

ANME NEWS

Newsletter of the



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ANME Annual Lecture



Prof. Geoffrey Sherington, Dr Malcolm Beazley AM, Professor Barbara Pamphilon, Professor Barry McGawAO, Professor Geoffrey Riordan.
Photo: Michelle McAuley – *Monitor Online*

The ANME annual Historical Perspectives on Education Lecture for this year was given by Professor Barry McGaw AO entitled: *The First Australian Curriculum* on 16 September. Professor McGaw is a Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne and Chair of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Prior to returning to Australia at the end of 2005, Professor McGaw was Director for Education at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). He had earlier been Executive Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and Professor of Education at Murdoch University.

In his most interesting and informative address Professor McGaw outlined the initiatives for the introduction, across the Australian state education systems, of a National Curriculum for all schools. He explained the setting up of the Authority for the development of a National Curriculum and the progress so far in the design and publishing of a number of outlines for various subjects of the National Curriculum. He explained the rationale for the maintenance of a “disciplines of knowledge” approach to the National Curriculum. The full text of Professor McGaw’s Lecture will be published by ANME in our annual Monograph Series. The well attended lecture was held in the Brindabella Room of the National Library of Australia. Following the Lecture Professor McGaw and ANME Friends dined at *Brassey House*.

Once so Common, now so Scarce: The Irish National Readers Series

The Commissioners for National Education in Ireland published, during the nineteenth century, a large series of school readers and school textbooks over the decades 1830s to 1870s. They were designed to meet the needs of the Irish National school system. This series of school readers and textbooks became the foundation for school readers and textbook usage throughout the schools of the Australian Colonies during the mid and latter decades of the nineteenth century. They were highly suited to the NSW and Victorian “National Schools” which were established by the NSW colonial government in 1849. This government assisted school system was based on the Irish National School model and initially relied on the importation of thousands of copies of the Irish National Readers Series before Australian based school textbook publishers became established in Sydney and Melbourne during the latter half of the century.

Almost all Australian colonial schools, National and Denominational, from the mid-nineteenth century used the Irish National Readers at some stage. Examples of the titles of these readers were simply, *Third Reading Book of the Commissioners of National Education, Ireland*, and, *The Fourth Reading Book*, etc. In addition to the readers, the Commissioners also published school textbooks in other subjects of the curriculum, for example, *Compendium of Geography, compiled for the use of the teachers and advanced classes of the National Schools in Ireland*. All of the Readers and other textbooks were initially published in Dublin by Alexander Thom. However, in the 1870s special editions of the readers adapted for the Australian market were published to meet the needs of

Australian colonial schools. For example the preface to the *Third Reading Book*, 1878 states,

“The publisher hopes that the special editions of the Reading Books of the Irish Board of National Education, which have been revised and adapted for schools in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand will be appreciated, not only for cheapness, but also as being better suited than any other series for the use of colonial youth.”

The preface goes on to state that these adapted editions were undertaken under the supervision of Mr. Archibald Gilchrist who was Inspector of Schools for Victoria, and each volume carries the title page inscription, “Published under the Sanction of the Education Department, Victoria”.

The ANME is fortunate to have in its nineteenth century text book collection two examples of the school books of the National Commissioners for Education in Ireland. Although it was still possible to come across examples of the Irish National Readers series of school text books in second hand book shops 50 years ago, they now seem to have disappeared almost completely with very few examples having been preserved in state libraries, school museums, rare book collections and the National Library of Australia.

Profile of a School Museum: The Hartley Street School Museum in Alice Springs



This school museum was established in the old Hartley Street Public School some years after the school building was no longer used as a school. The old Hartley Street School, located at Anzac Hill, was the first official school building in Alice Springs. It operated on this site from 1930 to 1965

having been constructed in 1928 to cater for the increase in the town’s population resulting from the town’s status as the Northern Territory railway terminal for the newly opened Adelaide to Alice Springs Railway link.

In 1980 the old original building was threatened with demolition following the establishment of self-government for the Northern Territory. The school building was saved by the intervention of the National Trust which took over the school building following a “save-our school” campaign pursued by the local community. The National Trust branch then began to restore the building.

A northern wing to the school building was added in 1948. The architecture of the building is typical of a 1920s-1930s government building of that period and today it is one of the few heritage buildings of that style and design in the Alice Springs Central Business District open to the public as a museum. The original school building was a small two-roomed structure, extended first in 1940 by an additional room and verandah. In 1945 an octagonal room and classroom were added. In addition to the Museum’s period classrooms, the building has also served as the local National Trust Branch’s library, shop and Trust office. The Museum is staffed by volunteers and is open to the public during week days.



It is significant to note that in 1950-51 the first radio broadcasts of the School of the Air were made involving teachers from the Hartley Street School. They volunteered to take lessons for the School of the Air, which had been established in the Royal Flying Doctor Base at Alice Springs in 1950. A land line was laid from the Base to the Hartley Street School. The teachers from the Hartley Street School during 1951 prepared radio lesson scripts, with the help of the radio staff at the Flying Doctor Base, for the outback children in isolated and remote locations.



Best Wishes

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