

BLYTH PLAINS SCHOOL

1869 - 1881

TEACHERS APPOINTED TO BLYTH PLAINS SCHOOL

JAMES BADCOCK	1869
SCHOOL CLOSED	1870
RICHARD H JARMAN	1871 - 1873
RICHARD J SHEPARD	1873
RICHARD H JARMAN	1874
RICHARD J SHEPARD	1874
RICHARD H JARMAN	1875
SCHOOL CLOSED	1875 - 1876
MISS GRACE KERR	1877 - 1878
MISS JEAN KERR	1879
ELIZABETH JANE CLIVELY	1880

OPENING OF THE BLYTH PLAINS SCHOOL

"The want of a proper place for the education of the young in the above locality has long been felt, and as the necessity became more apparent by the increasing population, a few ladies and gentlemen "took the bull by the horns" and went round the immediate neighbourhood to solicit the assistance of the farmers for so desirable an object. The call was responded to most liberally, considering the dullness of the times; and the promoters, finding that there was perfect unanimity among the residents, and that they would be assisted in their endeavours to supply the necessity, immediately set to work. A piece of land was presented by Mr Shepherd for the purpose, and a school of moderate size was soon commenced, the builder being Mr Nottle. The originators of the affair continued their exertions by soliciting subscriptions wherever there was the remotest chance of obtaining half-a-crown, until the sum of £52 2s 6d was raised.

The school room is situated in a very healthy locality, about half a mile east of Mr Best's store, and a hundred yards off the Wallaroo road. Its dimensions are: 26 feet x 16 feet in the clear, with walls 11 feet high, and is roofed with galvanised iron. The total cost is estimated at £150, therefore the trustees have yet some labour before them, and it is to be hoped the residents in the neighbourhood, for the education of whose children the rooms have been erected, will make an effort after the ensuing harvest to clear off the debt on the building.

It was resolved that a public demonstration should take place at the opening of the edifice, and arrangements were accordingly made for a tea and public soiree, and the Rev. Mr Davidson (Clare Presbyterian minister) promised to deliver a lecture on the occasion. The event was accordingly advertised to take place on the 21st inst., and as the residents of Clare and other localities sympathised with their neighbours on the Plains, a large number went to witness the affair. The interior of the schoolroom was adorned with green foliage; and outside, two rows of pine trees had been brought from the scrub and planted the day previous, which formed an avenue from the gate to the door. At 4 o'clock, an excellent tea was provided by Mrs Sampson and Mrs Hall, to which a large number sat down, and owing to the number of visitors the table was replenished three or four times. Preparations were then made for the soiree and lecture. A platform was erected at the further end, and a gallery or scaffolding of a nondescript character rigged over the door for juveniles, who found their way up by means of a ladder. The room was crowded, and a large number had to content themselves by looking through the windows, which were left open to admit plenty of air, as the evening was rather sultry, and, owing to the crowded state of the room, the heat was very oppressive. The entertainment commenced about 7 o'clock with singing and a prayer, after which Mr Shepherd proposed that Mr W Paterson occupy the chair; the proposition was seconded by Mr G Growden and carried unanimously. Mr Paterson then, with a few brief remarks, introduced the Rev. Mr Davidson, and said the first part of the programme was a lecture by that gentleman, which he was perfectly sure would be most interesting and instructive.

The reverend gentleman said it afforded him great pleasure to be able to attend on that occasion. He was President of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society, but his duties were not heavy. He could not be amongst them as much as he would wish, as his spare time was limited; but he was glad to get to see they could get on as well without their President as with him. There was a great difference in the Blyth Plains of the present time and the Blyth Plains of five years ago. At that period there was not a sign of agricultural pursuits being about to propagate, but since that time the place had advanced wonderfully, and six months previous he had ascertained that there were upwards of 30,000 acres of land under cultivation. He was much pleased to see such a large gathering on the present occasion; but as the programme was rather a long one, he would not detain them with any further remarks. The reverend gentleman then proceeded with the first part of his lecture on "Hugh Miller", dwelling on the most interesting events which occurred during the early days of this illustrious countryman's life. The first part of the lecture occupied upwards of half an hour. As the heat was intense, water was passed around.

