

THE FIRST

25 YEARS

(1921-1946)





Br. Celestine (L) and
Fr. Rossetti - Broome - 1923



Fr. Cerutti and Parishioners, Diamond Creek, 1925

SOME PRE-HISTORY

St. Mary's College,
Donnybrook, Dublin.

24th September, 1874.

Very Reverend Sir,

Your esteemed letter of the 21st inst. reached me today and I briefly answer it. Having to leave Dublin I have only got time to pen a few lines. For now it is sufficient that you clearly remember that we agreed that you would only have to pay my students' fares to Turin. According to this agreement five lads will arrive soon destined for my Australian mission, whether they remain seculars or want to join your Congregation. They know some Greek and Latin and a little more Mathematics but they are not yet ready for Rhetoric.

With expression of esteem for your Reverence,

+ Matthew Quinn.

Very Reverend Father John Bosco.

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Fern Lodge,
Brook Green W,
London.

7 February 1891.

Very Reverend Father (Don Rua),

Your Reverence may remember that, shortly after the death of Don Bosco, a request was sent to you, through the Salesian Fathers at Battersea, to establish a House at Melbourne in Australia. The reply then was, in accordance with the wish of Don Bosco, no new Houses would be established abroad for two years.

This period having elapsed, I paid a visit to Battersea in November last to urge this request. Fr. Macey was absent but Fr. Bonavia undertook to have the matter brought again before your Reverence. Since then I have heard nothing from them.

One day this week I received a letter from Melbourne repeating what I have already said: that the Archbishop of Melbourne is very anxious for you to found a House there. He now offers to give you 40 or 50 acres of land outside the city on which to found an institution. Such an institution is greatly wanted and His Grace thinks an establishment could be worked successfully.

I should be glad to hear what you think about the matter and whether you feel disposed to comply with His Grace's earnest request. Should you prefer to communicate directly with the Archbishop his address is:- Dr. Carr, Melbourne, Australia.

In that case I ask you kindly to let me know what you have done.

I am,

With the greatest reverence,

Your most obedient servant,

Edward Lucas.

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Fern Lodge,
Brook Green W. London.

4 May 1891.

Very Reverend and Dear Father,

On receipt of your very kind letter of the 14th February I at once communicated the contents to Mr. Fitzgerald in Melbourne, through whom the Archbishop has made a request for the establishment of a House in that important city, whose inhabitants now number 487,000, having increased by 206,000 in ten years. I mention that fact because it shows how necessary it is to have some means of looking after the host of newcomers, who must be, very many of them, without friends and those surroundings which, in older societies, are a support in well-doing and a check on the reverse.

I told Mr. Fitzpatrick what were your difficulties in regard to sending out men. Yesterday I received a reply from him which I venture to enclose for your perusal and consideration. You will see how much the matter is pressed and I am not without hopes that you will see your way clear to make the effort to comply with the wish of the Archbishop and his chief clergy.

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Kindly reconsider your former decision and let me know (when you shall have time to do so) whether you will be able to reverse it.

With the greatest respect,

I am, very reverend and dear Father,

Yours obediently,

Edward Lucas.

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(The enclosed letter from Mr. R. Fitzgerald)

Richmond, Victoria.

March 7, '91.

Dear Mr. Lucas,

Glad to hear that Mrs. Lucas and her daughter reached their destination safely. I am not surprised that the intense fogs should upset Mrs. Lucas. I hope she has got over the ailment and is in full enjoyment of her visit. Remember me kindly to her and her daughter.

I tried to see our Archbishop after receipt of your letter, he being out, I saw Dean Donaghey and left the letter with him to show the Archbishop. We discussed the situation. I have discussed it with others and yesterday, Easter Monday, with a religious in the Convent of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford. I may here note that I yesterday learned that there were 320 penitents in the establishment and 97 religious. There are also, I think, about 300 reformatory children and a public-school connected with the House.

All parties agree that Don Rua's answer is not a sufficient one for declining so important a work to which he is invited and which as far as we can see his is the only order adapted for the work.

If the accounts we have seen of the foundations be reliable he must have English-speaking Fathers in different places. Granting that he has none or, having them, it is imprudent to take them from the work where they are engaged. The difficulties of Fathers who cannot speak English are trifling as there would be no

trouble, Dean Donaghey specially remarked, in getting assistants who can speak Italian and that the Fathers would soon pick it up. A recent Superior of the Jesuit Fathers, Fr. Sturzo, is an Italian - at present, he has charge of their novitiate. At the time of the troubles with the Jesuits in Italy he went to Ireland and founded there a novitiate from the Order, which, strange to say, never existed before. Priests and religious only need to be true to their work and in civilized communities they are always a success. I have heard it said that the House of the Good Shepherd amongst us is the largest and most successful of the Orders anywhere - and this is a French foundation.

The Little Sisters of the Poor are making great progress. They have bought 40 acres of ground and have erected a large building. I forget the cost but think it was considerably over 10,000 pounds and by this time I suppose them to have 100 inmates. Before the new building was available they had about 80. One of their excellent Sisters was, I have reason to know, a persistent beggar and she is a French woman. I hope you will communicate with Don Rua again and that he would be able to see that a fruitful soil here awaits the grain of mustard seed which is in his hands.

I understand that the Trappists have already declined an invitation to settle in the Archdiocese. I should not think that they were wanted to take Don Bosco's work in hand.

In haste,

I am, dear Mr. Lucas,

Yours truly,

R. Fitzgerald.

Archbishop's House,
Hobart.

October 21st, 1905.

My dear and Very Reverend Father,

I beg to thank you very cordially for the Diploma enrolling me in the Association of the Salesian Co-operators and thus enabling me to enjoy all the privileges and spiritual graces granted by our Holy Father the Pope to members of this Association. I hope with the divine assistance and your kind prayers to profit of the rich treasures placed at my disposal.

(v)

I pray God to aid you and your associates to extend more and more the blessings of your meritorious works.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

+ Daniel Murphy

Archbishop of Hobart.

The Very Reverend Michael Rua, Superior General.

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*Society of St. Vincent de Paul,
Council of Melbourne.*

*Office - 423 Victoria Parade,
East Melbourne.*

President: D. Slattery, 423 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

Hon. Treas: A.C. Holbrook, 147 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy.

Spir. Dir.: Very Rev. M. Maher C.M.

Hon. Sec.: T.V. Cooney, 1121 Hoddle Street, East Melbourne.

26th April 1909.

Most Reverend Superior General,

I was highly pleased to receive your very kind note of the 15th ult. and feel most thankful for your kind wishes. We arrived here on the 7th February last as we left Naples about a week after that dreadful calamity at Messina. We had a pleasant prosperous journey, thank God. His Grace, the Archbishop, has not yet arrived but is expected early in June when we hope to get him back in good health and we mean to give him a glorious reception. I am sure he will be pleased to read your letter which I shall hand to him very soon after his arrival. He will then, of course, take suitable steps in the matter.

In the meantime, my dear Superior General, if you could give us some idea of the preparation that you would expect us to make for the proper reception of your venerated Order amongst us, and an approximate estimate of the time when we may expect them amongst us as it would be a great help to us in making our plans for

the future. Hoping to hear from you again very soon and thanking you again most sincerely and hoping that we shall soon have your devoted brothers among us.

I remain, dear Superior General,

Yours most faithfully,

Dan Slattery.

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Turin,

14th June, 1909.

*Most Illustrious Mr. Daniel Slattery,
President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Melbourne.*

The esteemed letter of your illustrious person of the 26th April 1909 reached me in these days and I hasten to answer it.

Your qualifications as President of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul is a good omen. In France in 1875 the sons of the Venerable Don Bosco were introduced into that noble Republic by the members of that same Conference. They provided the building, the furniture and all else that was needed in those early days of the new House at Nizza Mare and it was only when they were assured that we could carry on the work without their day-to-day help that they turned their charitable assistance elsewhere. St. Vincent de Paul of that time and St. Vincent de Paul of the 19th Century wants to bless these practices that have been initiated.

As I have already stated to you and that which Don Bosco constantly taught us - we do not open Houses without a previous request from the Ordinary or, at least, his consent. Therefore, before coming to any decision I will await a letter from your venerable Archbishop. Our work is mainly that of Festive Oratories where boys are gathered together to keep them out of danger and to instruct them in their religion. To begin such a work there is need of a building with several rooms and, above all, a courtyard big enough for the boys to play in. I hope that you can arrange things in such a way that the Salesians which I will send you - provided all goes well and necessary practices can be concluded - will have sufficient financial support for their own maintenance

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and for meeting the necessary expenses to keep such a Festive Oratory open.

With great respect I am pleased to repeat that I am

Your most humble servant,

Michael Rua.

- INTRODUCTION -

DON BOSCO'S DREAM OF AUSTRALIA

(Biographical Memoirs Vol. XVII, Chapter 22, Page 644)

"Finally, I seemed to be in Australia. Here also there was an Angel, but he did not have any name. He was guiding the people towards the South (mezzodi?). Australia was not as one continent, but a group of very many islands, whose inhabitants were of different temperament and appearance. A multitude of children that lived there were trying to come towards us, but were hindered by the distance and by the water that separated them. However, they held their hands outstretched towards Don Bosco and the Salesians, saying: "Come and help us. Why do you not accomplish the work that your fathers have begun?"

Many halted; others with a thousand struggles passed in the midst of fierce animals and came to mingle with the Salesians, whom I did not recognize, and began to sing: "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord." At such a distance, groups of innumerable islands could be seen; but I could not distinguish the features. It seems to me that all this would indicate that Divine Providence was offering a portion of the evangelical field to the Salesians, but at some future time. Their labours will bear fruit, because the hand of the Lord will be constantly with them; if they do not make themselves unworthy of His favours."

Other References: Vol. X, pages 55, 1268.

Vol. XVII, page 378.

HISTORY OF THE SALESIAN PROVINCE OF AUSTRALIA

PART 1 - THE SALESIANS IN THE KIMBERLEYS

It is related in the Memorie how Don Bosco in one of his dreams saw a land to the South, where the children of that land were calling out to his sons to come and help them. Later too in this same dream he saw these people worshipping at a great open cathedral. Some interpreters of this dream say that the great land to the South was none other than Australia, and that Sunbury, with its annual Eucharistic Festival and the thousands of worshippers who throng there, could have been the great outdoor cathedral where they worshipped.

Before Don Bosco's dreams became a reality, however, many years had to pass, and many other more urgently needed missions had to be staffed before the sons of Don Bosco could finally land on the great Southern Land of the Holy Spirit.

It was left to Father Rinaldi to call together the expedition which was to form the pioneer band to make the work of Don Bosco known in the youngest of the continents. It would appear that a great deal of care and forethought went into the choice of men for this mission. There were going to a new land, where Don Bosco was little known. They were going to a far corner of that land where white men had hardly penetrated. The coastline of this land had been well known and charted for centuries, but whites had not bothered to explore the interior well, as it presented itself as a bare and barren land, sandy, waterless, without any significant vegetation apart from the scraggy eucalypts and stunted undergrowth. The natives were considered by ethnologists as some of the most primitive types of the globe. Dampier in his Journal had called them a dirty, skinny flyblown lot, and the opinion of many whites hardly differed from his. It was amongst these blacks that the first Salesians in Australia were to work. It was a work that called for stout hearts. It was to be real slogging, hard work from the start, so men of enthusiasm, men with youth and vigour would be needed. Father Rinaldi picked such a group.

- THE PIONEER GROUP -

1922. The leader was to be Father Ernest Coppo, the Provincial of the United States. The Vicariate of the Kimberleys had been created in 1887 and Father Coppo was consecrated its Vicar Apostolic and Titular Bishop of Paleopolis on December 24th, 1922, in the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians by Bishop Comin (Equador), Bishop Pinardi (Auxiliary Bishop of Turin) and Bishop Versiglia (China). He was then

52 years of age. Bishop Coppo then set about getting together a party. He chose as his secretary and right hand man Father John Setaro, a dynamic little priest whose size belied the energy and strength which made him later on one of the hardiest and most valuable members of the group. Father Setaro was born in San Francisco of Italian parents - his knowledge of English was to be invaluable. He died at Sunbury on the 30th September, 1933, and is buried in the Salesian cemetery there. Then there was Father Siara, a Polish priest - limited as regards English, yet he was a giant for work. He died in Poland on August 9th, 1937. Fr. Erminio Rossetti was already a man in his fifties, and yet he was willing to obey and do all that was asked of him. Later he possibly suffered more than all the others on account of his enforced inactivity and inability to express himself. The 1963 elenco has him as confessor in one of our Houses of Lisbon. The fourth priest of the party was a Spaniard, Father Filimon Lopez, who was sufficiently acquainted with English to be able, later on, to hold a position as priest in charge of a mission. Accompanying the priests were also three lay brothers - Bro. Caesar Asseli, born in Palestine. He was later forced to leave the mission because of ill health; Bro. Emmanuel Gomez, still working in a Salesian house of Seville; Bro. Celestine Acerni, still alive and one of the patriarchs of the work in Australia. He is working at our Hostel in Brunswick.

- A FRIENDLY WELCOME -

1923 This then was the party which gathered together in Turin in February 1923 - one Bishop, four priests and three lay brothers. After the traditional farewell from the Superiors at the Mother House in Turin, Bishop Coppo took Father Setaro with him and set out for the U.S.A. to say good-bye to friends and collect whatever he could for the Mission. The rest of the band under Fr. Siara went to Marseilles where they remained for three days waiting for their ship. At length they set sail for Port Said where they were received with true fraternal affection by Fr. Rubino and the confreres of the House of Port Said. However, they were not able to remain there long and the ship now headed down through the Suez Canal, bound for Colombo. It was at Colombo that the party received what was to be their first more or less direct contact with Australia.

