

MINUTES of the Meeting, 21st August, 1986

Dr. K. Manley opened the meeting with prayer at 8.05 p.m. with twelve members and friends in attendance. Apologies were received and accepted from Rev. S. Arndell, Miss H. Burton, Mr. and Mrs. F. Church, Mr. J. Church, Mr. B. King, Mrs. M. Manley, Mrs. L. McDonald and Mrs. L. Ollif.

Minutes

The Minutes of the June 1986 meeting, as published in The Recorder were confirmed.

Business Arising

The Chairman highlighted the fact that the October meeting would be commencing at 7.30 p.m., the speaker being Mr. W. Ellis from the Islington Church.

Correspondence

The Secretary advised of the receipt of the following correspondence which was noted :-

- (a) Dr. K. Manley thanking the Society for its gifts towards his travel expenses for the Baptist World Alliance Conference in Singapore.
- (b) Royal Australian Historical Society advising of the next Affiliated Societies' Conference to be held in October this year. It was decided to approach Mrs. Ollif to see if she would be willing to represent the Society.
- (c) Royal Australian Historical Society advising of its decision to hold a stand at next year's Royal Easter Show and offering affiliated societies a place for selling books etc. at the stall. Referred to the Executive for consideration.

General Business1. Biography of G.H. Morling

The Chairman said he was delighted to report that the first draft has almost been typed and he then went on to outline the next steps necessary to have the book published.

2. History of Parramatta Church

The Secretary detailed the background to this work, the author being Mr. H. Watkin-Smith. Due to financial pressures Parramatta Church was unable to finance the venture and had approached the Society to see if it would be in a position to publish the book. The author had offered to contribute some \$2,500 to \$3,000 towards the cost of printing 1000 copies, estimated to cost in the vicinity of \$5,500. Parramatta Church would be able to contribute \$250 and approaches were to be made to the Baptist Foundation and the Royal Australian Historical Society. The balance of the costs would be met from the publications fund.

After further discussion members endorsed a recommendation from the Executive that the History of the Parramatta Church be published in the name of the Society and that assistance should be sought from the avenues outlined above.

3. Bicentennial Project

Dr. Manley reported on the latest position regarding this project. Consideration was now being given to the publication of a combined history of Australian Baptists mainly using existing publications and contributions from authors in the various states. A letter was to be written to the Baptist Union of Australia seeking approval in principle to this approach.

The Secretary said that if such a publication eventuated endorsement as a Bicentennial project should be sought.

4. Baptist World Alliance Conference

Dr. Manley gave a brief report on the Baptist Heritage Commission meetings held in Singapore, the aim being to encourage Baptist history research and writing throughout the world. He had presented a paper on Baptist origins.

Treasurer's Report

The financial report presented by the Treasurer, and showing the following balances for the period ended August 1986 was accepted :-

General Fund	:	\$ 1041.41
Publication Fund	:	\$ 2326.84
Essay Competition Fund	:	\$ 287.09

Archivist's Report

Rev. E. Archer said the most recent acquisition had been the bound diaries of Rev. William Higlett, 1910-44, giving a day-by-day insight into the man, his ministry and his times. Sixteen boxes of photographs by Rev. W. Higlett had also been received and all the afore-mentioned had been presented to the Society by Mr. J. Church. The meeting unanimously agreed that a note of thanks be sent to Mr. Church for his most generous gift.

Essay Competition

Arrangements were in hand for the next essay competition, Mr. P. Young again being the co-ordinator.

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The Chairman then introduced Rev. R. Briggs who addressed the meeting on the subject "The story of Baptists at Liverpool and the Jubilee of the Church". At the conclusion of his interesting address Rev. R. Briggs answered questions raised by members and showed some photographs of early times at the Church.

The meeting was then closed in prayer.

THE AUGUST LECTURE

In August this year the Church at Liverpool celebrated fifty years of continuous witness. The Jubilee services were on August 16th and 17th, actually the week-end previous to our meeting, and featured as the occasional speaker the first pastor, Rev. S.M.F. Brook. The coincidence of the dates was the reason Rev. R.C. Briggs was invited to speak at this meeting about Baptist work at Liverpool.

