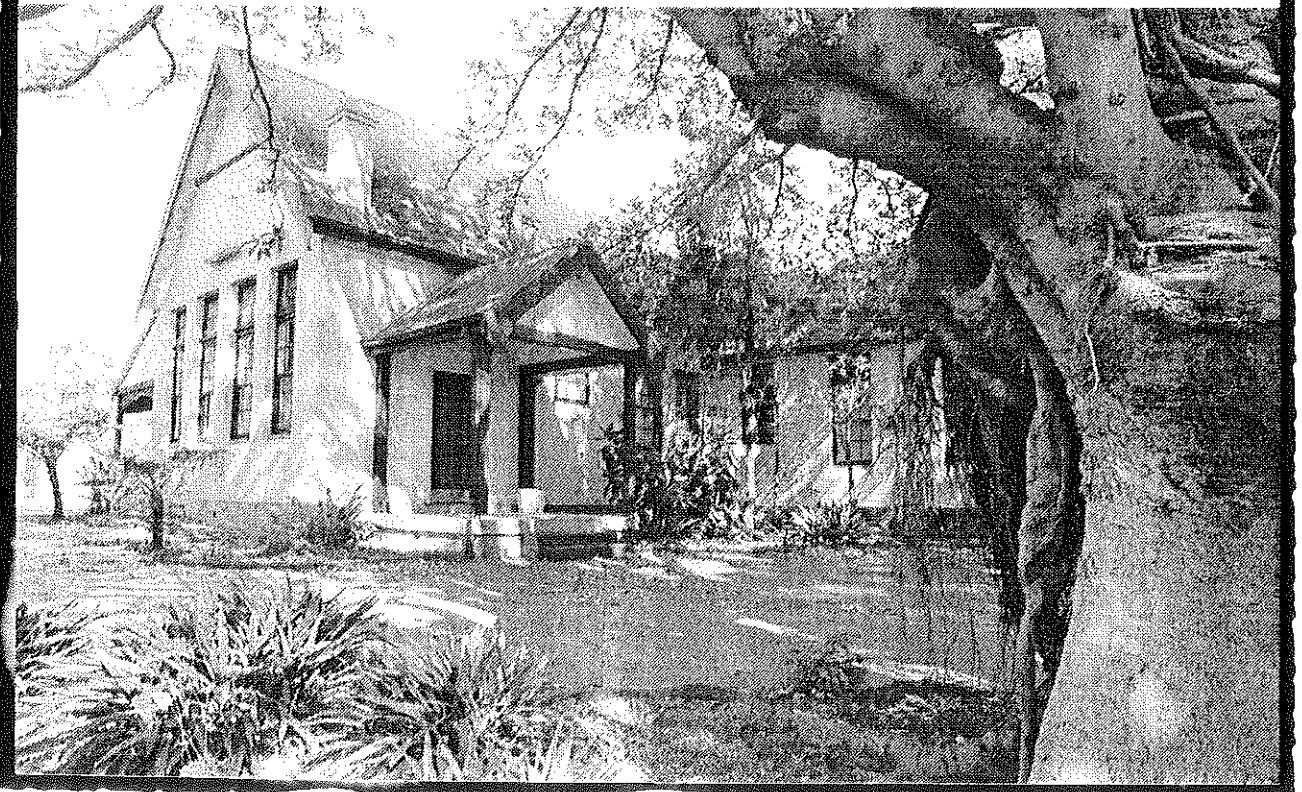


BOTANY PUBLIC SCHOOL
... a history



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This history of Botany Public School was prepared in 1976 by the then Principal, Mr Graham Norman. It has been republished on behalf of the school community in thanks for hosting the launch of the sesquicentenary of public education in New South Wales and to acknowledge the significant place of Botany Public School in this system.



This history is dedicated to all who have given of themselves in the cause of education throughout the history of Botany Public School. To past and present staff, pupils and parents we express our gratitude and look forward to the future in which much may be achieved in the furtherance of education.

*Graham N. Norman,
Principal*

Significant changes affected the life of the people of New South Wales between the years 1800 and 1860. Probably the most important events were the cessation of convict transportation, and systematisation of squatting, the introduction of railways and the discovery of payable gold.

The rapid economic expansion promoted the founding of the Stock Exchange and led to the establishment of a branch of the Royal Mint in Sydney, while the influx of gold seekers trebled the population in the decade from 1857 and 1861. Those seeking higher education no longer found it necessary to face the six or seven months long journey to the British Isles, since in 1850 a university was founded at Sydney.

At the same time improved communication with the outside world was assured by the new steam postal service to Britain. Politically, the colony advanced as a result of the introduction of responsible government and the separation of Victoria and Queensland from New South Wales.

However, progress in education was too slow and uncertain. This lack of satisfactory growth was due to many factors. But, for the most part, education in New South Wales was handicapped by the great dispersion of the population, the sectarian rivalry and the fact that the strenuous activity of pioneering allowed little time or energy to expend on the manifold and perplexing problems of education.

It was quickly realised by early governors, such as Bourke and Gipps that an education designed to embrace all classes and sects was the only possible solution. But it was not until 1848 that the Governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy, a grandson of the third Duke of Grafton, and a former member of the House of Commons, established public education on a firm basis by the introduction of a Board of National Education.

As constituted, there were three members. Its Chairman was John Henry Plunkett, the Attorney General of New South Wales, the two other members being Sir Charles Nicholson, physician, squatter and speaker of the Legislative Council and William Sharpe Macleay, a graduate of Cambridge University and a Fellow of the Royal Society. Mr Macleay soon

resigned but the other two men, enthusiasts in their belief in public education, persisted and as a result faced bitter opposition, especially from the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

A similarly constituted Denominational Board was appointed. This Board was composed of the representatives of the various religious denominations concerned. Generally speaking their duties ended when they distributed the funds given them by the legislature. This Board had little effective voice in the appointment and dismissal of teachers. In effect the parish clergymen almost completely controlled the Denominational Schools and their teachers.

The model for the system proposed under the control of the Board of National Education was that suggested by Lord Stanley for Ireland in 1831. The essential feature of these Irish schools was the attempt to bring together children of all sects for a general literary education which, while Christian in spirit, was non-denominational.

In order to promote such a system of education in New South Wales, the Board was prepared to provide up to two thirds of the cost of erecting and fitting out a school, wherever an attendance of thirty pupils could be guaranteed and local patrons found to undertake the responsibility of raising the balance of the money, superintending the erection of the school and taking a share in its conduct. The appointment of teachers was to rest solely with the Commissioners, but they would pay special regard to the recommendations of patrons.

The teacher, they believed: "should be a person of Christian sentiment, of calm temper and discretion, imbued with a spirit of peace, of obedience to the sovereign; but should not only possess the art of communicating knowledge, but be capable of moulding the minds of youth, and of giving a useful direction to the power that education concerns."

