

Copy of letter received from Mr. L.A.R. Morris to Principal, Mr. B Mulcahy on the occasion of the Centenary of Public Education in Wee Waa – 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1970.

Dee Why, 2099  
15<sup>th</sup> August, 1970.

Dear Mr. Mulcahy,

I received your questionnaire, but am afraid many of the questions do not concern me. In my letter to Mrs. Lynch, requesting information and the date of the centenary celebrations, I mentioned that I commenced my teaching career at Wee Waa school in January, 1915.

In 1915 there were only three teachers – the Headmaster, Mr. W. Russell, B.A., Miss Mary Neylan and myself – and between 120 and 130 children. (Wee Waa was a 4<sup>th</sup> class school).

Mr. Russell taught fourth, fifth and super primary classes; Miss Neylan, lower, middle and upper first classes; and I taught second and third classes.

During the second quarter – there were four quarterly returns in those days – Mr. Russell was promoted and transferred to Dungog, and Mr. Vince Parkinson, 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant – now known as deputy, or assistant principal – at Narrabri was appointed to Wee Waa as Relieving Headmaster.

Mr. Russell was exceptionally well-liked by the staff, pupils and parents. His discipline was firm but very fair. As a young teacher, I found him very helpful. When discussing mistakes etc., he did it in such a pleasant and helpful manner that you realized he was anxious to assist you. Mrs. Russell taught sewing to the girls from 3<sup>rd</sup> class upwards.

Miss Neylan had been teaching about four or five years. She was a capable pianist and so took singing for the whole school. She, too, was a very popular teacher.

As you realize from the above, we were a very happy staff and consequently the school progressed very satisfactorily.

Unfortunately, after Mr. Russell's transfer and Mr. Parkinson's appointment, the harmonious relationship between Headmaster and staff no longer existed. His approach towards his staff was quite a contrast to that of Mr. Russell's. However, I can assure you that he did not have it all his own way, particularly from Miss Neylan. I must admit, however, that as I was just beginning my teaching career, I was more subdued.

After Mr. Russell's transfer, Miss Neylan taught sewing.

Near the end of the third term, Mr. Chalmers from Deepwater was appointed Headmaster. At the previous Christmas vacation, Mr. Chalmers had been transferred to Deepwater from Goodooga, about 40 miles north west of Collarenebri, but he did not like the cold weather, so when Wee Waa was advertised in the Gazette he applied for it and was the successful applicant.

Mr. Chalmers duly arrived in a buggy and pair, with several goats and a number of fowls. His wife and family remained at Deepwater and he batched in the residence. Imagine our surprise when he arrived at school in a pair of khaki dungarees, an old black alpaca coat and a pair of blucher boots that, I am sure, had never seen any boot polish. Nevertheless, he was an excellent teacher and was immensely popular with staff and pupils.

He was particularly interested in farming. Wee Waa and the Pilliga had at that time just been opened up as wheat growing districts. A larger number of blocks of Crown land had been balloted for and there had been an influx of wheat farmers from Victoria and the Parkes district. When Mr. Fern, M.L.A. for Cobar, who had enlisted in the A.I.F., I regret to say he was later killed in action – visited Wee Waa on a recruiting tour, Mr. Chalmers drove him and myself

out to a farm which – if my memory serves me correctly – was drawn by Mr. McCormack, Stock and Station Agent in Wee Waa but worked on the shares by a farmer from the Parkes district. It was an excellent crop and was too high for the stripper – (not a Kings Cross stripper). As I had a camera, I was asked to take some photos of the crop with Mr. Fern standing in it. Mr. Fern was a tall man and only his cap could be seen. The negatives, I believe, were sent to the paper, “The Land”, and I was informed that some of them were published. However, I did not see them.

Just prior to Mr. Chalmer’s appointment, we had been notified that the Governor of N.S.Wales, Sir Gerald Strickland, and Lady Strickland would be visiting Wee Waa and would be at the school in the morning. As Lady Strickland was unable to get out of the car, the ceremony had to be held outside. Naturally we were busy practicing appropriate songs, Miss Neylan at the piano and myself acting as conductor. I, naturally, thought Mr. Chalmers would take over but he insisted that we carry on.

In the morning of the visit, Miss Neylan and I arrived, dressed appropriately for such an occasion, but – I leave you to guess the rest. (Yes, you’re right!).

Accompanying the Governor and his wife was Mr. George Black, M.L.A., Chief Secretary in the Labour Government which was then in power. Mr. Black and Mr. Chalmer were old friends, having spoken on the same platform during elections when he was stationed in Sydney.

However, the ceremony was successful, after which Sir Gerald and Lady Strickland visited the Holcombe family for lunch. At night a ball was held in the School of Arts, at which they attended. During their stay, Sir Gerald and Lady Strickland lived in their special train.

As I was interested in tennis, I was successful in getting a loan of a few horses and drays and, with the aid of some of the big boys we carted sand from the pit near the cemetery, on a number of Saturdays and made a tennis court over near the boys’ toilet. I endeavoured to teach the older boys and girls tennis. They all seemed very keen and we had many enjoyable games.

During the fourth quarter, Miss Neylan was transferred to Sydney and her place was taken by Miss Mary Knight – a member of a local family – from Ryde.

In the last quarter Collarenebri was advertised in the Gazette. As Mr. Chalmers was anxious to get back to Goodooga – I believe he had an interest in a farm there – he applied for Collarenebri and two days before the Christmas vacation, he was notified that his application had been successful. I did hear that he did get back to Goodooga again.

I was not there – it was Christmas vacation – when he left in his buggy and pair, accompanied by his goats and fowls, but I received letters from friends in Wee Waa, telling me, that along the road, the telephone supplied information that the menagerie had passed through, etc.

Wee Waa was a very patriotic town and during 1915 two very successful days – “Belgian Day” and “Australian Day” – were held and a considerable amount was raised on each occasion. During the year functions were held for raising money and all volunteers to the army were given a great send off in the School of Arts. I might add that the school played its part in all these functions.

Early in 1915, a volunteer Defence Corp was formed, parades being held in the park, several nights a week. Unfortunately, for various reasons, enthusiasm soon began to wane, but luckily Mr. Russell, who had been a Captain in the Militia at Chatswood prior to his appointment to Wee Waa, was asked to take charge and enthusiasm once again was evident.

During the year I was responsible for the Junior Cadets – 12 to 14 years. At that period compulsory training was in vogue from 12 years to 26 years – 12 to 14 years Junior Cadets – 14 years to 18 years Senior Cadets and 18 to 26 years Militia. A record had to be kept in a special book provided by the Defence Department for each child between the

ages of 12 years and 14 years and the Inspector had to examine the cadets at the annual inspection and record pass or failure for each boy. A special return showing the results had to be forwarded to the Defence Department.

In the last quarter, I was sent to a school for Junior Cadet Instructors, held at Gunnedah for about a month. There were about forty teachers at the school which was under the command of two military officers. At the end, an examination was held and a Certificate was issued with the results of each subject.

I cannot conclude without mentioning three people who performed a wonderful service to the district. They were Mrs. O'Rourke and Mr. & Mrs. Alf Audit. Mrs. O'Rourke – piano and Mrs. Audit – violin voluntarily supplied music for all functions, while Mr. Audit was a most capable M.C.

I am enclosing a sketch of the school and playground as I remember it. It is NOT drawn to scale.

I do not know whether the above is of any value to you. If not, deposit it in the waste paper basket.

Yours sincerely,  
(Signed) L.A.R. Morris.