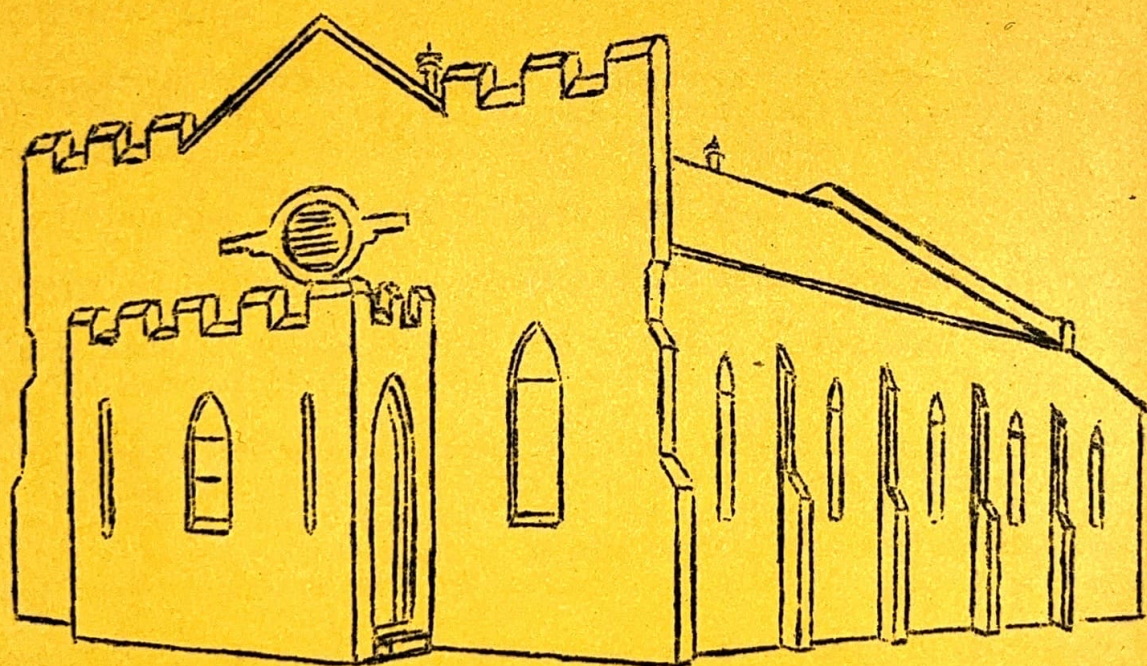


# 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



## BRIEF HISTORY



A Brief History of:      Church of Christ, Rockdale.      25th. Februa y 1973.

This summary was prepared for the 50th. Anniversary of the first Chapel. It was prepared for that occasion because the 24th & 25th. of February 1973 fell on the same days as it had 50 years ago. This is a brief summary. Many names and events may not be mentioned. Nevertheless it is with thanksgiving to God we celebrate this occasion and give thanks to all who have contributed to what the Church of Christ is in Rockdale to-day.

In this brief history of the Church of Christ at Rockdale, we go back to the year 1887 when Brother and Sister Mc.Gregor set up the Lord's Table in their home in Gladstone Street, Bexley. This couple had been welcomed in to the church meeting in Sydney, two years earlier.

Two or three other members met with them, and later they decided to move to the Temperance Hall, George Street, Rockdale. The Gospel Service and Bible School continued there for seventeen years.

In 1899 returns were sent to Conference showing a membership of 15. The following years saw the work go ahead, and then drop back, the membership rising to 38 then dropping to 28 in 1899.

Meeting with the Mc.Gregors over this period were: Mr. Mrs. Murchison, M. Mrs. Black, Mrs. Mc.Intosh, Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Argent, Mr. Mrs. Farser, Mr. Mrs. Males, Mr. Mrs. Beatie, Mrs. W. Gatley and Mr. Mrs. A. Gatley.

Bro. and Sister Mc.Gregor moved to Eastwood in 1904.

Mrs. Henry and her brother were the first Bible School scholars.

Little is known of the Church from 1899 till 1911. From 1911 to 1916 the membership averaged 13.

Bro. H.G. Payne went to minister to the Church at Hurstville in 1916, being the first full-time minister there. As there was no Church of Christ between Hurstville and Cook's River, except for the little band meeting at Rockdale, Bro. Payne obtained the names and addresses of as many members in the district as he could. He visited these people and arranged meetings from which the present work dates.

In November 1918 there were only 52 members and as a result of 36 members moving into the district the Church grew to 88 in 1919. Bro. Payne called a meeting of the Church on the 25th. January 1918 with Bro. C. Rush as Chairman, but owing to a number of members being unable to be present, the meeting was adjourned until 4th. February when a good number were present. Bro. H. G. Harward was elected Chairman of the meeting.

The first entry in the Church Minute Book read: "During the last few weeks of 1917 endeavour has been made with the assistance of Bro. H.G. Payne of Hurstville to interest members of the Church of Christ resident in the district, in the local work!"

As a result of the meeting on February 4th. it was resolved that the Secretary, Bro C. Duff, should compile a list of members, that a Bible School be inaugurated on 10th. February 1918, that a Gospel Service be held on the evening of the same day and succeeding Lord's Days, speakers to be provided for Sunday mornings and that a



On Sunday 10th. February, Bro. C.C.S. Rush offered to preach till Easter, which offer was greatly accepted.

The position of the Church was now much improved, and the Home Missionary Committee helped organise the work, and by financial aid made it possible for Bro. Stuart Stevens, who was ministering at Enmore, to take the position of the first full-time minister at Rockdale. On April 8th. 1918 Bro. and Sis. Stevens were welcomed to Rockdale. The first Quaterly meeting was held in the Temperance Hall, 29th April. Those present were: Sisters Mc.Intosh, Gatley, Miss Burt, Misses G. V. and E. Waring, Bren. Black, D.M. Duff, G. Partridge, W.T. Coles, S. Stevens, F.T. Willis and C.F. Duff.

At this meeting it was decided to change the place of meeting from the Temperance Hall to the School of Arts, Rockdale, by 5th. May 1918. A Church paper was to be printed known as "Glad Tidings" and a committee was set up to select land for a Church home. On June 1st. 1918 the first copy of "Glad Tidings" came off the press. We have a copy of that first issue on our Church files. An extraordinary business meeting was called to discuss the recommendation that a property be purchased in Frederick Street, Rockdale, for our Church home. "It was proposed then by Bro, W. T. Coles, seconded by Sis. Golby, that we purchase the property known as "Wakefield School and Kindergarten" situated in Frederick Street, Rockdale for One Thousand Pounds".

The first Annual Meeting revealed that the Church had grown by 38 members. The Bible School had been started and Gospel Services commenced. A full-time minister in the person of Mr. Stuart Stevens had taken up the work, the Church paper "Glad Tidings" was being issued free, at 1000 copies, a regular point of distribution being Rockdale Railway Station, and land had been purchased for the prospective Church home.

In 1919 the Chandler-Clay party held a mission, and though forced to close early because of the pneumonic influenza epidemic, the Conference Report from Rockdale for 1919 read: "Stuart Stevens Preacher, fine block of land secured, 45 additions, 100 added to the Bible School, Church building and self-supporting Church quite possible this year."

At a meeting on April 6th. 1919 the Church decided to move to the Rockdale Town Hall, rental, 25 Shillings a week. This would allow for three meetings on Sunday. This meeting co-incided with the closing of the Chandler-Clay mission as a result of the previously mentioned pneumatic influenza epidemic.

Later the Church decided to sell the cottage on a 50' frontage to Frederick Street, at not less than Seven Hundred and Fifty Pounds. The amount received was to be used as a deposit on a Chapel. As a result of the sale, Seven Hundred and Fifty Pounds was received, and it was then agreed to sell the remainder of the property in Frederick Street as it was learned that two blocks of ground in Bryant Street, each 40'X 125' were available for the purchase price of 1 Allotment at Six Pounds Ten Shillings a foot and the other at Five Pounds Five Shillings per foot. This is the property where our Church buildings now stand.



Bro. Stuart Stevens relinquished the work in 1921 after serving the Church faithfully for three years.

Bro. J. Clydesdale commenced his ministry on 1st. February 1922.

In July 1922 plans and specifications for the new Chapel were obtained, and in the following September the tender of Mr. Burgin was accepted, his price being One Thousand and Ninety Five Pounds. Bren. W.T. Coles, W.D. Lang and E.V. Sainty were appointed Trustees.

Saturday, 24th. February 1923 was a red letter day for the Church, for on that day the Chapel was officially opened by Bro. J. Crawford Conference Vice President. In the afternoon an appeal was launched by Bro. C.C.S. Rush and as a result Four Hundred and Sixty Pounds was obtained in cash and promises.

At night a splendid meeting under the Chairmanship of Bro. H.G. Harward was held when the following Sister Churches gave greetings: Erskinville, Hurstville, Marrickville, City Temple and Banksia Free Church.

The following Officers and Deacons were appointed at that time: Minister: Mr. J. Clydesdale. Secretary: Mr. E.V. Sainty. Assistant Secretary: Mr. C. Waring. Treasurer: Mr. W.T. Coles. Assistant Treasurer: Mr. A. Coomber. Deacons: Bren. R. Golby, N. Goyen. W.D. Lang and G. Partridge.

In December it was arranged for a tent mission led by Bro. H.G. Harward to commence in January 1924. The Church had another mission with Baker and Clay in August 1925.

Bro. J. Clydesdale resigned from the ministry at Rockdale in January 1927 after serving the Church for five and a half years.

In April, Bro. F.E. Alcorn of Queensland was invited to Rockdale. He accepted the invitation, and commenced in Rockdale in August 1927. It was during his ministry that the Church "decided to purchase a bicycle for the Evangelist to do his visitation". While Bro. Alcorn was at Rockdale another mission was held, the missioner on this occasion being Bro. J. Whelan of Chatswood Church.

Bro. E.V. Sainty resigned as Secretary in 1928 and Bro. C. Sorrell was elected to fill the vacancy.

In May 1932, Rockdale offered to help the Church at Bexley North by allowing Bro. Alcorn to go to Bexley North one week each month including the Sunday.

Bro. and Sis. F.E. Alcorn were with the Church at Rockdale for 8 years.

A year passed before the Church was able to secure another Minister. Bro. H. Priestly who was serving the Church at Bankstown was invited at a salary of Four Pounds per week. Salary to be reviewed each year in the light of the financial position of the Church. During this twelve months interim the Church was served by Bren. C. Everett of Mosman and A.L. Carter of Rockdale. Bro. H. Priestly commenced his ministry with the Church at Rockdale in 1936. Bro. Priestly spared not himself in his efforts to preach the Gospel, until his sudden and unexpected death cut short his stay. "He was not, for God took him".



On the death of Bro. H. Priestley, Bro. A.L. Carter was approached to see if he would help Rockdale with speaking appointments. This he did gladly, and as a result of this ministry many souls were added to the Church. Bro. Carter continued this ministry from June 1939 to January 1940 and in this time rendered a splendid ministry.

Bro. A.N. Hinrichsen arrived from New Zealand in January 1940 to lead the Church at Rockdale. In common with many other Churches, the Rockdale Church had suffered financially and in membership because of the depression and it was good to see the interest growing and the general tone of the Church improve.

The work continued steadily during these years and when the Church had a mission with E.C. Hinrichsen and V.B. Morris in 1940, there were added to the Church more than 100 members while the offering exceeded Three Hundred and Twenty Pounds. The Mission Thank Offering in 1941 finally totalled Eight Hundred and Eighty Pounds. It was decided in 1940 to raise all Brotherhood finance by means of the Duplex envelopes and it is pleasing to note that the response has been most gratifying, this was revealed in the financial statement for 1940, the year showed total receipts in excess of Nine Hundred Pounds.

Bro. and Sis. A.N. Hinrichsen served the Church from 1940 to 1944. Average attendance at the Lord's Table reached 150. At this time the value of the Church property was in excess of Two Thousand Pounds.

Bro. and Sis. George Burns then came to Rockdale from Mosman to the ministry of the Church here. The ministry commenced in 1944 and concluded in 1948. It was during their ministry that a Bible Class Room was added to the Church building, and the Manse in Oswell Street was purchased. At the conclusion of a very helpful ministry at Rockdale, Bro. and Sis. Burns returned to the Mosman Church who had invited them to return.

In February 1948 Bro. and Sis. G.J. Andrews came from the Church at Ballarat, Victoria. This added to the strengthening of the Church in life and witness. They were with us here till 1954.

August 14th. 1954 Bro. and Sis. A.B. Clark then came to minister at Rockdale. It was during this ministry that plans were made for the extension of the building program of the Church including the erection of the new Chapel on the spare block of ground. Bro. and Sis. A.B. Clark concluded their ministry with Rockdale in March 1959.

Bro. Denby Holmes, a student at the Churches of Christ Bible College Woolwich came in March 1959 and served faithfully till August 1959. It was during this time that the new Chapel was erected, and opened on 8th. August 1959. This also marked the commencement of the ministry of Dr. and Mrs. C.J. Mackenzie who served the Church till 1970. During this ministry the first Chapel had the old Kindergarten Hall and kitchen demolished and the new extension built including the new kitchen and large Hall providing room for Kindergarten and other activities.

So it is with gratitude in our hearts for all the pioneers whose names and actions may not be recorded here, as well as those who do, that we present this brief survey. Some records are not available having been lost in the process of time. So we close and give God thanks for the wonder of the fellowship of His Church.

To God be all the glory, Great things He hath done.

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Through the years....several of the young people from the Church at Rockdale went to Bible College and then in to the wider service of the Church where they have served with distinction.

In 1931, R. M. Wilson became the first member to enter Bible College, at Glen Iris, Victoria, to train for the ministry, Roy is teaching to-day.

E. W. Roffey and C. H. J. Wright followed, to the same College. Eddie, until recently Federal Secretary of Churches of Christ, ministers to the church at Blackburn Victoria and in 1974 moves to Adelaide, to become the Conference Secretary of our churches in South Australia. Jim Wright at present minister to the church at Canberrs, moves soon to Adelaide to a church there.

G. Brown, A. Morris, J. Henderson, W. Howard, D. Oldfield, R. Hawkins have all graduated from Woolwich during the years. G. Brown was in fact the first student to receive a Diploma from Woolwich College! Glen has for many years served in Chaplaincy work with the R.A.A.F. At present he is stationed at Darwin.

Alan Morris, at present in South Australia soon moves to Western Australia to serve with the Churches of Christ Social Service Department.

Today, Jim Henderson holds a very responsible position in The Social Service Department in the State of N. S. W.

Bill Howard ministers to the church at Taree and serves part time in Chaplaincy to the Army.

David Oldfield serves the Church at Hornsby.

Ray Hawkins, has been engaged in a pioneering work in establishing the church at Orange.

As Jenny Smith, (now Mrs. Peter Elliott) Jenny did a Missionary Course at Woolwich prior to going to our New Guinea mission work till ill health forced her retirement. Mr. Mrs. Peter Elliott still worship at Rockdale.

So, Rockdale has reached out through the years and supplied valued servants for the Lord's work.



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