



The University of Newcastle

History Club

Department of History

STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS
IN
AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

No 4

1979

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

HISTORY CLUB

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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PREFACE

This issue continues the practice, begun in 1976, of publishing the best original research papers done in the Australian History course. The series is now well established as a useful contribution, particularly to the history of Newcastle and its environs. Students are encouraged to work with primary sources from the University Archives, the City Archives, local collections up and down the Hunter Valley and private documentation that may surface during their searches.

This year students were offered a three-fold choice: to find their own primary research topic, to use a given set of primary documentation (e.g. The Bigge Report, the Newcastle Morning Herald) to answer a specific question, or to do a conventional assignment based largely on secondary sources. The four papers offered this year are from the first two categories. They represent some, though not all of the most original and best presented studies. Other papers which we did not have room to publish, but which deserve special mention were:

Susan Bentley	The Life and Times of 'Mona Vale'
Cathy Berecny	The Effectiveness of Newcastle as a Place of Punishment and Rehabilitation
Doug Cassidy	The Fight to Survive: The Great Depression in Newcastle 1930-33
Mark Clement	Socialism in Newcastle: The Elections of 1885 and 1895
Stephen Dunn	The Impact of the 1843 Depression on Hunter Valley Living Standards: An Examination of the <u>Maitland Mercury</u> .
Toni Flanagan	The Coal Monopolies held by the Crown and the A.A. Company in New South Wales
Eva Higgs	Security and Newcastle in the War of 1914-1918
Leonard Notaras	The Effectiveness of Newcastle as a Place of Punishment and Rehabilitation
Anne Pill	Cooks Hill: Its Contribution to the Development of Newcastle
Janelle Redmond	Beginnings of a Town: Life in the Cessnock District 1900-1906
Kim Tait	The Decline of the Lake Macquarie Aborigines in the early Nineteenth Century
Mark Watchorn	Camden Haven 1870-1930

All the local history papers, as with those of previous years, are available for public perusal in the Local History Collection of the Newcastle Public Library.

John Turner, Margaret Henry, Peter Hempenstall

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PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WITH THE BUILDING
OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, NEWCASTLE 1868-1902

BY

JANELLE PAULING

SYNOPSIS

The Diocese of Newcastle faced many problems when it contemplated building a Cathedral in 1868. This paper traces the development of the building and the difficulties faced, especially regarding finance, until 1902 when the first stage was completed.

The history of Newcastle's Christ Church Cathedral Parish shows that a temporary building for worship was erected on the present site in 1812. This was replaced, in 1818, by the first Christ Church, which remained until 1885, when it was removed to make room for the present Cathedral.¹

The Cathedral had been envisaged as early as 1847, when the Letters Patent, founding the Diocese of Newcastle, assigned Christ Church to Bishop Tyrrell for his Cathedral. This church was obviously but a poor substitute for a cathedral. An appeal was launched in 1849, but did not appear to meet with much success.² This proved to be the pattern with similar appeals in the years ahead.

Nothing of a more concrete nature was attempted until 1868, when a meeting of parishioners "resolved to appoint a Building Committee... to take all necessary steps for the erection of a new Church...".³ A subsequent meeting of this committee resolved to advertise in the main newspapers, calling for designs for the Cathedral Church at Newcastle, N.S.W. This led to the decision to accept the design of Robert Speechly, of the Melbourne firm of Terry and Speechly, on the 2nd February, 1869.⁴

However, the situation was not as straightforward as it appeared. The Building Committee was on the brink of one of the many problems that were to plague them throughout the history of work on the Cathedral. John Horbury Hunt, an outstanding Sydney architect who had submitted a design for the Cathedral, had been in correspondence with one of the assessors in an attempt to convince him of the superiority of his design, despite the fact that it was considerably more expensive than the others submitted. His efforts, and those of his staunch supporter, Canon White, were ultimately successful, for Terry's chosen design was set aside, and Hunt was appointed architect of the Cathedral. J.M. Freeland goes so far as to suggest that "possibly even before the competition was decided",

Hunt knew he would by the architect.⁵

Tenders for the work were called in January, 1870, but the building did not commence until 1883. The quest for funds to carry out the work had begun. The fund started in 1849 and was reinstated in August, 1868. Even before a design had been selected, the Building Committee had resolved to appoint two collectors at every meeting to canvass and collect subscriptions.⁶ This was altered in the following year so that all members of the committee were to be "supplied with printed subscription lists and use their best efforts in raising subscriptions".⁷

It was at this point that the Building Committee, and indeed the whole Diocese was forced to recognize the problem that was present throughout. All future work on the Cathedral was to be hindered by a lack of finance.

Thus, despite the efforts of collectors, the Cathedral Building Fund's account with the Bank of N.S.W. for the years 1868 to 1876 reveals donations only amounting to £424, of which over half went in expenses.⁸ The General Building Fund accounts, for the years 1868 to 1882, show a balance gradually increasing by donations and interest, from £149 to £996.⁹ However, this fund was for all diocesan purposes, and therefore reflects the fact that financial support was not readily forthcoming.

One source of income, apart from donations and subscriptions, that was available in 1871 was the leasing of the Church land now known as the Glebe that was owned by the Diocese. The coal from this was estimated to be able to bring "an aggregate of at least £13,293, a very large portion of which would be available for building the Cathedral".¹⁰ The following year, at a special meeting of parishioners, the Chairman stated that "he thought there were good hopes that in a short time arrangements would be made by which the Australian Agricultural Company would rent from them their Glebe land for mining purposes, and that they might expect to obtain a large sum for their proposed new Church".¹¹

The Bishop consented that all monies derivable from the Glebe, whether for mineral rights or leasing the surface, be devoted to the building of the Cathedral.¹² The popular thought, obviously, was that enough money would be obtained from the Glebe land to commence and sustain work on the Cathedral. This proved to be far from the truth, because, although money from the Glebe land provided a significant proportion of money used to fund the Cathedral, it alone was never enough to continually carry on the building. Indeed, it seems, on reflection, that Bishop Pearson was closer to the truth in 1880, when he said that while the Diocese depended on the coal from the Glebe lands, the Cathedral would never be built.¹³

However, in 1871, it was still regarded as the main future source of revenue. But in 1872 the rent was a meagre £18 and this did not even go into the Cathedral fund, but was paid to the incumbent as additional stipend.¹⁴ This reflects the problems the Diocese was having generally regarding finance. The fact that for the years 1868 to 1882 the most money received from all sources by the Diocesan Council was £6205 shows that the Diocese was really in no financial position to seriously contemplate building a cathedral during this period.¹⁵

The Building Committee re-formed in 1873, after a four year break, and the Chairman confirmed that the lack of finance was the prime cause of delay in beginning work on the Cathedral. He stated that "this long cessation from active operations in connection with the building of the Cathedral has arisen from our having had it by degrees forced upon us, that owing to the great difference between the estimated cost of the design and actual tenders for the same, it was not practicable for us to go on with the work...".¹⁶

The Committee now formed was, however, seen to be in a better position than the previous one, to push ahead with the commencement of the Cathedral. But this expectation proved hopeless, as in March 1875, the design still had not been adopted.

Indeed, nothing was attempted for several years to come. In 1880, the President of Synod noted that the "money presently available for building the Cathedral is : £1200 from the Usher legacy; several sums amounting to £856; variously invested and £385 especially contributed as memorial to the late Bishop".¹⁷

By the time a new bishop, the Right Reverend J.B. Pearson was installed in August, 1880, the old church was proving extremely inadequate, and the parishioners and clergy of the Diocese were understandably disappointed and disillusioned. This disappointment is clearly illustrated by the text of the illuminated address they presented to Bishop Pearson upon his arrival which stated, "We are looking to you to help us to wipe away the reproach which...lies heavily on us, as regards the Church in which you have this day been installed...and we confidently anticipate that at a not too distant date you and we shall have the happiness of beholding a noble Cathedral crowning one of the finest sites in the world...".¹⁸

