

CHAPTER 7

The first 20 years

The first year was a year of great enthusiasm and determination and it is quite wonderful that those 17 men who met (three being clergymen) at Thomas Broughton's home on 4th February, 1889 were able to arrange to buy the land and have a church (or at least half a church) built within nine months. They started with nothing but enthusiasm and a purpose and it was mainly due to the courage and efforts of those men and a few more they nominated as committee members that hope became a reality. Much of the money was collected by those who undertook to canvass donations from specified streets and of course the land was partly purchased with the £1,000 mortgage money from the Church Building fund, plus £500 on an interest-free loan from the Church Building Society and some small gifts.

The opening ceremony on 2nd November, 1889 was performed by the Very Reverend William Macquarie Cowper M.A., Dean of Sydney and Administrator of the Diocese and the following members of the Clergy were also present:- Archdeacon King, Canon Rich, the Revs. A.W. Pain, F.B. Boyce, A. Killworth, T.B. Tress and A.R. Barslen.

Unfortunately no report about the opening ceremony appears in any Church record or any of the newspapers near the date, but the above members of the clergy signed the Register of Services and there is a note showing that the services on Sunday, 3rd November, 1889 were conducted by:-

	<i>Number in Congregation</i>
11 a.m. Rev. J.D. Langley	146
7.30 p.m. Rev. Arthur W. Pain	167

Officially the Church School at Glenmore Road was licensed for public worship on the petition of the Rev. A.W. Pain, Rector of St. John's Darlinghurst and for the next 2³/₄ years the Church/School was operated under the umbrella of St. John's.

For 15 months many different clergymen conducted the Sunday services, but as from 1st February, 1891 the curate of St. John's, the Rev. David Laseron conducted the morning services and the Rev. Pain took the evening services.

On 16th August, 1892 the Rev. Laseron resigned from St. John's and was licensed as minister at St. George's, Glenmore Road, and he and his family lived in 21 Ormond Street.

It is fortunate that the Rev. David Laseron wrote a book called "An Autobiography: And people I have met" and therefore we can read this version of his association with St. George's. He wrote:

CHAPTER XV

My First Charge: Five Years Rector of St. George's

Glenmore Road (Reference y)

Some of my readers will remember that I stated in the last chapter that work was waiting for me, and this was true, as I soon found out. My good friends, with whom I was then staying, had been apprized of my coming some weeks before, and had made the fact known to a very prominent clergyman, viz., the Rev. A. Pain, the Rector of one of the largest and the most important parishes in the whole of Sydney, viz., St. John's, Darlinghurst.

This gentleman had under his care a newly created mission District comprising a certain part of a suburb, Paddington by name. A School/Church had been recently built there, no settled minister had, as yet, been appointed, the Sunday services being conducted by supplies under the direction of the above-named Rector. I at first thought that I should have a quiet Sunday with my friends but this was not to be.

I received a telegram late on the first Saturday after our arrival, requesting me to come at once to St. John's Rectory, as my services would be required the next day; so I immediately started for the City. Mr. Pain was away at the time, but I was kindly received by his Curate, and also by the former gentleman's two

sons, who, as a matter of course, cordially invited me to stay at the Rectory until Mr. Pain's return the following Tuesday.

I was to preach at St. George's in the morning and St. John's in the evening. So, on the next day, I walked over to the church, which was shortly to be my sphere of labour. I found a good-sized, but unfinished building; the chancel end was completed, but the west end was simply boarded up. The interior was clean, and, considering that there was no clergyman stationed in the parish, everything was in splendid working order.

The service was by no means lacking in heartiness and dignity, but of strictly evangelical character. The congregation, however, was not very large. I preached and administered the Holy Communion. At the close of the morning service, after shaking hands with the Churchwardens and some of the workers, I returned to dine at the Rectory. I took a class in the Sunday School in the afternoon and in the evening I preached to a large congregation in the Parish Church.

On Tuesday Mr. Pain returned from his holiday; he was very kind and friendly, and engaged my services for a month at a salary at the rate of £250 per annum. During the whole of this month I boarded at the residence of the Parish Schoolmaster; and I experienced at the hands of these good people nothing but kindness, both husband and wife vying with each other to make me comfortable.

My work consisted of preaching alternately at both the places just mentioned, and in visiting during the week. At the close of the month of February I was appointed Curate in Charge - under the direction of Mr. Pain of St. George's, Glenmore Road, my stipend being confirmed. This appointment was made by his Lordship, who was, at this time, the Bishop of Sydney and Primate of the Australian Church.

Having obtained a suitable house I bought my family over and then I commenced work in real earnest. The greatest difficulty I experienced in my new sphere of labour arose from the constant changing of the population. I visited each street in perfect

order, putting down the particulars pertaining to the inhabitants systematically, something like this:- "Street, number of house, religion, if Church of England, number of children, baptized, unbaptized, confirmed, number of sick, if any." This work took three months and more; I visited regularly during the hours between two and six each afternoon, Saturday excepted.

At the end of three or more months I started again, and only too frequently found that where the people had belonged to the Church, other tenants had taken possession, and these were of another denomination, a large percentage being either Jews or Roman Catholics, and a great number were Atheists.

Numerous Church organizations were now started, amongst these were a Ladies' Auxiliary, a Young Ladies' Guild, a Mutual Improvement Society for Young Men and what was more dearer and more precious to me than any other part of my work was my Teacher's Bible Class. Nearly the whole of the five years I carried on this part of my work and when I left the attendance numbered very nearly thirty or forty.

About the middle of March my sister's family arrived, accompanied by my father. They had sustained a terrible loss on the Red Sea, having had to lay their little babe to rest in the mighty deep, the child having died through the extreme heat experienced in that part of the world.

In the month of June my dear father returned to England, bidding us a farewell: we never met again, for in the year 1894 he went to join our beloved mother in the better home above.

Some time passed away and with God's blessing I was enabled to do good work for the Master. The attendance at the services increased, the Sunday School also prospered, as well as the numerous societies and organizations in connection with the parish. It seemed as though I had found my life's work, and I began to experience the hope that I might settle down for life, or at least for a great number of years, in this my first Australian parish.

"But man proposes and God disposes" and I was soon reminded that there is nothing certain here below; and also to learn that it is well for us always to be prepared for some interruption which may suddenly occur in our life's history.

I received a letter one day from a gentleman - a parishioner - thanking me for one of my Sunday's sermons, and asking the name of the author of a piece of poetry I had quoted; the same piece to which I referred to in the early pages of this book, bearing on a mother's love. I answered, sending him at the same time a copy of the lines, telling him, however, that I did not know the author's name; and shortly afterwards I called at his house; he was at the office, being a Civil servant connected with the General Post Office, and occupying a very good position. However, I met his wife, and after a little conversation, I noticed that she was very much troubled, and tried, therefore, by kindly encouragement to find out the cause of her trouble. Alas! her husband was a confirmed drunkard. Together we knelt down, I remember it as though it were yesterday - I prayed and wrestled with God for the salvation of this unhappy man.

In a few weeks' time I met him personally, and by God's help, I was able to exercise a good deal of influence over him, getting him at last to abstain at least for a time, from drinking altogether, I was very hopeful as to results, as I really had been enabled to keep him away from the accursed thing for more than four weeks, when an event took place that was to make a great change in my life, and to cause me twelve years of almost uninterrupted suffering."

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Rather than quoting the rest of the chapter, it can be summarized by saying: Mr. Laseron heard that the gentleman had been invited to attend a picnic at which much liquor would no doubt be consumed and to save his new acquaintance from the temptation, Mr. Laseron had suggested that the two of them take a short train trip out of the city to a congenial spot where they could converse and

read and "even smoke a cigar", to which his new-found friend agreed. They caught a train at Central about 2 p.m. on the agreed day and the train was just past Redfern station when a drunken man in the adjoining carriage started firing a gun and a bullet passed through the compartment wall and lodged in Mr. Laseron's back near the spine. He did not return to St. George's, but after four operations, he sailed to England on 16 July, 1895, returning to Australia in January, 1896 as Rector of St. Paul's Church, Lithgow. Subsequently he was involved in an accident whilst travelling in a sulky. The accident dislodged the bullet, but it still could not be removed. In January 1902 he underwent an operation for the removal of his appendix and he left hospital to marry his daughter in St. George's Church on 9th April, 1902. After that he performed Sunday duties at the Ultimo Mission for 6-7 months, before leaving the ministry altogether and taking up duties as an Insurance Salesman.

