

Foundation-stone of St. John's School, Saturday, 27th September 1856

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DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE - LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF A SCHOOL-HOUSE.

We are indebted to a Cotemporary [sic] for the following interesting account of this ceremony, of which we had information from other quarters. There are several circumstances connected with the event which induce us especially to notice it. But we particularly desire to call attention to the liberality of the founders of this School, and the sense of responsibility by which they appear to have been actuated, as holders of property and employers of labour in Australia. We know indeed that their convictions were that these were duties morally devolving on them, which they could not innocently neglect to fulfil. May others in like circumstances feel the same responsibility, and be no less anxious to perform what their consciences would lead them to feel was incumbent on them!

"The interesting ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new "Church of England School" took place at 4 o'clock p.m., on Saturday last(1), in the presence of the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, the Rev. Canon Wilton (2), and clergy of the district, and a highly respectable concourse of the inhabitants of the city and its vicinities, including the children from the Church of England School in Newcastle, who went in procession.

The site of this school is on the Australian Agricultural Company's Estate, situated in Parry-street, at present in a state of bush, and abutting on the Lake Macquarie-road (3), and is only an instalment of what is contemplated for the improvement of this locality. In connection with the school, it is intended to erect a residence for the school-master, a parsonage, and a church, to be called the Church of St. John, in the parish of St. John, Newcastle.

The area upon which these edifices are to be erected, we believe, comprises about three acres(4) of land, appropriated by the company in consideration of the large population located on their own estate in that neighbourhood, and at present without available means of secular or religious instruction.

The ceremony commenced by singing the 120th Psalm; after which, the Bishop called upon Captain Corlette - whom he eulogised as an old and faithful servant of the company - and congratulated the inhabitants upon one so influential and amiable having taken up his residence among them - to lay the first stone. It had previously been arranged, continued his Lordship, that Captain Brownrigg (5) should have laid the first stone of this edifice, in the promotion of which he had unceasingly laboured, and whose absence on so auspicious an occasion he deeply regretted; and deplored it the more because it arose from a very serious accident having occurred to him, and precluded the possibility of his attendance at a time when his ardent desires would have been gratified by a participation in that day's proceedings, in facilitating which he had exhibited a laudable zeal for the welfare of those inhabitants and their offspring who were daily increasing on the company's estate. After the laying of the stone Captain Corlette said: "My lord, you and all who participate in this day's proceedings will join me in regretting the unfortunate and unavoidable absence of Captain Brownrigg upon the present occasion, who had intended to have met his friends here to-day and to have said to them, on behalf of this good work, many things which I find myself unable to say for him, for he had the intellectual and moral welfare of these people at heart, and would have derived as well as have imparted a pleasure in these proceedings, of which his absence has deprived us. He (Captain Corlette) should watch with deep interest the progress of this work: assured of its beneficial tendencies it would claim all the aid and consideration he could devote to it, to its completion. But he did not regard its completion in the erection of the school alone; the virtues of a school did not consist in bricks and mortar, but in the spirit of the teacher, and in the soundness and liberality of the principles inculcated; and to this end he would labour on its behalf, and would venture to hope for this undertaking that with God's blessing it would be crowned with ultimate and complete success.

His Lordship then addressed the assembly and said: - The first stone of St. John's School has now been laid, and, Christian friends, permit me to congratulate you upon the event. Let me next discharge a duty to the committee of this good work. God has wrought wonderful changes in this land,

The First Rectory - 1871 photo of Revd. F. D. Bode and family. Photo discovered in Bode family album. Diocesan Archives, Australian Library, Newcastle University and reproduced with permission.

CHURCH: QUAKE REPAIRS UPDATE

The Heritage Council of NSW, whose authority for repair and restoration works is required as our buildings and site are subject to a Permanent Conservation Order, has referred the proposed earthquake damage rectification to a specialist committee - the Technical Advisory Group Materials Conservation (TAGMAC) - which meets next on 9th October. In the light of TAGMAC's reply our application for the work will be assessed.

Specific matters that TAGMAC has been asked to consider are "the extent of Cementitious Grout Injection" and "the use of galvanised rather than stainless steel in the repairs".

Our architect feels there may be problems in using stainless steel in conjunction with other materials, but wishes to consult with experts. Permission has been sought from the insurer, via the Loss Assessor, to consult with Professor Adrian Page from the University of Newcastle and other specialists in order to present a supported case to TAGMAC.

Heritage has also asked for an analysis of the heritage significance of the stained glass (7 windows to be repaired under a heritage grant) and its causes of deterioration.

It now seems unlikely there will be any repair work beginning before Christmas.