



Sydney Church of England
Grammar School

NORTH SYDNEY

DECEMBER, 1938

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, 1938.

My Lord, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my privilege, to welcome as our visitor to-day, one who is a son of a sister School of New South Wales and who left our University for Oxford as Rhodes Scholar and came back destined to fill at an early age an honoured place on the Supreme Court Bench, and to become Chancellor of our University where, under an altered sky, the ideals are the same. May I add that it is a matter of deep satisfaction to me personally that, on this my final act, which marks the close of fifty years spent in the service of education in this country, I should have with me on the platform my old and esteemed friend, Mr. Justice Halse Rogers.

My Lord, Mr. Justice Halse Rogers, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my report of the life of the School during 1938 in the absence of the Headmaster. The School year opened in sorrow. In January, when this Staff was looking forward to a strenuous year in the earnest determination to keep up the standard and prestige of the School during the absence of the Headmaster, under the leadership of Mr. Dixon, we were stunned by the sudden illness that ended swiftly in his death. He had given a life time of devoted service to the School; austere in his own life, he had sympathy with, and understanding of, those whose rule of life was less rigid. In the training of many generations of boys he added cheerful example to wise precept in the conduct of life. He was tireless in doing his duty, indefatigable in giving his best service. The School owes a debt of gratitude to many great schoolmasters, whether of the captains or the crew, but to none a greater debt than to H. H. Dixon.

After fifty years of teaching something within me was beginning to cry "Hold, enough!" and it was only due to the excellent organisation laid down in the past years that my shoulders were able to straighten themselves for a final additional burden in the emergency. I found each of my colleagues ready to assume whatever load I thought best to put upon him, to support and relieve me in various ways. All have given loyally of their best so that I may claim at the end of the year of emergency that I can give an account of our year's work, that will assure you that there has been no check in the progress of the School.

There had been cheerful news during the holidays, the Leaving Certificate results were unusually good: for the first time since Dunbabin's success, the School provided the Cooper Classical Scholar in N. M. Kelly, who obtained 1st class Honours in Greek, Latin and French, and second class Honours in German. O. L. Edwards, 1st class Honours in Latin and Mathematics, and B. H. Travers, 1st class Honours in French.

These three boys, together with W. L. Yuille, were awarded Public Exhibitions. Fifty-eight passed the Examination.

So long as we make the Intermediate Certificate part of our curriculum, we face it whole-heartedly. One hundred boys passed, six of whom obtained seven A's. The value of the Intermediate Certificate has been questioned and its omission from the five years course has been suggested. Some Schools have already discarded it, but I learn that the Intermediate Certificate is not doomed to extermination at present. Certain changes are likely to take place in the near future. I hope that in two years time we shall find boys sitting for a pass in the Leaving Certificate in the fourth year, while those who are suitable for honours will remain at School for a further year, during which they will specialise to some extent on those subjects that are germane to their subsequent career. I do here express my personal conviction that this system would make the Intermediate superfluous. As a final goal for those boys who intend to find employment at an early age it is unsuitable in character. It is neither fish, fowl nor good red herring. It does not fulfil the needs of what Mr. Robson once quoted to you as "the poor boy's Leaving Certificate." It is not a good meal, even of good red herring; neither does it lead on to the good digestion of a full course dinner, so it is neither fish nor fowl.

As a half-way record of progress of a boy who is intending to carry out the five years course, it is in some respects harmful. I will name two respects: It has been found year after year that the Fifth forms, composed of those boys who have passed the Intermediate Certificate are the most difficult to keep up to concert pitch. The cause is not far to seek. It is natural that after a year's unusual effort, crowned with some success, that a boy should over-estimate the value of that achievement. He finds himself faced with a year's work that does not, as far as he can see, lead in a direct line to any examination. His Leaving Certificate lies far away in the distance of two whole years, and two years is a long way off when one is fifteen or sixteen. It is therefore not unnatural that a boy is tempted to look upon the post-Intermediate year as a welcome interlude in which he may relax effort. At any rate, it is true that our experience tells us that this year which should be one of great mental stimulation is often rather the reverse. The stimulation has to be applied from without, instead of growing up from within.

The second point, and here I speak specially of the subject in which I have been chiefly engaged, the Classics, is that the effect of the Intermediate Certificate is narrowing at just the wrong point. Success in the Intermediate Certificate Latin depends too much upon the correct translation of one book of Caesar that

has been conned too often. A candidate is forced to mark time on this during periods of marching along the narrow path of grammar. There is too little to attract or stimulate. During the first four years of Latin study, a boy should be introduced early to Ovid's Fairy stories, Livy's anecdotes, Virgil's romance, and Cicero's wit and humour, and even if he does become foot-sore on grammar's hard road, at least he will be relieved by some interest in the landscape on either hand. He will enrich his English vocabulary, together with his Latin, and find that the Romans, who mothered our own tongue, lived and loved and laughed like other people.

Although this criticism is more applicable to linguistic subjects, than to the more exact studies, for they are more readily divided into stages at definite points, it is true that School boys and girls do tend to become examination-minded, to fix their eyes on the nearer goal of marks, rather than to become scholarly-minded and seek the more distant objective of mastery.

The number in attendance during the year was: 685 in Term I, 682 in Term II and 674 in Term III. Last year Mr. Robson told you that we were endeavouring to adopt 670 as the normal strength. He has heard from me, I fear with some dismay, that the number next year will be over 700. This is not a matter for congratulation. It has been necessitated by the purchase of Barry House, which is being reconstructed and will be opened as a Boarding House next February. Our careful Treasurer could not approve of this money lying idle for twelve months and so he put the hard word upon me to accept boarders to fill it. The entries in April when I took over control were already so numerous that it appeared that there would be 680 upon the roll, if we took no more new boys. I had now to fill Barry House with 30 boarders to please the Treasurer and to keep the numbers down to normal to please the Headmaster. Well, if you cannot please everybody, it is prudent to please the man on the spot. The Headmaster was on the other side of the deep blue sea, and I found myself between the deep blue sea and the Hon. Treasurer, so I have filled Barry House; and the School will open with 720 boys. I have arranged the entries, however, in such a way as to absorb this extra number in the Upper portion of the School, so that the new form created next year as an extra Fifth, may be eliminated in 1941, if Mr. Robson sees fit.

Perhaps this is a suitable time and place to utter a warning: I have, during the past few months, been forced to decline finally the entry of some fifty or sixty boys. I have already entered seventy boys for 1940 and the lists for 1941 and even 1942 have names on their rolls. I have taken you into my confidence in these business details to bring home to you, and through you to your friends, the necessity of early application.

In sport the School has had its share of success. I suppose that the day of the year is Regatta Day, and I am sure that the spirits of Charles Hodges, and W. A. Purves, Alan Ramsay and A. D. Hall were watching over our first Crew's magnificent victorious effort on the Nepean in April, and the hearts of the two Robsons were beating in double time to the oars. The second and third Crews were also in the picture, obtaining second and third places. One generous supporter, our old friend Sir Thomas Buckland, signalled his approval of our success by a generous donation of £150 for a new racing Eight.

In Cricket the 1st XI had more defeats than victories. The lower teams had more than their share of success. The first XI was fourth, and the second XI tied for the Premiership with St. Joseph's. This team owed a great deal to their coach, Mr. Eldershaw, as have so many second XI's in the past. The prospects for the future are good, as seven of the 1st XI are returning to School next year.

The football season was successful in general. The first XV was joint runner-up and the second and third XV were third. Our hopes were high when we beat the redoubtable St. Joseph's in the practice match, but they turned the tables on us in the competition match.

This year's Athletic season was interfered with by rain and influenza, leading to a double postponement of the Annual School Fixture, which ultimately took place in the third term in storm and wind and mud.

The teams representing the School in the G.P.S. Competition were not strong enough to cope with the opposition this year, and both filled fifth place: as in previous years, the performance of the Rev. N. Backhouse and the distance runners was outstanding, while J. F. Wearne performed notably in the High Jump.

Tennis occupies a minor place in our sport, as in most Schools. Not that it is despised as a game, but that from its nature it cannot be universal.

Nevertheless, quite a large number of boys become proficient and the Fairwater Cup goes backwards and forward between ourselves and the Sydney Grammar School. This year it is with our friends and opponents.

The Rifle Shooting teams have returned to the success of former years. The first team shared the Premiership with Scots, the second team was in first place. In Cadet matches, we won five out of six, and in Militia matches, two out of the seven in which we competed.

In the Cadet Corps, the spirit is more and more enthusiastic each year, and therefore efficiency increases. The attitude of the boys in the ranks is remarkably eager and is a mirror of the earnest and capable leadership of the seven boy officers, four warrant officers, and forty N.C.O.'s. The value

of Cadet training is more highly appreciated by the army authorities than ever before. The training arranged under the command of Major Bagot with the able assistance of Major Mander-Jones is systematic and thorough. The year's training culminated in a six days' camp at Liverpool, in conjunction with other Schools. The strength was upwards of 800. The camp was visited on Friday last by His Excellency the Governor-General, who showed keen interest in the boys' work and complimented those responsible on the efficiency of the Corps.

There is no tin-soldiering about our Cadet Corps: I remember well that in 1914 and onwards after many piping years of peace, I received many letters from the front in gratitude for the elementary lessons in warfare which helped our young soldiers towards efficiency and leadership. God defend us from such a need again; but never has it been more necessary to prepare for emergency. The Cadet Corps of the Secondary Schools are at least doing a work very useful both in performance and example.

Physical instruction has always been a serious part of our curriculum. This year, apart from the daily exercises under Sergeant-Major Davidson, in which the whole School participates, there has been an experiment in engaging special instructors for the Preparatory School. The work has been excellent, but I am not sure that the work of our own old Scots Guardsman, his grip of the method, and his inimitable way of imparting it can be improved upon. Perhaps it will be found that the chief gain from the more modern instructors will be in the system of record, by which we can make graphs of the physical improvement and the disappearance of defects in those who vary from the normal standard. Mr. Robson has been observing the incidence of Physical Training in Schools in Europe and America and will come back with something to tell us, but I feel that we are not far from being abreast of the times.

I would like at this point to ask for your congratulations to Sergeant-Major Davidson on the completion this year of twenty-five years' service in this School.

The health of the School has been, in the main, very good, but for two epidemics. In the second term the influenza took a rather serious form, and during the third term there was a wide-spread visitation of Mumps, which still lingers with us; not very serious, but disconcerting. The Council are tired of hearing me insist on the necessity for an adequate Sanatorium. We are still limited to the accommodation that was provided nearly forty years ago when the boarders numbered forty-two. There will now be over two hundred. The present building has, at a pinch, ten beds. In the days when it was first built this was barely adequate to deal with an epidemic. In both the epidemics of this year, I had to twist and turn the dor-

mitories to accommodate the patients. This causes disorganisation of the domestic staff and of house discipline. It entails great difficulty in checking an infection. It is hardly necessary to elaborate: a hospital is the most pressing of our needs.

