

1814

ROSENDO * SALVADO

2014

COMMEMORATING

200 YEARS

A Friend of the Yued People

On behalf of the New Norcia Aboriginal Corporation we extend our congratulations to the Benedictine Community as they celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of their founder, Bishop Rosendo Salvado.



Painting by Fatima Drayton, Sheila Humphries and Deborah Nannup

The establishment of the Aboriginal mission at New Norcia had a profound effect on the lives of the local Aboriginal people, the Yued people of the Noongar nation. This coincided with much upheaval for the Noongar people who bore the brunt of the early British colony in Western Australia.

We consider that Bishop Salvado was a friend of the Yued people. Bishop Salvado gained the trust of the Yued people who helped him and his fellow missionaries survive in the bush and to establish the mission at New Norcia.

Bishop Salvado had a deep interest and respect for Aboriginal people in which he recorded the local Noongar language, culture and customs. Those records have provided important historical information about Noongar people, including being used to support the Noongar native title claim.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we look forward to participating in events commemorating Bishop Salvado's life and his legacy.

Mary Nannup, Margaret Drayton and Paul Willaway
Executive Directors, New Norcia Aboriginal Corporation

Bicentenary Celebration

In our attempt to produce a motto to go with the crest produced for the Rosendo Salvado bicentenary year we soon came to realise how difficult it was to encapsulate this major West Australian figure in a succinct statement.

We decided that abandoning the idea of a motto and leaving an empty space would say more and would capture the essence of this commemoration which is about introducing an ongoing interactive conversation rather than making a definitive statement about this extraordinary character.



Abbot John and the members of the community

Through the events of this bicentenary, we intend to leave this 'empty space' for remembrance, comment, opinion, interpretation, exploration and reconciliation. It will be a conversation involving the monastic community, the Aboriginal peoples, historians and other academics, and the general public at large.

On behalf of the monastic community I invite you to join in the various bicentennial events and activities planned to commemorate the life and legacy of Rosendo Salvado – there's something for everyone. These events will take place both in New Norcia and Perth and the especially designed section of our website (www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au) will provide regular updates.

No doubt, a myriad of emotions will surface as the year unfolds, but it is a journey well worth taking and worthy of celebration too.

This bicentenary provides a rare opportunity for us to conserve and display the significant and often fragile artefacts relating to Salvado, to lay the foundations for a deeper study of all aspects of his life, and to develop resources for the future in the unique town he established.

Abbot John



In Search of Rosendo Salvado



Over thirty years ago, two new and groundbreaking books in English about Rosendo Salvado were published in Western Australia. Since that time, researchers from many backgrounds, and especially members of Aboriginal families connected with New Norcia, have used The Salvado Memoirs (UWA Press 1977) edited and translated by E.J. Stormon, and Lord Abbot of the Wilderness: the life and times of Bishop Salvado (Polding Press, 1980) by George Russo as key resources.

These two foundational texts opened up discussion of the life and work of the Spanish Benedictine monk who founded New Norcia with his confrere Joseph Serra, who led the Benedictine Community as abbot, and whose talent for friendship created networks around the world. These books have remained central to our understanding of Salvado but of course, they are not the last word. The archive at New Norcia holds significant materials to support further exploration and deepen our understanding of the man.

Salvado remains enigmatic. In an article for New Norcia Studies, the historian Geoffrey Bolton recalled how the Australian Bicentennial Authority passed over Rosendo Salvado in its search for notable citizens in 1988. At that time "...there had not been enough analysis of the Salvado legend". Our knowledge of Salvado has always been strongly coloured by his own words as translated by Stormon and enthusiastically interpreted by Russo. As we commemorate the Bicentenary of his birth, we still wonder how much we know of the man.

The New Norcia archive is not a quaint collection of devotional material. Far from it! The collection of written documents and photographs is complemented by the resources of the art gallery and artefacts of the museum. The archive is unique in its breadth and is sought out by researchers interested in many fields, particularly Indigenous history. Collected since 1846, these resources exist because Salvado worked assiduously as his own chronicler, often at cost to himself, and because those who followed also recorded of much that took place on their watch.

While the archival resources are intimately connected with the secular and ecclesiastical history of Australia, they also reflect the continuous life of the communities in the town, just as they relate to transnational themes of European expansion and imperialism, Indigenous history, Christian mission, race relations, and Benedictine life and theology.

Salvado was held in high regard in Australia and in Europe. As a bishop, abbot and missionary, he played an active part in the Catholic hierarchy, nationally and internationally. He was a friend to governors and people from every level of society. At the same time he maintained strong links with Europe, as a friend of cardinals, abbots and popes, as well as Queen Isabella II of Spain. The collection at New Norcia reflects the depth of his local understanding and the full scope of his interests.

In light of the British origins of colonial Australia, it is significant that New Norcia was a Spanish mission. Salvado became a British citizen and the Aboriginal mission was his life, but he also returned to Europe five times between 1846 and 1900. New Norcia's deeply-rooted European origins and ongoing connections set it apart from Britain.

That distinctiveness is reflected by records in Spanish, French, Italian and Latin, as well as in English, a factor that adds to the archive's significance while also pointing to the difficulties that arise in accessing the material. Translation is imperative, and this ongoing task is gaining momentum through work supported by the *Abbot Placid Spearritt Memorial Scholarship* established in 2009.

Abbot Placid Spearritt, Prior Administrator (1983-1997) and then sixth abbot of New Norcia (1997-2008), was a scholar-monk. From the mid 1980s, the Benedictine Community employed a full-time archivist and sought to promote research in the archive. The first chair of the monastery's Archives, Research and Publications (ARP) Committee, was the historian Tom Stannage. At the inaugural New Norcia Studies Day in 1992, Stannage explored Salvado's place in history. He concluded that the key to understanding Salvado and New Norcia was "in the internalised experience... of Benedictinism itself". He issued a challenge that future research should therefore be "spiritually bound, intellectually aggressive and socially assured."



