



SANDPIPER

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Archdeacon Davey's Double Burial

St Joseph's Church, Benalla is credited to the 'energy and zeal' of Pastor of Benalla, Archdeacon Owen Davey, who raised funds to build the church (making a large personal contribution) and supervised much of the building process.

Archdeacon Davey did not live to see the new St Joseph's Church doors open, dying at age 67 on 22 January 1908, some six months before the Church was officially dedicated and opened on 12 June that year.



When they buried their beloved Pastor in the Benalla Cemetery, Benalla parishioners were already making plans to move Archdeacon Davey's body from his grave to the new Church and eagerly awaited sanction from authorities and the 'Great Day of Resurrection'.

Archdeacon Davey's body was later interned in the new St Joseph's Church, but where exactly, is a moot point.

In 1908, Solicitors Gavan Duffy and King, on behalf of Archdeacon Davey's estate and the Benalla community, made an application to the Board of Public Health for permission to have Archdeacon Davey's body 'buried in a private ground outside of a cemetery'. The matter was held over a fortnight, and on 2 December 1908 it was decided to "allow the burial in the church under conditions which would conserve the public health."

According to the Benalla Cemetery Trust, "It is believed Archdeacon Davey was buried under the altar of the Roman Catholic Church, Arundel St, Benalla."

Diocesan Archivist, Dr Donna Bailey, shares extracts from the FCJ Sisters' Annals, which bring the Benalla community of this time to life:

The Dean died 22 January 1908

With resigned, but heavy hearts, we left the cemetery, where the mortal remains of this most staunch and generous of friends, this holy Priest, our spiritual Father, repose for the time being: for soon, we hope the authorities will sanction their removal to the new Church, which will serve as a fitting monument to his memory, awaiting the Great Day of Resurrection.

In 1909

An event to which we had for some time been looking forward, took place quietly one June evening, in presence of some of the Community, a few of the old parishioners and four priests. Back again on the road from the cemetery a funeral procession came, escorting the remains of our late revered Archdeacon. Owing to the stringent regulations of the Board of Health, the actual interment of the remains had to take place privately. In a deep vault, cemented with concrete and in a leaden coffin at the feet of the Blessed Virgin's statue, repose the mortal remains of that good and holy priest through whose zeal and material help Benalla's beautiful, far-famed Church was raised. There may he rest in peace awaiting the call of the Archangel's trumpet, when those ears so used on earth to kindly & sympathetic listening will hear the consoling "Come." The memorial service took place on the Tuesday following when a solemn Requiem Mass was chanted and a panegyric preached by His Lordship. The Church was draped in black and silver. Our Mother Provincial came to Benalla for the occasion. It was at this time she asked one of our little four-year-old pupils if she would go back with her to Richmond. Her reply was "I'll stick to my own school. I'll stick like plaster".