

High School Ex-Students Salute 100 Years of History (The First Instalment 1919-1969)

By Gary Matthews, Secretary DHS Ex-Students' Association

OVERVIEW

Following the introduction of free and compulsory education within Victoria, in 1872, **Dandenong's first public school**, taking students to grade 8, or Merit Certificate, soon followed, with Dandenong State School, in Foster St in 1874. The first we hear of anything approaching a *Secondary* School for Dandenong is in 1907, when, according to an item in the *South Bourke & Mornington Journal*, (*SBMJ*) a high-powered Ministerial visit was paid, in company with Dandenong Councillors, to the Police Paddocks, to assess the possibility of establishing an **Agricultural College**. Nothing more was heard of this, but it nevertheless seemed to be still part of the Primary School Committee's thinking, when, four years later, in 1911, they again mention an Agricultural College when applying for their School to be proclaimed as a **Higher Elementary school**. This would have provided for "a four years course of study", including subjects such as Latin, French or German. In this same year, enquiries were made to see if there might be available space at the **Fire Station** to conduct **cookery classes** for the girls. This was agreed, and at the same time, arrangements were put in place to hold **Sloyd**¹ classes for the school's boys at **Dandenong House**. ¹ *Sloyd, a Scandinavian term, applied to wood-working classes for boys.*

Still later, in 1914, the Chief Inspector of Technical Schools was invited to address Shire Councillors and prominent public figures on the "... great advantages brainy boys would receive after a few years training in a technical school." These efforts were thwarted however, following the establishment of Caulfield Technical College in 1915, and Dandenong had to wait until 1954 to have its own Technical School.

PUBLIC MEETINGS & DEPUTATIONS TO MINISTER

Some of the pieces for the establishment of Dandenong's first secondary school were slowly being assembled, notwithstanding the fact that just under 10% of the Nation's total population was engaged in the First World War in Europe. So it was, then, following various public meetings, that in June 1918, a large **Deputation to the Minister** of Education, led by the local MLA, Cr Groves, was again talking in terms of a Higher Elementary School, instancing the fact "that important industries were now established at Dandenong, the **bacon factory, flour mill, and box factory.**" At much the same time, a letter to the Editor of the *SBMJ* reads, in part: "A most essential point to be considered is that, as the school will be attended by scholars from both Gippsland lines, the land chosen should be as near as practicable to the railway station". It appears that the Minister was impressed, because only one month later, we read in the "*Dandenong*

Advertiser" (25 July 1918), under the heading "Dandenong High School , **SITE SELECTED**", that at a meeting of the Shire Council on 21 July 1918, an inspection of likely sites by Education Department officials, resulted in them being "*favourably disposed to the Melbourne Road land*". (on condition that the Council provides the land.) Further in the same article, a Council motion, "that the council undertakes to be responsible for the raising of £1,000, of which £750 will be applied to the purchase of the land and the balance of £250 donated towards the cost of the building" was then agreed.

TEMPORARY PREMISES

As **Tenders** for construction of the school were not invited until late March 1919, temporary premises were therefore needed for the coming school year. This was arranged, and on 10 March 1919, (5 weeks later than planned due to the world-wide pneumonic flu epidemic) the **temporary School**, initially comprising 80 pupils², was officially opened³ by Rev H Buntine in the Rechabites Hall at the corner of Walker and Robinson streets.⁴ The girls were accommodated in the hall, and the boys across the road in space made available in the Fire Station. At an earlier meeting between the interim committee and the **first headmaster**,



Mr Percy Langford, it was stated that "no fees are charged in the case of children under 14 years, but those over 14 will be required to pay £6 per annum. Remission of fees will, however, be granted in deserving cases".

² By 31 March an Inspector's report reveals this number had already grown to 104, no doubt as children recovered from the flu. ³ Being the next closest metropolitan High School east of Melbourne.

⁴ The grounds around the hall were used for impounded horses at night.

It was not until three months later, on 23 June 1919, that we read that at the first meeting of the newly formed **School Council**, (*gazetted 2 months earlier*) that the Melbourne firm of Nixon & Co. was appointed, at a contract price of £5129.6.3, with an agreed additional £900, for construction of the first stage of the High School building. A suggestion for a bell tower, at the School Council meeting in October 1919, was "*left in abeyance*".

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Work on the new building proceeded slowly, due to various industrial disputes, which are not detailed, and it was therefore not until 21 November 1919, that the **foundation stone**, was finally laid by the Minister of Education. A time capsule of coins, medals and historical documents was also "placed in a recess". Wording on the stone included the new School Motto, "Faber Quisque Fortunae", (See details of this below).



Front classrooms under construction, minus the west (left) wing, added a short while later

Although in temporary premises, the School had only two weeks earlier conducted its first **Sports Day**. This was held in hot conditions, (*SBMJ 13 Nov*) on Saturday 8 November, 1919, in the old showgrounds, in Clow St. The 1920 School year began on 3 February, where, with student enrolments now at 155, arrangements were hastily put in place to begin using the Church of Christ Hall on the opposite corner of Robinson and George Sts, so the School now comprised three separate groups, clustered across the three corners of Walker, Robinson and George Sts. Later this same month the School Council announced that arrangements had been made with three Friendly Society Lodges to institute a number of **Scholarships**. Two other matters were also decided: a proposal for a "Swimming Carnival" with the Baths committee in the following month; and agreement reached "not to take any steps ... to secure additions to the High School (*until*) children are in the building".

In the *SBMJ* of 17 June 1920, we read that three months notice to vacate the temporary premises had been given, and "The new school will be completed in a month or so, if the present strike does not again delay operations ". In early September 1920, we note " ...that a strong working committee of ladies has been formed, with Mrs Orgill as Secretary...." (It was Mrs Orgill, who had been such a strong voice in the preceding years at the Primary School, in public meetings and in deputations to the Minister, for the establishment of a High School.) In this same *SBMJ* article, we see that the University has permitted the forthcoming School Intermediate Exam to be held at Dandenong, most likely at the Presbyterian Church Hall. Further, we learn that "....The new building is very

nearly completed. As soon as the Public Works Inspector gives his permission, a move will be made to the new premises. This may be done next week. The official opening will not take place until October."

SCHOOL OFFICIAL OPENING

It was in fact on Monday, 1 November 1920, that this function was carried out by the Director of Education, Mr Frank Tate, CMG, in "beautiful weather", in front of well over 400 people. As part of a lengthy speech by Mr Tate, he "..... rejoiced with the people at the official opening of the Dandenong District High school, which was not only a good thing for the scholars who attended it, but was a good proposition for the business people in the town." In a reference to the emerging "respectability" of State-based higher education, he states "Already we had people from humble surroundings having risen to such positions as to become members of the Supreme Court Bench. The judicial Bench today comprised at least six men who were at one time attending State schools," Those present freely admitted that the new school was already at capacity, and with an expected increase of 50 or so in 1921, an extension would be needed almost immediately.



Official Opening of the partially completed

Notes from Mr Langford state: "In the beginning, the property purchased was covered with stumps and scrub, and had a large dam in the middle. The boys and the male members of the staff grubbed the stumps and filled the dam. We also planted the pine trees on the boundaries". (*A little different from the way things done today eh?*)

Tethering of Ponies: Also in this year of 1921, it is recorded that, following recent tree planting, it would now be necessary to keep ponies tethered in a fenced-off portion of the ground. Mr Hemmings' paddock (opposite) was made available, at a cost of 1/6 per week.

Immediate Additions:

In order to give immediate relief to the cramped conditions, a further upstairs room was added a few months later, with the west two-storey wing added at a cost of £4000 by the end of 1922. As early as 1925 however, overcrowding was soon in evidence. It's worth noting that it was on 17 December 1925, that the then Prime Minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, addressed the annual Speech Night, at the Boomerang (*later Mayfair*) theatre. In the 1927 Annual Report,

published in SBMJ, 22 December, we read that Mr Langford commented about hoped-for extensions."With these additions and the beautification of the Princes Highway, the school will help to provide a worthy entry to a town of which we are all justly proud." It was not until 1929 though, with an enrolment of 415, (*well in excess of capacity, and further admissions being refused*) , that the **final east wing**, including a wood-working room was eventually under construction, and finally occupied in early 1930, at a cost of £4570. So, after nearly 10 years, this at last brought the originally conceived building to **full completion**. It would be another 20 years or so (after World War 2) before further buildings were added. The stresses on the School's capacity can be understood when it's realised that the number of dwellings in Dandenong rose from just 550 in 1920, to around 1100 in 1928.

Mr Langford with the original members of staff



Mr Langford records the following 'sporting gems' from those early days:- "Alec MacKenzie, the Sports Master at Melbourne High, was taking some boys over to Adelaide to play their annual match against the School there, and for practice he wanted to play some of the other

schools, so he got in touch with me (I had known him for a long while; he used to be a League footballer and played for Geelong and I played for University when they were in the League) and asked me if we would have them over at Dandenong to play a game. We agreed, and we thrashed them on our ground. I think Alec had thought it would be just a trial run for them, but we gave them a pretty good hiding, so we journeyed to Melbourne to play them again, and one of our star boys broke his collarbone in the first few minutes, yet we beat them by three points on their rather poor home ground."

