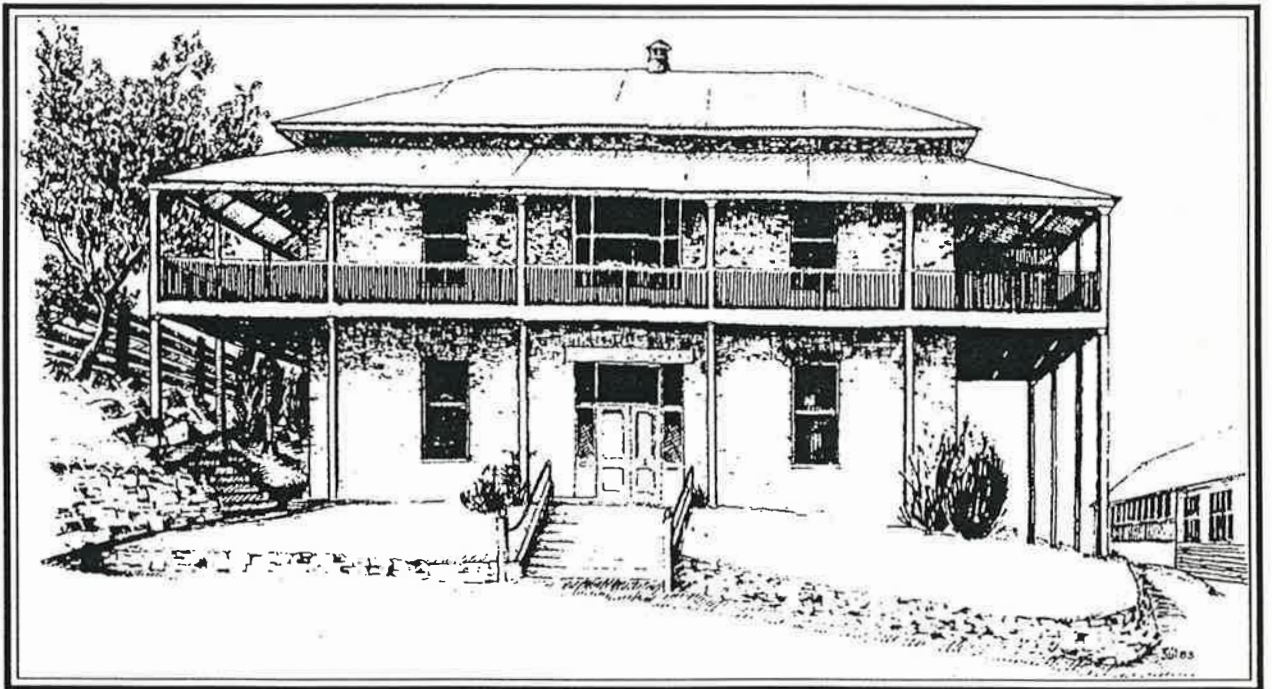


The Gympie School of Arts and Library

90 Years of Service 1905 - 1995



Rae Webb

Webb, Raeburn, 1930-

Gympie School of Arts and Library:
90 Years of Service, 1905 - 1995

ISBN 0 646 22823 4

1. Gympie School of Arts - History.
 2. Gympie Library - History.
 3. Mechanics' institutes - History.
 4. Technical education - Queensland - Gympie - History.
 5. Public libraries - Queensland - Gympie - History.
 6. Gympie (Qld.) - History.
 7. Gympie (Qld.) - Social life and customs.
- I. Pechey, Susan. 1941-.
 - II. Cooloola Shire (Qld.) Library Service.
 - III. Friends of the Cooloola Shire Libraries.
 - IV. Title.

994.32

© 1995 Raeburn Webb

Published by Æbis Publishing, Brisbane

Designed by Fiona Casey

Foreword

Architecturally the Gympie Library is an unremarkable building but 28th February 1995 will mark the ninetieth anniversary of its opening and of its continuous use as a library. This brief story has been written to mark that event.

Most of the early material came from photocopies of the minutes of School of Arts Committee Meetings, provided by the John Oxley Library.

Microfilm files of *The Gympie Times* held in the Library but financed by *The Gympie Times*, the John Oxley Library and what were then the Gympie City and Widege Shire Councils were a valuable source of information. *Pioneering Culture* edited by P. C. Candy and J. Laurent provided a wealth of information on the School of Arts movement.

Wherever possible permission to use material reproduced in this book has been sought and obtained. Any exceptions which may appear are regretted.

This has been a Friends of the Library project made easier by the help of members of that organisation and in particular Mrs Rose Sami, Mrs Merlyn Burkhardt, Mrs Jean Scougall, Mrs Margaret Dawson, Mrs Olga Thew, Mr and Mrs Smith-Goodwin and Mrs Moira Edwards. Thank you. Thanks also to Dot and Errol Crane and Patricia Foster for deciphering the scrawl and for their word-processing skills. Thanks also to the Chief Librarian, Ms Moira Maclachlan, for her support and enthusiasm and to Mrs Cathy Hunt for her editing skills.

I hope the result has proved worthy of their efforts.

Rae Webb
February 1995



The School of Arts Movement

Any idea, however obvious and sound in principle, needs a strong advocate. Someone who from conception to fruition will keep the aim firmly in everyone's mind, sustain the momentum and advance the cause. Such a man was Edward Bytheway, shopkeeper, sometime Mayor, and early settler on the Gympie Goldfields. Edward Bytheway's aim was the erection of a building to house the School of Arts and Technical Classes

The School of Arts movement had evolved from several streams originating in England and Scotland. The Edinburgh School of Arts was founded in 1821, the Glasgow and the London Mechanics' Institutes in 1823. Adult Sunday Schools, mostly Methodist and Quaker had educational influences even earlier as did a host of literary and philosophical societies.

The expansion of the movement worldwide was a reflection of the feeling of the age that the middle classes should both educate and uplift the masses. Their motivations for this were as varied as the institutions they spawned - a better trained workforce, the desire of those people who saw themselves as being cultured to share this blessing with others (even if they thought that the chosen could never equal the choosers), and the somewhat naive belief that the education of the lower classes might make them more respectful of those whom God or fortune had put over them. There was also the desire of the workers themselves to improve their skills.

The Van Dieman's Land Mechanics' Institute opened in Hobart in 1827 and, nearer to home, the North Brisbane School of Arts, the first in Queensland, opened in 1849. At their peak there were over 2000 institutes of this type in Australia, and in 1908 there were 181 in Queensland.

A typical Queensland School of Arts started with the calling of a public meeting to decide upon its establishment. In most cases this does not seem to have been an initiative of local government but

more often that of a group of leading citizens. A committee was then elected and subscribers solicited. One of the first contradictions encountered was that a level of subscriptions sufficient to maintain and improve the Institute was often financially beyond the perceived membership. Any government subsidy, when available, tended to fluctuate with the times and, as will be seen later, in Gympie's case the cost to subscribers was a constantly recurring problem for over forty years.

The Committee was exclusively the province of middle class men. Worker participation or any suggestion that women could make a worthwhile contribution were never considered. In this management structure can be seen the genesis of many of the future problems of the institutions in that the very people they were established to serve had no input into their constitution, their management or their programmes. Their rules for government include phrases such as "mental and moral improvement", "rational recreation", "the diffusion of scientific, literary and other useful knowledge".

The institute invariably included a library and, it would appear, more importantly in the Committee's eyes, a reading room. It also often included a museum and sometimes an art gallery. These usually reflected the travels and previous activities of the committee and also local industries and interests.

In their early days most Schools of Arts relied upon their leading lights to provide lectures in their particular area of expertise or a much loved hobby. Sometimes the members had the treat of a visiting lecturer, often with lantern slides, to lighten what must have been fairly heavy proceedings.

Gradually classes were introduced, sometimes of a formal nature, sometimes of a self-instructional method. These classes gradually

became more formal, leading to examinations and recognition by some type of certification. To popularize the institutions and thereby attract more subscribers, games such as chess, draughts and billiards were then introduced — the latter being good sources of revenue in spite of having to pay a Government tax on each table.

Schools of Arts were very important in some towns. For instance, the Tenterfield School of

Arts was the venue for the formal dinner at which Henry Parkes made the speech which is usually seen as the first step in the federation of Australia. Parkes himself had received much of his earlier education at the Birmingham Mechanics Institute.¹

As will be seen in the following pages Gympie was a copybook example of a Queensland School of Arts.

Mr Bytheway

Mr Bytheway was born in a small village near Wolverhampton, Staffordshire in 1840. On leaving school at 12 years of age he was employed at a nursery where he acquired a knowledge and love of horticulture.

In 1864, as a young man Bytheway decided to seek his fortune in Queensland. He travelled to Brisbane with his wife and on arrival worked in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. He soon set himself up as a grocer which proved a successful venture.

Reports from the goldfields led Bytheway to come to Gympie about the end of 1867 to open a branch business in Mary Street. This was so successful that he sold his Brisbane establishment to make his home on the goldfield. Soon he was able to establish himself as a manufacturer and importer on a large scale.

When he had secured a firm footing, he directed his attention to mining, and he prospered by speculation. He became a director of the No.1 North Glanmire and until his death the No.7 South Lady Mary and No.6 North Phoenix mines.

Bytheway was first elected to the Municipal Council in 1888 and two years later he was elected to the position of Mayor. At the end of his first term as Mayor he retired from the Council, but was returned again in 1893. Again in 1895 he was elected Mayor of the town. He returned to the Municipal Council again in 1901 and finally in 1904 he retired from municipal life. During his term in office the Town Hall was built.

Bytheway was a prominent member of the School of Arts and Technical College since its foundation, and for a great many years occupied the position of President. He worked hard for the establishment of the local hospital and held a seat on the Committee for very many years. He was also closely identified with the Gympie Agricultural, Mining and Pastoral Society.



Courtesy of Gympie Times 14 October 1905

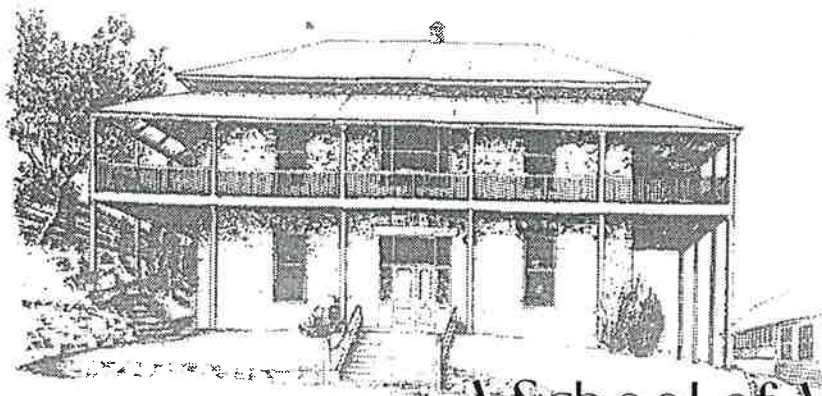
Bytheway used his endeavours to establish a local butter factory and was one of the leaders in the movement to form the Gympie Gas Company, of which he was Chairman at the time of his death. He was a trustee of the local cemetery and acted in the capacity of Returning Officer for both the State and Federal Authorities.

The Surface Hill Methodist Church was Bytheway's favourite place of worship. He was associated with this church from its foundation and the erection of the present building was due to his generosity, having contributed £200 towards the cost of building. He was also trustee and Treasurer of the Gympie Church Trust.

Bytheway was married twice - his second wife predeceasing him. He had four children by his first marriage. One of his sons, Edward served on the School of Arts Committee for many years between the wars. Father and son had thus served the Committee over a span of 60 years.

Bytheway died of dengue fever, aged 65, on 12 October, 1905.

The Gympie Times, 14 October, 1905.



A School of Arts for Gympie

In 1870 a group of citizens met and decided that Gympie needed a School of Arts. An application was made to the State Government which led to the gazetting later that year of a reserve for a School of Arts - the land on which the Gympie Library now stands. Gold which had been discovered in 1867 was the spur which brought to Gympie not only miners, but government officials, lawyers, doctors and businessmen of all kinds. As an indication of the rapidity of its growth, by 25 February 1868, 560 business licences and 15,000 Miners' Rights had been taken out in the four months since the diggings opened.

The miners as a class were strong minded individuals many of whom had worked the gold in California and other strikes overseas and in Australia. From contemporary accounts they emerge as men who had definite opinions, their own ideas on how things should be done and they were not reluctant to put their point of view as forcibly as they thought necessary. The businessmen were, one presumes, the more adventurous of their kind, prepared to give it a go in a situation where no one could say how long the gold would last. It doesn't appear that the population of the goldfield in 1871 was a likely source of people interested in "rational recreation", "mental and moral improvement" or in the promotion of intellectual culture and amusement.

However on 21 January 1871 a public meeting was held and the motion "that it is desirable to establish a School of Arts" was moved by Mr Kidgell and seconded by Mr Mellor. Mr Kidman became the first secretary. Mr Kidman later formed the first Building Society and was the first Town Clerk. When Widgee Shire was established he became the first Shire Clerk. Matthew Mellor, one of Gympie's leading citizens had started life

as a timbergetter, then a gold miner and butcher. He was Gympie's Mayor in 1880 and 1881, and Widgee Shire Chairman 1880-1883.

The early days of the School of Arts were marked by controversy over where it should be sited and also over, what will be familiar to many members of committees today, Rules of Procedure.

After several adjourned meetings it was decided on 24 April 1871 to start all over again and elections were called for a new committee and twelve new committeemen were elected who then ran the School of Arts.

One of the characters who had precipitated much of the furore was "The Jumping Doctor", Dr. Theodore Edgar Dickson Byrne. The doctor was eccentric, irascible and against just about anything particularly the Mining Court. As an example of the passions he aroused and the "knock em down, drag em out" school of debate current at the time, here is a letter published in *The Gympie Times* on 29 March 1871.

"The School of Arts Meeting.

Sir, Will you allow me, through the medium of your journal, to make a protest against the way the meetings of the Gympie School of Arts are obstructed by one of its members. Nearly every meeting Dr. Byrne has been present at has been a scene of frolic and larking instead of business and deliberation; and I cannot but think that the young institution is likely to be a good deal damaged by it. Dr. Byrne seems to come to the meetings for no other purpose than to kick up rows. It may be a very congenial occupation for him to abuse a man because he is, or has been, a manufacturer of soap; but let me tell him that if people used soap more they would

want physic less. Then why should a doctor sneer at a soap boiler - the latter is quite as honourable a profession! as the former. Even Dr. Byrne finds the use of *soft soap* desirable (especially about election times). I think, Sir, you will agree with me that when a man adopts the course of sneering at others in a personal manner he must be awfully hard up for arguments. Any idiot can make a hit at a man because of his trade; you can sneer at a tailor because of his "goose" or his "cabbage"; at a bank clerk (or even an editor) because he is a "quill-driver"; at a publican because of his "poison"; at a doctor because he amuses his patients with soap-and-bread pills while nature cures them. But a sneer requires very little sense; and is not at all a criterion of the high intellect which Dr. Byrne wants us all to believe he possesses. I really hope Dr. Byrne won't come down to our meetings trying to be funny; we meet for business; when we want some empty blowing we'll send for him.

I am, yours obliged,

A Member.²

The other argument was over where the School of Arts should be sited. A group of interested citizens wanted a building at Nash Street, Commissioner's Hill, on the land allocated by the Government because it was close to other official buildings. Other citizens contended

that, as the supporters are looked for from the mass of the population generally, their convenience should be studied. I have often heard complaints from working men that it is a serious hardship that all the public offices should be placed, so remote from the common centre of the population.³

In April 1871 the decision was made to buy Hardcastle's building for £25, the necessary alterations to cost £20. The building was where Lyons newsagency now stands in Mary Street in 1995.

A library and reading room were quickly established and the Report of the Annual General Meeting held in January 1873 mentions that among the newspapers held were donated copies of *The Gympie Times*, *Port Dennison Times*, *The Ravenswood Miner*, *Ipswich Observer*, *Dalby Herald*, *Darling Downs Gazette*, *Queenslander* and *Wide Bay and Burnett News*. More important colonial and London papers were also held. A government grant of £86.7.6 had been obtained and local contributions/subscriptions raised £98. 8. 8. The problem of the location of the School of

Arts however, had not been solved. In the previous year, the One Mile Miners' Institute had opened which also had a library of 150 books with a further 400 on order from Sydney. This new Institute reflected not only a different social grouping, but also a dissatisfaction with the location of the existing School of Arts. In addition people at the northern end of town "refused to subscribe because the School of Arts was not erected on the Government site".⁴

After a lot of discussion Mr Bytheway moved that a building fund should be opened for the erection of the new School of Arts on the Government site. Mr Kidgell seconded the motion which was then carried. Thus the first step in the long march to the present building was taken.

At this stage the School of Arts was still a library with a meeting/reading room.

In the 1883 sitting of State Parliament Fisher had put to the Colonial Secretary whether or not there was any hope that assistance would be given for the erection of a suitable building for a School of Arts at Gympie in which technical education in mining might be given. The suggestion was somewhat evaded and no help at this stage was forthcoming. In 1885 a mining lecturer was appointed by the government to be based in Herberton and Charters Towers. He was in such demand to advise small miners on the worth of their ground that from 1888 a second lecturer was employed based at Gympie. Mining literature was made available in Schools of Arts and evening classes were conducted. However governments were reluctant to subsidise wholly any separate Schools of Mines and local centres were unwilling to help themselves.

Thus from the late seventies governments had offered subsidies for Schools of Arts founded locally, and Gympie had at least the rudiments in 1878. The miners were slow to take an interest as the School of Arts did not offer mining courses. With the withdrawal of subsidies for 1880, all classes were discontinued. By 1889 interest in Gympie seemed to be reviving but public interest was merely ruffled - the apathetic majority swamped their enthusiasm.⁵

Things were at a pretty low ebb in 1876 with only 84 subscribers and only 90 new books added. The School of Arts did however boast a collection of over 300 mineral specimens, properly classified. The overdraft at the Queensland National Bank was £10.7.9.

For the rest of the century the twin problems of finance and accommodation continued to plague the various committees.



Early Conflict - Arts versus Mines

January 1890 saw the whole question of a School of Mines come to a head. The Annual General Meeting of the School of Arts was told that the £750 grant towards a new building would be approved but "that a part of the building must be definitely set apart for the instruction of classes in such subjects as clearly fall within the scope of technical mining education".⁶ Mr Smyth, MLA, (Patron) said that he believed that the School of Mines should be in a separate building as in Charters Towers and should be managed by men with a practical knowledge of mining.

The School of Arts then approached the Amalgamated Miners' Association for support. Their special meeting to discuss the matter made their attitude crystal clear.

They considered that the School of Arts Committee were taking too much upon themselves. They wanted the Association's assistance and a little of their money to carry the idea through but would not guarantee that their nominees would be elected on the committee.⁷

We should remember that this was an association of mine workers.

The idea of leaving the Mine Managers' Association to handle the problem was discussed and rejected. The meeting ended with a resolution "to inform the Chairman of the School of Arts and Mines that this branch of the Amalgamated Miners' Association does not recognise the School of Arts as a thoroughly representative body in respect of the School of Mines.

The Mine Managers' Association then decided to have their say. They requisitioned the mayor to call a public meeting which was held in the Theatre Royal and, in spite of the threatening weather, 200 people attended. The meeting resulted in a four column report in *The Gympie Times* on 8 February 1890. The aim of the proposed school as described by one speaker was

so that miners worked more economically and the ores extracted from the mines were treated more effectively.

He also noted that Germans are rapidly filling up the more important places in connection with mines in different countries. The reason being that the Germans had long since taken the lead in those branches of scientific knowledge appertaining to mining. It was stated that Queensland had been very miserly in regard to funding compared to say, Victoria, which had subsidised the Ballarat School of Mines to a total of £38000 in 19 years. Much discussion then took place as to whether the new School of Mines should be joined to the School of Arts or a separate body. Mr Stancombe, a mine manager, thought it should be separate because he believed that if such a union was allowed that there would be a lack of energy displayed and that all the benefit would accrue to the School of Arts.

It was finally resolved, on the motion of Mr Bytheway, to form a "high powered committee consisting of prominent citizens, mining managers, and members of other associations in connection with mining".⁸ The meeting had already decided that the £750 was not nearly enough for the purpose and that £2000 would be nearer the mark.

This new committee held its first meeting in the office of Flood and Company (Mining Agents and Share Brokers) on Wednesday 2nd April 1890. The committee consisted of two representatives each from the Municipal Council, Chamber of Commerce, One Mile Institute, School of Arts, Amalgamated Miners' Association, Mine Managers Association and our old friend Mr Bytheway, who by this time was the Mayor and took the chair.

By August 1890, the institution was known as the School of Arts and Mines with a special committee responsible for the operation of the

technical classes. Subjects covered were Shorthand, Physics, Botany, Mathematical Drawing, Chemistry and Dressmaking. One has to be impressed by the range of subjects covered and to reflect that Gympie could provide appropriate instructors, particularly when it was to be another 22 years before Gympie High School opened. It was hoped that student fees would raise between £150 and £200 per year.

Finance however, would always be a problem and every chance was taken to raise money. In June 1891, the Masonic Hall in Duke Street was the venue for an Electrical Exhibition in aid of the School of Arts. The evening opened with an overture, two songs and an instrumental solo, presumably to warm the audience up. Then came a lecture on the Electric Motor and its application to mining machinery. After the lecture there were discussions and experiments of "a shocking nature".

The next night there was a Grand Telephone Concert where all the music was transmitted to the hall by telephone! Three days later the Olympic Theatre, not to be outdone had a first public exhibition in Gympie of Edison's Travelling Talking Machine, the phonograph with voices of the living and the dead.

Money was still a problem and in December a Band Concert was held. It was a grand affair with enough bands to warrant separate tents for the bands and the judges and hotel accommodation being arranged. One band came from Mount Morgan, and a first prize of £100 was offered.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in January 1896 noted that

The building was in a dilapidated condition and not a credit to the town. Similiar institutions in other towns obtained profits from government grants or sale of land and, by that means, erected palatial School of Arts: unfortunately the Gympie School of Arts had a site of little commercial value and if it were sold it would not realise sufficient to erect a building worthy of the town. The chairman wished someone would present the institution with a handsome sum - it would be a capital way of winning themselves a name for benevolence, and he was certain that the institution was worthy of support.⁹

There is no record that this fairy godperson ever materialised.

The 27th Annual General Meeting of the School of Arts and Mines was held on the 25 January 1898. The credit balance for the year for the library was £4. 6. 7 and that for the technical classes was £64. 2. 2. After allowing for the Government grant of £78. 2. 4 it was obvious that both activities were only scraping by financially. At this meeting Mr Fisher M.L.A. strongly advocated that the control of both institutes should be transferred to the Municipal Council and suggested that when this was accomplished the reading room should be free and a small charge made for the use of the library. Mr Bytheway supported him but told him the Council wouldn't get involved. In fact it was to take nearly 80 years for this idea to be adopted.

Australia and the World in the 1890s

* In London Gilbert and Sullivan's new opera, *The Gondoliers* had just opened.

* Home rule for Ireland was being hotly debated.

* Disastrous floods in Bundaberg, Maryborough and Gympie.

* Gympie theatregoers were offered a great variety of entertainment at the "Olympic"

featuring:

1. Overtue - "March of the Men of Harlech"
2. Comic Song - "I'm going Home to Mother"
3. Dance - Polka
4. Comic Sketch - "Maloney's Fenian Cat"
5. Dance - Valse
6. Comic Song - "Gildea's Thirsty Band"
7. Violin Solo - "Blue Bells of Scotland"
8. Dance - Schottische

9. Comic Song - "It's all over now with the ladies"

10. Stump Oration - By "Jebediah Puffean Blough"

11. Comic Song - "The Bicycle and the Baby"

12. Dance - Valse

A farce entitled "Fun on Skates"

God Save the Queen. Adults 1/- Children 3d.

* Great Shearer's Strike(1891)

- The local militia (Wide Bay Infantry) was mobilised and sent to Clermont.

