

A Celebration of Our Church's History
(1861-2013)

'Out of the Ashes'



by St Mary's School students

Special Message

This project has been a huge learning experience for all the people who were involved. Because of the children's '*need to know*', many locals have had to dig deep in their memory banks when they received phone calls, often more than one, asking, "When? Why? How? and Where?"

The booklet the children have produced is a record of the information they have gathered. As in all historical booklets, some information may have been missed or incorrectly recorded.

Thank you to the children, parishioners and teachers who have given their time and expertise to put this document together for the celebration of the rebirth of St. Mary's Rutherglen.

Enjoy the celebrations,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Walsh." with a horizontal line underneath.

Frances Walsh

Contents

	Page
The Fire	1
The History of St Mary's Church, Rutherglen	5
The Parish of Rutherglen	
Priests of St Mary's Parish, Past and Present (1861 – 2013)	
The Catholic Church Buildings of Rutherglen	
Nano Nagle, Founder of the Presentation Sisters	
The Presentation Sisters	
A Timeline of Our Church's history	13
Where to After the Fire?	16
Where to After the Disastrous Fall of St Mary's Church?	
St Mary's School Lends a Helping Hand	
Fundraising For The New Church	
The Selling of Crops	
Recycling The Old Church	
Street Stalls	
Gymkhana	
Community Spirit	
Building Towards a Better Future	22
Building of The New Church	
Turning a Dream into Reality	
Opening of The New Church	
A Vision Recognised	
Changing Times	
Glossary	26

The Fire

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with the help of Faye Lappin.*

“God will bring you through the fire.”

Psalm 66:12



Due to a lack of official details and reports, this is a fictional account of what may have happened on the night of the fire, written by the students.

Thank you to those people who were happy to have their name in this story.

The Fire

“Fire, fire! call the fire brigade!” shouted someone from the crowd of people that had woken up to the smell of thick, black, cloudy, smoke that was surrounding St Mary’s Catholic Church, on the night of the 28th March 1961.

Buckets, hoses, rakes and shovels were snatched from nearby houses while other Rutherglen locals ran to the bell tower to alert the town of the emergency.

As the fire truck charged up High Street, men clung to the side of it shouting, “How bad is this fire?”

Their question was soon answered, as they approached the burning church. Fireman stopped in shock at the sight of what looked like an unstoppable blaze that was consuming their beloved church.



The last photo of the ruined church before the roof collapsed.

They jumped off the truck and quickly unwound their hoses and connected them to the town water supply. Fire fighters reached up onto the side of the truck and pulled down the ladders that they would need.

In the meantime, Mary McLinden, woke suddenly from her sleep. She nudged her husband, Tony, saying, “Wake up!” He woke up in disbelief, not knowing what was going on. Mary grabbed her dressing gown and raced outside. From her house she could see flames leaping high into the air coming from the roof of St Mary’s Church. One neighbour grabbed buckets of water and hoses, whilst Mary frantically tried to ring the Rutherglen fire brigade. They raced through the crowd and saw people throwing water at the flames and they joined in.

Many people were staring in shock, very scared at the sight of what was happening to their church. Before people knew it, the fire trucks had reached the fire and the men were shouting, "Move along! Coming through! Get out of our way! Move back please!"

Throughout the crowd, people could be heard crying out, "We want to help! We want to save our church!"

The six fire fighters who had jumped off the truck had surrounded the church and struggled to hold their hoses onto the fire.



From the Walsh farm, 'Mount View' on Humphreys Rd, Tom Walsh and Jack Blampied, who was visiting, heard the fire bell and they all watched from the back verandah as the church burnt. Tom and Jack went into town to help fight the fire.

Students from Mount Carmel school inspect the ruins.

As was the case in many fires in those days, it rekindled during the early morning and the fire brigade had to return to further douse the fire that had smouldered long into the night. At 6 o'clock in the morning the flames had come back to life and grew higher and higher.

A man out walking his dog that morning, spotted the fire and again called the fire brigade who rushed up the hill one final time to completely put out the fire.

The next day, townsfolk came from all over Rutherglen to look at the blackened ruins. There were also many visiting priests to console Fr. Owens and to look at the remains. People were crowding around the church, some in tears and some just so disheartened. They were all thinking about where they would go for Mass and if there was going to be another church soon, but no words were spoken.

Silence filled the air.



Fr. Owens (centre) looks at what is left of his church.

The History of St Mary's Church, Rutherglen

Written by Megan Fleming, Hayley Berry, Zara Wicks, Matthew Curran, Fin North, Darcy Bartlett, Larissa Davies, Paula De La Vera Anaiz, Jorja Kingston, Krystal Steve, Emily Bennett, Brayden Field, Storm Foley-Evans and Brooke Doyle with the help of Frances Walsh and Anne Bilston

**“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid nor dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Joshua 1:9



The Opening of the New Church.

The Parish of Rutherglen



*The Mass Tree is an old red gum
on the banks of the Murray River
at Wahgunyah.*

The Beechworth Parish was founded in 1861. The Parish extended from Rutherglen to Omeo. The Parish Priest of this huge Parish was Fr. O'Callaghan who travelled around the Parish on a horse drawn buggy, celebrating Masses, Baptising and conducting Marriages. Priests were very rarely available for a funeral unless they were close by. The next time the Priest was in the community, he would say a blessing over the grave.

The first Mass in the Rutherglen district was celebrated at the "Mass Tree" in Wahgunyah, by Dean Tierney in 1869. This tree is still standing. Other Masses were celebrated in private homes around the Parish.



The plaque at the 'Mass Tree'.

Priests of St Mary's Parish, Past and Present (1861 - 2013)

In 1876 the Parish was sub-divided again into Chiltern, Rutherglen, Barnawartha and Wahgunyah, with Chiltern as the main church in the Parish.

Rutherglen became a parish on its own in 1924 with Monsignor Lawless as the Parish Priest. Many priests came and went over the 152 years, including;

Fr. Charles Van der Hayden (1876-1888)
Fr. Patrick Carolan (1888-1892)
Fr. Richard Carr (1892-1895)
Fr. Michael O'Connor (1892-1905)
Fr. Edward Delaney, curate (unknown)
Fr. Denis Hogan (1905-1910)
Fr. James Cremen (unknown)
Fr. Patrick Griffin (unknown)
Dean James Gaffey (unknown)
Monsignor James Lawless (1924-1958) -
Curates during that time, Fr. Basil & Fr. Marr
Fr. Wood, curate (1924-1958)
Fr. Tony Elliot (unknown)
Fr. Patrick O'Sullivan (1958-1961)
Fr. Frank Owens (1961-1968)
Fr. Robert Smith (1968-1989) -
Curate during that time, Fr Gallagher
Fr. John Ware (1989 to current)



***Fr. Ware in 1954
at his ordination.***

As Rutherglen was such a large parish, there were often curates appointed to help the parish priests to perform their duties. In the earlier days of the church there was a limit of how many Masses a priest could celebrate in one day, so if there were four churches in the parish, you needed two priests. Also, the fasting regulations were so strict that the Masses had to be much earlier in the day than they are now. There was no evening Mass allowed.

The Catholic Church Buildings of Rutherglen

The first brick church was built in High Street, Rutherglen in 1875. In 1898 the old church had an extension added to cater for the larger crowds. The brick church was burnt down in March 1961 and the current church opened in September in 1963.



The present school administration building was built in 1901 as a school.

In 1990 it became the school's administration and library when the new school building was built on the site of the first brick church.

The wooden building, which was across the rear of the present school block was the infant classroom, and eventually became the 'Jack Kelly' meeting room.



Nano Nagle, Founder of the Presentation Sisters



Nano Nagle was born in 1718 at Ballygriffin, County Cork in Ireland. After completing her education in France with the Ursuline sisters, Nano returned to Ireland. In that time Ireland was under the control of the British Government and no Irish person was allowed to go to school to learn to read and write.

Nano set up small hedge schools on the side of the road or deep in the fields out of sight, where children would come to her in groups to learn how to read and write. They had to be very careful of the soldiers on patrol because if they were caught learning they would be severely punished.

Four of her Irish girls volunteered to go to France to complete their education and become teachers.

Nano Nagle continued to support the Ursuline nuns but wanted more flexibility so she founded her own order, The 'Presentation Sisters' in Ireland. The main house is The South Presentation Convent, Cork.

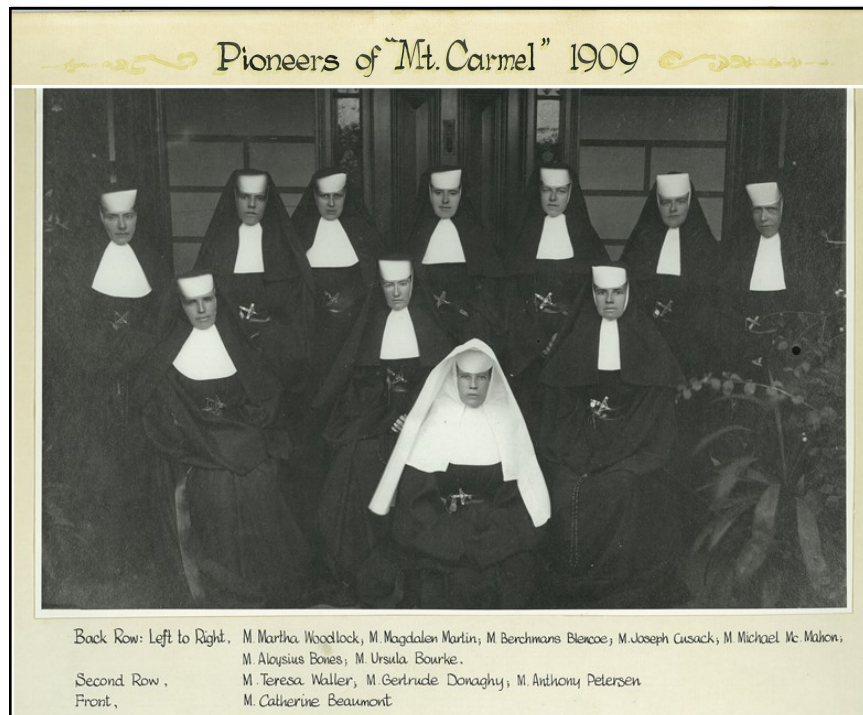
The Presentation Sisters are now working in the United Kingdom, U.S.A., India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand, Papua-New Guinea, South America, Africa and Thailand.

The Sisters are now involved in pastoral work within communities throughout the world. They are no longer teaching, as they were in the Rutherglen and Chiltern communities so many years ago.

The Presentation Sisters

Father Michael O'Connor was the Parish Priest of Rutherglen from 1895 to 1905. He recognised a lack of teaching professionals to educate the children of the Parish, both academically and spiritually. Father O'Connor wrote to the founder of the Presentation Sisters, Nano Nagle, who was in Ireland, to ask her to send some nuns to Rutherglen and Chiltern.

In 1901 the nuns came to Rutherglen by train and were met by a huge crowd of people. The nuns were taken to their new home in High Street. The house had been bought by the Parish and became the new convent.



There were ten nuns who came to Rutherglen, some resided in Rutherglen, while others moved to Chiltern.

The Presentation Sisters that remained in Rutherglen included:

Mother Gertrude Donaghy
Mother Ursula Payne
Sister Benedict Carolan
Sister Monica Bulger
Sister Martha Woodlock

Sister Martha Woodlock was in charge of the kitchen and milked the cow twice a day.

The Presentation Sisters that moved to Chiltern were:

Mother Francis Buckley
Sister Clare Conway
Sister Veronca Keating
Sister Anthony Byrne
Mother Sebastian Lardi

Since the original group of ten nuns in 1901, there have been 94 nuns who have worked and lived in the Rutherglen/Chiltern community.

Past students from Mount Carmel who entered religious orders were:

Sister Rita McKinty, Sister Rita Jones,
Sister Eileen Jones, Sister Una
Melville, Sister Lucille Jackson,
Sister Mary Keogh, Sister Frances Hargreaves
and Sister Patricia Kelly.



Mother Sebastian Lardi at age 90 decided to learn Indonesian.

Priests who originally educated at Mount Carmel were Father Francis Walsh, Father Vincent Walsh and Father Michael Grace.



Fr. Frank (Frank) Walsh, C.S.S.R.

