

Trees Planted at Historic Church

CENTENARY NEARING

For well-nigh a century the little church at Bong Bong, serene on its swelling, wind-swept hill, has brooded possessively over the smiling countryside about; time has brought little change to its ancient walls save those wrought by the hands of man; aloof, yet friendly, it has seen generations come and go, and with soothing hands brought peace and understanding to those who have worshipped there. Soon, now, it will receive the recognition to which its antiquity entitles it.

A preliminary function took place last Saturday afternoon, when seventeen trees were planted in the grounds in honor both of the recent S.C.E.G.G. School jubilee and the centenary of Christ Church, which was consecrated by the Primate of Australia, Bishop Broughton, 100 years ago, on 31st December, 1845. Those present included Moss Vale folk interested in the church, staff and pupils of S.C.E.G.G. School, Miss S. Loseby of Bowral, and her niece, Mrs. F. J. Griffin, the Mayor and Mayoress of Bowral (Ald. and Mrs. W. F. Foley), and Bowral municipal historians, Rev. S. A. Howard and Mr. A. V. J. Parry. Apologies were received from the R. A. Historical Society and its affiliated Illawarra body.

Prior to the tree-planting, a short service was conducted in the church—many features of which entitle it to be classed as an ecclesiastical gem in miniature—by the Rector of Moss Vale (Rev. H. G. S. Begbie), who also welcomed the visitors. There was particular warmth in the welcome to Miss Loseby, whose father, Mr. C. Loseby, was present at the consecration, and who was herself amongst the first children to be baptised there.

Because of interference with the power lines, large pines were cut down some time ago, and those planted on Saturday were of the same family but smaller and more decorative. The first, that in the north-western corner of the grounds, was most efficiently planted by the amazing Miss Loseby, who will be ninety-eight on 4th September next; trees were also planted by Mrs. Begbie (wife of the Rector), Mrs. Foley, Miss V. T. Baddams (principal of S.C.E.G.G.S.), and others.

Saturday's ceremony was held largely because of the propitious time of year for planting; present

plans are that the actual centenary will be observed on Sunday, 2nd December, so that the college girls attend each Sunday may be present before vacation.

Many pioneers rest in the churchyard nearby. To quote a few, there are Henry Mole Oxley, younger son of Lieut. John Oxley, the famous early Survey General, and grandfather of John Oxley, A.I.F.; his wife, Emily Oxley, who took a most prominent part in raising funds for the organ at St. Jude's Church; many members of the Throsby family prominently identified with this district; Joseph Wild, who "died in the Wingecarribee district" on 25th May 1847, aged 88, and after whom, according to James Jervis, A.S.T.C. in the R.A.H.S. Journal, Wild Meadow was named; and Rev. John Evans, M.A., who conducted the first regular Sunday (monthly) Presbyterian services at Bowral, starting on 6th January, 1884.

Research by Rev. S. A. Howard tends to show that Christ Church is the oldest standing between Paul's, Cobbitty, and St. John's, Cullberrra, consecrated in 1843 and 1844 respectively. Mr. Howard has prepared an interesting typescript brochure on the history of Bong Bong's first 100 years, incorporating as much material obtained by his fellow historian from local newspaper files and hopes shortly to have copies available for those interested at a nominal charge to cover production cost.

On the return trip the party paused at "The Brisara," the occupants pointed out the spot which the old road took nearly to the river, and where the Gyle Inn stood more than a century ago.