

28/12/1898

The bodies, which were lying at Gilbert's Hotel all yesterday, were removed to the Roman Catholic Church this morning.

The funeral takes place at half-past 11 o'clock.

THE FUNERAL. GATTON, December 28, 12 50 p m.

The victims of the distressing tragedy were buried in the Gatton Cemetery shortly after noon to-day.

The ceremony, both at the church and the graveside, was a most impressive and painful one.

At the service held at the church there was hardly a dry eye, and, altogether, the spectacle was an extremely touching one.

In the church the coffins rested on a long platform down the aisle, and were literally covered with wreaths and crosses.

Almost the whole township attended the funeral.

The cortege included over 300 horsemen and a large number of vehicles.

The scene at the cemetery was inexpressibly touching, and as the clear voice of Father Walsh, who officiated, uttered the solemn burial service the silence was broken here and there by the breaking out of pent up emotion.

All the business places in the township were closed, and the Divisional Board, which was to have held a general meeting this morning, met early and adjourned out of respect to the parents of the victims.

Father Walsh delivered a most impressive and stirring oration at the graveside. He declared the crime to be the most atrocious outrage ever perpetrated in Australia, and urged those present to assist the police in every possible way to secure the murderers.

His references to the deceased and their bereaved parents were most touching, and ere he had ceased there was not a dry eye in the large congregation.

THE FEELING IN GATTON.

Residents of Gatton and the surrounding district could find nothing to talk of all day yesterday but the atrocious crime committed in their midst on Monday night.

Intense excitement reigned.

Early in the morning folk from surrounding farms and selections wended their way, some on horseback and some in vehicles, to the township, there to await the sad ceremony of the day-the funeral.

5/01/1899

A special train, with Drs. Wray and Von Lossberg, and Sub-inspector White, arrived this morning just before daylight. They left the train before reaching town, and drove direct to the cemetery, where the exhumation took place.

The police prefer to say nothing of the result of the post-mortem examination.

The special train returned to Brisbane this morning. Before the exhumation Mr. Parry-Okeden put the matter before the Murphy family, and took every care to prevent any unnecessary pain to their feelings, and in this Father Walsh assisted.

The exhumation was performed without exciting public curiosity, and the scene at the cemetery was practically unwitnessed except by those officially concerned Dr. Von Lossberg states that a bullet was found in Michael Murphy's head. This may be accepted as correct.

The police, when questioned on the subject, do not deny it. This proves the correctness of the reports as to the two shots, and throws a new light on the case.

The members of the Murphy family are as well as can be expected after the fearful shock of last week.

Old Mrs. Murphy is a very devout woman, and rests on the Great Rock of her religion for consolation.

Her chief prayers during the first bitter hours of the tragedy were for the souls of those who had destroyed her children, and blasted the happiness of her home. What a sermon that prayer of the grief-stricken mother is!

The Rev. Father Walsh has, indeed, been a comforter to the family in their bereavement, and during this week, I believe, the nuns at the Convent at Helidon will visit Mrs. Murphy at her home.

The posters offering a reward of £1000 and a free pardon to the person confessing to the murders, so that it be not the principal offender who confesses, arrived here this afternoon, and have been nailed up in all the prominent places about the town. Every place in the district will be similarly posted, and the offer of the Government, it is hoped, will be carried to every home.

9/01/1899

GATTON, January 8.

At the second mass in the Roman Catholic Church this morning. Father Walsh preached a powerful exhortation to the young men of the district to give the police all the information in their power with regard to the recent tragedy. He emphasised the fact that anyone having knowledge which might lead to the discovery of the murderers, and who did not speak, was guilty of a very grievous wrong.

Father Walsh added that any young men who knew any circumstances bearing on the murder, and did not wish to go to the police, could go to him, and he would lay the matter before the police.

The sermon created a strong impression.

10/01/1899

The sermon of Father Walsh yesterday has been widely discussed to-day.

The rev. gentleman has been deeply affected by the tragedy, which robbed him of three of his flock.

It is a great comfort to the Murphy family and their friends that on the day before the murder, Christmas Day, they had participated in the sacred rites of their Church.

Father Walsh History

Father Walsh made great efforts to keep open the little Catholic school in Gatton that had been established by Father Brun in 1868.

Miss O’Keeffe was the last teacher in the school. In 1892 she married James McKeen of Mt Sylvia. She was not replaced and so the school closed.

