

LONG, GEORGE MERRICK

As with other “masters” included in our Rolls. Long is included by the original Editors, due to his very close association with the school. There was frequent press and Bathurstian coverage of his contacts with ASC. These included such as, his speeches at annual speech days.

His contribution in the area of vocational training for veterans at the end of the war was quite outstanding and he is given much credit for the rehabilitation and future development of Australia.

Readers will read that quite a number of ASC men benefited with such training opportunities whilst in England.

(1875-1930),

Educationist and Anglican bishop.



Was born at Carisbrook, Victoria, on 5 November 1875, the youngest child of George Long. Both parents were English. He was educated at Maryborough grammar school, on leaving school entered a bank, but when 19 years of age decided to enter the

Church of England ministry. He was accepted as a student for holy orders by Bishop Goe (q.v.) of Melbourne, and spent four months as assistant to Archdeacon Herring on the Upper Murray. He entered Trinity College, university of Melbourne, at the beginning of 1896 and graduated B.A. with honours in 1899. He was ordained deacon in 1899, priest in 1900, and from 1899 was given charge of the parish of Foster in South Gippsland, Victoria. It was a large parish which had suffered much from recent bushfires in which both the church and vicarage had been burnt to the ground. Long rallied his people, a new church and a vicarage were built, and the influence of his ministry was felt for many years after he left. But Long had been influenced too. He had lived with men who had wrenched a living from a difficult soil, and he remembered all his days the courage, perseverance and hard work that so often brought them little more than a bare living. In 1902 when Canon Hindley became archdeacon of Melbourne Long was asked to become his assistant at Holy Trinity Church, Kew, a suburb of Melbourne. He had other offers which seemed more important, but decided to go to Kew. Both men were strong personalities; it might have been feared that they would have clashed, but they worked perfectly together. Soon afterwards the question of establishing a secondary school for boys was raised, and a start was made by establishing one for those up to 12 years of age. It was soon realized that one was needed for older boys, but great difficulty was found in obtaining a suitable headmaster. At last the position was offered to Long who was advised by Archbishop Clarke (q.v.) to accept it.

Trinity grammar school had about 50 boys when Long took charge. In a few years the numbers rose to 300, and it continues to be one of the more important schools of its kind in Australia. Long was an excellent headmaster. An old boy of the school has summed up the attitude of his teaching in a few words, "To resist the brute, to protect the weak, to work for the general good, to face the light" (Martin Boyd, *A Single Flame*, p. 25). Long had many offers during his stay at Kew from other churches and in 1910 was made a canon of St Paul's cathedral, Melbourne. In 1911 it was suggested that he should apply for the headmastership of Geelong grammar school, one of the six Victorian public schools, but while he was considering this he received a telegram inviting him to become bishop of Bathurst, in New South Wales. It meant a reduction in his income, and much hard work and responsibility for a man still only 35 years of age, but after taking advice he decided to accept the position.

Long was consecrated bishop of Bathurst on 30 November 1911 and began his work with much energy. He showed that he had a strong business sense, and at once set about placing the finances of the diocese on a more secure footing. He found the work of the diocese being hampered by obsolete ordinances and succeeded in having them revised, he encouraged the bush brotherhood which worked in the outlying districts, he founded new schools and began the erection of a new cathedral. His work was interrupted when in **1917 he went to France as a chaplain, but in 1918 he was put in charge of a movement to organize vocational and civil training for the Australian soldiers. He was given the position of director of education in the A.I.F. with the rank of brigadier-general.** He did valuable work in this position, but his health broke "under a strain probably heavier than that borne by any other great leader of the A.I.F., from which it is said he never recovered". (C. E. W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, vol. VI, p. 1071). He returned to Australia in July 1919 and took up the work of his diocese again. He gave much thought to the drafting of a new constitution for the Church of England in Australia, and with the assistance of Sir John Peden the constitution was prepared and presented to the convention held in 1926. Long managed the matter with great tact and forbearance, and eventually the constitution was accepted by all the dioceses except Sydney which asked for additional

provisions. In 1927 a coadjutor bishop of Bathurst was appointed and at the end of that year Long was elected bishop of Newcastle. Bathurst vainly asked him to stay and the deputation which waited on him included not only members of his own church but men of all the leading denominations of the town. Long, however, felt that it was his duty to go to Newcastle, and he was enthroned there on 2 May 1928. Newcastle, then a city of about 100,000 inhabitants with a large industrial population, offered a great field for a man of his abilities, and he soon made his influence felt. On one occasion considerable support was given to the proposition that he should act as mediator in a strike at the coal mines. He had been there less than two years when in March 1930 he went to England to attend the Lambeth conference. On the second day of the conference Long was taken ill and died on 9 July 1930 of cerebral haemorrhage. He married in 1900 Alexandra, daughter of Alfred Joyce, who survived him with three sons and three daughters. He was given the honorary degree of LL.D. by Cambridge University in 1918 and by Manchester in 1919. He was created C.B.E. in 1919.

Long was tall, dark and rugged-featured. An athlete in his youth, his obvious sincerity enabled him to be a good influence as a student at the university, as a bush parson, and as head of a large secondary school. His sympathies were with the manual workers, but he did not interfere in politics. He was a good though not great preacher, and he wrote little, his one excursion into controversy, *Papal Pretensions* (1913), did not show him at his best. His real strength lay in the fact that no one could come in contact with him without being the better for it, and that he was a great organizer, hard-working, tactful, able, and obviously seeking what was best for all concerned. Had he not died at the comparatively early age of 54 there was no ecclesiastical office of his church in Australia to which he would not have become entitled.

W. H. Johnson, *The Rt Revd George Merrick Long, a Memoir*, *The Times*, 10 July 1930; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 and 12 July 1930; C. E. W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, vol. VI, pp. 1062-3 and 1071; *The Bulletin*, 16 July 1930; personal knowledge.