



museum without walls

MANDURAH COMMUNITY MUSEUM

Schooling in the 1800s

Many of the early settlers were worried by the lack of formal education for their children. In most country areas the children did not attend school. The girls- who remained at home to help with domestic chores sometimes were lucky enough to receive the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic from their mothers, but the boys, miles away out in the bush minding stock, usually missed out altogether. Children above the age of 10 years were considered to be employable; by the time they became teenagers many were of necessity in many instances- making a living on their own, away from their families.

As early as 1840 the Government announced that it would donate £20 to any community able to establish a school. Nothing occurred in Mandurah until Mary Ann Tuckey, the wife of James Tuckey, ran a class from her own home in 1865. She was assisted by her future daughter-in-law, Eliza Hawley. Mrs Eliza Tuckey conducted the school from 1869 to 1872.

First Educator- Mrs Eliza Tuckey

(1869-1872)

Eliza Tuckey, often known as 'Mrs John', came to Mandurah from Victoria when John Tuckey returned here from the Victorian goldfields.

Becoming well known in the district for her medical abilities Eliza was sought by many to assist with managing the ongoing health of Mandurah people. She was often involved in delivering babies, setting bones and treating other illnesses. She was well respected by the visiting doctor from Pinjarra who often sought her out for assistance.

Another area which Eliza became involved in was Sunday School, and teaching and playing the harmonium (a free standing keyboard instrument similar to a reed organ) at church services.

Eliza conducted classes in her own home for several children but it is unknown whether she was paid or even officially appointed. However according to historical sources, in October 1869 she was appointed by the Central Board. She received an allowance of £25 for her work and the use of her premises. In 1872 Eliza was permitted a fortnight's break for the birth of her son Stephen, returning to the schoolroom with the baby in a basket. At this time Eliza had four children 6 years and under and was to go on to have eight children in total.

It appears that during this time school hours were between 9am and 3pm with only 5 weeks holidays during the year. These included Christmas, Easter, mid winter and St Michaelmas Day on September 29th.

It should be noted that John Tuckey, husband of Eliza, was pursuing farming, pearling, fishing, and later fish canning which would take him away from home for some considerable time.

It isn't recorded when Eliza stopped running her school but a petition is documented by Robert Mewburn during 1872 to request permission to build and run a school.