

Saint Stephen's, Adamstown

HISTORY

The beginning of Anglican worship in Adamstown can be traced back to the last two decades of the 19th century. A decade or so earlier still, in 1869, readers of the *Newcastle Chronicle* had been informed that

‘Adamstown is the name to be given to a new township which is about to be established between the Borehole [*now the suburb of Hamilton*] and New Lambton, near Mr Christian's, where Mr Thomas Adam [*sic*], of Blane St [*now Hunter Street*], Newcastle, has recently purchased between 50 and 60 acres of Crown land. This land is to be subdivided into a large number of small allotments, and sold at most reasonable terms, so as to induce a population to settle it.’

The Scottish-born Thomas Adams, a government surveyor, had bought for the sum of £52 the 21 hectares (52 acres) that became the nucleus of a township. Allotments were subsequently sold at prices from £2 to £8. At the time, Adamstown was almost completely isolated, and many stories were told of its residents becoming lost in the bush.

The subdivision and sale were intended to offer a residential area for miners working in adjacent Hamilton. It formed part of a ring of isolated townships that had sprung up based on coal mining or coal-based secondary industry, including Merewether (mid-1830s), Hamilton (1849) and New Lambton (1868). These townships, at that time separated from one another, were later to become suburbs as Newcastle grew and swallowed up surrounding areas.

By 1877, there were between 200 and 300 people living in Adamstown, 120 of them being children of school age. The township's first buildings were constructed of so-called German bricks (made of yellow mud), wattle and slab and other materials. Two acres of the Commonage or Pasturage Reserve (Crown land) were acquired by the Council of Education, and Adamstown School was opened in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, located on those two acres and later, on 27 April 1877, moved across the road. (Before this date, the children who went to school had to walk to Hamilton, and could not go to school during wet weather because of impassable bogs.)

The *Newcastle Directory* of 1880 describes Adamstown as ‘rapidly growing into importance with its stately Public School, Mechanics' Institute and other prominent buildings.’ It was ‘rapidly taking its place amongst the leading colliery townships. It contains three hotels, four general stores, one place of worship and a post office, and has a population of 400, chiefly miners employed in the surrounding collieries. The Public School has 250 pupils enrolled, with an average attendance of 180.’

The town became incorporated (i.e., with its own Council) on 31 December 1885. It was in that year, according to the 1890 Report of the Church of England Synod, that ‘the first [Anglican] service at Adamstown was conducted under a tree by the Rev. C.F. Withey of Hamilton’.

Initially, the Adamstown Anglican community came under the aegis of the Parish of Hamilton, a township which had been a municipality since 1871 and where the Anglican Parish of St Peter's was proclaimed in 1883. In 1885, Merewether was proclaimed a municipality, and in 1890 its Anglican parish – St Augustine's – became a Provisional District, with the Rev. John Vosper as Curate-in-Charge. (It had previously been included in the Parish of St John's, Newcastle – the city's second-oldest church.) Responsibility for the Adamstown congregation now passed from S. Peter's, Hamilton, to S. Augustine's, Merewether. A congregation of 150 and a Sunday School class of 100 were formed.

The *Newcastle Morning Herald* of 12 June 1890 reported as follows:

'Last evening between 40 and 60 adherents of the Church of England met in the Carrington Hall in response to advertisement, with the object of establishing a church of their denomination in Adamstown. The Rev. Canon Selwyn occupied the chair, and opened the meeting with prayer.

The Chairman, in opening the meeting, said that he had been aware for some time that the Church of England residents of Adamstown had suffered to some extent on account of having no convenient church to send their children, and attend themselves. He had an eye to their wants, and now he believed a convenient time had arrived for the establishing of a church, and he felt confident if the Church of England residents worked in unity success was perfectly certain to crown their effort. Steps had been taken to secure a site for the church, and they had been promised valuable assistance in securing it. (Applause.)

The Rev. Mr Vosper [Curate-in-Charge of Merewether] also addressed the meeting. He said since his arrival in the country eight years ago he had taken an active part in establishing eight churches, and he must say that the meeting there was one of the most encouraging he had attended for that purpose. The Rev. Gentleman spoke in most encouraging terms, and expressed it as his opinion that the movement would be a success.'

A committee was established to select a site, and a number of donations in aid of the church were promised (Canon Selwyn £10; Dr Smith £5; Mr M. Loyden £2.2s; Mr G. Bartrop £2.2s; and smaller sums) amounting in all to £25.

At a meeting of the Committee held a few days later, it was decided that the Carrington Hall in Bruncker Road, Adamstown, would be engaged for five shillings per Sunday, and that services would commence on 6 July 1890, at 6 p.m. with Sunday School at 2 p.m. The Rev. J. Vosper would preach twice a month at Adamstown. He asked that the people of Adamstown provide him with a horse because of the extra work he would have in coming to Adamstown.

On 30 September, Mr De La Touche of Lichfield College, the new Catechist at Hamilton and one of Bishop Stanton's first ordinands in Newcastle, was introduced to the Committee. He took over the role of Chairman at Committee meetings.

The first church organ was bought at an auction on 4 August 1891 for £28, using money borrowed from the Building Fund and from the proceeds of a tea and a bazaar.

The *Newcastle Morning Herald* of 31 July 1891 reported:

‘Presentation at Adamstown

A public tea and concert was held in the Carrington Hall on Tuesday night, under the auspices of the Church of England, for the purpose of welcoming the Bishop of Newcastle. A good number sat down to tea, after which arrangements were made for the concert. The Rev. Mr Vosper occupied the chair, and was supported on the stage by the Bishop of Newcastle, Canon Selwyn, Mr De La Touche, and members of the church.

