



Sydney Church of England
Grammar School

NORTH SYDNEY

DECEMBER, 1937

Headmaster's Report

The enclosed report is distributed with the greetings of the Council, and the Headmaster and Staff, to Old Boys and friends, who, no doubt, will be interested in an account of the life of the school during the past year.

HEADMASTER'S REPORT, 1937

I have the honour to present my report of the activities of the School for the year which is now rapidly drawing to a close. Matters are recorded as they have come into my mind from the memories of the year. Such a record is bound to be incomplete, and I am afraid that it does too little justice to many who have done splendid work. There are many acknowledgments of help, but even so, there are not enough. If I seem to report for the most part in very favourable terms, I claim indulgence: it may be that I have succumbed to human frailty, and have forgotten, with the approach of Christmas, some disappointments which I ought to record. However, my memories of the year are exceedingly happy. It really has been a good year. Boys have worked hard and with very fair results. Games have prospered and the results are such as to justify a little restrained boasting. The immediate landscape gives evidence of further progress and improvement in the buildings. The discipline generally has been good and, furthermore, it has been healthy and happy. In all School affairs there have been enthusiasm and vitality which, though difficult to define, have created an atmosphere in which, as I hope and believe, all have found it pleasant to work and to live. In short, throughout the year things have "gone with a swing."

The year has been exceedingly busy. Indeed, each year seems to be busier than the last and it is right that it should be so. When a new undertaking is successfully accomplished in any one year, it tends to become a regular part of the routine of succeeding years and in this way the life of the School becomes more full and varied as time passes. It is this sense of continued progress which makes the life of a schoolmaster interesting and by no means the humdrum existence which, perhaps, it is popularly supposed to be. A good schoolmaster seldom deceives himself by thinking that, as he becomes more experienced, he will have more spare time; on the contrary, with increasing experience and efficiency he is constantly lured forward to tackle further interesting problems, and to find new lines of approach to the varied tasks which fall to his lot. The atmosphere of our Common Room gives a denial to any notion that a schoolmaster's life is dull and uninteresting. I think that the highest praise which I can give to the Staff is that they have had an arduous year, but have thoroughly enjoyed it. Without doubt the present success of the School is due largely to the intense interest which they have in their professional work.

The year has not been without sorrow. In February, Mr. W. A. Purves, Headmaster from 1910 to 1922, passed away. To him the School owes a great debt. During his headmastership the School made tremendous strides, not only by great increase of its numbers, but also by addition to its resources and equipment. The numbers increased from 300 to 500; the Northbridge Grounds were acquired and developed; new class rooms and dormitories were built, and the Chapel was built and dedicated. However, it will be generally

agreed that, from the personal qualities of Mr. Purves and of Mr. Hodges, his predecessor and great friend, the School derived benefit even more enduring than material things. Both were men of simple kindness and deep sincerity, with great capacity for friendship, and they gave to those about them a sense of the value of these qualities. If the life of the School has, during the last thirty years, been marked by a good moral tone and by an appreciation of the worth of personal character, it is due to these two men. Mr. Purves took a keen interest in the School after his retirement and gave to me personally every reason to value his friendship. It was characteristic of him that, after a success, his message of congratulation was invariably among the first and also that, in less happy circumstances, he seldom failed to send a kindly message of sympathy and encouragement.

I record also with deep regret the deaths during the year of two boys of the School. Peter Moncrieff Lewis died in February after an accident. Alan Coward passed away in March after an illness. Both were boys of promise and their loss greatly affected those who knew them.

The number in attendance during the year was 695 in Term I, 677 in Term II and 660 in Term III. We are endeavouring to adopt 670 as the normal strength, but it is difficult to control the number exactly. The figure has been fixed after careful thought and is based upon a distribution in classes of reasonable size, the number of classes in each year being such as to permit grading of boys in accordance with the rate at which they may be expected to progress. There has again been a rush of entries for 1938, in excess even of that for 1937. Indeed, there is already a fairly heavy enrolment for 1939.

