

**‘AN ORNAMENT TO THE TOWN’ :
FATHER JAMES J HORAN’S WARWICK RESIDENCE –
WHY IT WAS BUILT AND HOW IT BECAME
ST. MARY’S PRESBYTERY**

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In the Beginning

Prior to the formation of the Toowoomba Diocese in 1929, the Warwick Mission – later St. Mary’s parish – was very much a part of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Before the time of the first resident priest on the Warwick Mission i.e. Italian-born Fr John Cani, any visiting priests from Brisbane or Ipswich had to either camp out under the stars or seek some temporary shelter. No doubt Bishop James Quinn did the same in the early 1860s when he first came to Warwick. Apparently, Fr Cani was renting a stone house at the western end of Fitzroy Street during some of his term in Warwick from 1862 to 1865.¹ But there was no residential building **owned** by the Catholic Church for priests serving in Warwick until September 1911. How did resident priests cope with the situation and where did they live?

Sometime in 1865, Fr John Cani badly broke his ankle in a coach accident and, apparently, he was unable to remain in Warwick.² Fr Cani was replaced in early 1866 by very young Fr Thaddeus Hogan, but it is uncertain where he lived during his time in Warwick. However, a marriage certificate dated 17 September 1866 for Thomas Ryan and Rose Murray, shows that the marriage took place ‘in the house of the Rev. T. I. Hogan, Warwick’.³ Perhaps that was the same rented stone house in which Fr Cani had lived. Thomas Ryan was the great-grandfather of the present parish priest of Warwick

and he was also my great-uncle. According to Fr Neil Byrne, Thaddeus Hogan had fled from Bishop James Quinn's diocese of Brisbane by early 1867 along with a group of Darling Downs priests, and they eventually sought refuge in the United States of America. Fr Hogan was given the title of Monsignor in 1894 and he was in charge of the parish of the Sacred Heart in South Trenton, New Jersey, at the time of his death in 1918.⁴

Fr John O'Reilly had arrived in Warwick by mid-1867 to replace Fr Hogan. He remained there for two years before being appointed to Maryborough. Perhaps Fr O'Reilly had also resided in the rented stone house in Fitzroy Street. His successor, Fr Stephen McDonough, who had also arrived in Queensland with Fr Hogan on 31 December 1865, '... lived for a time in a house purchased from Mr Woods in Wood Street, and later in a house rented from Mrs. Cox.'⁵ Fr McDonough's housekeeper sister had married the widowed town clerk of Warwick, Francis B. Woods, in 1873,⁶ so that may explain why Fr McDonough had lived for a time in a house purchased from Mr Woods. However, that house was apparently too far from the little church in Palmerin Street and the Sisters of Mercy temporary school in Albion Street. Hence Fr McDonough may have moved to Mrs. Cox's house because it was better located.

For whatever reasons, Fr McDonough had been repeatedly asking Bishop Quinn for a transfer from Warwick. It may have been because Fr Robert Dunne – then parish priest of Toowoomba and senior priest on the Darling Downs – was not supportive of Fr McDonough's rather extreme Irish Nationalism.⁷ Fr Dunne was probably also keeping a close eye on parish finances in Warwick. Eventually, in February 1876, Bishop James Quinn gave Fr McDonough a transfer to far-away Cooktown.

A New Era

So, when Bishop Quinn's nephew and private secretary, thirty year-old Father James J. Horan came to Warwick in late February 1876, there was no presbytery owned by the parish where he could live. The official record is sketchy, but available electoral rolls and Warwick Council records suggest that Fr Horan occupied various rented houses during the period 1876 to 1885 – most notably from about 1880 living in a Percy Street house (on the corner of present-day Stewart Avenue) which was owned at the time by a prominent wool classer and non-Catholic named Court W. Cox.⁸ Mr. Cox died around the same time in 1885 that Fr James Horan purchased two excellent nearby allotments with frontages to both Palmerin and Percy Streets, as well as to Stewart Avenue (i.e. allotments 13 & 14, Section 46). These allotments, which had been owned by the estate of a Catholic hotelkeeper named Edmund Meagher, were vacant apart from a brick cottage which had been rented to a Mr. Wilson in the late 1870s, and then to a Mr. Mark McDonald for several years. This brick cottage faced Palmerin Street.⁹

It is not certain what purpose Fr James Horan may have had in mind at the time he purchased the two allotments in mid-1885. Perhaps they were just prime pieces of land which were close to the little St. Mary's church and the new parish school in Palmerin Street. But it is possible that Fr Horan had been considering for some time whether to build his own residence because of the long delay in the resumption of work on a grand, sandstone, partly-built presbytery which had been standing in the church/school grounds since construction commenced in 1880/1881!¹⁰

Grand Plan

Fr James Horan had three brother priests serving in Australia – Matthew in Gympie, Andrew in Ipswich and John (fondly called 'little Joe') in Carcoar, diocese of Bathurst, NSW. Although Fr Andrew Horan had not arrived from Ireland

until 1873, he had succeeded in having a grand sandstone presbytery built in Ipswich by December 1876. As mentioned earlier, Fr James Horan came to Warwick in February 1876. His uncle, Bishop James Quinn, had suggested the construction of a sandstone presbytery in Warwick during visits in the 1870s. It was probably the Bishop who commissioned the Italian-born architect, Andrea Stombuco,¹¹ to design such a sandstone presbytery for Warwick. Bishop Quinn laid and blessed the foundation stone for the grand Stombuco-designed presbytery in early May 1880. Initial work on the building started later that year – probably on a day-labour basis – as finance became available. The structure had reached window sill height on the first floor by August 1881. However, Bishop Quinn died on 18 August 1881, and so the presbytery foundation stone in Warwick was to be the last that the first Bishop of Brisbane laid and blessed on the Darling Downs before his death. Bishop Quinn's successor, Robert Dunne, on his first visit to Warwick after he received the rank of Archbishop in August 1887, made special reference to the laying of the presbytery foundation stone by his predecessor.¹²

Of course there was considerable uncertainty in the diocese of Brisbane after Bishop James Quinn died. In his Will, the bishop had not nominated anyone to administer the diocese after his death. Only about four months earlier, Fr Robert Dunne had arrived back in Ireland after having an application for leave treated as a letter of resignation by Bishop James Quinn!¹³ When the Irish-born clergy of the Brisbane diocese had a meeting soon after the bishop's death, they nominated Fr James Horan as the Administrator of the Diocese. However, Fr James declined in favour of his elder brother, Fr Andrew Horan. When notification of the latter nomination reached the English Benedictine Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Bede Vaughan, he refused to accept the nomination and, instead, he appointed Italian-born Fr John Cani to the position.¹⁴

Fr Cani, at that time, was a great distance away from Brisbane in his role as pro vicar-general of far North Queensland. He was already out of favour with most of the Irish-born clergy in the diocese, although the now exiled Fr Robert Dunne held Fr Cani in high regard as a confidant and a deeply spiritual man.¹⁵ The storm of protest which arose from the Irish clergy when Fr Cani was named as Administrator of the Brisbane Diocese by the Sydney Archbishop only intensified a few months later when Fr Cani was chosen to be the first Bishop of the new diocese of Rockhampton.¹⁶

A New Bishop

As for Fr Robert Dunne in Ireland, he saw the urgency of acting quickly as soon as news of Bishop Quinn's death reached him. He well knew the financial difficulties which the Diocese of Brisbane would now face, and to avoid embarrassment to that Diocese, he '...arranged with Quinn's nephew, Fr James Horan, for funds to be sent immediately to partially satisfy Quinn's Irish creditors.'¹⁷ Fr Dunne was on his way back to Queensland, after stopping over in Rome, when, on board ship, he read news of his appointment as the new Bishop of Brisbane!

It seems likely that the actions of Fr Dunne before he left Ireland, and the decisions of Fr Cani when he returned to Brisbane from North Queensland, put any major building activity in the Diocese on hold until the new bishop had taken up his position. Since Fr Dunne had always regarded Fr Cani as a friend, it is possible that some communication took place between the two priests during the interim period. In any case, construction of the sandstone presbytery in Warwick was certainly put on hold.

Robert Dunne delayed until June 1882 before he allowed himself to be consecrated as the second bishop of Brisbane. He wanted assurance that any public hostility from Irish-born clergy towards non Irish-born clergy (e.g. Italian and

French) in Queensland would cease.¹⁸ He made his first visit to Warwick as a bishop in December 1882.¹⁹ Where did Bishop Dunne stay in Warwick? Fr Neil Byrne, who published his biography of Robert Dunne in 1991, has supplied the presenter with an extract from Bishop Dunne's 1882 letterbook. The letter is dated 1 December 1882 and the extract reads: 'I don't wish a fuss over my coming. But kindly secure my quietness at night. Somebody speaking of your furniture etc. to me not long ago said, 'James' house is full of them'. What the 'them' are you can guess. I, as my good predecessor, could sleep under a tree, but not with troublesome company. Kindly pardon me troubling you on this point; but you would not like to have your guest miserable.'

An Important Meeting

Most likely, Bishop Dunne was referring to the house in Percy Street, Warwick, which Fr Horan had been renting from Mr Court W Cox. The bishop returned to Warwick again in April 1884, but a newspaper report of that visit indicates that the main concern of a group of leading parishioners who met Bishop Dunne was that the Sisters of Mercy were in need of better accommodation in Warwick.²⁰ It was not until his next visit in September 1885, that Bishop Dunne convened a parish meeting to discuss a re-commencement of work on the Andrea Stombuco designed sandstone presbytery. This meeting agreed that only essential parts of the presbytery building be completed to provide sufficiently for Fr Horan and his curate, Fr Thomas Hughes. A full completion of the presbytery would be deferred indefinitely as other parish work was seen as being more urgent. Fr James Horan attended that parish meeting but the newspapers did not report any comments he may have made. The newspapers also mentioned that Fathers Thomas Hughes, Thomas O'Connell, Denis Byrne and J. Enright were present.²¹

However, as indicated previously, Fr James Horan already owned two splendid town allotments in Percy Street, Warwick, before the September 1885 parish meeting took place. He had obtained title to those allotments on 15 August 1885. It is worth recalling here that Fr James Horan had also selected agricultural land at Forest Plain north-east of Allora the previous year.²² While Fr Horan had been busy in 1884 and 1885 acquiring land in his own name, the Warwick branch of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (HACBS) had also made a purchase. In early 1885 the Society had agreed to purchase the original Masonic Hall in Guy Street, Warwick. The annual general meeting of the Society was held on 31 July 1885. Newspaper reports indicate that, for whatever reasons, no priests were present. The outgoing President, Mr John Canny, had stated that ‘During the past six months they had passed through a stormy period but he hoped that the clouds had cleared away, and he trusted that Mr Ramsay’s (the new President) period of office would be both peaceful and prosperous.’²³ It is possible that Fr James Horan disagreed with the HACBS purchase!

In any case, on 10 October 1885 – about one month after Bishop Dunne returned to Brisbane - local architects, Wallace & Gibson, placed a newspaper notice calling ‘Tenders for the Woodwork of a Dwelling House for the Rev. J.J. Horan’ and in ‘The Local and General News’ column of that newspaper mention was made that ‘... Messrs Wallace & Gibson invite tenders for the woodwork of a dwelling house for the Rev. J.J. Horan. The building which is to be erected at the corner of Palmerin and Percy Streets is to be of brick two stories high, with balconies overlooking both streets. The contract for the brickwork has been let to Mr John McCulloch.’²⁴

A Parish Disagreement

In his 2005 booklet, 'Warwick and the Irish' (at page 16), Fr Peter Murphy of the Toowoomba Diocese wrote that '... Horan built the presbytery which dominated the Town After a row with parishioners he built and paid for it himself'. In a letter to Fr James Horan on 19 April 1886, Bishop Robert Dunne made reference to 'certain unpleasantness between yourself and some of your people' concerning his direction in 'outside matters'.²⁵

At his silver jubilee celebrations in Warwick in January 1893, Fr Horan himself stated:

... that there was no congregation in Queensland where the relationship between pastor and people was so friendly as between him and his congregation at the present time. That had not always been so, indeed the reverse had been the case for some time. A great deal of the fault he would admit was on his side, and not a small portion on the side of his people, but he was pleased that the hatchet had been buried and they were perfect friends again.

At the same jubilee celebration, Arthur Morgan, who was the proprietor of *The Warwick Argus* and Member for Warwick in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, spoke as follows in regard to Fr James Horan's Warwick residence.

He had erected a handsome residence which was an ornament to the town but this must only be regarded as a temporary resting place pending the erection of the presbytery already begun in St. Mary's church grounds.²⁶

Bearing in mind all of the above, it is not clear just when the dispute mentioned by Fr Peter Murphy took place. Fr Murphy's comment indicates that Fr Horan began to have his residence built after the dispute. However, it is not clear whether the dispute took place before or after the September 1885 parish meeting which was chaired by Bishop Dunne.

