

Not Just Ned: A true history of the Irish in Australia
An exhibition developed and presented by the
National Museum of Australia

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY

A model cathedral

Hailed at its official dedication and opening in October 1897 as the 'greatest ecclesiastical edifice in Australia', St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, had already been on show to Victorians for years. The Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880 featured a plaster of Paris model of St Patrick's made by monumental mason James McGowan. After the exhibition closed in March 1881, McGowan presented it to the Catholic Church. The model showed donors to Archbishop Thomas Carr's cathedral fund what their money was helping to build.

In 1939 Archbishop Daniel Mannix oversaw the completion of the cathedral spires. That same year he gave McGowan's model to the Public Library and Museum of Victoria. Why give it away? Perhaps because the model reflected architect William Wardell's original ideas for the spires, and Mannix had ensured they were built to a height greater than originally planned. He wanted them to tower above the eastern end of the city, supposedly above the Parliament of Victoria. McGowan's model had become the vision of another time and so was relegated to a museum. Today, however, it has come back to St Patrick's, where it is displayed as a tribute to that generation of Irish Catholic immigrants, and their Australian children, who gave their shillings and pence to build it.



Model of St Patrick's Cathedral 1880 by James McGowan will be on display in the exhibition *Not Just Ned: A true history of the Irish in Australia* at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The model is on loan from the State Library of Victoria

Not Just Ned: a true history of the Irish in Australia is on show at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra from 17 March-31 July 2011. Admission charges apply.

For more information about the exhibition visit www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/irish_in_australia

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