

DARLINGTON UNITED CHURCH



(A Short History)

Text by Ian Lindsay and sketch of the church by Dawn Lindsay

EARLY DAYS.

The area which is now Darlington was originally part of George Smith's grazing lease, and early explorers passed through while opening up the land around Newcastle (Toodyay) and York. Timber felling was carried out on a large scale, and the railway line came through in 1884. Dr Waylen of Guildford recognised the areas potential for vineyards, so before the end of last century Darlington had orchards, vineyards, a few settlers and a reputation as a favourite picnic spot.

Leithdale House was built in the 1890's, and it is known that Congregational services were held there before 1912. However, as no services were being held on the north side of the railway line and as many residents found it too far to journey to Leithdale House, Presbyterian services were commenced at Mr Simpson's home in July 1912 in the presence of a "splendid congregation" - and fortnightly services continued.

It is uncertain when the Methodist congregation began meeting or where they met initially. For a time, they held services in the Village Hall.

In 1914 a block of land was purchased by the Presbyterians for Twenty four Pounds, at the Hillsden land sale, splendidly situated on a corner block facing Hillsden road. Later the block was sold and the present site was purchased for eighty-five Pounds.

For some years, however, services continued to be held in private homes. A Congregational Church was built in Amherst Road in 1913 (but transferred to Bencubbin in 1951). The Minutes of the Presbyterian Church for April 1914 referred to a decision to bring the two church committees -Congregational and Presbyterian into conference for the purpose of united action on all matters. The Secretary explained that he had already been trying to do this unofficially, but his efforts had been turned down by the Congregationalists. After discussion it was decided to write to them officially, offering to convene a meeting to discuss the matter. However a reply from the Congregationalists stated that they regretted they were unable to support the movement.

In 1915, six monthly business meetings were held. In May 1915 the Secretary reported that up to date the finances of the church had not warranted opening a Bank account, but, as the present arrangements were hardly satisfactory, it was resolved that a Savings Bank account be opened in the name of the church. This decision was influenced by the need for a central place of worship. In talking of the building of a church preference was indicated for a stone church when such a building could be undertaken.

Efforts to unite the churches were still going on and members were confident that Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian folk would eventually worship together. In fact the April 1919 meeting was almost entirely devoted to the suggested union of local churches.

In the early days of the Presbyterian congregation offerings were handed over to the "South Perth, Mundaring, Darlington Mission". Later this was changed and a donation of up to One Pound per month was made to the Mission. Presumably the balance was retained to go towards the cost of the proposed building. Later on the Mission became the West Guildford, Mundaring, Darlington Mission.

A newspaper article under the heading "Presbyterian" in 1924 mentions at 3pm a service is to be held at Mr Neilson's house by W.F. Woodcraft secretary of the YMCA National Council in Melbourne.

During the 1920's there was much talk of a new building, in the first instance as a Sunday School hall, but later it was resolved to proceed to erect a church in wood at an approximate cost of Three Hundred and Forty-Two Pounds, in such a position as to leave sufficient space for a stone church to be built later. Rev. George Tulloch of the St. Andrews Session played an initial part in the building project. He was succeeded by Rev. Alex Crow, who took over and did a sterling job. It is interesting to read of the

efforts to obtain financial aid from various sources including Presbytery. "Influential Presbyterians" were asked to give a direct contribution.

An article in the Swan Express on the Friday 20th May 1927 described the opening ceremony of the church:

"In the presence of a large gathering, which included representatives from different parts of the State, the new Presbyterian Church was opened on Saturday. The Rev. A. Crow gave a short resume of the activities of the Church, which had resulted in the erection of the building. The Right Rev. G. Tulloch (Moderator of the Assembly) was presented by the builder, with the key of the building, and he formally turned the key in the lock and opened the door. A short service followed, conducted by the Moderator, assisted by the Rev. J.R. Thrum, of Katanning and the Rev. J. Shaw of Narrogin. An interesting feature of the service was the singing of Miss D. Main and Miss R. Sampson. The company was afterwards entertained at tea by the ladies of the congregation".

Incidentally, Mr. Crow conducted religious education at the State School in the late 1920's.

