



TRIBUTE

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FREE PUBLICATION

St Marys & District Historical Society Inc. - Quarterly Newsletter

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‘ Recording & Preserving the Heritage of St Marys ’

FOR THE PROTECTION OF OUR MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC THE CHAMBERS BUILDING HAS BEEN CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC DURING THE CORONA VIRUS AND THERE WILL BE NO ACTIVITY ON WEDNESDAYS & SATURDAYS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. OUR MEMBERS HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND. KEEP SAFE.



St Marys Public School

(Photo courtesy of Penrith City Library - taken from Princess Mary Street entry)



The Headmaster's Table

By Norma Thorburn OAM

When the Penrith City Council was preparing to upgrade Queen St., a member of the design team visited the Society to talk to our members who had lived for many years in St. Marys, to get a feel for the town. I was the last to be interviewed and she asked me if I attended St. Marys Public School. When I replied yes, she asked me what event at the school stood out most in my memory. The following story was my reply.

When the Munitions Factory closed at St. Marys after the Second World War, the buildings were either sold or leased to private enterprise to set up an industrial area, today's Dunheved Industrial Estate, while some of the original buildings were set aside for a Migrant Hostel.

The first migrants arrived in 1949, coming mainly from the Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The parents went to work in the new factories and the children were bussed to St. Marys Public School.



The Headmaster, Mr. Harry Ainsworth held an assembly and told us that these children would be coming to our school the next day and we were to teach them English and help them with their schoolwork, above all there was to be no fighting with them. He explained that they had lost everything in the war and were here to make a new life. All went well for about two days and then the fights started. The new comers weren't involved, it was the children who didn't get someone to look after were fighting with those of us who did, because they wanted to help them settle in as well. We were then told to "share" them in the playground.



The following year more migrant children arrived, swelling our population. Our school was very small at the time with only seven classes. The sixth classroom ran out of desks, so the dining room table was brought in from the Headmaster's residence and placed at the side of the room.

Mr. Ainsworth spoke to the two School Captains and two Vice-Captains, thanking us for helping the migrant children, and to ask us, as the student leaders in the school, if we would volunteer to give up our seats and sit at the dining room table. Of course, we agreed, and in fact thought it was special sitting at the beautiful mahogany table. It wasn't very long before more portable classrooms arrived and the 'new' Infants Department was built.



It was an exciting time for us, as everyone got along well and I think we learnt as much from them as they did from us.

*The tables have been built outside the Library with the following inscriptions:
Priius (Estonia-Liberty), Saugumas (Lituania- Safety), Namo (Latvian-Home)
New children are joining us. They have lost their homes in the war; we will WELCOME them.
There will be no fighting with them. THEY HAVE SEEN ENOUGH.
Mr. Harry Ainsworth Headmaster St. Marys Public School 1949.*



*Norma Thorburn nee Blacker St Marys Library
(Photos: Tom Thorburn)*



6th Class 1950

2nd Row fourth from left: Boy's Captain John Mara and Vice-Captain Harry Caines,
Teacher: Mr Tom Moroney

3rd Row second from left: Girl's Captain Norma Thorburn nee Blacker
and Vice-Captain June Sommerville

(Photo: Paul Mills Collection)

Permanent Display – Class Room

In 2011 St Marys Public School donated three student desks to the society in appreciation for participating in “Celebrating 150 years 1861-2011” event of their school.

A recreation of a brown box pleat uniform worn during the 1950s was made by member Caroline Volkiene. St Marys High School 1960s sports uniform donated by Paul Mills.



(Photos: Caroline Volkiene)

The St Marys & District Historical Society meets every 4th Saturday of the month at 1 pm – at the St Marys Precinct “Chambers” Building – Mamre Road, St Marys.

No meetings in January or December
ALL WELCOME

Open to the Public on Wednesdays & Saturdays from 10.00am - 2.00pm
(meeting days till 1.00pm) and by appointment for Groups

Please contact: Lyn Forde: 8840 8771 / Groups/Bus Trips - Norma Thorburn: 9623 2307

Patron of our Society is Jackie Greenow, OAM.

Back issues of the “Tribute” can be found on our website at
www.stmaryshistoricalsociety.org

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Memories of St Marys - South Creek NSW, Australia

(While care is taken to ensure that all articles are accurate, the opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society.) Any comments on this Newsletter are encouraged.

PLEASE, DON'T THROW OUT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY. OLD PHOTOGRAPHS, BOOKS, LETTERS, RECEIPTS, DOCKETS, NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES. IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU ARE NOT SURE ABOUT PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY.