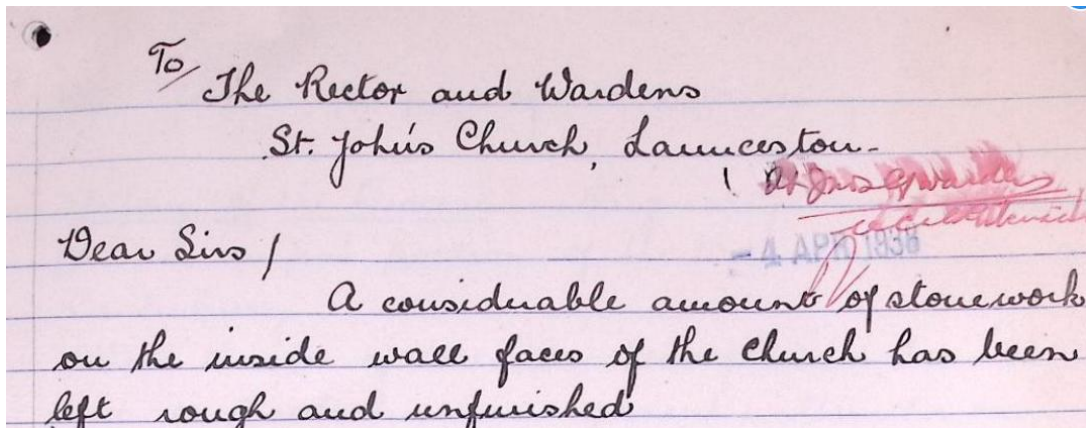


To: The Rector and Wardens St. John's Church Launceston.

4th April 1938 (date received)

Dear Sirs,

A considerable amount of stone work on the inside wall faces of the church has been left rough and unfinished.



Part of Alexander North's original handwritten letter.

It is trusted that the present uncompleted state of this work is only temporary and that at no distant date the unhewn blocks may gradually receive the impress and finish they were meant to convey. Until this is done, the interior of the church will fall far short of the original conception.

Many visitors and indeed some members of the congregation cannot understand the object for which these stones have been left, and in their present state are unable to visualise the ultimate result. Although the Churchwardens realise that the finances of the Church will not permit them to complete the carving at present, they feel that the time has arrived when some outline of the ultimate scheme should be placed on paper, so that the congregation may have some idea of the result it is hoped may ultimately be realised. The Wardens have therefore asked me to prepare working drawings for moulding the unfinished stone masses into shape.

In preparing these drawings, it has been my object to depict only such facts as have a direct bearing on the history of the Diocese, or the building of St. John's Church. Exotic forms of foliage have not been used but Tasmanian types have been conventionalised so as to fit there for the purpose of stone carving.

History of the Diocese: Originally Tasmania formed a portion of the Patriarchal See of Canterbury.

When the see of Calcutta was formed, Tasmania and all Australia were placed within the care of that Diocese. At a later date, the See of Sydney was formed and Tasmania placed within its jurisdiction. Eventually Tasmania became a separate diocese.

- No 1.** In the S.E. corner of dome, the arms of the Patriarchal See of Canterbury have already been carved these arms are supported by a lion which is the allegorical emblem of England.
- No 2.** In the S.W. corner of dome, the arms of Calcutta ought to be placed supported by an elephant.
- No 3.** In the N.W. corner of dome, space has been reserved for the arms of the Diocese of Sydney, supported by a kangaroo.
- No 4.** In the N.E. corner of dome, the arms of Tasmania are placed supported by a native tiger.

Pencil sketches have already been prepared for these designs which will give a sufficiently clear idea of the ultimate result.

NOTE: The above numbers may be taken as the order and position of other carvings, always commencing with No 1. S.E. corner of dome, or on the right hand side of chancel arch.

The four piers supporting dome: It has been thought that the most appropriate form the capitals of these piers could take, would be memorials to the four bishops during whose incumbency of the see, the principal parts of St. John's Church were commenced or completed.

No 1. To the memory of the Bishop of this diocese when the foundation stone of the name of St. John's Church was laid.

NOTE: (see note below – in red) I have been unable to discover whether Tasmania was in the Diocese of Canterbury or Calcutta when the foundation stone was laid. I have been unable to discover the name of the bishop, or to obtain a copy of his private arms. When these are obtained, the private arms should be impaled with those of the Diocese so that a complete history of this event will find a permanent record in the Church.

I spent some time with the Diocesan Registrar in Hobart, but he was unable to find any record in the Diocesan office which would show any light on the subject. This can scarcely be a matter for wonder as Tasmania did not then exist as a separate diocese, but it is a very important matter connected with the history of St. John's Church which was then called into existence as a separate parish.

This fact will become of greater interest as time goes on and serves to show how rapidly important events pass from the memory of living men, when unrecorded in writing.

I would ask the Rector to communicate with the Registrars of Canterbury & Calcutta and when he has obtained the information, I will complete the drawings. Please do not delay the matter.

I have written these notes on a bed of sickness, but I could not rest until a full explanation of the designs was made.

No 2. To the memory of the Rt. Rev. Sir H. H. Montgomery who was Bishop of Tasmania when the foundation stone of chancel was laid, and the walls of transept, chapel, vestries and dome were commenced.

No 3. To the memory of the Rt. Rev. J. E. Mercer who was Bishop of Tasmania when the walls of chancel, transepts, vestries, chapel and dome of St. John's Church were completed.

No 4. To the memory of the prelate who shall be Bishop of Tasmania when the aisles and clerestory of St. John's Church shall be built.

Rectors of St John's Church

It is proposed that the capitals of the four large columns supporting the dome shall be carved in memory of the four rectors during whose terms of office the main portions of this Church were commenced or completed, as follows:

- 1:** To the memory of the rector of this church when the foundation stone of nave was laid -
- 2:** To the memory of the rector of this church when the walls of chancel transepts, vestries, chapel and dome were commenced -
- 3:** To the memory of the rector of this church during whose incumbency the walls of chancel transepts, vestries chapel and dome were built -
- 4:** To the memory of the rector of this church who shall be incumbent when the aisles and clerestory are built.

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On the walls of the dome above these columns, the signs of the four evangelists have been carved. On one face of each capital, the symbol to one of the four missionary apostles has been drawn - St. Paul, St. Peter, St. Andrew, St James. These are complimentary to the signs of the evangelists carved above.

I do not intend that the emblems of the apostles should be carved on all faces of the columns, but only on one side, the other three faces to be filled with floral decorations.

NOTE: I have just come across the following words in a current periodical:

*"A rare old Chapel of great historical interest, stands in the grounds of the Church of England at Cobbity, New South Wales, bearing the following inscription.
"Heber Chapel, dedicated by Rev S. Marsden 1828, named after Bishop Heber, in whose diocese of Calcutta, Australia then was.
For over 106 years has this quaint-shaped building stood in this remote spot, and because of its*

age, it seems to be a guardian of the ghost-like weather-beaten graves that crowd around the Chapel"

From these extracts and the date therein named, it would appear that the carving on Sheet No 1- Drawing "M" 3694, that the foundation-stone of St. John's Church was laid, when the parish was included in the diocese of Calcutta. In which case, - I have already drawn out, the arms of that diocese, - the only vacancy would be the private arms of Bishop Heber.

It would be unfortunate if this interesting historical link in the past of St. John's Church is not recorded.

If Bishop Heber thus occupies position N° 1 on the carving of piers, Bishop Montgomery will occupy position N° 2- drawing "M" 3695, Bishop Mercer position N° 3 - drawing "M" 3696, and the last position N° 4 - drawing "M" 3697 would be reserved for the bishop in whose incumbency the nave shall be built. The arms may be impaled with those of the diocese of Tasmania, or it may be with a future diocese of Launceston, in which case the present St. John's Church will undoubtedly be the cathedral of Northern Tasmania.

Monumental Chapel: The font is in the wrong position, and unquestionably when the church is extended it will be placed near the west door.

From the commencement, it was intended that the north transept should be set apart as a monumental chapel, and there are many places where memorials of past members of the congregation of St. John's Church may be placed - No more brass plates should be allowed, but tablets might be of sectile or Venetian mosaics, natural or even synthetic stone.

On the two spandrels of gallery front, I suggest placing the carvings depicted on drawing "M" 3702 and "M" 3703.

Chancel: I have drawn the capital and bracket of one shaft (?) – drawing "M" 3704

There are still many friends and admirers of Bishop Montgomery and Bishop Mercer living in Tasmania. Possibly, some of these people would be glad to subscribe a little towards a memorial.

A. North

5th July 1935