Since the nuns moved to the new convent, Sister De Sales and Sister Christina have passed away. Sister De Sales was often seen Friday nights riding her bike to pick up the fish and chips for the nuns tea. A bike helmet on top of her religious veil, Sister was a common sight around town.

Sister Margaret arrived in Rutherglen in 2004 and was here for a short period of time, but has since transferred to a Melbourne convent.

Sister Lucille is our resident Sister and arrived the same time as Sister Margeret and is involved in many community activities. She is a keen card player at Glenveiw, distributes Communion to people who are unable to attend Mass and transports residents to senior citizens events.

The Presentation Sisters have played an important part in the history of our community and we thank them for their work.



Sr Christina Tovey and Sr de Sales Clark.

Timeline of Our Church's History

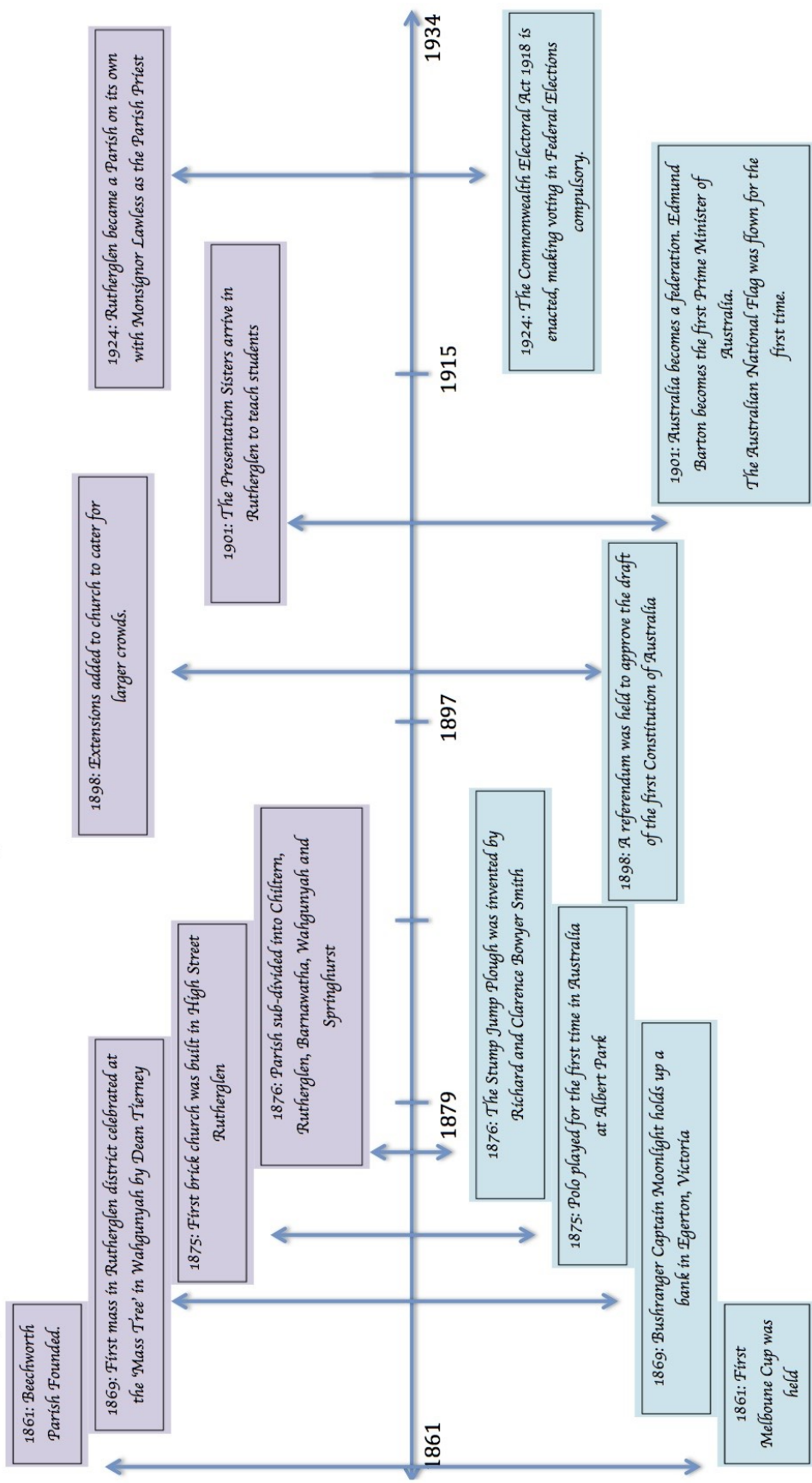
Constructed and researched by Zac Meyer, Sam Tynan,
Jessica Oats and Shaylee Parker-White

