

## The Old School Report

February 2021

### Forthcoming events:

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>:** February meeting. 2 pm in the William Dawes room of the Merimbula RSL. Neil will speak about the life of Albert Aspinall, the architect of the Greencape Lighthouse. Neil's talk will be followed by a guided tour of the revamped Museum by Liz.

**February 28<sup>th</sup>:** 1.30 pm. Re-opening of the Museum to the general public. Afternoon tea will be provided.

### Re-opening the Museum

The Museum will re-open to the public on Sunday at 1.30 pm. Entry will be free though all donations will be gratefully accepted. Afternoon tea will be provided. All Covid regulations will be followed. Visitors must register and must sanitise their hands and maintain social distancing.

The Museum has been extensively remodelled. Angela and Liz have worked tirelessly and effectively to create new displays which illustrate the history of the area from the time of the first inhabitants to the closure of the school in 1946. The working bees held each Tuesday played an important part in readying the Museum for the re-opening and thanks are due to those who contributed.

Visits to the Museum in March by various groups have been planned.

### The Koala Crisis

#### **Then:**

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, the NRMA'S magazine *Open Road* ran an article by Mr Frank L. Edward, secretary of the Koala Club of Australia. Mr Edward stated that *In the first quarter of this century probably 10 million koalas were shot for their pelts. So many koalas have been destroyed that the number of those which remain may or may not now reach a five-figure total.*

*Diseases, destruction of food trees, soil erosion and consequent food deficiencies in gum leaves, dogs, dingoes, the cat-gone-wild, bush fires and the imported European fox are all taking a relentless toll.* (NRMA, *Open Road*, January/February 2021, p10).

#### **And now?**

In April 2012, the Australian Government declared the Koala as '**VULNERABLE**' under the Federal EPBC Act in New South Wales, the Act and Queensland. Victoria and South Australia were excluded from the listing. The AKF (Australian Koala Foundation) believes that the Koala should have been listed in all States. Research conducted by the AKF strongly suggests the Koala's conservation status should be upgraded to "**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**" in the South East Queensland Bioregion as the Queensland Minister for the Environment has declared them to be "functionally extinct".

Koalas are in serious decline suffering from the effects of habitat destruction, domestic dog attacks, bushfires and road accidents. The Australian Koala Foundation estimates that there are less than 100,000 Koalas left in the wild, possibly as few as 43,000.

It is the AKF's view that is no legislation that effectively and/or consistently protects Koala habitat anywhere within Australia, not necessarily because the legislation does not exist, but because there is not always the political will to adequately resource, implement, police and enforce such legislation.

That is why the AKF wants a Koala Protection Act. (<https://www.savethekoala.com/about-koalas/koala-endangered-or-not>).

The *Open Road* article concludes: *It's depressing that, more than 80 years later, the fight to save the koala from extinction continues.* (NRMA, *Open Road*, p10).

### The Old School 1904-1928

(The author is indebted for the following information to M G Osmond's *The Provision of Educational Services and Educational Leadership to Merimbula School 1870-1939*, January, 1989, pp 107-130).

The last Old School Report took the history of Merimbula Public School to the year 1904, when the headmaster, Mr Eggins, had to retire due to illness. His place was taken in 1905 by Edward Templeton whose appointment coincided with the introduction of a new primary school syllabus which was more prescriptive than previous syllabi. Classes were reorganised to meet the needs of the new syllabus and holiday times were changed.

Osmond states that *according to several ex-pupils he (Templeton) conducted the school along unbending military lines. Some ex-pupils described as an "arrogant bastard" .....(p113).* Osmond adds that the use of the cane to solve discipline problems seems to have been fairly frequent and concludes that *it is disturbing that through twenty-three inspections he appears not to have gained any increase in classification (p114).*

In 1915, Templeton ran afoul of the powerful Munn family. In 1914, the Post-Master General at Goulburn proposed to move the Merimbula Post Office to the public school and asked Templeton to take on the role of Post Master for Merimbula. Since the Munn family had leased the Post Office for forty-nine years, this suggestion was bound to cause trouble. In 1915, Armstrong Munn, the 75-year-old head of the family organised a petition protesting the relocation of the Post Office and the appointment of Templeton as Post Master. He forwarded the petition, along with a letter of complaint to the NSW Director of Education.

Templeton wrote to the Department of Education declaring that he had not sought the position and had signed no agreement. In March 1915, the decision to change the location and director of the Post Office was revoked.

The revocation did not end Templeton's troubles with Munn, who sent a second petition and a letter to Inspector Back at Bega, calling for Templeton's removal on the grounds of *the progress, or non-progress in the education of our children* (p117). However, Reverend Robert Upjohn of Pambula wrote to Inspector Back saying:

*I consider the school one of the best managed in the district, with no superior.*

Upjohn claimed that *The recent petition is recognised as being the outcome of spite and is disputed by all outside the particular people who signed it. Merimbula is practically a private town owned by A. L. Munn and most of the names on the petition are his tenants.....(p119).*

The enquiry into Templeton's management of the school took place on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1915 in the classroom at Merimbula school. Surprisingly, Munn declined to give evidence and a number of parents spoke in Templeton's defence. Inspector Back decided in Templeton's favour, believing that the whole incident had been engineered by Munn to punish Templeton for the Post Office incident. Templeton remained in his position as teacher at the school until 1928.

Munn's financial empire collapsed because of over- extension of investments and an expensive law case in the USA. In 1917, Munn's Maizena Manufactory closed. Armstrong Munn died in a Sydney nursing home in 1932.