

**SANDSTONE CHURCHES
OF HUNTERS HILL
COMPILED BY ARTHUR AND RONDA BOYD**

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SANDSTONE CHURCHES IN HUNTERS HILL

IMPORTANT DATES

- 1647 – 1690 Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, lived in a convent at Paray-le-Monial, north west of Lyon. She was canonized in 1920. A stained-glass window in the church of St. Peter Chanel, Hunter's Hill, (De Fêtre 1893) depicts her with the Sacred Heart who appeared to her on 27th December 1673.
- 1766 – 1768 Captain Samuel Wallis (1728-1795), who circumnavigated the world over a period of 21 months on H.M.S. *Dolphin*, discovered the islands of Tahiti (1767), Wallis and Futuna (14°S, 180°E/W). He was made a flag-lieutenant at age 20.
- 1768 -1771 Lieutenant James Cook (1728 – 1779) made his first voyage in H.M.S. *Endeavour* in order to record the Transit of Venus at Tahiti on 3rd June 1769. He was not made a captain until he was 43 years of age (1771).
- 1788 Captain Arthur Phillip, with naval ships H.M.S. *Sirius* and H.M.S. *Supply*, and nine transports, entered Botany Bay on 18th January, 1788. Le Père Receveur, an astronomer and chaplain to La Perouse's Expedition consisting of *La Bouselle* (The Compass) and *L'Astrolabe*, died on 21st February 1788. He was buried at La Perouse (a suburb of Sydney) in territory dedicated to France on 14th July, 1917 (Bastille Day).
- 1812 Architect A. W. N. Pugin born in London, England. Died 1852
- 1837 Fr. Peter Chanel was established at Futuna Island as a French Missionary by Bishop Pompallier, who had accompanied him on a voyage which took 11 months. Other Religious, also on the voyage, were taken elsewhere.
- 1841 Death of Fr. Peter Chanel (1803 – 1841) on 28th April, 1841. He was beatified on 17th November, 1899 and canonized on 12th June, 1954.
- 1845 Arrival in Sydney of Fr. Jean Louise Rocher and associate priests of the Congregation of the Marist Fathers, after travelling for 4 and a half months.
- 1847 Fr. Rocher purchased 18 acres of land at Hunter's Hill from Thomas Stubbs. They settled into an existing stone building, which was subsequently called the "*Priory*". In 1856 a two storey stone wing was added. The architects were Weaver and Kemp.
- 1849 Donation of land by Daniel Macintosh for erection of a Catholic church at Ryde.
- 1853 – 1867 The Marist Fathers procured land, in several parcels, for Villa Maria Monastery and church
- 1856 On 1st April 1856, the Marist Fathers took over the parish of St. Charles Borromeo, Ryde from the stewardship of Bishop C. H. Davis O.S.B. Fr. Rocher was the Parish Priest on a Government salary of £250 p.a. The church, designed by the English architect A. W. Pugin (1812- 1852) was opened on 8th November, 1857.
- 1857 Donation of land by Didier Joubert for the Figtree Anglican Chapel (1/4 acre)
- 1858 St. Mark's, Figtree Chapel (Anglican) was built on the corner of Church Street and Joubert Street. Architect, William Weaver (1828 – 1868). Supervised by Edmund Blacket (1817-1883)
- 1861 Incorporation of the Municipality of Hunter's Hill.

- 1866 Erection of a sandstone Town Hall, 55ft. X 30 ft., in Alexandra Street at a cost of £750. Additions were made in 1879, 1903, 1938 and 1967.
- 1867 Laying of the Foundation Stone of The Church of The Holy Name of Mary By Bishop Bede Polding on 15th September, 1867.
- 1871 Church of The Holy Name of Mary opened 12th February, 1871 by Bishop Elloy.
- 1875 Congregational Church, Alexandra Street, Hunter's Hill built by A. Bondietti. Architect, Albert Bond.
- 1883 Land purchased for All Saints Anglican Church on corner of Ferry and Ambrose Streets for £1100. .
- 1888 St. Charles Borromeo Parish reverts to the Archdiocese of Sydney. It was temporarily run by the Marist Fathers until 1906 due to Archpriest Samuel Sheehy having fallen from his carriage sustaining injuries.
- 1888 All Saints Church, Ferry Street, Hunter's Hill opened. Architect, John Horbury Hunt (1838-1904). Rector: Rev. P. Spry-Bailey (1882-1900) (b.1836 d.1900). He was a High Churchman.
- 1890 Cardinal Moran, on 26th October 1890, laid the Foundation Stone of Blessed Peter Chanel Church on land acquired in Crescent Street, Hunter's Hill. (The stone cannot be located.)
- 1891 After three temporary Post-Offices, (1) at the wharf in Ferry Street, (2) in Ferry Street near the corner of Woolwich Road and (3) in Alexandra Street on the corner of Ellesmere Avenue, a new Post-Office was opened on the corner of Alexandra and Ernest Streets (Architect W. L. Vernon)
- 1892 Archbishop Navaire, Vicar-Apostolic, New Guinea , opened Blessed Peter Chanel Church on 11th December, 1892.
- 1899 Cardinal Moran laid the Foundation Stone for Stage 2 of Blessed Peter Chanel Church on 3rd December 1899. Timber school building erected.
- 1901 Completion of Blessed Peter Chanel Church. Opened by Cardinal Moran on 2nd June, 1901.
- 1904 Church of The Holy Name of Mary extended by two bays of the nave, with a new bell tower and the original front façade demolished and re-erected. The original western window was replaced by a tracery and lancet window. The finished church was blessed by Cardinal Moran in April, 1904.
- 1912 A chapel and front porch were added to St. Charles Borromeo Church.
- 1934 St. Charles Borromeo Church extensively enlarged.
1953 Figtree Chapel Memorial hall opened and the Chapel was closed
- 1962 St. Mark's, Figtree Chapel demolished for construction of main road and rebuilt in Figtree Road. All stones were numbered and replaced in same position.

Prepared by Arthur Boyd 8th October, 2011.