From Tuy in Spain to the bush he loved

Since then the ARP has overseen the publication of twenty-one editions of New Norcia Studies that encompass more than two hundred articles on topics that range from Aboriginal history, reports on buildings and land, to cricket, the work of women, the place of diaries, to monks, machinery, medicine and weather. Alongside this initiative, the 1996 celebrations of New Norcia's 150th anniversary included the publication of *A Town Like No Other* by David Hutchinson. This richly illustrated volume did not aim to be a narrative history but rather offered a series of snapshots of the mission.

As the title suggested the question was, just how do you tell the story of New Norcia? The question applies equally to the life of its founder, Rosendo Salvado, whose bicentenary is now being commemorated here, and in Europe, in 2014.

Who was Rosendo Salvado? Researchers who have worked most closely with the materials all hesitate to sum him up. Father David Barry OSB, whose careful knowledge of the sources has supported many researchers, says Salvado is too complex a character to fit into a nutshell because, decade by decade, there were different emphases in his work. Fr David argues that Salvado is someone who lived from a big picture, and was interested in news of developments in other parts of Australia, and the world. He was also a man of practical common sense, which is not a gift everyone shares. He suffered worse health than has been noticed up to now. And he became more directly politically active in the 1890s. For Fr David, Salvado becomes clearest through his relationships, firstly in the mystery of his faith, and the relationships of his family, and the community to which he belonged.

Dr Teresa de Castro was first interested in the agricultural and food history of New Norcia. Since 2003 she has been transcribing and summarising Salvado's letters and diaries. De Castro is inclined to agree that Salvado defies categories, but she is emphatic there is a real personality behind the vast archive of his work.

Salvado 'must have had a special allure and energy' to be so widely revered and admired. He was both 'paternalistic and paternal... and could be quite strict when needed.' He was discreet, always omitting 'the real gossip' of interesting cases. And 'he had a strong sense of purpose, unwavering faith in hard work and persistence, and a vision of the future...that explains much of what he did, and much of what he wrote.'

Dr Stefano Girola, whose work includes a focus on Salvado's reports to the missionary authorities in Rome, sees him as 'a missionary characterised by an extraordinary blend of idealism and pragmatism'. Eventually, when he saw 'the vision of a self-sufficient Christian village for the Aborigines and the monks would not be realised,' he began to use political methods, 'influencing the legal framework for the Aborigines in Western Australia' and involving himself in development of Government policies. Girola notes that 'Salvado's visions and his methods will be discussed and evaluated from a critical point of view, but his ultimate goal remained the improvement of the material and spiritual conditions of the Aborigines, as he saw them from the perspective of a Benedictine monk'.

In Rosendo Salvado's bicentennial year, new translations will be published and will provide a major step forward in the search for Salvado. Researchers will be able to build bridges between present knowledge of New Norcia and Salvado, find answers to old questions and ask new ones, thanks to the availability of these texts, and further new work in progress.



Timeline of Rosendo Salvado's Life

1814	Born March 1 st in Tuy, Spain	1848	January 13 th – 16 th , Synod at New Norcia 1,000 acres of land granted to the Mission
1829	Enters the monastery of St Martin de Compostela Foundation of the Swan River Colony		August 15 th , Serra consecrated Bishop of Port Victoria
1833	July 11 th , Yagan killed for bounty payment		August 24 th , news of naturalisation communicated to Salvado
1834	Battle of Pinjarra Slavery abolished in the British Empire		Europe's "Year of Revolutions" Karl Marx' <i>Communist Manifesto</i>
1835	Dissolution of religious communities in Spain Joseph Serra to Cava, Italy		European population of Perth circa 1,400, Western Australia 6,000
1838	Enters Cava Myall Creek, NSW, prosecution of colonists for Aboriginal murders	1849	January 8 th , Salvado sails for Europe with Dirimera and Conaci August 15 th , Salvado made Bishop of Port Victoria
1845	Salvado and Serra join missionary party to Western Australia Failure of the Irish potato crop, the Great Famine		Serra arrives in Perth with 40 monks and supplies
1846	January, missionary party arrives in Perth March 1 st , first camp established May, concert in Perth to raise funds Death of Gorman Tootle and Fonteinne retire December, Mission wrecked, monks evicted New site chosen	1849-53	Salvado in Europe, publication of Memoirs
		1850	Gold discovered in Eastern Australia
		1850-68	9,000 convicts to Western Australia
		1851	Serra administrator of Perth diocese
		1853	Salvado permitted to return to Perth
		1853-55	Serra in Europe, Salvado made administrator of Perth diocese
		1854	Eureka Stockade, Ballarat
		1854-56	Crimean War, Florence Nightingale
		1854-60	First phase of Aboriginal cottage development
		1858	"New Subiaco" established by Serra
		1859	New Norcia separated from diocese of Perth <i>The Origin of the Species</i> published
1847	March 1 st , laying of the foundation of the monastery on the banks of the Moore River April 28 th , first new building occupied July 9 th , Serra appointed Bishop of Port Victoria December 8 th , school for Aboriginal boys opened Mid-December, the miracle of Our Lady of Good Counsel	1861	School for Aboriginal girls opened
		1860-80	Australian breeders recreate Merino wool for industrial cloth

1864-69 Salvado in Europe on mission business, and brings his brother Santos, one other monk and some forty postulants

1867 New Norcia declared Abbey Nullius
Salvado made abbot for life

1868 Spanish revolution, Isabella II deposed
First Australian Aboriginal cricket team to England

1869-75 Frederick Weld Governor of Western Australia

1869-70 Vatican Council I, Salvado in Europe

1870 Library built at New Norcia
Australia is the world's leading producer of wool
Representative government in Western Australia