There is no available evidence on the public record which would show that work on the sandstone presbytery resumed after that parish meeting. Perhaps this is why Fr Horan's curate, fellow Irish-born Fr Thomas Hughes, was prepared to proclaim at his farewell from Warwick on 15 November 1891 that '... He never fed a dead horse – and he would never feed a dead presbytery!' Fr James Horan was not in attendance at that farewell and Fr Hughes may have left Warwick before his comments were reported in the local newspaper!²⁷

By the time of his farewell from Warwick, Fr Hughes would have known that the foundation stone for a Convent for the Sisters of Mercy in Warwick had been laid by Archbishop Dunne on 16 August 1891.²⁸

However, the previously mentioned remarks made by Arthur Morgan at the 1893 Jubilee, suggest that not everyone in Warwick agreed with the comments of Fr Hughes that the sandstone presbytery was 'dead'. No doubt Mr Morgan was well aware in January 1893, that the first stage of the sandstone convent for the Sisters of Mercy in Locke Street was almost completed. Hence he seems to have been encouraging Fr Horan's parishioners to now turn their attention to the sandstone presbytery once again.

As for Archbishop Dunne, he sent an apology for not being able to attend Fr James Horan's Jubilee. So, it is unclear whether he was more in agreement with Arthur Morgan or with Fr Thomas Hughes regarding the sandstone presbytery. However, just after he became an Archbishop in August 1887, Robert Dunne had visited Warwick where he commented at a parish reception that:

... With regard to the parochial work, he hoped that things would be better by and by and that they would soon be able to finish the work [for] which that sainted man, Dr Quinn, laid the foundation, [i.e.] the Presbytery, more especially as it was the last foundation stone laid by Dr Quinn on the Downs.²⁹

Financing the Building

Of course, the question arises as to how Fr James Horan may have financed the construction of his large and imposing brick residence in 1885/1886. Popular legend in St. Mary's parish, Warwick, is that Fr Horan was a man of some wealth because his father in Ireland had been a prosperous landowner. But that only seems to beg the question that if Fr Horan was indeed wealthy, why did he not lend money to the parish much earlier in order for the sandstone presbytery to be completed? Maybe he was not wealthy at all. Of course, Fr Horan had to put improvements on his Allora Selection in order to meet Government requirements. He would have incurred expenses for fences, buildings, wages, farm machinery and farm animals. Those expenses would have placed financial constraints on Fr Horan.

The only clue which may indicate how Fr Horan actually financed his residence can be found in early land selection documents now held at Queensland State Archives, Runcorn, Brisbane. A special hearing was held at the Allora Land Court on 29 June 1887 to determine whether certain selectors should have to forfeit their holdings. Apparently, selectors such as Fr James J. Horan had to prove to the Court that they were actually residing on their selections.

Fr Horan and his solicitor, Mr Curnow, were present at the Land Court hearing. The solicitor presented the Court with a lengthy statement which had been signed by Fr James Horan. The text of the statement appears to be in Mr. Curnow's handwriting but the signature is certainly that of Fr Horan. In regard to Warwick, the statement reads.

... The house in which I live when in Warwick is for the use of Catholic priests living in Warwick and is used for that purpose whether I am there or not. I sometimes live in this house in Warwick. It depends on the nature of my duties whether I spend more time in my house in Warwick

or on the Selection. ~~In the eyes of the law the house is my property.~~ The house I live in when in Warwick is the property of Edwin Morgan. There is an assistant priest who lives in the house in Warwick. This house is looked upon by the denomination as a home for the priests labouring in the Warwick district. Apart from my duties as a priest I look upon the house on the Selection as my home.³⁰

The sentence, ‘... In the eyes of the law the house is my property.’ had a line drawn through it. However, it is unclear whether the sentence was deleted before the statement was presented, or during the taking of evidence. The assistant priest referred to in the statement would have been Fr Thomas Hughes. He was in Warwick from late 1884 until mid-1891. A search of Rates Books for the Town of Warwick at the time has failed to identify any property owned by Edwin Morgan in which either Fr Horan or his curate, Fr Thomas Hughes, was a tenant.

It is not possible to say with absolute certainty where the house in Warwick, to which Fr James Horan had referred in his sworn statement of 29 June 1887, was located. When Robert Dunne made his visit to Warwick in August 1887 just after becoming an Archbishop, a local newspaper reported that he was taken in ‘a beautiful little carriage’ from the railway station to the ‘presbytery’ with Fr Thomas O’Connell after they arrived on the train from Toowoomba.³¹

The so-called presbytery may have been the previously mentioned brick cottage which had been rented to Mr. Mark McDonald until late 1885. If so, why did Fr Horan in his June 1887 statement to the Allora Land Court claim that the house where priests resided in Warwick ‘was the property of Edwin Morgan’? It is more likely that soon after Fr Horan purchased his Percy Street allotments in Warwick, he had the brick cottage demolished to make way for his new residence.