**"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith."**

Timothy 2 4:7

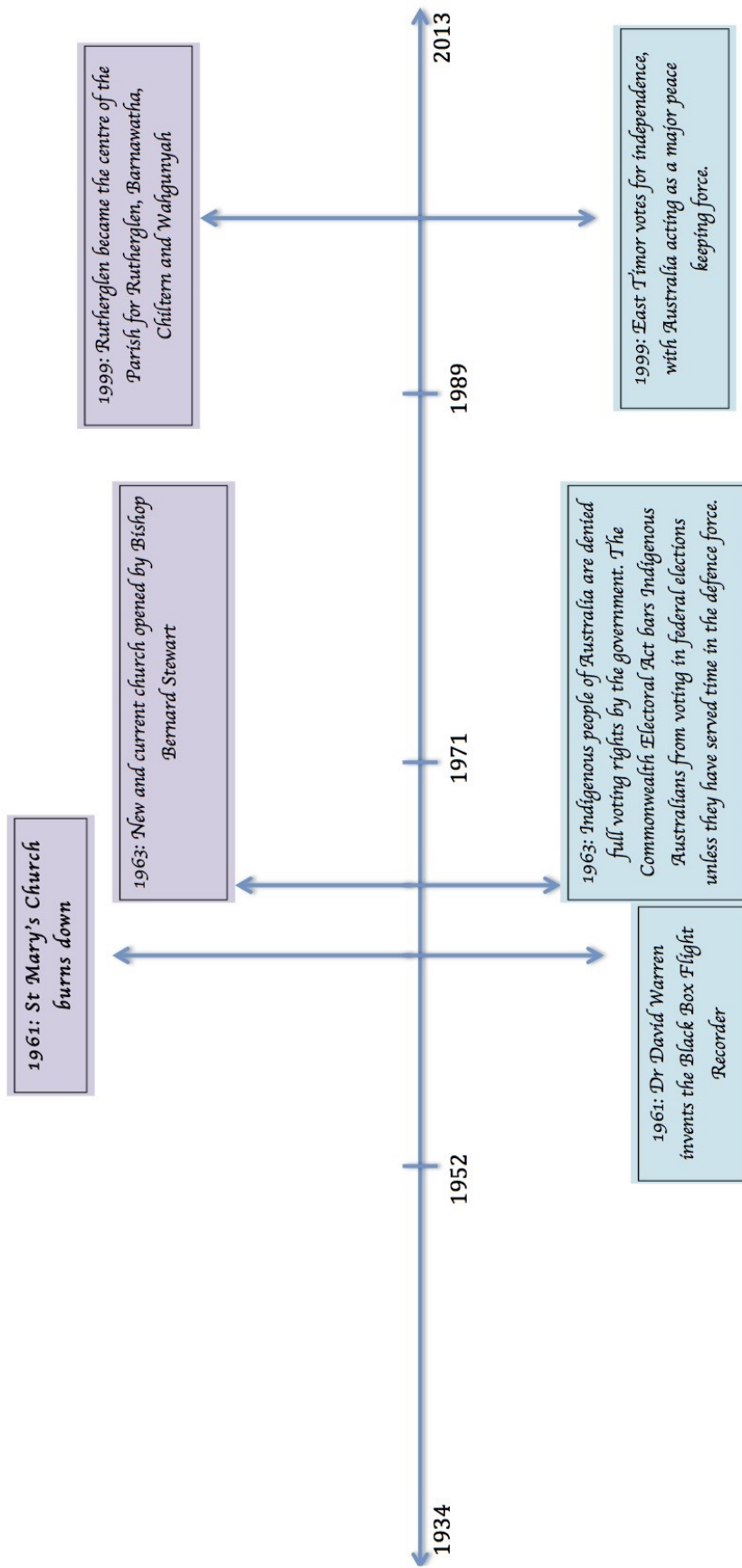


Important Dates in our Church's History



Important Dates in Australia's History

Important Dates in our Church's History



Important Dates in Australia's History

Where to After The Fire?