Arrangements had been made that while the party was in Perth waiting for the ship to take them north to the Mission, they were to be guests of the Oblate Fathers in Fremantle. On arriving at Colombo a cable was awaiting them from the Oblates welcoming them and wishing them a happy "last leg" on their journey. This last stage of the journey was a happy one, and the younger members of the band were keen to see who would actually be the first to set foot on Australian soil. Eventually, when the ship reached Fremantle, the authorities made a statement that persons coming from Palestine had to pass through a rigid medical examination to see if they were carriers of an eye disease

prevalent at that time in those parts. Bro. Asseli was from Palestine and so his chances seemed to be lost. The other members of the party crowded anxiously on deck waiting for the gangplank to be lowered.

- BAREFOOT ON THE ROADWAY -

In the meantime, Bro. Acerni was down in the cabin working out "a master scheme" to defeat the plans of the others. As the ship pulled closer to the shore, he climbed out through the porthole and dropped to the wharf, jubilant to have been the first to set foot in Australia. The Oblate Fathers, who were there to welcome the party watched the performance with amusement and joined the triumphant Bro. Acerni in waving to the other confreres still on board. The incident was not finished, however, for while Bro. Acerni and the other confreres were busy talking (in pidgin English) to the Oblates, Bro. Caesar went out to the roadway and proudly announced that after all he had been the first to touch Australian soil. This was a cruel blow to the happy Bro. Acerni, who had schemed so hard for his victory. Not to be outdone he immediately followed Bro. Caesar out to the roadway and proceeded to take off his shoes and socks and to touch with his bare feet the land which was to be so soon the scene of his labours. Who was the real winner?

The Oblates now took over and showered our Confreres with kindness. Using their influence, they had the Missionaries out through the Customs in no time, and with their own carrier they had their goods transported to the Oblate House which was going to be the temporary headquarters for the party before their departures for the North.

The Salesians were the guests of the Oblates for the next three weeks and in the meantime the priests did supply work in the various Convents around Fremantle as well as to the local goal. The lay brothers made themselves useful in doing any work around the House or in the local school. This included plumbing, repairing desks and general maintenance. Fr. Siara contacted the Archbishop of Perth and began to make arrangements for passages aboard the coastal vessel "Gascoyne" which was to transport the party to Broome.

It was late in April 1923 when the party eventually set sail northward for Broome, the enthusiastic young group of missionaries off on their first apostolic journey; the more sedate older men, already used to hard work, but just as hopeful as their younger brethren for a fruitful harvest of souls. How strange are the ways of God! What more willing workers could He have in His vineyard, and yet how bitterly He was going to try them; how soon their enthusiasm was to be put to the test and their grand ideas smashed at their feet!

- THE WAR YEARS -

With the outbreak of World War 1, the mission of the Kimberleys had been badly hit. Most of the Pallotines stationed there were of German nationality, and being of an enemy nation they were placed under surveillance by the Australian authorities and restricted as to their movements and to the assistance they could get from overseas. They were forbidden to leave the mission under any pretext; supplies were low, and feeling against them and their work ran high. To many outside, their every word and move became suspect.

In 1917, an unsympathetic native administration put forward a strong case for the closing of all Catholic Missions in the Kimberleys and the taking over of the whole Dampierland peninsula as a Government run cattle station for the aborigines. No account was made of the Pallotine or Benedictine work; rather there were those who pleaded the case of the missionaries standing in the way of native assimilation.

Disappointment waited the majority of natives trained at the mission, who found themselves unable to compete with others in the trades they had learned at the mission. Native tailors were unable to compete against the entrenched Chinese, employing only their own people, in northwestern towns and ports. There was no demand in a more or less static economy for native carpenters, house painters and plumbers. For the most part they had to revert to the unskilled tasks of labourers, stockmen and domestics.

The war years played havoc with the work done previously, supplies were costly; cyclones periodically destroyed buildings and gardens; transport was out of the question; the mission was slowly being strangled much to the joy of those who were no lovers of the good being done there.

Aware of the situation, the Holy See appointed Fr. Creagh, C.S.S.R., administrator of the mission, and it was under his care that the mission continued until the advent of the Salesians in early 1923. The Government did not lift its restrictions on Germans until 1926.

- A NEW BROOME -

1923 It was early in May 1923 when the little band of missionaries, still under the leadership of Fr. Siara, arrived in Broome. Here they waited for two weeks, and placed themselves under the care of Fr. Creagh. There was nothing for them to do at Broome, so Fr. Creagh decided to send them on immediately to Beagle Bay. On arrival there they found the Pallotines in a bad way. They had been restricted by the Commonwealth Government to Beagle Bay and Lombadina, but shortly after

the issuing of these orders their Superior had died, and they had been left there over the War years with no Superior allowed to come in.

With true fraternal charity they welcomed the new arrivals and made them as comfortable as they could under the circumstances. But it was at this stage the position became embarrassing. The Pallotines, as far as they knew were still in charge of the Mission, but were unable to withdraw. Here they were, faced with a new Congregation claiming to have taken over the Mission, and with a newly consecrated Vicar Apostolic due to arrive to take charge within the next few weeks. It was a nasty situation, causing embarrassment on both sides.

It was another six months before Bishop Coppo arrived in the Kimberleys, so Fr. Siara took charge and allocated positions to the various men. He himself went to Wyndham leaving Fr. Lopez and one brother at Beagle Bay and sending Fr. Rossetti, already past his best years and not knowing a word of English to Lombadina with two brothers. Poor Fr. Rossetti now found himself out in this lonely outpost, miles from anywhere and surrounded by the never ending bush. His apostolate was limited, and before very long he began to feel the weight of loneliness and inactivity so that by October, when Bishop Coppo arrived with Fr. Setaro, he found Fr. Rossetti a very discouraged and lonely man.

On his arrival, Bishop Coppo was amazed to find the situation in the Mission far from pleasant. He had expected difficulties, as every missionary should, but his difficulties were going to be of a different kind, and his worst enemy, both for himself and his men was not going to be the heat or the natives or the flies or the cyclones, but inactivity and boredom - how strange for a Salesian to be inactive and bored!

On Bishop Coppo's arrival, he found the situation difficult, and was at a loss to get around the impasse. One of his first moves was to bring in the suffering Fr. Rossetti from Lombadina and replace him with Fr. Siara. Bro. Gomez and Fr. Lopez were sent to Carnarvon, hundreds of miles away near Shark Bay, whilst he kept Fr. Setaro, Fr. Rossetti and Bro. Acerni with him at Broome. Bro. Asseli had developed appendicitis and had been hurriedly sent to Perth for treatment.

- UNEMPLOYED SALESIANS -

1924 In a letter to Fr. Rinaldi of 24th February, 1924, Bishop Coppo outlines the situation as it was, and expresses his unwillingness to ask the Pallotines to leave as they had already worked on the Mission for wellnigh 24 years and their only crime had been that they were Germans, not that they had mismanaged or not managed the Mission to the

satisfaction of the Holy See or the Australian Government. Some of his confreres on the Mission had been urging him to work for the withdrawal of the Pallotines, but he was not ready to do so, unless asked to do so by the Superiors. The Pallotine community consisted at the time of one priest and five lay brothers.

In another letter to Fr. Rinaldi, dated the very same day, Fr. Setaro, ten months after his arrival on the Mission, expressed his feelings as one dissatisfied with the situation, and referring to the presence of the Pallotines as a "misunderstanding". It is this letter which gives us a picture of the frustration of the little band, and their feelings of being up against an insurmountable obstacle of not being able to expand their work and not finding sufficient to occupy their time. It is he who tell us of the sufferings of Fr. Rossetti, who spent his time translating a book and praying. He calls him "a wonderful Salesian". There is reference made also to the talk of the local people, always ready to misconstrue, and who had already caused such trouble to the Pallotines. Fr. Setaro is afraid that they will talk about the number of religious in the house and the little work they are doing. And what can they do? Those at Carnarvon have no Mission to work, only a tiny parish. Lombadina is tiny, costly and out of the way and too close to the Pallotines at Beagle Bay. (The Bishop had made his base at Broome, leaving the Pallotines at Beagle Bay.) Bishop Coppo spent his time writing, receiving a few visitors, preaching on Sundays. He believes the Bishop suffers much on account of the situation, and the intense heat. He eats little, but his iron will keeps him going. The confreres are getting discouraged, due mainly to inactivity. They were all asking for work, but there was not enough for their own community. Pallotines were at Beagle Bay and had enough for their own community. At Lombadina after 19 months Fr. Siara had converted 12 aborigines. At Carnarvon Fr. Lopez had Sunday Mass to say and no other duties.

There was need to find work, and surely there was enough to be done in this area. Would a new Mission be the solution? But where? To the North, there were the Bénédictines at Drysdale River, and they had enough to do. The Pallotines were at Beagle Bay; they were sufficiently occupied. To the South there was nothing, only barren land with the nomad aborigines wandering about in groups of ten or twelve - who could hope to keep up with them? Inland were the Government Reserves, into which no white man could enter without special permission, let alone stay there and carry on Mission work. The position looked black. Perhaps the Benedictines at Drysdale River could assist. It was then decided to make an overland journey to their Mission to see if any further light could be shed on the situation.

- GONE WALKABOUT -

The trip was an enormous undertaking. The distance one way alone would be in the vicinity of 400 to 500 miles, and called for the crossing of the King Leopold Range as well as other no less formidable

ranges which ran right across their path. Closer to the Drysdale Mission were other ranges, all presenting major obstacles to the comparative "new chum" Salesians. Who today, with practically no knowledge of the bush and bushcraft, with only a smattering of English, by no means expert in horsemanship, still not accustomed to the rigours of the North Australian climate, would undertake a 500 mile trip on horseback? This was the stuff that our confreres of the first hour were made of. When the glories of the missionaries of other lands are sung, we should not be afraid to add our piece, for the Congregation has few who would be able to outstrip the constancy of this first courageous band of missionaries in Australia. Disappointments as to the possibility of a foundation, lack of support from those who had promised help, difficulties as regards language, slowness in communications, as well as troubles in establishing contact with the natives themselves, abject poverty in the mission buildings and surroundings, little contact with the outside world, the everlasting sameness of the bush which surrounded them on all sides for hundreds of miles. What could more sour the heart of a missionary than all this? Yes, they had come prepared for most of this, but so far they had not been able to get going and DO things. Yet they struggled on to overcome all these difficulties, knowing that it was obedience which had called them to this place, this work, and they were determined to see that it was not they who called a halt now that their hands had been put to the plough.

The journey to the Benedictine Mission was accomplished without any important incident, and to their disappointment, they found that the Benedictines could give no solution to their problem. There was simply not enough room for them. There was only one thing to do and that was to return to Broome and wait for a solution, either from Rome or Turin.

Getting back close to Broome again, they were surprised to find a native girl of about 14 wandering about in the bush alone. They had not seen signs of natives for some time, and it was difficult to find out where she was from or to what tribe she belonged. Fr. Siara did his best to find out her story, as he was a very keen anthropologist and had already started to compose a dictionary of the local dialects. Unable to find out much about her, it was decided to take her along with them and keep her at the mission until she could look after herself or be taken back to her tribe. She caused no trouble and on arrival back at Lombadina she was employed around the place, instructed in our faith and was baptised. Her health was weak, and before long she began to fail and eventually died after having received the Sacraments.

- TO STAY OR NOT -

At Lombadina, Fr. Siara found the mission in a dilapidated state. It was useless to try and repair the old buildings, so a start was made on new ones. First a rough wooden framework of freshly cut and untrimmed trees was erected and these covered with large sheets

of paperbark, the cheapest and handiest covering available. Flooring was not considered, so the earth was watered and pounded down to form a hard earthen floor. The dwelling for the community was a large one roomed affair, where everything was done - from saying Mass, to the eating and sleeping of the community. Later a small chapel was built and the missionaries had a bit more room to stretch their legs. Rough huts were also built for the natives who worked on the Mission.

The next thing to be done was to slowly make contact with the natives. They were those who were already familiar with the mission from earlier days but who had lost contact over the years that the mission had not been operating. These had to be brought back and new ones contacted. The number of natives in the area was so small at any time and many of them were nomads who wandered here and there with no fixed home. Often it entailed long journeys through the bush to contact these and more often than not whole weeks went by without seeing anybody. The ones who came in to the mission were fed and clothed as far as the meagre supplies of the missionaries would allow, but their resources were limited as supplies and mail arrived only when a lugger happened to be passing that way or somebody went down to Broome.

In Broome the Bishop and his assistants were trying to get things established. A lugger, costing in the vicinity of 4,000 pounds was purchased, and Bishop Coppo had already begun the building of the convent for the Sisters of St. John of God.

It had already become apparent to Bishop Coppo that the work in the Kimberleys was not going to be the great success it was hoped. He had written to the superiors in Turin explaining the position and advising them that houses had been offered the Salesians in the Eastern States, which would be possibly a better start for the Salesians in Australia than this failing mission situation. The Archbishop of Brisbane had offered the Salesians work at Mapleton; the Archbishop of Sydney had likewise offered them a house about 30 miles from the city; the Archbishop of Melbourne had also offered them work at Diamond Creek, any of which would offer greater promise than the Kimberleys, or, if the superiors chose, could serve as a base and house of rest for the men working in the Kimberleys.

The Superior Chapter discussed Bishop Coppo's reports of those offers, but refused the two Northern ones, deciding eventually to accept Dr. Mannix's offer of a site for a proposed agricultural school at Diamond Creek. Bishop Coppo himself had visited the site on his journey to the Kimberleys, coming in from the U.S.A. In a letter to Fr. Gusmano, Secretary of the Superior Chapter, dated 22.4.24, Bishop Coppo mentions that the property of Diamond Creek had been accepted, and says that Dr. Duhig had offered another property to the Salesians, this time in Brisbane itself.

It is another six months before the new house in Melbourne is mentioned again, but still no move had been made from Turin to send

men there. In a letter to Fr. Ricaldone, Bishop Coppo asks the superiors to hurry with their appointments, otherwise the Archbishop of Melbourne might believe that the Salesians were no longer interested.

