Rev. Canon Dr Frank Cash (1887-1964) : a biographical sketch

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Rev Dr Canon Frank Cash (1887 – 1964): a biographical sketch
by Vicki Hastrich, April 2008

Preface

Edward Francis Nicholson Cash was an assayer, an Anglican minister, an academic, an author, an amateur photographer, a father and a husband. But above all he was an admirer – of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In recently published books and in exhibitions held in 2007 to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the bridge’s construction, Frank Cash’s small place in the history of that work received more attention than ever before. Even so, he is represented as a minor but colourful character: the eccentric clergyman who was obsessed with the growing steel structure which he could see from the verandah of his rectory at Christ Church, Lavender Bay; the eccentric photographer who took thousands of photographs as it was built; the eccentric author who wrote Parables of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, an idiosyncratic text where detailed descriptions of the engineering processes are here and there linked to instruction in the Divine. In Frank Cash’s writings, in his obsession, in the broad shape of his life I sensed larger themes which I could develop and explore and so I was inspired to write a novel called The Great Arch. My invented character is not a fictionalised version of Frank Cash. Indeed, at a certain point I stopped researching Cash’s life to retain my creative freedom, and because I was concerned about hijacking a person’s identity for the purposes of fiction. Never-the-less, on the surface, there are many similarities between the real man and the one I invented. But how to explain the differences, especially when readers who know a little of Cash might presume they are the same? To set Frank Cash apart again, and as a mark of respect and a small gesture toward addressing my huge debt of gratitude, I decided to write the following brief biography. It is not artistically or professionally done; it’s more an assembly of the information I’ve come across, some discovered during the writing of the novel, the rest researched after I finished and decided on this course of action. Sometimes it may not be interesting – the facts and dates of lives can be like that, reading blandly on the page – but this time they are not for me to rearrange.
Early life and service to the church

Frank Cash was born on 15 February 1887, in Paddington, NSW. According to his birth certificate, his father, Charles G., was an accountant, and his mother's maiden name was Mary Anne Nicholson. Cash was baptised in March the following year into the Church of England at Jamberoo, a small town south of Sydney, at the Church of the Resurrection.

Little is known of Frank Cash's childhood or young manhood. According to Frank Cash's deacon's application, he was schooled at Fort Street School, Sydney. At the age of fifteen he moved with his family to the Western Australian goldfields. Again, according his deacon's application, he spent the years from 1903 to 1910 mining 'in Kalgoorlie and the back country'. During this time he studied for three years at the WA School of Mines in Kalgoorlie and worked 'on the treatment plants, ball mill and battery, and in the chemical and assay departments' of various big mines. On the deacon's application form his former occupation is listed as 'assayer'.

There is another source of information about this period of Frank Cash's life: an album of photographs taken by Cash himself during his goldfields sojourn. This album is held in the Battye Pictorial Collection at the State Library of Western Australia and was donated by John Beesley, the husband of Frank Cash's eldest daughter, Elizabeth. The notes in the Library catalogue state:

Born in NSW, at the age of about 15 he moved to Western Australia and was employed in the vicinity of Mount Malcolm as errand boy for a storekeeper "Dimeetro" after working as a striker (for a short period) to a local blacksmith. After a while, Dimeetro gave Frank a horse and trap and a mail round – until someone complained the H.M. mails were being delivered by a "youth". Later he moved to, and worked at Merton's Reward Gold Mine where he became interested in photography. At about that time he became interested in theological studies and made the acquaintance of Rev. E.M. Collick at Kalgoorlie. At Kalgoorlie he worked on the Golden Mile and attended the School of Mines.

This information may have its origins in a letter sent by Frank Cash's second wife, to Elizabeth Beesley. The letter was sent after Cash's death, but some family members apparently disputed the accuracy of some of the information it contained. Unfortunately, Elizabeth Beesley is now unwell and unable to clarify the situation,
and her youngest sister, Miriam Perry, does not remember hearing many stories of her father’s early life. Miriam thinks her father may have originally travelled to Western Australia by himself and that perhaps the rest of his family followed. The Battye Library photograph album certainly does contain photos of family members: his parents, his brothers, Bertie and Arnold, and his baby sister, Iris. Frank Cash was the eldest child.

