

## REFLECTIONS ON 1916

The year 1916 was a difficult one for the School. In his annual report at Speech Day, held on 23 June, 1916 the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, J.N.Parkes, stated that the School was at a cross-road. Due to the on-going drought in the west and the war, enrolments had fallen from one hundred and nineteen in 1915 to ninety in 1916 with boarder numbers falling from a record fifty-nine to thirty. To a certain extent the enrolments were modified by twelve girls enrolling, the second highest number since girls were first enrolled in 1893. The Chairman also remarked that Cyclone Leonta in 1903 had placed the School in a debt of £3000 which the Trustees were struggling to redeem. Mr Parkes remarked that, due to the war, funds were difficult to access and if the Queensland Government decided to force repayment the School would have to close.

Mr Rowland, the Headmaster, in his report echoed the comments of the Chairman. Mr Rowland, however, was more concerned by the fact that the Queensland Government was contemplating the closing of Grammar Schools and merging them with the Primary and Secondary Schools and Technical Colleges into a centralized body in Brisbane. In a fairly long report Mr Rowland set out various reasons why he felt that this move to centralization would be a disadvantage for education in Queensland.

The first reason Mr Rowland gave still resonates with many northern Queenslanders a hundred years later. He stated: *"Thoughtful Queenslanders have long recognized that swollen head-cities are not good for a State: they have looked to see Queensland develop more on the lines of New Zealand with its four good sized towns and its numbers of scarcely less important townships, than on the lines of New South Wales, with its one octopus metropolis and nothing else. As you know, I am one of those who believe that Queensland will never be fairly governed until provincial chambers for each, coupled with unification, control their part of the unwieldy state."*

Mr Rowland was also concerned that if the Grammar Schools were to be closed it would mean an end to boarding thus disadvantaging boys from country towns. Grammar Schools in 1916 were situated in Toowoomba, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Ipswich and Townsville. Mr Rowland went on to argue that boarding was essential and that it led to the *esprit de corps* of a school. If a country boy was to be boarded into a family home, Mr Rowland argued, it could lead to the lack of *"proper supervision so necessary for a successful schooling."* Also there would be the missed opportunity to attain a more holistic education encompassing many extra-curricula activities. As Mr Rowland stated: *"Haven't the Grammar Schools,"* an eminent Brisbane barrister asked me recently *"done quite well enough not to be interfered with?"*

It was not all negative on Speech Day. Mr Rowland welcomed to the stage an old boy, **Joseph Sparks**, who had been a boarder from Cairns, 1908-1910, and who had achieved good results at the Sydney University Junior Examinations in 1910. Sparks had been at the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and had been wounded at ANZAC Cove on 9 May, 1915 having his left arm amputated and receiving shrapnel wounds in his thigh and feet. Sparks spoke briefly and commented on the fact that the School was considering commissioning an Honour Board to remember those who served in the Great War. He asked the Trustees to leave an unveiling of a Board until peace had been declared so that all the names of those who served could be included. As it was, the Honour Board *Pro Patria* was to be unveiled a year later.



In spite of problems employing good staff the School still maintained their excellent record of good results at the Queensland Senior and Junior Examination results. R.G.Lanskey was awarded a Queensland University Open Scholarship [top twenty in the State] while R.Rheuben was awarded as Teachers' College Scholarship. Rheuben never took up his scholarship but enlisted in the Dental Corp. He was later to become a prominent dentist and in the mid 1990s donated a sum of money to the School. The Science Block has been named after him. W.J.Chamberlain was an Open Scholarship winner in 1915 but returned to the School to help teach the lower classes. He had enlisted but was rejected because of his poor eye-sight. He was to teach at the School from 1916-1918.

Theatre, music and sporting events were still maintained during the year albeit on a reduced scale. Cricket was non-existent with the only fixture played by the boys was against the Old Boys. As tradition dictated the fixture was played on St Patrick's Day with the Old Boys winning comfortably. Mr Rowland had a great love for cricket and consequently Colour Matches were played on a regular basis. These matches took place during the year and filled the void left by the lack of club cricket. Tennis and football continued to be played with the School taking part in what Mr Rowland termed Association League [rugby league]. Association football [soccer] had been the preferred sport but a lack of fixtures necessitated the switch, in 1916, to league. The Athletics' Carnival held in September was the highlight of the year. It was well attended and for the first time prizes were not awarded except to overall champions. Prizes were usually donated but in 1916 it was decided that the donors should rather donate the money for prizes to the war effort.

The theatre and music events of the year took place at Speech Day. The choir sang a range of patriotic songs with a British flavour. Among the songs presented were *Ye Gentlemen of England*, *To the British Grenadier*, *The Soldier's Return* and *Dulce Domura*. A scene from a French Play *Le Voyage de M. Perrichon* was performed as well as the trial scene from *Pickwick*. A student C.R.McLean completed the day by reciting a poem, in Latin, from Aeneid VI.

Despite some of the misgivings displayed by the Chairman and the Headmaster about the future of the School, the year finished well. It was a good year for student health keeping in mind that the 1915 had been a bad year for measles. The school drainage had also been improved and this may have helped keep diseases to a minimum. And in recognition of the girls who had attended the a School Past Grammarians' Girls Club was formed. The year finished with hope when Mr Rowland wrote of a yearning hope, that this, the greatest of the world's wars, would also be the last.

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