

Perspectives

The work of vandals or artists?

St Mary's Cathedral priest Fr Robert Cross, also an archaeologist, has been excavating the site of the cathedral as large parts of it are dismantled in preparation for its completion.

He has found many fascinating things which provide clues or glimpses into the past life and history of the cathedral and of those who have worked and worshipped there.

This week, Fr Robert begins an occasional series looking at some of the things that have been discovered. He is also appealing from readers for information which may throw light on any of his discoveries.

■ By Fr Robert Cross

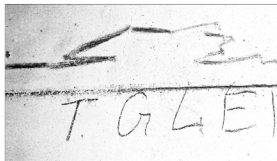
One of the first actions of the St Mary's Cathedral Archaeological Project was to carry out a paint scrape.

A paint scrape is done to determine the different paint schemes of a building over its operational life.

It became apparent that the Cathedral had only seen probably three schemes of paint over its 141 year history.

Preliminary analysis seems to indicate that the interior of the Cathedral may not have been painted originally but was simply mortar rendered. The first paint scheme, probably undertaken in the mid to late 1870's, was what is termed faux marbling.

Faux marbling imitates the appearance of marble. It appears that in the case of St Mary's Cathedral, a wet plaster was applied to the surface of the walls and then, before the plaster set, it was pointed to imitate blocks of marble and



Revealed: One of the two signatures was revealed on the Cathedral ceiling.

"scribbled" on to resemble the dark lines that run through marble.

It is thought that all the walls of the Cathedral were faux marbled, except perhaps the sanctuary area. Interestingly, the ceiling was also faux marbled. By amazing coincidence, Fr Robert Cross, who carried out the paint scrape, scraped the exact area where somebody had

signed their name on the faux marble surface. Is this the act of a vandal or is it the signature of the person who did the faux marbling?

The name of the person was D. H. Regan. In the Archdiocesan archives, a source has been found referring to a E. Regan collecting money for the painting of the Cathedral in the 1870's. Was this a



relation of D. H. Regan and can we suggest then that D.H. Regan was the faux marble artist/painter?

Another name, J. Glennon, has also been found in association with the painting, but this time it was on the faux marbled ceiling.

Again there is conjecture as to whether J Glennon was the painter of the faux marble ceiling or maybe a worker who left his mark on the old ceiling he was covering up with the pressed metal roof that was

installed in 1905.

Whether they were artists or vandals, the discovery of the names are a great archaeological find. Do you have any information as to who D.H. Regan or J. Glennon might be? Perhaps they are relatives!

Project Archaeologist, Fr Robert Cross would welcome any information you might be able to provide. He can be contacted by mail at 25 Victoria Avenue, Perth WA 6000, by phoning (08)

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