

# The Chimes



Newsletter of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia

Vol. 25 No. 2 – Mar 2025

## Welcome Dom Anthony!

*In a private monastic ceremony before Compline on Monday 24th March, our postulant Rohan Viswalingam was clothed as a novice of New Norcia.*

As inspiration for his monastic journey, Rohan took the name Anthony, after Anthony of the Desert, a model for monks.

Dom Anthony will now spend the next year settling into monastic life, and will undertake an on-line course of monastic studies from Sant' Anselmo, our house of studies in Rome.

We share, Abbot John's short homily from the clothing ceremony below.



*Rohan Viswalingam clothed as a novice of New Norcia*

The gospel Rohan has chosen for his clothing is one we are very familiar with; it is a gospel oftentimes chosen for requiem Masses, no doubt for its cosy image of a special room prepared in heaven for the deceased, providing much comfort for grieving loved ones whose hearts are troubled. Whilst eternal life in heaven is the ultimate goal for all of us, this clothing of a novice is clearly focused on the journey the novice is about to undertake, a kind of handing the novice a map to show him the way to his ultimate destination. In Jesus' proclamation that he is the way to the Father's eternal home, which is reaffirmed in Benedict's rule when he instructs us to prefer nothing to Christ – the love of Christ – the gospel and the rule will be Rohan's sure guides as he makes his way.

In choosing the text from Isaiah, Rohan is indicating that he is aware and understands that the journey he's about to undertake, is not going to be easy, in fact it's going to have a fair measure – a necessary measure – of suffering, pain, affliction and oppression – times of being totally lost and feeling abandoned.

But, this is only part of the story, part of the paschal mystery in which Rohan will align his vocation. It all leads to joy – not as some kind of certificate of merit for enduring the suffering and the little deaths along the way, but an assurance of joy which is on offer and can be accessed here and now – in this particular place, with this particular community. The psalm we just sang assures us that Rohan and each member of the community has a Good Shepherd leading us to green pastures, restful waters, banquets and all that is good.

Along with introducing Rohan to the other one-hundred-and-forty-nine psalms which he'll pray endlessly throughout his monastic life, and all the other pillars of monastic life (prayer, work, lectio divina, hospitality, and community) and all the spiritual values that sustain the monastic life (humility, obedience, conversion, stability, silence, solitude, and so on) Rohan has a sure and solid path before him, and he now has a community of like-minded brothers to walk with him, to pick him up when he falls (and fall he will), but most of all to love him in the uniqueness of who he is.

You would have read Rohan's impressive short article in the recent edition of Chimes, telling us of what led him to the monastery. We read there of an intelligent, articulate and creative young man with a sincere desire for God. In his seeking, Rohan has tasted from a smorgasbord of spiritual delights, and it appears he has now found his way, now found his spiritual home. His choice is not a result of sifting through all these traditions in order to find the one that seems right or secures the most comfort. No, Rohan's decision to become a monk of this community is the product of authentic and deep discernment, and we are confident that this is the right path, because we have been discerning too.

May the God of surprises who invited Rohan to this fragile little community – a fragility that is nonetheless full of possibility – bless his response in taking up the invitation. In doing so, God now has something to tell him, has something to tell all of us. May our response indeed lead us all together to eternal life, eternal joy.



**The Easter Triduum is the greatest solemnity of the Church’s liturgical year and staying at New Norcia over these three days is a wonderful and unforgettable way of being immersed in the great beauty, mystery and splendour of this occasion.**

