



Campus of Macquarie College, Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, 2018

Photo courtesy of Leanne Deanshaw.

Macquarie College, Australia

DANIEL REYNAUD

Daniel Reynaud, Ph.D. (University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia). Reynaud is professor of history at Avondale University College, NSW, Australia, where he has taught since 1992 in media, literature and modern world history. He has many publications on Australian war cinema, and on religion and the Australian soldier. He has also published on media in a Christian context, and how to read the Bible from a literary perspective.

Tracing its humble beginnings to 11 students in the back of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Hamilton, New South Wales, Australia, in 1900, Macquarie College has grown to become one of the most recognizable Adventist educational institutions, offering education from Kindergarten through Year 12 in the Newcastle, New South Wales, area.

Establishment of the School

Ellen White's presence at Avondale, New South Wales (NSW), Australia, between 1895 and 1900 fostered the promotion, through preaching and publishing, of Christian education, and churches were urged to establish schools as soon as possible. The difficulties in doing so were illustrated by the fact that the Hamilton church, located in a central suburb of Newcastle, NSW, established its school no fewer than three times before it became permanent, and even then, its viability was tenuous at times.

The paucity of records makes tracing the early years of the Hamilton school difficult. Those that survive suggest several attempts to establish a permanent school presence at the church over three decades. The Seventh-day Adventist church in Hamilton established a school in the rear of the church building on Lindsay Street sometime between mid-1900 and the start of 1901, employing A. T. Jessop as the teacher, with an initial enrollment of 11 pupils. In mid-1901, Jessop reported that a "fluctuating attendance" had reached 26, with improvements in the behavior of the initially unruly children. Other comments suggest that the bulk of his students were not from Seventh-day Adventist families.¹ Despite Jessop's optimism, the school seems to have struggled financially and appears to have closed after about three years.

Late in 1912, the Hamilton church voted to reopen the school, but exactly when this took place is uncertain, although it was perhaps as early as 1913. In January 1915 its enrollment was reported as being a rather low 12–16 students, with Miss Ada Murray as a temporary teacher for six months before H. H. Crouch took over. Recurring irregularity in attendance made progress difficult, although the school was well equipped for larger numbers. The Hamilton church pastor and his wife tried to extend the school's reach.² By the end of the year, the school was reported to be doing well, with about 20 students, "gradually gaining in numbers and . . . a model of neatness and order."³ However, progress stalled; three years later, it had just 19 students.⁴ Sometime after 1918, the school closed again.

Reestablishment and Relocation

In early February 1933, the New South Wales Conference acted on a request from the Hamilton church to reopen the school on condition that the church meet the running costs, appointing H. A. Sampson as the teacher. The classes were held in the rear of the Hamilton church, beginning with 19 students and increasing to 24 within weeks.⁵ The potential of the school prompted a report at the conference session "that more church schools should be established in this Conference."⁶

Financial difficulties dogged the school, despite growth in student numbers to 31 in 1934 with just 2 non-Adventists, while the mission of the school, "the physical, spiritual, mental, and moral development of the scholars, had been well kept in the foreground."⁷ A second teacher was appointed in 1934, and it became increasingly obvious that the facilities at the rear of the church were too cramped for additional growth.

The conference executive began a search for a more suitable site for the school in 1935, exploring land in several suburbs where it planned to establish a central school to serve the whole of Newcastle. The purchase of

an old Congregational church building on Kemp Street, Hamilton, in 1937 was funded by offerings and donations as well as Australasian Union Conference grants, in straitened depression-era times.⁸ But the process of building the new school was troubled, with a series of actions passed and rescinded over the plans and tenders for the building contractors, and an architect was hired, fired, rehired, and refired. Costs escalated alarmingly, and further loans, donations, local church levies, and union grants were used to complete the work. By the end of 1938, the new buildings of Newcastle Central School were complete: two classrooms and a shelter shed, which was a marked improvement on its old facilities. The two-teacher school boasted a mere 20 students, 11 of which were primary pupils, with several non-Adventists included.⁹ Clearly, financial viability would continue to be an issue, even with the addition of secondary grades.

