Brooches, Blues and Bloomers: How Material Culture creates, sustains and enriches sport and physical education at Brisbane Girls Grammar School

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School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences
Abstract

This thesis seeks to illustrate how material culture has created, sustained, and enriched the sporting culture of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School, a secular secondary girls’ school in Queensland, while attempting to contextualise the place sport plays in a schoolgirl’s education. There is an obvious void in the historical examination of girls’ physical education and sporting culture and this thesis is unique in the use of material culture as a methodology for its focus. The purpose has been to research the development of schoolgirl physical activity, specifically at Brisbane Girls Grammar School, through the media of objects and artefacts, not only illustrating the impact “things” have on people’s experiences and culture, but also exploring the value of artefacts as resources in the sporting context. Examining specific artefacts from perspectives of usage, style, context, and intrinsic and extrinsic value has enabled an assessment of the sporting and physical education culture of Brisbane Girls Grammar School. To explain the role sport and physical activity played in Queensland’s first secondary girls’ school, representative and original items were selected: prizes and awards for sport and physical education, photographs, and specific items of uniform. By using material culture as the lens, this study has enriched the traditional written history of the School. The thesis is divided into an introduction, followed by three chapters: prizes and awards; a comparison of newspaper photographs and photographs published in the School’s annual magazines; and a selection of three sporting uniform items. A conclusion examines findings and outcomes. Some of the findings include the evidence that material culture is an effective methodology to investigate the culture within a school and how that culture is sustained through material objects; the discovery of detailed facts about specific awards and uniforms; tangible evidence of society’s views of the female athlete throughout the School’s history; and the evolution of elements of the school’s sporting uniform.
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BGGS</td>
<td>Brisbane Girls Grammar School</td>
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<td>BGS</td>
<td>Brisbane Grammar School</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOSSSS</td>
<td>Board of Senior Secondary Schools Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>OGA</td>
<td>Old Girls Association</td>
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<td>QGSSSA</td>
<td>Queensland Girls Secondary Schools Sports Association</td>
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Introduction

The importance of sport and sporting culture to Australians has been eloquently and thoroughly argued, with many scholars exploring sport’s significance to Australian culture. With the emancipation of women in the early twentieth century, the role played by women in Australian sporting culture and national identity slowly unfolded. ¹ Much has been written about the development of women’s rights, universal suffrage and the evolution of girls’ education and, since the 1980s, there has been an increasing research about and analysis of the development of women in sport. ² The place of physical education in women’s education has also received increased interest and necessary discussion. ³ This important scholarship has provided the basis for a much-needed exploration into the Australian context and especially into the landscape of girls’ secondary education in Queensland where very little has been written and evaluated.

It is problematic that research and discussion appears to have begun at the end rather than the beginning. Journalists, social commentators, and academics have discussed, hypothesised, and unpacked the adult world of women in sport. Important and worthy topics such as the assessment of the role sport played in the emancipation of women, ⁴ the achievements of female athletes, ⁵ the


4 Mangan and Park, *From Fairer Sex to Feminism*; Scraton, *Shaping up to Womanhood*; Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*.

5 Howell, *Her Story in Sport*.
work/life balance for women, the lack of media coverage, and the crippling role these latter two dimensions have played in women’s sporting development have been published, discussed and argued. Yet it appears that little research has been conducted on the historical impact of elementary and secondary physical education and sport for girls, with a notable exception by Ray Crawford in the context of Victoria. As a secondary school educator, I believe it is necessary to examine the experiences of secondary schoolgirls, the educational principles of their teachers and administrators, and their curriculum to appreciate the place sport and physical education had and can have on girls and women throughout their lives.

There is a range of international research on the development of schoolgirl physical education teaching and training. Likewise, analyses exist of independent Queensland boys’ schools. However, only Crawford’s work on the development of physical culture and education in independent Victorian girls’ schools provides any detailed insight on this topic in the Australian context. There are a number of published histories of independent girls’ schools in Queensland, however, these texts have a narrative focus on their female students’ sporting involvement and do not explore, in any detail, the role and culture of Queensland secondary girls’ physical education and sport. This thesis fills the void through a case study of Brisbane Girls Grammar School (BGGS).

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2 Crawford, Sport for Young Ladies.


11 I shall be using the terms of Brisbane Girls Grammar School, Girls Grammar, BGGS and Grammar interchangeably throughout the thesis.
In many ways, I am ideally positioned to examine the role of sport and physical education at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. I attended the school as a student and during my thirty-eight year teaching involvement, directed the Health, Physical Education and Sport Faculty for twenty-eight years. In 2010, I authored a book entitled *To Become Fine Sportswomen: The History of Health, Physical Education and Sport at Brisbane Girls Grammar School 1875-2010*. My research for that book confirmed that Brisbane Girls Grammar School has a strong sporting and physical education culture from its inception. While writing the book and utilising the traditional written research sources – documents, minutes, reports, magazines – it also became apparent that material culture played a significant part in the School’s history. By material, I mean the significant prizes such as the Sports Brooch and the Trustees Cup presented on Speech Days, the uniforms worn by the students, the “pockets” or sporting awards won by the athletes and embroidered on their blazers, and the photographs taken of sporting events and physical education classes.

The sporting material culture of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School was included peripherally in *To Become Fine Sportswomen*. In this thesis, however, I focus specifically on the role of material culture in enhancing cultural insights and memories. One example of this is the previously undetected changes in the design of the Sports Brooch and the possible economic and social issues underpinning these alterations. Objects such as the Sports Brooch extend our knowledge and understanding of sporting activity within the School. Material objects can also enhance the School narrative by uncovering stories associated with each artefact: for example, a photograph can stimulate memories and encourage the subject to share and expand the experience, providing more information and understanding. The detail and narrative these objects can bring to this research provides an important insight into the experiences and educational imperatives across the 140-year history of this secondary girls’ school in Queensland, an institution which historically has provided an educational model for many other schools.
Women’s physical education

Education has been regarded as an essential element of the development of men for centuries, creating well-rounded, intelligent and empathetic human beings. From early Greeks, it was considered that leaders needed to have knowledge in the liberal arts as well as physical skills and prowess. This balance of the intellectual and the physical underpinned a comprehensive educational philosophy for male education. The nineteenth-century manifestation of this philosophy for middle- and upper-class boys was the concept of Muscular Christianity established by Dr Thomas Arnold of the Rugby School, in England. This concept became a fundamental element of education for privileged boys where team games were perceived as the “instrument of moral conditioning … a mechanism of control… an antidote to vandalism and even a means of personal enjoyment.”\(^\text{12}\) By the end of the nineteenth century, athleticism had a coherent set of educationally sound principles and became the hallmark for elite boys’ schools.

Not surprisingly, given the British contribution to Australian life, this educational tenet was transferred to the educational landscape of the elite in the Antipodes.\(^\text{13}\) However, some Australian southern schools, such as Wesley College and Geelong Grammar in Victoria, embraced athleticism more enthusiastically than others.\(^\text{14}\) In Queensland, Brisbane Grammar School, under Sir Charles Lilley’s direction and Thomas Harlin’s stewardship, was established with a deep commitment to Dr Thomas Arnold’s philosophy of education. Harlin, who was described as a “disciple” of Dr Arnold, and Harlin’s successor, Reginald Roe, advocated sport and outdoor activities. A strong classics and languages education with subjects such as Greek, Latin, chemistry, history and physics that ran parallel to cricket, athletics, Australian Rules football, cadets and drill.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{15}\)Willey, *The First Hundred Years*, 8.
In contrast, attitudes towards women and sport differed significantly in England. The commonly held view was that physical activity for women was detrimental to their health. The predominantly male medical orthodoxy insisted that women were physiologically and emotionally different to their male counterparts with all the obvious physical differences of smaller skeleton, reproductive organs, and frailer composition, as well as the more nebulous view of an inferior nervous system creating a highly excitable, delicate demeanour prone to over-stimulation. Women were always deemed inferior to their male counterparts, with limited mental and physical energy and weakness. The perception of women, as Patricia Vertinsky argued in *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, was that “No woman ever passed through life without being ill…Thus, every woman is, according to temperament and other circumstances, always more or less an invalid. Therefore, no woman can pursue uninterrupted physical or mental labour”.  

Educators of girls and, more particularly, physical educators, had the challenging task of questioning Herbert Spencer’s nineteenth-century concept of “menstrual disability” and the belief that the body possessed a discrete amount of energy which had to be cosseted. For women, the conservation of energy was geared for childbirth and not physical or mental pursuits. For the adolescent female, the concept of expending mental and physical energy during the onset of menarche was even a greater concern as this time was seen as the “onset of prolonged and periodic weaknesses of womanhood” and, therefore, demanded the need for extended rest to ensure the foundation for each woman’s future. Adolescence was perceived as a time where girls should be concentrating on developing their reproductive systems, not their intellect or hand-eye coordination.

However, the British Schools Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls in 1868 questioned the lack of formal exercise for girls in school curricula and established the foundation for the acceptance of games and calisthenics as a necessary element of a sound curriculum for

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18 Ibid., 48.
19 Ibid., 49.
girls. It is therefore ironic, that, at a time when medical theories expounded conservation of energy and female menstrual frailty, girls’ physical education was facilitated by the therapeutic and health benefits of exercise. The female physical education teacher became the guardian of young women’s health.

Two influential girls’ schools established in Britain were the North London Collegiate School for Ladies (1851) and Cheltenham Ladies’ College (1858). These schools, established by Miss Frances Buss and Miss Dorothea Beale respectively, embraced and embedded physical activity within their curricula. These schools challenged the erroneous nineteenth-century medical beliefs of the hazards of physical activity and academic endeavour for young women. The two schools’ emphasis on physical activity varied, with Miss Buss’s school embracing the concept of games and Miss Beale’s college pursuing the calisthenics system. It is not surprising that as graduates from these schools attended the newly established women’s colleges, physical activity would be an integral part of this experience and reflect, in some ways, the male university experience.

Australia

Across the next two decades in Britain, several factors heralded the shift in the educational significance of physical activity in girls’ education: graduates of these schools, legislation, tertiary institutions facilitating physical education training such as the Bergman-Osterberg Hampstead Physical Training College and Gymnasium for women, and the emergence of the female Physical Educator. This shift was reflected in Australia as British educators migrated to the colonies and established schools. Presbyterian Ladies’ College (PLC) in Melbourne was a prime example. Its first headmaster, Charles Pearson, was a Rugby School graduate, and he promoted the benefits of

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21 McCrone, Playing the Game; Hargreaves, Sporting Females.
22 McCrone, “Play Up!”
physical activity for his students.\textsuperscript{23} PLC opened its doors one month before Brisbane Girls Grammar School in 1875 and the development of physical education and sports ran a similar path in the two schools.

Although Australian society was a traditional, male-dominated society, very similar to England in many ways, there were unique opportunities for forward-thinking individuals to challenge societal beliefs and many educated women in Australia sought financial independence by establishing schools.\textsuperscript{24} In Queensland, Sir Charles Lilley proved to be both forward thinking and radical. Educated at the University College, London, the first English university established on an entirely secular basis and open to both men and women, Lilley believed in, and embraced, compulsory education and equal opportunity for girls. As a lawyer, businessman, politician, and state premier in Queensland, he was in a unique position to influence his peers. This lead to the establishment of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School in 1875, as sister school to the Brisbane Grammar School which had been established in 1868.

In Queensland, compulsory primary school education and the \textit{Grammar Schools Act} in 1860 set the scene for the development and evolution of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School. This, together with the introduction of secondary school education for girls in England in the 1850s,\textsuperscript{25} the establishment of a range of private ladies’ colleges in the Australian southern states,\textsuperscript{26} the development of physical education training,\textsuperscript{27} equal opportunities for women, the first women’s suffrage movement in Victoria in 1884 and the belief that women as well as men could benefit from physical activity, added gravitas to girls’ education, generally, and to the belief that physical activity should be an integral part of a girl’s education in Queensland.

Running parallel to the development of education for girls in the mid-nineteenth century and, more specifically, physical education for girls as a by-product of this education, was women’s

\textsuperscript{23} Crawford, \textit{Sport for Young Ladies}.
\textsuperscript{25} McCrone, \textit{Playing the Game}; Scraton, \textit{Shaping up to Womanhood}.
\textsuperscript{26} Marjorie R. Theobald, \textit{Knowing Women: Origins of Women's Education in Nineteenth-century Australia} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Hansen, and Hansen, \textit{Feminine Singular}.
\textsuperscript{27} McCrone, \textit{Playing the Game}; Hargreaves, \textit{Sporting Females}; Theobald, \textit{Knowing Women}. 
growing interest and involvement in organised sport. The myths associated with physical activity for women were challenged and discredited and women’s physical liberation was an integral part of women’s emancipation. 28 There was, however, still a view that higher education coupled with physical pursuits could “masculinise” girls, which resulted in physical education developing under a therapeutic theme. Accordingly, programs emphasised health and well-being in an attempt to maintain physical activity in the curriculum. 29 This concept morphed into the belief that girls, like boys, could benefit from games and sports through experiencing teamwork, loyalty, sacrifice for the team, and character building. The Brisbane Girls Grammar School Lady Principal (1900-12), Milisent Wilkinson, argued the case in the 1908 Annual Report:

> It is sometimes said that women in their ventures into life do not display the qualities which men possess, self-restraint, good fellowship when pursuing a common aim, the ability to take defeat in good part, esprit de corps, qualities which men first gain as boys, from their games. If this be so, there is all the more reason why girls should be given, equally to boys, the chance to receive such beneficial effects and be no longer debarred from the education of the playground. 30

Initially, the activities deemed “aesthetically pleasing” were perceived as more socially acceptable than the more physically active sports. Participation in sports such as golf, tennis, gymnastics, archery and equestrian events was encouraged. These pursuits were also restricted by fashion and, until greater freedom was experienced in dress, women were confined in more ways than one.

Furthermore, the introduction of the bicycle and the subsequent “craze” of cycling in the 1890s in Australia had an immense effect on women’s lives, generally, and physical involvement, specifically. 31 The bicycle meant dress became more practical, travel more convenient, exercise and competition a by-product, and greater freedoms were enjoyed by women. 32 This provided a

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28 Scraton, Shaping up to Womanhood; Hargreaves, Sporting Females.
30 Milisent Wilkinson, Report 1908, Brisbane Girls Grammar School Annual Reports, BGGS Archives, Brisbane.
springboard into other sporting pursuits. Although they were still fighting social convention, Australian women were exploring a sweeping range of sporting activity during the nineteenth century, often in the face of disapproval.\textsuperscript{33} Swimming became a common pastime in the colonies. Women enjoyed swimming both personally and professionally,\textsuperscript{34} even though they were restricted by fashion, law, and social expectations. In the late nineteenth century, women’s swimming clubs were popular and swimming lessons were promoted both publically and in schools, and competitions were organised and supported by the public.\textsuperscript{35} Other gainful pursuits such as horse riding and shooting were also embraced by the colonial woman.

As elementary, secondary and tertiary education became available in Australia for women, their willingness to challenge the social norms became more pronounced. This was expressed in various ways such as their exploration of public office, careers and physical pursuits. The colonial woman began to challenge social convention when pursuing sports such as rowing, cricket, foot races, and boxing. In the case of many of these sports, women competed for prize money and performed as entertainers.\textsuperscript{36}

**Brisbane Girls Grammar School**

Set against this backdrop of emancipation, compulsory education, higher education of women, and wider experiences in sport is the establishment of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School as the “girls’ branch”\textsuperscript{37} of the Brisbane Grammar School. Established in 1875, Girls Grammar reflected the major educational and political developments of the nineteenth century. As the first girls’ secondary secular school in Queensland, it presented Queensland women with a unique opportunity in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[33] Stell, *Half the Race*; J. A. Daly, *Elysian Fields*.
\end{footnotes}
education. However, there were the inevitable struggles between the dictates, beliefs and interests of the influential men of Queensland and the appointed Lady Principals.\textsuperscript{38} The term “Lady Principal” is, in itself, illustrative of the social beliefs these women had to comply with or challenge. The term generates images of a well-bred, decorous woman educated both in the academic disciplines and social comportment. This title was used officially at Brisbane Girls Grammar until 1889, when Miss Sophia Beanland requested that she be referred to as the Headmistress. This remained the official terminology until Judith Hancock referred to herself as principal from 1977 in all correspondence and her staff and the whole school community then applied this title.\textsuperscript{39}

A commonly held view of the Trustees of the School and the Lady Principals was the necessity of physical activity within the curriculum. As stated in the Brisbane Girls Grammar School Regulations 1875: “Gymnastics shall be taught, and no girl shall absent herself from gymnastic practice without the permission of the Lady Principal”.\textsuperscript{40}

As seen in the southern states, the Girls Grammar Lady Principals believed that young women should experience physical activity. Initially in Girls Grammar’s case, this took the form of drill taught by the boys’ school sergeant major.\textsuperscript{41} For independent girls’ schools, generally, the emphasis was placed on conformity, good posture, and discipline rather than any altruistic benefits of physical activity. However, the inclusion of drill/gymnastics and ultimately, sport, in the curriculum, did assist in the development of a unique school culture where sporting rituals were developed which conveyed solidarity, value systems, emotional ties to the school, and loyalty.\textsuperscript{42}

These rituals included prize-giving, organized competitions, awards and celebrations. Mangan argued that “long established schools, with firmly entrenched traditions of group-conformist activities with homogeneity of pupil background and social values, will utilize these…” elements


\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Brisbane Girls Grammar School}, School Regulations, 1875, BGGS Archives, Brisbane.

\textsuperscript{41} Harvey-Short, \textit{To Become Fine Sportswomen}, 18.

most effectively. Girls Grammar, as one such school, was particularly responsive to this type of sporting ritual. The role of physical activity within the Grammar curriculum as a cultural catalyst was evident in the annual prize-giving where Tennis prizes were first presented in 1884 and Gymnastic prizes from 1885. Other ritualistic aspects include sports uniforms, the presentation of pockets and awards, old girls’ matches, war-cries, hierarchical organisation of teams, and promotion and celebration of athletic endeavour.

**Materiality**

As noted, there has been a range of studies of the development of Australian physical education. However, there is an obvious void in the historical examination of girls’ physical education and culture, especially in Queensland, which my book started to address. These studies have predominately relied on traditional, written sources only, using material artefacts and ephemera to illustrate rather than enrich analysis. Brisbane Girls Grammar School has a time-honoured commitment to sport and physical activity which has played a significant role in the development of the School’s traditions and culture and, one could argue, in Queensland girls’ education. With a rich array of ritualistic and material artefacts such as the awards, trophies, uniforms and photographs, the School offers a treasure trove for the material culturist to interpret and explore. The following research examines the physical and sporting culture of the School utilising material culture as the medium, as the study of objects can bring not only an intellectual understanding to an unfolding history, but also an emotional connection. As Henry Glassie elegantly argues, “studies focused on words, whether written or spoken, omit whole spheres of experience that are cumbersomely framed in language but gracefully shaped into artefacts...”.

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46 Harvey-Short, *To Become Fine Sportswomen*.
Sport historians have long researched individual objects, but material culture has only been embraced by sports historians relatively recently. Examining specific artefacts from perspectives of usage, style, context, and intrinsic and extrinsic value enables an assessment of the sporting and physical education culture of Brisbane Girls Grammar School that compliments the written sources I used extensively in *To Become Fine Sportswomen*.

Among the array of artefacts mentioned above are a sports brooch, gym tunic and pockets. Why examine the Brisbane Girls Grammar School Sports Brooch to determine the place sport played and plays in Grammar’s sporting culture? How do you analyse the style and functionality of the gym tunic to argue the importance of physical activity to the emerging Grammar girl? Is it valid to investigate the origin of the pocket system and its manifestations to determine the place of sporting rituals in the development of a physical culture at Brisbane Girls Grammar School? The use of such material objects to scrutinise, expand, explain and “tell the story” of the sporting culture of a 140-year old independent girls’ school is a legitimate, illuminating and evocative methodology.

Art historian, Jules Prown, stated that material objects “help us discover the beliefs – the values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time”. By using a material culture approach, an enhanced view of sport and physical activity at Girls Grammar will be apparent by providing insight into the times and attitudes of the Trustees, educators and girls in a manner never previously explored. As Prown argues, the study of material artefacts will reflect “consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which they belong”. There is also the opportunity to expand the understanding of the history of girls’ physical activity in Queensland and these artefacts will expose a more complete view, and hopefully, pose more potent questions about the “big picture” issues of women’s equality,

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girls’ education in early Queensland, and sport as a vehicle that can control and conform or facilitate independence, teamwork and leadership.

Material culture analysis has transitioned through a number of paradigms. Thomas Schlereth has categorised these paradigms as the Age of Collecting (1876-1948), the Age of Description (1948-1965) and the Age of Analysis (1965-current).51 The characteristics of the most recent paradigm include interpretation of social behaviour, analysis of artefacts to explain human behaviours and experiences, “search for artifacts’ evidential uniqueness and methodology fascination.” Material culture contributes to historical research in a number of ways, especially in this thesis, because of its tangible form: something that happened in the past still exists in the present; the artefact has the ability to corroborate the written word; and has a high level of “evidential veracity”.52 Fortunately, what can be argued as the shortcomings of material culture – the erratic nature of survival, access to artefacts for verification and authentication by other scholars, human accuracy and a tendency for description rather than analysis – are negated to some extent in this study by the availability of artefacts for this research and the opportunity to cross-reference outcomes. I would argue material culture particularly suits this research as it can provide evidence when no other form exists, it can support detailed written evidence, and it can challenge previously held hypotheses.53

Historians relate to material culture in a range of ways. Giorgio Riello delineates three different approaches: history from things, history of things, and history and things.56 In the first approach, History from things, objects are primary resources supporting or disproving previously held beliefs. Here the “narrative” supports the topic under research and scholarship benefits from a greater breadth of resources. In the second approach, history of things, the analysis focusses on “the

52 Schlereth, Material Culture Studies in America, 7.
relationship between objects, people and their representations.” Here the “narrative” is the overarching topic or theory in history and the methodology is interdisciplinary research. Finally, history and things positions the artefact as an independent identity and provides a more creative method of analysis.