This leads one's thoughts directly to the necessity for capital. If it is thought to be a lapse from hospitality to invite you all to this ceremony to make an attack upon your pockets, I answer that this is not so much a garden party in which the Council and myself are hosts, and you the guests, as it is a meeting of partners in a great concern in the welfare of which we are all vitally interested. I therefore brave criticism and remind you that this School of ours has in fifty years grown into a mighty institution of great value to the State; and it has so grown by the self-sacrifice of two or three generations of men inspired by the love of the great centre of young life that was gradually being built up by their devotion. I am making no over-statement when I say that no business-institution of the magnitude and productiveness of this School would have been contemplated upon the slender capital that was available to found it. I further remind you, perhaps I should say inform you, that the fees paid for the services of this School are equivalent only to the most moderate of those Great Public Schools of England, on whose model this School has been formed. And I further remind you that all those Schools in England have been capitalised by the pious donations and legacies of former generations. We have had generous benefactors in the past, but what was looked upon as a natural duty in another century and on the other side of the world, has not become so general in New South Wales. It is for this reason that the Jubilee Fund was inaugurated. To this we have had generous subscriptions and for this Committees of kind ladies and others have valiantly worked. But to-day the clock strikes: the Jubilee Year is upon us. I do therefore exhort you to make a special effort during the coming year to fill up the capital fund of £50,000 at which we aim. Everyone may do something. Even those whose purses are narrow have friends whose purses are wider and who may be infected with enthusiasm for the cause. I am convinced that direct donation is the real and only channel from which we may expect a full flow: I feel convinced that if you will only do the simple sum in arithmetic correlating the fees you pay and the obvious items of payment that the School must incur, you will find that there is little over for capitalisation.

There is a hospital, an Assembly Hall, and a Hobbies House, which are immediate needs and apart from bricks and mortar, the demands of education are yearly becoming wider and more expensive. We may have many little irons in the fire, but we now want a few rich men who will recognise by their generosity the value of the work that has been done and that

will continue to be done in the future; if the means are supplied.

It is fair that the question should be asked what value does the School give to the community, which necessitates all this outlay?

I say first that all here know the answer. It is difficult to formulate; perhaps impossible to do so fully. But I suggest that, in addition to our record in the work of the classroom and the playing field, first that our training is rooted firmly in religion. I am convinced that no boy passes through this School unaffected by the influence of our simple daily service in the dignified Chapel. I am certain that there is sown in the inner consciousness of the young those seeds of unobtrusive religion which is the foundation of the best men of our race. I firmly believe it is this underlying sense of religion which is going to keep the British race in the van of civilisation when the iconoclasts in other places are themselves shattered, and I feel certain that Church Schools are a vital necessity.

Secondly, I answer continuity of the Staff. I quote from a letter of thanks, which I received from one of you last week, thanking the Staff for the obvious sincerity that all employ in their profession. I am convinced that the eagerness of this staff in their professional work is doubled by their sentiment for the place and feeling for the local habitation and the name. This one place becomes their career and their life: they stay here long enough to teach father and son; they are part and parcel of the School rather than pawns in a department.

Continuity again of the Old Boys' Union which links past with present. I have never known a similar body more loyal or more alive. I am convinced that these things, religion and continuity of service raise the level of the service to the community of this and sister schools to so high a place in public esteem. Is it too much to ask that some sacrifice should be incurred to ensure the means of continuance of their usefulness?

You can see for yourselves that the new class rooms, which were in embryo when we met here a year ago, have come to birth and are now fulfilling their destiny. The brighter environment has, we believe, had the effect which we expected. There is inspiration in tasteful surroundings. Parents, I suppose, are apt to think their own boys little angels. Uncles, I have heard, consider their nephews little nuisances. It remains for Schoolmasters to estimate fairly that they are really only rather pleasant little human beings. We, therefore, think it worth while to surround them with every civilising agency; among these seemly, even beautiful class rooms are not the least. One enthusiastic master has told me that spelling mistakes decreased by 17% on a day when he chanced to migrate with his class to one of the well-appointed class rooms. If I were less sceptical of statistics, I should claim this as a convincing proof of the value of beautiful surroundings,

and, in any case, I do believe that the effort required to master the inconsequence of English orthography is more readily given in pleasant surroundings than in dull ones.

Barry House, long my much loved home, has passed, as I hoped would be its destiny, into the possession of the School, and, as I mentioned elsewhere, will be reopened as a fifth Boarding House next term. Mr. Eldershaw will be in charge. So now we have the four Houses of the main School surrounding the Chapel and forming a close that will become venerable as those of the old Public Schools.