After an overture on the piano by Mr R. Jackson, the Chairman said they had congregated that evening to welcome Bishop Stanton, but prior to welcoming His Lordship, he desired to refer to the progress of the Church of England at Adamstown. Twelve months ago the church was inaugurated, and they had gone on steadily increasing, till they had resolved to build a church of their own. That evening the church Committee held a meeting, under the presidency of the Bishop of Newcastle, and a sketch plan of the new church was adopted, and the church was to be built.’

A formal address of welcome to the Bishop was made by Mr Matthew Loyden, and further speeches were made by Canon Selwyn and the Catechist Mr De La Touche. After various songs and recitations, a number of donations were received before the meeting was closed.

It appears that the Catechist did not endear himself to the Committee, which made a formal complaint to the Rev. John Vosper in a letter of 10 October 1891. Mr Vosper’s reply is not recorded, but it was not long before Mr De La Touche was replaced as Catechist by Mr H. Barnard Wingfield. The position of Catechist was of some importance, given that it was his responsibility to lead the worship when no clergy were in attendance.

Over the next year or so, considerable progress was made towards raising funds for a church building. The *Newcastle Morning Herald* of 5 November 1892 was to report:

‘Hitherto divine service has been conducted in the Carrington Hall, a commodious building and one that has answered its purpose very well, but the number of members has for some time been sufficiently large to warrant the erection of a church, and a good deal of zeal has been displayed in securing the funds necessary for the commencement of the work.’

Some indication of the situation that existed at the time can be gleaned from a publication entitled *Church Monthly for Merewether, Adamstown, and Hamilton*. The services for the three congregations were listed, and the following entry appears for Adamstown in the edition dated October 1982:

ADAMSTOWN

The Services are held in the Carrington Hall as follows:-

SUNDAYS – Children’s Service, 10 a.m.

Matins, 11 a.m.

Sunday School, 2.30 p.m.

Evensong, 6.30 p.m.

CHOIR PRACTICE – Tuesdays, 7 p.m.

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Catechist – Mr H.B. Wingfield

Wardens – Messrs Court and Bartrope

Committee – Messrs Bowman, Tait, Burns, Lee, and Firbank

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The Sacrament of Holy Baptism will be administered on the third
Sunday in the month, at 1.15 p.m.

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ALL SEATS FREE

Applying to all three congregations is the note: ‘No Pew Rents. Churches maintained by Voluntary Contributions only.’

By early 1892, the Adamstown Anglican community had commissioned Newcastle’s leading architect, Frederick Menkens, to draw up an appropriate design. It already had a site, in a commanding position on the crown of a hill: the *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported in 1892:

‘When the Commonage allotments were sold, about two years ago, a very eligible piece of land was purchased as a site, and the members have the satisfaction of knowing that their new church will occupy the finest position in the municipality.’

The land has a frontage of 60ft to Bruncker Road, and it extends back to Narara Street, and is, therefore, of considerable depth. It is bounded on the south by a piece of land that has been set apart as part of the proposed new post and telegraph office, and it is bounded on the north by a 20ft lane. The allotment is on the crest of a hill, and commands a very fine view of the city, harbour, and surroundings.’

Frederick Menkens, already the architect of a number of magnificent buildings in Newcastle, first designed a brick building, but with funds of only £146.15.3 in hand this proved to be beyond the congregation’s financial means. Menkens then designed a slightly less elaborate wooden building, for which he submitted plans in October 1892. The *Herald* stated:

‘The edifice will rest on brick piers built in cement with an average elevation 3ft from the ground. It will be constructed of rusticated weather-boarding, with an inside lining of 4in by ¾in jointed kauri boards. Its dimensions are 57ft by 29ft, and it is in the Gothic style of architecture with a hexagonal termination at the eastern end. The flooring is raised for some little distance on that side to form the chancel and choir stand. The roofing will be composed of galvanised iron, and will be supported by handsomely-framed principals and half-principals. When completed the building will cost £500. Mr F.B. Menkens is the architect, and Mr H. Dyson is the [building] contractor.’

By 4 November 1892, the foundations and framing of the church had been completed, and the foundation stone was dedicated by the third Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Henry George Stanton, DD (previously the first Bishop of North Queensland), Bishop of Newcastle from 1890 to 1905.

Though the dedication ceremony was set down for 3.00 p.m., Dr Stanton arrived an hour late (perhaps having had a long and uncomfortable journey from Bishopscourt at Morpeth). A temporary floor had been laid in the front part of the building, a large ‘American organ’ or harmonium was set up, and spaces were set aside for the clergy and choir.

The service began at 4.00 p.m., with the Bishop and visiting clergy robed and a large number of members of the congregation present along with the Catechist in charge of Adamstown (Mr H.B. Wingfield), the Churchwardens, members of the District Church Committee, and the Rev. John William Upjohn, Priest-in-Charge of S. Augustine’s, Merewether, and thus Incumbent of Adamstown. Also present were the architect Frederick Menkens and representatives of the building contractor Messrs Dyson & Company. According to the *Newcastle Herald* the following day:

‘Mr Jackson acted as conductor of the choir and organist. Hymn No. 215, the Apostles’ Creed, collects for the Fourth Sunday after Easter, Trinity Sunday, S. Peter’s Day, S. Simon and S. Jude’s Day and All Saints’, and Psalms 84 and 127 having been given, a lesson from 1 Cor. iii, 9-18 was read. The stone was placed in position during the singing of Hymn 242, and at the conclusion Mr J. Davis stepped forward and read a statement, showing that there was £146 in the bank to the credit of the building fund, and that an additional sum of £350 would be required to defray the cost of the work. He placed the document with a copy of the ‘Newcastle Herald’ of that day’s date in a bottle, which was sealed and put in a small aperture under the stone.

The Bishop was then handed a trowel, with which he formally laid the stone, saying: “I lay this foundation stone of a church to be named S. Stephen’s, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. The Glorious Majesty of the Lord Our God be upon us; prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us. O prosper Thou our handiwork.”

Following the recital of a prayer by the Rev. Mr Coleschild of Sydney, the choir sang the anthem *Thine Oh Lord*.

The *Newcastle Herald*’s report of Bishop Stanton’s sermon is worth quoting in full. It reads:

‘The Bishop delivered a very impressive address, in which he stated that very soon after he arrived in the Diocese he became impressed with the fact that a church was desperately needed in that part of the district in which they stood. He saw the need of it himself, and that need was reinforced on his attention by Mr Vosper, who, at that time, had the church at Merewether [*i.e.*, was Upjohn’s predecessor].

They had met that afternoon for the purpose of laying the foundation stone of the church, and had arrived at a stage of their work which marked one step in their progress, and also marked those which would follow. They could congratulate themselves on having been able to lay the stone, and they were pleased to know that a certain sum of money had been received, which warranted them in going on with the building.

Seeing those of them gathered there that afternoon, and knowing from the treasurer’s statement the ingenious methods of obtaining money that had been adopted, they need have no fear that the remaining £350 would be speedily forthcoming. Giving was characterized in their day by small sums from the many, and not large sums from the few. Many hands made light work, and they were therefore called upon to join the vigorous effort that was being made to raise the sum required.

They could see by the ribs and bones of the church that were already erected what a comely building it would be when the flesh of the weatherboards covered it. A church served many uses. Some persons imagined that it was only identified with life to come. Those who thought so took a very narrow view of the question. Its reach was far more wide than that. Religion was like an irrigation system where the water flowed through various channels fertilizing the lands. Religion fertilized the lives of people, and refreshed and nerved them for the great battle of life.

They were very glad to have been called together for the good purpose of laying the foundation-stone of St Stephen’s Church, and they trusted the prayers that had been offered would be answered, and that the day was at hand when another invitation would be issued by Mr Upjohn, asking them to assemble in the interior of the church, that they might consecrate it to God, and dedicate it for the purpose for which it was being built.’

During the singing of the subsequent hymn, the visitors handed in their offerings, which amounted to the sum of £9. 18s. 3d. Whereupon the Bishop departed.

On 6 July the following year (1893), a deputation from Adamstown waited on the Bishop to urge the re-annexation of Adamstown by Hamilton. The records do not indicate the reason for the desire to revert to the original ‘parent parish’. The Rev. A.C. Hirst of Hamilton agreed to take ‘superintendence of the Catechist and District in compliance with the desire of the people and the consent of the Bishop.’

By 20 August that year, the £350 still outstanding on the cost of building (£500) had been raised, and the new church was dedicated by the Bishop, with the Rev. A.C. Hirst and Mr H.B. Wingfield assisting.

On 21 August 1893, the *Newcastle Morning Herald* reported:

‘Yesterday morning His Lordship Dr Stanton, Bishop of Newcastle, formally opened S.Stephen’s Church, Adamstown, in the presence of a large and respectable congregation, which included many visitors from Newcastle and other sections of the district. The Rev. Mr Hirst, of Hamilton, and Mr H. Barnard Wingfield, catechist, Adamstown, assisted in the service. His Lordship took his text from the 56th chapter of the Book of Isaiah and a portion of the 7th verse – ‘I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.’

In the course of a most able sermon the Bishop referred to the Church as a large workshop, and urged upon the congregation to fervently do their portion in the work of the church. In the afternoon the Rev’d. Mr Hirst of Hamilton, conducted services, and in the evening, the Rev’d. Mr James of Stockton. At each Service the church was filled. The choir sang admirably upon each occasion. Mr R. Jackson, organist, discharged his duties ably. This evening a public tea in connection with the opening of the church takes place in the Carrington Hall, after which a public meeting will be held, at which the Bishop will be present.’

Over the following years, responsibility for the Adamstown congregation underwent frequent change: whereas in 1897 Adamstown was still being worked from Hamilton under the supervision of the Rev. T.W. Ramm, by 1898 the oversight appears to have reverted to Merewether, of which the Rector was the Rev. E.H. Wright. In 1899, Adamstown was worked by the Rev. G.B. Stephenson, Priest-in-Charge of Merewether-cum-Lake Macquarie. This arrangement remained until 1911.

In 1911, Adamstown became a new Provisional District in its own right, independent of Merewether but now including Lake Macquarie East. The Priest-in-Charge, the Rev. David Rees, and three of his successors, thus had to minister for some years to the Anglican congregations of Belmont, Dudley and Swansea, the Parish of Belmont not being created as an entity separate from Adamstown until 1920.

The Rev. David Rees remained in charge of Adamstown until 1913, when he was succeeded by the Rev. H.R. Nixon. Nixon remained for only one year, the Rev. Frank A. Woodger (later described as ‘an eccentric but lovable old Anglican Catholic priest’) being licensed as Priest-in-Charge in 1914 and remaining in that position until 1918, when the Rev. Reginald D. Pontifex became Priest-in-Charge, a position he held until his sudden death in 1920.

That year, 1920, saw the appointment of the Rev. Gerard Kennedy Tucker (1885-1974) as Priest-in-Charge of the Provisional District of Adamstown. He had been invited to work in the Diocese of Newcastle by his brother-in-law, Reginald Stephen, Bishop of Newcastle from 1919 to 1928. Fr. Tucker saw that the area served by St Stephen’s was too unwieldy for a single priest, and worked to develop the outlying areas so that they would qualify to have their own priests. This plan ultimately succeeded, but in the meantime, as was recalled years later,

‘On a typical Sunday Tucker would hold early church at Adamstown, go by train to Belmont for another service, then to Swansea by bicycle for afternoon service and on by bicycle to

Catherine Hill Bay. Sometimes he bicycled all the way back to Adamstown on the same day, arriving home in the early hours of the morning in an exhausted state!’

