

PART II

Chapter Three

Bishop Murray's Predecessors at Maitland: The Pioneering Work of the Early Priests.

The installation of James Murray as Bishop of Maitland was, as the *Maitland Mercury* recorded, 'carried out with all the impressive ceremony and grandeur suitable to the occasion'.¹ The day itself, 1 November 1866, was the Feast of All Saints, a day when the Catholic Church honours the many uncanonised, holy men and women of the past, the Church Triumphant. On this particular All Saints' Day Catholics had come from all parts of the district to witness and participate in the ritual of a twice-blessed occasion. As the Church Militant, the local Catholic community believed that a vast heavenly throng looked down upon them as they paid due homage to God and to their bishop. The might of Rome manifested itself when Father Michael Doyle proclaimed the Latin bull of Pope Pius IX directing the consecration of the Most Reverend James Murray as Bishop of Maitland.²

On that day St John the Baptist Cathedral itself echoed with the strains of the age-old penitential prayer, *Kyrie Eleison*. This repeated supplication for mercy directed to the *Kyrios* (Lord) begins the Ordinary of the Latin Mass.³ The poignancy of the *Kyrie* contrasts with the jubilation of the *Gloria* and the high drama of the *Credo* which are the major and extended texts of the Ordinary. Together with the joyful *Sanctus* and the subdued *Agnus Dei* these words had been said or sung time and time again since the fourth century. The Mass had survived the demise of Latin Christendom in the sixteenth century to continue as the common form of worship throughout the Catholic Church.⁴ Through the ages

¹ Installation of the Bishop of Maitland, *Maitland Mercury*, 3 November 1866.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ Each invocation is said or sung three times.

⁴ C. Kelly, 'Kyrie Eleison', *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, London, 1966, pp. 273-274.

composers had set its highly dramatic texts to music using all the vocal and instrumental resources available to them and choirs had sung them on grand ecclesiastical occasions in every part of the Catholic world. On that November day in 1866 the Maitland Cathedral Choir under the direction of James P. Broderick had chosen a musical setting by Mozart.⁵ The singing of a Mozart Mass seems almost incongruous in this antipodean setting and yet this Mass tied the faithful to their common heritage of Western Christendom and the post-tridentine church.

The performance of any Mozart Mass calls for extensive musical resources and many of them demand the use of trombones, oboes, bassoons, trumpets and timpani to support the string orchestra and choir. In this instance, when an organ accompaniment had replaced the orchestral score, the music required a very talented organist.⁶ Demands upon the choir were also considerable. The *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of Mozart's twelfth Mass were polyphonic in structure with the *Gloria* ending in an elaborate fugue. The *Benedictus* was an extended piece in strict contrapuntal style with an ornate organ accompaniment while the *Agnus Dei* featured a solo soprano and a flourishing organ obbligato.⁷ The Maitland Choir, begun by Dean Lynch (1838-1862) and improved and developed by Father Andrew Phelan (1862-1868), had become, reputedly, one of the best in the country.⁸ Under the direction of Broderick, the choir performed regularly at the Cathedral, at church openings and at concerts in Maitland. Broderick's musical talents were not only confined to the Catholic Church. Ironically enough, when Henry Parkes, at times a

⁵ *Maitland Mercury*, 3 November 1866.

⁶ K. Geiringer, 'Church Music' in G. Abraham, *et al*, *The Mozart Companion*, Connecticut, 1981, p. 368. A. Einstein, *Mozart*, London, 1969, p. 344.

⁷ It has been argued that the Mass known as Mozart's No. 12 was not written by him except perhaps for the fugue which comes at the end of the *Gloria*. 'Competent experts' claim, that 'it is a patchwork of arias from different operas calculated to captivate the ear'. By 1900 Masses by Mozart, Haydn and Weber were no longer acceptable in church liturgies. J. J. Donovan, 'On Church Music' in *Proceedings of the first Australasian Catholic Congress*, Sydney 1900, pp. 818-819.

⁸ Lynch was fond of music, particularly of Moore's Irish melodies, which he tended to sing with tunes largely of his own making! While he had established the choir, it was his successor Phelan, a musician, who employed competent masters to work with the St John's Choir. T. J. Linane and F. A. Mecham, (eds) *Patrick Hartigan — The Men of '38 and Other Pioneer Priests* by John O'Brien, Kilmore, 1975, pp. 84-85.

prominent opponent of Catholicism, came to Maitland for the laying of the foundation stone of West Maitland Public School, Broderick directed the Grand Entertainment held at the School of Arts.⁹ While we cannot gauge the standard of the Cathedral Choir's performance in November 1866, the choice of music indicates considerable ambition and sophistication.

After the drama and emotion of the solemn High Mass the less formal observations followed. In the afternoon in St John's schoolroom representatives from the diocese, clergy and laity, welcomed the Bishop and pledged their loyalty and obedience to him. Addresses embossed on parchment were presented to his Lordship, who thanked each speaker and commented appropriately on what each had said. Those Catholics who spoke on behalf of the laity of the diocese were familiar with the concerns of the Roman Church. Their addresses, highlighting their loyalty to Rome and their support for the beleaguered Pius IX, also emphasised their links with Ireland. The Irish, they said, were 'a race noted for its devotion to religion and to its teachers'. Father Andrew Phelan had introduced the laity to their bishop and had taken up these same themes. Asserting that the Catholics in Maitland were in every respect equal to any in any part of the world, he proudly proclaimed that there was not a Catholic family in the district who did not frequent the sacraments. Leaving aside the rhetoric of the occasion, we can see a certain theme dominating the addresses. People and priests were united and at one. The bishop concluded the formal celebrations with a prayer that all the saints under whose protection the day had proceeded would plead before the throne of heaven on their behalf.¹⁰ The standard had been set. The local Catholics had proclaimed their faith and the tenets central to their church.

The enthusiasm and jubilation which had greeted Murray on his arrival revealed, at least within Maitland itself, a thriving, enterprising and educated Catholic community, loyal to Rome and to Ireland.

⁹ *Maitland Mercury*, 24 December 1867, 20 January 1873, 18 February 1873, 15 March 1873, 5 August 1873.

¹⁰ Address by W. T. Mitchell, *Maitland Mercury*, 3 November 1866.

However, there were some Catholics in the Diocese who manifested their Catholicity in ways different from those which dominated the church of Pius IX. A week before the solemn installation of James Murray as Bishop, a brief, anonymous and apparently semi-literate notice appeared in the *Maitland Mercury*, announcing that there would be a bonfire and music at Miller's Forest on the night before the official ceremony, to 'welcome the arrival of Dr Murray as Bishop Maitland [sic]'.¹¹ This proposed gathering attracted the ire of local Catholic, Timothy O'Callaghan, who ran an advertisement in the *Maitland Mercury* some days later claiming that the bonfire at Millers Forest had not the 'approval or sanction of the clergymen of the district' and adding that 'noisy midnight assemblages were not a decorous way to bid welcome to a Bishop of the Catholic Church'.¹² This celebration (for which there is no further evidence) may simply have been a response by high-spirited Irish-Catholic men and women to the arrival of their bishop. On the other hand, it may have sprung from deeper, more elemental well-springs, a manifestation of ancient Irish-Celtic custom and belief which had survived and been partly subsumed in the Christianization of Ireland. The celebration of the entry of Murray into his diocese is one occasion on which we catch sight of the old, not yet completely submerged by the new.

Pagan and Christian practices had co-existed in Ireland from the time of St Patrick. The Christian and non-Christian elements which the Irish brought to their various celebrations — festivals, patterns and wakes — were not in conflict from the participants' point of view. However, from the middle decade of the eighteenth century, Irish clerics had tried to stamp out these celebrations with exemplary punishments and

¹¹ 'Arrival Bishop Maitland. The residents of Miller's Forest and the district are informed that a BONFIRE WILL BE MADE on the evening of 31st instant, near the school-house, to welcome the arrival of DR MURRAY, as BISHOP MAITLAND [sic]. Band of Music will attend'. *Maitland Mercury*, 27 October 1866.

¹² 'The advertisement in Saturday's issue of the *Mercury* announcing a demonstration in the shape of a Bonfire at Millers Forest, on the 31st instant, on the arrival of the above dignitary has not the approval or sanction of the clergymen of the district; and I might add, that, as far as I am personally concerned, I entirely disagree with the movement. Noisy midnight assemblages do not appear to me to be a very decorous way to bid welcome to a Bishop of the Catholic Church'. Timothy O'Callaghan, Millers Forest, 29 October 1866. *Maitland Mercury*, 30 October 1866.

exhortations. Patterns (gatherings at sacred sites such as a holy well, mountain or ruined church on a special feastday) were particularly frowned upon and condemned as occasions for drunkenness, violence and general misconduct.¹³ Nevertheless, even during the devotional innovations of the mid-nineteenth century, which saw the rise of the Romanised Catholic Church, the Irish continued to resort to the folkways of their past.¹⁴ When in 1866 some Irish Catholics of the Maitland Diocese appear to have held to their Celtic folk customs, we glimpse that same tradition of the supernatural. This episode, perhaps, provides us with a slight inkling of what still lay behind the public and accepted facade of formal Catholicism.

Murray's earliest contact with his people favourably impressed him. Writing to his friend and mentor, Tobias Kirby, rector of the Irish College in Rome, he claimed, they 'are as good as they are at home' and 'good progress has been made'.¹⁵ It is significant that Murray found little to complain about. As first resident bishop, he may well have wondered about the nature of his flock and, no doubt, he saw himself as the initiator and builder of the diocese. The healthy state of the diocese was due in no small measure to the administration of Dean John Lynch and his successor, Father Andrew Phelan. These priests had harnessed the enthusiasm of a laity who, hitherto, had been largely thrown on their own resources. The sophistication of Murray's official welcome shows the extent to which Lynch and Phelan had been aware of changes in Rome and Ireland and their success in inculcating the new ways. Lynch, in particular, had prepared the ground and sown the seeds of religious discipline, thus allowing the newer devotions espoused by Murray to take root.

¹³ S. J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland 1780-1845*, Dublin, 1982, pp. 139-141. For a detailed description of patterns, see E. E. Evans, *Irish Folkways*, London, 1988, pp. 262-266.

¹⁴ P. O'Farrell, 'St Patrick's Day in Australia (The John Alexander Ferguson Lecture 1994)', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, June 1995, Vol. 81, Part 1, pp. 1-16 and p. 5.

¹⁵ Murray to Kirby, 8 October 1867, Kirby Letters, ICAR.

Dean Lynch, writing to Murray from Armidale in 1866, expressed his pleasure that a bishop 'so well qualified' had been 'placed over a diocese wherein the Catholics are numerous and deeply imbued with respect for everything belonging to their holy religion'. In paying his duty to the new bishop, Lynch claimed due credit for the present state of the diocese emphasizing that the state of religion and morality had left a great deal to be desired at the time of his own arrival.¹⁶ After completing studies at Maynooth College, Lynch had come to Maitland in August 1838. Edmund Mahony, also from Maynooth, but ordained by Polding in Sydney, accompanied him and together they had begun their ministry at East Maitland.¹⁷ Mahony concentrated his efforts in and about East Maitland and the lower Hunter while Lynch ministered to the west and interior districts beyond the Hunter.¹⁸ Mahony's influence was to be relatively short. Never a strong man, he worked in the Maitland area for six years and was then called to Adelaide. He returned to East Maitland a year later and there died from tuberculosis in April 1845. During his brief active ministry in Maitland he presided at 453 baptisms and 120 marriages. Travelling approximately 3,000 miles each year, he said Mass and gave Communion at Mass stations throughout the district. By 1842, the total number of Catholics in the area was 600, with about 450 attending Mass and 30 receiving monthly communion.¹⁹

Dean Lynch, on the other hand, worked in the Maitland Mission for 24 years before he 'tore himself away' to take care of the 'isolated mission' of Armidale.²⁰ Another cleric, the pseudonymous John O'Brien (Patrick Hartigan) summed him up well when he wrote that Lynch 'was the type who worked best by himself ... he was a ruler who suffered no rival near the throne'.²¹ Not only did 'O'Brien' understand the man and priest but he knew the labour involved for a pioneering priest. According to

¹⁶ Lynch to Murray, 27 November 1866, File B.2.6., MDA.

¹⁷ Both men had arrived in Sydney on the *Cecilia* on 15 July 1838. J. W. Delaney, 'City of Cessnock 1788-1988, Roman Catholic Church History', typescript, n.d., p. 7, Newcastle Region Library.

¹⁸ For an account of the work of Edmund Mahony, see H. Campbell, *The Diocese of Maitland: 1866-1966*, Maitland, 1966, pp. 39-45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁰ Lynch to Murray, 27 November 1866, File B.2.6., MDA.

²¹ J. O'Brien, *Australian Catholic Record*, April 1944, p. 46.

'O'Brien', Lynch 'searched the upper reaches of the Hunter and Paterson Valley, and there was not a settler, Catholic or non-Catholic, whom he did not call upon'. He was a man who gained support from all sections of the community. Direct and simple in his approach, his correspondence with Propaganda shows a man with good, practical commonsense but one low down in the church hierarchy.²² His first task in Maitland was to 'tame' the Catholics of the district and to bring them to the proper practice of their religion.

The majority of Catholics in the Maitland Diocese during Lynch's pioneering work were pre-famine Irish, many of whom had arrived as convicts.²³ According to the 1828 Census 69 per cent of men in the Hunter were convicts. Moreover the Newcastle penal settlement had been established in 1804 partly to house the worst of the Irish insurgents.²⁴ These lower-class products of the Irish penal period had little knowledge and experience of formal religion and its practices.²⁵ Though there were hedge or pay schools in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Ireland only one tenth of the school-age population attended them.²⁶ Those who could not afford to pay went to Sunday schools. During the summer months the young, aged between seven and seventeen, gathered in the local chapel after Sunday Mass to be instructed in their religion. Many Irish Catholics were not confirmed until they were adults, a delay which indicates that only a few had acquired the basic level of religious knowledge essential for confirmation. Literacy levels were low and contributed to the difficulties encountered by those instructing and being instructed in their religion.²⁷

22 Lynch's correspondence, unlike that of the majority of letters to Propaganda, was always written in English and in Lynch's simple and direct style. J. T. Lynch to *Propaganda Fide*, 11 May 1859, *Oceania*, 1858-1860, Vol. 6, 601-1227, SCPFA.

23 D. N. Jeans, *An Historical Geography of New South Wales to 1901*, Sydney, 1972, pp. 75 and 135.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

25 Although the Catholic Relief Acts of 1778, 1782, 1792 and 1793 had restored to Catholics the 'long lost right of citizenship', it was not until 1829 that many of the restrictions regarding the exercise of Catholic rites were removed in law as well as practice. I. Murphy, *The Diocese of Killaloe, 1800-1850*, 1992, p. 21.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 349.

Catholic ceremonies in Ireland were not public, often taking place in private houses.²⁸ These houses, called mass houses or stations, were a distinctive feature of earlier Irish Catholicism. The priest would go to a particular house early in the morning to hear confessions, usually until the middle of the day, and then he would say Mass.²⁹ The day often ended with what was called a 'big night', a time of high-spirited celebration. While these gatherings and the ensuing celebrations occurred there was no formal, regular practice of going to confession and of receiving communion. This situation had arisen largely because of Jansenist austerities. Jansenius, a seventeenth-century French scripture scholar and a bishop, presented teachings on grace and the Christian life based on the writings of St Augustine or rather on an 'Augustine seen through Calvin spectacles'.³⁰ The belief that everything natural was evil affected the way Jansenists viewed life and, in particular, the way they approached the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. The Jansenists taught that without perfect contrition penance was of no avail and that one does more for oneself by not going to Communion than by going.³¹ Beginning in France the movement had swept through Catholic Europe and greatly affected religious practice and attitudes. Irish priests who had trained in France because of the restrictions of the eighteenth-century penal code returned to Ireland having imbibed a French spirituality and teaching deeply coloured with what the hierarchy in Rome considered Jansenistic error.³² Jansenism continued to affect nineteenth-century religious practice, posing a serious threat to the fundamental doctrine of grace received through the sacraments and the authority of the church.

For pre-famine Irish Catholics, formal religion was usually limited to special occasions and was community rather than church-based. Baptisms, marriages and Masses for the dead took place in the homes of

28 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 335.

30 D. J. Keenan, *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Sociological Study*, Dublin, 1983, p. 96.

31 P. Hughes, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, London, 1974, pp. 176-181.

32 D. Walker, 'The French Influence', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LV, No. 1, 1978, pp. 28-35.

people.³³ Little ceremonial accompanied these observances. Marriages, for example, were performed with a very informal rite in the home of the couple concerned or in the priest's house, usually just before the beginning of Lent. There were no banns, no confession, no communion, no Mass and no search for hidden impediments.³⁴ Marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics were illegal under the penal code but the marriage of Catholics by a Protestant clergyman was valid even in the eyes of the Catholic Church.³⁵ Visiting the sick and administering the last rites formed the most strict and arduous aspect of a priest's duties. Irish Catholics made a point of getting a priest when in danger of death, calling upon him at all hours of the day and night for this purpose.³⁶ The death of a family member occasioned a wake, a special gathering of friends and relatives in the home of the deceased. Here they would tell stories, recall the death warnings and the 'forbidden' omens.³⁷ Rites of passage were significant religious events for Irish Catholics and for many their main experience of formal religion.

Church buildings in Ireland reflected the poverty of the Catholic community and the effects of penal times. When Catholics in pre-famine Ireland did gather for worship in church buildings they did so in multi-purpose structures.³⁸ Often little more than 'damp and dirty, large, bare empty halls',³⁹ they served as Mass centres at weekends, as day schools during the week and meeting places in between times. Sometimes the chapel provided living quarters for the parish priest or curate, or both.⁴⁰ The Blessed Sacrament was not preserved in the chapel but in the priest's house. Within the chapel itself there was little ornamentation, such as pictures, statues or stations of the cross. Nor were there external signs denoting the chapel as a place of worship.⁴¹ The 1782 Relief Act proscribing steeples and bells was still on the Irish statute book and its

33 Murphy, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

34 Keenan, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

35 Murphy, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 338.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 340.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 280.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 313.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 316.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 313.

prohibitions still observed in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Catholic churches in Ireland stood hidden in back streets, spireless and plain. While churches became more visible in the major centres in the 1820s it was not until the 1830s and 1840s that a building programme in poorer dioceses, such as Killaloe, began.⁴² This particular diocese covered almost all of Co. Clare and the northern part of Co. Tipperary, two of the four counties which supplied most of the early Irish emigrants to New South Wales.

