

Vicars of St. Martin's Hawksburn

A talk by Rodney Wetherell given at St. Martin's on 30 April 2000,
when the Photo Montage showing all Vicars was dedicated

Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places... with these words Morning and Evening Prayer were introduced by at least 13 of the 18 vicars and priests-in-charge of St. Martin's. But who were they all?

In the June 1883 edition of the Melbourne Church of England Messenger, there was a letter from an anonymous country clergyman. He had heard that the Vicar of Christ Church South Yarra, The Rev. Horace Tucker, was bringing out an English clergyman to oversee the district being carved out of his parish, and he claimed discrimination. In fact he was wrong. The new priest-in-charge of Hawksburn was an Australian, the scion of a notable grazing family, though he had been in England for a few years. His grandfather had been transported for giving false witness in 1816, and did his time in Sydney and Hobart. His father became a leading grazier in both NSW and Victoria, making and losing several fortunes, and was a member of parliament in both colonies, which was unusual if not unique. William Kennedy Brodribb was born in 1847, and ordained priest by Bishop Perry in 1870. Later, as a convinced Anglo-Catholic, he joined the English Church Union, and fell foul of Perry, who refused to licence him. He then went to Sydney where he encountered the same opposition from Bishop Barker. Then to England, and he asked Perry to write a reference for him to the Archbishop of Canterbury, which he did. He was licensed as a priest for the first time in England, and became vicar of quite a big parish, another St. Martin's, in Hove near Brighton. Bishop Moorhouse opened the door for him to return to Melbourne in 1883, where he was to work under the supervision of Horace Tucker at Christ Church with charge of St. Martin's. The country clergyman might more reasonably have complained of nepotism, since Brodribb was Tucker's brother-in-law. Both were at the High Church end of the spectrum, and Brodribb was the first person in the Diocese to wear eucharistic vestments regularly. We don't know a lot about him personally, but he was described as 'saintly', and in the photograph we have he does look sensitive and intelligent. If there is a ghost here, it is that of Brodribb. After leaving St. Martin's in 1889, he went to England again, where he became vicar of Putleigh in Herefordshire, and died in 1896, aged only 49.

I won't dwell on the second priest, Arthur Vincent Green, because he was only here for six months in 1889. It's worth noting that he was immortalized in fiction, not very kindly, as the Revd. Robert Shepherd in *The Getting of Wisdom* by Henry Handel Richardson. He had a rapid rise in the church hierarchy, becoming Archdeacon of Ballarat, then Bishop of Grafton and Armidale, finally returning to Ballarat as Bishop. He was actually elected Bishop of Brisbane in 1903, but declined the appointment. He was obviously fond of St. Martin's, and returned here to preach often, well into the 1940s.

I first heard of St. Martin's in the 1960s from a rather formidable lady called Magdalene Auchinleck Ross, of Armidale, New South Wales. Her late father James had been the third priest here, and the first in charge of Hawksburn as a separate parish. In his time the average attendance on a Sunday went from 500 in 1890 to 700 in 1897. Ross was born in Edinburgh in 1855, made deacon in England but ordained priest by the Bishop of North Queensland in 1879. He had parishes in Goulburn Diocese before coming here, and after St. Martin's went to the Diocese of Tasmania, then to Sydney and finally Grafton and Armidale. He was a military man, very tall and given to 'muscular Christianity' – he is said to have got on well with miners, and with soldiers during World War I.

Our fourth priest was Thomas Holyoake Rust, who was a Cambridge M.A., and ordained priest by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1877. After some English appointments he became a schoolmaster at Melbourne Grammar, then after two other parishes, came to Hawksburn in 1897. Errol Hodge notes in his excellent history of St. Martin's that Rust conducted several major patriotic services here – British-patriotic, of course. There was Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Relief of Mafeking, the death of the Queen, the end of the Boer War, then a Lord Nelson Centenary Service in 1905.

Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria.

Rust was followed by John Stephen Hart, who was well educated in science as well as theology, and lectured in Botany at Melbourne University well after ordination. Described as a gentle, scholarly man, he is the first vicar to figure in the recollections of Miss Sidney Briggs, as recorded in Errol Hodge's book. She recalled the splendour of the processions in Canon Hart's time, and used to jostle for the honour of taking his arm as he walked to the church. Hart went on to become Dean of Melbourne, and Bishop of Wangaratta in 1927. He was probably the finest intellect among all the Vicars, with some books and two series of Moorhouse Lectures to his credit, and there's an article about him in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Hart is described as 'a little man in spectacles, with a mild manner, a certain whimsical humour – and a mind like a knife'. Clearly his talents deserved a wider sphere than a country diocese, the article says, but 'Hart's brusque and distant manner and thin piping voice precluded wide or easy popularity, and contrary to expectations he was not translated to a larger diocese'.

