

Baptist The Recorder

The Journal of the
Baptist Historical Society
of New South Wales

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April 1995

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OUR NEXT **21st ANNIVERSARY !!!** MEETING:

GREAT HYMNS OF THE BAPTIST TRADITION

An inspiring night of story and song with great
community singing of well loved hymns and special
items by guest artists

Thursday 4 May 1995
in the
MORLING CHAPEL, EASTWOOD
at 8 pm



MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING HELD 2 FEBRUARY 1995

The meeting was opened in prayer by the Chairman, Rev E R Rogers, at 8 pm with sixteen members and friends present (details in attendance book).

Apologies were received and accepted from Mrs J. Burton, Mr B. King and Rev B. Thornton.

Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the general meeting held 3 November 1994, as published in the latest edition of *The Recorder*, were confirmed.

Correspondence

The Secretary, Mr O.C. Nannelli, advised receipt of the following correspondence:

- Victorian Baptist Historical Society, a copy of their latest publication *Our Yesterdays* Volume 2 1994.
- Pennant Hills Baptist Church, a copy of their seventieth year anniversary publication 1924–1994 *Seventy Years of Service and Witness*.
- Royal Australian Historical Society Publications.
- Queensland Baptist Archives, requesting update on information re our Society. Secretary to co-ordinate response.
- Jews for Jesus Group. Chairman replied.
- Historic Houses Trust, copies of latest brochures.

General Business

1. The Chairman outlined details of the activities proposed for the Annual Meeting which this year would celebrate the Society's 21st birthday. A special evening of music featuring Baptist hymns and hymn writers was planned.

Details of speakers booked through to the 1996 Annual Meeting were provided.

2. Mr H. Watkin-Smith reported that the Burwood Church would be celebrating its centenary in May.
3. Filing Cabinet. The executive had previously decided to purchase an additional filing cabinet to accommodate the growing archival collection. A member had subsequently offered to buy the extra cabinet for the Society. Appreciation was expressed to this benefactor who wished to remain anonymous.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Mr P. Hayward, presented the financial report for the period ended 31 January 1995 showing a total credit balance of \$4,403.23 which was adopted. Individual membership now stood at 53 plus 12 churches.

Guest Speaker

The Chairman welcomed our guest speaker and editor of *The Recorder*, Rev P. Kilkeary, who addressed the meeting on the topic "The Origins of The Rookwood Independent Cemetery". At the conclusion of his interesting and well researched talk, Rev Kilkeary answered questions from the audience.

Close

The meeting was closed in prayer at 9.30 pm.

O.C. Nannelli

Baptist Historical Society of NSW
Annual Financial Statement for the Year Ended 28 February 1995

Income	General Fund		Expenditure
Membership Subscriptions	653.37	Postage and Stationery	135.50
Donations	90.60	Membership RAHS	65.00
Interest	<u>80.26</u>	Visiting Lecturer	75.00
		Advertising	173.60
		Bank Charges	1.83
		Promotion	50.00
		Book Purchase	45.00
		Stationery	<u>68.53</u>
Total Income	824.23	Total Expenses	614.46
Balance b/fwd 1 March 1994	<u>2228.47</u>	Balance c/fwd 28 February 1995	<u>2438.24</u>
	\$3052.70		\$3052.70

	Publications Fund		
Book Sales	509.26	Postages	48.75
Interest	<u>82.00</u>	Advertisement	<u>90.00</u>
Total Income	591.26	Total Expenditure	138.75
Balance b/fwd 1 March 1994	<u>1418.52</u>	Balance c/fwd 28 February 1995	<u>1871.03</u>
	\$2009.78		\$2009.78

Essay Competition Fund			
Balance b/fwd 1 March 1994	<u>\$98.96</u>	Balance c/fwd 28 February 1995	<u>\$98.96</u>

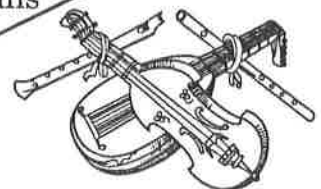
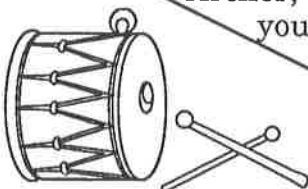
Summary of Balances	Held as follows		
General Fund	2438.24	Nat. Aus. Bank—Cheque A/c	1287.63
Publications Fund	1871.03	Nat. Aus. Bank—Term Deposit	1885.00
Essay Competition Fund	<u>98.96</u>	Nat. Aus. Bank—Term Deposit	<u>1235.60</u>
	\$4408.23		\$4408.23



**A WORD
from the
CHAIRMAN**

I appeal to all members of the Society to make a special effort to share in our 21st Anniversary celebration. Its success will depend on a large and enthusiastic attendance. Would you then also encourage friends to accompany you and so make it a great night of story and song. Ted Archer, Laurie Le Claire and I will provide the story and you and guest artists the singing of great hymns from our Baptist tradition.

(Rev) E R Rogers



Burwood Church Centenary

6 and 7 May 1995

On the week-end following our Annual Meeting the Burwood Church will be celebrating its centenary. The Church has decided that a small booklet outlining significant features in the Church's history should be prepared for present and past members and approached Mr H. Watkin-Smith of our Society to write this history for them. He acceded to their request and it is anticipated that the history will be available at the Saturday afternoon Rally on 6 May.

The Church was formed on Tuesday 30 April 1895, but it grew out of an open membership organisation called Burwood Baptist Mission. This Burwood Baptist Mission began on 6 August 1893, and four months later invited Rev A.J. Clarke to be its pastor. It developed rapidly under his leadership and he organised a membership with its own officers. There were over seventy members and a large Christian Endeavour Society. About a year later he pressed the Mission to be formed into a Baptist Church as part of the NSW Baptist Union. However, this move split the Mission. It was the minority that

proceeded with the formation of the Church. Mr Clarke moved from Burwood to give the opportunity for a reconciliation with the abstaining members, but this hope did not eventuate. Both the membership and the finances dropped to a quarter of what they had been under the Mission.

The ministry 1896-1903 of Rev W.A. Southwell set the Church on its feet. He accepted the call on the understanding that any remuneration would come only from any excess of income over expenditure. In the previous twelve months this excess had amounted to twenty-five shillings. Their acceptance of the call illustrates the commitment and faith of Mr and Mrs Southwell.

For the purchase of a site and the erection of a church building Burwood Baptists were indebted to the generosity of two Baptist stalwarts from other Churches, Mr William Buckingham in particular, and Mr William White. The longest serving pastor of the Church was that prince of preachers, Rev Stephen Sharp who led the people from 1917 to 1930.



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The Origins of Rookwood Independent Cemetery

P B Kilkeary

Introduction

I have chosen this subject because of my personal involvement and interest in Rookwood and because it represents an important but neglected area of historical culture with regard to the input of Baptists into the religious and social life of New South Wales. From its beginning in 1867 Baptists have played an important role in the administration of Rookwood Necropolis and they continue that role today by having a Baptist member of the Independent Trust. Unlike most cemeteries, Rookwood is not administered by a single trust, but by a number of separate trusts, including Anglican, Catholic and Independent. A representative of each of their trusts sits on the Joint Committee of Necropolis Trustees which deals with matters of common interest such as roads, gates and water supply.

Cemeteries in Sydney prior to Rookwood

The original Sydney Cemetery was the old burial ground, located adjacent to the site of St Andrew's Cathedral. It was officially closed in 1820 but continued in a state of neglect until the 1850's and 1860's.

