

FROM THE ARCHIVES

PREDICTING THE FUTURE FROM 1908

In a recent article in the Townsville Bulletin [23 April], mention was made of an essay written by a member of the Grammar community for the 1908 School Magazine and headed *The T.G.S. in 2008*. In the essay the writer fantasises how he believed life would be in the city in a hundred years time. The essay is signed by an "O.S" and as the archivist I have been unable to find any member of the then School community with those initials. However, I suspect that "O.S" was in fact the Headmaster at the time, P.F. Rowland. It is interesting to note that "O.S" also had a couple of essays published in the years before and after 1908. Some of these essays had numerous Latin quotes, a language familiar to Mr Rowland, and their subject matter is of a more complex nature than would be attempted by a student. Mr Rowland was also a prolific writer and was fond of using pseudonyms to protect his identity.

In reading the following we should keep in mind the historical perspective of the period. In 1908 Henry Ford had just developed his Model T Ford, the Wright Brothers had just a few years prior undertaken the first mechanised flight, Australia had a White Australia Policy, Charters Towers was a flourishing city and, at one stage, the Stock Exchange there had some of the heaviest trade in the world and the University of Queensland was to open its doors for the first time in 1911.

As archivist I have taken the liberty of editing some of the material especially the rather long-winded introduction and conclusion. I have added some comments in brackets hopefully for information to the reader. The essay, in part, reads as follows:

"Owing, among other things, to an enormous boom in Charters Towers, the population now numbers 200,000, and Queens Cross Shares being worth, I would not like to say how many pounds, numbers at the T.G.S. have gone up by leaps and bounds. Two years ago the Trustees found it necessary to buy up all of Paxton Street west of Grammar Street Road. [This, of course, never eventuated although for some years the School did own the land and buildings on the top end of Paxton Street.]

The opening of Queensland University in 1918 has given a great fillip for secondary education, and the wise move of the Council in putting residential colleges in Toowoomba and Kuranda has done much to prevent Brisbane becoming a cram house. [It is interesting to note that the writer misses the fact that Townsville with the establishment of JCU was to become a leading educational institution.]

The day boys at the T.G.S. have largely increased and now number nearly a hundred, drawn in increasing numbers from the railway suburbs, which have more than quadrupled their population owing the success that has attended efforts at the cultivation of coffee, tobacco and cotton in the Stewart's Creek area, and the growth of dairy farming in and about Townsville. [It is interesting to note the emphasis on day boys. There were but a handful of girls at Grammar in 1908. Furthermore, there would be close to 1200 day students currently at the School. Most students are bussed in as there is no rail system.]

The cadets number two companies, and have greatly improved in shooting; the ground in the neighbourhood of the Range is seldom now cut up by bullets. Their gallant action in the Battle of Castle Hill during the Japanese invasion of 1919 obtained them a liberal grant from the Government to pay for marksmen at rifle practices. [Cadets at Grammar were instituted in 1908 and the Rifle Range was situated where the Centenary Gymnasium now stands. The Cadet units were shut down in the late 1970s.]

The public buildings of Townsville show considerable improvement. The Church of England Cathedral is now completed, the size being doubled. What is now the Abbey Church of St Peter's has been built on a scale of grand splendour. The Customs House has been pulled down and replaced by a more suitable structure. The Town Council has constructed two magnificent sets of public baths, one adjoining the breakwater and the other in Picnic Bay. The Island now has a population of 2000 and the 'Yongala' and 'Bombala' keep up communication with the mainland by frequent trips; but there is considerable agitation at present for newer and more up-to-date vessels. The Inner Harbour is rapidly nearing completion, and is expected to be available for overseas vessels by the close of 2010. [Little comment is needed here except to add that Tobruk Memorial Pool has been a success and that Townsville may have a suitable harbour for large liners by 2010.]

The old Municipal Theatre was burnt down some years ago. The present theatre, which is in good taste and of an imposing appearance, enables the audience to both hear and see." [The old Winter Garden Theatre was indeed burnt down and finally replaced by the present Civic Theatre.]

The essay includes a few issues which I have omitted. These include the state of Flinders Street [still an issue in 2008], the development of flying machines and the development of rowing at the School especially girls' rowing. Mention is made of competition against schools in Rockhampton and Maryborough but not against schools in Charters Towers. The Towers' schools only developed from the 1920s but in 1908 Maryborough had one of the Grammar Schools of Queensland. It is the only Grammar School that has closed its doors.

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