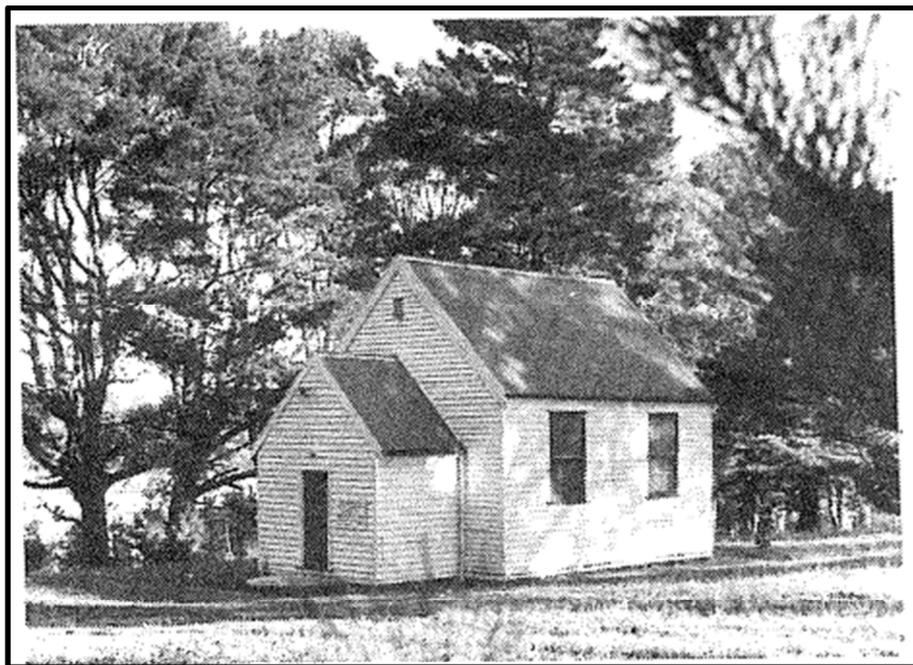


**Gembrook
Primary School**

135th Anniversary

1883 - 2018

Gembrook Primary School acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our school is located. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Gembrook Primary School is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.



Uniting Church – Gembrook (Corner of Ure and Mountain Roads)

This was the second building leased as a Gembrook School House by the Education Department 1884 -1905

Acknowledgment

Gembrook Primary School wish to acknowledge all who contributed to this booklet. This booklet is a refreshed version of the booklet produced by Roger Strickland in 1983 to celebrate the Gembrook Primary School centenary.

Published February 2018.

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Principals Forward



From the moment I first entered the grounds of Gembrook Primary School, examples of the long and rich history that pervades the school in so many ways were clearly evident. From the grand and stately centennial oak trees to our magnificent historical library, part of which formed the original school house. In addition, there is the proud and significant 'human' history of our school and I have lost count of the number of Gembrook 'elders' who have informed me that they attended Gembrook Primary School as did their parents. I really value and truly appreciate that our past and present students, together with their families, are so genuinely proud of our school, its history and culture.

Of course it is community that is the soul of any school and we are fortunate to have such a committed and supportive community that works incredibly hard for Gembrook Primary School. For instance, lots of time and effort has gone into the planning and organisation for our 135 year celebration. Thank you to all School Council members and in particular to the 135 Year Celebration Sub-committee including Jacqueline Child, Michelle Andrews Luke, Justine Paull, Tara Farr and Tanaya Lawrence - your generosity of skills, knowledge and heart is very much acknowledged and appreciated.

We have certainly come a long way since 9 August 1883 when Gembrook Primary School commenced in a leased hut with school number 2506. School number 2506 continues proudly today, 135 years later and I am just so excited about creating more wonderful history together in the future.

Please enjoy the celebration and Happy 135th Birthday to Gembrook Primary School!

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'BF'.

Brendan Fitzpatrick
Proud Principal
Gembrook Primary School.

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Gembrook Primary School Song

We love Gembrook it's our school
We care for each other that's our rule
We try our best in everything we do
Awesome views they're for me and you

Verse 1

Join in now and sing this song with me
In Gembrook's Circle of Harmony
A view to the future, near and far
Welcome Wominjeka
Welcome Wominjeka

Verse 2

Friendly happy our community
Our history dates to 1883
Respect High Expectations too
Love and learning we've got it all
Love and learning we've got it all

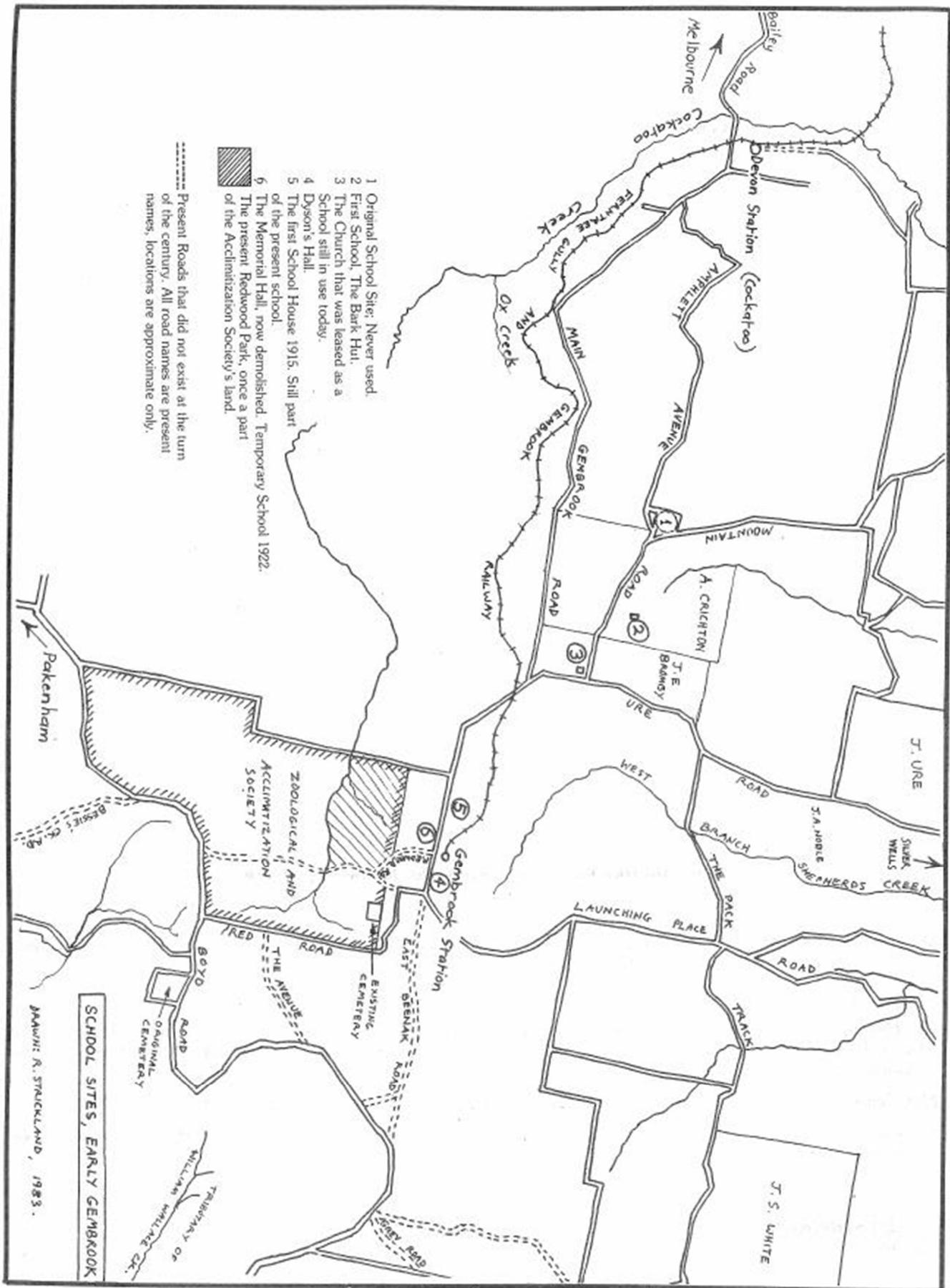
The school song was a collaboration by all Gembrook Primary School students in 2016. The school song is sung (very proudly) each week at school assembly.

Gembrook Primary School 2018



Gembrook Primary School 2018-Celebrating 135 Years

Gembrook Primary School students are pictured in the Circle of Harmony.



Early History of Gembrook

The first white visitors in the Gembrook area were almost certainly miners. In the early 1860's they came in small numbers from several directions, but very few stayed. Some came from the Emerald Diggings, some from the Hoddles Creek area where gold and tin were being mined, and some passed through when following Bowmans Track to the Jordan Goldfields.



'Bush Hut Gembrook'
from the N.J. Caire collection in the National Library, Canberra

Mining

Gold has been discovered at Emerald in 1858 and soon after there were 600 miners on the Emerald Diggings. Some of the more adventurous miners would have worked up the Cockatoo Creek and tributaries into the area we know now as Gembrook. It is probable that these miners discovered some gold in the North Gembrook area, but there was very little of the precious metal on or near the surface and it appears that at that stage very few miners were interested in the Gembrook area.

To the north, Hoddles Creek was an active mining area. This was probably discovered about 1859 and a Mines Department report of March 1864 stated that there were 83 miners at Hoddles Creek. Hoddles Creek had continuous activity for the rest of the century, but the level of activity varied greatly.

To the east, in 1864, Shakespeare and Harding reported the finding of tin at the head of Bunyip River. This was possibly discovered when Shakespeare was surveying Bowmans Track – a track which was extremely significant in the development of Gembrook. The tin mines at the head of the Bunyip were very active in 1876 and 1877.

Closer to Gembrook, a Mines Department Geologist, R. Murray, while looking for signs of coal, reported in 1882 that there was a possibility of auriferous gravels being found by sinking shallow holes along the hill slopes near the lower edge of the volcanic rock. This probably turned miners attention again to the Flannagan's (or Pancake or Crichtons) Creek area and soon after the local Mines Department officer reported considerable activity there.

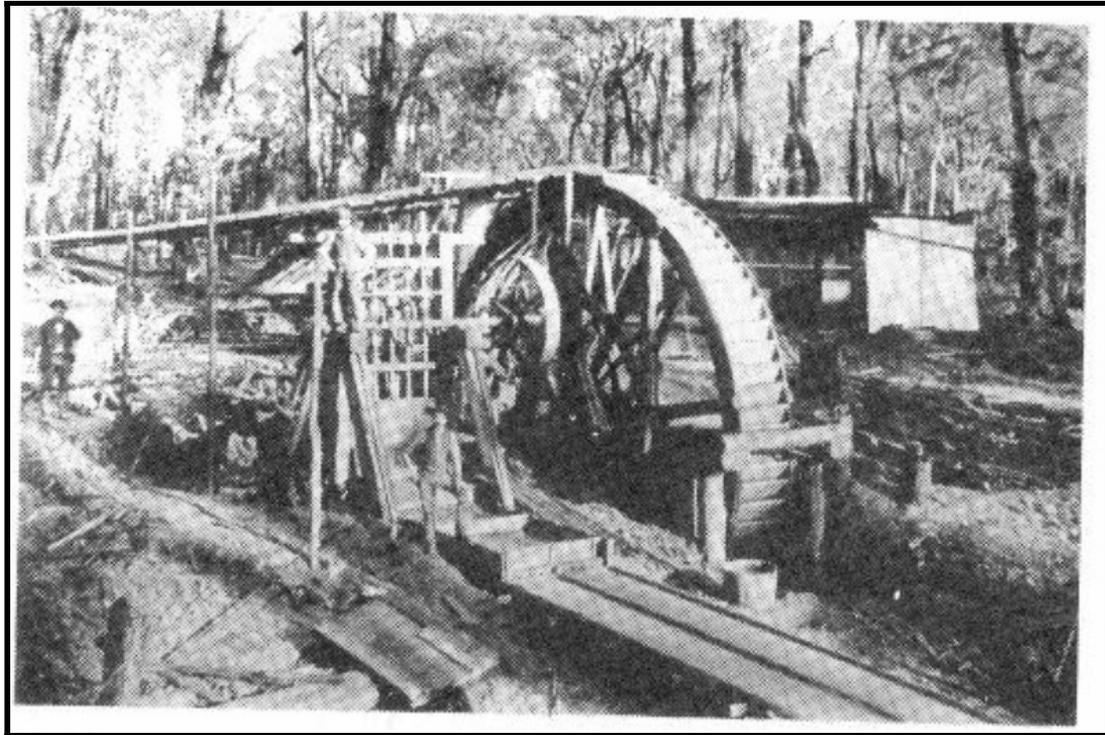
Nearby, The Crichtons Freehold Mine was established in the early 1800's. It was a costly project, with the shaft being 200 feet deep (partly through basalt) then following the wash for hundreds of feet. By the end of 1884 it had closed.

In the same area the Sons of Freedom Co. in mid-1884 commenced a tunnel which they drove for hundreds of feet. Two years later they built a horse puddling machine for more efficient extraction of the gold, but by the end of 1886, the Company had ceased operations.

From then until the early 1890's there were only a few miners on this field. However, in 1891 there was an upsurge in interest and Stirling, the Mines Department Geologist, reported 50 miners on the field in Crichtons Gully, adjoining Flannagans Gully which had been previously worked.

This activity resulted in two water powered quartz stampers being erected, including one built by John Ure which was also used for sawing timber.

Mining activity in this area soon died down, although some work continued there until the 1930's, with intensive activity during the depression.



Ure's Waterwheel for crushing Quartz and Sawing Timber. Opened 1899

Settlement Begins

Mining did not directly lead to settlement of the land, but it did open up the country to some extent. It took men of tremendous strength, endurance and foresight to tackle the task of turning the magnificent forest into farmland. With huge trees of Mountain Ash, Manna Gum, and Grey Gum and the dense understory, it was indeed a formidable task.

It took men of the calibre of Alexander Crichton – better known as 'Sandy' to tackle this task. Sandy Crichton came from Scotland about 1850, first settling and Yannathan growing potatoes, then driving bullock teams to Bendigo to supply the goldfields – in the days when it took one week there and one week back. After that he was a butcher in the Berwick-Harkaway area, but they took great interest in the land. He was active in the Mornington Farmers Association, and those who knew him well say that he really looked after the country, putting in furrows with a spirit level on certain paddocks to prevent wash after rain. He introduced new machinery to agriculture in the Cranbourne and Gembrook Districts – in some people's eyes he was 'crazy'.

Crichton pushed east from Abel's settlement on the Cockatoo Creek and selected 320 acres of the best, red soil country in the area now called Gembrook. He pegged the land on 14 November 1871 '2 or 3 miles E.S.E of land selected by Mr. Abel', in an 'unsurveyed and unnamed parish' and, in doing so, became the first settler at Gembrook.

Adjoining land was settled by his sister, his brother and his brother-in-law and there were accusations of 'dummying' having taken place. However, the Lands Department investigated and dismissed these allegations.

Sandy Crichton went on to own a very large acreage and to rent thousands of acres of grazing land in the district. He also became a councillor of the Shire of Cranbourne 1875-78, of the Shire of Berwick in the 1890's and the Shire of Ferntree Gully 1907-11 and 1914-15, where he was also Shire President.

Mrs Janet Bowman of the Gippsland Hotel also had a great influence on the development of Gembrook. In the early 1860's she paid to have a track cut from her hotel to the Jordan Goldfields (between Walhalla and Jamieson) so that the miners would patronize her hotel. In doing so, she could not have realized that this track would later become the springboard for settlement of land around present-day Gembrook. The track commenced at her hotel (at Upper Beaconsfield) and passed through or near the localities we now know as Mt. Burnett and Gembrook.

A Select Committee of Enquiry into Mrs Bowman's claim for compensation was held in 1876 and evidence was given by the Hon. James Buchanan, Albert Le Souef, Sandy Crichton and two men who had worked on the track.

At the enquiry Le Souef stated 'I was the first to select and purchase land upon Bowmans Track and I certainly should not have done either the one or the other had it not been for the Track'.

The Acclimatisation Reserve

Albert Le Souef was the Director of Zoological and Acclimatisation Society. He pushed into the Gembrook areas, along the overgrown Bowman's Track, seeking a secluded place in which to release animals and birds which his Society intended to introduce into the wild.

The first indication of this proposal appears in the minutes of meeting of the Society on 16/12/1870 when Le Souef announced that he intended to release Guinea Fowls, 20 Silver Pheasants, 10 Peacocks and Heahens "out of the reach of man, 20 miles N.E. of Berwick'. Le Souef was deliberately vague about where he released these animals but it appears that during 1871 he also released Hog Deer and Chinese Ringneck Pheasants in the same area.

In January 1872 he reported that some of the Guinea Fowl released twelve months earlier were still alive and, more importantly, that "I am about taking up a block of land in the vicinity of Bourkes Creek for the purposes of a residence for my family for a month or two in the summer'.

The Society was then granted a Reserve of 640 acres for acclimatisation purposes and, after some indecision regarding its future, it was permanently reserved in December 1876.

In 1878 the Society undertook some clearing and planting of frasses and blackberries, They also started fencing the reserve with a slab fence 5'6" high. A contractor was engaged at 22/6 per chain, but this was later raised to 26/- per chain.

The fencing continued until August 1880 when it was completed. Most of the work was carried out by William Dunne who subsequently became lost and perished on the William Wallace Creek, a short distance from the fence which he built.

In addition to those previously mentioned, other animals such as Californian Quail, Blackbird, Brown Trout and English Perch were also release in the Gembrook Reserve.

Interest in the Reserve waned and there was a lack of success in getting animals acclimatised – at klease the particular animals which the Society was trying to introduce. Proposals were put forward to use the Reserve as an Agricultural College but this did not meet with success. The land was ultimately subdivided and sold in 1905, a small area of some 60 acres being retained at the request of the locals – this in now the Gembrook Park. The allotments sold were quite small, being between 4 and 30 acres in size.

The slab fence was burnt by wild fires – the 1898 fires almost obliterated the structure. However, some of the animals and blackberries live on.

Settlement Continues

Meanwhile, Le Souef's property adjoining the Reserve, which he purchased in 1873, was being cleared and developed as farmland. At first a small house was built near the creek, but soon after a substantial house was built, along with other farm buildings – this house stood for many years.

In later years the le Souef property was manage by Arthur Backhouse, who, with two of his brothers, had each selected 320 acres. A house was built on one of the three Backhouse selections and the three properties were managed as one.

Mrs Isabella Backhouse, Arthur Backhouse's mother, also built a home on a separate area of land and called it 'Mt Eirene'. It is not known why she chose this name, but it appears that the name was subsequently given to the mountain on which the house was built.

Following Le Souef's selection of the Reserve and his own property, other land in the immediate vicinity was quickly taken up. Many of these early selectors had other sources of income, for example: William Nash, gentleman, of Pakenham pegged land October 1873; Charles Souter, publican, of Pakenham pegged November 1873; John Bell, a publican from Sandridge pegged land March 1874; and Rev. Bromby and his daughter Jenny each pegged land in April 1874 (he was the master of the Church of England Grammar School).

Selectors such as Crichton, Bromby and Le Souef employed labour to carry out the hard work of clearing the land, building fences and houses, planting crops and establishing pasture.

Others, such as John Ure, had a much more daunting task. They selected the land without having any other source of income and had to immediately tackle the task of winning a living from the land so that they could raise their families.

John Ure came to Australia from Scotland in 1874. He had married Jane Buchanan in the home country and they came straight to Berwick, where she had relatives. A few weeks after arriving he headed for Gembrook and, pushing on past the selections of Bromby and Crichton he selected some 213 acres.

His first move was to construct a bark hut for shelter. Then he set about clearing some land and building a log house. In the first year they sowed one acre of potatoes and oats and, after three and a half years had four acres sown to potatoes and oats, 60 acres of grass, a house, dairy, cowshed, stable, cartshed and hut.

Later, when the boys were old enough to assist on the farm. They were able to branch out into other activities, such as cheese-making and running a store and butchers shop.

There were many other selectors like John and Jane Ure, including Henry and Bertha Smartt, Joshua and Mrs Marsburgh and John and Louisa Dyer. They worked hard, raised their families in the area and were involved in community activities. Although not necessarily the first to select land in the area, these people became the backbone of Gembrook.

The naming of Gembrook

One of the miners on the Hoddles Creek field was William Huggett, who claimed that, in 1864, he and his father and uncle had found gems in McCrae Creek and, as a result, his father called the locality Gembrook. This is the earliest claim for the naming of Gembrook.

Another possibility for the origin of the name is contained in the application for a gem-mining lease by Adolph Page, William Godfrey and Albert Le Souef. In that application they state that "It is proposed to call the creek 'Gembrook'". Although the application is undated, it was certainly very early because they stated that there were "No miners or farmers within many miles of Creek applied for".

Two of the party of six which discovered the Emerald Goldfield are said to have their names given to creeks in the district – William McCrea and Pat O'Hannigan, who later hanged himself at the Emerald Diggings, was known as Big Pat and this became the name of a creek in the Warburton area. On a later visit to the Emerald Diggings, McCrea was accompanied by a Mr Sorbonne Shepherd, and this is said to have resulted in the naming of Shepherds Creek.

Postal Services

In these outlying areas the arrival of the mail was a very important event.

Prior to the post office and postal service being established, it was a case of someone going to Pakenham or Berwick to collect the mail. This was organised by the locals – for example, May Le Souef's diary, 18 December 1875 reads "Arthur rode down to Pakenham for the post...53 letters have passed through the Gembrook post this week".

Another settler, Robert Muir, wrote to the Commissioner of Lands and Survey that his son had acted as postman, without pay, for the two years prior to the post office being established – riding from Berwick to Gembrook and back once a week.

On 5 October 1877 the official postal service for Gembrook commenced. The service was "to and from Pakenham and Gembrook by way of Matters and Le Souef's at the rate of ten shilling and ninepence per week". The service was once per week and David Crichton was the postmaster at \$6 per annum.

A year later the service was increased to twice each week and in 1881 the service was extended to Macclesfield. In 1882 Gembrook South Post Office opened., with Sarah Clink as postmistress. Then in 1884 Gembrook West Post Office opened and the route became Pakenham – Gembrook South – Gembrook West – Gembrook – Macclesfield. In 1891 the Gembrook North Post Office was opened.

When the first post was established in 1877, the mail closed at Melbourne at 5:30pm. Thursday and arrived at Gembrook 2pm Friday. Return mail closed at Gembrook Friday 6am, arrive Melbourne Friday 11:15pm.

Transport

Travellers to Gembrook in the early days had to rely on horses or walk at least part of the way. From the diary of May Le Souef, 24/11/1875: “left the Royal Park at six o’clock in the morning. Papa drove Punch to Dandenong, there we changed, and put Brown into the waggonette, it began to rain, and never stopped til we reached Gembrook, at a quarter past three’.

That was a relatively fast trip. Others, particularly those who could not arrange a change of horses on the way, stayed overnight at Dandenong or Berwick. Those who travelled from Melbourne by coach or, later, by train, walked from Berwick or Pakenham to Gembrook. May Le Souef’s diary frequently mentions the Backhouses arriving on foot. Rev Dr. Bromby’s diary also shows that he often walked between Pakenham and Gembrook – for example. 7 April 1879 “Started at 7:15 to walk to Pakenham. When the weather is favourable, I find I can come down in three hours (11 miles)” – at that time he was 70 years of age!

During the 1890’s there was a coach service from Pakenham to Gembrook. At one stage this was a daily service, and on busy occasion it operated twice each day. In addition to carrying passengers the coach also carried a wide variety of goods required by the local community. However, with the arrival of Puffing Billy, a more direct service to Melbourne was available and coaches could not compete.

Stores

David Cricton started the first store in Gembrook, although it is not known the exact location of the building or when it commenced operations, it is presumed that he ran the store in conjunction with Post Office. M.M Dyer recalled the Crichtons General Store, Butcher Shop and Post Office was built of logs with the spaces between filled with spilt wedges of tree ferns – a common form of building in those days. It is not surprising that it was located quite close to the goldfield at North Gembrook and a visitor to that area in 1883 described the location of McCormacks prospecting tunnel as being “about half a mile distance from the only landmark of this sparsely populated locality, the Gembrook general store and post office’.

Again, it is not known when Ure’s store commenced operation, but it was certainly busy during the 1890’s and interesting records of the transactions during that period are retained by the family.

A new store was erected at the Puffing Billy terminus in 1901. This was built by Walker and the building has served as the Gembrook general store since that time.

