

PAPER 7

History of Lourdes Hill

Sr Leonie D'Arcy S.G.S.

This year Lourdes Hill will be 84 years old. Only a few of the original landmarks remain – the grotto, the hall and the rotunda – but its unique site is its most treasured legacy. That wonderful vista across the river to the city and beyond to the distant hills is an everchanging kaleidoscope of colour and movement. This beauty is an essential element of Lourdes Hill, and a constant gift to all.

From its beginnings until the '60s the influence of His Grace Archbishop Duhig was pervasive and was reflected in the life of the college in many ways. His status was akin to that of father of the College for many of the early pupils.

Yet it was not Dr Duhig but Archbishop Dunne who in 1915 invited the Superior General of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Mother Berchmans McLaughlin, to send Sisters to begin schools at Coorparoo and Bulimba. When the reply came in the affirmative, the history of the College began to unfold.

Dr James Duhig, the Co-adjutor, with an eye for real estate had purchased on 1st May, 1914 a property on the banks of the Brisbane River for £1,500. It was owned by a Mr Gilbanks who had called the property "Emerald Hill". It was a large area of land, thickly wooded with many varieties of eucalyptus trees and with a substantial family home on the brow of the hill. A path led down to a pontoon at the river's edge. Archbishop Duhig changed the name of the property to "Lourdes Hill" as the site reminded him of Lourdes in the south of France. On 24th September, 1915 the adjoining property at the corner of Virginia Ave and Hawthorne Rd was purchased from Mr William Quinn for £1,000, so the area for the new convent was increased. The final purchase within the same area was made on 19th January 1918 from the estate of W Smyth for £70. The official document states that the area was 30.4 perches (more or less). ¹

On the 7th January 1916, the pioneer Sisters arrived from Sydney on the ship, the R.M.S. "Osterley". Mother Berchmans with a companion Sr M Aquin Kelly accompanied the six Sisters for Coorparoo and the six for Bulimba. They were

met at the wharf by Dr Duhig and nine other priests and taken first to Coorparoo where six were to live, then on to Bulimba where the parishioners warmly welcomed them.

The building at Lourdes Hill was not yet ready so the Sisters were taken to a house at Lindsay Street. The community consisted of Mother Bernard Lysaght, the Superior, Sr Catherine Mulholland, Principal of the primary school and Srs Gabriel Daley, Ignatius Duhig, Adrian Kelly and Patrick Francis Kelleher who were to serve at Sts Peter and Paul's School.

The first Lourdes Hill pupil was Ethel Lee. It took Ethel (accompanied by her brother) five days to make the trip from Cloncurry to Brisbane. Arriving in Brisbane they took the tram to Norman Bridge and walked up to Lourdes Hill. Imagine their dismay to find they had then to proceed to Lindsay Street! Ethel was soon joined by a much younger student, Ella Spalding and later by Mabel Kennedy from Ipswich. They lived in a smaller cottage next to the sisters' residence with a lay teacher Miss Claffey. Their dining room was also their study, music and recreation room. Two Sisters slept in the second bedroom, no doubt to guard them.

The primary school opened on 3rd January 1916 and as Lourdes Hill was still not ready, the girls went to the Bulimba School. They walked at first, until a disused horse drawn cab called the "Chariot" driven by a man called Murtagh, became available.

In March, His Grace wrote to Rev Mother Berchmans inviting her to attend the official opening of Lourdes Hill on 9th April at 3.30 p.m. In his letter he says "I never thought the work would run into so many weeks and months but there was a great amount to be done and numerous details to be attended to. I am certain the place will please you for although there are more pretentious buildings, I don't think there will be a more suitable one anywhere for convent purpose than this is. Everybody who goes to see it comes away charmed alike with the house and the position".²

However, a downfall of rain on 9th April meant that the opening was postponed until the first Sunday in May. Even then the building was not ready for occupation so it was finally on 23rd July that the sisters and pupils moved into their new home. This meant that there was then an influx of new pupils though the number was still small.

Once the school building was completed at Lourdes Hill, new sisters arrived in July. Sr Hilary Lawliss was appointed Principal and the staff consisted of Sr Ignatius Duhig (whose place at the primary school was taken by Sr Anthony Joseph O'Brien) and Sr Teresa. These pioneering Sisters were responsible for the day to day care of the pupils, especially boarders who were in the majority. The buildings into which the community and girls moved was simply a large "home" consisting of a chapel, kitchen, parlour (as we used to say in earlier times) and 2 small refectories with the nuns' cells and girls' dormitory on the second floor. These were soon quite inadequate so that by April the following year (1917), a two-storey wooden building was added to the original convent with a girls' refectory on the ground floor and a dormitory for seniors on the upper level. His Grace dedicated the building on 1st April. This remained the nucleus of the boarding school for many years. The school was a separate wooden building next to the convent. Gradually the grounds were laid out with paths and terraces.

By 1917 steps, under the Archbishop's planning, had been constructed leading down to a terrace where a grotto, replicating the Lourdes shrine as far as possible, had been carved out of the hill. Beautiful statues of Our Lady and Bernadette were within the cave. An altar was constructed allowing Mass to be offered. Every year except when he was overseas, His Grace would offer Mass on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, about 6.30 a.m. The Sisters and girls knelt on the lower terrace.