* The Moreton Mounted Infantry and detachments of the Wide Bay Mounted Infantry and defence force companies, The Queensland Volunteer Rifles, the Brisbane Field Battery and the Queensland Scottish Volunteers numbering 15 officers and 243 men left for Barcaldine.



Mudies Books

The School of Arts side of the union still centred very largely around the reading room and the library. The 29th Annual Meeting held on 17 January 1900 stated that the reading room contained 47 magazines and newspapers of which 16 were obviously Australian and included the three Gympie publications - *The Gympie Times*, *The Gympie Miner* and the *Gympie Truth*. The magazines included the *London Punch* (now sadly demised), *Scientific American*, *Illustrated London News* and the *Sydney Bulletin*. The books came almost exclusively from overseas and mostly from a company called Mudies. Mudies continued to supply books to the School over many years as they did to libraries throughout Australia and the world. Here is an account of how Mudies operated and their influence on the Rockhampton Library. Gympie's relationship must have been very similar.

Mudies Circulating Library was established in 1842 as a subscription library and, by the mid 1850's, was the largest such library in Great Britain, and indeed the Empire. Its main branch in New Oxford Street, London, housed approximately one million volumes for loan and a fleet of delivery vans covered the London suburbs picking up and dropping off customer's orders. As well as running a lending department and a bindery, the New Oxford Street Headquarters also housed Mudies' large second hand book selling department: Although definitely subsidiary to the lending department, bookselling ...was a profitable adjunct. First, of course, it provided a market for some of the many volumes of three-decker novels that had run their course in the library... Besides selling individual titles, Mudie offered books in large lots, for example 100 volumes, for small provincial libraries... One thousand boxes carrying 10 to 100

books each, were dispatched weekly to country and colonial subscribers, many of whom were colonial libraries. Placing a regular standing order with Mudies was, in many ways a sensible course of action for the School of Arts to take. It meant that boxes of a hundred or more reasonably cheap, popular, current and attractively presented books arrived regularly at the library. Standing orders were also the only way for the library to obtain large numbers of books and multiple copies, as local booksellers usually tended not to stock many multiples of individual works. In addition local booksellers were often accused of being expensive and offering a limited range of stock. However the library's standing order with Mudies did present some problems. Mudies book boxes tended to dictate the content of a library's collection to a very great extent. Mudies Library was renowned for the high moral tone of its stock, especially its fiction stock: Mudies carefully excluded certain books for moral reasons... Whilst Mudies practice of excluding unsuitable works did prevent its shelves from being clogged with a large amount of allegedly substandard literature, it also meant that many works of merit were excluded simply because they were thought unfit for ladies and children to read. Consequently, Mudies was accused of pandering to the lowest common denominator of middle class intelligence - authors, critics and publishers complained again and again that Mudie's acquisitions policy made for a collection that was safe, predictable, stifling and unchallenging.¹⁰

Australia and the World 1900/1901

In July the British Government requested that ships of the Australian Auxiliary Squadron be sent to China to assist in putting down the Boxer Rebellion.

Australians were fighting in South Africa in the Boer War still as representatives of their respective states but under British control.

A telegraphed report on one British General's exploits makes interesting reading. "Lord Methuen pursued the Boers to Lindley he recaptured 8000 sheep and 500 cattle." (Don Quixote would have been green with envy). The Australian Commonwealth Bill passed its second reading in the House of Lords.

The Mayor of Gympie received the Governor and Lady Lamington (the lady of the cakes) on a visit. As Lady Lamington was anxious to see something of the mines, the Mayor suggested that the visitors should be taken down the Scottish Gympie and 2nd Great Eastern.

Plague was reported in Sydney, Brisbane and Gympie.

Mr H. Llewely, a Gympie shopkeeper, announced not only a sale of footballs (Gilbert Rugby Match Ball 14/-) but a circulating library with over 400 books.

So the School of Arts had some competition.

The Duke and Duchess of York toured Australia before and after the Opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament on 9 May.

Buyers of Boots and Shoes

FOR THE

Xmas Season, VISIT

E. Bytheway & Son.

GYMPIE TIMES

MARCH 1892.

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND MINES -

TUG- OF-WAR

**WANTED ENTRIES FOR THE
FOLLOWING TEAMS-**

**AUSTRALIANS, ENGLISH, IRISH,
SCOTCH,**

**WELSH, QUEENSLANDERS, DANES,
SWEDES,**

**ITALIANS, GERMANS, GERMAN
NATIVES.**

**WEIGHT OF TEAM NOT TO EXCEED
125 STONE.**

BY ORDER A.R. HEMMINGS.

SECRETARY.

FREE IMIGRATION TO QUEENSLAND

IS STOPPED

NOMINATED IMMIGRATION

IS NOT

**RESIDENTS OF QUEENSLAND CAN BRING
OUT TO THIS**

**STATE ANY RELATIVE OR ANY PERSONAL
FRIEND BY**

AT THIS END -

FOR ANY MAN UNDER 40 - £4.0.0

FOR ANY WOMAN UNDER 40 - £2.0.0

BOYS OR GIRLS UNDER 12 - Half Price

**OLD PEOPLE WILL BE CHARGED HIGHER
RATES AND**

INFANTS COME FREE. J. O'N. BREAN

Immigration Agent.



The New Century

The turn of the century saw the continuation of the rift between the School of Arts Committee and the School of Mines lobby. A meeting of the School of Arts and Mines Special Committee, chaired by Mr Bytheway, had in April 1891, decided to build additional rooms onto the back of the existing building in which to hold technical classes. The One Mile Sawmill's tender was accepted. Mr Durietz, a well known architect, supervised the work and the rooms were opened. The cost of the rooms with furniture and material necessary for carrying on the instruction approached £200. The fittings, the apparatus and the equipment of the rooms were rendered as complete as possible.

The Annual General Meeting held on 27 January 1901 started off peacefully enough then eventually and almost inevitably the discussion turned to the need for a new building. The Chairman stated that they had £76. 7. 6 on hand and promises "to the extent of over £307". He was however of the opinion that the matter should be pushed. One cannot but admire his optimism. Mr Percival asked a number of questions in regards to the balance sheet and laid considerable emphasis on the fact of the School of Arts charging the Technical College £350 for rent, remarking at the same time, that the rooms of the School of Arts were built with money earned by the technical classes. The Chairman stated that he thought that the technical classes should be charged for the use of the rooms. The Rev. Mr McIntyre said there was some doubt as to where the money had come from to build the rooms and he was anxious for some definite information on the point. The Chairman's diplomatic skills were equal to his optimism and he managed to defuse the situation. However within three years the question would be raised again much more forcefully. The financial affairs of the library/reading room, the technical classes and the more specifically mining orientated

classes were never going to be easy to resolve to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The Annual General Meeting to consider the business of the 1900 calendar year was not held until mid-February 1901 as it had been delayed by the return of troops from South Africa and the death of Queen Victoria. The President, Mr Bytheway, worried that there were only 236 subscribers which was "not as much a reading public as desired". He didn't know who was to blame for that. He was inclined to think the cause was that they were out of the way of a large number of the population. However that didn't seem to follow as the Institute which had once flourished at the One Mile, right in the heart of the population, had died a natural death while the town one lived and progressed. Present funds were something over £800 and they had the present building as a valuable asset. As we shall see, the value of this asset may have been overestimated but they were optimists. Miss Schauer's cookery classes must have been very popular as they made a profit of £71 which promptly went into the building fund. The building of a School of Mines was then discussed but the offer of the old Court House when the new one was opened prompted the suggestion that it could be used as a School of Mines and that the new building be a School of Arts and for the technical classes. This was not developed further at this meeting..

The April 1901 meeting of the committee made a decision which as we will see would have far-reaching effects. "It was resolved to allow Mr Wallman to conduct his classes in the following subjects - Chemistry and Mineralogy and Mining Manager's classes in connection with the Technical Colleges and in subject to its rules". It was also resolved to present the old books withdrawn from circulation to the Tewantin School of Arts, provided the latter paid the cost of transit. They were also to be given an old

edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Mr Bytheway was still working away for the School of Arts and its library. The Hon. T. J. Byrne, Minister of Mines, had promised that a subsidy of £2 per £1 raised locally towards the building of a new School of Arts would be placed upon the estimates for the next year. Unfortunately Mr Byrne then died. Members of the School of Arts Committee travelled to Brisbane and extracted a promise from the acting Premier, Mr Rutledge, that he would stand by this commitment, however he wanted the request in writing!

A typical example of what was considered both a suitable and desirable activity for a School of Arts was a proposal by the Medical Superintendent of the Gympie Hospital, Dr. Hamilton Kenny. He wrote to the Committee as follows:

A desire to spread knowledge induces me to offer to deliver a series of fifteen lectures on the Physiology of Animals at the School of Arts during the winter months. I would give 4 lectures on digestion, 3 on circulation, 2 on respiration, 3 on the nervous system, 1 on the skeleton of animals and 2 on the evolution of man. I would ask that a class of not less than 20 be guaranteed, a fee of 5 shillings to be paid or 1 shilling per lecture, an examination to be held early in September. 1st Prize 2 guineas and a 2nd prize of 1 guinea to be spent on books. All surplus monies to go to the School of Arts. 1st lecture Friday May 24th and every ensuing Friday until September at 8pm.

Dr Kenny's offer was accepted with thanks and the matter of getting a sufficient number of pupils left to the Secretary. It does not appear that the Secretary advertised this course of lectures in *The Gympie Times* but they did in fact take place. He did however advertise on 16 May a Plain and Fancy Dress Ball to be held in the Drill Hall in aid of the School of Arts and Mines, Gentlemen 7/6 Ladies 5/-, Double 10/6.

Mr Wallman's classes in Mineralogy and Chemistry were causing waves and in August a special sub-committee met to discuss the best means of working the classes and to ascertain the cost of chemicals and appliances personally purchased by Mr Wallman for the use of his pupils. In October Mr Wallmann wrote to the committee asking for a "settlement of arrangements in connection with the taking over of chemicals and apparatus belonging to himself and used by the college students". A list of chemicals was supplied by him. It was moved that the matter be referred to the sub-committee mentioned above and that "Mr Sykes be added

to the sub-committee". This is significant in that Mr Sykes was also a solicitor and had always represented the School of Arts in that capacity. It appears that they anticipated that trouble might be coming.

In November the sub-committee was authorised to settle-up Mr Wallman's account.

The Annual General Meeting held in January 1902 was told that the building fund now stood at £886. 15. 0. Mr Bytheway regretted that once again they had not been able to build a new School of Arts but he asked, "what was a year when it was a question of erecting a building to cost £4000 or £5000?" A promise still existed for use of a part of the old Court House. In spite of this apparently relaxed attitude Edward Bytheway and his committee were still determined to get a new building and 1902 saw the following developments.

7 January 1902

Mr Rankin brought under the notice of the meeting the advisability of obtaining plans of a building that would be suitable for the requirements of a School of Arts and Technical College.

13 February 1902

Mr Rankin moved that a premium of 50 guineas be offered for plans of a building with accommodation suitable for the School of Arts and Technical College with lecture hall, the cost of the building not to exceed £5000.

4 March 1902

Committee had visited the Nash Street site and Mr Durietz had undertaken to take the necessary levels. Library committee authorised to spend £3 per month on the purchase of books. Inquiries to Fire Underwriters Association of Queensland about insurance on new building.

6 May 1902

Looked at ways to get government grant towards new building. Messrs. Mulcahy and Rylands, Members for Gympie asked to help.

20 May 1902

Special Committee meeting decided to ask for £3000 grant. Mr Mulcahy MLA said drastic retrenchments would mean failure of the application. He said that the members for Gympie would get the government to renew its promise of £3000. About this time a conference was held in Brisbane to discuss new regulations of the Education Department dealing with technical colleges. This was to have considerable effect on the Gympie School and its classes.

4 November 1902

Mr Rankin moved "that if the Government recognised the amount expended by the Committee in erecting a School of Arts and Mines on the Nash Street site and will give a definite promise to subsidise such expenditure to the extent of £3000 as promised early in the year, that the committee at once take steps for the erection of a suitable building with provision for subsequent extension".¹¹

It would be grossly unfair, even at this distance, to accuse those involved of prevarication in this matter but the exact role and name of the proposed building seems to be unclear. Sometimes it is just the "School of Arts" sometimes "School of Arts and Technical Classes" and sometimes the "School of Arts and Mines". I believe that the answer is that there

had never been enough support from a wide section of the Gympie community for a fully integrated School of Arts and Mines with both aspects of the Institution equally vigorous and viable. The mining fraternity had never really supported the idea of a School of Mines as an appendage of the School of Arts and it had never eventuated as such in real terms.

The six years, 1900 - 1906, were some of the most productive in the goldfield's history and from 1907 onwards the annual yield steadily declined. Purely as speculation maybe the mine managers still had thoughts of a separate School of Mines. Also it could well have been that the School of Arts Committee realised that it didn't have the expertise or the will to run a "School of Mines", particularly in an environment of increasing governmental involvement and regulation.

A list of the subjects taught and their teachers show where the emphasis lay in 1902

Bookkeeping, Algebra and Mathematics	A.J. George
Drawing, Watercolour and Oil Painting	Mr T. Govett
Dressmaking	Miss Ahern
Music and Singing	Mr A.H. Kemp
Shorthand	Mr D.J. Quigley
Typewriting	Miss Vernor
Model and Perspective Drawing	Mr J. C. Baylis
Practical Chemistry	
Mineralogy	
Metallurgy	Mr H. F. Wallman
Geology	
Inorganic Chemistry	
Mechanics, Mathematics & Surveying	Mr N. Bell

(It is presumed that it was a convention of the day that ladies initials were not included.)

In 1902 the Mining Act decreed that the examination which miners had to pass to qualify as a mine manager would include assaying, metallurgy and surveying. However the State coffers were at one of their low ebbs and money was hard to get. The government finally granted use of part of the old Court House (on Horseshoe Bend downhill from the Police Station) for the School of Mines classes and also £100 for the furnishings. The building had been "fitted up with all the requisites necessary for the successful imparting of instruction in the various subjects taught. It is to be hoped that the classes will be availed to a much larger extent than has been hitherto done".¹²

Whilst acknowledging this progress Mr Bytheway made the point that the £100 had just

covered expenses and that they had certainly expected something more. "The situation was that unless they got the money they would have to cease this particular class."¹³ (One can only presume he meant the "School of Mines" classes). The committee considered the position had become acute and they could not proceed unless receiving further assistance from the Government. (During the years the Government had retrenched such classes as Music and Art). Mr Bytheway then went on to say "the classes which were the most useful, and at the same time the most difficult to get pupils for, were the ones on which the endowment was still given".¹⁴ Since he then went on to talk about the mining classes separately I can only presume he was referring to such subjects as Bookkeeping, Algebra,

Mathematics, Shorthand, Typewriting etc. It seems a contradiction that the "most useful" classes should be "the most difficult to get pupils for". One thing however is clear, that the organising and financing of both the technical classes and the School of Mines classes were not on a firm footing.

After hearing the above the Committee wrote to the government saying that the government be advised that the technical classes are unable to carry the Mining School unless further assistance by them and failing such assistance they will be compelled to hand the School of Mines over to them by 31 March, 1903. Again we have this blurring of titles and/or roles. The technical classes referred to above were only a sub-committee of the School of Arts and all its members were committeemen of the School of Arts.

It is hard to decide whether this was an entirely accurate presentation of the case. During the previous year nearly £100 had been added to the building fund. On the other hand the government was obviously tightening its belt and the coming year would be more difficult. If it was a bluff it was probably one the government was going to call.

A letter to *The Gympie Times* on 10 February 1903 says it all.

Our School of Arts has been a sick and dying institution ever since it was born; no healthy public interest appears to be taken in it. Those for whom this and similiar institutions are created appear the most apathetic in appreciating the benefits to be derived from active and passive support. This is regrettable insomuch as it reflects the domestic state, character, and intelligence of a community. Much can be said in support of the reason why such things are thus on Gympie. The majority forming the community are submerged in oppression; the effects of a drought, unparalled in our history; the increased railway charges for food; the sweat tax imposed on the hardy sons of toil, working the land; the withdrawal of Local Government subsidies, necessitating increased municipal taxation, are the main factors in reducing the wage earning power of the land to a state of utter prostration. It has to gather honey all the day and eat it up at night or starve. The seller of his strength and handicraft is powerless to provide against a day of sickness and sorrow. Ill clad and often hungry are the helpless, dependent upon the bread winner. The agonies of the damned have to be

hidden from the public eye somehow. Every hour has to be devoted to making provision for the present; Schools of Arts can't assist. Material help is the only panacea for the "National Crimes" - Queensland communities suffer from. Notwithstanding all this I think that if the Committee of the School of Arts were to experiment in methods calculated to increase the popularity of their institution, an improvement on the present state of affairs would result. In this connection I would suggest that their library and reading room be opened free for six months from a certain date, or free tickets issued to applicants for that time. Contributions in Hospital Box form could be provided for. Scores of people that never would or ever did taste of the blessings to be derived, would be drawn to see and feel the advantages Schools of Arts are intended to confer."

Yours, very obliged, 12 o'clock shift.¹⁵

As we have seen, the School of Arts Committee had informed the government of its concerns regarding the future of the mining classes. In March 1903 Mr Wallmann wrote to the committee asking what its intentions were. He proposed that the School of Mines be separated from the School of Arts and administered by a new committee of twelve members. He then went about the business of soliciting subscribers and potential new committee members. One of these was the Hon. F.J. Power MLC whom the School of Arts Committee wrote to in April saying that they were prepared to hand over the management to a new committee but required to know the names of the subscribers, the amount they planned to contribute and the sum banked, to enable them to furnish the government with full particulars.

In June 1903 the committee once again asked Mr Power and others that if they had a scheme for taking over the School of Mines to put it before the committee "as it is the intention of the committee in the event of the control of the School of Mines remaining in their hands to make radical changes in its management with the object of making it more popular".¹⁶

This prompted a reply from the Hon. F.J. Power stating that he was unable to cost any answer to the letters of 8 April and 4 June which had been addressed to him; and that he was taking no interest in the severance of the School of Mines from the control of the School of Arts and Mines committee. A Mr Willert replied in similiar vein.

Mr Wallmann was asked to attend the committee and was asked if it were true that "he

had been saying he was not under the control of the School of Arts and Mines committee and should any of them visit the school he would refuse them admittance".¹⁷ This he denied, he did however admit that he had given Mr Westcott permission to teach at the School of Mines (Mr Westcott had been a student at the Ballarat School of Mines. It was their requirement that graduates do practical work as a miner for two years before a Certificate of Competency as a mining manager was issued. This he was currently doing) Mr Wallmann was told that he must look to the committee for direction and that so long as the School of Arts was under their control he must not seek instruction from unauthorised outsiders, the committee expecting him to be loyal to them. In July, letters of complaint about Mr Wallmann's classes were received. These complaints specifically related to fire-assaying. A demonstration was requested and provided, but it was a failure. Mr Wallmann blamed the equipment.

Mr Wallmann then decided upon another line of attack and, in September, he and Mr Westcott together with 15 students petitioned the Minister of Education stating that "the School of Mines as at present conducted is not properly organised but is being carried on in connection with the School of Arts and is controlled by a committee of that Institution. That the School of Mines cannot efficiently be controlled by the committee of the School of Arts. That your petitioners are meeting with many obstacles and are unable to work the School of Mines to advantage as at present constituted".¹⁸ They went on to say that

not all the money (£200) granted by the Government to set up the School of Mines had been spent for that purpose but that some had been diverted to the School of Arts Building Fund. This fund had also been the final resting place of the past government subsidies for technical classes.

This petition set in train inquiries which almost led the School of Arts committee to court. An Education Department Inspector Mr D.C. Macgroarty who had previously inspected the School of Arts and technical classes then wrote a report which said, inter-alia that "the laboratory at the School of Mines was well equipped with up to date appliances for experiments etc". His report concluded with the statement that until "the Mines Department takes over the School of Mines, or appoints a Committee of local men other than the School of Arts Committee to manage it, I can see no useful or prosperous future before this institution, which, in a place like Gympie should be in a flourishing state, and of an immense benefit to the field".¹⁹

Subsequently the Hon. A.H. Barlow, Minister of Public Instruction, made the following minute "(1) In accordance with the opinion of the Boards of Technical Instruction these papers might be referred to the Auditor General and he might be asked to be good enough to cause special investigation to be made of the books and accounts of the Gympie School of Arts, Mines and Technical College." (There is that problem over correct titles again). "It is desirable that action be taken as soon as possible. (2) When the report of the Audit Department has been furnished the desirableness...of referring the matter to the Department of Justice can be considered".²⁰

At a committee meeting held on 3 November 1903 the Government Audit Inspector suddenly appeared much like a villain in a melodrama. There is no evidence that he wore a black cape but the accounts of the meeting suggest that it would have been appropriate. Mr Kinmond handed in a mass of correspondence dealing with the matter he had come to investigate.

The question was, had money received by the committee as subsidies for the technical classes and latterly the School of Mines been syphoned off over the years into the School of Arts Building Fund?

One can imagine the feelings of the committee upon hearing what had been going on in Brisbane. The meeting unanimously resolved that the government be requested to at once take over the Mining School "as in consequence of the unjust strictures passed on the committee on the strength of incorrect ex-parte statements, they decline to act further".²¹ The meeting then closed.

**Hard Wearing
BOY'S BOOTS**

OVER he goes with never a thought for his boots—like other boys he is hard on footwear, but the kind we sell are wear-resisters, yet smart looking.

No. 1 Boy's Tan Calf Derby Hide, medium toe, screw sole. For best wear.
Sizes 10 to 13 PRICE

No. 2 Youth's Black Calf Derby Hide, medium round toe, screw sole.
Sizes 1 to 4 PRICE

No. 3 Youth's Blue Hide Boots, with screwed sole. A great wear-resister.
Sizes 1 to 4 PRICE

BY THE WAY'S
Footwear Specialists GYMPIE

Courtesy of The Gympie Times 1905

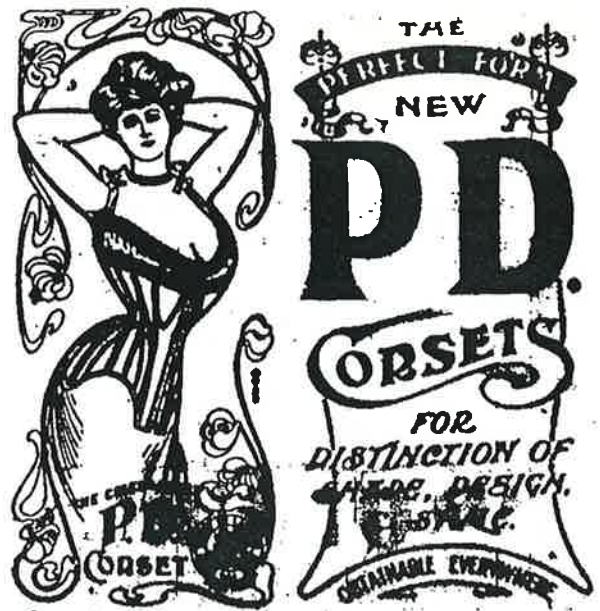
This effectively was the end of the "School of Arts and of Mines" although as we have seen it was never a really healthy union. Mr Kinmond's audit had been hampered by the fact that the books had not been kept in as good a fashion as he would have liked but there was no suggestion of dishonesty. I think the committee of the School of Arts had several grounds to be seriously aggrieved.

Firstly, the government didn't really think that Gympie needed a School of Mines as previously attested to by the Premier. Even when pushed they had only granted £200 and the use of a disused building, hardly an expression of enthusiasm. They hadn't had the courtesy to provide a copy of the Wallmann petition to the committee and invite their comments. To suggest referring the matter to the Department of Justice before the audit report was received seems to contradict the theory of a presumption of innocence. Mr Macgroarty had always said the schools were being well run but suddenly changed his mind, once again without any discussion with the committee. When he did make a recommendation for change it was to transfer the authority to the Mines Department, not the Education Department. Who were to be the members of the new committee who were to be so much better at running a School of Mines? The mining hierarchy had never shown a great desire to actually do anything. To put this in an economic perspective all this government penny-pinching was going on in the middle of the Gympie Goldfields' most productive years. The lack of support is just inexplicable.

