



Chapter 1

1 8 7 5 - 1 9 3 7

ONE NEEDED A STRONG SPIRIT in 1875. Charles Jolivet had it. During his journey on the ship “Syria” from Southampton, which started on Monday, 25 January 1875, and which was rough, uncomfortable and sickening to all, he prided himself on not being seasick. After arriving in Cape Town 25 days later, he sailed for Port Natal, arriving there on Thursday 4 March. It had taken him 38 days to travel from England.

After a few days with the D’Urbanites, he swept into Pietermaritzburg in the post-cart on Tuesday 16 March, to be met by a large group of people at the door of St Mary’s church, on the east, lower, side of Loop Street.

And so it was that the Catholic faithful of Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa, first set eyes on their new Bishop – the French, 50-year-old Charles Constant Jolivet. He had arrived at his new church – St Mary’s (the building known in 2002 as St Mary’s Chapel.) Next door, the double storeyed building with the dormer windows – formerly Bishop Allard’s house – was where he was first to stay.

FACING PAGE c1914 *The façade of St Charles’ College shortly after it had re-opened as a Marist Brothers school.*

RIGHT 1875 *The first of five placements of this advertisement to launch St Charles’ Catholic Grammar School for Boys. The advertisement appeared in “The Natal Witness” on Tue 6/7, Fri 9/7, Tue 13/7, Fri 16/7 and Tue 20/7/1875.*

Once in Pietermaritzburg, one of the first things he set about doing was to establish a school for Catholic boys. After all, there was one for the Anglicans, the successful Bishop’s College, and there was the small, non-denominational Government High School in Longmarket Street (opened 1863 – to become, from 1888, “Maritzburg College”) which was severely

ST. CHARLES'
Catholic Grammar School
For Boys above the age of 10 years.
Under the Superintendence of the Rev. J. M. LACY.

THE Course of Education will comprise the usual branches of a Commercial Education, including the English and French Languages, Writing, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, History, Geography, the Elements of Geometry, Mensuration, Algebra, and Mechanical Drawing, &c.

TERMS :—10s. per month.
EXTRAS :—Latin, 10s. per month.
Drawing in Landscape, Figures, Water-colours, and Chalks, 10s. per month.

N.B.—The Grammar School will open on MONDAY, 26th July.

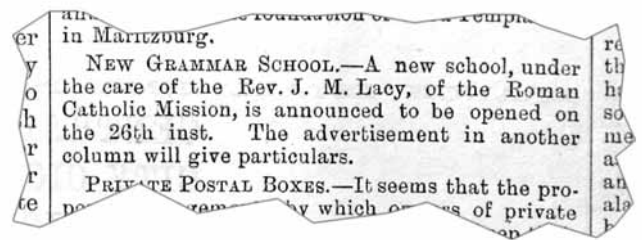
hampered by petty Governmental restraint, and which had about 25 pupils in the whole school – with one member of staff. Bishop Jolivet saw the importance of driving home Catholicism at a junior level (he'd made it work at the Holy Cross parish in Liverpool). He was instrumental to the decision, therefore, to open a school for Catholic boys in Pietermaritzburg after the mid-year holidays, on Monday 26 July, in the ground-floor rooms of his home, and to name it after St Charles Borromeo (his patron saint). The Headmaster was to be Fr John Lacy, a lively Irishman, who had travelled from England with Jolivet. (John Lacy actually was a brother in the Church, and Jolivet ordained him as a priest on 22 May that year.)

They organised a series of five advertisements to

appear, from the beginning of July, in the local newspaper, "The Natal Witness" for a "St. Charles' Catholic Grammar School". Into the bargain, the Parish Office saw to it that a small notice made its way into the general news columns of the paper on Friday 23 July.

Three days later the School opened its doors as Fr John Lacy met his boys.

