News from the Abbey



September 2025

May there be an outpouring of
Prayer and Peace
over our world at this time

Welcome to News from The Abbey

Spring has sprung! It is a time of new life, warmer days, and new growth. Here at The Abbey, the flowers are in bloom, and the beauty of our mountain home is on full display.

Much has been going on since our last Newsletter, including the passing of dear Sr Hildegard. We thank you for your prayerful messages of condolence to us during that time.

We are pleased to share that the Works Program at The Abbey has been progressing, and you will read more about that below. In addition, the insurance claim has been approved for the removal of the damaged St Scholastica's cottage and the clearing of the debris around the cottages, which will provide a fresh new look for guests who come to stay with us as the weather warms up. All are welcome!

Thank you to all who are continuing to contribute to our Fundraising Campaign to help us with the Re-Roofing project, and other significant restoration and repair works. With Stage One of the Re-Roofing Project now complete, we are currently raising funds for Stage Two of the Project. We are deeply grateful for the support we have received, and we hope to be able to move forward with Stage Two as funds allow. You'll read below about our plans to hold a Thanksgiving Mass for all the generous supporters of our Fundraising Campaign.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy catching up on all the 'News from the Abbey'.

The Nuns of Jamberoo Abbey.

Rest in Peace, Sr Hildegard Ryan osb



Our Sr Hildegard died very peacefully on June 12th at the age of 76, surrounded by some of her sisters and family members.

At 4.45 pm on June 24th, we lined the cloister leading into the Church as we waited for the body of our Hildegard to arrive. As the coffin was wheeled through the cloister we processed behind it, singing the *Suscipe* (which we sing at solemn profession) as we followed our sister into the Church. Once the coffin was placed in the centre of the choir the pall was placed over it. The coffin was then blessed and Vespers began immediately. After Vespers, the All-night Vigil began and there was someone watching with Hildie throughout the night.

Wednesday 25th, the day of the funeral began at 6 am with Vigils from the Office of the Dead. This office was followed by Lauds at 7.30 am Sisters were still watching with Hildegard after Lauds whilst others were making various preparations for the Mass and funeral. Our oblate Cecilia Larkin had arranged flowers for the Church and a wreath to go on the coffin - red roses were the choice and they look stunning.

It was a day of fierce winds and the worst that could happen, happened at 9 am, when we experienced an electricity blackout which lasted until 7.30 pm. so we were without power the whole day. This meant a major change of plan for the funeral Mass and also for the catering. With no electricity, there could be no organ, no live stream and no lights, and in the kitchen the electric stoves were no longer available to us to prepare a light lunch for over 100 people. However, under the guidance of Sr. Mechtild we did it all without fuss. It was a real team effort where everyone pulled together magnificently, including our paid staff and many oblates and volunteers. In the Church, we had no pipe organ, and this was extremely disappointing given that Hildegard was an accomplished musician who had composed so much of our music. We managed on a small battery-operated keyboard. Hildegard would have been amused!



Fr Wayne was the celebrant for the Mass and Bishop Brian joined us. As an oblate, he wanted to be here for the final farewell to Hildegard. Also here, were Hildie's two sisters and her brother, as well as many oblates and friends. The Church was packed but we did manage to get everyone into the Church.

Hildegard was the Director of our Oblates for over 30 years and hers was an amazing ministry of companioning, guidance and love to over 400 oblates. For all that she gave, she received so much more back from her oblates. Their faith filled lives of daily prayer and service were an inspiration to Hildegard and our community.

When the Mass had finished the symbols which had been placed on the coffin at the beginning were removed by the sisters and staff who had placed them there. The pall was also removed and the coffin was blessed by Bishop Brian before the procession followed the coffin out through the Church doors and down to the cemetery. After a short ceremony, it was here that we placed our sister in her final resting place.



We remember her as a giant of our community who, as a monastic woman of deep faith and prayer, held so much of our story and tradition and a special place in our hearts.

Rest in peace, dear Hildy. May the angels lead you to paradise. May you delight in the company of the God you loved and served faithfully all your life and in the joy of reuniting with the people who have journeyed with you, loved you and believed in you.

Sr Hildegard (Mary Ryan) – a lover of life, a masterpiece of God's creation, a gift to her friends and oblates, a joy and gift to her community, now, 'A feather on the breath of God.' *(St Hildegard of Bingen)*

Farewell to Our Chaplain Fr Wayne Stanhope O.Carm

Sadly, after three years we have farewelled Fr Wayne Stanhope O.Carm whose gifts and talents have been called elsewhere. Fr Wayne has devotedly shared the Table of Eucharist and pondered and broken open the Words with us. His thoughtful homilies will be greatly missed.



