

# *On Broadway*

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**View of the opening of Clayton South State School in 1929, courtesy David Soffe**

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## Feature stories

*Prompted by Clayton North school's recent anniversary David Soffe, Society member and secretary in 1991-92, has provided this (now abridged) account of the establishment of Clayton South State School No. 4384.*

Before 1929 Clayton South children's options for schooling were Clayton (North), Heatherton and Clarinda, each quite a walk for the younger ones, morning and afternoon. The Morgan family moved from Keilor into Clayton South in 1907, settling on the now vacant area south of today's Ryans Road. Daughters Violet and Isabel naturally chose the Heatherton school in Old Dandenong Road to continue their schooling. (Way back in history, someone in a town planning office elected to name that area Kingstown and so the Kingstown School opened there in 1870. No town eventuated, the area and school became Heatherton, but we still have Kingston Road.)

By 1927, Violet was Mrs Audsley with two children and living right behind today's Fire Station on land stretching from Merlyn Street to Bourke Road. So with a view to opening a local school she took the initiative to visit every household in the area to record, family by family, the numbers and birthdates of all school-age children, and their younger siblings. Original undated drafts of this list have survived in her family, and interestingly, the youngest entry then pencilled in only bears the name 'baby', with date of birth 'last Friday'! A search in the archived Education Department files at Victoria's Public Record Office revealed her neater copies submitted to the Department.

These names are a unique peep into the local population in the 1920s, as Council rate books from then have not been released and electoral rolls never covered those under 21. Each household's distance by road from their nearest existing school was recorded, ranging up to 3¼ miles (over 5 km). As the whole purpose of this list was to emphasize the hardships facing local children, we can safely assume that no distance by road was *under-estimated* and in practice, many kids would devise short-cuts through open paddocks, or farmers' vegetable gardens.

The first return correspondence is a note back from the Education Office dated 12 March 1927 acknowledging an initial request by Mrs Audsley, and advising her that the matter had been referred to the District Inspector to investigate.

By 28<sup>th</sup> June 1927 the Education Department had approved the school in principle, and as 4384 was the next available number, this was now added with a bold red crayon across all inward correspondence, to be filed accordingly. Following normal practice, responsibility for acquiring suitable land was handed to the Public Works Department. An investigation was made by the district inspector with a view to approving a suggested vacant area just south of a well-timbered track, which is now Bourke Road. Fortunately, it was visited after a spell of wet weather, so the swampy tendency of this low-lying land was apparent, and the site rejected.

On being advised of this, Mrs Audsley discussed it with her husband, and a section of their own land was offered. Largely because of the higher ground on the southern slopes of 'Audsley's Hill', this 'ticked all the squares', so on 16<sup>th</sup>

November 1927 advice came that the Government Valuer had been authorised to negotiate purchase. Presumably, Mr Audsley pegged out a suggested site on well-timbered land to the south of his cultivated area. The surveyor's neat and precisely dimensioned plan showed this to be slightly "off square" but acceptable, so on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1928 a cheque for £400 was forwarded to Mr Audsley for the 4 acres.

The Minister also approved the erection of a building to accommodate eighty pupils, together with fencing and 'out-offices' (to students - the 'dunnies'). As previously hinted, the erection of a teacher's residence was not considered necessary as some parents had already indicated their willingness to board teachers.

Upon hearing that the department now required that a School Committee be formed Violet sent letters dated 26<sup>th</sup> May 1928 to each household on her list to invite the parents to a public meeting in her home the following Thursday evening. Immediately following the meeting, she wrote late that evening to the Department, listing the 7 elected members, naming the president, treasurer and a correspondent, appointed from them.

But disaster threatened. When a group of Clayton's townspeople got wind of the Education Department's approval to build a school way down in Clayton south's bushland, they did their best to squash the idea. For some time they had been hoping for a more central school in Clayton, and now realised that Mrs Audsley's proactive move had left them behind, leaving little hope of them getting a third school in Clayton. Their several strongly worded letters of objection on plain notepaper under the rubber-

stamped letterhead of Clayton Progress Association all failed to sway the Department, which simply re-affirmed its commitment to build 4384.