A convinced Anglo-Catholic, Fr. Tucker gradually introduced changes which placed S.Stephen’s more and more firmly within the Catholic tradition of Anglican worship. In 1929, a Faculty was issued authorising the erection of an Aumbry [a locked cupboard set into the wall in which the reserved sacrament was kept] in the north wall of St Stephen’s, and the placing of a sanctuary lamp in the sanctuary; later that year, a Faculty was issued for the placing of brass standard candlesticks in the church.

Fr. Tucker was to become one of the towering figures in the Anglican Church of Australia, beginning with his establishment at S.Stephen’s in 1930 of the Brotherhood of S.Laurence. The Brotherhood was founded as a male religious order of the Anglican Church, its members pledging to remain unmarried while part of the Brotherhood, to live frugally and to practise an active community life. Its members included priests and lay brothers. Notable among the four original members was the Rev. Guy Colman Cox, who shared Fr. Tucker’s dream of a community of serving priests, and who died suddenly in 1937 at the tragically young age of 32.

On 1 July 1925, the Provisional District of Adamstown was raised to the status of a Parish, and in February the following year the Rev. J.W. Russell was licensed as Assistant Priest. Fr. Russell was to take over the Parish from June 1933, during the 12 months’ leave-of-absence that had been granted to Fr. Tucker. He resigned on 15 April 1934 to go to Melbourne, as Fr. Tucker had done earlier that month. That same month, the Rev. Maxwell M. Redman was licensed as Rector of St Stephen’s Parish, and was inducted on 7 May.

Initiatives that had been developed by Fr. Tucker while at S.Stephen’s included the establishment of ‘S.Stephen’s Co-operative’, assisting young men to weather the Depression, as well as the founding of 1st Adamstown (S.Stephen’s) Scout Troop and later a Cub Pack and Girl Guide Company. He also actively supported the establishment in 1927 of a Branch of the Mothers’ Union, a body which has had an unbroken record of existence ever since.

It was during Fr. Tucker’s incumbency at S.Stephen’s that the adjacent Parish Hall was built. The Hall was officially opened on 22 November 1922 by Major General Sir Granville Ryrie, KCMG, at that time Commander of the 1st Cavalry Division but on leave. It appears that Fr. Tucker and General Ryrie were acquainted, both having served in Egypt during World War I. (At the outbreak of war, Fr. Tucker had asked to be posted overseas as a chaplain. When this request was refused, he enlisted as a private soldier and sailed for the Middle East in December 1915. Three months later he was appointed chaplain to the Australian Imperial Force and served in Egypt and France until late 1917 when he was invalided back to Australia.) Fr. Tucker was affected so much by the experience of having to officiate at so many burials at the Trois Arbres cemetery in France, that he named the Parish Hall The Trois Arbres Memorial Hall.

[*Trois Arbres* (literally ‘Three Trees’) cemetery is in the village of Steenwerck in northern France, on the road to Armentières. Its site was chosen by the 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station in July 1916, and it contains over 700 graves of soldiers who died in World War I.]

The building of the Parish Hall was something of an act of faith on Fr. Tucker’s part, a bank loan from the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd having been taken out in the expectation that a row of shops under the Hall could readily be let to tenants and the income used to repay the loan. It so happened, however, that the commercial centre of Adamstown moved further along Bruncker Road, south of the intersection with Glebe Road, leaving the shops under the Hall largely untenanted. The outcome was the inability of the Parish to meet its loan repayments and, subsequently, the interest repayments on a mortgage. The matter dragged on for some years: the Minutes of the Diocesan Council for 26 February 1931 record:

‘The Treasurer of the D.C. [Diocesan Council] instructed to explain to Parochial Council of Adamstown that interest due on Mortgage has not been paid and asking what steps the Parochial Council propose to adjust the matter. On receipt of a reply the Administrator would be authorized to advance to the Church Aid Fund any amount required to pay interest on the mortgage to 31st December, 1930.’

And again, on 17 September that year:

‘The Standing Committee reported to the D.C. the inability of the parish to stand the burden of interest on its debts, and made recommendations to be submitted to the Parochial Council.’

On 14 December 1934, even after Fr. Tucker’s departure from Adamstown and the arrival of his successor, the Diocesan Council Minutes record that

‘The Bishop reported to Diocesan Council that he and the Registrar had waited on the General Manager of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd. in connection with the Adamstown debts, and had received his assurance of his every consideration in the matter.’

As this is the last mention of the ‘Adamstown debts’ in the Minutes of the Diocesan Council, it may be assumed that the matter was settled satisfactorily at some time in the mid-1930s.

In 1934, following his move to Melbourne at the invitation of its Archbishop, Fr. Tucker established a settlement in the suburb of Carrum Downs, to provide food and shelter to people affected by the Great Depression; after World War II, it was gradually developed as a retirement village for aged persons. The notion of a religious community of men under vows was supplanted by a much wider membership of clergy and laity dedicated to serving the community.

Other major welfare schemes initiated by Fr. Tucker included a hostel for homeless boys, a club for elderly pensioners, a seaside holiday home for poor families and an opportunity shop. In 1949, he moved to Carrum Downs where he soon embarked on another project, ‘Food for Peace’. He encouraged residents at the settlement to contribute from their pensions to send a shipment of rice to

India. In 1961, under its new name of Community Aid Abroad, it became a national organisation. In 1992, it merged with The Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign to form a single body. In 2001, its name was changed to Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, and in 2005 it became Oxfam Australia.

From 1924 to 1928, during the incumbency of Fr Tucker, the Anglican Parish of Adamstown was home to S.Stephen's House, later recalled by parishioner Jack Ryan as 'a rambling house opposite the hall in Bruncker Road with the Rev. J. Norman as Warden.' (The Rev. J.R. Norman was Director of Religious Education of the Diocese of Newcastle.) This institution was established for the preliminary training and sifting of candidates for Holy Orders; those who were considered suitable would go on to theological college – S.John's College being established at Morpeth in 1926 by its Warden the Rev. (later Bishop) Ernest Burgmann to take over the work undertaken by the College in Armidale since it was founded there by Burgmann in 1918.

Canon M.W. Williams recalled in 1992:

'S.Stephen's House was a Diocesan owned and controlled institution situated in the Parish of Adamstown. It was the brainchild of the Rev'd J.R. Norman, who had come to the Diocese of Newcastle from North Queensland. He could see the need for a preparatory place for students who wished to enter theological college, in particular S. John's College at Morpeth, but who did not have the necessary qualifications academically or spiritually.

The building itself was an old house situated opposite S.Stephen's, on the corner of Bruncker and Olney Roads. It was occupied by the Warden, the Rev'd J.R. Norman and his assistant the Rev'd E.H.B. Coulcher, together with domestic staff. It had additional rooms at the rear for six students. It was run on semi-monastic lines and with the kind permission of Fr. G.K. Tucker we used S. Stephen's as our place of worship. This consisted of a daily Eucharist, morning and evening prayer, together with sext at 12 noon and compline at 10 p.m.

The students worked in parishes in Newcastle for four days a week and were paid a small salary which went to S.Stephen's House for board and tuition. S. Stephen's House provided a great opportunity to test the vocation of men before going onto further studies.'

S.Stephen's House was closed by Bishop Long in 1928, and its work went with the Rev. J.R. Norman to Wickham. From 1935 to 1944, the building was used by the Church Army as a training college for evangelists.

The Church Army, founded in England in 1882, began its Australian operations in Perth in 1932; its presence in Newcastle was sponsored by the Diocese of Newcastle, and for some years the Diocese functioned as the Army's headquarters, the Trustees of Church Property for the Diocese acting as Trustees for all Church Army funds and the Diocesan Registrar (Mr C.A. Brown) being appointed Treasurer of the Church Army in Newcastle.

The Church Army Training College was opened, and its Chapel of S.John the Baptist dedicated, by the Archbishop of Perth on 18 November 1935. Also present were the Bishop of Newcastle (the Rt.

Rev. Francis de Witt Batty) and his chaplain (Fr. M. Redman, Rector of S.Stephen's), the Dean of Newcastle (the Very Rev. William Johnson), the Mayor and Mayoress of Newcastle (Alderman Richard Christie and Mrs Christie) and the Field Secretary of the Church Army (Captain J.S. Cowland). Following the ceremony, those gathered repaired to St Stephen's Parish Hall where they were addressed by the Archbishop and Bishop, following which tea was served by Church Army officers and sisters.

The work of the Training College fell broadly into two parts: mornings were given over to worship and instruction, and afternoons to the practical work of evangelism. In a report of July 1936, a typical afternoon is described:

‘The students have left the College. It is afternoon and all have gone to work in divers parishes and ways. Much practical work is done and there is a gratifying response. Open Air Meetings; Outdoor Processions; Religious Education; Conducting Services; Lantern Work [i.e., the use of lantern slides as a tool of evangelism]; all are part of the Training that the aggressive Evangelist might be turned out.’

In October 1936, the list of officers and sisters of the Church Army in Australia included the Field Secretary (Captain Cowland) and Mrs Cowland, stationed at Headquarters (i.e. the Training College at Adamstown), along with 14 Captains, 9 Cadets, 4 Sisters, 6 Pro-Sisters, a Matron, Stenographer and Lantern Slide Artist.

The Parish of Adamstown by now took in quite a large area. Jack Ryan recalled:

‘Included in the parish boundaries were the suburbs of Charlestown, Kahibah and Dudley, and to assist in servicing these areas the work of the S. Stephen's House students, the Brotherhood of S.Laurence and the Church Army personnel was invaluable, although there were several lay readers including C. Lumsden, A. Waddington and Jack Ryan engaged in helping out at those centres.’

The Rev. Campbell Brown, a S.Stephen's parishioner in the later 1930s, later recalled:

‘By 1934, during the extremely hard times of the Depression, the Rev. Max Redman became the Rector, and among the many stories he was fond of recounting to me of those days was the picture of the late Bishop Ernest Burgmann, Warden of St John's College at the time, preaching rousing sermons both inside St Stephen's and down the main street to the victims of the Depression.’

In November 1937, the Rev. Maxwell Redman and the Rev. William Hume of Murrurundi exchanged parishes, Fr. Hume being inducted to the Parish of Adamstown in January 1938. Long-standing parishioner Jack Ryan later wrote of ‘the Rev'd Bill Hume who will long be remembered for his adage “a penny per person per service” to help clear the debt on the organ.’ Fr. Hume remained Rector of S. Stephen's for the major period of World War II, resigning in 1944. He was succeeded by the Rev. Leslie Stibbard, who had been born in England and educated at S.Augustine's College in Canterbury.

In 1992, Stibbard wrote about his appointment to Adamstown:

‘It is more than 48 years since I was elected to the Parish of Adamstown, which I had not seen and about which I had no knowledge. At that time the Japanese threat to Australia had eased, but still remained a possibility, with the result that most things, including building materials, were strictly controlled and almost unavailable. Externally the little weatherboard Church of St Stephen looked very forlorn and neglected. So too did the rectory. No one was blameworthy; our country was at war. Inside the building was strikingly different. It was no architectural gem, but one perceived, almost tangibly felt, an atmosphere and a quality of holiness; a place in which the very walls had been hallowed by the prayers and devotions of the faithful. There were relatively few of the faithful left, but they were the salt of the earth; loyal, unpretentious, kind and generous in the face of many difficulties and hindrances. And how they worked!’

Once again, during Fr. Stibbard’s time at S.Stephen’s, the Parish boundaries were changed. He later wrote:

‘I hadn’t been Rector of Adamstown very long when Bishop Batty calmly informed me (as Bishops did in those days) that he had decided to add to my pastoral responsibilities the district of Charlestown, Dudley, Warners Bay and all stations in between; that area of the original Parish which proved to be too unwieldy and had been separated from Adamstown during the incumbency of Fr. G.K. Tucker. Based on conversations with the “old timers” of my day and with Fr. Tucker himself, I know it is true to affirm that the Brotherhood of S.Laurence was born and nurtured at S.Stephen’s. That organization, now based in Melbourne, is widely known for the quality and breadth of its social work.

Back to Bishop Batty – of course the places mentioned were relatively small when compared with the growth and development we see today. To help in the task, the Bishop sent a first year Priest who lived in a couple of rooms attached to the old weatherboard Church on Charlestown Road. We had no cars, so we used public transport and push bikes. (I still meet the occasional person who “pulls my leg” about the old bike.) Do I need to say it was an impossible assignment with which we struggled for a year or two until the Parish of Charlestown was created?’

It having been decided in December 1945 by the Bishop and Diocesan Council that the Provisional District of Charlestown should be worked from the Parish of Adamstown, the Rev. A.J. Cook was licensed in January 1946 as Assistant Priest in the Parish, with pastoral oversight for the Provisional District of Charlestown.

Leslie Stibbard was granted Leave-of-absence for the year 1947, to undertake work in the United Kingdom. The Rev. Canon Thomas May was licensed as locum tenens at S.Stephen’s for that year.

Leslie Stibbard was Rector of S.Stephen's from 1944 to 1951. He was to become Archdeacon of Newcastle in 1962, and Assistant Bishop of Newcastle in 1964. Fr. Campbell Brown has written:

‘Those of us who worshipped at S.Stephen's during the seven years of Bishop Stibbard's time with us, counted ourselves indeed fortunate to have had this dedicated priest as our pastor. His example of selfless service, integrity and uprightness will always remain affectionately with us, and the strong and active parish he left behind after his move to Hamilton was itself a fitting testimony to the contribution he made to the life of the parish.’

The Rev. William E. Weston was inducted to the Parish of Adamstown in 1951. In June of that year, the foundation stone of S.Botolph's Church in Highfields was laid, and in September S.Botolph's Church Hall was dedicated by Bishop Batty. The foundation stone had been procured by Fr. Weston from the 6th-century Church of S.Botolph in Boston (originally Botolph's Town), England. Also presented to the Parish of S.Stephen from S.Botolph's Parish was an altar cross made from one of the old pews of the church, to be placed in the church hall of S.Botolph's in Highfields.

S.Botolph's church hall was used for numerous activities, including the Boys' Society, social functions and Boy Scouts as well as for church services. Eventually, a separate section of the hall was divided off and set aside for church use only. Sister Hannah of the Church Army assisted with parish visiting.

Once the new Parish of Kotara was formed, a quite sizeable portion of Highfields became part of Kotara Parish. S.Botolph's found itself unable to continue as a separate entity, and on 12 April 1973 Synod agreed that its congregation should attend services at S.Stephen's, Adamstown, and that the property at Highfields should be sold. The church hall was purchased by the Parish of Charlestown and was moved to a site at Kahibah. The land was sold for a private dwelling.

The furniture, including the seats, altar, credence table and altar rails were removed and placed in the newly-completed brick church of S.Stephen at Adamstown. The cross and foundation stone from S.Botolph's in England were also removed, and placed in the side-chapel at S.Stephen's, which became S.Botolph's chapel.

Fr. Weston remained as Rector of S.Stephen's from 1951 to 1957. He projected into members of the Parish his enthusiasm for the need to build a permanent church. One of Australia's leading church architects, Louis Williams, was engaged to design a church of much more generous proportions.

On 30 May 1954, the Foundation Stone of the new brick church, intended to replace the old wooden one in stages, was laid by the seventh Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Francis de Witt Batty, and on 27 November that year the first stage of building works – a new sanctuary – was dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Fortescue Ash (a retired bishop, who had been Bishop of Rockhampton from 1928 to 1946). Funds for this work, and for the stages that would ensue, were raised through a stewardship scheme known as ‘Proportionate Giving’. Two years later, in 1956, in his Architectural Diploma thesis on Frederick Menkens, Mr Les Reedman would write:

‘To-day canvassers knock at doors in Adamstown and explain that they are erecting a new brick church ultimately to replace their old-fashioned timber one. Work has already commenced, the wooden chancel demolished and a brick apsidal end with tile roof has been erected. Eventually the simple and humble front elevation will be replaced by large blocks of brickwork designed in the ‘ecclesiastical’ manner and will have to be referred to as the West Front.’

The next stage in the building of the brick church took place under the incumbency of the Rev. H.F.G. Randall (Rector 1957-1972). On Sunday 25 September 1960, the West End and new furnishings were dedicated by the eighth Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. James Housden. The Bishop was met outside the church door by the Rector and churchwardens. The Bishop then having knocked on the door and been given entry, Psalm 121 (‘I was glad when they said unto me: we will go into the House of the Lord’) was sung, the Bishop dedicated the building itself before dedicating separately the font, the candlesticks and other furnishings, the chancel, lectern, altar and tabernacle, before the singing of the hymn ‘Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!’ There followed the sermon, and then the hymn ‘The Church’s one Foundation / Is Jesus Christ her Lord’, before final prayers and the Blessing pronounced by the Bishop.

Through the years of Fr. Randall’s incumbency, he was assisted by a number of Priest and Deacon Assistants: the Rev. A.J. Robinson was licensed as Deacon Assistant in December 1961 and as Priest Assistant in December 1962; in 1963, the Rev. D.F. Allen was licensed as Priest Assistant; following him, the Rev. Brian M. Roach was licensed as Deacon Assistant in December 1967 and as Priest Assistant in December 1968; in 1969, the Rev. Ray Williamson was appointed as Priest Assistant and Lecturer at St John’s Theological College.

Early in 1960, Fr. Harold Randall had written to the Administrator of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, UK (the Rev. J.C. Stephenson, MBE), with regard to the possible formation at St Stephen’s of a Fraternity (also known as a Cell) of the Society of the Holy House of Our Lady of Walsingham, and indicating that he had agreed to be nominated Local Superior of such a Fraternity. He enclosed a list of the five members of the proposed Fraternity, a requirement of the Society being a minimum of three members and a Superior in order to form a Cell.

A Diploma of Fraternity for St Stephen’s was issued by the Society of the Holy House of Our Lady of Walsingham on 15 February 1960, naming Fr. Randall as first Superior. The Diploma was signed by Fr. Stephenson in his capacity as Superior General of the Society.

Members of the local Fraternity undertook certain obligations, namely: to celebrate a monthly Mass with the intention of the Society, and to keep the feasts of the Society (the Annunciation, Assumption, and Translation of Our Lady of Walsingham on 15 October). Each member was issued with a devotional scapular embroidered with an image of the Virgin Mary.

The Adamstown Fraternity grew slowly during the 1960s, and attracted the interest of a number of persons from parishes both within and outside the Diocese of Newcastle as well as membership by a number of St Stephen’s parishioners. The last year for which the Cell paid its annual dues was 1970,

and it fell into abeyance for some years. Fr. Randall's successor as Rector, Fr. Warwick Turvey (Rector 1972-1988) did not seek to revive it or seek to become Local Superior.

When Fr. Turvey took over from Fr. Randall in 1972, S.Stephen's church consisted of a brick sanctuary, a brick west end of a baptistery and porch, and – between the two – the nave of the old wooden church designed by Menkens. One of the first tasks he set himself was to see the completion of the permanent church by the building of a brick nave between the two ends. However, with the closing of S.Botolph's and the cutting-off of much of the Parish to form the new Parish of Kotara South, there was a considerable loss of income for S.Stephen's and the task of completing the brick church appeared monumental. There was also a need for a new Rectory, suitable for housing Fr. Turvey, his wife and their four children.

Plans had already been drawn up for the completion of the church, and an estimate of the cost (\$38,000) had been obtained. Over the first few months of Fr. Turvey's incumbency, tenders were called. Much to the shock of the Parish Council, the lowest tender was for \$56,000. In Fr. Turvey's words,

‘Gone was the hope of building a new Rectory, even the hope of finishing the Church looked bleak. The decision was made to approach the Diocese for permission to raise a loan to press ahead with the work on the Church... Permission was granted, the tender accepted and the way was cleared for the work to begin.

Early in 1973 the furniture from the Church was shifted into the Parish Hall and all services were held there. Surprisingly, there was a real family atmosphere. Work on the Church began and was completed before the end of the year. S.Stephen's had been converted over a period of nineteen years and three Rectors from a small wooden Church to the magnificent building it is today.’

On 9 December 1973, the completed church – comprising the centre section housing the nave and S.Botolph's chapel together with the vestries – was dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Ian W.A. Shevill, ninth Bishop of Newcastle.

With the debt on the church being serviced, financial resources were few, and the need to build a new Rectory was becoming acute as the old building no longer met Diocesan standards. A block of land next to the church was available, but building costs were rising. Though the Parish Council agreed to look at designs and the possibility of starting a building fund, prospects looked dim.

It was at this point that the Treasurer came to the Parish Council with the news that an anonymous donor had offered the Parish \$30,000 if the Diocese would lend the Parish \$25,000 interest-free for five years. To the delight of the Parish, the Diocese agreed to this arrangement and in less than a year the new Rectory was built and was being lived in.

Until the closure of S.Botolph's at Highfields, the Rev. Ray Williamson had come from S.John's College at Morpeth to assist with services. With S.Botolph's closed, his services were no longer needed. What was needed was someone to assist with the administration of the Eucharist. Much to

Fr. Turvey's delight, Mr Doug Sowerby consented to become both a Lay Reader and Chalice Assistant – a role in which he was to continue for many years.

On 3 June 1979 the completed church, being free of debt, was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Alfred C. Holland, tenth Bishop of Newcastle. On 30 November 1988, Fr. Turvey resigned from the Parish in order to go into retirement. He was appointed Locum Tenens until 31 January 1989.

With the appointment of the next Rector, the Rev. Christopher C. Bird SSC, and his induction by Bishop Holland in February 1989, there was a revival of interest in devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham within the Parish, and a statue of Our Lady was ordered from the Shrine by Fr. Bird in 1991 and delivered and installed in S.Stephen's the following year (a previous statue, ordered by Fr. Randall, having been stolen in 1986). Fr. Chris Bird, who is still the current Rector, is a member of the Society of the Holy Cross (*Societas Sanctae Crucis*), a body founded in London in 1885 by a number of Anglo-Catholic priests led by Fr. Charles Lowder. Its objects are: 'To defend and strengthen the spiritual life of the clergy, to defend the faith of the Church, and to carry on and aid Mission work both at home and abroad.' The Society has now spread throughout the world and is organised in autonomous Provinces under Provincial Masters elected by their brethren. Priests of the Society live under a spiritual Rule of Life which unites them in their various priestly ministries and lives. Fr. Bird was to undertake two successive terms as Master of the Province of Australasia, and on the completion of his second term of office was named Master Emeritus.

On 12 August 2011, a special service was held to mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of St Stephen's as a separate Parish in 1911, and to commemorate the work of Fr. Gerard Kennedy Tucker in the establishment of the Brotherhood of S.Laurence at S.Stephen's. A number of visiting clergy were present, including clergy of the Greek Orthodox and Uniting Churches, as well as His Eminence Cardinal Edward Cassidy, a former President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. Also present was the Rev. Jeff O'Hare, Chaplain to the Brotherhood of S.Laurence.