Rev. R.C. Briggs

on

The Story of Baptists in Liverpool.

Mr. Briggs began by reminding us that three attempts had been made to establish a Baptist witness in Liverpool. He regretted the absence of any substantial volume of information about the two earlier attempts, but he pieced together a very interesting story about them with the help of information from Some Fell on Good Ground by A.C. Prior, The First Australian Baptists by K.R. Manley and M.J. Petras, Liverpool Baptist Church History (1957) by C. Wilson, local newspaper records and the reminiscences of older members. He began by speaking about :-

THE FIRST SERVICES, 1839-44

A Baptist congregation of between 40 and 80 persons met in the Liverpool Court House. The preachers were Samuel Hewlett and later John Walters, both of whom ministered in later years in other areas. Possibly among the chief supporters were a shop-keeper, Joseph Hoskins and his wife, who had been supporters of the Bathurst Street chapel. Hopes were expressed that a chapel might be built but this seems never to have eventuated, and Mr. Briggs could find no references to any further work at Liverpool until the 20th Century.

THE SECOND ATTEMPT, 1904-1923

Services began in the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Sindel, who lived above their drapery shop in Macquarie Street. With growing numbers the meetings were then transferred to the Town Hall until a building was erected in 1906. This building was opened in March on land purchased in Macquarie Street (now the Hume Highway). The date of the Church formation and the names of the foundation members are not known, but the Sindel, Russell and Rouse families were among the first members.

The first baptismal service (held before the Church was built) was in the Town Hall. The candidates were Jim Rouse, Tom Rouse and Capt. H.L. Rouse. A tank was built by one of the members, placed in front of the platform and filled with water from the George's River. When the Church building was erected the tank was transferred there.

The first decade saw quick growth and wide outreach. It was not unusual to have more than 200 persons at evening services and close to 100 at the morning services. A letter to Mr. Briggs some years ago written by the late Rev. S.A. Dickson, who served for a short time in 1916 before enlisting for service in the Great War, describes a busy schedule of services in and around Liverpool: a weekly service in the Old Men's Home, a fortnightly service at Cabramatta, a monthly service at Hoxton Park, at all of which large and appreciative audiences gathered. A very able leader and preacher was H.E. Wearne, a wood and coal merchant and a deacon in the Church. Pastors during this era included V.H. Jenkyn, E. Pocknall, S.A. McDonald, T.C. Kelly, R. Pickup, J. Yates, A.E. Watkin-Smith, W.H. Bain and J. Latimer. S.A. McDonald had oversight of Liverpool from April 1919 to March 1920 while serving as pastor at Granville.

Following the declaration of war in 1914 a military camp was set up at Liverpool and this had a devastating effect on the township - the behaviour of the soldiers earning it an unsavoury name which it took several decades to outgrow.

In 1920 internal dissension arose and services lapsed. Efforts to solve the difficulties failed. Despite appeals based on the hope that services might be recommenced the Home Mission Society sold the property in 1923 for 365 pounds and it became known as the Protestant Hall.

A NEW AGE - and A NEW CHURCH

It was in the Protestant Hall that Baptist efforts began again - with a Sunday School conducted by Baptist young men from the Flying Squadron of the N.S.W. Christian Endeavour Union. This was on 7th July, 1929. Very soon workers from Ingleburn joined this band and Church services were commenced. From 1909 to 1914 Ingleburn Church had been serviced by pastors from Liverpool, and now Ingleburn, under Rev. S. Lane, reached out to form the Liverpool Baptist Mission. Workers came from other places and the responsibility for supervision passed from Ingleburn to the Auburn Church. The Auburn pastor, Rev. W.C. Black, introduced Will Evans and Sid Brook, who were appointed Honorary Joint Evangelists and who began a vigorous programme. A fire in the Protestant Hall caused the Baptist Mission to move to the Seventh Day Adventist building for about two years before returning to the Protestant Hall. Several organizations were formed; the Baptist Hymnal introduced and the Mission came to be considered a Baptist Church. Baptisms were conducted at Auburn. In 1932 W. Evans left to enter Bible College and S. Brook carried on alone until accepted for ministerial training in 1935, when he was appointed to Liverpool as a Student-pastor. The Church was formed 16th August, 1936, land was purchased and a building opened on 3rd April 1937.

