

THE BIGGEST SCHOOL IN THE STATE: BLACK FOREST IN THE 1940S



Above: Black Forest students in the annual Nativity Play, 1940, a fixture of the school calendar in this decade. Photo courtesy of Barbara Dickenson.

In 1940, the Black Forest school committee reflected on its achievements over the preceding years. Of particular note was its contribution to the installation of a speaker system throughout the school, and the provision of gold medals to the highest achieving students. Likewise, after being “in bad repair for many years”, their work had led to the construction of a suitable entrance to the school from South Road.

Mrs. Nettlebeck, the secretary of the school Mothers’ Club, noted “keen activity and assistance to the infants’ school.” The Mothers’ Club, established when the Infant School opened in 1931 continued to grow in strength and numbers through the 1940s. The Club held regular meetings and often entertained large crowds of mothers, such as with a presentation by a Mrs. Boutcher in 1944, speaking of her wartime experiences during the Japanese attack on Penang.

A booklet assembled for the renovation of the Junior School in 1977 notes the growth of the school during the 1940s, with a steady increase enrolments until by 1943 Black Forest became the largest school in the state with 694 children. By 1948, Black Forest broke this record again exceeding 1000 students. In 1949, now at 1097 enrolments, “arrangements were made to use the nearby Church Hall for additional classroom accommodation. The Inspector’s Journal records that the Hall was “uninspiring and dingy” but the staff were glad to have the additional space in which to operate. A public address system was soon installed to link the increasingly dispersed classrooms.”

The same publication goes on to note that “classrooms were disinfected or fumigated regularly as children were found to be suffering from Scarlatina, Diptheria, Whooping Cough or Scarlet Fever. These infectious diseases recurred with monotonous regularity in the school’s early days and it was only after the playground equipment was erected that several other kinds of casualties were recorded.”

The school’s enduring enthusiasm for tree planting continued in the 1940s. In 1941, students planted Sterculia trees on nearby Selkirk Avenue, with the Mayor of Unley planting the first tree of the day. The grounds were much admired by the parents - the school yard now featured rockeries, grassed areas and even an aviary. One of the boundaries was lined with almond trees, perhaps from the school’s previous life as an orchard, and an Almond Blossom Festival was celebrated. Year 7 teacher Mr. Darwin and

students harvested the almonds which were prepared for sale by Miss Holden’s class of 57 students. An annual nativity concert was a feature of the school calendar, with teachers and mothers sewing the costumes.

Trevor Garton attended Black Forest School until 1949 before going to Adelaide High School and recently shared his recollections with the school. The Infant School was located where the Kertaweeta building now sits in the northeastern corner of the yard, and the row of ash trees on the northern side of the Junior Primary building formed the boundary between the infant and primary schools. The schoolyard was mostly asphalt, and he remembers running out of class one day, slipping and falling into fresh tar, ruining his clothes. One of the few teachers who had a car drove him home to change his clothes. In the yard students played games like rounders or hand cricket, and boys and girls were forbidden from mixing. In the courtyards, boys kept to the western side of the yard, while girls were on the east.

As a young child, Trevor lived with his family on Dryden Road and even as young as age three or four would explore the streets by himself. There was a creek that ran under the Cross Road and South Road intersection and this was a popular place for local children to play. On one occasion at age three or four, Trevor placed rocks on the railway line, resulting in a carriage going off the rails. The train driver leapt from the train and chased him home. Children would often stay out playing in the neighbourhood with friends and wouldn’t be home until 6 or 7 o’clock in the evening.

The school yard extended as far as Kertaweeta Avenue and the oval was not yet part of the school. Instead, students would play at what is now Glandore Oval, what was then tree-covered paddocks. Children would often play war games in the paddocks, digging trenches and putting on tin helmets, then lobbing rocks at each other and brandishing pretend machine guns. Particularly agile children would climb up into the canopy of the big gums then climb from tree to tree around the paddock without touching the ground! Trevor remembers a farm house still standing about where the Glandore Oval rose garden now sits beside South Road.

There was a permanent outdoor stage for the principal’s weekly assemblies. At these assemblies the students would sing *God Save the King* and *The Song of Australia*, while boys saluted and girls curtsied the flag. Lunches were bread and dripping, or sandwiches with apricot jam or tomato.

During the World War 2, the lawn area next to Oban Avenue was dug up for trenches and air raid shelters in case of bombing. Students regularly participated in air raid drills, and wore Bakelite dog tags with their names, together with little brown bags containing first aid kits around their necks. Trevor remembers sitting in the trenches during a drill, and a US Air Force Superfortress bomber flying over low, showering the school with propaganda pamphlets.