These teachers derived their income from two sources. There was first a salary paid by the Board, ranging in country schools from £60 to £144 per annum and secondly, the local contributions in the shape of school fees, together with a residence. The averaging salary received by the teacher was £92.8.8 and of school fees £52.19.0, making a total of £145.7.8.

The amount paid by each family for school fees was small and generally "bore no reasonable proportion to the means of most parents". But as the Commissioner of the Board of National Education complained: "Even this small sum, reduced as it is by the irregularity of the pupils' attendance is paid grudgingly and sometimes withheld altogether...instances have occurred in which ignorant people have refused to pay school fees on the ground that the teacher had a "splendid" salary from the Government, when perhaps the whole of his income fell short of the wages of a mechanic."

These "National" schools were under the control of local bodies, known as Boards of Local Patrons, which had considerable power and responsibility in school matters. For example, they were expected to provide for the repair of the school and premises, to ensure regular attendance of pupils, to protect the teacher from "frivolous and vexatious complaints" and to treat the teacher in such a way as "to second his efforts for the improvement of his children".

THE BEGINNING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AT BOTANY

The unfavourable attitude to education in New South Wales generally at the time when public education began at Botany is described in the Report of the Board of National Education:

"The first is the apathy of the parents, many of whom appear to care very little whether their children receive any instruction or not, while since some have actually stated their opinion, that children are better without education. Perhaps the most serious obstacle of all is the low material estimate of the value of education formed by some people. Their test is the query "Will it help to make money?".

The above attitudes were particularly unfortunate, because the first move for the establishment of a school had to come from the local people. It reflects great credit on the residents of the Botany district that a National School was established there late in 1848. Mr Castilla, Chairman of the Board of Local

Patrons, claimed that the school opened in an upstairs room in temporary premises. Thirty pupils attended the school at its opening and in the same year, 1849, the enrolment rose to 50. The Local Patrons requested the Commissioners to pay the four shillings a week rent as the lack of money available in the area is indicated by the fact that many children paid only one penny a week school fees. In spite of these difficulties the residents had raised £30 towards the erection of a proposed school and Mr. Castilla declared that proper desks and forms had been provided as well.

From 1st January 1849 the girls had been taught sewing and when in February 1850, Mr. Castilla informed the Board of National Education of this, £5 was granted for the sewing teacher, who was very likely the teacher's wife. The teacher, Mr. Samuel Smyth, requested a monitorship for his 15 year old son who for 18 months had been a good scholar but the teacher was too poor to maintain him at school.

Mr. Samuel Smyth was the first headmaster of Botany School from 1st January, 1849. Unfortunately for the school the owner moved into the building and the school was removed in September 1850. In the meantime in order to carry on his profession as a teacher, Mr. Smyth, who claimed that he had taught for 20 years mostly in Ireland, and that he was the oldest National schoolmaster in the Colony, opened a private school for 40 pupils. Mr. Smyth had ceased employment with the Commissioners on 30th November 1850 and the private school probably opened soon after.

Between 1850 and the end of 1861 Botany National School was closed but on January 4th 1862, an "Application for the Establishment of a Non Vested National School at Botany Bay" was lodged with the Commissioners. Temporary premises, the Wesleyan Chapel measuring 24 feet by 40 feet, were suggested as a school for the 45 children expected to attend. The Local Patrons proposed Mr. Charles Stratford, an Englishman of 25 years of age who had taught at Camperdown, as a teacher of the school. He was to be assisted by his Australian wife.

The school was opened in 1862 and the Inspector who visited the school in that year referred to the Chapel being used as temporary premises. "The room will always look crowded on account of the number of fixed pews".

The enrolment and average attendance the first year of operation were 76 and 55 respectively. This enrolment rose to 96 in 1864, and one of the pupils, Samuel Butler, was proposed as pupil teacher.

Inspector Gardiner reported that Mr. Stratford possessed insufficient qualifications to oversee a pupil teacher, but since Mrs. Stratford was giving all her spare time to help her husband this was not enough to promote a good school, Master Butler was recommended as a pupil teacher.

While the Botany Bay school was rapidly becoming overcrowded, the government in New South Wales had been too preoccupied with the urgent and fundamental land and constitutional reforms to concern itself with difficulties of providing public education.

In January 1866, James Martin formed a coalition government with Henry Parkes. On fiscal policy Martin and Parkes were in disagreement, but they agreed to leave naturally contentious legislation alone. Instead they concentrated on the removal of a number of social evils. Perhaps the greatest reform was the Act to make better provision for public education. Under the Public Schools Act 1866, of which Parkes was the chief architect, the National and Denominational Boards were abolished and in their place one controlling body, the Council of Education, was established, directed by five members. This Council took control of public education in New South Wales on 1st January 1867.

It was to this newly constituted Council that the Local Patrons in July 1867 directed their requests for a new school since 140 children were in the small Wesleyan Chapel. To expedite the erection of the school, Mr. George Lord, M.L.A. granted one acre of land as a site valued at £100. The site lay on the western side of the main road opposite the building then used as a public school and was described as a gentle elevation of land, sandy and naturally drained.

On the last day in July, Inspector Huffer visited the school and he appears to be the first person (since 1862) to refer to the Botany Bay School as the Botany School. From that time the school has been styled "Botany" instead of "Botany Bay". Immediately he declared the school building and furniture as unsuitable. The teacher was forced to stand before five or six pews and consequently could not command the maximum attention, the inspector maintained.

Since Messrs. Prince, Off and Co., had established a wool washing works close to the school Mr Huffer believed that the enrolment would rise. In addition he referred to Mr. Lord's gift as an excellent site and recommended that a school be erected as soon as practicable.

The sum of £119.12.0 was raised by residents towards the cost of the new school by October 1867. It was proposed to fence one side of the site with good 6 foot split iron bark. The fence to front the road was to be a two rail batten hardwood type including two gates.

It was not until 19th June 1868, that the contract for £300 was let to William and Alexander Elphinston. Four months later the Secretary of the Board of Local Patrons, Mr. Stephens, requested the Council to level the steep banks in front of the building, to point the outside, and to provide a well or pump for water.

Probably because of the increasing numbers, it may have become difficult for the Trustees to maintain the Wesleyan Chapel in a satisfactory condition. However, in December 1868, the Wesleyans stated that the Chapel would not be available as a school in 1869.

Fortunately, the new school was finished early in January and on 11th January 1869 it opened. Several improvements were effected to the grounds during that year. The sandbank was levelled, stumps were grubbed out, couch grass planted to hold the sand and clay pressed hard round the foundations. Kerb stones were placed at the entrance gates to complete the improvements.

