

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, THE VIRGIN, NORTH WAGGA WAGGA.

In 1898 during the incumbency of the Rev'd George Carver, a meeting was held at North Wagga Wagga to discuss the building of a Church.

Mr. W.G. (George) Commins, of "Springfield" gave to the Parish land on which a church could be built. Mr Commins arrived in Wagga Wagga in 1866 and established himself as a licensed surveyor, practising until about 1920's. Work began on the Church and on the 8th December, 1900 the building was licensed for use. A Vestry report for the year ending 1900 mentions that a church has been built across the river at a cost of about 200 pounds. The church was free of debt as soon as it was finished.

The Vestry report goes on to say, "One hundred pounds was generously given by the Venerable Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the balance of over 100 pounds was personally collected by Mr. Joseph Hayes, whose energy cannot be too highly esteemed. When the necessary furniture is secured the church will be opened for Divine Service."

On December 12th, 1900, under Episcopal Seal we read: "The Chancel of the School Church, North Wagga Wagga, is now sufficiently prepared and furnished for Divine Service. In testimony whereof we have caused our Episcopal seal to be hereunto fixed,"

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday School had its beginnings at "Springfield", the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Commins, both of whom were Superintendents of the children's Religious Education. The Springfield School existed for 30 years, as reported by Mr. Commins during his remarks at the opening of St. Mary's Hall. (Advertiser Thursday September 2nd, 1909).

The newspaper article goes on to say "After the Bishop of Goulburn had paid a visit to England, he announced he had received 100 pounds for North Wagga, on condition that the church was opened free of debt. The children moved into the

church. It was not thought "quite right" that the School should be held in the Church. That was how the school came to be built".

Some members of the present congregation are descendents of those early students.

St. MARY'S HALL.

The foundation stone of St. Mary's Hall, a brick building adjoining the Church, was laid on Lady Day, March 25th, 1908. This occurred during Canon Carver's second incumbency of the Parish of St. John's, having spent five years in New Zealand between 1902 and 1907. Mr. G.W. Commins was asked to declare the Hall open. Part of his story has already been told with the Sunday School, however, the debt on the School was not immediately removed, and as an incentive, Mr. Commins promised to present to the congregation the ground at present occupied by the tennis court on the day on which the school was placed out of debt. He then had pleasure in declaring the St. Mary's Hall open.

A number of congratulatory letters and telegrams were received from previous Rector's and Curates, expressing regret at not being able to be present. Some of these original documents still exist in St. John's Archives.

In 1939, the building extension to the west and north of the original Hall was constructed of brick with corrugated iron roof. The dimensions of the extensions were a total of 70 square metres consisting of 5 metres west and 5 metres north for the full length of the original hall and west wing.
The Details on the plaque are:

"A M D G
This stone was laid by the
Right Rev. E.H. Burgmann MA
Bishop of Goulburn
To mark the extension of
St. Mary's Hall
9th April 1939
Ven. Archdeacon West Rector".

This section of the hall has been converted into an ablution block for use by St. Mary's parishioners and playground participants.

NEW RECEPTION AND ABLUTION BLOCK

In 2002, the Parish Council agreed to the building of a new reception and ablution block on the eastern side of the Hall building. The building construction commenced in 2003 and was completed in 2004 at a cost of \$35,000.

Funding sources for the building extension were the Commins Bequest and accumulated income paid by the tenant (Rainbow Preschool part of the Wagga Wagga Preschool Inc.).

EXTENSION SPECIFICATIONS.

The building extension specifications are 8 metres by 4 metres. The extension has external cladding of blue board. A section of the hall external brick wall remains as a feature interior wall within the new extension. Volunteers assisted with some of the tasks and the building project supervisor was Ray Bagley.

The extension enables children to access the ablution block from either the outside or inside activity area. The new reception area is spacious and open providing lockers for children's gear as well as space for other items and a new external drinking water facility was installed for the benefit of the children.

PROPOSED THIRD STRUCTURE

In 2002, the Parish Council agreed (subject to funding) to the construction of a third structure between the Church and Hall building consisting of kitchen, store, ablution facility for people with disabilities, and a large pergola area for people to gather and share experiences.

This however, is in the future.

Well done St. Mary's congregation and Pre-School .

Acknowledgments: St. John's Archives & Mr. James Hamilton for building and technical details.