Governor Macquarie chose a site for the new burial ground at the brickfields and this eventually became known as the Devonshire Street Cemetery, now the site of Central Railway Station. By the early 1840s this site was beginning to fill and in 1843 a letter to the Colonial Secretary informed him of the need for a new cemetery, pointing out that it was "so completely occupied that decency and propriety were outraged".

During the next two decades, potential sites for a new cemetery were announced at Cabarita, Parramatta and Petersham. In 1860, John Robertson, Secretary for Lands, advertised in the Government Gazette:

Persons who may be willing to dispose of not less than 100 acres of land which may be suitable for a future cemetery on or near the First Southern Railway, between Sydney and Parramatta are requested to communicate with this Department, describing the portion of the land, and stating the area and price. It is necessary that the soil should be a considerable depth, and generally free from stones, and that the drainage should either be to salt water or to some stream or hollow whence water supply is not obtained for domestic purposes.

Among the replies received was one from A. Cohen dated 1 July 1861.

Sir,

Understanding that the Government are desirous of selecting a plot of ground for a General Cemetery, within easy communication of Sydney, I beg to submit for their approval a block containing between 1600 and 1700 acres, situated at Liberty Plains and about 11 miles from Sydney and through which the railway runs. The land is also of easy access from the Parramatta and Liverpool Roads. There is also in the centre of the land a reserve for a railway terminus. The land was formerly the property of Sir Charles Nicholson (by whom the reserve was given) and is now the property of my brother, Mr Michael Cohen, of Melbourne and Mr D. Benjamin, who have placed it in my hands for sale. The price of the whole block is seventeen thousand pounds.

I enclose a rough sketch of the situation of the land. The soil, I believe is deep and the land is free from floods.

*I have etc.
A. Cohen*

In April 1862 the Secretary for Lands wrote to Mr Cohen agreeing that the Government would purchase 200 acres near "Homebush on the Railway Line, being a portion of the estate called Liberty Plains at the price of Ten Pounds per acre, the terms being cash on the completion of a perfect title". Clearing of the land was carried out by unemployed men in 1866 and the cemetery became operational on 1 January 1867. Grants were made to the various trusts, Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Independent and Jewish. The Independent allocation was five acres but much additional land was added in 1881, when apart from the foregoing, grants were also made to Lutheran, General and Primitive Methodists. Today Rookwood covers 314 ha.

The Government Gazette of 6 February 1867 named the cemetery at Haslems Creek the Necropolis. However the local railway station was called Haslems Creek and popular usage referred to the Necropolis as Haslems Creek Burial Grounds. In the 1870's local residents were petitioning for a name change for their railway station to distance themselves from the cemetery. Mr Slee wrote to the local newspaper suggesting "... Rookwood is a pleasant name and a very appropriate one in this case, for there are many crows in the neighbourhood". The Government eventually responded by changing the station name to Rookwood and this was used from 1878. However the public began to refer to the Necropolis as Rookwood Cemetery so in 1913 another change was made for the station and the town when the names of two former mayors, Lidbury and Larcombe, were blended to make the name Lidcombe.

The Beginnings of the Independent Cemetery

The six trustees of the Independent Cemetery met for the first time on 4 January 1867 and five meetings were held during that month. In a minute of February 1910, Mr Joseph Palmer,

Chairman of trustees and a former Secretary explained the basis of this Independent Trust.

Independent Cemetery, Rookwood Minute by Joseph Palmer, one of the trustees

When the land at Rookwood was dedicated for the purpose of a cemetery, sections thereof were allotted to the various Denominations, amongst others to the Congregational and the Baptist Denominations. Up to that time the Congregationalists and the Baptists had had one common section of the old Devonshire Street cemetery, and the Trustees thereof had a sum of money in hand. The question was then considered whether that sum of money should be rateably divided between the two Denominations or whether it should be kept in one sum for the purpose of laying out and improving a single portion in the new cemetery to be held by the two Denominations jointly. The latter course was agreed upon, and accordingly the Government instead of granting to each Denomination a separate portion, granted one section to the two bodies such section being designated the "Independent Section of the Necropolis". As the Congregational denomination at that time was considerably larger than the Baptist, it was agreed that of the six Trustees to be appointed, four should be chosen by the Congregationalists and two by the Baptists. That arrangement has continued ever since. Whenever a vacancy occurred, the Denomination to which the retiring or deceased Trustee belonged was requested to nominate a successor, which was done and the gentleman so nominated was appointed by the Government a Trustee accordingly.

(Signed) J. Palmer
17th February, 1910

The first meeting adopted with minor amendments, a plan of the burial ground laid out by Mr A R Huntley and resolved that Sections 6 and 7 should be purchased at once. A scale of fees was also adopted.

Trust meetings were held in Sydney rather than on site and the practice continued throughout the early period. While the Independent Cemetery was one of the smallest in 1867, amalgamations over the years have seen it grow by the Presbyterians, Wesleyans

and Lutherans and the Trust representative are now drawn from the Salvation Army, Uniting, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Orthodox denominations in addition to the two originals.

Early Minutes

It is fascinating to read the early minutes which carry the interest of a new venture as the trustees shaped the direction of the cemetery: making decisions on important issues of principle; doing the work of landscaping and associated development; and struggling with the critical issue of limited finance which has continued as an important issue for all trust cemeteries at Rookwood, for government policy has been that each trust should be kept financially accountable. The early minutes are notable not only for what they say, but also for what they leave unsaid, and are certainly deficient in many respects by modern standards. Some interesting facts are:

1. Five meetings of Trustees were held in January 1867 (though the fourth is undated), but it was not until the eighth meeting held 19 August 1867 that the minutes of meetings 1-7 were confirmed.
2. In June, 1870 a letter was read from the Trustees for the Jewish Section of the Necropolis asking permission to engage the Independent Sexton for their ground. At this June meeting the Trustees consented to this arrangement, and there has been close co-operation ever since. The Independent Cemetery still carries out mechanical digging for the Jewish Trust, and it is noteworthy that Merv Manning, who was Manager of the Independent Cemetery from 1965-1994 originally worked in the Jewish Cemetery.
3. Another group to approach the Independent Trustees was the Sydney Unitarian Church requesting burial rights. This raised a problem

for the Trustees, as the Cemetery had been previously for Baptists and Congregationalists and the dedication service in 1867 had been performed by members of these two denominations. A letter from Rev James Pillars, requesting information about the burial of Unitarians was read at the meeting of 4 November 1867. The matter was deferred to a later meeting as only three Trustees were present. Two motions were recorded: the former that the Unitarian Church be referred to the Committee of the General Cemetery, and the Trustees replied by referring to their previous decision. No record of change to this decision occurs in the Minutes, but in 1890 when a mortuary chapel was erected, following a deputation from Baptist and Congregational Ministers asking for such a building, the trustees notified Baptists, Congregational and Unitarians. As one walks down the pathway to the Independent Office, the next statue encountered is one erected to the memory of Rev James Pillars of the Sydney Unitarian Church. The inscription reads:

James Pillars BA

11 Years Minister of the Unitarian Church
Sydney

He fell from the rocks near Bondi
31-7-1875

Aged 41 years
Born at Bristol, England

His grave was the ocean
This memorial is erected by his attached
congregation
and other friends of free religious inquiry
in recognition
of his manly virtues and in affectionate
remembrance of his
earnest, conscientious and self denying
labours
in the cause of true religion

"He being dead yet speaketh"

There is no longer a mortuary chapel, but it appears that what is now the Independent Office was the original chapel.

4. The final example taken from the early minutes refers to the appointment of Sextons. In 1867 Mr William Fathers was appointed to that office and served until 1893, when ill health forced him to relinquish this position. The Trustees sent a letter expressing their sympathy together with a cheque for £50 "in recognition of his long and faithful services".

The Trustees received a letter from Mr Alf Fathers, son of the First Secretary, applying for the vacant position. The minute reads:

It was resolved that he be appointed temporarily at a salary of £9 15s 0d per month, subject to one month's notice, and he was to be given clearly to understand that he had no claims to the permanent appointment.

There is no record in the minutes that this temporary arrangement was altered to a permanent one. Alf Fathers served as Secretary from 1893–1919.

Recurring Themes of the Early Years

In the early years of the Independent Cemetery there are a number of recurring themes — problems which faced the Trustees and were not easily resolved. I touch on three of these:

1. Shortage of funds. The Trustees laboured under the difficulty of developing a new cemetery with little outside assistance and heavy development expenses. There was little surplus to put aside as expenses about equalled income. In 1870 the year's income was £151 9s 5d and when expenses of £139 15s 2d were deducted the surplus was only £11 14s 3d. The financial returns for 1874 showed a bank balance of £294 0s 11d. By the end of 1890 the balance

had grown to £669 19s 8d, in a year which saw expenditure about double that of income owing to the construction of the mortuary chapel. In September 1897, the Trustees received a letter from the Secretary of the Baptists urging a reduction in cemetery charges. The Trustees drafted a detailed reply, making several important points about finance:

- i) Accumulated funds over 30 years amounted to only £444
- ii) Accumulated funds were needed for road development
- iii) Current income was equal to expenditure

The problem of finance has remained at Rookwood, leading to Trust amalgamations, and is behind the accusations of neglect which have been made in recent years. The fact is that fees have never generated sufficient income for adequate maintenance of the Necropolis. Current Trustees are addressing this problem with a more businesslike approach, and are pressing for the Government to allow renewable tenure of grave sites so that income is maintained and the threatened closure of the cemetery early next century is averted.

2. The second recurring theme is related closely to the first. Many complaints were received about the higher fees charged in the Independent Cemetery and several deputations of Baptist and Congregational Ministers met the Trustees to discuss this problem. There was also correspondence from Baptist and Congregational Assemblies. The point was made strongly that people whose last resting place should have been the Independent Cemetery were opting for the Church of England or Presbyterian Cemeteries where fees were lower. This was a particularly critical problem in the 1890s which covers a time of recession in the Australian colonies.

The Trustees meeting of 17 September 1897 addressed the problem in a positive fashion. A special portion of ground would be set aside for cheap interments and Ministers fees would be reduced from 7s 6d to 5s. They also stated that a Minister had the right to recommend a free interment and that such cases would be known to the Secretary alone.

Controversy continued throughout 1897 and 1898 over charges proposed for the new burial ground. Adult burials were to be 15s plus £1 for purchase of the grave site. There was much correspondence between the Trustees and the Baptist and Congregational Unions but the Trustees stood firm in their resolution that charges could not be lowered and submitted the new fees to the Government, which duly gazetted them. The Trustees then pointed out to the respective Unions that they had been gazetted by the Government and only the Government could change them.

Modern practice is that pauper or destitute burials are paid for by the Government who invite contract tenders from established funeral directors. Such grounds are unmarked but the record of interment is at the office and the place of burial can be identified.

The following is a report presented to the Baptist Assembly in October 1898.

The Sub-committee appointed to deal with the Rookwood Cemetery business have had a difficult task to perform, and, while they have gained some concessions, they have not secured all they set their hearts upon. They have worked cordially with the Congregational Ministers, and have spared no effort in working in the cause of the poor and needy who are heavily oppressed by the high charges in Rookwood Cemetery, and are driven to other denominational burial grounds where the fees are more in accordance with their means. It has come up for consideration at nine different meetings of the Executive this year, and the Committee regrets to report that the Trustees of the Cemetery have just gazetted certain charges in opposition to their wishes and those of the Congregational Ministers. A protest was sent to the Minister for Justice against what seemed to us this high-handed proceeding, and we were informed the charges were gazetted in accordance with the provisions of the Cemetery Act.

