



Bexhill Wesleyan Church - opened 31st May 1885

*Our First
100 Years*

1885

1985

For a great number of people there is in Bexhill a place which to them is one of the most sacred places on God's earth. Within the walls of the present church; within the walls of the old church which once stood on the hill above, sinners have been converted, believers have been strengthened in their most holy faith, little ones have been dedicated to God in the Sacrament of Infant Baptism, love has been sealed with the blessing of God before the marriage altar, and dear ones committed back to the safe keeping of God who gave them.

For over one hundred years a faithful witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ has been proclaimed around the hills and vales of Bexhill to all who would hear.

DEDICATION . . .

To our pioneer fathers who established the faith; to all ministers who have preached the gospel; to all Sunday School teachers who have taught the young; to all organists who have made music and to all who have adorned with beautiful flowers and surrounded with loving care, this church, because it is the House of God . . . this booklet is dedicated.

A PRAYER FOR TODAY

Jesus the master carpenter, who thru' wood and nails has purchased man's whole salvation, wield well Thy tools in this workshop of Thine, that we who come rough-hewn to Thy service; may, by Thee, be fashioned to a truer beauty, for Thine own sake.

Amen.

050257

*Moore College
Library*

*Margaretta Mary Woodruff
Memorial Library*



BEXHILL WESLEYAN SUNDAY SCHOOL — 1898

Group includes Rev. Potts (Methodist, Lismore), James Black (Superintendent), Maggie Black, teacher (next Rev. Potts), Maggie Elliott (Mrs. Ray Granger), Minnie Windsor (Mrs. Les Virtue), Miss Dellie Windsor, Jessie Brewer (Mrs. T. McMullen).



THE FIRST CHURCH

Built 1885 at a cost of £ 74. Note shingle roof. plain wall boards. The contrasting porch was added in 1905 and cost £ 60. Bride, Marjorie Sharpe, groom Stan Virtue — the last couple to be married in the old church in 1924.

IN THE DAYS OF LONG AGO . . .

It was not long after the arrival of the first white settlers to the Bexhill area that services of Christian Worship were begun. Earliest services were held in the humble dwellings of the first settlers, including: Mr. Hughie Cameron and Mr. William McKinnon (Boatharbour), and Mr. George Windsor (Bexhill), Presbyterian families as their names suggest. The first church was erected as a community effort on a commanding site just below the cemetery, the land donated by Mr. John Noble (Wesleyan), the foundation blocks were given by Mr. George Windsor (Presbyterian); other pioneering families of these two denominations donating materials, money and working together under the direction of the builder, Mr. McDonald, of Corndale. At a cost of £ 74 the first Bexhill Church was opened for worship on 31st May, 1885.

The Wesleyan newspaper, "The Weekly Advocate" reported, on the 4th July, 1885, the opening as follows:

NEW CHURCHES BEXHILL, RICHMOND RIVER

The new church was opened on Sunday, 31st May, when the Rev. F. C. Boyer preached in the morning and the Rev. R. Inglis, M.A. (Presbyterian), in the afternoon, there being a large congregation on each occasion. The offertories on behalf of the building fund amounted to £ 2/9/9. The church is 36 x 18½ ft., of plain weatherboard, with shingle roof and seats of pine.

A tea meeting was held on the following Wednesday, when the friends, not only of Bexhill, but from Lismore and the country round, gathered in such numbers that the tables were three times filled, and ample justice was done to an excellent repast.

After tea the chair was taken by the Rev. F. C. Boyer, who heartily congratulated the Bexhill people on the completion of their new and commodious church. He stated that, while the people generally had given and worked willingly and well, special praise was due to Messrs. Noble, Lee and Clark, who had been in the forefront of the enterprise.

The total cost of the building was about £ 70; towards this £ 40 had already been raised by subscriptions and the Sunday services, and he hoped that by the gathering of that night something substantial would be done towards clearing off the remaining £ 30. He expressed great pleasure that at the opening of their new Wesleyan church they were favoured with the presence of two Presbyterian ministers, and then called upon the Rev. R. Inglis, M.A.

The Rev. R. Inglis (Presbyterian) urged charity between the different denominations, and dwelt forcibly upon the importance of public worship.

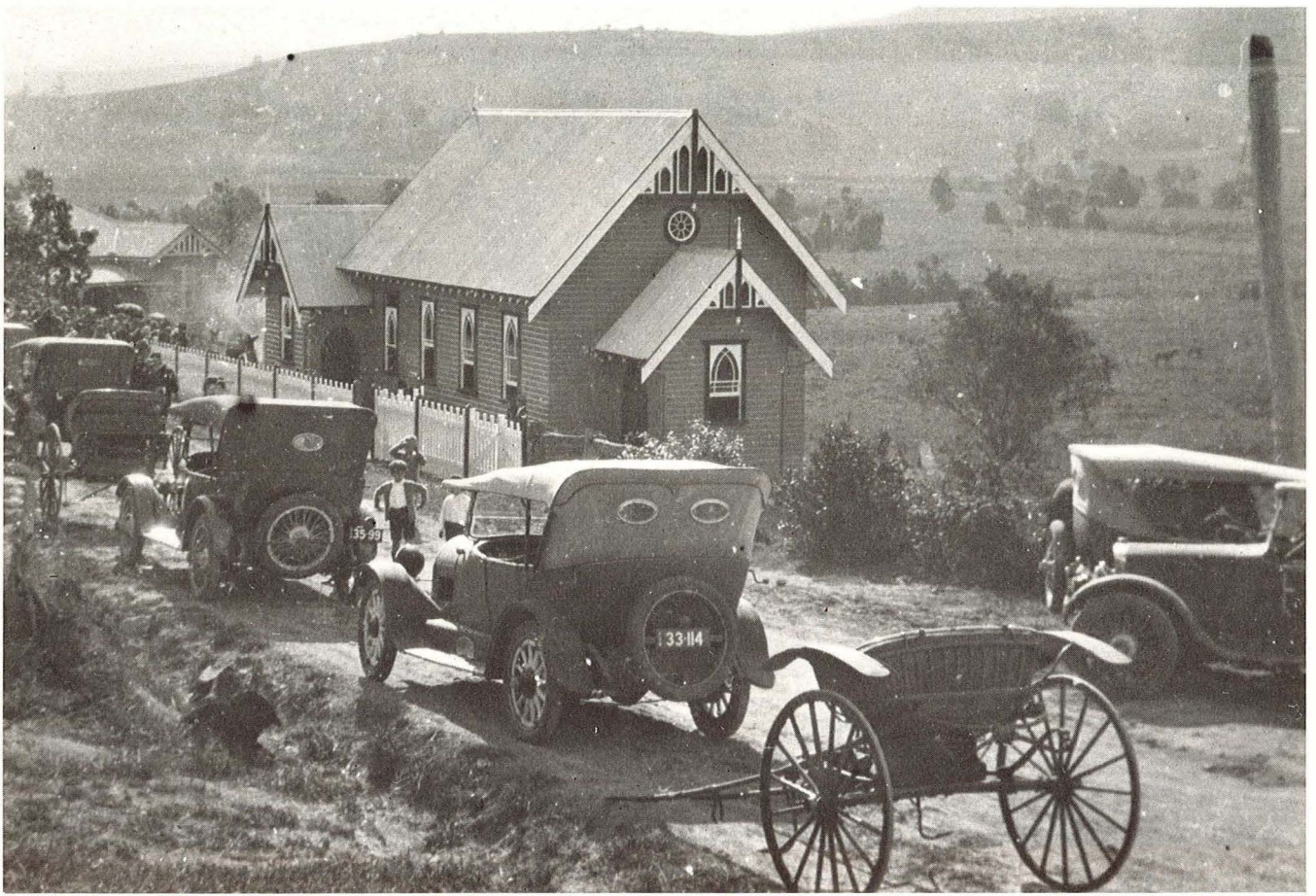
The Rev. Thomas Osborne (Presbyterian) related some of his experiences of America and its Churches.

The Rev. J. H. Lewin pointed out a number of ways in which worshippers could aid their ministers, and then made an appeal for the speedy clearing off of the debt upon the church.

The chairman then invited contributions towards the removal of the debt, and was soon enabled to announce that towards the £ 30 needed £ 18 had been contributed, thus leaving only £ 12 debt upon the building, a result deemed highly satisfactory by all.

The members of the Cowlong Good Templar's singing class did good service during the evening by rendering a selection of sacred music.

The Bexhill Wesleyan Church was a small, shingle-roofed structure, lacking both a porch and vestry, the interior unlined at first. Services, tea meetings and concerts were held in the light of kerosene lamps. The first organist Miss Virgil Osborne was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, who farmed at Numulgi during the week and herself collected, on horseback, the donations to buy the organ. The superintendent of the Union Sunday School was for many years Mr. John Noble. The United Church Choir of 30 voices under the baton of Mr. Fred Crowther rendered valuable service to the church and was successful in the Cowlong Musical Festival. A later choirmaster was Mr. Dick Edwards. As the years rolled by, improvements were made to the church, gas lighting was installed, the church extended, a porch added, a new organ purchased by the choir, but in 1913 it was decided to erect a new building. This was actually opened on Wednesday, 21st July, 1926 during the ministry of Rev. S. W. Bonner, Mrs. Robert Virtue Snr., performing the opening ceremony.



The opening day of the new church.



The Interior.

THE NEW CHURCH

The Northern Star (24/7/26) reported on the opening of the present church as follows:

BEXHILL METHODISTS NEW CHURCH OPENED

BAND OF ENTHUSIASTIC WORKERS

The official opening of the new Methodist Church at Bexhill took place on Wednesday afternoon last in the presence of a large and representative attendance. The picnic luncheon at noon in the grounds adjoining the church was a particularly happy function. The bounteous provisioning and arrangements left nothing to be desired. Friends from near and far joined in pleasing social fellowship.