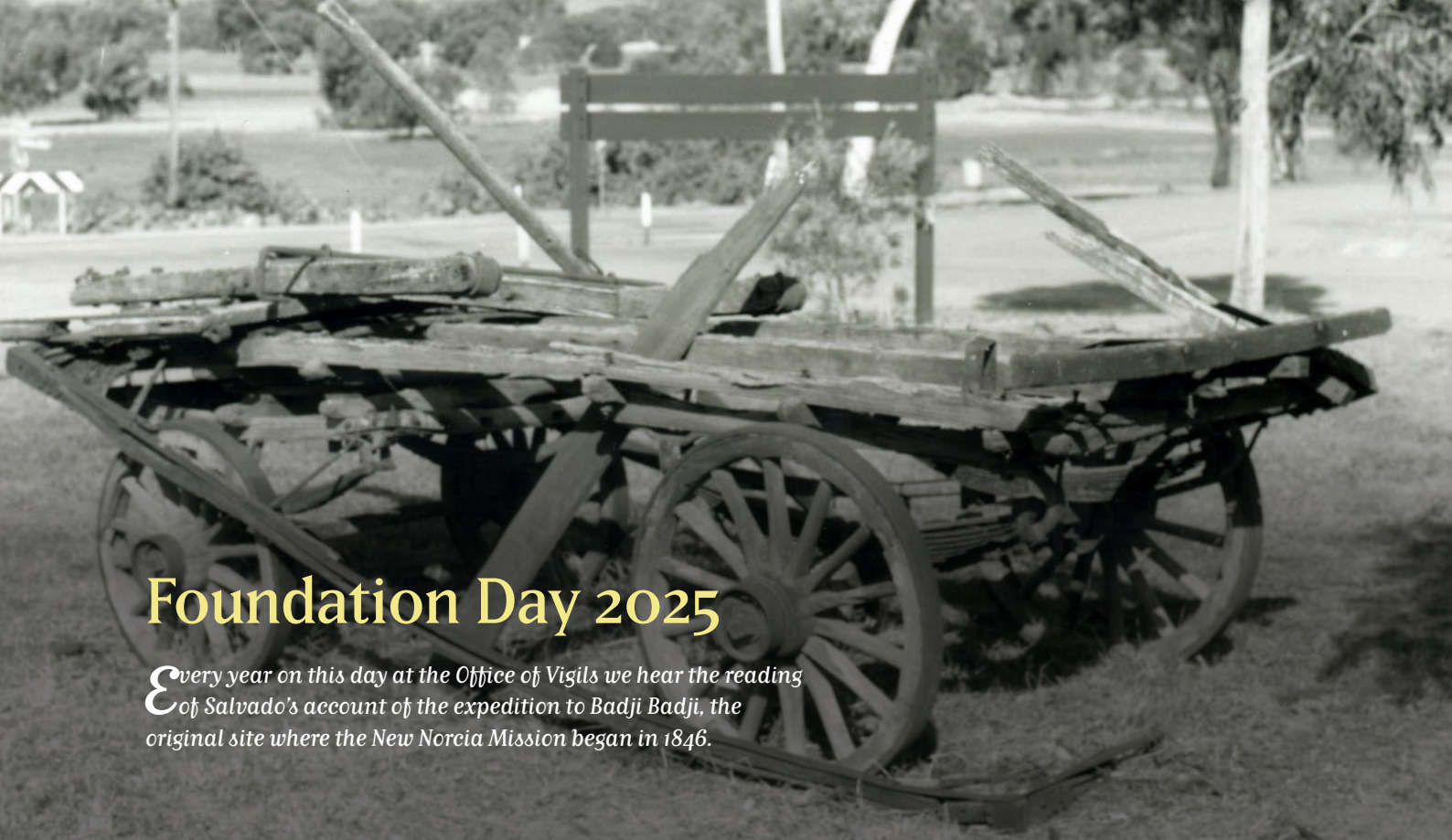
New Norcia is delighted to be able to offer packages including accommodation, meals and participation in the liturgy and other events to our guests. The events over these days include:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Holy Thursday (April 17) | Mass of the Lord’s Supper (7.30pm)   |
| Good Friday (April 18)   | Liturgy of the Passion of the Lord (3.00pm)<br>Taize Chant and Prayer (7.30pm) |
| Holy Saturday (April 19) | Musical Recital (10.30am)  |
| Easter Sunday (April 20) | Vigil Mass of Easter(4.30am)<br>Morning Mass (9.00am)                          |

The Monastic liturgy of the hours will also be prayed and are open to our guests.



Click the QR code to make a booking for any of our Easter packages.



## Foundation Day 2025

Every year on this day at the Office of Vigils we hear the reading of Salvado's account of the expedition to Badji Badji, the original site where the New Norcia Mission began in 1846.

