

# Location, location, location: a short history of 104 Jeffcott Street

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'Location, location, location!' is a favourite mantra of real estate agents. A good location is valuable – a pleasant aspect, safe, good neighbours, access to services, close to shops, work, and public transport, and neither too damp nor too dry.

By that definition Australian Lutheran College (ALC), situated on three town acres at the junction of Ward and Jeffcott Streets, North Adelaide, South Australia, has the hallmark of a desirable location. This paper is based on a lecture given to mark 90 years since Lutherans first occupied this site. It was originally accompanied by a hundred or more photographs which, sadly, cannot be reproduced in this journal.

## Before

To the best of our knowledge the original human inhabitants were the Kurna<sup>1</sup> people of the Adelaide plains. In 1839, at Piltawodli on the nearby banks of the Torrens River, Lutherans from the Leipzig Mission<sup>2</sup> established a school. They taught in the local Kurna language until in 1844 the colonial administration shut them down.<sup>3</sup>

From their arrival in 1836 the colonists of South Australia sought to contain and control their unfamiliar surroundings as best they could. They measured and gazetted the land. They valued it and money changed hands. On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1837 the government issued a Land Grant and entrepreneur George Fife Angas spent £7 12s buying some at 192 Ward St through to 104 Jeffcott St North Adelaide.<sup>4</sup>

In the process the colonisers erased the heritage of those who went before. Despite the concern of some early settlers, the regular pattern of European colonisation prevailed. The coloniser arrives and defines reality, what is and what isn't. He names the places. He makes the rules. The old ways of the people cease to be real. They even lose the language in which to tell their stories.

## North Adelaide Grammar School

The site purchased by Angas was used by John Whinham to open North Adelaide Grammar School (NAGS) on 25 July 1854. Whinham was a gifted and determined educationalist, and his school occupied the eastern end of the site where the Refectory is today.

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<sup>1</sup>'K' is pronounced as 'g'.

<sup>2</sup> The missionaries were Christian Teichelmann & Clamour Schürmann. In recent years the historic link has been recognised between the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Leipzig Mission, which had long thought the Adelaide mission ended in failure. The archives of the Leipzig Mission have preserved valuable correspondence and written documents about Kurna language and life as recorded by the missionaries.

<sup>3</sup> 'Governor Grey actually forbade the German missionaries from preaching in Kurna' – see <http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/community/reconciliation/kurna/#notes>.

<sup>4</sup> See 'History of 104...' by Paul in 'The Bond', July 1958.

He was born a farmer's son in Northumberland, England, in 1803.<sup>5</sup> Family tragedy cut his education short, and he chose to become a teacher. For 25 years he taught at Ovingham near Newcastle on Tyne. In the late 1840s he was financially ruined when Britain went over a fiscal cliff. Whinham had just enough left for his family's passage to Adelaide, where he was employed teaching mathematics at the newly established St Peter's College.

At the age of 50 Whinham decided to branch out on his own. Opened with only one student, NAGS quickly grew on the basis of his reputation despite a complete lack of financiers or organisational sponsorship. NAGS was reputed to be one of the best schools in Australia at the time and a shining example of what industrious private enterprise could achieve in the field of education.

## Whinham College

When John Whinham retired in 1873 his youngest son Robert took his place. Robert was everything his father was, and the school was enrolling up to 300 students each year. In the strength of this Robert spent £6,000<sup>6</sup> on a new set of buildings on the corner of Ward and Jeffcott Streets. This forms the nucleus of the present ALC campus.

The school was renamed Whinham College, which opened on 28 September 1882. A long list of local dignitaries attended, including the Mayor,<sup>7</sup> the State Minister for Education,<sup>8</sup> the Inspector General of Schools,<sup>9</sup> some Reverends, and noted South Australians such as Sir Henry Ayers.

These were the glory days. The Elizabethan architecture<sup>10</sup> was much admired as a fine addition to Adelaide's streetscape. The facility was considered modern, 'spacious and admirably furnished.'<sup>11</sup>

The opening speeches as recorded by the South Australian Register<sup>12</sup> would be worthy of an episode of 'Yes, Minister'. The Mayor was compared to a Roman Emperor, converting brick to marble to adorn the glorious capital, converting unsightly city squares to admirable resorts. He had transformed the Adelaide parklands into wonderful 'summer gardens'. The Mayor was similarly justly proud of his efforts and many rounds of applause and 'hear, hear!' were dutifully recorded.

The report contains a heated debate over the role of the State in education. The Mayor opposed government provision of more than the most basic services. This alone was good reason for him to approve the efforts of Whinham College. He 'had always considered that the first duty of a parent to a child was to clothe it, the next to educate it, and he wondered why the Government should be called upon to pay for the whole expense of the peculiar system of education adopted by South Australia. If the duty of a parent was to clothe and educate the children the State should see that the duty was performed properly.'<sup>13</sup> State support for the actual process of education should be perfunctory: 'If a higher than a plain, substantial education were wanted, then let the parents provide for it, and pay for it if they could.'<sup>14</sup>

The Minister for Education differed, arguing for State involvement in education as its 'proper work'. Sir Henry Ayers KCMG, President of the Legislative Council, supported both, regarding private

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<sup>5</sup> See Australian Dictionary of Biography <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/whinham-john-4832>.

<sup>6</sup> Some references say £10,000.

<sup>7</sup> Mr E. T. Smith.

<sup>8</sup> The Hon J. L. Parsons.

<sup>9</sup> Mr J. A. Hartley.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Heritage Places Inventory, <http://www.heritage.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahpi/record.pl?RNE16924>.

<sup>11</sup> South Australian Register, September 28 1882, 5.

<sup>12</sup> South Australian Register, September 28 1882, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

education as a useful complement to the State. Whatever the debate, the events of the day make it clear that both John and Robert Whinham were respected private educators of the colony.

The significance of Whinham College in its heyday is evidenced by the responses of other schools. St Peter's Anglican College had already been challenged by Prince Alfred College, the low fee school begun by the Methodists in 1869. Now in turn Prince Alfred countered Whinham's success by running a private omnibus to ferry students over the winter. This may be the earliest example of the school buses that are now so common. It had little effect. During the 1880s enrolments at Whinham continued to average 200-300, while St Peters fell to around half that, leading to salary cuts and other stringencies.

Whinham's mantra was success through personal industry and moral conduct. The curriculum and methods were all its own. The founder spoke of three heads: moral teaching, physical training, and mental culture. Memorisation was the key to learning. Whinham graduates did well in industry, commerce, and government.

Whinham's strength as an independent school also proved to be its vulnerability. John Whinham was a model of 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian values, 'a man doing his duty well and truly'.<sup>15</sup> His son Robert had the same strength of character. He died in October 1884 after falling from his horse, still a young man at 39. He is praised in his eulogy as possessing 'thorough manliness, straightforwardness of character, reverence for truth and fair dealing, enthusiastic attachment to the work of teaching, high qualities as organiser, skill in management of boys....'<sup>16</sup>

The tragedy forced John to resume the post of headmaster at the age of 81. He was well past it. Ill health took its toll and he died in March 1886. John's other son William tried to carry on, but the school began to fail, closing in 1898.

The grand buildings fell silent. Whinham's success had rested on the duty of the individual. It lasted a lifetime, but no more, despite the hard work of men of virtue. Whinham College had held no sense of entitlement, reliance on status, or societal privileges. Everything had been achieved by hard work. It was thoroughly modern, with no allowance for sentiment or regret. The only way was forward. Lack of finance didn't cause its ruin, but lack of character in Whinham's successors. When you stand alone, and you fall, there is no one to catch you. Whinham College fell.

## Angas College

In 1899 the land came under the control of John Howard Angas, son of George Fife Angas. He was deeply religious, a respected businessman and philanthropist. Under his patronage the North Adelaide property was soon used for training evangelical missionaries as Angas College, a prototype of today's evangelical Bible Colleges.<sup>17</sup>

The Adelaide Advertiser reported, not entirely accurately, that Angas 'generously placed Whinham College, North Adelaide, at the disposal of the Rev. W. Lockhart Morton for a training home for lady missionaries.'<sup>18</sup> Morton, a Presbyterian clergyman, was another self-made man, an individualist rather than team player. Angas brought Morton from Melbourne in 1893 to run an inebriates retreat. Morton soon expanded it into a mission school called Hope Lodge. He enrolled female students in 1895, one of the first to do so. In 1899 Morton moved his operation to the new premises. He drew no salary and charged his students no tuition or board, relying solely on Divine Providence in the

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<sup>15</sup> Praise of Ben Rounsevell, MP for Port Adelaide, mayor of Glenelg, recorded in the South Australian Register, September 28 1882, 6. Rounsevell had been the first boarder at NAGS in 1854.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Löhe, 'History of 104...' See also *Whinham College Yearbook* 1885, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Eg, see <http://ministryblue.com/colleges.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Adelaide Advertiser, October 13 1898.

form of donations. He called his educational method the 'Faith Principle', teaching an experiential faith with a strong emphasis on community living and minimal emphasis on intellectual life. Researcher Dr Darrell Paproth writes:

Life at Angas ... reflected the piety of inter- or non-denominational, populist evangelicalism, the characteristic ethos of the later Bible college movement, and the personality and theology of its stern director.... [The] regimen reflected a particular ecclesiology, spirituality, theology, and theological education."<sup>19</sup>

Morton drew his students from a narrow theological band of those who agreed with his views. As NAGS and Whinham College had been very much schools of Whinham father and son espousing personal endeavour and morality, so Angas was very much a Morton school reacting against the liberalism of mainline churches in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1893 and 1912, 243 missionaries graduated:<sup>20</sup> Of these, 145 saw service in China, India, Africa, South America, Burma, Japan, New Guinea, and the Pacific; and 98 served throughout Australia and New Zealand.<sup>21</sup>

There were constant tensions with the denominations who received Angas graduates, and by 1914 Angas College was in decline. In 1915 the buildings were commandeered as the 18<sup>th</sup> Military Auxiliary Hospital.<sup>22</sup> After the military left in 1916 the College didn't recover. This was the time of mission revival. Following the great Edinburgh missionary conference of 1910 churches were establishing their own missionary colleges. In 1920 Morton returned to Melbourne where he continued to accommodate female students studying at the Melbourne Bible Institute until 1932.

The North Adelaide site once again fell silent. The Title Deed required that it be used for Protestant evangelical religious education. Parliament rescinded the Deed and the way was open to sell. Finally, in May 1922, the Seminary Committee of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELCA) purchased the property for the modest sum of £13,500,<sup>23</sup> £1,500 below the reserve price.

## **Immanuel College and Seminary**

For what came next, I am indebted to Dr Erich Renner for a paper he presented to the Immanuel College Historical Society in 1987. Renner reports the words of delegate G Kruger to the Synod of Victoria in Murtoa on 8 March 1921:

Some weeks ago, we...received an invitation to come to Adelaide for a conference. The point in question was the Angas College, which had been offered us for sale by the Principal, Mr Morton.... It is an imposing, massive structure, in good state of preservation, and conveniently situated. One cannot but feel thoroughly convinced that the purchase money of £13,000 is to be considered exceptionally low.

The President of the US Iowa Synod, present at the Synod, lent his moral support to the proposal.

Renner surmises that the new UELCA had a strong desire to commence a new seminary, but there was no particular intent to start big. Nevertheless it would cost as much, if not more, to establish a

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<sup>19</sup> Darrell Paproth, 'Faith Missions, Personality, and Leadership: William Lockhart Morton and Angas College', <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/Lucas/nos27-28-june-dec-2000/03-faith-missions-personality-and-leadership-willi/>.

<sup>20</sup> Paproth, *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> An example of these students is Charles Barnett (1870-1941), see [http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/adeb/b\\_/barnett-charles-benson-1870-1941/](http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/adeb/b_/barnett-charles-benson-1870-1941/).

<sup>22</sup> 21 September 1915 to 31 December 1916, see <http://www.aif.adfa.edu.au:8888/Medical.html>.

<sup>23</sup> See 'A Brief History of Australian Lutheran College', and also 'History of 104...', and the paper 'Interesting and significant words in the History of Immanuel College' by Dr JTE Renner, delivered to the Immanuel College Historical Society on 3 April 1987.

green fields institution in the country than to purchase Angas College. It was a little larger and grander than the natural sensibilities of Lutherans allowed, but they just couldn't turn it down. He identifies five main stimuli behind the resolve to go ahead:

1. The post war situation in New Guinea meant Australia needed to provide missionaries.
2. Australian Lutherans needed to train their ministers locally.
3. The USA Iowa Synod lent its moral support.
4. The new amalgamation of Lutherans created a fiscal opportunity.
5. The growing number of secondary students at Immanuel College in Point Pass.

For the first time ownership resided with a church and not an individual or a trust. The church, however, didn't have enough money in the bank to even cover the deposit, let alone the full cost. The Synod had instructed the Seminary committee it should spend no more than £9,000, yet it had now committed to £13,500, with an extra £1,500 for renovations! There was an attempt to force South Australia to pick up the shortfall as it was their fault, but some Victorian laymen came to the rescue. They loaned enough to cover the £3,500 deposit that was paid on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1922. The Synod did eventually endorse the purchase, but only after brave souls had continued to pursue it and do what was necessary to close the deal.

The Committee launched an immediate church-wide appeal through *The Lutheran Herald* to cover the expense. Successive articles and reports in *The Herald* show that the struggle to justify the purchase and raise the full amount went on for some time.

Meanwhile builders and tradesmen renovated every room of the new facility. Faithful volunteers<sup>24</sup> cleaned the place up, and refurbished facilities. The secondary students moved in on 5 February 1923 and the seminary students on 10 February, with classes commencing on 12 February. There were 27 students, well short of the glory days of Whinham. The Director was Paul Löhe, whose terms as President of the church and Principal of Immanuel overlapped by two years.<sup>25</sup>

The dedication took place as part of the South Australian Synod on Sunday 27 February 1923. *The Herald* reported: 'The gymnasium had been converted into an Aulia and had had only one defect, large as it is, being too small on this occasion....' Reading the reports, it seems that the entire day was spent in worship. No amount of it was too great, and no sermon of the many preached was too long, so glad was everyone for the blessings that God had given.

This event represents a stark contrast to the opening of Whinham College just 40 years before. That was a politically charged, well reported event as the big men of the colony dined and jostled in their usual fashion. Outside UELCA circles few knew of the crowd of Lutherans worshipping joyfully in the gymnasium in 1923.

Immanuel College and Seminary continued side by side until World War II when the property was again commandeered by the military. This was an unpleasant time for the students and staff. Renner writes:

Those who were in North Adelaide in those years know well of some of the suspicions and pressures that were brought to bear on the college community. The climax of all this was experienced when Intelligence made a thorough search of both North Adelaide institutions, with a batch of armed soldiers, who combed the campus for weaponry and suspect literature. A number of us well remember the bitter tirade made against the leader of the search, who was told in forceful tones by the principal to go to some other place for fifth column activities, and to let a perfectly innocent community continue its work in peace.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Notably from the Adelaide St Stephen's congregation.

<sup>25</sup> Richard J Hauser, *The pathfinders: a history of Australian Lutheran schooling 1919–1999*, Lutheran Education Australia, North Adelaide, 55.

<sup>26</sup> JTE Renner, *ibid.*

On 24 March 1942 Director Löhe was notified that the Air Force required the premises for defence purposes, and they moved in on Easter Sunday 5 April. The College moved to Walkerville and the Seminary to Clifton House on Jeffcott Street. The two have not operated from the same campus since.<sup>27</sup>

When Immanuel Seminary moved back in 1945 it took over the entire site. Dr S P Hebart became Principal and the buildings were renovated yet again. In 1960 the 1882 gymnasium was converted and dedicated as the Löhe memorial library.<sup>28</sup>

## Luther Seminary and successors

The next major change came in 1968 with the building of Luther Seminary. As in 1922/3 this new endeavour was the result of a synodical union, this time of all the Lutheran Synods in Australia and New Zealand. The principles were the same – one theological training institution to unite one Evangelical Lutheran Church through its shared theology and ministry.

The new Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) held a successful church-wide appeal for the Seminary. The renewed campus, with substantial new buildings in the modernist style designed by Sir Eric von Schramek, was opened debt free in 1968. It was stage one of a larger plan which involved replacing all earlier buildings with a totally new, modern campus. Only stage one was ever completed.

In 1986 the South Australian government gave the 1882 buildings a heritage listing,<sup>29</sup> preventing any future demolition. By that time the main building, with its grand style and steep staircases, was thoroughly entrenched in the minds of generations as 'The Sem'.<sup>30</sup>

While the building's façade faced Jeffcott St, the activity and life of the Seminary was at the rear of the building. The front door became scarcely used. At times the circle driveway, wrought iron fence, and gardens became heavily overgrown. The maintenance of aging buildings presented increasing problems. From time to time renovations, some quite major, were undertaken. Each renovation, while solving one set of problems, had a tendency to create yet another.

In 2013 the buildings continue to function as an educational centre but their future use is once again uncertain. Such uncertainty goes back many years, as Renner already reflected in 1987: '... the seminary location in Nth. Adelaide has in recent times been the focus of real attention and concern as ... a City Council is bent on developing the area as a residential area and not as an institution location. So the saga of the Nth. Adelaide campus is perhaps not at an end.'<sup>31</sup>

## After

Over 160 years thousands of people have received an education of one kind or another on this site – parliamentarians, leading businessmen, community members, missionaries, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and lay workers. The sick and wounded have been tended, and the military have been trained.

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<sup>27</sup> The 75th Anniversary publication of Immanuel College stated that '*10,000 cadets passed through the old College in the years that it had been used by the Air Force ...*' <http://www.immanuel.sa.edu.au/news-events/news/info-immanuel-news-2>.

<sup>28</sup> Much of the information in this section of the lecture was conveyed through photographs of the time. It has not been possible to reproduce this form of historical record in this paper.

<sup>29</sup> The NAGS buildings dating from 1854 onwards were demolished as part of the Luther Seminary development in 1967.

<sup>30</sup> Even the Ward St lawn, protected by a rose garden, was called 'sacred'. In the 1970s to take a short cut across it would result in a dressing down from the Principal.

<sup>31</sup> JTE Renner, *ibid*.

What happens next? Major decisions have to be made once again. A bold redevelopment proposal was put to the General Convention of Synod in April 2013. Unlike 1922 it wasn't the Seminary Committee which presented the plan, but the General Church Council of the LCA.

The properties involved in the 21<sup>st</sup> century project extend beyond the original purchase, since the LCA has gradually concentrated its national operation onto adjoining properties. 20 acres of freehold land are involved, possibly the largest such parcel in the area. The proposal forecasts spending \$135,000,000 over 10 years, and to be successful it must provide buildings that fit for purpose, support the ministry of the church, generate income, and protect the LCA from financial losses. It is a tall order.

Whether this project is do-able or not remains to be seen, but it reminds me of Moses' caution in Deuteronomy 6:10-13:

When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, ...—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, ..., take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear.

## Learnings

What can we learn from this brief excursion into history? I offer a few reflections to wrap this up:

- For 160 years education has been the primary purpose of the site. Theological education and formation remain first and foremost in the church's mind as it plans for the future.
- Since colonial settlement we have lost contact with the original custodians, whose views are not sought nor necessarily welcomed. Lutherans must take care that their focus on the gospel, the God of Scripture, and the church of the Confessions, does not blind them from the God present in, with, and under our fellow human beings who have shared this place. The country is as much theirs as it is ours, no matter what struggles this might present to our sense of self, of destiny, and of place.
- Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the site has largely stood apart from its secular environment. The church has taken over, first through the evangelical zeal of Morton, and then through the theological intent of the Lutherans. Residents and workers in Adelaide today *know of it*, but they do not *know* it as part and parcel of their community. Has our theology become separated from the world in which it is enfolded? How will we attend to this imbalance?
- Education at ALC embraces an increasingly diverse range of students, most of whom have little or no connection to the physical place. As we engage with such students the way we conduct educational programs will change and so will our demands for physical resources.
- Every 20-30 years since colonisation the site has experienced major building works, alterations, or renovations. We are once again in that part of the cycle, planning, wondering, and waiting for what might come next.
- Since it was first sold to George Fife Angas the site has opened up new possibilities. Against the odds brave and resourceful people have seized those opportunities: John and Robert Whinham, William Morton, the UELCA Seminary Committee, and the founding fathers of the LCA. None have been held back by disadvantages or reminiscences of the past. Each has moved ahead in their time and built for the future. They have formed the history of this place and today new opportunities are opening up again.

In our generation we need once more the bravery and resourcefulness of those who have preceded us. Remaining as we are is not an option, as the future always beckons and the journey must continue. We have looked briefly at the spirit of this place: the individuals and groups involved; its role in community, church, and mission; and its emphasis on education and theology. Hopefully there

is something in these reflections that will help guide us as we continue to use this site for the glory of God and the good of his people.