The opening ceremony took place at 1.45 p.m. by Rev. S. W. Bonnor (chairman of North Coast district, and minister of the church. After the singing of the Old Hundred and prayer, the Rev. R. B. Lew, B.A., (Ballina), requested Mrs Robert Virtue to turn the key in the door and open the church to "The glory of God and the extension of His Kingdom". Mr Bonnor referred to the high esteem in which Mrs. Virtue was held, not only by Bexhill congregation but the entire community. He was pleased that Mrs Virtue had graciously consented to officially open the church and had pleasure in asking her acceptance of a gold inscribed key brooch as a memento of the occasion.

The congregation crowded the church, many being unable to gain admittance. During the service in the church Mr. Bonnor extended a welcome to the visiting minister and friends from other centres in the district. The president of the Lismore Ministers' Fraternal, Rev. David Galloway, extended cordial greetings and his gratification at the erection of so pleasing and suitable a church at Bexhill, and extended congratulations on the fine work accomplished and the excellence of the financial statement of the building fund. He referred to the happy, holy and helpful memories that cluster around an old church and prayed that abundant blessing would rest upon the worship and fellowship of the new church.

Mr. Marshall Virtue, treasurer since 1919, gave the cost of building as £ 800 and the debt as £ 130. The Trust secretary, Mr. W. W. James, J.P., listed the many beautiful and costly gifts donated as furnishings of the church.

Rev. S. Bonnor, in his address, referred to the great work of the trustees, Ladies' Church Aid and the congregation which had made the splendid success, which had been achieved, possible. He spoke of the place, message and ministry of the church in modern life, of the need of a simpler creed, a more beautiful and reverent service, a magnifying of the privilege and responsibility of church membership, and supremely the glorifying of the risen Christ, the great Head of the Church.

During the service Mr. R. E. Noble, of Lismore sang "Nearer my God to Thee", Miss Lockton and Mr. Brockington presiding at the organ. The service closed with the hymn, "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord", and the Benediction by Rev. S. W. Bonnor.

The new building was described ("N. Star" 24/7/26) as being of weatherboard lined with fibro-plaster with dado; Gothic in design with cathedral glass windows, with porch and spacious vestry, and lit throughout with acetylene gas. The dimensions are 36' x 20'.

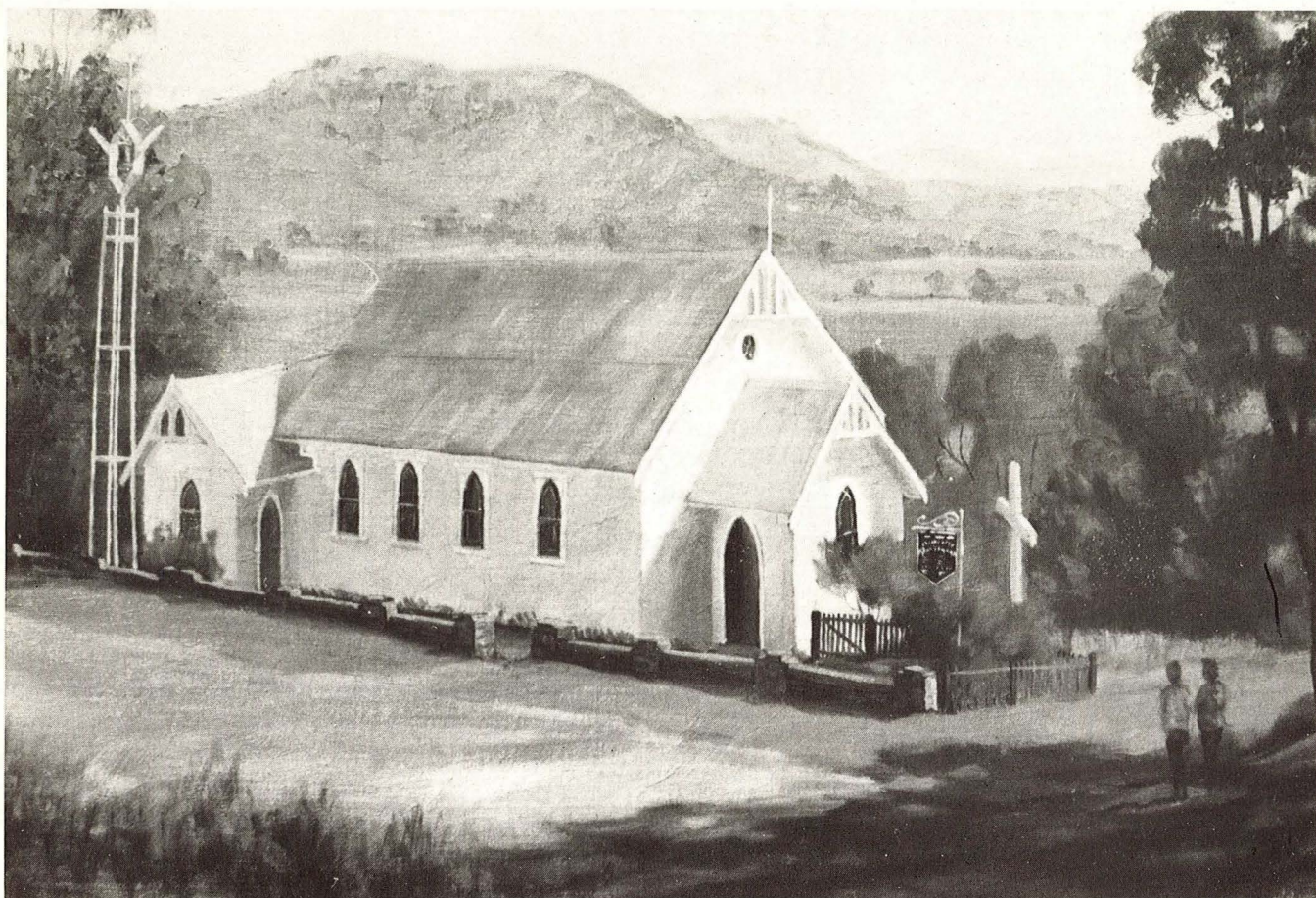
The thanks of the church officers are due to Mr. H. Walker, of Lismore, who undertook the sale by auction of the old church. Reference was also made by the chairman to the excellent work of the contractor, Mr. W. Gaggin of Bexhill.

THE PASSING YEARS . . .

As a result of the efforts of the Ladies' Church Aid, all debts were extinguished by 1928. In this year the L.C.A. donated a new bedroom suite to the Lismore Parsonage and later an ice chest and linoleum for the Parsonage breakfast room. The old timers still remember the astonishing Flower Show and Sale of Work in 1927 with 500 entries; a gold wristlet watch as first prize for the best jam sandwich (36 entries) and a gold medal for the mouth organ competition.

In 1933 a great "Back to Bexhill" Sunday was held, the old choir re-formed and rendered anthems under the baton of Mr. D. Edwards. A great concert and get together was staged on the Wednesday night following. The Golden Jubilee was held in 1935 with services conducted by the Rev. L. M. K. Mills, Superintendent of Lismore Circuit and Rev. A. S. Brooks, Presbyterian Minister of Clunes. The Jubilee Concert on the Wednesday evening was a memorable event. At the concert a large birthday cake with its 50 candles had a special place of prominence, the candles being lit by Mrs. Ramsay (nee Miss Amy Noble), and Mrs. Sharpe, both these ladies being present as little girls when the original church was opened.

On the Saturday a basket picnic was held in the Church grounds. The church later proved inadequate to accommodate the company that assembled to listen to the reminiscences of the olden days by the early pioneers. A greeting came from the Rev. A. M. Martin, a former pupil of the Sunday School who in later years was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland. Rev. Dr. F. H. Rayward, O.B.E., Superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission, Sydney, for twenty years, and who each week in the Lyceum Hall commanded the largest regular worshipping congregation of any denomination in the Commonwealth, was also once a pupil in the Bexhill Sunday School.



1985
Church of the Good Shepherd, Bexhill, from a painting by Max Price.



THE SANCTUARY
Adorned for a candlelight wedding.

IMPROVEMENTS

With the passing of the years various improvements were made to the church and its surrounds. The acetylene gas lighting was replaced in 1938 when the lights were switched on by Mrs. Robert Virtue Snr., who in 1926 opened the church door to worship. The Rev. R. B. Lew, B.A., minister of the church, later President-General of the Methodist Church in Australia, conducted the service. Other improvements included the laying of concrete paths. On the conclusion of the war the Honour Roll was erected to honour the memory of the dead and the service of the returning soldiers. Particular interest attaches to the Hymn Board made and donated by Mr. Len Mitchell, of Ipswich, a returned soldier and chance worshipper, who died after its completion and before its dedication by Rev. S. M. Barrett in 1949.

A MAJOR RESTORATION

By the early 1950's the church had fallen into a state of considerable disrepair and it was decided to carry out a major restoration and refurbishing. The church was completely repainted inside and out, the pews stripped of their dark stain and refinished, the floors sanded and polished, a beautiful silky oak reredos added above the pulpit, a rich red aisle carpet provided by the Ladies Aid and memorial lighting installed. The rededication of the church to the Glory of God took place on the 29th March, 1953.



The 1953 Interior.

In the thirty years to follow four further significant developments were to be completed:

- The creation of a Sanctuary in 1955.
- The provision of a Pipe Organ in 1962.
- The opening of a Fellowship Centre in 1971.
- The Dedication of a Memorial Bell & Tower in 1981.

THE SANCTUARY

Early in 1955 the Virtue Family offered to provide a stained glass window of the Good Shepherd as a family memorial. In order that the window might serve to its greatest advantage the trustees decided to dispose of the church's 1926 central pulpit and

recently added reredos. These were sold to the Federal Methodist Church. This permitted the creation of an entirely new sanctuary area dominated by the beautiful Good Shepherd Window.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD WINDOW

The window is of considerable historic interest. It was fashioned in the studios of John Radecki now a forgotten Polish artist whose body lies in an unmarked grave Lot 125, R/C Section 1, of the Woronora Cemetery.

