

St Mary's in Review

On Friday 26 November, St Mary's Infant School Greta hosted a 'walk through history' of the school from 1886 to 2010. Principal Helen Bourne and teachers prepared students from Kindergarten to Year 2 for this concert. The night was dedicated to Catherine Bridge, a previous music teacher who passed away this year.

It began in 1886 with Bishop Murray sending five Sisters of Mercy to Branxton, with three of these sisters teaching Kindergarten to Year 6 at St Mary's Greta. The sisters taught 55 students in the wooden church and travelled by buggy from Branxton.

In 1900, the school moved from the church into a new building. The Greta parishioners and townspeople planned a ball to be held in the new school building as a house warming. The ball was an unqualified success with 70 couples attending. The current Kindergarten students took the audience back to that ball, and danced the Pride of Erin.

In 1955, the present classroom building was blessed and opened on 24 April by Monsignor Peters. The cost of the building was £5000. The new school at Rosary Park will cost around \$4 million! At this time, rock 'n' roll was popular. Year 1 students swung their hips on stage and danced to 'Rock around the clock' for the audience.

In 1967, there was a directive from the Diocesan Catholic Education Office that St Mary's should be a Kindergarten to Yr 2 school, and St Brigid's Years 3 to 6, hence, the current schools today.

In 1980, Catherine Bridge had an old disused bus moved into the grounds from Ford Bros at Greta. This was done so as the children had shade to eat their lunch. Cath spent many hours painting the outside with cartoon characters. For anyone who attended St Mary's during this time, the bus was iconic. It brought back

many memories for former students. Marge Piper replicated this as the backdrop for the concert.



In 1982, Miss Penny Tully was the first lay principal appointed to the school. Penny was in attendance on the concert night and thoroughly enjoyed reminiscing.

In the 1990s, Cath Bridge taught music throughout the

school and was known for her wonderful patience and exceptional skill in teaching percussion. Year 2 students, conducted by their teacher Mrs Christine Johns, entertained the audience with two percussion pieces which showcased tambourines, triangles, cymbals, maracas and drums.

The evening also showcased significant historical events that shaped the community. Students recited poetry, marched as soldiers, engaged in Aboriginal dance and counted in a variety of languages.

2010 has seen the Federal Government's 'Building the Education Revolution' funding allow the two schools to amalgamate. In 2011, Rosary Park Catholic School will be built in Branxton and cater for children from Kindergarten to Year 6. St Mary's Greta & St Brigid's Branxton will close, and bring to an end a wonderful history of education in these two schools. Pastoral Care Worker, Basil Morrow, rewrote a song about the new school which all the students performed with excitement and enthusiasm.

It was a wonderful evening which showcased the talented students, and allowed the audience to 'walk through history'. Congratulations to Helen and the staff and students of St Mary's Greta!