

# The Chimes



Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

February 2024

## Goodbye to Kevin Hogan

*We recently said goodbye to Kevin Hogan OAM, a long-serving member of our advisory board. Michael Chaney AO wrote and delivered the eulogy below.*

Good afternoon everyone.

It is a great honour for me to have the opportunity to say a few words about my good friend of 40 years, Kevin – in commemoration of the life of an extraordinary, unique man.

As I know we would all appreciate, Kevin's life revolved around his wonderful family – Ronnie and their ten children and twelve grandchildren – but he was a man of so many parts:

- the farmer
- rural leader
- community giant
- sportsman
- company director
- man of faith, and, of course,
- great joke-teller and raconteur

That last quality, as we have all no doubt experienced, infused every activity in which Kevin was involved.

The Hogan family farmed on a Bencubbin property originally bought by his father and uncle during the Great Depression, on St Patrick's day in 1933.

Kevin reckoned that as they were driving to inspect the land in their T-model Ford, they noticed that everyone else was driving in the opposite direction; and they eventually understood why.

It was a tough life in a fickle part of the agricultural area. As Kevin quipped: "We started with almost nothing and, after 70 years, still had some of it left."

He was somewhat bemused that they had named the farm "Bon View", given that the only thing it ever overlooked were mortgage payments!



But in spite of good times and bad, Kevin never stopped loving farming, the farming community and Bencubbin itself.

He told me once that he had been MC at 17 weddings in Bencubbin. It struck me then that, given the challenge of finding, say, 170 different jokes, his popularity lay just as much in the way he told them, as in the jokes themselves.

Kevin took over the farm in 1969 and handed it on to their son Michael in 1995. He was a great farmer, keen to adopt new ways of increasing productivity and proudly winning the highest yielding crop award at the Muresk competition in 1986.

Despite the frequent tough times with poor seasonal conditions and low prices, Kevin never lost his sense of humour. For example, in one year, just before getting a bumper crop off, Bencubbin was hit with a 7 inch rain deluge.

Trevor Eastwood, who was running Wesfarmers at the time, called Kevin to see how he'd fared. Kevin replied:

"Well, I'm looking out on what was a wonderful crop yesterday and today is a beautiful lake with ducks wading in it. Oh no, wait, they've just walked out and they're emus. It's deeper than I thought!"

But of course, Kevin's contribution to the rural community went well beyond his family's own farming activities, as I'll talk about in a moment.

Kevin was born 90 years ago in Kununoppin, as were eight of the ten children he and Ronnie produced, all of them delivered by his great friend and golf partner, Dr John Radunovich.

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He was sent to the North Mt Marshall school at the age of 4 1/2 in order to keep the students numbers above ten - the minimum to avoid closure. He had to walk 1 1/2 miles each morning to get a lift with the teacher and the same on the way home. The other kids wore shorts and sandals, but Kevin was always dressed in a suit with a tie, shoes and long socks. The girls loved him and treated him as a toy.

North Mt Marshall was subsequently closed and Kevin started primary school in Bencubbin. At the age of 11, he went to the convent school in Goomalling where, he said, Sisters Finbar and Stanislaus taught him so well he won a scholarship to Perth Mod, which he took instead to board at Northam High, and then went on the study years 11 and 12 at Christian Brothers College in The Terrace in Perth.

It was there, under the guidance of Brothers Murphy and Collopy, that Kevin developed the strong Catholic Faith which was his guiding light for the remaining 74 years of his life.

As far as sport went, Kevin was a true all-rounder. In his younger days, he represented local associations in tennis, hockey and cricket; and as the years went by, was a keen golfer. He described himself as a hacker but he is the only person that I have seen hit a hole-in-one - on a challenging par 3 at Joondalup.

But it was in football and bowls that he really shot the lights out. In bowls, he was league champion of champions on two occasions; and in Aussie Rules, he won two Jeffries medals for fairest and best in the tough central wheatbelt league.

Here's a quote from the Dampier Herald in 1963, reporting on a match between Bencubbin and the Magpies from Trayning, when Kevin was 30:

"With K. Hogan in scintillating form, Bencubbinn scored with ease. The final score: Bencubbin 25.20 (of which K Hogan contributed 14.12) to Magpies 4.5."

Imagine the result if Kevin had kicked accurately! I am surprised that he never later suggested to his beloved Dockers that they try a full forward with very bowed legs like his!

Kevin attributed those bowed legs to the fact that at birth, the doctor stood him up while he was still warm!

Kevin sat on the boards of numerous not-for-profit organisations and on the Grain Pool of Western Australia and Wesfarmers. The fact that he was on the boards of Wesfarmers - the Wesfarmers Cooperative and then the listed company - for 33 years speaks for itself in terms of how he was valued as a director.

He had two of the most important qualities: common sense and good judgement. I had the pleasure of serving with him at Wesfarmers Limited for the last 13 of those years, during which time he was Deputy Chairman.

Kevin was an excellent contributor to Board discussions and decisions and pretty good with the numbers, although I do recall that he never approved of Australia adopting the metric system. He reckoned that overnight on the 14th of February, 1966, the area of his farm more than halved, his mortgage doubled and it was twice as far to drive to town for a beer.

There were two occasions where Kevin's contribution to Wesfarmers made a huge difference.

The first was during the takeover by the Co-op of CSBP, a company twice its size, in the late seventies. This was the largest corporate takeover in Australia at the time, and the most contested and drawn out. Kevin played a pivotal role in persuading his fellow farmers to support the bid - and his success, I am sure, resulted from the respect in which he was held, widely, throughout the country.

The second occasion was when the Chairman of Wesfarmers, Sir Marcus Beeck, died suddenly in 1986. As Deputy Chairman, Kevin was the natural heir, but a combination of rural politics and religious rivalry split the board of 21 farmers and it appeared that the other candidate, who had very different ideas about the direction of the company, might win.

Kevin put the company's interests ahead of his own, stepping back and persuading Harry Perkins to stand. Harry won by a slim margin and went on to become an outstanding Chairman.

I mention that incident because in my view, it typified Kevin's approach to life. He was selfless. Everything he did was aimed at helping others and there are no better examples of that than the major contributions he made to the rural sector and the people in it.

It was for those contributions that he was honoured in the Order of Australia, received the Advance Australia Award and Centenary Medal and was inducted into the Agriculture Hall of Fame.

Two of those stand out - the establishment of the Mt Marshall Rural Counselling Service and the Country Medical Foundation.

The first was during the nineteen eighties, a terrible decade for those on the land, with a run of bad seasons, low prices and interest rates of 20 percent or more.

Many farmers went to the wall. Banks were declining to provide additional finance, foreclosing on defaulting debtors and selling up farms, often at giveaway prices. The despair in the rural community was palpable.

Despite being at risk of losing his own farm, Kevin's focus at this time was on helping others. He played a key role in persuading the banks they'd be better off adopting a different approach, accepting some debt write-off and keeping farmers on their land until conditions improved.

In 1986, Kevin, through his own initiative, established a counselling service, providing financial advice to farmers in trouble, initially with the involvement of farm consultants, David Bedbrook and David Nuttall.

In a later interview, Kevin said of this time:

"It was two of the most difficult and heartbreaking years of my life, getting it started and promoting it. Of all the things that I did, that one is close to my heart."

"People's dignity was restored; they were given their confidence back, they were taught how to deal competently with financiers and how to manage their farm businesses, even if that sometimes meant exiting with dignity."

Kevin was Chairman of that Mt Marshall Rural Counselling Service for six years and its model was eventually replicated across the state, from Carnarvon to Esperance.

The second major contribution addressed the critical shortage of doctors in rural areas - the establishment of the Country Medical Foundation, of which Kevin was founding trustee. This body raised money to fund medical students' education, in return for which they agreed to complete their residencies in the country and subsequently practise there. Kevin served on that board for over 15 years.

I mentioned earlier that Kevin's faith had been his guiding light since he took his First Communion at the age of 16. A regular Mass-goer right up until his death, Kevin was active in the Church and in Church bodies. He served on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council for the Catholic Diocese of Perth for eight years, including six as Chairman -under Archbishop Goody who, as a Monsignor, had celebrated that first Communion with him 24 years earlier.

I know that it was their faith that allowed Kevin and Ronnie to cope with the challenges they have faced over the years - crises on the farm and the tragedy of losing two sons.

In 1985 Kevin joined a financial advisory committee for the Benedictine Community in New Norcia and served there until his death. I had the privilege of serving with him for 36 of those 38 years. I'll very much miss the drive with Kevin to New Norcia for our quarterly meetings, recounting old times and sharing a joke – I figure we must have done that return trip together about 140 times! Stopping off at the Bindoon bakery for morning tea just won't be the same again.

Kevin's great contribution in that role was his immediate understanding of the need of the Community for professional advice in farm management; and the appointment of the late David Bedbrook as initial farm consultant proved to be an inspiration.

And finally, to family. In an interview in 2009, Kevin said:

"The pivotal point of my life was my 1962 marriage to Veronica Hudson from Yelbeni, a newly graduated nurse. Then, over the next 20 years, followed the birth of our 10 children. We built in most of the verandah

on the house to fit them all in, but the memory is of tremendously happy days of noise, laughter and love."

Kevin was devoted to Ronnie for the whole of the 61 years of their marriage, and Ronnie to him. They were actually married under unusual circumstances. They had been engaged when, nine months before the planned wedding date, Ronnie's mother was diagnosed with cancer and was told she needed an operation the next Wednesday. She told them there was only a 50 percent chance that she would survive and asked if they would get married before that. Ronnie, who had intended to convert to Catholicism before she wed, was baptised on the Friday, received Holy Communion on the Sunday and they were married on Monday.

That seems to have been a winning formula! And happily, Ronnie's mother lived for another 25 years. And of course, Kevin and Ronnie's lives revolved around their ten children. You could no doubt write a whole book on that, but it was summed up by a story.

Ronnie once told where one of the older boys had said:

"Gee dad, if you didn't have all us kids, you'd be rich."

To which Kevin replied:

"Son, because I have all of you, I am rich."

Kevin died as he had wished, at home, surrounded by family and his priest, reminiscing and having a laugh until a few days before he passed away. At his 90th birthday last July, Kevin told his gathered family,

"I'll see you in paradise."

I know that all of us who knew this man – a man who genuinely lived for others – would agree that he would have been at the front of that queue. And so we farewell Kevin Patrick – husband, father, grandfather, colleague and friend – who was the very definition of what it is to be a good man.

May he rest in peace.

By Michael Chaney AO

# Vocational Observers Receive Unique Experience of Monastic Life

*Two young men are currently staying at New Norcia monastery to experience monastic life and to discern their own vocations as possible future monks.*

Rohan Viswalingam, aged 30, is from Sydney, and Martin Bradley, aged 25, is from Perth. For about four weeks, they will be participating in the full monastic timetable, including prayer, work, reflection, and contemplative solitude and study. As well as learning more about the charism, history and spirituality of the Order of St. Benedict, they are getting to know the community and traditions of New Norcia, and experiencing what daily life as a monk is like on a practical level.

Single, Catholic men who feel called to a life of prayer and the search for God are always welcome to make a stay at the monastery, as they discern their future direction. Anyone who is interested should contact New Norcia's Vocations Director, Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB, at [robert.nixon@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:robert.nixon@newnorcia.com.au).



*New Norcia's vocational observers in the monastery recreation room.*



# Tableware Gifting

*In the process of decluttering her cupboards, a long-time friend of the community recently gifted us with some very fine tableware (examples pictured).*

If you have any similar fine tableware that you never use and would like to go to a good home where it would be well cared for and used for our Musical Soirée Suppers and Abbot's Table Dinners in the grand old 1920s Hostel, we would be very happy and grateful to receive it.

Please contact our Director of Visitor Services, Carmel Murray at [info@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:info@newnorcia.com.au) or by calling 9654 8056.



## The Easter Triduum is the greatest solemnity of the Church

For many Christian churches, Easter is the joyful end to the Lenten season of fasting and penitence. The earliest recorded observance of Easter comes from the 2nd century, though it is likely that even the earliest Christians commemorated the Resurrection, which is an integral tenet of the faith.

The Easter Triduum is the greatest solemnity of the Church's liturgical year and staying at New Norcia over these three days is a wonderful and unforgettable way of being immersed in the great beauty, mystery and splendour of this occasion.

New Norcia is delighted to be able to offer packages including accommodation, meals and participation in the liturgy and other events to our guests.

The monastic liturgy of the hours will also be prayed and is open to our guests.

Times for these will be included in the information booklet.

The events over these days include:

<b>Holy Thursday – 28<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Mass of the Lord's Supper (7.30pm)
<b>Good Friday – 29<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Liturgy of the Passion of the Lord (3.00pm) Taize Chant and Prayer (7.30pm)
<b>Holy Saturday – 30<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Holy Saturday Musical Recital (10.30am)
<b>Easter Sunday – 31<sup>st</sup> March</b>	Vigil Mass of Easter (4.30am) Easter Sunday Morning Mass (9.30am)

The accommodation options include:

<b>Option 1</b>	Accommodation and meals from Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday afternoon	\$400 pp
<b>Option 2</b>	Accommodation and meals – one night only	\$160 pp
<b>Option 3</b>	Bed and Breakfast only	\$110 pp/night
<b>Option 4</b>	Day Visit only with lunch	\$35 pp

For full details and to book your tickets please go to: [shop.newnorcia.com.au](http://shop.newnorcia.com.au)

# Hot, Dry and Weary Land

*Over the years, one of the monks has faithfully recorded the weather details, day by day. These days, Dom Paul is the weather man and has been for 5 years and, before him, Father David for some 20 years.*

In the last month we have been enjoying some real bush summer weather, with several significant hot spots. One was in January when we had a run of days over 40, then February has been relentless with one week recording two consecutive days over 46 degrees.

The saving grace of New Norcia weather is that we do not (usually) suffer with high humidity.

The relentlessness of the heat and the parched look of the land puts me in mind of Psalm 63 verse 1, where the Psalmist is in the desert of Judah, and speaking metaphorically:

*God, you are my God, I pine for you; my heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you, as a land parched, dreary and waterless.*

But then he goes on to write a wonderful Psalm of praise, which begins so:

*Thus I have gazed on you in the sanctuary, seeing your power and your glory.*

*Better your faithful love than life itself; my lips will praise you.*

*Thus I will bless you all my life, in your name lift up my hands....*

If we do not take care, our daily comfort, pain, circumstances can rob us of even the desire to seek God in the sanctuary, wherever our sanctuary may be. Lent is upon us. Psalm 63 could be a "green pasture" an "oasis" on the journey to Easter.

*Verse 7: for you have always been my help; in the shadow of your wings I rejoice; (NJB.)*



## A Group of Local Women

This all happened because we didn't buy a marquee. The story starts at the beginning of the year when, at a farm clearance sale next door, there was an outside vendor item with a difference – a full blown wedding-standard marquee. Mentioning it to a couple of friends, and musing on the fact that we had fallen into the all-work-no-play trap, we let our imaginations run wild as to the fun that could be had. Totally unburdened by the actual practicalities (apparently these things take an experienced team a couple of days to put up and then take down again) we whipped ourselves into a high state of excitement and two of us were dispatched to the sale to have a crack at the purchase itself.

We had a few qualms when we saw the size of the thing even when all folded up but, nevertheless, still up for the adventure, we were quite ready to bid. Perhaps fortunately, and in hindsight definitely very fortunately, it of course went for about twice our maximum budget. So that was that.

Undaunted we decided to continue to address this work/life balance thing and in stepped the events team at New Norcia! Who knew what possibilities awaited! We started with a coronation afternoon tea, then a Christmas in July (for my English friends, as it is hot at Christmas time over here, it is the protocol to have a traditional Christmas dinner in the more wintry month of July). Then, a private tour of New Norcia followed by an al fresco brunch and, finally, a good old Melbourne Cup lunch.

It turned out to be a hitherto well kept secret how easy all this could be. We would have an idea, then run it by Joyce and Carmel at New Norcia and they would make it happen, exceeding our expectations each and every time. No cleaning the house for the week before, hiding all the clutter in the spare room (and then taking a month to find it again), no sweating over menus while the rest of the family survived on cheese toasties for days on end. Tick some options and turn up.

The venues were unfailingly spectacular, the hospitality wonderful and the food (and the Abbot's cocktails) amazing. I think the highlight was probably the private tour, with a 'no question is off the table' openness, and access to places usually kept private. I thought I knew New Norcia pretty well but within a minute I was learning so much more. That day will stay with me.

So, many thanks to Sharyn Sinclair, Jane Graham and Clare – we really did have some fun. Many more thanks to the people who supported us, we had an absolute non-exclusive policy, we asked our friends, they asked theirs and everyone kept on turning up.....lovely, lovely people – thank you!

Finally New Norcia, what a place, somewhere very dear to me, and somewhere that continues to adjust as it strives to reconcile the less happy aspects of its history with its unique place in the WA story.

By Emma Kelly