This takes us up to the First World War, and the incumbency of Leonard Thomas Maund, whose name you will find on the honour board among those who served – he went as an army chaplain to the Middle East in 1918. Among the parish archives is a sprig of dried leaves and flowers, marked 'Brought by L.T. Maund from the Garden of Gethsemane, Palestine, 1918'. He goes down in history as 'handsome, popular and eloquent' – perhaps Sidney Briggs was rather smitten by Leonard Maund. When he was preaching, you had to get here up to an hour early to get a good seat for Evensong. Though several vicars have been military chaplains, he is the only one to be photographed here in uniform.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.

In 1920 came the Revd. Harold Eustace Sexton, who turns out to be the most celebrated vicar of St. Martin's, but not in Australia. I presume he was Australian-born - he obtained his Licentiate in Theology in 1911, and was made deacon in Ballarat, but ordained priest in the Diocese of Adelaide, with two curacies there. He was an AIF Chaplain from 1916 to '19, and ended up in Canada, where he graduated B.D. from Trinity College Toronto in 1920. However, he was back in Australia that same year as Vicar of St. Martin's, staying three years – but this was his only Australian parish. Notable events during Sexton's incumbency were the building of the war memorial tower, the consecration of the church by Bishop Green – and the abolition of pew rents. He then went to England and two parishes in London, but in 1935 was asked to go back to Canada where he was consecrated Bishop of Victoria, becoming Archbishop of British Columbia in 1952. The only record of Sexton revisiting St. Martin's was on 7 Feb. 1935, just before his consecration. One day I hope someone will find out more about Archbishop Sexton through church records in British Columbia.

The Revd. George Green, no relation to Bishop Green, was ordained priest by the Bishop of Southwark in 1908. He came to Australia to serve in the Diocese of Rockhampton, then became an A.I.F. Chaplain, and Vicar of Hawksburn in 1923. He had been gassed in the trenches during the war, which affected his voice and his health

generally. He must have been a mover and shaker, because he organized a large Evangelistic Mission in the Diocese, but that was after he left the parish. Former parishioner Joan Davies was a little girl during Green's time, and remembers his strange voice, and his habit of looking up to the ceiling while preaching.

Clifford Leigh Moyes is fondly remembered not only by Joan, but by Jack Rogers, who comes to the 8 o'clock service. He was our only vicar trained at Ridley College, being ordained priest by the Bishop of Bendigo in 1918 and serving in several parishes there, then Frankston, followed by Hawksburn. He was a cousin of Bishop Moyes of Armidale, who conducted a major 11-day mission in the parish in 1933, to mark its 50th anniversary. He used to hear confessions, then considered a Romish practice, and was possibly the first vicar to do so. Joan and Jack say Moyes was a most impressive man, charismatic indeed; a remarkable teacher and orator – he would even thump the pulpit. If he took the sacrament to a sick parishioner, he would walk in full vestments with a robed server. He went on St. Agnes Glenhuntly, and that's one of many connections between the two parishes.

Alexander Frederick Falconer trained at the now-defunct St. Columb's Hall Wangaratta, moving on to curacies and parishes there and in Melbourne. He was the first of two moderate Evangelical vicars of St. Martin's – did the Diocese want to take St. Martin's down a peg? It had done so elsewhere. It's reported that though both these vicars left two candles on the high altar, much else was packed away, including the Arundel prints. However, Falconer was no puritan. Gwen Ward was one of the young people of the parish, and recalls his outgoing nature and sense of fun. He was also ecumenically minded, and instituted dances and games nights with the young people of the Toorak Methodist Church at the corner of Williams Road. The dancing vicar, we could call him. Joan Davies was less impressed with Freddie Falconer, saying he was indecisive and not a strong preacher. At first he didn't wear vestments, but when her father Stacey Davies asked a pointed question at an annual meeting, he did wear them the following Sunday, and continued to do so – as did his successor, she thinks. Jack and Gwen Rogers are inclined to think that neither of them wore vestments.

Gwen Ward's churchwarden father E.W. Berger thought the sun shone out of the next vicar, the Revd. Edward Schwieger, but Gwen didn't – after Falconer he seemed staid and unexciting. He had trained at another defunct theological college, St. Aidan's Ballarat, going on to several parishes in that diocese, then to Essendon, Geelong and the Bendigo Cathedral parish – all larger parishes than St. Martin's. He was in his late 50s when he came to Hawksburn, and was never well – he had suffered from TB, and also had an ulcer and diabetes. Joan Davies thought Schwieger was a delightful man with a good sense of humour. Among the improvements he made to the church was the attractive narthex screen.

It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like – no. 34 of the 39 Articles of Religion.

With the arrival of the Revd. Ken Goodisson in 1952, the Catholic tradition was firmly reinvigorated, and he was the first of our priests to be normally known as Father. He was another graduate of St. Aidan's College Ballarat, and had had parishes in that diocese as well as in England – this was quite normal for Australian clergy. He was at Mildura, Merbein, Dunolly and Rupanyup, then Sedgley Staffordshire and Aldershot, Surrey, then Ballarat, Merino and Dimboola, Air Force Chaplain, Flinders and eventually Hawksburn – but his widow Gwen told me that the high points of his career were probably Murrumbena and Glenhuntly, where he went after St. Martin's.