It is further likely that the building to which Archbishop Dunne had been taken ‘in a beautiful little carriage’ was Fr Horan’s new and very imposing brick residence. If so, the Archbishop may have been aware that the new residence had a connection with Edwin Morgan.

But leaving the above aside for a moment – who was Edwin Morgan? Apparently that Mr. Morgan was not related to newspaper proprietor and politician, Arthur Morgan. Rather, he and his brothers were graziers and mineral prospectors who had come to the booming Warwick district in the 1870s. Edwin Morgan had later followed his elder brother to the Rockhampton district by 1880 and then returned to Warwick in about 1883 as a rather wealthy man. During that absence, Edwin Morgan had been very prominent in the early history of the famous Mt. Morgan gold mine south-west of Rockhampton before he sold his share in the mine to his brother, Fred Morgan. When Edwin Morgan finally moved away from the Warwick district in 1890 - to a new residence (which still stands in McLennan Street, Albion, Brisbane), it was reported that

...Throughout his residence in Warwick, he had been a firm supporter of the public institutions and, besides, has put his hand into his pocket for many private matters which could not come before the public notice..³²

A Notable Building

Another early reference to the unfinished sandstone presbytery, and to Fr James Horan’s new residence, can be found in a biographical sketch of Fr James Horan who was considered a prominent citizen of Warwick in the 1880s. The writer, during the 1888 centenary year, makes reference to the partly-built sandstone presbytery and then says:

...whilst this is in course of completion, the priests reside in a two-storied brick structure, from the tower of which a charming panoramic view is obtained. Father Horan's house consists of fourteen rooms, handsomely furnished throughout.³³

Paying the Rates

Further searches made of Warwick Town Council rates books indicate that Fr Horan was paying the rates on his new Percy Street residence from the time of construction until late 1889. But from 1890, the Trustees for the Presbytery – a long established parish entity – began to pay the rates on Fr Horan's residence. This change could indicate that Fr Horan had entered into some agreement - verbal or otherwise – with the Trustees. If Fr Horan had obtained a loan from Edwin Morgan it is possible that the Trustees, or even Archbishop Dunne himself, had financed a repayment of the loan. Hence, it could explain why Fr Horan had claimed at his Silver Jubilee celebrations in January 1893 that ‘...the hatchet had been buried...’ and that the unpleasantness between himself and some of his leading parishioners had now gone. Archbishop Dunne even came to stay at Fr Horan's residence for about a month in February/March 1894, while he was recovering from illness brought on by the great Brisbane flood of 1893 and the financial depression which followed.³⁴

But, this story now takes another turn! The Warwick Town Council rates books show that the Trustees for the Presbytery ceased paying the rates on Fr Horan's property at the end of 1895 and that Fr Horan paid the rates himself from the beginning of 1896 until his death in 1905. The official record also shows that Fr James Horan mortgaged his private residence to the Queensland National Bank for £2258/17/9 on 27 December 1895.³⁵ In addition, a close reading of Fr James Horan's 1895 diary (which is held in the *Michael Potter Collection* at the University of Queensland) would suggest that he had been anxious during much of that year

to raise finance for some purpose.³⁶ What was that purpose? Again, this may never be known; but it is possible that Fr Horan repaid to the Trustees for the Presbytery, any money that the Trustees in turn may have paid to private money lenders in 1889/1890 in regard to his residence.

Taking a Holiday

It seems that by 1896 Fr James Horan was in ill health. On Archbishop Dunne's advice, Fr Horan took an extended holiday from early September to late December that year. Part of that holiday was spent in a sea voyage to Batavia in what is now Indonesia. Fr Michael Potter had come from Ipswich to Warwick in October 1891 to replace Fr Thomas Hughes as curate to Fr James Horan. It was the very energetic Fr Potter who had arranged a grand testimonial for Fr Horan before he departed Warwick to take the sea voyage.³⁷

A House for a Bishop

By 1897, there were reports from Fr Potter in Warwick and a parishioner in Allora that Fr James Horan was drinking alcohol to excess. His battle with alcohol continued off and on almost until the time of his death in 1905. His conduct was so unacceptable at times that Archbishop Dunne had to suspend Fr Horan from exercising his priestly faculties.³⁸ Bishop James Murray of Maitland NSW, and a relative of Fr Horan, also had ill health. Letters held in the *Michael Potter Collection* indicate that Bishop Murray was recuperating at Fr Horan's Warwick residence for almost six (6) months in 1898.³⁹

