



MONSIGNOR HAWES HERITAGE

December 2024

NEWSLETTER

A Note From the Chair

Another eventful year for Monsignor Hawes Heritage is passing. The highlight was the Centenary of the **Laying of the Mullewa Church Foundation Stone** which brought over 300 people to Mullewa on the 14th September.

The BIG NEWS these past weeks, was the announcement that Gerry Eastman won the **Geraldton Volunteer of the Year Award 2024**. Congratulations Gerry! Your win reflects on the importance of the generosity of all our volunteers and the significance of the heritage of Monsignor Hawes.

At our recent AGM, Gerry stepped down from the Board of Management of MHHI as well as the position of Events Coordinator. Gerry has given her heart and soul to the conservation and celebration of the heritage of Monsignor Hawes and I am sure I speak on behalf of us all in thanking her for all she has done. Gerry will continue her involvement in the heritage of John Hawes as coordinator of Cathedral Tour Guides and assisting with the operations of the Monsignor Hawes Heritage Centre. I also look forward to her wise and considered advice on all things Hawes.

Trudi Cornish also stepped down after many years as a valuable member of the Board, providing a conduit to the City of Greater Geraldton as well as bringing her professional cultural heritage management skill set to the Board. I am sure Trudi will continue her interest in all things Hawes and be available for thoughtful advice and guidance as always.



Grand Nativity Display by Fr Savio - Catholic Centre Geraldton 2024

As a result of these two resignations we welcomed two new members to the Board - **Wayne Bull** and **Clare Venturini**.

As we peep into 2025, plans are afoot to build on the achievements of 2024 and previous years. We will be holding what have now become our regular events such as the Fremantle Chamber Orchestra Concert, the guided Heritage Trail Pilgrimages, and the Camino San Francisco.

In addition we hope to conduct a Car Raffle which will assist in the many urgent conservation works being contemplated in the coming years, including works on the Utaarra San Spirito Cemetery Chapel, the Mullewa Church and Presbytery, and the Morawa Hermitage.

Can I thank all our corporate and individual members for your support these past 12 months. Your membership fees are a valued contribution in our efforts to conserve and celebrate the heritage of the Servant of God, John Cyril Hawes.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Fr Robert Cross (Board Chair)
heritage@geraldtoncatholic.org.au

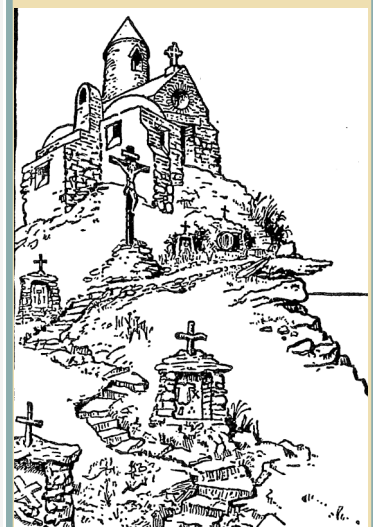
www.monsignorhawes.com



John Cyril Hawes

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THE SANCTUARY OF MOUNT ALVERNIA BAHAMA ISLANDS FRANCISCAN HERMITAGE & CHAPEL OF THE HOLY GHOST

Hawes sketch of his Hermitage with Stations of the Cross on Mt Alvernia Cat Island



Hawes arrived in WA in 1915 aboard the SS Malwa.

FOCUS BUILDING

The **Church of St Mary of Ara Coeli in Northampton**, 50 kms north of Geraldton, is the largest parish church designed by Hawes. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop O'Collins in **May 1936** and the building was opened in **September** of the same year.

The Parish Priest of Northampton at the time was **Dean Irwin** and he insisted that a new church be built, as opposed to renovating the old one. He also insisted on it being Gothic in style. Hawes conceded in his speech at the opening ceremony that he had thought Irwin obstinate as he had rejected Hawes's earlier designs, but that he could now see that he was right. Hawes believed that it was 'the finest and most impressive church in the Diocese'.



The building is constructed of rough hammer-dressed red sandstone donated by **Mrs Williams** of Willow Gully Farm. The deeply raked out joints emphasise the ruggedness and colour of the stone and its green tiled roof is reminiscent of the Westmoreland green slates in the north of England. The circular turret encases the stone stairway that leads to the choir gallery.

The interior features high clerestory and altar windows which allow the natural light to fill the building. The chancel arch and the arches into the transepts are Gothic in style and striped as in St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Geraldton. The hammer beam roof is made of jarrah. The side aisle arches are Roman-style. (Dean Irwin didn't get it all his way).

Our Lady of Ara Coeli was built by **Mr T P Crothers** who had recently completed the 3rd stage of St Francis Xavier Cathedral.