- WHOSE SISTERS? -

There had been moves made about this time to amalgamate the Sisters of St. John of God, who were working in the Kimberleys with the Salesians with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Bishop Coppo had seriously considered this aggregation and had suggested it to the superiors. Writing to Don Rinaldi (11.12.24), he thanks him for having sent a copy of the Rule of the Sisters to him. He tells Fr. Rinaldi that he had spoken to the sisters about the rule and the aggregation, and of the sisters at Broome, all but two had signed a petition to join themselves to our sisters. He also mentions that two sisters had been destined by their superiors to come to Australia. In a later letter he mentions how this petition had been sent around the various convents of the Sisters of St. John of God, and that 22 out of the 24 sisters on the mission had signed, asking for aggregation to our sisters. Later when the situation with the Salesians worsened, Bishop Coppo dropped negotiations in this regard due to the fact that the Salesians looked as if they would be leaving the Kimberleys. Fr. Rinaldi made the final decision in a letter to Bishop Coppo (8.3.26) when he made it quite clear that the sisters were not to be aggregated to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, mainly due to a difference in spirit and religious observance.

Seeing that the property of Diamond Creek had been accepted, the superiors were anxious to find a man with experience, and above all a man with a good knowledge of English to be the first superior. Bishop Coppo mentions Fr. Cerutti as being the superiors' choice, and that he had been transferred from Cape Town to Melbourne. Fr. Cerutti left Cape Town and went to Turin for his orders, then to England to pick up a ship which would take him to Melbourne, via Cape Town. He was due to arrive in Melbourne in March 1925.

Also in Rome, the true nature of the situation was becoming evident. The embarrassing position of the two congregations on the same mission was evident to all, so in a letter to Mgr. Cattaneo, the Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Van Rossum, Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda Fidei, suggests that the Kimberleys be left in the hands of the Pallotines, and that the Salesians be transferred to the Vicariate of Queensland. This Vicariate had been canonically erected in 1887, the same year as the Kimberley Vicariate, but no Apostolic Vicar had ever been appointed. Indeed, no special work had ever been carried on in the area, which was estimated to contain in the vicinity of 18,000 aborigines. The work of the Vicariate was to be for the blacks alone. It was now moved that the Salesians take over this area, and that Bishop Coppo assume the title of first Vicar Apostolic.

Later Bishop Coppo was to express his willingness to move to Queensland and pointed out some of the advantages as being the better climate and much more fertile land than the Kimberleys, not to mention the obvious advantage of relieving the unpleasant situation which still existed in the Vicariate. He cautioned the superiors to go slowly in the affair, as it would never do to have another failure in Queensland.

- BISHOP COPPO'S DILEMMA -

With Fr. Cerutti due to arrive in Melbourne in March 1925, Bishop Coppo decided that he should go to Melbourne and assist him in the first steps of taking over the new property. Nothing had been formally agreed upon as regards the Diamond Creek property, rather were the superiors anxious that the position should be examined and a decision about the real acceptance made at a later date. He made the trip to Melbourne, and was there shortly after Fr. Cerutti's arrival. Fr. Rossetti, Bro. Gomez and Bro. Asseli were all at Diamond Creek, together with Bro. Verena, a lay brother who had accompanied Fr. Cerutti out.

Bishop Coppo had also accepted from the Apostolic Delegate a work of looking after the Italian migrants, and trying to organise a Society for their assistance. It was whilst on this trip South that the Bishop made the first steps in this work.

He made contact with the Italian community in Melbourne, then went to Brisbane, where he established "La Societa Italo-Australiana" as a mutual aid society for the Italian migrants. Following on its foundation, he went on a visitation of the Italian communities at Rockhampton, Ingham, Halifax, Seymour, Innisfail, Mourilyan, Cairns, Babinda, Townsville, Proserpine, and back to Brisbane.

It was whilst on this visit that he also obtained permission from the Commonwealth Government for two Pallotine priests to enter the mission of the Kimberleys, and relieve the strain on the "exiles" there. This entry of two more priests was not received with enthusiasm from some of the Salesians who were being bored to death in the same mission. "Why was it that two new priests were being sent in, when there was not enough work for those already there?" This seems to support the opinion earlier put forward that Bishop Coppo was in favour of keeping the Pallotines in the Kimberley Mission and withdrawing the Salesians. In a letter to Fr. Ricaldone of 14.4.25, written whilst still in Melbourne he wrote: "I don't see any future for our work in the Kimberleys." He went on to say that the only reason why Propaganda Fidei had entrusted the work to the Salesians was not that the work was too much for the Pallotines, nor that they were not working well, but because they were of German Nationality, and the Australian Government had restricted the movements of the missionaries and wanted only those missionaries in charge who belonged to those nations which had been allies of Australia in the 1914-1918 war. It also appears from this

letter that Rome was under the impression that there were something like 50,000 natives in the Kimberley area.

In regard to this same question further light is thrown on the point by another letter written by Bishop Coppo to Fr. Ricaldone in which again he says that the Holy See had sent the Salesians to the Kimberleys only on the chance that the Government would request the Pallotines to leave, but (a strange thing to say, by a man who had been made Vicar Apostolic)....! "The Holy See NEVER INTENDED THE PALLOTINES TO LEAVE."

From the letter of 5.10.25 from Bishop Coppo to Fr. Ricaldone:

"mi sono convinto che l'unico motive per cui la Santa Sede si e' rivolta a noi fu il timore che questo governo avrebbe cacciato di qui i Pallotini ... Da documenti che io conservo apparisce chiaramente che non fu mai intenzione della Santa Sede di allontanare di qui i sunnominati Pallotini, ma solo di sostituirli nel caso che ne venissero cacciati, perche Tedeschi ... io non POSSO PER COSCIENZA ADOPERARMI PER ALLONTONARLI."

From this it appears quite clear that Bishop Coppo entered into the sentiments of the Holy See and decided that the Salesian work in the Kimberleys was only to be temporary until the Australian Government should lift the ban on German nationals. Such a ban was lifted on January 1st, 1926. From that date Germans were free to enter and leave Australia and to move about at will. This meant that the Pallotines were once more able to receive men to reinforce their solely tried confrere. It was also time for the Salesians to withdraw, and even before that date the gradual withdrawal had been taking place.

- THE MISSION DISBANDS -

It is sad to see the gradual disintegration of the original group who had come to Australia so full of hope and confidence, and who had suffered so much and hung on so long to a cause which even the slowest must have seen was fading. They did not command, they had been sent by obedience and as long as their orders were to stay at the Kimberley mission, even though they were spending long lonely days, weeks, and months in uncongenial surroundings, in enforced idleness, they hung on, as Fr. Siara wrote in a letter (5.4.25) to Fr. Rinaldi, and were willing to stay in the Kimberleys if they could only find work. But now there was to be a withdrawal, and the group was to break up. Fr. Siara was to leave for Macao on 24.9.25. Fr. Rossetti, Bro. Gomez and another lay brother, possibly Bro. Verona, were to leave Melbourne on 3.10.25 also for Macao. Bishop Coppo was to return to Italy, Fr. Setaro, Bro. Acerni and Bro. Asseli were to go to Melbourne. Thus had the original group broken up, but the work at the Kimberleys had almost finished.

In Melbourne, things were not going to well. After much discussion and correspondence, it had been decided not to accept the property at Diamond Creek as it was merely a clearing in the bush, with not much attraction for an agricultural school nor a school of trades. Archbishop Mannix was anxious to have a final decision on the matter and was waiting for the Salesians to decide. Finally it was decided not to accept and to take instead the property at Sunbury, where formal possession was to take place on May 27th, 1927.

With the gradual disbanding of the Kimberley Missionaries, Bishop Coppo made a trip to Rome where he resigned as Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberleys on the 17th November, 1927.

With the gradual disbanding of the Kimberley Missionaries, Bishop Coppo made a trip to Rome where he resigned as Vicar Apostolic of the Kimberleys on the 17th November, 1927. The document formally announcing the closing of the Salesian mission in the Kimberleys is a letter of the Propaganda Fidei, Bishop Francesco Marchetti-Salvegiani of 22.11.27, to the superiors in Turin. In this letter, he refers to the entrusting of the Kimberley Mission to the Salesians in 1922. After difficulties created by World War 1 as regards the nationality of the missionaries were solved, the mission was once more able to return to the Pallotines. It was obvious, the letter continues, that there was not sufficient work there for the two congregations, nor means sufficient to develop the work. He mentions how Bishop Coppo had suggested that the Salesians return and be given another field of Apostolate. Then there is mention of Bishop Coppo's resignation, which had been accepted by the Holy Father and that His Lordship had been allowed to return to whatever work the superiors might choose. With expressions of gratitude the letter closes and formally closed the chapter of the Salesian work in the Kimberleys.

- PASTURES NEW -

In Melbourne a fresh start was being made at Sunbury at the old home of Sir William Clarke, and some of the confreres from the mission were now at work in this new field, whilst others had come in from overseas to assist in setting the work on a firm footing. Word had been received in Australia that the one house of this country was to be joined with the western province of the U.S.A. and the confreres looked forward to a visitation from the then provincial, Fr. Manassero, but Turin thought it better to find out at first hand what was going on in the furthestest house from headquarters, and accordingly sent Fr. Candela to make a visitation and set things off for a new start which was to take the work through many more difficult and trying years to the "better days" which it enjoys in these our times. But the story of "Rupertswood" is another chapter.

Fr. Manassero was sent to Australia in 1926 to inspect the "Missions"; when he arrived in Sydney, he found a registered letter with the Apostolic Delegate, in which Fr. Rinaldi announced the closing

of the Kimberley Mission and ordered him to start something in Melbourne. Then, Fr. Manassero went back to Turin and returned to Australia via U.S.A. taking with him Fr. Michael Maiocco (April 27th).

The racehorse stable in "Rupertswood" was fixed to receive the first boys but this building burned down on January 29th, 1928. Then Fr. Candela was sent via U.S.A. and reached Sydney with Fr. Fedrigotti on January 10th, 1929. Fr. Diamond was with them on a visit to his people in New Zealand.

PART II - DIAMOND CREEK

1925 The Salesian Mission at Kimberley had now virtually come to an end. A new era, the two and a half year period at Diamond Creek was about to begin. When the superior of the new house, Fr. Cerutti, accompanied by Bro. Robert Verona, arrived in Melbourne on March 4th, 1925, he found that Bishop Coppo had travelled down from Broome to welcome them. Fr. Rossetti and Bro. Gomez had also come from the North West to join the new community destined for Diamond Creek.

For a fortnight the Salesians were the guests of the Jesuit Fathers at St. Ignatius' Richmond, through the kindness of Father de Francesco, S.J. A gathering of 400 Italians officially welcomed them in the Richmond Parish on March 8th, and a collection raised 7 pounds, nine shillings and ten pence. Bishop Coppo distributed pictures of Mary Help of Christians to all present, possibly as a memento of their generosity.

On March 19th, the official opening of the House at Diamond Creek took place - St. Joseph's feast. The four Salesians took up residence in the presbytery and shared the hospitality of the parish priest, Father John Norris, who was not due to leave for his new parish of Epping till after Easter. The same sense of bewilderment and rootlessness is met here as in the Kimberleys. The Salesians felt like shepherds without sheep. Fr. Cerutti notes in his diary: "We do not know yet what will be the scope and nature of our work here; for the time being we will look after the parish." There was already some vague idea of an Agricultural school, but due to the unsuitable conditions of soil and terrain, the local residents advised against it. With the arrival of Bro. Caesar Asselli, an experienced farmer, the community at Diamond Creek was now complete. Only Bro. Celestine Acerni was left to hold the precarious fort at Broome.

- HARD BOILED EGGS -

Letters were dispatched at frequent intervals to Fr. Rinaldi and Fr. Ricaldone. The main burden of their contents was that the work here, as in the Kimberleys, should be abandoned, as prospects for further developments were bleak. Bishop Coppo was all for moving lock, stock and barrel to Brisbane, where he had many influential friends, in the Italian-Australian mutual help society which he had previously founded. In Turin there seemed to be a confusion of two separate issues. The Kimberley Mission and the Diamond Creek venture seemed to be treated as a single entity, and were bracketed together in replies to Fr. Cerutti's appeal to leave Diamond Creek.

Several motives had prompted this decision; the heirs of the Briar Hill property (Diamond Creek) were contesting the will; there was no money in the house and debts were accumulating; there was no prospect of any distinctive Salesian work; and the proposed property was not suitable for an agricultural school.

While Fr. Cerutti was exchanging letters with Turin, he in turn received a telegram from Father Setaro in Broome, ordering three of the Diamond Creek confreres to leave for Macao, and signed by the prefect general, Don Ricaldone. That was easier said than done, as there was not a penny to pay for their passage. Eventually Bishop Coppo from the West sent the needed financial help. Second class passages were booked for Fr. Rossetti, Bro. Gomez and Bro. Verona for Hong Kong for a total sum of 94 pounds, 10 shillings. Eventually after some delay the S.S. Zanda sailed from Melbourne on October 6th. Driving to the ship from Richmond, Bro. Robert Verona knocked down a motor cyclist who escaped with minor injuries, and with a promise of reimbursement for injuries and damages, which Father Cerutti "hoped to goodness would be reasonable".

Only two Salesians were now left in Melbourne, Father Cerutti and Bro. Caesar. The sad story of the Kimberleys was being repeated, with a long series of disappointments and frustrations, yet Our Blessed Lady was preparing a harvest once the seed of sorrow and self sacrifice had died in the ground. At this time Father Cerutti refused an offer of Bishop Coppo to send an aspirant to Diamond Creek, on the grounds that the place was unsuitable. As the finance of the parish could no longer support her, the housekeeper, Miss J.J. Niblett, left. How apt was the Strenna that the Rector read to Bro. Caesar in their two man community on December 31st, 1925. "Let us seek souls, not money, nor honours, nor dignity." They were kept awake on this their first New Year's Eve in Australia by "concerts and noises till past midnight", from some neighbouring merry makers!

Their daily fare is set out in detail in Father Cerutti's diary: "Breakfast: porridge, bread, butter and coffee; Dinner: vegetable soup (thick) hard boiled eggs and salad - fruit when any; Tea: bread butter, coffee, cake when any." This vegetarian diet was worthy of an earlier monastic age.

