



The Chimes

Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

March 2023

Summer Fruit Harvest at New Norcia

The orchard behind the monastery is primarily looked after by the monks, assisted in some areas by Grounds and Maintenance staff. It has grapes, plums, citrus fruits, figs and nectarines, all in abundant fruit at this time of year (to a greater or lesser degree). Fr David took over looking after the grapes seven years ago (age 80) and was apprenticed to the pruner.

The vines are of varying ages, the oldest being over 120 years, the younger some 30 years old. The old brick shed that is used for the orchard is similarly more than 140 years old and had one complete wall renewed at some stage. The original rough cut roof beams are still in place.

In 2020 Sarah and Peter Smith volunteered to prune the vines. In 2021 they were joined by their daughter and two grandchildren and they have continued to prune the vines in July/August each year. The fruit of their labours is amply evident this year with festoons of grapes proliferating through all the vines.

The plum trees are espaliered and similarly laden with gorgeous plump fruit. Needless to say, the grapes and plums are kept in birdproof netted cages, otherwise the local bird life, particularly silver eyes and other species with a sweet 'tooth', would claim the entire harvest as their own!

Fr David said, "Brothers Steve and Gavin Doulas come in July each year to prune the stone fruit trees, and attend to other trees and bushes elsewhere in the town. G&M maintain the reticulation system that waters the citrus and stone fruit trees; grounds staff also help out when grass control gets



beyond the monks. Five years ago, regular watering of the vines was discontinued; during the summer they receive a good watering every four or five weeks, if there has been no significant rain in the meantime."

He also explained the problems faced in the orchard, which include keeping fruit fly and other pests out or under control, keeping grass under control (especially trying to limit the spread of aggressive types such as kikuyu and couch grass), pruning the citrus trees and managing the removal of dead or unproductive trees.

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RWAHS Talks: “Spanish Benedictine Brothers in Western Australia”

The centre for the Royal Western Australian Historical Society in Nedlands was filled to capacity on 21 February 2023 in anticipation of talks on the Spanish Benedictine monks of WA. Three speakers, all of whom are descendants of Spanish men who had volunteered for missionary work in Western Australia, spoke about their respective ancestors and their life stories.

Gillian Rodorera spoke first about Jerome Rodoredó. A baker by profession, he was also a musician, and (after leaving the Benedictines) served as first organist at the Perth Cathedral. His musical style was described as “flamboyant and colourful”. He had a close friendship with Bishop Martin Griver, whom he had known in Barcelona, and set up his business as a baker and grocer in proximity to the cathedral. The story of his success in business, gradual deterioration of his prosperity and health after the death of his wife, and the lapse of one of his daughters into insanity, was fascinating and touching. Significant reference was made to the Marsa diaries as a valuable source of insights.

After a break for morning tea, Pat Mills spoke about Francisco Ventura. A show of hands demonstrated that a large

part of the audience were his descendants. He was a stone cutter by trade and seems to have been widely educated with multiple skills. After leaving the mission, he married an Irish widow, established his own farm and was blessed with a large family. His life was touched by tragedy by the insanity of his wife, who would frequently wander off into the bush at night. She eventually met her death in this way. Towards the end of his life, he left farming and embarked on a new venture as a pearler. It is unknown whether this venture was successful.

Hilaire Nat then spoke on her ancestor, Isidro Oriol. Oriol was a furniture maker who set up his own business after leaving the monastic community. Eventually he came to own substantial commercial properties in Perth.

All of the ex-brothers continued as devout Catholics and maintained amicable relations with New Norcia. Ventura in particular often referred to it as his “home” and returned to it from time-to-time to volunteer. Rodorera and Oriol each had supportive long-term relationships with Bishop Griver and were leading figures in the Catholic community in Perth.



Coming Events

10-12 March 2023: Benedictine Experience Weekend

18 March 2023: An Evening of Schubert, Piano Concert

31 March - 2 April 2023: RETREAT: Letting Go

Visit

www.newnorcia.com.au/whats-on/events-calendar
for more information on these and future events

15 April 2023: DAY RETREAT: Thomas Merton: Dialogue in Prayer

20-28 April 2023: RETREAT: Female Benedictine Mystics of the Middle Ages: St Hildegard of Bingen, St Gertrude the Great, and others

Rebirth of the Abbey Press



People often hear of the treasures hidden in New Norcia, relics of its 177-year history. “What lies behind the doors” is encrypted in the town tours and the curiosity of travellers passing through this one-of-a-kind monastic town. The ornate chapel inside the Byzantine splendour of St Ildephonsus’ College is one breathtaking example of behind-the-doors marvels that can satiate the intellectual curiosities of the many visitors to the town.

