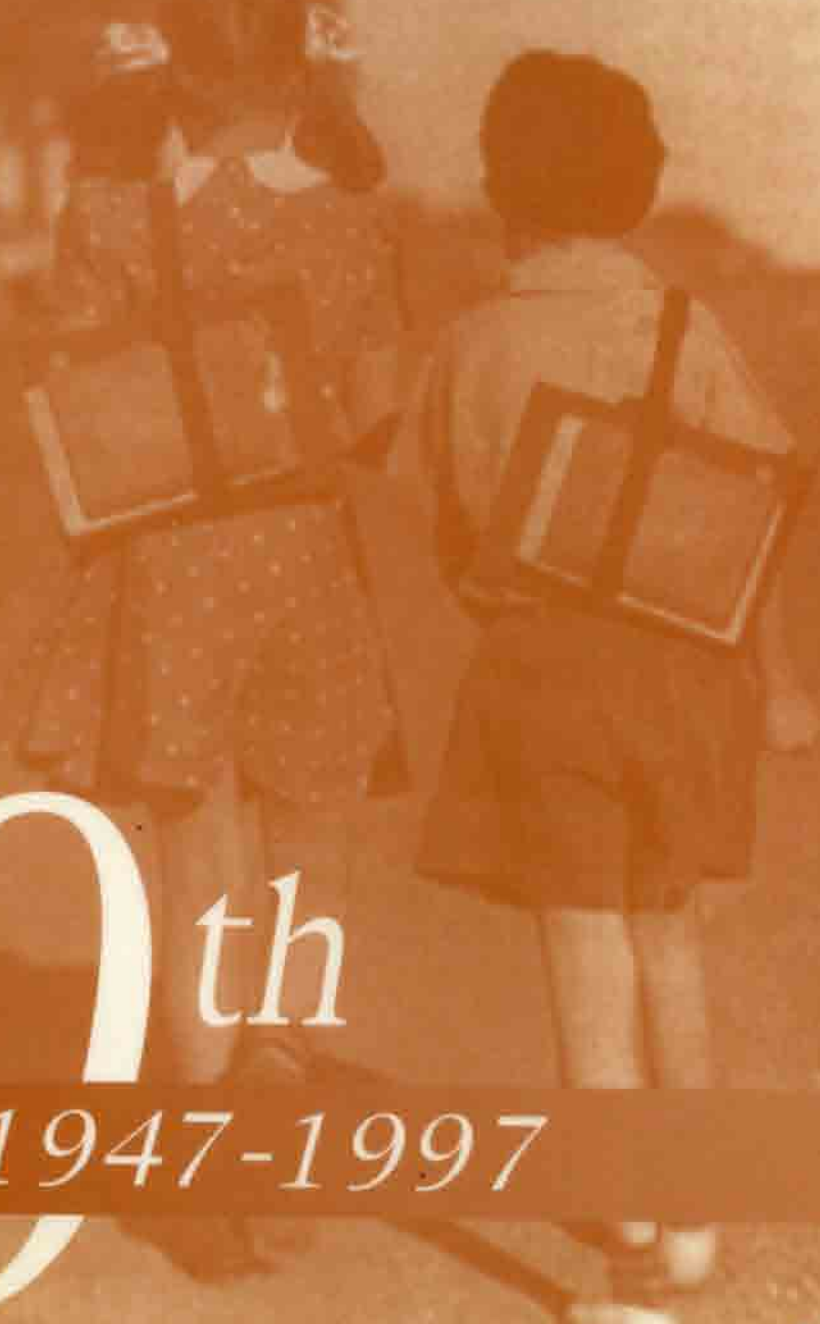




OATLEY WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL



50th
1947-1997

Foreword

A small bush infants school with ten pupils and a teacher. That's how it started. The war was over and, powered by optimism, the community looked to the future. Faith and belief in the future mean providing education for the children who are the future. So, with the community growing and becoming stronger, the demand for a local school at Oatley West became, on 24th March 1947, a reality. A small reality on a patch of ground, a bit rough but ready for the task of building the future. Things could only get better.

And they did. The school grew in size and stature, always with the strong interest and involvement of the community which grew and developed around the school. In fact this partnership is now part of the essence of the school. The bushland setting and this community pride and partnership are two precious characteristics that link us with our past. Of course there are changes. The hall and the library are two that the school community can be especially proud of. And who, in 1947, would have known what the internet was, let alone that by 1997 the school would be connected to it.

Pride in achievement should not become arrogance. Who can tell what the school will be like in another fifty years? What the folk then will think of our school now? I suspect they will be pleased with what has been done. I think they will look back at this landmark and say: "Well, we know a good deal about the 50th anniversary and the history of the school to that point because of the excellent booklet written by John Coleman". John himself is very much part of the story of our school. He has been a parent, an active member of the community, an initiator of the Art and Craft Show and one of the first community members of Oatley West School Council. Most significantly, he is the author of this excellent book. Thank you John, and well done.

Julian Sheen
January, 1997

Oatley's Grant School Site

Although Oatley West Public School opened its doors 50 years ago in early 1947, the story of education in Oatley goes back many years before that time.

The first school in Oatley, Oatley Public School, opened on October 2, 1917 in the Oatley School of Arts Hall in Letitia Street. A lack of funds and resources during the years of the First World War had precluded the construction of a specialised school building. However, with the conclusion of the war in 1918 the government was, by June 1921, able to find the funds to build three classrooms on a site at the corner of Letitia and Neville Streets.

Yet this was not the original site selected for a school in Oatley. In fact the first land set aside for a school in the Oatley area was actually in Oatley West on a one acre block bounded by Acacia and Mi Mi Streets and Woronora Parade. This site had been set aside for a school as early as 1883 when a

subdivision plan for 1400 residential blocks was issued by the Oatley Estate Company. This company was administered by Charles Cecil Griffiths who in 1881 had purchased the original James Oatley grant of 300 acres from Oatley's son, Frederick, at a cost of £10,000.

This purchase was part of a plan by Griffiths to buy up land in the area so that he might offer some land free of charge to the railways to encourage them to route the Illawarra Line through Oatley and cross the George's River at Como rather than at Tom Ugly's Point or Turen Point. In the end Griffiths' offer of free land made the Como crossing more attractive than the other two crossings where the wealthy entrepreneur Thomas Holt wanted to sell the land to the railways at exorbitant prices.

Griffiths' subdivision covered all of Oatley and Oatley West from Gungah

Bay Road in the west to Oatley Bay in the east and Boundary and Hurstville Roads in the north to the George's River in the south. The streets in this subdivision were named after members of the Griffiths family and Australian native plants. Charles Griffiths donated this school site to the Department of Public Instruction on December 20, 1883.

This original school site was called "Oatley's Grant School Site". It is described in Education Department records as lots 9, 10, 11 and 12 of section 13 of Oatley's Grant Forest subdivision. This site is clearly shown in the auction sale handbill of December 13, 1890 for the "New Oatley Township" and reprinted in this history. However, this site was probably considered to be too far from the heart of Oatley and therefore unsuitable for a local school and hence the selection of the Neville and Letitia Street site where Oatley Public School now stands.

NEW OATLEY TOWNSHIP

AUCTION SALE SATURDAY DECEMBER 13TH

WATKIN & WATKIN

AUCTIONEERS

313 PITT ST SYDNEY

TERMS
\$5 PER LOT
 DEPOSIT \$
 1/4 PER MONTH.
 INTEREST
 9% ON HALF YEARLY
 BALANCES

**TORRENS
 TITLE
 SHADED LOTS
 ARE SOLD**

VENDORS
 THE
**NATIONAL BUILDING LAND INVESTMENT
 COMPANY LTD 250 PITT ST**
 JAMES A TODD MANAGER

LOCAL SKETCH

Since, at war's end, this original site in Oatley West was no longer needed for a school, the Oatley Voluntary Workers' Association asked the Department of Public Instruction for the land so that its members might build homes for local war widows. The land was duly transferred on July 2, 1918 and by 1921 three homes had been built on the two blocks facing Woronora Parade using local voluntary labour. These three houses were all three bedroom of weatherboard construction and one of

them is still owned by the descendants of Mrs Bowden who was one of the original war widows for whom the houses were built. However, support dwindled and the blocks facing Mi Mi Street were never utilised and the land was left unimproved until 1945 at which time the council rates for the land were heavily in arrears to the amount of £365/10/4. As the value of the two blocks of land was only £330 the trustees of the Voluntary Workers' Association asked Hurstville Council to

resume the land in lieu of the rates owed. This was agreed to and the site became a public reserve. In one of life's little ironies the present Principal of Oatley West Public School, Mr Julian Sheen, lives in one of the houses built on this original school site.