When the evening procession was inaugurated in 1936, His Grace would normally return to lead the procession. On that first occasion His Grace said "We hope that this will be another Lourdes; and that favours similar to those granted to the pilgrims who journey to that picturesque town nestling at the foot of the Pyrenees will be granted to you all here".³

The grotto, especially for the older past pupils, has always been a place of prayer. In 1961, to mark his Episcopal Golden Jubilee, His Grace presented the College with life-size statues of Our Lady and Bernadette set up on the top of the hill near the boarder's quarters but they have never had the same attraction as the grotto. In the 70s vandals removed the statue of Bernadette from the grotto and a smaller replica replaced the original.

By 1918, the school was firmly established, in that there were now about 33 boarders and a few day scholars. The ages of the girls ranged from Alicia Delahunty who was four years old to the older girls – 16 or 17 years old. A governess, Miss Simons looked after the very young ones.

In that year, the hall which was built in the Romanesque style and which is the most conspicuous building from the river was completed at a cost of almost £7000. Girls tell of His Grace's frequent visits as he inspected the work being carried out. A master plan in the same grand style was drawn up but was never implemented. The builder and contractor was Mr E. Duhig, no doubt the Archbishop's brother Edward. It is interesting to find in the Archdiocesan archives, numerous entries for advertising costs for the new school. Ads were placed regularly in the Cairns Weekly Herald, the North Queensland Register and the Mackay paper, in an effort to attract students⁴.

To savour what life was like for the pupils, we have the memoirs of Maysie Gallagher, a boarder from Clifton, who had just passed her scholarship exam in 1917. Maysie wrote years later,

"The life was simple and friendly despite some feelings of awe in face of the seniors. The building of the Hall, still proudly standing, was full of excitement for the girls of that year, with its panelling and beautifully tinted ceiling – it was also a most welcome addition to teaching space and to recreation areas.

What everybody felt to be a special feature of life was the interest of Archbishop Duhig in everything connected with the school. He planned the hall, watched every detail of improvement in the grounds but he was specially concerned about our spiritual needs, coming for days of retreat and confession, interested also in our studies and happy to provide for days of recreation. A motor boat, the "Santa Maria", which we looked on as our own, was one of the joys he provided for river trips and we could use it also to go from our pontoon to the city quay to attend the Holy Week ceremonies in the Cathedral. I recall picnics to a pineapple farm at Wynnum, to Seventeen Mile Rocks and to Redcliffe on the "Kooopa", usually shared in by the Archbishop. His Grace also took us one night to the circus in South Brisbane and it lasted so long that the trams had stopped running and we walked home!

The Archbishop walked with us while his car ferried load after load of girls home. The last group arrived just before midnight, advised to hurry and get a drink while there was time to keep the fast for Communion.

On all Mass days we were present as a matter of course in the chapel and we also made an evening visit to the chapel before tea. On Friday evenings we followed the Stations of the Cross and on Saturdays we joined with the nuns in singing in Latin Our Lady's Litany and sharing in the Act of Consecration

The scheme of education was different from today's: it was rather a tutorial method in which a great deal was left to ourselves. Many lessons were "heard" early in the day, and then we settled down with textbooks on the three subjects Maths, French and Latin – one sister responsible for all eight subjects at different levels! There was a measure of monitoring as a help. Change was provided by other teachers in lessons on theory of music and perspective drawing.

Visitors were rare as most girls came from the country and some from other states. Some girls would go home at Easter and all probably at midwinter." ⁵

One of our most treasured archival possessions is the 1918 Address to His Grace. Now in a frame at the front office it was originally on a silk material back, bound in soft brown leather. The language may sound excessive to our ears, but the sentiments were sincere in their time and the address was a constant item for special occasions,

"To His Grace

The Most Rev. Dr Duhig

May it please Your Grace Happy children of your great pastoral charge.

We greet you today. It is an auspicious day made memorable by Your Grace's presence here. Surrounded by so many zealous priests and in a home of study and enlightenment just completed for our sakes",⁶

1919 brought further changes. The boarding facilities were so much under pressure that a further extension was needed. Nyanza, a large house, the Congreves dwelling, adjacent to Lourdes Hill and further up the hill, was bought for £2,100.

It was to be "home" to countless boarders until the '70s when it was used for music and finally demolished in 1985. Nearby, a small science room served the College in that period. On the all-female environment of the College the male science teacher was a novelty!

Perhaps a more enduring legacy began in that year. His Grace decided it was time Lourdes Hill students had a badge. He walked into the senior classroom, wrote on the board the words "Respice Stellam, Voca Mariam". Look to the Star and call upon Mary – a maxim of St Bernard, and no doubt intended as a delicate acknowledgement of Mother Bernard's role as Superior. He then drew a star with an inner circle, added palm leaves and the monogram A.M. and so was born our motto and our badge. The colours in the badge were those that became our school colours – purple, mauve and silver. The first three students to sit for and pass the Junior Public Examination that year were Peggy Cullen, Maysie Gallagher and Kitty Neville and they were the first to wear the badge in public. Two of these

later became Good Samaritan Sisters. Maysie as Sr Philomena was Novice Mistress and Assistant Mother General, while Kitty as Sr Rita Mary was one of our outstanding Lourdes Hill Principals. Maysie continued her studies and was our first Senior student in 1921.

In 1921 the pontoon at the river bank sank due to the heavy rains and entailed further expense to fix it. The next few years saw additions to the College that provided more facilities and made life easier for all. As music pupils increased in number, a new centre specifically for music was needed. A neighbouring property, just beyond the convent with a large Queenslander on it was purchased from a Captain Henderson for £2,500. There was difficulty in obtaining the finance and the purchase was held up several months.⁷ It was ideal for the purpose as it had several large high-ceilinged rooms for performance and a number of smaller rooms for practice. It was named St Cecilia's but was always referred to as the "Cottage".

The grounds had been improved with the building of tennis courts, quoits and basketball courts.

In 1924 the swimming baths on the banks of the river were built by M.R. Hornibrook Ltd for £1200. The advertisement for the College boasted of "swimming baths of re-inforced concrete fitted with electric light and thirty-six dressing sheds and measuring 75 feet by 25 feet."⁸ This was the pride and joy of Lourdes Hill, in spite of the 150 steps to be climbed down and up. It was filled with salt water drawn by an electric pump on the incoming tide.

As an aside, as the river became more polluted in the '50s and '60s, there are stories of sliced jelly fish and other debris in the water. His Grace had borrowed money for this construction from the Priests' sick fund and that was the cause of difficulties later. A swimming costume was designed of navy blue thick wool, neck to knee with a skirt – apparently vetted by His Grace! It does not take much imagination to guess what happened when in the water. They were soon superseded.

The uniform itself was a navy dress, usually of silk in summer and serge in winter, of any style. The common feature was the white lace collar and cuffs for Sunday and the celluloid cuffs for the rest of the week. In 1923 His Grace brought his two nieces Grace and Lucille Duhig from the United States to finish their education at Lourdes Hill. Peggy Cullen their cousin, designed their dresses to have fine pleats falling from a yoke. The style was so popular it was adopted as the uniform for special occasions.

The prospectus for Lourdes Hill in the 20s shows numerous photographs of the rooms and environs. Terms for Boarders including tuition was £12.12.0 per term. Extras include Music and Singing, Painting, Commercial subjects, Dancing, Elocution, Physical Culture, Dressmaking, Games and Library.

By the 20s the College had established itself. In 1926 the enrolment reached 130. Sr Teresa Joseph, affectionately known as T.J., was Principal. She was famous for her notices "N.B. Ladies will notothers must not". The majority of pupils were boarders and led a semi-monastic life which paralleled that of the sisters.

As pupils left Lourdes Hill, there was a real desire to keep in touch, so in July, 1926 it was decided to form a Past Pupils Association in connection with Lourdes Hill convent school. A general meeting was held where Peggy Cullen was elected President with Margaret Hegarty as Vice President. A constitution was drawn up. The Association is still strong today. In 1934 Sr David Barker urged the Committee to begin a magazine to keep in touch with past pupils in the country. There was no agreement about the name so His Grace was asked and he suggested "Lourdianian". Interestingly enough in his Foreword he says "I congratulate the Editors on having chosen 'The Lourdianian' as the title of this publication, for the students and ex-students themselves may well be called Lourdianians."

The first outstanding success for the school was that of Alma O'Dea who in 1926 won the coveted Dame Nellie Melba Scholarship at the Conservatorium of Melbourne, as well as the Ormond Scholarship. Dame Nellie Melba was the judge of the finalists and when making the award said it was very evident as soon as Alma commenced singing that she would win the prize.

In 1928 the first Lourdianians to graduate from the University of Queensland were Margaret Hegarty, Theo Rossler, Edna Morton, who all obtained their Bachelor of Arts.

One of the junior class of 1929, Betty Reid began training as a nurse then became the first Australian to become a member of the International Grail Movement. She was sent to Hong Kong to train Asian girls in leadership and guided a refugee aid programme. She was very involved in United Nations work in Asia, Africa and the Pacific. She wrote a book "I Belong Where I am Needed" describing her work in newly developed countries.

Another great past pupil missionary was Annie Beck. Having completed her nursing training she became a Marist Missionary Sister of Mary. She established

and devoted 18 years to running the Government Leprosarium at Guadalcanal. In 1956 she was awarded an MBE for that work.

Under the tuition of some fine music teachers, Lourdianians enjoyed considerable success. In 1931, of six L.A.B. certificates awarded in Queensland five were won by pupils from Lourdes Hill. Daphne Cockburn gained first place in the state for the Solo Performers' Certificate and Gladys Reed first place for the Teachers' Certificate.

In 1933 a greater honour was gained by Daphne Cockburn for her outstanding musicianship when she was awarded a three years' scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London. She was most successful, gaining medals for piano and theory. Her scholarship was extended after she had performed in Duke's Hall, London, including in the programme two Preludes of her own composition. Interestingly, Daphne also composed the music to a lullaby written by Mr George Goodman and presented to the Duchess of York for Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret. During the war she gave concerts for wartime charities and for the troops. In 1945 she gave a series of concerts around London and was an outstanding success. When she returned to Australia she was billed as "the greatest pianist of her generation".¹⁰ She was to tour Europe and America but she returned to London, married and gave up her musical career.

The school hymn to Our Lady of Lourdes was composed in 1934. The words were written by Brian O'Higgins and the music by Sr John Evangelist. On every formal occasion, Our Lady of Lourdes is invoked "Lead us, O Lady of Lourdes at last to Jesus, thy Son and Thee". And when Past Pupils gather for much less formal occasions, it is amazing how often the hymn is sung.

From the beginning there had been a very small primary school which included boys in the early years. Thus Lourdes Hill boasts of having Fr Vince Kiley, Desmond Barwick, Bruce Campbell, Powell McCafferty and John Uren among their past students. Some remained only a short time. When Mr Kiley returned home one afternoon and found Vince playing with Jacks, which he considered a girl's game, he exploded and his son had to face the long walk to the mixed school at Bulimba.

The end of year concerts were the showcase of music and elocutionary talent often with duets being played on four pianos.

In December of 1935 His Grace officiated at the Profession and Clothing of four Lourdianians as Good Samaritan Sisters in Sydney. Ten past pupil Sisters

joined in the celebration. In the early years, there were numerous vocations to the religious life, not only to the Good Samaritans.

