

GIRLS AT GRAMMAR

With the admittance of **MARY FOLEY** at the beginning of Term 2, 1893 Townsville Grammar became the first secondary school on the Australian mainland to become a co-educational institution. **LETITIA CROWDER** joined Mary Foley at the beginning of Term 3, 1893, in spite of an initial resistance to the enrolment of girls by the School Trustees and the then Headmaster, **C.H. HODGES**. This initial resistance to the enrolment of girls was to be prevalent until well into the twentieth century. In fact the School's attitude is perhaps best encapsulated in the 1936 School Prospectus, a comprehensive document, which allows only two lines to Girls. It reads *A limited number of girl scholars are received: for them there is a special recreation room in the Headmaster's garden*. This special recreation room was aptly termed the *Dovecot* by the girls who made it their very special place.

In spite of long being treated as second class citizens in the School many girls played their part in adding to the interesting history of the School. Foley and Crowder both achieved excellent results at the Sydney University Junior Examinations but it was not until 1904 that Grammar had its first Girl Dux in **E.R. HARTLEY** who was also Dux in 1905. She was also the first girl prefect, appointed to the position in 1905. **P.F. ROWLAND**, Headmaster in 1905, was so impressed by Hartley's academic achievements that he was moved to say at Speech Day: *dux femina facti, Virgil, hem*. Loosely translated it means *a female author of a deed, Virgil, indeed*. In spite of obtaining brilliant results at the Sydney University Senior Examination, Hartley never went to the University. Her parents decided that Sydney was too far from home and in those days the only form of transport to Sydney was by ship. She was married in 1911 and lived on Melton Hill for most of her life.

The first girl from Grammar to graduate from a University was **M.M. MACKENZIE [1907]**. She also became the second woman to teach at Grammar when she joined the staff in 1911. However, after one year of teaching she married a Mr Millett and lived in a house named *Castlebrae* which was situated on Castle Hill. **A. MCWHINNEY [1908]** on completing school joined the staff of the legal firm which is now Wilson, Ryan and Grose and on passing her law examinations became the first woman solicitor in Queensland and the second in Australia. After working as a solicitor for some years she also married and retired to become a housewife on a property in southern Queensland. It should be remembered that in those years it was virtually impossible for married women to find employment.

Although the School had many girls attaining good academic results it was not until 1942 that Grammar had its second Girl Dux of the School in **P.A. SHANN**. It was a good year for girls because Shann finished ninth in the State Open Examinations and **R. MONAGHAN** finished seventeenth. Both girls were awarded Open Scholarships to the University of Queensland. In 1944 **S. RICHARDS** became the first girl from Grammar to win the Byrnes Medal for first place in the Queensland Junior Examinations and in 1948 **G.H. DAVIES** became the first girl to win the Lilley Medal for first place in the Queensland State Scholarship Examination.

It had taken over fifty years for girls to make their mark academically in the school. It was to take longer than that for girls to be appointed to positions of greater responsibility. In spite of **F.E. SKAU** being appointed the first Head Girl Prefect in 1924 very few girls were made prefects. In most years only one girl was appointed as a prefect and it was not until the Headmastership of **A.D. MORWOOD [1975-1992]** that an equal number of girls were made prefects. In fact, 1981 was the first year an equal number were appointed. To celebrate one hundred years of girls at the Grammar School **S.C. PAUL**, Principal from 1993-97, announced in 1993 that girl boarding would be introduced into the school. **REBECCA BOHANNAN**, a student from Mount Isa, became the first Head Girl Boarder.

As in the academic and leadership spheres of school life girls also struggled to make their mark in the sporting field. It was only when **M. BLANK [1948-1965]** became Headmaster that sport was encouraged for girls, although **T.B. WHIGHT [1939-46]** did encourage some team sport for girls during the war years. P.F. Rowland introduced the Needle and Thread Race for girls in 1905, the Egg and Spoon Race in 1906, and in 1907 the 100 yards and the Potato Race. No further events were added during the long tenure of Rowland. In 1926 Rowland surprisingly allowed the girls to swim in the 20 yards handicap and by 1937 girls could compete in the 30 Yards Championship, the 30 Yards Handicap, the Brace Relay, the Novelty Event and the Neat Dive. In 1952 girls were allowed to swim at the Interschool Championships for the first time, winning the Championships in 1953, 1954 and 1958. A breakthrough in girls' sport occurred in 1962 when **PAM SERGEANT [1964]** was selected to represent Australia at the Empire Games in Perth. At the Games Pam broke the World 110 Yards Backstroke record and thus became our first world champion. Pam, who now resides in Brisbane, has kindly presented the School with the certificate acknowledging her world record. **SHARYN GIST [1985]** became our second international when selected to represent Australia at water polo. Sharyn was a member of the team that won the world title in 1985.

Team sport for girls flourished during the tenure of M. Blank as Headmaster and sports such as basketball, vigoro and softball were introduced with **L. GROVE [1950]** becoming the first Grammar girl to be awarded colours in 1950. She won the award for the sport of basketball. Over the last twenty years sport for girls at Grammar has burgeoned and our girls can rightly take their place in a variety of sporting activities.

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