



**BICTON
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
CENTENARY
1903 – 2003**

unless the LORD builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.
unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stand guard in vain.
Psalm 127:1



Autographs

HISTORY OF BICTON SUBURB

The Swan River Colony was established in 1829 and just two and a half years later, in December 1831, John Hole Duffield was Granted 500 acres of land in an area now known as Bicton. By trade Mr Duffield was a Cooper and Brewer. He named his land "Bicton" after a large estate near his original home in Exeter, Devon, England. He built a home by the river above where the Bicton Baths were located. He was a very successful settler; he profitably farmed his land, planted a vineyard and successfully completed the carpentry work at the Round House. As we shall see, following his death in 1859 his estate was divided, and by the early 1900's the area was being sub-divided into suburban style blocks.

Thus Bicton began to form its present layout with streets and houses, but there were no churches or schools. The closest school was Plympton (now East Fremantle) and parents in the district were beginning to see the need for their suburb to become more active.

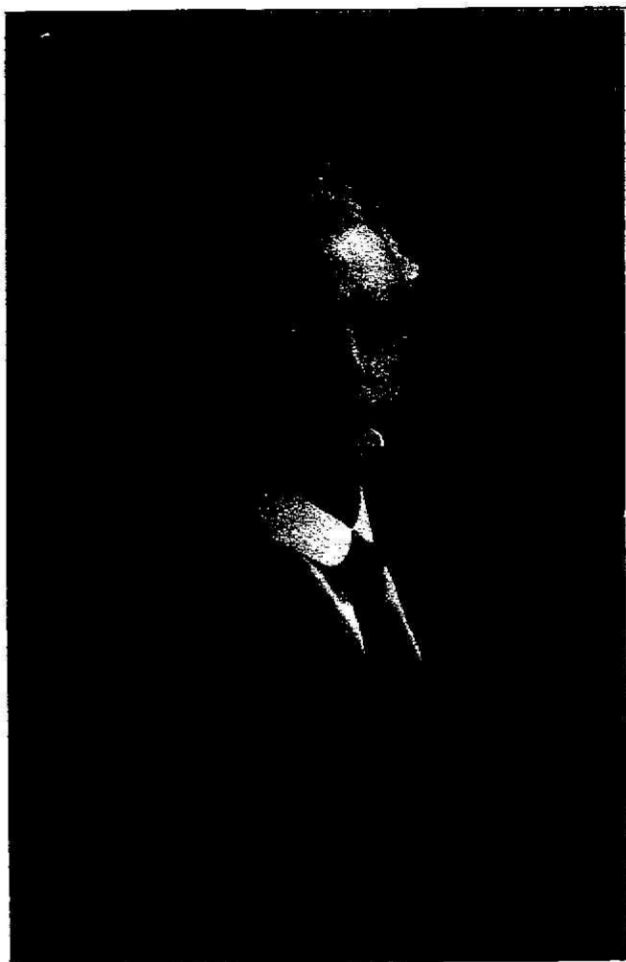
The Presbyterian Church had begun its work in Fremantle and with a donation of one hundred and twenty pounds, plus some other promised amounts (including five hundred pounds from the Colonial Committee in Scotland) the foundation of Scots Church was laid by the Premier, John Forrest, and the church was opened for public worship on 26th November, 1890.

It was not long before a new suburb of East Fremantle, or "Canvas Town" as it was first called began, and soon extension mission work was commenced. After the Reverend Douglas

Smith arrived from Scotland as an assistant to the Reverend Hanlin of Scots Church, he commenced services at "Pearse's Hall" in Canning Road. On 27th July 1898 the foundation stone for a new Church was laid, and on Sunday 18th September the building was opened for Divine worship with about 32 people attending.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BICTON PRESBYTERIAN HALL

It was to be expected that further mission work to Bicton would be the logical extension of the church. In 1902 the Session of East Fremantle Church, being concerned for the people of the Bicton area, purchased a block of land in Harris Road from Mr. Edwin Duffield. The proposed Hall was to be administered through a Committee comprising of F MacDonald, MLA, who ran the Fremantle Cash Store, Charles Purdie, who worked for F Instone & Co, wholesale manufacturers of farm plumbing equipment, and William Murray. It must be realised that at this time there were few made roads, no public transport, and children had either to walk to school through the bush or rely on parents and friends to give them a lift. Marion D'Arcy Evans, who lived in Murray Road, Bicton, attended the state school in Tuckfield Street, Fremantle. She trudged the four kilometres each way daily, except on those rare occasions when she had a lift in the Blinco family's horse-drawn buggy. Subscriptions were called to build a suitable building, with the result that a building later known as the "old hall" was constructed in 1902. The first service, conducted by the Reverend Douglas Smith of East Fremantle, was held on Sunday 4th January 1903.



C. Purdie

The Bicton Presbyterian Church was then a simple weatherboard structure to which the white ants took great interest in later years! It had a corrugated iron roof, and was described as a 'rustic weatherboard hall and porch with an iron roof about 25 feet by 20 feet' (seven and a half square metres) and used for a variety of community activities. It was the first public building to be constructed in the western end of the Melville district. It was also known as the Lower Bicton Hall, and as such, was used as a polling booth for State and Federal elections and from 2nd March 1903 until 18th May 1904 as the Bicton School on week days. The Lower Bicton Estate extended east-west between Stock Road to McKimmie Street, and north-south between Preston Point Road and Canning Highway. Presbyterian services were held regularly with the minister arriving in a horse and buggy. Charles Purdie was very keen not only to build a hall, but to commence a Sunday School. The first entry in an old bank book on 23rd October 1902 records an amount of 27 pounds 15 shillings. It is interesting to note, that a letter dated 17th April 1907, written to the Bank of Australasia, and signed by Mr Purdie, cleared the debt of the building which was valued at 200 pounds (400 dollars).

The first child to be baptised in the Hall was Roderick Purdie, eldest son of Charles Purdie. The three men who formed the Committee for the expansion of Bicton became known as the Bicton Vigilance Association – (F McDonald, C Purdie and W Murray)



Sunday School Anniversary - 1954

INTERIM YEARS

After this period, there are very few records of the advance of Presbyterianism in the area of Bicton up to 1940. In the Presbyterian of 1931 there is a report under the Home Mission section of a Ladies Guild being commenced with 13 ladies present. One of its first tasks was to report on a very successful social evening. In the Minutes of the Ladies' Guild recorded from 10th March 1964 to 8th June 1972, there is considerable evidence that the Guild carried out a programme of much activity and support for the Bicton Church. There were 24 ladies enrolled as Guild members in 1964, and at the Christmas Party, 28 attended, and 14 ladies sent their apologies. Tributes to Mrs N Lyons the first member of the Guild at its inaugural meeting and Mrs. N Tebbit, first President, were paid. It is recorded that both ladies died within a day of each other in 1967. There were other tributes paid to ladies who had served the church well, and the Minute Book records their faithful work.

It is evident that Bicton was a Home Mission Station under the direction of East Fremantle and Scots Church. Office-bearers of those churches included Mesdames Maxwell, W Murray (first treasurer), J.B. Wilson, F McDonald and C.M. Purdie.

Some of these members were influential in the development of the work at Bicton. The Minutes of a congregational meeting recorded on April 29th 1940, indicate the necessity for an increase in giving with a view to introducing an envelope system. It was also felt that 'it was desirable in the interests of the church if the missionary were resident in the district.' The collection total for the year of 1939 was 33 pounds (66 dollars), so it was expedient that a further 20 pounds (40 dollars) be raised. Mrs. Guest was appointed secretary

'for the purpose of reporting to the next meeting the progress of the envelope system.' "At the same time a Church Committee was appointed which consisted of Messrs. H Poore, H.C. Pitthouse, Guest, C Sampey, C Cowan and Draper. Mr Cowan donated a Notice Board and Mr Field, dust covers for the pulpit and organ. There were also times set for celebrating the Lord's Supper, and it was agreed to ask Scots Kirk Session, Fremantle to sanction the celebration on the first Sunday in April, July and October each year. A Board of Management was established in that same year and so we see the work developing and progress being made towards the maturity of a full charge.

On the 28th November 1955 the inaugural meeting of the Session was held at the church with Roderick Purdie acting as Session Clerk. The Reverend Trevor Diggins was appointed by the Presbytery of Fremantle as minister from the 1st July 1955 as 'he was leaving the army and is now at liberty to accept an appointment.' He was empowered to create a members roll, and at the same time, Ron Kent and Tom Evans were considered as being suitable for the eldership.

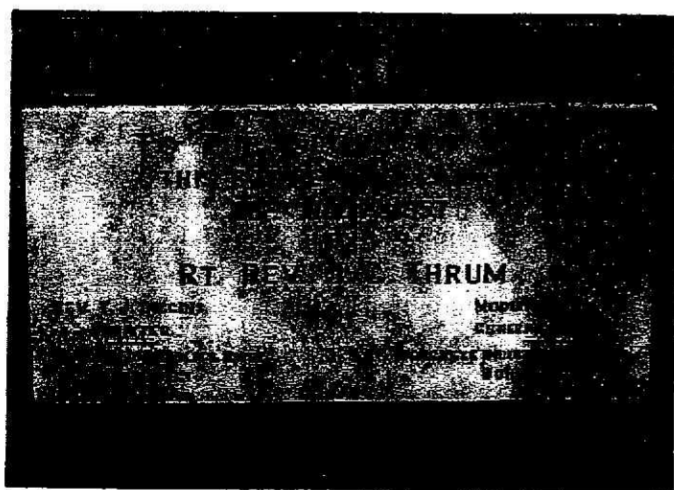
From this new development good progress was made and a Building Committee was appointed to consider the building of a hall. This Committee comprised of Messrs Cressie, Ward, Cam Bracks, Crowd, H. Poore and Miss Marjory Lyons.

Meanwhile, the old Church was again being used by the school, and a request had been received for the use of a radiator in the back room. It was decided on the motion of Mrs. Harvey, and seconded by Mr Mather that 'we charge seven shillings and sixpence per week for a period of three months.' There was also a new light

fitted in the porch, in fact 'two controlled by one switch' the path was also connected to the steps.

OPENING THE NEW HALL

The financial statement revealed over three hundred pounds in the building fund, and at a meeting on 3rd March 1957 it was resolved that the tender for seven thousand, three hundred and thirteen pounds and seventeen shillings be accepted, and the Concrete Industries Pty Ltd be authorised to build the hall. The hall was completed in good time, and on Sunday 27th October 1957 the Reverend Trevor Diggins, and the Board of Management of the Bicton Presbyterian Church, issued an invitation for all concerned to attend the dedication of the Hall at 3 p.m. with the Reverend G. Thrum laying the foundation stone.



Foundation Stone



Primary Boys -- 1955



Sunday School Anniversary



Sunday School Anniversary - 1950



Primary Class

By July of 1959 the white ants had invaded the old hall and action was needed. The damaged flooring had to be replaced after treatment had been carried out. Messrs. Kent and Bradfield painted the side door to the hall, and to make matters worse, the roof was leaking. The old hall was feeling its age. It was just as well a new hall had been erected. It was resolved by the Board of Management, that 'quotes be obtained for the repair of the old church and to accept a price of up to thirty-five pounds'

BUILDING OF FIRST MANSE

The next major concern of the Charge was the building of a Manse. A letter from the Commercial Bank released Lot 28 upon which the manse was to be built. The Home Building Society of W.A. approved a loan for the building. A novel way of raising funds for the manse was suggested by Mr. Higgins, that of selling bricks. The plan was approved and became one of the sources of finance for the new building. On October 28th 1959, at a special meeting, the congregation approved the building of a manse and the means of raising finance. The manse was dedicated on the 11th December 1960 with the Moderator, Reverend Thomas Gibson performing the deed. Psalm 100 was sung by the congregation and Mrs. Rhoda Bradfield rendered a solo, 'Bless This House.'



First Manse

APPOINTMENT OF 1ST ELDERS

It was at a meeting on Friday 31st January 1958 that Bicton Church was informed that the Presbytery of Fremantle had granted permission for the election of elders. Consequently, the special session suggested the names of Messrs. Ron Kent, Tom Evans and Harold Tebbit, and the Moderator, having met with the men concerned, 'was satisfied that the brethren were suitable for ordination'. Consequently, on the 23rd February 1958, after the session 'had received no objection as to the life and doctrine of any of the men', they were duly elected and given the right hand of fellowship. The new elders signed the Formula, and thus they became the first elders to be elected at the Bicton Presbyterian Church. Their first duty was 'to serve the elements at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.'

Tom Evans was elected Session Clerk, Ron Kent Treasurer and Harold Tebbit, Fremantle Presbytery representative.

An unusual event occurred in August 1958. The moderator informed the session that the communion wine had been stolen, and therefore, it was necessary to purchase further supplies!

In that same year, Robert Mather was admitted as an elder and 24 new members were added to the roll. There were 59 persons who partook of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on that occasion, (December 7th). At that time, the congregation could not call a minister because it was a special charge, and so the Presbytery had to appoint a suitable minister. As Mr Diggins was favoured by the members and as mentioned earlier he was appointed and served the parish until 1970.



New Manse

REPLACEMENT OF OLD MANSE

The old Manse which had been in use since 1960 was due for repair, and in December 1986 Mr Fraser drew up a list for review by a sub-committee, and after some delay, a Busy Bee was organised for March of 1987. It was also agreed to advertise in the 'weekly circular and with missions that the Manse was available for renting.' By April 1987 the manse had become tenanted and it was agreed that the manse garden should be cared for by the tenant. At the same time, the Rev. J. Nocher was assisting with supply, but 'he declined the \$100 per month offered him.' From time to time repairs were made to the manse. For example in October 1988 a quote for renovation to the church and manse totalled \$4,980.