Singing our Blessing Song for Fr Wayne

Fr Wayne has been a recent part of our long and deeply valued bond with the Carmelites of Australia and Timor Leste going back now more than 30 years to Fr Paul Gurr coming to be our Chaplain in 1991. (Note: Fr Paul visited us during the last week of Fr Wayne being with us.)

We are so grateful for their loving support, wonderful faith-filled insights and all they have shared with us over many years. May God bless them all abundantly!





Cherished friendship Fr Paul & Sr Frances

As Elijah was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, so we sent off Fr Wayne with our love, prayer and "Chariots of Fire" music played by us.



(*From left to right: Sr Marie Grace on the guitar, Sr Mary Bernadette on the organ, Sr Petra on the cello, and Sr Benedicta on the flute.)*

Formation Experience at Portsmouth Abbey, USA

Four members of the Jamberoo Abbey community embarked on a wonderful Shared Initial Formation Experience to St Gregory the Great Abbey in Portsmouth, Rhode Island on the US East Coast in July. The four of us were: Postulants, Kathleen Lee and Aimee Brown, together with Postulant Mistress, Sr Mary Bernadette and Novice, Sr Benedicta.

Our journey was at the invitation of the English Benedictine Congregation (EBC), who not only generously sponsored the travel costs for this fortnight long event, but also organised a wonderful program of informative and inspiring talks along with opportunities to get to know each other from the different Benedictine houses attending including our hosts, the monks of Portsmouth Abbey.

Portsmouth Abbey was founded in 1918 by Dom Leonard Sargent, an American monk of Downside Abbey in England. The community is comprised of 10 monks, both priests and brothers. In keeping with the mission spirit of the early history of the EBC, the monks at Portsmouth run a secondary co-ed boarding and day school with 350 students.

One of the highlights and key objectives of the Shared Formation was the opportunity to get to know other 'beginning' monks and nuns within the EBC. Along with 'the Jamberoo Abbey Contingent' there was an aspirant, postulants, another novice and a regular oblate, together with Formators, from Portsmouth, St Louis (US), Stanbrook (UK), Ampleforth (UK), and Worth (UK). We had much opportunity to get to know each other, along with the monks of Portsmouth Abbey whose monastic life we shared in during our stay. We shared stories, experiences of monastic life thus far, both those of the long professed and those yet to be professed, and of hopes and challenges for the future. These opportunities fostered a real sense of connection among those present and to the greater family of the EBC.



Praying together the liturgy of the hours

Another highlight of our time away was the experience of celebrating together the Liturgy and Mass with the monks at Portsmouth Abbey.

We were the recipients of a series of insightful, inspiring and edifying talks given by both the formators and visiting monastics. Topics included: The Psalms; our shared EBC history and spirituality on Dom Augustine Baker and the Cambrai nuns (later known as Stanbrook abbey); the spiritual heritage of our shared communities on Doms John Chapman and Basil Hume; the history and monastic mission of the EBC US houses; human development as well as physical and spiritual health.



Formators & formandis in Portsmouth abbey church

As strangers we arrived at Portsmouth Abbey at the beginning, as family we parted at the close. The embracing and generous welcome of the monks made a deep impression. Additionally, it was nurturing and encouraging to be able to come together with other 'beginners' and realise that we are on a shared journey. In all, our time was extremely blessed, full of graces and kindnesses and offering much hope and promise as we continue our monastic journeys. We extend our grateful thanks to the EBC, Portsmouth Abbey and our Formators for making it all possible. Thank you also to our Sisters at Jamberoo Abbey who covered for us during our time away. *Sr Benedicta*

Restoration and Works Program Update



The next phase of restoration works has begun at The Abbey, with ground and drainage work starting in mid-June. The work includes readjusting the contour of the land to build swales so that rainwater can flow efficiently to areas away from the building. It also includes replacing the rotting timber walls, window frames, doors and ceilings that have been damaged by water as well as wear and tear.

We are now halfway through this work. There has been lots of soil dug up. We have lost a few trees and flower bushes. For the time being, we get to see bare ground here and there, a good reminder of the desert, a sacred time and place to wait for new life to sprout.

We are also keen to start the second stage of the roof replacement work. However, that will need to wait until after this ground and drainage work is finished as the roofers will need the space to install the scaffolding and do their work.