In 1939, the enrollment eventually grew to 37 students, 25 of them in primary, with a marginal increase to 40 students the following year, when a third teacher was added to the staff. Even with additional donations, fee revenue failed to match expenses, and fund-raising by the very supportive parents and church members was needed to install playground equipment.¹⁰ By 1943, the school had paid off its building debts, and with the growth in enrollments, the secondary curriculum was extended to the New South Wales Intermediate Certificate Examination. Within a few years, both the leaving certificate (1947) and the higher school certificate had been added in response to the determined lobbying of parents, giving the school a full suite of secondary grades. Part-time staff delivered additional secondary curriculum in sewing and business.¹¹ Improvements in the facilities included a sick room; shelter shed;¹² an incinerator; the verandah enclosed to provide space for science classes; and modern equipment, such as a sewing machine and electric iron; and rudimentary laboratory equipment.¹³

Development and Decline

From 1943 to 1949, the school enjoyed the principalship of Robert H. Parr (who also doubled as assistant conference Education Department director), the longest tenure to date, and this continuity of leadership, along with his energy, wit, and people skills oversaw the school's slow but steady improvement. Official minutes recorded the development of not just school facilities but also its spirit, collegiality, and spiritual impact. Sadly, they also noted a slight drop in enrollments for 1946 to about 30 students, spread across Preparatory in Primary to Intermediate Certificate Grade IX, which forced the school back to two teachers, an astonishing burden for the staff to carry, although some part-time help continued to support the practical disciplines in the secondary grades. The distances traveled, especially for young students, was noted as contributing to the drop in enrollments. On the other hand, the school board was most active, and fund-raisers such as a concert and the Tuck Shop,¹⁴ along with Hamilton church donations and matching funds from the conference, paid for landscaping, library books, and sporting apparatus. New chemistry equipment allowed students to take the chemistry examinations for the intermediate certificate.¹⁵ Parr observed that the school's spiritual impact was also strong, with all recent graduates still attending church.¹⁶

These labors paid off in 1947. Difficult financial times had seen the North New South Wales Conference close all its schools except for Newcastle, but it was “a very happy family, and a growing family too.” With enrollment at 45, up from 29, a third teacher was restored to the staff, but the challenges remained. The students ranged in age from 5 to 20. Two-thirds were from Adventist homes, but the lengthy commutes to reach the school reduced its appeal. However, new teaching methods were introduced, including extensive use of State Education Department broadcasts on ABC radio, films screened on the borrowed conference projector, excursions to local industries, and extracurricular sporting and cultural activities. The school board continued its proactive engagement, and the school experienced its best-ever financial outcome. Academically, the handful of students taking intermediate and high school entrance exams achieved pleasing results.¹⁷ A separate report noted a “happy and profitable year; it is the record of the harmonious association of teachers with teachers and between teachers and pupils; it is also the record of most cordial relations between the school and the parents of the children attending and the people of the Newcastle churches generally.”¹⁸

By specific request from the Hamilton church, Parr’s tenure was extended by one year. Fee increases in 1948 and 1949, and again in 1951, the first in over a decade, attempted to keep revenue in line with expenses and were implemented without hurting enrollment, but funds were still insufficient to deal with urgent maintenance. With 34 of the 48 students from Adventist homes, a significant minority were non-Adventist. The school’s faith outcomes were visible through the high rates of Adventist employment of graduates and of non-Adventists moving close to church membership. At his farewell report in 1949, Parr was joined by all the staff as he stressed “that church schools do pay, and that as a result of the activities of this particular school the youth of the local churches have been held in the message, while non-Adventists have been greatly influenced.”¹⁹

The next few years saw steady growth in enrollments, placing pressure on the school facilities by 1952. Woodwork and physics equipment was purchased in 1950 as the new principal, W. Driscoll, wanted to add these to the offerings.²⁰ Plans to extend the buildings in 1952–53 were delayed “because of heavy financial commitments,” including the founding of a number of new schools across the conference beginning in 1949–50, which restricted funds for Newcastle. However, a budget for a fourth teacher was voted at the end of 1952 to support the growing curriculum.²¹ A high turnover of principals in the early 1950s probably did not help the school’s cause in lobbying for conference funds. Under the nine-year tenure of principal H. G. Vetter (1954–1962), a four-classroom block was finally completed in 1962, easing the pressure on classroom space. The energy of school board chairman Dr. Doug Easthope, who held the post for most of the 1960s and 1970s, ensured a further building program between 1972 and 1976. The late 1960s saw enrollment peak at about 200 under principal Winston C. Dunlop (1964–1968).