*Written by Elizabeth White, Jayelle Walsh, Layla Foley-Evans,
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**“For his anger is but for a moment; his favour is for a lifetime. Weeping
may linger for the night, but joys come with the morning.”**

Psalm 30:5



Where to After the Disastrous Fall of St Mary's Church?

It was 1961, March 28th and in the days and weeks following the fire, the church community of St Mary's was wondering where to go to next. Their beloved church had burnt to ashes and there was nowhere to celebrate the weekly Masses. The Catholic community of St Mary's was unhappy and anxious because they didn't know where to go. The community of Rutherglen soon offered venues for the weekly Masses. St Stephen's Church of England was willing to share, the Supper room at the Rutherglen Hall was offered, but the school building proved the more practical and logical venue, and therefore became the preferred option.

St Mary's School Lends a Helping Hand

Everything was destroyed in the fire, the chalice, the clothes and even the altar, so what could be used to perform Mass?

Mass had to be held in a regular classroom (which is now our school administration building).

Mass in the classroom felt normal to a lot of children as Kieran O'Keefe explains, "It felt normal as I can only just remember the inside of the old church, and going to Mass with my parents made it (church in the classroom) seem like it was a normal Sunday event."

Mr. O'Keefe also said, "The classroom was set up by about 5 to 6 men and would only take 20 minutes. Church went for about an hour because Father Owens was very slow (Father Smith and Father Ware were very fast by comparison).



1962 Mt Carmel Students.

The Church had to use different equipment from the classroom because the pews and other church furniture were damaged or destroyed in the fire.

“We used stackable school chairs, wooden seats, and steel frames to hold the people during Mass. 150-200 chairs at a guess. There always seemed to be a big crowd to a five year-old!” Mr. O’Keefe told us.

Mr. O’Keefe couldn’t recall exactly what was used as an altar, but he thought it would have been white starched tablecloths and candles. While Mass in the classroom was a good substitute for the time being, the people of Rutherglen needed a Church to pray and celebrate in. The church community started plans for the future Church.

Fundraising For The New Church

How was the money going to be raised to build a new church? That was the question on everyone’s mind in the town of Rutherglen. How could they find the funds? Even though the church was insured, money was still needed for the building. The parishioners decided that it was up to them to raise money to build a new church.

Maree Terrill remembers a lot of community fundraising. John Terrill (Snr), Councillor headed the committee to raise funds for the new church. They sold crops (ploughed paddocks and harvested crops), held a one off gambling night, held a gymkhana as part of the wine festival, bricks were washed and sold, and the Catholic Woman’s League held street stalls.

Father Owen, the Priest at the time, in order to prevent paying tax on the new building, decided to apply to have a war memorial included in the building of the new church.

The Selling Of Crops

John Terrill (Snr), Councillor generously donated a paddock to the church so they could plant and harvest wheat and oats. They were able to harvest two successful crops, but the third year proved dismal, with a hailstorm knocking the crops flat.



The War Memorial inside St Mary's Church

Recycling The Old Church

St Mary's Church was too dangerous to salvage, so Buscall and Cullen, a local builder, was hired to knock down the remaining walls. After this procedure, the school communities of St Mary's School and Mount Carmel Convent collected the bricks and washed them, ready to be sold.



Bricks from the church were cleaned ready to be sold.

Paving laid at Tony & Jan Walsh's is recycled from the Church building.



The bricks from the ruins were used in several buildings around town, including the residences of Robin and Sam Vonthien, and in the paving at Carla and Kevin Walsh's and Tony and Jan Walsh's. A steel doorframe was also recycled and is now located at Carla and Kevin Walsh's.



40 High Street, Rutherglen, the home of Robin & Sam Vonthien. Recycled bricks from the old church have been used in the building.