We have been accustomed in recent years to take some pride in our comparative freedom from epidemic diseases, but I am afraid that we cannot claim to have escaped so well this year. We have been invaded by chicken pox, mumps and the German variety of measles. The former two annoyances were handled with success, and indeed there was only a single case of mumps. However, the measles germ eluded our utmost efforts for some time. Fortunately its effects are not wholly inconvenient to the victims: after a temporary bodily disfigurement, the only effects seem to be a deprivation of the pleasures of the class room and an increase of appetite and vocal energy. However, it interfered considerably with school routine. We sent a number of boarders away a few days early in second term in the hope that during their three weeks' absence we might be able to eradicate the complaint. However, in spite of this precaution, it reappeared in third term and was finally vanquished towards the end of October. It is almost impossible to exclude infections which are widespread in the community, but I can give confident assurance that the greatest possible care is exercised. In general the health of boarders has been very good.

Since the evidence is before your eyes, it is scarcely necessary for me to report that the building scheme is now being advanced

by a further stage. The class rooms which are now in course of erection represent the western wing of a plan which is to be carried through the existing buildings and beyond them. There will be ten rooms in this wing and they are to be ready for occupation in February. New furniture has been ordered for them and I hope that they will be all that class rooms ought to be. It has been by no means easy to arrange for their construction while the School has been at work. The boys who had occupied the old rooms were accommodated temporarily in various places. Perhaps the greatest inconvenience has been the restriction of the area available for moving about. It says much for the understanding and discipline of the boys that the various temporary arrangements made only a negligible break in routine. I hope that parents will inspect the new rooms next year as we should like them to have an idea of the scale and quality of the equipment which we have in mind for the future. It is intended to do a great deal of renovation and painting in the big block of rooms in the vacation and also to convert three small class rooms into two demonstration rooms for Science. This ground, as you see, has been greatly improved. The full effect is not yet visible, but there should be a fine show of trees and shrubs during next year. We have also acquired, during the year, a small but important property adjacent to the School, and have carried out several minor improvements in buildings. A tennis court has been constructed in the Junior House, and extensive improvements are being made at Northbridge which will eventually give us an additional ground for football and cricket. Though these items can be enumerated fairly rapidly, it will be realised that they represent a very considerable total of improvements.

The work of the School has been carried out in a normal manner, with sound effort throughout the various classes, and the general rate of progress has been good. Ninety boys passed the "Intermediate" in 1936 and fifty-two passed the "Leaving." These numbers represent results of good average quality. The honours in the "Leaving" were well distributed among the various subjects. A. E. Geddes obtained the "possible" with four first-class honours and two A's; I am given to understand that he was third in the State in general proficiency. B. E. Swire was first in the State in Physics, and M. N. Kelly was second in French. Eleven boys secured Public Exhibitions; I think that this is our record number. Although the teaching work is the most important of the routine activities, it is impossible to report about it in any precise manner. Results in any form depend upon the ability of the boys in it and a comparison with previous years can be based only upon opinion. I am satisfied that the quality of teaching in the School has definitely improved in recent years. Among the Staff there is an exceptionally keen interest in their work, and an enthusiastic desire to keep abreast of educational thought. The regular subject of conversation in the Common Room is "shop," and there is, consequently, much co-operation and constant exchange of ideas between masters teaching similar subjects and between those taking the same boys

in different subjects. This professional interest is playing a large part in improving the teaching efficiency of the School.

I have referred on several occasions in the past to the fact that the Public Examinations are held too early. For the last seven weeks of this year we have been without our Sixth Forms. This means, of course, that we are deprived of the opportunity of doing for them much that we should like to do. It means, also, that we are deprived of their services at a most important time; and this is a very serious matter in a Public School which depends for its spirit upon the interaction of the various units which make up the whole. There are boys who completed their last examination on November 12th and who will commence lectures at the University about March 20th—a period of more than four months without routine study: surely this calls for protest. Since, in spite of protests, no remedy has been provided for this state of affairs, we have endeavoured, in recent years, to mitigate the evil by arranging educational activities for the "Leaving" candidates during the period after the examination is over. This year's attempt has been most successful, though the organisation involved was really very great indeed. Five lectures were given in the first week by Drs. Moseley and St. Vincent Welch on Physiology and Anatomy. In the second week there was a trip to Port Kembla in a special train, and a most comprehensive tour of the steelworks; a lecture on Art, with an exhibition by Mr. Charles Lloyd Jones and Mr. John D. Moore; visits to the Tobacco Company, the Ford Motor Company, the Commonwealth Bank and the University, and, finally, thanks to the help of certain officers of the Navy, a trip to Garden Island and to H.M.A.S. *Australia*. It will be realised that such a varied and interesting programme could not have been carried out without most generous help and hospitality from a number of gentlemen.

