Our College Chapel

Much has been written on the Chapel and it justifiably has a prominent place in the grounds and life of the College. Returning students tell of many Chapel memories and the words from an old hymn: ‘We love the place O God...’ begin to describe the affection.

The Chapel foundation plaque was set in December 1908 by Bishop Camidge. Construction was completed by July 1909 but the final Consecration was not until October 1910, again by Bishop Camidge.

Above is a rare picture of the Chapel in 1910 on the original site. It was completed at a cost of 800 pounds. The position of a Chaplain was inaugurated at the same time as the Consecration of the building and the first Chaplain was Canon Thompson.

So began a tradition which is now commemorated on a Chaplains Board on the Western wall of the present Chapel. Thank you to the Year 6 students (2012) for taking on this project.

The Chapel had been built on the site of the present Bathurst High School and was one of the stately buildings which overlooked the growing city. However, in June 1919 the College Council decided to close the College because of the influenza epidemic and the Chapel was locked and remained standing on the hill. The Chaplain whose tenure spanned the old and new Chapels was Canon Edward Wilton who eventually became a Bishop.

It was the drive of three men, Reverend L.G.H. Watson, C.C.F. McLeod and the newly appointed Bishop M. Long, that led to the purchase of Esrom House and its surrounds from the Barton family. In July 1924 Bishop Long made a request to the Department of Education, who had purchased the old site, to allow the relocation of the Chapel, and the Old Boys of the College raised 475 pounds to rebuild the College on the present site. It was re-Dedicated on 25th October 1925 by the Archbishop of Sydney.

A tragic funeral was conducted in the Chapel (new site) for the young Raymond Henry Suttor who died of pneumonia in May 1929. This plaque which was in the former ‘Opera House’ will now be placed in the Chapel. In the Chapel Service Register for the week of his funeral it was noted that the Chapel attendance was ‘affected considerably by an epidemic of mumps’.

Meanwhile across the river, Marsden Girls School was opened in 1925 and their Chapel of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) was consecrated on 28th August 1928. This Chapel remains part of the Holy Family School in Kelso. In 1977, when the school was closed, the pews from the Chapel were placed in St Barnabas Church, South Bathurst. The Lectern was brought across to the All Saints’ Chapel. The book rests were not installed in St Barnabas but remained in storage under the parish hall stage until 2003.

They were brought across to All Saints’ and fabricated into a new altar which is the centrepiece for the Chapel.

When the altar was made it was dedicated in the presence of former Marsden students, one of whom was Mrs Heather Paul, daughter of Reverend Watson. So in the Chapel the key symbols of Word (Lectern) and Sacrament (Altar) have their origins from the Marsden School.

The Chaplains Board represents the worship of the All Saints’ community. Psalm (113:3) has a line: ‘From the rising of the sun till its setting the Lord’s name is to be praised.’ and it is estimated that there have been more than 20,000 services since 1910, led in the main by the 25 Chaplains. It is a deeply significant move by the College Council to embark on a major refurbishment in the coming year of our holy place.

Father Paul