The Chairman then called upon Mr S Trestrail for a recitation entitled 'Bernado El Fenso', which was delivered very correctly and in an interesting manner, and the reciter deserved the applause elicited from the audience. The next piece was a dialogue entitled 'An Extract from the Honeymoon', delivered by Messrs T Goodridge, J Sampson, and J Growden, after which a recitation was given by Mr Lawson, entitled 'Rienzi's address to the Romans'. This piece was delivered in excellent style, and was most decidedly the best of the evening. Messrs J Shepherd and J G Nottle gave an extract from Henry IV which was followed by a recitation from Mr R Shepherd, entitled 'The Slave's Petition'.

Reverend Davidson then proceeded with his lecture on Hugh Miller, bearing upon his life and untimely death, which was brought about by his own hand, for in a fit of temporary insanity he discharged the contents of a pistol into his body. The lecture was a very long one and the lecturer had to hurry through it; but it was very interesting and instructive, and the reverend gentleman was loudly applauded as he concluded his discourse.

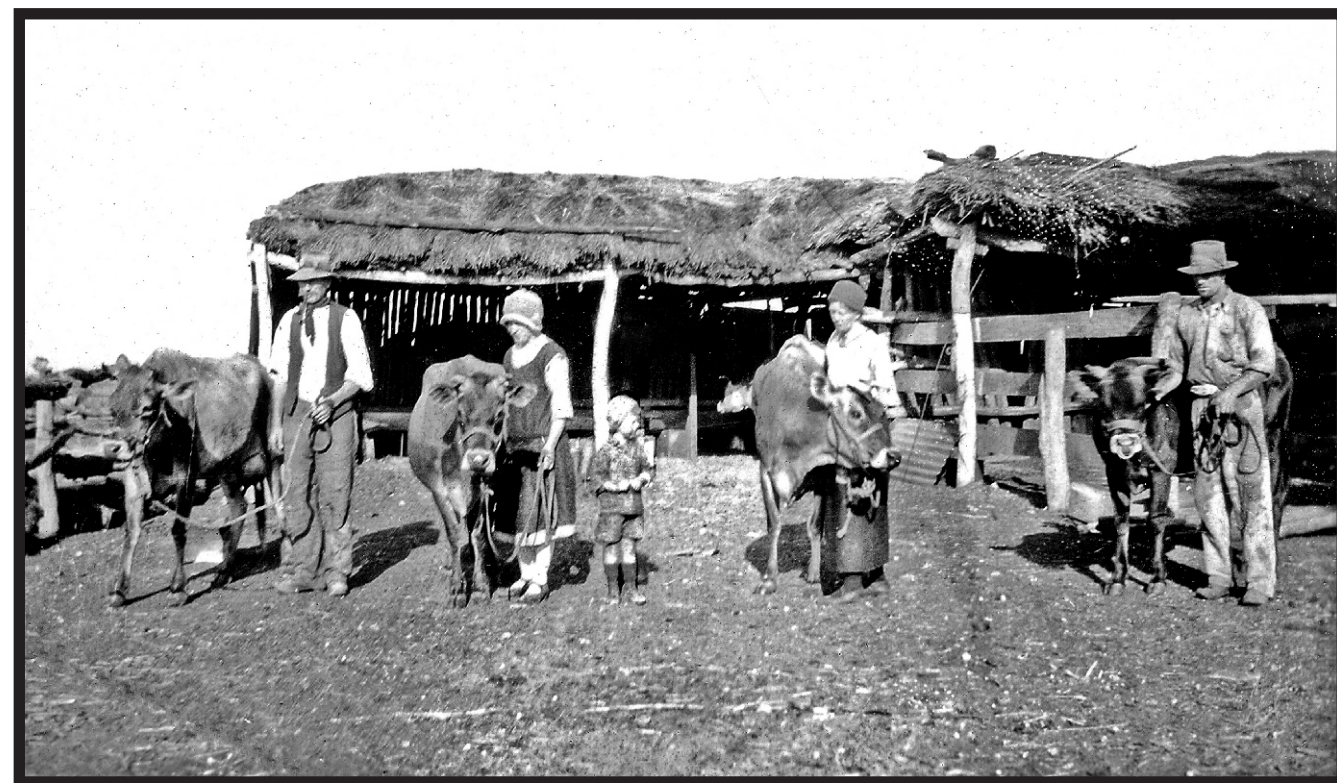
After several more recitations had been delivered by various amateurs, the proceedings closed with votes of thanks to the Reverend Davidson, the ladies, the choir, and others, including Mr Lawson for the use of his harmonium, the trustees of the White Well Chapel for the use of the forms, and the Chairman. The choir enlivened the proceedings by singing several anthems during the evening, Mr Lawson officiating at the harmonium. At the termination of the entertainment the audience indulged in various games while supper was being prepared, and a portion of them then appeased their appetites on the substantial repast laid before them previous to proceeding to their homes.

