

‘A HISTORY OF BISHOPS’

By Paul Murray, College Archivist.

THE DIOCESAN COLLEGIATE SCHOOL/DIOCESAN COLLEGE – BEGINNINGS

Diocesan College (Bishops) opened its doors to six students on 15 March 1849 at Bishopscourt. The school was founded on the principles of the English Church. It has continued to be a school in the Anglican Church tradition to this day. On the day that it opened, Sophie Gray, the wife of the school’s Founder, Robert Gray, was present and he was away on official duties on the island of St Helena. The opening ceremony was conducted by the first Principal, the Reverend Henry Master White and the Vice-Principal the Reverend Badnall. Thus was born the school that is today known as ‘Bishops’.

White was very much an academic scholar. His ‘blue eyes used to pale into a steel grey’ if boys did not live up to his expectations. He equipped the minds of boys with a broad education rather than for specific professions. Divinity, English, Mathematics, Modern Languages, History, Geography, Drawing and Music were taught, the latter because there seemed to be a ‘mysterious connection between good music and good morals’. It was hoped that the teaching at college would also prepare those wanting to take holy orders. Mr Badnall, known to the boys as ‘Carker’ because of his set of glittering teeth, was a great lover of cricket. His kindness was apparently taken as license by the boys to behave semi-chaotically in his History classes.

The school soon became too small for the growing demand and in 1850 it moved to Woodlands where it is still today. The leading English architect William White (a brother to the Principal) drew up plans for the first buildings. The Founders House east and south wings were constructed between 1852 to 1854, based on White’s plans. More buildings were erected in the 1860s, the 1890s and finally by 1905 the Founders Quad was completely closed. These are the buildings that today make up Founders House. Its elegant façade and clock tower remain among the school’s gems.

AVENUE, GATES; SCHOOL HOUSE & WHITE HOUSE

At the entrance of Bishops is the very historic ‘Ogilvie Memorial Gateway’. On the left as one enters, is Bishops’ oldest building, ‘The Lodge’. It was here where the coachman and his family lived. Further down the Avenue lined with Italian stone pines, stood the ‘Old Cottage’. It was here that the first Principals resided until it was demolished in 1886 when a new residence was erected. The school badge, the Mitre, in colours of maroon and gold, is in relief on the gateway. The Haddon Memorial Gates were added in 1946, to the sacred memory of the school’s head boy of 1939, Dacre Lovett Haddon, killed in active service fighting as part of the South African forces in Italy on 6 July 1944.

As one proceeds down the Avenue, the striking façade of School House meets the eye. Designed by architects Baker and Masey, its foundation stone was laid on 11 June 1900 by the Second Duchess of Teck. Immediately to the right as one comes down the Avenue, is the newly constructed Woodlands complex, which houses a Hockey Pavilion, and ‘The Mitre’, the home of the Old Diocesan Union where former students of the College have their meeting place. The building designed by Luke Scott and built by Mica Naumann, is one of a series of new developments at Bishops, as a result of the vision of former Principal, Grant Nupen, the

ODU Chairman Brian Robertson, Chairman of Council Mike Bosman and the Business Manager Sean King and their teams.

Another boarding House, the third at Bishops, was designed by Rae Ohlsson, the College Architect at the time. This is White House named after Bishops' first Principal, Archdeacon Henry Master White. Building commenced once the foundation stone had been laid on 5 November 1952. The inaugural Housemaster was the legendary First Team rugby coach Mr David Watkins Rees better known as 'Piley Rees'. When he retired from the school in 1966, he had given 45 years of service in, thus being one of the longest ever serving teachers at the school. Another legendary coach, Mr Basil Bey, an icon at Bishops, who sadly passed away in 2016, named the main rugby field at Bishops, 'The Piley' after Piley Rees. 'The Piley' is therefore appropriately next to White House.

THE BROOKE CHAPEL AND THE MEMORIAL CHAPEL

The foundation stone of the Brooke Chapel was laid in November 1879. Architect Edward Knox's Gothic revivalist style is present in the building's beautiful dimensions. In 1927, the Brooke Chapel was turned into a Library when the new War Memorial Chapel was built. The treasures in the Chapel number many but the stained-glass windows are its prize possessions, especially the windows dedicated to Robert and Sophie Gray. A major restoration project completed in 2017, brought back the Brooke's former glory. This includes the cobbled paving of the Founders Court and stone masonry and the laying of slate as part of the forecourt.

The War Memorial Chapel is Bishops' prize building. It was designed by Cape Town Architect Percy Wallgate, built in 1926 by Joseph Rubbi. General J. C. Smuts unveiled the 'War Memorial Bronze' tablets containing the 112 names of the former students of the College killed in action in the First World War (1914-18). It was intended that the Main Chapel should 'stand amongst the other buildings as a symbol of the higher life — the life of the spirit'. The three chapel bells Faith, Hope and Charity, cast in London, were dedicated in 1937. They are rung each day that the boys enter Chapel, and several Chapel services are held each week. Congregational singing remains a pride and joy, when one of the favourites 'I vow to Thee My Country' and 'Psalm 150' are sung extraordinary loudly. The Memorial Theatre was built to honour all former students who fought in the Second World War. A memorial brass tablet commemorates them.

SPORT AT BISHOPS – RUGBY, CRICKET, HOCKEY, ATHLETICS

Sport has always featured at Bishops since its inception; not to supersede the academic programme but to afford boys opportunities to exercise their energy and show talent; and compete. Whilst today the school offers a wide variety of sport to choose from, traditionally the main summer game has been cricket, and the main winter one has been rugby; and from the sixties, hockey as well. The very first cricket field was described as far back as 1850, today called the Frank Reid Field named after a former star student and Secretary of the Old Diocesan Union for 47 years. Next to the field is the Steffan Coutt-Trotter Indoor Cricket Centre opened in 2014 in sacred memory of a former student Steffan Coutts-Trotter.

The game of rugby football, known as 'Gogs Game' was first played at Bishops in a certain form, at time Canon Ogilvie arrived as the Principal in 1861.

The name Gog came from the way he signed his name. Rugby football more or less as we know it today, was introduced in the 1870, after which Bishops began competing in the WPRFU and has continued its tradition of playing rugby to this day. Its record of International

Rugby players is exceptional. Over fifty former Bishops boys have ended up playing at this level. Its tradition as a rugby school continues to this day. Rugby fixtures are well attended in the winter months not least the annual derby between Bishops and its main rival Rondebosch Boys' High School. Thousands come to watch and line the 'Piley'. The style of rugby that Bishops plays is especially appealing for its creative and elegant style of running-rugby. This is due mainly to the legendary Mr Basil Bey, one of South Africa's iconic schoolboy rugby coaches, who coached Bishops from 1972 to 1998.

Although hockey was not offered at Bishops from its inception as was rugby, the first signs of it might have been in 1901 when boarders played a game, with sticks. Hockey 'officially' started at school as a sport in 1966 when Joe Lister himself a former student introduced it as a school sport. Over the years it gathered a great deal of energy and today it is played at the same level as any other winter sport. Recently, a new hockey pavilion was erected. The new buildings were built to house a hockey club and stand, but it is shared with other stakeholders, not least the Old Diocesan Union called 'The Mitre' after the school badge, and the school's Museum and Archives. The positioning of these buildings with breath-taking views of the slopes of Devil's Peak, are due to the design from Luke Scott and built by Mica Naumann and his team. The dimensions gracefully fit into the College's other iconic buildings going back to the original 1852 Founders buildings. Bishops' sporting policy has developed over the years to include a wide range of sport which includes sailing, golf, squash, rowing, swimming, mountain climbing, and a number of others. Of historic importance is the annual Athletics Triangular event with SACS and Rondebosch.

THE ARTS; DAY BOY HOUSES

From its inception, Bishops has engendered a creative spirit in its students. The very first lessons offered when it opened included Music and Drawing. The Simpson Centre was built to house the Art Department and Design and Technology Centre. A number of renowned artists have taught at Bishops, not least Thomas Bowler, from 1857-66. The Sam Butler Centre/Room is named in honour of a former Art teacher Sam Butler and the Simpson Centre named in honour of the Simpson family who were the benefactors. Several works of art hang on the walls of the Prep and College, by Butler himself, with a self-portrait in the Sam Butler Room in the Art centre. Other scenes of Bishops painted by him are legendary for their vibrant and polychromatic qualities. Today Peter Hyslop and his Artist-in-Residence promotes fine drawing and painting in his art classes.

Bishops' Music Department has an exceptional record. The Directors of Music over the years have included greats such as K. T. Scovell, Noel Iverson, DR Claude Brown, John Badminton, Garmon Ashby and currently Mr Mark Mitchell. Bishops in turn has produced a number of great musicians such as composers John Rose and John Joubert, conductor Richard Cock and composer Stephen Carletti. Dr Brown's choral productions at the Cape Town City Hall and elsewhere are renowned. Today the Music Department organises several music concerts each term and the Eisteddfod as well as every three years, the Bishops Pops. The Eisteddfod was introduced to Bishops by Bishops' tenth Principal, Mr John Peake, who came to Bishops from Eton in England. Music still is strongly promoted by the Director, Mr Mark Mitchell, well-known in Cape Town music circles.

For the most part, Inter-House competitions across a wide range of activities have featured at Bishops. At the centre of this competitive spirit is the House system. There are eight houses in all, in order of the oldest, Founders House, followed by School House, then Gray House

named after the Founder Bishop Gray; Ogilvie House after Canon George Ogilvie the third Principal of Bishops, Kidd House after Mr Hubert John Kidd the eighth Principal, Birt House after Harold Birt, and more recently Mallett House, named after Anthony Mallett, Bishops' ninth Principal.

THE 2010 CONFERENCE; OUTREACH AND BISHOPS TODAY

Since last half decade, diversifying its intake so that boys who aspire to be educated at Bishops can do so, has been a strong feature of the school. The Principal Mr. John Peake was instrumental in setting up bursaries which subsequently became known as the Hamilton Mvelase Bursaries. It was a tragic day for the school when a Grade 11 learner, Hamilton Mvelase, was murdered on a day-out pass to his home. The 2010 Conference set up by Mr Grant Nupen, the thirteenth Principal and the Vice Principal Mr Michael King, 'heralded the beginning of a new spirit within the school'.

However, the spirit of diversity existed long before, as in the Night School started in 1938. Staff and boys taught the service staff at Bishops, Arithmetic, English, History, Geography and Chemistry. It was closed down in 1963 as a result of apartheid laws. Also, there was the Silvertree Club, started in 1940, also becoming the victim of apartheid. Other social responsibility initiatives include those by the Chaplain Dallas le Page with Robin Cox, in 1969. Interact was established by a former teacher Hugh Fynn and the Chaplain Henry Kirk in 1981; this grew into SMILE, a mini-teaching programme involving pupils from Khayelitsha schools.

Today Bishops has a number of different societies continuing Bishops' commitment to diversity, such as the African Relations Society, the Global Issues Network (GIN), and the OD Union Global Mentoring Programme. Since 2004 till the present, Bishops has a direct partnership with the LEAP school specialising in the teaching of Science and Maths, 'to create and maintain a structured learning environment that will allow each disadvantaged young person, selected primarily from the Langa community, to develop fully as a human being and to develop a positive, caring lifestyle and appropriate work ethic.'

CONCLUSION

Bishops consists of a Pre-preparatory school, a Preparatory school and the College, totalling 1350 pupils. Its commitment to values-driven educational practice across the academic, sporting, pastoral, cultural and spiritual life of the school makes it play its role in the 21st century. At the cutting edge of Information Technology in the classrooms, growth in the development of a Support Unit, programmes in pupil leadership, the school continues to inspire individuals. To embrace and celebrate excellence and diversity in the communities of our school and nation.