

Business Arising:

1. Queensland Society Brochure. A draft letter had been prepared by the Secretary to be sent to the Churches accompanying the brochure.
2. Evangelical History Association project. Mr. Watkin-Smith said that contact had been made with him by the originator of the biographical project asking for information. Work had commenced on the task but it was still in the preliminary stage.
3. "First Australian Baptists". As indicated at the August Meeting, the Chairman said that a decision needed to be made as to whether this popular publication should be reprinted or completely revised. The cost and time involved in a complete revision could be prohibitive and Mr. Watkin-Smith proposed that the current edition be reprinted with a new final chapter being added to include new and additional information which had come to light since the original publication. Whatever decision was made, the Secretary said, it should be to ensure that a worthwhile and professional publication resulted with due consideration being given to the wishes of the two authors and the availability of Missions Publications to carry out the task. General discussion then took place with members endorsing a motion that the matter should be referred to the Executive for a final decision.

Correspondence: The Secretary advised receipt of the following:-

- (a) Baptist Union of N.S.W., seeking information on the Society's meetings for 1991.
- (b) Evangelical History Association seeking data from the Society for inclusion in a future publication.
Both the above matters were to be attended to by the Secretary.
- (c) State Library of N.S.W. asking for copies of the Society's publications. Noted.
- (d) Queensland Baptist Historical Society Newsletter.
- (e) Royal Australian Society Historical Society Newsletter.

Treasurer's Report: The financial report, showing the following balances as at 18th October, 1990, was received.

General Fund	\$1573.91
Publications Fund	3001.15
Essay Competition Fund	194.32
Total	\$4769.38

Membership of the Society now stood at 82.

Archivist's Report: Rev. E. Archer reported on recent enquiries he had received.

Essay Competition: Mr. P. Young reported that advertisements had been placed in The Australian Baptist and The Victorian Baptist Witness.

Chairman's Report: Mr. Watkin-Smith commented on the following:-

- * Newcastle celebrations - He had attended and given a greeting on behalf of the Society. The meetings had been a great success and it had been interesting to note that as part of the renovation work the painting of the Church had been carried out in the original colours of 100 years ago.
- * Smithfield Church - He had been invited to attend the opening of a new auditorium but unfortunately it had been on the same week-end as the Newcastle event. He had sent his apologies and hoped to visit Smithfield in the near future.
- * Dungog Church - As previously reported, the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the Dungog Church had been held in August. He had sought a copy of the anniversary report in time for tonight's meeting but nothing had arrived.

Speakers: Rev. Ron Rogers then read the paper prepared by Mr. Ken Palmer "Story Without End", celebrating the golden jubilee of the Clemton Park Church.

Mr. Arthur Hall, a member of the Strathfield-Homebush Church, substituting for Rev. P. Kilkeary, reviewed the history of that Church and the celebrations to mark its golden jubilee.

General discussion then took place with interesting sidelights concerning the history of both Churches emerging.

The meeting closed in prayer by Mr. M. Petras at 9.40 p.m.

O.C.N.

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Both narrators at our October Meeting emphasized that their Churches had looked on the celebrations of fifty years of witness as a time to plan for the future as well as to look back on past achievements.

KEN PALMER STORY WITHOUT END - 1940-1990

1940 - a Momentous Year. Australia at war. Men joining the armed forces. People everywhere giving their spare time to assist the war effort. It was not the best of years to commence a Church.

The Vision Splendid. A small group of Baptists in the district, belonging to Earlwood and Campsie Churches met on a number of occasions in a shop on the corner of William and Hilltop Streets to discuss the possibility of commencing a fellowship in the new area. The suburb was named after F.M. Clements who owned 42 acres where he cultivated herbs for his famous Clements' Tonic. A few years earlier the railway had been extended from Tempe to Kingsgrove. It was obvious that after the War housing would be developed on a large scale. It was a major challenge - an opportunity too good to miss.

Meeting the Challenge. The first service was arranged for Sunday, 31st March, 1940, commencing at 7.15 p.m. On the preceding Saturday, 30th March, twenty earnest Christians under the leadership of Rev. S.M.F. Brook conducted a visitation campaign to make known the opening service. The twenty then met for a fellowship tea to discuss results, and to follow this with a social evening when greetings were given by Home Mission Superintendent, Rev. W. Wingfield and a message was delivered by the Earlwood pastor, Rev. S.M.F. Brook on "The Bible and Baptist Doctrines".

The Gathered Community. At the first service thirty-eight were present, twenty-eight being local residents as a result of the visitation campaign. Mr. Brook urged the new fellowship to be fully responsive to the needs of the growing district. The young fellowship first gathered around the Lord's Table on 14th July, 1940. The first baptismal service was held in the Earlwood Church on 20th July, 1941, there being no facilities for baptism in the Progress Hall where the Church met.

Historical background. Mr. Palmer gave some interesting facts about the district going back to the early days of the colony. A large estate was sub-divided into smaller holdings suitable for market gardens and the present day streets are named in honour of the owners of the farms or the names given to their holdings.

Commencing a Sunday School. The area was beginning to abound with young people and a quickly growing public school. On Saturday, 17th August, 1940 the young fellowship had a canvass of the district inviting parents to send their children to attend the first day of the Clemton Park Baptist Sunday School. The following day sixteen children attended and by October, 1940 the school had grown to thirty scholars.

Arise and Build. An approach was made to the Progress Hall seeking to purchase it for the work, but it was not for sale. Sites for a Church building were inspected in early 1942, and then on Tuesday, 14th July, 1942 Mr. James Castle told the meeting he was presenting to the Church a double block of land in Shackel Avenue, as a love gift in memory of his mother. This was followed by a substantial monetary gift to enable timber building operations to begin.

To erect a building of any sort during the War was an almost impossible task. After continued prayer in faith permits were issued by the Department of Organization of Industry to proceed with the erection of a timber building to the value of 525 pounds with furnishings costing 145 pounds. The building was declared open by the Home Mission Superintendent, Rev. W.H. Wingfield, on Saturday, 24th October, 1942 with a Service of Thanksgiving and Rev. Dr. W.L. Jarvis as the evening speaker.

Increasing Church activities led to a decision in 1953 to build a school hall at the rear of the church building. This was completed during April, 1954.

These buildings would not be described as either worshipful or functional by today's standards but many of the older members of today have fond memories of the blessings and joys and friendships experienced in these early buildings, which were the spiritual home of the Clemton Park Baptists until major building operations were implemented in 1962.

A Baptist Home Mission Church. In June 1945 the parent Church at Earlwood granted the fellowship authority to conduct its own affairs, and it was considered time to cease being a fellowship and become a Baptist Church affiliated with the Home Mission Society of the Baptist Union of N.S.W. This meant the appointment of a student-pastor to be responsible for the spiritual oversight of the work. On Thursday evening, 7th March 1946, Rev. F. Robinson, President of the Baptist Union of N.S.W. and Rev. E.V. Marks, Home Mission Superintendent, officially formed the Church with 14 members and welcomed it into the Union.

Pioneer Pastors. Rev. S.M.F. Brook, pastor of the parent Church at Earlwood preached on a number of occasions and chaired the early business meetings of the Church. Honorary Pastor, Rev. Bruce Langridge, served during much of 1941-42 but resigned to enter missionary service with the Sudan United Mission. He was followed by another Honorary Pastor, Mr. John Gore, 1941-46.

Student Pastors. The Home Mission Society appointed a married student, Pastor W.F.C. Horsburgh, as first student pastor. He commenced on 4th February, 1946 and had a gracious and fragrant ministry 1946-47. Other student pastors were F. Gallagher 1948-50, A.E. Cundall 1951-52, Rev. J.G.L. Wedge 1952-53, H.B. Suttie 1954-57.

