

School Memories by John Paphazy OC 1957

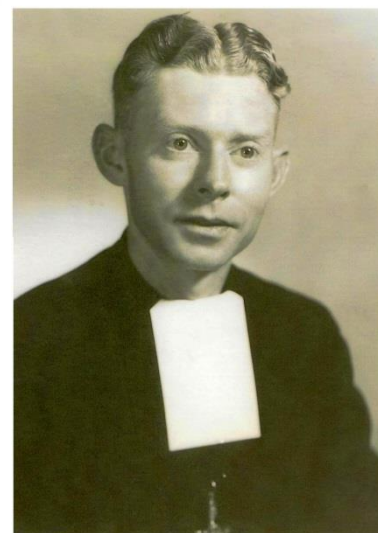
Brief Career Details: Principal and Teacher in Victorian Government Secondary Schools.
Teacher in a private UK school.
Senior Administrator in Victorian Education Department.

Crunching our way along the gravel drive at 21 Canterbury Road one hot Saturday afternoon in the summer of 1950, my mother and her 10 year old son came across a chap in overalls and battered boots tending a garden bed in front of the main building 'Ardmara'. "Good day, we've come to see the principal", began my mother. With a broad smile the gardener stood and replied, "Please follow me". We continued towards the left of the building, past the glazed conservatory to a door which we all entered. Once inside, he remarked in a soft and friendly tone, "I am Brother Nilus, the principal. How may I help you"?

After a brief chat and a short walk around the incomplete school buildings and grounds, my mother whispered to me in Hungarian, "I like this principal and I am sure this school will suit you well". For a careful and conservative person whose rigorous formal education spanned Budapest, the Sorbonne and Cambridge, this was an uncharacteristically sudden decision.

She was clearly impressed by the sincerity and genuineness of what Brother Nilus was offering.

Thus began my eight years at Marcellin College from Grade 5 (1950) to Matriculation (1957).



Bro Nilus Kenny
1950-1954

Facilities of the school



Ardmara Camberwell 1950

Construction was still ongoing when I started in Grade 5. There was a distinct lack of sufficient classrooms and furniture. The playground was gravel topped and quite rough in places. There was no shelter from the summer sun or indeed from the rain. This barren area however was well used throughout the year for a variety of sports and play. Later, concrete cricket pitches and nets were installed. Sporting equipment was dispatched from the converted coal shed at the back gate.

All assemblies were conducted here and forms lined up at the beginning of the school day and after recess. We then marched to our classrooms to the beating of several drums.

All subjects were taught by Brother Austin whilst Brother Nilus took Religious Instruction and Miss O'Shea Delivered elocution.

Felix Russo (ex St Kilda Football Club) was the Physical Education teacher.

Formal grammar was emphasised at all levels. History was offered at Forms 5 and 6. All Maths (then taught as Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry) and Science subjects were available as well as Latin to Form 5 and French to Form 6.

Given the small size of the school and the limited number of teaching staff, it was quite remarkable that so many subject choices were available and is a credit to the dedication and endeavour of the brothers.



Brother Austin 1950

The Brothers

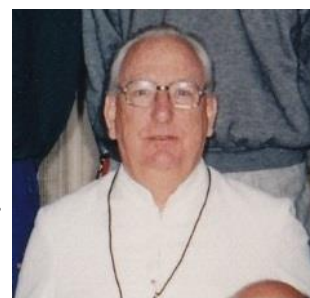
Brother Nilus – a gentle and humble man who was totally dedication to his various tasks be it as administrator, principal, teacher or wise counsellor. All in all he was a very effective educational leader who seemed to be involved in all facets of school life. He was liked by the boys and parents alike.

Brother Eustace – ‘a man for all seasons’ who taught various subjects at junior levels and all the Maths and Sciences at the senior school. He was incredibly hard working and always had his corrections promptly completed and returned to the pupils. He produced masses of notes and handbooks for the subject areas saving a fortune in textbooks for the parents.

Brother Evangelist – a popular teacher with a nickname of ‘Harry’ who liked a joke and was easily distracted from his subject matter. His lessons (especially Geography) were enjoyable. A devoted Carlton Football Club supporter he never lost his loyalty to his previous school Assumption College. When he returned from the Second Novitiate (the Marist Sabbatical) in France he regaled us with his tourist slides and even a famous ‘bridge at Bardot’ as a little joke.

Brother Ludovic – became principal when Brother Nilus left for overseas. He was a well organised teacher and confident in his subject matter.

Brother Stanislaus – an excellent teacher who gave clear and precise instruction. Boys gained in confidence in the Mathematics lessons. He had a deadly aim with the chalk thrown with his left hand. In 1991 I had occasion to visit both the Bulleen and Canterbury sites as a member of the Registered Schools Board for accreditation purposes. Brother Stanislaus, now Brother Bill and I renewed acquaintances over a cup of coffee.



