

SAM

RINGWOOD STATE SCHOOL

Ringwood State School No. 2997 was opened in 1889 on the corner of Ringwood Street and Maroondah Highway. It was built on this site after careful consideration of three possible positions and in effect replaced the schools already in existence in Ringwood No. 1451 and Nunawading North No. 2242. It was close to the railway station and considered a prime position because of the Land Boom of the 1880's, which saw Ringwood's development and population escalate. The pupil records of the school indicate a fairly unsettled population up until the 1910's and school numbers fluctuated. Teachers left valuable historical records in these pupil's details and I have been able to historically investigate Ringwood as well as the school. It gave me a good indication of the type of society, occupations and work available, the system of education, including pupil teacher reports and inspector reports. Ringwood State School continued on this site for thirty-three years until it was relocated to its present site in Greenwood Avenue in 1922.

Nunawading North School No. 2242 was opened on 6 February, 1880, on Whitehorse Road, and Heatherdale Roads, Ringwood. The department decided that

'on the opening of the new building at Mitcham, School No. 2242 will be closed'. *1

It was a crowded school and closed on 29th November, 1889.

This building, school and residence is now combined as the present teacher's residence close to the post office and railway station and abutting on Ringwood Street. *2

*1 Vision and Realisation -

*2 Document in Public Record Office - no date/name, etc.

BY JANINE RATTRAY

Ringwood School No. 2997 opened on 2nd December, 1889, with the staff and students of No. 2242; Mr. Sweeney the Head Teacher, Mary Nevan the First Assistant and Catherine Brown the Pupil Teacher with approximately seventy children. *3

School No. 1451 was in East Ringwood, it opened on 10th September, 1874.

Under the amalgamation scheme, an economy measure during the depression, seventy-two pupils of the school had to attend Ringwood State School No. 2997 with Cass as an assistant to Head Teacher John Sweeney, while the infant classes attended a leased hall near The Club Hotel. This annexe closed in 1894. *4

This occurred from 1st August, 1893. Staff and students were transferred from the Third Grade and up. First, second Grades were in the Hall. In the Public Record Office documents, details of economic measures were very relevant to this decision:

1893 School No. 1451	58 pupils
(May) School No. 2997	81 pupils

Estimated cost when combined for teachers under new act ... £540.6.6.

Present cost of both schools ... £714.14.6. *5

When 2997 opened in 1889 loss of the students transferred from 1451 even though it remained open, suggesting that most of the population in 1889 were living closer to the railway station school site. *6 The school at East Ringwood was closed in the amalgamation of 1893 and moved to The Basin.

There was apparently much difference of opinion over the site to be chosen for State School No. 2997. It was to be allocated one of approximately three possible sites, although Vision and Realisation says five sites were considered. From the evidence available most people concerned maintained that the school should be centrally located in Whitehorse Road, Ringwood. The sites referred to as A, B, and C were A on the North East corner of Dublin Road and Maroondah Highway, B west from Mount Dandenong Road, and C on the North East corner of Ringwood Street and Maroondah Highway. On 19th June, 1888 a correspondent

*3 Document in Public Record Office.

*4 Vision and Realisation, 2997 paragraph.

*5 Public Record Office details - 1893

*6 Pupil records, information 1889.

of the Education Department wanted the school 'in close proximity to the railway station' *7 On 8th June, 1888, two resolutions were sent to the Education Department. These were as follows:

First Resolution

'We consider its close proximity to Hotel would have a demoralizing effect on the children attending the same and further while the proposed site would benefit the few the majority would be placed at great disadvantage.'

Second Resolution

'We the residents and parents of children attending the school would suggest that the new school site be chosen on or near the junction of Anderson's Creek, Whitehorse and Fern Tree Gully Roads, which we consider would have the effect of benefiting the greater number of families inherited.' *8

In the Public Record Office correspondence, a letter dated 21st November, 1888, has been preserved. It is from G. Irishholm, Toorak. He says:

'.... I have unhesitatingly given my approval in favour of site B. It stands well in the centre of the living population, is convenient of access and in all aspects suitable although population in the individual weighmarked site C is not yet very dense it must span the community of the Railway Station continually in use Site C should accommodate in the first instance one hundred children (nearly fifty will come from North Nunawading, and as forty are just now accumulating in the rented Ringwood Hall it should be designed for enlargement up to two hundred.' *9

Inspector Gamble supported the site near the Railway Station as did the Lillydale Board of Advise, although they didn't originally. On 8th September, 1888, Gamble wrote:

'I am persuaded that it will be advisable to adhere to the site I originally recommended near the intersection of the main roads. Present and future population would be fairly well provided for so far as School requirements are concerned. It is a significant fact that the various churches, halls and C. are in the immediate neighborhood of the site I proposed for the central school. If the new school be erected near the Railway Station another new school will be urgently needed somewhere near the 18th mile post on the main road.'

In a letter dated 1st March, 1889, to G.W. Brown, Esq., from G.V. White correspondent stated:

*7 Public Record Office.

*8 Public Record Office.

*9 Public Record Office.

'I am still of the opinion that the site near the railway station is the best available. In all probability some of the members of the Board will meet you and can give expression to this opinion.' *10

A portion of the land near the railway station which was owned by G.W. Bruce of the Ringwood township Estate, had been offered by Grant Brothers of Port Melbourne for £100. Deputations and petitions were sent to the Minister, complaining about the site for the school. Four petitions in the building file dated 1st July, 1889, were against the location of 2997 because:

1. 2242 was closed and 5/6 of their children and those in Ringwood attended there.
2. It (2242) was within a mile of 2997.
3. Mitcham school was kept operating even though it was within a mile of 2997.
4. Not happy with the instruction of the people. *11

Inspector Brown decided a new school should be built on site C mainly because he believed it was where the population would increase more rapidly due to the railway station.

The Transfer of Land Statute took place on 23rd July, 1889, and a letter dated 29th July, 1889, stated that:

'a contract has been let for the erection of a school room on a site near the railway station, accommodation 50' x 20' brick. Date for completion 25th November, 1889.' *13

The Railway in the latter part of the 1880's was continued from Box Hill to Lilydale. The centre of population seemed to be nearer the railway station and pupils at the East Ringwood School dwindled as No. 2997 increased. On the 5th February, 1889, the Victorian Railways wrote a letter to the Secretary for Education to inform him that another railway station would be built about 1 mile from Ringwood Station this being the present Heatherdale Station. *12 This decision may have effected the decision to put 2997 near the station which was becoming increasingly important for the community.

* 10. Public Record Office.

* 11. Public Record Office.

* 12. Public Record Office.

* 13. Public Record Office.

After the collapse of the landboom much of the forfeited land could be bought cheaply and many people citywards bought holdings and although working in towards Melbourne, cleared their lands and made comfortable homes. This influx was a turning point in Ringwood's development. In a memo dated 12th December, 1888, a person wrote:

'the requirements of the district for school accommodation are continually growing in this place by the arrival of fresh families.' *14

The population dramatically increased as Ringwood developed more and more.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	
1882	448	
1908	700	
1918	1800	
1924	2000	* 15

School No. 2997 was opened officially in December, 1889 but in August, 1889, when the construction was advanced sufficiently, a foundation stone was laid. It took place before a crowd estimated at four hundred. The children were arranged in rows around the stone which read:

THIS FOUNDATION STONE
WAS LAID BY
MRS. J.K. TURNBULL
ON 15 AUGUST 1889 *16

The school was built on approximately three quarters of an acre, costing the department £100. It was to be a brick building 50' x 20' capable of holding 75-100 pupils. A memo dated 28th July, 1890, detailing the purchase of the adjoining allotment for the Head Teacher's Residence for £107.18.6. *17 On 29th January, 1892:

'contract has been let for the removal of 2242 building and conversion into a residence accommodation 5 rooms, wood.' *18

'The infant grades were accommodated in a gallery, later removed when alterations and addition converted the school into a three classroom building.' *19

*14 Public Record Office.

*15 Ringwood: Short notes on its development.

*16 Ringwood: Short notes on its development.

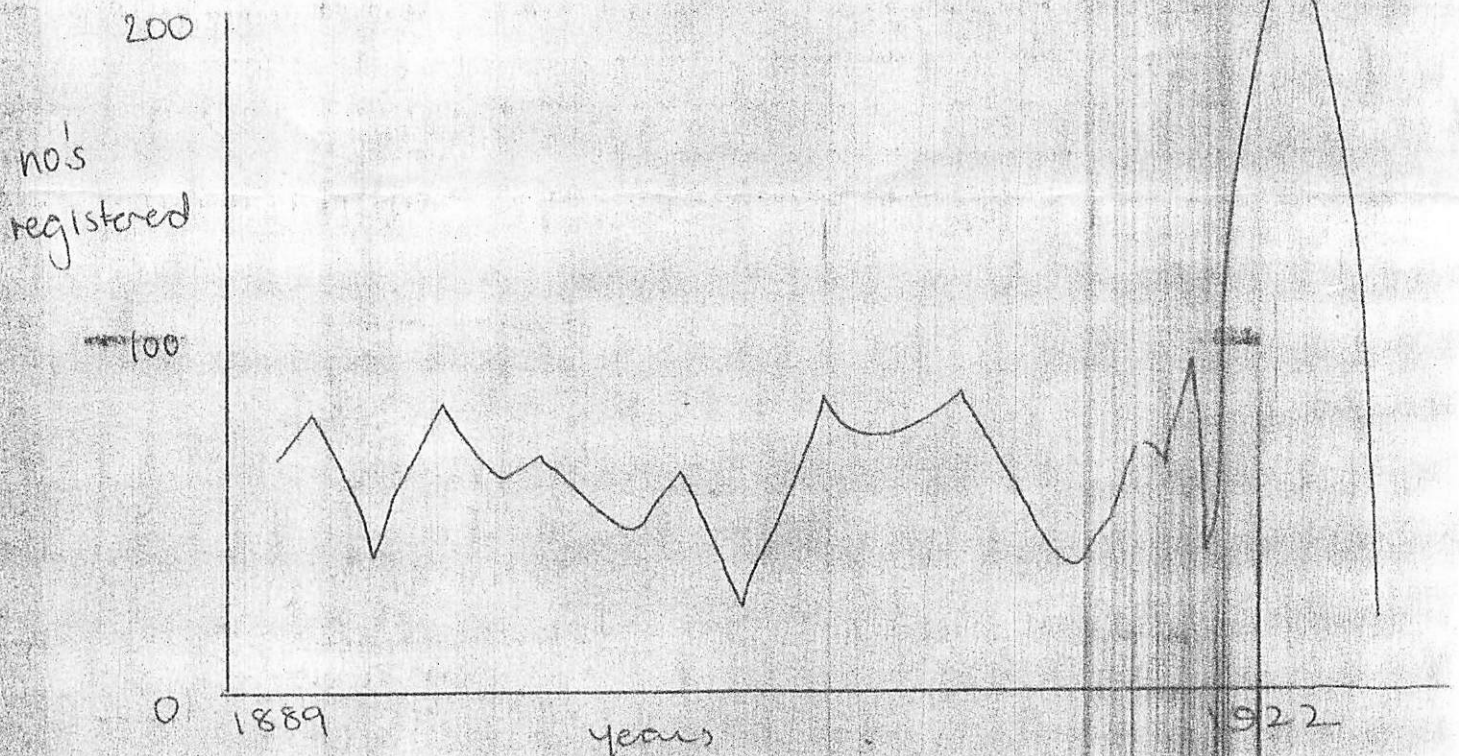
*17 Public Record Office.

*18 Public Record Office.

*19 Vision and Realisation.

My Grandfather attended Ringwood School from 1911-1919 and told me it was made from normal sized bricks, had 2 or 3 different sections, approximately four rooms with doors separating the individual classes. Toilets were outside as well as an old shed and woodshed in the yard. When it was wet they would shelter in here and often have lunch in amongst the dirt and dust. He remembers the grounds being fairly small so they used to play cricket and football in the McLellan's paddock nearby. *20 My Grandmother attended Ringwood School from 1914-1921 and remembers the school building being brick in the front and weatherboard at the back; she says there was one big room with two classes in the one room, and three classrooms in the brick section. The wooden building was an extension made before she attended. She remembers it still being overcrowded. In the grounds she clearly remembers a row of white ghost gum trees at the back of the school yard. *21

graph of pupils registered at
school 2997 1889 - 1922



* 20 J.J. Pratt - 3rd September, 1988.

* 21 G. Lindsay - 3rd September, 1988.

From the graph it can be observed that there were wide disparity with registered numbers for these years. There is really no pattern at all to it, some years being low, others high. Considering the figures we can assume there was a very active population movement because some years had more and less than others. There would also be wide disparity in the numbers in each grade because the pupil records showed that these figures did not only reflect Grade 1. There were students entering of all ages and at different standards, some entered for example at eleven years old and were placed in Grade 2 or 3. Others were put higher than the normal age group because they were brighter than average. The records showed a great deal about student and collectively the community in general. The pupil record books dated back to 1880 (when it was Mr. Sweeney's school at North Nunawading), in the early records the teacher wrote in very curly writing the students name, date of birth, their age on admittance, the grade they were in (1-8), the number of meetings attended (per term) address (suburb), occupation of parent and school last attended if applicable, e.g., a record appeared as such:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Parent/Guardian</u>	<u>Address</u>
Jane McDonell	P. John McDonell	Ringwood
<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Previous School</u>	<u>Age on Admittance</u>
Line Repairer	St. Mary's St. Kilda	7 yrs. 10 months
<u>Date Admitted</u>		
January, 1883.		

In the early 1880's many of the students registered were five or six years old and had been to no other school but there were also many from inner city schools previously such as Christian Brothers, St. Kilda, St. Mary's, Central, (Melbourne) and Collingwood.

Their parents had probably moved out to Ringwood for employment which became more available after the railway extension. Many pupils in the early years of 1897 came from Mr. Cass' school 1451 in East Ringwood. Obviously 1897 was closer to these families houses. Even in the latter 1880's there was still lots of population movement in Ringwood, as students at the school most often had been taught elsewhere, for example, at schools such as Doncaster, South Melbourne, Bushy Creek and Spotsby,

this suggests that Ringwood was a new area because most pupils were starting at Ringwood from previous schools. It was referred to in the pupil records as Ringwood Railway Station School, many of the students coming from Ringwood but also from surrounding suburbs, such as Mitcham, Warrandyte and Fern Tree Gully, these areas being a long distance suggested that there were not many schools in the area, therefore a wide zone and catchment area. In the records there are very few students who had sat for their Merit Certificate, if they had they would have the date they sat written down, usually in Grade 8 when they were thirteen or fourteen, depending on their intellectual ability. Most students had no such record and most had not reached Grade 8 at all. This could be due to the movement of the population but also because in this era more children had to go out to work early to support the family financially and also because there was very little hope of furthering their education. In the 1890's the records showed that nearly all of the children enrolling lived in Ringwood, no longer did they come from Mitcham, Warrandyte, Nunawading, etc. This seemed to suggest that more schools had been built in the area to meet the population demands and also that Ringwood was a more settled community with more children being born there than before, lots of the students still came from inner city areas and an interesting and unusual record was this one:-

Rosa Beggs, lives in Ringwood, father's occupation a Gentleman, came from Port Melbourne Ladies School, Admitted June, 1897.

This evidence supports to some extent the theory that many affluent people were buying cheap land in the suburbs after the collapse of the land boom.

In the early 1900's very few students were staying on to complete the eight grades or get a certificate.

In the 1910's and 1920's there appeared to be more children going on to High School than ever before, the records had stated if possible where the child was going; for example most children were leaving to work whilst others were leaving for High School such as South Melbourne. The records of the 1920's show a very movable population. On average the children were only staying at 2997 for one or two years, some left the area, others went to High School, other schools or left to work.

The early pupil records of 2997 show that a large proportion of the students' parents worked at the Brickworks. It appeared that this was a major industry because it was attracting people from all parts of Victoria. There were also many miners in Ringwood and this was due to Ringwood being a large centre for Antimony mining. Antimony had been discovered in 1869 and mining continued till approximately 1895. There had also been Quartz and Gold Mining around Ringwood in 1870's. *22 According to Hugh Anderson:

'the second and perhaps less important 'earth' industry in Ringwood was the manufacture of bricks and tiles ... the first commercial brick-making concern in Ringwood began operating in 1884, that many more flourished during the decade, and that they all died when the building and land boom burst in the early 1890's ' *23

When the antimony mines of East Ringwood gave out in the 1890's many of the miners were employed in the brick kilns in the vicinity. The school records definitely reflected this trend as miners were decreasing and brick workers were plentiful until the 1890's when 'new' occupations were replacing the brick workers. In the later 1890's there seemed to have been an increase in service/trade industry with occupations such as carpenters, shoemaker, railway guard, police constable, gas engineer and market gardener. Domestic duties were also very common in the latter 1890's many were single mothers. These service type industries tend to reflect the nature of the community as we assume that Ringwood had become more developed and settled with a much larger population requiring these services. In the 1900's there appears to be the beginnings of Ringwood's major industry orchardists, fruit pickers and fruit growers were becoming the common place occupations of many school childrens parents.

'Almost all industries in the Ringwood area were complementary to rural activities... During the land boom at the beginning of the 1890's, land there was sold for £20 an acre, but within a year or so, came the crash, it was only £6 an acre.' *24

Ringwood school began with three teachers from Nunawading North, who were gradually succeeded but there was usually only about four or five teachers at the most. In the Public Record Office documents there was a salary statement from 1893:

*22 Ringwood, P. 31, Hugh Anderson.

*23 Ringwood, P. 34, Hugh Anderson.

*24 Ringwood, P. 69/70, Hugh Anderson.

Head Teacher	Mr. J. Sweeney	received	£168. 0. 0. per year	
First Assistant	Miss Broadbent	received	£ 83. 4. 0.	
Pupil Teacher	Miss Brown	received	£ 24. 0. 0.	*25

My Grandfather remembered five teachers when he attended. He had the same teacher per grade for the whole year and the Head Teacher lived in the residence whilst the others lived within a 10 mile radius of Ringwood. My Grandmother thought that one teacher probably taught forty children at one time. There was a fairly high retention rate of teachers, for example Mr. Hocking stayed over eighteen years. *26 In the school records there was a report on pupil teachers, they were written about and assessed on various aspects of teaching such as: personality, attitude to work, class control, teaching aptitude, progress in studies and general suitability. *27

The Inspectors Reports reported to the Education Department on various aspects of the School these included grounds, buildings, instruction and discipline. In the 1910's there were very bad reports made on the condition of the building, accommodation and sanitation. An example of an Inspector's comment on 2997.

November 11, 1911.

'remodelling school building and supplying increased accommodation for an a.a. of 150 children necessary. This would be somewhat in excess of present requirements but the metropolitan settlement is working out that way and in less than 10 years that average will probably be reached. At present there are 120 children in a school built for 100 in the old scale.'

Repairs and alterations were made to Ringwood School on numerous occasions; in 1900 renovations were made to the teachers residence. Repairs were made in 1912 to the cost of £1037.0.0. after this memo:

'28 June, 1911, a contract has been let for addition and alterations. Brick. Accommodation 27 x 20 22 x 20 1736 sq. ft. completion date 10 October, 1912. ' *28

It was made in response to the letter from the Secretary of the School Committee urging:

*25 Public Record Office

*26 J.J. & G. Pratt

*27 Education Department, Junior Teachers Record Book.

* Public Record Office

1. that a new school room be provided
2. that new desks be provided
3. removal of the gallery partition
4. that a lavatory and hat racks be provided
5. the renovation of the interior of the school. *28

Repairs to the teachers residence were also made in 1915 as were seats and seesaws in the school.

From its beginning Ringwood School's junior grades had been accommodated in the gallery; in 1896 the Education Department had received a memo as to the possibility of junior grades being taught in the building of East Ringwood School 1451 now unused. 17th September, 1910, there was still nothing done about the infant gallery as McAlphin in the school board said -

'Urgent need of an infant room out of date gallery still in existence at this school the young children being cramped and overcrowded.' *29

Many controversies plagued the school; in 1910 a major row erupted over the granting of a Slaughter Yard Licence 600-800 yards from the school. An example of the concern it caused the parents :

Letter to Education Department, Melbourne.
June 1st, 1910.

'the proposed site for the slaughter yard will be from 600-800 yards from the local state school and as my children attend this school I feel compelled to ask you to resist the granting of such a license as the smells that will arise from this slaughter yard will be carried in the air right into the school and as even now the school is overcrowded I think it will be unhealthy for my children to sit in this building subject to a close school with its atmosphere spoilt and tainted with slaughter yard smells.

Yours truly,

Arthur Greenwood

*29A

There was no correspondence about the resolution of this issue but the slaughter yard license was issued to my Grandfather's Uncle and he said that he never knew of such a license and the yard was definitely not 600-800 yards from the school, it was about 1-2 miles away. There may have been enough pressure from parents and the community to cause Mr. Pratt to decide not to open the yard near the school.

* 28 Public Record Office.

* 29 Public Record Office.

* 29A Public Record Office.

In 1912 the School Committee requested the use of the Mechanics Institute for classes:

14th June, 1912

'Department is desirous of renting the Mechanics Institute for school purposes during the period the State Building is in the hands of the contractor. The Department is prepared to pay a rental of 30/- a week not more The period of occupation would probably be three months and perhaps longer whilst extensive improvements are being effected to the school building.

Mr. Walker,
Correspondent of the School Committee.

*30

In 1913 there were major problems with the girls closets and there was some concern about the spread of disease and the lack of 'out offices'.
Inspectors Report (in part) 25/5/1913 -

'the pan of the girls' closet was so full that he was unable to put the lid on the pan'

'urgent and serious matter ... especially when there have already been cases of Typhoid and Diphtheria outbreaks reported in the township recently.'

Attendance at the school was very irregular perhaps because Education was not seen as important then as it is now and very few of the students in the Ringwood School wereto go onto further study. For the Inspectors purposes the Head Teacher marked in the pupil records how many meetings each child attended per term, these were very irregular some hardly going at all. Attendance figures:

1907

February	134 on roll	average attendance	112
March	131 on roll	" "	109

1911 average attendance

May	112	September	108
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June	108	October	107
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July	109	November	99
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Accommodation for 100

1914

June Average attendance 150

When my grandparents attended Ringwood School in the 1910's the school was overcrowded. My Grandfather recalls that there were slightly more girls than boys probably because the boys went out to work earlier.

* Public Record Office

The school day started 8.45 and finished 3.30-4.00 p.m. there was 15 minutes morning and afternoon play and one hour for lunch. They started when they were five or six years old and it was compulsory and free. The curriculum he remembers consisted of maths, writing and spelling, history and geography. They went through to Grade 8 and sat their Merit Certificate if they wanted or were good enough at approximately fourteen years old. Not many sat for the Merit, possibly twenty per year. The teacher wrote on a blackboard and the children wrote on their own slates. They bought their own text books usually, history, geography and an atlas. The average leaving age was fourteen although Grandpop left when he was thirteen to work.

My Grandmother remembers learning arithmetic, geography, history, algebra, geometry, writing and spelling. They used ink and writing books after Grade 4. There were no tests but the teacher put you up a grade if he deemed you satisfactory. Nana said she was allowed to go home for lunch in the later grades. She sat her Merit Certificate at twelve years old, because she had skipped one or two grades due to her intellectual ability. She went with three others to sit for her Merit at Auburn School in March, 1921. Before the exam a few of the students were taken one or two nights a week to the teachers house for extra classes; she doesn't know if this was because they were younger than the others sitting the exam or because they were not as bright as the others. She didn't know why she sat in March and at Auburn when they normally sat in December at their school. After getting the Merit she had to stay on as an assistant to the teacher looking after junior grades, until she was fourteen, because she couldn't leave until fourteen years of age and her family couldn't afford to send her elsewhere for higher education. Nana remembers the big bell being rung on Monday Mornings for a school assembly when they would hoist the Flag up and sing 'God Save the King'. The discipline at the school was the cane. It was used quite a lot for children who misbehaved for example, fighting and arguing. Grandpop says the Head Teacher was 'cane happy' and hit kids over the head with it.

The old Ringwood State School remained on the corner of Ringwood Street and Maroondah Highway until 1922 when Headmaster William Ruben transferred his staff and pupils to the new school in Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood. As this was a transfer, the registration number 2997 still applied.

2997 had become overcrowded due to Ringwood's increasing population. The old school site was subdivided and sold in 1924. The new site was about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the south of the Railway Station and opened 27th July, 1922, with a net number of pupils 360. *

Ringwood State School was a school built in the 1880's without much projection into the future, the education department clearly did not feel that Ringwood would develop as big a centre as it became. Over the years many problems arose about its unsuitability for the number attending and this started when it was still relatively new. The junior classes had always been in the gallery, and the Mechanics Institute was rented at one stage. It seems that the site chosen for the school was however suitable as most of the population did live around the station and did so even more in the later years of the 19 Century. Pupil records of the school reflect a lot of the community during different periods of history. Occupations tell us a lot of the nature of the industries and lifestyles in Ringwood, such as the importance of mining, brick and tile works and orchards. The records also tell us a lot about the effect of the Land Boom when in the 1880's and 1890's many previously city dwellers bought land in Ringwood, particularly after the crash in the 1890's when land was very cheap. Many children at the school had moved from elsewhere into Ringwood for employment. As the area got older the settlement reflected in the pupil records as students were increasingly born in Ringwood and 2997 was their first school. The occupations of parents were increasingly related to services for the population such as trades, food production, labouring, baker, butcher, publions, railway and police for example.

Many repairs and alterations were made to the school building because of its unsuitability, it was deemed unsatisfactory in reports of inspectors because of its overcrowded rooms, poor sanitation and ill equiped building. The hours, curriculum, Merit Certificate and discipline were equal to most schools of the day when they were secular, compulsory and free. My Grandparents both went through the school in its most populous era, just before its transfer to

Greenwood Avenue. It still stands in Greenwood Avenue and 1997 celebrates its centenary in 1989, 100 years before it began with approximately seventy children in Ringwood Street, today the numbers at Greenwood Avenue School are declining, there are only pupils and staff. The school records are a great resource for historians as they tell us so much about the people and community of Ringwood who lived before us.

JANINE RATTLEY.