The committee then moved quickly to end the matter. A sub-committee was formed to draft a letter to the Minister for Education in answer to the charges by Messrs. Wallmann and Westcott and their pupils. Another special meeting was held on 10 November 1903 to approve this draft letter. This was duly done. The next meeting on 1 December decided to pay Mr Westcott all fees in hand and to inform Mr Wallmann that his engagement as a teacher would cease as far as the committee was concerned on 31 December.

Mr Wallmann appealed to the Minister for Education saying that the committee couldn't sack him. The Minister disagreed and he was sacked. He then took claim against the committee and Mr Sykes was asked to accept service of summons and defend any action which might be taken. Subsequently Mr Wallmann was paid £15.

The Minister of Public Instruction was informed that the School of Mines was now closed and the property of the Institution had been removed. In passing it is interesting to note that some of this acrimonious correspondence was sent to the Minister for Education and some to



Courtesy of *The Gympie Times* 4 February 1905

the Minister for Public Instruction. Whether this was just confusion or there were two ministries it is hard to tell. It seems unlikely. (As late as 5 January 1904 the committee was still trying to get a copy of Mr Kinmond's and other reports.)

The problem of the School of Mines was still not solved. At the February 1904 meeting a deputation was received representing the students of the Mining School. They wanted to know what the committee had decided to do about the future of the school. This again shows a breakdown in communications as the committee's intentions had been made abundantly clear to both the government and Mr Wallmann. The deputation asked the committee to hand over the building so that they could carry on their studies. The President asked if they had a teacher in mind. On being told that, because they were used to his style of teaching, they wished to continue with Mr Wallmann they were told that this was not possible. When told that a number of students wished to sit for the Mining Managers' Examination in June it was decided to hand over the keys of the building to the Mining Warden to enable the students to study for the examination.

"One Interested" writing in *The Gympie Times* on 6 February 1904 expressed the opinion that the elementary chemistry as taught by Mr Wallmann is of little or no value

for these examinations, seeing that the questions asked at all the previous mine manager's examinations, have little or no bearing on chemistry. It is the mathematical, mechanical and surveying classes, now ably taught by Mr Westcott, with a little knowledge of practical mining, that are required to answer all questions that are put by the Board of Examiners to gain a first-class certificate...the appeal to

re-engage him (Mr Wallmann) is all the more regrettable owing to the fact that all his advanced scholars were obliged to leave (after having put in two years hard study), because they were unable to get taught the higher and necessary branches of chemical science, including fire assay, etc.²²

Could it be that "One Interested" was one of, or had a close contact with a member of the committee? Later that month the Mining Warden took over all material and appliances in connection with the School of Mines and arranged for classes under his supervision.

Mr Wallmann was to continue as teacher but, as his letter of appointment shows, he was to be under a much tighter rein than before. What was the truth of the matter? The auditor's (Mr Kinmond) report wasn't conclusive. The cash book and ledger prior to 1896 could not be produced but the audit reports for those years were available and were rather quaintly described as "more or less incorrect".²³ His main objection was that the School of Arts charged the technical classes for rent and other services.

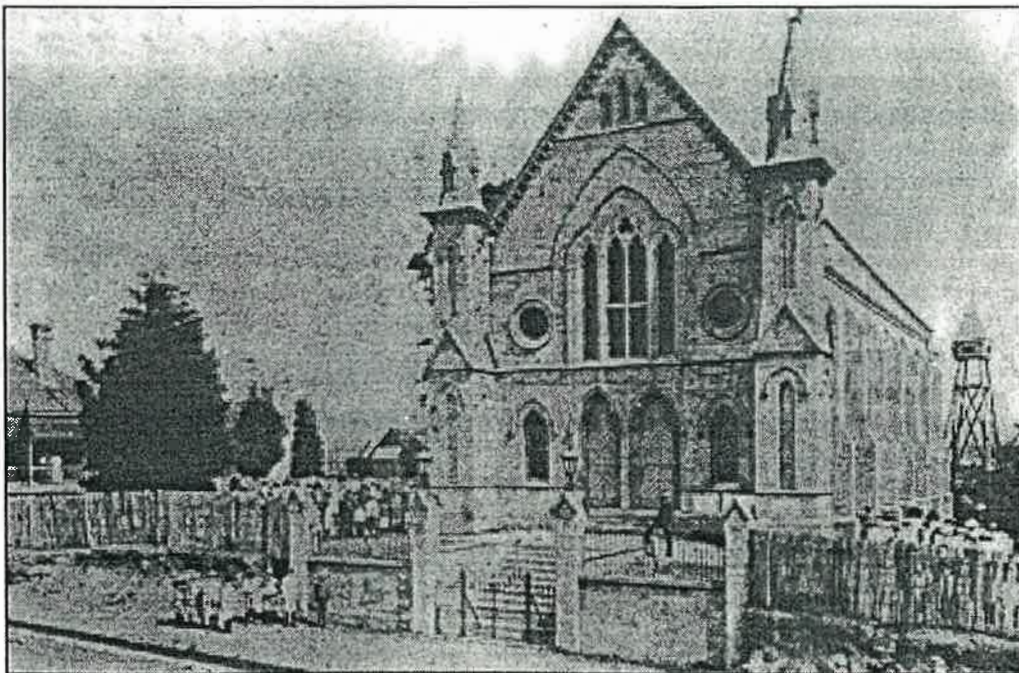
The sum charged against the technical classes represented an amount greater than the value of the School of Arts and Mines buildings and land, and in view of the fact that the Secretary's salary and commission, gas and other expenses are shown as charges against the technical colleges each year and that the college has been debited with the cost of construction of the rooms

to carry on its classes, I cannot see that the charges for rent are fair.²⁴

In a nutshell the auditor's adverse finding, which was accepted by the government, was that the School of Arts Committee having applied for government subsidies to run the technical classes, had received more money than it had spent and had transferred the surplus into the building fund. When the Minister for Public Instruction asked for legal advice on the matter he was told that the Rules and Regulations concerning Schools of Arts were not explicit enough to allow of any charges being sustained.

Who were the contestants in this controversy? The committee were undoubtedly a hardworking but rather self-righteous group who would automatically regard any criticism as both unwarranted and insolent. Mr Wallmann appears as dogmatic, probably over zealous, and certainly rather full of himself. There was more than a strong question mark over his qualifications which may have made him more defensive and easy to see slight. He was also younger than most of the committee members. These were all people who were used to getting their own way. They certainly didn't discover compromise in Gympie.

With this unhappy business behind them the decks were now cleared for the committee to once again attempt to get a new building. It was clear from the start that it was to be for a School of Arts and Technical College.



Surface Hill Church, Gympie
Architect: H.W. Durietz

Hugo Wilhelm Durietz (1831-1908)

Durietz was born in Langas, Sweden, the son of a lieutenant in the Swedish Royal Navy. He is said to have trained as an architect before emigrating to Victoria in 1852, attracted by its gold discoveries. He was present at the Eureka Stockade and later joined Queensland's short-lived Canoona rush in 1858 and by 1862 had moved to Brisbane and commenced business as a successful builder. He was also an active member of the first Brisbane Council.

In the slump which crippled the colony in 1867 he became insolvent. After his case was finalised Durietz joined the rush to Gympie where he stayed for the rest of his life.

Using his entrepreneurial skills he established a soap factory in 1870, the first of many business enterprises he pioneered. He also joined the committees of the School of Arts, the local Hospital, the Mutual Improvement Association, and the Agricultural, Mining and Pastoral Society, as well as the Gympie Primary School. During the 1870s he was active in the local chess club, an enthusiastic opening batsman and groundsman for the Exiles Cricket Club and a successful exhibitor of gladioli at the Gympie Show. In 1881 he installed Queensland's first cream separator.

While maintaining an active interest in gold mining as an investor, by 1871 Durietz had begun to practise as an architect in Gympie. For more than 30 years his skills were utilized by institutions on whose committees he served, by all religious denominations and by leaders of business and the professions. He so dominated the architectural profession in Gympie that he was probably responsible for a number of distinctive local building features.

At the end of Gympie's mining boom, Durietz turned to poultry farming, becoming a major egg producer and a breeder of Silver Wyandottes. He was also an inventor and patented several devices including a mechanism for loading sugar cane in 1896.

Durietz died on 9 August, 1908, by which time his second wife, Annie Scanlan, whom he had married in Brisbane in 1862, had predeceased him. He left three daughters and three sons.

Some of Durietz's architectural achievements in Gympie were:

1873: Presbyterian Church, Hotel Gympie Caledonian Hill

1874: One Mile Primary School



1880-81: St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Calton Hill

1881: Offices for *The Gympie Times* Phoenix Hotel, Red Hill

1881-82: Two shops for J.S. Cullinane, Mary Street

1884: Brewery, Gympie

1887: Hotel for E. Bytheway, Mary Street

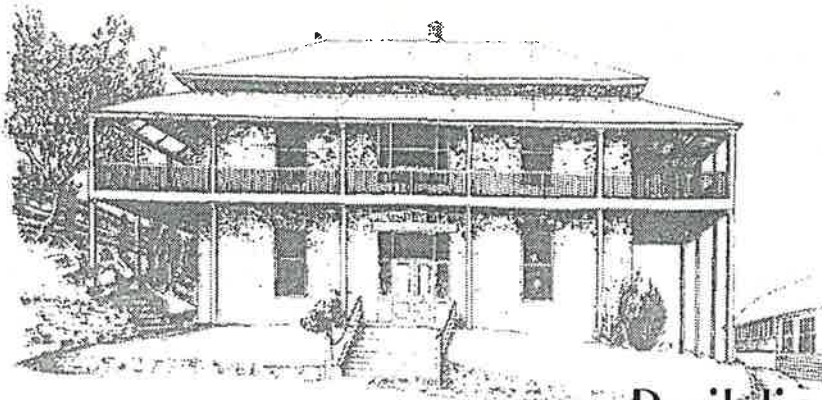
1889-90: Surface Hill Wesleyan Church, Channon Street

1891-92: Royal Bank, Gympie

1898-99: (New) Roman Catholic School, Calton Hill.

1904-05: School of Arts, Nash Street.

Source: Watson D. and McKay J.: *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*. pp.57-59.



Building Commences

The chronology of the new building during 1904 and 1905 was as follows:

1904

8 February

It was decided "to obtain plans and specifications of a building suitable for a School of Arts and Technical College cost not to exceed £1500".²⁵

10 February

After considerable discussion as to the class of building to be erected Mr Sykes moved "that Mr Durietz provide rough sketch plans of the building at the expense of £1500 on the suggestion of the Committee as discussed this evening in time for the next meeting on 1st March".²⁶ Seconded Mr Bell and carried. (They also resolved to ask the Premier for financial assistance).

1 March

Decided to call a special meeting of the committee to take into consideration adoption of the plans for the new building. There was also discussion with Mr Durietz (who was present by request) on costs and ways and means.

22 March

Passed that Mr Durietz be asked to submit specifications for the new building as per the sketch plan received, with the addition of gas fittings and fencing, provided that the cost thereof did not exceed £5. 5. 0.

19 April

Mr Durietz submitted the plans and specifications of the proposed new School of Arts and Technical College. The conditions of contract were read and explained by Mr Bell (a committee member). The architect estimated the cost of the building at £1529 plus about an extra £20 for gas fittings and fencing. The meeting also set in motion what was

to be a long process-the selling of the Mary Street property.

2 May

A special meeting of subscribers was held. Mr Bytheway was in the Chair to vote on selling the property. It was carried "that the Mary Street property of the School of Arts be sold either by public auction or private sale and that the proceeds of the purchase money be devoted to the erection of a new School of Arts and Technical College and that the Trustee of the Mary Street property be requested to carry out the subscribers' decision".²⁷

In seconding the motion Mr Hollis said that "a new building was badly required and as they had a suitable site and almost sufficient money to carry out the project, he thought they were safe in starting to build. He had no doubt that the townspeople would assist should funds be required."²⁸ The Annual General meeting had been told there was £1184 in the building fund plus £147 at credit to the School of Arts. It was hoped that the sale of the Mary Street building would raise between £400 and £500.

3 May

Mr Durietz submitted the plans and specifications for the new building which were approved and it was decided to call for tenders. At the same meeting it was decided to ask the Amateur Dramatic Club to give an entertainment for the benefit of the Institution. Maybe they were not all that sure of the generosity of the townspeople?

31 May

Tenders had been received and were considered. There were eight tenders for the excavations ranging from 1/6 per yard to 2/4 per yard (almost twice as much) and three total quotes of £28.15.0, £32. 0. 0 and £52. 10. 0. There were nine tenders for the building ranging from £1370.10.0 to

£1596.0.0. It was decided to accept Mr J. Russell's tender of 1/6 per yard for the excavations and Mr George Britton's quote of £1370. 10. 0 for the erection of the building. Mr Bytheway was authorised to sign the contracts on behalf of the committee.

5 July

A School of Arts and Technical College building account was opened with the Queensland National Bank. Messrs Bytheway, Bell and Rankin were appointed as a building sub-committee.

6 September

Decided to call tenders for the purchase of the site of the School of Arts and Mines building in Mary Street. Tenders closed on 1 October so the committee were sure of the finance to sign the contract for the new building even before they received the money from this sale. It was also decided to insure the new building for £1300. This appears strange in that it was less than the contract value of the building and also £1300 was split equally between the Atlas and the Royal Insurance companies.

4 October

It appears no acceptable offer had been received for the Mary Street property and it was decided to place the sale in the hands of Mr Woodrow. A value of £400 was placed on the property and his commission was to be 2.5% of the sale price. Once again there is a minor confusion because the minutes of the 6 September meeting and the advertisement in *The Gympie Times* both talk about the site but this meeting talks about the land and buildings thereon.

November

Mr Sykes reported that Mr Stuart had informed him that before the balcony of the new building could be erected it would be necessary to have further excavation done. This was approved and the Building Committee were requested to urge greater expedition with the construction of the building.

6 December

They were still having trouble selling the Mary Street property and decided that at the next meeting they would decide whether to put it up to auction. The architect was asked to furnish a report giving particulars of the extra work ordered on the new building and when he expected the contract to be finished. He was asked to incur no further expenditure without first getting the approval of the committee.

1905

10 January

Mr Durietz wrote to the committee detailing the extras and informing them that the contract should be completed in two weeks. The extras included strengthening the floor under the billiards room (now the Local History room) and extra studs in the lower hall where the Flindersia studs were warping.

25 January

This was the Annual General Meeting. A name change to delete the words "and Mines" from the title was discussed but not voted upon as the question of the status of the mining classes was still up in the air. Mr Joseph asked if there was to be any function in connection with the opening of the new building. It was decided to hold a ball upstairs before the furniture was installed. Ever mindful of the exchequer, it was decided to make this a Subscription Ball. The question of a billiards table was then raised. The point was made that it would mean a great initial expense but would bring people into the building and make money. Also "many people do not care about going to a hotel to have a game of billiards but they would go to a School of Arts. The wives of members would not mind that so much as they know that the School of Arts is closed at a reasonable hour and they would be sure of having their husbands home by about half past ten."²⁹ Mr Bytheway was re-elected as President. The Mary Street building still hadn't been sold.

7 February

It was resolved that the ceremony at the opening of the new building would take the form of a euchre party to be followed next evening by a dance for juveniles.

14 February

The Building Committee reported that they had inspected the building and upon the whole it was a "satisfactory" building - hardly a ringing endorsement. The architect had given his certificate that the building had been completed as per the contract so the final cheques were written. Unfortunately, because the Mary Street property still hadn't been sold there was a shortfall of £250. This was to be covered by a mortgage from the Queensland National Bank. Until this could be arranged with the Trustees of the Mary Street property (which was to be held as collateral) Mr Bytheway generously offered to guarantee the £250.

14 February

A meeting of ladies (Mrs Pack, Mrs Warner, Mrs Sykes, Mrs Bell) was held (St. Valentines Day - was that significant?) to plan the functions and presumably do all the hardwork.

28 February

The new building was officially opened.

The Gympie Times reported:

The Opening ceremony of the new School of Arts and Technical College in Monkland Street which took the form of a progressive euchre party was held on Tuesday evening. The fine new building was lighted up for the first time and presented an attractive appearance, whilst the ladies and gentlemen who assembled for a night's amusement gave the large well-lighted rooms quite a festive air. About 100 persons were present and a most enjoyable evening was spent.

The big reading-room upstairs was used as a card-room, whilst the room intended for the library made an excellent supper room. As a result of the evening's play, it was announced that Miss Scougall had obtained the first prize for ladies, Miss Scowen being second. Dr. Ryan and Mr A. Scowen gained similiar places for the gentlemen's prizes. The prizes were donated by the president (Mr E. Blytheway(sic))... a splendid supper was generously provided by the ladies.³⁰

The next night, "juveniles to the number of over 100 enjoyed themselves with a dance. The reading room upstairs makes an ideal ballroom and so good was the floor that some of those who had left their juvenile days behind could not resist the temptation of trying it. At about half-past nine o'clock an excellent supper was partaken of, the ladies again supplying all that was required."³¹ (One wonders about the mis-spelling of the name of a man who regularly advertised on the front page of *The Gympie Times*).

The new building was launched.

Australia and the World 1904/05

Japan and Russia were at war and the Japanese were winning through the prowess of their navy.

American troops left Cuba after six years of occupation.

C.S. Rolls and H. Royce announced a partnership to make motor cars.

Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov won the Nobel Prize after studing reactions in dogs.

Enrico Caruso commanded £1000 a performace and had just made his first American recording "La Donna E Mobile".

In London the first production of "Peter Pan" kept children clapping to keep Wendy alive.

In Australia the Deakin Government lost office over the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill and John Christian Watson formed the first Labour ministry.

In Kalgoorlie five miners died when a cage fell 400 feet at the Great Boulder Mine.

Charters Towers was the scene of a fire at the Brilliant Gold Mine killing seven men.

Acrasia won the Melbourne Cup.

There was a record wheat crop in Australia.

Australia's population rate was slowed by the falling birth rate.

A touring British Rugby team beat NSW 29-6.

At an educational conference, Cardinal Moran stated that the state education systems were imperfect and underdeveloped and the problem could only by solved by having a National System of Education.

The Christian Brothers came to Gympie to open their first school. Commercial subjects received special attention. The first enrolment was 180 boys.

A Grammar School was run in Clematis Street by Mr C.S. Newman. A wide range of subjects were taught including Latin and Greek.

A ten horse four wheel wagon with double shafts D and twitch chains was advertised for £25.

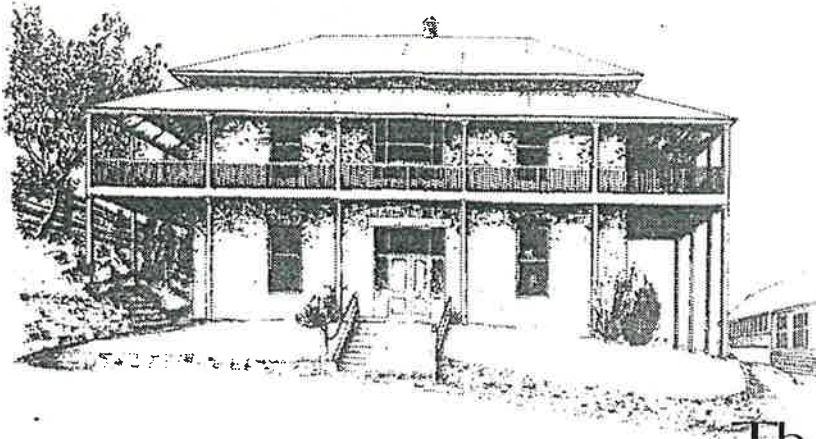
A splendid building site on a half acre on top of Ashford's Hill could be bought for \$25.

Gympie's first bowls club the Iona was opened.

Spring foot races for men took place frequently. The Grand Gas light Sheffield

Shield Handicap over 75 yards with a £15 purse was a typical such race.

On January 7 1905 Gympie became a City.



The New Building

What sort of building had they created? A contemporary report described it in the following terms:

The new building is a solid and substantial structure of two storeys. The outside measurements of the building are 55 feet by 51 feet. The main entrance is approached from Nash Street by means of a flight of concrete steps. Immediately facing this entrance is a large and roomy hall 52 feet by 12 feet, from the far end of which a broad staircase leads to the upper storey.

To the right, on entering the building, is the library, a large well-lighted room 52 feet by 19 feet in which the literary treasures of the institution will be stored, and the space available is such as to allow the library to expand and double its present dimensions.

The windows and fanlights of the library admit of being easily opened for ventilation purposes by means of patent transom lifts, and the windows on the southern end of the room are placed high up so as not to interfere with the shelving.

On the opposite side of the hall are four classrooms, each 13 feet by 19 feet. The walls of the ground floor are 13 feet 6 inches high and the classrooms should be cool and sufficiently large for the purpose for which they are intended.

Ascending the staircase one arrives on the second floor. Here the reading room measuring 49'6" by 27 feet runs the whole length of the building. The subscribers who have become accustomed to the stuffy atmosphere of the old reading-room may be depended upon to fully appreciate the commodious room now about to be placed at their disposal.

This room opens on three sides to a spacious balcony 10 feet wide, from which a good view of the open country beyond the river may be obtained. This balcony is to be provided with seating accommodation for subscribers and will be used as an adjunct of the reading-room.

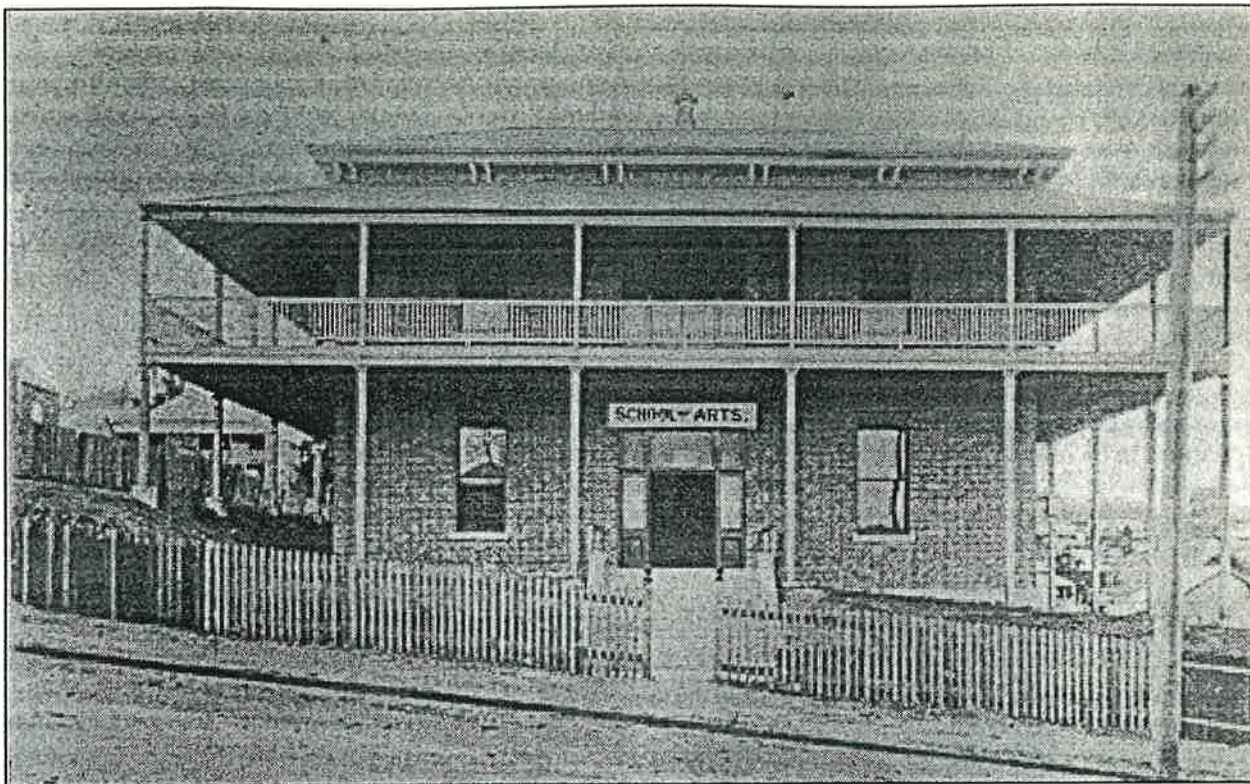
At each side of the hall on the second floor there is a room 24 feet by 19 feet. Both of these rooms have been built especially strong in order to carry billiard tables. The rooms on the upper storey are 13 feet in height and well ventilated.