The material culture technique I will utilise is history from things. The advantage of this methodology is that it adds depth and breadth to primary resources available which, to this point, have not been researched, explored and discussed. There is a wealth of significant artefacts which have been a part of the School’s sporting history and which can disclose a narrative unique to girls’ education and women’s sport in Queensland.

As a consequence, this research will demand a range of literacies. These literacies include material reading of photographs, interpretation of women’s fashions and functionality of uniforms, examination of textiles, investigation of the establishment of awards, explanation of the discourse of awards’ criteria, and discussion of the intrinsic and extrinsic value of various objects. It is an opportunity to utilise oral histories to substantiate evidence and interpretations extrapolated as there is an extensive database of past pupils. Thus, an analysis of the selected artefacts coupled with documentary evidence and oral histories will provide a greater richness to the history of the School.

My research is also influenced by the literary turn in sports history. This is a complex and nuanced debate, but it has impacted on this thesis in a number of ways. It opened the way to understand my role in this work as I have been involved in the School as a student, teacher and administrator for over forty years, and I am the historian writing about the sports history at the School. What the literary turn has enabled me to do is to legitimately engage with my privileged position as an observer, initiator and organiser of sporting material culture at the School to provide a nuanced understanding throughout the research and writing of this thesis. Equally important, the

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literary turn has examined traditional forms of research and has expanded the historical toolbox to create a legitimate space for material culture as a form of historical research.59

Schultz in her ground-breaking book, *Qualifying Times Points of Change in U.S. Women’s Sport* has ventured into material culture to analyse “points of change” in women’s sports history. She has mixed the mundane such as the ponytail and sports bra with the more traditional sporting elements such as tennis fashion and sex testing, to interpret how these items and practices have come to represent the female athlete.

By using a material methodology, traditionally embraced by archaeologists and art historians but not by sports historians, I will provide an insight into the development of Brisbane Girls Grammar School, offering an awareness of the influence English-trained educators on girls’ education in Queensland, and the importance of physical activity and sport in a young woman’s education. I would argue that with a generation of scholars who are educated, stimulated and enraptured by the YouTube clip, the Prezi, and the spontaneous photograph posted on Facebook or Instagram, sports historians need to venture out of the academic comfort zone of book, journal article, or dissertation and dive into the waters of alternative sources, including material culture. By analysing “things”, a deeper understanding and connectedness to the past and present can be achieved. Like Schultz, not all items I have chosen to analyse will appear to be unusual or highly significant or traditional – an expensive brooch or long-standing sterling silver cup – but a piece of material or a fragile newspaper clipping which are “shot through with substantial and varied cultural significance.”60

The objects under scrutiny will be:

- the Sports Brooch, the Trustees Cup, the Hilda Webb Prize for Gymnastics for Upper School, the Physical Culture Shield and the Milisent Wilkinson Prize for Tennis; and

embroidered pockets ranging from the 1930s to the 1990s;


newspaper photographs from the 1920s to 2003 compared to School magazine photographs from 1913 to 2013; and
uniforms including the babushka, the swimming coat, and the gym tunic.

The reasons for this selection of artefacts are their longevity, the cultural significance they held or hold within the School and the community, the stories which surround the artefacts, and the importance of the staff and/or students who won, or are represented by, the object and their impact on the sporting and physical education culture of the School. While I will consider, to a limited extent, the provenance and histories of these objects – “who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them” – my main concern is with how they reflect the beliefs, values and attitudes of this community and society.61

Thesis Structure

Subsequently, this thesis is presented in three chapters that focus on these material items. The first chapter examines specific prizes and awards which highlight the importance and celebration of sporting activity at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. These treasured items illustrate the longevity and significance of the sporting culture at the School. The objects selected are elegant, often expensive, and highly valued by the School and the recipients. Chapter Two examines newspaper photographs, including original and digitised photographs, and compares these images to those in the School magazines in a similar timeframe. This examination provides insight into society’s view of young women, activities they pursued, their athleticism and changes in the portrayal of women in sport over ninety years. The third chapter examines three elements of the Grammar sporting uniform – the babushka, the swim coat, and the gym tunic. These items of clothing enhance the interpretation and analysis of the evolution of schoolgirl sport and activity at Girls Grammar, and allude to similar practices in other Queensland girls’ schools.

61 Prown, Mind in Matter.
Chapter 1

Precious Metal – Awards and Trophies

An important development of the physical part of the education provided by the school has taken place in the formation of gymnastic classes, and in the initiation of a systematic course of gymnastic instruction, intended to strengthen and perfect the body... It seems to me hardly possible to estimate too highly the importance of giving equal attention to the education of both the mind and body... It is also very gratifying to be able to announce that Lady Musgrave on her first visit to the school, after seeing some of the physical instruction given, was kind enough to offer special encouragement to the girls to attain excellence in this part of their work, by the offer of a prize for the greatest progress made in physical training... 62

The acknowledgement of sustained, exceptional effort and success is a time-honoured tradition in most organisations. For schools, the most significant celebration of this kind is encapsulated in the annual prize-giving, colloquially termed Speech Day, traditionally held at the close of the school year. In 1879, the School’s annual prize-giving was held in December at the School of Arts with the Lady Principal’s and Chair of Trustees’ annual reports and the School’s prize list published in the Brisbane Courier in January 1880.63 Prizes, both academic and co-curricular, presented at these annual ceremonies, held great importance for the School and broader community as indicated by the clearly recorded criteria in the BGGS Archives, the published lists of prize winners in the newspapers, annual reports and School magazines, and the substantial nature of the prizes awarded.64

Brisbane Girls Grammar School has an astonishing array of trophies and awards presented in its 140-year history. A list of the most significant and time-honoured physical education and sporting trophies include:

- The Sports Brooch
- Trustees Cup
- The 50 metres Freestyle Championship trophy

63 The Queenslander, Brisbane, January 3, 1880, 6-7.
• The Interschool Points Swimming Cup
• The Netball Prize
• The Hilda Webb Prize for Gymnastics for Upper School, (renamed the Marjorie Elliott Prize for Health and Physical Education in 1982)
• The Lockhart Gibson Memorial Prize for Breaststroke and Backstroke
• The Silver Challenge Bracelet for tennis
• The Milisent Wilkinson Prize (the School Tennis champion)
• The BGGS Progress in Tennis trophy
• The Physical Culture Shield
• The Interhouse Aggregate – The Athletics Challenge Cup
• The Burrell Cup
• Sir Charles Lilley swimming prizes

It is not realistic, or even necessary, to pursue an exhaustive analysis of all of these trophies to illustrate how awards and trophies, as material culture, have created and enhanced the sporting and physical education culture of the School. However, it is important to note their existence and place in the sporting and physical education history of the School. The fact that these trophies have been awarded for many years, often at the end-of-year prize giving, Speech Day, alludes to their traditional significance and value. The Trustees Cup, for example, was first awarded in 1935. The inclusion of many of these prizes in this celebration of the academic year also illustrates the School community’s belief that sporting pursuits and the study of physical education play an important part in the development of the complete Grammar scholar.

It is my intention to examine five prizes – the Sports Brooch, the Trustees Cup, the Hilda Webb Prize for Gymnastics for Upper School, the Challenge Shield for Physical Culture, the Milisent Wilkinson Prize for Tennis – and pockets to elaborate and explore the School’s sporting culture and history. This selection has been chosen to illustrate the variety of prizes which range
from perpetual trophies on public display to individual awards, such as books, jewellery or clothing and a tennis racquet presented to the recipient. These prizes will be examined along the lines suggested by Andrew Morrall who argues that it is important “to take the study of ornament out of a narrowly ‘art historical’ context and to align it more with the interests of social and cultural history”. In this way, I will examine how these prizes benefit, enlighten and enhance the understanding of the beliefs, values and history of the School. By examining the source of the prize, the criteria for the award, the forum in which the prize was presented, the longevity of the award, if and how it is displayed within the School, the material value of the prize and the perceived importance of the prize, a range of conclusions may be drawn.

**The Sports Brooch**

The Sports Brooch is a potent example for this analysis. It has been in existence for 98 years. Designed by a student, Dorothea Stephens, in 1917 and donated anonymously, the Sports Brooch was regarded as the most prestigious prize awarded to an athlete. The brooch was an art deco design of gold and enamel and was originally referred to in the School’s prize list as “Best at Sport”. In 1923, the brooch gained its current name of Sports Brooch.

![Figure 1.1 Dorothy Hill’s 1924 Sports Brooch. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

Although the donor of the prize was anonymous, the concept was obviously supported by the School with eleven girls entering a competition to the design the brooch. The winning design

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illustrates the importance of sport to the Grammar community. The design, firstly, labels the brooch as a Girls Grammar possession with the School’s initials embedded in the royal blue enamel in the centre of the brooch where the eye is drawn immediately. Secondly, the size and style of the brooch allows for the engraving of the word “Sports” and the date. It is a powerful statement linking Sports and the School’s initials to illustrate the importance sport held. It appears that the concept of being the “best at sport”, recognised by excelling in the three dominant school sports, was important to the Trustees, staff and the girls with the choice of this design and its regular inclusion in the annual prize giving. The recipient was publically acclaimed, lauded in school magazines, listed in annual reports, reported in newspapers and, since 1983, her name has been displayed on the Sports Honour Board. This very public acknowledgement of sporting achievement not only reinforces the belief that physical pursuits were important to the School, but also emphasises the culture of success and achievement underpinning all aspects of School life. It can be argued that this celebration of excellence sat very comfortably with the School community and physical activity was perceived as an integral part of the broader Grammar curriculum.

It is also interesting to examine the choice of this very feminine concept of a brooch to reinforce this celebration of excellence and physical prowess. Jewellery has always been an integral part of women’s fashion. Many early Girls Grammar photographs illustrate a range of accoutrements worn by the staff and girls. There have been only two photographs found illustrating an athlete wearing the Sports Brooch as part of her uniform. The first athlete was Molly Pratten, Sports Brooch recipient in 1922, when she was photographed with Grace Zillman in 1923 (see *Figure 1.2*). The second image was Gladys Gray pictured at the Interhouse Athletics in 1935 (see *Figure 2.3*).

It is valuable to speculate why this is so, as it can allude to the brooch’s significance and the pride the athlete took in the award. Perhaps the athlete found it dangerous to have a sharp brooch embedded in her tie while pursuing athletic activities. The fact that girls received it on leaving the School, as is the case on many occasions today, may have reduced the opportunity for school
photographs. Fear of losing a precious prize – regarding the brooch as a valuable School award, to be protected, rather than a piece of jewellery to be worn – may be a factor. Or simply, modesty on behalf of the athlete may explain the rarity of photographs depicting the brooch.

![Figure 1.2 Molly Pratten and Grace Zillman, 1923. Pratten, on the left, wears the brooch on her tie. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

However, after such an auspicious beginning, there were two extended periods of time when the brooch was not awarded. The periods were from 1954 to 1964 and from 1966 to 1971. Precisely why these lapses occurred is not known. Possible explanations include athletes not achieving the criteria, a trend away from the belief in the importance of physical education and sport or lack of documentation with a change of teaching staff and, therefore, lack of knowledge of the existence of the award.

Precedents are dotted throughout the Brisbane Girls Grammar history of major prizes not being awarded, such as the Lady Lilley Medal for Dux, when criteria had not been met. However, the fact that the prize was not awarded for an entire decade and then for another five-year block of time suggests that this is not the explanation. The suggestion of the declining interest in sport does not seem likely either, as these years coincided with Australia’s sporting “Golden Era”
internationally, and with the development of tertiary physical education and the development of the National Fitness Councils.\textsuperscript{66}

As many of the other sporting prizes continued to be presented across these years, it would appear that other factors led to the Sports Brooch not being awarded. During the ten-year hiatus, there was a new headmistress appointed and ten new physical educators. With respect to principals, the School transitioned from Miss Kathleen Lilley - a long-serving, past student, and granddaughter of Sir Charles Lilley - to Miss Louise Crooks, who was an internal appointment to principal, coming from the Science Faculty of the School. The physical educators were, on occasion, past students. However, these “old girl” staff members attended the School during the years when the brooch was not presented. It is therefore probable that a lack of documentation and cultural change with new staff within the School primarily contributed to this lapse.

When the brooch was re-presented in 1971, the criteria remained the same. These criteria had been clearly documented and therefore, much easier to implement. However, the design had changed to an unimaginative sterling silver and enamel bar brooch (see Figure 1.3) where the initials of the School were now omitted, replaced with the wording, \textit{Sports Brooch}. Perhaps the creator(s) of the new design believed there was a need to name the brooch in this way to identify its significance as there was no place for other engraving on the new design as opposed to the original design.

Unfortunately, the designer of the new brooch and reasons for this change were not documented. It is mystifying that such an important prize, which had been presented across decades that included world wars and a depression, would suddenly be devalued in design and appearance by using cheaper materials and a simplistic design. On examination, it is most probable the change occurred owing to an issue of cost-cutting, no actual brooch held at the School to copy and ignorance of those making the decisions. Also, this ignorance of the brooch’s design is not surprising when there are so few images of the brooch recorded at this time. The Sports Brooch was

\textsuperscript{66} Young, \textit{Physical Education in Australia}. 
still presented on Speech Day, utilised the same criteria, and placed the recipient in the ranks of great achievers within the School. However, this careless handling does imply a less respectful view of the sporting traditions in the School.

![Sports Brooch](image)

*Figure 1.3 Sports Brooch, 1971-1999. Source: BGGS Archives.*

This level of respect and value of sporting prowess within the School was enhanced in 1983 when the Sports Honour Board was designed and unveiled in the School gymnasium by the 1921 Sports Brooch recipient, Miss Jessie Stephenson. This board listed every Sports Brooch winner and Brisbane Girls Grammar School Australian representative. This public display of sporting excellence reinforced the School’s belief in the important role of sport in a woman’s life, celebrated excellence which is central to the ethos of the School and provided tangible motivation for aspiring athletes.

In 1999, when the original design was discovered with the donation of Dorothy Hill’s 1924 Sports Brooch to the School archive (see *Figure 1.1*), I requested the design be returned to its original glory. I saw the original design as superior for a range of reasons. Firstly, the cultural significance of a student-designed brooch, acting as a tangible example of the School’s belief in its students. Secondly, the importance of historical accuracy and thirdly, the superior aesthetic design.

67 Jessie Stephenson had had her Sports Brooch stolen from her home many years before, and thus did not bring it to the unveiling of the Honour Board, nor did she comment on the difference in design when presented with the current Sports Brooch as a thank-you gift for her involvement on the evening.
The original design proved to be a significant cost to the School. However, the Principal, Judith Hancock, readily agreed, further illustrating the significant role of sport and physical education in the culture of the School. During her twenty-five years stewardship of the School, Judith Hancock highly valued the School’s history; improved its brand, locally, nationally and internationally; supported sporting endeavours and excellence; and influenced the Grammar community’s opinions through the public expression of her beliefs, her rapport with the Trustees and the parental body. By agreeing to reinstate the design, she clearly identified that the School valued the social and cultural significance of the brooch and, hence, sport and achievement. The display of every Sports Brooch winner’s name on the Honour Board, the return of the 9-carat-gold-and-enamel design and the School’s commitment to this elegant, expensive brooch, clearly indicates the value of Grammar sport, sporting culture and sporting traditions.

The story of the Sports Brooch illustrates not only the importance of material culture but also its fragility. While the brooch is highly valued within the School, its history as an artefact is vulnerable. Until recent years, the Sports Brooch had been virtually an invisible artefact and yet maintained cachet within the School. The design and worth was devalued through a lack of knowledge. The meaning of an artefact is not simply inherent in an object. Its value, usage and history are shaped by human agents. To protect the Sports Brooch from a similar fate in the future, it is now frequently the subject of displays in the School museum and has featured on the cover of the 1999 School magazine. Current winners are encouraged to wear the brooch on their blazer, especially for official School photographs and public occasions and it has featured in the School’s first book publication, *To Become Fine Sportswomen.*
The Trustees Cup

The Trustees Cup, the School’s oldest individual Athletics prize, did not experience the same vicissitudes of time and has been awarded continuously since 1935. As a perpetual trophy, it is distinctly more difficult to misplace or reinvent as was the experience with the Sports Brooch. This trophy is displayed in the trophy cabinet in the foyer of the MacCrae Grassie Sports Centre, the gathering place for all Physical Education classes.

Under the chairmanship of Dr J. Lockhart Gibson, the Trustees elected to establish this prize and awarded it to the outstanding athlete at the Queensland Girls’ Secondary Schools Sports Association (QGSSSA) Athletics who, in each year, gained the greatest number of points for the School. The enthusiasm for the awarding of the trophy came as a result of the highly successful Athletics era of the early 1930s when the School won all three QGSSSA Athletics trophies for the third time in 1935, the School’s Jubilee year. The Trustees’ Minutes of 27 September, 1935 stated:

**Athletic Sports were successful. Mr Crouch was present. He reports that the Girls’ Grammar School had nearly as many points all the other schools put together. He considers that the success was really remarkable. The Sports’ Mistress and the School to be congratulated. Miss Lilley asks for a whole holiday for picnic purposes because of this athletic success. Approved. Mr Crouch suggests that to commemorate this success the Trustees present a cup for competition for best athlete. To be left in the hands of the Head Mistress, Sports Mistress and Mr Evans to go into the matter of rules etc.**

Mr Crouch was a Trustee for fifteen years from 1929 to 1944, acting as Vice Chairman of Trustees for four years during this time. Mr William Evans was a trustee from 1933 to 1950 where he served as Treasurer from 1934 to 1940 and as Chair of Trustees from 1940 to 1947. The Sports Mistress was Miss Dorothy Brockway and the Athletics co-ordinator, Miss Marjorie Elliott, both “old girls” of the School.

This traditional trophy is a beautifully proportioned silver, hallmarked double-handled cup (see Figure 1.4) and represented a significant expense during a time when Australia was still

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recovering from the Great Depression. Created by the jewellers, Hardy Brothers, in their traditional style, it is engraved with the following wording:

![Image of the Trustees Cup]

The stated criterion was “The cup shall be awarded to the pupil of this School who gains the highest number of points in individual events at the Inter-School sports.”\(^{69}\) It was first awarded to Gladys Gray, who was captain of the 1935 Athletics team and its most successful athlete, for setting a new record for Senior Hurdles and gaining twelve individual points.

Over its eighty-year history, only two students have won the trophy in every year of their attendance at the School. These outstanding athletes were Brenda Cox (BGGS 1958-61) and Kate Leitch (2000-04). Brenda and Kate both represented their state and country in athletics; Brenda at the 1962 Commonwealth Games in Perth and Kate at the 2006 World Junior Championships in Beijing.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.
The QGSSSA Athletics or Sports, as it was referred to until the 1960s, held a significant place in the sporting calendar of both Brisbane independent schoolgirls and Brisbane, more generally. Newspaper coverage at the time illustrated its place as a newsworthy event, and no doubt, the School would have received considerable kudos when it dominated this competition so comprehensively in the early 1930s. This helps explain the enthusiasm displayed by the Trustees at the time and the subsequent presentation of the Trustees Cup.

The awarding of this prestigious cup was a tangible illustration of the School’s values and beliefs. It reinforced the striving for excellence the School strongly promoted in all aspects of student life, contributed to the celebration of the School’s sixtieth anniversary, promoted the School in the media and emphasised the place sport and physical activity held in a Grammar girl’s life.

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Prizes for Physical Education have been part of the Grammar academic landscape since 1885. These curriculum prizes were presented to Grammar girls for Upper and Lower School Gymnastics. Principal, Sophia Beanland, strongly promoted an all-round education for girls and spoke of “a harmonious whole” when reporting on the education of girls, and placed great emphasis on physical education, drill and sport. It therefore stands to reason that Gymnastics prizes, in the form of books, should be included in the prize list of the School under Beanland’s stewardship. With the support of the Trustees, she claimed in 1884 that gymnastics classes were an “important development of the physical part of education” which resulted in improved health and carriage.

These views were reinforced and supported by Lady Musgrave, wife of the Queensland Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave (1883-1888), when she presented the Lady Musgrave Prize for greatest progress in physical training until 1889. It was resolved in November 1884 that the Lady Musgrave Prize be awarded and named in honour of Lady Musgrave, whose stipulation was to:

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71 Names across the years have been: Upper and Lower Gymnastics Prize; The Old Girls Prize for Upper School; The Hilda Webb Prize for Gymnastics for the Upper School; Hilda Webb Prize; Hilda Webb Memorial Prize for Gymnastics; the Marjorie Elliott Old Girls’ Prize for Health and Physical Education; The Marjorie Elliott Old Girls’ Prize for Physical Education.
72 “Brisbane Names across the years have been: Upper and Lower Gymnastics Prize; The Old Girls Prize for Upper School; The Hilda Webb Prize for Gymnastics for the Upper School; Hilda Webb Prize; Hilda Webb Memorial Prize for Gymnastics; the Marjorie Elliott Old Girls’ Prize for Health and Physical Education; The Marjorie Elliott Old Girls’ Prize for Physical EducationGrammar School,” The Queenslander, December 29, 1883, 1053.
73 “Distribution of Prizes at the Grammar School.” The Brisbane Courier (Brisbane), December 20, 1884, 3.
award a prize at the breaking up of the school in June 1885 to that pupil who shows most improvement in physical training, has gained most in carriage of her figure, in a natural and graceful walk, in breadth of chest, and in calisthenics. Competitors must have worn no stays at any time during the eleven months. The awarding of the prize shall be settled by a committee composed of the Lady Principal, the drill masters, and a lady to be trained by Lady Musgrave.  

The first winner of the Lady Musgrave Prize, as listed in the Midwinter Examinations List 1885, was Bessie Cribb, with Eveline Griffith as proxime accessit (second place). Eveline Griffith was successful the following year.

The curriculum prizes varied in year levels and variety over the years. However, they were a testament to the importance of compulsory physical education within the School. Criteria for the prizes are difficult to ascertain. However, in the 1888 Prize list, the Gymnastics prize indicated the winner had made the “greatest progress”. The inscription on this illustrated prize below – Margaret Reid: For Progress and Regular Attendance in Gymnastics, December 1891 – suggests that attendance was highly valued. Across the years, prizes simply state “Gymnastics”, perhaps implying a return to performance (see Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5 Margaret Reid’s Prize book 1891, The Cairncross Kennedy Prize Book Collection. Source: BGGS Beanland Library.

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The Old Girls Association (OGA) indicated an interest in taking the financial responsibility for a range of prize-giving from its inception in 1899. As a result, prizes presented by the OGA dated from 1900. The OGA report in the 1930 School Magazine stated:

*It was further decided to give an additional three prizes in the school, preferably for the encouragement of literary and artistic culture, the final decision being left with the Committee in consultation with the Head Mistress. It has finally been decided to award the three prizes this year: (a) for elocution, open to the whole school; (b) for the second girl in the Junior Form; and (c) for gymnastics.*

Thus the Upper Gymnastics Prize was donated by the Old Girls Association in 1930. In 1943, it became known as the *Hilda Webb Prize for Gymnastics for Upper School*. This prize was named in honour of Annie Hilda Louise Kennedy who attended Brisbane Girls Grammar School from 1899 to 1903. During her time at the School, Hilda won the Upper School Gymnastics prize twice (see *Figure 1.6*).

*Figure 1.6 Indian Clubs with Hilda Kennedy (front, fourth from left) and Kathleen Lilley (front, third from right), c.1906. Source: BGGS Archives.*

In 1933, Mrs R J Webb (nee Hilda Kennedy) became the President of the OGA and held that position for two years. On 3 November 1942, Mrs R J Webb died. The president of the OGA at the time, Helen Campbell, wrote in the December magazine:

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Hilda Webb has taken an active part in the Association for many years and held office as Secretary, Committee member and as a very popular President for two years, 1933 and 1934; she also was Treasurer of the Annie Mackay Memorial Fund. The School and the Association are deeply indebted to her for many years of energetic and devoted service, and her unfailing cheerfulness and charm of manner endeared her to all our Members. The highest tribute we can pay is to say that everyone loved her.  

The award was known under versions of this name until 1977. In the 1976 revised Constitution of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School Sports Club, the criteria for this award was: “This may be awarded to the Sixth Form girl who has shown excellence of performance and sportsmanship in all aspects of Physical Education”.  

The new Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BOSSSS) course was implemented in 1978. The first academic prize for the subject, Health and Physical Education, was awarded in 1979 for both Year 11 and Year 12. In 1982, the BGGS Old Girls Association (BGGS OGA) determined to name the Year 12 Health and Physical Education prize The Marjorie Elliott Old Girls Prize for Health and Physical Education. Miss Marjorie “Babe” Elliott was a student of the School from 1918 to 1922 and returned to the School as an English teacher in 1930. Miss Elliott took a strong interest in and responsibility for athletics for many years. In 1985, the subject prize was awarded to the top Year 12 student in Health and Physical Education only, with criteria in line with that of all other academic subjects.  

The curriculum prize experienced one more change when the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BOSSSS) subject divided into Physical Education and Health Education. The School elected to offer Physical Education because of its uniqueness as a practical subject and, subsequently, the prize was then referred to as The Marjorie Elliott Old Girls’ Prize for Physical Education from 2002.

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The uninterrupted presence of the Gymnastics prize from the nineteenth century morphing into the fully-blown academic twenty-first-century Physical Education prize at the School’s Speech Days and annual prizing-giving alludes to the belief in, and importance placed on, the physical education of Grammar women. The cultural impact of this strong message of academic excellence in the subject cannot be underestimated. It further illustrates the place material artefacts have in the enhancement of the culture of sport and physical education within the School.

**The Challenge Shield for Physical Culture**

It is significant to note that the School was not only committed to excellence in sport on an interschool basis, but also promoted participation for every student through interform or interhouse (intramural) competitions. The most important prize presented for interform sport was the Challenge Shield for Physical Culture, which experienced a range of appellations across the years although its criteria did not change.

A range of interform shields and cups has been presented across the years with the 1910s seeing the introduction of the overall points trophies for basketball (netball), swimming and athletics. It is noteworthy that this decade saw three influential women within the School: the principals, Milisent Wilkinson (1900-1912), and Annie Mackay (1915-1924) and Physical Educator, Dorothy Brockway (1913-1934). These women were most significant to the promotion of sport and physical education and one can extrapolate to the awarding of prizes. Milisent Wilkinson was one of the founding member principals of the QGSSSA in 1908, and a strong believer in physical activity as evidenced by her bequeathing half of her estate to Brisbane Girls Grammar School so those students could “become fine sportswomen and noted tennis players.”78

Annie Mackay was an old girl of the School (1882-1887), having experienced regular gymnastics classes and sport during her student days and as principal, introduced the interform

athletics competition as a fundraiser for the war effort in 1917. During her stewardship, the Sports Brooch was also designed and first awarded.

It is no coincidence that Dorothy Brockway would be the teacher in charge of gymnastics, swimming and dance classes during this decade which saw so many sporting trophies introduced in the School’s sporting calendar. Dorothy was an old girl of Girls Grammar and Somerville House, a fellow QGSSSA school, and trained at the Southport Physical Training College, England where she would have been influenced by the growing enthusiasm for girls’ secondary education. She returned to Girls Grammar to commence a twenty-one-year commitment to the School, and while supporting the traditional interform sports which included tennis, netball, swimming and athletics, Brockway also introduced gymnastics and drill competitions.

As these individual and highly significant trophies became an integral part of the intramural sporting fabric of the School, there was some logic to have an overall award for the most successful form each year. The resulting award for this interform acknowledgement was the Challenge Shield for Physical Culture. Its forerunner is believed to be a shield donated by Mrs Mabelle Kennedy and Miss Evelyn Letemplier of Cornwall after their visit to the School in 1930. In 1932, Mrs Kennedy and Miss Letemplier presented the School with a Channel Island oak shield with “a boss of silver with a design of acorns” and this trophy was to be awarded to the most successful form for gymnastics. This trophy is labeled the Gymnastics Squad Championship, but was referred to in the Annual Reports from its inception in 1932 until 1941 as “The Challenge Shield from England” (see Figure 1.7). Magazine reports during this time did not refer to winners of the shield, which possibly suggests the announcement of the winner occurred at Speech Day or after the magazine was published in December of each year. The winning forms, in fact, appear to have been rather hapless in their sporting pursuits when reading their magazine reports and this may suggest that the
trophy was a consolation prize rather than a prize for excellence. However, the shield and the winners were always part of the School Prize List on Speech Day, which signifies their importance for the School community.

Figure 1.7 Challenge Shield for Physical Culture. Source: BGGS Sports Centre.

In 1945, the Principal, Kathleen Lilley, donated a shield, engraved as The Challenge Shield for Physical Culture, in memory of Kate Lilley, her mother. The criterion for this shield was stipulated in each Annual Report from 1946 that: “The Challenge Shield for Physical Culture is awarded to the form which has shown the greatest proficiency in Gymnastics and Outdoor Sports.”

With this criterion, it appears that Miss Lilley absorbed the concept of the “Challenge Shield from England” or the Gymnastics Squad Championship shield as it was engraved, and created a shield to reward and acknowledge the best sporting form in the School. As an illustration of the imprecision of naming that can pose difficulties in identifying some items of material culture, even though the shield was engraved clearly, it was not referred to in annual prize lists as The Challenge Shield.


80 Kathleen Lilley, Annual Report 1946, Brisbane Girls Grammar School Annual Reports, BGGS Archives, Brisbane.
Shield for Physical Culture until 1980. From its initial presentation in 1945 until 1955 it was called the Physical Culture – Challenge Shield; from 1956 to 1957 it was Physical Education – Challenge Shield; 1958 to 1960 it was listed as the Physical Education Challenge Shield; across the 1960s it was Physical Education – Interform or Interhouse Challenge Shield; and the 1970s saw the PE Challenge Shield. This was always the same shield with the same criteria (see Figure 1.8).

It is remarkable that with the fluctuations of the intramural sporting program between interform and house competition several times in the 1960s and 70s, the Physical Culture Shield, as it is colloquially known, endured as the trophy for the best form or House. The pastoral organisation of the School changed to houses in 1964 and thus the sporting competition shifted from form to house competition. Under the guidance of Miss Nancy Shaw, Principal 1970-1977, the form competition returned in 1974 until 1979. The House system was reinstated in 1980 under Mrs Judith Hancock (Principal 1977-2001) and continues to be the preferred pastoral organisation to the current day.

Currently, the House with the greatest number of points in the various interhouse sporting competitions wins the shield. Across the years, the sports which counted towards the total points varied. However, swimming and athletics have always remained constant. It is the Challenge Shield for Physical Culture that remains the ultimate Interhouse prize in sport. The shield has been presented every year since its inception with the exception of 1979. This was an oversight as a full interform competition took place but the winning form was not recorded. This oversight could also have been because of the splitting of the annual prize-giving with Year 12s receiving their prizes in November, 1979 and the remainder of the School in the following February. By 1994, a lack of space for engraving meant the shield was mounted on a polished redwood frame to accommodate future individual silver shields displaying each year’s winner and presented to the victorious House Captains on Speech Day. The most successful house over the years has been resoundingly Woolcock House followed by Gibson House, with England the third-most successful house.
The Challenge Shield for Physical Culture is permanently on display in the School’s McCrae Grassie Sports Centre foyer where every girl passes it on a regular basis. The shield is a very powerful indicator of the School’s commitment to sport and physical activity as it represents the philosophy of full school sporting participation, reinforces the importance of sporting activity for women, and is presented as the first of all prizes on Speech Day, thus representing sports’ inclusion in the fabric of the School.

![Challenge Shield for Physical Culture](image)

*Figure 1.8 The Challenge Shield for Physical Culture. Source: BGGS Archives.*

**Milisent Wilkinson Prize for Tennis**

As the oldest competitive sport in the School, Tennis has always been classified as a significant sport at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. In 1883, the School architect, Mr Richard Gailey, was authorised to design three tennis courts for the girls’ use. In 1884, the principal, Miss Sophia Beanland, established a tennis club and prizes for tennis competitions were first awarded in 1885 in the form of a silver bracelet. From this time, tennis prizes were always included in the Speech Day Prize List.
In 1901 the Head Mistress’ Tennis Challenge Cup was introduced to the School by Miss Milisent Wilkinson, Principal, with Form VI being the inaugural winners. This cup was later referred to as the Miss Wilkinson’s Tennis Challenge Cup in 1911 and was presented until 1921 (see Figure 1.9).

Interform tennis then competed for the Tennis Challenge Cup from 1922, presented by Miss Annie Mackay, Principal (see Figure 1.10). This trophy possessed many titles including the Mackay Challenge Cup (1928), Miss Mackay’s Challenge Cup (1941) and Annie Margaret Mackay Challenge Cup (1949-1960) and was presented until 1978 and always included on the Speech Day Prize List. The confusion of multiple titles for the same cup further exemplifies the confusion that can surround material objects, their recording and awarding. Custodians of the School prize list have a substantial responsibility with regard to accuracy.
On 25 November 1947, Milisent Amsden Wilkinson died in England and bequeathed half her estate to the School with the intention of encouraging Grammar girls to become fine tennis players. As a direct result of this bequest, in 1949, the Milisent Wilkinson Prize for Tennis was established and presented on Speech Day. The prize was tennis racquets which were presented to the Tennis Champion, the senior singles winner and the doubles champions. Across the decades, the prize was often printed without reference to Milisent Wilkinson; however, the prize was presented and paid for from the Milisent Wilkinson bequest. The prizes often included books as well as racquets. For example, in 1948, Daphne Seeney received *The Week End Book* as School Tennis Champion, *Anthology of Long Poems* for being the Senior Singles Champion and *Shelley* for being part of the victorious Senior Doubles.

With the development of technology, increased costs and personal preferences, the presentation of a racquet became problematic and in 1988 clothing was presented as the award for

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82 Daphne Fancutt Private Collection.
the Milisent Wilkinson Tennis prize instead of a racquet. This too had obvious limitations and now the recipient receives a silver goblet engraved with *Milisent Wilkinson Prize for School Tennis Champion Year* and a cheque for $500. Since 1996, this prize has been listed as the Milisent A. Wilkinson Bequest in the Annual Speech Day and Distribution of Prizes list.

This prize acknowledges the best tennis player in the School each year and confirms, with similar awards presented to the best athletes in all sports, that excellence in sport is cherished and encouraged by the School. It has been since the nineteenth century. This positioning of tennis, specifically, and sport, generally, is further validated by principals across the decades with their desire to finance and name trophies which commemorate competitive sport and their support of it. This support sends a powerful message to the School community that sport is an integral part of the education of women.

**Pockets**

Sporting honours took many forms within Queensland independent schools. Trophies and book prize presentations were normally reserved for formal Speech Days. Another form of sporting award which was presented across the school year was “pockets”. Pockets were the embroidery of co-curricular successes and participation onto the school blazer. The awarding of a pocket, although arguably less prestigious than trophies, brooches, bracelets and books, is powerful evidence of the School’s commitment to the stature of sport. As well as the celebration of excellence – criteria was based on winning competitions – the awarding of a pocket was the exclusive domain of sport until the 1960s. The ubiquitous pocket is, in fact, the most accessible form of sporting celebration and acknowledgement of the sporting culture within the School. It is interesting to note the importance placed on the recording of the criteria for pockets which indicates to their cachet in the School community. To this day, pockets are highly cherished and sought after with extensive and detailed criteria for their awarding. Typically, a student’s first question at the completion of a season is, “Will I get a pocket?”.

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83 Cosgrove, *The Wider View*; Mahoney, *Dieu et Devoir*; Livingstone, *Upon this Rock*; Quirke, *Moreton Bay College*.  

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The concept of awarding sporting colours or blues originated in the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The early sporting competitions between these two universities resulted in the birth of colours to represent a team. Oxford adopted dark blue with Cambridge flying light blue ribbons on their boat at their second boat race from Westminster Bridge to Putney Bridge in 1836. Sports at these universities were awarded blues status by a Blues Committee – Full Blue or Half Blue - with athletics, cricket and rowing being the first clubs to achieve Full Blue status. At Oxford, these sportsmen were eligible for a Full Blue which resulted in the athlete wearing a dark blue blazer. Half Blue sports allowed the athlete to wear a dark blue and white striped blazer. Other universities followed this concept with the London University awarding “purples and half purples” as this was London University’s colour.

The term “blue”, however, became synonymous with the highest pocket within the Brisbane Girls Grammar School community while the Brisbane Grammar School adopted the terminology of “colours”. This possibly resulted because Mr Reginald Roe, Principal of Brisbane Grammar School 1876 to 1909, adopted the Oxford/Cambridge actual colours of light blue and dark blue for the boys’ school and with these colours, the concept of their sporting awards. Girls Grammar folklore states that Brisbane Girls Grammar School’s official School colour, royal blue, was derived from a combination of the Boys Grammar “light, dark blue”, a term emotionally expressed in the boys’ war cries.

Sophia Beanland, Lady Principal (1882-1888), as a graduate of the London University, and Miss Lister, Assistant Mistress (1884-1889), as a graduate of Girton College, Cambridge, would have been familiar with the concept of sporting colours for the male graduates of these universities. In 1890, the introduction of colours was suggested by Lillian Faithfull, an Oxford University

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85 Wikipedia. “Blue (university sport)”.

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student, for tennis between Cambridge and Oxford, and the “lady blue” was created.\textsuperscript{86} Milisent Wilkinson, who graduated from Cambridge University with first-class honours, had the greatest influence on Girls Grammar pockets. Lady Principal from 1900-1912, she was a founding member of the Queensland Girls’ Schools Secondary Sports Association (QGSSSA) in 1908 and thus principal at the time when interschool competitions were formalised. Awards, such as trophies and pockets, are a direct outcome of organised sport and it is possible that a system of pockets existed following the establishment of the Sports Club in the 1880s.

The first tangible evidence of pockets is a photograph of the Winners of the Secondary Schools Cup and commentary on “blue” winners in individual sports reports in the 1916 Magazine (see \textit{Figure 1.11}).\textsuperscript{87} Two girls, Joan Lilley and Eleanor Hart, are photographed wearing their blazers with embroidered pockets, the earliest dating 1914. It is quite likely that a system of pocket awards was in place with the introduction of the blazer in the early 1910s. The first photographic evidence of pockets at the Brisbane Grammar School was 1913, so one can extrapolate that the sister school would have had a similar system at least at the same time, or earlier owing to the girls’ schools conducting formal sporting competitions under an official association.

\textit{Figure 1.11 Association Cup Winners, 1916. Joan Lilley seated wearing her blazer with Eleanor Hart standing behind Lilley. Source: BGGS Archives.}

\textsuperscript{86} McCrone, \textit{Playing the Game}, 44.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Brisbane Girls Grammar School Magazine}, 1916, 9.
The criteria for these early pockets included playing all or the majority of games in a season, as stated in the 1918 Magazine: Annie Carmichael missed three games… “thus rendering her ineligible for a Blue.” There appeared to be a limit of blues offered in any one year if the following statement made in the same magazine is accurate. In the Grammar magazine of 1918, it was recorded that “Clissa (sic) Wilson and Rosetta Powell won their Blues this year, and Essie Wilson also worked steadily throughout the year, but unfortunately it is impossible for three girls to win two blues.”

Every girl could wear a blazer with three unembroidered pockets. If awarded a “blue”, the top left-hand pocket was embroidered with School badge and BGGS above the crest and the specific details of the sport below the crest. These specific sports were recorded as, for example, “1st VII 1916”. Subsequent sports pockets were added below the first row of embroidery, on either side of the badge and even onto the lower left hand pocket of the blazer. A half blue was the embroidering of BGGS and the sports-specific detail, leaving a gap for the School badge if awarded a full blue at a later stage (see Figure 1.12).

Figure 1.12 Left: Full Blue of Noela Hardy (1926-30) Right: Half blue of Beth Dawson (1944-47). Source: BGGS Archives.

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The earliest detailed criteria held by the School were clearly stipulated in the Minute Book of the Sports Club in 1928. The awarding of all pockets was controlled and approved by the Sports Club which was chaired by the principal. The establishment of a Sports Club and thus, its committee, comprised of staff and students, is highly significant within the sporting culture of the School. The earliest reference to this committee occurs in the 1918 School Magazine outlining some of its responsibilities for the organisation of school sport.\(^9\) It would appear that its role reflects some of the English universities’ Blues Committees’ objects and further reinforces the theory of Grammar’s sporting blues being based on university blues. As an illustration of the responsibility of the Sports Committee for awards, the 1928 Sports Club minutes stated:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Tennis} All members of the A Tennis team shall be entitled to pockets when they have played in half the matches of the season. Blues shall be awarded, at the discretion of the sub-committee and with the approval of the General Committee, to members whose play has been outstanding, provided that such members have played in all matches for the season (except under most exceptional circumstances).\(^9\)
\end{quote}

Girls were eligible for a blue if they played all games in the seasons and if their play was considered to be “outstanding”. From 1931, for Swimming and Athletics, girls were eligible for blues if they placed first in any event and second in two or more events. Pockets were awarded for second or third in individual events. During the 1930s, relay teams were added to these criteria whereby a relay team was eligible if it placed first. Criteria became more elaborate and detailed in the following years; for example when a point system was introduced for Ballgames in the 1940s:

Pockets shall be awarded on the following system to those who obtain 12 or more points for Ball Games in the Interschool Sports: 2 points shall be awarded to every team member of each member. Additional points to the above to be added to as follows: 2 points to every member of a team which gains second or third place. 3 points to every member of a team which gains first place or 4 points to every member of a team which establishes a new record.\textsuperscript{92}

During the 1950s, the criteria for pockets continued to be clarified with greater detail when the Sports Club continued to arbitrate on proposed pockets for individuals and teams. At times, committee members who were eligible for pockets were asked to leave the meetings so open and frank discussion could occur. Standards were strictly observed with the emphasis placed on performance and excellence, reflecting the philosophy of the School that sporting endeavours were a serious undertaking. The Sports Club Constitution reflects this when recording the criteria for tennis blues in 1957:

\textit{In Tennis blues shall be awarded with the approval of the General Committee on the following conditions:} (i) The player will have taken part in all matches for the season (except under exceptional circumstances) (ii) The player shall have been either winner or runner-up in the Singles or Doubles Championship in the school tournament.\textsuperscript{93}

In 1963, the depiction of the “blue” was changed as every girl was given the choice to wear a blazer with the School crest embroidered on the top left-hand pocket. In 1964, it became a permanent element of the blazer. The result of this change was that the “blue” was represented by gold tacking around the crest on the blazer with the sport and date in gold under the badge to distinguish it from the new generic crest (see Figures 1.13 and 1.14).


Figure 1.13 Pocket of Robyn Aydon 1967, BGGS Archives.

Figure 1.14 Pocket of Catherine Rees 1980, Private Collection.
There were few significant changes to the Pocket System in the next two decades. The greatest change in criteria was for the blue. In 1979, the criteria shifted to State representation and two years’ service in A Grade. This made the blue harder to achieve and more exclusive. This award was made even more special with its change in design. In 1985, as the Director of Health, Physical Education and Sport, I suggested the blue become a separate pocket on the right-hand side of the blazer. The design was to reflect the School’s original blue with BGGS in script, in royal blue embroidery with the sport and year listed below. I decided to submit this proposal for three reasons. Firstly, the blue was the most difficult and prestigious pocket a Grammar girl could achieve and warranted a more substantial display. Secondly, it presented an opportunity to honour the blue’s original design. Finally, I was inspired by the boys’ school blazer which was an elaborate and elegant design with two top pockets balancing the blazer. This proposal was accepted by the Principal, Judith Hancock, and has been the design to the current day (see Figure 1.15).
Counteracting this exclusivity of the blue was the awarding of “Sports Colours”. This award was represented by light blue laurel leaves above the badge and awarded to a girl who had represented an A Grade team or division for two or three years – dependent on the sport – and who had not met other pocket criteria (see Figure 1.14). This addition to the pocket criteria was present for only a few years, circa 1980, and then ceased owing to a lack of support from the Health and Physical Education staff and the impracticality of its location on the blazer pocket.