With all of this in mind, we are very grateful for all who have assisted us with all the maintenance work around the building so far, contractors and volunteers alike. We also would like to say a special thank you to all our donors. Thank you for your generous donation and support for our community. We continue to hold you all in our prayer. May the Lord shower his blessing upon you!

Click here to make a Donation to our Building Fund

Thanksgiving Mass for Our Oblates and Donors



We are planning to have a thanksgiving Mass for all our oblates and donors before the end of the year in The Abbey church, followed by coffee and tea in the guestry.

Once the date has been finalised, we will send the invitation to you all through email. So, if you haven't given us your email address, please let us know by emailing it to webadmin@jamberooabbey.org.au . We will also put the invitation on our website.

Words are not enough to say how grateful we are to have you as our friends and support. We keep you all in our thoughts and prayers. And please keep us also in your prayers. Thank you very much, and God bless you all.

A Special Day with the Lay Carmelites

On 16 July, we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel which was also Fr Wayne's feast day. This year, however, there was a special addition to the celebration. Two of the Lay Carmelites made their profession. At Mass that day, Frances made her first profession and Beatrice made her final profession. Sue Stuckey, the prioress of the Lay Carmelites, and few other Lay Carmelites were also there to celebrate the day.



After Mass, we joined in the celebration with cakes and coffee in the Guestry. It was really lovely to meet old friends again.







Welcome Back, Sr Julian!



Our Sr Julian has just returned back from Stanbrook Abbey after spending six months there to broaden her monastic life experience.

Welcome back, Sr Julian! We are looking forward to hearing all about it.

Many thanks to Abbess Anna and all the nuns in Stanbrook Abbey for looking after her very, very well.

Abbey Craft Update



The sisters and staff in Abbey candles, cards, books, gifts and art continue to work hard to grow our small business.

We are 25 per cent ahead on our income of 2024. This is very pleasing.

We are having a big marketing year and some exhibition and sales events of August have been the Good Samaritan Education Triennial conference held at ACU North Sydney and one of our oblates LeeAnn Wein exhibited our Wedding range at the Coffs Harbour Wedding Expo.

Our focus is for our work to be seen as 'the work of our hands'.

Visit our online shop: https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/shop/shop-home/

Upcoming Retreats

Onsite Retreats:

***5 – 7 Sep 2025*: Feeling at Home in the Universe Story** with Sr Mechtild Crawford osb

This will be a gentle retreat expanding our minds and hearts to the unfolding mystery of the universe and seeing our place as human beings in this sacred unfolding. There will be times for listening and learning, and times for personal reflection and creativity.

More information and registration:
https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/events/2025-09-05/

***24 – 26 Oct 2025*: Borrowing Tomorrow – A Cry from the Earth**
with Sr Antonia Curtis osb and Dr John Lee

In this retreat, we will look honestly at the reality of the world we live in with its struggle to keep the beauty and richness of God's creation alive. We will examine ourselves on what we do personally to contribute to the destruction that is rapidly killing all life on this planet. We will endeavour to find ways within the context of our own lives to make changes that are fruitful and life-giving.

More information and registration:
https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/events/2025-10-24/

***7 – 9 Nov 2025*: Oblate Weekend in November** with Sr Mechtild Crawford osb

More information and registration:
https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/events/2025-11-07/

***14 – 16 Nov 2025*: Contemplative Creativity** with Sr Julian Grigor

Creativity comes from the Creator, and is often born from our deep-hearted experiences. The essence of creativity is transformation; combining original elements to make a new thing. Each of us is always in the process of transformation – becoming a new thing.

More information and registration:
https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/events/2025-11-14/

***29 Nov 2025:* Taking Time for Christ this Advent**

Day Retreat – with Sr Magdalen Mather osb and Sr Julian Grigor
More information to follow later – please check on our website closer to the date.

Online Retreat:

Bearing the Unbearable with Sr Antonia Curtis osb - currently available

The whole world seems to be at crisis point and none of knows how it will pan out. We are living on the edge, teetering between the known and the unknown. It can be terrifying. Our darkness in this unknowing is truly dark. In this retreat, ***Bearing the Unbearable,*** we will be looking at how we can live the unbearable in a way that would be life giving and life changing.

More information and registration:
https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/retreats/online-retreats/bearing-the-unbearable/

Other online retreats visit: https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/retreats/online-retreats/

Cottage Information:

https://www.jamberooabbey.org.au/retreats/cottages/

