

The People in the Memorials of St Martin's

A talk by Rodney Wetherell  
St. Martin's Day, 13 Nov. 2005

It must be a sign of age, that in the last couple of years I have been reading the memorial plaques in St. Martin's, and not only during the sermon. For most of my life I have regarded memorials as boring. Now I think they are wonderful, and wish there could be more, not necessarily of the same type as we have now.

**Other people laboured, and you have entered into their labour.**

- as Jesus said to his disciples. We have entered into an inheritance built up through much labour and love. Let's remember our forefathers and foremothers who founded this parish and maintained its life over 127 years.

First thing to say: there are remarkably few memorial plaques in St. Martin's, especially compared with our neighbours St. John's Toorak and Christ Church South Yarra where there isn't much wall space left. No doubt this reflects the lower economic status of our parishioners in the early days. There are some notable exceptions, the Were family and the Hughes family being two, and this leads to the point that throughout history, those with memorials have been those whose families could afford them – either that or they commanded such respect that others clubbed together for them.

Second thing: only one of the 18 previous vicars or priests-in-charge of St. Martin's is commemorated by a plaque in the church, and he has three – well, one for him and two for members of his family. He was a man of means, building our splendid vicarage with his own money. This was the Revd. William Kennedy Brodribb, ordained priest by Bishop Perry in 1870, but after he nailed his High Church colours to the mast, Perry refused to give him a parish. I suspect that Brodribb was not the most diplomatic of men. He went to England, becoming vicar of St. Martin's, Hove near Brighton, returning to Melbourne after Perry's departure. Brodribb's plaque is a beauty, but it's up in the sanctuary on the right, so most people don't see it often. AMDG, it says, Ad Majorem Dei Gloria and in loving memory of William Kennedy Brodribb, founder of this church, priest in charge 1883-1889, 'All loving, by all beloved'.

A small and obscurely placed plaque honours another priest who is not listed among St. Martin's clergy but who perhaps should be. This is the Revd. Horace Finn Tucker, second vicar of Christ Church South Yarra. St. Martin's is a daughter church of Christ Church and was not financially independent of it for several years. Thus Horace Tucker was in fact the first Vicar of St. Martin's, not Brodribb who was priest-in-charge – a fact often pointed out in early vestry minutes. His plaque is on the reredos – the

carved wooden structure behind the high altar which is probably our greatest art treasure, having been carved by Robert Prenzel, the best wood craftsman of those days. It seems likely that Finn Tucker was behind Brodribb's appointment here – possibly he talked Bishop Moorhouse into having him back in the Diocese with the promise of keeping an eye on him. After all, Brodribb was married to Tucker's sister – so there could be a touch of nepotism there.

The largest single memorial in the church is the honour board, and a very fine one it is. It was dedicated in 1921, as was the grey granite cross outside. I hope we all look at the honour board sometimes, reading the names and reflecting on what it meant to serve this country in the First World War, thousands of miles from home. 84 men and 4 women are commemorated, 13 being killed in battle. We know little about most of those commemorated. Familiar names are Were and Kent Hughes, W.S. or Wilfrid being one of the latter – he was at Gallipoli, not on the first day like Clive Were, but three weeks after 25<sup>th</sup> April. After some time he caught one of the viruses rampant on the battlefield, and was taken to hospital, away from the danger zone. He had a distinguished military career, serving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War as well, spending time in Changi. Sir Wilfrid as he became went into politics, becoming a minister in the Menzies and Holt Governments, and a well-known scourge of Communists. In 1924 Wilfrid Kent Hughes presented to the parish many of our Arundel prints – they had belonged to his uncle Ernest Selwyn Hughes, Vicar of St. Peter's Eastern Hill from 1900. And there are two clergy on the honour board: the Revd. Leonard Maund who was Vicar of St. Martin's from 1914 to 1920, and G. Gilder, priest, a St. Martin's boy who later became Vicar of St. Bartholomew's Burnley. Maund served as a chaplain to the A.I.F., presumably in France, in 1918 and '19 while another priest acted as Vicar. There is no honour board for the Second World War – instead, the chapel at the west end, now replaced by the community centre, was dedicated as the Peace Memorial Chapel by Archbishop Booth in 1950. The plaque with that information is now among those now on the wall of our new memorial porch, the names of the fallen being Townsend, Hack, Major, Berger, Peaceful and Cambridge. Colin Bruce Berger was the brother of our parishioner Gwen Ward, and that's the only link I have found between the memorials and a present-day parishioner. Bruce as Gwen called him joined the RAAF and trained as a pilot, then was seconded to the RAF based in Limervardy, Northern Ireland. On a very foggy night, he with others flew to Germany with a full load of bombs, but the fog made it impossible to drop any of them. On the way back, still in fog, he flew into a cliff on the coast of Ireland with all the bombs.

