THE GRAMMAR SCHOOLS ACT

The year 2009 is an important one for the state of Queensland which will be celebrating one hundred and fifty years of becoming a separate colony from New South Wales. Two of the initial acts legislated by the parliament in Brisbane in **1860** to were to, firstly, set up an Education Act which placed all primary schools under one central authority and, secondly, a **Grammar Schools Act** which provided for the establishment of a grammar [secondary] school in a locality where a sum of not less than £1000 had been raised. Townsville Grammar was established in 1888 under the conditions of the act and was the last of the Grammar Schools established for boys. Rockhampton Girls Grammar was the last school established for girls. Our school became the first co-educational Grammar School when girls were admitted in 1893. In doing so **Townsville Grammar became the oldest co-educational school on the Australian mainland**.

Townsville Grammar opened its doors, on its present site, to twenty day students and three boarders on April 16, 1888 [Founders Day]. The original site for the school was an area of ten acres at Kissing Point but the Land Commissioner in a memo in the Government Gazette of 14 April, 1887 cancelled the original site and reserved an area of ten acres fronting Paxton Street. As required under the act, seven Trustees had to be appointed. Some prominent Townsville names such as Aplin, Stanton, Bundock, Walker and Willmett were among the first appointed.

The Grammar Schools Act of 1860 was quite specific as to how the schools were to be administered. The vacations would be six weeks in midsummer, three weeks at midwinter and the Easter week. The act stated that the first term would start on the fifth Monday of the year and the terms following would be for eleven weeks, fourteen weeks and eleven weeks. The last term of the year would terminate at least six weeks before the fifth Monday of the following year. The minimum age for entry to the school was eight years of age and the student had to show some skills in literacy and numeracy before admittance to the school.

For the purposes of instruction the school was to comprise three divisions: the Upper School consisting of Forms IV to VI, the Modern School consisting of Forms IV and V and the Lower School consisting of Forms I to III. All students in the Upper School had to study Latin, Greek and either French or German. All students in the Modern School had to learn French or German while lower School students had to learn Latin and either French or German. In addition to the languages as mentioned above all students had to study English, Ancient and Modern History, Geography, the elements of Logic and Political Economy, Mathematics and the Natural and Physical Sciences. Drill and gymnastics were also part of the curriculum.

As is evident from above our School as founded in 1888 was certainly different to the one that exists today. The initial Grammar Schools Act was based on the Grammar School model that existed in England at that time and was focussed on a classical education, thus Latin and Greek were important subjects in the curriculum. The three term school year was based on the traditional system in England and was to remain in place until the early nineteen eighties. The subjects studied were also traditional in nature and changes were only to occur in the second half of the twentieth century.

Times have changed and hopefully all the new students entering the School can make the best of what is on offer to them. The narrowness of the early curriculum is long gone and students can now enjoy a broad range of subjects suited to their needs and interests.

ARCHIVAL SNIPPETS:

While reading Volume 1, Number 2 of the **1897** School magazine I came across a reference in Mr Hodges' Annual Report that all the masters and boarders had been affected by **"the dengue"** during the year. In the light of the present dengue threat in Townsville it is interesting to note that dengue fever has been around for a long time.

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