

150 YEARS  
OF  
EDUCATION AT LARGS



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1838 — 1988

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# A PROFILE ON LARGS SCHOOL

Largs school was founded before the Californian Goldrush — before Abraham Lincoln became President and before the American Civil War. It was also prior to antiseptic surgery or the use of chloroform. Neither the sewing machine nor the bicycle had been invented.

Prior to reading the text of this book, a short time spent reflecting on the dates and occurrences shown below, will help the reader to see the history of this school in its true perspective. The few moments spent will surely engender a sense of wonder at the immense changes that have occurred during the period that has transpired since the foundation of the school in 1838.

- 1838 Largs School Established  
Caroline Chisholm arrived in N.S.W.  
First steamship crossed the Atlantic.
- 1848 Andrew Lang made first application for government school in N.S.W.  
Ludwig Leichhardt set out to cross Australia but disappeared.  
Cholera Outbreak in England — 50,000 died.
- 1851 101 pupils at Largs School.  
Bathurst "Gold Rush" began.  
Singer invented the first sewing machine
- 1861 Maitland Mercury reported that Largs School "is almost uninhabitable".  
Burke and Wills set off on their fateful journey.  
Commencement of the American Civil War.
- 1872 Main schoolroom rebuilt.  
Telegraph cable laid from England to Australia.  
Jules Verne wrote "Around the World in Eighty Days".
- 1892 Dunmore Public School became Largs Public School  
Gold discovered in W.A. (Coolgardie).  
Rudolf Diesel invented first diesel engine.
- 1901 Second Classroom built.  
First Australian Parliament opened, with Hunter member, Edmund Barton as Prime Minister.  
Marconi sent first wireless message across the Atlantic.
- 1911 Largs school corresponds with Largs in Scotland.  
Australian explorer Douglas Mawson set out to explore Antarctica.  
Ronald Amundson reached South Pole.
- 1915 Application for second teacher at Largs.  
Australian troops landed at Gallipoli.  
The Lusitania was sunk.
- 1925 Present School Residence built.  
Vegemite was invented.  
John Logie Baird transmitted the first T.V. images.
- 1933 Appointment of the second teacher to Largs.  
The famous "Bodyline" series of cricket tests.  
Adolf Hitler became dictator of Germany.
- 1945 The last "Empire Day" celebration at Largs.  
Ben Chifley became Prime Minister.  
Atomic Bomb dropped on Hiroshima.
- 1955 Floods ravage Largs and environs.  
The Petrov spy controversy.  
Polio vaccine was developed by Jonas Salk.
- 1988 Largs School celebrates 150 years.  
Australia celebrates 200 years.

# THE BEST SCHOOL OF ALL

There is, of course, but one best school, and that is the one at which each of us has been a scholar. Our own old school, no matter what others may think of theirs, is to us "the best school of all." Sir Henry Newbolt, in these ringing and vigorous verses celebrates with the true touch of boyish patriotism the memory of all our schooldays. One would be sorry for the "old boy" who could not sing this fine song, and feel it to be true, for he would have missed one of the real pleasures of life.

It's good to see the school we knew,  
The land of youth and dream,  
To greet again the rule we knew  
Before we took the stream:  
Though long we've missed the sight of her,  
Our hearts may not forget;  
We've lost the old delight of her,  
We keep her honour yet.

*We'll honour yet the school we knew,  
The best school of all:  
We'll honour yet the rule we knew,  
Till the last bell call.  
For, working days or holidays,  
And glad or melancholy days,  
They were great days and jolly days  
At the best school of all.*

The stars and sounding vanities  
That half the crowd bewitch,  
What are they but inanities  
To him that treads the pitch?  
And where's the wealth, I'm wondering,  
Could buy the cheers that roll  
When the last charge goes thundering  
Beneath the twilight goal?

The men that tanned the hide of us,  
Our daily foes and friends,  
They shall not lose their pride of us  
Howe'er the journey ends.  
Their voice to us who sing of it  
No more its message bears,  
But the round world shall ring of it  
And all we are be theirs.

To speak of Fame a venture is,  
There is little here can bide,  
But we may face the centuries,  
And dare the deepening tide:  
For though the dust that's part of us  
To dust again be gone,  
Yet here shall beat the heart of us:  
The school we handed on!

*We'll honour yet the school we knew,  
The best school of all:  
We'll honour yet the rule we knew,  
Till the last bell call.  
For, working days or holidays,  
And glad or melancholy days,  
They were great days and jolly days  
At the best school of all.*

# DUNMORE TO LARGS

Largs is bordered by two of the Hunter Valley's major rivers, the Hunter and the Paterson. It is situated only a few kilometres from where the rivers meet at Morpeth. The area was first visited by cedar getters as they moved up these rivers. Edward Charles Close, when first he set foot in the area in 1821, "found the country a dense bush covered with ancient trees whose arched, leafy boughs were so impervious to light, that to walk beneath them in the middle of the day, was like walking in the dimness of twilight."

Today the area is almost totally cleared and is criss-crossed with levee banks as protection against floods. Lucerne fields, potato and corn crops form an harmonious patchwork overlay of great beauty when viewed with the hazed hills as a backdrop. Willow trees have replaced the giant natives along the river banks.

George Lang, son of William, was the first of his family to arrive in Australia. In 1822 he became the original grantee of the Dunmore Estate which comprised 1050 acres. Obligations of the grant were that, he was not to sell within five years, he reserved to the government the right to make public roads through the estate; he reserve for the Crown such timber as deemed fit for naval purposes; that he used his best endeavours to procure and have assigned to him ten convicts who were to be clothed and fed until the expiration or remission of their prospective sentences; the convicts were to be used exclusively on the grant of land.

It is from this estate that the history of the school springs. George Lang died of fever at the age of twenty-three, a few years later. In April 1830, William Lang, George Lang's father, was to make a visit to Sydney to attend the May meeting of the Sydney College Committee. He could not get a berth on the usual packet so accepted passage on a very small vessel. During the night a southerly gale blew up, the vessel was wrecked and William was drowned.

The land passed to the elder brother, the Reverend Doctor John Dunmore Lang. The Reverend Lang was far too busy with matters of Church and State to concern himself with farming and so the lease was sold to his brother Andrew, for five shillings, the minimum amount required by law.

A Journal written by the Reverend Lang referring to the Dunmore estate gives us a clear insight into the early settlement of our district. It read:

**Beautiful Situation.** For the first fifteen or twenty miles by water from the mouth of the Hunters-river, the land on either side is generally low, swampy and sterile, though for most part thickly covered with timber. Higher up, and along the banks of the two tributary streams, Paterson and Williams, the soil for a considerable distance from the banks, is entirely alluvial and of the highest fertility, and the scenery from the water exceedingly beautiful. The Hunter is a noble river, as wide as the Thames in the lower part of its course, winding slowly toward the ocean, among forests that have never felt the stroke of the axe, or seen any human face till lately but that of the wandering barbarian.

On either bank, the lofty gum tree or eucalyptus shoots up its naked white stem to the height of 150 feet from the rich soil, while underwood of most luxuriant growth completely covers the ground. Numerous wild vines, as the flowering shrubs and parasitical plants of the alluvial land are indiscriminately called by the settlers, dip their long branches covered with white flowers to the very water. Flocks of white or black cockatoos, with their yellow or red crests, occasionally flit across inconceivably varied plumage, are ever and anon hopping about from branch to branch.

**Dunmore Farm.** George named his grant 'Dunmore' as a mark of filial affection toward our mother, to whose christian principals and uncommon energy of character I shall ever be under the strongest obligations. It consisted mostly of heavily timbered alluvial land, extending about a mile and a half along the windings of the river, which at that part and for several miles higher up is deep and broad, sufficiently so for large vessels. . . . Walking along the river one day with my brother, I observed something moving in the stream. I called his attention to it and he saw at once it was a dorsal fin of a large shark, forty miles from the sea and at a place where he was accustomed to bathe.

**First Homestead.** The first dwelling house erected on the farm was formed of rough slabs of split timber, the lower ends of which were sunk in the ground and the upper extremities bound together by a wall plate. It was thatched with reeds or coarse grass and contained three apartments: a parlor or sitting room, a storeroom and a bedroom, each of which was occasionally used for other purposes. The kitchen was detached and was inhabited by a convict servant and his wife. The bare ground served as a floor and the interstices between the slabs were plastered with a composition of mud. The walls were white washed within and without. This homely building, which I am sure would not cost twenty pounds, was afterward furnished with glass windows and a floor of rough boards. It served as a farm cottage for three or four years.

**The Day's Routine.** The overseer arises at daybreak and rings a bell affixed to a tree, as a signal for the men to proceed to work. The greater number follows the overseer to the particular agricultural operation which the season requires. The rest separate to their several employments, one to the plough, another to the garden, a third to the dairy, and a fourth conducts the cattle to their pasture. The bell is again rung at eight for breakfast, for which an hour is allowed. At one o'clock there is an hour for dinner; afterward, they work from two till sunset.

**Good and Bad.** Many of the female convicts conduct themselves in an unexceptionable manner and, when reputedly married, rear large families of interesting and promising children. It is not unusual for a woman who has been exceedingly depraved and absolutely unmanageable in a single state to conduct herself with propriety when advantageously married. Others are indifferent enough in either condition and when assigned as servants to respectable families are got rid of and returned to government with all convenient speed. The fault is by no means uniformly on the side of the convict. During the last six or eight years (to 1833), twelve or thirteen convict servants who were assigned to my relatives obtained their freedom, absolutely or conditionally.

**Mill Installed.** Several hired mechanics with their families were occasionally employed on the farm, besides free sawyers and other hired labourers, all of whom received rations of flour etc. as part of their wages; it was found that there was a considerable loss of time and waste of material in grinding wheat for so many people (about fifty in all) with the common steel mills in general use. A horse mill was therefore erected and, as it was resorted to by the neighbourhood, a windmill was added. A threshing mill, and a mill for the manufacture of Scotch barley (the first that had been constructed in the colony) were subsequently appended to the original machinery.

**Four Horse Power.** Advertisement, "Australia", January 9, 1828: To the settlers of Hunters-river. The undersigned are erecting a flour mill of four horse-power on their farm at Dunmore, second branch, about four miles from Wallis Plains. They expect it will be completed in February. The machine is of English manufacture and is expected to work well and expeditiously. Settlers in the neighbourhood who wish to have their wheat ground may be accommodated at a reasonable rate. Grain will be received in payment, at a sixpence a bushel below the Sydney price. Wheat conveyed by water and landed at Messrs. L's wharf will be carried to and from the mill at an additional expense. W. and A. Lang.

**Blacksmithing Also.** Advertisement, "Australian", March 14, 1828: The settlers of Hunters-river are hereby informed that the flour mill lately erected by Messrs. W. and A. Lang on their farm of Dunmore has been in operation for a month past. Wheat will be ground at eighteen pence a bushel. As Messrs. L. have a free blacksmith, a wheelwright etc. in their employment, settlers residing in the neighbourhood may be furnished with agricultural implements, such as ploughs, harrows etc. or have blacksmiths' work made or repaired at a reasonable rate. W. A. Lang.

**Still More Land.** On my return to the colony in 1834, I found that my brother Andrew had purchased 'Goulburn Grove', a valuable property of about fourteen hundred acres adjoining his own, at twenty four shillings an acre, considered a remarkably good bargain. It was so heavily timbered that it cost five to six pounds per acre to clear it. The combined property now consists of upward of twenty four hundred acres, with a navigable river frontage of more than five miles. The arable land is at least fifteen hundred acres in extent and a third of this is now (1836) cleared and under cultivation.

**Bushrangers.** An attack was made by armed bushrangers upon one of the settlers on the Paterson river, residing at Mr Andrew Lang's farm. These rascals endeavoured to rob the inmates, when one of them, a young man, took up a blacksmith's tongs and belaboured one of the bushrangers to his heart's content, taking his firearms from him. One of the other ruffians shot him through the shoulder. Nothing daunted, the young man still kept his defensive weapon and succeeded in beating off the other two armed scoundrels and gave the alarm. The villains made off, but information was given to the Maitland Police, who succeeded in capturing one of the robbers, the one who bore on his face evident marks of the encounters.

Research shows that the bushrangers were known as the Jew Boy Gang, and that the attack was thwarted by a member of the Graham family who was the resident blacksmith.

The Dunmore estate was also the place where the notorious "Thunderbolt" began his famous series of encounters with the law. He stole some horses from the estate and was caught a few days later selling them at Windsor. He was imprisoned on Goat Island from which he escaped by swimming ashore and set out upon his bushranging career.

We should now look briefly at the author of these recollections, John Dunmore Lang, who remained a strong influence in the background, with his powerful connections in the colony and in the homeland.

The Lang family came from Largs, Ayrshire in Scotland. John was ordained into the Presbyterian Church in 1821 and came to New South Wales the following year. He was soon in conflict with the Church authorities



*The Rev. John Dunmore Lang, M.A., D.D.*

because his many interests in colonial matters kept him from his parish commitments. He made frequent and lengthy visits to England where he was able to win the influence of governing authorities and direct the attention of "desirable people" to this land. This enabled him to strengthen his influence on decision makers in New South Wales.

Very occasionally John was able to leave town and make the trip north to see his family at Dunmore. In 1827 he described the trip '40 miles from the mouth of the Hunter, 70 miles north of Sydney'. It was three day's hard riding over 110 miles of rugged mountainous country, via Wollombi, where he was forced to sleep out for two nights. If he travelled by boat, he still took several days on the journey, as the boat trip ended at the mouth of the river and he had to be rowed upriver by two boatmen, which all meant delay, fatigue, annoyance and expense.

On his first trip to Dunmore by the overland route, something happened which strengthened his resolve to assist education in the colony. When quite some hours out of Castle Hill, they stopped at a settler's hut to refresh themselves and their horses. With some prompting from Lang, the couple related their history. She was native born of convict parents and he a trained cobbler, transported for seven years.

Being industrious, he managed to earn and save money by cobbling during his servitude. With this and from what he had saved from wages, he bought the farm. Transportation had worked and Lang was impressed. But one aspect affected him deeply. Husband, wife and children were all illiterate. The settler hoped to obtain a literate assigned servant who could teach his children. Lang promised his assistance in obtaining such a man.

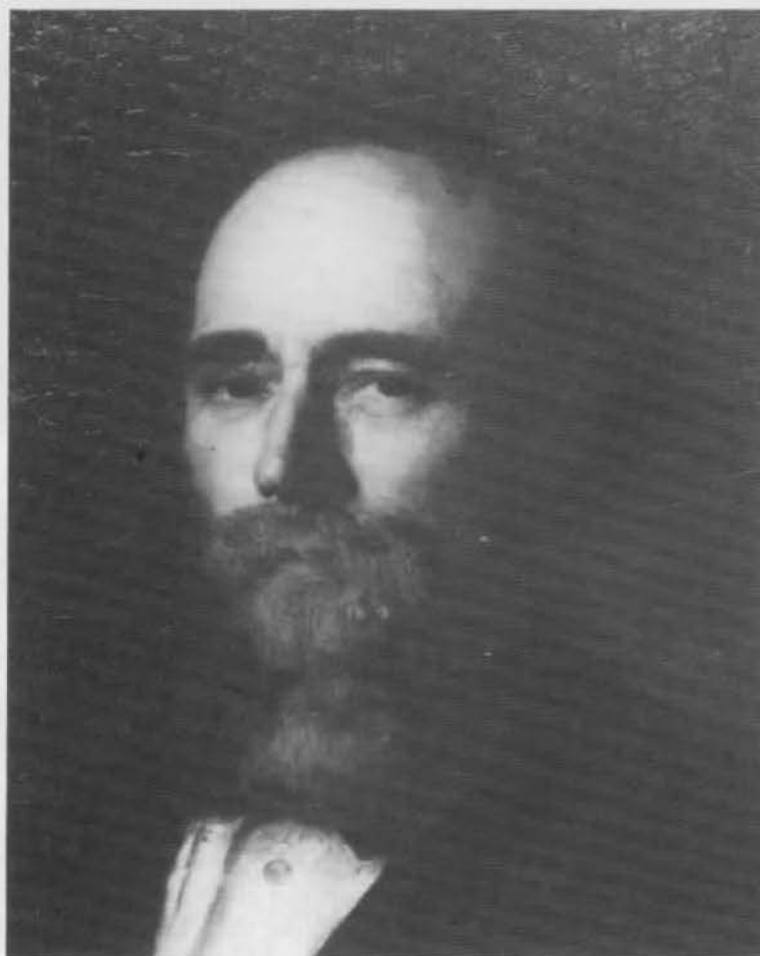
The desperate need for schools throughout the bush was brought home to him. In the light of this it is little surprise that his brother Andrew's Dunmore estate provided a school for the resident farmers well before most neighbouring country areas.

In England in December 1830, John Dunmore Lang was struck by that country's poverty and thought that this might be relieved by emigration, while well chosen migrants might produce a moral reformation in New South Wales. Lang was alarmed by the gross wickedness often produced by transportation. Free emigration complemented his plans for education, about which he felt so strongly. He was concerned that Australia was being flooded with Catholics from Ireland. He drew attention to the work by Caroline Chisholm as she placed young Irish colleens as housekeepers for lonely farmers. To counter this, he encouraged Highland families to settle in New South Wales.

An extract from the Sydney Gazette early in 1838 throws a quaint light on the Reverend's efforts to populate the colony:— "Twenty-three families, consisting in all of upwards of one hundred and twenty individuals composed the germ of this new Highland settlement, where it is probable the language of the Gael may form the medium of general communications for ages yet to come. With the German emigrants obtained for his brother by the Reverend Doctor Lang, who are daily expected by the 'Justine' from Bordeaux, and who are also to be settled at Dunmore, Mr Lang will speedily have his estates covered by a numerous and virtuous peasantry".

Dr. John Dunmore Lang was surely the busiest of men in and out of Australia. Clever, quarrelsome, vindictive and a brilliant politician, he worked hard for his adopted country.

During the first fifty years of the Colony of New South Wales the education of the settlers' children was provided for by schools conducted under the auspices of the churches and a few private teachers. Although Governor Macquarie had some interest in education, generally speaking there was little support as the young colony grew. A Church and Schools Corporation was set up in 1828 but growing need was felt for education which was not necessarily sponsored by the Churches.



*Andrew Lang*

By the end of 1838, the Dunmore Estate, now including the Goulburn Grove estate, of Mr Standish Lawrence Harris, had some sixty resident farmers and their families settled. To accommodate the new settlers, Andrew Lang had built a school house of mud brick with a stone floor. An extract from a letter signed JOHN DUNMORE LANG;

"In the year 1838, my brother built them a school house, substantial brick building, to serve also as a temporary place of worship, at an expense to himself of \$75, the government having afterwards contributed a similar amount; and in order to relieve the highlanders as much as possible of the cost of education he gave the school master, Mr John Whitelaw an alumnus of Glasgow College, whom he had brought out to the Colony in the same year board and lodging free of expense. The number of scholars in December 1838, was upwards of 60." The school which was denominational in constitution and partially supported by the government, was conducted by John Whitelaw, late of Glasgow College. Almost all the seventy children who attended it belonged to families on the estate. Reading was the main subject and the chief object of reading was to enable the children to gain a first hand acquaintance with the Bible. Arithmetic was also taught.

Dunmore 17<sup>th</sup> Aug 1848  
Andrew Lang applying to have the Dunmore  
School placed under the General System

Sir

I beg leave to request that the  
Dunmore School may be put on the  
General System, and that a salary may  
be allowed the Schoolmaster, and Books for  
the School.

The School has hitherto been under  
the Presbyterians, but I have long wished  
to give the General System a fair trial  
the attendance has been from 50. to 80

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your Most Obedient & Grateful Servant

Andrew Lang



A report written in 1839 for the Church and Schools Corporation reads:—

“There is a school at Dunmore taught by Mr John Whitlaw, a Presbyterian of the Church of Scotland. The number attending the School in 1839, was seventy, of whom twenty could read the New Testament; twenty-two read it indifferently; five wrote well, and understood something of Arithmetic; twelve wrote indifferently; twenty-two could read a little in the Primer; six could not read. The School opens and closes by Singing and Prayer every day; a Bible lesson is also taught upon the training system. Portions of Watt’s Hymns and Catechism are committed to memory every week. A Sabbath school is regularly taught and well attended.”

John Dunmore Lang continued to be involved in matters of immigration, self-government and education. His constant jaunts to England kept him in touch with the latest developments. In New South Wales, he lost no opportunity to champion the cause of National System for schools. he had a strong advocate in Sir Henry Parkes. When the new Governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy, arrived in August 1846, the Legislative Assembly voted for the introduction of National Schools, to be controlled by a board. A tour of country districts convinced the Governor of the pressing need for schools in rural New South Wales.

On May 11th, 1847, the Colonial Secretary announced that the government would allocate two thousand pounds for the introduction of a National system of schools. In January 1848, Governor Fitzroy set up the National Board of Education, to establish, maintain and control national elementary schools. Andrew Lang was quick to react and on January 19th, 1848, he wrote requesting that the school at Dunmore be included in the new national system. It was the first application received by the Board.

Mr. C.C. Pentland, who was teaching at Largs prior to its being made over to the board, spent most of 1848 negotiating with the board on terms of employment. Details were set out of monthly payments of three pounds, six shillings and eight pence. Mr Pentland was officially appointed on 1st January, 1849.

In 1849, in a report from the Board of National Education, the following was stated:—

“We beg leave to state, that we have now, under our superintendence, schools established at the following places, viz:

Kempsey	Dunmore	Botany Bay	Hinton
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At Dunmore, half an acre of land with the School House already erected thereon, has been made over to the Board by Mr Andrew Lang.

The Board financed some improvements to the school by the way of repairs. A quote was accepted for a wooden floor to cover the cold brick one and repairs to windows and doors at a price of twenty-three pounds, also a new bookcase at twelve pounds. The beautiful cedar bookcase is still in the school.

The differences in working for the government were soon apparent to Mr Pentland. His salary was set at forty pounds per year with a stipend of five pounds per annum for his wife to act as mistress. He was quick to write to the Board and point out that previously under the private system, he was earning sixty pounds per annum, plus school fees. He also complained that school fees had been reduced from six pence to two pence per week, which further reduced his income.

An extract from the Sydney Morning Herald in July 1849 gives the Board’s view on school fees. “All evidence taken in Great Britain and New South Wales goes to prove that the classes of society most likely to avail themselves of Public Schools are likely to care little for education given for gratis. The object of the Commissioners is to give the parent a pecuniary interest in making their child attend school regularly. The Board finds it advisable that some fee, however small, should be extracted from the poorest parents in order that no child may be treated by his school fellows as being a pauper, depending for education on the charity of the community.”

It appears that even in those early days of Public Education, people did not appreciate what they got for nothing and were likely to regard it as inferior, simply because it was free.

In 1850 the enrolment at Dunmore was 62 boys, 39 girls, a total of 101 pupils. The following year the enrolment fell to 50.

The school’s enrolment continued to fluctuate. At the inspection of the school, there were 60 pupils present. The Inspections comments were as follows:—

1. The organisation of this School is very good.
2. The children are tolerably clean and orderly.
3. The attainments of the pupils are very fair considering their ages.”

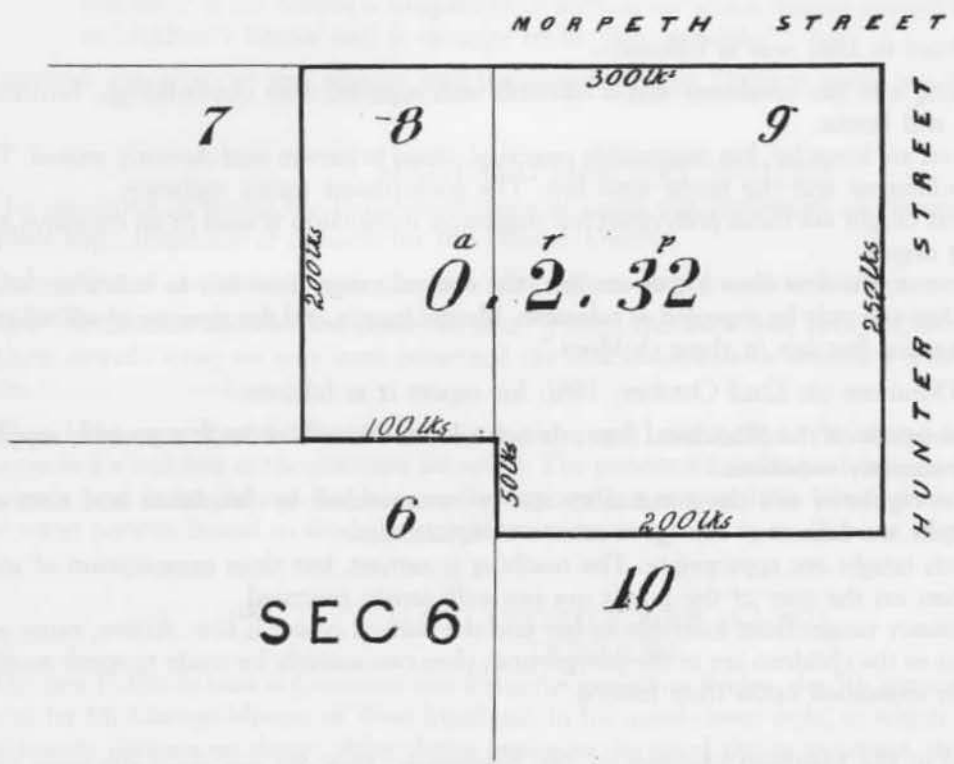
The following year, there were 71 children present for inspection:—

1. The school building is growing old and needs some repairs. Otherwise the organisation is in a satisfactory condition.

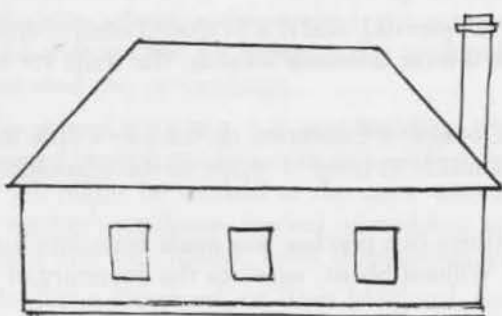


**PLAN**

*Of Dunmore School Site*



*Scale one chain to one inch*



*School Building*

*H. M. Stapleton.*

2. The children are tolerably regular and punctual. They are clean, neat and orderly.
3. In general the instruction is careful and judicious.
4. The attainments, attention and mental power may be regarded as fair upon the whole. The pupils have improved in earnestness and application to work."

By 1860 the total enrolment at the inspection was 44.

The Inspection wrote:—

- "1. The Schoolhouse, fences and Teacher's residence, are in want of repair. The furniture and apparatus are sufficient and in fair condition. The supply of books needs renewal.
2. The pupils are tolerably regular and punctual. They are clean and neat, but the order is not good. The moral tone is low.
3. The instruction is judicious and earnest.
4. The proficiency in reading and grammar may be considered fair, in writing, arithmetic and scripture, very fair, in geography and object lessons, tolerable. The mental power, sustained attention and inclination to exertion are all very unsatisfactory. The teacher has only lately taken charge of the School."

In 1861 nineteen vested school buildings received important additions and improvements. One of these schools was Dunmore.

The Report on the school in 1861 was as follows:—

- "1. This building is in fair condition and is tolerably well supplied with out-buildings, furniture, apparatus and books.
2. The children are irregular, but reasonably punctual, clean in person and decently attired. The order is indifferent and the moral tone low. The government wants vigilance.
3. The subjects taught are those prescribed but suggestive instruction is used to an excessive and enervating degree.
4. In attainments, the first class pupils are fair, the second range from fair to tolerable, while the third class can only be regarded as tolerable. Mental inertia and the absence of self reliance are distinguishing features in these children."

The Inspector visited Dunmore on 22nd October, 1862, his report is as follows:—

- "1. With the exception of the dilapidated floor, the school is in tolerable order. It is passably supplied with the necessary requisites.
2. Neither the regularity nor the punctuality can be commended. In cleanliness and neatness, several pupils are defective. The government is injudicious.
3. The subjects taught are appropriate. The teaching is earnest, but close examination of work and exertion on the part of the pupils are not sufficiently practised.
4. The proficiency ranges from tolerable to fair and the mental power is low. Active, noisy and disobedient as the children are in the playground, they can scarcely be made to speak audibly when fairly examined upon their lessons."

A report on the school in the Maitland Mercury on 5th November, 1868 did not share the same view as the school inspector who described the school as being in "tolerable order".