Between the tea and supper about £15 was collected, which, added to the subscription list, will make a total of £70, thus leaving a debt of £80 on the school, which the Trustees hope will be cleared off in the course of a few months."

[Source: *Northern Argus* 29 Oct 1869 p3BC]



"DEWDALE" HOMESTEAD, CLOSET HOUSE TO THE BLYTH PLAINS SCHOOL
(circa 1925) [source: Glen Wiech]



CARL, DORA AND AGNES WEICH WITH JERSEY SHOW TEAM, GLEN WEICH IS THE CHILD
(circa 1930) [source: Glen Wiech]

In response to the need to provide education for the children of settlers in the Blyth district, a public meeting was advertised in the recently established *Northern Argus* of 28 May 1869:

"A meeting will be held in Mr Best's store, Blyth Plains, to consider the advisability of erecting a public school on the Plains, and to transact other business."

That meeting resulted in a school being built on Section 161, land donated by Mr John Shepherd. At the opening on 21 October 1869 a public tea was held during the afternoon, followed by a crowded "soiree" or entertainment featuring a lecture, recitations and choral items. Mr James Badcock was the first teacher.

The school closed in 1870 but reopened in the following year with Mr Richard H Jarman as the head teacher and an average attendance of 23 students.

When the Trustees appointed Mr Richard J Shepherd as teacher in 1873, the school had 23 students, with "prospect of increase".

Schools Inspector Hosking visited Blyth Plains School in November 1874 and found the master had been absent since October 14. In answer to the Board's letter, the teacher Mr Shepherd stated that, having been obliged to go to Clare on business, he gave his scholars a fortnight's holiday, and was not aware he was breaking the rules. The inspector decreed that one month's salary be deducted from Mr Shepherd's stipend.

The school closed again in 1875 and reopened in 1877 but its revival was short-lived. In 1876 the tramway from Hayleton was extended to Blyth Plains, and later to the site of Blyth township. Soon after, a school was erected there. The *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail* reported in August 1877:

"Our new school building in the township (of Blyth) is progressing and, I understand, will soon be finished. It will be a great boon to this part of the country as a school was much needed, many children being deprived of educational benefits as they are at too great a distance from the other school on Blyth's Plains. At that school I hear the lady teacher gives general satisfaction, and that the attendance is augmenting considerably."

In November 1877 two tenders were received in relation to works at Blyth Plains School and were referred to the architect.

In 1878 Miss Grace Kerr taught at Blyth Plains. The school was open for a total of 70 days and although 38 students were enrolled, the average attendance was 16. Parents contributed £5/5/10 in fees compared to nearby Blyth School which was open all year and received £37/15/10 in fees.

In March 1880, the *SA Register* reported that Blyth Plains School was in need of repairs and additions, and its location was not convenient for children living at Kybunga. A deputation representing the residents of Kybunga and neighbourhood had visited the Minister of Education the previous month to put the case for a school at Kybunga. There were 97 children in the neighbourhood, with 58 of school age.

It was also reported that "there was a school on Blyth's Plains but it was practically closed, its situation not being sufficiently central to meet the requirements of Kybunga and neighbourhood, besides which it was in great disrepair, and altogether inadequate for school purposes. The consequence of this lack of educational facilities in the district was that a large number of the children were growing up in ignorance. Some children from seven to nine years of age did not even know the alphabet, and more than one family had left the district rather than see their children deprived of all educational advantage."

Some of the families in the area during the years the school was open included Sampson, Goodridge, Shepherd, Growden, Lawson, Nottle, Hall, Paterson, Reid, Roberts, Hill, Treloar, Longmire, Mee, Fogden, Adair and Best.

