

Part 2
1900-1956

Joan A. Smith

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

The years 1900-1956 for the Highton Methodist Church tell of a faithful and hardworking congregation, who made their house of worship the very core of daily living and the focus of much hard work, endeavour and Christian Faith.

Situated out in the country at that time, it served not only as a House of God for worshipping, but also as a social base, to put into practical ways the lessons learned each Sunday. The Trust members were responsible for the church property and the leader members looked after the church congregation and organizing of it. The Ladies' Aid assisted them, not only in monetary gifts, but they also gave generously to wider community and mission causes. The Sunday School nurtured the young ones in the Christian faith, and the Christian Endeavour provided encouragement and growth for the young adults.

In 1902, with the Union of all Methodist Churches in Australia, the Highton Wesleyan Church became the Highton Methodist Church.

The 1914-1918 War saw many of its young men serving overseas with the armed forces and mourned the loss of six, killed in action.

The tornado that destroyed the church in 1926 devastated the little congregation. Efforts were made to rebuild, with successful appeals to all Methodist Churches in the State, as well as to local people. With much hard work and fund raising, the debt for rebuilding the church was paid off in twelve years. This achievement was made all the more remarkable, as times were hard for most people during the Great Depression in the 1930s. It is interesting to note that the Lane Memorial Hall, which was unscathed in the tornado, was used for

church services alternately with the Church of England congregation, whose church also suffered damage. A kindly link was subsequently forged between the two churches.

The year 1939 saw the beginning of another World War, with young men leaving to fight for their country. Once again sorrow came to the congregation with the loss of two lives.

The Highton Methodist Church congregation always celebrated yearly anniversaries of the church, Sunday School, Ladies' Aid and Christian Endeavour. Concerts, fetes, gift evenings and coffee suppers were always being planned, and were always well attended social evenings. Church 'decade' anniversaries were always held in the years ending with the number four. For example the Golden Jubilee was held in 1904, the Diamond Jubilee in 1914 and so on, up until the 90th Anniversary being held in 1944. During a trust meeting in 1952, when thoughts of the coming Centenary of the Church were being considered, it was noted that the Wesleyan cause in Highton actually commenced in 1853, with services being held in the homes of Mr W Balding in Roslyn Road and Mr Windmill in Valley Road. Accordingly, the occasion was celebrated in 1953, with the service being broadcast over the Geelong radio station 3GL.

Throughout this section of the Highton Methodist Church's history, some names and photos of leading people are mentioned many times and deservedly so, but the writer is mindful of the many faithful people not mentioned who have given much in the background. They will not go unrewarded in the Kingdom of Heaven. The writer also apologizes for misspelt names, as writing is sometimes faded and illegible in minute books and meanings are not always clear.

The help of The *Geelong Advertiser* and The *Geelong Methodist* papers in this social history is noted with gratitude. Articles have been reprinted verbatim to show a way of life now past and also to include as many names as possible.

Looking back in history gives a sense of gratitude to the church pioneers, a feeling of greater stability in the present day and a clearer perspective for the future. The uncertain times being faced today are different to those of the first half of the twentieth century but hope can be achieved through the same means of faith, prayer and certain knowledge that the One who is creator of all is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient.

Chapter 10

**METHODIST CHURCH UNION
1902**

The following article from *The Western Agriculturalist*, dated 29 February 1896, indicates that the fragmented Methodist churches were considering reconciliation with the view to becoming a United Church once more.

“A United Methodist Church

In these days of sectarianism when the prevailing tendency in religious communities seems to be in favour of increasing the already vast numbers of sects, it is pleasing to find a movement in the opposite direction where a desire has been manifested to sink minor differences and unite for the general good. Such a movement has for some time past been going on in the various Methodist churches, having its object the union of the different branches, including the Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, Bible Christian and United Methodist Free Churches. Resolutions embodying the leading features of the scheme for organic union have been adopted by the Federal Council in whose judgment the statistics submitted to it, showed no insuperable difficulties in the way of such a Union provided that the Methodist people generally express themselves in favour of the scheme, which might be approved of by the conferences and annual assemblies of the Methodist Churches in 1896. Should these approve generally of the scheme, or any revision of it, the Council recommends that the vote of all members over 21 years of age be obtained on the said scheme, and if these votes were favourable to the Union, and the supreme courts of the Methodist Churches of 1897 approved, a date should then be fixed on which

the Union should be consummated, and that such date should not be later than 1900. At the meeting of the Primitive Methodist Assembly held at Eaglehawk at the beginning of this month, which represented Victoria and Tasmania, the report from the Federal Council Methodist Union was discussed in all its bearings, after which it was unanimously resolved that the plan contained in it be generally approved, and appointed a committee to meet similar committees of the other branches during the session of the annual conference of the Wesleyan Church this year in order to confer on the final revision of the scheme which is then to be approved by that conference. The Assembly recommended that the Sabbath previous to taking the members' vote be set apart as a day of special prayer of Divine guidance. From the above it will be seen that the union of the different branches of the Methodist Churches bids fair to become an established fact before long.”

John Wesley died on 2 March 1791 and left behind a United Church but, within a decade ‘Minor Methodist Bodies’ started to break away. In the following extract from the *Methodist Spectator*, 1 November 1901 the author wrote of these ‘Sister Churches’ soon to be re-united.

Sister Churches

“THE METHODIST NEW CONNEXION was formed in the year 1797, the principal, if not only difference between it and the parent body being the different degrees of power allowed in each communion to the laity.

THE BAND-ROOM METHODISTS had their origin in Manchester. Their chief leaders were John and E

Broadhurst, Holland Hoole, Nathaniel Williamson and Thomas Pointer. Of the earnestness of these goodly men there can be no question ... the denomination is now styled **THE UNITED FREE GOSPEL CHURCHES**.

THE PRIMITIVE METHODISTS sprang up in Staffordshire in 1810. The doctrines they teach are precisely similar to those of the original Connexion.

THE BIBLE CHRISTIANS were founded by William O'Bryan, a Wesleyan local preacher in Cornwall in 1815. They principally exist in the West of England, but also have mission stations in the Channel Islands, The United States, Canada, Prince Edwards Islands and Australia. Like the parent Connexion, they have class-meetings, circuits, district meetings and a Conference.

THE PRIMITIVE METHODISTS IN IRELAND who are altogether distinct from their English namesakes, seceded from the parent body in 1817 ... the only difference between them and their quondam friends being that their ministers should not minister baptism and the Lord's Supper (of late years they have come back to their old friends).

THE UNITED METHODIST FREE CHURCHES are an amalgamation of the three different secessions from the original Connexion.

1. The Protestant Methodists, who were formed into a distinct body in 1828, when upwards of 1,000 members separated from the Leeds Societies because of the proceedings of the Special District Meeting convened to settle the disputes arising out of

the introduction of an organ into Brunswick Chapel.

2. The Wesleyan Methodist Association, which sprang out of the controversy in 1834 concerning the then proposed Theological Institution.
3. The Reformers, who were expelled, or who seceded during the terrible agitation which occurred in 1849.

THE WESLEYAN REFORM UNION consists of those Reformers of 1849 who refused to amalgamate with the United Methodist Free Churches.

THE WELSH CALVANISTIC METHODISTS were founded by Howell Harris, an early friend and companion of Wesley and Whitfield.

Some others have occasionally sprung up, such as 'Test Methodists', 'The Independent Methodists', etc; but they are now either extinct, or incorporated with other churches.

As new colonists arrived in Australia it was inevitable that divisions in Methodism would occur but there were instances of unification as well. In 1888 two Methodist churches united – the Methodist New Connexion Church and the Irish Mission – and as a result the Methodist New Connexion church at North Richmond united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church.”

After much debate over the following decade, the 1898 Conference saw the close of the struggle. C Irving Benson, in *A Century of Methodism* wrote the following.

“When the matter of Union of all the Methodist Churches was put to the vote, the non-Unionists announced that, while they could not

conscientiously support Union as presented to them, they would retire beyond the bar of the Conference', meaning that they would not actively oppose the resolution which was carried by 176 votes. Union was to take effect from 1902 and from that day all controversy ceased.

Before the 1898 Conference closed a special symposium was held and comprised representatives of all the Uniting Churches. This assembly had no legal powers but it sealed the bond of fellowship.

The government of Victoria drafted the Methodist Union Bill which came before the parliament and, with the support of the government and the opposition, the Bill was read a third time without amendment, and thus became law.

The historic Conference of 1902 opened in Wesley Church on 25 February 1902. The Wesleyan delegation was seated and as the representatives of the United Free Methodist, Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist Churches entered, all rose and sang heartily 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'. The retiring Wesleyan President, Rev. A R Edgar, happily applied the words of the marriage service, saying that the union was 'for better or for worse,' and when he pronounced the sentence, 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder', the Conference broke out in great applause."

Rev. Alan Walker later wrote in *Heritage Without End* the following.

"Dr Berry, in reporting this great event to the Mother Conference in Great Britain, could say, 'For the first time in the world's history, we have a

whole continent, peopled by one race, speaking one language, observing one law, loyal to one flag, ruled by one King, worshiping one God. And now we have in the vast Australian continent, one Methodism'.

When John Wesley died in 1791 his people were not Wesleyan, they were 'Methodists' and, in 1902, Australians went back to that name."

It is interesting to note that Methodist Union was not achieved in England until 1933.

The following article from the *Geelong Advertiser* of 16 April 1902 describes Methodist Union celebrations in Geelong.

"Methodist Union

COMBINED DEMONSTRATION

A vein of fervent enthusiasm was prominent in the grand Methodist demonstration held yesterday in Geelong in celebration of the consummation of the union, and augured well for the hopes of those who feel that the sphere of the church's usefulness will be strengthened by the federation. The proceeding commenced with a monster tea meeting held in the Yarra-street school hall, at which there were two sittings. The tables were laid out in charming style, and were attended by the following ladies: Mesdames W Humble, Thear, George Strong, G M Hitchcock, Blakiston, Everett, Best, T S Humble, J Daniel, Hammerton, Howard, Cargeeg, Spriggins, Young, J Dawson, Hoban, Holden, Gardiner, Harrison, Pittock, Bridgwood, Dent, West, Kells, Dutton, H Thacker, M Thomas, Thompson, and Misses Kyle, Peters and Howard.

After tea an adjournment was made to the Mechanics' Hall, which was quickly filled to overflowing, many persons failing to secure seats. The chair was occupied by Mr W Kyle (Circuit Steward). A combined choir, consisting of about 100 voices, were on the platform, under the conductorship of Mr S Brearley. Besides rendering several hymns they sang, with good effect, "And the Glory of the Lord" (Handel), "The Hallelujah Chorus" (Handel), and "The Heavens Are Telling" (Hayden). Other musical items were sandwiched between the speeches, which were numerous, and lent a sweet and tasteful effect to the meeting. Of these an instrumental trio (flute, violin, and piano), entitled "Tyrolienne et Tarentelle", by Mr S and Misses L and E Brearley, was given with such exquisite taste as to meet with a decided encore. "The True Shepherd", sung by Miss Annie Smith, and "The Throne of Grace" (with violin obbligato) sung by the Rev. S J Hoban, were also most palatable items on the evening's bill of fare. Mrs Hobbs acted as accompaniste.

The Rev S Knight, in introducing the Rev. Dr Fitchett (President of the conference), alluded to the union as a grand wedding, through which the church would become greater and nobler. He was glad to have had the honor of taking part in the accomplishment of the union of the Methodists into one great family, for whom he had a supreme affection. (Applause). At a signal from the Rev. Mr Knight, the audience rose and greeted the Rev. Dr Fitchett with applause.

Dr Fitchett said he felt gracious for the reception accorded him. The Rev. Mr Knight struck a splendid keynote in alluding to the gathering as one family.

Closer ties than those woven by flesh and blood were the imperishable ties of a common spiritual life, a common faith and Saviour. The present gathering, he felt, was as a prophecy of the greater gathering bye and bye in the Father's house of heaven. The speaker said he felt especially pleased at being present because of his being a Geelong boy, and alluded in touching words to the spot in the Yarra Street Church which was the scene of his conversion, more than 35 years ago. The consummation of the union they had met to celebrate was a change that would stand as a landmark in history. Four broken fragments had been united into one church, with common membership, ministry, policy, flag and inspiration. The movement was but the springtide of a mightier union in which the other churches were coming behind. It was a scandal that the Master's great divine prayer of 20 centuries ago still remained unanswered. Christ's idea of His church had never yet been realised. Fragments, and even caricatures of it were seen, and the world would never be subdued to Christ until the union of all Christian churches prevailed. The divisions of Christians in the past were written in fire and blood, and made him look back with sorrow and shame on the scandal that clings to the name of Christian. At one time Christians hung each other in thousands over a dipthong, and centuries were spent in miscellaneous murder over theological disputes. The bitterness of the old days did not now exist. "We do not now slay each other," said the speaker naively, "we only cut each other." The supposed differences that had existed amongst Methodists prior to the union were so fine that they could not be detected by a microscope. They were never divided on the question of doctrine, but on the miserable question of administration. He did not

think the union of the Methodist Church was God's last word, but as the light from the sun consisted of seven colours united into one glorious white light, so would eventually all Christian churches be united in one combined body. As the morning sunlight first touched the higher levels, so the breaking of the disunion was forecasted by the example set by the Methodists, which had caught the first rays of the light of the great union that was to come. The speaker asked the members of the different congregations to stand firmly together and make the sacrifice if called upon for the furtherance of the union. As the servants of the Great Master they should consecrate themselves into the new life of the church with which God had honored them, and in conclusion, he commended them to adopt as a text John Wesley's dying words, "God is with us".

To prevent the speeches from wearying the audience, a time limit was placed upon the lesser lights, and the eloquence of these was, therefore, handicapped in some degree. An opening prayer was uttered by the Rev. E Turner. The Revs. W Williams, FLS (the new Circuit Chief), Bride Barber, and D B Bridgwood gave speeches, in which hopes for the success of the union were voiced, each speaker appearing to be fired with the enthusiasm of his subject. The other speakers were Messrs J Pittock (ex-PM), W Strong (Sunday Schools), J Danial (Circuit Steward). Votes of thanks were proposed by Messrs W Humble and E Adcock, and the proceedings concluded with the 'Doxology' and benediction."

Methodist Union was uncomplicated in Highton as there was only one Methodist Church – the Highton Wesleyan Church - so it was a simple matter of removing

the original name and replacing it in order to become the Highton Methodist Church.

In 1904, there was an Australasian edition of the *Methodist Hymn Book* prepared and copyrighted for Australia and New Zealand. It contained all the hymns of the English edition with an Australasian Supplement, and was authorized by the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia.

A new hymn book was published in 1933, the year of Methodist Union in England. The following extract is found in the preface of this book.

"Methodism is born in song. Charles Wesley wrote the first hymns for the Evangelical Revival during the great Whitsuntide of 1738 when his brother and he were 'filled with the spirit', and from that time onwards the Methodists have never ceased to sing. This hymn book was issued for use by all Methodists in Australia and for not a few Methodists 'beyond the seas' as well. It is the first such book since Wesley's final collection of 150 years ago. Its publication, therefore, may rightly be called an historic event in Methodism."

This hymn book was used at the Highton Methodist Church until the 1970s when the Highton Presbyterian Church united with this church in association. It was then decided to use the Canadian hymn book although Sunday School children continued to use *The Methodist School Hymnal, 1911*. During the 1930s, work began on a new *Sunday School Hymn Book*, but when war broke out in 1939 the revision was suspended and it was not until 1950 that the Highton Methodist Sunday School used the *School Hymn Book of the Methodist Church*.

Methodist Church of Australasia	
In the State of <u>Victoria</u>	
CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM.	
I hereby Certify that I have this day baptised	
<u>Ray Hurlstone Thomas</u>	
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.	
PARTICULARS	Child's Name <u>Ray Hurlstone</u>
	Father's Name <u>George Thomas</u>
	Profession <u>Farmer</u>
	Mother's Maiden Name <u>Adelaide Stone</u>
	Parents' Residence <u>Oakleigh</u>
	Date and Place of Birth <u>Mar. 31st 1890</u> <u>Oakleigh</u>
	Date and Place of Baptism <u>Oct 20th 1903</u> <u>Oakleigh</u>
[Issued by direction of the Methodist Conference.]	
<u>Rev. M. J. M. M. M.</u> Officiating Minister.	

Methodist Book Dept., 263 Little Collins Street, Melbourne.

Above: The Certificate of Baptism that was used in the State of Victoria in the early 1900's. Certificate provided courtesy of Rev. Eric Thomas.

Chapter 11

**TITLE OF HIGHTON METHODIST
CHURCH – GRANTED 1909**

On 24 November 1853 an application was made by Rev. William Butters for two acres of land in Allotment 1, Section 19, of the Parish of Barrarbool to be set apart for Wesleyan purposes.

According to government records, Messrs John Lowe, Thomas Rix and Henry Adcock were appointed trustees of the site on 23 September 1861 but it was not until 4 December 1909 that a Certificate of Title was issued.

The following notice appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 1 September 1909. Note the original spelling of Barrarbool.

**“METHODIST CHURCH. – LAND
AT BARRARBOOL. – POWER TO
DISPOSE.**

A statement of trusts having been submitted by the head or authorized representative of the denomination of The Methodist Church of Australasia in Victoria, under the provisions of the ‘Act to provide for the Abolition of State Aid to Religion’, for allowance by the Governor, the same was allowed by him on the twenty-fourth day of August, 1909, and the following is the form in which such a statement of trusts had been allowed: -

Description of Land. - All that piece of land being allotment 1D, section XIX., parish of Barrarbool, county of Grant: Commencing at the south-west corner of the said allotment at the intersection of the Barrarbool-road with a road leading to the Barwon River; bounded thence by the said road leading to the Barwon River bearing north 3 chains 79 ½ links; thence by allotment 1A

bearing N. 89 deg. 39 min. E. 5 chains 0 ½ link; thence by allotment 1C bearing south 4 chains 20 links to the said Barrarbool-road; and thence by that road bearing north 85 deg. 44 min. W. 5 chains 1 ½ links to the commencing point.

Names of Trustees. – Caleb Mountjoy, Robert Lane, John Harrington, Philip Hoskin, and John Samuel Camm.

Power of Disposition. – Such powers of disposition, including power to sell, lease, or mortgage as are contained in the ‘Model Deed’ as defined by the *Methodist Union Act* 1902, under the trust powers and provisions of which deed the said properties shall until disposed of be held.

Purposes to Which Proceeds of Disposition are to be Applied. – To such Methodist Church purposes as may be approved by a majority of the trustees, with the consent of the Annual Conference of the said Church.

As witness the hand of the Governor of the State of Victoria this 24th day of August, 1909 –

T CHARMICHAEL
Governor of the State of
Victoria”

Entered in the Register Book,
Vol. 338 Fol. 677417

VICTORIA.

CERTIFICATE OF TITLE,
UNDER THE "TRANSFER OF LAND ACT 1890."

Robert Lane, Fruitgrower, John Harrison, Dairyman,
Philip Hosk, Stationmaster, and John Samuel, Carpenter,
Retired Teacher, all of Brighton, and Caleb Mountjoy,
Retreat Road, Newbourn, Esq., all of Melbourne, are

now the proprietors of an Estate in Fee-simple, subject to the Encumbrances
notified hereunder in All that piece of Land, situate and contained
red on the map in the margin containing
two acres or thereabouts being more or less
more or less section nine hundred and one of
Barrabool county of Isaac.

Dated the 4th day of December
thousand nine hundred and nine

1000	1000
500	500
420	420
500	500
501	501

ENCUMBRANCES REFERRED TO

Appln 500
R.S. no 177

THE MEASUREMENTS ARE IN LINKS

IMAGED FOLIO - WARNING: TO BE USED FOR DIAGRAM, EASEMENT
INFORMATION, DEPTH LIMITATIONS AND ANY DIAGRAM NOTATIONS.
The text of this Folio has been converted to a computer Folio and the effect of any
dealing registered since the text conversion will appear on the computer Folio.

Above: The Certificate of Title dated 4 December 1909.

Declaration of Trust.

To all to whom these Presents shall come.

We the undersigned Do and each of us Doth hereby declare that we have not nor have we or any of us ever had any beneficial estate or interest whatsoever in the hereditaments set forth in the Schedule hereto but that we have heretofore held and now hold the same and every part thereof upon such and the same trusts and to and for such and the same ends intents and purposes and with under and subject to such and the same powers provisoes declarations and agreements as are expressed contained and declared or referred to in and by "The Wesleyan Methodist Model Deed of Victoria 1887" as amended by "The Methodist Union Act 1902" and upon no other trust and for no other intent or purpose whatsoever.

Dated the 10th day of Sept 1959

The Schedule above referred to. ALL THAT piece of land being part of Lot 6 on Plan of Subdivision No: 20237 lodged in the Office of Titles and being part of Crown Portion Three Section Nineteen Parish of Barrarbool - being part of the land more particularly described in Certificate of Title Volume 7597 Folio C46.

Above: The declaration of Trust, held at the Property Board Office of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

The following Trustees signed the declaration.

- S E Adams
- Ian L Allan
- L Dawson
- E N Harding
- A M Johns
- K P McDonald,
- W H Marshman
- G T Palmer
- H E Pescott.
- Norman McDonald
- A Rex Smith
- Neville K Smith
- T Tice

Chapter 12

EARLY YEARS 1900 - 1920



Above: Highton Methodist Church Congregation photograph taken on 14 October 1906.

Back Row, L–R: Randal Lane, Frank Horwood, Len Smith, Oliver Lane, Mr Robert Lane (senior), Stan Harrison, Alf Wall & George Seal.

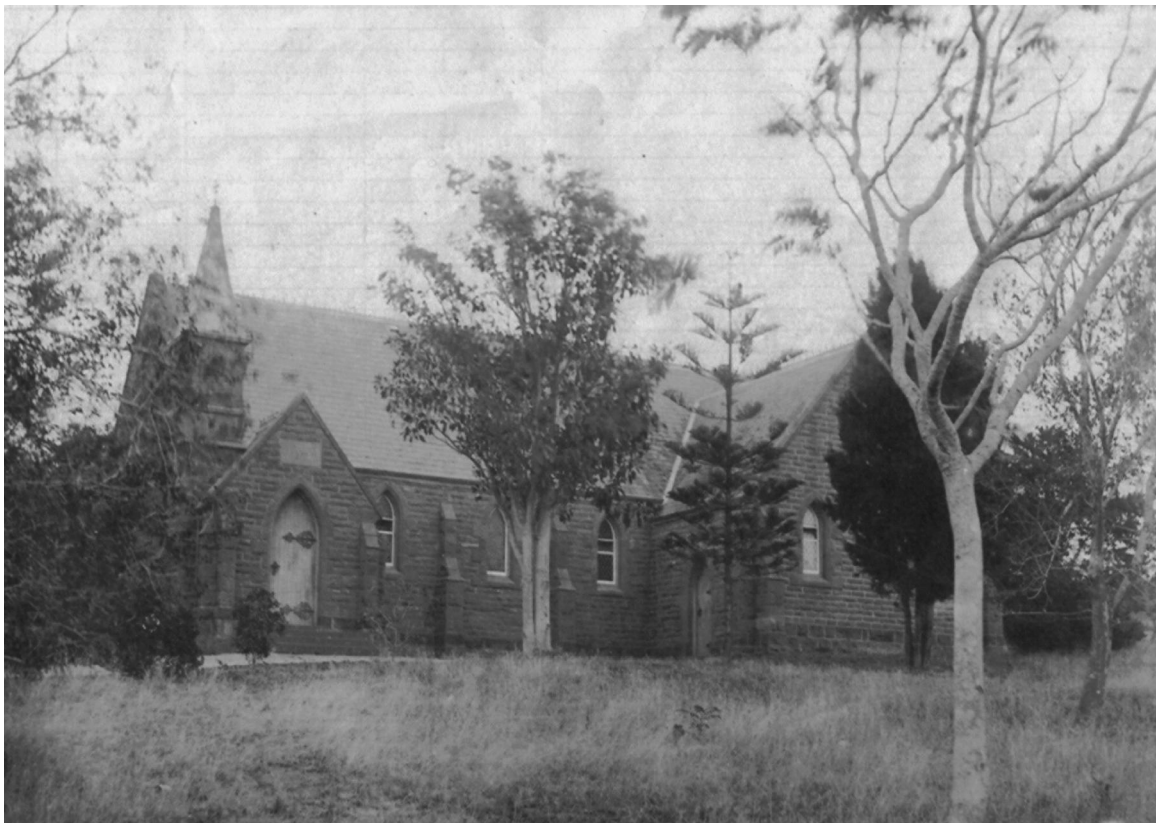
Fourth Row, L–R: Annie Wall, Rose Johnson, Maggie Burgess, Stan Wall, Herbert Capstick, Claude Horwood, Mrs Bedgood, Perc Horwood, Miss Hartshorn, Ernie Burgess, Effie Cother, Lill Wall, Mary Capstick, Winnie Johns, Hilda Harrison, Hilda Capstick & Annie Rankin.

Third Row, L–R: Mrs McMurdie, Mr McMurdie, Granny Hobbs, Mrs Allen, Mrs Rankin, Stella Hartshorn, Mary Lane, Elsie Harrison, Miss Mawson, Ethel Calvert, May Harrison, Syd Johnson, Mrs Priddle, Girlie (Florrie) Harrison, Jack Harrison, Mrs Hancock, Mr Hancock, Ben Wall, Harriet Harrison, Ella Foster & William Johns.

Second Row, L–R: Mrs Hartshorn, Beacher Hartshorn, Gertie Camm, George Hobbs, Emma Smith, Ted Horwood, Dora Camm, Mr Clapstick, Rev Adamson, Edie Cother, Phillip Hoskin, Addie Hyde, Ted Rankin, Mrs Seal, Andrew Wall, Mr Worland, Addie Rankin holding baby Jack Rankin & Mrs. Lill Johns.

Front Row, L–R: Mr Bedgood & Eric, Les Lawry, Len Harrison, Hazel Morriss, Olive Johns, Rita Rankin, Vera Harrison, Dorothy Johns, Gladys Morriss, Evelyn Johnson, Ida Capstick, Rose Wall, Cecil Priddle, Arthur Lawry, C Wall, L. Johnson, Lil Johnson, N Lawry, Eric Cother, Bert Wall, Alwyn Johns, Billie Nixon, Viv Bedgood, Cliff Rankin, V Johns, Eric Harrison & Keith Johns.

Steadfast Through Change



***Above:** Two early photos of the Highton Methodist Church, circa 1905.*

***Note:** The hedge has been planted leading down to the Barrabool pedestrian gate.*



***Above:** Photo taken of the Highton Methodist Church interior, at the yearly Harvest Thanksgiving Festival – 31 March 1910. Text on the back wall reads 'The Lord Is In His Holy Temple'. The door on the left side of the back wall was only a decoration to match the door on the right. Note the name cards on the pews. Church members paid for the use for these pews.*

There were a number of signs of progress in the new century. In 1900 two lamps were purchased for the church because electricity was not available until 1929. Donations from the congregation enabled essential repairs to the church to be carried out. In 1902 pew rentals were collected quarterly and bell ringers for the church services were John Harrison, Will Johns and Walter Rankin.

In 1904 the church celebrated its Golden Jubilee and the organ was specially tuned for the celebrations. It was decided to take photographs of the various church organizations but this was deferred until 1906.

In 1907 the church committee consisted of Mr Robert Lane (chairman), Messrs Randal Lane, Capstick, Hoskin, W Lawry, Horwood, Rankin, Harrison,

Wall and Camm (secretary). Mr A Lawry was elected a year later.

In the same year Rev. Adamson brought the Church Property Committee under the 'Model Deed Act' which meant that in the "Victorian Wesleyan Methodist Act 1887 and in the Methodist Union Act 1902 of the State of Victoria (known as and hereinafter referred to as 'The Methodist Church Acts') and in 'The Wesleyan Methodist Model Deed of Victoria 1887' (as by the said Acts altered and modified) and in the Book entitled '*The Laws and Regulations of the Methodist Church of Australasia*' referred to in the said Model Deed sometimes and hereinafter called the '*Book of Laws*' the Methodist Church of Australasia in New Zealand is referred to either expressly or by implication as forming an integral portion of the

Methodist Church of Australasia and the said New Zealand Conference is referred to as one of the Conferences comprised in and governed by the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia”.

Christian Endeavour focused its efforts on liquidating the church debt, and played its role by arranging concerts, lantern lectures and tea meetings.

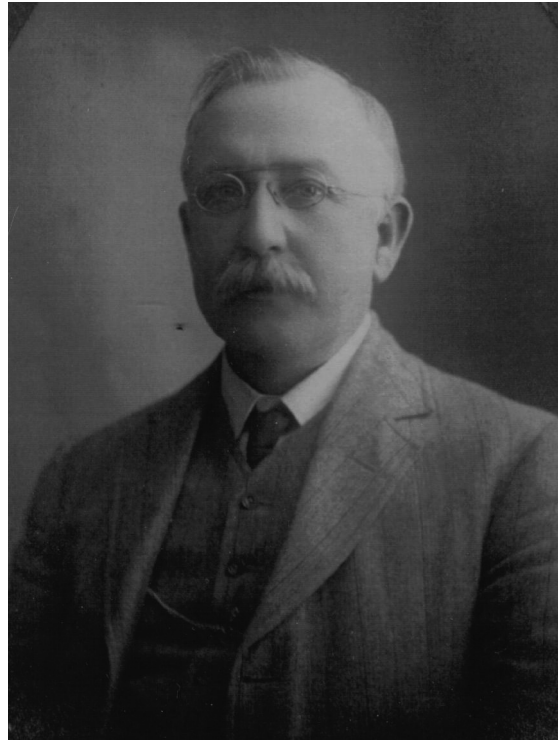
In 1908 a lamp at the gateway was lit in readiness for evening functions and Mr Rankin was paid an honorarium of one pound per annum to perform this important task. Due to the passing of time the church was again falling into disrepair and so the outside walls were tuck pointed by Mr Spriggins, the belfry tower was tuck pointed by Mr Searl, and wall cracks were filled. The lamp at the gateway was moved to within the church grounds and footpaths were upgraded.

In 1911, Mr Pittock carried out more repairs to the church.

The year 1913 saw new carpet laid in the pulpit area with a new lamp was placed in the school room.

Diamond Jubilee of the Methodist Church

In 1914, a Church Diamond Jubilee committee was established and invitations were sent out to current and former members. On Good Friday, Mr Watts took photos of early pioneers and Church members, both past and present.



Above: Mr George Henry Adcock, chairman of the tea meeting to mark the Diamond Jubilee in 1914.



Above: Pioneers of the Highton Methodist Church in 1914, taken on the occasion of the Church Diamond Jubilee.

Back Row L - R: Messrs J Cooper & C Mountjoy.

Seated L – R: Mesdames Allan, Hobbs & Mountjoy



Above: The Highton Methodist Church Past and Present Members – Good Friday 1914. Taken on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee (names unknown).

The following article was printed courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser* from April 1914.

“Although the weather was very boisterous on Good Friday, it in no way dampened the ardor of the old folk who attended the tea meeting in commemoration of the diamond jubilee of the Methodist Church. The tables were well presided over by Mesdames Harrison, Lawry, F Morriss, Milbourne, Carr, Johnson, Jasper, McGregor, A, A, and N Wall, and the Misses M and L Kennedy, Harrison, Paine, Elsie and Edith Lawry. After full justice had been done, the company adjourned to the church, when the Rev. S Flockart introduced Mr G H Adcock, of the Viticultural College, Rutherglen, as chairman. Several apologies were read from persons unable to attend, entreating God’s blessings to rest on the old church and its members. The choir, composed of those who had been members at various times in the church’s history, including Mesdames Millard (organist), Harrison, Rankin, Atkins, Johns and Smith, and the

Misses Foster, Hartshorn and Camm, and Messrs McMurdie, Bedggood, Camm, Robert and Randal Lane. Considering they came from all parts of the State, and had no time for rehearsals, their rendering of the anthems, quartettes, trios and solos, interspersed throughout the programme, deserved high praise. The Treasurer, Mr Harrison, after reading the balance-sheet for the year, which showed a small credit, read the report of a meeting held in 1853 (when it was decided to build the present church), which was in the handwriting of the Chairman’s father. The Chairman, in a brief address, referred to the efforts of our forebears – their saintly memories were with them that night – men who were heroes for God. When the treasurer read out those old names, his present audience became a blur before his eyes, and he saw sitting in the seats those old men and women in the days of his youth. They had sowed the seed, and other men reaped the harvest. It was surprising how often in his travels he met old Highton boys, and in most cases following the footsteps of their fathers, doing what

they could for the fallen humanity. He thanked them for their kind invitation to be present: after an absence of 23 years it was pleasing to see many of the old familiar faces, and join in this happy reunion.

Mr Lane, senr., who is known at the present time by the young people as 'the father of the church', told of the first service held in connection with the Highton Methodists. It was conducted by the Rev. F Lewis, of Yarra-street (the circuit then being one), in the house of Mr Windmill. He had tried to get information as to the cost of the present building, but no record had been kept. It must have been about £1400. Mr Cooper, of Melbourne, took up the story as to the opening of the present church, and referred to the self-denying efforts of the Barrabool farmers, Mountjoy Brothers, Honey, Coomb, Ross and many others. The Rev. J Bickford laid the foundation stone. They had no organ in those days; his mother used to raise the tune, and the first hymn ever sung in this church was sung to the tune of "Simeon". He was sorry in compiling the new hymn book they left that out; but the authors must have felt ashamed of the omission, for they put it in the appendix. Those were the days of Matthew Burnett (he opened the church) and California Taylor. In those days the young men, as they followed the plough, sang, "For the lion of Judah shall break every chain", and other familiar hymns.

Mr George Mitchell, Noble-street, Geelong, who was the local State School teacher for many years, spoke of the work in later years: how they had battled along when an exodus from the district left the debt a burden on the few; but with faith in God and the work they had kept on, the people of Highton to-day worship in as

substantial and pretty a country church as you would find in the State, free of debt.

Rev. S C Flockart gave a recital, "The New Minister", and the Rev. L Hartshorn also spoke. The Rev. S C Flockart, in moving a comprehensive vote of thanks, complimented the trustees on the arrangement of their diamond jubilee, and the old choir for their splendid services. This was supported in a humorous speech by Mr Spowart, of the Protestant Orphanage. The singing of "God be with you till we meet again" closed a meeting that will not soon be forgotten."

Methodist Church of Australasia Centenary

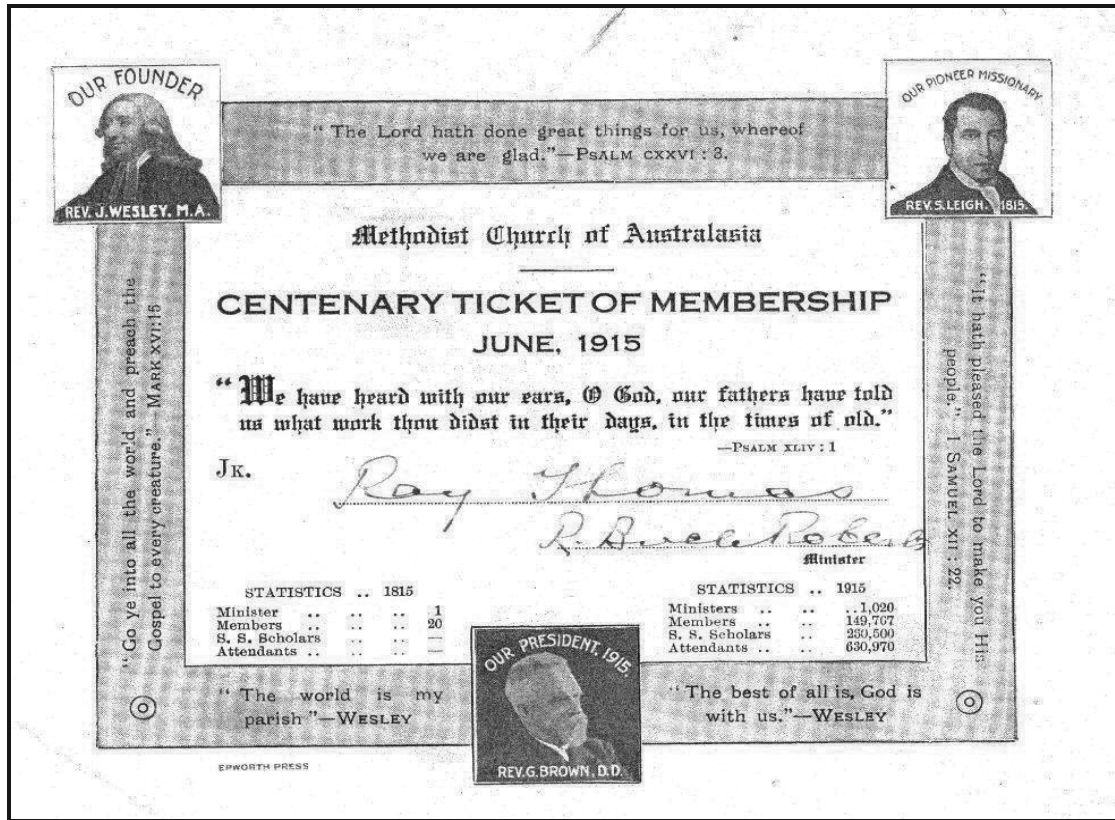
In 1915 the Methodist Church of Australasia celebrated its centenary and the occasion was marked with a special Centenary Ticket of Membership issued in the June of that year. It marked the arrival of the Rev. Samuel Leigh on board the 'Hebe' at Port Jackson a century earlier on 10 August 1815. Governor Macquarie granted the Rev Leigh permission to commence Wesleyan Services in a rented house in Sydney in that year.

The centenary celebrations at Highton included tea meetings, anniversaries, Harvest Thanksgivings with 'sale of gift' evenings, concerts and coffee suppers and other social activities. Sunday school and Christian Endeavour activities flourished. In the midst of these celebrations, a number of practical matters had to be managed, for example the grounds of the Highton Methodist Church were rented for stock grazing – a reminder that Highton was still a rural community.

Steadfast Through Change

In 1919 a group of church ladies obtained permission to hold a 'Sale of Gifts' evening to raise funds for the church. The following year another 'Sale of Gifts' evening raised £48. This enabled the trustees to investigate the

lighting of the church with the result that, in March 1920, the Trustees installed a Gloria Light Plant with two lights for the Church and one light for the Sunday school.



Above: A 1915 Centenary Ticket of Membership. Provided courtesy of Rev. Eric Thomas.

Chapter 13

WORLD WAR I

Highton Methodist Church Soldiers

The years from 1914 to 1918 saw the Highton Methodist Church doing its patriotic duty for the World War I effort. Over forty young men who had attended the church and Sunday School enlisted to fight for their country and tragically six were killed in action. The following men enlisted.

- A Bone
- E Bone
- H Bumstead
- R Camm
- W Ellis
- ? Frewin
- N Frewin
- S Harrison
- C Horwood †
- C James †
- C Johns
- G Johns
- H Johns
- M Johns
- A Johnson
- C Johnson
- F Johnson
- J Johnson
- V Johnson
- W Johnson
- J Joyce †
- L Kennedy
- N Kennedy
- R Knight †
- C Lawry
- H Lawry
- L Lawry
- N Lawry
- G McKenzie
- K McKenzie
- E McMurdie
- L Mitchell
- M Mitchell
- C Rankin

- Cliff Rankin
- W Reynolds
- A Simes †
- C Smith †
- I Smith
- F Trevaskis
- H Trevaskis
- C Wall
- S Wall
- V Wall

† Fallen

Avenue of Honour

Before the end of the war, Mr Robert Lane suggested the planting of an avenue of Cyprus trees in the church grounds, in memory of all those who served in the war. The trees were planted in September 1918 and wreaths were placed around the trees of the six soldiers who were killed.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 5 September 1918.

**“HIGHTON SOLDIERS’ AVENUE
TREES PLANTED ON SATURDAY**

There was a large and representative gathering on Saturday at the tree planting in honor of our brave soldier lads who have passed through the Highton Methodist Sunday School and Church. After prayer, offered by the Rev. F J Watsford and the National Anthem, Mr J A Milbourne, who presided, said the idea of planting the avenue originated with Mr Robert Lane, a gentleman who was honored and respected by all classes of the community, one whom they looked upon as the ‘Grand old man’ of Highton. Mr Lane was a veteran SS Superintendent; he had taught many of the boys at the Front – and some of their fathers.

Mr J H Lister, MHR, planted the first tree. He congratulated the Methodists on the idea of planting trees in the church grounds to keep in memory the brave deeds of our boys. He referred to incidents within his own experience of many little things, but great in themselves, that happened on the field of battle. In a great concourse of men there were bound to be some who could not be spoken of with pride; invariably it was found that these lacked the home and church training essential to make the man. He was proud to join in doing something to commemorate the memory of over forty brave lads who had gone from this little church and Sunday School.

The Hon. H F Richardson, after paying a tribute to the boys from Highton and to their parents and teachers, deplored the fact that places far larger than this had sent very few recruits. He had felt disheartened when the people turned down the only fair means of reinforcing our brave men, who were now standing between us and servility. He thanked the ratepayers of that portion of the riding for returning him unopposed to the shire council. The only thing that kept him in public life was to benefit and help the country in which he lived.

Mr D McLennan, MLA, said that the trees they were planting would remain green long after those who were present had passed into the Great Beyond, where tears and sorrow were unknown. One of the problems of the time was how to reinforce the brave lads who had given up all and gone to uphold the great heritage of the British Empire. It was sad to think that in White Australia eligible men stood aloof, and enjoyed their privileges, while men with dark skins were shedding their red blood in the same streams as the men with white

skins, that these privileges might be possible. The State Parliament had adjourned to try and do what it could to get enlistments, and Highton had done nobly, but he appealed to every eligible remaining man to join the ranks and help the mates of the men to whose memory they were planting the trees.

Mr W F Volum, president of Barrabool Shire, said he was glad to be able to come and join with them in doing honor to these brave boys. Mr McKinnon had stated that if the monthly quota exceeded the 5000 required the boys that had gone first might get home. His boys had been away from home four years; judging from the recruiting figures he had no hopes of seeing them until the war was over.

Relatives and friends then planted trees for the following: - J Joyce, C Horwood, A Simes, C James, R Knight, C Smith, H Lawry, C Lawry, N Lawry, L Lawry, L Kennedy, N Kennedy, A Johnson, F Johnson, S Harrison, C Rankin, S Wall, V Wall, L Mitchell, M Mitchell, C Johns, M Johns, H Johns, G Johns, E Bone, A Bone, H Bumpstead, W Johnson, J Johnson, C Johnson, H Trevaskis, F Trevaskis, W Reynolds, R Camm, I Smith, E McMurdie, G McKenzie, K McKenzie, Cliff Rankin, - Frewin, N Frewin, V Johnson, W Ellis, C Wall.

The first six men having fallen, wreathes were placed under the trees by Miss Lane, Miss Lawry, Miss Kennedy, Miss Dorothy Milbourne, Miss Gladys Morriss and Miss Vera Harrison respectively.

The committee planted a tree for Mr Lane to commemorate the originator of the scheme. Afternoon tea was provided by the ladies. Apologies were

received by Cr Watson, Mr T W Bailey, Mrs R J Joyce, Mr R Purnell, MLA, and Mr Albert Smith.”



Above: Private Charles C.H. Smith, killed in action in 1918.

The following letter from Mr Albert Smith of Ceres, the brother of Private Charles Smith, was found in a minute book and dated 3 September 1918.

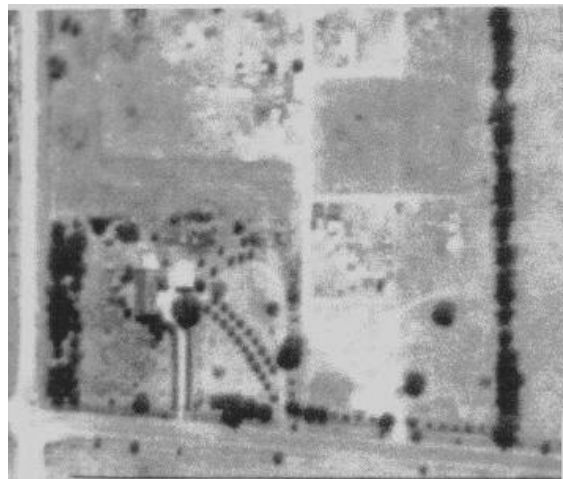
“Dear Mr Horwood,
On behalf of Mother and Family, I would like to convey to the Trustees of the Church and the Officers of the Sunday School our deepest thanks for planting a tree in the ‘Avenue of Honor’ in memory of our late Son and Brother, Pte C H Smith.

To the young lady who placed a wreath over the tree we would like you to convey to her our best thanks for her kindly act. I am sure every time we pass the Church and see the tree it will always remind us of him and those other brave lads who gave their lives to help to keep Australia free.

Once more thanking you and again expressing my deepest regret at not being able to be present.

I Remain Sincerely Yours
Albert Smith.”

The aerial photo taken in January 1947 clearly shows the trees in the Memorial Avenue of Trees at the Highton Methodist Church. Also seen is the double hedge, leading from the pedestrian gate in Barrabool Road to the church. Surrounding the church yard to the north and east is the Barrabool Hills Cemetery. The old two-horse church stable, which was removed in 1936, is believed to have been situated in the northeast area of the church yard.



Above: An aerial photo of the Highton Methodist Church and its Memorial Avenue of Trees, taken in 1947. Note that Scenic Road runs along the left and Barrabool Road runs along the bottom of the photo. Also note the straight hedge flanking each side of the path leading up to the church from Barrabool Road.

The memorial avenue of trees stood until June 1955 when the row on the north east side was removed to allow more space for cars. Mr O Lane’s name appeared several times in the minute books as the person who kept the avenue trimmed.



Above: The last two remaining trees of the Memorial Avenue planted after WW I. They were removed in 2005 as they had become unsafe. Photo provided courtesy of Mrs Jean Williams.

Public Recognition

Soldiers from the Highton community who had gone to the war were accorded a public reception on their return and were presented with medals. Some of the recipients' who were home from the front were Highton Methodist men.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 14 August 1919.

“Mr A T Larcombe presided over a meeting at Highton on Thursday night, at which medals were presented to the local boys home from the front. Apologies were received from Mr H F Richardson, MLC, Mr Lans, absent through sickness in his family, and Ptes Barclay, Reg and Arthur Harrison. Addresses were given by Mr J H Lister, MHR, Mr McLennan, MLA, and supported by Messrs Putland and T Horwood and Cr Watson. The medals to the fallen were

presented to relatives by Mr McLennan, and in the absence of Mr Lane, Mr Lister presented those to the men present. The following were the men who had fallen: Gnrs J and E Burgess (on the same day), Ptes C H Horwood, H Lynch, P Carroll, J A Johnson. The recipients were Sergt S J Harrison, Cpl C R Lawry, H H Wall, Gnr A S Wall (brothers), Pte C S Rankin, Dvr N H Lawry, Sergt R N Harrison, Pte A J Harrison, Cpl H R Reid, Pte P Lynch, Sergt L E Kennedy, Gnr A B Johnson, Ptes H W Johnson, W H Lamb, Dvr F Johnson, Cpl W A Lamb, Dvr A Johnson, Cpl A W Carroll, Gnr C H Johnson, Sergt M J Carroll, Ptes W S Clark, H Trevaskis, and W H Barclay. Sergt Leslie Kennedy and Dvr N Lawry responded for the soldiers. There were musical items by Misses Shegog and Feale, and recitation by Mr A Smith. Votes of thanks were proposed by Cr Higgins and Mr J A Milbourne, Messrs Lister and McLennan.”

Chapter 14

THE LANE MEMORIAL HALL

The Highton Methodist Church came under the Geelong West Circuit in 1871 but the church did not have a resident minister until 1960. Nor is there any record of which pastorate it was in until 1921 when, according to the *Geelong Methodist Journal* it was under the supervision of the Rev. L Tait, from the Noble Street church. In 1925 Highton was under the Newtown pastorate with the Rev Hiatt as minister.

Mr E Rankin was Superintendent of the Highton Methodist Church's Sunday School from 1920 to 1925, Mr Walter Challis was leader of the Christian Endeavour, Mr George Deans was a visiting conductor and, along with his wife, was in charge of the Sunday School anniversary children's singing program. Each of these people held their positions for many years.

In 1923, Mr E Rankin accepted a handsomely mounted oak tray in recognition of his faithful and successful work as Sunday School Superintendent. Mr Walter Challis, who came out to Highton from Geelong every Wednesday night for 20 years, was given a 'Complimentary Social' by past and present members of the Christian Endeavour. Mr Robert Lane, a foundation member, presented Mr Challis with a gold mounted fountain pen and a cane easy chair. Lane spoke of Challis' loyalty and sincerity and his remarks were supported by Messrs Bedggood, E Rankin, Johnson and Burgess. Miss Isa McGregor was presented with a handsome leather suitcase in appreciation of her work as Secretary.

The following article appeared in the April/June 1925 edition of the *Geelong Methodist Journal*.

"The Harvest Festival was held on Sunday, 15 March. The church was beautifully decorated with harvest products. The services were conducted by Revs. G B Campbell, G T Dohery and Mr Hillis. There were excellent congregations, and the services were greatly enjoyed. A successful concert was held on the Monday night, and the produce sold.

During the quarter the congregation presented Miss V Harrison with a xylonite brush and mirror in recognition of special services she has rendered the church."

The following names were found in a church seating plan dated April 1925.

- Allan
- Allen
- Baum
- Harrison
- Horwood
- Miss Horwood
- Jacka
- Jackson
- Johns
- Johnson
- Lane
- Mr L Lawry
- Mrs Lawry
- McGregor
- F Morriss
- C Rankin
- L Rankin
- Taylor
- A Wall

Robert Lane

On 3 March 1925, the Highton congregation was saddened by the news that the greatly revered and most respected elder member of their church,

Mr Robert Lane, had passed away in his sleep at his own home. He was an active member of most church activities, a foundation member of the Christian Endeavour, a Sunday School Superintendent and a stalwart of the church.



Above: Mr Robert Lane. Husband of the late Mary, father of Harry, Flo (Mrs Thorne), Randal, Laura (Mrs Bourke), Oliver and Mary.

The following article appeared in the April/June 1925 edition of the *Geelong Methodist Journal*.

“The district in general, and our church in particular, has suffered a severe loss in the death of Mr Lane, one of the oldest and most respected members of the church. For a long period Mr Lane had been a most active worker in both church and Sunday School, and was universally beloved. It is a comfort to remember that he was spared a lingering illness. He ceased at once to work and live. His transition was painless. He has gone into the glorified presence of Christ. ‘Mark the perfect man, and

behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace’. We tender sincere sympathy to Miss Lane and the other members of the family, and prayerfully commend them to the God of all grace and comfort. A couple of months prior to his death the opportunity was taken of presenting him with an upholstered armchair by the congregation as a token of their affection and esteem for him. On that occasion many testimonies were borne to his worth and work.”

Proposed Memorial

The Trustees met on 4 August 1925 to consider ways of having a memorial erected in memory of the late Mr Robert Lane. It was noted that a memorial tablet had already been discussed with the congregation who were in favour of this but Mr Rankin, the presiding Chairman, reported that several of subscribers had suggested that the preferred form of memorial should be more substantial. When the erection of a Kindergarten Hall was suggested, they indicated a preparedness to increase their donations to achieve this outcome.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from September 1925.

“The appeal for funds to erect a memorial in the Methodist Church for the late Robt. Lane has met with a generous response, and the Trustees are now to meet at an early date to finalize matters. However, a good number of donors have openly expressed disapproval of erecting a tablet, and with this in view, the Trustees are seriously considering the advisability of erecting a kindergarten as a memorial. Possibly the latter suggestion will find support in a good number of places, and should

sufficient funds be obtainable, it will not be a surprise if same is adopted.”

The Building of the Hall

After much discussion, Mr Rankin said that a kindergarten was “very necessary” and it was moved by Mr Wall and seconded by Mr Morriss that the Secretary, Mr T Horwood, obtain an estimate for the cost of the following.

1. A weatherboard building 30’ x 20’, walls 12’ high. A galvanized iron roof, suitable door and window. Walls lined with plaster sheets.
2. Freestone building attached to the Sunday school, 21’ x 15’ with slate roof to correspond with the church.
3. Concrete building 30’ x 20’ (same as No. 1) except the walls would be of concrete blocks.

The motion was carried and at the Trustee’s meeting held on 19 August 1925, the secretary had quotes for the following.

1. The weatherboard building. Estimated cost £230, unpainted.
2. The concrete building of similar size. Estimated cost £380.

Tenders were called for both but it was not until 6 April 1926 that the lowest tender by Mr L G Lawry of £275-18-9 for a weatherboard building was accepted, on the motion of Mr Tippet and seconded by Mr Johns. Mr T Horwood organized a working bee to level the site for the building and Mr Percy Horwood was appointed to supervise the building operation.

In the October/December 1925 edition of the *Geelong Methodist Journal* a mention was made of a concert to farewell Mr and Mrs L Rankin and family, who had moved to Belmont. There was also made mention of a

proposed memorial to the late Mr R Lane.

The following extract is from the October/December 1925 edition of the *Geelong Methodist Journal*.

“On Sunday afternoon 23 August an enlarged photo of the late Mr R Lane, presented by the CE Society and Sunday school, was unveiled. The school-room was well filled, friends being present from various parts of the district. Mr E Rankin, Superintendent of the Sunday School, presided. Brief addresses were given by the Rev. W T Hiatt and Messrs J Harrison, W T Tippet, E Rankin and G Mitchell, who also had the privilege of unveiling the photo. A solo was sung by Miss Sunderland. It was a very gracious service ... It is proposed to erect, in the near future, a Kindergarten Hall as a memorial of the late Mr R Lane.”