The photographs in the album are not arranged in chronological order. Dates range from 1904 to 1909. From the captions, it would appear Cash first spent some time in Malcolm. (Interestingly, one of the men in several group photos taken at that time is named as Cr. Dimitro.) The 1905 photographs indicate that Cash then moved to Mertondale: subjects include his own rough camp and various shots of the Merton’s Reward gold mine and machinery. From 1906 to 1908, it might be supposed Cash resided in Kalgoorlie, where he took pictures of the town streets and parks and churches, the family home, the Eclipse Battery after it was struck by lightning, as well as sundry portraits and records of social gatherings. A photo of Rev E.M. Collick is dated 11 November 1906, which would seem to verify that gentleman’s religious influence upon Cash, as Cash was confirmed shortly before on 30 September 1906 in Kalgoorlie. In February 1908, Cash boarded the White Star Liner Suevic in the port of Albany. The purpose and destination of the trip are unknown. In 1909, Cash seems to have either visited, or lived for a time in Murrin Murrin, where he took photographs of Afghans tending their gardens, of camel trains carrying firewood, and of the ‘Rio Tinto’ homestead.

The details of when and how Frank Cash came by his decision to return to Sydney to attend Moore Theological college are unknown, although, while still on the goldfields, Cash was apparently corresponding with Canon Hey Sharp, one of the original founders of the Australian College of Theologians. In mourning Sharp’s death in the March 1928 issue of the Christ Church parish paper, Cash describes Sharp as a friend and mentor. It’s possible that Rev E. M. Collick was acquainted with Canon Sharp and was responsible for introducing the two men to each other.

On Frank Cash’s deacon’s application he states that he had thought of joining the ministry ‘as early as my thoughts can faithfully carry me back.’ There he also lists his practical church experience as being six years of ‘active church work on the West

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3 This information derives from Frank Cash’s deacon’s application.
Australian goldfields, [lay] preaching every Sunday for the last two and a half years there.'

The application form lists Cash's father as being 'in the employ of the Citizens Life Insurance, NZ', but no location is given. Why ever, and whenever, the family eventually did disperse, with Miriam Perry recalling that Cash's brother, Bertie, lived in Tasmania, while Arnold lived in Brisbane.

Frank Cash was deaconed in December 1913 and priested in December 1914. He was a curate at St John's, Ashfield, from 1915 to 1916, and Locum Tenens there in 1916. From 1916 to 1922 he was curate at St Jude's in Randwick. Cash was given his first parish in 1922 — Christ Church, Lavender Bay — and there he stayed until his retirement in 1961. Over the years Frank Cash furthered his education and received the following academic awards:

- Bachelor of Arts, University of Sydney, 1915
- Bachelor of Divinity, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1918
- Honours Old Testament Literature, Hebrew & Aramaic, 1920
- Master of Arts (Honours in Philosophy), University of Sydney, 1922
- Honours in Biblical & historical Theology, 1923
- Doctor of Theology, University of Melbourne, 1945

Frank Cash maintained a lifelong interest in theological education and in 1931 became the Deputy Registrar of the Australian College of Theology, rising to Registrar in 1945, a position he held until 1961. In further service to the church, he was Chaplain to the Archbishop of Sydney from 1934 to 1963, becoming the Examining Chaplain in 1940. Additionally, he was the Canon of St Andrew's Cathedral (1951 – 1961) and a rural dean from 1953 until his retirement in 1961. Though twice offered episcopal office and other more lucrative livings, Reverend Cash was fulfilled by his extra church activities and chose to remain parish priest at Christ Church, Lavender Bay. There's no doubt he was attached to the beauty of the location and its proximity to the bridge, but he also believed in the nobility and purpose of his parish work, highly rating the privilege of being intimately involved with people's lives. In the July 1924 issue of the parish paper, he urges young men to consider joining the ministry, saying in rousing tones:
The Ministry of the Gospel is the queen of all professions, and the pulpit the most privileged, as well as the most solemn of any speaker's platform. ...Sunday duty, though a very important part, is but a very small part, of the circle of the Ministry. Everyday holds something new, every day the joy and sorrow of life are thrown one against the other; every day the Minister is, as it were, thrust in upon himself to decide upon matters which deeply affect other people's lives.

