

## A SCHOOL'S ARCHIVES

J. H. M. Honniball

A noteworthy event in the past year in Western Australia has been the establishment at Guildford Grammar School of a school archives collection. A room which was for many years the headmaster's study was made available as a result of recent building extensions and will house the collection comfortably. The position of honorary archivist was given to an Old Boy of early 1920's vintage, Mr. J. D. Drake-Brockman, who lives close by and who has taken a generous interest in the school for many years. He has launched with enthusiasm into his work of setting in order the heterogeneous items from boxes, bundles and piles which awaited his attention. Miss Mollie Lukis, Librarian of the J. S. Battye Library of West Australian History and State Archivist, readily gave time and advice to the school archivist in his work at the outset. The headmaster, Mr. D. A. Lawe Davies, has also given his full encouragement to the work.

Guildford Grammar School began as a private school in 1896, when Charles Harper, pastoralist and proprietor of the *West Australian* newspaper, engaged Frank Bennett to be tutor to his and to some of his neighbours' children at Guildford. The school steadily grew, moved to its own building and adequate grounds in 1904, and in 1911 was sold to the Anglican diocese of Perth. The following year construction began on a handsome Gothic chapel, the gift of an English landed gentleman who had no other connection with W.A., Cecil Oliverson. For a few years the Perth Diocesan Trustees closely supervised the management of the school, and in 1917 handed control to a new body—the Council for Church of England Schools. The Council's other charges were a second boys' school, Christ Church at Claremont, and, from 1930, St. Hilda's C. of E. School for Girls, Cottesloe. In 1951 administration of Guildford passed to the Council of Guildford Church of England Grammar School and the school was legally incorporated.

Considerable work is yet to be done to ascertain how complete a coverage of the school's history exists in the true archival records extant. There is not likely to be much relating to Mr. Harper's school. One highly prized item, however, is a receipt for payment of fees (£12.12.0) for a boarder for the quarter ending 31st March, 1896, the very first term. It was presented by an Old Boy. The archivist intends to make enquiries among the Harper family about any papers they may hold. A biography of Charles Harper, which included a short chapter on the school, was published for private distribution in 1958.

Weekly reports and other records of the period when the school was administered by the Diocesan Trustees are kept at the Diocesan Office, as indeed are less substantial records for the years since. The period before 1917 is also well-documented through a most important group of papers now in the safe-keeping of the school archivist. These are the papers of Canon Henn, headmaster from 1910 to 1924. Canon Henn himself was a keen student and writer of local history, and made careful arrangements for the preservation of his papers, although, as it turned out, they went to Sydney and were held there for thirty-five years. Most of the 103 letters included in them are concerned with the building of the Chapel, and were written by the donor and the architect in London, the Bishop of Perth and the headmaster. There is also a lengthy typescript article about the beginnings of the church school, compiled by Canon Henn in 1930, apparently as a guide for the future historian.

Another valuable series relating to the building of the Chapel consists of 68 glass negatives. The archivist received these from a retired builder who had taken photographs fifty years ago when he came to Guildford with the team of

English artisans who built the Chapel. Their original purpose was for sending home to the architect to show the progress of building operations. Like the Henn papers, the negatives were of great value when a history of Guildford's Chapel was published last year.

A large volume of records of the Council for Church of England Schools are in the hands of the school archivist. As yet they have not been examined more than cursorily, but they may well provide a good coverage of the years from 1917 to 1951. They include the reports of the Warden of the Council, correspondence between parents and headmaster or bursar, and plans of the buildings erected during that time. They also relate to matters involving all three schools controlled by the Council.

The school's bursar at present holds for current administrative purposes the minute-books, files and other records created since 1951 when the Council of Guildford Grammar School was established. The school council acts with considerable freedom, but reports to diocesan synod each year and keeps the diocesan office authorities well informed.

A small but valuable special collection in the school archives are the papers of the school's "Mr. Chips", "Digger" Collisson, who taught there for forty years before his death in 1954. One of Mr. Collisson's principal interests in his latter years was the compilation of an accurate roll of the scholars (in the absence of an official one) for the early years of Mr. Harper's school.

Printed records of the school are in good supply. A school magazine is a comprehensive record of a school's history, at least of aspects seen by the boys themselves, and largely in their own words. Guildford's "Swan" has been issued regularly two or three times each year from 1904. A useful magazine for Old Boys has also appeared more or less quarterly since 1953. There are successive editions of the prospectus (always lacking date of publication), orders of service used in the Chapel on special occasions, and programmes of concerts, plays and sporting fixtures. It will take time to build up complete sets of these.

The archivist has begun a collection of early text books used in the school, and a selection of scholars' exercise and prep. books and art work to illustrate class-work over the years. There is also to be a small library of books and other published works of members of staff and Old Boys. One Old Boy, Randolph Stow, has had five books published in the ten years since he left school. A file of newspaper cuttings relating to the school and to Old Boys is being maintained.

Without much difficulty, the archivist will be able to make up a nearly complete set of photographs of school teams and groups. The earliest is a picture of the scholars — boys and girls — of Mr. Harper's school in 1897. (Guildford takes pride in having a number of "Old Girls" who were scholars in its first few years; one attended the annual Old Boys' dinner last year). Many of the photographs of classrooms and sporting facilities that are in the archives were originally produced to illustrate issues of the prospectus.

Relics find a welcome place in the archivist's collection. They include blazers, caps and hat bands of different designs, items of furniture, a trowel and scissors used by vice-regal visitors at building ceremonies, and an old school flag bearing the Harper family arms, which were replaced by new arms in 1914. Some of the items are displayed in a show-case donated by the W.A. Museum, and these, together with photographs, are the things which most interest the average visitor to the collection.

The school archivist has appealed through the Old Boys' magazine and by personal contact for further relics, photographs and printed programmes. He is also hopeful that some Old Boys may be able to recover letters they wrote as schoolboys to their parents.

There are other places in the school where popular "relics" are displayed. Sporting cups and trophies adorn the library and shields representing victories in inter-school sports hang in the gymnasium. Carving boards and rolls of office-bearers and prize-winners line the walls of the original schoolroom of 1904. Portraits of headmasters and benefactors hang in the dining hall, and in the boarding houses are photographs of housemasters and house captains. These groups of souvenirs all need substantial space for display and are part of the school's traditional furnishings. Most of them will remain where they are, supplementing the historical records which find their way into the archivist's custody.

*The writer would be glad of a brief communication from any reader who may know of the existence of a school archives collection elsewhere in Australia.*