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 30 April 1926.

“The Trustees of the Highton Methodist Church have let a contract for the erection of a Kindergarten Hall in memory of the late Robert Lane, the successful tenderer being Mr Les Lawry, an old Sunday School scholar, and a returned soldier. The hall will cost approximately £300 when finished.

A very successful bazaar was held by the Methodist Church Aid to raise funds for the hall on Saturday last. The Rev. T Butcher, of Newtown, who has charge of the Highton Church, was present, and introduced Mrs H Hitchcock, who in a very able speech, mentioned the different memorials she had seen in many places during her travels abroad, but more especially one that she had seen at Gallipoli. In

speaking of the memorial hall that is being erected, Mrs Hitchcock, who is greatly interested in Kindergarten work, said that it was a splendid manner in which to perpetuate the memory of a good man. Amidst a round of applause she declared the bazaar open after which one of the Kinders, Norma Wall presented her with a bouquet of Autumn tinted chrysanthemums and fern. Mrs Morriss, President of the Guild, entertained Mrs Hitchcock and party at afternoon tea.

The following were names of the stall holders: - Work stall, Mrs F Morriss, Mrs Horwood, Miss Harrison; flower stall, Misses Lawry, Lane, Tippet; sweet stall, Mrs A Johns, Misses Allan, Horwood, McDonald, Johns; mystery stall, Mrs Morriss, Tippet, Misses Sunderland and Morriss; produce stall, Mrs and Miss Johnson; cake stall, Mrs S Harrison and Mrs S Taylor; tea rooms, Mrs McDonald, Mrs Allan, Mrs Jasper, Mrs Lomas, Misses Sunderland and I McGregor; fish pond, Misses Allan and Wall.

All denominations were present and helped by their patronage, as the late Mr Lane was held in the highest esteem by all residents of the community.”

The following article was found in the *Geelong Methodist Journal* July-September edition, 1926.

“A most pleasing event this quarter has been the erection of the ‘Robert Lane Memorial’ Kindergarten Hall. The history of this project is interesting. The movement began with the proposal to place a mural tablet in the church to the memory of the much-beloved Robert Lane, Superintendent of the Sunday School, but out of that has come this fine hall.

The present Superintendent of the school, Mr Ted Rankin, suggested it, and the idea was immediately taken up by the trustees and people. It was felt that no better memorial of this lover of children was conceivable. Generous support was at once forthcoming. The Church Aid (Ladies’ Guild) organized a Fete, which was opened by Mrs H Hitchcock on 24 April. The result was nearly £60, in spite of a miserably wet and cold day. The news of the motor accident in which Mr K Johns (a Highton young man) and Miss Rowe were seriously hurt, came early in the evening, and cast a gloom over the proceedings, and that too affected the result.

The ladies have fully determined that this hall shall be well furnished for its purpose, and propose to secure a piano at the very outset. Since the Fete two socials (one organized by the young ladies in the choir, and the other by the Church Aid) have been held and further sums have been raised.

The building will soon be ready for the opening ceremony, arrangements for which are in the hands of a committee, and our folk are looking forward to a great day. They certainly deserve to be congratulated on their determination to preserve the memory of a good man, and no other plan would have pleased him so well. The Sunday School is prospering under the superintendence of Mr Rankin, who is assisted by a staff of faithful workers. At a recent meeting of the committee a sum of £10 was voted to the Kinder Hall Fund.”

The Opening

The Trust minutes of 9 August 1926 state that Libby and Son offered the

marquee and flags free of charge for the opening of the Lane Memorial Hall (Kindergarten). The building was insured for £250 and contents £50. This was later increased.

On 14 August 1926, Miss Mary Lane unlocked the Robert Lane Memorial Kindergarten Hall, built in memory of her late father. She was presented with a memorial key (see Gifts & Memorials). The letters intricately carved on it are HMKH – Highton Methodist Kindergarten Hall. Miss Lane kindly donated the key back to St. Lukes at a later date.

The *Geelong Methodist Journal* printed the following article in the 1926 October/December edition.

“The Lane Memorial Hall was opened on 14 August in the presence of a large number of people, 300 were served with tea in the large marquee

kindly loaned by Mr Libby, of Yarra St. Many others had to leave because they couldn’t get in. The stalls in the marquee, in charge of the ladies, did good business, and about £45 was raised towards the cost of the building. The Church Aid Society (Ladies’ Guild) has arranged for a Fete towards the end of the year, and it is expected that the balance of the debt will be liquidated. These ladies have been very active during the year. They have raised, by one means and another, about £140, £111 of which had been given towards the cost of the Hall.”

In 1928, Mr and Mrs L Davies made a presentation of a photo of Mr Robert Lane, through their daughter. It was placed on the north wall of the Lane Memorial Hall with a brass plate underneath (see Gifts & Memorials).

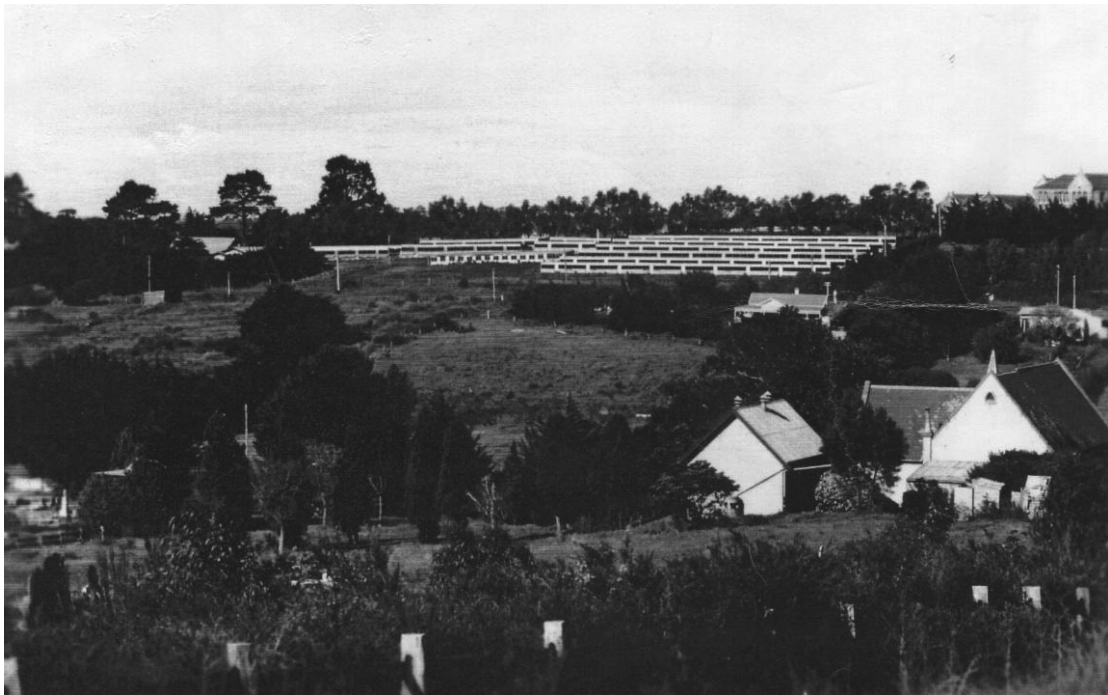


Below: The Highton Methodist Church in July 1926, prior to the tornado. The Hall is almost completed. Note that the hedge has grown since the top photo on page 134 was taken in 1905.

Steadfast Through Change – Part 2



***Above:** Two views of the northern side of the Lane Memorial Hall on left of church. Photos courtesy of Mr Hedley Smith, 2005*



***Above:** Photo taken prior to 1940, from Scenic Road looking south to the back of the Highton Methodist Church. Note that the Lane Memorial Hall is on the left of the church. St. Catherine's Orphanage is top right and White's fowl pens are in the centre. A two-horse stable would have been situated in the lower left corner until October 1936.*



Above: The Highton Methodist Church after the tornado on 22 July 1926. The stone plaque above the entrance was smashed.

Chapter 15

THE TORNADO 22 JULY 1926

The Destruction

On 22 July 1926, a devastating tornado swept down the Barrabool Hills at approximately 5:45 p.m., leaving a scene of destruction through Highton before it developed a path through the back of Belmont, into Marshall and Breakwater, before it swept across the countryside and finally dispersed near Ocean Grove.

The tornado smashed the church but fortunately the newly built Lane Memorial Hall was barely damaged, the hedge remained intact, as did the light outside the church. Some of the memorial trees were uprooted and working bees were quickly organized,

with volunteers coming from Geelong and neighbouring areas.



Above: Remains of the Methodist Church showing the school hall intact. Photo courtesy of Mrs M Harrison.

Steadfast Through Change



***Above:** Tornado damage at the Highton Methodist Church on 22 July 1926. Note that the south wall is still standing. Also note the undamaged Lane Memorial Hall, as well as the lamp post still standing in front of the hall.*

***Below:** The south wall from inside the church. Note the clock donated by the Christian Endeavour Society remained in place, but has been removed in the right photo.*



The rubble left in the wake of the tornado resembled something akin to a war zone. It wrecked the Highton Methodist Church, St. John's Church of England, the Highton Public Hall and Gardiner's Tannery at Marshall. At least 20 homes were destroyed, several people were seriously injured and a man and a six-year-old boy were killed. Beside the fact that a debt remained on the Lane Memorial Hall and the

Steadfast Through Change

realization that insurance would not be paid because the tornado was considered an 'Act of God', it was decided almost immediately to rebuild the church, and the cost of this eventually came to a total

of £1,712-10-2. Due to community participation, statewide contributions from other churches and local fundraising, this could be done without the delay to any other projects.



Above: The Highton Methodist Church west wall and Lane Memorial Hall after the tornado on 22 July 1926.



Above: The north and west walls and roof. Note that the Lane Memorial Hall remained in the background sheltered by the church.

The *Geelong Methodist Journal* printed the following its October/December 1926 edition.

“A date which will never be forgotten at Highton is 22 July, the date of the storm which brought churches and some of the homes of the people down in ruin, and swept away the beauty of the picturesque village. But the people of Highton did not lose heart. They began to clear up the wreckage, and to-day our folk are about to consider re-building operations. Mr F C Purnell, the architect, has placed us under a great debt by his very kind offer to prepare plans and supervise the work of restoration free of charge. The plans, except for a few small details, are ready, and before long we shall have the joy of seeing the beautiful church re-built. The folk on the spot have contributed very freely towards the cost, especially since they had just made generous contributions to the cost of the Lane Memorial Kindergarten Hall. The storm cast a very heavy burden on this small congregation for it was all a dead loss. An ‘Act of God’ cannot be insured against. Our people are very grateful for the help that has been given, especially to those who do not belong to our church.

During the quarter, church services have been held in the Memorial Hall. Since it was the only hall left in Highton, our Trustees offered the use of it to the Anglican Church. This offer was gladly accepted, and each Sunday the services, Anglican and Methodist, have alternated, and Highton has had a kind of Union Church.”

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 August 1926.

“TORNADO AFTERMATH

RESULTS OF WORKING BEES AT HIGHTON AND BELMONT REPAIRING DAMAGED BUILDINGS

Working bees commenced the work of restoration at Highton and Belmont on Saturday afternoon, and by the end of the day the result of their labors was extensive. There was no lack of volunteer helpers, people living in the district as well as many from Geelong taking a part in the work. There were four organized parties, the total approximate number of workmen being 100. Many hands made light work. There were no ‘drones’, each man doing his share heartily.

The Geelong branch of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria conveyed many of the workers from Geelong, those who loaned cars for this purpose being Cr N Wilson (President), Messrs B N Collins (Secretary), L Storrer, J Solomon, W Mullet, J Ingram, and W McDonald. The men taken out by members of the Automobile Club were carpenters from the Cement Works and J C Taylor and Sons. Others journeyed by bus and other means, and at Highton and Belmont, the Geelong men were joined by a good number of local residents.

The authorities of the Highton Methodist Church have not yet definitely decided what steps will be taken in regard to their building. Much of the debris has been cleared, and on Saturday afternoon Messrs Gurr, Frier and Collins auctioned a quantity of good timber, such as lining boards, portions of pews, and trees blown down by the wind. The sale yielded £16.17.0, which will go to the building fund.

The Kindergarten Hall at the Methodist Church is in the meantime being used for both Methodist and Anglican Church services. The hall was only recently completed, and it will be opened officially next Saturday week.

Residents of Highton whose properties suffered by the storm have been active during the past week, and have done much clearing and repairing. Although this work has begun there is still that appearance of desolation that naturally follows such a disaster. Time will remove all traces of the catastrophe, and picturesque Highton will be restored to its previous state."

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, shortly after the tornado.

"Practical Church Union

True to the best traditions of the quaint little township, the fine spirit existing between the Anglicans and Methodists of Highton found fit expression yesterday. Bereft of the spiritual 'homes', these denominations, the only ones in the district, sought solace with each other. Brothers in distress, each rose to the occasion in a way that makes one believe that Christianity, after all, is not divided. The Methodists, more fortunate than their Anglican brethren, has still one building left, the new Kindergarten School. They made a generous offer to the authorities of the Church of England, that the latter should hold one service a Sunday, for the time being, in that hall. By doing this, the Methodists deprived themselves of one of their own two services each Sunday. The offer was a pressing one, and the Anglicans gratefully accepted it.

Yesterday morning the Church of England service was largely attended, as many Methodists as Anglicans being present. It was called a thanksgiving service, for residents were grateful for their personal deliverance from the storm, not one life in the district having been lost. The Rev. W P Bainbridge preached the sermon, and the Hon. W H Edgar, a prominent Methodist, spoke very hopefully to the congregation. The vicar expressed the gratitude of Anglicans for the way in which the Methodists had so unselfishly come to their assistance. He referred with pride to the very fine spirit existing between the two denominations, and to the magnificent way in which Highton church folk, both Methodist and Anglican, had borne their loss.

In the evening the Methodist service was conducted by the Rev. T W Butcher, who spoke in similar strain. Many Church of England people were present. Next Sunday in the Methodist Kindergarten Hall, the Methodists will hold service in the morning; the Anglicans in the evening. So it will go on alternately (Methodists in the morning; Anglican in the evening and vice versa) each Sunday till new churches are erected.

A meeting of the Vestry of St. John's Church of England will take place in the home of Mr A Larcombe tonight. The re-building of the church will be discussed. The Rev. W P Bainbridge said yesterday that such unselfishness and strength in adversity had been displayed, that he was sure the new church would be better than before. It is hoped that past parishioners, who have removed from the district, will assist financially. Some former Sunday School scholars might feel disposed to help. The Methodists, who have already met, are making similar

plans for the re-erection of their church.”

The following letter was found amongst old church papers and is included to show that the Highton Church of England was appreciative of the use of the Lane Memorial Hall.

“St. John’s Church, Highton
12-9-26
Mr Thos. Horwood
Hon Secretary Methodist Church
Highton

Committee our thankful appreciation of their kindness in granting us the free use of their Memorial Hall for Church Services during the time we were without a Home.

I wish to say on behalf of our congregation that we enjoyed that short period of meeting together in brotherly fellowship and worship. Please accept our grateful thanks.

Yours Faithfully,
C C Ching.”

Dear Sir,

I am instructed by the vestry of the above church to convey to your



***Above:** Looking towards the north wall, inside the Robert Lane Memorial Hall when set up for church services. Both Methodist and Church of England congregations used the Lane Memorial Hall whilst their churches were being repaired after the tornado. It was also used for services when the church was being painted ready for its Centenary Celebrations in 1953.*

Note the photo of Mr Robert Lane with memorial brass plaque underneath on the back wall. Also note the temporary pulpit is Mr Robert Lane’s desk and the communion table in front of it is the one donated by the Ladies’ Church Aid in memory of Mrs Harriet Harrison in 1938.

Rebuilding

A building committee was set up, consisting of Messrs R J Leigh, J W Harrison and W H Tippet. Tenders were called on 15 October 1926 for the rebuilding of the Church, but all those received were too high. Rebuilding was further delayed when the Board of Health insisted that an additional exit door be added to the east wall of the church.

A plan submitted by honorary architect, Mr F Purnell, was eventually accepted and he was appointed overseer. The re-erection of the church was entrusted to the stonemason, Mr W Martin and builder, Mr L Lawry.

- Hire of the scaffolding was 10/- a week and the estimated time for the building of the walls was 16 weeks.
- Delbridge & Rosewall supplied the church windows for £23.17.6.
- There were two aisles in the church.
- Mr T Lindner was to supply and fix pews for £158.
- The Electric Light Co. to install lighting.
- Mr Walker to do plastering - £80 (labour only).
- Mr Tucker to do painting.
- Mr Thear to supply the pulpit and communion rail to match the pews. He donated the pulpit seat.
- Mr Kennedy to overhaul the organ and assess the damage.
- Johnston and Ebbot offered to repair the organ free of charge. They did this and proclaimed it "as good as new".
- The Tornado Relief Committee raised over £350 for the church rebuilding.
- An initial amount of £200 was borrowed from the Connectional Building and Loan Fund, but a

further £75 was borrowed in April 1928.

- The Trustees decided to have the text 'The Lord Is In His Holy Temple' placed on the interior front wall above the pulpit area. It is thought that Mrs Charles Dawson (nee Hilda Harrison) suggested this text. Mr Lloyd Haggis did the sign writing for this free of charge.

Circulars were sent to every Methodist Church in the state explaining the situation and asking for help. Church groups organized fetes, coffee suppers and concerts to help pay for the rebuilding, with many other churches and individual people giving generously to the rebuilding appeal. All donations were acknowledged in the *Geelong Advertiser*. A fete held in the middle of 1927 raised £75. The restored church was opened on 12 November 1927.

Re-opening of the Restored Church

The following is from the *Geelong Methodist Journal*, Feb/April 1928 edition.

"The Sunday School Anniversary was celebrated on 23 October. The services were held in the newly renovated school hall. The preachers were the Revs. T W Butcher, F Flentjy, and J Nall. The singing by the scholars was much enjoyed. Mr George Deans once more trained the scholars, and the Sunday School is greatly indebted to him.