"For some of our Gippsland sports meetings we sometimes left between four and five o'clock in the morning. The School was on the Dandenong platform at about four o'clock one morning, and I woke up one man who was sound asleep on the seat of one of the first-class carriages. I said to him: "Look, old man, we've hired this train, it's ours." He made no demur,

and when we got to Sale, which was where we were going for the sports, they introduced me to the M.L.C. who was going to be the head serang at the sports;-the man I had awakened in the train. He had been at an all-night sitting of Parliament and thought to have a nice sleep in the train on the way home. “

The School's colours, of red, light blue and dark blue, were suggested to Mr Langford by an unidentified student, and are based on his 4th Light-Horse Regimental colours.



The School crest was designed by the School's first art teacher, Miss Dorothy McKinnon, and the motto, 'Faber Quisque Fortunae', - 'Each Man is the Architect of His Own Fortune', was one known to early Dandenong identity, and member of the School Council, John Abbott, which he happily provided to Mr Langford.

Other noteworthy developments in this first decade of the new School, include:

- 20/9/1919: Football match at showgrounds between students and School Council (led by Mr Langford, "trained to a mere shadow"). [drawn game, 19 pts each.]
- 18/12/1919: First Speech Night, Boomerang Theatre.
- 1920: House names selected by Senior Mistress, Miss Dora Taylor: *(originally 6, Boronia & Waratah deleted in 1930, at beginning of Gt. Depression)*
- 16/10/1920: Student dramatic production "She Stoops to Conquer", at Town Hall, raises £12 for "purchase of suitable decorations for new School".
- 1921: First six students (5 girls, 1 boy) qualify for the Leaving Certificate;
- 1923: Mr Sims asks permission to place a turnstile opposite his James St shop;
- 15/4/24: First meeting of the Old Pupils Association;
- 9/9/24: 8 palms & 24 cypress trees planted by students;
- 1925: Cookery Inspector. "School visited at 3 pm. The class had all gone home"
- 1926: Four typewriters purchased;
- 8/5/1927: Radio hired to allow students to hear broadcast of opening of first Parliament House in Canberra; (Was relayed to upstairs double rooms)
- 1927: "The Gate" magazine begins, named by Form 2 student, Kathleen Brumley;
- 1928: Melbourne Show Day first selected as 'Reunion Day' for succeeding years, huge day at school, sports, social, continuing until 1:30 am. 'Home Room' for senior class was entrance hall & Headmaster's office.
- 1929: Ex-Student Kitty Bloomfield, first woman in Vic to obtain pilot's licence.

1929: Telephone service connected;

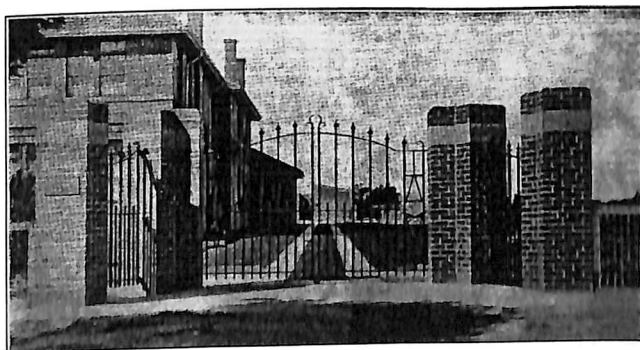
1930: Memorial (Tharle) entrance gates erected; Fourteen country students were boarding in Dandenong.

THE DEPRESSION YEARS

As with preceding years, Mr Langford's Speech Night reports (*in the D'nong Journal*) gave increasing emphasis to charity and thrift. This included the number of depositors in the SSB 'penny bank', the efforts in raising money for Junior Red Cross, and assisting with donations of clothing and funds to babies' homes in Melbourne. In Particular, in his December 1929 address at the Boomerang Theatre, there is mention of the Darling Church of England Babies Home, where: ".... the School adopted a baby and undertook to raise the sum of £15 for the upkeep of the baby during the year".

It was on 24 October of this year however, that the good times of the 1920s began to change dramatically, when, on "Black Thursday", the New York Stock Market (Wall Street) collapsed. This quickly ushered in what was to be the onset of the Great Depression", which was to have a devastating effect throughout the world, and particularly throughout Australia. We will see how this affected life at DHS in the following pages.

Perhaps a foretaste of the straitened times to come is included, when, in this same report, he states "Today there are nearly 40 High Schools, and a larger number of Higher Elementary Schools, each training boys and girls chiefly for a commercial or professional course. Is it not possible that we may be unconsciously, but nevertheless certainly, training too many boys and- girls along certain lines. What is our experience at the present time? Boys and girls are finding it increasingly difficult to start in the occupations they have chosen for themselves." He then goes



1930 additions, 2 further classrooms Sloyd Room & Memorial Gates

on to talk about a plan for the introduction of Vocational Guidance which was to be introduced.

As shown above, the latest extensions to the building were fortunately close to completion at the end of 1929, and this is commented on in 1930, when Mr Langford thanked the "well-known local contractor, Mr Harden", for the

fine results. So impressed was everyone with the work that: "Accordingly £112 was raised at a bazaar to provide lawns, concrete paths and general improvements. In addition, local citizens have helped to provide funds for the Tharle Memorial Gates," The Gardener, "Mr Weedon", was also thanked.

Returning to the theme of his 1929 address, Mr Langford again, in 1930, refers to the need to curb enrolments. "The professor and the artisan, the doctor and the bricklayer, the lawyer and the laborer, [sic] are all equally necessary in a well

balanced community; but the High School is not necessarily the training ground for all."

It was towards the end of his 1930 address, "with the sound of deafening rain on the roof of the Boomerang Theatre", in response to the worsening economic situation, that the Headmaster included a major Departmental announcement concerning Form 6 (now Year 12) students, for the coming year. In part, it stated: "The Leaving Honours candidates may, next year, be concentrated in three large central schools. This will entail considerable travelling (and living away from home) on the part of the senior pupils." This did occur, and was presumably recognition of dwindling student numbers in the senior form, as well as shrinking staffing budgets. It was of special interest to note that the Dandenong Journal, in which the 1930 report was contained, was printed on Christmas Day!

Enrolment numbers continued to fall progressively as the 1930s rolled on.

From a high in 1930 of 470, only three years later this had fallen to 212, a number similar to 10 years earlier! This was a direct reflection of the dire situation economically, which had led, paradoxically, to the need, in 1933, to introduce **annual fees** across all High Schools. With one child, these were: Forms E and F (1 & 2) £3; Form C & D: £9; and Forms A & B £12. Exemptions applied where household income was below £4, "together with 10/ for the second and each successive living child under the age of 14 years, or attending any school." In terms of the average wage of the time, the annual fees represented somewhere between 50% and 200% of a person's **weekly** wage.

We gain a better understanding of the mood with this quote from Mr Langford's



Advert noting difficult times December 1931

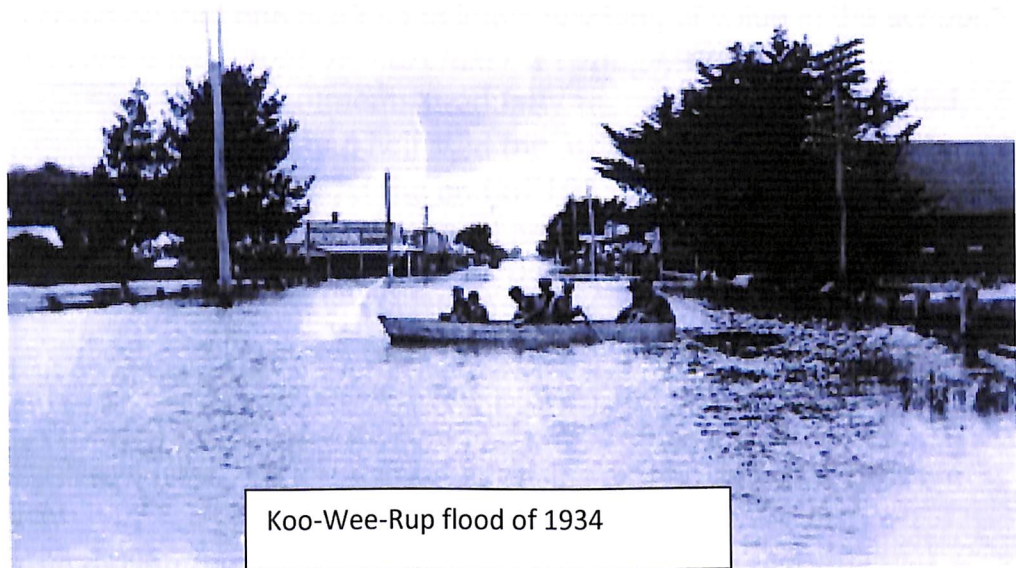
1931 Speech Day* report: "I do not desire to strike a pessimistic note, but we can-not deny the fact that the position is still unsatisfactory. Those boys and girls who left in 1930 in many cases are still unemployed, and those who leave this year will swell the ranks of applicants for positions." * **As an economy**, these events were held at the school for the next several years.

On a brighter note, we read of the usual program of events, (sports, swimming, social, fetes, OPA Ball,

etc) that were continuing. Specifically, "On Saturday evening, 28th May, 1932, the Dandenong High School Old Pupils Association gave a complimentary social to Mr. and Mrs. Langford." It doesn't actually state it in the article, but Mr Langford, had recently married former staff member, Miss Una Wilson, to whom he had been engaged, in the previous year. They were presented with a " .. a set of carvers and a beautiful briquette box ... which Mr Langford ... acknowledged in his usual genial manner."

Enrolments increased by a healthy 88 in 1934, following the introduction of a new (fee free) Arts and Crafts course for girls. A special exhibition of the year's results was held in November, which was attended by the Director of Education. The displays included examples of pottery, leatherwork, dress design, dress making, house-craft, needlework and cookery. This event was held on Wednesday, 28 November, which was just one day before the major - **FLOODS of 1934**, following which the School was to play a key supportive role. An indication of the wide-spread flooding can be gained from this item concerning the Officer district in "The Journal" of 6 December 1934: "During Thursday night and Friday, 8 ½ inches of rain was recorded. The rainfall for November was 12 ½ inches." (ie, 29 November)

An extract of remarks from Mr Langford, in an Ex-Students publication from 1960, reads as follows: "In 1934 one of the severest floods ever experienced



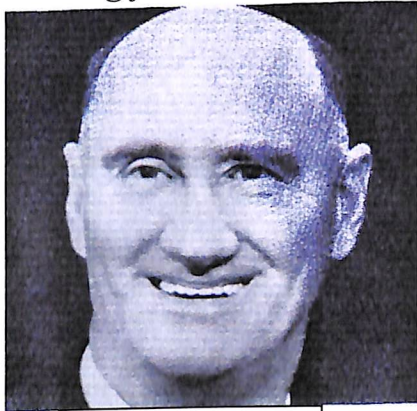
in Gippsland occurred and hundreds of people throughout Kooweerup Swamp were forced to take to the roofs [sic] of the buildings. They were rescued by motor boat, and three train-loads of refugees were brought to Dandenong. The women and children slept in the school classrooms for most of the following week, and the men were accommodated in the Scout Hall. portions of some of the properties were ten to twenty feet under water. In fact, one man told me that after he went back he was riding round his property and found three sheep which had struggled on to the platform of one of his windmills which normally was sixteen feet above the ground." Despite the improvement to student enrolments for 1934, the number still fell below the level of "Class A" status, and as such Mr Langford was sadly required to move.* At his final Speech Day at the School on 19 December, The School Council President, Mr Singleton states " ..Mr Langford ...was ...a huge factor in the prosperity and success of the school he so dearly loved (*Applause*)."

**A move to Mildura was first thought likely in 1927 – Annual Report)*

Mr Langford took up duties at Mildura for two years, before moving to Frankston High School, where he remained until his retirement in 1948. He returned to teach briefly at DHS after retirement, in the early 1950s.

Mr A V G (Albert) JAMES 1935 - 1936

This short two year period, under the guidance of Mr James, coincided with the beginnings of the slow emergence from the Depression years. Mr James was the author of a number of geography text books, used throughout Victorian schools over many decades. He received a Doctorate of Science, shortly after completing his time at DHS. In his Annual report at the end of 1935, he identified a number of items around the school that needed attention. "Probably no school in the State has seating accommodation inferior to that of this school, Already a large sum has been spent by the Department on repairs, and within a few weeks the acute shortage of chairs and tables will be a thing of the past. I consider a caretaker's cottage on the grounds so necessary that there should be a demand from the local authorities for it. Burglaries and petty thefts from the grounds and buildings are so common that one is afraid to leave anything of value in the school." *Nothing further eventuated about the caretaker's cottage, until 1964.*



Mr A V G James

Enrolments gradually increased over the period, and had eclipsed the 300 barrier by the end of 1936. At the end of 1935 Mr James states: "The school is in urgent need of renovations. Most of the outside woodwork has not been touched for 16 years, while the plaster in some rooms is in danger of falling." With the help of the local MLA, Frank Groves' appeals to the Minister, this work was finally put out to Tender about a year later! Mr James also noted that the playing fields become

virtually unusable during the winter months, and it is reported that this was remedied when "sustenance workers achieved splendid results in connection with levelling, drainage and painting."

It was not all doom and gloom during the thirties however. All of the usual sporting competitions flourished, both inter house and inter-School, with occasional longer journeys to places such as Warragul and this one, to Geelong in 1936. "The combined High School sports will be held at Geelong on Friday, October 23. The train will leave Dandenong at 9.8 a.m., and will leave Geelong between 5 and 5.30 p.m. The fares are as follows: Children, 2/6 return; adults, 7/- return."

There was an active social life also, mostly comprising the regular dances at the upstairs "hall". (Mr James introduced the Quadrille on one such occasion) These were organised by the ladies Auxiliary, and raised much-needed funds for small projects in the School. A cautionary is sounded though by the School Council, who were unanimous that "Children not be brought to Social Functions." These functions raised money for the School Improvement fund.

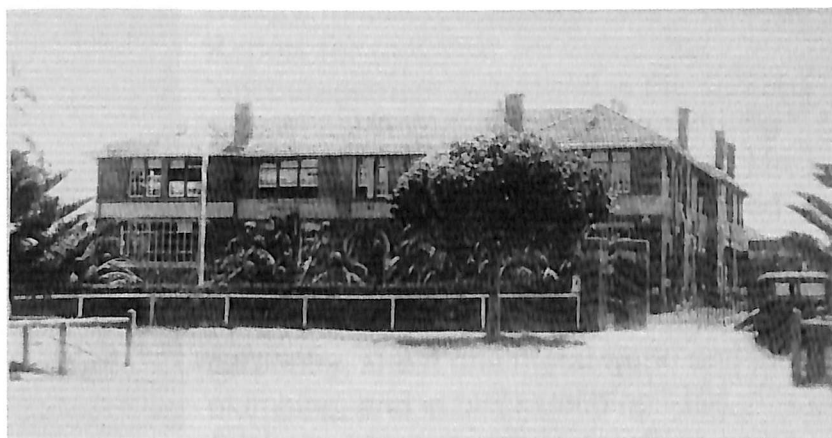
Again on a social note, "High- School old scholars and their many friends assembled at their annual ball, on Wednesday night of last week, (20 November

1936) when their numbers amounted to quite 300, and it was pronounced as the most enjoyable function yet held.- The music was delightful, and every effort had been put forth to assure success, and it was 2 a.m. on Thursday before dancers dispersed,”

Student **social service** was ever-active, despite the privations, and the annual Egg Appeal within the competing Houses of the School for the Alfred Hospital raised 107 dozen in 1935, with just half that amount in the following year. The Junior Red Cross group, as well as other ad-hoc School groups raised money for the needy, as well as for school projects.

During this time there were semi-regular visits to the School by members of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, who performed recitals for the students and members of the public, in the upstairs double rooms. The Pianiste, “Miss Mauricette McGillicuddy will go a long way, for she has brilliant technique and a fine appreciation of the moods of all composers. With an utter absence of anything but sheer love of her work, and a most gracious, and winning personality, she created an atmosphere of pure delight for her listeners.” Another special event, of a quite different type, occurred on 16 November 1936, when world famous Australian cyclist,

Hubert Opperman, visited the School, following which Mr James said “that he was astounded at the wonderful address Mr. Opperman gave, and felt sure from the words that Mr. Opperman had spoken the pupils would obtain a wonderful lot of food for thought.”



1930s Showing completed east wing and Sloyd Room

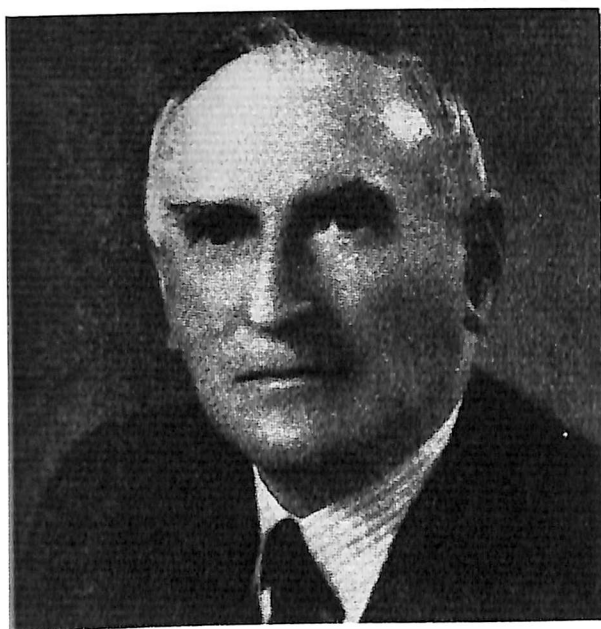
On a separate occasion, Mr James expressed the hope that the School might one day own a wireless set, having to again borrow one for the Armistice Day service. In this same address he included the comment that “Neatness in work and dress, slovenly speech and courteous manners are the concern of both parents and teachers-, and we earnestly ask for their co-operation.”

In the Mid - ‘Terminal’ exam results for 1935, a girl student topped the class in each and every form of the School . This included Edna Dawson in form 4, who went on to gain a scholarship that year, and again topping the form in the following (Leaving) year, and thus 1936 Dux of School.

From its earliest beginnings, the Independent Order of Rechabites (IOR) continued its unwavering support of the School, providing Scholarships for special essay and ‘physiology’ tests, as did other Friendly Societies, as well as the Business School, Hemmingway Robertson, and donations from ex-students.

As in former years, financial assistance was also provided by the School Council to the most needy students, allowing them to continue on to higher forms, which otherwise would not have been possible. It is strongly hinted that the President, Mr Singleton, made many such payments from his own pocket. This subject is included in the *Journal's* reporting of Mr James' final Speech Day of 1936: "Only a head-master, he claimed, who has had confidential interviews with a hundred or more parents can know of the self-denial that families experience in order that some of their children might obtain a good education. I deeply [sic] honor them for it."

Mr J L I GRIFFITHS 1937 – 1952



Mr Griffiths came to Dandenong from the position of Vice-Principal of University High School. This either coincided with, or resulted in, a new energy within the School. In his Annual Report for that year he stated that "encouragement was found in the substantial increase in enrolment during the last year, reaching now to 370."* He was "hopeful that the boys who desired not to follow, the courses at present provided, might be able to undertake a broad cultural training in such subjects as carpentry, sheet and metal work, and in plumbing, and in blacksmithing." He further commented that "....Girls and

boys, ... should not be satisfied with the mere attainment of the Intermediate certificate, but should remain to the end to obtain the Leaving certificate."

**Enrolment increased to 390 in 1938 and approved to conduct internal exams for Intermediate.*

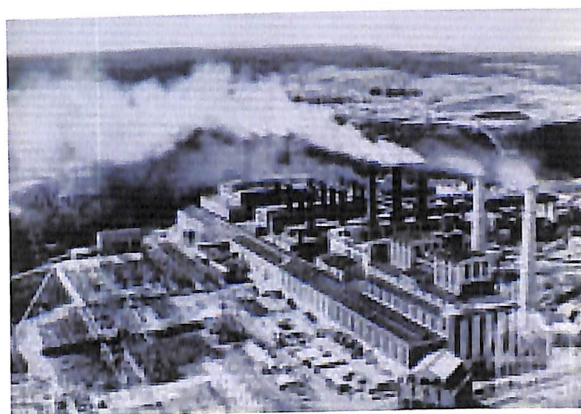
This last comment revealed what was soon realised was to be a defining passion of his Headmastership over the 15 years he was to remain at DHS. In a speech to the Dandenong Rotary Club in August 1938, he further defined what he saw as too much attention on "learning particular skills of a single job, but rather what the real world is like, and what it will demand of him. Much more important it is therefore that as wide a general knowledge as the school can provide should be given."

It was in April of 1937 that the Old Pupils Association was reformed, having been in recess since 1933, a fact that Mr Griffiths noted in his Annual Report. "Happy was he to feel that the Old Pupils' Association had been re-constituted. and the aid which had come from them had been ever valuable."

Together with School Council President, Mr Singleton, Mr Griffiths made deputations to the surrounding Shires of Dandenong, Cranbourne, Berwick and Mulgrave, to seek funding support for student bursaries, and these were, eventually, all successful ventures, averaging £10 each.

SCHOOL EXCURSION:

In April of 1937, there was a variation to the usual program of sports day events fund-raising, visits from the Conservatorium, etc, when all of the students journeyed by steam train to Yallourn, to visit the electricity undertakings.



Yallourn Power Station, as it would have appeared in the 1930s.



Yallourn town square. All long gone to make way for the expanding Open Cut

"The train left Dandenong about 10 a.m. and returned at 6.30 p.m. Although the weather was showery, the scholars managed to see "everything to be seen." The school was divided into two sections, one half being taken to the open cut and power station, while the other half were shown the town and briquette factory."

A DAY AT "THE PICTURES"

There was no doubt further excitement a month later, when : "On Thursday, June 10, the pupils of the school, together with those from the East and West State schools, were entertained at the Boomerang Theatre by the Vacuum Oil Company. A very good programme was given, including a geographical film, "Native Dances in Bali," and one showing the production of oil, entitled, "Where the Power God Dwells," and a comedy, "The Captain's Kid."

On Tuesday afternoon, 15th inst. the pupils from the C. and D. Forms visited Melbourne, to attend a production of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, which was given at the Central Hall." *

** Also known by its former name, Cathedral Hall, stands at the end of Brunswick Street in Fitzroy.*

POLIO EPIDEMIC

During the latter half of 1937, the scourge of Infantile Paralysis (Polio) again appeared in Melbourne, in what was to become the largest outbreak of many until it was eradicated with vaccines in the 1950s and '60s. Almost 1200 people, mostly children, were affected, in varying degrees, by the end of 1937.

(*Melbourne Herald* 21 December 1937) Many schools were closed for periods of time, including Dandenong West Primary School. Although Dandenong High Oakleigh and Murrumbeena students were kept at home for lengthy periods. In



Above: 1938, Form 3 girls on Frankston Pier after Sports Day. Girl on left, Muriel Stephenson, was one not able to attend school for several weeks during Polio epidemic. Gloria Welch 2nd from left

speaking with ex-student Gloria Welch, (nee Vinen) who was at School from 1937 to 1939 she states "[In] 1937 there was a Polio epidemic during 2nd term. Children living in certain districts were requested not to attend school. We did have a certain amount of homework sent to us. I think children from the suburbs on the Melbourne side were mostly unable to attend."

SCHOOL LIBRARY

MR. J. BOWMAN'S GIFT.

"During the tea interval, at the Dandenong High School sports, on Wednesday last, [27/10/37] an interesting ceremony took place, the occasion being the official opening of the first section of the new school library, which had, been established through the generosity of Mr. James Bowman, who donated £50 for that purpose."

(*Ed: This was in a classroom set aside for the purpose, and was most likely in the last upstairs room on the balcony of the East Wing, ie, closest to the driveway.*)

In his 1938 Speech Night Report, (which had now returned to the familiar setting of the *Boomerang Theatre*) Mr Griffiths gives the first indication that the steadily increasing enrolments and growing number of courses being offered will clearly need more accommodation. "The School urgently needs a properly equipped library. also greatly needs an assembly hall capable of accommodating the whole of the pupils, an additional art room, a general science room, and at least two more class rooms." (*Most of these needs would not be met for many years to come*)

1939 – 1945 THE WAR YEARS

Good news featured in the earlier part of 1939, when the Director of Education, in a ceremony at the

Maison de Luxe, (at right)

Elwood¹, said "he was proud of the achievements of Dandenong High School, which obtained four of the principal awards,"² including the Life-Saving Premiership of Victoria, the first time a High School had gained such a distinction, in open competition against adult bayside clubs.¹



Formerly on the corner of

Glenhuntly Road and Broadway in Elwood.² Received five awards the following year.

Internal Exams: It was also announced during 1939, that DHS, with Class A status, would now be permitted by the University to conduct internal examinations for the Leaving Certificate. This was in addition to a similar ruling for the Intermediate Certificate, which had been made in the previous year.

Council Agrees to Buy More Land: In early August of 1939 the Dandenong Council agreed to a proposal from Mr Griffiths, assisted by Mr Singleton, for the purchase of a further 2 acres of land. Mr Singleton indicated in an earlier submission that: "The proposed purchase would enable the construction of tennis courts, hockey and basketball areas," *(This was subsequently discovered to be part of the larger area [purchased 20 yrs later] fronting Ann St, which was used as a sports field for over 70 years, until the needs of an enlarged School saw it transformed as the site for a performance theatre and adjacent double gymnasium/games space.)*

School Sports: Success came at the Combined School Sports, with outstanding performances from Dave Morris and Trev Jones, also in inter-school hockey, with DHS defeating higher ranked University High.

A fete was held in November, and, "In the evening, a large crowd lined the balcony to watch a splendid dancing programme. Under the excellent guidance of Miss Fallows, and to the accompaniment of Bessie George on the piano, twelve girls, dressed in charming costumes, featuring floral skirts, black bodices, and short white aprons, trimmed with yellow, red, green and orange, and white ruffled head-dresses, danced the Gottlands Quadrilles."



The only mention of the war in 1939, within the context of the School, except in oblique terms, was a particularly sad one, with the news that Frederick Alan Bishop, *(pictured at left)* a DHS student from the early 1930s, had become the first Australian member of the armed forces killed overseas after the 1 September Declaration of War.

Alan, as he was known, had volunteered for the RAF while on a working holiday in Britain, and was killed on 12 September, when his plane crashed during a training flight in Scotland.

Overcrowding: Enrolment had continued to rise steadily, and by 1940 had reached 490, the highest in the School's 21 year history. In this year, "in line with other leading schools", the term "Dux of the School" was discontinued, "but there were some fine individual performers in all classes." This was also the year, with greater numbers now staying on, in which "Leaving Honours" *(later becoming Matriculation)* was restored; however, this is set against the background of Mr Griffiths' continued pleas *(first recorded in 1938)* for a dedicated Library, Assembly Hall, and further classrooms, including another science room.

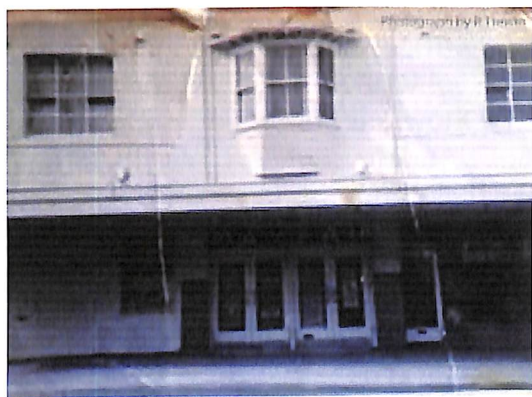
"This is the only post-primary school serving a very large district, and it is difficult to see how the problem of providing for those desiring this education is to be satisfactorily solved, unless the school is extended." To further underline matters, owing to teacher shortages, woodwork was temporarily discontinued as a School subject. This was also the year in which the **Old Pupils Association**, following its Annual Ball, with numbers dwindling, again went into recess.