The building is erected upon a concrete foundation, above which there are seven courses of bricks laid in cement. The exterior walls are 14 inches in thickness.

The contractor Mr G. Britton, and the architect, Mr H.W. Durietz, appear to have been very successful in erecting a building which is a distinct addition to the few public buildings in the city, and the committee and subscribers of the institution are to be congratulated upon having at last secured an appropriate place at a comparatively small expense.

The cost of the building as it stands was 1400 pounds. The hope is expressed that the public will take more advantage of the privileges the institution affords than they have hitherto done.³²

At the Annual Meeting in January 1906, Mr Bytheway regretted that a lack of funds prevented the building being furnished in the manner the committee would have wished but from the money available for the sale of the Mary Street property the new committee would be able to supply anything that may be considered necessary. He adds rather wistfully that the money available had not allowed of anything ornate in the way of architecture.



*The School of Arts Building opened in 1905
Courtesy of the John Oxley Library*

How did the building compare with others of its time? One writer classified Schools of Arts in Victoria rather facetiously under three types—“Chapel Cheapies”, “Bush Classical”, and “Goldrush Glorious”!³³ Gympie doesn’t fall into any of these categories but is certainly above average. In 1910, of 162 Institutes in Queensland, 58 had an estimated value of less than £100. Many of these would have been on large properties or attached to sugar-mills. Rockhampton’s was the most valuable (£5578), while both Bundaberg and Maryborough had very large ornate buildings. (This was a second generation School of Arts in Maryborough, the first having been established in 1861, before Gympie existed.)³⁴

The committee finally had their new building but in the day to day running of the institution very little had changed.

Thomas Ross was the secretary, and his total income was made up of a salary and a commission on the fees paid by the students of technical classes. The individual instructors were paid a percentage of the fees received from their students. The committee paid a bonus for outstanding performance or if the numbers attending a class dropped so low as to make the instructors’ remuneration too low even for those times.

1905 saw classes held in:- Model and Perspective Drawing, Water Colour Painting, Dressmaking, Bookkeeping, Shorthand,

Shorthand (Junior) (Monkland and One Mile Schools), Typewriting, Carpentry, Geology, Theory of Music. The carpentry class was discontinued in July because of a lack of support and proposed cookery classes didn’t eventuate for the same reason.

At the end of the year there were 4175 books in the library of which 115 were added during the year. There were some 215 subscribers which was a slight increase but income fell because the government reduced the subsidy it paid to the library based on the amount received in subscriptions from 10 to 5 shillings in the pound. The Mary Street property was finally sold for £325, considerably less than the committee had hoped for but at least it enabled them to buy some more furniture for the library. A plain and fancy dress ball was held in September and so the endless committment to fund raising was maintained.

On 12 October 1905 Mr Edward Bytheway (senior) died. Through all the difficulties of the twenty-seven years of which he was a member of the School of Arts committee he kept the faith in what he saw as an institution vital to the progress of Gympie and a suitable building to house it.

As we will see the times during which the library and reading room could be used was a subject of debate for the next thirty years. In 1905 they were open every morning from 10.30am to 1pm (except Wednesdays), every evening from

7pm till 9pm (except Thursdays), continued and on Wednesday and Saturday afternoon from 3pm to 5pm. These hours were continued with in 1906 but the low number of subscribers worried the committee so much that it was decided to employ a canvasser for three months. This worthy, one presumes it was a male, who presumably carried out his task on a door-to-door basis was to receive 50% of the subscriptions received. In hindsight this would appear to have been an abnormally generous commission.

The basis for calculating the Secretary's remuneration was also modified apparently in an attempt to be more entrepreneurial. In future he was to be paid as follows:-

- Subscriptions - 10% up to the first £150 then 12.5%.
- Technical college fees - 10% up to the first £120 then 12.5%.
- Salary - £70 from the School of Arts and
- £30 from the Technical College

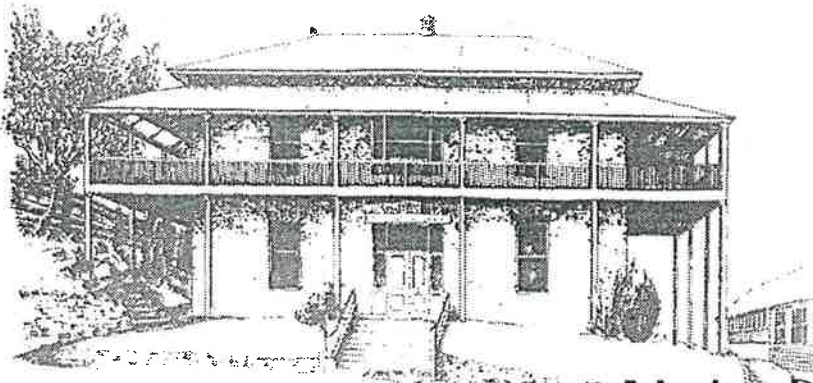
At a distance this once again seems to be a case of taking money out of one pocket and putting it in another but that was the way they liked it.

Educationally 1906 was an important year. The Queensland University Congress was convened to consider the establishment of the new university. The School of Arts was asked to send delegates but declined. It also declined to send delegates to a conference of technical colleges suggesting that it would be better to wait and see the anticipated new government regulations first.

The new School of Mines which had been opened amidst such acrimony had closed already and on 8 December 1906 the committee advised that they intended to reopen the Mining School under a "thoroughly competent Instructor." (Poor Mr Wallmann!) They listed the proposed subjects to be taught and were trying to gauge the possible level of support.

In his Annual Report the President seems to have had some reservations about the success of a reopened Mining School, as well he might have, but as to the School of Arts it was said, "they had one of the finest collections of books in Queensland while in regards to newspapers it was doubted whether a better collection could be found anywhere".³⁵

On this note of, admittedly self-congratulation, we leave 1906.



Not a Bright New Start

The next four years must have been frustrating for the committee. In spite of all their efforts the membership actually fell from 209 at the end of 1906 to 197 at the end of 1909. The idea of employing a canvasser obviously didn't work because in 1906/7 the Institute lost 10 subscribers. Reading the minutes of the Committee for those years gives one the impression that they had lost their way. They had a fine new building, an institution of which they were obviously proud, but they couldn't wake up their fellow citizens to its potential.

As far as grants were concerned in January 1907 the Government did a sleight-of-hand of which any modern bureaucrat would be proud. Delegates to the Conference of Technical Colleges which were held in Brisbane each year had been urging the government to improve the levels of funding to Schools of Arts. The government response was to increase the subsidy to 10 shillings for every one pound subscribed (those in connection with shearing sheds and sugar mills received pound for pound) with a top grant of 150 pounds. However as only £3250 had been allocated for 1906/1907 the actual rate would only be seven shillings per pound (fourteen shillings in shearing sheds and sugar mills). In other words we are going to give you seven shillings but we will call it ten!

In his report to the Annual General Meeting held in January 1908 the President Mr E.C. Park voiced their feelings as follows: "The past year has been a struggle against depression.....I cannot understand why the School of Arts is not a greater success. A city of from 14000 to 16000 people with only 199 subscribers to the School of Arts is a matter that asks for some explanation. Are the people not studious? Do the people not read? Or do they look upon the School of Arts as a luxury? We have 4683 books of which 267 have been added in the past year". Mr R. Rankin the Vice-President tried to cheer the meeting up by pointing out that, as most subscribers were

the heads of families, there were really about 700 readers. Mr Scanlon introduced another problem. He thought that the committee should devote more attention to scientific subjects although he knew a lot of people read fiction. (He was later to deliver a lecture on "The Violin".) This question of what we would now call their target audience shows a lack of a consistent logical approach.

In September 1908 the Committee approached the Under Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction with a scheme that the technical colleges would provide classes in Bookkeeping, Shorthand, Dressmaking, Cookery, Chemistry and manual training for state school pupils. The Under Secretary supported the scheme and agreed that although he couldn't pay for the classes directly he could probably approve a capital grant. This scheme went ahead and opened in July 1909 with 48 pupils from the Central, One Mile, Monkland, Jones Hill and Two Mile Schools.

In 1908 a Branch Library was opened at the Monkland but by the end of the year it only had two subscribers. After three months it closed. The old argument about the library's location was raised once more with the committee saying it was a pity it was at one corner of the field. The Cooran Agricultural and Pastoral Society was approached with the suggestion that, for £10 per year paid quarterly, they would be supplied with 100 books, twenty five of which would be changed every month. The library introduced a card system and in March 1908 Miss Du Deitz (their spelling) was paid thirty shillings to type out the library catalogue, 250 copies of which were then printed. This is at a time when they had less than 200 members! By mid 1909 the overdue subscription problem must have been acute as the Secretary was directed to write to all those subscribers who were 18 months or more in arrears.

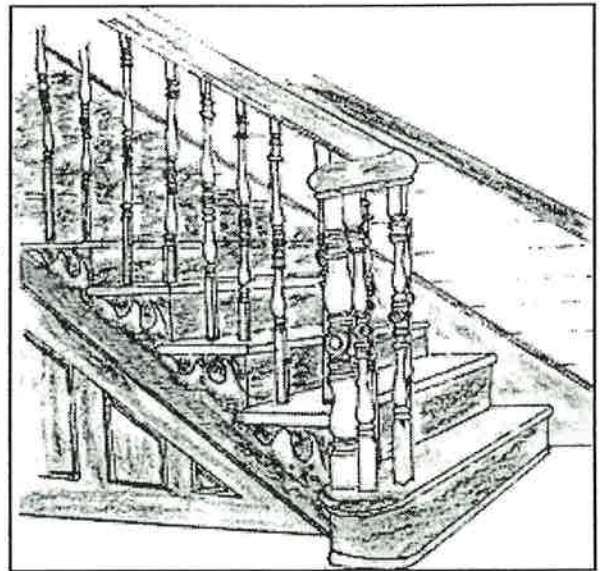
By contrast in April 1909 the suggestion by the Department of Public Instruction that the committee should establish in the library a section for the use of state school pupils and their teachers was dismissed as impractical. One would think that the two ideas were mutually supporting and that any opportunity to get children and their teachers into the library was too good to miss. The reasons for Gympie's declining to accept this offer even though an annual endowment was involved are unknown. However the view has been expressed "that the libraries were already fully extended in both accommodation and stock of books, that by some it was seen as a cheap way out of building libraries in schools. The Crows Nest School of Arts added the unexpected objection that, "at state school age, a too close attention to literature might go to build up a neurotic man instead of a man having the *Mens Sana in Corpore Sana*"!³⁶

Mr W.H. Smith who had been a great asset to the technical classes left Gympie in 1908. On his departure he tried to give the committee some good advice, "that they did not so much want to make the Institution a money making machine as one for educating the people by encouraging them to read!"³⁷ We shall see how the committee responded to this advice!

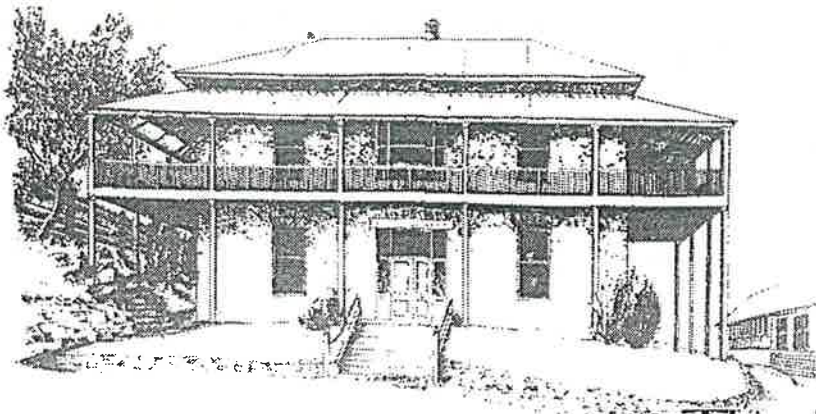
Meanwhile the hoped for reopening of the School of Mines never eventuated. In May 1907 the Inspector of Technical Colleges had expressed his anxiety to see the Mining School reopened. Advertisements were placed in the local papers

but drew virtually no response. An application for a special grant to employ a Science Master for a Mining School was rejected by the Minister for Public Instruction because might have created a precedent. Finally the idea was abandoned.

The technical classes continued with varying success but in general they made money. The committee had obviously taken heed of the events of 1904 because at the 1909 Annual General Meeting the president made the point that "money received for Technical education was not to be hoarded but spent".



Beautiful Cedar internal staircase – the bane of all librarians!



The Pre-War Years

The School of Arts plodded along during these years. The statistics for the library and reading room tell the story.

Year	Subscribers	No of Books
1909	197	5148
1910	192	5364
1911	191	5529
1912	190	5258 *
1913	194	5525
1914	207	5402**

*old books given to Mary Valley Railway camp

**old books given to Army canteens.

The Annual Meetings for those years all bemoan the fact that the library and reading room did not receive the support they deserved but there is little evidence that the committee knew how to rectify the situation.

In 1912 an offer was made to Mr C.L. Rees of Cooroy to supply 200 books on a payment of £2. 10. 0 per quarter, exchanged at a rate of not more than 50 per month. He was to pay all costs of packaging and freight. Neither the minutes of subsequent committee meetings in 1912 or of the Annual Meeting mention this initiative and it is presumed that it was never pursued any further.

The Secretary was told in 1913 to extinguish a number of lights in the reading room at 9pm should the readers present be few. This would not have been such a good idea in 1910 when they had to offer a "reward of £5 for information leading to a conviction for the mutilation and stealing of papers and magazines from the Reading Room"!

Not all the books met with universal approval. In May 1914 the motion was passed that the titles of books objected to as unfit for circulation be

submitted to the library committee for withdrawal or otherwise. There is no explanation given as to what prompted this decision. To encourage the use of the reading room the committee recommended the formation of a non-political and non-religious Debating Society and to grant them the use of the reading room for free. The proposed name of the Society would seem to preclude any really vigorous argument unless of course they debated Schools of Mines.

1914 also saw the start of the wrangles with the Gas Company over the efficiency of the lights in the building which were to go on virtually until electric light was installed.

In March 1910 the Government promulgated new Rules for the Management for Technical Colleges. These rules, which were to come into effect in Gympie in 1911, would separate the technical classes from the School of Arts. In future the Technical College would be run by a committee of nine members comprising three nominated by the School of Arts Committee, three by students of the College and their parents, and three nominated by the Governor-in-Council. The first committee was to sit from early 1911 to 28 February 1913 and from then on the members would retire every three years but would be eligible for reappointment. One wonders who advised the Governor whom his three nominees should be. Obviously, with three votes, the School of Arts committee still had a considerable influence should they choose to express it. As the School of Arts committee was anxious to extend the range of classes available to the pupils of state schools it was decided to build a carpentry shop. The proposed new regulations may have helped to loosen the Government purse strings a little because they promised 80% of the costs if the local community could raise the remainder. This meant that Gympie had to raise £50. As it turned out the locals only donated £28. 5. 2 but the building went up anyway. It was opened by the Governor

Sir William MacGregor on 6 December 1910. (It is still standing as part of the Gympie College of TAFE, Language Development Centre, next door to the present library). The first instructor was Mr John Stanford at a wage of £2 per week. He came with high credentials from the Old Country.

The other educational landmark during the period was the opening of the Gympie High

School on 29 January 1912. The old Central State School for Boys was renovated to meet the new requirements and Mr Morris was its first Headmaster. He was a member of the School of Arts committee but he didn't attend any meetings in 1912 and took no further part in its activities. There was no age limit for entry to the new school but pupils had to have completed the fifth class standard and be able to take up the work.

Australia and the World

1910

The Commonwealth was nearly ten years old.

The new scientific age was in full bloom with the invention of x-rays, early experiments with talking pictures, flying getting off the ground and the use of radio in ships at sea.

The Panama Canal was opened.

Scott, Amundsen and Douglas Mawson were exploring Antarctica.

Australia's population was about 4.5 million which included 20,000 full blooded aborigines. It was assumed that these would die out and that people of mixed blood would gradually disappear into the wider community.*

Social policies of Australian governments were paternalistic and very much driven by the Federal Government's preoccupation with population and defence.

Migrant schemes were encouraged especially those bringing farm apprentices to South Australia e.g. Barwell Boys.

Andrew Fisher, Gympie's most famous son, introduced a £5 maternity bonus which was paid to both married and unmarried mothers. It was not, however, paid to women who were Asiatics or who were aboriginal natives of Australia, Papua or the islands of the Pacific.

Lord Kitchener was invited to Australia to inspect the defences and defenders. As a result of his visit militia training was made compulsory for boys and young men.

1911

The Royal Military College (Duntroon) was established in 1911.

All boys turning fourteen years of age during 1912 had to be registered with the military authorities.

Fisher made a statement in London on the issues of defence when he said that:

Australia might not take part in any war in which Britain might become involved, we are not an Empire ... we are a very loose Association of five nations, each independent, each willing for the time to remain a fraternal co-operative union with Great Britain and with each other, but only on condition that if at any time or for any cause we decide to terminate that connection no one can say nay...

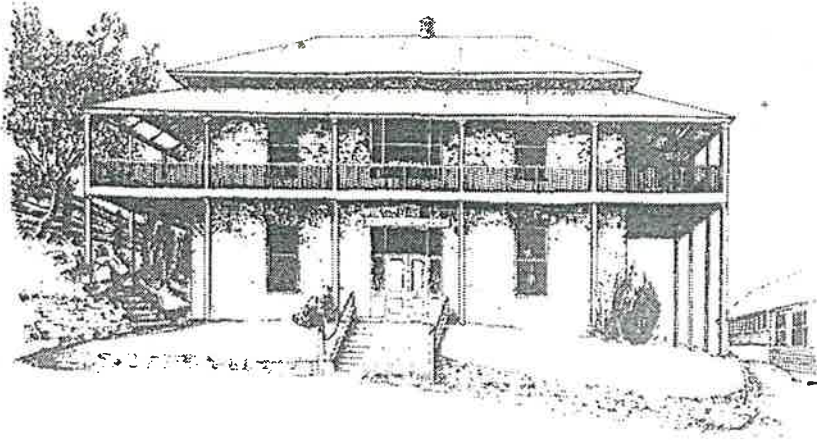
There is no necessity for us to say we will or we will not take part in England's wars.

This position changed in 1914 when he said:

*Australians would defend Great Britain to our last man and our last shilling*** We didn't have to go that far but the sacrifice was horrific.

* Chronicle of Australia (1993). Ringwood: Chronicle Australasia, p494.

** *Ibid* p.489.



The War Years

The next four years were to tear the world apart, bring sorrow to thousands of families and dash any hopes they may have had for the future. These years changed the way succeeding generations would regard such words as honour, patriotism, Empire; left 59,432 dead Australians on the field of battle and another 166,819 wounded, (some crippled physically and mentally for life) yet for the School of Arts it was business as usual.

Except for approving donations of books for Army Canteens, the minutes of the School of Arts committee for the war years only makes three references to the war all concerning Mr A. Chisholm, a committee member. Upon mobilisation he became Lieutenant A. Chisholm of the Central Queensland Light Horse and was granted leave on 1 September 1914 for the remainder of the year on account of his proceeding with the troops to the War. By January 1917 he had been promoted and was serving in Palestine where he persuaded his commander to name a newly discovered well Bir Gympie (Bir being the Arabic for well). Then in January 1918 the committee wrote to Major Chisholm to congratulate him on being awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

There is no evidence that the library building was used for any of the homefront duties. The bandage-rolling, comfort-box packing, the sock and scarf knitting all went on somewhere else.

The committee did resolve in November 1914 to buy a set of London Times war maps. These presumably were on display and marked with coloured pins to show the ebb and flow of war. Mr Bytheway would have approved, his elder son, also Edward, was one of the first to go and happily returned to join the library committee in October 1919.

The problem of gas lighting continued. In February 1915 the committee resolved that two

of their members interview a practical gas man to see if any improvements could be made to the gas lighting. In April 1918, in another attempt to improve matters, it was decided to convert the existing gas burners into inverted lights. The committee weren't above a little dissembling on this subject. However, in January 1917 they happily stated "our reading room is an ideal one of its kind, the lighting both for day and night is perfect".³⁸ More light will be shed on this matter later.

The numbers of subscribers continued to be the big worry. They had increased their subscribers by a few, and their financial position had improved a little. Gympie did not contain a very large reading public but they believed by their efforts they had got most of them (AGM January 1915).³⁹ "5600 Books available at a cost of under 5 pence per week. Your committee appeal to the young men of the city to join the Institution where they will find every comfort in a large, airy Reading Room and wide protected balconies for the spending of spare hours in improving themselves physically and mentally."⁴⁰ (AGM 15 January 1916). "We appeal to subscribers to make our Institution better known amongst their friends so that its advantages as a source for supplying good and up-to-date reading matter can be availed of and appreciated by a larger section of the public than at present".⁴¹ (AGM 30 January 1917) "So small a number of the city's residents accord their support".⁴² (AGM 14 January 1918). "The support accorded by the citizens is not such as a town of this size should contribute".⁴³ (AGM 28 January 1919).

The committee made some efforts to attract subscribers but they appear to have been fairly half-hearted. In 1916 an exhibition of district timbers was on display in the entrance hall. In 1917 they arranged an essay competition for students at the high school. The top boy and girl were each to receive a free subscription to the

library. The subject was "The Benefits of Reading". It is presumed that this contest actually took place but there is no further mention of it in the minutes, no indication that they tried to get some publicity out of it.

June 1917 saw disastrous floods at Clermont in Central Queensland. Sixty-two people died and 38 were lost. The local School of Arts appealed for books and the Gympie School of Arts sent books. The publicity potential of one city prone to flood sending books to a flooded city would today appear to be obvious but nothing was done then. Maybe the committee thought it was ungentlemanly (if they thought of it at all). It might explain their failure to popularize the library.

During 1917 there was a recurrence of the problem of theft of magazines from the reading room. It was suggested that committee members might drop-in from time to time presumably to catch the thief in the act or at least act as a

deterrent. Mr Bytheway did some patrols and reported that "on Sundays I did not find very many readers, mostly young girls".⁴⁴ Perhaps they should have passed on this information to the young men of the city, those they were so anxious to attract to the library? With a community preoccupied with the casualty lists and all the day-to-day worries of life perhaps the library wasn't on most people's *must* list.

The war had lead to a more complicated way of life. In September 1915 the Secretary had, for the first time, to make returns of the School of Arts Income to the War Tax Office. In July 1916 all employees of the Institution had to be insured against accident with the State Insurance Commission. By 1919 the School of Arts had to be represented in the Arbitration Court when the Clerk's Award came up for discussion. (They were then exempted from its provisions.) Yes, the times they were changing.

Australia and the World 1916

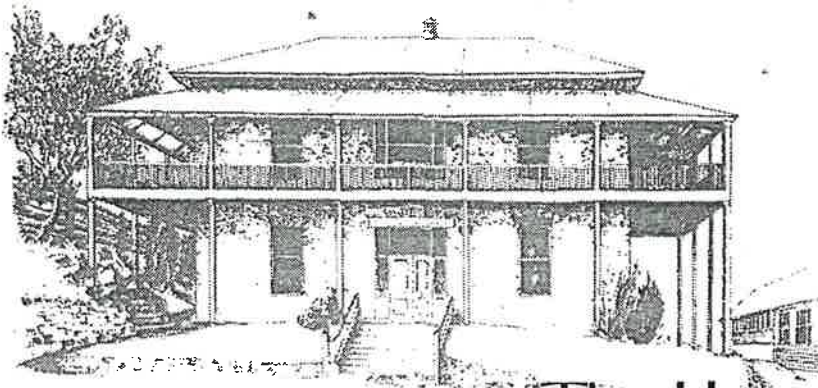
Although the world was in flames there was still time in Gympie for the following entertainment:

In Gympie, Martin Loblilla was attempting to break the State Club-Swinging Record which then stood at seventy seven and one half hours continuous swinging.