... so closely does he cohere to his work, that he can say, 'I am my work, my work is I, wherever I am there is my work.' It is a unity which knows no point of separation.

... Herein is the ideal of the Ministry, a lofty standard wherein every word is pregnant with noblest thought. Repeat it over slowly, "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," and your mind is brightened with a vision splendid of the Ministry, a Ministry which in clarion tones calls to the young man of to-day. It is a Ministry filled, not only with the beauty of service, but the spice of adventure; a calling, which, if to be successful, demands the highest moral fibre and an unfailing trust that God speaks directly to the human heart. For the Ministry of the Gospel are wanted, the best intellects, the best training – the best sons.

Parish priest and photographer

When Frank Cash took up the living in 1922 at Christ Church, the parish was rundown after the long incumbency of the previous minister. Indeed, in the forty years prior to Cash's arrival there had only ever been two ministers, so the young priest was keen to reinvigorate his church community. In July 1922, he published the first issue of nearly forty years worth of parish papers. In the October issue that year, Cash estimates the number of parishioners as being three thousand, but six months later, after an intense programme of church repairs and the establishment of new church guilds and social clubs, numbers rose to four thousand.

The church itself is an appealing sandstone building in the Early English style. Designed by the architect Benjamin Backhouse, the foundation stone was laid on 25 August 1869. Memorial gates to the church (built in remembrance of the previous minister who had died in office), were officially opened in 1925 by Dr John Bradfield, who was then a friend of Cash's, though the two were later to fall out. A church hall (sometimes referred to as the School Hall) stood on the grounds at the corner of Walker and Lavender Streets and was rented out for £60 a year for daytime use as a small private boys' school. This arrangement came to an end in 1926 when tightening economic conditions forced the operator to close down. Sunday School was held in
the hall and it was an invaluable venue for church functions and social gatherings over
the years until it burnt down in 1951. Replacement costs were estimated at £8,000 and
though many fundraising attempts were made, nothing like that amount was ever
realised.

Christ Church and its handsome sandstone rectory sit high on the hill at
Lavender Bay, looking out over the city and a wide harbour vista. During the course
of Reverend Cash’s ministry the view was to change considerably, most notably with
the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was a building project that Cash
was to become obsessed with and which would change the face of his parish. Cash
was enthralled with the engineering processes and the design of the bridge and came
to write his own book about it, Parables of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The book was
self-published in April 1930, though the bridge was unfinished and two more years of
construction were to follow. Cash intended to produce a second volume, but this work
never eventuated, possibly due to a dispute with the printers. It’s tempting to
speculate on the existence of a manuscript for the second volume. It seems probable
that Cash would have had most of the necessary material to hand (much of it would
have been written up for the parish paper), and it’s in keeping with his character to
think he would have been highly organised with a completed draft ready to go to
print. No such manuscript has so far surfaced, but perhaps it lies in a cupboard
somewhere awaiting discovery. How wonderful if this was indeed the case and it one
day came to light!

Frank Cash had unlimited access to the entire bridge worksite, including the
workshops, via a special letter of permission approved by Mr Laurence Ennis, the
Director of Construction for the bridge contractors, Dorman, Long & Co. Cash had
apparently asked Bradfield for permission first, but Bradfield refused since Ennis and
he had agreed no members of the public should be allowed entry to the site for safety
reasons. Though Bradfield never told Cash why he refused, he was furious with Cash
for seeking out Ennis and so ended the friendship.

Parables of the Sydney Harbour Bridge is filled with detailed engineering
descriptions and contains over 100 photographs which Cash shot and processed
himself. Twenty parables also appear in its pages, all of which use some feature of the

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4 This reason is suggested in Bridging Sydney, a book edited by Caroline Mackaness and published by the Historic Houses Trust in 2006, however, the source for that comment is unrecorded.
5 According to Richard Raxworthy in his biography of Bradfield, An Unreasonable Man.
bridge as a point of inspiration leading on to religious instruction. Indeed, ‘God at Work in the World’, was to be the major religious theme of Cash’s life and he was known to often illustrate his sermons with home-made lantern slides of bridge photographs. As well, bridge articles and photographs appeared in the parish papers for nearly all of the thirty-nine years of Cash’s incumbency.

