

**DANDENONG WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**NO. 4217**

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**50TH**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
**1925 - 1975**

*MOTTO*

*ONLY THE BEST*

**Saturday, 22nd November, 1975**

# PROGRAM

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2 p.m.

*COUNCILLOR IAN FOTHERINGHAM  
(EX PUPIL No. 92)*

*WELCOME OF OFFICIAL GUESTS*

*INTRODUCTION OF MAYOR OF DANDENONG  
COUNCILLOR M. JARVIS*

*OFFICIAL OPENING OF CELEBRATION  
BY Mr. MAX OLDMEADOW, M.H.R.  
(EX PUPIL No. 874)*

3.30 p.m.

*OFFICIAL OPENING OF SCHOOL LIBRARY  
BY Mr. B. F. O'NEILL, DISTRICT INSPECTOR*

*AFTERNOON TEA WILL BE SERVED BY  
THE MOTHERS' CLUB FOR MINIMUM CHARGE*

5.30 p.m.

*PROCEED TO DANDENONG SHOW GROUNDS  
GREAVES RESERVE, FOR BARB. B Q*

## PREFACE

*THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK DEPICTS THE  
HISTORY OF THE DANDENONG WEST PRIMARY  
SCHOOL No. 4217 OVER A PERIOD OF 50 YEARS,  
1925-1975.*

*I WOULD EXPRESS AN APPRECIATION TO THE  
COMMITTEE'S HISTORIAN, Mr. HAROLD VINES FOR  
HIS EFFORTS COMPILING THE PAST HISTORY OF  
THE SCHOOL.*

*IAN A. FOTHERINGHAM,  
CHAIRMAN,  
ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE*

# Dandenong West Primary School

No. 4217

## TWO LADIES BEGIN IT ALL!

In the year 1923, two ladies, namely, Mrs. Downey and Mrs. Hugh Murray (wife of the founder of Hugh Murray & Son), took the initiative in starting a movement for a new school in the West of Dandenong. At that time there was an organisation known as the Dandenong Improvement Association, with Mr. E. C. Butler as President, Mr. A. Branston as Secretary, and another well-known member was Mr. W. F. Roulston, prop. of "Dandenong Journal", all who gave their support in preparing a case to put to the then Minister of Public Instruction, Sir Alexander Peacock.

## SITE PURCHASED

Portion of the present site, consisting of over 2 acres, was purchased for £910 (\$1,820) and eventually a contract was let to Jas. C. Brockey & Sons, of Black Rock, for the sum of £8,900 (\$17,800) to erect an eight class room brick school to accommodate 420 pupils. It is on record that the school was completed 10 weeks ahead of time.

## SCHOOL OPENED IN 1925

The article in a September issue of the "Dandenong Journal" in 1925 tells of the official opening of the school on Wednesday, 26th August, 1925. It was a gala occasion — a public half holiday was declared within the Shire of Dandenong and the records show that it was the largest crowd seen in Dandenong (excepting Dandenong Show Day). What a fun day for the youngsters — Punch and Judy Show, Merry Go Round, Ocean Wave, children's sports, and the big marquee where that band of 24 ladies were preparing luncheon from 9 a.m. for an expected 1,000 visitors.

The Victorian Government was represented by Sir Alexander Peacock, Minister of Public Instruction; Mr. F. Groves, M.L.A. and Mr. Cotter, M.L.A. The foundation stone was laid by Mr. Frank Groves, M.L.A., who was presented with the silver trowel with which he had laid the stone.

Mr. A. Branston, secretary of Dandenong Improvement Association, unfurled the Union Jack, while a presentation of a gold key was made to Sir Alexander Peacock to open the new building.

The infant room was the venue for afternoon tea for the official guests. The toast to the visitors was proposed by Cr. W. B. Tharle and supported by Rev. F. E. Lewin and Mr. A. Branston. As far as the records show this concluded the official function, but outside in the school ground children of all ages were enjoying the sports, entertainment, sweets, etc.

## STARTED WITH 229 PUPILS

On the day school opened, a total of 229 students were enrolled; 180 transferred from Dandenong S.S. 1403, 24 from Noble Park and 7 youngsters attending for the first time on that day. (Later in this booklet we will trace the growth of the school, both in classrooms and pupils).

## JAMES HILLARD WAS FIRST "HEAD"

The first head teacher was Mr. James Hillard who was promoted from the position of head teacher of Noble Park. At the time of his appointment little did he realize the difficulties that were ahead — a school in an area that had many acres of land yet to be built on, unmade roads, Jones Road from the highway to Railway Bridge, Birdwood Avenue and Hemming Street from Potter Street, but undaunted by this with the West Progress Association he collected money with which eventually, on £1 for £1 basis from the Government, gravel was procured and working bees held to form, first, roads in Birdwood Avenue and Jones Road. Then came the depression and funds needed for school improvements were no longer available, but undaunted and with the loyal support of teachers, committee and Mothers' Club, the school progressed slowly. It was during this period that school attendance rose to 390 students and by the time of Mr. Hillard being transferred from Dandenong West, the numbers had fallen to 300.

Many of us who were privileged to be students under his care and guidance are ever thankful for his friendship, moral training to help us to become good citizens.

## ORIGINAL STAFF

From the appropriate staffing book at Teachers Branch, and from the personal records of the teachers listed below, we have established that the following were on the original staff of the Dandenong West Primary School No. 4217:

James Hillard	H.T.	20.9.25	to	24.7.34
Ellen E. Williams	Asst.	20.9.25	to	15.2.26
Lucy L. Head	Asst.	20.9.25	to	24.12.27
Ann S. J. McCord	J.T.	20.9.25	to	19.2.27
Teresa Morgan	J.T.	20.9.25	to	1.5.26
Leopold J. V. L. Steen	J.T.	20.9.25	to	4.7.26
Florence E. Wallace	J.T.	20.9.25	to	23.5.31

## MORE CLASSROOMS ADDED

After Mr. Hillard transferred on 24th July, 1937, there were eight head teachers appointed within the next 15 years. In 1949, 2 portable classrooms were added, then in 1963 a further 2 classrooms were added.

Towards the end of 1954, Mr. Ron Macdonald was appointed head master. He took up his appointment at the commencement of the school year in 1955. Before that he had been at the Bendigo Teachers' College. At the time of his appointment, I doubt if Mr. Macdonald could have envisaged the challenge that he was to face over the next few years. He came to a school with 569 pupils, 12 classrooms; also grade V and VI from Dandenong North were attending Dandenong West. In 1956 one additional classroom was opened and in spite of a transfer of 71 children to the new Harrisfield School, numbers kept growing. In 1957, attendance soared to 609, with some infant grades being accommodated at St. Luke's Hall. Two more classrooms were added in 1958. By this time the attendance reached 673 in 15 classrooms. September 1958 saw the transfer of 73 pupils to Yarraman Park, which gave temporary relief. At this stage 20 pupils were accommodated in a corridor. The school attendance was still growing and, by February 1966, 2 more classrooms were opened — the enrolment being 637. The school attendance kept growing and reached a peak of 771 in 1968 and, at the beginning of the school year in 1969, there was a total of 23 classrooms.

## OPPORTUNITY GRADE STARTED

It was during the early part of Mr. Macdonald's span that an opportunity grade was commenced at Dandenong West. Many of the pupils of that grade went on to secondary schools, or were able to be apprenticed to trades. In 1965 the opportunity grade was transferred to Yarraman Park.

In 1961 the school was raised to the classification of a special class with Mr. Macdonald receiving promotion to remain in charge of the school.

## TRAINING SCHOOL STATUS GRANTED

Dandenong West was proclaimed a training school for students of Frankston Teachers' College in 1962, and in the same year received the highest classification for a Primary School in the Victorian Education Department, as a special class training school.

## Mr. RON MACDONALD RETIRES AFTER 14 YEARS

Mr. Macdonald had been in poor health for some time and in March 1969 he retired on this account.

In 1970 Mr. T. C. Chellew took up the appointment as head master — a position he held until 1973. It was during this period that more pupils were transferred to the new school, Chandler Park. As will be seen by the figures in 1970, the enrolment was then 724, but in 1973 it dropped to 626.

In 1974 Mr. W. F. Maher took up his position as head master with an enrolment of 584 students.

## 550 PUPILS TODAY

This brings us to the 50th anniversary year and the appointment of Mr. D. Culph. There are 550 pupils enrolled. As very often happens with a school of this age there is a large amount of repair and maintenance required. Recently we had read in the local papers, the "Dandenong Journal" and "The News", of the very bad state of repair of the main school, and fences around the oval, but according to present reports this work is to be done within the next few weeks.

## **LIBRARY OPENING IN NOVEMBER**

We will all have the opportunity of seeing the official opening of the library on Saturday, 22nd November. On reading back through minutes of the School Committee, this has been mooted since the early days of the school.

## **FINE SPORTING RECORD**

In the first 50 years, students were encouraged to take up other than the academic subjects. Dandenong West was always to the forefront in athletics, football, basketball, cricket, swimming and, later, softball. (Dandenong West was the starting point for the formation of the Dandenong Softball Association). On reading through the old records we find Dandenong West won the first contest for Primary Schools choirs at the Dandenong Festival in 1957. 1952 saw the commencement of the school magazine "West Wind," and it continued with an unbroken publication for many years.

## **SCHOOL MOTTO HAS BUILT A TRADITION**

The school motto "Only the Best" has been applied to all facets of school life, and the school, through the staff, has developed a tradition for all to live up to this motto.

The staff, from the day the school opened, up to the present day, has endeavoured to teach not only the classroom subjects, but, initiative, competition, honesty, integrity and loyalty — the results are shown over the passing years by the many, varied and often important positions Ex Students have achieved. We see many of our ex students too, assisting in Community Service Organisations.

## **"LEST WE FORGET"**

We remember with reverence today those of our fellow ex students who paid the supreme sacrifice in service to their country.

## **FIRST SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Dandenong West has been fortunate in having many parents who were always willing to assist with school activities, such as Mothers' Club, School Committee, working bees, etc., and we note firstly from the School Committee minute books the first committee was elected and commenced on 17th February, 1926 — Mr. A. Toyne (chairman), Mr. E. C. Butler (secretary), Mr. E. Cashmore, Mr. W. B. Tharle and Mesdames McPherson, Jennings and Wangman. A few extracts from the minutes worth noting:

- Feb. 1926 Neighbouring people be allowed to get domestic water from school.
- Mar. 1926 Tenders received for erection of Shelter Sheds. Mr. W. Brown's tender for £141/15/- accepted.
- July 1926 Council to put down footpath, Birdwood Avenue from Potter Street to school.
- Nov. 1926 Application for electricity for school.
- July 1927 Dandenong West Station league be granted use of room for monthly meeting. Fee: 2/- per meeting.
- June 1931 West Dandenong Athletic Club granted use of room for meeting.
- Feb. 1932 Committee applied for loan of £2 for 3 months from Picnic Committee on individual guarantee.

August 1932 saw the commencement of the envelope system of monthly voluntary contributions which continued right up to 1973. Nowadays it is a yearly donation.

## **LEADING ROLE FOR MOTHERS' CLUB**

The Mothers' Club, right from the opening day, has played a leading part in the advancement of the school. On opening day they were that band of 24 ladies who prepared food and drinks for that multitude of people; and right through the passing years, they have provided playground equipment, books for the library, teaching aids, projectors, sporting equipment, etc. What a magnificent record the ladies have over all these years! Now for a few extracts from the Club's minutes:

1932 45 financial members 1/- per year

1933 30 " " " " "

1934 27 " " " " "

April 1931 Children to be entertained at Boomerang Theatre Empire Day.

July 1932 Euchre parties to be held in Memorial Hall.

Dec. 1932 Funds low — could only donate £1 towards prizes

but, as always, the Mothers' Club, whilst a most energetic body, had to work under direction of School Committee as far as monies raised were concerned.

It should be stated clearly that Dandenong West, even in the lean years of the depression, was fortunate to have had a hard working Mothers' Club providing the monies that were necessary, and a School Committee ever alert to use up all Departmental subsidies. This has been the story all through the years and is still the same today. So, too, the support from the parents — this was demonstrated in 1974 when a walkathon was organised, raising some \$1,800.

### NOT ONLY THE 3 R's

The school over the years has become more than a place of "the 3 R's". We have seen the following groups formed in that red brick building:

- Dandenong West Station League
- Dandenong West Progress Association
- Dandenong West Football Club
- Dandenong West Cricket Club
- Dandenong West Athletic Club

Dandenong West has been fortunate in the assistance given by the various State Parliamentarians of the day — Mr. Frank Groves, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Ray Wiltshire, Mr. Len Reid and Mr. Alan Lind. To all these gentlemen, on behalf of Staff, Parents and Pupils, we say a big "thank you."

### DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS

YEAR	H.T.	CLASSROOMS	PUPILS
1925-37	J. Hillard	8	1925, 229; 1926, 300; 1927, 350; 1928, 361; 1929, 370; 1930, 390; 1932, 380; 1937, 300.
1937-39	S. Little	8	} During these years the attendance did not fluctuate greatly.
1939-40	R. Miles	8	
1941-43	G. Doubleday	8	
1943-45	A. Forsyth	8	
1945-46	A. Jack	8	
1947-49	L. Smith	8	1947, 300; 1948, 375.
1949-50	L. Thomson	10	1949, 400; 1950, 455.
1951-54	J. Keddie	12	1951, 570; 1952, 734; 1953, 569; 1954, 552.
1954-69	R. Macdonald	22	From 1955-1957, 609; 1968, 771; 1969, 731.
1970-73	T. Chellew		1970, 724; 1971, 626; 1972, 574; 1973, 578.
1974	W. Maher		1974, 584.
1975	D. Culph		1975, 550.

### MORE GROWTH AHEAD?

The above figures show the growth years from 1955 to 1970 even though many new schools were opened within the area. There is today every possibility of future growth again, with the large number of flat permits granted within a short distance from the school.

### TO THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE OUR THANKS . . .

In conclusion: On behalf of all those ex pupils who have attended the celebration functions, we thank the Organising Committee for the many hours of their time they have given so freely, to make certain that the 50th Anniversary celebrations would be a great success; to Councillor Ian Fotheringham who was the instigator, and called the first meeting — thanks Ian for remembering; and to every member of the Committee; there could have been no celebrations without you and your generous support.

### COMMITTEE

President, Ian Fotheringham; Vice-President, Don Murray; Secretary, Margaret Tharle; Treasurer, Jim Waterman; Charlie Cooper, Hugh Cooper, Dave Morris, Harry Lardner, Joe Pyke, Gordon Saunders, Daryl Sutherland, Rodney Palmer, Ron Edwards, Harold Vines, Dave Pillar, Mrs. Reed (Joyce Alexander), Mrs. Morris (Norma Campbell), Mrs. Tucker (Irene Alexander), Mrs. McKinnon (Dorothy Cooper), Mrs. O'Neill (Marg Collier), Mrs. Graham (June Cashmore), Mrs. Goffin (Joan Gardiner), Mrs. Moxham (Beth Whiteman), Mrs. Sutherland, Mrs. Wren (Dorothy Jarvis).

It is the intention of the Committee to donate any surplus monies from the celebration functions to the School, for the purpose of equipment required by present staff and pupils.

## **APPRECIATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**DANDENONG WEST MOTHERS CLUB**

**DANDENONG WEST SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**PRINCIPAL DANDENONG WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
Mr. D. CULPH**

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT**

**DANDENONG HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**DANDENONG JOURNAL**

**THE NEWS**

**DANDENONG CITY COUNCIL, COUNCILLORS AND STAFF**

**Mr. R. MACDONALD (RETIRED PRINCIPAL)**

**Mr. GREG DICKSON**

**ARKANA BUILDING SUPPLIES**

**GRAF-X INTERNATIONAL**

**McDONALD PRINTING WORKS**