

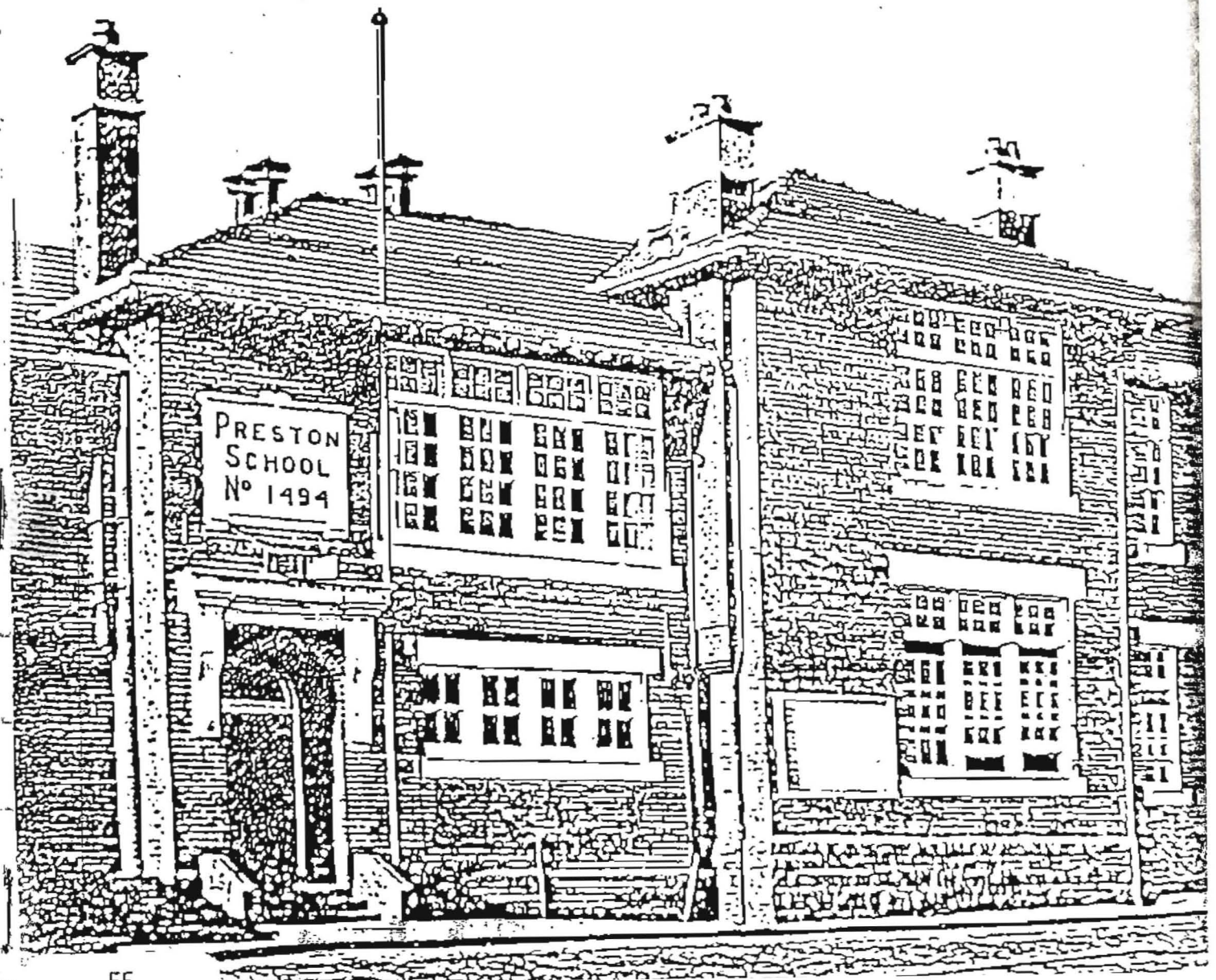
HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS: #2

LHRN 1362



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"A TEACHER REMEMBERS"  
1938 - 1985  
BERYL WATSON.



ABN

The Nominal Roll of Teachers at S.S. 1494, Tyler Street, Preston records that Beryl Elsie Froebel (Mrs. Beryl Watson), Record Number 32450, commenced at the school on 11th March, 1938 as a Student Teacher Grade 2, and that she ceased duty on 6th February, 1940 at 12.20 p.m. to take up a studentship at College. She eventually retired from the Education Department as a teacher on 8th November, 1985 , also from Preston Primary School.

As part of the Preston School's historical series of publications the following address given by Beryl Watson has been printed for your interest.

RETURN ON OR BEFORE  
LAST DATE MARKED

FF 322.79451  
WATS

-9 JAN 1982



Ken, Murray, members of School Council, my very dear friends, fellow staff members and family - thank-you all for coming here this evening. It is a delight to see you.

I should like to thank the Principal, members of School Council, and staff for organizing this evening. I think special thanks are due to our Principal, Ken McLeod and Sue Thomson.

Many sincere thanks to you all for this beautiful water colour. I shall hang it in a prominent place in my home, where I can admire and appreciate it. It will be a lasting reminder of the many very happy years I have enjoyed at Tyler Street, and of my many friends who have gathered to share this evening with me.

Children, their education and schools, have been very dear to my heart for the greater part of my life.

It has been said to me, that it is rather remarkable, that I began and completed my teaching career at the same school, Tyler Street, Preston. This is also the school which I first attended as a child.

My initial introduction to Tyler Street was rather informal. One day, while visiting my aunt, it was suggested I return to school with my cousin for the afternoon. A few months later I began attending school on a regular basis, and indeed my association with Tyler Street has spanned many years as pupil, Student Teacher, and Staff Member. The name of the Head Teacher who enrolled me is well known to many of you. The Dawson Scholarship is still awarded annually in his honour. This photo, which was presented to Mr. Dawson when he left the school in 1926, has recently found a new home in the Principal's office. These are the teachers who greeted me for my first year at school.

It was to Tyler Street that I returned as a Student Teacher. The polio epidemic had closed the lower grades of the school, but teachers were busily engaged painting wooden chairs and tables in bright colours. Animals were stencilled on the tables. The one of those chairs that has survived until today, proves very popular with the children.

When I commenced duty on 11th March, 1938, I was in charge of a Prep Grade, in what is now 4R's classroom. Another Student Teacher was on the other side of the folding doors, with over sixty grade one children.

Amongst my group, I had twin boys. Their father, now retired, sometimes meets me in the street. He is always very chatty, and never fails to introduce me as "Miss Froebel", and tells his friends that I taught his twins, and they are now over fifty. I well remember a four and a half year old girl in that grade. Having been taught the sound "e" in the morning, as we were writing it again in the afternoon, she told me she had been practising it at home at lunchtime. Her obvious initial enthusiasm for academic pursuits blossomed, and she is now a Professor of Anthropology in America, has lectured in different countries, and is Secretary of a world wide publication.

I formed friendships in those days with two girls who were also Student Teachers. They have retained their interest in Tyler Street over all these years, although they have spent all their married lives in the country. They are always interested in hearing news of the school. But for distance, they would be here with us tonight.

Having completed my teacher training, I took up an appointment at Diggers' Rest, and thought how fortunate I was to be only nineteen miles from Melbourne, between the Calder Highway and the railway line. My salary was one hundred and sixty eight pounds per year. Had I been twenty one, it would have been one hundred and eighty pounds per year.

A charming young couple, who were friends of our family, offered to drive us up one Sunday afternoon to see the location of the school. That couple, I am delighted to say, are with us this evening.

I learned that the previous teacher had travelled daily from Sunshine, so no one was accustomed to boarding the teacher.

The lady who ran the local store was happy to rent me a room in her home, but was too busy to provide meals, so the lady who ran the tearooms, suggested I have all meals at her tearooms, she regretted she was unable to offer accommodation. Thus I began the year teaching thirty children in grades one to eight. However, thankfully, before long another mother came forward, and invited me to board at their home. They were a lovely family. We had much in common and still correspond.

A short time after leaving Diggers' Rest, I had a visit from a delighted former pupil. She had come to Melbourne and obtained a job. She was employed cleaning public telephone boxes. All my life I have never seen anyone engaged in this occupation.

When I arrived at Romsey, on my way to take up my appointment at Kerrie, I was told the only transport out was with the mailman, that I would be Post Mistress as well as Head Teacher, and my boarding house was also the sly grog place of the district. These folk had been kind enough to put up a bed for me in their lounge room. It seemed country people were loathe to commit themselves to board someone they hadn't met, even if he or she was the school teacher.

After a short time, I was offered accommodation in a small detached sleepout, but it was one one of the best properties in the district.

In order to come to Melbourne for the weekend, I rode ten mile in a horse drawn butcher's cart to get to Woodend, where I caught the train. The event of the year at Kerrie, was when the school children, trained by the teacher, sang "Bringing in the Sheaves" at the Harvest Thanksgiving Service.

Fyans Creek was at the foot of the Grampians and very picturesque. Entry was along a five mile sand track off the highway, between Stawell and Hall's Gap. I walked for half an hour, over paddocks and through fences to get to school. This was the short cut!