(Presumably he was allowed short breaks). He was going day and night and the advertisement

said you could observe this "non-pariel of endurance" for 6 pence.

The Theatre Royal was screening *The Million Dollar Mystery* in two episodes in four reels of film, once a week for eleven weeks. Episode One was *The Airship in the Night* followed by Episode Two, *The False Friend*.



The Unproductive Years

The next years were to be ones in which the library, in common with many other institutions and individuals wanted to return to what was regarded as normalcy. Where events were under their direct control the committee were able to continue on as before, but more powerful forces were coming into play. In an initiative which would appear today to be way outside his brief, the Governor Sir Matthew Nathan, prodded the Government into action. In fairness, Sir Matthew had previously shown an interest in libraries and in October 1922 he had paid a surprise visit to the Gympie library and had made the point that "if the subscriptions were lower it might benefit the institution".⁴⁵ This visit was one of the many he made that year up and down the state and in May 1923 he voiced his concerns about the libraries in a letter to the government.

What were the Governor's concerns? He was primarily worried about the range of books that were on the shelves of many, if not most, School of Arts libraries. He realised that it was no good having books which nobody wanted to read however he thought they should try and lead as well as follow public taste. Here in a rather benign form we have the desire to educate the masses which had always burned just under the surface. He also wanted to increase the geographical range of libraries' circulation. He had been informed that centralised purchasing would save about £800 a year and he was not above suggesting that libraries would have to accept some such system if they wanted to receive Government money.

As a result of his letter a committee was formed. The School of Arts had one representative on this committee, Mr T. E. Jones from the Brisbane School of Arts. Whilst the problems of distance made this the only practical arrangement he could hardly be expected to know, much less put forward for consideration,

the problems of the majority of the Schools of Arts in country Queensland.

The committee met in September 1928. Its membership was exactly that which had been suggested by the Governor - now wasn't that a surprise!. Dr Cumbrae Stewart, one of the representatives from the University, obviously didn't have a high opinion of Schools of Arts libraries. He is reported in the minutes as saying that the man who does the buying for the School of Arts comes to town with £5 or £10 and buys a supply of books which are very often not read at all. He thought it was a waste of public money. There was some truth in this. Not all the money came from the public purse. In Gympie's case the Government subsidy was about one third of total receipts in 1924. Having got this off his chest, Dr Stewart didn't say anymore. He certainly didn't sound like a sympathetic voice at court. At the end of the day the committee did what all good committees do when they want time to think - they called for reports, returns, statistics.

My impression is that they accepted that the Governor had a point but the Department of Public Instruction didn't want to get involved any more than it had to, particularly if it meant employing additional staff. The Governor's suggestions didn't get off the ground but they did eventually lead to the requirement for Schools of Arts to send in a statistical return each year. Gympie's return for 1924 is included.

These returns are extremely useful in charting the library's progress. When the School of Arts Association was formed in 1927 one of its many functions was to be the "interchange and wholesale purchase of books".

These early years of the 1920s were in many ways a watershed in the life of the library. In January 1922 Mr Jacob Stumm, a prominent Gympie citizen, died. He had represented Gympie

in the State Assembly and then in Federal Parliament as the Member for Lilley. He had been a member of the library committee for many years and a man of his stature and influence was hard to replace. Every AGM for the next few years records the death of a long serving committee member.

In February 1923, Mr Thomas Ross resigned because of ill-health. He had been Secretary of the School of Arts for almost a quarter of a century. He was presented with "a wallet containing the Voluntary subscriptions of past and present subscribers" and was made a Life Member of the Institution.

To replace Mr Ross the committee then appointed a woman - Miss Clara Henry. The minutes record no details of what must have been for them a most radical decision. Unfortunately I have been unable to find out any personal details of Miss Clara Henry but she must have been quite a remarkable lady, firstly to get appointed, but then being able to achieve considerable changes. She presented the School of Arts with a magnificent table of which much will be heard later.

The Annual General Meeting held in January 1923 had discussed the method of indexing books and in April 1923 Miss Henry took action. Advertisements were placed in the local papers calling in all books which were out on loan to subscribers. The library was closed for two weeks and Miss Henry inspected all the books and discarded 889 of them, i.e. about 17%. One wonders what the committee thought of that! New shelves were procured, the catalogue rewritten and the library re-opened. Miss Henry stayed at the library for some years and obviously was a success. One committee member went so far as to wish her salary be at least 50% higher. Unfortunately there is no evidence to show that he ever achieved his wish or her a raise. In September 1929, she was given leave of absence and departs from our story. She had however made her mark.

The same old problems kept coming up through these years. How much should each subscriber pay? How to attract more subscribers? What should be the hours of business? What really could be done about the gas lighting? Each year saw lengthy discussion at the Annual General Meeting. The decisions reached rarely pleased the majority and often not even a minority.

In August 1924, obviously in a move to improve their cashflow, the committee modified the rules so that subscribers who paid their yearly or half-yearly subscriptions in advance could take out two books at a time, whilst those paying less

than half year in advance would only be entitled to one book at a time. The number of books in each case was doubled for country subscribers. Any subscriber could take out any additional book at 3 pence per book. The time allowed for reading was reduced from three weeks to two.

At the AGM in January 1926 it was decided to raise the annual subscription from 20/- to 30/-. This raise was generally at the urging of the Rev. B. Cousens. The Reverend had recently arrived in Gympie and after heaping praise on the library was elected to the committee. He was full of good advice and ideas particularly for fund raising. He suggested pictures followed by a concert at a charge of one shilling. He made the point that "in the small place he came from they had a School Of Arts and held a couple of concerts a year which in addition to bringing the institution before the people helped to raise £100 to £200."⁴⁶ He advised the committee not to parade their troubles but to show a bold front and they would find contributors coming along. He volunteered to arrange a musical programme and give the first lecturette. Mr Morrison, a committee member, showing what I believe to have been excellent caution suggested one such offering as a trial. The Reverend gave his lecturette which raised £1. 4. 6 less some expenses.

The motion to raise the subscriptions from 20/- to 30/- was opposed, amongst others, by Mr Crowe, another committee member, who thought it unfair that the 23 people present should dictate to the 293 who were not. In hindsight this may have been the correct view as the increased charges led to a reduction in the number of subscribers and the Reverend Cousens admitted the idea had been a mistake. The Reverend does not appear on the list of committee members for 1927/28.

The real crux of the financial problem was the low level of membership. In 1921 the numbers had remained steady. 1922 saw the loss of a lot of country subscribers due to hard times on the land. For the next two years the subscription list marked time and at the AGM held in January 1925 the Chairman really poured his heart out. "He thought they had to trot out the same old complaint, lack of interest. He failed to see where the wrong lay, so had come to the conclusion that it must be the committee. He would like these people in the town and country to come along and point out what was wrong. They did not seem to popularise the institution, some members had been on the committee for twenty five years and whatever the fault was, it came up every year and nothing was done. He thought some new blood would do good."⁴⁷

Mr J. MacDonnell (a subscriber but not a committee member) said he complained of the

want of publicity given, the School of Arts in country places. Similar institutions were kept before the public by way of concerts and fetes. The Gympie AM&P Society was dead until a new committee woke it up. Half the population of Gympie didn't know where the School of Arts was. He agreed some of the committee needed changing. Nothing seemed to go right as far as publicity was concerned. During his farewell tour of the State, Sir Matthew Nathan inspected the library in 1924 and expressed "his pleasure in the new arrangements of the books".⁴⁸ The library however was omitted from the printed itinerary for the visit. Not everybody agreed with Mr Macdonnell. Mr Griffith said that as a committee man he must reply to Mr Macdonnell. The institution "was not like an agricultural society, it was a co-operative concern, and if people did not put money into it they could not expect to get anything out of it."⁴⁹ So far as concerts or fetes were concerned, a few ladies did the work and he was not in favour of that. As to the Secretary's salary, Miss Henry also had her salary from the technical college, and also commission on the fees from the classes. So much for Miss Henry's 50% raise!

What was the position? In January 1920 there were 201 subscribers, yet by June 1928 there were 155. In January 1920 the subscriptions for the previous year were £161.1.0. In January 1926 the previous years' subscriptions totalled £177.18.6. The hours of opening changed almost from year to year and the gas lighting still wasn't perfect.

The technical classes were, with a government subsidy, going along reasonably well. It was the library and reading room that were the main cause for concern. There was definitely a shortage of books. For many years the total hovered around 5800 with discards and purchases more or less cancelling each other out. The president more than once complained about the poor quality of books, the paper, the binding, and once, the standard of authorship. Prices had certainly gone up. Before the Great War novels were 2/9 to 3/6 now they cost between 5/6 and 7/6. In the same period, except for the mid-term rise, subscriptions had remained the same. The library committee were still selecting from lists supplied by Mudies in London but found that institutions who were closer to England received the lists earlier and therefore took the better books. Mudies second-hand books were considered to be an excellent buy. Some of the books in the library must have had a pretty hard life. In 1924 with a stock of 5700 books, 1000 had to be repaired. The subscribers were critical of both the scarcity of books and of the books selected. From time to time the library committee, who only had £5 a month to spend anyway,

received advice from outside sources. In August 1924 a letter was received from the Ministers Fraternal who were told by the way of reply that "their views will have the careful consideration of the book committee"⁵⁰ Since there was also at that time the "Gympie Council of Public Morals" (Hon. Sec. Rev. R. Collins Davis) it may be assumed that suggestions were being offered as to which type of books to buy. Some of the books already held didn't seem to be read very often. At the 1926 AGM the Chairman (the system was that one of the subscribers would be the chairman at the AGM, the President would then move the motion that his report for the year be accepted) moved "that readers of history and biography (sic) and other deep reading be allowed to have two other books out at the same time stating that history and other deep reading was not much sought after in the library and a reader of this description of books often came in conflict with his family in not being able to get the usual number of fiction books".⁵¹ The motion was carried.

At a committee meeting held in August 1928 the difficulty in obtaining books was mentioned. A committee member reported that orders sent months ago were not yet to hand. The Selection Committee had made efforts to increase the books added to the library per month but replies came back from various book agents that books ordered were not in stock. In fact some ordered in January 1927 were still not to hand.

There was in the library a suggestion book for subscribers to make their wishes known. The Book Committee reported that "it invariably happens that the books suggested are unprocurable at the moment; nevertheless every possible effort is made to procure them and, even though this may be difficult, they eventually come to hand".⁵² To some degree this begs the question as to how the subscribers come to know of a book if it is so difficult to obtain?

In June 1929 the committee ordered from England, presumably from Mudies, "five new editions of best sellers to be forwarded weekly". They also joined the School of Arts Association. "By these means your committee hope to keep your library up-to-date with latest works, as far as your finances will permit".⁵³

The reading room was still a financial worry. In 1926 several subscribers suggested that a number of magazines be discontinued and the money saved spent on new books. The cost of opening the reading room exceeded the Government grant by £6 per year. This seems a trifling sum when one considers how its praises were sung in every Annual Report. In 1926 it was suggested that, as it was so poorly supported, the reading room be shifted from its spacious area

*Copy
of the
9/1/24*

RETURN REQUIRED UNDER STATUTORY AUTHORITY

(To be returned to the Registrar-General, Brisbane.)

E.

RETURN of the Library and Reading Room at Gympie School of Arts and Mines for the Year 1924.

Name of Institution: Gympie School of Arts and Mines.

Date when Institution first established: December, 1871.

BOOKS (Not including Periodicals, Magazines etc.)

NUMBER IN LIBRARY ON 1st JANUARY, 1924. (i.e. all Books owned by Institution)	.. .. .	5690
Number Purchased during the Year	.. .. .	157 & 15 worth order to Mudge
Number presented during the Year.	.. .. .	29 dispatched 5/12/24.
Number purchased and presented	.. .. .	186
Withdrawn from Library during the Year.	.. .. .	25
Net Increase to Library during the year.	.. .. .
Number in Library on 31st December, 1924 (i.e. all books owned by Institution)	.. .. .	5851

Value of Library Contents (i.e. estimated value of all Books, Periodicals etc. owned by the Institution on 31st December, 1924 - exclusive of Furniture, Fittings etc.) £675

If Library and Contents covered by Insurance against Fire, state amount £150

Subscription per annum £ 1

Number of subscribers on 31st December, 1924 204

state if open daily, and whether or not on Sundays: (Library: Daily except Sunday, a. Reading Room: do.)

Estimated value of Building, or portion of, used as Library and Reading Room. £3,000.

RECEIPTS DURING THE YEAR

EXPENDITURE DURING THE YEAR

Government Aid.	£98: 2: 5	On Books, Periodicals, Newspapers etc.	106 2: 0
Private Subscriptions, Contributions etc.	£22. 6: 9	Office Expenses & Salaries:	£100: 1: 7
Receipts from all other sources	£ 15: 0: 9	{ Management £96:10:0}	£159:16: 7
		{ Adv., Printing etc. 10:14: 8}	
		{ Lighting & Cleaning. 52:11:11}	
		All Other Expenses:	32:15: 2
		{ Furniture £8:11: 0}	
		{ Insurance 6: 4: 2}	
		{ Sundries 18: 0: 0}	
TOTAL	£298. 9. 11	TOTAL	£298. 14. 7

Caund... Secretary.

... Vice President of the Chairman of the Committee.

Date: 22 February 1925.

Notice - Penalty for Refusing or Neglecting to give Correct Information, £10.

upstairs into the cookery classroom just inside the front door. The cookery classes would then be held in a room at the back of the ground floor. The idea being that the existing reading room could then be hired out to produce revenue. The unknown cost of converting the existing reading room and setting-up a new cooking classroom made a quick decision impossible so the proposal was deferred. The reading room was hired out for entertainments at a price of 2/6 per night up to 9.30 pm . A typical event was Lubrication of Internal Combustion Engines with a lantern slide show projected onto the wall. There is no evidence in the minutes that the reading room was moved in the next five years at least but it was eventually.

We close the nineteen twenties on a sad note, at the AGM held in June 1928 the committee noted the passing of Mrs David Menzies who was the last surviving member of the original member's roll. Mrs Menzies had been a member of the School of Arts library for nearly sixty years.

Why hadn't the library progressed in nearly thirty years since the opening of the new building? The often heard cry that Gympie wasn't a reading town may have had some truth to it but the general level of education had increased markedly in those years and the main aim of the committee should have been to encourage people to read.

In spite of the fact that the committee was made up almost exclusively of business and professional men it seems to have lacked any entrepreneurial flair. The minutes of committee meetings suggest that they were overconcerned with detail rather than with making broad policy decisions which should have then been left to the Secretary to implement. In so far as the financial situation was always tight the caution is understandable but they should, in my opinion, have made the decision to sink or swim, merely to stagnate would never be a solution. They took over-control to extremes. For example, when it was decided to plant six trees in the library grounds a special sub-committee was set-up to organise it. They seemed to be unsure of themselves. As another example, in February 1930 the committee wrote to the Schools of Arts in Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Maryborough asking for details of how many books at a time each subscriber was allowed, how long they could keep them out and what fines, if any, were levied and what notice they used setting out length of time a book was allowed out of the library. This coming from an organisation which had been running a library of one sort or another for almost sixty years. It may be considered unkind to criticize after so many years but to a more-or-less degree the same situation was to exist for another forty years.

A Day's Work in Gympie

Miss A. Bradley was paid 5/- for scrubbing out the library which doesn't sound overly generous even in 1922. The next day she could have visited Mr Martoo's shop in Mary Street and considered whether to buy a wool tweed coat for 31/6d. or best quality Fugi blouse for 14/11d. If she felt she needed invigorating she had the opportunity to buy Elliots Beef and Malted Wine. This was a medicinal food - tonic that the

advertisement claimed tones up your system and imparts invigorating nourishment. All chemists and hotels sell 3/9 and 5/9 per bottle. There's energy in every drop.

If this stimulated her appetite and she needed a saucepan then a Judge brand, heavy steel enamelled inside with strong turned steel cover was available for 7/6d.

Australia and the World 1923

In August James Cavill opened his hotel called Surfers Paradise thus starting the progress of the Gold Coast. The post office was called Elston, that being the maiden name of the Southport postmaster's wife.

Vegemite, which had been losing sales to its English rival Marmite changed its name Parwill.

The theory was that if Marmite then Parwill. On behalf of all happy little vegemites, I'm glad that this rather laboured name died an early death.

A train derailment at Traveston in June killed 10 people and injured 28.

Brisbane became a single municipality in October.



The End of Peace

The years leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War were ones of hardship and worry for the people of Australia and the citizens of Gympie had their fair share. The decade opened with a financial crisis which saw the Premier of New South Wales "Black Jack" Lang pitted against the Governor of the Bank of England and the English Bond Holders and in 1931 the New South Wales State Savings Bank closed its doors. The privations of unemployment, disease and a falling standard of living for many, coupled to the threat of war towards the end of the period meant that the outbreak of war in 1939 in some ways came as a relief. Many men found in military service their first opportunity for steady work.

The library during these years bumbled along. The minutes of the AGM held in July 1936 reflect both the state of the times and the state of the library. By this time the technical classes accounts were kept separately. The government had discontinued its cash subsidy but was considering the idea of a centralised lending library and the finances of the Gympie Library were very delicately balanced. Let's not forget that this was the sixty fifth annual report and what do we find? The School of Arts had a bank balance of £11. 5. 10 which even for then was a trifling sum. The Secretary's salary and holiday relief amounted to £122. 2. 0 annually so the committee could only guarantee his salary for about 10 weeks. This should have at least made him want to be more entrepreneurial.

The main economies were made at the expense of the reading room. The latest scheme was to popularise the upstairs room as a means of obtaining finance. (Where have we heard that before?)

It was a pity really because that large room was the original reading room. Once it was full of tables laden with papers and magazines from all over the world. committee members had even advocated

obtaining papers from China and Japan and such countries. That had to be cut-down until now they only had a skeleton reading room.

According to their records the reading public of Gympie was a small percentage of the whole.⁵⁴

The Secretary said the membership was 191 although those who were paid up as annual subscribers were only about 120. Mr Peach thought it an absurd percentage for a place the size of Gympie. The Secretary agreed although he thought it was no worse than other Schools of Arts experience. One would have thought it would have been useful to be able to compare levels of membership in similar sized cities in Queensland at least as a starting point for some constructive planning. During the year 14,742 works of fiction were issued and 637 non-fiction plus 1741 magazines. This amounts to about 1.5 books per subscriber per week so even the people who were readers were not, on average, avid readers. The Gympie City Council had been approached to assist in supporting the reading room which is often availed of by the travelling public.⁵⁵ The Council had offered the sum of £10 per annum which the incoming committee were to consider. Their indecisiveness appears strange, with just over £11 in the bank an offer of £10 a year should have been irresistible. As was often the case the minutes end on a sad note recording the deaths of committee members. One such death brought to an end the association of the Bytheways who, father and son, had served the Institute over a span of sixty years, a remarkable achievement.

The Munn-Pitt report issued in 1935 revealed the true state of affairs in stating that Australia was better provided with local libraries in 1880. Almost every large town and city now contains a decadent School of Arts, many of which give evidence of having had a former period of usefulness.

From 1931-1936 there had been no government subsidies for Schools of Arts libraries. After that an annual subsidy of £500 was paid to the Queensland School of Arts Association. Some of this money was used to build up a library for bulk loan to Schools of Arts. A box of 25 books could be borrowed, the Association paying the outwards freight and the borrower the return. Additional boxes cost slightly more and the School of Arts had to pay the freight both ways. The cost of rail freight was a big burden even though the Government gave a 50% rebate. I don't think the Government perceived Schools of Arts libraries as performing a public service. I suggest the fact that books sent out by the Department of Public Instruction paid only 25% freight whilst books sent by the Queensland Country Women's Association went freight free, indicates this!

The Schools of Arts Association also purchased books in bulk from lists of authors provided by the individual libraries. These books were purchased in London and resulted in a cost saving of about 33%.

By the time of the 1938 AGM the situation had reached crisis point. To resolve the future of the School of Arts one way or the other it was decided to call a public meeting.

Special hand bills were distributed over the Mayor's (Mr L.J. Thomas) signature and he volunteered to take the chair.

Whilst accepting that in 1938 advertising hadn't reached the level of sophistication we are accustomed to today, the handbill in my opinion strikes exactly the wrong note. It is verbose and patronising, but above all it doesn't face the reality of the situation. This was to be a crucial meeting. If enough new members could not be found then the future of the Institution was in grave doubt. In that situation it might have been more productive to explain the situation and say what do you want from a library and how much are you prepared to pay for it? The handbill is not entirely honest either because it was only a public library in the sense that any member of the public was free to join it. It wasn't a free public library as we understand that term today.

Whatever one may think of the handbill it didn't work as only sixteen people attended the meeting (including three ladies, as *The Gympie Times* was quick to point out). What was the financial position of the School of Arts? In a word - broke. The previous year's operations had led to a loss of £31. 2. 0. The amount spent on books was £16. 9. 4 and the reading room £17. 16. 9. The other recurrent expenses totalled £164. 8. 10. In other words almost five times was spent on administration as was spent on books and

magazines. At some meetings accounts had been passed for payment "when becomes money available".⁵⁶

The discussion at the meeting centred around four main points, three of which will be all too familiar. First Dr W.L. Millett forced the meeting to decide whether or not they wanted a School of Arts. They did. They then discussed in turn, the number of members to be on the committee, the rate of annual subscriptions and the times of operation. The committee had to decide whether it wanted a twelve or a five man committee of management. Mr Morrison, the Secretary, obviously felt very strongly about this as he said "five had always done the work. The others would just as well be off the committee".⁵⁷ The suggestion that areas of responsibility be declared didn't cut any ice with him either. "There was no need for sub-committees. Book Committees were obsolete and this one and the others members wished his little fads attended to." In the end it was decided to have a President and a committee of four. The Mayor, Mr Thomas, was appointed President and the committee comprised of Alderman Cullinane, and Messrs. Longland, Townsend and Peach.

The subscriptions were set at £1.1.0 per year; 12/6 a half year, 6/6 a quarter, 6d a week for a three month period. Issues were three books and one magazine. Slightly higher rates were charged for country members because they were allowed four books and one magazine. Family subscriptions were £2.2.0 a year, £1.1.0 per half year, 10/6 per quarter, 3/6 per month for a three month period. Issues allowed six books and two magazines.⁵⁸ Those figures are from *The Gympie Times* account of the meeting. I can only presume that the 6d per week for a three month period actually means 6d per week for periods less than a quarter.

The times that the library would be opened was wisely left to the new committee to decide. Wisely because it was a problem to which a satisfactory answer had never been easy to find in over 60 years and also because it would be influenced by the level of support the library achieved. However a motion was passed that the hours be increased.

The idea of raising funds by means of functions was aired again with a School of Arts Ball and a Childrens Fancy Dress Ball being specifically mentioned. To this end the new committee was to appoint a ladies committee. It looked as if those three ladies attending the meeting were going to be busy. There was some support in the community at large. A letter was sent to the committee by Mr W. Nixon who offered to donate £5 if 49 other citizens did the same.

How productive was this meeting? Without a doubt getting the Mayor to be the next President was the most important outcome. With Mr Thomas and Alderman Cullinane on the committee the School of Arts had a powerful voice in the Town Hall. In fact Alderman Cullinane offered to increase the Council's donation from £10 to £25 at the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting still suggest that the fundamental problems hadn't been faced. The excuse for only fourteen people attending was that it was Exhibition Week, this to a public meeting called by the Mayor! The suggestion that functions, the attendance at which would always be just as unpredictable, were a means of getting out of the financial hole they were in, just doesn't seem practical. The reduction in subscriptions from 30/- to 21/- meant that an increase in membership of 50% would be necessary just to maintain the existing income.

It is difficult to assess in terms of today's prices whether the level of subscriptions was affordable to a wide enough section of the community. When the subscriptions were 21/- shillings per year a pair of men's work trousers was 8/11, a 2lb tin of jam 11d. and a Grey Check Tweed Doublebreasted Overcoat was 37/6d from Tom Stallard Mens Outfitters, who are still in business in Mary Street today. It is significant that the only work advertised in *The Gympie Times* was for lads for farm work or a couple - the wife able to milk.

The new committee however were able to turn the financial deficit around and by the AGM in August 1939 were able to report that the library had made a £23 profit for the year. The library was now open every day from 10 am to 5 pm and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights from 7 pm to 8 pm. The Secretary's wife is thanked for her co-operation in this regard and as the Secretary's salary hadn't changed (£120 per year)

there is a strong suspicion that Mrs Morrison did a lot of unpaid work for the School of Arts.

The supply of new books had certainly improved and the figures for a previous few years are a good barometer of the health of the library: 1935, £26, 1936, £24; 1937, £17; 1938, £18; 1939, £45. The ladies committee had organised two bridge evenings and local businesses had donated refreshments and prizes.

A canvasser had been employed during the year and it was decided to continue using his services. He was to continue to receive 50% of the new subscriptions as commission. One can only suppose this high level of commission was a reflection of the difficulty of his task.

The committee was still capable of self-deception however, The AGM was originally scheduled for August 1st but lapsed for want of a quorum. When resumed a week later the President expressed his pleasure at the good attendance. "The School of Arts was an important institution in any city", he said, "and it was gratifying to know that so many were willing to attend the meeting".⁵⁹ As the outbreak of war was less than a month away people probably had other things on their minds.

This borderline financial position was not confined to Gympie. It appeared to some extent at many School of Arts Libraries in Queensland. One of the main reasons was a lack of Governmental financial assistance which resulted in large part from difficult financial times and partially from disinterest. In 1934 the Libraries Association of Victoria had initiated a request, which was supported by libraries throughout Australia, to the Carnegie Corporation of New York to carry out a survey of Australian Libraries. The Carnegie Institute had already financed the building of four libraries in Australia.

(ESTABLISHED 1871)
GYMPIE SCHOOL OF ARTS
LENDING LIBRARY

Your Public Library at the School of Arts is in danger of being closed unless the people of Gympie are willing to become subscribers and support it. For 67 years this institution has faithfully served its members and is just as willing to provide for them today.

In unity there is strength, and without subscribers the Library has not been able to provide new books for which the public are always calling.

Have you read and enjoyed a book? We are sure you have. You have been thrilled by that "little bit", read it twice, and once again- just to make sure that you extracted all the enjoyment from it. Among the newbooks published in one year there are many that you would thus enjoy - and you can enjoy them, only by becoming a member.

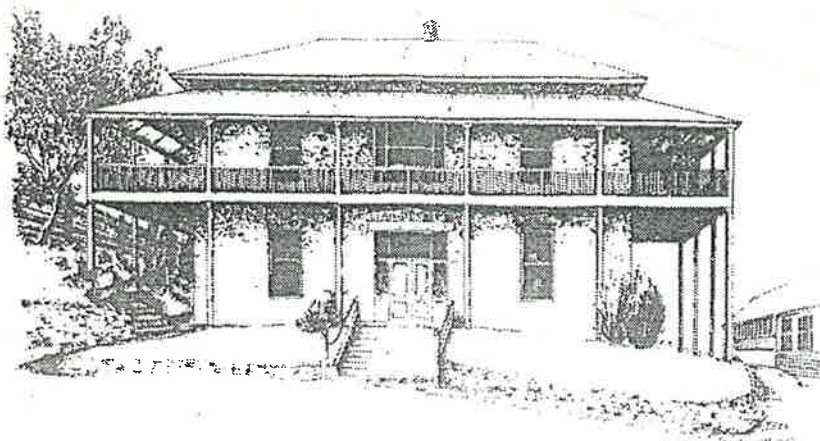
We invite you to attend the ANNUAL MEETING, to be held in the TOWN HALL on Wednesday, August 17th when a recommendation to reduce the annual subscription to \$1.1.0 will be considered. Corresponding reductions on the shorter term subscriptions will also be effected. Consideration is also to be given to the question of hours of opening which could also be extended if we had more subscribers.

With the small membership of recent years the Library has been maintained and new books added each year. If a hundred new members joined over 50 per cent of their fees could be used in the purchase of books, whilst the subscriptions of further members could be wholly extended thereon.

A membership of 300 to 400 is not too much to expect in a city the size of Gympie.

L.J. Thomas Mayor
H.Longland Committee
C.E. Peach Committee
A.R. Morrison Secretary

NOTE THE DATE WEDNESDAY AUGUST 17 AT 8.00PM AT TOWN HALL.



At War Again

The outbreak of war in September 1939 as reported in *The Gympie Times* led to scenes far different from those in August 1918. Then there had been public Royalty Rallies, farewell parade speeches and toasts to the departing men. In 1939 by contrast, although the war was covered, there is no account of local activities or the departures of local men to the war.

This lack of initial reporting however was not indicative of the years to come. The years of the Second World War had a much more pervasive and lasting effect on the lives of those who remained at home than had the years of the First World War.

The physical effects of rationing, man-power, large numbers of American servicemen in Australia and much wider involvement of women in the war effort made great changes in day to day life in Australia. In the minutes of the School of Arts committee for those years for instance there is no mention of functions. Young men and women were either in uniform or much too busy to attend such entertainments.

In other respects the library carried on much the same as it had in peace-time.

Money was still relatively tight in 1940 and when the committee decided to remove the forty year old fence and tidy up the front of the building they had to get a council guaranteed loan of £50 from the Commonwealth Bank. What sounds like a novel way of raising money had been proposed by Mr Thomas Duncan MLA in 1941. He suggested a private member's bill to enable the committee to move the Technical College Building (the one built in 1910) to the rear of the main building thereby creating three residential allotments on Monkland Street which could then be sold. The committee declined his well meant suggestion.

Another source of income had been created by a wartime shortage of accommodation. The original Reading Room on the first floor was

converted into a flat with two bedrooms, lounge and kitchen in 1941. The tenants used the outside staircase onto the northside verandah and had no access to the rest of the building. It was probably a little inconvenient with an outside toilet and having to pump up the water to the kitchen by hand but it was right in town and was tenanted for many years by Mr and Mrs Otto and their two sons Ray and Brian. The Otto's had a three year lease at £1 per week in the late 1940's.

The amount received in subscriptions rose from £217 in 1940 to £448 in 1945. This was supplemented by a £50 a year grant from the Gympie City Council up to 1944 when it rose to £100. The comparatively prosperous state of affairs by the end of the war appears to have been due in no small measure to the successive Presidents. Mr Cullinane, a prominent local businessman held the chair for some years until his death in 1943 when he was succeeded by Mr Witham. Mr Witham was then Gympie's Mayor and played a long and productive role in the development of the city. These Presidents were very ably supported by two able Secretaries and their wives. I mention the wives for although their names never appeared on any pay sheets they both worked hours for the Institution and were very obviously part of the team. Mr and Mrs Morrison had both worked very hard for the School of Arts and when they retired in 1941 Mr and Mrs Kennedy took over. In 1943 the committee appears to have realised the part the ladies played because they voted Mr and Mrs Kennedy a 15 guinea honorarium.

The method of procuring books went on as before. Books were borrowed in boxes of 25 from the School of Arts Association. These were now exclusively non-fiction, the majority being recent publications of travel, biography, science and "the social problems of today both domestic and international, these books are very popular with subscribers. Many of the outstanding successes

have been placed in circulation simultaneously with the appearance of the books in Brisbane shops."⁶⁰ New books had become harder to get because of shipping shortages but whether this emphasis on non-fiction was a reflection of that situation is hard to determine. A lot of magazines both English and American went out of publication during the war because of paper shortages. The unavailability of new books meant much more time and money had to be spent repairing books and the ones that were donated to the Southside Military Camp were probably very well worn.

An indication of the frustration experienced when trying to purchase new books in June 1945 can be shown by the following chain of events.

Firstly, a very famous English publishing house sent the School of Arts a booklist. The School promptly sent back an order form. The Publisher then wrote back saying that they didn't sell direct to non-trading libraries but they had forwarded the order to the Queensland Book Depot. The Queensland Book Depot then wrote back to the School of Arts saying that they couldn't supply any of the books requested and doubted if anyone in Australia could.

The method of payment of subscriptions and the amounts received during the war years are as follows:

Average method of payment	Total subscriptions received	
	1940	217
Yearly 35%	1941	217
Quarterly 20%	1942	280
Monthly 11%	1943	369
6d per week	1944	415
Extra books 1%	1945	448

Even allowing for inflation, to double the income in five years was no mean feat.

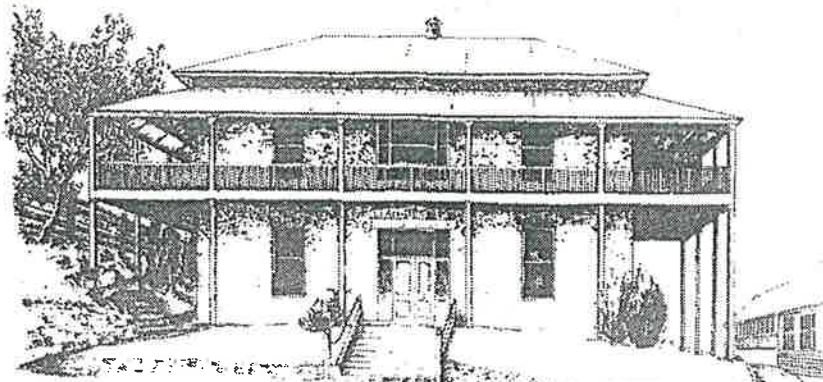
The Committee reflecting the changing times was becoming much more active in publicising the Institution during the latter years of the war. In 1943 the Committee had a fifty word promotion on the breakfast session on the local radio station - thirteen spots at 4/4d per airing. In 1944 they had slides made to be shown during the interval at the Olympia Cinema. A "talkie slide" was 8 shillings a week and a silent slide six shillings a week based on a 52 week run. The talkie component of the advertisement was provided from a gramophone record but although the committee wanted and paid for a talkie, because of a lack of other advertisers, the record wasn't made so they ended up with a silent slide. I presume a refund was sought and obtained.

The AGM of 1944 saw the President (and Mayor) propose that a book be published setting out the History of Gympie, one of the most historical towns in the Commonwealth. He thought the financial position caused by the expenditure on publication could be considerably alleviated if Schools of Arts organisations throughout Queensland could be persuaded to take one of the books for insertion in their libraries. The Secretary was given the job of contacting as many persons as possible for collecting the desired information. As far as I can ascertain this book was never written.

It says volumes for the State Government that in 1943 they had enough energy left over from the war and all its problems to think about libraries. Their thoughts took form in the Libraries Act No. 39 of 1943.

The government realised that the piecemeal subsidisation of a host of small libraries was never going to provide the foundation for a coherent effective library service to the people of Queensland. This they saw as being best achieved by free public libraries controlled by local councils with financial assistance from the state. The Act established the Queensland Library Board to control the Public Library of Queensland and created the position of State Librarian. The names of the members of the first Board were not announced until 1945. The Act gave the Board a remarkably free and generous hand. They could subsidise School of Arts libraries and there was no limit to the subsidy that might be paid by the Board, either to existing libraries or to any local Authority which decided to establish a library under the Act or to take over an existing School of Arts! One presumes that this largesse could only be dispensed within the framework of the annual budget but nevertheless it was a generous concept.

Some Councils were enthusiastic to take advantage of the new policy and moved quickly to take over School of Arts libraries. Others responded more slowly or took no action at all. In Gympie's case, the Mayor (Mr Ron Witham) was also the President of the School of Arts and at the 1944 AGM he expressed the Council's position. "The City's Council, he said, was quite satisfied with the manner in which the organisation was being conducted....the management of the School of Arts had been kept well within the receipts, improvements had been effected to the Hall by the Committee which gave the building the appearance which a School of Arts should possess". What else could he say given the circumstances? The building was "conservatively" valued at £1950 and the books and magazines at £1388. 15.3. The Council hadn't neglected to play their part and the original £10 a year subsidy had increased to £100 by 1944.



Post War - The Prosperous Years

The post-war years started well for the library. Its finances improved-helped in no small part by the first payments under the "Library Bill" which from 1946 gave a 50% subsidy on book purchases and also the continuing £100 a year council grant. The library opened two new sections one for Australian authors and one for juveniles. The President (1946 AGM) thought that the School of Arts was "rapidly gaining popularity as an attractive community centre".

The next few years were ones in which, although membership gradually rose and there was an income from subsidy, the library went backwards financially. This was due to rising costs not only for books but in every facet of its operations together with rising inflation.

	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953
Subscriptions £	469	489	547	573	590
Membership	418	407	412	405	391
Government book subsidy £	—	—	228	186	61
Equipment subsidy £	—	—	19	51	—

In October 1950 the rate of a subscription when paid annually which had been 21 shillings since 1938 was raised to 25 shillings. That year the President reported that the average cost of a book was 10/-, so it took the extra money from 2.5 subscriptions to buy one book. That year the wages bill rose by 5%. In June 1950 several subscribers complained about the shortage of new books. The next month the library accepted a gift of books which had been withdrawn from the Brisbane School of Arts.

Young people had not been forgotten but a plan to partition off an area of the library for juveniles was dropped when it was announced that a library would be built at the Central School. In June 1949 Miss Jean Cornes persuaded the

Gympie City Council to pay for the establishment of a reference library for the Girl Guides Association to be held in the library. As an example of how everybody was watching the pennies the Library Board could only offer £5. 10. 0 towards the painting of the library - about a week's salary for the Secretary.

In February 1951 Mr F. B. Sykes was asked to be Honorary Solicitor for the School of Arts, thus continuing a tradition of service to the Institution by this legal family.

The President at the 1952 AGM (Mr A.S. Harris) was moved to say that "I do not believe a School of Arts Library can successfully carry on unless new books in reasonable numbers can be presented to the subscribers.....complaints have been received on this score, I trust that ways and means will be found to improve the financial position".⁶¹

By 1954 the committee were able to report a slight increase in membership, the year ending with a credit balance of £267 on the year's transactions. The membership was 394 so revenue from subscriptions was about £500. (Its impossible to be more precise because of the different methods of payment.) A profit equal to about half of members subscriptions seems high but the committee had no way of gauging income from year to year and had to make provision for recurring expenses, maintenance on the building etc.

The technical classes had always been going strong and they provided in excess of £200 a year in rent. There was the £100 a year from the Gympie City Council and the subsidy from the Library Board towards the purchase of new books which in 1954/55 was £80. 7. 2 so things could have been a lot worse.

In 1954 the committee had been able to repay the government by agreeing to the excising of a portion of the School of Arts Reserve which was

then handed over to the Department of Public Instruction to allow them to build classrooms in which to teach plumbing and trade apprentices.

The book issues for 1953/54, with the figures for the previous year in brackets were as follows: Fiction 40354 (40229); non-fiction 1192 (1134); magazines 3453 (3433); juveniles 1194 (1353); totals 46193 (46154). If one combines both adult and childrens libraries the comparable percentages in 1994 are Fiction 65% Non-fiction 35% - quite different from 40 years earlier.

Books were still obtained on loan from the Queensland Association of Schools of Arts. In the 1953/54 year Gympie received 403 books and at the AGM decided to increase the entitlement to 100 volumes per quarter in addition to a free box of non-fiction and a free box of children's books. It seemed that people were well aware that attempts should be made to reduce the imbalance of the types of books borrowed.

The government was still not above pulling a bureaucratic sleight-of-hand when necessary. In January 1965 they announced that the subsidy level for books and equipment for Local Authority libraries and those of Schools of Arts would not be reduced from the existing 50%. The fine print however revealed that this subsidy would only be paid on 75% of estimates submitted. The subsidy on the remaining 25% would be reconsidered in May, in light of Government finances.

Books in the library were re-arranged to help subscribers more readily find their requirements. "On the suggestion of the Librarian the books have been classed under several headings that is, Romance, Mystery, Historical Romance, and Non-fiction and it is intended to remove those reference books and older books which are not frequently sought. Shelves are being provided for the reference books which will be on application to the librarian."⁶²

The library now had a paid staff of two. Mrs J. Miller who was described as the Library Supervisor and a library assistant Miss V. Leitch who resigned from the library to better her position and was replaced in April 1954 by Miss F. Richter. Mr C. Buckle who had been the Secretary agreed, upon his retirement, to serve as Honorary Secretary, so for the first time we have a person running the library as a full time job divorced from the other administrative tasks of the institution.

During the period from the end of the war until take-over by the Council in 1977 only approximately a quarter of the floor area was used as a library with an additional room on the

ground floor which served as both a reading room and a Trustee meeting room.

The ground floor was divided up by a big central passage leading to the stairs, one long room on the right hand side, as one entered the front door, and three rooms on the left. The right hand room was always the library whilst the remainder were used for a variety of activities. Upstairs the rooms were as they are today, one room on each side of the landing and a large room right across the front of the building. This room had a variety of uses after starting life as the reading room. Partitioning was provided as required. The rooms both upstairs and downstairs were used by several public service organisations such as Children's Services, the Police and State Emergency Service, National Fitness Council, Community Home Care, the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, and Commonwealth Employment Service. These organisations came and then went as more convenient accommodation became available. Looking at some of these tenants and thinking of their probable clientele there must have been just as many weary mothers then as there are now, climbing the stairs to what is now the Children's Library.

The minutes of committee meetings in the 50's and 60's show that life in the library went on much as before. Membership rose and fell. New books were purchased - mostly fiction and not all that good if the remark of the President in May 1964 that 66 books received from England, were mostly trash, is to be believed. This was hardly a recommendation for people to join the library.

The library during most of these years was predominantly fiction. There was a small non-fiction section and some books for juveniles but by no means enough.

In 1959 Miss G.C. McMinn, the Headmistress of the Gympie Central Infants School accompanied by her sister Miss J. McMinn, who had had extensive library experience, were invited to address the Gympie City Council.

Miss McMinn eloquently argued the case for the establishment of a free children's library service. The concept of a free library as a corollary of free education had originated in England and spread all over the world. In Australia it was established in all states except South Australia and Queensland. In both these States there were still places where libraries were non-existent or where only subscription libraries were available. Miss McMinn then quoted some telling statistics. At the end of the 1958 financial year, Queensland local authorities, which had not entered the library field, comprised six city

councils, one town council and fifty three shires. Gympie was one of the six city councils.

She then went on to say that children who had developed reading habits were able to express intelligent opinions on everyday questions. One wonders what the Mayor and Councillors made of that. Miss McMinn had really done the sums and she went on to say that there were approximately 3000 children attending schools in Gympie. A Children's Library should cater for those in the 4 - 14 year age group. This should be a building of at least two rooms, 1000 sq ft, which would need to be shelved and painted. It required 2500 books for a beginning, a reference library and book binding equipment. The cost of books for circulation would be £1250, those for reference £200 and £100 for book binding equipment. Allowing for Government subsidies the approximate cost to Council would be £775 plus the cost of renting accommodation. A new building would attract a Government subsidy of up to £4000. Although there were no subsidies available for wages she thought the building could be painted and then run by volunteers.

The Council obviously pondered over this for some time before passing it over to the School of Arts. In February 1961 the Misses McMinn were asked by the School of Arts Committee to help set up a Children's section. Their suggestions were: age group 6 - 13 years, average cost per book 10/-, upkeep cost £25 per 100 members and a nominal charge could be justified. In April 1961, the Secretary wrote to the Widgee Shire Council asking for an annual subsidy towards the purchase of new books. Money was obviously becoming tight again.

The Committee decided to buy some new children's books and the section opened in May 1962. By July four children had joined. The books would be available to children as part of their parents entitlement. (It is not stated whether this was an extra entitlement). Non-subscribers could

borrow them at 3d. per book. Miss McMinn's pleading hadn't brought forth the result she had hoped for but the fact that they were among the very few councils not actively involved in running free libraries had once again been pushed under the Council's collective nose.

The selection of books arriving from England was still thought to be poor. In 1963 it was decided to send the suppliers a new list of authors in the hope of improving the situation.

In August 1964 Mrs Miller died aged 71 years. Mrs Miller had been Librarian and Secretary for twelve years. Miss Eunice Turk was appointed as the new librarian at a salary of £9. 9. 0 per week to start on 19 August 1964. She, in turn, gave thirteen years service to the library.

It would probably be unfair to describe these as years of stagnation but they certainly were not ones of any real progress. In the community at large this was a period of prosperity and participation, particularly the 60's. The last of the wartime restrictions had long been left behind and new opportunities were appearing. On the library scene, book clubs where books arrived by post on a regular basis were popular and many young couples started their home library with the well-bound, well selected works of The Book Club. Every town of any size had a book-exchange full of an increasingly wide range of paperbacks. Many of these innovations could have an adverse effect on a library but they could also open up new horizons.

This was a time of participation. The population on a whole were becoming much more involved in making things happen and much more aware of their ability to control their own destinies.

A failure to grasp the potential provided by this awakening now, and particularly in the early years of the 70s, was another nail in the coffin of the School of Arts.

Australia and the World in the 1960s

Television was introduced to Gympie.

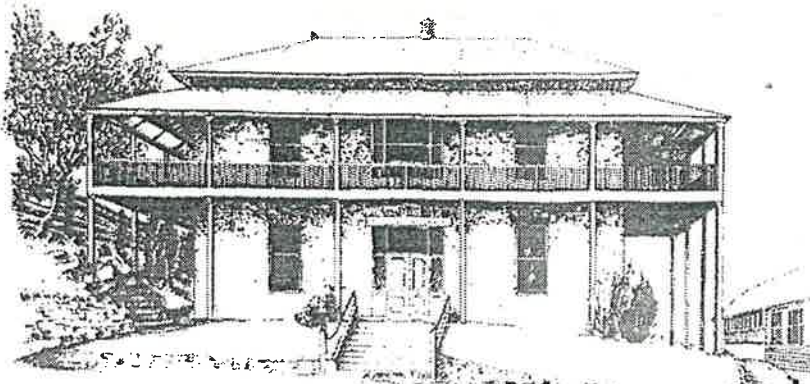
Motels were built along major highways.

More people could afford a reliable car.

Gympie's drive-in-cinema opened in 1968.

In 1965 Australia introduced conscription for the first time for overseas service.

Vietnam polarised public opinion in a way that hadn't been seen for generations and it emphasised that politics is about power and power affects people's lives.



Movement towards a free public library service

The 1970's were years in which more people realised the advantages of tertiary education not only at a university but in a wide range of other institutions. The Whitlam Labour Government discontinued Commonwealth Scholarships and made a university education free to all who could qualify scholastically. Possession of a formal qualification recognised by a professional body or institution became more significant in the workplace. This new emphasis was to lead to a local controversy later in the decade.

The move towards a statewide, free public library system was gaining momentum, eased subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, by the government. The results weren't always exactly what they had hoped for. The Twenty-third Annual Report of the Library Board of Queensland (1968) made the point that "of seventy three local authorities conducting free library services, only four employed a qualified librarian in-charge and only six others employed a librarian who was partly qualified."

The early 1970's saw a rise in the demand for Adult Education. The Technical College became a TAFE College and all except the most obviously "hobby" classes were held there. The hobby type classes which had been held in the library came to an end with the founding of the Gympie Adult Education Organisation which took them under its wing together with a wider range of educational subjects. This organisation was built around subject leaders who set their own programmes and arranged their venue. The library was not on any of their chosen locations. The Central School was the first and most popular venue for classes which were held at night.

In January 1973 the Commonwealth Government made \$5,000,000 available for the development of libraries in Colleges of Advanced

Education. The State Government was building libraries in State Schools at an increasing rate and Methods of Instruction courses became more common in industry. Audio-visual methods of training became more sophisticated and in retrospect these were stepping stones to the computer technology of the next decade. Meanwhile the School of Arts library just kept plodding along.

