

Epping Church 1902 to 1940

The location of the first church building

A careful examination of the annual Sands Directories for the period reveals some interesting detail about the location of the first Seventh-day Adventist church. Up to and including the directory for 1908, there is no mention of the church in Carlingford Road, Dundas.¹ In the 1909 Directory, on the North side of Carlingford Road, following the names of Mrs. C. Shields and Mrs. M. A. Williams, fruitgrower, the third entry is 'Seventh Day Adventists' Church'.² On the South side of Carlingford Road, immediately after 'Ryde street', is the name of Mrs. A. A. J. Mobbs.³

In 1914, the entry is even clearer as to the location of the church: On the North side of Carlingford Road (Carlingford) from 'Carlingford post office to Midson road', Mrs. C. Shields and Mrs. M. A. Williams are again listed and then 'Pennant parade'. Immediately after this is the entry for 'Seventh Day Adventists' Church' followed by eight other names before 'Midson road': Charles Smith of "The Crescent", J. A. Fleming of "Widgiewa", Charles Cropper, fruitgrower, James Cropper, Henry J. Dengate, fruitgrower, Mrs. Anne Dengate, fruitgrower, William H. Weirick of "Durham", and James Allen.⁴ The position of the Dengate property can be established as the three daughters of this family built a small shop which appears in a photograph of Carlingford Road in 1948 and which is still standing in 2002.⁵

In the 1915 Directory, the church is gone from the entries for Carlingford Road, but the next two properties on the 1914 entry, "The Crescent" and "Widgiewa" again appear.⁶ This establishes that the location of the first church was close to Pennant Parade and on the north side of Carlingford Road, not on land belonging to the "Nevertire" Orchard of Mrs. A. A. J. Mobbs, on the south side of Carlingford Road between Ryde Road and Midson Road, as was previously believed.

This location is confirmed by Sister Mary Johnston, nee Draper, whose family joined the Epping Church when she was a child. She can remember the picket fence and stumps of the first church on the corner of Pennant Parade, when she was growing up⁷.

The destruction of the first church building

A brief paragraph appeared in the *Australasian Record* of July 6 1914: "Our people will be sorry to learn that our church building at Epping, New south Wales, was destroyed by fire on the evening of June 23."⁸ Although this date for the destruction of the first church is, once again, at odds with the history given at the opening of the new church building in 1961 and subsequently re-used in 1967 and 1978, it must be preferred to the implied date 1912.⁹

This calamitous fire occurred on the eve of a wedding but did not discourage the young couple. A notice of the marriage was published on the same page of the *Australasian Record* as the item on the fire: "On Wednesday afternoon of June 24, at the residence of Sister Mobbs, Sen., Epping, New South Wales, a marriage ceremony was conducted by Pastor Hubbard, the contracting parties being Brother James Eggins and Sister Selina M.

¹ The suburb called Dundas included Carlingford Road from "Carlingford post office to High street". Sands' Directory, 1901-1910.

² Sands' Directory, 1909, page 314.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sands' Directory, 1914, page 359.

⁵ This photograph appears in *An ABC of Epping*, page 71, and a copy of it was provided to Carlene Bagnall by the author Alex McAndrew.

⁶ Sands' Directory, 1915, page 380.

⁷ Mary Johnston, telephone conversation with Carlene Bagnall, October 12, 2002.

⁸ *Australasian Record*, 6 July 1914, page 8.

⁹ Souvenir Programme, Official Opening of the Epping Seventh Day Adventist Church, 17th and 18th June 1961.

Mobbs. We wish them God's blessing as they go forth into the canvassing field, to help spread the knowledge of the glorious truth for this time."¹⁰

This is Leonard Sonter's account of the destruction of the first church, again taken from Alex McAndrew's book, *An ABC of Epping*:

*One Saturday in 1914 my parents had just returned to our homestead in Ray Road after dressing up the Adventist Church for the wedding of Effie Mobbs and Jim Higgins. They were looking through the breakfast room window when, to their amazement and disbelief, they saw the church burning down. The story was that it had been set alight by a certain disgruntled someone who had not been invited to the wedding. Maybe he was a rejected suitor.*¹¹

No record of the marriage of Effie Mobbs and Jim Higgins is to be found in the NSW historical indexes of Births Deaths and Marriages. In fact, this was the marriage of Selina Morbs (sic) and James Eggins.¹² The indexes show that Frank E Sonter married Deborah S Clark in 1895¹³ and they had seven children: Lucie, Ivy, Arthur, Donald, Adin, Rena and Leonard. The Sonter family moved from their orchard on the south-west corner of the intersection of Midson Road and Ray Road in 1916-7¹⁴, to Wyoming, where they were foundation members of the Gosford SDA church.¹⁵

In an article in the *Australasian Record* of May 24 1915, a report by P G Foster¹⁶ tells of the total destruction by fire in June "last year" of that first church, nine years after its construction. The building was uninsured and the only money realized was about thirty shillings for old iron.¹⁷

There was an abbreviated account in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Wednesday June 24 1914:

CHURCH BURNT

Early yesterday evening a fireed in the
Seventh day Adventists' church, Carling-ford-road,

¹⁰ *Australasian Record*, 6 July 1914, page 8. The marriage is shown in the historical index of the NSW Registry of Births, deaths and Marriages as being between Selina Morbs and James Eggins.

¹¹ Alex McAndrew, *An ABC of Epping, A Handbook for Residents*, page 292. The interview was conducted by telephone and this may explain the confusion of the names.

¹² NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Reg. No 12883, 1914, reg. at Ryde.

¹³ This was registered at Ryde, Reg. No. 3801 in the 1895 index of the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Their children were Lucie E Souter (1896 reg. Ryde, Reg. No. 7110), Ivy L Sonter(1897; reg. Liverpool, Reg. No. 13587), Arthur J Sonter (1899; reg. Ryde, Reg. No. 6805), Donald E Sonter (1900; reg. Ryde, Reg. No. 25995), Adin A Souter (1902, reg. Ryde, Reg. No. 16289), Rena B Souter (1906, reg. Chatswood, Reg. No. 22958) and Leonard O Souter (1909, reg. Ryde, Reg. No. 3801).

¹⁴ The 1916 Sands' Directory shows Frank E. Sonter in Ray's Rd, but his name is not listed there in the 1917 Sands' Directory.

¹⁵ Obituary in the *Australasian Record*, 14 November 1955: "Brother Frank Edward Sonter fell asleep in Jesus on August 26, 1955, at his home in Wyoming Gosford. His was a long life and he was a charter member and one-time elder of the Gosford church. He accepted present truth over fifty years ago and was baptized in the Epping church. His wife predeceased him seven years ago. The members of his family who remain are: Mrs. Gilbert, Mrs. Jeffes (Africa), Arthur, Donald, Aidin, Sister Rene Sonter and Brother L. Sonter. Brother Sonter's faith in the soon-coming Saviour was strong to the end. We laid him to rest in the Point Clare cemetery, where the writer was assisted by Pastor G. G. Stewart. Our sincere sympathy is extended to the members of his family. R. B. Mitchell." Deborah Sylvia Sonter was buried on October 16, 1947: G.F. Bohringer wrote that the Gosford church "has lost one of its faithful and beloved members," in her obituary, *Australasian Record*, 10 November 1947, page 7.

¹⁶ In an obituary in the *Australasian Record*, 7 Aug 1950, Pastor Philip George Foster is described as "one of the best known and most sincerely loved workers in this field". He was born March 23 1880 in Victoria, and was an accountant before he joined the SDA Church in 1906. "For seventeen years he was a conference secretary, serving in this capacity the old New South Wales Conference and later in the Victorian, North New Zealand, and North New South Wales conferences. For three years he was accountant of the Sydney Sanitarium. He was president of both the North New South Wales and the South Australian conferences. Of late years he has been engaged in pastoral and evangelical work in Victoria." He was laid to rest on July 7 1950.

¹⁷ *Australasian Record*, 24 May 1915.

Carlingford. The building, which was constructed of wood, was completely destroyed.¹⁸

The local newspaper, *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, gives some extra detail and colour to the story:

CHURCH BURNT DOWN

The church of the Seventh Day Adventists at Carlingford, near Epping, was burnt down on Tuesday night. The building was of weatherboard, with an iron roof, and measured about 40 feet by 25 feet. It had just been decorated for Miss Mobbs' wedding, fixed for the next day, and the decorators left the church at 10 p.m., leaving everything apparently all right. About half an hour later, Mr. Rhodes¹⁹, who lives about 500 yards away from the church, noticed a glare, and saw that the church was on fire. He gave the alarm, and he and Mr. Sonter were about the first to arrive at the scene of the conflagration. The flames had secured too great a hold of the building for anything to be done, and as there (were) no fire appliances and no water available nothing was attempted. In a short while, the building and all its contents, including an organ, were destroyed. The church was built by volunteer labour; and was not insured. The loss is estimated at £200.²⁰

The second church

Within a fortnight of the disaster, the nineteen members held a business meeting and planned the rebuilding of the church. Offerings and pledges were made and a block of ground on the Nevertire Estate, the present site, then valued at ninety pounds, was given by Sister A. J. Mobbs and her son Lewis²¹. It is not altogether clear why the church was moved to a different site, but oral history attributes the move to a desire to have the church closer to the railway station at Epping. Six months later, on the January 26 Australia Day holiday, a "building bee" consisting of all the brethren of the Epping church and a number from other suburban churches making twenty five in all, met at the site and by the end of that "hottest day of the year" had erected the greater part of the building. It was neatly finished and ready for dedication a few days before the service took place on Sunday April 18 1915.

Pastor A H White preached the dedicatory sermon from I Chronicles 28:20: "*And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.*" Pastor W. W. Fletcher offered the dedicatory prayer.

The treasurer's report showed that 147 pounds 15 shillings and 10 pence had been expended. Besides the gifts of the ground, labour, paint and so on, 86 pounds 17 shillings and 3 pence had been given in cash by the members and local friends. The debit of 60 pounds 18 shillings and 7 pence was a little further reduced by the offering made, which was taken up during the singing of a hymn by a company of children.

When Sydney Patrick wrote: "This debt was finally cleared in 1922 by a sum of 100 pounds left in a bequest to the church by a Mr Chee, a Chinese fruit agent in Sydney."²², it is likely that this date should be some years

¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday June 24, 1914, page 15.

¹⁹ Mr Rhodes was resident in Willoughby Street, Sands' Directory 1914, page 1548. He had a house in Orchard Street, Epping, which is still there: *Epping Presbyterian Church 1894-1994*, page 12.

²⁰ *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, Saturday June 27, 1914, page 6.

²¹ Lewis Mobbs was born in 1884 (NSW Register of Births, deaths and Marriages) and died at Eraring via Dora Creek on April 27 1967 (Probate Index for NSW, 1967, No 641860).

²² Souvenir Programme, Official Opening of the Epping Seventh Day Adventist Church, 17th and 18th June 1961.

later and that the benefactor was in fact Mr William Chie, whose obituary appeared in the *Australasian Record* written by E G Whittaker:

*William Chie, aged sixty-three, died at his residence, Carlingford Road, Epping, on Sunday, September 13, 1925. Brother Chie was one of the pioneer members of the Epping church, having been associated with the message for about twenty years. His health had been somewhat indifferent for some time. He leaves a wife to mourn her loss. We laid him to rest in the Carlingford Cemetery. In the service conducted at his house, his favourite hymn was sung; "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh! What a foretaste of glory divine."*²³

William Chie was the son of John Chi, a dairy farmer at Avondale, near Wollongong, and his wife Margaret (nee Miller). William and his wife Mary Jane (nee Miller) had been married for 42 years and had two sons, both of whom predeceased their father. His death certificate gives his occupation as a "poultry farmer" but in addition he had a productive orchard in Pennant Parade, between Carlingford Road and the Karonga School,²⁴ in which he grew fine apricots.²⁵ Later, William Chie resided in a house which he had named "Avondale", near to Annie Mobbs' "Nevirtire", between Ryde Road and Midson Road.²⁶ It may be this was an acknowledgement of both his place of birth and his Adventist connections, in view of his handsome bequest to Epping Church.

The boards of the walls were unstained and the church was lit with gas lights. Years later, a generous member, whose name is not now known, donated the cost of the electrical installation. There was no raised rostrum so the desk was at floor level. A second room, affectionately known as "the little room" because it was less than half the size, was at ground level, down six or seven steps from a door in the side of the church. The children would go out to this room for their Sabbath School. Gladys Sheridan wrote in 1971: "*I can remember as a little girl falling down those steps with children my own age. We would crawl up them on our hands and knees when it was time to re-enter the church, and the big boys would walk on our fingers in their hurry. There was many a crying match.*"²⁷

Annie Mobbs, Epping pioneer and mother of the church

At the Official Opening and dedication of the new church in 1961 Brother Sydney Patrick paid tribute to Annie Mobbs, a widow with seven children²⁸, who was "*often seen behind the plough in her orchard. From the returns of her fruitful property she gave freely to help others in need.*"²⁹ He also remembered the contribution of the pioneer elders: "*Some of the pioneer church elders gave great service to the church, and were often called upon, without notice to take three services out of four, which was hard on them, and sometimes harder on the congregation. Such as Mr Lamplough, Mr Irvine, I had the honour of working with, and though they have gone to their rest they are remembered for their earnestness in service to God and man.*"³⁰ Brother Patrick was another who gave many years of service as an elder and never went to church without the notes for a sermon in the back of his Bible, lest the preacher of the day fail to appear.³¹

Brother Patrick's daughter, Iris Welling, remembers Sister Phillips, formerly Mobbs, as a little missionary-minded lady, not good with words but with a generous heart, who lived almost opposite West Epping School. When asked how a new family of "interests" were going, she replied "They're coming along – I've got them eating Granola." Each year at the camp-meeting, she would pay for a tent and bring down some of the college

²³ Australasian Record, 12 October 1925, page 7.

²⁴ Alex McAndrew: An ABC of Epping, A Handbook for Residents, page 262. This is confirmed by entries in the Sands Directory.

²⁵ Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate, October 1898.

²⁶ Sands' Directory 1924, page 284.

²⁷ Gladys Sheridan, Memoirs of Epping SDA Church, 19 June 1971.

²⁸ The children of Annie and William Mobbs, in the historical index of the NSW Registry of Births deaths and Marriages were: Amy A J (born 1882), Lewis (born 1884), Hilda (born 1886), Selina (born 1888), Lennie G (born 1890), Esther P (born 1892) and William (born 1894)

²⁹ Souvenir Programme, Official Opening of the Epping Seventh Day Adventist Church, 17th and 18th June 1961.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Iris Welling, August 5 2002.

students to stay in it, employing Syd Patrick to take all the gear and boxes of fruit from her orchard out to the camp ground.³² She gave considerable financial help to some of the young men who wanted to attend Avondale College and virtually supported them through their training.³³

The *Australasian Record* of 19 March 1945 has an obituary of Sister Mobbs which is both a life-sketch and a tribute:

PHILLIPS.-Mrs A A J Phillips, better known to most of us as Mrs Mobbs, was born eighty-one years ago at Camden Haven River as Amy Sonter. She died and passed to her rest in the early hours of Friday, February 23. All that medical skill and nursing could do was done, but God decided that our sister had finished her task. She was married at the age of eighteen to William Mobbs, and to him she bore seven children, two sons and five daughters. He died fifty years ago,³⁴ leaving her a widow with a young family to bring up. These seven children are living today as an eloquent testimony to the loving maternal care she gave them.

Some twenty-four years ago, with the family all grown up, she was again united in marriage; this time to Mr J Phillips of Auckland, New Zealand. She accompanied him to his homeland, and lived there until after his death, when she again returned to her old home at Epping, from whence we took her to the Old Carlingford cemetery, and laid her to rest. Her life had always been an active one, and no work about the home or the orchard was too hard for her to do. It is difficult to express in words our tribute to her Christian fortitude and example. More than fifty years ago she accepted the advent message through the labours of Miss Malcolm (who is still living), and during all of these years she has "spent and been spent" in her Master's service. To her it was not a question of church or creed, but wherever there was need, she was there ready to help. She was seized with a great zeal for foreign missions, and often wished that she could have become a missionary herself. Instead, she for many years has supported native teachers in order that she might, as she herself put it, "give God a twenty-four hours' service."

If those in the homeland whose feet have been turned to Christ through her humble ministry could be gathered together in one place, they would form a goodly company, as they number more than fifty. She pioneered the church at Epping, and remained active in its service from its inception until now, and of her we can truly say, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ...Yea, saith the Spirit ...and their works do follow them."

A large concourse of people gathered at the home and the graveside to pay their respects to one they had loved so well. A number of ministers were present, the service at the home being conducted by Pastor Robert Hare, who had known the deceased for more than fifty years. He was assisted by Pastor A W Anderson and the writer.

*"Sleep on, dear heart, the day of toil has ended,
And darkened shadows softly crowd the west.
Thy Saviour slumbered through the silent darkness,
In hallowed resting for thy rest.*

*"Sleep on, the crowning day is surely coming,
The tearless day that time has never known;
Then waken with the loved redeemed in gladness waken
To take thy place beside the throne.*

*"Time cannot count within thy silent slumbers,
And rude alarms of earth cannot molest.
By angel watchers ever sweetly guarded,
Sleep on! Thy Saviour bids thee rest."*

³² In the *Australasian Record* of 12 Oct 1925, there is a Notice on page 7: "Camping requirements carried by motor lorry from all northern suburbs to and from camp at reasonable rates. Ring Epping 653, or write Sydney R. Patrick, Ray Road, Carlingford, N.S.W."

³³ Iris Welling, telephone interview with Carlene Bagnall, August 5 2002.

³⁴ NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Reg. No. 12104, 1894: William J Mobbs, son of William and Mary A, reg. Ryde.

-R. Hare.
Reuben E Hare.³⁵

The original grant of land was made to William Mobbs by Crown Grant on the 3rd of November, 1856, and consisted of 36 acres 1 rood, 14 perches, Portion 29 of Public Map of Parish Deposited Plan 7501. Ownership of the land passed first to the son of the original grantee, William John Mobbs, and subsequently a life interest to his widow Annie after her husband's death in 1894, providing she did not remarry.³⁶ The property was held in trust for their eldest son Lewis until he came of age. On the 9th of July 1912 Robert Hamilton Matthews a Licensed Surveyor of Parramatta was engaged to carry out a survey on this land and a Subdivision of 17 acres 3 roods and 6 ½ perches was created as Nevertire Estate No1. The balance of the original grant became Nevertire Estate No2.³⁷

The Certificate of Title of the Nevertire Estate No1 was transferred from Amy Ann Jane Mobbs, Widow of Epping to Lewis Mobbs of Epping Orchardist – Primary Application 18233 on the 15th day of November 1913. Lewis Mobbs was the eldest son of Annie and William Mobbs. The Subdivision consisted of Blocks 1-12 in Carlingford Road from Ryde Street to Midson Road; Blocks 13-17 in Midson Road from the corner of Carlingford Road to the corner of George Street; Blocks 18-29 on the north side of George Street; Blocks 30-40 on the south side of George Street; and Blocks 41-44 in Midson Road from George Street extending down Midson Road. The Nevertire Estate was auctioned by C H Mobbs & Co on Anniversary Day 26th January 1914, a year to the day before the construction of the church by the “building bee”.³⁸

On April 27 1915 Lot 40 in George Street was donated by Lewis Mobbs and his mother Amy Ann Jane Mobbs to the Australasian Conference and the deed was entered in the Registrar-General on January 4 1917 (Volume 2636 Folio 168).³⁹

Two Epping Sabbath School Picnics

A colourful account of an early Epping social event is provided by Queenie Patrick, wife of Sydney Patrick and stepdaughter of Henry Irvine.

The annual outing of the Epping Sabbath school was held January 20, at a delightful spot on the banks of the Parramatta River.

A motor bus which had been engaged for the return trip conveyed the party, about forty-five in number, from Epping station to the selected spot, where old and young alike forgot for a few hours the stern realities of life and played once more the happy games of childhood, interspersed with races in which not only the little ones but the fathers and mothers in Israel good naturedly participated.

The generosity of one lover of little children was responsible for every child receiving a small gift by way of remembrance.

A bountiful repast was spread with mother earth for a table, and the blue heaven above us; great trees, casting a grateful shade, were mirrored in the waters of the river; a boat glided by; the brown body of a swimmer poised in mid air for a moment, then disappeared with a splash in the quiet waters beneath. In these pleasant surroundings we offered thanks, Pastor Cozens acknowledging our indebtedness to the great Giver.

At the day's close Brother Irvine, in a few words, expressed the benefit and pleasure we had derived from a day in God's great “out-of-doors,” special mention being made of the strenuous efforts of the Sabbath school superintendents, Brother Sydney Patrick and Brother Moore, to make the day a success.

³⁵ Australasian Record, 19 March 1945

³⁶ Probate 8006, series 4, Wm. J. Mobbs, Carlingford, 1.8.1894. William John Mobbs left his money to be divided equally among his daughters, and his youngest son inherited his property at Pennant Hills “known as part of Murray's Farm”. The estate was sworn under £2232.

³⁷ Doug Bennetts: History of George Street, Epping

³⁸ Doug Bennetts, History of George Street, Epping.

³⁹ Alex McAndrew: An ABC of Epping, A Handbook for Residents

On the homeward journey, many a little head nodded its weariness from sheltering arms. Probably for the first time since its construction the roof of the motor bus echoed to the strains of "In the Sweet By and By," and "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder I'll Be There," in which the driver heartily joined.

So ended a happy day. Occasional social intercourse is necessary, for all work – even church work – and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

*"God of the heart and hand,
Teach me to understand.
I have forgotten in the long, long years
All my little childish hopes and fears.
It is so very, very long ago
Since I was in the world the children know,
I have forgotten what I used to play
And dream and do in that far yesterday.
Yet now they come, with faces raised to mine,
These little ones. Dear Father, they are Thine.
Teach me to lead them to Thine own pure light;
Help me to guide their little feet aright."*

*QUEENIE PATRICK,
Sabbath School Secretary.⁴⁰*

Another account of *An Epping Outing* by Queenie Patrick was published in the Australasian Record in February 1926 under the heading *SOUTH NEW SOUTH WALES, President : A. H. Piper, Secretary: W. H. Hopkin.*

A picnic for the Epping Sabbath school once a year has become a recognised institution. We are a busy people, with little time for social intercourse, therefore this one day in three hundred and sixty-five is all the more enjoyed and becomes as a pleasant picture on the walls of memory at which we may look in after years with happiest recollections.

Our plans were on a more ambitious scale this year. A day at the seaside! When suggested, the smiling approval of both children and parents settled the matter; and, after all, what are we older ones but children at heart, "just boys and girls grown tall," when we allow ourselves to forget for a few hours that we are wedded to work and worry.

