



LAST MASS IN SPRINGDALLAH

The final prayers have been said, the last communion has been shared, and now Springdallah's 121-year-old Catholic Church has closed. Bishop Paul Bird celebrated Mass with parishioners attending from across the state – many had grown up in the area, and wanted to return one last time.

The church was sold at auction last year, after the parish decided it was surplus to its needs, and is expected to become a residence.

Fr Justin Driscoll, who is the Administrator for Ballarat, Linton, and Beaufort Parishes, said

the remarkable altar and the rest of the furniture would go to other churches in the area. "The Stations of the Cross, for instance, will go to the church at Linton, because these ones are better than theirs, the church pews will go to Smythesdale, the altar will go to a little religious community in Greendale," he said.

"This church hasn't been used regularly on a Sunday for decades – the parish of Linton doesn't need the number of churches it did, and people are much more mobile, they have access to other church communities."

Basil Murphy (pictured right with his list) lived south of Springdallah, in Cape Clear, and remembered a 60-strong congregation when he was a child. He put together a list of old families he remembered growing up with, and said he was surprised at the turn out, seeing people for the first time in 30 or 40 years as well as plenty of family members. "We all grew up there, it's a sad occasion, but it's one of those things where there's no one there now, so something's got to be done about it," he said. "It's been there on its own for a number of years. It's a solid brick building, and it was the pride of the Linton parish when it was built back in those days."



The original church at Springdallah – also known as Derwent Jacks or Happy Valley – was made of wood. It burnt down in 1896, allegedly after a swagman camped too close, but a fundraising campaign, and help from other denominations, put together enough money to build a replacement within eighteen months. The church was officially opened on October 17, 1897.