No doubt Fr Horan's house had adequate facilities, not only to meet the needs of the regular clergy, but also to meet the needs of any future bishop. However, even though there had been rumours in the 1890s – especially in 1896 – that the Vatican would soon announce the formation of a new diocese of the Darling Downs based on Warwick, and that Fr James Horan might be selected as the new bishop, this never

happened.⁴⁰ Archbishop Dunne did not favour such a new diocese, and it was many years after his death in 1917 that the Diocese of Toowoomba was eventually created.

Correspondence

The *Michael Potter Collection* at the Fryer Library in The University of Queensland, holds a splendid range of original letters, including many written by Archbishop Dunne. Apparently they were collected by Fr Leo Hayes from Warwick after the death of Monsignor Potter in 1944. Fr Hayes later donated his collection to the University of Queensland. There are also many letters written by Sr. Michael Potter and Mother Patrick Potter of All Hallows Convent to Fr Potter. Many of these letters refer to the difficult situation in Warwick as the Archbishop depended more and more on Fr Potter to see to parish matters. Fr James Horan needed the capable Fr Potter, but some of the letters indicate that Fr Horan felt that Fr Potter was over-stepping his authority at times. One such area of tension concerned the location for the proposed CYM Society hall in Warwick. However, both priests were present when Archbishop Dunne came to Warwick on 25 March 1900 to lay the foundation block for the new hall. Mother Potter met the Archbishop soon after his return to Brisbane and she then wrote to Fr Potter in Warwick as follows: ‘I asked the A’bishop was Fr Horan civil, and he said he was. He blames the Convent now for not having a Presbytery in Warwick, and I think the A’bishop half believes him.’⁴¹

A Curate’s Holiday

Perhaps the strained relations between Fr Horan and his capable curate, Fr Potter, prompted Archbishop Dunne to allow Fr Potter to take a long overseas holiday from February 1903 to March 1904 – of course with Fr James Horan’s consent!⁴² Fr Potter travelled right around the world, but on his arrival back in Warwick, it was only about two months

before Fr Matthew Horan had to come from Gympie to take his brother, Fr James, away from his parish to Brisbane.⁴³ Fr Michael Potter was back to his heavy workload again!

Illness

Fr Horan was confined to St. Catherine's Private Hospital in Brisbane from July to October 1904. There he was under the strict supervision of Nurse Doyle. On Wednesday 26 October 1904, Fr James Horan wrote in his diary as follows: 'I went out on the street with Fr T O'C. Nurse Doyle "pursued me" and "made a show of me" by ordering me in!' Fr T O'C was probably Fr Thomas O'Connell, previously of Toowoomba, and a close friend of Fr Horan.⁴⁴

When Fr Horan returned to Warwick just before Christmas 1904, the second stage of the Convent for the Sisters of Mercy was complete and the debt much reduced. To that effect, a grand Bazaar had been held in Warwick in early October 1904 during which event considerable funds were raised for the Convent. At the same time as the Warwick Bazaar, Fr Andrew Horan in Ipswich was celebrating the opening of his grand St. Mary's Church and, of course, he also had a fine sandstone presbytery in which to live.⁴⁵ Fr James Horan probably now hoped that the sandstone presbytery would be completed in Warwick, and that he could then turn his attention to such matters as a boys' school and a larger St. Mary's Church!

Untimely Death

Indeed, a small article in a Brisbane Catholic newspaper indicates that Archbishop Dunne was back in Warwick on the second Sunday of May 1905 for the Sacrament of Confirmation and also to '...lay the foundation stone of the presbytery which is about to be erected'.⁴⁶ This newspaper comment is rather mysterious, but it may indicate that an entirely new start was to be made on a presbytery for Warwick. However, the local newspapers when they

reported on Archbishop Dunne's visit, made no reference to any such 'foundation stone' ceremony! The Archbishop was only back in Brisbane for a few days when word came on Friday, 19 May 1905 that Fr James Horan had become desperately ill with pneumonia. Fr Horan died at his Percy Street residence around 5:00 p.m. on Monday, 22 May 1905.⁴⁷ Neither the Archbishop nor any of Fr James Horan's relatives were present at his death. Archbishop Dunne was also unable to attend Fr Horan's funeral on the Wednesday because he had to travel to Rockhampton the same day since the clergy of that diocese had travelled long distances for an important meeting. After the train to Rockhampton stopped at Landsborough north of Brisbane, that Wednesday, the Archbishop sent at 10:50 am the following telegram to Fr Andrew Horan in Warwick:

...Deepest Sympathy regret my absence but Rockhampton meeting fixed tomorrow afternoon distant priests assembled...Archbishop'.⁴⁸

The funeral in Warwick started at 11:00am.

