

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

## 1884 - 1888

From an initial enrolment of twenty-three boys there are now close to fifteen hundred students and the School has taken its place as one of the leading educational institutions in Queensland. To celebrate the anniversary an extended version of *The Grammarian* will be published and posted to the School community in late April. This edition will encompass a photographic and written history of the School over the years.



Mr Robert Philp

In the early 1880s a group of prominent local citizens formed a committee to investigate the feasibility of forming a Grammar School in Townsville. At that time the only school of consequence was in Brisbane. On May 12, 1884, the then Chairman of the Townsville Grammar School Committee, Robert Philp, wrote to the Queensland Minister of Lands requesting a grant of land for the purpose of building a school. The letter was accompanied by a petition of thirty-one signatures. The request was granted for a block of land at Kissing Point but the interim Board of Trustees decided that the land was too far out of town and the Board, under the guidance of Mr Willmett, a Town Councillor, had the site approval moved to its present position. Mr Willmett was to become the first Chairman of the Trustees in 1888.

For the school to be viable the sum of £2000 had to be collected and shown as evidence to the government of the goodwill of the Townsville community. With great support from The Townsville Daily Bulletin and regional newspapers, the sum of £1892/3/6 was reached by the end of 1884.

The list of initial subscribers makes interesting reading. The largest amount donated was by a Tyson Isa who donated £100. The most prominent of the subscribers who donated £50 or more were R. Philp, R. Brown, S. Walker and J. Castling. With the exception of Philp the others, at some stage or another, became members of the Board of Trustees. J. Castling had four boys attend the School, the most famous of those being J.R. Castling [1888-1891] and a teacher at Grammar from 1891-1900. He edited the first School Magazine in 1897 and as a brilliant organist wrote the music for the School song *Carmen Townsvillare*.

Arguably the most interesting of the subscribers was Robert Philp. With Hollis Hopkins he was the prime mover behind a Grammar School in Townsville. However, when the Townsville committee nominated him as a Trustee the nomination was rejected by the State Government. It can only be assumed that Philp was rejected because of his association with the then Queensland opposition. In 1886 he was elected as the Townsville member to the Legislative Council and in 1899 he became Premier. He was knighted in 1915 for his services to the State of Queensland.

The Hopkins family has had a long association with the School. Hollis Hopkins was a Trustee from 1888-1890 and his son, Spenser Hopkins, was one of the original twenty-three students enrolled in 1888. Spenser Hopkins was to become Chairman of the Board from 1928-1940, 1946-1952 and 1953-1960. He was a generous benefactor to the School and the Spenser Hopkins building is named after him. Four of Spenser's boys attended Grammar in the 1920s, all achieving brilliant academic results. Since 1952, and until the present, members of the Hopkins family have been enrolled in the school at various times.

Another family with a long history at the School is the Hodel Family. Mr I. Hodel's initial subscription was £1/1/-. His son, Thomas, attended the School in 1905-1906, his grand-son, Fred, in 1933-1934 and his great grand-son in 1964-1965. In 1987 Fred Hodel donated a generous amount for an annual scholarship to a student in Year 11 attaining the highest results in English and Commerce [Economics, Accounting and Legal Studies].



Mr Hollis Hopkins

Two subscribers were senior members of the Church of England in North Queensland. The Bishop of North Queensland, the Right Reverend G.H. Stanton, donated £25 and the Reverend H. Plume gave £10/10/-. It is interesting to note the church's involvement because in the Grammar Schools Act there was no mention of religion and thus Grammar Schools became non-denominational. Stanton, on behalf of the Trustees, went to England in early 1888 and it was on his recommendation that C.H. Hodges was appointed Headmaster. Plume moved to Sydney in 1894 to become the first Headmaster of Barker College, now one Sydney's leading schools.

Unfortunately there is no further list of subscribers after 1884 available in the archives but there must have been a generous response from the community because what is now School House and the Headmaster's house went out to tender for the sum of £6200 and when completed in March 1888 the School, was free of debt. It was a remarkable achievement from the local community in need of a good school.

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School Archivist