



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

Keep in Touch

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Footsteps Towards Freedom:
Sculptor Rowan Gillespie with
Sr Clare Nolan and Toby.



Welcome to the December issue of Keep in Touch!

In this edition, we go south to Tasmania. We take time to salute the lives and the mission of Sisters who have ministered in Tasmania, look at the *Footsteps Towards Freedom* statues in Hobart, and celebrate with Sr Josephine Cannell as she approaches her 100th birthday. We also talk to Sr Elizabeth Dodds, and follow the Archives as some answers connected to one of the treasures housed there are teased out.

Milestones: 2017 in review

The Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan, looks back at the year just passed

The greatest gift, and challenge, this year has been the call to take responsibility for the governance, administration, and pastoral care of Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor. We are on a journey, learning to walk together, sharing our charisms and our dreams.

We are grateful for the grace and hospitality with which Our Lady's Nurses have welcomed us into their society and we have been glad to be able to develop parallel communications, providing a weekly Congregational News and sharing their news as well as ours.

I am indebted to Sr Gaye Reynolds who, in acting as Companion Sister, is providing the link between our two Congregations.

We have put in place our own Communications Strategy and it has been with delight that I have observed the growth in our Facebook community and the increase in our e-newsletter mailing list and website traffic as the year has progressed. It is rewarding to know that thousands of people are able to connect with us daily, hearing something of our ministry and mission, and better understanding the story of Mary Aikenhead.

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Milestones: 2017 in review

From page 1



This year we celebrated 60 years of compassionate care at St Vincent's Private Hospital, Brisbane.

Most of all, I am delighted that Sisters everywhere, regardless of their mobility, are able to share in the life of the Congregation through these media and to connect with their Sisters. More than ever, stories of Sisters and their events are being shared on the website and in Congregational News, and everyone is able to rejoice in them.

This year, we have had much to celebrate about the past, including 60 years of compassionate care at St Vincent's Private Hospital, Brisbane, the rich history of 170 years of ministry in Tasmania, and 10 years of Downs and West Community Support. Importantly, we have made some significant decisions for the future including the appointment of a builder for the Heritage Centre and the appointment of new Trustees for Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

I have accepted an invitation to join the Futures Forum being established as part of the newly restructured Catholic Religious Australia. I am thrilled to be able to be part of the visioning of a new way of being consecrated, apostolic, religious women in Australia today.

There is so much to be done, but if we can be at the forefront of modelling a commitment to social justice and to preferencing the poor into the future, we will be continuing to honour the spirit of our Foundress and living the joy of the Gospel every day.

Thanks be to God.

Sr Elizabeth Dodds

The perpetual student

In May this year, the Australian Catholic University made Sr Elizabeth Dodds a Doctor of the University (Honoris Causa) in recognition of her positive impact on countless lives through education and healthcare.

The citation, which was read on the occasion of the conferral of the highest degree the University offers, runs to four pages, and acknowledges two very evident facts about Sr Liz.

The first is that her family valued and encouraged learning and set her feet on a path to academia; she has various undergraduate degrees, and also has a Master of Education from the University of Sydney, and a Master of Arts in Leadership from ACU.

The second is that she is a perpetual student, with a passion for learning not only in theory but in her very sinew and bone. The Congregation gives her every opportunity to study.

The results of these two factors have flourished in service to others – principally in education and for some years in health as either Congregational Leader or a Trustee of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, as well as for the greater good.

Early in November, as the jacarandas laced the streets around her home in Sydney's eastern suburbs, she sat down with KIT to talk about the ACU doctorate, and her continuing ministries.

With a glint, Sr Liz told a story against herself ... one featuring the professor who tried on several different occasions to persuade her to undertake a Ph D.

"He even flew to Brisbane once to try to talk me into it," she said.

"When I was awarded the ACU Honoris Causa, I had the opportunity to tell him that I got the doctorate, but didn't have to do the work for it." Glintier.

Her passion for learning feeds her ministries as a Sister of Charity which centre around leadership, formation of leaders and formation in charisma, and governance. "I love governance," she said. "I really do."

Just as well. Sr Elizabeth was Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity from 2002-2008 and a founding Trustee of Mary Aikenhead Ministries (2009-2011).



Above left: Sr Elizabeth Dodds with her Doctorate from the ACU and citation; Above right: Sr Liz at home.

She is now the Australian representing the Sisters of Charity of Australia in the group selected to Promote the Cause of the Ven. Mary Aikenhead.

Her focus these days is mainly in education.

Formerly a teacher and principal in secondary Catholic schools in New South Wales and Victoria, and the director of the Edmund Rice Education Directorate in Queensland and the Northern Territory, Sr Liz is also the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's nominee as Commissioner of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), where she also serves as chair of the Commission's Faith Formation and Religious Education Standing Committee.

"This is the most fantastic committee I have ever worked with," said Sr Liz. "They are absolutely fabulous people."

She maintains her strong connection to ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), and also works on the Ecological Conversion steering committee for the Sisters of Charity Gathering in 2018.

Eco-conversion? "Its basis is the Papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*," she said.

"We are constructing a theological framework for our Sisters through which we hope we can understand more clearly the turn towards the universe and the understanding that we are all part of the whole."

The conversation doubled back to the ACU degree, and the occasional address Sr Liz gave to graduands at the graduation ceremony during which the university conferred its degrees.

After her thanks, she moved into the body of her address, quoting the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala Yousafzai: Many are "starving for education. It's like a precious gift. It's a diamond."

"This precious gift we celebrate together today is, I believe, a journey of lifelong learning. I have a plaque on a bookshelf within my home. On it are words attributed to the great Renaissance artist, Michelangelo. The words are: 'I am still learning.'