The Church

The oldest building still in use, and one of the most important in Gembrook, is the Uniting Church. It was built over 135 years ago, probably in late 1879, and also served as the school from November 1884 until January 1906.

The earliest church services in Gembrook were conducted by the Reverend Dr. Bromby. His diary of 26 September 1874 records “The Captain went round to announce to the woodcutters that there would be a service next day at the Captain’s hut, and several promised to come”. (Captain Page was the manager of Le Souef’s property).

The following day his diary records the event, which, because of the multi-national congregation, must have been quite a challenge for Dr. Bromby. This was possibly the first general church service held in Gembrook. The same diary entry also records the birth of the first white child in Gembrook: “Sunday 27 September 1874: The only female in Gembrook is the wife of the man who looks after the Captain; she milks his cow, makes his bread, and cooks his victuals. Going out early in the morning into the wood to meditate how I should conduct a service, with only one small prayer book and no hymn book, for a congregation consisting of a Russian and a Maltese and an Irish Catholic and a hilly uneducated Englishman, I came across the husband of the abovementioned female milking the cow. He apologised for the lady not doing this, her special duty, upon the valid plea that she had presented him during the night with another little son, the first child born in Gembrook. At 10am the congregation assembled, and when they were seated on beds and chairs, I began with the sermon...”

Bromby and other residents had been giving serious thought to the need for a church at Gembrook. His diary entry for 13 November 1877 records: "I have given an acre of my newly purchased ground, whereon to build a place of worship, to be vested in trustees on behalf of the Pastoral Aid Society. Boyes rigged himself out in his Sunday best and sallied forth with the subscription list to collect as many subscriptions as possible. It is to be a wooden structure, and will serve as a Sunday schoolroom as well. There are already 20 children within reach. Dimensions 30 by 18 feet, if some 40 pounds will carry us to the completion of such an ambitious fabric. My services have bespoken for the opening of the bush church".

It is thought that the first Gembrook wedding, conducted in this Church, was on 5 September 1889 when Edmund Cornwall and Florence Smartt were married.

Hotel

Gembrook did not have a hotel or any form of legal licensed premises until the Ranges Hotel was built. However, this does not mean that the people went without liquor. Some settlers made their own wine, while other demonstrate their interest in stronger drinks by operating illicit stills or selling sly-grog. This was evident when the police inspector commented on an application for a Roadside License in 1899: "the premises proposed to be erected will be some distance from the school and will, in the opinion of the Police Department meet a long felt want and mitigate the existing evil of sly-grog selling. Some opposition was shown to the granting of the license but it was mostly from people willing to supply the public at the expense of the state".

McMahon constructed the Ranges Hotel on its present site, at the Puffing Billy terminus, in 1901.

The Gembrook Railway – A new Era Begins

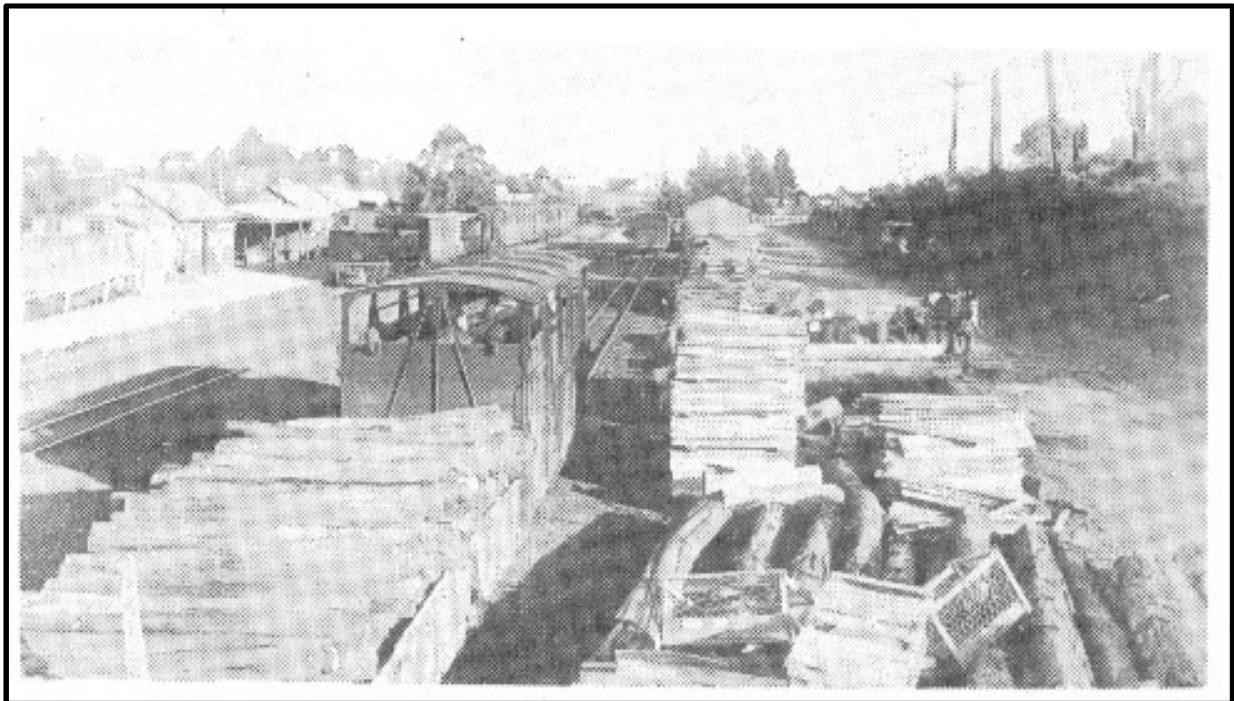
Before a decision was made to construct the Puffing Billy line at least six alternative routes were considered – each of these routes started from different stations – Dandenong, Glen Iris, Beaconsfield, Pakenham, Nar Nar Good and Ferntree Gully. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways investigated the alternatives and recommended construction on a narrow-gauge line from Ferntree Gully at an estimated cost of 3 000 pounds per mile and total cost of 54 000 pounds.

The line was constructed and the first train arrived in Gembrook in December 1900.

For a number of reasons, the new train service had a profound impact on the Gembrook community. Firstly, the real terminus provided a focal point for the township. Prior to that, the community had been very scattered, but the building of a general store and a hotel near the railway station was the start of the Gembrook township as we know it today.

Another major effect of the railway was the opportunity that it provided for new industries which involved regular transportation of produce. Although there had been sawmills operating in the district for many years, they mainly served the local community. Now timber products in many forms could be sent direct to Melbourne or elsewhere, and the timber industry boomed. Similarly, the potato industry rapidly expanded as a result of the rail service. Before that time cheese was one of the most important forms of farm produce because it could be made on the property and stored and this was sufficient quantity to make a trip to market worthwhile – and it could be sent by packhorse or coach.

The third major effect of the railway line was to open the way for tourist – and they came in droves. There are many interesting tales of activities of tourists and those who catered for them in the early days.



*Gembrook Railway Station – 1920's
Photo courtesy of J. Begg*

School No. 2506 Gembrook

The place name Gembrook has an entry in Les Blake's "Place Names of Victoria", published in 1977 by Rigby Ltd, Melbourne. The entry states: "Gembrook Parish, County of Mornington; parish, County of Evelyn; rural resort in Dandenong Ranges; gemstones found in creek by Dr. Bleesdale and also by A.A. Le Souef; 14 April 1874 site of settlement pegged by Rev. Rd. J.E. Bromby".

A further entry on Emerald reads: "emerald: Township 10kms from Belgrave in Dandenong Ranges: in 1851 gold discovered in creek named after prospector Jack Emerald who was murdered there, township first named Main Range".

The place name Pakenham has an entry too. It states: "Pakenham; Parish, County of Mornington: municipal centre for Shire of Berwick; named after General Pakenham who served in the Crimean War; also once known as Longford after English M.P."

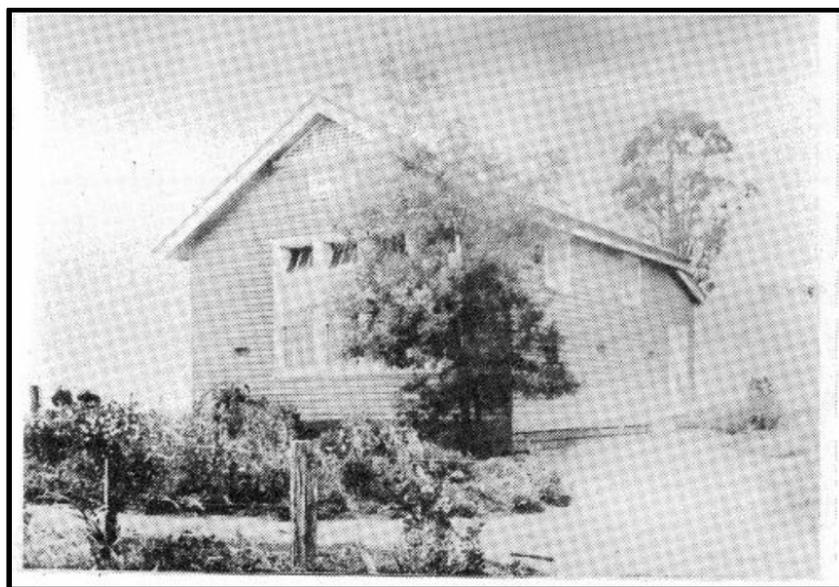
This school, S.S. No. 2506 Gembrook (Gembrook North) was preceded by a school which opened officially on 19 December 1878 half time with the new Emerald State school, both bearing the number 2110. John Augustus Noble was Head Teacher for both.

Just over eighteen months later, in August 1880, Emerald became a full-time school, still under John Noble as H.T. and Gembrook was operated as a part-time school with S.S. 2155 Gembrook South, now using the number 2155, with both schools under the command of Alexander P.W. Gough.

On 9 August 1883 Gembrook was separated from 2155 and established as a full-time school. The school was numbered 2506 and was conducted in the original leased hut. The school moved into a better but still leased building, the Union Church, in 1884.

Gembrook South No. 2155 was paired with Gembrook No. 2506 again in September 1885 under Head Teacher Samuel Barclay, and then under John T. Keane, followed by Joseph H.I. Morgan.

The school regained its full-time status in November 1889 with an average attendance of 26, under H.T. Walter Bilson.



*The first School House 1915. Still part of the present school.
Photo courtesy of J.Begg*

The residents of the Pakenham district were concerned at the lack of adequate primary school facilities for their children when the population numbers of the settlement increased. On 27 February 1877, a representative group of parents petitioned the local Board of advice to have a school established for the locality.

The petition was initiated by Francis Brodie and attested to by 11 parents representing 32 children.

To the Board of Advice Pakenham

We the undersigned Fathers of Families residing on the borders of Pakenham, Nar Nar Goon and Gembrook hereby beg that you will ask the Minister of Education to cause a School to be erected in our midst as the distance to Pakenham School is too great for children to travel.

Fathers Names	Children	Years	Months
Francis Brodie	Francis David	10	4
	Jane	8	6
	Alexander	6	11
	Janet	5	3
	William	3	3
	Agnes	1	2
	Janet Isabella		12
William Wright	William	11	
	Agnes	9	
	Margaret	7	
	Alice	5	
	Mary	1	
	Eliza	Infant	
Allan Gordon	Henry	12	
	David	11	
	William	13	
William Cornwall	James	11	
	Edmond Thomas	8	
	Michael	13	
Patrick Kelby	Mary	11	
	Betsy	6	
Thomas Baylan (Guardian for)	Frederick Wakefield	3	3
	James Ramage		
James Ramage	Isabella Dickson	12	
	James Ramage	Infant	
Joseph Henry Priest	Richard	6	6
	Agnes	2	9
	Matilda		8
	Adda	5	
William Taylor	Ellice	5	
	Charles		3
George Taylor	Clifton		9
Jeremiah Dyer	James		11

Besides there is another Selector who has four children of age to attend School who will be here to reside when ever his ground is surveyed

Pakenham
22 February 1877

Sir,

I enclose a copy of the application which we Fathers of Families sent in to the Board of Advice in Pakenham they say we have made a mistake in it. If so the mistake lies with Mr Thomas Flintz who was then Correspondent and drew the petition out for us.

Mr Wright asked me to forward this to you and said that you very kindly offered to do all in your power to procure us a School for which we will be forever indebted to you.

I remain Sir Your Obedient Servant
Francis Brodie

The petition was forward to the Hon. I. Purves M.P., who in turn presented it to the Education Department with the comment – “I strongly recommend this application for the favourable consideration of the Minister of Education”.

When the Inspector General, Gilbert Wilson Brown received the application for consideration he wrote a memo: “Gembrook Application:... Mr Purves M.P// Called with Mr Chricton. They represented that half time schools are badly wanted, one at Cockatoo, one at Emerald – about 14 children at last place – 4 miles apart. Mr Crichton would, if necessary, find a building at Cockatoo. Mr Noble of Cranbourne has a selection at Cockatoo on which his wife and family reside. He would like the school. Mr Holland visited lately. Call for his report”.

The District Inspector, James Holland was directed to submit a report on the application. The report was presented on 7 June 1877 and eventually on 19 December 1878 a school was established in Gembrook which was worked half time with **Emerald State School**, both bearing the number 2110. John Augustus Noble was the Head Teacher for both schools. Eighteen months later on 1 August 1880, **Gembrook State School** became a part-time school together with 2155 Gembrook South under Alexander P.W. Gough, while Emerald State School continued as a full-time school with John Augustus Noble as Head Teacher. Alexander Gough rode 12 miles to Gembrook on alternate days to conduct the school.

On 7 October 1881, J.H. Watson, J.M. Dyer and Joshua Mansergh presented a letter to the Minister of Education, in which they stated they had been led to believe that the Department proposed erecting a school house on the west side of the district (see letter).

Gembrook
7 October 1881

To the Hon. Th Minister of Education.

We the undersigned resident of Upper Gembrook have heard that it is the intention of the Education department to build a State School on the Reserve which has been set apart for this purpose.

We bed, humbly, to call your attention to the fact that this Reserve is situated at the West side of the district and by building the school there, it would leave us altogether out of distance to send our children to school, the distance being three to three and a half miles.

We would respectfully suggest that a more central place for a school would be a site on Dr Bromby’s land about half a mile south of Mr D. Crichton’s store, at the side of the church.

It would then be about tow or two and a half miles distant from us, and we do not think that there could be any reasonable objection to it being there. Dr. Bromby is willing to sell an acre of land for school purposes.

We are the more anxious that the school should be at the church as there are only eleven children of school age in the east side of this district and we could not hope, even to get a half time school.

We have the honour to be Sir you obedient Servants,

John Ure J.H. Watson
J.M. Dyer Joshua Mansergh

A memo on the matter, dated 5 May 1882, stated: "...it is not intended to erect a new school building at Upper Gembrook at present as the leased building is considered suitable".

Early in 1883 it was decided to separate the two schools and conduct both on a full-time basis. On 9 August 1883, temporary Head Teacher, Alfred Richards opened the Gembrook half under a new number, 2506, and began conducting it as a full time school. The first permanent Head Teacher, Annie Hamilton, appointed on 6 November 1883, conducted classes full time in the original leased hut.

The average attendance at Gembrook in December 1883 was 18 and in early in 1884 was – January 10, February 15, March 19, April 21.

At this time, the school was known as Gembrook North, situated in Upper Gembrook.

A Departmental memo dated 29 May 1884 stated: "Recommended that portable with quarters be sent to Upper Gembrook 2506." However on 30 June 1884 the trustees of the Union Church of Upper Gembrook offered to lease the church building for school purposes on reasonable terms. A further memo in relation to the matter and dated 8 July 1884 stated: "Architect. Please hold over sending of portable at present". See 'School sites, early Gembrook map', for location of church and school premises.

On 8 September 1884 H.T. Annie Hamilton, in a letter to the Department appealed for suitable alternate accommodation for her school.

Gembrook 2506
September 8th 1884

Sirs,

I have the honor to call your attention to the want of suitable accommodation for the above school. At present School is held in a small bark hut, which is damp, cold and much too small for the number now attending. I have received some new Scholars this morning and expect others before the end of the week, and I really do not know where to put them all.

Trusting that this will at once meet with your attention.

I have the honor to be Sir your obedient servant
Annie Hamilton
Head Teacher

Newbrook 2506
Sept 8th 1884



Sir,

I have the honor to call your attention to the want of suitable accommodations for the above School. The present School is held in a small bark hut, which is damp cold & much too small for the number now attending. I have received some new scholars this morning & expect others before the end of the week, and I really do not know where to put them all. (over)

Trusting that this will at once meet with your attention.

I have the honor to be
Sir,

Your obedient servant
R. W. Hamilton
School Teacher

The average attendance for 1884 were:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
S.S. 2506 Gembrook	10	15	18	21	22	22	22	20	18
S.S. 2155 Gembrook South	11	15	13	13	13	9	11	9	9

On 27 May 1885, District Inspector James E. Laing advised: "The school could very conveniently be worked half time with Gembrook South 2155".

The average attendance for 1885 was:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
S.S. 2506 Gembrook	15	10	12	11	11
S.S. 2155 Gembrook South	14	12	12	7	10

From 11 September 1885 until 13 November 1889 S.S. 2506 again reverted to half time status with 2155 Gembrook South, the teachers being Samuel Barclay, followed by John T. Keane and succeeded by Joseph H.I. Morgan.

A group of parents headed by J.M. Dyer on 22 August 1889 petitioned the Department to operate the school on a full-time basis.

Gembrook
22 August 1889

To
The Secretary for Education

Sir,

We the undersigned, Parents and Guardians of Children attending State School No. 2506. Gembrook North, have the honour to request, that you will be pleased to lay before the Hon. The Minister of Education, this our Petition, that we may be granted a full-time school for this district and we respectfully beg that he will take the matter under his favourable consideration.

We would beg to lay before him the facts, that the School has now 40 scholars on the roll and the average attendance for the last six months has been 26 which we are given to understand is more than sufficient to entitle us to the privilege for which we are petitioning.

Under the New Clauses of the Education Act, by which the School age is lowered to 13 it would be difficult to find many children attain the Standard in a half time school at that age and our children would thus suffer under a disadvantage in comparison with those in towns if a full-time school be not granted.

We have the honor to be Sir your most obedient servants

J.M Dyer	John Ure
Joshua Mansergh	Henry Dyson
Mr Stanley	Allan Kemp
John Kibson	Mr. J.H. Pittard
Mrs Harding	Mrs J Bell
Menry A. Smartt	S.B. McGowan

The petition was acknowledged and the petitioners were informed, on 6 September 1889, that the Department intended: "...to make both Gembrook North 2506 and Gembrook South 2155 full time schools".

S.S. 2506 regained its full-time status in November 1889 when the average attendance reached 26, under Head Teacher Walter Bilson.

The average attendance at the end of 1892 was:

Nov 18 **Dec** 18

The average attendance in early 1893 was:

Jan 21 **Feb** 21 With a net enrolment of 25.

The laying of the narrow-gauge railway line in 1900 increased settlement in the district, and a new town centre developed around the railway station.

In response to a Department directive the Head Teacher, Florence H. Hall, forwarded a list of pupil names enrolled at the school on 26 June 1903.

State School No. 2506
Gembrook N.
26 June 1903

Sir,

I have the honor to forward list of children on Roll. S.S. 2506 and state that the reasons for the falling off of the average attendance are that five children have left to work on farm etc. and the exceptionally wet weather, the roads being impassable. Seven children have been laid up with severe colds.

There are about 12 children in the District who will attend early in the Spring, so the attendance will greatly be improved.

I have the honor to be Sir, your obedient servant

Florence H. Hall

List of Children on the Roll S. School 2506

Isaac Church	
Samuel Smart	
Aldred Kirkpatrick	Left school working on farm
Andrew Bell	Sore throat
John Kirkpatrick	
Frank Cochran	Asthma
Peter Braden	New Scholar
Herbert Mayall	
William Begbie	Left, working on farm
Albert Begbie	Left, distance too great, 7 miles
James Carroll	New Scholar
Clarence Braden	Gone to England, returning November
Tom Evans	
Charles Goff	
Sydney Hayes	Severe cold
Fred Hayes	Severe cold
Jack Bergin	Sore foot
Annie Evans	Gone to England, back November
Lillian Goff	
Galdys March	Left district
Lillian Evans	In England, returning November
Dorothy Goff	
Jessie Bell	Absent sick
Evelyn Begbie	Left school, over 17 years old
Jessie Watson	Absent, bad roads, 5 mile walk
Emily Bergin	Sick
Maggie Bell	Delicate. 9 week absent. Sick
Lily Watson	Absent, bad roads, 5 mile walk
Nellie Watson	Absent, bad roads, heavy rain, 5 mile walk

On 20 November 1903, a group of parents petitioned the Minister for Education, John M. Davies, to establish the school in a more central position. The matter was referred to District Inspector Alfred C. Curlewis for enquiry and report.

Gembrook
20 November 1903

To the Hon. The Minister of Education

Dear Sir,

We the undersigned residents of Gembrook beg to bring under your notice the disadvantage we are placed under by the fact that there is no school in the township.

The school at present attended by the elder children (for it can only be used by the elder children on account of distance) is a mile and a half from the township, consequently it is on favourable weather only that the school can be reached.

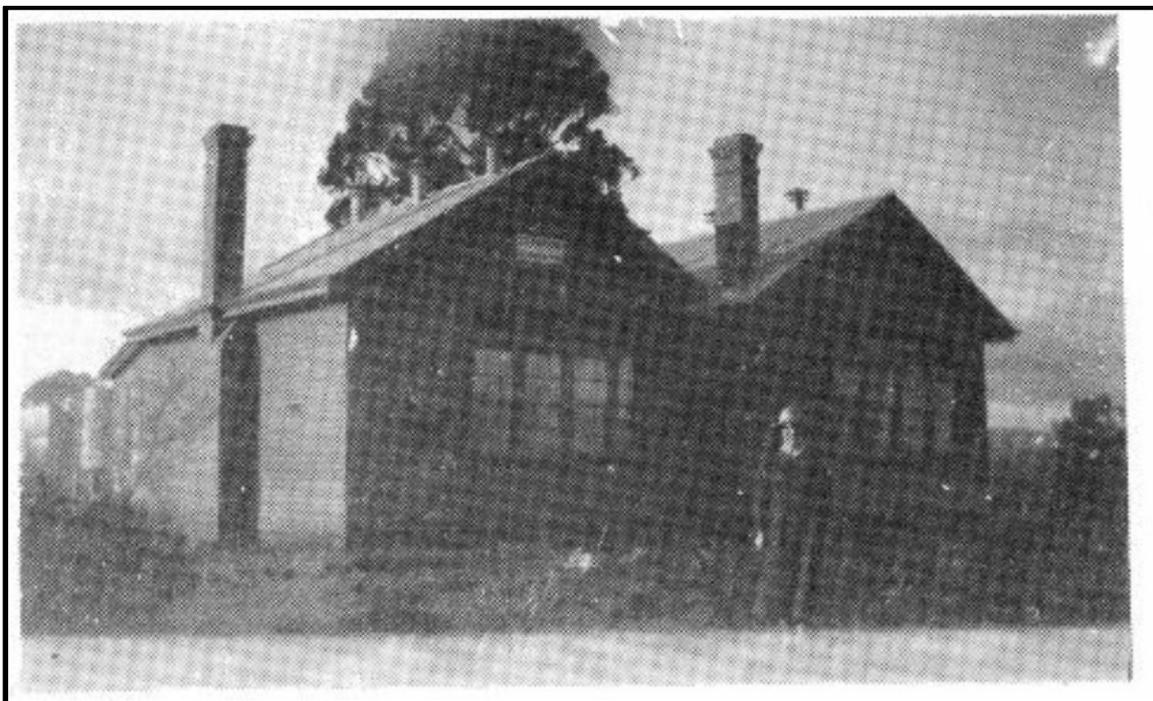
If a school was established in the township it would accommodate a large majority of the children of the district besides enabling the smaller children to attend.

We there petition you to have a school established in the township and thus save the children an unnecessary walk of three miles each day.

Trusting you will favourably consider our request.

We remain your humble servants

Jphn Deebie	H. Kilpatrick
E.A. Smith	Geo. Brown
J.C. Williamson	John J. Bell
Yelland	John Bergin
Braden	H. Howden
A. Worsley	



Gembrook School with Dorothy Smith (Huxtable) in foreground 10/06/1924

A counter group of parents on learning of the petition on 20 November 1903, presented the Secretary of Education with a letter protesting against the possibility of removing the school.