To Visit the Building

The Church is not open to the public but a key can be obtained from the office at St Mary's School behind the Church during school hours.

Mass is celebrated on Sundays at **8:30 a.m.**

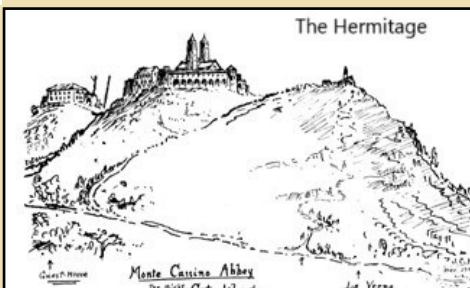
What Could Have Been - Cassino Nuovo



Benedictine Abbey Church
New Norcia West Australia

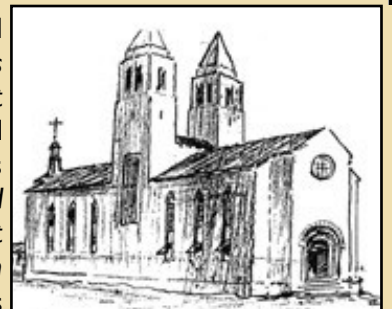
While Hawes wasn't directly associated with the buildings of the Benedictine Community at New Norcia in Western Australia, he was well acquainted with them and the Monks who ran the Abbey. On his return to the Bahamas, he was keen to see a similar establishment developed on Cat Island. In 1944 he tried to influence a young Benedictine, Fr Brendan Forsyth, who had visited him on Cat Island, by writing to him with a glowing, if not slightly 'romantic' description, of New Norcia

In West Australia Abbott Salvado founded the Abbey of 'New Norcia' - why should not the Bahamas have a 'New Cassino?!' (Cassino is the site of the first Benedictine Abbey in Italy). Dom Salvado with his little band of Spanish Monks, against everybody's advice and obstruction, left Perth and trekked out into the then dangerous and desert solitude of the 'Bush' - 90 miles north through dense forest. And now, the great Abbey is a smiling paradise, a Carmel, of agriculture & pastord activity. At Christmas, Easter & Pentecost a number of huge charabancs and cars, obliterating distance on the 90 miles of perfect road, carry Catholic pilgrims & Protestant tourists out to New Norcia; & the big Guesthouse & surrounding houses & cottages house the visitors - countless souls are edified & refreshed & many mere sightseers are put thinking, & started on the road to Conversion.



Proposed Cassino Nuovo Abbey Church
& The Hermitage

Hawes suggested not only that the Abbey and Novitiate should be built on Cat Island - *It has very good farming land & is I reckon, one of the most salubrious of all the islands . . . but that it should be situated quite close to his Hermitage on Coma Hill . . . The Monastery and Abbey Church could be built on the central summit which has a much more extended & level space than Mount Alvernia (where his Hermitage was situated).*

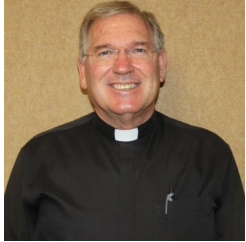


Proposed Abbey Church
Cat Island

MHHI Board

At the Monsignor Hawes Heritage Inc Board AGM on October 10th, two Members retired - **Gerry Eastman** and **Trudi Cornish** - and two new Members - **Wayne Bull** and **Clare Venturini** - were welcomed to the Board. Wayne is the current Executive Director of Catholic Education WA and Clare is a lawyer, with experience in both the government and private sectors, and is currently working for the Federal Member for Durack.

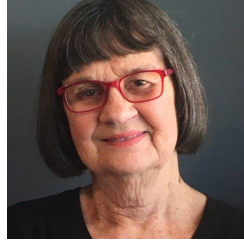
Introducing the Board of Monsignor Hawes Heritage Inc.



Fr Robert Cross - Chair



Ann Boyle - Secretary



Barbara Thomas



Enzo Sirna



Tanya Henkel



Tony Critch



Odhran O'Brien



Melissa Marquis



Wayne Bull



Clare Venturini

VOLUNTEER AWARD



Gerry receiving her award from the Mayor of the City of Greater Geraldton Mr Jerry Clune.

The **Volunteer of the Year Award 2024** conducted by Centacare Family Services Geraldton, in conjunction with the City of Greater Geraldton, was recently awarded to **Mrs Gerry Eastman** from a field of 37 nominees.

Gerry was nominated by MHHI for her long-time volunteer work and her passionate and tireless efforts to showcase and preserve the heritage of Monsignor Hawes. Her attention to detail is impeccable and she is always gracious in her dealings with people. Gerry also finds time to offer pastoral care and assistance to anyone in need, especially the tour guides under her watch, but also anyone who falls within her large circle of acquaintances.