The removal of legal discrimination against Catholics, the subsequent amelioration of institutionalized anti-Catholicism and the energetic episcopate of Daniel Murray, James Murray's great-uncle, coincided with the changes occurring within the Catholic Church under Pius IX. The nineteenth-century's legacy to Ireland has become a subject of considerable focus for the historian, not the least because of the Great Famine. Emmet Larkin was among the first to investigate changes in nineteenth-century Catholic practices, which he described as a revolution. Subsequently S. J. Connolly has provided some support for Larkin's view with his study of pre-famine Ireland.⁴³ Connolly discovered a Catholic people in Ireland who were not faithful, obedient, mass-going or priest-ridden, a very different situation from that of the Catholic community of the post-famine church. Larkin, for his part, maintains that in the pre-reform period only 33 per cent of Irish Catholics went to Mass each Sunday, though other Irish historians, such as Patrick Corish, have questioned this figure.⁴⁴ Corish, in particular, comments on an analysis of figures for Mass-going Catholics by the American historian, David Miller, who concludes that Mass figures for the four cities, Dublin, Cork, Belfast and Limerick were 40 to 60 per cent, while in other towns the percentage was 80 to 100 per cent. In rural English-speaking areas they were 30 to 60 per cent and in rural Irish-speaking areas 20 to 40 per cent. Corish himself suggests that the figures are too low and argues that in effect the statistics show only that religious practice in pre-famine Ireland varied from area to

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁴³ Connolly, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ E. Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3, June 1972, pp. 625-652 and p. 636.

area. In addition, he warns against making broad generalisations about any aspect of early nineteenth-century Irish Church history, whether it be the level of religious practice, the relationship between priests and people or concerns about schools and schoolmasters.⁴⁵

Corish's warning has special significance for understanding religious practice at the time of Lynch's ministry at Maitland. As Corish suggests, it is very difficult to know to what extent formal religion was a real concern for Irish Catholics in their own country. It is even more difficult to measure the extent of practice in the remote colony of New South Wales. However, by chance, one sometimes catches a glimpse of these concerns. One such glimpse is offered to us by a young woman, 23-year-old Irish convict, Mary Heiffran. Sent to the Newcastle Female Factory in January 1838, she arrived in the area a few months before Fathers Lynch and Mahony. Writing to her mother, Deborah Rosney, Mary must have commented upon her lack of access to a priest and to the sacraments because her mother responded by advising acts of contrition in place of confession and silent prayer at the hour of Mass. It has been generally claimed that convicts, and convict women in particular, were an irreverent lot, with few or no religious beliefs.⁴⁶ Mary's worry that she could not receive the sacraments shows a level of religious and sacramental awareness as well as commitment. While her case may be isolated, it may also be indicative of the importance some Irish convict women placed upon the practice of their faith. Mrs Rosney's response to her daughter as to how she might solve her dilemma reveals something more about Irish Catholics and their spiritual self-sufficiency, particularly when priests were not available.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ P. Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience, A Historical Survey*, Dublin, 1986, pp. 166-167. Interview with Patrick Corish, Maynooth College, May 1994.

⁴⁶ A. Grocott, *Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, Attitudes of Convicts and Ex-Convicts Towards the Churches and Clergy in New South Wales from 1788 to 1851*, Sydney, 1980, is fairly typical though, like Russel Ward, he accepts that Catholics were different. The new social history is beginning to reveal a very different picture in relation to popular piety as well as religious practice in New South Wales. Much which has been done in the History Department of the University of New England, Armidale, remains unpublished.

⁴⁷ Letter from Deborah Rosney to her daughter, Mary Heiffran, 21 October 1838, included in Returns for Applications to Publish Banns, 23 March 1840, AONSW, 4/2481.92, Reel 737. K. McCabe, 'Women of the Newcastle Female Factory, 1831-

Many Catholics in pre-famine Ireland, particularly in rural areas, had difficulty attending Mass on a regular basis. In the Diocese of Killaloe, for example, Catholics often had to travel two to four miles to the nearest chapel. The majority had to walk. Many did not have sufficient clothing for all family members for such an occasion. When the faithful did arrive at the chapel they had to stand or kneel without support during the service.⁴⁸ Moreover Catholics believed that if they were tilling the soil or tending their potatoes they were not obliged to go to Mass. This custom of exemption, as it was called, had arisen from discussions among the people themselves rather than from church authorities. Certainly, in pre-famine Killaloe, at least, priests were not authoritarian about Mass attendance.⁴⁹ Consequently, for the early Catholics of Maitland, including convicts and assisted immigrants, regular Mass-going had not necessarily been a common practice nor was it always seen to be a necessary part of one's religion.

Dean Lynch had left Ireland just as the church-building programme there was beginning. When he arrived in Maitland he located and mustered his Catholics and began a long-term and crucial building project throughout the Hunter Valley. Church buildings were not only important for Catholic worship and ritual, they were also places for teaching the faith and inculcating certain religious practices. By the time Lynch left the diocese in 1862, ten substantial churches, as opposed to Mass stations or houses, had been built.⁵⁰ Only a year or two after he began his ministry he had built his first church in Plaistowe Street, Horseshoe Bend, West Maitland. By the end of 1840 churches at Branxton and Paterson were nearing completion. Foundations had been laid at Wollombi, and Lynch had acquired land at Patrick Plains and Murrurundi for churches.⁵¹

1841: "The Worst and Vilest of their Sex"?. M. Litt., University of New England, Armidale, pp. 44-45.

48 Murphy, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

49 It was accepted that if people went to work they were not expected nor obliged to attend Mass. Corish, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

50 *Almanac of the Diocese of Maitland and Family Home Journal, 1900*, Maitland, 1900, pp. 21-31.

51 Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

In other words, he first secured the main centres and in doing so he secured the heart of the diocese.

Church buildings and the land on which they stood had been provided by the people of the Hunter Valley through donations of money, building materials and labour. The site of the church at Black Creek near Branxton had even been given by a Protestant, a Mr Bowe. John Browne had promised land at Singleton while other Catholics were busily collecting the £1,000 needed for the completion of the building. At Paterson, a Mr Keily and a Mr Clarke had each donated three acres of land and Thomas Haydon of Bloomfield had offered a site for a church at Murrurundi.⁵² Prominent Protestants also contributed generously to the building of St John's at Maitland. Donations from evangelical Anglicans such as Thomas Hungerford of Farley, Henry Incedon Pilcher of Telarah and Henry Rourke of Maitland showed the respect that these men had for Lynch and his work.⁵³ Lynch's ability to rally people, both Catholics and Protestants, to his cause, meant that Catholic churches became testaments not only to Catholic piety but also to general community support.⁵⁴

Lynch considered his greatest building to be St John the Baptist Church at Maitland. Its foundation stone had been laid originally at Campbells Hill in 1840. This elevated site was out of flood reach but because local development was taking place near the river itself, the site was changed to Charles Street. In this instance Lynch had relinquished the highest point in the town for a more obvious and accessible position.⁵⁵ The church, seating 300, was completed at a cost of £5,000 and opened in 1846. Before Lynch left the diocese he had enlarged it and added a tower, 65 feet high.⁵⁶ A contemporary report in the *Maitland Mercury* described

⁵² Lynch officiated at the wedding of Irish-born, Thomas Haydon and Margaret Wightman of Glengarry, in May 1841. During visits to Murrurundi Lynch stayed at the Haydons' property at Bloomfield. N. Gray and E. Davies, *A History of the Parish of St Mary's Scone*, Scone, 1975.

⁵³ *Maitland Mercury*, 18 March 1843.

⁵⁴ *Australasian Catholic Directory For 1841*, Sydney, 1841.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the impact of the Irish upon buildings in Melbourne, see C. McConville, 'Melbourne's Nineteenth-Century Irish Townscape', *Irish-Australian Studies*, 1990, pp. 92-102.

⁵⁶ *Maitland Mercury*, 5 October 1844.

it as an extremely neat building. 'It lies east and west and at the west end is a turret or belfry, the four corners supported by handsome campaniles surmounted by fleuretted cones. At each corner of the body of the church, as well as between the windows, is a neat gothic buttress ... giving a pleasing effect to the building'.⁵⁷ In stark contrast to the buildings of pre-famine Ireland, St John's had 'a ceiling of highly polished cedar, a handsome and commodious gallery and a chapel both ornamental and graceful in its proportion'.⁵⁸ It was a church of which the Catholics (and even non-Catholics) of Maitland could be proud. It symbolized the state of religious practice and the growing self-confidence and self-consciousness of Catholics themselves. It was this church which James Murray claimed as his Cathedral when he arrived in Maitland in November 1866.

Lynch provided Catholics both with buildings and with the desire to practice their faith regularly. In some respects the colony itself had given Lynch and his Catholics their opportunity. Ironically, perhaps, for a convict society New South Wales was freer in some respects than Ireland and less divided religiously. Lynch did not have to contend with the restrictions of the Irish penal laws nor with active discrimination.⁵⁹ Indeed, Governor Macquarie had made special provision for Catholic marriages in 1820 when the non-conformist Protestant groups still had no such right.⁶⁰ Given this situation and the work of Lynch, the level of religious practice in various centres throughout the diocese began to rise. Catholics at East Maitland, of whom there were about a thousand, could go to confession each Friday and Saturday, hear Mass and attend evening services every Sunday. By 1857 the number of people receiving Communion at St John's, West Maitland, had risen to 350 per week. As

⁵⁷ C. J. Mitchell, *Hunter's River: A History of Early Families and the Homes They Built in the Lower Hunter Valley Between 1830 and 1860*, Newcastle, 1973, p. 84.

⁵⁸ *Australasian Catholic Directory For 1862*, Sydney, 1862.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of Bourke's Church Act of 1836, see K. J. Cable, 'Protestant Problems in New South Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 3, 1964-5, p. 119.

⁶⁰ Instructions from Governor Macquarie to Rev. Messrs P. Connolly and J. J. Therry, Roman Catholic Chaplains, 14 October 1820, reprinted *Sydney Gazette*, 23 September 1836. W. T. Southerwood, 'New Light on the Foundation of Australian Catholicism', *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LX1, No. 2, 1984, p. 166.

part of overcoming the tyranny of distance and a widely scattered Catholic population, Lynch had Mass stations at Lochinvar, Black Creek, Rosebrook, Stanhope, two in Wollombi and three in the Paterson district.⁶¹ In the northern part of the Hunter a priest visited 1,102 Catholics at Mass stations north and north-west of Singleton. At Singleton itself the number of monthly communicants had reached 120 and in the area of Singleton and Patrick Plains there were 1,154. In the Raymond Terrace, Hexham, Stroud and Manning River districts practising Catholics numbered 600.⁶²

Lynch's regulation of religious discipline was particularly evident in the number of baptisms and conversions prompted by his personal contact. One family in particular stands out as an example of his obvious evangelisation and enthusiasm. Anne McMahon, a Catholic, and John Boyce, an Anglican, had married in Co. Monaghan, Ireland, in 1840. Arriving in Australia later that same year, they settled at Glendon, near Maitland, where John became a shepherd at Table Land Station. The family moved to Stanhope in 1849 and John obtained land at Eui Creek in 1859. From there he worked bullock teams from Morpeth to Armidale and Moree.⁶³ Though their mother was Catholic the Boyce children were baptized as Presbyterians and Anglicans.⁶⁴ In October 1859, however, June Boyce, aged 13, was baptized a Catholic at St John the Baptist Church, Maitland, by Dean Lynch. In October the following year Mary Anne, aged 20, Isabella, aged 18, John, aged 8, and Emily, aged 6 years, all followed her example. Lynch highlighted each of these Catholic baptisms by printing in large capital letters, the word, convert, beside each name. In January 1861 Letitia, aged 15, and Caroline, aged 13, were also baptized by Lynch. Later that year John Boyce, aged 43, converted to Catholicism and was

⁶¹ *Australasian Catholic Directory for 1857*, Sydney, 1857.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶³ K. P. Ingle, *Valley Echoes: History of the Gresford Catholic Parish*, Newcastle, n.d., pp. 31-32.

