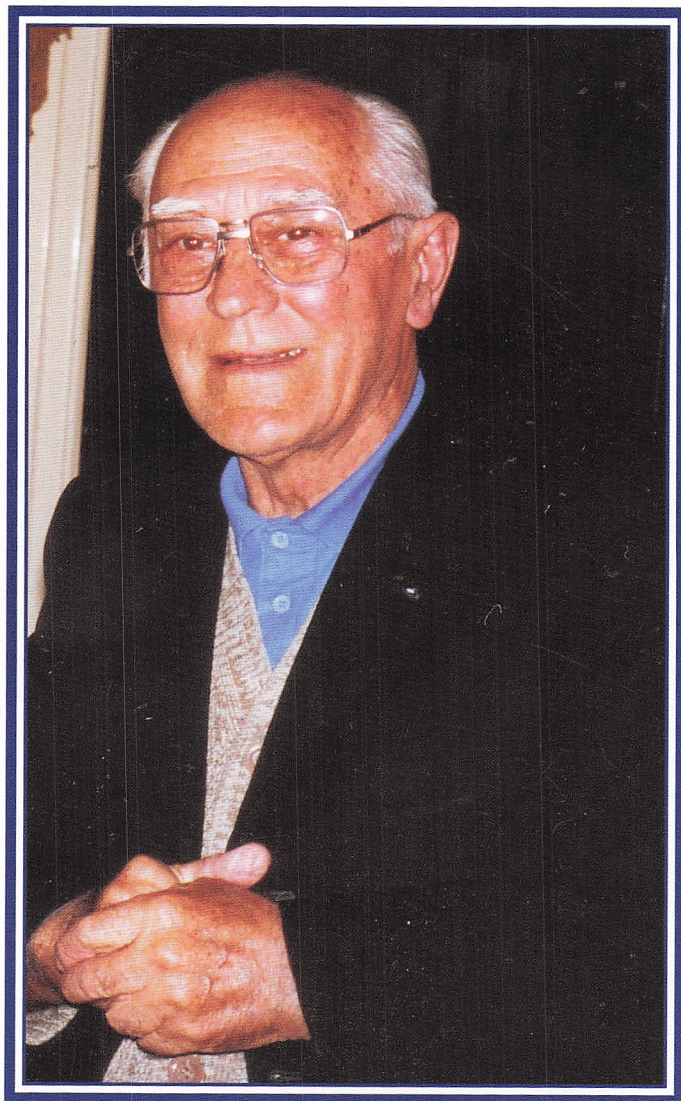


In Loving Memory of
Fr. Alan Cedric McDonald SDB



Born: 24 June 1918, Brisbane, Australia
First Profession: 8 December 1936, Cowley, Oxford England
Ordination: 28 July 1946, Melbourne, Australia
Entered Eternal Life: 9 February 2011, Brooklyn Park, Australia

Father Alan Cedric McDonald

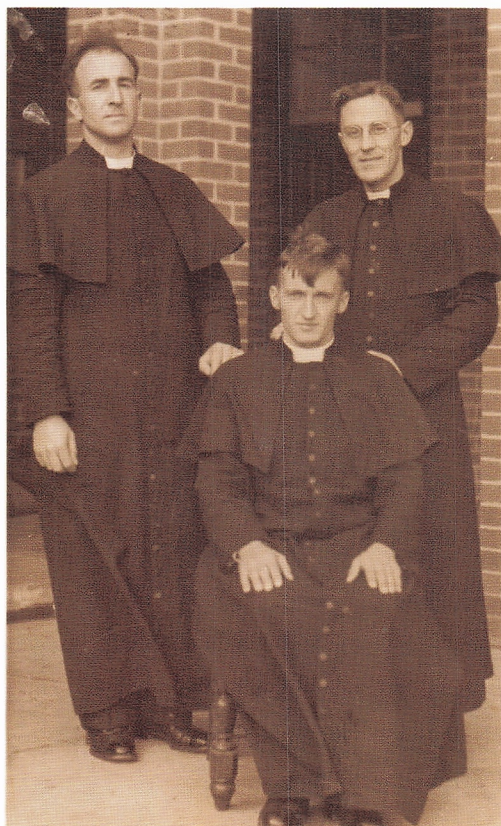
passed from this life to the next after a long journey of 92 years. In his life as a Salesian priest, he had been rector, a respected teacher, school administrator, confessor, musician, secretary and translator. Father McDonald influenced the lives of many young people at Salesian Colleges in Brooklyn Park, South Australia, and 'Rupertswood' Sunbury and Chadstone in Victoria. In his final years, he influenced the elderly and infirm residents in two Catholic aged care facilities. To his Salesian confreres, 'Father Mac' was the oldest member of the Australia-Pacific Province and they were interested in his well-being.



