



Every church window tells a story

The story behind The Good Shepherd Window in St Mark's Church

Reading memorial plaques and being transported back in history is one of the joys of visiting a church like St Mark's. One of the problems for the church though, is managing the expectations of families in relation to memorial plaques and dedications. There simply is not enough space to accommodate all the requests.

Recently, however, through some clever thinking and possibly some divine providence, we were able not only to accommodate the wishes of one present-day family in our congregation, but also to restore and rededicate, in the nave of the church, the gift of a prominent family made 160 years ago. This gift was from Thomas and Theresa Mort, who originally gave the land for St Mark's in 1847. It took the form of a stained-glass window depicting Jesus as "the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep".

The window was originally commissioned from a factory in Birmingham and shipped to New South Wales in the late 1850s. It was intended to be placed high in the western porch of the church when St Mark's was extended to its present footprint and the spire was added.

For reasons lost to time, the window was only briefly installed. It was stored in its packaging in a room near the church organ and was not rediscovered until 2005, when the organ was replaced.

There followed a turbulent period during which it was almost lost. Having been considered 'surplus to needs', it was taken by a builder who intended to have the work shipped to New Zealand. Fortunately, the oversight was rectified in time, and the kind builder returned it to a shed at the rectory for continued storage.

Following a bequest from the family of the late Dr Ranji Wikramanayake and his late wife, Amara, a suitable repurposing of the window was proposed, more than 160 years after the original gift.

Ranji and Amara had arrived in Australia in 1975. Ranji was an endocrinologist who had trained in Sri Lanka and London and decided that Australia offered better prospects for raising a family. A highly respected diabetologist, he took up an appointment at RPA, settled within the parish and joined our congregation. The couple had a son, Priyan, and two daughters, Roshana and Shemara, all of whom now reside in Australia.

The Good Shepherd, which has been restored by Rick Allan of Moss Vale as a backlit feature, is mounted behind the baptismal font. It was dedicated at a special Evensong service on 21 June 2026 by Dr Michael Jensen, Rector of St Mark's, and the service was attended by members of the Wikramanayake family.

Michael commented on the beauty of the work and reminded us that Jesus as the Good Shepherd guides us and gives his life for us. He observed how appropriate it was that the restored window should be dedicated to the senior members of a loving family who had discharged their pastoral responsibilities in the manner of the Good Shepherd and whose own lives were, indeed, a great Australian story.

Visit www.stmarksdp.org to learn more about St Mark's history, services and events.



Roshana and Shemara Wikramanayake with a photograph of their parents, Ranji and Amara near The Good Shepherd Window.



The wording on the plaque for The Good Shepherd Window.



Rev Dr Michael Jensen dedicating the Good Shepherd Window at St Mark's Church.

