

A SHORT HISTORY OF OUR PARISH

St George the Martyr Queenscliff and St James' Point Lonsdale

We acknowledge with gratitude that we gather on the traditional lands of the Wathaurong people of the Kulin Nation and we acknowledge and pay our respects to their elders past and present.

The Anglican Parish of St George the Martyr Queenscliff has been an integral part of Queenscliff since its earliest days.

European settlement of Port Phillip in 1835 created a demand for navigational services close to the entrance of the Bay and in 1838 crude dwellings were built on the beach beneath Shortland's Bluff and a pilot service commenced to aid ships entering and leaving the Bay.

Two years later a grazing lease was granted, and a fence erected between Swan Bay and the sea at what today is known as 'The Narrows'. A homestead was soon built on a site just north east of where our church now stands. By 1845, the Acting Superintendent of Port Phillip Colony, Charles Joseph La Trobe had built a holiday cottage nearby. While fishing became a major industry, Queenscliff grew in importance as a military base and government administrative centre.

A site for our Church was chosen by La Trobe following an 1853 land survey of the township, and a two-acre reserve on the hill on the corner of Hobson and Learmonth Streets was made available to the Church of England. The first services were conducted in 1854 by a priest from nearby Leopold, held in a newly constructed timber church school building on the site. This building was a Common School during the day, a meeting place for the growing community at night and a venue for Church of England and other denominational services on Sundays. The first Church of England baptisms took place here in 1858. The School Master's residence and a room for a public library adjoined this building.



A widely subscribed public appeal for funds to build a permanent church was launched in 1855. The church was designed by the recently arrived architect and surveyor Albert Purchas, who later designed some of Melbourne's major buildings. It was constructed of rendered, locally quarried limestone in the early English Gothic style, possibly inspired by the 700-year-old St Giles Church, Skelton in North Yorkshire, England.



Interior of St Giles Church Skelton, North Yorkshire

The Church opened for worship on Sunday 7th February 1864 and in early 1868 was consecrated by the first Bishop of Melbourne, the Right Reverend Charles Perry, DD. Thomas Fellows, a local politician, was a principal church benefactor and a large commemorative plaque honours him, stating with simplicity 'If you seek his Memorial, look around'. He later became a distinguished Supreme Court judge. A large vicarage was built in 1865 in Mercer Street to the north of the church, and the Reverend Henry Wilkinson became the first resident minister, serving faithfully for 36 years.

Building activity continued. In 1872 construction started on the present Victorian Gothic style school hall below the church, replacing the earlier timber structures. The castellated bell tower, a distinctive landmark in Queenscliff, was added to the church in 1878 and further work extending the chancel took place less than a decade later. Albert Purchas continued to be the preferred architect as the vicarage, school and tower were all to his designs.

The church and school hall have always been socially significant for their associations with important cultural groups in the Borough. Various masonic lodges, a literary association and a grammar school are just some who used the hall. Even the Borough held its meetings there for a brief period. It continues to this day to be a space for various community cultural, musical and arts activities.



St George's and the Learmonth Street – Hobson Street intersection
from the View Grand Hotel tower in 1888

In approximately 1875 a small stone and brick church, known as St James the Less, was built on crown land near the corner of Lawrence and Bowen Roads at The Springs, Point Lonsdale. It was used by Methodists, Presbyterians and the Church of England whose services were conducted by the vicar from St George's. The Education Department also leased the building for use as a school for a few years in the 1890s. Sadly, nothing remains of this structure today, however the altar somehow survived and is treasured by the congregation at Saint James', where it remains in use today.