Enrolments had now reached 125 but there were many free scholars (that is, children paying no fees). For example, one labourer, whose wages only amounted to 15 shillings per week plus rations for himself, was allowed free education for his family of six children.

Mr. Butler, who had served as a pupil teacher at the school for five years, took temporary charge of the school in October. Mr. John Mills from Camden was appointed in December 1869, and entered on duty in January 1870. It was three weeks before he could gain possession of the school residence and Mr. Mills referred to his removal from his previous school as in effect two removals. Therefore he claimed £12 travelling expenses, instead of the £8 the trip from Camden cost him.

As stated previously, the teacher's income was supplemented by school fees, a highly unsatisfactory arrangement in most cases for it often lowered the teacher's income, always decreased his status and sometimes led to strife with parents and local boards. Many districts claimed that fees were too high and while there many poor families in Botany, Inspector Huffer thought that the school fees at

Botany were too low. They were three pence a week for one child, six pence for two or three children and one shilling for four or more. Mr. Stephens, the Secretary, claimed that a private school had been set up near by and pupils were leaving since the previous teacher had charged one shilling per week per child and six pence per week for every addition. The Inspector recommended six pence per week as a minimum.

During the early 1870s the school grounds were further improved by the planting of 17 Moreton Bay Figs and 11 Norfolk Pines which had been purchased from a nursery for £1.5.0. At the same time the Local Patrons erected palings round the young trees and it is probable that a dividing fence between the boys' and girls' playground had been erected as this project was approved by the Council of 1870. Mr. Stephens, the Secretary, had urged the removal of stumps and brushwood and the planting of couch grass in the playground and since this work had been approved by the Council it was no doubt carried out as well.

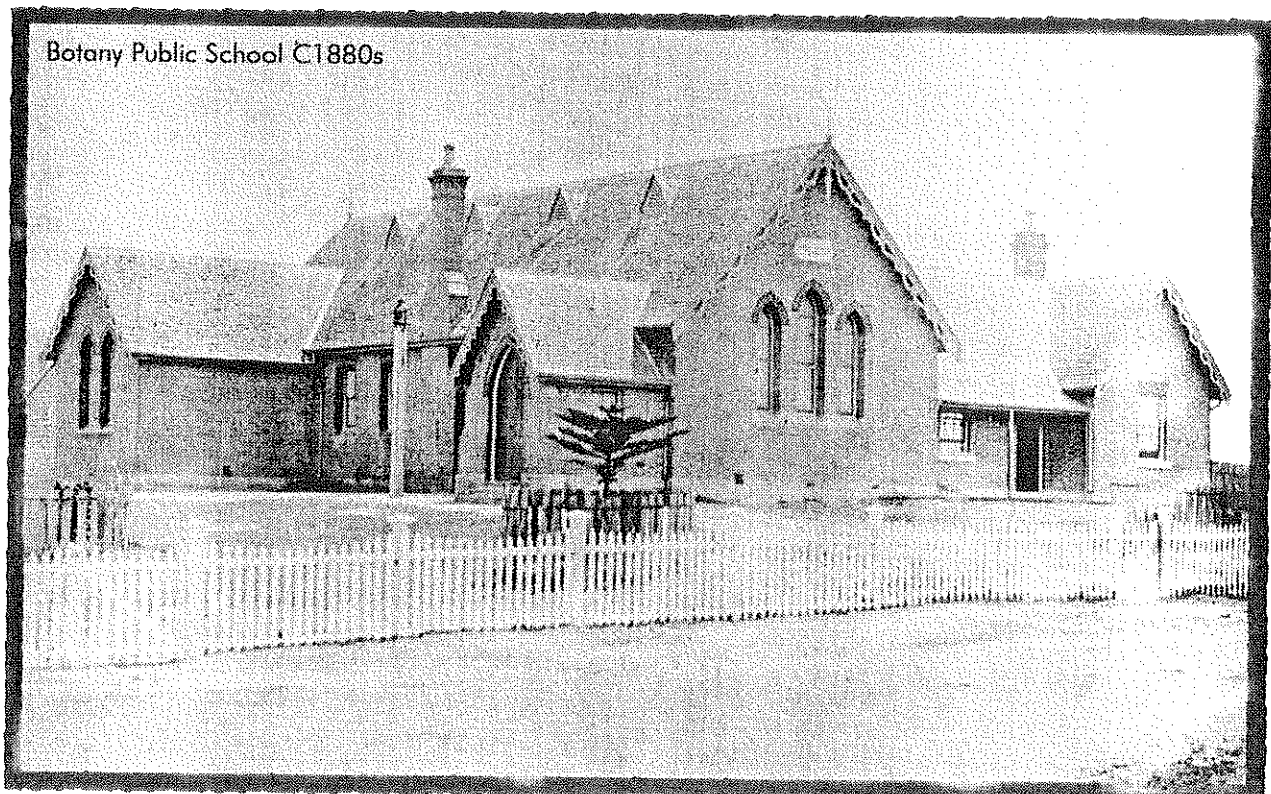
For some reason, Samuel Butler, who had temporary charge of the school before Mr. Mills' arrival, left the school since in April 1871 Mr. Mills informed the Council that he had to control 102 pupils himself. Three months later, Mr. Butler and one of his sisters opened a private school in premises adjoining the Botany School. Naturally, Mr. Mills feared the loss of

numbers of his pupils. Mrs. Mills was suffering from neuralgia due to the climate, and Mr. Mills alleged that the teaching in draughts at the school had made him susceptible to bad colds each winter.

In September 1871 the teacher requested removal from Botany. The next month the Secretary, Mr. Stephens, informed the Council of Education that the enrolment had fallen from 136 to 72. He blamed Mrs. Mills' ill health which prevented her from effectively assisting her husband. In addition, Mr. Butler's private school nearby had drawn away the younger scholars.

At the end of the year, Mr. Mills asked for promotion, claiming that he had been teaching since 1836, had taught 18 years in Australia, and had moreover, conducted a Training Department for two years. He concluded by stating that he was 52 years old and had an only son teaching.

Apparently he was not a very effective teacher whilst at Botany for in 1872 the Inspector reported: "The schoolroom floor is extremely dirty and appears to be seldom swept; the walls and furniture are covered with dust and the desks are badly ink stained. The interior of the building required to be re-whitewashed. The teaching would appear to be discursive, superficial and mechanical. The pupils are tolerably attentive, but evince little effort and are low in intelligence".



Because of unsatisfactory work Mr. Mills was dismissed in June 1872. The next month his successor, Mr. Thomas Caldwell, took charge and proved a better teacher. But he was disinclined to pay his bills and as a result lost the confidence of many parents, resulting in a further decline in enrolment, which dropped to 70 in 1874. The private school still flourished next door, and the Local Patrons requested the Council to reduce the school fees still further to compete with their neighbour. So seriously did the Council view Mr. Caldwell's attitude to money matters that it was decided to dismiss him. Subsequently he was re-employed and appointed to Rylstone.

The next Headmaster was Jabez Clarke, who took charge of the school at the beginning of 1878. Mr. Clarke was an experienced teacher who had previously been Headmaster of Newtown. He was an elderly man and his work at Botany was hindered by ill-health. However, he seems to have been appreciated by the parents and the enrolment increased from 79 in 1877 to 184 in 1878 and 236 in 1880. It then remained fairly constant for some time.

Some difficulty was experienced in finding a pupil teacher for the school. At that time the first bus from Sydney to Botany did not leave until 9.30 a.m. so it was not possible for anyone living in Sydney to teach at Botany. Owing to their low pay pupil-teachers could not afford to board away from home, and it was necessary to find a pupil-teacher who lived in the neighbourhood. It was some time before this could be done.

As soon as Mr. Clarke arrived at the school he asked for an additional room to be built on to the residence (which only contained three rooms besides the kitchen). It was decided to do this and also to carry out various improvements to both school and residence. In May 1878 a tender by Messrs. Bain and McConaghy was accepted and the work was completed in August at a cost of £185.

In view of Mr. Clark's poor health and the rapid increase in the enrolment, a male assistant was appointed at the beginning of 1880, although strictly speaking the number of children in the school did not warrant this. Henry Dingwall was appointed. In addition to his usual duties he had to instruct the pupil teacher and do much of the administrative work and it was decided that this justified an increase in salary. Teachers were paid by a combination of salary and fees from pupils and it was agreed that Mr. Dingwall should receive a

larger proportion of the fees than usual. He received five twelfths of the fees compared with Mr. Clarke's four twelfths and the female assistant's three twelfths. Mr. Clarke was agreeable to this arrangement. This meant that Mr. Clarke received £249 a year (£192 salary and £57 fees). Mr. Dingwall received £168 a year (£96 salary and £72 fees) and the female assistant (Miss Jowett) £91 a year (£48 salary and £43 fees).

Transport from Sydney to Botany was still causing difficulty to teachers in 1882. In May of that year, Miss Mackay, the female Assistant, informed the Department that "the earliest omnibus from Sydney leaves the Post Office at 8.45 a.m. and reaches Botany at 9.50 a.m.". She asked for permission to arrive at school at the latter time "until such time as the tramway be opened to Botany, which I understand will be on the 24th inst". Inspector Allpass recommended that this should be sanctioned and it was in due course approved by the Minister. However, by then the tramway had been opened and the permission was no longer needed.

In July 1885, Mr. Whitehead (who had become Headmaster during 1883 on Mr. Clarke's retirement) asked for permission to open school after lunch at 1.30 instead of 2 o'clock and to close for the day at 3.30 instead of 4 o'clock. He pointed out that under the existing system the pupil teacher, who lived at Waterloo, "had either to catch the 4.55 p.m. tram and miss part of her hour's tuition, or else wait until 5.55 p.m. while the Assistant, who lived at Woollahra, had to wait until 4.55 p.m. without advantage to the school service and with much dissatisfaction to herself". He also said that "many children live at a long distance from the school and it would be likely to prevent the non-attendance of many on market days when children are often required at home in the afternoon" and pointed out that a similar change in hours had been agreed to at Banksmeadow School. Permission to change the hours was granted.

A small shed was built behind the residence in February 1886 at a cost of £4 to act as a washhouse and a copper was placed in it. Previously it had been necessary to boil the clothes on the living room fire. Gas was laid on to the teacher's residence in August 1887. The work was done by William Furness for £10.10.0.

Mr Whitehead was drowned in September 1887 and was succeeded by William MacDonald. He only remained at the school for five and a half months, being succeeded by Walter Lambert in March 1888.

In February 1892, Mr Lambert asked the Department to have the school connected with the water main. "The only water for use in connection with the school under my charge is kept in small iron tanks, and in dry weather the supply is both insufficient and impure. As the pipes which convey the city water to Botany pass within a few yards of the school premises a good supply of pure water could be obtained at once, without any difficulty or great expense."

It was decided that the main water should be laid on, and the work was carried out in May by F.W. Bullock for £19.10.0. A large part of the plaster ceiling of one of the bedrooms at the residence fell down in September 1893, and Mr. Lambert reported that the rest was likely to follow it. The Architect, Mr. Kemp inspected the ceiling, and reported that it was very old and had been repeatedly repaired; he recommended that it be replaced by a timber ceiling. This was done at a cost of £5.

The shingled roof of the residence had become leaky, and in March 1894, Mr. Kemp reported that the shingles were worn out and should be replaced by iron. It was also decided to do various repairs. The work was carried out by H.S. Bagles at a cost of £111.5.0. During the 1890s there was a rapid increase in the number of children in the school. The enrolment increased to 266 in 1895 and 369 in 1900, and by 1904 had reached 526.

The Botany District School Board wrote to the Department in April 1896, urging the acquisition of a piece of land about half an acre in extent on the south side of the school site. The legal owner of the land was Mr. H.E. Lord, but he had agreed to sell it to Mrs. Ash, though evidently the sale had not been completed, or at least full payment had not been made. Mrs. Ash agreed to sell to the Department for £200, and Mr. Lord had no objection, so the Department acquired the land for this sum. The purchase was completed in July.

Mr. J.J. MacFadyen, a land agent, then wrote to the Department suggesting the acquisition of a further half acre belonging to Mrs. Harris on the south side of the new purchase. But the Chief Inspector after visiting the school reported that the suggested land was "low and useless for school purposes".

In November 1896, Mr Lambert reported that owing to the increasing enrolment two more classrooms able to seat about 70 children were needed as well as repairs and improvements. This was approved, and after the Architect had drawn up plans tenders were invited and that of John Lane

(£500) was accepted. But Mr. Lane then refused to sign the contract unless he was allowed to increase his tender so the acceptance was cancelled and the next highest tender, that of J.P. Gibson (£625) was accepted instead. The work was completed in September 1897. Inspector Thompson reported in July 1898, that a tannery was in course of construction on ground adjoining the school.

"The ground immediately below the school playground and for some distance on either side, is a swamp. Into this the whole of the drainage from the land on which the tannery works are being constructed must flow. Under such circumstances the effluvia from the tannery will be most noisome and possibly most detrimental to the health of the pupils, of the resident teacher, and of his staff".

The matter was referred to the Board of Health, who replied that tanning was not a noxious trade, and, that the establishment of such a business on any site could not be prevented. However, the Sanitary Inspector had visited the tannery, and Mr. Bowen, the proprietor had explained the proposed drainage system to him.

The tannery cannot have been a pleasant neighbour. Some years later the architect remarked: "The strong smell from the adjoining tannery so pervades the school that it is impossible to detect any other smell." At the end of 1898, Mr. Thompson recommended that, in view of the rapid increase in the number of infants at the school, a separate Infants' Department should be opened. There were 168 infants in the school, in five divisions. However, nothing was done just then.

Mr. Lambert complained in 1899 that the residence was too small for his family. It was decided to add another room to the house and also to build a proper washhouse, besides doing necessary repairs. A tender by Richard Hogsflesh Rogers was accepted in February 1900 and the work was completed in April at a cost of £144.5.0.

A good deal of trouble was experienced in draining the school grounds, as there were a number of hollows in which surface water collected. At this time the sewers were being laid at Botany, and an arrangement was made with the Public Works Department for the spare earth from the excavations to be used to fill up the hollows.

As a result of the growth of the school, Mr. Lambert was transferred in 1901, being succeeded by Joseph Lynch, a more highly qualified teacher who later became an Inspector.

Early in 1902, Mr. Lynch applied for promotion to 1A, the highest grade. The Chief Inspector, Mr. Bridges, made a special inspection of the school, and later reported that he was "very much pleased with its highly efficient condition". Mr. Lynch was promoted as from 1st May. As a result he was moved to a larger school at the beginning of 1903, and was succeeded by George Thornton.

The increase in numbers led to a need for more accommodation. It was at first intended to provide this by adding a storey to the existing building, but this would have necessitated the provision of alternative accommodation during its construction and although the School of Arts opposite the school was available, it was considered unsuitable largely because it would have been used for other purposes out of school hours, thus involving constant moving of the school furniture. It was then decided to enlarge the school site, and erect more classrooms. The site was enlarged by the purchase of Mrs Harris' half acre block on the south side of the site for £170. Meanwhile, preparations were being made for the erection of the new classrooms and a tender by W.S. Baker was accepted in January 1903. The work was finished in July at a cost of £1,528.5.0.

Mr. Thornton applied in January 1904 for the doors and windows of the residence to be fitted with fly screens. "These protections are considered to be an absolute necessity in this district. Most of the houses, even of the meanest character, are provided with them, the flies being so numerous as to constitute a veritable plague, giving the residents no rest either day or night".

This application was not granted. Mr. Thornton tried again in September. "Living in this district is almost intolerable on account of the swarms of flies, mosquitoes and other insects that infest it and that are due to the great number of swamps, tanneries, wool-washes and factories in the neighbourhood. I do hope that the Department will do something to mitigate the nuisance. The Waterloo, Gardener's Road and Banksmeadow School residence are all supplied with screens".

This time it was decided that screens should be supplied at a cost of £5.

The school was still being worked as one department, but in March 1905, Inspector Parkinson recommended that a separate Infants Department should be created. He reported that there were 545 children in the school, taught by 10 teachers in six rooms and the supervision of such a large school was very difficult for an unaided Headmaster. He

pointed out that an additional teacher was needed anyway and that the appointment of an Infants' Mistress would cause little extra expense. The recommendation was approved and the school was divided into two departments. Miss Annie Bousfield was appointed Infant's Mistress and she remained in the position until her retirement at the end of 1921.

Even with fly-screens on the house, Mr. Thornton did not like living at Botany. He complained that he and his family had experienced continual poor health since coming to live there ("my chemist's bill is as regular as my grocer's) while Mrs. Lynch, his predecessor's wife had been so ill there, that she had gone to live in the country during the latter part of her husband's headmastership. He considered that "the potent cause of the trouble" was the tannery next door to the school.

He asked for permission to live elsewhere and suggested that the residence should be let to "a very respectable family named Peters" who were already acting as school cleaners and who were prepared to live in the residence on the understanding that the Department retained the cleaning allowance (11 shillings per week) in lieu of rent. This arrangement was approved in August 1906 and Thornton went to live at Milson's Point. Later he moved to Chatswood.

Repairs and improvements, including removal of one of the galleries and levelling of floors and also improvements to the lighting were carried out in April 1906 by George Casey and Son at the cost of £205.

Trouble was caused in 1908 by trespassers interfering with the school garden, during the night or at weekends. The police were asked to exercise closer supervision, with the result that four boys were caught "wantonly pulling up lettuce and broad beans". A notice board saying "Trespassers will be prosecuted" was subsequently put up, the Inspector remarking that "the one erected at Marrickville seems to have had a good effect".

During 1910, the Municipal Council decided to asphalt the paths outside the school. Half the cost of this (£17.8.9) was paid by the Department.

The need for more accommodation became more and more apparent about this time. In 1908 it was suggested that the old residence should be converted into classrooms, but after the Architect had pointed out that, owing to the lowness of the ceilings, it would be necessary to remove the roof, raise all the walls, and provide new roof, ceilings

and floors as well as remodelling the building all of which would cost about twice as much as a new timber building, this idea was abandoned. Meanwhile, extensive repairs also became necessary.

In July 1909, plans were approved for a new building to include four classrooms and two staff rooms, and to carry out necessary repairs and alterations to the existing buildings. In September 1910 a tender by W.S. Baker was accepted. The work was completed in July 1911 at a cost of £3,116. A proposal made at this time that a new Infants' school should be established in North Botany, at the junction of King and Wilson Streets, was rejected on the ground that it would "set up an unhealthy rivalry and competition with two adjacent schools" (i.e. Botany and Gardener's Road) besides hindering the promotion of Gardener's Road to First Class status.

Manual Training classes were started at about this time and in September 1913, the Headmaster, Mr. Youll was allowed to spend £2.12.8 on timber for them.

A separate Girls' Department was established at the beginning of 1915, making the school a three department school. This arrangement did not last very long, though it is not certain when the school reverted to two departments. Ground improvements designed to prevent sand being blown from the school grounds on to the footpath of Botany Road were completed in March 1915, being carried out by Day Labour at a cost of £95.10.0.

The Municipal Council passed a resolution in March 1918 urging the Department to install an adequate number of patent bubbling fountains at the school. "These fountains have been installed at the Central Railway Station and principal street centres, and are a decided advantage over the old brass tap and its attendant insanitary conditions. Since the abolition of the old mug system the children have to place their mouths to the taps".

The Department replied that nothing could be done for the time being. Then in October, a local Committee proposed to install two or three bubbler fountains "similar to those installed at the premises of the Banksmeadow Public School recently by the local Parents and Citizens Association". The Department agreed to this, provided that the work was done to the satisfaction of the Architect.

