

# HISTORY OF ST GREGORY

## THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH

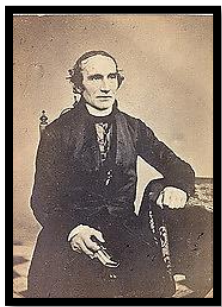
**1840:** The Catholic Mission of Queanbeyan was established by **Archbishop John Bede Polding**. Archbishop Polding was Australia's first Catholic Bishop, 1835-77. "*Polding emerges as a magnificent, compassionate, holy, missionary person.*" (Our Story, p22). Born Liverpool, England.



**1843:** The **Queanbeyan Catholic Mission** included the district of Maneroo (now Monaro), Bombala, Twofold Bay, Bega, Moruya, Canberra (known as Canberry), Gundaroo, Pialligo (now Duntroon), Snowy River, Ashby, Adaminaby, and Michelago. At this time the Queanbeyan Mission was headed by the Archbishop of Sydney.

**1840-42: Fr Michael McGrath**, priest of the Goulburn diocese, ministered to Catholics on horseback from Goulburn, through Queanbeyan, down the South Coast, and as far as the Victorian border. He visited the Queanbeyan Mission on several occasions prior to the appointment of the first resident pastor of the Queanbeyan Mission. Fr Martin Heston (sometimes referred to as Eston or Hastings) was stationed at "Dodsworth" in 1843, but no records of his ministry have survived. (*It has been claimed that Fr Heston, a native of Ireland, was unable to write in English.*)





**1843:** The earliest surviving sacramental registers of Queanbeyan parish were written by **Fr Michael Kavanagh**. Fr Kavanagh served two periods in the Queanbeyan Mission: 1843-1851 & 1856-1861. Rev Alexander McGilvray, in *The Hallowed High Adventure*, wrote: "In his years in Queanbeyan he must have

*travelled many thousands of miles in the saddle, and he was familiar with the tracks and crude roads that meandered from Queanbeyan to huts and homesteads and estates within easy enough reach of headquarters, and to settlements in the high Snowy regions and down to the Pacific at Bega and Twofold Bay."* It was Fr Kavanagh's initiative that led to the building of St Gregory's Church.

**C.1843:** Sources suggest there may have been a temporary slab church built on or near the land at Macquoid St. Mass was certainly said in the homes of parishioners as priests visited the more remote areas of the Queanbeyan Mission.

**1847:** The land at Macquoid St was dedicated for church, school and presbytery purposes.

**1849:** Archbishop Polding blessed the foundation stone of St Gregory's Church Queanbeyan. £48 (pounds) was donated on the stone by those attending the ceremony.

Around this time the region's European population increased, and priests also became more available. This meant resident priests



were provided at Moruya (1850), Braidwood (1852), Cooma (1856), and soon to be followed by Bombala (1864) and Bega (1865). **Consequently the territory to be covered by the**

**Queanbeyan priest was much reduced.**

**1850:** The first Mass was said in the incomplete stone **Church of St Gregory the Great**, Molonglo St, Queanbeyan. The architecture of St Gregory's was loosely based on town church designs by Augustus Welby Pugin, the leading Catholic Gothic Revival architect of the time. Pugin's "*little aisled church of St Andrew, Cambridge (1841-43)*" provided the "*principal dimensions and composition ... for a crude essay, St Gregory's church, Queanbeyan.*" Of particular Pugin note is the sedilia (seats) recessed into the left wall of the sanctuary. The centre seat is for the celebrant, the right for the deacon and the left for the subdeacon. The builder was Daniel McCloskey. Local stone was used from a quarry near Wright Park. "*It can be regarded as the mother church for the city of Canberra*" (Our Story). The church also operated as the school from 1852 until 1857. Photo Jasper Blair, Queanbeyan Museum

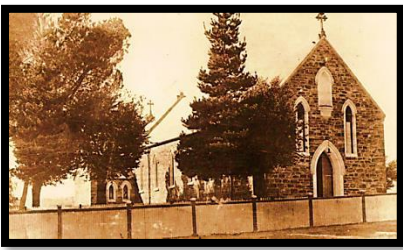
**1851:** The Church of St Gregory the Great was consecrated by Archbishop Polding during a visit to Queanbeyan.



**1861-62: Fr Austin Forde**, a noted liturgical musician, cultivated **choral music at St Gregory's**. And later, "*After his arrival in 1895 the gentle and cultured District Engineer, Charles Unthank O'Hanlon, also a talented conductor, took charge of the Catholic choir and spread its artistic reputation far beyond the town.*" Errol Lea-Scarlett, Queanbeyan District and People, p123.

