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October 17-24 1953

Visitation Report of BINDOON

Br. Paul Keaney	Sup.	Br. Matthias Dore	Coad.
" Peter O'Sullivan	S.S.	" Cletus O'Neill	"
" Regis Wexted	B.	" Alonso Angus	"
" Louis Conlon		" Norbert Tuppin	"
" Albeus Ryan			
" Sebastian Dwyer			
" Declan Parker			
" Osmund Robinson.			

Time Table and Observance: The Brothers rise at 5.30 and have morning prayers at 5.45 with Mass following immediately at 6.30, the boys being called at 6.15. The boys attend Mass every day except on Monday. The particular examen is made privately after lunch. The evening exercises are after tea at 6 and night prayers with the boys at any time after that.

The following changes were advised:

A. Mass at 6.40 to allow Brothers to call the boys without missing a point of the meditation, the ten minutes to be given to the examen by the others.

B. Night prayers to be at a fixed time, 8.30, with conference preceding, recreation and concluding prayers at 9.15.

At present a token time is given to the examen after the rosary and the points are then read.

Accusation is not altogether unknown. Sunday conference is held regularly and consists chiefly of a talk on miscellaneous matters by the Sup. He takes the boys too every Sunday for an hour approx. and talks earnestly to them on Christian living.

All the reading is done at table and on the whole poorly done. I found it difficult to follow the matter consistently, the low and indistinct voices and the movement with the serving making for bad reception. The books and the marking of them are left to chance.

Br. Albeus does not rise for meditation. His health is poor and his sleep is erratic. Br. Alonso is now getting back to normal attendance in the morning after some irregular months. Br. Cletus misses fairly often in the morning too. Otherwise all are up regularly in the morning. Punctuality is weak at all the exercises. This is inevitable to some extent with the evening exercises but there is no reason for it in the morning.

Two Brothers have not yet made the retreat, Brs. Cletus and Norbert. Both were told to arrange for it, with the permission of the Sup., at either New Norcia or the Redemptorists. The question of the retreat should be looked into for all the members of this community and in fact for those of the other institutions as well.

The practice has for them to remain at home and sometimes to use a book only. To some extent they have had to carry on with the work of the institution and even where they were free, mental distractions were considerable with the presence of the boys and ordinary life going on around them all day. A better arrangement



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is due to them in justice and should be possible. A skeleton staff aided if necessary by Brothers from the day schools, could carry on for the eight days allowing the others to be free altogether from work and distraction. And to ensure this they could perhaps have the retreat at the monastery in Perth just as many Brothers in Melbourne go to La Verna. More than one Brother expressed ^{himself} dissatisfied with retreats as they have so far been conducted. The Sup. is first to the chapel every morning. He sets a rapid pace from dawn to dark and he expects all to follow up, Brothers and boys. He is impatient with the slow and inefficient measured by his own standards. The wonder is that he as Sup. and director of big building operations has been able to achieve so much not only by his own personal exertion but by guiding and stimulating the others and not to, have worn himself out. His legs are badly affected by varicose veins and the strongest pressure was needed to get him to submit to treatment for a week in hospital. In the eleven years of its existence an enormous amount of building has been done in Bindoon. A critic could perhaps find faults easily enough but in the circumstances it would scarcely be just. The Sup.'s vision for the institution is big and grand, some might even say grandiose. There is no doubt that he has laid the foundations of a scheme with fine possibilities. It could become the centre of a strong Catholic settlement. He is inspired by a great and active charity for the under-privileged and would have them all so well equipped as to suffer no handicap in life. Without the use of any dubious means he has been able to enlist the help of a wide section of the community at large. In fact Bindoon has become one of the notable places in the State. He is not a seeker of publicity and favour for himself. On the other hand he avoids contact with the public as far as he can. The Sup.'s term of office will expire this year. His successor will be called on to undertake a heavy burden of responsibility. Not only will he have to direct the religious life of a big community and carry on the building programme and develop a large property but he must keep in close contact and on good terms with govt. authorities and the general public as well. Br. Peter as P.S. presides at some of the exercises, those in the evening when the Sup. is with the boys. That is the full extent of his functions as P.S. His health is not good. He is weak and emaciated and it will be necessary for him to curtail his work with the sheep. He should have an 'understudy'. The lamb raising, on the advice of the sheep expert, Mr. Flaherty, will be reduced and the number of wool producing sheep will be increased to make a total of two thousand altogether. Br. Kegis is fairly well in health at present. He had two periods in Heathcote and appears to have derived benefit from them. He takes no active part in the work of the institution beyond meeting visitors. His behaviour is still somewhat erratic and his near deafness makes it more noticeable. He goes to the bath