On 30 May 1928 the Public Works Department was authorised to call for tenders for the building, and on 17 July a tender was accepted, the contract granted to Mr C. Neville of Elsternwick for £1,456.

As 1928 drew to a close, all schools finalised their annual register of pupils, and if a child was not intending to return to the same school next year, any transfer plans needed to be noted. Heatherton's records show that quite a number there now indicated that they would transfer to the closer Clayton South School, scheduled to open in 1929.

The official opening was by Mr. Groves, M.L.A. on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 1929 followed by a Grand Bazaar with numerous stalls and competitions. The flyer printed on eye-catching orange paper was bordered (and probably subsidised) by a dozen small advertisements from local businesses - a couple of the more progressive ones even boasting their 3-digit telephone number from the Oakleigh exchange. But as the mere handful of overhead wires on the local telephone poles plainly indicated, very few local homes were connected until after World War 2.

As revealed on a few surviving snapshots taken on the big day only a few weeks after commencement, very little development of the grounds was to be seen. The clearing of a small area immediately in front of the new brick building served for assembly, and was the initial site of the flagpole - almost exactly where the 1956 memorial plaque for later

head teacher Peter Ryan stands today. Recently obtained prints of aerial photography dated two years later – 29 March 1931 – show most of the 4 acres were still virgin bushland.

**David Soffe, 2015©**

*Continuing the education theme, member Clive Haddock has provided this article (edited) of James Bagge (1853 – 1902) who for many years was Secretary of the Education Department and resident of Clayton.*

James Bagge was born during the early months of 1853, in the registration district of St Pancras, London, England. He was the second child to James Bagge and Jane Young Lawson, who married at Lambeth, Surrey, in 1850. A sister, Christian Mary Bagge was born in 1851, at Greenwich, and in September, 1872, married solicitor, Joseph Alfred Wilmoth, at Richmond, Victoria.

James Bagge was very much an infant when he arrived in Port Phillip in August 1853, with his parents and elder sister. The family had emigrated from England as Unassisted Passengers aboard the vessel *GIBSON CRAIG*.

It was the birth of Matthew Lawson Bagge in 1856, where we learn this family settled in Emerald Hill, at Victoria Place, Bank Street-west. The address is described on the plan as Allotment 7, Section 17, lots 5 & 6.

James Bagge made his property, Kilverstone, Clayton Road, Clayton, his primary residence. James was involved in the purchase of two pieces of land in the

Parish of Mulgrave during the latter half of 1888. The first transaction was during August and involved a contract-of-sale with John Balfour for 40 acres on part Crown Portion 18, and the deed was memorialised the following month. (Book 350 / Memorial 308) It was early in 1891 that Bagge applied to bring that acreage under the Transfer of Lands Act. The registrar gave his case Application No. 27263. A certificate of title (vol. 2361 / fol. 108) was issued in July 1891, carrying the names of James Bagge, the younger, James Bagge and Jane Young Bagge. It is clear at this point that Bagge shared those acres with his parents.

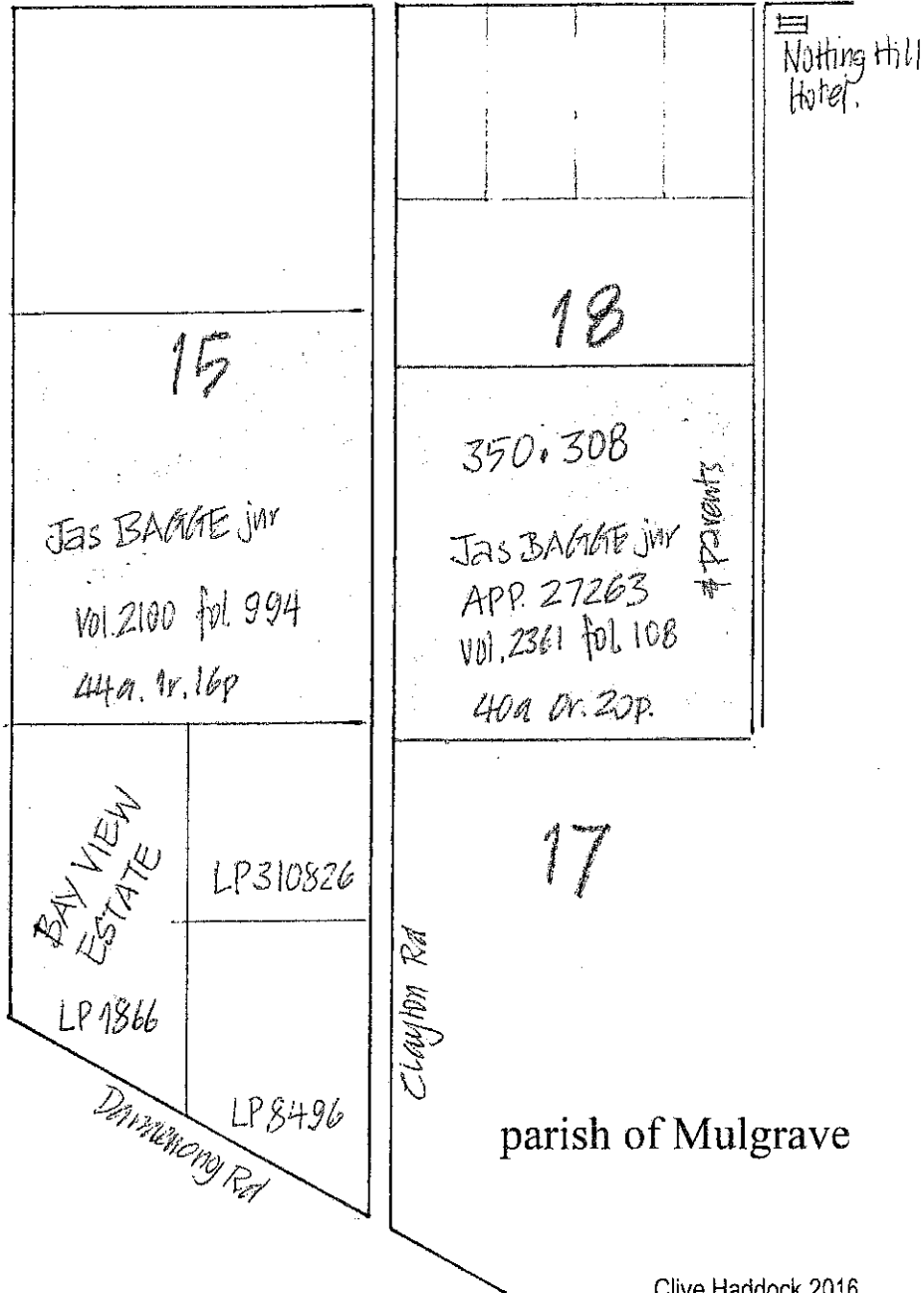
The second purchase was directly opposite the first on the western-side of Clayton's Road. The 44 acres of land involved part of Crown Portion 15, where part of its southern boundary adjoining the "Bayview Estate". James Bagge junior purchased those acres from James Ballantyne and William Bell. The transfer of title was registered in early December, 1888. (vol.2100 / fol. 994) A further search may reveal whether the Bagge's resided in separate dwellings on either side of Clayton road.

**Clive Haddock, February 10 2016**

**Editor's Note.** James Bagge maintained an interest in the nearby Clayton's Road State School (now Clayton North) which he presented with a flag and flagpole. After Bagge's death in 1902 Kilverstone was purchased by Will Whitbourn whose younger daughters attended the school. Their mother, Sarah Whitbourn, joined its school committee as its very active secretary.

# Kilverstone Estate - 1888

Ferntree Gully Rd



Clive Haddock 2016