But what of the lesser-known, not-so-spectacular treasures lying in the recesses of our storied past? Like the murky catacombs of the archive or the dank cellar where olives and oak-vatted wines cure (sorry, both are out of bounds for most monastery guests).

The Abbey Press is one such relic, and thanks to two enterprising British printers, it’s now waiting to be discovered by anyone interested in out-of-the-box curios. Claire and David Bolton, owners of a vintage press in the UK that prints limited edition books by traditional letterpress, happened upon New Norcia ten years ago, on a day tour from visiting family in Margaret River. One thing led to another and, due to their scholarly background in the industry (Claire has a doctorate in 15th C printing history), they were given access to the dust-covered room in the Education Centre that once was the home of Abbey Press. Their mouths dropped.

Long story short: the Bolton’s have spent the past decade cleaning the place up, first with a major dust-up and scrub-

bing, then placing the old printing machines in an orderly fashion, salvaging some from the old farm shed down the hill, and finally, strategically organising and cataloguing the comprehensive library of typefaces, some so rare as to be museum pieces in Australia. In short, they’ve turned a sleeping giant into a shining jewel of New Norcia’s printing past.

The history of the press started early in the 20th century with some enterprising monks interested in bookbinding, a craft often employed by European monasteries as a revenue source. They bound, among other things, Victorian novels, some of which still exist in the monastery library. They would go on to become the ‘in-house’ printshop for the diocese, monastery, schools, farm, vineyard, plus printing almost everything New Norcia needed in everyday life.

The press continued with various ups and downs until the advent of the digital age, at which time the formidable machines and accoutrement that operated the monastic press for just short of a century came to a standstill. When the Bolton’s discovered the equipment 20+ years on, it was covered in layers of dust and detritus from rodent and ant invasions. They rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

“It wasn’t until we got into it that I realised how rare and precious this collection is,” Claire said. “It’s an important part of not just the history of the Benedictine Community

continued

Rebirth of the Abbey Press.....continued

but of Australian printing heritage". She's emphatic: "It's not just another print shop. The work we've done on it has been curatorial".

After untold hours of cleaning, sorting and cataloguing, and with financial support from the Community, the press is now fully functioning once again. Those lucky enough to get a peak inside will find a wealth of curios, all neatly displayed, with large interpretive panels describing the press's history and activity. On their annual visits to Australia, the Boltons spend time in the Press room, producing unique stationery items for the Museum gift shop and running workshops attended by graphic design students, print professionals and hobbyists with a keen interest in the fading artform.

The Boltons would like to see the display put to greater use by including it in the popular town tours and by having regular, pre-announced Open Days for special functions or the general public. Other options include making the space available for artist-in-residence programs or a volunteer program for hobbyists and retired people who would regularly monitor the display as part of the self-guided tour options available for visitors to New Norcia.

Whatever happens, the Boltons want to get the word out, hoping to hand the baton to equally enthusiastic supporters of the historic press. Their retirement plans don't include the frequent trips to Australia they've enjoyed over the past decade, so finding people willing to volunteer their efforts to keep the press open and available is paramount. Looking for a way to satiate your own curiosity appetite? Contact the Boltons on their website, <http://alembicpress.co.uk/>.



For further information on the Abbey Press, read Dr Bolton's article, "The Abbey Press, New Norcia: History & Type Specimens of a Monastic Printshop", *New Norcia Studies*, No. 26, 2019, pp. 75-90.

See also, J Oakland, "The Abbey Press: New Norcia's Printing and Publishing History", *New Norcia Studies*, No. 28, 2022, pp. 51-58.





The Abbot's Summer Table

Hospitality, according to St Benedict, is paramount. The Summer Abbot's Table has once again fulfilled its mission to provide guests with not just a sumptuous meal, but also a warmed heart. "It was honestly the best dining experience I have ever had", said one satisfied guest, "and the service and hospitality were next to none".

The six-course meal, stretching deliciously across several hours of a balmy summer's eve in the air-conditioned interior of the New Norcia Hostel, is the mastermind of Abbot John Herbert, who enjoyed a previous career as a chef in his hometown Melbourne before turning to the monastic life. Does he still enjoy cooking? The broad smile spreading across his face suggests he does. Indeed, a lovely diversion it must be from the many administrative tasks occupying the daily life of a busy abbot.

But when asked what his favourite thing about the evenings is, it's not the planning, preparing or cooking the fine meal, enjoyable as those are. It's the hospitality. The spirit of community felt by both the guests and the staff and volunteers who work together to create a memorable event.

"Apart from the opportunity to do something creative", said Abbot John, "the real joy of the Abbot's Table for me is working with such a dedicated team – each contributing their skill – with positive enthusiasm and with a genuine desire to serve. This is reflected both in the ambience of the evening, and in the extraordinary and much appreciated feedback – above all, our guests are awe-struck by the unique spirit of hospitality, a key component of Benedictine spirituality".

Helly Kerr came to work at New Norcia when her husband Shady told her there was a job available. Shady's worked in Grounds for eight years and saw an opportunity too good to pass up. The Bindoon couple have been in the area for sixteen years.

Helly now works in Groups Accommodation, helping Joyce and Janette set up and serve lunches for bus tour groups. The team also do breakfast, lunch and dinner for other groups and functions visiting New Norcia. With her great team spirit, she also helps out at the Roadhouse when needed.

Prior to working at New Norcia, Helly worked in aged care facilities in Perth. Using her skills as a Clinical Aromatherapist she enjoyed giving aromatherapy treatments to residents. As an avid learner, she loves soaking up the history of New Norcia and its beautiful old buildings. A bonus of her job is meeting people from around the world and across Australia. She also finds her work-mates amazing.

In her downtime, Helly relaxes watching movies, spending time with family and friends. She and Shady enjoy camping and trips to the beach when they can.



Meet Helly Kerr

Her mum is her greatest source of inspiration, a woman of "strength, positive outlook, always gaining knowledge to look after her health, loving, caring and keeping it real!"

Helly has "world travel" on her bucket list, to see how people live, the landscapes, beautiful buildings and authentic foods.

Local St John's Ambulance Crew to the Rescue



One of the appeals to city folk who come to New Norcia is its vast sense of empty space and quiet. Situated in the midst of the Victoria Plains, it's actually surrounded by small towns and many local farmers. Still, the population density is low and to the people who live up here, it's remote.

So what happens when an emergency arises? Triple zero won't get first responders to your location in a matter of minutes like in the city. But thanks to a dedicated team of volunteers from St John Ambulance, people in need of emergency assistance in the region won't be left stranded.

Two squads of volunteers look after the New Norcia and Calingiri areas, with an ambulance parked in each location. Once a month the teams get together for training, practice and a top take-out meal supplied by Yerecoin Traders. They practice CPR and other emergency first aid on Fabia and Pasca, two life-size mannequins designed especially for the job of play-acting someone in distress.

Local farmer Sarah Mason, along with paramedic Maxi McDonald, head up the crew's practice sessions, ensuring their skills are kept current and readily accessible for emergency situations. Sarah recently took over the post of Volunteer Development Officer from Jane Graham; both women have been involved with St John's for quite some time and are passionate about what they do.

The other eight members of the team are spread throughout the region: 3 in New Norcia, 3 Calingiri, and 3 Yerecoin. When an emergency call comes through on Sarah's phone, volunteers in the region closest to the crisis will usually respond. But because there's no roster or set system, it means whoever's available jumps on it – with their strong team spirit, the volunteers often help each other out.

Just over three years ago the monthly practice sessions shifted from an old shed in New Norcia – sweaty in the summer, freezing in the winter – to the comfort of a carpeted, air-conditioned room in the Education Centre. Plenty of space to spread out their equipment and practice their moves, plus take some time-out for socialising and tea. "We're so fortunate that New Norcia has allowed us to use this space," Sarah said. "It makes our practice sessions not only easier, but more fun. We're really grateful."

The team is calling for more volunteers – the ideal number is between 15-20 to spread the load. Call-outs are fairly irregular – some months lots, others few – but each volunteer is virtually on call 24/7 (though not obliged to respond). Any interest in volunteering can be directed to the St John's Admin Office in Wongan Hills, who also coordinate first aid courses in the region upon request.

"First aid is an important skill for everyone," said Sarah. "We recommend people update their skills every two years. And when you do – come join us!"



Journey to Gingin



Director of Services, Carmel Murray, and Groups Accommodation Manager, Joyce McKee, wandered over to Gingin recently to survey the turf of a regional partner. Hosted by the Gingin Visitor's Centre, guests were taken through many of the local attractions, shown below.

The Gingin Visitor Centre is setting up a display of New Norcia and all that we have to offer. It's a great collaborative effort and we thank the good people of Gingin!

The day started at the Trackside Railway Café for a meet-and-greet and high tea. The Café is part of the Historic 1891 Gingin Railway Station, restored by the Lion's Club of Gingin/Chittering in 2012.

