

History of the Good Samaritan Sisters

The Call to Windsor

Archbishop John Bede traveled to Windsor on a number of occasions. After a visit in 1836 he wrote to his cousin in England:

"I went the Sunday before last to Windsor, and celebrated Mass in the temporary Chapel there. It was a barn and will be one again, made of slabs. A man by the name of Doyle died there a few weeks since, and left £500 to build a church and £200 for a school ... Windsor is situated on a long-backed eminence on a flat country, well cleared and cultivated; the vicinity is beautiful. As I looked towards the Blue Mountains about 200 miles distant, I saw a resemblance to the tract of Somersetshire ...; only the mountains are not so tame in outline, stand more in and out than the insipid Mendip Range." (1836)

As early as 1859 two Good Samaritan Sisters accompanied Polding to Windsor to help with the preparation of children and adults for the Sacraments.

In 1874 Fr Austin Sheehy, O.S.B. became Pastor of Windsor Parish which included Richmond, Kurrajong and Wisemans' Ferry, as well as the smaller stations of Riverstone, Nelson and Cattai.

Towards the end of the year Fr Sheehy invited Mother de Sales Maloney and Sr M Stanislaus McDonald to prepare a number of children and adults for Confirmation. This was so successful that Fr Sheehy decided to apply for a community of Sisters to live in Windsor.



Pioneer Sisters



*St. Joseph's Convent,
Windsor*

"Windsor Castle"

An old diary kept at the time by one of the first community members has recorded the event as follows ...

" Moved into the new convent today...
Up at four O'clock. Mass at six, said by

St. Katharina's

Father Austin. Half a dozen drays waiting at the door for the furniture while we were making our thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Had a hurried breakfast and began work. Father Austin, Mother Cecilia and Sister Stanislaus receiving the furniture at the new convent. Father Maurus, Sister Casimir and myself packing up at the old house, by half past eleven the house was empty ..."

Further interesting extracts from the Sister's diary include the following:

October 23rd, 1878

"Archbishop Vaughan blessed the Convent today. A great crowd of people at the ceremony ..."

November 22nd, 1878

"Schoolroom finished. Got furniture in today. We have had classes in refectory, children's dining room and music room for three weeks ..."

After the December 1878, Christmas holidays

"School reopened with 27 boarders, by Easter had 34 boarders, as many as could be accommodated... "

In 1879 a Girl's High School was opened by the Sisters. St. Joseph's High School.

Besides being involved in Primary and secondary Education at St. Matthew's School and St. Joseph's School, two Sisters would accompany the Priest whenever he traveled to an "out station" where Sisters would instruct the children while the Priest heard Confessions.



They also traveled long distances by horse or buggy, borrowed from a kindly neighbour, or by Cobb and Co coach to give religious instruction in places that a Priest could seldom visit.

These were happy days for the Sisters although they were not without trials, but at all times they were supported by the love and helpfulness of the people of the Windsor district.



*Fitzroy Bridge and Road.
Conditions were very hard.*

The following quote from the "The Good Samaritan Annals 1857 to 1938" vividly illustrates the real commitment and care the Sisters had, and still have for the people of Windsor.

" One wet week, the school fees were very low, and Mother Cecilia who had been told to pay for everything as she got it was very sad (as there was scarcely anything in the pantry on Saturday night). Sunday morning when she went to the kitchen after first Mass, she found the window had been opened and a basket

St. Matthew's

slipped in onto the table. It contained a large loaf of home made bread, 3 lbs of lovely butter, a piece of bacon, a tin of tea, some coffee, some new potatoes and other things. It was nearly three months before the generous benefactor was discovered, who proved to be no other than dear old Mrs. Cassidy"



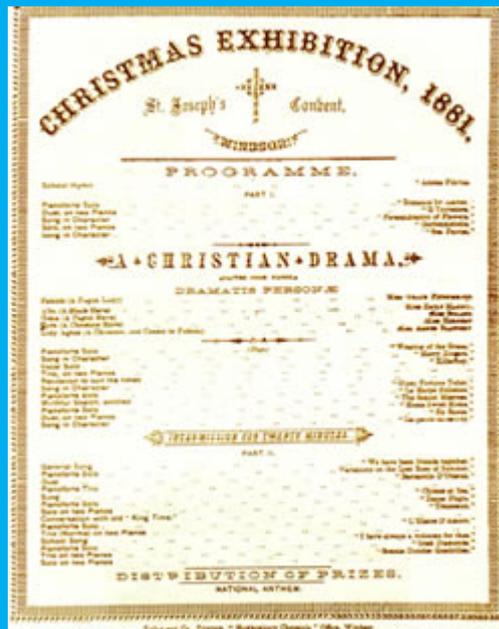
1958 L to R:

Mother Jean Marie (Superior), Sr. Clement Mary Riley (Primary), Sr. Marie Celine Evans (Primary), Sr. Maurice Sheehan (Infants), Sr. Eina Joy (High School)

Catholic Education

Good Samaritan Ministry in Catholic Education is closely interwoven into the history of Catholic Education in the Hawkesbury area. From the earliest days of settlement in the area the people have valued the Catholic School.

Esther and James Cassidy conducted the first Catholic School in Windsor from 1833 - 1844. In 1838 there were 104 students on the School Roll. This was the beginning of St. Matthew's Primary School, which continued to flourish in the hands of capable and committed Educators until the Public Instruction Act of 1880, which stopped all Government aid to denominational Schools.



Subsequently the Good Samaritan Sisters took charge of St. Matthew's School in addition to St. Joseph's High School which had opened in 1882 and became a successful country Boarding and Day School for girls.

The Benedictine ideal in Education has included in its scope the fashioning of the young mind to a love of the beautiful and the good, as well as to a keen pursuit of the Truth. The Sisters were eager to follow in the path of their Benedictine heritage. The teaching of music, art and a love of literature formed an intrinsic part of the education they offered to their students.

St Matthew's



Local History records a Grad Concert in the School of Arts Windsor by students of both Convent Schools.

Over the years many young people came to the Convent to be taught music by the Sisters.

Among those Sisters fondly remembered are Sr Scholastica Cullen, Sr Jean Marie McDonald, Sr Aelred Woolland and Sister Oliver O'Dowd.

St. Joseph's High School continued to provide Secondary Education Education for Girls until 1963, when significant

Education Reforms under Wyndham Scheme forced its closure.



In the following years parents were persistent in their requests to re-establish a Catholic Secondary School in the area.



From 1970 - 1981 the Hawkesbury Catholic High School Committee of local Priests and parents worked tirelessly to overcome the almost insurmountable problems, such as possible location and funding and to convince the Archdiocese that a Catholic High School was desperately needed in our area.

A decision was made in 1981 to establish the much needed Catholic High School in 1986. And so began Bede Polding College whose motto: "Called to Bring Peace" represents the spirit of the College.

From small beginnings Bede Polding College has grown to a large and vibrant School community. The Sisters value their association with this fine College named after their founder.

St. Katherina's