The New Education Fellowship Conference, which was held in August, caused a livening of interest in educational affairs throughout the country. It was brought about by the Australian Council for Educational Research and the organising work done by the officers of the Council was very good. Much could be written about the speakers and about the opinions which were aired, but this is not the time or the place. There was a great deal of sound matter put forward which received little publicity and a great deal of nonsense which was widely reported. Unfortunately, a few of our visitors spoke with more platform sense than common sense and their opinions seem to have aroused more attention than they deserved. There were, however, many extremely sound educationists who created an impression which is likely to be of more lasting effect than the spectacular utterances of their colleagues. Among the outstanding thoughts left by the Conference I should say first that it showed us clearly that education is now at last taking its right place throughout the world as a consideration of first importance. We had convincing evidence of big movements

which are taking place in many countries. The reaction of our own general public suggested that it is prepared to view with due dignity the task, which will become greater year by year, of endeavouring to spread education of the right type throughout the community. This is no small matter for the teaching profession. I believe that one can already notice throughout the ranks of the profession that increased confidence which is bound to come as the value of educational work becomes more fully appreciated. One was struck also by the widespread demand for freedom for teachers. In this country the demand has been heard, though not loudly, in recent years. There has been ample evidence of discontent with those many factors which limit the freedom of the teacher and of the School, such as narrowly prescribed curricula, and mass examinations. I find that in my report twelve months ago I endeavoured to express in a general formula the trend which must be taken in secondary education. I then expressed the opinion that the underlying principles must be formulated; that necessary examinations must follow these principles, and that reasonable freedom must be allowed to the School, as a unit, to work out its own courses and express its own individuality. The Conference showed clearly that the same opinions are being expressed in many parts of the world and that there is no serious opposition to them.

The School Council very generously made it possible for me to release a large number of the Staff to attend sessions of the Conference, and the opportunity was very fully used and appreciated. Since it took place during schooltime we carried out a most interesting and successful experiment for three days by dispensing with masters almost entirely. The classes were supervised by prefects with, apparently, complete efficiency. In fact, the Sergeant-Major reported to me, when I returned one day, that the School was so quiet that he had walked round to see whether the boys were really there. It was a very good test of the discipline to which I have already referred.

In N.S.W. the argument concerning examinations is not yet decided, though the Board of Secondary School Studies has met on several occasions. My only excuse for repeating my views is the hope that, if they are given often enough, they will in due course carry conviction. I have no doubt whatever that the proper principle for a full secondary course is that it should aim at giving a sound general education, followed by a period of one, and in many cases two, years of deeper study over a smaller range of subjects chosen in accordance with the pupil's aptitude and chosen vocation; that the general stage should cover four years and that the first public examination should be held at the conclusion of that stage. I believe that the objections to this plan, though honestly held, are founded upon misconception or prejudice. One of the objections is based upon the desire to retain the "Intermediate" in its present form. It is suggested that the four-year examination might suit the private Schools, but would not suit the bulk of post

primary pupils; that the present Intermediate is the "poor boy's Leaving," and so on. I cannot understand this point of view. The aim should be to design a sufficient variety of courses to enable us to provide in as many cases as possible the right kind of education for each boy in every secondary School. The present system is admittedly defective in many ways for the boy who is being educated up to seventeen or eighteen. For example, it requires that each boy shall carry some subjects far beyond the point at which his interest, quite reasonably, ceases, and it provides far too little time for the free development of those branches of work in which his mind, by reason of its special interest, will grow most rapidly. The system is certainly very defective for a great many boys who leave at fifteen. The latter are not doing a "full" secondary course; they should be instructed in subjects more suited to the careers which they will be following and the treatment of these subjects should be complete in itself and not merely, as at present, three-fifths of a course which is designed to cover five years. There is no reason why such pupils should not receive an Exit Certificate of a kind just as serviceable as the present Intermediate Certificate.

The record in games during the past year has been very good. For some years past we have been well in the running in almost every form of sport; this year in eleven contests we obtained four firsts, five seconds and two thirds. In the Regatta, we were fortunate enough to repeat the performance of 1928 by winning all three races; the fourth and fifth fours also won. The first fifteen was third and the second fifteen was second; these teams played many fine games and their performances against the redoubtable St. Joseph's College were particularly good. The Cricket Eleven improved considerably during the year and was the only team to defeat the eventual winners of the competition. When one match remained to be played, they were within two points of the leaders; however, in the last match, they fell below their usual standard and suffered a heavy defeat. They finished in third place. The second eleven performed very well throughout the year and was defeated only once in competition games. It achieved second place. The Shooting Team put up a highly satisfactory performance in spite of the fact that it was composed almost entirely of boys of little previous experience. In the G.P.S. series of matches in September, it finished in second place to Sydney Grammar School, whose standard in shooting has been very high for some years past. The second team had a comfortable win. The athletic sports in October were marked by the closeness of the contest. Sydney High School won from us by the extremely narrow margin of two-thirds of a point in eighty; the Scots College were only five-sixths of a point from us in third place. The junior athletic team was not held to be up to our usual standard, but it exceeded our expectations and gained second place. There are two tennis teams which take part in certain unofficial contests during the year; these were not so success-

ful as they have been recently and for the first time for many years the Fairwater Cup has passed into the possession of Sydney Grammar School.

I have referred in several recent reports to a definite change in the attitude towards games. It is difficult to define this change. There is as much healthy keenness to win as ever, but there is very little repining if we do not come first. One used to feel, some years ago, that the reputation of the School depended too much upon its success in games. It is quite right that there should be the most strenuous endeavour and it is true, in general, that the spirit of activity of a School is often reflected in keenness on the athletic field or the river; nevertheless, the idea seems to be passing that a School is degenerating if it does not regularly defeat its traditional rivals. The change is also reflected in the fact that in these days there are so many all-rounders who are good at games, good in work and interested in intellectual activities of some kind. The kind of boy who used to be known in English Schools as the "blood" no longer exists. A few years ago I gave examples of boys with splendid all-round records. This year I could enumerate a great many. The senior prefect is Captain of the Combined Schools' Eleven and a member of the Combined Schools' Fifteen; he has obtained honours in the Leaving Certificate and is worthy of further honours this year, and he has regularly taken almost complete charge of a company of the School Cadet Corps. The successful Rowing Camp contained several good scholars and supplied five members throughout the year to the School Choir. The leader of the Debating Team and winner of the Lawrence Campbell Trophy was a member of the Eight. These instances are sufficient to indicate that it is no longer true that—

"Where weight precedence gives worth seeks in vain,
And heavy limb can balance heavy brain."

and that conversely, interest in things of the mind need no longer connote disregard for healthy physical activity.

This leads me to speak of the prefects, who, this year, deserve very special mention. They have set a standard in respect of initiative and attitude towards responsibility that should be an inspiration to their successors. The prefect who will discharge faithfully a task which is outlined to him is fairly common; the one who will look for tasks and perform them quietly without being told is rare. During the present year, there has been evident among the prefects a quiet competence and self-confidence which have not been accompanied by any suggestion of "swank" or by the arbitrary assumption of any unjustified authority. They have conducted themselves as very efficient members of a team and, as good officers should, have placed far more emphasis on their responsibilities than on their privileges. It is something to be able to feel confident that the senior prefect's head will not be turned if I express the opinion, which his fellow prefects share, that his leadership has been really exceptional.

The Cadet Corps is now nearly 30 years old. Major Lee Pulling, its first commanding officer, tells me that its first public appearance was at the review held during the visit of the American Fleet in 1908. In its thirtieth year it attended the review in celebration of the Coronation of King George VI. It is thus developing that sense of tradition which comes with age. However, it has never been more flourishing than at present, even though we again failed to win the Kirby Shield for drill, the continuous possession of which used to be our boast. Our standard in this respect is as good as ever, but we are bound to acknowledge that certain other Corps have recently been able to produce squads which have been too good for us. The maximum strength this year was 229, a record enrolment. The special organisation provides for a large number of cadet lieutenants, warrant officers and N.C.O.'s. There are now nine cadet lieutenants, two warrant officers, ten sergeants and 35 corporals and lance-corporals. Thus 56 boys are occupying positions which give them experience of command and definite responsibility. All have been appointed only after a course of training, and after having proved themselves by an examination of sound standard. The fact that over seventy take the training for N.C.O.'s each year is an indication that there is a live interest and an incentive to excel in the work. Those who have seen the Corps at its normal training work will agree with me that Major Bagot and the officers are to be complimented on the manner in which training is organised. The bulk of the instruction is actually done by boy officers and N.C.O.'s. The nature and variety of the work are such as to call for intelligence and skill. Boys also take a very large part in the running of the orderly room, which contains fairly extensive records and the Q.M.'s store which handles a great deal of military equipment. The year's training includes about seventy hours of parades, at least one day at the Rifle Range, when a course of musketry is fired, and a five-day camp. The latter took place last week at Liverpool and was attended by almost the full strength. We do not subscribe to the opinion that military training should not be carried out in Schools. We have now had long experience of the value of an efficient cadet corps, as a service to the nation, as an instrument for the inculcation of qualities of manhood and self-confidence and, furthermore, as a real strength to the discipline and morale of the School in its corporate life. We hope for its maintenance in its present healthy condition and, so long as an example in this form of national service may be desirable, we shall try to give it. I hope that the members of the Corps will feel from these remarks that pride in their achievements is justified.

There are, of course, many other activities in a big School, and it is fitting that they should be mentioned. Each makes a valuable contribution which should be acknowledged; the more since at the centre of each there is a group of enthusiasts who supply the nucleus of interest and the driving force. The Debating Team was again successful in winning the G.P.S. series, and I think that

they achieved a very creditable standard in this difficult art. Our representative, Bedford, won the "Lawrence Campbell" Trophy which is awarded among the Schools of the Headmasters' Conference for the best exposition of spoken English in a speech which is virtually impromptu. The Scout Troop is flourishing under Mr. Backhouse and Mr. Gilfillan. In addition to their normal exercises, they have conducted several short camps. I am amazed by the degree of self-reliance which boys develop in scouting. I feel sure that the parents of the boys in the troop would like me to express publicly our gratitude to the Scoutmasters for the great care with which the camps are organised and supervised. Another of Mr. Backhouse's many interests, the Torch Club, has done good work in conjunction with the parish of St. Peter's, Woolloomooloo. In the first two terms, the Entertainments Club held several meetings and arranged for musical recitals. Its work was interrupted recently because the re-arrangement of classes during building operations made it inconvenient to set aside a suitable room.

It is the wise and profitable practice of the Chaplain to seek the co-operation and to ask the opinions of masters and boys in connection with the arrangement and conduct of Chapel Services. This co-operation has been freely given, and suggestions made by boys have been adopted from time to time with the result that interest has been quickened. As the general rule, the older boys and the younger attend Chapel at different times on week days: it is thus possible to introduce into the services slight variations appropriate to age. In addition to the services which they attend with the Lower School, the Preparatory School boys have had their own service once a week and have received appropriate instruction. The Choir has done really good work during the year. They give up a great deal of time to practices, and the effect of their example has not been lost. Certain senior boys have shown special interest this year and deserve great praise for it; I should be ungrateful if I did not also thank the masters who have again given up many hours to help to bring the Choir to a high standard. A service was held on the Tuesday evening of Holy Week, during which the Choir sang Stainer's "Crucifixion," and in November, a choral evening was devoted to Mendelssohn's works. We were, I confess, somewhat disappointed that more older people did not attend on these two occasions. It is likely that there will be similar evenings next year and a larger congregation would be an encouragement of which the Choir is worthy. I gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to Mr. Walmsley for the enthusiastic work which he has done as Choirmaster and organist. The Open Service in Third Term was broadcast principally for the benefit of Old Boys and others who live in the country. There have been several messages in appreciation of the Service.