Extensive improvements are being carried out at the Northbridge Grounds. To the enthusiasm of Dr. St. Vincent Welch is due the evidence that you see around you of the beautification of the School grounds. By May of next year, this work will be more complete. It is in no spirit of criticism of his work that I say that I am hopeful that, when the young life of the beautiful plane trees that he has planted round the ground has been sufficiently guarded, we shall once more see as of old the "ins" in a Junior Cricket match watching their mates from the shade, instead of in the broiling sun. We have put into his capable hands the decoration of the grounds for the Jubilee Celebration in May, and I can promise that he will turn the place into a paradise. At present I must apologise for the chrysalis stage in which we see it to-day.

The Master's Common Room has been refurnished and now forms a pleasant club lounge. Again environment is doing its work as there is increased opportunity and inclination for eager discussions on "shop" now that men are tempted to spend more of their leisure in that pleasant place.

The lag time after the Leaving Certificate was briefer than in former years, but was filled by lectures by Dr. Moseley and Mr. Waller and visits to the Port Kembla Steel Works and to Richmond Aerodrome.

The Debating Team has been as enthusiastic as ever. They were, however, defeated by High School, whose polemics took a more vigorous form. Notwithstanding this, our leader, Pritchett carried off the Lawrence Campbell Prize as best Orator.

At the Open Sunday Services the Preachers for the year have been the Rev. W. F. Pyke, the Rev. Canon Howard Lea, and the Rev. C. Adams. At the Service of the Lodge Torch-bearer the Preacher was an Old Boy of the School, the Vcu. Archdeacon E. A. North-Ash. Several addresses were given to the boys, notably one by Bishop F. A. Bennctt, the Maori Bishop of Aoteroa, New Zealand. To these I tender my earnest thanks. The Choir has maintained a high standard under Mr. Walmsley and has rendered a number of Anthems on various occasions. The Chaplain wisely arranges a variety of services, and in my opinion this largely accounts for the reverence and interest shown by a congregation of boys. I have introduced

a little more ceremony in the service for admission of Prefects, to which I have added a few words as a charge to them upon their new duties. I feel that the added impressiveness of a personal address on the first assumption of responsible office will prove beneficial.

Forty-nine candidates presented themselves for confirmation by His Grace the Archbishop. There is a large attendance at the weekly early celebration.

I think a few words on the Prefect system would be in season. It is a system which has the sanction of old established custom here and elsewhere. It is justified here by its results. I have read of its abuses in certain school stories written by neurotics. I have been governed by it as a small boy; I participated in it as a senior boy; I have observed it throughout a long life as a schoolmaster. My conclusion is that in all that separates British education from others, the Prefect system is outstanding in its benefits. The Prefects, themselves carefully chosen, learn the restraint that must go hand in hand with authority. The younger boys readily respect an office to which they themselves will be eligible to attain. Abuse of privilege is seldom met with among prefects; on the rare occasions when it is, it is the more easily checked; when appeal can be made to realisation of responsibility. Abuse of authority is non-existent: I know of no case where undeserved punishment has been given: I know of many where summary procedure by a prefect has saved a boy from severer penalty from a master and at the same time been a surer corrective. It provides the best insurance against bullying: it inculcates respect: it makes for good order.

The Scouts are eager as ever and have had various expeditions, the furthest of which was to Newcastle to the B.H.P. works. The vigour of this Troop under Rev. N. Backhouse and Mr. R. A. Gilfillan owes much to the leadership of Howie, who, on leaving the School after six years service in the Troop, well deserves that his name should be mentioned.

By ordering the School to assemble five minutes earlier in the morning I have added five minutes to the time for lessons, five minutes to the mid-morning break, and fifteen minutes to the luncheon break. I do not propose to detail the magic by which I turned five minutes into twenty-five, but the result has been good.

The Entertainments Club can now operate to the full without encroaching upon School time. We have had visits from Artists outside and the School Vocal Club has twice given a selection from the Gondoliers which was much appreciated. I find that the desire for music is growing.

The Art Club, of which J. W. Lipscomb is secretary, is also fully alive. There has been an exhibition of the work, mostly of the younger boys, also a selection of coloured prints of

famous pictures is posted in the sliding frames under the Arch and from time to time renewed.

