

Planted the seeds of lifelong learning

Brother John Carrigg
Schoolteacher and headmaster
Born: Perth, 1932
Died: Perth, aged 93

Planting seeds of education was a priority for Brother John Carrigg, but the business of growing did not end with teaching. He distributed seeds, literally. The handsome trees in the grounds of Trinity College in East Perth stand thanks to the green fingers of staff when the school opened in 1962.

By 1966, when John became Trinity's second headmaster, the sugar gums and Norfolk pines were thriving. River gums were added in that year.

In the classroom, he had distinguished himself under the stewardship of Brother Tony Kelly, inaugural head of this Roman Catholic school for boys. Parents, colleagues and friends admired John's belief that education was about learning for life, in all its complexities, as well as transmitting knowledge. John was ever glad of advice from Tony, who died in June 2020, aged 99.

John's range of talents was well known to the leading decision-makers at Aquinas College, the Catholic school where he was headmaster from 1987 to 1993. Several Carriggs, including his only surviving brother, Peter, contributed to the Requiem Mass for John in the Aquinas chapel in July. Among the photos in the Mass program is one from a rural setting in Africa, where John's regular visits forged educational links, created friendships and demonstrated in person that Christian faith should spread afar, across oceans and national boundaries, for both spiritual and secular benefit.

Aquinas learnt soon into the Carrigg headmastership that innovation was in the air. For example, in a speech reprinted in the 1987 Aquinas magazine, *The Annual*, John advocated the restoration of teaching the German, Latin and Indonesian languages; he also praised the expansion "of our curriculum, especially at Year 11 and 12 level . . . it is now possible for all students to go right through secondary education without being forced into a curriculum straitjacket."

In a separate interview he addressed the basics: "I've tried to be a good listener, both staff and kids . . . I try to be a role model in regards to pastoral care . . . I try not to miss morning tea." Overall, this personal and flexible approach connoted a very different Catholic regime to the one he had lived under as a boy, before leaving the family nest



as his 16th birthday loomed.

John Bertram Carrigg was born on February 5, 1932, at his grandmother's home in Mt Lawley, the second of five children of Dorothy (nee Donoghue) and John Carrigg.

The Great Depression and World War II were times of uncertainty, necessitating several domestic changes, including forced moves for many families. Young John spent much of his early childhood at the home of grandparents. Another family home was in the coal town of Collie.

His first formal contact with Christian Brothers was attending CBHS Highgate. Peter Carrigg recalls boarding the "Armada steam train" with his brothers on schooldays.

John finished his secondary schooling in Melbourne and underwent teacher training at Mount St Mary's in the Sydney suburb of Strathfield, now a campus of the Australian Catholic University. His first professional post was at a small parish school in the inner Melbourne suburb of St Kilda. His global view was extended by teaching many children who were, as he said, "migrants just off the boats from Poland, Lithuania and Estonia. They were great kids."

In 1955, after four years there, he moved to St Kevin's College in Toorak, Melbourne, for three years. A commitment to lifetime learning as well as teaching was apparent from his enrolling in part-time evening courses at Melbourne University. He gained a bachelor of arts degree, majoring in English, history and Latin. In later years he

completed a diploma, bachelor and master of education.

In 1958, John returned to WA to teach at CBC in St Georges Terrace, where his father had been a student half a century previously. This was the start of John's 14-year teaching association with the college — four years at CBC and 10 years at its replacement, the newly established Trinity College.

Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, John held various senior positions in education but always made sure to be involved in planning, whether for sports facilities, tree planting or curriculum changes. He successfully led Trinity to join the Public Schools Association.

In 1994 and 1995, after leaving Aquinas, he studied full-time at the University of New England in NSW, gaining a doctorate in adult education. He then lectured and became an associate professor of English at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle. His last position in education was at St Charles Seminary in Guildford. He retired in 2017, the year he turned 85. John died on July 2, survived by a sister, Rosemary Rear, and Peter.

A courtyard at Trinity was named after Brother John, but he was more proud of perpetuating honour for his fellow-in-faith with the Brother J.A. (Tony) Kelly Senior School that housed laboratories, classrooms and a lecture theatre. All this while John had a full program of teaching, advisory boards, committees and Headmasters' Association business. Trinity chose well its first two leaders. **Patrick Cornish**