"His humility led him to state 'I am still learning' just a year or two before his death...

"This is something I try to live by, and in fact, live within."

She concluded her address with some sage advice: "Continue learning, remembering your profession is not solely about doing: It is a way of being. And always 'sniff the breeze'."

Clearly Sr Elizabeth is someone who takes her own advice to heart.

Four Sisters

remember their ministries in Tasmania

In honour of the 170th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity in Tasmania, four of our Sisters remembered their time ministering in the Apple Isle.



Sr Virginia Wilkinson

Sr Virginia Wilkinson

*A memory of St Aloysius School,
Kingston Beach*

Being asked to write a reflection on some memory of my time living and teaching in Tasmania gave me much to think about. I chose this little anecdote as it is a very treasured memory of some very special children.

St Aloysius, Kingston Beach was a small, fairly new school in a semi-rural area, about 16 kms out of Hobart. The children came in from Snug, Margate, Longley, Kettering, and from Kingston itself. The school looked out on to a view of the mouth of the Derwent River that would be the envy of people anywhere in the world.

Every Friday morning, as the bus pulled up outside the school, out stepped Melba Kelly. As she approached the school, dressed in a most colourful array of flowing

gowns, brilliant scarves and flamboyant hats, a quiver of joy and expectation went through the classrooms. Melba was a speech and drama teacher of note, who no longer worked in the high schools or the drama and theatre scene of Hobart, but who came to share her wonderful gifts with our children.

As in many small towns in Tasmania, Kingston had an excellent drama group known as the Kingston Players, which produced wonderful plays each year to which we were always invited. I remember enjoying such plays as *Bonaventure*, and several Noel Coward productions.

This group organised a Junior Drama Festival each year and involved all the schools in the area. Due to the giftedness of Melba Kelly and the unbelievable talent of the children, St Aloysius took out the first place every year.

Melba saw their possibilities and suggested competing in the Hobart City Eisteddfod. Most of our children had rarely, if ever, been into Hobart, so this was a very interesting and exciting experience.

Here again, as Melba elicited the most beautiful speech, animate, and sheer talent from the children, they won many awards.

There was a section for boys only choirs, which catered for all the big high school groups of talented males. St Virgil's College entered two big choirs each year, and frequently won first and second prizes.

To meet the required number to compete in the choir section, our little school had to include boys from 7/8 years to 12 year-olds.

The day of the Hobart City Eisteddfod finally arrived and we made our way to Hobart to take our place in history.

After sitting through choir after choir performing over many hours, we were delighted again to take first and second places with our combined boys and girls choirs.

The time had come. Announcements had been made, and the boys from St Aloysius climbed on to the huge stand, on the huge stage, in the huge Hobart City Hall for the performance of their lives.

As I saw how small they were, I wanted to take them down. To us, they were already champions. However, the bell sounded for silence and a hush fell over the whole place. These young boys from outside the city limits were competing with the best. But only we knew that they had been trained by the best.

As the last line of the last poem came to an end there was a deathly silence throughout the hall. It was only seconds, but it seemed like minutes. Suddenly, the whole place erupted into a sea of applause. They had done it again. These boys had completed what they came for and it showed in their beaming smiles and angelic expressions.

Then the big moment came. From the back of the hall, the adjudicator approached the stage.

She critiqued the performances, and then announced the place-getters: 3rd place to one of the big Hobart colleges; 2nd place, St Virgil's Christian Brothers College (I was very happy for them).

I was feeling so much for our small, tired boys, standing there amid the senior boys in their very smart uniforms.

Finally it came: First place, St Aloysius School, Kingston Beach. The hall erupted again. Not just applause this time, but a standing ovation which seemed to go on for eternity. The boys looked stunned. We were all stunned.

As silence was called for, one of the smallest boys in the front row stepped down, walked across the front of the stage, looked across to where we sat, and called out in this beautiful young voice, with perfect diction:

"We was good, sister, was we?"

They had climbed the heights that day, but nothing could change our delightful, happy unsophisticated, St Aloysius children.

As a footnote, Melba Kelly died in her sleep very soon after that Eisteddfod, aged in her late forties.

Sr Jean Montgomery

One year at Kingston was possibly the happiest of my life.

I was in Tasmania at two different times. The first was for six years — 1961 to 1966. I spent one year at Kingston and five years at Aikenhead House in Hobart. The second time I ministered as pastoral associate at Kingston from 1993 to 1995.

My very first year at Kingston has the most remarkable memories for me.

I was sent there at the beginning of its second year. The convent Superior and school Principal was Sr Eileen Thynne. Community members were Sr M Agnes Mulquinney (RIP), Sr Patricia O'Loughlin and me.

The school was situated at the top of a hill with a stunning view of Hobart's Derwent River.

In its second year, the school was still a very small school with lovely parents and children. They were not wealthy people — but very generous and helped us build up the school. Many of the husbands were fishermen, and school fees would come to us in the form of fish. We often had fish for dinner!

We had a wonderful speech and drama teacher — Madam Kelly. It was incredible how many times Madam Kelly was able to train those little country children to such a standard that they won almost every Eisteddfod she entered them in.



Sr Jean Montgomery

Our parish priest was Fr Rex Donoghue, a kindly priest who was very devoted to the church and his priestly duties. On Sundays, as well as Mass at Kingston, he went to three out-station churches: Margate, Snug, and Longley. He appreciated the Sisters' attendance at these Masses to lead singing and be there for the people of these areas. I particularly loved going to these small churches and the people there.

In the parish were two spinster sisters, Jean and Kath Bradshaw, who were extremely good to us.

Every Sunday, Jean would have a thermos of coffee and fresh ham sandwiches for us to have on the way to either Margate, Snug, or Longley.

I loved living in this country atmosphere. We were a happy community and I look on this one year at Kingston as possibly the happiest in my life.

Four Sisters remember their ministries in Tasmania

From page 5



Sr Helga Neidhart

Sr Helga Neidhart

Focus on governance

Having just returned from our celebration of 170 years of RSC ministry in Tasmania, I've been invited to reflect on my contribution to this ministry. While never resident in Tasmania, I've ministered there for around 20 years.

As a staff member at Australian Catholic University (ACU), I was invited by a former Tasmanian Director of Catholic Education to investigate the possibility of introducing the ACU Masters of Educational Leadership to Hobart and Launceston. Tasmania, of course, has its own university with campuses in both the south and the north. ACU, however, was considered better able to offer an appropriate leadership program for Catholic schools.

Our Masters students were primary and secondary teachers with an interest in leadership studies. As these students were in full-time employment, we worked at weekends and in holiday times and lecturers travelled from the mainland.

Over the years, many cohorts graduated, and this helped create a strong base of leadership personnel for Catholic schools. Several students also proceeded to doctoral studies.

From this beginning came other invitations such as to participate on interview panels and do school and other performance reviews. I was also asked to mentor a director of Catholic education and several secondary principals.

Today, as I am no longer at ACU, my main involvement is in governance, which provides an ongoing opportunity to minister in Tasmania, where our contribution as Sisters of Charity has been both long and rich.



Sr Margaret Guy

Sr Margaret Guy

A very special and memorable time

I think our Congregation of Sisters of Charity has special bonds with Tasmania going right back to our history of the first three sisters — John Cahill, Catherine O'Brien, and Xavier Williams being invited there by Bishop Willson in 1847.

I have heard many stories of Sisters' ministry and community in Tasmania. These were around our ministries of gaol visitation, looking after children in Aikenhead House, and later caring for children in group homes at Taroona and educating

children in schools, responding to the changing needs after the days of the Cascade Female Factory and Orphanage for children.

I spent three years as a parish worker in Christ the Priest Parish, Kingston and consider my time very special and memorable.

Although there were many challenges, I found the people very welcoming and faith-filled. Parish groups were very much alive, as were the Eucharistic liturgies.

I felt very much part of the parish community. Being cut off from the mainland, I think we bonded more as an RSC community, which in my time was Mt Carmel, Sandy Bay, and Kingston.

Mt Wellington always dominated the scenery, along with the beauty of the Derwent River and the city of Hobart. Many times I took visitors up that mountain and enjoyed snow times there by myself or with other sisters.

Mt Wellington would have dominated the Cascade Female Factory and all those women imprisoned and suffering from hard labour (e.g. washing all the laundry with carbolic soap and often standing in water running down from the mountain).

I did not visit this now-heritage site of the Cascade Female Factory till years later during the 160 year celebrations of RSCs in Tasmania and 175 years of RSCs in Australia celebrations and then again on the morning of October 14 before the Unveiling Event in the afternoon.

This time impressed me more deeply. I seemed to learn more details of the daily life which these women and babies suffered and, as a result of which, many died.

With the sculptures unveiled, I felt as though these life-like figures, Indiarna 19, Alison 36, Laen 27, and baby Harry and the boy Toby were so real. What suffering and hardship were ahead of them!

Heart and soul

in Footsteps Towards Freedom sculptures

On Saturday, October 14, 2017 Sr Margaret Guy rsc attended one of the most inspiring events she had ever experienced in her life. She takes up the story...

It was an historic event – the unveiling of the sculptures representing the 12,500 women convicts and 2,500 children who came to Van Diemen's Land in the early to mid-1800s – which commemorated another series of events... the transportation in misery of women and children to the penal colony in Van Diemen's Land.

As the sculptures were unveiled at MACQ01 wharf just above Hunter Island where these women would have first stepped ashore, I related viscerally and emotionally to our early Sisters ministering with these women and children who had endured unspeakable hardships.

Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, spoke passionately of these "women who were transported for petty crimes, the acts of destitute individuals." Kate Warner, the Governor of Tasmania, reflected upon these women:



Sr Clare Nolan rsc and Toby

"While their lives were often wretched, they were also in many respects the founding mothers of today's Tasmania."

Irish sculptor, Rowan Gillespie, modelled these sculptures on descendants of these women and children. He said: "I live with them and I have this thing that I really believe that I know them as the process happens, so you get very emotional." I was touched by how he had poured his heart and soul into the making of these sculptures.



The Sisters of Charity group

He spent time in Hobart listening to the stories of descendants of convicts, visiting the archives and then returning to Ireland to his workshop with 3D scans of the models and going through the arduous task of moulding these 'women and child,' in bronze.

This entire story was told in the film we saw *Shaping History* which told the story of the *Footsteps Towards Freedom* Project.

On Sunday, we held our own RSC liturgy around the sculptures, then went up to celebrate Eucharist at St Joseph's Church just as the first three sisters, John Cahill, Catherine O'Brien and Xavier Williams did upon their arrival in Hobart Town in June, 1847. After a celebratory lunch, we continued our liturgy around the deceased sisters' graves at Cornelian Bay, placing the roses from the previous liturgies on them as we prayed with and recalled their names.



Sr Clare meets President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins

Sharing these historic events, liturgies, and prayers with the Sisters added greatly to the spirit especially with the welcome and enthusiasm of our Congregational Leader, Clare Nolan, and the committee of sisters including Anne Turner (our one sister resident in Tasmania who organised the liturgies and transportation).

Truly, we were standing on holy ground, "standing on the shoulders of the ones who went before."



Sr Josephine's long life of devotion and ministry

Sr Josephine Cannell

There has been something of a countdown going on for Sr Josephine Cannell, one which she readily shares.

She knows exactly how many weeks until her 100th birthday on February 24 next year, and she marks the calendar down weekly.

Sr Josephine can look forward to a letter from the Queen, the Governor-General, and the Governor, in February — as well as a welter of flowers and good wishes. In her own self-deprecating style, however, she will say "I don't know what I have done to deserve this. Only lived a long time."

When she joined 20 other Sisters of Charity for the Mass, special liturgy, and other celebrations connected to the Sisters of Charity's 170 years of service in first the Hobart penal colony and then the State of Tasmania, it was very special. For most of the Sisters, the celebrations marked a return to the places they lived and ministered for many years; for Sr Josephine, it was a true homecoming to the place that faith was born and nurtured.

As she talks about her life, her thoughts – logical, rich-veined with memory, and ordered – run across the history of the early 20th century in Tasmania, and Australia, from the time World War I finished, to the Great Depression in the early 1930s, and then World War II. It is quickly clear that her mind is acute, formidable.

Sr Josephine was born and spent her earliest years in New Norfolk, Tasmania, "a little, tiny town in the Derwent Valley" she remembers, settled by evacuees from Norfolk Island when the prison there was abandoned in 1807. It's the third oldest settlement in Tasmania, its historic past clear in the lines of many early buildings including one of Australia's oldest pubs and Australia's oldest Anglican church, St Matthew's.

These days, New Norfolk is about 35 kilometres away from Hobart, 35 minutes by road. When Sr Josephine was growing up here, it was rather less accessible.

"My father worked as the landscape gardener there, in the mental hospital," she said. "His father was a blacksmith, but he had seven sons, so there wasn't any room for my father in the business. My other grandfather was the chief officer in the hospital, so that is where my father was given a job. He was a warder first of all, but he suffered from asthma and so moved to an outside job."

There were a number of Cannell siblings – Monica, two years older than Sr Josephine, Kevin three years younger, and the baby Patrick, 18 months after Kevin. "Just after Paddy was born, Grandfather Cannell died," Sr Josephine said. That was 1923, and the Great Depression was on the far horizon.



Top left: Sr Josephine with Mary Aikenhead Ministries trustees celebrating her Oak Jubilee 2017 **Bottom left:** Blackman's Bay, Tasmania c. 1950 (Sr Josephine 3rd from left). **Top right:** Comely Bank, Healesville 1948 (Sr Josephine 1st on left).

"Unfortunately, my father decided to change his job, and things were just going down and down. My mother decided that something needed to be done. In 1925, there was an ad for a job in a Hobart foundry, which he applied for and got." Her father commuted for a short time, coming home for the weekends, but the family soon followed to live in Hobart.

"I was fortunate to have both parents Catholic," said Sr Josephine, who while she had started school in New Norfolk at the local State school, had been encouraged by her mother to visit the church across the road. This is where she encountered Sisters of Charity for the first time.

When the family moved to Hobart, Sr Josephine and her sister Monica were enrolled at St Joseph's Convent, which was under the care of the Sisters of Charity.

"I was always considered to be a little bit holy in the family," she said. "I was a bit of a pain at school, top of the class, doing jobs for the nuns."

As she approached secondary school, the Depression bit. "In 1928, 29, 30 — things were very bad in those times in Hobart," she said with restraint.

Into the 1930s, there was a continuing question about what young Josephine would do with her life. Her sister Monica had done a commercial course, but the workforce and young men didn't really appeal to Sr Josephine. She went home one day and declared to her mother: "I'm sick of boys."

Her mother soon had a visit from the Sisters, and passed on the gist of the formal conversation she had with them to Sr Josephine. "She told me the Sisters thought I had a vocation. Dead silence. Mum asked me what I thought, and I said 'Yes, Mum.'" That response came from certainty, and, as such, it was a relief.

"I was still at school, so the Sisters told me to take three months off and go into the novitiate after that..." That is exactly what happened, and Sr Josephine's life as a consecrated, apostolic woman, commenced. "It was a wrench, of course. Not for me so much, but for the family. I was off on a great adventure, I was going places."

She remembers standing on the ship in Hobart as it slipped its moorings and headed out of the Derwent for Sydney. The family, gathered to wave goodbye from the dock, became smaller and smaller.

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Sr Josephine and Sr Anne Turner with statue of St Joseph, Mary's Grange, Taroona c. 2010.

Sr Josephine's long life of devotion and ministry

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She was professed in January, 1937, after two and a half years of studying and learning about religious life.

Teachers college followed. Her life as a teacher began, and was as unpredictable as it was interesting. "Whatever happened was God's will, and I never questioned it." She took her final vows in 1940. She has acute recall of many of her postings as a teacher, which were mainly in the arts and crafts area. She followed renowned artist Justin O'Brien as the art teacher at St Joseph's Edgecliff when Justin left Australia to become an official war artist.

At the end of 1940, she moved to Melbourne and remembers clearly the troops being moved at the same time. Her teaching stints in Melbourne included periods at the Catholic Ladies College, East Melbourne, St George's in Carlton, and St Teresa's and St Columba's in Essendon.

She remembers particularly four wonderful years at CLC, during which she taught two young women who would go on to become Sisters of Charity themselves – Sr Deirdre Hickey, and Sr Elizabeth Costigan.

After 12 years in Melbourne, she was moved back to Sydney, first at St Mary's Cathedral School, and then at St Vincent's Potts Point, where she was in charge of the boarders' refectory and kitchen.

She was there for the 100th anniversary of the death of Mother Mary Aikenhead, and the garden party at St Vincent's to which 1,000 people came. "I enjoyed those years, looking after the girls."

It was a change which lasted two years, until she was sent to teach in Katoomba. The time came, though, when Sr Josephine began to dread the appearance of the envelopes which invariably contained another change of location.

She has excellent recall of those ministries, those locations, and can run them off without reference to a note. During her long ministry life, there were many different schools and roles. And she kept on creating.

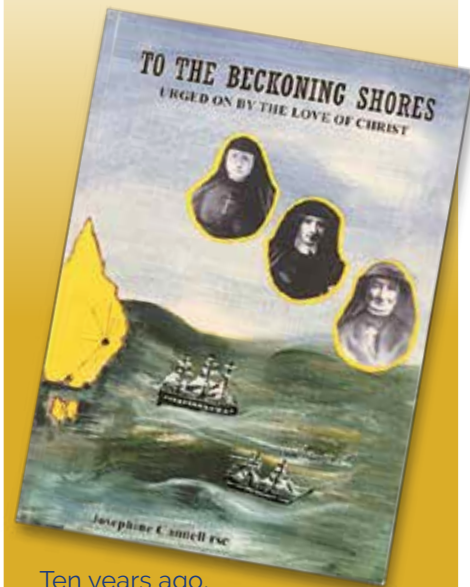
She left the community in Taroom in August 2014, taking up residence.

Sr Josephine remains self-deprecating to a fault. For her Oak Jubilee celebrations this year, the priest asked her for details of her life and career for his homily. "He wanted to know if I had ever been a principal, ever run anything. I told him not really," said Sr Josephine.

She might have been right, but that does not tell the whole truth about the remarkable Sr Josephine.



Sr Josephine cutting the cake at her Platinum Jubilee celebrations, 2007.



Ten years ago, during her final stint in Tasmania, she published a book, a labour of love, to commemorate the 160th anniversary of the arrival of the first pioneer Sisters in Van Diemen's Land. Entitled *To the beckoning shores: Urged on by the love of Christ*. Dedicated to the memory of the three pioneer Sisters who arrived in Hobart aboard the Louisa in 1847, it relates an intriguing story, one of sacrifice, dedication, and love.

Not only did she research and write the story of those 160 years, drawing on sources from Hobart to the Archives in Sydney, but she also designed the cover, and took the lot – loaded onto a USB stick – off to the printer. Not bad, for 90.



Today, Sr Josephine spends her time in quiet appreciation of all that has been, and remembers in prayer the needs of the Congregation and the world.

Sleuth at work again

Irish patriots, a statue of Christ and the Sisters of Charity

Recently there was occasion to investigate how a porcelain statue of Christ (pictured), which had belonged to William Davis, came to be in the Congregational Archives, writes Archivist Janet Howse.

The investigation became a tale of how one item in the Archives is connected to other facets of Australian history, and demonstrates how the Congregational Archives cannot be viewed in isolation as simply the Archives of a Religious Institute but has potential and significance for wider historical connections with Australian society, history and culture.

On the base of the statue are three small metal plaques dated 1817, 1892, and 1951. The first plaque reads:

"Presented to William Davis in 1817 by his fellow colonists in sympathy for the sufferings he endured for his faith."

The second plaque reads:

"Given by Mother M Gertrude Davis to Mr and Mrs Jageurs in 1892."

The third plaque reads:

"Presented to the Sisters of Charity in 1951 by the Jageurs family in memory of their parents."

Why, how and when did the statue come to be in the possession of Mother Mary Gertrude Davis? What prompted Mother Mary Gertrude Davis to give the statue to Mr and Mrs Jageurs in 1892 and what was their connection to William Davis or the Sisters of Charity? What were the circumstances surrounding the return of the statue to the Sisters of Charity in 1951?

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Porcelain statue of Christ, on a wooden pedestal, which had belonged to William Davis, 1817.

Sleuth at work again

Irish patriots, a statue of Christ and the Sisters of Charity

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William Davis

Irish patriot, landowner and benefactor

Let us go back to the beginning to William Davis, who, when he died in Sydney in 1843, was described as possibly the last surviving "victim" of the Irish Rebellion (according to the English) or Irish Uprising (according to the Irish) of 1798.

He was transported to NSW with 132 Irish rebels, arriving in 1800. Later that year, he was suspected of being involved in a plot by Irish convicts to seize control of the colony and received 200 lashes as punishment.

In 1811, Davis received a conditional pardon and three years later, an absolute pardon. He subsequently became a successful property owner and benefactor of Catholic causes, including donating the site of St Mary's Convent at Parramatta in 1839, building the convent, and bequeathing the site of St Patrick's Church, Church Hill.

Three years after his absolute pardon, his fellow Catholics thought enough of his good work to present him with the statue of Christ with the inscription which refers to his suffering as a convict.

Father Jeremiah O'Flynn, who arrived in the colony in November 1817 without permission from the British Government, conducted baptisms, marriages, and Mass in private in Davis' house at 1 Charlotte Place, contrary to Governor Macquarie's orders until his expulsion by Governor Macquarie in May 1818. Whether by accident or design is unknown, but prior to his expulsion, Father O'Flynn left the consecrated communion sacrament in a pyx there.

It became a focus of prayer for a group, who kept daily vigil before the Eucharistic sacrament until the arrival of Father J. J. Therry in May, 1820. The Congregational Archives holds not only the statue of Christ, but two brass candlesticks and a silk pyx cover in a silver case used in the secret Masses said in William Davis' house.



Top right: Mary Davis prior to entering the Sisters of Charity

Bottom left: Front page of booklet showing St Patrick's Church and William Davis' house in front.

Bottom right: Drawing of William Davis' house.

William Davis, who was childless, died almost five years before the birth in 1848 of his great-niece, Mary Davis (later Mother Mary Gertrude Davis) at his house at 1 Charlotte Place.

Mary Davis was the youngest of four children of William Davis' nephew, John Davis.

According to William Davis' will, he left his estate to family members, including his house to John Davis. The statue, the candlesticks and the silk pyx cover and silver case remained in the house and in John Davis' family's possession until the demolition of the house in the 1860s.

Mary Davis entered the Sisters of Charity in 1870 and was professed in 1872. On her profession, she was given the silk pyx cover by her relatives.

Was she also given the statue as well? We do not know.

Morgan Peter Jageurs Irish patriot, monumental mason and benefactor

Now we come to 1892, and how the statue came to be given to Mr and Mrs Jageurs in 1892 by Mother Mary Gertrude Davis and who this couple was.

Sleuthing in the National Library of Australia's newspapers on-line revealed that Miss Dena Bartley married Mr Morgan P Jageurs at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne on 17 February, 1892.

More research found that Morgan Jageurs, described as a monumental mason and Irish patriot, was born in Ireland in 1862.

The Jageurs family migrated to Queensland in 1865, to Sydney in 1868 and to Melbourne in 1870. During 1883 and 1884, Morgan Jageurs attended the National Art School, and travelled extensively in Europe.

In 1892, he joined the family firm of Jageurs & Son, monumental sculptors, marble and granite merchants, based in Parkville.

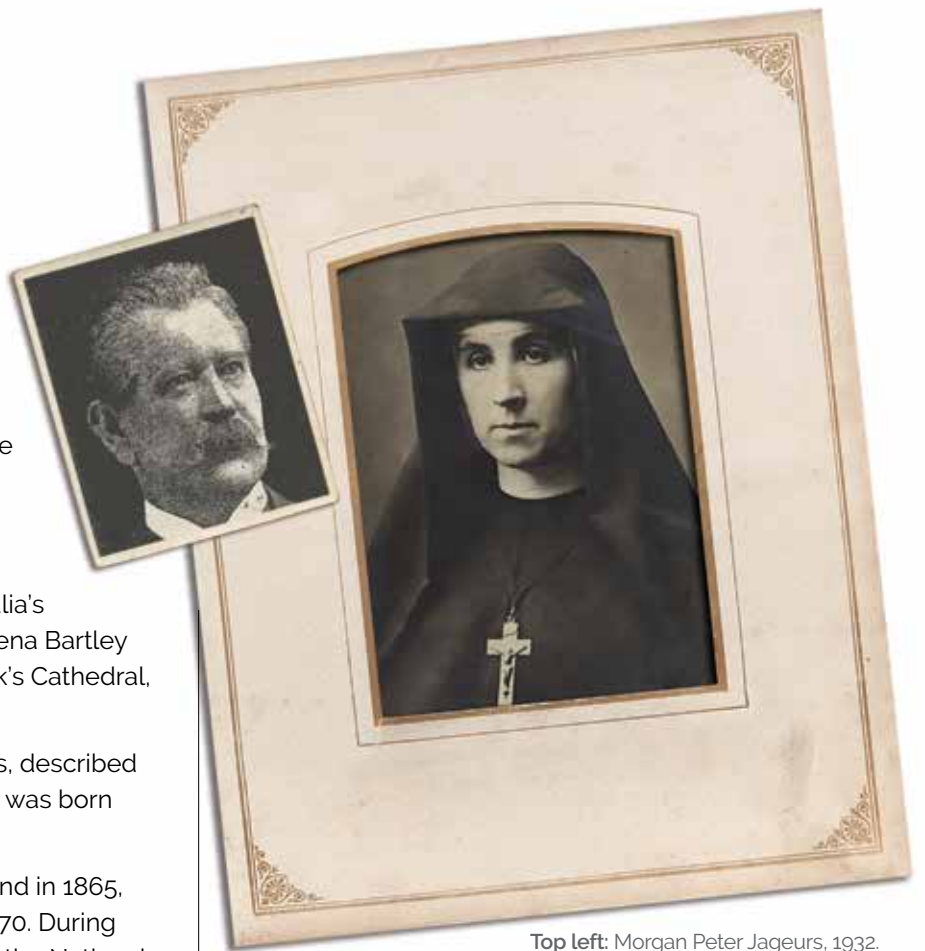
Jageurs was prominent in Irish nationalist causes, a student of Irish language, literature, music and art, and president of the St Patrick's Society between 1889 and 1900.

The article also revealed that his bride, Miss Bartley, had been a teacher at Clifton Hill, probably at St John's School, Clifton Hill, where the Sisters commenced teaching in 1894.

At the time of the Jageurs' wedding in 1892, Mother Mary Gertrude Davis was Mother Rectress at St Joseph's Convent, Hobart.

She had previously been in Melbourne since her arrival 5 January, 1889 as the first Rectress of the Melbourne community. Was the statue of Christ taken to Melbourne with her from Sydney? Why did Mother Mary Gertrude Davis give the statue to Mr and Mrs Jageurs?

The year on the plaque coincided with the Jageurs' wedding. Newspaper reports of the 1892 wedding not only revealed the precise details of the bridal outfit and those of her attendants, but also a comprehensive list of guests and their gifts to the bridal couple.



Top left: Morgan Peter Jageurs, 1932.
Top right: Mother Mary Gertrude Davis, 1909.

Buried in the article was the entry – “statue in ivory. Mother M. Gertrude (Sister of Charity).”

Further down the list was a reference to a gift from the “teachers of Clifton Hill school.”

Mother de Sales, Sister of Charity Sydney, was the giver of Agnus Dei. Presumably this would have been Sr Mary de Sales Phillips, who had been Mother Mary Gertrude's Novice Mistress. So, now we have an explanation of the second plaque and why the statue came to be in the possession of Mr and Mrs Jageurs in 1892.

Wondering if there was a closer connection with the Sisters of Charity, a search of Sisters with the surname of Jageurs revealed Sr Mary Laurentia Jageurs.

Born Mary Jageurs in 1864 in Ireland, Sr Mary Laurentia was the daughter of Mary Casey and Peter Jageurs, monumental mason and Morgan Peter Jageurs' younger sister and only sibling. Born two years after her brother, she died two years after him, in 1934.

Sr Mary Laurentia spent most of her life in Sydney having taken vows in October, 1891 several months before her brother's wedding.

Had the family become acquainted with Mother Mary Gertrude Davis in Melbourne between 1889 and 1891 as part of the Catholic community?

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Sleuth at work again

Irish patriots, a statue of Christ and the Sisters of Charity

From page 13

Full circle to the Sisters of Charity

How did the statue of Christ come to be given back to the Sisters of Charity in 1951 by the Jageurs family? Did it come to the Sisters following the death of a family member?

Further sleuthing in newspapers revealed that Mrs Dena Mary Jageurs, widow of the late Morgan Peter Jageurs, died on November 13, 1950 and she certainly had a close connection with the Sisters of Charity. In her obituary, two Sisters of Charity are cited as being her biological sisters – Sr Mary Bernarda Bartley and Sr Mary John Baptist Bartley. Sr Mary Bernarda, born as Elizabeth Bartley in 1869, entered in 1893, taking her final vows in 1896. Her younger sister, Gertrude May Bartley, born in 1876, entered in 1897 and took her vows in 1900 as Sr Mary John Baptist, passing away at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne ten years later.

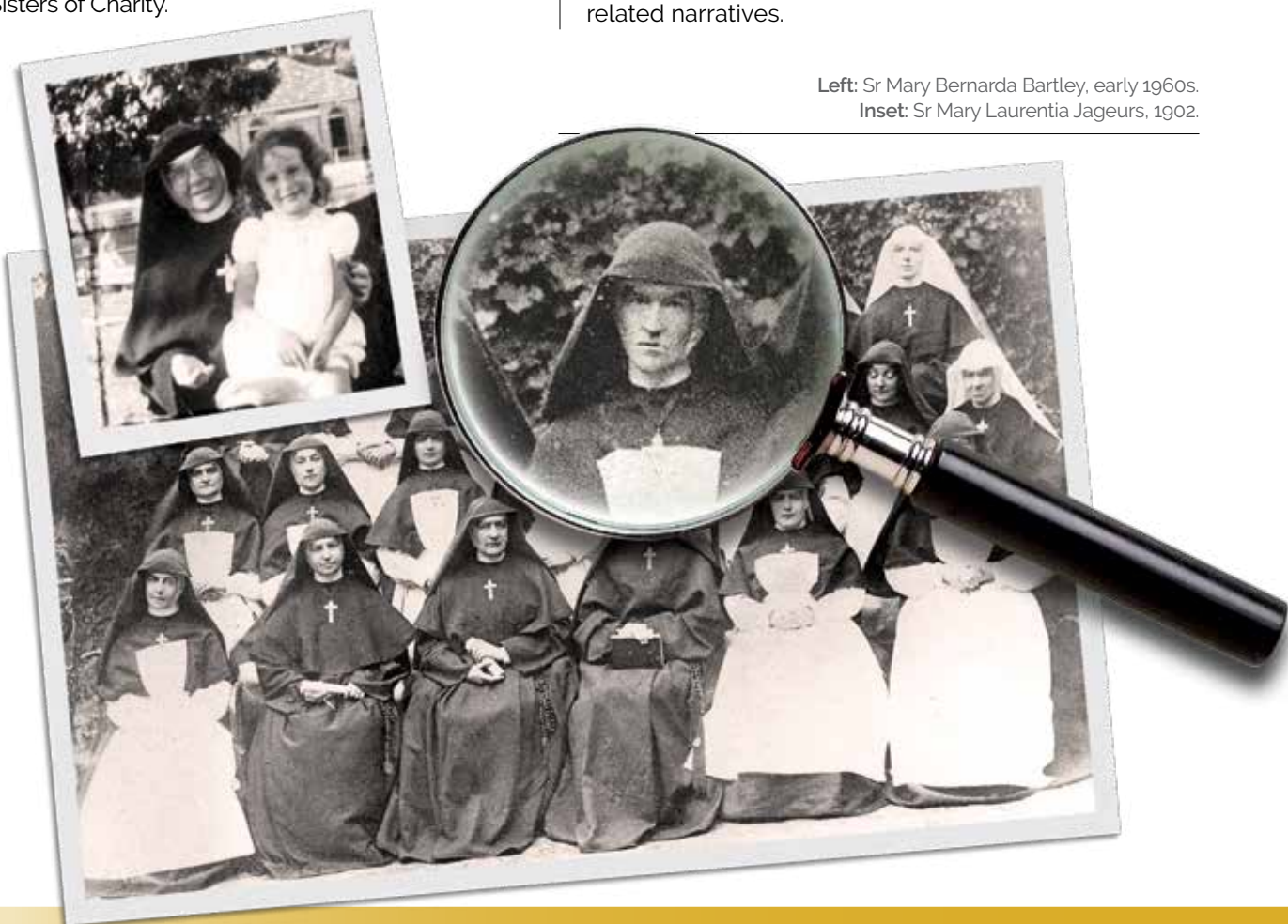
It is likely that following the death of Mrs Dena Jageurs in 1950, fifty-eight years after receiving the statue as a wedding present, her family gave the statue back to the Sisters of Charity.

Mrs Jageurs had come from a prominent Catholic family of eleven children, of whom six had joined religious orders. Mrs Dena Jageurs and her husband parented five children – John, Mary, Betty, Peter and Kathleen. In 1916, John the eldest, having served at Gallipoli in 1915, was killed by a German shell on the front line at Pozières, in France.

