

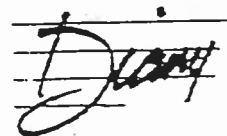
In 1889 he sold his coal and shipping interests and the family moved to Wellington where they lived in a grand house overlooking the city. There Martin Kennedy accepted a number of directorships, including the Bank of New Zealand, and continued his support of the Church, principally St Patrick's College. He was created a Knight of St Gregory by the Pope and died in 1916, aged 80 years, survived by his wife and five children.

As is obvious, Archbishop Redwood was well acquainted with Martin Kennedy in the days of his prosperity. But the fact remains that in 1864 when the first Mass was supposedly celebrated at Hokitika in a store belonging to Kennedy Brothers, the future metropolitan was on the other side of the world. His recorded comment of 1887 was secondhand. More importantly, biographical details of Martin Kennedy's life published in 'The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand' and Scholifield's 'A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography' make no mention of Hokitika; nor does his obituary notice. Moreover, all give the date of his arrival in Greymouth as 1865.

If the first Mass on the Coast was not offered in 1864 by Father Stephen Hallum in a store of Kennedy Brothers at Hokitika, who was the priest sent there 'before any protestant was among the multitude'? Presumably the honour of the first Mass on the Coast rightfully belongs to him.

JMH

Next issue: Part 3: The Case for the Alternative Claimant.



'Friends of the Cathedral'
Annual Gathering and Luncheon,
Sunday 28th October - 10.30-12.30.

THE CATHEDRAL TRUST
CATHEDRAL HOUSE
PO BOX 4544
CHRISTCHURCH

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NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CATHEDRAL



No 70 : JUNE 2007

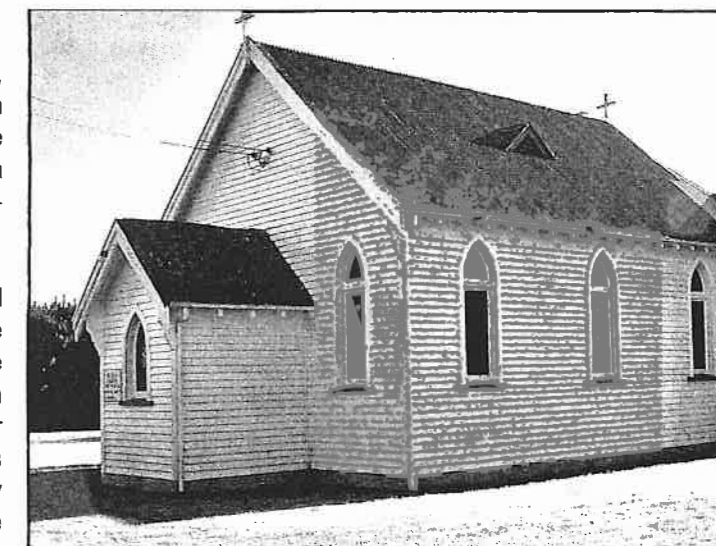
HERITAGE TO THE FORE

Few parishes in our country could claim two heritage buildings side by side. The Catholic Parish of Ashburton is one. Holy Name Church is the only building in the town designated Category One by the Historic Places Trust, and the presbytery next door is designated Category Two.

The church is now seventy-six years old, and the presbytery was a hundred years old in April of this year. Both were built by Dean James J. O'Donnell, parish priest of Ashburton for fifty-two years. To mark the centenary of the house the parishioners were invited to drinks and nibbles after evening Mass on the anniversary day, followed by a talk given by Michael Hanrahan, who wrote 'A Suitable Temple' for the centenary of the Cathedral. A brass plaque now graces the veranda, reminding all who come to the front door of the house that it was blessed and opened by the Rt Rev John Joseph Grimes, SM, First Bishop of Christchurch on 21st April 1907. And in the hallway, beside a showcase containing his walking stick, now hangs a photograph of the legendary Dean standing on the steps..

Dean O'Donnell built two other churches in the district, one at Rakaia in 1895, and another at Hinds in 1911, both of which he named for St Ita, patron saint of his home county in Ireland. The former is still in use, but due to a declining population, the Hinds church was de-commissioned by Bishop Cunneen in 2005.

Subsequently, the church was gifted by the Tinwald Parish to the Isaac Wildlife Trust for the heritage village being established by Diana Lady Isaac adjacent to the Christchurch Airport. The church has since been repainted and refurbished, and has already been used for a wedding. More recently, a group of former parishioners have had a book published recording the 94 year history of the church, and as a follow up a busload of people from Mid-Canterbury have since travelled up to McLean's Island to see the church in its new setting.



St Ita's Church, Hinds (1911-2005) prior to its transfer to the Isaac Heritage Village, McLeans Island, 2006.

So, while disappointment continues over the demolition of the Sunnyside Administration block and changes to the Arts Centre on Worcester Boulevard, some good things are happening. Chief among them must surely be the choice of Christchurch as the venue for the first New Zealand meeting of the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. It is expected that more than 1000 international delegates, observers, interpreters and media will fill the Christchurch Town Hall and the adjacent Convention Centre for the June 23 - July 2 event.

