

# IBVM Archives Newsletter

A newsletter from IBVM Archives across the globe

December 2020

## An Unusual Year in the Archives

The IBVM Archives are a rich, unique and vibrant collection of records, artefacts and memorabilia, preserving and making available the evidence of the IBVM presence and ministries across the globe. Our archives are an international collection with archival repositories in Australia, Canada, East Africa, England, Ireland, India, Mauritius, North America, Spain and Peru. Together they form the global IBVM archival collection, which has an increasingly important ministry in preserving the documentary and on occasion, the material

evidence of IBVM members, communities, ministries and missions. They are relevant to and belong to each Sister, and use of the Archive is widely encouraged.

I think we can all agree this has been a year like no other. Consequently, this newsletter seeks to capture the experiences of our archivists throughout the world and demonstrate how we as a community have reacted to the restrictions and limitations presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.



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# Meet our IBVM Archivists

*Our IBVM Institute, province and regional archivists from around the globe*

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Robin Scott

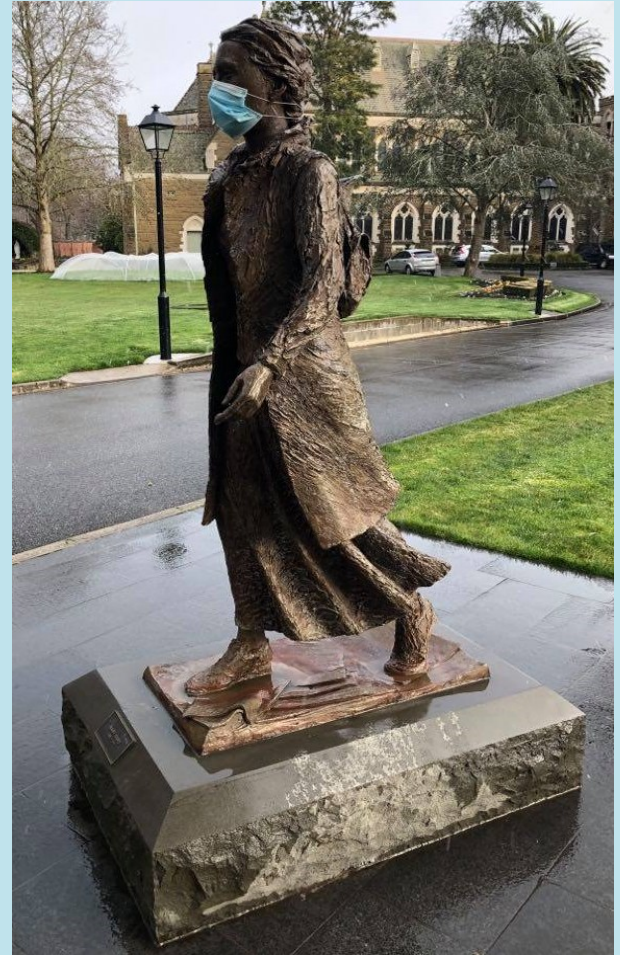
## Province Archivist, Australia & South East Asia

