

## WHO DESIGNED ST JUDE'S CHURCH, DURAL?

The Anglican church of St Jude's at Dural is situated 18 kilometres north of Parramatta, on what was originally the Great North Road to the Hunter Valley – now called Old Northern Road. There are only a few definite statements that can be made about the construction of the church. One is that work was well under way on 11 November 1846, when Bishop William Broughton came to Dural to lay a foundation stone. A second is that in 1847, when William Wells was compiling his *Geographical dictionary or gazetteer of the Australian colonies*, he included St Jude's, Dural in his list of 'Churches and Chapels partly erected or in the course of erection'. Finally, the church appears to have been in use by 27 December 1848 when the wedding of Margaret Hennessey and Thomas Cobb took place there. No documentation relating to its designer or builder appears to have survived.

The church of St Jude's is small, and the community for which it was built was not wealthy or important in the colony of New South Wales in the 1840s. But, as luck would have it, somebody was responsible for giving the then and future inhabitants of Dural a gem of rare value.

The building may technically be described as a "Norman one-cell, aisleless, apsidal church". That is to say, it is built in the Norman style of architecture with rounded doors and small, narrow windows; the chancel and nave are joined together in one cell without any exterior or interior break; there are no side aisles; and the eastern end is formed as a curved apse. The church's interior measurements are 11 metres long by 4.5 metres wide. The sandstone side walls are 3.2 metres high and 0.5 metres deep. There is a small belfry at the western end of the roof. A vestry was tacked on to the northern side around 1870 and a porch was added to shelter the original south door in 1894.

Dural parishioners have long thought that their church has the feel of a very early English church. My view is that its design is distinctive enough in the Australian context to mean that it was not just the product of somebody's inspired imagination but was based on their familiarity with a specific similar church back in England. So, this led me to seek the answer to two questions. First, is it possible to identify a church in England on which it might have been modelled? And second, if that is possible, who might be given the credit for choosing it? As all Anglican churches built in the Colony at that time had to look English, I have felt safe in restricting the search to England, rather than to include other European countries where Norman churches may be found.

### **Norman one-cell, aisleless, apsidal churches in England**

In 1846, as now, there were only four surviving examples in England which fit the description of a Norman one-cell, aisleless, apsidal church, and they are all located in the southern part of the country. Working from west to east, they are St Andrew's, Winterborne Tomson, in Dorset; St Swithun's, Nately Scures, in Hampshire; St Mary's, North Marden, in West Sussex; and St James-the-Less, Little Tey, in Essex. They were all built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, they are all relatively small, and they are all situated in little hamlets. Although these churches are similar in architectural design

they are by no means identical in appearance, and all have had a few changes made to them over the centuries. When comparing their appearance, it is also necessary to take into account that St Jude's, Dural, is built of dressed Hawkesbury sandstone blocks whereas the English churches are built of their own locally available stone or flint.

*St Andrew's, Winterborne Tomson*, is situated in Dorset just off the A31 road midway between Wimborne Minster and Dorchester, near the village of Anderson. It is similar in size to St Jude's but a major difference in appearance stems from the three large pairs of windows on the southern side of the church, which were installed in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its chief glory now are the early 18<sup>th</sup> century interior oak furnishings which have matured to a beautiful pale grey. Its roof carries a small square bellcote towards the western end.

*St Swithun's, Natley Scures*, may be found close to the A30 road four miles east of Basingstoke in Hampshire. (The name 'Scures' derives from the family which used to own the village from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and its use serves to distinguish the village from a neighbouring one called Up Natley.) It has experienced few structural changes since it was built, with no additional vestry, porch etc. The tall bell-cote at the western end was enlarged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The arrangement of the narrow windows and entrance door is very similar to St Jude's. Its interior dimensions are much the same as St Jude's but its walls are taller and thicker.

*St Mary's, North Marden*, is set high up on the western end of the South Downs in West Sussex, not far off the B2141 road from Chichester to Petersfield. This church is 3 metres longer than St Jude's but is otherwise very similar in appearance. It has also had a vestry and porch added at some later stage. From the outside, the main difference is the quite large square wooden belfry on top of the church towards the western end.

*St James-the-Less, Little Tey*, is in Essex, not far off the A120 road, six miles west of Colchester. This church is the least like St Jude's in appearance. Its windows are no longer Norman in design, it has a large wooden belfry, and the external construction of the roof above the apsidal east end is square rather than rounded like St Jude's and the other three English examples.

In judging this beauty parade, it is not all that difficult to rank them in order of similarity to St Jude's. The closest match is St Swithun's, Natley Scures, with St Mary's, North Marden not far behind. The third place getter is St Andrew's, Winterborne Tomson, with St James-the-Less, Little Tey, being clearly the least similar. The favourite, St Swithun's, is by no means an identical match but the dimensions, the arrangement and design of its windows and single door, and above all its apsidal east end viewed from both inside and out, are all persuasive. The main difference in overall appearance stems from the fact that its exterior walls are 2 metres taller and twice as thick as those at St Jude's, and the bell-cote too is taller and more substantial.

