

# A Book of Memories



150 years of St Charles' School Waverley

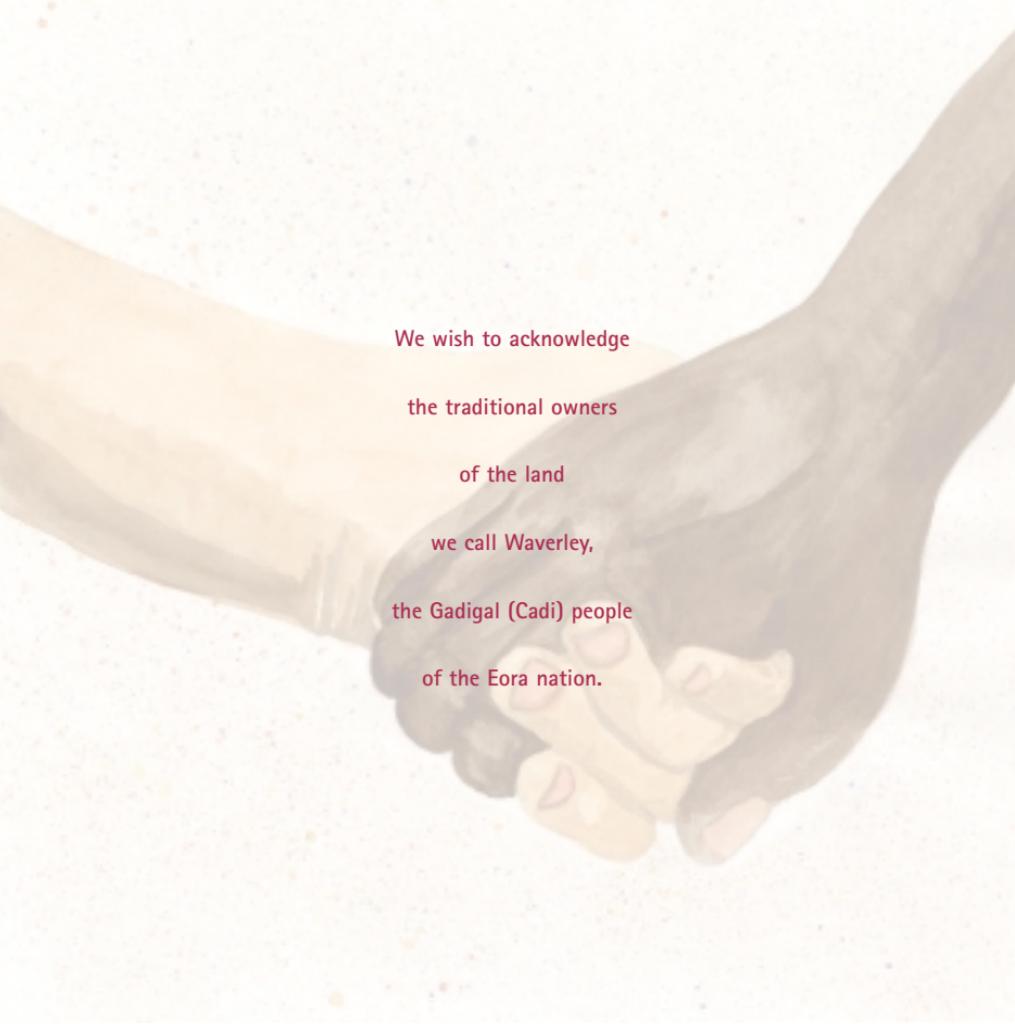
*Written and Illustrated by  
Liz Bowring*

# A Book of Memories

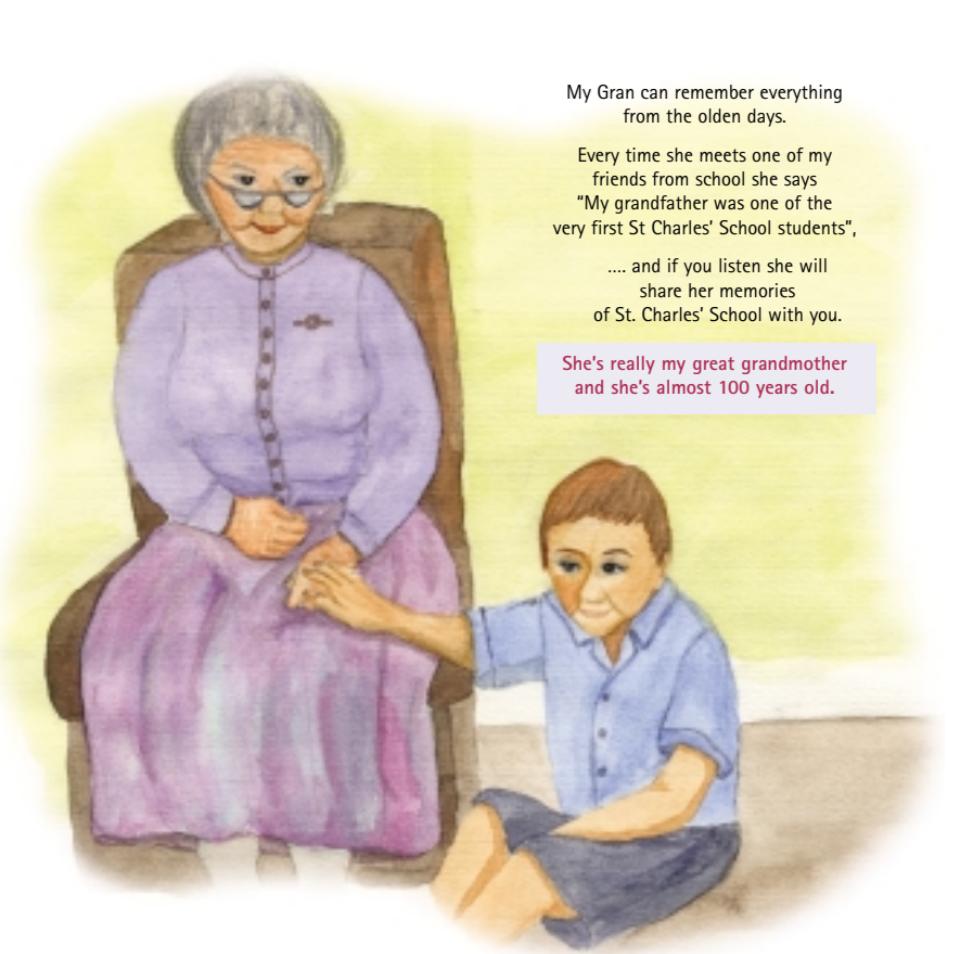


150 years of St Charles' School Waverley

*Written and Illustrated by  
Liz Bowring*



We wish to acknowledge  
the traditional owners  
of the land  
we call Waverley,  
the Gadigal (Cadi) people  
of the Eora nation.



My Gran can remember everything  
from the olden days.

Every time she meets one of my  
friends from school she says  
"My grandfather was one of the  
very first St Charles' School students",

.... and if you listen she will  
share her memories  
of St. Charles' School with you.

She's really my great grandmother  
and she's almost 100 years old.



Gran's grandfather went to St Charles' School the year it first opened in 1854.

There were only 18 boys and 20 girls in the whole school. The school was a small wooden building and was also used as the church. The teacher's name was Miss Mary Anne Oddie.

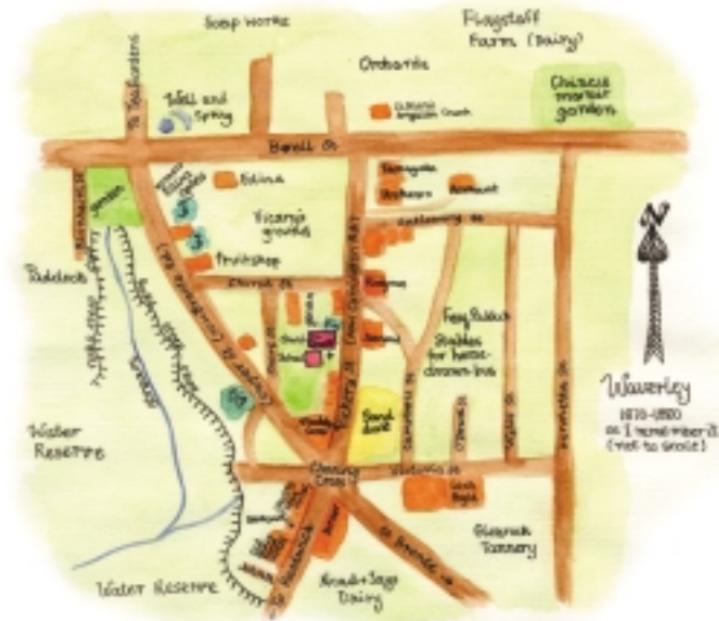
In those days less than half the children in Sydney used to go to school.

Some children were taught at home, while others never learnt to read or write.

In the 1850's Charing Cross was a rural crossroads.

Gran's grandfather described going from Tea Gardens (Bondi Junction) to Charing Cross on dirt roads through farming country. Waverley Park was a dairy farm called 'Flagstaff Farm'.

On many afternoons he would have the job of running to the Chinese market garden at the end of Henrietta Street to buy vegetables for dinner.



The land for the school was donated by Mr John Madden.

He owned land between Carrington Road and  
Cowper St (now called Bronte Road).

Charing Cross was called Madden's Corner at that time.  
His house was on the corner where the golf shop is now.

Before the school/chapel was built,  
Sunday Mass was held in his house.



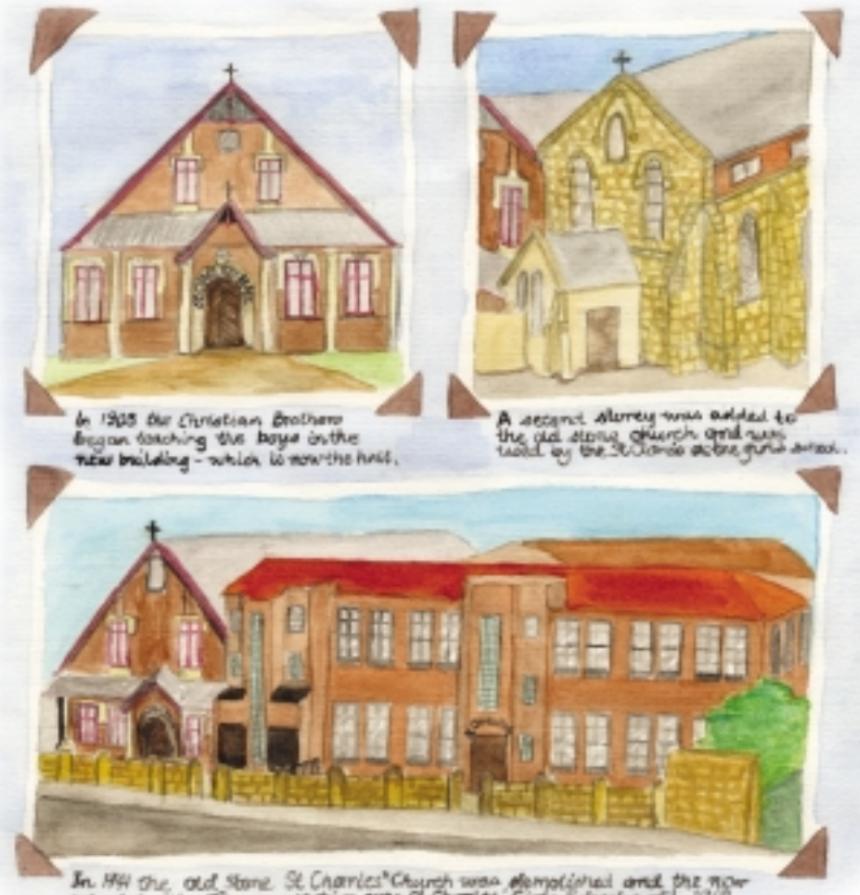
Gran says there was a ceremony and a great supper when the foundation stone was laid for the new stone church. Her grandfather told her that there were so many Catholics in Waverley that the old school/chapel couldn't fit everyone. Local people paid for the church through raffles and donations. One of the prizes was a cow, as a lot of the land at that time was used for dairy farming.

