

A century of Anglican worship in South Taranaki

One hundred years of worship at St Mary's Anglican Church, Hawera, will be celebrated during the next nine days and a number of activities have been organised to mark the occasion.

More than 300 people are expected to attend the week's celebrations which begin with a children's fancy dress party this afternoon.

A concert for adults will be held this evening and during next week a number of organ recitals and luncheons will be held.

On Tuesday a programme for the elderly, titled "Feast of Music" has been organised and next Saturday the centennial will conclude with an evening social and a thanksgiving service the following day.

When Hawera was establishing itself as a town in the late 1870s there were only two streets - High Street and Princes Street - and the rest of the settlement consisted mostly of paddocks and open country.

Only a small number of buildings had been erected for the settlers' use.

The first town hall had just been built and three churches had been established - Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Presbyterian.

Story: Pam Jones

As there was no Anglican Church in Hawera, the parishioners used the Presbyterian Church for their services.

In those days Hawera was part of the Parochial District of Patea, of which the Rev A. Desant was then curate.

The district was a large one and the curate travelled only periodically to Hawera to hold services.

This arrangement continued until the first St Mary's Church was built in 1881.

The number of Anglican families in and around Hawera had increased immensely and it became necessary for parishioners to have a church of their own.

The original wooden building was a small, high-gabled structure. It consisted of a porch, nave, chancel and vestry.

Two hundred people attended the opening of the building, which was consecrated by the

Bishop of Wellington on December 11, 1881.

The site of this church was the same as that on which the present brick church stands.

On January 9, 1882, the first recorded baptism in St Mary's was held and the first confirmation took place on March 3, 1883.

Although Synod had agreed to Hawera being created a separate Parochial District in 1880, it was November 12, 1882, before the Rev W. Hevingham Root, the first vicar, arrived to begin his ministry.

Services

In addition to the present day district covered by the Hawera parish, services were held at Rahotu, Opunake, Manaia, Ngaere, Eltham and Kaponga.

The original district actually comprised an area of 800 square miles.

The financial position of the church at this stage was worrying parishioners and in 1885 an envelope system of donation was introduced.

A year later a schoolroom was built.

For some years the parish developed quietly under a succession of vicars. District services were taken by the vicar or a lay reader.

The growth of the town soon became so great, however, that the first St Mary's, only 20 years old, was found to be too small and the present church was built.

Until this new church was completed morning services were held in the schoolroom and evensong was frequently held in the Hawera Opera House.

Foundation stone

The foundation stone was laid on September 8, 1902, and the building opened on July 1, 1903.

Payment for the new church was finalised in 1916 and in that year, St Mary's was at last consecrated and the foundation stone laid for the present hall.

The hall was completed as a war memorial and opened free of debt in 1919.

In 1915, the boys of St Mary's choir made their first appearance.

A year later St Mary's Church School opened. It was originally established as a result of the church school movement throughout New Zealand.

A boarding establishment was established in 1919 in the Nolan Homestead, Tannahill Street. (The building still stands on the original site today).

Although the boarding school did not survive long, the day school continued to flourish until forced to close during the Depression following World War I.

For many years pew rents were charged at St Mary's but in 1917 this system was abolished, causing a large decrease in the income of the church.

Difficulties

Through the years, the parish developed with the town.

Financially, they were difficult years - great mortgages had to be met and provision made for a new vicarage.

This vicarage was built in 1948 and in 1955 the exterior of the church was sealed and painted and the interior redecorated.

When St Paul's Church at Normanby was demolished, a chapel of St Paul was established in the northern transept of St Mary's. This small chapel is used regularly for mid-week communion.

In 1957 it was decided that an additional

church centre was needed and two sections were purchased in Pacey Ave.

St Elizabeth's Church Centre was declared open the following year. An additional clergy house was erected on the adjoining property in 1962 but as the gaps between the appointment of curates extended and finally ceased in 1974 its function came to an end. The house is now rented out.

Attendance numbers at St Mary's fell steadily during the 1960s and with it the church's income.

After long investigation it was finally decided that a major structural exercise involving the expenditure of many thousands

of dollars was necessary to preserve the beautiful and historic building.

A major renovation scheme was adopted as the centenary project and already some of the required \$30,000 has been raised in direct contributions and through increasing regular givings.

The parish is faced with a \$55,800 bill for urgent repairs and an even larger bill, \$72,500 for eventual repairs to the church hall.

The work is expected to begin in mid-January next year and will be completed within four months.

St Mary's Anglican Church, Hawera.



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In an effort to bring some semblance of order into it, she discovers that she can easily throw out things - but she can't bear to throw out people.

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