

BYGONE BROOKLYN

By Tom Richmond

THE METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist church at Brooklyn had passed into history before modern survivors can recall. Rev F.H.McGowan has left some details, however, in an article that recorded the early activities of Methodists at Brooklyn.

He mentioned the names of several Methodist families, including those of Cole, Greer, Burton, Bowles, Lloyd, Duffel and Calvert.

From 1872 occasional services were held in a private house, and Peats' Ferry appeared later as a preaching place on the Hawkesbury River Circuit Plan.

In 1874 a 'Wesleyan Chapel' was built. The shingles used for the roof were split by Mr. James Ross and Mr. Calvert, and donated by them as their gift to the Church. Mr. John Duffel was the builder. Mr. James Ross, interviewed in his 86th year, still resided at Brooklyn, and retained a clear recollection of the early chapel, which was a substantial structure, erected on a green slope overlooking the broad expanse of the Hawkesbury waters.



This woodcut from 1883 shows buildings where the cemetery is now located. The one on the extreme right was the Wesleyan Chapel (Methodist). The one on the left was formerly the Road Superintendent's house and later a school, then Dick Lloyd's store. The oyster depot run by Lloyd and Seymour is at the water's edge.

Mr. John Laughton, a farmer near Wiseman's Ferry, took an influential interest in the young cause. He conducted services twice a quarter, travelling the whole distance of 22 miles in a rowing boat. Laughton was the sister-in-law of Mary Cole, wife of the pioneer, James Cole.

The Hawkesbury River Circuit Plan for August, September, and October, 1875, shows Peats' Ferry as receiving morning and afternoon services once a month. Rev. James Sommerville had pastoral oversight, and conducted services once a quarter. His only mode of transit was by rowing boat from Wiseman's Ferry, in addition to a ride of 15 miles across country before the boat was reached. The morning service was held at eleven o'clock. The members of the congregation brought their lunch, and after dinner and social intercourse, a second service was held at two o'clock. Then followed the arduous task of the long up-river pull home.

A son of the Rev. James Sommerville, supplies the information that his father's last service at Peats' Ferry was on the 19th August, 1883. In 1887 the railway was opened through the district, and the present township, Brooklyn, began to grow near the station. Information supplied by Mr. James Ross was that from 1887, when the services were held less frequently, and at last ceased on account of, the distance preachers had to travel.

The church was used as a public school from 1878 to 1884, when it shared a teacher with Bar Island School. Prior to this, the school had been conducted in a house that had originally been built for the supervisor of roads in the area. The house became a shop operated by Dick Lloyd when the church was used as a school.

Just when Methodist services ceased altogether is not definitely known. Brooklyn continued to grow, and families gradually moved from the first place of settlement to the more convenient railway centre nearly two miles distant. The church, unused and neglected, crumbled to decay, till not a trace remained. The site was resumed by the Main Roads Board in 1931 for £750.