By 1969, the combined primary and secondary school had nine staff and an additional five part-time staff. Its successful tuck shop, as well as special fund-raisers, generated funds to purchase an impressive array of resources, including a television, art and sewing equipment, sound equipment, and library books. Two special tuck shops bought four crates of Bibles for a Fijian school. The primary school operated two multigrade classes

totaling 54 students, while the secondary school was gradually populating its senior three years. Sporting events were contested against two other regional Adventist schools.²²

An initiative of teacher A. Ellison saw Newcastle become the first Adventist school to introduce the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in 1970. The program set challenges in physical achievement, personal skills, and community service, which led to a number of students over several years being awarded Bronze and Silver Awards.²³ The following year, there was debate about the merits of merging Avondale and Newcastle schools into one facility located between the two. In the end, it was decided to maintain both and expand Newcastle's facilities, as Commonwealth Government funding for capital works in private schools was for the first time made available, supporting church sources to add new a science laboratory, library, domestic science, and general classrooms.²⁴

In September 1977, two students on a school-organized charity fund-raising orienteering exercise discovered human remains in bushland. The event won widespread media coverage, firstly for the novel fund-raising idea and then over the partly clothed skeleton.²⁵

School enrollments began to slide in the 1970s, with the secondary school suffering the most significant decline: 107 students in 1978 became only 84 in 1980.²⁶ By 1989, numbers had fallen to an unsustainably low 122 for the combined primary and secondary school. The school constituency was characterized as "skeptical and indifferent," the school was suffering an identity crisis, and it labored under an operating debt of AU\$120,000. With Adventist expectations of education becoming increasingly professional, Adventist schools had to lift their performance to attract previously unquestioned Adventist patronage.

Revisioning and Growth

With support from the North New South Wales Conference president Rex Moe, in 1989 a new principal, Bruce R. Youlden, embarked on revisioning the role and purpose of the school. In what was probably the first intentional venture of Adventist education in Australia to opening a school to a large non-Adventist population, he developed a 10-year plan to "upgrade the educational program," "reorientate the mission of the school," and "relocate the school to a new site."²⁷ Determined to make the school succeed on merit, he had a strong belief in the fundamental strength of Adventist education's philosophy and practice, convinced it could win in any marketplace if done well, as a well-articulated Adventist educational philosophy gave coherence to operational practice. He consciously abandoned the old quotas limiting the non-Adventist student proportion to 15 percent and deliberately tapped into growing demand in the region for private Christian education. He argued that Adventist youth biblical literacy had slipped to the point where reaching Adventists would require the same strategies as reaching non-Adventists.²⁸

Youlden revived talk of relocating the school to a more viable site, and a foundation was established in 1990 to build funds. In 1992, a six-hectare site (about 15 acres) was purchased at 182-222 Lake Road, Wallsend, for AU\$400,000, in the growth corridor of Newcastle, in partnership with the conference and the Wallsend church,

as part of a planned combined school-church campus partnership. Construction of the school began soon afterward, with space set aside for both the expansion of the school campus and the future relocation of the Wallsend church, and also possibly of the North New South Wales Conference office (later built on a nearby property). The design was around the concept of a village green, with a central oval around whose circumference the various school buildings were built. The new vision resulted in a self-funded AU\$6 million campus encompassing pre-school to Year 12. In 1994, the name of the school was changed to Macquarie College, and in June of that year, the school was relocated to the new Lake Road campus, with the official opening on September 18, 1994. The choice of a one-word name for the school was to ensure both a strong single-word identity for marketing purposes and to remove any barrier for non-Adventist families in exploring the option of Adventist education.²⁹

In 1991, Macquarie College became a foundation member of a new regional organization, the Hunter Region Independent Schools. It provided advanced sporting challenges for schools outside the state system, including representative opportunities at state and national level in a variety of team and individual sports, and also organized important cultural events.³⁰