As well as coordinating the St Francis Xavier Cathedral Tour Guides, Gerry has been a member of the MHHI Board for 6 years, taking responsibility for Events Coordination, the Newsletter, the Website, Social Media, and Membership.

Through her long-term and ongoing commitment to the promotion of Hawes' heritage, Gerry has made a valuable contribution to the cultural heritage of Geraldton and the Mid West Region.

HOW CAN I HELP?

We'd love you to become involved with the work of Monsignor Hawes Heritage Inc. in 2025

How??? Here Are A Few Suggestions!

- ⇒ Become a **Member of MHHI** (\$25 per annum)
- ⇒ Become a **Corporate Sponsor of MHHI** (\$100 per annum)
- ⇒ Make a **Tax Deductible Donation to the John Hawes Foundation**
- ⇒ Volunteer to assist with **Fundraising Activities** such as the **Car Raffle** (Contact Fr Robert Cross)
- ⇒ Join our great band of volunteers organising our **Annual Events** (Contact Fr Robert Cross)



Fr Robert Cross 99 213221 heritage@geraldtoncatholic.org.au

HAWES CONNECTIONS

Kathleen Jean Bisby nee Fitzgerald was born in Geraldton in 1926 and was brought up in Mullewa. She was interviewed in 2016 by Sr Chau Ho OP for her DVD '**Upon This Rock**'.

Kathleen passed away in 2023



Kath Bisby 2016

This is a summary of her impressions of Father Hawes.

My father helped with the building of the church and Fr Hawes used to come to our house to visit my parents. I was only one when the church was opened so I don't remember him building it but my parents used to talk about how hard he worked. My aunt used to worry about him not eating and would send food up to him. He worked till late at night. He dug the limestone out of the ground without any machinery.

When I was quite young my father became very ill. Father Hawes would come to the house every day and spend time with him and for the last 6 months of his life, Father Hawes and a Nun visited him on alternate days and stayed with him until he died. There were many times when Dad was really sick and Mum would need help, and Fr Hawes would come to the house and stay late at night. During these visits he would take me aside and talk to me about right and wrong. He told me to be kind to animals, and not to steal. He insisted that I should be strong and never give in. After Dad died things were very bad for my mother money-wise, and Father Hawes would come and check on her. She always went to him for guidance.

When Dad was dying Mum asked him to talk to me about death. He explained to me that Dad wouldn't be with me much longer and he was going to God. He said he had done a very good job here on earth and when the time came, I must be strong and be there for Mum. It was very a good lesson for me.

I was only 6 when Dad died in 1932 and after that time Father Hawes took a big interest in me at school. He was such a wonderful man. He was like a grandfather. My real grandfather lived a long way away and I didn't see him often, so I looked on Father Hawes as a grandfather.

He was beautiful with the children at school, and they would all run up to him when he arrived. We were never afraid of him. He was always interested in the children and they loved him in return. He was very good to the Aboriginal children. When they came to school, he always made sure they had breakfast at the presbytery before they went to their classes.

On All Souls Day each year he would walk all the kids, along with some adults, from the school about a mile and a half to the Pioneer Cemetery and say Mass on the grave of a young girl from the school who had died, Iris McDermott. She was the daughter of friends of his and he had built an altar on her grave. There was another grave nearby he'd built for his young altar boy Selby Arnold who had drowned in the dam. We would visit both the graves on those days.

All the young boys in the town had great respect for him. He was great for the community. He took an interest in things. He was a darling man. That's all I can say about him.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF SERVANT OF GOD JOHN CYRIL HAWES

When Bishop O'Collins granted Hawes indefinite leave from the Diocese of Geraldton in 1939, it was on the proviso that he write his autobiography, saying Hence as your Bishop I request you to write in humility a full autobiography. In 1942, after O'Collins had left Geraldton he wrote to Hawes saying

I hope you are keeping to the injunction I gave you to write your biography. You must do that and send it to me even now that I have left Geraldton."

In his introduction to his autobiography Hawes writes

An autobiography must necessarily put forward its author's predilections. In this one there will be found no mention of cricket, football, rowing or golf, because in my early years these games had no attraction for me. (At cricket I always got bowled out first ball and then it would be ages until I got another innings. Rugby football I enjoyed and at Kings School Canterbury I acquitted myself all right as a Half-back—and the same in football at Lincoln Theological College.) Here there will be overmuch of Architecture and the allied arts and the travels incidental to its study, and of horses, dogs and sailing-boats. Rather incongruous subjects to busy the pen of a bare-footed Franciscan hermit ! Most people in their forties have dreamed of writing a book, I did and gave it up but now ..i am told to write a full autobiography.

You can read Hawes' full Autobiography on the [website](#)