The Estate

Fr Potter, a nurse and the housekeeper had been at his side on the Sunday evening. Fr Potter wrote down, in the format of a Will, what Fr Horan indicated by the nodding of his head were his last wishes. In brief, the Will was signed by Fr Potter with the nurse and housekeeper signing as witnesses. Fr James J. Horan left his estate, after all debts were cleared, for the provision of a boys' school in Warwick.⁴⁹ Perhaps he had long held the hope of having a boys' school in Warwick because he had once been in charge of a boys' school at Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, in 1870.⁵⁰ But, in regard to the Will itself, it was a considerable time before Probate was granted by the Supreme Court.

For whatever reasons, Archbishop Dunne did not return to Warwick until December 1906. During that visit, he unveiled a memorial to Fr Horan who was buried in the original St. Mary's Church, and he also chaired a parish meeting to discuss the presbytery matter once again.

The meeting, unlike the historic parish meeting in September 1885, completely abandoned the construction of a presbytery in Warwick. Instead those parishioners present decided, on the recommendation of the Archbishop and Fr Potter, that the parish would now purchase Fr Horan's Percy Street residence from his Estate and that it would then become the official St. Mary's Presbytery once and for all!⁵¹ The transaction was completed by 1911 and the proceeds of Fr Horan's Estate – some \$3,000 – were then used in the construction of a Christian Brothers School in Warwick. That school was opened by young Bishop Duhig of Rockhampton in late January 1912 on behalf of the aged Archbishop.⁵²

Later Years

Fr Potter – later Monsignor Potter – became parish priest after Fr Horan's death and he remained in that position until he died in February 1944. The presbytery building – especially the interior furnishings – became worn and shabby as the years passed. Fr Potter gave much of his energy to paying off the debt on the new cathedral-like St. Mary's Church which was blessed and opened by Archbishop Duhig in 1926.⁵³

Fr Michael Mahon, parish priest of Warwick from 1948 to 1969, renovated the presbytery and gave it a different look. Some of the original charm of Fr Horan's residence was lost, but the building now had modern facilities and was comfortable for several priests at the time. During Fr Mahon's time as parish priest of Warwick, the foundations of the old sandstone presbytery were finally demolished and removed!⁵⁴

Epilogue

By late 2005 it had become apparent that some leading parishioners in St. Mary's Parish, Warwick, considered that the presbytery building was becoming redundant and that better use could be made of the splendid land on which the old building stood. The presenter, Mr K.F. Ryan, was concerned about the future for Fr James Horan's historic residence and made enquiries as to whether it was entered in the Queensland Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place. He discovered that it was not, and that no application had previously been made. He then carried out long and difficult research, with the help of two relatives, and eventually decided to nominate St. Mary's Presbytery, Warwick, for the Queensland Heritage Register. He notified the parish priest at that time by letter of his decision. After a long delay – and a profound silence from St. Mary's parish – his application to have St. Mary's Presbytery, Warwick, entered in the Queensland Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place was successful in August 2008.⁵⁵

The Diocese of Toowoomba then appealed the heritage listing before the Planning and Environment Court of Queensland. Eventually an out of Court settlement of that Appeal was ratified by Judge Rackemann on 9 December 2009. In brief, the main presbytery building and the Percy Street frontage to that building remained on the Heritage Register, but much of the surrounding land and more modern outbuildings were excluded.⁵⁶

Fr James Horan was a young priest at Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, when 27 year old Sister Mary of the Cross MacKillop and her Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph for the Catholic Education of Poor Children commenced their first school in Queensland at South Brisbane in 1870.⁵⁷ Sr. Margaret McKenna, rsj, has supplied the presenter with some extracts from letters held in the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

One letter reads as follows:

Yesterday and today, Fr Horan, a nephew of the bishop's came to say Mass for us. He seems a nice kind young priest and has got a school for Catholic boys in Brisbane.⁵⁸

