“FIRST AMONG EQUALS”

Kurri Kurri Methodist / Uniting Church

Centenary 1904 - 2004
PREFACE

This booklet ‘First Among Equals’ attempts to highlight a number of aspects about the life and witness of great number of people who over years have served the church well in the Lower Hunter.

The title ‘First Among Equals’ needs some clarification, because it is based on Kurri Kurri Township’s motto, ‘The Very First’. Kurri Kurri was the first township planned after Federation of Australia in 1901. As ‘Kurri Kurri’ is Aboriginal, from the Kempsey district, it means to move ‘quick, quickly’. This original meaning was lost, and the ‘The Very First’ was the meaning incorporated into the meaning of the words.

As the Methodist Church was the first church in Kurri Kurri, it would have been very easy to have assumed the township’s motto for this booklet.

The title ‘First Among Equals’ makes use of the motto but it is changed because it wants to affirm two important facts.

(1) The Methodist / Uniting Church has its place among other churches who acknowledge the Triune God, the historic creeds and as such claims its place within ‘the holy catholic and apostolic Church’. It is a church among other churches that arrived in Kurri Kurri at different intervals after the Methodist Church was opened on the 7th of February 1904.

(2) There was significant development of Methodist Churches originally flowing from the Hunter River Circuit in Maitland. Other churches were planted especially in Sugarloaf / Mulbring, Brunkerville, & Pelaw Main. These churches thrived, in some cases years before Kurri Kurri was established as a township in 1902. Some of these churches rivaled Kurri Kurri in the early days, especially Pelaw Main.

The coal industry was all important for the development of the township as it became a ‘new mining township’.

This short booklet seeks to pay homage to the people of God who laboured in this place and the many who found in Christ that transforming friendship that never ends.

Many thanks to all of those persons named and unnamed who have contributed to the usefulness of this booklet.

HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

Before we consider Kurri Kurri Methodist/Uniting proper we need to discover how the Methodist Church found its way into the Hunter Valley and surrounding districts. In 1840 the Methodist Church was established in Maitland. It had a new church and its first resident minister. In 1843 Rev Frederick Lewis was appointed to the Hunter Valley Circuit with a large number of towns and villages under his care. It was during his ministry that English folk, coming mainly from Sussex, came and settled in Mulbring
Creek/Sugarloaf and established a small but growing cause. A small Chapel 'with slab walls and a bark roof' was built in 1845.

From this small beginning and with the help of ministers and lay folk, including a devout and gifted lay preacher, Silas Gill, the church was well and truly established.

In 1849 it was instrumental in forming a school, which is still serving the needs of public education in Mulbring. This school ranks second to Largs Public School as the oldest in the Hunter Valley.

Farming and grazing were the original ways of making a living, but were gradually supplemented by timber-getting & road construction.

In the Mulbring Valley, Hutfield had a Methodist class meeting alongside of Sugarloaf, and churches were later established at Mount Pleasant & Brunkerville at about the same time. A large number of families can trace their roots from these early origins and later settled in Kurri Kurri, whilst the other stream of Methodism came as settlers to Weston, called 'Geordies' because they came from Newcastle-on-Tyne and Northumbria.

Meanwhile Edgeworth David, the renowned geologist, had discovered new and even richer coal seams that changed the face of the Hunter almost overnight.

Soon large collieries were established, some of the largest ones in the Lower Hunter being Stanford Merthyr, Pelaw Main and Richmond Vale/Main.

As the need for coal (domestic & for export) grew, so did the need for a larger labour force. As a direct result of the coal industry, there is hardly any major centre in the region that doesn't owe its existence to it.

Towns suddenly grew up like mushrooms, all sustained by a local pit or two.

Already older villages like East Greta, Heddon Greta, Stanford Merthyr & Pelaw Main, experienced rapid population rises.

So, at the turn of the new century a number of important changes were taking shape. Federation was proclaimed in 1901. The Boer War reached its ignoble end, and with a new king the Edwardian era had began. The major stands of the Methodist Church, Wesleyans, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, and the United Methodist Free Churches all joined together to form the Methodist Church of Australasia in 1902.

Rapid development was occurring in the Lower Hunter, new Methodist churches were opened and the Sunday schools were an important part of each church; Pelaw Main (1903), East Greta (1903), Weston 1905, Heddon Greta (1906), Sawyers Gully 1907, Neath 1908 & Abermain (1909).

Again the West Maitland circuit was the prime mover behind the scenes and made arrangements for Preaching & Pastoral Care.
It had arranged that a circuit missionary be appointed; the first being Mr J.F. Clifton in 1903 who walked throughout the circuit Heddon Greta, Pelaw Main, Kurri Kurri & Weston. In Kurri Kurri itself, services were held in the dining room of the home of Mr & Mrs Christopher Dyson, from about September 1903, in Rawson St., Kurri. On Sunday the 7th of Feb, 1904 a new church was opened to accommodate 200 persons, with a large crowd attending, Rev B.J.Meak of West Maitland presiding. Rev Meek said on that occasion that it was a unique experience to have ‘a new church in a new town’. “A little more than twelve months ago, the ground was only bush, and the majority of those in the church had then no idea that they would soon be living in Kurri Kurri”. (1)

In the course of the next decade two other circuit missionaries were appointed: Mr J Foster (1904) & Mr Leslie J Wilson (1906). The need was great because the new circuit by 1906 was from Heddon Greta on the South and Sawyer’s Gully on the West.

The first ordained minister was appointed in 1905 as a resident minister in Kurri Kurri, the Rev Thomas Davies. He had a wide range of skills and had important placements in Robertson (Southern Highlands of NSW) and at Parramatta,

In his welcoming speech, he spoke at length about the need to “work unitedly, for where there was unity and earnestness, there would God’s blessing be found”.(2)

Within a few years the debt on the church was paid off and a brand new Parsonage was build adjacent to the church.

The township of Kurri Kurri grew and so did the church and there was a constant need for more building and for more space. Meanwhile early problems began to develop at the pits often oscillating between lockouts and strikes. On one occasion, when the trouble was over, Rev T.Davies organised a town thanksgiving service. The concern of the church was very much to the fore. It was particularly concerned about the dual evils in the coalfields of alcohol & gambling and for the sanctity of the Sunday.

In 1915 approval was given to erect an Honour Roll in the Kurri Kurri church. This was later done to honour those who had enlisted throughout the circuit in the 1914-1918 War. It has more than a hundred names on this Roll.

As the population surge continued, it was deemed fitting that new arrangements should be made with the Cessnock circuit. Again later on, some rationalisation was needed, with too many churches to manage in the one circuit. So, in 1923, it subdivided to form the:

(1) Kurri Kurri circuit: with Kurri Kurri, Pelaw Main, Mulbring, Brunkerville and Heddon Greta &

(2) Western Circuit: Weston, Abermain, Neath & Sawyer’s Gully.

Many changes have occurred since then but the viable congregations have re-united with the appointment of a Tongan minister in 1993, the Rev Haloti Faupula.
In 1921, approval was given to erect a new church at Kurri Kurri. Prior approval had already been given for the youth to clear a site next to the old church on the right hand side, for a tennis court. But this location was the best-preferred option for a new church. So they shifted the church from Heddon Greta and re-sited it on its present position, and then allowed the youth of the church to use the vacant lot on the left side of the old church for a tennis court. The old church was then used as a hall and a new church was built at Heddon Greta.

Perhaps the most difficult time outside of the two World Wars was the period from 1928-1934. In this period the coal industry was in crisis; a fifteen-month lockout was imposed which affected everybody. The Church responded brilliantly to the crisis, giving hope and comfort to all. One Methodist minister in particular, the Rev Burt Manefield, did a remarkable amount of work to relieve pain and suffering. In December 1930 he organised a huge picnic at Buchanan for the unemployed of Pelaw Main.

He served the church well during the worst years of the Great Depression. Later he became an integral part of the Methodist (NSW) Home Missions Department and served from 1934 - 1962.

The Lower Hunter has been blessed with the great number of dedicated circuit missionaries, ministers, lay pastors and lay preachers who singularly and together have ministered to the needs of the flock and called many to give their lives to Jesus Christ.

It’s difficult to highlight any individual, but just a few comments about some of those that I have known personally: Rev Neville Arthur (who also became part of the Home Missions Department) was an exceptional minister; he had more candidates for confirmation than any other minister. The Rev John Amery, who followed after him, also did an exceptional job, each in his own way, and perhaps were blessed by being at Kurri Kurri at the right time.

Two other ministers have never served in Kurri Kurri but maintained their links over the years:

They are the Rev John Fullerton who was born in Kurri Kurri, and who became a Senior Methodist Chaplain at the headquarters of the Eastern Command. Military authorities have spoken highly of him for his many years of devoted duty ‘at all times and conditions’ (3)

After Leigh College John served in many circuits and whilst he was a minister in Alice Springs (NT) was commissioned as a chaplain and served in PNG and with the occupation forces in Japan. When he retired in 1975 he held the rank of Lt Col and was a chaplain at the Concord Repatriation Hospital.

And the Rev Ken Rogers, who grew up in Kurri Kurri, and having served in a number
of placements and has just retired from the ordained ministry after four years at Norfolk Island. He and his wife are now living in active retirement in Orange.

Rev Keith R Kestel / Mr Ken Wallwork
21/11/2003

References

(1) "Maitland Mercury" Tuesday 9th of Feb, 1904
(2) "Kurri Kurri Times" April 21, 1905
(3) "Cessnock Eagle" Nov 1970

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# LIST OF KURRI KURRI MINISTERS AND OTHER AGENTS WHO WERE EMPLOYED IN THE KURRI KURRI METHODIST / UNITING CHURCH

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<td>1930-1934</td>
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1934-1939 Rev. F. Trafford Walker
1939-1943 Rev. Alfred A.T. Robens
1943-1947 Rev. R. Carlyle Dempsey
1947-1951 Rev. Brian Heawood
1951-1955 Rev. Frederick Best
1959-1963 Rev. A. John Amery
1968-1971 Rev. Selwyn John Tully
1978-1975 Rev. Roy Waters

On 19th June, 1977 the last Methodist Service was held at the Kurri Kurri Church. The service was conducted by Rev. Ray Weiss, Mrs Osland was the organist, and Doreen Tweedie sang “Open The Gates”. The church was now known as Kurri Kurri Uniting Church.

August 1978-1979 Lay Pastor Henry Porter
1979 Lay Pastor Horrie McAdam
1980-1981 Lay Pastor Ian Dunn
1982-1987 Lay Pastor Peter Brady
1987-1991 Lay Pastor Geoff Davey
1992

1993-July 1997

1997

1998-1999

2000-

2006

2007-

2010

2011

2012/13

Rev. Neville Arthur (relieving)

Rev. Haloti Fangupa

Rev. Jim Newman

Rev. Charles Bathgate

Rev. Keith Kestel

Rev. Robert Jackson

Rev. Robert Walsh

Rev. Janette Grinter

Rev. Steve Rowe

Rev. Pamela Kestel

Rev. Steve Rowe

Rev. Pamela Kestel
R.E.F. Williams was a resident of Kurri Kurri from 1908 to 1934 and was prominent in church and community affairs.

He was known affectionately as “Mr Williams R.E.F.” or “darkie” for he was a Negro from the West Indies. He was born about 1847, little being known about his parents, but he was to be educated for the Church of England ministry. He rejected the plan at an early age and ran away to sea. He lived the life of a seafarer for eleven years and was shipwrecked twice. The last wreck was of the “Walter Hood” which ran aground near Milton on the N.S.W. south coast on 26th April 1870. R.E.F. Williams was credited with saving several lives. After the wreck he went to Tasmania, decided to leave the sea and settled at Beaconfield where he worked as a carpenter. It was here that he met his first wife, who was a negress born in Tasmania to West Indian parents.

After marriage R.E.F. came under the influence of a primitive Methodist Mission and was “soundly converted”. He then studied and qualified as a Methodist Local Preacher. The family moved to Mathina on the east coast of Tasmania where R.E.F. continued to preach, often traveling forty miles to take a service.

While at Mathina, Mr Williams buried his wife and two children. It was also at Mathina that Ada, the Williams’ adopted daughter (a white girl adopted at the age of five), married Mr S. Butcher.

In 1908 Mr Williams, two of his children, Arthur and Phyllis, and the newly married Ada and S. Butcher, moved to Kurri Kurri. Here the family was deeply involved in church and community affairs. He married again, to Charlotte Ethel Baker from Morpeth. This lady was loved by the Kurri people, especially the children of the Sunday School of which she was Superintendent.

R.E.F. Williams was well known and highly respected from Cessnock to Heddon Greta, from Mulbring to Sawyers Gully and years after his death in 1934 people would say: “We once had a black minister here. He was a wonderful man and a great preacher”. Others would recall his beautiful singing: “Every time he preached he would sing a solo such as “City of God” or “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” in the style of the Negro spiritual”
Mr William’s son, Arthur Vincent Williams, was known to many Kurri Kurri residents as “Black Snow” and, like his father, was highly loved and respected. Some of the present members of our church will remember “Black Snow”.

R.E.F. Williams, Arthur and Phyllis are buried in a family grave at the Kurri Kurri Cemetery.
Kurri Kurri Times, Friday, June 2, 1905

The Anniversary of the Kurri Methodist Church was duly celebrated on Sunday last. In the morning the Rev. T. Davies preached to a large congregation in Lewis’ Hall, which had been temporarily secured to meet the growing requirements of the church.

At 2.30pm Mr D. Watson conducted the service, a large number of the members of the church being present as well as a fair proportion of visitors.

At 6.30pm the Rev. T. Davies conducted the service, a very large number of people being present.

Bright singing and enthusiasm characterised the services. The choir and children, under the direction of Mrs C. Dyson, rendered solos, duets and choruses, and the following scholars contributed recitations:

- Lilian Searston
- Sarah Lamb
- Bella Kirkwood
- Amy Evans
- Harriet Chappell
- Clara Chappell
- Connie Dyson
- Ettie Evans
- Julia Kirkwood
- Vera Gould
- Alice Binney
- May Gould

And a dialogue was also contributed by:

- Clara Rawlings
- Lizzie Leitch
- May Gould

Miss S. Rawlings presided at the organ, and was assisted by the Misses E. Jones, M. Sharman and Master Pugh (violin)

On Monday evening a public meeting was held in the same building. There was splendid singing, recitations and dialogues, the young people joining in with great heartiness. Addresses, appropriate to the occasion, were delivered by the Rev. T. Davies and others. Mr C. Dyson, Superintendent of the Sunday School, presided.

The children and choir rendered an anthem, and the children briefly addressed the meeting, in the course of which Mr Dyson made an appeal to the young men to come forward and assist in the work of the Sunday
School. Additional male teachers were required, and the work of training the children was something they need never be ashamed of, and he trusted that they would come forward and assist in the good work of the Sunday School.

After hymns and recitations by the choir and children, the Secretary (Mrs C. Dyson) read the second annual report, which showed that during the year Sunday Schools of two other denominations had opened in the district, which had somewhat interfered with the attendance at their own school, but other families had recently come into the district.

