



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

HEALING THE LAND HEALING OURSELVES TOGETHER

Newsletter

August 2022

FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER JANE COLLOPY

I am so thankful to all of you for supporting our work at *Highways & Byways*, through your donations and through your words of encouragement. We love hearing of how special your connection to the MSS and our work at H&B is to you! I particularly value being part of this important work, and am feeling incredibly grateful to be welcomed into such a generous community – all of you, each of the incredible MSS sisters, our Branches who have committed so much over the years, and our generous “can do” Board.

We're also very lucky to have had such special people working for Highways and Byways. In a matter of months, we have farewelled Andrea Butler, Jill Elliot and Paul Jackson; each who have given so much of themselves to their work and our community. I am very thankful to Marnie Wylde, who is always across every detail of our Small Grants programs (you will find enclosed a summary of our Small Grant project recipients for 2022!), and I'm thrilled to welcome Jo Winton as our new Administration & Finance officer, who is so capably bringing three roles into one!

I recently met the beautiful MSS sisters in Toowoomba, and travelled with Mary Cleary to Roma to meet Megan Brown, who facilitates our Seeds of Connection program. Megan has run two *Healing and Belonging through Culture* programs this year, bringing young Indigenous people out onto Country to be immersed in their culture through language and stories, cultural art practices and ceremony and celebration. Megan spoke about her deep sense of responsibility to provide

opportunities for young indigenous kids to explore their identity so they can be proud of who they are.

I also met Vernessa Dien who will work with Megan on our second *Wandering Spirits* program in August 2022. Indigenous women will come together on Country to share themselves - their story – with each other. This is a very vulnerable endeavour for many of these women, who have so sadly been discouraged from using their language and culture in the past. The importance of these opportunities cannot be overestimated!

Thank you again for all of your support that enables these powerful programs to happen!

Jane



Yarck to Yea Ride-Walk-Run

Saturday 27 August 2022
For further information see our flyer enclosed



Highways
and Byways
HEALING THE LAND.
HEALING OURSELVES.
TOGETHER.

CALL OUT FOR YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Our newsletters are going digital!

To ensure you continue receiving our newsletter, please send us your email address! Call or email us at

newsletter@highwaysandbywaysltd.org.au

An eNewsletter allows us to do some exciting things which are not possible in hardcopy, like share videos of the MSS sisters and some of our projects. You'll also be able to share articles easily with others who might be interested.



SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE MURRIGAL, QLD

Brett Krause has a goal: to build new forests in Tropical North Queensland that provide habitat for endangered and threatened species such as the Southern Cassowary and Mahogany Glider.

Brett cofounded a not-for-profit organisation, Brettacorp Inc., that is working to revegetate and rehabilitate cleared land across the region, through local engagement and community plantings. A new community nursery has been set up in Murrigal with support from Highways and Byways, to complement these reforestation efforts.

The nursery started propagating native seedlings in September last year. It now has 10,000 trees in various stages of growth, thanks to monthly volunteer days and the work of two casual staff members employed one day a week to work at the site. And Brett has plans for more, "We have room for 16,000 seedlings on site. With the new nursery and a recent addition of a potting shed we can now move forward a lot easier and efficiently".

While this region may be known for its world heritage rainforests and tourist attractions, the sugar cane and banana industries have impacted the scale of native forests and habitat for local wildlife.

Brettacorp Inc. is an ardent advocate of the Miyawaki Method used for creating forests in a short amount of time. This afforestation technique was pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki who studied and implemented processes that restore degraded lands through natural reforestation principles. Using this technique trees native to the local area are planted at high densities which result in self-sustaining forests within one year.

"So far we have completed 10 Miyawaki reforestation projects", Brett said. He referred to a particular project recently completed at Gurrbum Nature Refuge, 20

minutes north of the Murrigal Nursery. "We planted 2,800 native trees and plants to create Australia's largest Miyawaki forest, at 700m²". This site is in the middle of the Wet Tropics, adjoins the UNESCO World Heritage Park and is on a registered government Nature Refuge that is now protected land in perpetuity. It adds to earlier work at the refuge where Brettacorp Inc. has completed 3 other Miyawaki forests and regular tree planting efforts. This site is also considered a national priority corridor for the Southern Cassowary and its population recovery.

