

BURWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL – The Early Years

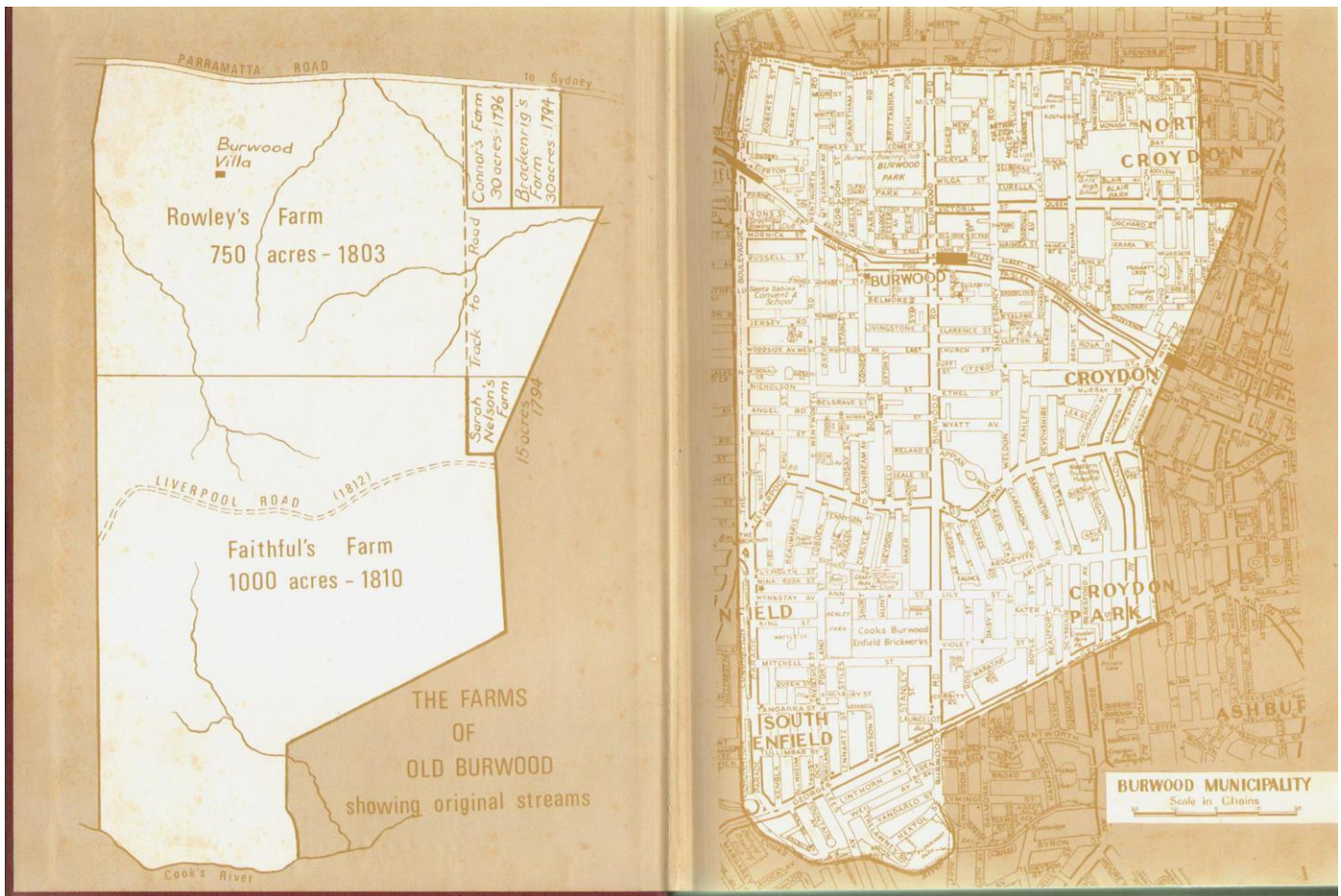
Prepared by Kenneth William Green (retired Surveyor)
Pupil of Burwood Public School 1958 to 1962 inclusive

The land upon which Burwood Public School stands is part of a consolidation of land grants (the earliest dated 1799) totalling 750 acres to Captain Thomas Rowley. Rowley had named one of these grants 'Burwood Farm' after the place where he had lived in Cornwall before leaving for Australia.

At the time of the consolidated grant (1803), the surface of the road between Sydney and Rose Hill (Parramatta), which had been a rough track cleared to a width of eighteen feet, was being improved using the labour of assigned convicts.

Rowley died in 1806 and his Burwood estate was divided between his sons and daughters, the trustees being Major Johnstone (Annandale), and Dr. John Harris. It was stipulated in the will that the property should not be sold until the children had attained their age of consent.

In order to give evidence regarding their involvement in the Bligh Rebellion, both trustees returned to England in 1808 and the Governor (Macquarie) appointed Thomas Moore, of Liverpool, to act as sole guardian of the Rowley children. For unknown reasons, Moore sold the Burwood estate of 750 acres in 1812 by public auction for £520 - the purchaser being Alexander Riley.



Comparison of Rowley and Faithful grants with modern street directory.

On January 1, 1810, the date upon which Governor Macquarie was sworn in, a grant of land having an area of 1000 acres and adjoining Rowley's grant on the southern side, was made to William Faithfull, a lawyer, who apparently did not fully realise the value of the property, for in 1815 he exchanged the grant for 1200 acres held at South Creek by Alexander Riley. The latter thus came into possession of 1750 acres, a large portion of which now forms part of the Municipality of Burwood.

Both Burwood Farm and Faithful's Farm were planted with wheat and were producing small harvests to help feed the young colony. Rowley was also running sheep which he had bought from Macarthur.

Riley died in London in 1833, and left the whole of his land in N.S.W. to his son, Mr. W. E. Riley. However, when the children of Captain Rowley attained their majority, it was found that the Burwood estate

had been sold contrary to the will of the original grantee and the sequel was long drawn out litigation. The upshot of this law case was that Riley was dispossessed of the property, the Supreme Court having decided that the Governor had no authority to appoint a person to sell the land, as was done by the trustee nominated by him.

