

Heritage Citation



Brisbane Girls' Grammar School

Key details

Addresses	At 70 Gregory Terrace, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
Type of place	Private school
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Free Style
Lot plan	L941_SP259287
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — January 2013
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Face brick

People/associations

Richard Gailey (Architect)

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

On 28 February 1883, Sir Charles Lilley laid the foundation stone for the first building of a new campus of Brisbane Girls Grammar School next to the Boys Grammar School on Gregory Terrace. The Brisbane Girls Grammar School had opened as a branch campus of the Boys Grammar School on 5 March 1875 in a house near the corner of George and Roma Streets. In 1882, Girls Grammar became independent of Boys Grammar and opened on the new site in 1884. Expanding enrolments saw further buildings added in 1886, 1888 and 1890. By World War I, Girls Grammar had become the most successful and prestigious non-denominational school for young women in Queensland. The school's growth led to the addition of a west wing (1915, extended 1956) and an east wing (1933), all designed by the Department of Public Works. With further additions and extensions the school continues to provide secondary non-denominational education to Brisbane girls.

History

Queensland's grammar schools were established shortly after the colony's separation from New South Wales, under the *Grammar Schools Act* 1860. In the absence of other secondary educational facilities in the new colony, they functioned as quasi-government secular schools, although enrolment was restricted to fee-paying students and holders of a small number of scholarships. Ipswich was the first Queensland town to open a boys' grammar school, in 1863, followed by Brisbane in 1869.

The question of provision of secondary education for girls was raised over the ensuing years. Free primary education was made available for all Queensland's students in 1870, but secondary education for girls was limited, provided only through private ladies' schools, or church schools. In late 1874, the Trustees of the Grammar School, including some of Brisbane's eminent citizens, formed a committee to have a girls' grammar established. Like Queensland's other educational reforms at the time, this movement was championed by former Premier Sir Charles Lilley, Chairman of the Trustees of the Brisbane Grammar School. Lilley's pro-free education stance had contributed to his loss of the Premiership, although he continued to campaign for improvements in education until his death. The Lilley family continued to play a significant role in Girls Grammar well into the twentieth century, with Sir Charles' granddaughter Kathleen serving as headmistress of the school from 1925 to 1952.

The Brisbane Girls Grammar School opened as a branch campus of the Boys Grammar School on 5 March 1875 in a house near the corner of George and Roma Streets in the City. The school aimed to provide an education for its 57 female students equal to that provided for boys, despite views expressed in the local newspapers doubting the necessity of higher education for girls. Its opening predated by six years the admission of women students into the Sydney and the Melbourne Universities.

The girls' school had not opened 'in brick and mortar' (as Lilley had put it¹) and had instead been conducted in the headmaster's residence. Poor conditions and overcrowding led to the resignation of the principal before the close of the inaugural year. She returned after the school was relocated to a private residence in Wickham

Terrace, Spring Hill by the end of that year. However, the school's popularity and record of academic success meant that the number of pupils quickly outgrew its new accommodation. In 1881, lobbying began to establish Girls Grammar as a separate school, and in 1882, Girls Grammar became independent of Boys Grammar. A new building was required for the girls' class and boarding rooms, and a fund to raise £2,000 for the construction was launched. The Grammar Schools Act provided that the government would contribute £2,000 to every £1,000 raised for the school, as well as a £1,000 endowment per year. By June 1882 the fund was fully subscribed, and in September just over two acres of land on Gregory Terrace was reserved for the girls' grammar school. Title to the site passed to the Trustees of the Brisbane Girls' Grammar School in December 1884.

European settlement came to Spring Hill after land sales in 1856 (in the Wickham Terrace and Leichhardt Street areas) and 1860 (from Boundary Street to Gregory Terrace). Trees were cleared and residential growth occurred during the 1850s to 1870s. By the 1880s, Spring Hill had developed a disparate residential character, with substantial houses of the well-to-do on the ridges of Gregory and Wickham Terraces, and workers cottages in the valleys. Gregory Terrace in particular became renowned as one of the elite addresses of Brisbane, in part due to the establishment of the grammar schools. The Boys' Grammar School had removed an eighteen-acre site on Gregory Terrace in 1878, with a new building opened in 1880. The Girls Grammar campus, a much smaller two-acre site adjoining the Boys' school, was gazetted from previously unsold land near the Victoria Park reserve.

Sir Charles Lilley laid the foundation stone for the first building on 28 February 1883. The stone was reported to contain, among other items, an inscribed scroll including the quotation, 'The woman's cause is man's, they rise or sink/Together, dwarfed or God-like, bond or free', although the sentiment was ridiculed in the Queensland Figaro, whose commentator 'would sooner see woman educated to flap a fritter artistically, than to worry around the Greek particles.'²

The new school building was designed by eminent architect Richard Gailey. Gailey was one of Brisbane's most prolific architects, producing designs for a staggering number of buildings over the course of his sixty year career. His work includes some of the most well-known churches and hotels in Brisbane (including the Baptist City Tabernacle (c.1889), Regatta Hotel (1886) and Empire Hotel (1889), residences (including Windermere in Ascot (1886), Cairnville in New Farm (1889) and Moorlands in Auchenflower (1892)) and commercial buildings including the Colonial Mutual Chambers on Queen Street (1883) and Tara House (the Irish Club) on Elizabeth Street (c.1878). Few schools were among his designs, although he had placed second in a competition to design the Toowoomba Grammar School in 1875, and was later engaged to design the School House building for the Boys' Grammar School (1887). Gailey had also contributed generously towards the establishment of a school on the Lang Farm Estate in eastern Toowong, in 1878.

