



**SHORE**  
**Sydney Church of England Grammar School**

**POLISHED PENNIES ADDRESS**  
**2014**

This year sees the commemoration and the centenary of two significant events in the life of this School, both which are bound together closely by history.

For its first 25 years Shore did not have a Chapel, which was felt by many to be a major deficiency in the School. However, lack of resources and significant benefactors meant that the Chapel Appeal only progressed slowly. In 1913 the School Council decided at least the Foundation Stone should be laid for the School's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday and plans were drawn up. This attracted further significant donations and, on the School's birthday, May 4 1914, Archbishop Rev Dr J C Wright laid and blessed the foundation stone which is at the eastern end of this building.

Three months later war was declared and one month after that Shore's first Old Boy was killed in the War. Nine hundred Old Boys served in World War I and 134 did not return. The new Chapel quickly became a shrine to many of those killed and the Northbridge playing fields were dedicated to the memory of all those who lost their lives in war.

Of those who died and who are remembered in this Chapel

- 39 have plaques on the wall
- 3 were Senior Prefects : Gother Clarke, Charles Pulling, James Blackwood
- The oldest was 42 Gother Clarke, the youngest 19, Edward Garraway
- 10 have windows dedicated to them

The organ is a memorial to J G A Pockley and two Masters and three Old Boys who were killed in World War II also have plaques on the wall.

The Memorial Books which the Prefects turn the pages of each Chapel bear the names of those who served in the wars. The one on the south is dedicated to those who served in World War I, the one on the north is dedicated to those who served in World War II.

As you are well aware there are a number of other memorials around the School dedicated to those who have fallen, including the War Memorial Hall which remembers those who served in World War II. Through the sacrifices of many Old Boys the School's history is inescapably bound to them – and at one stage they were all boys at this school like you.

The story of one of the Old Boys commemorated in this Chapel has interested me since I first heard it. In the 1,500 + times I have sat in my seat by the organ my eyes have been naturally drawn to the stained glass window opposite me. It remembers the death of Brian Colden Antill Pockley and his portrait was used for the face of St Luke, the beloved physician, the central character in the window.

In many ways Brian Pockley was like you – he loved his sport, he worked hard at school, he loved his family and was devoted to them, and he was a keen camper and fisherman. So what makes his story special?

Through an unfortunate set of circumstances Brian Pockley has become one of Shore's most widely known Old Boys.

He entered Shore in 1904 and quickly became known for his sporting prowess. He rowed in the 1<sup>st</sup> IV, swam for the School and was selected in the 1<sup>st</sup> XV for three years from 1906 - 1908. In Athletics he was a star. After being runner up in the School Athletics Championship in his second last year, in his final year he won the 100 yards, 220 yards, 440 yards, 800 yards, high jump, hurdles and long jump and came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the mile. At the GPS Carnival he was the All Schools Champion in the hurdles and his jump of 20' 10" (approximately 6.3 metres) in the long jump qualified him as Long Jump Champion for all schools in Australia and England, beating his nearest rival by one foot.

No doubt his reputed 9" chest expansion gave him a massive aerobic advantage over his peers. This means that when he breathed in his chest expanded by 9" (23 cm) which is equivalent to Mr Ryan breathing in and finishing with a chest like Mr Sackar. See how you measure up sometime.

In Rugby, Pockley was the third heaviest in the side, 3 kg heavier than the average weight of his team mates. Playing at outside back, with this weight advantage, and being the fastest player in the side he was a regular try scorer. He was known for his stepping ability and good hands.

In 1908 he was captain of the side which went through the season undefeated winning 18 matches and drawing four. The side scored 292 points to the oppositions' 39. In the GPS season they won 9 and drew 3, scoring 148 points to the oppositions' 22. This was at a time when a try was worth three points and a converted try five points. Pockley scored an average of one try per game and was named in the GPS 1<sup>st</sup> XV.

It is worth pointing out that, of the fifteen players in this side all bar one served in World War I and of those 5 were killed, one in each year of the war.

Brian did not just devote himself to games. He was a very good scholar gaining straight A's in his junior examinations, winning the Geometry Medal and after earning strong results in his senior exams, he qualified him for entry into Medicine. He was also a member of the Debating Society, took part in theatrical productions and was a member of the School's first Cadet Corps in 1908 being named as one of two captains – Shore's first officers. In those days cadets used rifles and Pockley was regarded as one of the best shots.

Pockley joined St. Paul's College at university and continued to excel academically and in Rugby and Athletics where he was awarded Blues. In 1913 he was close to selection in the State Rugby team but was unfortunately injured.

