

# SCHOOL DAYS TIME CAPSULE

HASS

How is school today different to school in the past?

Students will

- Examine and transcribe an autobiographical recount about school life.
- Describe some ways that schools today are different to schools in the past.
- Create a time capsule containing items which reflect life at school today.

## ENGAGE

- What subjects do we have at school today?
- What is your favourite subject?
- Think about your past school experience. If you were to describe something from Kindy or Pre-primary, what would stick out in your mind the most?

## EXPLORE

Show students a letter written by Ron E Waters, a former resident of Toodyay, recounting some of his memories of growing up and going to school in Toodyay.

- Working in pairs or groups, encourage students to have a go at transcribing the contents of the handwritten letter. It's OK if they only can make out a few words.
- Read through the letter together, discussing any unfamiliar words. You can show students a video of [how hand planes are used](#) and [how a grindstone works](#).

*When I was a boy at Toodyay State School we had a real nice Manual shed to do woodwork. One room had a grindstone which was turned by hand by one boy while the other boy sharpened Plain (sic) blades and chisels. The Grindstone was running in a trough of water.*

*In the main room down the centre was racks that held Plains (sic), chisels wooden malets (sic), saws, a tool to set at all different angles and other tools. Down both side (sic) of the shed was quiet (sic) a lot of benches with vices attached. We made toys out of wood, such as money boxes, Puppets, I made a match box holder you hung on the wall, when full had twelve boxes of matches, pot stand out of pine timber. I made these when I was eleven years old in 1943. The Headmaster was very good at woodwork. While us boys did woodwork the girls did sewing and cooking in another shed and took home some of their work to show their mother and Father. Both of these took our mind off the war.*

- What facts does this letter give you about being at school in Toodyay in the past?
- What do you think about Ron's life at school?
- What does the letter make you curious about?
- 'Manual workshop' fits into the 'Technologies' curriculum area today. What sort of things do we do and learn about in this subject now?
- Based on this letter, what differences can you identify between school in the past and school today?



## EXPLAIN

- The school that Ron refers to was the Toodyay State School on Duke St (which ran from 1887 to 1953). It was classified as a special Rural Observation School. New teaching methods were introduced at the school, with children encouraged to learn by observation. (Discuss what this way of learning could mean).
- By 1925, the school was taking students from smaller schools in outlying areas, and three motor buses and one horse-drawn bus were doing the school bus runs. They were the earliest school buses in WA.
- After the school closed, the buildings were used by the Toodyay Repertory Club, Toodyay Basketball Association, as a Methodist and Uniting Church. It was temporarily used as a school again in 1993 when the Toodyay District High School was destroyed by a fire, and is now a private residence.

## EXTEND

Show photos from the Toodyay State School, and some old school objects from the Toodyay collection. Compare and contrast these to your school and to school items you use today.

- How do you think schools will change in the future?

Put together a time capsule which illustrates school life now. Get students to suggest and provide objects to include. Some examples could be:

- Writing and drawing materials
- A USB drive
- Part of the school uniform
- Tests or other samples of written work
- Photos from a school excursion/incursion
- Athletics carnival / ANZAC Day order of service
- Readers or other text books
- Class list

Ask your school librarian to talk to the class about some ways you may be able to store and package your time capsule to make sure its contents are protected.

## EVALUATE AND REFLECT

- Why do you think schools change over time?
- If a historian was to find your time capsule in 100 years' time, which object do you think they will find most interesting, and why? Which items might they want to put on a display in the museum?

## WANT TO DO MORE?

- Investigate how things age and change over time, eg. why newspaper turns yellow, or why fabric fades.
- Discuss how easy/hard the letter transcribing was for students. Explain that letters, diaries and documents are valuable sources of historical information. However, a lot of them are written by hand, making them difficult to read. If we have digital copies of these documents we can more easily use them for research – eg. if the content of Ron's letter was typed up and put into a database, we could then use keywords like 'school' to find it and easily read it to learn about what school was like in the past. Although today we have technology that can scan hardcopy text and convert it to digital form, this is still far from perfect. Museums and historical societies often rely on volunteers to manually transcribing handwritten documents into a computer. Discuss:
  - What do you think compelled Ron to write about his school experiences?
  - Other than transcribing documents, what other jobs might people who work in museums do?
  - Why is their work important to the community?
  - Why might someone want to become a museum volunteer?

## USEFUL RESOURCES

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- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old\\_Newcastle\\_School](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Newcastle_School)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Albert\\_Miles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Albert_Miles)

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In the main room down the center was racks that held Plains, chisels, wooden mallets, saws a tool to set at all different angles and other tools. Down both side of the shed was quite a lot of benches with Vices attached. We made toys out of wood, such as money boxes, Puppets, I made match box holders you hung on the wall, when full had twelve boxes of matches a bread board out of garral and pine timber, and a tea pot stand out of pine timber, I made these when I was eleven years old in 1943. The Head master was very good at wood work. While us boys did wood work the girls did sewing and cooking in another shed and took home some of their work to show their mother and father. Both these things took our mind off the war.

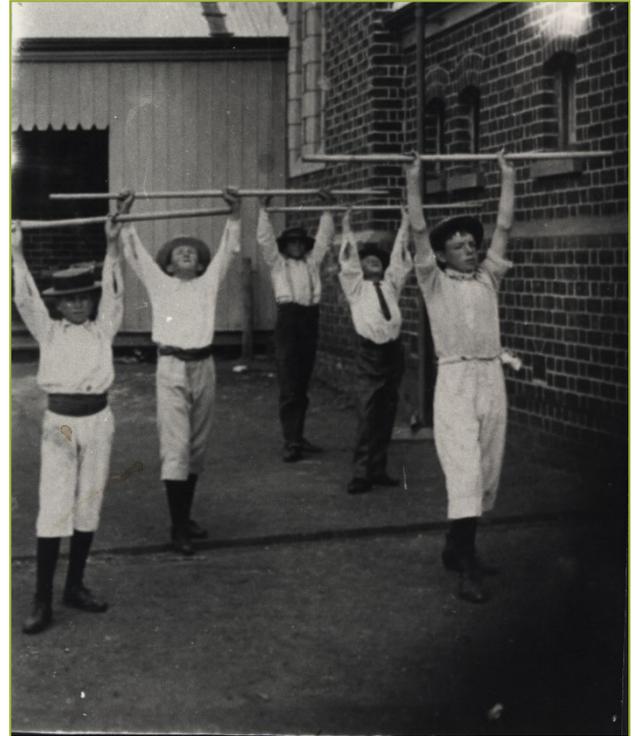
Ron Waters

Handwritten note by former Toodyay resident, Ron Waters.

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2017.4D



Cooking class at Toodyay State School, Duke St, c.1920.  
Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.1039



Exercise class at the Duke St school. Possibly Morris dancing (a form of traditional English dance).  
Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.1079



Experimental garden plots at Duke St school, c. 1922-1923. The men in the photo are Mr P Doig and Mr C Sainsbury (Headmaster)  
Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.1130



Horse-drawn covered carriage 'school bus', outside the Toodyay State School building in Duke St. 1920  
Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.1133



**Pencil case, 1880**

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.358



**Writing slate and pencil**

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.351c and 2001.354



**Pen and nibs**

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.199 and 2001.353



**School desk, 1870.**

Shire of Toodyay local history collection 2001.351a