First Full-time Pastor. In March 1959 the Church became independent and called Rev. G.J. McArthur, formerly of the A.B.M.S. as its first full-time pastor, and he served for five years before resigning to become founding Principal of the New Guinea Christian Leaders Training College. From 1957 to 1959 Rev. W.F.C. Horsburgh returned as an Honorary Pastor, being called by the Church to fill in the period between the ministry of student-pastors and an ordained minister.

Other Pastors. Since Mr. McArthur the following have been called as pastors: Rev. A.C. Le Claire (1963-64), Rev. K.F. Evans (1964-70), Rev. M. Olsen (1970-74), Rev. G.N. Chambers (1974-78), Rev. G.A. Muller (1978-90). Two of these,

Revs. A.C. Le Claire and G.N. Chambers, resigned to become Home Mission Superintendents. Rev. G.A. Muller resigned from January 1990 to return to his home State, Queensland. Rev. K.F. Evans, on retirement came to live in the district and has been a faithful Associate Pastor.

The Manse. A manse in the same street as the Church was built in 1959 and opened on Saturday, 11th October, 1959 by Rev. C.H. Gray, President of the Union.

Other Buildings. The present Church building was opened by Rev. G.H. Morling, President-General of the Baptist Union of Australia on 22nd September 1962. It cost 17,500 pounds. On 30th March 1963 a two-storey Education Block was opened but the growth demands obliged the Junior School to continue meeting in the Progress Hall. The Fellowship Centre costing \$96,000 was opened by the then pastor, Rev. G.N. Chambers on 22nd August 1976, the guest preacher being Dr. Andrew McRae, Superintendent of the Baptist Union of Scotland.

The Church building with many amenities has come a long way from its humble beginnings in the Progress Hall. In 1982 a digital computer organ costing \$29,000 was installed and in 1987 a grand piano valued at \$3000 was dedicated.

Clemton Park Revisited. During the fortnight of Jubilee celebrations many past Clemtonians joined in the special services including two young men who left the Church to enter the ministry, Revs. G. Beckenham and K. Jobberns.

Where is the Church Going? As the celebrations ended a Church Conference was held around the tea table to determine the future of the Fellowship. A large gathering confronted the problems familiar to many Churches. What will be the future when a small congregation burdened with large and decaying buildings cannot cope with changing districts and the challenges of new situations? It was agreed that while there were still good resources of personnel and money the Church should be shaped to fulfil her distinctive mission for the future of Clemton Park, so that it might be said at the end of the second fifty years that they were greater than the first fifty years.

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ARTHUR HALL A CHURCH IN ACTION - CHOSEN TO SERVE

Mr. Hall first of all apologized for the inability of Rev. P. Kilkeary to be present and then apologized that having just returned from holidays he had not prepared a paper. However, he spoke with considerable animation about the celebrations of the Jubilee and the story of the Church at Strathfield-Homebush.

Reasons for starting a Church. These were much the same at Strathfield-Homebush as at Clemton Park. A large barely developed district became increasingly attractive for housing and Baptists arriving in the area sought fellowship and opportunities for witness. The story is told in a publication "The First Forty Years" published ten years ago.

The Jubilee Celebrations. The planning for the jubilee commenced in 1988. One deacon insisted that it must be much more than a time of nostalgia and a re-living of the past. This view was gladly accepted and all the planning centred around the idea that it was to be a time of spiritual thanksgiving with a challenge for the future arising out of the selected theme: "A Church in action - chosen to serve". It was planned that every department of the Church should have a share and invite old members and friends to meet the present congregation and to talk to

them of what was being done. This opportunity came over and over again during a fortnight of meetings. Some former pastors were able to take part in the programme and renew acquaintance with former members. Early officers of the various activities and organizations of the Church were present to participate. The renewal of former friendships was an amazing feature of many meetings but especially so at the Reunion Picnic on Saturday, 18th May in the Auburn Picnic Grounds. Mr. W.H. Dennett, a foundation member, present from Blaxland despite his 87 years, was much impressed and asked: "What would we have done if we had shut up shop in the early days as we were tempted to do? What would have happened to all these people who have shared in the past fifty years?" He was contemplating the 300 and more persons who had come together on that occasion.

At all meetings former members spoke of what Strathfield-Homebush had meant to them and what had been accomplished by the Church since they had moved on. The emphasis throughout was not on entertainment but on challenge. All was challenge.

Anniversary Objective. The Church had decided as an outward move to help a fellowship struggling in its early stages. The project embarked upon was to raise \$15,000 as a deposit on a manse for the newly-formed (February 1990) Nyngan Fellowship. It was launched in May and was to close in December. As he spoke (October 18) Mr. Hall said that \$14,900 was in hand and hopes were expressed that \$20,000 might be reached. This response of the people to help someone else, he said, was a symbol of their commitment at Strathfield-Homebush to others.

Church Beginnings. Mr. Hall then outlined something of the story of the Church. It was started by a group of Baptists living in the area south of the railway line and most were members at either Concord or Burwood. The area was then on the fringe of civilization but it was believed that there was a future opportunity for evangelism in a substantial and growing district. An approach was made to Concord for support, first for a Sunday School in the Strathfield Council Chambers and later for an evening service, members continuing at that stage to attend morning services where their membership was. Concord gave its blessing to the venture. At 3 p.m. on 21st March 1937 Sunday School was inaugurated in the Strathfield Council Chambers with the Concord pastor, Rev. F. Robinson, participating. The first Church service was held in the Council Chambers on 27th June 1937 at 7.15 p.m. with Rev. F. Robinson as the preacher. The pulpit was filled in the early days by visiting preachers, Rev. Stephen Sharp, now retired but living in Burwood, preached at all the services in December 1939. He was a fine orator and a masterly expositor and endeared himself to the hearts of the people. From February 1938 he became the regular preacher at all Sunday services (in effect he was the Honorary Pastor).

1939 - A Year of Crisis. The congregation was discouraged by the lack of response to its advertising and personal efforts and some thought the undertaking should be terminated. However, a sympathetic response to their approach to the Home Mission led to plans for a Church formation, the appointment of a student-pastor and an evangelistic mission. Then the Strathfield Council refused permission for a morning service and doubled the rental for existing services. In March 1940, the same month in which Pastor A. Dube commenced as student-pastor, a move was made to the Soldiers Memorial Hall, near Homebush Station. This hall was available all day Sundays and on Wednesday evenings for a moderate rental. With the move the name was expanded from Strathfield Baptist Church to Strathfield-Homebush. On 30th May, 1940 the Church was formed with twenty-six members.

Church Buildings. At the first business meeting after formation, a decision was made on a site to be purchased for a building. The final payment was made in October 1941, but war-time building restrictions and shortages of materials meant building was prohibited. After the war plans were drawn and finance secured but the Department of Labour and Industry refused a permit as materials were needed for housing. In early 1947 the Memorial Hall ceased to be available and the Church made

CELEBRATIONS AT DUNGOG

for the 75th Church Anniversary, 1915-1990

Dungog is a pretty town in the midst of a delightful countryside on the Upper Williams River. Henry Kendall, one of our greatest Australian poets, wrote a poem in its praise.

Church services conducted by Baptists were held in the township of Dungog for many years prior to the formation of our Church there. The preachers came from the Church, formed in 1870, at Thalaba some eight kilometres downstream. They were not going to a new town for Dungog is one of the oldest towns in the Hunter Valley.

The Historical setting of the Town

When the Hunter Valley was surveyed in 1822-24 sites for villages were reserved at strategic spots and the site for a village on the Upper Williams River was at the confluence of Myall Creek and the Williams River (the present site of Dungog). Until 1834 when it was gazetted as Dungog it was known as Wihurgully or Upper Williams. The Wihurgully Hill some two miles south of Dungog would have been the point of reference for that name. Dungog, meaning "clear hills" was the aboriginal name for the high land close to the town between the Myall Creek and the Williams River.

The 1828 Census indicates some six settlers and their convict servants residing in the immediate vicinity and an 1832 Directory lists twenty-one settlers. In 1837 the Government Gazette reports the impounding of a mare and in 1838 it advised that applications could be made for the allocation of convicts to magistrates in 33 locations throughout the State and one of these was Dungog.

