

5. Aftermath:

- stay a while afterwards and chat. Also ask if they have any photos etc. (may record more information when they talk about these).
- write up notes fully immediately afterwards.
- transcribe or at least take notes and summarize contents of tape.
- useful to return copy of notes/transcript to person interviewed and ask them to make corrections or additions. Also let them keep a copy and let them know when your book or whatever is appearing.
- refer to the person interviewed by name in book etc.
- give copies of interviews to S.A. Archives.

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THE CHURCH AMONG THE VINES by Jean Schmaal

A great deal has been written about the German Lutherans who, escaping from religious persecution in their homeland, fled to South Australia to become some of its best settlers. Less is known, however, about the Catholics who also suffered on account of their opposition to the Prussian edict "The ruler decides the religion". In 1848 Franz Weikert, a well-to-do Silesian farmer, chartered the ship "Alfred" and brought a party of Catholic refugees to South Australia in search of religious freedom. Weikert provided the passage money for many who could not afford it.

However, when the party landed at Port Adelaide on 8 December, 1848, it was soon obvious that religious unity was sadly lacking among the party. Weikert and his family set out to find a suitable place to settle and were advised to head north to Clare Village a small hamlet at the northern limit of settlement. It took the party six days' travelling in bullock carts to reach their destination, some 80 miles north of Adelaide.

A Jesuit Brother named Aloysius Kranewitter accompanied Weikert's party. He was later joined by another two Austrian Jesuits, Brothers John Schriener and George Sadler. They all pooled their resources and between them farmed a small holding and kept a few cows. Before long Brother John, travelling by night, took butter across country to the Burra Copper Mines. He carried the butter in a keg on his head and avoided the heat of the day.

These Brothers not long afterwards moved out and built themselves a rough mud and slab hut to live in. The floor was bare earth. Screws, nails, door fittings, window glass, slates, tiles and galvanised iron were unobtainable. Their roof was made from bark and grass and tinfoil from packing cases and anything else that might make their humble abode rainproof. Nails had to be hand-made by a local blacksmith.

From these humble beginnings the Brothers laid the foundation of what was to become perhaps the best-known secondary Catholic boarding College and training place for young priests in Australia. By 1858 the College had 20 boarders (some of them from the eastern Colonies) but day pupils from the surrounding district (most of them Protestant) were also admitted. The first theological student at Sevenhill College was Fr. Julian Tennison Woods, who later became a famous scientist-priest.

They named their church St. Aloysius and the surrounding area Sevenhills because of its resemblance to the countryside about Rome, which is surrounded by seven hills. Being concerned about their supply of altar wines they decided to grow their own vines and build their own cellars and in 1852 the first vines were planted, and by 1856 wine making had commenced.

At the time of the great Victorian Gold Rush Br. Kranewitter was despatched with a convoy headed for the diggings, and not long afterwards came back with a bag of gold dust, which had been given to him by the miners. This enabled them to build a small chapel. It took several years with a great deal of sacrifice and hard work, to say

nothing of shortage of money, before the magnificent church building as we know it today was dedicated for worship in 1875. A great deal of voluntary labour was supplied from a nearby settlement of Polish immigrants, many of them skilled artisans with a deeply ingrained sense of community spirit.

Above the front door of St. Aloysius one finds some splendid stone carving. This is the work of Br. Waldman who went blind in his old age. In spite of his disability the Brother (disappointed because the carving had not been completed and no-one could be found to undertake the work) decided to attempt the delicate work himself. The work was eventually finished; it was an incredible achievement for a blind man. It is difficult to find any difference between the two stages of stone carving.

In 1861, with the arrival of more Jesuits, Father Pallhuber, formerly a teacher at the College, began his great missionary journeys to the far north of South Australia, calling on the scattered copper mines (some of them 300 miles distant from Sevenhills) visiting the sheep runs and the lonely shepherd huts, riding by horseback 1,000 miles or more each month.

About this time some exquisite hand-worked vestments arrived from Vienna and these magnificent items have survived to this day, the fine beadwork and embroidery still retaining their original brilliance of colour and painstaking detail of stitchery.

Beneath St. Aloysius lies what is believed to be Australia's only burial crypt, and here are interred 39 of the Brothers. Brother Sadler was the first. During quarrying operations in 1865 a flying stone hit him above the eye and killed him, and as the crypt was nearing completion he was buried there.

Weikert, although he lived to the ripe old age of 83, died a poor man on 3 October, 1875. The Jesuits who followed the first party remembered his kindness to Br. Kranewitter and gave him a home at Sevenhills in his old age. When he died they erected a fine headstone over his grave in the Sevenhills cemetery.

By 1886 Catholic schools had opened in Adelaide and in Melbourne and a large Seminary had been built in Sydney. Sevenhill College had fulfilled its purpose and its use was discontinued when it became a residence for the Austrian Jesuits.

The winemaking of those early Brothers continued, however, and today the main feature of the Sevenhill winery is producing sacramental wine which is sold to churches all over Australia, and many thousands of gallons are exported annually to Japan, India, Indonesia and the Pacific countries. When the needs of the church are filled the remaining vintage is made into table wines which are keenly sought after. Each year many thousands of visitors come to the tranquility of this magnificent church among the vines in the Clare Valley, a rapidly developing wine producing area in South Australia's mid-north where history and the fruit of the vine make a happy and splendid combination.

#### 6. NOTICE

WANTED: Information about the History of South Australian Football since 1860.  
Request made by:

Mr. Bernard Whimpress, Publications & Promotions Officer,  
S.A. National Football League Inc.,  
GPO Box 103, ADELAIDE, 5001.

who is writing a book on the subject.