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Various ministers officiated at the services during the 2 months following Mr. Laseron's accident in the train, then on 1st July, 1895 the Rev. Herbert May Trickett was licensed as Minister, which position he held for 2½ years. Attendances improved miraculously during his ministry - in fact, during his term of office he held 255 11 a.m. or 7.30 p.m. services averaging 129 members of the congregation at each service! He also held many 8 a.m. Sunday and 7.30 p.m. Wednesday services, which are not included in the count because only a few of the other ministers conducted these services. Mr. Trickett and his family lived in 46 Goodhope Street.

His first attempt to improve the status of St. George's was to persuade the Churchwardens to build a small wooden schoolroom, so that the church was used exclusively for religious services. The schoolroom was about 20 foot square and was built in the centre of the property and behind it to the left was a wooden bell tower about three metres high with a bell, which served the dual purpose

of summoning the school children during the week and the churchgoers on Sunday. Incidentally, this is the bell which now hangs from the side porch of the church as it is still used to summon churchgoers on Sundays.

Later during Mr. Trickett's term of office a large church hall was built on the western side of the property - no doubt because the small hall was too small on Sundays for all the Sunday School children attending. The small hall was let to a Miss Sinclair for shorthand classes during the week at 10/- (\$1) per month and the large hall was let to a Miss E. Hare as a private school for 10/- per week. In both contracts nothing was paid during holiday periods.

Then the Rev. Trickett concentrated on the building of the front section of the church and on 21st May, 1897 there was a special service for the completion of the church building and a fine secondhand organ was installed to the left of the chancel, so the Rev. Trickett certainly managed to make great improvements to the church during the 2½ years he was in charge, not only in regard to the buildings, but also in consolidating the congregation.

Perhaps at that stage he felt he had done all that he could for St. George's and he decided to go elsewhere to build up another parish, for in January 1898 a letter was received from the Bishop's Committee stating that the Reverend Herbert May Trickett had exchanged his incumbency with the Rev. Edward Owen of Shoalhaven and that the said exchange was duly sanctioned.

There is nothing in the church records of St. George's to give one any idea what Edward Owen was like except that he started his ministry on 1st January, 1898 when he was 33 years of age and the fact that he seldom showed the number attending the services in the church's Service Register Book would indicate he was not very careful about details.

At the meeting of 4th January, 1898 the Rev. Owen presided, as he did at the meetings of 31st January, 1898, 3rd March, 1898 and 31st March, 1898 which followed, then, for some unexplained reason,

there is a note in the Minute Book that "no meeting was held between 29th March, 1898 and 6th March, 1899" and the meeting after that shows the church was in real financial trouble. In the minutes of 8th February, 1900, the following statement appeared:-

"Considering the indebtedness of the church is increasing instead of decreasing, we (the Churchwardens) are of the opinion that steps should immediately be taken to put the finances on a sounder basis, for which purpose it is proposed as follows:-

- 1 That from 1st February 1900 the stipend be reduced to £250 per annum for 6 months and the wardens also propose to personally guarantee the payment to the Incumbent the sum of £21/5/- immediately after the first Tuesday of each month

- 2 That the offertories and proceeds of the monthly collection cards be set aside for the foregoing purpose and if the amounts received from these sources do not reach the sum of £21/5/- per month, the deficiency will be advanced by the wardens who will be repaid, as soon as the Church Funds will admit of it being done."

The meeting then closed. (The Churchwardens at that time were Messrs. Matthew Henry Stephen, Mr. J. Cox and Mr. W. Horn)

At the following meeting on 16th March, 1900 various expenses totalling £15/1/6 were passed for payment, but there were still various debts totalling £27/1/8 outstanding and only £6/4/6 in hand.

The Annual Vestry Meeting was held on 24th April, 1900 and the Rev. Owen promised to materially help in augmenting the funds during the ensuing year.

An overdraft had been arranged with the Bank and it would appear that, without being able to operate on that £50 overdraft, the church would not have been able to carry on.

