ST CECILIA’S CHURCH
WYONG NSW
A CELEBRATION OF 100 YEARS
1908 – 2008
This book is dedicated to the memory of Albert Hamlyn Warner, who donated the land for our Church; and to the early pioneers, who worked tirelessly to raise the money to build St Cecilia’s Church. Let us remember with gratitude to God, the gifts we have been given by those who went before us and may their faith inspire us today.

Published by
Wyong Catholic Parish
2008

Photos on front page:
Original Church – we believe this is the opening of St Cecilia’s Church in 1908.
   Photo, Wyong District Museum and Historical Society
St Cecilia’s Church in 2007 – Photo, K Harvey
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD by Fr Harry Kennedy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTRACT FROM ‘A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE WYONG SHIRE’</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Volume Four</em> – by Edward Stinson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROWTH</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mater Dei College/Corpus Christi College/St Peter’s College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John Fisher Primary School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessed Mary MacKillop Parish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PRIESTS</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NUNS &amp; ST CECILIA’S SCHOOL</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PRESBYTERY</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PEOPLE</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMORIES</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POEM: ‘A Church on the Hill’</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Wyong Shire Council for permission to use material from Edward Stinson’s ‘A Pictorial History of the Wyong Shire’, and to David Spratt and Gwen Dundon for their permission to use photographs. Thanks also to Phillip Morley, Wyong District Museum & Historical Society for early church photos and newspaper articles. Information was also available in Charles Swancott’s ‘Blue Gum Flat to Budgewoi’.

Thank you to the following for assistance with research:
Julie Cox, Archivist, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
Sr Norma Onley SMSM, Diocesan Archivist, Diocese of Broken Bay
Janette Davidson, Diocesan Archivist, Diocese of Broken Bay
Pauline Garland, Archdiocesan Archivist, Archdiocese of Sydney
State Library, Sydney
Gosford Library
Gosford Catholic Parish

We thank Fr Peppin Jayaraj for taking the initiative to suggest that the history of our church and parish should be recorded. Special thanks also to Vera Butler for making a start on this booklet and the many hours spent researching and writing.

While continuing to collate the history of St Cecilia’s Church, I have attempted to record the information as accurately as possible, as well as minimise the repetition in the stories and memories of the past and present parishioners of Wyong Catholic Parish. I would especially like to thank Kerrie Harvey for her dedication to this project with many hours spent sorting photographs and researching the internet – I couldn’t have done it without your help, Kerrie! I would also like to thank Regina Preston and Deacon Paul Simmons, and the many people who have helped with their contributions, support, encouragement and prayers, to make this memento of our church’s centenary possible.

Noela Ahearn
FOREWORD

One Hundred Years

The celebration of a hundred years is a time for thanksgiving, joy and reflection on the past. This is even more so when the anniversary is that of a Parish Church.

Joy and thanksgiving take on a special significance when it is realised that over one hundred years this Parish Church has contributed to the lives of so many people both past and present. This Parish Church has witnessed the joy and the happiness of so many, through the celebrations of Baptisms, First Holy Communions and Marriages. It has also been a place of support and consolation, through the many services and prayers, on behalf of those who have lost loved ones. Many a person, of the Christian faith, has found in this Parish Church the nearness of God during the difficult times in their daily lives.

This century old parish church has met the individual needs, as well as companionship for numerous people, by providing many opportunities for the community members to enjoy each others friendship. Members of the organising committee have not only done a magnificent job in preparing the activities associated with this celebration, but have also prepared an historical record of the past hundred years. In this way they have provided the means by which we can reflect upon the past so that all those who have been participants in the lifetime of this Parish Church can be recognised as contributing to its history. I would strongly recommend this centenary edition be seen as a memento of this great event in the history of both the Catholic Faith and of the history of the Wyong community.

Fr Harry Kennedy
INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the population on the Central Coast was sparse.

In 1852 Fr William Odilo Woolfrey, a member of the Cistercian Order, arrived in the MacDonald River area and was in charge of what is now the Central Coast. He had arrived in Australia six years earlier, eager to establish a Cistercian monastery in one of the colonies. Towards the end of 1852 he was relieved of the need to travel to the Brisbane Water District when his older brother, Fr Henry Norbert Woolfrey, also a Cistercian, was sent to Kincumber. The Woolfrey brothers, as they were known, travelled on horseback throughout the region and visited the various settlements where they offered Mass and administered the Sacraments. Between them they acquired over 100 acres of land for future Church needs. One block was at Yarramalong, known as Priest’s Farm, with the intention of establishing an orphanage for boys. Fr Odilo died in 1856 – unfortunately his plans for a monastery at Kincumber never eventuated. Fr Norbert stayed in the area until 1861. In Spencer, only a few months before he left the district, he had converted the 14 members of the Woodbury family to Catholicism. He was a popular priest and formed many friendships. He had a reputation as a healer. Ill health forced him to retire in 1870. He died in 1872.

In 1866 Matthew James Woodbury built The Cedars, more commonly known today as Woodbury’s Inn, where the Old Maitland Road meets Yarramalong Road. He also built a bridge across Wyong River. The Inn was a popular resting spot for travellers wanting to join the Cobb and Co coach at Cooranbong, and for bullock drivers moving their goods to either the timber mill at Cooranbong or the port at Dora Creek. Priests from Gosford travelled the area and when going north stayed overnight at the Inn. In this way Catholics in the area were able to celebrate Mass once a month. It is said that the first Mass in Wyong was offered at the Inn and a complete Mass kit was kept on the premises. During the 1880’s the settlement of Wyong
gradually moved two miles down the river to a position closer to the railway line, which opened in 1887. Eventually the Inn was considered to be too far out of the township and the School of Arts Hall was used for regular Mass services.

The Woodbury family was prominent in Catholic affairs and it was Cecilia, the eldest daughter of Matthew & Eliza Woodbury, and her four sisters, Maud, Teresa, Ethel and Alice, who worked tirelessly to raise money towards the building of St Cecilia’s Church in Wyong. The five sisters had two older brothers, Edwin and William, as well as a sister, Elizabeth, who died when she was 3 years old.

The land had been donated by Mr Albert Hamlyn Warner, who gave adjoining lots to the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. Edward Stinson notes:

>The story has been recorded that Warner asked the Roman Catholic priest if a site for his church next to that of the Anglican Church would be acceptable.

’And why not?’ replied Fr Peter Power, the red-headed Irishman. ‘We can manage. We are both in the same business, but our working hours are different.’

Both faiths have in fact managed very well, side by side, all through the years since then.

Stinson also records the debate in the Church of England congregation as follows:

>The site of the Church of England was a very divisive issue in the town even among the Church of England congregation. At that time, the eastern end of the town had not been developed. Most buildings and activities were on the western side of the town. The site for the church had been donated by Albert Hamlyn Warner. He also donated a site for the Roman Catholic Church, and the two sites adjoined. This is probably unique to have a Roman Catholic Church and a Church of England side by side, especially when we remember that 80 years ago there was much hostility between some Roman Catholic and Protestant churchmen; and Warner deliberately donated adjoining sites in the hope that it would lead to unity between the two sects. Feeling ran high among the Church of England congregation as to which side of the town the church should be, and the two factions came to be known as the “east-siders” and the “west-siders”.

Page 9
ALBERT HARNELL WARDEN of Sydney in the State of New South Wales, Contractor

being registered as the proprietor of an Estate in fee simple in the and hereinafter described, subject, however, to such encumbrances, leases, and interests, as are notified by memorandum underwritten or endorsed hereon,—in consideration of the sum of Ten Shillings

the receipt whereof I hereby acknowledge, do hereby transfer to the said His Eminence Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, Archbishop, The Right Reverend Kneeliner John Joseph Carrell, Vicar General, The Reverend Peter Paul Power, Matthew James WOODBURY, John ONeill and William Green Woodbury as joint tenants

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name, at Sydney

the 5th day of July, in the year

of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and Sixteen.

Signed in my presence by the said

ALBERT HARNELL WARDEN

who is personally known to me

Signed in my presence by His Eminence

Patrick Francis Cardinal Moran, Archbishop

who is personally known to me

Signed in my presence by the Right Reverend Kneeliner John Joseph Carrell, Vicar General who is personally known to me

Signed in my presence by Peter Paul Power who is personally known to me

Signed in my presence by Matthew James Woodbury who is personally known to me

Signed in my presence by John ONeill who is personally known to me

Signed in my presence by William Green Woodbury who is personally known to me

Transferee.
Voices were raised and some angry words were spoken. Some of these “west-siders” were a group of very bigoted Protestants who could not stomach the idea of having a Roman Catholic church next door to their own. However, the problem was eventually resolved in a spirit of goodwill from the majority, as one would expect from good God-fearing Christians! The Gosford times of December 23, 1904, reported:

A meeting was held on Monday evening to decide where the proposed Church of England is to be built. A few had an idea that it should be built at the western end of the town, and in consequence the eastern and central residents turned up in very strong numbers to carry the day, which they did easily. I understand since, that the sole object of the meeting was simply to decide, in a business-like way, the site, and not with any object of opposition. However, powder was smelt – whether rightly or wrongly I cannot say.

Mr Warner would delight in knowing the present friendly relationship between the two denominations – the Anglican, St James, and the Catholic, St Cecilia’s. Albert Warner died on May 7, 1933, aged 76 years, and was buried from St James Anglican Church.

Initially Wyong was part of Gosford Parish in the Archdiocese of Sydney. In 1914 Wyong was made a separate parish called ‘Wyong & Lake Macquarie’. It covered a large area, including not only The Entrance, Morisset and Cooranbong, but all the territory to the north as far as Boolaroo and south to Ourimbah. The priest would say Mass in Wyong and The Entrance (reached by boat) on the third Sunday of the month; Toronto and Boolaroo on the first Sunday; Cooranbong and Morisset on the second Sunday; Belmont on the fourth Sunday of each month, and Teralba and Swansea on alternating fourth Sundays; and if there happened to be a fifth Sunday Wyong and The Entrance had an extra Mass.

In 1926 the boundaries again changed and we became ‘Wyong’ Parish. Separate parishes were eventually set up at Boolaroo (1926), Belmont (1943), The Entrance (1947), Morisset (1947) Swansea (1954), Toronto (1955) and Toukley-Budgewoi (1962). On January 1, 1966, by special Brief of the Holy See (Rome), the parishes of Belmont, Boolaroo, Morisset, Swansea and Toronto were transferred from the Archdiocese of Sydney to the Diocese of Maitland.

On May 28, 1986, Cardinal Edward Clancy installed Bishop Patrick Murphy, as the inaugural Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Broken Bay. Previously part of the Archdiocese of Sydney, the new Diocese was created as a means of alleviating the difficulties of ministering to a burgeoning Catholic population throughout the Archdiocese. The name Broken Bay was chosen for its central location in Sydney’s northern region, being the mouth of the Hawkesbury River, which divides the north and south of the Diocese.
Beaming across to Broken Bay is the lighthouse situated on the Barrenjoey Peninsula. This lighthouse has become the key symbol in the Diocesan Crest, along with the motto, ‘Lumen Christi’ – the Light of Christ. Not only does this unify both sections of the Diocese, it is also a striking image of the light of Christ. Wyong Parish is part of the Diocese of Broken Bay.

Byron Street was originally known as Government Road and the initial land donation extended between Government Road and Leppington Street. Most of the streets on the east side of Wyong were named by Albert Warner and it is believed that Byron Street was named after Byron Baly, his manager and overseer for a couple of years. Byron Baly was also an auctioneer as mentioned in the Gosford Times, August 26, 1904:

*Mr Byron Baly, auctioneer, Wyong, reports having sold privately 66 feet frontage to Railway Street, Wyong, known as Ranken’s lot, at 25s per foot. Also Henry Knyvett’s farm of 80 acres at Reedy Flat, at a satisfactory price.*
The Early Church...

The first substantial building of any kind in the vicinity of Wyong, was Woodbury’s Inn, which provided travellers using the Old Maitland Road with liquor and accommodation. It was opened about 1866, and for about the next 30 years intermittent Roman Catholic services were held there, and a mass kit was kept on the premises. In his panegyric, delivered on the occasion of the funeral service for Mrs Woodbury, Rev Father Power stated (as reported in the Gosford Times dated July 14, 1911):

‘He also wished to express his grateful appreciation for the hospitality which had been so continuously extended to the priests in Mrs Woodbury’s home. For years the Catholics had met there to hear mass and even yet the priest found a home there when he came to minister in Wyong.’

At the beginning of June 1906, there was no completed church building for holding services in Wyong. Two years later there were four of them. The Roman Catholics were the first to take practical steps towards the erection of a church; but theirs was the last of those four churches to be opened. They were the Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist (or Wesleyan) and Roman Catholic. The Town and Country Journal on May 23, 1906 reported:

‘So far there has been no church building in Wyong, but an Anglican Church is now in course of erection. At present Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist services are held periodically in the local School of Arts. Steps are being taken for the erection of Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches.’

It has been recorded that Albert Warner had donated sites for the four principal churches in the town: Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist (or Wesleyan). (See Appendix A) There is no doubt that he did donate the sites for the first two. It is of interest to note that the proposed original site for the Roman Catholic Church was on the block adjoining the Presbyterian Church, on the northern side in Margaret Street.

The following reports from the Gosford Times tell something of the establishment of our church, and of the fund-raising activities:
January 9, 1903: A movement is on foot to establish a Roman Catholic Church at Wyong. The Rev Father Power is now issuing subscription lists for the purpose of raising funds for the desired object.

January 23, 1903: It is rumoured that an R.C. Church is to be shortly erected in Wyong, and that steps are being taken to collect funds in aid of it. Wyong is woefully deficient in church requirements, the School of Arts serving the purpose for three denominations. This may account for many of our young folk who have matrimonial inclinations going elsewhere to have the ........? knot tied.

April 3, 1903: A grand variety entertainment, organised by Mr F.L. Breakwell, in aid of the Roman Catholic Building Fund, will be held in the Wyong School of Arts on Easter Monday night.

April 17, 1903: A social in aid of the R.C. Church Building Fund, was held in the School of Arts on Easter Monday night. There was a large attendance, who seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves, a fact, which is due in a large degree to the excellent arrangements of Mrs O’Connor, the enthusiastic promoter of the affair. It is needless to say that the social was a financial success.

July 15, 1904: At last we have in our town a man with a big heart. Mr A.H. Warner, who has purchased the old Alison Estate, has presented each of the three churches holding services here at present, (Church of England, Wesleyan and Roman Catholic) with a block of land as a building site. This will be a gift, which will be greatly appreciated, as Wyong cannot yet boast of a church. It is to be hoped that a move will be made by one of the Protestant churches at once and a building fund initiated. I understand the Catholics already have over £100 collected for this purpose.

July 22, 1904: A grand social, in aid of the R.C. Church Fund, will be held in the local School of Arts on the 29th inst. Mason’s orchestra will provide the music and everything points to a most enjoyable evening.

August 5, 1904: The social in aid of the R.C. Church fund, held in the local School of Arts last Friday night, was a pronounced success. There was a large attendance and everything went off most agreeably and sociably. The music for the occasion was provided by Mason’s orchestra, while Mr J. Godinet acted most efficiently as M.C. The refreshments were all that could be desired, and on the whole, the social was one of the most enjoyable functions, that has been held here for some time past.

October 13, 1905: Rev Fr Power desires us to intimate that arrangements are now being made for the holding of a grand concert at Wyong in November, in which a number of well-known Sydney artists will take part.
October 27, 1905: A concert in connection with the R.C. Church Building Fund, takes place on the 25th November, and promises to be a great event, several well-known Sydney artists have promised to appear.

November 24, 1905: A concert to be held at the Wyong School of Arts tomorrow night, in aid of the R.C. Church fund, promises to be a big affair. In addition to the printed programme, we are requested to mention that Mr A.C. Baldwin, Newcastle’s premier tenor, has consented to sing.

December 1, 1905: The concert on the 25th instant, in aid of the R.C. Church Building Fund, was a great success, the attendances being very large and the programme presented was well received. The sum of £11 was netted, which, I understand, brings the amount in hand for this object now to over £100.

R.C. Concert at Wyong – The concert held in the Wyong School of Arts on Saturday evening last, in aid of the R.C. Church building fund, was one of the most successful and appreciative that Wyong has had for some considerable time. The hall was taxed beyond its seating accommodation, and resulted in a taking of £16. People from all parts of the district were present. A splendid programme was given in which the talented Kay Family took an important part and were highly appreciated. Miss Stella Kay, A.L.C.N., acted as accompanist throughout and was all that could be desired. The opening chorus “Nic-Nacs” by the Kay Family was warmly applauded and called forth an encore. Miss Lorna Payten sang very nicely “A Stranger in a Tea-cup”. Mr A.C. Baldwin sang “Island of Dreams” and was greeted with rounds of applause, being compelled to respond to an encore. Miss Susie Kay sang “Percy from Pimlico”. Mr Baxter sang “The Deathless Army”. Mr J. Harmey received a well deserved encore for his comic production “Moriarity”, responding with a comic recitation. Miss O’Connor sang very nicely “Bonnie Banks of Clyde”, and was much appreciated. Miss Vera Kay had to respond to an encore with her song “I want my Mamma”. Miss Irish, who is the possessor of a sweet soprano voice, sang very effectively “The Children’s Home”. Both artistically and financially the concert was one of the most successful held for some time past, and Mr. W. Baldwin, who laid the management of affairs, is to be complimented on getting such an array of talent together. As a result of the concert, the church building fund will be materially augmented.

June 22, 1906: Father Power, who by the way, is all energy and push, in looking after the interests of his church and flock, has secured the best site in Wyong for a church, being right on the top of the hill, overlooking the whole of the Warner Estate. He has his plans ready for a brick church, which, when completed will be a thing of beauty and a joy for ever for Wyong.
October 12, 1906: R.C. Concert and Drawing of Art Union – On Saturday evening last, a concert and drawing of prizes in the postponed art union in aid of the R.C. Church building fund, was held in the Wyong School of Arts. There was a fair attendance and a good programme was gone through. Our old favourites Miss Eva O’Connor and Master Robbie Wildman proved themselves as popular as ever: Miss Geraldine Rivers, Miss Elsie Ahearn and Baby Waters contributed excellent items, while Mr Campbell’s singing was also highly appreciated. The drawing of prizes then took place with the following results:-

1st pony – L Toban, Mandalong
2nd hand-painted picture (flowers) – Mrs W. Baldwin, Wyong
3rd silver teapot – A.H. Woodbury, Mangrove
4th silver cake stand – Mr E. J. Burnside, Wyong
5th pair razors – Mr McPherson, Tumup
6th hand-painted cushion – Mrs O’Sullivan, Durren Durren
7th box of needlework – Mrs B. Knight, Yarramalong
8th oil-painted picture – B. F. O’Sullivan, Durren Durren
9th silver-mounted pocket book – Mr. W. Perry, Durren Durren

The 10th prize, an 8-day clock, went to Miss Woodbury for selling the most tickets.

March 1, 1907: Some time ago, Mr Warner very generously offered a piece of land on his estate, for a Roman Catholic Church building, but it is rumoured that he intends withdrawing the offer if a building to the value of £700 is not erected. This means a big outlay for a small place like Wyong.

May 24, 1907: There is to be a social and euchre party in the School of Arts shortly in aid of the R.C. Church building fund and tickets for same are being sold freely.

May 31, 1907: At a meeting of the R.C. Church Building Committee, a statement was submitted of the amount of funds in the bank, which is about £130. With the sale of a block of land at the rear of the post office, which was estimated at £30, together with Mr Warner’s donation of 20 guineas and Mr Goldsmith’s donation of 30 guineas, would make the estimated amount of funds over £190. Additional donations were also promised for the opening of the church, amounting to over 40 guineas, and with these donations and others to come, it is expected the amount that will be in hand when the opening takes place, will amount to over £250 (with proceeds of social and euchre party to be held on June 7th). The building is to be of brick and to be erected on the Warner Estate. The estimated cost of the building is nearly £500.

August 16, 1907: A meeting of the R. C. Church Building committee was held in the School of Arts last week, and it was agreed to at once proceed with the building, which is to be of brick. Mr Norbutt O’Leary is the contractor, and his price is slightly over £400 for the building alone. It is to be on the Warner Estate, in close proximity to the English church.
**August 30, 1907:** Mr Norbutt O’Leary, of Cooranbong, the contractor for the R.C. Church, is to make a start, about next Monday, with the building.

**September 6, 1907:** Mr Norbutt O’Leary, the contractor for the Roman Catholic Church, has commenced operation and says he will have the building completed before Christmas.

**October 11, 1907:**

**R.C. CHURCH, WYONG**

– LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE –

The progressive age of our town has advanced another step. The church movement in Wyong is certainly keeping in the line of march of much older and more populous towns, and no movement can be a sign of more legitimate advancement than the erection of churches for the dissemination and extension of the gospel, which means the moral and social welfare of the community. Another link has now been added to the church history of Wyong by the laying of the foundation stone of a Catholic Church, which ceremony was performed on Sunday last (October 6, 1907) under most auspicious and encouraging circumstances.

A sumptuous luncheon, prepared by the good ladies of the district, was laid in the pavilion on the Warner Sports Ground (kindly lent for the occasion), and it was a happy idea, for it relieved those who had come long distances of
the worry and trouble of arranging for their dinners. Everyone was welcome and there was enough and to spare for all.

In the absence of his Eminence Cardinal Moran, Monsignor Carroll, Vicar General of St. Mary’s Cathedral, occupied the chair. On his right was Mr Warner, and on his left Mr M.J. Woodbury (chairman of the church committee).

Mr Warner proposed a hearty welcome to Monsignor Carroll. He expressed regret at the Cardinal’s absence owing to Ill-health, for he looked forward with great pride to meeting his Eminence. He had often brushed coats with him, but had not yet the pleasure of a formal introduction. However, they all felt proud to extend to Monsignor Carroll (acting on the Cardinal’s behalf) the heartiest of welcomes to Wyong. Two and a half years ago there was no Catholic Church in Wyong at all, but now by the banding together of the people, they were on the threshold of the establishment of an edifice, of which the district would feel justly proud.

Mr E.J. Burnside endorsed what all the previous speakers had said and was pleased the time had arrived for the laying of the foundation stone of this country church. He was sorry the Cardinal was not present, but looked forward to his presence at the opening of the church in the near future (applause).

Monsignor Carroll, on rising to respond, received a great ovation. He said he was very grateful to the speakers for their remarks towards himself and the sympathetic feelings for the Cardinal in his illness which prevented him from being present at this function. He could assure them that his Eminence had frequently referred, in most kindly terms, to Wyong and that his heart was in the welfare of the district. So encouraging were the reports of the district and so pronounced the sympathy and help by non-catholics, and so continuous, that his Eminence felt deeply grateful and no one would have been better pleased to have been with them that day than his Eminence. However, as he could not be with them, he (Monsignor Carroll) would endeavour to carry out the duties appertaining to the important function, and hoped that at the opening of the church the Cardinal would be with them. As an expression of his feelings towards the church in Wyong, he was the bearer of a cheque from his Eminence for £20 towards the building fund (applause), and probably at the opening the Cardinal would again be able to show his practical sympathy and kindly feelings. Monsignor Carroll was afraid to say much about help from himself. He was almost ashamed to place his cheque alongside the Cardinal’s as he could not offer such a handsome one (laughter), but he would be pleased to give a donation of seven guineas (applause).

Mr Gibb in a few appropriate words proposed the health of the Cardinal, which was seconded by Mr E. Woodbury.
Then an adjournment was made to the site of the building to bless and lay the stone, which was done by Monsignor Carroll and assisted by Father Power, the parish priest.

Mr Warner then came forward and proposed that a list be opened up. He was sure Monsignor Carroll, Father Power and the committee, would not refuse any offer. No cheque would be too large for them and they would be pleased with the smallest donation.

After the laying of the foundation stone was over, all again adjourned to the pavilion and had tea. Monsignor Carroll thanked the ladies, who had provided such a splendid spread. Mr Scorrell replied on behalf of the ladies.

The crockery, cutlery, etc, to accommodate over 100 people was kindly lent by Messrs Wilkinson Bros, storekeepers, and was packed and carted free of charge to and from the pavilion.

Monsignor Carroll left by the evening train.

St. Cecilia’s was officially opened on Sunday, April 26, 1908 by Cardinal Moran. What follows is an abridged version of the report of the day’s proceedings as published in the newspaper, The Catholic Press, dated April 30, 1908.

**THE CARDINAL AT WYONG – NEW CHURCH OPENED – A DISTRICT IN WHICH GOOD FELLOWSHIP PREVAILS**

His Eminence the Cardinal, visited Wyong on Sunday and opened the new church, the foundation stone of which was laid in October last.

The people of the district prepared a great welcome for him, and when he stepped from the train, he was met by representative men and the local committee. The Rev Father Power, who has charge of the extensive Gosford parish, was there too. So was his uncle, the Rev Father Ahern. A brass band played and the enthusiasm of those gathered around the station was unmistakable. Some Hibernians from Sydney formed a guard of honour.

His Eminence, who was accompanied by Monsignor O’Haran, was driven to the School of Arts, where the luncheon was held. The weather, at no time...
too promising, held up until then, but no sooner had the Cardinal and those taking part in the reception reached the hall than the rain began to fall. It continued showery all day.

The people came in from all parts of the district to help make the celebrations as successful as could be, and when they sat down to the repast made ready by some of the most energetic ladies in the place, the whole of the space within the building was filled. All could not be accommodated at one sitting, so a relay of the tables was necessary. Not Catholics alone were present; every denomination was represented, for harmony reigns among all sections of Wyong’s community, so much so that the Cardinal made reference to this excellent feeling in his speech.

The Cardinal was welcomed on behalf of the residents of Wyong and district by Messrs. M.J. Woodbury and P.J. Saunders.

In acknowledgement, his Eminence said it was a most pleasing thing to find all the citizens there united in a most harmonious way, in their own festive celebration. It was cheering in a new country to see those antipathies, which divided people in older lands were often forgotten, and he wished they would be forgotten for all time, and that all would be united in the bonds of good-fellowship, which was characteristic of honourable men. Then all would amalgamate for the great purpose of building up a flourishing Commonwealth, and of spreading around them every blessing which the Commonwealth could give. Every morning he prayed, that every blessing heaven could bestow, would be the heritage of every homestead in Australia. The spirit of concord was the spirit that should prevail in a country just embarking upon its great career. He was told their Presbyterian friends in Wyong put themselves to much inconvenience that day in order to allow their Catholic brethren the use of that hall for their celebration. (Applause). On behalf of the Catholics, as well as on his own part, he thanked them most sincerely, and assured them that when opportunity presented itself they would be only too happy to reciprocate the kindness they had been shown. (Applause). They had also to thank the gentleman, who exchanged the site on which the church was built for another site, not so convenient, and they hoped the good work he had done, would be the prelude of many other good works, which he would spread around him. (Applause).

He was sure at no distant date Wyong would be a flourishing township, and that the church just completed would be found too small. In fact, he trusted they would have to extend it, not in a minor degree, but in a tenfold capacity. He would be happy to come to open the enlarged building. He hoped the present good-fellowship in the town would exist, and that all would endeavour to reciprocate and maintain it as a permanent feature of the place. His Eminence thanked the ladies of the district for entertaining
the visitors, and proposed the health of Father Power, whom he wished every happiness and success.

The toast was honoured enthusiastically. Father Power made brief reply.

The church was opened in the afternoon. It is a nice substantial building, and stands on a rise just above the railway station. The design is Gothic. There is seating accommodation for 200 persons. The dimensions are 40 feet by 22 feet, with sacristy 14 feet by 12 feet, and porch 8 feet by 6 feet. The front is faced with O.K. bricks, tuckpointed. The arches of all the windows are tuckpointed, the sills being of cement. All the inside walls are cemented. The front windows are filled with coloured lead lights, the other windows having “Glacier” decorations, representing religious subjects. The structure has an open timbered roof, the ceilings being lined with varnished kauri pine. The church was much needed, as prior to its erection, Mass had to be celebrated at the School of Arts.

His Eminence was assisted in the blessing by Monsignor O’Haran, Fathers Power and Ahern. There was as big an attendance as at the morning’s celebrations.

Singular enthusiasm was shown throughout, and £90 11s was subscribed towards the liquidation of the remaining debt of £150.

Father Power, in making his financial statement, said when the foundation stone of that building was laid, they had £140 in the bank. Since, they had added £130 to the fund. The contract price of the work was £405, architect’s fees £13 3s a total expenditure of £418 3s. That day they had to meet a debt of only £150, which, he thought, was very satisfactory. He announced that the Cardinal had given him a cheque of £10 to open the subscription list with.

On behalf of Mrs Woodbury, Father Power presented the Cardinal with a chalice, 221 years old, which has been in use in the Wyong district for over 50 years. He then voted thanks to his Eminence for his presence. The people responded by carrying the vote standing.

The gathering then returned to the School of Arts, where afternoon tea was served. The Gosford Brass Band played selections during the day.

The architects for the church were Messrs. Sheerin and Hennessy, and the builder, Mr N. O’Leary.

As secretaries of the committee, Messrs. C.P. Gibb and E. Woodbury were responsible for a very large measure of the success of the celebrations, which will be long remembered in Wyong.
GROWTH

Wyong’s Catholic Church was named not after, but in memory of Cecilia Ann Woodbury. The Woodbury Family had been prominent in the Catholic life of the area for many years and it was Cecilia (fondly known as Cissie), who raised much of the money necessary to build the Church on the land donated by Mr Albert Warner. Sadly, Cecilia died at the young age of 33 on April 27, 1905. It was the parishioners who requested Fr Power name the Church in her memory.

The Gosford Times of April 28, 1905 reported her death:

DEATH OF MISS CISSIE WOODBURY

Miss Cissie Woodbury, eldest daughter of Mr M.J. Woodbury, of Wyong Creek, died early yesterday morning after a long and painful illness. Much regret is expressed on all sides, for the deceased lady was known for her amiable character and good nature to all classes of the community. During her illness she had the best medical advice that could be procured, notably Dr Sidney Jamieson’s. Many wondered how he kept her alive and active for so long a time. Father Power was unremitting in administering the consolations of religion and he was probably the last she recognised. She was an earnest and successful worker for every worthy movement set on foot (sic). It is mainly due to her exertions and practical mind, that the few Roman Catholics of Wyong raised £150 within the last eighteen months for church purposes. Her remains will be interred in the Wyong cemetery, leaving her father’s residence at 1pm today (Friday).

The Patron Saint of St Cecilia’s is best known as the patron saint of music. The statue on the front of the church was donated by Fr. E.J. McMahon, when the church was altered in 1926. The crucifix, which now hangs above the tabernacle in the church, was originally donated by Fr McMahon in 1928 to hang in the presbytery. The statue of St Therese, The Little Flower, was donated anonymously.

Several letters were written regarding the block of ground in Margaret Street. It appears that the people were relying on the sale of the block to help pay for the building of the church. The Honorary Secretary at the time was Charles P Gibb – on June 29, 1908 he wrote:

Page 22
My Dear Fr Power,

As I told you before, there is great dissatisfaction amongst our people, over the decision not to sell the original church site.

They say you always counted on that as an amount towards the church building and cannot understand, that offer inducing them to come forward generously, you go back on that promise.

Of course the furniture and extras increase the debt to £160. Besides, we incurred heavy expense over the foundation stone and opening; for the former it could not be avoided, as up to the last you led us to expect His Eminence, and on both occasions, we desired to give His Eminence a welcome worthy of him and ourselves, as far as we knew how.

The people are willing enough, but feel very keenly any break of faith on your part, and honestly you gave us to understand the land was to be sold. If it is not disposed of they will be expected to pay interest on that amount, and taxes on the land. Two of the committee have called to say they can get £30 cash for the ground. I wish you could see your way clear to let it go for my sake as well as your own. They would feel obliged if you will let me have your reply within a week.

I hope you will pardon me writing so strongly, but as secretary of the committee, I feel it is best that the exact position of affairs should be made known to you.

With Best Wishes, Sincerely Yours, C.P. Gibb

Letters continued between Fr Power and Cardinal Moran, with the Cardinal finally giving permission for the sale of the block in June 1909. It was sold to W Pennell for £35 with the transfer ready to sign on June 25, 1909. The money was in the bank by July 12, 1909, but on April 15, 1910, Mr Gibb again wrote to Dr O’Haran (Cardinal Moran’s Secretary), to say that the deed for the land had not been received by W. Pennell (by this time Mr Gibb had transferred from his position as Postmaster at Wyong to Delegate).

Enlargement of the original Church took place on two occasions. In 1926 it was extended to the west (towards Byron Street) by G Dixon. Plans of the extension indicate that a gallery was being considered. Specifications of architect, S. Roarty, Margaret Street, Sydney, noted that tenders are to state; (a) Price for church additions without gallery and (b) Extra cost if gallery is erected. The gallery would have extended about 13ft from the back of the church with a stairwell inside, on the wall opposite the front door. It is obvious from the specifications, that the extension was to match the existing building as the following extracts show:
Plan of 1926 church extension
Main Entrance: Main entrance door and frame to be re-used from existing building.

Window Frame: The two window frames on side of building to be made similar in all respects to existing windows, with two lower sashes, pivoted to open.

Provide and fix skirting to new work internally similar to existing.

The blessing of the extension was reported in the Wyong Advocate on March 19, 1926 as follows:

**St. Cecilia’s Church - Extensions Blessed**

On Sunday morning last the recently completed extensions to St Cecilia’s Roman Catholic Church, Wyong were blessed by the Rt. Rev. Monsignor O’Gorman P.P. of Parramatta.

He was extended a warm welcome by Rev. Father McMahon, who had known the visitor for many years. Monsignor O’Gorman was one of his kindest friends and he was both pleased and honored that he was visiting Wyong to bless the extensions of the church. The extensions were an absolute necessity. The work had been carried out very successfully and the original design had been closely adhered to. He complimented Mr G Dixon on the manner in which the work had been carried out.

Monsignor O’Gorman is a pleasing and fluent speaker. It was a great pleasure for him to be associated with Father McMahon in a work of this character. He visited Wyong during the time of Father O’Regan to lay the foundation stone of the Presbytery. He was proud of Father McMahon, whom he had known since babyhood. “I know quite a lot of things about him”, he added with a smile, “but I won’t tell them.” He delivered a stirring address on the influence of religion on the life of the community and individual, taking as his subject, the life of Christ. Even the enemies of Christ realised that the life of Christ is the ideal life to follow. If there is one thing about which the whole of the community is agreed it is the perfection of the life of Christ. The one thing necessary for the safety of the country and the community is the inculcation of a spirit of religion in the people of Australia. The greatest danger to the white race is the decline of religion.

Monsignor O’Gorman concluded his address, with an expression of his appreciation of the warm welcome extended by Father McMahon and the people of Wyong.

Dr R.E. Nowland formally moved that a subscription list be opened. He was proud indeed to see the church so beautifully completed. Mr C. B. O’Keeffe regarded it a very great pleasure to second such a motion. The work was a credit to both Father McMahon and the builder Mr G. Dixon. The motion was unanimously carried.
Mr W.B. Woodbury moved a vote of thanks to Monsignor O’Gorman and other visitors. It was pleasing to see so many visitors of other denominations which demonstrated a grand spirit. The motion supported by Mr Thos. Stinson was carried by acclamation. Mr Stinson remarked that he had a very great admiration for Father McMahon. When the church building was originally planned, he was a little afraid that it would be too much for such a small community. He was pleased with the progress, which had been made.

Monsignor O’Gorman briefly acknowledging the vote of thanks accorded him referred to the beauties of the surrounding district. He voiced his congratulations on the success of the subscription list.

To support St Mary’s Cathedral building fund in Sydney, the Wyong Parish had to pay a quota of close to £300 in four instalments from July 1, 1927 to June 30, 1929. This money was raised by parish and personal donations. At the same time, the parish had an allocated quota towards the Eucharistic Congress, held in Sydney in September 1928, and a payment of £15 is recorded on January 6, 1927.

In 1927 the liability in the parish was £469.6.4 (church), £390 (presbytery) and £598 (The Entrance church) – total £1457.6.4.

In 1941 the liability in the parish was £1103.18.7;
1942 - £860.0.4;
1943 - £716.11.6;
1944 - £39.0.10 which was cleared by the end of the year.
In June 1943, the RAAF requested permission to erect an aircraft observation post on our land in Byron Street, opposite the church. The post was to be used for the duration of the War and removed at its termination at the expense of the RAAF. Archbishop N.T. Gilroy granted permission to Fr O’Flaherty stating, ‘the rental that could be charged would be so small, that it would be better perhaps not to mention the matter, unless the RAAF authorities do so.’

The war also had an impact on family life and some families in the cities chose to send their daughters to board at Wyong convent.

In 1952 the capital value of the church was £2,200 and the presbytery £2,700. The parish was debt free until 1953/54 when a large extension to the east, considerably increased its accommodation. Some of the workers on this extension were: T.J. Smith (foundation), Tom, Jim & Harry McCarthy, J Pommer (bricklayers), G. Pommer (concrete work), T. Smith (carpenter, cypress pine flooring), N. McNally (plumber), Mr Seaton (plastering walls), Mr. W. Biddles (painter) and Mr. L. O’Kane (electrician). Standard Glass Studios supplied 7 leadlight windows costing £155 19s and Mr T. Fogarty was paid for making Church seats (he also made desks for St Cecilia’s School).
The differences in the bricks are clearly visible from the side of the building and internally the ceiling timber is different. The front porch had given way to an entry from the side at the back of the Church, and from the side Chapel.

The opening of the extension made front page news in the Wyong and Lakes District Advocate on Wednesday, May 12, 1954 as follows:

**Bishop Blesses Church Extension**

Extensions recently completed at St Cecilia’s Roman Catholic Church, Wyong, were blessed by Bishop Lyons, of Sydney, on Sunday, before a large congregation.

Father O’Flaherty expressed appreciation of the attendance of Bishop Lyons, who was welcomed to Wyong by a member of the parish, Mr M. Callaghan.

Mr Callaghan assured Bishop Lyons of the loyalty and esteem of the people of Wyong, and explained that, with the growth of the Parish, it had become necessary to enlarge the church. That had been no easy task for a parish like Wyong, but they had contributed to keep the cost to £3,500.

Father Funcheon, Parish Priest of Gosford, Father Reynolds, of The Entrance, and Father Fahy the curate of Gosford, all congratulated Father O’Flaherty and the people of Wyong on their fine achievement.

Bishop Lyons also congratulated Father O’Flaherty on his splendid work in the parish, and recalled the happy days they had spent together at Springwood Seminary.

“Without Father O’Flaherty’s drive and initiative you would not have had the additions to the church,” said Bishop Lyons, who paid tribute to the work done by the builders.

**Vigorous Church**

“No where in the world is the church as vigorous as in Australia. That is due to the zeal and self-sacrifice of the priests, the brothers and the nuns, and to the faith and generosity of the Australian people who are prepared to make sacrifices for more churches and schools for their children,” said Bishop Lyons.

Referring to the fact that it was Mothers’ Day, Bishop Lyons said that the Mother of God had “enriched motherhood to a new splendor.” He appealed to mothers to “thank God for their joys and burdens.”
In conclusion, Bishop Lyons expressed the hope that the people would continue to help Father O’Flaherty wipe out the debt on the church.

An appeal at the service resulted in £752/8/6 being subscribed.

Altar after extension in 1954. Note: sanctuary lamp hanging near Sacred Heart statue, altar rails, floral display by nuns for a wedding. Photo, R. Booth

In August 1960 the two blocks of land behind the church and presbytery which fronted onto Leppington Street were sold to John and Elizabeth Bevan for £502/14/0.

Repairs and painting to the Church have been carried out over the years. Electric lights installed and later changed to fluorescent tube lighting. Overhead fans were installed and later air conditioning added. Fr Peppin has carried out further repair work on the roof and drainage to stabilise the foundations. He also replaced the old ambo and presidential chair – our ‘new’ ambo and chair were donated by Terrigal Parish when their old Church was sold and replaced by a new parish center at a new site.

In 1977 when Fr Williams celebrated his 25th year of Ordination the parishioners collected money in the hope that he would have a holiday. Instead, he used that money to install microphones in the church – not the best system, as many times our service was interrupted by a call between taxi drivers or similar. This was a constant source of frustration for Fr Williams, but as he loved a joke, these ‘glitches’ often added to his homily! Since then, of course, the system has been much improved.

In February 1990, Redemptorist Priests, Fr Peter Ryan and Fr Carroll, conducted a Mission in our Church for one week including Home Masses. Records indicate that missions were held in 1940, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1951, 1955, 1960 and 1965. Following Vatican II, less importance was placed on these and emphasis put on continual faith education and growth.
The covered pergola area was added to the side of the church in 1997, by Fr Paul Evans. This area was then used to provide a ‘cuppa’ after Mass and for special occasions. It is also very useful on rainy days!

The 90th anniversary of the Church was celebrated on April 26, 1998 under the new pergola. Also, to celebrate the occasion, Fr Paul commissioned Des Riach to design and make two leadlight windows for the side Chapel – one representing ‘Loving Spirit Endures Forever’ and the other ‘Nine Decades of Loving Spirit’. These were installed by Des in October 1997.

**Mater Dei College/Corpus Christi College/St Peter’s College:**
Fr Robert Brogan of The Entrance Parish recognised the need for a local Catholic High School. Land was acquired in Gavenlock Road, Tuggerah, for this purpose. The land was chosen because of its proximity to transport and road networks. Fr Brogan was instrumental in co-ordinating the development and the financing. In 1983, ‘Mater Dei College’ opened with 107, year 7 pupils, in temporary accommodation at East Gosford. The first Principal was Sr Judith Sippel (RSJ). Classes moved to Tuggerah in 1985 when Stage 1 of the building was completed. In 1987 Year 11 commenced and the Senior School, built on the same site, was called ‘Corpus Christi College’. In 2000 these two schools combined administration and changed their names to St Peter’s College.

**St John Fisher Primary School:**
With the growth of Wyong Shire a new Mass Centre was developed in the Tumbi Umbi area. Fr Williams had previously commenced celebrating Sunday Mass in the Community Hall, Kurabba Street, Berkeley Vale and this service was then moved to the hall of the Berkeley Vale Primary School in Pindarri Avenue. Fr Harry Kennedy oversaw the construction of St John Fisher Catholic Primary School in Hicks Lane. The school commenced with its first Kindergarten class in 1988 and with the completion of Stage 1 the school was blessed and officially opened on November 20, 1994 - this incorporated the Mass Centre which is still in use today. The tabernacle in this Mass Centre inscribed “In Memory of John, Elizabeth & Katherine Curby-Hackett” was on the altar in St Cecilia’s Church, until Fr Harry Kennedy replaced it with the one currently in use.

**Blessed Mary MacKillop Parish:** (by Fr Brian Moloney)
An important part of my coming to Wyong Parish was to begin the process towards the establishment of a new parish made up of the northern section of Wyong Parish and the south western part of Toukley Parish. Back in 1908 very few farms were established in Warnervale, but as they were established some families journeyed, as best they could, to St Cecilia’s Church and to the convent school from their farms.
Shortly after I arrived at Wyong I established a Saturday evening Mass in the hall next to the oval at Warnervale and the congregation gradually increased from 50 to over 100. The area of Warnervale was experiencing great growth and this growth is projected to continue for many years to come. An interim Parish Council was established, while still officially part of Wyong Parish and those on this committee worked hard to establish this new faith community.

The Diocese, and in particular, the Catholic Schools Office, were planning to establish a large college at Warnervale. Eventually, the present 30 acres were purchased on the edge of what is to be the town centre of Warnervale. In 2002 enrolments were taken for Year 7 in 2003, and construction soon began on the new Church and the first section of the new MacKillop College. St Vincent de Paul Society also purchased land opposite our parish plant and Our Lady of Loreto Aged Care Facility was established, which is now run by Catholic Health Care.

When the new parish was officially started in May 2003, the new Church, seating 600, was one month off completion and the parish had begun to take shape. In 2008 nearly 1400 pupils are on site and a full range of years from Kindergarten to Year 12 have been established.

Over the 100 years of the Church at Wyong, many parishes have been carved out of the original boundaries of Wyong Parish. While Blessed Mary MacKillop Church, Warnervale, is now a fully established parish, it is very aware that it was the parish of Wyong that originally had the pastoral charge of this rapidly changing community, and that St Cecilia’s Church is our spiritual mother.

Blessed Mary MacKillop Parish congratulates all our neighbouring parishioners on the occasion of the Centenary of the Church on the hill at Wyong.

**Parish Office:**
In the early days, besides being home to the various priests, the presbytery was also used for various meetings, office for record keeping etc, and always open to those in need (both spiritual and monetary). With the growth of the parish and increased record keeping requirements, an office was established in 2000 by Fr Brian Moloney, in a shared location with Centacare, in the ‘The Old Court House’ in Alison Road, Wyong. This enabled the presbytery to be the priests’ residence rather than also the place of work. To lessen parish expenses, Fr Peppin Jayaraj moved the office to a demountable building at the rear of the church in 2005.
THE PRIESTS

Fr. Peter Power (Gosford Parish 1902 – 1908)

Fr. John Egan (Gosford Parish 1908 – 1915)

Fr Egan was assisted by Fr Fabian Dwyer (1913 – 1914)

PARISH OF WYONG AND LAKE MACQUARIE:

Fr. R.J. O’Regan (Nov.1914 – June 1917)

Fr Peter Power was the first Parish Priest while Fr O’Regan was the first resident Parish Priest after the presbytery was built in 1916. The parish in those days covered an extensive area from Wyong to The Entrance and north to Newcastle. Fr O’Regan travelled on a Red Indian motor-bike. The congregation at that time was between 20 and 30 people.

Fr. G.Ellis Herlihy (July 1917 – May 1922)

Fr Herlihy, who followed Fr O’Regan, had no conveyance at all and was dependent on the services of a good old Catholic gentleman (true Aussie), Jim Hilly, from Rocky Point near Tacoma, for transport. Jim had a horse and buggy. Fr Herlihy was a gifted musician and when he left Wyong he went to St Francis, Albion Street Sydney, where he established and trained The Sacred Heart Boys’ Choir, which was broadcast each Sunday evening by the ABC radio station. He was conductor of the combined choirs and bands at the closing ceremonies of the International Eucharistic Congress on the steps of St Mary’s Cathedral, September 1928.

Fr. E.J. O’Brien (June 1922 – May 1924)

Before coming to Wyong, Fr O’Brien was at Moss Vale in 1921 and then at Hurstville (Star of the Sea), while Fr R Wolfe was on leave. After Wyong in 1924, there is no mention of him in the Sydney Diocese.

On September 1, 1923 Fr O’Brien purchased a single seater Ford car from Earp Brothers for £210/13/9, which was paid for by the parish in one year, with regular monthly repayments.
WYONG PARISH:

Fr. Edward J. McMahon (May 1924 – Dec. 1928)

Fr McMahon came from Erskineville and was a very lovable personality. He had a Harley Davidson motor bike, which he later traded in for a Model-T Ford car. He was a tip-top mechanic and did all his own running repairs. These were frequent owing to the bad state of the roads, many not even properly formed. On one occasion, William Ferris helped him winch the engine out, to enable him to carry out repairs to the damaged gear-box housing; it had hit a blind tree stump.

Fr Green was appointed to Boolaroo and lived for a period with Fr McMahon at Wyong, while his church was being built at Boolaroo (established 1926). Being a carpenter before being ordained, Fr Green made all the furniture for his church and presbytery and also lowered the altar rails at Wyong.

It was Fr McMahon who enlarged the church, adding about 20ft, including the two confessionals, which cost £500. Father also built the Church at The Entrance, which cost £1,500. This was later enlarged and finally demolished.

Fr McMahon was appointed to Ashbury in 1929, to start a new parish there. He had earlier sold his Model-T Ford for £30. His mother gave him a Buick.
Fr. Peter Galavan (Jan. 1929 – May 1931)

During his two and a half year term at Wyong, Fr Galavan (an Irishman), purchased the three blocks of land opposite the Church at a cost of £782 6s. from the Chapman Estate. He came in for much criticism for the needless waste of money – it was thought – on land we had no use for. Father contended that some day it might be needed to build a school. Today it is used as a car park.

Fr. J. O’Flaherty BA (June 1931 – Sept. 1969)

Fr John O’Flaherty, who followed Fr Galavan in June 1931, remained at St Cecilia’s for 38 years (our longest serving priest). He was born in Ireland on October 20, 1894 and migrated to Australia in January 1921 (see Appendix B). He was among Ireland’s top scholars in Greek and Latin, and retained an interest in the classics all his life. He retired on September 30, 1969 and lived at Randwick, in the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor. His housekeeper at the time, Margaret Roberts, and her husband, Len, drove him down to Randwick. Margaret said they had to stop to buy him a ‘stubby’ of beer on the way! He celebrated his Golden Jubilee to the Priesthood in 1970 and he was appointed Chaplain to His Holiness, with the title of Very Rev. Monsignor, in 1971.

It was during Fr O’Flaherty’s time that the church was enlarged to the east, this time to nearly twice its original size. Parishes were also established at The Entrance and Toukley, where churches had previously been built.

A newspaper article following his death in 1974 reported:

*Many people of this town were saddened to hear of his death on March 22, following a brief illness.*

*After ordination as a priest in Ireland, where he was born and educated (he had a Bachelor of Arts degree from a university there), the then Father O’Flaherty migrated to Australia in the 1920’s, and about 1930 was appointed parish priest of Wyong when the extensive parish included places as far afield as Morisset, Cooranbong, Toukley and The Entrance.*

*Unfailingly assiduous in the performance of his many duties, he endeared himself to his parishioners by his modest demeanour and his kindly, gentle and compassionate disposition.*

*An intellectually talented man, scholarly, cultured, refined and sincere, he was greatly loved and admired by his parishioners and deeply respected by many of the townspeople, who were not of his faith.*
His church officially recognised his outstanding services and qualities and conferred on him two special honours – he was made a Privy Chamberlain and a Monsignor of his church.

He was also a character! – as an early parishioner recalls:
In 1958 my parents built themselves a little holiday house at Chittaway Bay. Thus, on Sunday mornings they attended Mass at St Cecilia’s Church at Wyong. At the time the Parish Priest was an elderly Irishman called Fr O’Flaherty. The first time I came with them to Mass, I was surprised to hear him come to a stop in the middle of his sermon. Visitors’ heads came up, thinking the old man had forgotten what he wanted to say. With a murmured aside … “we will wait for our separated brethren”, he paused …as the bell of St James Anglican Church, on its tower between the churches, began tolling … letting their parishioners know that services would start soon. When the bell stopped tolling, Father continued his sermon without missing a word or a beat. Visitors like myself, who heard this for the first time, found it difficult to suppress giggling. On future Sundays we realised that he had the sermon timed precisely!


Fr (Fred) Williams was appointed by His Eminence Cardinal Gilroy on August 19, 1969, as Administrator, because Fr John O’Flaherty was not well, and Confirmation was due. He was Administrator until December 1, 1969, when he was appointed Priest in Charge of Wyong. He was much loved by the whole community and was often seen driving around in his 1972 Mercedes 250 car. For extra protection he would often wear a motor bike crash helmet as well!! He was loaned the money to purchase the car by his mother and this debt was finalised by the Mother’s Club of St Cecilia’s School.

To celebrate the Silver Jubilee of his ordination as a priest, Fr Williams concelebrated Mass in our parish church of St Cecilia, on July 17, 1977, with Fr Paul Fitzgerald from Toukley. Marie Fogarty played the organ and Marie Murray the violin. Emilio and Maria Trinca, Tom Fogarty and his daughter, Sr Perpetua (Elly Fogarty RSJ), brought forward the gifts in the offertory procession. To mark the occasion a concert was organised by the school with the Mother’s Club organising an afternoon tea.

Fr Williams had a great love of children and they loved him in return. He was passionate in his commitment to visiting the classes, not only at St Cecilia’s School, but also the Catholic High Schools (in Gosford). On Mondays (his day off!), he took Mrs Williams (a parent at the school) down to St Edward’s Christian Brothers College for her to do tuck-shop duty and while he was
there he would administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He offered support to the teachers – a very caring man! He took the reception of the sacraments very seriously and did all he could to assist with ‘Parent Nights’ at school and parent’s involvement in their child’s development.

He never saw his education as completed; he was well read and versed in several languages. He could be found at the beginning and end of each day in the Church praying his Office. (To see him in winter was a sight to behold!)