The report in *The Gympie Times* of the 1974 AGM could have been written forty years earlier. "This year has been a difficult one with the price of books and other items increasing sharply while membership has remained stable".⁶³ Expenditure on books and magazines was \$873 and on salaries \$3325. Subscriptions were \$1400 and grants totalled \$3975. From these figures it can be seen that on an income of \$5400 only 17% was spent on new books and magazines and about 60% went on salaries which, individually certainly weren't high. As annual subscriptions were \$7 it means they had less than 200 subscribers.

In December 1974, Miss G. Huish, State Library Board Extension Services Librarian, wrote a report for the Gympie City Council on the establishment of either a Municipal Library or a combined Municipal and Regional Library. Her terms of reference are unknown but they certainly don't appear to have included any consideration of a revamped School of Arts Library.

A Regional Library had several advantages. It gave access to all the stocks of books held by each Municipality, it made more effective and economical use of staff through centralised ordering and processing, and it attracted a higher Government subsidy which was about \$1.20 per head. A minimum of three councils was required to form a Regional Library.

Noosa, Landsborough and Maroochy Shires were already discussing a regional library service and promised to keep Gympie informed of their progress. In December 1974 the Gympie City Council decided to approach the Widgee Shire Council and also Kilkivan Shire Council to explore the idea of a regional library. One Gympie councillor said "that a lot of Gympie people go to Kilkivan to take books out of the library there because these books were not available at Gympie, this is hard to stomach".⁶⁴

Things were not going well in Australia at the time and there was both inflation and unemployment. The Federal Government initiated several schemes to stimulate growth and employment including the R.E.D. (Regional Employment Development) Scheme. The Gympie City Council put forward several proposals and received a total grant of \$73,000 in January 1975. Of this sum it allocated \$30,000 to renovating the School of Arts building to function as a Municipal Library and \$21,000 to buy equipment for the dump. The Council must have been very persuasive or the guidelines very flexible because the money was given for work on a building they didn't own and if the renovations actually took place they weren't likely to be labour intensive.

The Council started to use some money in May 1975 in clearing the land at the back of the Library to create a carpark. This really upset the School of Arts Trustees and Committee as, although the Trustees had agreed to forego the Trust and hand it over to the Council if that was in the best interest of all concerned, no formal agreement to do so had been entered into. As the Chairman of Trustees was Mr R.N. Witham who had occupied the mayoral chair for many years. The Council were dealing with a man who not only knew what had to be done but how it should be done.

Meanwhile discussions were going on about what to do with the old Technical College buildings which had started life in 1910 and subsequently been enlarged and an additional building erected. For a while the most promoted idea was that it be used as a teacher's centre for local teachers to use as they saw fit. Finally in November 1975 it was announced that it would be used as a Further Education Centre, the exact form of which would be decided later.

After its rather shaky start the Council moved very cautiously in its negotiations with the Trustees. In August 1975 at the AGM the Chairman reported that negotiations were taking place between the Trustees and the City Council about a possible takeover of the School of Arts in the New Year. The library budget for that

financial year was \$7500 compared to Noosa's \$30,000.

The negotiations eventually bore fruit and on 12 December 1975 Mr Witham announced that the Trustees would resign as from 31 December in order that the Council could take over the building and grounds. The Committee were asked to continue running the library until the new Council took office after the 1976 elections. The Committee would continue receiving the rent from tenants in the building. What that represented in cash is shown by the following figures for March 1977. Weekly rents were as follows: Wide Bay Burnett Regional Council paid \$12.50, the Police Department \$15. 00 and the National Fitness Council \$11. 50.

The Committee worked as hard as ever to sustain and improve the library by promoting "Library Weeks" and starting a large-print section for the visually impaired, but they still bewailed the lack of public support. In February 1977 the Council gave an additional \$7000 as an interim measure to allow some improvement to be made to the supply of books. That they continued to work hard to support an institution whose days they knew were numbered spoke volumes for the dedication of the librarian and the Committee.

The last Chairman of the School of Arts Library Committee, which included two Gympie City Aldermen, was Mr Don Spacie. Mr Spacie



Mr Don Spacie
Courtesy of Gympie Times 18 July 1981

joined the committee in 1973 and served it and The Friends of the Library which he helped to found, until his death at 84. He started the Friends of the Library Housebound Service which still delivers books to people who, for one reason or another, cannot get to the library. This service was originated to serve the two local nursing homes and now serves nursing homes, retirement units and private homes. Don Spacie continued to work in this service even after a road accident in his 80th year. It was men of his stamp who had kept Gympie School of Arts alive when so many similiar institutions had perished.

So the School of Arts library was sentenced. Although it had been a sickly and largely unloved child which had never really known robust health, what caused its ultimate demise? The simplest answer is that its time had come. The campaign slogan for the Australian Labor Part

in the 1972 elections was "IT'S TIME" and this was a shrewd appreciation of the feel of the 70's. People generally had higher expectations of standards of performance from public services including education and libraries. The population boom which has been a feature of life in South East Queensland had its first rumblings at this time. Land was relatively cheap. The Dairy Industry restructuring led to farms on the market. "The grass roots" movement appealed to many considering an alternate lifestyle. Even Independence for Papua New Guinea brought people to the district. The most telling factor was of course the realisation by the State Government that the days of libraries run by voluntary committees and unqualified staff were over. The level of expenditure that would be required to provide the modern library service which the taxpayers expected could only be controlled by professionals.

much of the criticism of the take-over of the library was that if it was so poorly supported as a School of Arts Library, what was the justification for spending on something which obviously very few people wanted?

In the period between the announcement of the council's decision and the opening of the free library the annual subscription had risen from \$7 to \$10. Presumably some Gympie residents held off renewing existing subscriptions or opening new ones because they knew a free library was only a matter of time. Membership fell dramatically.

The crux of the matter is that the Council's actions and the way in which Gympie was changing were reflections of higher expectations amongst the population at large.

Alderman Rees and her committee knew that cosmetic changes even if supported by increased financial support would not be enough. They had to create a modern library from scratch. A transformation of this magnitude which would affect every facet of the library's operations would need careful planning and supervision. The choice of librarian and library assistant had to be a first priority of the Council. This led to the most personal and acrimonious area of the debate most of which had to be borne by Mrs Rees Miss Eunice Turk had been librarian since August 1964 commencing at £9. 9. 0. a week and increasing slowly to approximately \$75 a week at the time of the takeover. Her employment by the School of Arts would automatically cease on 1 June 1977.

Earlier that year the council had started the selection process for the first Municipal Librarian. There were four applicants including Miss Turk. After the usual procedures it was announced that Mrs G.E. Kirwin of Brisbane had been appointed at a salary of \$11754 per year. Miss Narelle McHarg was appointed as library assistant (the post she had held at the School of Arts) from a panel of fourteen applicants, and was to be paid \$77 per week. Mrs Kirwin's appointment immediately raised hackles because she was an outsider. Apparently a parks foreman and a building inspector had both been brought in from outside just before. The salary level was also criticised as being extravagant and the point that the library assistant was going to be paid approximately the same as the librarian had previously received did not go unremarked. Mrs Kirwin bought the dispute to an end by declining to accept the appointment, preferring to go to a job in Sydney, a possibility she had mentioned to the selection committee during her interview.

The situation then arose that the library was left with Miss McHarg doing all the work so the council decided that books could be returned to



Joyce Lilley, First President of the Friends of the Library (left) and Jean Kesteven, First Qualified Librarian

the library but no books issued. The Mayor, Mr Vernados, did state that "if anyone really wants to borrow a book, they should contact either me or the Town Clerk".⁶⁸ This remark, admittedly made in difficult circumstances, suggests that the Mayor, whilst trying to be helpful, didn't understand that the sort of readers a good library should and would attract ALWAYS want a book to read. It isn't like out-of-hours medication. The former Mayor and Chairman of Trustees of the School of Arts, Mr Witham, then rejoined the debate. He reiterated his previously expressed view that only a joint operation by both Gympie and Widgee would have the financial capacity necessary to fund the library. That this was an honest opinion honestly held cannot be doubted but memory may have played him false when he quotes 600-700 subscribers. He believed that the council should hand back the library to the School of Arts and that Miss Turk should be reinstated.

The appointment of Miss Turk was championed by many who quoted her excellent and faithful service particularly during a time of very tight purse strings. One correspondent made the point that \$8500 allocated for books in the first year of the free library was probably more than Miss Turk had had to spend during her entire tenure of office. It appears also that when the Trustees were discussing the transfer of ownership to the council, at least one of them thought Miss Turk's tenure was guaranteed, if only as an assistant.



Ailsa Dawson Local Historian

In any case the council now had an opportunity to have their cake and eat it. The departure of Mrs Kirwin led to a council debate, which led to Miss Turk being reappointed to her former head assistant's position on a temporary basis.

The alternatives canvassed at the meeting were:

1. That Mrs. Kesteven be appointed as qualified librarian.
2. That Miss Turk be appointed to her former job till the Gympie City Council had discussed the matter with the Widgee Shire Council.
3. That Miss Turk be appointed on a temporary basis.
4. That Miss Turk be reappointed to her position at the library and that the council reconsider the need to appoint a qualified librarian or assistant.

Alderman Rees supported by Alderman Kerr then moved that Mrs J. Kesteven as the next suitably qualified applicant be appointed. The meeting then heard a letter from the Principal of Gympie High School urging them to appoint Mrs Kesteven. Statements were then made which must have filled Mrs Rees with horror and that all she had achieved so far was at risk. "The council doesn't want to build a Taj Mahal and then have to look around for someone to use it - this is not the time for a qualified librarian".⁶⁹ Can

one believe that the Aldermen really understood what the Council's Library Committee wanted to achieve? A vote was then taken and Miss Turk was appointed on a temporary basis at an annual salary of \$8079.

This led to a full scale debate through the pages of *The Gympie Times* which argued both the value of a qualified librarian and Miss Turk's suitability for the post. The point that personalities were influencing decision making was not missed. One correspondent objected to the appointment of a married woman when there were unemployed single women and girls in Gympie.

Using the name Reactionary, a person writing to *The Gympie Times* in June 1977 had, albeit sarcastically, given his ideas on the selection of a qualified librarian.

A professional librarian might insist on an independent purchasing policy, and instead of ordering only the harmless, innocuous minor fiction works now available, might even presume to buy non-fiction works, some of which may contain challenging and thought provoking material. An educated, literate, thinking public is a dangerous public. Such people dare to question, criticise, challenge and comment upon accepted standards. They even vote well-meaning councils out of office. The librarian might even be guilty of contaminating the library shelves with such filthy, smutty literature as "Lady Chatterly's Lover" or "The Canterbury Tales", and, worse still, may allow our teenagers to even presume to buy non-fiction works, some of which may contain challenging and thought provoking material. An educated, literate, thinking public is a dangerous public. Such people dare to question, criticise, challenge and comment upon accepted standards. They even vote well-meaning councils out of office. The librarian might even be guilty of contaminating the library shelves with such filthy, smutty literature as "Lady Chatterly's Lover" or "The Canterbury Tales", and, worse still, may allow our teenagers to borrow such books. Gympie people must not be provoked into thinking or reasoning and must not be brought into contact with such purveyors of pornography as D.H. Lawrence or Geoffrey Chaucer.⁷⁰

The Aldermen were obviously aware of these letters and on 26 July debated the matter again. Mrs Rees had to battle all the way but in the end she won five votes to three for Mrs J.S. Kesteven to be appointed as librarian at a salary of \$11754 a year. This meeting also heard comments that this figure was far too high but presumably was governed by an appropriate award. The decision had been further complicated and forced on the council by the fact that the Municipality Officers Award said that a person could only be employed

on a casual basis for up to three months so a decision had to be made on Miss Turk's appointment.

The die was finally cast, and the option of a qualified librarian with an assistant had won. The most regrettable aspect of this debate is it was totally unnecessary. Miss Turk and her predecessors had obviously worked hard and given much of themselves to the School of Arts library but that type of organisation had had its day.

Just as libraries were changing - Gympie's much later than most - so was the role of the librarian. The prime responsibility of the School of Arts Librarian was the physical security of the books and fittings. (Remember the vigilante patrols and heavy fines?) The successive secretaries and librarians had always been the servant of their committee, very much reactive. If the council wanted to achieve its aim of a modern library service they were going to have to be guided by their librarian. They presumedly had no problems accepting the advice of their City Engineer, and they had to learn that the professional must always be heeded when talking on their field of expertise. The government had been aware of this for years and had structured their subsidies accordingly. Miss Turk had been overtaken by events and it is a pity that her supporters didn't realise this and make her leaving the library more a celebration of her hard work than the squabble it became.

The library opened in September 1977 under the direction of the librarian Mrs J. Kesteven. Mrs Kesteven was the wife of a well known local

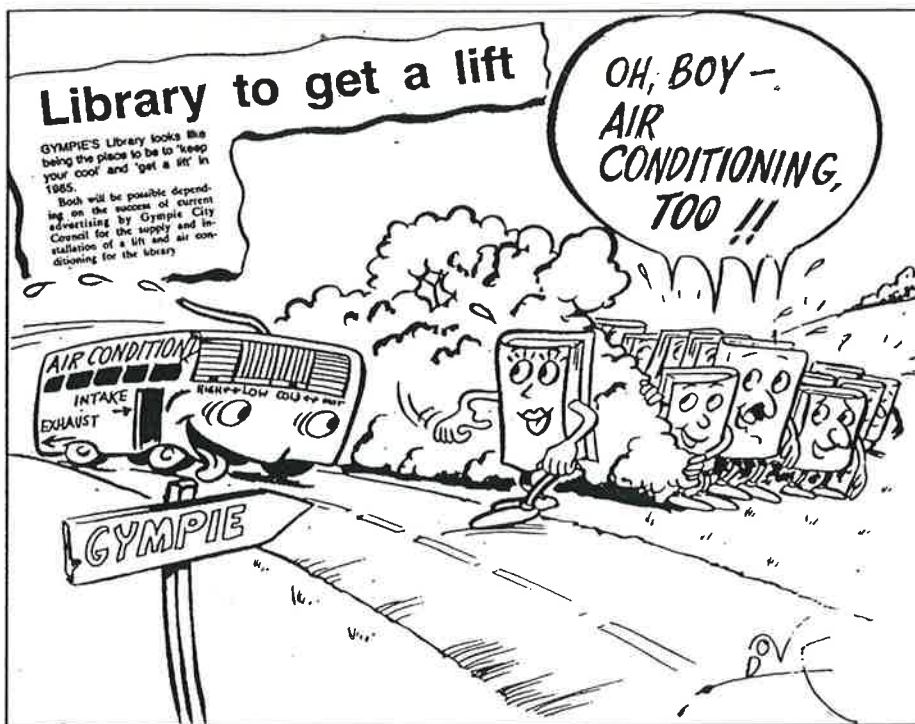
doctor who had in fact stood for Mayor in the 1976 elections. Mrs Kesteven was a graduate of Sydney University who, when her children had grown up, had attended Queensland Institute of Technology graduating with a Graduate Diploma of Library Science. Prior to being appointed to the Gympie Library she had been Branch Librarian at Springwood. She was, in my opinion, the ideal choice to be the first Gympie Municipal Librarian. Professionally her qualifications were unassailable and equally importantly she knew Gympie and Gympie people. Her background and maturity ensured that she would be able to guide and influence the Aldermen and Council staff in the difficult early years of the library.

Words such as "dingy" "discouraging", the books "old, damaged out-dated and unattractive" were used to describe the library that Mrs Kesteven took over. There was obviously a lot of work to be done and like any good commander she set out her aims:-

1. To phase in as smoothly as possible the changes necessary to move from the School of Arts to Council management.
2. To maintain and improve existing services including SPELD Books which are available to all requiring them, and a supply of books to readers in Winston House and Cooina with Mr Spacie's kind cooperation.
3. To begin building a professional catalogue of library stocks. This is a time consuming activity especially in the foundation stage. When established it requires systematic



Ken Dove
Gympie Times
28 January 1984



Ken Dove
Gympie Times
Saturday 12 January 1985

and regular attention to maintain. It is necessary because it is the one way to have full control, and the use of the library's holding easily available both to members and staff.

4. To cooperate fully with other council staff in detailed planning and preparation for the building alterations, so that the library can come into full operation as soon as possible after the builders move out.⁷¹

There was obviously a lot of dead wood on the shelves and it was decided to hold what was described as an Antique Book Sale. Before this could take place however representatives from the John Oxley Library (the Historical Collection of the State Library) sorted through the Gympie collection to select books worthy of their shelves. The books were grimy and students from the two State High Schools helped in the dirty work of preparing them for inspection. Finally John Oxley took some books, a number went to the loan collection of the State Library and about 100 were retained in Gympie as a basis of an Historical Collection. One of these was A.J. Campbell's *Australian Birds, their Nests, and Eggs* published in 1883 which is still in the Gympie Library Historical Collection.

Most of the remaining books were of 19th century vintage and of doubtful value and some "multi-volumes" with numbers missing. In the end some 1500 books were sold which raised over \$200. By August 1977 the membership was 250.

To replace this stock the State Library provided a basic collection of 500 non-fiction

books covering all general subjects, and 100 large print books, all on long term loan. It also provided the facility for the library to borrow specific books and cassettes to answer requests from borrowers. The rationale was that this would enable Gympie to spend a higher proportion of its book budget to build up the reference section. Widgee Shire was still undecided about the library and provided no funds in 1977.

In 1978 the State Library made a further loan of 200 adult fiction, 100 large print books, 200 junior fiction and 200 easy titles. The physical condition of the library was the next problem and in March 1978 two contracts were signed, one for \$10,846 for alteration and repairs and another for \$2,200 for electrical alterations. The alterations were largely confined to the ground floor where the partitions were removed and the library for the first time was opened up. The National Fitness Club office moved upstairs to join the State Emergency Service and the Department of Health's Community Health Care Service.

By April 1978 the membership was 900, 1500 new books had been purchased, there were 1300 books were on loan from the State Library and 350 requests had already been filled by special loans from the State Library.

There is no doubt that in those difficult early days the State Library gave strong support. The Gympie Council too, urged and prodded by Alderman Rees, honoured their commitments. There is no doubt in my mind that having a

professional librarian in charge was a major factor in both situations.

In August 1978 the Widgee Shire Council decided to be involved in the library. A six member Gympie/Widgee Library Committee was instituted, the Chairman to alternate annually between Councils. (This system remained until the Councils amalgamated in 1993.) There were now 1500 library members and it was agreed that based on population/membership Gympie would make an annual contribution of \$49550 and Widgee \$8658. From this \$14000 would be spent on books and \$8000 on improvements. On 10 August 1978, the Member for Gympie officially opened the new library. Mrs Kesteven must have

been more than satisfied with her first year's work.

In 1977 Mrs Elaine Brown had written to *The Gympie Times* arguing most effectively for a free public library. Later as a Widgee Shire Councillor her husband Geoff was a constant fighter on behalf of the library both in Council and as a member of the Joint Library Committee.

The State Government was being criticised over its level of subsidies for public libraries. In reply it pointed out that the total had risen from \$284,000 in 1971 to \$2.6 million in 1978. Whatever other factors were involved, an increase of almost tenfold in seven years was impressive.



Public Acceptance

Each of the next few years was marked by a milestone of progress. In 1980 a Library was opened at Tin Can Bay in the refurbished Progress Hall. This was an initiative of the Widgee Shire Council. Although it was only opened on Friday afternoons this created an awareness of the value of a library which was to be shown in 1983. At that time the Widgee Shire Council decided that Tin Can Bay needed a library, a Senior Citizens Centre, an Administrative Office and a Civic Hall. The first one built was the library.

In May 1980, the Friends of the Library decided to expand Mr Spacie's book delivery service to include a housebound service for any library member who, for one reason or another, was unable to get to the library. The service still runs today and is, in my opinion, the most valuable contribution of the Friends of the Library.

In September 1980 the range of services of the library and the membership were growing so rapidly that an additional professional librarian was needed. There were seven applicants. The successful one was Miss Kit Kugatoff - a Batchelor of Arts with a Graduate Diploma in Library Science and a former pupil of the Gympie High School. The appointment of a second professional librarian within three years of the great debate is an interesting comment on the advantages of professionalism. It is not possible to establish a direct link but by March 1982 there were four local students studying for a degree in Library and Information Science through the Riverina College of Advanced Education.

Mrs Rees did not stand at that year's elections and returned to teaching. The library, the Joint Library Committee, the Friends of the Library but above all the citizens of Gympie and Widgee owe her a great deal. Much of the controversy at the time of the council takeover led to criticism of her personally which, in my opinion, was

completely unjustified but also made harder to bear by what appears to have been a lack of support publicly by people from whom she could have expected to receive it.

The budget for financial year 1982/83 shows how the library had grown and where the money came from and how it was spent. Total expenditure was estimated at \$106,000. The contributions from the two councils were based on 51% from Widgee and 49% from Gympie providing an income of \$54,000. This was boosted by a government subsidy of \$31,300 and an additional subsidy for salaries of \$21,600. The main items of expenditure were to be \$75,600 on salaries and \$20,000 on books. Kilkivan Library joined the Gympie/Widgee library in offering reciprocal borrowing arrangements.

Towards the end of the financial year money again became tight and it was decided not to open the library on Saturday mornings. The problem was that a minimum of two people were required to operate the library on Saturday morning. A lot of the time this was carried out by casuals whose wages qualified for a government subsidy but when qualified staff worked on a Saturday no subsidy was available. At the same time the Federal Government made \$4,000 available to employ a female library assistant for 26 weeks. The library now had a permanent staff of four.

At the start of the next financial year (1983/84) the Library Committee decided to trim its operations in an effort to contain libraequired to operate the library on Saturday morning. A lot of the time this was carried out by casuals whose wages qualified for a government subsidy but when qualified staff worked on a Saturday no subsidy was available. At the same time the Federal Government made \$4,000 available to employ a female library assistant for 26 weeks. The library now had a permanent staff of four.

At the start of the next financial year (1983/84) the Library Committee decided to trim its

operations in an effort to contain library costs. The most obvious result was a reduction in the hours the library would be opened to the public. From 1 July 1983 the library would open from 1pm to 5pm Monday to Friday; the staff would work from 9am to 5.15pm on the same days. This led to a considerable outcry in the press and in October the Saturday mornings were reintroduced. The reduced weekday hours would remain in force until September 1985 and in October that year a Thursday evening session was added.

An allocation of \$70,000 was made in the 1983/1984 budget to erect a purpose-built library at Tin Can Bay. The existing library was run on a voluntary basis by Mr and Mrs Knox who knew that more books would attract more borrowers. They currently had 141 adult and 32 junior members. Work wasn't started on the new building until February 1984 by which time the estimated cost has reached \$85,561. In June 1985 the position of a Library Assistant for Tin Can Bay was advertised and the library opened for business. The opening hours were 1pm to 4pm on Tuesdays and Fridays. The main library was not being forgotten and in November \$11,000 was spent on renovations to the main room upstairs. This room, which had started life as the reading room of the School of Arts, had seen the last of its various tenants. The partitions were removed, the necessary woodwork repairs made, the whole painted and the carpet laid. The area was made available for displays of arts, crafts and others of a cultural nature. Miss Ailsa Dawson, a noted local historian approached the Library Committee for space to hold a Local History Collection. This was the start of the Library's Historical Collection.

The first months of 1984 saw the battle of the Great Table War between the Mayor and the library. The war was fought over a solid cedar table, three metres long by one metre wide which was donated by Clara Henry and had been in the library since 1920. The Mayor, during a visit to the library in January 1984 considered that it was not being used appropriately and would serve a much better purpose as a committee table for the City's Aldermen. He had it taken to the Council Chambers. When taken to task in the press the Mayor pointed out that when the Council took over the library they also gained ownership of all the fittings. The counter argument put by Don Spacie was that ownership was actually vested in the CITIZENS of Gympie. The Aldermen then met and voted to keep the table. However pressure was mounting amongst the population and in March the Council decided to return the table to the library. This unhappy affair didn't stop the Gympie City Council representatives on the Joint Library Committee

supporting plans announced in March 1984 to spend \$60,000 on improvements to the library.

The building received a "lift" quite literally early in 1985 with the installation of a book lift. At the same time, air conditioners were installed in the staff workrooms. Further renovations allowed for the expansion of library shelving upstairs and the establishment of a Local History room. Three extra staff would be employed whose salaries would attract a Government subsidy in the first year but thereafter would be a total charge on the Councils. The staff would now total seven.