Oatley West in 1947

The land on which the present Oatley West Public School has stood for the past 50 years was originally part of the Oatley Park Estate which was first advertised for sale on October 28, 1893. A subdivision plan is shown in the auction handbill which is reproduced in this history. The land on which the school now stands is described as lots 1-28 in section 9 of the estate. Lots 1-6 faced the park on Park Road (now Dame Mary Gilmore Road); lots 7-17 faced Peakhurst Park Road (now Oatley Park Avenue); and lots 8-18 faced Park Avenue. Park Street, opposite Oatley Park did not actually exist as a street until after 1947 when the school was first built. In 1947 the bush on the school site extended right up to the park boundary. At no time until the school was built on the site were any of the blocks developed or improved in any way with the exception of lot 12 facing Peakhurst Park Road which had foundations constructed to the value of £5.

In the late 1920s the Department of Education began the purchase and resumption of these blocks for the future development of a school for the Oatley West area. This section of land was selected because it was one of the few whole sections in the area which had not been built on and could therefore be purchased more cheaply for the unimproved value of the land. This land was also situated on the highest point of the estate and yet was relatively flat and ideal for building. It had the added

advantages of being situated near the Park and on the main road to the Park. Early residents of the Oatley West area maintain that the eastern end of the site was to be used for a Primary School and the western end of the site for a future High School.

The Department had acquired the entire block, comprising nearly four and a half acres of land, by 1932 as the extract from the valuation list of the Department of the Valuer General, reprinted in this history, shows. Of the blocks facing Oatley Park Road lots 16 and 17 had been purchased from Mr William Whitfield of Hurstville by 1929; lots 14 and 15 from Mr Francis between 1929 and 1932; lot 13 from Mr Charles Manglesdorf by 1929; lot 12 from Mrs Mary Moloney between 1929 and 1932; lot 11 from Mrs Annie Curtain by 1929; lots 7-10 inclusive from the estate of Mr Claude Henry Furness between 1929 and 1932. In 1926 these lots were valued at around £75 each and by 1929 at around £100 each.

Of the blocks facing the Park on Park Road all were purchased between 1926 and 1929; lot 1 was purchased from Mr R. G. Barker; lot 2 from Mr Neville L. Grove; lot 3 from Mrs Alma Rose Watson; and lots 4-6 from Mrs Mabel Irving Fountain. Lots 1, 2 and 3 were valued at £75 each and lots 4-6 at £78 each.

Of the remaining 11 blocks on the school site, situated on the southern side

of Park Avenue, eight were acquired between 1926 and 1929. Lot 27 was purchased from Mr William Johnston; lot 26 from Mrs Helena Lowes; and lots 18-23 inclusive from Mr Frederick W. Radford. The remaining three lots were resumed between 1929 and 1932; lot 28 from Mr George Martin Huggard; and lots 24 and 25 from Mrs Clara Hill. In 1926 these lots were valued at £60 each and by 1929 at around £75 each.

During the next fifteen years families slowly moved into the area surrounding the school site. By 1946 there were 10 houses in Oatley Park Avenue; a scattering of homes around Jewfish Point; one house only in Park Avenue; whilst nearly every block in Lloyd Street was built on. The houses in Lloyd Street (originally known as Lloyd George Street) had been built for returned servicemen immediately after World War I and the immediate area was known as "Soldiers Settlement". Even streets further to the east like Mi Mi and Myall were not fully built on. One parent of an early pupil at Oatley West says that she could look out her back window in Mi Mi Street and watch her daughter walk all the way to school.

Those homes established in Oatley West by 1947 were connected to the gas supply; electric power; water; and where it could be afforded, the telephone. The holes for the power poles had to be blasted in many areas of Oatley West due to the large amounts of rock so close to the surface. Sewerage was not connected until well after the school

was opened. The "sani-man" called once a week to empty pans from the backyard toilets, carrying the full ones on their shoulders to horse-drawn drays or motor lorries and bringing back an empty one for the next week. Hannon Brothers had the Council contract for this service as well as garbage collection in the area. Local residents used liberal amounts of phenol in order to kill both the smell and the germs.

Other services supplied to the local residents were milk deliveries by horse and cart twice a day, the milk being left in "billy cans" which the householders left on their front porches or hung on taps in their front gardens; blocks of ice delivered for the home's ice chest about three times a week; and bread from Edward's bakery in Letitia Street was delivered daily by Ron Parkes' horse-drawn cart. Ron's "Hullo little Dear" greeting was well known to all his customers; the clothes prop man would call at regular intervals to supply the wooden poles that would prop up clothes lines in those days before Hills hoists; mail was delivered twice daily by the postman who often made his rounds on horseback. Roads around the school were largely unpaved, one notable exception being Oatley Park Road between the park and Short Street. Where the roads were paved they often only had a thin strip of bitumen down the centre of the street.

It might be surmised that one of the main reasons for opening a new school in Oatley West would be overcrowding at Oatley Public School - but Departmental records show that this was definitely not the case. In fact the truth is that Oatley Public school was struggling to hold its

numbers during the early 1940s. Parents of Oatley students became so concerned at the drift of students from the local Oatley area to the larger schools at Hurstville and Mortdale that they wrote to their local School Inspector, Mr Taylor, asking him to draw up boundaries for Oatley School and make attendance at Oatley Public School mandatory for all those children living within those boundaries. This was approved by the Department on November 20, 1946 and the boundaries

of Oatley School were designated at Mi Mi Street in the west; the George's River in the south and east and Wonoona Parade in the north. On a hand-drawn map by Inspector Taylor that still exists in the Departmental Archives there is the hand-written comment that Mi Mi Street was to be the eastern boundary of the new Oatley West Public School.

Most of the local Oatley West children went to Mortdale Public School

123 Acres

PEAKHURST PARK

WONOONA PARADE

GEORGES RIVER

OATLEY PARK

THE GREAT ATTRACTION LOCAL SKETCH

OATLEY PARK

THE SOUTHERN SANATORIUM

SPLENDID BUILDING SITES

Will be Sold on the Ground SATURDAY 28th OCTOBER 1893 at 3 p.m. by

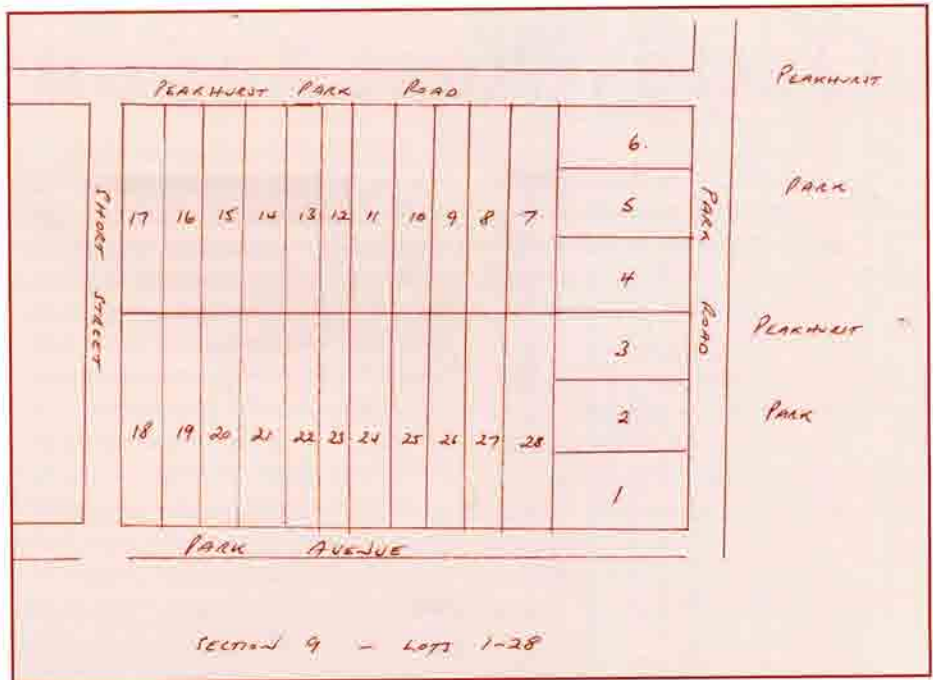
RICHARDSON & WRENCH LTD. in conjunction with **MYLES McRAE**

Every lot put up will be positively sold to the highest bidder

M'Carra, Stewart & Co. Printers, Sydney

because the local bus, Lawler's Bus Service, ran to that suburb and not to Oatley. However, as more families moved into the area following the end of World War II in 1945 many parents began to approach their local Member of Parliament, Mr A. J. Williams, in order to have a local school built at Oatley West on the site that had been purchased between 1926 and 1932. Many parents felt that either taking very young children to Mortdale School by bus or walking them over to Oatley School was too much of a hardship particularly if the weather was bad. The roads were largely unpaved and Oatley Park Avenue, for instance was cut by a flooded creek between Macintyre Street and Waterfall Road whenever it rained heavily.

As a result of parental pressure the Department of Education in 1946 asked the parents to conduct a survey to ascertain the numbers of prospective students for a school at Oatley West. This survey was carried out by Mr W. Dawes, Mrs A. Poole and Mrs J. O'Neill. The survey concluded that there were enough potential students for a local Infants' School and the Department gave its approval for the school to open at the beginning of Term One, 1947.



The actual construction of the Oatley West School buildings began in the latter half of 1946. First of all the bulldozers moved in and cleared the Short Street and Oatley Park Road corner of the site. The rest of the site remained thickly covered with native plant life of which ti-tree scrub predominated. The two room building was constructed of timber and was situated on this Short Street/Oatley

Park Road corner of the site near where the Hall and the Library stand today. One of the school's very first students, Jeanette Watt, says that whenever she smells freshly sawn timber she is instantly taken back to the very first days in this new timber school room. Attached to the classroom, on the Short Street side of the building, was a timber washroom with taps and bubblers.

XX 51 600-E DEPARTMENT OF THE VALUER GENERAL. N.S.W. - VALUATION LIST.

VALUATION DISTRICT OF **HURSTVILLE** OCCUPATION **PEAKHURST.** VALUATION NO. **5571**

OWNER **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.** ADDRESS **C/O RESUMED PROPERTIES DEPT. 16 GROSVENOR ST. SYDNEY.**

LAND'S NAME

COUNTY **lot 23-4031 191, 3230** PARISH **OATLEY PARK** TOWN OR VILLAGE **OATLEY PARK**

FROM REG. NO. **191, 3230** OTHER } **OATLEY PARK**
 TO TITLE / REG. NO. } **SITE.**

STREET **OATLEY PARK AVE.** SIDE **N** HOUSE NO. OR NAME **OATLEY WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL.**

PORTION	SEC.	LOT	AREA OF ENCLOSURE	VALUE			REMARKS
				UNIMPROVED	IMPROVED	ANNUAL GENERAL	
	9	1/28	643'3x312' 669'9 313' 4Ac. 2Rds. 32P.	2000	2000	100	

HERE PARK ROAD & END.

Oatley West Infants' School

Classes at Oatley West School finally commenced on Monday, March 24, 1947. The school had not been ready to open on the first day of the school year due to building delays, so the students who were to enrol at the new school received seven weeks extra holiday. Due to the delay in opening some parents who had promised in the survey to send children to Oatley West sent their children instead to other schools in the area. Hence the complaint from the District Inspector some time later that the actual numbers enrolled at Oatley West were not as great as the parents had originally indicated. On the first day, ten children were enrolled by the school's sole teacher, Miss Gwendoline Rowley, who had been appointed to the position on December 11, 1946.

These first ten children, seven boys and three girls, were, in the order that they appear in the roll: Ann Poole from Lloyd Street; Jeanette Watt from Park Avenue; Janice Hummel from Mi Mi Street; and the boys: Edward Stone, Lloyd Street; John Robbins from Douglas Haig Street; Bruce Sterling from Burke Street; David Adams from Oatley Park Avenue; Dennis and John O'Neill from Park Avenue; Graham Carter from Oatley Park Avenue. On the next day, Tuesday March 25, another four students were enrolled - John Gilroy, Jonathon Deerson, Betty Bland and Wendy Derrett.

The opening of Oatley West School received a small mention in the local Hurstville Propeller Newspaper on March 27, 1947 in the "News in Brief" section:

"Mr A. J. Williams, M.L.A. member for George's River, has been advised by the Minister of Education that an Infants' School has been established at Oatley West. The building will be completed this month and a teacher has been instructed to take up duties."

By the time the school's first term ended on Thursday, May 8, 1947, the student population had climbed to 33 - 15 girls and 18 boys, all in Kindergarten with Miss Rowley.

Early in Term 2, Miss Rowley divided her class into two groups - those who continued in the Kindergarten group and a second group which began "formal work". This latter group consisted of 16 students (8 boys and 8 girls) who moved very quickly onto First Class work. The kindergarten group of 25 students was also taught by Miss Rowley in the same room.

When the school's first year ended on Thursday, December 18, 1947 there were 50 children attending the little bush school at Oatley West - 25 boys and 25 girls. It is interesting to note that the roll shows that in Term 3, 1947 on November 20, that the students received a public holiday for "Princess Elizabeth's wedding day."

During this first year parents began a long tradition of assistance to the school. The first project appears to have been the construction and filling of a sand-pit in the grounds near the Short Street fence. The first parents' organisation was the Mothers' Club which was formed in 1948. The first President was Mrs Alice Poole, who served in that position for many years. The Mothers' Club raised money by running toffee stalls; cake stalls; fetes; Mother's Day stalls; the making and selling of handicrafts; and the regular stall in the little shopping centre at Oatley West on Saturday mornings. The proceeds from these various activities in those early days enabled the rooms to be carpeted and a piano to be purchased.

During First Term 1948 eight more students enrolled at the school which required the Department of Education to appoint a second teacher, Miss Benton. She commenced her duties at Oatley West on Monday, March 15, 1948 and was given the Kindergarten class of 13 boys and 13 girls. Miss Rowley taught First and Second classes consisting of 38 students in the other classroom. By the end of 1948 the school had 44 children in Kindergarten and 40 children in a composite First/Second class. This total of 84 students comprised 46 boys and 38 girls.

Lessons in those days concentrated heavily on rote learning, particularly when it came to the weekly spelling lists and the learning of multiplication tables. Kindergarten children had a compulsory sleep period after lunch each day and each child received a third of a pint of milk each day, paid for by the government and delivered to the school in foil top bottles.

In 1949 some of those children who had enrolled in the very first term of 1947 at Oatley West and who had completed Kindergarten, First and Second class in two years had to leave the school to go to either Oatley or Mortdale Public Schools because they had reached Third Class level and as an Infants' School, Oatley West did not cater for them. This caused new pressure from the local parents in order that the Department might upgrade the school to Primary status. Added to this was the fact that numbers both at the school and in the district were growing steadily and by the end of 1949 there were 110 students at the school, further accentuating the need for the school to be converted from Infant to Primary status.

The School Grows Up

Pressure to convert Oatley West Infants' School to a full Primary School had begun as early as mid-1948 only about 15 months after the school had initially opened. A letter was sent to the Department of Education by the Mothers' Club on July 5, 1948 which "requested that, in view of the rapidly expanding size of the suburb and the increase in the number of school children within its bounds, the school be extended to be a full primary school, its present scope being Kindergarten year,

First and Second class. If this is not at present practicable, the addition of another school room would alleviate teaching difficulties, as at present one room is shared by both First and Second Class. As an indication of the rapid growth of the school, I should mention that on its opening in March, 1947, nine pupils attended and at the commencement of its second year, 60 children are now in attendance. It is hoped that, with your interest, these matters may be put in hand and the

growing needs of the school may be accommodated by increased facilities." This letter was signed by Mrs M. Meakins of Lloyd Street, the Secretary of the Mothers' Club.

This request was passed on to the Hurstville District Inspector, Mr T.A. White, for a recommendation. Mr White asked that his recommendation be deferred until later in the year because a detailed survey would have to be undertaken in order to ascertain the potential enrolment for a Primary school. Mr White duly carried out his survey and on December 10, 1948 he recommended that the school be raised to Primary status. A copy of the Inspector's report is included in this history. It shows that the Minister for Education approved the Inspector's recommendation on January 7, 1949 subject to additional accommodation being provided. The report also states quite clearly that in elevating Oatley West to Primary status this would relieve pressure on Mortdale Public School and herein lies a hint as to why approval was granted so readily and so quickly. The records of Mortdale School at this time indicate that there was considerable parental pressure on the government to resume land owned by Judd's Brickworks in the period after 1945 due to the fact that Mortdale school's numbers were increasing (907 students in 1949) and the school site was overcrowded. The option of resuming part of the brickpit was very expensive and the Department procrastinated over this decision for many years. It must have seemed a much easier and cheaper option to firstly open a school at Oatley West in 1947 and then to upgrade it to a Primary school in 1950, especially as most of the children of the Oatley West area attended Mortdale school and land at the Oatley West site had been owned by the Department for many years and would necessitate no new expense. At the same time, during the late 1940s and very early 1950s, there was considerable pressure on the Department to open schools at Mortdale Heights and at

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

HURSTVILLE District. Section 6 DEC 1948

OATLEY WEST: STATUS OF SCHOOL: Ref: 48/192/45567.

Memorandum from District Inspector to S. J. ...

15 DEC 1948
JAN 1949

WEST OATLEY Infants' School has an enrolment of 61 and will probably reach 90 next year. There are two portable classrooms.

If the status were raised to PUBLIC an additional classroom would be required immediately, or the younger pupils would be excluded until it was provided; the parents do not desire this. From meeting several I have formed the opinion that a PUBLIC SCHOOL is wanted as soon as it can be provided, but the exclusion of the younger pupils would be keenly opposed.

I would recommend that the school be raised to PUBLIC status when additional accommodation can be provided.

As a Public School this school would relieve MORTDALE.

T. A. White, Inspector.

The Hon. Secretary of the West Oatley Infants' School Mothers' Club has made application for the West Oatley Infants' School to be converted to primary status.

In view of the report furnished by the District Inspector IT IS RECOMMENDED -

1. that approval be granted to raise the school to Primary status when additional accommodation can be provided.
2. That the question of providing additional accommodation at this school be referred to the Building Branch for necessary action.

Place: 1, Bown Rd., MCGRAWH, Date: 10th December, 1948.

APPROVED 5-1-49 (R.O.)

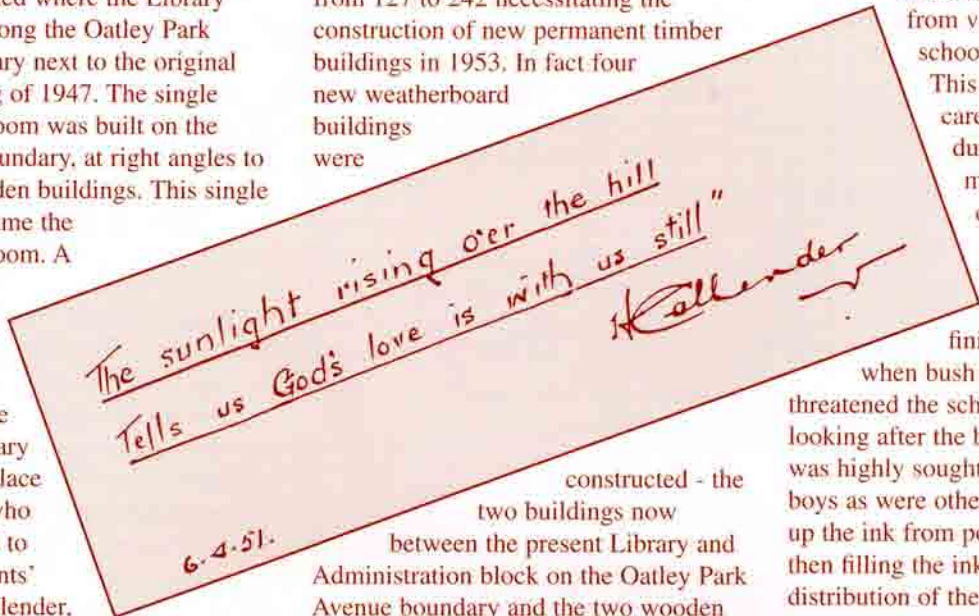
Kemp Street, Mortdale. Again this would have been expensive because land had not been set aside for schools in these areas and therefore resumption would be necessary. The establishment and the upgrading of Oatley West school alleviated the need for these schools and plans for them were shelved by 1951.

By March, 1950 the new accommodation had been provided in the form of one single and one double portable classroom. The double portable room was erected where the Library stands today along the Oatley Park Avenue boundary next to the original school building of 1947. The single portable classroom was built on the Short Street boundary, at right angles to these two wooden buildings. This single classroom became the Kindergarten room. A

Primary Headmaster, Mr Harry Callender, was appointed to the school on January 31, 1950 to replace Miss Rowley who was transferred to Caringbah Infants' School. Mr Callender, the school's first Primary Headmaster, served in that position until the end of the 1957 school year. A note from Inspector White informed the Minister that by May 24, 1950 the "school was functioning as a Fourth class Primary school with a Headmaster and three assistants." By 1952 the school's enrolment of 184 students entitled it to be classified as a Second Class Primary school. An

interesting footnote concerns Inspector White who was so involved in those early days of Oatley West school. Tom White was an original Anzac who had served in the Gallipoli campaign and later in France. He had reached the rank of captain and was often affectionately, although one would imagine not directly, referred to by teachers in his district as "Captain Tom."

Between 1951 and 1953 the numbers of students in the school nearly doubled from 127 to 242 necessitating the construction of new permanent timber buildings in 1953. In fact four new weatherboard buildings were



constructed - the two buildings now between the present Library and Administration block on the Oatley Park Avenue boundary and the two wooden buildings to the north which run parallel to them. All these buildings are still in use today.

Mr Frank Staples, the school's first Deputy Headmaster, who arrived in 1952, remembers that building materials were still in short supply when these buildings were constructed. He taught in one of those rooms without any windows or a door. There were not enough desks or chairs for the students

who sat at collapsible tables and on long forms. There were no blackboards, teachers' desks or cupboards. He used a broken table-top nailed to the wall as a primitive blackboard. In his first years at the school there was no office, staffroom or store rooms. Nor were any garbage tins supplied and students helped out by bringing small oil drums to school for that purpose. As there was no incinerator rubbish was burned in a camp-fire type arrangement with the fire encircled by rocks collected from various parts of the school site by the children. This had to be used with care, however, particularly during the summer months for fear of causing bush fires. In fact on several occasions in those early days school finished earlier than usual

when bush fires from the park threatened the school. The task of looking after the burning of the rubbish was highly sought after by the senior boys as were other jobs such as making up the ink from powder and water and then filling the ink wells; and the distribution of the bottles of milk which were delivered to the school each day for every student. These bottles of milk were one-third of a pint or about 200 ml and were supplied daily to every Infant student in New South Wales. They were often left in the sun until they were distributed during the morning recess break and thus were often times quite unpalatable. While most children brought their lunch and "play lunch" from home, some children ordered their lunches from Daltons, one of the local

Fame is not popularity, the shout of the multitude it is the spirit of a man surviving himself in the minds and thoughts of other men, undying and imperishable.

- Hazlitt.

FR Staples.

26.11.52.

shops in Oatley West. This occurred, particularly on Monday because there had been no fresh bread since Friday. Children would go to Dalton's shop before school and fill in their order on the brown paper bag, pay their money and pies, sandwiches, cakes and soft drinks would be delivered to the school.

The primitive conditions in the early days at Oatley West did not seem to worry Mr Callender, the Headmaster, in the slightest. In fact he seemed to revel in them. Although he was not always in good health due to heart problems, he had grown used to hardship earlier in his career when he had been a travelling teacher in outback New South Wales. Using a horse-drawn van he had moved from place to place teaching the children of itinerant workers in railway fettlers' camps or on isolated properties. He was always quite at ease teaching on the verandah of one of the classrooms or sitting on a log in the schoolyard with the children gathered around him.

During Mr Callender's latter years the school was enclosed on its Short Street and Oatley Park Avenue boundaries by a two bar post and rail fence and the main school gate was right on the corner of those two streets. At this time the area between the two rows of classrooms was asphalted to provide a suitable place for the children to play. The rest of the school site was still incredibly rough and much of it was covered in ti-tree scrub.

Mr Staples well remembers staff, students and parents all involved in clearing and beautifying various parts of the site. Many parents and teachers well remember that the girls made little "cubby houses" amongst the ti-tree scrub along the Oatley Park Avenue fence. They would sweep out an area under the canopy of ti-tree for their "homes" and decorate their borders with stones and even bring pieces of old lino or carpet from home for the floors. They would bring dolls and teddy bears to play with and even have vases of flowers to add to the decoration. One of the earliest improvements to the playground was a set of climbing frames

which the children called the "Jungle Jim" playground and around 1954 a basketball court was constructed on the site of the present Administration Block. It was a single court with two rings and a dirt surface.

The roughness and the slope of parts of the playground site led to a great deal of running water and the formation of large lakes during heavy rain. A popular pastime in these periods was sailing little boats made out of sticks and leaves down the raging torrents and watching their progress. Another favourite pastime of the whole community which involved use

of the school playground was the annual Empire Day bonfire. Empire Day was traditionally observed on May 24 every year and school children received a half day holiday. Empire night was also "cracker" night when bonfires and fireworks were great fun for all. A large bonfire was traditionally built near the site of the school's present Administration building during the May school holidays each year. When 2nd term started Empire Day was usually in the second week of term and so the bonfire timber was dried out and ready

for the torch. The entire community in the immediate vicinity of the school would bring along their own fireworks, purchased from local shops, and gather around the bonfire after dark to watch the fun. Yet another large bonfire was held every year on a large vacant area at the corner of Mi Mi Street and Mulga Road where several of the Oatley West shops are today. The area from today's supermarket to the take-away shop on the corner was a large vacant block of land at that time which contained a cricket pitch and was used for visiting circuses and rodeos as well as for the annual bonfire.

Members of staff during these early days of Primary Education were Mr Nicholls; Mr Spence; and Mr Starr all of whom taught in the Primary Department with Mr Callender and Mr Staples; and Mrs Hampton; Miss Duggan and Mrs Hand who taught in the Infants' Department. Other teachers both permanent and casual were Mrs Roberts, Mrs Dawes, and Mrs

McNamara. Mrs McNamara was one of the longest serving sewing teachers at the school. Her children attended the school and one of those children, her son, Ian, is now well-known as the presenter of the popular ABC programme "Australia All Over."

While Mrs McNamara was teaching the girls to sew desk covers, pinwheels,

*I think even self be true
I think all is
6. 4. 5!*

*Whatsoever things are honourable
Whatsoever things are just
Whatsoever things are pure
Whatsoever things are lovely
Whatsoever things are of good report
If there be any virtue
And if there be any praise
Think on these things.
Phil 4. 8.
J. Spence 16/4/51*

needle covers and the like, the boys were in a separate group making pencil cases, desk sets, blotting paper holders and cardboard models in Craftwork.

The Departmental records show that from the beginning of 1956 the numbers at the school justified the establishment of a separate Infants' Department. At this time the school's enrolment had reached 402 students of whom 173 of these were in the Infants' classes. The first Infants' Mistress at the school was Miss Ann Hodge who taught at Oatley West for many years.

During this time there was no official uniform as such although some students did wear a type of uniform - the traditional grey short pants and plain blue shirt for boys while some girls wore grey tunics with a blue shirt underneath. It was only during the tenure of the school's second Headmaster, Mr Edric (Jack) Bryant, that the children were encouraged to all wear the school uniform. Mr Bryant replaced Harry Callender in January, 1958. The uniform was

decided upon by a group of mothers during 1958 and it was largely similar to that described above but with the addition of the school colours of red and gold. These colours had been selected during the early years of Mr Callender's time at the school but had not been widely used. Mr Bryant urged students to participate in the wearing of the school uniform and the vast majority did so.

Mr Bryant was well respected by both the parents and his staff. He had a keen sense of humour and was a fine organiser. He initiated the Honour Board for the Dux of the school and also introduced the presentation of awards at his weekly outdoor assemblies where the children sat under the trees. The present Primary and Infants' toilet blocks were built at the end of 1959 and connected to the sewer at that time. The Water Board had sewered the Oatley West area beginning in late 1958. The contract was let to H. & R. Gilmour at a

cost of £30,000 for Area 7 Portion 5A. This area was

enclosed by Mi Mi Street to Oatley Park Avenue; Dame Mary Gilmore Road; Park Avenue and Mulga Road. Later on during 1961 a retaining wall was built in front of the Primary toilet block allowing the area between the toilets and the classrooms to be levelled and asphalted. Thus a proper assembly area and basketball court was available for the students for the first time. The cost of this work and additional paving between classrooms was approximately £5,000.

One of Mr Bryant's earliest initiatives was to encourage the formation of the school's first Parents and Citizens' Association in the first few months of 1958. He called a meeting of interested parents on Wednesday, February 19, 1958 and 70 parents attended. As a result of this meeting the Association was born. The first President of the P&C Association was Mr Jim Yeomans, while other pioneer office-bearers were Mr Rex Brown, Treasurer and Mr Leo Atkinson, Secretary. The Vice-Presidents were Mrs B. Crompton and Mr J Trimmer. A report in the local "Express" newspaper mentions that due to a violent storm a

Public School, Oatley West
Yearly Examination, 1953

Pupil.. Robin.. McNamara... Class.. HB...

Subjects:	Marks	
	Gained	Possible
Reading.....	85	100
Composition.....	75	100
Spelling.....	100	100
Writing.....	80	100
Arithmetic.....	87	100
Social Studies.....	88	100
English.....	515	600

Position in class - 2nd.
Very creditable performance
Keep up the good work!!
W. E. Murphy

Public School, Oatley West
Yearly Examination, 1953

Pupil Ian.. McNamara... Class.. 1A...

Subjects:	Marks	
	Gained	Possible
Reading.....	85	100
Composition.....	85	100
Spelling.....	85	100
Writing.....	85	100
Arithmetic.....	75	100
Social Studies.....	84	100
.....	-	-
.....	-	-
.....	414	500

Ian is a very capable little worker who should do well in 2nd class. Has a tendency to talk much hence work is often left unfinished.
N. E. Murphy

long blackout occurred causing the election to be carried out by lantern light. It was decided that future meetings would be held on the first Wednesday in each month at 8.00 pm. The first meeting of the P&C was held on March 5, 1958 and at the meeting Mr Doug Cross, the local member, was elected as the Association's first Patron. That first meeting also saw the Principal make a request for several items including a tape recorder - the first of hundreds of such requests which would be made of the parent body in the ensuing years. The report of that first meeting which appeared in the "Express" newspaper lamented the disappointing attendance after the huge turn-out at the inaugural meeting to form the Association in February.

One of the first projects of the fledgling P&C Association was to clear some of the bush on the school site in order to provide additional playground

space for the children. Another early project was the clearing of an area for the construction of the school cricket nets. The P&C paid for the steel frames and wire and then parents erected the nets on a weekend working bee. The P&C lost no time in lobbying the Department of Education for half the cost of the cricket nets which was £50. The P&C also lobbied the department to level and asphalt the playground. There is extensive correspondence describing the disgraceful condition of the playground prior to the improvements carried out in 1959. Yet another early venture was to plant trees, donated by the parents, on the school site after the scrub had been cleared. During these years an annual Sports day at Oatley Park became part of the school calendar and a monthly Gazette was published to highlight school events and news. Of the various methods used by the parents for raising funds, none was more successful

than the Annual Winter Fun Fair. One of the more popular attractions of the Fair was a display of paintings and so it would seem that the link between Oatley West School and art goes back to these very early times. Other fundraising activities included Car Trials and the monthly Cake stalls held on Saturday mornings outside the newsagent's in the Oatley West shopping centre. During the latter half of 1958 the P&C formed a Ladies' Auxiliary to assist with fundraising activities and the first President of this group was Mrs Betty Crompton and the Secretary was Mrs Alice Poole.

Some of the teachers during Mr Bryant's time were Miss Judy Atwill, Mrs E. Hogan, Mr Smyth, Miss Murphy and Mrs Betty Goodman. Mr Bryant retired from teaching at the end of the 1961 school year.

And Up and Up

The new Headmaster was Mr James Reid, who began at Oatley West on January 30, 1962 and presided over the school until his retirement in May, 1975, thus becoming the school's longest serving Principal. He was a quiet, extremely well educated man who was dedicated to the teaching profession and very much a perfectionist.

During his first year at the school the two new brick Infants' Department buildings were completed and occupied for the first time. The plans for these buildings had been drawn up early in 1959. Student numbers had risen from the 242 in 1953 to 470 in 1959 of whom 212 were in the Infants' Department. By 1962 when these six new classrooms were ready for use the school's enrolment had reached 532 and the new accommodation was gratefully accepted.

The brick two-room building on Short Street was first occupied in February, 1962 and the four room building on the Park Avenue boundary was ready for occupation by September 18, 1962. The total cost of these two new buildings, approved by the Minister

for Education, Mr Ern Wetherell, in October, 1961 was £29,733. The buildings were described as "five Infants' classrooms and one Kindergarten room with office, staff room, hat rooms and storerooms". The project included a terrace to be attached to one of the brick veneer buildings and provision was made to pave the assembly area and the paths.

However, the school's building plans were not restricted at this time solely to classrooms. In April, 1959 the parents had established a committee with roughly equal representation from the P&C and the Mothers' Club to co-ordinate the building of a school Assembly Hall. The Chairman of this committee was Mr A.B. Gilroy; the Secretary, Mr H.M. Whaite; and the Treasurer, Mrs V. Muir. Other inaugural members of this committee were Mrs Squires, Mrs Barker, Mr Fleming, Mr Godfrey, Mrs Atkinson and Mr Sondeholm. By May, 1959, the Mothers' Club had made their first donation of £100 to the Assembly Hall Fund and on August 7, 1959, the Building committee held a large concert

night at the Oatley Public School hall to begin raising funds. By June, 1961 the Assembly Hall committee had raised £3,020/17/9 by means of direct donations from parents; fundraising activities of the Assembly Hall committee itself; donations from the P&C and the Mothers' Club; and donations from local service organisations. Such an amount was considerable at the time and the tradition of enthusiastic and energetic parental involvement that continues to this day certainly had its genesis in those earliest times. Other monies were raised by private loans which were to be paid back after the Hall had been built. These loans allowed the committee to gain the necessary funds quickly and to spread out the fundraising in the years after construction was completed.

When the Hall had first been planned, the Department of Education had guaranteed a maximum amount of £6,000 would be given if the parents could raise £3,000. However, it was felt that a hall costing £9,000 would be too small and inadequate for the school's needs. In 1962 the Department changed

its rules and agreed to raise its maximum contribution to £8,000 provided the school could raise at least £4,000 plus the architect's fees. This fitted in with the committee's plans because it envisaged in 1962 a hall costing around £11,500 with architect's fees of a further £500. This meant that with just over £3,000 raised, a further £1,500 needed to be found before the project could proceed. Thanks to additional fundraising and some private loans the committee had £4,113/7/4 in the bank by August, 1962.

