



MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SERVICE

A mission of love and service into the highways and byways

Newsletter

Volume 55 No. 3
December 2022

As another year draws to a close, we pause, take stock and give thanks

As we enter into Advent, on the fast approach to Christmas, we take time to reflect on the year that has been, and all that's taken place in our lives—the good, the bad, and everything in between. We remain conscious of the devastating floods across the east coast of Australia, which have caused much destruction and heart-ache, and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in our communities. Within our own community, we remember Marie Carroll MSS who died in September, in Toowoomba, Queensland. We were so moved by all of the messages and comments on the MSS Facebook page, with so many of you expressing your love for, and fond memories of Marie's many years of service. We continue to welcome new staff members, employed by Emerging Futures Collaborative, to assist our community of women: Emilia Rubin, who looks after our administration and finance matters, and Glenn d'Souza, our new business manager. We have much to be grateful for, as we continue to journey alongside those we encounter in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania. And we're particularly grateful for the opportunity for a number of our sisters to host a 4-day pilgrimage to Bruny Island, to ensure the spirit, vision and mission of our founder, Fr John Wallis, and our pioneering women, continues on into the future. We pray you and your loved ones enjoy the peace, hope and blessings of Christmas, and a safe holiday period, and start to 2023. Our office will be closed throughout January 2023.

FR JOHN WALLIS HERITAGE TRAIL AND CELEBRATION OF 90-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION

The founder of the MSS, Fr John Corcoran Wallis, is originally from Yea, in country Victoria, about an hour and a half's drive from our Melbourne sisters. Born in 1910, ordained a priest at 22-years for the Archdiocese of Hobart in December 1932, we celebrate and acknowledge his 90-year anniversary of ordination on 18 December 2022. We have much so much to be grateful for! And the fact that he established our community of women in 1944, we're so fortunate that all of us MSS knew and loved Fr John in our years of formation and service. He died on 3 August 2001, aged 91.

A great way that his niece, Bernadette Wallis MSS, continues to share the story, vision and legacy of her uncle has been through her latest book, *Dear Mother Dear Father: Letters Home from John Corcoran Wallis 1927-1949*.

Helping to bring these 100 letters to life, Bernadette led a group of 12 people on 'The John Wallis Heritage Trail, Yea', which focussed on his family and early life, and his seminary days until he goes to Tasmania. Throughout the day, the group travelled to various sites of significance in Yea and surrounding areas, including Sacred Heart Church, to see the Baptism registry, which features John's details; the hospital where John was born; his local primary school and family home; and the cemetery where his parents are buried (top right photo).

In keeping the memory of Fr John alive, the MSS hope to host this event each year, so if you're interested in a future outing, please contact us. Read the full story and see many more photos from the day on our website, in our News section: Deepening connection on the John Wallis Heritage Trail.



Bernadette Wallis at the Box Hill site.

The MSS are excited to announce that we are part of the new **Australian Religious Archive**, with four other religious congregations (to date), which will be cared for and managed by the University of Divinity in Box Hill, Victoria. The Archive is designed to hold the story, history and legacy of religious congregations and other religious groups who have made significant contributions to both civic and church life in Australia and beyond. It will hold and honour the stories and vision of those groups who are considered to have played a foundational role in the establishment and development of pastoral, health, education and social services entities in Victoria and beyond, and will serve as a valuable research facility for future generations. Read the full story on our website, in the News section.

2022 Bruny Island Pilgrimage

As we gathered on Bruny Island, off the southern coast of Tasmania, for four days of pilgrimage, we acknowledged that we walked on the traditional land of the Nuenonne People of the south-eastern tribes. In this spirit, some of the MSS hosted new staff and board members of our mission entity, Highways and Byways – Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together, and friends of our community, both locally and from interstate.

Bruny Island holds a special place in the history of our congregation and our founder, Fr John Wallis – it was here, back in 1933 that a young Fr John, newly ordained for the Archdiocese of Hobart, met a young woman and mother of four children, Kit Hawkins, who asked the fledgling priest: What about us? Doesn't anyone care about us in the bush? This sparked something within Fr John's heart, so that, 11 years later, on 8 July 1944 in Launceston, Tasmania, the first four women came together to become the foundation of our community, with two more joining later that year.

Located at a campsite on Adventure Bay, on the eastern side of Bruny Island, each morning and afternoon, we gathered to listen and reflect upon John's letters to his mother, as he shared his experiences in visiting isolated families on the island. We heard his descriptions of the rugged landscape, the flora and fauna, which he keenly observed and documented, and how he made the long trips across the island by foot, horse and cart. We walked each day, too, climbing up 250m along the Fluted Cape track, and the next day, along the Luggaboine Circuit track on the Labillardiere Peninsula. We visited Cape Bruny lighthouse, recalling John's experience of befriending the lighthouse keeper's family all those years ago, and how these visits initiated what was to become the correspondence school.

We reflected on the beginnings of the MSS community, listened to stories shared by those of our sisters who were present, as well as friends of the community sharing their encounters and friendships with our women. And on the final day, we heard stories of how our work has evolved over the years, and also, how our mission entity, Highways and Byways (formerly the John Wallis Foundation), is carrying on the vision, mission and spirit of our community, in practical ways. We joined with locals at St Brendan's Catholic Church in Alonnah, on the Sunday, and said our farewells on the Monday. For all who continue to join in our spirit of going out into the highways and byways, we say thank you. We hope to host these pilgrimages every two or three years, so perhaps we'll see you there some time!



Left: Mary Williams (Highways and Byways, Hobart Branch); Stancea Vichie MSS (Congregational Leader); Tracy Thomas (Bruny Island Historical Society Coordinator); Bernadette Wallis MSS; and Corrie van den Bosch MSS. The society was presented with a display book that showed one of Fr John's letters describing his experience on Bruny Island.

Top right and middle: Our group of hikers trekked along the Fluted Cape circuit track while another group enjoyed the flatter walk to Grass Point and Penguin Island (right, middle).

Bottom: The campsite shed at Adventure Bay became our 'HQ' for morning and afternoon reflections.

The pilgrimage was held on Bruny Island, Tasmania, from 24-28 November 2022.

Bruny Island Pilgrimage 2022 in Photos



Top row, from left: The pilgrimage group on the Luggaboine Circuit walking track; Pilgrimage coordinator, Bernadette Madden MSS and Corrie van den Bosch MSS; the pilgrimage group in South Bruny National Park, having walked the very steep Fluted Cape circuit track.

Second row, from L: Catherine Carr (MSS Coordinator), Mary Heinemann and Brian Lennon (Highways and Byways board member); Catherine Carr and Judy Cain (Highways and Byways Small Grants committee member) lead the walking pack; Bernadette Hogan (Highways and Byways board member), and Lorraine Groves MSS, who lives in Hobart.

Third row, from L: Dennis Cooper fms and Denis Fitzgerald (patron of Highways and Byways); the pilgrimage group outside St Brendan's Catholic Church, Alonnah, where we celebrated Mass on the first Sunday of Advent; Hobart priest, Fr Graeme Howard, a long-time friend of Fr John Wallis.

Fourth row, from L: Martin Allen (Highways and Byways board member) with Bernadette Wallis MSS and Bernadette Madden MSS in the background; Mary Williams (Highways and Byways Hobart branch member) and Liz McAloon (former executive officer of Highways and Byways); Fiona Basile (MSS media and communications coordinator) pointing out the Fluted Cape walking destination; Cape Bruny lighthouse; the person up the very top is Jane Collopy (Highways and Byways executive officer).