No doubt, the heritage buildings of the city and beyond will be part of the bus tours arranged for delegates, and there will be events of all sorts provided for them. Already, there are those with a love of our Cathedral who are making sure that what is arguably the city's finest heritage building will be given the recognition which is its due.

THE CATHEDRAL TRUST: Bishop B P Jones (Chairman); Fr K J Clark; Prof. H J Simpson (Emeritus Professor of Fine Arts); Mr J Brandts-Giesen (Barrister & Solicitor); Mrs N Pascoe (Cathedral Parishioner); Mr R. Sullivan (Structural Engineer); Fr J Fitzmaurice (Administrator); Ms. A Flett (Cathedral Parishioner); Mons J. Harrington (Secretary).

For the Cathedral Trust

Monsignor J.M. Harrington

'WHAT IS TRUTH?' (Jn 18:38) Part 2

In late July 1865, the Rev. J. Buller, Superintendent of the Christchurch Methodist Circuit, emerged from the bush at the mouth of the Taramakau. That river alone he had forded 26 times; but he had succeeded in crossing the alps on horseback. He was not, however, the first clergyman to set foot in West Canterbury, as the Coast was then known. In his book 'Forty Years in New Zealand', he graciously acknowledged that ".... the Roman Catholics to their credit, sent a priest there before any protestant was among that multitude."

Who was the priest, and when did he arrive there? That is the question.

Readers of this column will recall Archbishop Redwood's answer; in describing the parish of Hokitika in a document written in 1887, he wrote:

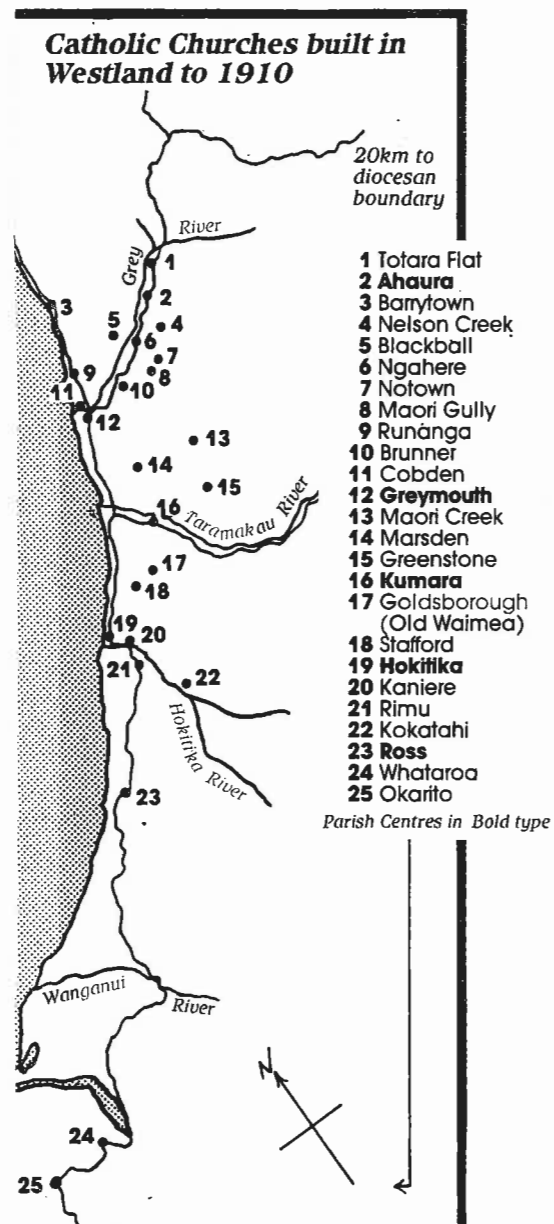
"... the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered here for the first time on the West Coast in 1864, by Rev. Father Hallum, a French secular priest, in the store of Kennedy Brothers, a fitting prelude to the prosperity which has since attended the firm ..."

Although this sounds authoritative, I have yet to find any evidence to support it; the year seems too early, the celebrant improbable, and nothing would suggest that Kennedy Brothers ever had an establishment in Hokitika.

Firstly, let us look at the date. Is it likely that Mass was celebrated on the West Coast as early as 1864?

Unlike the goldrush of Otago and Wakamarina, the rush to the West began slowly; the Coast was not readily accessible, and by now prospectors were more wary. While the presence of gold there was established by 1864, only the few set out via the coastline trails and mountain passes. It was the sea route that opened the way to most hopefuls. In July 1864, Reuben Waite, a Collingwood storekeeper with an eye to business, chartered a ship to take 70 diggers and a hold of provisions to the Mawhera River. A 20 mile tramp brought them to Greenstone where they struck it rich. A month later a description of the find was published in the 'Lyttelton Times', and the movement west increased, though it was still not a rush. On 20th December 1864, the paddleship 'Nelson' succeeded in breaching the treacherous Hokitika bar with a deckful of diggers. The following day a 100 more arrived on the 'Wallaby', and the day after that yet another large party who had abandoned a claim at Jackson's Bay.