In 1844 when the Government established Police Districts, the District covering the counties of Durham and Gloucester (i.e. from the Hunter River to the Hastings River) had its Headquarters at Dungog which by then was one of the 22 post towns in the Northern Postal Area. It received mails twice weekly. By this time there were one hundred emancipists on small farms along the Upper Williams River and a steam flour mill and a tobacco factory in the town. At the 1861 Census the population had reached 458 and Government records reveal that a Government grant in that year for the improvement of streets in country towns was shared by 21 towns, and Dungog was one of these. By 1889 the population of the town had reached 500 with about 2000 in the district. Cedar timber was the main export. The flour mill was still operating but the tobacco factory had disappeared. The district was noted for the excellent quality of its maize which was an important crop and J. Wade and Co. had a Corn Flour Mill in the town. In 1897 a butter factory was established and by 1904, when Rev. T. McIlroy went to Thalaba the population had reached 1082. In 1911 the North Coast Railway arrived at Dungog, attracting to the town much of the Williams River commerce formerly passing through to Clarence Town.

The town had not been without Christian services. During the 1850s a Wesleyan minister had been placed at Dungog and Presbyterian ministers at Paterson and Clarence Town included Dungog in their ministrations. There was an Anglican parish of Williams River which had its headquarters at Hexham. In November 1865 the prominent Congregationalist and Temperance advocate, Thomas Roseby, visited Dungog with Bush Missionary Dufty and preached on a Saturday at an Open Air meeting to one hundred people. In the following February he returned and held on a Sunday two moonlight meetings.

The Thalaba Church and Dungog

The Thalaba Church is set in the midst of farms. Baptist Union visitors loved to call it "The Church in the Wilderness". There are no shops and no homes near it.

The school is at Alison over the hills and on the Williams River. The Post Office is at a nearby farm and is called Marshdale after the Marsh family, who for a time leased land adjacent to Thalaba Estate. This estate was so named by Major Benjamin Sullivan who received it as a grant of 2560 acres (four square miles) about 1828.

It was natural that the missionary-minded evangelistic preachers from Thalaba (see page 6, February 1989 issue of The Recorder), who took the Gospel to farmers in the valleys of the Paterson, Williams, Chichester, Wangat and Karuah Rivers should preach in the township where they purchased their goods and sold their produce. It was the largest town in the entire district. In the 1880s Thalaba Baptists conducted Open Air meetings regularly on Saturday evenings in the main street. In 1887 Rev. John Straughen of the Parramatta Church during a visit to Thalaba for their anniversary services preached to a large congregation in Dungog School of Arts on a Saturday evening.

In February 1900 while Pastor D. Watson was conducting a vigorous ministry at Thalaba a fellowship of fourteen members was formed at Dungog. The following month (March 1900) Rev. Dr. Thomas Porter of Petersham had three consecutive evening meetings in Dungog on a Sunday, Monday and Tuesday and drew large congregations. Mr. Watson now began preaching every Sunday at Dungog and gave to the town a good share of his ministrations.

Rev. Thomas McIlroy, 1904-1914, who continued regular Sunday services at Dungog, reported to the Home Mission in 1906 that blocks of land suitable for a church building were for sale in Dungog, but no action was taken at that time. When Mr. McIlroy resigned in 1914 the Thalaba Church asked the Home Mission to take over the work in the whole district. The Home Mission appointed Rev. W.S. Cowling for this task.