This new award reflected the view of rewards for participation in the pocket system which had been discussed at Sports Club level in the mid-1970s but not acted upon. Shelley Haggert states that Kent Billinghamurst, a parenting educator, blames this view of awards on the runaway self-esteem movement of the 1970s and 80s where children developed an inflated view of their abilities and the
value and prestige of the reward was diminished. During the late 1980s, the concept of pockets for two years of participation came under scrutiny when the School’s senior administration decided that these awards devalued the pocket system. Subsequently, the criteria returned to performance and excellence. As well as excellence in performance, recognition for service was also acknowledged as the captains of each sport had a gold star embroidered on their pocket. This ultimately transitioned in 1990 to a full pocket stating the captaincy, the sport and the year on the pocket.

The complete pocket system evolved into a comprehensive document after 2000 when criteria for all co-curricular activities were listed and explained. The development of detailed and explicit criteria highlights the view that the acquisition of these awards was, and continues to be, very important to the Grammar athlete. Pockets are prestigious because they are attractive, highly visible, based on performance and not participation, and are difficult to acquire. There is an elitist element within this pocket culture as the recipient firstly has to be selected into a restricted number of teams in each sport from a large pool of athletes and additionally, the team must be successful in a competition normally involving nine other schools. This process of awarding pockets enhances the level of prestige as the selection process as well as the success of the team creates exclusivity.

Conclusion

There has been a long and strong tradition of celebration of excellence and achievement in sport and physical education at Brisbane Girls Grammar School from its establishment. This celebration is enhanced by the presentation of exquisite material objects ranging from brooches to elegant cups, from trophies and books to treasured pockets. The underpinning philosophy for these awards and prizes has been consistent and clearly enunciated. Principals and staff have always held and publically state the strong belief in the development of the whole student, a commitment to excellence and the aspiration of realising each student’s potential.

The establishment and minting of the Sports Brooch in 1917, celebrating the most gifted athlete in the school, was an overt and significant step towards cementing the position of the athlete within the School. Its longevity – the celebration of its centenary will occur in 2017 – is proof that the School honours its athletes, strives to inspire current athletes, and nurtures achievement in the physical realm. This brooch symbolises strong values of excellence, hard work, and achievement and its status with today’s athletes in the School is illustrated by the current holder of this award, Isabelle Franks, as she wears it proudly on her blazer lapel every day (see Figure 1.16).

![Isabella Franks, current Sports Brooch recipient. Note the Sports Brooch on the blazer lapel. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

The cups and shields which take pride of place in the sports centre display cabinet are tangible artefacts which laud the efforts of many Grammar girls across the years and act as incentives for future Grammar girls. These treasured objects are carefully preserved, on constant display, and represent the School’s commitment to both participation and effort in the sporting arena.

The awarding of Speech Day academic physical education prizes cements the creditability of the subject in the Grammar academic landscape. These book prizes have been presented to
Grammar girls from 1885 and, as cherished items, some have found their way back to the School archives for safe keeping and display. The role these awards have played, and continue to play, is one of recognition of academic achievement in a subject which has been an integral component of every Grammar girl’s education. For the recipient, the book prize represents talent, effort, and exceptional scholarship.

Pockets as material objects also enhance the argument of this thesis that sport holds a significant place in the culture of the School. Firstly these objects, the embroidered pockets, were treasured possessions of the owners and the subsequent donation of pockets to the School archives illustrates the worth attached to the preservation and celebration of sporting success in the School. Secondly, the care and detail expended on the awarding of each pocket indicates the level of importance placed on these sporting awards by the School community. Thus, sporting culture of the School is validated by this overt celebration of sporting prowess and success.
Chapter 2
Kodak Moments: Photographs

Over the last two centuries sport has become central to global culture. Its images are potent, popular and pervasive, yet its meanings are multiple, complex and often conflicting. While rigorous analytical explorations of the intersections between visual culture and the history of sport are still new, they are now beginning to attract scholarly interest.95

Traditionally, photographs have been used to illustrate, connect emotionally, entertain, capture the imagination of the viewer, represent a moment in time, or provide “light relief” in a text-heavy document. Photographs offer much more than the decorative and can contribute as a resource themselves, where they position the audience and impact on the delivery of a particular medium such as the written word, documentary or exhibition. A photograph, or series of photographs, can also generate its own history dependent upon how it is used, where it is used, and why it is used. Therefore, photographs may be regarded as having the capacity of being both sources and histories.96 This medium also possesses its own materiality: photographs exist as objects. As an object, the questions to ask include “where, and in what form, the image was published and consumed, and the ways it gets recycled and reread” and how these material acts influence meanings.97 Questions such as these, reflect sports historians’ growing interest in photographic images, as noted by Mike Huggins and Mike O’Mahony above.

Photographs play a significant role in the sports history of Brisbane Girls Grammar School. Some of the earliest photographs of the School depict sportswomen at play, holding tennis racquets or wearing sports-embroidered blazers. These provide valuable details: “(c)lues about the nature of the sports milieu, sports clothing, and even social class can be found in photographic images”.98

Approaches to analysing meanings beyond superficial detail include, “studying photographs for

96 Osmond, Gary. “Reflecting Materiality: Reading Sport History through the Lens.” Rethinking History 12, no. 3 (2008): 339-60.
97 Ibid., 341.
single conscious meaning (iconography), single unconscious meanings (semiotics, psychoanalysis), and polysemous, multiple, and indeterminate meanings”. Phillips, O’Neill and Osmond argue that the “poststructural notion of multiple, or polysemic meanings” is a valuable approach as meanings shift with the interpretation of the viewer and viewing context.

Photographs play a significant role in telling stories about society, organisations and people’s lives. Genres, materiality and semiotic meanings of images provide the interested observer with perspectives and understandings which can illuminate often superficial facts and histories. Sporting photographs are valuable because they are “signposts for collective sporting memory, a crucial resource for critical reflection.”

The photographs available within the Brisbane Girls Grammar School context range from formal or official shots to action photographs, newspaper photographs and clippings, private album collections and postcard photographs. A series of three photographs from 1934 and 1945 presents an effective case study to introduce three different photographic genres – newspaper, School magazine and personal photography – and the variety and potential of materiality and semiotic readings.

Enter Gladys Gray (BGGS 1932-1935), the common thread in these three depictions (see Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). An elite Grammar athlete, Gladys set records in hurdles, captained the Athletics team in 1934 and 1935 and was awarded the prestigious Sports Brooch in 1935.

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100 Ibid., 409.
The first of these three images appeared in an unidentified Brisbane newspaper and depicted Gladys Gray and Marjorie Allsop hurdling (Figure 2.1). Single newspapers are fragile ephemera; however, newspapers are a public record and are officially recorded, catalogued, microfilmed, digitised and otherwise preserved. Finding schoolgirl sport amongst the pages of local daily newspapers – *Brisbane Courier, Courier-Mail, Telegraph, Sunday Mail and Truth* – illustrates the public interest in schoolgirl sport and, more specifically, the independent girls’ schools where Brisbane’s influential members of society sent their children. The newsworthiness is reflected in the staging of this particular photograph. This is not an image of a real race, rather two winners from different age groups who probably hurdled several times until an appropriate image was captured by the photographer.

Equally important is the semiotic component of the photograph. This is a picture of activity, of hurdlers in full flight, in contrast to the passive poses in the other photographs that include Gladys Gray. These hurdlers potentially encourage and legitimise competitive physical activity for women. The headline, *Easy Grace – Grim Determination*, validates the actions of the hurdlers in the context of an era when young women were expected to be demure and controlled. Nevertheless,
this image portrays young women executing a difficult skill in a competitive situation. The photograph could also be considered rather risqué for the era with the girls in bloomers and their legs widely spread enabling the execution of clearing the hurdles and creating maximum visual impact. The active dimension of this photograph, whether it challenged or conformed to readers’ perceptions of young sporting women, is designed to attract the attention of readers and sell newspapers.

The remaining aspect of this photograph is the manual editing – a form of materiality – that changed the athlete’s name in the caption. The actual preserving of the image of the BGGS hurdlers and the desire to make it accurate (note the hand-annotated correction of G. Faragher to M. Allsop) by the schoolgirl, Isobel Joyce McKinnon, who cut the photograph out of the newspaper, alludes to the importance of photographs and accuracy to individuals. The storage and protection of the newspaper image in the BGGS archives indicates its value to the School.

Figure 2.2 Athletics Team 1934 Captain – Gladys Gray (circled, third row, fourth from left) - BGGS School Magazine December 1934, 35. Source: BGGS Archives.
The School magazine presents a different context in which to view photographs. The photograph of the 1934 School Athletics team, with Gladys Gray featured as captain (Figure 2.2), typifies the formal style of School magazine photographs. The magazine is a much more substantial document than the newspaper, more physically robust and traditionally given to every member of the School community. The audience of the magazine, however, is less public than a newspaper and thus the publication can be more idiosyncratic and parochial.

Photographs in the School magazine of the 1930s portrayed sport as a formal activity, depicting teams as part of an official historical record for the School. Their inclusion and the dominance of formal sporting photographs in the publication indicate the importance of sport in school life. The magazine, as a publication, is a significant piece of memorabilia for each student, especially those present in these photographs, as a record of their involvement and success.

A range of semiotic interpretations can be drawn from this traditional magazine photograph. The girls are formally seated displaying the Stephens Cup and the Junior Cup for Athletics – two of the three trophies from the QGSSSA Athletics competition. This passivity is at odds with the active performance these athletes no doubt exhibited whilst winning the trophies displayed. However, it may reflect the expectation of the photographer and the headmistress and their perception of appropriate behaviour for a formal picture. The photograph was taken in front of one of the side verandahs of the Main Building of the School, a formal and significant setting, as the Main Building has been the iconic structure of the School since the 1880s. The girls are dressed in full sports uniform and convey through their facial expressions – varying from very pleased to serious to contemplative – the importance of recording this momentous outcome. In this photograph, faces are clearly seen and recorded for posterity, although the naming of each athlete does not occur either on the actual photograph housed in the BGGS Archives or in the magazine. This omission of names constitutes a material act on the image. One can speculate on the reasoning behind this decision and suggest it was a choice with regard to print space, the difficulty of naming so many athletes, or timing in relation to publication, all issues often faced by an editor. The result is that this
photograph becomes a visual recording of the successful team aimed at giving the observer an understanding of the approximate size of the team, the uniform used by the athletes and the trophies won – all important facts for interpreting a Grammar athlete’s life.

Figure 2.3 Personal photograph taken of Joan Crosier, Dulcie Levy and Gladys Gray, August 1935 on BGS Normanby Oval. Source: Mrs Elva Marshall nee Colvin 1932-35 Collection, BGGS Archives.

The third example that includes Gladys Gray is a photograph from a private album. Private photographic collections provide an intriguing insight into society and, specifically in this case, school life. These personal albums and individual photographs are invaluable for their authentic details, informal recording of experiences and unique interpretation of schoolgirl life as they are compiled or taken by the individual. The example featured here is from Mrs Elva Marshall’s Collection, held in the BGGS Archives (Figure 2.3). This precious possession captures three young women – Gladys Gray, Joan Crosier and Dulcie Levy – at the School’s Interform Athletics on Brisbane Grammar School Normanby Oval in August 1935.