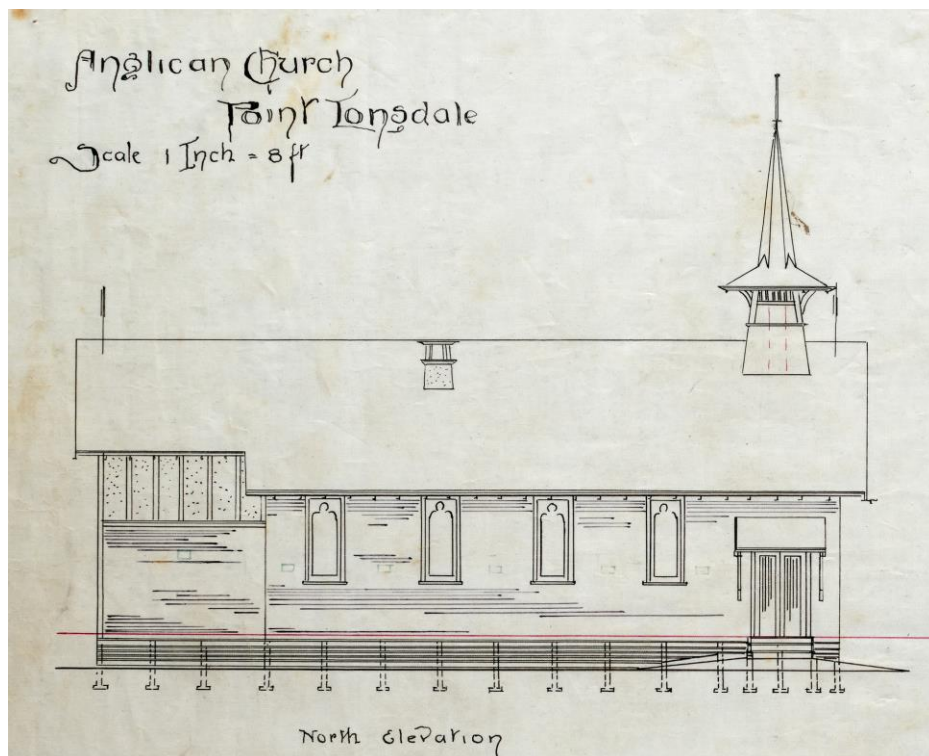


The Revd Vance and choir at St Georges in 1917



St George's Dance Troup 1920

During land subdivision in Point Lonsdale in 1885, the church purchased three allotments in Albert Street. Thirty years later, Saint James' Point church was built there to design of Alex North and the young Louis R Williams, who went on to design many Anglican churches in Australia, especially Victoria. It shows influences of the Arts and Craft movement and was constructed of timber and stucco.



Design for a timber and stucco, Arts & Crafts style church at Point Lonsdale

The new church was debt free when dedicated by the Archbishop of Melbourne in September 1915. Celebrations afterwards in the local hall included a fully catered dinner for almost 200

‘prepared by the ladies in a splendid manner’ and a lengthy concert including recitations, piano solos and singers.



St James' Church, Albert Street, Point Lonsdale in 1928

Midway through the last century St James' congregation grew larger and generated most of the Parish income, however they became aggrieved at their limited control of its distribution. In 1951 they felt sufficiently strong enough to formally separate from St George's and this was achieved after difficult negotiations. Soon afterwards a timber hall was erected behind the church with the support of the Gill family. It was well used for many events and became the home of an active performing group 'The Guilders', initiated by some members of the Ladies' Guild who wished to raise money by presenting concerts, focussing on comedy and nostalgic musical presentations.

**ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
QUEENSCLIFF**

**FLOWER SHOW
FAIR and GALA**

**TOWN HALL, QUEENSCLIFF
TUESDAY, 22nd OCTOBER, 1940
IN AID OF CHURCH FUNDS**

OFFICIAL OPENING AT 3 p.m.
OPEN FROM 2.30 to 5.30 p.m. and 7.30 to 10 p.m. BABY SHOW
NEEDLEWORK, CAKES, PRODUCE, SWEETS STALLS, ETC.

Special Silver Trophy for the Most Successful Exhibitor.
SPECIAL FLORAL DISPLAY BY MR. CYRIL COOKE, NURSERYMAN, GEELONG.

CLASS A.1. FLORAL WORK CLASS C.1. PASTRY, ETC. CLASS D.2. NEEDLEWORK

There were 9 different main sections and a total of 219 different

categories one could enter for this gala event!

By the 1960s St George's vicarage needed major renovations. Due to ongoing and escalating costs it was reluctantly sold and a new one built in Hobson Street, between the Church and the school. St James too had such issues and in the early 1980s the church was re-clad in brick and soon after the old Gill Hall was replaced by a new one in matching brickwork and connected to the church. A new vicarage completed the redevelopment of the site.

Earlier this century moves were made to consider bringing the two parishes closer together and in 2002 representatives of St James and St Georges began working cooperatively to explore this. After lengthy consideration and consultation in late December 2014 the two parishes combined to become 'The Anglican Parish of St George's Queenscliff and St James' Point Lonsdale'.

This short history would not be complete without mentioning St George's long connection with the military. It was the garrison church for Fort Queenscliff and the officers and men regularly marched from their barracks up the hill to the church. A significant portion of parish income up until the end of World War 11 came from 'pew rents' paid by the Commonwealth Department of Defence. Military families were welcomed when attending services at both churches and until recent times always made up a percentage of the congregations.



St James Point Lonsdale Ladies Guild in 1995

Over recent decades ageing infrastructure has continued to impose a heavy burden on parishioners. St James' issues have been already mentioned and, since the 1980s challenges to maintain the beautiful and heritage listed St George's church and school hall have regularly arisen. Constant problems of dampness, weathering and generally ageing have been faced with fortitude and resilience by congregations. An extensive conservation management plan for the Queenscliff site was undertaken in 2004 and, after a widely supported appeal for funds, major restoration works were carried out. These took over five years at a cost of approximately \$300,000. Maintenance of properties at both sites continues to be a worrying issue.

The very brief history above focusses on mainly the physical aspects of the Parishes' history. Not revealed here is the 150 years faithful clergy and congregations that have worshipped, witnessed and served God in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale. Over that time hundreds of vestries, committees, men's, women's, boys and girl groups have existed, choirs sung, fetes organised, fundraising events held, community activities supported and sporting groups vied to win. Women's groups - the Mothers' Union and the Ladies' Guilds - worked tirelessly to raise funds. Over many decades and lean times, the critical financial survival of the two churches depended on the efforts of these women's groups – especially the two Ladies Guilds.



Our worship continues.....

*Almighty God,
you have built your Church
on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.
we pray that we may reveal your love and mercy,
and being joined in unity of spirit
may grow into a holy temple, acceptable to you.
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever. Amen.*