**1870: St Gregory's Presbytery**, Macquoid St. The priest at front is most likely to be Fr James McAuliffe. Photo: H Beaufoy Merlin, Queanbeyan Museum.





**1873/74: Extensions at St Gregory's church:** a longer nave, the sacristy, a choir gallery and the western door (facing Molonglo St). This beautiful stone church was described as '*the spiritual powerhouse*' for a region that

included Queanbeyan, the Limestone plains and beyond. Photo: Eddie Hutchinson. Queanbeyan Museum.



**1876:** St Gregory's Church with school behind. Photo: Queanbeyan Museum



**1890:**

Interior of St Gregory's Church

**1890:** Image of **St Gregory's belltower** before it was relocated to the rear of the church. Photo: Claremount post card 1890.



**1909:** A new stone and wooden altar made by Bablinski of Newtown, Sydney, was added to the church with other improvements

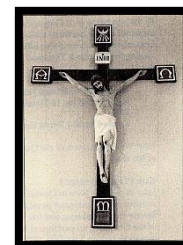


**1914: Interior St Gregory's Church.** Photo: F H Boland , Queanbeyan Museum



**1918: A large crucifix was erected in the sanctuary of St Gregory's church in memory of Private John Webb** by MJ

Byrne Esq (Jnr), the owner of the Royal Hotel. John was a labourer who was born



in Queanbeyan in 1873. He enlisted in 1916, at the age of 42, during the time the "Men from Snowy River" recruitment march was wending its way through the Monaro. He was a single man who gave his next of kin at enlistment in 1916 as Mrs Frances Byrne of the Royal Hotel. He was killed in action in Flanders on 5 April 1917.

**1918: Queanbeyan transferred from the Archdiocese of Sydney to the Diocese of Goulburn,** becoming a parish of the diocese rather than a mission. This restructure was part of a significant adjustment to the Diocese of Goulburn caused by the creation of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga in 1917. Also transferred from the Diocese of Sydney to Goulburn at this time were the South Coast and Monaro regions.



**Fr Patrick Haydon** (Queanbeyan Parish Priest 1918-28) delighted the school children as he arrived at school on his Harley-Davidson motorbike. He had a genial demeanour and became popular with Catholics and non-catholics alike. Fr Patrick concentrated on

providing key facilities for the parish such as the new St Gregory's Hall, Monaro St (1924) and St Gregory's School, Lowe St (1927).

[When the Catholic Parish of Canberra was created in 1928 Fr Haydon became its first parish priest (1928-1949).]

**1924: St Gregory's Hall** was built in Monaro St.

It included a hall with capacity for 1,000, a supper room, a library/reading room, and a theatre that was leased out. *"The town's social life centred around the hall"* (PB Sheedy & EA

Percy, *Moneroo to Monaro*). In 1940, the theatre lessor, WB Freebody, purchased the whole building.



**1930: St Gregory's Church and Presbytery**

Photo: Queanbeyan Museum



**1948: The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn** is

promulgated with Bishop Terence McGuire of Goulburn appointed first Archbishop. The Archdiocese incorporates the Queanbeyan region.

**1956: St Raphael's War Memorial Church** and presbytery were



opened in Lowe St, beside St Gregory's primary school, on land purchased from the Showground Trust. A larger church was needed to cater for a rapid increase in population in the post-World War II years. The

Church was named *'St Raphael's'* because in scripture it means *"God's Healing"*. A plaque dedicated to those lost in war, and the gate holding the plaque, were donated to the church by the Queanbeyan RSL sub-branch. The plaque and gate are located at the entrance to the choir loft stairs.

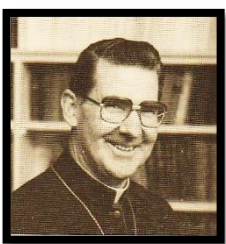
St Raphael's Church remains on the NSW register of War Memorials. The bell is a link with the past, having been relocated from St Gregory's church.

**1957:** St Gregory's Church was renovated after one hundred years since its dedication.

**1988: Major restoration work** was completed on the church of St Gregory the Great at a cost of \$120,000. Money came from the Heritage Council of NSW, the Queanbeyan City Council, fundraising, \$40,000 in parish contributions, and \$22,000 in donations.



