

Chapter 14

PARSONAGES, RECTORIES & HALLS

TODAY the Rector of the Mitcham Parish lives in a comfortable brick home on St Michael's Church Acre. It was not always so. For nearly one hundred years the Rectory (or Parsonage as it was known until the 1890s) was an old bluestone house on the eastern side of Carrick Hill Drive (formerly known as Fullarton Road). Home units now occupy this site, and the only sign of its passing is in the name of a street, Rectory Walk – once a walkway separating the Rectory from the grounds of 'Strathspey', now Mercedes College.

BURNETT'S PARSONAGE

The first incumbent, Reverend Edward Burnett, lived in a small cottage in the SW corner of Mitcham Village overlooking the ford across Muggs Hill Road (see Fig. 2-2). The house at 10 Lochness Avenue now occupies that site. The cottage was on two-and-a-half acres (1.01 ha) of land purchased in August 1848 in the name of Reverend W. J. Woodcock, the incumbent of St John's Church in Halifax Street, Adelaide. It seems likely that he may have been acting for the South Australian Church Building Society with a view to acquiring the land as the site for a church and parsonage.

Once Robert Thornber's offer of the present Church Acre had been accepted, this land was no longer required. However, sometime between 1848 and 1851 a cottage was built on Woodcock's land, and as there did not seem to be any hope at that time of building a parsonage on the Church Acre, this is where Burnett lived. The land, portion of Block 1, a large holding of 10 acres, consisted of a two-acre block plus two adjoining narrow strips of land, for which Woodcock paid a total of £32. In May 1853 it was transferred to Burnett for £200, and in July 1855 Burnett sold the property to James Smith, a draper, for £500. By then Burnett was a sick man, and a house was rented for him somewhere in the Village at a cost of £70 p.a. He sailed for England in February 1856 and died of TB en route.¹

THE OLD PARSONAGE

Following Burnett's departure there was a two-year interregnum. The second incumbent, Reverend Richard Needham, was not inducted until 11th January 1858. Presumably he also rented a house in the Village, because there is no mention of a parsonage in the Minutes until 28th August 1859 when it was proposed that:

Messrs Hardy and Manton be a committee to inspect the house offered by Mr Cornish and to report upon the

state of the building, also to measure and report upon the quantity of land offered by Mr Cornish and described by him as from 7 to 10 acres, and further to ascertain from Mr Cornish at what price he would sell the house and two acres of land.

The two men chosen for the task were well qualified. Alfred Hardy, the treasurer of the Parsonage Building Fund, came to the Colony with Colonel Light as one of his surveyors, and later served as Surveyor-General. James Manton was a civil engineer and surveyor. Having inspected the property, they reported that it was "desirable to purchase Mr Cornish's house rather than build in the Churchyard". On 18th September it was proposed that:

Messrs Arthur Blyth, W.W. Blyth, and Richard Hicks as Trustees accept the offer of sale by Mr Cornish of the House and two acres of land for £600 as marked out on the land by Mr Hardy and described in the plan produced, and enter into a contract for the purchase thereof for cash payable in one month. That the Treasurer of the Building Fund of the Parsonage be directed to hand over all funds and securities to the Trustees above named, and that the contract be contingent on obtaining the money.

That requisite, "contingent on obtaining the money", was not met until a year later. On 30th October 1860 the indenture conveying the property to the appointed Trustees was registered in the General Registry Office (No.184 Book 183). The land was described as containing "two acres or thereabouts being part of the eighty-acre section of land No.891". Five Vestrymen were named as the appointed Trustees: Hon. Arthur Blyth M.P., Alfred Hardy, Richard Hicks, James William Lewis and Henry Taylor. Arthur Blyth (the owner of 'Rusthall', and three times Premier of the Colony) was People's Warden, and Henry Taylor (after whom Taylors Road is named) was Priest's Warden. It was to be held by the persons to whom it was conveyed upon the Trusts of a certain Deed Poll dated 6th July 1858 enrolled in the GRO No.83 Book 37 Page 101 – the Model Trust Deed of 1858 – "so far as such trusts provisions regulations declarations and agreements are or can be applicable to a parsonage or Minister's dwelling".

In Constant Need of Repairs

The Parsonage was a solid bluestone house of eleven rooms with verandahs on the north and west (Fig. 14-1). Its date of construction is unknown, but it could not have been any more than fifteen or twenty years old when purchased in 1860. Within a decade it required major repairs, and in March 1869 was described as being "in such a dilapidated state that was painful to observe, and which, as the

Clergyman's residence, set a bad example to the whole of the village". Over the next two years £251 was spent on repairs. Apart from painting and wallpapering, major items included a new iron roof (instead of wood shingles), putting a floor in the kitchen (a separate outside room), installing water tanks, shutters on the windows, building a stable and a toilet, repairing drains and building a new entrance gate and front fence.

The Parsonage was to remain a constant drain on Parish finances until the day it was sold some ninety years later! In 1873 they had a chance to rid themselves of this burden when the property adjoining the Church Acre to the north was offered to the Parish. A Special Vestry Meeting was called on 22 October 1873 "to consider the propriety of purchasing Mr Thrupp's house as a Parsonage, in lieu of the present Parsonage". After a lengthy discussion, it was unanimously decided that Mr Thrupp's house should not be purchased, on the grounds that "the present Parsonage could not be sold" (because of its poor condition), and that it was "undesirable to incur so heavy a debt, as £1,600, the price named". Leonard Thrupp, a former Warden and Synodsmen, lived in a delightful house called 'Bloomfield' surrounded by four acres of beautiful gardens (see Fig. 2-13). It occupied the remainder of the block presently bounded by Church Rd, St Michael's Rd, Maitland St and Carrick Hill Drive.

The position had not improved seven years later when, in August 1880, a Special Vestry Meeting was called to receive a report "on the state of the Parsonage and the repairs necessary to render it safe". Mr Charles Hardy was requested to make enquiries as to the "position of the Title of the Parsonage property", and as to the possibility of "selling or mortgaging such property with a view to either building a new Parsonage or making substantial additions to the present one". He found that according to the Trust Deed of the property "it was impossible either to sell or mortgage St Michael's Parsonage". A committee of five was elected to try and obtain subscriptions from the congregation "to the amount of five hundred pounds, with a view to making the necessary alterations and additions".

The following April it was reported that "the work of adding to and improving the Parsonage was still in the hands of the contractor". There is no record of what this work entailed, but almost certainly the villa-style room at the front of the house with its extended gable-ended roof over the step was added at this time (Fig. 14-2).

From the mid-1890s the term 'rector' was used rather than 'incumbent' or 'parson'. In turn, his dwelling became known as the Rectory rather than the Parsonage.

By 1907 the Rectory had reached the stage where it had become dangerous. Attempts at renovating it had been made from time to time, "but without an architect's guidance, and so fundamental errors did not receive attention". White ants, damp, old age and "defective methods of carrying off storm water" all contributed to the problem. In fact, the old portion of the house was so unsatisfactory, that some thought it "wiser to pull it down and build up again". No less than three ceilings had collapsed – at some risk to the household – and others were bulging in a threatening manner.

Two quotations were received. One, estimated to cost £300, included general papering, repairing and painting of the house, together with "the making of an open area on the southern side to prevent the destroying work of damp". The other was of a more complete character providing for "the pulling down of the rear and centre of the house, the reconstruction of the same, the provision of an extra room, carrying out proper drainage and generally bracing and strengthening the property". This was to cost £872. In the end a compromise was reached – estimated to cost £400 – whereby the extra room, all outside painting and repairs, as well as much inside papering and painting was dropped.

The contractor, Thomas Baulderstone, moved in during the first week in December 1907 and the Clampett family spent the summer months in a furnished house at Glenelg. The architect was H.E. Fuller F.S.A.I.A., and the final cost of the project was £504.

A Grand Old Rambling Family Home

The following description of the old Rectory came from Mollie Bowen, Archdeacon Clampett's daughter, who was born at home on 8th December 1896:

My memories of my early childhood are very happy ones. The Rectory was a grand old rambling family home; nine good rooms, capacious rooms with high ceilings; splendid study, drawing room, dining room, five bedrooms and my nursery. Very good kitchen – old fashioned – with a scullery and a walk-in pantry, large bathroom and two splendid cellars which occasionally used to fill with water coming down from the springs on the hillside behind the house. The toilet was down the garden path and was serviced by the night cart.

