

PLOD ESSAY NOVEMBER 2025

“Snippets from the newspaper archives of W&DHS focussing on the Wonthaggi State School Mothers Club”

This month's PLOD Essay is presented by Nola Thorpe. Many locals will remember Nola as a teacher at St. Joseph's School, Wonthaggi, and later as the librarian at Newhaven College, so it is not surprising that her Essay focus is on a school, the Wonthaggi State School No. 3650 in the 1930s – 1965.

Since retiring in 2006 to the present day, Nola has been the backbone in cataloguing W&DHS's Local Newspaper Collection. She also enjoys sharing Wonthaggi's history with school groups and visitors, particularly children who visit the museum when she is on duty.

The articles this month should bring back a range of memories relating to the reader's school days, whether that be Wonthaggi and district, Victoria, Australia or beyond.



Gold Cup for Competition

GIFT TO STATE SCHOOL

Mothers Club Shows Enthusiasm

(By Les. Jabara)

The enthusiasm shown by the Wonthaggi State School Mothers' Club is evident from the interview I had last week with several of the committee. There was much rejoicing on Wednesday evening last when it became known that a gold cup was being presented to the State School by the Wonthaggi State



Presented to the Wonthaggi State School by the Wonthaggi Mothers' Club, for football competition during the coming season

School Mothers' Club. This will be competed for by the inter-house school teams during the football season, and should create no end of interest amongst the children.

It is well-worth mentioning the work that has been done by this club during its term of office. Mrs Edwards (hon. Treas.) informs me the club has spent over £32 in school ground improvements, a further amount of £59 was also handed to the chairman of the school committee to be used for school equipment. It is also interesting to note that the club was instrumental in raising the money for the school kiddies recent visit to the zoo.

Mrs Derrick (president), Mrs Laing (vice-president), Mrs Chambers (secretary) and members of the committee are to be commended on the excellent work they are doing for the State School. During their term of office these ladies have raised in all, £420.

Mothers' Club

CELEBRATE 4th. ANNIVERSARY

The Wonthaggi State School Mother Club celebrated the 4th. anniversary of the club on Friday last. To mark the occasion a social and dance was held in the Wonthaggi Town Hall. Amongst the guests was Mrs McColl, vice-president of the Victorian Mothers' Club Federation. When she arrived in Wonthaggi she was met and entertained by the members of the mothers' club. The visiting lady was entertained at dinner at Mr Taberner's Wonthaggi Hotel on Friday. In the evening, Mrs McColl received a stirring reception when she took the platform to address the members of the mothers' club and those present in the Town Hall on Friday night. In her address, she said she appreciated the privilege extended to her to be present at the 4th. birthday celebration. In stressing the work of the club Mrs McColl said she admired the report read out by the energetic secretary, Mrs Derrick and could see from it that great work was being done by the club, she congratulated the members for what they have done for the school and the children. The work done by the mothers' club has made happier surroundings for children throughout Victoria and thus the children like coming to school better than they did a few years ago. Mrs McColl stressed the point that it was not sufficient for clubs to work in their own schools

always, but to link up in one federation for the welfare of the children. The safety of the children was very important and a play leader should be provided to see that children are not hurt, while playing their games. The health of the children was another thing the Federation cared for and the object of the Federation was to have children in schools medically examined every year. Dental inspection for the children was a thing that was fought hard for and was now being carried out throughout Victoria, but the present financial position prevented further inspections taking place. Mrs McColl said she was sorry to say that Australia is behind every other country and Victoria behind every other State, but the mothers' clubs were fighting hard to be above the other States, and she appealed to all parents to give their practical support and for the young people to support by attending the entertainments held. On behalf of the Victorian Federation Mrs McColl wished the club many happy returns of their birthday and wished them the best of luck in the years to come.

Mrs Chambers (president) of the Wonthaggi Mothers' Club thanked Mrs McColl for attending and for the helping words spoken by her. Mr Heath Head Master, expressed his appreciation of what was being done and he thanked Mrs McColl for coming along and for the inspiration given, and everybody present gave Mrs McColl

Powlett Express 20 March 1931

£8,600 for school



The raising of £8,600 for direct school amenities is the remarkable achievement of the members of the Wonthaggi State School Mothers' Club, shown above. Mrs. G. Derrick (third from left in the back row) estimates that another £3,000 has gone indirectly to making the children's lot happier during the committee's 27 years of existence. Mrs. Derrick is the sole foundation member still on the committee. She has been secretary for the past 23 years, but her period of service on the committee is closely rivalled by three other executive members—Mrs. A. Chambers (25 years), Mrs. S. Kirkup and Mrs. Spurr (both 23 years). (W. Mullin photo).

The Wonthaggi Express 26 November 1953

Mothers' Club's 30th Birthday

TO celebrate the Wonthaggi S.S. Mothers' Club 30th birthday, a very pleasant social evening was held in the Wonthaggi Town Hall supper-room on Friday.

