

WORLD WAR II

On 3 September 1939 we all huddled around the wireless set in our lounge room to hear the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, proclaim that it was his melancholy duty to inform us that, as Britain was at war, we were now at war. For some time we all sat stunned.

(Allan Limburg, 1936-39)



Grandfathers from the Roseville community dug trenches on the grassed area of the boys' playground. Addison Avenue is in the background, 1940.

The school air raid shelters were, of course, underground and ran in a zig-zag pattern so it was impossible to see from one end of the tunnel to the other. We were marched down a sloping earth ramp to a big slatted door with a bolt and padlock. Inside the shelter parallel wooden seats ran along each wall. It was damp and cold, but airless and heavy with the breathing of the other children packed uncomfortably along the splintery forms. There was no electric light and the sand, which was heaped on top to form a roof, seeped down intermittently through the wooden beams and onto your clothes.

The Parents' and Citizens' Association were active in supporting the school in their efforts to ensure the safety of students. Following are extracts from the minutes between 1940 and 1942:

Mr Kehoe asked that 24 two-gallon buckets be purchased.

1 load of clean sand from builders, for the purpose of providing a means of combating fires.

Decided to write to Mr Dixon, Chief Warden of Kuringai. He requested details regarding the minimum equipment for Air Raid requirements of a school of 800 children.

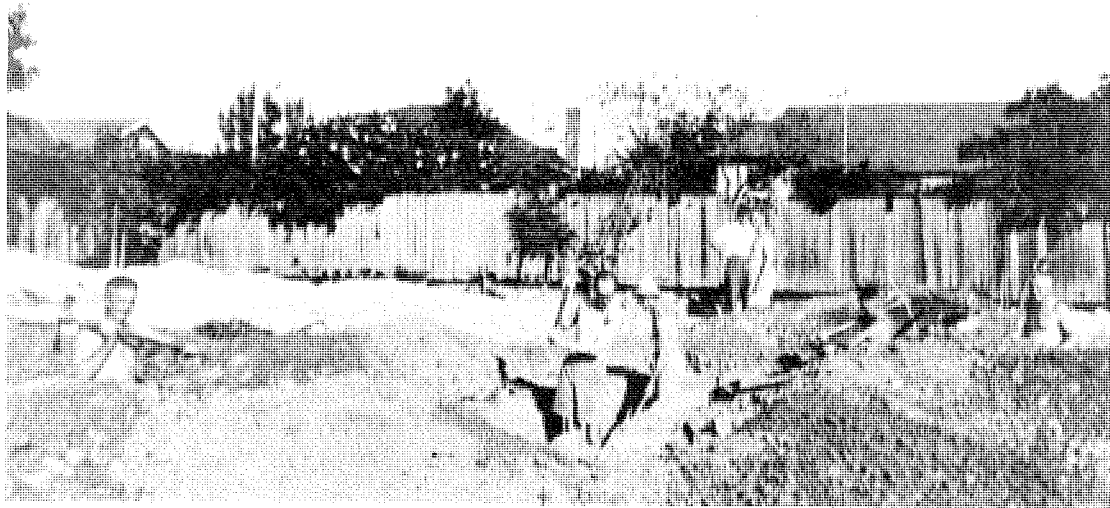
A discussion on Air Raid Protection at the school took place and it was arranged that Mr Kehoe and Mr Treloar would consider further trench digging. Miss Ayling explained the difficulty Mr Kehoe was experiencing in getting any satisfaction from various sections of the Education Department in respect of getting the assembly hall floor strengthened for sandbags.

Mr Treloar reported on the position re trenches and it was decided to issue a circular with the object of getting enough workers to complete the job on the following Saturday.

Moved by Mr Treloar, seconded Mr Brew that the thanks and appreciation by the men folk to the Ladies of the school in providing afternoon tea each Saturday to the trench diggers to be recorded.



The women supply cups of tea for the workers.



Trenches being dug on the grassed area of the playground, adjacent to the back gardens of houses facing Duntroon Avenue.

War broke out during my last year at Roseville. Shortly after, we all had to wear labels denoting the direction home from school and the time taken. My destination was 'South 15' indicating I lived fifteen minutes away in a southerly direction. The southerners lined up along the south fence and the rest in their respective north, east and west fences. At a whistle from the Principal we moved as quickly as possible without noise to these boundaries.

(George Nethery, 1935-39)

During the early part of the war we had slit trenches to which we hurried for air raid drill. I had to take my sister with me to the position our group was given. She and other younger siblings had to wait between the Infants' School and the sewing room to be collected. We were in group N5; we lived north of the school five minutes away.

(Shirley Cherry (Whittall), 1935-40)

During World War II there were slit trenches in the school yard and occasionally air raid exercises, evacuating the buildings and hiding in the trenches. We also raised money to send to England for the building of Spitfires – apparently even a school could raise enough to make a significant contribution to the cost of one.

(Tony Hayward, 1935-42)

To stop the danger from flying glass in case of an explosion, every pane of glass in the school had to be pasted over with thin fabric or paper. We got Grandma's old Nottingham lace curtains out of the dress-up trunk and donated them. All these odds and ends of material were cut into rectangles to fit the panes of glass, dipped into glue, and stuck flat onto the glass for the duration of the war. The result in our classroom was assorted wonder - the windows over the playground were white lace, pink voile from someone's ball gown above the blackboard, white strips like bandages next to the corridor and brown paper behind us.

... Air raid practice with knitted earmuffs and First Aid Kit.

(Philip Calvert, 1942-47)

I remember the end of the war. We went to school as usual, called to assembly and told the war was over and we could go home. I ran all the way to Roseville Chase and told Mum. At some point we were given Victory Medals.

(Errolly Holding (Marsh), 1942-49)

1945 Peace

Whilst all other pupils were really happy I remember David Todd (who then lived in Park Avenue, Roseville) a sixth class mate sitting on the playground kerb - sobbing violently. His father was a prisoner of war and they had just found out he was dead. I often wonder what happened to David.

(Thomas Roach, 1941-45)



The grandfathers who dug the trenches (Mr Gros Edenborough is second from the right in the front row).