Restoration work involved replacement of the roof and spouting, repairs to the electrical system and the replacement of light fittings, repairs to the stonework outside and cracks in the walls, renovation of the original pews, installation of gas heating, renovation of the sanctuary, repainting in the original colour scheme, carpeting, replacement of stained glass windows, restoring the gallery and landscaping.



A concelebrated Mass, with Principal Celebrant **Archbishop Francis Carroll**, rededicated the church.

*“The restoration work has given the church a much needed facelift, for the church is often requested for masses, baptisms and weddings, especially of an historical nature, for people whose ancestors were baptised and married there.”* The Queanbeyan Age Sept 22, 1988.

**Interior of St Gregory's Church** after restoration.

Although St Raphael's Church is now the main focus of Catholic parish life in Queanbeyan, St Gregory's church has been used over recent years for Polish, Croatian and Italian masses, as well as school masses.



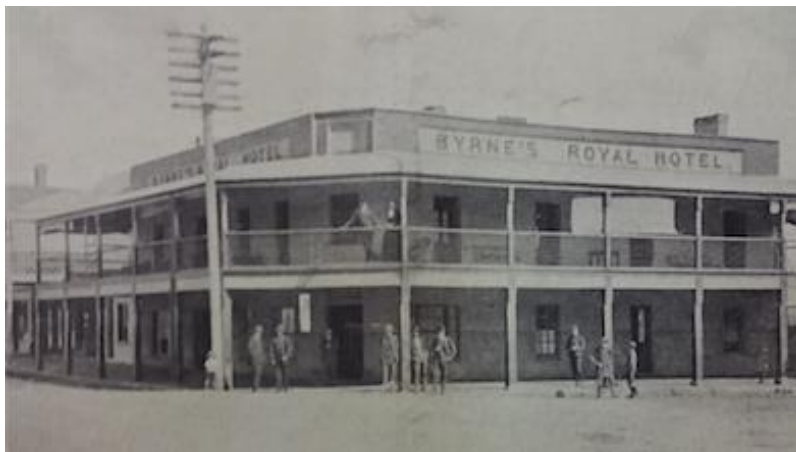
In March 2019 after a successful application for the Queanbeyan-Palerang council's special Heritage Grant was received, some restoration work was carried out at St Gregory's church; the work involved repointing (replacing some eroded and weathered stonework) to the exterior of the church.

### **1869: CHALICE DONATED IN MEMORY OF SARA BYRNE**



**Martin Byrne** (1815-1892) was born in Ireland. He arrived in Australia in 1834 as a convict with a life sentence for robbery. He was a devout Catholic parishioner, attending daily mass. He owned Byrne's Hotel

(currently operating as the Royal Hotel) until 1864. He also built Byrne's steam flour mill in 1883 for his sons to run.



When Fr James McAuliffe invited the Sisters of the Good Samaritan to live and work in Queanbeyan, **Martin Byrne** made the generous donation of a brick cottage on over 3 acres of land. This gift enabled the sisters to arrive in 1879 to commence their work of teaching and assisting those in need.

The cottage was used as the temporary convent, and St Benedict's convent/ boarding school was built on the land. **Martin Byrne** supervised each step of the building of St Benedict's.

When his wife, **Sara Byrne** (Nightingale) died in 1869, aged 44, Martin donated a chalice to St Gregory's Parish in her memory. The chalice was in use for over 100 years and remains in the possession of St Gregory's.



## **PRIVATE JOHN WEBB (1873–1917)**

In the sanctuary of St Gregory's Church, Queanbeyan a large crucifix is mounted on the northern wall as a memorial to Private John Webb, a Queanbeyan man who was killed on active service on the Western Front during World War I. The small memorial plaque beside the crucifix reads:

**In memory of Private John Webb  
Killed in action in Flanders in 1917 RIP**

**Erected by M J Byrne Esq**

John Webb was a son of the Queanbeyan district. Here is what we know of his story.

### **EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY**

John Webb was born in Queanbeyan on 9 July 1873. He was one of a number of children (and possibly the third born) of Thomas Webb, a farmer from Canberra, and his wife, Ann. The Webbs were parishioners of the Queanbeyan parish and it was in St Gregory's Church that they were married on 3 January 1870. The parish registers also show that John Webb was baptized at St Gregory's on 23 August 1873.

Little is known of John Webb's boyhood, though it is noted that his mother, Ann, died in 1874, when John was just one year old, and is buried in the Queanbeyan Riverside Cemetery.

