

Jerome Davadi: Priest and Orchardist

4 December, 2012

Ian Bonaccorso

Father Jerome Davadi was an Italian priest recruited by Bishop James Quinn of Queensland in 1870. He was one of a contingent of Italian priests to serve in the newly established diocese of Brisbane. The Brisbane diocese at that time encompassed all of Queensland.

In 1869, Bishop James Quinn, along with other Catholic bishops of the world, went to Rome to attend and take part in the First Vatican Council. The Council opened on 8th December 1869 and continued until 20th September 1870 when it ended abruptly with the fall of the Papal States.

However, Quinn had a second ulterior motive for being in Rome during this period. His new Diocese was desperately in need of clergy and he had earlier attempted to recruit priests from Ireland but had been unsuccessful.¹ Quinn had better success in Italy. He was able to convince three newly ordained priests from the province of Ancona, Italy, to undertake missionary work in his large diocese of Queensland. These three priests were Benedetto Scortechini, Constantino Rossolini and Girolamo Davadi.



Jerome Davadi: Priest and Orchardist

The acceptance of Bishop Quinn's tempting invitation by these three young seminarians is hardly surprising. They would have relished the idea for adventure and were ready to be involved in God's mission. It was a golden opportunity for these young men to leave Italy given the political turmoil of that period.

With the surrender of the Papal States by his Holiness, Pope Pius IX on 21st September 1870, these three young priests would have been concerned as to their future. The uncertainty resulting from the Unification of Italy taking place together with the strong possibility of military conscription would have influenced their decision to migrate to Australia. The three missionary recruits accepted Bishop Quinn's invitation to work in his newly established Queensland diocese. They travelled by steamer to London, England, prior to their departure for Australia.

On Sunday, 20th November 1870, Dr James Quinn celebrated High Mass with his new missionary priests surrounding the Altar of the Church of St Peter, Hatton Garden, London.² The following Thursday, 24th November 1870, these young missionaries boarded the *Storm King* at Gravesend in England and travelled to Australia via the Cape of Good Hope.³

While the life stories of Scortechini and Rossolini have been well researched and written by the author, Father Pat Tynan, Father Jerome Davadi's early life history in Italy remained shrouded in mystery. All that was known up to the writing of this paper was that he was born on 26th April 1845 in Monte Carotta [*sic*] province of Ancona, which formed part of the Papal States. His Australian Death Certificate confirmed that his father's name was Pictro Davadi [*sic*] and his mother was called Elizabeth.

Davadi - Italy

The first research question in this paper relates to the DAVADI surname itself. Davadi (not Davadi) was the name written in the ship's log of the *Storm King*, which brought Father Davadi to Australia. However, on the shipping arrivals list reported in *The Brisbane Courier* on 20th March 1871, his surname was incorrectly spelt Davido. It wasn't the only time that the Australian newspapers misspelled his surname. Various newspaper articles have at times reported his surname as Devada, Devadi, Devadie, Diradi and Divadi including the earlier mentioned.

Yet DAVADI is regarded as the correct spelling of this gentleman's surname. Written confirmation is obtained through such official documents as the Government Gazette, Land Registers, The Register of Marriages and Celebrants and his own Death Certificate. Indeed, personal handwritten letters found of this priest have been signed off by him as Jerome DAVADI. Further verification is obtained from his Certificate of Naturalization No.2656 dated 2nd June 1876, in which Jerome DAVADI of Stanthorpe attests his oath of allegiance as a British subject, to Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

Still, if his surname is confirmed as DAVADI why was it difficult to locate any of his siblings or ancestry? The secret lay back in the Province of Ancona, Italy. A geographical search of the Ancona region reveals the ancient town of Montecarotto, similar in spelling to the stated place of birth of Monte Carotta [*sic*] in Davadi's Death Certificate. An investigation of the churches' baptismal registers in Montecarotto uncovered the original baptismal certificate of Jerome Davadi, which is written in Latin. The baptismal certificate was located in the main church of the town of Montecarotto called Santissima Annunziata (The Holy Annunciation). The handwritten certificate inserted in the Baptismal Register is dated 26th April 1845.

An English translation of the Latin inscription reads as follows:

I, Joseph Byni confirm that:

On 26th April 1845 Father Serafino Giardini, under parish licence, baptised an infant born this night at about three o'clock to Pietro Giuseppe Davado and Elisabetta of the late Benvenuto Leonardi, married couple who simply provided the name Geronimo. The godparents were Aloysius of the late Benvenuto Leonardi from the Parish Colli Aprici (Sunny Hills) and Marianna Petra Comprezzi from Serra de' Conti (a commune near Montecarotto).

From the written evidence on his baptismal certificate we find that DAVADI's surname was in actual fact DAVADO. This new information established that Geronimo DAVADO of Montecarotto and Jerome DAVADI of Stanthorpe were one and the same person. So why did Father Davadi change his surname from DAVADO? This question necessitated further investigation.

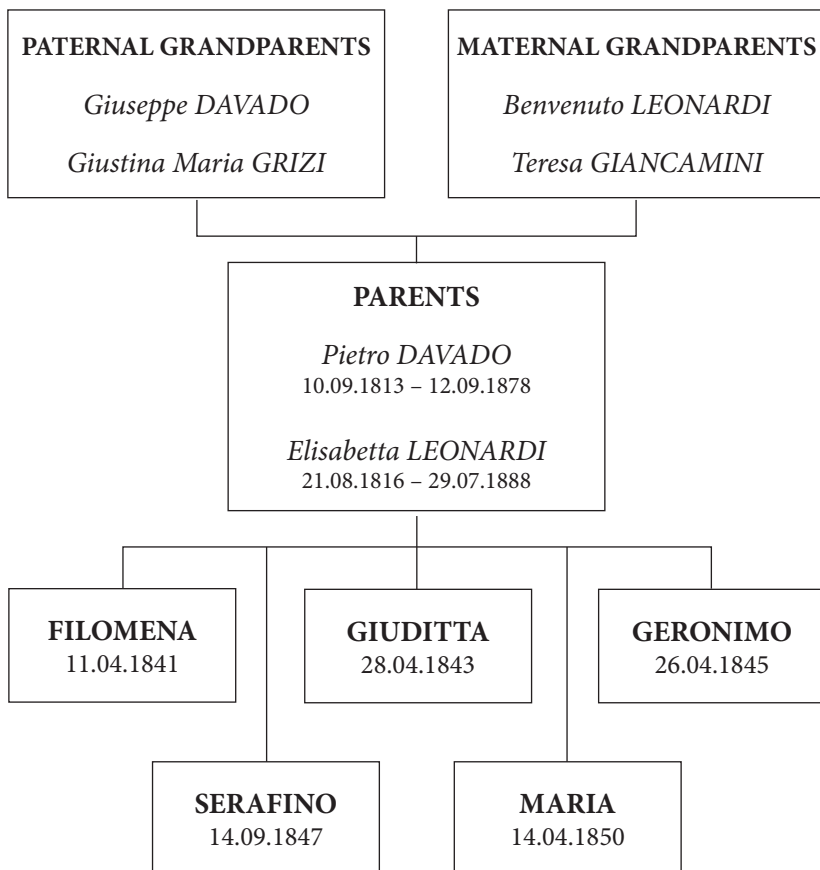
Armed with the DAVADO surname, a new search was undertaken to locate relatives in Italy. A great, great niece of Father Davadi who still resides in the same town of Montecarotto responded that she was related to Father Jerome Davadi. Her family were aware that their relative was a priest who left for Australia many years ago but knew little about him. They could not explain the different spelling of his surname. A copy of their Family Genealogy Tree establishing her family's relationship with Father Davadi was provided.

The Family Tree shows Jerome Davadi's paternal grandparents as being Giuseppe DAVADO and Giustina Maria GRIZI. His maternal grandparents were Benvenuto LEONARDI and Teresa GIANCAMINI. Jerome Davadi's father was Pietro DAVADO born 10th September 1813, deceased 12 September 1878. Jerome

Davadi's mother was Elisabetta LEONARDI born 21 August 1816, deceased 29 July 1888.

Pietro and Elisabetta DAVADO had five children: three girls and two boys. The eldest was Filomena born 11th April 1841. Second was Giuditta born 28 April 1843. Third was Geronimo (the first son, also known as Girolamo) born 26th April 1845. Fourth was Serafino born 14th September 1847 and fifth was Maria born 14th April 1850.

Davado Genealogy Tree



In order to understand the early life of Father Jerome Davadi (baptised as Geronimo Davado), it is necessary to appreciate the location and history of his birthplace which is in close proximity to the birthplaces of Fathers Benedetto Scortechini and Constantino Rossolini. The town of Montecarotto is situated about 45 kilometres west of the coastal town of Ancona and 20 kilometres north of Cupramontana, the town where Benedetto Scortechini was born. The commune of Sant'Apollinare near Monte Roberto where Constantine Rossolini was born is 5 kilometres from Cupramontana and about 15 kilometres south of Montecarotto.

These three towns are in the Ancona province of the Marche region of Italy, which once formed part of the Papal States. While they are in close proximity to each other, it is likely that the three missionary priests would have first met when attending initial seminary studies at the Cathedral of Jesi in the Ancona province.

Montecarotto derives its name from the early Latin name of the village meaning 'mount of the ruined fortress'. It was abandoned before the 13th century and nothing from its early history has survived. However, over the centuries, the town has been rebuilt.

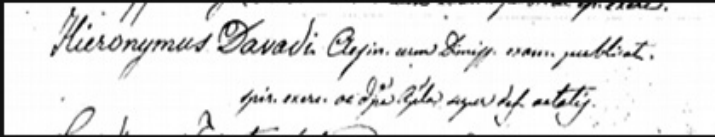
The collegiate church of Santissima Annunziata (The Holy Annunciation) is located in the upper part of the town of Montecarotto. The church was reconstructed in a neoclassic style from 1779 and has a main altar made of Italian granite and marble including two beautiful baroque chapels on either side (or wings) of the transept. The baptismal font is regarded as the original one of the church and used during Geronimo Davado's baptism.

