

HISTORICAL NOTES ON ST JUDE'S CHURCH, DURAL

(revised 2018)

ORIGINS

St Jude's Church was built at the initiative of local residents on land donated by James and Lydia Roughley, who lived at "The Pines" not far to the north along Old Northern Road. Construction, using locally quarried sandstone, started in 1846 and was completed before the end of 1848. Bishop William Broughton visited the building site on 11 November 1846 and performed a stone laying ceremony. It was the 29th Anglican church to be built in the Sydney district.

EXTERIOR

The building is constructed of large sandstone blocks and was originally without either a vestry or porch. Its design is that of a 12th century Norman single-cell, aisleless, apsidal church, of which there are four surviving examples in England. The most similar one of these to St Jude's is St Swithun's church at Natley Scures, near Basingstoke in Hampshire. William Broughton was the vicar of the neighbouring parish of Hartley Wespall for nine years before he came to New South Wales and it is possible he had St Swithun's in mind when commissioning the design of St Jude's.

The vestry on the northern side of the church dates from between 1866 and 1877. The porch, which protects the main door on the southern side and which is built of bricks covered with cement render, was added on in 1894.

The roof was clad with wooden shingles until 2006, when these were replaced with longer lasting and more fire

resistant Welsh slate from the Penrhyn quarry at Bethesda, North Wales.

PORCH

Inside the porch the Bible in the glass case (made in 1968) pre-dates the church by a few years, having been given to the Dural congregation in 1839 by Rev William Clarke (first Rector of Castle Hill parish, 1839-1844). A pick, supposedly used to dress the stone walls, hangs on the wall. The text of the framed historical summary contains a typographical error - the lych-gate, stone fence and sundial were built in 1938, not 1930.

INTERIOR

The distinctive features of the simple interior are the most unusual curved east wall and the narrow windows. The general appearance of the interior dates from the embellishments made soon after the end of World War II, although until the late 1960s, when major repairs to the interior of the roof were undertaken, the stone walls were covered in whitewash. The present wooden floor was installed in 1954, but part at least of the original floor would have been stone flagging.

WINDOWS

Originally the windows were plain glass diamond shaped panes. Four of the stained glass windows were made by Alfred C. Handel (1886-1948) -

Eric Donald Best (east wall): 1924
Clara Blaxland (west wall): 1924
Samuel Moore (north wall): 1924
Matilda Blake (north wall): 1926

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The remaining stained glass windows were made by Arthur Benfield (1912-1988) at O'Brien's glassworks. The known installation dates of three of these are -

Alfred Ernest Best and Lydia Anne Best (south wall): 1941

Nelson, Herbert & Kathleen Christobell Bushell (north wall): 1947

Children's window (vestry, east wall): 1947.

FONT

We have no information about the origins of the stone font at the rear of the church. Its wooden cover was given to the Parish in 1952.

PEWS & LECTERN

It is likely that the present pews were installed in or about 1949, at the end of Rev R.A. O'Brien's time as Rector. Before that, the seating consisted of plain forms without back supports. The lectern was made to match the pews in 1961.

The pew cushions were sown and embroidered by a parishioner and her sister, and installed progressively over the period 2000 to 2018.

PRAYER DESK

The desk and kneeler, and the Roll of Honour on the south wall commemorating five parishioners who died in service in World War I, were installed in 1920 as a memorial. The seat of the prayer desk was added as part of the Centenary celebrations in 1946.

CHANCEL

The Communion rail and wall panelling were installed as a gift from the Fuller family in or about 1927. The stone paving, communion table, brass cross and the pulpit date from the restoration of the church in 1946. The table and pulpit were given by the members of the 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion, with which the then Rector, Rev R.A. O'Brien, had been closely associated as a padre during World War II in Papua New Guinea. The Communion cushions were made by parishioners in 1996 for the 150th anniversary.

FLAGS

The Union Jack was brought back from World War II by Rev R.A. O'Brien from the 31/51 Infantry Battalion Chapel of St John in the Swamps, Merauke, Dutch New Guinea. The Australian flag was given to the Parish in 1952 in memory of the late Arnold Hirst.

VESTRY

In 1946 a wooden screen and door was installed separating the vestry from the main body of the church as part of the Parish's Centenary commemoration. This was removed in 2008 to enlarge the usable space within the church and to allow the organ to be moved into the vestry.

The military motifs and the World War II Roll of Honour previously on the screen were re-mounted on the north wall of the vestry. The Roll of Honour carries a list of 16 men of the wider Dural district who died in service in World War II.