

**A Brief Guide to
The Church of the
Annunciation
Renwick, Marlborough**



The Church of the Annunciation in Renwick is the Parish Church of the Wairau Valley Anglican Parish.

In its earliest years, from 1857-1917, the Wairau district was pastorally cared for by Blenheim clergy. Although services had been held in various places in the district it was not until the building of the Church of the Good Shepherd at Wairau Valley that they had a permanent location. The church was dedicated by Bishop Hobhouse in 1861, making it the second church on the Wairau Plains and one of the oldest churches in the diocese.¹

It was not until three years later that services were first held in Renwick.

A report published in the "Marlborough Express" in 1939 gives some details of the early days of the church in Renwick.

Anglican Church services were commenced in Renwick by the Rev. H. F. Butt in 1864. These were conducted in the old public school which stood where the present residence of the headmaster now stands. It is said that each worshipper took his own candle to the service to provide light. Mr W. Moore, the first school teacher in Renwick, although a Presbyterian, often assisted at the service, and in the absence of Mr Butt conducted the service for him.

Mr Butt ceased going to Renwick in 1870 and no regular Church of England service was held until the coming of Archdeacon Grace in 1885. A few years after the revival of the church services in Renwick it was decided to purchase for £100 the public hall, which was for sale at that time. The services were then conducted in the hall instead of the school. The people purchased the hall with the idea of converting it into a church, but the project was found to be too expensive. In 1894 it was decided to try and dispose of the hall; and it was consequently offered to the Oddfellows' Lodge for £60. This offer was declined, but an offer of £55 on the part of the Lodge was accepted.

Although a block of land was given by the Crown for a church site on what is now the Delta station, no use was made of it and it was eventually sold.

A block of land² left to the Church authorities by the trustees of the late Dr Renwick³ was taken advantage of and a church was erected on it. This edifice was erected mainly as a result of special efforts held from time to time in the township. The builders were Messrs Alfred Mills and William Hounsell.⁴

The church was dedicated on March 26th, 1896. This is the day after that observed in the Anglican Church as *the Feast of the Annunciation of our Saviour to the Blessed Virgin Mary*.

¹ The original wooden church was demolished to be replaced by a concrete block structure in 1958.

² At the corner of Havelock and Brook Street.

³ Dr Renwick, a Presbyterian, was the founder of the town which bears his name.

⁴ Quoted in "The Church on the Move" a booklet prepared for the centenary of the Church of the Annunciation in Renwick, by the Rev'd Canon David Gribble, 1996.

According to 'The Nelson Narrative', the history of the Nelson Anglican Diocese, "the day of the dedication will ever be associated with the tragedy of the Brunner Mine explosion and with the death of Mrs Suter."⁵

The aforementioned account in the *Marlborough Express* continues:

A report of the Consecration of the Church appeared in the Marlborough Express of March 27, 1896. The consecration was to have taken place on Wednesday, March 25⁶, at 3 p.m., to be followed by a tea at five o'clock, but wet weather detained Bishop Mules, who had to travel from Nelson to Picton by boat and then to Blenheim by train. A notice in the paper of Wednesday, the 25th, told of the postponement to Thursday the 26th, at 8 p.m.

It is said that the school children benefited through the postponement for they gathered on Wednesday and disposed of such food as would not keep until the next day. The arrangements for the tea (which eventually became a supper) were in the able hands of Mesdames Vorbach and Prebble.⁷

A.M. Hale in an article in The "Marlborough Express",⁸ recorded the following:

The Rev. C. Livesey presented the petition signed by the Ven. Archdeacon T.S. Grace, the Revs. E. Ensor and C. Livesey and the vestrymen praying for the Bishop of Nelson to consecrate the Church; and in the absence of the Chancellor, the Bishop requested the Rev. E. Ensor to read the service of consecration. This was signed by the Bishop, who stated it would be duly registered and retained in the Diocesan Register at Nelson.

The order of evening service followed, and the Bishop preached from St. Matthew's Gospel, chapter iv, 16—20. The Church choir rendered as the opening hymn "The Church's One Foundation" followed by the singing of the 24th psalm.

After the service tea was provided in the Oddfellow's Hall. The first two Church Wardens were Messrs Alfred Mills and George Coward. The furniture of the Church was built by Mr George Coward.

The timber for the Church came from Charles White's mill in the Onamalutu and was carted by Messrs John Neame and Walter Mead, his two wagon drivers.

The builders were Messrs William Hounsell and Alfred George Mills.⁹

In October 1953 the Wellington Education Board approached the vestry asking whether they could purchase for educational use, the section on which the church stood. In 1955 it was agreed that the church be moved and that the Education Board pay £655 being the cost of its removal and re-location to the vicarage section where Mr R. L. (Mick) Haines had gifted a piece of his adjoining property. The re-location of the vicarage had been

⁵ *The Nelson Narrative* by H. R. Ault, Nelson Diocese, 1958, p 304

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⁷ Marlborough Express article published in April, 1939.

