Westall Primary School
50 Years 1961-2011

Edited by Pat Miller
WESTALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

50 YEARS

1961 - 2011

Edited by Pat Miller - Teacher at Westall since 1983
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INTRODUCTION
by Richard Lloyd - Principal at Westall since 2009

I consider myself very fortunate to be in the role of Principal of Westall Primary School, a role I have had for almost three years now.

Having lived and taught in the area for many years beforehand and coached teams who played sport against Westall in the past, my knowledge of Westall was as a caring school with great kids and terrific teachers. Since taking over as Principal I have discovered it goes deeper than that.

Yes, both the students and teachers are terrific, but Westall has an amazing culture; one I had not come across in a school before (and I have been at many, many schools!). I have never been at a school where the teachers care for the children as much as they do here or genuinely ‘put the children first’ - a phrase you will hear at every school, but really meant and followed through at Westall.

Which brings me to the children. Again, I have never been to a school where the children are quite like they are here! They are so obliging, friendly, cooperative, accepting of others, well behaved and welcoming that it makes one feel like a proud parent when on an excursion, camp or sports day, total strangers come up and compliment the school on the wonderful behaviour of our students. Considering the many different nationalities at the school this is a wonderful achievement. It is interesting that if a child comes to Westall with a ‘reputation’ he or she is very quickly ‘Westallised’, as the students don’t tolerate or condone silly or disrespectful behaviour.

We may not have the best facilities, neatest gardens, biggest classrooms or many other things that schools in more affluent areas have, but what we do have is wonderful, caring staff, and the most delightful children of any school around.

In finishing this, I would also like to thank and acknowledge the work of Pat Miller who has done a tremendous amount of research for this 50th Anniversary booklet. I hope you enjoy reading about Westall’s first 50 years and that the future years are as successful!
BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
by Pat Miller - Teacher at Westall since 1983

The neighbourhood of Westall was named after Thomas Westall; a local market gardener who lived where the Enterprise Migrant Hostel was later located (now Lexington Gardens). By the 1950s there were several market gardens in the area.

Westall Railway Station was opened as a workers only platform in 1954. It provided for the adjacent Martin and King factory - motor and rail wagon builders (Volkswagen's predecessor). Other industry in the area included Humes Limited (Pipe Works), Burwood Timber Co., Green's the printer's and Austral Bakeries. The station was finally opened to the public in 1959.

The Education Department had begun searching for a school site close to the proposed Westall Railway Station as early as 1952. The District Inspector looked for suitable sites in the area near the corner of Westall Rd and Fairbank Rd (first known as Heath Rd and then James Rd).

The first site chosen was part of a market garden owned by Mr Reg. Saunders. Mr Saunders initially agreed to sell his property but misunderstood the amount of land the Education Department wanted. He thought he was selling 3½ acres but the contract was for 5 acres. Mr Saunders wrote to the Education Department suggesting the following alternatives.

1. 1½ acres of his land and 3½ acres from Mr Coates (his neighbour).
2. 5 acres in Queen's Ave (later Rosebank Ave) from Mr Coates.
3. 5 acres at the southwest corner of Osborne Rd and Westall Rd, known as Richmond Grange.
4. 10 acres owned by Australian Paper Manufacturing at the northeast corner of Westall Rd and Heath Rd (later known as Fairbank Rd and then Brear Rd).

The Education Department considered the third option a possibility and asked the District Inspector to take a look at the site. He reported back that the land seemed very suitable and the Education Department finally agreed to abandon the purchase of Mr Saunders' land and further investigate the suitability of the Richmond Grange site. After much deliberation it was eventually decided that rather than buying 5 acres for a primary school it would be best to buy a 20 acre site in Queen's Ave (Rosebank Ave) for two schools - one primary and one secondary.

In 1955 the Westall Preschool wrote to the Education Department asking if any provision had been made for a state school in the area. The Department replied that a site had been chosen but not yet purchased.

In 1957 both the Springvale and Noble Park Shire and the Westall and District Progress Association (W.D.P.A.) expressed concern about the lack of a school in the Westall area which had a rapidly expanding population. The Education Department informed them that it was intended to erect a primary school and a secondary school but it was not possible to state when building would commence.

The W.D.P.A. conducted a survey of the area bounded by Main Rd, the railway line, Westall Rd and Heatherton Rd and estimated that there were 200 children under the age of 11 living in that district. Parents were concerned that their children had to attend Springvale, Clayton South or Clayton State Schools. In winter direct routes to those schools were frequently impassable due to unmade roads and parents were often forced to hire taxis to transport their children to and from school. The W.D.P.A. again wrote to the Education Department in June 1958 asking for an early start on the construction of the school.
The Education Department asked Mr D. R. Morrison (District Inspector) to investigate the urgency for a school at Westall. He estimated that there would be 220 students by the beginning of 1960 and recommended that provision be made in the 1959 - 60 building program for a school of six rooms to be built at Westall.

Finally in 1959 the primary school was added to the building program and an amount of £36 249 was approved for the building of six rooms. The plan for Westall State School was drawn up and building began in 1960 on 23 acres purchased from Mr Charles Coates.

THE FIRST YEAR

The first building consisted of six classrooms and was occupied as of the 7th February 1961. The students started on Thursday the 9th February and it was expected that the initial enrolment would be approximately 150. By March 22nd, 200 students were attending the school.

The initial staff of Westall State School No. 4851 comprised - Mr James F. Curran (Head Teacher), Miss Gertrude J. Leishman (Infant Mistress), Miss Ann Cook, Mr D.R. James, Mr R.W. Loveland and Mrs B. Miller.

The first ten students to be enrolled were G.L. Conder, K.E. Keane, D.G. Butterfield, L. McNaughton, Diana Gibson, Danny Gibson, M. Baron, H. Walloch, C. Cray and Peter Cray.

On March 16 1961 the school committee was elected with the following members - Cr. H.R. Kay (Chairman), Messrs P. O’Berne (Secretary), D.H. Livingston, L.E. Marks, J. Stone, S. Heaney, F. Muir, J. Thomas, J. McKee and Mrs Y.M. Marks.

The Mothers’ Club’s first meeting was held on 23rd March 1961 and attended by thirty mothers. Mrs Marks was elected President, Mrs Packanen, Secretary and Mrs D. Livingston, Treasurer. They discussed how to raise the money required to provide the many items that were needed to equip the school.

Both the Mothers’ Club and the School Committee sought ways to raise funds for the school. Throughout the year, fund raising activities included card nights, competitions and a fete which was held in November. In September the Mothers’ Club began holding “Roll and Pie” days each Monday. Children could buy pies, rolls, sandwiches, cakes and drinks. Local companies donated goods, for example, 60 carpet squares from Westminster Carpets in Dandenong and wooden blocks for the infant room from Clayton Timber Co. A letter was sent home asking parents to help with the provision of items for the school. They even requested a football - old and used would be fine!

The school leaders chosen in 1961 were Charan Packanen and Helmut Walloch. Four school houses were formed and named after local streets. The Captains of the houses were:

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Westall State School participated in the Combined District Schools' Sports held at the Springvale Football Oval on April 19. The Mothers’ Club decided that the girls’ sports uniform should comprise red tunics with a red girdle, white blouse, sand shoes and socks while the boys’ were to wear white short-sleeved shirts, white shorts and white sand shoes and socks. It was also decided that the girls’ marching team costume should be red with a green tasselled cord. Unfortunately the school came last in the sports but it was a good experience and the students conducted themselves well.

