

Update 15 July 2014

The Roman Catholic Community of Saint Paschal Baylon: A Brief history of the First 60 Years +

By John J. O'Brien, SSS, Founding Pastor, William Fickel, SSS, 4th Pastor, Michael J. Arkins, SSS, 7th Pastor and John Thomas Lane, SSS, 8th Pastor

After World War II, the Cleveland area, much like the rest of the country, was growing and booming in the suburbs with new housing and development. In the early 1950's, Cleveland's bishop, Most Reverend Edward Hoban searched for places to create future parishes and recognized the Hillcrest Area as growing and having few Catholic parishes. Familiar with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS Fathers and Brothers) who ran a seminary and chapel on Euclid Avenue, he turned to the SSS to assist in opening up a parish. The SSS already had been present in the diocese since 1931 because it placed its seminary in the "best location in the nation," between the New York City and Chicago SSS houses. The order quickly accepted the challenge and assigned the popular editor of Emmanuel Magazine, and NYC native, Father John O'Brien and Brother Edward Mullen to come and establish the new parish. After Saints Paul and Felicitas Church in Euclid and Saint Clare in Lyndhurst opened and quickly grew, he saw the need for a parish between them in the then "little farming village" of Highland Heights. The parish additionally grew from members of Saint Gregory the Great, South Euclid and Saint Francis of Assisi, Gates Mills. While the parish is located in Highland Heights, from the beginning Saint Paschal Baylon parish initially drew members originally from the overgrown parishes in the cities of Euclid, South Euclid, Lyndhurst, Willoughby Hills, Mayfield Heights, and Mayfield Village.

NAMING THE PARISH

During this period in church history, parishes were only named after canonized saints. The founder of the Blessed Sacrament Community was a natural choice for the new parish, wanting to have a Eucharistic Saint and the apostle of the Eucharist guide the new parish. However, Peter Julian Eymard was only at the level of "blessed" in the canonization process and still needed one more miracle to obtain sainthood. One of the students studying for the priesthood, Brother

Paschal, knew of another Eucharistic Saint, a Franciscan brother, for whom he was named, that would inspire the purpose of having the new parish to become a Eucharistic center under his patronage. Brother Paschal was none other than Father Donald Jette, the parish's third pastor, who suggested and obtained the name for the new parish, approved by Archbishop Hoban.

PATRON SAINT HISTORY

Our patron saint was born in Torre Hermosa, (modern day) Spain, on May 24, 1540. He was given the name Paschal because he was born on Pentecost Sunday. He died fifty-two years later on the same day, Pentecost Sunday. At an early age, he was attracted to the Blessed Sacrament and would go to the church to pray instead of working in the fields with his parents, who were shepherds. His parents would find him at the foot of the altar with his eyes fixed on the tabernacle. At the age of 18 he went to Valencia to seek admission into the Franciscan order as a lay brother. His parents were eventually supportive of his vocation, however missed his help working in the fields. With the Franciscans, he became a cook, since the order needed one. This frustrated him, but it allowed him to stay close to God through his work and feeding of the poor through the kitchen. He would spend his free time in church/chapel praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Pope Paul V beatified Paschal and Pope Alexander VIII canonized him in 1690. Pope Leo XIII named him the special protector of all Eucharistic Congresses and societies. He is also the patron saint of chefs, cooks and watching over family kitchens. Paschal Baylon's feast day is May 17. Since 2010, our parish celebrates Spring Fling, a parish festival, around his feast day to honor our patron saint.

EARLY FOUNDATION

In 1953, Father O'Brien and Brother Edward came to Highland Heights and took up residence in a 125-year-old farmhouse on the present property that Archbishop Hoban purchased. The farmhouse stood at 5384 Wilson Mills Road and would host 6:30 Morning Mass with evening prayers and Benediction. This was known as the Parker Estate that was at one time sixty acres of strawberries and raspberries. The estate was surrounded by elm trees that unfortunately in the 1950's fell victim to Dutch elm disease and all died. To have a place to gather for Sunday Mass, Father O'Brien arranged for weekend liturgies at the Richmond Theatre on Mayfield Road in Lyndhurst. (Today this is the site of the Aldi's grocery store.) Initially, 200 families came to "Saint Richmond" to celebrate three Sunday morning Masses. The new community quickly committed themselves to building a temporary church, school and rectory with parish offices. The village hall of Highland Heights allowed for parish meetings until ground could be broken and new parish facilities created

