

WOLLONGONG BAPTIST SESQUI-CENTENARY
SPECIAL SERVICES

On Sunday, June 17th, 1990, Wollongong Baptists celebrated the opening of the first Baptist Chapel in Wollongong, just 150 years before. At 2.30 p.m. there was a short Thanksgiving Service on an empty allotment in Kembla Street adjacent to the site of this first Baptist building in the city. Despite blustery wintry conditions over thirty persons gathered for a short historical statement, greetings, a prayer of thanksgiving and a hymn. The group then moved to the present Church where at 3 p.m. about ninety people had gathered for a special Service of Thanksgiving including greetings, an historical outline, items and an occasional address by Mr. J.M. Maitland, immediate past President of the Baptist Union of N.S.W.

The Illawarra District Association was vitally involved in the arrangements and the Association President, Pastor B. Kidson, chaired the meetings. The Baptist Union was represented by Vice-President, Mr. P. Dart. A greeting from the Baptist Historical Society, prepared by our Chairman, was read at both meetings.

The chapel erected in 1840 was small, holding about 70-80 persons and had a small dwelling attached. The contract price was 139 pounds with another 30 pounds required for furnishings. This was only the second Baptist building in N.S.W. and was one of the first church buildings in the Illawarra. When services ceased in the mid 1840s the building was used by the Congregationalists and Free Presbyterians until they erected their own buildings. The present Church was formed in 1932 although there was a Baptist Fellowship in Wollongong 1915-22 associated with the Woonona Church.

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MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING HELD 21st JUNE, 1990

As the Society's Chairman was guest speaker for the evening, Rev. Ron Rogers acted as Chairman and opened the meeting in prayer at 8 p.m. Sixteen members and friends were in attendance and apologies were received and accepted from Miss H. Burton, Mrs. L. McDonald, Mrs. L. Ollif, and Mr. P. Young. A special greeting was extended to one of the Society's country members, Rev. Neil Cowling, who was able to be present.

Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held 18th April, 1990, as published in The Recorder, were confirmed.

Business Arising

1. Assembly Report. Copies of the Secretary's Report had been circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting. This report was endorsed subject to several minor amendments.
2. Queensland Historical Society Project. The Secretary reported that the 600 copies of the brochure ordered had been received and would be distributed to Churches (with a covering letter) later in the year. A copy of the brochure was given to each member present.

Correspondence

The Secretary advised receipt of the following:-

- a. Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Newsletter.
- b. Department of Planning. Application for heritage grants. Rev. B. Thornton asked if the Society had a heritage listing of Churches, etc., Mr. Nannelli replying that this was something the Executive might look at in the future.
- c. Copies of the latest Conservation News.
- d. A letter from the Evangelical History Association seeking assistance in the production of an Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography. Members agreed that the Society should participate and that the Executive should look at names which should be included and at any other help which might be given.

Dr. Heather Vose

Rev. R. Rogers reported on the recent death of Dr. Vose who, he said, had made a significant contribution to the study of history, including Baptist history, in Australia. The Society was grateful for her participation in our Bicentennial project. He led in a short prayer for Dr. Noel Vose and family and asked members to continue to remember Noel in prayer at this time.

Financial Report

The Treasurer's statement showing the following balances for the period ended 21.6.90 was, accepted:-

General Fund	\$1611.82
Publications Fund	2707.04
Essay Competition Fund	194.32
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Total	\$4513.18

Archivist's Report

Rev. E. Archer reported that the last two months had been busier than usual and he gave details of some of the inquiries received. A history of the Mortdale Church had been donated and greetings had been sent to Wollongong Church celebrating a 150th anniversary. Clemton Park and Strathfield-Homebush Churches had held Golden Jubilee Celebrations during May.

Chairman's Report

Mr. H. Watkin-Smith reported on the following:-

- * Mr. Bruce King had accepted an invitation to be the guest speaker at the 1991 Annual Meeting, his subject being the history and development of Australian Baptist World Aid.
- * A letter of appreciation had been received from Dr. Stuart Piggin, guest speaker, at the 1990 Annual Meeting.
- * Newcastle Baptist Tabernacle had held a service of re-opening and re-dedication following restoration work as a result of the earthquake. Centenary Celebrations for the original opening of the building were planned for 22nd and 23rd September this year, and the Chairman hoped to be able to represent the Society at this important function.
- * A book, Australia - the first 100 Years, dealing with the history of Australian Christian schools, had been donated to the Society.
- * Representatives from Clemton Park and Strathfield-Homebush Churches will give reports on their recent celebrations at the October meeting.

Paper

Mr. Watkin-Smith presented his address "Trials and Triumphs of the Trail-blazers" dealing with early courageous campaigning by Baptist pioneer pastors.

At the conclusion of this well-researched and presented paper, Mr. Rogers said that the Society was continually in Mr. Watkin-Smith's debt for the work and effort he made on behalf of the Society. Questions and comments were received from members, the conclusion being that a subject such as this was worthy of more investigation and a greater effort made to make such information known to the denomination as a whole.

Close

Rev. E. Archer closed the meeting in prayer at 9.45 p.m.

The June Meeting

Summary of the lecture.

THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF THE TRAIL-BLAZERS

Some courageous campaigning by pioneer pastors

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Mr. Watkin-Smith began by quoting Rev. Dr. J. Dunmore Lang:- "The pioneers of a country, or of a great undertaking, are like the foundations of a great city - soon built over and forgotten." His theme was that the faithful pastors and itinerant preachers of the last quarter of the 19th Century must not be forgotten. They, with sacrificial labours penetrated the vast rural areas of this State to maintain our denominational emphasis and endured hardships for Christ's sake and for their Baptist convictions. The speaker contended that despite discouragements, disappointments and opposition and apparently meagre results they did not fail. They were trail-blazers opening up the way for Baptist Churches.

THE MOTIVES FOR BAPTIST MINISTRY TO THE INLAND.

Four motives were suggested. The first three were present from the earliest days of Baptist witness and were implied in various statements and activities of Revs. J. Saunders, J. Ham and J. Voller. The fourth was one of the reasons for the formation of the Baptist Union and a potent factor in its policies.

1. A concern for the maintenance of Christian standards in the life of a growing and widespread community, and the need to increase the means to this end, namely, regular Christian services and Bible teaching.
2. A deep concern that many migrants with Baptist backgrounds were seeking their livelihood in the interior where there were no Baptist Churches or pastors and so were being deprived of the opportunity for the type of Christian fellowship to which they were accustomed and for worshipping together. This concern was directed towards the preservation of the Baptist understanding of Scripture, the conservation of Baptist sympathisers within the Baptist fellowship and its Churches and the prevention of their eventual absorption into other denominations.
3. An equally deep concern that the scattered families in the outback were in need of evangelization and that Baptists must accept some of the responsibility.
4. A conviction by some of the leaders that the Baptist Union should undertake an aggressive policy of extension if the denomination in N.S.W. was not to cease to have any witness or influence in this colony.

The combined effect of all four was a challenge to go forth and counter the dominance of the materialistic goals of people seeking to establish themselves in a new land. Ambitions and energies were directed primarily and almost exclusively to the provision of homes and the generating of income. There was little time for religious activities. In the larger towns there were usually ministers of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Wesleyan Churches but the calls upon their time permitted only minimal attention to the numerous villages, hamlets and scattered settlers. It is true that supplementing their limited efforts were itinerant preachers and colporteurs known as bush missionaries and including agents of the Bush Mission Society. With the advent of the Baptist Union in 1870 there was a rising tide of feeling that a distinctively Baptist effort must be made to meet the needs of the country areas more adequately than had been done.

THE PEOPLE TO WHOM OUR TRAIL-BLAZERS MINISTERED.