3. A third minor but interesting theme was the connection of the telephone. Trustees meetings were still held in the city with only occasional visits to Rookwood. The new invention of the telephone was becoming an important medium of communication. At the meeting of 14 May 1901 the Trust considered laying on a telephone but declined to act. Instead, the Secretary was asked to approach the Presbyterian Trust to see if the Independent could have use of their telephone. At the Trust meeting of 26 June 1901 it was reported that the Presbyterian Trust had declined to allow use of its telephone. The Secretary was authorised to approach the Presbyterian Trust to see if the Independent could have use of their telephone. At the Trust meeting of 21 June 1901 it was reported that the Presbyterian Trust had declined to allow use of its telephone. The Secretary was authorised to approach the Church of England Trust and offer £3 pa for use of that telephone. At the Trust meeting of 30 August 1901 it was reported that the Church of England Trust had also declined. The Secretary was then asked to approach the Presbyterian Trust again, offering £3 pa and if no arrangement was practicable, the Treasurer was authorised to subscribe to the telephone. The subject does not appear again in the minutes but the Trust does possess a telephone and also a fax today.

Continuing Progress

I touch on several other matters which indicates progress and reflect on changing social conditions at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

1. In 1901 the Devonshire Street Cemetery was closed and burials were allocated to Rookwood to make way for Central Railway Station. Numerous headstones are scattered through the Independent Cemetery. The Trust paid a gratuity of £10 to

the Secretary for the extra work involved.

2. In June 1901 the Trust resolved that the men employed at the cemetery should each have one day's holiday. In September 1904 they acceded to the Sexton's request that the men be granted one week's holiday per annum. Today employees are well off with regular holidays, rostered days off and good working conditions.
3. In April 1900 the Trust was approached by the Salvation Army asking that a portion of Section D (the cheap area) be allocated for Salvation Army burials. The Trust replied that it could not allow this because it was bearing burial costs in this section. In May 1900 the Salvation Army was granted its allocation of graves after a letter was received offering to forego ministers fees for funerals there.
4. In 1907 the Trust resolved that a Clergyman would be appointed at the first meeting of each year, and that Rev Joseph Palmer would be appointed Chairman for the remainder of that year. This practice continues to this day.

Baptists and the Independent Cemetery

Baptists have had an important role in the administration of the Independent Cemetery since its inception in 1867. This continues today, with one of the seven trust members being a member of the Baptist Church of NSW. No separate register of Baptist burials exist: the earliest burial register are for the Independent Cemetery without any denominational duplication, but were certainly predominantly Baptist and Congregationalist. The finest memorial in the Independent Section is the Dixon memorial, commemorating Sir Hugh Dixon (1841-1926), a prominent businessman and Baptist. No doubt many prominent Baptists are buried in the Independent Cemetery.

Conclusions

Today the Independent Cemetery continues to serve the community and retains its character as a religious cemetery, with Trust meetings opened and closed in prayer, and a requirement that any funeral service be conducted by an accredited minister of religion. New developments include allocation of land for many ethnic groups, particularly from the Orthodox Churches, and the introduction of above ground burials through crypts and vaults. A greater importance has been placed on landscaping and ground maintenance in recent years in an attempt to recover some of the beauty lost during years of neglect.

As burial space in the cemetery diminishes, the Trust bases its hope of future service on an early introduction of renewable tenure of grave sites by the NSW Government.



Appendix

Managers

W J Fathers	1867-1893
A Fathers	1893-1919
S Jones	1919-1935
C Goulding	1935-1956
R Farrar	1956-1965
M J Manning	1965-1994
A Brown	1994-

Secretaries

J Palmer	1867-1882
S H Lewis	1882-1888
W Bell	1888-1902
S H Lewis	1902-1916
E L Waddy	1917-1947
F H Farrar	1947-1959
L G Farrar	1959-1989
R A Davis	1989-