It is on the one hand a disturbing account as Salvado describes in vivid detail the gruelling conditions of the journey (the intense heat, the lack of water, the frustration, and so on) yet at the same time it is a very moving account as he describes the first Mass celebrated on the back of a dray in the midst of "these immemorial trees" whilst the local Yued people looked on – a moment of trust in Christ, whose name he and his party had come to proclaim.

I'd like to read you the first paragraph of the next chapter of Salvado's Memoirs (Stormon 1977) describing the second day at Badji Badji, because, although today's New Norcia is rather different, it tells us that one hundred and seventy-nine years later our days are fundamentally the same; we are still involved in the same essential activities.

*"On the following day it was all hands to work. We recited our usual prayers, and then cut and dressed timber, dug holes in the ground and began putting together a kind of rough hut capable of containing men, equipment and provisions, and also a small Mass altar. As evening came on a few natives appeared and looked on suspiciously from the distance, but without fear. They took up a position near the pool, perhaps forty yards from us, lit a fire, and after a while lay down to sleep. We did not interrupt our labours; indeed we worked all the harder, though with beating hearts, to show that we were*

*not afraid. When it was too dark to work anymore, we lit our own fire, stood around it and sang Compline with full monastic solemnity. Then we knelt and recited the Rosary, and afterwards made a meal out of some boiled rice and damper, and lay down to sleep on beds of tree-leaves." (p.37)*

So, we are still working, eating and sleeping. Although the emphasis is more on restoration these days, we are still building, not just for the monks, but for the staff who live and work in this special place with us and the many visitors with whom we are sharing this unique place of spiritual, cultural and historical significance. We are still celebrating the Eucharist and praying the Liturgy of the Hours with monastic solemnity, which means seven times a day we gather in prayer to give thanks, to offer petition, to be still in the presence of the Lord. Salvado's account of that second day describes the natives as looking on in suspicion; today we don't consider them as on-lookers, but as our brothers and sisters, collaborators in the on-going life of this living tradition, however complicated that might be, given what has taken place here over the years.

In order that New Norcia remains a living tradition we are called to renew our commitment to mutual respect, support and encouragement, and, just as in those first days of the Mission, fear must give way to faith, hope and love. We were just reminded in the reading from the prophet Isaiah (63:7-9) this

is especially so in times of distress. Just as we can't imagine how tough it must have been in those early days here, I'm sure Salvado never envisaged the kinds of difficulties we face today. But in all the sorrow and joy, the chaos and the calm, we are assured of God's steadfast love ... in abundance. All we have to do to be assured of that abundant love, even when we don't feel it, is to follow St Paul's advice in the second reading: to be "those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:1-9). And, even when it seems our call is not heard, we are reassured by the words of Jesus in the gospel:

"Remember, I am with you always to the end of the age" (Matt 28:16-20). In all this we can confidently go on singing with the psalmist: "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy" (Ps 126).

Along with joy, we have good reason to hope too. God has sent us a new recruit, Rohan, who will become a novice in a few weeks' time, on the eve of the solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. And it appears God is whispering in the heart of another young man, who will spend time in our midst at Easter to discern his vocation.

The monks are about to express this joy and hope on this our foundation day by renewing their profession of the promises of stability, conversion of life and obedience. Monastic promises they may be, but three important values worth considering for anyone and everyone on the journey towards God.

~ Abbot John

# The metamorphosis of The Old Trading Post (OTP).

*How the ugly duckling transformed into a gorgeous swan! Sitting up to the south of the Museum and Art Gallery is the Old Trading Post, for many years known as Lanigan's Store, in the days when the current Roadhouse was simply an old-fashioned garage. The OTP had until recently lain dormant for some 30 years.*



The first image on the left is Lanigan's Store when it was in full flight. The garage (current Roadhouse is to the rear. Note the old-fashioned coach pulled up for the passengers to get food and drinks from the store).

To the right of this image is the OTP in March 2024 just before the restoration works commenced, and a view of what has now become the central and main gallery for the Mandorla art collection. New Norcia has some seventy-six pieces of Mandorla art spread through our buildings and in our art storage areas.

A task of this size doesn't happen by itself, but requires a lot of planning and marshalling of trades in a logical order. Ian Smith, the Property Manager was the man for the task, gathering together his crew: Shady, Oelaxandr, Chris and lately Dimitri and George. They did a lot of the base work in preparing and cleaning up prior to each phase of the operation. Beyond them, there were a myriad of trades that needed careful coordination: roofers, a bricklayer, plasterers, an electrician, a plumber/gas fitter, a refrigeration mechanic, earthmovers and asphalters, then finally the internal painting and the flooring (done in-house). Besides that, there was work in the OTP flat, kitchen and bathroom to be organised. A truly mammoth task...well done Ian and our Grounds and Maintenance crew.

These projects start from the top and work down. First the south verandah was removed and once Top Gun Roofing had started taking off the tin, Shady and Ian could get into the rafters, remove elements and replace what needed replacing. Then the Top Gun Roofing crew got to work and replaced the roof. The old chimney needed some work, and meanwhile the inside of the building was cleared of all the things that had been stored in there over the years.



To the left, below – Ian and Shady working in the open roof cavity.

To the right of that, Top Gun are completing the roofing and finally...

WE HAVE A NEW ROOF, and the OTP is starting to feel reinvigorated. Shady and Oelaxandr did a lot of work rebuilding the south verandah, and making and repairing the sections of balustrading and step handrail sections that are part of the iconic features of the external look of the building.

Then, in no particular order come the internal trades.

LTP plastering endlessly patching the walls and removing the old and fixing new ceilings in the north galley and the small south gallery. The main gallery already had a suspended ceiling which also needed repair, done by our NN crew.

By now, the new balustrading was installed and our painting contractor Steve Mossman was on site for weeks painting the external

walls and literally kilometres of balustrade timber. Steve has been part of the “family” for many years, and has painted in and around most of our buildings.

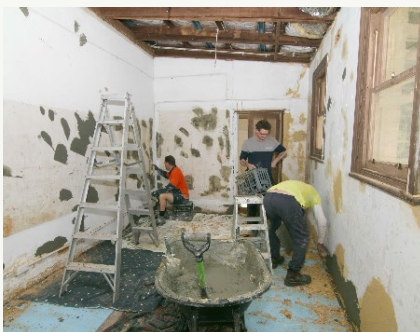
Meanwhile our crew were working on a multitude of carpentry jobs that needed doing before Steve could start inside.

Then a procession of an electrician, fridge mechanics installing the air conditioners, and a plumber and gas fitter working in the flat.



Meanwhile, outside there was landscaping, earthworks and asphaltting works underway to make safe the entrance ways and roads necessary for all weather access.

Steve was then able to access the internals of the building to paint all the ceilings, architraves, doors and walls. There was weeks of work involved in the internal painting but, wow, it was fabulous when finished.





Above, painting the base of the building finished off the external work and the OTP is looking stunning.

Of course, you don't always get things right the first time, so Dimitri repainted it later to a mission brown.

Once all the new lighting for the Old Trading Post had been installed, both inside and out, they were placed on a timer; the building is now lit all night and provides a lovely view of what has become a very beautiful building as you drive into town after dark.

Come the end of March 2025, all works have been completed and we commenced the process of moving some fifty pieces of art from the previous Mandorla exhibition in the Museum and Art Gallery (MAG), the art store in the MAG and some from the main collections art storeroom into the new gallery spaces.

The process of curating and hanging the artworks was led by Abbot John, who has a great vision for the gallery and also an excellent eye for the placement of the artworks.

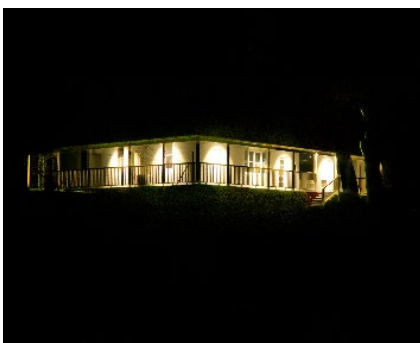
There are five gallery spaces:

- The main central gallery, a spacious large gallery and the main focal point as you enter the building from the front doors.
- A medium sized gallery (the northern gallery), nearly the same length as the main gallery, but narrower.
- At the west end of the northern gallery is an entrance foyer to the northern entrance to the building, in which are hung several artworks.
- A medium sized gallery mid to south, which is off the main entrance. This not only houses artworks but is also the allocated workspace for the artist in residence. It is the gallery space behind Shady in the photo above.
- A smaller gallery room off the main southern gallery.

Each gallery houses artworks and sculptures.

New Norcia is home to all the twenty-three past winner artworks of the Mandorla Art Award, right from its inception in 1985.

The gallery spaces have exceeded all of our expectations, and we say heartfelt congratulations to all involved in their creation. We have created a fine gallery showcasing one of the most significant collections of contemporary religious art in Australia.





# The Mazurkas of Frederick Chopin

A MUSICAL SOIRÉE

Performed by Fr. Robert Nixon, OSB

7TH JUNE 2025

At the New Norcia Hostel



Scan for tickets

Frederick Chopin (1810-1849) is perhaps the most popular and widely performed of all composers for the piano. His music is profound, beautiful, and infused with a variety of emotions and a rich tapestry of textures, rhythms and unforgettable melodies. The musical form he favoured most was the Mazurka- a type of dance from his native Poland, combining lively rhythms, distinctive melodies and rich and ever-changing emotions. This recital will present a programme consisting entirely of the Mazurkas of Chopin, and offer to listeners a unique and memorable immersion into these beautiful and capricious works.

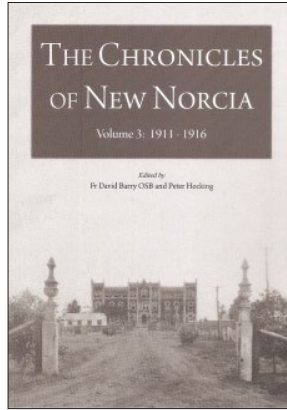
# New release: The Chronicles of New Norcia: 1911-1916

Following the release of the Santos Letters, Abbey Press is very pleased to be able to announce the publication of the third volume in the monastery chronicles series.

This volume, covering the years 1911-1916, is a fascinating account of life within the monastery and, as with the previous two volumes, the chroniclers share their reactions to world events such as the outbreak of World War 1 as well as dealing with tragedies closer to home like Abbot Torres' death in October 1914. The chroniclers never identified themselves but internal clues and other archival material reveal that the chroniclers were Enrique Altimira, Bishop Torres, Gerardo Castañares, Roberto Bas, Veremundo Ubach and Guillermo Giménez.

The chronicles were translated for the most part by Geoffrey Coad who also wrote the foreword, with editorial work by Fr David Barry and archivist Peter Hocking.

It is now available from the Museum Book Shop at \$29.99  
Visit: <https://shop.newnorcia.com.au/collections/books>



Geoffrey Coad  
(Translator)



Fr David Barry OSB  
(Editor)



Peter Hocking  
(Editor)

## Coming Events

From March 2025

4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Weekend Retreat: Benedictine Secrets for Balance and Serenity

25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Weekend Retreat: St. Francis of Assisi—Prophet of Peace and Freedom

17<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Abbot's Table: Autumn 2025

Please note there are limited tickets available

24<sup>th</sup> May 2025

One Day Retreat: Meditation and Union with God

Visit our website for a complete list of Coming Events - [newnorcia.com.au/whats-on/events-calendar/current-events](https://newnorcia.com.au/whats-on/events-calendar/current-events)

## Liturgical Calendar

From March 2025

Holy Thursday, 17 April

Mass of the Lord's Supper  
Abbey Church, 7:30pm

Easter Sunday, 20 April  
Vigil Mass of Easter  
Abbey Church, 4:30am

Good Friday, 18 April

Liturgy of the Passion  
Abbey Church, 3:00pm

Easter Sunday, 20 April  
Morning Mass of Easter  
Abbey Church, 9:00am

Holy Saturday, 19 April

Musical recital, Fr. Robert  
St. Gertrude's, 10:30am



**NEW NORCIA**  
BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY

The Chimes is a monthly publication of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia. To subscribe to the digital version, email [publications@newnorcia.com.au](mailto:publications@newnorcia.com.au).

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