

Some memories of uses of the Bank Building.

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Over the years, what is now known as the Bank Building has been known under various guises and titles - the Kindergarten, the Library building, the Club Rooms, 3,4,5, the Youth Club, the Bamboo Room, etc. etc.

In the thirties, the Manresa Kindergarten was in operation under Mrs. Caine assisted by Mrs. Pickard as a helper. In hindsight, I think Mrs. Pickard was a mother of one or more of the pupils at the time. She stayed with the kinder for many years. Probably to keep the kinder viable Mrs. Caine visited my mother and I was enrolled there - probably in 1937 and 1938. The kinder was in the room fronting Burwood Road and I remember the brown floor with a large double circle painted on it where we used to sit in a ring for stories and games. I have vivid memories of Mrs. Caine playing the piano.

We used to enter a dark foyer with a "big" staircase in it which we were never allowed to go near. There were other dark doorways which were always closed - more about them further on. The children walked under the stairway and through a small kitchen area with a high bench in it. I guess this was where refreshments were prepared for the children. Down two steps, our coats were on pegs in a veranda area and from there we went out into the yard and into another doorway for the toilet - one cubicle only there for the girls and another for the adults, and a gully trap to wash our hands but the tap was almost too high for the littlies to reach - whilst the boys went further up towards the hall and in another little area used the toilet there.

In later years I realise this was the rear entrance to what became the Y.C.W. (Young Christian Workers) rooms for the male teenagers of the parish. Later again, this toilet was incorporated into what are now the toilets for the small Manresa Hall.

Kinder children played in the area bounded by Kinder (bank building), a 'Big, Brown' fence, the large Manresa Hall and the small hall. Under the external stairs leading to the balcony of the big hall was a large wooden rocker which from memory about 6 children could fit at a time. Two notables among the children at this time were Fr. Bob Slattery and Fr. Len Thomas.

The "Catholic Library" was in the room immediately adjacent to the main door and was for many years in the domain of Fr. James Magan. It was open at various times, but was also accessible by obtaining the key from the presbytery and browsing and recording the borrowings in a large book on the table there. I was a member of the Hawthorn Public Library and with the great children's library there, did not really appreciate the books in the Manresa library - they were dusty and smelly and probably not really suited to children anyway. However, to 11, 12 and 13 year olds of the time, (at the end of the war - 1946 or thereabouts) it was a sort of mysterious place to be. Being curious as kids are, the brown doors around the foyer were an attraction. The door to the left of the main door, I remember, was

the Lodge rooms - where the Hibernian society used to meet - Jack Locke was in charge of this from time immemorial !

In later years, with the demise of such organizations, the Hibernian society donated its set of carpet bowls to the Manresa Scouts over in Lynch Street.

The doorway which adjoined the entrance to the library led to the C.Y.M.S. (Catholic Young Men's Society) rooms - we had no idea what CYMS stood for - but knew it was for those boys who were "too old" to be in the YCW.

I look back now and wonder what was done for the girls of the parish! Although I do remember that there was a group of N.C.G.M. [National Catholic Girls' Movement] leaders who used to meet in one of the upstairs rooms on a weekly basis. As I was in the Children of Mary and out one night a week at their meeting [held in the Shrine of the Church in what is now the Lady Chapel], I was not allowed - at 15 years of age - to go to that particular group and it was treated as slightly suspicious by my parents. The following year, the Manresa Musical Society, under the direction of Bill Box, filled a great social need for the young of the parish and Principals used some of the club rooms for practice, while the chorus used the small hall.

My memories of the upstairs area are less vivid - I think it was in the early fifties that the front room was renovated and a little kitchen - cups, saucers and power point for an electric jug - was installed in the alcove above what would have been the front door.

The Children of Mary, under direction of Fr. Pat Harper, - prominent members at the times were the Misses Feil and Kath Tighe (all seemed so much older than me then!) used this room from time to time for supper parties to celebrate eg. Feasts of Our Lady, etc. and also for prayer meetings and discussion groups.

We occasionally dared to open other doors - which we were not supposed to do of course and I remember a large table covered over with a cloth. I guess it was a billiard room - but again these were the domain of the boys of the time. Toilets were in short supply and those that were there were dark and dingy.

My father - Jack Geddes - was among a group of Block Collectors, an organization set up by Fr. Joe Fitzgerald to raise funds for the parish and they used to call at parishioners homes on the first Sunday of each month to collect Threepence or Sixpence a month to pay for the upkeep of the parish. Dad was a District Collector and he and a group of seven or eight Block Collectors used to do the calling on the parishioners in a particular area and collect and recording of the money - this was then delivered to our home and on the Sunday evening, the collated books and money were taken to the Club Rooms by the various different District Collectors and counted by the men of the parish.

He was a shift worker and on occasion I had to take the books down to the Club Rooms as it was known and deliver them to the upstairs rooms. I have (and I know Kevin Slattery also has) a photo taken at one of these counting sessions. Kevin Hart may also have some memories of this time, and maybe

Lorna Perkins whose husband Phil was involved, could help.

The Knights of the Southern Cross used one of the upstairs rooms for quite a period - again, Kevin Hart may be a good source of information here.

In the Sixties a fresh burst of enthusiasm for the youth of the Parish resulted in many changes in the building, when the "3,4,5" youth group was being run by Br. Alex Macdonald and Br. Paul Schulze (?)