

THE UNITING CHURCH IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

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NOVEMBER LECTURE

The Society is sponsoring a lecture in the Balaklava Uniting Church at 2 p.m. on Sunday, November 16.

The early churches in the Balaklava area, after its settlement in the 1860s, were almost all Bible Christian.

The present minister of the parish, Rev E. A. Curnow, has done an enormous amount of work in researching the origins and early days of these churches.

His account, The Spirit Comes: the story of the Bible Christian Churches on the Balaklava and Wakefield Plains, will form the basis of his address on November 16.

The book will be available for sale after the lecture.

Copies will also be available from the Historical Society, 19 Malvern Avenue, Malvern 5061 (telephone: Colin Watson 8271 8515).

At the 10.30 service at Balaklava, Dr Arnold Hunt will preach, taking as his subject the founding of the Bible Christians in Devon in 1815.

After a lunch, the Rev George Potter, secretary of the Society, will preside at the 2 p.m. meeting.

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FRANCIS SYMONDS & CHAIN OF PONDS

By

John L. Symonds

Entering Chain of Ponds after travelling up the Gorge Road, the Bible Christian chapel on the small hill above the village, built from local stone, would always have given an indication of the firmness and longevity of the faith of many people in the district. Its foundation stone was laid by Francis Symonds in 1857 and it was named the Zion Chapel by a vital member of the Bible Christian circuits of the time, Samuel Keen.

The connection with the Bible Christian movement dated back to about 1850 when Francis had invited the Bible Christians to begin work in the Chain of Ponds District. The invitation must have been sent close to the arrival of James Way as the first superintendent of the Bible Christian Mission to South Australia in November 1850. Francis indicated that the services would be held in his home Rosedale at Chain of Ponds.

Later with a larger congregation, some services were held in the Morning Star Inn in the village, a venue in which other important district meetings were held, including the formation of the local district council in 1857.

It is evident from articles in the Bible Christian and Methodist newspapers that the Zion Chapel became more than the church for the people of Chain of Ponds and the surrounding district. It was a place where folk could meet for good fellowship as well as for services befitting their strong religious beliefs.

The children were given a firm upbringing in a moral code that would stay with them for their whole life. The Sunday School did more for the children as it brought them into contact with others. Of course there was the annual Picnic Day; photographs of wagons loaded with happy children, heading out on that day still bring smiles to the face of this author.

By 1856, the congregation was well over 100. A chapel of their own was required, together with a Sunday School for their large families. The chapel records of Sunday School attendances and of burials in the chapel cemetery, now in the South Australian archives section of the Mortlock Library, came to the author from his uncle Claude Symonds, one of the last trustees of the Chapel.

The names in those records bear testimony to the lasting work done by its founders. Apart from the names of ministers who came to Chapel to spread the good word, there were surnames such as Caust, three of whom became Methodist ministers in South Australia, and the names of others including Symonds who became well known local preachers in various circuits around South Australia.

There were farmers, horticulturalists, carpenters, builders, wheelwrights and blacksmiths. Education of children was represented by the first teacher, Henry Hutchings; two well-loved ladies, Mrs and Miss Adey ran the

early school in Millbrook and raised William Adey who became headmaster of Adelaide High School and SA Director of Education.

The lady who became a long time headmistress of Millbrook School was Mrs Mary Belcher who was well-remembered as a fine teacher by many children, including those in the Symonds family.

Francis Symonds came to Chain of Ponds, aged 52 years, with his second wife Thomasine and eleven children in 1849, after leaving his well-established farm, Nankervis, in the St Ender Parish in Cornwall. The association of the Symonds family with Wesleyan Methodism and later with the Bible Christian movement in Cornwall goes back to John Wesley himself and his Cornwall visitations.

Francis Symonds' grandfather, also Francis, married Elizabeth Murlain (also spelt Morlen) whose father Richard had met John Wesley at St Columb Major. Richard joined a strong Wesleyan Queen's circuit based in St Austell, built a chapel in Trebudannon just south of St Columb Major, and set aside a fully equipped bedroom/study for visiting preachers. Attached to it was a stable for their horse and, if necessary, a buggy. All of this information was listed in his Will.

His brother John Murlin was much taken with Wesley's faith and discipline, became a travelling preacher in south west Cornwall, and was eventually ordained by John Wesley as one of the first 25 Methodist ministers.