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shortly after five each morning and continues on with the operation to the accompaniment of loud singing of hymns for a good half hour. The singing can start up at any odd time during the day too but in a more subdued tone. Br. Louis used to have the monopoly in the music. Whistling was his specialty and with no respect to time or place. His muse is now silent.

Br. Louis described the community as a 'conglomeration of oddities' as a group they would not take sharp umbrage at such a designation and to a point there is some truth in it. They have for the most part a sense of humour which helps to tide over the difficulties of their life. Br. Louis appears quite well and keeps on doggedly at the fence building. On the night of my arrival he failed to return home after his day in the bush. A search party looked for him in vain all night. Next morning when all hands had been mustered for an organised search he appeared in the distance with his horse and trap, a kind of rustic version of an ice cream cart. He would not have it that he was lost. 'The horse would not go'. The two boys with him had a different story.

Br. Albeus is in fair health only. He does a great deal of work being responsible for the books and accounts and in addition he helps the Sup. with the mail. He spends about half the day in school also where his close teaching has been of real value to the small Sixth Grade.

Br. Sebastian does reasonably well in school with two and sometimes three classes. He takes an interest in some of the farm work too directing the boys in the poultry section and now on the death of Mr. Pergande he has taken charge of the pigs. Here too it will be a matter of keeping an eye on the boys looking after them.

Br. Declan was not happy at all early in the year. He could not get on with the Sup. and almost demanded a change. That phase has passed and their relations are quite normal now. Br. Declan is still beset by his own inner troubles about which he spoke with complete candour. The second vow has long been a difficulty for him. No individual is involved. He is gentle and kindly by nature and the boys look to him as their friend. It is with them that he has to be very much on his guard. His frankness helps his preservation. No incident of any kind has taken place. As a teaching Brother he was a failure being unable to maintain discipline. He pleaded to be freed from school. He has a period of supervision on Sunday afternoon, all the afternoon in fact. In his own interest his contact with the boys ought to be reduced to the minimum. He is a hard, intelligent worker but he cannot get much out of boys. He would do it all himself.

Br. Osmund has not pleased the Sup. or any of the older men for that matter. They consider him really 'odd' but to specify was another thing. He has a calm, unruffled, almost indifferent manner which drove the Sup. to desperation. He was taken off all duties with the boys except for the teaching. He would appear to lack judgement and common sense and was unable to fit into



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the flexible pattern of Bindoon life, where a large measure of 'give-and -take' is needed. He wanted to have things his own way, he was too possessive with his boys. No one was to interfere. Actually I think he was overdoing a good thing. And the good thing was the keeping of the boys rigidly to their school work and to their small charges about the dormitories. The Brothers could not get boy or broom out of him on any pretext. I found his school work of very fair quality but otherwise I thought him easygoing. At table for instance where the arrangements call for much serving and moving about, he would be the last to get up. However he responded readily in this and similar matters when I pointed them out to him.

Br. Matthias spends about half the week driving the truck. He has no specified duties otherwise and it is left to himself to join in where he sees help is needed. He is a happy and willing man but I am doubtful about his prudence and judgement.

Br. Cletus is the nery man of the community. His health too is not good. He goes his own way and the others find it hard to deal with him when he is in one of his moods. He raises a barrier of silence before him. He works very hard but he must choose his jobs. He is engaged on the mechanical and electrical section.

Br. Alonso is old before his time. He is slow and deliberate and constantly behind time. The Sup. thinks the limit of his usefulness would be to run a kitchen garden. He did not join the community till April, three months late, owing to sickness and his holiday. His job was to put in the crops. They were late and as a consequence they are not likely to be 'the best in the district! He suffers from arthritis too which does not help his punctuality. He is a good natured, willing man and within his limits he does a fair share of the work.