Following the departure of the Reverend Richard Lee, and his wife Diane, the comment was made that the manse contained only three smallish bedrooms and one toilet, the study was very limited for a minister who required shelving for a computer and library, and so an incoming minister would have to think carefully about the conditions before committing himself. It must be recorded that both the Reverend Fraser and Reverend Lee, and their families, lived in these limited conditions and yet without complaint. After an inspection by the Board of Management, it was decided to sell the manse, and on October 8th 1995 the congregation agreed to accept an offer of \$200,000. The Board of Management consulted Summit Homes to produce a floor plan for a new manse, and finally, a quote of \$125,000 was approved by the Congregation and the new manse was built. The Reverend Stuart Bonnington and his wife were very happy to move into a modern manse.

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In 1 Samuel 7 we read that the LORD gave His people victory in an important battle (vv.7-11). Afterwards, the prophet

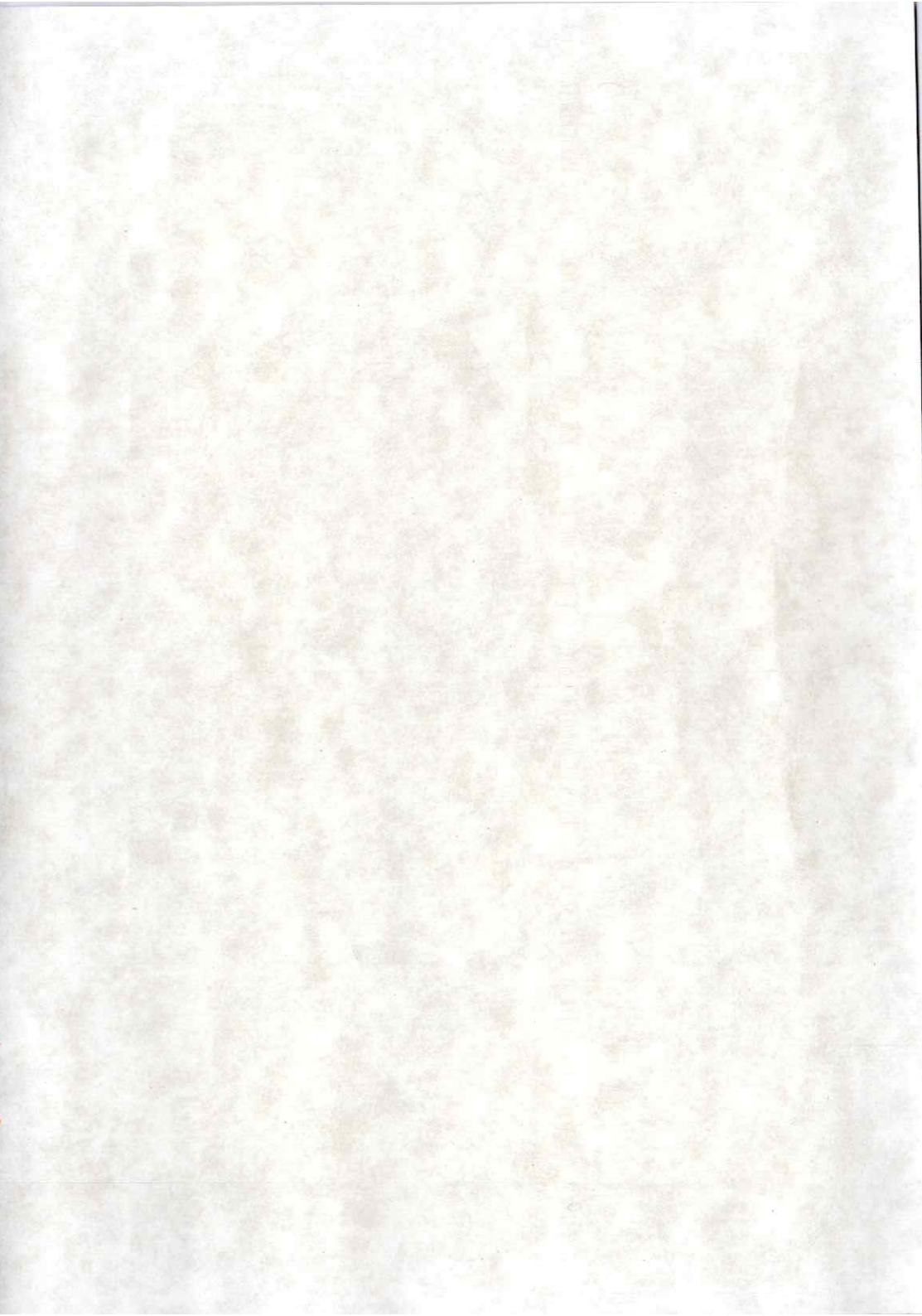
took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far has the LORD helped us." (v.12)

Why did Samuel put up this simple memorial? The answer is clear: to remind Israel of the Lord's faithfulness and care.

God's concern for us is evident in the following accounts. (So, too, are the warmth and friendliness of our congregation.) Thank you to everyone for your contribution to this history. Special thanks to Mr Harold Tebbit for compiling and editing the history, and to Mrs Margaret Ravlich for overseeing the printing.

Anniversaries are not only a time to look back. They are also a time to look forward. As we look to the future, let us do so with confidence. The task before us is very great: we're to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28: 19). But the LORD will strengthen us, and guide us in our work.

Andrew Robinson
MINISTER



When Tom Evans resigned as Session Clerk in 1962, he was replaced by Harold Tebbit, who when he was transferred to the country, was replaced by Ron Kent, the present session clerk.

ANN MURRAY FELLOWSHIP WORSHIP CENTRE

At a meeting of the Board of Management on 21st February 1979 Mr. Fraser (the minister) presented a sketch of a possible extension of the hall to provide an area for worship which would seat approximate 125 people. It was decided that Mr. Fraser and Mr. Allan would draw up a scale plan for calling for quotes and building approvals, eventually plans were approved, and quotes received, and on the 8th September 1979 a quote of \$26,344 was accepted from Bruce Matthews Pty.Ltd. By December of that year, the contract had been signed, and the first progress payment of \$6,934 was due. The building extensions were completed in early 1980.

DEMOLITION OF OLD HALL

In 1985 consideration was given to demolishing the old hall. On 6th December 1985 the Congregation approved to 'accept David Giles quote of \$400 to remove the old church providing all material was removed, that there was minimum damage to shrubs and that there was clarification of Workers Comp for David.' The hall was removed in April/May 1986 and the 'wood from it was stacked and available for firewood'. Thus the history of a building erected in 1902 had come to an end and no doubt there was much sadness at seeing it go.

MINISTERS AND MISSIONERS

Before concluding this brief history of Bicton Church mention must be made of ministers and home missionaries who served loyally, sometimes under difficult circumstances. The records of earlier preachers are not available, and so some names could be missed. Alick Bracks, Chairman of the then Melville Roads Board, was responsible for the church buying several blocks of land in View Terrace. He took the morning service at Bicton, and in the afternoon caught a train to Armadale where he took a service at Byford, for which was paid thirty shillings. Other ministers and preachers included Mrs. Rowland, Mr St Allan, Mr Hamer, John Morris, Andrew Priddle, the Reverend A.J.C. Tebbit, the Reverend Hallam Thorpe the Reverend Bill Maley and as recorded Trevor Diggins, an ex Army Chaplain, who took services for two years after his induction at no cost to the congregation. Later ministers included the Reverend John Rainsbury, Reverend Bruce Fraser, Reverend Richard Lee and Reverend Stuart Bonnington. The present minister is the Reverend Andrew Robinson who was inducted in 2002. The Centennial Committee has under some difficulty, due to lack of information recorded the major events from 1903 to the present time, and trust that sufficient material has been provided to show that Bicton, from its concept, has been an active congregation with its prime purpose of proclaiming the Word of God and living by its standards.

REMINISCENCE OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Mr Bob Poore

I started attending Bicton Presbyterian Church in the late 1930's as a small boy. Our family had moved from the Woodman Point Quarantine Station to Palmyra. My father was a dedicated Christian and held several positions in the church during his time there. He passed away in 1963 to be with the Lord. Mrs. Guest was the Sunday School Superintendent when we arrived. She was a dedicated lady who managed a very large Sunday School. The Anniversary Services were amazing. The stage held platforms at various levels, and by the time the children were in place it was a sea of excited faces. This was in the original church. Once Sunday sport was introduced our Sunday School numbers dropped. After the anniversary we had a party for the children and their parents. There were games, food, drinks and prizes. As we unwrapped each layer of paper there was a message as to who was to remove that layer, for example, 'The girl in the pink dress.' She would unwrap the parcel and pass it on. One message was 'The boy with the dirty face.' Mrs. Cowan had unwrapped it, she looked around and passed it to me. I remember being quite hurt at the time. I never had a dirty face; I had freckles. But all was forgiven and I unwrapped a great prize.

Mr. Harold Tebbit

I have very fond memories in the 1950's of being Superintendent of the Sunday School when attendance was up to 150 plus. Two annual events come to mind, that of the picnics and the anniversaries. Two or three buses were used to transport the children to South Coogee. My main worry was ensuring all the children returned home safely. The children were placed in groups with a teacher in charge, but unfortunately, in the afternoon parents would attend and take their children home, without notifying the teacher concerned. We never lost a child but it was rather a worrying day, and I was always pleased when no frantic parents rang me to find out where Johnny was. The children at lunch time would sit in a large circle, and after singing grace, an enormous amount of food was eaten, and with the usual weak raspberry cordial served to satisfy their thirst. As an extra delight for the children we ordered a keg of ginger beer, the contents of which disappeared rapidly.

Our anniversaries were very happy occasions. The stage was packed with girls wearing their best dresses and the boys neatly dressed. In 1958, at the afternoon service when special attention was given to the younger children, there were 170 people in attendance. The hall was simply packed. Rhoda Bradfield, Tom Evans and myself arranged the order and content of the anniversary and, at the end of the service the children would receive their prizes. This type of Anniversary was presented for the period I was Superintendent. I enjoyed my years at Bicton and found it rather hard to leave when I was transferred to Onslow in 1965.

Mrs. Betty Warren

Presbyterian Women's Association

The history of the Bicton Presbyterian Church would be incomplete without the mentioning of the P.W.A. Day Group. This group was disbanded in July 1996 through lack of numbers due to age and members shifting to other areas. For many years The P.W.A. organised the Fete and other social gatherings in the Church life. Particular mention must be made of the loyal service given by Mrs Jean Kent (President), Miss Ral Collins (Secretary) And Mrs Ally Harvey (Treasurer). These ladies have now passed on. Mrs Joyce Foley who was our organist for many years also held offices in the P.W.A. but sadly now is unable to be with us. Our thanks go to all the ladies who have helped us over the years.

Mr Ray Suckling

Memories of Men's Fellowship 1988-1996

When I took over the financial books of the Men's Fellowship in 1988 we were meeting on the first Monday of the months March to December. I believe the group may have been started by Ron Kent. The ladies had their day time Guild and an evening Fellowship and a time of fellowship and encouragement for the menfolk belonging to the church and others not committed to our Lord would meet together.

The meeting commenced with a fish and chip meal at \$5 per head with soup in the winter and salads in the summer. Amazingly a profit was sometimes made which provided small items for the Church. After the meal, the Minister gave a devotional talk before a guest speaker presented a talk on an interesting subject. A

highlight of the year was when we invited the ladies of our Church and wives of the men who attended the Men's Fellowship, to a meal in December, waiting on them and slaving in the kitchen! Unfortunately, due to lack of numbers, the group discontinued in 1996 after farewelling the Rev. Richard Lee at the end of 1995. Some of the names of those who attended included the late Reverend Bruce Fraser, Reverend Sullivan, Ed Stuart, Bruce Stuart, Tom Evans, Oliver Harvey, George Edwards, Bill Grassom, Jack Moorhouse, Ron Kent, Colin Pitthouse, Bob Poore, Bob McWilliam, Ernie Cole, Norm Stirling, Ray and David Suckling, Ray Cressie, Ross McCullough, Ben Lawson, Adriaan Latang, Kevin Vagg, Bruce Murray, David Mattison, Bill Pettit, Ernie Cole, Albert Finch, Bruce Love, Bruce Graham, Chris Sherman and Ray Scott.

Mrs. Shirley Suckling

My first memories with Sunday School in the little old church includes spreading mats over the wooden floor, not knowing when we would lose a small child through the floor boards, and being careful not to cause any fires when we attempted to keep warm in the winter.

Then I recall being enticed into the bun roster and providing lunches on a Monday for the children at the Bicton School because there was no school canteen at that time.

There was also the annual day when we covered ourselves with chocolate and coconut, sometimes managing to get some ingredients on the sponge cake to make up lamingtons and pack them in ice cream cartons (in later years boxes) for fund raising. Gradually, the number of ladies in the day time guild became so few that they had to discontinue meeting. They were truly a

dedicated band of Christians meeting together, working and serving the Church. I can recall Allie Harvey, Joyce Foley, Betty Warren, Rae Fraser, Isabel Diggins, Ral Collins, Jean Kent, Ann Murray, Joe Stanley and Rene Cressie.

For many years the Ladies' Evening Fellowship was led by Betty Riley, then somehow she persuaded me into the position, a hard act to follow, but with the ladies' help and the Lord, I have survived. Membership has been up and down. We still survive financially through the encouragement of our long-serving treasurer Margaret Johnson

Mrs Les Larsson

Kardinya Lakes Church was founded through church Planting in early 1992. We met in the library at Kardinya Primary School under the leadership of our first minister, Reverend Keith Morris. A manse was bought (although surrounding power lines were of some concern), but subsequently the manse was sold.

In June 1992 the Reverend Morris advised the Board he had accepted a call to Peppermint Grove. Des Burne, who had studied in Britain with Mr Morris, became the supply minister whilst working part-time in another position.

Unfortunately, Kardinya Primary School could no longer be used for Sunday worship due to vandalism, and we relocated to the Bibra Lake Community Centre. Financial assistance had come from the General Assembly Grant with a further donation from Victoria for the purpose of outreach work.

In January 1993 Des Burne preached for the last time, and he was thanked for his contribution to Kardinya.

We then looked forward to our newly appointed minister, the Reverend Rod McAuliffe, who took up his duties as minister in

February 1993. He did much visiting and letter drops in several areas which resulted in a successful Holiday Club.

Sunday School numbers averaged about ten children whilst twelve families formed our congregation. Bible study and morning fellowship were held for the mothers of small children.

In November 1994 the congregation was informed that owing to lack of finance the Reverend Rod McAuliffe would be withdrawn from Kardinya Lakes, and Kardinya would be a preaching place of Bicton. The decision was made with some reluctance as Rod and Rhonnie had worked so hard to build up the faith, and to bring others into the Kingdom of God. Sadly the McAuliffes were farewelled after the Christmas Day Service, 1994.

In the meantime, pulpit supply came from Bicton where the Reverend Stuart Bonnington had become minister of Bicton in February 1995.

The Lakes Church struggled until finally a small group held a meeting after church on Sunday 14th April, 1996. The resolution of the congregation and elders was to suspend worship at the Lakes. The Greer family (Tom and Elizabeth) together with Les Larsson Commenced worship at Bicton 28th April 1996.
We tried!

Rosemary Kent

Memories of B.P.C. in the 50's and 60's

I started attending Sunday School in the 'little church' in 1951 (aged 3) with my mother, aunt and younger brother after arriving from Brisbane by boat. As Bicton was a Home Mission station, special services were often held at East Fremantle where the minister was the Reverend Hallam Thorpe. I remember the great fun we had after worship with the three small Thorpe boys. In

Other camps included Toodyay, Rockingham, the Stirling Rangers and Albany. As the teenagers grew older, and many left high school for university, college or marriage, the group wound down. The great memories remain, and the adults in the group know that the foundation laid by the Lees will stay with those touched by the ministry. In fact, several SNFers went on to share their faith at annual Scripture Union Beach Missions in Jurien Bay, which were run by Jonathon and Gillian Nelson with their daughters.

Mrs. June Poore

I first attended Bicton Presbyterian Church on a hot summer's evening in 1966. I remember being very nervous as I hadn't regularly attended any church since Sunday School days. I walked in looking around hoping to find a new face I knew. The Reverend Diggins and his wife were there but nobody else. Panic set in. What if I was asked to read a passage of Scripture! I didn't know the correct pronunciation of names and towns from the Old Testament. Then there were the hymns. I only knew some well known hymns and so how could I sing unknown tunes. I need not have worried as Mr Diggins suggested that seeing it was hot, why didn't we go outside where it was cooler. So my first service at B.P.C. was an informal one under the stars. In later years I taught at Sunday School to children aged three years to six years. One Sunday the children acted out the story of Zacchaeus. Each child acted out the various parts. One little girl acting as Zacchaeus was on the chair, the other, a boy, strolled by, he looked up and said he would like to go to Zacchaeus' house for lunch. Zacchaeus looked worried, then climbed off the chair and said, "That will be all right but we will have to call in and get take away as I don't have a thing in the house." Children are a special gift from God and I

Mrs. Aletha McCullough

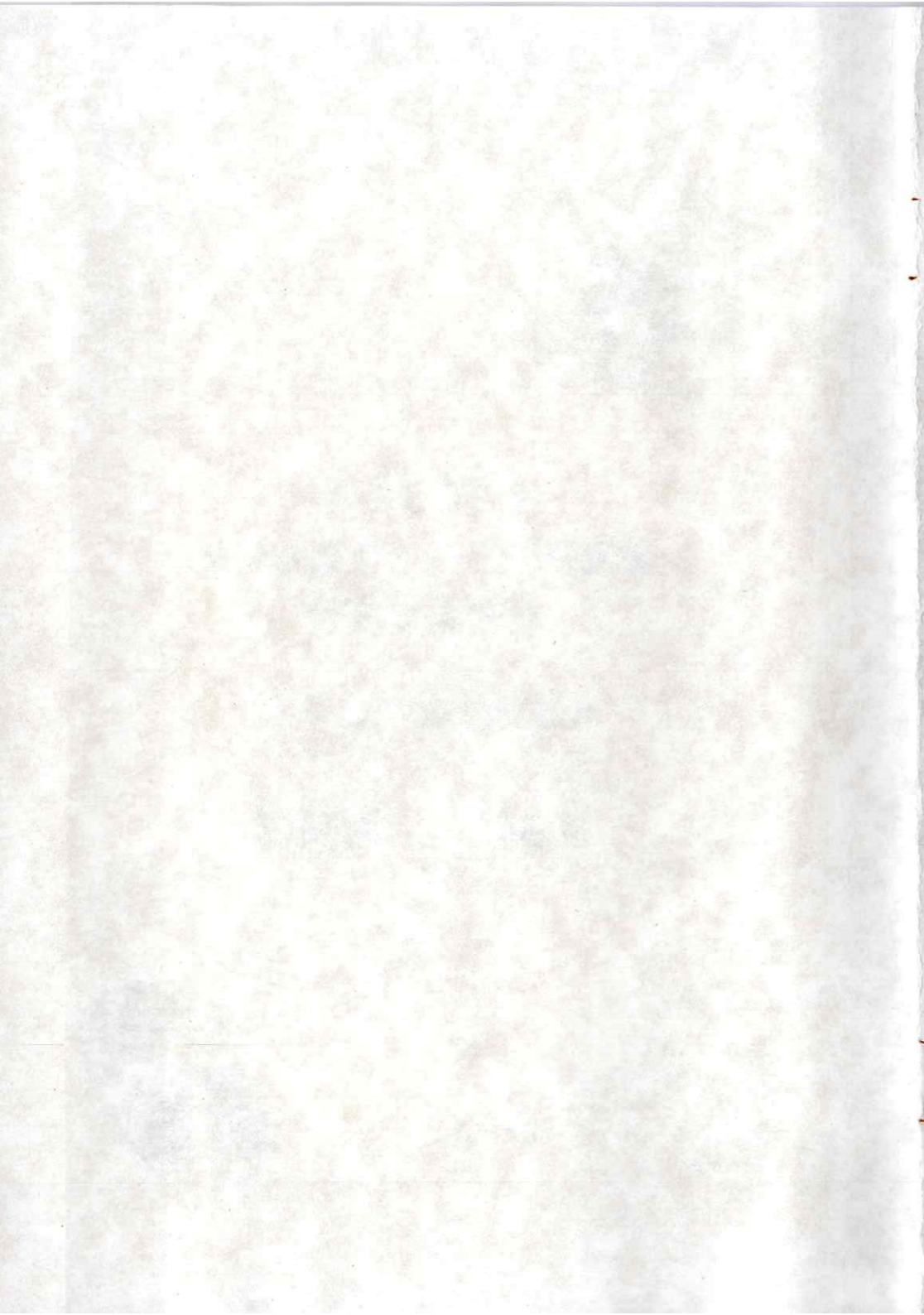
In 1973, when our family returned from 8 years in Melbourne, we bought a house in Bicton, and we were pleased to find a Presbyterian Church nearby. The Reverend Bruce Fraser was the minister. We were given a warm welcome and soon became involved in the life of the Church. Our teenage daughters joined the Youth Group. There were many outings, I remember Ron Kent taking them ice skating, and how pleased they were that he skated too! A few years later the girls went to Friday Night Coffee Shop which was held in the original wooden Church.

I remember helping with the "Buns on Mondays." The Bicton Primary School children would order their lunches from us, as there was no tuck-shop. We would make up the lunches at the Church and take them over to the school with a box of lunches for each class.

In 1977 our eldest daughter, Susan, married Ross Fraser in the Church where we now worship. The Reverend Bruce Fraser officiated and Mrs Betty Reilly arranged the flowers which were really beautiful. Betty, not only made wonderful flower arrangements for the Church, she also sang solos for us occasionally.

We missed the next 8 years at Bicton. Sue and Ross went to the Eastern States where Ross learned to fly so that he could serve with the Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Papua, New Guinea. The rest of us went farming.

Ross and I came back to Bicton in 1985 and it was good to be back in the Church. Our second daughter, Adele was worshipping at Bicton with her two small children, Adele helped design the present kitchen. Several of the congregation did voluntary work at



Autographs

Sunday afternoon visits with the girls to the old Braemar homestead when Mr St. Allan was minister where we enjoyed playing on the organ and games tossing the cumquats about the court yard. There was a most memorable train outing to Hovea with the PFA , Beautiful Harvest Festival Thanksgiving Services held in the little wooden church-such a lovely sight (grapes hanging from grapevines that had been looped around the little old wooden pulpit with bags of wheat in between.) Mr. Diggins playing on the tiny wooden organ at the Beach Missions at Bicton Baths, Church Fetes with the building packed with people and produce, happy memories of teaching in the Sunday School and Women's Fellowship with Betty Reilly, Rene Cressie, Jenny Higgins, Marion Nairn, Natalie Simpson, June Poore and others. My marriage in the new church hall, beautifully decorated by the ladies guild, with Mr Diggins in the pulpit and Harold Tebbit on the organ and Rhoda Bradfield singing a solo, then bringing my children up in the Sunday School are wonderful memories. I have to say that I am glad I was led to Bicton Church by Christ through the late Tom Evans.

God bless all in this centennial year.

enjoyed teaching them. I have always found the teachings, fellowship and love, shared by all at our church to be truly blessed.

Mrs. Margaret Ravlich (nee Beurteaux)

When I was 5-6 years old I commenced Sunday School at the Anglican Church in the Bicton Primary School. Our next door neighbour, the late Tom Evans asked my mother if she would like me to accompany her daughter Barbara to the Bicton Presbyterian Church, and so it was arranged. Who would have thought some 55 years later that I would still be worshipping here and Barbara is still my best friend. Choosing to reminisce is difficult as I have many wonderful memories of my experiences in this parish. I have vivid memories of Sunday School days and Girls Club with the Lyons girls, Ailsa, Netta, Marjorie and Rosemary. The first Girls Club camp to North Beach was a great adventure and the exciting Scavenger Hunt games around the neighbourhood were always great fun. The Sunday School Anniversaries were fabulous with Mr. Evans as Conductor and Joan Prior on the organ. There were lots of practice times and then 3 services on the actual day.

Asparagus fern and geraniums were looped all around the sides of the church and the weather board church would be nearly bursting at the seams with the numbers of people who attended. Awards and prizes were presented and mothers on the cradle roll would receive a buttonhole during the service. I value special fellowship with such people as Judith Bracks, Bev Jones, Nola Caratti, Janet Bradfield, Kaye Wright, Johnston and Hewitt girls, Barbara Wade, Lyn Schofield and Judith Munro just name a few.

There were the Sunday School picnics at Peppermint Grove and all those mock chicken sandwiches, red cordial, running races and swinging on the bars that surrounded the grounds.

Braemar and in 1989 I joined them. This led to a great love for Braemar Homes and a huge respect for all who worked there to make them such happy places. (they need more volunteers now!) I really appreciate the good teaching we have received over so many years and the Bible Studies and the Prayer Groups. All these help us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. As well as the teaching there has been wonderful friendship, cooperation and love. The Bicton Presbyterian Church has been a great blessing for me.

Mrs. Betty Reilly

When I first came to the Bicton Presbyterian Church in 1957 I arrived half way through the morning service. Afterward, Tom Evans and Mrs Tyler both made me feel I was welcome and it would be my church after having tried three other churches where I did not feel wanted. To welcome strangers is very important. The foundation stone of the hall had not long been laid. I have memories innumerable during the ensuing years, but from back there I recall a Sunday School Anniversary when Harold Tebbit was Superintendent and the platform had tiers of seats filled with children who sang Sunday School songs and hymns for us. I recall quite vividly Rosemary Kent and her young brother David providing a special item and I was amazed at their self confidence. Another memory is of the preparation for the annual Fete when the ladies went to much trouble making crepe paper flowers to decorate the various stalls on which the appropriate articles for sale were placed.

I remember with gratitude the Bible Studies led by the Reverend Diggins, who was also an Army Chaplain at that time. It was through his teaching I first learned to understand and value God's

word and later I grew in knowledge and appreciation of it through the teaching of the Reverend Bruce Fraser and his dear wife Rae. It was during these years that we learned to be Counsellors for the Billy Graham Crusade when many were led to Christ.

Mrs. Isabella Evans

I would like to record that the following relatives were married in the Bicton Church.

Margaret Carr (Greta) married Alfred Fordham (Alf) on the 25th August 1956. The minister was the Reverend Trevor Diggins. Greta is my sister.

Anne McMillan married Warren Wandless on the 22nd April 1966 with again the Reverend Diggins as the minister. Anne is my niece.

Mr. Ron Kent

One hot summer day in January 1951 I went to Victoria Quay to meet my wife Jean, her older sister Gert (Ral) and our two children, Rosemary and David, and we took a taxi to the War Service home in Wrexham Street which was to be our family home for the next 43 years.

It didn't take Jean long to sniff out the small Presbyterian Church in Harris Road. At that time it was a Home Mission Station, ministered to by an elderly Hungarian gentleman, Mr. St Allan. The congregation consisted of about six women and three or four men.

I didn't attend church at that time which I thought was OK for Jean, but not for me. One Sunday morning Jean came home from church and said rather diffidently, "We had our AGM this morning and we couldn't get a treasurer and I said that if I asked my

husband nicely he might agree to do it" "Why me?" I thought. I know now that it was all of God's plan. It meant that I began attending regularly to count the money which normally amounted to something like 3 pounds 13 shillings and 3 pence.

Amongst those who ministered to Bicton was Mr Alick Bracks, who as Chairman of the Melville Roads Board, nudged the church to purchase a large undivided block adjoining the original block facing Harris Road, on which the original church stood. This was later subdivided, and out of that block came the sites of the present church, the tennis court, the original manse and three blocks up View terrace, which were later sold to pay for the original manse. Through all the changes in the church I was still not a Christian and I decided it was time I read the Bible. I might add that although I apparently had everything necessary for happiness, a beautiful wife, two lovely children, a comfortable home and more than adequate income, I was not a happy man. After reading the Gospels and realising my rejection of any authority of God in my life and the consequent sins that inevitably follow, I felt like a pilgrim when the burden on his back rolled away my difficulties and I thanked God for giving me the understanding of my problem. I remember with gratitude the men who have served as Elders in the church up to 1977. I recall Ron Bradfield, Bill Martyr, Ray Cressie, Bill and Jack Higgins, John and Harold Tebbitt, Bob Mather, Ted Ingram, Tom Porter, Geoff Purdy, Barry Bint, Bob Scambler, Don Dowling, Fred Symes, Ron Allan, Norman Stirling and one lady, Betty Reilly.

As we remember the past an interesting item in the School Journal in early days reported that a Miss Murray did not like attending the Religious Instruction because she did not like it. Miss Murray later became a devoted servant of the Lord and gave a gift of many

Mr. Roy Davies

Saturday Night Fellowship (SNF)

SNF flourished during the ministry of Richard, Dianne and Adrian Lee. Lasting friendships were made in the formative years of many young Christians. Led by Adrian, a group of teenagers, parents and friends met regularly for study, fellowship and fun; for example basketball, mini Olympics, camel riding, archery and much eating. Each Christmas, the SNFers would minister to the older members of the congregation, those housebound, and residents of Braemar Lodge with a youthful rendition of carols. We were often joined by Keith Morris's family far away in Mosman/Peppermint Grove. The group would regularly make the arduous trip north to "Planet Joondalup," and meet with Stuart and Sharon Bonnington's fledgling congregation. These were memorable games of 'Spotlight' on the chilly beaches and sand dunes.

Annual camps were held in the South West. There was a mammoth 'Canoeing on the Blackwood River Gateway.' Most of us were novices and were unceremoniously dumped into the murky waters on at least one occasion. For hours we knew that our destination (toilets, camp and food carried by the Sucklings) was just around the next bend. We found the Blackwood River a long, tiring, meandering river. There was the memorable 'lentil camp' where we hiked with all of our possessions carefully stored in back packs, along the Augusta beach, over rocks, up sand hills and into virgin bush.

Another camp was in National Park where we quickly made ourselves at home and started a fire for a billy of tea. The ranger loaned us a gas stove, which we gratefully returned at the end of camp.

1955 my father started coming to church so that the whole family was now involved.

Most residents of any community, including Bicton, in general, had Church connections and one annual occasion was the Sunday School Anniversary. The girls had new dresses and boys, new ties and short trousers. We were arranged on a large tiered scaffold in front of our elders with Tom Evans (Superintendent) then, in later years, Rhoda Bradfield leading the singing and Harold Tebbit (also later the Sunday School Superintendent) playing the organ.

The annual Sunday School picnic at Coogee was truly fun and exhausting. Favourite activities of mine were the sand castle competition, the three legged race and the egg and spoon race. Sunday School teachers of the era included at various times, June Poore, Rhoda Bradfield, Howard Bradfield, Alison Diggins, Barbara Evans, Tom Evans, Margaret Ravlich, Ron Kent, Jean Kent, Win Dierks, Harold Tebbit and myself. P.F.A. was our Friday night activity. Trevor Diggins gave a Bible study and members were engaged in prayer. This was my first experience of corporate prayer and its power. My peers included Kay Trapp, Lyn Idle, Alison Diggins and Joy Fraser, all of who have grown in Faith over the years. Lyn Stanley, Helen McCormack, Fay Ellery, are names I recall, but with time, contact has lapsed. Mondays were bun days at Bicton School with the Ladies Guild providing the first school canteen, taking orders for polony and salad rolls at six pence each. Cakes were added later. It was a great fund raiser for the building of a new manse (now old) and later the present Church hall. They were a great band of women.

dollars (pounds in those days). The money bought Bicton a new church the "Anne Murray Fellowship Centre."

The Reverend Bruce Fraser and his wife Rae served during the turbulent times of church union and Bicton withdrew from the local Presbytery and was joined to the Presbytery of Melbourne North. He was a tower of strength in a difficult time and a much loved pastor. Due to his wife developing Parkinson's Disease, Bruce resigned in December 1986. He was followed by the Reverend Lee, and in turn the Reverend Stuart Bonnington and his wife, Sharon. Stuart was responsible for planting our first daughter church in Rockingham which is now ministered by the Reverend Paul Bloomfield.

Mr and Mrs Cressie (Rene & Ray)

In the Spring of 1950, Ray and I came out to Bicton with our 15 month old son, Ian to live in a shed on our block and to build our Do-It-Yourself style home. Having attended church at Scots and East Fremantle, we knew of a small wooden church in Harris Road. I called at the only small shop close to us where we met Beryl and Tom Evans, and picked up a Church envelope off the counter. After a visit from the Home Missioner we commenced worshipping at Bicton. Two more babies followed in 1950 and "51. The Reverend Hallam Thorpe (East Fremantle) was then looking after Bicton and he baptised Noel and Paula from the new Font donated by Mrs. Ida Cowan.

The suburb of Bicton was moving ahead. The Reverend Trevor Diggins, recently returned from serving as a Chaplain in Korea, became our part-time Minister, sharing Bicton with Army Service. This was an answer to prayer. Our Sunday School was flourishing with Harold Tebbit as Superintendent. We had a Ladies' Guild.

with Jean Kent, myself and later Jean's sister Ral Collins, the Guild looked like it had a Queensland invasion.

As we needed Sunday School room and a Manse we prayed and decided to commence fundraising. The ladies prepared salad buns for the school opposite, and the Hewitt family business was a big help with the buns. There were cake stalls and fetes organised by Margaret Barron. The old organ was replaced, concerts were enjoyed and Joyce Foley was our organist. The Hall and Manse were completed, and Reverend Trevor Diggins, Isabel and family came to live among us. Trevor was a faithful minister through our struggles and successes.

During the late '70s' we had the strong commitment of the Reverend Bruce Fraser at a time when Church Union was being considered, and despite all the opposition Bicton remained a continuing Presbyterian Church with the Bible the Basis of our faith, and we are indebted to Rae and Bruce for their wisdom. Over the years we have had dedicated Christian instruction and pastoral care, and we have formed treasured friendships. As we celebrate 100 years of continuing Christian witness, we have the assurance that the Word of God is still being preached by our Minister, the Reverend Andrew Robinson.

Time had taken its toll on the structure of the small wooden church. It gave up some time ago to be part of memories of Bicton.