We had a horse and trap which Father used for his Parish visiting. The Rectory had about two acres of grounds: stables, harness room, cow shed, coach house and large fowl houses. There was a large vegetable garden between house and creek, other side of which was the cow paddock and then 'Coreega'. We also had a cricket pitch. It was an ideal home for three children.²

Conflicts of Interest

During the Clampett years two daughter churches were built: St Columba's at Hawthorn in 1898 and St Wilfrid's at Torrens Park in 1934. Both congregations hoped one day to become separate parishes with their own rectories to house their own clergymen. Until that time came, they were duty-bound to contribute towards the housing of the Rector of Mitcham and his family. But this did not stop them grumbling every time the subject of repairs to the crumbling old Rectory was raised! Over the years this led to some friction between the congregations. Hawthorn became a separate parish in 1921.

Clampett retired in 1939, and with the arrival of Reverend Reginald Pearman the subject of selling the Rectory was raised once more. By the early 1940s it had become an embarrassment to the Wardens, who described it as a "financial sink". Money was poured into it to maintain it, but they were not keeping pace with the deterioration occurring. In July 1941 a Special Vestry had to be called to appoint new Trustees because all five previous ones had

been dead for years! The walls continued to crack and more ceilings fell down, but little could be done during the War years because of the acute shortage of materials and tradesmen resulting in stringent regulations and price control on the supply of building materials. Many of these restrictions were not lifted until the early 1950s.

The first murmurings of discontent between St Michael's and St Wilfrid's can be detected in the minutes of meetings held in mid-1951, at a time when members of the two Parochial Councils and the Mitcham Parish Central Council were grappling with problems associated with the maintenance of the various Parish properties. The Central Council established a 'Mitcham Parish Central Fund' in April 1951 which became responsible for the payment of all accounts connected with the care and maintenance of the Rectory and Hall.

At a Special Vestry Meeting of St Michael's parishioners held on 15th July 1951 it was resolved to request the Trustees to transfer both properties to the Synod of the Church of England in the Diocese of Adelaide Inc. in order to avoid the need to appoint new Trustees from time to time in the future. The Vestry then went on to discuss the merits of requesting Synod to sell some of the two acres of land surrounding the Rectory that had in the past been used as horse and cow paddocks. Money gained from the sale of portion of the land "could then form a useful nucleus for the purchase or erection of a new Rectory pending the sale of the old one". The proposal was to sell two blocks – 'A' for £1,200 and 'B' for £440 – as shown on a plan (Fig. 14-3). Two members of the St Michael's congregation, Mr Brian Crisp and his father Mr Douglas B. Crisp, had submitted applications to buy them. St Wilfrid's Council felt that the proposed sale "could have been discussed first by the Joint Parochial Council as a gesture of good faith in the combined efforts of both Churches, even though the final action would be taken by St Michael's Vestry". This decision was one of the subjects that led to prolonged debate and animosity between the two Councils (see page 96).

There were innumerable delays – of both a legal and technical nature – and another two years passed before the conveyance of the excess Rectory land to the Crisps was settled towards the end of 1953. On 2nd September 1953 Synod consented to the sale of the Rectory and determined

that the proceeds be applied "... for or towards the purchase or building of a suitable Rectory for St Michael's Church, Mitcham, to be held by the Synod upon Trusts applicable to the present Rectory".

Having cleared all these legal requirements, the sub-committee appointed by the Mitcham Parish Central Council to manage the affairs of the Rectory, was asked on 2nd February 1954 to "more actively pursue the matter of building or purchasing a more suitable Rectory in the centre of the Parish". It was pointed out that the Parish owned land in Princes Road near the Hall which could be used to build a new Rectory if necessary (see page 234).

One month later a disastrous event put these plans on hold, and it was to be a further five years before the saga of the Rectory was resolved.

Disposing of the Old Rectory

In the early hours of 1st March 1954 an earthquake caused severe damage to Parish buildings (see page 96). In his initial report the architect, Mr E.J. Barker, noted that the Rectory showed "acute damage" and it was expected that "about £400 worth of repairs would be necessary to rehabilitate it, which would be recoverable from the Underwriters". The Norwich Union offered £390 for the re-instatement of the building, and on 3rd June it was resolved to accept the quotation of £385 submitted by the builder, R.J. Nurse.

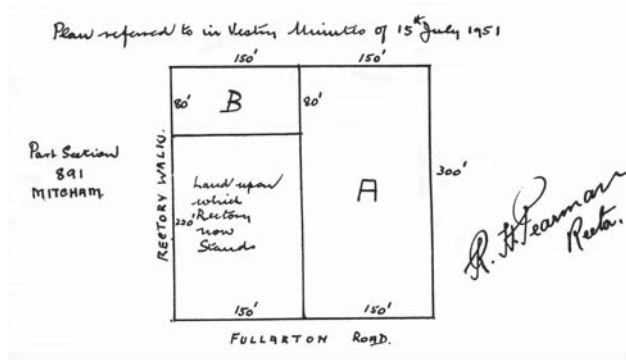
Assuming that the earthquake damage to the Rectory would soon be repaired using the insurance money, and that the building would then be put on the market, the Central Council decided at that same meeting to proceed with the preparation of ground plans and estimates for the building of a new Rectory on Lot 51 Princes Road.

Another year passed during which numerous meetings were held to discuss the size and layout of rooms and what fittings would be required. Then, on 19th June 1955, it was announced that "circumstances had changed", and that St Wilfrid's Vestry had decided to sell their share of the land to St Michael's Vestry and to put the proceeds into a Special Fund "towards the purchase of a home in that area" in the event of Torrens Park becoming a separate parish. As a result, St Michael's decided to "proceed with the building of a new Rectory on the Church grounds, on the eastern side of the block facing Fullarton Road". This decision was the only one possible to overcome all the legal difficulties connected with the Trust Deeds of St Michael's, as there was no provision in them for the sale of the old Rectory. Any proposed sale would require the consent of the Attorney-General of South Australia.

The architect was asked to re-design the Princes Road allotment plans to fit the new site, and in April 1956 preliminary work on clearing and levelling the area was done at the same time as a new entrance from St Michael's Road and a car park were being made in the NW corner of the Church grounds.

A year later, unable to obtain a temporary loan because the property was vested in Synod, the Rector said that the only method left of financing the new building was to put the old one on the market and offer vacant possession. He found it "irksome and frustrating when a parish such as this desires to relieve itself of a building which long

Fig. 14-3 Plan showing the position of the old Rectory on the two-acre block and the excess land, Lots A and B, which were sold to help finance the building of a new rectory. (Vestry Minutes, 15th July 1951)



ago became a liability". He offered to find temporary accommodation for himself and Mrs Pearman whilst a new Rectory was being built.

Several buyers inspected the rambling old building and rejected it because of its poor condition and lack of conveniences. Then a second earth tremor shook Adelaide. This resulted in further damage requiring the under-pinning of three rooms and repairing of three major cracks and four minor ones in other rooms. The insurance company would pay only £50, leaving a shortfall of £130. It was suggested that St Wilfrid's might share the cost "as the dilapidation had occurred whilst St Wilfrid's Church continued, as in the past, to share the services of the Rector". This they agreed to do, plus the installation of a new bath-heater, "the present contraption being one of the first ever made has long outlived its service". Much to Mrs Pearman's delight, they also agreed to share the cost of supplying running water to the kitchen and of providing a stainless-steel sink and drainboard. This in turn meant they could hire an electric water heater and have, for the first time, running hot water in the kitchen!

In March 1958 it was announced that a possible buyer had been found for the old Rectory, and the St Michael's Vestry recommended that the Standing Committee of Synod be asked to consent to the sale for the sum of £6,000 cash "in terms of the Synod Minute No.61 of 2nd September 1953". With the sale concluded, the Pearmans vacated the old Rectory and moved temporarily to a house they had purchased in Firlie for their retirement years.

Who could have imagined that the decision taken in November 1951 "to sell the Rectory subject to a suitable house having been purchased", would take over seven years to reach fruition!

The new owners, R.F. and J.I. Sweeting, lived in the old home for a number of years before it was demolished to make way for the red-brick home units which now occupy the site on the corner of Rectory Walk and Carrick Hill Drive.

THE NEW RECTORY

In April 1958, with the legal tangle of old Trusts straightened out, Synod approval received and the old Rectory sold, the architects, Dean W. Berry, Gilbert, Barker & Polomka, were instructed to invite tenders for a new Rectory on the Church Acre (Fig. 14-4). That of M.L. Bailey & Co. Ltd for £8,185 was accepted from five quotations received.

Building operations commenced on Friday, 4th July 1958 when the first holes were excavated for the pier and beam footings. The foundation stone of Balmoral Red Granite was unveiled on 7th December by Mr D. B. (Bert) Crisp and dedicated by the Dean of Adelaide, the Very Reverend A.E. Weston. The materials chosen were Hallett cream bricks for the walls, and Wunderlich tiles for the roof. Writing in the *Parish Messenger* in November, the Rector explained why they had been chosen:

Now for some remarks about the new Rectory. Some who have seen the building in progress have remarked on its

size. In this we are governed by diocesan obligations and the Bishop's approval. Present diocesan requirements are that there shall be at least three bedrooms and a study besides the other essential rooms, such as kitchen, dining room and lounge. Church people have to remember that a rectory, when built, is not built for the convenience of any one Rector and his wife, but is there for all future Rectors and their families; and that provision must be made for boys and girls of future rectory families. In other words, no one would want the present Vestry to build a small Rectory (even if the Bishop allowed it, which he would not) and then in a few years time, for rooms to have to be added to a completed plan because an incoming future Rector had a young family of boys and girls. We hope that the present Rectory will need no additions to the main building.

Why cream bricks?

(1) Because it was decided that next to a 106-year-old church they would not be such a great contrast as red brick.

(2) When the contract was first let red bricks were hard to get because of the demands of State Government works.

(3) There may come a time when St Michael's will have to be rebuilt and it will NOT be rebuilt in bluestone.

(4) There is no earthly reason why a building erected in 1958 should be built with materials used in 1852 - even if such were desirable.

(5) The Church Council decided on cream brick, and the St Michael's Vestry and Council and the Bishop accepted and approved both the plans and the materials to be used.

I merely state these points so that church officers will not be pestered by various individuals asking why did you do this? or why did you do that? When the Rectory is completed, we shall have in the parish a building which will have all essential conveniences, consistent with present accepted building and architectural requirements which will need, or should need, no heavy repair bills for very many years.

Sewers & Toilet Block

As early as May 1958, prior to construction beginning, some problems arose because the sewer connection from the Rectory site could not be made to either Church Road or to Fullarton Road (now Carrick Hill Drive). The matter was "fully discussed with the Sewers Department" (of the Engineering & Water Supply Department) who advised that a new connection to the sewer in Church Road "is not practical, because the sewer is too high" and that the sewer "is never likely to be extended along Fullarton Road, and to connect to its present termination would cost a small fortune"; and in any case "a new connection would not be granted". The only option was to trench all the way down to St Michael's Road in the far NW corner of the block. In 1965 approximately £347 was spent "relaying the sewer drain of the Rectory to eradicate trouble caused by tree roots", and in 1985 the PVC conversion of the sewer run at a cost of \$2,068 from the Rectory to St Michael's Road was recommended; but proposed additions to the Rectory, although approved in principle, were set aside until funds became available.

In November 1958 the architects for the new Rectory – Dean W. Berry, Gilbert, Barker & Polomka – drew

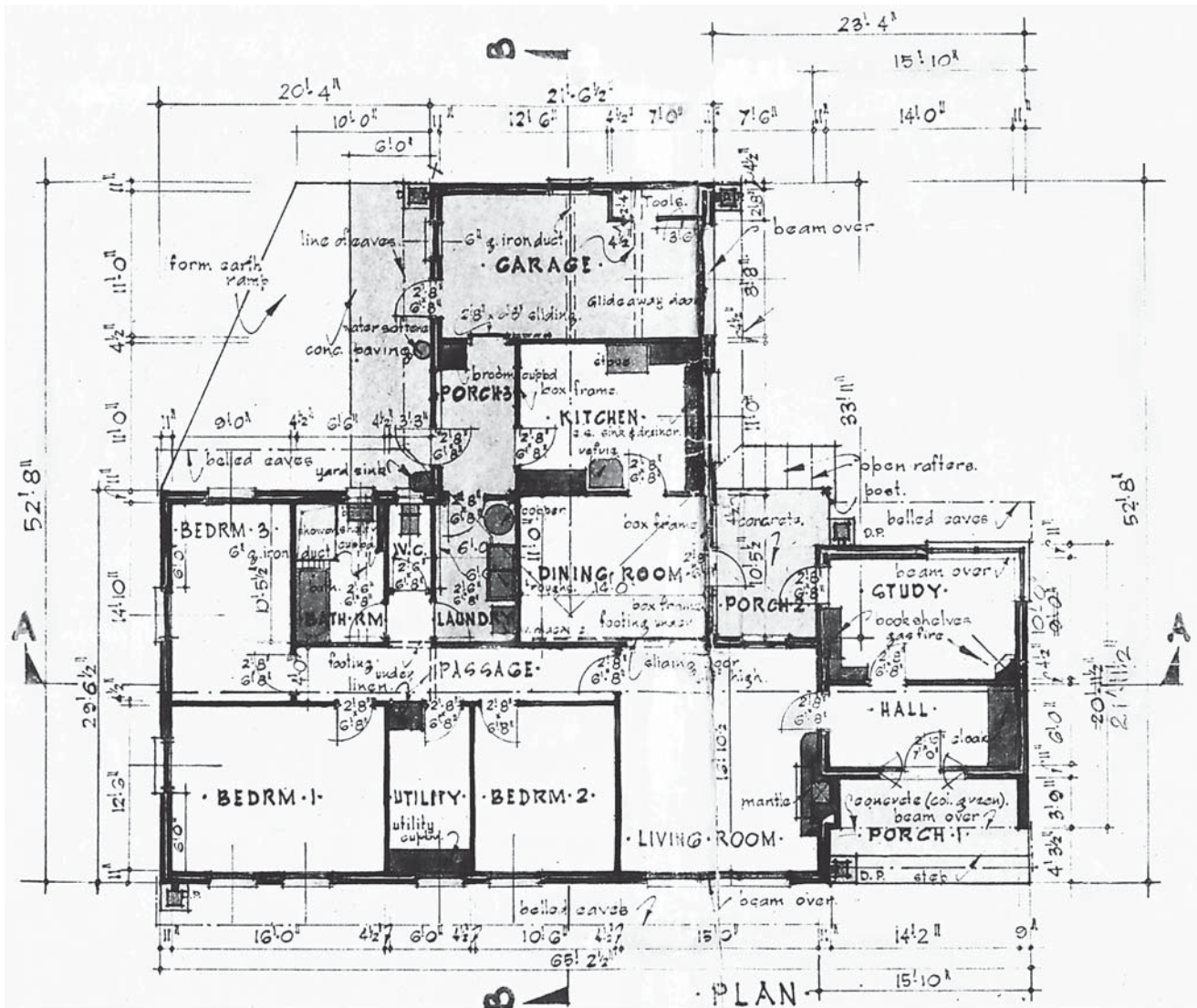


Fig. 14-4 Architect's plan for the new rectory to be built in the SE corner of the Church Acre. (Dean W. Berry, Gilbert, Barker & Polomka, dated 1958)



Fig. 14-5
*The toilet block
built in 1958.
Note the 'blind
arch' in the
eastern wall of
the south nave.
(Ben Oborn,
2002)*

up plans and specifications for the construction of “two lavatories and fencing” at the back of the Church. The contract was let to M.L. Bailey & Co. Ltd, contractors for the Rectory, at a cost of £372, with trench digging and sewer lines done at the same time as those for the Rectory. Until the Hall was built in 1980, the two toilets at the rear of the Church were the only ones available to parishioners (Fig.14-5).

Rectory Additions & Alterations

The Pearmans' only child, John, was already married by the time his parents moved into the new Rectory. At the time the Rector had stressed that provision must be made for larger families, and that it would be no good in a few years time for rooms to have to be added to a completed plan "because an incoming future Rector had a young family of boys and girls".

When the Reverend Jim MacDonald arrived in May 1962, the eldest of his three children was only twelve and the new Rectory was an ideal family home. Within eight years the position had changed, and he told the Parish

Council in December 1970 that “due to the studying requirements of his family it had been necessary to convert the garage to an additional bedroom”. At his suggestion a ‘Betta Frame’ carport was added to the existing garage, and a toolshed built nearby. After a dispute with the Building Inspector, Mitcham Council agreed to construct a drive-in entrance to the new carport from Church Road, thereby saving “several trees and shrubs that would otherwise have had to be removed to gain access from the north”.

Jim MacDonald retired in 1976 and during the interregnum the Ven. Stuart Smith, in his role as Archdeacon of Sturt, made a formal inspection of the Rectory. In his report dated 10th October 1976 he noted that it was in good order and repair, and that the rooms were being repainted by the Parish.

Having noted that the main garage was of solid construction under the main roof of the house, and that there were two carports “affording good protection against the weather”, the Archdeacon went on to say that one possible action worth early consideration was “to convert the main garage into a room. It could be used as a family room, or have a variety of uses, in accordance with changing circumstances.” As was often the case in rectories, the living room could then be used for “Parish purposes such as small meetings ... specially so, since the Parish Hall is some distance from the Church”. With the incoming Cheesman family having four young children, they would need “space and privacy, and the conversion of the garage into a room would achieve this”.

This conversion of the garage was to be the first of several alterations and additions made over the next decade.