For 24 years it had served the Catholic community of Gatton. At the time of its closure the attendance was small, the building – the old Inn – was draughty and unsuitable, and with no government assistance, the school was impoverished.

While Helidon had had a Catholic school since the Sisters of St. Joseph went there in 1874, followed by the Sisters of Mercy in 1880, the larger town of Gatton did not have a Catholic school from 1892 to 1917. Some of the Catholic children from Gatton district went to the Helidon Convent in this time as boarders.

Father Walsh made many efforts to establish a Convent School in Gatton, especially after the turn of the century.

In 1913, Father Walsh’s efforts were beginning to bear fruit. Archbishop Duhig, Co-adjutor Archbishop of Brisbane, was visiting Gatton for Confirmation on Sunday, 27th July, 1913.

The Catholic Press of the day reported that after the second Mass that day, celebrated by Father Walsh, the Archbishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 92 candidates (42 males and 52 females). While the weather was unsettled, there was still a large crowd in attendance with over 200 receiving Holy Communion.

Following Confirmation, the Archbishop presided over a meeting of parishioners, which was held to initiate a movement to establish a Convent and School in Gatton. The proposal was received with utmost enthusiasm by all present, and within half an hour over £1,000 in cash was subscribed. This amount was augmented later in the day to £1,400.

The Archbishop in returning thanks for the donations said that the collection was a record one, and found another splendid example of catholic generosity. It was only a fortnight before that the congregation of Helidon, in the other end of the Parish, subscribed £1,000 for the building of a new church.

The newspaper prefaced its report of the day by saying: “Since his appointment as Co-adjutor Archbishop, his Grace Archbishop Duhig has established many records, but perhaps the proudest record is the record he established in Gatton last Sunday.”

Heading the list of donations that was published, is the 2½ acres of land from Father D. Walsh. For £155 Father Walsh had purchased the land on which the Convent and the playing fields for the school now stand. This he gave as a donation to the Sisters of Mercy so that they may come to Gatton and establish a school with boarding facilities at the Convent.

On the following Sunday, 3rd August, a meeting of parishioners was held in the church after 10-00 a.m. Mass.

Present were Rev. Fr. D. Walsh who chaired the meeting, and Messrs. Timothy Murphy, John P. Fitzpatrick, Pat, Tom, Mick and William Jordan, George H. Stenner, Gerald Byrne, P.S. Callaghan, Jim Carew, Jim Osborne, Denis Healy, John

Meehan, Gerald and Reg L. Hughes, Pat Linnan, Mick Driscoll, T.J. Nihill, Tim O'Connor, Tom Hennessy, Andy Fitzgerald, William Ryan, Jeremiah Ryan and J.J. O'Flynn (25 altogether).

A committee was elected consisting of Rev. Fr. D. Walsh (Chairman), Timothy Murphy (the Shire Clerk) as Honorary Secretary, and Austin Jordan, John P. Fitzpatrick, Gerald Byrne, Michael Dowling and Daniel Callaghan. It was to be called Convent Building Committee.

The action of the Reverend Chairman and T. Murphy (as Joint Trustees) in opening an account entitled "Gatton Convent School Building Fund" in the Queensland Government Savings Bank, Gatton, was endorsed by the meeting.

A conversational discussion regarding style of buildings, etc., then took place, and it appeared to be the unanimous opinion of the meeting that every proposed step regarding buildings should be well thought out and enquired about; and that, if possible, the structures be erected and furnished without the aid of borrowed money.

Father Walsh commissioned Mr. H.J. Marks of Toowoomba as architect for the building. The same man had designed St. Mary's Church in 1888.

The Convent is a building of two storeys measuring 85 feet by 82 feet. It provided accommodation for 20 boarders as well as for a staff of Nuns. The School was 43 feet by 30 feet. The report read: The beauty of the design is much enhanced by the character of the site, which is the highest in Gatton.

On 19th December 1915, work was under way as Archbishop Duhig laid the foundation stone of these fine buildings. The stone was a donation from the builders, Messrs. J. & F. Muller, brothers from Toowoomba.

On Sunday, January 14th, 1917, the new Convent and School were blessed and opened. Sadly, Archbishop Duhig, who had been such a support to Father Walsh and the community of Gatton in bringing this project to reality, could not be present because Archbishop Dunne had died on the previous day.