This is where the Murrigal Community Nursery is really important – the facility can now provide a continuity of seedlings to support Brettacorp Inc.'s work. "Until now, this was something we struggled with. We had to buy plants from other nurseries for our projects", Brett explained. "Now we have our own supply chain thanks to the *Highways and Byways* program and more forest is coming. We look forward to making more habitat for endangered species across the region".



SPREADING THE WORD ON WISDOM WARWICK, QUEENSLAND



David Parsons hopes that one day it will be commonplace to hear people share First Nations knowledge and stories of land and country. For now he's doing his bit to spread the word around Warwick, south-west of Brisbane.

Supported by *Highways and Byways*, David and Brenda Parsons and members of the Warwick Development Group Inc. organised six On Country sessions for children and parents at sites in the area including some close to local primary schools. They accompanied Galibal Githabul elder Aunty Kali, who spoke about the importance of country, how her people related to country and how the children and adults might care for the land.

David and Brenda, who have First Nations ancestry themselves, have been involved with the local First Nations community for many years. They said the



primary-aged children were keen to hear Aunty Kali and had lots of questions about things including cultural burning and how it can be good for country. One session was held at the site of some significant scar trees, which many people in the area have never seen or heard about. The sessions encouraged all the children to look at land as a vital part of life and to develop skills to care for the land. Another session was held at a public reserve of endangered vine scrub.

“One school has asked if we could come back and several students wanted to bring a friend along next time, so hopefully they gained something from the experience.” Aunty Kali also brought some artifacts and artwork to some of the sessions and David said First Nations children were pleased to see their culture and wisdom showcased and valued in front of school mates. “The groups were mostly made up of First Nations and non-First Nations adults and children and for many of them these sessions are the beginning of their understanding of First Nations wisdom and knowledge,” said David.

“These children are the leaders of the future and it’s important they hear these conversations. Maybe one day First Nations knowledge will be widely valued and these sorts of conversations, like those we held at the schools are normalised, rather than heard at an organised event. That would be good.”

WATTLE FOR ARID AUSTRALIA CAMBRAI, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The threat of rain and the chill of late Autumn did not deter a group of South Australian land managers from coming together in May in the Mid Murray region for a field trip to explore native acacia farming.

“This region is marginal farming country” Mid Murray Landcare’s Aimee Linke explained. “We have significant erosion from over cropped and grazed land; our creeks and their banks are affected, and our roads and fences are covered in soil.” she said.

With acacia plantings proving to be a viable farming alternative for semi-arid zones, Mid Murray Landcare was keen to explore the benefits with local land managers. “We wanted to showcase the commercial and biodiversity potential of acacia trees and shrubs to encourage land managers to diversify their practices” Aimee said.

With the support of *Highways and Byways*, Mid Murray Landcare took 19 land managers on a field trip to an acacia property in Sanderston run by Angus Jones. Angus’ business Wattle We Eat has been successfully growing and harvesting acacia in the region for over 15 years. His wattle seeds are supplied to the food and beverage sector and are used in nutritional supplements and beauty products.

The group toured the property to observe the trees and production systems in situ. Angus spoke with the group

about acacias being a naturally drought adapted, fast growing perennial crop. He also addressed the marketability and environmental benefits of acacias, their fodder potential and contribution to shelter belts for native wildlife and improved livestock health and care. The group also enjoyed sampling a number of delicacies made with acacia seed, including coffee, cake and bread.

Acacia seeds have been a traditional food of Indigenous Australians for thousands of years, and there is increasing interest from mainstream food and beverage markets for this native food source. “It is a versatile and highly nutritious food product” Aimee explained. In fact, acacia seed is a good source of protein, zinc, calcium, magnesium, potassium and iron. It can be eaten raw or roasted, and according to Ms Linke is absolutely delicious. And each acacia variety has a different flavour: “One even smells like Lindt chocolate” Aimee said.

The event was well received, with participants indicating that it contributed significantly to their knowledge and interest of acacias and introduced them to local resources and new networks.