The Rowley family having regained possession of the Burwood estate, John Rowley went to reside at Burwood Villa in 1833.

In the meantime there was further litigation. Riley's executors brought an action against Thomas Moore in the matter, and recovered something over £5000 damages.

The Burwood estate was divided under Captain Rowley's will into four sections, for two sons and two daughters, and after 1833 these and other lands, which had been subdivided, were sold.

In the 1840's, two parochial schools in Burwood, and Enfield's Adelaide Park Free School, were founded. By the late 1860's Burwood youngsters might attend any of these three denominational schools or even a public school at Ashfield. In 1868 concerned citizens formed a committee to agitate for the establishment of a Burwood Public School.

According to *The Sydney Morning Herald* dated Monday 1 March 1869 a meeting, to establish a Public school, was held at Macdonald's Burwood Hotel, on the previous Tuesday evening, presided over by Mr. Thomas Walker, at which three resolutions were passed

1. Support for the establishment of a Public school as near as possible to the railway station.
2. Financial support to meet the guarantee required by the Council of Education – the cost of the proposed school being estimated at £1000, to embrace a teacher's residence and accommodation for 210 children. Mr. Thomas Walker stated his intention to pay an equal amount to the subscriptions received from other sources.
3. Appointment of a committee to carry out the object of the meeting. Captain Henry Burns was appointed treasurer, and Mr. E. T. Penfold accepted the position of honorary secretary.

Within a year the secretary, well-known tobacco merchant, E. T. Penfold, sent a formal petition for a school to the Council of Education, reporting that his Committee was willing to buy a 2½ acre site in Conder Street and to guarantee £400 towards the cost of the building.

It was reported in the *Sydney Mail* of 10 July, 1869 p. 5 that Mr. Thomas Walker, of Concord, had contributed £200 towards the erection of a Public School at Burwood, and had promised a further sum of £50 on condition of £50 being subscribed by the residents in that locality.

An application for the school was lodged with the Council of Education Office, Sydney – notification of which appeared in *NSW Government Gazette* dated 27 August 1869.

A site for the school, of area 2 acres 2 roods and ¾ of a perch (10,136m² or approx. 1 hectare), was initially selected and purchased (*NSW Gov. Gazette* dated 10 May 1870). A further area was added later.

It was reported in *The Goulburn Herald and Chronicle* of 31 December, 1870 p. 4 that Mr James McCredie, the second master at the Goulburn Public School, had been appointed master of the public school at Burwood, near Sydney.

The government response was so prompt that a brick school (designed by Mr. Mansfield, at a cost of £1300) and master's residence, were completed in time for Burwood Public School to be officially opened on Saturday 14 January 1871, when a luncheon was given, at which the Hon. A. Campbell presided, with Mr. J. Fairfax in the vice chair. The cost of the land was reported to have been £200 (*The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 17 January, 1871 p. 2).

The official opening of the school was reported in detail in *The Sydney Morning Herald* dated 16 January, 1871 p. 2:

OPENING OF THE BURWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL.

THE ceremony of opening a newly-erected Public school at Burwood took place on Saturday afternoon, in the presence of a large number of the residents of the district, besides many gentlemen from Sydney. Amongst those present were the Hon. James Byrnes, Minister for Works, the Hon. Alexander Campbell, M.L.C., the Rev. W. Lumsdaine, the Rev. John West, the Rev. R. W. Young, the Rev. G. G. Howden, Mr. John Fairfax, Mr. Walter Renny, Dr. Garran, Mr. M. M. Cohen, Mr. , John Lucas, M.L.A., Captain Burns, Mr. J. Cuthbert, Mr. R. G. Reading, Captain Challis, of H.M.S. Rosario, Mr. Charles Smith, Mr. W. Wilkins, Mr. G. A. Mansfield, Mr. F. Bridges, Mr. E. T. Penfold, Mr. Wynne.

The school itself is a very neat gothic building, and is situated about 250 yards from the railway station. Its position is so central that the children of Homebush and Enfield will be able to attend it without the inconvenience of a very long walk. It stands in the centre of four acres of land, which has been cleared and levelled for a playground, &c, and well-fenced round. The schoolroom is 54 foot long, by 21 feet wide, and is of very good height. It will afford accommodation for about 200 children. There are two classrooms attached; and lavatories are also fitted up in a building outside. The ground is divided into two allotments, one of which is reserved for the girls and the other for the boys; and upon each allotment a substantial shed has been erected for the use of the children during play hours. There are underground water tanks, capable of holding sufficient for every purpose for which water may be required. In one corner of the school ground stands a neat four-roomed cottage, with appurtenances, for the use of the master. The cost of the buildings, which are of brick on stone foundations, will be about £1300. Mr. G. A. Mansfield was the architect. The local board consists of Mr. Thomas Walker, Mr. William Deane, Mr. Wynne, Captain Burns, and Mr. E. T. Penfold.

THE LUNCHEON.

At 3 o'clock a numerous company of gentlemen sat down to a well-prepared luncheon. The Hon. Alexander Campbell, M.L.C., occupied the chair (in the absence of Mr. Thomas Walker), and Mr. John Fairfax occupied the vice chair. After lunch had been partaken of,

The CHAIRMAN proposed the toast of "The Queen". In doing so he expressed his regret that Mr. Thomas Walker, in consequence of a recent bereavement in his family, was not able to be present to take the chair. They were all aware of the great assistance which that gentleman had given towards the establishment of the institution in which they were assembled; they were aware of his character as a good colonist, and of his munificence to every Institution that was established for the public good. (Cheers.) Mr. Walker was also an old resident in the district; and would have filled the chair far more worthily than he (Mr. Campbell) could hope to do. (Cheers.)

The toast was drunk with the customary formalities.

The CHAIRMAN then proposed a toast, "The Earl of Belmore." He said that his Excellency had great claims to the gratitude and respect of the people of this colony, for the interest he took in every movement which had for its object the public welfare. No one, he thought, would deny that his Excellency was entitled to great respect for the manner in which he governed this country, and he thought no one commanded greater respect than his Excellency did.

The toast was drunk with cheers.