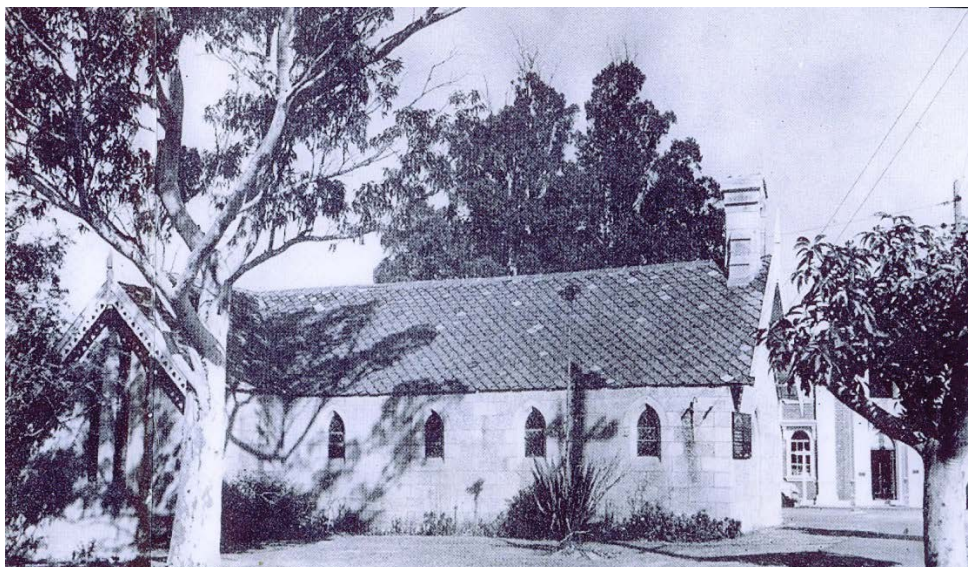
ST. MARK'S – FIGTREE CHAPEL

In 1857 Didier Joubert (1816 – 1881) a French Wine merchant from Angoulême in France, donated about ¼ acre of land for the erection of the Figtree Chapel –Schoolhouse on what became the corner of Joubert and Church Street, Hunter's Hill. The original dimensions of the church were 32 ft. X 16 ½ ft. The church was designed by architects William Weaver and William Kemp. William Weaver was the nephew of the Rev. G. E. Turner, Rector of St. Anne's Church, Ryde. The church was built in 1858 by John Christian Trier, great-grandfather of Mrs. Valerie Chidgey a present resident of Hunter's Hill. The original plans are not available, but there are plans, produced by Mr. Morton Herman in February 1959, of the church as it was prior to its demolition and reconstruction in Figtree Road in 1962. In 1860 an extra 15ft. x 14 ft. was added at a cost of £175.11.6 and in 1864, with Edmund Blacket as the architect, there was a further addition virtually doubling the size of the church, costing over £600. Transepts were added on the north and south sides with a chancel at the eastern end and a vestry and porch on the north-eastern corner. In each gable there is a large triple lancet window. Slates were used for the roof on these additions. The final change was made in 1874 by Mr. Trier when the Chancel was extended by 12 ft. at a cost of £121. 7. 9.

Over the years, due to lack of maintenance, white ants took their toll on the church and urgent repairs were needed. A War Memorial Hall was built beside the Chapel and was opened on 9th October 1953. The Chapel was then closed for repairs, with the hall serving as a temporary chapel. Meanwhile, negotiations were proceeding with the Department of Main Roads for the demolition and removal of the chapel. Finally, demolition, stone by stone, began in March 1962, the last service being on 11th March 1962. Erection on the new site (on a tennis court which was part of *Kaoota* in Figtree Road) began immediately. The land had been purchased by the Department of Main Roads to enable the relocation of the chapel. At the time of demolition the original Belgian tiles, with the appearance of shingles, were sold and re-used at No.11 Wybalena Road. Stained-glass windows were installed after the move to Figtree Road. They came from the studio of Sydney artist Philip Handel and had all been gifted. The first service on the new site was on 28th October, 1962.

My father-in-law, Harry Timbrell, regularly attended services in this church at the original site.

I am indebted to Mrs. Margaret Spinks in compiling this history and that of All Saints' Church.



CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN HUNTERS HILL

The Congregation of the Marist Fathers, a French Religious Order, took up residence in Hunter's Hill in 1847. They are responsible for two sandstone churches in the Municipality of Hunter's Hill: (a) Holy Name of Mary Church (Villa Maria) the principal church, is located in Mary Street; and (b) St. Peter Chanel Church in Futuna Street.

Villa Maria church was built in two stages, (i) 1867 to 1871 and (ii) 1903 to 1904. St. Peter Chanel church was also built in two stages (i) 1889 to 1892 and (ii) 1899 to 1901.

Each church was built in local sandstone and share similarities in that they exemplify French Gothic Style with high roofs and have rounded walls behind the altars. Villa Maria's roof is hemispherical whereas St. Peter Chanel's has a hammerbeam roof. Another variation is that the plan of Villa Maria is in the form of a Latin Cross while St. Peter Chanel's is more like a Maltese Cross.

The many stained glass windows of Villa Maria are quite significant as well as its statues which were crafted by French and Australian artists. St. Peter Chanel's stained glass windows and statues are also the work of French and Australian artisans, but are much fewer.

St. Peter Chanel (1803 – 1841), the first martyr of Oceania, was a missionary on Futuna Island, a very small island between Fiji and Samoa. He was clubbed to death by the island chief's son, but within three years of his death, the whole island, a population of about 900, converted to Catholicism. The church was named Blessed Peter Chanel after his beatification in 1889 and renamed St. Peter Chanel after his canonisation in 1954.

HOLY NAME OF MARY CHURCH (VILLA MARIA)

All the churches featured in this presentation, were built in local “white” sandstone, not “Pyrmont” stone which was used in the Cathedrals in the city.

Having arrived in 1845, the Marist Fathers agreed to purchase, for £1100, 18 acres of land from Thomas Stubbs in 1847, which included a stone building and outbuildings. Ten years later, Weaver and Kemp, architects, added a two storey wing at right angles to the original building. This was the first “Villa Maria” now known as *The Priory*, on the southern side of Tarban Creek.

The land for the Villa Maria Monastery and the accompanying church was acquired over the period from 1853 to 1867. The building of the monastery began in 1864 and the church in 1867. The church was opened in 1871.

The Monastery was the headquarters of the Oceania missions. It should be not be forgotten that the privations experienced by the missionaries were horrendous. The Oceania natives were generally hostile and stole clothes and food which made life very difficult. They often returned to Australia in very poor health. *** My mother-in-law, Tessie Timbrell, a parishioner all her married life, used to say about the Villa Maria priests, “They bring them back here to die” *** It should be noted that both the Villa Maria and St. Peter Chanel churches are on land owned by the Marist Order, not by the Archdiocese of Sydney, which owns the land occupied by the present presbytery and the parish hall and car park.

The architect for the church was Father Claude Joly, S.M. The builder was a Marist Fathers Lay Brother, Louis Pichelin, not noted for his efficiency.

Special features of Villa Maria Church.

- (a) The roof is supported on cast iron columns which have been covered with a resin, sand and cement mix called “scagliola”, to resemble sandstone. “Scagliola”, officially is artificial marble.
- (b) At least ten of the Stained-glass windows are from Lyon by Pagnon, Deschelettes and two are from De Fêtre. One shipment of windows was lost on the *Walter Hood* in 1870 at Wreck Bay adjacent Jervis Bay. They were not insured and replacements were sent a year or two later. (See name on north side windows the date 1868 on the south windows.) Cartoons, or drawings, up to full size, were available for making the windows and the original cartoon of 1868 was used for the replacement of the original windows. Note the northern windows of the transept featuring St. Margaret Mary Alacoque to compare with S.P.C.
- (c) Note the trefoil shape over the windows of the nave with sandstone treatment. There are doorways with Gothic-pointed arches.
- (d) The length of this church is about the same as William Tappin originally designed for St. Peter Chanel Church which gives the Latin Cross design. St. Peter Chanel is in the shape of the Maltese Cross.

After the death of Fr. Zephrim Muraire in 1903, the parishioners contributed to the cost of a two bay extension, including a choir loft and the demolition and reconstruction of the façade of the church. The original “wheel window” was removed and its replacement, still circular, has lancet and stone tracery. The extended church was opened in 1904, seating approximately 280 people. The dimensions of the church are now 30ft. wide (9m) X 125 ft. long (38m).