⁶⁴ In 1841 the Boyces' second daughter, Isabella, was baptized a Presbyterian by the Reverend Irving Hetherington. BDM 1841, 8090, 121. Two years later their third daughter, Letitia, was baptized in the Church of England by the Reverend Fraser Cameron. BDM 1843, 2086, 27. In 1846 a fourth daughter, Caroline, was baptized Church of England by the Reverend Fraser Cameron. BDM, 1846, 2462, 32.

baptized.⁶⁵ Anne Boyce's reassertion of her Catholicism is open to a number of interpretations. Obviously Lynch was persuasive in his dealings with those whom he saw as wayward Catholics. At the same time, he had created a climate in which Catholics, and especially Catholic women, could recommit themselves and their children. Moreover, the religious community itself provided support for women such as Anne Boyce. Almost certainly hers was not simply the case of an individual being imposed on by a determined cleric, but also of someone being guided by her friends in the decisions she made about her religious practice.

Admittedly, there had been signs of the same kind of heart searching among local Catholic women even before Lynch's arrival. John Callaghan and Elizabeth (Aharen) had married at Christ Church, Newcastle, on 9 July 1831.⁶⁶ Although the couple had contracted a mixed marriage in an Anglican church, their children, John, Thomas Joseph, Elizabeth and Eleanor were all baptized Catholics at Maitland.⁶⁷ Similarly Thomas Dee married Ellen Wool, also at Christ Church, Newcastle, in 1832.⁶⁸ They, too, had their children, William, Mary, Henry Joseph, Frances Margaret, Charles Stephen, Benjamin and Elizabeth Josephine baptized Catholics, some before and some after Lynch's arrival.⁶⁹ In the case of the Callaghan and Dee families both women had made 'good and

⁶⁵ Baptism Register, St John the Baptist Church, Maitland, 27 October, 1859, 17 October 1860, 4 January 1861, 7 September 1861.

⁶⁶ BDM 1831, 1196, 15, Church of England, Charles Wilton.

⁶⁷ 21 August 1836, East Maitland, C. V. Dowling, BDM 1836,413, 121. There is no registration of a baptism for Thomas Joseph but he married Mary Teresa Dee at St John the Baptist Church, Maitland, Rev. William Stone, April 1863. *Maitland Mercury*, Saturday, 29 October 1870, 21 March 1839, East Maitland, E. Mahoney, BDM 1839, 655, 121. 21 November, 1841, West Maitland, J. T. Lynch, BDM 1841, 2642,121.

⁶⁸ BDM, 1832, 1202, 16. Their daughter, Mary Dee, subsequently married Thomas Joseph Callaghan junior at St John the Baptist Cathedral, Maitland, in April 1863. Register of Marriage, Parish Archives, West Maitland, 5 April 1863.

⁶⁹ 18 July 1836, East Maitland Catholic Church, James Watkins, 15 October 1838, East Maitland Catholic Church, E. Mahoney, BDM 1838, 616, 121, 4 February 1849, West Maitland, J. T. Lynch, BDM 1848, 220, 66, 30 June 1850, West Maitland, J. T. Lynch, BDM 1850, 871, 67, 14 September 1852, West Maitland, J. T. Lynch, BDM 1852, 1477, 69, n.d. 1854, West Maitland, J. T. Lynch, BDM 1854, 2252, 71. There is no registration of Elizabeth's baptism but she married Francis Cunningham at St John the Baptist Church, West Maitland, October 1870, *Maitland Mercury*, Saturday 29 October, 1870.

desirable' marriages, albeit mixed.⁷⁰ In these families, however, the religious affiliation of the Catholic partner prevailed and the children of the marriage were baptized Catholics. This situation differed from the frequent practice Atkinson found in mixed marriages in the rural area of Camden in the 1840s. By comparison with Maitland with its significant Catholic population, Catholics in Camden numbered only fourteen per cent.⁷¹ As a result, presumably, compromise usually prevailed there. Male children were given the denomination of the father and females the denomination of the mother.⁷²

Lynch attended to the moral inadequacies of his flock with equal vigour. Aware of the evils of drink and its effect on his countrymen, he inaugurated the Total Abstinence Society in Maitland on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 August 1841. Coming close upon the heels of the first such society founded in Ireland, Lynch's initiative demonstrated his continued close contact with his home country. In Ireland both Protestants and Catholics exhibited such a strong tendency to drink to excess that by the 1830s drunkenness was considered a major problem. William Martin, a Quaker from Cork, had founded a Total Abstinence Society early in the 1830s. In 1838, he enlisted the support of a well-known Capuchin monk, Father Theobald Mathew. Mathew had become an influential figure throughout Cork and with other priests, Michael Meehan and Jonathan Furlong, from the diocese of Killaloe, he began his extensive crusade. From southwest Clare to Cork, Mathew travelled preaching on the evils of drink and encouraging drinkers to take the pledge.⁷³

⁷⁰ John Callaghan was the owner of considerable property and of the most flourishing and well-appointed hotel in Maitland. J. Turner (ed.) *Who Was Who in the Hunter Valley Towns in 1888*, Newcastle, 1984, p. 84. Thomas Dee Esq. of Mount Dee was a well-known Maitland draper. Baptismal Register, St Joseph's Parish East Maitland, 21 February 1836, Parish Archives East Maitland.

⁷¹ A. Atkinson, *Camden: Farm and Village Life in New South Wales*, South Melbourne, 1988, p. 162.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

⁷³ I. Murphy, 'Father Mathew Apostle of Temperance in South-West Clare', *The Other Clare*, Vol. 9, 1985, pp. 5-12.