By the time of the outbreak of war in August 1914, John Webb was a man of 41 and a labourer living in Queanbeyan. It is recorded that among his friends were the owner of the Royal Hotel, Martin Byrne, and his wife, Frances, both well-regarded citizens of the community.

### **ENLISTMENT AND MILITARY SERVICE**

The war was into its third year when John Webb, then aged 42 ½ years chose to enlist. He signed up during the weeks of January 1916 that the 'Men from Snowy River' recruitment march was wending its way down the Monaro towards Goulburn, though he does not appear to have been one of the marchers.

According to the record of his Army service, John Webb enlisted at Goulburn on 12 January 1916 and his attestation form was witnessed by Captain F R Wedd, the Army officer in charge of the recruitment march.

On his enlistment forms John Webb recorded his marital status as 'single', his religion as 'Roman Catholic' and gave his next of kin as a friend, Mrs Byrne of the Royal Hotel, Queanbeyan. It is likely that none of his own immediate family were, by this time, still living.

Information recorded at the time of his medical examination provided the following physical description of John Webb:

Height:	5 ft 2 in
Weight:	150 lb
Complexion:	Ruddy
Eye colour:	Blue
Hair colour:	Sandy grey

It was also noted he had a small red dental plate on his upper jaw, a scar on the left side of his back and a vaccination mark on his left arm.

On enlistment Webb was assigned the service number 2257. He undertook basic training at the Goulburn camp and embarked from Sydney for England on the HMAT 15 *Port Sydney* on 4 September 1916. The vessel arrived at Plymouth, England on 29 October.

John Webb arrived at Etaples in northern France in December 1916, and was allocated, along with many of the Snowy River recruits, among the 4<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements to the 55<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion. At this time he served briefly as Acting Corporal, but then reverted to his substantive rank. The next entry on his file records his death. John Webb was killed in action on 5 April 1917. The record notes his burial in Collective Grave 6, Plot 1, Row B of the Lebucquiere

Cemetery Extension which is located 8 kilometres east of Bapaume, France.

Advice of John Webb's death was forwarded to Frances Byrne, his next of kin, who also received a package of his personal possessions that comprised a devotional book, an air cushion and a small package of photographs.

The file also records that on 31 October 1917 F W Woodward, Solicitor and Commissioner for Affidavits of Queanbeyan, wrote to the Army to obtain a copy of John Webb's death certificate in order to seek probate on his will. This was duly provided.

In 1922 and 1923 the Army sought to contact Mrs Byrne again to establish if there were any known relatives of John Webb to whom his service medals and a memorial scroll could be issued. But by then the Byrnes had moved from Queanbeyan and these letters were not answered.

#### THE MEMORIAL CRUCIFIX

We do not know if Mr and Mrs Byrne were benefactors of John Webb's estate, but it was this couple, who, before 12 months had elapsed, had arranged for the erection of the crucifix in his memory in St Gregory's Church. The *Queanbeyan Age* for 20 August 1918 reporting the installation of the crucifix noted 'the upright of the cross stands over nine feet tall and the figure of Our Saviour upon it is almost life-size'.

Parish priest, Fr Patrick Haydon in acknowledging the gift added that it had been placed in the church in memory of 'an honest man and a brave soldier'.

An appropriate final dedication comes from the *Queanbeyan Age*: 'our Christian faith tells us that his sacrifice is assured of its recompense in Heaven.'

### LEST WE FORGET

### SOURCES

Army service record for John Webb, National Archives of Australia: B2455 Webb J

Baptismal and Marriage registers, 1870–73, St Gregory's Parish, Queanbeyan.

Cross, Rex *Bygone Queanbeyan*, Canberra Printing and Publishing, 1980.

Lea-Scarlett, Errol *Queanbeyan: District and People*, Queanbeyan Municipal Council, 1968.

Memorial Plaque to Private John Webb, St Gregory's Church, Queanbeyan.

*Queanbeyan Age*, 20 August 1918, page 2.

*Our Queanbeyan Boys No 4*, [1918], postcard of photographs of Queanbeyan district enlistments to First AIF (held by Queanbeyan and District Historical Museum Society Inc.).

Stegemann, William 'The chaps from Snowy River'  
*Sabretache*, Volume XXII, Number 4, October-December  
1981.

