

# Vacy Public School



**125 YEARS**

# VACY PUBLIC SCHOOL

1859 — 1984

A booklet to commemorate  
125 years of service

Compiled by the Principal  
and members of the  
P. & C. Association 1984

Cover designed by  
Ruth Painter



FOREWORD

"This booklet was written to commemorate the 125th Anniversary of Vacy Public School. It concerns chiefly the Vacy Public School, but in telling the story of the school we must of necessity unfold the history of Vacy, and the history of Vacy is closely associated with the Cory family.

Vacy is situated at the junction of those two delightful streams, The Paterson and The Allyn, which have their source in the Barrington Tops. The Paterson rises in the springs high up under the s.w. edge of the Barrington Tops, while the Allyn has its origin under the crags of Carey's Peak (5,280 ft.), the highest point in the Barrington.

The township of Vacy nestles on the banks of the Paterson River, while Mt. Johnstone, to the south, Mt. George to the west, and Mt. Breckin to the north, look down upon it."

With the exception of the anniversary date, so wrote my predecessor of 25 years ago, Harold Smith, in his foreword of the Centenary Booklet which he prepared in 1959. It is with profound respect that I use his words to open this booklet as most of the research is his - a fascinating, interesting, but time-consuming task performed with skill.

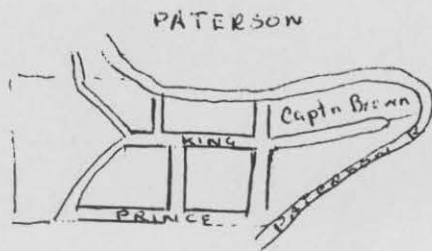
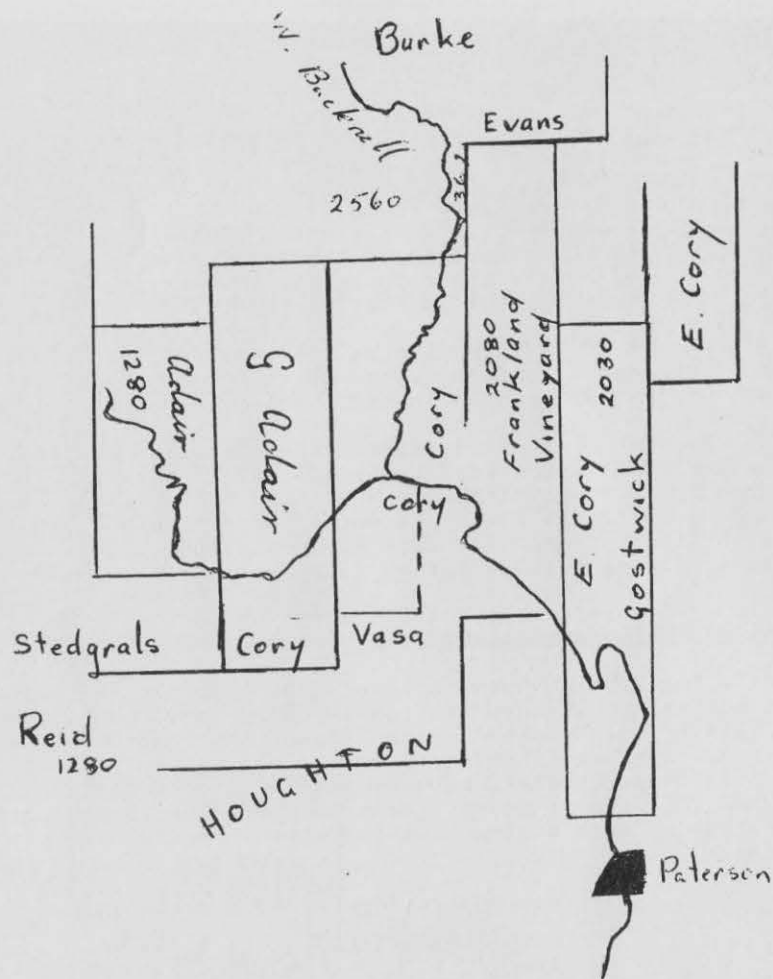
It is with considerable pleasure and pride that I occupy the "chair" during the 125th year.

1859 - The British Crown assumed government in India following the mutiny and Lucknow confrontations. Darwin published his "Origin of the Species"; John Brown (American Civil War) was hanged. Abraham Lincoln was preparing to take office - and here in Vacy, Charles Chapman opened the door of his classroom to the children of tenant farmers. So it began and so it has continued - each making a contribution, teacher and pupil alike :

"From each according to his ability -  
To each according to his need."

Sincere congratulations to all those who have made the celebration of this occasion possible. May it remind us all of the debt we owe to those who have gone before us - and may the young in particular be appreciative so that they in turn will become worthy citizens who will willingly strive to make further contribution to the growth of this fine district - and the nation.

(E. Barry Alsop)  
School Principal



Map of land grants in the County of Durham.  
Prepared by the Surveyor General of N.S.W. in 1843.

### Early History

The land surrounding the pretty township of Paterson (named after Lieutenant-Colonel William Paterson) was, in the days of the convict settlement at Newcastle, known as the "Old Banks".

The convict cedar parties working along the river (then called "The Cedar Arm") had one of their camps at the Paterson, and many a fine log of cedar was rafted down to the lumber yards at Newcastle.

In the early twenties of last century, large grants of land were made by the Government all along the Hunter River Valley. In the Paterson district James B. Webber (Tocal), James Phillips (Bon Vista), William Dun (Duninald), George Lang (Dunmore), Lieutenant Bedwell (Cintra), the Corys (Gostwyck and Cory Vale), J.H. Boughton (Tillimby), and others secured large grants.

The willow trees that so greatly enhance the beauty of the Paterson River are said to have come from a slip from a tree near Napoleon's grave at St. Helena, and brought to Paterson by Lieutenant Bedwell, a British Naval Officer, who owned the Cintra estate (on the Paterson River just north of Duninald). This slip, which he planted on his estate near the present Gresford Road, flourished and lived to a great age.

The Cory Brothers came from Devonshire, England. Edward Gostwyck Cory was the eldest son of John Cory, and was born in 1797. His middle name was taken from his grandfather, Sir William Gostwyck of Willington, near Bedford. The second son was Captain John Johnston Cory, R.N., who was born in 1800.

It was on 18th September, 1823, that Edward G. Cory received a grant of 2,030 acres (Gostwyck) in the Parish of Barford, and on 9th January, 1824, John J. Cory, his brother, received a grant of 800 acres in the same Parish (Cory Vale). In the Middlehope Parish John Cory also held another 400 acres by purchase, dated 17th May, 1825.

Capt. John J. Cory returned to England in 1831, and a power of attorney signed by him on 25th June, 1832, appointed William Dangar of "Neotsfeld" to control his land and affairs in N.S.W.

On 26th June, 1839, Capt. John J. Cory died in England at the age of 39 years, and his estate was inherited by his younger brother, Gilbert (born 1812).

Gilbert Cory came to N.S.W. and lived on that part of the estate named "Neyarra", which is across the river from "Cory Vale". (John Cory had lived at Cory Vale.)