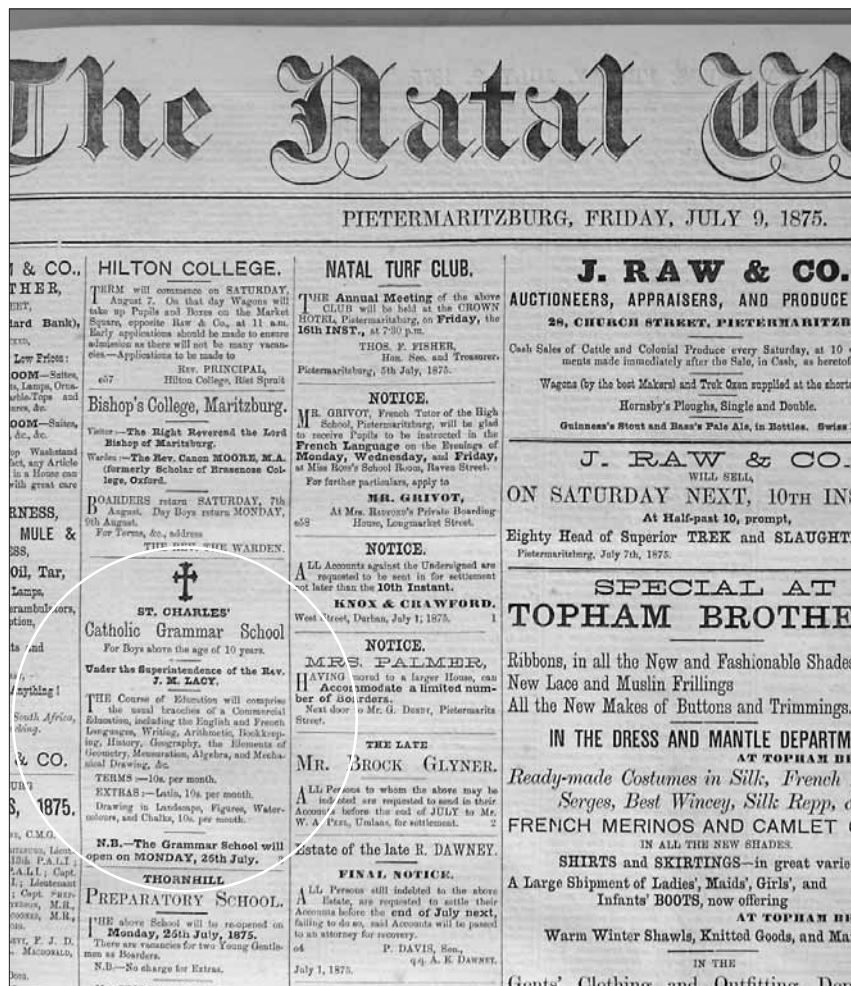
Bishop Jolivet was not there. Once Lacy and he had completed the first planning some two months



ABOVE RIGHT 1875 Natal Witness, Friday 23 March, St Charles's first press release.
BELOW 1875 Natal Witness Friday, 9 July. From the outset, St Charles' was front-page news.



ABOVE c.1875 Bishop Charles Constant Jolivet, O.M.I. As Bishop of Liverpool, Jolivet wrote in the 1860s, 'The [Protestant Ministers] had established in Hodson Street, an exclusively Catholic locality, a school of Protestant proselytism, the kind known in England under the not very flattering name of ragged school. They attracted the Catholic children with the lure of food and clothing that they gave them in exchange for their faith and religion. In vain did our Fathers denounce this institution from the pulpit and threaten with divine anger the parents who would let their children go there. We resolved to take by storm this citadel of Satan...' One wonders if Jolivet wagged his finger at the Catholic parents of Pietermaritzburg who sent their children to Hilton, Bishop's and the High School.





ABOVE 1875 Loop Street, Pietermaritzburg. On the left is the former St Mary's Church, St Mary's Chapel in 2002. On the right is Bishop Allard's house, the probable first home of Bishop Charles Jolivet and, therefore, first home of St Charles' Catholic Grammar School for Boys, established on 26 July 1875. (This photograph dates 2001.)

