

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## NEWSLETTER

No. 87 MAY, 2012

### MARLO SCHOOL No. 3433 - a life in parts

This newsletter has been compiled by Lois Crisp. When Lois began looked at the history of the different Marlo school-houses, she discovered a much-travelled building.

#### Beginnings

This story begins in June 1893 when parents of school age children at Marlo first began to agitate for a school. These efforts continued for a number of years, assisted by Orbost Shire Council, but were seemingly thwarted by unfavourable reports from the District Inspector. In desperation, the residents agreed in 1898 to pay for a local person, Miss Mulfahey, daughter of landholder J Mulfahey, to teach their children.

In a further application to the Department in 1901, Duncan Cameron stated *"The parents are very pleased with Miss Mulfahey and we once and for all would like her to be the teacher at the State School"*. There was an encouraging report from (the new) District Inspector Bothroyd and the Department agreed. **Finally, on 3rd July 1902, State School No. 3433 opened.**

#### Victoria's smallest school

Measuring 15 feet (3.75 m) by 12 feet (3.65 m) and with 11 feet high walls, the school was built by Mr C W Towner on his property opposite the hotel in Argyle Street. This was leased to the Education Department by Mrs Ellen Towner for £12 per annum. The first head teacher was Mr Walter Scott.

[A plaque marking this site in Argyle Street was installed during the Marlo School Centenary Celebrations in 2002. This plaque was vandalised about three years ago and plans are for it to be reinstated].



Mr J Bull of Metung purchased the property in 1915 and ownership again changed in 1916 when Mr H M Jorgensen purchased the property and developed "Ricardo House" adjacent to the little school.

Decreased attendance in the 1930s led to the school closing on 23rd June 1933. This was the last time that this little building was used as a school.

**H J Towner b.1896, (Snowy River Mail 11th May 1977)** *"The average number of students attending up to 1908 was about 15. I remember 3 teachers, Miss Grenville, Miss Bright and Mr Scott. Mr Scott was very strict and chastised us with the cane and at times scholars were made to touch their toes and receive several cuts with a steel lined jinker whip. This was very painful. There were only 9 houses and a hotel at Marlo when I lived there. There were no shops but our needs were supplied from Orbost stores, mostly by Herbert's. We also got supplies from Lakes Entrance by boat. Several Indian hawkers came. Each had two horses, one to ride and the other to carry the three packs of merchandise. It was surprising to see how much merchandise they had. There were many boats trading from Marlo, sailing ketches and steam boats and the two small paddle steamers, the Curlip and the Cheviot towed barges on the river. We left Marlo in 1908 and moved to Lakes Entrance .....*"

### The second schoolhouse

Three years later, the school re-opened, this time in a building owned by Mr Fred Christmas at 19 Willis Avenue as a part-time school in association with Cabbage Tree Creek.

This school closed in 1940 only to re-open in 1946 before finally closing on 7th September 1954 when a new school opened on the present Marlo School site which was part of the Lighthouse Reserve.

A copy of a letter from Peg Lakeland to the Marlo News, September 1984 reads *"We were very loathe to pull down the quaint second Marlo Schoolhouse with its memories for people returning to the scene of their holidays, but building laws demanded it."*

[A plaque marking this site in Willis Avenue was installed during the School Centenary Celebrations and remains in place, although rather faded.]

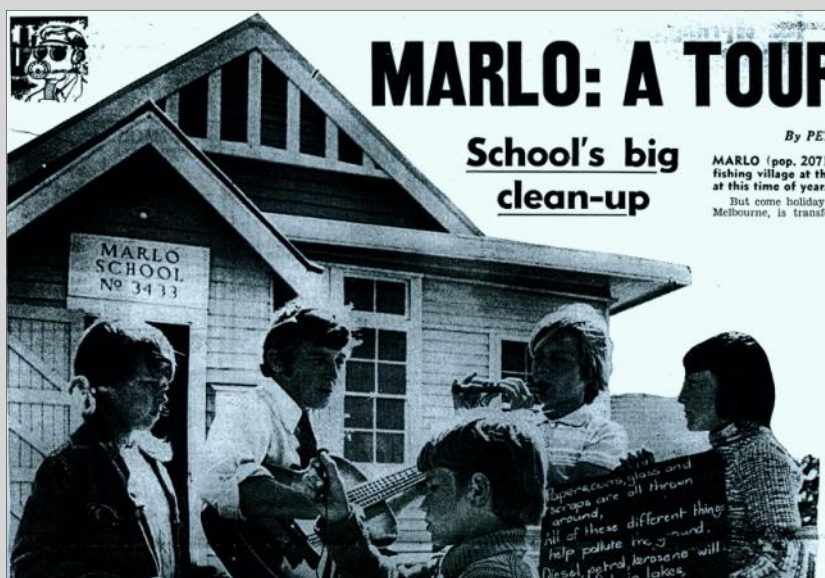


*ABOVE: School photo 1948 with teacher Mr Tom McCabe. Back row, from left: Ray Sewell, Ray Pitt, Margaret Cameron, Kath Sewell, Val Pitt, Norm Sewell, Ken Edlington. Middle row: Robert Knights, David Richardson, Mary Cameron, Ray Day, Heather Scott, Jimmy Pitt, Noel Sewell. Front row: Jimmy Alessandri, Irene Webb, Delia Alessandri, Janice Edlington, Jennifer Richardson, Delma Day, Graeme Edlington.*

## Marlo's third school - from Upper Maffra West to Marlo 1952

The Upper Maffra West schoolhouse was built in 1900 and served that district until the school was closed in 1950 when a number of one-teacher schools were amalgamated into the Boisdale Consolidated School.

In 1952, the building was transported over 200 km. to be re-erected at a cost of £1,747 on the present site in Jorgensen Street, Marlo. Alterations and restoration work were carried out by Mr R Jorgensen, costing a further £1,353/15/0. This included flooring, lining and fittings. Finally, permission was given for the pupils to move from Willis Avenue to the new school late in 1954.



*Above left:* drawing of Upper Maffra West schoolhouse.

*Above right:* This photograph is from the October 13th edition of the Melbourne Sun and shows alterations to the original school building. An entry door has been built into the front porch and a skillion-roofed addition to the right hand side. Notes in the Centenary Collection state, "the room was designed as a schoolroom with an extra flat-roofed section as a teacher's living quarter but was never used for that purpose."

The people in the photograph are Mr Jim Gunn (teacher) and from left, Carlene Law, James Castellein, Peter Short and Amanda Connelly. The photo provided good publicity for a clean-up of the Marlo area.

## Growth of Marlo in the 1970s

In 1979, as a result of a re-building project at Orbost Primary School, the old library building from Orbost was moved to Marlo to fulfil the needs of a growing school population.

As part of the upgrading of the school site in the late 1970s, the old schoolhouse from Upper West Maffra was sold to Mr Ben Saleni.

Tracking the movements of the much-travelled Upper West Maffra school building after it was pensioned off from Marlo in the late 1970s makes an interesting story in itself.

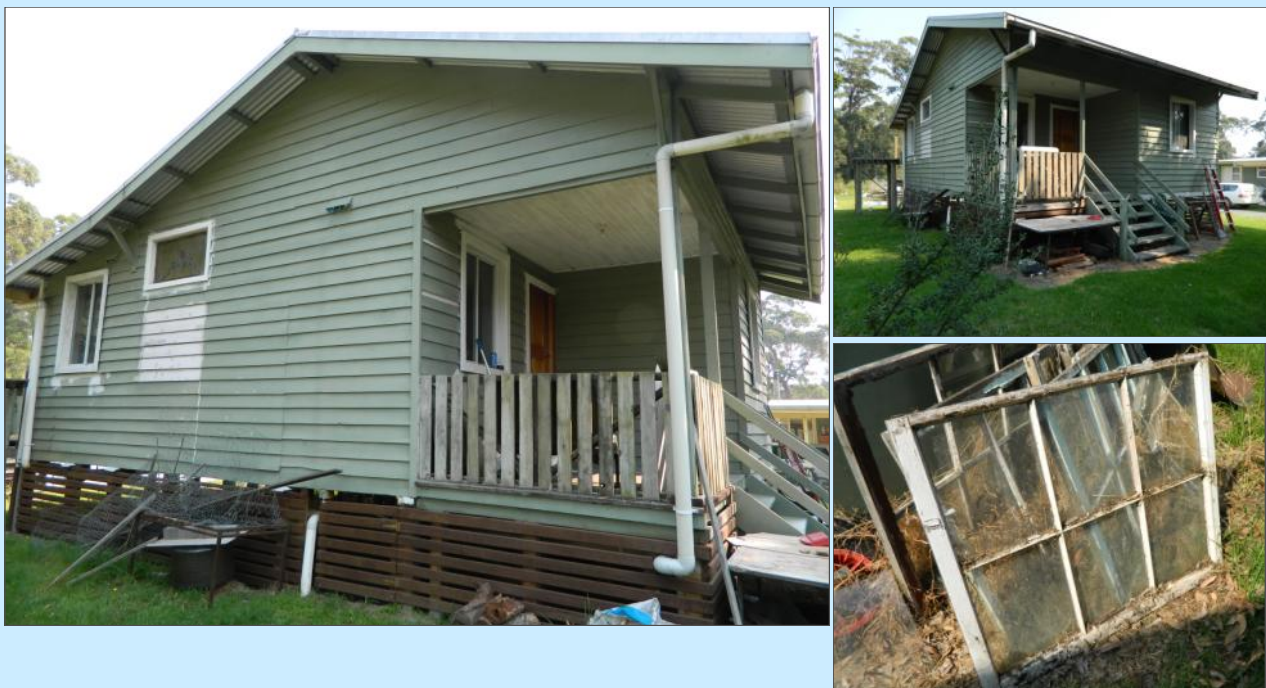


## A new life for a much travelled building

Mr Saleni moved the old building (apparently minus the flat-roofed section) to a property which he owned on the Marlo-Cabbage Tree Road. Some years later it was moved again, this time minus the porch. This second move brought it closer to Marlo and onto the property owned by Ann McCarthy at 165 Marlo-Cabbage Tree Road. A much-travelled building indeed!

This time, it was elevated onto higher stumps and a skillion extension was added to the left hand side to accommodate a kitchen and bathroom.

More recently, its present owners, Chris Allen and Lynette Greenwood have modernised the interior for the building's present use as spare accommodation for visitors.



The above photographs, taken in 2012, show the original weather-board cladding. Also visible is the tongue and groove ceiling of the original schoolhouse, seen here on the ceiling to the porch. The original school windows have been replaced and are retained on site. A notable feature missing from the original schoolhouse's design is the front entry porch. **The old Upper Maffra West school building lives on.**

## A few questions .....

**There is a 'school of thought' which says that the Upper West Maffra building was first moved from the Marlo School site to the Marlo Caravan Park and used as an office. Does anyone know? Maybe just the flat roofed skillion extension was re-erected at the Caravan Park? Efforts to contact Mr Saleni have so far been unsuccessful.**

### Sources used to compile this newsletter include:

- O S Green, MARLO The township, the plains, the cape. 1984
- Department of Education records, held by the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV)
- A 1999 Journal from the Centre for Gippsland Studies, Monash University. [Focus on Heritage](#)

Thanks also to Alma Mundy, Margaret Adams, Chris Allen and Lynette Greenwood, Faye Connelly, Penny Quin and the Marlo School staff.

- Lois Crisp, Marlo