On the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, 1954, almost a year in the parish's life, families broke ground for a new temporary church, school and rectory on the 20-acre site that we know today. A loan from Hanover-Trust Bank of New York City was secured because local banks did not trust "out of towners" as Father O'Brien was seen as. A local architect, J. Ellsworth Potter, designed and constructed the new temporary church and permanent school. The cornerstone of the building was laid by Bishop John J. Krol, auxiliary bishop of Cleveland (who would later become Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia). The inscription on the cornerstone says "Saint Paschal School – Marian Year – 1954" and may be seen today at the front left-hand corner of the building on Wilson Mills Road. This was so that the building project would be placed in our Blessed Mother Mary's hands.

Knowing and working with the Congregation of Notre Dame Sisters (CND) in New York City, Father O'Brien invited these sisters to administer the new school. Mother Saint Edward became the first principal with four other CND sisters. These sisters lived in the farmhouse up the street from the school. Within a year, the school opened in September 1955 with 321 new students entering through the new doors to be the first "Green Knights." One of the interesting facts about the Diocese of Cleveland was that no parochial school charged tuition. The parish quickly worked to create fundraising activities to provide funds for the school.

After the church and eight classrooms were completed, a gymnasium was quickly added to serve as a lunchroom, social gathering place and sports arena. In 1957, additional classrooms were constructed on to the school to allow for two classrooms per grade. With a great spirit from the theatre, summer fundraising festivals and other activities with the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Ladies Guild and the men's Holy Name Society, the parish was off and running in a great Eucharistic spirit.

SSS SEMINARY MOVED

Due to the flooding of the seminary structure at the bottom of a hill along Euclid Avenue and the growth of the number of seminarians, the Blessed Sacrament Community purchased the property next to the parish property to relocate its seminary. In 1963, construction began to extend the existing rectory and create the building that we have today. This building only served as a seminary for five years, however, due to the decrease in vocations to the SSS and the expense of running a seminary. The SSS students and faculty began to teach with the faculty of John Carroll University. With the extra space available to the parish the SSS building, its gym and classrooms became parish office space and usage,

including CYO basketball, retreats, Jazzercise and more parish activities using the areas of the SSS Seminary building along Wilson Mills Road.

FROM RURAL AREA TO THE SUBURBS

During the 1960's Highland Heights and the rest of the Hillcrest area lost its rural appearance as roads were paved (Ridgebury, Bishop, Brainard & Highland), connected (Monticello to Wilson Mills) and widened (Richmond and Wilson Mills). More homes meant more people and infrastructure. In 1962 eight more classrooms were added to allow for three classrooms per grade, with a staff of seven sisters. The CND sisters did not have a convent yet nor the ability to have enough sisters to staff the entire school. With the CND community leaving to return back to New England, the local Sisters of Notre Dame (SND), Chardon, Ohio were invited to administer the school.

With a new convent being built on the parish property in 1964, the SND sisters administered the school with Sister Mary Maureen being the first SND principal. Later, Sisters Joseph Paul, Saint Barbara, Kathleen and Mary Alice also led the school as principal. In 1966, the all-time high enrolment of the school was 934. A new library opened on February 13, 1966 with 2,000 books. For many years, members of the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Ladies Guild volunteered and coordinated this library.

A NEW CHURCH IS BUILT

The original church was temporary and held 600. Once the parish became firmly established, Father O'Brien, through his friendship with other priests in the area, began searching for an architect to create a Vatican II church. The parish hired world-renowned architect Richard Fleischman of Bratenahl, Ohio who always uses glass in his structures. Father O'Brien knew of Fleischman's work through a mutual priest friend from Warren, MI. He proposed a building that fulfilled the scripture passage, "A city on a hill cannot be hidden, a lamp sheds its light for all to see." He created a lighthouse for the church, "the People of God," (Matthew 5: 14-15) reminding the baptized that they are to share their light of faith, the light that they receive at their baptism. Like all lighthouses along Lake Erie, our church building was situated facing north toward Lake Erie. From the roof, one could clearly see the lake. Additionally, since Christ is the center of the community, the altar was placed in the center of the building and logistically, the center of the campus to symbolize the hope of this Eucharistic parish.

Budgeted for 1.6 million dollars, the parish did not have enough funds initially for the project. Between O'Brien, Fleischman and the parish building committee, the plans were reduced in half with items, such as a choir loft, pipe organ, entry narthexes, immersion baptismal font and bell tower to be hoped for or added later. After obtaining approval from the diocese for an \$800,000 church, ground

was broken on July 20, 1969. (There was also another important piece of history on this day – the first person to land on the moon!) The project took longer than expected, due to a few carpenters' union strikes in the Cleveland area and two exceptionally long difficult winters. In fact, one strike halted the completion of the roof. The wooden deck had only been halfway installed. Nesting of birds in the steel rafters and beams was common. Even when the roof was complete, many birds were heard chirping inside for years until the nests were removed. The church was completed on April 8, 1971. The First Communion class inaugurated the new worship space on a very special day, Holy Thursday, the beginning of the Sacred Triduum.

At the time of construction, church law stated that a worship site could not be dedicated or consecrated until the debt was paid. As we prepared to celebrate 40 years as a parish family, the Anniversary Committee recognized that our church building had never been formally dedicated. They recommended that the church be consecrated during the 40th anniversary year. As a result, Bishop Anthony Pilla finally dedicated the church on November 7, 1993.

The altar is a massive piece of Minnesota Red Carnelian marble and this marble is also used for the ambo, Blessed Sacrament chapel altar and baptismal font. The four statues (Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Saint Joseph, Saint Peter Julian Eymard and Saint Paschal Baylon) around the perimeter of the church are the work of Clevelander Norman Poirier. The church received initially two architecture awards in 1972 and 1974. The church architecture received another architecture award in 2010.

THE SPRIRIT IS A MOVING & CHANGING NEEDS

After many years of parish festivals to help build the facilities, it was felt that another type of fundraiser should be added to help support the parish and its school. Our second pastor, Father Joseph Bernier, SSS introduced Bingo in 1974 and renamed the cafeteria Father O'Brien Hall (former church) after our founding pastor, Father John J. O'Brien, SSS. Bingo became a big hit and staple fundraiser on Tuesdays and many Saturdays through the years.

With the drop in enrollment following the baby boom, there were extra classrooms available that allowed for a Kindergarten to open September of 1975. In the 1980's full-time teachers were added to offer art, music and computer classes to every grade level.

To better utilize space and prepare for the future, the SSS moved its United States headquarters to the seminary building in 1978. This led to a reorganization of the office space in the rectory in 1990 with wings of the building dedicated to specific purposes for the SSS Development Office, the Saint Ann Shrine and parish offices.

Wanting to have a space to gather after the Masses and prevent "winter avalanches" on the parishioners, Father William Fickel, SSS, our fourth pastor, gathered a committee together to create the "Paschal Pledge" and church narthexes. They were completed from 1988 - 1990.

Due to the shortage of SND sisters, the administration of the school became a responsibility of the parish once again. In 1995, the first lay principal, John Bednar was hired with School Advisory Council added.

Highlighting the importance of the charism of the SSS, Father Mario Marzocchi, our sixth pastor, promoted the Community at Prayer ministry and "adoration" of the Blessed Sacrament. In 1998 the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, already set aside since 1978 in the church, was covered with a roof and dedicated to around the clock prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Bishop Edward Pevec celebrated this dedication on August 15, 1998.

With the parish life continuing to grow, the parish offices in the rectory could not accommodate the need for meetings and gatherings. Father Mario Marzocchi, SSS began a capital campaign committee to create the Family Life Center. After many years of study and fundraising, Father Michael Arkins, SSS, our seventh pastor, inaugurated the building drive for both the Family Life Center and an additional gymnasium for the Athletic Association and the school. This gymnasium would later be dedicated to Father Donald Jette, SSS for his years of service to the parish, especially as pastor emeritus from 1996 – 2009.

