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<https://www.therecord.com.au/blog/mgr-hawes-he-acted-like-an-english-gentleman-in-his-demeanour/>

Among all the praise heaped on Monsignor John Hawes for his luminous architectural gems scattered around the Diocese of Geraldton, little is known of those who carried out his work so that it could be enjoyed by generations to come.

Whitford parishioner **Basil Barry**, 89, served on the altar for both Mgr Hawes and for the bishop who championed the priest-architect's work, Bishop James O'Collins, at St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Geraldton. It is often said that Mgr Hawes designed the main building of Nazareth House, an aged care facility at Bluff Point on the outskirts of Geraldton. In fact, Basil – who last year celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary with wife Bernadette, the sister of Fr Frank Dillon, former editor of The Record – actually designed it, staying true to the designs that Mgr Hawes originally drew up. "He sketched it, I interpreted it," Basil says today. After years working as a teen for his father Cyril and uncle Tom's construction company Berry Brothers, which constructed Utakarra Cemetery under Hawes' direction and the St John of God Hospital and Convent, Basil went into architecture, studying for three years with 'E Le B Henderson' on St George's Terrace, Perth city.

But what stands today as the main building and quadrangle of Nazareth House, in Spanish Mission style, nearly didn't happen. Basil had drawn up a completely different design, but after consultation with the Sisters and the sharpest architect minds in the state, including the Architectural Students Association, he decided to stay true to the spirit of Hawes' design. It was both his and the nuns' understanding that it would be an orphanage, but more children came after World War II than expected, so Basil altered the back and internal walls and added extra bathrooms, washrooms, bedrooms and kitchen facilities, plus a cool room, which was not common at the time.

Basil has fond memories of the famous Monsignor, and one in particular that he says speaks of part of the man's character. On one occasion while getting ready for Mass in the sacristy at St Francis Xavier Cathedral – which he designed and helped build – he arrived to see Mgr Hawes' fox terrier sitting on a blanket with another dog, with red ribbons around their necks. When young Basil, then about 15, asked why the ribbons, Mgr Hawes said it was in celebration of the feast day of St George, the patron saint of England. The Monsignor even had a special haircut for the occasion. Just before walking out to the altar he said, "I wonder where my glasses are?" before Basil pointed out they were atop his head – a common mistake that befalls the best of us. "He acted like an English gentleman in his speech and mannerisms; he stood out in the way he conducted himself. He was very clean-cut," Basil recalls. He also recalled that the

Monsignor often travelled to Geraldton from Mullewa, where he was parish priest for much of his time in Australia, in a train with a spare seat next to him covered by a blanket for Dominie to rest on.

With his experience in Spanish Mission style, which Hawes had designed for Nazareth House for the Sisters of Nazareth, Basil also helped draw up the plans for Santa Maria College in Attadale in 1938, while working for E Le B Henderson. Basil's work with his father and uncle's Berry Brothers company provided important grounding for him. The company also provided CBC Bindoon Agricultural college equipment for their joinery shop and took on some of their students as apprentices. Basil also helped build the temporary choir gallery at St Mary's Cathedral in Perth, some of the original seats and the Archbishop's throne.

On the way back from Geraldton after constructing the St John of God hospital, Basil remembers stopping over at Mullewa while Mgr Hawes was still constructing the Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel and the Holy Apostles Ss Peter and Paul. When they arrived in mid-afternoon, they walked into the church calling out 'are you there?' They heard a response 'I'm up here' – and sure enough, the Monsignor was on the roof of the church working away. Basil says that Mgr Hawes didn't come down to let them into the priest's house until the sun had set.

A few years later, Fr Edward Brian, the Mullewa parish priest at the time, contacted Basil to install a damp proof course, to protect the church from rising moisture at ground level. It was a feature that Hawes rarely installed.

Basil avoided it as he knew the church and Hawes' work, and knew it would be a job that required him to personally supervise it, and he didn't have the time to invest in it. Fr Brian got someone from Geraldton to install one, which Basil says saved the church, as the dampness was causing it to decay.

While with Berry Brothers as a teen, Basil also worked on St Patrick's CBC College, now called Nagle College – having himself attended the CBC College's old campus on Cathedral Avenue. Having moved back to Perth after completing Utakarra Cemetery Chapel, St Patrick's College and St John of God Hospital in Geraldton, the Sisters wanted Berry Brothers to return to build a convent, which Mgr Hawes designed.

Basil has fond memories of Bishop O'Collins, a rugged, practical ex-plumber who personally helped the Berrys build the presbytery down the road from St Francis Xavier Cathedral. He remembers the bishop telling him to climb up onto the scaffolding and catch the bricks he'd throw up to him. He also recalls that the bishop was an outstanding tennis player, often playing with the local doctor .

Basil's extended family has strong religious foundations – three of his cousins are Mercy Sisters

and two are former Christian Brothers. Basil and Bernadette have six children and 15 grandchildren.

[Basil Berry on John Cyril Hawes.](#)