School uniform colours were chosen by the Mothers’ Club in May and Clayton Mercers and Rayner’s Drapery were approached to provide socks, jumpers and ties. The school colours were grey, with a band of red, green and turquoise.

The school entered the local schools’ football and basketball (netball) competition for 1961. Practising sport at Westall was very difficult for two reasons - firstly, there was very little sports equipment, and secondly, the school grounds were left in a terrible condition after the building was finished. However the local Schools Sports Association kindly donated funds towards the purchase of some sports equipment and later in the year, soil from the Monash University building site was used to level the school grounds.

The school telephone wires were connected at the end of April but the school did not have a phone until early May. Central heating was installed but the thermostat was faulty and the heating was not working correctly until mid July.

In November surveyors from the SEC began working on levels for a new high tension line to Heatherton.

SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

School leaders chosen for 1962 were Sarah Livingston and Stephen ("Cactus") Currie.

The school was officially opened by the Minister of Education, Mr J.S. Bloomfield, on Saturday 17th March 1962. The proceedings were chaired by the Mayor of Oakleigh, Cr R. J. Lovell. The Mayor of Springvale, Cr W.R. Lees presented a framed portrait of the Queen for the school. Speeches were interspersed with folk dances by the school children.

Opening Ceremony 17th March 1962 - Photo courtesy of Leader Collection, City of Kingston
An article in the Dandenong Journal stated, “Headmaster Mr James Curran thanked the school staff for help given during the formative stages; the Mothers’ Club, which helped raise £360 for school equipment; the school committee, for its valued work; and Mrs Adcock, who was responsible for the immaculate cleanliness of the buildings.”

Initially Fairbank Rd was unmade and a large, open drain ran alongside it. At the opening ceremony, Mr Curran commented on the terrible condition of the drain and that rats had been seen in the school grounds. He later described a boy who fell into the drain and emerged smelling like a “polecat”. It was also common to see up to 40 boys chasing a rat in the school yard.

Building of the high school began in 1962 but it was not ready for occupation by the beginning of the 1963 school year. For the first term the school students were bussed to Moorabbin High School.

By the end of 1963 the student enrolment at Westall State School was 256. In January 1964 Mr C.G. Stocks (District Inspector) requested that the Education Department build an additional four classrooms onto the school because of the increased rate of residential development in the area. Westall was placed on the Building Program waiting list.

By September 1964 the enrolment was approx. 270 students with one class housed in a staffroom and the 5/6 class accommodated in a spare room at Westall High School. Mr H.R. Robinson (Inspector of Schools) wrote to the Education Department to request the allocation of two portable classrooms as the enrolment was expected to rise to 300 in 1965. The Department decided that the portables wouldn’t be needed as the spare room at the high school would still be available for the next year.

Throughout the whole of 1965 a class continued to be housed at the high school and the two staffrooms were used for classes. The sick bay became the staffroom and students who became ill were treated in a storeroom. Some classes had 50 or more students. The situation was slightly alleviated by the arrival of a portable classroom in August 1965. In September an amount of $35 380 was approved for the additional four classrooms but no building had begun by the beginning of 1966.
In 1966 seventy of the 170 students in the middle and upper sections of the school arrived on the first day to discover that they were being bussed to Springvale State School because there was not enough room for them at Westall. No notice was given to the parents.

The principal, Mr L.G. Webster reported to the Education Department in February 1966 that the parent-school relationship which had peaked in 1965 was under threat because the parents felt that their children were not able to take advantage of the educational amenities that Westall parents had provided for the school. He also stated, “The support given to the school in the last year, financially, through working bees, and through personal and corporate effort and interest has been the greatest I have experienced through thirty-five years’ service”.

The Dept came under pressure from parents, local parties such as the Clayton branch of the ALP and the press. By late March arrangements had been made for two senior classes to be accommodated at Westall High School. The students who had been bussed to Springvale were then able to return to Westall. By May tenders were invited for the building of four classrooms and later that year four rooms were added to the main building.

April 6th 1966 was an exciting day in the history of both Westall schools. It was the day when a large number of students reported seeing an unidentified flying object heading towards the Grange. The UFO has been the subject of much speculation over the years.

A group of parents formed a Co-op. in November 1965 with the aim of raising funds for the building of a canteen. The plan was to construct the canteen between the two existing shelter sheds. In April 1966 the Co-op. received a special grant of $1 800, from the Education Department, towards building costs. The estimated total cost was $3 600.

Student numbers continued to grow - 391 by November 1967 - and the principal again requested more rooms. However the next two rooms were not added until 1971. This pattern of rapid growth and lack of space continued for several years.

In 1970 the Enterprise Migrant Hostel opened in Westall Rd, Springvale. The hostel provided accommodation and settlement services for migrants.

With the opening of the hostel the numbers of non-English speaking students at Westall steadily increased. During the 1960s most students at Westall came from European backgrounds, particularly Greek, Yugoslav and Italian. This began to change late in the 1970s when Asian refugees began arriving. Child Migrant Education teachers taught students with little or no English in a portable classroom or any available space in the school.

By February 1972 480 children were enrolled and there were two portable classrooms in the school. One was used for Child Migrant Education/Remedial Reading groups and the other as a classroom.
The enrolment increased to 520 by the beginning of 1973 and three portable classrooms were now available for classes. The School Committee wrote to the Education Department requesting another four permanent rooms and a library. The parents were prepared to contribute to the building of the library. By the middle of the year the School Committee was notified that four classrooms, a library and an art/craft room were to be built and staff and administration facilities were to be updated. However no date was given for the work.

In the early 1970s many government schools in Australia were perceived to be performing poorly. In 1972 the Whitlam Government commissioned the Karmel inquiry to investigate ways to increase equality of opportunity through education. The resulting report in 1973 proposed increased Commonwealth funding of school programs which sought to redress disadvantage. This resulted in schools such as Westall being provided with more resources.

At this time the State Government provided funds for an art/craft room, four new classrooms and a revamp of the staffroom facilities and the offices. The staffroom was converted to the Principal's office and a classroom became the staffroom. The four classrooms and the art/craft room were completed early in 1975. The Commonwealth Government, as part of the Karmel Disadvantaged Schools Program, funded a multi-purpose hall and free standing library, both of which were completed in 1976.

The electricity pylons on the edge of the school property were hard to ignore and during the 1970s t-shirts were printed with the pylon used as a logo. The school newsletter “Westall Whispers” and even the House banners used the same logo. Mr David Morrissey (Principal 1975 - 1976) is credited with coining the school slogan, “Knowledge is Power”.

Students wearing the Westall t-shirt

The Language Experience Approach was used in the 1970s and 1980s and was believed to be the most appropriate for the large number of ESL students in the school. Students were exposed to a common experience, e.g. a science experiment or excursion, and this provided the basis for language activities such as Walli Stories. Many of the students would not have been able to afford the excursions without the Disadvantaged Schools Program funding.

During the second week of February 1978, twenty-three Vietnamese refugees were enrolled. They were given extensive language work for a few weeks before placed in various classes throughout the school.

By 1979 the enrolment was 510 and classes were using all the available space in the school. This included two small rooms - one in the Library and one in the Hall. There were five full time Child Migrant Education teachers working in two Commonwealth portable classrooms.

The school newsletter continued to be published once a week and the twice weekly staff newsletter was called “The Westall Whimper.”
EIGHTIES TO PRESENT DAY
By the early 1980s the school's ethnic mix began to change as more Asian students were enrolled.

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Table showing the languages of the ESL students 1979 - 1991

By 1980 many of the non-English speaking students from Enterprise Hostel were sent to Noble Park Language Centre for approximately six months of intensive English language education. They were then assigned to various local schools.

In the early 1980s the staff at Westall faced many challenges presented by the large group of non-English speaking students who attended the school. However, all the teachers approached those challenges with enthusiasm and a strong sense of teamwork.

Ethnic aides were employed to provide translations and to interpret conversations.
During the late 1970s the Canteen ran at a loss and it was decided to save money by cutting the hours of the manageress (Dot Saunders). Volunteers took over running the canteen one day a week. However this made little difference to the finances and on the 15th August 1980 the canteen was closed and students began using the High School canteen.

In 1983 some teachers became interested in the possibility of using computers with the students. By 1985 a computer lab had been set up and each class began lessons with a specialist teacher. A computer club for girls was held at lunchtime once a week to give them the opportunity to explore computer programs without the boys taking over. A staff computer club was held after school for those teachers who were apprehensive about using the “new” machines.

1985 - Mr Eric Mitchell (Principal 1980 - 1987) in the computer lab with a student.

The large number of students who came from an English as a second language background prompted the introduction of the Multicultural Perspectives Program in the 1980s. All students in grades 3-6 were involved. Some of the topics covered were: World Geography and Climate, Australia, Greece, Festivals and Vietnam.

From 1984 onwards several Cambodian children were enrolled in the school. In 1985 the innovative Khmer Language Maintenance program was established and taught by Muntha Uch.

Many of the students at Westall had poor dental hygiene and the Dental Van would visit the school once a year and stay for several weeks with dental staff treating students. In 1987 a Dental Clinic was erected at Westall near the staff car park. It provided access to dental services for students from schools in the area. The Dental Clinic was removed in the early 1990s.
The School Council decided to reintroduce a school uniform in 1996. Students were encouraged to wear red and green trackpants, t-shirts, windcheaters etc.

Monday morning whole school assemblies were held on the large asphalt area between the main building and the Hall. Eventually it was decided that it would be more comfortable to assemble in the Hall and assemblies were moved to the last half hour on Friday.

In 1996 the part-time music teacher, Janet Sharples, produced "Kids at Sea"—a musical production. It was very successful and the students had a wonderful time.

In 1998 a building project combined the free standing library and the computer lab to create an information resource centre. The Morvell Centre was officially opened on the 26th May 1999 and named after the Principal at the time, Mr Des Morvell.

New, colourful, playground equipment was erected in 2006. This replaced most of the old metal monkey bars, etc.

In 2005 eight local women completed a food catering course under the auspices of Australian Migrant Education Services (AMES). They formed a company called "Smart Cuisine" and re-opened the school canteen with support from AMES. The canteen is now open three days a week.

The school uniform was changed to red and black in 2010 to distinguish Westall from local schools which had similar colours.

In 2009 the four rooms that were built in 1974 were demolished to make way for a new building under the auspices of the Federal Government's BER program. This was finally completed in 2010 and classes moved in, in October. Also in 2010, the staffroom was enlarged by taking over an adjoining classroom.
The current School Council members are: Heidi Samason (President), Richard Lloyd (Executive Officer), Ian James (Treasurer), Sue Palmer, Maria Karakostas, Lyn Davis, Tatini Tou, Samira Hamid, Vaine Tiaiti, Stephen Bone, Rosa Prgomet and Jieni Palalagi.
The school population has continued to change and in recent years has included a large proportion of students from the Pacific Islands. There has also been an increase in the number of Indian families enrolling students at the school. Most recently a small group of Saudi Arabian students have attended the school.

The school enrolment peaked at approximately 540 students in the 1980s and since then has steadily decreased. Currently there are 210 students enrolled - almost the same number as when the school began.

In the last 60 years Westall Primary School has been influenced by the many cultures of the students. It is hoped that as the school continues to evolve it will maintain the high level of acceptance that has become its trademark.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**
- *History of Clarinda, Oakleigh South and Clayton South* - Kingston Historical website
- Newspapers - *The Age, Clayton Springvale Standard, Clayton Standard, Dandenong Journal and South Eastern Standard Dandenong*
REPORTS

LIBRARY
by Pat Miller - Teacher at Westall since 1983

The parents of students at Westall recognised the need for a library from the earliest days. Money was raised to buy books and even though space was at a premium, an area was set aside for a small library.

Requests were made to the Education Department for a grant to build a library but were rejected. Finally in 1974 under the Commonwealth's Disadvantaged Schools Program, funding was made available for a stand alone library to be built.

Whilst waiting for the library to be finished a temporary library was housed in a portable classroom and run by two part-time untrained librarians. When the library was completed in 1976, Mrs Gower, the first full-time librarian, took over the job of setting up the library and running it.

In the late 1980s the library collection was computer catalogued using the ProLib system and children were able to borrow using bar-coded library cards. The catalogue could then be perused through the old card system or computer printed books. The data was stored on a "hard drive" with a capacity of 30Mb! The hard drive was a large box that stood on the shelf next to the computer. The Friday afternoon task of backing up the Library data required an Apple Ile with dual disk drives and more than fifty 5⅛" floppy disks.

The borrowing program was updated to the Bibliotech system in the 1990s and in 1998 the computer room, which was an ordinary sized classroom, and the library were merged into one building. This created an information and technology centre which was officially opened in 1999 and named the Morvell Centre after the principal at the time.

The library has been well resourced over the years and provides an area for reading and borrowing books as well as subject information for students and teachers.

Students in the Library
DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM
by Ian James - Teacher at Westall 1976 - 2004 & Deputy Principal since 2005

In 1975 Westall Primary School became a part of the Supplementary Grants Program, later to be renamed the Disadvantaged Schools Program. The program was Commonwealth funded following the Karmel Report which established the basis of funding for school education on the principle of need. Our school hall, completed in 1976, was built as a result of this initiative. The program sought to promote equality of opportunity, community participation and openness. School communities were invited to submit their proposals for funding to a local Area Committee comprised of parents and teachers from the eligible schools.

Over a period of more than fifteen years funding was used for the following programs and activities:
- Camps for all students from grade 3 to 6
- Two excursions per term for all students
- Visiting groups
- Conversion of a shelter shed into a community room
- A comprehensive social-welfare program involving five nearby schools
- Introduction of computers into the school
- Multicultural Aides
- After-school program

MULTICULTURAL LEARNING PROGRAM
by Ian James - Teacher at Westall 1976 - 2004 & Deputy Principal since 2005

This program, which fully commenced in 1983, was developed in response to the surge in Asian migration to Australia in the early eighties, when the twenty-one students from Vietnam, Cambodia and China in 1979 swelled to two hundred and ten in 1983. Out of 542 students, 499 came from a home where English was not the main language spoken. It was well thought out and ran successfully for a number of years.

A forty page document outlining the philosophy of the program, as well as suggested themes and activities, was drawn up by a committee with staff and parental input.

The program’s aims were:
- to develop a multicultural awareness, tolerance and appreciation of others.
- to provide each child with a broad knowledge and understanding of at least the main cultural groups represented in our school
- to develop in students, attitudes, values and behaviour appropriate to life in our multi-cultural society.

All grades from 3 to 6, and all staff, plus interested parents, were involved with two one hour sessions being held one afternoon per week.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
by Ian James - Teacher at Westall 1976 - 2004 & Deputy Principal since 2005

Our foray into the world of computers began in 1983 with the purchase of a Comx computer that needed to be plugged into a television set and was driven by cassette tape.

During 1985, with assistance from Disadvantaged Schools Program funding, we set up a laboratory of ten networked Apple Ile computers with colour screens – very advanced for the time. Each computer cost over $2000, and the dot matrix printer (that could be heard throughout the main building) cost more than $1000, which was a substantial amount of
money. Hard disk drives had not yet made an appearance, and it took about ten minutes to get everything up and running as each computer had to be turned on in the correct order. A couple of mobile trolleys with an Apple IIe and printer were available for classes to use. Programs, on floppy disk, included Logo, Frogger, Word Spinner, Transylvania and a very basic word processor.

In 1995 we extended the computer lab into the adjoining utility room. We also bought our first digital camera, which was the size of a dictionary and just as heavy.

A huge change occurred in 1998 when a great deal of money was spent on extending the computer laboratory and connecting it to the library, creating a large laboratory housing thirty computers and sundry laser printers. There was a mixture of Apple and Windows machines for staff and students to use.

There are now about 100 computers in various locations around the school as well as in the computer lab and the use of ICT is a regular part of the school day.

![Computer Lab. 1985](image1.png) ![Computer Lab. 2011](image2.png)

**KHMER LANGUAGE PROGRAM AT WESTALL PS**

by Muntha Crowe (Uch) - Teacher at Westall 1985 - 1991

In the mid 1980s, with more refugees from Cambodia, Westall PS had around 60% of Khmer students. The Khmer language maintenance program took place in 1985. All the Khmer students in the school were taught Khmer. The program was bilingual in parts, starting from the Prep grade. Other students in higher grades were taught Khmer as language maintenance program.

New materials for the program were produced from government grants. They included Khmer cultural materials and story books in Khmer. We had a mock wedding at school, made possible by a lot of Khmer community involvement. This occasion took place in order to produce posters and books about the Khmer wedding.

Students experienced different forms of Khmer culture, such as Khmer riddles, folk stories, dances, music and songs, as well as the understanding of traditional culture of Cambodia. In 1991 the program won the Myer Foundation Asian Languages Advancement Award. It was believed that students who participated in the program came out of the school with a sense of identity as a Cambodian with the feel of the Khmer culture, understanding their place in the general Australian society. Many of them still speak Khmer.
ART
by Lis Spencer (Miss Pink) - Teacher at Westall 1983 - 2010

These are some brief highlights of Art Works since 1988 when I became the art teacher.

- Six students attended the Royal Melbourne Show and entered knitting.
- Australian Cloth Wall hanging, celebrating Federation, near the computer room.
- A pavement artist, Peter Voice, worked to produce the Australian chalk picture that hangs outside the main door.
- A mural about migration was displayed outside the Ian Potter gallery (Federation Square) - run by Dulux.
- Every grade made a fabric banner about themselves for International Link Week held in our hall.
- A mural of The Three Bears was made for the Monash Hospital Children's ward.
- Many students' work was sent to decorate the foyer of Asian Arts Teachers Conference-Monash University.
- Westall began its association with The Grange - planting indigenous trees, bushes and grasses.
- Students designed the front cover for "Multicultural Teaching" journal (Melbourne University) and had an article inside about teaching jewellery to Asian students.
- Environmental display at the Royal Exhibition Building.
- A ceramic tile in the new Southern Stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (M.C.G.).
- Westall's Family tile wall by Lyn Darton - Artist in Residence, outside main door.
- Cartoonist Richard Galbraith taught students cartoon skills.
- Fishes mural painted by grades 1 and 2 along art room wall.
- Grade 6 exit projects of "Welcome" sign, mural on back wall of art room.
- Mural on canteen building - insects painted on sporting bodies.
- Creation of Time mural by grades 3 and 4 on Art Room wall near library.
- A month in the Environmental Calendar, and many highly commended entries.
- Puppets made and carried in the Clayton Festival Parade.
- Photographs of students' 3d models were used as a cover of an art suppliers catalogue - CAM Wholesalers.
- Banners made and displayed in the Dandenong Sumnation Festivals.
- Huge banner for Kingston Council Arts Centre, hung outside building along the Nepean Highway.
- Third prize in the Amnesty International Competition through the Kingston Council.
- Tiled murals sponsored by Bunnings, on water conservation and inspirational words.
- The students' art works have regularly been presented to the local community in venues such as Commonwealth Bank, Clayton R.S.L., Oakleigh Council Chambers, Kingston Council Offices, Oakleigh Central Shopping Centre, Parkmore Shopping Centre and Lexington Gardens.

Students in the Art Room

WESTALL’S SPORTING HISTORY
by Donna Westie - Teacher at Westall since 1990

Westall Primary has enjoyed much success in sport over the decades. Sport teams have made their mark at State level since 1981 and teams are still competing at that level. You need only enter our hall to see the results at District and State level proudly displayed on the walls. What is even more remarkable is that the hall was built in the 1970s because Westall was identified as a disadvantaged school with students who did not have the same sporting opportunities as most primary children in the State of Victoria.

The school Physical education program has capitalised on the need to give Westall students every opportunity to compete in sport. To this day, there is still an unwritten policy that allows all sporting teams and individuals to go as far as they can and so many teams and individuals do.

In the last decade or so, Westall’s rugby league and volleyball teams are still highly regarded and respected in Victoria.

VPSSA STATE TEAM REPRESENTATIVES

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Westall Primary School - 50 Years - 1961 – 2011
JUNIOR SCHOOL COUNCIL
by Fiona Barrie - Teacher at Westall since 1996

In 1999 I took over Keith Meador's grade as he moved into the position of Assistant Principal. It was my first year at this level and I was new to a lot of the protocols which took place in the senior school.

House Captains are elected at the beginning of the year. The children are divided into four colour groups and the boys and girls in grade 6 introduce themselves so that the children can vote for their favourite, and we would ultimately hope, the best leader of each house. However as we gave out the awards I noticed that some of the quieter, less charismatic children were missing out on positions of responsibility even though I felt that they were well suited to be role models for their peers throughout the school.

This led me to speak to the principal at the time, Des Morvell, and I suggested that we form a Junior School Council which would meet monthly, raise money for charity, host social events at the school and discuss issues which affect the children at the school. I asked for volunteers and over fifty children applied. It took a while to sift through the applications and interview possible candidates. The JSC originally started with eight members and this has increased to fourteen in 2011 as School Captains and Vice Captains are now included as a matter of course.

The JSC hosts discos, free dress days, a day for the Leukaemia Foundation and Daffodil Day. It sells bandanas for Canteen, jelly babies for Juvenile Diabetes and badges for Legacy. The JSC has held a Super Hero Day, Footy Day and a large cake stall to raise money for the Grade 6 Graduation.

The council meets once a month and discusses issues which concern the students. A working party was organised to help select the new playground equipment, and lights and a mirror ball were bought for our discos. (Please let us know if you happen to see our ball - it has gone missing from the hall and our dancing has lacked a little sparkle since then.)

I am extremely proud of the students’ efforts raising money for the tsunami in Indonesia, bushfires in Australia and the earthquake in Samoa. We do not have families with a lot of money but we do have kind, generous families with a lot of heart and children who are great leaders and show the same compassion as their parents.
RECOLLECTIONS

LETTER (extract)
written by Mrs Joan Livingston – Parent

Lots of memories, as we lived in Culshaw Avenue from 1956 till 1974. We saw the erection of the Primary School, the High School and of course Monash Uni. My children (some of them) attended all three. As both my husband and I were involved in both the Primary and High School Committees, the memories are somewhat intertwined. A map of the area (as it was), has produced the names and locations of most of the residents at the time. We were a very small, almost isolated area of Springvale, which meant that the families & children attending school were all well known to each other. Some of us were migrants, attending school, though the families of Ericksens, Sahlstroms, Caddicks, Marquis’s and the Jolly’s had been resident in the area for some time.

The erection of the school was welcomed as both the Springvale and Brown Road schools were a distance away. The roads were unmade and apart from those on Westall Road very new, and in Fairbank Avenue which was mainly sand, we counted the marks left by the copperhead snakes which were prevalent in the area. When there was a bush fire in the Pines, the boys, one of whom was my son Andrew, attacked the emerging copperheads with a piece of bent wire kept for the occasion, and the bush with wet sacks.

We had the school keys stolen one day as the headmaster (his name escapes me, except he wore waistcoat which was always buttoned) kept the keys on a board just inside the door. As the ground was mainly just grass, a cricket practice site was established by the Dads, but I can’t remember, in those early days any football posts.

As the Westall Kindergarten was in its early days too (short cut through our garden) we were a very sociable area, and on any occasion when a barbeque or a Crazy Whist night was organized, most of the families round about became involved. (Trivial incidents, I know, but all part and parcel of life in Westall).

WESTALL PRIMARY STUDENT 1961
by Neville Heaney Grade 6 Student at Westall 1961

I attended Springvale Primary School for grades 3, 4 and 5 and wanted to stay, but Westall Primary was opening for the 1961 year so I was required to change schools. The headmaster was Mr Curran, an older man who spoke to us in a kind way and I think we felt this new school would be ok. I was shy, but I remember thinking how friendly all the kids were in my class.

My teacher for grade 6 was Mr Loveland. He was ex Navy, stood tall, spoke in a friendly but firm way, and he knew how to talk to and relate to boys.

The school was quite bare, the oval just a graded area, which Mr Loveland and us boys raked around the edges for some definition. We didn't even have goal and point posts for footy. We told Mr Loveland where the bush was and one day, with axes and tomahawks from home, we set off to find suitable trees to cut down. We dragged them back to school, trimmed them to size and painted them. The oval was "stepped out" for size, holes dug, and in went our own homemade posts for football.

Unfortunately the Westall footy team was not very successful. We travelled to other schools by car with Mr Curran or Mr Loveland and I remember we got thrashed every time. Like I said the school was pretty bare, one day Mr Loveland took a couple of us boys to local businesses to gather wood or vinyl or fabric scraps, to provide materials for art and craft.
Grade 6 students did go on excursions. One day we went by Grendas bus to a large passenger liner at Station Pier. That was very exciting.

We put on a school concert in a room which had a large folding divider through the centre. Different classes made decorations to dress the room. Mr Loveland asked if any student could sing or dance, and we were encouraged to come up with ideas for the concert. Lynette George, Lynette Smith and Sharon Packenham (?) sang "My heart is an open book". They sang well, it was very good. Leslie Falshaw could strum a guitar and was supposed to accompany me while I sang Rick Nelson's "Travelling Man". But he didn't turn up on the day, so I sang it solo. I was very nervous, but the mums and dads were still generous in their applause. The most embarrassing part of the concert was when they asked me to sit in a chair while, the awful (I thought), Sarah Livingstone, sang, "Wouldn't it be lovely", while walking around the chair.

One day a new boy turned up. He was "different", dressed in strange leather shorts. His name was Helmut Schmidt(?). Helmut was a quiet boy, a good student and a very fast runner, almost as fast as me.

I don't remember any "foreigners" in our neighbourhood or wider area in those days, just about all Aussies. Now the Westall Primary School and surrounding area is full of boys and girls from all over the world. I hope they can all look back, one day, on their memories of Westall Primary and their teachers and friends with enjoyment and happiness.

WESTALL PRIMARY SCHOOL IN THE 1960s
by Christine Bird – Student at Westall in the 1960s

I'm Christine, now 55. I attended from Grade 2 to Grade 6 in the mid-60s.

I can remember some of my teachers: Ms Leishman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Marshall(?), Mr Mason & Mr Campbell. I can remember so many little fellow-students but there are others I'd need to hear names or see pictures to recall.

Subjects were English and spelling, arithmetic, social studies and geography I think – something like that. A man would also visit the school weekly to provide "religious instruction". I did reasonably academically – if I liked the teacher I performed well.

The most memorable feature for me of each day in the classroom was my desk. Two would share each desk, usually for the entire year, and where we sat is where we remained for that year. We graduated from pencils to ink pens (i.e. dipped into inkwells); messy enough for a right-handed child but for us lefties it was a challenge.

In the classroom, compliance – strict adherence to conventional code of conduct at the time – was not to be questioned. Anyone even contemplating non-compliance was dealt with according to an individual teacher's mores – we had kindly teachers but others relied on authoritarian rule; the strap was utilised a great deal, and in front of everyone, the results there for all to see. Class clowns did entertain us but with that went severe punishment. We had school uniforms to wear but not everyone did so - I had to and hated it; worse were the hats we had to wear. Perhaps it was not such a bad thing as I was not able to wear the pretty clothes some of the others could.

Assemblies usually "compered" by the headmaster were the norm – in fact every student present on the day had to attend, and "God Save The Queen" was the national anthem we sang – ever so slowly. And from each assembly we all had to march (to equally slow music), usually single-file and very orderly back to our classrooms – no talking.
Milk would be delivered in little bottles each morning for "playtime" and we were expected to drink it, and most did.

Sports days I can remember reasonably well – I was a fast runner and enjoyed them. We’d be given a little ribbon if we placed and I can remember someone once saying “that’s a good effort curly top!” I still run, admittedly not with the same gusto!

I can remember the day of the widely-reported UFO sightings and while I did not see anything in the sky I can well-remember the atmosphere and highly-excitable behaviour of so many students that day, extremely out-of-the-ordinary, and I later did find one burnt patch in The Grange, reported to be a landing site – there was nothing else it could have been.

I can remember the daily walk to and from school (most kids did walk in those days), in my case along Westall Road, a distance of about a kilometre. Winters were memorable because footpaths were non-existent along much of the route and puddles would freeze over and remain frozen for some hours. We walked past or sometimes through The Grange which was considerably more sizeable then; we’d see and hear frogs (thousands of them), copious and always out-of-control blackberry bushes, thistles and a lot of pine trees and the crumbling old homestead.

Non-school issues at the time included the Vietnam war and conscription, currency change from pounds to dollars, and after-school television was seemingly all about animals: Lassie, Rin Tin Tin, My Friend Flicka, Fury, National Velvet and so on, and music was changing with The Beatles and like-bands. Westall, apart from Clayton, was a largely non-developed area with plenty of market gardening and some industry (GMH and Humes Pipes). As kids we’d occupy ourselves finding bottles, each bottle worth threepence I think.

Westall Primary School was a good little school. I can remember enjoying my time there, although there was a touch of apprehension at times courtesy the odd school bully, but overall I remember fondly some of my little friends and particularly my teachers – for some reason one rarely forgets teachers. I visited the school some months ago and was amazed to see it is virtually as it was in the 60s: the same walls and windows, steps, and incredibly, the same taps I used to drink from, and simply seeing the same buildings and being around the school brought back fond memories.

**LETTER (extract)**
written by Muriel Ward - Infant Mistress at Westall in the 1960s

When I first taught there, there were only 6 rooms and we taught in every nook and cranny also in very crowded classrooms. I remember many over 50 children – mine of over 22 nationalities – some of them just off the boat or plane and speaking no English – a Swedish boy I taught English through Arithmetic – own only common ground; some of them were second generation Australians who lived in the homes nearby.

