

## Father Julian Tenison Woods



Father Julian Edmund Tenison Woods arrived in the South East of South Australia in 1857. He was 24 years of age, had been in Australia for three years and had experienced seven years of Catholicism and three months of the priesthood. He replaced Father Powell who had spent 11 months in Penola from 1854-1855.

His parishioners were spread throughout 2,000 square miles from the Murray to the coast and west to the border. They were either squatters, servants, shepherds, storekeepers or workers attached to one of three townships of Penola, Robe and Mount Gambier.

The challenges of providing priestly support for families in the region was immense. But Father Julian Tenison Woods immediately set up a system of regular visitations to Penola, Robe and Mount Gambier and by 1860 he had established churches at these centres. He had also become well known in the area and was well liked. Father Woods had great public speaking skills and his keen interests in geology environmental management and indigenous education earned him a reputation for advocacy on social justice and community well-being. He remained in the area for ten years, ministering and serving the people of the South East until 1867 when he was recalled to Adelaide.

Father Julian Tenison Woods' journeys heightened his interest in the geology of the region and it was during this period that he completed his first book, *Geological Observation in South Australia*, principle in the district south east of Adelaide (published 1862), a book still valued as a reference for scientific researchers, and he was the first scientist to chart much of the sub-terrain of the South East. His scientific genius, artistry in recording flora and excellent communication skills earned him a strong reputation for his expertise in this field and his renown led to correspondence with other experts and requests for lectures. He was an accomplished natural scientist and his scientific methods of research and analysis were meticulous and scholarly.

Father Woods' books and scientific articles are still consulted today and his contemporaries widely accepted and respected his theories and opinions in the area of botany, geology, marine biology, geography and palaeontology. In all, he wrote six books and had over 200 articles on scientific observations published.

However, it wasn't long before the education winds began to blow through the state. Tenison Wood's congregation was too small and scattered to consolidate a strong network of Catholic schools across the state, and yet he was becoming gradually and painfully aware that future generations were in effect growing without any significant or formal instruction in the faith.

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Deeply troubled because so many poor children had no access to any education, Father Woods determined to set up a series of Catholic schools in the South East. He opened a small one in 1861 in the Church at Penola, but the people were too poor to support it and it had to close down. At this time, he met Mary MacKillop and, with her help, was able to fulfill his dream to establish a religious order that would work for poor in remote places. In January 1866, Mary arrived in Penola. By March there were 33 children on the roll in the new school, and the prototype of Catholic education in South Australia had begun.

Appointed to the position of Bishop's Secretary and Vicar for Education in 1867, Father Woods was given the task of setting up an independent system of Catholic Education. Using his experience in the South East he came up with an outline for South Australia which came to be accepted as the only one capable of meeting the Church's needs in the Adelaide archdiocese. Father Woods remains a significant figure in the development of Catholic Education in South Australia and beyond.

We are proud that Tenison Woods College is named after the Reverend Julian Tenison Woods. He is a great leader and mentor for our young people as he worked so hard to establish a Catholic identity in the area, then initiated the system of Catholic Education in the state, and who was not only a scholar of public respect, but a man of vision, compassion and action. We believed that his high ideals of scholarship and concern for the poor provide a worthy inspiration to encourage our students to meet the challenges of the future.