

William Henry Wooster – Head Teacher at Mackay North State School

By Fay Hamilton (nee Wooster)



It was early evening in July 1958 just a couple of months after a severe cyclone had wrecked the Forgan Bridge, when my father, mother and I arrived in Mackay by car. Dad was transferred from Cairns Central State School where he had been head teacher for the previous seven years to take up the position at North Mackay.

My older sister Delma was working in the Bank of New South Wales in Cairns and later that year was transferred to the Mackay branch.

After a long road trip from Cairns, Dad decided to drive us over to have a look at the school and house where we were to be residing for the next six years. Dad trained the headlights on the house and mum burst into tears. It was old and run down with an outside earth closet/toilet. The next day Dad phoned the regional office in Rockhampton to explain why he couldn't expect his wife and family to live in these rather primitive conditions.

After two weeks housed in a Mackay Hotel, we were happy to hear that an inside toilet had been installed and we moved in.

In those days, the head teacher was "Jack of all trades" – mowing lawns and fixing little things that were broken around the school and house. He was also Returning Officer on election days. There was no such thing as a groundsman in those days.

The job went much further than just head teacher and certainly not only between the hours of 9 to 5. It involved many community engagements and cultural activities, P&C project implementation and supervision and all without administrative staff.

Mum was heavily involved with the Ladies Committee and regularly hosted afternoon tea. She worked tirelessly when the annual school fete came around. She was also nurse to sick children whose mothers were at work.

On most Saturday evenings, our visitors would include school inspectors, other head teachers from neighbouring primary schools in Mackay, along with their families. Some of these friendships lasted for many years.

When Dad was transferred to Brisbane in 1966 Mum cried again as their years living in the North Mackay community were some of the happiest times in their professional lives and of course they were sad to leave.

He was a teacher for 52 years and head teacher for 48 years. He taught in many remote areas including schools in the Gulf Region, Tolga and Normanton in North Queensland and several schools in West Queensland.

When I was born in Rockhampton, Central Queensland, the obstetrician was Doctor Frank Couper Wooster. When Terry and I were married in Mackay, Dad included in his speech that the Doctor said to Mum at my birth. "We Woosters are a fine bunch". I think he enjoyed that story!

William Henry Wooster died in 1983. Aged 78.



A street in North Mackay was named in honour of William.