In 1866 the foundation stone of a new gothic style stone church was laid.  
The Parish of St Charles' Borromeo had been established in 1865  
with Father Norbert Woolfrey the first Parish Priest.

Over the years the population of Waverley grew. The school needed to use rooms in the basement of the church. Just before Gran was born the Parish built a hall to the south of the stone church for the boy's school, and converted the church to the girl's school. Mass was held in the hall.

Later they added second stories to both the stone church and hall. They demolished the stone church in 1941 and replaced it with a brown brick school building which became St Charles' Girl's School.

Today St Charles' School uses the brown brick building and the classrooms above the hall.



In 1905 the Christian Brothers began teaching the boys in the new building - which is now the hall.

A second storey was added to the old stone church and was used by the St Charles' girls until 1941.



In 1941 the old stone St Charles' Church was demolished and the new school built. The rear section was St Charles' Girls School until 1960.



The Franciscan Friars took charge of the parish in 1879, and so the Franciscan tradition at St Charles' Borromeo School began. Gran says that the Friars have always been involved in the school.

In 1880 the NSW Public Instruction Act was introduced to New South Wales. It made education free and compulsory for children 6 to 14. It also said education was to be secular (not tied to any religion). State schools were set up, and by 1883 funding was taken away from denominational – in other words religious schools. The religious orders became involved in education so that schools could continue.

The Franciscan Friars organised for the Poor Clare Sisters to come from Ireland to teach at St Charles' School and by 1883 the first six Sisters had arrived from Keady and Newry.

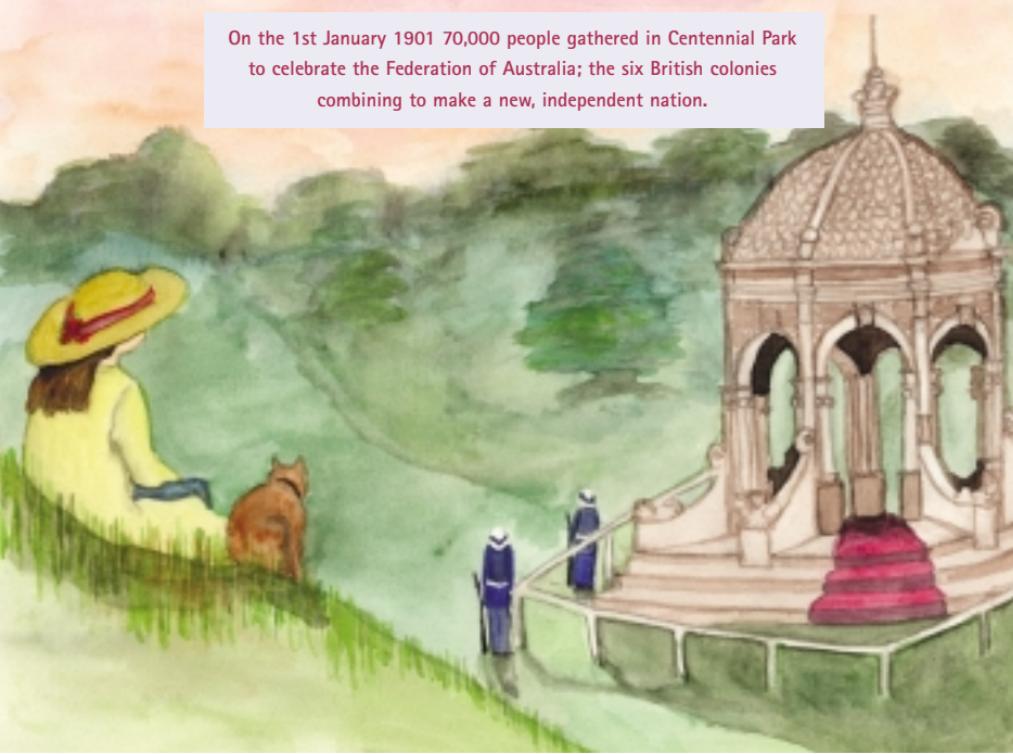
The Poor Clare Sisters taught at St Charles' School for 112 years. During that time they taught infant grade children, primary girls and even high school girls. They also set up St Clare's College to teach primary and secondary girls. Gran says it is a bit confusing because the sisters called their section of the St Charles' Parish School 'St Clare's School' until 1941.

A lay teacher called Jeremiah O'Keefe continued to teach the boys at St Charles' School until 1902.



As the sun rose on the 1st of January, 1901, Gran's oldest sister ran to Centennial Park. That afternoon was the celebration of Federation. Australia would no longer be a colony of England but a separate, independent nation. She wanted to be one of the first to be at the specially built pavilion. She was lucky because by the afternoon it seemed as if everyone from Sydney was there. It's a shame they didn't keep the pavilion. If you go there now you can see the one they built to replace it during the Bicentennial year.

On the 1st January 1901 70,000 people gathered in Centennial Park to celebrate the Federation of Australia; the six British colonies combining to make a new, independent nation.



From 1903 to 1968 the Christian Brothers ran two schools in Waverley. The Brothers lived at Waverley College and came across the road to teach at St Charles'. The school hall was equipped for the Boys' School, and by 1917 a second storey provided extra classroom space. The playground was separated by a fence, with the boys on one side and the girls on the other.

Gran said that St Charles' (or 'St Chikkas' as my grandfather called it) was a very popular school in the area. In the early years it had a reputation for students winning bursaries, which were awards of money to pay high school fees. The boys excelled at football and swimming. During the 1930s and 1940s it had the best choirs in New South Wales, winning many eisteddfods and other competitions.





Mary Immaculate is the Friary Church of the Franciscans and is used by the Parish of St Charles, Borromeo. The church was opened by Archbishop Kelly in 1913.

Gran says she was one of the first children to make her Holy Communion in the new church in Victoria Street. Mary Immaculate was the biggest church anyone had seen in Australia that wasn't a Cathedral. Her mum explained that there would be columns and towers added later, when the Friars had more money. She said there would be lots of fabulous paintings all over the inside. Gran could hardly wait to see that, but it would take many years for this to happen.

Because of the Second World War an Italian artist came to Australia. Cesare Vagarini, whose usual work was to teach fresco painting in Milan, Italy, had gone to the Holy Land to paint frescoes in a church belonging to the Franciscan Order. When war was declared against Italy he was captured

by the Allied forces, declared an enemy citizen and brought to an internment camp in the town of Tatura, Victoria. The Franciscans were able to bring him to Waverley. So in 1945 he commenced 7 giant paintings on canvas depicting the seven decades of the Franciscan Rosary.

Unfortunately he was only able to complete 3 paintings before he was repatriated to Italy. He didn't come back to paint the other 4, but painted them in Italy and sent them over. It took him until 1959 to finish the paintings and the walls of the church were finally completed.





After the Second World War times were very difficult in Europe. Australia encouraged migration, and many families came to our country.

Many came from Britain, Italy and Greece. Some of the 'New Australians', as Gran calls them, started small businesses like milk bars and corner stores and sent their children to St Charles'.

Some of them have grandchildren at St Charles' School this year.

People have migrated to Australia from nearly every country in the world.



