

Sydney and the Bush

Duntryleague' in Orange – part of the Jesuit and Riverview story

A few hundred years ago, this jingle about the Jesuits used to be put around:

*“Bernardus valles, montes Benedictus amabat,
Oppida Franciscus, magnas Ignatius urbes.”*

It suggested that Ignatius preferred to settle in large cities, “leaving the valleys for St Bernard’s monks; the mountains for the Benedictines; and the towns for the Franciscan friars.” That was because Ignatius would only undertake to open colleges where abundant funds were forthcoming and when the sites chosen suited him in every way. Places that could achieve ‘the more’, the greater good. Let us not forget, Ignatius was born in rural Spain: sheep country, where he loved to roam the hills and munch on roasted chestnuts that he would gather. But Ignatius saw the cities as places of influence.

When the Austrian Jesuits arrived in South Australia in the late 1840s, the Archbishop of Adelaide was unaware of their arrival and was probably a little suspicious of this order, so recently re-established after their long suppression. So he dispatched them inland to distant Sevenhill. As it happened, the church and retreat house there is now part of the largest winery in the Clare Valley! The Irish Jesuits, who came almost two decades later, stuck to the coast – Melbourne and Sydney. But the boarding schools they soon established, Xavier and Saint Ignatius’, were quick to enrol young men from far afield, from intra- and inter-State. There was always a commitment to the land, to offer a solid all-round formation in head, hands and heart to those challenged by distance and local opportunities.

This week, there has been a boarding caravan rolling through the State’s west and south. We firstly joined a multi-school boarding expo in Dubbo, then moved on to mount our own displays in Orange, Forbes, Cowra, Young and Tumut. An enormous group gathered for dinner, held once again at *Lazy River*, Dubbo, hosted by Peter and Pamela Scott. Peter Anderson’s toast to the College was both sidesplitting and moving. There was brunch the following day in Warren where families of McKays, Nadins, Druces, Noonans, Robinsons and many others gathered and shared stories of the past. There were dinners with the Sloanes in Orange, the Thomases in Forbes and the Hobsons in Young. Many families joined us at those gatherings – Metcalfes, Bolgers, Bonsembiantes, Makehams, Backs, Meinckes, Mandy Tooth and Sue Buttenshaw. On the evening of this edition of *Viewpoint*, a dinner will be hosted by the Grahams at Coolac – with some fifty Riverview family guests! Our last function will tomorrow be, appropriately, a Thanksgiving Mass in Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Gobarralong.

All along the way, the welcome has been warm and generous. The frequent comment has been, “Thank you for visiting us.” But we are always the more indebted. And our gratitude is for much more than hospitality, as rich as that was. It is for entrusting us with the sons of the soil over so many generations. It is for the ongoing support of the College in both material and spiritual ways. It is for being such loyal advocates and ambassadors of the College ‘in the field’.

Seasonally, this has been the best of times to be on the road. Sunny autumn days, a freshness in the air. Trees turning tones to crimson and gold, leaves showering the roads. The cloud formations could have inspired Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, when he wrote:

... up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

At every turn of the road, the pastures and paddocks seem to have been blessed with recent rains. The fields emerald green with the winter crops of sorghum and canola starting to push through. The cotton crop is baled up ready. Creeks were running well. Dams were deep. In the late afternoon sun, the vistas could have leapt from an impressionist's painting. Such sights make it easy to see why a psalmist could write with gratitude to God, perhaps three millennia ago and experiencing something similar:

Abundance flows in your pathways;
in pastures of the desert it flows.
The hills are girded with joy.
The meadows clothed with flocks.
The valleys are decked with wheat.
They shout for joy; yes, they sing! (Psalm 65)

Outside Warren, we were taken by Peter Debus to John and Robyn Nadin's property for an afternoon to see three hundred or so head of sheep trucked for the sale yards. To watch the dogs at work, eyes on the sheep, then eyes on their master, a bark here, a nip there, simply puts their comfy city cousins to shame! Along the way we passed farm after farm of the McKays, the Egans and the McAlarys. This was clearly Riverview territory. Out of Dubbo, we saw Chesworth's, the most inland dairy in the State. Later, in Forbes, we bought pies at Hartwigs and supplies at Flannery's Pharmacy.

It was a memorable time spent in Orange. We stayed in *Duntryleague*, the mansion built by James Dalton a few years before his namesake (but no relation) Fr Joseph Dalton SJ purchased a farm at Riverview. The Dalton brothers, James and his older sibling Thomas, had grown up to all intents and purposes as orphans in Ireland. There are various versions of the family background, some colourful, others less so. But it seems they caught up with each other in Australia and began a small business, Dalton Brothers, in Orange which soon grew rapidly. James remained in Orange to handle affairs in the country whilst Thomas moved to Sydney to manage business in the city and port. There Thomas became a member of State Parliament. Both brothers were created Papal Knights for their charitable works. James built *Duntryleague* (named after their home in Limerick), while Thomas built a fine residence, *Wheatleigh*, in Naremburn. Thomas had a son, another Thomas, who went to Riverview, and who was also a Papal Knight. He it was who was largely responsible for the construction of the Dalton Memorial Chapel and then arranged for Fr Joseph Dalton's remains to be re-interred there from the Gore Hill cemetery. More generations of Daltons followed, with Angus (Year 12) and Timothy (Year 9) representing the current generation. But back to James Dalton and *Duntryleague*. James and his wife, Margaret, had twelve children. Two of his daughters became Sacré Coeur sisters (Kincoppal-Rose Bay) and one son, Patrick, joined the Jesuits and later taught at Riverview. When James died, he left *Duntryleague* to Fr Patrick, which he then had to give to the Society. There was talk of using the residence and surrounding acreage to establish a school in Orange. Alas, the local bishop at the time was of the Vincentian Order who happened to run St Stanislaus' College at Bathurst. He would hear nothing of it! The property was sold.

So much history. So many stories. The ones I took to heart were accounts of how families and classmates had rallied around and pitched in to help others in tough times to ensure they could send their sons to 'View. Yes, we are blessed with boarders, we are blessed with benefactors and we are blessed with the bounty of the land. All experiences of grace. All causes for gratitude. Let us never forget to be thankful.