Students were given various jobs, including preparing the ink for the day. The best job, according to Trevor, was to be the milk monitor. All students received milk in little bottles. The monitors were expected to collect the milk delivery and distribute it to the students, but the bonus was that they were also allowed to drink any milk left over! Year 7 students had the particular job of supervising the school gates to punish late children by getting them to write lines. Often however, students would have been late due to completing household chores.

References

‘School Activities at Black Forest’, 1940, *Mail*, 16 March, p. 4
‘Arbor Day at Black Forest School’, 1941, *News*, 1 August, p. 3
‘Radio Installation for Black Forest School’, 1948, *Advertiser*, 4 December, p. 7

Black Forest: Official Commissioning of the Renovated Infant School Building on September 22, 1977, 1977, Black Forest Primary School, Adelaide

CONTACT US!

For more information about the Black Forest Primary School Centenary, contact us on 08 8293 1204, email centenary@blforest.net or find the Black Forest Centenary page on Facebook

<https://blackforestps.sa.edu.au>



CENTENARY PROJECTS UPDATE

There are all kinds of plans and projects afoot to mark 100 years of Black Forest providing educational excellence for its community. While the special Gala Day (see poster below) is shaping up through the planning of a staff committee, there's plenty more happening behind the scenes.

The Fundraising Committee has been working to develop a range of commemorative merchandise to be made available by special order or at the Gala Day. This includes wineglasses (pictured) and tea towels featuring student and staff self-portraits.

The Centenary Cookbook is progressing with recipe testing now well underway and this should be ready for launch at the September event.

The recently completed nature play area "Centenary Green", funded by years of parent fundraising, continues to evolve. Year 3 students recently worked with Banrock Station ranger Tim Field to plant out a "Banrock Garden" celebrating 21 years of the Black Forest community's contribution to revegetation at the Riverland property.




MURAL WORKS BEGIN

Black Forest Primary School has commissioned prominent artist Vans the Omega to paint a mural marking the school's centenary. Renowned for his large-scale portraits, Vans' mural will feature the faces of past and present students representing the early years of the school, the middle period in the 1960s and the present day. The background from each section will reference the changing landscape of Black Forest, from grey box woodland, to agriculture and horticulture to the present urban environment.




After much deliberation, the students have been chosen by the Centenary Committee based on a "names out of a hat" method. These include Peter Routley, a student from the 1930s who went on to have an esteemed career internationally in education and maintains active involvement in educational pursuits and Di Dyson, a student from the 1960s who also went on to become a teacher and now has a multi-generational connection with the school with grandchildren currently also at Black Forest. The artist has met with each to photograph them in preparation for the painting. The surfaces have been primed and work will begin in earnest in mid-July to be completed by the September celebration.

We look forward to this new feature of the school emerging over the coming months. Vans the Omega's work can be viewed locally on the walls of the Capri cinema on Goodwood Road, as well as the corner of Langdon and East Avenues, at Rise & Grind Cafe. Vans the Omega also has an extensive portfolio online at <http://www.vanstheomega.com.au/>



BLACK FOREST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Celebrating 100 Years: 1919-2019

CENTENARY GALA DAY

Celebrating 100 years of educational excellence 1919-2019

FOOD | DRINK | RIDES | SIDESHOWS | TOURS
HISTORIC DISPLAYS | OPEN GARDEN | PERFORMANCES
MEMORABILIA | PLANT SALES *and more!*

10.00am-3.00pm, Sunday 15 September 2019
679 South Road, Black Forest

For more information contact centenary@blforest.net, phone 08 8293 1204 or find us on Facebook!

SO YOU THINK YOU'RE A WISE GUY



Quiz & Games Night

Saturday 29th June 2019

6.30 for a 7pm start
Black Forest Primary School Hall

\$20 per head – 10 per table
Includes a bottle of water

In conjunction with our Centenary Year we have a "Through the Decades" Fancy Dress theme prize awarded for the most creative table

BYO Supper and Drinks
Lucky Squares & Silent Auctions
Start saving your gold coins

Last year sold out quickly so don't wait – get a team together and book your table now!

For more information contact:
bfpsevents@gmail.com

Presented by the Black Forest Primary School Fundraising Committee. All funds raised contribute to the development of Black Forest's grounds, facilities and learning resources.