



*Commemorative  
Liftout*

# **150<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY GUNDAROO PUBLIC SCHOOL Saturday, 21 March 2015**

## **Program**

11.30am to 12 noon	Meet and greet
12 noon to 2 pm	Gala Lunch Self-guided school tours
2pm to 3pm	Children's musical performance
3pm to 3.30pm	Official address, cake cutting and tree planting with the Hon. Pru Goward MP, Member for Goulburn and Angus Taylor MP, Member for Hume
3.30pm	Afternoon tea
6pm to 9.30pm	Old Style Dance

## **Gundaroo Public School: Then and Now**



## Gundaroo Public School: 1865 to 2015

### *The Early Years*

Like many small rural communities in 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia, Gundaroo had its share of problems establishing a school.

In 1865 an application received by the Board of National Education for a school in Gundaroo, signed by Messrs Frederick Hoare, Thomas Booth and Arthur Affleck, requested that the Commissioners '... be pleased to award a salary to the Master, and aid in books ...'.

At that time 28 pupils were expected to attend, paying sixpence per week. The school building was to contain a school room, a bedroom and a sitting room, functioning as both a school and teacher's residence.

The school was initially established in the Presbyterian Church. The first teacher appointed was Mr Hugh McPhee (teacher from October 1865 to December 1865), a 50 year old unmarried Scot. Mr McPhee had previously taught for nine years in Queanbeyan.

A Chief Inspector for the Board of National Education commented late in 1865 that 'considering the schoolhouse is not erected, that only 15 children belong to the school, and that the teacher's qualifications are doubtful, I beg to submit that aid be withheld until the completion of the building, an increase in the attendance, and the examination of the teacher'.

So began the Gundaroo community's ongoing quest and petitions to maintain a school in the district.

In 1868 with ongoing lobbying from local patrons, specifically Messrs Arthur Affleck, Hugh Vallance, Charles Amatty and William Affleck, the then Council of Education agreed to aid a public school in Gundaroo. It was requested that books and equipment for the school be sent to Sutton Forest, where they would be pick up by Mr Vallance with horse and dray.

In 1868 a new teacher Mr Crew (teacher from November 1868 to November 1870) and his wife arrived. Mrs Crew assisted in teaching sewing.

In March 1869 work commenced on the construction of a new school building and teacher's residence, by contractor Mr Thomas Jobson.

There was some delay to building due to difficulties in obtaining bricks and heavy rains interfering with the quarrying of stone. The building was ready for occupation in September 1869.

An ongoing challenge to the viability of a school in Gundaroo was poor attendance. Children were often needed to help on the farm, or prevented from attending due to floods. There were many who complained about the general apathy of parents.

At one stage, to encourage attendance at the school, it was decided to withhold the teacher's salary until he had recruited 15 pupils.



Fortunately there was a man on the spot, claiming to have a university education, Mr A.J. Slatterie (teacher from January 1871 to October 1872) willing to take on this challenge. For the whole of his term he used a blackboard that had been broken on his journey from Sydney in 1868. This arrangement lasted for two years until Mr Slatterie's services were dispensed with because his lack of a wife deprived the local girls of lessons in sewing.

### *Teacher Anecdotes*

There are many amusing historical anecdotes about teachers at Gundaroo Public School.

Mr William Fursman (service from May 1883 to April 1877), brought his wife and six children to Gundaroo. Mr Fursman looked good on paper and sounded well at first hearing. He believed he was the very model of an ideal schoolmaster, however in his first year he was unable to complete a written examination to qualify for an increase in salary as he was “highly nervous and sensitive”, and when under examination his memory left him. Instead he submitted a series of “useless” mathematical problems which left the Council of Education unimpressed. In addition his daughters succeeded in having two local lads sent to prison, although Mr Fursman always denied his daughters would ever “cajole boys out of their homes or romp with them until they lost their boots and stockings”.

Mr James Lowe (service from January 1891 to July 1895) whose distraction with other concerns, specifically gold mining near Gundaroo, resulted in him leaving the school to the supervision of the Senior Constable’s son. One day in 1895 he returned to find the District School Inspector conducting the lessons. The Inspector’s report did not detail Mr Lowe’s misdemeanours simply stating that he “lacked knowledge, ability and natural aptitude”.

### *Teaching in Colonial NSW*

A clue to the expectations of teachers in this era is in a document titled ‘Rules for Teachers 1872’.

Rule 2: Each morning teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day’s session.

Rule 4: Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they attend church regularly.

Rule 8: Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honesty.

In 1915, a similar document titled ‘Rules for Women Teachers 1915’.

- You will not marry during the term of your contract.
- You will not keep company with men
- You must be home between the hours of 8pm and 6am, unless attending school functions
- You may not loiter in any of the town’s ice-cream bars; and you may not dress in bright colours and you must wear at least two petticoats.

Goulburn Evening Penny Post, 1 July 1899.

GUNDAROO. The accommodation at the local Public School was taxed to the utmost last Friday afternoon, when several of the parents and townsfold assembled at the invitation of the teacher (Mr McDonald) to witness the presentation of prizes to the scholars in connection with the breaking up of the school for the midwinter vacation. Mrs McDonald presided at the piano, and the pupils rendered several songs in a highly creditable manner. There was also a reciting competition for senior and junior scholars ...

In 1897, the community had outgrown the original school building and it had fallen into disrepair. An Inspector’s report commented that due to the hot summer weather and the size of the class the teacher then Mr Thomas McDonald (service from July 1895 to October 1907) was compelled to go out into open air to recover sufficient strength and energy to proceed with his duties, and every child had to bring their own drinking water due to the bad state of tank water, which stank and was a floating mass of insects.

A new building was opened in 1898, and over the years it was set off by gardens of flowers and vegetables (see picture ). In 2015, this building currently functions as the school’s library.

### *A District’s Love of Spelling Bees*

The Gundaroo district has a passion for spelling bees, with records of competitions dating back to 1875. This tradition continues currently with children in Years 3 to 6 participating in spelling bees, part of the Premier’s Spelling Bee competition. In 2013 one student was runner-up (that is, she came second in the whole state) for this competition and was the third child in her family to have made the finals.



Queanbeyan Age, 17 November 1875.

GUNDAROO: A very pleasant gathering took place at the Public School here on last Friday night, to celebrate the first Spelling Bee that has been held in Gundaroo. The managers were, Messrs Devlin, Fursman, W. Affleck, and H. Vallance, the chair was filled by A. Affleck J.P. The prizes were three very fine books, and the first went to Miss Vallance, the Second to Master H. Vallance, and the third to Master Clarence Dyce. Another contest was then got up for the adults, and was splendidly contested and it was for a long time thought that it would be a tie between Mrs Walmsley and Mr Mason, so long did they spell every word put to them, but at last the prize went to the gentleman. No doubt this will not be the last bee here.

### Modern History

In the 1960's the schools numbers had dropped disastrously and no attention was given to celebrating its centenary. Teacher Gordon Gray (service from February 1965 to January 1973) took

up his appointment with 28 pupils on the roll, and by 1969 enrolments had dropped to seven and the school was technically unable to operate. The community was told the school would be closed unless numbers were maintained at the minimum required, which at that point was nine. Three very small boys saved the day – Glen Jobbins, Tim Kershaw and Alex Walker – and a small group of residents, among them Peter Dyce, ferried these children from their outlying properties to and from school every day. But for these actions and the dedication of residents, Gundaroo Public School would have closed.

Today the school is the heart of the Gundaroo community, it has 85 pupils, four full-time teachers, including its teaching Principal Sue Kominek (service from 1981 to current), and eleven teaching and support staff. Children are encouraged to actively participate in the school curriculum, as well as extra-curricular activities such as Rostrum public speaking, the school band, inter-school arts festivals, cross country, and much more.

*Many people have been involved in making today possible. The school would like to thank the following for their generous donations:*

Tallagandra Winery

Dionysus Winery

Bob Carter

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Marion Meischke



2010