Mid Murray Landcare is hopeful that the initiative will lead to the greater uptake of acacia plantings in the region and has plans for a similar event for additional land managers later in the year. It is also considering an initiative to involve local school children in planting out and managing a small acacia crop at Meldanda, its 40ha community environmental educational site in Cambrai. “Many of these kids come from farming families. Involving them in a crop which they can monitor over time will give them practical skills and environmental knowledge that they can take home and share with their own families”. This in turn may lead to even more acacias being planted out across the region.

“The field trip showed us just what can be achieved with acacias. We are feeling really positive for the future and excited to explore these opportunities further”.





HEALING OUR COUNTRY – CONNECTING OURSELVES DUBBO, NSW

Being loved, listened to and connected to each other is the universal story that Robert Salt and his team from Connective Indigenous Corporation want to tell. “It’s what we all want isn’t it. No matter what our religion, background or anything else that makes us different from each other, we need these things to heal,” Robert said.

The organisation set about spreading that story with locals at a major community event in Dubbo earlier this year with support from Highways and Byways. The event attracted Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who were keen to learn more about Indigenous culture through Yarning Circles, information sessions on local native flora and tree planting in a local park.

The event followed two-years of COVID restrictions, floods, droughts and dust storms that blanketed the area. One participant commented that it was, “good to attend an event that was fun and allowed our communities to come together to listen, learn and connect”. Creating connections within the community and strengthening existing partnerships was another goal of the event that attracted more than 170 people.

“We wanted to share with the community information about this country, which is so beautiful and we are so lucky to live here. But we know that a lot of people, Indigenous and white people, show disregard for the land. Our earth is unique and we all need to look after it and play our part and focusing on the local area is a start,” Robert said.

Robert said the information yarning session created a greater awareness of healing country and ourselves, at a time when many people have lost touch with the land or are experiencing hardships.

“The yarning circle has been used by cultures through the centuries. People all around the world, through time, have sat around a fire, looked up at the stars and yarned about the land and connected with each other. I think there’s healing to be found by doing this, listening and connecting to each other,” he said.

The corporation hopes to build on the success of this event with follow up projects later in the year



SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM 2022 GRANT ANNOUCEMENT

Each year *Highways and Byways* provides small grants to community-led organisations for projects that address disadvantage and exclusion within towns and communities, especially in rural and regional Australia.

We are delighted to announce the recipients of our 2022 Small Grants Program. This year 42 organisations from across Australia have received funding for projects aligned with our program theme of *Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together*.

A short summary of each grant project follows. These highlight the range and depth of community endeavours we have supported. They care for, heal and look after land, waters, country and communities across Australia. The map (right) indicates the broad spread of grants by location this year; the red dots indicate locations of the grants.

These grants would not be possible without the support of our donors – and we thank you so much for your continued generosity!





New South Wales

Western Landcare NSW “Baaka/Darling River Run” Western NSW \$3,000

A program for eight remote primary schools along the Darling/Baaka River to educate students on the river's ecosystem and cultural value.

Landcare Broken Hill Inc “Regenerating Broken Hill's Regeneration Area” Broken Hill \$3,000

Renewal of Broken Hill's National Heritage Listed Regeneration Area to mitigate drought impacts.

Wambool Permaculture “Permaculture Design Certificate” Yetholme \$3,000

Two placements for local land managers in a permaculture course.

Weemelah Hall Committee \$3,000 “Purchase a Data Projector” Weemelah \$1,299

A new data projector to be used by training organisations for environmental and land management activities.

Pambula Wetlands and Heritage Project Inc “Mowing with Solar Energy” Pambula \$3,000

A new electric zero turn mower to maintain walking paths and control invasive weed species.

Drake Village Women's Shed “Pollinator and Sensory Garden” Drake, \$3,000

A bee pollinator and sensory garden in the grounds of the Drake community hall.

Susan & Elizabeth Islands Recreation Land Manager “Maintaining tracks for volunteers” Grafton \$1,620

A contractor will maintain tracks across Elizabeth island to provide safe access for volunteer workers.

Hay Plains Landcare “Cultural Learning Space” Hay \$3,000

A cultural learning area and yarning circle at Hay Public School. Wiradjuri artist Owen Lyons will create a design to be painted across the space.

