



THE PIONEER

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The Spirit of Giving in Stroud

This article will celebrate Christmas in Stroud over the years through the art of giving to the children of the district. Over the years, according to *The Dungog Chronicle*, there has been a constant at Christmas and that is the Stroud Christmas Tree.

In December 1934 'a Christmas Tree and sale of work' was held on a Saturday afternoon with the funds raised given to the Church¹.

The Parents & Citizens' Association (P&C) for Stroud Public School took the lead in the Christmas Tree event of 1938. An appeal was made for gifts for the children and there was a 'splendid response' which resulted in each pupil attending the school, and 'future scholars', receiving a gift. The event was planned to be 'held on the breaking-up afternoon after the children have partaken of a basket luncheon'. There would be demonstrations of 'school work before the ice creams, sweets, and gifts' were distributed. After the event, the newspaper reported that 'the children were delighted as each one had a real part in the function. The members of the P&C entertained the children at a picnic lunch and while the children played games about fifty adults were also catered for'. The children were very excited when the gifts were distributed from the Tree. A 'Father Christmas' helper (Mr K. Gorton) then made his appearance and proved a great success. Over 200 gifts were handed out and 'each recipient was more than pleased'. The school received funding from the event 'and the teaching staff appreciated the increased interest of the parents'².

In 1952 the Christmas Tree was arranged by the Women's Guild and held at St John's Presbyterian Church, Stroud.



A large crowd attended, including children, parents and friends. 'The church was decorated with flowers and a very large and beautiful Christmas Tree was laden with dozens of valuable presents'. The children came from Monkerai, Limeburners Creek and Stroud. Items on the agenda included carol singing, Christmas cake and Santa Claus' helper visiting. Santa's helper distributed the gifts and each child also 'received a bag of sweets'. The afternoon was finished with thanks all round for the ladies of the Guild, Santa Claus' helper, parents and friends³.

Fast forward to the 2000s and Denise at R & R Property is facilitating the Christmas Tree for families struggling at Christmas time. Denise started this

initiative in the area in 2004 when she noticed that 'many families have been hit hard by increasing costs in day to day living expenses' which continues to be the case. Since 2008 Denise has worked in conjunction with the Dungog Neighbourhood Centre to make this happen.

Community spirit has always been alive and well in Stroud. It is especially nice to see it as a constant at Christmas time over the years.

Sharon Burke © 2017

¹ *The Dungog Chronicle* dated 11 December 1934, accessed through Trove at www.nla.gov.au.

² *The Dungog Chronicle* dated 29 November 1938 and 20 December 1938, accessed through Trove at www.nla.gov.au.

³ *The Dungog Chronicle* dated 24 December 1952, accessed through Trove at www.nla.gov.au.