

St Patrick's College Shorncliffe

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In this talk tonight, I hope to share some reflections and a snapshot of St Patrick's College. To put it in perspective, I have been part of the College for 11 of its 62 years.

I thought that to give the reflection some structure I would break the examination of the College's history into the different decades. As well, I think, it is relevant to talk about a couple of other topics including Morven, the Christian Brothers, the College campus, and also to share some thoughts on the future of St Patrick's College.

On January 29, 1952 a legend was born when 172 students, 4 staff and a renovated Governor's holiday residence marked the beginning of St Patrick's College. In 2014, over 60 years later this great College still continues to be a leader in providing a quality Catholic education in the Edmund Rice Tradition. Today the College boasts 1275 students with 163 staff and a campus that is modern, functional and captures the magnificent vista of Moreton Bay.

Fr O'Rourke, who was the Parish Priest at Sandgate, had a vision to establish a College for young men of the Shorncliffe and Sandgate area. He purchased a large but dilapidated house in 1950 and, with the efforts and skills of Bill Pashley, transformed a rundown property into the magnificent building we know and recognise as Morven. Part of the funds for this purchase came from a bequest left by Fr Power, himself a former parish priest of Sandgate.



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Fr O'Rourke invited the Christian Brothers to operate the school. The Sandgate Parish owned St Patrick's College for a number of years until in 1968 the Christian Brothers purchased the property. In 2014, St Patrick's College forms part of an Australian-wide network of schools owned and operated by Edmund Rice Education Australia.

In order to put some context around the St Patrick's story I think that it is appropriate to talk a little of Morven and this can set the platform for a further examination of the history of St Patrick's.

Morven is the iconic building on the campus at St Patrick's College. Built in 1864 it has had a number of owners and lives during its journey and in 2014, celebrates its 150th birthday. Its first owner was a grazier by the name of Mr John McConnell. The construction of the original single storey building commenced in 1863 and was completed in 1864. Mrs McConnell planted two large pine trees on the property and these became landmarks of the area for many years.

In 1880, David Brown, a merchant, purchased the property and named the home Morven, after his home town in Scotland. He renovated it; adding a second storey. It was during the Brown's occupancy that the Governor of Queensland, Sir Henry Norman, and Lady Norman started to use it for their holidays.

A Mr Blume purchased the house in 1910 as a holiday home. In the 1920s Mrs Craven, who was Mrs Blume's widowed mother, moved in with her two unmarried daughters. After the death of Mr Blume in 1943, the building remained unoccupied and neglected until it was sold in 1950 to Fr O'Rourke who—with the assistance of Bill Pashley—then transformed Morven into St Patrick's College which opened its doors in 1952.

From the beginning, Morven has been the signature building at St Patrick's. Initially it was its only building; serving as the residence of the Brothers upstairs and the classrooms

downstairs. It continued to be used by both the Brothers and the school until 2008 when the Brothers left and took up residence at Treacy at Nudgee. In 2014 Morven is the administrative hub of the College. Staff rooms and offices occupy the upstairs floor whilst downstairs includes the finance department, the College office and a series of other office spaces. It also includes the Jack Stevens Room, which houses the College Archives and Museum.

Now that a context has been created around Morven, it is appropriate to begin looking at the St Patrick's journey and I commence with the College's first decade, the 1950s, which were tough times.

Br Coffey, the first Principal, along with Brothers Hayes, Rodgers and Saward began educating 179 young men on January 29, 1952. These pioneering men laid the foundations for St Patrick's College and the legacy that is colloquially referred to as a 'Paddies Boy'. The College Crest was designed by Br Saward, whilst Br Coffey selected the College motto *Certa Bonum Certamen* (Fight the Good Fight). Mrs McDonough designed the original school uniform. Both the crest and the motto remain in existence today although the modern crest has been slightly modified as part of the 50th Year celebrations in 2002. The uniform remains the same with the additional items of a jumper, blazer and sports uniform.

St Patrick's College was a founding member of The Associated Schools (TAS) Sporting Competition and during the 1950s achieved many successes including third in the 1956 Athletics Carnival. St Patrick's College entered its inaugural First XV team in 1957 and that year they drew with Marist Ashgrove. 1956 saw the construction of Dowd Hall that would remain in service until 2009 whilst the tennis courts in front of Morven were completed in 1959 and are still operational today.

The early days for the Brothers were very tough. They had little money and were responsible for all the teaching, the sports coaching, and maintenance work around the school. In 1953, Mrs Pitty brought the Grade 3 boys up from Sacred Heart (local parish school) to join St Patrick's College. She was the first lay teacher at St Patrick's College and remained on staff until 1966.

By the end of the 1950s the school population had grown to 500. During this decade, Dowd Hall (1956), the tennis courts (1959) and a new tuckshop in the bay window area of Morven were constructed, as well as the clearing and levelling of the back oval (1952). In order to construct Dowd Hall a large fig tree needed to be removed. It was decided to dynamite the tree roots and this was done one week-day afternoon. As a precaution, the students left Morven and gathered on the back oval—Workplace Health and Safety was not strong in those days.

The 1960s saw an increase in student enrolments over the decade, peaking with 530 students. The College had three Principals during the 1960s: Brothers Morrissey, Quane and Mooney. As well as these men the majority of the staff was comprised of Christian Brothers who taught the boys, coached the sporting teams, and worked very hard on the grounds around the property.

The spiritual life of the College was an important focus during the 1950s and 1960s. The Marion processions, the development of the Shrine of the Mother of Perpetual Help, the construction of the Brothers' chapel and the positioning of an illuminated statue of Our Lady in the tower of Morven—which still stands overlooking the College today—all took place during this era.

In 1961 an additional three classrooms were built whilst in 1968, work commenced on the construction of new classrooms and the refurbishment of the science laboratories. These additions formed what is now known as the O'Connor building. Later that year the College purchased an adjoining property

from Mr K Sherman and the Br Dwyer Memorial Library was also opened during 1968. Also, after many years of negotiations, the College began using the inside of the Deagon Racetrack as its sporting fields. It continued to use these fields until the 1990s when the Curlew Park Fields were established on the site of the old Sandgate dump.

Early in 1961 Fr O'Rourke passed away. This was significant for the College and its students attended the special Requiem Mass in the Sacred Heart Church, Sandgate. The school and the parish continued to have a good relationship with the parish priests who followed Fr O'Rourke. However, it became obvious as the decade unfolded that the financial support from the parish was diminishing and this put additional strain on the already tight financial situation in which the College found itself. This deteriorating financial position took its toll and, by the end of the decade, College enrolments had decreased to 430.

During the 1950s and 1960s the academic progress of the students continued to flourish. The first class to graduate from the college did so in 1955 and many of the early graduates went on to further studies; excelling in their chosen fields. Names such as McKeering, Rutherford, Graham, Isaacs and Fitzgerald belong to just some of those early graduates of the College. While some graduates progressed to university, others entered the religious life. Amongst the latter were Fr Bernie Costigan who became the first Old Boy priest whilst his brother Phillip was the first Old Boy Christian Brother.

A key development during the 1960s was the transfer of ownership of the College from the Sandgate parish to the Trustees of the Christian Brothers. This complex and protracted process, which was completed in late 1968, greatly assisted the College in addressing its financial situation. It could now do its own fundraising including the staging of the St Patrick's College Carnivals which ran for many years,

The 1970s was a turbulent time for St Patrick's. There was a decline in enrolments at times during this decade with student numbers decreasing to 400 in 1975. However, despite difficult financial situations and declining enrolments, the 70s was also a decade that saw some significant development of the College campus including the construction of the Morrissey Building and the O'Connor Building (a long-time supporter of the Brothers at St Patrick's College was Miss O'Connor) and the construction of the swimming pool. Much of the funds raised during this decade were as a result of the strong and active Parents and Friends (P&F) and Sports Committees. Over the decade these groups raised money that was then invested into capital infrastructure around the College.

During the 1970s Br Mooney was succeeded as Principal by Br Ryan with Br Grundy succeeding him. The number of lay staff continued to grow and amongst the names of these staff are some who belong to the folklore of St Patrick's College. People such as Jack Stevens who created champion choirs, Rita Prackert who was the tuckshop convenor right up until 1997, Gil Robinson, John Lovett and Reg Baker—all were part of the St Patrick's College landscape during the 1970s. The College chapel was renovated in 1973 and remained as the chapel until the construction of the Father Liam Horsfall Chapel in 2011.

Student performances in the academic, sporting and cultural arenas continued to develop through the 1970s. Success in the The Associated Schools (TAS) sporting competition continued to develop whilst the St Patrick's Choirs of the 1970s, under the guidance of Mr Jack Stevens, were renowned.

By the time the 1980s began, St Patrick's College had a student population of only 372 with a total staff of only 27. Grade 4 ceased to be at the College in 1980. Brothers Grundy, McDade and Gagen were the college principals during the 1980s. The Christian Brothers continued to have a strong presence on the teaching staff but, as was indicative of other Christian Brothers

schools, the number of lay staff continued to grow. One such staff member was Mr Steve Graham, who recently retired after 39 years as a member of staff at St Patrick's College. Other stalwarts included members of the office staff: Mrs Pat Pashley and Mrs Lorraine Norris. Both ladies devoted many years of service to the College. Br Gagen commenced as Principal in 1985. In 1987 he introduced the concept of a College Leadership Team. The original team consisted of Br Gagen, Mr Holm, Mr Todhunter, Br Price and Mr Woodger. The 1980s saw significant curriculum changes in Queensland schools with the introduction of ROSBA in 1985.

During the 1980s the College continued to purchase adjoining properties; using them for various school activities including administration offices, manual arts classes (Crayseas Restaurant) and teaching rooms. It was also the decade when the College developed sporting grounds in conjunction with St John Fisher at Bracken Ridge and commenced negotiations with the Brisbane City Council regarding leasing the old Sandgate dump as part of its sporting grounds.

The 1990s proved to be a decade of change for St Patrick's College. College Principals included Br Gagen and Br Skelly; however in 1995, Mr John Kennedy was appointed the first Lay Principal. John remained College Principal until July 1999.

This decade also saw the College be strongly competitive in the TAS sporting competition. However it was also the time when St Patrick's College, along with a number of other schools, left TAS and formed a new sporting association: Association of Independent Colleges (AIC). St Patrick's College remains a member of this Association in 2014.

With this growth came further development including the construction of the Edmund Rice Building, Saward Building, the Max Graham Gym, the Lex Lovett Centre and the P&F Arts Building (all of which are still operating in 2014). It was also during the 1990s that St Patrick's College relocated its sporting

fields from the Deagon Racetrack to Curlew Park. In 2014, Curlew Park is a magnificent venue, featuring six rugby and soccer fields, cricket amenities and a range of other buildings. In 2012 the College hosted the Confraternity Rugby League Carnival featuring forty schools from across Queensland. The first College Masterplan was also developed in the 1990s; mainly due the hard work of Br Gagen and the College's newly appointed architect, Mr Lawrie Bertoldi—a position he still assumes. The College was also successful in obtaining a Commonwealth Grant of over \$500,000, which was the catalyst for further developments during the 1990s.

The College's first Mission Statement was developed in 1993 and although it has been modified over the years, the essence of the original statement has been maintained in the more recent editions. The inaugural College Board was established in 1994 and, in 2014, remains a key group within the governance of St Patrick's.

The retirement of two people, who made significant contributions to St Patrick's College over many years, occurred in 1993. Mr John Lovett left after thirty years of service whilst Mrs Pat Pashley left after twenty years as the Principal's secretary. Pat was also responsible for the production each week of the College newsletter, *The Calling*; the first edition of which was published in 1967.

The turn of the century was a significant time for St Patrick's College. Br Dan McMahon was appointed Principal and during his time the Callan Centre was constructed. This building endeavour marked what was probably the start of a major redevelopment strategy for the College. Following Br McMahon, Mr David Carroll was appointed as Acting Principal during 2001 and Mr Peter Chapman became Principal in July 2001. In 2004, I was appointed Principal and will complete my Principalship at the end of 2014.

The College celebrated both 50 and 60 year celebrations in 2002 and 2012 respectively. Both years included a range of celebrations involving staff, students, parents and the wider community.

Since 2000, St Patrick's College has continued to increase its student population reaching 1000 students in 2009. Its present population is 1275 with an expected 1330 in 2015. With this growth in student numbers there has also been some significant development of the College campus including the redevelopment of the Morrissey Building in 2004, Saward redevelopment in 1996, Morven redevelopment in 2007, Dowd Building development in 2009 and the Waterford Building in 2011, with commencement of the Sporting and Cultural precinct due to begin in 2014.

The year of 2010 was a particularly significant one for St Patrick's College. In particular, February 15th was to be etched into the history of St Patrick's College with the tragic loss of Elliott Fletcher. During this extraordinarily difficult time for the College the 'Paddies Spirit' came to the fore. The 'Band of Brothers' was born and through adversity, the St Patrick's College Community united and ensured that this great College would continue to provide a high quality of Catholic Education in the Edmund Rice Tradition into the future. The construction of the 'Mary Help of Christians Memorial Garden' in 2011 gives tribute to the nine young men who lost their lives whilst students at St Patrick's College.

St Patrick's College is an outstanding school with a fine tradition. Over its 62 year history many great men and women have formed the staff and been responsible for educating the young men of this College. However, I have no doubt in my mind that the key staff, particularly in the early years of the College, were the Christian Brothers. There have been 92 brothers who have been at St Patrick's College over its 62 year history. Brothers Coffey, Hayes, Rodgers and Saward being the

first whilst Brother Chris Pritchard remains on staff in 2014. Sadly, we lost Br Col Fitzgerald recently after his being on staff for the last 19 years.

The Brothers were the ‘backbone’ of the College. They were teachers, coaches, groundsmen, maintenance people, bus drivers and, importantly, role models for the young men over the years. To acknowledge the huge impact they have had on the thousands of students who have been educated by them over the years, a number of the Pastoral Care houses and buildings have been named in honour of these great men.

For the 62 years of its existence, St Patrick’s College has been an outstanding school. The thousands of young men who have been educated at St Patrick’s College and left it as ‘Paddies Boys’ have moved into many fields. Some, such as Fr Bernie Costigan—our first Old Boy Priest—and more recently Fr Bryan Roe, have joined the priesthood. Others, such as Sam Simpson, Adam White and Carlo Massimino, have gone on to represent Australia at the Olympics while in rugby there were Drew Mitchell, Dom Shipperley and Jesse Mogg. Others have been doctors, lawyers, scientists and teachers to name just a few. The Old Boys enjoy getting together and early this year a number came back for their 50-year reunion. It was a great event with so much of the College’s history coming together.

St Patrick’s has educated young men academically, spiritually, pastorally and nurtured a strong sense of social justice. The College operates the Paddies Van during the week with aid to those at the margins, and supports student immersions to India, East Timor, Tiwi Islands and South Africa.

I believe that the young men who leave St Patrick’s College are well rounded. This is very much the legacy of the Brothers and, hopefully, people such as myself and the other lay staff continue to nurture the Charism of Edmund Rice in our students.

I have had the privilege of being part of the St Patrick's College community for 11 years and, during this time, have seen it continue to grow and change. I have had the opportunity of meeting many hundreds of wonderful young men, working with professional staff, and of course being part of a community of parents that is unrivalled. A true strength of this college is its community. It is as strong as ever and will continue to be.

In my opinion the future of St Patrick's College is bright. We are very fortunate to be situated in such an idyllic location on the cliffs of Shorncliffe overlooking Moreton Bay. The campus is exceptional and enrolments continue to be very strong.

I have been privileged to be the thirteenth (and longest serving) Principal of St Patrick's College and it has been an honour. I leave the College at the end of this year to continue my journey—as principal of another great Edmund Rice School: St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace. My replacement who was announced today is Mr Chris Mayes.

The College Motto of *Certa Bonum Certanum* (Fight the Good Fight) is certainly what St Patrick's College has done for 62 years and—I have no doubt—will continue to do for many years to come.

I again thank you for the opportunity to share a little of the history of St Patrick's College. It has been an honour to be here and I trust that you now have a greater insight into what is an outstanding College.

Michael Carroll was born in Brisbane in 1962 and was educated at St Laurence's College, South Brisbane. His university studies include Degrees in Science, Education and Religious Education as well as a Master of Education and a PhD which he completed in 2006.

Michael has been a teacher since 1982 and has been Acting Principal at Marist Rosalie, Principal at St Peter Claver College, Riverview and, for the last eleven years, Principal at St Patrick's College, Shorncliffe.

In 2015, Michael will take up the position of Principal at St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace.