

REMINISCENCES AROUND THE HISTORY OF ST MARKS

MEMORIAL CONCERT, 17TH JUNE 2018

SECTION ONE: EARLY ALBION AND THE FIRST CHURCH.

Good afternoon and welcome one and all. To add to the cultural feast of the afternoon I am going to add a sprinkle of history. These grains are gathered from the National Library's "Trove" website, Alex Kidd's history, the Golden Jubilee booklet and a selection of books and websites.

St Marks, like any human endeavour, is but a small blip on the ongoing river of time, but it is our blip and here is how it came to float upon those great waters. Aeons of upheaval and volcanic activity finally settled down to leave a fertile coastal plain by a shallow bay. The land around where Brisbane would appear was thickly forested and filled with fauna of all sorts that supported many tribes of indigenous people along the coast. The Turrbal people who lived here indulged in great corroborees and formalised skirmishes with neighbouring tribes. We are told there was an important Aboriginal camping ground near Breakfast Creek that was one of the major sources from which local Aboriginal people supplied the Moreton Bay colony with fish until it was broken up by police raids in the 1860s.

Mr Oxley made the Brisbane river known to the whitefella in 1823, and colonisation commenced with a convict settlement at Redcliffe, moved to "Edenglassie" the following year. The vicious Governor Logan was appointed of the now named Moreton Bay colony which by 1830 housed 1000 convicts and 100 soldiers. The Petrie family arrived in 1837 with the German mission established shortly thereafter; free settlement commenced in 1842. By 1850 possibly the first white settler in this area was "Old Adam", growing vegetables down near the 5-ways as locals hunted along the creeks and swamps. Heavy floods, including the great flood of 1841, tended to sweep away bridges over Breakfast Creek, keeping the area isolated until the first solid timber bridge in 1858. Brisbane became a municipality and Queensland a state in 1859, with a population of about 25,000.

In the early 1860's a little hotel across the creek called itself The Albion after the local white stone, and our story begins to focus on the local area. John Petrie came after the stone and opened his quarry up on Bartley's Hill, followed by brickworks down on Oriel Road. Sawmills processed the forests to extinction, one of them being adjacent the site of the future St Marks. Land was initially divided into large lots, Patrick Mayne keeping his cattle south of the creek and Mr Thomas Hudson owning a large tract known as Hudson's Paddock south of the present Lissom Grove Road. Mr. Hudson was coachman to Mr. Justice Lutwyche, the first Chief Justice of Queensland.

In the very early days the pioneers of the Albion district used to walk all the way to Trinity Church, in the original huge Fortitude Valley parish. In 1882 Bishop Hale separated Lutwyche, Albion and Hamilton districts from Fortitude Valley, and the new districts enjoyed a high level of autonomy for some time.

In early December 1887 in a SGM at St Andrews, Lutwyche the Hon Holmes a Court and Captain Whish moved that a site at Bridge St be purchased and steps taken to erect a church. Prior to Christmas the site at the corner of Bridge (now Hudson) Road and Moore Street was purchased off Mr Clothier with Holmes a Court and Andrew Petrie as trustees and joint tenants. Events moved apace and by the end of May 1888, at an overall cost of £850, a new timber church for 200 people was dedicated by Assistant Bishop Dawes. It is this initial housing of the congregation in a church of their own 130 years ago that we celebrate this year and particularly today. Mr Saunders was appointed organist at £20 and a verger at £12 per annum respectively.

The Reverend E C Osborne became rector of Lutwyche in February 1890, and for a while St Marks must have enjoyed an equal status to St Andrews, though historical rivalries played out in various ways. The iron bridge over Breakfast Creek opened in 1889, and remained in use for almost 70 years.

SECTION TWO: BRIEFLY IN ALBION, THEN UP THE HILL

The year 1892 saw the opening of the railway which sadly formed quite a barrier to the western parts of the parish, and later a flood which covered all of lower Albion and Windsor Park.

The St Marks AGM in April 1895 reported an improvement in finances with a total of £441 in income, with a hearty vote of thanks to the ladies of the parish who had worked so hard to bring this about. It should be noted that apart from social events and craft produce the ladies also went around as collectors prior to this becoming acceptable in services much later. Eagle Junction State School opened in the same year.

By 1898 Bishop Webber was agitating for the church to be moved and by the end of the year the Vestry Committee voted 39 to 14 to make the move up to the Maida Hill Estate on the Old Sandgate Road. Finding a site acceptable in both aspect and price proved difficult, with the irascible Webber grumbling that he wished his flock would "look ahead like the RC's"! Finally this block was agreed and transferred in January 1899. Tenders were invited and that from Smith and Bywater for £126 to move and paint accepted. The addition of the new chancel cost another £114. The old land having been sold at Easter to Dr Clowes and the move agreed, the church move up the hill commenced in May. Services were held in the Albion Public Hall during this time.

On the 3rd of August 1899 the re-established timber church was opened with a full choral evensong attended by the Bishop of Brisbane. He dished out congratulations to all involved. Gas had now been fitted and the painting undertaken by Hayward and Hancock. A very enjoyable social gathering to commemorate the completion of the work was held in the Albion Public Hall on 7th August, with nearly 300 parishioners present. The site was fenced and gated by the end of the year.

A year later special festival services were held to commemorate the reopening of the church. The result of the year's work on the new site was *"most gratifying to the church offices, and shows that the removal of the church was a wise step to take. The congregations have so greatly increased that the annual expenditure has been much more than met by the increased income."* This rosy financial situation was far from the norm. The Sandgate Road tramway opened the following year.

By 1909 Rev Osborne was lobbying for a brick church but was outvoted, and instead a new hall and Sunday school were agreed to at a cost of £584. This was dedicated by Bishop Donaldson in November 1910. St Margaret's, under the guidance of the Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent, moved up on to Albion Hill occupying "Donatello", built for Patrick Durack in the 1880's. It was until recently the Community House for the Sisters. As the clouds of war gathered the open tennis club was reformed with limited membership, much against their will. The ever industrious parish ladies now threw themselves into the war effort, at the same time as the Sunday school thrived and numbers swelled.

The harsh realities of war were forever linked to St Marks when the Hockin family donated the splendid central stained glass window to commemorate their slain son Lieutenant Jack, killed in action in July 1916. A year after that installation the two side panels representing St Mary and St John were presented, one by Mrs Blume and the other by friends and members of the congregation. Rev Osborne presided over the large service, attended by the band of the 1st Military District. A new organ, also a memorial to the fallen, was dedicated in 1919.

SECTION 3: THROUGH TO THE PRESENT

In 1920 the redoubtable Rev E C Osborne was promoted to Archdeacon of the Toowoomba to Wide Bay districts after 30 years in the parish, and his son A H Osborne took over. Bishop Donaldson had to handle bitter arguments about the moving of St Colomb's, but held his ground. In 1921 a parishioner gifted electric lighting to St Marks, and a year later a memorial screen to the late Miss Braithwaite, superintendent of the kindergarten school was dedicated. Having finally climbed out of debt by 1922, the church proceeded to extend the hall in 1924, possibly in time for a most successful annual fete in October. We are told that with Mr Petrie as MC *"The stallholders found little difficulty in disposing of their attractive and moderately priced wares, and an additional attraction was provided in the hall, where Mr. V. J. Millar, gymnasium instructor, gave a clever display of escaping from a straight jacket. Music was supplied by the Naval Band, adding much to the afternoon's enjoyment. In the evening the fete was again in full swing and a dance, organised by the senior gymnasium class, was an unqualified success."* I would suggest that we have a worthy successor to those glory days in the Annual Craft Show organised by Bronwyn Barber.

An important milestone was the forming of St Marks parish in 1925, with Rev C J Armstrong becoming our first rector. Initially residing in a rented house at the corner of Bayview Terrace and Bonney Avenue, Armstrong personally acquired 56 Bellevue Terrace in 1928 and this Queenslander remained in use for 44 years. Clayfield College opened in 1931 and it was not until 1935 that parish boundaries were finally agreed.

The effects of the Great Depression became evident in the form of unpaid rates to the city council, a fact which was excoriated by a Mr Herring at Synod in 1935. Rev Armstrong's passionate response ran thus: *"In four years, as a result of the depression and distress, the names of 146 parishioners have been removed from the parish list. Many parishioners have been two or three years out of work. I cannot go to these people and tell them we cannot pay the rates on the parish when they are losing their homes and are in the midst of a great struggle to obtain the very necessities of life. We will do our duty, God helping us, when our people are able to do it!"* We need the likes of Armstrong on the Royal Banking Commission! In 1939 the Ladies Guild was formally established.

Sadly Armstrong dies in 1938 to be replaced by Rev Alan Thomson, who in 1942 leaves to be chaplain to the Australian Military Forces. After a brief interregnum local boy Charles Hogan became our third Rector in 1944, to remain in the position for 27 years. Ideas for a new church were discussed in 1948 and again in 1951, but lack of finances scuttled both bids. The Boys Club closed in 1952, and in 1958 the new and still extant concrete bridge over Breakfast Creek opened.

In 1964 Les Morwood dismantled the old timber church free of charge, with parts making their way in many directions. Building material went to two Methodist churches in Goondoowindi, and the pews for instance went to the Uniting Church in Wandoan. In a remarkable effort Wardens Fred Reed and Eric Roush with treasurers Sid Davis and Mel Tipper and assisted by "Cam" Weller and Eric Morwood managed to organise the building and paying off of our new church in only seven years, at an overall cost of \$64,000. Designed by Conrad and Gargett and built by Mr Gamble, building commenced in 1963 and the church was dedicated on 26th April 1964, 75 years after the original church in Albion.

Shortly after the consecration of the new church Rev Hogan resigned in 1971 to be replaced by Des Williams, our first married Rector. He moved in to the brand-new rectory in 1972. Brisbane suffered major flooding in 1974. In 1977 the old Whitehouse organ was moved after 58 years of use on to St Mary's in Bardon. The Rev Williams resigned in 1991, succeeded by Phil Crook who guided the parish until 2008. Hadge Hughes was briefly at the helm before Murray Harvey took over as our seventh rector in 2011. He is now about to move on as our first Rector to be promoted directly to a Bishopric!

Whilst there have been periods of relative stability we must accept that the only constant in history is change, and this appears, to us at least, to be accelerating. If we are to ride the wave rather than be swamped by it we are called upon to rise up and be the light on the hill; to engage and to plan, to worship and rejoice, to become again the vital kernel of the community that the people of Christ can be. We should not let financial constraints or political correctness scare us into hiding our lamp under the bushel, for that is accelerating the path to oblivion. Let us celebrate the many decades of service and determination that have brought us to this point and carry his word proudly into the future. Thank you and God bless you all.