1871 Formation of the Victoria Plains Road Board

1873 First Spanish Republic

1874 Western Australia Industrial Schools Act
New Norcia Post and Telegraph Office built – Helen Cuper in charge
Rosendo Salvado, 25 years a bishop
Restoration of the Spanish monarchy (Alfonso XII)

1877 First steam engine in the colony, at New Norcia
January 12th, death of Helen Cuper
Telegraph line between Perth and Adelaide

1879 A million sheep in Western Australia
First New Norcia team to play against Perth teams formed

1880 Ned Kelly hanged

1880-90 Assisted passages to Australia total 155,000

1881 Henry Parkes initiates moves toward federation of Australian states

1882-85 Salvado in Europe on mission business

1884 Patrick Moran made Archbishop of Sydney

1885 New Norcia holds 967,000 acres of land

1886 WA introduces Aboriginal apprenticeships
Aborigines Protection Act, Aborigines Protection Board (until 1940)

1887 Queen Victoria 50 years a monarch
First Colonial Conference, London
Matthew Gibney becomes Bishop of Perth,
Patrick Cardinal Moran visits New Norcia
Felix Jackamarra and Eliza Willaway address Moran at New Norcia

1888 Miner's licences denied to WA Aborigines

1889 State Library of Western Australia founded

1890 Self government in WA, John Forrest first Premier
Native Affairs continued to be administered from London

1890-96 Jandamarra leads Aboriginal resistance in West Kimberley

1892 Gold discovered in Coolgardie
Depression in the eastern states

1895 Compulsory schooling in Western Australia

1899 November, Salvado leaves on final trip to Europe
Women's suffrage in Western Australia

1900 December 29th, Salvado dies in Rome

1901 January 1st, Federation of Australian colonies

1902 January, Daisy Bates visits New Norcia

1903 January 3rd, funeral service for Rosendo Salvado in Perth
Salvado's body returned to New Norcia

The Origins of a Spanish Missionary

Rosendo Salvado is proudly remembered in Tuy, the ancient cathedral town in northern Spain near the border with Portugal, where he was born on 1st March 1814.

His parents were substantial, educated citizens and practising Catholics. Rosendo, who was one of six children, attended the Cathedral school where his intelligence and flair for music were noticed. At fifteen, he entered the Benedictine monastery of St Martin in Santiago de Compostela. He was 21 when this monastery was disbanded in a wave of anti-clericalism.

He returned home in 1835 but, after a time, accepted the suggestion of his confrere Dom Joseph Serra (b. 1810), to transfer to the Benedictine monastery in Cava, Italy, where Serra had been given hospitality.

The time of liberal revolution in Europe coincided with a wave of enthusiasm for missionary endeavour. Serra and Salvado both applied to become missionaries amongst indigenous people, possibly in North America. *Propaganda Fide* assigned them to John Brady, the newly consecrated Bishop of Perth. They were to work among Australian Aborigines. Their party, including six Irish Sisters of Mercy, set out in September 1845 and arrived at Fremantle on 8th January 1846. This was the first of Salvado's five journeys between Europe and Australia.



Salvado's Tuy, on the banks of the river Miño



Salvado's own map of his journeys "home"

Mapping a Missionary Life

An uncertain beginning

In 1846, only seventeen years after the foundation of the Swan River Colony, a small European population lived mostly around Perth. Few had ventured into the vast interior.



First journey into the bush and the first camp

Salvado discerned quickly that the Europeans knew little of the traditional owners, and few had reliable opinions. He resolved that: 'the most efficient method to obtain our goal was to go and live among the savages themselves in that part of the bush where they had not been contaminated by the morally corrupt European society.' (1883)

Salvado had a clear sense the Aboriginal people were the reason for his journey and recorded his perceptions of the men and women he encountered. His language varies; sometimes Salvado described Aboriginal people as "Australians", he also referred to them as "Indigenes", and continued to use the word "savage". "Savage" was rather like a technical term that betrayed nineteenth century British and European preconceptions of their own superiority. Used in relation to humans "savage" meant those who were primitive and uncivilised, who did not wear clothes, and appeared not to have social organisation, ownership of property or belief in a Supreme Being. Perceptions have changed, and Salvado's perceptions changed over time too, but his original documents have not, which leaves the modern reader the task of entering into another world and endeavouring to fully understand such heavily nuanced words.

But whatever words Salvado might have chosen, as a person true to his time and calling, he assumed he had something good to offer and he intended to bring about change in the life of the people he encountered. As a Benedictine monk, he had pledged himself to a life-long journey of "conversion of life" aimed at creating better individuals and communities. He was able to recognise that this goal did not necessarily work in tandem with the economic and political aspirations that drove imperialist expansion.



Artist's impression of first contact

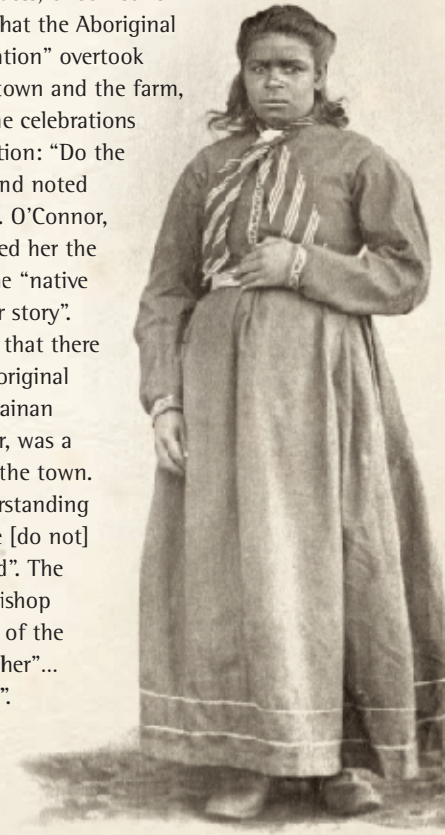
Almost from the outset he was openly critical of moral corruption among the Europeans, and devised ways to protect the Aboriginal people from its negative influence.