Br. Norbert is kept strictly to the building. He has energy and skill to match. Unfortunately he is not successful with the boys. He is unable to get their co-operation. His methods are too sharp. There was at least one instance of very active antagonism. The chaplain is Father William of New Norcia. He is full of zeal and good intentions and fits in well with the community with whom he takes all his meals. He does not understand boys and bursts of impatience and irritability are common. The boys are not much put about by them. I would not say there is lack of respect. Bindoon boys are casual and take things for granted very much. They approach the sacraments frequently and I am confident they have genuine respect for Father William, as a priest. He takes the singing and his style rather than amuses them. He gets lusty shouting but not singing which is a pity for the boys like music and singing and would get benefit and refinement from it if the correct methods were used.

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School: The Institution has 143 inmates of whom 124 are in school. There are 91 British migrants, 48 Maltese and only 4 Australians. Br. O. Robinson has the two junior classes with 68 boys all told ranging from the merest beginners to boys capable of Grade 3 work. Br. S. Dwyer has the next two with 40 boys in classes called, more for convenience than anything else, Grades 4, 5. Most of them are very weak. Br. A. Ryan has 12 in Grade 6. They are of fair standard. More than half of the school population came to the Institution during the year and much improvisation was necessary in school work. The general standard of attainment was low for their ages, boys in Grade 3 for instance being of the average age of ten and in Grade 4 thirteen. And they were not by any means up to the usual standard of those classes. However in spite of difficulties school work is going on more consistently and successfully than has been the case previously in Bindoon. The 19 out-of-school boys have not been entirely neglected as far as their studies go. The Sup. takes them occasionally at night for lessons. Nevertheless there are some cases of near-illiteracy among them. A man to take charge of these boys is needed, one who will not only direct their outside activities but teach and train them in the evening also.

The instruction in Christian Doctrine is satisfactory. The boys say their prayers well and approach the sacraments frequently. They attend Mass every morning except on Monday and their fervour is impressive. The Sup. is zealous for their spiritual welfare. ~~Morning Mass already to his / Sunday morning talks.~~

Technical training consists almost entirely of working on the building. There is little formal class instruction. The Sup. is hopeful of being able to get a man from the Ed. Dept. to give the theory and practical lecture room instruction.

Finance; Income for last year was £29,881 and expenditure £38,756. Repairs are shown as £6140, wages £3743, building £8349.

A loan of £2000 was paid back to Tardun.

There were two Govt. grants towards the building fund, the first of £8320 and the second of £10,432 which did not appear on the balance sheet but has gone into to a special account called the Building Acct. The deficit to this year was £9154.

At the present time the general account is in debit at £8531 and Building Acct. in credit at £8802.

Total expenditure for the current year to date is £22,524 and income £24,059.

Payment for each migrant derived from all sources totals £2/5/9 made up as follows: Commonwealth Govt. 18/3, Imperial Grant 12/6; child endowment 10/-, Charities' Board 5/-.

General. Four Sisters from New Norcia are in charge of the domestic side. They are not happy under the more than necessary inconvenience they have to put up with.

Meals lack variety and tastiness. The manners of the boys at meals receive little attention, a shortage of cutlery and



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crockery does not help. They are~~x~~ happy boys, frank and free in their attitude and not afraid of hard work. They are quite amenable to all good influences.

One would like to see more gr^{at}er attention paid to good order and tidiness in the whole establishment including the Brothers in their personal appearance. ^{How} few if any have a real turn for neatness. With so many visitors about the place, badly stained habits and unshaven faces cannot impress favourably. The Sup. has no policy of regular cleaning up. It seems that rubbish is allowed to collect at any odd place. He talks about tidiness but nothing is done. Before the Governor's visit recently two days were spent tidying the building and~~x~~ immediate surroundings. It would not be too much to expect the same order should hold for the future but to secure it, there must be emphasis from the top. I took occasion to stress the need and also to allot special duties. The whole place should represent~~x~~ rural living at its best with no signs of the slovenliness and neglect that have brought life on the land into disrepute.

A. Conall