The Vice-CHAIRMAN proposed, - "The Parliament of New South Wales." In the course of his remarks, he acknowledged that there were many good statesmen connected with our Parliament; at the same time there were some gentlemen who could not claim that distinction. The Ministry now in power had before it a field of labour and of operations, which, if properly managed, would prove of great and lasting benefit to the colony. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN returned thanks on behalf of the Legislative Council.

Mr. JOHN LUCAS in returning thanks on behalf of the lower branch of the Legislature said he was always happy to say what he could for the Parliament of New South Wales. Although there were both good and bad men in Parliament, he thought that on the whole there were as good a lot as could be assembled. He behoved that every interest in the country was well represented in Parliament-the squatters, the agriculturists, the merchants, the small tradesmen, the mechanics, and the labourers. He was a member of Parliament for ten years previous to the last dissolution; and during that time he never knew any vote proposed for the education or improvement of the people that was not granted in full. Money for the University, the Grammar School, or the Public schools was voted without a single objection. He thought that spoke well for the members. He believed they were really delighted whenever a new school was opened, and looked upon it as another step towards cultivating the mind of the rising generation. When we considered that the boys of to-day would be the rulers of to-morrow, he thought we could not do better than give every lad in the colony a good moral and intellectual education. On behalf of the Parliament of New South Wales he returned thanks for the toast.

The Rev. G. G. HOWDEN proposed "The Council of Education." They had, he thought, good reason to speak well of the Council for what it had done in the colony, and especially for what it had done for Burwood. They were greatly indebted to it for the kind manner in which it had met the proposals made in respect to the building in which they were now assembled. They did, most sincerely rejoice in what the Council had done throughout the land, in providing education for the children of the poorer classes. (Cheers)

Mr. JOHN FAIRFAX responded to the toast. He was sorry that an older member of the Board was not present to respond. Professor Smith was on a visit to Melbourne, Mr. Arnold was in the country, the Hon. George Allen was unwell, and Sir James Martin was, he presumed, busy with the fortifications. He had only been a member of the Board for about a fortnight. He therefore was not in a position to speak at any great length of the operations of the Council; and he therefore contented himself by simply returning thanks for the toast that had been proposed.

Captain Burns proposed a toast "Mr. Thomas Walker.' In the course of his remarks he passed a high eulogium upon that gentleman's character as a colonist and a philanthropist. He thought there was not a charitable institution in the colony that had not benefited by Mr. Walker's munificence; he had contributed about one-sixth of the cost of that school, and had been most assiduous in helping to get the institution established.

The toast was received with great cheering.

The Rev. W. Lumsdaine proposed the next toast, which was "Our Visitors."

The toast was accepted in due form.

The Hon. J. BYRNES responded. He congratulated the committee to whose persevering labours was mainly owing the erection of that school, and he also congratulated the residents of the neighbourhood, on having their

desires for a Public school fulfilled. After alluding to the difficulties in the way of education in the early days of the colony's history, he proceeded to say that he was delighted to find that the colonists had risen as one man to insist upon a proper education being provided for the rising generation. The children would have to be thankful all their lives for the success which had attended the passing of the Public Schools Act. That Act was passed under the Administration of Sir James Martin, and ample provision had been made for educating the children of all classes of the community. He thought that the great success which had been achieved by the present system, should now cause all opposition to it to be withdrawn. (Cheers.)

Mr. WALTER RENNY, in a few appropriate remarks, proposed "The Press of New South Wales."

The toast was responded to by the Rev. J. West and by Dr. Garran.

This concluded the list of toasts. The company retired for a short time whilst the tables were cleared, ready for,

THE PUBLIC MEETING.

There was a very good attendance at this meeting. The Hon. Alexander Campbell was called upon to occupy the chair.

The CHAIRMAN remarked that it was with some reluctance that he consented to take the chair. It was hoped and expected that Mr. Thomas Walker, would have presided, but owing to a domestic affliction he was unable to be present. He felt his utter inability to take the place of that gentleman; indeed there were few men in the country who could fill his place. He was sure the meeting all deeply sympathised with Mr. Walker, and regretted the cause of his absence. Mr. Walker had displayed his munificence towards the institution in which they were assembled, as he had done to most of the public institutions in the colony. He (Mr. Campbell) could not help congratulating the inhabitants of Burwood upon the opening of that very handsome and commodious school; nor could he refrain from expressing his opinion that great credit was due to the residents of the neighbourhood, few as they were, for the great energy they had displayed in bringing that building into existence. During his residence at Burwood he had himself witnessed a great deal of what had been done; and he was exceedingly gratified to find that in so small a space of time, and with such a small number of hands to work, so much had been accomplished. Whilst saying that, however, he did not forget the handsome manner in which Mr. Thomas Walker had given his assistance. But for that gentleman they would probably not have been able to congratulate themselves on the erection of the school. Now that the school was opened, he hoped that those who had children would not have to be reminded of their duties to them. A grave responsibility would rest upon all parents who neglected to perform their duty to their children. It was one of the greatest boons a parent could enjoy to have the means of educating a child at a cheap - he might say a nominal rate. And when he looked at the fact that the people of this colony were so much better off than the people of older countries, and had at their disposal greater facilities for educating their children, he might characterise the sum which education cost here as very trifling. He asked the meeting to join him in heartily wishing that success might attend that Public school. (Cheers.) He concluded by declaring the school open.

Mr. JOHN FAIRFAX said, as he had only been a member of the Council of Education for a very short time, it would be out of place for him to presume to give the meeting any information which he had not from time to time derived from printed reports. He might say that from the time the old National Board was instituted it always had his sympathies, his respect, and what little influence he possessed from his connection with the public Press. The Board of Education, however, which was established four years ago, had certainly had additional claims to his support; and that support he had given in every possible way. He believed that the present Public school system was destined to become prevalent over the whole of this great colony. He did not wish to say a single word against the Denominational schools as they existed. They were doing a great work. And he believed that the clergy and gentlemen who supported those schools were consistent in their support. Those who were in favour of the other system desired their support, and he believed that in the course of time it would be given. He believed the time would speedily come when the supporters of both systems would work harmoniously together for one general system of public instruction. He thought that the teaching of religion to children devolved first of all upon parents. And he regarded it as most extraordinary that throughout all the discussions which had taken place with regard to education during the last four years, parents, to a large extent had been put on one side, or lost sight of altogether. Religion should be first taught at the mother's knee. But the teaching of religion in Public schools had not been overlooked. Certain hours had been set apart in order to allow ministers of the various Denominations to attend the schools, and teach the children the doctrines of the Church to which they belonged. There was no interference with the tenets or beliefs of any Denomination. All were treated alike. If anyone would take the trouble to look through the lesson books used in the Public schools, they would find that extracts from both the Old and New Testaments were continually being read by the children. It was quite true that the different dogmas of religion were not taught by the lesson books. It was objected by some that the whole Bible was not allowed to be used. But the main truths of religion were taught by extracts from the Old and New Testaments; and, therefore, it could not be truly said that religion was entirely ignored in our Public schools. He believed in the Public school system most thoroughly. And he believed that those gentlemen who were opposing it, or holding back from it, would in the course of a few years be amongst its fore-most friends, and would become most diligent and faithful workers under the system. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. WILKINS (secretary to the Council of Education) having been called upon to address the meeting, said it was very difficult for him to make a speech inasmuch as he was not his own master, and from that circumstance he was precluded to a great extent from expressing his own opinions. He had to deal almost exclusively with questions of fact. He would, however, endeavour to say something to the audience which it would regard as new and interesting. Perhaps he could not do better than point out a few particulars in which the educational arrangements in this colony contrasted with those of the mother country. He had already stated in public his strong belief that in such a contrast

the advantages were wholly on the side of this colony. In the first place, if we took the amount of money expended upon education, it would be found that our Parliament was liberal beyond all comparison with that of Great Britain. (Cheers.) He believed that if, in the mother country, they spent upon education in proportion to their wealth to the same extent as was done in this colony, instead of spending some £800,000 per annum, they would have to spend something like £10,000,000. He thought it redounded to the credit of the colony that the Parliament should be willing to vote the large sum which it did every year, and that the people should not only not object, but actually approve. Then, if we went into the details of the question, we should find that the extent of education given here was vastly greater than it was in England. Practically, to the great bulk of the children, instruction was limited to the three fundamental subjects - reading, writing and arithmetic. It was true there existed another organisation which had for its object instruction in science and art; but from the very nature of its constitution, the board which had to do with those matters could do nothing directly, and could exercise no great amount of control or stimulus over the teachers. Practically, then, the great body of the children who went to school in England learnt only reading, writing, and arithmetic; and that instruction was of an exceedingly meagre and mechanical kind. He spoke from his own personal observations in the model schools of England, and from reading the reports of inspectors and the report of the Committee of Education in England. If it was necessary to produce any circumstance or fact in proof of what he had said, he might allude to the introduction of the Education Bill into the British Parliament. Not a single member opposed it on the ground that it was not necessary. On the contrary, it was admitted on all hands to be extremely necessary, and that if steps were not taken to improve the education of the people of England, that country would soon sink to the position of a third-rate power in Europe. Such was the character of education in England. Now what did we attempt to do in this colony? In addition to the three elementary subjects, we endeavoured to give some instruction in grammar and geography. He believed that the emigration movement in England was checked to a great extent by the utter ignorance of the lower classes with regard to Australian geography. They had little idea of where Australia was, or of the nature of the country. Before we could induce people to come here, it would be necessary to give them some information about the colony. A knowledge of geography was of the greatest importance to the people of this country. We should soon be carrying on a great business with all the islands which lay so near to us, and with the opposite continent of America. A knowledge of geography would assist our colonial youth in understanding the position and character of the countries with which we might trade, and of what products we could buy from or sell to them. These were some of the most obvious reasons for teaching geography. But we went further. We were very fond of teaching singing in our public schools. And he might mention that the master who had been appointed to superintend that school was a very successful teacher of singing. Music cultivated the taste and sentiment, and morals, and even religion. He re-collected when he came to Sydney some twenty years ago the favourite song of the nurse-girls, as they walked about the streets with infants in their arms, was "Oh, Susannah." But now we were sure to hear them singing some nice little song, the words of which conveyed some great truth or useful sentiment. The humanising and civilising influence of teaching music was of incalculable value. Drawing was also taught in the schools without extra charge; and he would again remark that the gentleman appointed to that school was a very successful teacher of drawing. Strange to say, drawing was the one subject which was most likely to be useful to a man in any rank of life. Suppose a boy was to be an artisan - one of the most difficult, and yet one of the most common, requisites was that he should be able to make a straight line. If he was to be a ploughman, his master would not approve of his work unless he could make a straight furrow. If he was to be a blacksmith, he must be able to make a straight bar of iron. Then again, the children attending the Public schools were also instructed in mathematics, in Euclid, and algebra; and the teaching of a little Latin was even attempted. The result of all this was, that if a boy only remained long enough at school, until, say sixteen or seventeen years of age, he had got a far better education than could have been obtained a few years ago in any but very expensive schools in any country where the English language was spoken. Having said thus much about what was taught in the Public schools, he would like to impress upon those ladies and gentlemen present who had children to send to school, what appeared to him to be an obvious conclusion which they should draw. Here were the means of education placed close to their hands; a commodious school room provided with all necessary books and other appliances of instruction; a master appointed, who was distinguished in his profession, who was devoted to it, and who was to make it the business as well as the pleasure of his life. The result remained to a large extent with the people themselves. As the proverb said, "one man might take a horse to the water, but forty men could not make the animal drink." If parents in the neighbourhood of that school did not take advantage of the means which had been placed within their reach for educating their children, no one could compel them to do so. He would just add one observation, not to show the value of education, but to show how easily persons could deprive themselves of it. Education was a process continually going on in school and out of school. It went on in the child's mind by almost imperceptible degrees. You could not measure the length and breadth of what a child learnt during the day. But he acquired something every day, his mental faculties had grown stronger, had expanded, and had become of more use to him. But if parents kept their children away from school for a few days, they broke into that process of development, the children lost something. They did not stand still, but every day lost was a step backward, which had to be made up again. The child would fall behind the others of the class, and the instruction which would have been given to him in common with others would have to be given separately, or not given at all. It was, therefore, important that children should be sent with great regularity. Of course to do that would demand a great sacrifice on the part of many parents. But the trouble they experienced would be repaid to them by the progress which the children would make in learning, and fitting themselves for the duties of life. After speaking of the importance of parents placing implicit confidence in the teacher of their children, Mr. Wilkins remarked that he had known the master who had been appointed to that school from boyhood; he knew him to be very successful as a teacher, and one in whom the greatest confidence might be placed by the parents of the children.

The Rev. J. WEST briefly addressed the meeting, and in a few humorous remarks contrasted the facilities which parents now had for giving their children an education, with the difficulties which existed many years ago.

On the motion of Mr. E.T. PENFOLD, Mr. Campbell left the chair, whereupon it was taken by the Rev. W. Lumsdaine.

Mr. John DAWSON then proposed, and Captain Burns seconded, a vote of thanks to the chairman.

The motion was carried by acclamation.

The Hon. A. CAMPBELL having in a brief manner acknowledged the compliment, the meeting separated.



*Burwood Public School in 1913 – the original 1871 building is on the right.
Enrolments increased from 67 to 139 during the first year.*

Following is a report of the school in October 1890, as appeared in the *Evening News*, 7 October, 1890 p. 2:

BURWOOD SUPERIOR SCHOOL

The site of the Burwood Public School, pleasantly elevated as it is above the surrounding township which contains many spacious and handsome dwellings, is one of the best in Sydney. Whenever a breeze blows in summer the pupils are fanned by it, and their energies are consequently renewed to greater exertion and more vigorous effort than could well be the case in a less favorable situation. A welcome shade also is afforded by a belt of trees, principally firs and Moreton Bay figs, which surround the entire grounds; and from their size and maturity would indicate that previous managers did not neglect arbor day which has under present administration become so generally and deservedly popular throughout the colony.

The classes were smaller in Mr. M'Credie's time than at present, and the headmaster had more time to devote to training than now. After this gentleman, came Mr. M'Clelland and Mr. Cornish, both of whom are accredited with having left an enduring influence, and were succeeded in turn by Mr. J. Saxby, of whose most useful work in his present appointment at William street testimony was borne in a recent notice. Mr. Saxby is still affectionately remembered at Burwood, here he would probably have ended his departmental service but for his dislike to living on the school premises and in such close proximity to the vigorous shunting operations carried on by the railway authorities almost under his bedroom window, rendering sleep an impossibility. In the present esteemed popular and efficient headmaster, Mr. J. R. Clouting, these gentlemen have in every sense a worthy successor. This gentleman was for some nine years headmaster of the Superior Public School at Dubbo, which he raised from one of very inferior grade to that of one of the highest in the western district, and has since held appointments as headmaster of the Waterloo and Enmore Public Schools, both of which he opened, and which are now nearly first-class schools. Mr. Clouting has been in the service of the Council of Education and the Department of Public Instruction for nearly 24 years, and holds a IA. certificate by examination. Besides the headmaster, are Mr. E. Cadman, assistant, a young man of considerable energy, tact and attainments, and holding a first class certificate, whose teaching in the fourth class has already been mentioned; Mr. Scouller, who has charge of the upper third class, and whose style of dealing with his subject, and the prompt and intelligent answers would certainly gratify any visiting parent who might have children in the class, and three pupil teachers, whose classes were doing honest earnest work, which cannot but leave its favorable results on the minds and characters of the pupils.

The enrolment and attendance of the entire school have increased very materially of late, the number in attendance at the end of last week being: Boys 305, girls 261, and infants 371; total, 937. The school has a cadet corps of about 60 members, under the captaincy of Mr. Clouting, who is enthusiastic in his advocacy of the physical culture dependent on military, drill. In accordance with the requirements of the new standards every class of boys in the school is drilled - the second and third classes learning squad drill, and the higher classes company drill and military physical exercises without arms; while the cadets, of course, have in addition the manual exercises, battalion drill, skirmishing and firing exercises, in all of which they compare very favorably with other corps in the colony.

The school accommodation is at present very inadequate for the instruction of such a number as is at present enrolled. The Minister, however, has called for tenders for the erection of a large school for the girls and infants, including a department for the training of infants under the new and popular Kindergarten system. When the new building is completed the present block of brick buildings will be converted into a boys' department, and Burwood pupils and teachers will have nothing to complain of on the ground of insufficient teaching space.

Of the girls and infants' departments, the same high testimony may be borne as in the case of the boys; and their teachers, Miss Proudlock and Miss Harding, were spoken of to the writer by a gentleman possessing exceptional means of judging as two most faithful and enthusiastic teachers. The reports of Mr. Inspectors Dwyer and Thompson, as well as the appearance of the two departments in question, amply justify the high encomium. These ladies are assisted in their respective departments by Miss Ada Smith and two pupil teachers, and Miss Mary Young (acting head mistress), Miss Miller, and four assistants, all of whom are doing good service. Indeed, the authority just mentioned speaks of the staff as one of the best he has ever known; and further, of the parents' children at Burwood, the same friend remarks that they leave nothing for a teacher to desire. etc

When Mr. J. Perry, M.L.A. (Minister for Education and Labour), accompanied by Mr. J. C. Maynard (Under-Secretary), visited Burwood and Homebush in August 1900 it was pointed out to Mr Perry that the accommodation in the Burwood Public School was inadequate and he promised to sanction the building of a new school as soon as the money was available (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August, 1900 p. 4).

The Daily Telegraph dated 9 August, 1902 p. 20 was able to report:

BURWOOD SUPERIOR PUBLIC SCHOOL
OPENING THE BOYS' WING. SPEECH BY MR. BRIDGES.

The new wing of the Burwood Superior Public School, built for the accommodation of the boys, was yesterday officially opened by Mr. F. Bridges, Chief Inspector, in the presence of a very large gathering of local residents. The principal thoroughfare of the suburb was hung with bunting, as also were the approaches to the railway station. Mr. Perry, Minister for Education, was to have performed the ceremony, but owing to some matter of importance coming before the Cabinet, he was unavoidably absent, and Mr. Bridges, who was accompanied by Mr. James M'Credie, filled the breach. A platform was erected in the school grounds, and from this several addresses were delivered. Mr. E. Scholes presided, and associated with him were Messrs. W. Archer, M.L.A., J. Bridges, James M'Credie, M. Sheppard (Mayor of Burwood), T. O. Correy (Mayor of Concord), W. G. Crane, T. Hodson (Mayor of Enfield), and the Revs. R. Scott-West, J. G. Middleton and others.

Mr. Scholes apologised for the absence of the Minister, but said that it was unavoidable. It gave him pleasure to preside at the opening ceremony of the handsome building which had just been finished by the Government, and which did them credit. Nowadays they heard a great deal of the waste of public money, but it pleased him to be in a position to say that no such charge could be made with regard to the new school. ("Hear, hear.") The old premises were getting into such a state of disrepair as to be wholly unfit for the children to occupy them. Much of the credit of having prevailed upon the Government to erect the structure was due to Mr. Archer, the member for the district, who had been unremitting in his endeavors, and who had not relaxed his efforts till the money for the school had been granted. (Applause.) Next the board would ask the authorities to sanction the erection of a girls' school, which was even now just as much needed as the boys' building had been. (Applause.)

Mr. F. Bridges, Chief Inspector, expressed the pleasure he felt at being present, and which was heightened by the fact that he had been present also at the opening of the original school 30 years ago. He felt a very considerable interest in the Burwood school. No person could notice the opening of an educational institution without a feeling of pride, for it had been said that the opening of one school meant the closing of two gaols. ("Hear, hear.") In Massachusetts, at the conclusion of the war, the people affirmed that "The State desires the education of its people as the safeguard of order and liberty." Education preserved the liberties of the people. The more a nation devoted itself to the education of its people, the greater and more successful had been its desires for liberty. There had been a steady decrease in crime in New South Wales of late years, due entirely to the growth of education. The more people read the more they learned their rights, and the stronger grew their desires to maintain them. It afforded him the greatest pleasure to declare the new school open, and he trusted the children in whose interests it had been erected would take the fullest advantage of it. It was the aim of the Education Department to improve the physical, moral, and intellectual characters of their scholars - these were interests which he was sure would be well preserved. He counselled the children to be careful and obedient in their studies, so that when they grew up they might prove themselves "mettle of their pasture." He ventured to predict that the future of the Burwood school would even eclipse the good work of the past. (Applause.)

Mr. James M'Credie, the first public school teacher at Burwood, said that he might be pardoned for altering an old couplet, till it read, "Before all schools in east and west, I love the Burwood school the best." (Laughter and applause.) Even after 20 years' absence, he could be pardoned for saying that, for it was in Burwood he had won his spurs as a headmaster. He began there with an enrolment of 67, and left with one of over 500. It was his hope that the Burwood people would never forget the great assistance given by the late Mr. Thomas Walker, of Yaralla, whose financial help had been liberal and timely. As to the future prospects of the school, he was satisfied that in the hands of Mr. Ferguson, the headmaster, they were all right. (Applause.)

Mr. W. Archer, M.L.A., also addressed the gathering, and traced the past history of the school. He expressed the belief that in Mr. Ferguson and his staff the Burwood residents had teachers who could not be excelled in any other suburb.

Mr. M. Sheppard (Mayor of Burwood), in proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Bridges, said that the nation which troubled little about education went back and back, while the countries which were liberal in that respect prospered.

On the motion of Mr. J. Ferguson, the headmaster, a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Scholes for presiding, and to all others who had assisted at the function.

During the afternoon the girls gave a pretty display of club exercises, and the boys of physical drill, the accompaniments being played by the Cadet Band. Several vocal items were also nicely rendered.

The new building is a handsome and commodious structure, situated in one of the best positions of the municipality. Included in it are four class rooms, 40ft. 6in. x 25ft., there are corridors and hat lobbies, and other apartments necessary to a well-appointed school. The materials in its construction are of the very best. Mr. M'Donald, of Summer-hill, was the contractor.

Having had the accommodation issue rectified, concerned citizens raised the matter of the deplorable condition of the footpaths surrounding the Burwood Public School grounds. The local council approached the Department of Public Instruction for financial assistance, but received a facetious response (*The Daily Telegraph*, 21 January, 1903 p. 5).

By July 1904 the work had not been undertaken. It was stated in *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 July, 1904 p. 16 that '*Since the building of the recent additions to the Burwood Superior Public School, the footpaths have been in a shocking and even dangerous condition, owing partly to the roots of trees growing within the school grounds forcing their way through the asphalt*'. The council were to again seek funds from the Education Department, with a view to an apportionment of the expense of necessary repairs.

Another problem with the school was noted by *The Sydney Morning Herald* dated 28 August, 1905 p. 10:
Burwood Public School

Many needed improvements at the Burwood Superior Public School have been accomplished by the Department of Public Instruction, but the condition of a structure in the boys' section is such as to meet with the disapproval of the Burwood health officer. The local council has urged the department to remedy the structural defects and drainage of the building.

A letter to *The Sydney Morning Herald* from "A Parent" (edition 6 February, 1911 p. 12) complained of the insanitary and neglected condition of the Burwood Superior Public School and hoped that the Minister for Education would have his attention drawn to the pressing needs of the scholars.

By July 1911, further improvements to the school were imminent according to *The Sun* dated 14 July, 1911 p. 2:

Burwood Public School.

A meeting of the Burwood Parents and Citizens Association was held at the local School of Arts last night, when the secretary (Mrs. K. Newsome) intimated that she had received a letter from Mr. Henley, M.L.A., stating that the long-promised improvements at the Burwood Superior Public School would be put in hand without further delay and that the work would be carried out by day labor. Some of the members were not disposed to believe that the work would be started "without delay," as that story had been told so often. The principal (Mr W H. Teale), however, set all doubts at rest by assuring the members that material for carrying out the work had already been delivered. Mr. Teale also informed the meeting that the Commonwealth Meteorological Bureau had offered to establish a station at the school, and had agreed to provide all the necessary instruments. On the application of Mr. Perry £1 10s was voted for footballs for the school, and it was also stated that arrangements were being made for the school team to play a match at Orange shortly.

Two years later, the parents of the school children were seeking urgent attention to the buildings - *The Sun*, 4 February, 1913 p. 6:

An Ant-Eaten School

Despite the fact that frequent complaints have been made regarding the condition of the Burwood Public School buildings very little seems to be done to remedy them. At last night's meeting of the Burwood Council Mrs. Kate Newsome, hon. secretary of the Burwood Parents and Citizens Association, wrote as follows: - "*I beg to draw your attention to the ant-eaten condition of parts of the Burwood school buildings. The old wooden building in the south-west corner is in a most dilapidated state, and, in my opinion, is not safe. The heavy posts of the main building are also much eaten by white ants. An early inspection by the Mayor and aldermen is earnestly looked for.*"

It was decided to inform the writer that the council had already taken action, with the result that the departmental architect had visited the school, and the matters referred to had been brought under his notice.

Major work was undertaken and the results were reported in both newspapers as follows:

- *The Evening News*, 7 March, 1914 p. 8 -

Burwood School Improvements.

The additions to the Burwood Public School which were opened by the Minister for Education, consist of six fine new class-rooms, splendidly ventilated and lighted, and also commodious rooms for the mistress of the girls' school and the mistress of the infants, and staff. Each class-room will accommodate about 55 children. The new buildings cost about £6000, and the contractor to the Works Department was Mr. Legge. The new wing will be used by the girls and infants.

The total enrolment last year was 1950, and 800 children had to be refused for want of space.

Among those present at the opening were the Mayor of Burwood (Alderman Carpenter), Mr. T. Henley, M.L.A., Alderman Archer, Alderman Whipp, Mr. W. H. Teale (headmaster), Miss Proudlock (mistress of the girls), and Miss Griffiths (mistress of infants), and a large number of parents.

Burwood has been premier school in football for four years, besides being high in the list for certificates and bursaries.

- *The Daily Telegraph*, 7 March, 1914 p. 15 -

Burwood Superior Public School.

Mr. Carmichael, Minister for Education, opened the additions to the Burwood Superior Public School yesterday afternoon. The Minister mentioned that the site of the Burwood school was purchased by the department for £200. The first school cost £1300 to build, of which £500 was subscribed locally. The present additions had cost £5000. The school was somewhat historic, for the first headmaster, Mr. James M'Creddie, afterwards became chief inspector, while another principal, Mr. M'Coy, was now Director of Education in Tasmania, Two other headmasters, Mr. A. Smith and Mr. A. Noble, were now inspectors under the department.

Apparently there were still problems – as reported in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May, 1914 p. 23:

Burwood Public School.

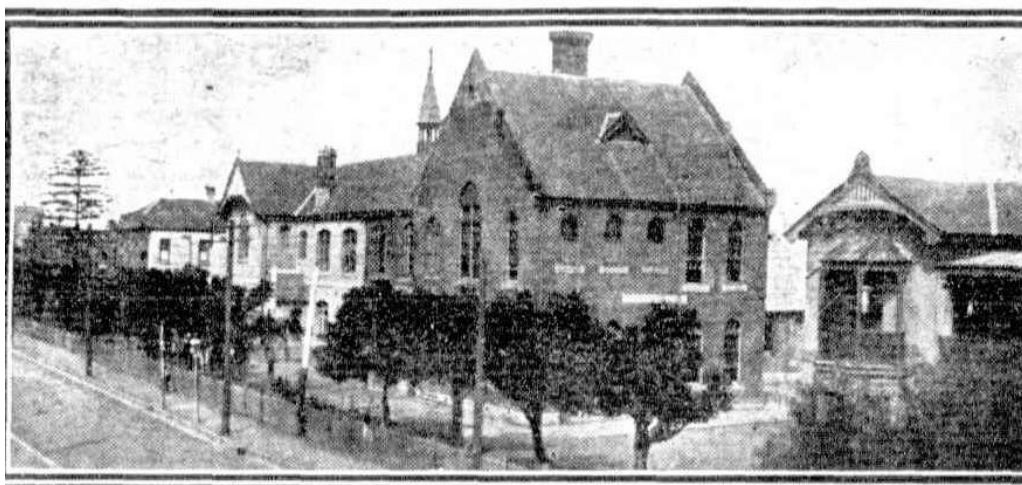
Mr. O. Lindsay Thompson, vice-president of the Burwood branch of the Parents and Citizens' Association, commenting upon the published statements by the hon. secretary of his association to the effect that no overcrowding exists in the Burwood Superior Public School, states that no overcrowding is allowed to take place because scores of scholars are refused admission on account of insufficient accommodation. He can produce dozens of children unable to gain admittance to the school.

There was a need to replace the flagpole after it was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* of 31 March, 1915 p. 18 that 'The flagstaff at the Burwood Superior Public School was shattered by lightning'.

A series of articles on Australian Schools by *The Mirror* newspaper included the following, regarding Burwood Public School, in its edition of 13 October, 1917 p. 4:

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS - III.-BURWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL.

A SCHOOL OF WHICH AUSTRALIAN BOYS AND GIRLS SHOULD BE PROUD.



A general view of the Burwood Public School, of which some particulars were published in the last issue of the Mirror.

During the week the Burwood Public School was visited. The scholars are rosy-looking youngsters, and a good advertisement for the Burwood air. The patriotic activities of the Burwood Public School compare favorably with those of any other school yet visited. To Australia Day funds the Burwood School contributed £249; to Red Triangle

Day, £45; France's Day, £29/9/8; and to the Children's Thirty Thousand, £108. Also, as a result of a challenge from a private school, £50 was realised. Smaller donations were: £4/6/ to the Polish Fund, £11/12/ to the Red Cross. £1/7/ to Allies' Day and £11/10/ worth of Tommy cookers for the lads at the front. The children of this school, in particular, seem to have the habit of taking pains. Seven hundred pairs of socks and one hundred different garments have been finished during the year. The money spent on knitting wool (£4 a month) is raised either by sweet-selling or penny concerts, in which the school children take part. The War Chest and the French League also send bales of wool, which are made into socks or Balaclavas by the energetic little scholars and returned to those societies. A novel idea is the Snapshot League. Taking snaps of the families of soldiers to send to the front is a favorite occupation of Burwood boys. The school is particularly proud of its three honor rolls, containing over 500 names, including one V.C. (Edward Howell) and several Military Medals. The school shield, which is placed in the centre, has for its motto, *'Play the Game'* - a fine motto, which can and ought to be followed throughout life. Some, pictures of Burwood School will be published next week.

Although the school's secondary classes had been extended after educational reforms in 1904, it was still called a Superior Public School until 1920 when the senior boys' classes were constituted as an Intermediate High School, and the girls' classes as a Commercial School.

In 1927 all the secondary classes were moved to a fine new building in Queen Street, but the boys were shortly transferred to the Summerhill Intermediate High School, leaving the whole building for use as a girls' Central Domestic Science School.

An article titled 'Two New Schools', in the *Sydney Mail* dated 13 April, 1927 p. 38, described the *'handsome edifice designed for advanced scholars and listed as 'Croydon Intermediate High'*:

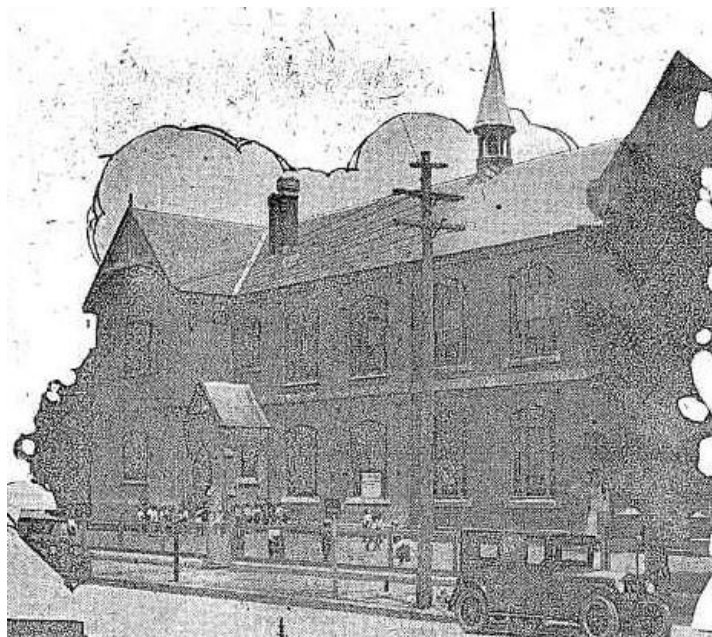
Croydon Intermediate High School accommodates the overflow from Burwood Public School, and fills a long-felt need. Originally intended for girls only, it has been found necessary to make it a combination school for boys and girls. The chief feature of the boys' section is a well equipped science room, where special tuition and supervision are supplied by Mr. Mann.

The Daily Telegraph dated 10 January, 1928 p. 7 reported major work at the school:

Workman's Narrow Escape When Wall Collapses

A workman named David Rayner (49), of Briggs Street, Granville, employed in the **demolition of Burwood Public School**, had a narrow escape from death yesterday afternoon when, without warning, the wall collapsed and a shower of bricks and mortar came hurtling to the ground. He jumped clear a few seconds, before it collapsed. He had a violent fall and was later admitted to Western Suburbs Hospital with a fractured leg.

In the *Sunday Times* dated 18 November, 1928 p. 22, an article on the suburb of 'Burwood, One of Sydney's Pleasantest Residential Suburbs' included a picture of the school, which was described as *'The commodious Burwood Public School, one of the largest and best attended in the metropolis'*.



Burwood Girls High School

The following history contains paraphrased extracts from the booklet published in 2004 for the school's 75th Anniversary celebration.

[Full 75th Anniversary book](#) (8MB PDF).

Additional information was researched from the Burwood GHS archives and personal accounts by past and present staff and students.

The beginning

During the ten years after WWI, the demand for education beyond the primary stage had increased in areas of large population such as Burwood. Burwood Public School, aka Burwood Superior Public School, founded 1871 in Conder Street, Burwood, was in need of expansion. It was first proposed to erect a new building for the Domestic Science and Intermediate High section on the same site as the primary school in Conder Street. Later, it was decided to obtain a new site altogether. The current location, consisting of two properties on the corner of Cheltenham Road and Queen Street, Croydon, was purchased by the Department of Education on 28 February 1924.

Plans for the new building were completed in June 1925 and in October the then Minister, Mr TD Mutch, approved the work being carried out. Mr W Stoddart was the supervising architect.

The following is an extract taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 April 1926:

"A contract has been let for the erection of an Intermediate High School for boys at Burwood. The work also includes the erection of a domestic science school for girls. The whole will be located in one large two-storied brick building, with the exception of the cookery classrooms, for which an annexe will be provided in a single-story building. The site of the new building is at the corner of Queen Street and Cheltenham Road. The main façade faces Queen Street. There will be 20 ordinary classrooms, ten on each floor, also a large science room, well equipped for the use of the boys. There will be two large cookery classrooms and kitchens attached, fitted with the latest appliances for the girls. There will be an assembly room for boys and girls as well as head master's and mistress's rooms, and apartments for the teaching staff. A large sewing room will be provided. The construction of Public Building secured the contract at £31,384. The brickwork of the building is well advanced. In order to give the local municipal council the right to widen the road, the Department of Education dedicated a strip of 6 feet from the land. The grounds are to be laid out and trees planted."

The new building was ready for occupation by 31 January 1927 but not finished until August 1927. At the end of 1927, the boys attending the Burwood Intermediate High School section of the Queen Street building were transferred to Summer Hill, with the opening of the Boys Intermediate High School there. This left the Queen Street building a totally girls' secondary school known as Burwood Domestic Science School, but still under the authority of the Headmaster of Burwood Public School, Mr E Dash, with Miss HM Anderson as Mistress of the girls' department.

REFERENCES:

All newspaper references are from the National Library of Australia's 'Trove' website:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/>

Harvest of the Years - The Story of Burwood, 1794-1974 by Eric Dunlop - Issued by Authority of the Council of the Municipality of Burwood

Burwood Girls High School website: <https://burwoodg-h.schools.nsw.gov.au/>