The Catholic missionaries agreed to divide the Swan River colony geographically. Brady entrusted to Salvado and Serra the central mission that would become Victoria Plains. In February 1846, the Spaniards set out with two others: Léandre Fonteinne, a novice from the French abbey of Solesmes, and John Gorman, an Irish catechist. The English Benedictine, Denis Tootle, joined them a short while later. After five days of arduous travel they had journeyed 68 miles into Yued country to reach the home of Captain Scully at Bolgart. From here the party set out to go deeper into these lands; Scully sent with them two of his servants and two Aboriginal guides, whose names we do not know.

On 1st March 1846, the feast day of Salvado's patron, St Rosendo, they set up camp and celebrated Mass near a spring of water five miles north of New Norcia's present site. Salvado had met Aboriginal people in Fremantle, but he recorded this occasion as his first real contact with the Yued people. He wrote: "As evening came on, a few natives appeared and looked on suspiciously from the distance, but without real fear.

They took up a position near the pool, perhaps forty yards from us, lit a fire, and after a while lay down to sleep." (*Memoirs*) Afraid, Salvado and Serra continued their work. In the morning the group left, to return with a larger party in the evening. On the third day, much to the excitement of Salvado and Serra, the people accepted their offer of damper, sugar and tea, and suspicion gave way to regular peaceful contact. From the monks' point of view, the mission had begun.

More than half a century later, not long after Salvado's death, a visiting lady "journalist" and an Aboriginal woman who had spent her life at the mission discussed Salvado's legacy. According to the record of the visit published in *The Western Mail*, both were impressed. The journalist, probably Daisy Bates, or someone who shared Bates' assumption that the Aboriginal people would die out as "civilisation" overtook them, recorded the tour of the town and the farm, the neat family cottages, and the celebrations for Christmas. She put the question: "Do the natives enjoy being civilised?" and noted she was not in a position to say. O'Connor, the doctor at New Norcia, assured her the answer was "Yes", but one of the "native boys" suggested "That's another story". What was abundantly clear was that there was "plenty tucker" and the Aboriginal people admired Salvado. Eliza Tainan Willaway, who guided the visitor, was a respected matron and leader in the town. Her responses suggest the understanding of, and regard for, Salvado: "We [do not] dance now his Lordship [is] dead". The journalist went on to say that Bishop Salvado lived on in the memory of the Aborigines, not only as "Our father"... but as "our father who loved us".



Eliza Tainan Willaway came as a child and spoke on behalf of the mission

Working hard, hoping for better days

In the demanding years of 1846 to 1848, Salvado's many abilities were focused on maintaining the mission. Three stories give a picture. When more supplies were needed, Salvado set out for Perth with an Aboriginal guide. On arrival he found the bishop had nothing to give. A man of considerable musical talent, Salvado decided to appeal directly to the public. The concert Salvado gave to raise funds has achieved legendary status for its fine music, and for the generous co-operation it evoked. He remembered: 'Governor Clarke graciously granted the use of the courthouse; the local printer brought out the program at his own expense. Without being asked, the Anglican minister sent along carpets from his church for the improvised hall, and his sexton attended to the lighting. A Jew, Mr Samson, forwarded invitations to prominent citizens and collected tickets at the entrance. The Sisters of Mercy provided the pianoforte' (*Memoirs*).

With a light heart and £70 in hand, Salvado was gathering provisions for the mission but, unexpectedly, Serra arrived in Perth with Tootle whose health had broken down.



The first New Norcia Chapel

Then disaster struck again when Gorman, the Irish catechist, was accidentally shot dead by Fonteinne, the French novice, who withdrew, his nerves shattered. Only Serra and Salvado remained. The nomadic life of the Aboriginal people was too great a challenge; the mission needed more than a campsite. Salvado later said: 'It is known that one of our first and main objectives was to establish a Benedictine community at New Norcia, without which we did not think that anything good could be achieved for the civilisation and conversion of those savages.' (1883) The two monks laboured hard to produce their first crop. Salvado wrote: 'Father Serra directed the bullocks, and I guided the plough. Indeed, I can say that I have watered the Australian soil with the sweat of my brow and with the blood of my lacerated feet.' (*Memoirs*) Once more their efforts were dogged by misfortune. During a Perth trip in December 1846, Salvado and Serra left a hired hand in charge but, on return, they were dismayed to find him missing and the mission robbed and ruined.

More disappointment lay ahead. Early in 1847, a magistrate declared Serra and Salvado were trespassing on another settler's allocation of Yued land. With the help of an Aboriginal guide, a new site was selected on the Moore River. Once the land had been formally granted, the foundations of the monastery were laid on 1st March 1847. Serra and Salvado named the place New Norcia, after Benedict's birthplace. On 28th April 1847, thanks to generous French and Irish tradesmen who volunteered their help, the monks moved to a modest stone building that was both chapel and dwelling. The chapel was dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity. Set up above the altar was the treasured picture of *Our Lady of Good Counsel*, given to them in Rome by Father (later Saint) Vincent Pallotti.

The new building gave the two monks new energy for their task. Numbers of Aborigines came and settled near the monastery. Serra and Salvado provided them with food and, despite an inadequate supply of medicines and equipment, cared for the sick and injured.



Our Lady of Good Counsel – the white lady who knows so much

They began to teach the Christian faith. When the parents of three Aboriginal boys asked the monks for a European education, a 'school' was begun. All was going well when another crisis struck.

In mid-December 1848, Niniaga, a woman who was being attacked by her husband, Munanga, sought help from the monks who, when they found they could not calm him down, took her to the chapel for safety. Enraged, Munanga, who was a local leader among his people, left the Mission and the monks returned to their tasks. The next day a bush fire, driven by a strong wind, spread through the grass towards the sheaves of harvested corn. As the Mission came under threat, all hands fought the scorching blaze. When the situation seemed hopeless the monks took their picture of *Our Lady of Good Counsel* from the chapel and placed it against the standing corn. At that moment the wind began to blow in the opposite direction and the fire died out.

Salvado wrote: 'thus did we witness the protection granted by our Holy Mother... A large number of natives witnessed this marvellous event. Some of them, looking at the miraculous picture uttered these words with simplicity and truth: 'This white lady knows so much! It was she who did it, yes, it was she...'. Next morning the monks celebrated a thanksgiving Mass in honour of Our Lady, at which many Aborigines were present. (*Memoirs*)

By the end of 1848, the mission had bought land to add to the original grant and ran cattle and a flock of sheep. Serra was in Rome, and Salvado managed the mission alone. In September, news arrived that distressed Salvado: Serra had been appointed bishop of the new settlement of Port Victoria (the garrison town of Darwin). Salvado was determined to carry on at New Norcia, but his troubles were just beginning. In January 1849, he went to Perth to deliver a load of wool, and was unexpectedly ordered by the bishop to go to Rome, to raise funds and recruit missionaries. Salvado prepared to embark, but feared New Norcia would be abandoned.

Two Aboriginal boys, John Dirimera and Francis Conaci, had travelled to Perth with Salvado and, when they heard Salvado was leaving for Europe, they begged to go with him. Salvado's account records his amazement but he agreed and, with their parents' permission, the boys accompanied him to London, Paris, Rome and Naples. He introduced the boys to British and European audiences and spoke of New Norcia's need. Conaci and Dirimera were admitted to the monastery of Cava to train as priests. Conaci proved an able student, but died in Rome. Dirimera returned to Australia in 1855 but also died shortly after. Salvado was deeply saddened and discouraged at this attempt to bring forth "Australian Benedictines".

Building New Norcia's Profile

Salvado in Europe 1849-53

Salvado spent the years 1849 to 1853 in Europe, mostly in Italy and Spain. Through these years, the Roman authorities were attempting to solve the administrative tangle of the Perth diocese. They appointed Joseph Serra to assist the ailing John Brady as co-adjutor bishop and Salvado found himself made a bishop to replace Serra at Port Victoria. As far as Salvado was concerned this was a "terrible calamity". He refused to attend celebrations in his home-town of Tuy to mark the new honour, and was relieved when plans for the colony were abandoned in September 1849.



Aboriginal family house at New Norcia Mission

Waiting in Europe for permission to return to New Norcia, Salvado wrote *The Memoirs*, his celebrated account of the first years in Australia. It was quickly published in Italian, Spanish and French to promote interest in the mission and spearhead fundraising. Eventually, in 1853, Salvado was able to set out for WA. His departure from Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona included a grand procession to the port. He arrived in Fremantle bringing 43 Benedictine postulants and £7000 for the mission. Bishop Serra promptly diverted these resources to the needs of the diocese and left for Europe. He appointed Salvado to oversee matters in Perth while he was away; it was two years before he returned.

Despite his shock, as a Benedictine committed to obedience, Salvado devoted himself as directed to building new churches and schools in the diocese. But he also found time to visit New Norcia. He planned houses for the Aborigines, selected a site for a new wing for the monastery, and drew plans for a new and larger church. When Serra returned to Perth he found a flourishing diocese. Income had doubled and there were new churches and schools. Salvado recalled that he heard Serra announce to his confreres: 'Anywhere I go, with anyone I talk to, anywhere I am, I only hear people talking about Monsignor Salvado.' (1883) If Serra's aim had been to wear Salvado out he had miscalculated, or misjudged him. However, during this time the mission suffered greatly, and Salvado began to campaign for New Norcia to become independent from the diocese. Serra contrived to keep Salvado at his beck and call in Perth and Fremantle until 1857, when he was finally allowed to return to New Norcia.

A Change in Fortune for the Mission

New Norcia's fortunes took a turn for the better in 1859. A decree from Rome made the Mission entirely independent, appointed Salvado its sole superior, and gave the many monks, lay brothers and candidates for monastic life in the colony the option of joining New Norcia or remaining in Perth. Most chose to transfer, and New Norcia's community of 47 soon included many skilled tradesmen.



Monks and the traditional people of New Norcia

Salvado appointed a novice master to train monks for the mission and a prior to administer the monastery. Salvado's cherished dream of greater involvement with the Aboriginal population began to take shape, based on the foundation of a fully functional monastic community.

Though these years continued to be dogged by competition with the diocese for resources, the 1860s saw consistent development at New Norcia. Storehouses, workshops, and a small flourmill grew up around the monastic buildings. St Joseph's residential school for girls was established in 1861, and St Mary's school for boys expanded.

Salvado's desire to provide houses for Aboriginal people who worked at New Norcia was matched by keen interest from the "bush born and raised" members of the community. Salvado sought a grant of 28 acres over the road from the original mission site, and from 1854 a long-term plan for housing emerged. The completion and occupation of the first four cottages slowed due to Salvado's absence and a series of tragedies suffered by all of the families (Malanga, Nalbinga, Tacagnicut and Duergan) who were intended to occupy them. From the 1860s, new families moved in. Eventually, Salvado's perseverance meant twenty-two two-roomed cottages, laid out in four rows, stood on the land. The scheme persisted in various forms for several decades. Although the common bathroom remains, the last of the cottages was demolished in 1954, a century after the scheme was born.

Work, Prayer and Life Together

The work of Salvado's monks was not restricted to the confines of the town. New roads were surveyed and cleared and stone wells were sunk to provide for sheep herded long distances. These initiatives helped facilitate the settlement of the Victoria Plains district. In turn, closer neighbours increased the challenges arising from contact between Aboriginal and European people.

In 1867 Salvado was made abbot for life. New Norcia became an Abbey Nullius with a territory of 16 square miles, and finally, funds and earnings flowed directly to the mission.

Rosendo Salvado's life and work are inexplicable without reference to the spirit of Benedict of Nursia (480-547) and the worldwide monastic movement that continues to live according to his traditions. The *Rule of St Benedict* was simple and adaptable, and proved durable in many contexts. It called for commitment to stability, obedience and conversion of life, and gave priority to communal life based on a balance of prayer and work. Seven periods of prayer based on the psalms punctuated each day, and every member contributed to the upkeep and smooth operation of the community. The daily programme also provided time for silence and for the slow, deep reading of scripture and ancient authors. Salvado developed his community's library, laying the foundations of one of the finest theological collections in the country. It was not a luxury; it was core business that went hand-in-hand with manual work. Salvado regarded these provisions as fundamental for maintaining the life and spirit of the mission.

He wrote: 'The main goal in establishing a Benedictine Community at New Norcia was the conversion and true civilisation of those Australian savages; hence, in order for that Community to be able to endure the many and almost unbelievable difficulties and deprivations involved in setting up and maintaining a Mission of a kind that was as new as it was toilsome and difficult, it was indispensable to establish its system in such a way as to promote and maintain there the true monastic spirit, so that the true missionary spirit would not be neglected.' (1883)

Salvado took up his role as bishop and missionary abbot at the First Vatican Council in 1869 in Rome. He opposed those who wanted to create a division between the cloister and missionary activity. Salvado argued that the cloister should be the centre of missionary life even though in his own circumstances the full round of monastic life was not always possible. The brothers, particularly the tradesman, had to live and work outside the monastery, while the abbot and the priests also mingled more freely with the local people than they would have done in a European town.

Nevertheless, balancing work, prayer and community life was the key to realising the goals of the mission. In 1883, Salvado reported on the daily life of the mission, including the Horarium, the pattern of work and prayer. Aboriginal participation was noted, and provisions were made for workers if they were far from the settlement. The bell, a gift to Salvado from Compostela, tolled 24 times to rouse the community at 2.45am, fifteen minutes before Matins. Then the day proceeded through more prayers, to work, through meals to rest, and eventually to sleep at 8pm.

Salvado himself lived according to this pattern of life except for one thing – he did not rest. He worked exceptionally hard during the day and, while the community slept, often continued at his desk until the bell rang at 2.45 am to begin a new day. During a visit in 1874, Bishop Martin Griver noticed Salvado was in poor health. He encouraged him to return to Perth to rest but the abbot did not feel strong enough to brave the journey. Salvado wrote: 'I had been feeling very weakened, worn-out and depressed, yet without knowing the real cause. Sometimes I shook so much while being in bed that the bed shook in the same way as me; I was able to stop it with a supreme effort, but only for a few minutes... I sometimes had very sharp pains in my chest, hands and legs and even in my feet, preventing me from walking... there was a time when I believed that I had very few days of life left.' (1883) He was unable to hide his illness, and some even thought he had died, but Salvado had not spent a whole day in bed.

The New Norcia Horarium (1883)

Awake at 2.45 am (The bell is rung 24 times)

MATINS (Vigils) at 3 am

Meditation at 4.45 am;

Mass - some of the monks who are not priests receive Holy Communion.

After Mass - bed making and then to

→ Work ←

The natives work before school, accompanied by their Prefect, a brother.

The girls are busy with the needle and appropriate activities besides schooling.

BREAKFAST in common at 7.00 - a cup of tea and bread.
No milk or butter.

PRIME is after breakfast and said in the church.

→ Work ←

TERCE is at 9, but those who are far or whose work cannot and must not be suspended, do not attend it.

SEXT is at 11.15, before which there is spiritual reading which is concluded by examination of conscience.

LUNCH at 12, after the Angelus

All throughout lunch, as well as breakfast and dinner we have reading.

When we finish lunch we go to church where we recite the five psalms set down to honour the Holy Name of Mary and then retreat and rest.

SIESTA

NONE 2 pm said in the church

→ Work - until a quarter of an hour before sunset. ←

VESPERS is said at sunset.

DINNER: a cup of tea and bread

Spiritual reading in the church

COMPLINE

BED 8 pm The end of the day is sounded and everyone goes to bed



The Abbot with the community

The Monastery and Ecumenism

Twenty-three years after New Norcia was established, a visiting Anglican minister wrote a review of its life and work, and the abbot himself. He reassured his readers: 'although everything around reminds the Protestant visitor that he is in the midst of a Roman Catholic community...yet neither the Superior nor his subordinates ever introduce their peculiar dogmas nor destroy the pleasure of your friendly visit by attempts to lead into controversy'. The abbot was 'all that I had heard of him, courteous, frank, humble, and kind'. He praised the community's welcome, and when he had been shown over the whole mission, was 'scarcely prepared to find so much fruit of patience and perseverance... There are 70 brothers and as many natives old and young. They all work and thus contribute to the general good. The settlement is like a hive of bees'. (*Perth Gazette*, 10th March 1871)

New Norcia's visitor had become despondent about what could be achieved 'in the amelioration of our natives' and recommended that people who reached the same point as he had, 'ought to pay a visit to the Plain's Mission' where, unless he had been duped, he said, 'the moral and spiritual results' were very satisfying. In a time when there were deep suspicions between Christian denominations, he found: 'Bishop Salvado is no ordinary man... he has many great qualities which, notwithstanding his religion, rank him among the remarkables'.



An integrated community prepares for prayer



Monks and Aborigines at prayer



At work together

Evolution and Change at the Mission

As the colony grew, the focus of the Mission continued to change. Farming intensified but Aboriginal families did not take up farms as Salvado had hoped. Aboriginal people suffered deeply as settlement expanded. The abuse of alcohol, and other negative consequences of European contact such as smallpox, measles, influenza and venereal disease, as well as outright conflict over land and water, exacted a heavy toll.

New Norcia came under increasing government pressure to direct its care toward Aboriginal children. Salvado told the Colonial Secretary that 'New Norcia was never intended to be, and is not at all, an orphanage.' But he never refused to accept a child in need, regardless of whether they had parents living or not.

In 1873 Salvado accepted a government commission to build a telegraph station and post office in the town. Salvado studied the Morse code and then taught it to Helen Pangerian Cuper, a married Aboriginal woman 'who learned it well and very quickly'. Without telling the government department Helen Cuper was Aboriginal, Salvado appointed her as the telegraph officer. When the Superintendent of Telegraphs, Mr Fleming, raised the inevitable question of what skills she had to operate the equipment when it arrived, Salvado continued to support her employment. There was no telegraphic key on which Helen Cuper could practise, and the Superintendent warned of another difficulty: 'You need a good musical ear, since the good telegraphist reads more with the ear rather than the eye, transcribing the telegrams without seeing them.' When he visited to inspect the facilities, Fleming took with him a page almost covered with telegraphic symbols and gave it to Helen Cuper to read. She promptly did so, in good English.



Helen Pangerian Cuper first telegraphist at New Norcia



Local timber cut and prepared by workers for the monastery extension

Fleming was flabbergasted and, taking the paper back again, wrote a longer message which she read 'as quickly and straightforwardly as the first one'. Fleming produced a telegraphic key, showed Salvado how to use it, and left it with him.

Two days later he returned and tested Helen Cuper's proficiency. Fleming told Salvado he had never seen anyone learn to use the key so well and in such a short time; he would never have believed it if he had not seen it.

Salvado proudly recorded stories of other success, in European terms, that Aboriginal people enjoyed as an outcome of their association with New Norcia. Whereas European shearers could shear 25 sheep a day, Aboriginal shearers at New Norcia, who did not tie their sheep up to shear them, tallied 80 and 100 a day.

The Aborigines who travelled to Perth with Salvado were attracted to the British game of cricket being played by the gentlemen of the colony. At the mission they formed two teams of their own and, "without any teacher or direction" began to hold games. As a Spaniard, Salvado knew nothing of cricket except as "an English national game... played by people of the highest aristocracy". (1883 Report)

Europeans who observed the New Norcia teams stressed that the Aborigines played cricket well and Salvado decided to encourage it because "persons who are unable to form clear ideas on things and judge the same things, in one word, stupid people, will never be able to play cricket". There were other reasons too: it brought social benefits to the community, and was a welcome distraction from other more destructive diversions such as drinking alcohol that a certain type of European brought into the bush on weekends. With Salvado's specific permission, his neighbour, H.B. Lefroy, trained a team of Aboriginal cricketers. New Norcia lost its first game against Perth due to nervousness and unfamiliarity with the rules. Later, against a superior Fremantle team, the New Norcia team scored a convincing win. Salvado was unable to describe the extent of the applause that erupted such as they had never before received. Salvado wrote: "I, who although from a distance, had attended their entertainments, thanked God wholeheartedly for granting them that magnificent outcome... [a resounding] reply to the evil accusations of their detractors."

(1883 Report) The New Norcia Cricket team continued its success and, when Cardinal Moran visited the mission in 1887, a celebratory match was held in his honour.



New Norcia introduced new farming technology

There was also evidence of the sense of justice that informed some of the people from the mission. An Aboriginal man named John Malley, who learned shoemaking at New Norcia, took his family to Perth with the aim of becoming a shoemaker there. A Perth shoemaker asked Malley to prove his skills by completing some sewing. The owner was very satisfied and was about to sack the person Malley had replaced. But the Aboriginal man spoke up: "Not on your life...I have asked for work, that is to say, bread for me, but I can't allow that it is taken from another one in order that it is given to me." The shoemaker was so impressed that he continued both men in their work. *(1883 Report)*

Salvado understood that if the Aboriginal community absorbed the vices and not the virtues of the Europeans, then the effect was strongly negative. From an early stage he believed that these vices were avoidable and that, in dismissing the Australians as lowly beings with no potential, the Europeans had misjudged the capacity of the people who confronted them. He wrote: "...if all these things have been done and done well several times by the Indigenes of pure savage Australian blood, to wish to deny their capacity for an intellectual education would be the same as to wish to deny the fire's property of heating and burning". *(1883 Report)*

What Salvado may have meant by "intellectual education" is not clear. Conaci's academic success in Italy proved to him that Aboriginal people had the capacity for intellectual work, but were destroyed by life in a foreign context. The Aboriginal people of New Norcia showed themselves to be lovers of music, ritual, dance and story, and they were quick to pick up language, as the boys singing in choir demonstrated. But rather than being a place of intellectual advancement for Aborigines in the scholarly disciplines familiar to monastics, the mission was developed as a farm on the basis of there being a complementary balance of tasks between the monastic community and the Australians.



At first self-taught, New Norcia's Aboriginal team excelled at the British game of cricket

While children in its care were taught the three Rs, they were prepared for work in the pastoral industry, the domestic sphere, and in the trades.

Salvado's influence was decisive in the development of the Industrial Schools Act that became law in 1874. Among its provisions for the "education of children or descendants of the Aboriginal race" the Act allowed school principals to exercise powers that replaced parental authority, whether or not the children had entered the school freely. Penalties were imposed for absenteeism, and the removal of children from the school. New Norcia's school and orphanages were authorised to receive children, in keeping with section 5 of the Act, and Salvado also agreed to receive juvenile offenders. From that time, the nature of New Norcia's mission changed. Whereas Salvado's aim had been to work with individuals from the same tribal or clan group, children and families began to enter from all over the State, and the number of children in care rose sharply. From a total of 30 children at New Norcia in 1874, the numbers grew to 132 in 1900, some of whom lived in the orphanages, while their family lived locally.

The Final Decade

The discovery of gold in 1892 brought boom times to Western Australia. Fortune seekers flooded in from all over the world, and from other parts of Australia.