One thing that Gran misses is the annual St Charles' Ball, which was held at Paddington Town Hall. It was the social event of the year! All the family would go, the mothers would wear a ball gown and the fathers would wear a dinner suit. Most of the children would be in their Sunday best except for the stars of the show – the debutants and their partners. These were girls from Year 1 and boys from Year 2. The girls were dressed in beautiful white dresses, sometimes made from their mother's bride dresses, and the boys wore dinner suits. They would roll out the red carpet and the boys and girls would walk in pairs to be presented to the Bishop. Then everyone would dance the night away, doing the traditional dances they had been practising in class for weeks before.

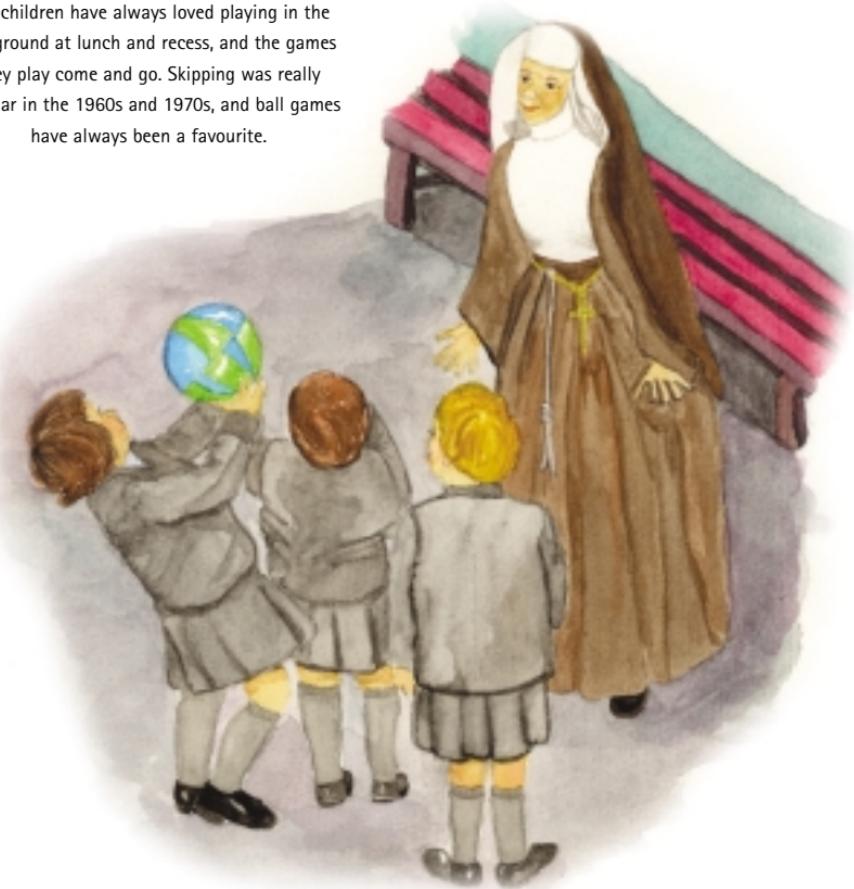


Gran says that although so many things have changed over the years at St Charles', lots of things remain the same. Football has always been a great passion at the school and the parents have run the St Charles' Football club since 1966.

Gran tells of sporting competitions held in the Friary grounds from the 1960s to the 1980s. Before the building of the new Friary there was a lot of open space and some classes used to go to play in the grounds at lunchtime. The Friars liked the children going over and were often seen joining in the games.



The children have always loved playing in the playground at lunch and recess, and the games they play come and go. Skipping was really popular in the 1960s and 1970s, and ball games have always been a favourite.



Gran says she doesn't know much about the way we learn now, but that when she was at school everyone sat in their places and listened. There were big classes, sometimes over 100 children in the one class, so everyone had to be doing the same thing at the same time. Classes gradually got smaller and new technology arrived.

When Gran started school she learnt to write with an ink pen that you had to dip into a pot of ink every few letters. And did you get into trouble if your ink spilt in your school bag on the way home! The worst thing was that you couldn't rub out any mistakes. There was blotting paper for removing puddles of ink, but there was always a mess left behind. The children had to use ink pens until the end of the 1960s when ballpoint pens became available.

Learning has always been important at St Charles'!



St Charles' has always prepared students for the sacraments of Confession (Reconciliation) and Communion (Eucharist). In the old days there were confessional boxes inside the church. Everyone had to go into these boxes one at a time behind closed doors and speak to the priest through the small screen. There were altar railings in the church and all the children had to kneel at these railings to receive Communion.



Gran remembers the excitement of the arrival of black and white television. In 1969 the children all gathered around the television set to watch as man first walked on the moon! The children could listen to recorded music and stories on the record players, and could watch films and slides if the room was really dark.

The teachers said it became much easier when video and audio cassette tapes became available, and by the 1980s children could watch video programs whenever the teacher wanted.

But Gran says she'll never understand computers, so there's no point sending her an email.



© Creative Clips 2004

Today I told Gran how we had our whole school photo taken – all together- everyone in the school, even the teachers. We made the numbers 1 5 0 to celebrate the 150th year of the school. Our school is one of the oldest in Australia! I wish Gran could have seen us all, but here is the photo for you to see.

Thank you Gran for all your memories of St Charles' School Waverley.

## Timeline of the Parish School of St Charles'

1854

Mr John Madden donated land to the Catholic Church. St Charles' School/Chapel was built on this land. The first building was constructed of wood and measured 23ft x 16ft. The foundation stone was blessed on Sunday, November 19 by Archdeacon John McEnroe. The first priests were from the Benedictine order, O'Connell and Sheehy.

1855

Miss Mary Anne Oddie was the first teacher. The first year 38 boys and girls attended the school. For a long time the school was a one-teacher school.

1859

Miss Ryan (1859), Miss Purcell (1859-60), Mr James Sutherland (1860-62), Mrs Shine (1862) and Mrs Johanna Cregan (1862 -) were teachers at the school. From 1862-83 the records of the teachers and when they taught are not available. However some of their names were Miss HM Duffy, Miss McCambley and Mr Campbell who finished in 1883.

1861

It was decided to build a new Church.

1865

The Parish of St. Charles' Borromeo was established and the first Parish Priest was Father Norbert Woolfrey, from the Cistercian order.

1866

A gothic style stone church was built facing Carrington Road (next to the current parish hall). The foundation stone was laid on Tuesday, January 9.

1879

The parish was given to the Franciscan Order to administer. The Friars came from the Franciscan Province of St Patrick in Ireland. The first Friars were Fathers Peter James Hanrahan and Augustine Martin Holahan.

1883

Government funding for Catholic schools ceased. The church looked to the religious orders to teach in the schools.

1884

The Poor Clare Sisters took over the teaching of infants and girls. Part of the Parish school was renamed St Clare's Primary. The first Principal was Sr Aloysius O'Hare OSC who remained in charge until 1911. There was a building constructed for this school which was demolished in 1971. The Sisters also established a separate school, St Clare's College. The boys of primary school age and older continued to be taught at St Charles' School by a lay teachers, Mr Jeremiah O'Keefe and Mr Singleton (assistant).

1902

A new school building was constructed. It was one storey and faced Carrington Road, to the left of the stone church and was opened on August 2. (The St Charles' Parish Hall incorporates this building).

1903

The Christian Brothers began teaching the boys at St Charles' Boys' School in the new building. Br P. A. Conlon was the first Headmaster.

1903

By January the new school building was to become the church/hall and the church became the school for St Clare's Primary. A second floor was added to the Church.

1912

Mother Francis Maloney became Principal of the Parish Infants and Primary girls and Br. Foran was headmaster of the Boys.

1913

The Church of Mary Immaculate was opened in Victoria Street, and was dedicated on August 13 by Archbishop Kelly. This church is the Friary church of the Franciscan order and is used by the Parish of St Charles' Borromeo. It was finished in gray stucco, but not all its decorative features were completed.