The next vicar, Angus Palmer, was our longest stayer – 13 years – until Fr. David passed his record some time last year. The St. Martin's window was given in memory of him by his widow Sally. After training at St. John's College

Morpeth, Palmer was ordained by Bishop Hart in Wangaratta in 1931, and then moved around even more than Fr. Goodisson, taking in the dioceses of Wangaratta, London, Brisbane, Riverina, Ballarat, Tasmania and Melbourne as well as an army chaplaincy. No doubt he was glad to stay in one place when he got to Hawksburn. He was a short stocky man with a penetrating voice, scholarly and a good preacher. He was the old-style 'Father knows best' type of priest, and tended to resist the winds of change in the Church during the 60s. He could be cranky, but he had an excellent sense of humour as well. It was Angus Palmer who found the Arundel prints in the bell tower being eaten by silverfish, had them restored and replaced on the walls, and added to their number. He also rededicated the south transept to Our Lady of Walsingham, and we still have the annual Walsingham service. Having spent so long on the deceased vicars, I'll have to hurry through the living ones, unfortunately. It could save me some libel actions too.

The Revd. Clyde Wood was a down-to-earth character, with a background in the nursery business, and he didn't seem quite prepared for the more esoteric ways of St. Martin's. There was a mood for change in the 70s, in any case – but on the whole, tradition was maintained. There was an obvious need for structural change in the parish, and Clyde Wood was the first Vicar of the amalgamated parishes of Hawksburn and St. Alban's Armadale. Wood had a good brain and challenging style of preaching, and there was much consideration of the Liturgy, particularly for Holy Week and Easter. From here Fr. Clyde went to the parish of Darwin, subsequently becoming Dean, then Bishop of the Northern Territory in the 80s. Then to Brisbane as Coadjutor, and he is now Bishop of North Queensland. On the subject of vicars being consecrated bishops, I would be very surprised if there was a parish in Australia which could rival St. Martin's record of five, except for our mother parish of Christ Church South Yarra which has had five too; St. George's Malvern has had two; St. Peter's Eastern Hill, one, and poor St. John's Toorak, none.

After Clyde Wood came the Revd. Peter Chesterman, who had been a curate at St. John's Toorak, among other appointments. He stayed a fairly short time, but during that time were felt the first breezes of the charismatic movement that was to become so important at St. Martin's. Later he went to Thornbury, and is now Vicar of St. Silas' North Balwyn.

Gerald Beaumont grew up in the parish of St. James' East Kilda where his family were stalwarts, and his mother, who is with us today, still is. He's been described as a challenging if not confronting priest, asking parishioners to commit themselves both spiritually and to the community. During Fr. Beaumont's time the parish became quite a centre for the charismatic movement, and those who experienced it describe it as a rewarding time. After leaving in 1981, Beaumont took leave to study painting, and later held several exhibitions. He had two other Melbourne parishes before going to Perth, then Alice Springs, then Perth again as assistant bishop. He and his wife Lynne now live in Kalgoorlie where he is Bishop of the Goldfields region of Perth Diocese.

Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire.

Victor Haste came from England to Papua New Guinea to work as a builder in the Anglican Mission under the then Bishop Strong. Like Beaumont he trained at Crafers, and was made deacon in Melbourne for the Diocese of New Guinea. He was ordained priest by the Bishop of Southwark in 1970. Several parishes in various dioceses including New Guinea followed, but he was back in Melbourne as the Victorian Secretary for ABM in 1976. He became Vicar of Hawksburn-Armadale in 1981. Fr. Victor has sent us a special message for today, which reads in part: 'St. Martin's and St. Alban's were in my time, and still are no doubt, characterised by their 'oddity'. All sorts of people are attracted to the parish with a variety of needs and a wealth of gifts. This oddity is its greatest strength. The

ability to find strength in weakness, to find its glory in the cross rather than in worldly wealth. This madness, this foolishness for Christ's sake is the very essence of St. Martin's. Our willingness to embrace change, to welcome strangers into our midst, to be different in so many ways, is the measure of our greatness.'

Fr. David Head came to St. Martin's in 1987, only three months after the death of Sidney Briggs with her pre-First World War memories. He trained as a chemical engineer, then for the priesthood at St. John's College Morpeth. By the standards of earlier clergy, he has been slow-moving, or infrequently moving, with only two parishes before this one – but he has been no slacker in the parish. Numerous improvements to the church plant have been made in his time, but more importantly he has been a fine pastor and teacher, and has encouraged a children's ministry, as well as links with other churches and the wider community. Whether he will be our sixth bishop remains to be seen.

So let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us...Leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their knowledge of learning meet for the people, wise, eloquent in their instructions... There be of them, that have left a name behind them, that their praises might be reported...And some there be, which had no memorial – but they do now.

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