



THE PIONEER

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PROPERTY

The Hermitage and Old Stroud Monastery



THE COMMUNITY OF ST CLARE IS AN ORDER OF Franciscan Sisters in the Anglican Church dedicated to a life of prayer and solitude. Early in 1975 they were invited to Australia from England by the Diocese of Newcastle. The order began to grow and larger facilities became necessary. Nearby land was found and purchased, and architects and builders consulted. A local builder Kevin Osmond suggested 'adobe' as a simple and economic way of building and it wasn't long before some experimental mudbricks were made. None of the workers had used mudbricks before but had heard about a whole suburb of mudbrick houses on the outskirts of Melbourne, the designs of which inspired the first structure - The Brothers Hermitage – built for the Anglican Franciscan Brothers.

Volunteer groups began to come at weekends, often from as far as Sydney and Kempsey. People kept on coming – not only the young and old from the Church and from other traditional groups, but also many 'alternative' people interested in mudbrick making and building. A new species evolved from this project and they are known as "The Muddies" – hands & feet always caked in mud.



In the beginning the architects design proved very tedious and costly so between the Sisters, the builder and muddies the buildings were redesigned. Mudbrick load bearing walls, rough bush poles and second hand doors and windows were used. Much to the joy of the Sisters, the next 5 structures were built in the same time and for the same price of the first one. And that was only the beginning...

Much of the construction took place over a period of two years from January 1979. The land was consecrated and the buildings were blessed and dedicated on July 12, 1980. It is estimated that while "Muddies" were on minimal wages – the cost of the project was approximately 1/3 that of conventional buildings. Donations and loans kept coming in, although at times there appeared to be no money left. The Brothers and The Sisters were very grateful to all those who helped them in their venture of faith and prayer.

Today The Monastery is still seen as a very special place where the Brothers reside and people are still drawn to for solitude and peace. Groups also gather there for creative and learning sessions.

Character abounds and the creativity of those who constructed the buildings and grounds is evident.

~ Thank you to **Christopher Nash** of Booral for providing permission to print from his "Muddies Manual".

Rosemary Christmas is searching for further information on the whereabouts of Stroud's Muddies as she is writing a documentary on the building of the Stroud Monastery. If you have any information please let us know.

The Team at R & R Properties wish everyone a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!