When Fr Williams was newly ordained, he was assistant to a Parish Priest who was an alcoholic. This proved to be a problem for both men. Together in the early 1960’s, they got Alcoholics Anonymous up and running in Sydney, especially for those within the Catholic Church. Fr Williams is reported to have attended each meeting with his Parish Priest until the man was able to continue a normal life. Fr Williams took the prayer of the AA Association on board and prayed and lived its message. During his ministry he continued his association with AA and often attended meetings by himself or in the company of others whom he supported.

Nothing shows up Fr Williams’s devotion to his ministry more than the last days of his life. Having suffered a major heart attack and in the Cardiac Ward at Gosford Hospital, he enquired on the Friday if the parish had found a supply priest for the weekend Masses. When the answer was ‘no’, he signed himself out of hospital, returned to Wyong and said his four Sunday Masses, only to have another heart attack and never return. Fr Williams died suddenly on June 22, 1984. The Requiem Mass, which attracted a huge crowd, was held (in pouring rain) in the open air at St Cecilia’s School. The Archbishop of Sydney, Edward Bede Clancy, was the principal celebrant with more than 60 Bishops and Priests, who also concelebrated the Mass. The offertory procession included Anglican and other Protestant Clergy. The Mass was organised by the administrator, Fr Harry Kennedy, who was to become the next Parish Priest.

The Catholic Weekly recorded the following tribute to Fr Williams, by Archbishop Clancy, at the Pontifical Requiem Mass as follows:

*Left his mark on the Church of Sydney*

“The death of a man is always a mystery. Medical science can describe it in its own terms, but medical science never seems to address all the questions.

Our faith does not resolve the mystery either, but rather intensifies it. Faith and mystery, after all, are partners. Most of all, for believers, there is mystery in the death of the very young, or in the death of those who seem to be at the very apex of their lives.
It is with the mystery of just such a death – the death of one at the zenith of his life – that the author of the Book of Wisdom wrestles in this morning’s First Reading. He speaks of one who, though virtuous and of untarnished life, having always sought to please God, dies before his due time. The author does not claim to provide the solution, but with great assurance he bids us find it in the grace and mercy and love of God.

**Own idioms**

The words of the Book of Wisdom seem almost to have been written for our brother, our friend, whom so many of us knew affectionately as “Freddie,” but who was baptised “Francis” – Father Francis Williams. ‘Coming to perfection in so short a while, he achieved long life; his soul being pleasing to the Lord, he has taken him quickly to himself.’

It is our Catholic way, in mourning the death of a friend, to take account of his virtues, reflect on the elusive character of death, and with faith and hope and the courage they lend us, give measured thought to that death that one day will be our own. A friend’s death is his last message to us; a priest’s death his final sermon.

Father Williams was only 56 years old when he died. He had served as assistant priest in some half dozen parishes before he came to Wyong in 1969. For almost 15 years he was the pastor, the shepherd, of God’s people in this parish.

Every priest leaves something of himself with the people whom he has served. Every priest makes his own unique contribution to, and leaves his own individual stamp on, the priesthood of the diocese in which he has worked. Father Williams certainly left his mark on the Church of Sydney.

In an age that has seen the skills of communication assume an extraordinary significance, Father Williams was a magnificent, if somewhat unorthodox, communicator. He had a style that was exclusively his own. He demonstrated convincingly that the spoken word could, on occasions, be so much more effective when liberated from the stifling constraints of grammar and syntax.

He spoke often in what could only be described as a dialect that was always evolving. He created his own idioms; they possessed an originality, a daring, and a fearless disregard for convention and formality that fixed them forever in one’s memory.

Where my sermons, Fathers, and yours will soon be forgotten, and perhaps better forgotten, so many of his have already passed into the oral tradition of this Archdiocese.
He had a genius for making the Gospel story alive and immediate and relevant. His stories and comments and declamations in and out of the pulpit will be told and told again as long as any of us who knew him are still alive – and, I suspect, for long thereafter.

But it was not just the words that made him so memorable – it was also the brilliant pantomime that accompanied the words. Even in conversation he had a way of acting out all that he said with a flair and a spontaneity that did not permit one’s attention easily to wander.

**Sincere man**

Father Williams’ whole style as a priest was stamped with infectious joy and energy and exuberance. It was always invigorating to be in his company and absorb something of his limitless enthusiasm. To say he was larger than life itself is to give new meaning to an otherwise jaded phrase.

I suppose that many would describe him as an extrovert. But to describe him thus would be to do him less than justice.

There was in Father Williams another and more authentic identity behind the one that was generally on display. He was the most sincere of men, and he possessed that simplicity that the Gospel so warmly commends.

Simplicity, too, describes his profound faith and his priestly piety. He was gentle and sensitive and sentimental. He also lived his life with an intensity that belied the relaxed image he projected.

Above all, however, Father Williams was a Pastor, devoted and dedicated to the point of heroism.

I do not think it would be possible to overstate the generosity and self-sacrifice and compassion with which he put himself at the disposal of his people. His time and his talents were always at their service. Nobody was ever excluded, nothing was ever too much trouble.

He could with justice, I believe, borrow St Paul’s words from today’s second Reading and receive a ready acknowledgement from the people of this parish. You remember them: ‘I felt so devoted and protective towards you, and had come to love you so much that I was eager to hand over to you not only the Good News but my whole life as well ...You can remember how I treated everyone of you as a father treats his children, teaching you what was right, encouraging you and appealing to you to live a life worthy of God, who is calling you to share the glory of his kingdom.’ Such was the priestly ministry of Father Freddie Williams.
I visited him in hospital the day before he died. He was his old irrepressibly self – talking and laughing and joking. He described his initial illness and the measures adopted at that time to maintain his life as ‘scary’. However, he was looking forward to returning to his parish ‘with all sorts of new ideas,’ he said, for his sermons. Well, treasures though they would have been, those sermons will never now be preached.”

Fr. Harry Kennedy (June 1984 – 1994)

Fr Kennedy came to Wyong as Administrator following the death of Fr Williams. He had administrated elsewhere before, but Wyong was his first appointment as a Parish Priest. Whilst he was lucky (fishing at hand!), the parishioners were blessed in having him.

He was not standing on familiar turf when he first began visiting the classes at St Cecilia’s School, nor was he on any surer turf when he started children’s liturgies, but both of these were an area of great growth. The children themselves loved him.

Fr Kennedy was Parish Priest for 10 years before going to Epping. He is remembered for his cheery disposition and compassion for all the sick, needy and troubled. He was instrumental in organising visitation teams to take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound. Fr Kennedy was also the instigator of the Piety Stall on behalf of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

The church and presbytery were refurbished during Fr Kennedy’s time. The church ceiling was re-stained, the church painted, pews restored and the kneelers were padded.

Fr Kennedy loved living close to the water and owned a boat called ‘Arryk’. He and Rod Cornwell (on hand mechanic!) liked to take it for ‘sea trials’, which inevitably ended up being a fishing trip. Father always made sure it was ‘up and running’ for his holiday trip to Narooma in February each year, when he took his uncle (the late Bishop Kennedy) for holidays as well.

Fr Paul Evans brought a sense of adventure to our Parish, with his love of the outdoors. His family picnics and outings (with Fr Paul piloting a plane occasionally) did much to engender the ‘family’ spirit in the parish. He spent many hours collecting rocks and beautifully landscaping the church and presbytery grounds. Rod Cornwell continued to maintain his caravan, front-end loader, trailer and cars!

Changes were again taking place in the Catholic Church – previously priests/bishops had been addressed by their surname but now Christian names were being used and Fr Paul Evans was simply called Fr Paul.

The ecumenical spirit was demonstrated when St Cecilia’s neighbour, the Anglican St James Church, burnt down in December 1994. Rector, Noel Bowditch, was lent vestments and sacred vessels to enable him to conduct services in the Anglican hall. When the hall was pulled down to make way for the new church, services were held in St Cecilia’s School. St Cecilia’s Church was used for special events – history was made on:

- **January 21, 1995**, when Rector Noel officiated at the marriage of Craig Middleton and Joanne Palmer
- **October 11, 1995**, when Rev. Bruce Perry was commissioned by Bishop Roger Herft as Rector of St James Anglican Church

The close bond with our neighbours at St James Church was developed further with the removal of the old adjoining fence. After church services on hot days the Catholic parishioners would often mingle under the shade of the large camphor laurel tree in the front yard of the Anglican Church – and children were often seen climbing it as well! Removal of the fence opened up the area even more.

The construction of the Memorial Wall behind the side entry was carried out during Fr Paul’s time in Wyong. The Piety stall was relocated and the pergola was also built at this time, as part of our celebrations of the 90th anniversary of the parish. The garden planted on the boundary between St Cecilia’s and St James further enhanced this area, as well as strengthened our already well founded ecumenical relationship.
Fr. Brian Moloney (July 2000 – 2003)

After Fr Paul Evans was transferred to Collaroy Plateau, Fr Brian Moloney was installed as Parish Priest at the 6pm Vigil Mass on Saturday, July 29, 2000 by Bishop David Walker. Much of Fr Brian’s time was devoted to setting up a new parish at Warnervale by establishing a new school called MacKillop Catholic College, and Church called Blessed Mary MacKillop. To achieve this he needed an assistant priest. Due to the ageing population of our priests and few new ordinations, our Bishop, David Walker, entrusted the pastoral care of Wyong Parish to a Religious Order called The Fransalians or the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales.

Fr Joseph Rebello MSFS (2000 – 2002) arrived from India to assist Fr Brian. In January 2002, Fr Joseph wished to go back to his native place and continue his special and unique ministry in the tribal areas of Maharashtra near Mumbai. During his time with us Fr Joe celebrated his 40th Anniversary of Ordination and his 65th birthday on March 24, 2001. His simplicity and soft spoken nature is still remembered and cherished by many of the parishioners.

Fr Brian recalls …

In mid 2000 I moved from the neighbouring parish of Toukley to start a short period as Parish Priest of St Cecilia’s Parish, Wyong. Paul Simmons, a long time parishioner, was at the time completing his studies towards his Ordination as a Deacon and was employed on a part time basis as a Pastoral Associate.

During my time at Wyong, the Parish Council was brought back into existence after a long absence. Membership came equally from the Wyong and the Tumbi Umbi sections of the parish, as they strove to support the faith development of these communities. A second Mass was established at St John Fisher and the numbers at Mass greatly increased at Tumbi as a result of this, particularly as the school continued to grow.

Both primary schools undertook major rebuilding programs. Much of the time I spent at Wyong was devoted to attending meetings with the Principals to ensure that better facilities were developed for the benefit of our younger parishioners.

As I recall my time at Wyong, I am very aware of the relatively long history of the Catholic faith being lived at St Cecilia’s. This is evidenced by the two extensions made to the church over the years.
When I first came over to celebrate weekday Mass, I met Nonna Trinca. She came to me to say that she thought that she would give up setting up for Mass now as she was too old and that she would soon be with the ‘old man’ in Jilliby (cemetery). The others at Mass pleaded with me to get her to change her mind. She had said that as she was getting shorter she could no longer reach the shelf in the cupboard containing the sacred vessels. I told her that I would solve this problem by putting them on a lower shelf and so she happily continued to do this ‘ministry of love’ for many more years before she sadly left us for eternal life.

I congratulate the Parish of Wyong on the centenary of the building of the first section of St Cecilia’s Church. I am very much aware of the faith of all the generations of Catholics who have been part of the parish during its long history.

**Fr. Peppin Jayaraj MSFS (June 2003 – 2007)**

After Fr Joseph returned to India, Fr Peppin Jayaraj arrived on March 14, 2002, to carry on as Assistant Priest (2002 – 2003). Fr Brian was appointed as Parish Priest of the new Warnervale Parish, which was officially blessed in August 2003. On June 1, 2003, Fr Peppin was appointed Parish Priest of Wyong Parish and the parish was officially entrusted to the Fransalian Order for pastoral care.

In turn, he was assisted by **Fr Peter D’Souza MSFS** (2003 – 2006), who also arrived from India. In March 2006, Fr Peter was appointed Parish Priest of Toukley Parish.

In February 2007, **Fr Stephen Hamilton** was appointed Supply Priest for the parish while Fr Peppin was on leave. Fr Peppin returned to India on November 29, 2007. When Fr Peppin was asked what he would miss most about Australia besides the friendliness and generosity of the people, he replied, ‘The open spaces - nothing like it in India – and oh, how I’ll miss the clean air. Yes, that is what I will miss.’ For most of us we will miss his sparkling eyes and that beaming cheeky smile, but most of all we are going to miss his spirituality. The Indian people have such a relationship with the
In December 2007, Bishop David wrote a letter to the people of Wyong Parish to advise them that he had decided to move the Fransalian parish from St Cecilia’s Wyong to St Mary’s Toukley from February 1, 2008. Fr Stephen Hamilton continues as our Administrator and Fr Lucas Myint was appointed as Assistant Priest on February 1, 2008.

Fr Frank Larkin and Fr James Collins – much loved Relieving Priests

In 1987 Fr Frank Larkin looked after the parish, while Fr Kennedy was away on leave. His native home was Canada and his Order was the White Fathers. He was a Missionary Priest in Africa who told many wonderful stories, and used his own special hand-carved wooden chalice and his robes from Africa. He also played his African drum for us. He relieved in our parish several times and close bonds were formed. We often raised money for his missions. His last visit was in July 1994. He now lives in Canada close to his family and retired from active ministry this year.

Fr Collins was another regular relieving Priest in our Parish and much loved by the parishioners. He was farewelled at a Mass in 1988.

(For a list of the priests/deacons who have helped in our parish see Appendix C.)
THE NUNS & ST CECILIA’S SCHOOL

The nuns played an important role in the history of the parish of Wyong (See Appendix D).

Soon after the formation of the Parish, the need to have a Religious Congregation was obvious, and as the Sisters of St Joseph were already present on the Central Coast, it was to this Order that the plea was made. The possibility of the Sisters coming to Wyong tested the foresight and resources of the then Superior General, Sister M. Baptista, as the onus was on the Order to purchase a house that was suitable to convert to a convent. The Gosford Times dated July 16, 1915 reported as follows:

*The Sisters of St Joseph, North Sydney, have purchased Mr S.J. Whittle’s beautiful home and property at Wyong, the purchase price being £2,500. They intend opening a boarding school for girls, and also establish a primary school for boys and girls at the local R.C. Church.*

The house was refurbished to the needs of a convent, which could also offer boarding accommodation for girls, ranging in age from six to thirteen, from outer-lying areas.

When St Cecilia’s School commenced in 1916, the only available building that could accommodate and facilitate children and classes was the Parish Church. It was there that Sisters Raymond and Dara began the first classes of St Cecilia’s for boys and girls. This continued until 1923, when the first classrooms were built on the current school site.

*Sister Raymond* is remembered in particular, not only by the locals of Wyong, but also by her Order, as being an accomplished musician … and so began a love and tradition of music at St Cecilia’s. The nuns played the organ for Mass, taught music to the children and formed choirs. They were also sacristans at the Church and prepared the altar for Mass each week and laid out the vestments for the priest each day. No doubt the boarders and school pupils were happy to help with this service.

*Sr Teresita Heffernan (RSJ) recalls ...*

*I was born in Castleisland, County Kerry, in the south of Ireland in October 1921. I went to the Presentation Sister’s school until Year 8 and then to the Juniorate in Newmarket, County Cork, where the Sisters of St Joseph were. We went there to get an idea of what the Sisters of St Joseph were doing in Australia and at the end of my time there three years later, I decided that I would come out to Australia. Ten Irish girls came out by...*
boat, the Himalaya, in 1937, including my older sister. We were postulants at North Sydney and trained there for several years to be teachers. My first appointment was Punchbowl, teaching fifth class. I was appointed to Wyong in 1947 and I loved Wyong. It was the real bush to me – I’ll never forget the first night, the complete darkness – there wasn’t a street light anywhere, nothing! I thought the sun would never shine again when I was transferred from Wyong in 1951.

Fr O’Flaherty came from the same part of Ireland as I did and of course he gave me a great welcome. He would come down to the convent once a week to say Mass. I thought he was a wonderful priest. In his sermons he would be joking a lot. Another sister, Sr Dennis, enjoyed his jokes also and we would be laughing and the more we laughed the more he would be joking. The Mother Superior at the time, Sr Bernard Joseph, said we would be giving a bad example to the people in the church so we had to sit at opposite ends of the pew – but it didn’t make any difference so we joined up again. Sr Dennis and I used to have a great time. We enjoyed Fr O’Flaherty very much. At that time a lot of the nuns from North Sydney used to come up to Wyong for holidays and of course he loved the holiday sisters and went on with more jokes for them so he had a great audience with the sisters.

At Wyong convent we actually had no comforts whatsoever, but we didn’t look for them because we were happy with the children. I just loved the children. Quite a number who came to school were barefoot and we didn’t worry about that at all. Now, where Sr Dennis and I slept it wasn’t enclosed, consequently the rats used to come in from the river sometimes and hop on the bed. Also the rain; it would pour in so the only way to protect ourselves was to put an umbrella up over us when we were asleep to stop the rain from getting on us. There were two beds in this little area and two of us couldn’t get out of bed at the same time because there was hardly any space but we were exceptionally happy. On Sundays, Mrs Trinca would often come in
in the lorry and the ‘old man’, as she called him, would take us out to the poultry farm for a break. That was like going in a Mercedes to us – we’d go in the back of the truck. We were delighted. There were many wonderful people. We weren’t allowed out at night. We never moved out of the house except once a year to go to retreat in Sydney and that was like going off to Paris or something! We went by train and I thought we’d never get there, as it was the longest journey.

One time I recall Fr O’Flaherty took us out to Soldier’s Beach in his car. We all got sunburnt to bits. You could imagine how sunburnt I’d get. We rolled up our sleeves I suppose and exposed little bits that never got the sun even in the fresh air. We thought it was a wonderful day – like going to the Riviera in France, but we paid for it with the sunburn!