In January 1937 Sr Rita Mary Neville returned to Lourdes Hill as principal and remained until 1943. She was a woman of great vision and personality with a belief in the girls and an ability often to second-guess their reactions. Her brilliant sense of humour was legendary. Each year a play was produced, usually with a religious theme. Two that stirred great interest were “The Passion Play” produced in 1939 at the Tivoli Theatre and “The Pageant of Mother Love” the following year. The Senior send-offs became an opportunity to individualise the foibles of each girl as Rita Mary cleverly adapted words to some popular tunes.

One on Hazel Mezger ran as follows –

Sleep then my Hazel so fast
Senior is over at last
School days are ended for you
And troubles among them were few
When your ambition you seize
Husband and money and ease –
Do not forget how you found
Bright light at five all around ¹¹

1941 Lourdanian

One of the constant complaints of this period was “Why don’t they send us some young nuns?”. Later we found our two new Sisters, Helen Mary and Julian Eymard were just professed and in their early 20s. To ensure discipline, they had decided not to smile before St Patrick’s Day! And we thought they were old!

Sr Dorothea Goodwin, the Sister in charge of Nyanza, while standing supervising, would be doing the most intricate embroidery and missing nothing!

Sport fixtures in tennis, basketball and swimming were held with other secondary schools and also with the past pupils. Sr Rita invited gentlemen from the QCLTA to play with the senior teams – quite an innovation! The A grade team won the Archbishop Shield for three consecutive years 1939-1941.

Girls of this era remember their embarrassment at their appearance in the new basketball uniform! Purple pinafore over a mauve blouse with silver ribbon and with very large purple bloomers just visible under the pinafore!!

The expectations about the behaviour of Lourdes Hill girls were very high. There seemed always to be an array of spies, ex-Lourdes Hill pupils, who were ready with a telephone call to the school to report any failure in uniform or behaviour. Some Sub-Seniors having received their Children of Mary medals in the morning, lost them on returning in the afternoon. Their crime – eating hot dogs at the Church fete at Wynberg. I was one of them!

1941 marked the first twenty-five years of the College. His Grace wrote “Lourdes Hill has now behind it 25 years of history. The progress has been steady. The number of pupils, like the number of successes, has been increasing year by year.”¹² Boarders’ numbers had increased to 104 and there was an increase in day pupil numbers.

The Second World War at first had little effect on the lives of the pupils until news arrived of the death or wounding of family members at the front.

In 1942 with the war in the Pacific coming closer, the decision was taken to move the College to Gayndah, where there was a large convent and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan were already in residence. A large picture theatre “The Palace” opposite the Convent was hired to house most of the boarders, the seniors being able to boast of being on the stage for one year!

The Fall of Singapore marked the evening when the contingent left by rail from Roma Street for their new home. The most precious luggage – a statue of Our Lady and a very large Windsor sausage that was to be the meal the next day. “It’s a Lovely Day Tomorrow” became the theme song. Srs Rita Mary Neville, Helen Mary Hobbs, Julian Eynard Quaine and Bonaventure Foley accompanied the group to set up Lourdes Hill in exile. There was great excitement as there had been flooding of the Burnett River and it was not certain that the train would be able to get through. However, that goal was achieved when people met the train a little way from Gayndah and the invasion of Gayndah begun. There were no beds for the first few nights so the boarders slept on the floor of the Nun’s community room, telling ghost stories.

Order was soon established out of chaos and the normal programme of events became routine. Three boys bravely joined the senior and junior classes. A special feature of the year were the singing classes by Sr Gabriel Healy, who was a member of the Gayndah community. These climaxed in the senior choir obtaining the highest marks in the choral examination. As there were no inter-school sporting fixtures, the House Competition of Purple, Mauve and Silver became fiercely contested. The Senior Formal was held as usual where the girls dressed in their

finery and danced with each other! Public examinations resulted in Pete Uren obtaining 11 A's in Junior. The exodus only lasted one year as the school returned to Hawthorne for 1943. Actually, during the year away, about 50 day scholars had continued to go to Lourdes Hill for Grade 7, Sub-Junior and Junior with Srs David, Isobel and Bertille as teachers. An air raid shelter was built under the hall, and was used for practice. The girls adapted the usual regime to their small number, even to their farewell concert for the Grade 10's.

On the return to Lourdes Hill the primary section was closed and the girls transferred to St Peter's and Paul's, though still wearing Lourdes Hill uniforms and still enjoying the privilege of being able to run, walk or get the tram back to the College at lunch time to use the swimming pool!

Sr Vianney Phillips succeeded Sr Rita in 1944 and was Principal for the next 11 years. When Pete Uren, a protégé of His Grace, did not do as well as expected in Senior, he wrote a very critical letter to the Mother General, deploring the fact that Sr Rita had been moved. ¹³

In 1947 the names of the Houses were changed from the school colours to Our Lady's titles. The house captains chose Stella Maris, Mater Dei and Mater Admirabilis, the last being shortened on most occasions to Mater Ad.

The 50's ushered in a period of change. It was the time of the Fatima devotion and a statue of Our Lady of Fatima was installed in the hall. In 1955 there was a complete change in uniform with a grey tunic, white blouse, green tie, blazer and a hat or green beret being introduced and received with great enthusiasm.

With increasing enrolments and little change to the original campus, a new building programme was drawn up. In 1956 the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Carboni laid the foundation stone and the next year Archbishop Duhig opened the £150,000 block, consisting of boarding quarters, a convent section, chapel and dining facilities, all considered very modern for the period. Sr Edmund Bondfield had become Principal that year. Fees were £150 for boarders and £30 for day scholars. The enrolment was 275.