In Pearson, a vital and optimistic leader, they had seemingly found the right man, capable of commencing the task. He immediately surveyed the situation and took the people to task for not giving enough to the great work of the Cathedral. From the evidence available, it appears as if he took every opportunity to reprimand his parishioners and urge them to contribute more. In 1881 he preached that "a noble church...will not be built by a mere wish, nor by passing half a dozen resolutions that it ought to be built. It will require a united effort, and we...do hope that when the time for effort comes, city and country will both strive to build a church which shall be more worthy of its sacred uses", and similarly, "I pray you to bestir yourselves...trying to remove a standing disgrace from your city and diocese...".¹⁹

He thus encouraged his people to regard the building of the Cathedral as a diocesan effort, and not merely a parish one. However, this was a problem that was never really come to terms with during the entire early

work on the Cathedral. Although canvassing took place in all the other parishes, it was never very successful, and therefore the raising of funds was not a united effort. The problem was still evident as late as 1902, although it improved slightly in later years. The Synod noted in 1902, that support for the Cathedral had come almost entirely from Christ Church Parish, with little financial support or even encouragement from the rest of the Diocese, although it was a building that would benefit them all.²⁰

Bishop Pearson so stimulated action that at the Synod of August, 1881, a new Building Committee was appointed.²¹ In that year, a sub-committee was also appointed to devise a means of raising the amount of money required to build the Cathedral. Thus a definite attempt was being made to remedy the problem. The sub-committee resorted to many varied sources of aid in raising funds.²² However, even all these attempts together were unlikely to provide the sum of £20,000 that was being considered as the likely cost of the Cathedral. The sub-committee therefore, proposed a specific, well-organized plan to augment these funds. It afforded an opportunity to all churchmen in the Diocese to give, according to their means, the amount to be spread over five years.²³ This plan for subscriptions was accepted by the Building Committee and was presented to the parishioners with a call for their liberal support.

Financially however, the 1880's were a difficult period for the Diocese, generally. Droughts had led to a loss of income just when an increasing income was needed to replace the government assistance that had recently ceased. The rapid increase in the number of new parishes and the expenses they entailed during this period also contributed to the financial difficulties of the Diocese.²⁴

Thus the time did not yet seem right for the commencement of the Cathedral. But sufficient money had been accumulated to allow a beginning and work finally commenced with the laying of the foundations in 1883. It should have been a time of rejoicing with the work on the new Cathedral

finally beginning but more problems became evident almost at once.

There was an apparent clash of personalities between the volatile architect, Horbury Hunt and the then Canon Selwyn. This led to bitter struggles between the two that inevitably involved the Building Committee, and although the work continued until 1885, it stopped at that stage, with only the foundations completed.²⁵ At this point a dispute arose with Hunt regarding the plans. A settlement could not be reached and this eventuated in protracted law suits which were to delay the work for another six years.²⁶

The work, it seemed, was not to be accomplished by any easy means. Meanwhile, to complicate the issue still further, the old church had been showing signs of weakness and was considered unsafe. Therefore, Hunt was asked to design a temporary pro-cathedral for use until the Cathedral was eventually completed.

This building was finished in December, 1884, and was used for service from then until the Cathedral was available.²⁷ This meant that money that should have accrued for the Cathedral had to be spent on this temporary substitute. The prospect of a true Cathedral seemed to be receding. Even fittings for the interior of the Pro-Cathedral proved to be costly, and the fact that finances were stretched to the limit is revealed by the instructions to the architect preparing plans for flooring and lighting, "that utmost economy (was) to be studied".²⁸ Once again the work on the Cathedral itself was at a standstill, but in this instance not only because of financial considerations. The foundations alone had cost £5000, and it seems unlikely that there would have been sufficient money to continue had not the legal troubles between Hunt and Selwyn forced the work to slow to a halt. Although at a meeting of parishioners in April, 1887, a strong desire was expressed that the building of the Cathedral should proceed without delay,²⁹ at Synod in June of that year, the President's address revealed the straitened financial position of the Diocese; "Our funds, managed with most scrupulous economy, have just enabled us to

pay our admitted liabilities: they have not enabled us to meet new wants...".³⁰

People were obviously reluctant to give to a cause that they could see little hope of eventuating in their life time, if at all. Thus, perhaps much of the trouble that was experienced in obtaining donations may have been alleviated, if enough money had been available initially to make a start on the building. However, this was not the case and there was a reluctance to contribute.

Another setback to the building plans which the Diocese faced during this decade, was the complete collapse in health, in 1887, of Bishop Pearson. This forced him to return to England, leaving the Diocese without its leader. Many important decisions could not be made in his absence, and the Bishop was too ill to resign his post officially, forcing Canon Selwyn to act in a limited capacity in his place.³¹ This caused problems regarding the work on the Cathedral, so that Canon Selwyn was moved to state, in 1889, that he felt very reluctant to take further steps until they had a bishop among them again.

However, the financial position had seemingly improved, as he followed this with the statement that "the delay is really here not a question of money. We have considerable funds in hand...subscriptions to a considerable amount have been promised or given during the year...".³² Indeed, approximately £4,000 to £5,000 was available for the continuation of the Cathedral.³³

The absence of a bishop was a major deterrent to action and therefore the arrival of the new Bishop, the Right Reverend George H. Stanton, in 1890, led to another attempt to re-start building. Tenders were called for the roof and walls, and after further delays, a contract was let to John Straub, in 1891, for £14,853. Indicative of the shortage of money that still faced the Committee, was the fact that a clause was included in the agreement with Straub stating that, if funds became needed they could suspend the contract when, "work and materials together shall amount to £8,000".³⁴

This clause was a necessity, considering that the Committee had at this time only £6,500 for the work, of which £5,000 was actually available and the other £1,500 merely long promised.³⁵ Thus the Building Committee thought the time was opportune for a renewed appeal to carry on the work. They reported that up to the present there had been £9,452 contributed from all sources, of which £5,210 came from only forty eight donors, with the remainder from the Glebe, the Memorial Fund of Bishop Tyrrell, and Bishop Pearson. It was time therefore, that the Diocese as a whole made a "steady and liberal response".³⁶ Towards this end the subscription forms of 1881 were re-instituted, in the hope of encouraging donations.

On the 2nd June, 1892, the foundation stone was finally laid and work commenced.³⁷ But once more it was not destined to proceed smoothly and almost immediately disagreements arose over the occupation of the site, the bricks to be used and other issues.

Ultimately, in 1893, a strong disagreement arose over the final certificate of payment for the first stage of the contract that Hunt had issued to Straub. The Building Committee felt that it was an overstatement of the correct amount due. Straub noted in his diary that he delivered this certificate for £3,762, for payment on the 21st July,³⁸ but the Building Committee stated he was not entitled to the amount. The problem eventually went to court to be solved. Writs for £3,500 were served on the Dean and Bishop by the contractor.

This placed the Diocese in extreme difficulty and it was decided to mortgage the site of the Cathedral, if the Committee should be forced to pay Straub.³⁹ The court decision did uphold Straub's right to the money, but fortunately the Committee was not forced to mortgage the Cathedral site as they received from Dr. Pearson, the late Bishop, a gift of £500 that went a "long way to removing the present debt and enabling the Committee to settle with the contractor".⁴⁰

Indeed, it would appear that the Committee objected to paying Straub's

final certificate because they simply did not have the funds to do so. On the 14th April, 1893, the Committee had instructed the architect to give Straub notice to suspend the work in accordance with the provision in the contract for this action, thus intimating that they had run out of money.⁴¹ This was further evidenced in May, when the President of Synod called on everyone to contribute, because "the fund was more than exhausted".⁴²

At the same Synod meeting, the Building Committee reported that in order to pay the "last certificate for £3,762 and other contingent liabilities it has been necessary to obtain an overdraft of £1,500". Despite this, they recommended that all efforts be made to complete the building, and that the £5,000 necessary be borrowed while subscriptions were being sought. They felt that if the work were suspended, not only would the building suffer from exposure, but a new contract would be for a much higher amount.⁴³

A newspaper report of 1894 stated that "at every meeting of Synod, the Bishop...reflects upon the action of wealthy parishioners in the Diocese failing to contribute to the funds of the Cathedral...".⁴⁴ However, the truth was that the 1890's were an extremely bad period for the Committee to be canvassing funds for the Cathedral because by 1892 most of Australia was in the grip of the worst depression it had yet experienced. The period was a dismal one for many people, with financial collapses, unemployment, industrial strife and the worst drought on record. Thus, despite appeals to their conscience, the parishioners of the Diocese probably could not afford at this time to give to their church, to any extent.

