

Woodford School History

Since its inception in 1882 as a primary school, Woodford State School soon acquired a reputation as a small school with a big heart, and that very proud tradition has continued to the present day, now a bigger school with a bigger heart. Nestled in picturesque grounds, 100kms north west from Brisbane, this location, which is equal distance from the city and the Sunshine Coast beaches, is ideal for students and staff, as it offers not only the 3 R's, but the 3 L's as well, those being learning, laughter and love. These we have in abundance.

The town of Woodford, a dairy and timber town, originally rode on the bullock's back, hence our school emblem depicts the origins of the district. The name Woodford came from one of its founders, H.C. Wood, manager of Durundur Station, and the necessity to 'ford' the Stanley River at this point. The school still serves the same community, and descendants of the original families, and will hold its 125th celebrations in 2007.

In the early days, students rode on horseback from outlying dairy properties, the old horse paddocks being where the ovals are now, and where our Farm Project has commenced.

In 1882 the first school was built. It was a rough, bark-roofed, slab-walled, bush school. The floor was hard, packed earth. The slabs for the walls were split by hand. There were many gaps in the walls where the timber didn't exactly fit together. The first head-teacher said, 'If there were lots of little holes to let the wind in, there were lots of bigger ones to let it out.' There were seventeen children, eight boys and nine girls at the first school. It started on 23 October, 1882.

Ada Haggard was the first pupil. Her age was seven years and two months. She belonged to the Church of England. Her father was a carpenter and built and owned the first shop. The first teacher's name was Thomas Donnelly. He was followed by George Penny, then John Febtrell. Ambrose Tilney enrolled in the school in 1892, aged 6 years. Mr Tilney visited the school around 1975 and told about the town and school. He told about the bushrangers and how the boys used to play with guns. Other games played were hop-scotch, tiggy, marbles, rounders and skippy.

By 1892 the old bark hut was no longer serviceable. Gradually, over the years, it got eaten away by white ants. The first permanent building was B block. It was built on low stumps, but raised afterwards, so they could build a domestic science room underneath. At the same time, a corrugated iron shed was built. At first it was a lunch area, but in 1927 was enclosed in corrugated iron, and made into a manual training room. It was good to use in winter, but as summer came and the weather became hotter, so did the shed. On the very hot days, the boys and teacher would have to go outside under the shade of the camphor laurel trees to work. The shed was pulled down in 1969.

The Neurum School was closed in 1947 and brought to its present site, and was used as the Grade One room, or the Infant Room for many years. The building is still in use to this day.

In 1956, the Grade Four room was added, and in 1966, two more rooms. The High School was built in 1967, and opened by Mr Nicholson, who was the member for Murrumba at that time. The tennis courts were built soon after.

The oval was constructed in 1971, and as our sporting and athletic trophies show, has been used to good advantage. In 1974, the pine hedge at the front of the school was removed. Age and continual pruning had taken their toll.

In 1975, the Queensland Centenary of Education year, the new Library and Preschool were both constructed and opened. The Woodford School had come a long way from the bark-roofed and slab-walled school of 1882.

The small school with the big heart has had many moments of glory — even rubbing shoulders with royalty!! As a result of a Grade 9 Geography project, eight students from this school met the King of Tonga on his Australian visit. We also welcomed Lady Flo with her pumpkin scones at our 'Lady of the Year' contest in 1982. We were invited to Government House to accept the State History Project Award in 1990.

We have had all shapes and sizes of principals, the tall, the short, the rotund, the bespectacled, male and female, and Woodford has welcomed them all, most of whom lived in the school residence, until its removal in 1991. We have involved ourselves over the years in 'Academic', in its early TV years, debating for 23 years at Queensland Debating Union level, choirs, Eisteddfods, and students trod the boards in six musicals in which they, and the staff, had the time of their lives, as they did in Tournament of Minds. We prepare students for Lions Youth of the Year every year as, being a small school, we have a great rapport with the community.

On the sporting field, we have come from using a local's dam for our Swimming Carnival, and his paddocks for our Cross Country, to the halcyon days of Kunga, a meeting of six neighbouring schools, namely Yarraman, Lowood, Rosewood, Murgon, Kilcoy & Toogoolawah. Just getting there, in our ancient buses in those days, was a memorable feat!! The small school with the big heart often won the day!! We produced district and state champions, and set records, not broken to this day.

Our School Sporting Houses are Stanley, Wood and Archer, with a brief appearance of Lewis, Lillee and Bradman, before a popular protest returned them to the original names.

Woodford School students served their country in four wars, and our stand of trees at the front of the school, honours these brave men and women. Some of our past students are serving abroad today.

Our valiant Parents' & Citizens' Association has survived some very lean years – so lean in fact that, in some years, people were frightened off, as with only 3 – 5 members, you would find yourself Secretary, Treasurer or President on your first visit!! Today, it is thriving and well-attended.

The myriad of staff who have served Woodford State School and Secondary Department (as it was known), have all had one thing in common – a desire to uphold the School Motto – Finis Coronatopus (The End Crowns the Effort) and to this end, they have worked tirelessly to achieve student satisfaction and potential. The School Honour Board will attest to their efforts.

Our greatest accolade, however, came from a past principal and I quote “We must be doing something right, when kids come back to Woodford State School just to say hello”!! That remark sums up the spirit of Woodford P-10 Campus – the spirit that has endured for almost 125 years – the spirit of the Small School with the BIG HEART. Come and join us!!!

Joane Morish