

FLAT BUSH METHODIST CHURCH HISTORY

The Methodist Church property and cemetery is between Baverstock and Stancombe Road. Before the church was opened services had been held in settlers' homes. The decision to build this church was made on 13 June 1882. When a suitable property was found, the Church trustees bought the land from John Hillman of Tamaki Farms for £20, it being part of Allotment 38 of Deed Plan 31, of Allotments 64, 66, 110 Block VII, Otahuhu Survey District.

By the end of that year the church had been built at a cost of £205. From then until the early 1960s it was a popular place of worship. For some years there was a large choir and a thriving Sunday school. Some well known families worshipped at the church. Some, like Mrs Bellingham sang in the choir. Mrs. Margaret (Maggie) Ormiston (nee Knapping) played the organ and taught in the Sunday school. Millicent Wood (nee Yeats) also played the organ for many years.

On 15 December 1957 the church's seventy-fifth anniversary was celebrated. However by 1964 as the congregations had dwindled due to a changing population and the growing ease of transport, and it was decided that in future services should be held only as required. By 1970 the church was part of the Papatoetoe Methodist Circuit. The building was sold on 30 May 1973 and removed from the site. The deconsecrated building has now been converted to use as a private residence at 56 Gillies Avenue, Epsom. It can just be seen from the car park in Clovernook Road, Newmarket.

FLAT BUSH METHODIST CHURCH CEMETERY

The church cemetery is located on approximately a quarter acre of land. It was situated behind the church although now it can now be reached by a walkway from Chapel Road. It was gazetted as a cemetery on 29 June 1885 but there is evidence of some burials on the property before that date. The names of many early settlers can still be seen on the headstones. The earliest grave is that of Horace David Whitten, aged six years, who died of blood poisoning on 12 July 1886.

On 16 March 1991, nine members of the Trinity Methodist Church and thirty descendents of the early settlers including representatives from several branches of the Bellingham family and the Glover family met to clean up the graveyard. Other well known family names of the district recorded on the headstones are Matuschka, Kitson, Scarborough, Stancombe, Crago, Thorburn, Stubbing, Hemming, Angrove and Cargo.

In 1961 a new Methodist Church was erected at 2 Otaru Road. St Mark's Mark's Methodist Church, on the corner of Preston and Ferguson Roads, was opened in 1963.

The Flat Bush Methodist Church was originally part of the early Manukau Circuit which stretched from about Onehunga to as far south as Waiuku and Pukekohe. Over the years alterations to Circuit boundaries were made as movements and growth of the population made this necessary. By the time the Flat Bush Church closed it was part of the Papatoetoe circuit but was under the oversight of the trustees of the Otaru Methodist Church. In 1990 the control and upkeep of the cemetery became the responsibility of the Trinity Methodist church at Pakuranga.

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