**The  
Memorial  
Crucifix**

**ST GREGORY'S  
CHURCH**

**QUEANBEYAN**



**A MEMORIAL TO  
PRIVATE JOHN WEBB  
DIED 5 APRIL 1917  
A SOLDIER OF THE FIRST  
WORLD WAR**

## Queanbeyan Catholic Parish (1840 – 2019)

### List of Parish Priests and Assistant Priests

YEARS	PARISH PRIEST	ASSISTANT PRIEST
Diocese of Sydney		
1840-41	Parish Priest not yet appointed	
1843	<b>Rev Martin Heston</b> (named Martin Hastings in note in Baptism register)	No written parish records exist for this era.
1843–51	<b>Rev Michael Kavanagh</b>	<b>Rev John Kenny</b> (1843-1844)
1851–55	<b>Rev Richard Walsh</b>	
1856–61	<b>Rev Michael Kavanagh</b>	<b>Rev Edmund Walsh</b> (Feb–April & Aug 1856)
1861–62	<b>Rev Austin Forde</b>	
1862–68	<b>Rev Patrick White</b>	
1869–79	<b>Rev James McAuliffe</b>	<b>Rev E Walsh</b> (1876)
1879–86	<b>Rev Patrick Birch</b>	<b>Rev James Mahony</b> (Dec 1880-Nov 1881)  <b>Rev Joseph Collins</b> (Dec 1881-Aug 1882)  <b>Rev James Sheridan</b> (1885-1886)
1886-87	<b>Rev Patrick Hickey</b>	
1886–91	<b>Rev James Sheridan</b>	
1891–93	<b>Rev Richard Condon</b>	
1893–96	<b>Rev Patrick McCambridge</b>	
1896–1904	<b>Rev Richard Collender</b>	
1904–11	<b>Rev John Patrick Hyland</b>	
1911–18	<b>Rev Matthew Hogan</b>	<b>Rev Patrick Haydon</b> (1911 & Jan 1913-1917)

Diocese of Goulburn		
1918–28	<b>Rev Patrick Haydon</b>	<b>Rev Clarence Lehane</b> (Feb-Dec 1921) <b>Rev Peter Costelloe</b> (March 1924-Jan 1925) <b>Rev David Griffin</b> (Feb 1925-1928) <b>Rev Terence Dunleavy</b> (May 1926–1928)
1928–32	<b>Rev Patrick O’Riordan</b> <b>Rev James Ryan, Adm</b> (Feb 1932- )	<b>Rev Peter Donnelly</b> (1928–1930) <b>Rev Timothy Harnett</b> (1930-1932)
1933 (Jan-Dec)	<b>Rev James McKenna</b> <b>Rev James Ryan, Adm</b> ( -Jan 1933)	<b>Rev Charles Gleeson</b> (Jul 1932– Jan 1934)
1934–36	<b>Rev Patrick Deenihan</b> <b>Rev Patrick O’Carroll, Adm</b> (Sep 1936-Jan 1937)	<b>Rev James O’Connor</b> (Feb 1934–Jan 1936; Jan-Feb 1937 & Feb-June 1939 ) <b>Rev John Kerrigan</b> (Feb-June 1936) <small>(on loan from Sydney diocese)</small>
1937–47	<b>Rev Michael Casey</b>	<b>Rev Francis Bouchier</b> (Feb 1937-Feb 1938) <b>Rev Francis X Kerr</b> (Feb 1938-Jan 1939) <b>Rev Dominic Egan</b> (June 1939–June 1942) <b>Rev Cyril Commins</b> (Nov 1943–Mar 1945) <b>Rev John Brohan</b> (Apr 1945–Apr 1947)

Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn from 1948		
1948-55	<b>Rev Michael Casey</b> (RANR Chaplain, 1954) <b>Rev Daniel Greene, Adm</b> (Feb 1951- Jan 1952)	<b>Rev Denis Fitzgerald</b> (Apr 1947-Apr 1952) <b>Rev John O'Brien</b> (Apr 1952-Dec 1954)
1955-69	<b>Rev Daniel Greene</b> <i>(RANR Chaplain, 1954-1959)</i> <b>Rev Morgan O'Connor, Adm</b> (Feb-Dec 1958) <b>Rev Ignatius McNamara, Adm</b> (1964-1965)	<b>Rev Lloyd Reynolds</b> (Feb 1955-Mar 1959) <b>Rev John O'Connor</b> (May 1959-Jan 1961) <i>(RANR Chaplain, 1959-1962)</i> <b>Rev Paschal Flannery</b> (Feb 1958-Jan 1960) <b>Rev Adrian Cork</b> (Feb 1960-Nov 1964) <i>(RANR Chaplain 1961-1964)</i> <b>Rev Thomas Hunt</b> (Feb 1961- Jan 1962) <b>Rev Wallace Crowe</b> (Feb 1962- Nov 1963) <b>Rev Henry Byrne</b> (Jan 1964-Jan 1968) <i>(RANR Chaplain 1965-1969)</i> <b>Rev John Fitzgerald</b> (Jan 1964-Jan 1969) <b>Rev Ignatius McNamara</b> (Feb 1964-Jan 1966)
1969-72	<b>Rev Jeremiah Downey</b>	<b>Rev Francis Guiry</b> (Feb 1968-Jan 1972) <b>Rev Lawrence Blake</b> (Feb 1969-Jan 1972) <b>Rev Kevin Flynn</b> (May 1970-Aug 1970)
1972-74	<b>Rev Noel Cook</b>	<b>Rev Brian Hassett</b>