**Let us now praise famous men and their fathers that begat them** – not forgetting the women and the mothers, but I'm using the old translation of the passage from Ecclesiasticus because it's so familiar and quaint.

Moving into the southern aisle, there's a large plaque to the memory of Herbert Percy and Edith May, children of Maude and James Evans – Herbert was just under four months old, and Edith was eight years old. Let's think of all the children who died of diseases now curable, and their families.

Commander James Evans R.N. was one of the important names in the early history of St. Martin's – but I haven't discovered why an officer of the Royal Navy came to Australia and lived in this area. There was no Royal Australian Navy of course, though there was a Victorian Navy. Herbert and Edith Evans are not the only children commemorated in our memorials – another is the girl featured in our most prominent plaque just behind the pulpit, daughter of Kennedy Brodribb and his wife. I have come close to shedding a tear over this one: 'Eanswith Alice Kennedy, only daughter of the Revd. W. Kennedy Brobribb and Anna Montgomery Brobdribb, who died at sea, 5 March 1889 aged 6 years. 'Grant O merciful God that she may ever grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. I wish we knew why Brodribb left St. Martin's after only 6 years, after he had put such effort and so much of his own money into the parish – he and his wife returned to England where he became vicar of Putleigh in Herefordshire, and died in 1896 at the age of only 49. On their way back to England young Eanswith died at sea. The vestry minutes for 3 March 1893 records that the then priest in charge, the Revd. James Auchinleck-Ross, had received a letter from Kennedy Brodribb saying that he had sent a tablet in memory of his child with the Revd. M. Beo, which he desired to be placed in the nave of St. Martin's. The minute reads 'It was decided to sanction same.' It sounds as if they did not have much choice – it seems Brodribb looked on St. Martin's as his church which he could adorn as he pleased, years after he had left it. Much earlier he had made sure that the 7<sup>th</sup> century English saint Eanswith was depicted in the left hand light of the central sanctuary window. The Brodribb touch often has a note of eccentricity about it, which may well have determined something about this parish from its earliest days.

Two more children: for many years, some plaques were placed on a ledge in the staircase as you went down to the crypt: Chorister William Keys fell asleep on 7 Sept. 1891, and chorister William Kemp fell asleep on 26 Sept. of the same year. Was there an outbreak of typhoid fever or diphtheria around that time? Perhaps others died at the same time, but if someone had not organized those two small plaques, we would not be even thinking about Master Keys and Master Kemp today. That's five children among our few memorials – rather unusual I think. Another plaque on that ledge, now on the wall in the porch, was in memory of Lilla Auchinleck-Ross, wife of the third priest in charge. 'After long and patiently borne suffering, she fell asleep on 4 April 1894, aged 37 years.' The death of Lilla caused a breakdown in health of Auchinleck-Ross himself – she had always had what was called delicate health. He took leave, to return to England for a time. The parish was supposed to pay him a portion of his stipend, the rest going to a locum, but it refused, and this led to a long-running dispute. Even when Bishop Goe urged the parish to pay the part-stipend, it again refused. This was possibly the most unpleasant single episode in St. Martin's history. Incidentally I knew very well one of Auchinleck-Ross's daughters Magdalene, who was a parishioner of my father's in Armidale NSW in the 1960s, and she often referred to St. Martin's. Only from this plaque was I able to work out how old Magdalene must have been when she died in the 1980s – at least 90, though she did not look it. Her sister, named Lilla after her mother, spent her life in a wheelchair.