That letter was written by Mary MacKillop from South Brisbane to Fr Julian Tenison-Woods on 8 February 1870! Fr James Horan, as mentioned earlier, was in charge of a boys' school at Fortitude Valley in 1870, as well as being in charge of the Fortitude Valley Mission. His uncle, Bishop James Quinn, was absent in Europe for the first Vatican Council and Fr John Cani administered the Diocese during his absence.⁵⁹

It is likely that Fr James Horan was soon instructed by Fr Cani not to go across the Brisbane River anymore to say Mass especially for Mary MacKillop and her Sisters of St. Joseph. Sister Mary of the Cross had refused to accept government financial assistance for her schools. It seems that Fr Cani wanted to be kind, but he was indecisive and afraid to displease Bishop Quinn. The Bishop wanted Catholic schools in his diocese to accept such government assistance.⁶⁰ Mary MacKillop herself commented that young Fr James Horan was kind but he too was probably afraid to displease his uncle, Bishop Quinn. There is no indication that Fr James Horan again celebrated Mass for the Sisters of St. Joseph at South Brisbane. However, Fr Horan was later in charge of the Peak Downs Mission – based on Copperfield and Clermont in Central Queensland. At the priests' retreat in 1873, he was instructed by Bishop Quinn to return to his Peak Downs Mission and then return to Brisbane as soon as possible to be the Bishop's private secretary. Bishop Quinn wanted to replace Fr John Cani in that position.⁶¹

It seems Fr Julian Tenison-Woods had arranged for a small community of the Sisters of St. Joseph to start a school in Copperfield. That work was commenced in July 1873. Fr

James Horan made provision for the Sisters to occupy his presbytery at Copperfield when they arrived and he went to reside at Clermont until he departed the Mission in September 1873. This arrangement seems to have been a characteristic act of kindness by young Fr Horan. When his successor, Fr Francis Dunham, eventually arrived on the Mission, Fr Dunham resented the fact that he had to travel the 6 mile distance between Clermont and Copperfield.⁶²

When the presenter received official notification from the Queensland Heritage Council that St. Mary's Presbytery had been entered in the State Heritage Register, he was surprised to find that the entry had been made on 8 August 2008. Of course that was the feast of Blessed Mary MacKillop! The presenter could only wonder whether this was just a coincidence, or whether it had any deeper significance concerning those small acts of kindness that young Fr James Horan had extended to the Sisters of St. Joseph in the early 1870s.

But Fr Horan's private residence, and St. Mary's Presbytery since 1911, is once again facing an uncertain future. The grand sandstone convent for the Sisters of Mercy passed into commercial hands several years ago. At present the presbytery in Warwick is mostly unoccupied as the parish priest, Fr Kevin Noble, undergoes treatment for a serious illness. Will the presbytery still remain a part of church property in the future? Whatever that future may be, Fr Horan's former private residence should continue to be – in the words of Arthur Morgan – 'an ornament to the town' for generations to come!

Ken Ryan's ancestry is, like the subject of this paper, Irish-Catholic – at least as far back as his great grandparents. The first of his ancestors emigrated from Ireland in 1854 and settled near Warwick on the Darling Downs which, at that time, was still part of New South Wales.

Other ancestors emigrated from Ireland in 1863, 1864, 1876 and 1889 and they also settled on the Darling Downs which had then become part of the new Colony of Queensland. His ancestral family names in Queensland are Doherty, Cavanagh, Ryan and Mahony.

Those of his ancestors who either emigrated from Ireland, or were born in Queensland, resided within the boundaries of the Warwick Parish [Mission] for all, or part, of the twenty-nine year period that Fr James Horan was parish priest.

ENDNOTES:

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17. Neil J. Byrne, *op. cit.*, p.124, last para.
18. *Ibid.*, pp.134-135.
19. *The Warwick Argus, op. cit.*, 12 December 1882, ‘Visit of Bishop Dunne to Warwick’.
20. Brisbane Catholic newspaper, *The Australian*, 26 April 1884, Microfilm Copy: State Library of Qld., p.13, col.2 – ‘Deputation’.
21. (a) *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 9 September 1885, p.2, ‘St Mary’s (R.C.) Church’; (b) *The Australian* (Brisbane Catholic newspaper), *Ibid.*, 12 September 1885, pp.15-16, Country News, ‘Catholic Current Events in Warwick’.
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23. *Ibid.*, 4 August 1885, p.2, col.3, ‘HACB Society’.
24. *Ibid.*, 10 October 1885, p.3, col.2, ‘To Carpenters & Builders’, p.2, col.2, ‘Tenders’.

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