

**The Historical Society
Uniting Church in Australia
SA SYNOD**



The original Bible Christian Church and Manse,
Paxton Square,
amended date 1850

**NEWSLETTER No. 71
July, 1999**

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EDITORIAL

We focus on the Burra Uniting Church for the frontispiece of this edition in order to draw your attention to the December Celebration of the founding of the first Bible Christian Church in South Australia. The incumbent minister writes to introduce himself and to invite you all to the Service of Celebration.

Indeed there are many such celebrations in the mid-north. The Auburn township is celebrating 150 years since land was first taken up and there is a keynote Heritage Service on 31 October in the Uniting Church. More details of each will follow but mark your diaries now!

Contemporary preaching is often said not to mirror that of past memory. A series is commenced in this publication in which certain people have been asked to identify some of the 'great preachers' from their own contributing denomination to Union within the U.C.A. This is in order to preserve some historical data, and there is no intention to focus on current preachers in S.A. These are personal opinions only and not a comprehensive list of the great figures of the time. Others of you may have great memories also and may well like to respond.

We commence with the Rev'd Arthur Jackson, scholar, inspirational college lecturer and preacher, who is formerly of the Methodist Church. We will follow with the Rev'd Ian Tanner, formerly of the Presbyterian Church and likewise a man of scholarship and well known leader within the church. Both of these ministers are among my 'great preachers'. The memories of Rev'd Ken Leaver about some Congregational preachers, will be produced at a later time.

HISTORY WALK

Dudley Park Cemetery

Exeter Road, Dudley Park

Sunday, 12 September 1999

We meet at the main gate at 2 p.m. (when the gate will be opened and cars will be permitted to drive into the grounds). The tour will be conducted by the Manager, Mr John Jackson, and will cover graves of historical significance and also the new Children's Memorial. Afterwards we will proceed to Islington Church for afternoon tea. All welcome. Contact phone : Gaye Brown 8278 5370.

THE VIEW FROM BURRA!

Hello, I'm Rod Peppiatt and I live in Burra, a town with a great past and, I hope, a future to match! My family and I moved to Burra in January 1996 for me to begin my placement as Minister of the Word to the Burra Parish of the Uniting Church in Australia. For me, this was a 'culture shock', as I grew up in Hobart (150,000ish people) and then lived in Adelaide. To come to a town of 1200 and a district of just over 2000 was thus a very new experience! It has also been an incredibly rewarding one!

Burra is a place with a fascinating history, and it seems to us that a great many people have a 'Burra story', whether it be that "great-great-grandfather was the first stonemason", or "our ancestor's family lived in the dugouts along Burra Creek". I sometimes receive letters from people elsewhere in Australia, requesting information about marriages etc. that took place in Burra. In its 'boom years' of the 1840s and 1850s, the five townships that made up "The Burra" had a population of 5000, compared to Melbourne's 18,000!

The Church has been very much a part of Burra's history, whether it be the different strands of Methodism, Church of England (and Ireland, according to a marriage record I found recently), Roman Catholic, or Lutheran, as well as a few others that were part of life here.

One great story is of the rejoicing among Christians when it was realised that there were more churches than pubs in "The Burra"! Another story concerns the Primitive Methodist preacher, Rev John Gibbon Wright, of whom it was said: "On calm summer evenings, when the windows of the building were open, he could be heard nearly half a mile away."

I have a deep sense of privilege at being part of the heritage of God's ongoing story in this district, particularly through the ministry of the Uniting Church (now the Burra District Congregation, worshipping at Booborowie, Burra and Farrell Flat), through chaplaincy at the Burra Community School, and the many other different activities which are part of country church life.

Our congregation struggles with many of the things other rural communities are experiencing but we are often heartened by the things that God is doing among us and through us. We are small in number but continue to try to be a faithful community.

Cathryn and I, and our children Duncan (7) and Rhiannon (5), love living in Burra. It's a great (and safe) place to live as a family and there's always plenty of things to occupy our time – church activities, sport, school, CFS, friends, etc.

For those of you not fortunate enough to live here, you'll be very welcome when you visit. Why not come and see for yourself? We'd love to see you in particular on Sunday, 5 December, when we're celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the beginning of the first Bible Christian Church in South Australia (and the first outside England). The Community began in 1849, the building followed in 1850, and we want to honour this part of our own Uniting Church heritage. Planning for the day is well under way and we are looking forward to a great celebration!

I hope you are able to join with us then. Shalom.

Rod Peppiatt

METHODISM IN THE MIDLANDS PARISH

Part 2

By Rosemary Shearer

Land was donated to the Bible Christian Society by Mr Tom Penny for the erection of a church at **Marrabel**, the Foundation Stone of which was laid on 16 July, 1867 in the presence of 250 people. Among those who addressed the gathering were Rev Mr Hancock and Rev Mr Hill together with Messrs Oldham, Rock, Johnston and Dunstan. The church was duly opened in 1868 at a cost of £320.

Other Bible Christian chapels which existed in the district in those early days were situated at **Springfield** and **Butcher's Gap**, whilst a Presbyterian chapel, built by the settlers who had migrated from Scotland, was built at Ettrick on land donated by Mr William Kelly.

As early as 1863 the pioneers at **Finniss Point** erected their chapel on land donated by an early settler, Mr Gasmier. The church was served by ministers from the Kapunda Circuit, as was the church at **Giles Corner** which opened on 25 January 1868 at a cost of £360 on land donated by Mr Edward Furniss. Among those baptised at the inaugural service were E.A. Gray, A.N. Harris and Miss S.J. Pillefeant.

Original Trustees of the Giles Corner Church were Messrs E. Furniss, S. Harris, F. Gray, W. & T. Greig, R. & T. Kelly, T. Flaveel and H. & G. Inglis.

The Wesleyan Church at Riverton was erected in 1869 and was under the pastoral care of the Auburn Circuit, as were the churches at Woolsheds and Rhynie. The first resident minister was Rev James Haslam who officiated at the marriage of Francis Raggatt of Macaw Creek and Charlotte Kelly of Navan on 24 February, 1872.

The closing of the railway workshops in 1878 was a great blow to the Wesleyan and Bible Christian churches in Riverton as about 30 families left to seek employment elsewhere.

When the union of these two churches, together with the Primitive Methodist Church, took place in 1900 to form the Methodist Church of Australia, the Wesleyan Church had by far the greater congregation. However, as the Bible Christian Church was the more substantial building of the two, it was agreed that this would become the Methodist Church whilst the Wesleyan Chapel could be used as a Sunday School and Hall.

In 1932 a new building was erected, just north of the old Wesleyan Chapel, to house the Kindergarten and Junior Primary classes. Mr Harry David had the proud record of being Superintendent of the Sunday School for a total of 39 years and a photo and plaque in honour of his dedicated service were placed on the wall of the main hall (formerly the church).

Over many years the Sunday School has had a large enrolment but numbers declined until around 1978 when both the senior and junior classes ceased to exist. However, a small group of children is now meeting regularly under the guidance of Rev Ruth Threapleton.

In the early 1960's, when the congregation was faced with a decision to upgrade and refurbish their church or to sell and build adjacent to the Sunday School and

church hall, there were many who thought the task too costly and altogether too daunting. However, under the guidance and wise direction of Rev Vern Cracknell, the new church gradually took shape and was duly opened and dedicated on 27 September, 1964.

A copper sheathed spire is a focal point of the modern green tile roofed structure which today is known as the **Pioneer Uniting Church**.

The old Wesleyan Chapel has become a well-used hall for the various groups who hold their regular meetings there as well as being hired to small groups for a range of activities, whilst the Kindergarten building is now home to a very successful Op Shop, Coordinator of which is Mrs Carrie Twigden assisted by women from the various congregations within the parish.

The Wesleyan minister, Rev John Trevorrow, remained as minister of the newly amalgamated church until his successor, Rev J. Nicholls arrived in 1902.

Resident ministers since 1900 (*reading across*)

1902 J.J. Nicholls	1905 J. Watts	1909 W.H. Hanton
1913 W.H. Rose	1917 G. Hall	1920 E.T. Pryor
1924 F.L. Rooney	1927 R.H. Davidson	1929 A.E. Jones
1932 A.M. Davis	1935 D.C. Harris	1938 A.A. Gunter
1941 C.J. Davis	1944 J.H. Davies	1947 J.H. Allen
1950 R.G. Plowes	1954 N. Smith	1957 R.S. Wilkie
1959 L.L. Hunt	1963 V.J. Cracknell	1966 D.G. Mack
1970 E.T. Broomhead	1976 R. Haynes	1983 W. Reddin
1986 A. Biglow	1989 Dr. R. Wallace	1994 R. Threapleton

Compiled by Mrs Alma Thomas, a grand daughter of Rev John Gillingham, the Wesleyan minister who served the district from 1897-1899. The information has been expanded on and is now available at the History Centre, Riverton, where numerous records and photos regarding Methodism in the Midlands Parish are available for perusal.

Among the many dedicated ministers, who have spent one or more terms in the district, was the Rev Bob Davidson, who once said that the best tools a country minister could have were a solid faith and a good bicycle. The first is irreplaceable and, whilst a car may have its advantages, he believed you met more people when you rode a bike.

Mr Davidson completed his probationary period at Broken Hill South where he spent a lot of time with the miners. His first appointment was as a Home Missioner at Cockburn and Silverton before joining the 11th Field Ambulance Division during World War I. On his return to Australia, he took up an appointment as Assistant to the Rev W.J. Mortimer, spending much of his time raising funds for the establishment of the Memorial Hospital.

For many years following his term in Adelaide, he served in various country areas including Pt Augusta, Pinnaroo, Riverton and Balaklava. In 1937 he was appointed Secretary and Chaplain to the Memorial Hospital.

In an interview several years ago, Mr Davidson conceded that "preaching has to be down to earth and affecting all of life. There is really no religious section and no practical section – it is all intermingled."

GREAT PREACHERS I HAVE KNOWN

By
Arthur Jackson

By "great preachers", I mean preachers who most impressed me and have stayed in my memory over the years.

The first was **Dr Henry Howard**. In the early years of this century, he was the outstanding Methodist preacher in this State. As a boy I often heard my parents speak of the days when Henry Howard was at Pirie Street and of how great he was.

When I was in primary school (I cannot remember the exact year), he returned for a visit to Adelaide from the United State of America where he had been ministering. My grandfather took me to hear him one Sunday morning at Malvern. It was made plain to me that this was going to be something very special. I still recall the full church, the eloquent way he announced the first hymn, "The God of Abraham praise", and that he preached on "Work out your own salvation". I do not remember anything he said, but I was most impressed by the way he said it.

Then there was **Dr William Shaw**. He was another man with a great reputation. He was a supernumerary by the time I started taking notice of what happened in church but I well remember three occasions when he took the morning service at Parkside Methodist, our family church.

He came down from the pulpit and preached from the communion rail (there were no microphones in those days). Again there is the memory of a very eloquent and fervent man. I remember the first sermon – "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

In my early teens, when the Gospel was just beginning to arrest my attention, I was especially impressed and helped by two successive ministers at Parkside. In each case, it was their preaching which first grasped my attention and made me begin to take my first steps in discipleship.

The first was **Alfred J. Finch**. This was from 1933-35. Finch did not have any degrees nor was he one of the big men in the Conference but he is still in my mind as one of the best preachers. He made me feel how exciting Bible texts could be.

He invited several of us young men (I was only 15 at the time) to be two preaching bands. We took services together in the circuit and had many a memorable evening in Finch's study learning about biblical exposition.

He was succeeded by **Harry Lyons** (1935-38). He was an unusual man. His father was Jewish and his mother Catholic, and as a young man Lyons was very hostile to religion. But he was suddenly converted by a vision of Jesus speaking to him.

His preaching was marked by great evangelical fervour which deepened in me the faith God kindled through A.J. Finch. Harry Lyons died suddenly on Good Friday 1938, and that was the event which precipitated me into candidature for the ministry. I felt someone had to carry on the work.

During my student years (1939-43) the outstanding preacher in Adelaide, according to some of us in College, was not a Methodist but one who belonged to another segment of our Uniting Church tradition. He was **J.R. Blanchard** of Scots Church, Adelaide. Today, on reflection, I still think he was one of the two best preachers I have heard.

He preached with great clarity so that one could go home and repeat the outline. He also knew how to apply Scripture to everyday life. He did much to influence my own approach to sermon preparation and delivery.

The other preacher who most impressed me came in 1960 to an ecumenical conference in Melbourne to which I was a Methodist delegate. He was **Lesslie Newbigin**, of the Church of South India. The clarity with which he expounded and applied the gospel to the current world situation was memorable. I have not heard his equal since then and cherish those of his writings which I have in my library.

As I reflect on my own years of active ministry (1945-89), the two preachers of our church who most impressed and influenced me were **Erwin Vogt** and **Frank Hambly**.

Just after the war Erwin became Crusade Director in S.A. and conducted missions in churches all over the State. There was a vigour and warmth about his preaching and his sane evangelism gave me new vision and confidence in those early years of my ministry. I realised that "evangelical" did not mean "fundamentalist" and that the whole church could be evangelical. More than anyone else his preaching and influence shaped my early ministry.

Frank Hambly was different and influenced me in other ways. I was greatly influenced by Anglican liturgy and felt rather uncertain about Methodism (though I mainly kept quiet about that). Frank's worship leadership showed me that the elements in worship which I desired were really a part of the whole Methodist heritage. I had a great desire to be a scholar theologically but didn't quite see how that could fit into parish ministry. Frank was probably the outstanding scholar in our Conference and I saw how scholarship could be related to effective pulpit ministry.

There have been others, too, whose preaching ministries I have appreciated and respected. But these are the ones who are truly the most memorable for me.



An extensive appreciation of Arthur Jackson's ministry and life has been published in the Festschrift Evangelism and Preaching in Secular Australia, edited by Dean Drayton and Graham Twelftree (JBCE, 1989). Briefly, following ordination in 1945, Arthur has served as an Army chaplain, been appointed by the S.A. Methodist Conference to Wallaroo, Naracoorte, Malvern, Plympton, Lincoln College (where he was Vice-Master and Chaplain to Methodist students at the University of Adelaide), Westbourne Park, Brighton and Blackwood. He has served as President of the S. A. Methodist Conference. He has been a some-time part-time lecturer at Wesley College and later Parkin-Wesley College, in Greek, New Testament, Preaching and Theology and has lectured in Theology at the Bible College of S.A. Arthur has been a sought-after speaker at Conferences and has a considerable reputation as an outstanding preacher himself. Ed.

DIARY of Forthcoming Events

- September 12 **HISTORY WALK** - Tour of Dudley Park Cemetery
(details page 2)
- October 1-4 Organ History Trust of Australia - 22nd Annual Conference
"Town and Gown" - Adelaide, Tanunda and other venues
- November 12 7.30 p.m. **A.G.M. of the Society**, followed by
8.00 p.m. **HISTORICAL SOCIETY LECTURE** at Clayton-
Wesley Church Hall (top of The Parade, Norwood)
**Rev Jim Winn "History of Tertiary Chaplaincy
in S.A."**
- December 5 11 a.m. Burra Uniting Church (Paxton Square)
**Anniversary Service : Founding of the first
Bible Christian Church in S.A.** Preacher:
The Moderator - Rev Don Catford. *Lunch to follow.*
2 p.m. Meeting, including Address on The Bible Christians
by Rev Donald Haydon. *Afternoon tea to follow.*
- March 26 2.30 p.m. Kent Town U.C.A. Anniversary of the Signing
2000 of the Methodist Deed of Union. Featuring: Adelaide
Harmony Choir with conductor John Hall.

Tours of Adelaide College of Divinity Campus

We remind our readers that we are in the midst of a history-making epoch in the establishment of a common campus for theological education between three denominations (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Uniting) at Brooklyn Park. Groups are welcome to visit and will be taken on tour by arrangement with Parkin-Wesley College. Phone 8416 8420.

Officers of the Society

President : Mrs Val Canty (8293 3980) Vice-President : Rev Walter Stafford
Secretary : Rev George Potter (8382 5658) Treasurer : Rev George Wright
Editor of Newsletter : Rev Ruth Threapleton