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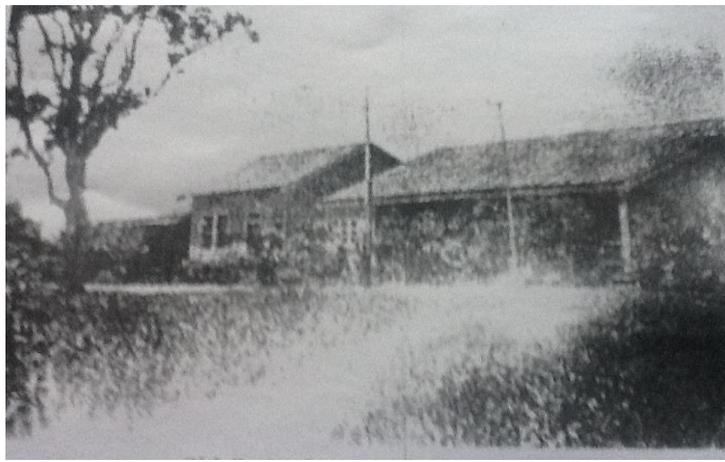
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MARKS POINT / PELICAN FLAT SCHOOL

Remember the days of the old schoolyard, We used to laugh a lot...we had simplicity...



A glimpse of the past:

The old school bell is rung by hand to mark different times of the day. Linen maps adorn plain walls. You slide into your seat as they can't be moved. Neat writing is practised on slates – a small blackboard in a wooden frame. Pencils are used until 3rd class; then ink pens. Ink wells are filled on Monday morning, after mixing up powder; then collected and cleaned Friday afternoon. Writing is done by pens with nibs. It is a good idea to lick the new nibs as they seem to hold the ink better. You have to be careful not to have too much ink or nibs get blocked. The teacher can only give

Marks Point PS, 1938. Teacher – Miss Perkins. Kinder – 2nd class

chalk and talk lessons. You learn times tables and spelling by chanting them repeatedly. Bad behaviour is discouraged by the cane. There are no video games or TVs – you have to make do with what you have, and play things like marbles, skipping ropes and hopscotch in the school yard.



Old school days 1
Marks Point PS 2-3
Memories 3-4



Kindly supporting the community –
including Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club; this edition of HELM newsletter.

4972 1066 - NOW AT SWANSEA!
SWANSEA PLAZA ARCADE
Near Coles and Blondies.



Not for oneself but the school

1938 – 1955: Tool shed, lunch shed, wash shed with seating in front;
Transition & 1st class; 2nd class; 5th & 6th class; 3rd & 4th class buildings.



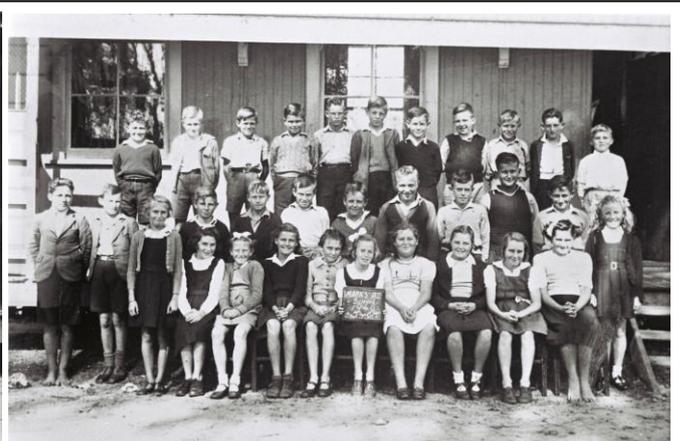
The strong community spirit of Pelican Flat, Marks Point and Blacksmiths is very evident in the long battle to obtain schools for these areas. Before 1938 the children who were eligible for school either went to Swansea or Belmont. As these townships slowly expanded it became apparent that at least one additional school was needed to ease the burden of the influx of children to the Swansea and Belmont schools. It would have to be built in a central position to serve the three townships.

In 1921 the struggle began with dozens of letters being forwarded to the Department of Education. All were rejected, the reason given being insufficient numbers of children. Nonetheless, in 1925 it was agreed that crossing the Swansea bridge was hazardous for children of a tender age, so a policeman was assigned to the bridge during school hours for their protection. Rowing across Swansea Channel was considered far too dangerous, unless it was a very calm day.