BELOW 1877 The east side of Bishop Jolivet's house facing on to Loop Street. He occupied one wing, on the right, while the other wing (left) housed St Charles' Grammar School in three rooms. A square portico, belfry and spire were added 13 years later, in 1890. This photograph was taken in 1914. A photo of this house, from the other side, is reproduced on Page 10.



previously, he left the City for a visit to Bloemfontein and Basutoland. So, when he returned on 21 September, he found his house full of boys – the boys of St Charles. It is not surprising that he wrote in his diary, ‘I have begun a school in our house which is small enough as it is. I found myself rather cramped.’

The Bishop’s new house was due to be built across the road opposite St Mary’s (where Ansonia Court is in 2002). Two years later, in 1877, the Bishop and his boys, with Fr Lacy, moved the School into the Bishop’s new home, the “Episcopal Palace”. The School occupied three rooms of the west wing – the boys could get out of the building via the west door on to their playground, Big Field.

By all accounts, the School was a great success. Rev. JE Brady’s book “Trekking for Souls” (1957), reports that Bishop Jolivet, in the late 1870s, regarded his educational establishment as the ‘most flourishing institution in the town...’ The early success of St Charles’ can certainly be attributed to its Principal, Fr John Lacy (who adopted a quasi-French version of his name as he became John de Lacy from mid 1976). On 10 December 1878, Sir Bartle Frere, Queen Victoria’s High Commissioner and Governor of the

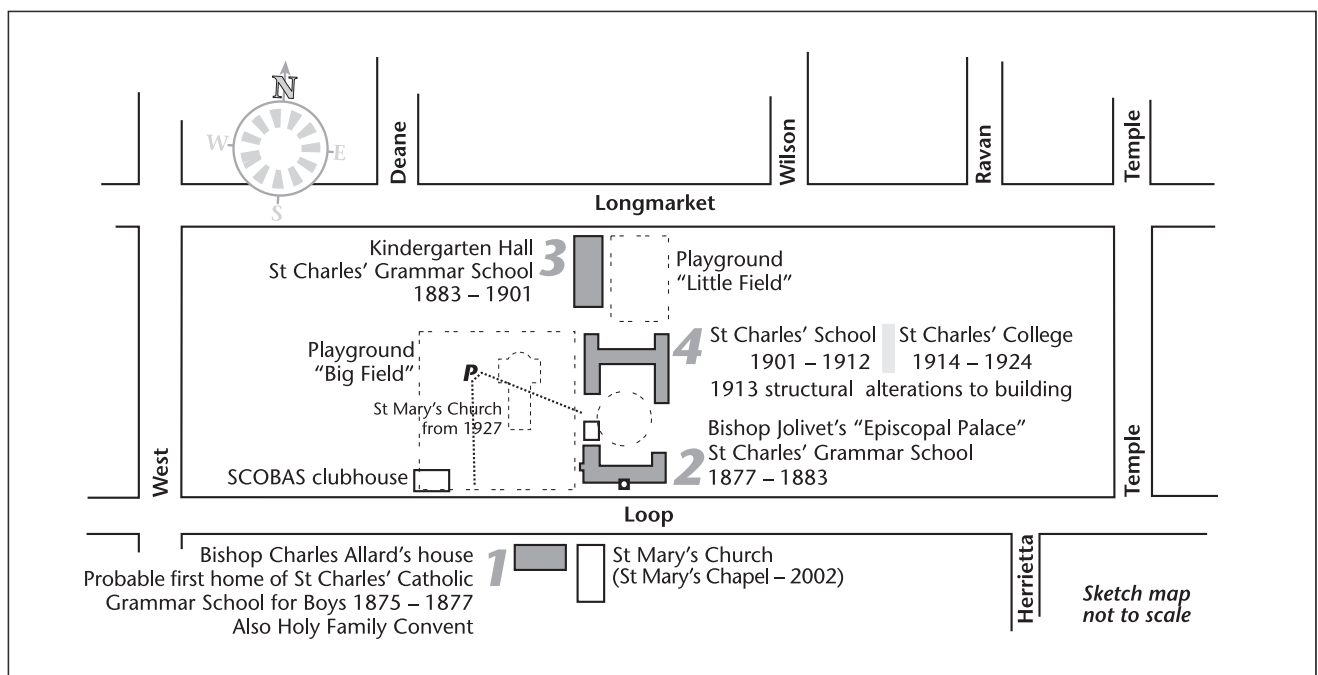


ABOVE: 1883 – 1901 The kindergarten on Longmarket Street housed the boys of St Charles’ Grammar School. (All these “Kindergarten” photos date from 2001)

BELOW: 1883 – 1901 The north wall of the kindergarten which contains engravings by the boys. Details of the brickwork engravings appear opposite.