In early issues of the parish papers, Cash explained to readers that he felt it his duty to report on the progress of the bridge since he was privileged to be so handily situated. For this reason, and because he firmly believed there was widespread interest in the bridge, he sent 150 copies of the parish paper to members of the clergy, especially targeting country clergymen. The parish paper was paid for by subscription (collected locally by ‘District Visitors’ who went doorknocking around the parish), and regular churchgoers received their copies on the first Sunday of every month. At one point an honour box was installed at the bridge workshops where interested workers could purchase a copy.

Circulation figures for the parish paper bounce about: the first issue, in 1922, had a print run of 1,000. By mid 1931 numbers climbed to 1500, but, shortly after, church finances became pinched and the run was reduced to 1200 copies. Circulation dwindled to 700 by 1945, and then, in the March 1951 issue, Cash warns the paper must soon come to an end as the printers have been doing their work for the same cost since 1922 and cannot continue to do so. But the parish paper did survive – albeit in a reduced four-page state – until Cash’s retirement. A photograph (often an old one of the bridge) continued to grace each issue.

Without doubt, Frank Cash’s parish papers are a remarkable record of a place and its people over time. Not only does the Sydney Harbour Bridge get built over the course of its pages, but the everyday effects of major social changes are seen. For example, in the February 1932 at the height of the Great Depression, Cash states that over four days in the previous month 250 callers have come to the rectory seeking assistance in securing a job on the bridge. (By this time news of Cash’s close association with the bridge must have been well known, but to appreciate the plight of those desperate job seekers it’s worth bearing in mind that most of the work on the bridge was completed by then and only finishing off remained.) Various charity drives were organised during these lean years: first, cases of oranges were given away, and then blankets and slippers were sold cheaply in the winter of 1931. Miriam Perry remembers people coming to the Rectory for help all the time and says some
destitute souls even camped out under the hall. On a lighter note, she also recalls her father sending occasional, vexatious, hard-luck cases up the road to the Catholic church – only to receive others in return.

Though some parishioners did have employment on the bridge, many others were ousted from the suburb when their flats and houses were resumed to make way for the new roads and railway and tram lines which would connect up to the bridge. Reverend Cash photographed many local demolitions (some of which can be seen in his book and in various issues of the parish papers) and it's these photos by which he is chiefly known today since they're dramatic and dynamic. Church numbers suffered as a result of the resumptions and the parish never recovered despite Cash's predictions to the contrary. The parish declined further during the Second World War, and then again during the 1950s when the demographic changed as the business district of North Sydney grew and high-rise flats were built. The boundaries of the parish had always been small, but by the early 1960s, after the excising of yet more land for the construction of the Warringah Freeway, it was almost unviable. Thus, Reverend Cash had presided over the decline of his precious parish.

While looking after the needs of his parishioners, Reverend Cash also served the broader community: he gave religious instruction at the Greenwood School; he held weekly services at the Graythwaite Veterans' Hospital where he also served on the board; he was the chairman of the board of St Ives Church of England Hospital in North Sydney from 1940 to 1953. Cash was also a long-time board member of Shore School (SCEGS) from 1924 to 1964. In 1962, Cash presented a handsome, hand-made book to the school, *Sixteen Turning Points in the Construction of Sydney Harbour Bridge*, which is now lodged in the school archives. The book takes the form of a large album. The text is professionally printed and laid out, and is illustrated by high quality prints of Cash’s own photographs which are pasted into place. In the preface Cash explains he was moved to make the book thinking of the generations of staff and boys to come who, on seeing the bridge from the school grounds, may ask how it was built. By way of citing his credentials as the author, Cash goes on to say he spent ‘...about sixteen hours every week for eight years within the Workshops, and on the steelwork during its construction across the Harbour.’ The school principal, B. H. Travers, writes in the forward, ‘...the School now has a volume which is unique in every respect – in quality, in size, in subject matter and in number. There is no other book like this anywhere!’ B. H. Travers says of Cash, ‘Not only renowned in several
fields within the Church, he is also world renowned for his photography and for the pains he takes to produce a photographic result.

If the claim of an international reputation seems over-blown, Cash’s obituary in the *Sun* newspaper states, ‘Dr. Cash was one of Australia’s leading photographers and was called upon by the RAAF in wartime and by the N.S.W. Police Department.’ No other sources have mention this work, and what it might have entailed is not known. Certainly, Cash was a patient experimenter as a photographer: he tried night exposures and was willing to wait for ideal conditions, famously getting up night after night for a month until, on New Year’s Eve in 1935, at 3.57 am, he finally captured a shot of the bridge perfectly reflected in the waters of the harbour. He was also fearless when it came to putting himself in precarious positions to find new angles and views. Writing about a photograph of the hangers and bridge deck in the January 1931 issue of the parish paper, Cash says, ‘I suppose more than one hour was spent in arranging the camera in position, for it was necessary eventually for me to sit out upon the cross lateral bracing, to make the time exposure. Any photographer, and perhaps every ferry passenger, will readily understand that some nervousness might be shown when focusing a heavy whole plate camera, on a cross lateral, and not drop any of the paraphernalia in the harbour below.’

Although Cash’s technical skill is evident in surviving prints and lantern slides, his photographs are utilitarian in nature. They are proud records of places and processes but are purely representational, lacking that transcendent quality which might earn them the additional adjective, ‘artistic’.

In the July 1926 parish paper, Cash said of his hobby, ‘I enjoy exceedingly my photography in reproducing for our people anything which may win you nearer to God...’ So, not only does Cash enjoy his hobby for its own sake, he uses it as a professional tool and as means to connect with his community. Cash is generous in sharing his images around and surely takes on a good deal of extra work when he offers any adult two free photos of the demolished houses shown in the parish paper of January 1927. In that issue he says he’s been doing photography for 25 years which would date his interest as beginning in 1902.

Despite his early take-up of the technology, Cash was content with the equipment he had and appears never to have updated his gear. In the introduction to *Parables of the Sydney Harbour Bridge*, Cash lists his equipment as being an Adams
Minex quarter-plate camera and four Ross lenses. \(^6\) Thirty-three years later, in 1963, Cash was still using the Adams Minex on a visit to the Admiralty Islands, though he acknowledges lighter equipment would have been more practical. Miriam Perry would agree: she remembers childhood holidays and having to take turns carrying the heavy camera in its black leather bag.

While some sources talk of there being a darkroom in the Christ Church rectory, Miriam maintains there was no such dedicated room and clearly recalls the inconvenience to the rest of the family while her father, engrossed in his hobby, monopolised the only bathroom!

Frank Cash willed his camera and photographic equipment to a friend, Mr John Brackenreg, owner of the Art Lovers Gallery in Artarmon. Mr Brackenreg later donated the equipment to Moore Theological College where it remains.

**Family life**

While still a divinity student, Frank Cash became engaged to Miss Violet Elizabeth Short of 30 Railway Street, Petersham. (Violet was known as Elizabeth, but, to avoid confusion with her daughter, she shall be referred to here as Violet.) The couple were married in 1915. Violet was 28 years of age, born on 10 May in the same year of her husband’s birth, 1887. As a young woman she was a talented artist and, according to her daughter, Miriam, won a prestigious scholarship to study overseas. To Violet's great disappointment, her parents refused to let her go and so her artistic gift went undeveloped. Though Miriam Perry has a few of her mother's paintings, she says Violet never really pursued her art as a hobby, instead spending most of her spare time studying Greek and Hebrew at home with her husband.

Frank and Violet Cash had four children. The eldest, Violet Elizabeth (also known as Elizabeth), was born in 1915. A second daughter, Mary Phyllis Annie, was born in 1919. A son, John Francis, followed in 1920. Miriam, the youngest child, was born in 1922.

When Elizabeth left school she attended catering college and excelled at her course, becoming a great provider for, and organiser of, rectory functions. She

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\(^6\) Cash also owned a Pony Remo No. 4 camera, made in the USA between 1906-1912, which is now held by Moore College Library.
married John Beesley in 1944. (John Beesley had originally been a school friend of John Cash.) Elizabeth and John Beesley moved to Western Australia where John took up a government appointment in forestry, having earned his degree in that field from the University of Sydney. They currently live on the Mornington Peninsular in Victoria.

Mary Cash studied botany at the University of Sydney and went on to complete her Masters in England. On her way to the UK, Mary met Pip Duell, the ship's chief officer. The couple married and later settled in New Zealand. Mary passed away some years ago.

Youngest daughter, Miriam Cash, was also university educated. She gained a science degree and began work as a bacteriologist for the company, Johnson & Johnson. Miriam also sailed for England where she stayed for five years working and travelling. Employment for young, educated people was easy to find in post-war England and Miriam says it was an exciting time in science with the field of microbiology opening up. Mary and she both worked on different projects to do with the development of antibiotics. While in the UK, Miriam met her husband-to-be, Dr David Perry — another young Australian furthering his studies. The Perry's returned to Sydney where David worked as surgeon and Miriam later became a university librarian. Miriam now lives in Armidale in country NSW.

John Cash, the only son of the family, was also a bright student. He went to North Sydney Boys' High School but failed to gain university entrance and so started work in the Haymarket Branch of the Commonwealth Bank. When war was declared on 3 September 1939, he immediately joined up, becoming the first citizen in Sydney to enlist in the RAAF. He was nineteen years old. John trained in Australia and was awarded his wings. He sailed for the Middle East on Good Friday 1941, on the Queen Elizabeth. John was stationed at Alexandria. In August 1941 he was listed as missing and then, in March 1942, was officially listed as killed in action. At the time of his death his rank was Sergeant Pilot. He was shot down over the Mediterranean Sea, near Ras Beddud, North Africa, on 16 August 1941. A letter from John’s commanding officer, addressed to Mrs Cash, explains the circumstances of John’s death:

The Squadron was doing an offensive patrol over enemy territory in the Gambut region, when an Italian S.79 was seen landing on Gambut aerodrome. Your son dived down from 13,000 feet, and opened fire on the S.79.
You will be pleased to hear that the enemy aircraft crashed on the aerodrome, and was credited to your son.

Your son had previously shot off the tail of a M.109 – a German fighter; but so many things were going on over enemy territory – it was unable to be confirmed by us, and has been listed as probable. I think that the reason your son made a forced landing in the Sea was due to rear gun action from the S.79, which may have caused some damage to the engine – but not sufficiently serious to stop it immediately.

Yours sincerely,
Dudley Garton Honor

John’s death was a great sorrow to the family, and when an appeal came from Moore Theological College in 1942 for donations towards the building of a new chapel, Frank and Violet Cash immediately responded in the name of their lost son, offering the entire sum required. The chapel would be named ‘The John Francis Memorial Chapel’. Due to war shortages, building did not get underway until 1947 but by then plans for the chapel had changed to become much more lavish due to an unexpected windfall. In January 1945, Frank Cash was informed by a letter from a firm of Dublin solicitors that he was sole heir to an Irish ancestral estate. This was startling news, as Cash had no inkling of wealthy Irish connections, though Miriam Perry says her grandmother sometimes muttered about her son becoming rich one day. No one paid any attention to the prophecy since, according to Miriam, her grandmother was always a little strange and later in life became confused.

On 22 July 1950, the chapel was opened by the Governor-General, and in the same year, on 20 November, it was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was not the humble brick building first envisaged: the chapel was made of stone, its design inspired by the King’s College Chapel in Cambridge; stained-glass filled its windows. Communion vessels of pure gold, designed by Violet Cash, graced its altar. Together, Frank and Violet Cash had spent the entire inheritance honouring their son. Further descriptions of the chapel and the circumstances surrounding its construction may be found in A Centenary History of Moore Theological College where two accounts are given: one by the author Marcus Loane, and one written by Cash himself which appears as a curiously out of place chapter, or appendix, at the rear of the book. Cash’s more personal account includes portions of the speeches made at the opening and consecrating ceremonies.