The temperance movement quickly gained wide popular support in Ireland. The movement not only ameliorated the problem of drink but provided opportunities for socialising in a way which appealed to the Irish sense of display. On St Stephen's Day in 1839, for instance, about 3,500 temperance society members with banners unfurled marched through towns in Co. Clare to the strains of music from the Kilrush band. Most importantly, however, membership of the movement assured individuals of a 'fine funeral, an object dear to all Irishmen'. One such funeral in Clare is described in some detail. Temperance members wearing special headbands and medals served as pall bearers. Behind them 'reverend gentlemen from local parishes walked arm in arm while a procession of two thousand members followed'.⁷⁴

Lynch's inauguration of the temperance movement in Maitland was timely. A contemporary account (perhaps overstating the case a little) reported that before his work began,

A formidable array of 'grog houses' graced both sides of High Street from Campbell's Hill right through to its eastern extremity. So close together were they that, in some instances, they almost adjoined, while in others but a few yards separated them.⁷⁵

With so many of his parishioners heavily involved in the drink trade, both buying and selling, Lynch set about remedying the situation. During 1841 he had organized various meeting places for temperance followers, the Temple of Concord at Maitland, the Ark of the Covenant at Singleton and the Conciliation Hall at Muswellbrook. A hall at Wollombi followed a year later.⁷⁶

Lynch's methods in Maitland were effective, for 5,000 people took the pledge of total abstinence from him, a result which earned him the healthy respect of many including some members of the Church of

⁷⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ James Backhouse, a Quaker, visitor to New South Wales, quoted by the *Catholic Sentinel*, Maitland, 1932, p. 204.

⁷⁶ Linane and Meham, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

England.⁷⁷ His success undoubtedly helped to ease sectarian tensions. Giving lectures on the evils of drink every week, he organized concerts, magic lantern shows and social evenings to keep the young and not so young out of the 'shebeens'. The evening usually began with

a procession of well wishers and the recently converted from the Temple down to the Long Bridge at the end of the town headed by Fanning's band. Thence they paraded along High Street to Victoria Bridge, back to the Temple, a total distance of four miles; and every drunk on the way was swept along in the March of the Righteous.⁷⁸

Lynch was very skilful in gathering potential pledge-takers, and he was not beyond using his fists (as he did on one occasion to silence a vociferous heckler) as well as words to encourage the hesitant.⁷⁹ His muscular Christianity was, no doubt, much admired.⁸⁰ He himself considered the Society to be most successful, claiming it 'proved itself the prolific source of good to every section of the community'.⁸¹ The Society provided Lynch with a way of controlling his flock, and for Catholics themselves it became the means of achieving some respectability and acceptance within the broader community. The temperance movement was by no means confined to Catholics and Lynch's involvement in the movement was certainly not unique to him. Clergymen of all denominations battled against the evils of drink among their flocks. The extent of the popular response to the movement from both Protestants and Catholics was closely linked to, and an expression of, developing piety and the growing desire for respectability characteristic of the latter part of the nineteenth century.⁸²

Lynch's successor in the diocese in 1862, Andrew Phelan, was a very different man. He has been described as a zealous clergyman, but also a

⁷⁷ P. S. Robertson, *Proclaiming Unsearchable Riches, Newcastle and the Minority Evangelical Anglicans: 1788-1900*, Hertfordshire, 1996, p. 57.

⁷⁸ J. O'Brien, (Thomas Hartigan) 'In Diebus Illis', *Australasian Catholic Record*, 1944, p. 99.

⁷⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁸⁰ Lynch's work on behalf of the temperance movement earned him great respect within the broader community. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

⁸¹ Lynch to Murray, 17 December 1866, File B 2.7., MDA.

⁸² Atkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

good citizen, a perfect gentleman and an excellent man of business.⁸³ His approach was not that of a raw-boned, frontier priest imposing new ways on the Catholics of Maitland. In many ways he moderated the roughness of the developing Catholic community, smoothing the path which Lynch had cut through the wilderness. Educated at Carlow College in Ireland, Phelan was ordained for the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin in 1856. There he had ministered as a curate in the parishes of Rosenallis and Carlow before coming to Australia as administrator of the Maitland Diocese in 1862.⁸⁴ During his seven years in Maitland he built neo-gothic churches at Lochinvar, Gresford and Black Creek, at a total cost of £3,000, beautified St John's and its precincts, remodelled school houses and built new schools at Lochinvar and Branxton.⁸⁵ In 1869 Phelan was offered the position of administrator of Carlow College, and it was with some reluctance that Murray agreed to release this very able and experienced priest from his diocese.⁸⁶ Phelan's farewell from Maitland was attended by 'all classes of the community' and he was acclaimed for 'assiduously administering to the spiritual wants of his people' and for his 'tolerance and consideration of the opinions of other denominations'.⁸⁷ Phelan had continued the work begun by Lynch but he also provided the important transition between Lynch and the urbane Murray. Upon Murray's arrival Phelan was able to hand to the new bishop a diocese of which he, Phelan, claimed to be justly proud.⁸⁸

There can be no doubt that the Catholics of Maitland responded to the religious discipline imposed upon them by Lynch. It is difficult, however, to know how readily and steadfastly they responded to what was asked of them. Given Lynch's personality, his determination and zeal,

⁸³ *Maitland Mercury*, 6 May 1869.

⁸⁴ J. McEvoy, *Carlow College 1793-1993*, Carlow, 1993, p. 237. Phelan returned to Carlow as administrator of the College in 1869 and later served as parish priest of Philipstown, Mountrath and Maryborough where he died in 1901.

⁸⁵ Lynch had also encouraged the building of schools and by 1855 nine schools staffed by Catholic laymen and women had been set up in the main towns of the Hunter Valley. *The Australian Catholic Directory*, Sydney, 1855. *Maitland Mercury*, 24 May 1869.

⁸⁶ Murray to Cullen, 14 June 1869, DDA.

⁸⁷ *Maitland Mercury*, 6 May 1869.

⁸⁸ *Maitland Mercury*, 3 November 1866.

