

A
HISTORY
OF
EDUCATION
IN
WAUCHOPE



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WAUCHOPE PUBLIC SCHOOL

In 1818 the Macquarie River was explored at length in the expectation of being able to trace it to its outlet. Surveyor John Oxley and Evans the leaders of the expedition encountered sufficient swamps to deter them and they turned eastward to discover the Warrumbungle Mountains, the Liverpool Plains, the Hastings River and Port Macquarie. The Governor immediately took steps to have the latter examined in more detail.

He established the penal settlement at Port Macquarie in 1821. This remained a dreaded place for ten years before it was determined not to send any more convicts. However private citizens continued to move to the town and acquired land around it. In 1828 a Mr Maugham was given permission to take up an area of land twelve miles west of the Port at a point where the Hastings River enclosed several islands. This grant was also slightly west of the Government established town of Hay.

In 1836 Captain Robert Andrew Wauch arrived from Scotland with an authority to acquire a land grant. Captain Wauch lost no time in applying for a thousand acres on the Hastings River between the town of Hay and Maugham's property. He called this grant Wauchope, settled on it and continued to buy good land in the district. As he bought more land and acquired residences in Port Macquarie and Parramatta Captain Wauch found it necessary to employ an increasing number of men.

A small village grew on Wauchope; Wauch, being a Scot, had a tendency to employ Scotsmen and the settlement developed a Scottish and Presbyterian character.

When Captain Wauch arrived in Australia provisions for education were unorganised.

In 1833 Governor Bourke made an unsuccessful attempt to introduce a non-sectarian system of education. From that time schools were established and maintained by the various church bodies with the Government contributing towards the upkeep on a pro rata basis. The records of such schools are few. Outside the city and large

towns education was rarely considered. Children were needed on farms to share the labours of cultivation. Their parents taught them sufficient to enable them to make a living from the land and if they were lucky the children might learn to read the Bible at Sunday Schools.

Naturally those who could afford it and who did not need their children's labour, often employed a governess or tutor.

In 1844 a Select Committee enquired into matters of education and reported that:

"The present state of Education in this colony your Committee considers extremely deficient. There are about 25,676 children between the ages of 4 and 14 years; of these only 7,642 receive instruction in public schools, and 4,865 in private schools, leaving about 13,000 children who, as far as your Committee know are receiving no education at all. The expense of Public Education is about £1 per head; an enormous rate after every allowance has been made for the necessary dispersion of the inhabitants, and the consequent dearness of instruction....a far greater proportion of the evil has arisen from the strictly denominational character of the private schools.

"The first great objection to the denominational system is its expense; the number of schools in a given locality ought to depend on the number of children requiring instruction which that locality contains. To admit any other principle is to depart from those maxims of wholesome economy, upon which public money should always be administered.

"We are convinced of the superiority of a general to a denominational system....and recommend that one uniform system....be established for the whole of the colony."

Again the English traditions prevented the colonists accepting a completely non-denominational, state education system. The compromise, a system of Dual Administration, was effective from 1848 until 1866. This system provided education from two sources - the Board of National Education and the Denominational Schools Board. National Schools were established on the pattern of Irish National Schools, giving children of all sects a general literary education, which, while Christian in spirit, was undenominational. Port Macquarie National School opened in 1852, to be the first in the Hastings River area. The nature of Denominational schools varied greatly: Those in Sydney were generally of a very high standard,

with trained teachers from England; many country schools were also of a high quality, particularly where the supporters had been able to secure a trained teacher. However many country schools were inferior, two or three rivalling each other in a town which could support only one school fully. Many clergy were not trained teachers but many of their substitutes had even less training.

Benevolent employees frequently encouraged the establishment of schools for the benefit of the children on their properties and it is not unlikely that Captain Wauch was one of these. In 1841 the town of Wauchope was laid out, mainly on the land bought by Maugham in 1835. This private town quickly superceded the nearby Government village.

On 11th December 1865 Mr John Hume, on behalf of the church, opened a Presbyterian Denominational School at Wauchope. This was in a building on the flats on land originally held by Captain Wauch; no residence was provided, presumably because Hume was a local resident. There were thirty one children enrolled, of whom ten had received some education prior to joining Mr Hume.

In 1866 Sir Henry Parkes, leader of a coalition government, decided to concentrate on educational problems which had been described by a Select Committee in 1855 as being in a deplorable condition. He observed that the dual system was "unnecessarily expensive, of inferior quality, divisive in its effects and limited in its supply." As a remedy he introduced a Public Schools Bill which, after heated controversy, was passed by the Legislative Assembly to take effect from 1st January 1867. The Sydney newspaper 'The Empire' stated:

"We have held that ... as education is necessary even to the physical and secular well-being of the State, it is as much within the province of the State to promote it as it is to provide police for our protection.

"Parkes' bill, as he presented it, incorporated both of these ideas. He sought to have the State shoulder its responsibility for seeing that the children were taught, and to prevent the rivalry of the denominations from hindering the State in carrying out its duty."¹

The Act called for the establishment of a Council of Education and the disbanding of the two Boards. The Council was to control

1. Davis, P.D. The 1866 Controversy. Journal of Christian Education VII p. 85.

public education which was to be disseminated from Public, Provisional and Half-time schools. It was also to ensure that only those denominational schools which maintained a satisfactory standard were subsidised from Government funds.

Within the first year of operation 76 new Public, 31 Provisional and 6 Half-time Schools had been established. Most of the denominational schools had been visited by the Council's inspectors and 317 found to be satisfactory.

Wauchope School, visited in July 1867, was considered to be in a satisfactory state but as Presbyterians did not constitute the majority of pupils the residents applied to the Council for the establishment of a Public School.

The application was signed by Alexander Bain, Donald Cameron, Samuel and Isaac Andrew, Mathew Casey and Thomas Suters. The last of these pointed out that he had given two acres of his land over to school purposes. A schoolroom and residence with slab walls, hardwood floor and shingled roof had been erected by the residents who valued it at £45. Redbank Provisional School was a mile from this school but as the Hastings separated them the Council resolved to establish Wauchope as a Public School. They agreed to retain Mr Hume but, recognising his thirty five years' experience in Scotland, England and Australia and acknowledging his 66 years, exempted him from examination.

Wauchope Public School opened as such in January 1868 in the non-vested buildings. Mr Sutor offered his land but the Council refused to buy. The school was not able to maintain the enrolment of 42 and during 1869 several suggestions were made to combine it with neighbouring schools such as Redbank, Ennis and Haytown. These were discarded in recognition of the danger of the river and the generally apathetic nature of the people. With few prospects the Council again considered buying land at Wauchope but failed to reach a decision.

In 1870 the local board, which was made up of these gentlemen who signed the application, authorised the digging of a well for £40.

The next few years saw a decline in the Wauchope school, both in attendance and organisation. The fees of £4 a month per family were not paid regularly and Mr Hume's health began to fail. In 1873 Kendall Hume, the teacher at Ennis, requested a move and John Hume indicated he wished to retire at the end of July. A Public meeting was called by the Inspector of Schools on 15th May when it was decided not to reopen the Wauchope school in August but rather to send all those children to the Ennis school until a school could be erected on a more central site. This was Inspector Bradley's report:

"35 enrolled, 25 present.

1. The schoolhouse is not central, and is built on a low, damp piece of brush land, difficult of access in even moderately wet weather. The furniture is sufficient and of moderate quality, but owing to the shape of the schoolroom, not well arranged. 2. About two-thirds of the pupils attend regularly and punctually. The discipline in other respects is poor in its effects, the pupils being in most points ignorant of order, though in general quiet and obedient. 3. The instruction is but indifferently regulated, and the teaching stiff and mechanical. The lesson programmes are imperfect, and no register of lessons has been kept for a long time past. The average proficiency of the pupils is indifferent."

The closing of Wauchope Public School was not entirely due to a drop in population but more to the increase in the number of smaller schools and the increased need of the children to help with the bullock teams, which were becoming the prominent feature of the town. Twelve months later the inspector visited the Ennis school and reported that the measures initiated the year before had fallen through. In September Samuel Andrews on behalf of the residents of Wauchope made application for a Provisional School. He claimed that Ennis school was too far for children to travel, that they had a new wooden building 25 by 13 feet on the Wauchope side of the river and that 28 year old Miss Catherine Kennedy would be a suitable teacher in charge. The Inspector agreed* with Mr Andrews and aid was granted from 1st December 1874.

* See appendix for his report.

Miss Kennedy entered on duty on 11th January but had an unfortunate time, closing the school for three weeks because of floods and a measles epidemic. During this period the School Board, whose duties were to supervise the physical maintenance of the school, was comprised of Samuel and Isaac Andrews, Philip Moody, Patrick Denihan and Thomas Suters.

In 1877 the Inspector had this to say:

"At Ennis and Wauchope together there are now over 70 children of a school age and they all reside within a radius of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of an excellent central site on the left bank of the Hastings. During my recent visit to the locality I attended meetings of the Boards at both schools and eventually the residents of both localities agreed to support one Public School to be centrally placed on the bank of the river at Ennis, immediately opposite the Waughope**farms."

Miss Kennedy resigned in October 1877 and was succeeded by another Ennis girl, Miss Elizabeth Secombe, who in turn resigned in 1881.

The question of putting a school on a central site was delayed by the problem of acquiring the appropriate land and both schools continued as Provisional schools.

In 1880 the Public Instruction Act was passed, relieving the Local Board of almost all its responsibility. The onus of acquiring a site and erecting a building then fell on to the new Department of Public Instruction. Other changes were the introduction of compulsory attendance, withdrawal of aid to denominational schools, the payment of fees to the Department and an increased salary for teachers.

By 1881 it was clear that Wauchope was going to be the prominent town and the inspector recommended the erection of a school for 35 pupils. In June the Minister approved the expenditure of £525 on such a building. In 1883 a schoolroom $22\frac{1}{2}$ by 17 by 13 feet was built on a site of two acres near the river (Portion 25). The site was fenced by the residents and then the front fence moved

** Waughope and Wauchope were alternatives although the original name was spelt with a 'c' and the 'g' came into use after Captain Wauch's departure.

back eleven yards to make way for the wharf road. A residence was also provided as the teacher, Mrs Minnie Doyle, had a small family to care for.

By 1887 there were 61 pupils enrolled and the residents were successful in their bid to have a twelve by seventeen classroom added, although it was not used until there was an average attendance of 50. A kitchen for Mrs Doyle was provided simultaneously.

The school was kept in good repair for:

"Wauchope is permanently settled, and it promises to become a flourishing township. The prospects of the locality are such as to justify the necessary expenditure."

A weathershed, new fences and gravel playground surface were included in repairs done in 1889.

In 1889 11 children from Redbank wished to attend Wauchope Public School but had no means of crossing the river. The Department agreed to pay half the price of a punt (£5) but pointed out that the teacher was not obliged to supervise its use. The parents were unwilling to let the children cross alone and nothing further was done.

In July Mr Thomas Dickson was appointed but remained only a year as the attendance had increased sufficiently to warrant the appointment of a more highly qualified teacher and a pupil teacher. Mr Robert Hopper and Miss Susan Robinson filled these respective positions.

The following year the first Arbor Day was celebrated and six trees were planted in the grounds to supplement those natural trees already on the block. In 1892 a separate school for the aboriginal children of Wauchope was established to be run on a half-time basis with Rolland's Plain.* In July Edward Hattersly was appointed as a second pupil teacher of the main school and in December an extension of 25 feet was made on the western end of the school. This was necessary as there were over 100 children enrolled and an average daily attendance greater than seventy.

* At some stage this school was known as 'Morcom' School.

During 1894 Mr Hopper married Susan Robinson, his pupil teacher, who took over the teaching of sewing from her sister-in-law. James Dickson filled the position vacated by Susan and as the other pupil teacher had left there was again a staff of two.

In 1895 two certificates of exemption were awarded by the inspector. These may not have been the first given but it is the first recorded occasion. It was probably these two senior pupils who helped Mr Dickson run the school while Mr Hopper was ill. Within a couple of years the average daily attendance again warranted the appointment of a second pupil teacher and Hercules Robinson (Mrs Hopper's brother) was appointed.

In 1905 a central school conveyance scheme was introduced into New South Wales. Parents were offered subsidies to defray the costs of sending their children to a centrally placed school by a 'school buggy'. The following year the scheme was extended to include water transport. Twenty two pupils from Ennis took advantage of these facilities through a parents' committee which paid the boatman. This scheme continued until the end of November 1910. From 1st December children caught a regular ferry, 'The Rocks' which travelled via Rawdon Island.

It was not only the parents at Ennis who were anxious about their children's education - Wauchope was one of the earliest places to have a Parents and Citizens' Association in the state. In 1911 they were urging that a District School should be established there to serve the whole Hastings River area. There was also a teachers' association which requested the appointment of a young male teacher who could assist with drill and cadet training for the boys.

In 1913, by which time 132 pupils were enrolled, Mr David Williams replaced Mr Hopper, who had wanted a transfer for many years as his health was failing. Mr Williams found that he had more than 110 pupils attending in two rooms which could only satisfactorily accommodate 90. A hall owned by Mr Parkes was immediately rented for temporary classrooms. Mr Williams had three female assistants to help in his expanded school.

Plans for a new building were discussed for some time as the school continued to grow and the old building became less satisfactory. The question of a new site was also considered as the depression of the present one was a disadvantage.

In 1913 an area of just over four acres in Wauch Street was surveyed and resumed for school purposes. This site was cleared of dead trees and a four roomed wooden school built on it in 1917. The residence on the old site was retained and extensively renovated after its occupation by the new teacher Mr Joseph Wright. The new school was occupied from the beginning of 1918. Its construction meant that three assistant teachers were necessary for effective teaching but because of the war situation a third could not be sent. The school's enrolment had been inflated during 1913 by the construction of the Northern Railway but by 1918 it had settled back to 175.

Mr Edwin Prowse was appointed to the school in 1918 and took charge of the 18 pupils in seventh class who had passed their Qualifying Certificates. This group which was enlarged the following year occupied what had been the old school building when it was moved to the new site in 1920. The old classroom was used for manual training classes. The fifty senior pupils who were working towards the Intermediate Certificate were classed as a Day Continuation School.*

By 1920, with 200 pupils, Mr Prowse felt the need for a male assistant and one was sent in 1922 to give him a staff of four assistant teachers.

The residence continued to need repairs until it was sold in 1939 after a new one, nearer the school, had been built. Wauchope was one of the earlier towns to have an electricity supply, the residence being connected in 1925.

In 1926 the headmaster requested a paling fence for the back of the school as what had been classed as permanent virgin

* They studied English, maths, geography, book-keeping, history, manual or needle work, music and cadet drill for the boys.

forest in 1917 was rapidly becoming closely settled. His request was declined as there was already a good wire fence in existence.

The school continued to expand and the senior pupils began the Rural School course in 1929, gaining practical knowledge which would be of great value on local farms. Children were conveyed to Wauchope from many surrounding settlements. In 1930 the deal for the acquisition of the school site was completed, sixteen years after it had been occupied. The delay was caused by legal difficulties in Mr Bain's will. The Department finally paid £300 for the new block.

The Wauchope school teachers were responsible for the successful organisation of the Hastings District Sports, which were held annually from about 1929. The boys had been having swimming lessons since 1920 and from 1934 were able to have these in the new pool constructed near the old school. The children also made use of the school tennis court which was resurfaced in 1934.

By 1944 the school was classed as a Central School with 83 secondary pupils. Nine years later it was an Intermediate High School with a total enrolment of 467 and in 1954 the High and Primary Schools separated.

<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>
John Hume	January 1868
School closed	August 1873
Catherine Kennedy	January 1875
Elizabeth Secombe	October 1877
Minnie Doyle	October 1881
Thomas Dickson	July 1889
Robert Hopper	September 1890
David Williams	July 1912
Joseph Wright	April 1917
Edwin Prowse	October 1917
George Bruce	March 1924
William Whitting	July 1927
Frederick Henry	December 1928
Gilbert Davis	July 1930
Alfred Spicer	December 1937
Valentine Lickiss	December 1939
Norman Haywood	February 1948
Gerald Williams	January 1952
Robert Walpole	February 1954
Arthur Riding	January 1959
Allan Cook	January 1967
Max Apps	January 1973
Jock Foley	January 1974
Evan Francis	January 1976
Tim Ivers	January 1984
Diana Reynolds	April 1996
Cameron Osborne	January 2011