

FROM THE ARCHIVES

1952 - 1955

What follows is a synopsis of material I found in the archives setting out a period of the School's history from 1952 to 1955. In many ways this period can be seen as a watershed in the School's history as many important changes to the curriculum, buildings and sporting facilities were made during those years. Most of what follows is taken from a then confidential report the Headmaster, Mr Blank, wrote to the Board of Trustees in 1952. Mr Blank had been a teacher at the School from 1939-1942, 1946 and then Headmaster from 1948-1965.

In his report Mr Blank makes the interesting observation that the general administration of the School devolves upon the Headmaster, the Secretary to the Trustees and the Matron. The Matron was in charge of most matters concerning boarding and the kitchen, the Secretary to the Trustees dealt with financial matters and the Headmaster dealt with all other issues. It should be noted that there were no office staff at that time and the Headmaster typed all his correspondence, reports and other relevant clerical matters.

Mr Blank wrote that his administrative routine involved the following: dealing with all enrolments and prospective enrolments, boarder issues such as regular duty and the day to day running of the boarding house, preparation of the school time-table, supervision of the work of the teaching staff in an attempt to raise the standard of teaching, the certification and examination of monthly accounts, the receipt of monies for the Trustees, the preparation of monthly returns for the Department of Public Instruction, general supervision of the standard of work of each pupil, with interview and remedial treatment in backward or unsatisfactory cases, the consideration of general matters of educational policy for report to the Trustees, general supervision of financial matters in relation to economy of operation, supervision of grounds and groundsman and the organization of the majority of school sport.

The School week consisted of thirty-nine periods, with one period being set aside for visiting ministers of religion. Friday afternoons were given over to cadets. Out of the thirty-eight period week, Mr Blank taught thirty-five periods and his classes were Form VI Mathematics I and II, Physics, Chemistry and Botany, Form V Mathematics I and Physics and Form IV Mathematics B and Physics. As Mr Blank had served with distinction in the RAAF during World War II he also ran the Air Cadets on the Friday afternoon.

Mr Blank was also heavily involved in the organization of sport and in the coaching of the students. For many years he coached all the Rugby League teams [usually three teams], the 2nd XI Cricket and Athletics and Tennis. Mr Blank had great success with his teams and in the 1950s he did not lose a game of Rugby League in six years. His Cricket team also met with similar success. To add to the myriad of tasks mentioned above there is also evidence that he often acted as a general handyman, fixing lights, windows and other minor breakages in the boarding house. Mr Blank was also keen to improve the sporting fields and over a period of a few years he and willing boarders spent many Saturdays working on what is now the Morwood Oval. Not only was the surface of that oval improved but they built what has long been called the Blank Wall. The Wall is still in existence and is at the far end of the oval and close to Landsborough Street.

The success of Mr Blank as the Headmaster can, perhaps, best be summed up on the increasing enrolments during his tenure as Head of the School. When Mr Blank became the Headmaster in May 1948 he found the School in a perilous and unstable condition. There were 79 students enrolled, 40 day pupils and 39 boarders. By 1964, the year before his resignation the numbers had risen to a record 282 [94 boarders, 126 day boys and 63 girls]. Much of this success can be put down to Mr Blank's almost obdurate persistence on academic and sporting success but also on the maintenance of a high standard of dress and behaviour. I have spoken to many past students from the Blank period and the one point they have in common was that Mr Blank was very strict, a great teacher but, above all, a man who cared for the well being of each and every pupil. Stories have been told of how he would personally buy, for example, a tennis racquet for a student who could not afford one or of his many visits to the sick bay to see how an ailing or injured pupil was progressing.

Mr Blank's tenure as Headmaster is best summed up in a report made in July, 1956 by the Queensland Inspector of Schools when he wrote: *"The Headmaster's control is quiet, firm and effective. At the present time, he is teaching a full programme and has therefore little opportunity to observe or supervise closely the work of the members of staff. The teacher-student relationship is good. Students are courteous and friendly, and are proud of their School. Students enter and leave the classrooms in an orderly manner without any form of regimentation..."*

The School was indeed fortunate to have a leader of Mr Blank's calibre during a period when the future of the School could have been in jeopardy.



Mr Blank & Mr Poulson - 1940s

MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist