

**Part 1:**  
**A Short History of Plympton School 1861 to 1986 by Mostyn Schneider.**

According to existing records, Plympton School came into being in 1861 as a school licensed by the Central Board of Education.

The original school, conducted in a dwelling house, was on Section 108 (across the Marion Road from the present site) on a property owned by a Mr Burnard. Mr Burnard sold the property to a Mr Weekes, who, in turn, rented it to a Mr Jay, whose wife, Sarah, was the first teacher of the Plympton School. Mr Burnard's wife, Grace, followed Sarah Jay as the teacher after two years.

There were 37 children enrolled at the school in the first year of operation (12 boys and 25 girls) and the average daily attendance was 26. In that year, the Inspector wrote: *....."Mrs Jay has succeeded in collecting a moderate number of pupils who were beyond the reach of other schools, and is instructing them with a fair amount of abilities and success" .....*

In that first year, three inspections of the school were made. Grace Burnard, who took over from Sarah Jay as Teacher-in-Charge, taught for 10 years, seeing the enrolments rise to a peak in her time, of 79 pupils in 1873. Although the average daily attendance was only 33 pupils, the house in which the school was conducted was recorded as having accommodation for a maximum number of 28 pupils.

1875 was a significant year in the Colony of South Australia because in that year, the Education Act (1875) was passed after a number of years of Parliamentary debate over the priority of Education in the young colony. This act provided for the establishment of public schools and abolished the system of licensing of schools.

From 1876-1880, Plympton School had been listed on and off as a public school; but in 1881 with the appointment of William E. Radford, a teacher-in-charge, Plympton became a public school again and has remained so to this day. In 1881, the enrolment peaked at 110 pupils, with an average attendance of 60.7.

In 1880, a contract was let for the erection of school building and residence, to be completed by 18 October, 1880. The contract price was 1090 pounds with extras costing 15 pounds 11 shillings and 9 pence. The site cost 100 pounds. The building was formally opened on 18 February 1881, by the Minister of Education of the day, the Honourable F. Basedow. This is the building currently known as the "Old Site", which has been the heart of Plympton

School for over 100 years.

The annual report for 1880 of the West Torrens School Board of Advice said: .....*"The Plympton School, now being completed and occupied, this district is well-equipped with school accommodation; and no part of it is more than two miles from a school. Consequently, the compulsory clauses can be enforced in every part of the district."* .....

William Radford continued as Head Teacher until 1892. In 1893, James Greenlees was appointed Head Teacher on the Plympton School, now having an average attendance of 80.6.

James Greenlees was a keen gardener among other talents ( having been also at various times a farm labourer and a clerk of the Aldinga District Council) and before long, the school became noted for its gardening and seed production. Lady Tennyson, (wife of the Governor) took great interest in the school, visiting the school show in 1902. Inspectors from New Zealand and all the states, visited the school to observe the children at work. Many show prizes were taken by the School (especially in roses and chrysanthemums) and the production of large quantities of onions provided a reliable income to fund the school activities.

In 1912, John Jones was appointed head teacher following the retirement of James Greenlees; and began a twenty year period as head, ranging from pre-World War I days to the time of the Great Depression.

Over the next 20 years, a number of headmasters of note led the school until the early 1950s when the post-war "baby boom" hit primary schools. Pupil numbers soared and teachers and accommodation were scarce. Classes of 50-60 children were not uncommon in that era.

In 1951, a separate infant school was established under the leadership of Alison F. Taylor to help cope with the influx. A new infant school building was erected across Chapel Street in the early 1950s to replace the accumulation of "temporary buildings". This new building was officially opened on 3 May 1957, by the Honourable Baden Pattinson, Minister of Education of the day. This section of the Plympton School catered for the 5-7-year-olds for over two decades until it was disestablished in 1972, owing to falling enrolments. In 1958 and 1959, the combined school attendance exceeded 1000 children, peaking in 1959 at 1024.

From 1960 onwards, the numbers at the Plympton School began to fall away - initially because of the opening of new schools at Forbes (1952) and Netley; and subsequently following a State-wide pattern of falling enrolments. In 1972, the Plympton Infant School was finally disestablished and the Plympton School became again a single school catering for primary children grades 1-7.

Over the life of the school, the following parent bodies supported the school, fundraised, and in the latter years, contributed towards decision-making:

School Auxiliary, Mothers' Club, Welfare Club, Parents' Club, School Committee, School Council.

One of the functions begun at the school by these bodies grew to be well-known in Adelaide. In 1950s (2 November) a Guy Fawkes celebration fireworks evening was held and this developed over the years into the annual fundraiser at Plympton School known as the "Fun, Fair and Fireworks". This soon began to return up to 2000 pounds each year, which was a very large sum in those days. After almost 20 years of operation, the "F, F and F" ceased to be.

In 1964, the parent bodies decided to work together on the major project of providing a swimming pool for the children. This was completed by 1967 and the pool was subsequently tiled. Later, a garden area was established about the pool and toilets and change rooms were added. Hundreds of children have benefited from these facilities.

At last, in the late 1970s, after almost 18 years of written requests and lobbying, the long overdue redevelopment of the Plympton Primary School was begun. The removal of all prefabricated buildings and the close of Owen and Chapel streets was the start. The redevelopment continued from 1979-1981 and the "new" school was officially opened by the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Harold Allison, on 3 April 1982.

## **Part 2: Plympton Primary School 1987 to 2001 by Simon Dawson.**

Since that time enrolments continued to fall and reached a low of 205 in 1990. With the appointment of a new principal, Simon Dawson, in 1991, the School Council embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign aimed at addressing the problem of falling enrolments. Following the introduction of a number of changes, enrolments climbed dramatically during the 1990's.

Dark clouds of doom descended over the school with the establishment of the Anzac Cluster Review in 1995, when we were informed that at least two local schools would close. As Plympton Primary was on this list, the School Council

embarked on a well planned campaign aimed at keeping the school open. The battle which went on for over a year, involving politicians at the highest level was successful. The long term future of the school once again appeared secure.

By 1997 enrolments had reached 365 which was one of the highest growth rates recorded by an Adelaide school since the 1960's. At this stage the Government held discussions with the School Council and an enrolment ceiling of 350 was placed on the school.

Between 1993 and 2001, \$180,000 was spent on a wide range of improvements which included air conditioning and the establishment of a computer suite in 1999. In 2000, staff member, Mr Jeff Rosewall, successfully applied for a \$20,000 Federation Grant to establish a Federation Walkway through the school. This project formed an important part of the school's 140th birthday celebrations which were held on 27th October 2001. The addition of verandahs and the class garden beds certainly enhanced the appearance of the school.

In July 2001 with 73 reception students enrolled for that year the Government once again stepped in and placed a freeze on future enrolments until a review was completed. With this healthy increase in enrolments the school should continue to prosper as it enters the new millenium. After 10 years as Principal Simon Dawson left the school at the end of 2001.

### **Part 3: Plympton Primary School 2002 to 2008 by Geoff Higgins.**

In 2002, a new principal, Geoff Higgins was appointed to Plympton Primary School, replacing Mr Simon Dawson who had been at the school for the previous 10 years. Geoff was keen to ensure that current programs were maintained and that the school continued with its current strategic directions as set out in the 1999 – 2001 School Development Plan.

At the beginning of 2002, the Department of Children Services (DECS) called for schools to register an interest in participating in a school external review process. Plympton Primary School saw an opportunity to review its school operations with outside support. DECS acquiesced and two external reviewers from the University of Melbourne were appointed to conduct an external review of the school.

As part of this review, representative students from the Student Representative Council, parents/caregivers and staff involved with the School Council and/or the council's Education Committee and finally, selected staff from junior, middle and upper primary classes were interviewed by the reviewers. Geoff initiated this process because he was keen to ensure that information about the review came from across the school community rather

than just from the school principal, especially given that he was new to the school. A similar approach to school reviews had been taken by the now defunct Education review Unit in South Australian schools. [It was interesting to note that the reviewers had conducted most of their previous reviews in Victoria, solely with school principals.] The intention was to use the review information to provide future direction for Plympton Primary School.

As a consequence of the review, the school community identified a set of priorities for the school community, along with a series of recommendations that would support the attainment of these priorities over the following 3 years (2002-2004). The priorities were:

1. That the school community investigates ways to support the sophisticated use of information and communication technologies in the teaching and learning program
2. That the school consolidates implementation of Program Achieve and Thinking Skills across Reception to year 7 and develop an R – 7 Active for Life Program
3. The school community investigates ways to raise the profile of performing arts
4. That the school ensures that all staff members are using SACSA as a planning framework within the next 3 years through: the development of a plan for implementation of SACSA across pre-school through to Year 7; and, provision of appropriate professional development
5. To improve students' numeracy and literacy learning outcomes and to further develop identification and intervention structures to support ALL students with special learning needs

This planning process ensured that the school community could see that current educational programs would continue, albeit with some modification despite a change in school leadership. For instance the sustainable environment project started with the 2001 Federation Walkway and Re-forestation of garden areas was further developed, Information and Communications Technology remained a focus program across R-7 etc. One significant change that was made during 2004 was the appointment of a part-time school counsellor to the school for 2 years, courtesy of a government commitment to increase the number of counsellors in public primary schools. This has been a valuable resource, enabling the school to support a large number of individual students and families in need of a site based counselling service, to review and improve our school's anti bullying and harassment policy and associated programs, to support our current our Program Achieve program and to prepare for the implementation of a Whole School Drug Strategy Plan in 2005.

During 2004, a School Council Planning Committee took on the responsibility of developing a new 2005-2007 Plympton Primary School Development Plan

in consultation with staff, students and parents/caregivers. This plan is closely aligned with the DECS Strategic Plans and the District Site Learning Plans. It will provide strategic direction for the next 3 years.