Brother Bill 1990

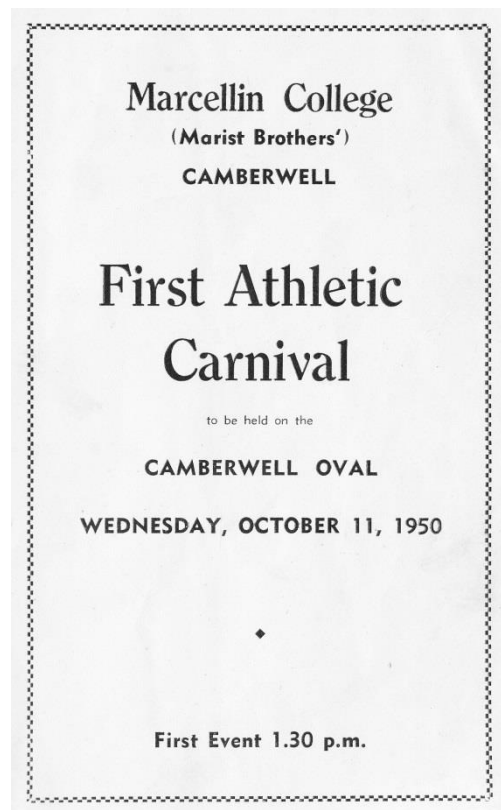
Brother Matthew – a South African who arrived around 1955. He was a large imposing fellow. He had a weakness for cakes and on more than one occasion I was sent on my bicycle to buy some cream buns instead of after school detention.

Sport

From the very beginning the schoolyard was the main venue for all sport and games. Local rules, limits and penalties were quickly established and accepted resulting in a quite clever and harmonious use of a severe and potentially hazardous terrain. A fall on this surface always resulted in a bloody knee or knuckle and at times worse. Use was made of nearby ovals and courts.

Camberwell Football ground was the venue of our earliest Athletic carnivals and on one occasion the fabled Collingwood Football ground was used. Football was also played at Camberwell Football ground, Myrtle Park and Rathmines oval.

The annual football trip to Assumption College Kilmore became a ritual slaughter for many years until eventually Marcellin managed to achieve a few respectable scores. Who could ever forget the bus trips when we were made to recite the Rosary instead of singing bawdy songs or indeed the 'warm up run' at the base of Pretty Sally (a big hill between Wallan and Kilmore).



First XVIII 1954

A swimming training squad attended the Brunswick heated pool on Saturdays. Sufficient chlorine was inhaled to infuse and flavour the fish and chips we bought for lunch on the way home by tram and train.

Religion

In a typical day boys would be expected to pay a visit to the chapel en route to the classes. The strategic location of the chapel made it almost impossible to avoid this custom especially if one thought a brother was watching.

There were prayers before lessons. The Angelus was rung and prayed at noon and religious instruction was timetabled for half an hour before lunch each day. Grace before meals was said prior to leaving the classroom before lunch. After lunch the Rosary was recited and again the obligatory visit to the chapel on the way home.

Each exercise book page was headed JMJ in honour of the Holy Family.

Once a year retreats were held for the senior classes at La Verna in Kew. The retreats were live-in and lasted 2 to 3 days. Silence was strictly (mostly) observed and long walks in serene meditation were undertaken in the cloisters and the beautiful grounds of the monastery. The retreats were not entirely humourless – skylarking and ghostly apparitions at night were frequent. Boys who showed any inclination towards a vocation in holy orders were singled out for special pastoral support.

Speech Night

The end of year celebration and showcasing was usually held in the Hawthorn Town Hall. There were predictable musical items – choirs, solos and instrumental, verse recital and the ubiquitous gymnastic display of vaulting and pyramids followed by the presentation of awards. The songs chosen were traditional English and Irish tunes and were generally well performed and received. One year the senior choir sang 'Pedro the Fisherman' and the word 'hell' in the lyrics was replaced with 'heck' to ensure that the audiences sensitivities were not offended.



Pyramids

Dances

During the winter months, pastel coloured gilt edged serrated invitations arrived from neighbouring Catholic girls schools for partners for the annual school dances. Kildare, Kilmaire, Siena and others each sent out around 20 invitations. 'Suitable boys' were selected and approved by our principal to fill the quota. Once the prized tokens were issued there quickly developed a black market and sometimes 'less than suitable boys' were able to attend.

St Patrick's Day March

Rivalling the Anzac March and later the Moomba Parade was the St Patrick's Day March. Large crowds gathered in the city to watch and cheer representatives of most Catholic schools, clubs and organisations take part in this event. Archbishop Mannix was seated in his open top Bentley at the top of Bourke Street as each squad of the faithful filed past. Every school and organisation carried a banner proudly displaying its name, insignia and motto. Most had their own drums and sometimes brass band to beat out the march.



St Patrick's Day March 1956

Conclusion

Gentle reader, what has been written here so far is a frank and honest attempt to recall and interpret the memories of a pre-adolescent and adolescent some 60 years ago. There is a phenomenon known as the 'optimism of memory' where there is a tendency to recall the pleasant more so than the unpleasant. This may explain why on the whole my time at Marcellin was an exceedingly happy and reasonably productive one. I had the privilege and benefit of having spent eight years in a formal education setting and I cannot deny that such a sound schooling served as an important lubricant in my life education.



Matriculation 1957

Back Row: Kevin Walsh, Peter Higgins, Kevin Doyle, Martin Hartnett, John Magee, Petter Hodgkinson, Roger Hartnett, John Rodda, Hilary Duignan
Middle Row: Michael Dixon, John Lynch, Hubert Moran, Geoff Green, John Paphazy, Terence Power, Desmond Murphy, Daniel Taggart, Peter Wood
Front Row: Michael Leigh, John Murphy, Michael Coghlan, Kevin Slattery, Brian McCrohan, John O'Sullivan, William Rogers, Francis O'Sullivan, Norman Fegan