

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS BUILDING— FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO RESPITE CENTRE

The Christian Brothers building was officially opened on 3 March, 1919 by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, James Duhig.

Duhig, known as 'Duhig the builder', was responsible for over 400 buildings being added to the Brisbane landscape, from churches to schools, colleges and hospitals. He was knighted in 1959.



Sir James Duhig—
Portrait in St Leo's
College, Uni. Qld.

The £4000 building

Situated in Woongarra Street, the school, according to the *Bundaberg Mail*, is "not only the finest of buildings in town, but is described by His Grace as absolutely the best design of school in the State, and that it was his intention to have all future schools in Brisbane built on the same lines."



bun01891 Christian Brothers School ca1920

Designed by Bundaberg architect F.H. Faircloth, and built by Mr W. Guthrie, the structure was described by the *Bundaberg Mail* as "occupying a prominent position in Woongarra Street, near the Austral Hall and presenting a most imposing appearance."

The building was erected on ten feet blocks of brick and cement, and was 127 feet in length, with 15 foot ceilings. There were four classrooms, a nine foot wide front verandah and a larger back verandah.

Specifications of the building included concrete steps leading to a brick and concrete porch, a hardwood frame, and imported Marseilles tiles on the roof. There was also a ventilated turret of ornamental design with Gothic crosses, the largest of which was covered in gold leaf.

Gables were sited at either end of the front of the building, and the builder Mr Guthrie was notably proud of the "huge windows fitted with a patent mechanism to control the opening and closing of same."

Oakhampton Home, a two-story building at 80 Woongarra Street—a former private Grammar School and



Oakhampton Home on left, next to Christian Brothers School ca1926.

Boarding House, was also purchased and renovated for use as the residence of Brothers Hogan (Principal), Reidy and Molloy. Ron Harvey recorded that in 1911, a 'Mrs J. from Tirroan' ran the Home as a Boarding House, but by 1918 the home was "sadly in need of repair". The cost of renovations to Oakhampton Home, building the school and purchasing the land amounted to £7,400.

The Christian Brothers school remained open until 1983, and the buildings were essentially the same, with some remodelling and extensions in 1969. Oakhampton Home was demolished to make way for the school laboratories some time after WWII.

In 1983, Christian Brothers closed its doors, and in 1984 merged with Loyola College for Girls to form Shalom College.

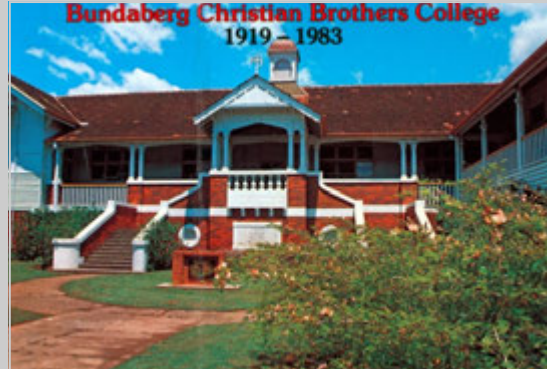
Moving a School

The Christian Brothers School and land was bought by Bundaberg City Council in 1983. After several years use by various tenants, including the Life Education Centre, the Bundaberg City Council decided to use the main building as a new Respite Centre. The centre was designed by Brisbane architects Phillips Smith Conwell and cost \$940,000, including Government funding of \$200,000.



bun01470 Christian Brothers School

Local contractors Herbener Brothers cut the main building into several sections in 1988 for the journey around the corner to the new site.



The following images are part of the Picture Bundaberg Collection, donated by Geoff Bullpitt and the Gracie Dixon Centre.



Who was Gracie Dixon?

Hazel Grace Dixon was born in 1910 in Mt Perry. She was one of 10 children born to Thomas and Liliias Dingle.

Gracie and her husband Archie moved to Bundaberg in 1942—her husband was a relief teacher known as 'Dynamite Dixon' because of his powerful voice.



Gracie voluntarily visited people in the Base Hospital for 30 years, and was instrumental in organizing the Friendship Club, which raised money for local charities. In 1975, 'Auntie Gracie', as she was affectionately known, was named Bundaberg Quota Club's Woman Of The Year, and had a street named after her in recognition of years of giving and helping the community. In 1989 the Gracie Dixon Respite Centre was opened. In a News Mail article from January 5, 1987, Gracie mentioned that she "*loved people, and if you love people you can't go wrong*".

Gracie Dixon died in 1991, and is buried next to husband Archie in the Bundaberg Lawn Cemetery.

After extensive refurbishing of the rooms and roof, the building was reassembled in the current location, and final touches were done by January 1989.

The new respite facility was named after one of the District's best-loved identities, Gracie Dixon, and officially opened by the Minister for Housing and Aged Care, the Hon. P.R. Staples, in a ceremony on 8th July 1989. In an interesting address, Mr Staples told the crowd that he thought "*...it was charming that boys who went to Christian Brothers school may eventually return to use the facilities of the centre.*"

Sue Gammon

References

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The Bundaberg Mail, 3 February, 1919.

All images from *Picture Bundaberg*

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