The teaching staff had also been affected from the same cause, but others had offered their services, so that they would not suffer in that respect.

The present year was commenced with an attendance of 140 scholars and 13 teachers, which had increased up to the present to 180 scholars and 18 teachers.

The income was £25 11s 8d, and the expenditure was £24 15s 1d, leaving a credit balance of 16s 7d.

Regular monthly Band of Hope meetings had been held during the year, which had been well attended.

The township was growing, and the hope was expressed that the school might grow in proportion, and that they might feel the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst.
SOME EARLY INFORMATION ON KURRI KURRI
METHODIST CHURCH

My grandfather, William, and grandmother, Bethany Lane (nee Hawkins), moved from Greta to Kurri Kurri in 1904 with their children Lydia, Herbert, Alma and Myra.

The three girls went to Sunday School and later became Sunday School teachers. Some time afterwards they commenced a Sunday School class in the front room of my grandmother’s home in Brunker Street, as there were a few small children around the bottom of the street and it was thought it too far for the little ones to walk to the church.

The Lane sisters were members of the choir, the Methodist Girls Guild and the Methodist Girls Comradeship.

My mother, Alma Lane, married John Corlett in Kurri Kurri Methodist Church on 11th October 1924, after which they moved to Charlton in Sydney where they opened a grocer’s shop. Please note that my father’s name is on the Honour Roll spelt Corlette.

Beth Biles (nee Corlett)
THE CHURCH SULKY

In 1920 my father, Rev. David Weatherall, was appointed minister at Kurri Kurri Methodist Church. A new horse was needed to pull the lightweight two wheeler sulky which was the means of transport for church visitations, meetings, funerals and weddings. My job as a young lad in the parsonage was to care for the pony and to fit the horse blanket on it on Kurri’s frosty nights.

As a boy I watched with interest as my father consulted Mr Bevan, the local undertaker, who owned two beautiful black horses, which pulled the funeral coach. He was told to ask the local postman (who rode a horse) if he could help. The postman’s brother had an ex-racehorse for sale because it had not performed well. My father was offered the horse, to see if it suited but he was not told that the horse had never been in sulky shafts. Came the day when the uneasy horse was harnessed into the shafts and my father, a stocky man of English-Cornish blood, mounted the vehicle. Without success he urged the horse to move. He gave the horse a clip on the rump with the reins. The horse reared and swerved, tipped the sulky, and Dad landed with a thump on the ground. The horse jumped the picket fence, snapped the harness and bolted down Victoria Street with reins trailing. Dad dusted himself off and decided to look elsewhere for a horse. The sulky needed a lot of repairs. The incident caused much laughter and many witty comments – “Always check your horsepower before you use your reins.”

In 1925 a Parish car was purchased at a cost of £241/18/3

This report was sent by “the young lad”, Merton Weatherall, about a fortnight before his death in November 2003, at the age of 93.
The Kurri Methodist Sunday School Anniversary was held on Sunday and Monday, October 4th and 5th. The services were the most successful in the history of the school. The hall had been prettily decorated by the teachers and scholars and presented an imposing sight when the children and teachers were gathered together on the Sunday.

The children were trained by the Superintendent of the school, Mr J.T. Gilmore, and the singing was far above the very fine average the school has always maintained at its anniversaries. The conductor brought the best out of both boys and girls, and many of the congregation remarked that finer juvenile singing had not been heard in the hall. In the senior school, Misses Edna Paxton and Ethel Avery were in charge of the elocution section, and the splendid performances by the children showed many evidences of very careful training. Miss Olive Owen was in charge of the soloists, duets and trios, and her very careful work was easily seen at all the services. The Kindergarten section was trained by Miss Elsie Robinson and the afternoon service was splendidly arranged. The services rendered by Miss M. Barkwell at the organ and Miss Esther Wooderson at the piano helped greatly towards the ultimate success of the function. They were helped by Miss Ena Wooderson, Messrs Frank Gilmore, Ray Bagnall, Don Blair and Dennis Williams as violinists. Pastor Reid of Weston conducted the morning service, while the minister of the church, Rev. A.G. Manefield presided at the afternoon and evening services.

The public meeting was held on Monday night in the hall. The children again delighted the congregation with very fine singing and recitations. Rev. A.G. Manefield and the reports of the Sunday School work of the year were presented by the secretary and treasurer Mr E. Jacobs and Mrs Gilmore.

The reports showed that the school had maintained a steady progress during the year. Attendances had improved and the Kindergarten section particularly had increased. The thanks of the school to all who had assisted to make the anniversary such a success were rendered by the Deputy Superintendent, Mr A. Young. Mr Gilmore thanked the parents for their co-operation, and asked for a greater measure during the new year of the school’s work.

Sis Ena Wooderson rendered a violin solo. Solos were sung by Ada Gilmore, Edna Holmes, Ken Robson, Daphne Owen, Rosalind Lamb, Barrie Lamb, June Davies, Pearl Whalan, Tom Harrison, Maggie Harrison and Miss Olive Owen. Trios were rendered by Tom Harrison, Barrie Lamb and Ken Robson; June Davies, Rosalind Lamb and Edna Holmes. The children of the Kindergarten rendered choruses, some being to suitable actions, while five girls of the senior school sang a chorus. A duet was rendered by June Davies and Rosalind Lamb, while ten girls rendered an illustrated poem.
Rev. Heawood arrived in Kurri, Easter, 1947 with wife Lillian and four of their children – Peter, Ruth, David and Judy. Joan, the eldest girl, had married Allan Saines in Young (Heawood’s previous appointment) and remained on the farm.

Peter met and married Shirley Bray in October, 1951. Rev. Heawood had been appointed to Muswellbrook the previous Easter but returned to Kurri Kurri to perform the marriage. He returned to Kurri many times over the years to visit family and friends. In February, 1972, he conducted the marriage of Peter and Shirley’s eldest daughter, Christine, to Stephen Davies of Newcastle in Kurri Kurri Uniting Church.

In January, 1980, Rev. and Mrs Heawood visited their daughter in Young to celebrate Mrs Heawood’s 75th birthday and their great granddaughter’s birthday. After a very happy day, Mrs Heawood suffered a massive heart attack and died that night.

Rev. Heawood later moved to a retirement village at Young and died peacefully in his sleep in 1985.
HAPPY CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Thank you so much for inviting me to share in Kurri’s 100th Anniversary. It is reminiscent of my early teen days and special to me as Dad was minister at Kurri Kurri from April 1951 to April 1955 so the Best family was involved in the celebration of the Golden Jubilee (50th Anniversary)

I attended happily all the groups available to me. This included Rays with Phyllis Martin and June Greentree. Betty Street was one of my Sunday School teachers. When old enough, I commenced the Youth Fellowship and recall Phyllis, Ray and Steve Martin, Tom, Lillias and John Tweedie. Doreen Gill, Beverley and Pam Owen, Betty, Peggy and Elsie Street, Ron and Ken Lowbridge, Bette Winning and Lillian, Mary, Janet And Betty Moss. I’m sure I’ve forgotten some.

Among “last days” memory that brought a smile to many, was the gift of car ornaments, a hanging skeleton to the Parson (Dad), and a devil to his friend, the jovial undertaker Richie Bevan! Mrs Osland was a faithful organist – so many memories come flooding back.

“Come as you are” parties also provided lots of fun with folk turning up with faces lathered with shaving cream, in a shower cap or bathrobe or whatever unorthodox outfit they had on when the phone rang with the invitation.

A real highlight for all our family was the Annual Fun Fair. Dad had built a high frame around our box trailer, and poster-painted huge, colourful advertisements about the Fair, driving it and parking it wherever he could for publicity. Little Ian had a bright red pedal car and matching red wagon, which attached behind it. He was determined to imitate Dad, who contributed cardboard signs for the wagon and while Fred drove the brown Plymouth, UN 657, down Kurri’s main streets with its sensational trailer, Ian pedaled furiously along the footpaths, hopefully not “taking out” too many pedestrians on the way.

At the Fun Fair there were stalls and competitions of every imaginable kind. We had a lucky dip fish pond (made of hessian I think) where children actually used toy fishing rods to “catch” a surprise parcel pinned on the “hook” by a human fish inside the “pool”. I treasured a hand dressed dolly bought from the sewing stall, until last Christmas, when I redressed it for a grandchild.
Dad's forte was his preaching; Mum's was organising and of course her loving nature. Mrs Ethel Moss was a tremendous help in our home and always a gentle and loyal worker behind the scenes.

Carol married Graham Maddox, son of Rev. Russell and Marie Maddox, Methodist Missionaries in Samoa at the time, and is still teaching in Armidale. Ian married Lois Collard from Dad's church at Wyong, both were bank clerks at the time. I am now using my second Christian name Elizabeth, (I was Christened Robyn Elizabeth) and am married to David Woodhouse.

Carol, Ian and myself have many happy memories of our days at Kurri Kurri half a century ago. We congratulate you, and wish you all God's blessings in the years to come.

Elizabeth Woodhouse (nee Best)
STORY FROM OLIVE ARTHUR

Neville, John and myself arrived in Kurri just before Easter 1955, following a dreadful journey from Coonamble after the 1955 floods.

We were greeted at the Parsonage by a lovely group of ladies who had prepared afternoon tea for us and cleaned the house. They were so welcoming that we at once felt an accepting love towards us.

Kurri was a busy Circuit with four preaching places and a service at each every Sunday, but we enjoyed our five rewarding and wonderful years in this special town.

The Circuit bought us a second hand navy Ford Prefect, which Harold Worboys kept in running order and Neville made good use of. We did not own a car at this stage.

I remember very well the fetes we had and also the Sunday School Anniversaries, which were held over two Sundays.

Our two daughters, Lynne and Wendy, were born at Kurri Hospital, so Kurri will always be special to me. Also, when Wendy was three months old, we (the whole family, Neville, John, Lynne and myself), went down with mumps. Wendy missed out. Neville’s mother was able to come to look after us for a few days, but all the church folk were very kind in bringing us food and helping where they could.

I have many happy memories of Kurri days and some sad ones too, but it will always have a special place in my heart and I know it was a spiritually satisfying time for Neville.

Olive Arthur
"OUR YEARS AT KURRI KURRI"
1960 - 1963
JOHN AND LEXIE AMERY

It was customary in the Methodist Church in those days to move every five years. Prior to the Conference of 1960, we had received an invitation to West Wollongong and this stood through the first and second readings of stations. At the third and final reading I was very surprised when my name suddenly appeared beside Kurri Kurri – I didn’t even know where it was. But the Lord often works in mysterious ways and we were off to Kurri Kurri (wherever it was!)

We eventually drew near to Kurri Kurri on our way up the coast. I remember stopping on the roadside to tidy our selves up a bit. Our boys, Richard and Stephen, were only 2 years 11 months and 1 year 6 months old at the time. We arrived at the Parsonage to find a band of people gathered to give us a warm welcome with a lavishly prepared afternoon tea, a sample of the kind of people with whom we were to work for the next four years.

Kurri Kurri was a very busy Circuit. Here there were five worship services every Sunday – Pelaw Main 8am; Kurri Kurri 9am (also trying to sing tenor in the choir); Mulbring 10.30am; Brunkerville 11.30am; and Kurri Kurri, once again, at 7pm. Scripture classes at Kurri Kurri every week – Infants, Primary and High Schools – very large classes. A large hospital to visit weekly, and many funerals to conduct as there were large numbers of Methodist families in the coalfields.

Lexie had Ladies Aid groups at Kurri, Pelaw Main, Mulbring and Brunkerville, and a Fellowship group of younger ladies at Kurri Kurri.

Our two boys were a delight and growing in preparation to welcome a sister, who duly arrived on the 5th March, 1961. Jillian was the first baby girl to be born in the new Maternity Wing at Kurri Kurri Hospital – pipped at the post by a baby boy. Not many of our church families had the telephone on in those days, so as soon as I learned the news and ascertained my wife’s state of health, I jumped in the car and flew around the streets, stopping at parishioners’ homes, blowing the horn and screaming out the news: “It’s a girl”.
Our fourth child, Paul George, was born on the 7th February, 1963. Unfortunately there were many problems and he died the following September. During this time our family faced many personal problems and this period in our lives was quite difficult.

It was time for us to move on. We received an invitation to go to Alstonville on the north coast and we moved there at the beginning of 1964.

We will always treasure the memories and the experience of our years in Kurri Kurri, and especially the friendships formed which are still as strong as ever.


**Congratulations**

*To all members of the Kurri Kurri Congregation upon the Celebration of 100 years of Continuous Worship*

*John and Lexie Amery and family.*
THE WATERS FAMILY MEMORIES OF KURRI

We arrived at the Parsonage in January 1972 to find two ladies waiting to greet us. Our first service of worship was well attended with people who welcomed us with great warmth and encouragement. There was a youth choir that contributed to the service and continued right through the four years of our ministry.

It was my first appointment as a probationer and many other firsts were encountered at Kurri. One of the things that surprised me was going in to some of the schools and having more children in front of me than the local Anglican Rector.

There were times when I was either going to or coming from a funeral. I seemed to have so many. One day I was sitting in the study. It was about mid-day and raining cats and dogs. I looked out the window and saw people gathering at the Funeral Chapel down the road. I remember thinking, “Poor people; fancy a funeral in this weather. I wonder who is conducting this one”. After a moment I thought I had better check my diary. Wolla! It was mine!! Did I move? You bet I did.

Well do I remember one fortnight when I had three funerals, one member at Brunkerville and two Trustees from Kurri. One of the Kurri funerals was one of the hardest funerals I have ever conducted because he was one of our special people with a family of four young people. Just before the third one, the Circuit Stewards, Mem and Barry, came to me and told me to hook the caravan we owned onto the car, take it to Beresfield Crematorium, and, after the service, keep going. It was school holiday time and we were encouraged to stay away for the two weeks. I well remember them saying that this is not a part of your holidays, but compassionate leave. It was that kind of support that made Kurri a place of great memories and so special.

In our business meetings I made the time of adjournment 9pm. For extra time someone would have to move for an extension of time and that would be in 15 minute segments. People were amazed how much business can be achieved in 15 minutes when you set your mind to it.

Once, when going out to Mulbring for the morning service I had the misfortune to clip the back of another car that was being driven by, would you believe, a policeman. Unfortunately he would not let me continue on
to conduct the service. He tried to contact the Kurri Police, but there was no response. After nearly an hour, he continued on to Sydney and I to the church only to find that the folk had been and gone. I reported to the police in Kurri after lunch and received a slight reprimand. I believe they blistered the other fellow for not letting me proceed to conduct the service.

There were many highlights of our time in Kurri. Two worthy of mention are the “Dine With Us” events and the Combined Circuit Evening Services. Both were very special and most enjoyable.

There is so much that we could say. The friendships we formed, the fun we had, the tears we shared together, the support that was so obvious, the acceptance and the oneness. These are the things that made the Kurri Kurri Methodist Church so special in our lives.

Roy and Pam Waters and family.
PASTOR HENRY PORTER

Pastor Henry Porter came to the Kurri Kurri Parish of the Uniting Church in 1979.

He conducted services each Sunday at the four preaching places. Kurri, a 9am service each Sunday; alternating between Kurri and Pelaw Main at 7pm for the evening service; and services at both Mulbring and Brunkerville each Sunday assisted by Local Preachers.

He did scripture in the schools, visited the elderly and once a fortnight, with a small group of ladies, went to the retirement village at Kurri Hospital. Here we enjoyed singing some great old favourite hymns, listened to the Word, had a prayer time and Mr Porter gave an informative message.

Mr Porter remained with the Parish for about 2 years before leaving to resume his trade as an electrical engineer. Later he became the Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Singleton. Mr Porter is now enjoying his retirement.

Doreen Tweedie
A GOOD TIME SPENT AT KURRI

My first teaching appointment with TAFE was to Kurri Kurri in 1956. Early in the following 11 years, I met and married Ray Frappell, an Industrial Arts teacher at the newly opened Kurri Kurri High School.

We became active members of the then Methodist Church. Rev. Neville Arthur was minister at the time. Neville was quite a character, but non the less very sincere. I remember at the conclusion of one service, with arms outstretched for the benediction he said:

"FOR WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE,
MAY THE LORD MAKE US TRULY THANKFUL.
AMEN"

I had a little giggle to myself. When we shook hands at the door, Neville leant forward whispering, “I think you’re the only one who noticed”. We both laughed.

I became involved with Comrades, teaching and playing the piano for Sunday School, Young Women’s Fellowship and many other social activities where wonderful friendships were established. I have loving memories of the Owen and Winning families who “took me under their wing”, still a teenager and away from home for the first time.

Our sons, Neil and Ian were Christened by Rev. John Amery (1963) and Rev. Wesley Bird (1965).

My prayers and best wishes as you continue worship and fellowship into the next century.

Myra V. Luckett
THE EARLY YEARS

John and Isabel Binney and daughter, Alice, arrived from England in the 1890’s. They were very devout Wesleyans. In 1899 a second daughter, Vera, was born. Vera was the organist at Kurri Kurri Methodist Church until she married Joe Stewart from Weston. From then, they lived in Weston and attended Weston Methodist Church. In 1925 their only child, Isabel Merle was born – me.

I have fond memories of Kurri Church. When I was a little girl I often spent weekends with my grandparents and was taken to Sunday School by my grandma. I joined her class of senior girls who always made me feel very welcome.

We would first attend the church service and I can remember an elderly gentleman who always sat out the front in a basket armchair and he used to shout out words during the service. I was quite frightened of him, but later found out that he was shouting “Amen” and “Hallelujah”.

I have fond memories of Rev. Bert Manefield, who was a great friend of my grandfather and my parents. He came to Weston to marry me and my late husband, Bill.

Congratulations on reaching 100 years of worship in the Kurri Kurri Methodist / Uniting Church.

Merle Delprado.
FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

Pelaw Main Methodist Church Sunday School was part of the Kurri Kurri Circuit and in 1930 at the age of 5 years I became a student there. I learned my hymns and catechisms from Mrs Teena Stewart and Mr Jack Davies the Superintendent.

At the age of 14 I was allowed to walk from Pelaw Main to Kurri by myself and so joined the Christian Endeavour Group on a Sunday morning under the leadership of Mr George Brown. These meetings were held in the Church hall between 10 and 11 am. Then we went to the morning Church Service after. I also joined the Comrades, our special girls’ meeting. Once a year the combined Methodist Churches held a sports day at Singleton for the Comrades and O.K’s, and we hired a bus to get there.

I can also remember a caravan of several budding ministers from the Theological College in Sydney camping in the church grounds whilst they practiced their oratory skills on us. When WWII started, some of these young men put their studies on hold to join the army. Our Comrades group adopted them, knitting scarves and caps and sending parcels to them. Beryl Wolfenden and myself became the Leaders of the Rays, a junior girls’ group. We had lots of fun and happy times during this period.

Anniversary days were full of excitement and times of preparation were special. The men of the church built up seating in the choir seats for all the children to sit prim and proper waiting to sing or recite to our parents. I can remember Mr James Tippet, a local preacher, taking the service for one of these special days and he spoke about “don’t forget to clean the back of your shoes”. It is surprising how many times in my life that has come into my mind.

I left Kurri and went to Newcastle where I contacted Lambton Comrades and in March 1949 came back to Kurri Kurri Methodist Church to be married in “My Church”. The Comrades gave me a guard of honour.

I thank all the past teachers that touched my life during those growing years. I wish blessings to all who continue to worship. My memories are strong and are a delight to me.

Doreen Connett (nee Tweedy)
THE WALLWORK FAMILY

My father, Edward Wallwork, was born in the county of Durham, England in 1878. The family came to Australia in 1883 and settled in Adamstown where his father worked as a coal miner. Dad married Grace Ann Langbridge and they attended Adamstown Methodist Church,

In 1906 Dad came to Kurri to work at Pelaw Main Colliery. Mum and four children – Ema, Elsie, Edward and John – came to Kurri the following year. The Kurri Kurri Methodist Church became the family church. The next eight children – William, Edna, James, Marjorie, Jean, Kenneth, Albert and Beryl were all born at Brunker Street, Kurri.

All the children attended Christian Endeavour, Sunday School and Church. All the girls were members of Comrades. Jean taught in the Infants Sunday School, was a member of the Ladies’ Fellowship and her sons, Ronald and Robert, attended Sunday School. Ema was a great worker for the church and was a member of the Ladies’ fellowship.

Albert and Ken were members of the Junior Order of Knights. Edward’s daughters, Shirley and Elaine attended Christian Endeavour, Sunday School and Church. Shirley was noted for her singing and sang “Jesus Loves Me” at the 1931 Sunday School Anniversary when she was only three.

When I married Gwen Batey of Abermain, we attended Abermain Methodist Church where Gwen had been a Sunday School teacher. Our children, Evelyn and Kenneth, attended Sunday School and Church.

When the Abermain Church closed in 1999. I returned to my original church, Kurri Kurri. The earliest event that I can remember is coming to Sunday School one morning and seeing that the foundations had been laid for the new church. I was four years old.

Ken Wallwork.
SHIRLEY DENLEY (nee ROBENS)

We were known as the “Parsonage Kids”. Highly successful Sunday School Anniversaries where every pupil performed and George Brown was Superintendent are fond memories, as are Welsh Eisteddfods with the music penetrating the parsonage and beyond. Students from Leigh College – Jack Doust, Jack and Alan Brand, Dick Cowper, Colin Ritchie and Doug Fullerton – camped in the hall for some weeks. When war was declared on the 3rd September, 1939, Shirley’s father dug an air raid shelter in the back yard. Shirley remembers vividly an incredible wind and dust storm that lifted the roof of the parsonage three times; the next day the Sunday School children gazed in awe at the damaged side verandah.

ELSIE OSLAND (nee WYBORN)

As one of 16 children, Elsie helped with all the chores of farming including making butter, cheese and sausages. When she was 13 she played the organ at Brunkerville Church. After her marriage, she moved to Kurri, and for 37 years was the organist for Kurri Kurri Methodist Church. She sang as she played and sometimes at funerals, she was the only person singing. Failing eyesight forced her to resign as organist.
MEMORIES FROM BETTE LOWBRIDGE

My parents, Freda and Robert Winning, were married in the Kurri Kurri Methodist Church on 1\textsuperscript{st} May, 1937 by Rev. Frank Trafford Walker. My mother-and-father-in-law, Helen and Herbert Lowbridge, were also married there on 14\textsuperscript{th} May, 1932 by Rev. Albert George Manefield.

I began attending the Kurri Kurri Methodist Sunday School when I was eight years old, that is, in 1947. I was also a member of Christian Endeavour, Rays, Comrades and then the Ladies Aid (now known as the Women’s Fellowship). My sister, Patricia, who was five years younger, also commenced Sunday School when she was eight. We were both Sunday School teachers and Superintendents at various times. My mother, Freda, became an active member of the church in 1957.

I married Ronald Lowbridge on 5\textsuperscript{th} July, 1958. He had also grown up in the church. We had three children, Susan, Robert and Phillip. Our children were brought up in the church and attended Sunday School, Rays and Youth Groups.

Ron was secretary of the church for many years and I have been secretary of the Women’s Fellowship for 25 years. My mother-and-father-in-law, Nell and Bert Lowbridge were great workers in the church. We have met many people through the church, and have remained close friends long after they have left the area.

I have seen many changes in and around the church over the past 60 years. The buildings have been upgraded, rearranged internally and refurbished. Mr Shanko was responsible for much of the changes and later, Les Davies. With the help of the men in the church, the outside gained a new look as well.

Ron passed away on the 26\textsuperscript{th} January, 1992, and then in 1994, I lost both Pat and Mum. I feel fortunate to have had my faith to help me through this difficult time of my life.

I have many fond memories of sharing fellowship with our wonderful ministers over the years. There have also been many happy family times, but one occasion that will always remain with me is when we had our 3\textsuperscript{rd} child, Phillip, Christened. Susan left our side and went to the organ where Mrs Osland began playing, and she sang “Only A Baby Small”. She was
only 10 years old. Ron had organised this, but it was a very nice surprise for me.

I recall the great concerts we held every year. One item I’ll always remember was Annie Calderwood and Esme Walpole singing, “There’s A Hole In The Bucket Dear Liza”. Also, the Harvest Festival Sundays were most enjoyable. We collected grapes from the vines and other produce items from Mrs Osland’s yard and people brought any other produce, for example, bottled jams, bread, eggs and home made cooking. The church was decorated with the grape vines, cobs of corn and all the produce. The church always looked spectacular. Then on the following Monday night everything was auctioned, and the church made a great profit.

The L.C.A. catered for functions almost every Saturday. Our ladies enjoyed the time spent in fellowship and working together for the church. The Garden Parties were also great days. They were held at the homes of Ida Pringle, Jean Owen and my aunt, Martha Argyle. There were many games, stalls and guessing competitions (such as the weight of a cake, or how many lollies in the jar), and fun was had by all.

One Sunday School picnic was held at Morpeth after the Sunday service, and I recall causing a stir when Susan, her two children, Christopher and Hayley, and myself arrived with our traditional Sunday “baked dinner” for lunch.

It has been sad to see our congregation diminish over the years, but we still enjoy our continued fellowship together.

Bette Lowbridge
Many people acknowledge “something” is lacking in their life. The fortunate ones seek this “something” in the right place. At 35 years of age I needed to find a right relationship with God. I prayed for His help.

With three young children at home and my husband on shift work in the mines, getting out was difficult. Good people helped. Our children attended Sunday School and eventually I was able to contribute to helping others. Bible Study with ministers and books led to religious instruction in three schools for about 7 years. I met other teachers of religion and made many friends.

As a member of the Women’s Fellowship, I and others have had many enjoyable years of service. There have been many pleasant activities to raise money to maintain church property and enhance our lives.

Prayer And Share was started by Anne Tully, wife of minister John Tully and was effective for 14 years or more. Being a Sunday School teacher was one of many pleasant tasks. Our Uniting Church is a second home.

Dorothy Hales
MEMORIES FROM MEM FOSTER

I have been connected with Kurri Kurri Methodist and Uniting Church practically all of my life. In the Methodist Church I was both a Junior and Senior Circuit Steward. Then in the Uniting Church I was both the treasurer and secretary at various times as well as being a representative in most organisations. I enjoyed working with the members at the meetings, as the fellowship was very good. Being Circuit Steward and secretary was very interesting as I welcomed and fare welled various ministers to the Parish. Fred Best was the first minister I welcomed. My wife, Kath, was also a strong supporter of the church at Mulbring and Kurri, and held many positions in the Ladies’ organisations.

I tried a bit of preaching but all I could do was to take sermons from books. Still, it was interesting to see how many I could put to sleep. I can remember Jack Fullerton preaching, before becoming a minister and while I was in New Guinea during the war, I was pleasantly surprised to meet him, as he was a padre in the army. There was a lot of talk about old times.

I will never forget the fun and fellowship we had doing the repairs and renovations to the church and the hall.

Thanks to the present minister, Rev. Keith Kestel, and the congregation for the wonderful gift and certificate given to me at my last attendance before coming to Benholme.

Mem Foster

(This was one of the first items the committee received. Unfortunately Mem died a short time later and according to his wishes, his funeral service was held at Kurri Kurri Uniting Church)
ARTHUR AVERY 2.4.1889 – 8.12.1965

Arthur married Elizabeth Whipps at East Maitland.

He was always “Dar” to his family and to many of the church people. He was a Church Steward for many years. Come rain, hail or shine, Dar would leave home at 6pm every Sunday night to open up the church and have everything ready for the 7pm service. One important job was to wind the clock over the front door. To do this he placed a chair on a table and climbed up. Whenever Rev. Arthur came he said it was unsafe and he took over the duty. Dar had his own chair at the back of the church and in the same spot, under the church our dog would lay and wait until the service was over. If we tried to stop him from following Dar, he would jump the back fence, run along the creek and meet Dar at the bridge. To him, Sunday night was Church Night.

Memories of Sunday School are: little chairs to sit on; Mrs Una Gregg; double decker bus trips for our annual picnic; Anniversaries with rows of chairs on the stage in the church hall; all five girls in our family had to have new dresses made by Mum, patent leather shoes and a hand bag as we got older; up to Mrs Dill’s shop for hats and don’t forget the gloves.

After our marriage, my husband and I with young Janelle in tow would attend church. We always sat five rows from the front. You did NOT sit in any one else’s seat. Mr and Mrs Worboys sat on the end of the row behind us as Mrs Worboys often sang and had to get out quickly. We marched in one day only to find most of our row was occupied, so we had to sit on the end directly in front of the Worboys. We didn’t see that Mr Worboys had put his hat on the seat until Janelle sat on it. We did apologise, but Mr Worboys was not amused and we could hardly keep the smile from our faces.

Betty Teasdale
RECOLLECTIONS FROM A DISTANCE

I was christened at the church on 23rd May 1948. By then I was nearly one, perhaps rather old for a christening. Nell Lowbridge, my father’s sister and congregation member, was my godmother and this was in fact the first time I was able to visit Kurri Kurri because I lived in Melbourne with my parents, Robert and Dorothy Hyslop.

Dad grew up in Kurri, the youngest son of Will and Molly Hyslop. He attended Sunday School at the Methodist Church, not far from his home in Rawson Street. When he was five, my father was part of the Anniversary concert in which he was to recite. He recalls how, overcome by nerves, he burst into tears and had to leave the stage.

Aunty Nell was always a very special person for me – and for lots of other people too. I was lucky to be her goddaughter. During the 1948 visit she was delighted when I took my first steps walking towards her!

Two years later my little sister, Deirdre, was christened at the church. Mary Love, my father’s older sister and congregation member, was her godmother. I remember how Aunty Mary used to enjoy the church fashion parades where she modeled clothes “for the mature woman”. She particularly loved hats and always had a smart new one for family weddings.

When we grew older and visited the church again, my sister and I became fond of the building itself, typical of early churches across Australia. Its simple, wooden interior gave it a warm and friendly feeling.

This church was important to my father’s family. Especially to Aunty Nell and Aunty Mary, not only because of their religious beliefs, but also because of the social life which surrounded it. My aunts made a major contribution to the Kurri community through their church activities – organising events, caring for people and sharing a great sense of fun.

I thought of all this when I attended Aunty Nell’s funeral at the church in 1977. That was the first time I was aware of the cathartic value of a funeral service in which everyone involved really knew and loved the person they were there to celebrate. I’ll never forget it.

Gabrielle Hyslop.
FUN ON FRIDAY NIGHT

One Friday evening the boys and girls from O.K.'s decided to go for a walk out to Richie (Richmond Main). On the way home we had great fun playing Postman's Knock in the middle of the road. We got a few smiles from men riding their bikes to start the dogwatch shift at the mine. We enjoyed ourselves so much that we decided to repeat it on another Friday night, but some older members of the church had heard of our "carrying on" and were not amused. So next time, we were accompanied by the minister, Mr Dempsey in his car – the "little green bug". As we were behaving ourselves, Mr Dempsey wished us a goodnight and said he would be on his way. Now was our chance for a game, but we were persuaded by one of the boys to keep on walking. As we came over the hill there was the "little green bug" and Mr Dempsey, just checking that we were still coming along.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

In our younger days a group from our church would go around the town, stopping at various places to sing carols. We had a pedal organ on the back of a truck and we carried a ladder so the organist, Mrs Elsie Osland, could climb on to the truck to play the carols for us. One night on our way to Pelaw Main the truck struck a large pot hole and the organ almost rolled off. However, it was safely returned to the church and Mrs Osland played the hymns for our Sunday service. The organ can be seen in the Museum on the grounds of Kurri Kurri High School.

THE TENNIS COURT

After many Saturdays of laying gravel, rolling and watering, the tennis court on the vacant block next to the church hall was ready for play. There was a grand opening – a member of Comrades, O.K.’s, Ladies Aid and Vic Woodman played the first game, and so began many happy hours of exercise and entertainment on Saturday afternoons. There were no champions – just good fellowship. In later years the land was sold and a house was built on it.
KURRI KURRI METHODIST LADIES CHURCH AID

The Ladies’ Aid was formed in the early years of the church and was well attended by the ladies who enjoyed working together to raise funds to meet financial commitments of the church. They organised many and varied functions and became well known for their catering skills, especially for weddings. Each year a garden party was held at the homes of Martha Argyle or Ida Pringle.

Now it is called the Kurri Kurri Fellowship, and although the group is small we can still meet our financial needs. We enjoy good working relations mixed with plenty of humour.

THE CHURCH CHOIR

Kurri Kurri had many good singers in the early years and the Methodist Church Choir, conducted by Mr George Brown and Mr Harold Allsop, added to the evening services by rendering anthems that brought out the delightful tones of their voices.

Over the years the church has been fortunate to have many good singers, both junior and senior. When the large choir finally folded, a junior choir, formed in the 1970's, sang each Sunday morning for several years. A senior choir was reformed and once again began to entertain the congregation. Highlights of the 1980 era were the very successful and enjoyable Cantata performances at both Christmas and Easter.

Today we have the Kurri Singers – a group of five people who sing one or two items for us on most Sundays. We are fortunate to have Doreen Tweedie playing the organ and Helen Conn on the piano.

GLAD FOSTER

For many years Glad Foster played the piano for our community singing at the hospital and at the church hall for the Outreach To The Elderly. She was greatly missed when her failing eyesight made it necessary for her to live at Benholme, in Maitland.
THE CHURCH TAKES ON A NEW LOOK

In 1990 major renovations to the church and hall were carried out. Under the guidance of Les Davies’ knowledge and expertise, the buildings were clad. Male members of the congregation volunteered their time, some working each day and others when they had free time. A covered walkway was constructed to connect the church to the hall, some sheets of iron were replaced on the roof of the hall and the front door of the hall was replaced. New toilets were also built.

Those who gave their time included Vic Steele, Alan Barkwill, Mem Foster, Ron Lowbridge, Tom Tweedie, Harold Worboys, Bert Stoddart and Harry Manning. The ladies of the church provided morning and afternoon tea, which was greatly appreciated by all. The cementing of the walkway was completed later by Harry Manning and his son, Peter.

The windows in the church and hall were replaced by new windows, which were donated by individual members or families belonging to the church.

When the work was completed, it was free of debt. A very generous donation was given by Adamstown Uniting Church, and Hamilton Wesley Church donated 50 copies of the New Australian Hymn Book.

OUTREACH TO THE ELDERLY

Pastor Geoff Davey’s wife, Judy, introduced the idea of some form of entertainment for the elderly one morning each month in our hall. From that, Outreach To The Elderly developed and is held on the first Thursday of the month. A bus brings people from the Masonic Village, and Phyllis Martin, Peggy and Elsie Street and Lila Hawkins collect people from around the town. We serve morning tea (some call it a mini lunch), have community singing and some form of entertainment. For many years, Glad Foster played the piano for our singing. We always try to bring humour into the morning and send our guests home with a smile on their faces. The women who provide the food, wait on tables and try to bring happiness to our friends each month consider it a privilege, and are well rewarded to see the elderly folk happily enjoying themselves.
SOME THOUGHTS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Many years ago our mother worked for Rev. Peter Williams, the minister of Kurri Kurri Methodist Church in the 1920's. During this time she met our father. From early childhood, we have been involved in the church – Sunday School pupils and teachers, Rays, Comrades, O.K.'s, and Fellowship. We have happy memories of the friendship we enjoyed for so many years. There have been many change but we still worship at the same church and enjoy the same fellowship even though the numbers have diminished.

One hundred years have come and gone
Through joys and tears we battled on
And our love for our church is just as strong

Peggy and Elsie Street

Remember the old brick fence around the church and hall? One Monday night when the Methodist Girls Comrades met, some young men were sitting on the fence waiting to escort some of the girls home. Rev. Carl Dempsey approached them and requested for helpers to assist him with the services. “You look an intelligent lot”, he said. “Think about it and come and see me next Monday night around 7pm” We thought it was a joke, but on Monday night we arrived at his study. Each Monday night for several weeks this continued. So George, Clive and I, later joined by Minnie Avery, began to take part in the Church Services. Later we sat for the local preacher’s exam and all passed. I continued to take services for many years (51 in fact) in many areas of the Hunter Valley, and was glad that Carl Dempsey approached those young men sitting on the fence all those years ago.

A charge to keep I have
A God to glorify
A never dying soul to save
And fit it for the sky.

Tom Tweedie
THE BARKWILL FAMILY

Albert Barkwill arrived from England in 1912 and settled in Kurri Kurri. He and wife Hannah had three children:
   Louisa, married Adam Young
   Edwin, married Mary
   Maude, married Wilf Jones
All three marriages were performed in Kurri Kurri Methodist Church.

Albert was an accredited Local Preacher and began preaching in the Methodist Church in 1913. He walked to Weston, Abermain and Neath to preach.

Edwin also preached in his early adult life, was a Trustee of the Church and sang in the church choir with wife Mary for many years.

Louisa Young was a Sunday School teacher and husband, Adam, was General Superintendent of the Sunday School.

Maude was the church organist for many years until she left the district about 1933.

Alan Barkwill
Alice Picton, daughter of Margaret and John Picton, was born at Haydock, Lancashire, England. Alice’s father and uncle were miners. All came to Australia for the betterment of Bill’s ill health (Alice’s brother). They lived near the Methodist Church in Rawson Street, Kurri Kurri and Alice taught at the Sunday School.

Alice married Wally Osland, an electrical fitter at Hebburn Pit, and during the “lockout” about 1928, he and Alice had a farm at Lilyvale, past Testers Hollow. They lived there for 25 years. They relied on tank water at the farm and hurricane lamps for lighting. Their children were Christened and attended church at Kurri Kurri.

Alice remembers contributing money for a brick to help construct the fence on two sides of the church property in 1941. The fence cost £63 and was 243 foot long. 85 people had contributed to the cost so the church was free of debt.

Alice married again and became Mrs Beckett, wife of Charles. She contributed to the church funds in her own small way by making jam for sale at church.

Alice died in 1990. She said that Pastor Ian Dunn in the 1980’s gave her the full realization of what salvation meant.

Dorothy Hales
ETHEL THOMPSON

I was born 31.5.1910 and lived in Durham, England with my parents, Elizabeth and William. We attended the Primitive Methodist Church until we sailed on the “Ormonde” in 1928 and settled in Kurri Kurri. We attended Kurri Methodist Church and I remember Rev. Peter Williams and Rev. Trafford Manefield. The church was always full for 11am and 7pm services every Sunday, and Sunday School was in the afternoon. There were 90 children in the under 10 group. I was a member of the Comrades 1930-1934 and Elsie Robinson was President. We made many articles to sell to raise funds, and we bought an organ for £80. I was a member of the Ladies’ Aid and can remember Ken Wallwork’s and Ethel Avery’s fathers supervising the heating of water in a copper when we catered for functions. I now enjoy attending “Outreach To The Elderly” once a month and hope to continue to worship at Kurri Uniting while ever I am able.

HILDA WILSON (nee COTTERILL) 1913-30’s

Sundays – attended Church for morning service, afternoon Sunday School, and then evening service. Weeknights were busy – Ladies Aid, Girl’s Comradeship, Protestant Alliance Lodge, choir practice. Tennis was popular and the court was where the residence now stands next to the hall; Sunday School picnics at Heddon Greta racecourse were happy events; Bazaars lasted from Wednesday to Saturday with Friday nights off. Mr Harry Wiggins and Arthur Avery manned the home made ice-cream churn.

WIN HOWARD (nee WILSON) 1920-34

Remembered traveling in Hampton’s bus over rough dirt roads to Sunday School picnics. A “blue-bag” was taken along to treat ant bites. Mrs Avery made ice-cream. Win taught Infants Sunday School in the early 30’s and was pleased to see that Mr Fred Herron, one of her pupils, became President of the Law Society.
THE MARTIN FAMILY

Our Grandmother, Jane Martin, was a member of the Kurri Kurri Uniting Church in the 1910’s. Our parents told us that even though she was raising a large family, she still made baskets of craftwork for sale at fundraising events. After her death in 1927, our parents never forgot her teachings and love of the Lord.

Our parents had six children, and though they did not attend church, they sent us to Sunday School from the age of three. We all joined Christian Endeavour, my brothers were O.K.’s (junior and senior) and I joined Rays, Comrades and attended church (both morning and evening services each Sunday). Three of my brothers helped as local preachers in the area, with Clive and George becoming accredited local preachers. For many years I taught at Sunday School and frequently associate present day adults with the children I taught.

The part of Aberdare Street where we were raised was “Methodist Alley”, with the Forster, Morgan, Willetts, Belcher Robertson, Johnson, Lowbridge and Martin families all attending church meeting groups. Sadly, I am the only Uniting Church member now residing there and am honoured, that at the age of 74, I am still able to worship the Lord in the same church that my Grandmother did so many years ago.

Phyllis Martin
OUR CHURCH AS I REMEMBER IT FROM 1930's

The Wolfenden family consisted of ten children, plus Mum and Dad. I was the 7th child. Our parents encouraged us to attend church from an early age, and we continued to do so until work or marriage took us out of the area. Five of the six girls were married in the Kurri Kurri Methodist Church. Yoella, the youngest, was married at Burwood Methodist Church because Bruce’s father was the minister there. Two of our brothers were married in the Abermain Methodist Church and two in Newcastle churches. The four remaining girls still attend Uniting churches.

Sundays began with Christian Endeavour in the church hall at 10am for those who were 12 years and over. Then we crossed to the church to become the choir for the 11am service. Sunday School was at 3pm, where we attended as pupils and the later as teachers. Evening service was at 7pm, and the teenagers occupied the back seats of the church.

The girl’s Rays, for those over 8 years, met on Monday evenings. Then when we reached 14 years, we joined the Comrades. My sisters and I held a range of offices over the years. I was Chief Ray from 1961 to 1972, then became the Director of Comrades until we became the Uniting Church in 1977 and these groups ceased to exist.

Thursday nights were choir practice with Mr Brown as our tutor. Friday nights, the boys went to the Order of Knights (O.K.’s as they were known). On Saturday afternoons we enjoyed many a game on the church tennis court, and at night we often enjoyed “progressive games”, going to 3 or 4 “church family” homes to play board games and part of the evening meal at each home.

Other activities I remember were Crusader camps, sports days, church picnics, harvest festivals, Rays Eisteddfods and Rays camps. We grew up with love in the family home and love in our church family. How lucky we were!

Our daughters, Jan and Jillian, played the organ in the Kurri Kurri Methodist Church – Jan played when needed for the morning service and Jillian for the evening. They were both married in the Kurri Kurri Methodist Church.

Betty Manning (nee Wolfenden)
FROM THE EDITOR

When I decided to attend Kurri Kurri Uniting Church in March, 1999, I was warmly welcomed. Of course I was no stranger. I had either attended school with some of the congregation, or taught them or their children at Kurri Primary School, so my reputation went before me and yet, they welcomed me!

Before attending church services I was associated with various activities within the church, especially Outreach To The Elderly. Quite often I was called upon to entertain our guests, so they heard about my early teaching career, humorous incidents on holidays etc. “you can think of something to tell them” was the way it was put.

When the Church Centenary was discussed, I was given the task of editing the material for the booklet. From the articles I’ve read I realise that The Church was not only a Place Of Worship in the first sixty or seventy years but it provided a wide scope of interesting activities for people of various ages. I have no doubt that the leaders of these “clubs” instilled into the members high moral values which moulded their characters and the town of Kurri benefited. The term “offensive behaviour” was seldom heard except, perhaps, when someone rolled an empty cordial bottle down the floor of the Kings Theatre. Then the usherette would quickly shine her torch on the suspected offender and warn that such behaviour would not be tolerated.

I thank Rev. Keith Kestel and the committee for their help and apologise for any omissions but we had to limit the amount of material we could include. If there are any errors don’t forget I’m the “new kid on the block” but a very happy member of the congregation.

Lila Hawkins.
I asked Doris Conn to write something for the Year 2004.
I’m sure we would all agree with her!

----2004----

With so many memories of the past, who can remember the Berger Paint slogan? “It keeps on keeping on”.
The Kurri Kurri Uniting (Methodist) Church
With our smaller congregation but much faith,
In the future will
KEEP ON KEEPING ON

I would like to thank Susan Ford for typing the material on computer before sending it to the printers, and thanks to Bette Lowbridge for arranging the printing.

Lila Hawkins.

To all who read this book:

I hope it brings back many memories for you, and that it makes you smile as much as it made me.

The Typist.