



## **FROM THE PARISH ARCHIVES**

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### **Saint Margaret's in the 1950s**

Welcome to the twenty-fourth edition of "From the Parish Archives". We hope that you will enjoy reading about the history of the Parish. This is especially so with us in our 150th year.

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**

This issue of "From the Archives" describes what Saint Margaret's was like in the 1950s. If this proves interesting to parishioners then we will publish an issue on the 1970s and 1990s, for instance. The author's disclaimer is that these recent decades have not been thoroughly researched yet. However, this Issue primarily uses the published sources of the Annual General Meeting Reports, Registers, Financial Reports and "The Way". In the future current parishioners, who were also in the parish during the 1950s and in other decades, will be interviewed. We welcome their memory and any records, including photographs, of any decade as additions to the Parish Archives.

We will describe the 1950s under four main headings. They are:

- Clergy and Laypersons
- Worship and Sacraments
- Church Groups
- Property and Finance

#### **Clergy and Laypersons**

During the 1950s Saint Margaret's experienced the ministry of three priests. They were Robert George Long 1949-1951, John Fenton Gibbins 1951-1956 and David Brooke Warner 1956-1960. The Revd. Long formerly served in the Diocese of Ballarat before receiving permission to officiate in the Diocese of Melbourne. Prior to his appointment at Saint Margaret's he was chaplain at Ivanhoe Grammar and he ministered at Holy Trinity East Melbourne.

The Revd. Gibbins was priested in 1942 by the Bishop of St Arnaud and served in that Diocese before appointment to Eltham. Finally, the Revd. Warner was priested in 1952 by the Archbishop of Melbourne. He ministered to parishes in Manchester and London before appointment to Saint Margaret's.

We can identify some of the laypersons who had positions of responsibility and ministry during this decade. F Ludwig, T A Rank and Stanley Ziebell were Parochial Lay Readers. Ziebell was also choirmaster. Laypersons who served as church wardens for much of the decade included A Parsons, A Burgoyne, William Ward, Thomas Rank and Adrian Dagnall. The latter also served as secretary and treasurer.

### **Worship and Sacraments**

During the 1950s the regular weekly services at Eltham were an 8am Holy Communion and a 7pm Evensong. The first Sunday at 11am was Holy Communion and the third Sunday at 11am was Matins. Later in the decade the present time of 10am was introduced. The other centres of the Parish of Eltham cum Panton Hill, included Saint Matthews Panton Hill, Saint Marks Hurstbridge, Church of the Transfiguration Research, Saint John's, Hazel Glenn and Saint Andrews, Saint Andrews. All centres offered a combination of Divine Worship and Holy Communion services. However, a service was not offered at some centres every Sunday. Sunday School was held most Sundays at all centres in the Parish.

During this decade there was less emphasis on attendance at Holy Communion than there is today. Indeed, the Revd. David Warner raised it as an issue to be solved. He wondered if many thought it was only for a select few. But, he stressed that Holy Communion should be our central service as it was the Lord's own service. He believed it was a parishioner's duty and a privilege to take a weekly holy communion.

We have some figures for the late 1950s concerning acts of communion and service attendance as revealed in the table below.

Service Attendance and Acts of Communion		
Year	Acts of Communion	Service Attendance
1955	967	3974
1956	1316	6085
1957	1904	7333
1958	2586	8296
1959	3355	8782

We can speculate about the substantial increase over 5 years but the successful ministry of David Warner is probably significant.

The interior of Saint Margaret's differed from today in a number of important ways. The altar and altar rails were flush against the north wall. The "mobile" section of the altar rails to "close" the square was used. A dossal hung above the altar and behind it, obscured, was the 1861 altar window. The Matcham Skipper crucifix had not yet been acquired and the stained glass "resurrection pair" had not yet been erected. The vicar's Honour Roll had also not been erected.

The choir pews and the organ (not our current one) was located in the north-west corner of the church. A blackwood pulpit was also on that side. The hymn and psalm numbers were shown on a board that hung on the north wall. The font was located in the south-east corner, that is, the "children's area" today. The pews were arranged horizontal facing the altar, compared to the slight incline today. The pews were the original ones purchased from the Baptist church in 1861. The Head of the Angel Gabriel was acquired in 1953 and the stained glass of Samuel was erected in 1954.

All services were taken from The Book of Common Prayer and the hymns came from a book titled Hymns Ancient and Modern. During the communion service the priest had his back to the congregation for a great deal of time. Generally speaking women wore hats and all persons kneeled during prayer. The altar usually had on it two small vases of flowers, two candles and a small metal cross. During this decade the patronal festival was in honour of Margaret of Antioch, not Margaret of Scotland. It was during the time of the Revd. David Warner that the annual service of Blessing the Plough" took place at Panton Hill.

The other sacraments of baptism, marriage, confirmation and burial were offered during the 1950s. There were 52 marriages conducted between 1950 and 1959. Over the same period 325 baptisms were undertaken. In 1958 there were 27 confirmations and 12 burials whilst in 1959 there was 19 confirmations and 8 burials. The Revd. David Warner had the pleasure of baptising his own daughter, Penelope Jane, on the 19 January 1958.

### **Church Groups**

Some of the main church groups operating at Eltham in the 1950s were as follows. The Ladies Guild (LG), Mothers Union (MU), Junior Church of England Boys Society (CEBS), Girls Friendly Society (GFS), Young Anglican Fellowship (YAF) and a Social Club that organised a fortnightly dance.

The Ladies Guild was important during the 1950s. It provided opportunities for fellowship and for raising funds to assist in the operation of the church. On the 10 November 1959, for instance, a lunch was held al fresco in the garden of Mrs Jack Burgoyne. It also had a market table. About 30 people attended.

The MU was strong in the parish during the 1950s. A highlight was the holding by Saint Margaret's of "The Day Apart" for the Melbourne East Deanery in March 1958. It was stated that the Eltham members of MU were gracious hostesses to the 160 members that attended.

The CEBS is also described as flourishing but it could cope with a few more boys over 12 years. In 1959 the membership was about 40. Juniors, 8-12 years, were provided with a programme that included spiritual, mental, social and physical. Richard Appleby was in charge. Bill Ward was in charge of the intermediates, 12-16 years, and their meeting averaged about 10 boys.

In 1959, it is reported that the GFS membership was 14 and they met at 7pm on a Tuesday evening. It is further reported that the girls themselves have been given the responsibility for organising the meetings. It was regretted that more talks and craft activities had not been incorporated into the programme. It was resolved that this would happen in the future.

The YAF was formed in 1957. It is described as offering a balanced programme of intellectual, physical, social and spiritual matters. It is reported that in 1959 it had an average attendance of 25. Outings in that year included the Dr Billy Graham Crusade at the Myer Music Bowl. A District Dance at Saint Margaret's Parish Hall attracted over 150 young people.

Saint Margaret's Social Club was formed in 1955 to provide various forms of entertainment for Church members. Apparently the fortnightly dances proved popular with an attendance of 100-150 people. The money raised from the dances was used to construct a tennis court on the site.

A Church of England Men's Society was formed at Eltham on the 4 September 1959. The broad objective was good fellowship among the men of the parish in conformity with the Christian way of life. Men's communion breakfasts were also organised. On the 15 July 1956, for instance, the vicar administered the service and the Ladies Guild cooked and served breakfast in Gibson Hall. Major General F Kingsley Norris gave the address titled "Onward Christian Soldiers". Fifty boys and men attended.

### **Property and Finance**

For most of the 1950s the site consisted of three buildings, the church, Gibson hall and the parsonage. However, it was noted in 1956 that the church although 95 years old was still unfinished, the 86 year vicarage "has all the discomforts of old age but none of its charm" and the church hall was "ill-suited to meet the calls upon it for kindergarten and Sunday school, for youth activities and for the general social life of the parish".

One response to this situation was the opening of the new vicarage fronting John Street in 1958. It was dedicated by His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend Frank Woods on May 18. Until then the John Street end of the site was a "wilderness". The last "vicarage family" to live in the parsonage, now referred to as Dendy House, was that of the Revd. David Warner.

A report from November 1958 stated that this was the end of the first year of "Every Member Canvass Appeal". Further, that the appeal had progressed well so that after paying all the necessary church operating expenses the indebtedness of the new vicarage was reduced by £1200. The aim was to clear the vicarage debt by the end of the three year canvass period, that is, in 1960. It was achieved with some difficulty.

In late 1959 a Church Completion Fund was established. This recognised that Saint Margaret's was never finished since opening in 1861. It had always been the intention to expand through the temporary north wall. It was hoped that parishioners could look forward to the day when a start could be made on completing the church so it could provide adequately for parish worship at Eltham.

Certainly, throughout the 1950s the parish tended to have a surplus budget with balances being transferred to pay off the vicarage debt and funds for the completion of the church. Offertory, special efforts and donations were the main sources of income. Like today the major expenditure item was the vicar's stipend and travelling allowance but unlike recent times a large amount was spent on maintenance and repair of the church, hall, vicarage and church grounds.

However, in 1960, concern was expressed by the Revd. Warner on the eve of his departure from Eltham that although church attendances were increasing, income had declined to £300 or less. This included a decline in the "Canvass Appeal" (Planned Giving in today's terms).

### **Postscript**

We trust that this issue has given a glimpse of what Saint Margaret's was like in the 1950s. If parishioners are interested we can discuss other recent decades using the same sort of headings. Parishioners are welcome to suggest other topics that might be of interest. However, we may be constrained by the availability of relevant records in our archives.