On 12th December 1960 a fire broke out in the original convent building and it was soon engulfed. Only a change of wind saved the building next to it and the hall. A great loss was the records that had been stored in the Sr Rita Mary Memorial Library.

Mother Ignatius died the next day, so in one sense it was the end of an era. It might therefore be an appropriate time to consider the Duhig influence on the history of the College.

Mother Ignatius Duhig was one of the pioneer group of sisters. She returned as Superior three times – 1922 -1927, 1930 – 1935 and finally 1937 – 1942: In all 21 years! Her influence was enormous as over those years she learnt to know the pupils and their parents and established an intimate relationship with them. As the editorial in the *Lourdianian* of 1936 says, “It has always been Mother’s aim to link past pupils and present pupils as members of one great family, by ties of affection and gratitude to their Alma Mater.”(14) She was the Archbishop’s sister, and was known as such, in the wider community, and he was a constant visitor.

Mother Ignatius possessed a natural dignity but was approachable and kindly. Her ideals of the Lourdes Hill “lady” were impressed on her charges every Sunday when she gathered the boarders for her weekly talk. Her opening was unvaried “Constant dripping wears away stone”. Then followed detailed expectations about behaviour of young Lourdes Hill ladies at all times: the wearing of hats and gloves, thank you letters to be written to the hostess after Outing Sunday, genuine courtesy to one another. The examples were limitless as were the exhortation to live according to gospel precepts. Individual failures during the week had also to be accounted for! Finally a formal dismissal occurred when, in turn, we left the hall, curtsying to Mother Ignatius as we did so. Another of Mother Ignatius’ warnings was, “You’ll be a burden to your parents” – the cause: sitting on the short brick wall or the cement stairs – apparently a recipe for all kinds of disaster. Even when not Superior at Lourdes Hill she maintained influence at the College, as commendation or recrimination was passed on. She was a lady of influence.

There is no doubt that Archbishop Duhig occupies a special place of honour in the annals of Lourdes Hill. It was not only in the early days but through every decade up to his death that Lourdianians were grateful for his visits to the College.

In the first years he visited the school weekly, giving religious instruction to the girls and, later, came on the first Thursday of the month for Mass. He regularly gave the girls’ retreat and heard their confessions. By the 60s this had become a problem as with age, the Archbishop’s hearing had deteriorated so that sins were told not only to him but also heard by the assembly!

A pattern was established for His Grace’s visits. A bell was rung, and the girls lined the drive to welcome him. And welcome him we did as he never came empty-handed! The driver would bring out oranges, water melons, apples and

even sweets and chocolates. He arranged, as special treats, boat trips. If he did not come with us he would meet us with large churns of ice cream and sweets. He even provided High Tea on some special feasts of Our Lady and as just one further example of his thoughtfulness, in 1948 the boarders who were unable to go home for the Easter break were invited by His Grace to spend the day with him at "Coolooli", a beautiful seaside home at Scarborough. He was often photographed with the girls when official photos were taken.

He was anxious that the students should develop an appreciation of Art so he would accompany a small group of Senior girls to exhibitions in the city, always treating them to afternoon tea at one of the shops.

He was generous in his gifts to the College. On one of his trips to the United States he sent back a harp which is still played today. He gave works of art including two paintings by Arthur Streeton. A large painting by one of the Italian masters hung on the wall in the Superior's Office. A beautiful Mass Missal was given in 1948, from France came books for the library and from Rome, statues.

He was very proud of having bought the site originally and whenever a celebrity from overseas would be in Brisbane, on the itinerary would be a visit to Lourdes Hill.

St James' feast day was a special day for the girls. On that day, or on a day near 25th July, His Grace would celebrate Mass in the Chapel and then there would be a concert, begun with the "Ecce Sacerdos" as His Grace entered the hall. There was often an Address to His Grace, read usually by the Head Girl.

In the archives is the letter written by His Grace to his "Dear children of Lourdes Hill" dated 22nd June 1922. He relates "The great event of my life in Rome has been the private audience with His Holiness (Pope Pius XI). He was particularly interested in learning of the schools. He received the watch with exquisite pleasure and blessed you all."¹⁵ He tells them of the schools in Rome he visited where he is known as the "Children's Bishop". He also mentions that he had signed the petition for the beatification of the "Little Flower".

After the death of the Archbishop on 10th April 1965, his anniversary and feast day were always marked on the calendar but in the diamond jubilee year of the College 1976 it was decided to set up the *prix d'honneur* as The Archbishop Duhig Memorial Prize. This prize is awarded to the senior student most outstanding for her school spirit, her dedication to issues of justice and her involvement in College life. The recipient receives prizes from the College and from the past students. Her name is inscribed on the honour shield.

When the Good Samaritan Centre was built in 1998, the Principal Kay Herse, held wide consultation about the naming of the new and old halls. The hall built in 1918 was dedicated to both Mother Ignatius and Archbishop Duhig and is known as the Duhig Hall. The photos of both look down on the Assembly.

I would like to conclude this section by quoting from Archbishop Duhig's speech at the annual Concert in 1940.

I have watched this school grow, and when I die, when I pass away, there will be a few things for which I will expect God to reward me, and to forgive some of my faults, and one of these will be the founding of this excellent school – Lourdes Hill. ¹⁶

After the fire, space was at a premium. Sr Laureae Ryan, the Principal, began a major building undertaking, with classrooms, science rooms and specialist areas being built each year. In spite of the disruptions the 60s were remarkable for the number of girls who achieved outstanding success. In 1961, Joan Andrews, Barbara Baker and Noreen Francis were in the top 20 finalists in the Senior Public Examination. Robyn Schacht won the Brunton Stephen prize for the Junior essay. In 1966, Donna McKenna topped the girls in Catholic schools for Senior. Margaret Mary Batch repeated that success in 1967. The YCS, the Young Christian Students movement, was very strong.