Colly Gamilaraay Indigenous Corporation “Healing Gallarinbaraay Land – Healing Collarenebri People – Together 2022” Collarenebri \$2,883

Mapping of the Barwon River to document environmental cultural sites. Community information sessions on caring for country and cultural fire management. Tree planting and weed control at local sites.

Connective Indigenous Corporation “Healing our Country, Connecting Ourselves” Dubbo \$2,350

A community event based on the theme of ‘Healing our land, our earth, our ecosystems and our people’.

Scone and District Garden Club “Healing the Land – Healing Ourselves Together” Scone \$3,000

Development of wet area habitat for frogs, turtles, lizards and smaller birds..

Byron Youth Service Inc “Green Thumbs” Byron Bay \$3,000

A 10-week program for local youth in permaculture, sustainable garden design and indigenous bush tucker.

Purfleet Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council “Healthy Living” Purfleet \$3,000

Enhancement of a community garden to generate a sustainable source of bushfoods and vegetables.

Karuah Local Aboriginal Land Council “Garuwa Caring for Country” Karuah \$3,000

A new zero turn mower for use in land management.

Nari Nari Tribal Council “Glenhope Tree Planting Day 2022” Hay \$3,000

A tree planting event to extend an environmental corridor across Glenhope Station in Hay NSW.

1st Cootamundra Scout Group “Native Bushfood Orchard and Nest Boxes” Cootamundra \$2,000

A new bushfood orchard. Construction and installation of wildlife nesting boxes.

Hunter Region Landcare Network “Hunter River Reserve Renewal” Greta \$3,000

Events and activities to promote awareness and use of the Hunter River Reserve.

Broulee Mossy Point Dunecare “Post Fire Dune Vegetation & Enhancement” Broulee North \$2,900

Restoration works following 2019/2020 bushfires including fencing, vegetation and signage.

Gwymac Landcare “Supporting knowledge and skills exchange on sustainable land management” Inverell \$3,000

A competition to identify champions of sustainable land management and a field day to showcase approaches and techniques in practice.

Container of Dreams “Tiny Homes for Native Wildlife – Nesting Box Making Workshop” Tabulum \$3,000

Community workshops to construct wildlife nesting boxes.

Queensland

Jimboomba Community Garden “Community Seed Bank” Greenbank \$2,990.50

A Community Seedbank with monthly ‘crop swap’ events.

Friends of the Forest “Greenhide Reserve Forest Regeneration Project” Linville \$3,000

Monthly working bees to rehabilitate and revegetate Greenhide Reserve.

Warrego Wildlife Rescue Rehabilitation & Education “The Grass Grows Greener” Mungallala \$2,300

A new rototiller to remove buffel grass in nature strips, footpaths and lawns across the township of Mungallala.

Macintyre Ag Alliance “Cover Cropping Field Day for Regenerative Cropping Systems Management” Goondiwindi \$3,000

A field day for the agriculture community on the benefits of cover cropping and bio-fertilisers.

Thallon State School Student Council “Rose Flick Memorial Garden Project 2022” Thallon \$3,000

Revitalisation of the Rose Flick Memorial Garden at the Thallon State School.



Cape York Weeds & Feral Animals Inc “Healing Annan/Endeavour Catchment’s Community Capacity Building – Follow Up” Cooktown, \$3,000

Training for land managers to reduce the prevalence of high priority weeds across Cape York.

Walking Story “Miramali-baa... Making Well Place” Conondal \$3,000

A new outdoor space for First Nations people for discussion and hands on learning of culturally-centred food/medicine growing and land rehabilitation issues.

Tasmania

Country Women’s Association in Tasmania Online Branch “Community Fruit Loops” Wynyard \$3,000

A new food forest. Produce to be used in preserves and provided for not-for-profit organisations with programs focused on food security.

King Island Community Garden “Build, Heal, Water, Nuture and Grow” Currie, King Island \$2,940

Construction and installation of a series of new raised garden beds, along with a new irrigation system.

Lake Pedder Restoration Inc “Restore Pedder: Bioblitzing” Lake Pedder \$3,000

A BioBlitz of the Lake Pedder perimeter to establish a wholistic data set and map existing flora and fauna, threats and benefits.

Victoria

Education First Youth Foyer, Launch Housing “Garden Project” Broadmeadows \$3,000

A youth engagement project to design and develop a sustainable green area and memorial site.