John Radecki was born in Poland and after being educated at Posen, migrated with parents and brothers and sisters to Sydney. His father was Paul Radecki the youngest son by a second marriage of Count Jose de Radetz or Dradec, 1766-1858. The Count was an Austrian Army Officer who after distinguished service in the Napoleonic Wars became a nation hero.

His grandson John, who lived in Hurstville, was an artist of great natural talent, this being outstandingly developed as a pupil of the famous Julian Ashton School in Sydney. John's artistic talents led him to the design, study and manufacture of stained glass, and in partnership with John Ashwin (Ashwin & Co.) he opened a small factory in Dixon Street, Sydney, and when Ashwin died John Radecki bought out his share.

Various clays were imported from Czechoslovakia for making the glass; all paints were made and hand mixed by John, and the glass was fired in his ovens. He became renowned as a stained-window-glass artist, designing and manufacturing many exquisite pieces, for cathedrals and churches throughout Australia. John Radecki died on May 10th, 1955 aged 90 years.

One of his sisters attempted to carry on the work, but she was neither a businesswoman nor an artist of the talented calibre of her brother, and the stained-glass manufacture ceased. The many sets of painted designs and black & white plans sketched by John, and the secret formulae of the coloured glasses, disappeared after his death . . . Today, John Radecki lies in a forgotten grave.

THE FELLOWSHIP CENTRE

In the 1950's the Bexhill Sunday School had become one of the largest village Sunday Schools in N.S.W. with an enrolment of almost 100 scholars and a staff of twelve teachers drawn from Bexhill and surrounding centre.

With only the church available, classes were regularly held out of doors, under trees, in cars and in the waiting room of the railway station. There was also an enrolment of 40 teenagers in the Youth Fellowship. Over the years many schemes for the provision of suitable accommodation for the Sunday School and Youth Fellowship were considered. Eventually Marjorie Virtue offered to donate a farm cottage for removal to the church for remodelling as a Fellowship Centre. The extensive remodelling and restoration was carried out mainly by the voluntary work of local residents of all denominations. New doors, windows and furnishings were given as memorials and thank offerings. The 60 year old farm house, converted to a modern Fellowship Centre was dedicated to the Glory of God on 31st July, 1971 by Rev. Alan Walker, President of the N.S.W. Methodist Conference.

THE ORGAN

The pipe organ within the Bexhill church is of considerable historic interest as the original organ from which the Bexhill organ was in part fashioned was built in 1881, the year John Noble, who gave the ground for the first church, settled in Bexhill.

The 1881 organ was in fact constructed in a Melbourne brewery by an Englishman, Alfred Fuller who was by trade a brewer. Fuller was 26 years of age when he arrived in Melbourne from England on the good ship Oxford in May 1871.

In England he had studied organ building as well as brewing but he evidently considered the opportunities from brewing to be more rewarding in Australia for, having sufficient capital, he immediately purchased property, erected buildings and installed brewing plant. This was next to the Clifton Hotel in High Street, in the Melbourne suburb of Kew. The brewery flourished from 1872 till 1880 when the name abruptly changed from 'Kew Brewery' to Organ Builder!

Fuller in fact started organ building in his brewery in 1879 in order to complete his first organ in time for display at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-1881. This large three manual organ unfortunately broke down whilst being judged at the exhibition. Despite this it received a most prestigious placement in the Toorak Presbyterian Church where it was installed in 1881. The church bought it from Fuller for £960. He soon became recognised as an organ builder of outstanding artistry and between 1880 and 1899 built some 25 pipe organs, mainly for significant city churches in Melbourne, Bendigo and Ballarat.

THE BARLOW ORGAN

In 1881, however, Fuller built a two manual and pedal pipe organ for the residence of Andrew Henry Barlow of Ipswich, Queensland.

This was only the second organ to be built by Fuller and it was from this organ that the Bexhill organ originated.

Andrew Barlow was the manager of the Bank of Australasia at Ipswich but later became a parliamentarian — first elected in 1888 and re-elected in 1893. Just before the pipe organ for his residence arrived from Melbourne in 1881 Barlow decided it might be too powerful for installation in his home even though he'd had a special room built for it.

In the hope of overcoming this predicament Andrew Barlow wrote to the Ipswich Congregational Church on Sunday 14th November, 1881, offering to sell the organ to the church.

The church has kindly provided an actual copy of Barlow's letter — addressed to the Reverend Elijah Greenwood.

Ipswich 14 Nov^r 1881

My dear Sir, I hear that there is some idea among the Congregationalists of getting an organ for your church and I shall be much obliged if you will bring forward the following facts — I have had an organ built in Melbourne which will be ready for shipment in about six weeks. I have also built a room for it which I think is too small for its immense power — If your people like to treat with me I will let them have the organ at the contract price and if required give them long credit at moderate interest. Until negotiations go further I cannot disclose the contract price because I long ago have promised the builder not to do so as he says he will not build another for the same sum, but I do not intend to lose ^{wish to} gain by it and all the contract papers shall be produced if the negotiation takes place. This is a chance for you that may not occur again. It would take 9 months to build another organ as all the metal work comes from England — I went to Melbourne especially to order the organ and to consult with organ builders and I also got estimates from English builders — and every care has been exhausted to

ALFRED FULLER
ORGAN-BUILDER
KEW
MELBOURNE

make the organ "perfection"
 The builder is a man of means
 and I can get from him
 such a guarantee as will
 prevent any possibility of loss
 from faulty work, but this
 is quite unlikely as he
 writes me that everything is
 superior to English work -
 It will have "water blowing crank"
 foot blower - and hand blower
 One word in confidence -
 do not be too much influenced
 by professional musicians
 as I shall give them no
 "tip" which they always look
 for when they give any
 opinion on these matters.
 Kindly let me have an
 early acknowledgment of
 this letter as the organ
 will soon be ready for
 shipment. -
 Yours very faithfully

Charles Fuller
 P.S. Until something is decided
 one way or the other will
 you and the Deacons please
 consider this offer as being
 private and confidential

At a meeting of the church on Wednesday, 29th December, 1881, a vote was taken 10/10 and the chairman put in his casting vote against. However on Tuesday, 7th June, 1882, the church authorities agreed to the purchase of the organ for 300 pounds. Mr. Barlow then made a donation of 10 pounds but charged the church 34 pounds 5 shillings for erection. Because Mr. Barlow was very anxious that the organ should remain in Ipswich he offered the church very liberal terms . . . 5 years to pay, yearly interest of 7%, payments to be a minimum of 20 pounds.

FLOODS

At the time no one realised the trials and tribulations that were to befall this organ. It began on Friday, February 4, 1893, when a severe flood devastated Ipswich, covering the church and carrying away the small original wooden church next door, built in 1855, and then used as a Sunday School. Fortunately on the previous day the organ had been dismantled and stored in an upper room of the building society, however the water rose there and damaged parts of the organ. Five years later on Monday, 11th January, 1898, water also threatened the organ during a flood but Brisbane organ builders (Whitehouse) managed to remove it before the water got to it.

Over the years much thought was given to the construction of a new church in a flood free position but in 1935, the 1870 church in it's existing location was extensively renovated, with the original tracker organ built by Fuller in 1881 being completely rebuilt, enlarged and electrified, including an entirely new detached console. The 'new' organ was built by Whitehouse Bros. of Brisbane at a cost of 1350 pounds, boasted nearly 1300 pipes including most of the pipes from the 1881 Fuller organ and was reputed to be "one of the finest organs in Queensland". But within a few years this superb and historic organ was to be destroyed by fire.

THE FIRE

This occurred on Monday 16th February, 1953, at 5.30 in the afternoon. A nearby resident noticed smoke issuing from the church. When firemen arrived they found the fire to have been in the organ and to have spread through the organ pipes into the ceiling. The great and pedal organ sections of the organ were completely destroyed. The fire was believed to have been deliberately lit by an intruder. Because the damage was so great the organ was never rebuilt. Only two parts of the organ, located away from the main case, survived — namely the console provided new in 1935 and later sold to All Saints Anglican Church, Wickham Terrace, Brisbane and the pipes of the swell organ sold to various Brisbane churches.

And this meant the end of the historic 1881 Charles Fuller organ. Strangely, not so!

THE BIRTH OF AN ORGAN

Away back in the 1930's a Brisbane man was dreaming of one day building a pipe organ for his own house. When in 1935 Whitehouse Bros. carried out the major reconstruction of the organ in the Ipswich Congregational Church, discarding the original 1881 Fuller Keyboards and a set of Open Diapason metal pipes the Brisbane man secured these as the basis of his dream organ.

The amateur organ builder was Leslie Robert Somerville a carpenter by trade and a close friend of the Whitehouse family.

With the firm telling him how to build a pipe organ, Les Somerville commenced his mammoth task, first building the splendid silky oak console now in Bexhill Church. With the guidance of Whitehouse Bros., and some assistance of their employees he proceeded to fashion the various other parts of the organ including the making of scores of wooden organ pipes.

A matter of particular interest is that the bellows for the Somerville/ later Bexhill organ came from the huge four manual pipe organ built in 1891-92 by Henry Willis and Sons, London for the Queensland National Association for their exhibition building at the Brisbane Showground, now the Queensland Museum building.

But the Q.N.A. went bankrupt and was taken over by City Council. The organ, with the assistance of public subscription, became the property of the council and was rebuilt and enlarged in 1927-1929 by Henry Willis and Sons (London) and Whitehouse Bros, Brisbane and installed in the new Brisbane City Hall, the massive organ now, boasting five manuals.

The 1892 'Bexhill' bellows came from the 1929 Brisbane City Hall installation.