The service was also attended by the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC CVO and her husband Sir Nicholas Shehadie. It was the first time a State Governor had visited St Stephen's. The twelfth Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Dr Brian Farran, presided. Following the singing of the entrance hymn and the National Anthem, the Bishop welcomed those present, including the Governor and other distinguished guests. There followed a brief Liturgy of the Word, whereupon the Governor supervised the blessing and re-laying of the original Foundation Stone from 1892, which had previously stood outside the church but was now placed in a niche in the chancel wall. Her Excellency stated: 'This is an important anniversary that celebrates the diligence and the vision of those who go before us.'

After a number of intercessions and the singing of the hymn 'In our day of thanksgiving one psalm let us offer' in remembrance of past parishioners, the Governor unveiled a photograph of Fr. Gerard Kennedy Tucker, and a prayer for the Brotherhood and for the repose of Fr. Tucker's soul was offered by Fr. O'Hare. The Parish Prayer was then said by all those present, and the service ended with a blessing by the Bishop. Refreshments followed in the Parish Hall.

October 2011 saw a visit to Newcastle by the Administrator of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, the Rt. Rev. Lindsay Urwin OGS. He presided at High Mass in Christ Church Cathedral, and later at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at S.Stephen's; he also spoke at S.Stephen's about the work of the Shrine and of the healing work of Our Lord. As a result of his visit, interest was sparked in the re-establishment of a Cell of the Society of the Holy House, and this was approved by the Parish Council. Fr. Chris Bird was approved by the Administrator as Local Superior, and three other clergy of the Diocese were approved as Priest Associates of the Society.

The basic worship pattern of the Cell is a Mass celebrated at S.Stephen's at 8 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month (except January). The celebrant is usually the Local Superior or one of the Priest Associates, and Mass is followed by breakfast in the Parish Hall at which a talk is generally given on a subject of interest to Cell members – the Cell having adopted an educational as well as a devotional role.

On special Feast Days which are Days of Obligation for the Cell, Mass is usually held in the evening in one of the other churches of which a Priest Associate is Rector (S.Peter's, Hamilton; S.John's, Raymond Terrace; S.Peter's, East Maitland). Members of the Cell come both from S.Stephen's and either one of the above churches or Christ Church Cathedral.

Removal of the carpet in S. Stephen's following a drama production and damage from water ingress during a storm meant that for a time the floor consisted of the underlying concrete. Toward the end of 2013, the decision was made to lay a floor of marble, and a successful appeal to parishioners for financial support enabled this to be done. A floor of Travertine stone from Turkey, with green marble from Italy inlaid to designate the aisles, was laid by a team of expert tilers. On 15 December 2013, the Third Sunday in Advent (known as *Gaudete* – 'Rejoice!' – Sunday), the rite of blessing renovations and re-hallowing of the altar was led by the Rt. Rev. Richard Appleby, former Bishop of the Northern Territory and Assistant Bishop of Brisbane and Newcastle – and a member of the St Stephen's congregation. Assisting clergy were the Rector, Fr. Chris Bird, Fr. Greg Clarke, Fr. David Smith and Fr. Brian Roach.

Following the entrance hymn, the Bishop went through the church sprinkling holy water, after which came prayers, and the Collect, Readings and Gospel followed by the homily delivered by Fr. Chris Bird. The Nicene Creed was then recited, the Litany of the Saints was sung, and the altar stone was presented and placed in the high altar. The stone, embossed with gold leaf crosses, had been crafted from a portion of the original Foundation Stone laid by Bishop Stanton and re-hallowed in 2011 by Bishop Farran. A holy relic, of St Venustian (martyred in the persecutions of Diocletian in 303 AD), the gift to St Stephen's of Fr. Stefan Sapun of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in appreciation of our shared love and friendship, was placed under the altar stone.

Following the anointing of the altar, its incensation, and the lighting of its candles, the Greeting of Peace was given and the Liturgy of the Eucharist continued, ending with a Solemn Blessing by the Bishop.

During Fr. Chris Bird's incumbency, he has been assisted from time to time by a number of retired priests, including Fr. Bill Brown, Bishop Robert Beal (formerly Dean of Newcastle and later Bishop of Wangaratta), Fr. Brian Roach and Bishop Richard Appleby.

Although much of the emphasis in this short history has been on members of the clergy, there have been large numbers of lay members of the congregation who have faithfully served God at St Stephen's over the years. Particular mention might be made of a series of Lay Readers from the 1930s onwards, and in later years of Chalice Assistants beginning with Doug Sowerby, of Miss A. Brown who served as Sunday School Superintendent for many years, long-standing organists such as Miss V. Krimpin, Keith Whitla and Madge Hoy, churchwardens and Parish Council members, some of many years' standing such as Tom Blunden, Geoff Borham and Jim Timmins, those who held office in the Men's Society and Mothers' Union, members of the church choir, servers and sanctuary assistants, the long-serving and devoted sacristan Richard Saunders, and other faithful parishioners too numerous to mention.

Among the usual fund-raising activities of the Parish – sausage sizzles, high teas, etc. (often with proceeds going towards missionary work rather than the funds of the Parish itself) – mention should be made of various entertainments that have taken place over the years, from the revues produced by Keith Whitla in the 1940s and 1950s, through to the repertory theatre companies that have been associated with St Stephen's in more modern times. The Intimate Theatre Company, and its successor Theatre on Brunner, have staged several productions each year, accompanied by dinner catered by members of the Parish, and these have proved a valuable means of raising funds and keeping the Parish solvent.

One of the first Parish visits made by the thirteenth and current Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Greg Thompson, was to St Stephen's, where he had been confirmed. It was very much a home-coming.