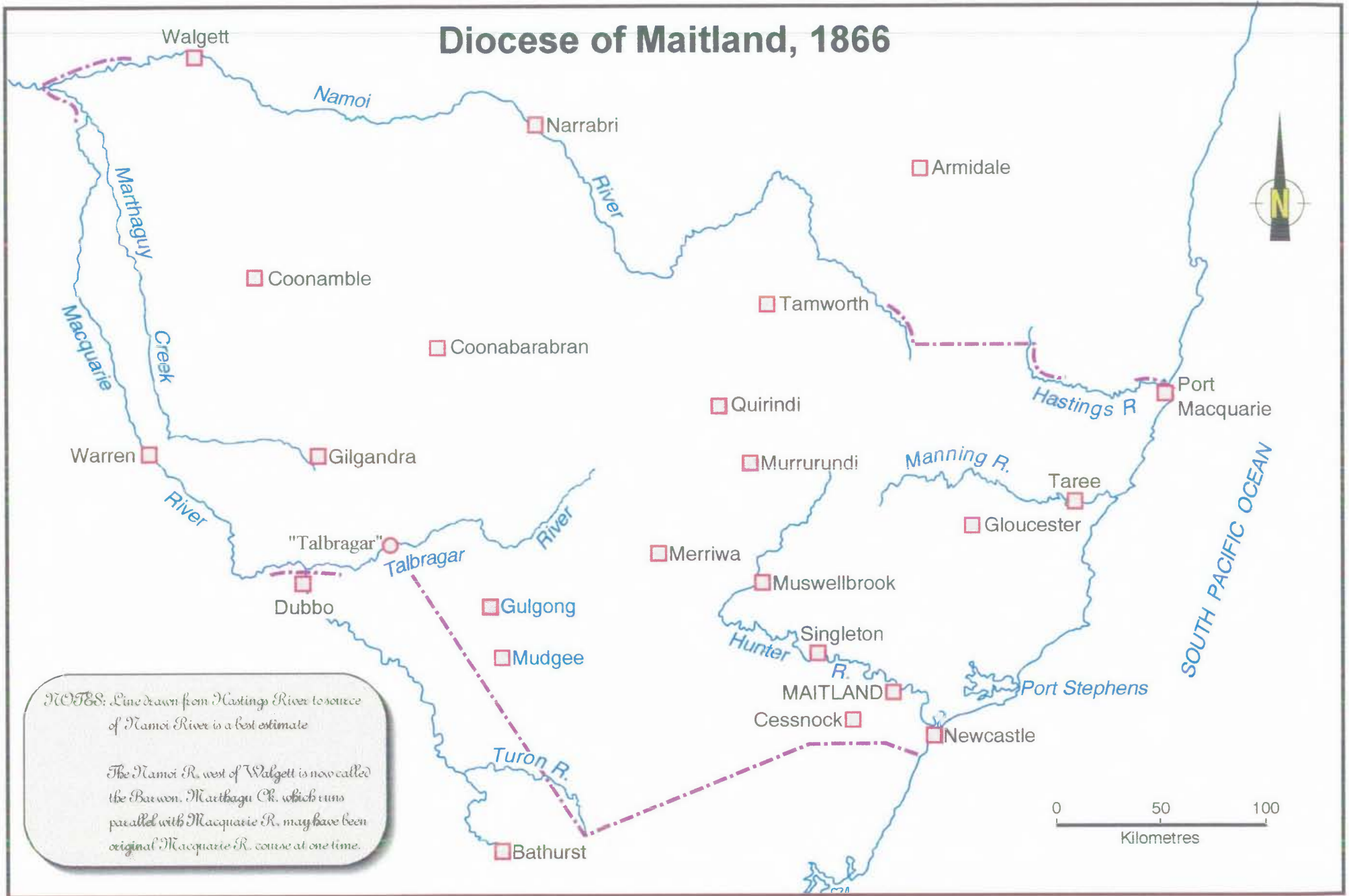
there must have been a degree of coercion, or at least strong persuasion, on his part. In earlier times Catholics, and Irish Catholics, in particular, had found ample scope for their devotion in community gatherings which included wakes, patterns and even noisy midnight assemblies. Now they were being told that to learn superior moral values, and even their social duties, they must gather formally and regularly in churches where doctrine would be preached and religious lessons taught. The changes wrought by Lynch, the transmutation of the old into the new, could not have been achieved without tension. There must have been some resistance as the Irish relinquished, or at least hid, their old ways in favour of the new.⁸⁹ It was, however, this very tension which produced the particular Catholic community of Maitland. That Catholics adopted the newly institutionalised Catholicism is a fact which reflects in part their social aspirations and their need for acceptance within the general community.

Undoubtedly in the making of the diocese and the moulding of its people, Lynch in particular had laid very firm foundations. It was appropriate that James Murray should have presided at Lynch's obsequies in 1884. It was a way of paying tribute to a man who had prepared the way so well for him.⁹⁰ Lynch was, indeed, a John the Baptist. In some respects he was of limited ability and his ministry was circumscribed and, perhaps, something of an anachronism. Lynch had worked among essentially lower-class Catholics who had come, lacking formal Catholicism and the consistent practice of their faith. He was a man's man, a rough diamond, who spoke the language of his people and understood them. That was his strength as well as his limitation. In a way, only he could have achieved what he did, providing the material fabric, churches and schools, so essential for the practice of a sacramental faith.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of the tensions between personal and communal worship within the confines of a particular religious discipline, see M. Aveling, 'Notes on Decoding a Ritual', *Push From the Bush*, No. 4, September 1979, pp. 47-55.

⁹⁰ Lynch was in charge of Armidale until 1869 when the new bishop, Patrick O'Mahony, arrived. He visited Ireland and then returned to Pymont, Sydney where he took up duties until he was appointed to Campbelltown, c. 1877. In 1874 Pope Pius IX made him a Domestic Prelate. Lynch remained in Campbelltown until his death in 1884. Linane and Mecham, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.

Diocese of Maitland, 1866



NOTE: Line drawn from Hastings River to source of Namoi River is a best estimate

The Namoi R. west of Walgett is now called the Barwon. Marthaguy Cr. which runs parallel with Macquarie R. may have been original Macquarie R. course at one time.

St Patrick's Day Sports Committee 1901



(vi) Public Recognition: A Study in Respectability. The Committee with Father C. McAuliffe