Because of this and other factors, the Committee was forced to secure a loan for the money to continue with the work. The Australian Mutual Provident Society, when approached, had offered to lend £5,000 on very moderate terms, on the guarantee of a large number of churchmen.⁴⁵ The loan secured, Synod resolved "to instruct the Building Committee to proceed with the completion of all present contracts of the Cathedral...as soon as the

necessary financial arrangements have been completed".⁴⁶ The amount had been borrowed on mortgage, with the full intention of proceeding with work on the building, under existing contract.⁴⁷

Attempts were made once more to secure the necessary funds. An application to the Christian Knowledge Society brought a grant of £1,000 payable when the work was complete. But the recent depression had prohibited any collection of private donations and a debt of £3,000 burdened the work already done.⁴⁸

Money to complete the work was to prove unnecessary in the light of subsequent events, as the work was to remain at a standstill, with the first part of the contract complete, and the walls half way up. The Synod, having been reminded by Horbury Hunt that they had to make a definite decision on whether the work was to continue by the 30th June, 1894, wrote to him officially on the 22nd June, requesting him to give notice to the contractor to proceed with the work. He replied on the 26th enclosing a new notice to be signed which excluded some wording he had found objectionable; this was accordingly signed by the Dean and Bishop and returned on the 28th June. Despite this, the Committee received a notice in August from the contractor, stating he had been informed too late, and that he considered the contract had therefore been terminated.

He agreed to go on if he was paid another £1,600, but probably due to lack of money as well as the injustice of the situation, the Committee refused. Considerable correspondence with Hunt, during which they blamed Hunt for the situation, eventuated in Hunt supporting Straub's claims, and going so far as to award him a final certificate for £1,000. To avoid further court action, which they could ill afford, the Committee paid this amount, but the contract was regarded as terminated and work did not resume.

The problem with finance was ever-present, especially since, although the work completed was supposedly valued at over £9,000, leaving £6,000 for the completion of the entire contract, the opinions of other architects

set the value of the work done at £6,500, while that remaining to be done was £9,000. This implied that the Committee had not received value for money, and also that they would need much more money to continue than previously anticipated.⁴⁹

The Building Committee were anxious to free themselves of the debt to the A.M.P. Society, and resolved "not to proceed with the building until the sum of £3,000 could be paid off". As they did not intend to continue work immediately, they informed Hunt that they would pay him what was due and terminate his agreement.⁵⁰

They also resolved that whenever credit of the Committee made it possible, the amount due to the A.M.P. should be reduced. In 1896 the Dean undertook to obtain a loan, since no other means were available, for a sufficient amount to pay off the first £1,000 due under the mortgage.⁵¹ However, in 1898 contributions were still being sought to pay off this first instalment.⁵²

Steps were taken in this year to reinstitute a committee for the Cathedral and to encourage moves toward completion. Canvassing of subscriptions once more took place. In 1899 the Building Committee sought a report from Fred K. Menkens as to the best possible manner in which to proceed with the Cathedral. After considering various alternatives, Menkens suggested that "the work not be recommenced until such a time as you see your way clear to complete the walls in one uninterrupted contract".⁵³

This report led to renewed efforts for contributions, as did the occurrence of the Diocesan Jubilee. The appointment, in 1900, of Bishop John Francis Stretch as Dean of Newcastle, gave fresh impetus to the situation. The plans for the building were reconsidered, as Bishop Stretch felt they would prove inadequate in the light of Newcastle's development and likely increase in population.

The eminent Sydney architect, J.H. Buckeridge was consulted on altering the incomplete structure to provide seating for 1,500 persons. As the need was urgent, it was decided to complete the nave to a certain height and to roof it in such a way as not to interfere with future work when it became financially possible to carry it out. This work was expected to cost £3,500. A contract was let in 1902 to Messrs. John Howie and Sons, and with a temporary chancel and roof, the building was adapted for divine service and dedicated on the 21st November, 1902.⁵⁴

The worst of the 1890's depression now being over, the financial position of the Diocese improved slightly and contributions were more forthcoming. The "Jubilee Cathedral Completion Fund", instituted in 1899 progressed well until its closure in 1901. But still appeals were made to the people of the Diocese. One such appeal stated "...your Committee appeal to the whole Diocese to show its deep interest in this most important work by placing at its disposal as a thank offering, the £10,000 required to carry out the desired object...".⁵⁵

In 1902 the Century Thanksgiving Fund was designated for the completion of the Cathedral and evoked considerable support. In this year also, unused building materials were sold, entertainments were staged to make money and the Women's Guild made donations. But these were not enough and the Committee was forced to seek other assistance. The A.M.P. agreed to allow the mortgage to be overdue for two months without an increase in interest. In addition, the Bank of N.S.W. agreed to allow an overdraft of £1,000 on guarantee, signed by members of the Committee.⁵⁶

In the years following the partial completion in 1902, money was still being sought, as eventually it was hoped to complete the building properly. Every year attempts were made to beautify and furnish the Cathedral. These mainly took the form of memorials and much of the interior of the Cathedral was paid for in this way.

In 1902 the Cathedral was by no means complete. It was to take another seventy seven years before this was to be the case. The problems that had plagued the Building Committee until 1902 continued. The financial problem was ever present and at no stage was there enough money to fully complete the building.

FOOTNOTES

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11. Ibid., Special General Meeting of Parishioners of Christ Church, 2nd April, 1872.
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17. Synod Report, Friday, 19th November, 1880, AB7468.
18. "Illuminated address to Bishop of Newcastle from the clergy and laity of the Parishes of Christ Church St. John and St. James, Newcastle, August 1880", A5310(i).

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20. Synod Report, 2nd Session 13th Synod, May, 1902, pp.16, 17, AB7486.
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22. Cathedral Building Record 1881. Report of Sub-Committee appointed by Cathedral Building Committee, 23rd November, 1881. These sources were: "Legacies; Memorial Offerings; Thank offerings; the Glebe; the Great English societies; Sales of Work; Collections in Churches; Collections in Sunday Schools; Donations from Colliery Companies; Donations from Shipping in the Harbour; Absent Property Holders; Debentures; Donations Outside Diocese", AB7879.
23. Ibid. There were to be 6 classes each representing donations from £1 to £100 per year and a certain number of contributors were required in each class to raise the required amount over five years.
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26. Parochial Council Minute Book 1882-98, Parochial Council Meeting, 8th April, 1889, AB7839.
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29. Ibid., Meeting of Parishioners of Christ Church, 12th April, 1887.
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32. Synod Reports, p.16, President's address 11th June 1889, 1st Session 9th Synod, AB7468.
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35. Synod Reports, Cathedral Building Committee Report, 3rd Session 9th Synod, May 1891, p.55, AB7480.
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38. John Straub's Diary of Cathedral, 21st July, 1893, A536(ii).
39. N.M.H., October, 1893, A5368.
40. N.M.H., 2nd November, 1893.
41. Castleden's History of Cathedral, 1936, A5369(viii).
42. Synod Reports, President's address, 2nd Session 10th Synod, May/June, 1893, p.17, AB7480.
43. Ibid., Report of Christ Church Cathedral Building Committee, pp.56,57.
44. N.M.H., 12th December, 1894, A5368.
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47. N.M.H., 30th July, 1896, A5368.
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 A5356(iii) - Printed and written material
 A5357 - Legal correspondence 1882-1899
 A5359 - Miscellaneous material
 A5361 - Miscellaneous records and correspondence
 A5362 - Financial records 1868-1948
 A5364 - Miscellaneous accounting records and correspondence
 A5366 - Printed material on Cathedral
 A5367 - Printed material on Cathedral
 A5368 - Press clippings
 A5369 - Miscellaneous records

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