Born in Brisbane, Queensland, the family moved to Melbourne when Alan was young. While still a boy Alan was placed in the care of the Christian Brothers at South Melbourne; it was there he met visiting Salesians, the religious order he would soon join to follow the gospel call to discipleship according to the way of St. John Bosco.

The young Alan McDonald was around 15 years old when he became a boarder at 'Rupertswood', Sunbury. Salesian historian Father Ted Cooper tells in his book *Grateful Heirs* how the Salesians arrived at Sunbury in 1927. There was a note in the House Chronicle in September 1933 - six years after its beginning - about a serious influenza outbreak, and two sick boys, one was Alan, with high fever. Alan was taken to hospital in a very serious condition. Next day, the house chronicle had "Alan McDonald is still on the danger list" and later "Alan McDonald in St. Vincent's is very seriously ill." Alan returned to Rupertswood

in November still recovering from double pneumonia and pleurisy. In the Foreword written for Fr. Cooper's book, Father McDonald looks back and describes those times: "I was in hospital and near to death, I had regular visits from those magnificent pioneers, and years later, dear Father Michael Maiocco wrote to me and told me that after one of his hospital visits he had gone to St. Patrick's Cathedral and had offered his life to God for mine. Thank the Lord, both of us were spared."



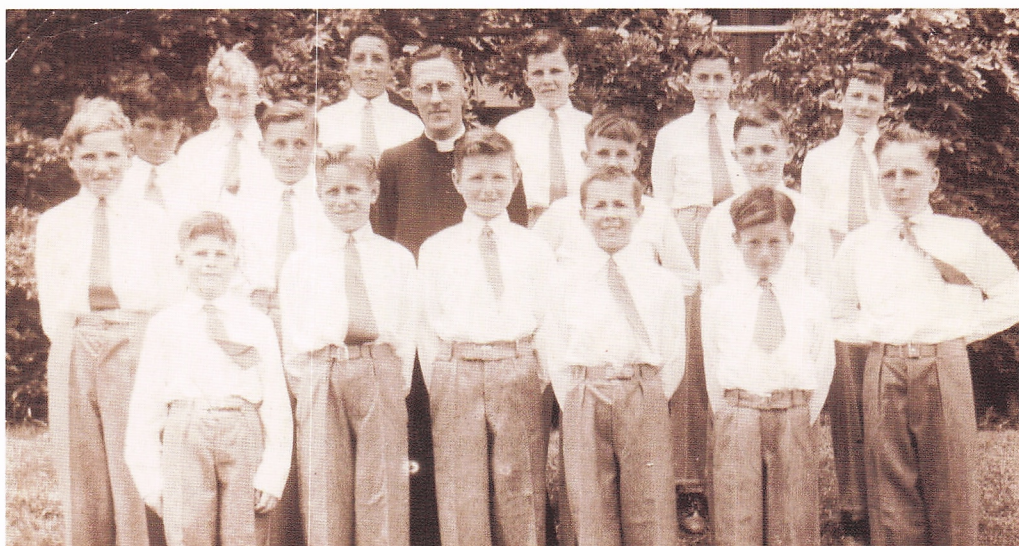
Alan did his initial formation in England, together with other pioneer men from Australia, Terry Jennings and Jim Hamilton. His Novitiate was at Cowley under Father Simonetti and he took his first vows as a Salesian in 1936. These were received by Fr. E. Tozzi. Philosophical studies followed at Cowley, then Practical Training at Beckford and Shrigley. Brother Alan sailed back to Australia across the dangerous Atlantic and Pacific oceans during World War II, on a ship degaussed to fend off magnetic mines in the water. Having returned home in 1943 he completed his studies for the priesthood at 'Rupertswood'. Alan was ordained a Priest by Archbishop

Daniel Mannix at St Patrick's Cathedral on 28 July 1947, along with two other Salesians - Fr Frank Drohan, who became a missionary in Japan, and Fr Terry Jennings.

The newly ordained Father Alan was appointed Prefect of Studies at 'Rupertswood' from 1947 to 1951. Then he served as Rector in the years 1952-1957. In his homily at the funeral Mass, the Provincial, Father Frank Moloney, paid tribute to Fr. Alan's presence at 'Rupertswood'.

"When Alan began here we ran only a primary school, exiting students with their Merit Certificate. He gradually brought the exit level to Intermediate Certificate, initiating the foundation of the outstanding secondary college that 'Rupertswood' is today. In his early 'Rupertswood' years he formed and conducted a fine Boys' Choir that was eventually recorded. We still have an old '78' of that recording in the Provincial archives. In 1952 he was appointed the Rector - the first Australian-born Rector in this little corner of the Salesian world.

"... He built the hall, and the fifty bed dormitory above it, upgrading the ablution block that served both the Sacred Heart dormitory, Our Lady's dormitory and later, the Agricultural boys. He built a study-classroom, with an associated science block, especially designed for the agricultural students, adjacent to the Chapel, and he added what in my time was the sacristy. Today we need to especially recall his important project of the Salesian Cemetery that he wanted to locate in the spacious grounds of the Mother House of the Province. The records show that this was a massive task, opposed by both municipal and state government authorities. But his devotion to the Congregation and to his fellow-Salesians ensured that this project was seen through to provide that serene place which all Salesians eventually call 'home'."



Long-time Australian Salesian missionary in India, Father Brian Diamond, recalls his novitiate year in 1953 when Fr. McDonald was his rector. *"His varied activities as choir master, breeding gold fish, repairing watches and driving the 'ute' with a load of kids down to Dromana. He brought new vision and sowed the seeds of Rupertswood's present vitality with his building projects. He was great at approaching people and gaining their support for Don Bosco's work. He had a streak of Fr. Ciantar in him."*

Father Alan then was appointed Rector of the Oakleigh and Chadstone communities from 1958 to 1960. The new Salesian College at Chadstone began in 1957. In those days, the Salesians lived at Oakleigh and came over to Chadstone each day. It was in 1961 that a residential area was built. Father Alan became Rector of Chadstone in the years 1961-1963. Past pupils, some of them now Salesians, recall Father Mac's years as an accomplished teacher as well as his influence as a Salesian priest.



His next appointment was a return to be Rector at 'Rupertswood' Sunbury from 1964 to 1969. Father Provincial once again:

"There were more Salesians around in those days of the 60s, and it is warmly remembered by many - some of us here today - as the period when the old 'Rupertswood' was at its high-point: boarding facilities, a secondary college from Form 1 to Matriculation, an agricultural course with entry at Form 4 level, and exit with either Intermediate or Leaving Certificates, and the beginnings of the presence of day-boys, especially the large cohort that came up on the train each day from Sunshine. It was also at this time that the first lay teachers - so much the backbone of Salesian College 'Rupertswood' today - were appointed: Basil and Pat Sheehan."

After completing this term as Rector, Fr. Alan went back to Chadstone as a teacher and confessor in the years 1970-1971.

Then came an appointment overseas at the Generalate of the Salesians of Don Bosco at the Pisana, Rome, where Fr. Alan was an official translator and became the Vice Rector of the community making a deep impression on them. He spoke several languages, English, Italian, French and Latin and spent two years undertaking this important work for the Congregation.

