The centenary of St Luke’s of South Wagga turns 100

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St Luke’s of South Wagga turns 100

The centenary of worship will be celebrated this September at St Luke’s Anglican Church, on the corner of Shaw and Docker streets, South Wagga.

It is not known when the Anglican Parish of Wagga Wagga obtained the land for a new church but the very first owner of that particular block of land was a schoolmaster from Appin, James Poulton.

Poulton purchased the block on November 25, 1867, for the sum of eight pounds, 16 shillings and 11 pence. He began to dispose of portions of the large block in 1879.

THE CHURCH

From 1908, Anglican services for the growing population of South Wagga were held in the home of Mr and Mrs Frank Woods of “Foxborough Hall”, indicating the need for an Anglican church in this community.

St Luke’s, a brick building with an iron roof, was designed by Mr WJ Monks. At the end of September 1913 a tender presented by Messrs C Hardy and Co for the sum of £533 (£1063) was accepted, being the lowest tender received.

The plans allowed for 140 people to be seated in the 14x9m main body of the church and included was an 18x9h porch, and a vestry of 7x9ft. The building was expected to be completed within 12 weeks.

On September 14, 1913, the ceremony of the Laying of the Foundation Stone was started with a procession of the Sunday school children, with some adults, headed by the Citizens’ Band marching from St John’s Hall in Baylis Street. Outside the hospital in Edward Street, the Bishop of Goulburn, Dr Barlow, the Acting Rector Rev GE Merlove and the Rector, Rev GL Williams joined the procession along with the choir.

When St Luke’s was almost completed, a license was granted on November 27, 1913; a Communion Service was celebrated on the morning of November 30, 1913 with the church being formally dedicated at 4pm on the same day by the acting Rector, Rev GF Merlove with a large congregation present.

Prior to the consecration of the church in September 1924 by Bishop Radford, assisted by Archdeacon Pike, the church building was renovated and many big improvements were made to the fittings. A decoration scheme had been set in place and many sacred pictures were expected to arrive from England for the walls.

THE HALL

For many months, voluntary workers had spent their spare time erecting the weatherboard building which had been built mainly for the use of the Sunday school.

In February 1924, about 200 people joined together to witness the opening of St Luke’s new hall. During the evening, a program of music was broadcasted by Mr LG Pimbblet of the Riverina Wireless Company.

The parishioners of South Wagga would go on to enjoy a variety of social evenings in the new hall and the Ladies Guild held many fund-raising functions. Archdeacon Pike was even hopeful that they would be able to install a small motion picture plant.

As the years passed, it was necessary to keep the church and hall maintained, and no doubt the people who return for the centenary celebrations will have many fond memories to share.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The children’s Sunday school was started at Easter 1914 by Mr H Hansard who was described by Archdeacon Pike as the “Father of the Sunday School”.

Mr Hansard was Superintendent until 1923 when he resigned and his position was filled by Miss Dora Wulf. Miss Wulf was dedicated to serving the Sunday school for many decades. Sunday school picnics were eagerly looked forward to by the children and were held at various venues, one such being Newtown (Collins) Park, when in 1923 120 children were entertained with races and games organised by Mr Hansard and Mr Croucher with the assistance of 10 teachers.

In August 1926, when the annual party of the Sunday school was held there were more than 200 children to take part, many who attended in “fancy dress”. A competition was held to judge the costumes, the winners being fancy – Ray Patterson, Dorothy Smith, Marie Patterson and Margaret Nation; humorous – Ron Smith and Jack Pery, original girls – Peggy Perry and Gwen Miller; original boys – Wallace Fife and Reg Reberger; pairs – Bobbie and Valerie Allen; non-Sunday school children – Anne Fife and Gwen Henneke. The party closed with the singing of the national anthem and the children receiving a basket of sweets.

In 1947, the Southern Churchman reported that the St Luke’s Sunday school consisted of 150 children with 14 devoted and enthusiastic teachers.

If anyone has photographs of anything relating to St Luke’s Church and Sunday school, it would be appreciated if they would contact the CSU Regional Archives on 02 6933 6666. The photographs would be scanned and returned immediately.

References: NSW Land and Property Information; St John’s Anglican Church Archives; The Daily Advertiser, 15 Sept and 29 Nov 1913, 30 Sept 1915, 13 Nov 1923, 27 Feb and 22 Sept 1924; Aug 1939; The Southern Churchman, 1 Sept 1947.

Compiled by: June Dietrich

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12 – Riverina Weekender, Saturday and Sunday, April 6 and 7, 2013.