Having established that there are some churches in England which could conceivably be the model for St Jude's, and that at least two of them are a reasonable match on appearance and size, my next step was to look for a possible link between one of these churches and a person who was involved in some way with the building of St Jude's.

## **Who might have been responsible?**

I am going to argue that there are three men to be considered: Edmund Blacket, the eminent architect; William Clarke, who was the first minister of the parish of Castle Hill and Dural from 1839-1844; and William Broughton who, as Bishop of Australia, was in charge of the Anglican church in New South Wales when St Jude's was built. I have also looked into the alternative possibility that one of the settler families of the Dural district, such as the Bests, might have had a link with one of the four English churches, but I have not found any hint of this. It also seems a little unlikely, at that stage of the development of New South Wales, and given the recent convict past of most local families, that any of them would have been inclined or in a position to ask for the new church to be built to their specifications.

### *Edmund Blacket (1817-1883)*

It is appropriate to start with Edmund Blacket because St Jude's, Dural, has long been on some people's 'attributable' list of Blacket churches. He arrived in Sydney as a young, recently married man in November 1842 and by May 1843 had set himself up in Sydney as a self-styled 'architect and surveyor'. The time of Blacket's arrival coincided with the start, in England, of a period of intense admiration for the Gothic style of architecture, promoted by groups like the Cambridge Camden Society and championed by A.W.N. Pugin and others. Blacket was deeply influenced by this contemporary trend and made himself into an expert in medieval revival church architecture.

In the first six years of his career, before he was appointed colonial architect in 1849, quite a few of the churches being built were commissioned as copies of specific English churches. Three examples with which he is known to have been involved are the churches at Berrima, Rossmore and Carcoar. It is therefore entirely possible that Edmund Blacket was engaged in a similar role at Dural but it seems unlikely to me that he chose the design for St Jude's.

First, the timing is a bit tight. As we shall see when looking at Rev William Clarke, the planning of a church at Dural was probably well under way by the time Blacket arrived in Sydney, and as already mentioned, construction began sometime in 1846, only three years after he had established himself. Another more significant problem arises from the primary documentary source for evidence of his work in this early period. This source, which can be consulted in the archives of the University of Sydney, consists of a business diary Blacket started in 1843 to record his architectural work. At the beginning it is quite detailed but as he got busier it developed into more of an account book for recording major receipts and payments, meaning that it cannot be relied on to provide a definitive list of which churches he was involved with. Nevertheless, there is no mention of Dural or St Jude's anywhere in Edmund Blacket's contemporary business diary.

To my mind, though, the main argument for doubting that St Jude's is a Blacket church is that, being built in the Norman style, it does not look like one. Blacket was a Gothic man through and through, and if you take a tour round the Anglican rural churches that he is known to have either designed or worked on in the 1840s, it is hard

to believe that Dural is also one of his. Wollombi, Berrima, Greendale (now converted to a private house), Rossmore, Emu Plains, Carcoar – all hark back to the English medieval church era which followed the Norman style of building. A Blacket church that is intended to be “Norman” in appearance is the rather later one of All Saints’ at Sutton Forest (completed in 1861). In my view, though, it looks much like many other Blacket churches but with rounded windows and doors. The other more rudimentary ‘Norman’ rural church associated with Blacket is St Phillip’s, Warkworth (completed in 1853), but he was only called in to complete the initial design.

And finally, I have found no reason to suppose that Blacket might have been aware of any of the four Norman one-cell apsidal churches, which as we have seen are all in the south of England. Although he was born in London, he spent his early adult years before he came out to Australia in the north of England. His wife, Sarah Mease, came from Yorkshire and he married her there in May 1842 shortly before sailing out to Australia.

*Rev William Clarke (1798-1878)*

The second candidate, Rev William Clarke, arrived in Sydney in May 1839 at the relatively mature age of 40 and was appointed the first minister of the parish of Castle Hill, which then stretched out through the bush to the settlement at Dural and the district beyond. Although he was a conscientious and knowledgeable clergyman, he is remembered more widely as an expert in the young science of geology, ending up as a founding member of the Royal Society of New South Wales in 1867 and a vice-president until 1876. William Clarke was appointed to the parish of Campbelltown in November 1844, although not moving from Parramatta, before going on to St Thomas’, North Sydney, in 1846, where he remained until his retirement in 1871. William Clarke College at Castle Hill recalls his name today in the district where he began his life in Australia.

When he arrived in Parramatta, there was no actual church building in the parish of Castle Hill, parishioners having to walk or ride to Parramatta if and when they wished to attend a church service. William Clarke set about remedying this situation, firstly by getting part of the former Government barracks building at Castle Hill altered to provide a place to hold church services, and naming it St Simon’s. He also started the process of lobbying the government authorities for a church to be built at Dural. To this end, he published the text of a sermon he preached at Castle Hill on Christmas Day, 1840. The sermon was preceded by an “Advertisement”, which made the case for a resident minister at Castle Hill and a church at Dural, and appealed for people to make contributions to this cause.

