How Chatham Primary School Began.

We value the history of Chatham because we think it is important to trace the development of our school over the years. It helps to promote a connectedness to the past by the present community and builds on the strong community spirit which is entrenched in the school culture.

This is Chatham Primary School on its official opening day, 15th February 1928.

The enrolment then was 212 students who had begun school on 1st August 1927.

This is Chatham Primary School at the present time.

The original building has been extended and there are eight portable classrooms in the school grounds to house the 421 students enrolled in 2009.
School Uniform and Badges

These badges were donated to the school’s history archives by some of the past students and are an example of what would have been worn back in the 1930’s and 40’s when the students wore the uniform pictured below.

Chatham Badge and Dux Badge

80th Birthday

In 2008 we celebrated the school’s 80th birthday and the opening of the new buildings. Many of our past students from the early days came back to help us celebrate. Every few years a Foundation Day afternoon tea is held at the school and is well attended by past students.
The SS Edina Bell

In September 1931 a working bee of parents was held to erect a bell tower in the front garden. This housed a large brass ship’s bell retrieved from the steamship the SS Edina and donated to the school by Mrs V. A. Webb who was an active member of the Mothers’ Club. The Chatham bell was relied on by the community as wrist watches were not commonly owned in those days. Ringing the bell was seen as an honour and a task that the older boys looked forward to being assigned.

Over the years the bell was painted white as cleaning it was a hard and time consuming task. By 1982 the bell tower had become unsightly. The then Principal, Adrian Peniston-Bird, had it restored and hung it inside the front entrance hall and the old bell tower was demolished. Today the bell of the SS Edina is used for ceremonial purposes. Grade 6 students each take a turn to ring the bell before they leave the school for the last time. Its place on the front lawn has not been forgotten. A rotunda was erected on the site in 1996.

Each year Heritage leaders are appointed from the Year 6 students. They maintain the community’s interest in our Heritage by the presentation of information at assemblies and in the Newsletter. They are pictured below with the SS Edina bell and outside the rotunda.
The Chatham Site

The land on which Chatham stands today was leased by Mr John Butler Maling in 1861. He was a Councillor, President of the Shire of Boroondara, and the first Mayor of Camberwell. Some of the past students have referred to Chatham’s land as Mr Maling’s bull paddock. Some of the original yellow box trees remain on the property. The most significant of these is now called the Friendship Tree. Three acres of the land was sold to the Education Department in 1923 for the sum of £1,562 or about $3,124.00 in today’s money.
Mr John Butler Maling, on part of whose 13 acre farm Chatham now stands, first settled in Surrey Hills in 1861. His house ‘The Willows’ (demolished c 1931 after his death) stood between Shepreth and Meldreth Streets.