Garage Conversion No.1

During 1977 Ben Oborn, a consulting engineer and a Warden, drew up plans to convert the garage to a meeting room (Fig. 14-6). This involved replacing the garage door with a glazed door panel and side lights. They were fabricated by Lloyds Australia Limited “through the good offices of John Dibben” who was the firm’s Finance Director. The work of installing the frames was done by parishioners, thereby saving an estimated \$300. In January 1978 it was noted that the door and window frames had arrived, and that they were being painted by Ted Smith, leaving “only the interior painting and roof/ceiling insulation to be completed prior to Sunday, 12 February”. On that date it was to be opened “as a meeting room for the Sunday School which will always worship in conjunction with the 10 a.m. Parish Eucharist”. In April it was reported that: “a small band under the leadership of Ben Oborn and Peter Geytenbeek, have handsomely paved the approach area to the Rectory Sunday School Room.”

New Bathroom & Dining Room Extension

One obvious disadvantage of living in the Rectory was the lack of a second bathroom and toilet – rather a necessity with six people in the house! Both the study and the dining room had exterior doors leading via a porch to a private courtyard. During 1981 Ben Oborn drew up plans to



Fig. 14-6 *The Rectory as it appeared in 1977 prior to the garage being converted to a separate family-cum-meeting room. In 1986 the walls between that room and the kitchen and back porch were removed to make a large kitchen/dining/family room area under the main roof. (Ben Oborn)*

convert the study into the master bedroom with the exterior door opening to a small en suite bathroom. The other half of the porch became an extension to the dining room (see Fig.14-7). This involved removing the wall and re-using the glass door to provide light and direct access to the courtyard, and blocking up a window in the living room.

The work was done by local builder, Gordon Turner, at a cost of approximately \$4,000. In November a trench for the sewer connection, ten metres long and one metre deep, was dug by seven members of the Mitcham Anglican Youth Group, thereby saving some \$160.

Garage Conversion No.2: A New Family Room

For several years after converting the study into a bedroom, Andrew Cheesman used the original living room as the Rector’s Study. By 1985, with four teenagers in the house, a further extension was required. In line with the trend towards informal eating-cum-family-entertaining areas, a Rectory Building Fund was opened to raise \$15,000 to convert the former garage/Sunday School Room into a large open-plan family room (see Fig. 14-7).

The main work included the removal of the brick wall between the kitchen and original garage and between kitchen and back entrance porch to produce a room 6.35 m x 7.1 m. This area remains under the main roof of the building. One of the two adjoining carports was then enclosed to form a new Rector’s Study. It retains its flat carport roof line.

The plans were drawn up during 1986 by Earle Scott (Fig. 14-9) an architect, who was Priest’s Warden at the time. The total cost of the project was \$22,373. This included payment to the builder, Gordon Turner, of \$17,872 as per original quotation, plus ‘extras’ (such as blinds, carpets, fencing etc). The blessing of the Rectory additions took place on 7th December 1986.

The Rectory as it is in 2002 is shown in Figures 14-7 and 14-8.

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ST MICHAEL'S DAY SCHOOL (THE OLD PARISH HALL)

The following information concerns the building, not the 'life' of the School: that can be found on pages 267–270.

A Diocesan Board of Education was set up in the late 1880s to establish and assist church schools. The incumbent of Mitcham, Reverend F.W. Samwell, was keen to take advantage of this, but had no suitable building in which to operate a school. In March 1889 he rented a cottage in Welbourne Street where he opened the St Michael's Day School. A year later he was able to report to the Easter Vestry that there were seventy children on the roll, and that the sum of £420 had so far been contributed to a School Building Fund by seat-holders and residents.

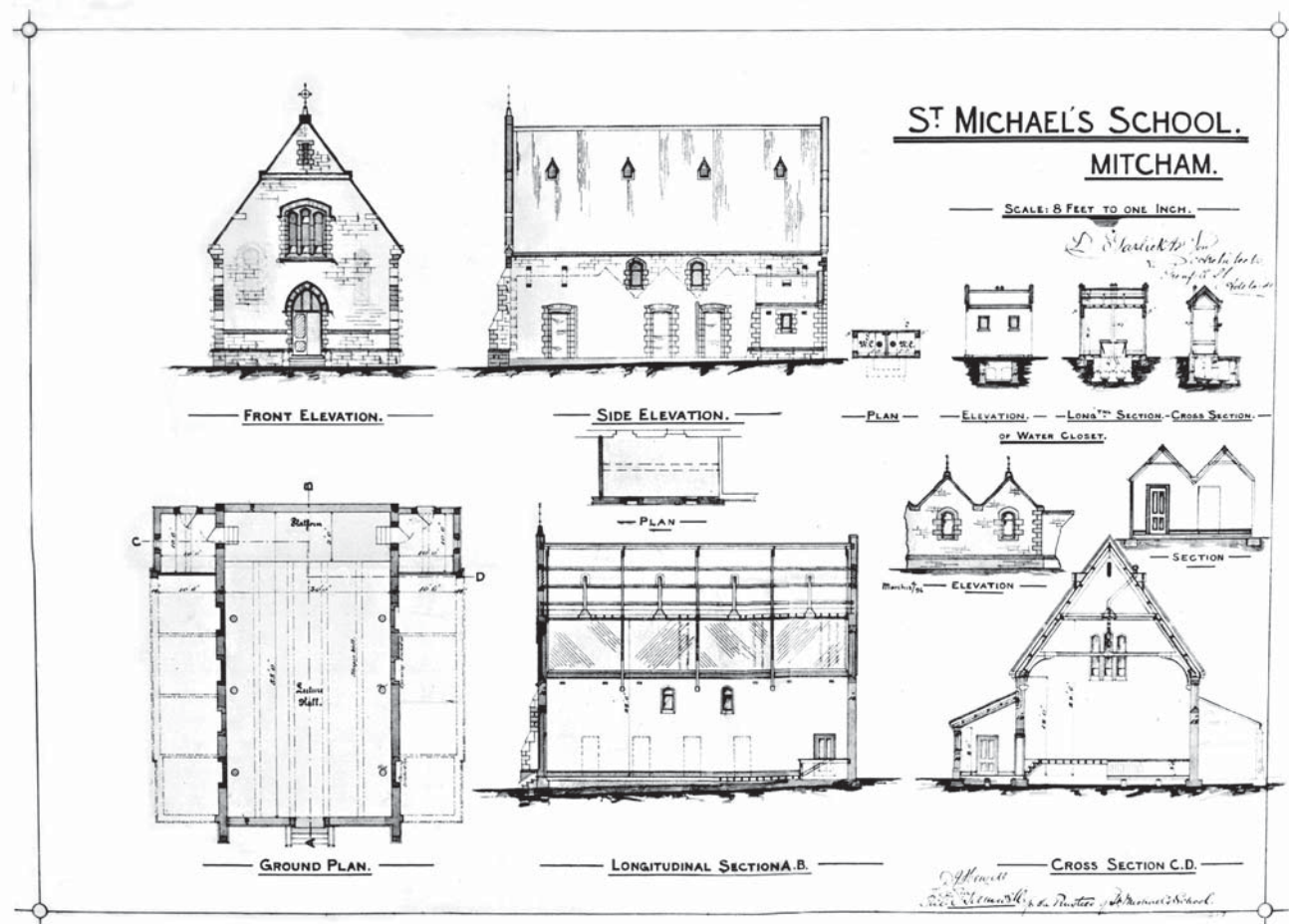
An irregular-shaped block of land on the corner of Princes Road and East Parade at Kingswood (part of allotment 39 of a subdivision dated 11 February 1882) was purchased for £55. The foundation stone was laid on Thursday, 10th April 1890 by the Countess of Kintore, wife of the Governor, the Rt Hon. the Earl of Kintore. It was a gala event in the lives of the people of Mitcham and was attended by members of the District Council and local dignitaries as well as the Bishop and five members of the clergy.

The schoolroom, designed by the architectural firm of D. Garlick & Son and built by D.J. Hewett, comprised a 'lecture hall' 55 feet by 30 feet (16.8 m x 9.1 m) with a raised platform at the eastern end (Fig. 14-10). Provision was made for various additional classrooms to the north and south. It was a handsome building of local pecked sandstone blocks on a bluestone base with red-brick quoins and surrounds. The high-pitched roof was supported on timber frames, and the ceiling lined with timber panelling.

The total cost of the building and site was put at £1,019; the main components being £55 for the site, £42 in architects' fees, £788 for the builder, £54 for furniture and £32 fencing. Writing in the July edition of the *St Michael's Parish Magazine*, Reverend Frederick Samwell noted that:

Mr Hewett, the contractor will not make any profit from the job. By his own desire he provided in some cases better materials than were named in the specification. There is nothing 'shoddy' about it from end to end, and we predict that it will not soon fall into disrepair ... The gas is now being laid on, and the seats are being made in readiness for the opening.

Fig. 14-10 Architect's drawing for 'St Michael's School, Mitcham'. Additional elevations (seen centre right) were added to this original 1890 drawing to show the extra rooms built along the southern side of the main hall.
(D. Garlick & Son, Architects, Grenfell Street, Adelaide)



The official opening of the St Michael's Day School Hall took place at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, 30th July 1890 (see page 42). In October it was noted that: "The new proscenium for the stage will be a great acquisition at performances, and as the acoustic properties of the Hall are exceptionally good, it is very suitable for entertainments." In 1900 Mr Frank Rymill from 'Springfield House' provided a fine piano, and the following year an Estey harmonium was donated. It was a gift from the Girls' Friendly Society which was led by his daughter, Miss Adelaide Rymill, and two of Peter Waite's daughters.

The Hall Tennis Courts

In July 1920 the Rector advised that "by the kindness of some friends of St Michael's" he had been able to purchase two allotments of land on the northern and eastern boundaries of the Hall. It was later revealed that these "friends of St Michael's" were Peter Waite, Miss Rymill, Mrs Love and Mr Wilkinson – all generous benefactors of the Church.

The allotment to the north had a frontage of 50 feet to East Parade and a depth of 126 feet (15.2 m x 38.4 m), and the other one a frontage of 40 feet to Princes Road and a depth of 167 feet (12.2 m x 50.9 m). Clampett intended to "throw one allotment into a children's play ground, and to form the other into a tennis court for the use and recreation of the adult members of St Michael's congregation".³

Additions & New Facilities

By April 1896 the debt on the building had been paid off and a new room was under construction on the southern side of the building. In November 1922 it was reported that Mr H.E. Fuller, the architect, was calling tenders "to proceed with the essential work of extending the junior class rooms". The work was completed over the Christmas holidays and included "an additional porch, which by folding doors may be added to the class room". It was said to be "a great boon to the young children and their teacher during hot weather". These extra rooms are shown on the original plan as future extensions along the southern side of the main hall (Fig. 14-11). Those on the northern side were never completed.

In mid-1948 the Day School ceased to operate as a primary school, and the following year it re-opened as a kindergarten only (St Michael's Nursery Day School). A Ladies' Parish Social Committee was formed "to promote the social life and activities of the Parish as a whole", and central to this was the upgrading of the old Day School Building. A new stove was purchased, crockery cupboards built in and lino laid on the floor. Two serveries were made in the partition leading from the kitchen to the main Hall, and two large gas heaters installed. To facilitate the staging of plays by the Dramatic Club, a door was put in the wall between the two rooms on the south side of the Hall, thus enabling them to be used as dressing rooms.

In 1965 an inspection was made of the Hall in order to determine the extent of deterioration and to recommend repairs and improvements that should be carried out to raise the general standard of the accommodation. A detailed quantity survey was made by Alec Bissland (the builder who had worked on the restoration of St Michael's

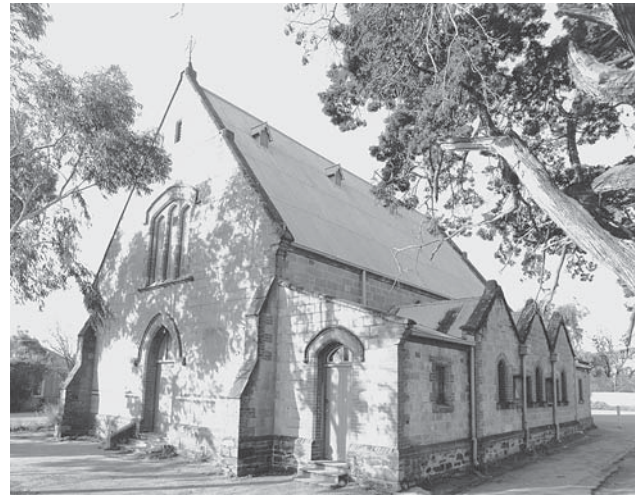


Fig. 14-11 The old Parish Hall and Day School at the corner of Princes Road and East Parade, Kingswood.
(Courtesy Woodham Biggs Property Consultants Pty Ltd, 1979)

in 1963), and a structural report prepared by Ben Oborn, who was a member of the Parish Council and a consulting engineer. It was noted that the area of the Hall, including the stage, was approximately 1950 square feet (181.3 m²), and the annexes had an additional area of 820 square feet (76.2 m²). It was estimated that it would cost in the vicinity of £12,000 to replace the Hall with a structure of equivalent area and of minimum standards of finish.

Their report listing the priorities and estimates of costs to undertake various repairs was presented to both Parish Councils which expressed concern at the "deteriorating condition of the Hall and the possible extensive costs of restoration". A combined meeting was held on 1st March 1966 when it was agreed that urgent repairs (particularly in the kitchen area) be effected. One of the recommendations in the Bissland/Oborn report, "which could be carried out with the aid of parishioners", was the removal of the hedge. This was done at a working bee held in September 1965. It was replaced by a 'Cyclone' mesh fence.

Administration Problems

When it was established in 1890 St Michael's Day School operated under a Trust Deed that provided for the selection of a School Committee consisting of the Churchwardens and three persons to be elected annually at the Easter Vestry Meeting. They were responsible for hiring teachers, collecting fees, paying salaries, and for overseeing the maintenance of the building and grounds. St Wilfrid's opened in 1934, and seven years later the management of the Hall was entrusted to a joint committee representing both Churches. Although centrally situated between them, the Hall was convenient to neither, and over the years this caused many administrative problems.

From its inception the building had always doubled as a Day School, Sunday School, entertainment venue and Parish Hall. This inevitably led to conflicts, and as is so often the case with a building used for a variety of activities, there were constant grumbles about groups leaving the hall dirty, breaking furniture and failing to leave the desks set up ready for the Day School.

By 1949 the Day School had closed and it was operating as a kindergarten only. The Rector, Reverend Reginald Pearman, complained that the arrangements for the administration of the Parish Hall were “totally unsatisfactory”, and they were “being left entirely to him, instead of to an appointed Committee of Management”. The following year moves were made to vest the property in Synod (see below) and the Central Council established a ‘Mitcham Parish Central Fund’. In February 1952 it was resolved that: “All the expenditure of the Parish Hall be drawn from the Fund and the income banked therein.” The St Michael’s Nursery Day School closed in 1954 and the building then functioned as a typical Sunday School and Parish Hall. In 1959 Pearman disbanded the Central Council and its funds were divided equally between the two Churches. It was agreed that both ends of the Parish would contribute to the maintenance of the Hall, which was to be administered by the Priest’s Warden of St Michael’s.

A Joint Parish Council was re-instated in April 1972 following the granting of the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969 and the Church of England Trust Property Act of 1971 to the St Michael’s Vestry. In September 1977 St Michael’s and St Wilfrid’s legally became one parish, operating with one bank account.

Sale of the Old Parish Hall

When built, the St Michael’s Day School Hall – like the Church itself – was under the control of private Trustees whose powers were conferred on them under the Model Trust Deed of 1858. St Michael’s Vestry had the right to appoint new Trustees as old ones died or left South Australia, but this was often overlooked.

In 1951 it was found that the last three Trustees appointed had all been dead for years: Alfred Heath died on 18th August 1902, Robert William Thorpe on 17th January 1905 and Alfred Corker Minchin on 20th September 1934. At a Special Vestry meeting held on 15th July 1951, attended by the Synod Solicitor, new Trustees were elected and the decision taken to vest the property in the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide to avoid having to appoint new Trustees from time to time in future. This happened at the same time as the old Rectory was vested in Synod.

The Model Trust Deed of 1858, under which many parishes operated, was superseded by the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969, and the Church of England Trust Property Act of 1971. At St Michael’s Annual Vestry held on 18th April 1972 two motions were passed unanimously: one to do with the Church Acre, the other with the Hall (see page 298). For each property they requested Synod to “grant the benefit of the Church of England Trust Property Act 1971 in respect of the property listed ... and that the Synod hold the said property upon the Trusts of the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969”. All existing Trusts and Trust Deeds would automatically be revoked and the properties vested in Synod. But first, this required the concurrence of the various Trustees involved! The following August, Synod advised that these requests had been granted in respect of the Church Acre but that there was a problem with the Hall. This ‘problem’ was to take seven years to resolve!

Although the Standing Committee of Synod agreed in June 1978 to the request of Vestry that St Michael’s should

have the benefit of the Church of England Trust Property Act of 1971 and the Synod Model Trust Deed of 1969 for the former Parish Day School building and land on the corner of East Parade and Princes Road, it was not until the 31st July 1979 that the Rector was able to report that “title to the Hall property has now been clarified”. The Examiner of Titles was prepared to accept a certificate under the hand of the Archbishop and Synod Seal Holders in the vexed matter of the transfer of the Hall property to the trusteeship of Synod. The Standing Committee was asked to approve the sale of the Princes Road property at its next meeting on the 14th August.

A valuation report was prepared by Woodham Biggs Property Consultants Pty Ltd and the property sold at auction on 14th September 1979 for \$70,000. Settlement date was set for 15th October, and on the 13th an auction of the remaining contents was held. The proceeds were to be used to purchase an industrial cleaner for a new Parish Hall to be built in the grounds of St Michael’s.

THE NEW PARISH HALL

By the time the old Hall was sold, planning was well advanced for the construction of a new ‘Parish Centre’ on the Church Acre. Preliminary layouts for the chosen site had already received planning approval from both the Mitcham City Council and the Planning Appeal Board.

During 1978 a Buildings and Property Development Committee, comprising the Rector (Reverend Andrew Cheesman), Sir Allan Callaghan, Cicely Bungey, John Dibben, Ben Oborn, Arch Tonkin and Jock Mackinnon, met and identified an area in the SW corner of the Church Acre as the most suitable site for “a modest multi-purpose hall”. Very few trees would need to be disturbed and no obstruction would be offered to the traditional approach from the west (Fig. 14-12).

One of the initial priorities was the provision of space to erect two north-south tennis-cum-netball courts (to compensate for the loss of those adjoining the old Parish Hall on Princes Road), a shelter shed and storage facilities

Fig. 14-12 Site of the new Parish Hall before the olives and pines were cleared prior to the commencement of construction work at the end of March 1980. (Pamela Oborn, January 1980)



for sports equipment. Alluding to this in his Annual Report to Vestry in April 1978 the Rector said: “Maybe we should retain at least part of the land [on Princes Road] as a court area and carry the stone of the building and its woodwork to the new site for reconstruction there.” This was not feasible for two reasons: firstly, because the maximum return on the old Hall and its land was required to fund the new building; and secondly, because it would “seriously interfere” with the architect’s ideas of “siting and building a hall ... in keeping with and sensitive to the mood and position of the Church”.

Plans & Protests: 1978–79

Graham Hardy, a partner in the firm of Tugwell Tetley Hardy Architects, had “of his own volition” produced some sketch plans and overlays in August 1978 “as a help to the Committee”. The son of Ralph and Olga Hardy, he had been brought up in the Parish and was well aware of the historical significance of the Church building. He recognised that “any future developments should conform with, and not detract in any way from, the beautiful structure of the Church”. One of the main attractions of his plan was the integration of the old and new buildings by means of stone cloisters.

A series of watercolour presentation drawings were displayed in the Church porch and comments invited from parishioners. As these ideas clarified over a period of seven or eight months, the plans were modified and refined to satisfy the requirements – and the budget – of the Parish, before being submitted to a Special Vestry on 1st April 1979. They were overwhelmingly adopted: sixty for and six against. Another Special Vestry meeting was held on 29th July to re-affirm the previous decision to build a Parish Centre; to request the Wardens to negotiate such loans as may be necessary to finance the project, and to sell the Princes Road property and use the proceeds towards the building of the new Centre. The Vestry also confirmed the appointment of Graham Hardy and Ben Oborn as architect and structural engineer respectively, and asked them to proceed with the necessary specifications and working drawings.

At the suggestion of the Archbishop, the term ‘Parish Centre’ was dropped in favour of Parish Hall.

Inevitably there were some who were not happy with the project. The Mitcham City Council received sixteen objections from nearby residents concerned that it would be “detrimental to the aesthetic appearance”, “adversely affect traffic and parking patterns”, “would not complement old Church”, and “loss of woodland”. The Early Buildings Committee of the National Trust and the Mitcham Historical Society both raised concerns regarding “possible clashes between the character of the old Church and any possible new construction”.

Some parishioners (particularly those from St Wilfrid’s who were already upset about recent changes to service times) viewed the re-siting of the Parish Hall and the loss of the tennis courts as an insult. It would serve “no useful purpose whatever for people who live in the western and southern sections of the Parish, particularly those who do not drive”. They sought reassurance that their needs had not been overlooked. Some parishioners objected to Parish

funds being ‘squandered’ on unnecessary new buildings, some threatened to worship elsewhere, and one of the Lay Readers tendered his resignation.

Construction: 1980

Having been granted Diocesan approval, the plans (Fig. 14-13) were endorsed by Bishop Lionel Renfrey, acting as Dean Administrator and Commissary for the Archbishop of Adelaide, on 2nd January 1980.

At that stage estimates for the project ranged from \$130,000 to \$150,000. Eight builders were invited to tender for the job, but when the envelopes were opened on 18th February the quotations ranged from \$219,500 to \$265,515! Negotiations with the lowest tenderer, Minuzzo Constructions Pty Ltd, identified certain areas where substantial savings could be made. As the consulting engineer for the project, committee member Ben Oborn had advised the Wardens that he was happy to donate his own services, and where necessary would only charge on a time basis for any work carried out by other staff in his office (Hosking, Fargher & Oborn Pty Ltd, Consulting Engineers and Planners).

A Special Vestry meeting was held on 9th March 1980 at which the Wardens of St Michael’s were authorised to sign a contract with Minuzzo Constructions Pty Ltd for the sum of \$180,000. Secondly, they were authorised to borrow up to \$120,000 to finance the building of the new Parish Hall. Thirdly, John Dibben, as Parish Treasurer, was authorised to incorporate an Association to be known as St Michael’s Building Fund Incorporated as a “non-profit body established ... to provide finance to the Vestry for the erection of a new Hall ...”

Site preparation began on 31st March and the foundation stone was laid by Lady Doreen Callaghan on 11th May (see Fig. 8-5). Initially it had been supposed that dressed stone for the cloisters would have to be obtained from New South Wales at great expense. Considerable savings were made when it was found that a South Australian quarry could provide suitable stone, and that a local firm of stonemasons had the equipment to cut and dress it. Writing in the *Herald* in August, the Chairman of the Building Committee, Sir Allan Callaghan explained:

The cloisters represent the appropriate linkage between the Church and the new building. To meet this purpose stone of similar colour and dressing was essential.

By extraordinarily fortuitous circumstance, Messrs D.L. Scott & Son had just set up their plant for handling stone from several quarries, and quoted to supply dressed Basket Range stone at a price well within the original estimate.

They have had teething troubles and have not been able to keep up the supply of stone to meet the builders’ schedule [about 3 weeks behind]. As a result of our concern, a visit was paid to their operational centre, which turned out to be an open paddock, at Callington.

Very large rough-hewn stones, quarried at Basket Range, are transported to the plant at Callington. There, in an isolated area, it is sawn with a huge electrically-driven horizontal three or four bladed saw operating under sprayed water. A stone the size of an average refrigerator, sawn into three or four slabs of equal dimension takes

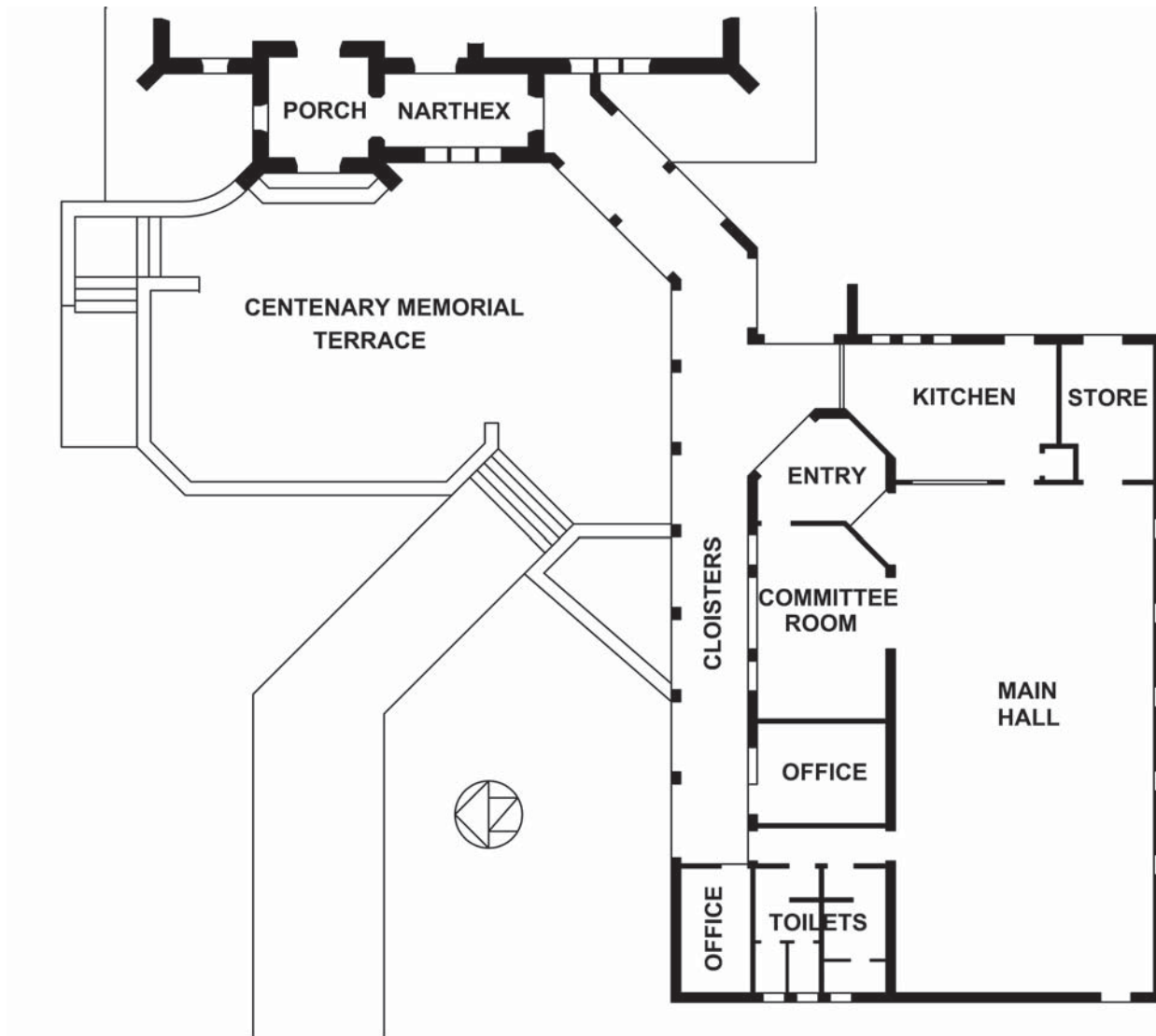


Fig. 14-13 Layout of the new Parish Hall based on plans prepared by Tugwell Tetley Hardy Architects. (Ben Oborn, 2002)

nearly an hour. Next, a large circular saw cuts the slabs into units of specified size and shape for the cloister columns and segmented arches. The central markings and marginal lines are then chiselled by hand – a time-consuming process.

Mr Scott and his son, Ashley, are enthusiastic and capable, and we've been fortunate that they are able to supply the stone we so badly needed. The visit we made satisfied builder and architect that the enterprising Scotts had had real problems in keeping up supplies. More importantly we were assured that from now on supplies would be in time to meet the revised building schedule.

The Foundation Stone carries the inscription 'To the Glory of God, this stone was laid by Lady Callaghan, 11th May 1980'. The lettering and numerals on the stone were hand-carved to match those on the foundation stone of the old Hall. This was done by an older tradesman of S.D. Tillet Memorial Pty Ltd., who has been engaged on a lot of restoration work undertaken by Tilletts ...

Between March and September the Rector and Sir Allan Callaghan attended the weekly on-site meetings at

which any problems were discussed and slight adjustments made to the original scheme. One of the architect's early presentation drawings showed a mezzanine floor over certain areas, and although this idea was rejected by the Committee, later plans incorporated a storage area above the kitchen. The other major alteration to the plans was the door through which people entered the Church from the cloisters. When the choir vestry was built in 1899 it had two doors: an external door and an internal one entering directly into the Church. This was to have been Graham Hardy's original route between Church and cloistered walk to the Hall. Subsequently a decision was taken by the Committee to form a narthex by breaking through the tower wall between the porch and choir vestry thereby creating a much more spacious entrance plus storage areas for prayer and hymn books. The old choir vestry door into the Church was closed off and cupboards built on either side of it.

When it came to making decisions about the kitchen, the ladies of the Parish insisted on having an input into the planning. A small group, led by Heather Geytenbeek, chose the positions of sinks, urns, stove and serving



Fig. 14-14
*Final clean-up on
 29th November 1980
 in readiness for the
 dedication by
 Archbishop Rayner
 the next day.
 (MPA)*

hatches; supplied detailed dimensions of cupboard and shelving spaces required and chose the Laminex bench surface material. This attention to detail and logistics has been appreciated by all who use the kitchen, and has become a 'role model' for other parishes building or remodelling kitchens.

Dedication

The dedication of the new Hall (Fig. 14-14) by Archbishop Keith Rayner took place on the afternoon of Sunday 30th November 1980 (see Fig. 8-6). A plaque in the entrance foyer bears the words:

A.M.D.G.
 THIS HALL WAS DEDICATED
 BY
 THE ARCHBISHOP OF ADELAIDE,
 THE MOST REVEREND KEITH RAYNER, Ph.D.
 30th NOVEMBER, 1980

Reviewing the project in the November edition of the *Herald*, Sir Allan wrote:

St Michael's Church is a major focal point in the Mitcham precinct. Built in 1852 of stone quarried in Brownhill Creek Reserve, it is an historical landmark – an important part of our cultural heritage. For this reason extreme care has been taken to build the new Hall and its facilities to harmonise sympathetically and aesthetically with the church, using compatible design and materials.

A notable feature is the linking of the two buildings with a cloistered walk built of compatible stone. The cloisters lead into the vestry annex which has been extended by a breakthrough into the tower porch, providing a more spacious entrance to the church. The cloister linkage gives a simple pitch to the roof and a continuous facial line at the same level with the roof of the vestry. The flooring of the cloisters, vestry and porch have been paved with slates.

Ever mindful of the historical significance of the church, the new building is wholly in sympathy with its character and surroundings. The site chosen near the church has minimised the loss of trees, relates well to the entrance to the church, and in no way detracts from the existing views or elevations. In many respects it has added new and pleasing vistas.

The architect, Mr Graham Hardy, of Tugwell Tetley Hardy Architects, has achieved an aesthetically satisfying relationship with the architectural features of the church and provided a cohesiveness which has been overwhelmingly approved by parishioners and others.

The building provides a hall, 12 metres by 10 metres to seat 190 people with space for a dais, and suitable for table tennis and similar sports; a meeting room; parish offices; a kitchen with serveries to the hall and terrace; a storage room, and toilets. A foyer provides a pleasant entrance to the building and an unobtrusive spaciousness to the adjoining cloister.

It will provide a much-needed parish meeting place, catering for the youth as well as the adult parishioners, and provide the parish with a centre to extend Christian fellowship to others.

How the Project was Financed

Because the proposed Hall was to be built on consecrated land and could therefore not be mortgaged, it was felt that the Synod – in which the Title of the land was vested – should be requested to guarantee depositors in the St Michael's Building Fund Incorporated which had supported the building project to a limit of \$70,000. This request was granted by the Standing Committee of Synod in early December 1979. Following the setting up of the Fund in March 1980 it was noted there had been a "highly favourable reaction of parishioners and a splendid response to the appeal for funds". By September interest-free loans amounted to \$47,000 and gifts to \$14,389. As the project neared its completion in November the financial report

showed that the expenditure to date was \$162,292, and that the initial estimate of \$180,000 might be nearer \$200,000.

By the time the building had been fitted out and all accounts paid, the final figure was \$202,821. Of this, the interest-free loans and gifts provided a total of approximately \$62,000, and the proceeds from the sale of the old Hall in Princes Road plus accrued interest amounted to \$73,000. Against the loan approval of \$80,000 from the Bank of New South Wales, \$75,000 had been drawn down. As the 1980s progressed, interest rates on the bank loan rose alarmingly – from 10½% in 1980 to 18½% in 1987 – and John Dibben urged parishioners to make a concerted effort to repay the money (threatening at one stage that St Wilfrid's might have to be sold!). By 31st March 1988 he was able to report to the Annual Vestry that the outstanding bank loan of nearly \$40,000 had been repaid.

With many of the interest-free loans converted to gifts, the money owing on the remaining loans was reimbursed to parishioners and, having done its job, the St Michael's Building Fund Incorporated was dissolved and the account closed in December 1995.

Gifts & Memorials

The Hall contains a number of furnishings and fittings which were gifts from parishioners. One of the first was from Janie Barbour who, during the construction phase, offered to donate the cost of all brass doorknobs and fittings in memory of her father, Dr Russell Barbour. In August 1984 a thank-offering gift of \$6,000 was paid to the Hall account from the family of the late David Short and a plaque acknowledging same placed in the Hall.

Over the years other gifts have included a handsome clock for the Hall donated by the 'Sew & Sews' (now known as The Guild) and an electric clock for the kitchen given by Mrs Gibbs; a noticeboard, bookstand and mobile library trolley made by Jim Gunn, and a three-in-one pinboard, film projection and writing surface movable board donated by John Dibben. The old wooden lectern, which was superfluous to the needs of the Sisters at the Retreat House, was purchased for \$50 in 1983 and lovingly restored by Harold Thomas.

In January 1989 a handsome Steinbach piano was purchased through the generosity of Mrs Mary Thomas and the Music Support Group.

ALTERNATIVE SITES

Over the years there have been several other venues which have been considered as possible sites for rectories and/or as accommodation for curates and their families.

Lot 51 Princes Road

Just before Christmas 1947 the decision was made by the Central Council to purchase a block of land almost opposite the Parish Hall with a view to one day "building a separate school on the site" or to use it "for some other Parish purpose". It was designated as Lot 51 from the 1917 subdivision of the Torrens Park Estate, and was situated on the southern side of Princes Road.

The cost of £250 to purchase Lot 51 was met partly by a bequest and partly by a loan from B.H.M.S. for five years, for which the two Churches accepted equal responsibility. At the Annual Vestry held in April 1952 it was noted that the debt had been repaid, and that the total of principal, interest and charges had amounted to £25 4s 8d. The following October the Rector, Reginald Pearman, reported that he had heard a rumour that the triple-fronted freestone house on the corner of Princes Road and Balkissock Road (Lot 53) was for sale, and that he "had asked for first offer" – presumably for use as a rectory. Nothing seems to have come of this suggestion.

A Special Vestry was called on 13th June 1954 at which it was resolved "that this Vestry approves the recommendation of the Central Council that a new Rectory be built on Lot 51 Princes Road". A committee was elected to "proceed with the preparation of working plans and report progress to this Vestry". Two months later discussions were held with Mr Pinchbeck, the owner of the adjoining Lot 52, with a view to exchanging the blocks to enable him to build a tennis court at the rear of his home situated in Fife Avenue. The transfer was effected on 17th January 1955.

By August it was reported that "for various reasons, legal and otherwise", it had been decided to dispose of Lot 52 and to divide the proceeds between the two Churches. The block, which measured 75 feet by 175 feet (22.9 m x 53.4 m), was sold on 12th November 1955 for £911 10s 0d – quite an escalation in price over seven years! A stone-fronted brick home now occupies Lot 52 and in 1999 two-storey home units were built on Lot 51 (Fig.14-15).⁵

St Wilfrid's Church House

On the 19th February 1962 St Wilfrid's purchased the adjoining property, No.2 Belair Road, Torrens Park "for Church purposes and/or a residence which could, at some time in the future be available for an assistant priest or, should the Parish divide, for a rector". Until then they hoped to obtain "a satisfactory tenant at a rental which

Fig. 14-15 Lots 51 to 53 Princes Road, Torrens Park, as seen from the old Parish Hall. Two-storey units now occupy Lot 51, and the bungalow Pearman wanted to buy as a Rectory still stands on Lot 53 on the corner of Balkissock Road. (Pamela Oborn, 2001)



will cover all our expenses and payments to the Bank”. It was seen as a long-term investment and, if in the future it was not required as a rectory, it could be sold and money invested.

In October 1974 the Church House was sold privately for \$16,000 after being passed in at auction at \$15,300. Earlier the land had been subdivided and portion at the rear added to Church land for parking. Further information on the St Wilfrid’s Church House can be found in Chapter 13.

The Curatage at No.9 St Michael’s Road

Adjoining the northern boundary of the Church Acre on St Michael’s Road is a red-brick house. For a number of years it was leased by the Church and used as a curate’s residence. It has often been regretted that, due to financial constraints, it was not possible to buy No.9 St Michael’s Road as a permanent curatage. In March 1981 the Wardens approached the owner, Mrs Angela Hirst (then residing in Melbourne), inquiring whether, at the “expiration of the present lease” she would be prepared to sell the property, or of giving them the “right of first refusal in the event of it being offered for sale”.

The first occupants were the Reverend David Lunniss and his wife Helen, who moved in at the beginning of 1978. They were followed in January 1980 by Fr Frank Kernot and his family. Two years later it was reported that the new curate, Fr Stephen Clarke, was a single man who would “only require two rooms and kitchen facilities within walking distance of St Michael’s”. However, in response to a plea by the Archbishop, the lease was renewed for another year and the house occupied by “the Reverend Owen Thomas, the incoming Chaplain of Pulteney Grammar, who with his wife Hillary and three sons urgently require family accommodation”.

With the arrival of the Reverend Mark Thomas as curate in October 1984 the need for a curatage lapsed as he and his family decided to live at Glenalta, “where they are dwelling at present, a matter of a few minutes from Mitcham”. Later curates had to find alternative accommodation.

The curatage was very convenient for both Rector and curate: communication between their homes was via

‘intercom’ phones (donated by a parishioner) with the line woven through the branches of high trees running along the northern boundary of the Church Acre. Occasionally conversations came to an abrupt end when fierce gully winds caused the line to snap, or when flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos descended to feast on the cones of the huge Aleppo Pine!

* * *

The decision taken to sell the old Parish Hall was a monumental one. It had been built in 1890 as a Day School, and following the closure of the School in the 1950s its maintenance became a drain on Parish finances. Its ultimate sale, and the loss of the adjoining tennis courts, caused considerable resentment, particularly by some who had worked for years to build up the facilities at St Wilfrid’s.

The old Day School building still stands at the intersection of Princes Road and East Parade, Kingswood. When sold in 1979 it was converted into a private dwelling with a mezzanine floor built above the stage. The new owners, Mr and Mrs Martyn Angus, taught ballroom dancing in the spacious main hall – a function for which it had been used many, many times over the decades! In one corner they created a small St Michael’s historical museum. The property was resold in 1992 and is still a private dwelling.

Over twenty years have now passed since the new Parish Hall was built on the Church Acre. It has worn well, still looks fresh and welcoming, and serves its purpose admirably. Today it is an integral part of the worship and fellowship, not just for St Michael’s, but for the whole Parish. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine Parish life without it!

Shortly before he died in 1986 Ted Smith noted with satisfaction that “the new Hall has proved to be an enormous success. It has added so much to the life of the Parish. There are activities going on now which would not have been possible under the old circumstances”. Many of those activities are recorded in the next chapter.



Fig. 15-1 *Sung Eucharist in St Michael's in April 1986. (Bob Brougham)*

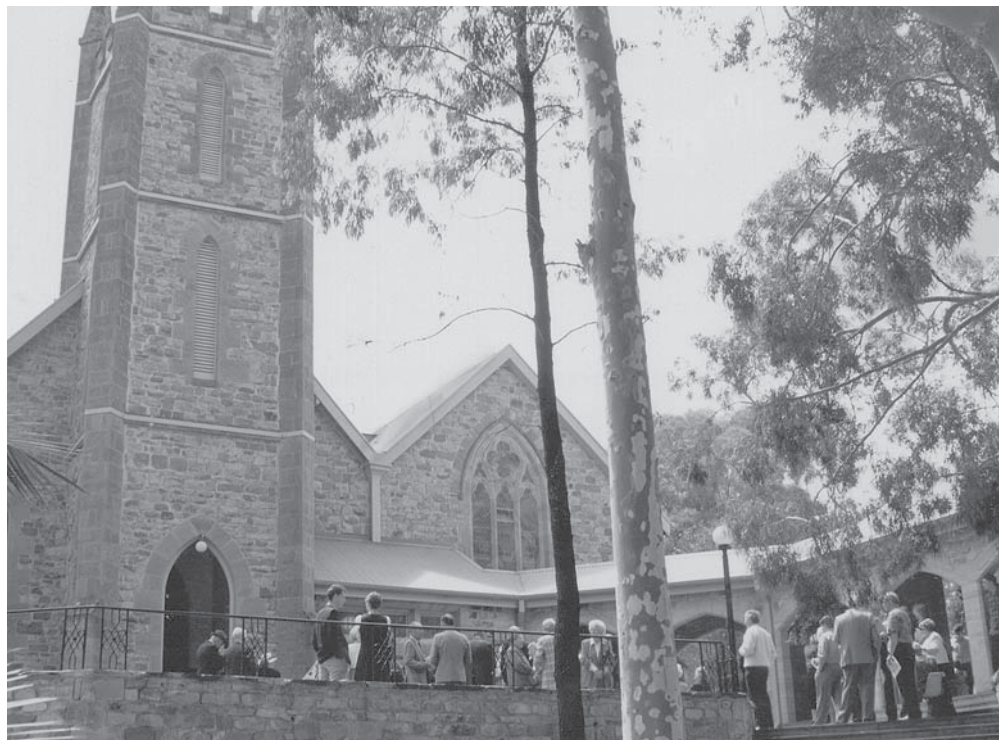


Fig. 15-2 *Fellowship on the Terrace following Sunday morning Sung Eucharist in December 1996. (MPA)*