Leslie Robert Somerville completed the organ for his residence at Thistle Street, Gordon Park in 1940. Shortly after the war he moved to a new residence at Little Barron Street, Kedron, taking the organ with him and erecting it in his lounge room where it stood for the next 12 years until he again moved house.

It was shortly after this that the organist of Bexhill Church, Grant Virtue, conceived the idea of obtaining a small discarded pipe organ for Bexhill Church. Despite extensive inquiries throughout Australia and overseas only one such instrument was located this being the residence organ of Mr

Somerville which at the time was in storage, meaning it had to be purchased without it being seen erected or heard played.

Notwithstanding the Bexhill trustees decided to purchase the organ for £250 and in December 1961 the $\frac{3}{4}$ ton dismembered instrument was conveyed via a church member's pig lorry, Clive Bryant, from Brisbane to the Bexhill Church.

The work of completely overhauling and installing the organ in Bexhill Church began on 1st January, 1962, and was carried out voluntarily under the supervision of Brisbane organ builder H.W. Jarratt.

It took six months to complete the task with work often continuing into the early hours of the morning as the dedication date drew near.

The organ and its many memorials were dedicated to the Glory of God on Sunday 22nd, July, 1962 at 11.00 a.m. by the minister of the church Rev. Arthur Buxton. The combined Lismore Methodist and Presbyterian Choir was conducted by William Blair. The organist was Grant Virtue with seven brass and percussion players. Almost 250 district residents attended the dedication service.

The inaugural recital on Monday 23rd July, 1962 at 8.00 p.m. was presented by Arthur Brockington, the congregation overflowing into the aisle and sanctuary.

Over the years various tonal improvements have been made.

In 1964 a Salicional Stop was dedicated to the memory of John Noble, the donor of the ground for the original Bexhill Wesleyan Church and his wife Isabella — the gift of their grandchildren.

In 1981 a large scale Sub Bass stop was installed adding much needed weight of tone to the bass department of the organ. These pipes have been set aside for memorial purposes.

The origin of the various sets of pipes is of particular interest —

- Open Diapason 8' (metal) from 1881 Fuller organ.
- Stopped Diapason 8' (wood) made by Walter Emerson Toowoomba, voiced by Paul Fulcher Walker's Aust.
- Open Flute 4' (wood) from Somerville Organ.
- Bourdon 16' (wood) from Somerville Organ.
- Salicional 8' (metal) secured 1964 from residence organ of Arthur Lord, Killara, N.S.W.
- Sub Bass 16' (wood) secured 1979 from organ of Methodist Church, Carrington Road, Strathfield, from three manual organ built by W. L. Roberts, of Adelaide in 1925.

Grateful appreciation is expressed to the following for generously supplying historical information and photographs for this article—

Graeme Rushworth, Turramurra; David Vann, Carseldine; Alex and Bryan Capern, Ipswich; Les Langham, Tarragindi; and Noel Somerville, Ashgrove.



1940

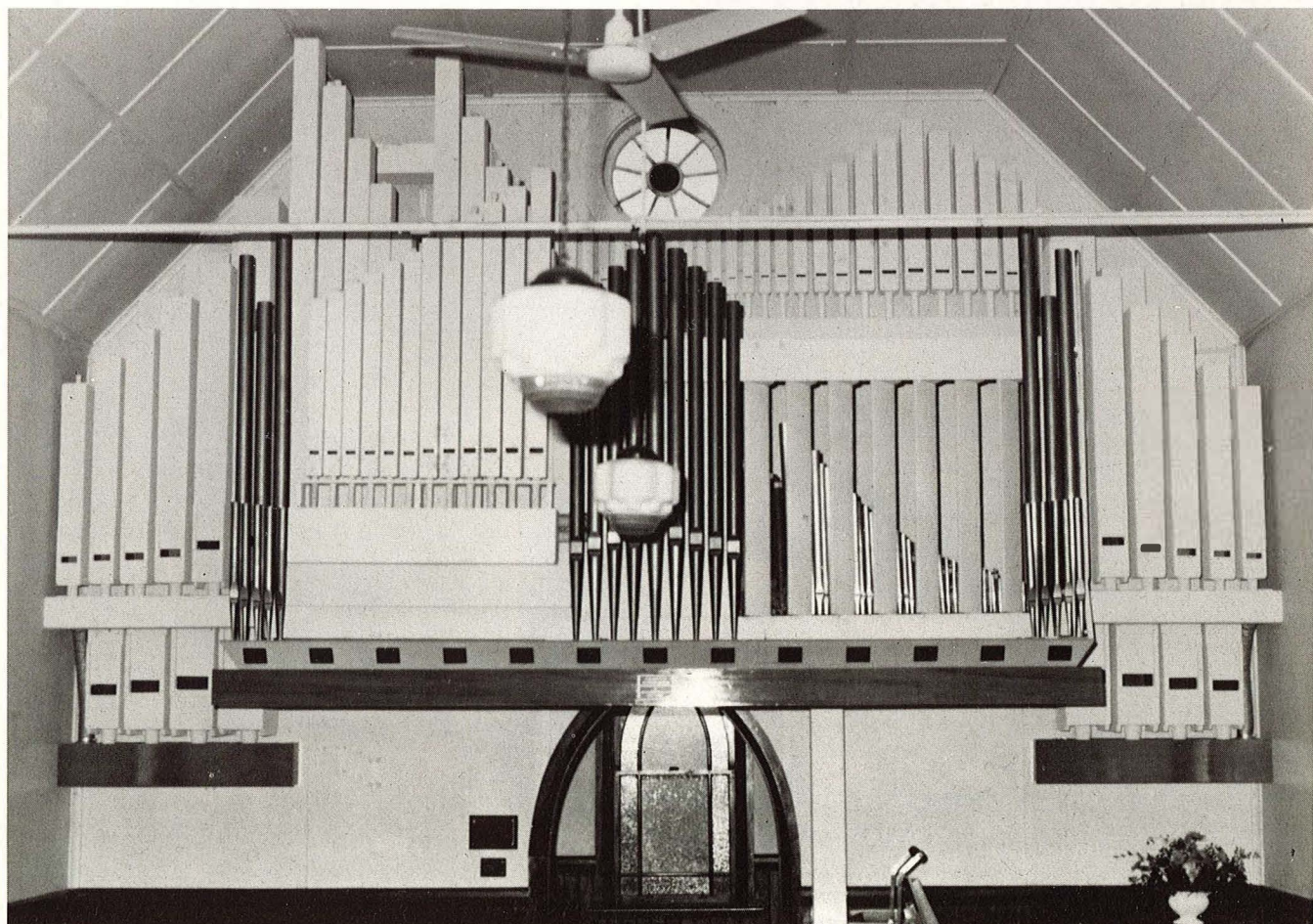
The Somerville Residence Organ.



1882
*Alfred Fuller Organ, built 1881, newly installed
 in Ipswich Congregational Church.*



1935
*The rebuilt and enlarged Fuller organ. Large
 centre section completely destroyed by fire
 1953.*



1961
Somerville residence organ as installed in Bexhill Church with 1981 additions.

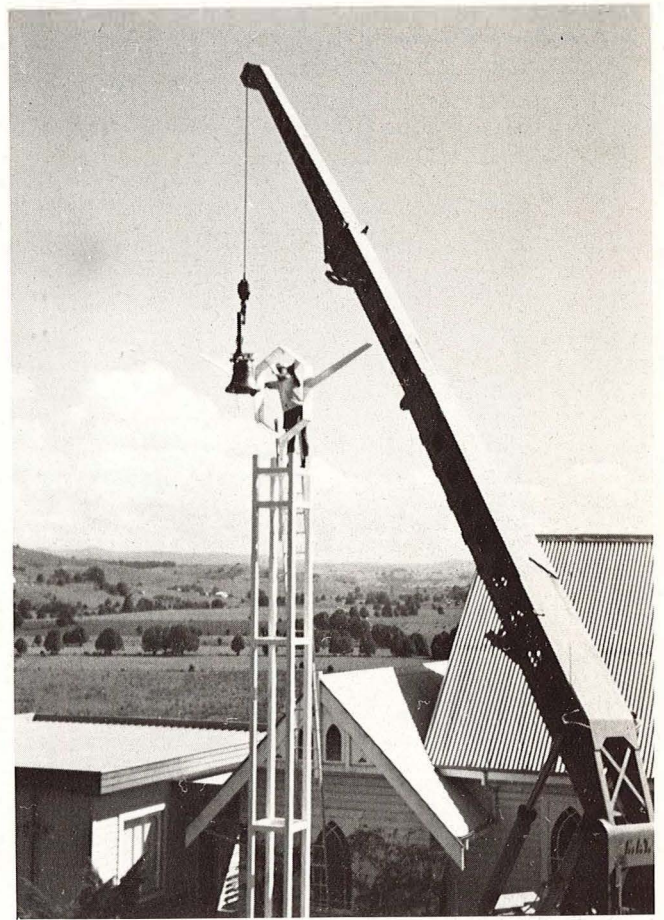
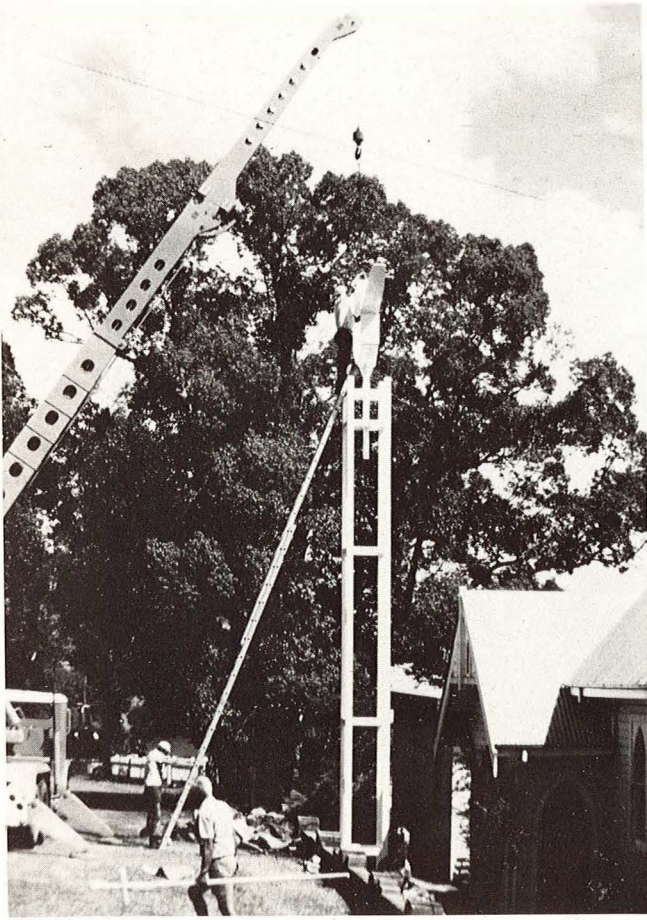


**DOING
THINGS
TO THE
GLORY
OF GOD . . .**

Making a movie . . .



Building a Cathedral . . .



Erecting a Belltower.

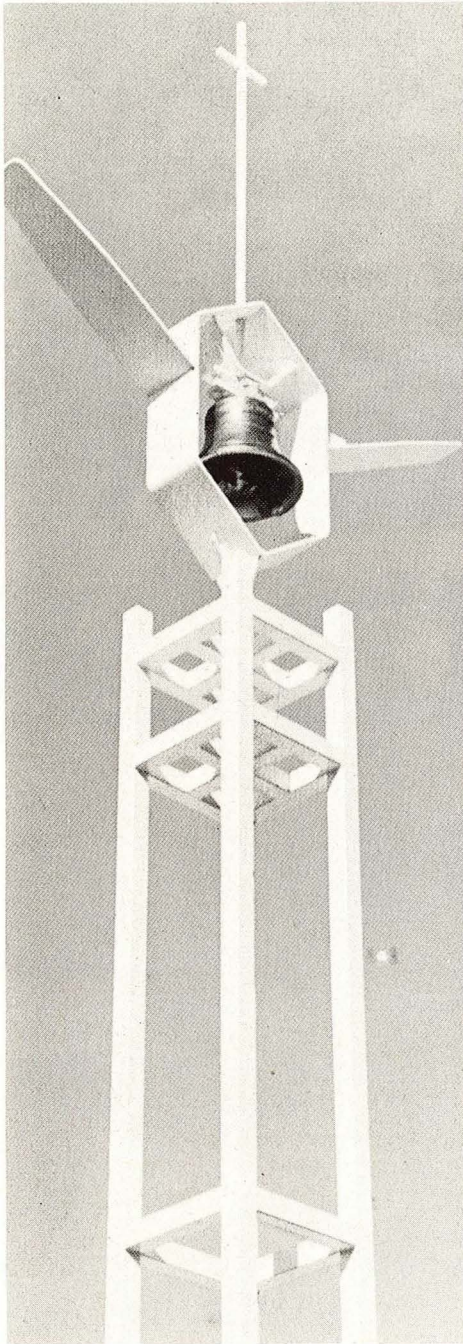


Building an organ . . .

THE KEITH VIRTUE MEMORIAL

Dedicated to the Glory of God and in memory of a former pupil of the Bexhill Sunday School, Keith Virtue, this superb memorial was completed in 1981.

The photos below include the actual casting of the Bexhill Bell by the 500 year old firm of Bellfounders in England.



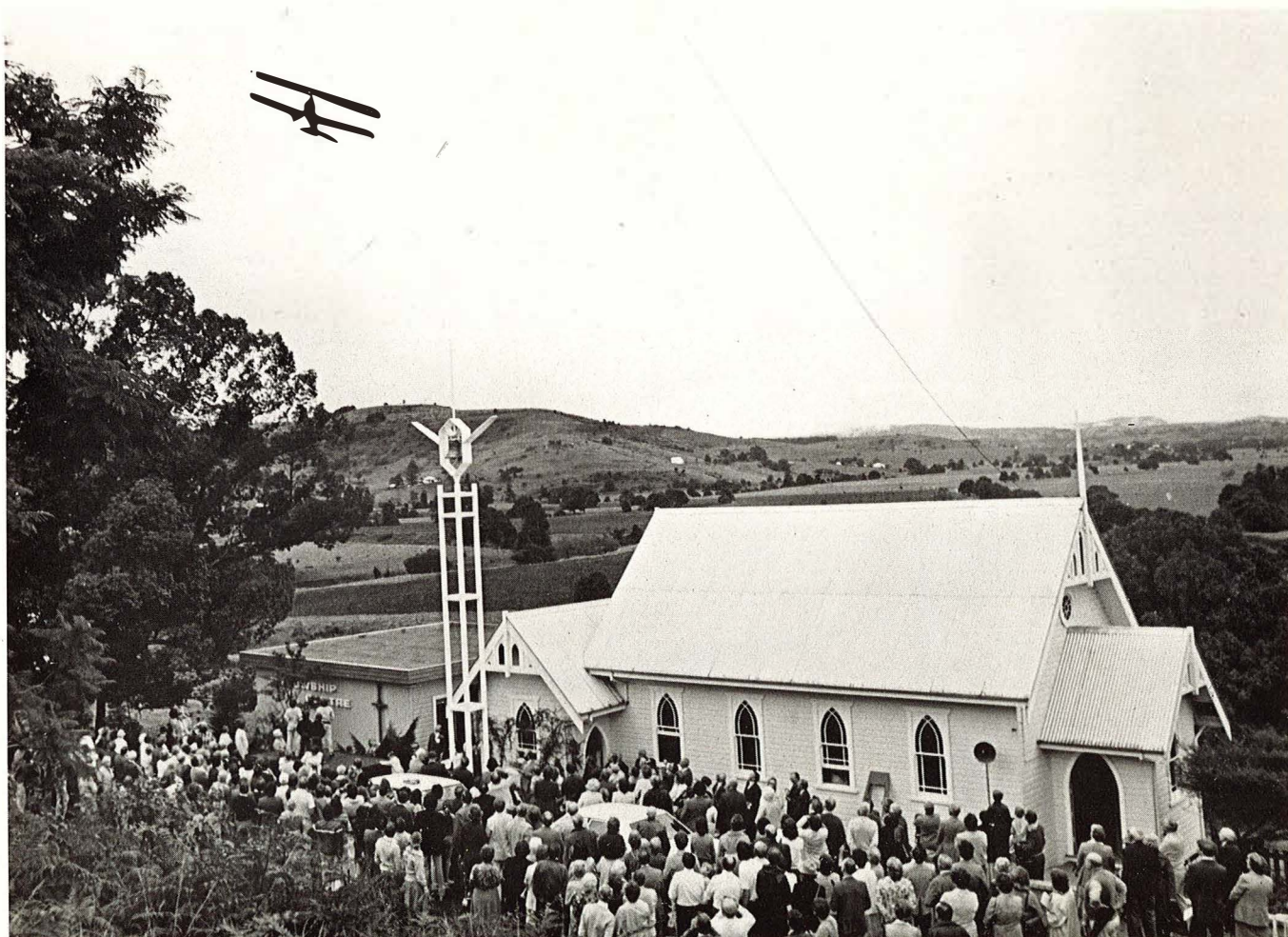
TUNED BELL CAST BY
JOHN TAYLOR AND CO. BELLFOUNDERS LTD.
LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND
DIAMETER: 22 INCHES WEIGHT: 2 1/4 CWT

INSCRIPTION
KEITH ALLISON VIRTUE M.B.E.
"MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED"

TOWER BY
MAXWELL CONTRACTING PTY LTD, IPSWICH, QLD.
DESIGN: RICHARD CRANDON M.I.E.A. LISMORE

THE BELLTOWER
 TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF
CAPTAIN KEITH ALLISON VIRTUE M.B.E.
 PIONEER AVIATOR, WHO, ON THE 19TH JANUARY 1929,
 AS A LOCAL FARMBOY, LANDED HIS FIRST
 SMALL BI-PLANE IN NEARBY COW PADDOCKS
 BECOMING ON THE 1ST JANUARY 1931
 CO-FOUNDER & FIRST PILOT OF NEW ENGLAND AIRWAYS
 WHICH DEVELOPED INTO AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST
 NATIONAL AIRLINE
 ERECTED BY HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS
 DEDICATED 17TH MAY 1981
 REV. H.T. GRAVES L.TH. MINISTER GRANT VIRTUE SECRETARY
 "THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES"

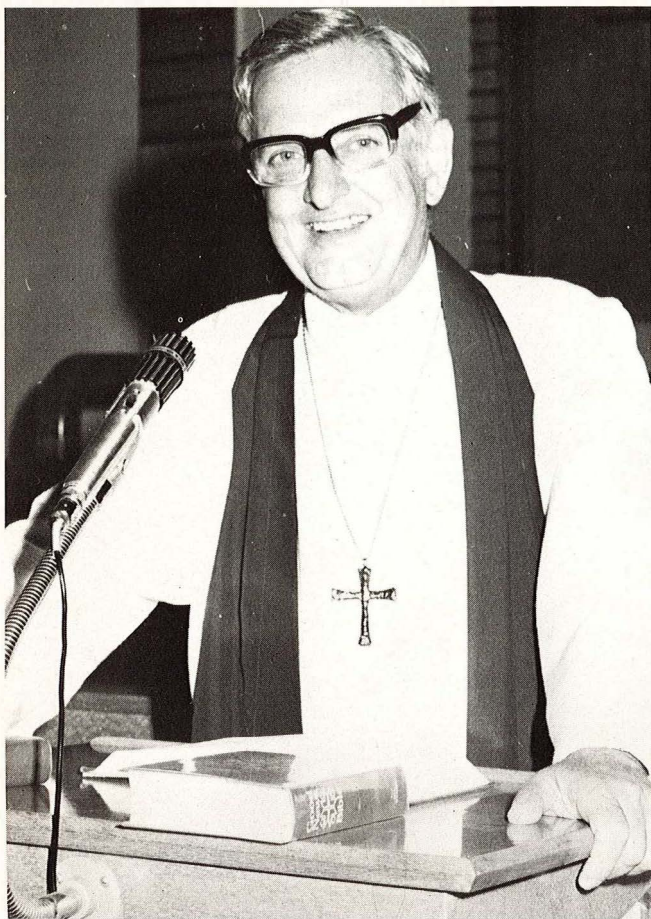
The Memorial Plaque.



THE DEDICATION

That unique moment when the first tolling of the bell mingled with the sound of a frail biplane overhead — caused many men and women to weep openly.

Photo courtesy Northern Star



Guest Preacher.

We are honoured to have as our Church Centenary guest preacher Rev. Professor Roland A. Busch, A.O., O.B.E., Ch., St., J., E.D., M.A., B.D., M.R.E., J.P. President, The Assembly of the Uniting Church of Australia. Professor Busch was for 17 years Principal of Emmanuel College University of Queensland and is at present Principal of Trinity Theological College. He has served the Church and Community on many committees at State and National level and has attended Church conferences in many parts of the world.

Heather Moen-Boyd, A., Mus., A., L.T.C.L., B., Mus. commenced pipe organ studies at 13 was appointed organist of Ryde Presbyterian Church at 15, later accepting appointments at St. Andrew's Chatswood and St. John's Cathedral, Parramatta before becoming organist of St. Stephen's Uniting Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, in 1983. Heather Moen-Boyd is a well known Sydney recitalist and for several years has been official organist at the Sydney Town Hall and Opera House annual 'Messiah' presentations.

Guest Organist.



OFFERTORY HYMN

Ye holy angels bright,
 who wait at God's right hand,
 or through the realms of light
 fly at your Lord's command,
 assist our song,
 or else the theme
 too high will seem
 for mortal tongue.

You blessed souls at rest,
 who ran this earthly race,
 and now, from sin released,
 behold the Saviour's face,
 his praises sound,
 as in his sight
 with sweet delight
 you do abound.

You saints who toil below,
 adore your heavenly King,
 and onwards as you go
 some joyful anthem sing;
 take what he gives
 and praise him still
 through good and ill,
 who ever lives.

All nations of the earth,
 extol the world's great King:
 with melody and mirth
 his glorious praises sing.
 In him rejoice,
 and there proclaim
 his holy name
 with sounding voice.

My soul, bear thou thy part;
 triumph in God above,
 and with a well-tuned heart
 sing out the songs of love;
 and all my days,
 let no distress
 nor fear suppress
 his joyful praise.

BENEDICTION

THE CENTENARY SERVICE

of the

BEXHILL CHURCH

**Sunday, 19th May, 1985
10.30 a.m.**

Minister: Rev. Lindsay Doust

Organist: Heather Moen-Boyd

Address: Rev. Prof. Roland Busch

ORDER OF WORSHIP**HYMN**

NOW thank we all our God,
 With hearts, and hands, and voices;
 Who wondrous things hath done,
 In whom His world rejoices;
 Who, from our mothers' arms,
 Hath blessed us on our way
 With countless gifts of love,
 And still is ours to-day.

O may this bounteous God
 Through all our life be near us,
 With ever-joyful hearts
 And blessed peace to cheer us,
 And keep us in His grace,
 And guide us when perplexed,
 And free us from all ills
 In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
 The Father now be given,
 The Son, and Him who reigns
 With Them in highest heaven :
 The one, eternal God,
 Whom earth and heaven adore;
 For thus it was, is now,
 And shall be evermore.

PRAYER**LORD'S PRAYER****OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

Psalms 118 : 9—25

SOLO

"Open the gates of the Temple"
 Joyce Kennedy

WELCOME

HYMN

O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of our God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.

He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life and dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
and leap, ye lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON

1. Peter 2: 4—10
John 14: 1—7, 27

HYMN

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
who joins us by his grace,
and bids us, each to each restored,
together seek his face.

He bids us build each other up;
and, gathered into one,
to our high calling's glorious hope
we hand in hand go on.

The gift which he on one bestows,
we all delight to prove;
the grace through every vessel flows,
in purest streams of love.

Even now we think and speak the same,
and cordially agree;
concentred all, through Jesus' name,
in perfect harmony.

We all partake the joy of one,
the common peace we feel,
a peace to sensual minds unknown,
a joy unspeakable.

And if our fellowship below
in Jesus be so sweet,
what heights of rapture shall we know
when round his throne we meet.

ADDRESS

"Living Stone — Living Stones"

THE OFFERTORY

The Centenary Thanksgiving Offering will
be devoted to the recent Church Restoration.

THE MEMORIALS

A unique feature of the Bexhill Church is the very large number of Memorial and thank offering gifts that have been provided and which made possible the creation of the sanctuary, pipe organ fellowship centre and belltower.

The very first memorial to be given to the Church was the beautiful silky oak baptismal font, the gift of the Wynd family in memory of their beloved son and brother, Gavin, who was killed in action in the Owen Stanley Ranges, 23rd October, 1942, at the age of 21 years. In the years following thirty-five further memorials have been given and twenty-five items of furniture provided in thanksgiving for God's blessing.

Of particular interest is the belltower. This massive structure was made entirely by Peter Maxwell of Ipswich, Queensland, who donated all materials, labour, painting and transport. The tower was Peter Maxwell's, donation towards the Keith Virtue Memorial given in thanksgiving for blessings in his own life.



One of the many memorials at the Church of the Good Shepherd, this massive cross, rising from an Australian native garden is, by day and night, a constant reminder to passers by that 'Christ is alive and let loose in the world?'

THE OPEN AIR CATHEDRAL

One of the North Coast's most valued scenic attractions is the Bexhill Open Air Cathedral. Situated at Inspiration Point it overlooks the beautiful Corndale Valley and towards the distant Nightcap National Park. It was created by the Bexhill Youth Fellowship and dedicated to the Glory of God and 'the use of all people' on Palm Sunday, 1958.

Regular services include a 6.00 a.m. Dawn Service on Easter Day when some 200 district worshippers sometimes gather.

Although built over a quarter of a century ago the first wedding was celebrated only eleven years ago but in the ensuing years over ninety weddings have been celebrated at the 'Cathedral'.



'Whom God hath joined'



BEXHILL METHODIST LADIES CHURCH AID 1930

Back: R. Virtue, M. N. Virtue, H. A. Virtue, M. Crowther.
 Middle: A. Bryant, A. Grebert, O. Clarke, N. Forster, L. Johnston, J. Virtue, S. Virtue, R. Lavis.
 Front: R. Virtue Snr., O. Virtue, S. Rappeneker, W. James, D. Lewis, T. H. Foster, A. Brockington, L. Virtue.
 Absent: C. Lockton, M. Lockton.



BEXHILL METHODIST LADIES CHURCH AID 50th ANNIVERSARY 1972

Back: E. Boyd, C. Matthews, S. Brown, K. Prior, D. Waddell, M. Outerbridge, C. Lockton, S. Parrish, G. Bryant.
 Front: S. Virtue, H. Graves, C. Allan, C. McLeod, M. Grace, W. Willis, R. Waddell, C. Bryant, N. Chittick.
 Absent: E. Allsopp, R. Hosking.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

The 1955 Sunday School Anniversary with sixty-five pupils and six teachers. At left, a scene from "Pathway to Glory" a sound movie on the life of Christ — produced by the Sunday School in the 1950's



SOME PROPERTY TRUST DECISIONS 1913-1941

— that the fourth Sunday in March be recognised as the Anniversary of the Church and that a special effort be made on the day to get a good collection.
Sept. 1913

— the Rev. E. E. Hynes presided and opened the meeting in the usual solemn manner.
14 Jan. 1919

— that the tender of £ 22/10/- for painting outside of church by A. Campbell be accepted including the lettering (on front of church) and W.C.
2 June, 1932

— that Mrs. Rappeneaker be offered 2/6 a week for sweeping and dusting — 5/- extra for scrubbing, same to be done twice a year.
16 July, 1932

— 8/- for repairs to carbide tank and 4/- for carbide passed for payment.
22 Sept., 1933

— Mrs. Rappeneaker be asked to scrub the church twice a year, 5/- each time.
22 Sept., 1933

— that the trust accept Mr. C. Lockton's offer of a carbide tank to replace the one worn through.
24 Oct., 1935

Electricity — that 3 lights be in Church one in vestry, one outside over door be installed at 75 volts, one power point and if possible the wires to carry 100 volts.
24 May, 1938

Tenders for lighting —
Marsden £ 7/10/-; Downs £ 9/10/-; Hall £ 9/12/6;
Williams £ 7/12/6.
— it was decided to accept the tender of Marsden for £ 7/10/-.
22 June, 1938

Mr. Starky quoted £ 16/12/- for laying concrete path. Accepted. Path completed for Easter Sunday, 9th April, 1939.

Mr. M. Virtue stated the tank wanted seeing to — moved that permission be given Mr. M. Virtue to buy a bag of cement and see to the tank.
12 Feb., 1941



The Old Blacksmiths Shop, Bexhill.
Opened c. 1890 by Samuel Buchanan.

ABOUT BEXHILL VILLAGE

It was in 1842 that the cedar cutters, the first settlers, moved into the Richmond. The whole area was covered by the 'Big Scrub', a relic of which can still be seen at Boatharbour. Cedar cutters were active in the Bexhill area in the late 1850's. The life of a cedar cutter was very hard. His shelter was of bark or a tent, always close to his work and near water.

A bare hilltop directly East of the Bexhill Recreation Ground (see map) was, in the earliest days of settlement, named Bald Hill because the sandstone outcrop did not support the bush rainforest.

However when the locality was surveyed by T. T. Ewing, a Mr. Beck, was pressed into service as a 'chain' man for the surveyor and was rewarded by having the area named after him — 'Beck's Hill' — hence Bexhill.

By 1885, Bexhill had a hotel, boarding house, a blacksmith, two stores and a butcher, a school, Post Office, and a church.

The Lismore to Mullumbimby section of the Tweed railway line was opened on 15th May, 1894 and the first Bexhill railway station on 27th May, 1894.

RAILWAY STORES, BEXHILL W. F. COLLEY

begs to announce to the inhabitants of Bexhill and District that he will open on Saturday next, 27th May, at BEXHILL, in premises adjoining Messrs. Elliott & Lee's,

A GENERAL STORE,
to be known as "The Railway Stores."

Full Stocks of Groceries, Drapery, Ironmongery, Crockery, Tinware, Agricultural Seeds, and Produce will be held, and as he imports direct, buying for cash, he is in a position to sell at Bedrock Prices.

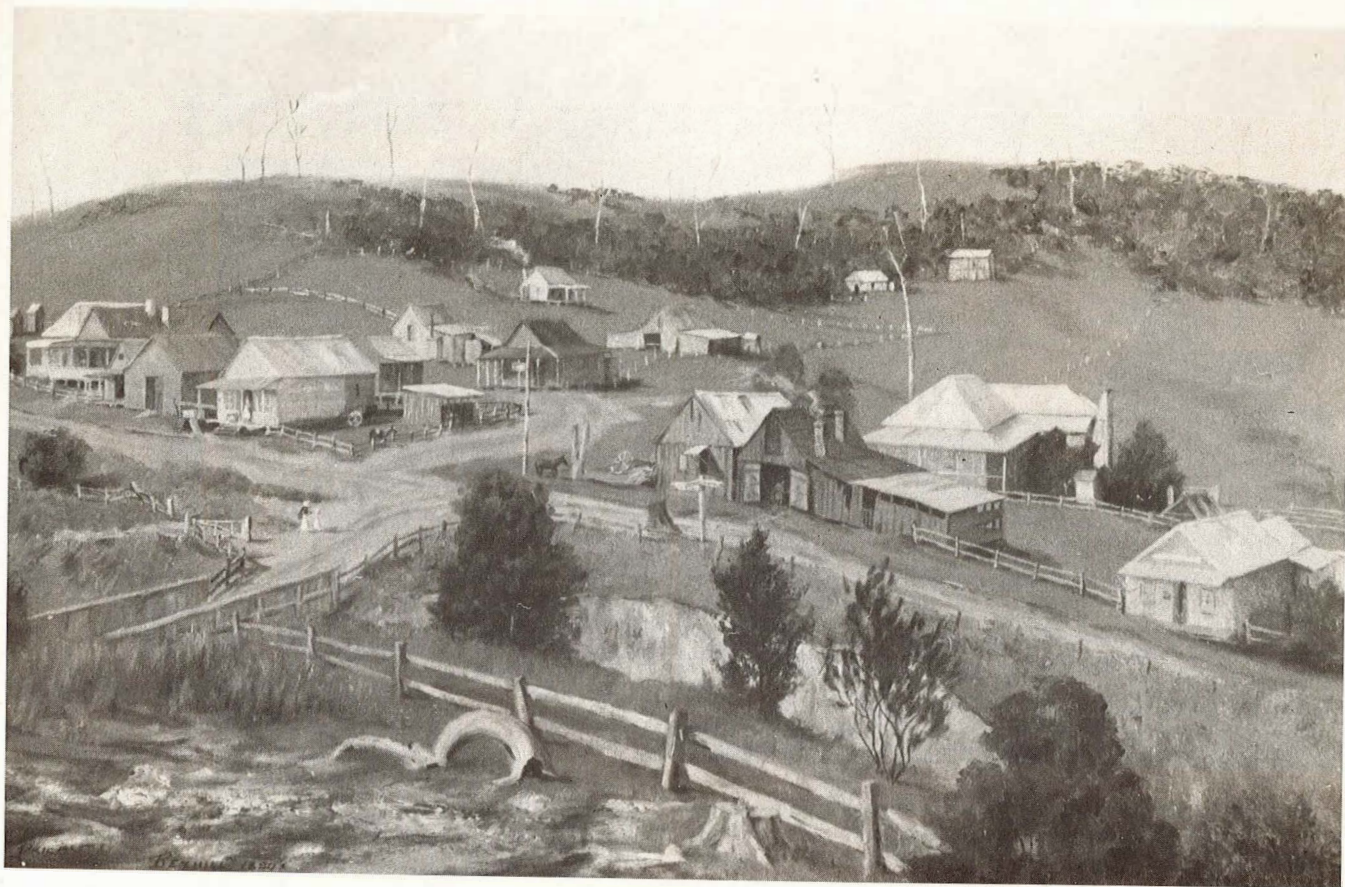
All kinds of Produce will be taken in exchange. A VAN will run through the district, making regular visits up Cooper's Creek, Nunnulgi, Pearce's Creek, Alstonville and Rous.

Patronage Solicited.
Motto—Small profits and quick returns.

W. F. COLLEY,
RAILWAY STORES, BEXHILL.

For Burns and Scalds you can't beat Mrs. Askew's Ointment.

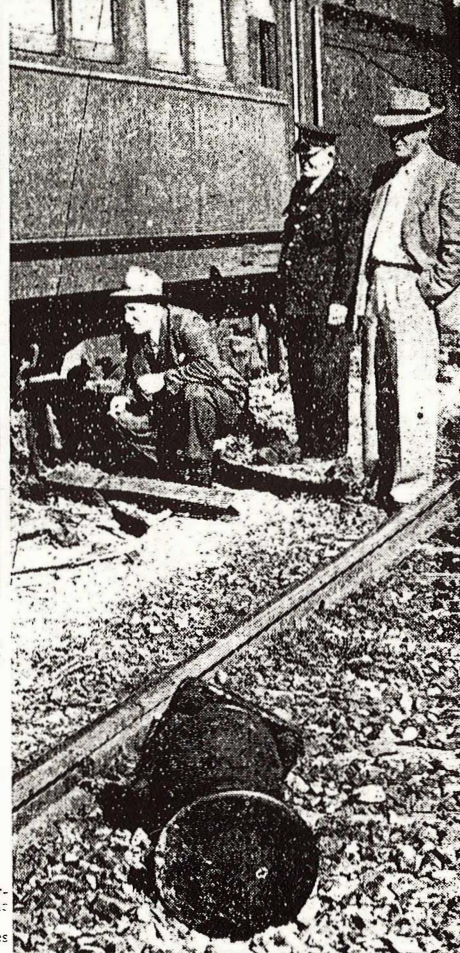
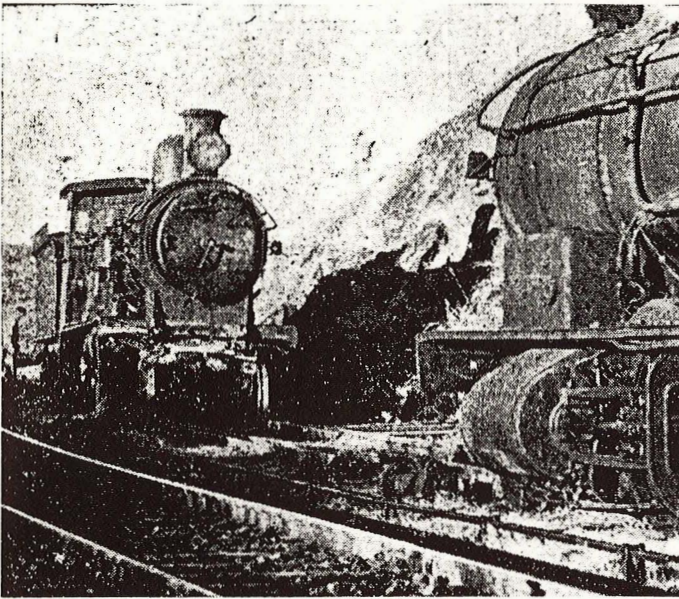
This advertisement appeared in the Northern Star on Wednesday, 24th May, 1899. The Railway Stores Bexhill is now Dave Elliott's Butcher Shop.



*Bexhill Village
circa 1899*

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Baker's Residence | 6 Butchery - Rex Hager | 12 Blacksmith - J. Buchanan |
| 2 Bakery - Elliott & Lee | 7 Residence | 13 Blacksmith's Residence |
| 3 Railway Stores - F. W. Colley | 8 The Stables | 14 The Little Shop - B. L. Smith |
| 4 Residence - Fanny Hager | 9 The Pothouse | 15 The Tin Bridge |
| 5 The Ramacks | 10 The Maughterhouse | 16 The Railway Cutting |
| | 11 The Wheelwrights Shop | |

FIVE IN HOSPITAL AFTER BEXHILL TRAIN SMASH



ATTENDED INJURED
Mrs. S. A. Sainsbury, wife of the Bexhill Station Master, who is at present a patient in the Brisbane General Hospital, said she was in the laundry of her home when she heard the crash.
"Soon afterwards young Lloyd Pearson came running down



Mrs. S. A. Sainsbury . . . who took blankets to the injured train crews and passengers.

Five of 11 people taken to Lismore Base Hospital after a crash at Bexhill between the North Coast mail and a railway engine were still in hospital last night. One of them was in a serious condition.

Passengers on the south-bound North Coast mail were hurtled from their seats in the smash which was heard up to two miles away.

The driver of the tender, David Clarence Achurch, 58, of South Lismore, was admitted in a critical condition. It was stated, at the hospital last night that his condition had improved and he had been removed to the list of seriously ill.

Achurch, however, was still in a serious condition with a crushed chest, possible ruptured kidney and shock.

Lismore ambulance rushed three cars to the scene and treated 11 persons for injuries and another 10 for minor wounds.

The engine tender was stationary after shunting a goods train.

It had moved up to near the

points when the mail came around the bend.

The mail, it has been stated, appeared to overrun the points leading onto the main line and travelled along the second line before smashing into the engine.

29 PASSENGERS

The mail was carrying 29 passengers and a crew of four, with two railwaymen on the engine.

The engine and three carriages of the mail left the tracks.

The fronts of both engines were stove in by the impact.

Railway repair gangs had the main line open again at 3.30 p.m.

During the day special buses carried other rail passengers between Lismore and Bangalow.

Boy Gives Graphic Story

A graphic story of the collision was given by Lloyd Pearson, 12-year-old schoolboy, of Eltham, who was a passenger on the mail train at the time of the collision.

Lloyd, who is a pupil at Bexhill Public School was standing near the doorway of a second class carriage intending to alight at Bexhill station.

"There were a couple of ladies in the carriage with me," he said. "I was thinking I would be at the platform in a minute or two when all of a sudden there was a crash."

"I was hurled to the floor and bumped my hip pretty hard."

"The ladies were also thrown on to the floor. There was a lot of noise and screaming. I was dazed for a minute and did not know what happened."

"I climbed out through the door and had a look around. I heard people calling out and then a man told me to run down to Mrs. Sainsbury and get some blankets."

"I did that and then went on to school where I told the headmaster, Mr. W. L. Aldridge what happened."

"I was feeling a bit rocky, so Mr. Aldridge gave me some first aid treatment for my hip



Schoolboy Lloyd Pearson . . . a passenger on the train who ran for aid.

Thanks By Department

The District Superintendent, Mr. W. E. Hodder, said in Grafton last night that on behalf of the Department of Railways he would like to express appreciation of the splendid assistance given to the injured.

"I would like to thank the Lismore Ambulance for the prompt way it responded to the call, the doctors and nursing staff of the Base Hospital and St. Vincent's Hospital and the good people of Bexhill who gave such great service," said Mr. Hodder.

"The department is indebted to everyone who assisted," he added.

Top left.—Two engines involved in yesterday's head-on collision near Bexhill Station are shown shortly after the smash. The tilted North Coast Mail is shown on the left. A buffer, ripped from the goods train engine, is shown on the left of the engine.
Above.—Lismore police examining the wheels and broken track under a derailed carriage of the North Coast Mail. They are Det. Const. A. Palmer (crouched), Sgt. A. W. Buchanan (centre), and Det. Sergt. A. Burton. A buffer from the passenger train is shown in the foreground.

BLOOD BANK NOT SHORT FOR CRASH

The Lismore Red Cross blood transfusion service had sufficient blood available yesterday for the victims of the rail smash.

BEXHILL CRASH INQUIRY

THE announcement that an open inquiry will be held into yesterday's railway crash at Bexhill is prompt answer to public concern. The Far North Coast has been notably free of serious railway accidents and the break in the long record of safe travelling must be thoroughly examined and, if necessary, fearlessly explained.

Twenty-one people were injured, five of them seriously enough to be admitted to hospital. District, and departmental, relief that the results of the accident were not more serious does nothing to answer the concern that a major disaster could have occurred on the loop at Bexhill.

and told me there had been an accident," said Mrs. Sainsbury. "I collected all the blankets I could and hurried up to the line."

"There were several injured people lying along the bank and with the help of other women who had rushed to the scene, I did what I could to make them comfortable."

SHOCKED AT SCENE

Mrs. Sainsbury said she was shocked at the scene which confronted her on arrival.

"There seemed to be an awful lot of blood about," she said. "It was apparent that some of the unfortunate people had been badly injured."

"One man was calling out 'Oh! Oh! I can't feel my legs'."

"We covered him with a blanket and he was the first man that the ambulance attended to after their prompt arrival."

"He seemed to be in an awful lot of pain," said Mrs. Sainsbury.

CRASH—ROAR
Mr. Lloyd Virtue, a Bexhill farmer who lives close to the station, said he heard the crash and the roar of escaping steam.

"I ran up to the station," he said. "When I went along the line I saw fireman Lamb lying alongside the train."

"He kept calling out 'I'm all right! Look after the others'." Mr. Virtue said he did what he could for the injured people prior to the arrival of the ambulance.

Murwillumbah nurse, Miss Alice Deppe, who was admitted to hospital, said yesterday afternoon that she could not remember anything about the crash.

The three railway men who were admitted to the Lismore Base Hospital could not be interviewed.

A breakdown crane from Casino arrived at the scene of the accident at 2.45 p.m. The main line was clear by 3.30 p.m.

The carriages of the mail train were taken away at 4.20 p.m. and work was then proceeding with the repair of the lines prior to the lifting back of the damaged engines.

Mr. C. R. Cook, assistant Superintendent at Grafton, Mr. A. Coote, maintenance engineer and Mr. J. Gordon (Signals) directed repair operations.

Police investigations were carried out by Detective Sgt. A. Burton, Detective A. Palmer, Sergeant A. W. Buchanan and Constable J. C. Daley.

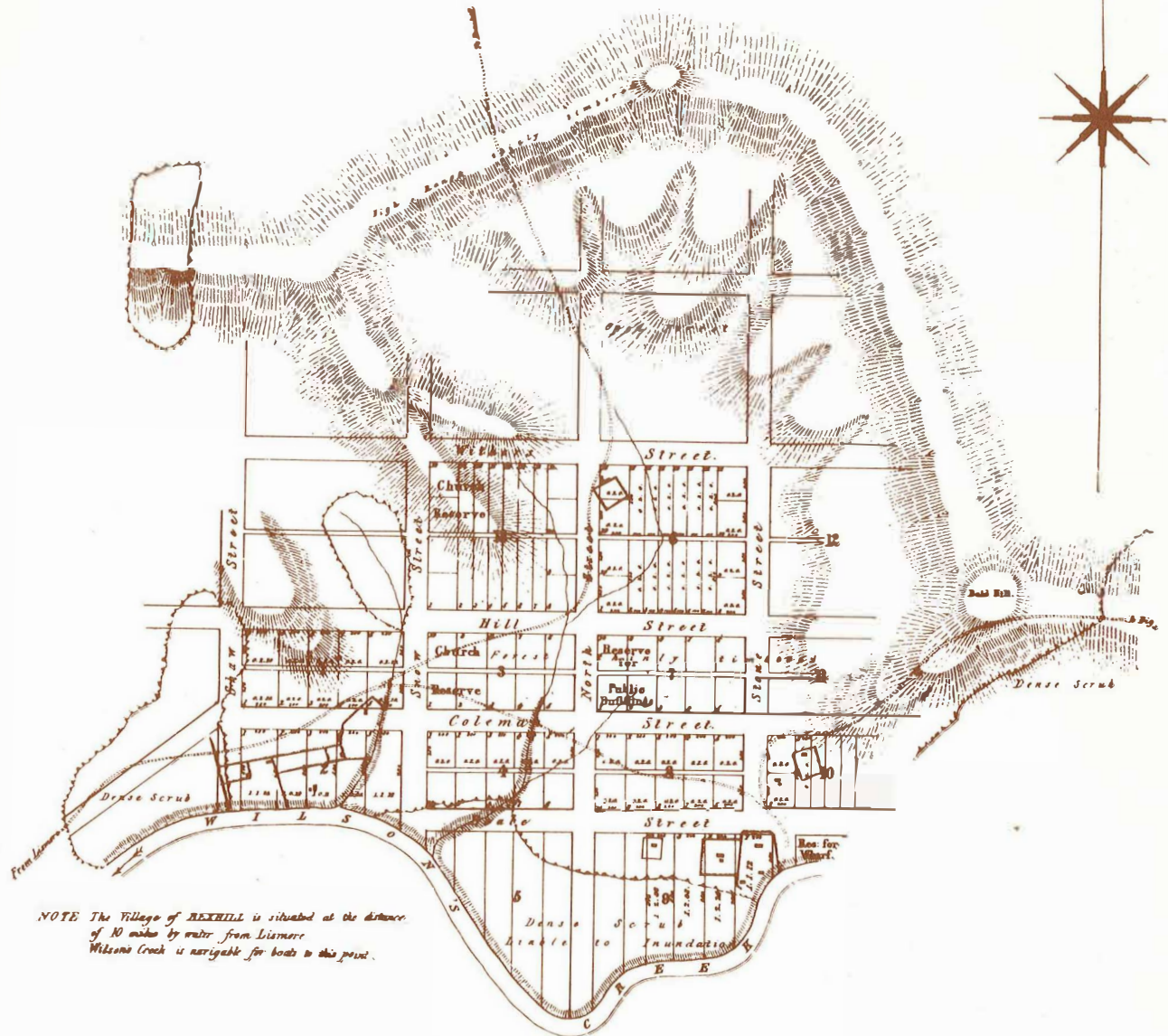
Residents of Bexhill were shocked by the rail disaster of Monday, 1st Aug., 1955 when the North Coast Mail collided head-on with a stationary goods train engine at Bexhill Railway Station.

The driver of the goods engine died two days later as a result of his injuries. The Northern Star (2/8/55) provided a vivid description of the smash.

PLAN OF THE
VILLAGE of BEXHILL

PARISH OF BALD HILL
COUNTY OF ROUS

New South Wales 1863.



NOTE The Village of BEXHILL is situated at the distance of 10 miles by water from Lismore. Wills Creek is navigable for boats to this point.

Scale 8 Chains to 1 Inch.



Moore College
Library

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation is expressed to Max Price for cover drawing of first church and his drawing of the Blacksmith's Shop, Bexhill and for kindly permitting

photographic reproduction of his paintings—'Church of the Good Shepherd' and 'Bexhill 1890's' in this booklet, and to Philip Goodrich for cover title.



The best is yet to be . . .