

## ST. MARK'S, TARCUTTA. The Church and the Parish. (BY RANSOME T. WYATT.)

The township of Tarcutta is celebrating its centenary, for it is just one hundred years ago this month since Thomas Hodges Mate settled upon what is now Tarcutta Station. The little church of St. Mark at Tarcutta, although it cannot claim a centenary, has yet a respectable antiquity behind it, and is sharing in these celebrations.

The ecclesiastical history of Tarcutta may be said to begin with the taking up of Tarcutta station by that staunch churchman,

Thomas Hodges Mate, in 1836. Mr. Mate's arrival is said to have arisen thus : In 1836 he reached Tarcutta in search of some cattle which had strayed from the neighbourhood of Harden. He found them near Tarcutta Creek. He had been camping there a few days, when a man rode up and asked him if he knew he was trespassing. Mr. Mate replied "No," and inquired as to the ownership of the property. The visitor declared himself the owner and in reply to further questions as to the extent of his holding, claimed ownership of everything between the Murrumbidgee and the Murray. Whereupon Mr. Mate replied that he intended to remain where he was until such time as the Government ordered him to vacate. He did remain there, and township and parish grew out of that settlement.

The present ecclesiastical parish was only formed in 1909, but ministrations in the area go back to the very beginnings of church life in the Riverina end of the Goulburn diocese.

In 1843 the Rev. W. Lisle was sent to the Murrumbidgee District "for the purpose of dispensing the ordinances of religion and to itinerate in that district for three months from January 1 next." In the absence of any registers or any report it is hard to say where he went or what he did. The itinerating nature of his duties as prescribed in his licence would suggest that he had no fixed abode. He would visit Tarcutta and stay at the Mate's. The first recorded ministrations were rendered at a very early date by the Rev. C. F. Briggstocke, rector of Yass. His registers show two marriages in 1847.

Bishop Broughton visited Tarcutta on the 29/1/1850, staying at Mate's. The next night 30/1/1850, he slept at the Inn at "Kiamba" (Kyeamba). Tarcutta probably shared in the itinerating ministry of the Rev. T. H. Wilkinson (1851) and that of the Rev. Samuel Fox (Tumut, Wagga, and Gundagai, 1855).

### THE SETTLED PASTORATE.

In 1859 Tarcutta would appear to have been included in the Wagga parish, for the Rev. E. Singe, in his account of his journeys through the south-western parts of the diocese (Sydney), describes that parish as including: "The basin of the Murrumbidgee from the Tarcutta Creek as far down the river as the clergyman is able to reach." However, Tumbarumba was then the responsibility of the clergyman stationed at Albury, whilst Tumut was responsible for Adelong. Confirmation of the responsibility of Wagga for Tarcutta in 1859 is found in the "Sydney Church Society's Report for 1860," where "J. H. Mate," an obvious misprint for "T. H. Mate," appears as a subscriber of £10. The following year he appears as "T. H. Mate, M.P." In 1863 the Diocese of Goulburn was founded.

The earliest reference to Tarcutta in diocesan records is in 1874, when, as part of the parish of Albury, it remits £7 for the Church Society. For two years previous to this, Mount Adrah and Mundarlo are shown as worked from Gundagai. In 1875 Mount Adrah, Oberne, and Humula are shown as worked from Adelong, Mundarlo as from Gundagai, and presumably Tarcutta from Albury, for it is still listed under Albury in 1878. In 1876 Kyeamba is shown as the responsibility of Albury; "Marraguldrie" appears under the heading of Adelong in 1876. In 1881, however, Tarcutta Upper and Tarcutta Lower appear as contributing £1 and £8 respectively to the stipend fund of the Adelong parish.

In the Adelong registers baptisms from Oberne and Humula appear constantly from 1873 and 1875 respectively to 1909. Baptisms from Tarcutta itself are rarer, but are recorded at intervals from 1881 to 1909.

Confirmations from 1890 onwards are held regularly, showing the steady growth of settlement. In Tarcutta itself the Presbyterian Church was used for services, the Bishop giving confirmation there, e.g., on October 10, 1893. In 1902 the Mate Memorial Church was built

there. On March 1, 1909, the Bishop reported to the Diocesan Council "the constitution of a parochial district out of the parish of Adelong, to be called the parish of Tarcutta."

#### A SEPARATE PARISH.

The Rev. H. J. Gedney first took charge, and was there four years. He built the church at Westbrook and himself made the furnishings. He did the work in Tarcutta, helped in their conveyance to Westbrook, and placed them in position there. He was followed by the Rev. D. D. Carruthers, who also stayed four years. An interregnum then occurred, during which services were carried on by Mr. H. J. Mills, then a lay reader. The Rev. H. C. Walton was rector for five years, during which time much improvement in the furnishing of the parish church was undertaken; the Borambola Hall and the rectory were built. The Rev. W. Blackwell was rector from 1925 to 1928 and the Rev. E. Fletcher from 1928.

A beautiful and well-appointed little brick church is St. Mark's, with an iron roof. Its proper designation is "The Mate Memorial Church." It was built by "Maria H. Mate and her sister, Annie Thompson, to memorise the lives of Thomas Hodges Mate and Maria Mate," and consecrated November 15, 1902. In 1919 a new altar, reredos, and altar lights were placed in the church as a memorial to fallen soldiers. A new font was introduced in 1921, the gift of Mrs. Latham, in memory of two sons, the former font being removed to St. Peter's, Mundarlo. Memorials include a tablet to the memory of Maria H. Mate, who built the church; sanctuary lamp, alms dish, and cruets were given by parishioners in memory of Nancy Fletcher. The lectern Bible was given on the 30th anniversary of the opening of the church by four members of the Fletcher family, two Hiltons, and Ellen Bowen.

#### ST. PETER'S, MUNDARLO.

Mundarlo is first shown in diocesan returns as worked from Gundagai in 1871. A Church Society grant of £25 towards the cost of its erection was made in 1877. The petition for its consecration is signed by the Rev. J. H. Williams, who was rector of Gundagai at the time. There is no date on the petition and no diocesan record of the consecration having taken place. The font is that originally in St. Mark's, Tarcutta; some refurnishing took place in 1914. It was largely rebuilt and re-stored in 1921, and was licensed again on March 21, 1921.

#### ST. JOHN'S, MOUNT ADRAH.

A wooden church with an iron roof, Mount Adrah is shown as worked from Gundagai in 1871, since when it has been worked from Tarcutta, Adelong, and Tarcutta again. Its dedication would appear to be uncertain. Both St. John's and St. Paul's are in use. The church was built in 1900, when the centre was worked from Adelong. Some restoration and refurnishing took place in 1914, and further measures of refurnishing and rearrangement in 1920.

#### ST. ALBAN'S, WESTBROOK.

A weatherboard church with an iron roof. Built during the Rev. H. J. Gedney's incumbency, but not dedicated or licensed until February 7, 1915.

#### BORAMBOLA CHURCH HALL.

An iron building with an iron roof. Built 1924. The hall has had an unfortunate history. Mrs. Angel gave a site, which site was conveyed to the Church of England Property Trust, Diocese of Goulburn. Apparently it was found impossible to raise sufficient funds to build a church, and it was determined instead to build a hall. As the general public was invited to contribute, the building somewhat naturally came to be regarded as a public hall. The decision to build a hall was not unanimous, and the resulting misunderstanding as to its ownership and use has led to friction. Other centres worked are Humula and Oberne. At Humula a Presbyterian Church is used for services.