What an interesting tale which encompasses the 1798 Irish Uprising, William Davis, Governor Macquarie, Father Jeremiah O'Flynn, Mother Mary Gertrude Davis and a prominent Catholic family of monumental masons in Melbourne.

In addition, three Sisters of Charity, Sr Mary Laurentia Jageurs, Sr Mary Bernarda Bartley, and Sr Mary John Baptist Bartley, and a soldier's death at the Somme in 1916, are connected by the statue of Christ.

It is truly an example of how an "object" in a museum collection is not just a three-dimensional 'object' but can lead us to the telling of a number of inter-related narratives.



Left: Sr Mary Bernarda Bartley, early 1960s.
Inset: Sr Mary Laurentia Jageurs, 1902.

Celebrating 60 Years of St Vincent's Private Hospital in Brisbane



Above: Sr Jeannie Johnston shares the story of Mary Bedford's generosity in donating the land. Left: Mary Bedford c. 1891 Below: Miss Josephine Bedford and Dr Lilian Cooper, made house calls in a horse and 'sulky'. Inset Dr Lilian Cooper.

In September, those who helped create the campus now known as St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane in Kangaroo Point were remembered, and a Mass to mark 60 years of compassionate service was celebrated.

During the morning, Mary Bedford's Corner on Kangaroo Point Cliffs was also blessed and named.

In connection with the naming and blessing of Mary Bedford's Corner, Sr Jeannie Johnston spoke of Mary Josephine Bedford and her vision for the original hospice on the site now included in the St Vincent's Private Hospital Brisbane campus:

A remnant of a brick stone wall is all that is left of the original gift of Mary Bedford. It marked the boundary of Old St Mary's, the shared property of Dr Lilian Cooper and Mary Bedford (black and white image), and, more importantly, Mary Bedford's "Meditation Seat."

In 1951, when the Sisters from Ashgrove accepted an invitation to visit Mary Bedford's beautiful house, they were very surprised to see in her bedroom a prie-dieu placed before an open window from which there was a glorious view of the Kangaroo Point Reach of the Brisbane River. On this prie-dieu was a well-used Prayer Book containing the Divine Office. At that time, the Sisters of Charity did not recite the Psalms that comprised the Divine Office or, as we know it today, The Prayer of the Church. They recited a host of Litanies instead.

Mary Bedford was a very devout Anglican and a parishioner of St Mary's Church next door. Her personal library was stocked with theology books and books on sacred scripture. Mary Bedford kept up to date in theology and scripture studies.

While the Sisters were standing there admiring the view from the prie-dieu – an item sourced from a medieval abbey in the north of England, Mary Bedford pointed out to them the corner of the garden where every day, weather permitting, she would spend time seated in prayer. This corner was her meditation seat.

Mary Bedford and Lilian Cooper met in Rochester, Kent, when they were in their 20s. Mary Josephine Bedford was visiting her aunt and uncle who lived not far from Rochester Cathedral. Lilian Cooper's family lived in Rochester. Mary was visiting from Notting Hill in London.

She and Lilian Cooper shared a burning desire to go to University. Mary Bedford's parents would not allow her to leave the family home even though she had turned 21 yrs of age; Lilian Cooper was determined to become a doctor, a profession not readily accessible to women.



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Celebrating 60 years: of St Vincent's Private Hospital in Brisbane

From page 15

It was Mary Bedford who aided and abetted Lilian Cooper in achieving this ambition. The two of them moved to London and lived at 21 Guilford Street, Russell Square. Lilian studied medicine at the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital.

Mary Josephine enrolled to do an art course at the Slade School, University College, just behind the British Museum. Her parents approved of her choice of study as one befitting a lady.

After completing her course, Mary Bedford became heavily involved in Coram Fields, a home and hospital for foundling children which featured a playground for children. Adults could only enter this playground if accompanied by a child.

In 1891, Mary Bedford and Lilian Cooper sailed for Brisbane. Their first home was in Russell Street, South Brisbane; six years later they moved into The Mansions on George Street. Later, the pair moved into Auckland House further along George Street, on the corner of Mary Street.

World War I found them serving behind the front lines in Serbia as part of the Scottish Women's Hospitals teams American Unit.

While Lilian Cooper handled the surgical side of things, Mary Bedford was in charge of the Ambulance Transport column, ensuring that the ambulances were kept running. She was known as "Miss Spare Parts."

Dr Lilian Cooper, however, was not well so both women resigned their posts and travelled by train to Le Havre and caught the boat back to England, arriving in London, September 7, 1917. They travelled to Edinburgh and gave their report to the Scottish Women's Hospital Board.



Most Reverend James Duhig addressing the gathering at the official opening of Mount Olivet, 8 September 1957.

Both women spent time with their families before embarking on the sea voyage back to Australia, arriving in Brisbane in April, 1918, just in time for Mary Bedford to take part in the Anzac Day Procession on April 25.

That same year, they purchased Old St Mary's, 421 Main Street, Kangaroo Point, which had been built as the Rectory of the first Anglican Church in that area.

Lilian Cooper died on August 18, 1947 and Mary Bedford wished to perpetuate the memory of her great friend by establishing a hospice for the incurably ill and the sick poor, especially those in their twilight years. She offered Old St Mary's to the Sisters of Charity, saw the Foundation Stone laid and watched Mount Olivet grow up around her. Mary Bedford died on December 22, 1955. Her funeral service was held on Christmas Eve and was attended by the Sisters of the Charity.

Always, Mary Bedford was adamant that her property with its magnificent view of the Brisbane River was not to be used for the high-end of town – it was to be for the sick poor only.



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