Fr O’Flaherty was never on time. When we went up to mass of a morning it was a very big climb up the hill and Sr Bernard Joseph was older and not very well. Being the youngest sister I had to push her up the hill and we’d get there and there’d be no sign of dear Fr O’Flaherty. I used to go over and knock on the door to wake him up. Sometimes he wouldn’t answer at all and we would just go back to the convent again. I would always say to the sisters, that it’s very few sisters who would have a nice morning walk up the hill and down again! If we didn’t have mass then we would have a little ritual ourselves and say extra prayers.

Our daily routine was to get up at 5.00am every morning and meditate/pray for half an hour and then have breakfast. We always had enough to eat as people were very good to us and brought fresh food, eggs etc. Families were poor in Wyong. Fees were something like two shillings and six pence but we never worried about that. We got about two shillings. The sisters taught music and anybody who learnt music paid a bit extra and that helped. The money we got sufficed because the people were so generous.

Swimming was great. I used to go down swimming at night. Some of the nuns and some of the boarders used to go. We had a pool there. Some would get out and swim over to the other side of the river, which was very dangerous, but the pool was great. When the sisters came up from North Sydney on holiday, they loved the swimming too. There was a magnificent tree there in the gardens and we would sit around there and read. They were the beautiful simple joys of life. God was first in our life but he was also first in the life of the people. They were lovely, beautiful people.
Margaret McDonald (nee Brazel) recalls memories of her time in the parish:

I was a boarder with the wonderful St Joseph Sisters at St Cecilia’s school. My parents had the hotel at Morisset, which necessitated my going to boarding school at the age of seven so as to receive a Catholic Education. I vividly remember my First Communion which was certainly a rite of passage in faith. The Sisters (Sr. Dennis) prepared us for months for the momentous occasion. I think now that was the first most spiritual occasion of my life. All concerned really took the reception of the Eucharist in awe, reverence, and with a commitment which even to-day I find most humbling. Prior to the day the excitement and nerves mounted, (having a bath the previous night aided by the old chip heater was a breach of the norm of the usual Saturday) exacerbated by the effort and “grandeur” expressed in the dress, hair in rags, and sleepless night. The Church was filled with an abundance of flowers, splendid aroma and all our loved families and friends. The party after was also befitting the celebration ... I wonder now who did all the work for such a splendid day. My Confirmation was equally memorable. Solemnities were certainly celebrated; and the prime theological values taking precedence over celebration. Not that I now regret the progress of Vatican 11, which has dispensed with much of the ‘trappings’.

I also remember the Redemptorist Missions, which I think went on for a week (we certainly felt the fear of God) - the church was packed every night ... standing room only. The Confessional was really running hot! As a boarder it was the only time we went out at night, which was to walk in a line, 2 x 2 with the Sisters behind, saying the rosary from the school to the Church. Normally each week day I was up at 6am for piano practise, and thence all the boarders followed the routine of walking up the hill for 7am Mass. I wish I had such discipline as those Irish nuns to-day!
Every Saturday afternoon two Sisters and two boarders would go up to the church to clean the brass (big candle holders and numerous vases etc) and do the cleaning and flowers for the Sunday celebration. Actually most of us enjoyed being chosen for these tasks and took great pride in the shine from the brasso ... at least it was an outing and got us away from the darning of stockings etc. When the priest’s housekeeper was away another treat was to be chosen to take Fr O’Flaherty’s meals, prepared by the Sisters, up to the presbytery. I remember (exaggerated being a young child) it was a big rambling dark house inhabited by Fr O’Flaherty, whom I remember as a very kind man and greatly revered. Thinking back I feel what a life of self sacrifice and loneliness for an academic, a theologian in his own right, ‘exiled’ from his homeland. It wasn’t until I sailed from Ireland in adulthood, that I fully appreciated the sacrifice the Religious suffered to bring the faith to Australia. The St Cecilia’s community was the foundation of my faith, which has nurtured and supported me for 60 years. I wish you all blessings and joy of the centenary. With gratitude and loving memories I will be with you all in spirit.

Vocations: Some of the St Cecilia’s girls who entered the Josephites were Sr Elly Fogarty, Sr Bernadette Ferris, Sr Anna Maria Trinca, Sr Sylvia Markulin and Sr Toni Baldwin. Other St Cecilia girls who entered the religious life were Mary Thompson (Sister of Mercy), Julie Baker (Little Company of Mary), and Mary Dunn (Black St Joseph).

On Sunday, November 12, 1978, St Joseph’s Convent was officially closed, with the celebration of an open-air Mass of Thanksgiving. Sr Clare Ryan, the Provincial of the Sydney Province, spoke on behalf of the Order. She said: ‘the Nuns were sorry and reluctant to be leaving a place that had been so much a part of Josephite history. Not only had Wyong been loved by the Sisters who had lived and worked here, but also by the many Sisters who had enjoyed picturesque, peaceful holidays by the Wyong River where, up until the fifties, they had enjoyed swimming in the Convent pool.’ Sr Clare thanked the Wyong parishioners for their generosity to and love of the Sisters. She assured all, that while the Sisters would no longer live at Wyong, the Josephites would remain in the school.

At the completion of the 1978 school year, Srs Dorothea, Olave, Anthony and Marcia left St Joseph’s Convent, Wyong – a sixty-three year era had come to an end. The convent was pulled down in 1981 to make room for more classrooms. The parish purchased the land and along with the Catholic Schools Office continued to maintain and build classrooms to accommodate 400+ students.

The nuns now lived at The Entrance and continued to teach in St Cecilia’s School until 1988, when their service and apostolate came to an end due to the diminishing numbers of Josephites. The first lay principal, Mrs Rhonda Devereux, was appointed in 1989.
Sr Patricia Snudden (formerly Sr Marie Louise)

This is an attempted reflection on my memories and its impact on me during my time in Wyong in the late 60’s and 70’s.

When I think of Wyong what touches me is the memory of the people who were there – people with backbone, courage, warmth and earthiness. They were people who accepted one, believed in one and empowered one.

A very happy memory regarding the children was the Debutante Children’s Balls. Such fun occurred as the little girls tried so hard to lead the little boys, with feet – that seemed to go in the wrong direction – around the hall.

As I begin to reflect, I remember that for me it was a dark and scary period in my life, especially since midway through 1970 I became sick, was ‘burnt out’ and needed to leave Wyong.

Over and above that dark period, the ‘country flavour’ of Wyong was always and still is a real gift. Hospitality was part and parcel of life there. In the school set up with no Government help, we struggled to ‘make ends meet’. During my time as the Principal of the school, the Mother’s Club was formed and, I believe, is alive and well today under the banner of the Care Group. Such a fine band of people made up that group. I remember well how we painted the scratched desks with a biscuity coloured paint and we thought we were Christmas.

Another memory that comes to mind is the ‘new’ additions to the school. How very very special that was! Just the year before, the Infants section had been flooded so we needed to take great care when planning the new wing. Fr O’Flaherty insisted on a solemn blessing minus the Bishop. Father himself was the main celebrant that day, accompanied by the Sisters, who assisted by swinging the thurible whilst singing the appropriate hymns. There were no spectators.
I smile whenever I remember Fr O’Flaherty. One would say that he was an eccentric. For me he was an eccentric, who had a special place in my heart. He once told me that he longed to speak with St Paul for he had lots of questions. I would have loved to listen in to those conversations.

When Fr O’Flaherty retired to the Little Sisters of the Poor at Randwick, he had not planned to retire from cooking and took with him a little stove. At the time of his Golden Jubilee when we visited him, how very special it was to see the little piles of treasured letters sent to him from the children at Wyong. He used to address his letter with ‘St Paul’s letter to the Wyongians’. The children were delighted to hear from him and he had the beautiful gift of making his news or comments so personal.

With the retirement of Fr O’Flaherty another very energetic and enthusiastic priest arrived, namely Fr Francis Williams. Father came from a large family and told us that his family lived in a big house that was named ‘The Immaculate Conception’.

Fr Williams had great rapport with the children. He understood them and could relate to them well. He was a man in touch with his humanity, at home with his parishioners, appreciative of the Sisters and not hesitant to share this. He was a real pastor, shepherd and priest.

Looking back now in November 2007, I marvel and am so grateful for the many ways my life was enriched by the people of Wyong. My heart was enlarged from being there. Special friendships were formed and some of these continue till the present day.

Thank you, dear Wyongians.
Sr Marcia Cox (RSJ)

The following is what I recall about my time at Wyong and my association with Fr Williams.

Behind Fr William’s jovial exterior there was a very caring and prayerful man. He was always supportive of anything that was to benefit the children in the school and the parishioners.

Fr Freddie celebrated Home Masses throughout the preparation for First Holy Communion in 1977 and 1978. He was always available to celebrate class and school masses for the children, either in the church or classroom. He was always open to suggestions that could make the liturgy more meaningful to the children. The children loved Father’s graphic and sometimes dramatic homilies!! They loved his description of “HEAVEN” – “All the icecream you can eat”.

Each time I took the children to the Watagan Forest for the weekend he was always prepared to come and celebrate an outdoor Mass on the Sunday. The parents joined their children for the outdoor mass and picnic lunch. In fact other people were enthusiastically encouraged by Father to join us in the celebration.

Wyong was a lovely community. The people were enthusiastic and generous workers for both school and parish. Fetes were a school and parish affair, as the proceeds were shared between both. Wyong people knew what it meant to “put the hand to the plough”. The Mother’s Club was a great band of women, who not only worked to raise funds for the school, but extended their efforts to reaching out to those in need; one incident I recall, providing refreshment after the funeral of a pupil’s mother. A wonderful band of helpers would turn up to every working bee. In those days a wonderfully warm, happy, generous and caring spirit prevailed.

During 1978 the convent and school was sold to the parish. On November 12, Fr Williams celebrated Mass in the school grounds to mark the withdrawal of the Sisters in residency at Wyong and the ownership of the school and convent grounds. Sister Clare Ryan, the Provincial of the Sisters of St Joseph, was present and addressed the congregation. Many Sisters of St Joseph and parishioners were present for the Mass of Thanksgiving.
The foundation stone of the presbytery was laid on Sunday, November 28, 1915 by Rt. Rev. Monsignor O’Gorman; and it was officially opened on Sunday, May 7, 1916 by Dr Michael Kelly, Archbishop of Sydney. The event was fully reported in The Freeman’s Journal on May 11, 1916, as follows.

**Progressive Wyong**

**THE NEW PRESBYTERY BLESSED AND OPENED**

**THE ARCHBISHOP ON EMPLOYER AND WORKMAN**

The Wyong parish has reason to be proud of the excellent progress it is making in the erection of parochial works under the direction of the Rev. Father R.J. O’Regan. Quite recently the energetic priest built a new church at Toronto, a splendid seaside resort on Lake Macquarie, and this was followed by the laying of the foundation-stone of a new presbytery at Wyong. On Sunday last, the Archbishop of Sydney, who is on Episcopal visitation, blessed and opened the presbytery; and publicly paid tribute to the devotedness of Father O’Regan – a sentiment which was heartily echoed by his parishioners.

In the morning his Grace the Archbishop celebrated Mass after which the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered to a number of children and adults. His Grace, at the afternoon ceremonies, was assisted by the Rev. Fathers R.J. O’Regan and J. Kelly (Gosford), after which the usual public meeting was held. His Grace the Archbishop presided. Others present were Rev. Father O’Regan and Rev. Father J. Kelly, Messrs. M. Woodbury, M. Salmon, F. Salmon, J. Corry, E. Behan, F.C. Darcy, W.B. Woodbury, J. Hilly, E. Seary, G. Taylor.
WELCOME TO HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP
In extending a cordial welcome to his Grace the Archbishop, Father O'Regan said:- “It is for me a very great pleasure to welcome publicly to Wyong, his Grace, the Archbishop. The occasion of his coming is a very important one, and that for two reasons. It is important for the children, who had the happiness to be confirmed by his Grace this morning; and it is important to the Catholics of Wyong and district, for it signalises the realisation of their efforts to build a presbytery for the priest who serves their spiritual interest. In a lesser degree, too, it is important to me personally, for I am to live for some time – I don’t know how long – in the house that is just completed. For these reasons, then, we shall set down May 7th 1916, as a memorable day in our little calendar.” (Applause)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
The new presbytery, completed and furnished, cost £1153. Of this sum, £583 has been paid off since the laying of the foundation-stone, on November 28th 1915. On this result the Catholics of Wyong and district are to be congratulated, and outside friends and sympathisers thanked. Continuing, Father O'Regan, said:- “I have ambition enough to hope we shall be able to raise this. Friends outside are helping, his Grace is giving a generous donation, and we take it as an expression of his approval of what you have done. You have now a good church that is too small, and a presbytery that can compare favourably with many of the city presbyteries. Once again, I say I look with confidence for the emphatic approval – expressed in figures – of the people of Wyong, thus telling of what they have done here since November 28th 1915. Before asking his Grace to touch the tender chords of your sensibilities, I wish to express my appreciation of the manner in which the contractor, Mr. D’Arcy, carried out his work, also his readiness to adopt any suggestion that it was thought wise to make. This presbytery is a good specimen of the work he can do, given the opportunity.” (Applause)

PROGRESSIVE WYONG
His Grace the Archbishop, after congratulating Father O'Regan, and the parishioners on the excellent start they were making in organising the district, said that his first visit to Wyong was about fifteen years ago, when Mass was celebrated in the home of Mrs. Woodbury; later it was held in the School of Arts. Now they had a splendid church; the devoted Sisters of St. Joseph; and the presbytery erected in the centre of the population of the parish. That showed Wyong was progressing in the sense of religious organisation and otherwise. Sydney was progressing in a certain way, but he preferred to see the country developed, because there life was the best and happiest for the families. (Applause)
THE PRIEST’S MISSION
Dealing with the spiritual character of the priesthood, his Grace said there would come a time in the life of all when they would take a candle in their hand and the dream of life would be over. Then they would see the reality of things. The priest represented our Saviour, Who came on earth to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, instruct the ignorant; and teach the people that they had eternity before them and Heaven to look to. As our Saviour was invisible, the priest took His place, as it were, on earth in carrying out His divine precepts.

THE RIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY
Dealing with organisations for the protection of the rights of the worker, his Grace said that it was wrong if one section came into conflict and upset social peace. The rights of the whole community were superior to the part of one section. Strikes meant the upsetting of social peace, because they brought others into the trouble out of sympathy, and they would not know where the trouble would end. In Ireland they had the development of the evil seeds sown two or three years ago by agitators, who went across from England on behalf of certain workers to create a sympathetic strike, which paralysed the life of Dublin for months. It was the duty of those charitably disposed to provide food for over 10,000 children, and generally through the strike families were reduced to destitution.

THE EMPLOYER AND HIS WORKMAN
Sometimes they heard people say, “Where is our enjoyment? Look at me, working day and night, with five or six children to keep!” That man (said his Grace) has not faith in his heart. If he had he would say that God had made him responsible, and He would provide for them through the father. Let all make the best of this world and all that God gave. If not, man would be eager to get riches, and the more he made the more avaricious he would become, and be an enemy to his fellow-men. The employer must not look upon his workmen as mere machines or toilers with which to make money. He is bound to pay just wages for a day’s work. Injustice was an offence against God. On the other hand, the workman must give a just day’s work for his pay. The workman was not a mere beast of burden, and the result of his work should enable him to lead a rational and comfortable home life, enjoy his family, appear respectable, so that he can take his place in society with credit. He trusted that the spirit of his words would be perpetuated among the people. Let them be organised, but at the same time appoint as leaders, men who would not upset social peace. Let all be patient, and not make matters worse by striking, and it will be a good thing when a body of men is directed and guided by the words of the priest to adhere to the laws of God. By doing so, they will in the end secure a greater reward by happiness in the next world.
A FINE PRESBYTERY

They were to make sacrifices for their church and presbytery, and for the nuns and priests (continued his Grace). By doing so, they would be well rewarded not only in this world but hereafter, and they would rejoice in the knowledge that their priest will have a comfortable home to rest in after his arduous labours. (Applause)

Referring to the presbytery, his Grace said that its completion and general appearance gave him great satisfaction. The presbytery was a credit to the designer and the builder, and perhaps none he had blessed had given him such satisfaction. No mistake had been made in sending them Father O’Regan to look after the parish, and now they had a comfortable presbytery for him, all would work together in reducing the debt on it.

At the close of the remarks of his Grace the Archbishop, a subscription list was opened, on the motion of Mr. G. Taylor, who dwelt upon the early days of Wyong, when he arrived there 47 years before. He told the gathering of the difficulties which the priest, Father Young, who walked the whole way, had to contend against when administering to his scattered parishioners. In those days the people of Wyong and farther afield drove to Gosford to assist at Mass. The speaker paid a tribute to the zealous labours of Father O’Regan, and congratulated them on the fine presbytery, the debt on which he hoped they would all endeavour to liquidate in the near future.

Mr W. Woodbury briefly seconded the motion, and in response to the appeal, headed by a cheque for £50 from his Grace the Archbishop, over £165 was handed in.

Mr F. Salmon then proposed a vote of thanks to the Archbishop for presiding, and said that that day was the most memorable in the history of Wyong, as far as the Catholics were concerned. That morning his Grace the Archbishop had confirmed a number of children and adults, and in the afternoon opened a splendid presbytery for their priest, for whom nothing was too good.

Mr. E. Seery briefly seconded the vote, which was carried by acclamation, and after his Grace had replied, Wyong’s historic day’s proceedings were brought to a close.

