

FROM THE ARCHIVES

SPEECH DAY - 1909

The event took place in the morning and was held on the lawn in front of the Headmaster's residence. At that time the house occupied the ground where the Middle School now stands. It was a grandiose old Queenslander with high set, wide verandahs and a sweeping and majestic staircase leading up to the verandah. The Headmaster, P.F. Rowland, and invited guests sat on the verandah while parents and friends were seated on the lawn below. There was no modern equipment such as microphones at that time so the voices of the speakers had to be strong and able to carry.

The programme opened with the choir singing a few songs followed by a brief Chairman's address and then the Headmaster's address. In many respects Speech Day was the most important day in the school year. It was an opportunity to put on display the talents of the students and further more it was recognition of what the School had achieved over the academic and sporting year. As there were no newsletters and other forms of communication it was the only opportunity for the Headmaster to set out his philosophies and to report on the running of the School.

Mr Rowland opened his report by stating that school numbers were seventy-three with thirty of the students being boarders. He then spoke at some length on two issues of concern to him: firstly, the teaching of literature in Queensland Schools and secondly, the development of tertiary education in the State. He was particularly pleased that an announcement had been made concerning the opening of a university in Brisbane in 1911. However, he still argued that students from North Queensland had to travel too far for their education and he called for a tertiary institution to be set up in the North. In some respects it was probably the first move towards a university in our area.

Mr Rowland also spoke of what he perceived as a decline in great literature in Queensland Schools. While not against the development of mathematics and the physical sciences he railed against *"the neglect into which the great literature of which we are the heirs has fallen due to our store in the old Athenian failing, a restless yearning for novelty. We assume too readily that a book published last week is necessarily abler and more interesting than a book published two hundred years before."* He urged the education authorities to encourage the wider reading of the classics.

In his Report Mr Rowland spoke with some pride about the academic performance of the girls in the School. He spoke particularly about the achievements of Miss McKenzie and Miss Tuffley. Miss McKenzie became the first Grammar girl to be awarded a University degree while Miss Tuffley passed in all ten Senior Examination subjects while only attending school on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings for tutorials. During the week she helped teach at the primary school where her father was the headmaster. She finished second in the French examination in the State. Mr Rowland spoke at some length about the achievements of George Hall and was hopeful that Hall would become the next Queensland Rhodes Scholar. [He was to achieve this in 1910].

Sport was also an important aspect of Rowland's educational philosophy. In his Report he stated that the School had entered two teams in the local Cricket competition and one of the teams had finished in equal first place. Athletics and Swimming had prospered at the School and for the first time the School had entered the Empire Shoot. This was a competition between schools in the United Kingdom and other countries of the Empire such as India and South Africa. George Hall managed to score 32 out of 35 over the distance of five hundred yards: another of his great achievements. Mr Rowland also reported that Hall had been selected in the Townsville Cricket and Association Football Teams. He was also Head Boy, Dux of the School, winner of the Chelmsford Cup [Rugby Prize] and winner of every academic prize in 1909.

The Speech Day finished with student performances in extracts from four plays: *Idus Martiae* in Latin, *Philoctetes* [Sophocles] in Greek, *Louis XI* [Delaviones] in French and *Much Ado About Nothing*. It is interesting to note that George Hall had a leading role in all four plays.

It is interesting to note George Hall's performance on Sports Day 1909. Keep in mind that the events all took place in one afternoon and that all events were held on a grass track on what is now the Sports Reserve. [This land was owned by the School until 1924.] Photographs taken on the day show that Hall ran most of his events wearing a hat and ordinary sports' shoes.

He won the following events:

High Jump	5 foot 5½ inches
Long Jump	20 foot 3 inches
100 yards	11 seconds
440 yards	57 seconds
880 yards	2 mins 20 seconds
120 yards hurdles	20 seconds
Putting the Weight	21 feet
Throwing the Cricket Ball	101 yards

Hall won all the above events bar the Putting the Weight. His distance for Throwing the Cricket Ball was to last until 1996 when Clint Barry broke the record. Hall also ran in the Open 440 yards against all comers. He was just beaten by a staff member in M. Moyes in the time of 52.8 seconds. Moyes went on to represent Queensland at Athletics. Hall's performances on Sports Day were good enough to raise comments in the southern press.



G.F.E. Hall

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