The picturesque landscape of the district gives us a better understanding of Father Davadi's love of the country and vineyards. The surrounding hills are covered with vineyards and the valleys are dotted with fruit trees and yellow wheat plains. The Montecarotto district is identified with the production of high quality white Verdicchio wine. The climate and the soil are particularly suitable for the growing of Verdicchio grapes, which are used to produce a fresh and aromatic wine. Red wine production, principally 'Rosso Piceno', is also associated with the district. Undoubtedly, Father Davadi was able to transpose his knowledge of soils, the planting of grape vines and the making of wine from this district to the advancement of his experimental vineyards and orchards in the Stanthorpe district.

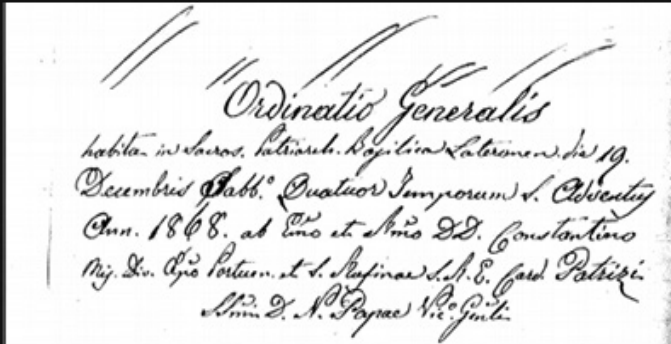
The house where Father Jerome Davadi was born still exists. It is on the outskirts of Montecarotto and is still retained by family members. The original home has since been renovated and extended. The home property suggests that Davadi came from a wealthy family who had the means to enrol him in university studies.

Little is still known of Father Davadi's early schooling or where he completed his seminary studies. However, it is now known when and where Father Davadi was ordained. A copy of a Latin transcript was obtained stating that Hieronymus DAVADI was ordained on 19th December 1868 at St. John Lateran's Archbasilica in Rome. It is the cathedral church of the Diocese of Rome and the official ecclesiastical seat of the Bishop of Rome. It is located outside of the boundaries of the Vatican City but still within the city of Rome.

Ordination Papers



*Hieronimus Davadi. Cypri. cum Sinep. 1870. publicat.
quis. 1870. de Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep.*



*Ordinatio Generalis
habita in sacros. Lateran. Basilica Lateranensis die 19.
Decembris Sabb. Quatuor Imperorum s. Absentis
Ann. 1868. ab Eno et Amo DD. Constantino
Mij. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep.
Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep. Sinep.*

The Christian name, Hieronymus, is the Greek and Latin form of the given name Geronimo (Jerome) and means ‘sacred name’. What was more surprising was that the ordained surname was given as DAVADI and not DAVADO! This is the first known official use of the surname DAVADI by him. The surname DAVADI is the original Latin form of the Italian surname DAVADO. It is therefore considered that Father Davadi may have chosen the surname DAVADI in recognition of his new life mission as an ordained priest.

Davadi – Australia

As previously mentioned, on 24th November 1870, the Italian missionary recruits boarded the clipper *Storm King* in England and travelled to Brisbane, the capital city of the newly formed State of Queensland, after its separation from the Colony of New South Wales in 1859. Bishop Quinn arranged travel for

his missionary priests as first class saloon passengers to impress upon them the importance of their work and of course, his esteemed position as Bishop of Queensland. He remained in Europe for another year to acquire essential items and to recruit additional personnel for his diocese.

The lengthy sea voyage of these immigrant recruits took three months. During this period, the Italian priests were taught the English language by the Irish immigrant, Jeremiah Long, who was also on board the clipper. He was a former teacher, registered with the Irish Education Board, who had also been recruited to Queensland by Bishop James Quinn. Jeremiah Long was later appointed as Headmaster of St James Non-Vested Primary School, Boundary Street, Brisbane.⁴

The ship's log of the *Storm King* confirmed its arrival in Brisbane on 2nd March 1871. In actual fact, the *Storm King* anchored in Moreton Bay at 2.30pm on 28th February 1871. The onboard passengers were then transferred to a smaller boat to reach their final Brisbane destination.

On 1st March, the *Nowra* took on board the passengers and luggage from the *Storm King* and set sail up the Brisbane River. Prior to reaching the mouth of the river, Captain Harwood of the *Nowra* ordered the raising of the jib. A seaman crew member, Henry Jenkins, who was setting up the stay of the mast subsequently slipped and fell overboard. Efforts were made to rescue him but unfortunately, the young man drowned⁵. One can only ponder as to what impressions this tragedy had on these recently recruited missionary priests on their arrival at this new frontier land. They disembarked in Brisbane on 2nd March 1871.

On the following Sunday, 5th March, the newly arrived priests were officially welcomed to the Queensland diocese with the celebration of a High Mass at St Stephen's Catholic Church, followed by Benediction.⁶ After their welcome reception in Brisbane, Fr Benedetto Scortechini was subsequently posted to the Darling Downs mission to assist Fr Stephen McDonough, the Irish priest in charge of the Warwick area. Father Constantine Rossolini was posted to the towns of Gayndah and Mt Perry in the Burdekin and Wide Bay district.

