

Before Bayles Regional Primary School...

The Koo Wee Rup Swamp, as it once existed, was an area dominated by tea tree, mud and water, and the first attempts by white man to cross it in the 1820s ended in failure.

Many early attempts to drain the swamp were only partially successful and took a backward step each time there was heavy rainfall. After many, many years of trial and error, and extraordinary work by engineer Carlo Catani, the waters that once flowed from the surrounding hills to create a great swamp were controlled by a drainage system that provided flood protection to the entire district. (for detailed info read 'From Swampland to Farmland' by David Roberts)

As the drainage improved, the land of the K.W.R. swamp was proving to be some of the best farmland in Victoria and demand from the city for fresh produce increased dramatically. The railways were the transport system of the day and it became increasingly obvious that a line should be built to service 'The Swamp'.

Construction of a new railway line from Koo Wee Rup to Strzelecki began just before the outbreak of World War One. The first station from K.W.R. *was* to be named Yallock, but in fact was named 'Bayles' to honour the memory of Fred Bayles, the first member of the Railway Construction Branch to be killed in active service. Fred had no direct connection with Bayles but had worked as a clerk for the railway company after emigrating from England and then failing at a farming venture at Tyabb. He died at Gallipoli in 1915. His story is remembered often in the words of the School Song – "Call it Bayles they said, In honour of Fred, Who died at Gallipoli"

The township grew up around the railway station which continued to serve the community until 1959 when the line was closed. The dismantled station site became overgrown but in 1974 the local community transformed it into the Bayles Fauna Park which is still visited by locals and tourists today.

As the township grew, there was an increasing need for a school. Yallock School (in School Road, Bayles) had opened in 1902 and Catani School had opened only a few miles to the east in 1923. Schools were also operating at Cora Lynn, Koo Wee Rup and Koo Wee Rup North. Early applications in 1922 and 1924 for a school in Bayles were rejected, on the grounds that the area was sufficiently well served by existing schools, but in 1927 the District Inspector recommended the establishment of a full time school in Bayles. On September 10th 1928 Bayles Primary School, 4374, opened its doors for classes and was 'officially' opened in the November. A shelter shed was erected the following year. (Is this now the chook shed, or was it destroyed in the 1970 fire?). The school was connected to electricity in 1941, and a school residence was erected, and occupied by the head-teacher, in May 1950. By this time the pupil enrolment had outgrown the one classroom, but requests for a further room were not met until 1953. The enrolment hovered around the 50 mark for several years.

In examining the history of Bayles Primary School, one main event stands out – the fire of May 29th 1970. Starting early in the morning, the fire totally destroyed the two weatherboard classrooms. It is believed to have started near the ‘Warmray’ heater in the infant room, although there was never any *definite* proof of the cause. For the following year, classes were held in the Bayles Public Hall under the guidance of Head-teacher, Garry Robbins, and infant teacher, a tiny but formidable Mrs Marie Egan.



Photo - 1970. Teachers: Garry Robbins and Marie Egan.

Back Row: Ross McFarlane, Wesley Miller, Peter Connell, Greg Shaw, Neville Reid, Darrell Wilkinson, Paul Renehan

Next Row: John Bethune, Rodney Stephenson, Craig Miller, Trevor Shaw, David Parsons, Wayne Walker, Geoffrey Gardner,

Next Row: Glenys Walker, Jenny Miller, Wendy McFarlane, Robyn Renehan, Leonie Revell, Karen Gardner, Wendy Scadden, Shelley McMaster

Front Row: Rhonda Gardner, Karen Reid, Karen Robbins, Patricia Ellaway, Kathy Evans, Kerry Scadden, Gaye Evans, Joy McFarlane, Glenda Stephenson.

Mrs Egan had taken up a position at the school in 1929 as Miss De Frocq and had been there ever since. She, in fact, retired at the end of 1970, before the new school was complete, and passed away less than three years later. Meanwhile, the local community worked hard at fundraising for the new school which was built on the old site and occupied in June 1971. The teachers were Mr Robbins and Miss Lucy Boekel (who became Lucy Garvey and who still lives at Modella) who were in charge of 42 pupils.

The school celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1978, by which time the third generation of local families was beginning to enter the school and the enrolment was approaching 60.

Bayles School (and Bayles Regional) was well known for its floats in local festivals, a tradition which continued until recent years when the Koo Wee Rup Potato Festival was discontinued. The final festival was held in the 2000.

Another highlight of the 'old' Bayles School – one which is still reminisced over at local gatherings - was the school float which won Best Float at the Koo Wee Rup Potato Festival and the Pakenham Yakkerboo Festival in 1982, and then went on to win Best Community Float at Moomba in 1983. The float, entitled 'Hagar and the Vikings', was built by local farming families, some of whose grandchildren are currently at the school.