- A JESUIT CONSPIRACY -

1926 The year 1926 was uneventful. For these twelve months the Salesian work in Australia marked time at Diamond Creek. And yet, the humble, patient work of the two isolated confreres in a county parish was soon to be blessed. It was good to see that at least there was now enough money to send 20 Masses to Don Ricaldone, together with 3 pounds for a Salesian Bulletin subscription and 5 pounds to aid the cause of Dominic Savio.

1927. The Salesians' year of blessing was 1927. After a good start when Fr. Cerutti was able to send 25 pounds for 100 Masses to our missions in China, and after the Kinglake Church had been blessed and opened debt free, (thanks to a donation of 57 pounds, 4 shillings and 7 pence from Dr. Mannix), a letter arrived from Fr. Manassero, Provincial of the U.S.A. In it he announced his intention of coming to Diamond Creek to study the problems there.

On April 28th, Father Manassero was met at Spencer Street Station and taken to see the Archbishop and the administrator, Father Lonergan. With him was Father Michael Maiocco, whose genial nature, priestly zeal and agricultural interests were to endear him to Salesians, boys and co-operators for the next fifteen years. For a week or so, Father Manassero explored the possibilities of nearby properties for an agricultural school, including the legacy of Briar Hill (Diamond Creek), and Miss Ford's property at Kinglake. Nothing was found suitable. The notes of this period show that Father Manassero suffered from acute migraine headaches. The apparent futility of the work plus the financial problems would have caused any man a headache, but Fr. Manassero was a chronic sufferer prior to his arrival, and a saintly sufferer at that.

Again the good Jesuit Fathers came to the rescue. On a casual suggestion from Father de Francesco, S.J. an approach was made to the agents of the "Rupertswood" property. The first visit to "Rupertswood" took place on May 4th, the Patronage of St. Joseph. Father Manassero was so impressed by the suitability of the place that he immediately decided on its purchase, provided terms were reasonable. What impressed him and Father Maiocco was the spacious building, the farm already functioning, the proximity of the creek, and the supply of good drinking water. These same advantages had led the Jesuits at one time to consider buying the residence, but they had let the project drop until now when Father de Francesco mentioned the property to the Salesians.

- MASS IN THE BILLIARD ROOM -

Although the Archbishop at first thought that "Rupertswood" was too elegant, and above their means to run, he eventually changed his mind, promising to lend help towards its purchase. On May 8th, Mr. Naughton, the proprietor of "Rupertswood" drove to Diamond Creek to offer terms that Father Cerutti records "were very reasonable". He offered the mansion with 105 acres of land for 30,000 pounds at 4%, with 5,000 pounds to be paid in cash and a reduction of 5,000 pounds if the rest was paid within five years. His Grace negotiated for a further reduction of 5,000 pounds which he got. On reflection, Father Manassero suggested that a further 731 acres next to the property should be bought for an eventual agricultural school. To

this the Archbishop made no reply, but he again displayed his sympathy by promising an immediate loan of 5,000 pounds.

In the meantime a telegram from Don Rinaldi had arrived in Sydney from Turin authorizing Father Manassero, who had gone there to see the Apostolic Delegate, to accept the Sunbury foundation. In reply to Fr. Manassero's second request for "three English priests", Don Rinaldi's telegram vaguely read: "I am writing." A misunderstanding had also arisen with Bishop Coppo. Right from the start the good man had been deeply hurt at not having been informed of Father Manassero's arrival and intentions in Australia. The Bishop was now on the point of leaving for Italy. All this time the Salesian confreres were still resident at Diamond Creek or in Melbourne.

At last the formalities of the "Rupertswood" contract were concluded significantly on May 24th, when Dr. Mannix visited the property for the first time. His Grace encouraged the confreres, telling them that he had said Mass that morning for the development of the Salesian work. With no affectation, it could be said of Rupertswood, founded on the patronal feast of the Society and of Australia, what was spoken of the Turin Basilica: "This is my House; from here my glory will spread."

In June Dr. Mannix took Fr. Manassero and Fr. Maiocco to visit a number of Victorian Reformatories, including those at Phillip Island and the Salvation Army Home at Box Hill, where they found several Catholic lads, as no diocesan institution catered for them. They were moved by this thought.

Back at Diamond Creek, Bro. Caesar Asselli was perpetually professed on June 8th, and he took up residence with Fathers Manassero and Maiocco at Rupertswood on June 17th, 1927. On this day the first Mass was said in the Smoke Room, now the men's refectory, by Father Maiocco. Again, what a humble Eucharistic start for a house that was later to have the privilege of holding the largest annual Eucharistic Procession in Australia!

When Father John Cerutti joined them on June 27th at Rupertswood, glad to have ended his eremitic life, the work of the transition period at Diamond Creek could be considered at an end. Having come fresh from Capetown to the unsettled conditions at Diamond Creek, Father Cerutti had shown heroic fortitude, relying as his notes show, on adherence to the Rule for Don Bosco's blessing. Once again God had, as the Portuguese say, written straight with crooked lines. A newer, and for the most part, a brighter chapter was about to commence for the Salesians in Australia.

The above information is taken from a notebook kept by Father John Cerutti during his time as Parish Priest at Diamond Creek.

PART III - SALESIAN PIONEERS AT SUNBURY

The brief history of Rupertswood's early days is taken from the house chronicle. As there are no diaries or correspondence to rely on, as there were in the case of the Kimberleys and Diamond Creek, the following outline will necessarily be sketchy and deficient.

We have already seen how Father Manassero and Father Maiocco visited Rupertswood for the first time on May 3rd, 1927, and how impressed they had been with its suitability for an agricultural school. With Dr. Mannix's blessing and financial backing, the contract with Mr. Naughton for the sale of the house and property was completed on May 24th. The history proper of Salesian work at Sunbury can be dated from June 17th, 1927 when Father Manassero, Father Maiocco and Brother Caesar took up residence there, with Father Maiocco saying the first Mass in the Smoke Room, the present Men's refectory. On the same day they were given initial encouragement when Mr. Haughton offered to seed the paddocks for them at his own expense. A good start had been made.

Only a week later the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Cataneo, came to bless the house in the presence of some 400 guests; surely a strain on the newly established kitchen! By Don Rinaldi's official appointment Father Manassero had been nominated Rector, Father Maiocco Prefect and Father Cerutti, newly arrived from Diamond Creek, Confessor and assistant to the Prefect. Their first decision was to fit out the existing stables as a dormitory and study hall. Before the year was out Father Manassero made a trip to Brisbane at the invitation of Dr. Duhig to investigate the possibility of setting up two agricultural schools there. By December another twelve Confrere had arrived from Europe to swell the Rupertswood staff, one of them Father Sullivan from Cape Town, taking over the office of Catechist and Prefect of Studies. Shortly before this their first Christmas at Sunbury, it was decided that the chapel should be moved to the Ball room.

- FIRE IN THE STABLES -

1928. The new year 1928 began disastrously when during the night of January 28th a fire broke out, destroying the recently adapted stable which was to be the dormitory and study hall. There was some consolation in Dr. Mannix's generous gesture of forwarding one hundred pounds the same day, but there was still the serious problem of how to accommodate any incoming students. Meanwhile Father Manassero had left for Italy with his problems, leaving Father Maiocco in charge. As the Kimberley Mission had now been officially handed back to the Holy See by Bishop Coppo, Brother Celestine Acerni arrived at Rupertswood from the West. By the end of the year Father John Setaro was to follow him.

Some comfort was given to Father Maiocco and the pioneer staff when it was learnt that Dr. Mannix had arranged for the coming of the Sacred Heart Sisters to look after the domestic needs of the house. They were further heartened by the return of Father Manassero in June with the news that Australia was a "Visitatoria", the official Visitor, and that the plans for the new building had been approved. To have accredited teachers at Sunbury, Father Manassero decided to send the clerics John Biloni and Joseph Della Torre to school at the Christian Brothers, Victoria Parade, under the formidable tutelage of Brother Marlow. The step showed clear sight and enterprise.

However, despite the obvious progress, some of the newcomers at Rupertswood found the early difficulties more than they could bear. Their discontent came to a head on July 24th when a group of confreres sailed back to Europe. As the house chronicler gloomily puts it: "A very black day for the House when four priests leave with their unending pieces of baggage. No money left in the House". There was so little money, indeed, that on the following day when a load of band instruments arrived at Port Melbourne, Father Maiocco was unable to take delivery for want of cash, but fortunately an early co-operator in the Customs freed them of duty. In later years Father Maiocco used to relate how they depended on catching rabbits for their meals at this period.

As a result of these set backs Father Manassero was often down in bed with severe migraine headaches, but he had one last trump card up his sleeve. He boldly cabled Turin. "Either decide general withdrawal or immediate loan of money. Prepare in secret to send me Bortolo Fedrigotti as he has useful titles from America as well as speaking English and German, besides being useful for propaganda. Manassero." Both his requests finally bore fruit when the U.S. Provincial Father Pittini arranged for a loan to be brought to Australia by Father Candela, and when, after some objection by the Goshen staff, Father Fedrigotti was allowed to accompany Father Candela.

Although not as yet out of the wood by any means, things seemed a little brighter for the new house, especially when Father Sheehan of the Melbourne diocese donated five hundred pounds to the Salesian work. However, Dr. Mannix was impatient to see the educational work begun, as still no pupils had been accepted, and he expressed his strong displeasure at the repeated delays.

- SUNBURY'S FIRST PUPIL -

1929. The Archbishop's wish was finally satisfied when Rupertswood's first pupils arrived on February 11th, 1929. The first boy enrolled was William O'Day. The first Spiritual Retreat was preached by Father Fedrigotti and Father Diamond, who had come to visit relatives in Sydney. Another event that has become an annual institution at Sunbury was initiated in that year. The Knights of the Southern Cross held

their picnic in the grounds, some seventy pounds being raised for the Salesians by the 528 men present. Before Don Candela left for Turin in March he was able to pay back both the Archbishop and Mr. Naughton for loans and interest due. The De Marco Brothers were also paid four thousand, six hundred and fourteen pounds for the new building. At this time Mr. McCormack, the Shire Secretary, took up residence in the Lodge, renting it on a ten year term. He proved of great help to the work.

In the scholastic field good work had already been done in as short a time, for when the first inspector, Miss Julien Flynn visited the school in May, she expressed her complete satisfaction with all the classes she saw. The first wards of state were also received at this time when six boys arrived from the Salvation Army Home at Bayswater. When Father Manassero left for Turin in May, after his heroic pioneer work was done, Father Fedrigotti took charge of the house until the new Rector, Father Patrick O'Grady, arrived some three months later. He was delighted with his reception from the newly formed school band. When the Archbishop visited the House soon afterwards to attend the Boys' sports and Entertainments, he was so deeply impressed to see the Irish flag, specially bought by Fr. O'Grady, flying from the tower for the occasion.

Towards the end of the first school year five boys made their first Communion, the same day as the profession of Brother Aman, Brother Schuppe and Brother Willibold. In the last term a decision was made to have four hours of class in the morning, and for all the boys to be engaged in manual work in the afternoon. To mar this final term several boys ran away late in September, Father O'Grady gave the offenders a stern warning and threatened that in future he would use the stick on those who ran away or induced others to do so. This first scholastic year was brought to a close by a fine entertainment.

It is evident from the plain, matter of fact entries in the House chronicle from the end of 1929 onwards that the house had now settled down to a normal routine and that the turbulent, adventurous early days were, for the most part, over. After two discouraging years without a single pupil, the Salesian work had struck root in Rupertswood's fertile soil, and they had trusted, as Father Rinaldi had urged them a year earlier, in the protection of Mary, Help of Christians with good results.

- FIRST EUCHARISTIC FESTIVAL -

1930. By contrast with the first two and a half years at Rupertswood, the year 1930 was an uneventful one. Perhaps the highlight of the year was the first ordination of a Salesian priest in Australia, when the deacon Emilio Dabove was ordained in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne.

In the same year too, Father Michael Maiocco returned to Italy for a well earned rest and for what was to be his last visit home. It is interesting to note that when the Apostolic Delegate visited Rupertswood in November, he was accompanied by his young secretary, Dr. Gilroy, the future Cardinal.

By the end of 1930 five more Salesians had arrived, including the cleric Henry Gilman and Brothers John Ledda and Sebastian Durando.

1931. As far as the Salesians name in Australia is concerned, 1931 was an epoch making year. April 26 saw the first Eucharistic procession at Rupertswood to honour Blessed Don Bosco. From the brief entry in the Chronicle, "It was such a success that it was decided to hold it each year". The Festival has grown into the greatest annual event in the Catholic life of Australia.

Much forethought and planning had gone into it. Father O'Grady had summoned the first committee meeting in the office of Mr. J.J. Brady in Collins Street, Melbourne. The Committee appointed Dr. Paul Rowan as chairman; Mr. C. O'Connor and Mr. J. Brady as vice chairmen; Fr. P. O'Grady as treasurer, and Mr. J. Morrissey as the organising secretary. Amongst the eleven other names on the committee list, that of Mr. J.J. O'Neil is the most familiar. The weather for the occasion was perfect and "... tons of thousands from all the metropolis and country districts attended."

There was another first this year when the Rector's feast was kept on St. Patrick's day. A fine Rector's gift was the condonation of 10,000 pounds from the debt that Mr. Naughton gave about this time. In July the first four Australian aspirants, including John Brennan, sailed for England to try their vocation in the novitiate there. At this time too, the Sacred Heart Sisters decided to move out of Rupertswood, transferring to Mora House in the city.

A new foundation was in the offing, as Dr. Mannix urged the Salesians to take over a proposed Boys' Reformatory at Mornington. As a result of this suggestion, Father O'Grady, Father Fedrigotti, and Father Maiocco visited "Sunnyside", Mornington, to "... look into its suitability as a Boys' Reformatory."

On forwarding the proposal to Turin, they received a telegram from Don Rinaldi: "Accept the Reformatory on principle, but reserve the right to examine the conditions." In the House meanwhile, Father Fedrigotti had become Prefect of Studies as well as prefect. A new music teacher and handyman was employed before the year was out when Mr. Cyril McCarthy came to stay.

