



# St Mary's Diocesan School

**Broadway North**

**1914**

**Use:** Boarding school  
**Materials:** Timber, iron  
**NZHPT Registered:** Not registered  
**Legal Description:** Pt Lots 2 & 3 DP 1500 Lot 10 DP 1822 All DP 3670 Pt Lot 14 DP 4177 All DP 4366 Lots 1 & 2 DP 5575 Lot 1 DP 5630 Lot 1 DP 8592

**Historic Value:** 3 out of 5  
**Architectural Value:** - out of 4  
**Technical Value:** - out of 2  
**Symbolic Value:** - out of 3

**Rarity Value:** - out of 2  
**Townscape Value:** - out of 2  
**Group Value:** - out of 2

**Overall Heritage Value:** 3 out of 20



In 1914, a group of parents in Stratford decided to try to establish a boarding school that had a Church of England character. This school was to be the Diocesan School for the soon-to-be-established Diocese of Taranaki. The group of parents constituted themselves Board of Governors for the school, and in October they brought the Glasgow property on Broadway. (The Glasgow home, known as Young House, was not demolished until 1988). In November of the same year, Miss Ella Allman Marchant was invited to become the founding headmistress. Classes began in February 1915, with Miss Sheppard helping Miss Marchant to teach the children. The total roll was 22 – consisting of two boarders, 10 day girls and 10 day boys.



*Marchant House after it had been completed*

The school roll rapidly climbed, and the school outgrew the buildings. In 1917, the school board purchased the current site of 11.5 acres, and arranged for new buildings to be built. The laying of the foundation stone was done by the Bishop of Auckland (the Right Reverend A.W. Averill) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1918. The building was named after Miss Marchant, and it still stands today. Until recently it was used solely for accommodation. However, in 2003 new hostels were built, and it is now used as a teaching space.

The principals of St Mary's have always been women of education, vision, and courage. Miss Mary Silvia Fleming replaced Miss Marchant in May 1917, but unfortunately was struck down with the influenza epidemic in 1918, and died after nursing the school through it. There is a Fleming Memorial Window in the hostel which commemorates her contribution to the school. Miss Edith Stanford took over, bringing her own school 'Chetwode' down from New Plymouth to join St Mary's. Miss Ethel Wilson was appointed principal in 1926, and stayed until 1944. She encouraged the girls to be more physically active – with all the girls climbing the mountain, and a creek running through the school grounds being dammed to form a swimming pool. At this time, St Mary's was described as *"a modern school for girls, situated amid fine, healthy surroundings and on an elevated site."*



*Entrance gates to the school – inscription reads "St Mary's Diocesan School, Est. 1914"*

Miss Elizabeth Robertson became the principal of St Mary's in 1950. She was an energetic and goal-orientated person, who was very influential in the school's history. By the time she was appointed, the primary part of the school had been phased out, and boys were no longer able to enrol in the kindergarten or primer classes as they had been able to in earlier years. Miss Robertson saw the need for a school with such a special Anglican character to have a chapel, but when she asked about it she was told there was no money and she should build it herself. This she did, with the staff and girls building it from scratch – drawing up the plans, digging and laying the foundations, making bricks, and fundraising. In 1956, the chapel was completed and it still stands today along with the main classroom block, which Miss Robertson also instigated.

Other principals include Miss Marjorie Bruce, Rev David Tonkin, Miss Robertshawe, Mrs. Geraldine Travers, Mrs. Susan Stevens, and the current principal, Mrs. Lynley Rawston.

St Mary's is still operating as an integrated Anglican girl's secondary boarding school. It has a decile rating of 7, and approximately 180 girls attend the school, with the majority of them boarding. Recently, plans for an extended chapel have been drawn up, as the roll is too large to be comfortably accommodated for in the small building. New buildings and facilities have been added, but the special character of the school that was sought after by the group of parents setting up the school in 1914 has lived on.



## **Bibliography**

*The Stratford Press*: "Looking Back 90 Years", Carol Spragg (Vol. 46, No. 4, 9 Feb 2005)

*The Stratford Press*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Feb 14 1990)

St Mary's School website: [www.stmarys.school.nz](http://www.stmarys.school.nz)

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