

THE STORY OF

St. Mary-on-Allyn

ALLYNBROOK N.S.W.

by
The Rev. M. J. Clarke, Th.L.
Rector of Gresford
1967 - 1973

It is unusual for a ship-board romance to lead to the building of a Church. However, this is the case in regard to the origins of the historic Church of S. Mary-on-Allyn.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN.

The story begins with the arrival from Wales of Charles Boydell, who was given a grant of land north of Paterson on the site of the town of Gresford. He named his property "Camyr Allyn" which is Welsh for "a cottage on the Allyn". Boydell, with a staff which consisted of one free-man and his wife, two free fencers and seven assigned convicts, proceeded to farm his new property, growing wheat, corn, beans, potatoes and tobacco, and fattening sheep and cattle. Boydell prospered and wrote enthusiastically to his younger brother William, who was then a medical student at the University of Edinburgh.



BISHOP BROUGHTON, FROM A SKETCH BY
BISHOP NIXON.

THE BEGINNING OF A LOVE STORY.

William decided to follow his brother, and settle in New South Wales. He booked his passage on the good ship "Camden". Among his fellow passengers was William Grant Broughton, who after many years work as Archdeacon in Australia, had recently been consecrated first Bishop of Australia. With Broughton were his wife and two daughters. It did not take long for William Boydell to fall in love with one of these girls, Mary Phoebe, a person of great beauty. In due course, Boydell asked the Bishop's approval to marry Mary Phoebe. But the Bishop's reply was an emphatic "No". He said to Boydell, "My dear young man, what makes you think for one moment, that I would give my consent to such a proposition as this? I am familiar with that district where your brother resides. The nearest place of worship is at Paterson, quite a distance away, and I cannot imagine you travelling

that distance over what is but a track, week by week, in order to attend Divine Service”.

A BARGAIN WITH THE BISHOP.

Young Boydell was not the kind of man to be put off by such a reply, and decided to discuss his problem with the “Camden’s” Captain. The wise captain came up with the suggestion that if William Boydell were to build a Church on his new property, for the use of the Rector of Paterson, and to serve the needs of the settlers of the surrounding district, the Bishop might consider the matter in a more favourable light.

This the Bishop did. He even produced a design for a small stone Church, and promised that when it was completed he would travel from Sydney to consecrate it.

The “Camden” reached Sydney on June 2, 1836, one hundred days after leaving England.

Brother Charles was at the wharf to meet William, and was able to obtain a grant of land for him, adjoining his own property.,

The two brothers went by the small steamship “Sophia Jane” to Morpeth, in those days a thriving port. William obtained the services of a number of convicts, purchased supplies and equipment in Morpeth and Maitland, and set about the mammoth task of clearing the land, planting crops, and building a house. He also found time to arrange for the erecting of the promised Church, on the banks of the Allyn River.

THE PROMISED CHURCH IS BUILT.

Several times he went to Sydney to report progress to Mary Phoebe; several times she was able to visit the property and note the progress made there. She had a particular interest in the way the



MARY PHOEBE BOYDELL.

Church was taking shape! At her suggestion, William called his property "Caergwrle" after his family's estate in Wales. In those days the property extended from Charles Boydell's estate "Camyr Allyn", to the upper reaches of the Allyn.

The Church was completed in 1844, and Bishop Broughton kept his promise to consecrate it, naming it, "St. Mary-on-Allyn". The consecration took place on 26th November, 1845.

He had also given his consent to the marriage of William and Phoebe, which he solemnised in St. James' Church, King Street, Sydney, in April, 1844.

The Church of St. Mary then consisted only of the nave and sanctuary. Bishop Broughton wrote, "It is a humble structure, measuring 38' by 17' internally, the walls but 9' high, built of the grey granite found in the bed of the river; but the general style and appearance are so Church-like that it cannot be mistaken for anything but what it is — a house set apart for

the worship of God”.

The transepts were added at a later date.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ST. MARY'S

Features of the Church worth noticing are the belfry over the Vestry, the woodwork at the gable ends, the timber mullions, and the tracery to the stained-glass windows in the Sanctuary wall. Also of interest are the cedar hammer-beam roof trusses, the simple cedar pews, the carved cedar pulpit and lectern, the small windows, cedar floorboards fixed with handmade nails, the doors with their wooden rim locks, wrought-iron hinges and long bolts, and the stone flagging of the Vestry.

Close to the building, in the Churchyard are the graves of William and Mary Boydell, and of an infant son. There is also a tablet to their memory inside the Church.

A direct descendant, Mr. Richard Boydell, Mrs. Boydell and their family, live at the historic home “Caergwrle”, which is in a remarkably sound state of preservation.

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

This old Church, which originated in a romance, has a romance of its own. For over one hundred and twenty years it has been the spiritual home of the people of this district. Here generations of the faithful have worshipped. They have been married here. Their babies have been baptised here. And their mortal remains have been laid to rest here.

This Church still serves the spiritual needs of the people. Three services are held here each month.

And it will be here for the use of generations to come.

Australia has many reasons to honour



the memory of her first pioneer Bishop.
This Church provides one of those
reasons.

ST. MARY-ON-ALLYN.

At the time of the first reprinting of this booklet (1988) regular Church life at St. Mary-on-Allyn, Allynbrook, is being maintained.

The year 1985 was observed as Centenary Year of the Parish of Gresford. Allynbrook shared in that observance. Each Church in the Parish had a Centenary Eucharist. The service at Allynbrook was held on 14th April, 1985. The Celebrant and Preacher being the Rt. Rev. R.F. Appleby, Auxiliary Bishop of Newcastle, assisted by the Rector, Canon T.J. Johnstone, and a former Rector, Archdeacon D. Stuart-Fox, and Archdeacon J.V.J. Robinson, Archdeacon-Emeritus of the Diocese of Grafton, and a great friend of the Parish of Gresford. The Centenary Eucharist was a great spiritual occasion and was followed by a Parish Luncheon.

Due to the generosity of the descendants of the late Thomas and Mary Hancock, who had held a family reunion and a special Holy Eucharist on 10th May, 1982 to mark the Sesquicentenary of the arrival in Australia of Thomas and Mary, the Church has been beautifully re-carpeted as a thank-offering by the family.

The generosity of the late Mrs. Lillian Christine Scobie, a resident of Allynbrook in her earlier years, has meant that the Vestry has been able to undertake an extensive programme of renovations to the Church. The Church at Allynbrook received a further legacy from the Estate of the late Mr. Kenneth R. Bridger, who spent part of his early life in the Gresford district.

The services of an architect, Mr. David Hilliard, were sought, and Diocesan approval was given for the work to proceed. Internal and external painting of the building has been completed. The first half of the Church floor has been replaced with new timber. The timber for the second half is currently passing through the seasoning process. The Vestry has also embarked on a programme of renovations to the Church Hall.

The departure of Mr. Richard Boydell and his family has meant that, for the first time since the Church was consecrated

in 1845, no member of the Boydell family is now resident or worshipping at Allynbrook. We do thank God for the many contributions made by the Boydell family over the years to St. Mary's. We wish Richard and his family well in their new home in Walcha, N.S.W.

We pray that this historic Church may long continue to witness to the things that are eternal.

The Reverend Canon T.J. Johnstone, Th.L.

Rector of Gresford.

1988