Once again the weather was inclement – as on so many of the official occasions in the parish. A good attendance was reported in spite of many of the roads being impassable. Father O'Flynn, parish priest of St. Patrick's, Fortitude Valley, had been sent by the Archbishop to represent him in blessing and opening the building. He did, assisted by Father Walsh, and in the presence of a number of clergy who travelled from neighbouring parishes to be present.

Father O'Flynn in his address, made reference to the late Archbishop Dunne who had established Gatton as a parish. The report reads: "He made special reference to the late Archbishop's love of children exhorting the assemblage to show by the earnestness in supporting the work of Catholic Education their appreciation of his zeal in that cause. Another great characteristic was the interest he always took in the men on the land. Their life, in his opinion, was ideal. Given anything like fair seasons they were the most independent people of all."

In reading a financial statement at the opening, Father Walsh revealed that the Convent and School cost respectively, £4,500 and £1,654. A collection taken up on the occasion amounted to £450.

The Convent was first opened as a girl's boarding school with Mother Ursula in charge.

Later it was turned into a boarding school for boys up to Scholarship. It is many years since it has taken boarders.

Many children from the parish received their education at the school over the years. Today many of the faithful parishioners of Gatton recall the days they spent as children at the school. This extends from some who were opening pupils down to the present time. Boys came from many districts to be boarders at the school – some even from Western Queensland.

Among the early pupils one stands out in the history of the Gatton Parish and the history of Queensland, that is Bishop John Torpie.

John Torpie came to Gatton with his family in 1924, when his father took over the Imperial Hotel. He attended the Convent School for a short while where he was a fellow pupil with some of the present day parishioners. Then he attended the Gatton Intermediate School for some time before his father moved from Gatton to take over the Brighton Hotel at Sandgate, Brisbane. During his time in Gatton, Father Walsh took a special interest in John Torpie.

When Father Walsh was growing older and people say that he needed an Assistant Priest, he used to say: "I will wait till 'young Torpie' is ordained."

In 1934 Father John Torpie was ordained a priest. His first appointment was to Gatton where he remained until after the death of Father Walsh in September 1939, and the appointment of Father Cahill.

At the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Convent in 1967, Monsignor Torpie, then Rector of Banyo Seminary was invited to be the special guest and preach the homily at the Jubilee Mass. Over 1500 people attended those great celebrations. An old boy priest in Father John McGinley celebrated the Mass at which Monsignor Torpie preached. Fifty-two Sisters of Mercy who had been involved at the school over the years were present, including the first music teacher, Sister Mary Anastasia. In the Catholic Leader report is a photograph of three persons who were on the original committee of the school: Miss Grace Fitzpatrick, who was secretary of the original committee; Miss Mabel Selby and Mrs. V. Jackson (nee McNeil).

The Sisters of Mercy faithfully conducted the school for 66 years. Times were often difficult. With depression or drought or poor produce prices or war, many families would have found it difficult to pay school fees. The Sisters must have gone without often.

Since mid-1960 a universal system of school fees has operated in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. As a result a fitting stipend could be paid to the Sisters, as well as meeting the salaries of the lay staff. This system must have relieved the Sisters of a great deal of tension.

Gradually, as vocations declined, fewer and fewer Sisters could staff the schools. There had been some lay teachers in our schools over many years but in the last 25 years the proportion of lay teachers has risen. Today, all the teachers in the school are lay teachers.

The Sisters also found it difficult to provide principals for their schools from their own order. In the mid-1970's many of the parish schools had lay principals appointed. In 1982 the Sisters of Mercy informed the Catholic Education Authorities that they could no longer provide a Sister as principal to Gatton. Sister Joan Morrissey was the last religious to be principal of the school. It was her kindness and guidance that helped the parents to accept, in a very gracious manner, the transfer of leadership to a lay principal. Sister Joan remained as a religious presence in the school as a teacher and Religious Co-ordinator until 1991.

Mr Kevin Glasheen was appointed first lay principal. He filled this role in 1983 and 1984. He shared with staff and parents his vision for Catholic Education. His dedication helped this transition period go very smoothly. Mr Gerard Campbell followed in 1985 to assume leadership of the school. Since then, Mr Tom Reardon, Mr Gerard Marsh (Acting Principal), Mr Brian Bright, Mr David Sewell and current Principal Mrs Susan Carpenter have led the school as Principals.

Today, Our Lady of Good Counsel School has over 200 students and the school continues to be supported by a dedicated teaching staff of 18, ancillary staff of 8 and a great parent body. Together the school community strives to live by the school motto – "LOVE, SERVICE, JOY".

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