

Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal, 30 May 1889

Departure of Mr. George Smith.  
PRESENTATION OF TESTIMONIALS.

As is now generally known Mr. George Smith has arranged to leave Bathurst for "fresh fields, and pastures new," he having taken up land at Eden where he purposes settling down with his wife and family. When the members of the Wesleyan Church heard of his intended departure, they decided they would not allow him to leave without recognising the services he had rendered to the church, especially as choir-master, for about twenty years. Accordingly he and Mrs. Smith were entertained at a social on Monday evening last, and at the same time presentations were made from the trustees and congregation and also from the members of the choir. The former consisted of a gold watch suitably inscribed, and the latter a life size portrait, in crayon, of Mr. Smith. Owing to the inclement weather which set in on Monday, the attendance at the social was not very large, but notwithstanding this a very pleasant evening was spent. After refreshments had been supplied a public meeting was held, and this was presided over by Mr. E. T. Webb, J.P.

The Chairman apologised for the absence of his father (Hon. E. Webb) who had been invited to fill the chair, and also for Mr. Apps. He then referred to the fact of Mr. and Mrs. Smith's residence amongst them for so many years, during which time they had taken a very lively interest in the cause of the church, and in the advancement of the city. Mr. Smith came to Bathurst as a single man, and married a Bathurst lady. His children were born in Bathurst, and he was sure that there would always be a tender place in his heart for the city of the Plains. His loss to Bathurst would be felt, not only as leader of the choir but in other ways. He was a man full of energy, and when he undertook anything he carried it through. He hoped that success would attend him in his new home, and opportunities would present themselves by which he could continue to carry on the work in which he was engaged in Bathurst.

Rev C. Stead said that as there were several speakers to follow him who were better acquainted with Mr. Smith than he was, he would leave them to speak. He well remembered Mr. Smith, having seen him about nine years ago when on a visit to Bathurst and he had never forgotten him since. The reports he had heard of him were good, showing that his devotion to Methodism was still as great as ever. He thought it would not be right to allow him to go away without some expression of feeling on the part of the congregation and choir. He was glad that the trustees had taken up the matter, and that the friends had so willingly responded. Speaking of the choir, he was sure the people would endorse his statement that it was a first rate choir, and their services could not be over-estimated. He referred to an occasion when an eminent Baptist Minister, Dr. Ryland, after giving out a hymn allowed the choir to sing it through. This having been done the minister turned round and said that he wondered the Angels did not come down and wring the neck of each of the singers. There was never any occasion for such a remark in connection with the choir in Bathurst since Mr. Smith had acted as conductor. In addition to being a good leader, he was an excellent man. He managed his choir so well that there were never any differences and everything passed off smoothly. He regretted that one of the prominent members of the congregation was about to leave just as he (the speaker) was coming into the circuit. He hoped his children would follow in the footsteps of their father, and that in the future there would be a strong Methodist Church at the Cape.

Mr. W. C. Kelk, J. P., was sorry that the occasion had arisen when he had to say farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Smith. They would be greatly missed from Bathurst; but, their worth was so well known that it needed nothing more from him than a simple expression of his regret. He had known him from the time he came to Bathurst, and had always had a high opinion of him. As a leader of the choir, he was very good, and, as a result, the singing was excellent. He (the speaker) had great confidence in Mr. Smith, and, although he differed with him in politics, yet, when political excitement was over, nothing more was thought of it, than showing how the Methodists could agree to differ. To show how greatly he trusted him, he had consented to allow his son, Rowland, to go with him. He was pleased that the congregation and choir had decided to recognise Mr. Smith's services.

Mr. W. H. Paul, M.P., expressed the honor he felt at having been asked by the trustees to make the presentation to Mr. Smith in recognition of his services in connection with the church for seventeen years. He was pleased when he heard that steps were being taken in this direction. Some might think that it was a light matter to undertake the leadership of a choir, but in addition to other difficulties there was a great tax on his time in practising and regular attendants at church. Being a family man he must find that he was compelled to set aside many comforts in order to fulfil the duties faithfully. The choir had done good work in assisting to raise money by special services. In addition to the service rendered in the church, he had aided greatly the different Sunday schools, both in preparing the children in singing for Easter, and in the management of the treats. He was a good all round man, and in point of liberality none could surpass him in proportion to his means. As a church, the Methodists in Bathurst could put any of the other Protestant churches to blush, for he had it on the authority of a prominent member of All Saints which was composed of a wealthy congregation, that the Methodists gave as much, or more than they did. It was through Mr. Smith having offered £5 at the last Milltown anniversary that other donations were made, with the result that over £80 was contributed at the meeting. It would be well for the church if the youth of the congregation threw as much energy into the church work as Mr. Smith did. Mr. Kelk had referred to his work in politics, and he (the speaker) was satisfied that it was through Mr. Smith's energy, coupled with that of an influential committee that he (the speaker) was elected as representative for Bathurst. Bathurst could ill-afford to lose such men as Mr. Smith, but he hoped that in his new home he would be successful. Mr. Smith had done good work in the cause of temperance, and it was mainly owing to his efforts in years past that some of the present temperance institutions were started, and were still in existence

When concluding his remarks, Mr. Paul presented to Mr. Smith a gold watch bearing the inscription : — 'Presented to Mr. George Smith, by the trustees and congregation of the Wesleyan Church, Bathurst, in recognition of his valuable services as choir master for 17 years. — May, 1889.'