On staff, noted for the success of her choirs in competition, was a most gifted nun Sr Winefride Heffey. She had as offsider Sr Mel O'Malley so that both jointly picked the choir. Each girl had to sing. If in tune she was chosen, but if not and she had a pretty face, she became part of the choir but was warned not to let a note come forth, but to mime.

Sr Winefride wrote a book for adolescents' sex education "Youth Looks Ahead". It was trialed in her religion class with the roneoed sheets that were never allowed outside the classroom. When printed Sr Winefride set up Polding Press to distribute the books – one for boys and one for girls. The nuns were then irreverently referred to as "Pol" and "Ding".

Sr Gerard was a very good language teacher. She was very proud that her girls had better results in Latin than the boys from neighbouring schools. Sr Gerard had the custom of calling all her students 'Mary' and if they objected and said that was not their name, her quick response was "Well it should be".

In 1962 Miriam Baker was named Girl-in-a-Million and in 1964 another past pupil, Jan Taylor became Miss Australia.

Sr Laureae set up the first official body of Parents and Friends and since that time the work and influence of that body has been invaluable. They provided the first car for the Sisters.

In 1971 the original school was pulled down and a new college library and administration block were erected on the site.

New very modern boarding quarters were built next to the new swimming pool and were given the same name – Nyanza.

After 15 years as Principal, Sr Laureae left at the end of 1973 and Sr Leonie D'Arcy became Principal.

New House names of Duhig, Polding, Chisholm and Oxley were chosen, no thought being given to the masculine dimension!

A special walk-a-thon raised funds to excavate the baths area near the river and sailing was introduced as a subject. The suggestion for the introduction of Sailing had come from the Co-ordinator of Physical Education, Enid Ginn. Enid, with help from two students, built the first "125", often staying very late at night to work on the boat. When first sailed in the May races at Noosa, it was perfect! Mr Brian Davis, one of the fathers, made a "125" for raffling and with mothers selling tickets at the supermarkets, \$4000 was raised. The prize winner took the boat but later sold it back to the school. With help, the college soon had six boats. The first Sailing Club elected Mary McKenna as the Commodore. A boat shed was built and a road constructed down the hill. Kayaks were purchased and regatta days became part of the programme, with the parents lending boats and arranging races between staff and students. With a change of the Co-ordinator of Physical Education, and the difficulty of servicing the boats, sailing stopped. There was an attempt in 1984 to begin the Club again but it was the enthusiasm and vital interest of Mr and Mrs Seto in 1990 that actually revived the sailing.

Abseiling was introduced. At first the girls were very keen but as enthusiasm became less it was not continued.

An Art and Craft exhibition began in a small way in 1978 but soon grew in size and popularity. The early committees each year purchased several works of local artists for the college. The annual art show has continued since then, as an important social event for the community.

In the same year the student exchange system between Lourdes Hill and the Good Samaritan College in Sasebo, Japan began and has continued for the past 22 years. This event seemed to be the catalyst for a number of students to initiate an exchange programme in many countries.

The S.R.C. (student representative council) took responsibility for many aspects of school life and special portfolios were set up – community service, communication, library, cultural, social and environmental.

With Federal government assistance a new Year 10 building was constructed and by the 80s the enrolment was almost 700. The present uniform was introduced in 1979.

Elizabeth McKenna, a Year 11 student gained a Val Duncan Memorial Scholarship to study at United World College in Wales, one of three awarded in Australia in 1980.

Overseas scholarships were gained by past pupils in music in 1975 and in science in 1978/79. Eva Arni became Miss Papua-New Guinea, then Miss Asia. Junie Sng was the Sportswoman of the Year in Singapore. Linda Cassell was our first AIS Scholarship holder, while Vicki Ferguson shared the Quota award for a deaf student of the year.

There was a close relationship between Lourdes Hill and Iona College when Mrs Pat Spence and Father Fitzpatrick produced “Annie Get Your Gun”, “The King and I”, and “Pirates of Penzance”.

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations included a backward look at our history in a theatrical production “A Time to Remember”.

Three of the fathers were members of parliament, Mr Ben Humphreys was the federal member, always ready to lend a hand and interested in supporting the College, opening the Art Show and donating an Australian flag. Mr Booth was in the State Parliament and on one visit before his election Mr McVeigh, shook the hand of every pupil he met! In 1987, Mary Crawford, Past Pupil was elected as the Federal Member for Forde. Mr Pat Purcell, present State Member supports the College in many ways.

Sr Noela Bunn was the next Principal from 1982 until 1991 with the Deputy Mr Alwyn Webb being the Acting Principal in 1986.

In 1982 the care of the boarding school was given to a staff separate from the college staff. Sr Pat Thom was the first Director with five full-time assistants to look after the 120 boarders. During this period a new convent was built and the extra area was able to be utilised for the boarders and the staff. Boarders today have a freedom to be involved in outside activities and sports, never dreamed of by past generations. Food too is no longer the central concern as menus are varied. Some boarders even say the food is better than at home! The Big Sister programme and the Buddy System which couples country boarders with families of day scholars helps to break down the loneliness for new students.