- ENTER THE FRIESIANS -

1932. The question of the Mornington Reformatory was the dominating theme through the following year 1932. To settle it officially Father

O'Grady set sail for Europe in May and returned in October with the news that the Superiors in Turin found the conditions unsuitable, and, in any case, they lacked the personnel. Dr. Mannix had shown himself displeased with the Salesians for their tardiness in giving a definite answer to his proposal. The second Eucharistic Procession had attracted some 20,000 from all over Victoria on April 24th, and was already a red letter day in the Catholic calendar of the State. In the last term a German aviator, Captain Bertram, who had been saved by Catholic missionaries while lost in flight, visited the House and took movies of his rousing reception at Rupertswood.

1933 From an agricultural viewpoint 1933 marked the start of a new era for the House. In July that year the first three Friesian cows were brought from Mr. Gilmore of Yarrowalla South "as the foundation of a special herd that we hope to establish."

It was to be a year of blessings mixed with sorrows. On September 24th, Deacons John Biloni and Joseph Della Torre were ordained priests in the Cathedral by Dr. Mannix. At the same time many in the House were seriously sick with influenza. Although he was ill himself the Catechist, Fr. Setaro, insisted on looking after the sick and attending the ordinations. Three days later he was taken to Mora House, seriously ill, where he died at nine o'clock in the evening of September 30th. His Grace presided at the funeral on the second of October, when about forty priests attended. It was the first time that the Angel of Death had visited the Salesians in Australia. Father Setaro was laid to rest in the Sunbury cemetery, but the remains were transferred to the Rupertswood cemetery in 1956. Only a month before his death he had received an obedience to go to San Francisco and the ticket had already been booked, but Providence had seen fit to let him await the resurrection day in the land of his labours. He is still spoken of fondly as surrounded by boys crowding to look through his telescope; leading the walks and stopping to buy ice creams in the Sunbury township en route; being sensitive about his short stature which obliged him to use the steps to open the tabernacle when on supply at St. Ambrose's, Brunswick; and zealously spreading devotion to the Sacred Heart throughout the House.

Looking at the development of Salesian work in Australia since his death over thirty years ago, we can see the significance of the text: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground dieth, the grain itself remaineth alone."

Before 1933 was out the newly ordained Father John Biloni was named Prefect of Studies, and a new arrival from England was the cleric Edward Power.

- THE CANONIZATION FESTIVAL -

1934. Don Bosco's Canonization year 1934 was to see a tremendous crowd, estimated at between sixty and seventy thousand, attending the

Eucharistic Festival on March 25th. This figure still stands as a record and probably will never be bettered. Photographs show the vast crowd at Benediction time, covering practically the entire arena.

The Railways put no limits on their rail services and parishes throughout the Archdiocese organised buses and furniture vans to leave from the church doors after the last Mass. During this year Fr. O'Grady went to New Zealand for a month or so, on a propaganda tour. One of the pioneer lay brothers, Brother Caesar Asselli, returned to Italy in June.

After the death of Father Trinchieri in California news reached Australia that the new Provincial was Father Ambrose Rossi, and that the two provinces of the U.S.A. had been fused into one for the time being.

In September there was Confirmation for the first time in the Rupertswood Chapel when 34 boys were confirmed. They had been examined the week before by the Archdiocesan Inspector, Dr. M. Beovich, now the Archbishop of Adelaide.

On November 28th, the future novices sailed to England. Alan McDonald, Terrence Jennings and James Hamilton. With his usual kindness, Dr. Mannix had forwarded 50 pounds towards the travellers' fares.

The early sacrifices and the apparently futile labours were now bearing fruit in the vocations that were coming from within the school itself: the Salesian educational system had once again been justified.

- FATHER O'GRADY AS PATRIARCH -

1935 Although it might seem an arbitrary division, there are usually three periods in the life of every religious house - establishment, consolidation and expansion. If the years of Father Manassero's and Father O'Grady's rectorship saw the establishment of the work at Sunbury, those during Father Dunne's term of office can be considered the years of consolidation. This period extended roughly from 1936 to 1939.

The Salesians lost a good benefactor in 1935 with the death in Queensland of Mr. W. Haughton, from whom the Salesians had acquired the property. A Month's Mind was held in the school chapel with the Naughton family present.

It was a year of building in the farm section as Mr. Morrison, besides extending the milking shed, had erected a hayshed. Evidently the dairy had made quick progress in the few years of its existence as the Rupertswood friesians, entered in the Royal Melbourne Show for the first time, gained one first prize and two seconds.

A further compliment was paid the dairy when the Department of

Agriculture bought a Sunbury bull, Rupertswood Inka Joe, in October. In October also, a concrete altar to be used for the Eucharistic Procession was built. For the first time the Procession was advanced to December in the hope of getting better weather. A welcome donation at this period was the gift of 1,000 pounds to Father Fedrigotti by Mr. Cyril McCarthy for a Burse for a student to the priesthood.

Before the year was out, Father O'Grady announced the coming of a new Rector, Father Dunne, who arrived on November 25th in time for the Eucharistic Festival. "Rupertswood" also maintained its good record for vocations when two aspirants left for the novitiate in India.

1936. The fine patriarchal figure of Father O'Grady in his three quarter length coat had become a byword in the Melbourne Archdiocese, and it was appropriate that he should celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his priesthood in that city before his departure early in 1936. A large crowd farewelled him before he sailed to California in the Monterey on March 28th.

He had been a very successful propaganda man and had boosted the Salesian name in Catholic circles during his years in Australia. (He was to die on Don Bosco's birthday, as Don Bosco had predicted, August 16, 1943, and is buried in the Salesian cemetery at Richmond, California, U.S.A.)

Another departure in 1936 was that of Father Joseph Della Torre who left for San Francisco. As compensation, Father Emmanuel Stettmayer arrived on the "Oronsay" in October to take up duties at Rupertswood.

There was much activity in the agricultural section in the same era with further prizes at the Show, the acquisition of a new Massey Harris tractor, and the levelling of the fields along the railway line for the purpose of irrigation.

The school's reputation had evidently spread to episcopal circles for visitors that year included Bishop McGuire of Townsville, Bishop McCarthy of Bendigo, and Bishop Raible of the Kimberleys. A few days after Christmas, Rupertswood had its first provincial visitation when Father Ambrose Rossi arrived.

- THE KNIGHTS WITH NO BEER -

1937. Father Rossi lost no time in the New Year, 1937, for on New Year's Day he and the House Chapter visited an elevated section of ground on Rupertswood's property near the Racecourse, selecting it as a suitable site for the future Aspirantate. The next day Father Rossi had an interview with Archbishop Mannix, and then travelled to Brisbane to seek information about Dr. Duhig's old proposal of two

agricultural schools. Eventually nothing came of it, as the conditions were not acceptable to Father Rossi. On his return, the Provincial preached the Retreat and infused new life into the House before leaving for America.

Apparently it was a hot dry summer that year as a minor disaster occurred at Rupertswood on February 28. As the chronicle entry for that day laconically puts it: "Annual gathering of the Knights - only 500 present, with the falling away in numbers due to the prohibition of beer!"

A link with early history of "Rupertswood" was broken in May when the antique furniture of the House was sold by order of the Provincial, who considered it out of place in a religious house.

There was another ordination in 1937, that of Father Henry Gilman, who left for London four months later. New arrivals or returning confreres were Father Fitzgibbon, Brother Brennan and Brother Confeggi.

For the first time, the numbers at the Eucharistic Festival were well down, due to the scare of the infantile paralysis epidemic. Some schools were closed and children were discouraged from attending public gatherings. Some authorities had done their best to prohibit the Festival altogether that year.

Once again the Naughton family proved good benefactors when Mr. Frank Naughton gave Father Dunne 500 pounds, the first instalment towards building a school as a memorial to his family.

- MAGAZINE VENTURE -

1938. In January 1938 there saw the light of day Volume One, Number One of "The Help of Christians", the magazine that was to become eventually the "Salesian Bulletin". It featured articles on the Co-operators, Lepanto, Don Bosco, a history of the Festival, and "Rupertswood" news. Writing under the nom de plume of "Father Christopher", Father John Biloni ran a children's corner that featured such gems as: "If you had been Our Lady, what would you have done when Our Lord was lost in the Temple?" "I would have prayed to Saint Anthony to find Him." In that same year, "Father Christopher" was to visit his family in Italy for the first time in many years.

The wonderful record of vocations was kept up in 1938 when four more aspirants, including William Naylor and Peter Swain, left for England in August. It was the best year yet for the Dairy, as besides winning an array of prizes at the Royal Melbourne Show, "Rupertswood" got first prize in the district clean milk competition.

Just before the Festival, Father Dunne announced that Father Joseph Ciantar would succeed him as Rector within the week. Father Dunne returned to England in December, his consolidating work over,

taking with him another aspirant in Adrian Papworth.

Father Ciantar's arrival on November 29 marked a turning point for Salesian history in Australia. With a House well established, with a regular supply of vocations, and with the Salesian name now well known, Father Ciantar turned to thoughts of expansion.

The Salesian work had already come a long way from the depressing years in the Kimberleys and the interim at Diamond Creek, but even the most optimistic could hardly have foreseen that within ten years the motherhouse at Sunbury would branch out to staff four new Salesian foundations.

- ENTHUSIASTIC DYNAMO -

1939 After his arrival in 1939 Father Ciantar's first act was to send the confreres, in relays, to Hepburn Springs for a holiday, their first since the foundation of the House in 1927. All the boys went by bus to visit them at Spa View where they were staying. The second instalment of another five hundred pounds from Mr. Frank Naughton came at this time.

In his enthusiasm the new Rector was evidently overtaking himself too soon after his arrival. Whilst preaching the confreres' retreat on January 23rd Father Ciantar fainted, toppling over backwards from his chair to the consternation of all the retreatants. After a few days rest in bed he was back to his normal bouncing self. On his first feast on April 26th, he was able to enjoy the stage presentation of the "Seed of Martyrs" in the Drill Hall.

For the first time May 24th was kept as a public feast, with the clergy and co-operators invited to dinner in honour of Australia's Patroness. That evening also saw the Premiere of the Film of St. John Bosco in the Cathedral Hall, in the presence of the Archbishop and a large crowd. Actually there had already been a private screening of the film to a select audience in the basement of St. Francis' Church in March. It met with an enthusiastic response, and within the next three months Father Ciantar was busy showing it in many Parish Halls and as far afield as Adelaide.

On July 23rd Deacon Edward Power was ordained to the priesthood. At this time too, some Old Boys made a retreat at their old school. In August Father Ciantar announced that the Danelli sisters intended to offer us their property at Brunswick as a Festive Oratory, the first news of Salesian expansion since 1927. Congratulating the Salesians at the Eucharistic Festival, Dr. Mannix expressed his delights at the proposed Boys' Club. In December Brother Jennings returned from England to join the Sunbury community.

- INVASION OF BRUNSWICK -

1940 With 1940 opening under the cloud of a Second World War, the second permanent Salesian foundation was opened at Brunswick. After Father John Biloni had been announced as the new rector of the Club and Hostel, the foundation stone was laid before a big crowd on Don Bosco's feast day. Although absent in New Zealand, the Archbishop sent a cable message: "Offered Holy Sacrifice this morning for God's blessing on your great work."

The official opening of the Club took place on May 19th. Speakers included the Archbishop, Father Ciantar, Father Power, P.P., Mr. B. Santamaria, and Mr. Cremean, M.L.A. His Grace expressed his conviction that "the boys of today are no worse than those of the past." He thanked the Salesians and gave fifty pounds towards a bed in the Hostel, with an eye to the day he would be kicked out of Raheen. After being captivated by Father John's charming manner he wasn't certain whether his name was Biloni or Maloney. Some two thousand five hundred pounds was raised by an appeal and collections, leaving a debt of four thousand pounds on the Club. On the following weekend, Father Ciantar despatched a horde of boys, armed with boxes reading, "Help us to help your boys", who swarmed over the nonplussed neighbourhood. One group was forcibly ejected, with full boxes, after gatecrashing into the crowd at the Brunswick Football Ground. A few days later a two day bazaar in the Club hall raised one hundred and thirty seven pounds. It had been a hectic week.

On September 8th the new community took up residence at Brunswick when Father Ciantar celebrated the First Mass. Father Maiocco was on the staff with Father Biloni. Operating every night, the Club immediately had 250 active members with 170 on the waiting list. Initial activities included Father Maiocco's choir and band. Of great assistance in the running of the Club were the aspirants waiting to enter the novitiate in January.

Meanwhile life was going on apace at Rupertswood where the Apostolic Delegate, Dr. Panico, visited in November. He gave faculties for the Novitiate to be opened at Sunbury. The school year ended with the feast of Christian Doctrine kept by a catechetical competition in the presence of Monsignor Hannan.

- THE FIRST NOVITIATE -

1941 By a special Rescript, Rupertswood became the Salesian Novitiate in Australia in 1941. The Novitiate chapel, study, dormitory and refectory were blessed on the evening before Don Bosco's feast. Father Ciantar was to be Novice Master, Father Power Socius. The first novices were Wallace Cornell, Kevin O'Leary, John Murphy and John Neale. They received the habit on March 19th St. Joseph's feast.

In May Father Maiocco was taken to Sacred Heart Hospital,

Moreland, but came home three months later seemingly better. As it was the Centenary year of the Salesian work (the Bartholemew Carelli - sacristy incident), as well as the 100th anniversary of Don Bosco's ordination, various celebrations were held throughout the year. These included a dinner for the clergy at Brunswick Club, a Centenary Ball at the Brunswick Town Hall, and local festivities at Rupertswood on December 8th. A highlight of the Centenary Year was the attractive commemoration issue of the Help of Christians printed specially for the occasion.

On the evening of the Festival Father Ciantar announced that two clerics, Brother Curran and Brother Drohan, had arrived at Cairns from Japan, and would be in Sunbury in time for the procession. On meeting the new arrivals at the Festival, Dr. Mannix assured them that the great crowd "hadn't come to Rupertswood merely to welcome them." On Don Bosco's feast the first four novices were professed.

1942. There were to be several heavy crosses for the Salesians to carry in 1942. Early in the year Dr. O'Keefe had ordered Father Michael a complete rest, but still he showed no improvement. The shadow of the Pacific War came closer home when the local constable, Mr. McNamara, gave notice that all at Rupertswood had to hold themselves in readiness to leave the district within 24 hours in case of a Japanese invasion. In February all the aliens in the House were paraded before an Australian Army Captain.

- JAPANESE SPIES AT RUPERTSWOOD -

Capitalizing on the war situation that "vile rag", Smith's Weekly (now fortunately defunct) published on February 28th a "horrible, vulgar and insulting" article on Rupertswood. In retrospect the cloak-and-dagger tone of the article is ludicrous with the insinuation of hidden radios, concealed arms, two newly arrived Japanese spies, etc..... but at the time it was calculated to cause untold damage to the Salesian name. Dr. Lyons, the Administrator of the Cathedral, took a serious view of the matter and there was talk of libel charges. Father Ciantar was called to the Cathedral where a letter was drafted for the Minister of the Army and for the papers. The next issue of the Advocate came out with a stout defence of the Salesian name, while a meeting at the Sunbury Shire Hall rallied to the Salesian cause. Mr. McMahon, Mr. McCormack and Mr. Johnson were the speakers. In the long run the scurrilous charges of the anonymous writer did more good than harm, as a wave of sympathy came our way.

Every Sunday throughout 1942 Father Ciantar made an appeal to the various churches of the diocese, raising as much as two hundred pounds in some parishes, perhaps thanks to Smith's Weekly!

In June Dr. Mannix visited Father Michael in the Sacred Heart Hospital but Father's heart condition had deteriorated so badly that on September 3rd he was anointed. Again later that month the Archbishop paid him a visit. It was obvious that he would not last long and on October 28th he made his last entry in his diary that he kept so conscientiously over the years. On Saturday, October 31st, the day before the Festival, Father Michael Maiocco, the pioneer priest of Salesian work in Sunbury passed to his reward.

At the Requiem Mass at St. Margaret Mary's, North Brunswick, Dr. Mannix referred to him as "a pure, gentle, genial soul". "From the first I was attracted by Father Michael's genial and kindly character. I looked upon him as one of the ablest of the Salesian Fathers, and regarded him as a close personal friend." It was remarked that even in death his smile did not leave him. As a priest he had radiated goodness in a number of spheres - at St. Vincent's Orphanage as chaplain for many years, in agricultural circles as Farm Manager, and above all as a Salesian among his boys, both at Rupertswood and at Brunswick. His saintly memory lives on amongst them even today.

Due to the war the Festival attendance in 1942 was well below average. Monsignor Hannan carried the Monstrance. When the Victorian Premier, Mr. Dunstan, visited Rupertswood in November he promised ten thousand pounds to the building fund. He was especially taken by the Song of Welcome composed in his honour, apparently oblivious to the fact that it was a secularized version of "Vivat Pastor Bonus"!

During 1942 the Brunswick Club football team had taken all before it under the coaching of former Collingwood and Interstate fullback, Jack Regan, who resided at the Hostel as an aspirant. Within the next few years the Club was to send its quota of vocations to the Salesians, as well as to the diocese and religious orders, so Don Bosco's traditions were being carried on.

- SOUTH OF THE BORDER -

1943 The third Salesian foundation in Australia, that of Adelaide, was to have its start in 1943. It was the Centenary year of the consecration of Australia to Mary, Help of Christians, so an auspicious start.

As he had made such a going concern of the Club and Hostel, Father Biloni was selected as Rector early in the New Year. The club was left in the hands of Father Cerutti who carried on courageously despite his years. For twelve months Father Biloni was to be the solitary Salesian in Adelaide, in the unenviable situation of being director of another religious order, the St. John the Baptist Brothers. It speaks volumes for Father Biloni's strength of character and forceful personality that within the year he was able to set the Salesian work afoot, despite internal difficulties and a lamentable lack of

support from outside. Dean Bayard proved a true friend in time of need.

Back at Rupertswood three new novices received the cassock or the lay-brother's medal on March 19th, Brother Carroll, Brother Brophy and Brother Hamilton. There was a Solemn Requiem Mass at Rupertswood when news of Father O'Grady's death in California reached here. In his panegyric, Father Ciantar observed that Father O'Grady's career had been marked by unflinching gratitude to benefactors; he had spent an entire lifetime writing letters of thanks to all over the world.

On September 13th, Brother McDonald and Brother James Hamilton arrived back in Australia, after avoiding the perils of U-boats in a convoy, while Brother Swain, Brother Adrian Papworth and Brother Naylor returned to Australia in time for Christmas. For some time now the Scout Troop had been flourishing at Rupertswood and they showed their paces in a full scale demonstration, that included signalling, bridge-building, rescue work and first aid, before Mr. Saunders, the general secretary. At the same time, a Scout troop the 10th Brunswick, was already under way at the Club.

Again the Festival numbers were down considerably due to the war. Father Little carried the Monstrance and Benediction was given from the front verandah of the House. At the end of the year the first Salesian help was sent to Father Biloni in Adelaide when Brother Papworth and Brother James Hamilton were there. They were to be followed within a week by Brother Cornell, Brother Murphy and Brother O'Leary.

- UNDER CANVAS AT DROMANA -

1944. Among the new novices in 1944, was the first from Adelaide, Brother Angus. With him in the Novitiate were Brother Cooper, Brother Horne and Brother Mileto. It was a quiet, routine year for the most part. After another wartime Eucharistic Festival, Rupertswood had the singular honour of having an ordination in its own Chapel when Brother Curran and Brother Brennan were ordained priests on December 1st, saying their first Masses amid great festivities the following day. Father Ciantar extended the Salesian work still further in 1944 by purchasing at Dromana a property as a seaside camp. On December 27th the first contingent of Salesians and boys moved in under canvas.

1945. Two more Adelaide novices were admitted in 1945, Brother Schutz and Brother Supple, together with Brother O'Day. The House was to acquire a new confessor when Father Cronin arrived from India in March, while a familiar figure among the workmen at Sunbury, Mr. Con Kennedy, died suddenly at Rupertswood in April. The wheels of progress moved another turn in May when Dr. Mannix signed the deeds for the transfer of Miss Moroney's property at Oakleigh to the Salesians as the Juniorate to be.

A red letter day in the year was the Silver Jubilee of Father Ciantar's ordination kept at Rupertswood with a great crowd of visitors on July 11th, when Father Biloni, over from Adelaide, preached the sermon. Two successful money raising functions that year were a Gymkhana at Brunswick that raised twelve thousand pounds, and a Bazaar at the Club that brought in five hundred pounds.

The Congress saw a bigger crowd again, with World War II over, but as there were no trains, a great strain was placed on buses and cars. The crowd was estimated at 12,000 with 130 buses parked. Later in December Father Zolin, recently set free from a Japanese internment camp in Manila, arrived in Melbourne, ready to take up duties in Adelaide.

- DEATH ON THE ROAD -

1946 Several incidents were to mark out 1946 as a very eventful year. Firstly the Provincial, Father Alvin Fedrigotti, arrived in Melbourne on February 14th, the same day as one of the biggest floods Sunbury had ever had. Kismet Lake had burst, pouring down to overflow the once dry Rupertswood Lake and making the front drive impassable for two days. On March 4th, Father Alvin left for a visitation of Adelaide but returned in time for the Novices' Clothing Day, St. Joseph's Feast. The novices were Peter Lock, Robert Curmi, Kevin O'Mara, William Edwards, John Ayers, Firmino Romanin, John Blackwell and Allan Dwyer.

On Easter Sunday Father Alvin enrolled the sodalists at Rupertswood. He left Australia on May 14th, expressing his satisfaction at the good Salesian spirit he had found. Although involved in a car accident while travelling with Father Ciantar to Sunbury in June, Bishop Gsell of Darwin was fit enough to give an inspiring talk to the boys on the Australian Missions.

News of a further Salesian foundation was in the wind when Father Ciantar flew to Tasmania in June to interview Dr. Tweedy about a proposed school building. He returned full of optimism with the news that fifteen thousand pounds would be on hand to make an immediate start and that the Salesian Sisters would also be welcome. A new arrival in Australia was Brother Grimshaw, who was going to take up duties at the Club.

On the evening of the Ordinations in July, Father Biloni, Brother Francis and Brother Papworth arrived from South Australia with six boys, travelling in a utility truck. Brother Jennings, Brother McDonald and Brother Drohan were ordained priests by Dr. Mannix in the Cathedral on July 28th, and celebrated their first Masses amid great festivities at Rupertswood the following day. Two days later, July 31st, the South Australian contingent set out very early on their return trip. Halfway through the morning a phone call from Ballarat reported that they had been involved in an accident. The boys were said to be safe but Father John's condition was reported as critical. A later message in the day said that Father John had died from a fractured base of the skull,

sustained when the utility rolled over a few miles outside of Ballarat. It was a tragic anti-climax to the festivities of the ordination, just as Father Biloni's own ordination thirteen years before in 1933 had occurred only a few days before Father Setaro's death.

The Archbishop of Adelaide flew over to celebrate the Solemn Requiem at St. Patrick's Cathedral, to do "his duty" as he called it. Dr. Mannix presided and Bishop Vesters was also present, with over sixty priests in the Cathedral. Dr. Mannix preached the Panegyric, and as the sentiments expressed apply to all deceased Salesian pioneers in Australia, it is reproduced here almost in its entirety.

- PANEGYRIC FOR ALL OUR PIONEERS -

"This is a day of great sorrow for the Salesian Fathers, who have lost one they can ill spare and one who reproduced in his life all the best attributes of the saintly founder of their Order. It is no wonder that the Salesians and the boys should be deeply grieved on this occasion. Perhaps there is one to whom the Salesians would wish to extend their sympathy on this sad day, and that is the mother of Father Biloni who is far away in her Italian home. It would be some consolation to her if she could see this great gathering; it would lead her, perhaps, to resignation.

It was only two or three days ago that Father Biloni came all the way from Adelaide back to Sunbury where he had worked so hard and efficiently; and the night before he proposed to return he delivered to the community and the boys at Sunbury a most wonderful and inspiring address." (In this Goodnight Father John had stressed unity and contact between the various Salesian Houses.) "It was the last will and testament of Father Biloni. He set out for Adelaide but never reached it, and now, until the resurrection day, his mortal remains will rest where he began his priestly labours.

The ways of God are inscrutable; Father Biloni was doing marvellous work and there seemed to be many years of fruitful labour before him, but God, in His Providence, took him suddenly. He was a great priest and an outstanding Salesian, and he seemed to be just the ideal that Don Bosco himself would wish his followers to be. He had a marvellous influence upon the young people committed to his care. He could be strong, just, and firm, but he was always gentle, kind and sympathetic. He was just what Don Bosco himself would be to the house. He was engaged in great work for Adelaide, and Archbishop Beovich has assured me that his loss there will be irreparable. I can believe it, for I know what he did at "Rupertswood" and later at the Don Bosco Boys' Hostel, Brunswick. I remember how sad I was when his Superiors took him away from the work he was doing so well at Brunswick and sent him to Adelaide. There too God had prepared for him a special work and he built up in a short time an institution which will always be honourably associated with his name.

He has gone with all his works to lay them at the feet of his Master. His mortal remains will be laid to rest near his own community at Sunbury. We may hope and pray that the Australian soil - he did so much for Australia - will rest lightly upon his remains; that his prayers in heaven will help his community ever more than he could have helped them in life."

- THE FIRST 25 YEARS -

In the day of success in one Salesian work in Australia it is good to realize that we are reaping where such pioneers have sown and to remember the debt of prayers we owe them. If it is true that a country that is ignorant of its past history will soon lapse into barbarism, it is equally true that a congregation that does not study its early years will not realize the significance of the present. The history of the Australian Province is a brief one, comparatively speaking but in these first 25 years we have enough matter for our edification and for our future advantage.

(END OF VOLUME ONE - 1921 - 1946)

BACK TO THE KIMBERLEYS

Recently I journeyed to our Kimberley missions, the first Salesian to do so since our mission group was disbanded there in 1929. It may seem presumptuous to compare such an experience with that of the missionaries returning to Francis Xavier's old mission territory of Nagasaki in 1865, but that is exactly what it felt like.

Where Father Petitjean and his companions were amazed to find the church still strong - over 10,000 Christians still cherishing the faith - 2 centuries after the Jesuits' expulsion, one was astonished to find the Salesian name still clearly and fondly remembered in the North-west after 50 years.

With a first class relic of Don Bosco in my pocket during the overall trip of 8,000 miles, I was to experience a very real sense of "Don Bosco ritorna" in the Kimberleys. This was particularly so on May 24th when I celebrated Mass for aboriginals and mixed-bloods in a chapel of mangrove and paperbark, thinking of the plea heard in Don Bosco's dream of Australia, "Why do the Salesians not come to complete the work that their fathers began?"

On the first day in Broome, for example, a Thursday and therefore pension day, the aboriginals, who had come in from Beagle Bay and Lombadina for their cheques, soon passed the word around. There was a continual stream of visitors knocking at the door. "We want to speak to Bishop Coppo's friend"(sic); "We want to see the Don Bosco father"; "We want to speak bout time long time ago," etc.

Typical of them was old Bernard George. "I'm so glad to meet a Salesian again," he beamed; "we loved the fathers and brothers who gave us games, songs and made us happy." And there on the back verandah he gave an impromptu concert of the songs he had learnt as a youngster from Father John Setaro breaking out into a word-perfect Italian version of Santa Lucia (2 verses), an Italian round "Tutto il mondo, Nicola, la, la, la, la," and an unidentifiable Arabic song learnt from Brother Caesar Asseli. Bernard's masterpiece, however, from Father Setaro's repertoire was the music-hall hit of the 20's, "Yes, we have no bananas, we have no bananas today"; which, he assured us, his brother Patrick used to sing with improvised choreography around the camp fire when - to quote his brother - "he had too much beer up top".

Their memory seemed unbelievably photographic. With no prompting they rattled off the difficult Christian names and surnames of every Salesian in the pioneer group, recalling how Father Siara and Father Setaro never missed a camp fire on Kennedy's Hill, giving an extra stick of plug tobacco to star performers. Most of them had been prepared for First Communion by Father Setaro and insisted on repeating the hymns,

prayers and stories learnt at catechism class. "It was fun, Father; we got pictures, medals and lollies, and Father showed us photos of San Francisco." Don Bosco's life was very well remembered, and they chipped in over the hubbub to tell of young John perched on the tightrope or (to their huge delight) of Grigio putting assailants to flight. Thirty copies of Don Bosco's life I had brought, disappeared like water in the red sand as newcomers streamed in.

Feast days, in particular, were fondly remembered by the present presbytery housekeeper, Rosie Lee. "All the Broome churchyard was decorated with bunting, foliage and Japanese lanterns borrowed from the pearl fishermen", she recalled. "At the end of the procession, under a big canopy, Bishop Coppo would give us a long, long talk." (Confirmed later by the New Norcia Benedictines who recalled His Lordship's "never-ending instructions"! "At the end we all got boiled lollies. I remember Bishop Coppo walking up and down the yard every evening, saying his prayers from a book; he was a holy man, Father, but I was a bit frightened of him".

- WELCOME TO BISHOP -

When a white student, Jim Kennedy, left the Broome school to board in an Eastern college, Father Setaro composed a farewell song for the occasion which the aboriginals still remember.

Now the owner of Broome's largest store, Jim Kennedy was only too pleased to talk about those days although he is no longer a practising Catholic. "Your men brought a new spirit to the town. Every Tuesday and Thursday after cricket practice, there would be a big crowd of black and white children crowding around Father John (Setaro) as he took us to the shop for ice-cream or peanuts. He knew nothing about the game but would bribe us to beat the public school team by a promise of extra sweets. I remember the Bishop wore full pontificals, even on the hottest day, but Father John wore a white shirt and khaki trousers, with an old baseball or golf cap. My father often spoke of Father coming into the local before six o'clock closing, surrounded by a crowd usually talking about life in the U.S.A. On Sundays, he took a group of us to Cable Beach for a picnic, or to fish from the rocks in Roebuck Bay. They were good times, Father."

Time and again the arrival of Bishop Coppo at Beagle Bay was brought up. For days before the children decorated the track with floral arches, stretching from the bay to the mission. Bernard George was able to sing verbatim the actual welcome song specially composed by a St. John of God sister for the occasion.

"You have come to us from distant seas,
In the land where the saints have trod,
To teach us to walk in the ways of truth
And to bring us on to God.

God bless you, God bless you,
O honoured and blessed one;
God bless you, God bless you,
O honoured and blessed one."

As most Salesians will recall, in Broome itself Bishop Coppo had tried to affiliate the St. John of God Sisters to the Salesian Sisters. Completely isolated from their Subiaco motherhouse, the sisters saw this merger as a proximate solution to their own isolation and to the Bishop's needs. The sister who led the attempted affiliation, and the eventual return from Sydney to their own convent, is still in the Broome community. Sister Mary Ignatius is understandably sensitive about that pioneer period, so my information had to be gathered indirectly rather than from her. Bishop Coppo gave each sister a new name, one of the Seven Sorrows of Mary, insisting on the full title each time, despite protests. Even the memory of her old name, Sister Mary of The Flight into Egypt, causes Sister Ignatius embarrassment in the light of subsequent history.

Mary Durack is at present editing Sister Ignatius' diaries, but apparently is finding it almost impossible going.

As Mary Durack's book "The Rock and the Sand" had given the Salesians a rather raw deal, I introduced myself as an undercover agent for Mussolini's GIOVENEZZA. She was more than embarrassed by what she now regards as her rather cavalier approach to the Salesian period, being prejudiced, she admits, by the late Father Sean Moynihan, former archivist of Perth archdiocese. Without foundation, he had elaborated "a fascist triumphalism" theory which the present archivist, Father Newbold, repudiated in my presence. I told Mary Durack the only evidence of an Il Duce-blackshirt plot I had uncovered were the names of the two Beagle Bay Salesian mission horses, Julius and Caesar!

As she had flown to Broome for the burial of her grandchild, I was reluctant to contact Mary Durack, but she telephoned the presbytery insisting that I come. Although her own childhood was spent mainly in the now drowned Ord River district, she has an encyclopaedic knowledge, relating how her father as official Administrator of the North-west, had met Bishop Coppo at many formal functions. The voluminous journals, now being prepared for publication at her Perth home, contain many Salesian references, which she is going to post on. She considers the Salesian era a colourful, unwritten chapter.

Mary Durack pointed out that the Kimberley region had, proportionately, the highest enlistment and casualty rate in Australia in World War I, so that anti-German sentiments there ran extremely high. As Italian migrants were almost unknown there (most Italians having settled in the Albany region down south), the mission newcomers were already a novelty in themselves.

She recalled her father speaking of Bishop Coppo's long,

theological sermons, even on weekdays, considered by most to be above the heads of the local congregation.

Her father's favourite story of Bishop Coppo was retold. Fresh from the protocol of Europe and the U.S.A., His Lordship was taking his first shower in the form of an improvised bucket and rope contraption. When the second dousing did not materialize, he looked up in horror to see a smiling aboriginal maiden, bucket in hand, acting as bathroom attendant. It was a classic case of the missiologists' "acute cultural shock".

- SALESIAN NUPTUALS -

The Broome church records (Liber Baptismorum, Matrimoniorum, etc.) also threw some light on the Salesian story. I counted 83 Salesian baptisms all told from 1923 to 1929, the first being a white baby, May Evelyn Darcy, being christened by Father Siara in June 1923. Bishop Coppo's first entry is for an aboriginal girl, Rosa (no surname), in December of the same year, with Thomas Puertollano, the colourful Filipino cattleman and founder of the Lombadina mission, acting as sponsor. Baptisms by other "S.C.'s" (as they were then) are listed: Fathers Setaro, Rossetti, and Lopez. A sad commentary on the loose life-style of Broome's itinerant pearlmen at that time is the frequent incriminating entry of "Paterignotus" (father unknown), which the church in its sterner days insisted on inserting.

Altogether 49 Confirmations are entered beside Bishop Coppo's name, the first one having as sponsor a certain "Brother Celestine Acerni S.C.", whom several aboriginals recalled as "a big strong fella; he work, work all the time in the garden." Among Bishop Coppo's candidates are entries from the Dobson and Djiagween families, who have now given us Australia's first aboriginal priest, Father Pat Dobson. In parenthesis, a visit to Father Pat's grandfather, old Paddy Djiagween, the uncrowned king of Broome, proved an inspiration. Almost blind now with trachoma and sandy blight, he sits on a chair like an old patriarch, chewing plug tobacco and fondling his rosary beads. "I'm waiting for God to take me to heaven, Father, and just pray, pray all day long." Like Rosie Lee, he was in awe of Bishop Coppo, but enjoyed Father Setaro's picnic outings. "I ran away from Beagle Bay mission school, but was grateful to the brothers who brought me back."

A number of confirmations are listed beside the name of Father Creagh, C.S.S.R., temporary Vicar-Administrator prior to Bishop Coppo's arrival. Pentecost Sunday 1920, shows that the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cattaneo confirmed a large crowd of aboriginal adults. The records show that that year, significantly, Archbishop Cattaneo decided "to divide the still North-west into 3 regions, confiding the north to the Benedictines, the central region to the Pallotines, and the south to the Salesians": a plan which never eventuated.

Broome's Liber Matrimoniorum records that the S.C.'s officiated

at 24 marriages altogether. When a harrassed government official, perplexed at the multiplicity of plain Johns and Marys decreed that a surname "be given to all parties contracting marriage", Father John Siara showed little imagination in marrying off Edward Caput with Regina Corpus. With a more original touch, Bishop Coppo officiated on 2nd March, 1924, at the marriage of Peter Francis Bosco and Mary De Sales (sic). Just what Propaganda Fidei in Rome thought of this blissful union of the saints is not recorded.

Catholic life in Broome seems reasonably strong. With the advent of cultured pearls (and with plastic replacing mother-of-pearl buttons) Broome itself is now rather a steamy, downgoing town. Despite this, the Catholic population is on the increase and Mass attendance is high. Distributing Communion in the hand in the Broome Cathedral on Ascension Thursday, I was moved to see more than one aboriginal with not a single finger, mere stumps where the Host was laid on either hand, victims of a now cured leprosy. A splendid modern secondary school staffed by a combined team of Christian Brothers, John of God and Loreto Sisters (fresh from Mandeville Hall, Toorak) caters for the multi-racial children from Chinatown. Most of the tribal aboriginal children are sent to the Benedictine and Pallotine schools down south.

A casual visitor is shocked at first by the many aboriginals lying prone around Broome's streets, all dutifully wearing green scapulars or rosary beads around their neck; but, alcoholism is all part of a complex social problem that defies an easy solution.

The scars of the Japanese air raids from World War II are still apparent at low tide in the wrecks of 4 Catalina flying boats; riddled by gunfire while taking off with Indonesian and Dutch refugees.

Father Mike McMahon S.A.C., parish priest and general factotum of Broome, extended wonderful hospitality. His diocese duties range from central umpire of the senior football league to that of undertaker and gravedigger (quite literally) for every funeral in Broome. As the aboriginals still express grief by cutting their face and head with sharp stones till the blood runs freely, to attend a native funeral is quite an experience. Father McMahon was delighted with the \$200 collected by Salesian pupils (the other \$100 being equally divided between Beagle Bay and Lombadina), adding it to the Broome co-operative funds. This latter is run by the no-nonsense Rosie Lee, a protégé of Father Setarò's mentioned earlier; with business booming at shirts for 50 cents, 2 frocks for a dollar, etc. Hopelessly overworked, Father McMahon is assisted only by deacon Chris Saunders (recently ordained Priest in St. Ives, N.S.W., for Broome diocese).

Father observed that all Broome's official correspondence and journals from 1923 to 1929 are missing, allegedly taken by the Salesians on their departure. Bishop Jobst was absent in Mittagong.

A final visit to Sister Michael, a Good Shepherd nun doing

freelance social work with Broome's many underprivileged and delinquent children, completed the Broome episode.

- OLD BEAGLE BAY -

To reach Beagle Bay mission after heavy rains on the red soil roads was quite an ordeal. Harder still, of course, in the 1920's! On the road earlier at 3 a.m. I had run foul of a big red kangaroo - a "Cooper species", with an innate tendency to charge at any S.D.B. vehicle in sight - ending up in a ditch with a broken exhaust and muffler and one dead roo, until a Good Samaritan trucker drove in sight.

Beagle Bay is the only former Salesian mission with an old world, European charm. Whether it is the alpine-like Chapel, with its mullion windows and hand-cut black bloodwood benches, the century old giant tamarine trees planted by the Trappist pioneers, or the 3 huge bells imported from Bavaria, the mission radiates on another world history. When Father Francis Huegel and the two German brothers tolled the bells in tune for Sunday Mass, I estimated that the trio's combined mission experience totalled over 120 years.

The only local exotic touch is the pearl-shell motif, now made famous by post-card pictures, which has turned the altar, sanctuary roof, windows and doorways into a flashing, mother-of-pearl rainbow pattern. Rosie Victor, one of the most memorable aboriginals I met, told us how she was in the group which collected shells for both the Pallotines and Salesians who worked on building or restoring the church. "We carried the shells 8 miles from the beach in paper-bark baskets every day, cutting them into patterns; getting paid at the end of the week with bread, sugar, golden syrup and 5 pound tins of jam. We were poor then, Father, but very happy." She was speaking in a pitifully poor hut, standing on an earthen floor, the only concession to contemporary civilization being a worse-for-wear transistor radio. "The paper-bark and mangrove ceilings had to be rebuilt every year, due to white ants. I remember one Salesian brother at last relining the roof with kerosene tins which he got us to flatten out with hammers." For several years Rosie corresponded with Fr. Siara, cherishing the letters which she got first from China and later from Palestine. She treasured these letters until a few years ago, when she was transferred to higher mission huts after a flood. Again the Salesian BONTÁ and ALLEGREZZA had struck a sympathetic note. "The Salesians kept us happy and busy; and we still remember the songs they taught us. We missed them very much when they left here."

Rosie Lee has splendid children and grandchildren, one of them a student teacher at Broome's Catholic primary school. On the return trip, I visited one of her grandsons at the Pallotine school.

"Butcher Joe" of Beagle Bay (Joe Nancan, recently interviewed on This Day Tonight) is the greatest living authority on aboriginal myths

of the Ngina tribe. Sitting in a side chapel during Sunday Mass, Butcher Joe informed all and sundry in anything but a sotto voce tone "He's a Salesian Father; you remember the Salesians?" She told me the Salesians attended their corroborees, something unheard of till then apparently. "The Salesians asked me if initiation was good or bad; I told them initiation only brings big trouble."

Veteran Father Huegel is a great devotee of Dominic Savio's, and was pleased to get a pamphlet life to read to his boys. Now 78, Father Huegel had never met a Salesian in Australia. He made the interesting observation that the real, forgotten hero of Beagle Bay was Bishop Gibney, close friend of Daisey Bates, who "cleared the bush and pioneered this mission single-handed".

There was great consternation the evening I arrived at Beagle Bay, when the boys killed a 6 foot King Brown snake under the office block. Apparently they have an awesome respect for the venom of this first-cousin of the dreaded taipan. Nature is prodigal here. After a short fishing trip the brothers and natives brought back rough salmon, bluebone, and crabs to fill a giant deep freeze, some of the bluebone being 15 pounders. As the bottom has fallen out of the cattle market, the brothers are desperately looking for an alternate economic staple to keep the mission operative.

Father Len Thomas, well known to Rupertswood boys through Australian Catholic Relief, has a memorial at Beagle Bay. When a volunteer party of young helpers from St. Ambrose's, Brunswick, had completed an office block last summer, they left behind a mock foundation stone laid by "His Lordship Len Thomas D.D.," as a memento of their visit and high spirits!

There are very few S.C. entries in the Beagle Bay books, the first being a baptism by Father Siara, 21st May, 1923, and the last one by "Earnest Coppo, Vicar Apostolic" on October 7th, 1926.