1917

The church/hall was extended by the addition of a second floor and the St Charles' boys were taught there. The St Clare's Girls' Primary remained in the old stone church.

1920's

Total enrolment for both schools reached 400 pupils. Principals of the Parish Infants and Girls school were Sr Michael Loughlin (1922-1924, 1928-1942) and Sr M Leotina (1925-27). Headmasters of St Charles' Boys were Br Desmond, Br Crennan (1927-33)

1930

Mary Immaculate Church exterior was completed and dedicated on February 16. The two towers and portico had been added.

1930's

Br Reid and Br Brady were Headmasters of the boys' school.

1941

The old stone church was demolished and new school buildings were constructed. Some buildings were remodeled. The new school was known as St Charles' Girls' Primary School.

1940's

Sr M Catherine Boulton (1943-1955) became Principal of the St Charles' Girls' School. Headmasters of the Boys' included Br Wynne (1947-53)

1945

Mr Cesare Vagarini commenced a series of 7 wall size paintings on canvas for Mary Immaculate Church. These paintings represent the seven decades of the Franciscan rosary.

1955

The primary section of St Clare's College closed and many of the girls transferred to St Charles' Girls' School.

1950's

Principals of the Girl's school were Sr M Theresa Free (1955-1957), Sr M Carmel Martin (1958) and Sr Moira Harrison (1959-1967). Headmasters included Br DE O'Connor (1953-6) and Br Newton.

1959

The final painting for Mary Immaculate church was completed.

1968

The Christian brothers closed their St Charles' Boys' College. St Charles' Parish School became one school for girls from Kindergarten to Year Six and for boys from Kinder to Year Three. The last Headmaster was Br J H Dixon.

1968

Sr Pauline Mary Babicci became Principal of St Charles' Parish School.

1970

Sr Joan Fitzsimons became Principal.

1972

Sr Joan Murphy became Principal.

1979

Sr Louise Hume became Principal.

1980's

Boys were able to continue at the school until Year Six.

1995

The final year of leadership of the school by the Poor Clare Sisters.

1996

Mrs Felicity Giles became Principal.

2000

Jubilee 2000 all Catholic schools from the Sydney Archdiocese gathered at the Olympic Stadium for a huge celebration of Catholic Education.

2001

Mrs Gabrielle McAnespie became Principal. St Charles' School celebrates 150 years of Catholic Education.

2004

## Bibliography:

- 'Calendar of source material and chronological epitome:  
the Church of St Charles' Borromeo Waverley N S Wales: pre-Franciscan period, 1854-1879'  
Provincial Chronical of the Holy Spirit Province Australia-New Zealand Vol 6 1952
- Dowd, B.T.  
The History of the Waverley Municipal District  
Council of the Municipality of Waverley, 1959
- Johnston, Major W.L.  
Scrapbook  
Waverley Municipal Library
- Keane OFM, John E.  
A Church at Charing Cross: Overview of the history of the fabric of  
Mary Immaculate Church, Waverley, and its background  
Franciscan Archives Historical Series No 2 1998
- Luttrell FMS, John  
St Mary's to St Catherine's: Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Sydney 1836-2000  
CEO, Sydney 2001

## Special thanks to:

- Sr Mary Francis Murphy, Archivist, St Clare's College
- Father John Kane OFM, Franciscan Archivist
- Mr W Cranny, Archivist, Waverley College
- Gabrielle McAnespie, Principal, St Charles School
- Margaret Crawley, St Charles' School
- Greg Coggiola of Creative Clips Photography

Designed and Produced by  
Karin Bouda Design 2004



© Liz Bowring 2004



53-63 Carrington Road, Waverley NSW 2024  
Ph 02 9387 3845 Fax 02 9389 3612  
[admin@stc.waverley.syd.catholic.edu.au](mailto:admin@stc.waverley.syd.catholic.edu.au)  
[www.stc.waverley.syd.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stc.waverley.syd.catholic.edu.au)