



MARY MACKILLOP PLACE

## SCRIPT TEXT - JULIAN TENSION WOODS: MISSION LIFE IN COLONIAL AUSTRALIA

Settlers' life



**Hello everyone, My name is Edwina. I am the curator at the museum, and today I will be taking you on a journey to discover the life and mission work of Julian Tenison Woods.**

Let us imagine a very different world to the one you know today. We are going back to the 1860s.

This was a country with isolated communities and vast distances to travel between each town. For these communities of people who were mostly Irish Catholics [you may have Irish ancestry in your family] they were living in a country controlled and dominated by British colonial power - life was a struggle. A struggle to live in harsh conditions and the lack of acceptance to worship as a Catholic community.

For Fr Julian and the very newly established religious congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart - their lives would be characterized by having no fixed place to call home.. for the most of their lives. Very unlike our lives today..... They were constantly on the move .....

why was that the case for Julian ? .....Australia had a much smaller population in the 1860s

...which was a widespread population across the country. Free settlers established their lives on the land, as more land grants were made available to settle. This meant new townships sprung up supporting young families and new industries.

At the beginning of his life as a priest, Julian, in his role as the first pastor of the Penola parish in South Australia travelled great distances [ 56,000 square miles], which included the towns of Robe, Mt Gambier, Naracoorte, Bordertown and Penola.

Suggested small group activity.

Take some time to look at a map of the Southeastern district of South Australia to locate where these towns are situated and discuss with your teacher the distance between each town.

Robe, Cobb & Co transporting Chinese.



In 1857 Fr Julian and his brother Terry travelled by steamer to the port town of Robe after he was ordained as a priest. They discovered a town which was a busy centre for Chinese migrants [ 15,000 arrived in that year alone!] travelling from China and then overland to the goldfields of Bendigo and Ballarat. This was Julian's first encounter with Asian people. The landscape was flat with slab buildings near the port and shops selling oriental clothing and goods for Chinese miners. Often these items would be exchanged by shop keepers for food and transport for the new migrants travelling to the goldfields.

St Mary's Star of the Sea Church.

Fr Julian became a frequent visitor to Robe. He served his parishioners, and spent many hours exploring the countryside on horseback, with a geological hammer tucked into his saddle bag



Penola



alongside his bible. Woods served the area for ten years from 1857, overseeing the building of St Mary's Star of the Sea, which was completed in 1859 of local stone.

It was the first place of worship to be completed in Robe and one of the earliest Catholic churches in South Australia. It would become accommodation for visiting priests and to host Mass to the local people.

By 1870 Robe had grown into a township of 400 people and Mary MacKillop's mainly Irish Sisters used the building as a convent and ran a school in two rooms attached to the church [1867 - 1888].

From desert to scrub land and fertile areas near Penola; Julian camped as a bushman with his horse bringing Mass to the scattered farms and villages. He lived off salt meat, damper, and Billy tea.... sleeping in the open bush or under a tarpaulin attached to a horse - drawn dray [ wagon]. Julian travelled for years on horseback at a time when Penola was more isolated from Adelaide than the Victorian capital Melbourne! with the mail coach only arriving once a week and the closest bank was in Ballarat, Victoria, or Adelaide.

Lucky for Fr Julian, the people of Penola did finally save enough money to buy him a buggy to travel in.

## Video 1 content



I am excited to be able to show you some objects that have some **remarkable stories to tell of this remarkable person!**

We will be learning about the life, spirituality, and travels of the creative, academic, and missionary priest Fr Julian, by looking at some rather small objects that have **a big story to tell!**

So, we are going to look at some of the objects Julian travelled with that help us understand his life and mission activities. Julian's interests in natural sciences and mission work were connected and his travel equipment was for exploration and ministry life.

I have unpacked them from a saddle bag, that was very much like to the one Julian would have used, for you to see.

In front of me I have some objects that give us cues as to the life Julian lead....

**What do you think these objects belonging to Fr Woods have in common in our story today?**

They suggest a life that is one of

- **Self sufficiency**
- **Itinerant** in lifestyle
- A life dependent on a faith in God.
- **Innovative** in meeting the hardships of life in the bush

The objects are not rich in the materials or highly decorated are they..... but they are practical, rudimentary [ basic].

How would you describe these objects?



### Video 2 content



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION /  
ACTIVITY

Let us look at them....

[curator picks up item to show each characteristic]

- **Adaptable** to the conditions of travelling over long distances
- **Robust** to withstand all weather conditions
- **Practical** in design for being transported.

Let us look at the leather saddle bag like one Fr Woods would have used ...hum! ..... what do we know about the importance of travelling by horseback from town to town at that time?

Let's look at Fr Julian's' life..... he was dependent on the horse for covering a large parish area. There were no train lines linking townships at that time.

### [curator handles each item]

Firstly, let us look at the **bandage** made of wool flannel material cut in a long narrow strip ready for binding an open wound. The material is durable and warm, and so it quickly became very popular at this time. It is a natural fiber that absorbs moisture and can be washed and reused. In the 1860s flannel and gauze were used for healing wounds. So, this was a very helpful/ essential item to take with you. WORK ON this]

### Video 3 content



Activity – share your experiences camping what you would have used that is adoptable, reusable....

### Video 4 content



Next, is this **drinking cup** with a purpose! The silver drinking cup is a typical style of Victorian cup also called a 'campaign' cup. What does that mean? Well, it refers to any item of furniture or object that was designed to collapse or fold inwards to be packed and reassembled on the move. As far back as Julius Caesar campaign furniture and objects were designed for travelling armies or military campaigns. A very clever idea! The cup has been hand etched with the year 1865 when Julian Woods was in Penola, South Australia .....was it a gift from a thankful parishioner or friend?

Now let us look at this object

What do you notice that is different with the design of these **rosary beads**?

Let us look at the one cue that points to its true use!

Can anyone guess what the large ring at the end of beads is used for?

[Demonstrated by curator]

If I put my thumb in the ring it sits securely on my hand and I can still feel the beads while doing something else! Does this give us a cue to its use?

This was a very special object that was held close to him....it signified his faith and devotion to God.

He was a man who sensed the presence of God with him, and he knew that whatever happened, it was for a good purpose.

Rosary ring or bracelet to be a comparable item for script completion.

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