Father Christmas visited the children as usual. The entrance of this warm-hearted lover of children caused great excitement, and he not only remembered all the children, but the teachers and officials also; Mr Butcher even received a beautiful book at his hands. An unlimited supply of ice

cream added to the delight of all present.

On 12 November the restored Church was re-opened. The afternoon was fine, and a large crowd gathered. The key was turned by Mr J Harrison, the senior Trustee, and immediately the church was filled. The Rev. Dr McCallum conducted the opening service; and the following gifts were dedicated:- the Pulpit (gift of Mrs J E Leckie), Communion Table (Church Aid), Bible (Friend), Hymn Book (Mrs Milbourne), Pulpit Seat (Mr J Thear), Collection Plates (SCE), Hymn Board (JCE), Choir Chairs (Sunday School), Carpets (Mr and Mrs J E Leckie), From a platform erected outside the church, Dr McCallum delivered an impressive address. The Rev. J W Rowse and Cr Syd McCann also addressed the gathering. Reports were submitted by Mr T Horwood (Secretary of the Trust) and Mr J Harrison (Treas.). The approximate indebtedness of the Trust was put at £381, but the offerings at the opening services and a gift of £20 from the Church Aid (Ladies' Guild) has reduced the amount to £300.

A very pleasing feature of the proceedings was the presentation of a beautiful silver-mounted fruit salad service to Colonel Fred Purnell, who, the day after the tornado, offered his services as hon. architect for the restoration of the church. Mr J Harrison, senior trustee, made the presentation in a characteristic speech on behalf of the trustees. We all feel greatly indebted to Colonel Purnell for the unremitting attention to this labour of love, which has resulted in a greatly beautified and much strengthened edifice.

During the afternoon, Mr and Mrs Davies, through their daughter, presented a large framed photo of the

late Robert Lane, for many years the superintendent of the Sunday School. This beautiful gift was received, on behalf of the Sunday School, by Mr E Rankin, the present superintendent.

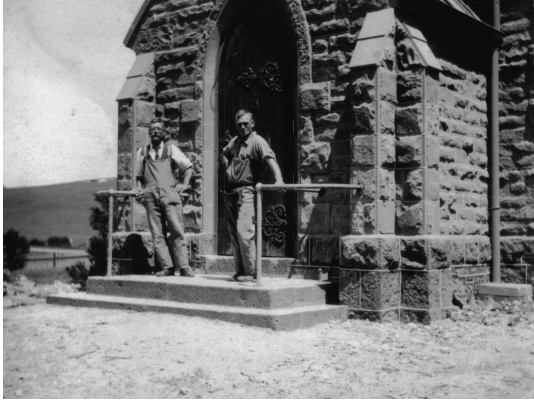
The Rev.. T W Butcher expressed the gratitude of the Highton folk to the donors of the gifts already mentioned, and also to the following: - Tornado Relief Committee (£350), 'The Advertiser', coupled with the name of the Editor, Mr L Fallaw, Mr Milbourne (gold leaf for inscription over main door), Mr R Ebbott (re-building of organ), the people of St. John's (coping stones), Mrs F Leigh and Cr Syd McCann (stone), Mr Huggett (sand), Mr Casey (gravel), Mr Cliff Morriss (amount from sale of photos of church).

Mr W N Tippet moved a vote of thanks to Rev. Dr McCallum, and thus a memorable event was concluded.

On the Sunday the services were conducted by the Revs T W Butcher and T Indian. Special solos were rendered by Miss Dorothy Reseigh (Conservatorium) and Miss Osler, of Geelong. Miss Hazel Morriss presided at the organ. Splendid congregations gathered. On the following Sunday, 20 November, special services were conducted by the Revs. C Barber, MA, and J W Rowse. Our people are very grateful to all who came so generously to their help."

On 8 December, a Thanksgiving Social was held in the School Hall, and a very happy evening was spent. The trustees made presentations to the Rev. T W Butcher (a beautiful fruit salad service), and to Miss Elsie Lawry (a very useful mirror) for her attention to the physical wants of the workers during the re-building. Both recipients were greatly surprised and delighted. A vote of

thanks to the Trustees for their unwearied efforts during so many months, was moved by Mr E Rankin, and seconded by Mr N McDonald, and carried with much enthusiasm'.



Above: On the left, Mr W Martin, stone mason, and Mr R Lawry on the right taken at the front door of the restored Highton Methodist Church 1927.

The following plaque was placed above the restored door.

METHODIST CHURCH 1868
WRECKED 1926
RE-ERECTED 1927.

The following is the wording on the original plaque that was shattered in the tornado.

WESLEYAN CHURCH
1868

The following is an extract from a more detailed account of the re-opening ceremony appeared in the *Geelong Advertiser* on Monday 14 November 1927.



Above: Opening day of the restored Church, 12 November 1927.

“HIGHTON METHODISTS Church Restoration

Re-opening Ceremony Under Happy Auspices

An eventful ceremony in the long history of the Highton Methodist Church took place on Saturday, when the re-erected building was opened by the senior Trustee (Mr J Harrison) and a service of dedication conducted by the ex-President of the Australian Methodist Conference (Dr Alex McCallum). It is not so long ago that the church was wrecked by the tornado that swept through Highton and Belmont, but now the edifice stands complete again in the midst of its picturesque surroundings, happily with only a comparatively small amount of debt over it. How different the weather on Saturday, with pleasant sunshine and everything peaceful from that memorable occasion last year when the little

village saw ruin and desolation cast everywhere about it.

A large number of people, including an almost complete representation of the congregation, together with several clergymen and many friends of various denominations, took advantage of the weather to be present for the service and to see the church re-opened. The church, while the service was being held, was filled to overflowing. Subsequent proceedings took place in the grounds.

The Chairman was the Rev. T W Butcher, who has pastoral charge of the section of the circuit. Associated with the Chairman and Dr McCallum on the platform were the Rev. J W Rowse, of the Noble Street Methodist Church; Rev. Mr Topp, of St. John's Anglican Church, Highton; and Mr F L Purnell, who, in an honorary capacity, acted as architect whilst the church was being re-erected.

A pleasing feature of the reconstructed church is that it is built mainly of the fine stone that was in the former building, with the happy addition of some coping stone, the gift of the St. John's Church authorities.

Proceedings began with the opening of the church door, which was followed by the service. Various gifts were dedicated after the singing of the National Anthem, the hymn, 'O, God Our Help', and the offering of the Lord's Prayer. Mr Butcher announced the following gifts for dedication, namely, the pulpit, a gift of Mrs J E Leckie; Communion table, the gift of the church aid or ladies' guild; pulpit Bible, the gift of a friend; the hymn book, the gift of Mrs Milbourne; pulpit seat and cushion, the gift of Mr Thear; collection plate, the gift of the senior Christian Endeavour; hymn

board, gift of the junior Christian Endeavour.

In his address of dedication, Dr McCallum, apologized for the absence of the President of the Conference (Rev. R Bayles), whom he said wished him to express regret that he was unable to be present. It was a good and generous thing in the hearts of so many friends that they had made offerings that would abide in a permanent form as long as the church stood. On behalf of the church he received these things, but behind the church there was One to whom the gifts were made. He was glad that the people who had made the gifts had done so with the consciousness that they were giving them to God. The gifts were dedicated in prayer.

Dr McCallum said that some thirty-three years ago he was one of the ministers of the circuit, and like all folks associated with the circuit he felt and shared the pride in the beautiful little sanctuary on the hill. They all felt that the men and women who had been associated with the church in the early days showed a sense of taste and fitness in the beautiful building erected there for the worship of God. He became fully conscious of the magnitude of the disaster attending the storm when he had driven round the district shortly afterwards. He wanted to congratulate the residents of Highton and their many friends on the restoration of the church, and to see it looking as beautiful and complete as it did was a great joy.

A community without a church was a poor place. It was lacking that which was going to give stability and safety to the community. The re-erection of their church was an expression of faith and love and loyalty of a great group of people. Their hearts were all glad,

as they had seen the church re-erected. So they gave thanks to those whose generosity had made the restoration of the church possible. The church did appreciate the fact that many who were not of their communion, people of other faith and of other churches, had come to the help of the Highton Methodists in the good work that had been undertaken. They gave thanks to God for the day when they saw the church complete and beautiful with its doors open to men and women who might come burdened with sorrow, trouble and sin.

Through their daughter, Mr and Mrs Davies presented a framed photograph of the late Mr Robert Lane, who during his lengthy association with the church endeared himself to everybody. The photograph which has been hung in the hall, was received on behalf of the Sunday School and the kindergarten department in particular by the superintendent of the Sunday School (Mr E Rankin).

In thanking the donors, Mr Rankin said that the late Mr. Lane had been a very dear friend, and one who always evinced a close interest in the church and Sunday School.

On the first Sunday of his ministry in the circuit he had admired the building and thought what a fine stable congregation the church had. About three months afterwards he inspected the wrecked church. Those who were at Highton the morning after the tornado had swept through would never forget the sight, for the whole of the beautiful landscape was strewn with evidence of wreckage. St. John's and the Methodist Churches were tumbled almost in ruins. The very next night the trustees held a meeting and took steps to prepare for the re-erection of the building. That

afternoon they were witnessing the consummation of the trustee's efforts.

What he regarded as a beautiful spirit existed between the people of the Highton Methodist Church and St. John's Church. After the tornado the people of St. John's had no building in which to worship, and the trustees of the Methodist Church adopted that attitude that what they had it was their duty to share with their neighbours. It was agreed to send to the minister and vestry of St. John's an invitation to use the kindergarten hall. For six months that happy state of affairs existed. During the intervening months since the storm the church authorities had had the pleasure of receiving help towards the re-erection of the church from every part of the State. He did not think that there was one church within the bounds of the Geelong West Methodist circuit that did not give again and again towards the relief of the Highton congregation.

Help, however, was received not merely from churches of Geelong, but from churches and people of every part of the State. So, that day they saw the church restored, and, as he thought, in a stronger and more beautiful fashion than it formerly existed. He congratulated the people of Highton on the completion of the rebuilding. He hoped in the days to come God's work at the church would prosper more than ever it did in the days that were gone.

Rev. Topp of St. John's, referred to the brotherly spirit that existed between the authorities of the two churches. He appreciated the fact that the high church people (the Methodists) went down to the low church (the Anglicans) and invited them to go up to the high church for services in the hall. (Laughter). The

Anglicans very gladly went up. He felt that the two congregations had in some measure mixed themselves up in such a way that they had grown fond of each other. (Renewed laughter).

Mr Butcher expressed gratitude to the Tornado Relief Committee, which had made £350 available for their church re-building; the *Advertiser* coupled with the name of Mr L Fallaw; Mr Milbourne for the gold leaf work on the inscription over the door way of the church; Mr Ebbot for rebuilding the organ which was wrecked when the building was destroyed; the people of St. John's for a gift of coping stone; Mrs F Leigh and Cr S W McCann, for a supply of stone; Mr Huggett for a gift of sand; Mr Casey for a gift of gravel. Special mention was made of the work of Messrs Martin, who did the stone work for the re-built church, and Mr Les Lawry, who was in charge of the carpentry. In conclusion thanks were extended to the ladies for their valuable assistance at a time of need, in addition to Mr C Morriss.

Responding, Cr McCann said that those who had helped the church had done so for the love of the cause.

To the honorary architect (Mr Purnell), Mr Harrison made a handsome presentation as a mark of appreciation of his help. Acknowledging the warm-hearted references of Mr Harrison, Mr Purnell said the work had been a pleasure to him. He paid tribute to the work of Messrs Martin and Lawry. He was grateful for a beautiful remembrance of the restoration of the church.

Proceedings concluded with speeches by Messrs T Horwood, Secretary of the Church Trust; Harrison, Treasurer and W N Tippet, a member of the Trust, who moved a vote of

thanks to Dr McCallum. Mr Harrison intimated that the sum of £1,330.13.7 had been received for the re-building of the church, and the total cost of the work was £1,712.10.2, so that the debt balance stood at £381.16.7. An appeal was made to wipe off the liability of the church.

‘Credentials of the Church’

The Rev. T W Butcher was given the honor of conducting the first service of the church yesterday morning after its reconstruction. He conducted the morning service, preaching to a crowded congregation. In fact, all services throughout the day were attended by exceptionally large congregations. At the evening service many people were unable to obtain seating accommodation, some of those present being personal friends of the Rev. T H Indian, of Horsham (formerly a minister of the Geelong West circuit), and whose first station on coming to Australia 11 years ago was Moriac.

Record collections were taken at each service. Solos were sung by Miss Dorothy Reseigh, of Melbourne, and Miss Osler, of Geelong. The organist was Miss H Morriss.”

The family of Colonel Purnell later donated the fruit set back to the church (see gifts & memorials). The following letter dated 17 December 1973, from Mr Ronald Purnell to Mrs N McDonald was found in the Highton archives.

“Dear Mrs McDonald,
Thank you for your kind thought in writing to me, especially at this time, with your Christian greeting.

I am pleased to know that the Highton Methodist Church has welcomed the return of the gift made to my father so long ago – the thought had been in my

mind since my mother's death in 1958, but I had no contact with the Church until I met with Harold Best; without his help, I should still be floundering about, wondering what to do.

I was pleased to learn that you had known my father, and that you had been at that presentation. I was of an age when I was not included in social events, but I can remember my parents returning home with the gift from the church.

I can also remember the devastation in Highton after the tornado, and the ruins of the Methodist Church and St. John's. When my father was approached, he regarded it as a challenge to rebuild, not new churches of his own design, but the original churches as they had been. Without old plans and working drawings, he found himself with two jigsaw puzzles, but somehow, with the help of verbal information and old photographs, he must have sorted them out. But that is old history.

With my thanks, and my best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
Ronald Purnell."

A thanksgiving social evening was held in December 1927 to celebrate the rebuilding of the church.

The following extract is printed courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 12 December 1927.

"A thanksgiving social evening took place in the Methodist Sunday School on Thursday evening. The pastor, the Rev. T W Butcher, presided and in spite of weather conditions there was a good attendance. A short programme of musical and other items were well received. It was contributed by the following: Misses Allan and Walker and Mr Norman Taylor; violin solos by Mrs R J Leigh, and recital by Mr R

Leigh. Mrs N White and Miss H Morriss ably acted as accompanists. Opportunity was taken during the evening to express appreciation of the Rev. T Butcher's excellent services in the re-building of the church. To mark this in a practical manner, he was the recipient of a beautiful crystal salad set. The presentation which was made by Mr F Horwood, was supported by Mr W Tippet and Mr F Purnell. Mr Butcher expressed his thanks in a very appropriate reply. Another interesting presentation was performed by Mr J Harrison and was made to Miss Lawry, for her services, so often given. This comprised a handsome xylonite mirror. Miss Lawry responded in her characteristic style. On behalf of the officers of the Sunday School, Mr E Rankin expressed thanks to the Trustees for the labor and the time given to the task of re-building. He was ably supported by Mr Norman McDonald. Supper was served and an enjoyable evening closed with the singing of the Doxology and the benediction."

A special date was celebrated in September 1938, when Mr J Harrison, the Trust Treasurer, announced to the congregation that the Trustees 'had reached their objective and had received sufficient money to make the final payment of the amount borrowed to rebuild the church which was wrecked by the tornado in July 1926'.

The following article is printed courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 September 1938.

"CHURCH ANNIVERSARY

The celebration of the Methodist Church anniversary was brought to a close at a function at which there was a good gathering. After a hymn and prayer, the Rev. R J Philp introduced

Cr J F Frier, of Geelong, as chairman. In a brief address, he stressed the need of the church to speak with a united voice in regard to the no-licence vote in October next. The following excellent programme was given:- Songs, "Bless This House" and "Villa", Miss Joan Bennett; recitations, "Swandalaya" and "After the Ring", Miss M Palmer; songs, "Shipmate of Mine" and "Tommy Lad", Mr R Kirtley; songs, "Bird Songs at Evening" and "O Lovely Night", Miss N Venters; recitations, "Story of a Tack" and "The Hole in the Road", Mr Stan Wall; songs, "Songs of Araby" and "Mary of Argyle", Rev. A W Milligan. Each artist had to respond to encores.

The Secretary of the Trust (Mr R J Leigh) read a brief report of the activities of the church during the year. The Treasurer (Mr J Harrison),

presented a satisfactory balance-sheet, and stated that, with the offerings at the Sunday services and special donations received, the Trustees had reached their objective and had received sufficient money to make the final payment of the amount borrowed to rebuild the church which was wrecked by the tornado in July 1926. A short address was given by Rev. Mr Philp. Supper was served in the school hall by the women, after which Mr W N Tippet expressed thanks to all who had helped to make the celebrations so successful. The meeting closed with the singing of the Doxology."



Above: A view of the south end of the church, highlighting the more ornamental windows & intricate roof trusses than prior to the tornado. Photo taken in 2005, & provided courtesy of Mr Hedley Smith.

Steadfast Through Change

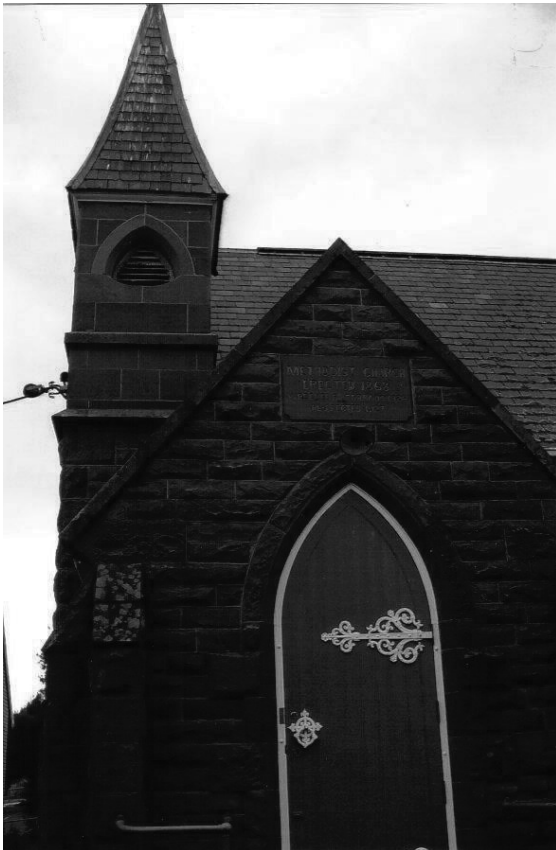


***Above:** An early photo of the Highton Methodist Congregation. Note that there were three windows on the east wall prior to the tornado. **Below:** The Highton Methodist Church after restoration. This photo clearly shows the white door where a window had been previously (as shown above). The lamp on the right side of the photo was not destroyed in the tornado nor was the hedge. Photo taken by Mrs R J Leigh in 1927.*





***Above:** The west side of the restored church. The weatherboard structure at the rear was the kitchen. The Lane Memorial Hall is on the extreme left.*



***Above:** A boot scraper at the church entrance. An identical one is on the opposite side of the door.*

***Left:** The front door and restored bell tower of the church. All photos on this page were taken in 2005, & provided courtesy of Mr Hedley Smith.*



***Above:** A view of Highton looking north-east across Barrabool Road, to the corner of Fisher's Road (now Mt. Pleasant Road) and Valley Road (now North Valley Road). Mr E Baum's orchard is on the extreme left top of the photo. Two houses belonging to the Morriss family are visible among the trees. 'Woadley' (now Woodley Court) on the left & Hillside' 29 North Valley Road is the home of Mr Fred Morriss. Roncliffe Road is named after his two sons.*

Chapter 16

THE DEPRESSION & WORLD WAR II YEARS

Highton in the 1920s and 1930s was still very much a rural settlement with land being used for horticultural and agricultural pursuits. Dairy farms occupied many acres at Highton and supplied milk for much of Geelong. There were also vineyards, orchards, and a large poultry farm owned by Mr White.

These rural livelihoods served to cushion the effect of the great depression on Highton Methodist Church members, and it was barely mentioned in minute books.

Horses were used for personal transportation and horse drawn wagons were used to carry produce into Geelong. In the north east corner of the churchyard

there was a two-horse stable but the motor car was making its impact. The *Geelong Methodist Journal* published a list of people who offered the use of their own vehicles to transport ministers to their preaching appointments throughout the district and it is interesting to note that the 'List of Buggies' was renamed the 'List of Motorists' in 1926.

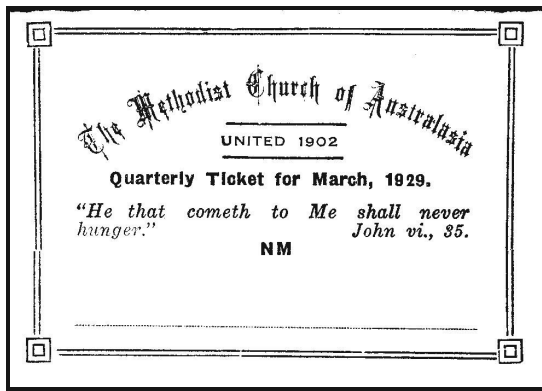
In spite of the rural calm, many facets of church life were changing in this period. A junior Christian Endeavour was formed in 1927, under the leadership of Miss Marjorie Taylor at a time when senior Christian Endeavour numbers were beginning to dwindle due to marriages and members moving away from the district.

A concrete floor was laid in the copper house at the back of the church, where the hot water was boiled for the many

church functions. Its door was moved to the north east corner from the west wall.

Four dozen hymn books were purchased for the church.

Mr H C Fagg, the Circuit Steward, attended a Trust meeting on 10 June 1929 to explain the free-will offering scheme (envelope system) that would come into operation in the Circuit in July that year. Also in that year, an application was made to have the electric light installed in the church and a piano was purchased. A concert was organized to help the 'Piano Fund' and Mr Alex Johnstone loaned £50 to the fund, free of interest for two years.



Above: A Quarterly Ticket for March 1929. It was the practice for these to be handed to church members every three months. There were 22 families on the Church Roll that year.

The Rev. T W Butcher and Mrs Butcher were farewelled in 1930 and the following report was found in the *Geelong Methodist Journal*.

“Spontaneous and warm hearted tributes to a ‘Christian Gentleman’ were the outstanding features of the friendly gathering assembled last Thursday evening to bid farewell to Rev. T W Butcher and Mrs Butcher. A short programme of vocal and elocutionary items were given by

members of the church, after which Mr W N Tippet, who occupied the chair, called upon various speakers for the acknowledgements.

Messrs C C Ching and A Larcombe stressed the cooperation that existed between St. John’s Church of England and the Methodist Church at the time of the tornado, and voiced their appreciation of Mr Butcher’s practical and sympathetic help. The Trustees and Sunday School Superintendent eulogised Mr Butcher for his interest and spiritual oversight on the work of the church.

Mr J Harrison, as senior Trustee, then presented Mr Butcher with a travelling rug as a token of affectionate regard, and wished Mr and Mrs Butcher every happiness in their new sphere.

Mr Butcher, in response, thanked all for their gift and kind words, and for the help and friendship that had not been lacking during his ministry at Highton, and added that he trusted the same understanding sympathy would be extended his successor.

The evening concluded with supper and the singing of “Auld Lang Syne’.”

The Rev. R B McConchie took charge of the Newtown Pastorate in 1931 and oversaw the Highton Methodist Church. On 31 August that year, Mr R Horwood resigned as Secretary of the Trust, a position he had held since 1918. Mr R J Leigh was duly elected to the position.

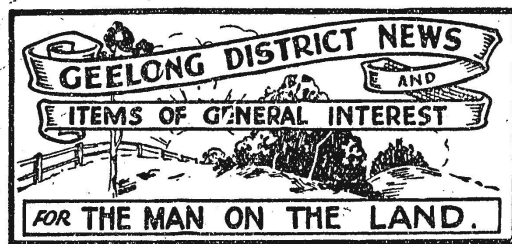
An ‘outhouse’ was purchased from the school to replace the old one at the church.

In March 1933, a grass fire damaged the front fence of the church.

Tree Planting in Barrabool Road

An article found in the district news section of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 August 1933, recounts the tree planting in Barrabool Road, opposite the Barrabool Cemetery and the Highton Methodist Church, to honour the old pioneers of the district. The Highton Progress Association carried out the work and some of the trees were planted in memory of the Highton Methodist Church pioneers. It is not known how long the trees survived, but an aerial map from 1947 shows no sign of the plantings.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 7 August 1933.



“Saturday was spoken of as a ‘Red letter’ day in the history of the Highton and Barrabool Hills Districts, the occasion being a tree-planting afternoon in memory of the early settlers. It was decided to complete the avenue of trees in Barrabool Road, Highton, as far as Boundary Road. The section planted on Saturday was opposite the Barrabool Cemetery and the Highton Methodist Church, and was reserved as a memorial to the old pioneers. The work was carried out by the Highton Progress Association. There was a large gathering of residents, including the President of the Shire, Cr A G white, and other municipal representatives, members of the Town Planning Association and the descendants of practically all the oldest families in the district.

In extending a welcome to all present, the President of the Progress Association (Mr A C Larcombe) said that they were assembled to do honour to the old pioneers of the district. He spoke of the hardships of the early settlers and their determination to succeed. He also specially welcomed members of the Town Planning Association and the many old residents who were present. On behalf of the Association he wished to thank an anonymous correspondent who had so generously assisted the scheme through the ‘Geelong Advertiser’.

The first tree was planted by Mr Larcombe in memory of Messrs Lawry, Philpot and Higgins, three of the founders of the association. Other trees were planted by the President of the Shire, Cr A G White; Miss M Larcombe, in honour of ‘Correspondent’; Cr S McCann, in memory of the McCann and Heard families; Mr C Anderson – Edney family; Mr A B McDowall, for the Cox-McDowall family; Mr A Piper, for the Piper family; Mr J Mann for the Mann family; Mr R J Leigh for the Leigh family; Mr B A Allin for the Allin family; Miss A Walter and Mr N Walter for the Walter family; Mr Coombs for the Coombs-Beck family; Cr H A Lumb for the Scholes-Lumb family; Mr G Honey, for the Honey family; Dr Moreton for Messrs Mountjoy, Adcock and Hoskin and other former Trustees and members of the Methodist Church; Mr Purnell for Mr Cochrane; Mr O Lane in memory of his father who was a former Trustee of the Methodist Church; and Cr Horwood, planted a tree in memory of all the early pioneers whose names were not previously mentioned, as it was the wish of the Association that all the early settlers should be included.

The following trees were also planted by Mr D Allan, in memory of the late Mr A Wall, Mr Harrison; Mr C Taylor in honour of Mr Purnell, because of his services to the district at the time of the Tornado; and by Miss Fletcher, the President of the Girls' Club, in honour of Mr and Mrs T W Bailey, who have generously assisted any scheme for the welfare of the district.

At the conclusion of the tree planting, all present were entertained at afternoon tea in the Methodist Sunday School Hall. A vote of thanks to the visitors was moved by the Secretary of the Association Mr N White. In responding the president of the Shire, Cr A G White, congratulated the association on the success of the scheme. He briefly referred to the help that the Progress Associations could be to the municipal authorities, and said that the Council desired to cooperate with the Associations as far as possible.

Cr S McCann said that he had been associated with many of the pioneers of both Highton and Barrabool and his family had been represented in the district for 97 years. He therefore claimed that he could adequately speak as a representative of the pioneers. They were a type of men who faced difficulties as they arose and did not wait for government assistance. Cr Brand also complemented the Association on the constructive nature of its work in planting an avenue of trees. Cr H A Lumb said that he was very grateful to be able to take part in such a work, as it was a work that would last for time immemorial and would not only be a memorial to the past generation, but would be a benefit to generations to come. Cr F Leigh said that Barrabool and Highton were always closely

connected. An avenue of trees was a living monument. The trees selected were native trees of England, as they would remind us that we were descended from British stock. Also, as the trees were growing they should urge us to build something fresh and go on to future progress. Mr Coombs said that one of the first acts of the pioneers was to establish in this new country the church which they had known in the old land, and he attributed much of the greatness of the district to the Christian character of the early settlers.

Dr Moreton, the President of the Town Planning Association, spoke of the proposed improvement to the Colac Road. He said that the city of Geelong did not have a suitable entrance from the South, and it was most desirable that an entrance would be established worthy of the Greater Geelong of the future. Advantage should be taken of the Centenary Celebrations, and he appealed for the co-operation of the residents in this matter. Mr Coombs referred to the fact that three men present that afternoon – Messrs C Anderson, J Mann and himself – had lived in Barrabool for over 70 years.

Mr R J Leigh apologised for the absence of the editor of the 'Geelong Advertiser' and also thanked 'Correspondent' for his assistance to the movement. He also desired to thank the local press for the publicity that it had given the scheme. Mr Larcombe thanked the ladies, particularly those who had come a long distance. He also thanked the Methodist Church for the use of the Sunday School Hall. In conclusion, he appealed to the young men of the district to join the Progress Association and to continue the work. The assembly ended with the singing of the National Anthem."



Above: Miss May Larcombe plants one of the memorial trees in 1933.

Mr R J Leigh made a rough sketch of where the Avenue of Honour trees were planted in Barrabool Road, from the beginning of the cemetery to Boundary Road, now known as Scenic Road.

The names on that sketch are as follows.

From the east cemetery boundary fence to the churchyard.

1. Larcombe for Messrs Lawry and Philpot
2. Cr A G White, Shire President
3. Correspondent
4. McCann and Heard families
5. Anderson and Edney family
6. Cox and McDowall family
7. Piper family
8. Mann family

Cemetery gateway.

9. Leigh family
10. Allin family
11. Walter family
12. Coombs and Beck family
13. Scholes and Lumb family
14. Honey family

From the east churchyard boundary fence to Boundary Road (now Scenic Road).

15. Dr Morton for the pioneers of the church
16. Cr Horwood for the unnamed pioneers
17. Mr Lane
18. Mr And Mrs T W Bailey by Miss Fletcher

Church gateway.

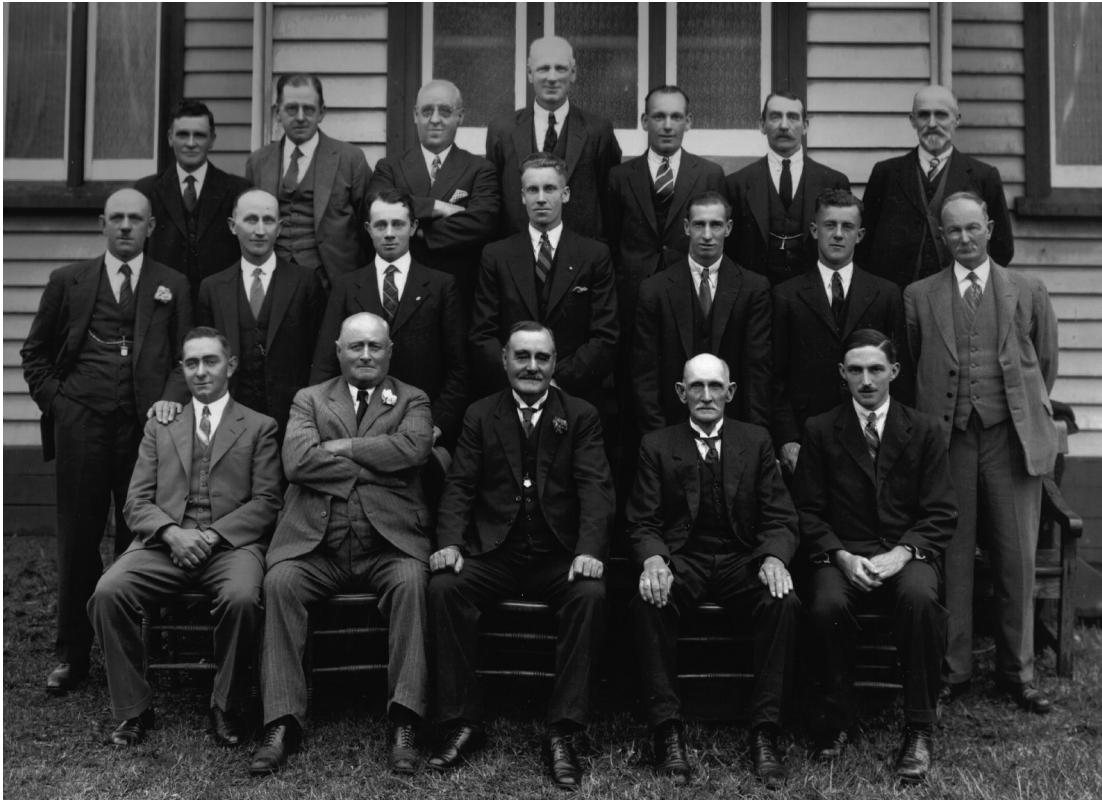
19. Harrison
20. Unknown
21. Wall Family
22. Mr C Taylor to honour of Mr Purnell



Above L-R: Mr A C Larcombe and Mr R J Leigh at the tree planting in 1933, in memory of Pioneers of the district.

The membership of the Highton Progress Association included men from the Highton Methodist Church, all demonstrating a keen interest in the community, as well as church life.

The organ at the church was repaired in 1934 and in the same year the tank attached to the Sunday School was causing damage due to overflow so it was relocated to the kindergarten room (Lane Memorial Hall), to supply water for the copper. An inspector of noxious weeds advised the trustees that they had to remove the Sweet Briers in the church yard, so a working bee was organised to carry out this work.



Above: The Highton Progress Association, photographed in 1933.

Back Row L-R: *P Lomas, *W N Tippet, A Wilby, T Woodard, R Bartlett, F Bartlett & F Boreham

Centre Row L-R: *R J Leigh, C Taylor, *N McDonald, P Bartlett, *E Harrison, R Watson & *D Allen.

Front Row L-R: A E Larcombe (Treasurer), E Watson (Vice President), A C Larcombe (President), *J Harrison (Vice President) & *N White (Secretary)

Note: * These men were also involved with the Highton Methodist Church. Photo provided courtesy of Mrs Marion Stainsby.

80th Anniversary of the Methodist Church

The following article was reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 April 1934. It makes mention that the debt caused by the tornado in 1926 has almost been repaid.

“The annual concert and coffee supper in connection with the 80th anniversary of the Methodist Church was held on Tuesday evening. Mr W H Smith, the Chairman for the evening was introduced by the Rev. J K Arnold, who made reference to the help he had given the church at the time of the

tornado. Mr Smith said that he was at all times interested in the Highton district. He congratulated the church on behalf of the Yarra Street circuit on the attainment of its 80th anniversary. A short address was also given by the Rev. J K Arnold, who emphasised the responsibility of the church to the young people. Mr Arnold also referred to the fact that he was acting for the last time officially as pastor of the church, and therefore took the opportunity of saying farewell to members of the congregation. The Secretary’s report, setting out the work of the Church Trust for the past year, was presented by Mr R J Leigh.

Mr W N Tippet presented the Treasurer's report in the absence of **Mr J Harrison**. This report showed a credit balance for the past year of £6. In reviewing the work of the past eight years, Mr Tippet said that after the rebuilding of the church the liabilities of the Trust amounted to considerably over £2000, but owing to the splendid work of the Tornado Relief Committee and the people generally, this sum had been reduced to a little over £100, which he considered very satisfactory."

At an informal meeting in August 1935, the Trustees decided to enlarge the kitchen and to remove the old two-horse stable situated in the north east corner of the church yard. The material from the stable was used to build a storeroom, which held the platform paraphernalia used for the Sunday School anniversaries.

Centenary of Methodism in Victoria

September 1935 marked the Centenary of Methodism in Victoria, and the Highton Methodist Church celebrated the event.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from September 1935.

CENTENARY SERVICES

"Following the arrangements for a week of special country services in connection with the centenary of Methodism, Rev. A W R Milligan presided at a well attended meeting in the Highton Church on Wednesday evening last, at which the Rev. R S Morris, of Belmont, and Mr C E De Garis spoke, and Mrs Ebbott, Miss Hewison, Mr England and the Rev. Mr Milligan contributed vocal and elocutionary items.

Outlining the Providence that kept Australia unsettled by civilisation so late in the world's history, Mr Morris stressed the hope that we might produce a race superior in all things to any previous people, and so prove worthy of so marvellous a gift.

Personal recollections of the old church at Highton 52 years ago prefaced the short address by Mr De Garis, in which the speaker gave reasons why Methodists should rejoice at this season, concluding with an appeal to youth to recall the works of our forebears and build upon them following the rule of the law of love. After a few words from Mr J Harrison, who is one of the oldest members of the Highton Methodist Church, the meeting concluded with a coffee supper provided by the Ladies' Aid."

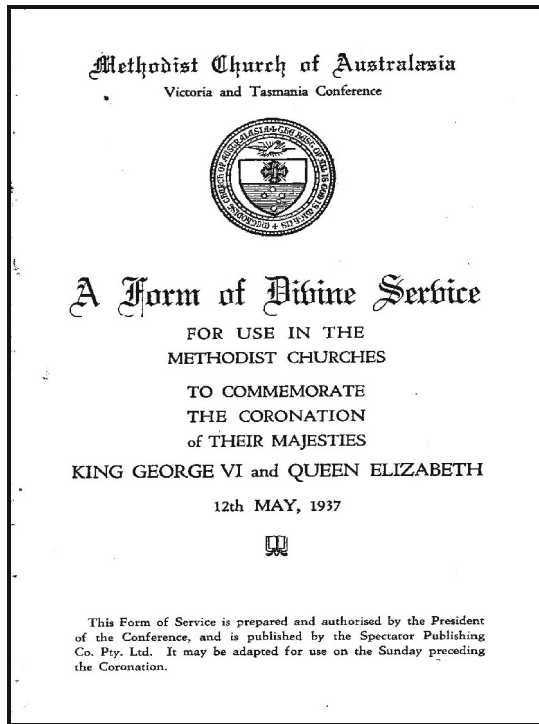
A special service to commemorate the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on 12 May 1937 was used in Methodist churches throughout Australia.

Also in 1938 the kindergarten (Lane Memorial Hall) was painted, the Christian Endeavour celebrated its 43rd anniversary, and the Ladies' Church Aid celebrated its 12th anniversary.

The Church Trust was saddened to learn of the death of Mrs Harriet Harrison (nee Johns) on 9 November 1937, a stalwart of the church and wife of Mr John Harrison, the Trust's oldest member.

In February 1939, Mr John Harrison offered to construct an iron gate and balustrade of wrought iron at the Barrabool Road entrance. This was to be in memory of his wife, the late Mrs Harrison, on behalf of the Harrison family. The offer was gladly accepted

by the Trust as it would 'add beauty' to the proposed new fence.



Above: The cover of the printed coronation service, 12 May 1937.

In September 1938 the last payment was made on the debt on the church incurred by the tornado of 1926 and the Trustees resolved to erect a new cement post and chain-wire fence. Mr E McCann made the posts and Mr H E Leigh, assisted by Mr Lomas, erected the fence.

Mr John Harrison resigned as Treasurer of the Trust after 40 years of service from 1899 to 1939. His son-in-law Mr Norman McDonald was elected to the position.

The Highton Methodist Church came under the jurisdiction of the Mt. Moriac Pastorate with the Rev. R J Philp in charge but this was a temporary measure because in 1939 it came under the Pakington Street Pastorate with the Rev. C Gallagher in charge. By late 1940, the Highton Methodist Church was again

under the Noble Street Pastorate with the Rev. J T Duggleby in charge.



Above: This photo taken in 1980 is the only known photo of the Harrison Memorial Gate and was taken after the new church hall was built. The old church and bell tower can be seen in the background. The fence and gate have long since gone.

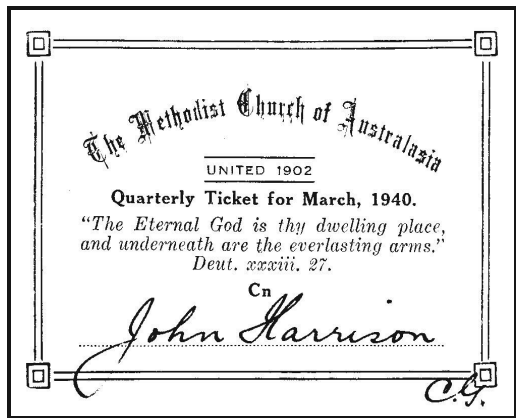


Above: Photo showing the new front fence of the church erected in late 1938.

The *Geelong Methodist Journal* of August/October 1939 printed a paragraph congratulating Miss Vera Harrison who had recently married Mr Norman McDonald. The couple were great workers in the church, and in later years became great benefactors to it.

In 1941, Trustees gave permission for the Sunday School to hold its anniversary in the church itself, instead of the Sunday School Hall. The pulpit had to be moved out and the platform erected in position. The *Geelong Methodist Journal* said that the Highton Church was renowned for its anniversaries, concerts, coffee suppers, and its support for the Protestant Orphanage. Highton's Christmas candlelight services conducted by Mr Lew Bandt were described as "quite a feature".

In the minute book it stated that Boxthorns were becoming troublesome in the church yard, and the Council had asked for them to be removed by the Trust.



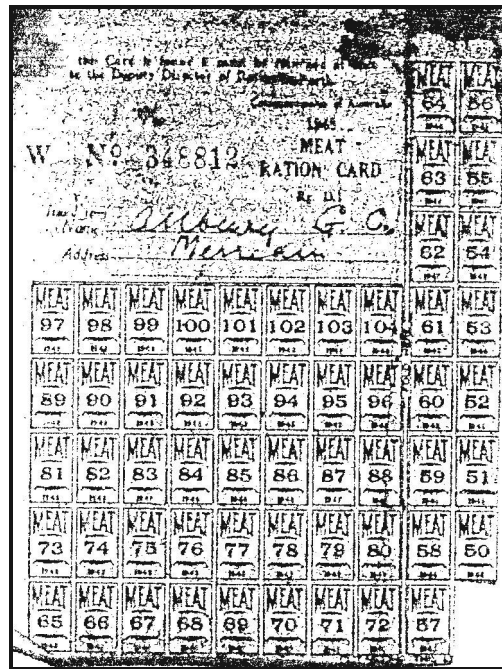
Above: A Quarterly Ticket for March 1940 given to Mr John Harrison.

World War II

World War II took its toll on the church community as young men from the congregation joined the armed forces. An article in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 21 July 1940 described a public farewell to Leading Aircraftman N White and another article found in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 14 April 1942, indicated that Sappers Vernon Baum and Noel Harrison were spending their war leave in Highton.

The Ladies' Church Aid rendered support to the 'Padres' Auxiliary' which was an association of Methodist ladies who helped chaplains overseas during WWII.

Ration books were issued to everyone limiting certain consumable goods. The rationing of petrol began in 1940, clothing, sugar and tea rationing was introduced in 1942, with butter being included in 1943. Meat rationing wasn't introduced until 1944 with two more reductions in the quantity of meat allowed in 1945. Rationing ended in 1948.



Above: A meat ration card. Rationing continued until 1948.

The following article was printed in the *Geelong Methodist Journal* Feb/March 1942.

"The various activities of the church have been well maintained during the quarter. The Ladies' Guild completed a successful year just prior to Christmas. The Guild has provided much valued aid to the church and has not forgotten the various City

Missions. All who have been assisted have expressed their sincere gratitude for the help given.

Highton has rendered special aid to the 'Padres' Auxiliary', an association of Methodist Ladies which has meant a great deal to the Chaplains labouring overseas. A new opportunity has arisen because of the coming to Highton of Men of the Military Forces. Our people are making the soldiers welcome at the services and are providing refreshments at the close. Contact is being maintained with the men overseas and all who leave for service abroad are being presented with a testament."


Highton Methodist Church Soldiers

Eighteen young men who had attended the Highton Methodist Church and Sunday School enlisted to serve their country. Those going abroad were presented with a pocket New Testament by the church. The eighteen men were:

- Gunner S E Adams
- Bombardier T E Baum
- Sapper Vernon Baum
- Sapper Len Dawson
- Driver G M Harrison
- Staff Sergeant Laurie S J Harrison
- Signaller Lindsay G Harrison
- Sapper Noel Harrison
- Bombardier Hugh Hill
- Private Ray Horwood
- Gunner Ken Lawry
- Flight Lieutenant Earle Milton Nelson
- Driver L G A Nelson
- Captain St. Elmo Nelson
- Gunner ? Oldham
- Leading Aircraftman Frank W. Tippet †
- Trooper Doug Wall
- Flight Sergeant Nathaniel White †

† Fallen

The following is a letter found in the archive folders, written on 8 February 1941, from Pte. R Horwood, WX 9013, 2/13th Fld. Amb. Abroad.

Australian Young Men's Christian Association	
PATRON: HIS MAJESTY THE KING	
	
WITH AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE	
No. WX 9013	
Name: Pte. R. Horwood	
Unit: 2/13 th Fld. Amb. Abroad	8 Feb 1941
Write Home First	

Dear Mr. Leigh,

I suppose by this time you have thought me lost or something. But far from it, I am still very much alive and kicking. You must excuse my delay in writing but for the past few weeks it has been impossible to get any letters away and goodness knows when you will receive this hurriedly scribbled note.

Re your gift of a pocket Testament. I will be very glad to accept it and know that the prayers and kind thoughts of all the members of the Highton Methodist Church and Sunday school will help me to pull through.

Please give them all my kindest regards and may they be spared from any of this terrible sin.

Well as you will realise time and space for letter writing is very limited so with my best wishes to you all I will close now.

Yours Sincerely
Ray Horwood

In 1942 the Highton Methodist Church was saddened by the loss of two of its young men serving in the armed forces. Leading Aircraftman Frank W Tippet died during a rescue mission in Queensland in February, and Nathaniel White was lost in April, whilst on active service with the RAAF serving with the Coastal Command at Cleethorpes on the North Seas.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 27 February 1942.



Above: Leading Aircraftman Frank W Tippet.

“Leading Aircraftman Frank W Tippet, who was drowned recently at Bundaberg, Queensland, while engaged in flood rescue work. He was the youngest son of Mr And Mrs W N Tippet, of Highton. Before enlisting in the RAAF he was employed as a motor mechanic in Geelong. He had a most successful record during training in Victoria and New South Wales, and he was transferred to Queensland only a week before his death, which occurred while he was engaged with others in an effort to rescue an elderly woman in flood waters. Leading Aircraftman Tippet was born at Charlton 21 years ago, and four years later he came to Highton with his parents. He was educated at the State

School and the Junior Technical School.”

The following article was found in the *Geelong Methodist*, May/July 1942 edition.

“Our people were greatly distressed at the loss of Frank Tippet. Our friend lost his life in flood rescue work in Queensland. We tender our deepest sympathy to the family.”



Above: Flight Sergeant Nathaniel White, lost in active service in April 1942.

When soldiers were on leave from the War Front, the church congregation would hold an After Church Social to welcome them.

The following article was found in the *Geelong Methodist Journal* May/July 1942 edition.

“Highton enjoyed a very successful quarter. Financially returns were well above those of the corresponding quarter last year. A very fine work has been done by the After Church Social Hour, when ever soldiers have

been in the district. This service has added a new zest to the evening congregation.

The Church Anniversary was held on 12 April, when services were conducted by Revs. J T Duggleby and R G Arthur and Dr R W Waddell. The Annual Concert and Coffee Supper took place on Tuesday, April 14. Visiting artists from Geelong made the evening most enjoyable. Religious instruction is regularly given at the Highton State School by Rev. J T Duggleby."

The Shire of South Barwon sent a letter to the Church Trust on 20 March 1942, drawing attention to the regulations pertaining to the war. Windows of the church had to be 'blacked out', and air raid shelters were to be dug at any place where more than thirty people gathered. It was also compulsory to effect insurance on church fittings as a war damage risk. Church Trustees insured with Liverpool, London & Globe for £520 and arranged a working bee to put 3-ply wood on windows of the church for blackout purposes.



Above: The Highton Methodist Church Congregation taken in the 1940s. Similar photos of the congregation were sent to soldiers away at the war.

Back Row L-R: R J Leigh, Mrs J W Leigh, John Harrison.

Second Row L-R: Mrs R J Leigh, Elsie Lawry, Norma Angus, Mary Lane, Murhyl Gwyther, Mrs Edith Tippet, Joyce Leigh, Edith Leigh, Sid Adams.

Third Row L-R: Verna Baum, Mrs Angus, Edith Lawry, Mrs Dawson, Vera (Harrison) McDonald, Bella White, thought to be Mrs Baum.

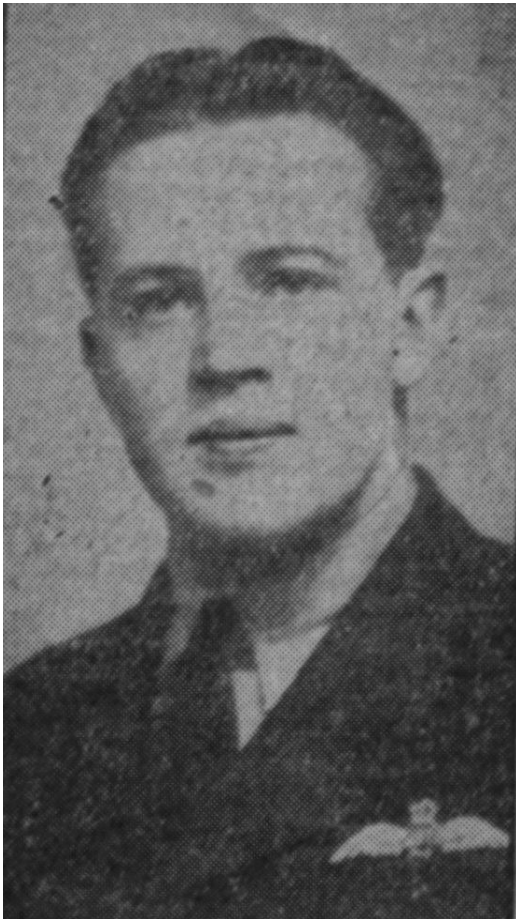
Fourth Row L-R: Rev J T Duggleby, Ron Angus, Max Dawson, Ian Hill, Billy Baum, Marion Leigh, Joan Gwyther.

Front Row L-R: John Angus, Margaret Angus.



Above: Digging an air raid shelter.

After the sad news of losing two of its former members in 1942, the church congregation had more disturbing news in April 1943, when Pilot-Officer Earle Milton Nelson was reported as missing in action.



Above: Pilot Officer Earle Milton Nelson
The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 28 April 1943.

“Pilot-Officer Earle Milton Nelson, is reported missing in air operations on the night of April 9. He is the son of Mr and Mrs D Nelson, of Highton. Pilot-Officer Nelson was given a public farewell in Highton Hall in June 1941, and shortly afterwards he went to Canada for training. On arrival in England he was posted to a squadron of the Royal Air Force, and for many months he has been flying Lancaster bombers in operational flights. Of splendid physique and happy temperament, he won admiration as a fine type of Australian manhood. Before the war he gave promise of becoming an excellent singer.”

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 22 August 1945.

IN GERMAN HANDS

Life As A War Prisoner

Highton Officer's Experiences

“One of the main complaints against his treatment by the Germans during the time he was a prisoner of war in their hands, was that he, in common with other officers, was not allowed to work, said Flight Lieutenant Earle Nelson, of Highton, when speaking at the weekly luncheon of Geelong Legacy Club yesterday. This, he said, had a very demoralizing influence upon the men. Although they had a fine library and other facilities in many of the camps, they found it extremely hard to concentrate on studying and intellectual pursuits all the time. Doing nothing was not conducive to maintaining high morale.

Flight Lieutenant Nelson said that when he was taken prisoner on 9 April 1943, he was put into an interrogation camp, where Germans of many types, ranging from friendly to aggressive and tyrannical, tried to extract information from the RAF officers

with whom he was imprisoned. They even posed as Red Cross officials to find out all they could about the RAF, with which Flight Lieutenant Nelson had been serving. One of the ways in which the Germans tried to lower the men's resistance to interrogation was to put them into rooms heated to a temperature of about 145 degrees. Sometimes they were left there for about a week.

Speaking of escape plans in which he had participated, Flight Lieutenant Nelson described the escape organization in each camp. In the first camp he was in, about 1000 men of the 2000 there were workers in the organization. Of these 1000, about 100 were given "stooge" duties, and theirs was the job of seeing that the Germans did not become suspicious of any escape activities going on in the camp. Others who were given special work to do were tailors whose job was to make disguise suits from uniforms so that men who escaped would be appropriately clad to be able to get right away from the camp. As tunnels were the main way of escape, many of the men were detailed for the work of digging.

Other men escaped by dressing as Germans and boldly leaving the camp when some of the Germans left. On their way out the Germans had to be "de-loused", but the prisoners of war made a break for freedom when they came to this juncture, instead of following the Germans.

When the Russians began to make their push in Upper Silesia early this year, the Germans became uneasy, and decided to move their prisoners from there. Consequently, about midnight on January 27, the men began a forced march through snow and bitter cold. The temperature was

about 45 degrees centigrade below zero. Many of the men were too weak to carry their individual packs and other goods, so they had built sleds, wheelbarrows and other conveyances, and about 5000 men set off dragging these behind them. After walking for 28 hours they came to a barn which housed animals, and there some of them slept on what straw they could drag from under the animals.

Later they were put into cattle trucks to go to Bremen. There were 40 men in each truck and, in Flight Lieutenant Nelson's words, the journey was "utterly chaotic". There was no room for the men to lie or sit down, although many of them were very ill. They had no water, and had to eat snow. The only meat was frozen tinned supplies. This trip lasted about four days.

On arrival at Bremen, the men were put into quarters which had no beds, no cooking facilities, no wood with which to make a fire, and very little food. When they were finally given permission to go to the forest and cut wood, most of the men were too weak to swing an axe. A theatre in the camp was pulled down to make beds, but no bedding was available. Stoves to cook food were made from Red Cross tins.