The new facilities and renewed vision soon attracted a larger clientele, with many non-Adventist parents seeking places for their children at the school. In its first 10 years, Macquarie had more than three applicants for each available place and became, by default, somewhat selective. However, there was significant constituency resistance to double-streaming and, eventually, triple-streaming the school to meet demand. Youlden conducted a vigorous campaign around the Newcastle churches, promoting his vision, arguing that protecting, enhancing, and developing the faith of Adventist children and youth required a real-world environment, not an artificial barrier. He sought the preservation of Adventism through “proactive strategies,” ones needed as much for Adventists as for non-Adventists. By 1998, enrollment stood at 455—already exceeding its ambitious target of 400 students, with a 200-place preschool fully subscribed, healthy financial reserves, and a foundation with growing investments. Soon, demand was placing pressure on facilities, and new classrooms and specialist areas were added, including a gymnasium complex in 2018. By 2007 numbers had necessitated starting a third stream in both primary and secondary, and by 2010, the primary and secondary sectors had about 360 students each, with enrollments totaling about 750 by 2017.³¹

With up to 80 percent non-Adventist students, care was taken to ensure the ongoing Adventist character of the school. The introduction of additional streams was done one year at a time, to ensure that new intakes absorbed the culture of the school, rather than overwhelming it. All applicants were interviewed, and the special nature of the school was clearly outlined. Spiritual exercises form a core part of the school life, with religion classes, weeks of spiritual emphasis, charity fund-raisers, and school-sponsored mission trips overseen by specialist chaplains in the primary and secondary schools. There has been collaboration between the school and the Wallsend church, which is on the campus. Between 2010 and 2017, roughly 20 percent of the school students have joined voluntary Bible study classes each year. Bible studies and baptisms of non-Adventist

students and their families have regularly occurred.³²

Academically, the school has performed well, consistently recording results well above the national average in Australia-wide NAPLAN standardized tests and ranking high in the region in state end-of-schooling university entrance examinations. Participation in various English, math, and science competitions has also returned excellent results. A variety of academic enrichment programs have ensured AAA ratings for achieving above the standard required by accrediting bodies. The school has been active in sporting and cultural events, performing well in a variety of sports, performing arts, and community events.³³

The school has played an important role in the mission of the church in the Newcastle region, where it has become one of the most recognizable Adventist institutions, impacting the local non-Adventist community in significant ways.

Hamilton School Principals (1900–1937)

A. T. Jessop (1900–ca. 1903); A. Murray (interim, February–June 1915); H. H. Crouch (July 1915–ca. 1918–1920); H. Sampson (1933–1935); H. O'Hara (1936–1937)

Newcastle Central School Principals (also variously, Newcastle Central Adventist School, Newcastle School, and Hamilton Church School) (1938–1993)

J. S. Donald (1938–1940); A. Ivey (1941–1942); R. H. Parr (1943–1949); W. Driscoll (1950); F. A. Rocke (1951); O. C. Ferris (1952–1953); H. G. Vetter (1954–1962); G. Litster (1963); W. C. Dunlop (1964–1968); F. J. Brown (interim 1969); S. K. Gillis (1970); D. A. Caldwell (1971–1972); E. G. Krause (1973–1979); R. A. Spoor (1980–1982); R. J. Sparke (1983–1985); W. Lawson (interim 1986); R. J. Sparke (1987–1988); B. R. Youlden (1989–1993)

Macquarie College Principals (1994–)

B. R. Youlden (1994–1997); G. King (1998–2005); B. R. Youlden (2006–2018); Rohan Deanshaw (2019–)

SOURCES

Chaney, Bertha S. "Church Schools in New South Wales." *Australasian Record*, January 11, 1915.

———. "Our Church Schools." *Australasian Record*, June 28, 1915.

Cooinda. Macquarie College School Annual, 1969, 1970, 1971.

Gilson, W. J. Files. South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia. Box 40.

Minutes of the Australasian Union Conference Session, July 1901. South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

"Over two hundred children. . . ." *Australasian Record*, October 7, 1918.

Stellmaker, Mary. "A Skeleton." *Australasian Record*, January 3, 1977.

White, Eric. "The Duke of Edinburgh Awards." *Australasian Record*, February 7, 1972.

Youlden, Bruce R., and Glynn Litster. "Hamilton Adventist School and Macquarie College." In *Light on the Northern Coalfields: A Short History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Greater Newcastle Area 1898–1998* edited by W. Glynn Litster and Malcolm J. Bull. Newcastle, NSW: Newcastle Centenary Committee of the North New South Wales Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1998.

NOTES

1. Minutes of the Australasian Union Conference Session, July 1901, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.
2. Bertha S. Chaney, "Church Schools in New South Wales," *Australasian Record*, January 11, 1915, 2.
3. Bertha S. Chaney, "Our Church Schools," *Australasian Record*, June 28, 1915, 5.
4. "Over two hundred children . . .," *Australasian Record*, October 7, 1918, 8.
5. Minutes of the New South Wales Conference, February 8, 1933, February 26, 1933, October 27, 1933, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia, Box 40.
6. Minutes of the New South Wales Conference Session, October 27, 1933.
7. Minutes of the New South Wales Conference Session, October 14, 1934, November 22, 1934, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
8. Minutes of the New South Wales Executive, June 9, 1935, July 28, 1935, September 8, 1935, December 23, 1936, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
9. Minutes of the New South Wales Executive, September 20, 1937 to April 5, 1939; Minutes of the Conference Session, December 8, 1938, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.

10. Minutes of the New South Wales Conference Session, December 8, 1940, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
11. Minutes of the New South Wales Executive, October 21, 1941, April 20, 1943, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
12. A shelter shed is an area where students can be outside yet under a roof during outdoor recess times in rainy weather.
13. Minutes of the New South Wales Executive, April 29, 1941, June 18, 1945, December 11, 1945, January 23, 1945, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
14. A tuck shop at a school is a small shop from which students can purchase lunch.
15. NSW Session Minutes December 8, 1946, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
16. NSW Session Minutes November 13, 1945, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
17. NSW Session Minutes, December 10, 1947, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
18. NSW Session Report, December 1, 1947, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre
19. NSW Executive Minutes, April 14, 1948, February 23, 1949, August 26, 1949, July 14, 1949; NSW Session Report November 27, 1949, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
20. NNSW Executive Minutes, February 1, 1950, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
21. NNSW Executive Minutes, July 30, 1953, December 11, 1952, Gilson, W. J. Files, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre.
22. *Cooinda*, Macquarie College School Annual, 1969, Box 185, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.
23. *Cooinda*, 1970, 1971, Macquarie College Library; Eric White, "The Duke of Edinburgh Awards," *Australasian Record*, February 7, 1972, 1.
24. *Cooinda*, 1971.
25. Mary Stellmaker, "A Skeleton," *Australasian Record*, January 3, 1977, 1.
26. NNSW Conference 44th Session report 1978–79, NNSW Conference Reports, Box 2219, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.
27. Bruce R. Youlden and Glynn Litster, "Hamilton Adventist School and Macquarie College," in *Light on the Northern Coalfields: A Short History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Greater Newcastle Area 1898–1998*, eds. W. Glynn Litster and Malcolm J. Bull (Newcastle, NSW:

Newcastle Centenary Committee of the North New South Wales Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1998), 65.

28. Bruce R. Youlden, interview by author, Newcastle, NSW, May 14, 2018
29. Youlden, interview; Youlden and Litster, "Hamilton Adventist School and Macquarie College."
30. "History of HRIS," Hunter Region Independent Schools, accessed May 6, 2018, <https://www.hris.org.au/history>.
31. 54th NNSW Conference Session report, September 9, 2007, NNSW Conference Reports, Box 2219, South Pacific Division Heritage Centre; Macquarie College Council Report, Term 2, 2017, Macquarie College Records.
32. Macquarie College Council Reports, November 2010, July and November 2011, June 2012, Term 3 2015, Term 2 2017, Macquarie College Records; Youlden, interview; Minutes of the Macquarie Council, October 28, 2013 and February 24, 2014.
33. Macquarie College Council Reports, May 2010, June 2012, Term 2 2017; Minutes of the Macquarie College Council, June 25, 2012, February 23, 2015, Macquarie College Records.

encyclopedia.adventist.org is an official website of the [Seventh-day Adventist World Church](#)

© 2020 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring , MD 20904 USA 301-680-6000