

THE HISTORY OF ST FAITH'S SCHOOL

A most important undertaking by the Anglican Diocese of Rockhampton was the founding of St Faith's School for Girls at Yeppoon in 1923. Mount Stewart, the 53 acre property of Mr J.C. Stewart, MLA, in the hills on Adelaide Park Road, on the outskirts of Yeppoon, was the site chosen by Bishop Crick.

Throughout its life of 45 years, the school was constantly plagued by financial difficulties and finally it was closed in 1968. Nevertheless, two generations of Central Queensland girls received their secondary education at St Faith's and were sad to see it close.

St Faith's buildings consisted of the homestead and outbuildings already on site, as well as buildings formerly used at St Paul's Hostel in Rockhampton, that were moved to Yeppoon. As well, considerable additions and improvements were made. Work was still going on when the first students arrived to begin school in February 1923 and some classes were held outdoors under the mango trees.

In 1929 the Anglican Church purchased the lovely old Carlton House, former residence of the General Manager of Mount Morgan's mining company – a building with an interesting history of its own – and re-erected it on the hill behind the main school building. In 1935 the Chapel was built as a memorial to Archdeacon G.H. Rogers, the school's first chaplain. Prior to this, an enclosed verandah on the left side of the main building had been used for worship purposes and was later used as a dormitory known as "Chapel Wing".

The first of many financial problems beset the school in 1932 during the Great Depression, when the number of boarders was considerably reduced. The financial strain was alleviated by the Anglican Order of Sisters, the Society of the Sacred Advent, who took over the staffing of the school. Under their guidance, and with the wholehearted support of Bishop Ash, the school made good progress, but after the end of World War 11, the Society had to relinquish its role and lay staff returned to serve.

Like so many other coastal schools, St Faith's pupils and staff faced the upheavals of evacuation and spent most of the war years billeted at St Peter's school (which had closed in 1932) and other church buildings at Barcaldine. At the war's end, St Faith's re-opened at Yeppoon, but no longer under the guidance of the Sisters.

By 1963, with declining enrolments mainly brought about by the establishment of State High Schools in country towns, the financial strain became too great and the Anglican Diocese reluctantly announced the closure of St Faith's. But then, through intercession of students, who ran street stalls etc in their home towns during their holidays, and who wrote to the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin asking for financial assistance, followed by grants and gifts from the Tooth Estate (\$3,000) and from one of the clergy (\$4,000), the school remained open. St Faith's was then under the control of an independent Board of Governors who had been organized by Archdeacon J.B.R. Grindrod (later Sir John Grindrod, Archbishop of Brisbane) to purchase the school.

Then a gift of \$6,000 from Mrs Enid Shepherd and a \$5,000 Commonwealth grant enabled a science block and two additional classrooms to be built. Notwithstanding the advantage of new classrooms, the Board of Directors in 1968 came to the same conclusion as the Diocese five years earlier: that the enrolments were too low for it to be economically possible to continue the school and St Faith's closed at the end of the school year.

After a number of years, the land and buildings were purchased by a developer and by 1993 all that remained of the school was one of the clumps of bamboos which had flanked the main entrance and the cross on the chapel which had become a 5 bedroom dwelling.

Fearing that the school was in danger of disappearing from memory, the Past Pupils Association asked the Livingstone Shire Council that the area to the left of the old driveway be named St Faith's School Park. That done, they donated almost \$3,000 for a gazebo bearing a memorial plaque to be erected in the park. The gazebo was blessed by Fr Lindsey Howie at a ceremony attended by about 60 past pupils on September 30th, 1995 during their annual re-union.