LIST OF DONATIONS

The following is a list of the contributions:- The Archbishop of Sydney, £50; Rev. Father R O’Regan (Redfern), Rev. Father R.J. O’Regan, £5 each. Mr Denning, £6 1s. £5 5s each: Messrs. D. Wellings, James Kelly, W.D. Woodbury. £5 each: Messrs. M.J. Woodbury, Will Salmon, James Moffitt. £3 3s: Rev. J. Egan. £2 2s each: Very Rev. J. Whyte, Rev. M.F. McAuliffe, B.A Newcastle, Rev. J. Kelly (Gosford), Rev. W. Barry, Mr Houlahan (Springwood), Mr. Correy, Mr. James Taig, Mr Munday. £1 10s each: Very Rev. Father Treacy C.SS.R., Mr Douglas (Boolaroo), Mrs Worley (Catherine Hill Bay), Mr. Dan Horgan (Junee), Mr Pat Clifford, Mr Thos. Stinson. £1 1s each: Rev. Father B. McKiernan (Newcastle), Mrs. Porter, M. O’Keefe (Belmont), S Shanahan (Mosman), J. O’Neill,
The first marriage in St Cecilia’s took place between John Regan and Evelyn Lilian Hare on March 17, 1909 (St Patrick’s Day), almost a year after the Church was opened.

The first recorded baptism in our Church took place on April 27, 1908 – the day after the official opening. Gerald Joseph Woodbury, son of Edwin and Annie (nee Kelly) Woodbury was born on March 23, 1908 and christened by Fr Peter Power.

The Holy Father, Pope John XXIII, called the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and the first session of the Council commenced in St Peter’s Basicilla in Rome on October 11, 1962. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy was the first Constitution to come out of the Council on the December 4, 1963. This Constitution called for “the full, conscious and active participation” of the people in the Liturgy. Some of the changes called for in this Constitution also included the priest facing the people for the celebration of Holy Mass in the native language. As a result of the implementation of a number of the constitutions, and post conciliar documents of the Council, we now have many people in our parish family who assist the clergy in the liturgical and pastoral life of the parish.

In 1977, Sr Marcia Cox RSJ, a teacher at St Cecilia’s Primary School in Wyong, played an important role in introducing some of these changes into our parish, including the introduction of Lectors (readers) and an Offertory Procession at our Sunday Masses. She was also instrumental in involving parent in Sacramental Programs. This also led to the start of home masses, picnics and mass at school camps. When Sr Marcia left, Fr Williams and Regina Preston provided Lent and Advent spirituality sessions with intermittent scripture study, sacramental masses and parent/adult education. These continued until the sacramental programme was taken from the parish school.
Acolytes and Senior Servers:
The history of acolytes in the Wyong Parish dates back to 1981, when one of our parishioners, Tony Cashin, came to our parish from Gosford Parish, where he had already been ministering as an acolyte. Early in 1984, Fr Williams invited three parishioners, Paul Simmons, John Millard, and Chris Pannell to consider becoming acolytes, to assist him and Tony Cashin in the pastoral and liturgical ministry of the parish. These three men undertook a six week course of training and preparation at St John the Baptist Parish at Woy Woy. They trained with a number of other men from Central Coast parishes to be installed as acolytes. Their Installation took place at St Patrick’s Parish Church, East Gosford, on May 20, 1984, by Bishop Patrick Murphy.

During the following years a number of other parishioners were also encouraged to undergo training, and were subsequently installed as acolytes. John Devereux was installed in 1985 and also continues to minister to the residents at Berkeley Vale Aged Care Facility and Wyong Hospital. Others include Clive Pasfield, Frank de Wall, George Livingstone, Roger Binstead, Stephen Radcliffe and Brian Alexander. Kevin Barry, an acolyte from Gosford Parish, also moved into Wyong Parish and continued ministering as an acolyte. Also, during this time Russell Pedrana, an acolyte from Toukley Parish, came to Wyong Parish. Some time later, John A’quilina also came to the parish as an acolyte from Toukley Parish.

With the establishment of the Mass Centre at St John Fisher School, two acolytes, Peter North and Peter O’Connor came to Wyong Parish from The Entrance Parish. Colin Payne came from Terrigal Parish. These three mainly ministered at St John Fisher.

Women were also encouraged to take a more active role in ministry and, in 1992, one of our very long standing parishioners, Evelyn Ross, commenced training our Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, who distributed Holy Communion at mass and to the sick, within the parish. Fr Kennedy commissioned our first Eucharistic Ministers on May 24, 1992 – Nora Dillon, Pat Willemsen and Patricia Doyle. Evelyn also co-ordinated the monthly celebration of mass in each of the nursing homes within the parish, as well as ministering to the sick of the parish in their homes. Following Evelyn’s illness and death, her work is being continued by one of our long serving parishioners, Sheilagh Cook.

From 1994 until the present time, Broken Bay Diocese has not prepared and installed men to the ministry of acolyte. However, our parish trained men and women to minister as senior altar servers, and to carry on the ministry undertaken by acolytes.

This parish was rather progressive in training women to become senior altar servers and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Some of
these women, along with some of the acolytes and senior servers, not only ministered at the altar, but also led services of the Liturgy of the Word with Holy Communion. Fr Brian introduced women ‘Ministers at the Altar’ and our first women Senior Servers, Patricia Doyle and Vera Butler, who were trained by Paul Simmons, were commissioned at St Cecilia’s on November 4, 2001. Other senior servers included Maureen Roast, Fred Liackman and Ray Booby. Margaret Houston, Brian Williams and John Robertson also underwent training at St John Fisher at Tumbi Umbi and ministered there as Senior Altar Servers.

Boys and girls aged 10 years and over were encouraged and invited to become Altar Servers after November 1, 1994. Prior to this only boys served on the Altar in our Church.

Vocations:
The Second Vatican Council called for the re-establishment of the Diaconate as a permanent Order in the church. In 1966, Pope Paul VI promulgated the Order of Deacon be established as a permanent order and that married men were eligible to be ordained as deacons. It wasn’t until 2000 that the Diocese of Broken Bay decided to have permanent deacons, and on April 14, 2002 one of our acolytes, Paul Simmons, was Called to Candidacy, as a Permanent Deacon, by Bishop David Walker in our parish church. Paul had previously studied, full time, at the Catholic Institute of Sydney for his Degree of Bachelor of Theology, and after undertaking a four year Diaconate Formation Program, Paul was ordained to the Order of Deacon, in Corpus Christi Cathedral St Ives, on April 16, 2004, by Bishop David Walker. Deacon Paul was appointed, for a period of three years, to the Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Wyoming. In April 2007, Bishop Walker re-appointed him to Wyoming for a further three years.

Sacraments:
Right of Christian Initiation for Adults:
The RCIA programme commenced in 2001, at the request of the then Parish Priest, Fr Brian Moloney. A small group of parishioners, interested in sharing their faith with others, came together. The then Pastoral Associate, Paul Simmons, co-ordinated the group with support from Alf Beer, who had had previous experience with RCIA in the parish of North Rocks, along with John Devereux, Ann Brady, Marie Malouf, and Colleen and Gary Waterson. At the completion of their enquiry period, three candidates were received into the Catholic faith at the Easter Vigil in 2002, and another shortly afterwards. Each year the numbers increased and many people, from all backgrounds, enjoyed the Easter experience of being received into the Catholic faith.
Baptism/Confirmation/Eucharist/Reconciliation:
The sacraments were known as Baptism, Confession, First Communion and Confirmation in the early years and they were received in that order. Apart from Baptism, instruction was the responsibility of the parish school. Children were instructed at school. For children not attending the Catholic School it was a little different.

Irene Smith recalls:
Our family came to live in Dooralong in 1931 with no transport, except for the milk carter, who picked up milk in cans from the dairy farms throughout the valley. We were a family of eight children and most of us made our First Communion at St Cecilia’s. The sisters at St Cecilia’s School gave Mum lessons for us and we had to know our green catechism book back to front. At least one or maybe two days before Holy Communion, Mum had to take us in to the school and we had to be put through the test and make our First Confession. The day before Holy Communion we had to spend the night with a family in Wyong so we could be at church for 7am Mass. In those days we had to fast from midnight and the mothers prepared a party at the school afterwards.
Following on from the Second Vatican Council, a new approach to the initiation of children into the life of the church was developed. In January 1987, Bishop Patrick Murphy issued a Pastoral Directive that family based instruction became the normal practice in preparing children for the Sacraments. This Directive was issued because the schools had taken on this responsibility which the Church had said was the proper responsibility of parents; as parents are the primary educators of their children, particularly in matters of faith. To assist parents with their responsibility, the Diocesan Liturgy Office developed Sacramental Programmes and, under the direction of the parish priest, parishioners have been invited to set up parish sacramental teams. These parishioners have been trained as facilitators, not teachers, to support parents to prepare their children to receive the sacraments. It was also at this time that a deeper explanation of the nature of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, as Sacraments of Christian Initiation, was given to parents and the parish faith community. The sacrament of Reconciliation, whilst not a sacrament of initiation, is now received between the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. And so, what was once seen as the responsibility of the school is now, more rightly, understood as the responsibility of the whole parish community.

Music:
Marie Fogarty recalls:
‘I was taught the piano and organ by the Sisters of St Joseph while attending St Cecilia’s School. The sisters played the organ for Sunday Mass (7.30am and 10am – only Mass times then) at St Cecilia’s Church. The first organ that I remember was an old, small, manual one with pull-out stops for volume and two pedals, which I worked with my feet for sound (Harmonium Organ). It was in the right hand corner at the very back of the Church. I would have started playing for Mass and weddings about 1954/55. Some years later someone donated a larger organ and some time later on another one (electric) was installed. At that time it was moved into the side Chapel and later on it was placed in the Church opposite the side Chapel. Marie Murray (violin) and I played together for many years at 7.30am Sunday Mass and I retired in 1990 to enable other musicians to take over.’

We have had many musicians/singers over the years. Margaret Roberts (housekeeper and cook for Fr Williams) played the organ for 10am Mass until she left the parish in 1986. Following Margaret’s departure Leon Milroy (nee Allan) learnt to play the organ especially to play for 10am Mass each Sunday and her husband, Andrew, played guitar. When Nanette and Hans Drielsma moved into the parish in 1974, Fr Williams invited them to start monthly ‘Folk Masses’ at 10am Mass on Sundays, with Hans on guitar and Nanette singing. When they left in 1976 Marie Dyer continued the guitar masses. She taught many children to play the hymns on guitar and encouraged them to join her playing at Mass. Those who didn’t play guitar helped with the singing and she was often surrounded by many children.
After the completion of the Mass Centre at Tumbi, an organ was donated and musicians played there each week, including regular Youth Masses. Today the musical celebration of our Masses at both centres continues with the involvement of many wonderful people.

(Do you remember on Sunday morning at our 10am Mass when hearty singing from St James next door would herald the end of their service but it would be about Consecration time at our Mass?!!)

The **Children’s Liturgy** was introduced in 1994 and co-ordinated by Marcia Arundell. The readings cater for children from preschool age through to year six primary and are conducted in a way that is meaningful to the age group. It takes place during the Mass – the children go to their special room at the beginning of Mass and return in time for the Offertory.

**Catholic Youth Organisation:**

Irene Smith recalls … *St Cecilia’s CYO was started in 1961-1962. Sr Imelda asked a couple of us to get the young people together. We met on a Friday or Saturday evening – had sing-a-longs, dances and fun evenings in one of the classrooms at St Cecilia’s School. We held picnics, beach trips and generally had a fun filled, enjoyable time. I’m not sure how long it went for, but only around 2 to 3 years. A lot of marriages came via the CYO. There were around 14-20 members, maybe a few more.*

Over the years there have been other groups formed, including Antioch, but they only lasted for short terms. A Youth Ministry was commenced in 2007, under the leadership of Kelly Li, to cater to the needs of the youth of our Parish and this is well attended with regular fun activities. Currently they are working towards World Youth Day in Sydney in July 2008.

The **Piety Stall** was first organised by Fr Harry Kennedy on behalf of the St Vincent de Paul. Ruth Booth and Grace Trigg were appointed to be buyers, pricers and sellers of the spiritual items. Tables were set up by Des Worboys, Frank Hatton, Will Ferris and others near the Church before Mass – at times the tables were set up in the Church. At mission time spiritual items from the Redemptorist Fathers were sold.
Fr Kennedy arranged for the construction of a piety stall on the external northern wall of the church, adjacent to the confessional room. The relocation of the piety stall from the northern wall of the church to its present location adjacent to the sacristy was undertaken during Fr Paul Evans’ time as parish priest. When Ruth and Grace retired due to ill health Eileen Thorpe took over running the stall until ill health forced her to retire also. Carmel Fletcher took on the task and when she moved from the parish Maureen Kearney continued the task of co-ordinator. Many women help with selling the various items.

Wyong Legion of Mary:
Wednesday, April 22, 1998 marked the 1,000th meeting.

Fr. O’Flaherty commenced the first Legion in the Wyong Parish on September 14, 1947. Fr. O’Flaherty stated he wanted a band of lay people to help him to reach the non-Catholic and careless Catholics throughout the parish. But, unfortunately, this folded in 1948 (according to the records we have). Transport was a major problem.

Fr. Williams started the present Legion on March 1, 1977. Fr. Fitzgerald had started the Legion in Toukley in 1972 and with the help of his members, Mrs Clemon, Mrs K Martin and Mrs Longhurst, Wyong was started. First members were Mrs B Chapman, Mrs V Whiteman and Mrs M Gatt. The following week Mrs R Booth, Mrs Bingham and Mrs C Phillips joined. Mrs J Lee was one of the first auxiliaries (prayer partners). Mrs Maria Trinca joined the Legion a few weeks after commencement. (‘Nonna’ as she was fondly known, was our oldest parishioner at the time of her death in July 2004. She was 99 years old and had attended the Church for more than 70 years. In the sacristy is a photograph and poem commemorating Nonna’s life. Some of her descendants still live locally and attend Mass at St Cecilia’s.)

The Altar Society commenced in 1978 when the Sisters of St Joseph ceased to live in the local convent and handed over their role as sacristans to the parish community. A small band of ladies, Nan Massey, Mildred Goodman, Marie Carey, Vilma Whiteman, Nardina Chapman, Lucy Smith, Pat Hartcher, and one gentleman, Cyril Hartcher, took on the task of creating floral arrangements and preparing the altar and church for all parishioners to enjoy. Weddings were given special attention after a conference with the bride. If flowers had to be bought this was at the bride’s expense, otherwise the flowers were gathered from parishioner’s gardens. Easter and Christmas were also special times and many satisfying hours have been spent creating lovely floral arrangements over the years. No charge was ever made for this work. A wonderful sense of satisfaction has been gained by those dedicated people who have been members of the Altar Society. They helped to make our Church a beautiful place to worship our dear Lord. (Marie Carey was an active member until her death in 2007)
The Care Group started in November 1985. Previously a group of women known as the Mother’s Club had been very involved in social/fund raising activities at St Cecilia’s School. This group was farewelled at the school on November 6, 1985 and replaced by a Parent’s Association. Two of the long time members, Pauline Cornwell and Jo Ferris, were asked to housekeep for Fr Kennedy and while discussing the Mother’s Club situation with him, he suggested that they start their own group. He said they could hold their meetings in the presbytery and bought an urn for their use, and hence the start of St Cecilia’s Parish Care Group. With no funds they called on donations of cups and saucers to start morning teas after Mass. Then the first Christmas Party for Senior Parishioners was held in December 1985 in the presbytery grounds in a large tent lent by the Cullen Bros. Everyone was so generous! The Care Group members/friends brought in their own crockery and cutlery, and donations of ham, turkey, pudding, custard, punch etc – everything was donated, even down to hand made lavender bags to give to our guests! Fr Kennedy joined in the fun and played ‘Santa’!

There were fourteen women in the group to start with and to this day there are about the same number. The group is noted for its support of anyone in need including catering at wakes, sacramental celebrations, visits by bishops and priests, or when asked by the Parish Priest. A lesser known function is their provision of a cuppa and biscuits at the Wyong Court House – a job shared with other churches.

The earliest record of the St Vincent de Paul Society in our parish is 1941 and it has continued to this day. It is a group of people committed to relieving the human suffering and hardship of individuals and families in today’s world. In the early days when needy people knocked on the door of the presbytery the priest used to give them a sandwich and perhaps a small coin. They were also referred for assistance to the St Vincent de Paul Society. Volunteers run our local shops selling second-hand goods to raise money for this purpose.

Records also show that there was a Sacred Heart Society (Men) from 1941 to 1948 and from 1949 to 1967 it became the Holy Name Society. There is also recorded a Sacred Heart Society (Women) from 1941 to 1967. There was also a Children of Mary group from 1941 to 1967.

Mary MacKillop Haven was originally set up to provide accommodation for women seeking respite and is run by the Sisters of St Joseph: Sr Clare Keating (1996-2000), Sr Catherine Corkill (1996), Sr Marie Ellen Daniel (2001-2006), Sr Catherine Histon (2002), Sr Yvonne McGettigan (2003), Sr Sylvia Markulin (2007 to present) and Sr Margaret Paton (2008). Today they no longer provide accommodation but cater to the wider needs of the parish.
Social Functions:
In the early years of the Parish, social functions were also fund raisers, not only for Wyong, but to help with the building of more churches/schools as the population of the surrounding areas grew. Various social events/fundraisers were held over the years including fetes, art union, dances, house parties, debutante balls, concerts, bazaars, euchre parties, street stalls, raffles, and even a gymkana, which raised £180 in 1952. For four years (1958 to 1961) money was raised by ‘silver circle’ raffles – parishioners bought tickets (2 shillings each) on a regular basis with a winner drawn (using lottery numbers) when the last ticket was sold (obviously an incentive to donate regularly). Towards the end of 1961 a meeting was held in the convent to discuss the introduction of envelope collections at Mass each week and this was introduced in 1962 and continues to this day.