In the years before his emigration and even with his Bible Christian connection, Francis himself still maintained an association with the St

Ender Parish Vestry as one of its church wardens, taking part variously as Waywarden for highway maintenance and as an Overseer of the Poor.

With this background, it is not surprising that he was also a prime mover in the formation of the Para Wirra District Council in 1857 and later its Chairman for many years, followed by his son John until his death in 1913.

The Zion Chapel was dismantled when the Chain of Ponds township finally succumbed, as did Millbrook much earlier, to the need for clean water from the Millbrook reservoir.

Wybert Symonds (youngest child of John and Amelia Symonds, headmaster, Methodist local preacher in many places) considered it would be a sad day for Chain of Ponds to disappear without recognition of hard work which had been put into the district by the pioneers.

He negotiated for the stonework of the old Chapel to be used for a Memorial Wall, 117 years after the Chapel was first founded - there it stands today, commemorating Chain of Ponds, the surrounding district and its many pioneers.



Dr John Symonds, a nuclear physicist living in Sydney, is the son of Mr Wybert Symonds, a noted educationist and Methodist layman of a generation ago. As a University student in the 1940s Dr Symonds boarded at Wesley College, Wayville.

SPICER COTTAGES TRUST

By
Jim Everett

February 1997 celebrated the Centenary of the formation of the Spicer Cottages Trust.

This Trust, which has for 100 years provided homes for widows of ministers and retired ministers of the Wesleyan, Methodist and Uniting Churches, could be described perhaps as one of the Church's "little known ministries".

The story began when the following letter was received from Mr Edward Spicer by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference meeting in Adelaide on 23/2/1897:

To the President of the Wesleyan Conference

Dear Sir - It has been in my mind for some time to make some provision in the way of homes: first, for ministers' widows; and second, for supernumerary ministers who may be in straitened circumstances. With the above object, I have purchased a site in East Adelaide, and intend at once to erect three suitable cottages, at a cost of £1,100 for the purpose already named.

I therefore request the Conference to appoint Trustees in whom the property may be vested, as the purchase of the land must be completed before March 2. I intend that the claims of widows shall be first considered; after that the claims of supernumerary ministers; also, that for the first ten years the claims of widows and ministers now in the Wesleyan Methodist Church should have precedence. This in view of possible Methodist union.

I desire that no charge for rent should be made upon the occupants of these houses beyond what is necessary for the payment of rates, taxes, and insurance.

If, therefore, the Conference will nominate Trustees, the land will be conveyed to them and the houses erected without delay.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

EDWARD SPICER.

Church union for the various Methodist groups was under discussion; hence Mr Spicer's preference for Wesleyans during the early years of the Trust.

Early Years

Edward Spicer (1817-1906) was a retired pastoralist, merchant who resided at Rose Park and was a member of the Kent Town Wesleyan Church. Following the acceptance of Mr Spicer's letter things moved quickly with the first Trustees appointed on 2nd March 1897, and building of the three houses in Fourth Avenue, St Peters commencing. These houses were opened on 4th August 1897 and occupied in that year.

In 1900 Mr Spicer built a further two houses for the Trust at Wattle Street, Malvern, and in 1902 two more at Victoria Street, Payneham. These properties, together with a cash endowment of £450, was the basis of the Trust which, in 1902, was valued at £4,000.

In addition to these gifts Mrs Emma Spicer, on her death in 1927, left the Trust £300.

Edward Spicer gave several other substantial gifts to his church which are still part of the ongoing life of the Uniting Church:

- in 1893 a sum of £1,000 to endow a scholarship at Prince Alfred College,
- in 1898, £1,000 for the building of the church at East Adelaide (St Peters), and
- in 1904 a further £500 towards the cost of the transepts on this same building.

Following Mr Spicer's death in 1906, the Trustees of the church at St Peters resolved:

To perpetuate the memory of our esteemed fellow trustee - the late Edward Spicer - through whose liberality we were enabled to erect the beautiful church at East Adelaide, this meeting of trustees unanimously decrees that this church shall henceforth be called Spicer Memorial Church.

With these eight properties, the Trustees continued over the next decades to provide for the needs of widows, retired ministers and ministers who had to retire early due to ill health.

New Trust

In 1934, the original Trust Deeds were incorporated into an Act of Parliament which constituted the Spicer Cottages Trust.

The location of the original properties were well sited so as to be convenient to transport and shopping. In 1897, the tram passed the houses in Fourth Ave. St Peters, and the corner shops provided for the needs of the tenants. Payneham Road trams served the

Payneham houses and Malvern was covered by Duthy Street trams.

Changes

In 1972, a house property at Labrina Street, Prospect, was left to the church in the terms of the Spicer Trust charter and was transferred to the Trust.

In 1977, the structural conditions of the Payneham house had deteriorated badly; so the Trustees decided to redevelop the site. Five 2-bedroom units were designed by Architect, Mr Malcolm Doley, and these were completed in 1979. These units increased the Trust's accommodation by three units to 11.

In August 1989, the Trustees undertook a review of all properties and, as a result, it was agreed to bring all properties up to a modern standard. Over the next eight years, properties at Prospect, St Peters and Malvern were sold, five new units being built on land purchased at Arthur Street, Magill.

Trustees

The original Trustees appointed in 1897 were:

The Revs. Henry T. Burgess, Robert S. Casely, J. Bunting Stephenson, Joseph Berry, Charles H. Ingamells, J. Cowperthwaite, B.A. Williams Reed, and W. Alfred Langsford; Messrs. E. Spicer, E.B. Cotton, A.E. Davey, T. Drew, F. Chapple, T. Bricknell, T. Rhodes, and G.S. Cotton.

Since that time, many well-known names have appeared on the list of Trustees: V. Roberts, W.G. Clarke, W.A. Dunn, F. Lade, J.H. Nield, E.H. Rhodes, J.W. Gillingham, W. Chinner, G.S. Reed, J.H. Hobbs, P.B. Carvosso, W.E. Collins, J.S. Clarke, S.G. Forth, G.B. Stribley, A.R. Medson, L.W. Rowe, W. Viney.

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The Trustees in this Centenary Year are:

Rev R.K. Waters (Chairman), Mrs Nancy Russell (Secretary), Revs. N.A. Norris, T.R. Hayward, Mrs M. Burns, Messrs R.A. Bowley, J.D. Everett, B. Headland, I. Ide. A number of these members have given

over 20 years of service to the Trust.

In this Centenary Year, the Trustees remain committed to the charter as laid out by Edward Spicer and will continue to provide comfortable, modern retirement accommodation for ministers and partners into the next century.



Successful History Walk

On Sunday afternoon, 28 September, about fifty people gathered for the Society's annual History Walk at the once-Methodist cemetery in Smith St. Walkerville. This is a small graveyard which twenty years ago was handed over to the Walkerville Council. It was opened by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1848.

After a brief introduction by the organiser, Arnold Hunt, the group visited the graves of George Cole, a pioneer Methodist stonemason, his son, George William Cole, and George Cole's son-in-law, George Hiles, an early pastoralist at Terowie.

Two great-great-grandchildren of George Cole spoke - Bill Lyne and Mona Hunt - giving an account of their ancestors and their families.

Arnold Hunt drew attention to the graves of two notable Wesleyan ministers, James Young Simpson

and Jabez Bunting Stephenson.

Val Canty spoke at the grave of Mary Lee, one of the principal campaigners for women's suffrage in the 1890s.

Then Don Pearce described the Pearce family, especially Constable Harry Pearce, who was murdered in 1881 while escorting a prisoner from Kingston.

Finally, Brian Jones described the lives of several Congregationalists interred in the cemetery - Sir Samuel Davenport, several members of the Cleland family and James Harrington.

The members of the fellowship at Walkerville provided afternoon tea at the close of the walk.

This was undoubtedly one of the most successful 'walks' which the Society has organised.



The Beginnings of the Warradale Park Congregational Church : 1952-54

By
Rod Peppiatt

"We the undersigned, confessing our faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, and now assembling for Divine Worship in the building newly erected at the corner of Lascelles and Struan Avenues, Warradale Park, do solemnly associate ourselves and unite together as a Christian Church."

These words began the Covenant statement with which the Warradale Park Congregational Church formally came into being, in a service of Holy Communion, on Wednesday December 15, 1954. The Covenant signatories, and those who would later join them, would use for worship their new church building, opened ten days earlier.