"THE PUBLIC SCHOOL AT LARGS — On Tuesday evening we had an opportunity of inspecting this building, in which, under the fostering care of Mr. Henry, the new schoolmaster, about seventy children receive tuition, a number almost double the attendance before he took possession of the school.

The building is quite a relic of the past, being about twenty-five years old, and it is in woeful need of repairs both inside and out; the flooring is much decayed, and affords a most unsteady footing; the walls are very dilapidated, and require a thorough coating of plaster.

We wonder that in the face of the success of the school, the Council of Education do not pay a little more attention to the matter. The schoolmaster's house is almost as much in need of repair as the schoolhouse, and its condition is naturally the cause of more discomfort."

On 16th January, 1871, a government grant of two roods, thirty-two perches was made from lots 8 and 9. In 1872, the Secretary of the Local Board at Dunmore, Mr William Short, wrote to the Secretary of the Council of Education about the crowded schoolroom:—

"As there is such a large increase at the Public School at Dunmore, 121 children being now on the roll and frequently more than 100 present, they are very much crowded as the School room is designed to work only 70 children. There being 40 and sometimes more little ones (sic) crowded into the classroom.

To remedy this state of things as far as may be, the Local Board have obtained a tender from Mr Houston for three desks and three forms for the sum of five pounds, twelve and six pence, which unfortunately he overlooked to sign as you will observe. It would be a great advantage if two more forms were provided for the classroom, which I presume the tenderers would supply at the same rate, viz; twelve and six each. This tender in the opinion of the Local Board is very reasonable and Mr Houston is first class (sic) giving general satisfaction in all jobs which he undertakes.

The Local Board wish to mark its sense of the great increase to the attendance at the School (sic) since it has been placed under the care of Mr Hullick who appears to have the tact of commending himself to the children and their parents as he has regained two or three families to the School whose parents differed with the late Teacher and sent their children to the Catholic School . . .

. . . This gratifying increase over fifty percent, has taken place although the School has to compete with the aforementioned Catholic School, which is putting forth most strenuous efforts to increase its numbers. A good School can always be maintained here, as it is centrally situated, relative to three Estates which have a large population situated on them. Yet the great drawback to the efficiency of the School is irregularity of attendance which feature obtains in all agricultural centres as children's labour (sic) is thought to be very valuable."

Approval was given to this request and the present Upper Division room was begun.

#### MAITLAND MERCURY 19-10-1872

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone at Largs was performed on Saturday, 12 October, by J.D. Bradley Esq., Inspector of Schools for the Hunter District.

Only a few of the parents were present, although invited by advertisement.

After Mr Bradley laid the first stone, he said: "I hope the work may proceed, stone by stone, until in two or three months time, we may have presented the neat commodious structure your schoolhouse is intended to be.

When I first came into the district, about two years ago, I was most surprised and ashamed to find Dunmore so wretched a building as the one now occupied. The present schoolhouse has been in existence about thirty-five years and in its old age has been sadly neglected; it is now little better than a ruin, and I am aware that some parents feared to send their children to be taught in it on account of its dangerous condition."

#### MAITLAND MERCURY 15-2-1873

##### DUNMORE

The new Public School at Dunmore was formerly opened on Friday, the 7th instant, by a public tea meeting, got up by Mr George Moore, of West Maitland, in his usual clever style, to which upwards of one hundred and twenty persons sat down. After doing justice to the good things provided, the company adjourned to the new schoolroom, where a public meeting was held. The chair being taken by a member of the Local Board, who called upon the Treasurer, Mr John Graham, to read the report, which showed with probable cost of supervision a debt of about eight pounds. The meeting was addressed by the Rev. Messrs. Benvie and Hills, the Rev. Dr. Boag, Messrs. O'Sullivan and Foster, who ably advocated the cause of education, especially the public schools, pressing on the attention of parents, the necessity of sending their children regularly to school, without which the energies of the teachers are paralyzed. A vote of thanks to the Local Board and teacher for bringing the undertaking to a successful issue was carried by acclamation, which terminated the proceedings.

The school is a plain, but neat building, constructed of brick on a foundation of the same material, with cemented base-course above the ground line, measuring internally 33 x 18 designed to accommodate 75 pupils, but 100 might be worked in the same without much inconvenience. There is also a detached kitchen to the teacher's residence, erected of studding and weather boards on a brick foundation, measuring 24 x 12, divided into two rooms, lined throughout with half inch tongued and grooved pine.

Mr. James Pritchard, of West Maitland, was the contractor, who has carried out the works in a highly creditable manner, entirely to the satisfaction of the Local Board. Mr Mansfield, the Council's architect, has examined the various works, and signified strongly his perfect approval of the same, adverting especially to the neat and workmanlike manner in which the brickwork is done.

On 11th May, 1877, the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction appointed Messrs. Henry Strong, Patrick Moylan Junior, and John Bluford as additional members of the Public School Board. These men were all farmers.

On 25th July, 1877, the Honorary Secretary of the Board wrote:—

“There are 116 children on the roll and the average attendance has been 71.4. This is a slight decrease on the average attendance of the previous quarter and it is to be regretted that irregularity is the prevailing feature of this school which circumstance militates against the fair rewards of their industry. However, fair average progress has been made. The Teachers being painstaking and energetic in the discharge of their duties, giving general satisfaction to the parents of the children.

The School is well furnished but the space is too cramped for the large accession of numbers on the roll that has taken place since Mr. Hullick has assumed the management.

A weathershed, lavatory and fence around the playground is (sic) urgently needed and exposed woodwork of schoolroom and appurtenances to be repainted. The older part of the Teacher's residence is beyond repair, being built of wood many years since and frequently repaired; nothing short of reconstruction would be effective. However, as it is comparatively weathertight, it will do service for some time yet.”

Tenders were called for repairs and improvements to the school and Mr. Hodge's tender of Thirty pounds (\$60) was accepted. The work was completed in November, 1877.

A further report was made on Dunmore School by the Clerk of Works on 23rd May, 1879:—

“I inspected the whole of the School premises and herewith submit a Block plan of the same. The Schoolroom is a brick building, very plain, it has neither porch or verandah.

The residence is a very old slab building, quite past repairing and totally (sic) unfit for occupation; in connection with the residence, there is a small detached weatherboard cottage, this is in good repair and substantial, I would suggest that a three or four room, brick residence be built along side of this and be connected by a covered way as it will make a very good detached kitchen . . .”

Mr. James Pritchard, a builder of West Maitland, tendered for this work and his tender of four hundred and fifty two pounds (\$904) was accepted.

Apparently the Council of Education withdrew this approval, as can be seen in the following letter written by William Short to the Hon. Robert Wisdom, M.L.A., on 21st October, 1879:—

“I am in receipt of a letter from the Council of Education, declining to carry out the alterations in the detail of the works in the proposed Teacher's residence, suggested by the Local Board or to make any others in the same.

I have again at the instance of the Local Board addressed a letter to the Council of Education indicating some new reasons for the reconsideration of the subject . . . I again respectfully request you to support the reconsideration of the application to the Council. My apology for so doing must be my anxiety to do the best I possibly can for the school.”

In the following month the Secretary, Council of Education, wrote to the Architect in charge of Schools:—

“Upon the representations of the Public School Board, the Council has decided to amend the plans and specifications of the proposed Teacher's residence, and has accepted Mr. James Pritchard's supplementary tender for twenty-five pounds (\$50) for the additional work. In preparing the duplicate plans and specifications will you be good enough to make the necessary alterations.”

A progress report was received on this work in January 1880 from the Clerk of Works:—

“The works here are progressing satisfactorily, the walls of the new residence are near completion, the alterations and repairs to the schoolroom will be completed by the time the School reopens.”

In June of the same year, William Short wrote asking for weathersheds and lavatories to be erected at the school. Not until January 1881 was Mr. James Stuart's tender of forty-nine pounds and ten shillings (\$99) accepted. The plan was for one weathershed, divided into two sections with two lavatories in each section. This was completed in April, 1881.

An application was made during 1889 for an evening school at Dunmore. The District Inspector wrote to the Chief Inspector about the school:—

“Dunmore is a rising village and is situated on the Hunter River some three miles from East Maitland. The district is an agricultural one and the farmers are in good circumstances. The Evening Public School will be a boon to the young men of the locality. I recommend that the application for the establishment of such school be acceded to and that Mr. C. Mansfield be appointed its teacher.

This recommendation was approved.

SCHEDULE showing the Names of Persons who will attend an Evening

Public School at Dunmore, Largs.

Full Name.	Age next Birthday.	Occupation, if any.	Signature of Parent, Guardian, or Employer.
John Gulliver	20	---	Mr. W. Gulliver
George Suters	18	---	Mr. G. Suters
Bob Price	18	---	Mr. Price
Thomas Price	21	---	Mr. W. Watson
Frederick Watson	19	---	---
John Watson	14	---	---
William Bridger	16	---	Mr. D. Roberts
James Miller	19	---	Mr. J. Miller
Thomas Miller	17	---	Mr. Miller
Malcolm McKee	15	---	Mr. J. McKee
John McKeown	19	---	Mr. A. McKeown
Sydney McKeown	19	---	---
J. Bridger	20	Baker	Mr. B. H. Wade
W. Meridith	22	---	Mr. J. Dawson
J. Gulliver	19	---	Mr. W. Gulliver

12/9/89

In 1891 the following report was made on the school site at Dunmore:—

"The present site contains 7/10 of an acre. After various suggestions the final recommendation of the District Inspector was to purchase the ten lots . . . for a total sum of three hundred and ninety two pounds (\$784). Lots 11 and 7 being omitted. No action has yet been taken on this recommendation which was received shortly before the Minister's decision to postpone all further purchases for three months.

The actual school playground is very small but the children have had access to some of the vacant lots recommended for purchase.

Average attendance was 67, on rolls 113 . . .

In view of the small area of existing site, I recommend that a valuation be obtained of the allotments specified in Teacher's letter of 7th March."

This was approved on 6th May, 1891. In 1892 lot 10 was acquired — an area of one rood, eight and a half perches, while lots, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 14 were acquired the following year.

On December, 1892, Mr. C. Mansfield, teacher at Dunmore School, wrote to the District Inspector at East Maitland:—

“I beg to make application for the present designation of this School (Dunmore, Largs) to be altered to ‘Largs’. The alteration is advisable for the following reasons, viz:—

The present name was taken from an adjoining private estate while the township, which has since sprung up has been named “Largs” and this name is also borne by the Post and Telegraph Office of the township. There is also a Railway town named Dunmore on the Illawarra (sic) line to which some of my communications have been forwarded.”

This was approved and the school’s name was officially changed to Largs on 16th December, 1892.

There is some confusion as to how Largs actually got its name. The two main theories put forward are that it was so named because it was Governor Brisbane’s birthplace. The second is that it was named after the Lang family’s town of origin. It seems inconsequential because in both cases the bone of contention is Largs Ayrshire, Scotland, a town important in Scottish history as the place where the Scots defeated the Vikings in 1263, in the Battle of Largs. The Scottish Largs, has a pleasant marine situation, backed by lofty hills. Our local Largs has a backdrop of hills and distant ranges. Both towns have been important centres of shipbuilding in their day.

The Largs Progress Committee wrote to C. Bennett, M.L.A. on 7th November, 1901, about the erection of additional accommodation:—

“At a meeting of the above Committee held on Friday evening last, the want of accommodation at the local Public School was discussed and it was unanimously decided to agitate for the erection of a new building on modern principles.

The present building was built to accommodate fifty or sixty children and built too, in a very primitive style, too low and badly ventilated.

Now the average attendance is over one hundred, parents in the interests of their children, keep them at home during the summer months as much as possible.

The improvements which the community consider would be absolutely necessary are the erection of classroom (sic), roofing to the present building, the present walls raising some two feet, and proper ventilation provided, besides other smaller matters. . . .

If it is not done the school, which has increased in numbers so considerably recently and which is holding its own with any school in the district, by turning out boys and girls able to successfully compete in competitive examination, will suffer by pupils being compelled to be irregular in attendance or to go elsewhere during the summer months.

We feel confident that “under these circumstances” you will use your best efforts to the interests of this district in this direction.”

The Inspector’s report of 16th November, 1901 to the Chief Inspector on the situation at Largs was:—

“The present schoolroom is what the people made it, for they subscribed two thirds of its cost. The room is too good to be thoroughly destroyed. I recommend the erection of a new classroom 16 x 20, also improvements to the hat room etc. A considerable number of the pupils are over fourteen years of age and are not likely to remain long at school.

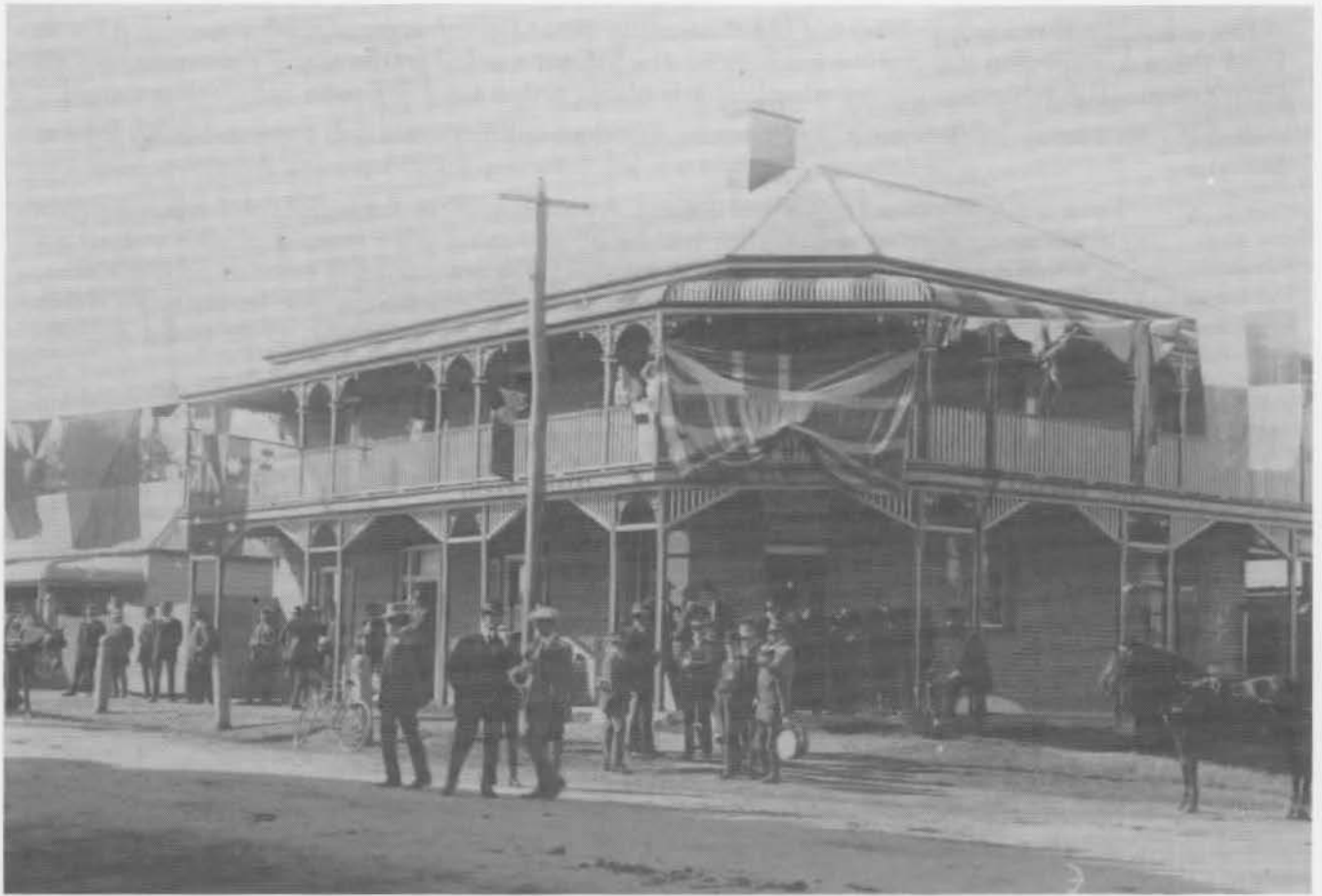
This recommendation was apparently approved. On 16th February, 1903, the teacher, Thomas Pyman, notified the Department that he had taken possession of the new additions to the school. (The new room being the present Lower Division room.)

This was built by William Noad of West Maitland at a cost of two hundred and fifty pounds (\$500). The classroom was of brick construction and accommodated fifty-two pupils.

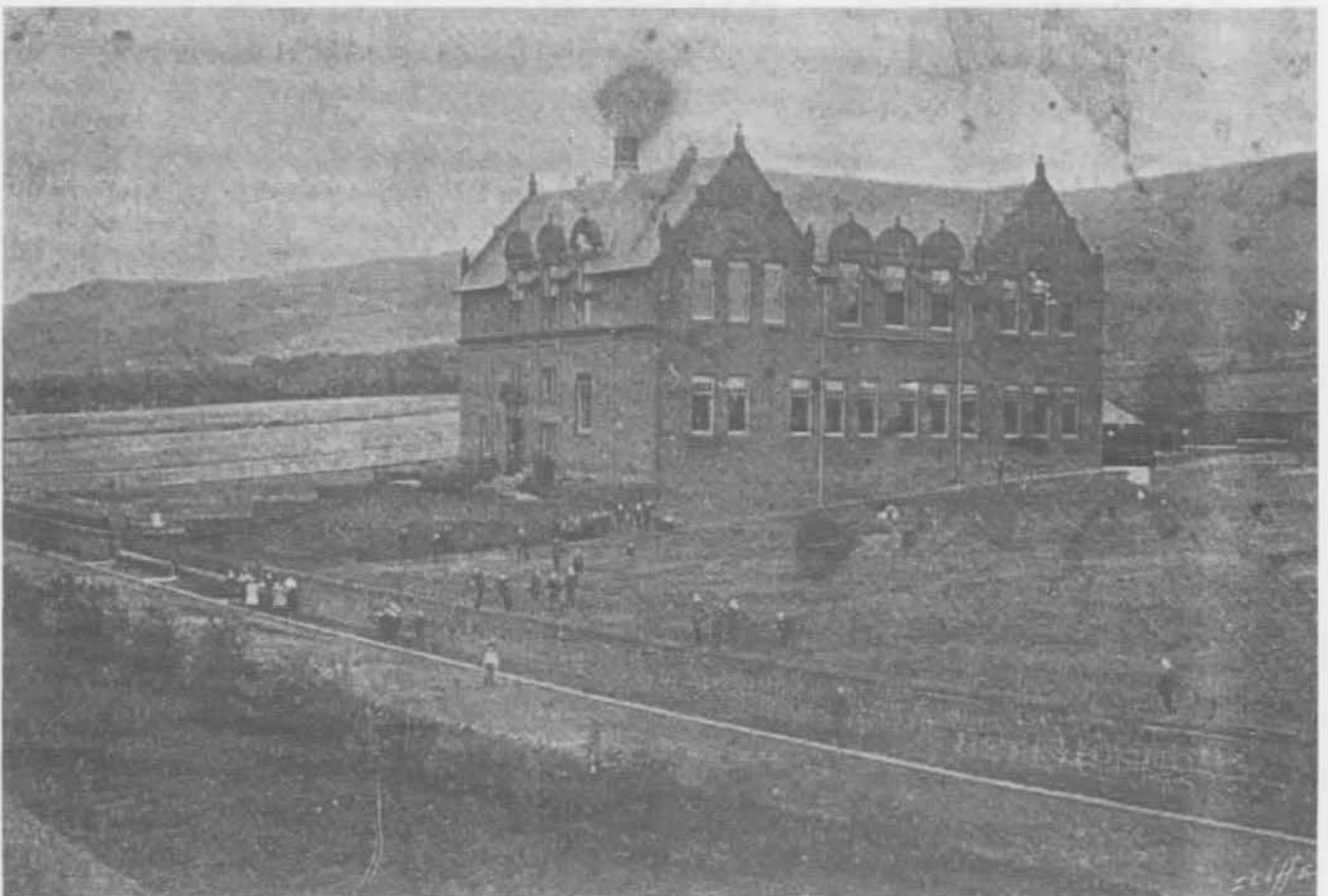
Mr Henry Hunt took over as headmaster in April 1909. The punishment book shows that Mr Hunt did not follow the trend of the day. He refrained from corporal punishment. He introduced a number of innovations in an endeavour to give meaning to the children’s education.

He contacted the school in Largs, Scotland and children corresponded regularly. Pressing of flowers and leaves became popular and many varieties were exchanged with the Scottish School.

A “School Journal” was commenced. This was an extremely progressive undertaking at this time. A committee of journalists was elected to report on such matters as:— Horticulture, Foreign News, Agriculture and Weather.



*Largs Hotel 1916*



*Largs School Scotland*



This unique journal was kept until Mr Hunt's death in 1911. The inspector of the day sent a report to Head Office commending this creative innovation. The Journal was lost to the school's possession on Mr Hunt's death. This is unfortunate, as school records of this period have otherwise been well preserved.

In 1916, the Treasurer of the Parents and Citizens Association, Mrs C. Wicher, wrote to Mr W. Brown, M.L.A.:—

“Being treasurer of the Parents and Citizens Association of the Public School, Largs, they have requested me to write to you on their (sic) behalf and being more acquainted with you, to ask if you would do what you can, by applying for a (sic) assistant teacher to help our School Master, Mr. Gallop. We had a meeting last night and the Master informed us that he has seven classes to teach, and cannot do justice to all those classes without an assistant; so we would all deem it a favour of you to do what you can in the matter . . .”

The Department's reply was to inform Mr. W. Brown that the average attendance at Largs during 1916 did not warrant the appointment of an assistant. When the attendance for a quarter showed an average of forty-five, the matter would be reconsidered.

Tenders were invited in July 1925 for the erection of a residence at Largs. The contract was awarded to F. & R. Compton for one thousand and eighty-four pounds (\$2,168). The residence was occupied by the teacher in October although the work was completed in the following month.

On 10th May 1934 the teacher at the time, Mr. Walker, wrote to the Inspector, Mr. Lewis, as follows:—

“I desire to apply for a junior assistant. During the term, the enrolment has increased from forty-four in the first week to sixty-two at date of writing.

The average for the whole term is 47.7. Only two of the pupils are under six years of age . . .

The attendance promises to be permanent. Under such a load I find it extremely difficult to give proper attendance to all classes.”

This application was strongly endorsed by the Inspector.

He wrote:—

“Mr Walker has a very difficult task. The school will warrant grading as Class V next year.

The difficulty is that, after a sudden downpour of rain, across the river, children fail to attend.

This brings down the average attendance but normally the teacher has a 90% attendance . . .”

Shortly after, an assistant teacher was appointed to Largs.

Mr Walker stayed at the school for fourteen years until 1941. He was the second longest serving headmaster. He was followed by Mr. Henry Jones, who stayed for fifteen years and thus has the honour of being the longest serving headmaster. He arrived in 1941 and left in 1956.

The present two classrooms used to have stepped floors with long desks and backless stools going the length of the room. Children filed in, in order, and were virtually locked into a set position for the day. The teacher was left with very little space at the front of the room, that is the wall containing the old fireplace. He stood confronting a sea of faces, each now elevated above the one in front. There was no principal's office then, just a long room.

Peg Unicombe arrived in the district in 1953 and since that time, as a P.&C. member, a mother and a member of staff, she has had a close association with the school.

She has supplied most of the following information on the teachers of recent years.

Mr. Henry Jones was the teacher at the time of her arrival. He is remembered as a stern, no nonsense teacher, who was particularly strict on his own children who attended the school.

He transferred to Eleebana in 1956 and retired from there.

Mr Charles Gorman who arrived in 1956 is remembered as an 'old world' teacher, always dressed in a dark suit and starched collar. He was strict and authoritarian and many pupils did well under his tutoring. One of his pupils recalls him as a nervous man who drove his Ford Prefect hunched tensely over the steering wheel while his wife sat erect in the back seat making elaborate handsigns.

In 1962, Alan Jones, brother of Henry Jones, came to Largs from Woodville as a stop-gap, on his way to Fairymeadow on the South Coast, before retiring. He was fond of the old 'concert hall' songs and much effort went into a variety concert at the School of Arts.

Next came Doug Murkin. He was English and had been in a German P.O.W. camp. His eldest daughter, Ruth, helped him in a voluntary capacity. A maintenance committee was set up and tree planting was a

priority. Hitherto, the school grounds had been rather wild. His basic philosophy was that children should become completely involved, and often they did!

Peg recalls a riotous "Cracker Night" at the school. A very dark evening, a huge bon-fire, children and parents everywhere, with double-bungers and jumping-jacks tossed in all directions with gay abandon. Somehow everyone managed to escape injury and all voted the night a huge success.

The Murkin family transferred to Wollongong in 1966.

Bill Kneipp came in 1966. He had three children, one of whom was born at Largs. He proved energetic and many things changed during his stay. The P&C progressed and a school library was started. The school organised frolics, fetes and concerts to raise funds. He was always available and many high school students came to him for assistance.

Kath Waller, assistant teacher, was appointed as numbers grew.

One memorable event at the time was the installation of the septic toilet block, the old wash shed at the side of the porch entrance was turned into a store-room.

The pan toilets with their stench of phenyl were demolished.

During his stay at Largs, Mr Kneipp had undertaken further studies and he transferred to Taree High in 1970.

In 1971 the school was upgraded to a third class school and Mr Jim Mollison was the first teacher to have officially the title of Principal. Kath Waller remained as assistant until replaced by Robyn Tonkin.

Mr. James Mollison recalls his introduction to Largs. He arrived in January 1971 and was promptly isolated by floods. His rural education continued when a large diamond python took up residence in the verandah rafters of the school residence.

Nesting magpies in the silky oaks made his walk down the school yard rather hazardous. Green frogs were in almost plague proportion and then a red bellied black snake around the brake drum of the female assistant's car completed his welcome to the district.

Peg Unicomb was appointed as clerical assistant in 1975. She remembers the state of the building vividly. All the school had a high wooden board ceiling, with church-like exposed beams. Birds nested happily in the ceiling and dirt fell freely on all within. Feathered visitors who found a way in, flitted around looking for an exit. The floors were well worn and the boards rather battered. Lizards frequently popped through the gaping cracks.

There was still no office. Peg clattered away on the typewriter at one end of the room, while Mr. Mollison taught at the other.

In 1976 a major maintenance program was undertaken. During the alterations, the Department rented the vacant Catholic School. Both teachers and their classes were accommodated in the one room. The stage curtains, used for concerts at the School of Arts, served to divide the room into upper and lower division classes. Peg battled away with her clerical work amid the thumping of workmen, running back and forth with phone messages and work stencils for the children.

The staff returned from holidays, full of grand expectations of a rejuvenated school, only to find that the workmen had left without cleaning up. Everything was covered with plaster dust, off-cuts and debris. The staff worked like navvies all day, trying to make the rooms habitable. The high windows in the Lower Division room had been lowered. Ceiling had been installed at ten feet and fluorescent lights connected.

A Principal's office was made at the front of the main room. Very soon the pressure of everyday school activities erased the trauma of the renovations from the staff's memories and the grind continued in normality.

The Mollisons transferred to Tintenbar, before retiring. Mrs. Mollison had taught the infants for the two years prior to their leaving Largs.

1979 saw Mr. Vic. Thomas appointed Principal and Miss Mary O'Connell as Assistant. Numbers rose and Mrs. Ruth Davis was appointed in 1980. A third room was set up in the kitchen. Strong protests were made about conditions at the school and a de-mountable building was erected.

At this stage, there was a move to have the old brick buildings classified unsuitable for classrooms and an entire new school was sought. It was proposed to use the old building for a museum.

Numbers fell rapidly during the next few years. The third teacher was transferred out and the momentum lost. Mr. Thomas transferred to Rutherford in 1984.

1985 saw the appointment of Bob Jackson as Principal and the retirement of Miss Mary O'Connell.

Mrs. Louise Eggelton was appointed as Assistant in 1986. She found herself being educated in her first appointment in a small school. Watching new-born foals wobble on spindly legs, taking the class to witness the birth of goat triplets, identifying the water-birds as they arrived at the nearby waterhole and school excursions that turned into family picnics, were all new experiences. However, her natural enthusiasm for life has lent itself well to small school teaching and within weeks, she became a confirmed small schooler.

Mr. Jackson and Mrs. Eggelton, along with Mrs. Lyn Bellamy (part time) form the present teaching staff.

## TEACHERS

Very little is known of the teaching staff prior to the change over to the National System in 1849.

We do know that John Whitelaw was the first to serve under the Church.

Since the school came under government control with Colin Pentland in charge, there have been thirty teachers in charge, serving under the title of Head Teacher, Headmaster or Principal.

The longest serving teacher was Mr. Henry Jones (15 years) followed closely by his pre-decessor, Mr. Gordon Walker (14 years).

Following is a list of all teachers and where possible, their date of service.

C.G.C. Pentland	1-1-1845	30-9-1851	Miss Alice Charleton		
Tas Fraser	12-1851	2-6-1860	(Asst. Teacher-Ex pupil left		
J. Sheldon (went to Hinton)		--8-1864	to be married	----1935	----1936
Rolf Broadbent	-----	-----	Miss Scobie (Assistant)	2-2-1937	-----
Lewis Chandler	8-1865	30-9-1865	Mrs White (Pupil Teacher)	22-3-1940	-----
John Kilpatrick	9-10-1865	--11-1866	Henry Jones	16-9-1941	5-6-1956
Thos. Henrie (Left)		--5-1870	Charles Gorman	30-7-1956	----1962
Mr W.M. Cameron	--5-1870	28-8-1875	Allan Jones	30-1-1962	28-1-1964
Tas Hillick	2-9-1875	9-1-1878	Douglas Murkin	28-1-1964	1-2-1966
John Lumsden	9-1-1878	28-2-1879	F. William Kneipp	1-2-1966	20-12-1969
Charles Marchant	--2-1879	6-10-1886	Robert Thompson	27-1-1970	9-3-1970
Michael Moy	6-10-1886	--11-1888	John Townsend	9-3-1970	2-2-1971
Charles Mansfield	8-11-1888	--8-1895	James Mollison	2-2-1971	--12-1979
Thomas Pyman	27-8-1895	----1909	Kath Waller (Assistant)	-----	-1974
M. Creely (Assistant)	----1906	-----	Miss Beavis	11-2-1974	-----
Henry Hunt	23-3-1909	--9-1911	Mrs B. Crisp (New sewing		
Mr Hunt ill -- May --			teacher)	----1975	-----
H.G. Setchell (relieving			Mrs June Godwin		
teacher 1911 while Mr			(Permanent part-time		
Hunt was ill	Mr Hunt Died		sewing teacher	-----	-----
James Byrne	29-9-1911	-----	Mrs Robyn Tonkin		
Miss I Cohen (Assistant)	----1911	-----	(a primary trained teacher		
J.P. Kelly	----1912	-----	appointed to teach lower		
Madge Bryne (Daughter of			division)	-----	-----
James Byrne)	-----	----1915	Mrs Joan Mollison	----1978	--12-1979
Alfred Gallop	21-8-1914	14-12-1920	Victor Thomas	--1-1979	--12-1984
Oliver Fox (Relieving)	16-1-1918	23-1-1918	Miss Mary O'Connell	----1979	----1985
G.R. Prentice (Relieving)	28-2-1918	29-6-1918	Mrs Ruth Davis (Third		
Matthew Hannon	14-12-1920	24-4-1924	Teacher) Taught yrs 3&4	----1980	-1983
Robert Robertson	3-5-1924	8-9-1927	Mrs Lyn Bellamy	1984	-----
Miss K. Patmore (Jnr Asst)	-----	-----	(Current permanent casual)		
Alex McLachlan (Relieving)	23-7-1927	10-8-1927	Robert Jackson	----1985	-----
Gordon Stewart Walker	8-9-1927	16-9-1941	(Current Principal)		
			Mrs Louise Eggelton	----1986	-----
			(Current Infants Teacher)		

Teachers have always been very much in the public eye. Having charge of a community's children places the teacher in rather fragile position and often the community, and sometimes the authorities, place expectations on them that are a little unreal. Take the following extract for instance.

The Maitland Mercury, May 17, 1848.

#### TEACHERS

*"A teacher should be a person of Christian sentiment, of calm temper and discretion, should be imbued with a spirit of peace, of obedience to the law, and loyalty to the Sovereign, and should not only possess the art of communication and knowledge, but be capable of moulding the mind of youth, and of giving the power which education confers, a useful direction. These are the qualities for which patrons of schools, on their recommendation of teachers, should anxiously look.*

*Salary forty pounds per year."*

Rules for Teaching in 1879. (origin unknown)

1. Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys, before beginning work.
2. Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and scuttle of coal for the day's session.
3. Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individuals taste of the pupils.
4. Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go to church regularly.
5. After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.
6. Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.
7. Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.
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.
9. The teacher who performs his labour faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of two shillings and sixpence per week in his pay providing the Board of Education approve.

Largs parents have a long history of registering their disapproval if they disagree with a teacher's actions. There are a number of reports over the years of parents withdrawing their children and sending them elsewhere. As early as 1876 we can read reports to illustrate this:

*"The Local Board wish to mark its sense of the great increase to the attendance at the School since it has been placed under the care of Mr Hullick who appears to have the tact of commending himself to the children and their parents as he has regained two or three families to the School whose parents differed with the late Teacher and sent their children to the Catholic School."*

As late as the 1980's parents of Largs have used this same method of protest.

The protests were not always about the teacher's classroom practices. In 1893 a Mr Mansfield fell out with the Largs community when he began keeping bees and selling Queen bees and honey. He was reported to the Minister for Education for having a second source of income and competing unfairly with the local bee-keepers. He transferred soon after.

One of the shortest terms of enrolment at Largs was the result of a disenchantment with the teacher. A local resident tells the story of his fleeting acquaintance with the school. He transferred from Glen William school. After a few days he was slow to duck and was hit by a flying blackboard duster thrown by an irate teacher. He headed for home and rather than present himself again he completed his primary education at Iona School, Woodville.

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# PUNISHMENT

This in one case where the school is guilty of being almost totally chauvinistic. In records going back to 1902, we can find only two cases of girls being punished.

The samples which we show in this booklet are not intended to cast any reflection upon any family or teacher. They have been chosen as an historic record of interesting examples of some of the misdemeanours which occurred and retributions handed out. It is interesting to note that as this booklet is being compiled (in 1987) corporal punishment has been outlawed in Public Schools in N.S.W.

When reading these extracts you will no doubt feel for the recipients, however, spare a thought for the long suffering chalky, who found himself incarcerated each day with as many as seventy children from five years to fifteen years, crammed tightly into rather primitive accommodation.

Mr Pyman did battle from 1895 to 1909 in an overcrowded room with an age range embracing Infant, Primary and Secondary. The punishment book testifies to his efforts. One lad received eight strokes around the legs and back. Why not on the hand? Simply because he had already received six earlier in the day. The child headed for home. When he next appeared at school he received another eight for absconding.

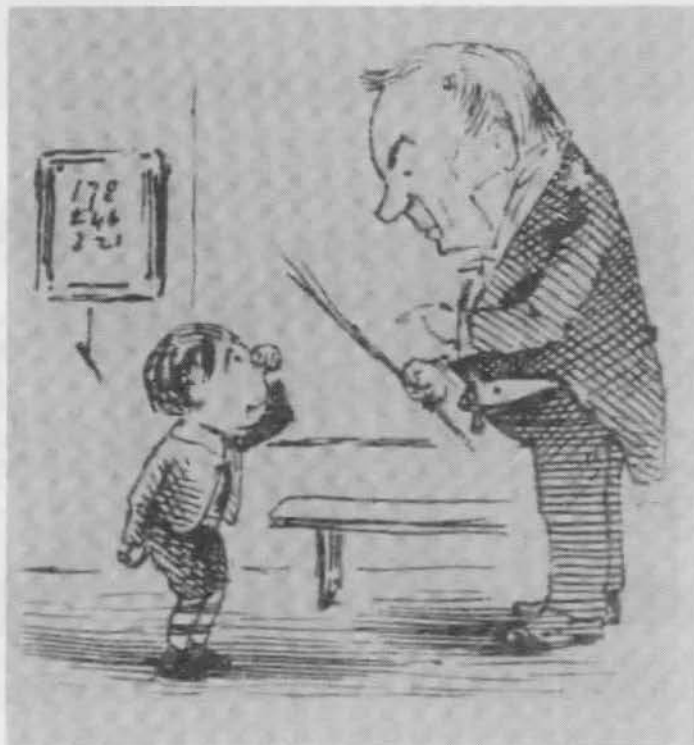
In retrospect, some of the incidents which occurred have their lighter side.

A story is told of Mr Pyman going to select a new stick. He ceremoniously announced his intention and headed off to the river after school. Some of the more daring boys would sneak down unobserved to witness the ritual. The selection, the cutting, the trial swishing, and then the patient whittling of bark and nodules.

Despite the severity of his punishments, My Pyman was held in high regard during his long stay at Largs. Extracts from the Maitland Mercury bear testimony to his success as a teacher.

15-4-1903 — MAITLAND MERCURY — LARGS

We are pleased to again be able to congratulate our local Public School teacher, Mr Pyman, upon the success of pupils under his care. Four of his pupils were candidates at the recent examination for pupil school teachers held at East Maitland and all were successful in passing the literary test. Only six positions are available, and two of the candidates, Master P. Hickey, son of Mr P.T. Hickey, and Master O. Munday, son of Mr F.J. Munday, Woodville, succeeded in gaining the coveted honour. Pupils from our local school have been singularly successful since the present teacher took charge, but on this occasion we believe a record for country schools has been established, a fact of which parents and teacher alike are justly proud.



6-6-1903 — MAITLAND MERCURY — LARGS

At the recent examination of candidates in the general division under the Commonwealth, three pupils from the local public school presented themselves, and My Pyman (head teacher) has the gratification of learning that one of them (Master Willy Lawrence) of Woodville, passed with credit while the other two, Masters M. Watson, and Gordon Graham, of Largs, have been registered as eligible for appointment in the service.

Mr Pyman is also remembered for his community efforts. He wrote an "Uncle Tom's" column in the Maitland Mercury and raised money for charity.

There is a plaque in the Maitland District Hospital commemorating his efforts.

Mr. Hunt succeeded Mr. Pyman in 1909. His disposition seems to have been gentler and he used corporal punishment very sparingly. The effect on the children is unknown but his term as Principal was brief. He took ill in 1911 and passed away.



*Plaque to Thomas Pyman situated in Maitland District Hospital*

## **MAKING THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME**

During the 1930's when the room was still packed with wall to wall pupils, one education practice in vogue was the singing of the solfa scale with the help of the tuning fork. Many will recall the instructions given on the ring of the fork. "Sing this note." "Call it Doh." Pupils then proceeded to sing up and down the scales.

One Principal of Largs made this the last exercise of every day. Class was dismissed when the task was performed to satisfaction. It was a task that most children, eager to be released from their cramped stools, found very tedious. Their solution was to spirit away the offending tuning fork and drop it down the school well. As is so often the case, one of the very junior pupils weakened under the teacher's barrage when the loss was discovered. Having solved the mystery, justice was swift and fitting. The class was made to stay back each afternoon until the well was empty and the fork was retrieved. The daily singing of scales was resumed.

During the same period, when the room was so congested, it was easy for one pupil to slip down below the desks and visit a friend further down the row for a short time, while "Sir" was pre-occupied. Some even managed to enjoy a few moments of freedom by escaping out of the back windows, left open in an effort to ventilate the stuffy surrounds.

Stories are told of the time one boy did his vanishing act, crawled under the desks and tied the unsuspecting teacher's shoe laces together. Another fiendish prank was to place crushed chalk in the unfortunate victim's ample trouser cuffs and then speculate what would happen that night when he hung them up. They must have been lovely children at Largs in those days!

There were, however, situations where the teacher emerged the victor. One story goes, that a senior pupil left school to take up a telegram boy's job. In those days, telegrams were delivered by youths on pushbikes. This particular lad had not bothered to inform the headmaster of his new vocation and one of his first jobs was to deliver a telegram to the school. On arrival he entered the room, full of self-importance, only to find himself ordered to the front of the room, admonished for being late and for entering without knocking, and given 'two of the best', before he had time to explain the situation.

Public School at Largs

Punishment Book.

Frank Mallet	13	Constant Talking	Sit on hands	lane	7.3.06	Thomas. Byrne
Charles Summings	11.5	Disobedience	Sit on hands	lane	2.11.06	M. Bruce for S.L.
	11.8	Repeated Disobedience	8 round legs and back		2.11.06	J. L. Symon.
Charles Summings	11.5	Absconding at recess on 2/11/06	light on hands	lane	5.10.06	Thomas. Byrne
A. White	9	Lighting fire & pulling chains from school	2 strokes		Apr 18	W. Cornish Sen: Junr 25/5/11
Harold Suters	13	Knocking children	6		3.7.14	" " "
Fred Thimont	13	on other boys' names	6		3.4.14	" " "
Leslie King	10	knocking and injury	6		3.4.14	" " "
Henry Adams	8	(Handed) to Ronald	6		3.4.14	" " "
Geo. Hancock	11.2	Splashing	2 slaps	Cane	24.5.28	G. S. Walker
Allen/Crow	11.8	each other.	2 slaps	Cane	24.5.28	G. S. Walker
Bert Peattie	10.1	Disobedience	2		11.3.32	G. S. Walker.
Lionel Eveleigh	10.3	sc. laughing in class.	2.		11.3.32	G. S. Walker.
Bert Peattie	12.8	Kicking a girl while at play.	2 slaps		7.8.34	G. S. Walker.
Lionel Eveleigh	12.10	Cruelty to a young boy at play.	4 slaps		19.9.34	G. S. Walker.
Bert Peattie	12.5	Running about	2 slaps.		19.9.34	G. S. Walker
Roy Suters	12.8	Street without shirts.	2 slaps.		19.9.34	G. S. Walker.
Bert Peattie	13.6	Ringleaders	6 slaps.	Cane	7/6/35	G. S. Walker
Roy Suters	13.10	of this party	6 slaps	"	7/6/35	G. S. Walker.
Lionel Eveleigh	13.8	jumping on, pulling, and teasing	6 slaps	"	7/6/35	G. S. Walker.
William Franker	11.5	a cow.	4 slaps	"	7/6/35	G. S. Walker.
John Hawley	11.2		4 slaps	"	7/6/35	G. S. Walker, K

# THE OLD BUSH SCHOOL

The historic pioneer cottage, being at present restored and converted into the 'Old Bush School' is considered to be over one hundred and fifty years old. It was probably built as a resident farmer's cottage on the original Goulburn Grove estate in the 1830's.

This slab cottage has housed many of the district's pioneer families and no doubt many pupils of our school have lived within its walls. An ex-pupil and regular visitor to the school over the years, Milton Jory, was born in the cottage in 1906. Nine of the twelve Jory children lived to adulthood and although the cottage had a number of appendages in those days, living space must surely have been severely cramped.

One of the Jory girls, when she married and became Mrs Hodges, ushered in a new era in the history of the cottage when she and her husband occupied the dwelling. Ron Hodges, one of the present Largs residents, was born in the cottage in 1925. Mr Hodges relates a story often told by his father, of how an earth tremor severely shook the old cottage. (date unknown).

Prior to the property being sold to the Department of Education in 1978, it was owned by Mr Kevin Maher. Mr Maher married in 1939 and took his bride to live in the cottage which they occupied until 1946. At this stage, with World War II just over, they purchased one of the army barracks from the camp site along Dunmore Road. They moved into their more modern acquisition, transforming the old building into a garage and chicken shed. This led to the building falling into a state of sad neglect.

The P.&C. in 1978, under the guidance of President, Mr Noel Unicomb and Secretary Mrs Lyn Pepper, fought successfully to obtain a stay of demolition. In 1980, they managed to have the building re-sited and repaired to a sound condition in its present position. However, no doors or windows were provided and local children found it a convenient meeting place. It soon fell into disrepair again.

In 1986, the school Principal compiled a submission to the Bicentenary Committee to obtain funds for restoration.

The submission went much further than just a plan for the restoration of the old cottage. It set out a full program for the school's bicentenary celebrations. Plans were made for the "Old Bush School" to be opened on May 10th 1988 as an Educational Resource for the Hunter Region, where other schools could visit and the children experience the atmosphere of an early colonial school. The specific aims as set out in the submission were:—

1. To establish an awareness of Largs as an important part of Australia's National Heritage.
2. To establish a Museum which will become:—
  - (a) a resource centre for schools in the Hunter area.
  - (b) an historic landmark to be frequented by visitors on historic tours, during normal school hours — (at present tour buses stop, read the sign and then move on).
3. To experience living history by re-enactment of everyday activities in colonial life.
4. To help unify the community by involving everyone in the Bi-Centenary celebrations.
5. To allow neighbouring schools to share the experience of the day by visiting and participating in the day's activities.
6. To bring to the school the professional expertise of Colin Douglas and another musician, thus exposing the children present to Australian culture in the areas of literature, poetry, dance, music and folk lore.
7. To allow the children the experience of hosting visitors and guiding them through the Museum, thus instilling such desirable traits as courtesy, self-confidence and tact. This will be an on-going and hopefully, expanding living experience.
8. To establish an attraction that will be a source of pride to Largs district in future years.

An "Early Settlement Day" pageant was organised to run for a full school day to complement the opening of the "Old Bush School". A specimen program of the day's activities can be seen on an adjoining page. Professional entertainers were engaged to assist. Mr. Blackmore, The Lord Mayor of Maitland, was invited to attend the opening ceremony as Governor Fitzroy, while the local Presbyterian Minister, Paul Logan, was invited to come as the Reverent John Dunmore Lang. Also invited were the District Inspector and the Regional Director of Education.

June 1987 saw the formation of a school Bicentenary Committee with a number of sub-committees, one of which was an "Old Bush School" building committee. Bicentenary funds were slow coming and promised to be well short of the required figure. Mr Jackson went, cap-in-hand, around the area seeking support.

Four Mile Timber yard donated the timber for the doors and shutters which were constructed by unemployed students of the T.A.F.E. college. Shingles were obtained from a nearby homestead and are believed to be



over one hundred and fifty years old. The battens for the shingles were donated by Monier & Co. The Maitland Lions provided the labour and placed both battens and shingles on the roof in 1987.

Eventually Bicentenary money was allocated. The Largs school did not receive the amount requested but the \$1,000 granted was the largest amount given to a school in the Maitland area.



*Old bush School before restoration  
Mr Jory in foreground was born in the cottage in 1906*

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## **EX-STUDENTS**

Small schools have a proud record of producing students who have gone on to make their mark in society. Largs is no exception, although families have been very slow to volunteer information on their achievers.

The Graham family, one of the earliest families to migrate from Scotland to Largs, have produced a string of worthy ex-pupils.

It was the son of the original Graham family who was the blacksmith who drove off the bushrangers as mentioned earlier in this book. The Graham family remained farmers and later John Graham showed initiative in setting up a travelling butcher shop to complement his farm income. John and his brother Robert established "Clifden" a Clydesdale Stud, which became famous throughout the eastern states.

Robert turned his attention to Jersey Cattle breeding and again succeeded. It is interesting to note that John Graham became the owner of 'Dunmore House' which, only one generation before, was owned by Andrew Lang who was instrumental in settling the Graham family as tenant farmers on the "Dunmore Estate".