Bayles float won at Moomba

Victoria's "Best Community Float" in last week's Moomba parade through Melbourne was entered by the small township of Bayles.

Below: Proudly holding aloft the "Bayles" sign Helen Lynch (President of the school parents club) and Ann Huntington (secretary) prepare to move off from the marshalling zone.

Bottom: The longboat takes part in the parade at the top of Swanston Street.

Those who watched the Moomba parade on television may have wondered how mighty Hagar and his Viking longship from the little Bayles school could have produced such a stunning effect.

There was a low budget — farm materials were used including the horns of cows and the tassels from the tails of bulls.

But the secret of the success was in the heart of the small town — a priceless commodity called community spirit.

Along with its lovely fauna park and heroic CFA, Bayles gives whole hearted support to its local primary school.

Many long hours were spent up in Barry Reid's shed where Hagar and his longship were restructured after winning both the Kooweerup Potato Festival and Pakenham Yakkerboo's top awards last year. It was "Moomba or Bust."

The school theme song, honoring the name of Gallipoli hero Fred Bayles, resounded through the bus as a fully-dressed horde of Vikings rode to join their lovingly-built ship in the early hours of Monday morning, to become the life and soul of the marshalling zone at the top end of the City.

These were the same men who had unhesitating-



The Birth of Bayles Regional Primary School

Until 1994 Bayles Regional Primary School, 5421, did not exist! In 1993 Bayles Primary, 4374, was a school of three classes and about 40 pupils. Only a few kilometres down the road at Catani, another primary school with two grades and two permanent teachers was servicing 30 pupils. Political moves by the Premier Jeff Kennett saw the schools being forced to close. Both schools and their communities fought a hard battle to retain their independent identities but it became clear that the only options were to be forcibly closed or agree to 'merge' on one site. Closure

would have seen the pupils and school amenities scattered amongst many other schools but, by agreeing to merge, all pupils were given the chance to stay together and all school buildings and equipment became part of the new school. Choosing which site should remain open wasn't easy as both were excellent sites – but Bayles was on the direct bus route for secondary college buses so the new school was established there.

Staffing for the new school came from the existing permanent staff – as luck would have it, the Bayles Head-teacher, Dick Ryland was in a temporary position and did not wish to lead the new school, so John Coupe, Head-teacher of Catani, was the logical choice. Rieky Moore from Catani and Julie Cosnett from Bayles became the other two classroom teachers (head-teacher was also a class teacher) and Jane Coupe, who had been a shared specialist at Bayles, Catani, Modella and Iona schools, became the part time specialist teacher. The name for the new school was not chosen immediately but suggestions were called for from the school families and then a vote was taken – Bayles Regional Primary School was born.

The process of merging the two schools for the beginning of the 1994 school year was done on a shoestring budget of \$35,000 using local tradesmen. For this, the staff room and large shed (sub-shed) were moved in from Catani, the toilets were extended, walkways were built, the Modella school building was moved in and

attached to the Bayles single classroom, all equipment was shifted from Catani, the carpark was extended and so on and so on. Of all the merged schools that opened that year, Bayles (Regional) was the most well-prepared for the new school year. The school council was exceptionally large, being comprised of all previous school councillors of both schools. The enrolment remained steady at just over 70 for the next two years.

A brand new school sign – thanks to grade six

Bayles Regional Primary School now has a brand new sign at the front of the school thanks to the efforts of a group of grade six students.

The students, with help from teacher Jane Coupe, have spent several weeks on the project and last week's unveiling reflected their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment.

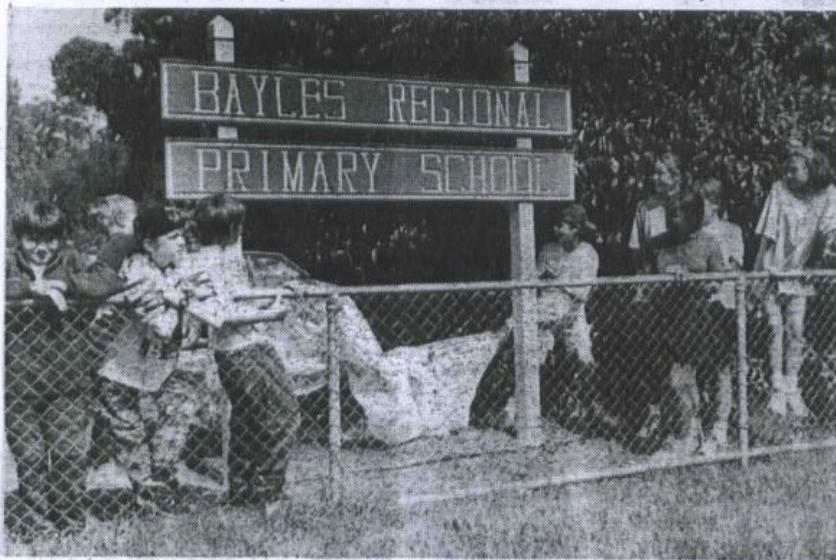
According to Jane, the children were responsible for everything from selecting the timber and paint through to digging post holes and nailing on the boards.