Another plaque in the south nave aisle is in memory of James Alexander Morrison, one of the first guardians of this church who fell asleep 16 June 1893, and also of Edith Rosetta, loved wife of the above, who fell asleep 9 August 1893. 'They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not diminished.' Bishop James Grant tells me that the word vestry was not allowed to be used in those days until a parish was self-sufficient, and the words guardian and trustee were used. Some if not all of our early guardians personally underwrote the debt incurred on the church building – that is, if the parish defaulted on a repayment, the guardians had to pay out of their own pockets. In 1883 when the sanctuary and chancel were built, in the proudest decade of Marvellous Melbourne, financial trouble may have seemed remote. By 1891 when Brodribb had departed and a serious depression had begun, hard times for St. Martin's had begun in earnest. The vestry minutes for the 1890s and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century are full of talk about financial difficulties. In the parish archives is a letter from the aforementioned Commander James Evans R.N., dated 27 Jan. 1892. It's addressed to the Bishop in Council – the bishop being Field Flowers Goe – and in part it reads: 'St. Martin's has caused me years of anxiety and hard work. I relieved a trustee now in prison, solely with the object of furthering the church's work. A foreclosure on the part of the Building Society would mean ruin for me.' So that's what being a guardian was like. When the parish and its guardians could not pay the interest on the church loan, and there was talk of selling the building, the Diocesan Trust took over the loan from the Building Society and saved the situation for the time being. Moreover St. Martin's was able to become an independent parish for the first time. For all we say about the Diocese, it saved us once from liquidation.

Yet another Brodribb memorial is high on the wall in the narthex, and this is one of the real puzzles of St. Martin's – a serious engraving error, surely. The plaque reads: Frances Maria, wife of Armstrong Brodribb Esq., mother of Mrs. Brodribb, wife of the first vicar of this parish, died at Brighton, England 1885. Erected by her husband.' Lots of parishioners have noticed what can only be a mistake: Frances Maria Brodribb can't have been the mother of Mrs. Brodribb, she can only have been the mother of Mr. or Fr. Brodribb. Armstrong Brodribb was the wealthy pastoralist father of our priest in charge – but his life story has him living in Australia not England. Mrs. Brodribb senior may well have gone to Brighton England when her son was living there up to 1883, but why she was still there in 1885 is a bit of a mystery. The plaque, possibly sent from England as Eanswith's was later, must have gone up in Brodribb's time, so why didn't he get another one made with the correct wording? It's a long-lasting error.

Over to the north nave, one plaque is partly obscured by the door in the narthex screen when open, and has been so since 1943. It's in memory of John Tibeaud Macartney, a member of the vestry of this church for 33 years from its foundation in 1883, who died at Hawksburn in 1916. I have often wondered if he was related to the first Dean of Melbourne, Hussey Burgh Macartney, an Irishman who came out with Bishop Perry in 1848, but Macartney's great-granddaughter Nancy Basterfield thinks he

was not. The first Guardians of St. Martin's were: Macartney, Evans, Mercer, Bromby, Willan, Jefferson, Tod and Philpott – I wonder which was the one who went to jail.

Moving along the north nave wall, we come to the plaque in honour of Clive Wellington Were, born Hawksburn 1889, second son of Francis Wellington and Anna Isabella Were, who was killed in action in the Darnadelles on 25 April 1915, aged 26. Another tearful moment as we read this. There are photographs of Clive Were in some of the books about the Were family – he was a strapping young man, as was his brother Hugh who was also at Gallipoli but survived. Their sister Ina joined the First AIF as a nurse, and spent the war years stationed at hospitals in Egypt and France. All three are on the honour board. Francis or Frank Were was one of the sons of J.B. Were, a remarkable businessman who founded the stock-broking firm which still looms large in the city of Melbourne. The Weres were important in the development of several Australian states and New Zealand, and in Melbourne their principal province was Brighton, but JB's son Frank built a large house in Cromwell Road called Bonalbo, recalled today in Bunalbo Ave., a cul-de-sac off Cromwell Road near Toorak Road. Bonalbo has become Bunalbo for some reason. They also purchased our vicarage from Kennedy Brodrigg when he was going back to England – he must have needed the money and the parish couldn't afford to buy it. Clive Were was killed at Gallipoli on the day of the landing, 25 April, just as he went ashore, in the spot visited by a parish group in September this year. Hugh Were was wounded by a bullet through his shoulder and arm, some way up the hill. He was told to make his way back to the beach, but with the light fading and weakened after losing blood, he fell over a cliff and injured his back, spending all night on the ground. He was found next morning by stretcher bearers who took him to the shore from where he was taken to the hospital ship Ionian. Hugh spent several months at a base hospital in Alexandria, and returned to Melbourne late in 1915.