Rapid population growth and vigorous economic activity generated significant social change, which in turn affected the State's strong sense of regional identity in the lead up to Federation. Salvado told his once close friend John Forrest that the new nation had little to offer the Aboriginal people.

But Salvado remained Abbot or "Father" to his monks, and to every Aboriginal who would accept his help and guidance. Despite his considerable prestige and influence in Europe, and offers from government and church in Australia to take posts elsewhere, Salvado's commitment to New Norcia, and to furthering the interests of Aboriginal people, was unshaken.



Salvado, a man for all people with the whole community in the cloister

Who was Salvado, and how successful was the Mission?

In November 1899, Salvado left Fremantle for Rome on his fifth trip to Europe to deliver what proved to be his final report on New Norcia. He also went in search of a successor since his first choice, Fulgentius Dominguez, had recently died. He visited Montserrat in Spain, hoping to confirm New Norcia's monastic status by linking it with the leading source of monastic missionary training at that time.

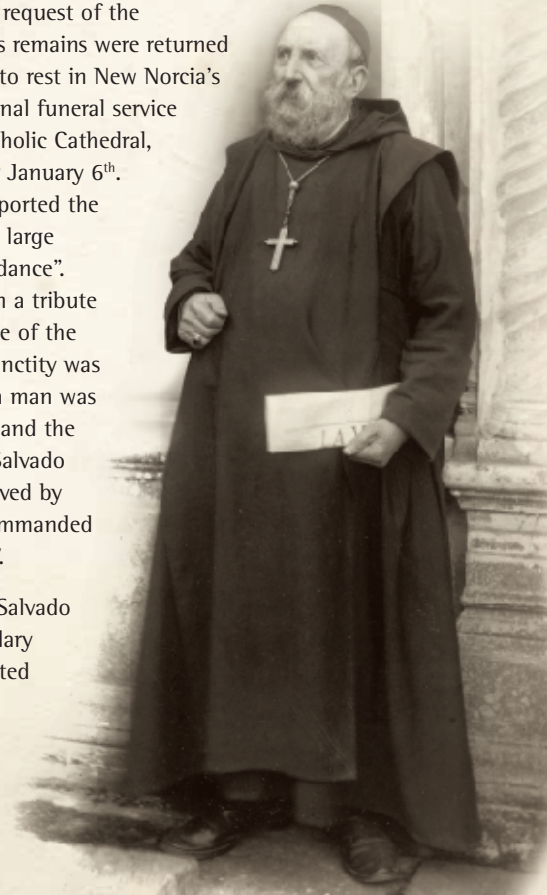
Salvado was not in good health when he left Western Australia and the sea voyage did restore him. He became ill while working in Europe. On December 29th 1900, aged 86, he died peacefully in Rome, fittingly, close to the tomb of the Apostle to the Gentiles, at the Monastery of St Paul Outside the Walls. Salvado had devoted 54 years to the Aboriginal mission in Western Australia.

The people at New Norcia responded to his death with profound grief. The newspapers praised the man and his work. *The West Australian* extolled him, 'it is doubtful if anything stands out in such relief as the self-denying work of Bishop Salvado, of the New Norcia Mission.' The article continued with the arresting assessment that he had 'the nerve of a giant and the heart of a woman... two characteristics which have made him at once a hero in ordinary estimation, and a saint amongst the people for whom he laboured'. (January 1st 1901) *The Western Mail* repeated this assessment, and then four days later was more prosaic.

Its article "The Great Pioneer", concluded that: 'Besides being nominal owner of the New Norcia mission station, Dr. Salvado was one of the largest property holders in Perth'. Later in the year, the Chief Protector H.S Prinsep said in his annual report to the Aborigines Department: 'I felt that the natives of this State had lost their greatest friend... his memory will long live in the minds of all Western Australians'.

Early in 1903, at the request of the community, Salvado's remains were returned to Western Australia to rest in New Norcia's Abbey Church. The final funeral service took place at the Catholic Cathedral, Perth, on Wednesday January 6th. *The Western Mail* reported the occasion attracted "a large and influential attendance". Monsignor Bourke, in a tribute to Salvado, said: "One of the indications of true sanctity was the knowledge that a man was beloved of the lowly and the humble and Bishop Salvado had not only been loved by the poor, but had commanded universal admiration".

During his long life, Salvado had become a legendary figure who was counted amongst the leading personalities in Western Australia.



Salvado during his last days

But, after the service, “the Natives’ greatest friend” was accompanied by a team of pall-bearers that did not include an Aboriginal person, but was more representative of the ruling class from which he came and amongst whom he moved with ease and grace: the Chief Justice (Sir Ed. Stone), Mr. Frank Connor, M.L.A., Mr. T. Quinlan, M.L.A., Dr. O’Connor, Mr. M. F. Kavanagh, and J. P. Maxwell. *The West Australian Catholic Record* noted that “in the death of Bishop Salvado a colonial event must be recognised, and a colonial epoch is marked by it” - and so it was.

The colonial epoch is one over which new questions have arisen, in search of an answer, not least of which is: who was Rosendo Salvado, really? Was he “the natives’ greatest friend”, “our father...who loved us”, “beloved of the lowly and the humble”, one of “the remarkables”,

“courteous, frank, humble, and kind” who “commanded universal admiration?” Was he as “uniquely respectful of Aboriginal potential” as has been claimed, or was he, a hard-headed pastoralist who, as Bolton said “imposed an alien culture on an ancient and spiritually rich people”? Given the revolution in the current understanding of Aboriginal culture and spirituality, how are we to judge the mission he inaugurated? New translations and new work being done will help scholars, and the community at large, come to a better understanding of the legend that has dominated our reading of Rosendo Salvado and his work. But, whether he was a success or a failure, one thing is certain: he was no ordinary man, and some of who and what he was will likely remain a mystery to us.



Salvado farewells a guest at the Monastery gate



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John H. Smith

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