Two student pastors, A.A. Whale and J. Howes followed Mr. Brook and then because of an exodus of members from the district the Church was led for some years by Mr. Fred Rames as Honorary Pastor. In 1943 a returned missionary, Rev. W. Barry, became pastor for six months and was succeeded by Rev. J.E. Leech who stayed for six years.

A great cause for rejoicing was the liquidation of the debt on the building in May 1950. For the next few years the Church was led by student-pastors appointed by the Home Mission, Pastors C. Weston, D. Moore, R.D.N. Burton and M. Dennis. Throughout this time there was a gradual growth in membership and a considerable growth in the Sunday School. To bring children to Sunday School a bus was purchased. Building extensions were considered and a house opposite the Church purchased as a possible manse. Mr. Dennis was the first to occupy the manse.

In 1958 the Church called a full-time pastor in the person of Rev. M. Wynn. An open-air Sunday School at Hargrave Park (now Warwick Farm) attracted 90 children. A Boys' Brigade was commenced in May 1958 followed shortly by the formation of a Girls' Brigade. Mrs. Wynn commenced a very successful Homemakers' Meeting. In the same year a Nursery was built behind the manse in preparation for the commencement of an All Age Sunday School. This commenced in March 1959 with 121 in attendance.

Evangelistic missions attracted more people to the Church, especially following the Graham Crusade of 1959 which the Church promoted vigorously. A Youth Hall was considered a priority but was not completed and opened until May 1962. In the meantime a second bus brought children to Sunday School from the Mount Pritchard area.

A break-down in Mr. Wynn's health led to his resignation and the commencement of the ministry of Rev. A.J.L. Neate in 1963. The Church then became involved with the Home Work Council's move into the housing development at Green Valley. A deaconess was appointed who divided her attentions between Liverpool and Green Valley where the Home Work Council had also placed a student-pastor. The Church also gave some help at this time to the Milperra Bridge Baptist Mission, and held services at a preaching station at Catherine Hills.

Following the resignation of Mr. Neate in 1968 Mr. T. Willersdorf was interim pastor for a year before the coming of Rev. W. Britsa. A new manse was purchased in 1969 and in 1973 plans were made for extensions to the Church property. These were carried out in 1974 and a new sanctuary opened in May 1975.

Mr. Britsa died suddenly in December 1975, after which there were two short ministries by Mr. Eric Graham and Rev. S.C. Wright. Since 1979 Mr. Briggs has been pastor of the Church.

Over the fifty year history of the Church the township of Liverpool has changed. From being a small outer Sydney suburb with a strong rural flavour it has become a thriving Regional City and an expanding business centre with multi-storied buildings. The Church is finding itself on the edge of this central business district and now faces the problem of determining where and how it may best minister to the spiritual needs of a new age.

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Our Fourth Publication

Our fourth publication, referred to in the Minutes, is expected to be available during October. The Executive of the Society commends it for the significance of its story to the growth of the denomination. With the title "Baptists in the Cradle City" it tells the story of the Parramatta Baptist Church, but it is more than a local history. It reveals hitherto unpublished facts about the early history of Baptists in this State; it indicates how Baptist witness spread in western areas of Sydney; it relates the beginnings of a number of churches and it profiles people significant in local and denominational history.

MEMORIES STIRRED BY

ASSEMBLY TIME

As I write this the Assembly is still to come. As you read this the Assembly will be over.

Do you ever ponder on the nature of the First Assembly?

The First N.S.W. Baptist Assembly was held in September 1858.