Edward Gostwyck Cory's estate stretched from the Paterson River in a N.E. direction, almost to the foothills of the Wallarobba Mt. His original grant had increased to almost 5,000 acres at one time. On his estate at "Gostwyck" he built a flour mill, which was the first one in the district

to be driven by water power. Here also at "Gostwyck" he commenced the rearing of blood stock. "Camerton", bred at "Gostwyck", was the sire of many prominent race horses in the district in the old days.

The first homestead built by Edward Cory was named "Vineyard Cottage" because of the large area of grape vines he had under cultivation. In later years "Vineyard Cottage" became an inn; one of the first in the district. Here he also kept large flocks of sheep.

In 1836 he built "Gostwyck House". It was a home of some importance, and is still standing today, although not entirely as it was when it was first built. It is interesting to read an advertisement concerning "Gostwyck House", published in "The Australian" on 10th August, 1842, which give a fine description of this homestead:

"To let from 1st July next, all that capital message and farm called "Gostwyck", now occupied by William Burnett and Thomas Hector, together with the government men, water mill, and mill dam, 4,000 acres more or less, 100 acres fenced, two storey home of eight rooms and hall on the ground floor, and three very large rooms over same, dairy, salting and slaughtering house, store rooms, detached kitchen, servants' departments, together with large new barn, imported threshing machine, vineyard, orange and lemon grove of fine quality and full bearing, kitchen garden and fruit trees."

"Gostwyck House" was one of the outstanding homes in the district.

Gilbert Cory's homestead at "Neyarra" has completely disappeared, but beneath a palm tree can still be seen depressions which mark where members of the family, and some of their servants, were buried, but their remains have long since been removed, and interred elsewhere.

In the early days of the 1830's both E.G.Cory and Gilbert Cory had assigned servants to help on the estate, not only with the cultivation of crops but also for the protection of the property. During the period 1820-1830 the natives became a problem. There were strong tribes of aborigines in the district, particularly along the river banks, and they caused the early settlers a great deal of trouble. The Corys suffered considerably. Their barns and haystacks were burnt, their sheep attacked, and their workmen speared.

In the "Sydney Gazette" of 24th March, 1827, it states that a large party of aborigines attacked two shepherds of Mr. E.G. Cory, and attempted to drive off a number of sheep. An armed party was needed to disperse the aborigines.

Not only were the aborigines troublesome but the convicts too proved hard to manage. It was in 1833 that Mr. E.G. Cory

Gostwyck House. Built 1836. Photograph taken late 1970's.



fell foul of one of his assigned servants - a man named Coleman - who attacked him and struck him a terrible blow on the head with a spade. Coleman was subsequently hanged for his murderous attack.

"Gostwyck" continued in the Cory possession until 1873 when Mr. E.G. Cory died at the age of 76. His wife Frances, having died in 1870, and there being no children, the estate was sold.

The estate passed to a man named Luke, and later Mr. Theophilus Cooper bought the property. In 1902 the "Gostwyck" estate was subdivided, and Mr. George Priestley bought the homestead block; some twenty years later Mr. Priestley also bought "Tillimby House", an estate on the other side of the river, and thus he secured two very old and historic homes.

"Gostwyck" is now owned by Mrs. D. Priestley, and "Tillimby" has become the property of Mr. Stan Priestley.

Originally the "Tillimby" estate was a grant of 900 acres made to J.H. Boughton. It later passed to Mr. A.A.W. Nivison - a breeder of fine hereford cattle.

It is interesting to note the other estates in the district in the 1820's.

Separating the "Gostwyck" estate from the "Cory Vale" property was an estate now known as "Mowbray", but known then as "The Vineyard". This was a grant of 2,080 acres, and was given to Mr. G.J. Frankland. Here the grape vine was cultivated extensively, and large quantities of wine produced. The homestead, built by Mr. G.J. Frankland, was made of locally made bricks, and presented a fine example of the architecture of the day.

At that time the Paterson to Dungog Road crossed the river near the homestead and the crossing was known as "Vineyard Crossing". It ceased to be used when the bridge was established at Gostwyck.

After Frankland, the estate passed to a Mr. Elliott, who carried out extensive improvements to the estate. At the beginning of the century he installed an irrigation plant. This consisted of a steam engine which pumped water from the river into trenches running between the rows. This experiment was a success for produce from the estate became well-known, and found a ready southern market. Alas, the steam engine was too expensive, and this method of irrigation was discontinued.

This estate, like all other large estates on the Paterson River, was subdivided and the Ebbeck family secured the homestead block, while the Fraser family purchased another portion of the property.

To the west of Vacy, and adjoining the John Cory grant, was an area held by James Adair ("Cardoness") which stretched from

the Lennoxton Road along the Gresford Road till it joined up with William Bucknell's grant of 2,560 acres at "Elmshall", and then extended westward to include land in the Summer Hill area.

The "Cardoness" homestead built on James Adair's property, was modelled on English lines, and contained upwards of 20 rooms. It is still standing and has been completely renovated, and is in good condition. The "Cardoness" estate was later subdivided into several farms. One portion of the estate is the Somerville property, "Ferndale", and from the title deeds we see that originally the "Cardoness" estate was a grant to Henry Ferris, although James Adair owned the property in 1828.

Other owners of the "Cardoness" property include Messrs. Craig and W. Tucker. The homestead farm is now owned by the Fraser family, who incidentally are also in possession of the homestead block of Mr. Gilbert Cory - "Neyarra".

"Lennoxton" appears to have been a grant to S.L. Adair (640 acres) while land to the South of the Lennoxton Road was held by Colonel Snodgrass (1,015 acres). "Lennoxton" homestead was destroyed by fire in the early part of this century, but it once stood upon property now owned by Mr. G. Gillespie. "Lennoxton" of old is remembered for growing citrus trees and vineyards of Isabella grapes, which were temptingly close to the roadside.

William Bucknell called his land grant "Elmshall", and on it he built a fine brick homestead of locally-made bricks. This property has changed hands many times. Names such as Kettle, Cann, Puxty and Horn are associated with it. Mr. Elhanan Puxty conducted a store there before he moved to "Ferndale". Mr. R. Jager is the present owner.

One of the last of the large estates to be subdivided was Mr. Gilbert Cory's Vacy estate. His whole estate of 1,200 acres consisted of "Cory-Vale", "Tack-Bear" and "Vacy". In 1879 he sold "Cory-Vale" to Mr. John Horn, and it has been in the family ever since. About the same time, portion of the "Tack-Bear" was sold.

The township of Vacy was rather unique. It was practically a private town. Gilbert Cory owned the property, and the buildings, and the residents were his tenants. He died in 1896, and his second wife survived him by 28 years. Then in 1927 the Cory Vacy estate was sold. In all about 50 building blocks (approx. 60'x150') facing the Gresford Road were offered for sale, and found ready buyers at 10 Pounds per block.

The hotel and local buildings were sold, and farm lots fronting the Paterson River were disposed of quite briskly. Thus ended the Cory association with Vacy, which lasted over a period of more than 100 years.

Vacy has been referred to as an important little settlement in the early 70's of the last century. It was a farming community and its needs were served by -

George Brown	Storekeeper
John Crotty	Innkeeper
Josiah Morcom	Teacher and Postmaster, Vacy
Thomas Fitzgerald	Teacher, Summer Hill
William George	Auctioneer, Bird Hill
William Ninness	Tinsmith, Cory Vale
Wormerlsey Bros.	Bootmakers

The Gresford Road passed close to the inn and crossed the Paterson River at the ford near the junction with the Allyn River. This ford later gave way to a low level bridge, which served a very useful purpose for many years till, strange as it may seem, it was burnt down. This led to the building of the present high level bridge a little upstream from the old bridge. The new wooden bridge was built in 1898 - high above flood level.

The northern side of the bridge was reinforced with stonework. This was carried out by a German stone-mason named Zenisch, who was employed on the property of Mr. John Horn.

On the northern side near the bridge can be seen a cement block, which is all that remains of the old creamery that had been conducted by Mr. Uriah Heep. Cream from this building was taken by dray to Paterson and loaded onto a boat for Bowthorne-Wallalong.

There seems to have been an inn at Vacy from the earliest times. There is reference to it in early communications fixing the position of the original school building - ".....The original school site was between the present school site and the Paterson River, on what old maps describe as "The Old Road to Vacy". It was just north of the "Half-Way House Hotel". Evidently the present hotel known to all as "The Farmers' Hotel", was once known as "The Half-Way House". It is now owned by Mr. & Mrs. K. Miles who have introduced many innovations - including the levelling of the Sports Oval, the provision of changing facilities, and the construction of Motel accommodation units.

At the time of the School's centenary in 1959 Vacy was a self-contained little centre, having a post office, butcher, baker, grocer, hotel, hall, church and school.

In fact, Vacy at one time had its own resident doctor, Dr. Richards, on the Gresford Road, and a surveyor, Mr. F. Tucker. Mr. Brooker of Gresford used to conduct cattle sales in yards just below the hotel, while Mr. W.D. Keogh was the local blacksmith. Alas, these latter services have now passed.

Mr. W. Brooker's father took over the butchering business from Mr. W. Sherwood about 1914, and it remained in the Brooker

# THE VACY ESTATE

## ON THE BANKS OF THE PATERSON RIVER

**5 MILES FROM THE RAILWAY STATION AND TOWN OF PATERSON**  
**FERTILE ALLUVIAL SOILS CHOICE LUCERNE FLATS**  
**RICH MAIZE AND MILLET LANDS**  
**IDEAL DAIRY FARMS**

**ALSO**  
*The Farmers Hotel*  
*Butchers Shop*  
*Bakery*  
*Blacksmiths Shop*  
*Store*  
*Residences*  
*Vacant Building Lots*  
*Small Grass Paddocks*  
*Rich Agricultural*  
*Grazing & Dairy Farms*  
*Pasture Lands*

SUBDIVIDED INTO  
 CONVENIENT LOTS  
 BY ORDER OF  
**PERMANENT TRUSTEE**  
 29 OF N.S.W. LTP  
 24 O'CONNELL ST SYDNEY

**FOR SALE BY AUCTION**  
**AT THE FARMERS HOTEL VACY ON**  
**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 12<sup>TH</sup> 1927 AT 2 P.M.**  
*King & Humphrey 121 Pitt St Sydney* *Auctioneers in*  
*Carr Brothers West Maitland* *Conniff*

NOTE  
 THIS PLAN IS NOT TO SCALE  
 All measurements and  
 areas subject to  
 Deposited Plans

10% Deposit  
 15% in 6 Months  
 Balance by half yearly  
 instalments  
 Extending over 7 1/2  
 following Term  
 Improved Village lots 5 1/2%  
 Unimproved Village lots 3 1/2%  
 Farm Lots 10 Years  
 Interest 6 1/2%

Auction notice for Vacy Estate, 1927.

family until it closed in 1965. Other names associated with the supply of meat in the district in the past have been Brosier of Gresford, and Brooker of Paterson.

The first storekeeper we hear about is Mr. George Brown. He became one of the Vacy Public School Board members along with Messrs. Gilbert Cory and G.J. Frankland in 1868. Then there was Mr. George Clarke, and later Miss McCloy. The Cann family owned stores in the district. One shop was at Paterson, another at "Tillimby", and Mr. Fred Cann owned the Vacy Store. This store must have been quite a busy spot because at one time there were no less than five people employed there. Mr. D. Shearer was a familiar figure delivering the goods. Later Mr. G.A. Horn took over the business, and a modern shop was built. The present proprietors are Mr. & Mrs. F. Young.

The Bakery was conducted by Messrs. J. Murphy and M. McMahon, and they not only supplied the needs of the township, but also the surrounding district.

#### The Post Office

On 1st March, 1960, the Vacy Post Office achieved the distinction of having reached its centenary.

The first teacher appointed to the Vacy School also took charge of the office on 1st March, 1860. He was Mr. Charles Chapman. The remuneration was 12 Pounds per annum, plus a small commission for the sale of postage stamps.

The next to take over the office was Josiah Morcom (school teacher), as from 15th September, 1862. (Mr. Morcom also held a newspaper agency in Vacy.) When he died his widow became postmistress on 23rd April, 1878.

Money order facilities were extended to the office about 1886.

The postal revenue during the 80's was only a little over 49 Pounds per annum, so the office was a losing proposition for the Department.

There is a record that a telephone was in use at the office at least as early as 1892, probably for telephoning telegrams between there and the nearest telegraph office.

Mrs. Alice Cox, wife of the school teacher, took over the Post Office when Mrs. Morcom gave it up, as from 19th July, 1892.

In 1904 there was one telephone subscriber, W. Tucker of "Cardoness", connected to the Vacy Office, but the entry appears in the Paterson Telephone Directory.

A new teacher, Mr. F.C. Willis, was appointed to the Vacy Public School, and as from 1st August, 1916, he became Postmaster.

A telephone exchange was opened at Vacy on 4th March, 1915, and by 1916 there were three or four subscribers.

The Postmaster, Mr. F.C. Willis, resigned on 31st January, 1919, and Mr. A. McInnes was appointed Postmaster on 1st February, 1919. He filled the position until the time of his death on 18th August, 1941. The Post Office was removed from the school residence to Mr. McInnes' property opposite.

His widow, Mrs. A.E. McInnes, was appointed Postmistress and remained in charge until 7th May, 1943. Her daughter, Miss Lily Kathleen McInnes (Mrs. Lowrey), was appointed Postmistress from 8th May, 1943.

Automation overtook the old manual exchange and in 1981 the 101 subscribers were able to dial directly out of the valley without Mrs. Lowrey's or Mrs. Smith's assistance.

The Post Office itself did not survive such a transition, and in 1983 it was re-located down the street into the General Store.

#### Transport

Transport during the latter part of last century was either by bullock waggon, waggonette, coach, or horse back.

Waggonettes were a popular means of transport 75 years ago, and many travelled along the Gresford Road. One in particular was Mr. James Chesworth who, each week, made a one day journey to Newcastle to Gresford to attend the Union sales held there, returning the next day to the city.

Then came the coaches. They supplied regular services between Paterson, Vacy and Gresford. Such well-known names as Fry and Hancock always will be remembered with coaching days. Evidently keen competition existed between the proprietors of the coaching services:

Hancock's coaches carried this sign :

"Rain, wind, hail or snow,  
Hancock's coach is sure to go."

Fry's coach, not to be outdone, had a large red rooster painted on it, with the words :

"While I live I'll crow."

These horse-drawn vehicles filled a long-felt want in the community. The drivers were experienced men who had to con-



tend with bad roads, and treacherous crossings. On one occasion a coach drawn by two fine horses plunged into a flooded culvert on the main Gresford Road near the home of Mr. A.C. Somerville. Both horses were drowned, but the passengers and drivers escaped injury.

The first blacksmith shop was established in Vacy on land near the Hotel. It was conducted by Mr. W. Darcy Keogh, who had done blacksmithing before at a smithy near the Somerville estate with his two brothers. (Mr. A. McInnes also worked at this smithy at a later date.)

The Vacy blacksmith shop was later removed to a position about a quarter of a mile on the Paterson side of the School of Arts. In latter years when there was little call for this type of work the shop closed and has now been demolished, but members of the family are still in the district.

#### Agriculture

The products of the farms have varied. In early days much wheat was grown and often had to be taken many miles to be ground. It is on record that wheat grown on the "Tack-Bear" estate in 1880 was taken to Dungog to be ground.

Large quantities of tobacco were grown at Vacy, and in the Gresford district, and sold on the Australian market. Until recently tobacco presses, which had been used in the industry, were to be seen in the Gresford district. Wine grapes were grown extensively, and many of the estates had their own cellars. Large flocks of sheep were kept until climatic conditions prevented a continuation of the industry. The timber in the Vacy area has long since been cut down, and now dairying, cattle raising and poultry growing are the chief industries. In fact, the Paterson-Gresford District is now regarded as one of the most productive and important areas in the Hunter Valley.

A butter factory was established at Gostwyck in the early part of this century. The Raymond Terrace Company operated it. This was sold but in 1926 was repurchased by the Raymond Terrace Company. It is not now used, and the milk from the district goes direct to Hexham.

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Here is a side-light on early Vacy - supplied by an ex-pupil of the school and obtained from the Library of the Armidale University :

#### Vacy 1866

"Vacy is a postal township, situated at the junction of the Allyn and Paterson Rivers in the Parish of Houghton. It has a tobacco factory, and one for arrowroot. It grows tobacco,

maize and arrowroot. Wheat is beginning to get the rust. No public conveyance to Paterson. Three times a week a one horse post runs from Gresford to Paterson. There is one Hotel - "The Half-Way House". The population is thirty. Vacy is a private township, built on, and belonging to, the estate of Gilbert Cory. It commands the most beautiful scenery on the Paterson River. It has a school which is well attended, and an English Church, both built by the owner for his numerous tenants and their families."



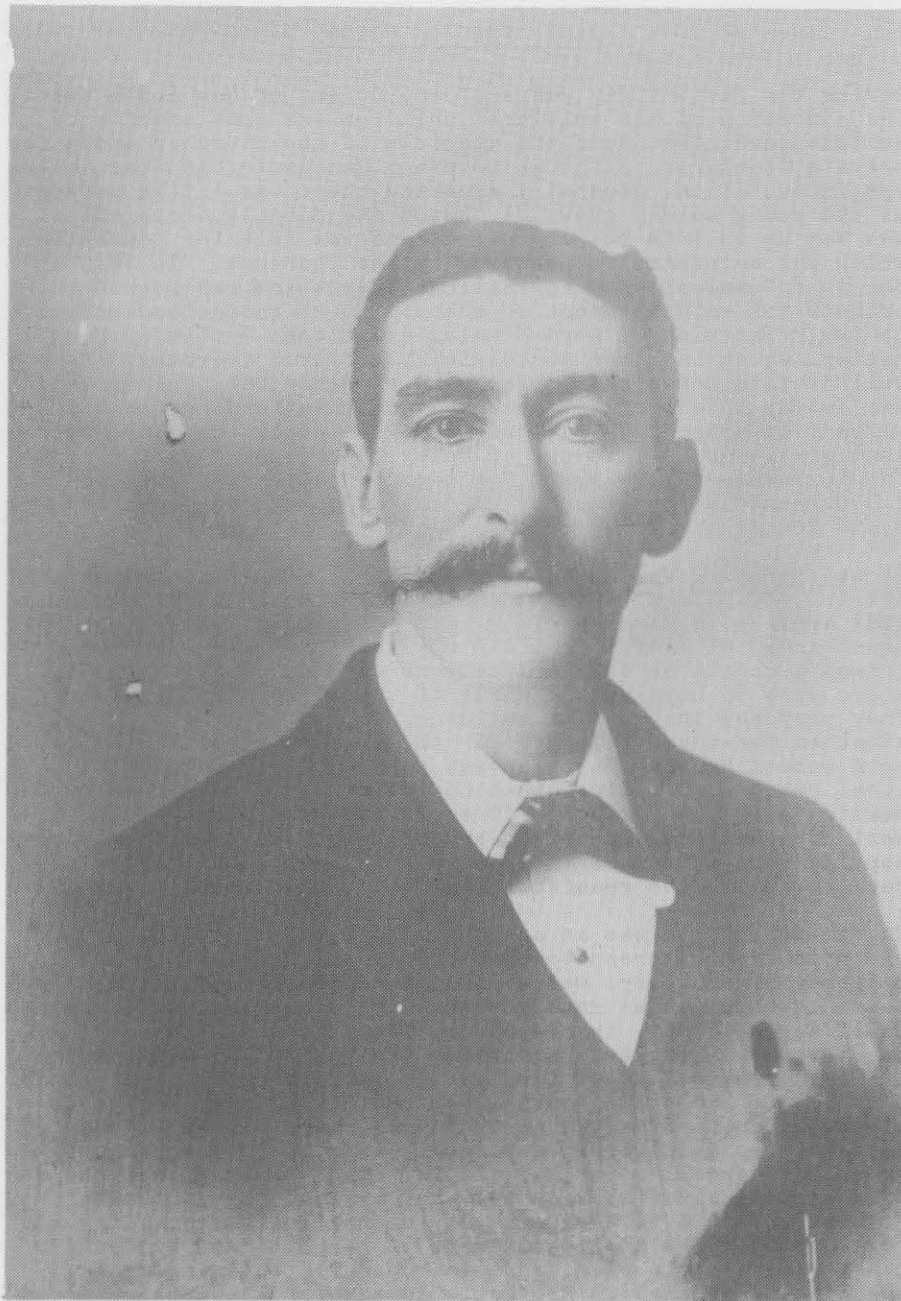
Vacy Store — 1935.

#### VACY PUBLIC SCHOOL

During the first fifty years of the Colony of New South Wales the education of the settlers' children was provided for by schools conducted under the auspices of the churches and a few private teachers. Although Governor Macquarie had some interest in education, generally speaking there was little support as the young colony grew. A Church and Schools Corporation was set up in 1828 but a growing need was felt for education which was necessarily sponsored by the Churches. In 1848 a Board of Commissioners for National Education was formed to promote the establishment of schools to be conducted according to the principles of Lord Stanley's National System of Education, which had been successfully employed overseas. As well as this organisation, a Board of Denominational Education was set up to administer the many denominational schools already in existence and those newly established. The Government granted a certain sum of money to each of these. In 1848 for instance, the Board of National Education was granted 2,000 Pounds and the Denominational School Board received 8,450 Pounds.

It was to the Board of National Education that the Rev. Thomas Stirton, Mr. Gilbert Cory and one other gentleman of the district applied in January, 1857, for a National School to be established at Vacy. In their application these men, who formed a committee of local patrons of education, stated that there were 35 boys and 36 girls of school age in the district. They proposed that a slab building, 28 ft. by 18 ft., with an attached two-room residence for the master, should be built as a school house. The proposed cost was 200 Pounds and the local patrons guaranteed that 65 Pounds could be raised by the residents of the village. (One of the terms of the establishment of a National School in any district was that the Board supplied two-thirds of the cost of the school buildings and repairs, while the remainder was contributed locally.)

The proposed site was an acre of land bounded on the east by the road from Paterson to Gresford and on the west by the property of Mr. Cory, who would donate the land. The matter seems to have fallen into abeyance for some time as it was not until August, 1858, that Mr. Cory wrote to the District Inspector, Mr. McIntyre, requesting the use of 405 slabs which had been provided about five years previously for a school at the Brecon. Reporting on the matter, Mr. McIntyre said the slabs, which were valued at 16 Pounds, were "lying at the Brecon", two miles from Vacy, near Campsie, on the property known as Bucknell's Estate. It is not clear from the records whether this material was used, but in May, 1859, Stephen Stanbridge wrote to the Secretary of the Board requesting a copy of the rules and regulations of the National System for non-vested schools (i.e. schools housed in buildings not vested by the Board). Mr. Lee, the teacher at Campsie, wrote to the Board in June requesting appointment to Vacy as he had heard that the school there had been completed. Mr. Lee's application was unsuccessful. The school at Campsie was



**Benjamin Cox — Teacher-in-charge 1892-1916.**  
**To date longest serving Principal.**

closed soon after and Mr. Stirton asked if the furniture there could be used for the Vacy School, which was soon to be opened.

According to the Report of the Board of National Education for 1859 the school opened on 1st September, the teacher being Mr. C. Chapman.

As well as being in charge of the school, Mr. Chapman held the position of post-master at Vacy. In May, 1860, Mr. Cory assured Mr. Wills in a letter that Mr. Chapman's position as post-master did not interfere with his duties as teacher. He wrote, "Mrs. Chapman attends to the post office, which is kept in their private residence, and the mail arrives at 11 a.m. and is sorted between 1 and 2 p.m. - out of school hours."

In his report for the year, Mr. McIntyre made the following comments about the school:

- a) It is a very good building, but the ground is not fully enclosed. The furniture is temporary and very crude. The apparatus is incomplete. The material condition is unsatisfactory.
- b) The subjects taught agree with the table of Minimum Instruction. The instruction is mechanical and to a certain extent superficial.

Although 67 pupils were on the roll at the end of the first year, the average attendance was only 37; in 1860 the enrolment dropped to 52 and the average attendance was only 29. The attendance was further reduced in the following year owing to floods. On one day at least, 29th July, there was no attendance at all.

The year 1862 was not a successful one for the school. Mr. Stirton resigned as a member of the School Committee (he was also local patron of the National Schools at Tillimby and Bendolba) as his time was fully taken up with his parish duties. As at the end of July Mr. Chapman discontinued teaching at the school, saying he wished to be removed. The local patrons appointed Mr. Josiah Morcom, who had for the past 14 years been teaching at the Church of England Denominational School at Bolwarra. Mr. Morcom began his duties at Vacy in September, and at the beginning of October Mr. Cory wrote to say that the patrons were very pleased with his work. "I am happy to say the school is progressing favourably. We mustered 37 children last week and 39 this week, and I have no doubt the number will increase." Mr. Cory again wrote in February, 1863, to say the school was much improved but the local patrons were concerned that Mr. Morcom was being paid only 5 Pounds per month. In the same letter Mr. Cory remarked that the school was still about 60 Pounds in his debt, as he had provided a considerable amount of money for the building.

The records contain little information for the next few years. The enrolment remained between 35 and 40 and the average attendance between 25 and 30. In 1866 the two Boards of Education were disbanded and the Council of Education was set up under the terms of the Public Schools Act. The Denomina-

tional Schools still received assistance from the Government provided they were certified by the Council. National Schools became known as Public Schools, and Local Public School Boards replaced the Committee of local patrons. In 1868 the Vacy Public School Board consisted of Messrs. Gilbert Cory, G.J. Frankland, and G.S. Brown.

Mr. Morcom applied for a move in 1870 but a suitable school was not available at the time. He was generally popular in Vacy, and a petition was sent to the Council of Education in 1870 asking that he not be removed. On 27th April, 1878, Mr. Morcom died and was buried at St. Paul's Churchyard, Paterson. He had been a teacher for 34 years.

Miss Edith Morcom, his daughter, was appointed the next teacher at Vacy. (She had a private school at Mr. Laurie's on the Upper Allyn River for two years.) Mr. Inspector Bradley reported on Miss E. Morcom: "She is a young lady of very fair intelligence and information; of active industrious habits, her aptitude for teaching is quite equal to the average shown by applicants for employment.

At this time the enrolment at the school was 45 with an average attendance of 33. In 1883 Miss Edith Morcom resigned and was succeeded by her sister, Miss Margaret Morcom, who had been teaching at Campsie.

Evidently this original school was inadequate because on 4th March, 1882, Mr. Inspector McIntyre recommended the acquisition of the present site of two acres.

The site of the original school was stated to be between the present school site and the Paterson River, "on the Old Road to Vacy". It was just north of the "Half-Way House Hotel".

The new school, with its residence combined, (as was the rule), was constructed of brick and was erected in 1882. However, it was not till September, 1886, that the formalities with Mr. Cory over the resumption of his property were completed and compensation paid, which amounted to 73 Pounds.

In July, 1890, the Inspector reported that the school site was badly drained, and water was lying underneath the building. A tender for just over 8 Pounds, from Mr. J. Oldfield, was accepted and drainage work was put in hand.

During 1892 Miss Morcom was appointed to the Infants' Department at Blackfriars Public School, Sydney, and in the same year 13 residents petitioned the Department to appoint Mr. Benjamin Cox in her place. Mr. Cox was the teacher at Allynbrook, or as it was then known - "Caergwle", and he was evidently well-known in Vacy. Mr. Cox was appointed soon afterwards.

In 1893 a number of repairs were carried out at a cost of 90 Pounds, including the painting, inside and out, of the school and residence, and the construction of a room 14 ft. x 10 ft.

on the back of the school residence. One Inspector, reporting on the matter, stated: "Mr. Cox is an earnest and painstaking teacher, who takes good care of the property of the Department, and he deserves to be made comfortable." Mr. J. Oldfield carried out both the painting and building projects.

A sidelight on the cost of transport in 1894 is contained in a letter written by Mr. Cox to the Department for equipment to be sent from Sydney - "Should the above be forwarded from Sydney, the most economical route would be by steamer to Paterson, from which place it can be sent by coach - fare about 9d. or 1/-." Rates have certainly changed.

On 23rd July, 1894, the Inspector reported: "Vacy is a 2nd Class School. Last quarter the enrolment was 58, and the average attendance 44. When there is anything like a full attendance the pupils are very crowded."

Great difficulty was experienced in keeping dampness out of the brickwork at the school, and residence. Drains had to be dug, and the brickwork painted quite frequently. One contractor, Mr. William Heald, carried out a painting contract for 8 Pounds 5 Shillings in November, 1895, and in December of the same year Mr. F. Connors installed an additional 600 gallon tank at the residence for 6 Pounds 10 Shillings.