On January 17, three motor lorries, owned and driven by our brethren, also two motor cycles, made a brave showing as about seventy in number started at 8 a.m. for Balmoral beach, a ride of sixteen miles or more from Epping.

A delightful spot; quiet water, glittering beaches, tree-clad hills, swimming baths, boats, not to dwell upon a diminutive train running on its own tiny track which fascinated the boys mechanically inclined and gave juvenile passengers a thrill never experienced in a real train.

Our table was spread beneath the shade of an old beach tree – a bountiful repast upon which our elder with bared head asked a blessing. Scores of curious eyes watched us. The beach inspector asked what Sunday school we represented; his interest did not lessen on being informed we were a Sabbath school of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Of more than ordinary interest to the adults was the amphitheatre recently built by the Theosophists, "for the use of Christ, whose coming it is their privilege to announce and prepare for" (quotation from one of their pamphlets). "A structure of unusual beauty, whose white Grecian columns rear their graceful outlines above Balmoral beach," opposite Sydney Head, through which the Theosophists say the Teacher will come, probably by aeroplane. Front seats to witness this spectacle are £100 each; brass plates attached to various seats reveal the purchasers as now living in Italy, India, Ireland, and our own fair land. Carved on the white stone supports of the Grecian pillars are the words, "Thou art the Light." "Let your light shine." The "wailing time" hanging rather heavily on their hands, or perhaps the rates

⁴⁰ Australasian Record, 11/2/24, page 5.

and taxes on such an imposing structure, induces them to use this place in the meanwhile for classic plays and dancing.

The day is a Sunday. On the ground floor a refreshment room is filled with patrons who sip fountain drinks and gaze, if they care to, at beautiful pictures of Christ, as a boy in the temple, and Christ walking on the sea, which hang on the walls. Above, the Sunday afternoon service is in full swing; attractive music and a speaker who talks of the coming Christ to appear this year in the form of a Hindu, not to put an end to things as they now exist, but to reconstruct present conditions and “bring men into the way of peace.”

Literature with a smattering of truth and an appalling amount of error is there for the taking, so people take because there is so little even that is worthless one gets for nothing these days. This amphitheatre, a triumph in architecture, gleaming in marble in the noonday sun, in reality is a whitened sepulchre containing already the buried hopes of a deluded people. O! that some one would preach the truth of Christ’s return before these portals to the thousands of pleasure-seekers who sit beneath their shade with the same power and spirit that characterised Paul’s sermon on Mars’ hill!

The long summer day drew to its close. We settled down to our homeward journey, no accident marred the day’s enjoyment; and as the curtain of night descended we reached our homes, grateful to our Father for the roses that strew our sometimes thorny pathway; even more grateful for the truth which makes us free.

QUEENIE PATRICK.⁴¹

Extension and modification of the church building

Some fifteen years after the construction of the second church, perhaps made possible by William Chie’s handsome bequest, some alterations were made to the building constructed so quickly in 1915.

In her *Memoirs* of Epping Church, Gladys Sheridan, the daughter of Harry Morgan, described the changes made to Epping church. About 1929 or 1930, Brothers Harry Morgan and Norman Marchant, who were carpenters and cabinet-makers, were asked to lift the existing small room to the same level as the church and to build a wooden slat ramp for outside access. After the lifting was done, because Norman Marchant had another job to go to and Harry Morgan had just completed one the week before, Brother Morgan was paid a fortnight’s wages to enlarge the back room, build an alcove and raise the rostrum with a neat rail around it and a sliding door to allow access from the back room. A man from Cheltenham was engaged to stain the inside of the church and a Brother Booth from Wahroonga painted a scroll above the rostrum alcove with the words of Habakkuk 2:20 “Let all the earth keep silence before Him”. Brother Morgan made other fittings for the church, including a rack for tracts and a pigeonhole cabinet. A fold down seat in the corner of the building which he had made was extended by some of the young men as the membership grew. The porch, open on the front and with plank seats on two sides, made a cosy place to sit on a winter’s day.⁴²

By Sister Sheridan’s account, it was enclosed in the early 1940s. In fact, the minutes of church meetings held in March and April of 1946 show that the enclosing of the porch and the removal of the hat rack to the porch was authorised and started then, along with other refurbishing work.⁴³

In the 1920s, several families came to church in sulkies. The ponies would be unhitched and tethered to an old persimmon tree at the side of the church. The scent of the grass they were eating and the sound of their movements would come through the open windows of the church. After the services, the brethren would load the sulkies with women and children and drive them to the railway station. When the sulky era passed, some of these joined the train travellers and up to 30 adults and children would alight at Epping Station and, dressed in their Sabbath best clothes, would walk the mile to the church. “*Many of the local residents raised their eyebrows as we passed through the streets of Epping,*” Sister Sheridan wrote in her *Memoirs*.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Australasian Record, 8/2/26, page 5.

⁴² Gladys Sheridan, *Memoirs of Epping SDA Church*, 19 June 1971.

⁴³ Minutes, Quarterly Business Meeting, March 1946; and Minutes, Officers Meeting, April 1946.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Harry Irvine, a devoted Adventist and an English “gentleman builder” with means, married Frances Hill, the widow of the captain of a Murray River paddleboat and the mother of four children, in 1921. Frances and her children had been brought into the Adventist church through a mission at Berowra, where both they and Harry Irvine lived. He built a home for her in Ray Road, Epping, which has been restored to its former style. Frances’s daughter Queenie married Sydney R Patrick, and Harry Irvine subsequently divided the land so that Sydney and Queenie could build next door. Their daughter Iris Welling remembers that her father would faithfully attend prayer meetings: he would light a hurricane lamp and walk across the fields to the church. During the Second World War, Sydney Patrick was on the conference preaching plan and would preach about once a month. He was a gentle man, who had a unique way of coping when he was annoyed – he would go outside and whistle till he had recovered his equanimity.⁴⁵

Some of those who served as elders in the 1920s and 1930s were Dr Caro, Brother Lamplough, Brother Davis, Brother Patrick, Brother Marchant and Brother Robinson. Brother Irvine, remembered by Gladys Sheridan as “*an old white-haired Christian gentleman*”, served as both elder and treasurer for many years. A number of the members were called to God’s service: “*the ministers included Pastor Rudge, who was called to the General Conference and then to the British Isles; Pastor Allum, who served many years in China as a missionary; Pastor Fred Webb, Pastor Keith Satchell and Pastor Edwin Totenhofer. Others went as missionaries and teachers to all parts of the homeland and to the islands of the South Pacific.*”⁴⁶ Another who attended was Arthur Peach whose prayers and dedicated life brought his brother Frank and Frank’s family to the Lord. Among the children of that era were Cyril and Violet Evans, Joyce and Peggy Peacock, Alitha and Marita Cousins, Joyce Robinson and Gladys Morgan, later Mrs Norm Sheridan, whose memoirs provided most of the information we have about this period.⁴⁷

Brother Davis was the grandfather of the two Evans children and provided Gladys Sheridan with another memory: “*His dentures clattered to the floor one Sabbath, while praying.*”⁴⁸ A more colourful account of this story was told by Jeff White, of a preacher, name unspecified, who, as he declaimed “Brethren” with great force, projected his dentures from his mouth, over the rostrum rail, to land on the Sabbath School table below. He is said to have walked around and retrieved them, returned to the rostrum where he rinsed them in the glass of water provided for the speaker, and put them back in his mouth, before continuing the sermon.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Iris Welling, telephone interview with Carlene Bagnall, August 5 2002.

⁴⁶ Sydney R Patrick, Souvenir Programme, Official Opening of the Epping Seventh Day Adventist Church, 17th and 18th June 1961.

⁴⁷ Gladys Sheridan, Memoirs of Epping SDA Church, 19 June 1971.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John Bagnall.