

# The history of the former church in Tindale Road, Artarmon

By Helen Wheeler, APA Heritage Committee

**The former church and its adjoining hall on the corner of Tindale and Artarmon Roads have been used in the past for community events and this will continue in the future with the recent purchase of the site by Willoughby City Council.**

Prior to the establishment of the church the Presbyterian residents of Artarmon walked to Chatswood South Church on the corner of Mowbray Rd and Pacific Hwy.

Plans to build a Presbyterian Church in Artarmon began in early 1922 and the site was acquired in 1925. The foundation stone was laid on October 10, 1925 and the church was dedicated and opened in March 1926. Over the years the building grew to accommodate the church's growing needs. The Reverend Dr John Flynn, who founded the Royal Flying Doctor Service and appears on the Australian \$20.00 note, preached in the church in the 1920s.

In 1927, 3 Muttama Road was purchased as the residence for the minister. In 1932 the Sunday School hall was built and, in 1956, additional building took place to join the hall and church together and to add a kitchen and fellowship rooms.

The original decorative leadlight in the northern window came from Scots Church in York Street in the city. This church was demolished in preparation for the construction of the southern approaches to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The leadlight window had been constructed in 1826 so was already 100 years old when it was moved to Artarmon. Between 2001 and 2009 it was removed and is believed to have been given to a church on the Northern Beaches.

The sandstone font was donated to the church by Reverend E.A. Fergusson when St Stephen's Church in Phillip Street, Sydney was demolished. Rather than wooden pews, the church had old theatre seats, reputedly obtained after the refurbishment of the old Lyceum Theatre in

Sydney. Senior residents of Artarmon can remember the seats springing up whenever they stood to sing hymns.

During WWII an Artarmon resident was the first RAAF serviceman to die in action and a plaque was placed in the church in his memory.

In 1945 it became apparent that the original organ was deteriorating so a special fund was set up by local residents for a new one and it took until 1962 to raise sufficient funds. The replacement was called the 'War Memorial Pipe Organ' in remembrance of parishioners who died in the 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 world wars. The organ remained in the church for nearly 40 years and was moved in 2001 to the Longueville Uniting Church who held a thanksgiving service to celebrate its donation and installation.

In 1947, Mr J.C. Brodie donated the church bell that is still in situ today and, as he was an engineer, he also designed the bell tower. The bell was found at South Head and had come from a ship wreck. On 6th March 1948 it was first rung at the nuptials of Mr Brodie's daughter, Janette, and David Warner, an eminent Artarmon resident after whom the Artarmon Community Centre is named.

In 1976 the Artarmon Presbyterian Church became part of the Uniting Church. Over the years its congregation had slowly decreased and the last service was held on Sunday, 26th November 2000. Janette Warner has kindly donated the Order of Service sheet for the final service to the Heritage Committee so that it can be conserved for the residents of Artarmon. After church services ceased the congregants transferred to the Chatswood



*Artarmon Presbyterian Church in March 1948 on the morning of Janette and David Warner's wedding.*

South Uniting Church on the Pacific Hwy.

The site was purchased by the Gavemer Foundation, who extensively renovated both the church and the hall, in 2001. The crematorial ashes from the church's front garden were transferred to the Chatswood South Church Cemetery but the location of the memorial plaques removed from inside the church is unknown.

In 2009 the site was purchased by Willoughby City Council for use as a library and community centre. The Council has proposed that the name of the existing library in Elizabeth Street, the 'David Warner Community Centre', be transferred to the new site. The name is even more appropriate in this location as David Warner and his family were active in the Artarmon Presbyterian Church. Vernon Warner, his father, was the first Sunday School Superintendent and David was a church elder, youth worker and convened the annual fete.

The church and hall will be renovated for use as Artarmon's new library and other community uses. It will be a real asset to our area while still retaining a piece of our heritage.

*Thanks to Janette Warner for providing photos, documents and information for this article.*