

THE MAURIE BLANK ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

For visitors or new parents to the School the first building they will enter is the Maurie Blank Administration Building. The ground floor of the building encompasses the offices of senior staff and support staff and also includes an array of honour boards, photographs and plaques that reflect the history of the School. Two of the more distinctive boards are the Honoris Causa established in 1907 and the Pro Patria established in 1917. The history of this building is an interesting one as it was the second permanent building, after School House, to be erected at the School.

In 1939, past student and former master Mr T.B. Whight was appointed Headmaster of the School. Due to the increase of enrolments, his first major task was to build new classrooms. It was thus, perhaps, fortunate that Mr Whight had attended the opening of the new brick classroom block at the West End State School. Mr Whight had attended that school in the 1920s and, in wandering around the grounds, he noticed that the Kindergarten Annexe was to be either demolished or given away. Mr Whight approached a Trustee, W.R.M. Kogler, and the two then wrote to the Minister of Public Instruction asking for the building to be donated to the School. In June 1939 the School gratefully accepted the donation of the building from the Department but on the condition that the School pay the removal costs.

In September 1939 Mr Whight advised the Trustees that: "Mr Adams, the Government Supervisor of Works, would be instructed to give the Trustees advice in connection with the new building and obtain an estimate for removing and re-erecting the building from the West End School in its present form." In October 1939 Mr Adams advised the Trustees that the cost of removal would be roughly £200 and the cost of the completed building would be no more than £600.

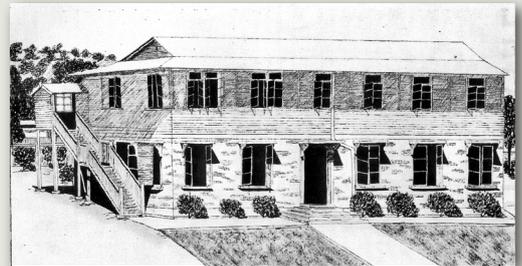
At the beginning of 1940 the Trustees were forced to make a decision as to whether to erect the building exactly as is or place the timber frame on a brick block. In some respects their hand was forced because numbers had increased by twenty-eight and Mr Whight had introduced new subjects, including Physics. The School employed an Old Boy, Joe Rooney, as the architect and, in April 1940, he came up with a costing of £2647/3/3 for the building as we now know it, a block base with a timber upper floor. Mr Rooney also estimated that it would take sixteen weeks for the building to be erected.

The Trustees approached the Bank of New South Wales but were refused a loan. They then approached the National Bank of Australia who was prepared to lend the School £1,750 at five and a half per cent interest. The interesting point regarding this loan was that the Trustees mortgaged "Portion 120 of the 15 acres, 3 rood and 12 perches of the School grounds." It is thought that this is the only time the School has mortgaged its land to cover a loan. The final cost of the building was to be £3,000 with the Jubilee Appeal Fund providing £800 and the rest of the amount coming from general revenue. The Jubilee Fund had been set up by Headmaster Rowland to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the School.

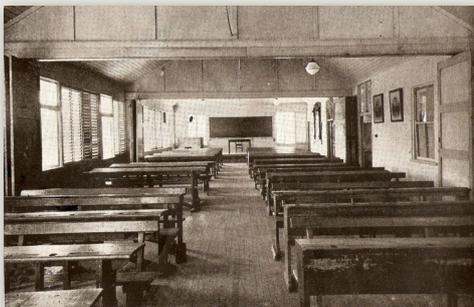
Writing in the 1941 School Magazine Mr Whight describes the new building as follows: "On the second floor is the Big School Room, 70 feet by 25 feet. In remodelling, the needs of the climate were kept in mind, and the whole end of the northern wall consists of louvres and casements. By folding doors, it divides into three excellent classrooms. Due to the willing co-operation of a prominent Sydney firm, specializing in the lighting of schools, an excellent lighting scheme was adopted. The plan chosen as the most suitable provides shadowless, diffused light, which is of great benefit to boarders, when studying at night."

The ground floor contains, as well as three classrooms, the Headmaster's study, a Masters' Common Room, the School Library and Reading Room. The Masters' Common Room is well furnished and fills a long-felt need. The library is well-stocked and the furnishings enhance its attractiveness as a reading room." He went on to add that the erection of the building freed up space in other areas of the School allowing common rooms for both Day-Boys and Boarders.

The School was not able to enjoy the benefits afforded by the new building for long when in January 1942 the buildings and grounds were taken over by the RAAF and the WAAF. On the 25th of February No 3 Fighter Sector Headquarters were established at the School with the WAAF taking control of the new building. Until the start of 1945, when the School was vacated by the Air force, the top floor of the building was used as a radar spotting centre. The ladies who worked in that section were billeted at St Anne's Cathedral School, at that time situated in the city.



The School 1953 by G. Morris



Assembly Room 1947

After the War, assemblies were held on the top floor [until 1973], as were School plays, debates and other activities such as dances. In 1955 the building that is now named the Len Daniels Building was built. It was built in an almost mirror image to the Maurie Blank Building, with a brick block base and the old dormitory block erected in 1910 dismantled and then being erected on top. The top floor consisted of science laboratories while the ground floor had classrooms and a Masters' Duty Room. The P.F. Rowland Library was added in the mid 1960s and the Rheuben Science Block was built in 1972-73.

Since the mid 1970s many more buildings have been added to the School but for many years the Maurie Blank Building was the lone classroom building in the School. It is a structure that is fondly remembered by many past students.

MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist