

Coonamble Celebration of Brigidine History of NSW Province.

"Sr Clare, are you on the line?" ...and so began our Saturday celebration of "Providence Provides", back where it all began in 1883. In the telephone interview with Geoffrey Mann on ABC Regional radio (himself a Coonamble ex-student) there were many vivid memories of "the old bush school" from its beginnings ten days (!) after the nuns' arrival in 1883, to the present. During the day, the author, Dr Janice Garaty, visited the Coonamble Cemetery, to see the graves of some of the early Sisters, whose stories had become so familiar to her in her research.

After evening Mass, (with a rousing "Far Above..." to conclude) about 75 people gathered at St Brigid's School, for a wonderful night of memories and re-unions. The Coonamble people have always been appreciative and supportive of the Sisters, and the night was typically open-hearted and enthusiastic, with plenty of humour and lots of warmth. Mayor Tom Cullen welcomed the group, Kevin Keady recalled some of the highlights of the 130 years, and after supper (including hot soup for a cold night!) the author shared her own insights gathered over the four years of the books creation. Geoff Mann's roving microphone gave many people the opportunity to voice their own memories. Enthusiasm and real gratitude were the flavours of the night. One man said, "The Faith in this town owes its life to those nuns." A night to remember, 130 years of God's providence and the resilient kindness of the people of Coonamble.

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Clare Keady