With the opening of the Blyth and Kybunga Schools, the Blyth Plains School finally closed in 1881. We can only surmise that fluctuating student enrolments and inconvenient location were the causes of its brief and unsettled history. Only the odd inkwell, marble, broken slate and slate pencil remain, some of which are illustrated here.

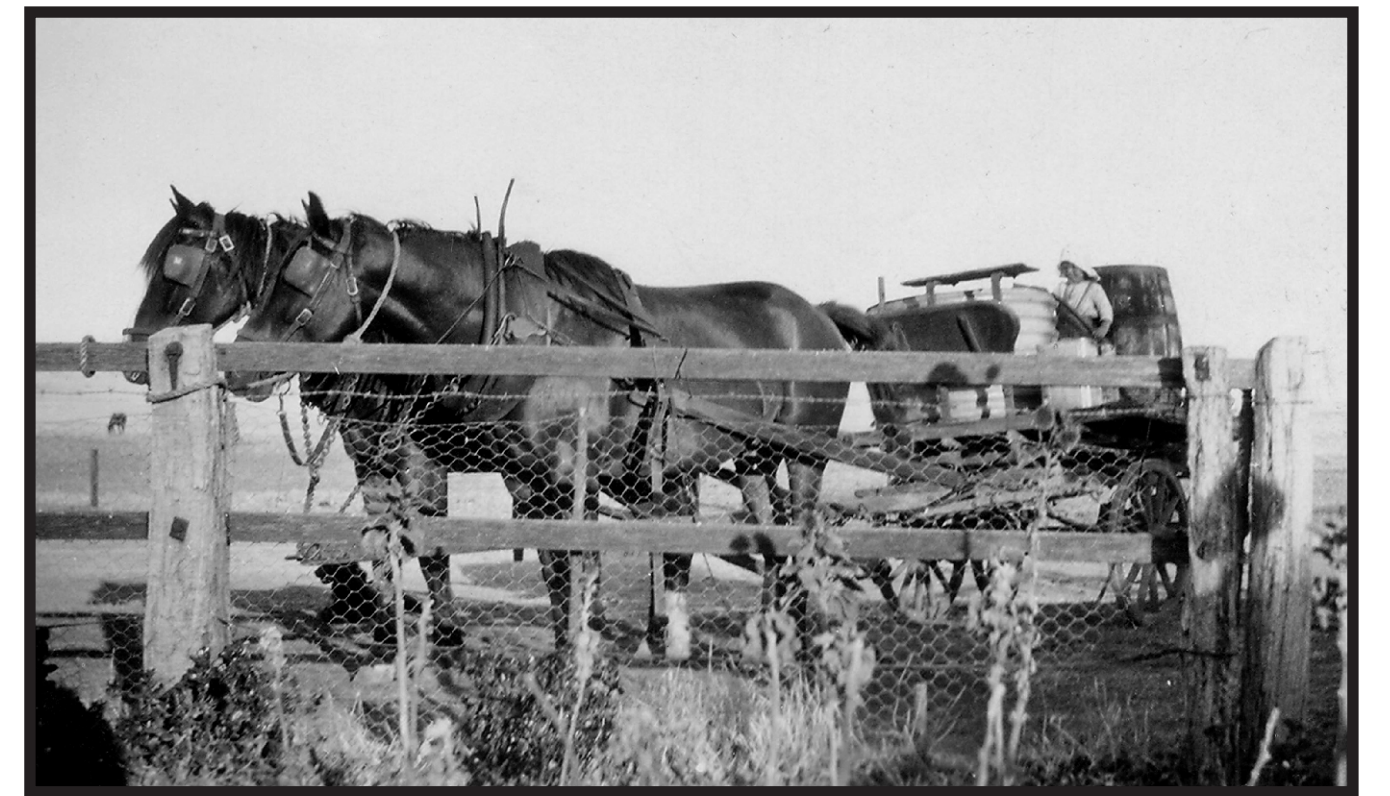
BLYTH PLAINS SCHOOL

The above School will be opened by a PUBLIC TEA, SOIREE, LECTURE, and SUPPER, on THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1869, when the Rev. W. Davidson, President of the Blyth Plains Young Men's Association, will deliver a Lecture on

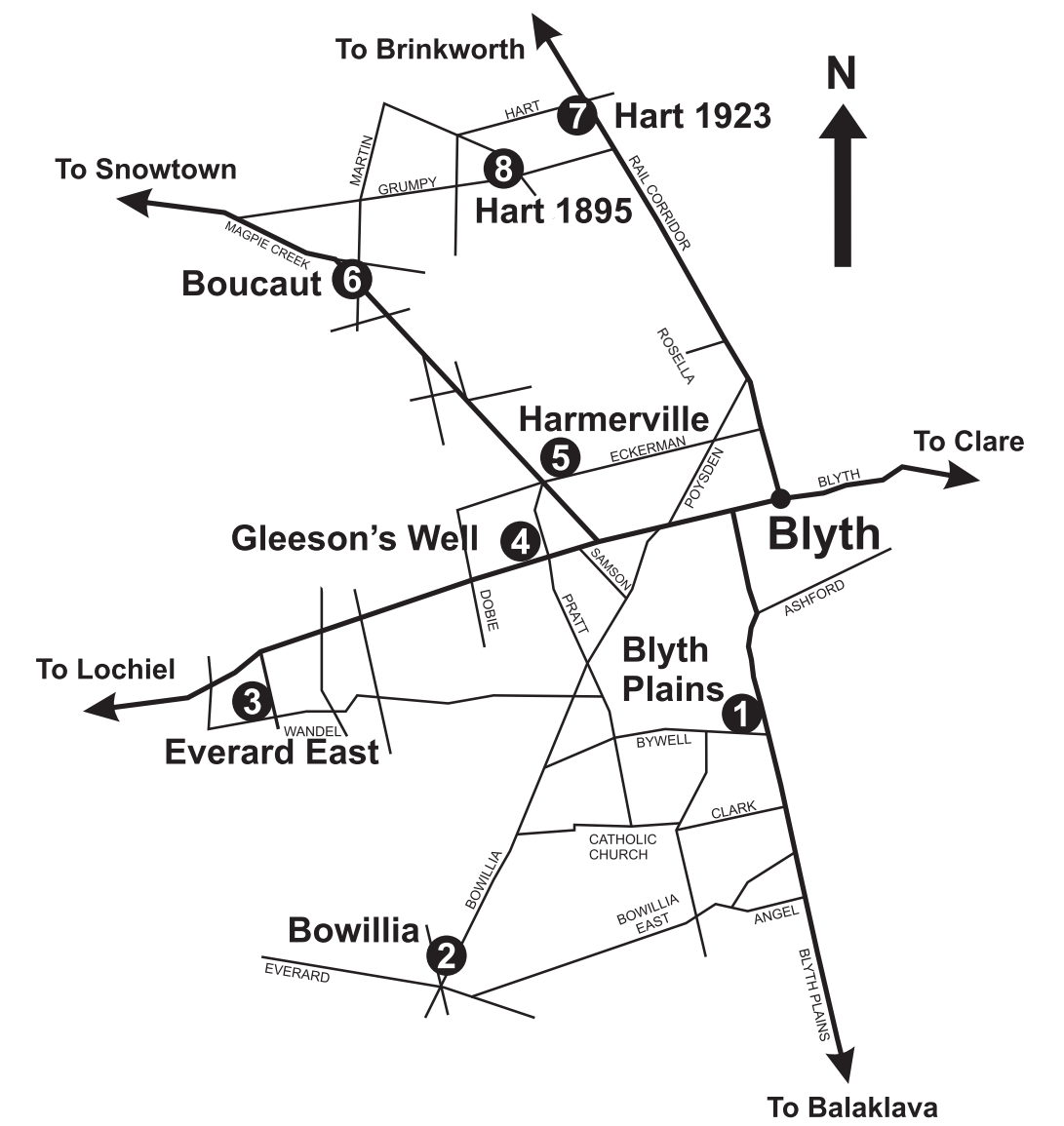
"HUGH MILLER."
Tea, 1s 6d, for adults; Children, half price.
Collections will be made after the Soiree and Supper
E.H. BEST, Hon.Sec.

MOONLIGHT!!!

Ref. *The Northern Argus* 8 Oct 1869, p1B



HORSE AND DRAY WITH KEG AND TANK TO WATCH SHEEP (circa 1930)
[source: Glen Wiech]



Map showing location of Blyth district school signs