Fund-Raising: In typical fashion however, it was also a time when there was an increased volume of activity in general fund-raising, whether competitively between Houses with the usual hospital egg appeal, and stalls, or various concerts, including a large one at the Boomerang Theatre, in aid of the Education Department's War Service Comforts Fund.

From another snippet in the Journal of 3 July 1940 we gain a little of the atmosphere of the time: "1500 skeins of wool were received from the Education Department this week, and pupils are busy knitting garments for the Department's Comfort Fund."

Playing Fields: It was also in the middle of 1940, that Mr Griffiths made an approach to the Shire Council, for the removal of some trees on Hemmings Park, to allow more space for sports such as cricket and football. *(Presumably*

freeing up the oval to allow different activities to be held simultaneously) A limited number of trees was eventually approved, after three discussions of the matter. An article on 18 September, of the same year, paints a delightful picture of the front garden: "At present the school garden is a mass of [sic] colorful blooms, and Mr C. Wines, the gardener, can well be proud of it. The wide lawns are fresh and green, and the flowers are blooming profusely." It seems this was to be short-lived however, as we will soon see.



Boomerang Theatre, Thomas St (later renamed Mayfair) Pictured at left, Scene of DHS Speech Nights over many years

Part of Mr Griffiths' address in 1941, included the words: "The present time is fraught with peril and anxiety, and the work of the schools must inevitably be affected. Staffs will be difficult to maintain, but the education of the children must go on." There were a further two known ex-student wartime casualties during the year.

Staffing: At the beginning of the year, Mr Griffiths had announced the arrival of 8 new teachers, including a new "Sloyd Master", and there was understandable disappointment when, at the end of the year, he announced, with numbers now reaching 520, "As usual, we are to lose valued members of staff."

Need for Gardener: Early in the year, in company with Mr Singleton, Mr Griffiths sought Council assistance, "because the Advisory Board had reached a dead-end in the maintenance of the High School garden." It was proposed that this might be done by the use of "Sustenance Labour", with the School paying £20 per annum for Council supervision. It's not clear if this was finally agreed; however, we note in the **1942** report that: "The school garden has been maintained in excellent order by the efforts of a number of boys under the guidance of Mr. Sinclair."

Returning to May of 1941, "The Pavilion* class-room is now almost completed and the sewerage of the school is in progress". Further temporary class room space was found, with the growing population, by the re-flooring of the boys locker room. *Had been relocated from Box Hill High School. It is assumed was the weatherboard, iron-roofed room, known in the 1950s, having an adjoining boys' change room. (See pic next page)

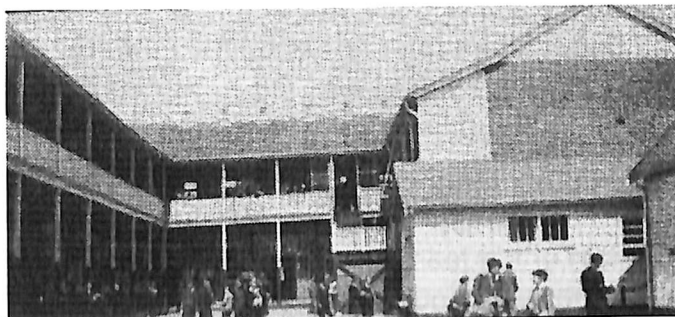
House Sports at School: In what seems was understandable recognition of the need for greater community involvement with each other in difficult times: "... the house sports were held on a Saturday, and the innovation proved most successful. More than 300 parents and friends were present, and the afternoon tea arrangements were most capably carried out by the Ladies' Welfare Club."

The work of the School stuck to its task, with 168 Honours certificates awarded. **Social service** was as strong as ever, with stalls, socials, knitting for overseas troops and a record 400 dozen eggs distributed to various hospitals.

As the new year rolled around, this item appeared in *The Journal*, "Although rumours have been current that the High School has been taken over for military purposes and would not be re-opening, there is no truth in this report." (*This was unlike what did occur with Melbourne High, which was requisitioned by the Navy, resulting in some students then coming to DHS*)

Nearly 50% More Girls Enrolled in 1942:

In reviewing 1942, Mr Griffiths, in his usual unambiguous way, states: "The school enrolment is practically the same, as last year, but the number of boys in attendance is less. (215 boys, 310 Girls) This is due in part to the fact that many boys from country schools who normally commenced the High School course after completing the work to Grade VIII are, because of the shortage of farm labor, compelled to forego secondary education.....Again, an increasing number of pupils is tempted to leave school earlier than usual because of the apparently tempting prospects offering in the way of employment. In many cases, parents are taking a short-sighted view and are pawning their children's future for present gain."



Quadrangle in 1940s showing weatherboard 'pavilion' room.

The School War Savings certificates scheme among the students was reported to be steadily increasing, with an additional 100 added in 1942, and 300 overall, who "have subscribed approximately £700." £200 was separately sent to

Education Dept War Relief, with a sell-out Town Hall concert contributing .

A "Sick-Bay for boys has been built by Mr. Wirth, who is in charge of woodwork, and the Ladies' Welfare Club has agreed to furnish it suitably."

Further Casualties: It was deeply regretted to have to advise details of the loss of three more former students among the casualty lists.

With a **general decline** among the numbers of **boys** in many schools, the Combined High Schools Sports were not held. **By contrast**, this item in May of 1942 is interesting: "Invading the boys' preserves, the girls at the Dandenong High School are this year playing inter-house cricket! Points scored to date are: Orchid House 4, Wattle 3, Bluegum 3, Clematis 2.

Air Corps Training:

Forty boys from the School have enrolled with the Dandenong Air Training Corps. No doubt to teach the fundamentals, and pique their interest prior to "joining up".

House Egg Appeal: More than 400 dozen eggs were collected for distribution to the hospitals, which was a record, but was soon to be (*excuse the pun*) utterly smashed, when doubled the following year, and in 1945, the total was 1415 dozen!

Evidently parents heeded Mr Griffiths' words, from the previous year, as from **1943 onwards**, an increased number of students stayed on for the higher forms.

(Numbers rose from 86 to 113 in Intermediate level). "It is pleasing to note that parents are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for higher education for their children, and I look forward to the time when the school will have a large Matriculation form." "Next year the new Intermediate and Leaving Certificate course become operative, and Matriculation will require a further year at school after the Leaving Certificate year." Meanwhile, the pressure on already strained accommodation must have been immense, with Mr Griffiths again highlighting the urgency for extensions, in his Speech Night report. "I regret that these (except perhaps the Library) are not likely to be included unless a substantial sum is raised locally."

Further Casualties Announced: We can only imagine the total silence that would have descended over the packed numbers in the audience of the Boomerang Theatre, as he read out the much longer list of casualties, prisoners and the missing over the past 12 months.

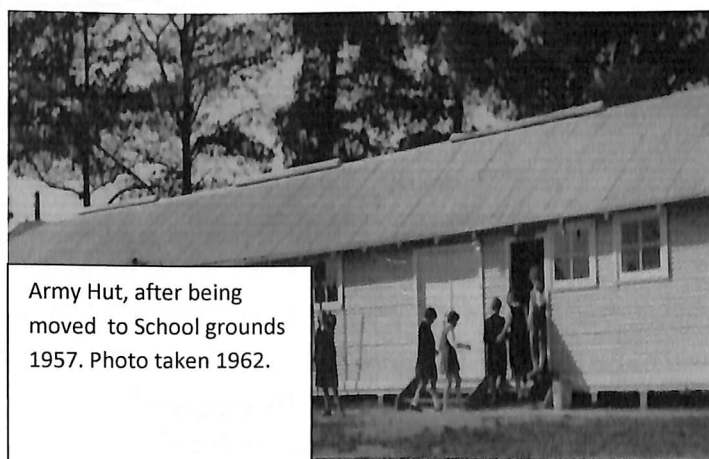
Earlier in the year, *The Journal* reported: Dandenong High School starts off the new school year with an enrolment of approximately 550—the highest in the history of the school. This is about 30 pupils more than last year, and accommodation, a serious problem then, is doubly so this year. THE STAFF now numbers 20. It is a matter for satisfaction that the threatened cancellation of the Berwick school bus has not materialised, and the bus is again running." Bus services were also being extended, and on a subsidised basis, similar to what applied to student train travel. A new service was to operate for the Yanathon district.

Stench from Tip: Late in the year the Advisory Council sent a letter to the Shire Council, stating that: "protests were received from the staff about the "abominable stench" which was so overpowering that the windows had to be kept closed, thus preventing correct ventilation." It seems however, little was able to be done in the short term.

"The Army Huts": It was, in fact, in the following year of 1944, (*numbers now risen to 633*) that the Education

Department's interim solution to the accommodation crisis was to set up some temporary classroom space across the road (*and closer to the tip*). Mr Griffiths describes this: "...we have obtained permissive occupancy of the two military wards near the Scout Hall. These are to be altered and furnished, and will provide fairly adequate accommodation [*from 1945*] for Form 1." Plans were still "....being

prepared. for substantial additions to the school, and we hope to have included in these, provision for an assembly hall large enough to seat all the pupils at the same time." This hall would only be partly financed by the Department, with the community being required to find a substantial sum before any works would commence, and as a result most fund-raising was directed to this goal, with an amazing £635 raised in the first year.



Army Hut, after being moved to School grounds 1957. Photo taken 1962.

"When the amount of our commitment is definitely known, a wider appeal will be made to the community, and I am certain that the worthiness of the object will ensure an enthusiastic response."

EXTENSIONS FORMALLY ANNOUNCED:

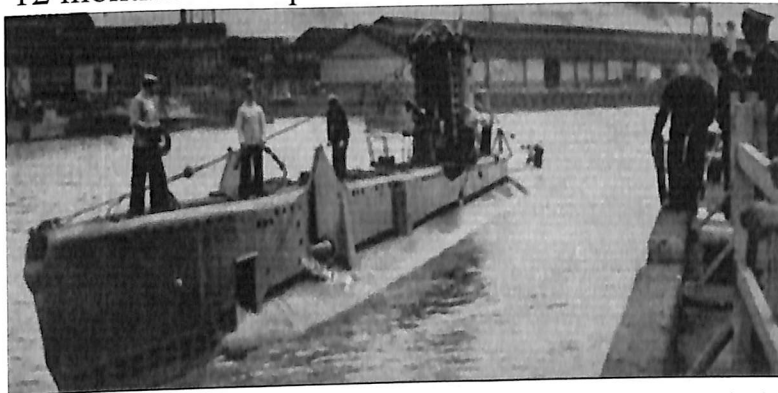
The much-awaited announcement came in May 1945, *about a week after the end of the War in Europe*. The project envisaged additional classrooms, a practical, or "Manual" skills section and an Assembly Hall. The Hall, estimated at £11 000, with the School required to raise £3 000 of that sum over a period of 5 years. In an (*unsuccessful*) deputation to the Dandenong Council seeking a grant of £150¹ (*spread over 3 years*) towards the Hall fund, Mr Griffiths pointed out:

"I have seen a proposed plan and estimate for the additions and the total estimate is nearer the £30,000 mark than the £20,000..."

"Separately, during his Annual Report for 1945, Mr Griffiths commented: "In view of the acute housing shortage, and the consequent restrictions on public buildings it is difficult to forecast when the proposed additional classrooms will be provided. Important as these are, however, I believe that they are not as important as the provision of a School Hall." *You will need to read on to see exactly when the additions were made, suffice to say, it wasn't in Mr Griffiths' tenure of office, which still had seven years to run.* ¹ *Berwick Council agreed to £150, Mulgrave agreed to £30.*

Getting back to reality, Mr Griffiths indicated in his Report that "The strain on our accommodation has been eased by the use of the Military Wards adjacent to the Scout Hall. Alterations have been made to these, and we are now able to house three Forms there." The Shire Council, had previously moved "that permission be given to allow the huts to remain another 12 months."

Fund-raising within the School quickly provided encouraging results, with £1505, or just over half the needed sum, either in hand, or promised, in the first 12 months. This quote from Mr Griffiths is particularly pointed: "...too many



A British submarine coming to dock on the Yarra in 1945, as photographed by an ex-student contributor to 'The Gate'.

who have gained substantially by the School's existence, excuse their unwillingness to contribute, with the plea that it is the Government's concern."

The School orchestra was formed in 1945, and was used to good effect in concerts and later in the staging of the Mikado in October, at the Town Hall.

Lou Garlick, who gained his Leaving in 1926, became one of the first, if not the first Ex-Student to be elected to State Parliament, becoming the Member for Mildura.

POST WAR

Over the immediate post-war years, of the late 1940s, School life, with a student population hovering in the low 600s, settled into an uneasy, but somehow tolerable rhythm, embodying the major sports functions, Town Hall performances and exams; and performing at a high standard in all three. This is not to suggest that there was acceptance of the cramped and spartan conditions, far from it, there were constant references in Mr Griffiths' Annual Reports , such as this one in 1947: "There appears little prospect of the promised additions being made in the near future. We still feel that the hall and such necessities as common rooms, gymnasias, cafeteria and cloak room accommodation are even more important than these additions, and your Council is watching the position closely, with a view to making further representations in this direction." *(Some relief was felt with much-needed painting of the whole School, internally and externally in this year.)*

And "further representations" were made, but the assurances never matched the other priorities of an economy still dragging itself back from the ravages of a world war. In 1949 the Minister responds:

"The suggested amendment to departmental plans is being considered by the Architects' Branch, and it is certain that the Assembly hall promised by the Hon. T. T. Holloway, when Minister for Education, will be erected, subject only to the needs of the Housing situation. Class rooms for Art, Gymnasias, and Common Rooms, and Library, Cafeteria and Locker rooms are added facilities for the teaching staff which are all incorporated in the plans, and when completed, will obviate the use of the military huts adjoining the Scout Hall."

It seems that there was a number of competing objectives within the Education Department at the time, as this item from a Regional conference from October 1948 shows:

"It was proposed, he said, to establish a Higher Elementary School at Kooweerup and convert the Dandenong High School to a multi purpose school, by the addition of a Technical Wing." Discussion along these lines persisted for some time, culminating, as we know, in the establishment of the Technical School in Cleeland St in 1954. The following 1948 exam results from Advisory Council Chairman, Frank Singleton may, or may not be relevant: "matriculation standard, and of the 15 only six were Dandenong students. ... leaving certificate of the 29 only two were local children... the intermediate of the 71 ... 19 live in Dandenong."

OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST AT THIS TIME:

Library: In terms of creating an exclusive space for a library: "... boys doing woodwork under the skilled direction of Mr.Randles, have made four Library Tables; and sufficient chairs having been provided by the Department... Room 31 will be used exclusively as a library [in1948]."

Old Pupils Association was again re-formed, following a meeting, on 17 July 1946, with a Social and planning session organised for the following month.

Polio was again an issue in 1949. *The Journal*, 19 October 1949: Owing to the Polio epidemic no combined sports or inter-house sports will be held at the Dandenong

High School this year, and as in other High Schools, it has been considered wiser not to hold a Speech Night.

THE 1950s

The new decade dawned on a huge increase in numbers, and an urgent need for a “pre-fab” block, as a “stop-gap”, until the permanent buildings were possible. “Our enrolment greatly increased this year, reaching a total of 793, almost 140 more than last year’s record enrolment.

By the end of 1951, the situation was unchanged, and the following words from the Shire of Dandenong first female Councillor, Nancy Sullivan, proved prophetic:

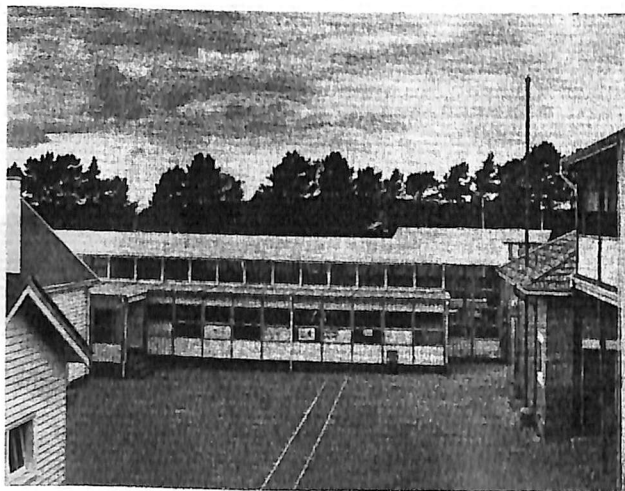
“The High School, she said, had been promised its pre-fabs in January, then in July and again in September, and now, according to the Chief Inspector, it was fairly obvious that they wouldn’t be here for another 12 months.”

With understandable frustration, Mr Griffiths, in his last report commented:

“Unless the long promised prefabricated classrooms are ready for the new school year, Dandenong High School, with a record enrolment of 950 in sight, may have to turn away 160 pupils I have become very disturbed about these pre-fabs. They have not been erected yet, and there is no guarantee that they will be ready when school reopens. I appeal to you all to interest yourselves in this matter, otherwise there ‘will be another 160 children with no school to go to.”

Mr R W ANDREWS 1953 - 1957

Mr Andrews, formerly Headmaster at Camberwell High School, commenced in Term 1 of 1953, under trying conditions, as the promised **pre-fabs**, >>>> although on-site, weren’t ready to be occupied. When the full complement of students arrived in April, the enrolled figure of 921 was second only to Melbourne High. The old school-house, (Room 33) affectionately known as “Siberia”, which had occupied the site, at the rear of the quadrangle, had previously been moved across to the James St boundary.



Later that year, it was announced that negotiations were proceeding for the purchase of adjacent land to house a future Domestic & Manual Arts Block . **The Ex-Students Association**, as it was now known, was again very active, holding social and fund-raising events as well as an annual Ball in the Town Hall.

There was a visit by 26 Mildura High boys, in May 1953, to play tennis and Cricket Matches. Results showed we were very evenly matched.

It was in September of 1953 that the system of School & House Colours, recognising sporting achievement, was instituted.

The opening of Springvale High School and Dandenong Technical School in 1954, resulted in a not un-welcome decrease of 101 in the School enrolment. The Guest Speaker at the 1954 Senior Speech Night was The Hon. Sir Edmund Herring. The Junior School was addressed by Mr. A. McDonell, Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools. *(Speech Night was split into two groups from 1953)* The playing fields were now maintained by the Council, and this was gratefully acknowledged by Mr Andrews.

EGG APPEAL:

For some years the school had been undertaking to provide each of the 70 boys at the Menzies Boys' Home with a least one egg and one piece of fruit, or their equivalent, per week and the 1954 contribution to that Home amounted to £160 in money and goods. As a result of the annual egg appeal for hospitals, eggs and money collected for the purchase of eggs was equivalent to 1715 dozen.

During 1955, the **field gun** >> presented to the school after World War 1 was transferred to the grounds of the Dandenong Drill Hall. Under a new system of inter-school sport organization, Dandenong became a member of the Senior Section of the Peninsula group, with Frankston, Hampton and Mordialloc.



The imbalance of girls to boys was becoming even more pronounced, as the figures in 1956 show: Boys - 262, Girls - 520. As additional schools were opening up, there were now fewer students travelling from elsewhere to DHS each day, with only 140 now travelling by bus.

A Debutante Set was a feature of the Annual Ball, organized by the Ex-Students' Association and the Ladies' Welfare Club. Debutantes were Berenice Neumann, Margaret Anderson, Elaine Woods, Wendy Osborne, Valerie Hance, Fay Clifton, Barbara Lewis, Elaine Breedon, Irene Petzke, Marion Rivett, Barbara St. Clair, Barbara Evers, Gloria Gardner and Rosemary Thompson. All were past or present students of the school.

Mr. W. L. Brumley, who was a member of the staff for 32 years retired from the Education Department, and was farewelled at a special school function. "Brum" as he was affectionately known to the thousands of students who had passed through his hands, will long remain part of the cherished tradition of the school.

The construction of the new domestic arts block can just be seen in this photo of the 1957 House Sports, showing Fred Noblet lying 2nd, poised for yet another win.



The wheels do indeed "grind slowly", but during 1957 Tenders were finally called for the erection of the new domestic arts, art and music block; and work commenced late in the year. The wing will include a domestic arts kitchen and demonstration

room, laundry, needlework room, crafts room, two art rooms, music room, commercial room, and a general classroom.

At the same Sports, showing Brian Phillips clearing the bar, with the 1953 'Bristol' pre-fab and pine trees in the background.



The Army hut* had been transferred across the Highway to the school grounds. * Was intended to be two, but one was destroyed by fire late in 1956

The long-awaited **Assembly Hall** was also back on the agenda, with the Advisory Council Secretary indicating that he "considered the time opportune for [another] approach to be made to the Education Department"

Dandenong Girls' Secondary School was opened in temporary premises (The umbrella factory) at the start of the 1957 school year. This further eased the pressure of high enrolment at the High School, although this would be short-lived with the rapidly growing industrial development surrounding Dandenong, as well as the extensive housing schemes underway.

On 21 March 1957, the Combined Schools' Swimming Sports were, for the first time, held at the new Olympic Pool in Batman Avenue, journeying in from Dandenong on one of the new "blue trains! We had a small measure of individual success, and came 4th out of 5 overall.

The Headmaster, Mr. R. W. Andrews, was appointed as Headmaster back at Camberwell High School, taking up his new duties in 1958. (to paraphrase "this was a circumstance that caused much regret, but sought for private reasons.")

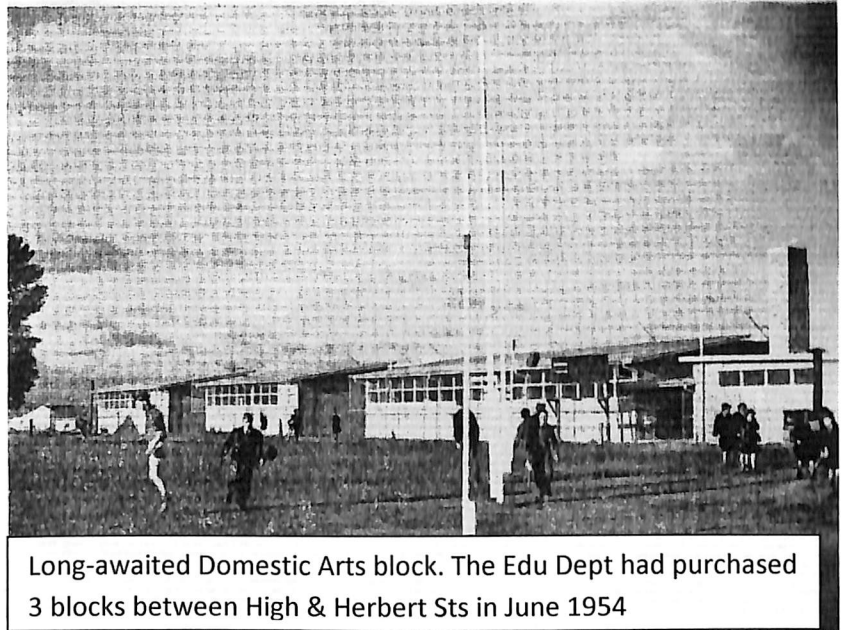
MR L A COOKE 1958 - 1964

Dandenong High School was Mr Cooke's 2nd appointment as Headmaster, having spent two years at Bentleigh.

The Army hut, now within the school grounds, by 1960, was converted into a Girls' Gymnasium, with Mrs Daly in charge.

The new Domestic Arts block of 14 classrooms was completed, and enrolment numbers had settled to a relatively stable 800.

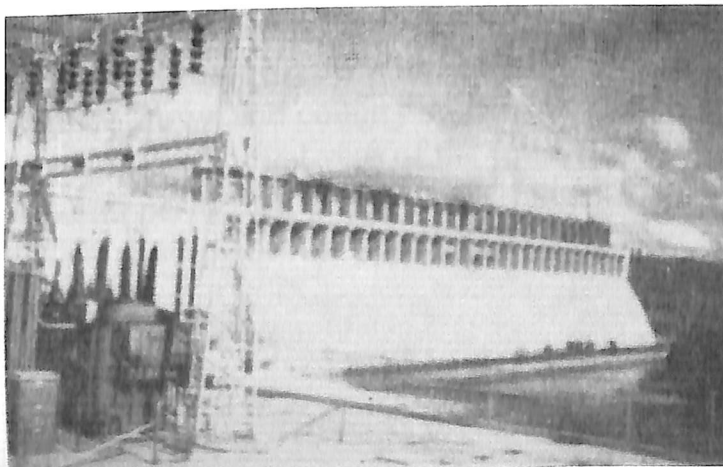
A Debating Club was formed, with Mr. Barry Jones as the teacher in charge. Other clubs formed included Red Cross Music and Art Appreciation, Chess, Floral Art, Dramatic, Sketching, Film, Mechanics, Craft and Travel.



Long-awaited Domestic Arts block. The Edu Dept had purchased 3 blocks between High & Herbert Sts in June 1954

In training as secondary teachers were Brian Edgar, Robert Twyford and Joan Symons. At the University also were Don Dezentje and Alick Eremin, both studying Medicine. Wilma Hagan, Faye Clifton, Jane Williams and others were training as nurses. Wilbur Muskens was in New Guinea as a cadet patrol officer.

Excursions: Annual class excursions for the more senior forms, to far-



away destinations, such as Kiewa, Harrietville, and later, inter-state, started to become possible for most students. This included sporting matches with the host school, as well as

educational tours and site-seeing. In many instances this led to return visits by country students to Dandenong.

1960s.

Improvements:

The occupation of the new "Arts & Crafts" wing, with its various specialist facilities, had freed up much-needed room in the main building. The most obvious of these was the conversion of the original Cookery Centre into a spacious library. Also, in the late '50s, the former boys' locker room* was converted to a well-equipped gymnasium.

** This building (the former Sloyd Room) was relocated from the Dandenong Primary School in 1924, having originally come from Warragul in 1913, - Frankston-Somerville Standard June '24)*

In addition much-needed maintenance/replacement of oval seating and fencing, was carried out, as well as a new girls' basketball court behind "the new building"

On 3rd April, 1960, the Ex-Students' Association presented an Anniversary Afternoon of musical items, to commemorate the **40th Anniversary of the school.** "Back to Dandenong High School" functions, led by the energetic President of the Association, Ted Hook, were organized, and a most informative booklet dealing with the



development of the school was published. *(This was the first of what was to be many major School Reunions, up to 2009, in which the Ex-Students Association played a key role.)*

Land Purchase:

At the opening of the decade, an additional area of land between Ann and David Sts was purchased for future playing fields, thus bringing the total of this allotment to 5 acres.

The opening of Doveton High School in 1960 eased the pressure of fast-growing enrolments at Dandenong. However, with this development, the Dandenong Creek was now established as a new enrolment "border", and as such, this also sadly drew a line under what had always been a School made up of a mix of town and country students, since its foundation in 1919.

1960 was also the first year of the Inter-House choral competition, *(won by Wattle)* and performed at the Town Hall.

Enrolments steadily increased again, as the new decade progressed, reaching 1140 in 1963, with almost equal numbers of girls and boys. The Headmaster notes that while "...in 1952 ours was the only High School between Melbourne and Warragul. Since then no fewer than ten new High Schools have been opened in that area, several of them holding more than 1000 pupils each." So acute is the accommodation issue, that from 1963, form 1 students will be bussed to Lyndale High School with their teachers, to temporarily use vacant classrooms there, until portables become available at Dandenong.

To address the problem, the Department requested that plans be drawn up for the construction of a single-storey block of nine classrooms "...alongside the laneway on our eastern boundary." Slightly later, still more plans were being developed within the Public Works Department in 1964, for the erection of a



new two-storey Science wing, extending in line with the existing east wing.

Also in 1964, a house in High Street, adjacent to the School, was purchased for use as a **Caretaker's residence**. *This was first seriously suggested by former Headmaster, Mr James in December 1935*

1962 Monday morning General Assembly
(Weather permitting)

The **senior choir** was awarded first place in its section at the 1962 Dandenong Festival of Music and & Art for Youth.

During Speech Night of the same year, an original **One Act Play**, "Sam Bowman", written and produced by three staff members, A O'Brien, K Szidat and P Ralph, was presented .

Another item on Mr Griffiths' list was finally ticked off in 1963, when the School's first **Canteen** was opened. This had been the result of a very long fund-raising effort, in which the Mothers' Club played a leading role, with the two-fold aim of providing convenient and nourishing lunches, as well as boosting School funds for future projects, such as a future Assembly Hall. It was early in this era that a School **Chaplaincy** Committee from representative churches was formed to sponsor the appointment of a full-time Chaplain in the School, leading to the appointment, in 1965, of the Rev K Heath.

MR K B MITCHELL 1965 - 1971

Quoting from a brief history compiled at the beginning of Mr Mitchell's term: "A vigorous campaign to expedite school building resulted in news that tenders for a new wing and for an assembly hall were to be called early in 1966." This new energy for action suggested that perhaps more than new buildings were coming.

Key events from this period include:

In 1965, Students, under the supervision of Mr. Szidat and Mr. Adarns, had produced and screened a film showing many aspects of the school year. Senior students demonstrated within the city area, in support of teachers' demands for better school conditions.

In 1966, Mr Mitchell wrote: "I refer in particular to the substitution of Junior and Senior Assemblies, early in the year, for Speech Nights at the end of the year, and to the introduction of Drama and Choral Festivals as evening functions."



An article in 'The Gate' reviewing the 1960s, provides a very good snapshot of the remainder of this time. Part is included here:

"Our numbers are to rise still higher to over 1100 before they decrease again. We welcome many families from Europe. The school leaving age is raised to fifteen years so more of us remain longer at School. We have classes everywhere, including in the bicycle shed and the freezing portable Siberia, but we must wait a little longer.

We are very happy when the canteen is built, even though we gaze with wonder at its architectural design!

We assemble in lines in the quadrangle every Monday morning in full uniform, boys in caps, girls with berets.

We are in the process of changing the girls' uniform. Junior navy and blue replaces the navy and white; the red check summer dress is replaced by a blue and white check with a red line designed by ourselves in art and needlework classes. There is a stage where we think we may like a design based on the feathers of the Light Horse Regiment!

Boys' summer uniform includes a short sleeved shirt.

The House Choirs go from strength to strength till we have sixty voices in senior and thirty in junior choirs. Highlights are the Bach chorals: Charlie is My Darling, Wrangle Taggle Gipsies and Kumbayah. Our school choir wins awards at

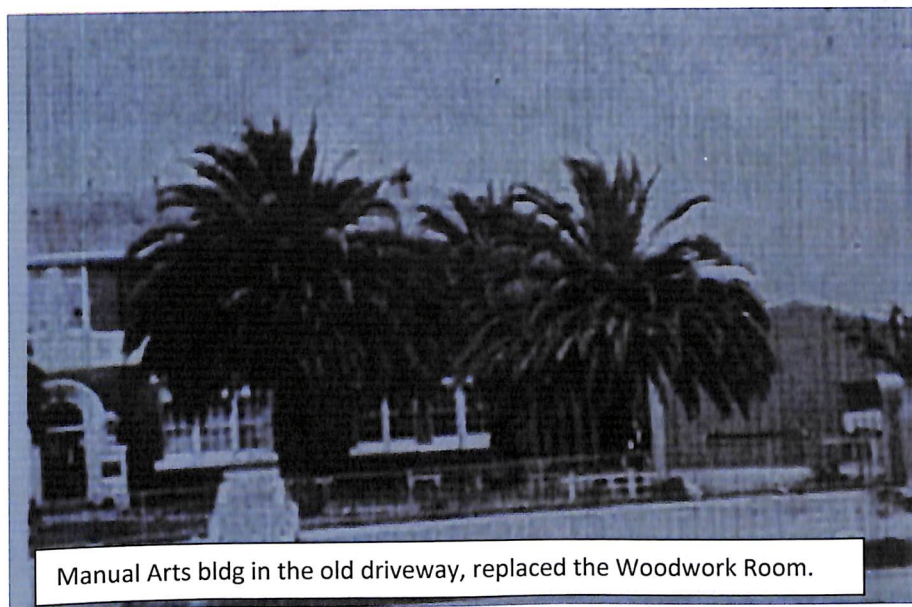


Mornington, Dandenong and Ballarat. The girls dressed in white with fascinating headgear, sing in St. Paul's Cathedral at a service of dedication of teachers. We begin house drama. Our School produces 'Family Album' and a number of original plays. We have art exhibitions in class rooms and at the Methodist Church Hall. We debate in the Parliament of Youth. We open a junior library.

The Form Captains' Council [SRC] is instrumental in making many changes in the School. The Form VI students have a formal dinner at the end of the year. We have a School Chaplain for the first time. He is Rev Kevin Heath.

We make wreaths for Anzac Day School Ceremony. One from each House, and one in School Colours. We are academically fine, with a pride in our School and a wonderful spirit.

The House Athletic Sports include a Marching routine by all Houses on the oval. For about three weeks before the big day our gardener marks out the oval - 440 yards - and as the white lines wear out, he re-marks them. We all practise at lunch time. The whole School goes to Olympic Park or Olympic Pool for Inter-School sports. We must be correctly attired. We hear that the ladies of the staff are expected to wear hats.



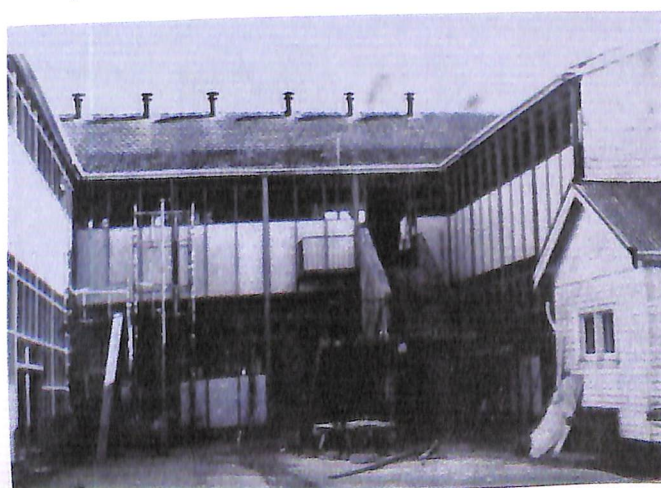
Manual Arts bldg in the old driveway, replaced the Woodwork Room.

A major change comes in 1966 when we replace the Prefect system with a Committee system in an effort to associate every Form VI student with at least one aspect of school activities. Later in the decade (1967) we have many renovations to our School and

the addition of the eagerly awaited **science block**. [and Manual Arts building]

While this is going on we start walking again. We must not go anywhere near the construction works, so we go around the Bristol, over the oval to the LTC and the four portables behind it. We meet socially on the duckboard path across the oval.

.....
A brief interruption to the narrative follows, to include an excerpt from a related item from the 1967



Gate, informing us that this was also the year that the upstairs balconies were enclosed.

"My God! But they must be joking! Aren't they? They were not!"

Up it came, creeping along the balcony like a malignant architectural Growth, cancerous, all orange, and forever expanding. These were the frames, the first stages of the great wall. They were followed by the blocking agents; pleasantly textured cement sheeting. (ever so bold). The meagre spaces that were left were then filled with glass, resulting in windows that were too high up for anyone to be able to see through.

Turning to the interior, one could see at a glance that no expense had been spared with the materials chosen to extenuate the design. A rather sensual yet cheeky masonite was used, fully imported of

course from Tasmania. I might add that along with the disappearance of the balcony came the disappearance of the old wooden stairs. Shake, sway and rumble as they might, they were nevertheless loved by one and all who trod the sagging timber.

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1960s Review Concludes:



And [finally] in 1968 the Assembly Hall is completed and furnished, together with a new grand piano and the newly designed House banners ready for the Jubilee Celebrations in 1969.

We are saddened a little when the **palm trees** are bulldozed from the front of the School, but a new look is planned. The six gum trees are planted along the front fence to represent our first six School Principals.

Form VI produces some memorable revues in the 1970 's including the motorcade in the quadrangle complete with Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird, and the 'Royal Tour', a superb revue in the new Hall. Our Jubilee celebrations include a School Assembly with speakers, one from each decade, a reunion of ex-students with a dinner social dance and a thanksgiving service; and a memorable assembly of ex-students in the new Hall. We feel the strength of our new song - We give our pledge of loyalty,

We shall be strong!"

