

The Next 25 Years at Muswellbrook South Public School

1977 When the 25-year celebrations were held, **Gordon Benson** wrote the script for a play, which was read by the Primary School children and re-enacted in the School Playground. The stage was made from school wooden desks tied together, with a surface made from class mats, there being no stage or hall at South.

Brian McGrath became an Advisor at Upper Hunter Teachers' Centre in Skellatar House. The Teachers' Centre would provide Inservice Courses, Parent Courses, Adult Literacy, a Resource Library and venue for Educational Displays.

Students living at St Helier's have now been at the School for more than two years.

Don Lawler was District Inspector, and **Alan Beard** was Regional Director. The Director-General of Education, Mr Doug Swan visited the area.

1978 There was the promise of a new library and extensions to the classrooms. (The new library is now being built in 2002, and the school is finally being given a hall, permanent classrooms, and upgrading).

Some Aboriginal children were enrolled at the school.

The Girls' uniform was red and white check with a Peter Pan collar.

Boys wore blue shirts and grey shorts.

There was a maroon pinafore as Girls' sports uniform with SM on the shoulder.

Pat Skinner was the Principal.

Judy Adam became the Advisor at Skellatar House, organising In-service Courses.

Adult Learn to Read Classes were commenced at South.

1979 Errol Allen became Principal, with **Elma Woolfe** replacing **Mabie Cosgrove**, as the School had been reclassified.

Soccer, Rugby League, Newcombe Ball and Netball were played as sport.

Raye Pryor was the Sewing/Craft Teacher. **Norma Fowler** trained the Band.

1980 Pat Dark became Infants' Mistress. **Mrs Maloney** was the School Secretary, and Teachers' Aides were appointed.

Hockey was added as a school sport.

The brick library was still in use, as the promised new building did not eventuate.

Barbara Bishop worked from the Teachers' Centre at Skellatar House.

1981 Mrs Pritchard became the paid Canteen Supervisor. Before this, a committee had run the Canteen on a volunteer basis. **Mrs N Fowler** was deployed as Small Schools Consultant, based in Skellatar House, and also running a Teachers Resource Centre.

Sue Moss became Acting Deputy Mistress.

A 5th Class was set up in the Seventh Day Adventist Hall, as there was no classroom, until a demountable was placed on site.

Colin Fisher, MLA, announced the upgrading of Muswellbrook South to include a Canteen, library and administration services was in the "Planning Stage."

Mr Eric Bedford, Acting Minister for Education, announced that the Dept of Education would assume responsibility for Willowbrook School. Director is **Clarrie Willoughby**, Area Director is **Alan Beard** and District Inspector is **John Peacock**.

Teachers coming to the area were having difficulty finding suitable accommodation.

St James Catholic School \$1.5m. building was commenced off Skellatar Stockroute.

1982 A demountable library arrived to relieve the overcrowding. This freed up the old brick library as a small hall and office space, known as Heritage Hall.

Five additional male teachers were added to the staff.

1983 Larry Keegan was appointed Principal.

A Library Assistant was employed part time to assist the Librarian.

There were now 11 male teachers on the staff.

1984 Doug Avard was appointed General Assistant.

15 female and 7 male teachers made up the teaching staff.

Mr Avard built shelves for storage, as the School did not have enough space.

1985 The Safety House Scheme was started with local houses being asked to affix a sign to their letterboxes and provide a safe place for children to go if needed.

N Fowler returned from the Teachers' Centre secondment.

Pat Dark became ill at School and passed away on 31st October.

1986 Designated the **Year of Peace**, many changes were starting to take place in Education. There were now 600 children at the School.

Two School Magazines were produced in this year.

Brian McGrath was appointed as Deputy Principal Infants.

Events such as the Festival of Performing Arts continued.

Mr Avard built a secure bike enclosure for pushbikes, as well as computer desks.

Breakthrough and Cuisenaire were still used extensively in the Infants Department. The first Microbee Computers were purchased, running on cassette tape.

Ian Ralston came to the staff as **Gordon Benson** retired from fulltime teaching, before doing 5 years of casual teaching.

Kindergarten visited Mrs Kath Smith's Farm, there was a Lake Liddell Infants' Fun day, a Primary camp was held at Manobalai School and Old Sydney Town was visited. Year Five went to Camp Crusader at Bonnells Bay.

