

STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES:

The Armistice – as it happened at PLC Sydney in 1918

The end of World War I was a time of both celebration and sadness: elation that after four years hostilities had finally ended, but grief for the many lives that had been lost.

For the duration of the war students at PLC had knitted scarves and socks to send to the front and had engaged in a variety of activities to raise money to help the soldiers. All of the pupils would have had family members or friends who had marched off to battle, and many would have known some who had fallen.

What actually happened at the College when the war ended can be learned from two documents: the *Aurora Australis* for December 1918 and the Record Book 1917-1958, a book that, rather like a diary, records (in handwriting) major school events.



Dr Marden (back to the camera) and students at the flagpole lawn, 12 November 1918.

The emotion of the armistice, announced “at the eleventh hour of the eleventh month in 1918”, is clear in reading the College magazine:

“Year after year we had watched and prayed and worked through dark days, then brighter, then dark again, waiting for the tide to turn. ‘Peace on earth, goodwill to men! – The irony of it!’ so we were tempted to exclaim. With what new eagerness did we seek our hope and comfort and strength from the old Book and wait for Biblical history again to repeat itself. So when the glorious news really came our first impulse was to sing the Doxology as never before, ‘O God our help in ages past,’ and the 100th Psalm. Then tenderly we remembered the un-returning brave in ‘For all the saints’. Psalm 124 was read and appropriate

prayer offered by Dr. Marden, who gave a brief, fitting address. With a thrill did we watch the flag of our beloved Empire rise to its full height on the flagpole lawn! How we sang 'God Save the King!' How we cheered!"

The entry from the Record Book, for all its solemnity, also has a humorous touch as the proceedings had to be carried out twice!

On Friday November 8th news came through that the Armistice had been signed by the Germans. The School assembled on the Flag-staff lawn, saluted the flag, sang Rule Britannia, God Save the King & other patriotic songs, then went to the School-room & sang appropriate psalms & hymns. After prayers and an address by Dr McQueen the school was dismissed for the day.

Later in the day it was announced that the news of the signing was not official – The Official news came through on Monday evening. [11 November].

Tuesday (November 12th) was proclaimed a public holiday by the Commonwealth Government. The School assembled sang appropriate psalms & hymns. Afterwards Dr Marden conducted Prayers addressed the girls & asked them to salute the flags of the allies. Then an adjournment was made to the flag-staff lawn, the flags were hoisted in the midst of ringing cheers. After cheers for the King & our soldiers & the singing of God Save the King, Rule Britannia, etc. the scholars were dismissed for the day.

The following day (Wednesday Nov. 13th) was proclaimed a public holiday by the N. S. Wales Executive. The school assembled but was dismissed at 11.15."



Hoisting the flags to celebrate the Armistice, 12 November 1918.

As we mark the centenary of the Armistice, let us remember the sacrifice and dedicate ourselves anew to peace and understanding.