

BOARDER WEEKENDS

In his autobiography *The Beckoning Horizon* Colin Bingham [1913-1916] writes: "Sunday was the duller day at the Townsville Grammar School, except when the Boss was committed to one of his reading sessions, seated at the top end of the main table and delighting us all with an enthusiastic rendition of C.J.Dennis's *Sentimental Bloke*, or another favourite, the prose *Vice Versa* of F.Anstey who in 1882 had made the English rock with laughter at this story of a pompous business man who, through the agency of a magic stone, exchanged places with his schoolboy son." Sunday was without doubt the duller day with the only activity organized, until 1965, was that all boarders had to attend church. Attendance at church was, in itself, almost a game for the boarders to avoid. Most of the boarders were Church of England and had to attend the 7:00am service while those of "other" denominations attended after breakfast. The story is told that in the 1920s one Presbyterian boarder advised Mr Rowland, on four successive weekends, that the sermon of the day was about 'Daniel in the Lion's Den'. Colin Bingham writes that he was the only Catholic at the time and was advised not to attend morning prayers held each morning by Mr Rowland. Compulsory church attendance was abandoned in 1965 and this led to a marked drop in boarders reporting to sick bay on that day.

In spite of Bingham stating that Sundays were boring, the weekends were in fact, until 1938, busy for boarders. On Friday nights the pie-man would wait outside the school grounds and sell the boarders a pie for four pennies. On Saturdays boarders were allowed to go to town on the condition that they wore their school uniform complete with tie and boater. The boater was a bone of contention with the boarders and in 1929 they rebelled after a boarder was involved in a fight with a "local" who was teasing the boarders about their boater. That night the boarders took off their badge on the boater and then destroyed the disliked boater. Mr Rowland had enough sense to realise what had happened and that was the end of the boater at the School.

Boarders were allowed great freedom at weekends and could involve themselves in various activities as long as they reported in for lunch and dinner. Many of the boarders had bicycles and they would either ride on Castle Hill chasing goats or go to the City Baths for a swim. On some weekends there would be concerts and from the nineteen-twenties dancing classes were held at the School of Arts. These classes were popular with the boys because it gave them the opportunity to meet up with the girls from St Anne's School. For those not interested in the above activities the game "scabby" was a popular pastime. "Scabby" was a particularly hazardous type of hockey played on the area where the Rowland Memorial Library now stands. It was a game played with a cricket ball, hockey sticks and clubs of various sizes.



TGS 1910

Excursions to Magnetic Island were always popular but in 1929 the excursions were stopped for a while after G.Wetherell was taken by a shark at Alma Bay. Excursions to the Island were certainly different to the ones held today. The December 1901 School Magazine reports that the boarders took lots of fishing gear and ammunition with them to the Island but they had no luck with their fishing and no-one had the fortune to shoot a goat. However, they did manage to organize a bon-fire and a cock fight! On one occasion the boarders were stranded on the Island when the crews on the ferries went on strike. The boarders went without food for a day or two.

Weekends became more structured with the opening of Town High in 1924 and three schools in Charters Towers. There was always excitement as travel to the Towers was by train. Prior to this the only other secondary boys' school was Mary's Mount which later became Ignatius Park College. Cricket and rugby league were the main sports with some rugby union in the 1930s. Some of the better cricketers were allowed to play for club teams. Frank Sides, a boarder from Mackay, played for the All Blacks Club and, aged seventeen, became the youngest player to represent Queensland, a record which still stands.

Life after World War Two was little changed for boarders. Under the headmastership of Maurie Blank, a stern disciplinarian and a man of high moral standards, boarders had to wear full school uniform when visiting town on the weekends and to church on a Sunday. Mr Blank

had inherited a school run-down after the war and thus used the boarders to work on the school grounds on weekends. While the work was not always of a voluntarily nature many boarders from the 1950s still take great pride in the effort they made into building the wall which is situated on the western side of the Alan Morwood Oval. Weekend life for boarders was to change with the appointment on Mr Len Daniels as Headmaster in 1965.

Compulsory church was abandoned and there was a general relaxation of weekend rules re visits to cinemas and other activities. Mr Daniels encouraged boarders to be involved in community activities when the School was unable to do so. Boarders were allowed to play rugby league for local clubs as well as Australian Rules, to join the Citizens Military Force and to participate in judo and trampoline clubs. However, interschool sport on the weekends reached a peak during the term of Mr Alan Morwood as Headmaster. Weekend sporting trips were arranged with schools in Bowen, Mackay, Cairns and Rockhampton, with the trip to Rockhampton particularly popular.



Oringal City Baths - now the Tobruk Pool

MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist