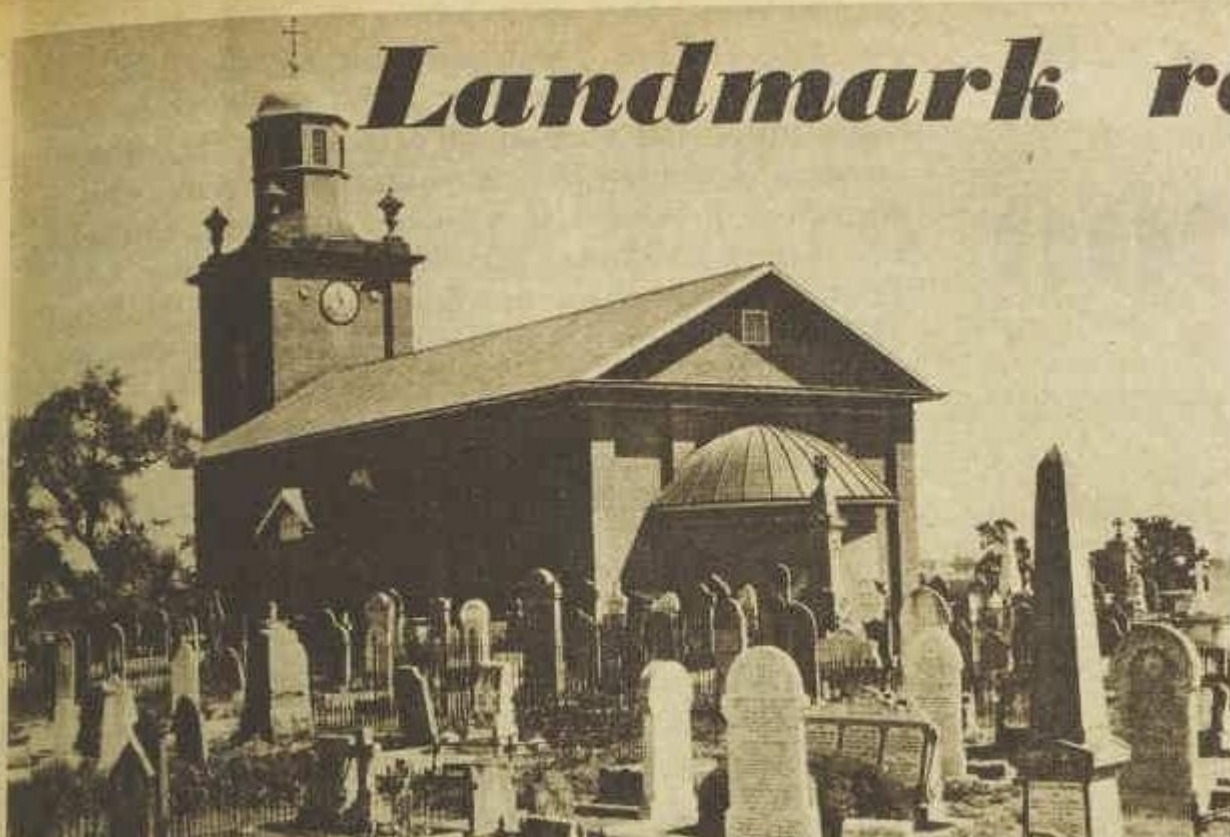


Hard work, polish and £15,000 make old church shine



Landmark restored

CONVICT-BUILT St. Matthew's Church of England, at Windsor, N.S.W., showing the old tombstones in the churchyard. The cross on the dome is about 100ft. high.

● The oldest Anglican church in Australia, St. Matthew's, Windsor, N.S.W., will hold a special service to dedicate extensive restorations on October 12, exactly 141 years and one day since the foundation stone was laid by Governor Lachlan Macquarie.

THE foundation stone actually was laid three

times.

Governor Macquarie placed

Governor Macquarie placed under the stone a Spanish dollar with a circular piece

lar with a circular piece struck from the middle, then the currency of the colony. A thief removed the stone, and the dollar.

The following day the Governor tried again, with a dollar supplied by the first rector, the Rev. Robert Cartwright. This, too, was stolen, and the stone had to be laid for the third time.

The parish register, kept at the time by the parish clerk, Joseph Harpur, tells the story of the stone in copperplate handwriting that is gradually fading with age.

He described how "the transaction was witnessed by His Honour Lt. Gov. Erskine of the 43rd Regiment, Major Antill, D. Allan, Esq., Chief Magistrate of the Hawkesbury, Mr. Surgeon Mileham, J.P.,

several gentlemen, and the most respectable inhabitants of Windsor."

Two years later the church was debt-free, and consecrated by Australia's first Anglican clergyman, the Rev. Samuel Marsden.

In the same year St. Matthew's rectory was built. Mr. Marsden died in it in 1838,

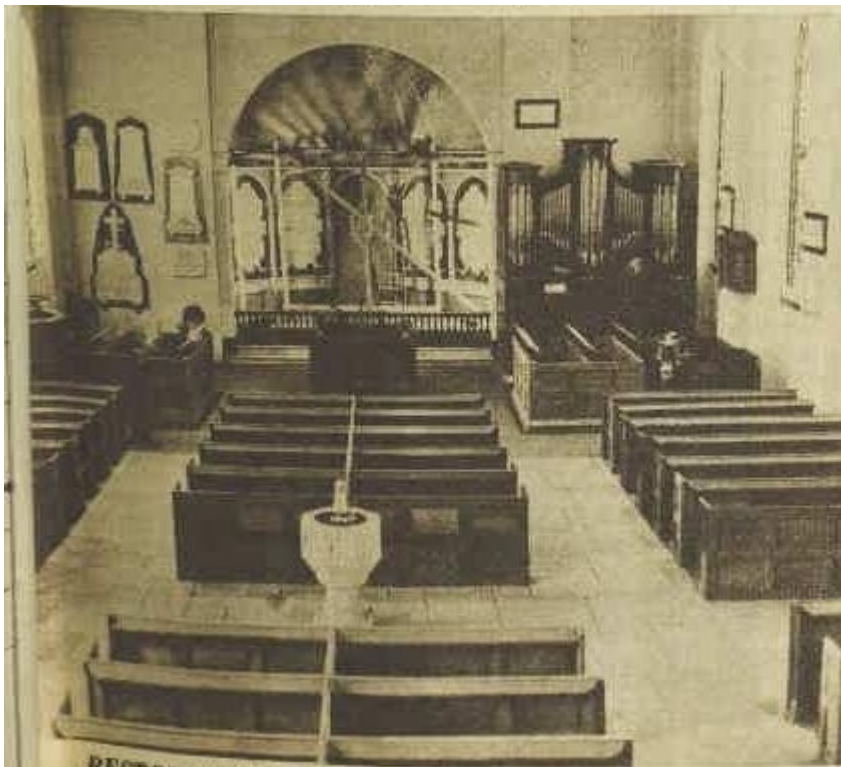
—By—
ANNE BRADLEY,
staff reporter

of pneumonia. Local legend says that his ghost still haunts the rectory.

I asked the present rector, the Rev. W. F. Carter, if the ghost of Mr. Marsden had bothered him.

"I haven't seen him," he replied, smiling, "but my predecessor did. He told the Archbishop, who asked what he'd said to the ghost.

"My predecessor replied: 'I



RESTORATION WORK was not complete in the interior of St. Matthew's when this picture was taken.

asked him to contribute to the restoration fund and I haven't seen him since."

The convicts who built the church of red clay bricks so many years ago wouldn't see such a big difference today.

The original stone floor, which was hollowed and worn, has been replaced with new stone. From the cedar pews and communion rails the layers of stain and varnish have been sanded, and the wood shines again.

The church has been painted inside and out, and extensive repairs include a copper roof and guttering and a new drainage system.

The service on October 12 marks the end of restorations that have been in progress for five years. A total of £15,000 has been spent, and donations have come from many parts of the world.

The historic old church attracts thousands of visitors each year. On one day last year more than 300 people

came year. On one day more than 300 people signed the visitors' book.

Among the many old graves in the churchyard is that of Andrew Thompson, an emancipated convict who became highly respected in the community.

Governor Macquarie thought so much of Thompson that he ordered the large stone slab with the inscription on the ex-convict's grave.

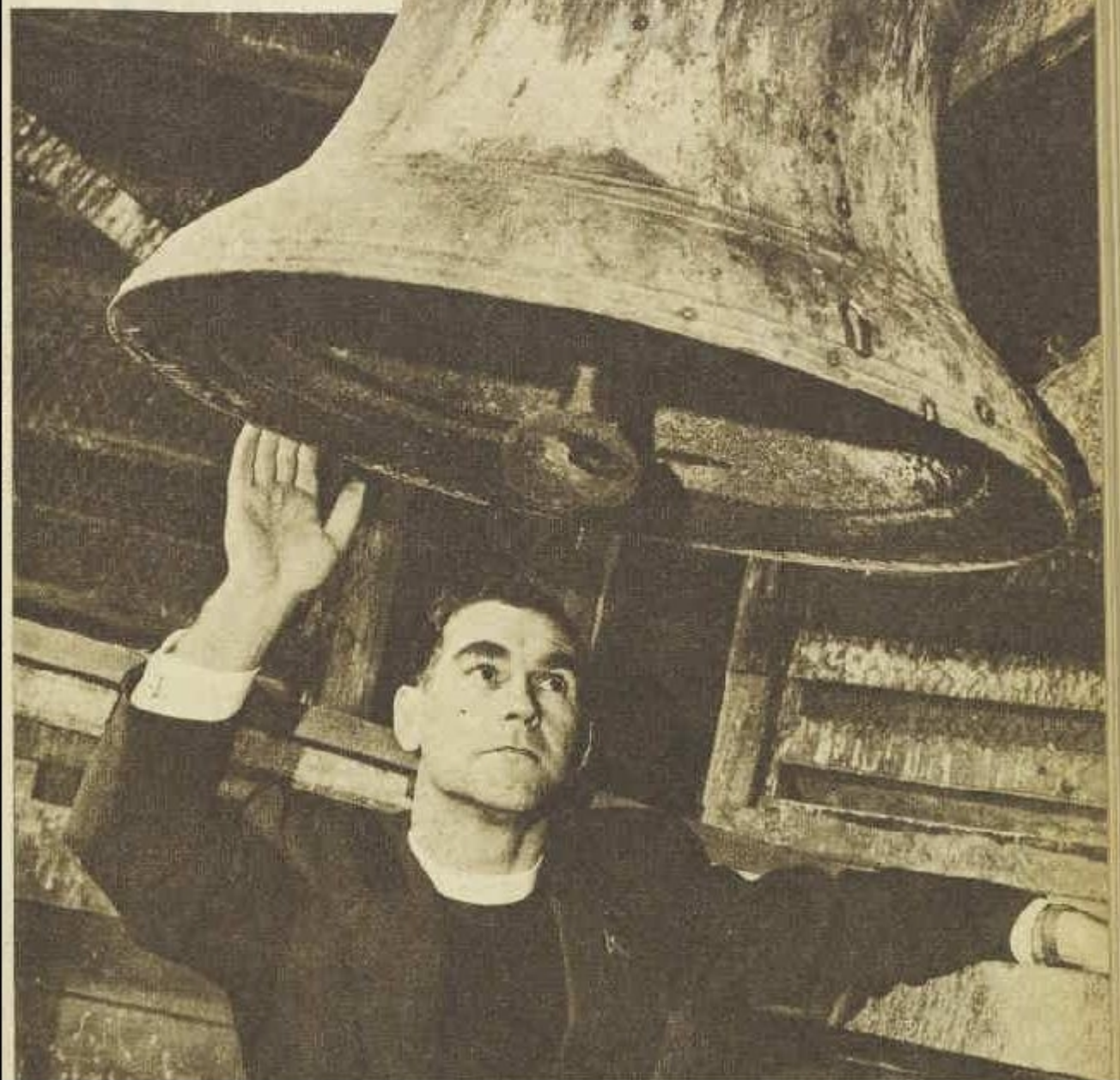
Thompson was transported from Scotland in 1792, when he was 17, for setting fire to a stack of hay.

Another stone marks the grave of a man who died "of the curse of drink," another tells of Constable Green, "whose memory will remain ever-Green."

Inside the church is a memorial tablet topped by a rope-twined anchor.

It is to the memory of Captain William Hans Blake, and

restored



gives a long detailed history of the captain's career from the time "this gallant officer entered the Royal Navy in 1846" until he died in 1874 at Cape Coast Castle, West Coast of Africa, "from the effects of

Africa, "from the effects of climate, brought on by excessive exertion and exposure."

St. Matthew's, often called the Hawkesbury River Cathedral, once had a parish that was described as includ-

that was described as including Windsor, "with all Australia west thereof."

The church was designed by Australia's first architect, convict Francis Greenway.

The clock in the church tower, still the only town clock

The clock in the church tower, still the only town clock in Windsor, was presented, according to tradition, by George IV in 1821 together with the enormous Bible and the communion vessels.

The organ in St. Matthew's, installed in 1840, was the first built in Australia.

Before the organ was installed, hymns were sung to music by Windsor's military band, which occupied the three back pews.

In those days parishioners rented pews, the charges ranging from £1/10/- to £5 a year for the whole pew.

The fading old parish registers of births, deaths, and marriages at St. Matthew's sometimes seem cruel in their brevity.

A suicide is dismissed with, "he laid violent hands upon himself."

In the early marriage register, beside the copperplate writing of every name, is the letter P or F, recording for years whether the person was a prisoner or free.

Most of the names written by the parish clerk have a big cross through them — the mark of the bride or groom who could not write.

RECTOR, the Rev. W. F. Carter, inspecting the church bell.
Until recently the bell was rung every minute on the death of a parishioner, twice for a woman and three times for a man, and one toll for each year of life.





LARGE BIBLE, being examined by the rector's warden, Mr. Arthur Wilcher. Because many visitors tore out small pieces as souvenirs, the Bible is kept in a locked glass case.



CEDAR communion rails, cut from the cedar trees that once surrounded Windsor, receive a final polish from the rector and his father, Mr. William Carter, who is the vergier.