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7 This letter is quoted by Frank Cash in Marcus Loane’s book, A Centenary History of Moore Theological College.
The memorialising of John Cash did not begin and end with the building of the chapel: in 1946 a commemoration stone was laid in the western wall at Christ Church, and in 1954 the Cash’s established a scholarship in John’s name to be awarded annually to a student at Moore College at the discretion of the principal. Further scholarships were established under the terms of Reverend Cash’s will, whereby £7,000 was to be provided as capital for six awards to be known as the ‘Frank and Elizabeth Cash Scholarships’. Frank Cash’s second wife, Annie, followed suit and left another sum in her own will to Moore College to establish the ‘Anne Cash Scholarships’. (Frank Cash’s will and estate papers are held at Moore College, as are Annie Cash’s, the co-executors of both being Broughton Knox and Marcus Loane who were, at various times, principals of Moore.)

For Frank and Violet Cash the building of the chapel was an act of love, a practical task to compensate for loss, but the generosity of their gift left them in a modest situation financially. By the early 1950s, Reverend Cash was finding it difficult to manage on a stipend which had not increased since the 1920s. When Synod moved to institute a minimum wage for ministers in 1954, Cash indicated in the parish papers that he would be glad to receive it as his income was well below the figure mooted.

The Cash’s had always been major contributors to Christ Church funding drives for church improvements and repairs, but now, in line with many parishioners, they were not in a position to provide as much. In 1956, parts of the parish were declared slums. Weekly collections diminished to an average of £15, but diocesan taxes remained at the high level of half the parish’s income. As the number of active churchgoers dropped year by year, it was a struggle to keep the parish going. Early in 1958 when the vestry needed re-roofing, Cash glumly notes in the parish paper, ‘It is imperative this generation should preserve the Church building, whether the people hereabouts use it much or little.’

The situation at Christ Church was only to get worse in May of that year when Violet Cash passed away. For thirty-six years Violet had been a stalwart worker for the parish in her own right and had even taken up lawn mowing duties in recent times when no other volunteers could be found. A memorial plaque was installed in the church in September 1958. Violet’s ashes were interred in the John Francis Memorial Chapel.
As it happened, the rectory was not without the presence of a woman for long. Frank Cash married Annie Winifred Steel, a family friend who had never been married before. The couple remained at the rectory until Frank Cash’s retirement in October 1961. Cash appears to have left Christ Church without any great fanfare, his last parish paper is subdued: in it he simply notes a few, seemingly arbitrary, highlights of his forty years of service. Without explicitly inviting visitors, he then sets down the address and phone number of the small cottage in Willoughby which will now be his home.

In retirement, Cash continued to serve as chaplain to the Archbishop and as a member of the Synod of Sydney, and on the board at Shore School. In 1962, still enthralled with the Harbour Bridge, he made his one-off book for the school, *The Sixteen Turning Points in the Construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge*. He also carried out some photographic work for Shore, recording school building projects.

At around this time, Frank and Annie Cash made a trip to Lord Howe Island where they stayed for several weeks. As a result, Cash presented Shore School with another home-made ‘book’, consisting of three albums of black and white prints accompanied by typed commentary and titled, *Lord Howe Island: What a Boy Could Expect to See There During the Month of September and October, Book 1, Book 2, Book 3*. And what would a boy likely see there during those months? Trees, birds, and cargo being unloaded at the small jetty. Frank Cash’s own handwriting dates the preface of the book as 16 April 1963.

**Passing**

Frank Cash was a healthy man throughout his life, but in his last months he suffered from chronic nephritis – an inflammation of the kidneys. (It has been said that Cash suffered from silicosis from his work on the mines. Miriam Perry, however, completely refutes the claim.) On Sunday 26 September 1964, Frank Cash collapsed at home and was taken to the Mater Hospital in Crows Nest where he died the following Thursday night. Cause of death was given as acute renal failure and acute appendicitis, in conjunction with nephritis. A funeral attended by senior churchmen was held at St Andrew’s Cathedral on Monday 3 August, and a cremation followed at Northern Suburbs Crematorium. Reverend Cash’s ashes were interred beside his first
wife's in their son's Memorial Chapel at Moore College, on 30 November 1964, with Bishop Loane in attendance.

Annie Cash survived her husband by fourteen years, dying in 1979.

The Man

The facts of a person's life tell much about them, but certainly not all. How to define that slippery thing which is personality, temperament, character? The anecdotes and words of others tell us something, and so do the man's own writings.

