

DALBY STATE SCHOOL

SOME EARLY HISTORY.

(By E. Geisel).

An institution that has played a big part in the development of the town and district is the Dalby State School. During the many years of its existence, it has been in a great measure responsible for the moulding of the character and destiny of quite a large number of men and women. Some have wandered to remote parts, whilst others are still in local surroundings, and are doing their bit for the general welfare of the town and district.

One and all must rejoice in the splendid and effective educational system of the State, which, whilst not entirely free, is within the reach of the most humble citizen, and by which opportunities are given to each boy and girl alike. To deal with our system even in the briefest sense, one cannot fail to mention the name of Mr. Charles Lilley, afterwards Sir Charles, who was chiefly instrumental in and became chairman of a Royal Commission, which resulted in the introduction of free education in Queensland in 1875. His name, with many other pioneer statesmen, is enshrined in Queensland history. As a memorial to him two medals known as the Lilley medals, are still presented to the boy and girl who head the list of winners at the annual State School Scholarship examinations throughout the State.

The Dalby State school first came into existence as a mixed school on the first day of June, 1861, under the first headmaster, Samuel Henry Ind, who remained for about 1½ years. No history is available as regards the location, but very old hands assert it was on the other side of Myall creek in the vicinity of old Roachtown, where also the first bank, the Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney, opened for business. The present school site was not secured until July 4th, 1862, and probably some time elapsed before a building was erected thereon, so the assumption of an earlier school is quite feasible. The present grounds contain two allotments, which were auctioned under proclamation dated May 27th, 1857, and were purchased by Messrs Charles Coxon and Alexander Johnston respectively, who afterwards made a transfer to the Board of General Education of the State, on the date previously mentioned, July 4th, 1862.

A second building was later erected on the same grounds. This was used as a separate department for girls and infants. It was opened on January 1st, 1863, and remained in existence until June 30th, 1893, when the building was closed and removed from the town, due, it is said, to an exodus of people to the gold fields at Eldersville. This affected the attendance; hence the decision to close this department, and again revert to the one building as a mixed school. During the 34 years existence of the girls' and infants' department, the mistresses in charge of this section were:

Mary Jane Houlston	to 1870
Emma Wright	to 1872
Harriet Fincombe	to 1876
Kate Gripp	to 1877
Wilhelmina Bulcock	to 1883
Mary Kennedy	to 1884
Ellen Short	to 1886
Mary Alice Cox	to 1892
Helena Broe	to 1893

Miss Cox after her retirement married Mr. Charles Simpson, and went to reside on Bon Accord station.

The headmasters' terms from the opening of the school were:

George Williams	to 1864
James Platt	to 1865
John Caine	to 1868
Patrick Walker	to 1875
Dennis Lyons	to 1882
Arthur Kemp	to 1884
Richard Bracewell	to 1885
John Morrison	to 1886
James Baylis	to 1889
George Sheppard	to 1893
Fred Finch	to 1911
R. B. McNaught	to 1916
J. A. Barnes, B.A.	to 1923
D. S. A. Drain, B.A.	to 1928

To Mr. Finch must be given the credit of having served the longest period, 18 years, during which time he occupied the old school residence in the grounds, since removed and still standing in Bunya street. Perhaps the most popular master was Mr. R. B. McNaught, a genial favourite with all, as evidenced by the large public send-off at the time of his transfer. It was during his term, through the combined efforts of the school committee and himself, that the status of the school was raised. The demand for a High School was so strong that the Department yielded to the request and created the secondary school. Mr. McNaught had the honour of being the first master of the High School.

In regard to daily average attendance, no figures for the first few years appear on record, but in 1861, the year of opening, 57 were present on the date of inspection, the following year showing 111 on the roll. For the year 1868 the daily average attendance is shown at 133. These figures remained stationary until 1874, when the numbers increased to 218. A downward trend again showed for a number of years. The figures for 1886 are given at 149, whilst in 1895 the low figure of 90 was reached. Fourteen years later, in 1909, the attendance again increased to 179, and in 1912, higher figures are shown at 219. An upward tendency again appears from this time on, 1915 showing at 302, 1921 at 307, whilst in 1930 the record daily average attendance is shown at 334.

No history of the Dalby State school would be complete without the inclusion of the name of Miss Elizabeth Malley, who gave almost fifty years to her life's chosen work, until she entered into eternal rest in the midst of devotion to duty. As an infant teacher probably she had few equals, and she had the distinct privilege in one family instance of teaching three generations. It was fitting, therefore, that a memorial should be erected in the school to her memory. This bears the inscription:

"To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die."

If this be true, then the memory of the deceased lady will never die in the hearts and minds of the parents, whose children she taught, for the memory of her work is still cherished. With her gentle and kind disposition, she was indeed a foster mother to the little tots under her care. Nature had endowed her with all the faculties necessary for this particular work, and her record will stand the severest test through the years to come.

These few incidents are given with a view to resurrecting early history, and that the Dalby State school will go on performing this great and useful work, giving the necessary educational facilities to the rising generation, is no doubt the greatest wish of the inhabitants of the town and district.