Mr. Herbert Craig could not add anything to what the previous speaker had said. He had been connected with Mr. Smith for fifteen years in connection with the choir, and he now felt their separation keenly. They had always been on the most friendly terms, and he hoped that in the future God's blessing would attend him. One of the speakers had referred to the fact that Mr. Smith had married in Bathurst, and he might add that he took his wife from the choir. He felt sure that Mr. and Mrs. Smith would, always remember that in Bathurst there were friends who would always be glad to hear of their welfare and pleased to see them in the future. On behalf of the members of the choir, he presented Mr. Smith with a life-sized portrait, in crayon, bearing the inscription : "Presented to Mr. George Smith, leader of the choir for 17 years, by the members of the choir, on the occasion of his departure from Bathurst.-May. 1889."

Mr. Smith rose to reply, but was so affected that it was with difficulty he gave utterance to his remarks. In accepting the handsome presents on behalf of Mrs. Smith and himself, he tendered his most sincere thanks. About Christmas, 1871, he arrived in Bathurst, and in the Easter of 1882 [1872] he undertook to train the children in singing. He had been connected with the choir continually, ever since, with the exception of two years rest that he had had. The work had always been a pleasure, as he thoroughly enjoyed it. The enjoyment was increased by the fact that he had such an agreeable and effective choir. He had made it a point not to do anything before first securing the sympathy and co-operation of the choir. He did not believe there was a choir anywhere that worked more harmoniously than they did in Bathurst. As leader, he had always made it his aim to fall in with the wishes of the ministers, and had never once had any unpleasantness with them. When 18 years of age he became leader of a choir in England, and with the exception of a few years after he first came to the colony, he continued to act in that capacity. He still felt that he had accomplished but little, but he had always striven to do his duty, and hoped that he would always remain faithful to the Wesleyan Church. From the time he was ten years of age, in Lancashire, he had been connected with the Wesleyan Church, although he was not so intimately connected with it as he might have been. Where he was going to live was some twenty miles away from any church or school, and he felt that in taking his wife and family to such a place, his responsibilities were greatly increased. He was, however, determined that they should not lose the benefits of those things. They would be located in an isolated spot, and as there were no inhabitants they could not hope to have a church. If the opportunity offered for the establishment of either church or school it would be one of his first objects to assist. During

his stay in Bathurst he had, no doubt, given offence, but no one could accuse him of having condescended to do a mean act or wilfully tell a falsehood. Whatever ideas he entertained he had proclaimed them boldly, and was not given to shuffling. He had no idea that he was to receive such valuable presents, and when he saw them he felt as though he could undo all he had done and remain in Bathurst. Bathurst, and the friends in it, would always have a warm place in his heart, for in no other place had he felt more at home and enjoyed more friendship. With regard to the choir, whoever their leader might be, he hoped that the members would work as harmoniously as they had done in the past. They had as organists two talented youths who, if they continued to make the progress they had accomplished, would prove to be proficient players. He hoped that the choir would keep up their good name, for there were few better country choirs in the colony. He would leave Bathurst almost immediately, but would return in about two months for his wife and family. Again he returned thanks for the kind expressions which had been applied to not only himself, but his dear wife and family.

Rev. R. Allen regretted that they had been called together to say farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Smith. He looked upon them as his friends, and they were true church workers. It would be difficult to fill Mr. Smith's position as choir master. Mr. Smith was a straightforward Englishman, and as such expected everyone to do his duty. This was how he succeeded, and explained the entire absence of discord in the choir. Good singing was a great help to the preacher, and he had frequently received help in this way from Mr. Smith and his choir. Reference had been made to the services rendered by the choir in liquidating both circuit and trust debts, and he could endorse all that had been said. He was very sorry that Mrs. Smith was going away; she was a better Methodist than her husband, as she was a class attendant, and was a great assistance in his class. He hoped that others belonging to the choir would join, so that they might have improved singing there. He was also sorry that Rowland Kelk was going away; but he hoped that the influence which had surrounded him from his infancy would not be forgotten, but that he, and Mr. Smith's children would grow up to fill honored positions in the Church and in Society.

Mr. F. Halliday, J.P., could only endorse what had been said before, for Mr. Smith was a man, every inch of him. If he had remained in Bathurst for another 20 years he would not have known in what esteem he was held. One was apt to think that there was no one who thought of them outside their own family circle until they were about to leave them, or were overcome by some great trial or affliction. Then it was that the true sympathy of the people was seen, and in this way it was appreciated. Mr. Smith was a good man in every sense of the word, and was one of the sort that they wanted as citizens. They only had to look at his career during his residence in Bathurst and they would see that he was one of the "do or die" men. He had a dear good wife and one whom he (the speaker) thought a great deal of. They would miss Mr. Smith in the Sunday School, but as men were laid aside and others raised in their stead, so in his case, they must believe that some one would come forward to fill the position Mr. Smith had occupied. He hoped that God's blessing would attend him and his family.

Mr. Sydney Webb expressed his pleasure at the opportunity given him of adding his [words] of praise to Mr. Smith and his wife. While recognising the good points and qualities in Mr. Smith they must not forget to mention his wife. She must have been a thorough self-sacrificing woman to have been content that her husband should devote so much of the time, which would otherwise have been spent with his family, to the work connected with the church. There were few women who would have acted in this unselfish way, but such conduct proved that her heart was in the right place. Mr. Webb then referred at length to the different branches of the work in which Mr. Smith had engaged.

During the evening the choir, under the conductorship of Mr. W. Pascoe, sang several selections, and Miss Ross rendered a sacred solo. Mr. Percy C. White filled the office of organist very efficiently.