

Archivally Speaking

No. 3 — August 2006

An occasional newsletter for those interested in the Archives of the Catholic Diocese of Christchurch.
Preserving the foundations of tomorrow's Diocese

Another Archives Day

We have now had two archives days with a good crowd at each, so another has been planned.

It will be held on

**Saturday, October 28
at Cathedral House in Barbadoes Street.**

It will be a little more hands-on than the last two events, as the plan is to have copies of all the almost 2500 photos from the collection in the archives on display.

A number of them require identification of people, places and events, so with several people interested in the history of the church in Canterbury and Westland together in one place, this is the ideal time to do it.

The day will be relatively informal. It will

start at 12.30

but people will be able to come and go as it suits them as the photos will simply be laid out on tables to be inspected.

Please spread the word to others who may be interested. We are too late to advertise the day in Inform and attempts to get archives news out through parishes in the past have met with limited success.

PHOTOS FOR SALE

Well, not quite, but we are now in a position to supply digital copies, on disc only, of many of the photos in the Diocesan Archives.

The price is \$22 for the first photo and \$15 each for subsequent photos.

Photos from some other collections have been catalogued but we can not supply photos from those collections, although we can put you in touch with the people concerned, who may be able to help.

For enquiries please email mhhh@xtra.co.nz. To view the collection catalogue please phone Merle Conaghan on 03 358 8758.

The good news is that much more has

FROM THE ARCHIVIST

been achieved in our archive work than we perhaps realise. When climbing a hill we can feel dismayed at the distance still to go, but looking back can be very encouraging. I think we all feel we have scarcely scratched the surface in the work of ordering our archives. So, what has been accomplished?

The old Cathedral presbytery was a mine of diocesan history. Not as a deep mine, but more as an open cast one where the surface spoil has to be dealt with. It is dirty work removing soil, but I think remov-

ing half a century of railways' and gasworks' dust and smell is filthy. I open one of the archive file boxes now and am taken back immediately to the fragrance which permeated my bedroom study in the old house. But when the gathering, dusting and sorting was accomplished, these records were at least in some order, somewhat sorted and under lock and key.

Enter Dr Pat Kelleher. With his enthusiasm, generosity and knowledge, and with a team of dedicated people giving of their time, all the records of Baptisms throughout the

diocese from 1840 to 1904 were entered on a database.

An index of all these is available on CD. Over 100 copies have been sold.

Enter Michael Hanrahan. Enthusiasm again is the key! With equal generosity and Michael's 'know-how' there is a growing awareness of how precious or archive is. Another group of volunteers have sorted and properly filed all the hundreds of photographs we have. The work of gathering, identifying and filing continues.

Not bad, Eh!

GRATEFUL THANKS:

To Monsignor Harrington for the excellent publicity he gave our work in the recent Friends of the Cathedral newsletter.

To Jane Teale from Anglican Archives for tutoring a sizeable

group on the basics of archive conservation at our last archives day.

To the people who organised the last archives day, prepared the room, organised afternoon tea and cleaned up afterwards.

LETTERHEAD:

With a number of enquiries coming in arising from the sale of the Baptisms index CD, diocesan archivist Father Clark has designed a special letterhead for the Archives, using Francis Petre's original sketch plan of the Cathedral.

CHURCHES OF THE PAST:

This is the name of a new section on the diocesan website, under parishes at

www.chch.catholic.org.nz.

It is very much a work in progress, and at the moment no doubt contains a number of errors and omissions. The aim is to include a little history of all churches no longer in use and, where possible, a photo.

SPREAD THE WORD:

If you know someone interested in the history of the church who would like to help with projects, attend our occasional archives days or receive newsletters, please contact Michael at mhhh@xtra.co.nz or 48 Philip St, Ashburton, 03 308 8853 evenings.

What is an Archive?

A place to store old bits of paper!

If that's what you think, please think again.

An archive collects significant material from the past.

Having collected it, the archivist takes steps to conserve that material, that is, as far as possible to prevent its further deterioration from causes such as insect damage, heat, high humidity, acid damage and careless or rough use.

He catalogues the material the archive holds as fully as possible to make access as trouble-free as possible and to minimize handling of items in the collection while people are looking for other material.

Lastly, he makes the archive's holdings available to reputable researchers, keeping in mind the requirement to conserve, the requirements of privacy and the wishes of donors of material.

And in most cases the archivist does this on a shoestring budget, smiling all the while.

CAN YOU HELP?

For more than a year five ladies have been working away every Thursday cataloguing the photo collection of the Diocesan Archives.

At photo 2440 they have run out of work to do.

We are conscious there are many more photos in other collections and would like to include them in the catalogue, not necessarily as being housed in the archives, but as being available in various collections throughout the diocese.

We are not asking for photos to be given to the archives (although if people would like to do that they would be gratefully received). We are simply asking that they be loaned long enough to enable us to catalogue them and record details of where a future researcher may find the originals.

They would also be scanned onto a disc.

Photos can be found in all sorts of places:

- Parish collections.
- School collections.
- Private collections
- Your local museum.
- Collections of religious orders

So the photo project does not completely grind to a halt, we are asking for people to search out what they can in their own areas, from individuals and drawers and cupboards in parish and school offices.

Please help to keep Merle, Jean, Jenny, Helen and Deslie gainfully employed recording the photographic history of the diocese.