Jean Morrison

I answered a knock at the door to be greeted by a man, who I later found out to be the Reverend Bruce Fraser, who asked me if I would like to attend the Bicton Presbyterian Church. I agreed, and on the next Sunday, Ron Kent and his wife, Jean, took me to church where I met members of the congregation.

At that time the church was asking for support to call Stuart and Sharon Bonnington, and in addition an organ fund was in existence. I remember a barbecue at Norm & Pam Stirling's home, and a Nisbet dolls demonstration by Hillary McWilliam.

I met Mrs Betty Reilly, who then lived in Adrian Street, and for about four years we walked together to church. I also became friendly with Isobel Diggins who had a great love for the Bicton church, and I remember Joyce Foley playing the organ for many years.

There were activities such as when Rosemary and I helped to deliver the Good News Bibles in Palmyra, craft group ladies making cushion covers, men's tea, Bible study led by Rae Fraser, and so on.

I have enjoyed the choir groups over the years, and now we have a lovely singer in Kathleen Robinson (Minister's wife), who leads the chorus singing before church.

Mr and Mrs Stirling, (Pam and Norman)

We had a visit from the Reverend Trevor Diggins after signing the visitors book in October 1966. Our first service was the Sunday School anniversary with many young people up front singing, including Rosmary Kent.

We first met Ron Kent and Bob Poore painting the ceiling of the old wooden church.

Neil Diggins (youngest son of Trevor and Isobel Diggins), with Down's Syndrome, but with great warmth and sense of humour, used to sit in the front row, and during father's sermon he would become bored, and hold up a watch for dad to see that it was time to close. Needless to say, the congregation struggled not to explode with laughter. There was also a Leeuwin Navy Officer and his wife

The church had a large old fashioned bell suspended above the roof at the rear of the church. It was rung twice about 15 minutes before the start of the Sunday School commencement. I can still close my eyes and image that once more I am running up the hill in order not to be late.

Communion was conducted from time to time by ministers from Scots Church and East Fremantle, I can remember the Reverend McEvoy, The Reverend R Herriman who had a strong singing voice and who very often commenced his services with the hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, the Reverend H Thorpe, the Reverend A.J.C. Tebbit and the Reverend N Brown.

Of the Home Missionaries I think John Morris was the favourite. During his time we started having Girl Guide Church Parades of the 1st Palmyra Company. John also instigated the Sunday School Anniversary. Mrs Revill of Scots Church was the conductor until Tom Evans took her place.

I have enjoyed writing down my memories. They are precious ones indeed and I feel thankful and blessed by God in my association with the little wooden church on the hill as it was in those days.

References

Information from "A City For All Seasons. The Story of Melville." Courtesy of the Heritage and Museum Services, City of Melville.
Photo of Bicton Presbyterian Church courtesy Bicton State School from their Booklet "Bicton 80 Years."

11 a.m. The adult service followed and the children stayed in for up to 15 minutes. Bruce Stewart was the Sunday School Superintendent and he and my brother became good friends because of their interest in wireless. His mother was my Sunday School teacher and as the fashion was in those days she wore hats and gloves and dark clothing and I thought she was positively ancient.

One of my early teachers was Peggy Guest who died suddenly in her teens. I think was my first experience of death with someone close. I shall always remember on the following Sunday morning we sang "When He cometh to make up his jewels." Mrs Guest offered to take over Peggy's class. She was a lovely lady and was present at my farewell night.

Another family which had a very active part in earlier days was the Cowan family. Mrs. Cowan was a teacher at one time. Sadly their eldest daughter Joyce also died young. One of their sons was at one time Town Clerk of East Fremantle. Of other families involved I well remember the Pitthouses, Poores, Priors, Bathursts, Evans, Doigs and Leslie Eacott.

Other activities enjoyed in those days were the annual picnic and Christmas Party. The picnics were held at the home of Mr and Mrs Doig and one of the highlights was when the group was taken on Mr Doig's Yacht for a short sail on the river. The Christmas Break Up Party and Prize giving was also a special time with a high tea, games and prizes.

When I was young there was a Band of Hope Temperance club for children. I well remember singing songs and playing Table Top Croquet on a flannel covered table in the back room.

My two younger sisters Netta and Marjorie ran a very successful Girl's Club for many years after I had left.

Lynette Graham with a one year old child, who was very noisy during the sermon. Trevor Diggins, undaunted, managed to give his sermon without the help of a sound system. When Trevor and Isobel left for Yea in Victoria, a farewell evening was given at the home of Geoff and Betty Purdy, who lived in Melville at that time. The Reverend Bruce Fraser, his wife, Rae, and family of teenagers next occupied the manse. Rae encouraged young mums and their littlies to a special Bible study, and to "bring your kids and don't worry if they cry or you have to attend to them."

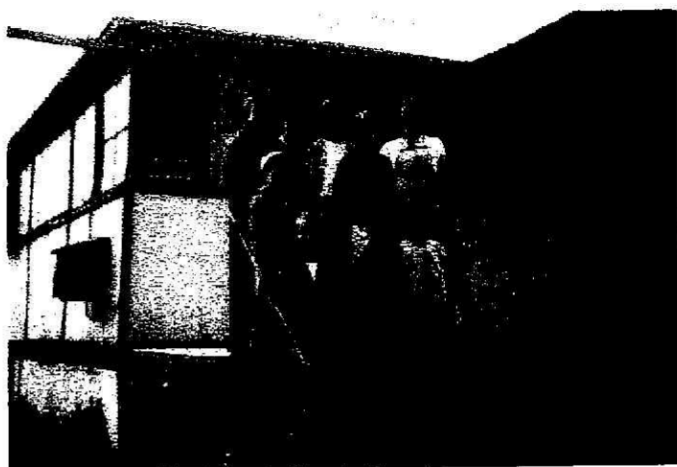
The above are just brief events that we recall of earlier days.

Mrs Ailsa Maley (nee Lyons)

The year is 1951. The month is May and I am in the little Bicton Presbyterian Church for probably the last time as Ailsa Lyons. My finance, Bill Maley (later to become Reverend) is with me together with the church 'family' and in a few days we will be married at Scots Church in Fremantle – my other spiritual home. We first met when Bill was sitting on the steps waiting for someone to arrive with the key of the church door. That was me.

The function was a farewell social evening at which Bill and I were presented a dinner set-cream with gold trim. I in turn presented a framed print of the head and shoulders of Christ with the caption, "and Jesus looked upon Peter and Peter remembered." I started attending Sunday School when I was 3 years of age. My 7 year old brother had been attending for several years. My mother told me that a gentleman called one day in a horse and dray and offered to pick up my brother and no doubt other children. That was about 1928.

Sunday School was held in the afternoon in those days but when I was 6 or 7 the time was altered to Sunday morning from 10am. To



P.G.A. - Camp - Waterman's Bay



P.F.A. - Picnic To Hovea

Autographs



Bicton Presbyterian Church – 1903

*Take pride in our past,
 Courage in this present day,
 And be full of hope and faith in our future.*



Bicton Presbyterian Church – 1957