The paddocks were market gardens and further afield were scrub and trees where the boys used to go and bring back lives snakes to school.

I remember most clearly trucks of newly washed carrots going off to market – the lovely caroty colour and the green.

Remember the panic with the children the day the flying saucer landed on the golf course. “Mrs Ward there are little green men there.”

But we learnt and we had fun and beauty.
Remember the plot of ground outside the staffroom and Mr Jackson’s Office which was ablaze with all sorts of flowers where every child in my grade had a plant of each kind of flower labelled with their own names on ice-cream sticks, and where they used to spend all dinner hours watching them grow. Mr Wood – the nursery man gave us the seedlings.

What about the Centenary – or Bicentenary of Captain Cook? - when we made a scale model of the Endeavour with paper and cardboard using all the skills of Infant handwork. The children of Grade 2 wrote a play for it and dressed up in authentic costumes and performed it in the yard. The difficulty we had in getting the model from the classroom through the door, and down the corridor into the yard for the performance! I didn’t mention the children by name for fear of missing one – they were all equally important.

The staff were wonderful too who backed Mr Jackson and me up, and Miss Toleman who assisted them succeeded me.

I remember my last night there - a hot daylight saving one, just on dark about 9pm, when I was finishing up. It was very lonely (Westall was in the middle of paddocks then) when two policemen came knocking on the door thinking vandals had broken in. I told them I was only getting the school ready to open the next year.

1968 MEMORIES
by Kay Clark (Dobbins) - Teacher at Westall 1968

Grade 1: I taught 42 students many of them did not speak English as they came from the Westall Migrant Hostel. Beginners, 1 and 2 were in the Infant School with an Infant Mistress as the head person.

The school just seemed to be stuck in a great big paddock and was a long low grey building typical of that era. I lived in Glenhunty and as I had no car at first I caught the train to Westall Station and walked to the school, unless I got a lift from someone! I very quickly got my licence and bought a brand new car - a Mini - so I could drive to work. The children were all excited about my new car and all wrote stories about it. We just parked in one part of the "paddock" and were likely to get bogged if it rained.

Literacy/English: We used Words in Colour so there were charts all over the room with each sound in English having its own colour so we needed lots of different coloured chalk to reproduce the "sounds".

We used John and Betty readers so we used Playmates in Grade 1 for the entire year.

Maths:
Cuisenaire was all the rage and so Maths was all done with coloured rods which could have a different value!! Confusing for most kids!

Groups: Classes were divided into groups and we would work with one group while one group worked from the blackboard and another perhaps from a roneoed worksheet. Boy were they messy nasty things!!

Arts: We did art in our classroom so one group might get to paint while others drew or coloured in.

Music: We listened to Music of the Air broadcast over the p.a. system and used the Sing books.

Nature Study/Mouse Plague: I remember that the students were fascinated by the mould on 'dead' sandwiches and fruit in their brown paper lunch bags and so we set up a table for
growing mould on things. A little later the cleaner asked me to get rid of it all as the mice were having a feast. I remember mice running up the blind cords and one teacher unwittingly took one home in her bag and it caused great panic when it jumped out in the train!

Chicken Pox: We had an epidemic of chicken pox that year and most of the young students came down with it, closely followed by the teachers. It seemed that every few minutes a child would come and show a tummy and say "Look Miss I got spots!" I caught them myself and was very ill with them. There were so few children and teachers left that the classes were combined and taught by the lucky few who escaped the plague!

Other memories: One day a week we had school bank day and the students bought their money and bank books and we sent the money to the office to go the the State Savings Bank of Victoria.

SOME MEMORIES OF WESTALL P.S.
by Hartley Tobin - Vice-Principal at Westall 1973 & Term 1 1974

The principal, Royce Dixon, and I both arrived new to the school at the start of 1973. The other Vice-principal, Elizabeth Toleman, was already established at the school and extremely helpful with background information. Then, Westall P.S. was almost surrounded by light to heavy industries which provided employment for the parents of many of the pupils.

The school site was shared with Westall High School with an open drain as an arbitrary boundary. It seemed an effective boundary as there was no real problems with transgressions from either side.

The school had a huge migrant component as the Enterprise Migrant Hostel, close by, was the first home for many families newly arrived from overseas and many of these families spoke no, or little, English. This certainly added variety to the school population. During my time I found there were countries in the world that I had never heard of and it was not unusual on a Monday morning to have the manager of the Hostel waiting with a family, or families, of new arrivals ready to enrol the children before taking the parents off to find employment. Where families spoke no English, when possible, the Hostel Manager brought an interpreter with him. The school had some special staff to help cater for this situation.

One Monday that sticks in my mind was the arrival of ten (I think that's correct) Turkish children with not one word of English. I was amazed that within a few weeks these children had picked up enough language to slot into many of the curriculum activities. All credit goes the special staff who worked with these children.

I recall Jill Hayden (one of the ESL teachers) would take several of these children along the corridor, stopping at the various rooms, and introducing the children to the various members of staff. The Vice-principals' office, where Elizabeth Toleman and I were based was a regular stopping point. Jill would say to the children, "Say 'Good morning' to Miss Toleman. Say 'Good morning' to Mr Tobin." We would reply using the particular child's/children's name(s). After a short while these children would move back and forth from their class room(s) to their special English lessons unaccompanied and one little girl (sorry I can't recall her name) in particular always made a point of stopping at the door of our office with a "Good morning, Miss Toleman." "Good morning, Mr Tobin." With the development of English skill came a sense of humour, and very soon this little girl would look me in the eye, and with a broad grin, say, "Good morning, Miss Toleman." and then, looking Elizabeth in the eye, say, "Good morning, Mr Tobin." This was followed by a cheeky giggle, an apology and a correction and then she would run off to her class.
We had an outdoor Xmas concert. There was no school hall but one of the parents provided the tray of his semitrailer for a stage and with some improvisation, by way of decoration and the P.A. system everyone enjoyed themselves.

In August 1973, Darryl Trott (grade 6 teacher) organized a Bus Trip/Camp to the Latrobe Valley and The Prom. Weatherwise, August is not the ideal time to visit The Prom but the weather was very kind to us, so much so, that the day before we were to return to school, many of the pupils found an excuse to 'fall' into the water. The following day, at The Prom, was warm and sunny, but in Melbourne it was totally different. After lunch, as we were returning to the school, I picked up on the radio that Melbourne was having miserable weather and their maximum temperature was 6°C [I think that’s a record to this day.]. When the bus arrived at school, I think the parents were expecting to see their 'little darlings' as frozen lumps of ice. The looks on the children’s faces told another story.

MEMORIES OF WESTALL

by Enza Calabro - Teacher at Westall 1975 - 1990

I started teaching at Westall in my second year of teaching in 1975. I remember how excited I was on my first day and I couldn’t wait to start and I had a grade 5! There were 35 students in the class and Westall had about 570 students. There were no carpets on the floors in the classroom and the students sat in desks in pairs.

There were no computers and the teachers produced student worksheets on a purple ink fordigitograph machine. The purple ink stained your hands when fresh off the press.

All the teachers were very young, mainly in their 20’s and there were a couple of old teachers who must have been at least 40!! I remember wearing mini-skirts to school and chunky platform heels (it was noisy walking on the floorboards). Many of the young male teachers had long hair.

The blackboard was used each day and some of the blackboards each week looked like works of art with beautiful drawings and exquisite handwriting. There was a weekly 30 minute singing radio program for each class and each student had a song book with the songs. The weekly newsletter for parents was called ‘The Westall Whispers’ and the emblem of the school on the newsletter and on school t-shirts was an electricity pylon.