I wondered at the holes appearing in my handkerchiefs, and to my horror discovered it was due to rats entering the drawer of the dressing table. My landlady told me, if I left the bedroom window open, the cat could get in and catch the rats. I was then faced by cat, rat in mouth, walking across my room. However, I appreciated the fact that the folks gave of their best, and the children and parents were appreciative of the fact they had a teacher.



I returned to teaching twenty years ago, when my youngest child started school. It was through a friend, who is with us tonight, and whose father was a Primary School Principal, that I learned the Education Department had commenced the Emergency Teacher Scheme. I so enjoyed each day of teaching, I found I was quite disappointed on the mornings the 'phone didn't ring.

There was such a desperate shortage of teachers in 1966, that Tyler Street was facing the fact, that third term would begin with two grades without a teacher. The Principal prevailed on me to become a temporary teacher, just for term three, I having previously declined his offer to become Librarian. The Departmental Office said, "Why be only temporary? I'll send you out the forms to apply for a temporary and a permanent appointment."

I've now spent twenty seven years of my life at this school, six as a primary school student, two as a Student Teacher, and now I'm in my twentieth year as a Staff Member.

As a teacher of young children, there are always surprises around the corner. Small friendly faces from classrooms recur in newspapers and magazines. It is interesting to read of their achievements in intervening years.

One pupil, I welcomed to school on her first day, will be taking up her Chair in Law next year, but her achievements have not been limited to the academic world. She has been appointed by the State Government to lead the inquiry into prostitution, its effects on other sections of the community, and the means of controlling it. She is Senior Lecturer in Law at Melbourne University, and has taken a year's leave from lecturing in the Law Faculty to complete the inquiry.

In addition to lecturing, over the past two years, she has held the position of Research Director for the N.S.W. Law Reform Commission, studying in particular, de facto relationships and accident compensation. She is also on the Commonwealth Attorney General's task force on Human Rights, which has been examining the Sex Discrimination Act.

On a recent Friday afternoon I walked home from school, very conscious of the fact that this was the last time I would be returning home, having completed a full week of teaching. That night I dreamed a very vivid dream. I was working with my E.S.L. group, a grade 2 pupil was beaming up at me with her enchanting smile. The building in which we were working was quite unfamiliar to me, but was on the site of the Melbourne Teachers' College, which I had attended in 1940. The Principal was none other than the Principal I'd worked with thirty -five to forty years ago. At recess time my group dispersed. It was then I was faced with a problem. It was Monday morning, I was due in 1D's room for the Language through Cooking Program. Recess time was unduly long. The bell didn't ring. I went this way and that in a strange building. I met people singly and in groups, but nobody was able to help me. The bell still hadn't rung, but that was no excuse really for me not being in 1D's classroom, where I was overdue. The bell didn't ring, nor did I locate any 1D children, or their classroom, and I woke up smiling.

This year another girl has delighted me with her progress. Just twelve months ago she came to Preston Primary School, shortly after her family arrived in Australia. One of my responsibilities has been to introduce her to the English language. Her progress has been so outstanding, that last Friday, she was the one chosen to present me with a farewell gift. She really excelled herself. What an asset she will be to our country.

I shall always cherish the memory of my last day at Preston Primary School. I would like to thank, most sincerely, all those very dear friends who put so much time and thought into preparation for the occasion, and who carried the festivities through so admirably. Following the presentation, the Principal asked me to go around the rooms and show the gift I had received to the children, as they hadn't seen it. This I was delighted to do. Having to tend with - visiting rooms on both sites, very heavy intermittent rain, the fact that children these days are so often receiving their education somewhere other than in their own classrooms, and painters on ladders painting above closed doorways, it was quite co-incidental that when the final bell rang at 3.30 p.m. I was in the classroom with 4R - the same room, in the same school in which I had commenced my teaching career on 11th March, 1938.

These have been very happy and rewarding years. I have found my teaching career very fulfilling, interesting, and varied. I've seen many changes in my time. In fact in some areas the wheel has turned full circle. I consider myself very fortunate that I have been able to work for so long, in an occupation in which I have been so happy. I am leaving a school with a wonderful Principal, and a dedicated and enthusiastic staff, who are most professional.

I have here with me tonight, people with whom I have taught over the years, and in recent years, parents' of children I've taught, the nephew of a past pupil, the brother of a past pupil, and friends of many years standing. I thank you all for your warm friendship and thoughtfulness towards me. I have valued it immensely.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my teaching career, but I am now looking forward, with enthusiasm, to enjoying those things I have not had time to do previously, and seeing more of friends and engaging in activities with them.

I thank you all most sincerely for this most memorable evening.

Thank-you.



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