Reports of the progress of construction appeared in Queensland newspapers over the following year. By February 1884 the new school had opened for its 70 students. In order to recommence classes as quickly as possible, the completed building formed only a segment of Gailey's original design. It had cost £6,000, and building funds were set up to make up the debt.

Additions, including a second stage of Gailey's design, were implemented in 1886-87. The work was carried out by contractor George Gazzard, who was simultaneously completing work on another Gailey building (the Treasury Chambers in George Street). The additions included dining and common rooms, convertible to an auditorium, a large central hall, four workrooms and a kitchen. The upper floor consisted of a twenty cubicle dormitory, for the school's boarders. The school was further enhanced between 1888 and 1890 with additions and separate buildings designed by Gailey including a gymnasium and mistress' residence (both no longer extant).

Amendments to the Grammar Schools Act in following years cut funding to the school, and despite bequests from former teachers and students, the school ended some years in debt. However, student numbers continued to grow, spurred on by the school's ongoing academic success, and the need for additional rooms soon became clear. In December 1914 tenders were received by the Public Works Department for additions to the school. The tender of W.G. Kerr was accepted for £3,008 and 17 shillings, and work began on a wing to the west of the main building. The 'fine new building' as it was described in the school's Prospectus in 1917, provided three additional classrooms and art room.

The school's enrolments boomed in the 1920s and by December 1927, the school had 442 pupils. In response to the overcrowding the Department of Works drew up plans for extensions on the east side, balancing the western wing. Enrolments continued to grow, with a record 503 students registered in 1929. 'So crowded is the school,' reported the Brisbane Courier, 'that one of the sitting rooms has had to be converted to a classroom,' reflecting the school's 'progress and development that must inevitably lead to additional buildings in the near future.'³ However, funding difficulties continued and it was not until the early 1930s that work began on the east wing.

The eastern wing was designed to match the western wing, including the gable projection and brick arched window, facing the road. It was built by the construction branch of the Department of Public Works at an approximate cost of £3,313. Opened by the Governor Sir Leslie Wilson in August 1933, it served as the school's new science laboratory.

Brisbane Girls Grammar continued its growth, both in buildings and enrolments, over the twentieth century. Additional buildings constructed include a library (1958, replaced 1973), a second storey on the west wing (1956), additions to the east wing (1969), Gehrman building (1986), the Judith A. Hancock Communications Centre (1992) and Creative Learning Centre (2007). The school continues to provide non-denominational secondary education for young women in Queensland.

Description

The three historic buildings on the campus (central Main Central Building 1883-1889, West Wing 1915/1956, and East Wing 1933) form a cohesive group fronting Gregory Terrace. They share common attributes of building form, hipped roofs, arched windows, masonry walls and colours.

The Main Building is symmetrical with a central pediment and open verandahs flanked by projecting wings at each end. Openings are semi-circular headed, matching the lower verandah frieze between paired posts. The corrugated steel roof features small pediments to the end wings, vents and prominent chimneys. Original cast iron cresting to the ridge has been removed, and the original colour scheme has been considerably altered.

The West Wing which was first built as a single storey building in 1915 and was modified by the addition of a second storey in 1956, is basically symmetrical around a ground floor projection with gabled roof and large arched window. The main core is two-storeyed with a ground floor verandah projection on the western side. The base walls are brick with the upper section rendered and painted. The roof is diamond patterned fibro cement slates with terracotta hip and ridge tiles.

The East Wing mirrors almost all of the attributes of the original form of the earlier West Wing. The materials,

large arched window, hipped slate roof and side verandah all match the similar building on the opposite side of the Main Building.

The three buildings are further unified by a timber picket fence and mature planting to Gregory Terrace.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as a school for girls first established in 1879 and developing on Gregory Terrace since 1884. Brisbane Girls Grammar demonstrates the growth of the colony in the late nineteenth century and the growing importance placed on secular educational facilities for young women in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as the first Girls Grammar school established in Brisbane. The school complex is an uncommon collection of architect-designed late nineteenth and early twentieth century masonry school buildings; and a rare early example of a prestigious secular school.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a school established and developed from the late nineteenth century. The school buildings demonstrate the importance placed on fine, substantial school buildings and the changing uses of space within those buildings as

the practice of pedagogy has changed over time.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a collection of fine late nineteenth and early twentieth century masonry buildings in landscaped grounds, the school is an important element in the open, treed streetscape of the north-western side of Gregory Terrace.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as one of the schools resulting from the importance placed on education by Sir Charles Lilley, former Premier of Queensland; and as one of the few schools designed by eminent Brisbane architect, Richard Gailey.

References

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23. Specification drawn up by architect Richard Gailey, 9th February, 1883. Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, Brisbane, 1883
24. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Picture Queensland
25. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes

available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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