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'THE FIRST FIVE YEARS' (The Croydon West Years) - April '89

When Croydon West High School, yes, that's what our school was originally called, commenced in February 1965, with its thirty nine students and eight staff in the grounds of Croydon High School, the current Victorian Football League Premiers were Melbourne, a wrapped and sliced loaf of ^{white} bread cost 20 cents, a pint of bottled milk was 6 cents, the Maroondah Highway was still very much a single, narrow bitumen road, with gum trees arching their branches over it, the very new Shire of Croydon was four years old, there was no Eastland Shopping Centre, some of the top black & white television programs were "The Saint", "The Drovers' Hillbillies", "Pick-a-Box" (with Bob & Dolly Dyer), and "Coronation Street, and there was no colour television!

Melbourne and its suburbs were growing fast. The airwaves were dominated by four Liverpool lads called 'The Beatles'. They had visited Melbourne the previous year, and all the way from Essendon Airport to the Southern Cross Hotel in Exhibition Street in the City, complete confusion had ensued. Their rivals were surprisingly different - Peter, Paul and Mary, the American Folk Singing group, with their catalogue of Bob Dylan protest songs (the American presence in the Vietnam war was just beginning to be significant), plus their novel song, 'Puff the Magic Dragon'. Their long playing records (L.P.'s) were sure fire sellers. They were rivalled by an unusual phenomena, an Australian pop group that actually hit the world hit parades. They were called 'The Seekers', and this Melbourne group hit the big time with 'Georgy Girl', not only in Australia, but in Britain also. Drive in picture theatres were still hugely popular, and the Croydon Drive-In at Nursery Road, still existing in 1989, packed in the locals with the latest movies, in a quite rural atmosphere.

A block of land in the immediate area of the school cost around \$1750, and a house could be built on that

block for about \$8,500. The average weekly wage was then \$. From Dublin Rd, through to Kent Avenue, around the East Ringwood and down the hill into South Croydon, many young married couples had been and still were, building their first home, and as a consequence immediately sought places at the local primary and secondary schools for their children. It became clear to the Liberal government of the day under the Premiership of Henry Bolck, and Education Minister John Blainfield, that surrounding secondary schools at Ringwood, Bayswater, Croydon and Norwood, were becoming overcrowded, and the demand for a new High School somewhere between the current schools was warranted. That demand became the new Croydon West High School, and under the leadership of founding Principal, or Headmaster as they liked to call him then, Mr. Lindsay Young, an enthusiastic staff, an emergent group of ~~students~~^{parents}, and thirty-nine wide eyed Form 1, now called Year 7 students, the school commenced. Just for the record, the first student ever to leave the school, on the 25th May 1965, was one Mary Sutton.

Starting a brand new school is an exhilarating experience, and as was the case with many new schools, life commenced in another local school, whilst the new school building was actually being built. Croydon West (the new school), began its existence at Croydon High School grounds, housed in three portable classrooms.

The joint occupancy of the school was a very happy one, and Principals Ambrose Douglas of Croydon and Lindsay Young of Croydon West, got on splendidly. Croydon High freely shared their possessions, which included sporting equipment, English and French class sets, not to mention the library and canteen. Mrs. Panther of the canteen was appreciative of the Croydon West mothers help. The Ladies Auxiliary under the Presidency of Mrs. Wademan and secretary

Mrs. Binns, raised \$17.05 at the Markin household with a Barbecue and Film Night, and an Easter Egg competition by the same Auxiliary raised \$36.70. The school's very first Parent-Teacher night was held on the 27th April in the Croydon High School, and by March 1965, the style and articles of the school uniform had been decided. This included summer and winter hats for girls (\$4.30), ties for both sexes (82 cents), and a school blazer (\$13.50). In 1989, none of these articles form part of our uniform. The boys were considered tops - "we feel that the boys look very smart in their full uniforms." The author (clearly the Headmaster) added - "without doubt, the school uniform, which, with care, will last for years, is the most economical way of clothing the high school child." Back in 1965 a pair of grey school trousers cost \$12 - \$14, depending on your size, a grey shirt \$1.99, a girls summer frock \$6.75, and a jumper \$7.50. Compare this with today's prices of \$, \$, \$, \$, respectively!

The thirty nine students who started in February 3rd 1965, were divided into two forms - 1B and 1S (Mrs. Briede and Mrs. Seymour), and comprised 21 girls and 18 boys. Such was the plight of the boys numbers, that in a number of interschool football matches, they had 'to borrow' opposition reserves in order to play the games! A report in a newsletter added - "we are not very successful, we do not expect to be, but we are enthusiastic." The school received a mid year setback, when Mrs. Seymour passed away, and students formed a guard of honour at the funeral. By the end of 1965 students had achieved 'a good academic standard', and on November 3rd, the long awaited contract for the new building was let. The year concluded with a 'Small Speech Night' in the sewing room at Croydon High School for 43 students and their parents - a growth in the year of four students.

The school can still directly connect 1965 with 1989 by reference to two people. On the Croydon West High School 1965 list we see a Mrs. P. Lloyd - a teacher of Religious Instruction, and one Alison Markin of 15 - a student. Today in 1989 Mrs. Lloyd is still with us, and each year is in charge of conducting the end of year V.C.E exam at Year 12. Alison Markin is now Alison Robinson, and is currently the school's science laboratory assistant.

1966, the year of the introduction of the new decimal currency, commenced with the school still at Croydon High, and 77 new Form 1 students, making a total of 120. Remarkably this group was divided into only two classes, due to 'accommodation problems' - in other words classes of 38, something certainly not unknown or even unusual to the teacher and student of the 1960's. Lindsay Young promised to make three forms when the school moved into its new building, but in fact it didn't happen until the new year in 1967. Five new staff were appointed at the start of the year, with two later in the year. One of these latter appointments was Betty Ann Sheaffe, destined to spend a long period at the school. One of the new staff - one Mrs. Hedgemont became Senior Mistress. Ten new portable classrooms arrived, making a total of five, but as the Headmaster said - "we were buoyed up by the knowledge that the permanent buildings would be ready in Term Three (September). This proved to be incorrect, but you couldn't blame the Headmaster!"

In the actual school itself, things began to happen - slow readers used a new technique called 'Words in Colour'; remedial work in English and Maths was proposed for the following year, and it was announced 'commercial work' would definitely be introduced in 1967. A school bag cost \$3.50, and the Composite fee was \$5.00.

Because of the call for help in the Croydon canteen,

Croydon West mothers were quickly into their stride. As a result the Ladies Auxiliary was formed, the very first organization within the school, even before the Advisory Council. Eventually this Auxiliary became the Mothers Club. In 1966 the President was Mrs. Schimmelbusch, Mrs. Martin Secretary and Mrs. Robinson Treasurer. A fete was conducted and raised \$500. During 1966 the very first School Council or Advisory Council was formed. Mr. Robinson was the first President and Mr. Shingles Treasurer. These two gentlemen retained these positions during the schools formative, early years. The Headmaster was automatically the Advisory Council Secretary. Lindsay Young commenced - "I have never been associated with a busier, more effective and far seeing group of men and women".

Late in 1966 - October 26th to be precise, later than the Headmaster had anticipated, Croydon West High School finally moved into the new building on the site we now occupy. This was accomplished with the help of the Public Works Department (the P.W.D), teachers' cars and the boys of Form 2! The buildings consisted of a central office and a classroom block, plus the domestic Science and arts wing. The grounds of the new school were unpaved and covered with crushed rock. In his Headmaster's Report to the school, Lindsay Young said - "the relief and pleasure this gave us all, pupils, as well as staff, can scarcely be put into words. However, it would be churlish not to recognize the debt we owe to all at Croydon High School, from the Headmaster Mr. Douglas, downwards. Kindness and tolerance were the keynotes of our occupation of the portables in the Croydon grounds for nearly two years, and were greatly appreciated by all." So that the parents and students of the school didn't become too settled, feeling all was now well and finished, he reminded everybody - "the new building is excellent to work on, but it can be

imagined the grounds need a ^{great} deal of effort to bring them up to standard." That was a real challenge, clearly ringing in everybody's ears!

The year concluded with a Speech Night, held in the Croydon Presbyterian Church Hall, and apart from the expected presentations and reports, this evening saw the first appearance of the school song, composed by staff member Mrs. Hedgermont. The school still has the original manuscript in its possession, written in Mrs. Hedgermont's own hand. Over the years, the song was performed less and less, and almost sank into total oblivion. It was rescued by the long serving Principal Harry Fletcher who rated it quite a good school song. On Mr. Fletcher's retirement in 1985, the song was revived and sung at the final school assembly, much to his delight. The 1985 students had never heard it, and great was their surprise to learn there even existed a school song!

By 1967, the school was really beginning to grow - from 120 in 1966, to 212 in 1967. Sadly, the intimacy of a small school was now being lost. Growing were the complications, problems and joys of running a rapidly expanding very new high school. With the Headmaster, there were 18 staff in attendance to run the school program. Moving into the new school meant a new canteen had to be established for the very first time. Mrs. Phyllis Asquith became the manageress. Our current manageress Mrs. Pam Catling took over from Mrs. Asquith in February 1977, so in fact Mawndah High School has had only two manageresses. That's quite a record, and the two ladies deserve our heartiest congratulations. On leaving in December 1976, Phyllis Asquith presented an oil painting to the school, and this has been displayed near the Principal's office ever since.

New subjects were added to the curriculum, and these included Business Education and Typewriting. Shorthand,

Bookkeeping, Personal Typing and Mechanical Drawing were promised as subjects in 1968. The school, built in undeveloped grounds, with 212 students, was becoming quite a problem. This tended to be overshadowed by the fact that the school didn't have a proper and permanent entrance and access road. Cuts Avenue was perceived by the Education Department to be the entrance and access, but this was physically impossible, and it certainly reflected poor departmental planning, something the cynic could possibly claim was almost a permanent state of affairs. Temporary access for the builders was made through the orchard of Mr. Brentnall, direct from Macdonald Highway. This is the area where Brentnall Road is now, and hence its name. At one stage the track from the highway followed close to the ~~road~~ western fence n *

→ Cuts Avenue, although on a plan, was not the street we know today. Where the avenue is at its lowest, there existed a creek, which flowed past Shelsons Tile Works, through Cuts Avenue, and onto Burnt Bridge under the Highway. Only in the Seventies was this creek put into a barrel drain, and become a possible entrance, but by this time the 'saga' of the new entrance had developed nicely.

* This track 'developed', originally by the builders, with their trucks and raw materials wending their way along it. When the school actually opened, this track continued to be used, watched by Mr. Brentnall with considerable interest. The Education Department then 'acquired' the track as the entrance of the school, but not the whole wide land as we have seen well into the nineteen eighties. When the bulldozers arrived to 'create a road' for the school, they did not, as was expected, follow the track along the fence, but went straight through the middle of the orchard, roughly along the line of the road we know today.

Mr. Brentnall's orchard was almost ruined, divided into two, and so he decided to sell the whole block, right through to the Ainslie Park area, where one the Ringwood Wilhelmina Soccer Club had its ground. A price was reached, and the Croydon Council purchased it. Never was either road or track, call it what you will, actually sealed. It became muddy, messy and at times downright dangerous. The new entrance required twice yearly grading, plus regular additions of crushed rock, and it was said by many teachers and parents that all the costs involved over the twenty years of the road saga, could have built a properly sealed and permanent road way back in the late sixties. Ah, such is life. The school, through the Education Department, purchased a portion of the top area for a school car park, and this of course still exists, and serves the school, the Community Centre and patrons of Ainslie Park well. The saga of 'the road', as it became known, could fill a whole book, but eventually twenty years later the sealed road came to pass. Such was the joy, the school arranged a special road opening, complete with the Mayor of Croydon Councillor Gordon Coules, new Principal Brian Jones, the school band, hundreds of students and teachers.

Mr. Young and his Advisory Council were becoming very frustrated with the lack of grounds development, and of course the lack of a proper school entrance. Eventually some good news arrived, and he calmly commented - "however the efforts of the Council were rather belatedly rewarded when the site works were commenced in November 1967. These will mean a great deal to the school." The site works were the paths and certain bitumened playing areas immediately around the buildings. The actual ground development such as the oval, tennis courts and so on, were yet to come, and were to represent many weeks and months of fund raising and physical hard effort. With the cooperation

of the Ringwood Council and the site contractor, certain filling of the site of the oval was commenced. Originally, the land sloped from the present quadrangle, right down to Shelsons Tile Works - in other words, for an oval to be constructed, massive filling had to take place. This came much later, and the major filling came from the Dandenong Road, when it was being doubled and sealed. As was said by one teacher, the site of the oval as it was ~~slowly~~ ^{slowly} but surely filled 'resembled the surface of the moon'. At one point, snakes became quite a nuisance, and so the oval area was placed out of bounds.

1967 saw what you might call 'the tradition of the School Musical', one of the great traditions of Monmouth High School, come into real being. 'Toad of Toad Hall' was produced by a Mr. Dooley and a Mr. Donnelly. It included 80 pupils in the cast, and played for two nights, even rating two photographs in 'The Sun' newspaper.

Mr. Young was obviously very proud of his new school building, and he encouraged staff and students to beautify the place. He praised the interior of the school saying - "it is being developed attractively with indoor plants, art displays and displays of students' subject work. Mr. Woodberry, Mrs. McClellan and Mr. Smith are to be thanked for this."

Now that the school numbers were growing, so was the selection from which to choose sports teams. No longer did the school have to borrow from the opposition. Mr. Young said - "we have now reached the stage where our competitors have to take us seriously!" Now that's a really telling line. He continued - "wins have been recorded in all team sports, and the hockey team had an unbeaten record in 1967". One Marilyn Le Guier must rate a mention in our records, as she recorded the first ever individual win in any sports, when she won the Diving

event at the Interschol Swimming Sports. Twenty-eight placings were gained at the Athletic Sports, with wins by Yvonne Gysserts, and the boys under 14 Relay team.

During 1967, the hard work of the Advisory Council, under Mr. Robinson, and the Mothers Club by Mrs. Warburton, continued. Lindsay Young was generous in his praise of these two bodies - of the Mothers Club he said - "words are inadequate to describe the amount of work put in by this small band of ladies. One can say that without their willing and friendly efficiency, the school would be much the poorer." Of the Advisory Council he said - "last year I called them a busy, efficient and far-seeing body of men and women. All I can do this year is to repeat that statement with emphasis." In 1967 the Parent, Teacher and Citizens Association was formed with the "avowed intention of raising as much money as possible for the school." Mr. Mathews became the first President, Mr. S. Woodberry, a teacher, became Secretary, and Mr. Leek Treasurer. The 1967 Fete under their banner raised \$1100. This important body of hard working people, with a will and profound interest in the school, lasted until 1988, and many significant figures in the development of the school commenced their efforts in the P.T.C.A, moving eventually to the Advisory Council or School Council. More importantly at the time, it allowed parents and teachers to actually work side by side in a common cause, and it developed mountains of goodwill and positive feelings. The P.T.C.A. is now no more, but it has a successor called a committee of the School Council. The Mothers Club still continues, and still with 'a small band of ladies'. Their devotion and energy are legend in the school, quietly going about their efforts with a minimum of fuss. Such a lady would be Loni Cunningham, whose efforts at this school encompasses 20 years as a parent & friend of the school! The Advisory

Council or School Council, continues, with ever increasing responsibilities and ever demanding time to follow through those responsibilities. Today, the School Council now officially includes not only parents and local citizens of note, but also teachers and students, something legally quite impossible back in the Sixties and Seventies.

As 1967 came to an end, Headmaster Lindsay Young made two important announcements. His first rang a very familiar bell in Croydon West minds - "a new high school to serve the Kewbrook area, called Pembroke, will begin in portable classrooms in the grounds of our school. Having in mind our sojourn in similar conditions at Croydon High School, we are glad to offer what facilities we are able, and to cooperate as best we may." His second announcement was a personal one, tinged clearly with a deal of sadness - "after three years at Croydon West I leave with considerable regret. Circumstances of the teaching service are such that I had really little choice in the matter. When, next year, I consider my student body of 1020, and staff of more than sixty, I shall miss the intimacy of Croydon West, and the many friends I have made there, both on the staff and among the pupils and their parents. You have pioneered wonderfully well, and I trust you will continue the good work." Lindsay Young in 1968 became the Principal of Nunawading High School, and his place at Croydon West was filled by Frank Russell from Baywater High School, whose sojourn proved to be a very short one, echoing the recent departing words of Lindsay Young - "circumstances of the teaching service are such....."

1968 added 119 new pupils to the school, making a total school population of 333, along with new Principal Frank Russell, plus eight new staff, making a total of twenty-three. Staff names appear on the list who had a long association with the school, and these included

Adrian Carr, Ron Crane and Judy Griffith.

NOT Necessary
A peculiar early duty of the new Principal, was to attempt to obtain more duplicating paper, above the allowance granted to the school. The Croydon West allowance was 60 reams, Frank Russell wrote to the Education Department - "with the enormous amount of data sent to all parents, quickly ran away with the paper. Our form lists alone used 11 reams. We have already ordered 20 reams from the Government Printer, and as you can imagine if this has to continue all the year, it will soon run away with our money. We will leave the amount supplied to your generosity." No record can be found, if paper was in fact received!

The House Swimming Sports at the Croydon Pool recorded that Green house won, followed by Red, Yellow and Blue (inspired names). The trophy was donated by the P.T.C.A. In the interschool swimming sports, Croydon West came third out of six. During 1968, site works continued - concrete paths, roadways, parking areas, garden beds and gravelled areas. Uniform, always a regular news item, even into the Eighties, talked about lengths of girls socks - there were varying lengths. Boys were seen in checked Bermuda shorts, and these were considered quite inappropriate. Grey shorts were required, along with ^{long} grey socks. The school Tans, for which Marwood has become well known, first saw the light of day in a March 1968 newsletter. The policies and style it enunciated show little difference between then and now. Like any school money collection, the Tans provided scope for lengthy discussions on how much, how often, when, refunds, insurance and so on. The new science course - called T.S.S.P. was introduced to the school, and each student was charged \$1.50. The Principal exhorted mothers to come and help at the canteen -

now that message has been heard before! The P.T.C.A. a Dinner and Winecasting fund raising evening at the R.S.L. hall in Croydon, plus a two day working bee to construct outdoor seats for the students.

Frank Russell echoed a very familiar communication problem when he said - "if parents have any problems they would like to discuss, do not hesitate to get in touch with me, either by phone or by calling at the school. Children sometimes bring home incorrect versions of matters concerning uniforms, subject choices etc..... and misunderstandings can be avoided by direct contact."

Bessie Tanner in the library, one of our longest serving teachers, had a field day with her allowed \$1400, whilst the Advisory Council spent \$1467 on T.V. sets, a record player, 20 glockenspiels, a spirit duplicator, a refrigerator, steel rods, gymnasium mats, volley ball posts, a trolley, pictures and insurance. The Mothers Club had a live theatre night in the city at Her Majestys Theatre to see 'Mame', with tickets at \$1.60. The students presented 'Too-ra-he-ooa-lie-ay', a previously unperformed play by John Macarthur at the Croydon Presbyterian Church Hall, with a cast of 80, set in the Victorian goldfields of the 1860's. Old clothing was required to outfit the diggers and their hard pressed wives and children. Interestingly the Pembroke High School Orchestra provided the accompaniment.

1968 saw the school play host to somewhat unusual guests, although no record can be found of the length of their stay. We were used to high school guests, but in 1968 we played host to a Grade 5 from Croydon West Primary School, with their teacher Mr. Chandler. The school newsletter of March '68 said - "we could not wish for better guests." This same newsletter also advised the readers

about the Advisory Council and its role. It said - "it is charged with the maintenance and welfare of the school buildings and grounds it also controls and coordinates all fund raising matters such as discipline and curriculum and any other matter concerning the internal running of the school are however the responsibility of the Headmaster alone."

A Parent / Teacher evening was held in March, and it was held in three rooms to differing Form level parents. There was a short introductory talk over the public address system to explain the purpose of the meeting, and this was followed by Mr. Kelly discussing 'Business Education' to Year 9 ~~parents~~, Mr. Donnelly discussing 'English' and Mr. Dooley 'Languages' to Year 8 parents, whilst Mr. Smith assisted by Mr. Carr, discussed 'Mathematics' to Year 7 parents. The library was also open, and it was stated by the Librarian Mrs. Tanner, that "parents could gain an idea of the type of material going onto the library shelves, and also the type required." Ringwood City Council gave \$50.00 for the purchase of books. In a May newsletter it was said - "it has been decided that from the point of view of cleanliness, and with a view to preserving clothes, it would be a good idea if the boys wore a special uniform for sport and physical education. This consists a jumper in house colour, football shorts and a pair of sandshoes." For the girls, the sports uniform was seen "to preserve the uniform and above all to keep normal clothing dry." Seating around the school was important, and after working bees it was declared - "there is now ample seating round the school, and a girls area has been declared"! Headmaster Frank Russell was obviously thrilled when he wrote - "it is pleasing to notice that the initiative on this occasion has

been taken by people not already involved in either Advisory Council or Mothers Club. The more parent interest in the school, the better it will be". He was referring to the P.T.C.A.

During 1968, the second stage of the school buildings commenced, adding to the facilities of the school. The 'oval' still looked like the surface of the moon, and the grounds still were very open, almost treeless, and awaiting greater development. The school in 1968, was nothing like the view we see in 1989. The year concluded, by Frank Russell announcing his departure for another school, and the appointment of the Deputy Principal of University High School, Mr. Harry Fletcher, to the Principal's position at Croydon West.

As 1969 arrived, along with the new Principal, little did the school community realise the number of years and major contribution Harry Fletcher would give to the life and development of Croydon West High School, soon to become Maroondah. The school's new name is his story, and in Mr. Fletcher's article, found in this publication, you can read with interest, how it came about. Over the years, parents, teachers and students saw Harry Fletcher in many ways. In school newsletters and magazines he was good subject for cartoons. Harry had a very good sense of humour, and many students will remember his theatre and sense of fun when Ellie Puller opened Pioneer Place at the school. He was a man of no nonsense and firm discipline, and was widely admired in education circles. Such was the man Croydon West interviewed in February 1969, not yet realising the quality of the person they were receiving, and who was about to lead them.

In 1969, the school population reached 442, and listed

were two new staff, whose names were to become very familiar to thousands of students - Mrs. Kira Siedenicks and Mrs. Eva Buchanan. Mrs. Siedenicks taught maths - and very well indeed, and certainly no student failed to obey & listen to her words. Mrs. Buchanan taught Science, and later Education for Living, but to the school her great love was the grounds & garden development. You can read about this in this publication, and what's more in Mrs. Buchanan's own words. Both were ladies of great generosity and purpose, who enriched and enlivened the school. No student could fail to notice these ladies.

1969 was the first year of our Year 11 (Form 5) students. It was called the Leaving Certificate year, and at the end of it those wishing to do Year 12 or Form 6, had to move to another school. Our resources were limited, and it was not until 1972, that our first Year 12 class commenced. Our cleaning staff totalled four - Mr. & Mrs. King, Mr. Wright and Mrs. Lynch. The canteen was still managed by Mrs. Asquith, helped by Mrs. Bartling and Mrs. Matthews, whilst Mrs. Lloyd still coordinated Religious Instruction. Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Johnstone led the Mothers Club, whilst Mr. Matthews led the P.T.C.A. The Advisory Council had a new leader in Mr. Daniel, following the foundation President Mr. Robinson. In April, the second stage of the buildings were completed and handed over to the school.

In Mr. Fletcher's first report at Speech Night, held in the Croydon High School Hall, he made the following remarks - "I wish to make a plea to all parents to encourage & possibly insist that all students remain at school, at least until the end of Form 4 (Year 10). I have been most ~~surprised~~ ^{surprised} recently to find a number of girls in particular, who leave school on reaching 15, in their eagerness to start work,

usually at a job that will give little personal satisfaction or opportunity for advancement." Things have certainly changed since 1969. Back then jobs were plentiful, and one could almost automatically have entry to their chosen job or profession. Careers advisors did not exist in schools, and in the community at large, their very limited presence was hardly considered or even noticed. In the schools many subjects were available only to certain sexes - boys took Mechanical Drawing, Woodwork and Metalwork, whilst the girls satisfied themselves with Cooking, Needlecraft and Typing. Many students left at the Year 10 level. Yes, things have changed!

Mr. Fletcher also said at the Speech Night, as a challenge to all students - "I ask all students to look back over the year and recognize the fact that development and achievement has been made by all in one way or another, and as others come forward to receive their awards, think to yourself that you too, tonight are commemorating another very important year in your lives."

So concluded five years of the Croydon West High School. Much had been achieved - much still had to be done - under the leadership of the new Principal much was done.