

The Dixon Heritage in Flaxton

(Many thanks to Mapleton School for permission to use passages from their Centenary Book)

A SCHOOL FOR FLAXTON:

When the settlers in the Flaxton area proposed that a school be built there, Joseph Dixon offered to donate a one-acre portion of his own land to be used as a school and community reserve, the block to be placed in the hands of three trustees. The new Flaxton State School was duly built on the site, & opened on 30th January 1922.

[Actually, the story goes that major lobbying for the school came from Joseph's wife & daughters-in-law, particularly Mrs Percy Dixon, who led her little girls to Montville School on a pony every day. Later, she paid a young Bob Wyer 1d. a week to escort them, but Bob wasn't much fussed about that either.]

MARGERY COPELAND RECALLS LIFE IN FLAXTON IN THE 1920s AND 30s:

'When Roy & I first went to live in Flaxton in January 1927 it consisted of about 25 families. 'Living at Flaxton in those days, with the road being so bad, we were cut off from Mapleton & Montville by even a sprinkle of rain, so our whole social life was centred at the school. 'The timber for the school was cut at a saw pit by Mr John Wyer, & the building erected by volunteer labour in 1921. 'At the same time, two tennis courts were made & everybody, grandmothers & babies in prams, went to the school on Saturday afternoons for the tennis. There would be about forty people there & two people were rostered each Saturday to provide afternoon tea.

'On Sunday afternoon four churches took it in turn to hold a service at the school: Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of England & Salvation Army. There was a non-denominational Sunday School which most of the children attended. Dances were often held on Saturday nights, & during the war all men from the Flaxton district who joined up were given a send-off at the school. When they came back they were given a 'welcome home' there. 'In 1928 a branch of the C.W.A. was formed in Flaxton & meetings were held under the school.

'Just before I came to Flaxton in 1927 the Postal Receiving Office & telephone exchange, which were run from the home of Mr & Mrs Wyer, were closed & our mail came through Mapleton. It was brought by the carrier when he came to pick up fruit & cream. 'The roads were so bad that the carrier used to come out on Sunday afternoon to pick up the fruit to make sure it caught the Monday morning tram from Mapleton to the railway at Nambour. I used to see the truck coming along the road sideways – two wheels in one set of ruts & two wheels in another set. The carrier had to renew his tyres often because they were worn through on the sides.

'During the war, timber for the Darwin wharves was cut at the sawmill in the Flaxton forest. Ray Plowman was the manager, & lived with his family near the Mill. 'It was a great day when we got electricity in 1948, and access to the outside world was much improved when the road from Mapleton was sealed in 1968, and on to Montville in 1971.

'We had 4 boys attend Flaxton School. Roy was Secretary of the School Committee in 1945 when there was a move to close the school & bus the children to Montville. The Flaxton parents protested most strongly, & after 7 months of meetings & correspondence to the Department, the idea was dropped & the school continued for another twenty years.

SOME SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED:

On 13th June 1967, the doors of the Flaxton State School were closed for the last time, & forty-five years of service to the Flaxton community came to an end. The 'battle for Flaxton School' was finally lost, & the remaining children were given the choice of attending either the Mapleton or Montville State Schools.

The old Flaxton State School building remained on its site until the mid-1990s, being used as a meeting venue for Boy Scouts, groups providing child care & a bridge club, amongst others. In 1992 the trusteeship of the land was transferred to the Blackall Range Care Group, which had been operating since 1987 out of private premises.

Sadly, the old building had to be demolished in 1996, & has been replaced by a modern administration & day-respite centre run by the Blackall Range Care Group. It was a decision that caused considerable grief, both to the management committee of the time, & to ex-pupils. **Under the terms of the Trust Deed framed by the Dixon family who originally donated the land, the property is still held in perpetuity for community use,** & cannot be passed on or used for commercial gain. Eighty years on, it is a wonderful heritage that this land is still used for service & support to the community, particularly for an age group who might have been those early students, & with a very large factor of volunteer involvement. *GMW.*