

Willow Grove Primary School  
2520  
(Formerly Latrobe River State School &  
Willow Grove State School)  
1883-2023



## The Latrobe River State School 1891-1900

By 1889 the local area was beginning to be known as Willow Grove and the school was referred to by locals as the Willow Grove School, however Government officials continued to use the name La Trobe River.

The Narracan School Board of Advice met at Trafalgar on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 1891 and accepted a tender for the erection of a fence around the school at Willow Grove.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1891 a new head teacher was advertised for and John E. Chenhall was appointed. Despite being appointed, John Egbert Chenhall's teaching record does not show he taught at LaTrobe River S.S.

"During the depression years of the 1890's, attendance at the school fell below 20 pupils. Subsequently on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1893 the school became temporarily unclassified and the Head Teacher, Miss Harriet Preston, was informed "to hold herself in readiness for transfer." By 1894, however, the numbers attending had risen to 20+..." (Willow Grove P.S. 2520 Centenary, 1983)

Advertising for a new Head Teacher was issued in the Age on Saturday 7 Jul 1894. Alice Bunter Stokes was appointed as head teacher.

The school was the meeting place for many local organisations, including the Wesleyan Church, who held their anniversary there in 1894. The Latrobe Cricket Club held their meetings there, most notably the meeting that they decided to name themselves the Willow Grove Cricket Club in 1889. Elections and concerts were held at the school also.

"In December 1898, the dwindling Tanjil school closed down, and a few of the children from there transferred to La Trobe River, bringing the attendance to over 40. To accommodate this number, the partitions were removed between the schoolroom and the dwelling rooms (1899)." (The Changing Years)

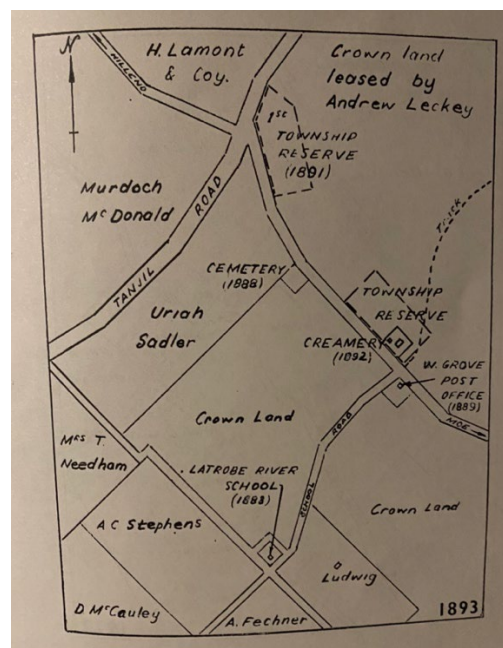
"On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1899, Head Teacher Christina Montgomery requested "that the boards of the partition between the school and the residence be cut out so that the residence may be used for the lower classes. The schoolroom is 22 ¼ feet long, 13 feet broad and 12 ½ feet high. The average attendance for the weekend ended 26<sup>th</sup> August was 40.5 and that for the week ended 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 43.2. Nor is this attendance likely to decrease as there are several younger children in the district to come. The atmosphere at the present time in the schoolroom in the afternoon is almost unbearable." (Willow Grove P.S. 2520 Centenary, 1983)

The removal was approved, and part of the wall was removed in October 1899

Over the years when men head teachers were appointed, sewing mistresses were engaged ... One of the first sewing mistresses was Tot (Ethel) Williams, daughter of the hotel keeper, who taught both boys and girls to sew. This activity was so unpopular with the boys that they hid their sewing materials in a gum tree. Their rebellion was short-lived and ended painfully!" (The Changing Years, 1972)

From the time when Williams' Hotel was built, single teachers boarded there. Married teachers would rent a house nearby.

In June of 1898 Miss M. Wilson was appointed head teacher of the LaTrobe River School.



1893 Map of Willow Grove

Note the school is in the lower, middle section of the map. There is also no Trafalgar Road.

#### References

- Warragul Guardian and Buln Buln and Narracan Shire Advocate, Fri 27 Mar 1891
- The Argus, 30 May 1891
- The Narracan Shire Advocate, Sat 17 Mar 1894
- The Age, Sat 7 Jul 1894
- The Horsham Times, Tue 28 Jun 1898
- The Changing Years, A History of Hill end, Willow Grove & Fumina South Districts, 1972
- Willow Grove P.S. 2520 (formerly Latrobe River P.S.) Centenary 1883-1983