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH – HUNTERS HILL

COMPLETED IN 1878

THE CHARMING STONE BELLCOTE

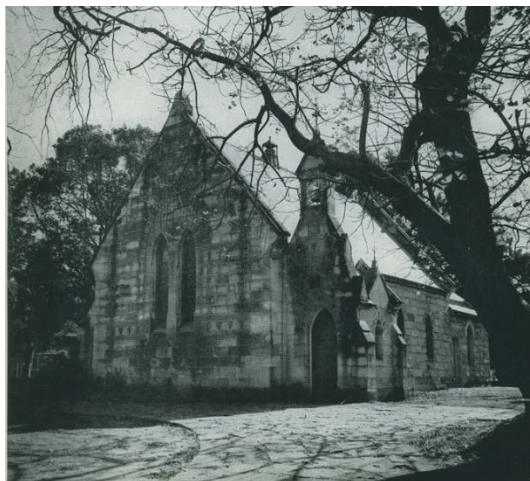
In 1872 James Fairfax and friends donated the £200 required to purchase land for the erection of the Congregational Church in Alexandra Street, Hunter's Hill. The size of the original land is reported to be the block bounded by Alexandra, D'Aram, Madeline and Ferdinand Streets, being 1.4 acres or .56 hectares. The church was designed by Albert Bond who was the City of Sydney architect from 1873 – 1878. The foundation stone was laid in 1875 and was first occupied in November 1876 and completed in 1878. The total cost of the land and church building was £1145. The organ, built by the Parker family, was installed in 1922. The stained-glass windows have been gradually added, the most recent being to the memory of Mrs. Mavis Lovell in 2001. It seats about 110 people, measuring approximately 50 ft. x 25 ft. and is provided with a charming buttressed stone bellcote on its south-eastern gable. The magnificent Manse was also built of stone in 1886 costing £775. Stone vestries were added in 1898 for £145. The brick church hall was built in 1924 at a cost of £2200.

The builder of the church was Antonio Bondiotti (1838 – 1882), great-grandfather of Greg Bell, a resident of Hunter's Hill and grandfather of ex-Mayoress Kathleen Bell. It was stated in a biography of Bondiotti that the stonework was laid with no mortar which he had practised in villages in Switzerland where he was born. I recently inspected the stonework and there is definitely mortar in the joints. I have spoken to an expert on stone buildings and he does not know of this method being used locally. He has heard of a cottage, built in Ireland in A.D.600, on which this method was used and it has never leaked or deteriorated.

It is a favourite building for weddings, including couples from Japan wanting to experience a Western style wedding.

It is the only church in the area operating a very popular retirement village which began in 1975 with additions to the church hall. It was established by Pastor Angus Bristow, who died tragically in a bus crash in October 1989. He was on his way to Brisbane to pick up a bus for the disabled. In 1984 he had established a retirement village at Narellan with the hope that it would eventually cater for ageing parents and their disabled children together. He was the pastor at Hunter's Hill for 25 years having spent the first three years of his married life looking after a hostel for the homeless in East Sydney with his wife, Margaret .

(Actual measurements of land: 338 ft. X 172 ft. 3 in.) – Council figures



ST. PETER CHANEL CHURCH

The important date in respect to this church is 28th April 1841 with the death of St. Peter Chanel on Futuna, a small island in the Pacific Ocean (15kms. X 10 Kms.) between Fiji and Samoa. At that time, it would be fair to assume that after three years on Futuna Island and only a few converts having embraced the faith, (mainly through the death of infants), he would be depressed. It should be remembered that a European culture was being impressed on a native island Culture, where the Chiefs had sole control and warring and cannibalism among the tribes were common. Further, there was competition in the Pacific Islands between the Lutheran, Methodist, and Anglican religions, as well as the Catholics. Christianity was seen by the natives as very confusing and Peter Chanel's murder was understandable. The later conversion of the whole population of the island was the only visible reward. He was beatified on 17th November, 1889 and canonised on 12th June, 1954.

In respect to the building of St. Peter Chanel's Church, (a two stage process), Fr. Claude Joly engaged William Tappin (1850-1905), Dennehy, Smart and Reed as architects. That decision was fortuitous because the Ballarat based architects who had designed the presbytery and school adjacent to St. Patrick's at Church Hill in 1889, had the inspirational idea of using the hammerbeam roof of cedar in the sanctuary. This, and the steep roof, identified the Pugin Gothic influence, but there is also a Romanesque style of semicircular headings of the windows. The first stage, which consisted of the Sanctuary and Sacristy, was enclosed with a temporary wall and was opened on 11th December 1892. After Fr. Joly's death in 1892, the parish priest, Fr. Zephirin Muraire, anxious to complete the church, took advice from another group of architects, Sheerin and Hennessy, who suggested that stage two of the church be reduced in length to its present size, allowing for a temporary western wall of cement washed brickwork. Joseph Sheerin was the great grandfather of Mr. Ross Sheerin, a Hunter's Hill Councillor). The shape of the church thus became a Maltese Cross unlike the Latin Cross of Holy Name of Mary Church. The architects exposed the local sandstone inside in 14" (350 mm) sawn courses and continued the outside, rough-hewn, in 7" (175 mm) courses. This internal alteration of dressed stone in lieu of the plastered sanctuary has created a wonderful ambience. The result is an outstanding monument of architecture in a prestigious location. It is favoured for weddings for couples from all over Sydney. Examination of the church's title deeds confirm that on 31st May 1892, an exchange of a small parcel of land between the Marist Fathers and Charles Jeanneret, the then owner of 9 Futuna Street, altered the eastern boundary to its present position.

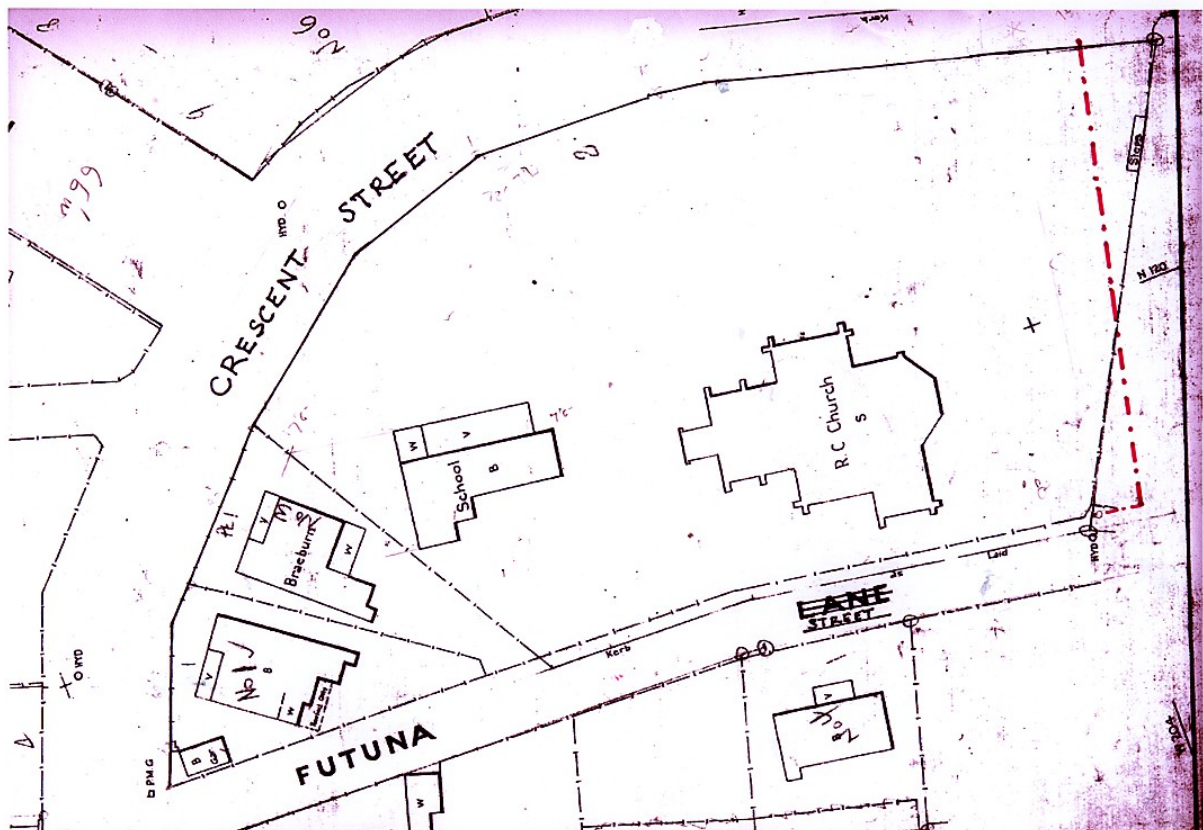
The stained glass windows (two) were made by G. De Fêtre of Lyon and were installed in 1893