There is only one remaining memorial plaque in the church, a small one beside the honour board 'in proud and loving memory of Pilot Officer Douglas Doel of 77 Squadron RAAF, who died not in wartime but in a flying accident on 21 July 1954, not far from the RAAF base in Sale. The Gippsland Times reported the accident with the headline Blazing Aircraft Traps Crew after Smash. A Tiger Moth had been flying at 1000 feet but suddenly flipped on to its back and nose-dived. News of the fatal accident did not get into the Melbourne papers, and didn't rate much space in the Gippsland Times either. But Mrs. Pocock of St. Martin's was devastated – Douglas Doel was her foster son, and she arranged for the small plaque, and more importantly the three Air Force windows up above it. The windows show St. Michael in the centre with the RAAF insignia on one side and the Squadron 77 badge on the other.

Next to the sacristy, on the ground floor of the bell tower, for years was a plaque in memory of Anne Isabella Were, mother of Clive and Hugh, who died in 1931. The family gave the bells in memory of Isabella – a carillon of bells which have not been rung for years. That plaque is in the porch too. Also there is one taken off the old choirstalls: Stalls presented by friends of choirmaster Charles Truelove, 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity, 1901. It was said that the choir of St. Martin's in those days was the best

parish choir in Melbourne, going on tours of Tasmania and NSW. A plaque taken from the old choir vestry in the south-east corner commemorates John Stephen Hart, Vicar from 1907 to 1914 – he was no doubt the most intellectually distinguished of our Vicars, and became Bishop of Wangaratta. And there’s one for Jane Margaret and Dorothea, wife and daughter of Edward H. Bromby, organists, 1888 – Bromby was among the original vestry names, a Melbourne Grammar name too. An important small plaque commemorates the bequest of Sidney Briggs who died in 1986 in Victor Haste’s time. That unexpectedly large bequest was used to make numerous improvements to the interior including the altar platform and the carpet, and the complete renovation of the crypt – this all happened early in the incumbency of Fr. David Head. I haven’t covered the dedications of the stained glass windows, but will just mention two names: Angus Elor Palmer, Vicar 1957-1970, and his wife Sylvia, Lucy May Johnson of St. Alban’s Armadale, remembered by many people here today. She was involved in the Girls Friendly Society at a national level, and Heather O’Donnell was one of Auntie Lou’s GFS girls. Like Sidney Briggs, she left a substantial bequest to St. Martin’s.

**And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished as if they had never been; and are become as if they had never been born.**

I love this verse from Ecclesiasticus, but do you agree - if you have no memorial, it’s as though you had never been born? The scriptural writer goes on about their seed standing fast, and remaining forever. But it’s worth thinking about, that we pay more attention to Kennedy Brodribb today because of the three memorials in the church – most of his 17 successors are not commemorated at all, and neither are the vast majority of churchwardens, vestry members or parishioners. Just as well, you may say – we don’t want to end up like a provincial version of Westminster Abbey. But it is good to keep in mind all those who have gone before us, who had joys and problems very similar to those we have now. Should more parishioners be commemorated in plaques, windows or elsewhere? I believe so. I’ll just add one more comment: that the plaques in the nave are not well-placed, and there’s no sacrilege in re-placing them. It’s wonderful that from today we have all the plaques displaced by changes over the years given a permanent place in the new memorial porch.

**All these were honoured in their generations, and were the glory of their times. There be of them, that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported. The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will show forth their praise.**