



North Sydney

Heritage Leaflet

7

GREENWOOD SCHOOL

The Greenwood Plaza shopping complex located near North Sydney Station has as its centrepiece the former Greenwood School. This large development site fronting the Pacific Highway, Blue and Miller Streets comprises an area of 1.08 hectares and features a multi-storey commercial office building, a retail arcade, open recreation space and the retention of the Greenwood building which was once St. Leonards Public School and later the North Sydney Technical High School.

St. Leonards Superior Public School

The St. Leonards Superior Public School was formed in 1874 by the Department of Public Instruction, to take over the nearby St. Peter's Presbyterian Church School, begun in 1844, and housed from 1864 in the old stone hall further down Miller Street.

The first section of the site here near North Sydney Station was acquired in 1875. The Gothic revival school building (now Greenwood Hotel) was constructed in 1877 by architect, George Allan Mansfield. A leading architect of his day, he was responsible for many of the school buildings erected in the 1870s and 1880s throughout Sydney.

The school first opened its doors to 320 children in 1878 and expanded rapidly by the 1880s and 1890s by which time it was necessary to build additions to house the growing number of pupils enrolling each year.

Further land was purchased in 1902 and a new building fronting Miller Street was erected to house an additional number of girls (totaling 450).

Nimrod Greenwood

The name of the school was changed to North Sydney Public School in 1910, though it continued to be known unofficially as Greenwood's School until 1914, when Nimrod Greenwood, a popular and respected headmaster retired after 30 years service to the children of the district.

Nimrod Greenwood was described by one of his pupils, AR Chisholm, as a

'fairly big man, heavy but not corpulent, with a fringe of grey hair round a pink scalp and a neatly clipped beard. His hands, like his face, were rather florid and had thin, brittle-looking nails. His eyes were of a bluish or greyish green, and unforgettably ironical'.

Chisholm goes on to describe the school and its grounds including its various name changes - St. Leonards Public School, North Sydney Public School, North Sydney Superior School, North Sydney-Chatswood Junior High School, and finally in 1943 North Sydney Technical High School. Chisholm tells us that 'the boys always called it 'Greeny's'.

Greenwood lived in the school grounds in a pleasant two-storey residence fronting Blue Street. This building was demolished in 1960 to make way for car parking.

Secondary Education

In 1913, nearing the end of Greenwood's association with the school, secondary education was introduced to the North Sydney Public School when 72 boys and 75 girls enrolled in an Intermediate High School section. However overcrowding at the site led to the opening of the North Sydney Girls High School in 1914 near the corner of the then Lane Cove Road and Hazelbank Road where the girls were transferred, whilst the North Sydney Boys High

School was opened in Falcon Street in 1915 and where the remainder of the intermediate high school students were transferred.

North Sydney Technical High School

The North Sydney Public School continued here until 1932 when the Infants Department was transferred to the newly opened Lady Hay School (North Sydney Demonstration School) on the site of Crows Nest House. This was followed two years later by the remainder of the pupils.

The North Sydney Public School then became the North Sydney-Chatswood Junior High School in 1936 with an enrolment of 703 pupils. However conditions at the school had become 'appalling' by 1940 and the P and C complained bitterly of the *'the extreme difficulties under which the staff is labouring in an endeavour to train our boys for future citizenship'*, as well as being 'noisy and congested'. The school at this time was situated on an island in an industrial area, surrounded by traffic, and complaints about the school facilities (or lack thereof) included the *'odours from the adjoining laundry and pickle factory being daily nauseating'*, lack of conveniences and limited playing area and staff accommodation, and the "whole atmosphere of the school is depressing". In 1943 it was renamed the North Sydney Technical High School.

Education Department

The Education Department then used the buildings as a curriculum development unit. Greenwood's building was saved by the efforts of the 'Old Lions', past pupils of the Technical High School, the North Shore Historical Society and North Sydney Council.

Greenwood Hotel and Plaza

This historic building, classified by the National Trust, is an integral feature of the commercial and retail development known as Greenwood Plaza. It provides a combination of a place of commercial activity and an open space for people to gather and relive a part of North Sydney's history.

(below) View east along Blue Street showing North Sydney Superior Public School in centre left, about 1893.



(Above) Superior Public School North Sydney, between 1905-1910. This building fronted Miller Street.



North Sydney Heritage Centre

1st Floor
Stanton Library
234 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060

Phone: 02 99368400
Fax: 02 99368440

Email: infodesk@northsydney.nsw.gov.au
www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au



North Sydney
Heritage Centre