



City of Gosnells Museum – Education Program 1912 SCHOOL ROOM – teacher’s resource

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The first schools in the City of Gosnells area were established as parents began actively demanding schools for their communities to meet the educational needs of their children and to reflect local progress and stability.

Often first schools were provided inside a local community hall. This was the case in Gosnells with the first school being established in 1905 that was housed inside the Methodist Church Hall on Dorothy Street. In addition, the first school in Maddington was held inside the Gosnells Road Board Hall. These halls were often unheated and had an inadequate water supply. There is an anecdote that the Methodist Church Hall in Gosnells had an earthen floor that rabbits used to burrow through.



Gosnells Road Board Hall 1908. City of Gosnells Photo collection

The first permanent school in Gosnells was built of brick in 1907 and was located on the corner of May and Hicks Street in Gosnells and could accommodate 50 pupils. The school buildings also incorporated teacher’s quarters. Maddington Primary School was built in 1914.

Many schools started as one room buildings and were extended as the number of pupils increased; however, extensions to a school were usually only provided when the school became overcrowded. In the meantime, students were accommodated in make-shift classrooms. For example, the infant’s class at Gosnells School was housed in the Boys Cloak room and there are also reports of children being taught in the Headmaster’s room and the washroom.

NOTE:

- The Cloak room was where coats, hats and bags were left during the day – rather than on the verandah outside the rooms as we do today.
- There were no demountable school rooms



Class sizes were large and all grades were taught in the same room, with youngest students at the front and older students at the back. The desks were bolted to the floor and two children sat at each desk. Each desk had two inkwells. There was often a shortage of desks and other equipment in the school room.

There was no running (scheme) water provided at the Gosnells School in 1912. Water was provided by tanks and bores and had to be carried in buckets to the building. Toilets operated on a waste pan system, with the pans only being emptied once or twice a week. In 1912 there was no electricity at the school and lighting was provided by hurricane lanterns.

The school yards at some schools often flooded during winter and improvements to the grounds were often undertaken by teachers and students; e.g. Beckenham Primary School. In some schools, the yard was divided into Boys and Girls areas.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

In the early day of the Swan River colony there was an acute shortage of trained and qualified teachers. There was no teacher training college and although pupil teachers were employed from 1853, teachers were untrained and unqualified.

John Davis Jr who came to Western Australia with his parents, John and Frances Davis in 1829, is an example of an untrained teacher who has employed to teach local children. His first appointment was to the Fremantle Government Boys School in 1850. Interestingly, the General Board of Education hoped that his wife would be able to look after the very young children and instruct the girls in needlework at the girl's school.

In 1861 the General Board of Education introduced a system where pupil teachers, some of whom were only 14 years old, could undertake a four year apprenticeship. Strict rules and regulations were in place to ensure that pupil teachers would receive excellent training. However, the actual work performed varied from mixing ink powder and running messages to teaching the odd lesson or taking responsibility for a whole class. A further condition was that once qualified, pupil teachers had to serve a further four years as a condition of their contract. Many of those who took up these apprenticeships were women. However, by 1891 of the 77 teachers in Western Australia, only 23 had any formal qualifications and most of those had been trained as pupil teachers. Pupil teachers were young and enthusiastic, which left them vulnerable to exploitation through low wages.

The first Teachers Training College was at Claremont and opened early in 1902. At this time the pupil teacher system was abolished. During the three year training course, trainee teachers studied scripture, English language, literature and history; Latin: geography; physiography; arithmetic; geometry, drawing, singing, reading and training; physics and chemistry for men and kindergarten, needlework and domestic economy for women. Teacher Training Colleges were formally absorbed into Universities in 1988 and today teachers must be eligible to be registered with the Teachers Registration Board.

The first teacher at the original school in Gosnells was a former hospital orderly, Arthur Hemeleers, who retained this position for a short period when the new Gosnells School was opened in 1907.



LESSONS

Before World War One most Australian children grew up with the games, folklore, schooling and books of Britain. The ideals of loyalty to God, King and Empire were first implanted to children.

The school day started with the children assembled in the playground where they saluted the flag before being marched into class. Discipline was strict and the cane was used regularly.

Lessons were straightforward. Lessons were in reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and history. Reading and writing lessons included a good deal of grammar. Children were also taught drawing, poetry and recitation. Homework was assigned and often included spelling lists. The words in the list had to be learnt and children were tested on a regular basis. One of the words contained in the spelling list was diphtheria.

Singing lessons were provided once a week. A tuning fork was used to give the note and then the children were led through the tonic so-la-fa scale. A child who did not sing in tune was sent out of the class. These children were often assigned tasks such as weeding the garden or washing the inkwells.

In addition to regular classes, scripture lessons were held once a week. As a general rule, these lessons were provided by the Protestant Ministers in the district.

Children were coached for Adelaide University's primary examinations, which were the required standard at that time. To gain the certificate, pupils had to pass English grammar, composition, dictation, arithmetic and at least two subjects chosen from - Geography of the British Isles and Australia, English History, Greek, Latin, French, German, Algebra, Geometry or Drawing.



Photo of children at Gosnells State School in 1907. Courtesy City of Gosnells photograph collection.



Photo of children at Gosnells Primary School in c1912. Courtesy C. Matison, City of Gosnells photograph collection.

ADDITIONAL ROLES AND TASKS FOR TEACHERS

Both teachers and pupils were expected to undertake extra duties. For teachers and headmasters this could include undertaking maintenance on the school buildings, grounds and equipment. Children, especially the older boys, were expected to cut the wood needed for classroom fires and to carry the wood into the classrooms.

One task that was usually assigned to the boys at the school was to mix the powdered ink and water to provide ink for the inkwells. The ink was mixed in a separate room and put into stone jars for filling the inkwells. The evaporation of the ink left a deposit in the inkwells and every few months the inkwells would be collected and the 'Ink Boys' would wash out all the inkwells. Many of the boys considered this a great privilege because it meant missing class.

In 1911, the Headmaster at Gosnells School was granted new desks for the school which were delivered to the local Gosnells Station by train. The Headmaster and some of the older boys carried the desks from the station to the school and then assisted the Headmaster to fix the new desks in place in the classroom.

If the Headmaster was interested in gardening, as at Gosnells School, the children would be required to assist. For the boys this could include digging garden beds and for the girls, weeding. In many instances, gardening was linked to lessons and was used to demonstrate concepts being taught.



Photo of Gosnells Model School garden 1909. Courtesy The Western Mail newspaper.

At Gosnells School, Tennis Courts were laid down around 1908. The Courts were constructed of a hard material, made up of soil, termite saliva and dung (from termite nests), and was carried to the school in bags by the children.

GETTING TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Teachers

A Headmaster's house was often built adjacent to the school building. Other teachers travelled long distances to the school each day; some drove a horse and sulky or walked, while others chose to board with a local family.



Sulky outside Watt's general store in Maddington



Children

Children also walked to school, although some travelled by horse and sulky. When there was public transport available, it was not timetabled to meet the needs of school children and this often resulted in children being late for school every day and arriving home very late in the day.

Many children walked long distances to school (or to public transport when it was available), with some walking up to 2 to 3 miles (4 to 5 kilometers) to and from school each day. Many children walked along isolated tracks, waded through rivers and streams and heavy sand. In summer the ground was so hot that the children's bare feet often blistered and in winter the country could be completely impassable due to the flooded rivers.

The long journey to school often resulted in very young children being kept at home until they were considered strong enough to undertake the long walk to school, while others relied on older brothers and sisters to piggy-back them when they were tired.

ATTENDANCE

Wet and very hot weather would also result in children remaining at home. Gosnells School once reported that 35 students out of the 38 students who attended the school were absent due to wet weather.

If the mother of the household was ill, older children would be kept at home to care for the younger children in the family and to assist with household chores.

Sickness also impacted on school attendance. Ophthalmia (Sandy Blight) was common. Diphtheria was of particular concern as it could be fatal. Other common illnesses of the day were Scarlet Fever, Mumps, Measles, German Measles (Rubella), Chicken Pox and Whooping Cough. The only protection against most of these diseases was the quarantining of families which meant that children simply could not attend school. The Headmaster at Gosnells School reported that for a six week period the average attendance at the school was less than 40%.

Reference Sources:

- *The Gosnells Story*, G McDonald and WS Cooper, City of Gosnells, 1988
- *A Ton of Memories: A History of Gosnells School*, Gosnells Primary School P&C Association Inc, 2009
- *The Endless Playground: Celebrating Australian childhood*, Paul Cliff, National Library of Australia, 2000
- *Treasured Island: 175 Years of Growing up in Guildford*, Laura Peden Nolan, Guildford Primary School Parents and Citizens' Association, National Trust of Australia (WA), 2008
- State Records Office <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/archive-collection/collection/education-and-school-records>
- *City of Gosnells Heritage Inventory* 2016.



Stafford family outside their house, 1912



Watts family, 1915

CELEBRATIONS

Empire Day

The intention of Empire Day was to celebrate the greatness of the British Empire and remind children that they were an integral part of an Empire, the strength of which relied upon them. The concept of such a day of celebration was first proposed in 1897 when the motherly figure of Queen Victoria, Empress of India, ruled an empire which spanned almost a quarter of the globe. However the first Empire Day was not celebrated until the year after Queen Victoria's death in 1901. The first Empire Day was held on her birthday 24 May 1902.

Empire Day was first celebrated in Australia on 24 May 1905. Flags were flown on all public and many private buildings and there were receptions and gatherings with speeches, street marches, parades and community celebrations.

Empire Day was observed in state schools with a program of addresses, pageants and patriotic songs like Jerusalem; Men of Harlech; God Save the King; Rule Britannia. School children would typically salute the Union Flag, swear allegiance to King and Empire with a loyal declaration, hear inspirational speeches and listen to detailed stories of tales of 'daring do' from across the Empire. Stories that included such heroes as Clive of India, Wolfe of Quebec, Gordon of Khartoum, Admiral Nelson, Boadicea, Cecil Rhodes and James Cook. Of course the real highlight of the day for the children was that they were let off school early.

*Reference Sources: Information on Empire Day sourced from www.historic-uk.com, www.aso.gov.au and *Treasured Island: A Book Lover's Tour of Britain* by Frank Barratt.*

Arbor Day

Arbour day known today as National Tree Planting Day and is celebrated in schools on the last Friday in July. Arbor Day celebrates the role of trees in our lives and promotes tree planting and



care. Unlike most celebrations that remember something that has happened in the past, Arbor Day reflects a hope for the future.

Arbor Day was instigated in Nebraska (USA) in 1872 by J Sterling Morton and first celebrated in Australia on 20th June 1889.

Headmasters would often use Arbor Day as an opportunity to improve school grounds. Students were often required to bring shovels from home to undertake the tasks of preparing both the holes required for tree planting and garden beds. Once the trees and gardens were planted the children then had the task of carrying large quantities of water each day to water the newly planted trees and gardens.

Reference Source: Information on Arbor Day sourced from www.arborday.org

GAMES

Skipping

Two players – one at each end of the rope

Two players to skip

Sing – ‘Two little Dickie Birds sitting on the wall’

Two players jump in

Sing – ‘One named Peter, one named Paul’

Each player waves at their name

Sing – ‘Fly away Peter, fly away Paul’

The player exits as their name is called

Sing – ‘Don’t you come back till your Birthday is called. - January, February, March etc’

The player returns when their month is called

Sing – ‘Now fly away, fly away, fly away all’

Both players exit the rope

Skipping

Two players – one at each end of the rope

As many other players as wanted – or can fit into the length of the rope

Sing:

‘Cinderella dressed in Yella

Went upstairs to kiss a fella

Made a mistake

And kissed a snake

How many doctors

Did it take’

Rope turners count and the skippers continue skipping until they miss. At this point they exit the rope and the others continue until all the skippers are out.

To make it more difficult, the rope turners can call ‘Pepper’ and begin to turn the rope very quickly.



Hide and seek

Pick someone to be 'IT'. IT then turns around and counts (number is usually 100) with their eyes closed at the 'Home Base' while the rest of the children hid. Then IT calls 'Coming ready or not' and tries to find everyone. The other children must try to get back to Home Base without getting 'Tagged'. If "Tagged" that child then becomes IT

If the child who is IT does not get someone in 3 tries, IT then gets to pick another child to be IT

Tag/Chasey

One child is designated as IT and that child then runs around and tries to Tag another child. If they succeed, the child they touch becomes IT; and they must try to tag another child.

Choosing it

Children stand in a circle and each child makes a fist and turns it sideways. A Rhyme is chanted and as each word is chanted in turn each child hits the next child's fist. At the end the child whose fist is hit last is out. So the chanting of the Rhyme continues. The last person in the circle is IT.

Rhymes for choosing it

One potato, two potato, three potato, four
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more
(More is out of the circle)

Eenie, meenie, meinie moe
Catch a tiger by the toe
If he hollers, let him go
Eenie, meenie, meinie, moe
(Moe is out of the circle)

Dodge ball

A large rubber ball – Netball size is needed.

Draw a large circle on the ground. The children divide into two teams. One team stays inside the circle, the other team spread themselves around the outside of the circle. The outer team throws the ball at the children inside the circle. The children inside the circle can run where ever then want, but cannot leave the circle. The ball must hit the child below the waist. Once hit, that child then joins the team of players outside the circle. If a child inside the circle is hit above the waist, the thrower is out and must stop playing. The game is over when one child is left inside the circle.

Simon says

One child is chosen to be 'Simon' and the other children stand in a straight line. 'Simon then calls out an action for the children to follow. The action can be anything like – 'Touch your toes'; 'jump ten times on one foot' The 'Simon' can when giving the action simply state an action by itself – 'Touch your ears' and whoever does it is out and has to sit down. Or the 'Simon' can say 'Simon says, touch your ears' and then everyone must follow the instruction. The child who does not follow the instruction is out and must sit down. The actions can be varied according to the age group of the children who are playing. The last child left standing can then be 'Simon'



Marbles

An equal number of marbles per player is placed in the centre of the circle. The size of the circle is dependent on the skill of the players. The player's hand is placed on the ground just at, but not over, the edge of the circle and the player shoots at the marbles inside the ring, trying to shoot them out of the ring. If the player manages to get a marble out of the ring and their Shooter stays inside the ring, that player can shoot again from the place the Shooter had stopped. If the Shooter fails to shoot any marbles out of the ring, the next player then shoots.

The player keeps any marbles they have shot out of the ring.

The most common 'shooting' style was to push the marble out from a curled index finger with the thumb nail – much like flipping a coin.

Clapping games

Pease Porridge Hot

Pease

Clap both hands to thighs

Porridge

Clap both hands together

Hot

Clap partners hands

Pease

Clap both hands to thighs

Porridge

Clap both hands together

Cold

Clap both partners' hands

Pease

Clap both hands to thighs

Porridge

Clap both hands together

In the

Clap partner's right hand only

Pot

Clap both hands together

Nine

Clap partner's left hand only

Days

Clap both hands together

Old

Clap both partners' hands

Reference Source: Information on games taken from various websites on children's games

EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Until the mid-twentieth century Australian families seldom swore or used coarse or blasphemous expletives at home and women seldom swore anywhere. Men who used



aggressive expletives among themselves were affronted by a man who did not 'remember himself' or 'guard his tongue' in mixed company. Children were expected to leave schoolyard smutty talk outside with their muddy shoes; their elders instilled and expected reasonable manners and reasonable restraint.

Women used to let off steam domestically with a fine range of substitute expletives: 'Holy Moses'; 'Holy Mackerel'; 'great balls of fires' and 'jumping Jehosophat' being examples. There were many expressions that children would have heard on a regular basis. The following are some examples of common synonyms for silliness: 'as silly as a two bob watch', 'a shilling short', '19/6 in the pound'.

Another common saying was 'the penny drops' to indicate sudden enlightenment.

Other common phrases were 'Horses sweat, men perspire and ladies flush'; 'Little Pitchers have big ears or Little Pigs have big ears' which was a reminder not to discuss a particular topic as there were children present. Mythical personalities or nonsense phrases for people and things whose names are forgotten were very common 'Whose-me-whatsit', 'thing-a-ma-jig', 'what-a-ma-call-it'. These words were also used to refer to an object "she uses a clever little 'thing-a-ma-jig' for unpicking stitches.

Replies when the adult did not want to answer the question:

Q: What is in your handbag?

A: Fly paper for a sticky beak

Q: What are you making?

A: A wigwam for a gooses bridle

Q: What is that?

A: A crutch for a duck

Q: How old are you?

A: As old as my tongue and a little older than my teeth

Q: Where are you going?

A: To see a man about a dog

Q: Why

A: Because Y is a crooked letter and can't be straightened

Sometimes the response was simply 'Ask no questions and you will be told no lies'

To the child who asked repeated questions:

- 'You're nosey enough to want to know the ins and outs of a chooks' bum'

Chatterbox children:

- 'had been inoculated with a gramophone needle'
- 'able to argue the leg off an iron pot'
- 'Talked until the cows came home'



When chatter and argument became intolerable children were told:

- 'Let's hear it for a bit of shush'
- 'I'll spiflicate you'
- 'I will kill you, as sure as God made little apples'

To the child avoiding household chores/tasks:

- 'Who do you think you are Lord Muck of the Chook House?'

Old sayings still in use today:

- 'Where there is a will there is a way'
- 'Two wrongs don't make a right'

To the cheeky child:

- 'Do you want a taste of Paddy Whack the Drumstick?'

To the uppity child:

- 'And you will come down a peg or two Lady Jane'

To the person leaving the door open when entering the room:

- 'Were you born in a tent?'

To the person telling a lie:

- 'Pull the other leg, it plays jingle bells'

To the person who was untidy or dirty:

- 'You look like something the cat dragged in'
- 'You look like you have been dragged through a hedge backwards'
- 'You look the wild man from Borneo'

To the child pulling a face:

- 'If the wind changes your face will stay like that'

A tall person was known as 'Yard of Pump Water'.

Common phrases to get a child out of the kitchen:

- Kid you're a tap and run
- Kid you're an egg and beat it
- Kid you're a nut and bolt
- Make like a tree, and leave
- Make like a bee and buzz
- Get moving quick sticks
- Get moving licketty split

Reference Source: Information on everyday language taken from 'Lily on the Dustbin: Slang of Australian Women and Families' by Nancy Keesing, Penguin Books Australian, 1982.