

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO - 1913

This year has seen a most rewarding and, at times, an exciting celebration of the School's 125 years of history. On a broader scale there have been two very iconic centenary celebrations in Australia. On March 12, 1913, King O'Malley, then Minister for Home Affairs in the Federal Parliament drove the first peg into the ground to mark the development of what has become our national capital, Canberra. A few weeks ago there was also a stunning celebration on Sydney Harbour to mark the first sailing of the Royal Australian Navy into the Harbour.

To celebrate the establishment of Canberra the then School Headmaster, P.F. Rowland, organized a poetry competition among all the students to see who could write the best poems with the title *Canberra*. Writing in the School magazine of that year Mr Rowland said that there were a surprising numbers of poems, or as one Form III student wrote "pomes", sent in, some good, some bad and some indifferent. Mr Rowland, an avid supporter of literature and poetry, then published some of the poems in the 1913 Magazine adding his comments to each poem.

A couple of ones had a distinctly patriotic flavour. 1913 was a time when the "Yellow Peril" and white immigration was very much at the forefront of the Australian psyche.

One poem read in part:

"Australians, guard your native land
From hordes that pour from Asia's door,
Preserve the freedom of your land,
A nation evermore."

Another poem also read:

"May Canberra of Australia
Be one day a mighty town
May it flourish like a dahlia
May it grow to win renown."

Mr Rowland made the following comment of the above by writing: *"We feel sure that nothing except the exigencies of rhyme would have induced the author to believe that dahlias were particularly good at flourishing."*

Those who have knowledge of Australia's early history will know that King O'Malley, a federal politician, was one of the main drivers behind the selection of the name, Canberra. A member of the Labor Party, O'Malley represented Tasmania [1901-1903] and then Darwin to 1917. He is also notable for pushing through the current spelling of the Labor Party from [Labour] and the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank. A Christian socialist O'Malley was also an avid advocate of prohibition in Australia. It is thus not surprising that many students used O'Malley's name in their poems.

A couple of examples are:

"O, King O'Malley, you're a terror,
To give us a name like Canberra.
Canberra, Canberra, the place that I love,
Oh, I wish, I had the wings of a dove:
I'd then fly to thee soon,
By sunlight and moon,
And find no other place like Canberra."

One student had picked up on O'Malley's non-alcohol, prohibition policies and wrote:

"The new Federal city
They say is quite pretty
'Twas christened with water, not wine:
They named it Canberra,
But it seems an error,
Although 'twas O'Malley's design."

On the last poem in the magazine Mr Rowland writes: *"Last, we will quote the four lines of H ----n's contribution, which would seem to deserve a place in this anthology for their engaging simplicity:"*

"The word Canberra
Is literally
The name of a jackass
That sits on a tree."

Mr Rowland's final comment was: *"The poet would seem to imply, though he does not assert, that it would therefore be metaphorically applicable to legislative wisecracks who pillow-fight in Parliament."* Some people today could argue that not much has changed over the last hundred years!



Cadets were first introduced in the School in 1907. Much of the training consisted of drill and shooting and camps took place at Jezzine Barracks. Shooting became an important part of school life and the School would compete on an annual basis with schools throughout the British Empire. Two students who ranked highly on the competitive scores were W.H. Donald, presenter of the Mary Agnes Donald Prize in 1929, and George Hall, our first Rhodes Scholar. The Commonwealth of Australia established a Naval Force in 1901 and in 1911 King George granted the navy the title of Royal Australian Navy. A Naval College was established at Jervis Bay soon after but as it took four years to develop the facilities there the College was based in Geelong. As a consequence of the rise of popularity of the navy, part of the School cadet programme was set aside for those interested in nautical pursuits.

Mr Rowland was proud to announce at the end of 1913 that a boarder from Malanda, **Otto Mark McMahon** had passed the examination for a cadetship in the Royal Naval College. McMahon, who was only thirteen years of age when awarded the cadetship, drew high praise from Mr Rowland. He wrote: *"From a point of view of the School we were sorry so promising a boy should leave so soon; but he is to be congratulated on his success."* Not much is known about McMahon after he left Grammar but it can be assumed that he was part of the first group of graduates from the Naval College in 1916. The attached photograph is of McMahon which he sent to the School soon after arriving in Geelong.

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