On 1st January, 1901 the Rev. Robert Rook was licensed as rector, the Rev. Edward Owen having been in charge of the parish for exactly 3 years. The Rev. Rook received no stipend the first two months and only £18/10/- the third month. In the meeting of 5th March, the Rev. Rook suggested the Secretaries apply for a loan

from the Church Building Fund (no amount was specified) and also they should apply to St. Philip's Glebe for a grant of £50.

During the Annual Vestry Meeting which was held on 15th April, 1901 the Rector announced he had had an interview with the Archbishop and had placed before him the present position of the church, also the fact that the seating accommodation was insufficient and that, if the Church Building Fund could grant an interest-free loan for extra seating, he was sure there would be an increase in church attendance. Further he pointed out that during the four months of his incumbency £99/3/- had been received in offertories, which he considered was very satisfactory and showed that greater interest had been shown in the Church services.

At the same meeting it was decided the Rector's stipend should be increased from £220 to £250 per annum, but it was 2½ months later before he received the increase.

The only items of particular interest in the Annual Vestry Meeting on 22nd April, 1902 were the report by the Rector that he believed the increase in attendance at the church was principally due to the extra pews that had been installed. Also, a decision was made at the meeting that the Rector's stipend should be increased to £350 per annum, the organist's salary to £15 per annum and the Verger's to £32 per annum, so obviously the financial position was much improved.

However, by the middle of 1903 the church was in debt again and every meeting thereafter the amounts to be paid exceeded the money in the bank, so it was finally decided the church should try to obtain an interest-free loan of £400, of which £150 would be paid off the Church Building Loan and the balance put towards the £1,000 mortgage on the land, which would save the church paying £12/10/- per month interest, besides the possibility that the Archbishop might make the district a parish.

At the Annual Vestry Meeting of 12th April, 1904 the Rector asked all members of the congregation to consider what the Church had achieved and the progress made spiritually, also the debt had

been reduced to £980 on the land. As a result of this optimistic feeling, various minor works were to proceed e.g. putting up a picket fence on a stone foundation in front of the church, connecting the Rectory with a telephone and painting the small hall. In the following month's meeting the following amounts were passed for payment:-

Hire of bullock moving stones, etc.	£ 3. 9.0
Hire of bullock laying foundation stone for fence	4.10.0
Timber	6. 0.0
Nails	2.6
Painting small hall	5. 0.0
Painting fence	1. 0.0
	<u>£15.12.6</u>

In December 1904 it was decided to hold a Moonlight Excursion to raise some money to pay the £25 promissory note due to be paid on 1st February, 1905. The ferry cost was £5/10/- and 400 tickets were to be printed.

It must have been a great success as three Harbour Cruises were planned for the Summer to raise funds.

Just as a matter of interest: During a meeting early in 1905 it was decided a formal complaint should be made about the noise of the horse buses passing the Church on Sunday mornings, also the noise emanating from the Royal Hotel, so apparently the hotel opened on Sundays in those days!

One year later the Church was again in financial trouble as the Treasurer wrote to the Church Building Fund Committee asking it not to present the Promissory Note for £25 as "if the Church were asked to pay it by the due date, *it would throw us absolutely on our beam end*". The Treasurer certainly had a very graphic way of expressing the situation!

It is interesting to note that as early as 1906 the Federal Elections were held in our halls, the charge being:-

Large Hall	£3/10/6 per day
Both Halls	£4/4/- per day

The financial position was obviously very serious early in 1908 for an amount of £96 was owing to the Rector at that time. He

had generously offered that the amount owing to him be regarded as £75/10/- but this kind offer was not accepted.

During this period Mr. Robert Graham's name appears frequently in the Minutes of meetings. No doubt he is the same person in whose memory the brass plate in the entrance porch has been erected. It reads:-

In memory of
ROBERT GRAHAM
erected by the Sunday School
Children
whom he loved
Died 10th September 1909

The Vestry Meeting of 28th April, 1908 and a continuation meeting of same announced the outstanding amount owing on the organ had been paid. It also mentioned that the Organist Mr. Plummer had been forced to resign, as he was leaving the State. Mrs. Withers, a member of the congregation, volunteered to act as organist in a voluntary capacity, but the Church Council felt unable to accept this kind offer. However, Council said it would be pleased to appoint her as deputy organist, which she gladly accepted.

The year finished with the Church in a reasonably stable condition (although some money was still owing to the Rector) and there was still £980 owing for the land, but at least the organ had been paid for and all other debts met.

