

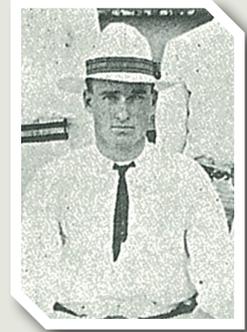
## TOWNSVILLE TO NEWCASTLE BY BICYCLE - DECEMBER 1908

Principal, Mr Fairley, recently announced that the Early Education Centre at North Shore would be named in honour of a past staff member **Donald Neil MacGregor** who was killed on the first day of the Gallipoli campaign. MacGregor was one of a handful of exciting, talented and intrepid young men employed by the School in the years before World War One. Of those employed were **W.L.Garrard MC** and **S.Jacobs MM**, who were both heroes during World War One. **M.W.Moyes** was to join Mawson on his first expedition to the Antarctica and was later to be awarded the MBE for his services in that region. **T.D.Kay** was the runner-up to the Rhodes Scholar winner in Tasmania and, after leaving the Grammar School, became a valued member of the Scotch College, Melbourne.



D.N. MacGregor

The School Magazine of August 1909 has a long article headed *Townsville to Newcastle by Bicycle* and was written by MacGregor and Kay. Both members of staff displayed a great sense of adventure and this was reflected in their cycling trip south during the Christmas break 1908. The reader should keep in mind that the rail from the south had not yet reached Townsville and the only method of travelling south was by ship. The roads were of a poor standard while towns were few and far between. Furthermore the quality of bicycles at that time would be sub-standard compared to those of the modern era. The trip from Townsville to Rockhampton was written by MacGregor where he caught a train to Brisbane while the second part of the journey was written by Kay who made it to Newcastle.



T.D. Kay

The article in the Magazine is an interesting social and geographical comment of what the north was like at that time. The pair left at noon on a Saturday and made it to the Houghton River where they spent the night with a "lengthsman" who

provided them with supper. They reached Ayr where they had a short break at the Delta Hotel before making the crossing of the Burdekin River. On the following day they reached Bobawaba, the then terminus of the railway north. The night was spent on the hardwood floor of the terminus. The next day the pair cycled the forty miles to Bowen which as MacGregor writes: *"a few miles' ride across a salt pan, where the radiated heat roasted us to cinders and a thick patch of bindii which provided a few hours of unwelcome employment."*

The two then travelled on a twelve mile trip to a bush shanty where they spent the night. The next morning they reached Proserpine where they collected a small stock of provisions before spending the night at a camping place along the O'Connell River. The following morning took them on the old coach road where they encountered the notorious Bloomsbury grass. As MacGregor writes: *"Its coarse, wire tussocks swarmed over the road, leaving a bare few inches of navigable track, blocked at interval by a tussock to catch the pedals and make breakneck spills monotonous."*

In spite of the difficulties they reached the Leap Hotel on the outskirts of Mackay where they spent the next two days relaxing. It had taken them six days to reach Mackay. They left Mackay on the Saturday evening. Riding and sleeping in stages, they reached St Lawrence where they spent the morning asleep. The journey from St Lawrence to Rockhampton had its trials and tribulations. On reaching Wilanga Creek the pair decided to spend the night there. As MacGregor writes: *"Flattering ourselves that we were to camp comfort, we made a cheerful camp fire and dropped off to sleep. Then when our fire died down we were attacked by droves of furious mosquitos."* Leaving the Creek they cycled to Marlborough and then on to Yaamba on what Macgregor wrote as the best road of the journey. Rockhampton was reached the next day where they *"had a couple of hours with a stiff scrubbing brush which removed most of the dust of travel."* MacGregor then left Kay to journey by train to Brisbane where he was to undergo further military training.

T.D.Kay's description of the journey south is of interest as he was to come across more towns on his trip. Leaving Rockhampton on 23 December he aimed to be in Gladstone by Christmas. On reaching Calliope he was held up by a high tide over the crossing. As he writes: *"This, by warnings on either side, is a dangerous place, and if there is more than six inches of water in the ford there is a risk of your becoming food for alligators."* From Gladstone to Brisbane was fairly uneventful with better roads and more hotels to sleep in overnight. Two items of interest for Kay was the result of the Burns/Johnson world title fight and meeting a friend who had been at university with him in Tasmania. On reaching Brisbane he spent the night at Lennon's Hotel where he collected some fresh clothing Mr Rowland had forwarded on to him.

From Brisbane, Kay cycled to Southport where he caught up with MacGregor who as he writes *"looked splendid in his military array forming fours."* From Southport he cycled down the beach to Tweed Heads where he came across thirty people who he thought were priests. In Kay's words: *"This caused me to think that Tweed Heads was a very wicked place, but I found out the next day that they were Christians Brothers down for their holidays."* Kay crossed into New South Wales on New Year's Day then headed for Port Macquarie travelling through Murwillumbah, Mullumbimby, Byron Bay, Grafton, Coff's Harbour and Kempsey. On leaving Kempsey the first major setback occurred. While travelling at pace down a hill Kay tried to avoid a tree across the road and in doing so hit another piece of wood and went over the handlebars and over an embankment. In own words *"the result was a scratched face, a bruised body, a broken chain and a bent crank."* Kay was unable to fix the crack and walked the twelve miles into Port Macquarie. From there he caught the S.S.Wauchope into Newcastle. Kay completes his description of the trip by writing: *"I consider it the best holiday I have ever put in, and next Christmas I intend to complete the journey from the North to the South, by riding from Melbourne to Port Macquarie."*

**MR BILL MULLER**  
School Archivist