

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE FIRST YEAR - 1888

From time to time the School has been fortunate to have a past student interested in maintaining the history of the School. One such student was **FRANK ISLEY [1888-1891]** who, until his death in the 1950s, kept a keen eye on the development of the School and in 1945 presented the School with a bound set of School magazines. This is the reason why the archives is in the fortunate position of having every magazine published from 1898 to 1945 in its possession. Inside the front cover of the first set of bound copies Isley has attached a Forward which describes the opening of the School in 1888. In the Forward he writes:

"Some time in 1887, the Government agreed to the establishment of a Grammar School in Townsville, in view of the outcry at the expense of always having to send boys South for completion of their education after leaving the various State Schools throughout Northern Queensland.

In due course, plans were prepared and tenders called etc, and the main building, with Headmaster's residence, were erected and ready for occupation in March 1888.

The "seek" for a Headmaster and Staff were the next worries. Positions for both were advertised throughout Australia and the United Kingdom. The selection of Staff was simple but that of Headmaster was a long job, and eventually, Mr C.H. Hodges [with his wife] of Oxford was chosen and proved a most efficient man for the job – one of the very best – but he could not take up the appointment till the opening of First Term 1899. So as not to hold up the opening of the School a Mr Upward, who conducted a private mixed secondary school in Walker Street just beyond the School of Arts, was asked to take up the Headmastership pending Mr Hodges' arrival. He consented and the School opened on a Tuesday, 18 April [I think was the date] 1888.

Some dozen of us boys at Mr Upward's school followed him to the Townsville Grammar School. I can see it now, as if it were but yesterday, we boys 'fooled' about in the paddock below the school whilst the new chaps had their names, addresses and qualifications taken. Of those alive today, I mention Spenser Hopkins and Dick [R.D.] Henry. I cannot recall any others.

The two identities of the day were 'Anna' [Miss Shields] who acted as a sort of matron and gave us boarders a couple of Gregory pills if one was, or said he was, sick: and old 'Peter' who swept out the School, cleaned up the grounds and cleaned the boots.

Oh! For the good old Saturday mornings when we boarders [I was both a day Scholar and Boarder at different periods] would make up the slopes of Castle Hill, lassoing, or trying to, goats running wild, with lassoes made from rope clothes lines.

All the best to the Old School and the scholars it turns out. "



Frank Isley [10 October, 1945]

COMMENTS ON THE ABOVE FORWARD:

... The site of St John's College was on a property called Edgecombe in Walker Street. There is no record of where the College stood but it is thought that it was below and on the same side as where the College of Arts building now stands.

... Unfortunately we have been unable to find a photograph of Mr Upward. He left Grammar in April 1889 and returned to England where he opened a school for Anglo-Indian students in South Devonshire. When he died in 1934 his obituary in the London Times stated that he was a lawyer, living in North London and he left a large estate to his family.

... Isley is incorrect with his date of the School's opening day. It was 16 April, 1888.

... Twelve students came with Upward from St John's College and there were nine new students, three of them being boarders.

... Spenser Hopkins has been one of more prominent past students and the English/SOSE Building was named after him. He was a Trustee of the School from 1921 to 1966 and was Chairman 1928-1940, 1946-1952 and 1953-1960. Some of his descendents still attend the Grammar School.

... It is interesting that Isley mentions chasing goats on Castle Hill. This became the main student activity for the remainder of 1888 and Hodges, on arrival, was horrified that there were no after school activities for the boys. He immediately introduced compulsory sport, cricket the main sport. Football was to follow in later years. At that time cricket was the only sport in Townsville where the students could play in an organized weekend competition. It was not until 1897 that football (soccer) was introduced and rugby union followed soon after.

MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist