

Photo

Box 69

ArchivesACT Research Guide

Original address
(from NSW. Education
Dept. on file 57/136)

Old Narrabundah School.

Note: Spelling of the title of the locality varies as Nerrabunda, Nerrabundah, and Narrabundah. All three were used concurrently although, until 1900, the most commonly used was the first. The last spelling has come into general use most recently. In the following text the various spellings are used as they occur in papers referred to.

The specific answers to your questions are as follows:

- (a) The school demolished in 1923 appears to have opened in 1894.
- (b) As the teacher-in-charge was appointed to the school at Bungendore on 27th September 1923, it seems likely that the school closed during that month.
- (c) The enrolment at the time of the school's closing is not available but it is probable that the school closed because the attendance had fallen below 20 pupils.
- (d) The last teacher-in-charge was Mr. George Kemp.
- (e) The building demolished in 1923 cost £68.11.0 It was built in 1904 by Mr. J. O'Rourke.
- (f) The following information was discovered during research into the history of the school.

There were two schools in the Canberra district which, at different time, were both called Nerrabundah. The first of these was built in the locality known as Long Gully, which was midway between Yarralumla and Tuggranong. In January 1885 Mr. W.G. O'Neill, a stock and station agent at Queanbeyan, wrote to the Under Secretary of Education to say that the residents of Taylor's Hill, Long Gully wished a school to be established there. They were able to guarantee an attendance of 15. An official application was sent on 31st March, signed by John Pike, Joseph Mayo, William Ryan, and Patrick Sheedy. The last two were apparently unable to sign their names for each marked the paper with a cross. Approval for the school

to be established was given on 4th August 1885. The Chief Inspector thought that a name more distinctive than Taylor's Hill, Long Gully, should be provided and the District Inspector, Mr. Kevin, suggested "Nerrabunda", which was adopted.

Mr. F. Campbell of Yarralumla had offered to rent a stone cottage for a school house but Mr. Kevin reported that it would be better to build a new school on part of a Government reserve which was more central to the community. The school site is shown on parish and county maps as portion 170, Parish of Narrabundah.

The Inspector had hoped that two acres would have been available from the four acre reserve but, as public access to a spring would have been barred, the school was only granted three roods for its site.

Built of slabs, the school house was erected by John Pike and William Ryan, who were paid £45 for their work. The building was completed by the end of the year, but Mr. Kevin wrote to say that the wood was fairly green and would almost certainly shrink. On 12th May 1886, however, he was able to report that the slabs has been "tightened up and the joints securely covered with strips of zinc". He continued: "The whole has again been whitewashed and made neat, clean and comfortable".

The Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for 1886 states that the new provisional school which had opened at Nerrabunda during the year had had an average attendance of 9.8 and a total enrolment of 16. The first teacher, Miss Jessie MacTavish, was appointed on 20th January 1886. On 28th May of the following year Miss MacTavish married Mr. John Sheedy - probably a resident of the district. Despite her marriage Mrs. Sheedy remained at the school until December 1889. It was apparently closed from then until December 1890 when Miss Mary McManus was appointed teacher-in-charge.

From 1st April 1891 until February 1893 Nerrabunda was conducted on a half-time basis with the school at Canberra. It

reverted to provisional status again with the appointment of Mr. Samuel Hanscombe on 23rd February 1893. The attendance must have continued to fluctuate, however, for the school closed in October of the same year, only to reopen four years later as a provisional school under Herbert Dallas, who remained there from January to October. In January 1898 Mr. Patrick Sheedy wrote to the Department asking for the school to be reopened. With the appointment of Mr. Francis McGee on 1st February, Nerrabunda was conducted as a half-time school again, this time in connection with the school at Yarralumla. Twelve months later Mr. John Clowes became teacher at the two schools. Approval was given in October 1900 for the closing of Nerrabunda half-time school and the conversion of Yarralumla to a public school. This took effect from 1st November.

The second school, which was located approximately three miles to the north-east of Nerrabunda and was known at first as Duntroon, appears to have come into operation in 1894 as a half-time school conducted with the school at Canberra. The first teacher was Mr. Donald Robertson who stayed at the Canberra school in July 1895 when it was converted to a public school and the Duntroon school was closed.

In 1901 the Duntroon school reopened as a half-time school with Malcolm Vale. Mr. William J. Rolfe was appointed teacher of the schools in July 1901. As the nearest residence which he could acquire was six miles away Mr. Rolfe had to ride or drive to school each day. He was granted a forage allowance of £20 per annum.