The last major event of 1984 was a Review of the State Library of Queensland held in November. In its wide-ranging submission the Joint Library Committee emphasised the technological explosion that was taking place and emphasised that Gympie and Widgee both had above national and state averages for over 65 year olds and under 15 year olds.

Early in 1985 the library signed up its 10,000th member. The Tiaro Shire was still trying to come to an agreement with either Gympie/Widgee or Maryborough or both over a library service for its citizens but no accord was reached at this stage. In October *The Gympie Times* undertook to underwrite 50% of the cost of a microfilm reader with attached photo-copier. The remainder of the cost came from the two councils, the Gympie Historical Society and the Gympie Genealogical Society. This piece of equipment is still in the Local History room and is in such demand as to require a pre-booking system. From October 1985, library hours were extended to 8.00pm on Thursday nights to cater for late night shoppers.

At the end of January 1986 Mrs Kesteven retired. Her strength of character supported by a clear understanding of what had to be done enabled her to transform a dingy, dusty lending library into a substantial resource centre the whole community could be proud of. Although one of her great skills was the ability to find and organise volunteers and she had many supporters in the community at large, in her official dealings with the Library Committee it often appeared that she lacked the support which she could reasonably have expected. The problem of dissipation of resources and effort by the establishment of the Tin Can Bay library and the proposed Imbil library was highlighted by the following figures as at March 1986:-

Imbil had 2000 books - Population 500

Tin Can Bay had 3500 books - Population 100

Gympie/Widgee had 15000 books - Population 25,000

Tin Can Bay had 16% of the books for 6.5% of the population. Notwithstanding this it was decided in April to go ahead and build a branch library at Imbil to cost \$60,000. This building was opened in July 1988 as a Bi-centennial project and cost slightly under budget.

Miss Kit Kugatoff who had become Chief Librarian upon the retirement of Mrs Kesteven brought some disturbing figures to the notice of the Library Committee in August 1986. They concerned the shortage of books. Gympie Library had 0.83 books per head of population compared with Noosa 2.05, Maryborough 1.5, Caloundra 1.03, Hervey Bay 2.2 and so the list went on.⁷² Similar disparities appeared in the holdings of periodicals, newspapers and audio-cassettes. The cost of achieving government recommended holdings would need about \$60,000 a year extra from each Council for five years. In November the Library Committee recommended to their respective Councils that the book vote be increased by at least 15% each year over the minimum figure required by the Queensland Library Board. In fact, in the next budget, only an extra \$5250 was made available for books.

Tiaro was still considering how to provide a library service but it wasn't until December 1987 that it decided to subsidise 50% of the cost of subscriptions of residents who joined either the Gympie/Widgee or the Maryborough Library.

The draft budget for 1987/1988 was \$243,413. One wonders what the Aldermen would have thought in 1977 with that first budget of \$7,500. They may well have had some thoughts about the take-over.

Deliberations of the Joint Library Committee in 1987 could well have taken place 60 years earlier. The Committee quite rightly, wanted to encourage the library to shop locally and asked the librarian to state her policy on book purchasing. Miss Kugatoff pointed out that it was standard practice throughout the state for public libraries to use mainly large Australian library suppliers and overseas houses. "Local bookstores could only offer discounts of 15% - 20% whereas the two major library suppliers offered 30% and up to 40% for certain publishers." She added that "the price of books had risen dramatically in the present economic climate of varying exchange rates and cost escalation".⁷³ The second reason for purchasing outside Gympie was based on the needs of collection building. Local suppliers could not stock a wide range of titles over a large variety of subject areas. In 1986/87 almost 11% of the book vote had been spent locally or more than 13% when allowance was made for such items as large-print books which could not be obtained locally.

The problems caused by the falling dollar and budgetary restraints were felt by all Australia's 14000 libraries in 1988. It was calculated that there were six and a half million registered borrowers and that libraries were the second most frequently visited public utility after Australia Post. In October of that year an Australian Libraries Summit was held in Canberra under the auspices of the National Library of Australia.

The proceedings formed the basis of a report written by its Director-General, Warren Horton. The findings were, in part, that networking and the optimum use of technology were probably the best means of reducing costs. It reiterated the fact that on philosophical, equity and practical grounds librarians were loath to create any barriers to access to information.

The Gympie Library building received another boost to its appearance in May 1989, when external painting was carried out.

Throughout the 1980s the range of activities offered by the library service expanded.

Library services for children took on a greater importance particularly after the expansion to the upper storey in the mid 1980s. The library's scrapbook is filled with news items related to school holiday storytelling sessions. Much storytelling was conducted by a dedicated and enthusiastic band of Friends of the Library volunteers.

The expansion of children's services was accompanied by a general change in library philosophy. Librarian, Kit Kugatoff, in an article in *The Gympie Times* (7 September 1984) wrote:

Libraries are no longer the hush-hush affairs they used to be where silence was golden and only a select few availed themselves of its facilities.

A sheet music collection was established in the library. The music was mainly donated by local residents, and repaired and sorted by volunteers.

Many historical items were donated by generous local residents. Once again the community showed its support for the library.

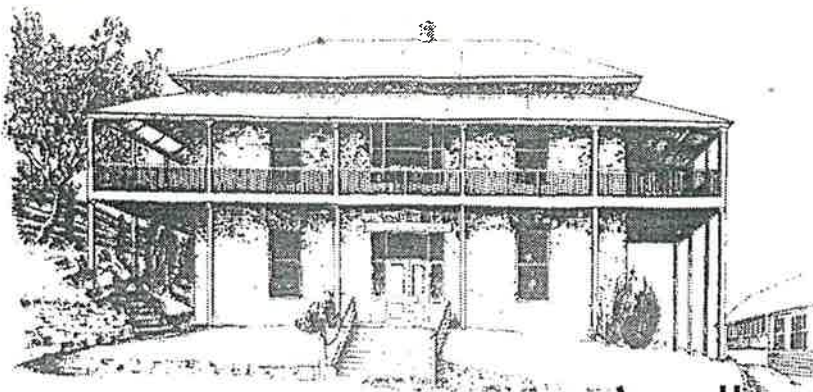
In July 1990 Miss Kit Kugatoff left to become an advisory librarian on copyright laws at the TAFE network libraries. This position reflected the skills and leadership she had demonstrated in Gympie. In her ten years of service she had done a lot to humanise the library particularly with extending services to children.

The new Chief Librarian was to be a lady with a wide experience in libraries both public and

those of tertiary institutions. Ms Moira Maclachlan was obviously looking forward to working with the public and responding to their reading needs.

Once again the financial belt was being tightened and in September a freeze was announced to hold all expenditure at 1989 levels. In October the general subsidy rate for libraries

was reduced by 3% and that for qualified staff from 50% to 46.5%. This led to a budget shortfall for the library of \$9000. However not all was doom and gloom because in December the first Local History Librarian was appointed. Louise Bauer was only to be available for one day a week but her enthusiasm and experience meant that, at last, the large amount of historical material would be put into useful order.



Another Funding Crisis

If these pages have revealed anything it is that the funding of libraries is always contentious and carefully scrutinised. In her first annual report to the Joint Library Committee in July 1991 the new Chief Librarian reported that the library fell far short of the recommended standards for public libraries of two books per person. The library held 38,281 items against the 55,000 the standards recommended. This holding compared very unfavourably with those of other libraries in the area. Progress was being made however and the decision was made to computerise the library operations. The question of funding of public libraries led to the Mead Inquiry in late 1991. Ken Mead was a retired senior public servant who conducted his inquiry by a combination of written submissions and public hearings. Both the library and Friends of the Library made written submissions and representatives of both councils, the two professional librarians and representatives of the Friends of the Library attended the public hearings held in Maryborough. The Friends of the Library submission is included in full as an indication of how they perceived the problem at the time.

Public Library Review

Submission prepared by Gympie/Widgee Friends of the Library Group

c/- Gympie Library

39 Nash Street

GYMPIE QLD 4570

The Gympie/Widgee library serves an area of nearly 3000 square kilometres and a population of 27000 people. Its main library is in the old School of Arts building in Gympie with branch libraries at Imbil and Tin Can Bay.

This submission is on behalf of the Gympie/Widgee Friends of the Library. The primary object of the group is to

support and encourage free public libraries in the City of Gympie and the Shire of Widgee. It does this in a number of voluntary and practical ways. It was formed over a decade ago (one of the first in Queensland) and as a measure of public concern and involvement in "our" library we have never been short of volunteers to supply the necessary assistance.

The Gympie/Widgee library had operated since 1905 as a traditional small town School of Arts library; a catalogue restricted both in size and scope, a membership drawn predominantly from older members of the community and a staff whose main responsibility was perceived to be the security of the books and fittings.

The last fifteen or so years have seen considerable changes in our area. Physical changes such as the cutting up of farms into smaller blocks and the influx of people from interstate and overseas to take advantage of newly available small acreages. There have been lifestyle changes brought about by such factors as early retirement, the do-it-yourself phenomena, the world of arts and crafts, heightened interest in Australian history and traditions, the study of genealogy and a much wider range of sporting, recreational and hobby activities. There have also been vocational and domestic changes; far more unemployment, people by necessity changing to completely new areas of employment, more students staying on to complete Year 12 at high school, a large increase in the number of university students doing external studies, mature age students who are now a permanent part of our high schools, single parent families, women needing to enter or re-enter the workforce who require retraining.

Many of these factors are catered for to some degree by other agencies. The level of assistance available in a country town varies greatly between agencies but it never equates to the level available in Brisbane. In all these examples the library is involved and in many cases is the point of initial enquiry. The range of enquiries made of the library staff is vast - people expect staff "to know".

The Gympie/Widgee library has responded well to all these changes. We have always been extremely fortunate in the calibre of the chief librarian and her staff and they have created an atmosphere of welcome and personal involvement that has made the library what we consider it should be, a social centre which provides free resources for education, information and entertainment for our community.

At present the library does this through books, audio cassettes, newspapers and magazines, reference books and microfiche of local history data. The problem is that we just don't have enough of anything. Our student borrowers at all levels are frequently dismayed at the small selection we can offer on their subject. We can borrow from Brisbane but that involves a delay, is time consuming for library staff and often the student cannot nominate a specific title. Our long-time members complain that they have read most of our books and that we don't add enough new titles each year. This claim is hard to refute. We don't believe libraries should be "snobbish" about books stocked, the public should be offered a wide range of subjects and styles to cater for the individual reading patterns and requirements. Shortage of money makes this selection process very difficult. The fact that we occupy a very old building means maintenance costs are high and in the eyes of the Gympie City and Widgee Shire councils money spent on the library is money ratepayers have to find whether it is for bricks or books. This we accept but it still affects our "disposable income".

For the future we believe that in an increasingly computer literate society the public will expect access to a wide range of computer available information in the form of software and also directly available on computer terminals in the library. Instructional and educational video tapes could also be on tomorrow's library shelves. Many libraries already stock

instructional videos. Limited funds at our library means they are not stocked.

Our library is much more than a collection of books in a building. The library and its staff have an important and expanding role to play in the life of our community. The factors affecting the future of a small country town are complex and interconnected and inappropriate decisions can dramatically affect the health and happiness of their residents. Money spent on library services is well spent both because of its direct results and also because it saves money in other areas.

We found Mr Mead to be approachable, open-minded and a man who had done his homework and naturally we were anxious to read his report. This was not going to be achieved easily or quickly. Our requests for information started with letters to the Premier's Department (who were then responsible for library funding) in February 1992 and continued until December 1993. Most replies were mere acknowledgements, the process being complicated by a transference of responsibility to the Ministry of Arts.

Eventually the details of the report were only obtained by use of the Freedom of Information Act. Mr Mead opened his report by stating that the fundamental premise which led to the review was that the standards of public library services in Queensland was inferior to the standards of public libraries services elsewhere in Australia and the report concludes "that this is so, based on a comparison of performance against criteria generally accepted within library circles as being valid criteria". He went on to say that the fundamentals of the system were generally accepted and that sweeping changes were not required. In fact he believed the only thing the system lacked was money. He concluded that "\$6 million in 1992/1993 will only partially address the current poor situation in public libraries and that it will be necessary to provide an additional \$4.5 million in each of the succeeding two financial years to ultimately elevate the system to an acceptable standard".⁷⁴

No wonder the government didn't want to discuss this report! Mr Mead recommended the money be spent in the following areas:-

1. Improve seriously depleted bookstocks.
2. Employ more professional staff.
3. Improve staff training, and provide basic technology improvements in libraries.
4. Locate an office of the Public Libraries Division in Cairns.

The government rejected the Mead report on the grounds of insufficient detail of costings. It then handed the problem of the Public Library Service to the State Library Board for further information to be collected..

The Friends of the Library felt that this had been a classic example of shooting the messenger and that they had been let down.

Elsewhere in the bureaucracy there were stirrings which would have a profound effect on the library.

The Electoral and Administrative Review Committee was holding hearings as to whether the Gympie City and Widgee Shire Councils should amalgamate. This proposal was to inflame passions far beyond a mere library.

The budget for 1992/1993 was to be the last for the joint Library Committee. It showed how the population had shifted in that 62% was paid by Widgee (\$199,500) and only 38% by Gympie City. In August the joint Microfilming Project of *The Gympie Times* referred to in the foreword was completed and handed over to the library.

This is one of the most valuable resources of our collection.

The standard and frequency of displays in the library improved dramatically in the early 90's and in August the "Dinosaurs Undercover" display held in conjunction with Children's Book Week won the "Promotion of the Year Award" in the category for libraries serving a population between 10,000 and 40,000.

In September the stock figures for the libraries were as follows:-

Gympie	-	30,907
Imbil	-	2,906
Cooloola Coast (Tin Can Bay)	-	4,572

In December the Inaugural Meeting of the new Cooloola Shire Council was held and the library service became "Cooloola Shire Library Service". Gympie Library still retained its name and position as the central branch of the library service. The new Council's first budget increased the book vote and made provision for the appointment of the third professional librarian.

Friends of the Library

Voluntary service has always been a part of both the School of Arts and then the Gympie Library. At the time of the Council assuming the responsibility for the library much of the work required was done by volunteers.

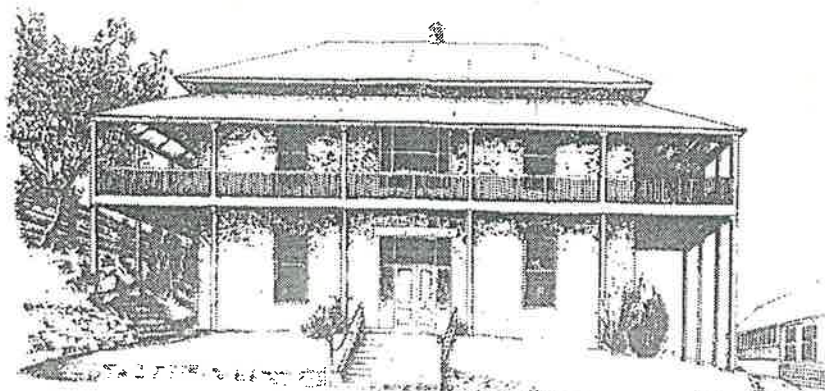
The first qualified librarian, Mrs J Kesteven recognised the importance of this assistance and supported the formation of a "Friends of the Library" group.

The inaugural meeting was held in July 1979. Convenors were elected for five areas:- Internal Assistance, Local History, Children's Activities, Sheet Music Collection and Extension Services. The latter was a delivery service to people who, for one reason or another, couldn't get to the library. A service of this type had been started and carried out by Mr Don Spacie the last chairman of the School of Arts Library Committee. The Gympie-Widgee Friends of the

Library was the first such group in Queensland. The primary object of the group is to support and encourage free public libraries in the Cooloola Shire. Further aims and objectives of the group are as follows:-

- (a) To give voluntary practical help in maintaining and extending library services.
- (b) To promote the extension of library services by securing materials beyond the command of the ordinary library budget.
- (c) To encourage and accept by request or gift donations of books, manuscripts, money and other appropriate material which can enrich the cultural opportunities of the district.

The wisdom of the original concept and good cooperation between successive librarians and the members has enabled the scheme to flourish and continue to this day.



The Computer Age

The computer age dawned in the library in the early 1990's. Computer cabling was laid in the Gympie Library building in October 1991 and the new Fujitsu 2200 computer arrived in December 1991.

Library staff commenced courses in the use of Dynix library software in January 1992, and spent the entire year busily inputting the details of books in the collection onto the computer system.

Gympie Library went "live" with the computer on 8 March 1993 when the first books were checked out using the automated circulation system. All borrowers were asked to renew their membership and issued with a laminated, barcoded membership card.

The publicity surrounding the computerisation attracted many people to the library for the first time. By June 1994 10,690 people had joined the library - 35.5% of the shire's population of 30085.

The number of books borrowed also increased steadily in the 1990s. The percentage increase in loans compared with previous years was 1.35% (89-90), 6.47% (90-91), 4.1% (91-92), 8.2% (92-93) and then in 93-94, a whopping 23.5%! The total number of items borrowed in 93-94 was 273349.

The increase in library use can be attributed partly to improvements in the quality and quantity of books made possible by increased council funding, the weeding from the collection of old items in poor condition, and the increased emphasis in the community on study and information.

The library's OPAC (On-Line Public Access Catalogue) greatly increased the accessibility of the library's collection. The OPACs are a far easier, more efficient and faster method of finding books, than the old card catalogues were, and allow keyword access to all the library's holdings.

Another technological milestone was the purchase in December 1994 of a personal computer with CD Rom drive for public use. During the 1990's more library tasks were able to be conducted on-line eg inter-library loans and searching of other libraries' catalogues and databases.

While the library service has moved with the times and adopted computerised resources, the Gympie Library through its Local History collection still provides residents with a strong link to the past. Old photographs, books and rare documents are preserved for current and future researchers. The Local History section received a boost in 1992, Gympie City's 125th anniversary, when over 400 photographs were added to the collection as part of a joint drive with local paper, Leisuretime. In the same year John Oxley Library generously donated The Heritage Collection - a collection of enlarged laminated photographs depicting the heritage of this area. 1992 also saw the generous donation of a rare books cabinet by local gold mining company Devex/Gympie Eldorado Gold Mines Pty. Ltd.

Children's services continued to increase and the library's August 1993 Children's Book Week display was awarded a QLPC Promotion of the Year award. The winning display's theme was "Dinosaurs undercover" - the upstairs of the library being transformed into a prehistoric wonderland.

The importance of Children's services was acknowledged in 1994 with the appointment of a third qualified librarian - bringing total full time permanent staff numbers to eight.



Conclusion

We are nearing the end of our journey. 28 February 1995 marks ninety years of continuous library operations in the same building.

When the building Sub-Committee of the School of Arts made their final inspection in February 1905 they reported that "on the whole it is a satisfactory building". In retrospect perhaps the architect and builder deserved better.

The Gympie Library has seen huge changes in its 90 years of service. The School of Arts Committee of 1905 would be astounded to see the library so well stocked and so well used.

The library of today is a much used, dynamic community resource catering for the cultural, educational and information needs of all Shire residents.

The building of course would be completely familiar to the 1905 Committee but the library has outgrown its old home. In November 1994 the Cooloola Shire Council announced their decision to purchase the Social Security Building in Mellor Street, and it is planned that the library will move during 1995.

The story of this building and the library is much like the long life-span of an individual. An uncertain and unconfident start, mistakes, wrong paths, missed opportunities but growth, wisdom and a well-loved old age.

It will be sad to leave behind the ghosts of all those men and women who have given so much to create what we have today. It took a lot of effort and a lot of faith but we got there.



Footnotes

1. Candy, P C, " 'The light of heaven itself' : the contribution of the institutes to Australia's cultural history", *Pioneering culture Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*. edited by P C Candy and J Laurent, Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994.
2. *The Gympie Times* , 29 March 1871.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Vickery-Lockwood, R G, *History of Gympie: The 1840's-1900's*.
6. Minister of Mines, November, 1889. Held in Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.
7. *The Gympie Times*, 16 January 1890.
8. *The Gympie Times*, 8 February 1890.
9. *The Gympie Times*, 18 January 1896.
10. Murdoch, W. 'The Rockhampton School of Arts Library and Museum in the Nineteenth Century', *Pioneering Culture Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*, Edited by P C Candy and J Laurent, pp284-85, Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994.
11. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, Gympie, 4 November 1902.
12. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Annual Report*, Gympie, 29 January 1903.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *The Gympie Times*, 10 February 1903.
16. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, 2 June, 1903.
17. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, 10 June 1903.
18. Wallmann, A F *et al*, Letter to the Minister of Education, Gympie, 15 September, 1903. Held in Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.
19. MacGroarty, D C, *Report to the Department of Public Instruction*, Gympie, 22 December 1902.
20. *The Gympie Times* , Novemer 1903.
21. School of Arts Committee, Letter to Hon A Barlow MLA, Gympie, 4 March 1903. Held in Queensland State Archives, Brisbane.
22. *The Gympie Times*, 6 February 1904.
23. Kinmond, J (Auditor), *Report to the Auditor-General*, Gympie, 11 November 1903.
24. *Ibid.*
25. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, Gympie, 8 February 1904.
26. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, Gympie, 10 February 1904.
27. Special Meeting of Subscribers, *Special Meeting Minutes*, Gympie, 2 May 1904.
28. *Ibid.*
29. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 34th Annual Report*, Gympie, 25 January 1905.
30. *The Gympie Times* , March 1905.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Gympie Times*, March, 1905.
33. Wesson, A, 'Mechanics Institutes in Victoria', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, 42 (3), p 614.

34. Kellermeier, S, 'The Architecture of the Institutes. Selected examples from Queensland', *Pioneering Culture Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art in Australia*, edited by P C Candy and J Laurent. Adelaide: (Auslib Press, 1994).
35. School of Arts Committee, School of Arts Annual Report, Gympie, 20 January 1907.
36. Inskter, C, 'Growth and decline of the Queensland School of Arts 1849-1981'. *Pioneering Culture Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*, edited by P C Candy and J Laurent, p 247. Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994.
37. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Annual Report*, Gympie, 26 January 1909.
38. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 46th Annual Report*, Gympie, 30 January 1917.
39. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 44th Annual Report*, Gympie, 27 January 1915.
40. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 45th Annual Report*, Gympie, 15 January 1916.
41. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 46th Annual Report*, Gympie, 30 January 1917.
42. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 46th Annual Report*, Gympie, 14 January 1918.
43. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 48th Annual Report*, Gympie, 28 January 1919.
44. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, Gympie, 17 January 1917.
45. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, Gympie, 4 April 1923
46. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 55th Annual Report*, Gympie, 30 January 1926.
47. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 54th Annual Report*, Gympie, 30 January 1925.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid*
50. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts Committee Minutes*, Gympie, 12 August 1924.
51. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 55th Annual Report*, Gympie, 30 January 1926.
52. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 57th Annual Report*, Gympie, 25 July 1928.
53. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 58th Annual Report*, Gympie, 26 July 1929
54. *The Gympie Times* , 16 July 1936.
55. *Ibid*
56. *The Gympie Times* , 18 August 1938.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. *The Gympie Times* , 8 August 1939.
60. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 72nd Annual Report*, Gympie, 17 August 1944.
61. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 80th Annual Report*, Gympie, 20 August 1952.
62. School of Arts Committee, *School of Arts 82nd Annual Report*, Gympie, 26 August 1954
63. *The Gympie Times* , 7 September 1974
64. *The Gympie Times* , 21 December 1974.
65. *The Gympie Times* , 14 June 1977.
66. *The Gympie Times* , 1 June 1976.
67. *The Gympie Times* , 16 June 1977.
68. *The Gympie Times* , 4 June 1977.
69. *The Gympie Times* , 9 June 1977.
70. *The Gympie Times* , 28 June 1977
71. *The Gympie Times* , 10 September 1977.
72. *The Gympie Times* , 16 August 1986.
73. *The Gympie Times* , 2 December 1987.
74. Mead, KJ. *Review of the Public Library System in Queensland*, Brisbane, 1991.