The persistence of these parents and citizens of Marks Point, Pelican Flat and Blacksmiths was finally rewarded in 1935 - permission was granted for a school to service the combined area. The first site considered was the area of Mr E Hadley's piggery, (approximately Faymax Street) but was rejected due to the land being flood prone. The second site was on Soldiers Road but again deemed unsuitable due to being flood prone. In 1937 a third site was finally agreed upon, now known as the southern corner of Awakabal Ave and Pacific Highway, Blacksmiths; opposite Soldiers Road. This area was chosen as it was central to the areas it was to serve. The name of the school selected was "Marks Point Public School". The land was cleared, and two portable classrooms were transported from Cessnock and erected on site. The school opened at the commencement of the 1938 school year with an enrolment of 170 pupils drawn from the existing schools of Swansea and Belmont. Mr Austin Peter Hayes was the first headmaster (1938-1947) and taught 3rd 4th 5th and 6th classes. Miss Josephine Perkins, in her first teaching position, took Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd classes. Lighting was by hurricane lamps. It soon became apparent that an additional classroom was needed due to overcrowding. More land was cleared to help keep down ticks, snakes and sandflies; and so that a third classroom could be transferred from Belmont School ready for use in 1939. The third teacher assigned to the school was Mr David Menteith. Electricity became available to the school during that year.



Senior students Marks Point Public School



5th and 6th class Marks Point Public School, 1940

The children's parents came from all walks of life – labourers, butchers, shopkeepers, tram drivers, carrier, steelworkers, clerks, brickworks, dealer, bricklayer, salesman, domestic, carpenters, electrician, shunter, ice works manager, pattern maker, moulder, shiftsman, engineer, boilermaker, chemistry assistant. The fathers of many children were employed at the nearby mines. At times there were stoppages and disputes resulting in lack of wages for the men involved, therefore affecting their families and businesses in the area. During these times the parents became concerned about the health and welfare of the students. They decided to set up a "Soup Kitchen Committee" to provide the children with a nourishing meal at lunchtime. A large fuel fired copper was installed in the school yard. The men would light the fire while the women prepared the vegetables. The local butcher provided meat, the greengrocer the vegetables and the grocer other ingredients. The mothers cooked a delicious soup which they doled out at lunchtime to make sure every child had a nourishing lunch. Each child had to bring their own mug. This was the main meal of the day for some children.

As the population grew, another classroom was added, making four in total. The school had its name changed from Marks Point Public School to Pelican Flats Public School on 1st July 1950. The reason given was that the school was in the "Pelican Flat" postal area. Even going back to 1938/1939 there were difficulties about which name to use for the school – some records were stamped "Marks Point" others "Pelican Flats".

January 1954 saw the establishment of yet another school, this time at Marks Point itself. This school would serve the needs of the Marks Point and Belmont South areas.

The original old school remained in use on the highway site until September 1955, when the school children were transferred to the present- day site at Pelican Flat where a new school was built. It would still keep the name of Pelican Flat Public School. The development of more housing blocks in the Blacksmiths and Pelican area resulted in a large increase in enrolments at this school.

To accommodate the overflow, Blacksmiths Community Hall was utilised for the older pupils until the completion of the new school – Blacksmiths Public School, which opened 11th September, 1962. These extra classes were still officially a part of Pelican School until then. The pupils would work on wooden benches; and at the end of the day all their books and equipment had to be put away in lockers as the hall was used for all sorts of other activities. The children of some families were split between the two sites. Three primary schools would now serve the educational needs of the children living in the Marks Point, Pelican and Blacksmiths area.

MEMORIES OF MARKS POINT SCHOOL/PELICAN SCHOOL 1938-1945.

"Life was much simpler then. Our little school was on a large block of land that faced the highway, opposite Soldiers Rd. Only a small part at the highway end was cleared for the school to be built – a couple of classrooms, no electricity. I was enrolled on 14th February, and remember when the shelter shed was built and 2 bubblers installed – the ultimate luxury.

I can remember Austin Peter Hayes, our wonderful Headmaster. He always signed his full name in copperplate handwriting. Mr Hayes knew all his children personally and had time to talk to them. The school seemed to run smoothly without too many rules and regulations with Mr Hayes gentle guidance. If you didn't wear shoes to school (and many boys chose not to) it didn't matter. You could play footy or whatever you wanted to, provided it was within the rule of acceptable behaviour. There weren't too many rules about where or when. As a child I had a small black and white fox terrier dog named Nippy. Nippy and I were inseparable and going to school and leaving Nippy behind became somewhat of a problem. I cried. Nippy, no matter how many times he was told to go home, would follow me to school. For several weeks Nippy was an unwelcome guest and I would be asked to keep him at home the next day. After several weeks of failure, Mr Hayes thought that seeing our school was in the middle of the bush, it might be OK to have a dog around that liked catching snakes. Nippy became a welcome guest and rode to school in my bicycle basket each day.

One of the teachers - Mr Fitzsimmons, a pleasant young man, could play the piano accordion. On the occasion of his cat having kittens, he invited the class to catch a bus to Belmont to see them on a Saturday morning, provided we had our parents' permission. Quite a large group of us set out on this exciting outing.

Most of my time at Pelican School was during the period of World War II. Occasionally we would do a practise in preparation for an enemy air raid by seeing how quickly we could hide under our desks. But as the war

ground on, it got closer to home and Mr Hayes thought his children needed more protection. He called a meeting on a Wednesday night. Our families walked to the school trying not to show too much light with our torches due to the blackouts. We lit the kerosene lights hanging on the classroom walls; after covering the windows. It was agreed two split trenches would be built and a working bee was called for the next Saturday. Lots of dads turned up, as there were many coal miners. (Coal mining was an exempt industry during the war and coal miners did not have to join the army.) They soon made quick work of digging out a couple of long trenches. They chopped down a couple of cabbage tree palms, split the trunks and used them to shore up the walls. Before lunchtime Saturday, the job was finished. That's how things were done in the "old days". No Council permits, no environmental study, no begging the Government to build it. Just get in and do it yourself. *Transport.* Almost everybody rode a bike to school or walked. The Blacksmiths locals would all call on each other, and usually arrive en masse. If it was a very cold and rainy day, we would catch a bus. Sometimes I rode my bike home for lunch. It only took a few minutes. Mum would have my lunch ready, and we would both listen to "Blue Hills" together, then peddle back to school. In the afternoon the bus came at 3.25pm; but school did not end till 3.30pm. The problem was easily solved at the local level— we went back from lunch 5 minutes early and ended our school day in time to catch the bus home.

Coincidentally this bus diverted on its way to Swansea via the John Darling Colliery to collect coal miners finishing their shift for the day before it reached the school. So, our dads were already on board the same bus. It was a happy reunion as we sat on their knees for a ride home. The bus was always packed.

Tuck shops. (or lack of them). We didn't have a tuck shop, but Mrs Hadow, whose solitary house was on the other side of the highway, directly opposite the school, made snacks to sell. Her battered savs were great! But the powers that be soon decided it was too dangerous for little kids to be crossing the highway constantly, and it was put off limits and closed. We didn't starve though. McEwen's Pie truck came a couple of days a week with wonderful hot pies and cream buns. Lots of schools later had toffee days. (I was always making toffee for my kids to take to school.) But we never did. You needed coupons for sugar during the war years due to rationing; and there was never enough to go around.

We raised money by having little concerts. We paid 1 penny to go in and then anyone who wanted to, sang. I remember my friend and I doing a song and dance routine to meagre praise. She sang "Elmer's tune" – (a hit on the charts recorded by Glenn Miller and his Orchestra) because her name was Elma. I think we were raising money for Red Cross war effort. Junior Red Cross was a big thing in my day, and a lot of girls belonged to it. I did; and I remember having a white veil with a red cross on it. I also remember being a member of the "Gould League of bird lovers". Their cards arrived once a year with pictures of birds on them and it was almost a given that you would buy one.

I can picture a series of flashbacks. Banking was on a Monday with my Commonwealth Bank book. The school magazine arrived monthly and I can still remember how excited I was to read about Bib and Bub and the bad, bold Banksia men. I don't remember a lot of sport, but we did a lot of PE and calisthenics – running on the spot, touching our toes. We tried to grow victory gardens, but it was hard work for little kids making gardens in what was natural bush.

I still reminisce about what luxury it was sitting under a huge stand of Cabbage tree palms. Some fathers had made seats by just nailing planks to the tree trunks. The cooling breeze from the beach was magic. We knew even at that age, what lucky kids we were to receive our education in such a happy place.

Many thanks to our sources of information and memories – 1938 enrolments: Kevin Meaker, Joan Nott.

Disclaimer

: Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this newsletter, however, the accuracy of statements or opinions expressed in articles cannot be guaranteed.

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WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS FOR MORE HERITAGE STORIES!!!