Father Alan returned to Australia to the community of Brooklyn Park in South Australia where he was the Vice Rector and a teacher at Salesian College Brooklyn Park from 1974-1979.

Old scholars reminisce:

"I reckon we could all add some things that Fr McDonald did or said e.g. his insistence that zoology and envelope be pronounced as zoe - ology and onvelope."

"His suggestion that you should sleep with a dictionary under your pillow just in case a word comes up that you do not know the meaning of."

"I shall miss Fr. Mac - he was always there to have a friendly chat. We are very lucky to have him as a teacher."

"Whilst I believe we were all influenced by many people at the school I have a confession to make. I have always had a dictionary on the bedside table, not under the pillow mind, but close. His fault! Also remember discussing 'The problem of evil' with him and ended up reading Thomas Aquinas because of that and discovering the world of Philosophy. We were all better people from knowing him."

"Fr Mac was instrumental in me being who and where I am today. I will never forget a conversation I had with him toward the end of year 12 that encouraged me to a final burst of study that got me through year 12 and into accounting at Uni SA. I will never forget his 'post hoc ergo propter hoc - after this, therefore because of this'; his bushy white mutton chops; his leather jacket and fearsome postie bike."

"I am sure he is enjoying being in the presence of his God and creator who he so faithfully served for so many years."

"It is with great sadness that I learn of Father Mac's passing. Some of us affectionately called him Big Al, owing to such a powerful voice coming from a man of such short stature ... will miss him as we all will but will remember his influence and impact. May he rest in the grace of God the Father."

Fr. Alan returned to the Pisana in Rome where he was a translator and secretary from 1980-1983.

In 1984 Fr. Alan returned to Brooklyn Park where he lived until his death this year. He was involved with Salesian College until its closure in 1996. Soon after, the Adelaide College of Divinity (ACD), an ecumenical consortium of theological institutions from the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches, moved into the former Salesian College buildings. Cris, office administrator of Catholic Theological College of South Australia, wrote to express their sadness at the news of Fr. Alan's death. *"Those of us who have been here since our move to this campus in 1997, are grateful to Fr. Mac's welcoming to this site. He was a constant help to the CTC and especially the ACD office in showing how things worked, where pipes went etc., and until he sadly moved to nursing care, he was a constant welcomed visitor to the campus."*

He continued his translating activities and produced numerous valuable translations for the confreres. Fr. Alan was called on by former provincial Father Ian Murdoch to undertake some translations for the Province. These included works by Salesian scholars such as the late historian, Pietro Stella's *Don Bosco* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001) published in the 'L'identità italiana' (The Italian Identity) series. Alan's rendition of Stella's scholarship in English was published by Salesian Province Centre, Ascot Vale and placed in the hands of all confreres in the province.

For many years Fr. Alan also celebrated a weekly Mass for the Marist Brothers at Somerton Park. This was continued even after he was no longer able to drive; a Marist brother from the community would pick him up and bring him home. After suffering a fall, he was not able to continue this commitment, but Fr. Alan remembered this weekly appointment, as he was keen to ask, "do I still celebrate Mass for the Brothers?"



The last few years of Fr. Alan's life were rather difficult. He showed signs of memory loss, which was later diagnosed as Alzheimer's dementia. This was compounded by his deteriorated hearing and the unease in wearing and maintaining his hearing aids.

He devoted most of his time and energy into ensuring he prayed the Prayer of the Church, and the celebration of Mass. Fr. Alan relied more and more on the support of the Brooklyn Park Salesian community, particularly Fr. Tony Moester who was a patient and caring confrere, whom Fr. Alan often remembered with affection as "a good friend".

Just before Christmas 2008 Fr. Alan moved into Villa Saint Hilarion, a Catholic low care, aged care facility at Fulham, South Australia, run by the Society of Saint Hilarion. With assistance he celebrated Mass in Italian for the mainly Italian residents there. In 2009 he was able to move into Flora McDonald Lodge, Cowandilla, a work of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart (Josephites) and named after the mother of St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

Though he experienced difficulties with short-term memory, for Fr. Alan, a loss of memory was not a loss of identity. He reminded us that he was a Salesian and that he had given his whole life to that religious order. For a while now, the Salesians at Brooklyn Park have celebrated Masses at Flora McDonald Lodge six days a week. Fr. Alan initially concelebrated with the confrere who was presiding at Mass. Then Sister Marlene RSJ suggested that Fr. Alan could celebrate Mass one day a week, this, then became two days a week. The residents really appreciated seeing Fr. Alan on the sanctuary of the chapel, Sr. Marlene said, as it was one of them who was presiding. He was greatly helped by one of the dedicated volunteers John Warden, who was his close and uncomplaining pastoral carer.

Fr. Alan retained a sense of humour right to the end. Flora McDonald Lodge residents liked it when Fr. Alan proclaimed the gospel at Mass. He had clear voice, elegant diction, and a command of the language.

Towards the end of 2010 there was an overall decline in Fr. Alan's condition. He could no longer preside at the celebration of the Eucharist and so continued to concelebrate with one of the Salesian priests.

Due to a fall in early January 2011, he was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital Woodville for various tests and treatments for several conditions. The dementia was becoming more noticeable and now Fr. Alan spoke slowly, not always able to complete a long sentence, struggling to converse. He said one time, "oh ... the words won't come to me!" Then another time, he was grimacing in the face with the pain of frustration, saying with exasperation, "what the heck! Where's my memory?!". It was distressing to see him in such distress.

On the other hand, there were times we noted when Fr. Alan smiled and recognised names from the past and present. He was ever courteous, always saying thank you. Once when he was offered the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, he joined his hands in prayer. Sometimes he was still able to recite the some phrases of the Lord's Prayer, and realise what that prayer was, and make the sign of the cross when receiving a blessing.

On Wednesday 9 February, Fr. Alan's long life was over as this pioneer Salesian 'passed over' to God. If he had lived longer, 2011 was going to be a double jubilee celebration year for Alan: 75 years as a professed Salesian, and 65 years of priestly service. In any case, he had laboured in the Lord's vineyard for a very long time.

A memorial Mass was celebrated on Saturday 12 February at St. John Bosco Church Brooklyn Park at which Archbishop Philip Wilson presided. He had written to the priests in the Archdiocese, "Fr McDonald was actively involved in the life of the Archdiocese during his ministry and served as a member of staff at the former Salesian College Brooklyn Park and later retired at the Salesians community in Brooklyn Park. On behalf of the Clergy and people of the Archdiocese of Adelaide, I offer our prayers and deepest sympathy to his Salesian family. Please pray for the repose of his soul. May he rest in peace."

The Funeral Mass was celebrated in the Salesian College Chapel, 'Rupertswood', Sunbury on Tuesday 15 February 2011. Father McDonald was buried in the Salesian Cemetery in the grounds of 'Rupertswood'. The Provincial was principal celebrant, with a large number of concelebrating priests, and a good gathering of members of the Salesian Family and Alan's own family including his niece Joan Potter. She and her husband Jim also came to Adelaide to visit 'Uncle Alan' on one of his later birthdays.

