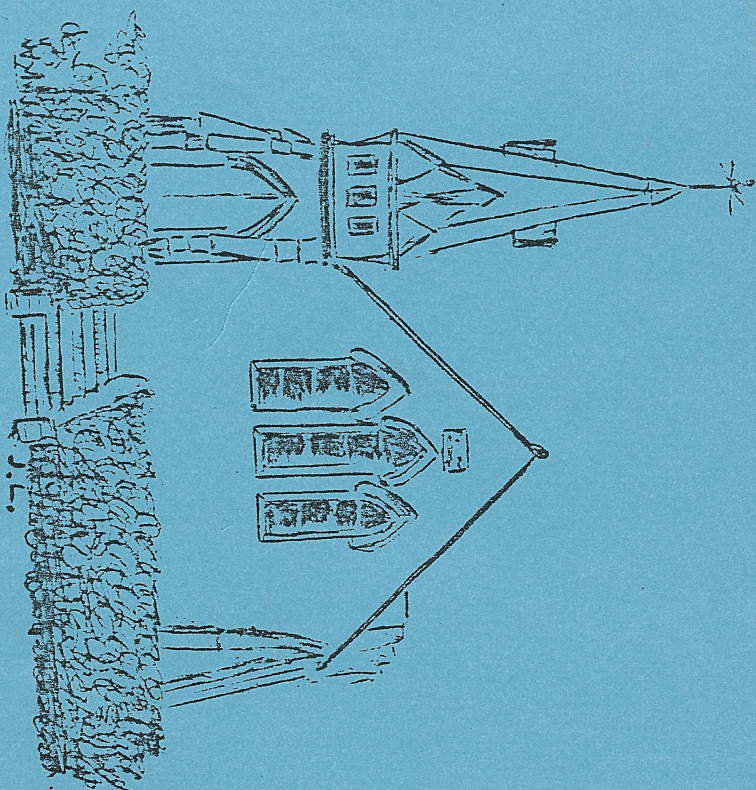


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BUN IN YONG

1860

1985

"Strength and Beauty are in Thy Sanctuary"

BUNINYONG

1860

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This booklet is a copy of Buninyong Presbyterian Church 'A Brief Historical Survey of the Erection and Opening of the Church Building, 1860.', compiled by the late Rev. K.K. Luck in 1960 to commemorate the Centenary of the Church Building.

In 1970 the Congregations of the Buninyong Methodist Church and the Buninyong Presbyterian Church combined to form the Buninyong United Church, using the Presbyterian site for worship. The Methodist site was sold and became a private home.

When the Uniting Church in Australia was formed in 1977, the Buninyong Congregation became a part of the Ballarat South Parish as the Buninyong Uniting Church, our Present Minister being Rev G. Hawkins.

With the Grace of God, we trust and pray that the Buninyong Uniting Church will stand for many more years as a Sanctuary where young and old may hear the Word of God, and go forth rejoicing in his Presence and Power.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BUNINYONG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The pioneer minister, Rev. Thomas Hastie, commenced his ministry in Buninyong in March, 1847, being the first minister of any denomination to be settled in the wide area around Ballarat. At first services were held in a small wooden building near the residence of Mr. Gollan MacDonald but this was inadequate for the needs of the growing congregation and steps were taken for the erection of the present fine sanctuary. Of the first church, Mr. Robert Gillespie has this to say: "*The traveller who descended the slope of the hill twelve years ago remarked on his left, as he looked down into the beautiful and almost tenantless valley below him, the neat wooden building which, though most unpretending in its appearance, was unmistakably a house of God; and had he stopped to enquire, he would have found that that was the sphere of labour of the Gospel pioneer in these parts; and so it is at this day. One of the first objects which inform the stranger that he is approaching one of the interior centres of population is the old Presbyterian Church, and weekly it bears witness to the message of the same faithful servant of God.*"

In 1859 the congregation felt the time had arrived for the erection of a more adequate church building and one more centrally situated. A Committee was appointed to superintend the arrangements, consisting of Messrs. Hastie, Scott, Allen, Akehurst, Rankin, Surman (the schoolmaster), Gunn, and Innes. After much care and painstaking they adopted the plans of Messrs. Backhouse and Reynolds, architects, and contracted with Messrs. Renne, Moran and Anderson for the erection of the building at a cost of £900. Mr. Gillespie, who was Secretary of the Church Committee, has this to say further: "*It was indeed feared by many, that, circumstanced as the congregation was, the inhabitants of a small township, having many claims on their generosity, it would be hopeless to attempt the erection of a new church worthy of the cause; but the Lord has been better to them than their fears, having put into the heart of the people to give liberally towards the building of His house; so much so as to surpass the expectations of the most sanguine. The foundation stone... is also in some sort an Ebenezer, for, we may truly say that hitherto the Lord hath blessed us. Through many vicissitudes, through many perplexities, His cause has struggled on; and now, while we*

have before us the prospect of being enabled to raise a house to His honour, which shall be worthy of His cause in this place, there is in no one who is not ready to say, on reflection upon the past, "the thing is of the Lord". Our prayer is, that in this earthly temple His people may be built up a spiritual temple, and that as in faith we have prepared Him a room, so He will mightily work in the ingathering of those who hitherto have been strangers to the covenant of promise and the commonwealth of His people."

The foundation stone of the present church was laid by Mrs. Scott, senr. of Mount Buninyong, the oldest resident in the district, on Tuesday, 27th March 1860, in the presence of a large gathering.

The proceedings were commenced by the Rev. Mr. Hastie giving out the 100th Psalm; the Rev. Mr. Henderson, of Ballarat then led in prayer; after which, Robert Gillespie, Esq., M.L.A., read the report from which the above extracts have been taken.

Thereafter, a bottle, containing the report and pieces of the current coins of the realm, was placed in a place prepared for it, together with copies of a list of the subscribers to the new church, and copies of the following newspapers, The Buninyong Telegraph, The Ballarat Star and Times, The Melbourne "Age", The Christian Times, and The Australian Messenger.

Rev. Mr. Hastie then addressed the assemblage. He said that they had now been engaged in laying the foundation stone of a new Presbyterian Church. He begged to correct an error which was sometimes made in designating the Church. It was frequently called the Scotch Church. Now, although he was not ashamed either of his country or its institutions, yet he was not so vain as to think that Presbyterianism was peculiar to Scotland. It was confined to no one Country. Presbyterianism was not English, or Scotch, or Irish, but Cosmopolitan. The Church, upon whose foundation he now stood, would present a welcome to the stranger from every land.... Highly as he valued the polity of the Presbyterian Church, it was only as he considered it the best fitted to preserve and promote the truth, the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God. Long, therefore, he hoped would the truth be proclaimed in this sanctuary, and many a sinner taught to look to Him who is mighty to save...."

The Church was opened for worship on Sabbath, the 26th August, 1860, and dedicated by the Presbytery of Ballarat which had been formed only the previous year. Appropriate discourses were preached to crowded audiences by the Rev. Mr. Walker, of Ballarat, in the forenoon, the Rev. Mr. Henderson, of Ballarat, in the afternoon; and the Rev. Mr. Simpson, of Shelford, in the evening.

On the Monday evening a tea-meeting was held in the new church. About 500 persons sat down to tea, which was provided by the ladies of the congregation.

The total cost of the Church, according to Mr. Gillespie's report, was £1265, of which £852/18/- had been subscribed to date at the opening. In a voluminous history of Early Melbourne and its environs published in 1888 (shown to me by Mr. R. Jackson) the total cost is given as £1500. Presumably the extra cost was for furnishings.

The first Trustees of the new Church were: Messrs. Scott, Allan, Fisker, Dr. Rankin and Kelsall.

Mr. Gillespie concluded his report to the tea-meeting as follows, indicating the pioneering spirit in which the Church was erected and by which it must be maintained: *"We have taken possession of this new house of God in a time of much trial and distress. Commercially, we believe at no time in the previous history of the colony have pecuniary difficulties been so widespread or so great, — bodily sickness, more or less severe, has been all but universal —. The Lord has made us feel our entire dependence upon Himself, and to some of us He has lifted the veil, and brought the realities of Eternity very near. Let us take the lesson of a more entire dedication to His service during the coming years, assured that, in our worldly affairs they who truly seek the Lord will not lack any good,— in our bodily ailments He will be the health of our countenance, and when our time comes to die He will show Himself our stay in death and our portion forever."*

At the Tea-meeting also a presentation of a silver tea service and salver was made to Mr. Hastie by Mr. Robert Scott in recognition of thirteen years faithful ministry among them.

An address was given by Rev. Mr. Henderson, of St. Andrew's, Ballarat, in which he drew attention to the fact that in the month of August 1860 the Per centenary of the

Reformation in Scotland was being celebrated. "That month", he said, "was sacred to Scotchmen, as commemorative of their deliverance from the thralldom of Popery. He need not remind them of the struggles of the Reformers, the dangers they encountered, and the labours of John Knox and his co-partners. Suffice it to say, that it was in the month of August, 300 years ago, that the Reformation was established in Scotland, and if there was anything like hay and straw in the work, he thought it would have been burned out before now . . . Scotland had a narrow escape of being Episcopal, but they preferred Presbyterianism to every other system. He was much gratified at the stand they were taking in Buninyong, and he hoped they would go on in charity with all other denominations, but at the same time take care of their own. They could wish others God speed, and co-operate with them, as there was labour enough for all."

In addition to the Rev. Thomas Hastie, the following clergymen have occupied the pulpit of this church, either as Ministers, Assistants or Home Missionaries, namely: Rev. J. J. Spalding, J. G. Davies, J. A. Burns, J. A. Forrest, R. W. Cunningham, W. Mabin, G. S. Brodie, J. Gillan, J. Scott, L. Clayton, A. E. Giles, O. Jones, T. C. L. Goble, D. F. Brandt, R. H. Roberts, A. H. Ross, W. Strathie, G. McGregor, A. C. Karmouche, W. E. Blackwood and the present minister, K. K. Luck.

Some years ago in order to preserve the building which was beginning to show its age, the original brick was given a coating of roughcast. This proved unsatisfactory and gradually peeled off allowing dampness to seep in and damage the interior plaster. Accordingly in 1958 the congregation appointed a Committee consisting of Messrs. A. Shearer, R. E. Selwyn Scott, W. D. Sleepnell, C. H. Thornton and N. Coxall to proceed with extensive renovations of the church. A contract was let to Mr. W. Dow, of Wendouree, who gave the exterior walls a coating of plaster impregnated with Silasec and Colortex, and renewed large areas of plaster on the interior walls. The whole, where necessary, was then re-decorated mostly by members of the Board of Management. The Ladies' Guild supplied a new carpet and new blue cloth and cushion for the pulpit. The total cost of the renovations was in the vicinity of £1300. So generous has been the response from present and past members and friends of this historic church that only about £250 of this amount remains to be paid. The re-hallowing of the church was conducted by Rev. Professor D. S. Hopkirk, of Ormond College, on 30th November, 1958.

The Rev Ken Luck and his family were called to Tallangatta in 1963, and after renovations to the manse were completed Rev Michael Oser was called to the Buninyong Presbyterian Church until 1969.

Owing to small congregations and limited finance at both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches the congregations combined to form the Buninyong United Church.

The Interim Moderator, Rev Arnold James of Scots Presbyterian Church Ballarat, and the Rev Graham Clark, of Skipton Street Methodist Church Ballarat presided at the inaugural service on 7th February 1971 for the Buninyong United Church.

Rev A.G. Hooper was the first minister followed by Rev C Dodd assisted by Pastor Stuart Davies for local pastoral care.

The Uniting Church in Australia came into being in June 1977, and the Buninyong United Church became a part of the Ballarat South Parish as the Buninyong Uniting Church.

Having been without a resident minister for some time, the manse was sold in 1975, and with the monies from this and the sale of the Methodist Church site in 1971, a new Sunday School Hall was built, and was opened on 6th November 1977. The ladies of the Heather Club had furnished the hall, and Mrs Riley had donated the kinder chairs. This replaced the very ancient hall that had served so well for over 100 years.

Rev Michael Ellemor and family joined us in 1980.

Due to the roof slates falling off and rain entering the Church, the roof was renewed and reslated in 1981 at a cost of \$9,900 and the men of the Property Board reblocked and repaired part of the floor, then the building was painted inside and out in 1982.

At the beginning of 1984 Rev Graeme Hawkins became our Minister.

This year the ladies of the Church provided wall to wall carpet in the Church to help insulate against the notorious winter in Buninyong.

The stained glass window facing Learmonth Street was erected by Mr G. Richmond, who had been a pupil of Rev F. Hastie at Madras College, St Andrews. Mr Richmond thus paid a tribute alike to his revered teacher, and to his long cherished friendship with Mr & Mrs Thos Scott. The window was the work of James Ballantyne & Son, Edinburgh, Scotland.

The windows in memory of Rev Thomas Hastie, and Mr & Mrs Robt Scott were unveiled on Good Friday, 18th April 1900. The windows were erected by the friends of Mr Hastie, and adherents of the Church and the family of Mr & Mrs Scott respectively.

The west side window in memory of Mr Hastie, shows a large figure representing the sower, from Matthew 13. The companion window in memory of Mr & Mrs Scott shows a large figure representing the reaper - Matthew 13. Both windows were the work of Messrs Zenken & Co., Melbourne, Mr Harness being the artist.

The window in memory of Robert Gillespie, depicts "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." Mr Gillespie was Secretary of the Church Building Committee in 1860 and loyal friend of the Church until his death in 1910.

Information on these windows from Mr R.J. Scott, Mt Boninyong.

The window in memory of Stuart Davies, pastor at Buninyong 1977-81, and Lay Preacher for over 50 years, was erected by Friends of the Church and his family in 1982. It depicts 'Christ the Light of the World'. The artists being Mr and Mrs Leigh of Pyalong, Victoria.

Additional:

Mr Richard Rennie was the Bricklayer for the building, later he built the Buninyong Methodist Church and the Buninyong Town Hall.

The Church building is approx 68 feet long and 32 feet wide, with extensions for the vestry and the belltower.

Our present Elders are: Mesdames Jean Lorransene, Ruth Johnstone, Jean Poynton and Pam Ditchfield and Messrs Jim Gay, Allan Bennett and Bill Stepnell

Property Board: Mesdames June Henderson, Ruth Johnstone and Messrs Alby Robertson, Norm Neimann, Jim Gay, Allan Bennett and Bill Stepnell.