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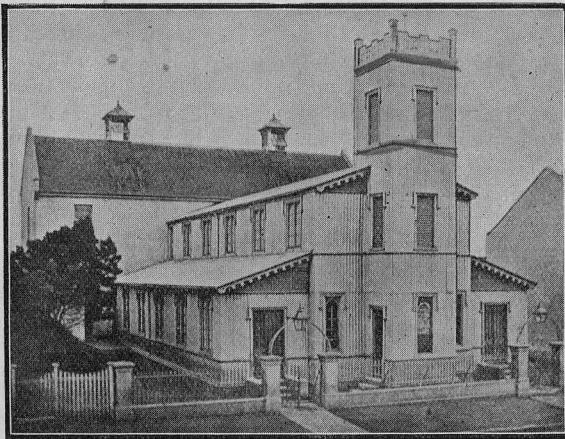
**Jubilee
Sketch
OF
BOURKE STREET
Congregational Church,
SYDNEY.**

1855 | BY Rev. Charles Whyte, M.A. | 1905

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WHY



THE OLD IRON CHURCH.

(1855-1878.)



(Most of the Engravings in this Book are the work of
E. R. Morris, 26 Pitt St., Sydney.)

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Jubilee Sketch

—OF—

Bourke Street Congregational Church, Sydney,

1855-1905.

The Bourke Street Congregational Church was founded on the 24th of May, 1855, so that it will have completed its Jubilee on the 24th of May, 1905. Its earliest record is as follows:—“Minutes of the Church of Christ formed on the 24th of May, 1855, and assembling at the Congregational Chapel, Bourke Street, Surry Hills, Sydney.

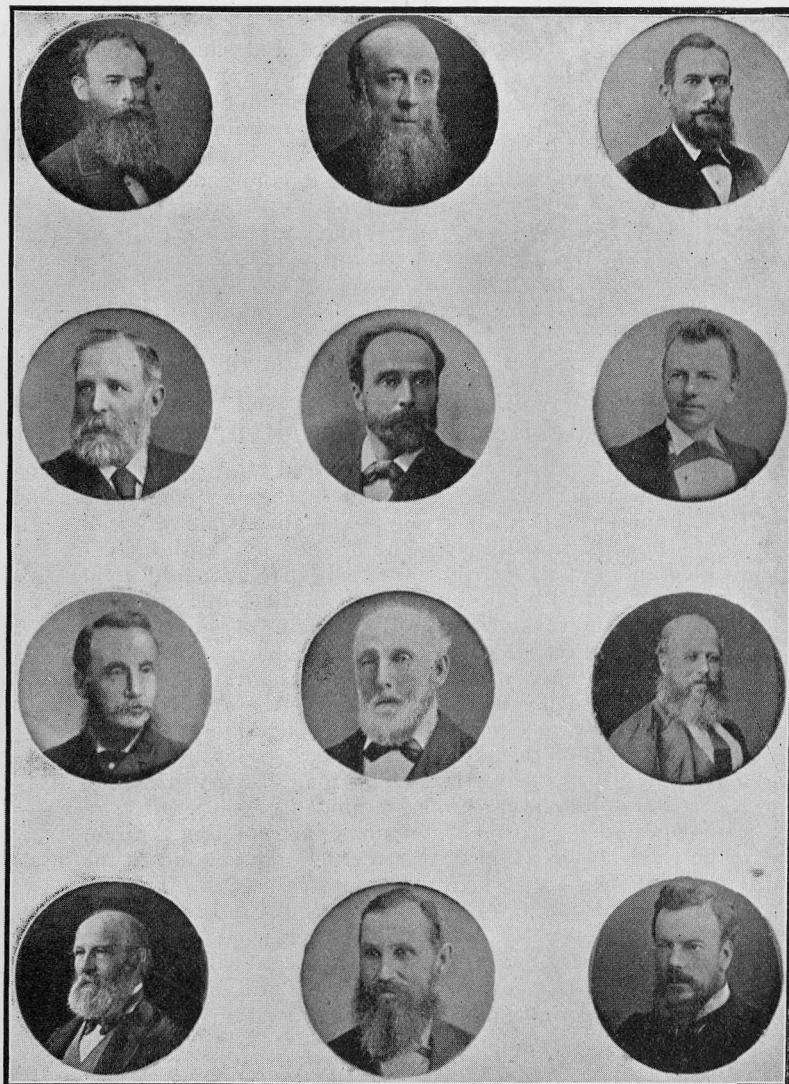
“The following persons being present having assented to the Declaration of Faith, principles of Religion, Church Order and Discipline, as adopted by the Churches of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, the Rev. W. Slatyer gave a short address, and it was agreed to hold a Church Meeting for the transaction of business on the evening of Friday, 1st June.

“Rev. W. Slatyer, Eliza Slatyer, Samuel Hancox, James Thornton, Elizabeth Thompson, John Rocke, Grace Rocke. The following also having given in their testimonials, were at the same time added to the number, Francis Webb, Annie Miles.”

At the next meeting, on June 1st, the “By-laws of the Church, read and adopted. Rev. W. Slatyer proposed S. Hancox and J. Thompson to take charge of the financial affairs.”

Previous to the formation of the Church, services were held in the Happy Valley Hotel, Oxford Street, opposite the Court House.

Thus simply and quietly was founded the Church which is so dear to many hearts, and in whose blessed fellowship the Lord Jesus has won and garnered so many precious fruits of His travail. How little of its true history can be written down. Its brief and bare records may be rich in suggestion to the heart that sees



PAST DEACONS—I.

S. BURRIDGE
R. J. PARISH
W. S. BUZACOTT
J. J. SALIER

A. A. WILLS
W. I. B. MOTE
JOSEPH CLARK
G. LAIRD

W. SAWYER
C. E. WIGZELL
D. S. MUTTON
E. ARNOLD

their significance - the heavenly love and sacrifice contained in them; but how trivial they appear to the casual reader. We need a divinely-illumined imagination to reconstruct from these scanty remains the living and beautiful activities of fifty years of Church history.

The young Church met in a commodious iron building, situated in Bourke Street, not far from Oxford Street. The "Iron Church" may still be seen by the curious in Stewart Street, Paddington.

The Church was launched with the aid of the Colonial Missionary Society and the Congregational Home Mission Society of that time, and was generously subsidised by them for several years, till it became strong enough to go alone.

The Rev. William Slatyer,

the first Pastor of the Church, was a forcible and eloquent preacher, and stamped on the new enterprise the impress of his own strong personality. He was well fitted for his task of laying the foundation, with his decided and almost stern character. He gathered good material, and knit it into a substantial and enduring fabric, as the result abundantly proved.

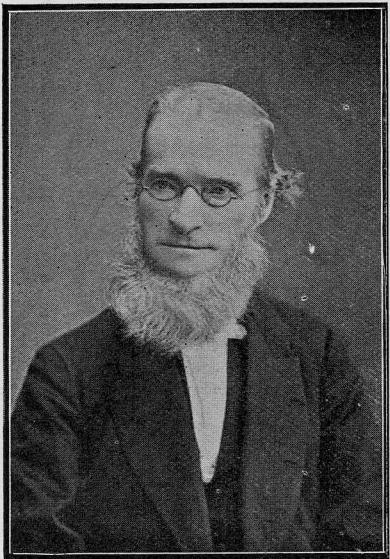
The Church began its life vigorously. We find it immediately opening a Sunday School, although operations were delayed on account of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary books. A collection for books, made at one of the services, yielded £9 2s 4d. Mr. Fowler, the first Superintendent, died in the work.

It is interesting to be reminded of the leaders of that period. At the first Anniversary of the Church, the Rev. Dr. Ross of Pitt Street Church conducted the morning service. Two years later, the Rev. Thomas Binney, of London, one of the giants of Congregationalism, preached one of the Anniversary sermons.

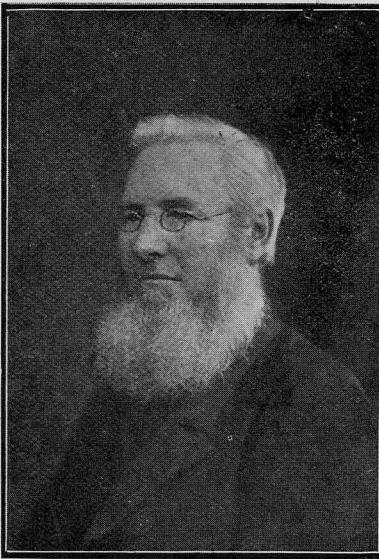
Fifty years ago the weather interfered with Churches as it does to-day, for we find more than once that the Business Meeting had to be "abandoned on account of the inclemency of the weather."

In 1860, after a ministry of five years, the Rev. W. Slatyer, having accepted a call from the Redfern Congregational Church, resigned his position in Bourke Street. The Rev. J. E. Vetch, with others, supplied the pulpit for about a year.

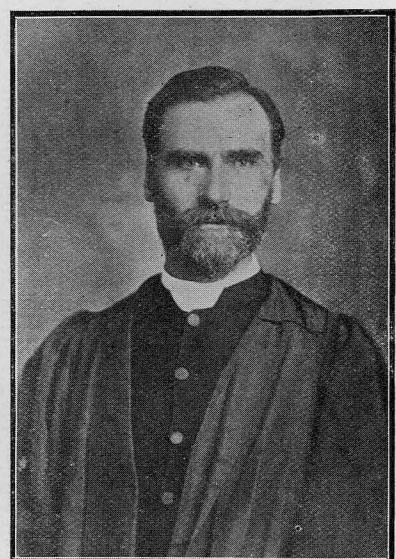
THE LATE PASTORS.



REV. WM. SLATYER
(1855-1860.)



REV. THOS. JOHNSON
(1861-1883.)



REV. JAMES HILL, M.A.
(1883-1900.)

The Rev. Thomas Johnson.

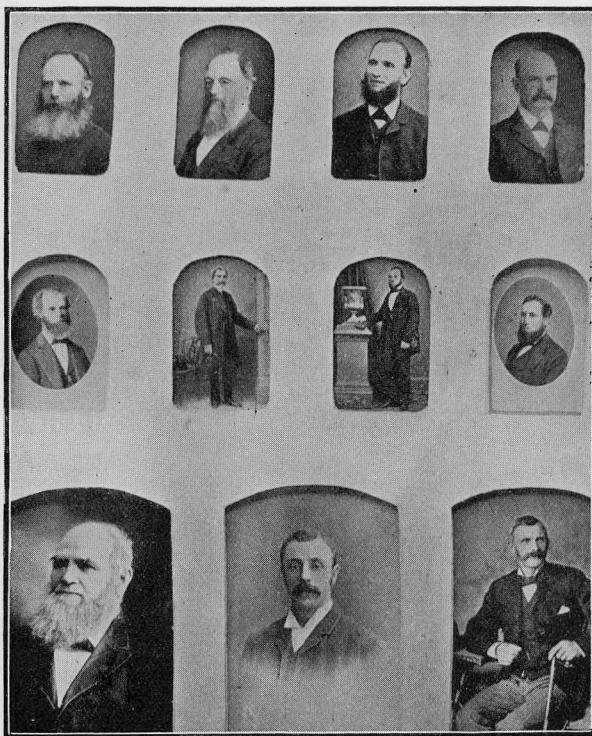
In the beginning of 1861 correspondence was opened with the Rev. Thos. Johnson, then of Maryborough, Victoria, the result being that he entered into an engagement with the Church to take the oversight of it for a year, with a view to permanent settlement. Before the end of the year he was unanimously invited to become pastor, and for twenty-two years he continued in that position.

Mr. Johnson was a man of fine presence and pleasing address. He was possessed of considerable pulpit power. His preaching was sound and evangelical, and was characterized by strong common sense and deep earnestness. This was supplemented by his genuine character and fatherly care for his people. They sought his counsel, and even outside his own charge his advice was much prized. He was surrounded by efficient workers, and gradually gathered a good congregation, composed, one of the reports states, largely of people who had not been in the habit of going to Church. Seven years after the founding of the Church there was a fair congregation, and the Sunday School had an attendance in the morning of 140, and in the afternoon of 180. Visiting and Tract-distributing Societies were formed, and the Church became a centre of great activity. Mr. Johnson was Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1869-70.