What greeted these men was an apology for a town. Hokitika on Christmas Day, 1864 was no more than a collection of tents and a few primitive shops. William Revell, the Government Agent, had only just arrived to plan the town, and the settlement at Mawhera, from which he had come, numbered only 6 adult whites, and a number of children. In all the population of the Coast, from top to bottom, was about 800, most of them scattered in the bush. Only with the official proclamation of the new goldfield in March 1865 would the rush really begin. Over a three-year period the population would grow to upwards of 30,000. All that however was still in the future, and the question remains: Is it likely that a priest arrived to say Mass in Hokitika as early as 1864?



And what of Father Hallum, the priest credited with the first Mass on the West Coast. Where was he in 1864? Stephen Hallum was born in Brittany in 1809. Already a priest, he arrived in New Zealand by accident in 1857 and was accepted by Bishop Pompallier for the Auckland Diocese. After a short period at Tauranga he was sent to Waiheke Island where there was a small clay church. He does not seem to have done much; he left no records, and probably lived in the home of a Belgian named De Witte during his time on the island. Officially he was there from 1862 to 1868; the Bishop's Directory of 1863 and the New Zealand Almanac of 1866 list him as rector of that mission.

In the later part of 1886, however, he was elsewhere, on the West Coast of the South Island. Presumably he had joined the priests who had moved south because of Pompallier's inability to support them, and had been offered work by Bishop Viard. The Greymouth registers show that Stephen Hallum was assistant priest to his fellow-countryman, Father Emmanuel Royer, at least from October 1866 to May 1867. At that time he took charge of Charleston to the north, but by 1871 was back in Auckland, having been recalled there by Bishop Croke. It seems he never became fluent in English, and largely pleased himself what he did. For a period he served at the cathedral on a part-time basis, and in old age he lived privately with a Frenchman in Ponsonby, where he said Mass for the Sisters at St Mary's, New Street. Presumably this arrangement allowed Bishop Luck, who described him as a man of peculiar habits and Jansenistic theology, to keep a watchful eye on him. He died in good standing in 1890.

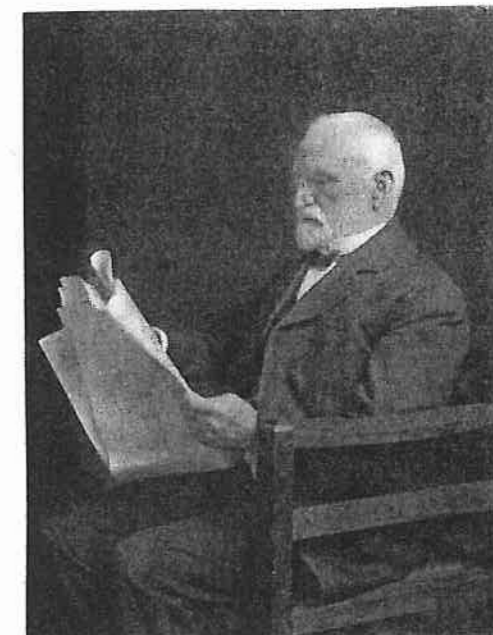
Although Stephen Hallum was certainly on the Coast in the infant days of the Church there, the question remains: is it likely that this priest from Auckland, past middle age and with limited English, stepped on to the beach at Hokitika one day in 1864?

And what of the Kennedy Brothers store, purported to be the venue of the first Mass on the Coast – 'a fitting prelude to the prosperity that has since attended that firm ...'. The question is: did Kennedy Brothers ever have a store at Hokitika?

As any old-timer in Greymouth will tell you, there were two families of Kennedys – the 'Gas' Kennedy's and the 'Bus' Kennedy's. However Martin Kennedy of Kennedy Brothers belonged to neither; and strangely has long been forgotten in Greymouth where he made his name. He was born in Ballymackey, Tipperary, in 1836, and emigrated to Australia in 1860. After twelve months on the diggings of Victoria he followed the rush to Otago, where until 1865 he and a brother traded as merchants in Queenstown. With the opening up of the Coast Goldfields, Martin Kennedy moved west to the growing town of Greymouth.

Over the years his success in merchandising led to his acquiring a share in the Brunner Coal Mine. By 1880 he was its sole proprietor, and coal, coke and fire bricks were being transported in his own ships to markets throughout Australasia. As his business grew, so did his public profile. In 1876 he was elected to the House of Representatives, a position he later relinquished; not surprisingly, he was a founder of the Greymouth Gas Company and the first Chairman of the Greymouth Harbour Board.

In the Catholic community Martin Kennedy was no less prominent. When a Church dignitary came to town, the customary address of welcome bore his name; when the new St Patrick's Church was built he donated all the bricks; when the first Bishop of Christchurch was consecrated, the guest list included Mr and Mrs M Kennedy of Greymouth, who were in London at the time. But if prosperity attended the business dealings of the Kennedy Brothers, a grave in the Karoro cemetery bears witness to this day of the family's sorrows. Buried there are 3 boys who died in childhood, together with a sister of Martin Kennedy's.



Martin Kennedy, the prominent Catholic businessman, politician and benefactor of the Church in early Westland.