Mr Alan K. Eedy was the architect commissioned by the committee to draw up plans for the Assembly Hall in late 1962. After some amendments to reduce the amount of glass in the building and to re-align the building 90 degrees so that the entrance faced Short Street and not Park Avenue, the Department approved the plans in November, 1963 and authorised the committee to call for tenders for the project. The Department reported on March 6, 1964 that the lowest tender received was from D.A. Oliver for the sum of £12,574 and a further sum of £703 was involved in architectural fees for planning and supervision. At the same time the Minister informed the local member, Mr Doug Cross and the committee that because the school had raised £4,300 with a further £300 promised the Department would increase its subsidy to a total of £8,700 in view of the parents' wonderful response. The contract was entered into on March 20, 1964 and of the total £13,277 required for the project the parents had raised £4,577 - a remarkable achievement.

The Assembly Hall was duly opened by the local member for George's River, Mr D.D. Cross on July 10, 1965. This was only fitting as Mr Cross had consistently supported the school over a long period of time and a great many of the improvements which were gained were, in part, due to his constant representations on the school's behalf.

In the early part of 1963, following the opening of the new Infants' classrooms in 1962 the Department gave permission for the school to convert one of the old timber buildings in the second row, previously used by the Infants, into a Library. The parents had asked the

Department to build a library in conjunction with the building of the Assembly Hall and the new Infants' classrooms but the Department had stated that there were not enough funds available to cover this. Thus, the school gained its first library in one of the old timber rooms where it continued until the present brick Library was constructed in 1995.

The purchase of books in 1963 was a real problem due to the fact that the resources of the school were very much directed towards the funding of the

Assembly Hall. Donations were sought from local community groups such as the R.S.L. and the Department was also approached for a subsidy. The Department's subsidy was 40 cents in the dollar for all books purchased before December, 1962 but after that time it was reduced to 20 cents in the dollar. During the early sixties the school's enrolment was fairly constant at 540 pupils of whom about 240 were in the Infants' Department.

In December, 1966 the school's first Infants' Mistress, Miss Anne Hodge,



4th and 5th Classes 1953 - Wendy Derrett extreme right (front row)



4th Class 1952

retired from teaching. She had been in charge of the Infants' Department at Oatley West for 11 years having taken up the position in January, 1956. She was replaced in 1967 by Miss Chalmers and upon her transfer at the end of 1968, Mrs Hitchcock became the Infants' Mistress until December, 1975. It was during this period that the asphaltting of the Infants' playground was completed - the final area to be done was the area around the seats in the Short Street and Park Avenue corner. This task was completed in June,

International, having represented Australia at both hockey and women's cricket. Miss Picton served at the school until the end of 1985. Secondly, in 1973 Mrs Esme Orange was appointed as the school's Librarian for two days each week. She was to continue as the Librarian until July, 1996.

\$86.41 and began a tradition of Art shows at Oatley West School - a tradition which was picked up by later parents in the early 1980s and which continues to this present time as a vital social and fundraising activity of the school.

Another highlight of the school year

"Life is not so short, but that there is always time for courtesy"

- Emerson.

H. Callender

5/10/54.

Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.

Best wishes to Wendy
from Sir.

J.R. Super
10.8.54.

at this time was the annual operetta performed by the Infants' children in the new hall. The hall kitchen was also used as the school tuckshop which was staffed by the mothers and opened on Mondays only. The mothers

It is fine to have
a friend you can trust,
But it's finer to have
a friend who can trust you.

W. Langstaff
10.9.54

1969, at a cost of \$126. This area was adjacent to the site selected for an adventure playground in November, 1974. The Department's Physical Education section approved the construction and agreed to pay for the materials and construction costs with the Mothers' Club paying for the area to be surfaced with wood-chips. However, the Department reneged on its promise to pay the majority of the costs and it was left to the parents to find the \$1,557 needed to complete the project. The Adventure Playground, which had been designed by the P.E. Inspector, Mr A. McLean, was eventually completed in October, 1975.

The early 1970s also saw the arrival at Oatley West of two of its longest serving members of staff. First, in January, 1971 Miss Muriel Picton arrived as Deputy to replace Mr Langstaff. Miss Picton had the rare distinction of being a dual

One of the more interesting means of fundraising utilised by the parent groups at this time was the Art and Craft Exhibition, the first of which was held on November 27, 1969. These exhibitions, which were more like Craft Fairs, were held every year until they were discontinued in 1974. The first one in 1969 raised

were also instrumental in beginning the first uniform pool at the school early in 1971.

The Building of the school hall had allowed all sorts of fundraising and cultural events to be held and increased the opportunities for children to participate in concerts, operettas and the like at Oatley West rather than to have to borrow the hall at Oatley Public

School as had been the case prior to 1965. The Principal, Mr Reid, encouraged the formation of a school choir in Term III, 1973 and invited Mrs Margaret Trewartha, a parent of children at the school and a President of the Mothers' Club, to conduct and teach the choir. Mrs Trewartha was to continue in this role for the next 15 years during which time the choir participated in Opera House concerts, annual Presentation days, school concerts and District Education concerts at Hurstville Civic Centre.

While Mr Reid was only too keen for Oatley West school groups to use the hall, he was not so keen for outside organisations to make use of it, believing that it was a valuable resource and that it needed to be looked after. Some parents, however, had a different view and there was some lively debate over the matter. One of Mr Reid's objections was that there was insufficient lighting in the school grounds to allow night functions and so the P&C eventually prevailed upon the Department to provide adequate external lighting to the school grounds in 1972. Gradually community groups were able to use the hall, albeit on a limited basis.

In 1973 Mr Reid and Mrs Hitchcock were responsible for implementing the first combined staff meetings between the Infant and Primary Departments and these were held on a regular basis from then on.

In May, 1975 Mr Reid retired from teaching and was replaced as Principal by Mr Ken Craig. Mr Reid had served as Principal since January, 1962 and has the distinction of being the school's longest serving Principal. There was a changing of the guard at this time because in December, 1975 the Infants' Mistress, Mrs Hitchcock left the school to be replaced in 1976 by Miss J. Eyles.

Ken Craig served as Principal from May, 1975 until December, 1978. He was the first of the non-teaching Principals at the school, Mr Reid and his predecessors having to teach a class of their own as well as run the school. Mr Craig also exhibited a different style to Mr Reid being far less formal. This is in no way meant as a criticism for the two men were from different eras. Teaching staff - even the most senior of them -

always addressed Jim Reid as "Mr Reid" and recount the fact that if he needed to come to your classroom to speak to the class or the teacher he would invariably put on his hat and coat to do so. Mr Craig was also more enthusiastic in directing the pupils of Oatley West towards inter-school sport and cultural activities outside the school. He encouraged the students to participate in competitive sports against other schools in the area and was keen for groups such as the choir to take part in events outside the school, such as at the Opera House and the Hurstville Civic Centre. He also encouraged many more excursions whereas Mr Reid's policy had been to limit excursions to the types of places that students could not visit with their parents. In his first few months at the school Mr Craig made an application to the Department to build an Administration block and six new classrooms to replace the wooden buildings which had formed the nucleus of the school since the 1950s. However, the request fell on deaf ears and it would be more than eight years before the school got a new Administration block and, of course, the wooden classrooms remain to this day. Mr Craig's request for

administrative assistance was, however, more favourably regarded and early in 1976 Mrs Shirley Blunden was appointed as the school's first full-time ancillary staff member.

In December, 1978 Mr Craig was transferred to Banksia Road Public School at Greenacre and he was replaced as Principal at Oatley West by Mr Frank Phelps, who served as Principal from January 1979 until his untimely death in November 1980. Mr Phelps was a much loved Principal who began one of the great traditions of Oatley West school - the school band. It was he who formed the band and it was he who organised the loan of instruments initially from Liverpool region. Mr Phelps invited one of the parents, Mrs Jan Thorpe to conduct and teach the band.

Mr Phelps also encouraged the design of the first metal school badge - a beautiful design which incorporated scenes of the George's River, Oatley's clock, the Assembly Hall and the gum trees of Oatley Park. This colourful badge was designed at Mr Phelps' instigation by Ms Denise Jones, one of the teachers' aides at the school. The

TEACHER	DATE OF APPOINTMENT	REMOVED TO	DATE OF TRANSFER
Rowley, Gwendolene (S)	11.12.46	Caringbah High	31.1.50
Callender, Harry (M)	31.1.50		
Mell, Norman R (M)	19.5.50 (Rt)	Rt. Lunnell	15.8.50
Bryant, Edric J (M)	28.1.58	R.	
Reid, James (M)	30.1.62	Retired	19/5/75
Ken Craig	17/5/75		
PHELPS, F.W	2.7.79		
KELLY, Marilyn J	2.2.81		
SHEEN, Julian Andrew	2.2.87	still there late 1995	

Infants' Mistresses:

Miss Hodge, Miss Chalmers, Mrs Hitchcock, Mrs J. Eyles, Mrs J. Martin, Mrs C. Hesford, Mrs G. Antonaz - Deputy

badge also incorporated a school motto for the first time. "Learning to Live" was Mr Phelps' own suggestion for the motto and it appeared in the P&C monthly Gazette of November, 1979. Other suggestions were sought as well as comment on the design of the badge. One other alternative motto which was suggested at the time was "Time to Learn". This suggestion was made by the Sewing and Craft teacher at the school, Mrs Molly Riley, who taught at the school from 1972 until 1986 and it aimed to make the connection with Oatley's clock which was to appear on

the badge. After discussion both the badge design and Mr Phelps' suggested motto "Learning to Live" were adopted and 300 badges were ordered from Perfection Plate and were sold for \$1 each. This continued to be the school badge until the early 1980s when it was changed to the "tree" design which was the logo of the Art and Craft Exhibitions which were first held from 1981.

There was a deal of controversy and heated debate over the relegation of the original badge and the adoption of the tree design. This was partly due to the

fact that some parents felt that the original design was a beautiful and appropriate one for the school and its surroundings and partly due to the fact that the original badge was also associated with Frank Phelps. The school community felt a tremendous loss when he died in November 1980 playing his weekly game of lawn bowls. Many considered that he had a real empathy with the school and its children. The Principals' Board was installed in the School Hall in June 1981, in memory of Mr Phelps.

The Latter Years

The new Principal, replacing Mr Phelps, was Mrs Marilyn Kelly who began at Oatley West in February 1981. It was in Mrs Kelly's first year, 1981, that the Art and Craft exhibitions, in their present form, began. As has been mentioned there had been Craft Fairs over one day from 1969 until 1973 inclusive, but in 1980 a committee was formed to raise funds for the school by means of an Art and Craft Exhibition over three days and with a far greater emphasis on the sale of paintings. These successful exhibitions have continued until the present time and have proved to be a tremendous social event for the community as well as providing a wonderful source of funds for the school. The first committee began work in late 1980 and the first exhibition was held early in 1981. The first convenor of the committee was Mrs Merrilyn Wood; the Art convenor was Mrs Lyn Coleman; and the Craft convenor was Mrs Meryl Davison. Other members of the original committee were Janice Chambers, Julie Ferrier, Wendy Ross, Carol Ertl, Carol Rayment, Helen Grocott, Alan Heinecke and John Coleman. The first exhibition raised more than \$5,500. Part of the money raised (\$1,500) was spent on upgrading the sound system and microphones in the school hall. This was part of a general program to improve the acoustics of the hall and to this end in late 1980 a local builder, Mr Leo Atkinson, was contracted to supply and

install the timber acoustic panels in the hall at a cost of \$2,567.

It was during these years that the cultural activities of the school really developed. This was partly due to the encouragement of Mrs Kelly and her staff and also due to the fact that parent fundraising activities provided the school with previously unheard of resources. During this time the band developed to the point where there was a junior and senior band conducted and taught by Mrs Jan Thorp. The choir continued to be led by Mrs Trewartha and its numbers swelled to more than 80. A very successful Dance group was begun under the direction of one of the teachers, Ms Cheryl Large and a large number of children were also involved in the recorder groups under the tutorship of Mrs Esme Dean. Such was the extent of all these activities that a governing body, the Music Council, was set up in March, 1983 as a sub-committee of the P&C to oversee these activities and the financing of them. The chief organiser and first convenor of the Music Council was Mrs Bev Kennedy.

It was after the success of the first Art Show and the decision to keep them going that Mrs Kelly raised the possibility in April, 1981 of using the "tree" logo on the school letterhead with the school motto underneath. The "tree" logo which was eventually adopted by the school as its badge was designed for the Art and Craft Committee in early 1981 by Mrs Sue Drinkwater.

In September, 1983 the school gained its long-awaited Administration building, Mr Craig having lobbied for such a building as early as 1975. Mrs Kelly had repeated this request during 1982 and the Department agreed to it in February, 1983. The building contained a reception area and clerical office; printing room and storeroom; a large staff area; and Principal's and Deputy's offices. It is interesting to note that the parents and staff decided not to have an official opening of the building, opting instead to have a small function where the school community could inspect its latest asset and resource.

The opening of the Administration building coincided with the retirement of Mrs Joy Martin, who had been Infants' Mistress at Oatley West from January 1, 1980 when she had replaced Miss Eyles. However, Joy and her husband, Alan, were not completely lost to the school as they both assisted on the Art and Craft committee for some years after Joy's retirement in 1983. The new Infants' Mistress appointed to the school at the beginning of 1984 was Mrs Coral Hesford.

At the end of 1986 Mrs Kelly left Oatley West to take up an appointment at Marrickville Public School. She was replaced as Principal in February, 1987 by the present Principal, Mr Julian Sheen. Mr Sheen came to Oatley West from his position as Deputy Principal at Bonnet Bay Public School. As a local, Mr Sheen had a close association with

Oatley West School with his younger brother and both his children having attended the school. In the same year, 1987, Mrs Georgina Antonaz replaced Coral Hesford as Infants' Mistress.

Enrolments at Oatley West were dropping during the late '80s and by 1989 had fallen to 373 pupils. The Principal and the staff at this time made a conscious decision to place a greater emphasis on the basics of education at the school without curtailing any of the cultural or sporting activities in which the students were involved. The result has been that enrolments during the '90s have continually risen to the point where the school's enrolment was 457 in 1995 with 15% of the students coming from outside the school's nominal drawing area. Some of the highlights of these latter years have been the establishment of a School Council; the construction of a new school Library and the formation of a Students' Representative Council.

The School Council was first discussed in late 1988 and early 1989. Mr Sheen, Mrs Janet Willis and Mr Andrew Bristow were involved in investigating the idea which was in its infancy in New South Wales schools. A working party was set up and a draft constitution, based on government guidelines, was drawn up. The draft constitution was accepted by the school's parent bodies and the Department of Education in 1990 and the first election was held early in 1991, resulting in Oatley West having one of the first School Councils in Sydney. Members of the first School Council were Sol Lebovic, who was elected President, Margaret Derwent, Gillian Anderson and Russell Orr who were elected as parent representatives; Norma Crawley, Sue English and Jeff Sheinwald who were the staff representatives; Julian Sheen as Executive Officer and Lionel King, the President of the P&C. Bob Phillips and John Coleman were appointed community representatives. The

role of the Council has been to advise on and set the direction for school activities and policies and to formulate a budgetary plan. The Council has, in the ensuing years, filled this role extremely well, ensuring an orderly budgeting process; conducting a school survey and writing a Mission Statement for the school; and overseeing the building of the school Library. A further change in 1992 saw the school motto rephrased and extended. The original "Learning to Live" was extended to "Learning to Live - Living to Learn".

The new Library was opened in November, 1995 as a result of fundraising by the parent bodies. The Library sub-committee was chaired by Mr Russell Orr and the cost of the building was almost \$260,000 of which \$150,000 was given as a grant by the Department of Education. Great assistance was given to the project by Mr Brian Jarman, Assistant Director of Properties and Mr Phillip Sansom, a parent and architect, who developed the concept of the Library plan.

The balance of \$110,000 was raised by the parents by means of the annual Art Exhibitions; two spectacularly successful Auction nights; and several popular Trivia nights. So successful were these fundraising activities that the required funds were raised in 3

years and not the 6 years which had been originally envisaged.

Another change to school life at Oatley West occurred in 1993 when the Students' Representative Council was begun and the Prefect system was phased out. The first full election for the SRC was held in 1994. Mrs Angie Sheinwald of the teaching staff was the co-ordinator of the SRC and oversaw the implementation of this important change.

The Library sub-committee has been replaced by the Site Development Committee which is looking to the future needs of Oatley West Public School. This committee is looking at improving the buildings on the site by replacing the old timber buildings with more modern ones; redeveloping the School Hall; and halting the deterioration of the site itself.

Thus, as Oatley West School looks back on 50 years of outstanding achievement in education, the most important feature has probably been the manner in which the staff, parents and community have worked so harmoniously together to provide a wonderful education for the children in this beautiful bushland setting. Since these factors continue to exist there is every reason to look forward to the next 50 years with a great deal of optimism and excitement.



Presidents of School Council

Mr Sol Lebovic
Mr Kim Wagstaff

Presidents of P&C

Mr J. Yeomans
Mr O. Bartlett
Mr J. Carney
Mr M. Fleming
Mrs D. Johnston
Mr W. Stewart
Mr H. Powell
Mr F. Saintilan
Mr C. Ross
Mr S. Law
Mr S. Bell
Mrs J. Devenny
Mr N. Willis
Mr L. King
Mr C. Carfoot
Mr A. Bristow
Mr B. Hinley

Art Committee Convenors

Ms Merrilyn Wood
Ms Julie Ferrier
Ms Gae Law
Ms Tina Auciello
Mr Tony Pearsall
Mr Michael & Mrs Lyn King
Mr Mark & Mrs Karen Wilson
Mr Michael & Mrs Kathy Low

First Day Enrolments (Boys) 24/3/47

1/47 Edward Stone
26 Lloyd Street
2/47 John Robbins
38 Douglas Haig Street
3/47 Bruce Sterling
2 Burke Street.
4/47 David Adams
Oatley Park Road
5/47 Dennis O'Neill
1 Park Avenue.
6/47 John O'Neill
1 Park Avenue
7/47 Graham Carter
Oatley Park Road

25/3/47

8/47 John Gilroy
9/47 Jonathon Deerson

First Day Enrolments (Girls) 24/3/47

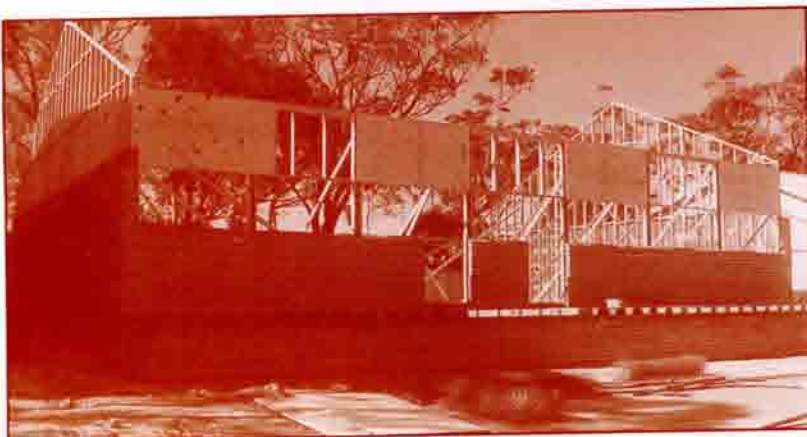
1/47 Ann Poole
47 Lloyd Street
2/47 Jeanette Watt
3 Park Avenue
3/47 Janice Hummel
76 Mi Mi Street

25/3/47

4/47 Betty Bland
Marine Drive
5/47 Wendy Derrett
14 Douglas Haig Street

Acknowledgements

Ms Joan Watt
Ms Jeanette Watt-McLean
Mrs Janice Andrews
Mr & Mrs Hummel
Mrs Joy O'Neill
Ms Gaye Pracey (Gladwyn)
Ms Margaret Murphy (Gladwyn)
Mary McPherson (Dept. of Educ.)
Mrs Fiona Murray
Mr & Mrs Jim Yeomans
Mrs W. Dawes
Mrs V. Howes
Mr & Mrs N. Sterling
Ms Marion Sterling
Mr Bruce Sterling
Mr Guy Yeomans
Mr Frank Staples
Mr L. Meakins
Mrs Alewood
Mrs McNamara
Mr I. McNamara
Mrs S. Blunden
Miss M. Picton
Mrs E. Orange
Mrs M. Riley
Mrs Wendy Derrett-Smith
Special thanks to Mr Graham Cole
for help in publishing this booklet.



The new library during construction in 1994.

Staff

A
Mrs T. Auciello
Miss J. Atwooll
Ms S. Annetts
Mrs G. Antonaz

B
Ms R. Buckpitt
Mr I. Bigg
Mr F. Buckley
Mrs L. Bushnell
Mr E. Bryant
Miss Brown
Mr I. Bertram
Mrs J. Bishop
Mr M. Ballantyne
Mrs S. Blunden
Miss Benton

C
Mr H. Callender
Miss Chalmers
Miss W. Chalmers
Ms N. Crawley
Mr K. Craig
Miss K. Cartledge

Miss Carr
Mrs S. Cartwright
Miss B. Cole
Mr M. Carlisle

D
Miss P. Dowzer
Mrs E. Dawes
Miss Duggan
Mrs M. Davison

E
Miss Eyles
Ms Sue English

F
Mrs C. Fellows

G
Mrs B. Goodman
Ms C. Glover

H
Miss A. Hodge
Mr T. Hayes
Ms Hargreaves
Mrs Hooper
Mrs L. Holtham
Mrs P. Hatfield

Mrs Hitchcock
Mr W. Holt
Mrs Hampton
Miss Hand
Mrs E. Hogan
Mrs Hornerann
Miss Hudson

I-J
Ms M. Iwaysk
Mrs Jones
Mrs G. Innes
Ms L. Joseph

K
Mrs M. Kelly
Mrs L. King
Miss R. Karmis

L
Miss C. Lamb
Mr J. Langstaff
Miss C. Large
Mr K. Lloyd

M
Mr T. McDonald
Mrs J. Martin

Miss Miller-Logne
Mrs McNamara
Mrs F. Murray
Miss Murphy
Miss Mackenzie

N
Mrs Neilson
Mr J. Nicholls
Mrs L. Nash
Mrs J. Nicholl

O
Mrs E. Orange

P
Mr F. Phelps
Mrs M. Picton
Mrs Peters

Q-R
Mr J. Reid
Miss G. Rowley
Mrs R. Roberts
Mrs M. Riley
Mrs J. Robinson

S
Mr J. Sheinwald

Mrs A. Sheinwald
Mr J. Sheen
Mr F. Staples
Mr Starr
Ms S. Stephens
Mrs A. Street
Mr J. Spence
Miss Sassall
Mr W. Smyth
R. Shepherd

T
Mr L. Thompson
Mr R. Tant
Mrs M. Tsambouniaris

W
Miss J. Wagner
Mrs J. Walther
Mr Wilkinson
Mr B. Warner
Mrs Wyner

X-Y-Z
Mr Young

Staff, April 29, 1980



L-R Back: Judy Wagner, Tom Hayes, Kerrian Cartledge, Esme Dean, Susan Stephens, Frank Buckley, Margaret Weeks, Esme Orange, Jeanette Robinson, Shirley Blunden, Margaret Trewartha, Molly Riley.

L-R Front: Ian Bigg, Kevin Lloyd, Lynette Joseph, Muriel Picton (Dep. Principal), Frank Phelps (Principal), Joy Martin (Infants Mistress), Glyn Lamb, Bronwyn Warner, Penny Dowzer.

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School Photos

Oatley West - 4B 1954



Oatley West - Class 1 1959

Oatley West - 6 A 1964



Recollections from the past . . .

I attended Oatley West from 1955 until 1960. At that time there were no brick buildings, only six wooden blocks. There was no library but lots of bush and I remember playing in the first cricket nets.

I remember also playing rugby and soccer at school and of course, drinking hot milk.

There were only two classes when I was there, made up of children from Kindergarten to Year 6 in each one. I remember going to school with Ian McNamara, Bruce Battishall and Garry Gainsford. My father was the first President of the P. and C. and in 1960 they began the first Dux of the school award.

Mr Lawrence Yeomans

I attended Oatley West from 1947. I remember Mrs Riley, Mr Nicholls, Mr Callender and Mr Staples. In those days there were only two wooden buildings, surrounded by untamed bush. We used to run around the school barefooted because the bush was our playground.

Mr Bruce Sterling

I attended Oatley West between 1953 and 1959. I remember having Mr Staples as my teacher in Year 6. In those days there were all wooden buildings with verandahs. In each class room there were fireplaces with potbelly stoves. The teacher put coal in the stoves to keep the rooms warm in winter. Each desk had an inkwell and all the desks and chairs were wooden.

I remember playing cubbies in the bush and that the toilets were way down the bush. The playground was stony and there was no Hall or Library. I have special memories of dancing around the Maypole and going to the park to play tennis. For music, we used to sing while the teacher played the piano. Lunch times consisted of meat pies, cream buns, vanilla slices and every day there was hot milk to drink! I rode my bike to school and left it leaning against a tree all day.

Mr Phillip Hand

I started at Oatley West in 1947. Kindergarten and Grade One were in one year. In 1949 I went to Mortdale because Oatley West didn't have primary. The Principal at the time was Mr Callender and he taught me in Grade One and Grade Five. In sixth class there were thirteen boys and six girls. Some of the other teachers were Mr Nicholls, Mr Spence and Mrs McNamara was the sewing teacher.

The buildings didn't have any carpets and the Library was a cupboard in the corner of the Grade Six room. I remember clearing the bush for the playground. The toilets were in the bush and the men came around each day to empty them.

Jeanette Watt (McLean)

Between 1947 and 1954 I attended Oatley West. I was in the first class ever at the school and I was girl number five. When I started there was only one class, and this was increased each year. There were only four classrooms when I left.

I remember my "bush" school near the park, as there were no fences the children were able to go right up to the park fence. No one wore a uniform and most boys wore no shoes

Wendy Derrett (Smith)