



## FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES

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### Saint Faith's Montmorency

Welcome to the eleventh edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish. This is especially so with the 150th anniversary in 2011.

The "From the Parish Archives" aims to be factual. However, any opinions expressed are personal and may not be necessarily shared by other parishioners.

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#### Introduction

Issues numbers 6 and 8 were devoted to the former centres of the Parish known as The Church of the Transfiguration, Research and St Matthews, Panton Hill. This issue features St Faith's Montmorency. It was previously part of the same Parish as St Margaret's, then it became separate from, and finally amalgamated with, St Margaret's.

The archival sources, not explicitly cited, are largely from the *Profile of St Faiths Anglican Church Montmorency*, November 2001 and *brief electronic notes December 2010* from Barbara Talbot a former parishioner of St Faith's.

#### Early History

In 1917 a gift of two acres of land bounded by Mountain View, Price and St Faiths Roads was made. On the land was built a church primary school and this was officially opened by Archdeacon Hindley on Saturday 5 October 1918. The diocese made a grant of £225 on the condition that a like sum was raised locally. Much of the Building Fund was raised at a fete held in St Margaret's Parish Hall. A holy table and lectern was promised from Christ Church South Yarra and Merton Hall donated a few disused desks.

The building made of brick and tiles had a recess which could be curtained off, and from 1919 was used as a sanctuary for occasional services. In 1921 the school was closed and building was used exclusively as a church. St Faith's was part of Parish of Eltham and the shared Vicar at this time was Thomas Henry Sapsford (1915-1922). It is recalled that he would start the

service, read the lesson, trot to the organ stool, play the hymns, preach, go back to the organ, bless the congregation and go off in his horse and buggy to his next engagement.

### **Later History**

In 1952 the St Faith's hall was built. In 1954 a play-centre was established and in 1958 it was officially classified as a kindergarten. It was officially opened and dedicated by Archbishop Joseph John Booth on the 22 October 1955. When the Parish of Greensborough was formed in 1957 St Faith's became part of it. However, in 1962 St Faith's was established in its own right. The founding Vicar was John Simpson (1962-1969) who was a former curate of All Saints, Greensborough. A Vicarage was completed by 1962 to house the Vicar and his family.

In 1958 it was decided that church services should be readily available to the people of South Montmorency. The first services were held in the Lower Plenty Progress Hall. They were conducted by the Reverend Richmond McCall, Vicar of Diamond Creek with Greensborough. St Paul's was completed in 1959. However, in 1981 because the congregational numbers had significantly declined at both St Faith's and St Paul's, it was decided that the latter be sold and worship be only at St Faith's. In 1983 St Paul's was sold and the Diocese agreed that a proportion of the funds from the sale be used for extensions and improvements at Faith's. This action was to be repeated when St Faith's was sold and was amalgamated with St Margaret's Eltham in 2007.

In March 1974 the Narthex was added to the church building. During 1985 a new Vestry and the St Paul's Meeting room were also added, from the proceeds of the sale of St Pauls South Montmorency.

Like many churches in the 1960s a large number of children attended Sunday school, the Church of England Boys Society (CEBS) and the Girls Friendly Society (GFS). Again, like so many other churches numbers declined afterwards, especially from the 1980s. GFS disbanded in 1982 and CEBS a year earlier. An informal youth group continued into the 1990s. Sunday school numbers at the amalgamation were very small in number. St Faith's Mothers Union and the Ladies Auxiliary (later changed to Parish Ladies Fellowship) continued to 2007. A Christian Meditation Group existed in 2001.

### **Decline and Amalgamation**

St Faith's remained a full-time Parish until early 1995. At that time it was decided that it could no longer afford to keep a full-time Priest, as parishioner numbers and funds had declined to such an extent. From 1995 to 1997 it was decided that St Faith's become a part-time Parish with the hope of growing to become once again a full-time Parish. The Reverend Douglas Stevens was appointed at the beginning of 1997 on a half-time stipend and in the next few years the Parish experienced limited success in reaching the goal of a full-time Priest.

The congregation and its committees met many times, and with diocesan authorities, to consider its future options with the strong preference for continuation of St Faith's in its own right. There was optimism about its future but in 2007 with much sadness and some hope most parishioners accepted the option of amalgamation with the neighbouring Parish St Margaret's, Eltham.

The land and buildings of St Faith's were sold and part of the proceeds was retained by the Diocese for the support of new churches on the fringe of Melbourne. A substantial part of the proceeds were to be used for the expansion and refurbishment of the site and buildings at Eltham.

### **Remembrance**

Whilst former parishioners of St Faith's were saddened by the loss of their church, members at St Margaret's were delighted to receive into their number so many Christian brothers and sisters blessed with a variety of gifts. They were welcomed with warmth and affection in June 2007.

Currently, there exists many tangible remembrances of St Faith's, and there are some yet to be brought to fulfilment. The "Mystery of Faith" hangs above the western entrance door to the church. A grand cross is central to the Memorial Garden which houses both the remains of St Margaret's parishioners but also those of St Faith's. The "Light of the World" hangs in the Vestry and the Processional Cross is used for every service.

When the worship centre is expanded and the existing hall refurbished and extended during the next two years, largely from the proceeds of the sale of St Faith's, the amalgamation will be complete at both the physical as well as the spiritual level. Stained glass from St Faith's and from the other former centre, The Church of Transfiguration, will be lovingly incorporated into the expanded worship space.

A St Faith's Pew Leaflet dated 6 October 1985 describes the Mystery of Faith artefact. It is a gilded sculpture by Elizabeth Schubert one of Melbourne's leading wood carvers. Elizabeth was asked by John Young, priest of St Faith's (1978-1985) to design and build a sculpture representing the "Mystery of Faith". This we proclaim at every Eucharist in the words "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again". What Elizabeth has produced encourages us to not only reflect on these three great "truths" of Christ's work, but also on the whole mystery of who Christ is.

### **Vicars and Locums 1962 – 2007**

John Simpson	1962-1969
George Charles	1970-1974
Maurice Whitehouse	1974-1978
John Young	1978-1985
Ken Brierty	1985-1986
Tom Sansom	1986-1995
Noel Delbridge	1995

Gordon brown	1995
Frank Somerville	1995-1996
Chris Appleby	1996
Vic Maddick	1996-1997
Douglas Stevens	1997-2001
Matthew Dowsey	2001
Vic Maddick	2002
Scott Bramley	2002-2006
Jim Cowdery	2006
Elizabeth Delbridge	2006-2007



*Elizabeth Schubert's Wood Carving of "The Mystery of Faith"*