Cardinia Environment Coalition Inc “Monitoring Bandicoot Corner” Bayles \$2,916

A program to monitor Bandicoots in their native habitat.

Food is Free “Healing Community, Healing Nature” Ballarat \$3,000

An immersive gardening workshop to coincide with International Mental Health Day on 10 October 2022.

Redbank Reserves Committee “ANZAC Park Rejuvenation” Redbank \$2,901

New equipment, including a hedge trimmer and blower, for use in rejuvenation works at ANZAC Park.

Yarra Valley ECOSS “ECOSS Forest Food” Wesburn \$3,000

A new Permaculture Food Forest involving students, disabled volunteers and the indigenous community.

Western Australia

Desert Support Services “Using Drones for Two-way Fire Management on Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Protected Area” Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Protected Area \$3,000

A new drone for use by the Kiwirrkurra Indigenous Ranger program in the management of fire across the region.

Kulungah Myah Community Centre “Composting” Kardinya \$800

A 'Rethinking Organic Waste' workshop on simple waste management strategies for the home.

Gondwana Link Inc Noongar led workshop - Kaarl Ngara: Cultural Burning Noongar Way Jacup \$3,000

An on-country workshop focused on the cultural, ecological and asset protection role of cultural fire management

Busselton Dunsborough Environment Centre “Native seeding planting at Barnard Park East” Busselton \$3,000

Bushland rehabilitation works within degraded areas of Barnard Park East via a youth planting day.

South Australia

Gawler Environment & Heritage Association “Grassland and habitat restoration Saint Benedicts Cemetery” Pinkerton Plains \$1,000

Revegetation of St Benedict Cemetery and nearby road verges with native grassland and understory species.

Corny Point Progress Association “Identifying and Understanding Plants Indigenous to our Area” Corny Point \$1,065

Interpretive signage along a multi-use pathway.

Walker Flat & Districts Progress Association “Purchase a ride on mower and trailer attachment” Walker Flats \$3,000

A new ride on mower to replace worn out equipment, and a cart to carry gardening tools and weeds.



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS
Healing the Land Healing Ourselves Together supports people and communities experiencing hardship and disadvantage, especially in rural Australia.

We do this through our annual grants program and longer term initiatives in small rural communities where we partner with local organisations. *Highways and Byways* is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission.

Highways and Byways continues the vision and mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service and their founder Father John Wallis.

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MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SERVICE

A mission of love and service into the highways and byways

Newsletter

Volume 55 No. 5
August 2022

Winter solace

We are in the midst of an exceptionally cold and wet winter, and the impact of COVID, the floods along Australia's east coast, and the war between Russia and Ukraine is still being felt by so many of us. We continue to pray for all who are impacted by these devastating events and who are struggling with so much. We pray that solace may be found in the knowledge of God's everlasting and steadfast love, and in the comfort of loved ones around us.

In recent news, we farewelled our dear sister-in-Christ, Therese Healy MSS, who died in Melbourne on 24th June 2022, the Feast of the Sacred Heart; Stancea Vichie MSS, our congregational leader, was among the 200+ members from across Australia who gathered in Sydney last month for the second assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council and provides some reflections below; And this month we celebrate a number of significant anniversaries within our community. We hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter. More news and upcoming events can always be found on our website, www.missionarysisters.org.au and be sure to like and follow us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/MissionarySistersServiceAus

AUSTRALIAN PLENARY COUNCIL, THE WAY FORWARD

It has been a significant time for so many people that the 5th Plenary Council of the church in Australia took place from 3–9 July, the first Council in over 80 years. People came from across the country, along with overseas visitors, and there was a great team of people who worked very hard to enable the Council to take place. We progressed each day discussing and voting on Motions that strived to pave a way forward for our church within an Australian context. The reading from the *Acts of Apostles* on the Wednesday morning became a reality that day—and suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting—as members grappled with the section outlining the *Equal Dignity of Men and Women*.



This unsettling moment in the Council gave rise to an even deeper honesty and desire for unity which paved the way for a wonderful conclusion to the Council. As it was often said, the Council is another step along the way for our national church, the way forward, and not the complete answer.