Father Davadi is first mentioned in Queensland with the opening of the new St Joseph's Catholic Church at River Terrace, Kangaroo Point, appropriately on St Joseph's Day, Sunday, 19th March 1871. The wooden church was consecrated by the Rev. Dr. Cani. Following the rites of consecration, it was reported that High Mass was celebrated with Dr Cani acting as celebrant, Father James Connolly as deacon and the Rev. Father Devada [*sic*] as master of ceremonies.⁷

After this date, Father Davadi fades into oblivion for seventeen months until there is mention of him on a shipping arrivals list for Brisbane. The passengers' list of the *Yarra Yarra* shows a Rev. I Davidi [*sic*] who arrived in Brisbane on the 11th August 1872.⁸ The boat picked up passengers who boarded from Maryborough, Gladstone and Rockhampton. While Davadi's embarkation point remains unknown, evidence shows that Davadi's destination was Ipswich.

The *Ipswich Observer* confirms Davadi's presence in Ipswich on Sunday, 25th August 1872. That evening, the parishioners of St Mary's at Ipswich held the annual anniversary dinner of their parochial library in the school of the Sisters of Mercy. The Rev. Dean Brun occupied the position of Chair of the large gathering, which included Fathers Francis Xavier Kaercher and Jerome Davadi.⁹

The Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser, Dublin, dated 12th December 1872 further endorses Davadi belonging to the Ipswich parish. A letter from the Archbishop of Tuam in Ireland inserted in the paper, thanks the Ipswich Catholics for monies forwarded by them to Ireland in aid of the Ireland Famine Relief Fund. The list of subscribers commenced with the name of the Very Rev. Dean Henry Brun immediately followed by the Rev. Jerome Davadi.

Pugh's 1873 Old Almanac records the Very Rev. Dean Brun as parish priest of Ipswich and the Rev. Davadi as his assistant priest during the year 1872.

Davadi continued to serve as assistant priest in the Ipswich Parish until early 1873. On Monday, 24th February 1873, a farewell banquet was hosted in the evening for the Very Rev. Dean Brun and Mr J. Breen of St Mary's Church, Ipswich on their leaving the colony for Europe. Seventy-five gentlemen including the Rev. Father Davadi are noted as seated at the banquet reception.¹⁰

Shortly afterwards, Father Jerome Davadi was transferred from Ipswich to the Warwick Parish. He succeeded Father Benedetto Scortechini as Assistant Priest of the Warwick Parish in June 1873. At that time, the Rev. Stephen Henry McDonough was the parish priest of Warwick. Davadi is recorded as being present in Warwick during the marriage of Father Stephen McDonough's sister. On 29th July 1873, Francis Barron Woods of Warwick married Mary Anne McDonough at the Church of the Assumption, Warwick. Mary Anne was the eldest daughter of the late Doctor P.V. McDonough M.D. of County Clare, Ireland. A notice in the *Warwick Examiner and Times* stated that the marriage was performed by the Rev. Stephen McDonough who was assisted by the Rev. I Devadi [sic].¹¹

Father Davadi was to reside at the Warwick Presbytery with Father McDonough but there is no record of him residing there. Whilst it is confirmed that Davadi was in Warwick in July 1873, there is strong evidence that Davadi may have in fact resided in Stanthorpe soon afterwards.

On 16th August 1873, Bishop James Quinn made his first visit to Stanthorpe. It was a significant occasion for the townspeople and he was escorted into town by a large cavalcade of vehicles and horsemen.¹² The following day, Bishop Quinn preached to a large gathering. It is recorded that he was favourably impressed with the district following his inspection of the town and the various tin mines.

Quinn's visit to the town would not have been coincidental. He would have envisioned that the prosperous mining town necessitated a local clergyman to attend to the spiritual needs of the growing population. After three days visiting the town, he returned to Brisbane. It is realistic to contend that Bishop Quinn commissioned Father Davadi to move to Stanthorpe shortly afterwards—if he was not residing there already.

Unconfirmed handwritten records suggest that Davadi first stayed at the Sunburst Hotel in Stanthorpe prior to his living at the Stanthorpe Catholic Presbytery. The Catholic Presbytery in 1874 was comprised of a small cottage in the church grounds behind the existing school.¹³

An official notice inserted in the *Queensland Government Gazette* by the General Registry Office, Brisbane dated 16th April 1874 states:

The Revd. Jerome Davadi, a Minister of the Roman Catholic Church, residing in Warwick, is registered in this office as a Minister of Religion, authorised to celebrate Marriages in Queensland, in accordance with the provisions of “The Marriage Act of 1864”.

While this notice declares that Davadi resided in Warwick, this information contradicts other material stating that Davadi had already taken up residence in Stanthorpe. Further research is required to establish the actual date of arrival of Davadi in Stanthorpe.