Gembrook
4 February 1904

The Secretary of Education Melbourne

Sir,

In having come to our knowledge that a section of the Residents have applied to have the state school No. 2506 removed from its present location to a place near the Gembrook Railway station. We the undersigned parents of children attending the school and parents of young families not yet of school age but who will attend this school beg to protest strongly against the asked for removal as thereby a gross injustice will be done to our children.

Our reasons for protest are these. The school as at present situated is in the centre of the district. The two nearest schools to it are Emerald 6 miles and S. Gembrook 6 miles. To take it to the asked for site would lesson the distance to S. Gembrook by 1½ miles and increase it to Emerald by the same distance. In every instance of the supporters of this protest their children will have to walk a further distance of about 1 ½ miles which in several instances will mean their being deprived of schooling altogether as the distance will be too great whereas the children from the direction to which it is asked that the school shall be removed are at present within a two mile radius of it and our children would be penalized that they may have the school practically close to their doors.

Also in removing the school as asked for it would necessarily bring it within the close vicinity of the Public House – which is not advisable.

We would therefore beg that you will favourably consider this our protest against the removal of the school. As where it is now situated is the best for the district at large.

We have the honor to be Sir yours obediently

Name	Distance from Present School	Distance from Railway Station
John Ure	3 ½ miles	3 ½ miles
H. Watson	5 miles	6 miles
A.N. Skjellerip	3 miles	4 miles
F. Henderson	1 mile	2 ½ miles
Isaac Church	1 ¼ miles	2 ¼ miles
Arthur S.H. Smartt	1 ½ miles	2 ¾ miles
F. Cullen	3 ¼ miles	4 ¼ miles
M. Kirkpatrick	3 miles	4 ½ miles
J.F. Evans	2 miles	3 ½ miles
E.W. Hayes	4 miles	5 miles
W. Kirkpatrick	1 mile	2 ½ miles
G.A. Ferries	1 ¼ miles	2 ¾ miles
E.C. Golf	1 ½ miles	2 miles
H.A. Ewart	1 ½ miles	2 miles

②

Gumbrook

4. 3. 04

The Secretary
of Education Melbourne

Sir

It having come to our knowledge that a section of the Residents here have applied to have the state school No 2506 removed from its present location to a place near the Gumbrook Railway station. We the undesignated parents of children attending the school and parents of young families not yet of school age but who will attend this school, beg to protest most strongly against the asked for removal as thereby a gross injustice will be done to our children. Our reasons for protest are these. The school as at present situated is in the centre of the district. The two nearest schools to it are Emerald 6 miles and St Gumbrook 6 miles to take it to the asked for site would lessen the distance to St Gumbrook by 12 miles and increase it to Emerald by the same distance. In every instance of the removal of this school their children will have to walk a further distance of about 12 miles which in several instances will mean their being deprived of schooling altogether as the distance will be too great for all the children coming from the direction to which it is asked.

that the school shall be removed are at present within a two mile radius of it and our children would be penalized that they may have the school practically closer to their doors.

Also in removing the school as acted for it would necessarily bring it within the close vicinity of the Public House, which is not advisable.

We would therefore beg that you will favorably consider this our protest against the removal of the school. As where it now situated is the best for the district at large.

We have the honor to be

Sirs
Yours obediently

Name	Distance to Present School	Distance to Public Station
John Egan, Jr. (Pres.)	5 1/2 miles	3 1/2 miles
H. Watson ✓	5 "	6 miles
A. J. Jefferson ✓	3 1/2 miles	14 miles
J. J. [unclear]	1 mile	2 1/2 miles
J. J. [unclear]	"	2 1/2 "
Arthur B. Smart ✓	1 1/2 "	2 1/2 "
J. C. [unclear] ✓	3 1/2 miles	4 1/2 miles
W. Kirkpatrick ✓	3 miles	9 1/2 miles
J. S. [unclear] (D. A. [unclear])	2 "	3 1/2 "
J. W. Hayes ✓	4 miles	5 miles
W. Kirkpatrick ✓	1 mile	2 1/2 miles
J. A. Ferris	1 1/2 miles	2 1/2 miles
L. C. Goff ✓	1 1/2 miles	2 miles
H. A. Edwards	1 1/2 miles	2 miles

John Deeble acting on behalf of the first group of petitioners, on 14 June 1904 asked the Department to give effect to the request of petitioners.

Another counter petition was presented on 11 July 1904, protesting against the possible removal of the school.

Upon being requested for an expression of opinion on the matter the District Inspector F.C. Eddy, on 23 August 1904 replied: "It is highly probably that in the process of time their school will have to be closed and a school established at the station, but I think the application for the station School is premature and I recommend that no action be taken at present to interfere with the existing arrangements". The reply was accompanied by a list of names of the children attending S.S. 2506 Gembrook North.

**Names of children in attendance
State School Gembrook North, 22 August 1904**

Church Isaac	16.1	Bell Maggie	9.8
Evans Annie	14.5	Watson Lily	11.11
Golf Lillian	13.8	Cullen Emily	13.1
Kirkpatrick Jack	12.11	Beanland Sydney	
McBride Edith	11.8	Bergin Jack	10.6
Evans Lillian	12.6	McDonald Alex	8.6
Golf Dorothy	11.4	Hayes Fred	8.5
Bell Jessie	11.9	Hayes Sydney	9.6
Watson Nellie	14	McBride Fred	8.11
Penrose Victor	11.11	Deeble James	8.5
Peterson Jack	11.5	Beanland Percy	9.2
Evans Tom	10.1	Beanland Stanley	9.5
Kilpatrick James	11.6	Russell Charles	10.5
Bergin Emily	12.11	Bergin Lindsay	6.9
Skjellerup Olga	9	Kilpatrick Donald	10.4
Golf Charles	8.10	Penrose Reginald	5.6
Cullen William	10.3	Golf Lawrence	6.1
Skjellerup Rita	8.3	Drew Katie	6.1

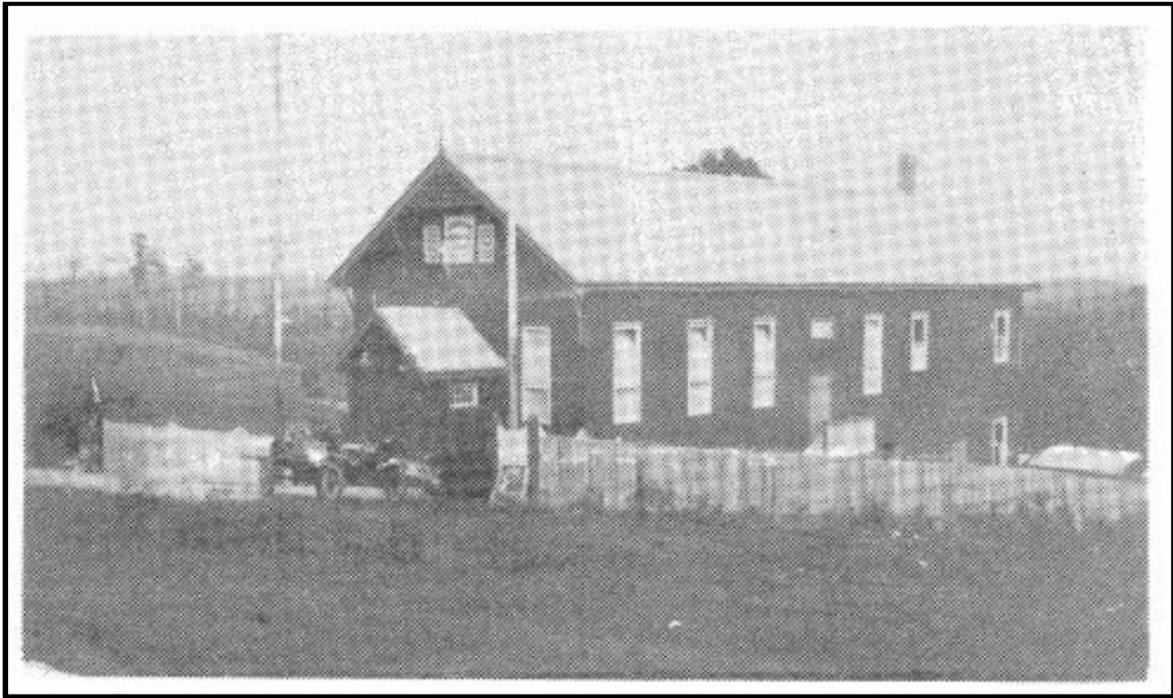
36 on roll.

On 6 June 1905, John Deeble again called upon the Department to establish a school in the developing town centre. He was advised to make a formal application. He forwarded the application accompanied by a letter presenting a case for the establishment of a school in the township centre, on 17 July 1905.

A Departmental memo dated 24 December 1905 stated: "Leased building be closed and re-opened after vacation in Hall at township. Rent 10 pounds per annum".

On 15 December 1905, Hans Glissman the Correspondent of the Board of Advice was advised of the Department's decision, which the Board accepted. In January 1906 the school opened in the Hall in Main Street, Gembrook.

A movement to impress upon the Department the necessity of securing a Departmental school site upon which to erect a permanent school house gathered momentum over the years. On 10 July 1909 a group of 53 parents headed by M. Morrith and A. Brown, addressed a request to the Minister seeking the erection of a permanent Departmental school building.



*Gembrook memorial Hall and Library
used as a school for a few months during 1922*

Gembrook
10 July 1909

The Honourable the Minister for Education

Sir,

We the undersigned residents of Gembrook, desire respectfully to bring to your notice the urgent need of a School building in this district. A site was originally reserved for a school but this, we understand, has been alienated by the Department. The Gembrook School has an attendance roll of 34. School is at present held in the Gembrook hall the property of Mr H Dyson. This building contains three rooms viz: The Hall itself 30 x 19 ½ and at the back two small rooms 12 x 10 and 12 x 10. There is no fireplace or other means of heating. The Teacher in charge has no place for the adequate care of school furniture and appliances as, when the hall is used for purposes of entertainment, all three rooms are required. The building has the further disadvantage of standing on a very small piece of ground and abuts the main street. The children have no where to play except the road unless they trespass upon either the Railway Reserve of the adjacent properties. We have good reason to believe that a site suitable in every way can be secured but the selling price of land in the township is increasing and the supply is limited. We will gladly do all in our power to assist the Department in the selection of the best available site. We feel that our application will receive the cordial endorsement of your responsible officers and trust that you may be able to take the necessary steps at an early date to provide this growing district with a School building and site adapted to our reasonable requirements which at present are most inadequately met.

We have the honour to be Sir your obedient servants

M. Morritt A. Brown
J. Mansergh C.F.N. Burchert
W.J. Bannon

To His Honourable The Minister
for Education
Gembrook
10. 7. 09.

Sir

We, the undersigned residents of Gembrook, desire respectfully to bring to your notice the urgent need of a new school building in this district. A site was originally reserved for a school, but this, we understand, has been allocated. The Gembrook School has an attendance roll of 137 by four. School is at present held in the Gembrook Hall the property of Mr. H. Dixon. This building contains three rooms only. The hall itself is 20 x 19 ft and at the back two small rooms 12 x 10 and 12 x 10. There is no fireplace or other means of heating. The Teacher in charge has no place for the adequate care of school furniture and appliances as, when the hall is used for purposes of entertainment, all these rooms are required. The building has the further disadvantage of standing on a very small piece of ground and abuts on the main street. The children have nowhere to play except the road, unless they pass upon either the Railway Reserve or the adjacent properties. We have found it a

2.

not so that a site suitable in every way can be secured but the selling price of land in the township is increasing and the supply is limited. We will gladly do all in our power to assist the Department in the selection of the best available site. We feel that our application will receive the kind and prompt attention of your responsible officers and trust that you may be able to take the necessary steps at an early date to provide this growing district with a school building and site adapted to our reasonable requirements which at present are most urgently met.

We have the honour to be,
Sir
your obedient servants.

For Messrs:
A. Brown
J. Munn
L. J. P. Burchett
W. J. Cannon

On 3 October 1909, the acting Head Teacher suggested changing the school name *Gembrook North* to *Gembrook* since the school was just a quarter of a mile from Gembrook Railway Station. The Board of Advice and the District Inspector were advised about the name change sought. On 8 December 1909 the Board of Advice accepted the name change to *Gembrook*.

The average attendance for later months in 1909 was: August 19, September 19, October 22, November 22, December 19.