During the year some two hundred boys twice paid a visit to the Town Hall to hear a Symphony Concert.

The Pageant which was presented at the School two years ago was re-presented at the Chatswood Oval, as part of the Sesqui-Centenary Celebrations.

The good work of the Woolloomooloo Club still goes on, and I am pleased to say in connection with a kindred interest, that there has been a good response from the School to Professor Lovell's invitation to G.P.S. Boys to attend the Toe H. Camp during January. This is a combined Camp for Schoolboys and boys engaged in Industry. Similar Camps have been most successful in England and the King himself has done much to further the movement for the better understanding between the young in differing social circumstances. The movement is on a firm footing in England and has been productive of a better understanding between the Classes. It is said that it settled one dispute between employers and employees, where a capitalist, cold of eye, and a greaser, prominent of chin, who were debating on opposite sides of the "impasse" suddenly recognised one another as tent-mates at a former Toe H boys Camp and ended up arm in arm with all differences settled. That is a good story and it may be true. But at least the moral is abundantly true and I have no doubt that it is our duty to the community to guide the young along every channel that leads towards the river of peace and goodwill towards man. That is the reason that I sponsored this movement by a circular to parents of Vth. Form boys. I am glad to say that considering the short notice there has been a good response and some dozen boys are going to Camp.

It is not possible in this record to offer to every Old Boy the congratulations which we offer and share: but I will mention three:

Dr. D. M. Myers, who astounded the mathematical and scientific world by his invention of the graph-integrator.

I have no intention of explaining to you what it is, but it solves mechanically in a few minutes algebraic equations which no one in this tent except Messrs. Bagot and Whight could solve at all, and it would take them, I understand, four or five weeks. It is, in all seriousness, a startling achievement.

K. N. E. Bradfield, who received his Doctorate of Philosophy at Oxford during the year.

E. C. S. White, who added to a name which has been an honoured one in cricket annals of the School for forty years, the supreme honour of being selected for the Australian team.

Mr. Whight has been with us since the beginning of 1935. His sunny nature, his cheerful energy in form and in field has endeared him to his colleagues and the boys, and, though we

feel that we can ill spare him, we offer him our hearty congratulations on his appointment to the Headmastership of Townsville Grammar School for which responsible position his attainments and his personality eminently fit him.

We also regretfully part with Mr. Edwards, whose temporary appointment for this year ends with this term and who is about to undertake work of a more specialised nature. Also Mr. McCracken, who has given good service both in Preparatory and main school for five years. During the year Mr. S. C. S. Begbie left us to become Headmaster of St. Andrew's Cathedral Choir School.

All the vacancies have not yet been filled but I have secured the services of the Rev. T. H. D. Kitley, who was for some years on the Armidale staff, and who addressed the School in Chapel last term; and Mr. Brierley, who has been for some time on the Tudor House Staff and who will assist Mr. Fisher in the Preparatory School.

The Council aims at making service on the Staff of S.C.E.G.S. a career in itself and hopes for the day when no member of the Staff will be attracted from it but to become a headmaster elsewhere.

I cannot adequately express my thanks to my colleagues, for their whole-hearted support without which I should have found my responsible office too great a burden. I can say at the end of my command that the pleasant relations that had always existed between us continued during the period when some of the aloofness of the captain of the ship was necessary. Everything was done to show that I possessed their confidence and respect. This, more than any other thing, has made this last year a happy one for me.

I also tender my thanks to those members of the Council who have given me sympathy, advice and assistance in an arduous year's work, especially to Mr. Blythe, whose wide experience in the business of the School has been of great service and his counsel, which he has always been ready to give, has been invaluable. The School has no firmer friend.

That I may speak without faltering the last words that I shall address to the boys as a schoolmaster, I say no more than this:

May God bless you with long life and with success and happiness in your undertakings, and this will be so if you set out to rule your life on those principles of conduct that you have learned in the School that you all love.

J. LEE PULLING,
Acting Headmaster.

