

Cathedral moves land war tributes

Coats of arms 'tell our story'

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A collection of coats of arms that recall the bloodshed of the Taranaki land wars are to be shifted to another part of St Mary's Cathedral.

The 17 hand-painted military coats of arms, or hatchments, were given to the parish as tributes to the fallen men in the land wars which began in 1860.

They are displayed in the main area of the cathedral but are to be moved to the transept, the cross arm of the building.

The move comes after more than 40 years of discussion about whether the symbols of discord and war between Maori and Pakeha should adorn the walls of a church.

Dean Jamie Allen said the hatchments' presence in the main area of the cathedral was inappropriate.

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DEAN JAMIE ALLEN

The hatchments carried a sense of some heartache to a united cathedral of Maori and Pakeha and it was time for that to change, he said.

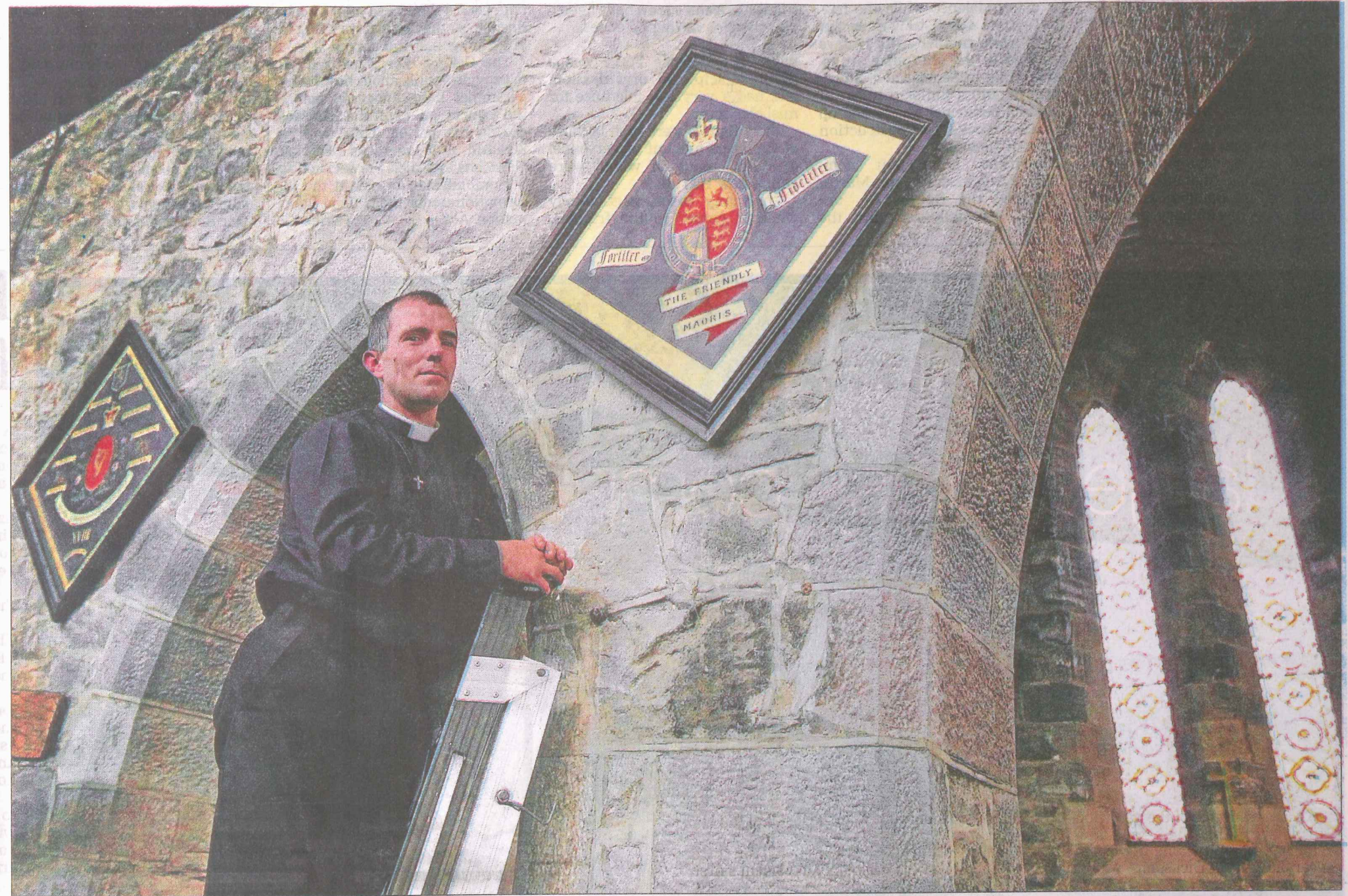
The hatchments were precious and it was important they remained in the cathedral, but in an area that was less overbearing.

"They're fascinating items. They tell a significant part of our story, the history of Taranaki."

He was opposed to removing the hatchments from the cathedral altogether because they acted as a visual aid for learning Taranaki's history.

"We ought not to remove things which recall history, or we would risk not learning from history."

"I think it's our responsibility to accept and tell our story very



Off the wall: St Mary's Cathedral Dean Jamie Allen prepares to move one of the military hatchments which is dedicated to "The Friendly Maoris".

Photo: ROBERT CHARLES/FAIRFAX NZ

clearly and truthfully to each generation. These hatchments are a resource for doing that."

In their new space, the hatchments would be displayed alongside an explanatory panel which told what they were, how they originated and why they were in the cathedral.

The hatchments will be moved on March 3, the third anniversary of the cathedral's consecration.

Dean Allen said they would be passed literally hand to hand to their new display position in a gesture of peace and reconciliation.

"It's an exciting movement."

Parishioner Mary Vinnicombe said she was delighted with the solution to what had been a difficult situation over the years.

She said it was important to understand the hatchments were initially placed on the cathedral walls as memorials, not just decorations.

"I have been anxious to see a proper interpretation of their presence in the church."

She said when the topic of shifting the hatchments was discussed in the 1970s, it was too early, and too much for some parishioners to even consider.

"We had a lot of older parish-

ioners whose roots went back directly to the land wars."

She said the decision now to shift the hatchments had not been met with much resistance.

"We had some retired servicemen who couldn't understand it but apart from that there were no voices of dissent."