

BDA Source Description Pages

<http://www.bda-online.org.au>**Church Register: St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Sydney NSW**

This BDA information page refers to the earliest NSW Catholic parish registers microfilmed on SAG reels 6 and 7 covering the years 1820-1877. Full transcripts of the text of baptism, marriage and burial entries are being progressively added to BDA. Records currently online are mostly baptisms and marriages for the years 1820-1838 from Greater Sydney and Campbelltown).

This source page refers to the following datasets on BDA:

St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Sydney NSW: Church Register – Baptisms [1820-1831]; ML ref: Reel SAG 7

St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Sydney NSW: Church Register – Marriages [1820-1831]; ML ref: Reel SAG 7

St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Sydney NSW: Church Register - Baptisms - 1832-1837 [Reel SAG 6, includes areas outside Greater Sydney]

Background

The first officially approved Catholic priests who kept regular parish registers in the colony of New South Wales were Fathers John Joseph Therry and Philip Conolly who arrived in Sydney in May 1820. In 1803 Fr James Dixon had been allowed to practice in the colony briefly, but no registers were kept. Catholic baptisms and marriages performed before 1820 by convict priests and other unauthorised priests (including Fr Jeremiah O'Flynn in 1817) were clandestine.

Therry and Conolly officiated at baptisms, marriages and burials from 1820 and their registers and those of many of the increasing numbers of priests who followed them are held in the archives of St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, Sydney (Archdiocesan Archives).

For about a decade and a half after 1820 most Catholic services were performed in private homes, business premises or public buildings or St Joseph's Chapel, Hyde Park, completed in 1830, the first consecrated Catholic Church in Australia.

In 1842 the Sydney Archdiocese was created covering all of mainland eastern Australia. Regional dioceses were progressively created and excised from the Sydney Archdiocese (Maitland in 1847, Brisbane 1859, Armidale 1862, Bathurst 1865, and so on). Many 19th century Catholic parish registers are held in parishes or in regional diocesan archives.

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The early priests travelled widely in the colonies before settled parishes and permanent Catholic churches, schools and dioceses were set up. Priests moved between different areas of Greater Sydney and the regions as the needs of the Catholic population required. Many original registers kept by 19th century priests in New South Wales remain in parishes.

Around the 1970s some Catholic registers were microfilmed in a joint copying project involving the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives, the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG), the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney and the National Library of Australia in Canberra. They are referred to as SAG reels because the Society took a prominent role in arranging the microfilming.

From 1820 the civil government in New South Wales required Catholic clergy to make applications for banns of marriages involving convicts. Many of the original applications are held in the Fr Therry Collection at the State Library (ML MSS 1810). From 1834 Catholic priests were required by government to supply duplicate copies of marriage registers. This requirement was extended to baptisms and burials from 1840, though compliance was sometimes patchy. Prior to these dates registers were only held by Catholic authorities.

Some additional copies were made from Catholic registers later in the 19th century by the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages established in 1856. In the early 20th century many, but not all, Catholic parishes lent their original registers so that information missing on civil marriage certificates could be added, in particular details of the birthplace and parents of the bride and groom. But in some cases the original parish register is the only record of a baptism, marriage or burial. In this period Catholic clergy sometimes did not register burials at all.

Baptisms

Document	Start	End	Location	In BDA
Church Registers	1820	1831	ML: SAG Reel 7	Online
	1832+		ML: SAG Reel 7	Not processed
	1820	1837	ML: SAG Reel 6	Partly processed

Marriages

Church Registers	1820	1831	ML: SAG Reel	Online
	1832		ML: SAG Reel 7	Not processed
	1820	1837	ML: SAG Reel 6	Partly processed

Burials

Church Registers	1821	1831	ML: SAG Reel 7	Online
	1832+		ML: SAG Reel 7	Not processed
	1820	1837	ML: SAG Reel 6	Partly processed

St Mary's Sydney baptisms and marriages 1820-1831 SAG reel 7

These transcripts from SAG reel 7 have been online at BDA since 2013 in separate datasets for baptisms and marriages from 1820-1831. They were transcribed from the microfilm by BDA volunteers prior to 2013. More baptisms, marriages and burials on this microfilm dating from after 1831 will be added at a later date.

St Mary's Sydney baptisms 1832-1837 (Sydney and regional NSW) SAG reel 6

The dataset records 887 baptisms, marriages and burials performed by Catholic priests across a wide area of New South Wales in the years 1832-1837, including much of modern Greater Sydney and settlements as far afield as Yass, Goulburn, Bungonia, Wollongong, the Blue Mountains and Maitland. Most of the entries are in the handwriting of Fr John Joseph Therry. A group of marriages from August to November 1832 were signed by Fr John McEnroe.

The register is particularly rich in biographical information, often giving ship of arrival of parents and witnesses and sometimes additional biographical information such as residence, birthplace and occupation.

Some of those baptised were adult Catholic converts. Individuals range from convicts (including multiple baptisms of children of convict women in the Parramatta Female Factory), Aboriginal people (one is identified as 'Catherine an Aborigine of the Illawarra Tribe') and landholding free settlers and locally born Catholics. Some sponsors (godparents) were by proxy, representing an absent godparent.

An Aboriginal child named Bridget baptised February 1833 at Mount Terry, Illawarra, south of Sydney, to a father named Chit Chat and a mother named Mary Goololong was noted by the priest as being born one moon ago, directly quoting the Aboriginal parents' version of one month as 'one moon' either an Aboriginal English usage or a translation from local Aboriginal language.

The entries from SAG reel 6 for 1832-1837 were transcribed by Natalie Lonsdale and edited by Malcolm Sainty and Michael Flynn in 2021. Transcripts of the remaining contents of SAG reel 6 are will be added to BDA in the future.

Sources for St Mary's Cathedral Sydney NSW parish registers:

Gleeson, Damian J. *Genealogical Sources in the Sydney Archdiocesan [Catholic] Archives*, Thesis/B2/10/CD.1, Submitted in partial fulfilment for the Diploma of Family History Studies, Society of Australian Genealogists, 1983.

Index to the Microform Collection of the Society of Australian Genealogists as at 31 January 1990, SAG, Sydney, 1990: 25.

NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages indexes:

www.familyhistory.bdm.nsw.gov.au

BDA Source Description Pages

<http://www.bda-online.org.au>

Society of Australian Genealogists, library catalogue www.sag.org.au
Church register of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney and St John's, Campbelltown Roman Catholic. [microform] Call No: 0006;

pdf with contents online at:

<http://catalogue.sag.org.au/attachments/43028/reel%200006.pdf>

Church registers of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney; St Patrick's, Parramatta; Adelaide SA; Sydney & County Cumberland, Roman Catholic. [microform] Call No: 0007;

pdf with contents online at:

<http://catalogue.sag.org.au/attachments/43029/reel%200007.pdf>

State Archives New South Wales, Births, Deaths & Marriages Registers, 1787-1856:

<https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/births-deaths-and-marriages-registers-1787-1856>

For more detailed information about the different types of church registers and for the list of other church registers included in the BDA see

<http://www.bda-online.org.au/sources/church-registers>

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