In November, 1895, Mr. Cox asked permission to begin school at 9 a.m. and finish at 3 p.m. He pointed out that Vacy was a dairying district, and that the parents needed their children to come home early to help on the farm. Many of the children rode to school in creamery carts and were in the playground before 8 a.m., and then wished to be allowed to go early in the afternoon. Permission was granted for the variation in school hours.

The years 1894, 1895 and 1896 were difficult ones, for the summers were very hot and dry, and the school residence was often without water, there being only three tanks holding 1400 gallons. 1896 was particularly dry and the cost of carting water to the residence that summer amounted to nearly 2 Pounds. A new tank was supplied by the Department and installed by Mr. Patrick Kealy for 6 Pounds.

A sidelight on Departmental policy can be gained from the following incident:

A referendum to decide the issue of Federation was held in 1898, and on 25th May of that year Mr. Cox asked permission to assist the returning officer. The School was being used as a polling place. The Department replied that it was not considered desirable for him to act in such a capacity.

In 1898 Mr. Cox, at his own expense, built a laundry and bathroom at the school residence.

The enrolment at the school then was 57, with every prospect of an increase.

Vacy School and Post Office with Mr. and Mrs. Cox standing on verandah.



During the next few years Mr. Cox had considerable family worries; two of his children had scarlet fever, and the school was closed from 6th March until 28th April, 1899.

Earlier in the year Mr. Cox had applied for two months sick leave. Chief Inspector Bridges noted that Mr. Cox's services were considered to have been meritorious and leave was granted on full pay, which was unusual for such a long period.

In July, 1908, Messrs. J. Woodhouse, L. Woodhouse, J. Watson, J. Presland and A. J. Edwards, residents of Lennoxton and Creebank, said they were willing to provide "two suitable logs, place them in position across the Paterson River, adze the top surface, and carry out any work necessary to make a safe and convenient means to enable our children to attend the Vacy Public School". They asked the Department to pay 25/- to cover the cost of hauling the logs to the river, and providing bolts and chains with which to secure them in position. The teacher supported the application. He said that the seven children involved could not attend any other school, and added, "... it is unnecessary for me to point out the dangers to wade through water and often in a very heated condition." The logs were installed, but in time the floods washed them away.

Mr. Cox was nominated in January, 1911, for appointment as a Justice of the Peace. Teachers were not allowed to take office of that kind, and Chief Inspector Dawson recommended that "The Chief Secretary's Department be informed, as in other similar applications, that it is not desirable to concur in the nomination."

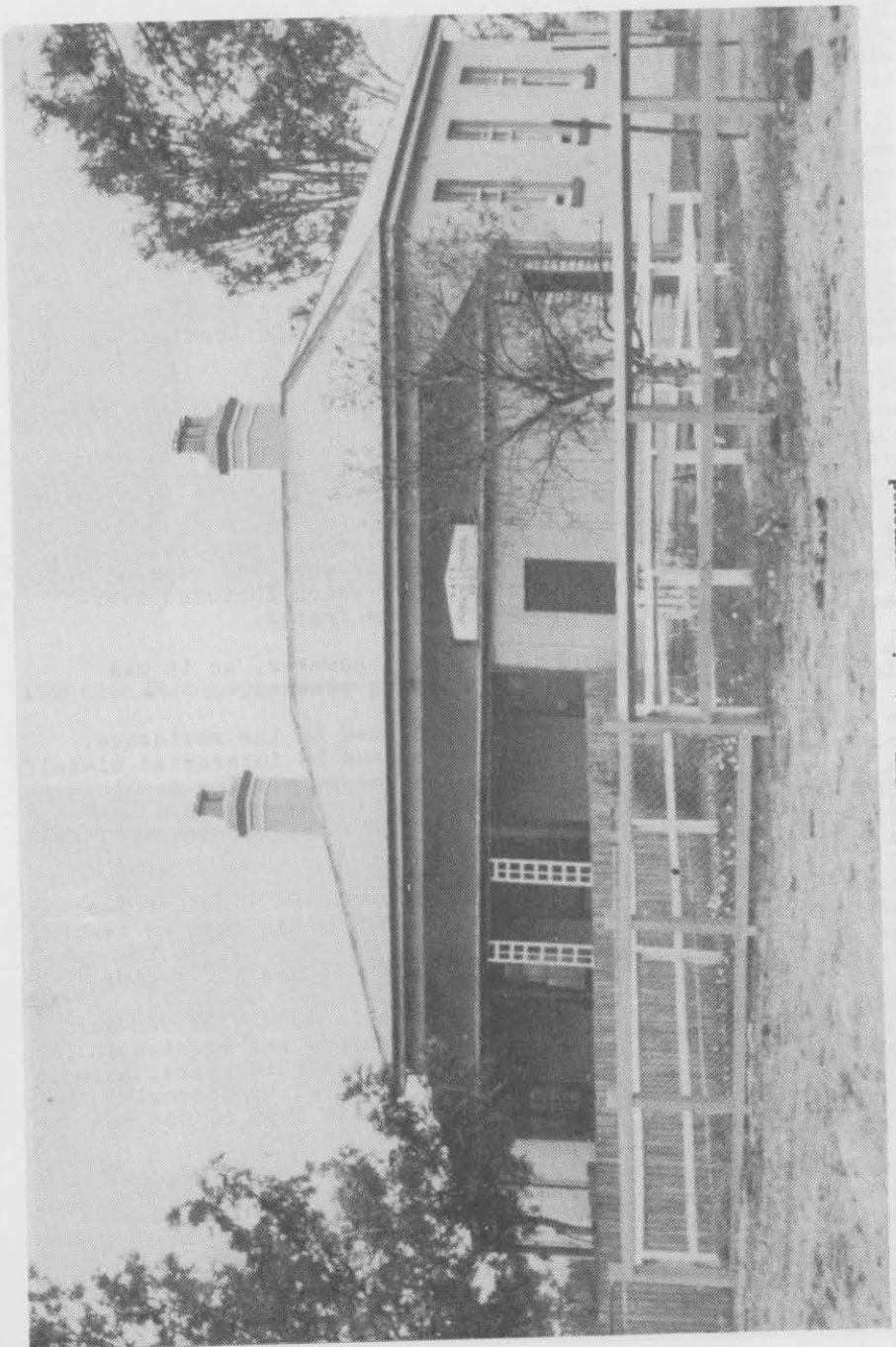
In March, 1911, a manual training room measuring 12'6" x 9' was erected. The work appears to have been done by the teacher himself, who was something of a carpenter.

From 1909 to 1911 there was much trouble in the teacher's family owing to diphtheria - Dr. Perkins, the Government Health Officer at Morpeth, and Dr. Dick, the Medical Health Officer at Newcastle, inspected the premises and recommended thorough renovations. These were carried out in 1912 at a cost of 222 Pounds 10 Shillings.

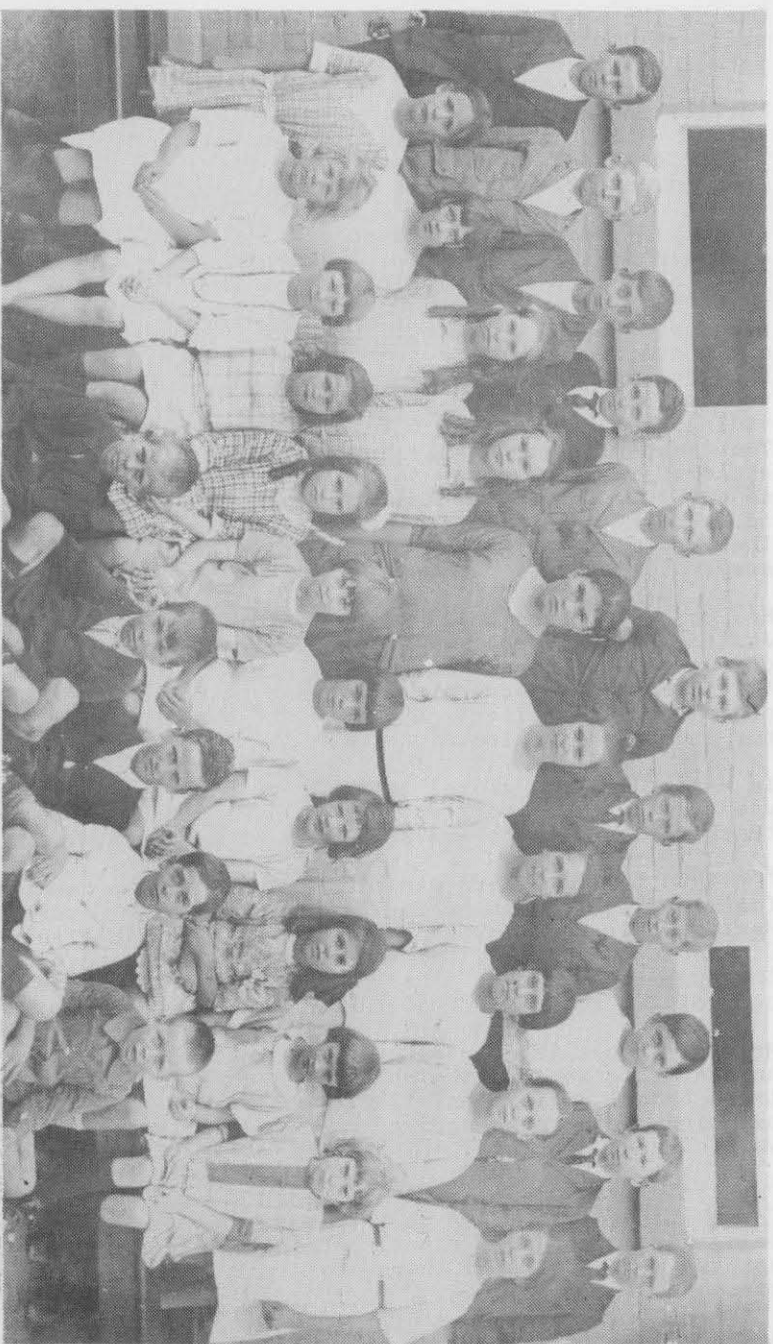
Mr. Cox specialised in manual training. For a number of years he sent specimens of the children's work to the Dungog District School Exhibition. These included penmanship, printing, painting, rope work, woodwork, plain needlework, and fancy work of various kinds.

The 18th March, 1914, must have been a memorable occasion. The children were taken to Newcastle for the day instead of being given the usual school picnic. They travelled to Paterson by waggonette, and thence by train. Several parents accompanied the party.

After spending 24 years in Vacy, Mr. Cox was transferred in June, 1916.



School and Residence. Taken after 1916 when Post Office extension was removed.



VACY SCHOOL — 1925 — (Back Row) R. Ninnes, W. Brooker, J. Woodhouse, B. Cardow, E. Ninnes, F. Hudson, G. Presland, H. Watson, J. McInnes, J. Somerville, G. Somerville; (2nd Row) L. Woodhouse, M. Eveleigh, M. Fairhall, D. Fairhall, L. McInnes, M. Watson, D. Layer, R. Duck, M. Woodhouse, V. Pilgrim; (3rd. Row) D. Ninnes, D. Keppie, J. Pilgrim, V. Fairhall, G. Brooker, E. Presland, J. Osborne, F. Pilgrim, V. Osborne, E. Somerville; (Front Row) L. Keppie, K. Hudson, C. Cardow, E. Layer, C. Bush.

The next teacher was Mr. Frederick Willis. He was appointed post-master too, on condition that the work was done by his wife and daughter. During 1917 the attendance dropped to 26, and the following year Mr. Willis was transferred.

In 1919 Mr. Percy Edwards was appointed teacher. He died suddenly while quite a young man, after being in charge for only 4 years.

He was succeeded by Mr. William Helm in 1922, who was the teacher for the next 8 years.

Increased enrolment meant extra seating accommodation, and this was provided in 1928 for the 53 pupils attending the school.

It was during Mr. Helm's time that the old gallery was removed from the school and the floor levelled, and the desks turned across the room. This work was carried out by contract by a Mr. A. Presland for the sum of 10 Pounds 5 Shillings.

Mr. Thomas Scott was appointed to the school in April, 1931, and within a few years extensive repair work was carried out. A sum of 225 Pounds was spent on work which included overhauling the drainage and repairing the fences.

No repair work was done to the school however, as it was stated that a new schoolroom was being planned.

In July, 1938, electricity was connected to the residence. Mr. Scott was a very popular teacher and he interested himself in the welfare of the district. It was mainly due to his efforts that a new low-level bridge was constructed at Horn's Crossing. Vacy was gay with bunting the day Mr. Spooner came to open that bridge.

Mr. John Glock took up duties in January, 1940, as the teacher, and he remained until 1949. It was during his term as teacher that a new classroom was completed in August, 1945. The contractor was Mr. J.G. Pickles, and the cost was 757 Pounds.

Mr. Ashley O'Toole succeeded Mr. Glock in 1950. It was during his term as headmaster that a new classroom was erected in September, 1956. Developments in school architecture, as well as a rise in building costs, may be gathered by comparing the price of the building erected in 1945 with that of the one in 1956. The latter cost 3,368 Pounds.

It was during Mr. O'Toole's term that a mouth-organ and accordion band was established, and many fine trophies were also won at the Gresford District P.S.S. Association.

Mr. Harold Smith was appointed to Vacy in January, 1958. During Mr. Smith's service the 100th birthday was celebrated and the centenary booklet published.



1963 Class Photographs (names not given)



Joan Palmer followed Harold Smith in 1965. Joan saw the demolition of the old school house and residence and the new residence constructed.

It was during John Dixon's time as principal that the school rose to a 3-teacher establishment, and a demountable classroom was erected. Mr. Dixon was a very competent musician and the Vacy School choir performed with distinction at many functions, including the Combined Primary Schools' Festival.

