

The Early Years

Enrolments at Ringwood North remained steady across the years 1923 to 1950. During the Depression years of 1928 – 1933 enrolments fluctuated between 55 and 80. In 1940 enrolments were 53; a decade later, five years after the end of World War 11 enrolments were 67. Typically, children were enrolled from a diverse range of parent occupation groups. As Ringwood North State School was centred in a rural, fruit growing community, parent occupation groups included orchardists, gardeners, farmers and labourers. The early pupil registers also list children from families whose parents were railway/tramway employees and motor mechanics. By far the greater number of pupils lived within a mile and a half of the school. School registers also reveal that pupil movement both into and out of the school was high, no doubt a reflection of the itinerant nature of work available in the district.

Mr Mason was appointed to take temporary charge of the school and clearly impressed the school community with his prowess. In a letter to the Education Department, the school's correspondent stated that Mr Mason had given "complete satisfaction to parents and residents who have the welfare of the school at heart. His personality and teaching ability have won the affection of the scholars..."¹² Mr Guest also requested that Mr Mason's appointment be made permanent 'as it would meet with the approval of all concerned.' The Department informed the school committee that under the Education Act, the vacancy at Ringwood North had to be filled by the appointment of a teacher already in the Permanent Service. As Mr Mason was a Temporary Officer, he could not be confirmed in the ongoing position. The correspondent's request was therefore denied.¹³

Rowland Mason remained as Head Teacher until the end of the 1923 school year. He ceased duty on the 12th January 1924.¹⁴ Miss Jessie E. Patison was appointed the permanent Head Teacher and commenced duty on 29 January 1924¹⁵, having transferred from Hazeldene State School, Number 3460.

With the opening of new schools, comes the assessment and proper provisioning of facilities and equipment to operate the school successfully. In the early months, the greatest needs at Ringwood North were the requests for a sheltered annex; the provision of electric lighting and a water storage tank. Water would be at a premium—there was no constant supply of fresh water. The tank would be filled from water collected from the small gable roof area of the building. For the scholars, the greatest need was the supply of additional desks. Children were sitting three to a desk which

¹² Correspondence Files, (VPRS: 640, Box 2573), A.J.Guest to the Secretary, Education Department, 26 November 1923.

¹³ In a subsequent letter to Mr Guest –29 November 1924, the Department explained that Mr Mason "could only gain a permanent position by being placed by the Classifiers on the Register for Permanent Employment, and only after he becomes the senior eligible applicant for an advertised vacancy."

¹⁴ Correspondence Files (VPRS: 640, Box 2573, Item: 23/9177), R.J.Mason to the Director, Education Department: 25 October 1923.

¹⁵ Correspondence Files, (VPRS 640, Box 2573, Item: 23/9761) Jessie Patison to the Director, Education Department, 29 January 1929.