The Jubilee Fund has progressed steadily during the year. While the most optimistic expectations have scarcely been realised, the sum contributed represents a most valuable contribution to the

School's work. I did hope that we should be able to announce by the end of the year that the Fund had reached five figures. At the time of printing this report, the total stands at about £9,200, a sum which, though admittedly less than we hoped, nevertheless represents a very great goodwill. A great portion has been contributed in small gifts, each prompted by generous interest in the School's activities and progress. The Association has been active in many ways, but chiefly through the efforts of the Ladies' Committee. The ladies have now organised six functions since May of last year. Each has been a great success, not only financially, but also socially. The most recent, the Fete, which was held three weeks ago, was an outstanding success, and was responsible for the addition to the Fund of no less than £1,500. We have always been most fortunate in that so many of the large circle of parents, friends and Old Boys have looked upon the School as a common bond of interest and have been prepared to serve it. We are the more fortunate in that this interest and support have been given in an atmosphere of jolly friendliness. It is largely this friendliness, and the mutual confidence which it engenders, which have caused most of our undertakings to prosper in recent years. I place great importance on the social aspect of the work of the Ladies' Committee since I am sure that it has a good effect upon the life within the School. Mrs. Robson and I feel that our work is made much easier when we have frequent opportunities of meeting parents in an informal manner and I think that masters generally share our feeling. Therefore, in acknowledging gratefully the work of the Fete Committee, I refer to a work much wider, and, perhaps, even more important, than the raising of funds.

It appears to be my regular annual pleasure to record that the membership of the Old Boys' Union is greater than that of the previous year. The membership now stands at 1903. Both the Union and the Club have taken many opportunities recently of making contact with the present School. For example, a fortnight ago the Club members entertained the senior boys in the Club premises. The President and several officers of the Union have been very welcome guests of the School on many occasions. Dr. St. Vincent Welch has been a great force as President, not only in promoting the affairs of the Union, but also in lending most energetic support to the School in many of its activities. It is well worthy of record that a dinner of Old Boys was held in London in October under the chairmanship of Mr. Matthew Dawson. Among the many items of news concerning Old Boys I can only mention a very few which are of great interest for widely different reasons. T. J. Dunbabin was elected during the year to a fellowship of All Souls' College, Oxford, a most exceptional distinction: in fact, I think that he is the first All Souls' Fellow from New South Wales. David Myers, of whose considerable ability there have been many evidences, won world-wide recognition among engineering and physical scientists by the invention of a machine for the solution of differential equations. Captain P. G. Taylor received recognition

by an award from His Majesty the King for his well-known act of gallantry during a flight over the Tasman Sea. In different spheres again, W. G. Thomas has been selected as a member of the Australian crew for the Empire Games, and H. W. Hattersley and T. S. McKay have been selected to tour England with an Australian golf team.

The Council has received two most important and valuable bequests during the year. In September, an amount of £3,000 was received from the estate of the late Mr. Edwin Grainger. He died in 1930, having made a number of most generous bequests to educational institutions, subject to a life interest of his widow: Mrs. Grainger passed away during the present year. The wish was expressed that the money should be applied in Scholarships: the Council proposes to award these to boys who are deserving of help to complete the last two years of their secondary education. In October, an amount of £250 was received under the will of the late Norman Cadwallader, an Old Boy whose death occurred recently as the result of an accident. There is touching sentiment attached to this gift, which binds to us even more closely a family of loyal Old Boys.

It is a pleasure to have back with us Mr. Burgess who has been ill during portion of the year. His place was taken at first by Mr. W. T. Cameron, but, unfortunately, the latter became seriously ill and was obliged to leave us. He was replaced by Mr. E. C. Arnold. Both of these gentlemen are retired Headmasters of the State service: during their temporary appointments they helped us considerably and made many friends among us. Next year, Mr. A. R. Rupp, B.A., from the Armidale School, will join the Staff. I have already indicated in several ways my sense of the loyalty of the Staff and of their enthusiastic interest in every phase of their professional work. I venture to think that no emphasis is needed. I shall, therefore, merely add that it is for me a privilege to belong to so good a team.

I am conscious that this report contains a series of expressions of gratitude; none of these could be omitted. Yet there remains to be given an acknowledgment, which is no mere formality, of the keen interest of the Council in the School's welfare. I have known Schools in which the attitude of the Council has suggested a remote patronage, like, perhaps, the supposed attitude of the War Office to the army in the field. It is a great strength to us that our Council is, as it were, in the thick of the battle. It has been our great pleasure to welcome them often far up the lines of communication, and Mr. Blythe, in particular, spends much of his time in the firing line. The problems of the School are tackled with understanding and sympathy, and the relationship is that of friendship and partnership in a common task. For these reasons, the thanks which I offer to the Council are warm and genuine.

L. C. ROBSON,
Headmaster.