The Council has opened up further impetus for a range of things, including: walking with our Indigenous brothers and sisters; developing the seven-year action platform for care of the Earth flowing from Pope Francis's encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*; healing in the aftermath of the sexual abuse crisis; developing greater participation opportunities for women; along with becoming a Church which listens to all voices, leading up to the Synod on Synodality in Rome in 2023. It focusses on structures and formation which are at the service of mission in the world today and a mission that is nurtured by a contemplative community who are ready to go beyond 'safe zones' to be at the edges of society. **May we take up the challenge of this moment which is there for each of us in our everyday lives and the Church as a community.**



Marking Rosary House Day with scones and tea

On Friday 8th July 2022, we celebrated the 78th anniversary of the beginnings of our community of women, the Missionary Sisters of Service, formerly known as the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady (or the Rosary Sisters, for short!) We wonder whether our founder, Fr John Wallis, and our pioneering women—Gwen Morse, Monica Carroll, Kath Moore, Joyce O’Brien, Valerie Casey and Agnes Ryan—could have envisaged that so many years on, we’d still be celebrating this milestone with MSS gatherings in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania.



Lunch celebrations in Melbourne began with a reflection by Marcia McMahon MSS and a communal singing of *My Land*, which called us to the heart of our land. Marcia shared the words of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*, which captures the MSS mission: ‘I express myself in expressing the world, in my effort to decipher the sacredness of the world, I explore my own.’ In Toowoomba, some of our sisters met at Preston Manor and Chapel, and were treated to a special guest for the festivities—Corrie van den Bosch MSS, who was visiting from Melbourne at the time. Nancy Doyle MSS also celebrated her Covid-delayed birthday at the gathering. Marie Murphy MSS in Mackay, Queensland, enjoyed a special cuppa and morning tea with some family members, and in Whyalla, South Australia, Cheryle Thomson MSS was honoured at lunch by some friends, including long-standing friend, Jenny Kondylas. In Hobart, Lorraine Groves MSS was praying for ‘divine surprises’ to all MSS—we wonder if she meant scones, jam and cream? Together with Frances McShane MSS, they enjoyed morning tea at the popular Bakehouse in the beautiful, historic town of Richmond followed by scones and jam, later at home. And from all of your messages, we know many of you were with us in spirit, as you savoured delicious scones and cups of tea and coffee, in your own homes.



Above right: Bernadette Wallis MSS and Kath Clune MSS. Above left: Cheryle Thomson MSS (seated right) with friends; and Pat Kelly MSS with MSS Coordinator, Catherine Carr.

Vale Therese Healy MSS, 1933-2022

With both sadness and gratitude, we share the news that Therese Healy MSS died peacefully late in the evening of 24th June in the presence of family. Therese was 89 years old and will be missed by us and her family. It would have been a great gift to Therese to know that she died on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Her treasured picture of the Sacred Heart had pride of place over her bed and alongside it, her other treasured picture, St Therese of Lisieux. Therese had a great love of birds and the Kookaburra was her favourite. We’re sure a chorus of kookaburras continue to sing all around the country for Therese.

Therese’s funeral was held on 29th June at St Thomas the Apostle Church, in Blackburn, Victoria. She was buried at Yan Yean Cemetery in Yan Yean. A replay of the funeral service can be accessed via our website.



Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

In August, we give thanks for, and celebrate the 60-year anniversaries of profession of Corrie van den Bosch, Kath Clune, June Dunford and Lorraine Groves MSS (pictured). We also remember Sr Helen Haywood, deceased, who would have also celebrated this significant anniversary in August 2022.



It is also the diamond jubilee for those who joined the Missionary Sisters of Service 60 years ago including Mary Cleary, Nancy Doyle, Pat Kelly and Pat Brain MSS, and deceased sisters Mary O'Connor and Doreen Jones MSS.



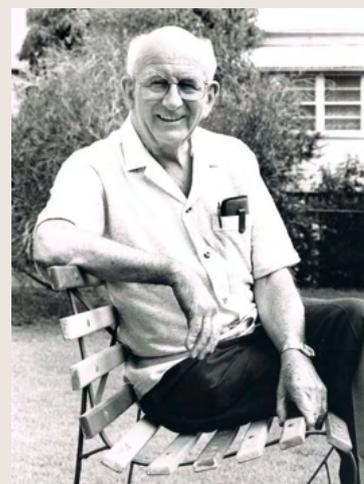
Grace and blessings to you all in achieving such magnificent milestones. We pray that the spirit, vision and mission of going into the highways and byways, wherever we are, and with whomever we encounter, continues in each of you.

My introduction to Fr John Wallis

by Catherine Carr, MSS Coordinator

Fr John Wallis was born on 11th June 1910 in the Victorian country town of Yea. On 9th June 2022, 112 years after his birth, at the Melbourne home of his niece Bernadette Wallis, several MSS women and staff gathered to acknowledge and celebrate his birth. As the only person at the table who had never met Fr John personally, I asked the sisters for memories and stories of this remarkable Catholic priest and his vision for the group of women who would become the Missionary Sisters of Service, founded in Tasmania, Australia, but which would have far-reaching impact. This is what I learnt:

- ❖ Father John was ahead of his time in his approach to pastoral outreach of the Catholic Church into the community.
- ❖ He was interested in developing lay vocations in the Church well before Second Vatican Council
- ❖ He was often (though some say always) on the phone
- ❖ He devoured the documents of Vatican II and passionately taught the MSS about these new theological ideas
- ❖ He possessed a strong desire to reach out to, and teach disadvantaged Catholics in the Australian outback
- ❖ He was a determined man with a great sense of fun
- ❖ He appreciated and respected women in all his interactions
- ❖ He envisaged the strength in women going out beyond the convent walls into the ordinary lives of people
- ❖ He championed a modern congregation of women: 'modern in point of time, modern in dress and modern in the ways and means of carrying out their apostolate'
- ❖ He was dedicated to his reading of the scriptures and he relished life.



We continue to give thanks for the life and influence of Fr John Wallis on our lives, and on the lives of so many.

Frances McShane MSS, a life of service and welcome

Frances McShane MSS was born in Broadmarsh, Tasmania and is one of nine in the family. She joined the MSS in 1960 and was professed on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August 1963. Reflecting on her time as an MSS and some of the stories that remain close to her heart, Frances shared her first experience of mission: 'I was giving a Mass Commentary in the little Church at Chigwell—St Monica's—where Fr John Wallis was the parish priest. Being 1963 the Mass was all in Latin. I was very nervous, and one parishioner said afterwards, "That was good, but your face was very red." I confessed, "I was very nervous".'



Frances' first mainland mission was in the Wilcannia Forbes Diocese in NSW, which she described as 'life changing'. She'd left Hobart where it was 3 degrees Celsius and just days after arriving in Parkes, was out on mission to Cobar where it was in the 30s. There was a dust storm and her white bowler's hat brim was gathering red dirt from the dust, which soon turned to red splotches of mud when some large rain spots fell. 'But the country was big and the people were all big in heart too. They always made us so welcome,' she said.

Frances also has fond memories of her missions for 12 months in Tasmania, her own 'beloved home territory', with families she'd known from childhood, followed by four years establishing the foundation house in the Port Pirie Diocese, SA, with Sr Helen Haywood. They were vastly different places, but people had 'very big hearts and hands out in welcome,' said Frances. 'I will be forever grateful to the priests and folk in those places, some quite remote, for their kindness to us.'

Frances managed the Catholic Centre Bookshop in Hobart for 28 years, which was considered the 'shop-front of the Church in Hobart'. Her next and penultimate mission was as Pastoral Associate to the Franciscan Friars in the West Tamar Parish, serving in Beaconsfield during the mine-collapse that took the life of a local miner. 'It was a privilege to serve during those days', she said.

Frances retired from parish work to Claremont, Tasmania, in 2014. Now in her 80s, she is enjoying her 'retirement years' by reconnecting with local community events and with her extended family of whom she has many! 'It has been a privileged time and I am looking forward to keeping up with the next steps in the life of the congregation,' she said. 'I am also following the Australian Plenary Council findings and am looking forward to a productive Synod.' At home, Frances enjoys spending time tending her little garden, 'keeping the roses and camellias growing nicely and showing them in our local flower shows'. 'People don't mind if I boast when I win some prizes along the way!'



Frances McShane with children in the Barham, NSW, area. Photo: MSS Archives