

Our Story

1846 to 2018

In 1846 Governor George Grey recruited a Corps known as "the Royal New Zealand Fencibles" in England and Ireland to defend Auckland from possible attacks by local Maori . These fears proved unfounded. The Fencibles arrived in Auckland in 1847 and settlements were founded for them in Onehunga, Otahuhu, Panmure and Howick. As about half of the 773 families were Irish Catholics, Governor Grey made a special grant of one acre of land to Bishop Pompallier for a church, presbytery and graveyard and the Bishop bought a further four acres at what is now the corner of Picton Street and Parkhill Road.

The **early settlers** of Howick came from a military background; they were splendid pioneers and good and faithful Catholics. They played their part in the development of New Zealand in times of peace and in times of trouble. Today's parishioners of Our Lady Star of the Sea, Howick, some of whom can trace their ancestry back to the Fencibles, have much to be grateful for and much to look forward to.

First Parish Priest –Father Antoine Garin sm

The Catholic Parish of Howick was one of the earliest to be established in New Zealand and in October 1847 a French Marist pioneer missionary, Father Antoine Garin SM, became the first priest to be placed in charge of the Fencible settlements of Howick, Panmure and Otahuhu. He was a re-sourceful priest, much loved by the settlers and Maori, and with their help in 1848 a pit-sawn kauri schoolroom was erected and was also used as a temporary Chapel for six years. A Presbytery was built in 1849 and Bishop Viard blessed the buildings when he visited the new Howick parish that year. Father Garin was posted to Nelson at the end of 1850 where he served as parish priest of St Mary's for 39 years.

First Church – Father Henry Fynes

Father Henry Fynes educated at Downside Benedictine Abbey school and London University came to New Zealand in 1850 and in 1852 was

appointed to Howick and Panmure Parish. During his 21 years in Howick he organized the building of the first church, originally known as St. Mary's Star of the Sea, which was completed and blessed by Bishop Pompallier in 1854. This original wooden church stood for over 100 years until in 1960 it was replaced by the current stone church. The Parish school was known as the Howick Catholic School and Father Fynes trained all the lay teachers and also taught at the school himself. Later this original old schoolroom was relocated behind the church and used as a Parish hall until 1987 when it was demolished and the timber returned to Umupuia Marae at Maraetai. Father Henry Fynes was a man of exceptional ability, and was totally dedicated to the Church and Catholic education. He served the Parish faithfully for 21 years and was greatly missed when he was transferred to Parnell in 1873. In 1874 Monsignor Fynes became Vicar General and Administrator of the Auckland Diocese. His lasting legacy was the Fynes schools which were set up throughout the Diocese with the money he had left in Trust for them.

Long-Serving Parish Priests

Some priests that came to Howick over the next 100 years only stayed for brief periods. However the beloved Father Walter MacDonald served the Parish for 13 years 1886 -1899. Father John Downey 14 years 1927 – 1941, and Father James O'Connor 11 years 1941 – 1952. There were also periods when there was no resident priest and the parish was served from Otahuhu or Ellerslie.

In 1949 Howick and Panmure became separate parishes in their own right and in 1952 Father **William Flynn** came to Howick where he stayed for 22 years. During his time a little church was built in Bucklands Beach dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, this was blessed by Archbishop Liston on Easter Sunday 1953. Father Flynn also organized the demolition of the old wooden Star of the Sea Howick church in 1959 and a fundraising campaign for building the new stone church and Presbytery of Our Lady Star of the Sea. Both were opened and blessed by Archbishop Liston in 1960.

Dutch born **Father Nicholas Alleman** was parish priest for 6 years from 1978. He was succeeded by **Father Peter Prendergast** in 1984 who, during his 16 years at Howick, oversaw the building of a new

presbytery in 1987 and major alterations to enlarge the church in 1993 along with the introduction of the first Parish Council. Stained glass windows were designed by parishioners and installed, along with colourful collage banners depicting the liturgical readings – these were designed and made by Louise Noble-Campbell and are hung each week on the sanctuary walls. The Bucklands Beach church was finally de-sanctified and sold in 1991. Land was bought in Beachlands in the hope of building a small church there but that was also sold in 1992.

Father Patrick Brady was appointed to the Parish in 2001. At that time in the Parish, there was only a management committee in place that dealt with mainly the finances and whatever crisis came to its door. Father Pat established a proper Pastoral Parish Council in 2001. Modifications were made to the Parish Centre to incorporate a private office for consultations. Further extensions included a large deck for social gatherings. Father Pat encouraged laity involvement by setting up Holy Communion visits for the sick. Some events organized in Father Pat's time were a Parish Mission in 2005 and Habitat for Humanity in 2006. In 2007 Father Pat wrote the submission for the award of the Papal Blessing for Louise Noble-Campbell.

Father Terry Montgomery came in 2008. One of the first things he noticed was that the church had not been Dedicated, but that, being built of stone and concrete, it could be. When it had first been built there was still a debt on it, then later no-one had got round to it. Sam Pulanco, the assistant priest did the research and organised the ceremony. The church Dedication Ceremony by Bishop Patrick Dunn in 2009 marked the 50th anniversary of the church. During his time the new sound system was installed.

Father John Fitzmaurice is the current Parish Priest. He arrived in February 2017.

References

Auckland Diocesan Archives

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The History of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Howick

Mike & Helen Hammond:

Footsteps of Faith, History of Howick Parish 1847-2010

Alan La Roche:

Grey's Folly