### The COVID Year in Loreto's Australian Province

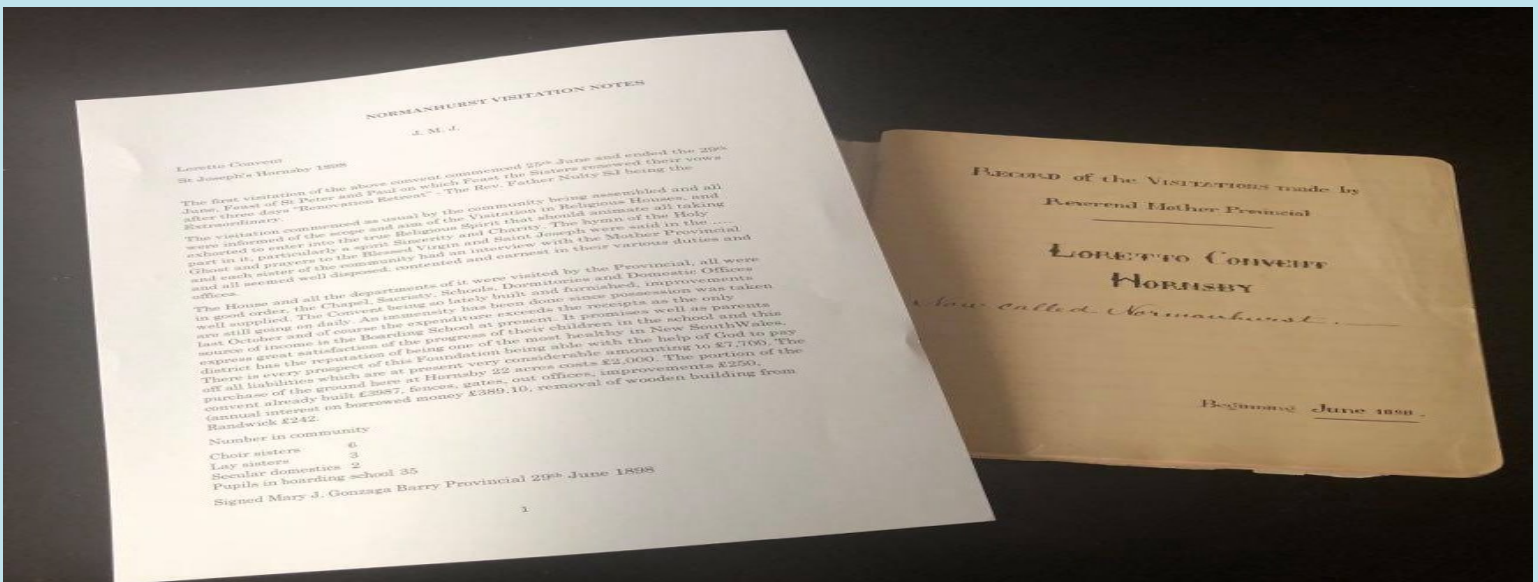
We realise that we have been relatively fortunate in our Australian COVID experience so far and our hearts go out to those Provinces so badly affected. In Australia, the City of Melbourne has been hit hardest, but, at different times, our Sisters all around the Province have been in lockdown and unable to participate in their usual ministry projects. Many have turned to work that they can do from isolation and their response to a request to assist the Archives has been wonderful.

Archivists know that it is becoming more difficult for younger people to read handwritten documents, even in an elegant Loreto hand! Our Sisters have been transcribing handwritten letters, annals, pupil registers and visitation books so that these will be more easily accessible; easier to read and searchable. The documents were scanned, and a digital copy provided to the Sisters via email or a link to a file sharing site.

The Sisters told me that reading these documents brought back memories and I hope that they have enjoyed the work. Archives certainly appreciates it.



*Mary Ward Sculpture in the grounds of Loreto College, Ballarat, just outside the Loreto Archives Centre - being safe with her mask.*



*Loreto Convent Hornsby (Normanhurst) Visitation Book and first page of a transcription made by the Sydney Community.*

**Michelle Anitra Pariag,**

**Province Archivist, Canada**

**'Twas the Day Before Lockdown – *an archives reflection of 2020 at Christmastime,***

***Canadian Region***

'Twas the night before lockdown, when all through the Abbey  
Preparations for a lockdown felt unreal and whacky.  
The rooms were all checked and monitored with care,  
With the knowledge that soon we would not be there.

Our boxes secured all snug in the vault,  
As we did not know when the lockdown would halt.  
Robert with the keys and I with my cart,  
Packed records to give working from home a start.

Way back in March how could we know,  
That the virus would take more than two weeks to go.  
Along the way many challenges did appear,  
Disheartened, when to the Archives- we could no longer go there.

We adapted our home spaces to work without distress,  
And toiled away on projects feeling quite blessed;  
Amidst all the changes our families were well,  
And our various archival projects had time to excel.

Throughout the day, we worked with Zoom,  
Facetime and WhatsApp not leaving our rooms.  
We filed and digitized and answered requests,  
Barred from the archive but we did our best.

September, “*back to the Abbey!*” the good news came,  
Finally a sense of relief we could claim.  
Returned to the archives we pack at a steady rate,  
For next year some time, we will have to relocate.

For the Institute and our Sisters we continue to pray,  
And give thanks for this Ministry each and every day.  
To our Loretto family our message is clear –  
“*Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good year!*”



Loretto Sisters CANADA WHO WE ARE WHAT WE DO GE



Robert Little and Michelle Pariag – a typical 2020 day, working together on a project while on a Zoom call.



# Nuala Brangan BVM

## Province Archivist, East Africa

Greetings from Kenya where we are in a partial Covid-19 lockdown. And where a daily drink of *home-made "anti-Corona juice"* has now become the norm for many. Here in Kenya the Primary and Secondary School level exam classes are now back in school and university courses are slowly getting back on track. Our Covid-19 numbers are rather high, yet today a new notice from the Government requests schools to reopen for all classes on Jan 4, 2021.

In the meantime, life seems to be as busy as ever with many of our Sisters engaged in online teaching, online academic studies, courses and meetings and and/or engaged in Home-based projects, such as making our "anti-Corona juice" and agriculture related activities etc. Our archives are kept in Msongari and so, as I live now in Loreto Kangemi, some miles away from Msongari, I have been slow to access them for fear that I may unknowingly bring the Corona virus to our elderly Sisters living there, especially to our three sisters who are either in, or have now reached, 100 years of age.

The importance of keeping archives is being brought home to us here in Kenya, especially these days, as plans and activities are underway to celebrate the centenary of the arrival in Kenya, on October 18, 1921, of LORETO Sisters. The beginning was small – a little band of six Sisters, led by Mother Borgia O' Shaughnessy, was sent from the Loreto Mission in India to Kenya, The mission soon took root and now the Province, greatly enriched by the band of Loreto witnesses gone before us, has grown to roughly 80 members and has moved beyond Kenya to set up missions in Tanzania and Ghana and has also sisters working in Sudan and Zambia. The launch of this Loreto East Africa Province Century year celebrations has been scheduled to take place on January 23, 2021 during Mary Ward week and will climax with the celebration of mass on January 29, 2022. Among the many activities and events in progress is the publishing of a special Loreto Centenary calendar in which the Spirituality, Formation and History of our Loreto IBVM Province will be made more widely known, especially in our Eastern Africa Province. Plans are also in progress to include a creative "Journey of Loreto" exhibition which has also necessitated drawing on our archival resources.

One of the special blessings of working on the archives at this time is feeling that we are truly part of the Institute as it draws towards union with the Companions of Jesus, a time when Mary Ward's and Teresa Ball's dreams are coming true. We thank God for these great women and for the hundreds of dedicated Loreto women and their many supporters who prayed, planned and labored to make their dream come true. May God truly bless this coming year of celebration both of our East African Province Centenary and the bi-centenary of the Foundation of the Irish Branch.



**Clare Walsh,**

**English Region Archivist, Llandudno**

My visit to the Loreto archive in Llandudno from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> March was a strange experience as we all watched the news from Britain and around the world aware that things were changing fast. By the time I left the retreat house at lunchtime on 19<sup>th</sup> the decision had been taken to shut the retreat house until at least the end of April and that I would work from home. Little did we realise as I said goodbye that I wouldn't be back for six months!

I work for Loreto for four days each month and even in the midst of the fear and sorrows of the pandemic there were silver linings to having to stay at home. Projects that have been on my to-do list for a long time have been tackled. Collection level descriptions have been written for the houses of the region. An advice leaflet about personal papers was written and circulated to all the Sisters of the region and an advice leaflet on annals has also been produced and is ready to circulate. I undertook a free online training on digital preservation that was extremely useful and I am hoping to be able to implement what I learnt in the coming year. And I've made a start on a disaster recovery plan for the archive.

Sr Catherine Fay who works closely with me encouraged the Sisters of the region to keep a record of their lockdown experiences and many of you will have seen the region's Easter experience that was shared across the institute.

This is a time when we could have felt very isolated but thanks to phone calls, emails, zoom calls, texts and WhatsApp messages I felt connected with Loreto both here in Britain and across the world. For that I will always be grateful.



When I'm in Llandudno I get out for a lunchtime walk whenever the weather allows. I kept this habit during lockdown taking a walk around my estate and these wonderful scarecrows began to appear to thank key workers and to entertain us as we stayed safe at home. The archivist in me felt the need to photograph as many as possible!



**Kathleen FitzGerald IBVM,**

**Institute & Irish Province Archivist, Ireland**

Greetings Abbey House Rathfarnham, Dublin.

Very best wishes to each one of you and a hope that you will have joyful, open days and every blessing throughout Christmas and good health in the New Year.

We certainly have a sense of unity throughout the Institute as we journey through this pandemic, measuring out the levels of cocooning decided on by Medical and Political Authorities in our respective states. Presently, Ireland is on the highest level of alert. We hope for some easing of restrictions for the Christmas Period.

Since mid-March our Archive Office has been closed. Work has been carried on, at an extraordinary level, by Áine. Covid had no effect on the work she carried out weekly. Before she went on maternity leave she had reached out into next year and left completed projects ready for Kate to post out during the months ahead. Kate is well on top of the work, although she only had 7 days with Áine. With her our archives are in very good hands. We look forward to the publication of the Life of M. Teresa Ball by Deirdre Raftery and the completion of Ruth Ferris's Ph. D. on M. Michael Corcoran's influence on Education in Ireland.

Our greatest delight was the arrival of Aine's baby son on 23 November 2020. His name is Domhnall, an Irish name. My brother uses the English version, Donal. The name is Ireland's version of Danial.

We have a great community here in Abbey House and have found many interests to work with and enjoy during our long lock-down. The spirit in our group has carried each one of us along and we are truly grateful to one another and to our loyal, hard-working staff for keeping each one of us safe.

Betty and Cindy from the USA have been in strict quarantine because of exposure to a victim of Covid. Thank God neither of them were infected. At present the storage space for their archive boxes is not adequate. That speaks of the work of cataloguing they have done. Have you experienced the increase in archive boxes required as the journey through boxing archival documents progresses? We wish Betty and Cindy the very best and they send Greetings and wishes for the New Year to us and all of our readers.

**Kate Harris**

**Institute & Irish Province Archivist, Ireland**

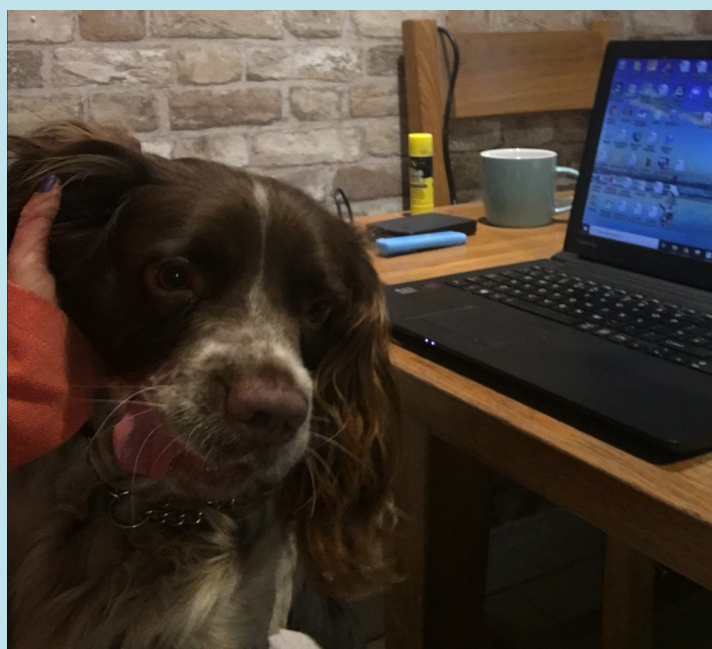
When the first Covid-19 Lockdown began in Ireland, I was in the final semester of my Masters programme in University College Dublin. We were in the middle of a cataloguing project it was announced that we would have to go home. No one knew how long the college was to be closed for and certainly no one expected that we would not return to UCD again. We worked remotely; watching recorded lectures and working on assignments. It was difficult but my class is close knit so we were constantly in contact on Whatsapp and we helped each other as best we could. This continued until August when I finally handed in my Dissertation. It was a really anti-climactic finish to a year's study but I was blessed to be able to complete my qualification.