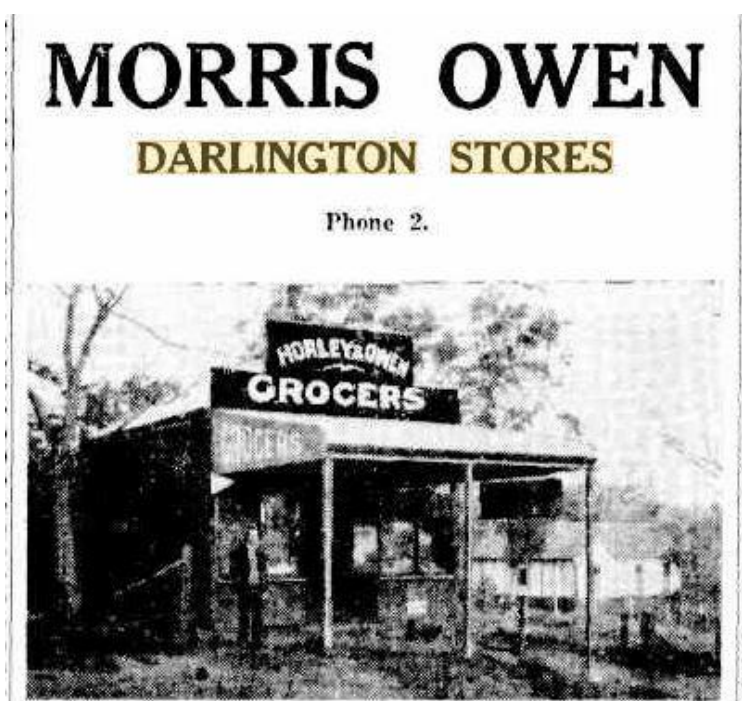
The main building was built first and the vestry and choir alcove were added in March 1931 for Two Hundred Pounds.

The Swan Express recorded the dedication service to open these additions in Thursday 9th April 1931 as follows:

"Dedication" - Special services were held in the Presbyterian Church on March 22nd to dedicate the additions just completed. The Rev. A. Crow preached in the morning and the Moderator (the Rev. W.D. Pearson) in the afternoon to large congregations. Singing by the augmented choir was a special feature of both services".

The Methodist congregation paid six shillings and later ten shillings per service for the use of the building.

1937 shows the Presbyterian Church behind the store



UNION.

By the late 1940's new families had come to live in Darlington and the urge for a union of Christians became stronger and stronger until the inaugural meeting of the Darlington United Church was held in July 1950.

They were stirring times as the group began to draft a suitable Constitution. After the first submission, numerous counter proposals came forth and long discussions were held. Apart from the local committee members, there was the guiding "Council of Ministers" of the participating denominations who took a personal interest in the efforts and made a real contribution to the final result. All this debate took ten years. It was not until 1961 that the Inter-Church Co-operation Committee adopted the "Rules of the Darlington United Church. Mr Frederick Charles Osbourne Yeates was the Secretary at the time and Mr Bill Morgan was the President.

Several Baptist families had joined the congregation by this time and the weekly services were taken by Congregational, Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist preachers in that order each month, and a Mission or other special speaker on any fifth Sunday.

The third business meeting of the new United Church was held in 1951, there being 40 members present. Some of the family names of the 1950's and 1960's are still on our roll.

"Some Presbyterian attendees recalled by Joy Morgan included – Smythe, Scrymgeour, Park, Stremple, Wakelem, Skipsey, Vickers, Yeates, Camerer, Longman, Patrick, Johnston, Willoughby, Osman, Richards, Abbott, Williams, Morgan, James, Smith, Rhodes, Harris, Kilmaster". Much earlier attendees included: Neilson, Simpson, Crowe, Maxwell, Taylor, Liddell and Hynes."

In those years, group activities included monthly fellowship meetings and for some time evening worship once a month as well as monthly evening film services.

Good Friday film services were inaugurated on an inter-denominational basis (including Church of England). These continued until 1963 when they were terminated because numbers attending had fallen considerably.

In 1952 the church annexe was built. This is a story in itself. Mr Camerer organised the purchase and carting of the old building and the weekly busy bees for eighteen months that were necessary for the reconstruction.

The fellowship appears to have been well endowed with organists during some periods. In 1953 there were no less than four regular organists sharing duties. In those days, too, the minutes refer to an active church choir, as had been the case in the 1930's.

There is reference in the records of the use of the church annexe by the Masonic Lodge for meetings and in 1955 by the Education Department as a temporary school classroom.

The original pews were brought from the Congregational Church. These pews were later passed to the Congregational Union for use elsewhere, when our present pews, and other furnishings, were installed in 1962.

It is interesting to note that in the early days the Ladies' Guild was paid six shillings per week for church cleaning. The support of the United Aborigines Mission was commenced in 1952 by the donation of clothes by the Ladies Guild. Support for aboriginal needs still continues.



1959 photo, courtesy of Thelma Rhodes who married here in 1959

In 1965, with the suspension of the appropriate rules, a Methodist theological student was appointed part-time minister for a period of a year. It had been pointed out that although the monthly rotation of preachers was very popular, there was a lack of continuity in preaching and a lack of youth work in the area with a drifting away of young people after passing through the Sunday School. It was not intended that the church become denominational, but that it continue to be administered by the Quarterly Members Meetings and the Church Committee. The proposal was to be reviewed annually.

During 1966, the difficulties of a part-time pastor as far as pastoral work is concerned became evident and further consideration was given to the suggestion put forward earlier by Presbytery that it might be more effective to have a tie-up with churches at Midland (Presbyterian) or Mundaring (Methodist) while still retaining the United Church identity and retaining the principle of rotation of denominations on a periodic basis.

The Midland Church came forward with a proposition (which was accepted) that for a two year period the Minister at Midland would spend a day and one evening each week in Darlington and conduct morning worship each Sunday, Darlington to pay an amount (approximating one quarter of Midland's costs) and this would enable Midland to become elevated to a Charge instead of a Home Mission Station. Darlington would retain its identity and administer its own affairs - i.e. maintain the church building and pay all incidental expenses incurred at Darlington. Midland Session would meet monthly and would include three representatives from Darlington.

The tie-up with Midland was extended for a second two-year term covering 1968-1969. During 1968 the need for a new manse became evident and at the request of the Midland Church, in order to remove uncertainty as to the future as far as Midland's planning was concerned, the 1968-1969 term was extended to a period of ten years. This period expired in 1979.

GROWTH

Thus, during the 1970's, the Church benefitted from the pattern of a more settled ministry. Reverends Gray Birch, Doug Purnell and Hallam Thorpe were able to devote time to pastoral work and were encouraged by a growth in membership, an increasing number of children, a stable committee, an emphasis upon fellowship and sound teaching. A youth group commenced in 1974 and youth work has continued to grow since then. In 1976 we agreed to work towards providing a new building, for the work amongst children and adolescents, together with more adults, meant that our facilities, even with an addition of two rooms were becoming inadequate.

At this time monthly family services in the Village Hall commenced, and the young wives group, men's teas, annual church camps and social events like tennis, cricket and picnics, provided means of outreach and nurture. In 1977 our giving to about a dozen Christian organisations was systematized as we were increasingly aware of the need to have a vision wider than the local church. However, we also agreed not to join the Uniting Church when three of the participating denominations entered union. We thus maintained a high degree of autonomy and avoided the danger of splits within the church along denominational lines, as people from many denominations were by now worshipping in the one Christian community.



Newer church built 1980



Plaque to commemorate the opening of the new United Church in 1980

(Rev. John Gilks was the son of the early Darlington Baker Jack Gilks)

Resulting from negotiations with the Baptist Union, we invited Tom McMath to be our pastor during his ministerial training, and from 1980 to 1983 he ministered in Darlington. During this time, a new building was opened debt-free (in December 1980) by Sir Ronald Wilson, and the growing congregation considered at length its goals and priorities. Following these discussions a structure of Ministries was commenced in 1982, with groups being responsible for nurture, evangelism, social concern, co-operation, and property. This pattern developed over years following, to include worship, visitation, training youth and small groups. Thus, instead of the ministry being monopolised by one full-time professional, the gifts of the congregation were exercised and developed. In 1982 a Family Faith Fiesta was led by Michael Lush of Scripture Union.

During 1984, Dr. Allan Chapple of the Uniting Church was our minister, and the quality of his teaching will long be remembered.

Then in 1985, Rev. Gordon Johnson, a Baptist minister from Canada, accepted the congregation's call and became the first minister to have accommodation provided in Darlington. This, together with the opening of the Church Office, proved of immense value.

Church growth continued to a point where, in 1986, two morning services were commenced and total attendances, including children at the Sunday Club, approached 200. A varied social programme, emphasis on house groups and regular evening services were means of maintaining a sense of corporateness. Steps were taken to develop our ties with the participating denominations, and the continuing quarterly joint services with the Anglicans and Roman Catholics demonstrated our unity with all believers.

We established links with a sister-church: the SUNGAI WAY-SUBANG METHODIST CHURCH in Kuala Lumpur.

Thus the church over a period of twenty years from the mid-sixties to the mid – eighties, showed sustained growth. But the ethos has altered little. A love for the Lord and His Word; a recognition of our union of Christ; an emphasis on developing the varied gifts of the congregation in the power of the Spirit, and a desire to be involved in the wider work of the Christian Church, continue to be the mark of a fellowship which is determined by God's grace, to be orthodox in both doctrine and community. We are glad to welcome into our membership all who desire to walk and work together in the name of the Lord.

UPDATE

The president of the DUC: Murray Guy, notified via email that the name change for the church was approved as of 14th August 2018 to "Darlington Christian Fellowship".