A new building plan was implemented:

- Hall was enlarged and equipped for theatrical productions.
- New music rooms extended into hillside
- Utilizing the unemployed, a boardwalk was built from the grotto to the playing fields
- The library – administration block took over the old tennis court. New staff rooms gave the staff a million dollar view of Brisbane.

In 1985 a Board of Management was set up. The expertise of the Directors was a most valuable source of wisdom for the life of the College. Almost immediately, the value of such a body was shown when the committee demanded that the tiles that had been laid under the library be taken up and re-done. Using the expertise of a structural engineer they were also very active and professional in opposing the River Crossing that was to have been built in close proximity to Lourdes Hill. These are but two examples where the expertise shown is outside the normal competence of educationalists.

1985 also saw Ann Kinnane named Miss Queensland.

To cater for the number of students in years 11 and 12 not interested in tertiary study a new building called the SCOPE building - Student Centre for Ongoing Participation in Education was built on the river bank. The girls worked out that in a week they climbed 3006 stairs! A special curriculum involved work experience, community service, career education and was a very popular move

The St Vincent de Paul Conference was set up and has been very active in the College and outside community.

The successes of the pupils in a wide and varied field reflected the new opportunities available. National and international success was achieved in 1985 in Synchronised Swimming, Trick Skipping, Surf Life Saving, National Diving

Competition, Queen's Equestrian Titles, Ballroom Dancing, Badminton, the Jean Trundle plays. The Lourdes Hill representatives in the Commonwealth Games were Jennie Burke and Susie O'Neill and in the Olympics were Susie O'Neill and Monique Dunstan.¹⁷

1991 marked the 75th anniversary of the founding of the College so a week of celebrations ensued. Mass at the Cathedral, dinner at the Sheraton where a group of past pupils presented a hilarious view of the 75 years, reunions at the College, the burying of a time capsule, and of enduring value the 75th Magazine which gathered memories from each of the decades.

In 1992 the present Principal, Mrs Kay Herse became the first lay principal. At first there were three Sisters on staff but now there is only one Sister teaching part-time. Kay's leadership has ensured that the Good Samaritan – Benedictine ethos is kept before staff and students constantly. Values of compassion, justice, equity, hospitality and stewardship are inculcated at all levels. In 1994 Vertical Roll Groups were introduced to strengthen the bonds of friendship across the levels and improve pastoral care. There is a resident Counsellor who is available in times of need. She is part of the Enrichment Centre set up in recent years to cater for the gifted and the less gifted students. TAFE courses are available for years 10, 11 and 12 students.

Care for the less fortunate is emphasised with staff and students involved in the local St Vincent de Paul Society. There were 2,500 tinned food items presented at the Mass for Sharing this year. The Good Samaritan mission, especially in Kiribati, gains much from the generosity of the pupils, though specific areas of need, e.g. East Timor this year are willingly supported.

Reconciliation is an important issue at the College and the week of Corroboree 2000 and the National Week of Prayer for Reconciliation were celebrated with a visit of the traditional Aboriginal, Torres Strait and PNG dancers from Abergowrie College, with the guest speaker Mrs Beryl Wharton, an Aboriginal Elder, and with a special liturgy.

The newly formed Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program group at Lourdes Hill have just received Commonwealth funding to be used to assist with the education of the 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the College.

In this Jubilee year, the Year 11 Good Samaritan Outreach students made a pilgrimage to Charters Towers to fulfil the jubilee goals of journey, justice and

forgiveness and to experience reconciliation with the Aboriginal community. A Good Samaritan Sister, Sr Edith Edwards has worked to bring together the indigenous and non-indigenous communities for the past 10 years. Because of the high regard in which she is held, our group were given unprecedented insights into the customs and current issues facing the local South Sea and Gudjal people.

In 1992 the LHC team entered for the first time in the Tournament of Minds Competition were National Champions in the Mathematics – Engineering Senior section.

At this time also a new sports uniform – shirt and culottes were a modern welcome to the uniform, especially the purple culottes!

In 1993 the former Sisters' Nursing Home was converted into a computer area. A major improvement to the college was the building (1998) of the Good Samaritan Centre which comprises an all purpose hall, large art and recreational areas. Extra science rooms were provided, but the greatest asset was the landscaping of the total area. The rotunda was moved, this time to an excellent position overlooking the river.

River sports continue to play an important role in the sports scene. In 1993 a Talent Identification Programme for kayaking was introduced. The Canoe Club was set up in the same year. The Sailing Club now produces its own newsletter as well as taking part in many competitions.

In 1999 Rowing was introduced and has proved very popular, girls being prepared to give up a week of their holidays to attend a rowing camp. Mrs Herse has employed separate Coordinators for each of these disciplines. Plans to extend and include the present buildings on the river bank have already been drawn up and will enhance the look and the usefulness of the river bank.

When a new House was needed because of increased enrolments in 1996, consultation resulted in the naming of McKenna House. Mrs Betty McKenna, a past pupil and mother of seven Lourdanians had been involved in many aspects of life at the college. She had undertaken executive positions in the P & F, the Mothers' club and was President of the Past Pupils' Association for the 50th and 75th Jubilees. She was a marvellous model for all, ever cheerful and full of faith during her cancer sufferings.

A new administration system was introduced in 1999 with the executive to the Principal consisting of a Dean of Student Welfare, Dean of Studies and a Dean of Community Development. This definition of roles seems to have worked very well.

Curriculum initiatives have continued to provide a broad range of opportunities to meet the needs of individual students. Programs involving both vocational and general education have been particularly exciting with many students completing a traineeship / apprenticeship within their school studies. Adrienne Marrone, a Senior of 1999 was named Queensland "Trainee of the Year".

