

St George's Trentham – a Brief History (compiled September 2020)

The first Church of England service in Trentham was held in 1864, the year the town was surveyed. 150 years later, on St George's Day, 23 April 2014, this was celebrated with an historical pageant at the Quarry Street Reserve.

The church's first guardians were G.O. Vance (rector of Kyneton) and M.H. Ashe (rector of Blackwood), with local men Joseph Bickley, William Dashwood and Francis Turner. Before 1882 residents worshipped in the school and in the Mechanics Hall. The first church was a wooden building fronting Albert Street: it opened sometime after 1882, though the land had been gazetted for the church on 14 February 1865.

Local businessman J.W.S. Wolff left money in his will in 1910 to build a new (smaller) brick church fronting High Street that opened in 1928. It retains some furniture from the previous building, and until the COVID pandemic was open daily.

Most written records are unfortunately lost, but we know that until 1889 Trentham Anglicans came under St Paul's Kyneton. Services in Trentham were led by lay readers, including David Weeding from Tylden, F. W. Wray and George Frewin (1889-91). These men were looking to ordination, though Mr Weeding sadly died aged 38 and is buried at Tylden.

Under Mr Frewin St George's flourished, with a Sunday School, and a young adult choir in the evenings. Attendance averaged 80, and giving rose by 50%. During his time Trentham parish separated from Kyneton and operated under the Archdeacon of Sandhurst (Bendigo). *[Read more about this lively period in "The Disturbance in the Choir", from the Trentham and District Historical Society.]*

The first ordained minister, the Revd E.C. Knox, worked from 1892 until 1898. By this time, however, Trentham township and churches were affected by the state-wide land depression: the district had more downs than ups for decades.

In 1942 the Anglican churches of Blackwood, Trentham and Woodend came together to form one parish, with the Revd C.R. Miles as rector. But all three centres continued their independent character, Blackwood eventually returning to the Diocese of Melbourne. In 1983 St George's generously donated most of the land surrounding the church to the (then) Bush Nursing Hospital for a five-unit retirement village.

Trentham Anglicans have played a central part in community life: the history of the town and St George's are interwoven. J.W.S. Wolff was a pioneer of town businesses and local politics, staying on after the gold ran out. Lifelong saw miller and sportsman Harry McCashney "was always ready to help people in trouble". Dr Gwen Wisewould, legendary town doctor (1938-1972) is memorialised in St George's by the sanctuary lamp: her autobiography, *Outpost: A Doctor on the Divide*, available on the internet, offers empathetic insights into the district's people. Norma Proctor drove the school bus to Blackwood, started a Cubs group and helped with the CWA and Sunday School. Her husband Alan chaired the Hospital committee for many years.

Trentham Anglicans have offered ongoing pastoral support and leadership, contributing to many district activities: the Bush Nursing Hospital and Red Cross, sporting teams, school, kindergarten, Lions, swimming pool, Spudfest, Historical Society, Community Bank, sustainability group, Neighbourhood Centre, Men's Shed, Words in Winter, Flower Show and more – playing their unobtrusive part in God's mission locally.

St George's is glad to be part of Trentham Combined Churches' Committee. During the 2020 COVID lockdown, people from the three churches joined together to ring the bell at noon each day, as a sign of God's presence among us.

Trentham township has been revitalised in recent years with a surge of new residents making a 'tree change'. Younger families are having an impact on the kindergarten, school and culture of the district. In this changing context, how will St George's take part in God's mission in 3458 and beyond? That is the question now.