District Inspector W.A. Cavanagh on 18 July 1910 and on 12 October 1910 was directed to recommend a school site.

The Department of Lands and Survey on 19 December 1911 advised the Department: "...it has been decided to temporarily reserve...land in the Parish of Gembrook for State School purposes". The reservation of 7 acres and 15 perches of land, being Allotment 31 of Section B, in the Parish of Gembrook, as a site for a State school, was duly notified in the Government Gazette on 7 February 1912.

The average attendance for late 1911 was: October 20, November 26, December 25; and for early 1912: January 27, February 32, with a net enrolment of 38.

A Departmental memo dated 15 April 1912 stated: "Departmental is at present occupying leased premises which are stated to be in a very unsatisfactory condition. A site of 7 acres has recently been reserved for school purposes. The late D.I. Mr. Cavanagh recommended that a school building should be erected. Submitted – that estimate of cost of erecting a building type B be obtained".

A later entry dated 18 June 1912 stated: "New building will cost 455 pounds including fencing (41 chains) O.O.'s etc. Grading and clearing of site 40 pounds additional".

On 13 June 1912, the Hon. W.S. Keast M.L.A. presented the Minister with a petition from the local residents, requesting the Department to expediate the erection of a State School building. The Department replied that the P.W.D. was attending to construction costs. On 19 July 1912 the Building Inspector suggested: "...that adjoining allotment 32 which is fairly level be transferred from Lands Department".

The Hon. W.S. Keast M.L.A. on 12 March 1913 urged the Minister for Education that a new school building be erected.

12 March 1913

The Honourable – The Minister for Education
Education Department
Melbourne

Sir,

During Mr Billson's term of office, I saw him repeatedly in reference to a new School for Gembrook.

This school is an absolute disgrace to the district and also the Department, as this district has a rainfall of somewhere about 40 inches in the winter time. And I feel certain that the children will not be able to spend another winter in this school. The Department promised me to go thoroughly into this matter and put it on the urgent list, but this was some months ago and I shall be glad if you will kindly let me know how the matter now stands, as I have mentioned, previously, this is very urgent matter. I feel quite certain that the Department will not be able to keep a teacher there during this winter and that the parents will not send their children to school, if the school is allowed to remain in its present state.

Yours faithfully

W.S Keast

The Department replied: "The work of erection will be placed in hand as early as the funds placed at the disposal of the Department will permit".

On 13 November 1913 a Departmental memo states: "...inform Mr. Keast M.L.A. that the erection of a new school building at Gembrook is included in the list of works which the Department expects to be in a position to carry out during the current financial year".

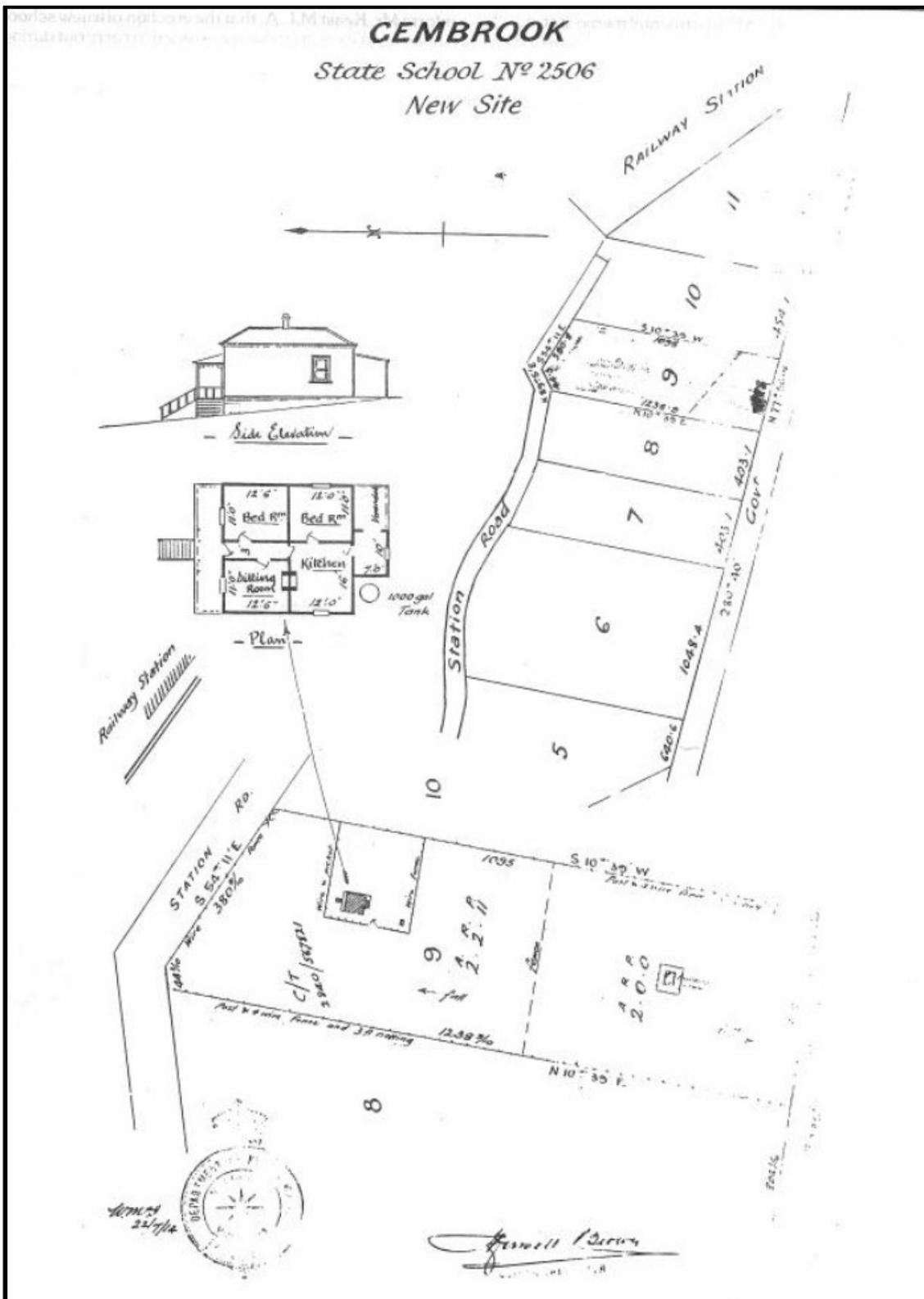
Some average attendances for 1913 were: July 28, August 24, September 28, October 29; and the net enrolment 39.

The Gembrook Progress Association on 19 December 1913 passed a resolution reading: "That in the interest of the district and children attending the school, we consider the site selected for the state school inconvenient and unsuitable and we request Mr. Keast M.L.A. to interview the Minister and endeavor to obtain a more suitable site".

The Hon. W.S. Keast M.L.A. presented the resolution to the Hon. The Minister for Education. He was advised that the matter would be investigated.

District Inspector J.H. Bethers on 4 February 1914 recommended alternative sites in the proximity of the Post Office and Railway Station.

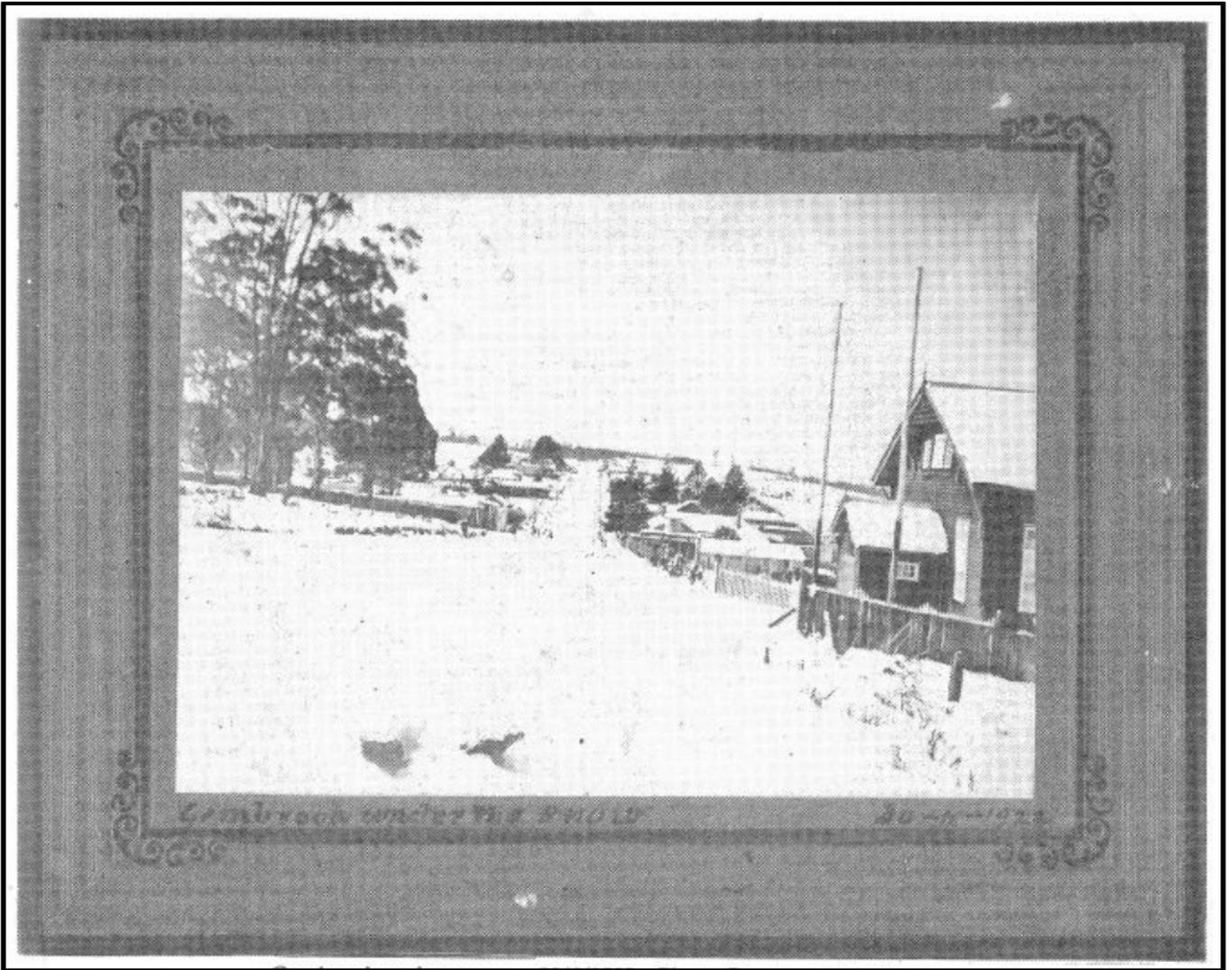
A new site, Lot 9 – part of Crown Allotment A11, was purchased for 300 pounds in 1914. The previous site at the corner of Amphlett Avenue and Mountain Road was revoked on 17/02/1915.



New site map

This new site is the site on which the school now stands. When purchased, the site had a 'roomed weatherboard house, with no conveniences such as pantry, copper and bath'. This building subsequently became the teachers residence.

The new school was officially opened in 1915, but by 1920 the single school room was too small for the increasing population. A second room was added in 1922 and as luck would have it, the road was off the building when Gembrook had a heavy snowfall.



Gembrook under snow – 30/06/1922

Photo courtesy of j. Begg

The school population remained stable for many years. Most correspondence was to do with the poor state of teacher's residence, the fences and the occasional school break-in.

Frederick W. Bayne H.T. reports temporary closing of School. 3/7/22

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the builders engaged in the task of enlarging this school have made the room uninhabitable. They have removed half the roof, and one wall, and have the place littered with their tools and materials. In the circumstances school work is impossible owing to the pupils being exposed to the weather (there was 2ft. of snow on Friday), and to the noise of the operations and the continual interruption of the classes by the workmen entering the building in the course of their operations.

Consequently after consulting the Chairman of the School Committee, I have closed the school for 1 week.

I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servant,

F.W. Bayne.

It is interesting to compare Head Teacher Fred Bayne's inventory in 1922 with the assets of the present school.