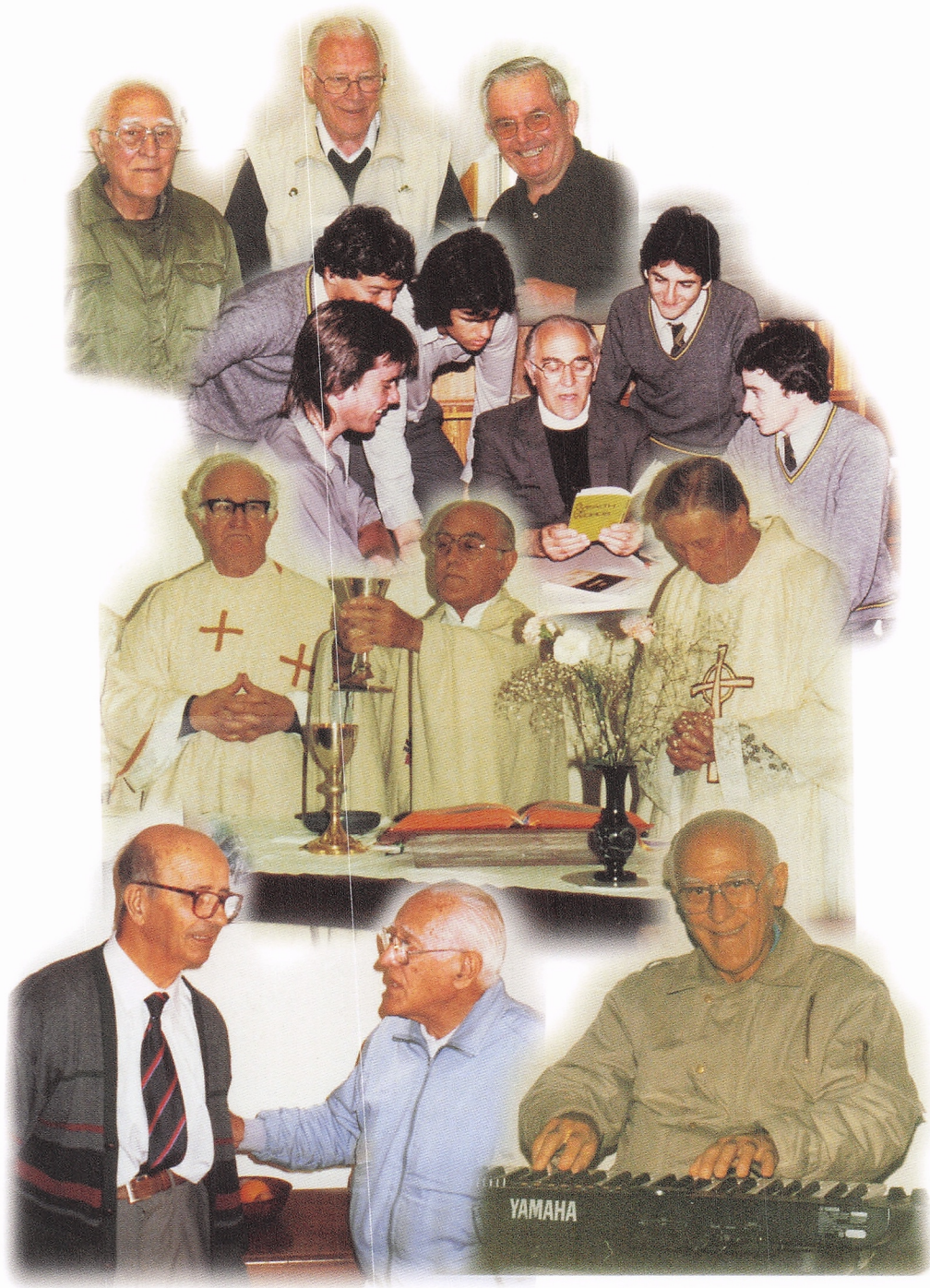
In his homily the Provincial Father Frank Moloney spoke with gratitude and respect and highlighted several chapters in his long life as a Salesian. Father John Briffa, the oldest Salesian at the funeral, led the prayers of commendation at the cemetery.

Father Provincial concluded thus:

"And so we come to say our final farewell to our oldest Salesian. What a privilege it is to recall with you all the life and contribution of this remarkable and gifted man. How blessed we are to be able to recognise our own situation, and Alan's situation, as he goes to meet the one he loved and served so well for so long, and cry out with joy, Paul's words to the Romans:

"Neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen."

Fr. Joseph Lee SDB
and the Gawler/Brooklyn Park Salesian Community
May 2011



Pastoral Ministry:
Teacher, Prefect of Studies, Rector,
Service to the General Council (Rome),
Vice Rector (Rome).