There were still only two sets of traffic lights in Muswellbrook.

Mrs M Maloney retired as School Secretary. **Bronwyn Hicks** assisted in the Library.

Book Week with a Clown Theme, was held indoors as it rained.

A maroon tracksuit and Netball Skirt were added to the school uniform.

Ground works were done for the siting of the John Foley Unit.

The end of year concert featured "Cabbage Patch Kids".

1987 John Foley Special School (formerly known as **Willowbrook**), made the move to Muswellbrook South at a cost of about \$70 000 in February.

Amanda Lambert and **Ruth Scholes** were appointed to the John Foley Unit.

Lyn Stocker and **Melissa McLennan** worked as Teachers' Aides Special. Many other people, assisted on a voluntary basis. **Peg O'Brien** became their regular Scripture Teacher. Previous aides included **Marge Webster**, **Mrs Kennedy**.

Previous teachers had been **Val Clarke**, **Samantha Mackay**, **Shirley Feeney**, and

Daphne Lowe.

An Integration Aide, **Penny Lees**, was also appointed to the School.

A Reading Resource Teacher, **Rod McKeough** was appointed to assist children who had reading difficulties.

Robyn Cox became the School Secretary.

Trish Ferguson was appointed as a Teacher's Aide.

Doug Avard's influence was beginning to be seen, with the setting up of stone-edged flowerbeds.

The Marching Koalas visited Muswellbrook Olympic Park.

Larry Keegan retired as Principal.

1988 Mrs Diane Nightingale was appointed as School Principal.

The School was asked to participate in the Centenary Muswellbrook Show.

The **Bicentenary Year** led to a celebration involving Maypole dancing, Dance Groups, and a Pageant depicting Early Education.

Mrs Kerle's Gymnastics groups performed to "Celebration of a Nation."

Each child attending the School was given a medal.

Casuals were beginning to be employed to release teachers for two hours per week, from face to face teaching.

Small Schools were the first to receive Release from Face to Face Teaching about 1984.

A "Lapathon" around Australia was used to raise funds for the School.

A Steam Train- the "**Flying Scotsman**" visited the town, giving free rides to schoolchildren to near Scone and return. For many, this was their first sight of a steam train, and for many, their first trip on a train.

More Aboriginal Students were being enrolled at the School.

The end of year production was based on "Cats".

1989 This year saw a lot being done in the area of Staff Development.

Maori workers were being employed at the Power Stations, and their children were enrolled at South. Some South Sea Islander families were also enrolled.

The Hunter Life Van visited the School, and Apex Club sponsored a Public Speaking Competition, which was to become an annual event throughout the School.

Traffic Lights were installed on the New England Highway in front of the School after years of lobbying, especially by the P and C Association.

Aliera French attended the School, the second generation of her family to do so. Aliera is now making a name for herself in the International Scene as an Aboriginal Model.

David Roach was appointed as IM Teacher. **Val Cuttriss** assisted in the Unit.

Choral and other Performances took place over the year. The end of year production was called "Rock it in Space". The School continued to do well on the sporting field.

1990 A demountable library arrived.

Cindy Adams, a former Captain, came to the Teaching Staff.

D Avard and helpers built an undercover area-known as the "Hayshed".

Global Budgeting was introduced at the school.

The School Patron, **Grace Cousins** passed away in May 1990.

A weekend fire in a classroom in the Year Five Block was brought under control, thanks to the quick action of a teacher, but severely damaged one classroom and smoke damaged the reading bookstore and two other classrooms.

A successful Cake Day was run. Public Speaking became an Annual event.

Classes visited Aboriginal Sites at Camberwell for ideas for **Wanaruah Square**.

The Senior Girls' Cricket Team were State Runners Up. Sports available at the School were Rugby League, Basketball, Roller Skating, Golf, Softball, T-Ball, Touch Football, Netball, Cricket, Swimming, Gymnastics, Cross Country, Hockey and Dance.

"Dragon Girl" was the end of year production.

1991 A very full and busy year saw the paving of the Osborn Ave area by **D Avard** and parents and the purchase of new playground seating.

A new cleaning service started, and the School farewelled **Mrs Hoole**, **Mrs Wenban** and her daughter, **Mrs Komacha**, after many years as the School Cleaners.

Mrs Holz and **Mrs Goodwin** were appointed as Cleaners.