When the Family Life Center was completed in 2001, it included six meeting rooms of various sizes, a new school office, a new music room, a media center for thirty-five computers and space for the 9000-book library.

A special honor was given by the United States Department of Education for our school in 2009. After the lengthy process, initiated by the administration, faculty and staff, Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic School was deemed a "blue ribbon school of excellence."

Our parish is known for its wonderful facilities and grounds, but even more importantly, for it's wonderful people. Many people through the years have worked tirelessly to insure quality education, service of others, care for the needy, and more. Following our patron saint, who provided food for the poor, we generously give of our time through the many outreach programs and ministries.

When Deacon Joe Bourgeois, SSS came to SPB in 1999, he developed with a board of volunteers a clown ministry and an outreach program called Helping

Hands. With almost 400 volunteers over the years, the parish is proud that it supports this ministry of service to the needs of those needing care, food, clothing and other services. Each Wednesday and Saturday, parishioners take the "care vans" and take the meals prepared in our kitchens to those who hunger and live on the streets of the inner city or at special facilities at other churches or institutions.

Our worship is known for its active participation, through song, praise and prayer. With a strong devotion to the Eucharist, worshipping and praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, taking the Eucharist to those in need, through sharing Holy Communion and feeding and clothing those in need, we live what we celebrate. Additionally, each summer we enjoy our devotion to Saint Ann and Saint Peter Julian Eymard, as we celebrate Triduums, novenas and special events around these two patronal feasts (July 26 and August 2 respectively).

May our patron Saint Paschal Baylon, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Saint Julie Billiart (spiritual foundress of the SND's) and Saint Peter Julian Eymard always guide us as we fulfill Christ's mission to build the Body of Christ in the Hillcrest region of the Diocese of Cleveland.

To the next 60 years! Let us continue to pray, worship and work with each other for Christ! "For thy Eucharistic kingdom come!"

Miscellaneous Facts:

ORIGINAL PARISH BOUNDARIES:

(from the "Decree" establishing the parish, September 2, 1953)

- **EAST:** Orchard Heights Boulevard [Mayfield Heights] from Ridgebury Boulevard northward to its airline extension at Highland Road [Highland Heights].
- NORTH: Highland Road from the airline extension of Orchard Heights Boulevard, west to Richmond Road, north along Richmond Road to Euclid Chagrin Parkway [Richmond Heights/Euclid city borders], west along the same Parkway and continuing through Harms Road to the Euclid Creek Reservation [later called "Metro Park," city of Euclid].
- **WEST:** Euclid Creek Reservation, from Harms Road southward to, but excluding Anderson Road [South Euclid].
- **SOUTH:** From Euclid Creek Reservation along a line paralleling and north of, but excluding, Anderson Road as far as Professor Road, then

south on Professor Road [Lyndhurst] to Emmet Road, thence east on Emmet Road to Richmond Road, thence north on Richmond Road to the intersection of the airline extension of Ridgebury Boulevard, thence eastward along this line and Ridgebury Boulevard itself to its intersection with Orchard Heights Boulevard [Mayfield Heights].

The NEW BOUNDARIES of the parish as of Decree: 7 February 2014:

- NORTH: East from an airline extension of Harms Road and Euclid Creek Reservation to Bishop Road, North on Bishop Road to the Cuyahoga/Lake County Line (Highland Heights, Willoughby Hills Line), East on Cuyahoga/Lake County Line (Highland Heights, Willoughby Hills Line) to Interstate 271.
- **EAST:** South on Interstate 271 from Cuyahoga/Lake County Line (Highland Heights, Willoughby Hills Line) to Ridgebury Boulevard.
- **SOUTH:** West on Ridgebury Boulevard to Richmond Road, South on Richmond Road to Emmet Road, West on Emmet Road to Professor Road, North on Professor Road to Anderson Road, West on Anderson Road to Euclid Creek.
- **WEST:** Northwest through Euclid Creek Reservation to an airline extension of Harms Road.