This account was done by Ian Lindsay 1986

(Use was made of early notes done by Joy Morgan; Stan and Jean Williams)

Recollections and Reflections **by Ron and Dorothy Mitchell 17.7.2000**

Darlington United Church (DUC) came into being on 26th July 1950, bringing together in the one organization several that had met mostly separately for some decades previously. Our involvement began in 1959 and these notes only attempt to record a few experiences mostly in DUC's earlier days. Some parallels with the way/s in which we do things today will be self-evident. I think.

Many wonderful – sometimes tense, sometimes humorous – discussions and debates took place at COMMITTEE MEETINGS. It was amazing how much banter and/or heat some relatively insignificant items could generate while weightier matters were usually approached carefully and prayerfully. The main venues I recall are the homes of the Camerer and Morgan families. Arnold Camerer's place was quite a favourite in winter because of the magnificent exposed, large, copper, fireplace hood and flue which would warm the lounge with just a few sheets of newspaper.

BIBLE STUDY/FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS were held regularly usually just the one each week. "All comers" were made very welcome at the RICHARDS and MORGAN homes, although I remember that we occasionally met at the home of KATHLEEN SKIPSY in Dalry Rd. They were valuable times of mutual "fellowship".

We all used to look forward to some SPECIAL EVENTS on our calendar. The combined SUNDAY SCHOOL and CHURCH PICNIC at COOGEE BEACH was always popular. I believe that some folk began catering preparations as early as 5.00am to ensure that there was no hold up in getting an early start for Coogee. We travelled in broken convoy unless detailed to go ahead and erect the shelters. In every respect they were "big" days – with wind, sand, surf, sunburn and lots of fun adding to the memories. The Kwinana development eventually diminished somewhat our enthusiasm for the Coogee site.

Another time (1987) a FAMILY BEEFBURGER DAY was organized by JEFF and RUTH BYRNE. Its location was CARINYA a cleared area in the forest towards Brookton Highway. It was "voted" a huge success. A flywire tent for the chef to operate in, made that task less hassle-some and fly-some (if there are such words)

Occasionally a PLEASANT SUNDAY AFTERNOON was arranged – usually for a particular purpose. The MORGANS generously gave us the use of their neat lawn and garden setting. One such occasion was to bid farewell to Rev. GRAY and ROS BIRCH – Gray being a minister that we shared with the Midland Parish. Gray settled in Sydney to lead the Frontier Services of the UCA. I believe Frontier Services is the successor of the Australian Inland Mission.

Along the way somewhere, a CAR RALLY was arranged by IAN WILSON and DOUG DECAUX. This was a quite a hilarious event what with the doubling back, extra miles

and animated discussions as to how to find the clues and relate them to the information sheet. Notwithstanding, we all ended up at, I think WUNGONG BROOK near the Waterway Gallery, where some games were organized in a paddock and an altogether pleasant time was had by the brook. Another time, we travelled to MT DALE for a fellowship outing.

In the mid 1950's KINGSLEY RICHARDS undertook to commence a SUNDAY SCHOOL. By the time we came to Darlington, it had been underway for some time. A great many folk have served in the JUNIOR CHURCH as staff. One project which the children (and whole church fellowship) gave strong support to for a number of years, was the sending of boxes of toys, clothing and books to the Warburton Ranges Aboriginal Mission. Later on, Cundeelee Mission was the recipient. The cartons were taken freight free. The idea was that the freight would arrive just before Christmas.

In 1970 a PRIMARIES CLUB began. These were held in the early evening on Fridays. The core group came from several DUC families. In time that group along with others became the initial YOUTH GROUP with JEFF and (the late) JANE TRIGG as leaders. It is a tribute to their work that many of the youth they worked with, have gone on to make their contributions also to the Lord's work.

Another 1970's event that made a unique contribution in the area was the commencement of the MIDLAND – DARLINGTON CONTACT with BILL MORGAN as its founding editor. Besides the serious purpose of keeping us informed and in contact with each other, Bill exercised his editorial right to include a joke or two. I suspect that these may have been the first and most often read items. A sample follows:

(Feb 1972)

Mr Newlywed: "I am going out after dinner"

Mrs Newlywed: "Oh darling, what will I do without you?"

Mr Newlywed: "The dishes"

(Oct 1972)

She: "Before we were married, you told me you were well off"

He: "But I never knew how well off"

Sometimes, some thought provokers were included:

(July 1972)

"Don't judge a man by the clothes he wears: God made one, the tailor the other".

(March 1972)

"A good sermon should not only comfort the afflicted – but afflict the comfortable".

The contact continued for some 17 years from October, 1970, with Jeff and Jane Trigg, Murray and Pam Guy and Maureen Capps serving as editors subsequently.

Leap frogging a few years and events to today: the people, places and times may be different but many similarities can be identified, Although people have come and gone the witness goes on. We thank God for His blessings over the past fifty years. To God be all praise.



Val Shiell and Ron Mitchell 2018