

SIMPLE BEGINNINGS - 1888

When the first Trustees set up the School in 1888, the facilities comprised just one building [School House], the Headmaster's house, a small gymnasium cum science laboratory with two staff members; the Acting Headmaster, Mr E.F. Upward and teacher, Mr D. Ansted. They would not envisage that the School would, in 2017, be spread over three campuses, have over two hundred staff, great playing fields and state of the art classroom facilities.

In accordance with the regulations governing the Grammar Schools Act, all Grammar Schools in Queensland had to have seven Trustees; four appointed by the government of the day and three elected by the subscribers to the School. There was also a Secretary to the Board of Trustees to be appointed. It was not surprising when on 16 January, 1888, the subscribers elected a group of men who were not only prominent in the local community but also the driving force behind the establishment of the School. The three selected by the subscribers were the Hon W. Aplin M.L.C., the Hon W.V. Brown M.L.C. and Bishop G.H. Stanton. The four Trustees appointed by the government were Messrs T. Willmett, W.P. Walker, A.G. Bundock and W.J. Castling, all prominent businessmen. Mr Willmett was appointed Chairman and E.J.B. Wareham, was appointed as the Secretary to the Board. The only surprise in the selection of Trustees was that the nomination of Mr R. Philp was flatly rejected by the Queensland government. Mr Philp was, in fact, the driving force in establishing the School and had raised most of the finance necessary for the School to become a viable entity. Mr Philp was later to become Treasurer and Premier of the state of Queensland. He always remained a great supporter of the School.



W. Aplin (1888-94)



Rt Rev G.H. Stanton
1st Bishop of NQ (1888-90)



T. Willmett (1884-92)



A.G. Bundock (1888-91)

The first Chairman, Mr Thankful Willmett, had come to Townsville and opened a stationary and printing business. He involved himself in community affairs and was Mayor of Townsville in 1880-81 and 1883-84. With Philp, he can be said to be the leading figure in pushing the State government to set up a Grammar school in Townsville. More importantly, however, he was the person instrumental in persuading the government to set up the School on its present site. When the government allocated land for a school it was situated at what is known as Kissing Point. The Trustees felt that it was too far out of town for a school so Mr Willmett, as Chairman of the City Council Park's and Gardens' committee, persuaded the council to exchange some of the Queens Gardens land for the Kissing Point site. Mr Willmett is remembered at the School with the Library building named after him on the Annandale Campus.

Five of the seven Trustees had been, or were actively involved, in either local or state politics. W. Aplin, a local pastoralist and business man, had been a member of the Legislative Council of Queensland and mayor of Townsville on several occasions. W.V. Brown had been elected to the State parliament on two occasions, while W.P. Walker, T. Willmett, A.G. Bundock and W.J. Castling all had periods as being Mayor of Townsville. They are variously remembered by having either a street in Townsville named after them or, in the case of Aplin, a weir. Castling is commemorated in ANZAC Park with a beautiful water fountain which was built soon after his death in 1906.

The only non-businessman appointed to the Board of Trustees was Bishop, G.H. Stanton, the first Church of England Bishop to be appointed to North Queensland. An Oxford graduate, with a Doctor of Divinity degree, he arrived in Townsville in 1879 and soon made his mark on the local community. He became prominent by riding on a horse around his diocese. In 1887 the first sod was turned on what is now St James Cathedral. It is also suspected that he was influential in the decision to appoint Mr C. Hodges as our first Headmaster. Like Bishop Stanton, Mr Hodges was an Oxford graduate. Stanton Hill was named after the Bishop.

In late 1888 Walker resigned from the Board and was replaced by Hollis Hopkins, a draper and another prominent local businessman. Mr Hopkins was also instrumental in raising money to help establish the School and it was the beginning of the Hopkins dynasty that still has family enrolled at the School. Spencer Hopkins, the son of Hollis Hopkins, was one of the founding students in 1888 and after completing his schooling in England returned to Australia to work in the family business. He was appointed to the Board in 1921 and remained a member until 1966. Even after his retirement he was involved in School affairs and was a leading figure in Project Phoenix which raised money to build what is now the Rheuben Science Building. In his will, he donated money to the School and the Spencer Hopkins English Building is named in his honour.

One hundred and twenty-nine years on, the citizens of Townville and North Queensland should be grateful for the vision and energy displayed by the early Trustees of the School. As an early prospectus explained: *"Parents should spare themselves the anxiety, expense and inconvenience attendant upon sending their sons to distant schools. The wholesome influence of home need not be sacrificed to obtain the best and highest school teachers. The youth of North Queensland can be qualified for their future careers where local interest watches their progress and stimulates them to intellectual achievements."*

MR BILL MULLER
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