It was proposed by Rev. James Voller in June 1858 and supported by the Hinton Church in that month (Hinton Church Minutes). It was announced in The Australasian Baptist Magazine (Mitchell Library) which stated that the Churches united for the purpose were Bathurst Street and Goulburn Street Churches in Sydney, Hinton, Parramatta and Smithfield. It was hoped that the other Church then existing in N.S.W. namely the Brisbane Church, would join. There had not been time enough to make contact for the announcement. Brisbane was in N.S.W. until 1859.

A later issue of The Australasian Baptist Magazine reported on the meeting. It was held in the Bathurst Street Chapel. Goulburn Street Church had dissolved and was not represented, but there were delegates present from Bathurst Street, Hinton, Smithfield and Parramatta. Rev. P. Lane of Hinton preached the Assembly sermon.

Mr. Voller had prepared Rules for the proposed "Baptist Association of New South Wales". Hinton Church had accepted these in June and commented in its Minute Book that the idea was very desirable. Apparently the other Churches found them so for it was resolved that the next meeting should be held at the same time in 1859 at Parramatta.

The second Assembly was held in October 1859 and Brisbane was represented, but whether the third Assembly set down for Hinton in 1860 was held is not known.

It was 1867 before another Association was formed, this time deriving its impetus from Rev. an Webb of Harris Street Church.

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OTHER REFLECTIONS

When we think of the difficulties dogging the development of the First Baptist Churches in the colony it is easy to overlook the sparsity of the population among whom they ministered. For example, the congregation at Liverpool 1839-44 was drawn from a very small population. In 1836 it had a population of 597 which had grown by the 1841 Census to 690. However, the next Census shows that there were only 601 persons resident there.

The Central Church at Bathurst Street had much larger congregations but these had to be drawn from a small city population. When the Church was formed in 1836 the Census for that year reveals that Sydney's total population was only 19,729.

Records of the Bathurst Street Church in the Mitchell Library reveal that Samuel Hewlett was helped at Liverpool by a Mrs. Mary Anne Chislett, who conducted both a Sunday School and a Day School. It is understandable that the Church ceased to grow when Samuel Hewlett moved to Wollongong and Mr. and Mrs. Chislett moved to Newtown from whence they attended the Bathurst Street Church from 1843 onwards.

THE DANGER OF FORGETTING

When Churches cease their separate existence there is a danger that the witness they made and the contribution they made to the denominational work will be forgotten.

One such Church is Waverley. Just short of its centenary its membership was amalgamated with that of Randwick and the long story of its witness in the Eastern Suburbs could soon be forgotten. It is part of our task as an Historical Society to keep alive the memory of its good work and that of the fine men and women who laboured there.

The cause commenced with services held in the Oddfellows Hall, Queen Street, Woollahra in July 1884. Shortly afterwards a small building was erected in Wallis Street and the Church was known as Woollahra. The members erected another building in Ebley Street, Waverley in 1904 and the Church became the Waverley Baptist Church.

When the Woollahra work commenced there was only one Baptist student studying for the ministry in N.S.W., arrangements having been made for him to study at the Congregationalist Theological College. The Executive appointed him to the charge of the Woollahra Church, which had been formed in 1885. On the completion of his course the student, D. Davis, was ordained in the Oddfellows Hall, still the meeting place of the Church. The charge to the new minister was delivered by the pastor of the Bathurst Street Church, Rev. Charles Bright.

Among the ministers who followed Mr. Davis were some whose work in a variety of spheres will not soon be forgotten. Among these ministers was Rev. E.G. Gibson (now Dr. Gibson) currently President-General of the Baptist Union of Australia.

From among the members of the Church have come many with a significant role in denominational affairs. The present Principal of our Theological College, Rev. E.R. Rogers and a recent President of the Baptist Union of N.S.W., Mr. W.M. Barnett, were baptized and joined the Church at Waverley.

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THE BACKGROUND OF OUR MINISTERS

We frequently refer to the source of training of the pastors in our Churches and the missionaries that go in our name to many fields. There are those who were trained in our College under G.H.M. and those who trained as Pastor's College in the tradition of the celebrated C.H. Spurgeon. Yet as we delve into the past it is remarkable how varied is the background from which our ministers have come.