Street Stalls

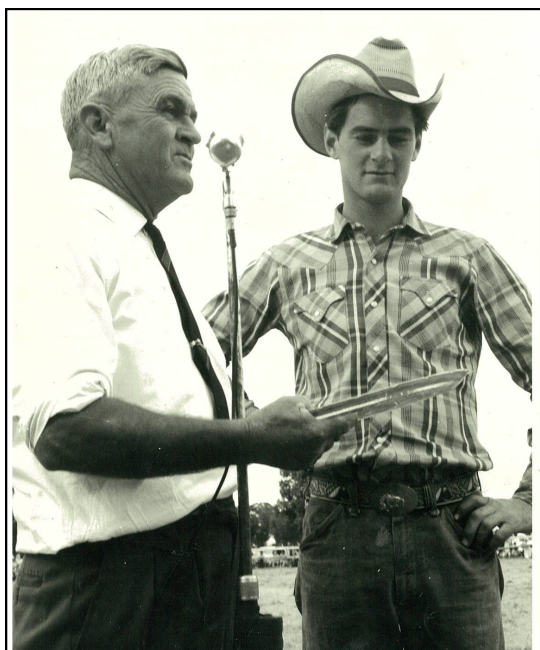
The Catholic Women's League held street stalls to fundraise for the building of the new church. Stalls were held at the front of Tony Gillman's shop, which was then Henderson's Grocery Store. A trestle was used, and the raffle prize was either a fruitcake or a fowl.

In those days, the stalls went all day and there were lots of people around, especially on a Friday. Farmers came into town as well. You didn't have to get permission from the shire to hold a stall. Stalls were manned mostly by Kath Kelly, Iris Carey, Flo Walsh, Beryl Walsh and Nell Glasgow.

You didn't have to write the ingredients on the cooking, you could use fresh cream and no health authorities were checking on you.

Gymkhana

Dallas O'Keefe and her husband, Jack, organised a gymkhana to raise money for the new church. The first year was a raging success as no money was outlaid for the cattle and riders received no prizes, which meant all money raised went entirely to the new church building project. In the second year, however, new riders who weren't familiar with the community project expected prizes and money and subsequently the gymkhana was not as successful as the first.



Bruce Ryan (New Zealander) presented with a trophy by Den Gillman.

Community Spirit

It was inspirational the way the community all chipped in to raise money for the new and communal church, which is now used for weekly Mass, school celebrations and religious ceremonies. If it were not for the amazing support the local Catholic community demonstrated, there would be no St Mary's Church, as we know it today.



*2013 Confirmation candidates with
Bishop Leslie and Father Ware.*

Building Towards a Better Future

Written by Henry Smits, Kianne Steve, Jayden Bryant, Jordan McKenzie, Toby Robins, Lilli Chennell-Jarvis, Callam Cann, Caron Bilston, Matilda Chick, Tylan Landers-Wood, Caitlin Somerville, Erin Huggins, Matthew Ritchie and Sabastian Taylor

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Corinthians 2 5:7



Building of the New Church

Mr. Bob Garland's Building Company built the new church and the community held numerous working bees in preparation of the grand opening.

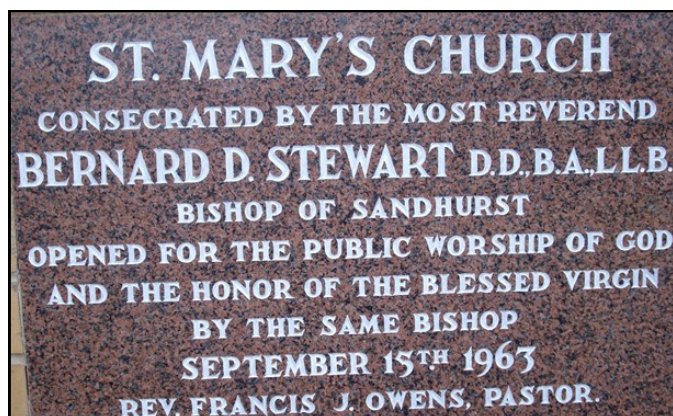
The bricks from the old church were washed and sold.



A working bee establishing the garden at the new St Mary's Church building—Kingsley Koche (Station Master) at back, Hec Francis, Phil Cullen, Tony Walsh, Jack Kelly and Fred Terrill.

