

# Information Sheet No. 24



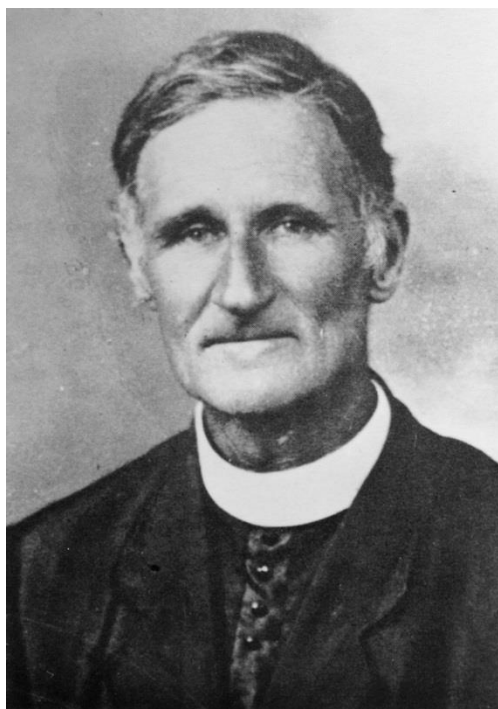
## Heritage Services

## Geraldton Regional Library

### JOHN HAWES – Architect/Priest

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| 1876, Sep 7  | - Born in Richmond, England.   |
| 1892         | - Began training as an architect in London.  |
| 1903         | - Ordained an Anglican priest.   |
|              | - Worked in the Bahamas.   |
|              | - Converted to Catholicism.  |
| 1915, Feb 27 | - Ordained a Catholic priest in Rome.  |
|              | - Sent to Geraldton, Western Australia where he worked as a priest and an architect. |
| 1939         | - Left Western Australia for the Bahamas.  |
| 1956, Jun 26 | - Died in Miami, USA.  |



John Hawes. Photograph courtesy of Geraldton Catholic Presbytery, P 285.

It was on a visit to the Vatican in 1914 in search of priests for his remote, vast and poorly-funded diocese that Bishop Kelly was fortuitously introduced to John Hawes. An architect by training and a missionary by vocation, Hawes committed himself to moving to Geraldton, and presented Kelly with plans for a Spanish Mission style cathedral. Ordained in 1915, Hawes arrived in Geraldton later that year. After briefly serving in the parish of Mount Magnet, Hawes was recalled to Geraldton to commence building St Francis Xavier Cathedral. By August 1918, after two years' hard work, the first stage of the building was officially opened.

Following the death of Kelly, work on the Cathedral halted. Hawes's talent was not appreciated by Bishop Ryan. Concentrating on his Mullewa parish, Hawes built the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and adjoining priest house. Finance was scarce, and much of the labour was undertaken by Hawes.

The situation changed with the appointment of James Patrick O'Collins as the new Bishop of Geraldton in 1930. Hawes was appointed Diocesan Architect, and designed churches for many agricultural towns in the region; including Mullewa, Morawa, Perenjori, Yalgoo and Northampton. Work recommenced on St Francis Xavier Cathedral in 1935 and the completed building was officially opened in 1938. That year Hawes was honoured with the title of Monsignor, and transferred to the parish of Greenough. There he continued his architectural work for O'Collins, drawing up plans for Nazareth House. Although he designed a small retirement cottage for himself in Geraldton, it was always Hawes's wish to return to the Bahamas. In May 1939, Hawes sailed from Fremantle, officially on a pilgrimage, but never to return.

Although he only lived for 24 years in the Mid West region of Western Australia, Monsignor Hawes has left behind an outstanding legacy of architectural work. From the grandeur of the Cathedral of St Francis Xavier, and the dignity of Nazareth House, to the simplicity of the Cemetery Chapel of the Holy Spirit; these buildings are much admired features of the Geraldton landscape, and reminders of the talent, dedication and tenacity of a remarkable man.

Hawes passed away in Miami, United States, on the 26 June 1956.

## **References**

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 88.*

*Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).*