As very few children were attending Malcolm Vale school it ceased to function in June 1903 and on 17th of that month Duntroon became a provisional school. Then, at the end of 1904, it became a public school. As the attendance at Duntroon was

ArchivesACT Research Guide

- 4 -

generally 20 or more children and the building was old and small, there had been agitation for a new school building for some years. In November 1903 the District Inspector, Mr. Flashman, wrote:

"the building at Duntroon is a very old one and was some time ago removed from another siet. It is altogether too small for the present attendance. I am of the opinion that the building is quite beyond repair or improvement...I recommend that a new building be erected to accommodate about 25 pupils at a cost of about £50."

Tenders were called and on 24th June 1904 a contract for £68.11.0 was signed by Mr. C.J. O'Rourke of Queanbeyan. On 19th September the Inspector reported that the new school was completed.

On November 8th 1904 Mr. Rolfe wrote to Mr. Flashman:

"I beg to respectfully inform you that letters addressed to me at the Public School, Duntroon, Queanbeyan are frequently delayed through being sent on to Duntroon Station. Duntroon Station is on the Yass-Queanbeyan mail route, whereas Duntroon Public School is on the Queanbeyan-Uriara. I would suggest that the name of the school be changed from Duntroon to Nerrabundah, the name of the locality. If the name be changed to Nerrabundah much inconvenience and annoyance now caused by the delay in receipt of letters will be guarded against."

Approval for the name to be changed was given on 9th December 1904.

The school was situated at the intersection of two roads (plan Nos. 2178/1603 and 2078/1608) on Robert Campbell's property "Madura". This site had been leased from Mr. James Scroggie, trustee in the estate of the late George Campbell of Duntroon. Mr. Scroggie had leased two acres of land to the Department of Public Instruction at a peppercorn rental and in January 1904 Mr. Flashman had written to him seeking an extension of the lease of three or four years, as it was due to expire on 30th June 1906. Mr. Scroggie extended the lease to 30th June 1910.

In November 1901 Mr. Rolfe had written to say that as the site was bare and windswept he had planted trees and fenced the school grounds to keep out rabbits. At the time

wire netting was 10/6 per roll. The cost of fencing two sides of the schoolground was £8/12/6. This included 15/- for 200 yards of barbed wire. Amplification of Mr. Flashman's remark that the first Duntroon school building was "removed from another site" could not, unfortunately, be found in the available records.

Teachers who succeeded Mr. Rolfe included Mr. M. Hannon in September 1907, Mr. E.J. Mason in October 1912, Mr. Samuel Crowther in the following month, and Mr. George H. Kemp in 1916.

The teachers at the two schools and the dates of their appointment were as follows:

Nerrabunda.

Jessie Sheedy (nee MacTavish) 20/1/86 to 17/12/89.

School closed until November 1890.

Miss Mary McManus 12/11/90. Half-time with Canberra school from April 1891 to February 1893.

Samuel Hanscombe 23/2/93 to 31/10/93.

Reopened as a provisional school in 1897.

Herbert Dallas 21/1/97 to 22/10/97.

Half-time with Yarralumla from January 1898.

Francis McGee 1/2/98.

Frederick A. Greentree 4/11/98.

John Clowes 2/2/99.

School closed when Yarralumla became a public school from 1/11/1900.

Duntroon - Nerrabundah.

Donald Robertson 23/1/94 to 22/7/95. Canberra and Duntroon half-time schools.

W.J. Rolfe Appointed to Duntroon and Malcolm Vale half-time schools 31/7/01. Duntroon converted to a provisional school 1903. Name changed to Nerrabundah 28/11/04.

M. Hannon 10/9/07.

E.J. Mason 2/10/12.

Samuel Crowther 20/11/12.

George H. Kemp 19/4/16.

School closed September 1923.

Inscription on wall of

Fire Station reads:

"Near this plaque stood one of the earliest
 Schools in Canberra. The original slab building
 18' x 14' stood in a two acre site at the
 intersection of two roads on Robert Campbell's
 property "Madura". It opened with an enrolment
 of 23 pupils in January 1894 as the Duntroon
 School. In December 1904 it was officially named
 the "Nerrabundah ^{Public} School" until it closed
 in September 1923 on the opening of
 Telopea Park School nearby."