

Churches -Riverstone & District

Winsome Phillis

In the latter half of the last century, as development spread out from the Sydney area, many small townships grew up about 30 miles from Sydney. (I have heard this referred to as the 'Bible Belt'.)

Although the churches in Windsor had been built in the early 1800s, this was too far for people in the Riverstone district to travel, many on foot, to worship. So even before a township became established, one of the first concerns of the settlers was to build a church for their own small community.

***The Windsor & Richmond Gazette* reported on the progress and activities of most of these churches and has been an invaluable source for research.**

1846 St Phillip's Church of England at Clydesdale in the Parish of Windsor, was built by the local people and consecrated in 1846. Unfortunately it was built on flood prone land, and was severely affected by the floods, so much so that after 1889/1890 it was allowed to fall into ruins.

Documented in *Clydesdale -a small history* by Jeanette M. French.

1863 Christ Church Rouse Hill. This was the earliest church built in the Riverstone district, being opened in July 1863. It was built on land donated by Mr Robert Fitzgerald, who was married to Elizabeth Rouse, youngest daughter of Richard Rouse. The Cemetery belonging to the Church contains the graves of many of the pioneers of the area. This Cemetery is located in Mile End Road, Rouse Hill.

1875 St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Riverstone. The first church service was held in 1875, in the home of Mr John Greig in Garfield Road. A Church was built in Regent Street in 1884, being shifted to the Garfield Road site in 1912. Documented in *The Cemetery Book* 1882-1982 by Mary Gillespie.

1882 St John's Catholic Church was opened on 2nd July 1882 in Garfield Road Riverstone, (then called Windsor Road) on what is still called the Catholic Church Hill. Merv Davis records: The original church was of split slab construction situated to the left of the present church. Built in 1882 by Father M. Coffey, the priest of the Hawkesbury District from 1874 -1886.

See booklet *A History of Quakers Hill -Schofields & Parish* 1919-1993 by Gary Payne which contains a chapter on the First Catholic Church at Riverstone in 1882.

Laurie Hession has written a full account of St John's Church which is reproduced in this Journal.

1884 St Andrew's Church of England, The Vineyard. The Vineyard School Church was originally in the Parish of St Matthew's, Windsor. It was established by the Rev. F.W. Stretton. Erected by voluntary labour, under the superintendence of Mr John Gow, it was opened in 1884. Sometimes called The Vineyard Mission School.

1885 St Paul's Church of England, Riverstone. The first Anglican Church Service in Riverstone was held in the open air around a tree stump in Meld Road. St Paul's Church was opened in 1885 in Elizabeth Street. Originally in the Parish of Windsor, St Paul's was transferred to the Parish of Castle Hill in 1886. The Provisional Parish of Riverstone was created in 1928, becoming a full Parish in 1930. This then incorporated Riverstone, Rouse Hill, Quakers Hill, Marsden Park, Schofield and The Vineyard. See also *St Paul's Riverstone Centenary Book - 1985*

1892 Gospel Hall, Marsden Park. The *Windsor & Richmond Gazette* mentions meetings held in the Marsden Park Gospel Mission Hall in 1892. It evidently operated at least until 1899. The next reference we have is in 1925, when the Hall was dismantled. to become the Methodist Hall in Riverstone.

1898 St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Marsden Park. In June 1898, meetings were being held to establish a Presbyterian church at Marsden Park. In August, work was started and by September the frame of the Church was up; painting was being done in October, and on the 29th October *The W & R Gazette* reported on the opening of the Church.

1903 Mission Hall, Schofields. Referred to as the Slab Church, because it was constructed of iron bark timber slabs, this building was erected in 1903 to be used for Protestant worship. In later years, part of this congregation became the Baptist Church.

See Riverstone -Schofields Baptist Church Booklet. 1964-1985.

1909 St John's Church of England, Marsden Park. Land was donated by Mr Claus Witt in 1900. The Church was built by Mr Fred Rothwell and opened on the 30th December, 1909.

See The Church of St John's, 1909 -1959 Booklet.

1918 St Peter's Church of England, Schofields. Services were held first of all around the 1918/1920 period, in a Hall belonging to Mr Wiggins, which was situated on the same block of land as the present Church in St Albans Road, Schofields. In 1929 the Hall and contents were bought by the Church. It was 1958 before the Church Building was built.

1922 St Stephen's Church of England, Quakers Hill. *The W&R Gazette* reported on the 10th March 1922: *Our Anglican friends at Quakers Hill are building a fine church at that centre.*

The first Marriage in the Church was that of Robert Welch and Florence Greenhalge on the 4th March 1922. The Minister, Arthur W. Setchell noted in the St Paul's Marriage Register that the church was 'in an unfinished state'.

Documented in *A History of the Quakers Hill Township* Susan Cole 1988.

1925 Methodist Church, Riverstone. Gazette entries show this as opening in 1925 in the old Marsden Park Gospel Hall which was rebuilt in Riverstone by *Mr Mangold*. A new brick church was built in 1941.

1962 St Joseph's Catholic Church, Schofields. First Mass was said on Easter Sunday of 1962.

See booklet *A History of Quakers Hill -Schofields Parish* 1919 -1993. by Gary Payne.

1964 Riverstone-Schofields Baptist Church. In 1964 some members of the Schofield's Mission Hall church affiliated with the Baptist denomination and worked to establish their own Church. Land on the corner of Regent and Oxford Streets, Riverstone was bought from Mr Fred Bliss for £903 and on the 26th February 1966 the new Baptist Church was opened.

See *Riverstone -Schofields Baptist Church Booklet. 1964 -1985.*