The northern window is of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and the southern window is of the Annunciation (note the halos and the Holy Spirit in these windows). The quality of these windows by De Fêtre show a marked improvement in technique to those of Pagnon of 1868 at Holy Name of Mary Church.

Cardinal Moran opened the church on 2nd March 1901, arriving by ferry from the city to Garrick's Wharf at the bottom of Crescent Street. This wharf was used by people from the Longueville area, such as Father Heesh and his family to attend Mass at S.P.C. before a church was built at Lane Cove.



PLAN OF ST. PETER CHANEL CHURCH AND SCHOOL AFTER BOUNDARY CHANGE



ST. PETER CHANEL CHURCH AND OTHERS

Brief History

St. Peter Chanel, first Marist martyr and first martyr of Oceania, was born in Cuët, France on 12th July 1803. He joined the Marist Society at the age of 28. In 1836 he was sent as a missionary to the island of Futuna, a very small island (15 kms. X 10 kms.) in the Pacific Ocean, east of New Caledonia, between Samoa and Fiji. The journey took 11 months arriving in November 1837. In his naivety, he offered advice which was in complete contradiction of the island culture. This caused the chief to order his death and in 1841, in his 38th year, he was clubbed to death by the chief's son. His life was not in vain. Within three years of his death, the whole of Futuna, a population of almost 900, was Catholic, the natives having requested another missionary be sent. His body was brought back to Hunter's Hill, a suburb of Sydney, but eventually was returned to France for burial. In 1977, his body was taken back to Futuna and permanently buried there. He was canonised in 1954. The church in Hunter's Hill was the first in the world to be named after the saint, having been called the Church of Blessed Peter Chanel up until 1954.

The land for the church was purchased by Father Claude Joly, S.M. in August 1890, from W. Cope and G.S. Arthur. It had been acquired previously from C.E. Jeanneret in 1882. It is situated at 5 Crescent Street with a frontage to Futuna Street. The property of just under 1 ½ acres cost 17,500 French Francs (£700) which was well under market price. £ Sterling was used in Australia until 1909.

The Gothic style church was built in two stages. The first stage of the programme was to build the Sanctuary and Sacristy at a cost of about £1000, the foundation stone being laid on 26th October 1890. This stone cannot be located. In the sacristy was a fireplace for the comfort of the priest who came by horse the night before Mass was to be celebrated. The walls of this first stage are plastered on the inside and a temporary wall on the western side and roof over this section were erected. This small area of Sanctuary and Sacristy accommodated up to 150 people for Mass. They possibly came by boat from Lane Cove, Longueville, Northwood and Greenwich to Garrick's Wharf (photos available) at the bottom of Crescent Street, as well as from Hunter's Hill and Woolwich. It was opened on 11th December, 1892. The architects were Tappin, R. J. Dennehy and Smart. Their proposal was to build the church as it now exists except that the nave would be 120 ft. long. The two transepts were to be retained at 15 ft. wide by 25 ft. long. The Parish Priest, Father Zephirin Muraire, S.M. decided, after writing to his Marist superiors in France in July 1899, to alter the plans and reduce the length of the nave to 55ft. with the western wall as a temporary end, to allow for future expansion. Father Joly, the Provincial, had written to Father Denier in France on 13th December 1891 requesting the purchase of a temporary wooden altar to be made in France.

The next stage of the building was overseen by Sheerin and Hennessy, Architects, the second foundation stone being laid by Cardinal Patrick Moran in December 1899. The nave is much shorter than the usual church length and this gives a much more intimate experience. It resulted in the shape of a Maltese Cross rather than a Latin Cross as is the Church of the Holy Name of Mary at Villa Maria. The wall height of 25 ft. and the 50ft. high roof, give very good acoustics for choral singers. The acoustics have been affected by the exposure of the floor boards with the removal of the carpet beneath the seats. This caused the reverberation time to increase to four seconds from two. The builders of the second stage were Dakin and Park of Gladesville at a cost of £2600. The walls are in dressed stonework except for the western end which consists of plastered brickwork. Special efforts were made to ventilate the church. Beneath each window on the external walls, is a cast iron ventilator

leading within the wall to an internal ventilator on the splay beneath the window. In the ceiling are a series of triangular ventilators with similar shaped protrusions above, in the slate roof. The completed church was blessed and opened on 2nd June 1901.

By 1899, a timber school building had been erected on the site and was free of debt due to fund-raising by the Parish Priest. Until 1907, the school was staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph who walked from Mary Street each day. In 1908, the Marist Sisters of Woolwich took over the school,

which burnt down in 1916. It was replaced by a brick building at a cost of £636, with two classrooms, a stage, teachers' rooms and a 12ft wide verandah. It was opened in November 1916 by Archbishop Kelly. There were 42 pupils at the time.

The children of the Gallagher, Murphy, Bell, McBride and Doran families, among others, attended the school which closed in 1936. The 60 pupils transferred to Marist Convent and Marist Brothers. Later the Catholic Youth Organisation used the building for meetings, dances, and dramatic productions under the direction of the Misses Clark. A tennis court had been built on the site of the present gravel parking area and this was used by the members of the C.Y.O. The school building was burnt down in May 1968.

Stained Glass Windows

The church has 21 windows, two of which are pictorial stained glass. These are in the Sanctuary, directly behind the altar, and were supplied by G. Dufêtre of Lyon, France in 1893. One is of Christ and a holy woman (possibly St. Margaret Mary Alacoque 1647 - 1690) the other depicts the Annunciation. The remaining windows were probably supplied by Lyon Cottier & Co. Sydney. They include two beautiful Wheel Windows in the transepts, two quatrefoil windows on the western walls of the transepts, three plain lead-light windows in the Sacristy and in the porch, nave and transepts of the church there are twelve slightly fancier, attractive lead-light windows.

Statues

There are seven statues in the church, five of which are in the Sanctuary. These are St. Peter Chanel, St. Joseph, St. Patrick, St. Therese of Lisieux, and Our Lady with child Jesus. The other two are of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady at the side altars.

Recent History

In the early 1970s, the sanctuary was changed so that the priest faced the congregation and a modern altar and lectern were installed. The tessellated tiled floor was covered with carpet and the altar rails and raised choir platform, at the back of the church, were removed at this time. A new Rogers electronic organ (Model Essex 645i) replaced the old Hammond organ in 1989 at a cost of about \$20,000.

In 1988 a major reconstruction of the Sanctuary area was undertaken. The main altar was resited and rebuilt, a new lectern was added and a new presidential chair acquired. The church was closed for this work to be done, from July until 4th December, 1988.

New entrance gates were installed and a red bitumen roadway was constructed leading to a red-gravelled parking area on the north side of the church. It was installed by Emoleum (Australia) Ltd. in March 1996 at a cost of about \$20,000. Extensive landscaping was also done at this time. In 2001 the porch was altered and upgraded to provide disabled access on the southern side. A new door, terrace and steps were built on the northern side, making a very appropriate place for wedding photos etc.

On Sunday 5th December 1999, a Mass of Celebration was held to mark the 100th anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone of the church which took place on 3rd December 1899. The celebrant was Fr. Tony Corcoran S.M., P.P. The music was provided by St. Peter Chanel's choir with assistance from Villa Maria choir. The organist was Gai Woodcock. Morning tea in the grounds followed the ceremony.

Background

Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Villa Maria and St. Charles Borromeo, Ryde The Sanctuaries of St. Peter Chanel, Villa Maria and St. Charles Borromeo, Ryde, are similar in having a rounded section behind the altars. Villa Maria and St. Charles Sanctuaries have hemispherical roofs while St. Peter's has a hammerbeam roof.

The construction of Villa Maria church began with the laying of the foundation stone by the Archbishop of Sydney, John Bede Polding on 15th September, 1867. The first wedding was held in 1868 prior to the roof being completed. The church was opened in 1871, and a marble altar was installed in 1890. It was extended by two bays in 1904 as a memorial to Father Muraire who had died in 1903 after thirty nine years in the parish. James Park of Gladesville carried out the work involving the two extra bays and dismantling and re-erecting the front façade with a new bell tower. The original "wheel" window was replaced with a circular window of lancet and stone tracery.

The twenty eight stained glass windows of Villa Maria are quite magnificent and overall are valued at over \$500,000. The two outstanding windows in the transepts are each of three lights, the Crucifixion on one side and the Holy Family on the other. They were manufactured by Pagnon Deschelettes of Lyon, France. Other window manufacturers are G. Dufêtre of Lyon and John Ashwin and Co. of Sydney.

In 1851, before Ryde became a separate parish, a recently ordained Father John Ignatius McClennan O.S.B. acted as pastor and travelled from the presbytery at Parramatta to areas as far away as Pymble and Tarban Creek. Unfortunately, he died on 4th November, a few days before the official opening of St. Charles Borromeo in 1857.

On 1st April 1856, Dr. John Bede Polding O.S.B. gave Father Jean Louis Rocher S.M. responsibility for the parish of St. Charles Borromeo and he took over the incomplete church in August 1857. This was at the time when a fierce storm wrecked the ship *Dunbar* on South Head on the night of 20th August, 1857. The same storm blew slate tiles from the roof of the church and delayed its completion. The first Mass was said on 8th November, 1857, by Archdeacon McEnroe substituting for Archbishop Polding. This early Gothic style church was built, facing west, to the plans of A.W. Pugin (1812 – 1852) a famous English architect. The builder was John Crotty and took from May 1854 to November 1857 to complete at the cost of a little over £1500. The 4 ½ acre block of land was donated by Daniel McMahon in 1849 and the church was built on the corner of Great North Road (now Victoria Road) and Charles Street. Bishop Charles Henry Davis O.S.B. laid the foundation stone after Mass on 4th January 1852. He was instrumental in obtaining a government grant of £1500 towards the building of the church. At this time the church was called St. Joseph's. After Bishop Davis's death on 17th May, 1854, the name was changed to St. Charles Borromeo, the patron saint of Bishop Davis.

The Marist Fathers administered the Ryde parish until 1888. However, between 1899 and 1906, the Marists returned to care for the parish of St. Charles Borromeo. Originally given to the Society of Mary by Archbishop Polding in 1856, and covering an area from Parramatta to Balmain, the parish had been divided in 1889, the Marists receiving the Hunter's Hill end, and the last of the Sydney Benedictines, Archpriest Samuel Sheehy, becoming Parish Priest of Ryde. Sheehy fell out of a carriage midway through 1899, and never regained his health. He lived in the presbytery until 1906, when Cardinal Moran relieved him of his charge.

The Marists cared for Sheehy's parish throughout this period, Francis Huault working there initially, and in later years, his brother Julien, who had come to Villa Maria in 1903 from Fiji. Poor health and an erratic temperament had rendered Julien unsuitable for the Mission. In assisting Sheehy, the Marists were repaying a long-standing debt, for he was, according to Fr. Aubry S.M., "one who has always shown himself our best friend since we came to Sydney, and whom we needed to thank several times at St. Patrick's when everyone, except he, was pushing the Archbishop to send us away". Fr. Sheehy died in 1910. but in 1907 he would render the Marists one further and significant good turn. As an adviser to Cardinal Moran, he was able to convince the Cardinal that in excommunicating Father Peter Piquet, an assistant priest at St. Patrick's, he had made an error in Canon Law and therefore the excommunication was invalid. The Cardinal immediately renounced the excommunication and Fr. Piquet returned to his normal duties. Fr. Piquet had been excommunicated for administering the Sacraments outside his parish without permission from the hierarchy.

St. Charles proved to be too small and in 1934 it was rebuilt and enlarged using the stone from the original church for the external walls. The Parish Priest insisted that any further material required should be stone. The internal walls are of cream face brick in English bond. The architects were Fowell and Mc Connell, and the builder was R. M. Bowcock of Ashfield at a cost of just under £10,000. The church now faced north, but the western entrance and bell tower were retained. Plans showing the layout of both churches are available with the seating raised from 250 to 600. The stone framework of the old eastern window was designed into the new Sanctuary on the southern side, with a new fine stained glass window. It depicts incidents from the life of St. Charles Borromeo and was made by John Ashwin & Son, from sketches of the architects. The Parish Priest from 1906 to 1948 was Father E. Gell, who, with his own personal money, generously supported Our Lady's Nurses of the Poor (Brown Nurses) at Coogee. He is buried in the Priest's Circle at Field of Mars Cemetery. Buried in St. Charles Borromeo Graveyard was Saint Mary McKillop's mother, Flora (now re-interred in Macquarie Park Cemetery).

Acknowledgements

Compiler: Arthur Boyd

Contributors: Fr. Peter McMurrich; State Library of NSW; Ryde Local History Library; Sr. Joan McBride; Dr. John Keneally; Mrs. Suzanne McGirr; Mrs. Margaret Farlow; Mr. Brian Andrews; Mrs. Ronda Boyd.

ALL SAINTS CHURCH – HUNTERS HILL

At the Easter Parish Vestry meeting of 1883, the church wardens formed a committee and were empowered to purchase a suitable site for building a new church and parsonage. One year later, the committee purchased the area known as *Seymour's Garden* in Ferry Street, Hunter's Hill for £1100. John Horbury Hunt (1838 – 1904) was commissioned on 4th April 1884 to prepare plans for the new church. Hook & Taylor, stonemasons and builders, commenced work in October of that year with local white sandstone. A well in the garden necessitated J.H. Hunt moving the location of the church further east. This involved purchase of an extra block of land for the parsonage. There were many problems between Hunt and the committee. Adamson & Dow won the contract to build the roof, the masonry having been completed. Hunt was outraged because the committee had ordered that the roof timbers be planed not as from the saw and also because he had specified a shingle roof, not slates. The Rector, Rev. Spry Bailey, was a High Churchman, so Horbury Hunt designed the church accordingly. The foundation stone was laid on 30th May 1885 and the church was opened in April 1888 with a temporary timber front. The stained-glass windows made by Lyon, Wells, Cottier & Co. and donated by parishioners were installed after the church opened. Of particular interest are the five-light Eastern windows depicting *Te Deum* and *The Last Supper* and the four-light *Evangelists* window on the southern side of the nave. Later, in 1919 and 1926, the memorial window of Archibald Simpson and his son George, who was killed in action in the Great War, and the Manning family's *Saints* window were installed. These windows were designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones and made by William Morris & Co. of London. The church has a slate roof supported by a modified hardwood hammerbeam truss with a cast iron tie bar at the top of the wall. The chancel, in which the rare Bevington Pipe Organ was installed in June 1888, is narrower than the nave, and has a much simpler roof.

In 1938, fifty years after the opening of the church, an extra bay was added to the nave, forming an entrance porch together with a bellcote at a cost of £4700. This was instead of Hunt's plan to build a large tower on the southern side of the building. The church seats 250 people. The architects for this extension were Wilson, Neave and Berry and the builders were Carswall and Richards. The dimensions of the church are now 34 ft. wide (10.4m) X 126'6" long (39m).

The parsonage was built on an extra block of land costing £250 for ¼ acre at the rear of the church in Ambrose Street. The builders, Nurthen & Furness were instructed by the architect, J. E. Kemp in January 1890 to commence work and the building was ready for occupation in October of that year. The cost of the building, architects fees and stained-glass windows was £1710. The parsonage also included a number of stained-glass windows by Lyon, Wells, Cottier & Co., the most impressive of which is the "stair" window depicting *The Sower and the Seed*.

The Rector, Rev. Spry Bailey, was friendly with Fr. Dalton of St. Ignatius College and also with Cardinal Moran. This alliance with the Catholic clergy was the subject of much discussion within the Parish.



ST. CHARLES BORROMEO, RYDE

I would like to point out that all six churches of which I am going to speak, were constructed in local white sandstone from Hunter's Hill and Ryde areas. They are all in good condition, contrary to the cathedrals and churches in inner Sydney which were built in Pymont sandstone and show deterioration. All the churches are gothic inspired by architects, such as E. Blacket and W. Weaver who had experience working with the internationally famous A.W.N. Pugin in England before they immigrated to Australia. Weaver was the architect for quite a few buildings in Hunter's Hill, including "Passy". He was born in 1828 in Somersetshire and left England in 1850. He died in 1868 in Geelong.

I have included St. Charles Borromeo Church, Ryde in my talk because of its connection with the French Marist Fathers and with Didier Joubert, considered one of the founding fathers of Hunter's Hill, who is buried in the graveyard there. Mother Mary McKillop's mother, Flora, was buried here also, but later re-interred in Macquarie Park Cemetery.

St. Charles Borromeo was born in Arona, Italy in 1538 and died in Milan in 1584 at the age of 46 years. He was ordained a priest and consecrated a Bishop in the same year, 1563, aged 25. He borrowed heavily during the famine of 1570 and the plague of 1576 in order to feed 60,000 to 70,000 people daily during the time he was Archbishop of Milan. He forbade himself all luxury and imposed severe penances on himself.

In 1851 the church's foundations were set out in accordance with a design by A.W.N. Pugin and prepared for the stonemason on land donated by Daniel McMahon in 1849, who was a successful ex-convict. The gold rush of 1851 delayed the progress of the work. Archbishop Polding O.S.B., an admirer of good quality churches entrusted control of the parish to Fr. Louis Jean Rocher S.M. in 1856. The church was opened in November 1857 and within a year he had built a school. With some monetary assistance from the Government, Bishop Davis O.S.B. arranged for the construction of the church and for £250 per annum to be paid to Fr. Rocher for his services. The church was passed back to the Archdiocese in 1888. Subsequent to an accident to the new Parish Priest, the Marists carried on temporarily until 1906. A porch on the western entrance and a chapel on the northern side were added in 1912. Father Edward Gell was the Parish Priest from 1906 to 1948 and was responsible for the enlargement of the church in 1934 which increased the seating from 250 to 600. The much larger church incorporated a new entrance on the northern side facing Victoria Road. Because they did not have enough stone to line the church, the inside face is cream brickwork (See plan on board). The plan does not show the addition of a semi-circular apse behind the altar with a three-light stained-glass window transferred from the original church, depicting, in one, St. Charles Borromeo. (See photo).

Father Edward A. Gell (1867 – 1948) and his sister inherited substantial wealth from their parents. They contributed generously to various charities, in particular the Brown Nurses at Coogee, (Eileen O'Connor had founded this order of nurses who visited the poor in their homes), as well as to the needs of his parish. Fr. Gell's father, also Edward Gell was an architect who was born in Hull, England and he migrated to Australia in 1857 aged 37. He settled in the Bathurst region, designing many churches, schools and houses in the area. He had shares in mining in the Lithgow Valley and even took over the management of a colliery at some stage. He and his wife, whom he married c1861 in the Cathedral of Ss.Michael and John, which he had designed, retired to Hunter's Hill.

The architect for the original St. Charles Church was A.W.N. Pugin (1812 – 1852) as I mentioned earlier. He converted to Catholicism at the age of 23 years. He had three wives

producing eight children. His first two wives died and his third wife out-lived him by 57 years. He wrote over twenty books on the Revived Gothic Churches and their furnishings including stained-glass windows and internal roofs.

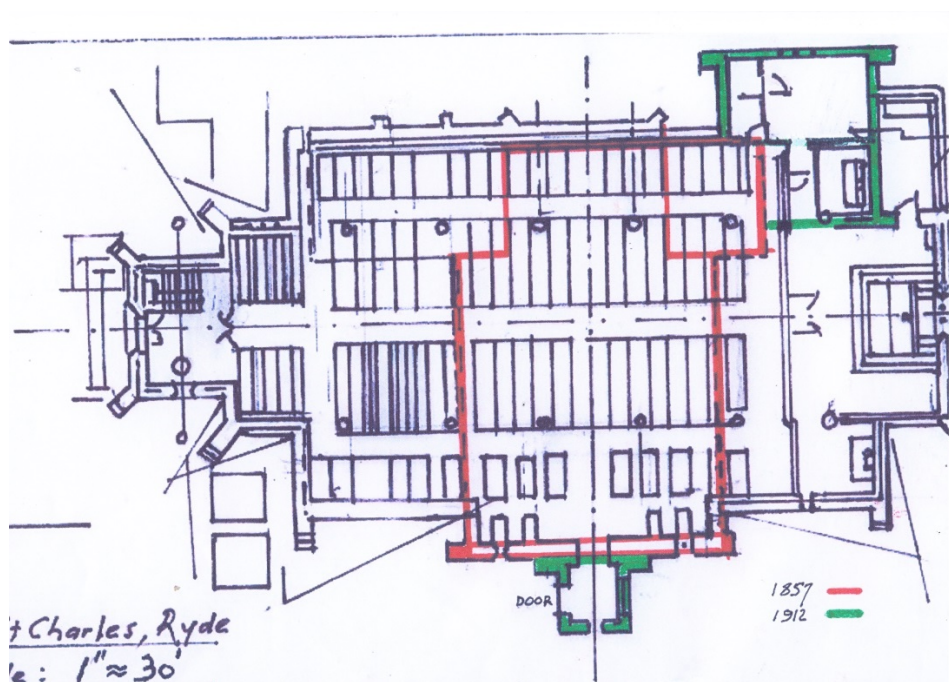
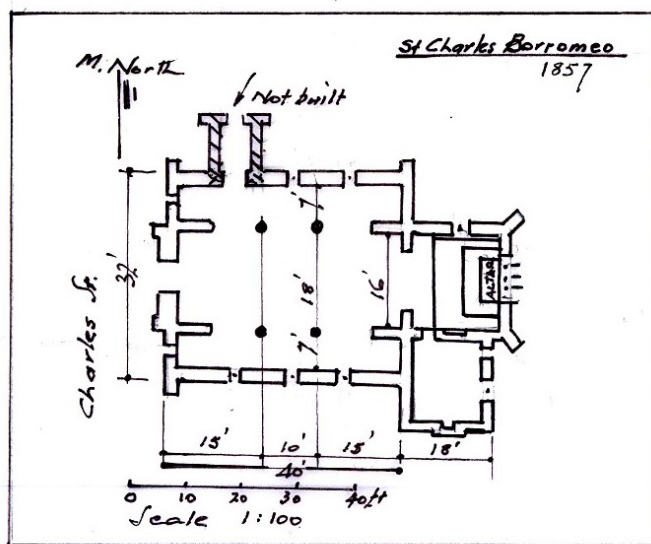
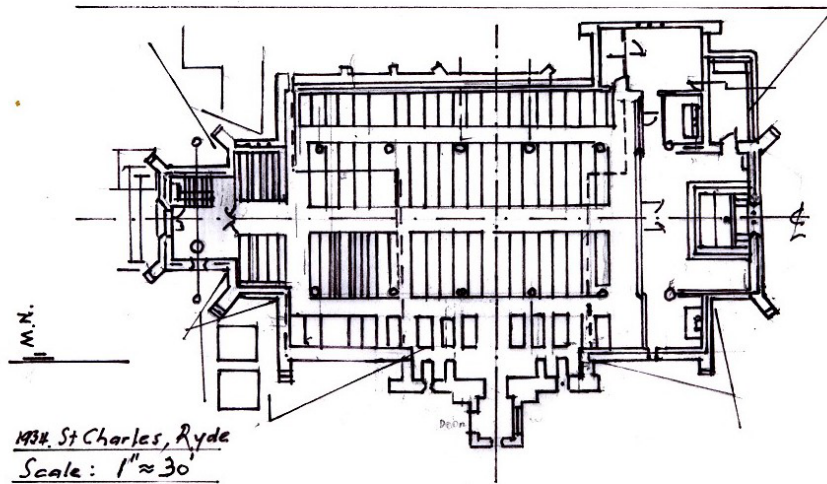
The English “Catholic Emancipation Act 1829” liberated Catholics to worship openly. This enabled Pugin to openly discuss his designs with all church authorities in the UK. He had global influence in spite of the fact that he never came to Australia. In his short architectural career of 17 years he was responsible for the design of about 100 churches and homes in the UK and overseas. One of his associates, Sir Charles Barry was commissioned for the rebuilding of the London Houses of Parliament which had been destroyed by fire in 1834. The external design was in the late Gothic Perpendicular style, but Barry was influenced by Pugin’s internal architecture. Neither Pugin nor Barry lived to see the completed structure in 1868. Pugin’s treatment inside the building was stunning and gave him the opportunity to continue the Gothic Revival architecture of which he was a master. The internal fittings of Houses of Parliament London included panelling, fireplaces, vaulting, door frames, floor tiling, turrets, eight different door types as well as the stained-glass windows.

A jeweller and silver-smith, John Hardman of Birmingham, was encouraged by Pugin to establish a stained-glass window manufacturing business. His work was used in the Houses of Parliament London (100s), St. Andrew’s Cathedral Sydney (27 windows) and St. Mary’s Cathedral Sydney (49). Hardman & Co. ceased trading in 2008.

P.S. My wife’s great-great-great-grandmother, Mary-Ann Eggbury, a convict, is buried in the graveyard at St. Charles Borromeo. She lived in Waterloo Road, North Ryde near the present Macquarie Centre. The story goes that her grandson, William Hennessy, born 1847, was sent from Sussex Street by his mother to visit her with a message. He went on foot and swam the Parramatta River with his clothes on his head. Presumably he crossed from Abbotsford to Punt Road Gladesville, which was the shortest crossing point. There was a ferry (c1832) at this crossing, but maybe he didn’t have the fare. We have no idea how long the journey took nor how long he stayed with his grandmother. The thought of sharks does not appear to have been a deterrent. William was a good story-teller, so we are not sure of the truth of the matter.

I am indebted to Mrs. Margaret Farlow for her help in compiling this history.

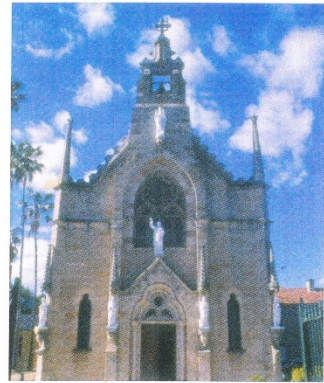




Five Stone Churches of Hunters Hill

An architectural guide. By Hector Abrahams

The 19th century churches of Hunter's Hill are a rich collection, representing all the main denominations. All built of stone over a period of more than 70 years, each was designed by a different architect and represents a different architectural approach. Each however reflects the Victorian ecclesiastical fascination with the revival of Gothic architecture and church forms.



Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Hunters Hill, West Elevation.

This revival emanating from Oxford and Cambridge universities in the late 1820s was the undisputed approach for constructing churches, especially here in the colony where the revival of medieval Gothic also meant reproducing the architecture of 'home'. Unlike architectural trends of today, this revival was very deeply rooted, became very scholarly and corresponded to broad cultural changes. The revivalists, particularly the Camden Society in Britain took an increasingly narrow view of the styles and types of church worthy of revival. This was rarely adhered to in Australia and these five churches demonstrate a broader, but no less vigorous, construction on the Gothic vision.

St Mark's Anglican Figtree

The earliest church in Hunters Hill is St. Mark's Anglican Figtree (also called the Figtree Chapel). Largely intact, it is a genuine piece of early Hunter's Hill. Small, simple and twice extended the church is the child of the early builders and figures of the neighbourhood.

The Chapel was built and consecrated in 1858 as a chapel and schoolhouse, established by the parish of St. Anne's, Ryde under its Rector Rev Edward Turner. The Rector's nephew, William Weaver was the architect for the building, designing its simple nave, pews, west door and bell turret. Weaver, who for a short while was Colonial Architect, is associated with other houses in Hunter's Hill and credited with,

the design of All Saints, Mudgee, but his practice in New South Wales was short-lived; from 1857 to 1863.

