

A Brief History Of St Matthew's School



Archbishop Bede Polding

St. Matthew's was started as early as 1835 according to Henry N. Brit in *'Benedictine Pioneers in Australia'*, Volume 1, in which he quotes Archbishop Poldings return of 1836 to Governor Bourke regarding Catholic Schools.

"In Windsor,	Boys	50	payment ...	£ 54
	Girls	40	payment ...	£ 30

Mr. Jas Steele's book *'Early Days Of Windsor'*, published in 1961 states...

"The first Roman Catholic School in Windsor was conducted by James and Esther Cassidy, from 1835 to 1844. There were one hundred and four scholars on the roll in 1838."

A record can also be found of a Catholic School in Windsor in the *'Australian Catholic Directory, 1841'* in which it states...

"At Windsor there are from 90 to 100 children in daily attendance; the school is conducted on the Irish system by Mr. J Cassidy and Mrs. Cassidy."



Mrs. Esther Cassidy

St. Matthew's School had a very humble beginning with inadequate accommodation and very poor facilities. We know this from the following report, dated 13th March 1848, written by Father Therry (Australia's first Parish Priest) to the Board of Education.

"In reply to the queries that have been recently addressed to me in the printed circular I have the honour to state for the information of the Board of Education that there is but one School connected with the Catholic Church of this town that receives Government aid. The Master's name is Joseph Carney. He is in my opinion perfectly competent to the proper discharge of his duties. His wife who is competent to instruct the younger children is the Mistress attached to the School. The number of children in daily attendance is very inconsiderable in consequence of the protracted illness and final retirement of the late Schoolmaster Mr. Can and the inconvenient distance of the Schoolhouse (which is an unfurnished and not very fit one) from the center of the

Town. The Master states that there are 23 boys and 35 girls on his list, but I have not seen so many in attendance at any one time."

Recorded teachers of that early period 1845 to 1882 are C. A. McCan, J. Carney, M. Hynes and finally W. B. Langton.

Of these early teachers Mr. William Langton, 1863 to 1882, distinguished himself as an educator of some note by his earnest and conscientious work of which School Inspectors commented favourably.

William Langton gave a good foundation to the brothers E. J. and T. Butler, who, after going to Lyndhurst College, had brilliant careers at University. The first brother became a priest and the second was the first native born Professor of classics at Sydney University.

Inspectors wrote that Langton maintained a good spirit in the School. In August, 1881, Langton suffered ill health. He applied for leave but was refused by the Council of Education, who felt that his wife and son could manage the School in his absence. The arrangement was found unsatisfactory and the Council of Education appointed a teacher to replace Langton. After convalescing for a period of five weeks, Langton sent a telegram to the Council of Education advising them of his return to teaching.

Following the Public Instruction Act of 1880, which created the Department of Education as we know it today, Langton resigned his position in 1882 and became Riverstone's First Public School teacher in 1883.

As stated in the '*Annals of Sisters of the Good Samaritan Order, 1857 to 1938*' after the closure of the School in 1882.

"All the girls belonging to the denominational School came to us. Father Austin (Sheehy) secured a teacher for the boys, only the infant boys came to the Convent. When Father Austin left Windsor in December of 1886, there was not a single Catholic child, boy or girl, at the Public School"

The teacher secured by Fr. Austin was a Mr. M. Phelan and he was paid by the Parish. Mr. J. Reidy replaced Phelan in 1884. After Reidy the nuns (Sisters of the Good Samaritan) took over the running of the Primary School.

When reviewing the 1890's to 1950's period the most written and discussed events undoubtedly were the end of year School Concerts that were held in both the School Hall and the Local School Of Arts. These concerts best capture the great energy and pleasure that both children and Sisters gave to, and received from, their days at St Matthew's School.

St Matthew's

From 1952 to 1985 the school enrolment tripled. To accommodate the increasing enrolment the Parish completed four major building projects during this period.

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| 01 May 1955 | 3 new classrooms were blessed and opened by Cardinal Gilroy
Father Leo Murphy, Parish Priest. |
| 24 July 1966 | 3 new classrooms were blessed and opened by Cardinal Gilroy
Father Leo Murphy, Parish Priest |
| 26 June 1983 | 3 new classrooms were blessed and opened by Bishop Bede
Heather Father Jim Dooley, Parish Priest |
| 28 April 1985 | 2 new classrooms and Administration Area were blessed by
Bishop Bede Hunter and opened by Br Othmar Weldon F.M.S.
Father Jim Dooley, Parish Priest |

All of the building projects above except the 1985 project have been completely funded by the Parish. A testament to the Parish's commitment to Catholic Education.

St Matthew's