BELOW: 1875 to 1924 This sketch map shows the progression, dating and names of the various forms of St Charles’. The letter “P”, to the west of the current St Mary’s, shows the point at which the upper photo on page 11 was taken.





1883 onwards *The St Charles' boys' break-time activities: their initials and more scratched onto the walls of their building.*

Cape, visited the School – according to Jolivet, he was very pleased with what he saw.

1879 must have been a time full of wonder for the boys of St Charles'. First, the son of Napoleon III and Napoleonic heir to the throne of France, the Prince Imperial, a family friend of Jolivet, stayed for a while in Pietermaritzburg at the Governor's home, and visited St Charles'. Even more a time of wonder when the Prince was brought back to the City, dead, by being in the wrong place at the wrong time on Sunday 1 June when he was killed by a Zulu spear in an ambush in the Zulu War of that year. His body lay in state by the altar in St Mary's, right across the road from St Charles'.

Nearly a year later, the Prince's mother, the Empress Eugenie, visited Jolivet on Tuesday, 28 April 1880, when she also visited the boys of St Charles' School. On 30 June 1880, there was the end-of-term prize-giving to the boys. They staged a small play for the large crowd present.

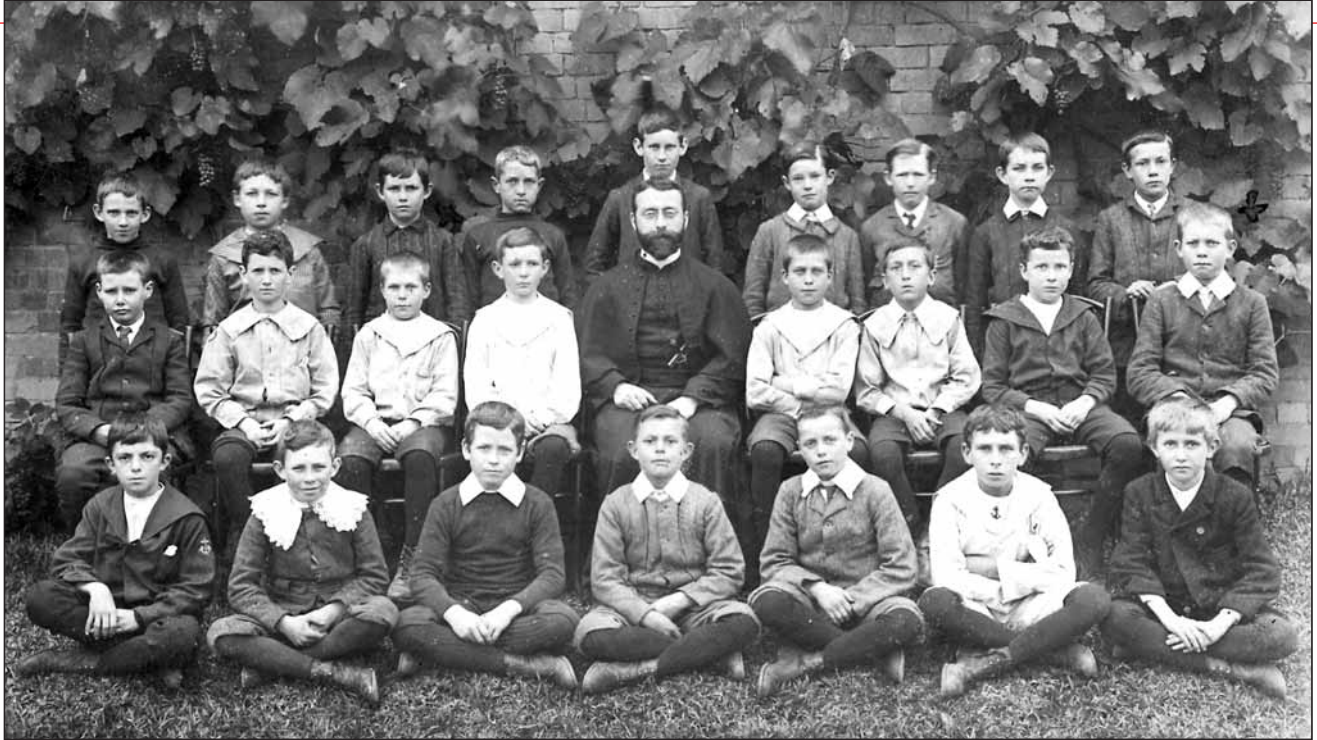
After Bishop Jolivet sent Fr de Lacy to Pretoria at the end of 1880 to start a school there, Fr d'Arcy Follis became Principal of St Charles' at the beginning of 1881. Apart from a short time away from the city (when Fr Edward "Ned" Kelly took care of the School), he stayed at St Charles' until 1893.