The building is simplicity itself with small, pointed lancet windows, simple hardwood trusses with knee braces, good hardwood floor and cedar ended open back pews. Several additions completed by 1870 added the transepts and the chancel (possibly in two stages) and a small vestry with pointed roof. Pretty fretted bargeboards finish the little peaked roofs.

Quite dramatically the roof was tiled in a superior quality special leaf-shaped terracotta shingle, most likely imported. One tile survives in the church while many now adorn the house at 11 Wybalena Street, Hunters Hill. The church has a full suite of early Victorian fittings, such as its carved sandstone font, communion rails and choir forms. It is fitting that the 1845 Kinloch organ originally from the Scots Church has recently been located to the north transept.

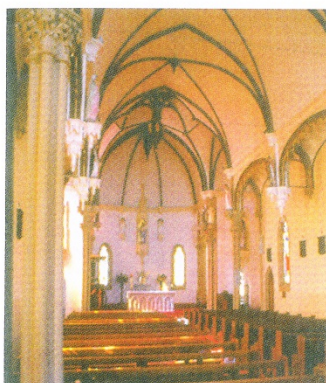
As older members of the Trust will recall this church was moved in 1957 from its original site to make way for road approaches to the Figtree Bridge. This was the only gesture of conservation that arose out of the battle fought against the demolitions needed for the road. The work of relocation was carried out to the designs of the architect and historian Morton Hermann. His resiting was successful and more than 40 years on, fabric does not readily show signs, of reconstruction.

The Church of the Holy Name of Mary

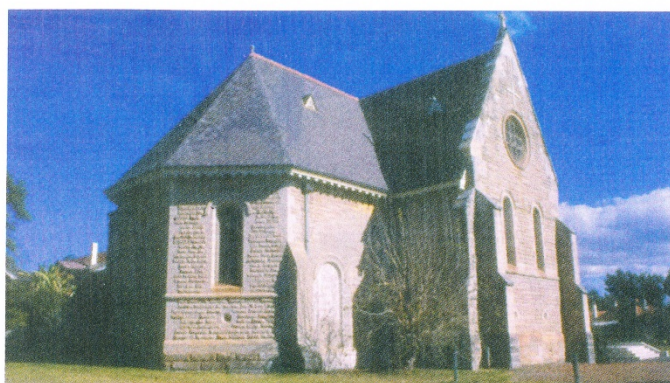
The most substantial early establishment in Hunters Hill, the Monastery of Villa Maria, established in about 1847 (in buildings also by William Weaver) gave rise to the second Hunters Hill Church. The Church of the Holy Name of Mary was built by the monastery in 1871 to the design of the architect and priest Fr Claude Joly. Ambitious in scale and design, replete with its full monastic setting of priory, gardens, cemetery and earlier chapel in a marked French style it is a church unlike any other of its time in New South Wales.

The splendid west elevation facing the road announces the French Victorian character, no doubt inspired by the provincial architecture of Lyons, where the Order was founded. The design of the elevation is a complex working of the bell tower brought down through the facade as a buttress dividing around the west door with its circular window tracery and breaking forward to frame the west door portal. There are four pinnacled buttresses housing statues of the four evangelists, probably portraits of the named donors and supporters.

The interior is laid out grandly, complete with plaster groin vaulted nave, crossing and apsidal chancel. There is a screened monastery gallery to the south of the chancel. It has a full complement of furniture including the carved five bay marble altar which was set originally against the back wall. It is of the first quality. Just as confident is the working in cast iron of columns, balustrading, the font and other architectural elements.



Church of the Holy Name of Mary. Interior.



The incomplete Church of St Peter Chanel, Hunters Hill.

Photos: Hector Abrahams

The interior surfaces were once fully decorated in colourful patternwork but this has not survived. The window glass is French. My words ill describe the vigour and piety of this church interior.

Congregational Church

Smaller but no less attractive is the Congregational Church built four years later in 1875 in Alexandra Street. The design is the work of the architect Albert Bond, sometime city architect who designed the mansard roof and the vestibules to the Sydney Town Hall, and Antonio Bondietti who built Milano at 31 Madeline Street.

Although small, it authentically follows the Gothic principles of decorated structure, referred to in the 1870s as geometric Gothic. Its principal façade is carved and coloured to give a patterned effect also found in the arched heads over the doors to the two porches either side of the church. Side or dual entry is a common feature of Congregational churches, along with the central preaching position rather than a table or altar. The chamber is a single room all in stained pine; the ends of the open back pews exemplify the concern with geometry and pattern. The east end was originally furnished with a panelled timber pulpit and readers' desk. In 1919 this was pulled to one side and the centre place taken by a very elaborate organ case constructed of Queensland maple. The chamber is very intact. Two good vestries or schoolrooms have been added to the rear. Complete and well used, it is a very good church of its type.

Hunter's Hill Anglican

By the 1880s the Anglicans of Hunter's Hill were prepared to build a large and more magnificent church. They commissioned John Horbury Hunt, that highly artistic innovative builder of cathedrals and large churches in New South Wales. Highly informed in English and American thinking, Hunt would provide an up-to-date Gothic architecture exemplary in its constructional logic, modern in its liturgical layout and inventive as well. This church is unusual for Hunt – he executed it in Sydney sandstone, whereas he normally used brick. It was grandly scaled, with internal space which competes in size with the cathedrals of Armidale and Grafton. Designed in 1886 the interior is laid out for the High Anglican church rites. The chancel is deep set, its roof structure distinguished from the nave, its altar table raised on steps. The broad chancel arch opens it to the nave. Immediately to the north, the only non-symmetrical opening is the wide arch framing the transept, added to house the font and the vestries.

This church was not completed by Hunt. Its western bays are the work of the colonial revival architects Neave and Berry in about 1931. The furniture, all good Victorian, is from different sources. Although incomplete, as with all of Hunt's work the church is architecturally very strong and albeit large, is quite approachable by the virtue of its directness and clarity.

St Peter Chanel

Perhaps the most unusual is the last built church, St. Peter Chanel, built to

commemorate the first Pacific martyr of the Order of Mary, Peter Chanel on the island of Futuna. This church was begun in 1890 to a design by Tappin Donnelly, the Victorian designer of Ballarat Cathedral, and Smart. It was conceived on a scale to rival Horbury Hunt but on a more dramatic site down the peninsular, on land steeply raised above the Lane Cove River. Construction was halted and recommenced twice. Finally in 1899 Sheerin & Hennessey managed to see completion of the chevron chancel, crossing and short nave, opened in 1901

The church is built of rock faced stone, plain and conventional in plan, with enormous roof members and windows. Its furnishings are incomplete and have been assembled from other places including cast iron and marble pieces from the Church of the Holy Name of Mary. But of all the churches so far mentioned, this is the most outward looking, sited on large, level grounds which offer views of many points along the Lane Cove River. It can be seen from the Longueville peninsular, sitting up high among the houses and trees of the north side of Hunters Hill. This type of picturesque location was much sought after by the Victorians in their revival of medieval architecture.

This article has been structured to give readers an informed tour of these five churches which are generally well cared for and intact. They are a fine example of how the Victorians built their Gothic churches.

From a talk given by Hector Abrahams in 2003, arranged by the Vienna Sub Committee of the National Trust. Hector Abrahams is a conservation architect in the practice of Clive Lucas Stapleton & Partners.