Next it was off to taste test the different goat cheeses and gelato at Local Goat (important link: [this is where Abbot John gets his goat cheese for The Abbot's Table!](#))



The tour took a turn towards the Gravity Discover Centre, an astronomical observatory dedicated to the exploration and science of the night sky, where guests got an overview of the many displays and tours available to the public. But the real attraction for the hungry visitors was the Gravity Café, located in the centre and ready to serve up a delectable lunch!

The green oasis of the Caladenia Mini Golf and Café was a cool grand finale before returning to the Gingin Visitor Centre for a farewell from the staff.

A top day out!

Liturgical Calendar MARCH

Wednesday 1 March – NEW NORCIA FOUNDATION DAY

SUNDAY 5 MARCH – SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

SUNDAY 12 MARCH – THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Friday 17 March – St PATRICK (SOLEMNITY)

SUNDAY 19 MARCH – FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Monday 20 March (trans) – St Joseph (Solemnity)

Tuesday 21 March (trans) – OHF Benedict

Saturday 25 March – ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD (SOLEMNITY)

SUNDAY 26 MARCH – FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT





Moving Heritage Farm Equipment for Safe Storage

For years, the piggery on New Norcia farm, about 2km out of town, has been a graveyard for old, and now heritage, farm equipment. Ian and Jim from Grounds recently spent a challenging two mornings solving a range of issues that would ensure these vintage vehicles are protected. Their task was to move the equipment down to the old dairy area in order to maintain possession of them after the farm sale is settled.

“The old pieces of machinery are fragile, some more than others, and haven’t been moved for many, many years”, said Jim, “so we had to use all our expertise to prepare them for the approximately 1km journey in order to deliver them in one piece”. Sadly, the old Massey Ferguson Sunshine 500 combine seed and fertilizer drill machine was missing two wheels and one hub had been cut off, so was beyond their physical capability to move it.

The duo did move an old mobile water pumping rig from Milner’s lake, used to pump water to a header tank for the old swimming pool. “I truly didn’t think this old lady would move, at first sight”, Jim reflected, “but we hooked her up to the new tractor and she travelled without incident”.

Next was an old scrub roller. Here the challenge was getting it hooked up. The frame on top is made of old sleepers and very heavy. “We trusted Archimedes*”, quipped Jim, “and it was a matter of leverage, blocking and much sweating”.

On the following morning they managed to lift an old front-end loader bucket onto a trailer and simply reverse the procedure at the other end. Their main challenge was to prepare the old seeder for transport. “She was in the worst condition. We had to lift all the discs so we didn’t plough the road all the way back, and then consulted with Archimedes again to get the machine hooked up. This old lady barely survived the journey, but we did deliver her in mostly one piece – though I did pick up the odd piece along the track that had fallen off”.

It has been a very interesting couple of days for the dynamic Grounds duo. But thankfully, the precious cargo is now under protection of its original owners.

*Greek mathematician, well known for his inventions and scientific discoveries. Archimedes is famous for his quote, “Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world”.

Our Wonderful Volunteers – John & Nicole Ogilvie

Along with our new “Staff Focus”, we’re going to introduce you to some of our amazing volunteers. This month we hear from John and Nicole Ogilvie, who have been coming to New Norcia for nearly twenty years.

How long have you been associated with the monastery and what brought you here?

Our association with New Norcia started way back in 2004 when Abbot John (then Fr John) was appointed Parish Priest of the parish of Dardanup/Boyanup. At the time we were living on an old farm in Boyanup and our two children went to school in Dardanup. He introduced the parish to Benedictine spirituality. It wasn’t long before the rhythm of monastic life took over, and hospitality after mass and on feast days became the norm. Nicole loves to cook and when we found out that Abbot John was a chef, our shared interests usually became the topic of conversation.

Can you tell us something about yourselves?

Nicole is a Dental Therapist at Margaret River Orthodontics and John is Financial Administrator for the Catholic Diocese of Bunbury. We live in inner city Bunbury and our children live in Perth. When we are not at New Norcia or spending weekends in Perth, we are at home enjoying eating out and going for coffee on the Marlston waterfront overlooking Koombana Bay. We also enjoy weekend drives to nearby towns to sample and purchase some of the wonderful produce the Southwest has to offer.

When did you you start volunteering for New Norcia and what have you done?

We attended the Abbot’s Table in February 2021, enjoying a wonderful meal in the parlour of the Hostel. We stayed upstairs in one of the comfortable rooms, which proved to be very handy after a beautiful four-course meal, accompanied with selected wines. We had such an enjoyable evening that we offered to help Abbot John at the next one and to our surprise he accepted. Nicole, given her cellar door experience, was assigned to wine waiting duties and John, with no hospitality experi-



ence, was assigned to washing dishes. He has since graduated to helping with preparation and service of the food. We offered to return again and have been a regular at the Abbot’s Table ever since.

