

## Openings

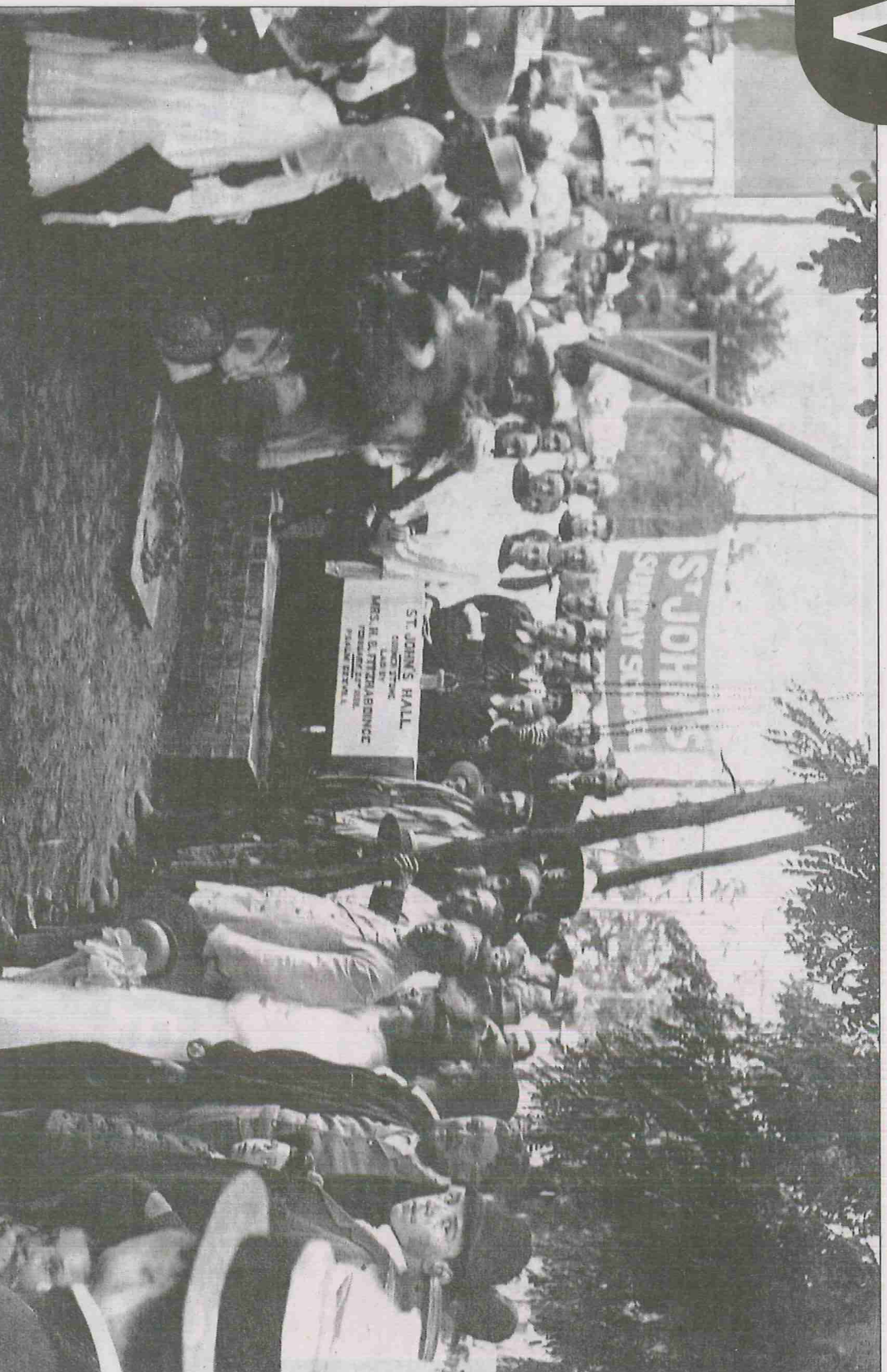
THE CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month.

On these days the archives will be open from 10am to 3pm.

The next Saturday opening will occur on August 6, 2011.

This trial initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers, who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours.

It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.



The laying of the foundation stone of St John's Church of England Hall in 1888 (courtesy of St John's Archives).

# Grand old St John's

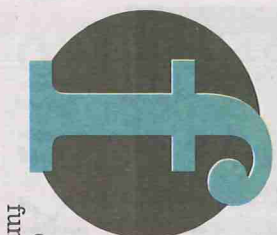
## what you need to know

### THE CSU

Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



at the archives  
Wayne Doubleday



or 76 years, St John's Church of England Hall in Baylis Street was the venue of choice for functions and meetings in Wagga.

It was situated between Thompson and Morrow Streets, on the western side on Baylis Street.

In the early days the Choral Society, the Philharmonic Society and the Wagga Temperance Guild were among the local societies and organisations to use the hall for meetings. Various entertainments such as dances, missions, bazaars, fairs for outlying parish churches, and Young Anglican functions were held there.

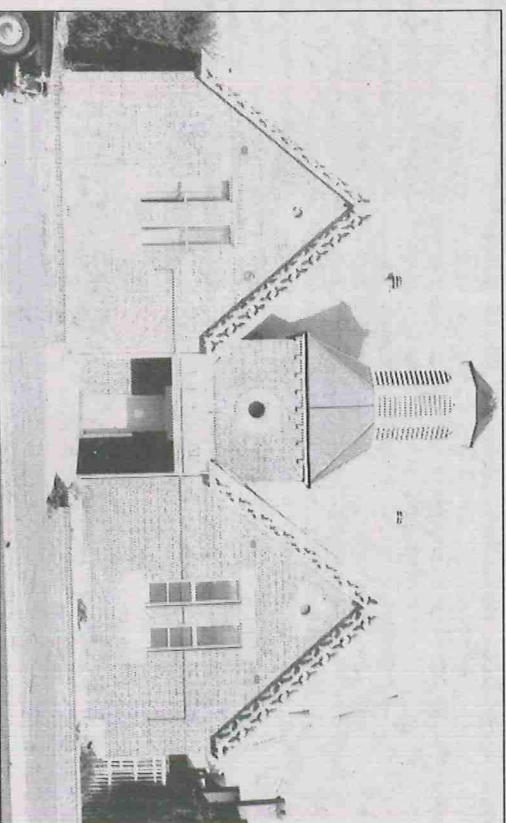
### The opening

BAYLIS Street, Wagga, was the scene of a gala occasion when the corner stone of St John's Church of England Hall was laid on February 22, 1888.

St John's church choir commenced proceedings at 6pm by singing *The Church's One Foundation*.

Copies of the three local newspapers, the *Advertiser*, *Express* and *Evening Post*, were put in a bottle, which was then safely placed in position under the stone where it was to be permanently secured.

The stone was suspended by a chain and when it was put in place Mrs HB Fitzhardinge declared the stone "to be well and truly laid"



St John's Church of England Hall in Baylis Street before demolition, circa. 1964

after which she was presented with a silver trowel.

The stone is now located on the north western corner of St John's Parish Centre in Church Street.

Those attending the laying of the foundation stone were asked to move to the beautifully decorated Protestant Hall where the church ladies had prepared a supper of "artistically cut watermelons and luscious grapes" followed by an extensive musical program.

The hall was erected at a cost of £1200 on a block of land that had been a grant from the New South Wales government to be used for parochial church activities and mission services, beginning with St John's Sunday School for the children.

The architect for the building was Mr George Shepherd and the builder was Mr Charles Hardy. The plans for the hall were based on the gothic design of the Goulburn Church of England Hall, although the Wagga hall was much larger in size. Within five months of the stone

being laid, the building was completed and the dedication service took place on July 15, 1888.

The Lord Bishop of Goulburn travelled to Wagga for the purpose of the opening and dedication of St John's new hall.

For the festive occasion, St John's Hall was decorated with Japanese fans and umbrellas in beautiful colours, with china jars filled with pampas grass to soften the effect of so many colours.

The overall effect of the decorations of Chinese lanterns with the gas star lights reportedly produced a stunning scene for the musical program of the evening.

### A community affair

IT WAS hoped the hall would have been free from debt by the end of 1888 and many functions were held in aid of the building fund.

A large, successful bazaar and fancy fair was held in September that was well patronised with the wonderful result of reducing the debt by almost \$550 pounds.

The first Christmas after the opening, the St John's Sunday School celebrated with a large crowd being present for the distribution of Christmas gifts to 265 children.

The brightly decorated, monster Christmas tree was covered with the presents for the children. There was "hearty laughter" until it was time to end the festivities.

In 1906, the Wagga community supported many concerts, which were held in the hall on behalf of various projects and organisations. St John's Young Men's Club held a concert to assist in furnishing their club room in the hall and to initiate a library. Some of the funds were used to travel to Albury to participate in a debate.

When it became necessary for the Wagga Municipal Council to conduct the local children's diphtheria and later the polio immunisations campaign, St John's Hall was used because of its convenient location for young mothers. During World War II, the Churchwomen's Union ladies and the ladies of the Women's Voluntary Services compiled an extensive roster to provide hundreds of meals to servicemen and women and the hall was the centre of these activities, as well as providing a reading room for quiet times.

St John's Hall was sold in 1964 and in January 1965 the roof was removed as the first stage of demolition began.

If anyone could assist with any photographs of functions held inside St John's Hall it would be appreciated if the CSU Archives could be contacted. Photographs would be scanned and returned immediately.

References: Service Register, St John's Church, Wagga, (No 2), 1880-1889; *Wagga Advertiser*, 23/02/1888, 12/07/1888, 13/09/1888, Dec 1888, 30/06/1906.

Compiled by June Dietrich.