		<p>(Feb 1972-Jan 1973)</p> <p><b>Rev Fred Edwards</b></p> <p>(Feb 1972-Mar 1973)</p> <p><b>Rev Philip Harding</b></p> <p>(Feb 1973–Jan 1974)</p> <p><b>Rev Brian Maher</b></p> <p>(July 1973–Jan 1974)</p> <p><b>Rev Giuseppe Canova</b></p> <p>(July 1973–Feb 1974)</p> <p><b>Rev Anthony Frey</b></p> <p>(Sept 1973-Jan 1974)</p>
1974–80	<b>Rev Michael Quinn</b>	<p><b>Rev Philip Harding</b></p> <p>(Feb 1974–Aug 1976)</p> <p><b>Rev Anthony Frey</b></p> <p>(Feb 1974– Dec 1975)</p> <p><b>Rev Michael Mullen</b></p> <p>(Dec 1975–Nov 1978)</p> <p><b>Rev John Daly</b></p> <p>(Sept 1976-Dec 1976)</p> <p><b>Rev John Woods</b></p> <p>(Nov 1978– )</p>
1980–85	<b>Rev John Butz</b>	<p><b>Rev John Woods</b></p> <p>( - Nov 1981)</p> <p><b>Rev John Morrison</b></p> <p>(1980–1984) (resident)</p> <p><b>Rev Michael Burke</b></p> <p>(Nov 1981– Dec 1983)</p> <p><b>Rev Kenneth Heffernan</b></p> <p>(Jan 1984– )</p>
1985–88	<p><b>Rev Patrick Power</b> (appointed Bishop on 18 April 1986)</p> <p><b>Rev Hilton Roberts, Adm</b> (May 1985–Feb 1988)</p>	<p><b>Rev Kenneth Heffernan</b></p> <p>( -Feb 1988)</p> <p><b>Rev John Woods</b> (1985–1986) (resident)</p>

1988–94	<b>Rev Philip Buckley</b>  <b>Rev Brian Hassett, Adm</b> (Feb-Dec1990)	<b>Rev Peter Miller</b> (Feb 1988–Feb 1991)  <b>Rev Joseph Tran</b> (Feb 1988–Jan 1990)  <b>Rev Paul Huthnance</b> (Feb 1990–July 1994)  <b>Rev John Armstrong</b> (Feb 1991-July 1993)
1994–2000	<b>Rev Michael Burke</b>	<b>Rev Anthony Percy</b> (Aug 1994–May 1997)  <b>Rev Mark Croker</b> (July 1997– Oct 2001)  <b>Rev Peter Day</b> (Feb 2000- ) (ordained Oct 2000)
2000–08	<b>Rev Dermid McDermott</b>	<b>Rev Peter Day</b> ( –Nov 2006)
2008–10	<b>Rev Mieczyslaw (Mietek) Markowitz</b>  <b>Rev Peter Day, Adm</b> (2010)	<b>Rev Peter Day</b> (Nov 2009-March 11)  <b>Rev Jaison Mulerickal</b> (resident) (Jan 2009-)
2011– present	<b>Rev Troy Bobbin</b>	<b>Rev Jaison Mulerickal</b> (resident) (-Jan 2011)  <b>Rev Samy Irudeyasamy</b> (June 2011-March 2012)  <b>Rev Joshy Kurien</b> (July 2012– Jan 2014)  <b>Rev Peter Day</b> (July 2015-present)

#### **West Queanbeyan (1971-87)**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Parish Priest</b>
1971–82	Rev Kevin Flynn
1983–85	Rev Justin Barwick
1985	Rev Joseph Rheinberger
1985–87	Rev Thomas Martland