Debutante Balls:
In the earlier years, the Catholic Parish of Wyong was well renowned for its Annual Debutante Balls, but unfortunately, the popularity of these Balls began to wane and they were discontinued. However, in 1982 they were re-introduced and organised by the newly formed Parents & Friend’s Association along with the Mother’s Club from the school. After the last Parish Ball held in 1988, it was decided that, owing to the rise in popularity of both Year 10 and Year 12 School Formals, there was no longer a need for Debutante Balls to be held.

Springtime Art Show: Joyce Nord recalls ... 
In 1976 St Cecilia’s Mother’s Club was looking at ways to raise funds away from the usual raffles etc. As I had been involved with the Goulburn Art Group and had a little knowledge of how to go about it, we gathered a group of ladies and some artists as well, and together we organised the first Wyong Art Show. The ladies involved at that time were Marie Carey, Nan Massey, Mildred Goodman, Bonnie Stephens, Nardina Chapman and others whose names have slipped my mind (I apologise).

We managed to get the use of the Wyong Memorial Hall, gathered some men to make us stands and to help hang the paintings. Next came programmes to be printed, people to man the front desk and others to make slices and donations for the opening night. If you have never been involved with an Art Show, believe me, it is hard work!

We then put out feelers to various Art Groups around the coast asking them to show their paintings and they were only too happy to join in, and even helped on the weekend. It was a great success and the artists asked us to put on another one the following year.

In 1977 it was even better with actress, Elizabeth Kirkby, there to officially open the art show on Friday, September 30. The local newspaper reported:

70th Anniversary Art Show

In conjunction with its 70th anniversary celebrations this year, St Cecilia’s Catholic School at Wyong is holding an Art Show at Wyong Memorial Hall during the 1977 Springtime Festival.

The Art Show will be officially opened on Friday, September 30, at 8pm, and the exhibition will also be open to the public over the long weekend.

The artists who will be displaying paintings include top-liners from Sydney, Newcastle, Orange and Goulburn. All have been invited to exhibit.

Three ladies who do china painting and several potters will also exhibit.

Mr Brian Chapman, of Gosford, will demonstrate glass blowing on the Saturday (October 1).
(Footnote: In 1977 St Cecilia’s Church celebrated its 70th anniversary since the laying of the foundation stone.)

Sadly after 1977 my husband was transferred to Sydney and others moved away too. Toukley Rotary Club took over and it has become an annual event on a much larger scale with the proceeds going to local charities which is wonderful.
Bus Trips:
These popular outings commenced about 1995 during Fr Paul’s time with us. Frank Costa, supported and assisted by his wife, Frances, planned many and various trips/functions near and far creating a social atmosphere and raising much needed funds for the church and missions. Money raised was used for repairs such as, fixing the roof after storms and a broken window after a break-in; the purchase of the Sacred Heart statue on the altar to replace the one thrown through the window; it helped to pay for the building of the piety stall and pergola, and half the cost of the air conditioners. Frank and the late Tony Cashin also carried out monthly maintenance of the church, including cleaning those high ceilings. Frank continued his good works until about 2002 when he became involved in helping to set up the new Warnervale parish.

St Cecilia’s Gadabout Bus Trips started in March 2005 and participants have raised more than $2,000 towards the restoration of the Church building. Such outings are enjoyed by many parishioners who have visited Dungog, Morpeth, Wollombi, St Albans, Nelson Bay and made a tour around Lake Macquarie.

St Cecilia’s over 55s Seniors Group also began in 2005. Their outings have been a little closer to home and include visits to Woodbury’s Park, Dooralong Lodge and the Macadamia Nut Farm at Yarramalong. One time they went further afield travelling by train to Katoomba.
MEMORIES

By William Aloysius Ferris (1898-1978)

My father, James Ferris, came to Wyong in November 1915. He purchased and settled on a 13 acre property in what is now known as Wyongah. There was a mass in Wyong at that time once a month. Father O’Regan was the priest in charge, the first resident priest. Dad and I used to walk the five miles to and from Mass through a bush track, after fasting, and breakfasted on our return home. We elevated later to a draught horse and cart for the farm to take us to Mass – 1½ hours’ journey each way.

The lighting system for the church and presbytery was by a carbide gas plant, housed in a little shed nearby. A heavy weight (approx. 2 cwt) had to be wound up a tower above about 200ft high to provide pressure of gas to the church and presbytery. That was my job every Sunday evening; to wind up that weight (about 10 minutes) before 7.30pm Benediction. Eventually the system broke down and Father replaced it with two Aladdin Lamps (kerosene mantle) for the church, one above the centre of the altar rails, the other at the back of the church for the choir, which was lit up every Sunday evening.

Someone went into the presbytery during Benediction one Sunday evening and stole Father’s combined Mass collections from Wyong and The Entrance, a total of £4.10. Father laughed and said ‘He probably needed it more than I.’

While Fr Herlihy was in Wyong in 1918, one side of the church roof was blown off at the height of a severe wind storm one night. It was the side next to the presbytery. Next morning Mr Hughie Dacy, Mr Albert Tiltse, two others and myself replaced new iron.

I recall on several occasions after Fr McMahon had returned from saying Mass at Morisset and Cooranbong, and visiting the sick there on their Sunday in his Model-T Ford, he would get a sick call from Morisset Mental Hospital and have to go straight back there. Nearly half of the 20 miles to and from there was no better than a bush track with many sand patches to plough through.

Mr Tom Pearce, the bus proprietor at Kanwal ran a mass bus each Sunday to Wyong from Kanwal/Wyongah (about 1934) for six-pence return, and only 18/20 passengers. Later Mr Emilio Trinca bought a second-hand Oldsmobile car and converted it to a table-top truck and he would take as many as 20 of us to mass on it – hanging on like flies!

Fr O’Flaherty complained bitterly about all the pennies on the plate. One parishioner was so incensed he used to put 12 pennies on the plate instead of a shilling piece. Father said ‘contribute according to your means, not your meanness’—with emphasis on the latter!

Page 68
By William Anthony Ferris (son of William Aloysius Ferris)

I was born in Wyong in 1934 and I was baptised in St Cecilia’s Church a few weeks later by Fr O’Flaherty. I was educated at St Cecilia’s School and Father was there when I made my First Communion and Confirmation. I can remember little things as they happened over the years.

In the 1950’s the two Sunday newspapers conducted crossword games. Father would buy several of these papers, complete the puzzles and that evening catch the 8.00pm train to Sydney and post his entries at the Sydney GPO so he would get them in early the next morning. He would then catch the paper train back to Wyong arriving home about 1.00am.

St Patrick’s Day was a big day in Father’s life. He would have his housekeeper, Miss Reardon, prepare a special lunch and on many occasions invited my Dad (he being Irish and coming from County Tyrone). Dad got on very well with Fr O’Flaherty and they often talked of the old country.

Year after year Father gave us some very instructional sermons, usually the same theme year after year. One particular quote I can remember at the end of his homily was: “We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.”

Each November Fr O’Flaherty would arrange with a group of men from the St Vincent de Paul Society (about six in all) to tidy up and re-peg unused graves at Jilliby and Norah Head Cemeteries. This was long before Toukley became a separate parish.

After Fr O’Flaherty retired, Fr Fred Williams was appointed Parish Priest. He made many little improvements. After a huge storm the stained glass windows on the street side of the church were blown out. He then had the red glass fitted. He changed the altars, removing the centre and two side altars. He dismantled and used the timber (cedar) for various things – one that comes to mind is the crucifix above the altar. It was originally above the sign ‘Cor Jesu, Ave Maria’. Fr Williams made a new cross and placed it just above the tabernacle where it is today, his idea being that it was more accessible for Good Friday ceremonies.
By Fr Francis Mervyn Williams, August 15, 1974.

When I came here in 1969 the place was overgrown and wild, because Father had been so sick. I had constructed a double garage behind the presbytery – this was built by Les Smith and his brother, Trevor. I myself pulled down the old shed that stood on the site. I pulled down the old garage under the big iron-bark tree and I pulled down Father’s old garage that stood where the new incinerator is, facing south-north. I pulled down the chicken sheds below the old toilet and cleared the land of blackberry bushes and weeds. I cut down the growth between the presbytery and the house next door. I have had the sewer connected and the bathroom renovated; new sink in the kitchen, new verandah on the back; the wiring renewed and new points put in each room; the laundry floor cemented and all water pipes renewed; I removed the two water tanks which stood outside the kitchen/bathroom.

I erected the fence between the presbytery and church. I am at present painting the inside of the presbytery.

I record all this in the first person so that readers may know I did not get the information from anyone else, and that it happened in my time here. I leave the wisdom of the various decisions to the judgment of our common Lord.

I also had Trevor Smith remove some steps from the Sanctuary of the Church so that I could have a flat area to put an altar facing the people. The old cedar altar I pulled down myself; because it was old-fashioned and had been put together with pieces of pine wood and the borers had enjoyed this bonanza – the small tabernacle is at present in the presbytery. The present tabernacle was obtained from Parramatta Parish – I understand it had been made by Mons. Joseph McGovern himself – and I put it on one of the old side altars to make it simpler and smaller. A parishioner had donated the blue carpet for the Sanctuary so I put the old red feltex in the front bedroom of the presbytery. I bought carpet for the church aisle and old sacristy – the present baptistery. I had some windows from the back of the Church fixed up as the lead had deteriorated and I had the red glass put in the back of the Church.

I had two new classrooms built at the school from a grant of $20,000 from the Catholic School’s Building Fund.

By Marie Dyer

Fr John O’Flaherty would tell jokes after the sermon and if you didn’t laugh he would repeat it until you did. One of his favourites told several times over the period of years: “The elderly widow buried her husband and sometime later erected a headstone. It read ‘Rest in Peace ... until I come!’”

Fr O’Flaherty drove an old 1935 Ford. He was a lonely old priest but really needed to be looked after. The house was always a mess and the grass was high around the back steps.
St Cecilia’s Mother’s Club would buy him chocolates and cigarettes. We’d travel for 2½ hours to The Sisters of the Poor at Randwick to see him (Kath Sewell, Irene Smith and myself) and he’d say ‘thank you, you can go now’. Irene said once when she and Kath went to see him he didn’t open the door for 1½ hours, because he was watching the races on TV.

Fr Fred Williams – We all loved him even though he did have a bit of a temper at times. He would have so many altar boys at Christmas (sometimes 12); he’d look like the pied piper coming down the aisle at Mass.

He was a hard worker. He’d be out digging with the men when jobs had to be done. He lived simply – we found out later any gifts we gave him he’d give to someone in need.

‘Hail Queen of Heaven’ was his favourite hymn. You couldn’t be late for the 7am week day Mass or you would miss it – it was finished at 7.15am!

By George Mercieca
It is difficult for me to think of St Cecilia’s Church, Wyong, without remembering the parish’s longest serving priest, Fr O’Flaherty. He was an Irish priest of great education, but gave the impression of being a simple man. To know him was to love him, although to go to the presbytery and speak to him was almost impossible as one had to get past his tiny housekeeper, Miss Le Breton.

There were many humorous episodes involving Father over the years. He owned a 1935 Ford car and in the 1940’s and 1950’s he used to drive up the main street and turn at the bridge leading to the racecourse. The only problem was that in the days of having to give hand signals, all you could tell was that his window was down and you didn’t know until the last second if he was going to stop or turn.

I remember the ladies replaced the carpet around the altar about the late 1950’s. It was an orange colour and they apologised to Father, who replied that he didn’t mind wiping his feet on the orange (a little dig at the religious division in Ireland).

Father and a long standing worker for the church, used to go twice a year to the Cessnock vineyards to get altar wine. On their return you could tell the trip had been successful, due to their red glowing faces and slurred speech.

When my mother was converting to the faith I went with her to Father (I was about 14 at the time) and he turned to me and said I was a missioner in my own home and I wasn’t even an Irishman. After some weeks and just before her First Confession Father was giving her a talk on how to make a good confession. ‘Start with the big things first. Don’t start with dozens of small things hoping I will doze off and you can slip the big things past me. If you have killed a Chinaman during the week, start with that!’
By Kathleen Gavenlock (nee Robinson)

Fr O’Flaherty was part of my life since the age of four. Dad’s family lived in Wyong opposite the convent and Nana Robinson, even though she was an Anglican, was very good to the nuns, always sending them over something from the farm.

I started school at St Cecilia’s and received my First Communion from Fr O’Flaherty and was married by him in 1960. My three children, Vanessa, Gary and Melissa were also baptised by him. For as long as I can remember, mum would have us running up the lane (between Leppington and Byron Streets) with something for Father. Miss Le Breton, his house-keeper, stayed with our family at Leppington Street when she was sick for a while.

Fr O’Flaherty was a very loving and generous man. When I was getting married he told my husband, Mervyn, to come back after three years and if he wanted to change his religion then they would talk about it. When we were married he gave back to my husband, Mervyn, the envelope containing the money due to him for our marriage (I did not know at the time), saying to my husband that he might need the money more than him. I suspect that I was only one of many that Father was so generous to.

Our family had such a close relationship with St Cecilia’s School and the Church that when Nana Robinson died in 1976, it was the first time a Catholic priest and nuns had gone ‘next door’ to the Church of England for a funeral.

Memories of Fr John O’Flaherty by Ruth Booth

I first met Fr O’Flaherty in April 1947. After attending mass with my family we went to the old sacristy door to introduce ourselves. My husband, Cec Booth, remembered Fr O’Flaherty as a young curate to Fr Thomas Ryan at Penrith. This was in 1923 and Fr O’Flaherty would have just come over from Ireland.

Cec recalled that Fr O’Flaherty would come over on a Sunday to St Aidan’s at Rooty Hill and apparently he used to get into some trouble with Fr Ryan as he was a reluctant riser of a morning. When Fr Ryan’s name was mentioned to Fr O’Flaherty he said, ‘Oh, he’s burning in hell’ and he gave a hearty laugh.

Fr O’Flaherty came from the Dingle Bay area in Ireland. There was a movie made in this area and released in 1970 called ‘Ryan’s Daughter’ which Father went to see so he could see the scenery. One of the nuns, Sr Conleth, was a great friend of Fr O’Flaherty and I can recall her telling me that he really liked the movie, but he had to close his eyes at the ‘naughty bits’. Father looked forward to the conversations with the Irish nuns, who were at the convent at the same time and when they left Wyong they would always return for their holidays here.

Fr O’Flaherty would always have plenty of jokes to tell the altar boys – all
five Booth boys served as altar boys accumulating a total of approximately 35 years service in the 1950’s and 60’s. On Saturday night there was Confession and being a large scattered parish at the time there were only a few people who could come to confession, so the Booth boys would go up to the presbytery to see Father, who was usually reading or listening to the Trots or Greyhound races on the radio. The Booth boys would annoy Father by continually knocking on the door and laughing, so Father would tell them to go over to the Church and he would come over to hear their confessions. Father would amuse the boys with his jokes (rather than listen to their confessions).

Every last Sunday of the month at around 4.00pm there would be Benediction. This was a good time for Father’s jokes. He particularly liked telling the story of Henry the Eighth and his six wives (especially Anne Boleyn whom Henry had beheaded).

Father was very compassionate toward his parishioners. I recall that there was a Polish family, who came to live near the church. Father heard that they were having a difficult time, as the man could not find work. Father thought he would help the man find a job and approached my husband, Cec, who worked for the Railways. As we had no car Father drove Cec and the man to Newcastle to the Railway’s Head Office. On the way home they called into a hotel at Swansea. Father, not wanting to be recognised, turned his white collar around.

During the 1940’s and 50’s Father often had his close friend Fr Michael O’Beirne, who was Chaplain at the St John of God Training Centre at Morisset, come to visit. Fr O’Beirne would often help Fr O’Flaherty by saying some masses around the parish.

On Saturday mornings Father would celebrate Mass at the convent with the nuns and boarders. When Father drove his old grey Ford, always with his hat on, down to the convent, the Booth boys would greet him at the end of Byron Street. Noticing them waiting at the bottom of the hill he would honk his horn and slow the car down. The boys would then jump on the running board and get a lift to the corner. When Father walked down he would again be met by the Booth family and would come over to tell them jokes. If I had a baby in my arms he would love to blow on the baby’s face and catch their breath. He loved to hear the baby’s sigh. Father was very fond of children.

Outside the front of the church was a seat, which was used by the mothers when the baby started to cry during mass.

Father used to call three of the parishioners after St Joseph, because they frequently helped with repair jobs for him. They were Tom Fogarty who helped with the carpentry, Norm McNally with the plumbing and Bill Meacham who was the painter.
Miss Le Breton was Father’s loyal housekeeper. She also came from St Mary’s Parish and knew Father there. Apparently her family had always done housekeeping for priests.

Father not only had Mass in Wyong but would celebrate Mass once a month at Cooranbong and The Entrance.

Father had a wonderful sense of humour and a sense of comical timing. For several consecutive Sundays, for some reason at Father’s sermon time, the bell of St James, which was situated right on the fence dividing the two churches, would ring about halfway through Father’s sermon. Initially Father would persevere through the ringing. It seemed that each Sunday the ringing got louder and longer to the point that during the sermon the congregation had difficulty hearing. Father, sensing this, stopped his sermon and remained silent allowing the bell ringing to continue until it finished. Once, after waiting for the ringing to finish, Father mischievously said, ‘they are wasting their time as nobody will come!!’ to which the congregation responded with great laughter.