As the fortieth anniversary of the Covenant service approached, my aim was to examine the period leading up to that event. How and why did this congregation come together as a worshipping community? What was the social and religious setting in which the congregation developed? From where did it gain support? What was the significance of the Glenelg Congregational Church, out of which Warradale Park began?

Context

A congregation does not begin or exist in isolation, and it is important to look at the context in which Warradale Park began.

Firstly, it is helpful to look briefly at the context of Congregationalism in South Australia in the post World War II period. In 1954, Congregationalists in South Australia numbered 15,361, and

made up 1.96% of the state's total population. In 1901 there were 13,338 Congregationalists in South Australia (3.68%) and in 1937, 13,916 (2.15%). It can be seen that, though the numbers increased, Congregationalism's percentage of the total population declined in the first half of this century.

While noting the failure to keep pace with the growth of South Australia's population, Walter Phillips draws attention to the effect of post-war migration in the denominational affiliations of Christians, especially with the large numbers of European Roman Catholic migrants. This notwithstanding, Congregationalism in South Australia did not seem to be as strong as many would have wished.

In 1950, Dr E.S. Kiek wrote: "Congregationalism in South Australia, especially during the last fifty years, has not shown any progress commensurate with the work that has been put into it." He talked of the limited presence of Congregational Churches in rural and metropolitan areas, suggesting that the church had lost people to other denominations when moving to 'unoccupied' areas. He also recognised, however, Congregationalism's "creditable dislike" of competition with other Christian bodies as a factor stopping the development of causes in particular areas.

Acknowledgment was given to the role of the Parkin Mission in beginning and maintaining a great many of the

Congregational Churches of the period, a role which was not likely to be sustainable in the great church extension Dr Kiek saw as vital to the future of the denomination's mission. "Congregation-alists will have to develop a new con-sciousness of their obligation to home missions."

Writing twelve years later, Walter Phillips' view of the period 1950-61 suggests that Dr Kiek's words were heard. He talks of a period of revival. "Our churches have gradually awakened from the spiritual lethargy which hung over them in the inter-war period." To make his point, he talks of a period of theological revival among ministers, as well as life and ministry. This included a greater emphasis on the ministry of lay people, programmes of stewardship, lay-visitation, and a greater denominational organisation.

Warradale Park was one of six new churches opened in the period 1954-61, although Phillips does also note the closing of some causes, including the Halifax Street Mission. Generally, however, it seems that the situation within South Australian Congregationalism was one of hope and some sense of moving forward.

Having looked at the religious setting, what can be said of the social setting of the Warradale Park congregation?

Like many Adelaide suburbs in the early post-war period, Warradale Park and its surrounding area were influenced by the South Australian Housing Trust. In response to an acute housing shortage, created in part by migration, the return of servicemen, and the demand for low density affordable housing near industrial developments, the Housing Trust undertook massive building programmes in suburban Adelaide. The depth of the shortage can be shown in the use of converted Army camps at Springbank, Warradale and Northfield for the provision of emergency housing. [In

1950, 97 'flats' at Warradale Camp housed 250 adults and 250 children, often with major health problems such as polio.]

The period of growth in the Warradale Park area (1950-54) was prior to the massive expansion growth of southern suburbs around industry (such as Chrysler at Tonsley in 1957). It was, however, a period of marked growth nonetheless.

The area is remembered as one with large numbers of Housing Trust purchase homes (non-rental). It was necessary to have a child before consideration would be given to a couple. Availability of a home was often advised at short notice, leaving people to make a decision as to which house they wanted (usually out of 4-5 houses in each group) in the area. The size of a dwelling was limited by regulation, but homes were regarded as comfortable enough. A strong memory for residents of the period is the lack of facilities, such as fences, roads, footpaths, or shopping in the immediate district.

Significantly, for many, there was no church in the area. Given that cars were much less common than today, this was a problem for many families who would walk considerable distances to worship. The nearest Protestant churches to the area were in Brighton. If individuals or families wanted to attend a Congregational church, the closest was at Glenelg. This was an option for some when a bus service was introduced, but the need was felt for a church in the area.

The population of the area was mostly made up of young, Anglo-Australian families, with a wide variety of occupations represented. Many workers commuted to Adelaide by train. In terms of education, Warradale Primary School was opened in 1960 with 277 children.

From this, we have a picture of a young growing suburb, with many young families and few facilities. It is in this context that Warradale Park developed in the early 1950s.
(TO BE CONTINUED)