
From the Archives

The first point of call for visitors to the School is the Maurie Blank Administration Building situated at the corner of Burke and Paxton Streets. This building is one of the oldest at the School and was erected in 1940. In the sixty-six years of its existence it has gone through many stages ranging from classrooms, a library, a staff room, examination centre, a war planning room and an administration complex. Today the inner core of the building has been tastefully furnished centering on a microcosm of the School's history in the form of the many Honour Boards.

The initial cost of the building was £3000 of which £1,750 was borrowed: of the balance the Jubilee Appeal Fund raised £800 and general revenue providing the remainder. To celebrate the fifty year milestone of the School in 1938, the School Trustees, Masters and Old Boys met to form a Jubilee Appeal Fund. The Fund was an immediate success with many local businesses and individuals donating money. Among the major donors were the J.S. Love Estate Fund, Burns Philp and Company, the Townsville City Council and W.S. Sprott-Boyd. Approximately £800 was raised by holding a carnival through the city streets and culminating on the School ovals. An interesting side issue to the carnival is the fact that this method of raising money was utilized locally to raise funds for the war effort from late 1939 onwards.

During the construction of the building the State Government generously offered the School the "no longer needed Kindergarten Annexe" of the West End State School. This annexe was moved to the Grammar site and became the second floor. In remodelling the top floor the needs of the local climate were kept in mind and the entire length of the building was fitted out with louvres and casements. Folding walls were also incorporated and this allowed the top floor to be opened and used for a variety of purposes. A Sydney firm devised a new system providing a shadow free, diffused lighting scheme and this allowed boarders to do their prep at night in a comfortable environment.

The new building was in existence for two years before the RAAF commandeered the School for the war effort. The new building was put into immediate use and became a war control/planning area until the beginning of 1945 when students returned once more to the Paxton Street address. Over a period of time the top floor has been a venue for School examinations, concerts, dances and boarders' prep. The only consistent factor of the bottom floor has been the Headmaster/Principals' Office, School financial administration and the Honour Boards. At other times it has been a library, staff room, reading room, board room and on a couple of occasions a dormitory for boy boarders.

In the context of the history of the School the construction of what is now the Maurice Blank Administration Building could be regarded as a watershed. Enrolments were growing and there was a need for another building. By constructing this building other structures on the grounds were freed up for use as either a gymnasium, common rooms or classrooms. It is also interesting to note that all the landscaping and paving around the new building was undertaken by the students under the supervision of two teachers. Cost of this undertaking, as stated in the 1941 School magazine, was the sum total of two shillings and sixpence [25 cents in present day coinage].

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