Inventory | State School 2506, Gembrook

Dual desks, 1 dorm, 1 table, 2 chairs, 1 teacher's desk, 1 stool, book press, 15 framed and glazed pictures, 1 clock, 1 sewing frame, 6 old maps (9damaged), 1 Flag (Australian), 1 ladder, 1 blackboard, 6 dozen porcelain inkwells, Files Gazettes, Rolls, Records, School Stationery, School library, pupils, inspector's, teachers, G.P., absence registers, time table, work programme

Doors, locks, windows

Doors, all in good condition

Locks. Press and teacher's desk, no locks. Table and cupboard, locks good. No key to table drawer.

Windows, 1 cracked in corridor, rest sound.

Gerald Russell H.T. reports on the bad state of the Teachers quarters

Gembrook

30/10/22

Sir,

I have the honour to report on the wholly unsatisfactory condition of the residence at this school, and ask that either a new residence be built, or that such substantial alteration be made to the present habitat.

The rooms are so small that there is no sufficient room for either our family (2 adults and 4 children) or our furniture, and the passage way is so narrow that we are unable to get our piano, couch, or table into the front room.

With the exception of window there are no means provided for ventilation at all.

There is only a very narrow verandah on the front. During a violent wind the house shakes alarmingly, and some sheets of iron are loose. The roof is leaking and yesterday we had pails in different parts of the house to catch the drips.

The kitchen and copper fires smoke.

The Outoffice is in a most obnoxious position close to the back door.

The kitchen is 7ft. wide and opens into the bath-house and wash-house combined. There is no pantry nor any place fit to store food. The fences and gates are in a most dilapidated condition. The house is so built that during every heavy rain a flood of water rushes in at the back door.

I have the honour to be, Sir, Yours obediently,

Gerald Russell. H.T.



*Walkers General Store Main Street, Gembrook
Photo courtesy of D. Saunders*

Memories

David Ure | Pupil | 1905 – 1913

David Ure started at School No. 2506 in September 1905, the month he turned 6 years old. This was 12 years after it had become a full-time school.

The school was being held in the church on Ure Road at that time, the 25 or so children sitting on trestle seats. He walked up the road to the church from home which was then situated just opposite the present Protea farm in Ure Road.

The next year school began in Dyson's Hall in the Main Street. The walk to school lengthened to nearly half an hour, cutting across paddocks, dodging the occasional snake. The following is an edited transcript of an interview with Dave in August 1983.

"This Saville, he as a good sport like, he wouldn't take no nonsense. I remember – there were two kids – one pushed the other off the end of a seat one day. So he had them both stand in front of him, and he said to the other fellow, "Well you catch up with him now and put him on the ground". He had them both wrestling out the front. When they finished he chased them back with a stick. Oh, he was a good sport.

This Pilgram fellow, he was a queer old stick. He used to spend all day walking up and down the school – he had a cane thing – swinging it round and singing a bit.

We used to play hockey – that's what we used to play when he was there – often until 2 in the afternoon, sometimes just with sapling clubs. Billy Pilgram, he'd play too. He wasn't young – in his forties perhaps. Miss Hall used to ride a hack side-saddle to and from school. All the teachers we had were pretty good really.

There was no fire in the Hall – it was a pretty cold place – you didn't notice it much when you were young like that – it got pretty hot sometimes. Most of the time you were in school".

The steam train from Ferntree Gully would get in about quarter past one. It was a full days trip to go into town and back. We used to go on a trip to the seaside once a year – leave at 6 minutes past 6 in the morning and get back about quarter past 10 at night. We didn't take much with us – a lot of the parents went. We'd go to Sandringham – Brighton – Frankston – they'd run the train right thru.

They used to have the School paper – a few pages that's all. We had a slate for the little ones and exercise books for the older ones.

The snowfall of June 1922 – the snow lay for up to 3 weeks in places. I had to hand feed the bullocks with chaff – I had a team by then – there was no grass for the animals to get at.

They were no trouble at all if you knew how to handle them – didn't have to go crook at them all the time – they'd walk straight up to their places".

Dorothy Huxtable | Pupil | 1911 – 1916

Dot achieved her Qualifying Certificate at Gembrook School in 1916, when Miss Jane Wilson was Head Teacher. She used to walk from Mt. Eirene Road (from about where the late George Hope's residence stood) to school in Dyson's Hall in the Main Street (point 4 on the map). The 3 ½ mile walk took her about an hour each way. In her own words:

"The roads were all totally different then. The main Pakenham Road didn't exist – we used to walk up Red Road. There was a small cast iron stove at one side for heating, that was all, and two small rooms at the back. Now and again we had a concert in the hall. There were about 30 boys and girls.

When the teacher went home for lunch, the boys would throw nib pens at the ceiling – it was pine lining boards, and they were covered with nibs.

A became Sewing Mistress when I was about 17 years old. I took the First and Second Grades during the week for Reading and Writing and on Fridays I had all the girls for Sewing. When the School moved to where it is now, the boys did gardening with the Head Teacher”.

Miss Gladys Harvey | Pupil | 1919 – 1925

Miss Harvey (now Mrs. Munnerly of Gembrook) attended Gembrook Primary School between 1919 and 1925. During that time she saw many teachers come and go. One teacher who stood out was Mr. G.I. Russell, he was not only a teacher but a farmer as well. His property was located on Mountain Road.

The children did not know how he would be dressed. Sometimes he arrived with hay band strong holding up his trousers. He had come straight from the paddock to teach. It was he who introduced the vegetable garden to the school. Boys and girls planted vegetables and sold them for 3 pence per bunch.

Headmaster Fred Bayne was another colourful figure. His habit was to send one of the boys down to the General Store for 50 ‘coffin nails’ (cigarettes).

An eventful period was when the school undertook renovations. Up until 1920 Gembrook Primary had been a one room school with about 46 children. By that date however the roll call had lengthened to 70 names and a decision was made to add a second room. This involved a complete new roof, and as luck would have it on Friday 30 June 1922. Gembrook was buried under almost 2 feet of snow while the roof was off the schoolhouse. While the renovations were going on, the whole school moved into the new Memorial Hall which had only just been completed that year. (This was situated about 100m up the hill from the Ranges Hotel). The district was snow bound for 3 days, and the boys and girls took full advantage of the conditions to slide down the hill to the Memorial Hall. This gave rise, incidentally, to the term G.M.H. long before the vehicle manufacturer became established. “Gembrook Memorial Hall”.

Contributed by John Rigby

Mr Genseric (Bill) Parker | Pupil | 1920 -1927

I commenced my schooling in the single room at Gembrook in 1920 with a school population of about 70 and only the Head Master and a Sewing Mistress, which was a misnomer as they also had to assist with the general education of lower classes.

The Sewing Mistress in my early years was Miss Smith, now Mrs Huxtable. I still have vivid memories of her vice like grip on my little hand as I clutched the slated pencil and she directed my movements as I learnt to write on the slate.

In retrospect I never cease to wonder at the enormous task the early teachers had with their many and large classes as the Head in my day had to supervise the teaching of the 8 grades often under very primitive conditions. Although my teacher for 6 years, Mr Russell, may not have been as demanding in the school room as might have been desired. I won much to him outside the class room.

He made me aware of the wonders of nature and aroused in me an interest in the study of flora and fauna. Even years after I had left the school I would have lengthy discussion on these topics with him. During my long life as a farmer, some of the basic principles for soil maintenance and conservation I can associate with conversations I had with him in my formative years.

Although teachers can often be the subject of ridicule by the pupils, it is nice when you reach more mature years to look back and think what you really did get from your school years. The pro’s will outweigh the con’s. There is much more to schooling than learning the 3 R’s.



*Gembrook School – June 1926
Photo courtesy of D Saunders*

Miss Wilma Beer | Pupil | 1936 – 1942

I attended Gembrook Primary School as a student during the late years of the depression and the early war years. When I first started school we wrote with a slate and a slate pencil. We had to keep a moist rag in a little tin to clean the slate. I had difficulty in remembering to dampen the rag. It was not long before slates were abandoned.

The desks were arranged in rows where we sat except for occasional visits to the blackboard for grade lessons. We learnt to read by taking turns at reading from the grade teacher. During physical education lessons we stood in straight rows and performed formal exercise. At playtime in the summer, we made playhouses under the pine trees and in winter we played skippy and a game we called keepings off was played with a basketball and was great fun.

I remember my school days as mainly happy and I was fortunate in that I liked all my teachers.



*Gembrook school – Mid 1930's
Photo courtesy of D. Ure*

Lorna Parker (then Lanyon) | Teacher | 1938 – 1974

In more than a third of a century's association with Gembrook Primary School, from when I first came in 1938 until I finally retired from emergency teaching in 1974, I have seen many changes.

Coming from teaching in a city training school my first shock was how little equipment the Education Department provided in a country school. For an infant room with less than 48 pupils, no supplies were allocated. There were 36 in the infant room, 33 in the senior school, up to Grade VIII and three teachers at that time.

The school consisted of two rooms and a passage with a tiny store room at the end. I remember at one stage the Headmaster lost the key, and for week entrance was made through the window. No! the pupils didn't file in through the window, but whichever teacher was there first climbed in and unbolted the doors from the inside. Table, chair, one cupboard, desks, blackboard, chalk and school records were all that was supplied, plus in my room an old teacher's desk, tall and wide, relic of a previous era.

Compare this with now, eight classrooms, a library, a gymnasium come music room come dark room, an administrative and staff block, for 181 children with 10 teachers. What a luxury! With tables and chairs for the younger grades there is greater scope for conversation or, we hope, interchange of ideas. Each room has an array of cupboards, brimming with a bountiful supply of exciting coloured materials of every description, enough to make water the mouth of an older day teacher.

It must have been 1938 when we started the Mother's Club, after which conditions quickly improved. In those days the children mostly walked to school over muddy roads. A few rode bikes. The only one who rode a pony at that time was John Russell. On the odd occasion it got its directions mixed and finished back where it started from. In this wet climate a wet day meant few children at school so that lessons had to be repeated several times for the benefit of those who had missed out. But nowadays, wet or fine, 9am sees a steady stream of cars in and out of the school ground disgorging children.



*Gembrook Primary School – 1939
Photo courtesy of G & L Parker*

Look at the old school photos. The girls wore shirt and jumper or an occasional school tunic and blouse. Boys wore trousers and a pullover. How different now, and how practical with both sexes in track suits! Compare the old playground games, hopscotch, tops, marbles, skippy, rounders with today's sophisticated playground equipment, not to mention the current electronic games which keep the young glued to the spot. Not even a swing or seesaw in 1938!

Perhaps the most spectacular change has been in reading. In those days, the material was so limited; for lower grades a class reader not allied to children's interest, poorly illustrated, for upper grades, a class reader and a monthly school paper, containing admittedly quite interesting stories, poems and articles. I really do envy today's children with the classroom shelves crammed with attractive interesting, well-illustrated, well-graded books. Instead of reading a paragraph each all round the class, today they proceed by themselves, at their own pace, reading as many books as they can get through. And on top of that they have a well stocked library, catering for every interest a child might have, and in addition, training in its use. Lucky, lucky children.

But the change in mathematics I consider most important. Not only did the pupils learn their tables and simple processes, but they were also burdened with tables for money, length, weight, area etc. How many hours they spent changing Pounds to pence, tons to ounces, yards to inches and vice versa! But now with the metric system in use, all those valuable hours can be used for other studies, socially based, so useful for community living or for more sophisticated and challenging mathematical procedures. With the change to metric, we poor adults had to cope with conversion from quarts to litres, yards to metres etc, but for children who have known no other system, the four simple operations, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division hold for all, be it money, weight, liquid measure or length. In every area, art, crafts, sport, the tale is the same – materials of every description available for today's children. We had pastels and plasticine for art; even so an improvement on my own school days when we had nothing by lead pencil and white paper. I can remember at the age of six being slapped by the teacher for scribbling all over the page in sheer frustration.

But today every medium imaginable is used, from paints to pottery, from woodwork to spinning and weaving, with great scope for creativity. But by far the greatest change I have seen in this third of a century has been the rate of change which doubles, triples every year. And this has changed the whole aim of education. For it no use to teach children sets of facts and figures if these will no longer be valid in a year or two. So children must be equipped to keep up with change, to use the techniques of science, to classify, observe, read and deduce, to find out for themselves.

Yes! I envy today's children.

But surely there must have been a few pluses for my children all those years ago, more space, less pollution, more time for simple things.

I look back with nostalgia on the good old days and my dear pupils. They were a jolly good bunch of kids.

Stan and Nell Marriott | Parents | 1948 – 1957

The Marriotts particularly remember Wally Hoy as a very good teacher who understood children and had the power to be able to encourage the best out of each child, no matter where that child's talent lay. They remember the Head Teacher's house (now demolished) as being a constant issue for the School Committee, whether it was maintenance and repairs, or unsuitability for the changing needs of the various occupants. (Only shrubs that once graced the old building can now be seen at the bottom of the school yard).

The Marriotts also remember that the children of the mill workers at Estcourts Mill in the Tomahawk Valley were brought in to Gembrook once each year for the Christmas break up. These children were taught by correspondence under the guidance of Mrs Estcourt, herself a trained school teacher.

The present day children of Tomahawk Valley are brought to school each day on a bus.

Stan and Thelma Atkinson | Parents | 1952 – 1968

The Atkinsons served on the School Committee for many years, sorting out issues such as the supply of firewood for the schools open fires and the planting of pine trees and even potatoes for extra money. The firewood was delivered by a truck from Williams Bros Sawmill in the form of a log which the parents cut and split in the schoolyard. Stan remembers planting 1 700 pine trees in a paddock off Knight Street with the assistance of the sixth grade and biscuits and soft drink from his Main Street shop, only to find some time later that the tops of all the seeling trees had been chewed off by some predator.

Another task was to try to divide the two school rooms, (to separate the grades) by means of a curtain made up from a floral cotton material by the mothers.

The Atkinsons remember the combine Mountain District Sports held at Emerald or Monbulk, was 'nearly always a shocker' for bad weather. Two of the best competitors were runners Gay Failla (nee Dell Universita) and Lucy Scalora (nee Bordonaro).



Gembrook School – Grades 5 and 6, 1955

Gay Failla (Nee Dell Universita) | Pupil | 1951 – 1956

I lived in Orchard Road then, and I used to run down the road to the railway crossing to be in time to catch the little work trolley on its way to Gembrook Stations. The workmen would give me a hand up and let me off at the school as they went past.

We would line up at the ringing of a handbell and sing the National Anthem on Monday mornings. Anzac Day was an especially serious day when the Headmaster would give a speech and we all had to be on our best behaviour.

On a couple of occasions a fully equipped dentist's van arrived at school and checked all our teeth. The school Mother's Club used to provide cups of hot Milo during the winter. There was a small loom set up in the corridor that we children used at lunchtimes to weave scarves. We girls did sewing and fancywork, and the boys did woodwork in the sheltershed. The teachers were most concerned that our handwriting was up to standard.

I can clearly remember Head Teacher Clem Cantwell – he once asked me to dig a splinter out of his finger for him. He was like a father to me.

The Annual School Sports was always a big occasion with much rivalry, and nearly always wet. This I remember because I came second once when my runners slipped on the wet grass at the start. Gembrook held the Combined Shield for two or three years running.

And once or twice the whole school, parents and all, went on a picnic excursion to Healesville Sanctuary.

Andrew Gordon | Pupil | 1959 – 1962

School was pervaded mainly with an atmosphere of anxiety. Definite concern was felt about Bridgeman's strap, fighting the school bullies (mainly a case of losing with minimal fuss) and facing very fast cricket balls – in fact I put it about that I was very susceptible to the tricky slow bowler.

The big worry, I think for everyone, was the appearance of the white immunization card, especially as we know for a fact that the doctors, having first been to Emerald and Cockatoo, had only blunt needles left.

There were of course pleasures, like seeing Connie Pepi every day, and the marble season.

I remember one very nice student teacher who cried the day she left – a complexity at the time – I know it was a relief.



Gembrook School – Grades 5 and 6, 1961

Emma Green | Pupil | Grade 6, 1983

In grade Prep, I was happy. We had a teacher called Miss Shilton (she was later Mrs Scott after marriage). Her boyfriend came to our school often and gave us P.E. I cannot remember that much about that grade, I cannot remember anything about the school itself either.

Then in Grade 1, our teacher was called Mrs Tulk. We were in the middle portable. The school has changed a lot since then. The playground has been one of the only things that has been the same all of the time. One thing has changed in it, the see-saws have been pulled out.

Grade 2 was a pretty good year, I suppose. We had a male teacher this time, Mr Glover. He taught us some things that are now being taught to us in Grade 6.

Grade 3 helped us to learn about horses. We had Mrs Testi, a very horsey woman. It is hard to remember anything about the School them. I still write to Mrs Testi sometimes but I haven't written for awhile.

Leanne Gillies | Pupil | Grade 6, 1983

When I began school it was very much different than it is now. We had a female teacher by the name of Miss Shilton later becoming Mrs Scott. The school building was an old building, which was originally the building in which classes were held. Two portables were located about 6 metres from this building, an old toilet block was located farther down. The remainder of the space was used to build play equipment. There was a rough pot-hole netball court. A small tool shed and shelter shed were a few metres from the main building.

Two portables later became three after another one was added because of the growing number of children. A lot of pupils were staying down. Another portable was soon needed to allow the large number of children coming.

Later a library became necessary to give the students enough books to read. The old toilet block had to be demolished so portable toilets took their place. A gym was needed for P.E. in the winter so a gym was put up.

Roger Strickland | Parent | 1981

Nowadays we like to think we do things differently, and better of course, and in a sense perhaps we do. But looking over the history of this school and the efforts of both parents and pupils over the years, it seems that really we are just part of a continuing effort to try and improve things for our children.

During 1982, thru the effort of both parents and teachers, the school put on a number of functions including a Debutante Ball, an Italian Fiesta, complete with a greasy pole climbing competition and traditional Italian dances, drew crowds from as far away as Korumburra. At year's end about \$8 000 had been raised for the school. To quote from John Wells, 'Remember, we are only small, though we have a big heart!'

It should be recorded that John Wells will also be remembered for his good humour and his own big heart, although he was by no means small!

Ron Neville, Principal from 1976-81 deserves a mention. It was he who initiated the work on the Centenary Celebrations and this book back in 1979. And he also will be long remembered for his devotion to the school and his love for the children in it.

1983 has been a very significant year for the school for a number of reasons. Major renovations and upgrading of buildings have taken place, the government has announced new rules giving School Council's much more significance. And Graeme Legge has taken over as Principal, to carry the torch on.

Graeme Legge | Principal | 1983 – 1993

There was once a time when even kings couldn't read, but now, nearly all people, as children, are able to come to a school to learn to read. What a change that has been!

And looking at the Gembrook School, which has served hundreds of families in its one hundred years of operation, its history records the fascinating changes that have occurred throughout that span. Things that were 'ordinary' in past times fascinate us in the present. I believe that history is continuing process, it is being made today just as it was in the time of the Crucifixion, in 1066 in England; in Gembrook's early pioneering days, and 1883 when this school, then State School No. 2506, began.

Looking at this school – history is likely to increase our experiences of life by bringing us to feel at least a little of what it was like to have been an early fossicker in a local creek, a pioneer in untouched forest, or an early school-child in primitive conditions. History also helps us to understand ourselves better by allowing us to see what we are or what we are not. We identify ourselves by similarity of contrast when we are faced with aspects of life such as the zeal of parents who first promoted the idea of this school and who coped with their living conditions of the time.

Change is certainly with us in 1983, not only with having had major projects and maintenance work done upon the School itself (the equivalent of more than \$1 000 per child), but also with the School Council being made responsible for the educational policies and plans for its School. Most assuredly the whole school community will grow in pride with even further involvement as the second century is entered.

Karlee McMahon | Student 1991 – 1997 | Teacher 2008 – to present | Parent 2016 – to present

Gembrook Primary School has been an integral part of my life, always.

I attended GPS in the 90s as a student. Returned in 2004 to complete my first teaching rounds. Then returned again to work as a teacher in 2008. In 2016 my relationship with school changed again, to the mum of a child at GPS. I could never have sent my children to any other school. I absolutely love Gembrook Primary School.

As a student some of my most fond memories are of my teachers. Mr. Watson and Mrs. Everett being among my favourites. I remember learning my times tables signing along to Mr. Watson's guitar and I remember making my year book in Mrs. Everett's grade 5/6.

The school's physical features have changed so much in 30 years. Beautiful new classrooms to teach and learn in and wonderful play areas for our children to get their bodies moving. But, as always the amazing backdrop of the view of the hills remains.

I see Gembrook Primary School as the heart of our community. Where people feel they belong - so much so that, if they're like me, they'll never leave.

Charlotte Woehl | Pupil | 2011 - 2017

I love writing stories, reading books and of course maths. My teachers at Gembrook saw this in me and helped me grow my imagination and story writing. I have been very lucky to have great teachers at Gembrook Primary. In prep Mrs Smith decided we would be doing a project so I did mine on "La tour de Eiffel" - the Eiffel Tower. Ever since that's what all my projects have been about. I helped Miss Hutchinson to teach the class the time in grade 2. In grade two I became a writing superstar thanks to Mrs Bigwood. We would brainstorm words and put them in a sentence and use them to write our stories. That year I also got to go on my first school camp to Stringybark Lodge.

Mr Hevern had with him two guinea pigs, Snowball and Blaze which we looked after and could take home on weekends. I loved watching BTN with Mrs A. I learned a lot of really interesting facts about the world. We also did an Inquiry unit which showed us how much we really didn't know about Australian History. In 2014 I was encouraged to audition for the school production and had a main part in the school production - "The Enchanted Faraway Tree". I loved it! In grade 5, with Mr Fraser we played a lot of maths games which was fun. We were also able to race on the HPV (Human Powered Vehicles) team. I went to Wonthaggi and Maryborough racing against other schools. Our school is a sustainable school. We grow and harvest fruit and veggies, which we sell at the produce market.

2016 saw Gembrook with a new Principal Mr Fitzpatrick. He is amazing. He taught us how to play downball and improved our school in many ways – including introducing Student Voice. I had an idea to change the house points system to include other activities besides sport. I spoke to Mr Fitz who loved the idea, implemented it and always included students in the discussions. Grade 6 I became a big buddy to two preps and was an Eco Leader which meant I could look after the chooks, collect the eggs and make announcements (that was probably a highlight). Gembrook Primary gave me so many opportunities and the teachers are always amazing. I really miss it.

Matilda Child | Pupil 2016 – to present | Grade 2

I have been at Gembrook Primary School for three years. The thing I love most about school is when we have PE. PE is really fun.

There have been new students in my class since I started in Prep. I am grateful to have such lovely friends, but sorry to see beloved teachers leave our school like Mr Hervern.

I am really looking forward to Grade 2 camp. We are going Stringybark Lodge.

My favourite teacher at the moment is Mrs Smith. She is teaching us Italian. She encourages us to learn more about all things Italian.

I am looking forward to the future and all the exciting things that are waiting for me.

List of Head Teachers/ Principals

John Augustus Noble (Gembrook/Emerald 2110)	1878 – 80
Alexander P.W. Gough Gembrook Sth/Gembrook 2155	1880 -81
Joseph P.B. Frost Gembrook Sth/Gembrook 2155	1881 -83
Alfred Richards 2155 then at 2506	1883
Annie Hamilton	1883 -85
Samuel Barclay	1885 -87
John Thomas Keane	1887 – 88
Joseph H.I. Morgan	1888 – 89
Walter Bilson	1889 – 1990
William W. Gay	1900
Fairy Thomas	1900 -01
Florence H. Hall	1901 - 09
Louise C. Saville	1909
Joseph Howcroft	1909
Henry V. Roget	1909
Henry W. Gay	1910
William Pilgrim	1910 – 11
Bartholomew Scanlan	1911
Jane C. Wilson	1912 – 17
William Ruth	1918
Frederick W. Bayne	1918 – 22
Gerald Russell	1922 – 41
John P. Evans	1941 – 44
Victor H. Loudon	1944 – 47
Walter E. Hoy	1947 – 51
Alex G. Pillar (relieving)	1951
William F. Augustine	1951 – 55
Clement J. Cantwell	1955 – 60
William H. Bridgeman	1960 – 66
Alan C. Strachan	1966 – 68
William O'Connor	1969 – 71
John W. Cavanagh	1972
Leonard J. McAinch	1973 – 75
Ronald J. Neville	1976 – 81
John Wells	1981 – 82
Graeme Legge	1983 – 1993
Noel Hyndman (acting)	1993 – 1994
Stuart Symmons	1994 – 2002
Mark Carver	2002 – 2008
Kym Peterson	2008 – 2016
Brendan Fitzpatrick	2016 – to present