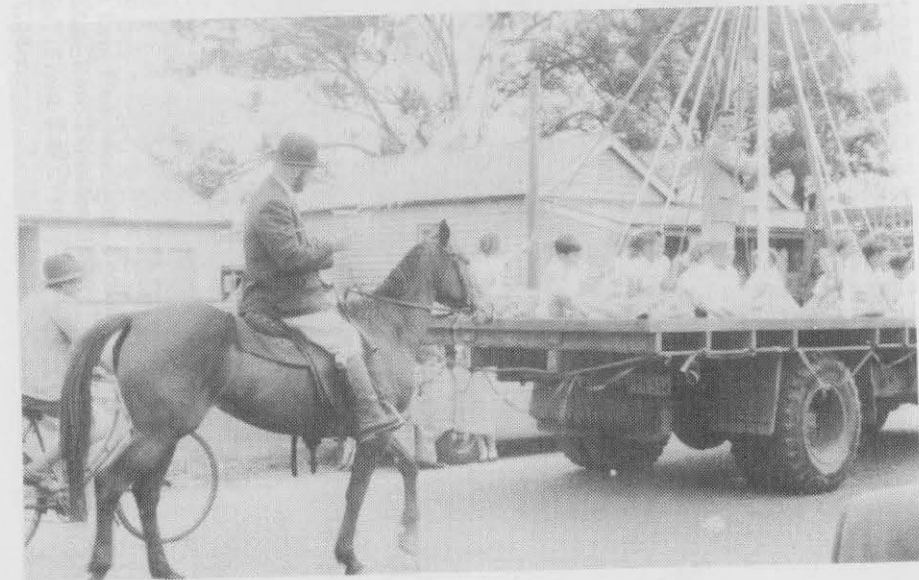
Eric Barry Alsop was appointed in 1979 and is the present Principal. During Mr. Alsop's term we have seen the change-over from tank water supply to mains supply, the building and opening of the library and administrative area, and the "adventure-type" playground equipment and the barbecues constructed.

List of Teachers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Appointed</u>
Charles Chapman	August, 1859
Josiah Morcom	September, 1862
Edith Morcom	May, 1878
Margaret Morcom	December, 1883
Benjamin Cox	June, 1892
Frederick Willis	June, 1916
Percy Edwards	December, 1918
William Helm	August, 1922
Thomas Scott	April, 1931
John Glock	December, 1939
Ashley O'Toole	January, 1950
Harold Smith	January, 1958
Majorie Palmer	February, 1965
Neil McKilligan	January, 1969
Neil Sellers	February, 1972
John Dixon	January, 1974
Eric Barry Alsop	February, 1979



Centenary (1959) Celebrations



## FISHERS HILL AND HILLDALE SCHOOLS

In celebrating our 125th birthday, we must acknowledge the work and service performed by two neighbouring schools, now closed, whose children are now numbered among our own.

### Fishers Hill School

Fishers Hill School began as a semi-private establishment in 1871 - in a slab hut - with 17 children in attendance. The Rev. W. Stone was the prime mover in its establishment, with Edward and William Kealy prominent in the early organisation. It was first known as Summer Hill School, but the name was changed to Bunnabunoo in 1884. In 1934 the name was changed again to Fishers Hill. These name changes were apparently made to avoid confusion with places of similar names.

Many of our local residents received their primary education at Fishers Hill School and recall those days with pride and a certain affection.

Owing to the declining roll, the school was closed "temporarily" on three occasions - 1936, 1941 and 1943. It was finally closed in 1974 and the children have been transported to Vacy School since that time.

### Hilldale School

The origins of Big Creek School were very similar to those of Fishers Hill - a small slab building with an earthen floor. It opened as a Provisional School in 1879 and it appears it operated on a half-time basis - alternating with Trevallyn. The children were required to bring sixpence per week.

In 1908 a new weatherboard school was erected. The intrusion through the valley of the North Coast Railway in 1909 brought an influx of "railway" children - the roll rose to about 70, necessitating a second teacher. As the construction crews moved north, so the roll dropped.

1937 saw the school closed because of declining admissions. It reopened in 1940 and in 1961 the name was officially changed to Hilldale. (The name "Green Hills" also appears in its early history.)

In December, 1968, the bell was run for the last time and the school was finally closed.

**BIG CREEK SCHOOL — 1911 — (Back Row) Arthur Haman, Jim Eyb, Dick Merchant, Cecil Borham, Fred Gardner, Charlie Eyb, Sylvan Tyrrel, Maitland Butler, Bill Miller, Arthur Miller; (Middle Row) Dorothea Butler, Maud Butler, Nina Huddleston, Amy Parish, Susie Merchant, Ivy Duck, Dot Gardner, Byril Borham; (Front Row) Vera Parish, Nellie Miller, Jim Huddleston, Arrie Borham, Percy Borham, Vernie Borham, Les Gardner, Lily Glider.**



## COMMUNITY LIFE

The "life" and strength of a community naturally emanates from its interest groups, sporting clubs and public spirited personalities. Vacy is no exception to this rule.

Our School of Arts was erected in 1901 and the hall has witnessed many memorable and notable functions since that time. Our school pupils look upon it as their "assembly hall" and we hope they will continue to care for it long after they have finished their school days. The names of Bill Brooker, Arthur "Nugget" Bowd and Doug Cardow have appeared on management committees over many years and the community is certainly indebted to them for their services.

The Red Cross, C.W.A. and Bush Fire Brigade are organisations which also are supported by enthusiastic and community-minded residents.

Our P. & C. Association, because of its purpose and function, benefits almost immediately from the new families moving into our area. Often, before their homes are fully-established, young parents are bringing their interests, skills and talents to the assistance of our P. & C. Our present organisation, with community support, has been extremely successful in fund raising over the last few years, resulting in the purchase of Teaching Laboratories, Instructional Reading Texts, Television sets, Adventure-type physical education equipment, Barbecue units - and items which can't be seen but are certainly appreciated, namely assistance in subsidising travelling costs to sporting and social studies outings. Our present 125th birthday celebrations are also the result of many hours of planning, preparation and hard work. Our officers for 1984 are : Secretary, Dawn Parish; President, John Holder; and Treasurer, Vivienne Sternbeck.

Sport has experienced an exciting revival in Vacy over the last three years. This has been largely through the efforts of Hotel Proprietor, Keith Miles, with sons Robert and Trevor, and their development of their "oval". 1981 saw the formation of the Gresford-Vacy United Soccer Club and 1982 the re-constitution of the Paterson River Junior Rugby League Club. Touch Rugby Teams are also entered into local competitions. The well-established Cricket Club not only continues to play, but spends many hours in training our school pupils in the skills of the game.

St. John's Church in the "historical gem of the township" and is indeed worthy of its own complete commemorative booklet. Although the church's construction and dedication dates from 1887, there is evidence to prove that a slab-walled shingle-roofed building existed before 1859, and the Rev. John Jennings Smith from Paterson (1839-46) conducted services throughout the area. The list of clergy who served the Parish through St. John's contains some distinguished names - all dedicated men - many learned Christian scholars.

The names of many of our well-respected, old-established families appear in the old church records - Bowd, Brooker, Cardow, Clements, Fairhall, Gillespie, Horn, McInnes, Somerville, to mention a few. The Christian work and service continues "in their safe hands" - with the able support of our more recently arrived families.

(E.B. Alsop)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We offer our grateful thanks to the following for their assistance and help in preparing this booklet and in loaning photographs :

Mrs. Dawn Parish, Mrs. D. Pristley, Clements family, Mr. Jim Somerville, Fraser family, Mrs. Susan Radford, Mr. Ross Horn, Mr. John Horn, Brooker family, and Peter Woodley of Maitland City Library.

To all other kind folk who helped us in any way we offer our thanks.

We trust that you will find the reading enjoyable, and that it will bring back pleasant memories.

Barry Alsop,  
Janet Lambert,  
Lynda Roberts, and  
P. & C. Committee.  
1984.