

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

On April 16, 1888 Townsville Grammar opened its doors for the first time to twenty day students and three boarders. These new arrivals were faced, as Colin Bingham (1916) writes in his autobiography *The Beckoning Horizon* by a stark environment consisting of a bleak background of brick and mortar, of wood and iron, all situated under the menacing bulk of Castle Hill. The original building, School House, is still standing albeit re-built after Cyclone Leonta in 1903 as does the menacing bulk of Castle Hill. However, the environment around the School is no longer a stark one but rather an attractive combination of buildings, gardens and playing fields.

To celebrate its one hundred and twentieth birthday this April the School will be holding a Celebration of Boarding Week (21-25 April) acknowledging the contribution that boarders have made to the history of the Grammar School. On Monday, 21 April there will be a Founder's Day Assembly where an Honour Board, donated by the Past Grammarians' Association, will be unveiled. This Honour Board will display the names of those past boarders who are deemed to have made a significant contribution to society in their chosen field of endeavour. The Board will also include the names of those first boarders who enrolled in 1888 and also those past boarders who gave their lives in the various conflicts since the Boer War.

In conjunction with this week's celebrations a booklet containing brief biographies of those past boarders being honoured will be published. This will allow our present generation of students to be made aware of the great achievements past students have made. It should be noted that the Honour Board will be ongoing and that names will be progressively added to the Board where deserving boarders need to be acknowledged. As archivist I would also like to collectively honour and acknowledge all our past students. The vast majority of our students have all made commendable and productive contributions to society in all walks of life.

It was not an easy task selecting boarders who were to be recognized on an Honour Board. In brief, the criteria centred on those boarders who were either killed in action, those who were awarded Imperial or Australian honours, those who received gallantry medals during times of conflict, prominent sportsmen and those who achieved high academic recognition or were prominent businessmen or inventors.

The following is but a brief synopsis of the achievements made by boarders in our 120 year history. Our two Rhodes Scholars (George Hall and Chester Parker) were both boarders and three of the four Grammarians who have received knighthoods were also boarders. They are John McKelvey (surgeon), Tom Covacevich (lawyer) and Charles Davidson (war hero and politician). Davidson was to become the Postmaster General in the Menzies Government. Five boarders have received OBE's (Order of the British Empire) and two received an MBE (Member of the British Empire). In contrast to Imperial Honours seven boarders have received Australian Honours since their inception in 1975.

Of the fifty-nine Grammarians killed in action, twenty-nine were boarders. Boarders received two DSO's (Distinguished Service Orders), two MC's (Military Crosses), four MM's (Military Medals), two DFC's (Distinguished Flying Crosses), one CdeG (Coire de Guerre), one Queens Medal of Gallantry and five were Mentioned in Dispatches. These awards are remarkable by any standards and are certainly comparable with many other educational institutions in Australia.

A wide range of academics and scientists will also be recognised on the Honour Board. One of the more interesting scientists is A.P. Dodd who received the MBE and the OBE for his work on eradicating the prickly pear menace in Queensland.

What is surprising is that not many past boarders have been recognized for their sporting achievements. Perhaps the most prominent is Fred Timbury who was Dux of the School in 1901. Timbury went on to represent Australia at Rugby Union and in 1908 scored the only try in an 8-0 win over New Zealand. He also represented Queensland at cricket and was the Queensland tennis champion. He moved to Roma in 1911 becoming Mayor of that town and was involved in the gas and oil exploration in that region. Frank Sides who represented Queensland and Victoria at cricket was perhaps the School's best cricketer.

Quite a few boarders became educators at both the tertiary and secondary level. F.T. Perkins was a double first Honours student in the Classics at the University of Sydney and was Headmaster of The Armidale School before becoming the Foundation Headmaster of The Cranbrook School in Sydney. Arguably Grammar's most prominent boarder is Tommy Whight. A student at Grammar from 1916 to 1920, a teacher at Grammar from 1921 to 1927 and Headmaster from 1938 to 1946 T.B. Whight has left his mark on the School. A talented sportsman Whight was Dux of the School in 1920 and winner of the Chelmsford Cup for best all-round student. He will be forever remembered for the role he played in keeping the School viable during the difficult years of World War II.

As pointed out above a booklet will be available after the April Founder's Day Assembly and I encourage parents, students and friend of the School to take some time to read about the wonderful achievements of many of our boarder students. Each in their own way has added to the history of a great School.

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