PASTORS:

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1st
       1953 - 1973
                     John J. O'Brien, SSS
2nd
                     Joseph Bernier, SSS
       1973 - 1979
                     Donald Jette, SSS
3rd
       1979 - 1985
                     William Fickel, SSS (parishioner)
       1985 - 1990
4th
5<sup>th</sup>
       1990 - 1993
                      Thomas A. Wiese, SSS
       1993 - 1999
6<sup>th</sup>
                      Mario Marzocchi, SSS
7th
       1999 - 2009
                      Michael J. Arkins, SSS
8th
       2009 -
                      John Thomas Lane, SSS (parishioner)
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PRINCIPALS:

- 1955 ? Mother Saint Edward, CND
 ? 1964 Mother Saint Mark of Rome, CND
 1964 1970 Sister Mary Maureen, SND
 1970 1973 Sister Mary Joseph Paul, SND
 1973 1979 Sister Mary Saint Barbara, SND
- 1979 1985 Sister Mary Kathleen, SND

- 1985 1995 Sister Mary Alice, SND
- 1995 2012 Mister John Bednar
- 2012 Mrs. Carol Jansky

PAROCHIAL VICARS OVER THE YEARS:

- Andre Beaudoin, SSS
- Herve Huot, SSS
- Maurice Prefontaine, SSS
- Clement Hebert, SSS
- Paul Krainz, SSS
- Leopold Saint Hilaire, SSS
- William Murtaugh, SSS
- John Kamas, SSS
- Aurelius Gariepy, SSS
- Walter Riendeau, SSS
- Roger Bourgeois, SSS (two times)
- Patrick Fenton, SSS
- Francis Costa, SSS
- William Young, SSS
- Anthony Schueller, SSS
- Federico Ablog, SSS
- Scott Haig, SSS
- Thomas Smithson, SSS
- Paul Bernier, SSS
- John Christman, SSS

SSS BROTHERS ON PASTORAL STAFF:

- Edward Mullen, SSS
- Philip Dufour, SSS
- Noel Canuel, SSS
- Paschal Frazier, SSS
- Gary LaVerdiere, SSS
- Jim Lent, SSS (teacher)
- Martin Hayes, SSS
- Michael O'Leary, SSS
- Edmund Hardy, SSS

SSS DEACON ON PASTORAL STAFF:

• Joseph Bourgeois, SSS (since 1999)

DIOCESAN DEACON ON PASTORAL STAFF:

• Robert J. Bowers (since 1985)

SSS Provincial Superiors at Saint Paschal Baylon

(USA Headquarters moved from New York City (founding 1900) to Highland Heights 1978)

Donald E. Pelotte, SSS 1978 - 1986
 John Dowling, SSS 1986 - 1992
 Donald Jette, SSS 1992 - 1995
 Anthony Schueller, SSS 1995 - 2002
 Norman Pelletier, SSS 2002 -

Other religious life vocations from the parish:

- Lisa Novak, SND profession of religious vows 1960
- Patricia Gentile, SND profession of religious vows 1990
- William Fickel, SSS ordination 1981 (at SPB)
- John Thomas Lane, SSS ordination 1992 (at SPB)
- Anthony Marshall, SSS profession of religious vows 2006, ordination 2011 (both ceremonies at SPB)
- Vincent (Alan) Benander, OPraem ordination 2013

Time Line of Significant Dates

1953 September 2 - Parish established by Archbishop Edward Hoban

October - Masses begin at the Richmond Theatre

- November 5 Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Guild (for women)
- November 5 Holy Name Society (for men only at the beginning, now open to both)
- December 24 Adult Men's (only) Choir
- 1954 August 15 Ground breaking for temporary church (current Father O'Brien Hall) and school
- 1955 August 11 14 First Parish Festival
 - October 18 First Mass in the temporary church (now Father O'Brien Hall) and eight classrooms and gym ready for use
- 1956 December 8 Dedication of the parish buildings and rectory of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament by Archbishop Hoban Father Mark Blinn guest preacher

700 registered families

- 1957 Women's Choral Club begins
 - Catholic Youth Organization begins
 - Catholic Young Adults
 - October Federal Credit Union formed
- 1958 Booster Club forms (later named the Athletic Association)
- 1959 1,000 registered families
- 1962 School "completed" with 24 classrooms (three classes per grade)
- 1963 March 31 Nocturnal Adoration Society formed by National Director Father Hector Lemieux, SSS
 - October 27 Seminary of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament construction begins and cornerstone laid
- 1964 August Convent opened
- 1965 Dedication of the school library
- 1966 Peak enrollment of school at 934 students (12 Sisters and 13 lay teachers)
 - September Preschool Religion Classes begin
- 1968 "Folk Mass" born in the gymnasium
 - February 2 Building fund for new church inaugurated, Richard Fleischman hired as architect
- 1969 July 20 Groundbreaking for new church (twenty-one months of construction)
- 1971 April 8 First Communion & First Mass in the new (present day) church
- 1972 May Diocese of Cleveland priesthood ordinations Spiritual Renewal Programs begin

- 1973 October 21 Father Joseph Bernier, SSS formally installed as second pastor at 1 p.m. Mass
- 1974 March 26 BINGO begins on Tuesday evenings
 Communion Ministers (lay) begin and are commissioned to distribute the Holy Eucharist
 November Better World Movement begins
- 1975 Kindergarten initiated
- 1976 November 20 Christ Renews His Parish begins
 - December 15 Steering Committee creates first Pastoral Council
- 1978 25th Anniversary celebrations
 - May First election of delegates to Pastoral Council
 - May 31 Pastoral Council begins
 - CCD becomes PSR and refocuses Catholic Christian formation in the Diocese of Cleveland
- 1979 SSS USA Headquarters relocates from New York City to the Blessed Sacrament Community House in Highland Heights
- 1980 SESA (Spiritual Education Spiritual Apostolic) Singles Group established by Father Donald Jette, SSS
- 1984 First Communion after Mass driver delivers flowers and accidentally plows through church windows into the church missing statue of Saint Paschal Baylon and pillar; miraculously no one is in the area and no one is hurt
- 1986 May 6 Bishop Donald E. Pelotte, SSS, Provincial Superior of the SSS ordained bishop of the Diocese of Gallup, NM
- 1988 1990 Paschal Pledge and the creation of the church narthexes
- 1992 Brother Edmund Hardy launches Bereavement Ministry
- 1993 40th anniversary celebrations 3,200 registered parishioners peak year

- November 7 Church building officially dedicated by Bishop Anthony Pilla (4 crosses around the perimeter acknowledge this event) to end the anniversary year
- 1994 March 19 Beginning of the Community at Prayer and around the clock prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the church chapel
 - Musical *Compassion* is composed at SPB and performed here and throughout the diocese
- 1998 Town Hall Meetings held over the year to discuss the needs of the facilities
 - August 15 Dedication of the enclosed Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel
- 1999 March -- Census taken; capital campaign (Our Parish Our Future) begins for the Family Life Center and an additional gymnasium
- 2000 June 10 Ground breaking for the new Family Life Center and gym
- 2001 August Father Jette Gymnasium complete
 - November Family Life Center complete
 - December 9 Dedication of the Family Life Center and Father Jette Gymnasium by Bishop Edward Pevec, Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland
- 2005 Church dome window falls out and onto the roof and slides down to the ground no one is hurt
- 2006 Summer replacement of all church dome windows church closed; Father O'Brien Hall temporary church again
- 2008 Diocese of Cleveland reconfigures parish our parish clusters with the Church of Saint Clare, Lyndhurst; parish census demonstrates 2,400 parishioners
- 2010 Confirmation Another car driver drives into the church, this time the main narthex
 - Parish Festival Returns with Spring Fling in honor of our patron Saint Paschal Baylon (May 17)

2013 60th Anniversary Year begins with Lenten Parish Mission (February 17 – 20), continues with Spring Fling Parish Festival (May 17 – 19), Summer Mass and Picnic (August 18) and concludes with Anniversary Mass and Luncheon (November 17) with Bishop Richard Lennon

June 30 – parish census shows 2,620 parish families, 6,999 members

November 17 – Anniversary year ends with special Mass and reception; School Wins Ohio State STEM Award of Excellence Again

2014 February 7 – Updated official boundaries of the parish are decreed (see above)

July 12 - Updated Baptismal Font used for the first time at weekend Masses, architect Richard Fleishman and Dave Martina Monuments masoner

History compiled for the 60th Anniversary Closing Celebration: 6 October 2013 Updated: 15 July 2014