The meetings of 6th January, 1909 and 3rd February, 1909 were chaired by the Rev. Richard Rook, but no mention was made of his resignation. However, the resignation took place as from 1st March, 1909 and the meeting of 3rd March, 1909 was chaired by Mr. Cox, one of the churchwardens.

The Minutes state that during the months St. George's would be without a permanent rector, the churchwardens had made arrangements with the Rev. E.S. Lumsdaine to take charge of the services, the remuneration being £4/-/- per week. A Mr. Parish, a member of the congregation, expressed the regret of the meeting at the departure of the Rev. Rook and also its congratulations on his appointment to

a parish and the hope that he would have every success and prosperity in his new sphere of work. Mr. Wenbon seconded the motion.

Mr. Cox was again in the chair for the meeting of 20th April, 1909, but for the meeting of 5th May, 1909 the Rev. Richard Todd was in the chair, his appointment as Rector having taken effect from 1st May, 1909.

From the very first meeting it appeared Mr. Todd was a man of action, for he proposed two procedures which were adopted by the meeting:

- 1 Proceeds of the Sales of Work were to be devoted towards the indebtedness, not the upkeep of the church.

- 2 The Centennial Fund Committee was to be approached for a grant of £50 and the Standing Committee of Synod would be asked to cancel arrears of assessment money.

The Rev. Todd had obviously spoken to the congregation about the necessity of reducing the church debt for the Sunday School children expressed their willingness to help the financial position and voted £5/-/- from their funds and also they agreed to give their first collection each month to church funds.

At the June Parish Council meeting it was decided the congregation would be asked to give an extra amount in the offertory at the end of each month and when the usual collection for the month was deducted, whatever extra was collected was to be paid against the church debt.

The minutes of the meeting on 6th July, 1909 state the Church Society had agreed to give St. George's a grant of £20, but the Centennial Fund said no grant would be forthcoming and as for the arrears in assessments, the Parish Council had been advised it would have to make a direct appeal to the Synod at its next session. It was decided to make a strong appeal to the Centennial Fund at the next meeting for a further grant.

In the following month's minutes there is mention that the Paddington Council was going to prosecute the church if the rates were not paid within a few days. The new Rector said he would contact the Council and he must have been very persuasive as the rates were actually not paid until June 1910!

That was the position of the Church at the end of its first 20 years.

Mr. Laseron, the first Rector of St. George's, said in his book in the chapter "My First Charge - Five Years Rector of St. George's, Glenmore Road" which has been quoted already said: "Numerous Church Organizations were now started, amongst these were a Ladies' Auxiliary, a Young Ladies' Guild, a Mutual Improvement Society for Young Men and what was dearer and more precious to me than any other part of my work was my Bible Study Class". Unfortunately there is only one book in the church records about any of these activities at the time of which we are now speaking (1889-1909) and that concerns the Mutual Improvement Society for Young Men. The members met every Monday night and their activities were really amazing. Apparently they also played cricket or held swimming contests against groups from other Protestant Churches at the week-ends. Following is a list of some of their activities:-

Saturday 26.9.09	Cricket Match against St. Judes.
Monday 28.9.09	Mock Trial - wet weather but good attendance as some friends came
Saturday 3.10.09	Cricket Club "bye day". Spent day at La Perouse
Monday 12.10.09	Rev. Richard Todd chaired monthly meeting at which the following month's programme was outlined, new members received, also questions were handed in for answering at future meeting.
Saturday 17.10.09	Visit to Parliament House
Monday 19.10.09	Young Women's Institute invited our members to their social
Monday 26.10.09	Mock Trial (participants named)
Monday 2.11.09	Monthly meeting
Saturday 7.11.09	Some members gave interesting talks about their trades - Printing, Building and Locksmithing
Saturday 21.11.09	Visit to Lighthouse South Head - then a restaurant entertained by Mr. Todd

Monday 6.12.09

Young Women's Institute members invited to the Men's Social Evening

Monday 3.1.10

Members Swimming Handicap won by B. Walker. It was decided the meetings would be held only fortnightly until the end of February and on alternate Monday evenings members would visit one of the beaches.

FIRST TWENTY YEARS (1889-1909)

Number of Marriages 781

Number of Baptisms 322