In 1839 there existed what Clarke called a “Diocesan School-house” at Dural. This was the Church of England denominational school which was held in a “small and inconvenient” building a little way down the hill from where St Jude’s church would be built in 1846. The “Advertisement” to his 1840 sermon says it was big enough to serve as a school but that a church was needed if people living in the Dural district were to be properly served. He also warned his Church of England readers that the Wesleyans had recently become active in the Dural district. In a notice following the sermon, he published the times that “Divine Service will be performed in the Church

at Castle Hill, and in the School-house in Dural” each Sunday throughout the summer of 1840/41.

Before coming to Sydney, William Clarke had spent five years as the first vicar of a new parish at St Mary’s, Longfleet in Dorset. Longfleet is now part of the port town of Poole. He would have travelled widely in the surrounding district during his time there, partly following his geological interests, and partly as he was also a magistrate in the town of Dorchester in the western part of the county. When riding between Poole and Dorchester, he would have often passed close to St Andrew’s, Winterborne Tomson, one of our possible model churches for St Jude’s.

It is hard to draw a firm conclusion from this tenuous link. Although he did not stay long enough in the parish of Castle Hill to see the start of the building of St Jude’s church at Dural in 1846, it is quite possible that he was involved in the early planning of the church building before he left the district, and he might have suggested a building of the style and size of the Winterborne Tomson church. However, bearing in the mind the reservations already mentioned about the similarity between St Andrew’s and St Jude’s, as well as the timing of William Clarke’s departure from the parish of Castle Hill, I have concluded that although he should be credited with much of the achievement in getting a church built at Dural as early as 1846, there is little reason to suppose that he had anything to do with the actual design of St Jude’s.

#### *Bishop William Broughton (1788-1853)*

William Broughton was appointed to the position of Bishop of Australia in 1836, having previously been Archdeacon of New South Wales from 1829. As head of the Anglican church in Australia, he used his authority to bring about the building of a great many rural churches in New South Wales. The large number of ‘Broughton churches’ built in his time was recalled in 1936 when the Diocese celebrated the centenary of his appointment as Bishop of Australia. One of the events organised for the celebrations was a series of four Broughton Church Pilgrimages, which involved Archbishop Mowll leading a convoy of cars round a collection of Broughton churches on four separate days. The one held on 17 May 1936 started at Parramatta North at 3 o’clock and went to Prospect, St Mary’s, Penrith, Mulgoa, Emu Plains, Richmond, Pennant Hills, and ended up with Dural at 7 o’clock (and in the dark at that time of the year). Ten minutes was allowed for each stop, with the Rector, wardens and ‘people’ waiting to greet the party at each church.

William Broughton owed his original appointment in the Colony to his acquaintance with the Duke of Wellington, who was Prime Minister from 1827 to 1841. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the Duke had been given a reward in the form of a country seat and he eventually selected the large house and estate of Stratfieldsaye in Hampshire. At almost exactly the same moment, in 1818, William Broughton, then aged 30, graduated from Cambridge and entered his chosen profession, the church. His first appointment was to a curacy at a small village called Hartley Wespall, about three miles south of Stratfieldsaye.

Broughton spent nine years at St Mary’s the Blessed Virgin, Hartley Wespall, where he is still remembered today in a local history booklet, spending much of his time in scholarly research. The quality of his published work was impressive enough to bring

him into favour with his Bishop of Winchester. More importantly for his subsequent career, he also attracted the attention of his famous and influential neighbour the Duke of Wellington. In due course the Duke secured for him first the chaplaincy of the Tower of London, and then in 1828 nomination as archdeacon of New South Wales in succession to the incumbent Thomas Scott.

Now, if you go south through the country lanes from Hartley Wespall for about six kilometres, you come out on to the A30 main road at the village of Natley Scures. Cross the road, and a farm track will bring you to the church of St Swithun's, which is of course one of the apsidal model churches described earlier and of these, the most similar to St Jude's. William Broughton lived in this district for a full nine years and must have come to know the surrounding villages well. It is an easy step to speculate that when he was planning the building of a church at Dural in the early 1840s, he remembered the small Norman church at Natley Scures and arranged for its likeness to be perpetuated on the other side of the world.

If this were the case, he might have commissioned the church building from his own recollection, but it seems more likely that he would have had to ask for plans or specifications to be sent out from England. The Bishop of Winchester would have been his most obvious source for this. Unfortunately, the Hampshire Record Office, which now looks after the Winchester diocesan archives, does not contain any documentation or correspondence on the subject.

### **Conclusions**

St Jude's, Dural, is an unusual and beautiful church which somebody designed and built. My proposition is that St Jude's was designed to resemble an English church of a precisely specific design, and that St Swithun's, Natley Scures, in Hampshire is the most likely model.

I have also argued that the 'somebody' who decided on the design of St Jude's could well be William Broughton, on the basis of his likely personal familiarity with the church of St Swithun's, and his position of authority as the Bishop of Australia.

For the time being, however, in the absence of documentary evidence in Australia or England to support or otherwise affect this line of reasoning, these speculations will have to remain just that.

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