Mary Cleary MSS, grateful for a life of travel, mission, and being with the people

This year, Mary Cleary celebrated the diamond jubilee (60-year anniversary) of when she first joined the MSS. She was 22 years old, and had moved from her hometown of Warwick, a town about 130 kilometres south-west of Brisbane, Queensland, to join the community down south, in Hobart. In two and a half years, she'll be celebrating the 60-year anniversary of her first profession. Reflecting on her life, Mary acknowledges there is much to celebrate, but also wonders where all the years have gone! 'It's been a wonderful experience for me—all those years, all those places that I've been to, and the people I've met along the way, which I wouldn't have experienced had I not been an MSS,' she said.



Over the years, Mary has served in pastoral settings in Scottsdale, St Mary's and Beaconsfield, Tasmania; in Parkes, New South Wales; in Whyalla, South Australia; and Toowoomba, Queensland. However, it was her 11 and a half years in the Jandowae parish (1999-2011), located in the Western Downs Region of Queensland, about 130km northwest of Toowoomba, where she served as pastoral leader, which holds a special place in her heart. As well as serving in her own Church community, she assisted in other denominations, too. For instance, she officiated at a funeral for both the Anglican and Uniting Churches. 'I was involved in so much in the town and I think that's what made it so special; Jandowae was a little country town, but it had quite an extensive country area surrounding it, where we had parishioners living,' Mary explained. 'It was wonderful to be in the one place for so long and to get to know the people really well, and to see them regularly. It was a tremendous grace to be there with them, to accompany them in all of their joys and sorrows, their ups and downs. That was a really special blessing.' Mary often marvelled at the openness of the people she met, and their trust in sharing their lives and stories with her.

Eleven years ago, Mary retired and has lived in Toowoomba, ever since. She is grateful that she still enjoys good health and can continue serving in her local community. Mary is spiritual adviser to the Cathedral St Vincent de Paul society, is part of local social justice groups, and regularly attends classes at U3A (University of the Third Age). She enjoys pottering in her vegetable patch and tending to her many flowers in the garden. She's also grateful that there are several other MSS who live nearby, who she visits regularly. 'We catch up fairly regularly, for birthdays and anniversaries, and things—though, we don't need much of an excuse to get together!'

She is also grateful for her family—her parents, and sister—and for all the opportunities she's had in life both before joining the MSS, and afterwards. Tragically, Mary's parents were killed in a car crash in 1975, only weeks after she'd arrive in Whyalla to work in the Port Pirie Diocese in South Australia (she was 34 years old). 'That was the most extraordinary experience of how I got home from Whyalla back to Warwick, with a plane that only landed in the little country town once a week and it happened to be the day that I needed to get to Adelaide. And then to get the last seat on the plane from Adelaide to Brisbane. There were a whole series of things that happened that got me back to Brisbane that night. And then my cousin took me home to Warwick the next day. I'm so grateful for how so many people rallied around to get me home. I look back now and think, "God, how did I do it?" but somehow I did it, and I survived it all, but it was an extraordinary time.'

'I really have so much to be grateful for: I have a heart for travelling, so I found the right spot with MSS, although, it was really the people at the end of the long distances that made the traveling worthwhile. I've just been so grateful to arrive at where we had to go and to always arrive home, safely. That's been a great blessing.'



JOHN WALLIS COLLECTION IN CARE OF ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART

In a small ceremony at the Wallis Centre in Hobart, on 29 November, the Missionary Sisters of Service officially donated John Wallis' extensive library of books to the care of the Archdiocese of Hobart. At the ceremony, his niece Bernadette Wallis MSS shared stories of John's love of books, which nurtured his relationship with God and shaped his spirit and vision. Corrie van den Bosch MSS, who has spent much time in the MSS archives helping to sort and catalogue the books provided a presentation of the treasured books that could be found on the shelves. Congregational leader, Stancea Vichie MSS, formally handed over the library to archdiocesan staff Chris Ryan, executive director of the archdiocese and Eloise Armstrong, archdiocesan archivist (featured in the photograph).