⁸ March 1946

⁹ Quoted in "The Church on the Move" a booklet prepared for the centenary of the Church of the Annunciation in Renwick, by the Rev'd Canon David Gribble, 1996

suggested as early as 1951 by the Rev'd Kenneth Gregory but the idea carried no further. It was mooted again by the Rev'd A.R. Miller in 1951 but there is no record of quotations.

However, starting on Monday 22nd May, 1955 the church was re-located (see photo on right). A full account in words and photographs is given in a panel located in the vestry. On arrival the exterior was painted, the interior varnished and the pulpit remodeled and other work completed at a cost of £868.

It was re-opened for services on the 19th June 1955 by Archdeacon P Kirkham assisted by the vicar, the Rev'd N.S. Clarke on its new site.



The photograph on the left shows the church in its final position where it stands today. To the rear is the old Parish Hall and to the left the old vicarage, demolished in 1978. The back bedroom of the vicarage now serves as a meeting room behind the present Parish Hall. The exterior of the present church has changed little from that time.

Later history

The Rev'd David Gribble recalls:

"Throughout the 1980's the Vestry agonised over what to do with the deteriorating condition of the Church of the Annunciation. In the winter of 1982 the Church was so damp that I was putting the heaters on at 11 p.m. on a Saturday night to get the Church warm enough for the 8 a.m. service the following morning. We were offered St Barnabas Church at Springlands by the Blenheim Anglican Parish, but finally we were forced to decline their offer because we could not find the \$12-15,000. needed to remove the Church on to the site.

A long-term programme of repair and renovation began, which included the installing of soak-pits, exterior woodwork repairs, the door-sill replacement. A hand rail made by Mr J.H.B. Sheild was fitted into new concrete steps, and a concrete path and forecourt area were laid.

Mr H.H.G. Harvey resurfaced the top of the Lord's Table inside the Church, and because four guests had become stuck to the pews during a wedding in the summer of 1990, the Vicar spent Lent that year scraping and revarnishing all the pews in the Church! The roof and exterior of the Church was painted, and an overhead screen installed above the pulpit."¹⁰

¹⁰ Church on the Move by Rev'd Canon David Gribble.



The interior of the church as it appears today

Church Furnishings

The pulpit

This was a gift of the vestry of the Parish of Blenheim in 1938 and was the original pulpit in the Church of the Nativity.

The font

The original font was donated by Mr William Tapp. This was replaced in 1954 by a new font donated by the Renwicktown School Jubilee Committee.

Seats, lectern and holy table

These were made by Mr George Coward, a wheelwright who lived in Renwick. He was the first churchwarden and also the first Sunday School superintendent.

The prayer desk

This was moved into the church from the Church of the Good Shepherd, Wairau Valley. It bears the inscription: "To the Glory of God and in Memory of Past Vicars of this Parochial District."

Curtains, cushion covers and frontals

Presented by Miss Rosemary Goddard of Waihopai (1955), these were replaced by the Renwick Ladies Guild in 1977.

The organ

The inscription reads: 'To the Glory of God and to aid in Joyful Worship. This organ was given in memory of Barbara Cresswell by her husband Jim in 1969.'

Diamond leaded windows with ruby crosses

Made from Flemish glass they were donated by Mrs D Gibson and her brothers in 1956. The inscription on one reads: 'In memory of William George and Rose Boyce' and on the other 'Reginald Malcolm Boyce Killed in action July 22nd, 1942.'

Madonna and child window

Donated in 1958 by the Mothers Union and dedicated by Bishop Hulme-Moir.

The Good Shepherd Window

"This was installed in the Sanctuary end of the Church in September 1956. The manufacturers of the window, Messrs Jas. Powell & Sons, Whitefriars, London, had taken special care to portray the sheep in the window as typical sheep seen in New Zealand, and had also placed a lamb in the arms of the Good Shepherd for a particular reason. The window had been donated by Mr & Mrs Claude Goddard of Black Rock, in memory of their handicapped son, Raynor."¹¹

A description of the window by Howard W Ellis is found in the church to the right of the door. The design of the window is based on a painting by Warner Sallman.

The window was floodlit in 1957.

Chalice and Paten

These are both dated 1903.

Brass candlesticks

Donated by Mr Laurie Cross 1999.

Brass bookrest

Dedicated in memory of three communicants who lost their lives in World War II: John Burns, Peter Adams and John Vesey Hamilton Robinson.

Brass alms dish

This was donated anonymously.

Church bell

This bears the inscription: "SS Drayton Grange Greenock".

Tapestries

Four oval embroidered cross stitches depicting the four seasons were made by members of the Girls' Brigade.

Wooden cross at the front of the church

Inscription under the cross read: "Made by ----- Blenheim." "Donated to this church by Rev J J Smith." "Easter 1905 J.J.S."

The church was severely damaged in an arson attack in the early hours of Saturday morning, August 10th, 2002. A decision was made in December of that because it was not possible to restore the church for a number of reasons a new church would be built on the site, incorporating some of the furniture and stained glass from the original church.

[This booklet was compiled by the Rev'd Stephen White, November 2002]

¹¹ Quoted from 'The Church on the move' by the Rev'd Canon David Gribble, p 8.