The Enterprise Hostel was nearby and each week new students would arrive in the classroom who spoke very little English. It was a transient and very multicultural population and at the end of each week each teacher would have to send a form to the office with the number of new students and the students who left the school during the week. One Friday I sent the form to the office and the child I sent to the office returned the form on Monday signed by his mother!

There were many Italian, Greek and other European students when I started and as the 1970’s progressed we started getting more and more Vietnamese students, many of whom were boat people. I stayed at Westall until 1990 and during this time the multicultural mix slowly changed with ever increasing number of students coming from Asia.

The school was an exciting place to be part of and I loved every minute at Westall. The best thing about the school was the students who wanted to learn and were wonderful to teach. The school was part of the 'Disadvantaged Schools' Program' and because of this we had an excellent excursion program and great teaching resources. There were lots of portables and we had a double portable classroom which we called 'The Hilton'. The portables became very hot in summer and there was no air-conditioning. On very hot days it was cooler teaching the children outside under a tree than in the classroom.
The other great thing about Westall was the great staff. There were so many fantastic teachers who worked so hard and were so enthusiastic and wanted to provide the best possible program for the students. We also had some dynamic leaders including principals such as Eric Mitchell and Des Morvell. Gisele Ariove worked in the office as the Business Manager and started soon after I commenced and retired only a few years ago and we are still great friends.

I made some lifelong and very special friends at Westall. We learnt from each other, planned together and shared resources. They helped make teaching fun and I loved going to work each day. Westall Primary will always hold a special place in my heart.

I loved the school community, it was an exciting school and I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to work there for over 15 years. I will always treasure my memories of Westall Primary.

1980 – 1987 THE HALCYON DAYS OF EDUCATION IN VICTORIA
by Eric Mitchell - Principal at Westall 1980 - 1987

I was very privileged to be the Principal of Westall Primary School during this very special time of education in Victoria. It was a time of much experimentation with new ways to deliver education and support for students and their families. Gone were the days of the dreaded inspector’s visits. In their place was a Regional Board of Education and much more freedom for Principals to respond to their local community. I represented the area on the Regional Board. Bill Bainbridge was the Director – a man of vision, willing to challenge all the members to think broadly about the issues he brought before them.

The community too was changing and becoming much more diverse. Westall Primary School became one of the major schools for the children from the Enterprise Migrant Hostel and other newly arrived families in the area. The children all walked to school from Enterprise – quite a distance. The Primary School and the Secondary School had different starting and finishing times. I decided to change the Primary School times to coincide with the Secondary School so that older students could supervise their younger siblings. I canvassed the idea with the parents but one parent complained to the Minister, a full investigation into my outrageous proposal was conducted and my idea firmly rejected! How different it is today!

One of the unique attributes of Westall was the number of young teachers on the staff. They brought enthusiasm, energy and a ‘willingness to have a go’ no matter what the challenges. The team spirit was amazing. The staff ran the co-ordinators’ meetings. I would attend at the beginning to raise relevant issues and then I left them to make the decisions. They never let me down. Sometimes they even told me when I had gone too far!

Integration of students from all parts of the world was paramount. Sport proved to be an ideal way to achieve this. Soccer became the focus for the boys. No matter which country they came from their ball skills were extraordinary. For several years Westall Primary School was the State Schools Soccer Premiers. Their coach had some unique approaches to sport coaching and education. He ran weekly mental arithmetic competitions over the loud speaker for all grades 3 – 6! No prize just the honour and glory of being that week’s winner.

The girls were all netball players. While not becoming State Champions they did very well at a more local level.

Westall Primary and Secondary Schools worked closely together at this time. Cross Age Tutoring between Year 10 and Grade 4 students and Year 12 and Preps were a feature of
this co-operation. Year 12 students helped with the Preps Perceptual Motor Program and the year 10 students helped the Year 4 students with their written language. The Primary School students benefited from the extra supervision and the Secondary school students benefited from the practical experience which fitted with their academic studies.

The International Day run by the Secondary School in the ground of the Primary School was one of the highlights of the year and is another example of what can be achieved when schools on the same campus work together. The parents provided the wonderful food, the students a lot of the entertainment. They were colourful, happy days.

The newly arrived students often had little or no English language. Their classes were separate to the other classes. This created 'a school within a school'. It was decided to integrate all the students into the general classes and provide extra help within that setting. At each year level there were 3 classes and 4 teachers. The timetable was organised so that the classes had art, phys. ed. and library at the same time. This enabled the 4 teachers to meet and plan their work.

The late Professor Michael Clyne, a linguist specialist from Monash University, was brought in to research the effect of this change on the students. He found that they had not experienced any educational disadvantage but had gained a social advantage from the change.

These were the days when the Commonwealth and State governments recognised that education was more than the 'three Rs'. The Federal Government's Disadvantaged Schools Program provided funding to employ social workers and youth workers. We were privileged to have a number of highly skilled very young workers, some of whom later worked in quite high profile positions.

One of them set up a Friday Night Youth Club. When the funding ceased the young people were not prepared to give the club up so my Friday nights from then on were no longer my own!

Ethnic Aide positions were relatively new at the time and at that stage were funded by the Commonwealth Government. They were a vital part of the school structure and made an enormous contribution to the way in which students from diverse backgrounds settled in to the school. They also helped to make the parents welcome at the school.

The State Government provided a huge range of personal student services. Specialist teachers to test the students and develop individual programs for them were always available and counsellors provided an automatic weekly service. These services also helped to develop the skills of the classroom teachers.

Dental health was not forgotten. The School Dental Van came to the school as part of the regular service. The dental staff were so appalled at the state of the migrant students' teeth (many had come from refugee situations) that they arranged for a permanent dental surgery to be placed onsite at the school.

This was the time when computers were being introduced into some schools. Somehow Westall found the money to develop one of the early computer classrooms and computerise the library!

Westall always had a reputation of opening itself to the community. Ethnic schools were beginning to be created. The Saturday Greek School was the first one at Westall so when the Vietnamese also wanted to establish their school it was held on Sundays. The Vietnamese school functioned at Westall for many years until it outgrew the premises. It is now a weekly school of over 1000 students. Sharing their classrooms was not something
that came easy to teachers but good communication meant that any problems were eventually resolved.

Westall Primary School in those days was a great example of the way in which diversity can not only work well but can enrich everyone’s life.

RECOLLECTIONS OF WESTALL PRIMARY SCHOOL 1983-1999
by Des Morvell - Deputy Principal at Westall 1983 - 1987 & Principal 1987 - 1999
My reflections on seventeen years at Westall Primary School have led me to record the following impressions of outstanding features of the School during that period of time.

Firstly the teachers and support staff were extraordinarily talented, dedicated and generous in working to encourage all students to gain as much as possible from the curriculum provided to them.

They were supported by a small but wonderfully loyal band of parents who worked very hard as School councillors and Parents and Friends Association members to help create good policies and secure equipment and resources for the benefit of students and staff.

The vast majority of students appreciated the School for the excellent quality of education offered to them. They responded with a wonderful spirit of co-operation to create a productive and harmonious school spirit.

FOND MEMORIES OF WESTALL

The best part of Westall Primary School was always the students. We did the best we could to keep the ageing facilities to a reasonable standard but it was always the compliments about student behaviour we received during camps, excursions and sporting events that reminded me how lucky we were. I often thought many adults could learn valuable lessons about tolerance and multiculturalism from the children. Waves of immigrants from a huge range of countries trusted Westall to teach their children the basic skills for a happy and productive life in Australia.