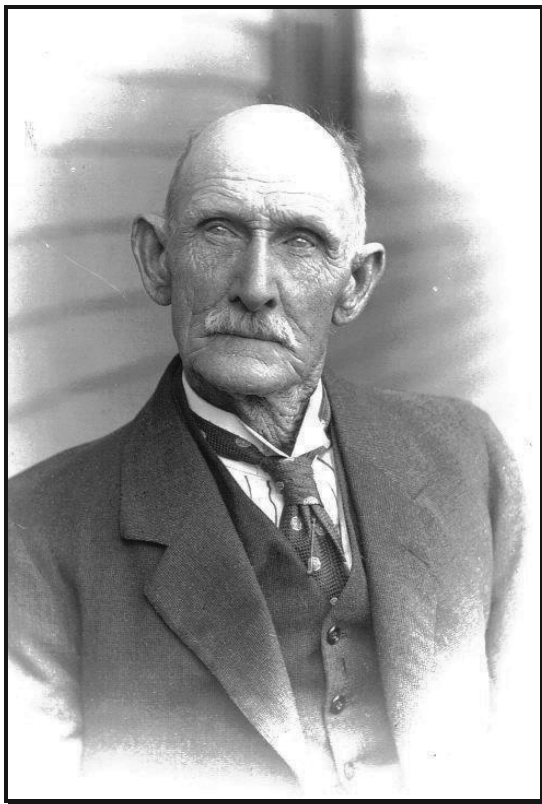
At one stage, at Bremen, the Germans stopped all food for five days, and the situation was so desperate that when Flight Lieutenant Nelson saw an emaciated cat roaming the camp he decided to decapitate it, skin it, and make a stew. This, with mangels, made a meal for the 14 men in his hut. He said that the incident made him ashamed at the time, but it had greatly amused him since. He described the dish "as very nice indeed".

While he was still in Bremen the Allies liberated the prisoners there."

Activities such as church and Sunday School anniversaries, concerts, coffee suppers, PSA's and Harvest Thanksgivings with the sale of gift nights continued as usual during the war years.

John Harrison

On 12 January 1944, the church community was saddened to learn of the death of Mr John Harrison, (known as Jack in his younger days). He had been a Church Steward and Trust Treasurer for many years.



Above: Mr John Harrison. Photo provided courtesy of Mrs F Lomas.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from January 1944.

“HARRISON – On 12 January, 1944 at the residence of his son-in-law, (Mr N McDonald), Valley Road, Highton, John Wilkin, dearly beloved husband of the late Harriet Harrison, and

loving father of Adeline (Mrs T Rankin, deceased), Florence (Mrs P Lomas), Charles (deceased), May (Mrs Baum), Stanley, Elsie (Mrs H Jasper), Hilda (Mrs C Dawson), Harold (deceased), Leonard, Vera (Mrs N McDonald), and Eric (deceased). Aged 87 years. Father and Mother reunited.”

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 15 January 1944.

“The passing of Mr John Harrison on Wednesday has removed one of the oldest and most highly respected residents of the district. Born at Banyuk, near Warrnambool, in July 1856, he came to Highton at the age of five, and spent the greater part of his life here. In his younger days he was prominently associated with athletics and competed in the first Stawell Gift 67 years ago and under the captaincy of Mr J Wilson played football with Geelong. He was engaged in the dairying industry for the greater part of his life. He was a member of the Progress Association for 35 years, and 12 years ago was elected a life member. For over half a century he was a Trustee of the local cemetery and has held the position of Chairman for 22 years. He gave unstinted service to the Methodist Church and held the offices of Treasurer and Church Steward for many years, and was at the time of his death the oldest Trustee. He was most regular in church worship and widely known to many preachers, ministers and lay, as Father Harrison, and will be long remembered for his sincerity in the things he believed to be right. The esteem in which he was held was evidenced by the large gathering that assembled at the cemetery on Friday afternoon.”

The 90th anniversary of the Highton Methodist Church was held on the first Sunday in April 1944, and a former minister from the Geelong West Pastorate, Rev. T H Indian, was guest preacher for the celebrations.

90th Anniversary of the Methodist Church

The following is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 1944.

“The 90th Anniversary celebrations of the Methodist Church were a great success. The Rev. J T Duggleby preached in the morning. Some former members of the choir led the singing, and rendered an anthem. Mr S Howard also sang a solo. The afternoon and evening services were conducted by the Rev. T H Indian, of Bendigo, who spoke of those he had known when he began his ministry here 32 years ago, and the cavalcade of men and women associated with the Church who had passed on. At the afternoon service the singing of Mr and Mrs T Goodall was greatly appreciated, as also was the singing of the choir at the evening service. At the organ in the morning was Mrs N Lawry, a former organist. At the afternoon and evening services Miss Leigh presided. Large congregations attended all services. On Tuesday night a concert and coffee supper was held. Mr J Spencer Nall presided. A fine concert programme was contributed by Mrs J S Nall, Mrs R McKenzie, Mr S Walter and Mr A Smith. Mrs G Merritt and Miss Nall played the accompaniments. An interesting talk was given by Mr E Rankin on the early history of the Church and the men and women who had carried on the work so faithfully for many years. Satisfactory reports were submitted by the Secretary (Mr R J Leigh) and the Treasurer (Mr N

McDonald). A comprehensive vote of thanks to all who had assisted in the work of the church during the past year, and to those who had helped to make the celebrations a success, was moved by the Rev. J T Duggleby. Supper was served in the school hall by the ladies, and the evening terminated with the Benediction.”



Above: A ticket for the 90th anniversary Concert and Coffee Supper.

Edwin Walter (Ted) Rankin

Another stalwart of the Highton Methodist Church, died on 31 July 1944. Mr. Edwin Walter (Ted) Rankin had been associated with the Sunday School at Highton for 15 years including more than 13 years as its Superintendent. Although he had left Highton to live in Newtown some years previously, he continued to ride his bike out to Highton each Sunday afternoon for Sunday School. He was also well known in the Geelong area and throughout Victoria for his sporting abilities.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 1 August 1944.

Mr TED RANKIN Death At Age Of 72

“The death occurred at a private hospital at Geelong yesterday, after a long illness, of Mr Edwin Walter (Ted)

Rankin, at the age of 72 years. He was well known throughout Geelong and district for his association with sporting activities, and was held in affectionate esteem by old Geelong Collegians, who remember his life-long association with Geelong College. He was the eldest son of the late Sarah and Walter Rankin, of Highton, where he was born. For 51 years he was Financial Secretary of the Geelong Order of the Sons of Temperance. He was curator of Geelong College oval for 40 years, and was first employed by the late Mr Norman Morrison when the College was owned and managed by him. He remained in the service of the school up to the time of his last illness. He was also curator of the Corio Oval for eight years.

He was known throughout Victoria as one of the outstanding League footballers of earlier years, and he represented Geelong in many interstate and carnival games. He was a playing member of Geelong Football Club for 21 years, and for 10 years was vice-captain. Three of his sons – Bert, Cliff and Doug – gained fame as outstanding footballers. Mr Rankin was a life member of Geelong Cricket Association. He played in the turf cricket competition for many years, and coached Geelong College teams during his early life at the school. He was a member of Geelong Fish Protection Society and Anglers' Club, and was a keen angler and a worker in the interests of that body.

From early manhood he was a member of the Methodist Church. During the last 40 years he was associated with the Newtown Church and Sunday School. He was a Trustee and Steward of the Church for many years, and had charge of the early morning Sunday School for some years. For 15 years he regularly went

to Highton on Sunday afternoons to conduct the Sunday School service. He was always an enthusiastic supporter of any movement for the advancement of young people. He was a foundation member of Geelong Fathers' Association, and was the only member of that body who was the father of one son who saw service in the 1914-18 war and has sons who are serving in the present war.

Mr Rankin leaves a widow and family."



Above: Mr Edwin Walter (Ted) Rankin.

The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 5 August 1944.

"The death of Mr E Rankin, at a private hospital in Geelong, has removed one who was born here 72 years ago, and who had been inseparably associated with district activities all his life. A lover of clean sport, Mr Rankin showed in all the games he played outstanding ability. He left Highton about 40 years ago to reside in Newtown. The Methodist

Church and all its agencies are the poorer for his passing. In the Sunday School, where he was a teacher and later Superintendent for 15 years, he gave efficient and unselfish service. At the 90th anniversary of the church last April he gave an address on his early recollections. Speaking at the graveside in the local cemetery, The Rev. J T Duggleby said it needed no words of his to tell of the rich and natural Christian character of a good man, and the large gathering assembled demonstrated the deep esteem and high respect in which the late Mr Rankin was held."

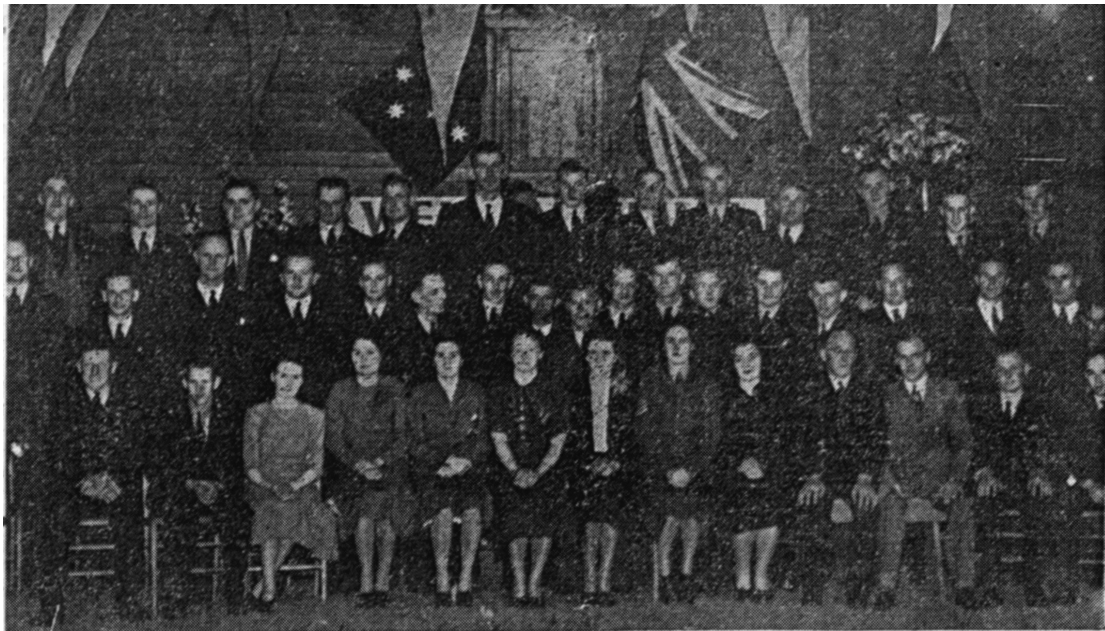
In 1948, the Rankin family donated a brass cross in memory of Ted Rankin. It is situated at the north end of the new church (see Gifts and Memorials).

The *Geelong Methodist Journal*, May/July 1945 edition, mentioned a farewell evening for the Rev. J T Duggleby and reported that the Rev. H M Knuckey was now the minister in charge of the Noble Street Pastorate.

Soldiers Welcomed Home

World War Two came to an end and eventually the enlisted soldiers came home. On 10 August 1946 the township of Highton arranged a welcome home dinner and social at the Public Hall for all former service men and women and a number of the Highton Methodist servicemen were among the recipients. The names of Methodist men not mentioned in the following article were welcomed home in other areas.

Below: Former Service men and women who were entertained at a welcome home gathering at Highton on Saturday 10 August 1946. Photo and article on the following page reprinted courtesy of the Geelong Advertiser, Monday 10 August 1946.



WELCOMED HOME AT HIGHTON **FORMER SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN WELCOMED HOME**

"Former service men and women from the district were accorded a welcome home dinner and social evening at the

Public Hall at Highton on Saturday. The President of the Welcome Home Committee (Mr N McDonald)

welcomed the guests, and a period of silence for the fallen was observed.

Cr J Johnson (President of the Shire of South Barwon) proposed the toast 'The Returned Service Personnel'. He said that it was fitting that the people who had yearned for them during their absence should be those to organise such a welcome. Such celebrations were made possible by the sacrifice of those who did not return.

Supporting the toast, Mr Maltby, MLA, said that he hoped that the recognition to servicemen would in the future be something more tangible than mere words. As they had shown themselves worthy of their country, he hoped that the country would always be worthy of them.

Messrs S Adams and E Nelson and Miss M Gwyther representing the Army, RAAF and Women's Services, respectively, thanked those responsible for the welcome.

Mrs C J Larcombe, to whom Mr McDonald paid tribute for her untiring efforts during the war, cut the decorative cake.

A toast to 'Other Guests' was proposed by Mr R J Leigh, who referred to the work of Mr N M Freeman for returned men, and paid a tribute to the spirit of the 'old diggers', who were represented by Mr W A Hornsey. Included in Mr Leigh's toast were the Farewell Committee and the Progress Association.

Responses were made by Messrs Freeman, Hornsey and L Woodard, and the Rev. H G Matthews.

Mr G Evans proposed the toast 'The Welcome Home Committee and the Lady Helpers'. He said that they had

all worked hard to make the welcome home a success, and the same people had striven during the war to make the lot of the servicemen easier by supplying them with comforts.

Mrs L McGregor (Secretary of the Committee) and Miss P Horwood responded.

Each of the service personnel was presented with a rug and a monetary gift, in addition to a certificate for their services. The presentations were made by Mr McDonald.

Messrs R Horwood (Army) and L Hodges (RAAF) and Miss E Casey (Women's Services) expressed gratitude for the presentations.

Mr L Harrison presented Mrs McGregor and Miss Horwood with a bouquet of flowers as a token of appreciation of their efforts on behalf of the Service personnel.

Mr C Walters thanked Messrs G Palmer, S Walter, A Smith and Mrs G Merritt, who provided items of entertainment.

The following were presented with rugs: Messrs A J Day, B A Hickey, R Horwood, S E Adams, L T Woodard, W Hiscock, L C Dawson, L S J Harrison, N Harrison, G M Harrison, A C Charles, V Baum, T Baum, G Broughton, L T Broughton, G J B Helliger, S Mitchell, J Roberts, V Hornsey, L G Hodges, R Legge, W K McKewan, C Morriss, E Nelson, St. Elmo Nelson, W J Gwyther, L Nelson, R Evans, W King, E Hunt, J Kennedy, J Coghlan, J Harris, A Poulton, D Wall, N Wall, E Howard, J. Kerrigan, Misses L S Anderson, E Casey, M Gwyther, Couzens and D Larging. Rugs were also presented to the families of those who did not return.

The recipients were Mrs N White and Mr And Mrs W N Tippet.

A thanksgiving service was held in the Public Hall yesterday afternoon, when Mr Maltby, MLA, and Cr Johnson (President of the Shire of South Barwon) were present. The service was conducted by the Revs. C G Lavender and G E Vertigan."

On 16 October 1949, a memorial tablet was unveiled at the Highton Methodist Church in memory of Nathaniel White, a past member who had lost his life in 1942, whilst serving in the air force (see Gifts and Memorials).

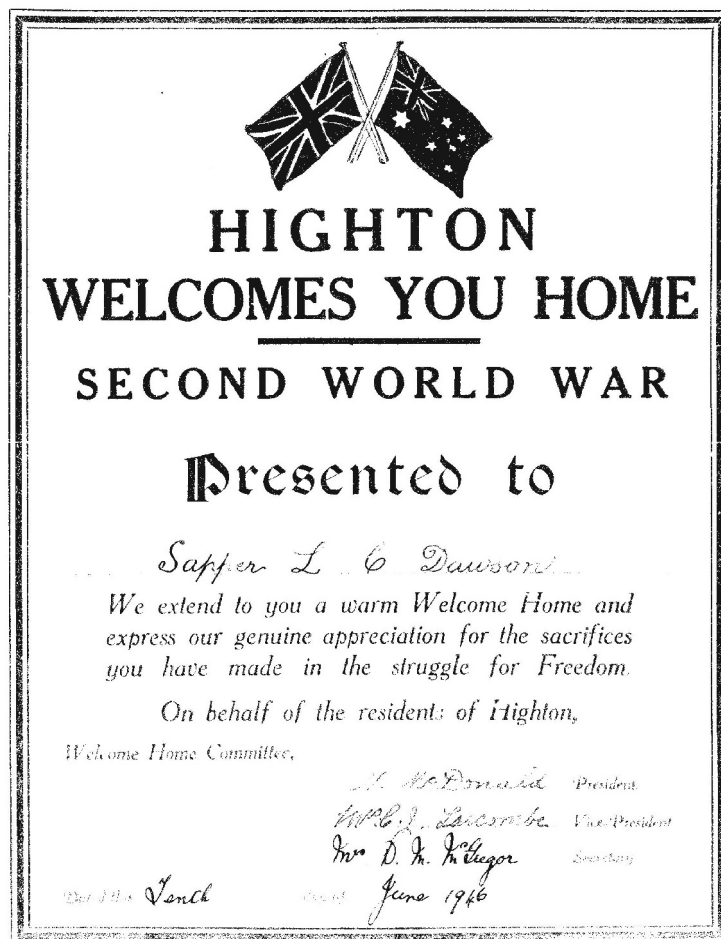
The following article is reprinted courtesy of the *Geelong Advertiser*, from 17 October 1949.

"A service to honor the memory of the late Nathaniel White, RAAF, was held

in the Highton Methodist Church yesterday morning and conducted by the Rev. A Bligh and the Rev. J T Duggleby. During the service a memorial tablet was unveiled

A number of relatives and friends, Sir Thomas Maltby and Lady Maltby, representatives of the Geelong Legacy Club and Limbless Soldiers' Association, Royal Australian Air Force and AIF attended the service. There was a large attendance.

Unveiling the memorial tablet, Mr Duggleby said that Mr White's resting place was unknown. He was lost while serving with the Coastal Command at Cleethorpes on the North Sea. The erection of the tablet, he said, made of the church a shrine – a source of pride to his wife and children. He trusted that all would continue to cherish the memory of the man who had given all for this land of Australia."



Left: An example of the certificate given to each serviceman and woman from Highton dated 10 June 1946.

Note: Sapper Len Dawson mentioned on the above certificate was a member of the Highton Methodist Church. Reprinted courtesy of Mrs Mary Dawson.