During 1887 fees at St Charles' were £40 a year for boarders plus £5 for washing and mending. The

THREE RUGBY-PLAYING BROTHERS

On Wednesday, 31 May 1882, at the inter-high-school rugby match between the High School (later Maritzburg College) and St Charles' on Big Field, representing St Charles' were: H Edwards (Captain), H Gutridge, W Crowley, M Wilson, Paddy Pennefather, J Baines, G Foxen, J de Souza, Stanley Baines, W Gutridge, T Gutridge, D Richter, A McHarrie, G O'Meara, J Chadwick. Both sides played well. "If Hayes, on the High School side, had not talked so much, everything would have panned off smoothly!" High School won by two goals and three tries (24pts). This is the first recorded instance at St Charles' of three brothers (Gutridge) playing for the First XV. O'Meara House at St Charles' is named after Mr Thomas Patrick O'Meara, father of G O'Meara who played in this team. G O'Meara's brothers, James Justin and Michael Henry, went to St Charles as well. They died in World War I.

"Natal Rugby" 1820 - 1964



ABOVE 1908 Fr Leo Sormany OMI, Principal of St Charles' Grammar School, from 1905 to 1913, sits midst his well-dressed junior pupils. Their thick woollen stockings and solid boots must have been hell in the hot Pietermaritzburg summers. An absence of school uniforms is notable in this 1908 photograph, with the boys dressing in their Sunday best for the photocall.

School remained housed in Bishop Jolivet's residence until February 1883 when it was moved to the hall which had housed the Kindergarten or Infant School, facing Longmarket Street (the St Mary's Parish Hall in 2002). With apparent pleasure, Jolivet noted in his Journal, 'The boys' School is now in the old Infant School and we now occupy the whole of our house.'

Realising that proper school buildings were necessary, Jolivet organised the planning and construction of new buildings for the School, from July 1889 to January 1890, which were ready for occupation in time for the start of term early in February 1890.

Proudly, across the lintel above the central arched entrance to the building, was the name "St Charles' School". For many years an apostrophe after "Charles" was included but it has been omitted recently as language norms have altered.

The portico in the centre and the wing to the west were single storeyed; they were divided into three classrooms known as "big", "middle" and "little" for senior, middle and junior classes respectively. The east wing was double storeyed – the dormitory was above, and the dining room below.

By 1897, plans which included electric wiring, were drawn up by L de la Garrique, and further building took place once the inconvenience of the Boer War was past. The boys occupied the whole of their

School from January 1903.

Staffing was a problem all along, as the Fathers were devoted to pastoral care rather than teaching. Once Fr Follis was posted elsewhere in 1893, Fr Ned Kelly took over as Principal again, but died in October 1894. Until a suitable replacement was found, Fr Jolivet took charge as he attempted to run the school through various students and lay people. Then, in October 1895, Fr James O'Donnell was appointed Head Teacher; he may have been popular with the people of the parish of St Mary's, but he was

BELOW 1911 St Charles' B five-a-side soccer team.