The New Schoolroom.

In January, 1862, a Committee was formed for the purpose of taking steps to build a new Schoolroom. The Committee consisted of Messrs. Fowler, Crispo, Fry, Buzacott, Welch, and Minchell. The foundation was laid on August 25th of the same year by Miss Johnson, daughter of the pastor. It is interesting to know that the Sunday School children gave towards the building in fifteen months the sum of £100 in money.

The Schoolroom stands behind the Church, a two-storey building, the upper floor of which is used for girls, and the ground floor for boys. It is provided with an Infant Schoolroom, a Library, and a number of Classrooms. It was opened free of debt, through the Hon. John Fairfax, M.L.C., giving the last in addition



PAST DEACONS—II.

*Top Row (Reading from left to right)—*S. BURRIDGE,
S. S. GOULD, H. B. PAGE, J. G. ORAM.

*Middle Row—*U. W. CARPENTER, REV. A. BUZACOTT,
MR. FOWLER, W. B. ELLARD.

*Bottom Row—*SIMEON BROWN, O. BARNARD, J. STIMPSON.

to the first hundred pounds. Mr. J. J. Salier, the first Choirmaster of the Church, conducted in these premises, for several years, what was called a non-vested Public School, before Crown Street School was built.

Devonshire Street Sunday School

was formed a few years after this, through a Bible Class which gathered in the house of Mr. T. W. Gully, a City Missionary. From this small beginning grew the Sunday School. In 1873, a Schoolroom was built; all the labour being given gratis, and only the material supplied. At this time Bourke Street Sunday School attained its maximum strength, there being nearly six hundred scholars on the roll. When the Devonshire Street School was completed, it naturally drew to itself the children in its own vicinity. Two years later a Missionary was appointed over this branch, and in time a separate Church was formed.

The Present Bourke Street Building.

Hitherto the "Iron Church" had sufficed for the wants of the congregation, but in time it was felt that a better place of worship should be erected. As early as 1873 it was resolved to proceed with the scheme. A Committee was elected, a meeting of the congregation was held, over which the Hon. John Fairfax, M.L.C., presided, and, the same evening, the sum of £593 was promised. Various obstacles arose, however, which delayed all operations till 1878. In this year the foundation was laid on the 21st September, by Jas. R. Fairfax, Esq. (now Sir James Fairfax.) Memorial stones were also laid by the Revs. T. Johnson, W. Slatyer, and C. Pitman. The enterprise was carried through with great enthusiasm, and when the Church was completed in 1880, opening services were held on February 8th, by Revs W. Slatyer, J. H. Fletcher, and J. Jefferis, LL.B., and also on February 15th, by Revs. J. G. Fraser, M.A., T. S. Forsaith, and Thos. Johnson. Bourke Street Church is a handsome and substantial building, with a seating accommodation for 750. Internally it is comfortable and beautiful. It cost about £5350.



THE PRESENT CHURCH.

(Opened in 1880)

A Public-spirited Church

The Bourke Street Church from the first entered into sympathetic relations with its sister Churches. Immediately after its formation, it united with the Congregational Union then existing, and when the present Congregational Union was founded in 1866, took an active share in its formation. It also entered heartily into the scheme for forming a "Boys' College," and later, in starting a denominational paper. It was at one time distinguished as "The Missionary Church," numbering in its fellowship such Missionaries as Rev. A. Buzacott, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Barff, Mrs. Alex. Irvine (now Mrs. Pearse), Mrs. Robt. Thomson, Rev. Chas. Pitman, Rev. David Darling, and Mrs. Darling. For many years Captain and Mrs. Turpie were in its fellowship, and also Captain Runcie, once mate of the *John Williams*, and then Captain of the *Ellengowan*. With such strong Missionary sympathies, the Church gave liberally to foreign Missions. Early in 1883, Rev. Thos. Johnson was compelled, by declining health, to retire from his long and fruitful pastorate. The Church regretfully received the resignation, which, in the circumstances, it could only accept. Provision was made for a liberal retiring allowance, which the aged pastor enjoyed for several years. Mr. Johnson retired to Burwood, where he died on November 19th, 1895.

Rev. James Hill, M.A.

