

THE SCHOOL IN THE PARK

An enquiry from the historic places section of DNRE led to Barbara James preparing this....

The old school building in Fryers Road, Chewton, was indeed part of the Chewton Common School No. 1054 and, from 1872, State School No. 1054. We presume the plan to which you refer is the one sent to the Board of Education by Mr T. L. Brown on 13 November 1869, now held in VPRS 795, Box 527. We agree that the existing building bears little resemblance to this drawing. By 1874 a bigger school was needed and Mr Bastow wrote to the Education Department recommending that it be extended. The Department agreed to a considerable expansion of the school reserve to make this extension possible. The classroom still standing, apparently built of recycled materials, was then erected. In 1917 much of the old school was demolished, but this room was not. When the Metcalfe Heritage Study was written in 1994 there were people still alive who could remember having had lessons in this classroom. The Chewton Scout group, founded in the 1920s, did not use this building, but met in a wooden building, now pulled down, which was built beside it. By 1934 an oval had been built on the recreation reserve and the first football match was played there. The old classroom was from then on sometimes used as a changing room by players.



The old school building is highly valued by the people of Chewton. The school in the park, as it was called, was of great social importance to the many people who attended it between 1871 and 1911 and is still important to their descendants. The local material of which it is built adds to its interest. The first Common School No. 1054 had originally been St John's Episcopalian School standing opposite the Chewton Town Hall. Its

Local Committee had decided in 1869, despite the opposition of the Bishop of Melbourne and the local Wesleyan and Catholic schools, to ask the Government to take St John's over and offered, as bait, to donate the disused Market House as premises for the school. The old building thus stands as an interesting reminder of the difficulties surrounding the introduction of free, secular and compulsory education in colonial Victoria. Finally, it was decided to use the materials of which the market was built, rather than the Market House itself, in the construction of the school, so the old building also serves as a link to Chewton's brave, though failed, attempt to prevent the newly-built Castlemaine Market from attracting trade away from Chewton businesses.

The writers of the Metcalfe Heritage Study considered the old building to be of local significance and recommended it be given individual listing. It is also included in the Chewton Heritage Area. The Metcalfe Shire is now part of the new Shire of Mount Alexander which has incorporated these recommendations in its Planning Scheme.

BOX-IRONBARK FORESTS

There has been a lot of publicity about the future of the Box-Ironbark Forests of the local area in the last few weeks. The Environment Conservation Council (ECC) Draft Report has provoked much discussion. Any submission to be made to the ECC will be considered by them before they make their final report to the State Government. The State Government will then make a decision on the future of the Box-Ironbark Forests. You can help make that decision by writing a submission (or letter) to The ECC, 3rd Floor, 250 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, 3002. As with all such submissions (letters) it is advisable to send copies to your local member of State Parliament.

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