Representatives of the Borough Council, the staff of the Wonthaggi S.S., and members of district schools Mothers' Clubs were welcomed by the President, Mrs. Kirkup, and the Secretary, Mrs. Derrick.

Bouquets were presented to Mrs. Kirkup and Mrs. Derrick by Mrs. Dent and Mrs. J. Taberner, of the North Wonthaggi Mothers' Club.

About 200 people enjoyed dancing, interspersed by items from local artists, including the recently formed school recorder band.

After a short address of welcome by the President, the Secretary (Mrs. Derrick) gave a brief resume of their activities over the past thirty years. This was received with considerable applause for it was a record of remarkable

achievement concerning the welfare of students.

Some foundation members were present. Mrs. Derrick has been secretary for 27 years.

The head teacher (Mr. R. W. Hallett) voiced his praise; he said it was the finest Mothers' Club he had ever worked with in 40 years.

He remarked humorously that the large and beautifully iced birthday cake made by Mrs. Stirton and Mrs. Spowart, in the form of a book, reminded him of Mrs. Derrick's 30-year-old cash book iced over.

Candles were lit by Mrs. Kirkup and Mrs. Derrick.

After Mrs. Kirkup had blown them out, Mrs. Derrick cut the cake, and all present received a portion, after a bounteous supper.

An apology was received from Mrs. Chambers, a member of 29 years standing, during which she was either President or Vice-President for 27 years.

Wonthaggi Express 1 November 1956

TRIBUTES TO RETIRING STATE SCHOOL WORKERS

Tireless Wonthaggi S.S. Mothers' Club and School Committee members, Mrs. Agnes Chambers and Mrs. Gladys Derrick, have resigned.

To mark the occasion a social evening was tendered to them on Friday night.

The evening's entertainment consisted of items and dances and took place in the Town Hall supper-room.

Guest artists were the school's Recorder Band — a group of twelve pupils, who played and sang three times, led by Mr. J. Chambers, their tutor.

Mrs. Betty Coulton sang two delightful numbers, Mrs. Hill and Mrs. White mimed their way into their audience's heart.

Fred Spooner and Alex Mulmin and Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Stirton of the Mothers' Club entertained with songs. Mr. Jim Hodge acted as M.C. for dances, which were highly charged with a Scotch flavour.

Prior to the presentations, Mrs. Kirkup, president of the Mothers' Club and secretary of the School Committee, welcomed visitors from district Mothers' Clubs and School Committees and the guests of the evening.

The Mayoress, Mrs. J. Longstaff, presented the guests of the evening with a basket of flowers.

The Head Teacher, Mr. R. W. Hallett, eulogized Mrs. Chambers and Mrs. Derrick's loyalty and devotion to a chosen cause for two generations. He thanked them on behalf of the Education Dept., staff — past and present — and pupils — past and present.

Mr. J. Hodge, chairman of the School Committee, said that the couple's long service to the school was greatly appreciated. A record of their work will be published in this month's Education Gazette.

In presenting a wallet of notes to each guest, Mrs. Kirkup recounted conditions under which sterling service and wise leadership was given. In the case of Mrs. Chambers this service was for 33 years of which 20 years were as president of the School Committee and, concurrently, 10 years as president and 20 years as vice-president, of the Mothers' Club. Her sound advice and inspiring leadership has placed the club in the strong position it is in today.

In the case of Mrs. Derrick, service was as a member of the School Committee for 20 years and a foundation member of the School Mothers' Club 33 years ago. Her staunch support, by word and deed, of what the committee and club considered best for the school and pupils, had earned great respect.

In responding, Mrs. Chambers and Mrs. Derrick spoke feelingly of their ups and downs during their years of office, and of their desire to better the conditions of school life for Wonthaggi children.

They thanked all for their lovely gifts.

● Mrs. Derrick, Mrs. Chambers look back — Page 5.

The Express 3 July 1958

£19,676: 40 YEARS — MOTHERS' CLUB

The Wonthaggi S.S. Mothers' Club has raised £19,676 in 40 years.

This was announced at the club's annual meeting this week.

Most of the money has come from catering for balls and weddings, and annual children's fancy dress ball, and street stalls.

Last year the club gave the school committee £262/10/-. It was matched with Government grants.

The club also purchased two sets of football jumpers and 40 pairs of socks (£105) and curtains and matting for the school (£40).

Dressing shed

Next year the club hopes to erect a new, brick dressing shed at the swimming pool. The plans provide for hot showers.

Application has been made to the Education Dept. for a £1,000 grant to match £1,000 the club has for the project.

From the 16 present Mrs. J. Kirkup was re-elected president for her thirty-first term. She has also been president of the school committee for 33 years.

Mrs. G. Beaton, who

retired after eight years as secretary - treasurer, was succeeded by Mrs. A. Allen.

Mrs. F. Allen and Mrs. J. Chambers are the vice-presidents.