What is accepted is that Father Jerome Davadi was appointed by Bishop Quinn as the first parish priest of Stanthorpe. The first known service conducted by Father Davadi in Stanthorpe is recorded as being on Easter Sunday, 5th April 1874.¹⁴ He found a prosperous town with a large Catholic congregation of mainly Irish and Scottish descent.

A year earlier in March 1873, a population census was officially provided by the Commissioner of Mines. Stanthorpe was noted as having a proximate population census of 1,100 persons with the total population of the tin mining district in Queensland being about 3,800 persons.¹⁵

Stanthorpe is a charming country town situated 200 kilometres south west of Brisbane. The town sits on the Queensland side of the Queensland/New South Wales border. The district is famous for its production of apples, pears, a variety of stone-fruits and the growing of vegetables. It is further renowned for its vineyards and is the premier wine producing district in the State of Queensland.

However, Stanthorpe was not so charming in its infancy prior to Davadi's time. The town was initially called Quart Pot after an early squatter, Patrick Leslie, allegedly forgot his quart pot on the creek bank. The area gained prominence in 1872 with the discovery of tin. There was a rush of mining prospectors to the district eager to make their fortune. Bark shanties mushroomed in the fledgling mining town to cater for the immediate influx of people. The area resembled a wild frontier

with people searching to strike a rich tin lode or townspeople ready to relieve the miners of their hard-earned money.

By the time Davadi was appointed to the Stanthorpe Parish, the town was transformed into a bustling country town. Its name had changed from Quart Pot to Stannum (the Latin name for tin) and eventually Stanthorpe. Bark huts that previously lined the main dirt street had been replaced by neat wooden buildings that were neatly painted at the front. These buildings were comprised of three banks, three chemist shops, a Post Office, Court House, newspaper house, several stores and offices and, for the most part, over twenty-five hotels.¹⁶

At the Church Hill end, there were a number of places of worship including the Roman Catholic Church. At the time of its construction, it was described as being the most prominent building in Stanthorpe when completed.¹⁷ This impressive Catholic church was formally opened by the Reverend Stephen McDonough on Sunday, 8th December 1872. It was a neat well-painted building constructed of wood with a shingled roof that fronted onto the main street.¹⁸

Davadi decided to extend the existing church soon after his arrival in order to accommodate the needs of his growing congregation. He employed a local Italian contractor, Paolo Modini, to undertake the work alterations and extension to the church. By December 1874, the main alterations were nearing completion, including the addition of twenty new seats, a new altar and porch, a high choral gallery and the supply and erection of a new bell and tower twenty-five feet above the ground.

In addition, with the expected arrival of the Sisters of Mercy to Stanthorpe on the 9th February 1875, Davadi vacated the cottage next to the school where he resided, to convert it into a convent. A kitchen and verandah were added to the existing

cottage and a front paling fence and gate were erected. The total expenditure for church and convent renovations left the parish with an outstanding debt of one hundred and sixty pounds.¹⁹ This debt was soon extinguished by holding a Grand Bazaar with prizes, which was highly supported not only by the Catholic congregation but by the Stanthorpe people in general.

By 1875, there were 150 children who attended the Catholic school. The old Globe hotel had been transformed into a school. The pupils were instructed by four Sisters of Mercy, Sisters Mary Agnes, Emilian, Muredach and Malachy, and two lay teachers, Miss St Ledger and Miss Beth Collins under the supervision of Father Davadi.²⁰

While the town continued to grow and prosper, the first doubts were being raised about the continued profitability of tin mining. There was also the question of supplying food to the ever-increasing population. A town committee was formed to examine the growing of produce in the district. They established the Border Agricultural, Horticultural and Mining Society and held their first exhibition in April 1876. The display was comprised of flowers, vegetables and cereals grown in the district as well as an excellent exhibit of local minerals and precious stones.²¹

Davadi's passion was two-fold. He cared not only for the spiritual but also for the basic material needs of the people of Stanthorpe. Davadi decided to incorporate both of these needs as part of his missionary responsibility and collaborated with the Stanthorpe Border Society Committee to attain these goals.

Father Davadi advised the Committee that the cool, temperate climate of Stanthorpe and its deep decomposed, granitic soil composition had similar characteristics to those of his home town in Italy. He also foresaw the need for an alternative

industry in order to sustain the livelihood of the local residents and the prosperity of the district, once the tin petered out.

Through his own example and perseverance, Father Davadi encouraged the local community to diversify into agriculture. He began his own agricultural experimentation by planting grape vines and fruit trees at the back of the church grounds. By 1878, he had taken up a Deed of Grant in fee simple on new land. He established a vineyard at the foot of Mt Marley, which later became known as 'Vichie's Vineyard' and began making wine.

However, Father Davadi also had his critics. Archbishop Robert Dunne who succeeded Bishop James Quinn in 1882 admonished Davadi for his indifference to parish finance and church matters.²² Father Davadi earned a private income from his vineyard and stone fruit orchard and regarded the matter of parish finance with remote disinterest. Dunne was particularly annoyed at the sub-standard rickety school facility and the cold draughtiness of the building during winter. Davadi was counselled to commence local fund-raising for the establishment of schools and the upkeep of the local Sisters of Mercy.

Fortunately, Davadi was much admired and loved by his parishioners and the townspeople in general. They came to his aid and raised sufficient funds for the needs of the local Sisters including the development of school facilities.²³ During the 1884 Christmas school vacation additional improvements, including better insulation and ventilation, were made to the school.

Nevertheless, Father Davadi was a visionary shepherd. He continued in his quest to research the establishment of an orchard and vineyard industry for the future benefit of the local residents. To further promote this interest, he became an active

Committee member of the Border Agricultural, Horticultural and Mineral Society.

At the third annual show held on the 24th and 25th May 1878, Father Davadi was appointed Judge of the wine section exhibits along with Dr. W. L. Marley and Mr. C. W. Pitts.²⁴ This is hardly surprising given his current experience as well as prior knowledge of wines from his native home region of Montecarotto.

Davadi also ensured that his religious responsibility to the community was reflected in the exhibits of the show. He produced an oleograph of Saint Francis of Assisi, which he entered as an exhibit in the Art Section at the same year's Show. He based his creation on the original work painted by Guido Reni, an Italian painter born in the sixteenth century. The oleograph must have been of such satisfactory standard that the Society granted Father Davadi a First Class certificate for his exhibit.²⁵

Over the following years Davadi participated, both as a committee member and an exhibitor, in the advancement of the annual show exhibition. He entered a number of interesting and varied exhibits; all of which related to improving the agricultural and horticultural opportunities for the local community.

At the fourth annual Border Society exhibition of 1879, Father Davadi entered topical exhibits. This time, he received a Second Class certificate for his exhibit in the *Best Cockerel and Two Pullets* section and a Second Class certificate for his exhibit in the *Best 14 Pounds Onions* section.²⁶

In 1883, Father Davadi submitted diverse exhibits at the seventh annual exhibition of the Border Agricultural, Pastoral and Mining Society. Amongst the many first prize winners in the

Garden Produce section, the Rev. Davadi received first prize for his green peas exhibit. He was also recognised for the best rockmelon display and for his exhibit of three bottles of white wine.²⁷ Although the grape variety grown and type of white wine produced by him is unknown, it would not be surprising if Davadi entered a Verdicchio white wine similar in style to that produced in his native province.

Davadi further encouraged and supported agriculture through his own selfless actions. He generously distributed his own seedlings to locals for the betterment of the community. In addition, he provided grapevine and fruit tree cuttings to encourage the grafting of new plant varieties. He used his prior knowledge of winemaking in Italy to assist in the commencement of a fledgling wine industry in Stanthorpe. His foresight laid an easy transition for the production of wine by the first wave of Italian settlers to the district some 30 years after this death.

Davadi's community spirit in the Stanthorpe district was steadfast. He was committed to helping his local community members attain and enjoy both the human and spiritual food of life. He selflessly tendered to the spiritual needs of his congregation and the local residents. He especially cared for the local Sisters of Mercy and the school children, despite earlier criticism from Archbishop Dunne. He fully supported the Sisters and the school children in their endeavours to raise funds through School Socials and Grand Bazaars.

Davadi made time available for social enjoyment within the local community. He attended the school concerts and took particular delight in the musical and literary entertainment provided by the St Joseph's school children. He was also a keen draughts player. The local paper mentioned him winning two local tournament events. However, in keeping with his ethos as

a giving and caring person, Davadi donated a draughts table set as a prize for a forthcoming local tournament.

Davadi was generous with his own money. Records indicate that he loaned or gifted his own money to people in need in the local community. Some of his recorded acts of financial generosity include the following donations:

- 12 December 1872 – donated one pound to the Irish Famine Relief Fund.
- 9 February 1875 – arranging the renovation of his cottage as a convent for the Sisters of Mercy and in turn paying rent for his accommodation at a local hotel.
- 26 January 1877 – donated one pound to the Stanthorpe Hospital Fund.
- 24 January 1879 – donated a ten shillings prize for best Red Wine Exhibit and another ten shillings for best White Wine Exhibit at the Show.
- 31 January 1879 – donated one pound sterling to the Stanthorpe Hospital Fund.
- 16 January 1880 – donated a ten shillings prize for best White Wine exhibit.
- 30 January 1880 – donated five pounds sterling in aid of the Irish Famine Relief Fund.
- 4 June 1885 – donated two pounds sterling in aid of the Dr Torreggiani Memorial Fund.
- 11 February 1887 – donated two pounds sterling in aid of the Flood Relief Fund.
- 21 April 1888 – donated twenty pounds presented to him plus another twenty pounds of his own money to Pope Leo X111 as a Jubilee gift by the people of Stanthorpe.
- 2 September 1892 – donated two pounds to St Mary's Building Fund, Sydney.

Between April 1888 and January 1889, Davadi obtained leave of absence from his parish to visit his native Italian homeland for the first time since arriving in Australia. The parishioners of Stanthorpe loved and respected their devoted parish priest. Upon hearing of Davadi's travel arrangements, they organised a collection and presented him with a purse of 74 sovereigns.²⁸

On Friday, 6th April 1888, Father Davadi left Brisbane aboard the *Cintra* for Sydney. Four days later, he boarded the *R.M.S. Ormuz* of the Orient Pacific Line from Sydney bound for London.

Previous documentation states that Father Davadi intended to visit England and spend some time in the Cornish tin mines as well as visit Ireland, then travel to Italy.²⁹ Other recorded history details that Davadi went to Italy to arrange Italian migration to the Stanthorpe district following new government incentives for land settlement.³⁰ If this was in fact the reason for him to travel overseas, then his mission proved unsuccessful.

A more plausible reason suggests that he requested leave to visit his sick mother in Italy. It is noted from the Davado Genealogy tree, that his mother, Elisabetta Davado, died on the 29th July 1888. This date coincides with the period that Davadi was overseas.

Following her death and burial, he arrived back in Sydney on 14th December 1888 as a saloon passenger aboard the *R.M.S. Orient*. It is not known whether he boarded the boat at London on 26th October 1888 or at Naples on 5th November. Nevertheless, he returned to Stanthorpe earlier than expected. The Stanthorpe residents had anticipated his return to Stanthorpe in early January 1889. The Sisters of Mercy, who held Father Davadi in high regard, hastily organised a welcome concert to be given for him by the pupils of St. Joseph's School on his arrival in Stanthorpe.³¹

First mention of Father Davadi's ill health is in 1896. The local Stanthorpe paper reported that the Rev. Father Davadi 'had been in delicate health for some time' and had obtained permission from Archbishop Dunne—presumably while His Grace was in Warwick—to obtain one month's leave.

A letter hand written by Father Davadi endorses this statement. His letter dated 13th October 1896 addressed to Monsignor Michael Potter of Warwick reads:

Dear Revd. Father, I see His Grace is to be in Warwick in the middle of this week. I intend to visit Warwick on Thursday next, and I hope to see Him and you on that day. Hoping you and Fr. Hennessy are well, I remain yours faithfully in Christ, J. Davadi.

Dunne consented for Davadi to obtain leave from his parish for respite purposes. It was arranged that, while Father Davadi recuperated at the seaside, Father McKiernan would temporarily fill his position in Stanthorpe.

There is no further mention on Father Davadi's state of health until September 1899. *The Australian* reports that the Reverend Jerome Davadi is in an 'indifferent state of health' and is on leave. In actual fact, Davadi had been suffering from headaches and insomnia for the last three years.

He went to Brisbane to seek medical treatment where he was admitted into Ormiston Private Hospital at Gregory Terrace under the care of Dr. Taylor.³³ He was referred to St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, where he was cared for by the Sisters of Charity, but returned to Brisbane after one month. He was then admitted to Woogaroo Mental Asylum, Goodna (now Wolston Park Hospital), where he remained until his death.

Prior to his death, a letter dated Thursday, 21st December 1899 was written by Archbishop Robert Dunne to The Curator in Insanity, Treasury Building, Brisbane. In the letter, His Grace

advised the Curator that Rev. Jerome Davadi had been placed in the Government Asylum at Goodna. He confirmed that Davadi did not have any relatives in Australia and held both real and personal property. Davadi's real property comprised of land that he owned at Stanthorpe and Texas. His personal property comprised of about three hundred pounds and other personal effects.

Archbishop Dunne had been told by Fr Davadi several weeks prior to the date of the letter that he had completed a Will. Father Davadi's last Will and Testament was dated 9th September 1899. His Will declared 30 pounds be donated to his previous housekeeper, Elleanor (known as Lena) Kelly, with the remainder of his probate to Robert Dunne, the Archbishop of Brisbane.

On Monday afternoon, 22nd January 1900, the Rev. Father Jerome Davadi, Roman Catholic priest of Stanthorpe, died in Brisbane at the age of 54 years. His Death Certificate shows that his demise was caused by an inoperable tumour on the brain. This assessment would have been based on medical capabilities of that period.

Previous records state that Father Davadi was held in high esteem by the Stanthorpe community and on hearing the news of his death all the places of business were closed.³⁴ He was described as a most zealous priest—an amiable and kindly gentleman who always had the interest of his community at heart. He endeared himself to all who knew him and his death was deeply mourned.

The townspeople requested that he should be buried in Stanthorpe. His mortal remains were conveyed by mail train from Brisbane to Stanthorpe for internment. On Wednesday, 24 January 1900, a Requiem Mass for the late Father Jerome Davadi was held at St Joseph's Church, Stanthorpe by the

celebrant, Father Patrick Bailey. Father Bailey had earlier been sent to Stanthorpe to fulfil the role of Father Davadi during his period of illness.

Following the Mass service, a horse carriage carrying his coffin led the large funeral procession to the Stanthorpe Cemetery where the burial took place. The *Brisbane Age* reported the following:

the funeral was the largest ever seen in the district. The deceased priest arrived in Queensland about 30 years ago, 25 of which he spent in Stanthorpe.

The following month, the Border Agricultural, Horticultural and Pastoral Society held their Stanthorpe Show meeting on Thursday, 22 February 1900. At the meeting, Mr Foxton put forward a suggestion that a public memorial be erected in memory of the late Father Davadi.³⁵ An impressive headstone, with the epigraph, 'Érected by the people of Stanthorpe' stands vigilant over his grave in the Stanthorpe cemetery.

Father Davadi served the tin mining and agricultural community of the Stanthorpe district for over 25 years. He has long been lauded as the 'Father of the Fruit Industry' in the district³⁶—although a more deserving title should now affectionately read 'Father of the Fruit and Wine Industry of Stanthorpe'.

In 2000, a centenary plaque in honour of the memory of Father Davadi, was laid by Bishop William Morris at the entrance gate to the Stanthorpe Catholic Presbytery. A grape vine and apricot trees grafted from Davadi's original orchard on his old Caves property were planted next to the commemorative plaque where they are tenderly cared for in honour of his memory.

An article inserted in *The Queenslander* newspaper dated 17th October 1925 beautifully and succinctly summarises the life of Father Jerome Davadi:

PRINCE AMONG THEM ALL WAS THE REV. FATHER DAVADI,
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH PRIEST,
WHO WAS A MAN OF VISION.
HE SET ABOUT PLANTING AN ORCHARD.
HE WAS NOT ONLY A SAVIOUR OF SOULS
BUT THE BUILDER OF THE DISTRICT –
HIS MEMORY WILL EVER REMAIN A PLEASANT ONE.

Ian Bonaccorso was born in Stanthorpe, Queensland in 1948. His parents together with his paternal and maternal grandparents formed the first wave of Italian pioneers to settle in the Granite Belt district in the early 1930s.

He attended primary school at Mary Immaculate School, Annerley and completed his secondary education at St James College, Boundary Street, Brisbane. After completing his Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training he attained his Master of Education with Honours at the University of New England, Armidale.

Ian holds a particular interest in researching and writing on the early Italians in Queensland. In 2008, he published his book “Addio Italia – Hello Australia, Stanthorpe Italian Pioneers” and in 2012, coordinated an exhibition titled “The Italian Presence in Queensland” held at The Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane.

ENDNOTES:

1. *The Freeman's Journal*, 3 September 1870, p.6.
2. *The Freeman's Journal*, 28 January 1871, p.5.
3. *The Brisbane Courier*, 2 March 1871, p.2.
4. Tynan, P. J.(undated), *Constantine Rossolini: Pioneer Priest of the Burnett (1845 – 1893)*, Church Archivists' Press, p.16; *The Brisbane Courier* 1 March 1871 p.2.
5. *The Brisbane Courier*, 2 March 1871, p.2.
6. *The Brisbane Courier*, 6 March 1871, p.2.
7. *The Brisbane Courier*, 20 March 1871, p.5.
8. *The Brisbane Courier*, 12 August 1872, p.2.
9. *The Ipswich Observer*, 31 August 1872.
10. *The Ipswich Observer*, 26 February 1873.
11. *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 2 August 1873, p.2.
12. *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 August 1873, p.2.
13. Research material held by the *Catholic Diocesan Archives of Toowoomba*.
14. *The Border Post and Stannum Miner*, 10 April 1874.
15. *The Telegraph*, 26 April 1873.
16. *The Brisbane Courier*, 17 April 1873, p.2.

17. *The Brisbane Courier*, 23 November 1872, p.5.
18. *The Brisbane Courier*, 11 December 1872, p.3.
19. *The Border Post and Stannum Miner*, 23 April 1875.
20. O'Donoghue, Sr. Mary Xaverius, 1961, *Beyond Our Dreams – A Century of the Works of Mercy in Queensland*, The Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, p.131.
21. *The Brisbane Courier*, 24 April 1876, p.3.
22. Harslett, J. & Royle, M. 1980, *They Came to a Plateau (The Stanthorpe Saga)*, 3rd edn, International Colour Productions, Stanthorpe, p.113.
23. O'Donoghue, Sr. Mary Xaverius, 1961, *Beyond Our Dreams – A Century of the Works of Mercy in Queensland*, The Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, pp.131-133.
24. *The Border Post and Stannum Miner*, 10 May 1878.
25. *The Border Post and Stannum Miner*, 31 May 1878.
26. *The Border Post and Stannum Miner*, 21 July 1879.
27. *The Queenslander*, 3 March 1883, p.352.
28. *The Warwick Examiner and Times*, 14 April 1888.
29. *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, 21 April 1888, p.9.
30. Byrne, N. J. 1991, *Robert Dunne: Archbishop of Brisbane*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p.139.

31. *Warwick Argus*, 29 December 1888, p.2.
32. *Warwick Argus*, 10 November 1896, p.2.
33. *Warwick Argus*, 19 September 1899, p.2.
34. *The Warwick Examiner and Times*, 24 January 1900, p.3.
35. *The Brisbane Courier*, 23 February 1900, p.6.
36. Harslett, J. & Royle, M. 1980, *They Came to a Plateau (The Stanthorpe Saga)*, 3rd edn, International Colour Productions, Stanthorpe, p.73.