I became Principal just before the turn of the century after a few years as the Assistant Principal and some time as the Year 6 teacher before that. Room 11 was our home. For a teacher the Westall students offered an opportunity to have fun. We could attempt new and exciting lessons without the worry of things getting out of hand. Sometimes wanting to do the right thing resulted in the amusing. Once on a camp at Beechworth the students were settling into an old two-storey building. The camp owner gave a little safety talk as every child moved down the hallway of the building and the manager asked them to ‘watch the step’. After thirty minutes unpacking we noticed one Year 6 boy still in the hallway. Asked what he was doing he told us, “that man asked me to watch that step”. So he did!

School Camps alternated between Echuca and a seaside camp at Port Fairy or Warrnambool. Some great memories came from a range of activities.

Each year we would hatch chickens. They hatched a few days after being purchased and immediately they imprinted on their new ‘parents’. The students loved their chicks and would take them for daily walks and generally take care of them. However other teachers did not enjoy the smell and noise as much as 6M. Many returning ex-students still talk about their chicken experiences.
During the 90's the school remained very multi cultural with the majority of students coming from Asian countries. Most students also attended weekend school and were very keen to learn. My first week at Westall, I prepared the first Term's homework before school started. I was called away to the phone on Friday. I asked a student to hand out the photocopied sheets. On Monday some very tired students came to school after completing 10 weeks of homework. All I could think of was how was I ever going to correct all this?

When I became the Principal I was left a school in very good shape by Mr Des Morvell. A new computer centre was built and that vision has been a real asset to Westall ever since. I could always tell if the class had computer next because the boys were first to line up.

It was about this time that large numbers of Pacific Islanders moved into Clayton South. They all seemed to be related. They brought a love of Music and Sport with them. We had a choir that performed regularly at assembly, at local nursing homes and at Bunnings.

Westall Primary School has always produced some wonderful athletes. Individuals who had only played their sport at school made it into the Victorian Aussie Rules, Cricket, Tennis and Rugby League teams. Teams from the school regularly made the State Finals in T-Ball, Volleyball and Rugby League. They have been State Champions many times over. These achievements are displayed on the walls of the school gym.

Of course schools are driven by the dedicated work of the teachers. I have witnessed many times, the teachers, going that extra mile to help children achieve fully. It is difficult to write about Westall without thinking of hundreds of incidents in which teachers made a real difference. I am avoiding mentioning teachers by name as I know that I will probably miss someone important or offend someone.

On behalf of all the students who attended Westall in my time as Principal I wish to thank all the teachers, support staff and office staff. The School Council supported me in everything I did. Particularly, I would like to thank Mr Allan Street and Mrs Heidi Samason who were School Council Presidents.

I have met some wonderful people through my job. I have had some marvellous experiences and have been privileged to be a part of Westall Primary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following for their financial support for the 50th Anniversary celebrations:

Norm and Bev Bury
Springvale RSL
Springvale RSL Women's Auxillary
Students at Westall - Pizza and Hot Dog days
APPENDIX 1

WESTALL'S PRINCIPALS

James F. Curran 1961-1964  
L.G. Webster 1965-1967  
Charles C. Jackson 1968-1971

Royce S. Dickson 1973-1974  
L.A. Monaghan 1975-1975  
David Morrissey 1975-1976

Alan R. Hill 1977-1979  
Eric W. Mitchell 1980-1987  
Desmond Morvell 1987-1999

Keith Mealer 2000-2008  
Richard Lloyd 2009 to present date

N.B.  Feb. – May, 1972 – temporary principal Norman Deckert  
APPENDIX 2

In 1966 an unidentified object was seen in the sky by students from Westall State and High Schools. The following is an article written by Shane Ryan who has been researching this incident in recent years.

The 1966 Westall Flying Saucer Incident

It might surprise many more recent students and staff at Westall Primary School to learn that their school, and the adjacent secondary school, were at the centre of Australia’s largest mass-witness sighting of a flying saucer – both in the air and on the ground - in April 1966. Moreover, that it was a story so controversial, and so sensitive, that discussion of it was discouraged and that, if some had their way, all memory of it would one day have been erased. However, for many of the hundreds of witnesses, the impact of the event was so strong that four decades later when I approached them to record their experiences, they graciously and enthusiastically cooperated, leading to the creation of a documentary film, called Westall ’66: A Suburban UFO Mystery, first broadcast on television in 2010.

On Wednesday, 6 April 1966, the second last day of Term 1, at around 10:15 am, something very unexpected appeared in the sky above Westall. First noticed by Westall High School students doing PE on the sportsground, the strange object soon came into the view of Westall State School students outside enjoying morning recess. It made no noise as it flew low over the schools, having already, according to some witnesses, touched down over the high school’s western boundary fence (where Brady Avenue is now). Most of the state school students, and the teachers supervising them, noticed the silvery-white, metallic looking object as it ascended and flew down toward the pine trees at the western end of The Grange. They watched in awe as this object – shaped like an upside down bowl or saucer – fitted from one side of the sky to the other at incredible speeds and angles – before disappearing from sight as it descended behind the grove of pine trees. The object had no wings or fins, no engines or rotors or propellers, no ropes or balloons, no windows or hatches, no markings, letters or numbers. It didn’t float, it flew, and it easily out-maneuvered the five light aircraft that some students remember seeing buzzing around the object, as if trying to observe it.

For the state school students, the other powerful memory they have is that of dozens of high school students running across the school property, jumping up on to the fences under the power pylon to get a better view of the object, and then, in disbelief, these younger students watched as their older high school counterparts did what everybody knew was against the rules, when they jumped the fences, crossed Fairbank Road, and raced toward The Grange in hot pursuit of their mysterious quarry.

The flying saucer rested on (or near) the ground at The Grange for a few minutes, before lifting off, turning on to its side, and then vanishing from view in seconds. A few high school students reached the object, near the pine trees, in time to see this at close-range; most students reached the site of the landing only after it had departed. Most of these students, however, and many, many more students from both the high and state schools, as well as some teachers, and local workers and residents, visited the site of the landing over the coming hours and days, and discovered a huge circle of flattened grass, with a discoloured ring around the edge, in a grassy paddock at The Grange.

Forty years later, at an anniversary gathering for witnesses held at the Westall Tennis Club Hall, the deputy headmaster of the state school in 1966 told me that he remembered returning to school that day about lunchtime and, although he had missed the flying saucer incident, he could clearly see how excited and disturbed many of the students were – indeed that some of them seemed quite distressed about what they had seen. During the course of my research over the past six years, forty-one Westall State School students have confided in me what they remember seeing that day. Many of them have very clear memories of watching the flying saucer in the sky, and where it was in relation to landmarks they knew well, such as the bike sheds and power pylons, and memories too of the strange, perfectly-round circle in the grass, in an area that was off-limits to many primary school children. There are some students, too, who have recounted memories of seeing uniformed men at The Grange inspecting the landing site, and that these men did not welcome being observed! Others recall seeing such men – in police or military-type uniforms - at or around the school. Some remember seeing police, fire brigade and military vehicles driving past the school, en route to The Grange. Many feel that they were not welcome to discuss what they had seen that day in their classes, and for some, indeed, that such discussion was actively discouraged at an “official” level.

A conspiracy of silence continues to shroud the events of Westall 1966. There are people who still refuse to talk about it. Whatever it was, surely, after the passage of 45 years, there can no longer be valid continuing national security implications. It was all a very long time ago – it is time for the full truth about Westall to see the light of day.

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