

150th Anniversary Marysville School

Special Bulletin, October 2020



We, as a community are proud of our school and we congratulate them on reaching their 150th Anniversary. We thank all the staff who have encouraged the students and we look forward to interesting and exciting achievements in the years to come.

Heather Mills, President

WANTED, Second-class Certificated TEACHER, under the Board of Education, for Marysville Rural School, No. 1. Applications, with testimonials, referred to Mr. Whyte, Model Schools, Melbourne.
The Argus, 4 June 1870

WANTED.- Classified Male TEACHER, Marysville Rural School. Married man preferred. House and garden attached. Salary, with board allowance, £100 per annum. Applications, with testimonials, forwarded to correspondent, M. Keppel.
The Argus, 5 October 1870

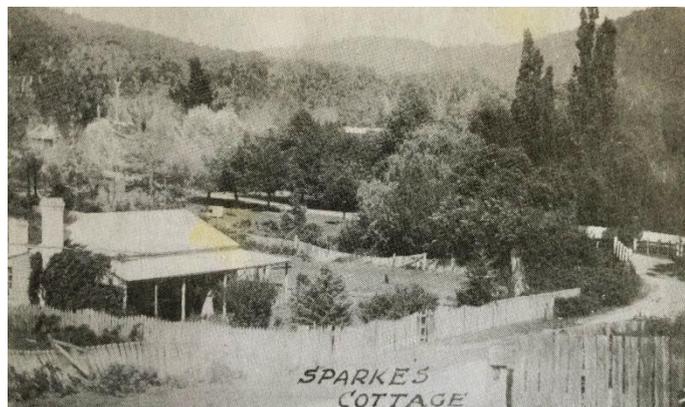
The Beginnings

With the growth of the new village of Marysville, families with children arrived. By 1869 the village leaders were keen to have a school for these children and those that would come in the future.

At this time the Government recognised the special needs of schools in sparsely populated districts and voted for special grants to 'Rural Schools' to subsidise the teacher's salaries. A Local Committee was formed consisting of Maurice Keppel, Thomas Barton and George Smith with Maurice, the correspondent required by the Education Board. Their application made in February, 1870 was granted by Parliament on 20 May 1870 and payment commenced a month later.

Thomas Barton had organised a cottage with schoolroom to be built at a cost of £60, and desks and benches were obtained. Frederick Sparke was appointed teacher on 24th October 1870 after the first selected teacher, Michael Costello resigned almost immediately due to various problems including his Teaching Certificate.

Early attendance averaged 20 pupils with 27 on the roll. Frederick Sparke taught at Marysville until 1892.



'Sparkes Cottage' located on today's Crossways site.

There are various reports of the school operating in Barton's own house or the old bakery. A letter, in Rev George Edwards' research notes, from Thomas Barton in 1874 tells of how Thomas secured a building for the school and that without it there would have been no school. He received no rent during the early period under the Rural School scheme, but was prepared to offer it at cost for the new Government State School.

Frederick Henry Sparke

Synonymous with the Marysville School is the name Frederick Sparke. Frederick was the longest serving teacher from 1870 to 1892.

Frederick Henry Sparke, born in 1833 in Bovey Tracey, Devon, arrived in Melbourne at the end of 1854 on the 'Walter'. He married Clara Maria Johnston, daughter of a Headmaster, on 29 May 1856 at St Johns Church, Heidelberg. Frederick was Head Teacher at Templestowe School No 624 from May 1856 to February 1864.

Frederick's next venture was publican at the Templestowe Hotel until the license was transferred in February 1870.

Frederick responded to the advertisement in The Argus on 5 October, 1870 for a certificated teacher at Marysville and was appointed on 24 October 1870.

Clara and Frederick arrived to the little cottage provided by Thomas Barton with three children (five having died as toddlers). They went on to have 10 more children, another two dying as toddlers. All in all 10 children survived to adulthood. Frederick called the cottage "Bovey Tracey" after his birthplace in England. It was on the site of today's "Crossways".

Life for a school teacher was not easy, wages depended initially on the fees paid by the parents and the government subsidy. With free education from 1873 wages were still based on student numbers. For the large Sparke family this was difficult in the years when the student numbers were down. The reputation of the teacher depended not only on his performance, but also on how he got on with the school Inspectors. In 1876 the district inspector noted "A careful teacher, keeps his school well employed". In 1883 he was severely censured for his carelessness and inaccuracy with roll marking. He was fined £2 and that was noted in the punishment register, along with a warning that a repetition of the offence would probably result in him being removed from his current position.

For a year through 1885 and 1886 Frederick conducted the schools at Marysville and Buxton on the half-time system. In 1886 he was described as "A fair teacher of the old school".

In 1892 the Education Department wanted Frederick to move to another school. A petition was circulated in Marysville supporting Sparke. One dissenting opinion was that of Mrs Bridget Kirwan who noted that the petitioners were Sparke's relatives or people with no interest in the school. She was not impressed with Sparke's methods - his lack of instruction, his constant tobacco chewing in class and the enrolling of 3 year olds who interrupted the classes.



At the end of 1892 Henry was appointed Head Teacher at Montrose State School No 2259. He taught there until March 1894. Advancing age forced his retirement.

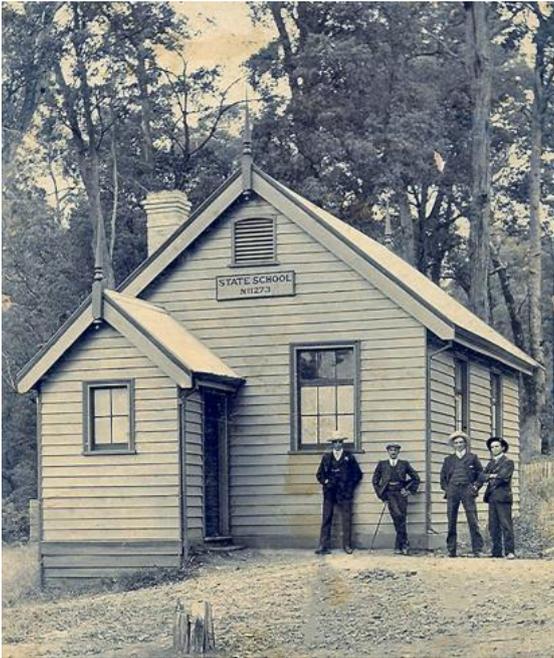
Whilst her husband taught the children, Clara Maria Sparke was one of the mid-wives in the Marysville district. For a time her mother, Harriet Johnston, also a teacher lived with them. Dying in Marysville in 1904, Harriett Johnston is buried in Marysville Cemetery.

When not teaching Frederick honed his fishing skills and was a highly regarded trout fisherman. He is photographed in 1885 with the Marysville cricket team.

Frederick was not well in his last days and was sent to Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum on 17 October 1904 and died there on 11 Mar 1905 from Bright's Disease and pneumonia. His body was returned to Marysville where he is buried in the cemetery.

Clara lived in Marysville until 1914 when she moved to McMahan's Creek where a number of her children and their families lived. She died there in 1923 and is buried at Wesburn Cemetery with a number of members of the Sparke family.

Marysville State School No 1273



Rural School No 1 was officially closed at the end of August 1873 and State School No 1273 was established on 1 September 1873 with Frederick Sparke Head Teacher. The school was under the control of the local Board of Advice, District of Upper Acheron. The school continued in the existing building.

Land was gazetted on 7 November 1873 at the corner of Pack and Kings Roads for a school. Early in the new year tenders were called for a new wooden schoolhouse for 40 pupils and Mr Jefferson's tender at £207 was accepted.

The schoolhouse was completed in September 1874. In the late 1880s it was in disrepair and it was through the teacher's persistence that works were carried out. It was in use until the 1940s when the school was relocated to Falls Road. The original Marysville schoolhouse was sold to Tom Robb who used it to extend his farmhouse in Buxton.

The next teacher was Alice Clara Techow who arrived in 1893 and four years later married Jeremiah Keppel. They lived at the Keppel farm on the Buxton Road and they had three children Maurice John, Francis and Claire.

1905 local lads including Fred & Percy Barton



c1890 Parents & Children

Standing at the back l to r are Billy Burchall, ?,?, Annie Walker, Archie Walker, Mrs Sparke, Head Teacher, ?,?, policeman, ?,?, Maria Kirwan, Clara Barton, Selina Barton.

Amongst the children are Syd Sparke, Bert Barton, Ernie Robertson, George Barton, Gerald Kirwan and Fred Barton.

This undated photo is from 'Highway to Heaven' by Mary Kenealy. It is possible to date it by considering the ages of Maria (1877), Clara (Dec 1878) and Selina (1876). In 1890 they would be 12-14 years old and their images reflect these ages.

Early in the 1900s when gold was long gone and the district fell on hard times, teachers didn't stay long. The school was operated on a part-time basis with Buxton and, at times Narbethong.

Well-known poet and naturalist Frank S Williamson taught at Marysville from 1910 to 1912. His most famous poem is "*The Magpie*". He was easy going and his classes informal.



Miss Black & students winter 1928

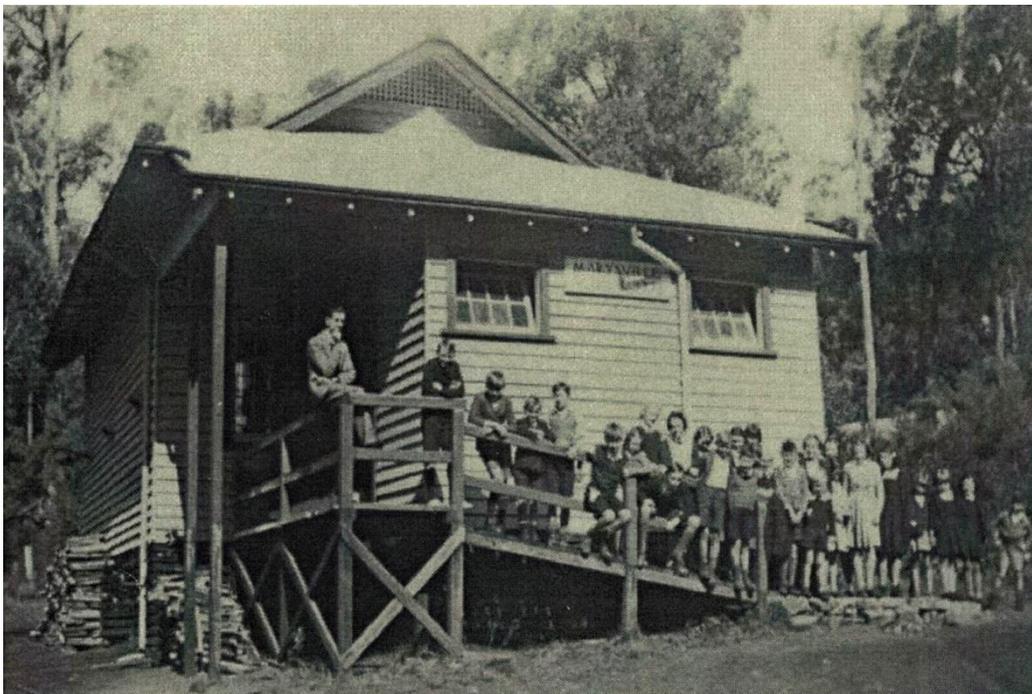


In the 1930s

It was not until 1922 when Miss Frances Black came that the school was back to full-time. Frances was a good teacher and stayed 9 years. With numbers increasing the school could no longer hold all of the students, so when Narbethong School closed in 1932 its building was transferred to Marysville.

Aiden Macmichael was Head Teacher 1936-1947 and can be seen with the students on the verandah of the original schoolhouse in the photo below. He was well educated having won a scholarship to Geelong Grammar to finish his secondary schooling. Aiden and his wife loved the theatre and one well-remembered play which involved the whole town was "The Missing Pembroke Jewels" staged at the Picture Theatre.

After WWII the town grew with the influx of timber workers providing for the post-war building boom. This included a group of Portuguese Timor refugees, who arrived to help with their wives and children. School numbers increased and an assistant teacher was appointed in 1944.



William Carney came in 1947. He was musical and taught the 40+ pupils to play instruments for the School Fife and Drum Band. The drummers were featured in the Anzac Day Parades. Mrs Carney, a fine pianist, played for school concerts. William Carney was to oversee a number of changes at the school.

The Move to Falls Road

The school at Pack Road had out-grown its use. Education was changing and so Marysville School was to change too. The ex-Narbethong building and a small shed were moved to a new site in Falls Road bordering Gallipoli Park. Renovations and a new classroom to the value of £2250 were commenced in 1947. Meanwhile the children were taught in the Memorial Hall.

The Hall had to be a school during the week with classes separated by canvas blinds which could be rolled up for the Saturday night dances. There was very little lighting and heating. In winter keeping warm was a priority, Mothers were rostered to make hot cocoa in the morning and the students were encouraged to be active at break time.

The second winter was fast approaching and the building works nowhere near complete. Everybody was frustrated and at a Mother's Club meeting Headmaster, William Carney reported no progress. It is said he remarked that if the parents refused to send their children to school then the Education Department may take notice. He immediately left the meeting.

The Strike - June 1949

Pupils on Strike

AT VICTORIA SCHOOL
Kalgoorlie Miner, 2 June 1949

CHILDREN'S "STRIKE"

Prosecution Threat For Parents
Western Australian, 3 June 1949

STRIKE AT SCHOOL

Shouting "We're on strike," 80 out of 100 pupils at Marysville Public School walked the streets of the town yesterday.
Barrier Miner (Broken Hill), 2 June 1949

School Strike Not So Hot
Chronicle (Adelaide), 9 June 1949

Department Moves In School Strike

Today's news from the draughty schools war front is: —

MARYSVILLE

Parents will hold a public meeting on Sunday to discuss the Education Department's threat of prosecution for keeping their children away from school. The secretary of the Marysville Mothers' Club (Mrs L. Dowdle) said today that the Works Department hoped to have renovations completed in a fortnight. Parents would send their children to school if the work was done in that time, but she did not think they would wait longer.

The Chief Inspector of Primary Schools (Mr G. O. Osborne) said today that officials were investigating the possibility of conveying some of the children to the school at Alexandra or to schools between the two towns.

Two years ago a building was transferred to a Marysville site from another place, and conversion would be completed within three months.

About a dozen children were at school this morning.

Herald, 3 June 1949

Beer, plonk empties in school-room

A newspaper reporter who inspected the Marysville School got so mad at the conditions there that he couldn't help saying: "Tovell should be made to grovel in this hovel." Tovell is the Education Minister.

"The school was an old, dirty hall, which was also used as a dance hall, a recreation centre, scout hall, baby health centre and polling booth.

"The building was old, unlined, draughty, wet, and the daylight seeped through two grimy windows.

"At the back of the school were empty 9-gallon beer barrels, and dozens of empty beer, plonk and rum bottles.

Labor Call (Melb) 10 June 1949

SCHOOL TODAY, MARYSVILLE STRIKE ENDS

Marysville school children will end their strike and return to lessons in the draughty public hall today-but only for a fortnight.

The contractor who is building the new school has assured the Mothers' Club that the building, though not completed, will be ready for temporary occupation within a fortnight.

Only about 12 of the 100 scholars attended during the three-day strike.

The Argus, 7 June 1949

With the school still teaching grades 7 & 8 in 1950, William Carney realised the students needed the resources of a High School and he lobbied for the students to have free transport to Alexandra High School. The bus was an old Ford 'Side Loader' with 5 doors on the left opening to 5 long seats. It broke down often and somehow Ton Gregg, the driver managed to keep the bus and the rowdy kids under control.

As rapid growth continued an aluminium classroom was added in 1952 and a light timber classroom in 1960 when student numbers reached 150 the highest to that date.



1950 Students outside the Renovated classrooms

Headmasters like Edward Cross, Harold Critchley, Alan Cleaves and John Blackie led the school through to the 1970s.

School life involved extra activities. Swimming classes in summer and skiing classes in winter. There were town activities to participate in - the Annual Australia Day Parade at the beginning of the year and from 1972 through the 1990s there was the Wirreanda Festival on Cup Weekend.

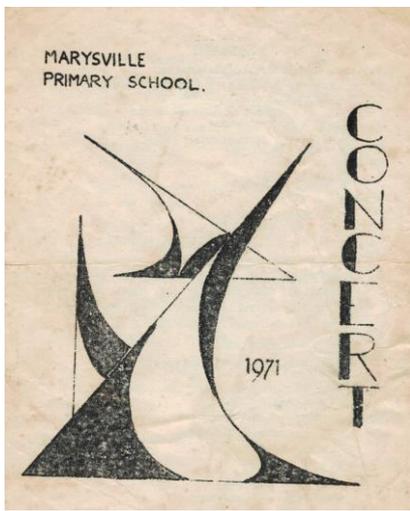
Many will remember Ian Walshe, Bob Donald, John Barrow and Glenys Fraser.



1958 Judy Jennings with her Junior Grades



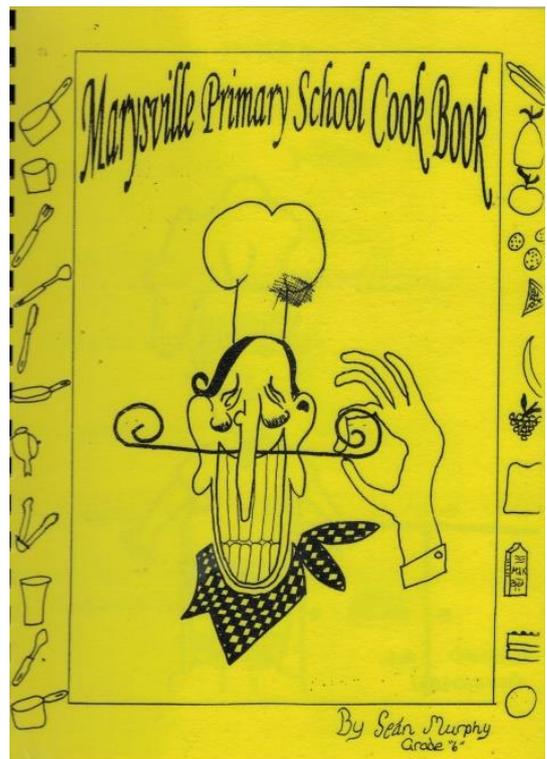
1966 Visit to Healesville Sanctuary



Students learning Tyrolean Dancing for the 1989 Wirreanda Festival



Wirreanda Festival 1994



Ski Lessons 1990s

Disaster - 2009 Fires

The 2009 Fires completely destroyed the school along with its records and memorabilia.

Donations of some photos including classes photos and ephemera have been received by MDHS, but we would be pleased to receive any items and memories you would like to provide.

A dedicated email marysville.school150@gmail.com has been set up for this purpose. It is a joint project of Marysville Primary School and Marysville & District Historical Society.

The New Marysville Primary School

"Achieving and Celebrating Excellence"

Marysville Primary School reopened in April 2010 at the previous school site, 15 Falls Road after the Black Saturday fires. It forms part of a Community Hub with Maternal Health, Kindergarten, Playgroup and OSHCare co-located. As a consequence the School, Shire Pre School and Maternal Child Health Centre are relocated on the same site with established links between them, in state of the art 21st century facilities.

Marysville Primary School's vision is to prepare young people to become active, engaged and responsible citizens of the local and global community. Our Values are Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Community. We aim to prepare students to contend with a dynamic 21st century in which creativity, cooperative work, connectedness to the world and adaptability are key features. The school aspires to provide a contemporary approach to teaching and learning in a respectful and purposeful learning environment.

From the School website



Breakfast Club with Ruth & Conrad Haliburton, 2018



School Photo 2019

The resources of the MDHS were used to produce this special Bulletin and I would like particularly to acknowledge the research work of the late Rev George Edwards and the detailed School Memories of Kingsley Fiske.

Judith Vimpani, MDHS Archivist