Mr Hill began his ministry in Bourke Street in November, 1883. He was minister of the Congregational Church, Fraserburgh, Scotland, when the invitation from Bourke Street reached him, and was accepted. He arrived in Sydney on a Sunday morning, and made his first appearance in Bourke Street at the Communion Service. He was more formally welcomed, however, at a special meeting of the Church, and then at a tea and public meeting. Over the public gathering the Rev. Thos. Johnson presided. Among those who took part were Mr. Wills, as Secretary of the Church, Mr. W. S. Buzacott, as Senior Deacon, and Revs. S. Savage, S. Bryant, J. F. Cullen, G. Campbell, and G. Pratt.



THE ORGAN.

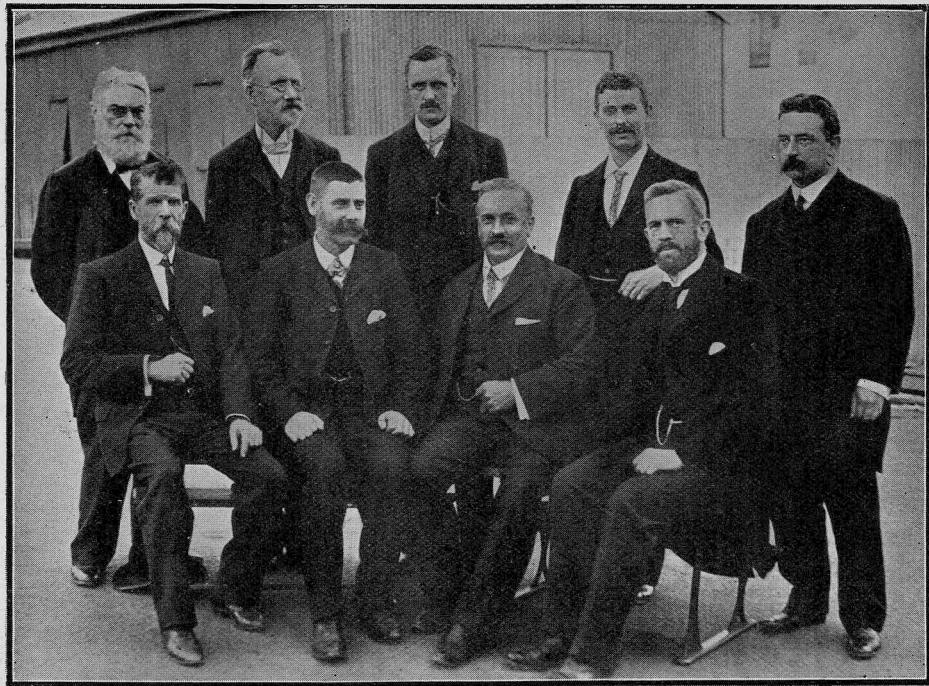
Presented by the MISSES E. C., M. L. and C. F. BAXTER,
(Opened 10th June, 1888.)

Mr. Hill began his work under happy auspices. The Church prospered, additions were made to its fellowship, and its treasury was well supplied. Frequent Evangelistic Missions were held with gratifying results; and about a year-and-a-half after Mr. Hill's arrival, it was found desirable to employ a Missionary to overtake the need of the surrounding district. The suggestion to engage a Missionary came from the Misses Baxter, and when he was appointed, they generously bore the whole burden of his support during the nine years of his connexion with the Church. The Church was fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Woolnough. Mr. Woolnough was a man singularly adapted to his work. Unsurpassed as a visitor, he won the confidence and sympathy of all. He gathered round him an active and aggressive band of Christian workers, and infused into them his own enthusiasm. There is no doubt that much good was accomplished through his agency. Mr. Woolnough carried on this grand work for nine years, and when it became necessary for the Church to dispense with his services, they bore the highest testimony to his worth. A year or two later, while busy in the midst of his Master's service, Mr. Woolnough was suddenly removed by death to a higher sphere.

The Organ

was another of the Misses Baxter's munificent gifts to the Church. It was presented as a thank-offering to God, and conveyed in terms both beautiful and appropriate. This splendid instrument was opened on Sunday, 10th June, 1888. On the following Tuesday, at a Tea and Public Meeting, it was formally dedicated, and the key handed over to the Church, through Mr. Wills, the senior Deacon. Mr. A. G. Addison Flower, who has continued to give such generous and valuable service in the department of praise, had charge of the Organ, and Mr. W. I. B. Mote led the Choir.

The Organ was built by Messrs. Foster & Andrews, of Hull, England. It is well made, containing two rows of keys and pedal organ, with extended keyboard or console, a very convenient arrangement, especially where the duties of Organist and Choirmaster are combined. The case is of pitch pine, the front pipes



PRESENT DIACONATE.

Back Row (Reading from left to right)— H. D. WELCH, R. MORISON STEWART, WM. G. LEWIS,
(Secretary), CHARLES QUELCH, GARNER WARD.

Front Row— JOHN C. B. NEWNHAM, A. G. ADDISON FLOWER, ALFRED ARMSTRONG (Treasurer),
FRANK COCKS.

are ornamentally arranged and artistically decorated, the whole being a splendid addition to the Church.

Suburbanism.

During the later years of the Rev. Thos. Johnson's ministry began that painful exodus to the suburbs which has depleted the Church over and over again; and towards the close of Mr. Hill's ministry it became a constant worry to him, and a source of anxiety to the Church. Family after family who largely constituted the strength of the Church, both spiritually and financially, moved away to the new suburbs which were opening out in every direction. There is no doubt that this drift had a directly injurious effect on Mr. Hill's health. His condition became serious; and when at length he was ordered to take a long sea voyage, he decided to go on a visit to the old Home Land. The Church made the necessary arrangements, and he sailed in the *India* on March 23rd, 1898, returning at the end of the same year. He enjoyed his trip, and at first seemed benefited by it, but ere long it became evident that he was not completely restored. Bravely he struggled on, amid painful discouragement, till Sunday morning, May 13th, 1900, when he passed away. The previous day had been spent happily among friends, and he seemed in fair health, so that the shock to his family and the Church was very severe.

It was when he died that Mr. Hill's influence and the power of his rich and strong personality became apparent. The mourning was universal. A Funeral Service was held in the Church, at which not only the congregation attended, but leading ministers and laymen of all denominations. Expressions of sympathy and regret came from men of all classes, references were made to him in many of the Churches, and resolutions adopted in Church assemblies in terms of the highest appreciation.

The Rev. James Hill was built on a large scale in every way, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. His mind was massive, cultured, and richly stored. His big heart was sensitive and brotherly; and those who were honoured with his friendship knew how loyal and true he was. He was a conspicuous figure where-



REV. CHAS. WHYTE, M.A.,

Whose Pastorate began 1901.

ever he appeared. His influence reached far, and was due, above all other causes, to the conviction that he was a good man.

Present Position.

Nine months after Mr. Hill's death, early in 1901, the Rev. Charles Whyte, M.A., of Newcastle, New South Wales, began his ministry in Bourke Street, the fourth minister since the formation of the Church. It falls to his lot to share in the Church's Jubilee. It is with a view to the celebration of this important event that the present sketch is written. However slight the narrative, it will give those who have inherited fifty years of loving Christian service, some realization of the debt they owe to the past.

One thing is to be here specially noted. A good many years ago, when Mr. Hill and the Church grappled with it, there rested on the Church the heavy debt of £1900. By Sales of Work and the Centenary Fund, this debt had been reduced when the present pastorate began to £500. In 1904, it was further reduced to £200, and now, after the Sale of Work, which is to be held in March of this year (1905), it is hoped that the whole of the £200 will be wiped out, and not a penny of debt remain on God's house. Thus, when the Jubilee Celebrations take place in May, the Church will be entirely free of any financial burden. To this, through God's blessing, we confidently look forward.

It seems unjust to the grand history of God's dealings with this Church, to compress it into such a small space, but let us not forget that there is a fuller record written not here, but contained in the Books which will be opened when Christ finally gathers before Him the whole number of the elect. To Him be glory both now and for ever—AMEN.

P S.—I desire gratefully to acknowledge the invaluable help rendered by Mr. J. C. B. Newnham in procuring photographs and arranging for their insertion in this Memorial Booklet. —C. W.