A particular highlight of each year was First Communion, which was followed by a First Communion breakfast at the school. Father would attend this breakfast taking his place at the head of the table.

and Ruth’s son, Frank remembers …

I am the second of the five Booth brothers. I first started to serve on the altar soon after making my First Communion in 1954. Fr O’Flaherty was always helpful to the new altar boys and was fastidious on details such as the cruets of wine and water being filled correctly and positioned on the serving tray in their place. I recall when the section of the church to the east was constructed – I have recollections of the old back wall being removed and covered with a hanging curtain until the new section was completed.

In the summer months Father would often sleep in an enclosed area of the verandah nearest the Church. It was not uncommon to have to wake him up for 7 o’clock morning mass, when we turned up to serve. At such times the nuns would start to prepare the vestments ready for a quick start. Sometimes, if Father took too long, the nuns would head home to prepare for their busy day. I tend to think that occasionally some of his difficulty in waking up was related to him backing a winner and having an additional celebratory drink.

The Easter period would often see some of us jump in the old Ford and head out to the area between the beaches and the top of the Lake where long palm fronds used to be sourced for cutting into smaller pieces for Palm Sunday. The palm fronds were loaded up into chaff bags and being sharp pointed, used to make for a prickly trip back.
When the Toukley-Budgewoi Parish was established in 1962 it was initially based out of Wyong and the new priest, Fr J.J. Hatton, lived at the presbytery with Fr O’Flaherty. The Ford Pilot would often be used and would stop outside our home to collect whoever had the turn of serving Mass at the Toukley Community Hall. It was prior to and during this time that our grandmother, Gertrude Mary Booth (nee Nichols), worked tirelessly at fundraising for the eventual Toukley Parish Church. (Footnote: In 1947 Wyong Parish borrowed £300 towards the purchase of three blocks at Toukley valued at approximately £180 each)

I recall Fr O’Flaherty’s interest in astronomy. He had a rather large telescope which he would set up in the driveway towards the end of the Church. There are vivid recollections of him joking about the smile on the face of the man in the moon and the large craters being like Swiss cheese the first time I observed the moon through the telescope.

As was often the case in those years, Fr O’Flaherty was a heavy smoker and when he ran out of his favourite ‘Craven A’ cigarettes, it was not uncommon for brothers Dennis, Tony and/or Phil to be sent to the shop on Warner Avenue to replenish the supply.

By Sr Anna Maria Trinca (RSJ)
These are some of my memories of my early childhood as a member of Wyong Parish.

- I remember as a little girl, walking from our home in Warnervale, to a bus at Pearce’s (who had a bus run) at Kanwal to take us to Mass each Sunday. Fr O’Flaherty was the Parish Priest but he also travelled to Morisset and The Entrance to say Mass.

- When World War II broke out petrol became rationed, so Pearce’s stopped running the bus. A parishioner, Mr Sutton, offered to drive us to Mass but we had to walk 2-3 miles to his home, because of the petrol shortage.

- At times Dad would drive some of the family in horse and sulky. The paddock opposite the Church was where the horses were tied up.

- There was a great meeting of friends outside the Church – it was a great social event. A lot of these people were farmers and had been up very early milking cows or feeding chooks before coming to the Church.

- The children all sat down the front with the sisters, who taught us at school. The older children sang in the choir and sister played the old pedal organ.
• After some years the farmers ‘updated’ and they began driving to the Church in utes and trucks. Dad went around the countryside collecting parishioners for Mass. Sitting in the back of the table top truck was very cold in winter but we all rugged up and had blankets. There were so many passengers at times that the men stood on the running board of the truck. As we got close to the Church, Mr Ferris would say to the children ‘now be quiet and prepare for Confession’.

• The people worked hard for the Church. They ran raffles, house parties and Deb Balls to pay for the maintenance and expenses.

• School was at St Cecilia’s and was run by the Sisters of St Joseph. We were taught well and instructed in our faith. The Sisters prepared us for the Sacraments. Some of the Sisters who taught me were Sr Denis, who later became the Congregational Leader, Sr Bernarda, Sr Agnes Francis, Sr Teresita, and I learnt music from Sr Helen and Sr Richard.

• The Sisters had very little and mum and dad and other families gave them eggs, chickens, vegetables and anything they had on their farms.

• Mum used to supply Fr O’Flaherty with eggs each week. We always put the double yolkers in a corner for him!

• When I turned 13, I went to the Juniorate at Hunter’s Hill and others from the parish followed. Some of these were Sylvia Markulin, Angela Ferris, Elly Fogarty and, Bernadette Ferris. This was like a boarding school but for girls who had showed interest in becoming a Sister of St Joseph.

• The men of the parish held working bees to keep the church and school grounds tidy. The team of men would go out to the Jilliby Cemetery and attend to maintenance of the grounds there.

I just remember that the people of the parish really supported each other and that they had a great faith. The Catholic Church was the centre of all the lives of so many people.

Childhood Memories of the Wyong Parish in the 1940’s
by Sr Sylvia Markulin (RSJ)
At this time the Wyong Parish included The Entrance as well as Toukley. The Entrance had its own Church and a little later became a separate parish; Toukley had no church and became a separate parish some time later. The area had a real country atmosphere. Fr John O’Flaherty was the Parish Priest, an ascetic with a dry wit and a great reader. We were lucky to have a priest, a catholic school and the Sisters of St Joseph who taught us so well.
We lived at Warnervale; we progressed from sulky transport to a utility. The Saturday ritual was to prepare the back of the ute with four wooden egg boxes in two rows covered with blankets to seat the people we would give a lift to Mass on Sundays. It was a cold ride in winter but nice and cool in the summer. How times have changed!

My father was a gentleman who carried out any duties that the priest and/or nuns desired. He was a willing, tireless worker for the church. During the sixties my father and Ossie Hogan mowed the car park, church and presbytery grounds every week in the summer months and when needed in the winter months.

During the Christmas holidays, the church would be packed for the one Mass which alternated between 7.30am and 10am as Father had to travel to The Entrance for Mass too. Quite often Father would let us know at the end of the homily that there must have been many visitors from Cobar (known for its copper) the previous Sunday ie. there were too many pennies on the plate.

One of the chief sources of financing the parish was from the money raised from street stalls and house parties. These were good social events too as we would do the rounds of the house parties – no home-work would be done on these evenings!

It was quite a walk from the school to the church for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Fridays and for Confessions on the first Thursday of the month. The road was not tarred or curbed and guttered, so it was quite rough and steep. Father loved sitting at the back of the church and knocking off some of the girls’ hats as we were leaving the church. In those days of course we had to wear hats in the church. There were giggles and many oo ahs. I’m not sure what Sister thought!

I thank God for the gift of Faith and for St Cecilia’s Parish and my parents who helped nurture it.

Childhood Memories of the Wyong Parish in the 1960’s by Kerrie Hogan Harvey
I lived in Wyong with my mum, dad and brother and we used to walk to Mass on Sunday mornings as there was no Saturday night Mass as there is now. In the late 60’s we got a car and because of this I didn’t have to get out of bed so early, which I thought was great. Mum always dressed us up for Mass, as they say “in your Sunday best”, complete with hat or scarf for your head or something mum called a mantilla – women had to wear hats or something on their heads in those days and men had to take their hats off. We had to sit up straight, not fidget and not talk. Every person I knew was always there and a lot I didn’t. Everyone used to stand around after Mass and talk and chat while we kids ran around and played.
I can remember walking down Anzac Avenue in Wyong in the dark when I was about three or four (someone always picked us up) but I don’t remember much after that. Later I realised we would be going to Midnight Mass at The Entrance for Christmas as Wyong didn’t have Midnight Mass at that time and obviously I wasn’t that interested as I slept right through it. We must have been lucky or dad arranged to be picked up as we always got a lift.

I made my First Holy Communion at St Cecilia’s in 1967. We had religion first lesson every morning at school. When we made our First Communion, all the girls were dressed in white dresses and veils and the boys in grey or black trousers and white shirts. Each child sat at the end of the pew with their family starting from the front seat. My cousin, Michael, sat in the pew opposite me. The first two families with their child went up and knelt at the altar rail, received Communion and so on down the row. It was very formal and well organised, but of course there were maybe only 15 to 20 of us. Then we went to the school for a Communion Breakfast. It was a great day! For Confirmation the Bishop came and quizzed us on what we had learnt in our catechism books. We had to kiss his ring as we left the church.

We went to Mass every Friday morning. We walked up to the church and then walked back down to school. Fr O’Flaherty always had a joke for us that I couldn’t wait to tell mum.

I was married in St Cecilia’s Church on a Friday night by Fr Kennedy; my daughter, Bethany, was baptised by Deacon Terry O’Brien; Jonty, my son, was baptised by Fr Paul; my daughter, Alicia, was married by Fr Brian; and my grand-daughter, Charli, was baptised by Fr Peppin.

I have been to many beautiful weddings and baptisms at St Cecilia’s over the years and the ladies who do the flowers make the church look wonderful for these special occasions. The priests have, as in the case of my husband’s family, made the non-Catholics feel very welcome and very much at home.
A Church on the Hill

‘A hundred years with God’, the letters boast,
A journey of faith on the Central Coast,
Through love and labour and good will,
By the Grace of God –
   Stands a church on the hill.

A century ago, through rugged bushland,
Rode Fathers Woolfrey to Wyong’s small band
Of faithful pioneers at Woodbury’s Inn,
Anxious for the Sacraments to begin.

A century ago, a Good Samaritan
Donated land, so it has been written,
For two churches to stand side by side,
An ecumenical vision: a future guide.

A century ago, fund raising began,
The Breakwells and O’Connors socials ran,
Helped by Cecilia, Woodbury’s daughter,
And a church was built of bricks and mortar.

A century ago, in 1908
St Cecilia’s was Blessed on a fateful date,
And in 2008 is with us still.
By the Grace of God –
   Stands a church on the hill.

Elizabeth McVie © 2008


**APPENDIX A**

The Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches united on June 22, 1977. They are now known as The Uniting Church.

**APPENDIX B**

**Information from the Australian Catholic Directories:**

**Fr. John O’Flaherty BA**

1921 - 1922 Assistant at St Columba’s College, Springwood – Fr PC Cregan PP
1923 Assistant at Penrith – Fr Thomas Ryan PP
1924 - 1925 Assistant at Newtown – Fr PC Cregan PP
1926 Assistant at Camperdown – Fr TG Kelleher PP
1927 - 1930 Assistant at Forest Lodge, Pyrmont - Mons.PL Coonan PP

Fr O’Flaherty was recorded as being ‘on leave’ during 1938 with Fr John Phelan acting as administrator as appointed by N.T. Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney. Part of his letter states the following:

‘Your salary will be at the rate of £12 per month and if any surplus Revenue remains at the end of your period of administration ask me for directions as to its disposal.’

**Fr. Michael O’Beirne**

Fr O’Beirne is listed as ‘on leave’ from his parish in Wellington NZ from 1944 to 1955. He regularly helped Fr O’Flaherty in Wyong Parish and his name is recorded in our baptismal records periodically from July 1941 to February 1953. He died on August 17, 1955.
APPENDIX C

According to baptismal records the following Priests/Deacons helped in Wyong Parish:

1914 – 1934
Fr J Egan
Fr WJ Hurley
Fr AJ Perkins
Fr James J Massey
Fr Hugh Conaghan
Fr Reginald Lummer
Rev Fr Triffle CSSR

1935 – 1964
Fr JJ McCarthy
Fr J Phelan
Fr J Finnerty
Fr J Nolan
Fr Michael O’Beirne
Fr I Cronin
Fr D O’Connor
Fr W O’Regan
Fr J O’Quinn
Fr JC Bartlett OFM
Fr M Murphy
Fr K Byrne
Fr P Van Oss CSSR
Fr JJ Hatton
Fr EJ Barry

1965 – 1988
Fr WJ Dew MSC
Fr John Keeble
Fr P O’Rielly SVD
Fr Jeremy Flynn
Fr V Doyle
Fr Frank Larkin WF
Fr Smith SJ
Fr J Tierney
Fr C Slattery
Fr James Collins

1989 – 2008
Fr V Warren
Fr G Foley
Fr Boberg
Fr R Borg
Fr P Keenan
Fr R Shanahan
Fr D Foley
Fr Paul Finucane
Fr P Ryan
Fr P Leonard OFM
Fr K Sharkey
Fr C Smith SJ
Deacon Terry E O’Brien
Fr E Lynch
Fr P Fitzgerald
Mons Vince J Marley
Fr JB Gahan
Fr K Hurd
Fr Finian Egan
Fr Barry Kirby OFM
Deacon Jim McKeon
Fr Barry Dwyer
Fr David Maguire
Fr Vince Pedemont
Fr Jaroslav Sinek
Fr Peter Jones
Deacon Paul Simmons
Fr Denis Callahan
Fr Simon Bourke
Deacon James Phelan
Fr Maurice Rosa
Deacon Jim Caulfield
Fr Denis Callahan
Fr John Krewenka
# The following Nuns taught at St Cecilia’s School:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915 - 1921</td>
<td>Raymond Elliott</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1960 - 1962</td>
<td>Ferdinand Fuhlendorf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915 - 1918</td>
<td>Dara Banks</td>
<td></td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Joan (Columba) Keating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Cuthbert Bagshawe</td>
<td></td>
<td>1960 - 1963</td>
<td>Catherine Gleece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916 - 1921</td>
<td>Killian Hendrick</td>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Mary (Majella) Baker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922 - 1928</td>
<td>Geraldine Coffey</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1961 - 1962</td>
<td>Bernadette(geoffrey)O’Sullivan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Theophilus Robertson</td>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Monica Therese McMahon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Christina Murphy</td>
<td></td>
<td>1962 - 1963</td>
<td>Rosalie (Celine) O’Neill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923 - 1925</td>
<td>Romana Burke</td>
<td></td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Catherine de Ricci Woodhouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924 - 1928</td>
<td>Terence Kiley</td>
<td></td>
<td>1962 - 1964</td>
<td>Maurice McCarthy - Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Theophilus Robertson</td>
<td></td>
<td>1962 - 1965</td>
<td>Eymard Harvey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923 - 1925</td>
<td>Romana Burke</td>
<td></td>
<td>1962 - 1966</td>
<td>Eileen (Gerard) Foley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926 - 1928</td>
<td>Olga Flaherty</td>
<td></td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Noeline (Joseph) Nelson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926 - 1937</td>
<td>Urban Dowsey</td>
<td></td>
<td>1965 - 1969</td>
<td>Francesca Lets - Principal from 1966</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929 - 1930</td>
<td>Athanasius Bolt</td>
<td></td>
<td>1965 - 1973</td>
<td>Barbara Lyons - Principal from 1970</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929 - 1930</td>
<td>Alphonsa Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Patricia Josephine McEnery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931 - 1934</td>
<td>Sylvia Dudson</td>
<td></td>
<td>1966 - 1967</td>
<td>Robyn (Christopher) Cook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Giusepppe Omodei</td>
<td></td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Jerome Raisback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933 - 1934</td>
<td>Imelda Morrison</td>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Elaine (Damian) Golding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Joan Gattenhof</td>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Margaret Anne Brady</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934 - 1938</td>
<td>Marguerite Doyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Paula (Agatha) Nickle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935 - 1940</td>
<td>Magdalene Daly</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Austin Keane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936 - 1937</td>
<td>Katherine Murphy</td>
<td>(Benigna)</td>
<td>1968 - 1969</td>
<td>Ida (Leontius) Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938 - 1940</td>
<td>Agnes Wallace</td>
<td></td>
<td>1968 - 1970</td>
<td>Patricia(Marie Louise)Snudden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Honorine Murphy</td>
<td></td>
<td>1969 - 1971</td>
<td>Joanne MacRae</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938 - 1951</td>
<td>Leonidas Kerr</td>
<td></td>
<td>1970 - 1971</td>
<td>Angela Cunneen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938 - 1940</td>
<td>Winifred Bartels</td>
<td></td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Ruth (Gerard) Ross</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 - 1949</td>
<td>Denis Earl</td>
<td></td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Geraldine Meany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 - 1945</td>
<td>Raphael Vincent</td>
<td></td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Margaret (Carmelita) le Breton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941 - 1946</td>
<td>Bernarda Dwyer</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Cornelius Christie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941 - 1946</td>
<td>Agnes Francis Miller</td>
<td></td>
<td>1973 - 1975</td>
<td>Agneta Crowley - Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942 - 1946</td>
<td>Helen Dahlberg</td>
<td></td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Veronica Lynch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947 - 1951</td>
<td>Teresita Heffernan</td>
<td></td>
<td>1973 - 1978</td>
<td>Monica Joseph Ryan(Toukley)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Teresa (Cyril) Keane</td>
<td></td>
<td>1974 - 1976</td>
<td>Margaret (Verona) Gooley- Superior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948 - 1949</td>
<td>Richard Brosnahan</td>
<td></td>
<td>1974 - 1978</td>
<td>Olave Walsh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Sebastian</td>
<td></td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Margaret (Anthony) Ferris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 - 1958</td>
<td>Terzito Palise</td>
<td></td>
<td>1975 - 1978</td>
<td>Dorothea Neilson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 - 1953</td>
<td>Conleth Foley</td>
<td></td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Maree Larkin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951 - 1956</td>
<td>John de Britto O’Connell</td>
<td></td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Marianna Delaney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 - 1957</td>
<td>Conception Byrne</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1976 - 1978</td>
<td>Anthony Hogan - Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 - 1953</td>
<td>Mary (Patricia) Luscombe</td>
<td></td>
<td>1977 - 1978</td>
<td>Marcia Therese Cox - Superior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Aloysia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Doris (John) O’dwyer      *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 - 1956</td>
<td>Margaret (Leon) Maher</td>
<td></td>
<td>1979 - 1984</td>
<td>Marie (Joanne) Manche - Principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Catherine (Finbarr) Duggan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teaching at school after convent closed*