The population outside Sydney was numerically small and thinly scattered. The few wealthy graziers had a comfortable lifestyle, contacts with the literary and musical culture of the day and financed Anglican and Presbyterian Churches in the towns. The rest, made up of employees of the graziers, free selectors and miners,

lived in spartan and primitive conditions. In the tiny townships were storekeepers, a few tradesmen and perhaps a professional person. Some boasted a small hall which frequently would be hired by our trail-blazers for services.

AGENCIES FOR CHURCH EXTENSION.

1. Home Mission funds, available from 1870 onwards.
2. The Baptist Evangelist Society, formed in 1875 and amalgamated with the Home Mission in the year between the Assemblies of 1875 and 1876. This was supported by a separate fund.

Until 1891 when the first Home Mission Committee was elected, all resources available for extension whether in manpower or finances, were carefully monitored by the Executive of the Baptist Union of which all pastors of Churches were ex-officio members. The Baptist Evangelist Society (B.E.S.) was a sub-committee of this Executive. In Some Fell on Good Ground Rev. A.C. Prior has given interesting insights into the adventures of the evangelists employed by B.E.S.. Mr. Watkin-Smith, with only passing reference to these activities (see Prior, pp 158-170) outlined the full story of the B.E.S. and added similar experiences from some of the Home Mission successors to its agents.

THE FORMATION OF THE B.E.S.

There can be little doubt that the formation of the B.E.S. came from the availability of Thomas Llewellyn for the type of work envisaged. He had been a bush missionary, pastor of the flourishing goldfields Church at Araluen, contemporaneously founder and pastor of the Moruya Church and in conjunction with all these a colporteur on behalf of the Baptist Association of religious and uplifting literature. He was well-known to leading Sydney Baptists having been the representative of the Araluen Church and a speaker at the inaugural meetings of the Baptist Association in February 1868. By 1874 a fall in production of gold at the Araluen field led to a migration away of miners. Rev. A.W. Webb considered the opportunity should be seized for Thomas Llewellyn to become a Baptist itinerant evangelist preaching the Gospel and visiting scattered Baptists throughout the colony. But it was not till the Annual Meetings in September 1875 that the Baptist Union accepted this proposal. Rev. F. Hibberd was a firm supporter, having only accepted the Secretaryship of the Union if it entered upon aggressive work. Funds were raised by collections at the Annual Rally of the Society, held in conjunction with the Assembly Meetings, by donations from friends and Churches and after 1879 by a Ladies Auxiliary organized by Mrs. Burdett and Mrs. Hugh Dixon. It was noted that in 1868 an independent bush missionary, Mr. John Druery, briefly a member of Harris Street Church, had been recognised as associated with the Baptist Association.

B.E.S. AGENTS

Thomas Llewellyn was the first of the four agents supported and he commenced serving immediately after the 1875 Assembly. A.W. Webb's hope of having such labourers in every district was encouraged by the appointment at the 1876 Assembly of William R. Harvison, a year later in 1877 of Thomas H. Jagers and in 1878 of Rev. William Collier. Negotiations in December 1876 with a Mr. James Sirle to act as a colporteur came to nothing because of inadequate funds. W.R. Harvison came to notice as the evangelist appointed by the Bega Baptist Fellowship formed by Llewellyn. His suitability for the task was the commendation of both Llewellyn and Samuel Crawford, a member of the Baptist Union Executive, who visited Bega in 1876 on behalf of the Union. Mr. James Sirle was also a member of the Bega Fellowship, officially known as the Bega Mission. T.H. Jagers had been a Wesleyan local preacher and a teacher in an Anglican school. He was commended by Llewellyn and the Wesleyan Superintendent at Bega. William Collier trained at Spurgeon's College, came to N.S.W. for health reasons and brought with him an enthusiasm for evangelistic effort.

THE LOCATION OF THEIR MINISTRIES

1. **Thomas LLEWELLYN** began by moving south from Araluen and Moruya to Bega and the Monaro, probably the scene of his bush missionary work. He formed Bega Fellowship with a Secretary, Treasurer and Evangelist and worked the district until Easter 1877. Harvison had been appointed to Bega to allow Llewellyn to enter a new district so in April, 1877 Llewellyn made his headquarters at Molong for work in the western districts. In September, 1877 he advised the Assembly he felt directed to New England. The Committee agreed and he laboured there for six years until 1883 when the Committee sent him to Coraki to service the Richmond River valley. In 1884 after baptizing fourteen candidates he formed a Church of twenty members at Coraki. The Church was received into the Union at the 1884 Assembly and he remained as pastor there until 1890 when he became pastor of the Wardell Particular Baptist Church. He died in May, 1899 and is buried in the Baptist section of the Coraki Cemetery.
2. **William HARVISON** campaigned for seven months along the South Coast and in May 1877 was brought to Sydney for systematic study with ordained pastors. In August he settled as pastor of the Hinton Church which was used as a base for regular missionary tours to the valleys of the Karuah, Myall and Williams Rivers and to Port Stephens and the Myall Lakes as well as for occasional visits to the gold diggings near Gloucester. In 1883 he moved as pastor of the New England Church with its headquarters at Black Mountain and Armidale, where he served till 1887 and where he was a assistant pastor from 1894 to 1896.
3. **Thomas JAGGERS** after twelve months on the South Coast where general support was disappointing was moved to the Lower Clarence in 1878 where he formed the Lawrence Church and evangelized the eastern end of the Clarence Valley until 1890. (For his work there see Rev. F. Coan's Big River, Big Hearts pp.9-20, 23-27.)
4. **William COLLER'S** work on the Richmond was hindered by drought, then floods and ecclesiastical opposition and the Committee closed the work in January, 1880 and sent him as a Home Mission Agent to Newcastle which made very considerable progress under his ministry.

METHODS EMPLOYED.

As these are described in some detail in Some Fell on Good Ground, they were only briefly referred to:- visiting out-of-the-way farms, house to house visitation in towns, arranging Sunday services and week-night cottage meetings (often four or five a week) as well as services for baptisms in creeks and rivers, distributing tracts, selling literature in addition to the care of pack-horses or waggon horses and care of the waggon. On his regular missionary journeys on the Port Stephens-Myall Lakes-Kuruah River circuit, Harvison would be absent from his home at Hinton for ten days.

Mr. Watkin-Smith emphasised and gave examples of the problems of the opposition to denominational theology, problems with the horses, delays caused by accidents and what Professor Blainey has distinguished as Australia's "tyranny of distance". Llewellyn, Harvison and Jagers all suffered serious accidents and Harvison's accident resulted in his resignation (1887) and consequent dire distress for Mrs. Harvison and his family.

CONSEQUENCES FLOWING FROM THE B.E.S..

Mr. Watkin-Smith called these the triumphs to compensate for the trials. First of all must be reckoned the rejoicings in witnessing the Holy Spirit at work in conversions, in baptisms, in reconsecrations, in the revival of regular worship in sparsely populated districts, in the maintenance of Christian standards and the support of men and women who stood by to help.

The view of their contemporaries is of importance and is expressed in the Annual Report of the Baptist Union Executive in 1880. "The operations of the Evangelists

Society have resulted in spiritual fruits. The Society is the Union's glory and joy. Whatever effort we might endeavour to make in the suburbs at any future time they should not be allowed to divert our attention from this important field in which the abundant blessing of God has crowned our work."

The short story of the Bega Mission (1875-78) was not without fruit. During this time several were baptized, at least twelve personal members of the Baptist Union and many subscribers to the denominational paper were enlisted. Two members, Harvison and Jagers, became valuable Baptist ministers and a Mr. Kennedy an acceptable lay preacher. The closures of the Araluen Church and the Bega Mission pose the question as to any on-flowing effect of these efforts. Among those baptized by Llewellyn at Araluen were F. Beedel, pastor 1904-07 of the Castlereagh Street Strict Baptist Church and Mr. Weaver, honoured deacon at Parramatta for many years.

In New England several helpers were prepared to assist in the establishment of regular services, including Mr. and Mrs. Tysoe at Armidale, and Mr. Glover at Glen Innes. At Gunnedah, Mrs. Jones and a group of friends were prepared in 1881 to raise funds to purchase land for a chapel if assistance in building could be given and a minister sent. Chapels were erected at Paradise Creek and Saumarez Ponds, and buildings made available elsewhere for services. In 1879 thirteen persons applied for personal membership of the Baptist union including four from Gunnedah, three from Tamworth, three from Armidale, one from Bendemeer, and two from Glen Innes. In the one year of 1881 there were eighteen baptisms. The glow was dampened with the sale in 1890 of the chapel erected in Armidale in 1882.

In the Richmond River Valley, Collier gathered good congregations before circumstances forced his withdrawal and a few years later Llewellyn had considerable encouragement. His success was built on by Revs. T.E. Jones and S. Hotston and the groundwork was laid for Churches at Casino and Lismore.

In the long term the promise of some of these places was not fulfilled.

THE EFFECT OF LACK OF RESOURCES.

There is ample evidence that the leaders of the Union wishing to grasp many opportunities were hampered by lack of resources - few suitable men offering for pastoral service and a most discouraging lack of funds for the erection of buildings and the support of pastors. It is certain that the Churches at West Kempsey (formed by Mr. Druery in 1868) and at Bega did not continue because the Union had no means to maintain men in those places. A Church could have been formed at Gunnedah in 1880-81 had it been possible to finance a building and support a pastor. The evangelists had triumphs but the Churches did not grasp them. As early as 1879 Llewellyn had requested that the district be occupied by a permanent minister.

OTHER TRAIL-BLAZERS

Although particularizing the work of the B.E.S. Mr. Watkin-Smith said due emphasis must be given to two features of the Home Mission activities during the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. **FIRST.** Despite the B.E.S. serving areas demanding in their extensiveness and their difficult terrain vast areas of the state were not touched. The West. Apart from five months spent by Llewellyn in the western districts the evangelizing of that area had depended on preachers and the Home Mission working in conjunction with the Bathurst and Orange Churches, supported by Home Mission funds.

The Far West. The N.S.W. Union advised the South Australian Baptist Union that Silverton and Broken Hill were geographically and commercially linked with Adelaide and confessed it was unable to assist in either place. The trail-blazer for the South Australian Union at Broken Hill was William Collier.

South West. Causes here were promoted by Baptist settlers eventually supported by the Home Mission. (See E. Archer's paper in April, 1988 Recorder.)

A FREE SELECTOR ON HIS HOLDING

Thomas Charles WORBOYS
of Spring Hill, near Orange

T.C. Worboys was the foundation Secretary of the Orange Church in 1869. He was baptized at Bathurst Church in 1865. He had come to the district in 1863. He took up a free selection in that year of one hundred acres, paying twenty-five pounds as the required deposit. He had been brought up in farming districts in England and came to Australia at the age of nineteen on the recommendation of the wife of one of his employers, she being a Tasmanian who spoke of the opportunities for young men in this country. After a short time as a groom in North Sydney he went to the gold rushes in Victoria. The following account of his first few years as a free selector has been made available by the Secretary of the Belvoir Street Church who is a great-grandson.

"I spent between five and six years on the different goldfields in Victoria and New South Wales Part of the time we were fairly successful but at the end of that time we were run down and left without anything. The Lucknow goldfields were just then being thrown open to the public so I made my way there. Hearing about the Robertson Land Act 'selection before survey' and seeing a lot of good land, as I thought, in the neighbourhood the question arose in my mind whether it would not be wiser to take up the land and go cockeysing, as it was termed in those days, than to follow the mining.

"Seeing I had already had between five and six years mining and still had nothing I thought it would be wiser to go for something surer than mining so I decided to aim at getting a piece of land for myself. Seeing a lot of new settlers had just taken up land and were making a start to clear the land and build there was plenty of work to be got. I started at one pound a week and keep, but soon got on to piece work, taking contracts for clearing, well-sinking, etc. The first twenty-five pounds I got saved I selected one hundred acres of land in the district of Springhill, five miles from Lucknow and twelve miles from Orange. I pitched my tent on the selection and made it my home and began to clear the land and make the necessary improvements. Not having any capital I had to take work from other people for a time. But seeing I had to make improvements to the value of one pound per acre in three years I had to put all the time I could into my own place. To accomplish this I arranged with another selector, who had a team of horses and was a carrier on the roads, to give me one day with his team and I would give him three days of my own labour for every one he gave me with his team. That is how I started farming.

"It answered well for a time until I got sufficient to buy one horse and a little plough after getting my first crop off my five acres which I had cleared. After this I was able to spend more time on my own place and I succeeded in making all the necessary improvements in the three years, with clearing the land, fencing it and building a house, etc. Having selected a good English girl for my wife, one that was able to milk cows and look after poultry and after securing a couple of good cows and a few choice poultry for a start, she was soon able to breed up sufficient to keep the house going with butter and eggs. Having secured a good breeding sow and a good brood mare it was wonderful how soon the stock seemed to increase I was soon able to drive a team of my own breeding. I was still without capital. I borrowed the sum of 50 pounds at ten per cent interest, but I was increasing in stock so I soon paid off the little I had borrowed."

This story gives a fuller picture of the life and work of the free selectors mentioned in the June lecture. This particular free selector was able to be a Church Secretary while establishing himself in the ways described above.

A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO NEW ENGLAND, 1894.

Another sidelight on the June Lecture

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The denominational paper describes it as "A Missionary Tour to the northern and New England districts." It details the visit of President Mr. William White, Mrs. White and Evangelist Palmer.

Saturday, 14th April. Sydney to Tamworth. Met by Rev. M. Morris.

Sunday, 15th April. Mr. Palmer preached morning and evening and Mr. and Mrs. White conducted a young people's service in the afternoon. Two professions at the evening service.

Monday. By train at 2.20 a.m. to Black Mountain, arriving at 7.30 a.m. Our esteemed brother, Rev. Sydney Hotston, took us to the parsonage, a neat weatherboard cottage in a paddock some distance from any other house. In the afternoon visited four families, each visit being the equivalent of a short service. In the evening we had a service at Black Mountain. We met a dear old man, a bush missionary and colporteur combined - a baptized believer, simple and honest hearted. For the past fourteen years he has been up and down the land, distributing tracts, selling Bibles and tracts, singing and praying with the people. He has three pack horses to carry his books and often camps out in the open.

Tuesday, 17th April. Visiting and praying with people. In the evening the Church was filled with people. One surrendered.

Wednesday, 18th April. A thirty mile ride, evangelizing as we went. It was rough but beautiful country. We travelled four miles to a slab house with a bark and shingle roof on the Booralong Creek, surrounded by mountainous peaks. Then seven miles to Brother Archer's and sweet communion. Then four miles to Sabroan and a service in the afternoon. Next we went six miles through heavy rain on a one thousand foot descent for the evening service at Brother Manuel's.

Thursday, 19th April. A five mile ride to George Manuel's for a short family service, then two miles to another family and after that to an aged saint in a lonely cot. From there we went to a house with fifteen children and an 81 year old man. We moved on to Yarrowyck where we have a nice little church. Mr. White was incapacitated so Mr. Hotston preached and three persons trusted Christ.

Friday, 20th April. We moved on to Saumarez Ponds where there was a small audience but we had a blessed time. Some time was spent in house to house visiting.

Saturday. We went on to Armidale for the Sunday meetings where Brother Palmer and Sister White took part in each service.

Monday, 23rd April. A meeting in the Hall which was crowded and where eight souls professed Christ.

Tuesday, 24th April. To Tillbuster and Sister Warner's (twelve miles).

Wednesday, 25th April. Eight miles to Black Mountain. The Church was crowded and one soul trusted Jesus Christ.

It was then back to Sydney. From Sydney to Sydney we had travelled 900 miles by rail and horseback, had held thirty-eight meetings, and seen twenty-four souls profess Christ and we had left Revs. Hotston and Harvison beaming with the glory of the Lord.