

## The Lion, 1956

COLLEGE

### *The Reminiscences of a First Master*

The Editor of the "Lion" has asked me for some reminiscences and, as the retirement of the pioneer Master after 32 years may be said to mark the end of the "foundation epoch," I have been re-reading my historical notes which will lie sealed in the South Australian Archives until all those concerned have passed on.

My connection with St. Mark's began in 1920 when some St. Peter's masters, who were dissatisfied with the way in which the University was treating the returned soldiers, suggested to the new Headmaster, the Revd. Julian Bickersteth, that he should establish a University Residential College on Oxford lines. By September, 1921, it was clear that a Synod Committee formed by the Headmaster had failed, and on 16th December, 1921, he gathered at St. Peter's a group of University College men, who formed themselves into a Provisional Committee to found an Anglican College and organize in the Town Hall an inaugural meeting at which the Prime Minister, now Lord Bruce, was to be the chief speaker. These men, who can be called "the planners," were incredibly young. Sir Henry Newland, whom we already regarded as "the grand old man" of the movement, was in the late forties; Bickersteth was in the middle thirties, and several such as Kenneth Henderson, Cedric Hayward and I were still in the twenties. Nevertheless, of the Chairman (Mr. Bickersteth) and of the eight men who moved or seconded the four foundation resolutions, all but Bickersteth, Newland and I are dead.

Our next steps were to convert the University, through Mr. Justice Poole and Harry Thomson, draft the prospectus, which is in my handwriting; appoint an invaluable Ladies Committee under Mrs. Ernest Good and Mrs. Alfred Lendon, and hold a highly successful Town Hall meeting in May, 1922. The planners were not only young but broad minded. Several withdrew because the College was to be denominational. A majority of the remainder carried by one vote that the Master need not be an Anglican, and on Canon Hewgill's brilliant inspiration that St. Mark's Day was that of the Anzac landing, changed the proposed name from Christ's to St. Mark's, as they sincerely felt that "Well played Christ's" would sound impious in the shadow of the Cathedral.

The planners' work ended in March, 1923, with the really vital and splendid purchase of the Downer and Fowler properties for the then large sum of £9,690 by a Committee which had no money whatever. The purchase was very largely due to Harry Hodgetts who, on occasions, advanced us as much as £3,000.

The planners now became the founders and were strengthened by the acquisition of well known older people such as Charles Hayward and Harold Fisher, and a rising young philanthropist, Dudley Turner. Nevertheless, it was a desperate struggle to pay for the properties and furnish the Downer House for a Master and 12 tutors and students. Not until December, 1924, could a sub-committee recommend my appointment as Acting Master from a field of some 80 Australian and English applicants. I was selected partly for my research work, partly for my help in the foundation, partly because, as Harold Fisher told Charles Hayward, the founders wanted Hayward support through my wife, and partly because the College could not afford an older and more distinguished man, particularly as no well established scholar would have faced the appalling and health-breaking conditions which my wife and I suffered in those early years. Our own financial position, too, was difficult. The Mastership absorbed my small salary; our tiny private means, and everything I could earn in strenuous W.E.A. lectureships.

The months before Sir Tom Bridges opened the College in March, 1925, were a nightmare. I was very weary after nine years of responsible work at St. Peter's so I took the family in January to Victor Harbour where I could quietly draft the regulations and rules. Meanwhile merry hell broke loose in Adelaide. A very rigid Finance Committee, which excluded me from their meetings, deeply and unnecessarily offended the Downers; angered Mrs. Good by demanding control of the £1,200 which her Committee had raised for the furnishing; planned to equip the College with three-quarter beds, wood fires and bedroom toilet sets, while one member even castigated me in a bitter letter for suggesting that we secured from England a little unbreakable china, which the Committee could not order quickly enough the following year.



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In the end, Mrs. Price and I roared up to town at 12 miles an hour and led our good friend Harry Thomson through the Downer House to show him where we could save large sums in capital and labour costs. Mrs. Price herself solved the almost impossible problem of providing shaving and other toilet space in the Downer upstairs bathroom, for which the Finance Committee reluctantly disgorged £25. It is an interesting fact that this vacation the College is cheerfully spending £600 in improving the same bathroom.

We opened with one tutor—the late Professor Kirwood of happy memories—and nine students, most of whom were friends whom I had collected by the assurance that the College would resemble the extremely bright Christian Union Camp which I had just commanded on the Onkaparinga. Amongst the earliest entries was Sholto Douglas, who as Club President from 1928 to 1930, contributed much keenness and brightness to the party, just as he now enlivens the Council. Under the terms of the appointment I had to accept an Acting Mastership for three years; and leave my wife and family to fend for themselves at Walkerville. To add to our difficulties a senior student, now dead, set out deliberately to give the College a reputation for loafing, with the result that we were bitterly attacked on the University Education Committee by a distinguished doctor who later became a warm supporter. The following day our examination results began to appear. Twelve men sat, and all passed satisfactorily. Such figures were unanswerable. To the horror of the University leaders, I was elected to a very elderly University Council as an infant of 33.

Our success brought building extensions, and enabled my family to join me in residence, but the conditions were deplorable. The men had to pass through our private quarters to the Common Room and Dining Hall, and, as our kitchen which was already catering for over 40 people, was only 10 feet by 14 feet, we had in 1927 alone three matrons, fifteen cooks and nearly all the housemaids in Adelaide. In 1927-8 Mrs. Price's health broke down completely and her family were forced to send her abroad, but on her return Mr. Harold Fisher, the kindest and most considerate of councillors, together with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hayward, Sir Henry Newland and Mr. Turner, came to our rescue. The Hayward family offered £150, if the Council found another £200 to make the kitchens workable; and Mr. and Mrs. Hayward gave £100 which provided private access to our quarters and sound proof doors. The Council had told me that if we lost more than £1,000 in the first three years the College and I would depart, but by the end of 1927 we had established St. Mark's at a cost of £698, and in that year came the first of those small cash surpluses which have formed an unbroken sequence up to my retirement. We were now strong enough to surmount the great depression, and to survive where St. Andrews failed after the University refused a Government offer to save that College by granting each College, up to five, the sum of £1,000 a year. Nevertheless, in spite of this tragedy, the University had now accepted St. Mark's. The College proved very useful during the University Jubilee, and the College and I worked energetically in the important and successful Union appeal.

From 1927 until the outbreak of the war we expanded happily, particularly as the dear and good, but overworked, Bishop Thomas generously stood aside for Sir Henry Newland who spared the time to become our really great and enthusiastic Chairman for 27 years. Wise in his knowledge of the University and tactful in his handling of university people, his contribution was outstanding, while over the same period Dudley Turner showed that he possessed the qualities to lead the Finance Committee as an ideal chairman. We progressed by piecemeal building, and by renting outside properties and, although I had no full-time help, I was splendidly supported by Honorary Tutors such as Dr. Norman Tucker, and by several really fine Club presidents such as Graham Bennett, R. W. T. Cowan, and J. A. Game. We were now in calmer waters. I ran the College single handed; helped the University; carried on research in the small hours of the morning, and twice visited America and Europe under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation, when J. H. Reynolds (Collegian) and R. R. P. Barbour were successful Acting Masters. From 1928 onwards we won the Rhodes almost continuously. By 1940 we were housing some 68 tutors and men.

After the war and the lease to the R.A.A.F., we were able to open in early 1946, mainly through the devoted efforts of Colonel Jim Irwin (Collegian) and the fact that we had through Air Force procrastination, refused to lease our furniture for Air Force destruction. The Entry outlook was now so promising that we clearly needed a second full-time man. When the University declined



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to help us by giving Ron Cowan, now Warden of Trinity, a small lectureship (they were soon seeking him as a Professor), I offered a Vice Mastership to Mr. R. B. Lewis, a graduate and double blue of Trinity, Melbourne, together with my resident allowances and quarters. As for 11 years Mrs. Price and I provided and maintained "Llantfair" as a second Master's Lodge, the College gained the services and stability of two married officers for little more than the cost of one.

The appointment of a second full-time man was quickly justified as we expanded from 68 to 86 men, by renting at various times Bishop's Court, Aquinas College, the Cathedral Vicarage, and parts of Mr. Gavin Walkley's house, and even St. Ann's College, where in the last instance Professor and Mrs. Piper proved efficient chaperones. In these constant moves which were a heavy strain on the College staff, Mr. Lewis gave very valuable service.

Then came the years 1949-1953 which were of great importance, from several viewpoints. Supported by Vice Chancellor A. P. Rowe, the Australian University Colleges secured a Federal grant, and Mr. Rowe gained for the South Australian Colleges, from the University, financial assistance which later became a State grant of money and scholarships. I am glad of this opportunity to acknowledge our very deep debt of gratitude to the Vice Chancellor, and to the University. The successes of Mr. Rowe and the College Masters represented a capital gain of £40,000 to St. Mark's and £160,000 to the four Adelaide Colleges. In addition, during these splendid years of achievement under Sir Henry's inspiring leadership, the College bought North House and built the Memorial Building. Not less important was the fact that Mrs. Price enabled us to buy the Grenfell Price Lodge and by reviving and chairing the historic "Ladies Committee" inspired a splendid effort by which the Collegians, the College community, and the students liquidated the remaining cost of the £14,000 house. Nevertheless, these building efforts and purchases would have been far less effective had not Mr. and Mrs. Dudley Turner twice extended the Dining Hall so that the College could cater for about 110 tutors and students.

The years of rapid expansion and the leadership of the founders now terminated. The College leaders and community were temporarily exhausted by their great and successful efforts. Sir Henry resigned the Chairmanship in February, 1954; Canon Finnis, who was mainly responsible for the early religious development of the College, resigned in 1955. Canon Docker, our beloved and broadminded Chaplain, died in 1956; and I felt that when I reached the age of 65, at the beginning of 1957, I should pass over to a young men's College to younger hands. St. Mark's had by then entered on a new period of useful consolidation—one hopes as a breather before another vigorous advance.

In this period of consolidation the outstanding fact was that under Bishop Robin and our former tutor, Dean T. T. Reed, the Church at last recognized the vital importance of work amongst the future leaders of the community in the College and University. To continue Canon Docker's voluntary labours it gave us a full-time resident Chaplain, the Revd. Norman Paynter (Collegian), who soon made the Anglican Society the largest Christian body in the University.

In 1955 I went abroad again, and Mr. Lewis managed the College so successfully that, although he would not accept the Mastership save under competition, it was clear that I could give my remaining years to other pioneering and semi-honorary work, the establishment of the Australian Humanities Research Council, and the Editorship of a Survey of the state of the Humanities in Australia—a task of some national importance.

I feel that I cannot close these reminiscences without a tribute to my wife. Although her hand has never been with mine on the wheel, her foot has never been far from the accelerator and, as over the years she has provided a good deal of the petrol, she has done much to help St. Mark's, as indeed she has helped St. Ann's along the road to success.

We now leave the College with the deepest gratitude for God's guidance and with the warmest affection for those members of the Council, and the College, who not only founded St. Mark's, but who established in South Australia that residential College system which the leading British and American Universities now regard as the outstanding feature of modern University life. Throughout my 32 years of office I have tried to keep before the College the need of strenuous endeavour for the development of all-round excellence in its best and highest sense.

In the words of Canon Doyle: "It is the law of Heaven that the world is given to the hardy and to the self denying while he who would escape the duties of manhood will soon be stripped of the pride, the wealth, and the power, which are the prizes that manhood brings."

—A.G.P.