

Seminary Years

Werribee Park became a place of reflection, prayer and spiritual development with the opening of a Catholic seminary known as Corpus Christi College in 1923. The seminary was a training ground for young men seeking to enter the priesthood in the Dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst, Sale and Hobart that operated at Werribee Park for fifty years.

During its occupation of Werribee Park the Catholic Church added several wings to the original Chirnside Mansion, two of which have been converted into Sofitel Mansion & Spa.

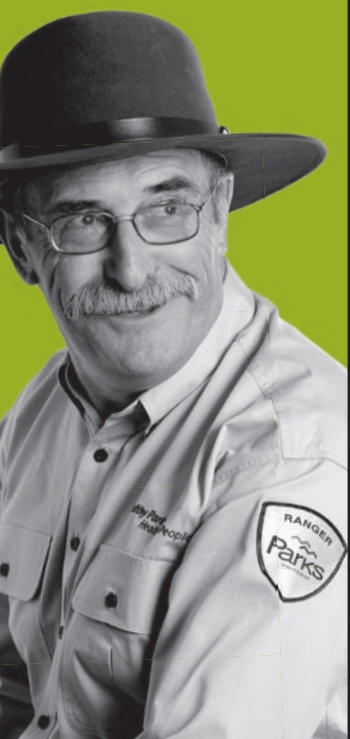
The full training course required to enter the priesthood consisted of eight years of full-time study in Arts, Philosophy and Theology. Until 1959 all eight years of study were completed at Werribee Park. As trainee numbers increased a second college was built at Glen Waverley, now the Victoria Police Academy, enabling students to undertake their first four years of Philosophy at Werribee Park and their second four in Theology at Glen Waverley.

A regular day for the trainee priests commenced at precisely 5.55am with the sound of ringing bells resonating through St Joseph's Wing (now Sofitel Mansion & Spa). Students proceeded to the chapel for 30 minutes of meditation, followed by morning mass and then breakfast at 7.45am. All meals were taken in silence in the refectory (now Werribee Park Reception Centre) to enable spiritual reflection or to listen to a reading.

Students participated in formal classroom lessons in the morning, developing knowledge in such areas as Theology, Philosophy, Scripture, Church History and Social Studies. After lunch all enjoyed a daily 'Rosary Walk' through the formal gardens. This suitably nicknamed walk was an opportunity to reflect in silent prayer within the tranquil garden surrounds.

Afternoons were devoted to pursuits outside the classroom. Students played competitive sports with enthusiasm two afternoons a week; football, basketball, handball and tennis to name a few, while a diving tower and boatshed along the banks of Werribee River hosted water based activities. A range of chores were also undertaken to maintain the buildings and grounds and ensure self sufficiency in such items as fruit, eggs and honey.

A variety of performing voices could be heard every Thursday afternoon in the theatre (now a Conference and Function Room of Sofitel Mansion & Spa). Regular plays, musicals, concerts and revues brought the room to life. Or to really test the student





Werribee Park

K Road
Werribee VIC 3030

Tel: 13 1963
Fax: (03) 9741 6879
www.werribeePark.com.au
www.parkweb.vic.gv.au

Melway Map: 201 D1

Opening Hours:

November – April
10.00am – 5.00pm daily

May – October
10.00am – 4.00pm weekdays
10.00am – 5.00pm weekends

Closed Christmas Day.

Parking & Transport:

Free car parking is available,
or for an alternative transport
option the Werribee Park
Shuttle service operates daily
from the Victorian Arts
Centre, telephone
(03) 9748 5094 for
reservations.



body Philosophical Debates were conducted, in which students memorised and cited a topical thesis and answered questions from their teachers and peers entirely in Latin!

If lucky enough students were placed on altar wine bottling duty. A sneaky tippie was known to be had whilst undertaking the favourite of chores in the bluestone Laundry behind the Mansion.

Formal or private study was scheduled again from 4.00pm until dinner at 6.00pm. Evening study commenced at 7.15pm where conversation was permitted “only on necessary matters, in a low voice, and as briefly as possible” (Rule 12) and “provided the student did not enter the room of another student” (Rule 14).

Students reassembled at 9.00pm in the chapel to hear meditation points for the following morning and to say evening prayer. Magnum Silentium - the Great Silence - began at the end of evening prayer and was observed by all until breakfast concluded the following morning.

9.45pm Lights out!

Take some time to explore an exhibition within the Mansion dedicated to the seminary years of Werribee Park. Have a wander throughout the expansive grounds, from the formal gardens right through to the natural riverine.

Are you able to find your favourite place for private reflection?