

# More Nimbin history goes up in smoke

by Bob Dooley

A suspicious fire has again removed an historical building from Nimbin’s main street.

The fire tore through St Patrick’s church on Sunday 17th October at about 8.30pm, reducing the timber structure to rubble within an hour.

Next-door neighbour David Barbara was the first to smell smoke from inside his house, and investigated to discover small flames on the northern wall of the church.

He returned with buckets of water only to discover the interior of the church was well alight, and raised the alarm.

Though the Nimbin and Blue Knob RFS brigades responded quickly, they could do nothing to save the church, and worked to contain the blaze, keeping it away from neighbouring properties, before finally extinguishing the glowing remains.

St Patrick’s was built in 1913 for the Sisters of St Joseph who had a convent adjacent to it, and had used the church as a school, as well as holding services in it.

Over many decades, it had been a vibrant community hub for the village, as recalled by Daisy Stewart and other long-time residents for *The Daily Telegraph*.

The Long Tan cross, which survived the fire, was constructed by parishioners and installed in the church grounds in 1999 to honour the soldiers killed in the Vietnam war.

Father Bing Monteagudo of the Lismore Diocese told *NBN News* that the church had not been used for almost four years, and though all holy items had been removed, it had still been a consecrated building.

David Barbara said that homeless people had frequently dosed down in the church, which he said was easy to break into, and in the last month or two he had heard people shouting and smashing things.

He had reported this to police, and the church had been boarded up only two days before the fire.

However, no vagrants had been seen or heard in the vicinity that Sunday.

Police are investigating the cause of the fire, and



Photo: PAC

have conducted a forensic examination of the debris, which revealed that fortunately no-one had died.

The blaze re-kindled memories of the unexplained fire that burnt down two verandah-post buildings in the centre of Nimbin on 13th August 2014, with one bystander saying, “So much of Nimbin is gone forever.”

The coroner returned an open verdict on the cause of that fire, and it is equally likely that the destruction of St Patrick’s will also remain a mystery.



Photo: Yagia Gentle



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Authorised by Simon Cough 90 Beardow St West, Lismore Heights.





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Authorised by Sylvia Hale The Greens NSW D/263 279 Broadway Glebe NSW 2030

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