

William Robert Dalrymple

Headmaster (1899-1926)

We are not sure why Mr Dalrymple came to Australia but his records from the Education Department (found in State Archives) show that he had undertaken 6 months training in Dublin and at some time immigrated to Victoria where he worked in a variety of colleges (possibly private schools), and at one time had spent 2 years as headmaster of the Grammar School in Bourke, N.S.W. It is possible most of his experience during that time was with older boys as a comment early in his employment states, “but has not fully grasped the methods of teaching in an elementary school yet,” this comment is repeated again several reports later.

On arrival in Western Australia in 1887, he spent 3 years at Belmont School and was temporarily in charge of this during a sick leave of the headmaster. By this time he was a permanent employee. During this time he took evening classes and qualified as a Teacher of Gymnastics.

In early 1899 he was advised that he was to be moved to Mandurah as the Headmaster with a salary of £100 per annum. At this time he was 41 years old. His wife Dorothy, who had also been employed at Belmont as a sewing mistress had accepted the position to teach sewing at Mandurah for £12 per annum.

Robert Dalrymple commenced teaching in the Police Barracks which had been built in 1852, located on Pinjarra Road near the traffic bridge. The premises had been refurbished during Miss Mary Ann Mewburn’s time in 1894. (Daughter of Robert Mewburn)

When Robert Dalrymple and his wife Dorothy arrived in Mandurah there were concerns by the local residents that the school was too small for the number of students enrolled, the shingle roof was in a dilapidated state, there were no tanks for water, no kitchen and the fence surrounding the school was falling down.

There were 29 students attending the school and all of them were being taught in a room 24 x 12 feet. (7m x 3.6m) There were another 6 children of school age in the district, but the school had no room to accommodate them.

Following the series of complaints the construction of a new school took place in 1900. The new school opened with an enrolment of 16 boys, 17 girls, and a female monitor.

While erecting the new school, renovations were undertaken to convert the former school room which was part of the old Police Barracks into more living quarters for Robert Dalrymple and his growing family.



William Robert Dalrymple cont'd

The Dalrymple School is now part of the larger Mandurah Community Museum complex. In August 1899, Mr Dalrymple opened an evening school but it is unclear how many people attended and it closed in February 1900 due to insufficient attendance.

As the years went by inspector's reports reflected on the old fashioned style of teaching that Mr Dalrymple brought to the position, however they were generally complimentary of his discipline and attention to detail. One negative comment in 1903 related to him keeping infants down past the age of 7 years without permission. This was explained as a mistake on the schedule. There were further problems with the ages of the infants in 1906.

In celebration of Arbor Day, 1901, Peppermint trees were planted along the foreshore, adjacent to the school. The trees are still standing in the area known as 'Dalrymple Park'. One pile of the 'Dalrymple Jetty', built in 1906 may still be seen at low tide. The jetty was demolished in 1971 because of its dangerous condition.

In 1904, Mandurah was struck by a Diphtheria epidemic, which affected much of the local population. It was thought that the disease had been spread through the school. The school was closed for a short time.

In 1913 Long Service Leave was granted to Mr Dalrymple. He continued to teach at Mandurah after his long service leave. Many of the children he had taught left Mandurah but many remained and he was now teaching a second generation within the school.

Dalrymple remained the Headmaster at Mandurah School for 27 years, retiring in 1926 on a pension of £111 per annum.

He died in Mandurah in 1928 after a lengthy illness. His passing certainly did have an impact on local people, for he had been the longest serving Headmaster in Mandurah. His grave is in the Christ's Church Cemetery.



Dorothy Eleanor Dalrymple

Dorothy Eleanor Johnstone of Perth was born 1869. She married Robert Dalrymple in 1889.

Dorothy Dalrymple was known to Mandurah school children as “the Old Brick” due to her red hair. West Australian records show her as being appointed as sewing teacher at Belmont in 1897.

What is shown early in her records are less than complimentary statements regarding her sewing work, with a threat of dismissing her at her next assessment if she does not improve. She was transferred with her husband to Mandurah and her wages were to be £12 per annum. Over the next several years there were obvious improvements and by 1903 she was receiving very complimentary remarks for her own and the student’s work.

She continued to work at the school during the time her husband was employed receiving 6 months leave without pay while he was on Long Service Leave.

In 1917 she received a commendation for her work and its wide variety. A report made of her War Work in 1918 said that it, “deserves special mention for the children and herself with Mr Dalrymple’s aid have raised some £500 in money and goods for the soldiers during the period of the war”.

Dorothy Dalrymple resigned at the same time as her husband’s retirement but was re-employed several times for short periods in the years following his death and prior to her own in 1937. Her grave is in the Christ’s Church Cemetery.

Mrs Dalrymple’s Music Book

This book originally belonged to Mrs Dalrymple and after her death in June 1937, it was passed to her second son, James, who was also an accomplished pianist, having been a pupil of his mother.

Dorothy Dalrymple was the assistant school-mistress and gave musical instruction. In the early 1900s, she had the distinction of being Mandurah’s first music teacher.

While on a visit to Mandurah shortly before his death, Jimmy Dalrymple presented the book to his old friend and fellow-pupil of his mother, Mrs Edna Heath (nee Tuckey). In turn Kelvin Tuckey donated the book into the collection of the Mandurah Historical Society and it has in turn become part of the collection within this Museum.

The book appears to have been sold in Perth, but other information relating to its printing is missing. The book is embossed with D R Dalrymple and it can be seen in a display case in the Dalrymple schoolroom.