Frank Cash's writing is daring, imaginative, instructive, charming, enthusiastic, sometimes innocent, almost always kind, and always, always full of awe and admiration for the inventiveness of mankind. These qualities can be seen on nearly every page of his beautifully idiosyncratic book, *Parables of the Sydney Harbour Bridge*; certainly they abound in issue after issue of his parish papers which endure as a remarkable snapshot of parochial life. One wonders how many such records of Australian life survive.

Anecdotes take skill to elicit, but even the simplest of them have a life-giving power. Miriam Perry says her father was good with people and always patient: she can't remember him losing his temper. John Beesley recalls that in everything Cash did 'he was near the top of the class in competence.' He was even a good motor mechanic. Beesley admits his father-in-law was a bit eccentric, but when asked if parishioners tired of talks and sermons on Harbour Bridge themes, John maintains no one minded because Cash was such a well organised and entertaining speaker. But at least one parishioner found him a little intimidating. In an oral history recording held at Stanton Library in North Sydney, Joan Fletcher says:

'I was never keen on meeting him in the street. I was always frightened he was going to ask me embarrassing questions and he spoke in a loud voice and was very effusive... He was an overwhelming character... he was quite open, an enthusiastic gentleman...'

Reverend Cash was a believer in bonhomie and a bountiful spread and the Sunday School children's parties and choir boys' parties are evidence of this — they must have been legendary, particular during the lean days of the Depression. Cash
describes them often in the parish papers and reports the children saying they have had a 'truly party' when they are given as much ginger-pop and home-made ice cream as they can consume. Apparently the superlative was sometimes extended and a 'very truly party' might be had. One choir boys' party is described in the November 1930 issue of the parish paper: it consisted of two hours of games, followed by party food in the hall laid out on fifteen foot long tables covered with snowy white tablecloths, and '...each boy has as much as he pleases'. Afterwards a concert was held and prizes given out, among them 'a variety of electric, long distance torches; leather bags; wrist watches; very good hair brushes; very good Prayer Books; and hymn books with music; and numerous other things which boys love.' Reverend Cash so thoroughly approves of the good fun and excess that it's hard not to see him as the driving force behind them.

Cash's few obituaries — in the newspaper, in the Diocesan Yearbook, in the parish paper — were modest in size and restrained, but all mention Cash's diverse interests and describe him variously as 'a unique and remarkable man'. The most personal of these, and surely the most apt, was by E. D. G. Booker, who was the Rector's Warden at Christ Church for a great many years. In the October 1964 issue of the parish paper, a new parish priest printed the following tribute written by Booker:

It is difficult for us, in these days of rush and bustle, to visualise the parish when the Rev. E. F. N. Cash was Inducted in 1922.

There was no Harbour Bridge... Life moved at a slower, and perhaps more gracious tempo. Attendances at Church were higher, and in the old hall the Sunday School was a flourishing concern with almost as many teachers then as we have children to-day.

The fine old stone Rectory, with its wonderful views, must have delighted the heart of the new Rector, and his family. It was there that his children grew up, and from which his only son John went forth, at the call of duty, never to return.

A man of outstanding scholastic attainments attracted attention from all over Australia. So highly regarded was he that twice he was offered episcopal office. Twice, however, he declined, as he felt that his work at Lavender Bay, both parochial and extra-parochial was of more importance to the church as whole.

In all tasks he undertook, it was characteristic of him that he threw himself into them with all the ability and enthusiasm he possessed, and it was usual for him to bring a new and most unlikely approach to the problem to be solved with outstanding success.

What can one say about a man who had so many and varied interests in all of which he was an acknowledged expert?

Many people, far better qualified than I am, have paid tribute to his skill and outstanding ability in the many facets of his career. I think, however, of the remark of
a small boy, when I informed him of the death of Dr. Cash, summed up the way he was regarded by us all: “Gee, I’m sorry,” he said, “he was wonderful with children.”

Afterword

The Reverend Frank Cash’s small place in the history of Australia’s iconic bridge is now guaranteed given the extra attention he has received in the latest spate of bridge histories. His service to his parish and his church is on the diocesan record. But anyone who cares to know him more intimately should pour through the pages of his parish papers, there to find a man whose capacity for joy in favourite things is unfailing. Enthusiasm, and a willingness to be pleased – these were surely Frank Cash’s greatest gifts.