The Parents and Citizens' Association makes its first appearance in the records of 1921, when the Secretary wrote to the Department asking that

lighting should be provided in a room at the school so that the Association could meet in the evenings. As it was, they had to meet in the afternoon and that prevented many interested people from joining. It was decided to extend the gas service from the Cooking School to provide lighting in one of the classrooms and this was done by the Department's Painting and Repair Staff at a cost of £11.19.8.

There were again difficulties about accommodation in 1922. Requests were made for additions to the buildings but after careful consideration it was pointed out that the staff was not likely to be larger than four in the Boys' Department, four in the Girls' Department and five in the Infants' Department and that sufficient accommodation could be provided for such a staff by re-organizing the existing arrangement of classes and remodelling the building. Plans for this were drawn up by the Architect and in May 1923, a tender was accepted from John Burnett. The work was completed in October at a cost of £1,718.

It was also decided to enlarge the site. Among other reasons cited for doing this, was the expected development of Botany "as a result of the proposed railway facilities".

Inspector Black recommended the acquisition of a piece of land about one and a half acres in extent on the south side of the site. Part of it was owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Stoker and the rest was part of the estate of Mrs. Moran, who had recently died. Mrs. Moran's land was what was really wanted and only part of the Stoker's land was needed to connect it with this existing site. Since the trustee of Mrs. Moran's estate was abroad and the Stokers were unwilling to sell, it was decided to resume the land. The resumption was gazetted on 23rd November, 1923. It is not clear from the records how much compensation was paid to Mrs. Moran's estate, but it was probably £860. Mr. Stoker agreed to accept the strip of land leading to Bay Street, in exchange for the strip resumed. He returned his block facing Botany Road.

In June 1923, The Parents and Citizens Association asked that the Headmaster's residence should be modernised and the Headmaster required to live in it. The Architect however, reported that the residence was very old and it would be better to demolish it rather than to try to modernise it. Later, the Municipal Council asked that a new residence be built, but they were informed that it was no longer the practice of the Department to erect teachers' residences in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Jones, the Headmaster, continued to live in a house which he had bought in another part of Sydney. The matter was taken up again in December, this time to Mr. J.R. Lee M.L.A. Inspector Kennedy pointed out that not only was the residence old and dilapidated, but the practice of sub-letting it had begun long before Mr. Jones' appointment and it was because of this situation that he had bought his own home.

Living elsewhere had not interfered with his efficiency, nor prevented him from taking part in the activities of such bodies as the Parents and Citizens Association, and he did not think it would be fair to ask him to live at the school. Besides, "I do not think the Department should require its officers to reside in a locality in which the sanitation is so faulty and where the air is so constantly burdened with disagreeable odours."

The real reasons why the residents wanted Mr. Jones to live at the school were "to make another local family, and, so add to the importance of Botany", and because "they resent the fact that he goes to other schools to explain his Reading Method". The latter was a method of teaching reading which Mr. Jones had developed during his teaching career. He had evidently written books about it which had attracted favourable notice, both in Australia and abroad, and, as he himself wrote: "Even while at Botany I have received visitors from various states and from New Zealand, Noumea and America".

Many teachers in New South Wales were using his methods and he received frequent invitations to visit schools and explain them. He was invited to explain his methods to the students at the Teachers' College and also at Blackfriars Practice School, as well as to teachers in various parts of the State.

In 1923, the Infants Mistresses Association urged the Department to set Mr. Jones free from his duties as Headmaster, so that he could supervise the teaching of his Reading Method in Infants' schools for at least a year. They wrote: "The system is spreading rapidly through the State, and is being used in other States with success. It is now in use in hundreds of schools, and has been introduced without any expense to the Department. It has given joy and zest in the early work of reading both to teachers and pupils. But teachers in the country who have not had a personal demonstration of the method, feel that they have an imperfect knowledge of it, and, therefore appeal to Mr. Jones for help. The correspondence entailed makes a great demand on Mr. Jones' private time".

The Department, however, did not view Mr. Jones' activities with favour. The request by the Infants' Mistresses Association was refused, and in 1924, Mr. Jones was forbidden to address teachers or students about his Method any more, apparently on the ground that it was interfering with his duties at Botany. It is possible that this may have been done at the direction of the Minister, Mr. Bruntnell.

At any rate, not long after, the latter had been succeeded by Mr. Mutch (whose constituency was Botany). A request by Miss Proctor, the Headmistress of Darlington Infants' Practice School, that Mr. Jones should visit the school to explain his Method was acceded to and thereafter a compromise was arrived at by which Mr. Jones was free to accept invitations to schools in and around Sydney on Monday mornings (when his class at Botany was doing Manual Training) on condition that no expense was caused to the Department. Not long afterwards the Department agreed to accept his work on the teaching of reading as partial fulfilment of the academic requirements for promotion to Grade 1B.

Modern toilets were installed, and the school connected to the main sewer in February, 1926. The work was done by W. Bamfield at a cost of £707.

The Parents and Citizens Association about this time asked the Department for approval for the construction of a tennis court. They asked the Department to lay the asphalt, and offered to do all the rest of the work themselves, including levelling the ground, building a retaining wall and putting up wire netting. Mr. Jones supported this request, pointing out that a position alongside the school garden had been chosen, which would not encroach on the playing area, and Inspector Walker, recommended that approval should be given "seeing that this Association has done a great deal for this school and that it is doing so much towards the provision of the proposed court, which is for the use of the children". Approval was given, and the court was constructed soon afterwards.

At about 11.30 a.m. on 18th October 1926 E.W. Fowler's tannery adjoining the school grounds on the north side caught fire and was burnt down. Mr. Jones reported: "The flames quickly spread to the lavatories on the infants' playground, and despite all efforts they were reduced to smouldering ruins. With wonderful energy the firemen fought the flames and succeeded in saving the school residence and the rooms used by the infants. The fence at the rear of the residence was destroyed. Very little

damage was done otherwise. The children were safely guarded while making their exit from the buildings and they and the members of the staff acted with commendable calmness. The furniture was taken from the rooms used by the Infants till all danger was over. Under the circumstances it was quite impossible to conduct school for the remainder of the day. I may add that the captain of the Botany Fire Brigade lost his life". New toilets were built for the infants and the fence was replaced by the Departments Painting and Repair staff at the cost of £242.

The Parents and Citizens Association wrote to the Department in November, suggesting that action should be taken to prevent the tannery being rebuilt so close to the school grounds (the building had been right on the boundary). The matter was referred to the Crown Solicitor but he advised that the Department had no power to do anything, although it might be possible for the Local Council to take some action. It had been the practice for the Manual Training teacher at Botany to visit Waterloo Public School on one day a week to teach the 6th class boys Woodwork and Drawing.

In October 1927 the Manual Training Room at Waterloo was closed and the equipment sent to Gladesville. It was then arranged for the Waterloo boys to come to Botany on one day a week for their Manual Training.

Mr. Jones retired from the teaching service at the end of 1931 and the staff of the school organised a special function as a farewell. Mr. Callen, who had been First Assistant at the school for six years but had recently been transferred to Coogee, was given leave to attend the function.

Mrs. Peters, the school cleaner, who had rented the vested residence when it was vacated by Mr. Thornton was still living in it, although her daughters, Miss Peters and Mrs. Morris had succeeded to her position of cleaner.

It had been the practice to deduct the rent from their wages as cleaners but on the retirement of Mr. Jones it was decided that, since in theory the residence was being sub-let by the Headmaster, the cleaners should in future be paid their full wages, the rent deducted from the Headmaster's salary and the Headmaster instructed to obtain the rent from the tenants. Both Mr. Trim, the new Headmaster, and Miss Peters objected to the new arrangement the former stating that it caused "much inconvenience and trouble" but the Department refused to alter it.

An unusual situation arose at this time. Mr. Davies, the Minister, had directed that political bodies might be permitted to meet on school premises in the evenings and the Botany Branch of the Australian Labour Party had been given permission to meet at the school on alternate Mondays.

Unfortunately, Monday was the night on which the Parents and Citizens Association held their meetings and as there was only one room at the school with electric light (apparently electric light had been substituted for gas at some time since 1921) a dispute took place as to which body should have the preference.

According to the usual practice it was decided that the Parents and Citizens Association, being an organisation working in the interests of the school, should be given the priority and the Labour Party were asked to meet on another night. This they refused to do and Mr. Davies then decided that since more people attended the political meetings they should have the use of the room and that electric light should be put into another room for the use of the Association.

He did not indicate who was to pay for the new installation. Before anything could be done there was a change of government and Mr. Drummond, the new Minister, immediately directed that the use of schools by political bodies should be discontinued. There was thus no longer any need for the additional electric light. The school buildings were falling into a state of disrepair and in July 1932, Mr. Trim reported: "I have 70 pupils in my room, and the rain comes in the broken windows and flows along the floor. I fixed these on several occasions with cardboard, which has blown down; now wood is nailed on to keep the rain out. This is the same with other rooms. The noise of the loose windows is very trying; it is a daily occurrence to nail windows. Bushes have been placed over gaps in the fences to keep cattle out, with little effect. The front fence will soon fall down. The iron on the Infants' school requires immediate attention or it will blow down, and may cause an accident".

The local member of Parliament, Mr. R.J. Heffron, M.L.A. took the matter up with the Department and plans for the necessary repairs were drawn up, but when it was found that they would cost over £100 the work was held over owing to financial stringency. It was felt, however, that something must be done about the fences and they were repaired by the Department's Painting and Repair Staff at a cost of £57.

The old long desks were still in use at the school in the Primary Department. They were very dilapidated and could no longer be screwed rigidly to the floor, which made writing difficult. There was no provision for burning rubbish and Mr. Trim was forced to use old kerosene tins for this. There were also leaks in the roof. It was decided to carry out necessary repairs and to supply an incinerator and this was done at a cost of £59, but there was not sufficient finance to provide modern desks (dual), although measures were taken to fix the existing desks more securely to the floor.

Not long afterwards a decline in enrolments led to the re-organization of the Infants' Department and a reduction in the number of classes. As a result, a number of infants dual desks were no longer needed; and when they were sent to the furniture workshops, primary-size dual desks were sent in exchange. This made possible the replacement of some of the long desks.

A portion of the playground was low-lying and swampy and could not be used. In 1934, Mr. Trim noticed that a storm-water channel was being dug in the neighbourhood as an Unemployment Relief Work and he suggested that the earth removed from it be put on the low-lying part of the playground and the whole levelled as part of the Relief Work (thus without cost to the Department).

Later he reported: "At times 20, 30 or 40 men were at work and three carts; this was in operation for fully six months. In places the ground was raised four feet and on an average three feet. The ground was levelled off and is now a good playing area. Trees are to be planted round this ground".

Mr. Trim was officially thanked by the Department for his action.

The Parents and Citizens Association wrote to the Department in August 1933 complaining that the Infants' Department had neither an office for the Mistress or a staffroom. They pointed out that the previous Minister, Mr. Davies, had promised that such a room would be provided. "The order goes forth to Industry, 'Erect a ladies' room or be fined'. We have no power to fine you, but we would think it fine of you to find a way to honour the promise of Mr. Davies".

The matter was referred to Inspector Miss Proctor, who reported that the Infants' building (the original school building was used by the Infants) was old-fashioned and unsuitable in every way. "There is no office for the Mistress; all interviews with parents

or visitors have to be held in a hat-room or a porch. There is no staff-room for the class teachers; all lunches have to be eaten in classrooms. Water for tea-making has to be boiled in a room used by the Primary Girls' Department. The arrangements are exceedingly unsatisfactory from every point of view".

Miss Proctor suggested that the Infants' building should be remodelled and later she suggested that an entirely new building containing four classrooms and necessary amenities should be erected. In addition to the disadvantages already referred to, she pointed out that the existing building had too little classroom space, no water or gas, poor ventilation and lighting and unsatisfactory means of access to one classroom. White ants had also put in an appearance. "For years the building has been recognized to be inconvenient, obsolete in style, and inadequate in every way. It is now also ant-eaten and extremely dirty".

She also pointed out that it was a Practice School, visited by students from the Teachers' College. After the matter had been considered for some time, it was decided that the provision of a new building would be too expensive but that re-modelling should be carried out to enable the provision of an office and a staff room, as well as other necessary improvements. The expenditure of £102.5.0 on this work was approved in March 1936. It was probably carried out by the Painting and Repair Staff.

Mr. Trim asked the Department in March 1936, to move the electric light used by the Parents and Citizens Association for their meetings from the basement, to one of the first floor classrooms. Apparently people were in the habit of throwing stones through the windows during meetings and on one occasion a bullet had been fired from a pea rifle. "The basement room has large windows without blinds and the light thus causes a good target from the back streets. The Association has a fine body of members and I am anxious for their safety".

The Department refused to move the light, but said that the Association could do so at their own expense, which however, they were unwilling to do. Subsequently a number of similar requests had the same result. The Department also refused to supply blinds.

A choir of 60 girls and boys conducted by Mr. C. Mitchell, one of the teachers at the school, won second place at a Tonic Sol-Fa competition at the

Town Hall in August 1936. It also gained second place in a competition at the Railway Institute. Mr. Mitchell was Assistant Secretary of the Tonic Sol-Fa Association.

The furniture in the Primary Department was reconditioned in 1937 at a cost of £120. The water supply had been giving trouble for some time, Mr. Trim reported: "The supply is not sufficient. When the girls' section is in use, the boys have to wait. This happens during the summer months".

The Foreman Builder inspected the installation. He thought that it needed replacing. He also pointed out that one service supplied the residence and part of the school (presumably that part which was under the same roof) while another service supplied the rest of the school. "As we cannot renew the service supplying the residence and school on account of the Water Board's Regulations that the residence must have a separate service, I suggest that the residence service be disconnected from the school, and let the one service, when renewed, supply the whole of the school. This should rectify the water supply".

The cost of necessary work was estimated at £88.1.0. This estimate was made in March 1937 and since the trouble with the water service was confined to the summer months, and owing to the scarcity of funds, it was decided to defer further consideration of the matter until 1st July, when the next financial year began. It was then decided to carry out the necessary renewal of the water service and the work was completed by the Painting and Repair Staff in October, at a final cost of £102.

The whole school was equipped with dual desks in 1939. About 40 of the old desks and forms were removed to the furniture workshops. Galleries were removed and the floors levelled in June 1938. The work was done by the Painting and Repair Staff at a cost of £56.

THE SECOND CENTURY

In 1948 the centenary of public education in Botany was celebrated. On 20th April, 1948 the then Minister for Education, Mr. R. J. Heffron and Mrs. Heffron visited the school and Mrs. Heffron unveiled two commemorative plaques to mark the school's centenary. Today the State electorate in which the school is situated bears the name of this former Education Minister and Premier of New South Wales.

The school had entered into its second century and successive principals made representation to the Education Department to improve facilities at Botany School. During 1959–1960, a major renovation program was executed, but much was still to be done.

Under the headmastership of G.L. Taylor, a major library establishment program took place between 1961–1962 in the school basement area. This provided a much needed educational agency for the staff and students. Also, during this time a fine collection of art prints was commenced, many of which are still displayed in the school.

In 1968, the external painting of all buildings took place.

In 1972 the Library was moved from the basement to rooms on the ground floor of the Primary School building. This was known as the Library Audio-Visual Centre and was opened by Mr. R. Davies, the Assistant Director of Education for Central Metropolitan Area, Mr. E. Collier being the principal at the time.

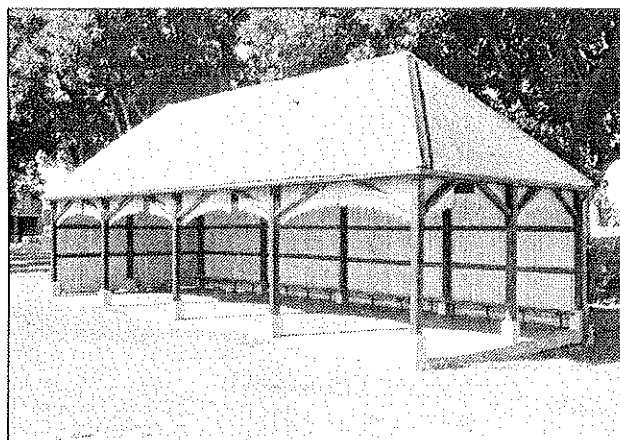
Botany was in that category of schools which, for many decades had to "make do", while successive administrations laboured under financial restraints to meet demands in newly developing areas where no schools existed at all.

Finally, approval was given to begin work on updating facilities at Botany School. This was to be undertaken in two stages - renovations and refurbishing of the old section of the school, and the erection of new buildings. The new construction was to provide a range of new classrooms and work rooms, a new administration block, including a food service unit and a free standing Library-Resource centre.

In April 1974 work began on the refurbishing and renovation of the old building and those buildings soon showed signs of complete transformation.

The contract for the work at the school was given to the firm of Paynter and Dixon of Sydney. The refurbishings and renovations were to cost in the vicinity of \$225,000.00, with almost a further \$800,000.00 to be spent on the new accommodation.

Indicative of the care which was taken with the new development and renovations was the treatment of the old school weathershed - a symbol of a bygone era. In most schools the traditional weather shed has long since disappeared. Undoubtedly, because no new work was carried out at Botany for decades, the old weather shed escaped the march of progress. Now it has been relocated, restored and repainted, much to the enjoyment both of pupils and those with a sense of history.



The old school weathershed fully restored

The preparation of the site for new buildings began in August 1974 and work on the new buildings soon began. Good progress was made and the last of the builders left the site in December 1975.

Full occupation of all the new accommodation took place in the First Term, 1976 and Botany School can boast every facility of a modern primary school. The old and the new have blended in well and the link with the past is one which should be maintained.

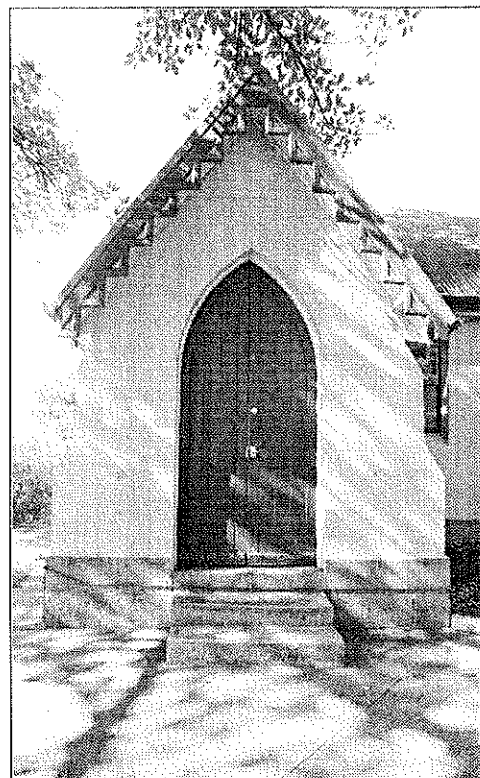
In August 1976, a group of First Year Architecture students from the University of New South Wales, drew up plans for an Out Door Theatre. These students then executed their plans by building the theatre themselves from funding received from the Assisted Schools Program. The theatre was finished in October 1976.

THE FUTURE

The new accommodation was officially opened on Monday 13th December 1976, by Mr. M.L. Brereton, M.L.A., the Member for Heffron.

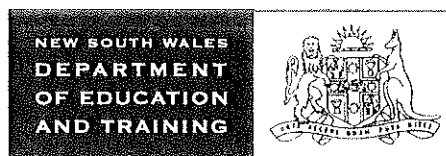
The community can be justly proud of the school which serves it. The Department of Education has provided Botany with excellent facilities which will more than adequately cater for the educational needs of the community in the years ahead.

The future is in our hands and the hands of those who will follow us. May we, the staff, children, parents and community work together for the good of all and be partners in the privilege of educating the children of our community and preparing them for the future to the benefit of our nation.



Botany Public School 1998





January 1998