Church Formation

Mr. Cowling was a Tasmanian who had trained in the Victorian Baptist College 1912-14. Towards the end of his training he had applied to the N.S.W. Home Mission for an appointment. It was intended to settle him in the coalfield centre at Cessnock, but in April 1915 he was sent to the Thalaba-Dungog district where there were plans to build a church in the town. Land was purchased in May, 1915 for 300 pounds and on 24th August, 1915 the President of the Baptist Union, Rev. B. Gawthrop, formed a Church of eleven members who elected George Searle as their Secretary and Henry Germon as their Treasurer. Henry Germon was one of the Thalaba stalwarts, now retired and living in Dungog. George Searle, who was manager of one of the two butter factories in Dungog, was to become President of the N.S.W. Baptist Union for 1922-23. He had been a Sunday School scholar at Glen Oak, one of the outstations of the Hinton Church, and later Sunday School Secretary in the Millthorpe Church during the time of his employment in the Millthorpe Creamery.

Mr. Cowling had a good response to his ministry with a minor revival in the district when forty-three conversions were recorded. Unfortunately in mid-year his health failed and a change of district was considered necessary. A supply was sent in June but Mr. Cowling was able to return for the closing months of the year and had a baptismal service on Christmas Eve prior to his departure. A contract had been let for the erection of a brick building to cost, with furnishings, 650 pounds. Mr. Cowling's successor, Pastor G.H. Morling, arrived in time for the laying in March, 1917 of the foundation stone by two ladies highly regarded in the district, Mrs. Henry Germon and Mrs. Albert Yates. Gifts laid on the foundation stone on that occasion amounted to 329 pounds. The building was opened on 9th September 1917 and in the two years previous to that occasion 654 pounds had been raised towards the cost.

During the ministry of Rev. R.W. Dobbinson, 1919-23, Mr. Morling's successor, Dungog took over the responsibility for the services at Clarence Town, formerly provided by Hinton. Some preaching stations were also re-opened and services commenced at Wangat at the site of the Chichester Dam being constructed for Newcastle's water supply.

In all the years since those foundational days a vital work has been carried on in both Dungog and its parent Church at Thalaba. An interesting fact emerges from the research of Rev. Michael Dennis into the 1981 Census. He was seeking the percentage of Baptists to the total population in each of the local government areas in N.S.W., and his researches revealed that the highest percentage of Baptists was to be found in the Dungog Shire.

Links with the past at the Anniversary

Many of the present members of the Dungog Church belong to the families from which the foundation members came. To them the special month of meetings to commemorate the Church formation and the erection of their Church building had a very special meaning. It was also possible to have present members of the families of the pastors who ministered when the Church was formed and the building erected. One week-end was centred around the family of Rev. W.S. Cowling and the following week-end around the family of Rev. G.H. Morling. The present pastor, Rev. V. Kerz, advises that the whole of the month of special remembrances was a heart-warming occasion.

H.W-S.

Sources used for the above:-

- from Mitchell Library: Government Gazettes, various Directories and Almanacs, The Christian Pleader.
- F.A. Larcombe: Local Government in NSW. Vols. 1 and 2.
- Various books on Geography and History of NSW.
- Baptist Union Year Books. Baptist Home Mission Minute Books.
- Reports in The NSW Baptist and The Australian Baptist.

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FURTHER MINISTRIES OF REV. W.S. COWLING

Rev. William Cowling continued in the Baptist ministry of N.S.W. until his death on 11th February 1952, while pastor of the Kurri Kurri Church. There were some short interruptions caused by recurring illnesses. His pastorates after leaving Dungog were at Tamworth, Woonona, Orange, Goulburn, Goombargana, Grafton, Nowra, Hamilton, Dubbo, Strathfield-Homebush, Casino and Kurri Kurri.

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A MINISTER CAME OUT OF DUNOG

At the turn of the Century the Secretary of the Thalaba Church, residing in the town of Dungog, was G.S. Cox. In 1900 he applied to the Home Mission for service in our Churches, his application being supported by Rev. R. Williams, a Congregational minister. In 1904 he commenced training with the Education Committee of the Union and was eventually ordained. He served in a number of our Churches but frequently had to withdraw for extended periods because of ill-health. In the country he was pastor at Maclean, Temora, Aria Park, Leeton, Orange and Taree. In the City he was pastor at Pymble and in an experimental grouping of Arncliffe and Sans Souci where he had a very profitable ministry until it was interrupted by a break-down in health. He died on 26th March 1940.