

New Guinea Martyr honoured in Prospect

In remembering New Guinea Martyrsâ?? Day, we uncovered a piece of church history linking the martyrs to St Cuthbertâ??s Church, Prospect.

The church is home to a devotional niche, including a stained glass window and a Cross of Sacrifice, which commemorates Lilla Lashmar, one of the 12 New Guinea Martyrs, an Anglican missionary who was beheaded by the Japanese on 4 September 1941 .

Miss Lilla Lashmar, was a South Australian woman who, before becoming a missionary in New Guinea, lived at Braund Road, Prospect, just around the corner from St Cuthbertâ??s.

Lashmar had been with the Australian Board of Inland Missions in New Guinea for several years before her death.

Elements of the devotional niche honouring Lilla Lashmar at St Cuthbertâ??s. The cross in the window was a gift of the Japanese Anglican Church concerning martyrdom of Australian Missionaries at the hands of Japanese soldiers.

While we are discussing St Cuthbertâ??s, there is another, albeit slightly more tenuous, connection to the martyrs, but one which does highlight an artistic gem in the form of a triptych (pictured at the top of the page) by renowned artist Mervyn Napier Waller. Napier Wallerâ??s three-lancet window commemorating the New Guinea martyrs is a much loved feature of St Peterâ??s Church Eastern Hill in Melbourne, and was completed in 1946.

Napier Waller was a right handed artist who was enrolled in art school before the Great War. In 1915 he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces 22 Battalion. In 1917 he was seriously wounded at Bullecourt, France.

His right arm was subsequently amputated at the shoulder and while convalescing in England he learned to write and draw with his left hand.

On return to Australia he became known as a water colourist, mosaic artist, and stained glass artist.

Napier Wallerâ??s best-known works include the mosaic at the University of WA (1931), the facade of Newspaper House Melbourne (1933), murals for the dining hall of Myer Emporium Melbourne (1935), a three-lancet window commemorating the New Guinea martyrs for St Peterâ??s Church Eastern Hill Vic (1946), and the mosaics and stained glass in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra (1952-1958).

The Art Gallery of South Australia has a Napier Waller in its collection.

The St Cuthbertâ??s triptych was featured in a collection of Adelaide Anglican Art at the Art Gallery of SA sometime during the 1990s.

A triptych is a three-panel work of art that is sometimes hinged together, in this case into three hard sections.

The St Cuthbertâ??s triptych is oil paint on cardboard. The work was previously retouched by art conservator company Artlab circa 25 years ago, who also undertake work for the Art Gallery of SA (AGSA).

Anglicans and members of the public are invited to stop by the church to have a look at the work of Mervyn Napier Waller and to know they are standing in the presence of a world renown artist and a member of the order of Companion of Knights.

Napier Waller was born 19 June 1893 at Penshurst Victoria, died in 1972 Ivanhoe Victoria.

The picture above of the St Cuthbertâ??s Triptych by Mervyn Napier-Waller was taken by St Cuthbertâ??s parishioner Pauline Mosel. In another link to the past, Paulineâ??s uncle, George Bates, was killed aged 24 at Bullecourt in 1917, the same place where Napier-Waller was wounded.

You might also like to read Archbishop Geoff Smith, who served in PNG himself, reflect on the meaning and memory of the Martyrs here.

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