At the end of 1913 he graduated with Class II Honours and commenced work at Sydney Hospital.

On 14 August 1914 Pockley enlisted in the army, three days before war broke out and he was appointed a Captain. Six days later he found himself on board HMS Berrima as Regimental Medical Officer bound for a destination which was secret.

They were in fact heading to the Solomon Islands where they were to capture a vital part in the German Pacific wireless installation which had been set up to send news to Berlin.

On 6 September he was moved from the Berrima to HMAS Sydney and was attached to the first landing force under Lt Bowen with fifty naval reserves. He wrote to his family in the early hours of 11 September letting them know the forces' objective was Rabaul and Herbertstoke in New Britain and that they were due to land at 3.00 am.

Based on the experience of exercises which had been carried out on the island, he said that probably there would 'be no opposition at all'. He was to be the only medical officer with the landing party and wrote 'Personally I think it will be a very pleasant experience'.

Unbeknown to the landing party the Germans had dug trenches across the narrow jungle track to the wireless station and pits alongside it, with one to three Germans in each trench and about nine native police troopers who climbed trees to act as snipers.

In the first fight a German officer Mauderer was shot in the hand and captured. Pockley, noticing Mauderer was losing a lot of blood, took him aside to attend to him. Sheltering in a hole in the ground, Pockley amputated the German's hand, without anaesthetic as he had none. The German held his wounded hand with his good hand and smoked a cigar while the amputation took place. Mauderer was taken back to the ship and survived to tell of what happened. He was very grateful to Pockley and said he was a 'very humane man'.

Shortly afterwards further up the track Able Seaman Williams of the Naval Reserve was shot through the chest and was brought back to Pockley for treatment. Pockley saw that there was little he could do for Williams and got his Naval Orderly, William Kember, to care for him and take him back to base. Pockley took the Red Cross arm band off his arm and wound it around Kember's hat to protect him from being shot. When Kember asked Pockley how he would manage without his protection, Pockley said he would be all right.

Pockley then went up to the fighting front and was shot, the bullet entering 2" below his ribs and passing out through his back, shattering his lower vertebrae on the way through. He lost consciousness and was taken back to the Berrima at 9.00 am. He later regained consciousness and, according to the Lieutenant with him at the time, Brian Pockley passed away peacefully at 1.50 pm, 50 minutes before the death of Williams.

Pockley and Williams were buried side by side at Herbertstoke at about 6.00 pm that day – Williams the first Australian wounded in World War I and Pockley the first Australian and first Officer to be killed in World War I.

Pockley's grave now lies in Rabaul at Bita Paka war cemetery.

News of the casualties reached Australia that day and Pockley's loss was keenly felt.

At St Andrew's Church at Wahroonga, where Pockley had been one of its earliest pupils at Sunday School and a regular worshipper, the Rector, The Reverend Langford-Smith, referred to Pockley's death as 'a loss to the whole community, as a life of bright promise and brilliant prospects had been cut short. He described him as a person of upright and moral character.'

At the unveiling of a memorial tablet to Pockley at Sydney Hospital, Dr Ralph Worrall said that 'he won the esteem and regard of us all on account of his marked ability, the faithful manner in which he discharged his duties and the other splendid qualities that distinguished him – his high character, his modesty and self-effacement and his energetic action. Throughout his career he set a high standard. His life was gentle and pure and true and strong.'

Perhaps the most moving tribute came from the Headmaster, Mr Charles Hodges.

'I always considered him as approaching as near to my ideal schoolboy as any boy in my experience. In work and games he displayed a splendid keenness and admirable temper and won high honours for the School and himself and the unconscious influence which he exercised was in the direction of upright manliness. As a Prefect he helped me more than he was aware of, by loyalty, by respect to duty and by charm of manner.'

So what do we, sitting here in this Chapel almost 100 years after Brian Pockley's death, surrounded by plaques commemorating the deaths of other Shore boys, make of and learn from his death?

He was a young man from whose life we can learn much – love of family, making the most of the talents with which you are blessed, the importance of faith and character, selflessness and compassion. If we just did this, the sacrifice he made, which seems so pointless, would not be in vain.

He was a man who made a heroic sacrifice to protect the life of another and as our reading said. 'Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for another.'

On this day we remember the sacrifices made by those who went before us in this School. Our polishing of the coins symbolises our respect for them. But we also remember the sacrifice made by Jesus who sacrificed his life not to save just one but all of us.

Graham J Robertson  
DEPUTY HEADMASTER

April 2014