The President of our N.S.W. Baptist Union in 1900-01 was Rev. W.A. Southwell. He was a native of Bridgenorth in Shropshire, England, and was an Independent by upbringing. He was converted in 1853 and upon going to London joined the Greenwich Baptist Church in 1860. He was married in 1865 and his wife was to be a great helpmeet to him in his Christian work. He moved to Cardiff in Wales to become Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. there and then in 1885 he migrated to Melbourne to become Secretary of the Melbourne Y.M.C.A. In 1892 he became very ill and moved to N.S.W. in search of health. In 1893 he was appointed by the Baptist Home Mission to the Church at Orange which was on the verge of extinction. Under his guidance and with the help of William Ardill who was transferred to the Lands Office at Orange at the same time, he revived the Church and established it firmly for a future ministry. In 1896 he was called to Burwood where he did a notable work. His accomplished daughter became the second wife of William Ardill. At Burwood his wife had outstanding success with the Junior Christian Endeavour Society of which she was Superintendent. It had one hundred members in 1900.

MORE ABOUT LIVERPOOL

Some light is thrown upon the uncertain history of the Liverpool Church in the period 1906-1923 by reports in The Baptist and The Australian Baptist and by referring to the Minutes of the Home Mission Committee. Unfortunately the reports are few and far between and the Minutes are very brief and obviously do not record decisions taken by the Executive of the Committee between meetings.

In March 1907 Rev. H. Metters went to Granville with the added responsibility of giving oversight to the work at Liverpool. In May he appealed to the Committee for financial help for the Liverpool Church. It would seem that much of the preaching was undertaken by the Lay Preachers' Association for gratitude is expressed late in 1907 for the help given in this way by Mr. William Ardill and the Lay Preachers' Association of which he was then Secretary.

At its meeting on 3rd November 1907 The Home Mission appointed Pastor S.A. McDonald to Liverpool and re-appointed him there in October 1908. In July 1908 a new branch was opened up at East Hoxton Park, existing preaching stations operating at Hoxton Park and Canley Vale at that time. Then in March 1909 a building was erected at Canley Vale as the congregations there continued to be promising. It was reported at the same time that the work at Canley Vale had been commenced on 18th March 1906 by Pastor V.H. Jenkyn. Preaching at the outstations was not weekly, but once a fortnight or once a month according to arrangements with other denominations. During 1909 Mr. McDonald was asked to give oversight at Ingleburn, newly established.

The Home Mission meeting on 1st November 1909 moved S.A. McDonald to West Wallisend and his place was taken until March 1910 by Pastor T.C. Kelly, who left to proceed for training at the Victorian Baptist College. Pastor R. Pickup, who had been stationed at Temora was moved to Liverpool about May or June 1910 and gave a good deal of attention to the causes at Canley Vale and Ingleburn. After twelve months Pastor Pickup transferred to Woonona and Rev. J. Yates came to the oversight of the Liverpool and Ingleburn Churches.

Mr. Yates was succeeded in January 1913 by Rev. A.E. Watkin-Smith as pastor to both Liverpool and Ingleburn and the various preaching stations attached to Liverpool. In November 1914 he commenced a cause at Fairfield where there was promise of a good congregation. The work was now quite extensive and it was felt that a more intensive effort should be made. The Liverpool Church requested the Home Mission to appoint one of the students on vacation from the Victorian College to assist Mr. Watkin-Smith during the summer months. The Home Mission viewed this proposal with favour but who was appointed to help is not revealed.

In April 1915 Mr. Watkin-Smith was transferred to the promising work at Kurri Kurri and two students were appointed to succeed him, one at Liverpool, Pastor Bain, and one at Ingleburn, Pastor Melville.

ANOTHER CENTENARY APPROACHES

In December 1886 services commenced at Blackheath in the home of Miss Smith, from whom came the impetus for the move. She herself led the first meeting. During the first twelve months supply preachers included Revs. Clark, Hibberd, Price and Soper. Thus began the Blackheath Baptist Mission. Land was donated by Mr. E.J. Robinson of Bathurst Street Church and a building was begun towards the end of 1888.