

Blackall Range School

First School on the Range

In 1886, the Blackall Range Provisional School (No 511) started at Wootha, on the property of Mr Joseph McCarthy with 12 pupils and the teacher was Mr William Verrent. The school was built not far from the McCarthy's home and consisted of one long room with a smaller room at one end, which served as a bed-sitting room for one of the early teachers, Mrs O'Sullivan, a widow with two small children. The partition was later removed and a veranda added. Class sizes went up to 70 students a day, with just one teacher, assisted by the older students, who would mentor the younger children. In 1937 the Blackall Range School was called the Wootha School. In 1949 the school closed and the building was later relocated and incorporated into the Palmwoods School.



Blackall Range Day & Sunday School 15 - 11- 1914

Back - Maud Ewin, Billy Ewin, Miss Benjon (School Teacher)

Second - Rita Campbell, Mary Campbell (Kirby), Edwin Ewin, Pauline Campbell (Green)

Third - Bruce Campbell, Claude Campbell, John Campbell

Front - ? Ewin, Laurie (Lawrence) Campbell, Charlie (Charles) Campbell, Ted (Edwin) Campbell

REMARKS-

January 24th Reason sent by letter
 February 3rd 13th 14th 22nd Reason sent by letter
 March 6th Reason sent by letter
 March 17th St Patrick's Day
 March 24th Reason sent by letter
 April 2nd St George's Day
 April 22nd Leave of absence
 April 23rd Polling Day
 April 24th Leave of absence
 June 23rd Coronation Days
 July 13th 13th Nambour Show
 August 9th Brisbane Exhibition
 Sept 11th Friendly Society's Day
 Sept 28th Maleny Races
 October 4th 5th 6th 7th School closed teacher transferred
 October 17th 20th Reason sent by letter
 November 30th St Andrew's Day
 December 4th Reason sent by letter
 December 15th Reason sent by letter

Details from the Blackall Range State School Annual Return, 1911.

If you had a child attend the school in 1911, apart from it closing for the school holidays, it also closed for:

- St Patrick's Day
- St George's Day
- Polling Day
- Coronation Day
- Nambour Show
- Brisbane Exhibition
- Friendly Society's Day
- Maleny Races
- St Andrew's Day

Annual Returns in different years note when it closed for such occasions as: Visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to Landsborough, wet weather, Maleny Patriotic Bazaar (WWI), Maleny Show, Noosa Show, Woombye Show, Caboolture Show, Maleny Ambulance Sports, and the School Picnic.





WOOTHA STATE SCHOOL 1921

Back L to R: Ron Plucknett, Carl Johnson, Unknown, Unknown, Mary Scott, Molly Lumsden, Theresa Costin, Nell Cole, Cecile Webster, Unknown, Keith Johnson.

Second Row L to R: George Grigor, John Costin, ? Maggie Cramb, Dorrie Bryce, Joan Gibson, Nance Gibson, Kitty Peters, Robert Cole, George Johnson.

Third Row L to R: Roy Cole, Stan Peters, Alf Plucknett, Hec Gibson, ? Edna Sellick, ? Hazel Cramb, Jean Cole, Charlie Webster, Bob Scott, Archie Cole.

Front Row L to R: Athol Johnson, Sam Sellick, George Gibson, Bill Cole, Vic Peters, Mary Cole, Margery Webster, Daphne Webster, Unknown, ? Ferguson, Dudley Webster, George Peters.

Mrs. Alice Cole - Mr. Kinniple - Teacher 2.8.20 - 7.5.23

May 6, 1988

THE WAY WE WERE

Tonight I felt touched by history and was honoured. I met a lady, Frances McEachran (nee Coombe), whose grandfather came to Australia in 1862 to be a minister of the church in Carlton, Victoria. Frances herself was born hundreds of miles to the north in Bundaberg, thirty-five years later.

When I met her she told me she had been a teacher at the Wootha School in 1916 and 1917. This opened up a page of history for me. I wondered what a young lady, amongst the first to be trained at the new teachers' college in Brisbane, thought as she climbed up the range to her first posting — Wootha. She was nineteen and in charge of twenty pupils. Can you imagine the school and the grounds, did she have to draw water from a creek, or did she have a well? Did she have a gas or kero lamp to light the schoolhouse on dark days? Did her pupils do their sums on slates, chant the times table aloud, and later throw blobs of ink-soaked blotting paper at each other. Where did teacher McEachran live? Did she board in a farmhouse nearby. Did she have to wash her long skirts and long-sleeves blouses, or did the farmer's wife do these for the nineteen-year-old teacher? Did all the young men in the district fall in love with her? What sort of social life went on? Was Maleny the hub or were there smaller communities based in the schools and the churches — how many families made up the roll of twenty pupils? The questions I could have asked were endless and I thought of the elegant lady all the way from Mackay, now ninety-six years old and still able to win hearts and I saluted her.

Looking around the crowded Show Pavilion where half a thousand people or more had gathered, I thought of the endless stories and experiences that had been built out of and through the schools of the district. I thought of those who had been dunces at school and who shone later, of those who went away to war and sacrificed their lives for all they held dear, of those who stayed in the district, who have helped it change and grow and in their own way have contributed



Mrs Frances McEachran (nee Coombe) teacher at Wootha School 1916-17.

as much to the development of this place as that contribution made in 1916 and 1917 by Frances McEachran. As a newcomer of ten years' standing whose children have benefited from the Maleny school tradition and who has found friendship and a sense of belonging, I salute you all, past pupils — Maleny and its district schools.

Alison Frew

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