

Visit by Mr. ALF Ryall.

Last Wednesday Mr. Ryall visited Grade Six at Strathfieldsaye Primary School. He talked and answered questions for almost one hour. When he attended the school there was no electricity, and so no lights or fans, and no tap water.

Most children walked to school even though one family didn't even have shoes to wear. Children who owned a bike were very fortunate.

The school consisted of only one classroom which was attached to the Headmaster's residence. Some children, if they lived nearby, or had older brothers or sisters at the school, started when they were 4. Children attended the school up to Year 8. Most children, when they finished Year 8 stopped going to school and either helped at home or found work on a nearby farm. Mr. Ryall was lucky because his parents allowed him to go to Bendigo H.S. He had to ride into Bendigo on his bike along dirt tracks.

Subjects taught at school included Spelling, Geography, History, Arithmetic, Drawing and Reading the 'School Paper'. Children began by writing with pencils on a slate, then to pencils on paper and then nibs and ink from ink wells. The school did not go on excursions and did not have special sports days. The most exciting day was Empire Day. For weeks beforehand the children collected firewood or cut down trees and built a bonfire. At night they.

would light the bonfire and let off fire crackers.

Mr. Ryall liked the Head Master Mr. Crossley very much, even though he was strict. One reason he liked him may have been because Mr Crossley paid the children pocket money every Friday for doing such jobs as, building the fire, cleaning, the blackboard and dusting. Mr. Crossley could afford to pay the children because he had won money in Tatts.

Mr Ryall also talked about the history of the Strathfieldsaye area. Originally there had been a little gold mining and then grape growing, until the grapes were wiped out by a disease. Then fruit growing developed and orchards supplied fruit to the five fruit processing factories in Bendigo. Bendigo apples were famous in overseas countries as far away as England. There were originally 3 hotels in the area and the Post Office was opposite the old Shire Hall. The oval next to the school has been there for over 70 years and the tennis courts were once dirt. There were no junior sport teams and only 1 cricket team.

Mail was delivered to farms by Mr. Alf Pettigrove who would ride into Bendigo Post Office on his bike from Peipers Hill. He would then ride back with the mail, newspapers, etc and deliver all around the Strathfieldsaye area. He delivered in all kinds of weather six days a week. Mr. Ryall said that Mr. Pettigrove did an excellent job.