The Student Representative Council continues to nurture qualities of leadership in students and a new group known as SPARC (Student Protection and Renewal of Creation) has added an environmental stewardship dimension to this vital element of the College.

Student welfare is a strong focus within the Good Samaritan Benedictine Ethos and a wonderful initiative in the late 1990's has been the Social Policy which not only puts in place guidelines for dances but more importantly has seen the introduction of programs such as Health Promoting Schools which assist adolescents to deal positively with issues to do with drugs, alcohol and sexuality.

Music and Art are two very popular subjects. The Friends of Music provide excellent support in the different music presentations – the Concert and Stage Band, Clarinet, Flute and String Ensembles and the Choirs. The Art displays, especially the Annual Students' Art, is most professionally presented. The Drama Group rival the other performances with their productions. However, it is impossible to chronicle the full diversity of opportunity at the college.

Current information can be obtained from the Lourdes Hill website: [HtmlResAnchor www.lhc.qld.edu.au](http://www.lhc.qld.edu.au).

It is impossible in such a brief survey to do justice to the many past pupils who have given witness to the ideals of the college, many as wives and mothers, as fine single women, as religious or as professional women.

Two ex-students have been elected as Superiors General of the Good Samaritans, Sr de Lourdes (Mary) Ronayne from 1970-1981 and Sr Sonia Wagner, our present Superior elected in 1994.

Several past pupils have been publicly honoured, two with imperial honours, Sr M Joseph (Annie) Beck MBE in 1956 as mentioned and Major Janice McCabe MBE in 1970 for outstanding service in every army rank and appointment held.

Recipients of the Order of Australia medal are:

- 1995 – Mrs Wensley Goebel (Gardiner) for services to the Girl Guides and to the community.

- 1996 – Sr Pauline Fitz-Walter for services to the disadvantaged particularly the homeless, those with psychiatric disorders and drug dependencies
- 1997 – Therese D’Arcy for service to education as speech and drama teacher and examiner
- 1997 – Susie O’Neill for service to sport as a gold medallist at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996. Susie is probably our ex-student with the highest public profile and is always a worthy ambassador for the college.

Others who have made their mark overseas include

- Elizabeth Allen, a member of Tony Blair’s 2YK compliance team.
- Stephanie Whisson (Commons) a Senior Executive in Ernst and Young in Corporate Finance Department involved in trying to work out the Baring Bank debacle.
- Anna Carroll spending 8 weeks at the United Nations headquarters in New York in its speech writing division.
- Cathy Rhodda a freelance script writer who with her husband recorded a games show for London Weekend T.V.
- Denise Cosgrove as a member of the Federal Police employed by the U.N. in peace-keeping in Cyprus.
- Meg Grogan, Assistant-Professor in Department of Education Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Virginia, United State of America.
- Kathleen Ryan former Australasian champion in Irish dancing now with Riverdance in New York.
- Sisters Judy Margetts and Mary Randle involved in education in Kirabati.

Some of the successes of past students in 1999 include:

- Melanie Simpson who received Dean’s Scholar Award in the Faculty of Science for her outstanding achievement in the programme. One of 500 to receive an Australian Students’ Prize of \$2000, a Federal government award.
- Sarah Gall who was awarded the Queensland Division Student bursary from the Royal Australian Planning Institute for Best Overall results for a student entering an accredited planning course in 2000.
- Kaitlyn Sharp who graduated as Valedictorian from U.Q. gaining awards in Paediatrics, General Practice and Medicine.
- Dr Anne Ulcoq (Roche) who won the Kent-Hughes Memorial Medal for the highest marks in the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners national examination.
- Tina Previtara who became our first Magistrate.
- Allinta Rose was Queensland’s women’s and girls champion in Chess.
- Palmina Di Stasi who won the RAQ award for Children’s Wear for the Offspring label.

- Gabrielle Adairs who took out 3 of the major awards in the Western Australia Media Awards.
- Jane Matthews who was awarded an Army Scholarship to the Australian Defence force Academy, Canberra.
- Kathleen Lamont who played the lead role of Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady* for the Savoy Arts Theatre Group.
- Peta Neylan who was one of three hairdressers to win a Queensland State Championship as a Colour Technician.
- Georgina Killoran who was presented with her Private Pilots' Wings at the Royal Queensland Aero Club recently.

Most professions and careers have Lourdanians in their ranks. And as pupil, teacher and principal at Lourdes Hill I never cease to marvel at what has been accomplished in the years since Archbishop Duhig first bought this blessed place.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Details from the Archdiocesan Archives. The transactions had not been recorded in our history. The purchase year in our printed material had been 1915.
- (2) Letter in Glebe Point Archives at St Scholastica's
- (3) *The Lourdanian*, March 1936, page 5
- (4) Archdiocesan Archives. Correspondence Wm. Wallace Downie
- (5) Memoirs of Maysie Gallagher: Lourdes Hill Archives
- (6) Front Office: Lourdes Hill College
- (7) Archdiocesan Archives: Correspondence with Mr Robert Briscoe
- (8) *The Lourdanian*, 1976, page 26
- (9) *The Lourdanian*, June 1935, Foreword
- (10) Lourdes Hill archives
- (11) *The Lourdanian*, December 1941, page 25
- (12) *The Lourdanian*, The Archbishop's Message
- (13) Correspondence, Lourdes Hill file, Archdiocesan Archives
- (14) *The Lourdanian*, March 1936, Editorial, page 3
- (15) Lourdes Hill College Archives
- (16) *The Lourdanian*, December 1940, page 20
- (17) *The Lourdanian*, 1985, pages 54 - 55