OPEN NIGHTS / INFORMATION DAYS

It is the norm these days for independent schools to hold Open Days. These days allow schools to showcase their facilities as well as allowing prospective parents the opportunity to discuss matters of interest with staff and meet current students. The first known Open Day at Townsville Grammar occurred during the headmastership of Alan Morwood [1973-1992].

Prior to 1975 any prospective parent wanting to enrol their son or daughter at the School would have to rely on the School Prospectus or to have a quick visit to the School. In the early years of the School's history a visit would not have been easy. Distance and a lack of transport would have worked against the concept of an Open Day. The only occasion parents had of touring the School would occur on Speech Day which was usually held on the last day of the school year. On these days the School presented excerpts, in English, French and Greek, from classic plays and the choir would also perform.

The 1909 Prospectus (left) offers an interesting insight into the type of education offered at that time. The choice of subjects follows the liberal education offered by schools in England with an emphasis on classic languages, mathematics and the type of subjects a gentleman of that time would study: nature study, singing and freehand drawing. Book-keeping was an interesting addition to the curriculum but many of our students at that time did not go to tertiary education but entered firms such as banks and insurance companies. It is also interesting to note that the School prepared students for examinations to the legal, dental and pharmacy professions as well as for the civil service.

For the first half of the twentieth century Queensland students spent the first eight years of schooling at a primary level and then, if they wanted to, four more years of secondary education. At the end of their primary year students wrote a scholarship examination and, if successful, moved on to secondary education. As the Prospectus shows, students were provided with £4 4s a quarter, this amount was the same as the school fees which were £16 16s per annum. Other scholarships were available and were largely provided by Masonic Lodges.

Two interesting extracts from the introductory section mentions that the health-record is excellent and that the School Dining Room and laundry is situated in the Headmasters’ house. Health was an important issue in 1909 and every Speech Day Report in the early years of the School’s history had a health report. Dengue fever was a big problem at that time and of concern to parents. Until a dining-room was built in the 1920s boarder meals were provided by the Headmaster and his wife. There is no mention of boarding fees in the Prospectus but all fees were paid to the Headmaster and he would run the budget for providing food for the boarders.

It is interesting to note that no mention is made of lighting in the School and of showers. Power was only provided to School House in 1926, prior to that, gas lighting and lamps were the norm. No hot showers were provided for boarders until 1970. Until that year boys would line up, the showers would be turned on and they would run through, wetting themselves. At the other end they would soap themselves and then run through the showers before drying themselves. It is, perhaps, not surprising that a School Prospectus would not mention these practices!

MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist

Speech Day Report in the early years of the School’s history had a health report. Dengue fever was a big problem at that time and of concern to parents. Until a dining-room was built in the 1920s boarder meals were provided by the Headmaster and his wife. There is no mention of boarding fees in the Prospectus but all fees were paid to the Headmaster and he would run the budget for providing food for the boarders.

It is interesting to note that no mention is made of lighting in the School and of showers. Power was only provided to School House in 1926, prior to that, gas lighting and lamps were the norm. No hot showers were provided for boarders until 1970. Until that year boys would line up, the showers would be turned on and they would run through, wetting themselves. At the other end they would soap themselves and then run through the showers before drying themselves. It is, perhaps, not surprising that a School Prospectus would not mention these practices!

School Prospectus - 1909