Wanaruah Square was completed with the co-operation of the ASSPA Committee.

A mural depicting **Byamee** was painted on the weather shed wall, with handprints of the current Aboriginal Children in place.

Children performed in the Festival of Performing Arts at Olympic Park, a Red Faces Concert, and manned a float in the Spring Festival Parade.

Students planted one hundred trees at the Golf Course and along Muscle Creek.

The Rugby League team reached the Finals in the Westmont Shield.

There were excursions to Reptile Park, Old Sydney Town, Leyland Bros World, Glenbawn Dam and Canberra.

The end of year production was based on the **Works of Andrew Lloyd Webber**.

1992 Teachers became more Sunsafe, insisting on the wearing of hats during the day.

Glenyce Armstrong commenced "Reading Recovery" with Year One pupils at the School.

Interest Electives were added to the afternoon curriculum, and students could choose to learn Indonesian, Paint murals, delve into Science, join the Choir, or learn about Aboriginal Culture, among the many choices. Many parent volunteers assisted.

A mesh fence was added to the front of the school for safety.

The Library became computerised, and cyclic maintenance gave the School a facelift.

The School continued to be involved in activities such as a Fitathon with an Olympics Theme, Book Parade and Fair, and an Environment Day.

The Official Opening of Wanaruah Square took place in September, with many Aboriginal visitors and guests, who were entertained by the School Choir and other groups.

The School was given an **Assistant Director General's Award** for "**Outstanding Achievement in Visual and Dramatic Arts, Choral Activities and Verse Speaking.**"

The end of year Production was entitled "Germs".

1993 A successful submission was made for Disadvantaged Schools' Funding.

A School Council was established.

The School continued to shine in all areas of sport.

Dance Groups continued to be trained by **Mrs Sandra Kerle**. Mrs Kerle has given of her time and talents to train boys, girls and teachers in Dance in the years she has taught at the School.

Rod McKeough gave of his talent in the field of art and writing End of Year Productions. A "Topping up the Talent" Program was begun with DSP funding.

Many children did well in the Newcastle Permanent Maths Competition.

Kurt Barnes added to his sporting achievements by taking up Golf. (He is the current Australian Junior Golf Champion-2002).

Michael Hanly and **Andrew Partridge** started their sporting careers at South, also.

1994 The School Council assisted with updating School Policy Documents.

"Skills for Growing" Program was implemented in the area of Personal Development.

The Senior Choir came first in the Eisteddfod, conducted by **D Nightingale**.

The Under 8's won the Peel Carnival in Rugby League.

Roz Nean was appointed as an Aboriginal Teachers' Aide. **NAIDOC** week was held.

The Girl's School Uniform was changed from red and white to maroon and white, the official school colours. A maroon polo shirt was chosen for the boys.

Brian McGrath, Deputy Principal, retired after many years at the School. Brian inspired Public Speaking, Maths and Literacy in his years at the School.

June Davies retired from the role of Teacher Librarian. She had been the driving force behind the Book Week Parades, Book Fairs and had endured not only moving the Library to the Demountable, but instigated the Computerisation of the thousands of books and resources, as well as training many Library Monitor in the care of books.

Virginia Chadwick, Minister for Education, visited the school in August.

Volunteers and Doug Avard built Stage One of the Ausplay equipment in the playground.

The **Special Classes** held an overnight camp at the School.

For many, this was the first time away from parents.

Other grades went to Mrs Smith's Farm, Rusa Park, Dubbo, Old Sydney Town, Glenbawn Dam, Bundabah and Canberra.

Fundraising was in the form of a Trivia Night, Fete and Funathon.

1995 John Fibbins was appointed Deputy Principal.

The TAFE students from next door built a rocket in the playground.

With the extra money provided by DSP funding, and P and C Funding, the School was able to purchase computer equipment, sandpit area, netball rings, air conditioning and CD's for use at the School Dances and Infants' Frolic.

Julie Edwards, a parent, was voted 1995 Citizen of the Year for her involvement in the School and the community.

"Quality Assurance" was carried out, using borrowed caravans as interview spaces, as the School does not have the space for interview rooms. More policies were reviewed.

A School Jacket was added to the uniform.

A senior group learnt how to apply for funding for trees and seats.

The **Special Classes** attended Riding for the Disabled.

The School Choir sang in Welsh at the Abermain Eisteddfod, held at Cessnock, coming in third place. The Infants Percussion Band came first in the Muswellbrook Eisteddfod.

The 9's and 10's Rugby League Teams won at the Peel Carnival.

A World Environment Day was held. **Speech Therapists** trained the class teachers.

Some classes went to Dubbo Zoo and Year 6 went to Sydney for their excursion.

The End of Year Production was based on **"Pirates of Penzance"**.

1996 Interest Electives continued as part of the program, with many parents volunteering their time and talents to assist.

A video camera and editing equipment was purchased. This year saw the positioning of Stage Two of the Ausplay Equipment in the playground, assisted by **D Avard**.

Morpeth was the venue for a Creative Arts Camp involving dance, poetry, and visual arts. Dancers trained by **Sandra Kerle** performed a Spanish dance in the Hunter School Dance Festival in June.

As well as Hunter Life Education visit, and a Book week parade, an "Olympicathon" was held close to the time of the Olympics.

Students continued to learn Indonesian with the help of **Vana Ford**.

Glenyce Armstrong was presented with a **Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching**.

The big news for the year 1996 was the **Senior Rugby League Team** becoming the Runners-Up in the Westmont Shield, with 8 wins and a loss (in the Grand Final) held in Wollongong.

Mick Barnes was the coach.

1997 The Staff of Muswellbrook South grew to 41 this year.

Planning was started for the new buildings.

The Staff were trained in Child Protection and CPR.

Air conditioners, seating, Maths equipment, and Laptop Computers were added to the items provided by DSP and P and C Funding.

Gloria Jordan and **Julie Tereszku**n were presented with Life Membership of the P and C Association.

Jaden Ward won the 8year old section of the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Competition.

A Multicultural Day was held, as well as participation in the Festival of Performing Arts, Dance, Creative Arts Camp and Book Week activities.

Creativity continues to flourish with such people as **Sandra Kerle**, **Rod McKeough**, **Diane Nightingale** and **Vana Ford's** many hours of dedicated work.

Mr Caddey and **Mrs Armstrong** both left the staff this year, after many years of service.

Mr Graham Turvey started training for Reading Recovery, and **Mr Peter Rowe** was appointed as a Special Reading Teacher.

Peer Pals were trained to help Year Two transfer to Year Three, and assist Kindergarten enrolments in their first week at School.

1998 Muswellbrook has been transferred to Tamworth District, with the re-allocation of areas.

This year was the celebration of the **Sesquicentenary of Education**.

With **Mrs Norma Fowler's** retirement as Assistant Principal Infants, **Mrs Michelle Floyd** arrived as her replacement.

NATSI Week was celebrated, and the Morpeth Camp for Visual and Creative Arts was held again, assisted by teachers and parents.

A **cycleway** was begun linking Osborn Ave and Ruth White Ave.

Dance Groups were trained and performed on several occasions, thanks to the dedicated teachers who are willing to give of their own time and energy.

Many hours have also gone into training Sporting Teams, thanks to dedicated coaches, be they teachers or parents.

1999 Changes were made to the bell times so that a two-hour Literacy Block could be held daily. Basic Skills testing took place.

Many hours were spent on "levelling" reading books to assist with the Literacy Program.

The Ancillary Staff have chosen to wear a checked uniform in the School Colours, but in a different check to the girl's uniform.

Australian Cricketers **Shane Lee** and **Gavin Robertson** brought the World Cup with them to show to students and teacher in September.

Stormwater drains were upgraded from October.

Philip Derksen jumped 1.47 metres to be placed second in the All Schools State Titles held at the Olympic site. He went on to compete in the Nationals.

Year 6 went to Canberra for their excursion.

2000 This year will not only be remembered for the Olympics in Sydney, but at South it is known as the **Year of the Fire**. On 19th March, some children set fire to packing around an air-conditioning unit that was to be placed in the ceiling of the front three- block unit, and the fire travelled into the ceiling and gutted the block, which housed three classrooms and book storage areas. The damage was estimated at \$1/2 million.

Not long after the fire, Muswellbrook was deluged by rain, so that the playground became a quagmire. **George Souris** visited on the day of the fire offering his support.

Computer Tutors were trained to assist younger pupils with computer skills.

Because of declining enrolments, the DP position was deleted at the end of the year.

Roz Nean ran in the Torch Relay at Quirindi with lots of helpers to cheer her on.

The Torch Relay was cheered on as it came past Muswellbrook South School.

Unfortunately, **Ron King**, a local identity collapsed after his section of the relay, and passed away.

The Dance group performed in a Torch Relay Spectacular at the Showground at the end of the Muswellbrook section of the relay.

Hamish Fibbins was chosen to sing in the Olympic Choir, **Mrs Logue's** sons and husband performed in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Olympic Games.

The School farewelled **Mrs Floyd, Peter Clare, Dennis Turnbull, Rod McKeough** and **Doug Avard** (General Assistant) in this year.

Mrs Karen Rayner replaced Mrs Floyd, now Principal at Sandy Hollow School.

Rugby League legends, **Andrew Ettinghausen** and **Laurie Daley** visited South on November 2.

George Souris, Member for Upper Hunter, delivered a petition with over 1800 signatures to Parliament, asking for urgent action on Capital Works funding.

End of Year Production was called "Flame".

2001 John Aquilina called into the school on 22nd February to announce that the School was to be granted new buildings and refurbishment costing \$6 million, to be spread over two years. Stage One is to include a Hall with COLA (Covered Learning Area) attached, and a New Library. Other items include covered walkways, larger canteen, permanent buildings for the Support Unit, and refurbishment of the Classrooms, the Administration Block and grounds.

Diane Nightingale retired as Principal on March 8, after 13 years at the School.

Her replacement is **Lyn Wright**, who had been teaching near Tamworth.

Medals were presented to the children for the **Centenary of Federation**.

The School took part in Debating, and a Science Day.

Hamish Fibbins sang on Australia Day and at the Opera House in September with Sing 2001 Choir.

Melanie Whiting, a hearing impaired student, performed in the Signing Choir in Starstruck, a regional Spectacular.

Sarah Hope competed in the State Cross Country Championships.

A **Reconciliation Choir** was formed to sing in Education Week, and for the unveiling of the Muswellbrook Reconciliation Mural.

The School was given an award for the way the staff assisted after the fire.

A plaque was added to the refurbished block.

The School welcomed seven new teachers and farewelled **Phil Debenham, Peter** and **Julie Rowe**, from the teaching staff, and **Lyn Logue** (Office Assistant).

There are now 53 Staff members.

2002 This **Golden Anniversary Year** has seen Stage One of the building program commence. It is hoped that the Hall and Library will be completed so that the Celebrations planned for 13th and 16th November can be held in them. The Staff have chosen to wear a Polo T Shirt in the School Colours to wear for this Anniversary Year. Meanwhile, the School continues to be involved in the Day-to-Day activities with many parent volunteers assisting in all aspects of the School Programs. Scripture teachers still attend the School on Friday to deliver a non-denominational program across the Stages.

Osborn's and Harris buses continue to provide transport before and after school.

The local Taxis provide transport for the Special Needs Children.

MOOSH provides before and after school care from the National Fitness Hall in Skellatar St.

It is hoped that the many people visiting the School will be pleasantly surprised with the changes that have occurred at Muswellbrook South to make it what it has become today.

Muswellbrook South Public School has grown from a School with four class teachers to a modern School with a Staff of over 50 people, keeping up with this most demanding but rewarding vocation.

DUX OF THE SCHOOL-from 1990

1990	Helen Watt
1991	Peter Harvey
1992	Kelly Stacey
1993	Kate Sanderson
1994	Renee McKenzie
1995	.
1996	Jonathon Mc Cormack
1997	Amy Wells
1998	Tony Derksen
1999	Lauren Stacey
2000	Emma Hinschen
2001	Laura Duck
2002	Sophie King
2003	Lauren Thornton

Gordon Benson, the School's Historian and first Deputy Principal, has summarised the first 25 years at Muswellbrook South Public School in a booklet entitled "A Short History of Muswellbrook South Public School".

References:

- "Dawn in the Valley" W A Wood
- Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Historical Society
- Records of Muswellbrook South Public School
- Personal Records of Gordon Benson
- Information from many friends, ever willing to assist in the compilation of this record of the Muswellbrook South Public School
- Mrs Mary Bowman, "Girrahween

Norma Fowler, former assistant principal, the second twenty five years at south-1977-2002
This is an attempt to summarise the next 25 years.

References:

- Muswellbrook South School Magazines 1986-2001
- Staff members who have helped jog my memory and corrected details.