What’s so special about the Abbot’s Table? What brings you up here every quarter to take part?

It’s building community through authentic Benedictine hospitality. Bringing people together from different backgrounds at Australia’s only monastic town, to share a four-course meal prepared by the Abbot, served by volunteers who have other careers, is a truly unique dining experience. Every Abbot’s Table is different. Every menu has its own story and the guests are so appreciative. Abbot John is a talented chef and his passion for good food and fine wine is evident in the quality of ingredients and selection of dishes. We love working with him and the other dedicated people on the night. And yes we do get to taste the yummy dishes!

Do you have a fun story from the Summer Abbot’s Table?

The Abbot decided to add a Singapore Sling to the cocktail list, not the quickest or easiest cocktail to make. John was promoted to work behind the bar for the first time to help make Singapore Sling, something he had never done before. In making one, John inadvertently added tonic instead of soda water. Thanks to the Abbot’s eye for detail, the mistake was discovered and the newly invented cocktail, later named a Singapore Sonic, was discarded for a proper one.

What’s the best thing about volunteering at New Norcia?

We have always felt welcomed and appreciated. The Abbot’s Table team works really well together. We are on the go all night and work hard to make it all come together, but we also have fun. It’s a real team effort and we enjoy catching up with our ‘New Norcia family’, whether they be the monks, the guesthouse staff, or the staff working in the gift shop or roadhouse. They are all so friendly and we are blessed to be able to spend time with them.

Books in the Guesthouse

The Way of St Benedict by Rowan Williams (\$30) The former Anglican archbishop unpacks some of the mysteries of the saint’s 6th-century Rule, drawing out its relevance for the modern world. Rev’d Williams applies the broad scope of the Rule to everything from our personal interactions to global dynamics, encouraging world leaders to cultivate relationships of mutual respect for the good of the larger world community. Eloquent written by one of the top wisdom teachers in the church today.

The White Stone: The Art of Letting Go by Esther de Waal (\$30) Part spiritual treatise, part memoir, Esther de Waal explores the difficulties we experience when faced



with the inevitabilities of loss, whether it’s aging, sickness or death. Drawing upon scripture, monastic traditions, and Celtic spirituality, de Waal honours the sorrow of loss and pain, while also leading readers into the possibilities of growth and new opportunities such experiences bring.

Sojourners: Monastic Letters and Spiritual Teachings from the Desert (Matthew the Poor) (\$40) Drawing upon desert wisdom, this series leads us back to our true calling as spiritual beings. Matthew the Poor was a Coptic Orthodox monk who saw himself as a fellow sojourner on the path back to God. His focus is entirely upon Love as divine energy that lives in all beings. It will inspire your own spiritual journey.

Giving Young People Work Opportunities

The Benedictine Community of New Norcia has always been committed to community and the people essential to the smooth operation of the wide range of activities and tasks that go together to run the town. Recently we have seen three young people around town, who have been given opportunities to work and learn new and different skills.



Tyler Murray (18), youngest son of Carmel and Gary Murray (Carmel is Director of Visitor Services), has been working as a cleaner in the monastery under the direction of Dom Daniel, and for the Grounds and Maintenance department, under the direction of Ian Smith. He has been deftly handling a whipper

snipper in the orchard and was recently seen astride the new ride-on mower. These opportunities have been great for Tyler, topping up his finances just before he commences studying commerce at Curtin University. Tyler hopes to transition to law during the second semester of 2023.



Kyle Victoriano (18) is the older son of Melissa and Marlon. Originally from the Philippines, Melissa, Marlon and the boys have made a new home in New Norcia and have been here for nearly eight years. Marlon is the community chef and Melissa is tour guide extraordinaire; she is also the safeguarding officer for

the parish. Kyle is set to follow in dad's footsteps, having worked kitchen in Yerecoin and now in Salvado's Café. He was appointed to kitchen staff and wants to further his catering education at Central TAFE Joondalup in 2024.



Kean Victoriano (14) is taking the opportunity to earn some extra pocket money by working in the roadhouse kitchen. He is currently in Year 9 at Central Midlands High School in Moora. Kean hasn't yet decided what he wants to do in his working life. Both Kyle and Kean are altar boys within the parish.



Farewell to the Pines

Kennedy's Trees was contracted to remove 15 aging and tired trees in the town centre south of the Abbey Church this month. Sadly, due to the risk to passersby from falling branches, the trees needed to be removed.

The felled trees were disposed of by mulching, which was spread across open ground. The tree trunks will be placed in a pile to be burnt during the prescribed burning time.



'He should first show them in deeds rather than words all that is good and holy.'