"The children did a great job and we are all very proud of their efforts," she said. "Soon after taking on the project, the group looked at several other signs in the area, visited a timber yard, gave a quote to school council and then began

work."

Just about the only thing the students didn't do was the engraving of the letters – which was cheerfully taken over by Mr Ian Speight from Home Hardware, Koowereup.

"The children traced the letters for the name onto the timber and Mr Speight made the grooves. It was a great learning experience for the children."



Grade six students at Bayles Regional Primary School proudly unveil the school's new sign. Included in the photo are Chris Coupe, John Douglas, Mathew Shaw-Smith, Damien Miles, Gavin Hayward, Michael Ingham, Clint Hockley, Elizabeth Secoulidis, Danielle Dubois, Sarah Moore and Lisa Miles. Absent: Jodie Robertson.

Bayles Regional Primary School was without a sign until the first term of 1995 when the grade sixes designed, built and erected this sign as a science and technology project. It was repainted in blue and white at the beginning of 2006.

During 1996, there was a change in Head-teacher as the position became that of Principal. A period of instability followed and the numbers took a dive to below 50. When Julie Luiten was appointed to lead the school from 1999, she made the Principal position non-teaching and was able to concentrate efforts on building up the school profile. Numbers climbed again into the seventies and the school gained an excellent reputation for both its innovative curriculum and its student welfare policies. The school had now received a major PRMS (Physical Resource Management System) upgrade of facilities – a new administration block from the converted Modella building, a new brick toilet block, new fencing, an update of painting and so on.. The new buildings were officially opened by Jan Lake, the Regional Director on October 20th, 2000. The children performed a rap song - PRMS Rap – before the speeches, the ribbon cutting and the sharing of a cake.

PRMS RAP

In nineteen hundred and ninety nine
We were proud of our school, we thought it fine.
And little did we know our lucky fate
When up pulled a car with government plates.

Out got the men with the clipboard,
Took a long look around,
“We think you need upgrading
Look at the things we’ve found:

“Your fences were made by farmers,
To keep their cattle out,
You need some new beaut chain-mesh,
Of that there is no doubt.
Your car park's far too squeezey,
No room to sling a cat,
You need more space for motor cars,
We're very sure of that.”

“Well, we like our school as it is
But if you really insist.....”

“Your carpets are in tatters,
All frayed and almost bare,
We'll rip them up and replace them,
You'll feel you're walking on air.
Now let's look at your old heaters,
Which animals did Noah keep warm?
We'll give you state - of - the - art ones,
No shivering in the storm.”

“Well, we like our school as it is,
But if you really insist.....”



Principal Julie Luiten with the celebratory cake which was shared by staff and students.

“Your blackboards are rather shocking,
All pitted, scratched and marked,
We'll put up new magnetic ones,
They'll be a work of art.
And lets have brand new pinboards,
In colours to match the rest.
We'll choose some bright new paintwork,
We'll only have the best”

“Well, we like our school as it is
But if you really insist.....”



“We'll fix the doors and windows,
The ones that need attention,
And don't forget the old tin roof,
We think that rates a mention.
And would you like an admin block,
In quite a new position?
We'll bring more blokes to have a
look,
And make a bold decision”.

“Well, we like our school as it is,
But if you really insist.....”

Blue and White had been adopted
early on as the Bayles Regional
colours. Catani had been Green
and White and Bayles had been
Blue and Red

“We mustn't forget the toilet block,
The jewel in the crown,
"I'll build in brick" said the third little pig,
We'll copy and it won't blow down.
We'll clear the old one to make some space,
And lay a slab of concrete,
Then build a frame and brick it in,
To make the job complete.”

Now the year two thousand is flashing by,
The work's all done, and you can't deny
The buildings and grounds are looking great,
The best in the Shire, the best in the State,
We've invited you here to look around,
But you won't need a clipboard, it's all been found,
And we're telling you now, if you really insist,
THAT WE LIKE OUR SCHOOL AS IT IS!

Jane Coupe, 2000

The very active parents' club was able to purchase new blue tables and chairs to give a cohesive look to the classrooms. Along the way a portable classroom was installed between the existing rooms and the basketball court. When Julie Luiten moved on to lead Blackrock Primary School and Sue Goodall was appointed Principal (final term 2003), Bayles Regional was in a stable position with an enrolment of 70+, four classroom teachers, a part-time art teacher who also supplemented the reading programme and a visiting librarian.

Mrs Goodall brought a new environmental focus to the school as she set about enhancing the school grounds with Sustainability in mind. Within two years the overall appearance of the school had become very attractive with painted fences, bright blue shades over the colourful playground, a second (and later a third) set of modern playground equipment, a frog bog, two rotundas and numerous native-planted garden beds.



The improvements were dual focused – child friendly and environmentally beneficial. Curriculum programmes within the school supported the changes with recycling being a major focus. Pupil numbers climbed passed the one hundred mark and by 2006 the school was able to run five classrooms. Another major extension costing \$150,000 was underway when Sue Goodall was appointed to the Principal position at Somerville Primary, and Nicole Bottriell was appointed to Bayles Regional. One of Nicole's first tasks was to organise the Grand Opening of the extensions which included updated office areas, a new staff room, inside staff toilet, sick bay, Principal's Office and a dedicated computer room.

Nicole brought a renewed focus on 'Literacy' to the school, and teachers were trained in the best practice of the day. Bayles became a show school for children's writing and NAPLAN results reflected the extra effort.

In 2008, it was spotted that there had been no commemoration of the school's 75th birthday back in 2003, so a small group of interested locals, led by Jane Coupe, organised a very successful 80th birthday celebration. Ex pupils came from far and wide with fond memories and stories to tell. Many ex Head-teachers, Principals and teachers were also in attendance, presenting some great photo opportunities.



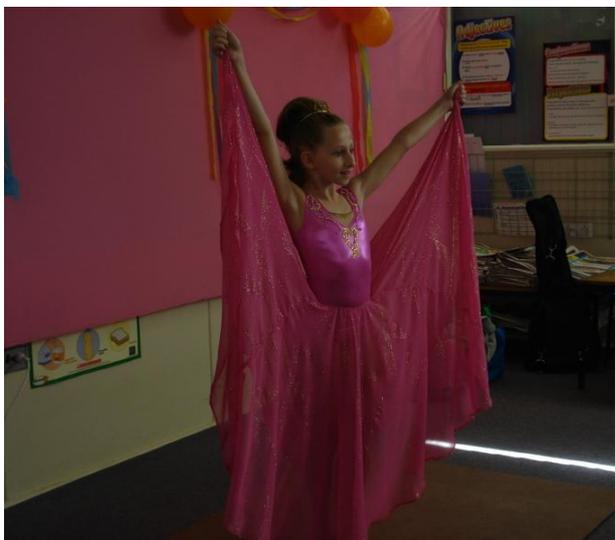
Principal Nicole Bottriell with Ex-Principals Maurie Richardson (acting), Dick Ryland, Don Jewell, John Coupe, Sue Goodall

Below – the cake, made by parent Suzanne Ashby

With co-operation from all Staff, Pupils, School Councillors and Parents' Club members, the celebrations lasted all day with many displays and events to entertain the crowd. A time capsule had been prepared by the children beforehand and was officially closed and 'put away' on the day. Rather than bury it, Mrs Coupe decided to put in into safe storage within the school.



Entertainment from the pupils. All the finalists from our 'Bayles Has Talent' competition performed during the day.



Our youngest pupil on the day, Samantha, with Miss Bottriell and, below, Mona Mynard the oldest ex-pupil, one of the originals. She was able to make a speech and tell us about the school in the 1920s!



Below – it was a great day for meeting old friends.



Building works became the order of the day again when the Federal Government in early 2009 decided to ease the country through the economic downturn by creating jobs through a program named Building the Education Revolution (BER). Bayles Regional was entitled to work to the value of \$850,000. There was no local choice in the style of building and the school was eventually given an open plan, three classroom building, plus the refurbishment of the front building (the 1970 fire replacement building) as an assembly area. The Multi Purpose room, a water tank and an enormous plane tree were removed to site the new building which was finished in late 2010 and took in its first classes in February 2011. It has become known as the Senior Learning Centre. The 'mod 5', housing the Prep and Grade One classes became known as the Junior Learning Centre. At the time of writing, we are ironing out teething problems with the new building, waiting for the front room refurbishment and looking forward to an official opening. Again, it will be a new Principal to oversee the ceremony as Nicole Bottriell gained a Principal position at

Tyabb Primary School from Term Four 2010. Another Principal Selection process was worked through, bringing Mrs Fran Van Lambaart to Bayles Regional for the start of the 2011 school year.

Schools are not static places – there will always be changes and improvements, staff will come and go, pupil numbers will continue to reflect the growth of the area. At Bayles Regional the future looks rosy and all involved in the school are directing their efforts towards the common goal of improving education for the children of the district.

Jane Coupe, updated Feb 2011