Turning a Dream into Reality

After the old church burnt down it left the town with one of the hardest decisions it would ever have to make, was the community going to have Mass in a small classroom or were they going to build a new church? That's where the building came in. After all the fantastic fundraising efforts, the Parish, along with the help of Mr. Bob Garland's Building Company, started to turn a dream of a small community into a reality. All went well thanks to the many people who helped. It was inspirational to see so many people help contribute in some way, towards the new church building.



The Opening of The New Church

Finally after two whole years of sweat and hard work, the new church was opened on a warm spring day on Tuesday, 17th September 1963. There were lots of rejoicing citizens and plenty of onlookers from all around Australia. The total number of people who made the journey to the opening of the new St Mary's Church, tallied up to about 1000. Those in attendance included a special visit from Bishop Stewart, who opened the building. All witnessed the extremely significant opening of St Mary's Church.



A community celebrates the opening of St Mary's Church.

A Vision Recognised

The New Church made a big impact on the town. The people fancied how big the new church was and how much space it had compared to the old church. People loved coming to the new church to have Mass and to pray. It was a more restful and peaceful area to have Mass and the size was important to the people because of the number of people that came to Mass.

The church is made of cream coloured bricks, with 28 wooden rows of seats (also known as pews). There is a choir stand up at the back with 9 pews (on the 2nd storey). It has St Mary's Chapel where school classes have their separate Masses. There are also two places where you can receive the sacrament of reconciliation. It has a huge space where you can sit and on the right side there is a huge gap where young children can move around without disturbing anyone.

It has a huge outside area, perfect for playing. The garden is large with a really nice garden bed (six roses, eight lavenders, eight agapanthus and a few others). There's a green lawn with older trees. The children that go to Mass normally use the trees as barley in the game of tag.



St Mary's Church at the Opening Mass.

Changing Times

Back in 1961, the old church was small and rules were very strict. People had certain areas in which they had to sit every time they came to Mass. Mass was also different back in that day. The Priest would stand with his back towards the people and would speak Latin. Today, the Priest faces the people and speaks in English.



St Mary's Catholic Church in its current glory.

Glossary

Aisle	An architectural division of a church separated from the nave by rows of pillars.
Altar	The table in the church at which the bread and wine are consecrated in communion services.
Baptism	A rite of admission into the Catholic Church.
Bishop	A senior member of the Catholic clergy, typically in charge of a diocese.
Biretta	A stiff square hat with four ridges on its upper side.
Chalice	The wine cup used in the Catholic Eucharist.
Convent	A catholic community under monastic vows, such as one of nuns.
Curate	An ordained member of the clergy engaged as an assistant to a parish priest.
Diocese	A district under the pastoral care of a bishop in the Catholic Church.
Eucharist	The Catholic ceremony commemorating the Last Supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated.
Founder	A person who establishes an institution or settlement for a specific purpose, e.g., Nano Nagle.
Habit	A distinctive set of garments worn by members of a religious order.
Host	Unleavened bread consecrated in the Eucharist.
Mass	Where the community come to celebrate Eucharist and pray as a group.
Monsignor	The title of senior Roman Catholic priests, such as a prelate or an officer of the papal court.
Mother	A senior religious sister.
Nano Nagle	Founder of the Presentation Sisters.
Novice	A person who has entered a religious order.
Nun	A member of a religious institute of women.
Parish	A small administrative district typically having its own church and a priest.
Office	A prayer service, such as Morning or Evening Prayer.
Sacraments	A religious ceremony or act of the Catholic Church that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace.
Seminary	A college that prepares male students to be priests.
Sister	A member of a religious order or congregation of women.
Stole	A long strip or loop of cloth worn around the neck of a priest during religious ceremonies.
Tabernacle	An ornamented receptacle or cabinet in which a pyx or ciborium containing the reserved sacrament may be placed in Catholic churches, usually on or above an altar.
Vows	A set of promises committing one to a prescribed role, calling, or course of action, typically to marriage or a monastic career.
wedding	A marriage ceremony.
Wine	Wine used during Eucharist.

Acknowledgments

*While doing this project we needed a lot of help and support.
Many people gave up their time to come and guide us,
so we could get the facts right and our story straight.*

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