

## 120 YEARS OF BOARDING AT GRAMMAR #1

On April 21 the School, in celebrating One Hundred and Twenty Years of Boarding, unveiled an Honour Board of Achievement. The length of time as a boarding institution is, in itself, a remarkable achievement and makes the School one of the oldest, continuous boarding schools in Australia. Our present boarding facilities are of the highest quality so it may be interesting to the reader to reflect on what life would have been like for a boarder in 1905, the first year for Mr Rowland as Headmaster of the School. Most of the information for this article has been sourced from School Magazines, Prospectuses and a variety of other primary sources.

In 1905 boarding was under the direct supervision of the Headmaster and two resident Masters. The Dormitory [one only] was situated on the upper floor of what is now School House with the two Resident Masters also living at that level. In 1905 the lavatories were up-dated and large plunge and shower baths were introduced. However, there was no hot water at that time and the building was lighted throughout by incandescent gas. There was a phone in the building connecting the School with the town. The boarders also had a sitting room where illustrated papers, magazines and other suitable literature were kept.

During the week the boarders were woken by a 6:30am bell and this was followed by a forty-five minute prep session with breakfast at 8:00am. Classes took place between 9:30am and 4:00pm with sport coaching from 4:00pm to 6:00pm. The main meal for the boarders was at lunch-time so the evening meal was light. Day students were encouraged to have a meal with the boarders at lunch-time. Prep in the evening took place from 7:15pm to 8:45pm and everyone was in bed by 9:00pm. It is interesting to note that the 1905 prospectus makes much of the fact that the School had its own milk supply for boarders.

On Saturdays there was no school work. Boarders could visit town until 11:00am and the afternoons were devoted to Cricket, Tennis or Football. In that year football was either Rugby Union or Soccer. Sport was compulsory and all had to take part. On Saturday evenings there were games or general reading and this took place at the Headmaster's house. On infrequent occasions there would either be a dance or a concert. Dancing was encouraged and the School provided dancing lessons at the cost of five shillings per term.

On Sundays the boarders had to attend whatever church their parents designated. This was a compulsory activity. In the afternoons the boarders could go for walks or visit friends in the immediate vicinity. Many of them took the opportunity to climb Castle Hill as an activity. Tea on a Sunday night was traditionally spent sitting around a table with the Headmaster who would regale the boarders with stories or read extracts from books to them. Boarders were also encouraged to read and on Friday evenings Mr Rowland would have Shakespearean reading nights with the senior boarders. The younger boarders would be encouraged to either read Scott, Dumas, Victor Hugo or R.L. Stevenson.

Full boarding fees in 1905 were twelve guineas a quarter and included evening tuition, mending and laundry. A weekly boarder paid ten guineas a quarter. Boys were expected to provide their own sheets, pillow slips and towels. There was also a charge of five shillings a quarter to cover the costs of gymnastics, swimming, drill, games and the School Magazine. It is to be assumed that drill would be the modern day Physical Education class. It is interesting to note that in 1905 the School had both a qualified Music and Drill teacher.

The school year was much longer in 1905. There were two long breaks only: about eight weeks at Christmas and three in Midwinter. There were two short breaks, of about two or three days only, at Easter and Michaelmas. The reason for this was the difficulty of travel for many of the boarders and thus some of them were unable to get home for long periods at a time. The School prospectus of 1905 says that boarders could stay during the holidays [if they could not go home] but would be charged *pro rata*.

Overall, life was not that easy for boarders. Meals were not particularly wholesome and they had to face the prospect of a cold shower each morning. Initiation ceremonies often made life uncomfortable for those new to the boarding house. In his book, *The Beckoning Horizon*, Colin Bingham describes two of the more "popular" initiations. The Ghost Hole was one and toe-stringing the other. In the latter a string was tied to a sleeping boy and he was then dragged around the dormitory in the middle of the night. While Bingham did not like the initiation processes he does admit that it did develop a bond amongst the boys and friendships that were to last long after they had left the School.

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