- BLOWING SALESIAN TRUMPETS -

On the track between Beagle Bay and the Lombadina, I gave a lift to an old aboriginal stockman, Charlie Norman. Besides giving me interesting tips on tracking, he recalled riding to Cape Leveque lighthouse to visit a Catholic family with Father Lopez, "a long fella and a really good horseman". I asked the inevitable question, "Do you remember the names of the two horses you rode?" Quick as a flash he told me, "Sure, Julius and Caesar." He recalled Father Lopez shooting wild pigeons for their meals en route, and a stop at Boolgum camp.

Lombadina seems so much younger and, on the surface anyway, more vital mission than Beagle Bay. Father Murray brings the vigour of a young man to a tightly-run station, ably assisted by young and

enthusiastic lay missionaries. The children here are a particularly alert and happy group, tight discipline notwithstanding.

Salesian memories at Lombadina are kept alive by Martin Sibasado, an old Filipino-Japanese, married to an aboriginal. He told me how he had helped make a stretcher, tied behind a 4 wheeled donkey-cart for Brother Caesar Asseli, who had suffered an acute appendicitis attack. Brother was given a bumpy ride to the schooner, under Captain Peterson, for transfer to Broome and eventual treatment in Perth. Martin recalled Brother Celestine and Brother Caesar practising their brass instruments in a makeshift hut hopping up repeatedly to chase away a giggling crowd of young onlookers (including Sibasado) from the open window. He still has great admiration for old Father Rossetti whose English, he recalls, was "very poor, only a few words". Appalled at the makeshift chapel, Father Rossetti decided to enhance the bark-like appearance by railing lightwood box-slats on the outside. With the help of the boys, he laboriously broke up hundreds of fruit cases to cover the chapel with slats, finishing off the whole job with whitewash applied with brooms. "We knew there was some misunderstanding up top, Father," a shrewd Sibasado observed, "but we didn't know who was in charge - the Pallotines or the Salesians. My word, the Salesians gave us big feast days, processions and plenty of singing."

Brother Celestine's original garden at Lombadina is still in the same spot, now enlarged to irrigated, flourishing acres of market-garden proportions. Martin recalled how families would work with the Brothers in the garden, "getting their pay in vegetables, but sometimes sneaking back at night for extra".

Old Amy Sapo and Tony Sapo, respected elders of the Bardi tribe, sitting round a camp fire recalling memories of the Trappists, Pallotines and Salesians. They pointed out the hill where Father Nicholas gathered their children and belongings when a giant tidal wave swept over the mission in the early 20's. Even today, the tidal rivers are particularly treacherous. Such aboriginal elders from the Ngigina, Njol Njol, and Bardi tribes leave a lasting impression of keen intelligence, deep culture and sacred respect for oral tradition: a lacuna in the lives of many of the mixed bloods, unfortunately.

- WHAT IS FAILURE? -

La Grange seems an impressive, almost model mission in many ways. With government help and an abundance of lay missionaries, Father Kevin McKelson has been able to build up a flourishing mission-station. Not only do the vast cattle-run, market-garden, modern native houses, etc. present a fresh, well-groomed look, but the aboriginal liturgy here is extremely progressive. The modern church-sanctuary has an aboriginal motif of throwing sticks, spelling out the words "CHRIST WAIKU", "Christ is alive", true in every sense here. With Father McKelson I concelebrated Mass, accompanied by the clicking of 50 or 60 boomerangs, and an offertory

dance equivalent to a corroborree. Normally the liturgy is in their own dialect, translated and adapted by Father McKelson, the Pallotine expert in native languages since the death of Father Worms.

The night before, I had sat up late with Father McKelson to translate an article from the Italian Salesian Bulletin, December 1973, "Missione Kimberley: F allimento: Kimberley Mission, a Failure," sent him by Bishop Jobst. Enlightened by a battered old Italian dictionary and a bottle of Swan Valley claret, we were able to agree with the gist of the article that "failure" is a very relative term in missionary work. Such pioneer work, whether termed pre-evangelization, pre-catechesis, or simply picking out the stones, can only be evaluated in the light of the Gospel text: "unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, dies, the grain itself remains alone." A former vicar-general of the Broome diocese, Father McKelson was captain of St. Bernard's C.B.C. Essendon when I first went there in 1940, so we were able to catch up on the whereabouts of old schoolmates, many of them priests, religious and missionaries, after some 35 years.

Father maintains that the Faith in younger missions like La Grange is only skin-deep by comparison with the well-rooted catholicism in the older, apparently sleepy missions of Beagle Bay and Broome. "My catholic boys here are still half-pagan." Father McKelson recalled with gratitude the gift from our Salesian schools during the centenary year of \$1,000, earmarked for La Grange by the Pallotine provincial; and on my departure, loaded me up with boomerangs as souvenirs. Indicative of the missions isolation is the unreliable pedal-radio contact.

Stopping to say Mass along the track on the return journey, I met a number of Salesian contacts: the two Irish John of God Sisters at Geraldton with cousins in our Irish province; the Pallotine brother in charge of the farm at Tardun who had known Brother Angus and Brother Hamilton in Melbourne's St. Joseph's Guild; a Franciscan friend of Father Ciantar's working on the life of Dom Hawes, etc.

- BISHOP COPPO'S DREAMS -

Simply looking for a chance to say a late Mass at New Norcia, I was pressured to stay the night and meet the whole Benedictine community, despite several layers of red dust from head to toe. Quite a few of the older monks, including former Abbot Gomez, vividly recalled the Salesians of the 1920's. Bishop Coppo had come to ordain some of the O.J.B.'s in the magnificent New Norcia chapel, and as a young, uncertain M.C., Gomez pulled the Bishop's chair back too quickly. After what seemed a nasty fall, Bishop Coppo quickly regained his composure.

Dom Wilfrid recalled his post-graduate study days at Manly seminary. Bishop Coppo was the guest speaker for graduation,

accompanying Archbishop Kelly. When James Madden, later rector of St. Patrick's and Sydney's Vicar General, was unable to defend his thesis on Harnack due to illness, Dom Wilfrid was called in as substitute. In a long summing up, Bishop Coppo singled out the Harnack thesis for special praise; but his hand gestures grew so animated that the students closed their eyes in expectation of Archbishop Kelly, seated beside him, having his biretta sent flying.

Dom Arnatz and Abbot Gomez recalled how Brother Gomez S.C., stayed at New Norcia for several months, rebinding the monastery's precious books and mss. many of them on priceless velum and personal gifts of the Queen of Spain to Bishop Serra or Dom Salvado. "The Salesians were a tonic here, full of good spirits and laughter, and we always looked forward with pleasure to their visits, as they came and went from the Kimberleys on to Perth". "Brother Gomez was an Andalusian with a rough wit, fire and pronunciation all his own. Even many years after returning to Spain, he would write letters full of humour and nostalgic affection for New Norcia." A sad commentary on the shattered Salesian dream in the Kimberleys was given by Abbot Gomez. "On his first trip up North, Bishop Coppo spread out a map, enthusiastically pointing out that his vicarate was bigger than most of Northern Italy. But on the way back he called in here a broken man: 'But there's nothing there except a handful of people and a few old tin sheds', he lamented. They were innocents abroad, Father, babes in the wood, really."

By parity, I couldn't help thinking of the boyish, naive vision of a martyr's death from cannibalism envisaged by that likeable trappist, Father Nicholas, when writing to Bishop Gibney. "How beautiful to see the fire of the wild tribes around the barbi! In case, Your Lordship, I poor ould sardine where burried in the stomach of these strong aboriginals, I umbly implore some prayers for my poor soul". Of such, even in the sophisticated 20th century, is the kingdom of heaven.

- COME TO KALUMBURU -

After Mass next morning, Abbot Rooney and Prior Justin Bruce took me through the best collection of mss and historical material in the Australian church. At the end they produced their concealed ace-card. "Missions are not really our work as contemplatives; we would like the Salesians to take over our station at Kalumburu. You're a young congregation with plenty of vocations." One felt quite embarrassed by their extremely high regard for the Salesian Congregation and its work. Throughout all the missions one could discern and hear of major problems: the difficulties posed by a dual mission-government administration system; the unresolved alcohol problem, especially among the mixed bloods and fringe-dwellers; the new problem of lay missionaries, welcome as they are, delaying the aboriginals' coming-of-age, by doing work that the blacks themselves should be doing; the

hazards of climate, terrain, and health; the current failure of cattle on a mission-staple; the clash of cultures in adaptation to the Faith, etc. But they are all problems that have been faced and solved elsewhere, and that will be solved here in God's good time. While it is refreshing to see the tenacious Pallotines constantly rethinking and reshaping their missionary work, perhaps they are a little too self-critical and so unappreciative of their own endeavours.

The general facts, gathered by Father Cooper and Father Moester and incorporated in "The First 25 Years" publication, have been simply confirmed by the present trip. Perhaps the only doubt would be whether the Salesians actually went, or simply contemplated going, on the long overland trip to the Benedictines at Drysdale. The carefully kept detailed records of the O.S.B.'s (now preserved at New Norcia) make no mention of such a visit.

Back in Perth, Monsignor John T. McMahon, an old acquaintance of Bishop Coppo's (A man of evangelical simplicity; he dreamed too much" - I thought of His Lordship's positively disarming suggestion that he should be made Coadjutor Bishop to Dr. Mannix in Melbourne!) put me up for the last night at his South Perth presbytery. Here I was well looked after by the housekeeper, an enthusiastic Salesian Co-operator and recent "convert" of Father Murphy's. Later the Perth archivist, Father Newbold called in to say that back in the records room there was abundant material on the Salesian era, correspondence, etc. Unfortunately he was off duty sick, but is making photostats of relevant material. At present Father has the first life of Bishop Brady ever written ready for publication. Next morning he insisted on driving me to the airport where Father Mo was kindly waiting to say goodbye.

- DON BOSCO WAIKU -

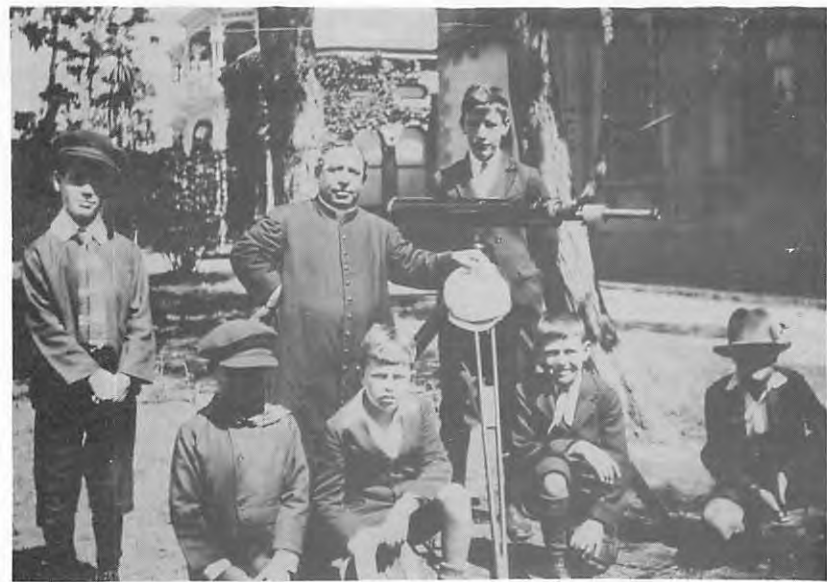
Overall, we might at first look on the Salesian work in the Kimberleys as almost an interlude, comic relief even, between two serious Pallotine acts; but that would be quite unfair to our Salesian pioneers. Everywhere they went, they left an identifiable spirit, a remarkably lingering and much appreciated presence for such a short stay as theirs. As a consequence the one insistent and recurring theme at Broome, Beagle Bay, Lombadina and New Norcia was, "When are you Salesians coming back to your old Kimberley Mission?" In every way it was evident that "Don Bosco Waiku"; through the Salesians' goodness, sacrifice, festive-song and cheerfulness. Don Bosco's spirit is still very much alive and loved throughout the entire Kimberleys. The work had been anything but a "falling to" or failure.

On the plane back to Sydney, I opened up Don Bosco's dream of Australia, still feeling that same sense of exhilaration as Father Petitjean in Nagasaki.

"Finally I seemed to be in Australia, whose inhabitants were of different appearance and temperament; not one continent but many islands. A multitude of children were trying to come towards us, but were hindered by water and great distance. They held out their hands towards us, pleading "Come and help us. WHY DO YOU NOT COMPLETE THE WORK THAT YOUR FATHERS HAVE BEGUN?"

"To me this indicates that Providence is offering a share of the mission field to the Salesians, at some future time. Their work will bear fruit, because, unless they render themselves unworthy of His favours, the Lord will be always with them" (M.B. Vol. XVII, Ch.22 p.644).

If old men, as Joel reminds us at Pentecost, will dream dreams, then young men will see visions. And, looking at our Kimberley missions, there is a chance that this dream and this vision might just one day be identical. Not only the aboriginals will cherish the great dreamtime.



TOP:
Fr. Setaro and Pupils, 1930

MIDDLE:
Rupertswood, 1929



BOTTOM:
Salesian
Community, 1938.



Cardinal Legate to International Eucharistic Congress 1928 and
Archbishop Mannix with Community and Friends



Salesians at "Rupertswood"
1928

TOP: First
Novitiate in
Australia, 1941-42.



CENTRE:
Aspirants, 1938.



Novitiate of 1946-47.



TOP: Eucharistic Festival
Committee, early 1940's.

BOTTOM: Community with Fr. Rossi,
Provincial, 1936.



Founders of
Eucharistic Festival
Fr. P. O'Grady,
Mr. C. O'Connor,
Mr. J. Morrissey, 1931.



BOTTOM: An early Eucharistic Festival.





First Community at
Brooklyn Park, 1944.

Archbishop Mannix with Fr. Ciantar and Fr. Brosnan at Brunswick,
early 1940's.





Ordination of Frs. Brennan
and Curran, 1944.



Fr. A. Fedrigotti, Provincial
and Fr. B. Fedrigotti, 1946.

