

—CHURCHES AND CHURCH AFFAIRS—

WOODVILLE METHODIST CHURCH.

A RECORD OF SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS.

The first records of the Woodville Methodist Congregation go back to days long before the erection of any building to accommodate the worshippers. At that time a small company of stalwarts foregathered in the York Rechabite Hall, on the Port road. In this locality there were several Wesleyan Methodist families, and these formed the nucleus of the church that later found a habitation for itself on Woodville road. From that small beginning the church has prospered without interruption, until to-day a magnificent pile of buildings has been raised upon the site at Woodville road, with its noble frontage of 250 feet. In the pre-church days, more than 20 years ago, the congregation was gathered, instructed, and edified by the ministrations of a company of local preachers, whose fervour and capacity were remarkable. Prominent among these good men was Mr. E. H. Butler, whose daughter was one of the first organists of the original church erected 48 years ago. She married Mr. J. G. Rofe, who was a notable early worker in the church before his death. Mrs. Rofe is still one of the most regular worshippers, and occupies a

seat in a transept, which is an enlargement of the stone church that succeeded the first galvanized iron structure. Instead of the harmonium of early days, at which Mrs. Rofe presided, a fine pipe organ is now installed. Different long-hearted pioneers in Messrs. Peter Wright, John Ottaway, Dr. Bollen, Dr. Blackney, Phillips, Derrington, Theo. Hack, Bray, Carter, Lawrence, Josiah Novis, James Rofe, C. Charlton, W. Diverall, J. Maddern, Capt. Brinsden, and others rendered yeoman service.

A Modest Structure.

During the ministry of the Rev. C. T. Newman, Capt. Simpson, a leading shipping and coal merchant, generously presented the site on Woodville road. Forty-eight years ago, in 1876, the trustees decided to build a church. Woodville was then included in the large Port Adelaide and Semaphore circuit. What was then one circuit is now six circuits, fully staffed and equipped, two of them adapting themselves to specialized mission work. The first church building was of galvanized iron, and was erected during the superintendency of the late Rev. James Haslam, two of whose sons are now in the Methodist ministry, one in Victoria and one, the Rev. G. Keyseil Haslam at Kapunda. Another son is Mr. J. A. Haslam, B.Sc., head master of King's College. Capt. Simpson had expressed a wish that a church and parsonage should be erected as soon as possible. From the earliest days the trustees have laboured devotedly to carry out this expressed wish, and can to-day claim to control a property that fulfils the desire of the first donor. The iron used in the construction of the first church was part of the salvaged cargo from the wreck of The Iron King, which went down near the Aldinga coast. The church when finished was dubbed "The Iron King," and sometimes "The Sardine Tin," but it served its purpose. The Rev. James Haslam preached the opening sermon, from the text, "I saw no temple therein." The original trustees were Messrs. W. Crooks, J. G. Rofe, John Jeanes, J. Maddern, W. R. Birks, T. J. Mitchell, S. Rossiter, Bedford Hack, and George Willmore. Of that company Mr. Willmore alone survives to this day. The cost of the original church ("The Iron King") was approximately £400.

A Stone Church Built.

Within a few years the need for additional accommodation was imperative. A meeting was called by the Rev. J. Bickford on September 5, 1883, to discuss the prospects, and by September 13 £224 had been promised towards the cost of erecting a larger and more suitable building. On October 12, 1883, it was decided to build a new stone church 32 ft. by 30 ft., with two lean-to vestries, at an approximate cost of £750. This estimate was largely exceeded when tenders were called. Messrs. Bayer & Withall were asked to prepare plans and specifications



REV. THOMAS PIPER,
a well-beloved leader.

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REV. ISAIAH PERRY,
who instituted the successful thankoffering system.

received, and the work was given to Messrs. Robin & Hack, who tendered at £1,080. The contractors presented the foundation stone, which was of Kapunda marble. The foundation stone ceremony was fixed for December 19, 1883. The stone was laid by Mrs. W. Crooks, wife of the senior partner in the firm of Crooks & Brooker. On the Sunday preceding the stone-laying ceremony, namely, December 16, morning and evening services were conducted at the Woodville Institute by the Rev. J. Hall Angus. The stone was laid at 4.30, and after tea a public meeting was held in the institute. The programme presented at that gathering reveals the patience of the pioneers. In addition to "Chairman's remarks" by the Hon. John Carr, there were no less than three full-dress speeches. Mr. Angus spoke on "Christian sympathy," the Rev. J. Bickford spoke on "Progress of Christianity," and the Rev. S. F. Prior on "The true foundation." Mr. E. E. Mitchell, Mus. Bac., who has since those days become a prominent teacher of music rendered a solo, which was well received. There were 17 items in the programme, four of which were speeches, an Homeric repast. The new church was opened on April 6, 1884, the preachers being the Revs. J. Bickford, G. W. Kendrew, and J. Hall Angus. A public meeting on April 8 was presided over by Mr. D. Neck, and addressed by Mr. Angus. Mr. W. R. Burks presented a reading desk,

pulpit chair, and communion table to the new church. On May 8, 1884, the congregation met and discussed the question of seat rents, and it was decided that the rents should be voluntary. This system is still retained. The total cost of the new building was in the neighbour-

hood of £1,400, much of which had to be raised by loan. It is characteristic of the congregation to face a big obligation in a cheerful business-like spirit. More than once in the history of the church big debts were incurred, and gradually liquidated, with the result that to-day a property worth many thousands of pounds has been developed, and carries only a nominal liability.

Pipe Organ Installed.

An important event on April 21, 1887, was the appointment of Mr. E. E. Mitchell to the charge of the musical part of the service. His connection with the church was a long and honourable one. Not only as choir master and organist, but even more in his capacity as treasurer for many years he did a great work, and exerted a fine influence. On July 21, 1887, he presented a scheme for the installation of a pipe organ, which was disallowed at that time by the trust, but on August 20, 1891, he succeeded in winning the approval of the trust, and carried out his project. A small pipe organ was purchased and installed, which did service until the purchase of a larger instrument in September, 1900. Before this instrument was purchased the second of the capable trio of organists had been appointed in the person of Mr. F. V. Little, who has since passed away. To his day his memory is fragrant. A window in his honour has been placed in the church. He was a gifted man, and his service to the church cannot be easily computed. His appointment dated back to October 15, 1885. For many years he held that post, and maintained the high musical standard for which the choir has always been noted. An interesting discussion on Methodist union took place at a trustees' meeting on September 10, 1896. The Rev. J. B. Stephenson, a strong opponent of union, was in the chair. The trustees, apparently influenced by the Chairman, voted, as a meek and docile spirit, two to one against the scheme. Mr. Stephenson was a man of strong convictions, and a faithful preacher and pastor of the flock. In spite of their heavy commitments, the members of the congregation were very anxious to secure the advantage of a resident minister, which up to this time they had not enjoyed, and on April 3, 1900, the matter of a parsonage was first mooted. At that time the famous Twentieth Century Fund was being raised, and a suggestion was made that this fund should be liberally supported, the amounts to be earmarked for the Woodville parsonage. During the same year other building proposals were considered.

Classrooms and Parsonage Built.

The church was now too small for the congregation. In September, 1900, it was proposed to build a gallery, but that plan was afterwards abandoned. In November the transept and vestries that complete the present church were first suggested, and the need of a parsonage was also urged. The Sunday school, however, was straightened for room, and the first buildings actually erected of those under consideration were several classrooms for

ings actually erected of those under consideration were several classrooms, for which a tender of £336 10/ was accepted on December 3, 1900. This line of rooms was erected parallel to the church and facing Woodville road. The "Iron King" had been moved to the rear of the church and faced the side street. The church enlargement had again to wait while the manse was brought into existence. Plans for a fine nine-roomed residence were approved on April 16, 1901. The tender of Mattinson and Kestel for £720 was accepted. The actual cost of the parsonage was £765, when all details were included. On May 28, 1902, the total liability on the property was £1,400, but this was being steadily reduced. Sanction was obtained to erect the transept at an estimated cost of £1,000. Tenders were called for. Messrs. Walker & Denman secured the contract at £1,079. On May 27, 1903, the only surviving members of the original trustees were Messrs. John Madden, Thomas James Mitchell, and George A. Willmore. The following names were added on June 27:—Messrs. R. Clarke, R. O. Evans, H. A. Gunter, A. Willmore, H. Mitchell, R. Bower, Captain Dingle, and H. Gartrell. On the same day the foundation stone of the transept was laid by Mr. T. J. Mitchell. He was the first of a fine trio of Sunday school superintendents. He was for many years treasurer of the trust, and filled all his offices with distinction. He was followed in the superintendency by Mr. George A. Willmore, whose term of service was remarkable both for its length and its abiding power. He married Miss Jeanes, a sister of the first church organist, and the influence of Mrs. Willmore is still one of the most gracious features in the life of the church. Perhaps the best contribution to the life of the church made by Mr. and Mrs. Willmore was a family of eight children, all of whom have become valuable workers. Mr. Percy Willmore is now Sunday school organist and teacher, trust secretary, and choir secretary; Mr. Clem Willmore is a church steward; Frank and Leonard are members of the congregation, and leaders in the young people's sporting circles; Arthur and Hurtle have left the district; Miss Hazel, now Mrs. P. M. Ryan, has married into another prominent Woodville family, her husband being an energetic member of the trust. The other daughters, Miss Elsie Willmore, Mus. Bac., has done much, as organist and leader of the choir since 1919, to maintain the high musical standard of the church.

Enlarged Church Reopened.

On December 6, 1903, the enlarged church was reopened, the preachers being the Revs. Henry Howard, W. A. Potts, and W. T. Shapley. The name of Mr. Gunter appears at this time as an active worker. He is now the Rev. H. A. Gunter, Chairman of the Broken Hill District, and one of the most efficient of the younger ministers of Methodism. Woodville has given several able young men to the ministry. The Rev. Roy Heard is now a successful Baptist Minister. The Rev. Percy Baker became a Methodist Minister, but unfortunately, a most promising career was cut short by death. The Rev. S. Blackney, and the late Rev. S. Rossiter, spent some of their early

S. Rossiter, spent some of their early years in the Woodville church. During 1906 the thankoffering system was introduced by the Rev. Isaiah Perry. In an annual collection from £70 to £90 was obtained in this way. The system is still continued with gratifying results. During this year also, the work of Mr. E. E. Mitchell had special recognition, and an address was presented to him. The complete list of trustees in 1907 was as follows:—Messrs. R. Bower, R. Clark, Capt. Dingle, W. L. Ekers, R. O. Evans, H. A. Gunter, I. Gartrell, John Madden, E. E. Mitchell, H. R. Mitchell, F. C. Marston, G. C. Tregenza, G. A. Willmore, A. Willmore, and T. Willis. In 1908 Messrs. F. Cocks, I. Jarrett, H. E. Annells, and A. Todd were made responsible trustees. Mr. Bower was responsible for the installation of electric light in 1910. Mr. Cocks, in 1912, obtained permission to erect a gymnasium hall on the premises of the trust. He undertook to erect the hall free of debt, and to make the building the property of the trust. He carried out his undertaking faithfully, obtaining contributions from church members and the general public. His departure from the district was a great loss to the church and trust. During these years of careful financial administration, the work of Miss Jarrett as collector was frequently referred to in the minutes, in terms of high praise. The last period of property improvement occurred in 1918. Miss Jessie Gartrell organized efforts and raised money for a primary school room, which was erected in front of the existing classrooms, at a cost of £165. The trustees decided to call this building the Jessie Gartrell Hall. Miss Gartrell still retains her position as superintendent of the primary department. In the same year Mr. V. H. Ryan initiated a scheme for a memorial garden, part of which was carried out, with the pleasing result that the church grounds, with unreading lawns, well-kept pathways and hedges, have become attractive and beautiful. Mr. S. Perry provided an ornamental lamp standard, which was erected near the main entrance to the garden as a memorial to Mr. J. G. Rofe. During 1920 the Ladies'

Patriotic Circle collected funds and installed two beautiful memorial windows. In this year also, the Rev. R. H. Lee inaugurated a debt-reduction scheme, by which £400 was eventually paid off the church debt, bringing the liability down to a merely nominal figure. A brass memorial in the church contains the names of 41 men who enlisted during the Great War, seven of whom made the supreme sacrifice. There are also two war memorial windows.

Family Associations.