In July, I heard about the position with Loreto archives and was immediately interested as I attended a Salesian primary school and a FCJ secondary school. The founders of these schools played a role in our day to day education and they were celebrated throughout the academic year. As a result, I had an interest in the development of religious orders and their vital impact on education in Ireland and throughout the world.

In September, I had an interview with Áine and Sr Kathleen. It was quite a strange interview as I wore a mask the whole time and wasn't able to shake anyone's hand but they still made me feel very at ease. Soon after, Áine informed me that I had been successful and I began work in October. Thankfully, I was able to work a few days with Áine before I began working from home. During this time, I got to know the layout of the archives. I got the chance to meet one of the regular researchers, I answered some queries and I catalogued one collection.

I have been working at home since 20 October 2020 and it has been strange. However, it is confronting to know there is always support available through email or through a zoom call. I have primarily been doing digital preservation work and some Archive administration. I have also been looking into the lives of some of the women buried in the graveyard at Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham in Dublin which has been lovely.

I look forward to a return to the archive and to work with the physical archival material once again.



My co-worker, Tommy, in my work from home office.



**Linda Charles**

**Provincial Leader, Mauritius**

It is such a privileged time for us, sisters of the province of Mauritius, to reflect and find ways to act differently since the outbreak of corona virus. We have been in total confinement from the 20<sup>th</sup> March until 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and the social media has been a helpful device to keep in touch with communities and collaborators. Since then two of our members from a small community joined Shalom (our community for elderly sisters) because all workers were with their families, to support and help in community life and chores. We are blessed that the community leader and assistant are trained nurses who have been looking after our sisters with dedication and love especially where one who was almost 101 years old. In another community the parish asked to have streamed- live mass in our chapel in the presence of the community only, to be viewed by parishioners. Our 'médiathèque' has online facilities for deepening faith and is accessible for the public. Prior to this service of provincial, I used to do counselling for students and young people. I've been asked to participate in journeying with youth or young adult and listening to them in case they are struggling with confinement or related difficulties. The education coordinator has been in contact with school management to facilitate and monitor online courses for our students and support staff in their work with the programme establish by the local government to sustain students progress while in confinement. We are also fortunate that the country has put in place a Covid-19 Task Force to inform the citizens every day at a set time on the situation of the virus, its impact worldwide and locally. The sisters attended press conference every day to keep themselves updated. Thankfully to God they have tried their best to manage the whole situation in terms of socio-economic and cultural perspective, actions such as using the local leisure centre quarantine areas, providing basic needs for poor, allowance for self-employed, a central fund to cover the medical cost and all. The media is a powerful means for people to express themselves and to be listened so that speedy actions are done to alleviate people's anxiety.



Province meeting with Sr Noëlle and Sr Brenda from Generalate Rapone.



*The Sisters in  
November 2020.*

**Nilina Deb Lal,**

**Province Archivist, South Asia**

## **THE COVID TIME**

Covid-19 descended on us when I was just into my second month as archivist at the Loreto South Asia Province Archive. I had barely settled into a routine when I was faced with the prospect of having to work remotely for an unspecified period of time. The enforced break did not seem to augur well for my new responsibility. I was just about beginning to acquire an understanding of the collection, the tasks ahead and the tools in hand. I wasn't sure how I was going to deal with having to distance myself from my place of work and yet continue making meaningful progress in my task of organizing the archive and putting in place the requisite systems.

In reality, however, the enforced break necessitated by successive lockdowns and the need to take precautions against catching the virus turned out to be something of a blessing in disguise. Freedom from the interruptions associated with daily administrative tasks, reader enquiries, and even the commute to and from Loreto House, meant that I could focus on the tasks at hand. I had copied the entire contents of the desktop computers, made scans of hard copy lists in all the boxes, and generally ensured I had collected as much information as I could about our collection. Working from home I set about sorting, creating lists, generating a Retention Schedule, developing policy documents, and initiating communication with the IBVM members in our Province. At times the work was tedious, to say the least. It required meticulous attention to detail and constant working and reworking of the evolving framework. Progress was slow, but inch by inch I crept forward. And then suddenly, some months later, one entire stage of work had been completed! From knowing next to nothing about my domain of work I had developed a rudimentary familiarity with the Archive, its arrangement, and contents.

I stepped out of the Archive premises on 21 March, only to return on 18 September. It had been six long months of occasional monotony, but enormous gains for me in terms of starting on the road to intellectual control of our collection. Re-entering in September, paradoxically, I felt a greater familiarity and oneness with the Archive than when I exited in March, though in actuality I had been physically away for the entire period. I was now seeing my workplace not as a new experience but as a familiar acquaintance, hopefully soon to become a well-beloved friend.



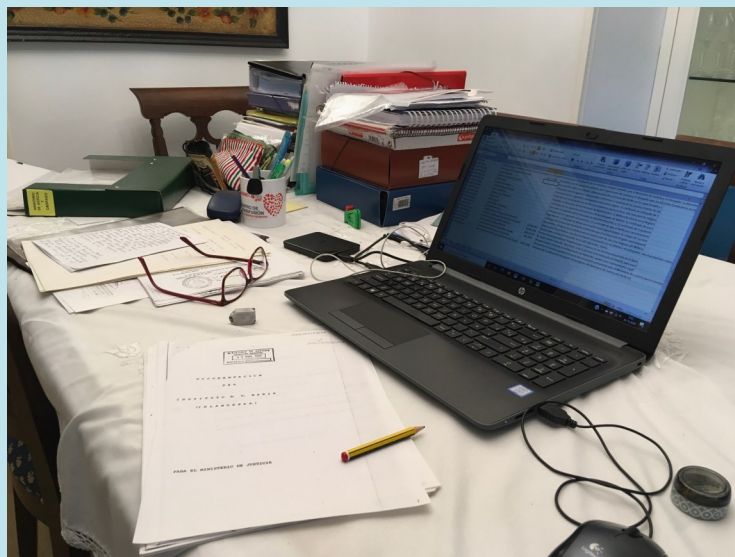
**María Velázquez,**

**Province Archivist, Spain**

Since March, it has only been possible to go to the Archive when I need to collect or leave documentation since the Archive is in the Institute's nursing home. That documentation ends up on my dining room table, which has become my workplace for all these months.



The Spanish Archive in the Institute's nursing home.



Working from home setup.

One of the jobs during the first weeks of confinement was to file the letters from the Spanish Civil War that Áine had sent to us. It was an interesting coincidence to have that material at that time, to be able to see how our nuns lived the war confined in Madrid. Read about their concern for their relatives and sisters, if they would have food, medicines when the next bombing would be or if they could be evacuated to a safe area... and then 84 years later we are confined again but this time world wide.

## Winifride Doyle IBVM

Province Archivist, Peru

Here is a small taste of the Amazon Jungle in south Peru, where Miroslava Santillan IBVM is serving indigenous communities during these months of Covid19.

She is part of an inter-congregational community that have come together to bring comfort, medicines and help to families in this forgotten and discriminated against place in the Amazon.

Her IBVM sisters back in Lima keep constant contact with her, and support and cheer her on and pray for her safety.

Today as I write Miros is setting out with another sister on a 13 day trip into the heart of the Amazon to continue their work of reaching out to those on the periphery.





# Connect with our IBVM Archives

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## *IBVM Archives*

*‘identify, collect, protect, preserve and make available’  
the records of enduring value of the Institute of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary....’*

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