Many families were closely identified with the church in past days. The names of Treleaven, Matthews, Palmer, Marston, and Swann will recall pleasant memories. Mr. Marston was leader of the young men's class for more than 29 years. The Tregenza family have been great workers in church and school. Mrs. D. L. Ryan has had long association with the church. Her two sons, Messrs. V. H. and P. M., fill important offices, and her daughter, Mrs. John Willmore, is a valued helper. The parents of Mr. T. and the Misses

Mrs. John Willimore, is a valued helper. The parents of Mr. T. and the Misses Willis were among the most respected of early workers. Mr. Willis is now chief usher and a member of the trust. The Gartrell family have a long record of loyal service. There are many active institutions in the church. The Sunday school is flourishing. The Women's Guild is an important philanthropic agency, dispensing much comfort to the unfortunate. The Girls' Club has provided many requisites and comforts for the manse. The Foreign Mission Auxiliary is one of the most prosperous branches of the church work. En-



REV. W. T. SHAPLEY, who did much useful work in the circuit. deavour societies are well attended. Basketball and cricket clubs cater for the physical welfare of the young people. The cricket team last year annexed the association premiership. The choir was never more efficient than at present. At the Strathalbyn competitions concluded last Saturday it was placed second out of six competing choirs. Before the erection of the manse Woodville was included in the Port Adelaide and Semaphore circuit. Since then there have been the following resident ministers:—The Revs. Thomas Piper, Henry J. Pope, William T. Shapley, Isaiah Perry, Paul C. Thomas, D. Buckley Bridgwood, William Jeffries, Ernest J. Piper (a son of the first resident minister, and now general superintendent of home missions), Ralph H. Lee, and Alfred H. Carne, a much beloved pastor, whose decease shortly after his appointment to the circuit was deeply regretted. The present superintendent, the Rev. Percy Eckersley, B.A., was appointed to Woodville by Conference last April. He received his primary education at Roseworthy Agricultural College. Later on he attended the School of Mines, and then entered the Adelaide University, where he graduated. His appointments since being ordained have included Port Broughton, Millicent, and Rose Park, and his present charge. He has been a member of several Conference committees. For

present charge. He has been a member of several Conference committees. For four years he contributed "Views and Reviews" to The Australian Christian Commonwealth, which attracted attention. He is the lecturer in New Testament to the Sunday School Union students. A man with a commanding appearance and pleasant personality, he has already established himself in the esteem of the congregation. He brings a keen, analytical mind to bear upon the subjects which he presents to his hearers, and his sermons are characterized by a deep spiritual tone.

"Passion of the Puritan."

The service last Sunday morning was conducted by Mr. Eckersley. His address was based on the text, "Be not conformed . . . but transformed" (Romans xii., 2). He said there were two main tendencies that affected the moral life so far as it was touched by religion—The Catholic and the Puritan. The Catholic idea was to use the world, its ministries of grace and beauty, that life might have beauty and proportion. The Puritan idea was to overcome the world, to bring the soul through its perilous adventure unhurt and undiminished. In a more general aspect those were the Hellenist and Hebraist principles that Matthew Arnold strove so pleasantly and ineffectively to reconcile. "The Greeks were only handsome youths," said Renan: "The Hebrews were always men." In the history of this sorry world it had been the downright and direct passion of the Puritan that had won each painful inch of social progress. Be not conformed!—the world had magnificent bribes, but more deadly was its slow contagion. Ideals that were constantly washed with inferior thought and senti-



REV. PERCY ECKERSLEY, B.A., the present minister.

ment were likely to crumble at the edge and gradually dissolve. Sudden moral collapse was less to be feared than pervasive languor. Ages of persecution had never dimmed the witness of the church, but ages of temptation had been more and

never dimmed the witness of the church, but ages of patronage had been more successful. They should be Puritans, Protestants, and passionate pilgrims. To be transformed was to be formed across, quite independently of the current of the world. A stream was sometimes superficially fretted by transient gusts, while the tidal flow was unhampered. The autocracies and democracies were perishing fancies, but the Christian programme had eternal force and sanction. The inanimate world preserved itself by simplicity and structure. So, too, the soul must be saved by a return to the elemental and by an incorporation in the life of God. The choir, under the direction of Miss Willmore, rendered Woodward's anthem, "The sun shall be no more."

The sixty-ninth article of the weekly series will deal with the Glenville Methodist Church.