This personal photograph is open to an array of semiotic interpretations. It epitomises the essence of Girls Grammar sport where the Sports Brooch winner, Gladys Gray, the most elite athlete in the School, shares the joy of the day with friends, one of whom, Dulcie, stands in a sack,
suggesting her participation in the novelty sack race; Joan holds a tunnel ball, a regular event at both interform and interschool sports. There is an obvious pride in their friendship, the involvement in the day, and their uniform. The juxtaposition of the formality of the full school uniform worn by Joan (including tie, form colours and School hat) and the variation of Gladys’s uniform (combining the sporting babushka or head scarf, with the formal uniform) to Dulcie’s relaxed pushed-up sleeves and hessian bag reflects the eclectic elements of the Sports Day. These elements varied from organised events for serious outcomes such as trophies and interschool selection, to fun activities like sack races as part of the interform sports which, on occasions, raised money for the soldiers’ fund.

The material importance of this photograph for the individual lies in the memories and emotions it evokes, an image of friends captured and kept in a personal album and treasured by the donor, Elva Marshall. As a digital artefact for the School, its importance is multifaceted. The information captured by the “snap” includes a moment in time for the School, uniform variations, the wearing of Form coloured ribbons with the School dress badge, pockets on the blazer, sporting equipment – running shoes and a pump – carried by the elite athlete, the venue for the interform athletics, and the variety of events and joy of this annual competition.

As suggested by these three photographs, a range of photographic contexts exists at BGGS with individual semiotic meanings and material uses that reinforce their unique value as sources. They are very important in the interpretation of the history of Grammar’s sporting and Physical Education history. Frequently, athletic events were not recorded, or only vaguely alluded to, and it is photographs that add clarity, detail and information to the event.

To explore still further the impact of photographs on the history and culture of the School, I will examine other newspaper and magazine photographs across the decades focusing on material and semiotic perspectives. I have chosen to analyse newspaper and magazine images rather than private collections because they are published images. As published images, they reflect and influence society’s view of women in physical activity and, subsequently, the style of photograph
taken; have a powerful impact on the viewer; reached a wider audience; and thus have the capacity to wield greater influence. Additionally, school magazine images carry a dual role of prescribed as well as public readership. I chose the photographs for analysis based on personal experience, preference and bias, or what Mike Huggins would refer to as my “sporting gaze”\textsuperscript{102} as an old girl, athlete and Physical Educator of the School. Like any reader, I am influenced by the visual appeal, the relevance of the image, and my knowledge of and interest in the activity. For me, the selection criteria included aesthetics; availability of the photograph; importance of the activity or event to Girls Grammar – its place in Grammar sporting history; the story the image tells about the participants in the photograph; and its commentary on women in sport at the time. Much can be extrapolated from these images, their placement within the paper or magazine, and their captions.

**Newspapers**

In newspaper reports of schoolgirl sport and Grammar sport in particular, the inclusion of photography became increasingly important to portray the event to the public. The analysis of the style of image, position within the paper and subjects of newspaper images provides an insight into women’s involvement in sport, and the value of schoolgirl sport to the readers of the newspapers and illustrates the place of sport in a Grammar student’s life. I will analyse a selection of newspaper images from 1924 to 2003 in which Grammar girls are featured to illustrate these aspects. I have considered all decades but have been selective in this analysis.

Coverage by the main Brisbane newspaper, *The Brisbane Courier*, of schoolgirl sport in the 1910s and 1920s included reporting of results and associated social events, interspersed with occasional static, formal pictures of a team or individual. The *Brisbane Courier*, published daily, had approximately twenty-eight pages devoted to advertisements, sport, general news, social and cultural events, trade, business and commerce.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 320.
Figure 2.4 The Brisbane Courier, 8 September 1924, 11. The caption reads: “The Girls’ Grammar School team, winners of the senior relay race at the Inter-school girls’ sports on Saturday.”

Figure 2.4 captures the 1924 winning Brisbane Girls Grammar School Senior Relay team and shares the page in The Brisbane Courier with the School’s winning Junior Relay team. Obviously proud of their achievement, the girls line up to be photographed for posterity.

Particularly significant is that the newspaper editors regarded this sporting event as sufficiently important to have a photographer present to capture this image. However, the placement of the photograph is at the bottom of the page with the male cricketers at the top, suggesting the priority given to men’s sport. This image says as much about the girls’ compliance and precision as it does about their uniform and appreciation of the significance of their achievement. The caption denotes the school they represent, and states that they were the winning team at the “girls’ sports”, but does not list individual names as is the case with the photograph of male cricketers. This could be attributed to the large number of girls needing to be listed as compared to the two cricketers photographed or the level of importance attributed to the men’s game. The style of photograph is common and others can be found in the School archives from this era illustrating this typically formal style.

With the invention of the George Eastman’s Kodak “Brownie” in 1900 and the development of Oskar Barnack’s 35 millimetre camera, the Leica, in 1925, cameras became more efficient, less
cumbersome and hence, more mobile. 103 As well, “the development of quicker shutters, faster films and lighter cameras helped to arrest the swift action of many sports. From solitary hiking to crowded road races, sporting activities quickly went from being largely unrecorded to high visibility in public newspapers, and tabloids devoted solely to sports were established.”104

Photographs were included more frequently in the newssheets from the 1920s and these images depicted increasingly more active representations. The images were printed in the sports pages, but also in the women’s section, for example, in the Telegraph’s, “The Women’s Realm”, and in the pictorial sheet which often featured multiple photographs. This regularly featured collage of images was heavily influenced by the German idea of photojournalism where images with captions, or cutlines, told the story.105 The Brisbane version had varied topics ranging from action shots of physical activity to social events. The images in Figure 2.5, compiled in 1935, illustrate this eclectic combination, which was used to attract the attention of the reader while visually capturing the social whirl of the week or, perhaps, relegating women’s activities to a visual summary rather than detailed reporting. The semiotic interpretation of this collage, which includes the significant image of Gladys Gray receiving the QGSSSA Athletics trophies and another with her fellow captains from the other QGSSSA schools, is one of happiness, joy, and social and cultural exchange (such as the Windsor School of Art Show photograph at the bottom right) and achievement.

In the 1920s and 1930s, sport was afforded a prominent place in the Brisbane’s newspapers, often towards the front of the paper, preceding even the general news. These images would have engaged the reader, and provided light relief from the pages of advertising, results, weather and shipping times. It is interesting to contemplate the frustration of the Grammar girls when the captions and headlines often inaccurately listed the school as their “brother” school, Brisbane Grammar School, rather than Brisbane Girls Grammar School. There was obviously a view of interchangeability of the two school names amongst journalists. This lack of concern for accuracy reinforces the establishment of the girls’ school in 1875 as an “experiment” in the minds of the public and, perhaps, the lack of recognition of the girls’ school in its own right. However, at least these photographs provided a clear discourse in which women were active, proficient and central to community activities.

In the 1930s, Brisbane newspapers – which included the Telegraph, Sunday Mail, Brisbane Courier, The Queenslander and Truth – required news and activities to fill their pages. The Telegraph, in particular, became a rich resource of action photography as it had two evening editions to fill and this resulted in a positive outcome of increased coverage for schoolgirl sport. Frequently, Grammar performances were illustrated in this newspaper where interform as well as...
interschool sports were photographed and reported. Once again, these photographs were deemed sufficiently interesting and newsworthy to sell newspapers.

Newspaper clippings became precious personal possessions for Grammar girls such as Leah Potter (nee Shaw), where the image (see Figure 2.6) was cut from the newspaper and preserved, demonstrating the materiality of individual newspaper images. This photograph is part of a collection of a series of newspaper clippings from Leah’s years at school, which included a range of both active and passive newspaper photographs of Grammar athletes. This particular image may have been of special importance to Leah as it includes two of the elite athletes in the School at the time, Betty Mapleton and Marjorie Allsop, who had also been featured in the Telegraph in 1937. Leah carefully cut out and collected relevant images and, years later, glued the clippings for display, labelling them with interesting commentary and ultimately gifting them to the School.106 The display was possibly created for her fiftieth reunion, which validates the enduring power of these images.

What does this collection, exemplified by Figure 2.6, tell us about Leah Potter and the 1930s Grammar girl more generally? It displays pride in her school and peers, emphasises the importance of the printed image and expresses a desire to capture the memories that these images evoke. The image and caption present the viewer with the impression that the race is hotly contested with the athletes showing considerable effort and style; and that the typical attire for schoolgirl athletes of stockings, bloomers, tie and babushka reinforces the need for modesty during physical endeavour. It also raises the questions: Can the evenness of the race reflect the start of the race, or does it suggest that the photograph was staged, especially when you consider the curiosity rather than excitement of the lone spectator? If it were an “even race”, as the title suggests, you would expect the participants as well as the onlooker to be more engaged.

106 Leah Potter’s Scrapbook 1937 – 1940, BGGS Archives.
The style and frequency of the coverage of schoolgirl sport by newspapers in the 1940s was similar to that of the 1930s. Schoolgirls appeared in the sports pages and the social section of the newspapers featuring results, illustrated articles reporting on swimming and athletics predominately, and enthusiastic spectators. Photographs were a mixture of action and posed shots. However, there was an absence of interform photographs like that seen in Figure 2.6, perhaps indicating the impact of the war years with print space devoted to news from the war and a decreased interest in schoolgirl intramural sport.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the press pursued more active photographs aided by improved technology and the public’s desire to capture that moment in sport that the eye could not always discern. These images were displayed in the sports pages and illustrated the athletic achievements of schoolgirls. The photographs were usually part of the report on the event but were also used to fill space or break up results and print. Figure 2.7 was an image taken at the QGSSSA Athletics held at the Brisbane Cricket Ground in August 1959. The dominant subject of the photograph is Brenda Cox, an outstanding sprinter for BGGS, and ultimately Australia. The image, which appeared in the Sunday Mail (see Figure 2.8), was a cropped version of the original. This illustrates
the editor’s discretionary power in the selection of images and the impact this choice can have on the public record of events reported.

*Figure 2.7* captures Brenda Cox perfectly as she crosses the finish line. This photograph, when cropped, provided a clear image of her face for the article which focused on her specifically, alluding to her potential as a future Australian representative and sub-captioned “Brenda Cox brilliant”. However, the editing of the photograph, its caption and the text in which it is placed impacts on the full context of the shot and its reception by viewers. Mike Huggins expounds John Bale’s view, where he contends that the viewer can be positioned when the “photograph might be cropped before publication, shorn of textual journalistic comment, or with inappropriate comment.”

These two photographs illustrate the malleability of photographic images and the choices made by editors. The audience, rather than viewing a panoramic view of the Brisbane Cricket Ground, the position of the spectators, the rows of athletes preparing most likely for the Ballgames competition in the background, and the dominance of Brenda Cox in this race (see *Figure 2.7*), are presented with a more focussed and dramatically cropped shot of Brenda at the completion of her race looking strong and composed (see *Figure 2.8*). One image is published for the world to see and the other is committed to a forgotten newspaper file. It also resides in Brenda’s private collection, for limited consumption, but nonetheless possesses its own special materiality for this athlete and the School.

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Figure 2.7 Brenda Cox at the Brisbane Cricket Ground 1 August 1959, Brenda Cox Private Collection, Source: digital copy BGGS Archives.

Figure 2.8 Photograph of Brenda Cox cropped for publication, the Sunday Mail, 2 August 1959, 41.
The 1960s’ newspaper images also provided an interesting view of the importance of particular events in the schoolgirls’ sporting calendar. Figure 2.9 illustrates the significant place held by the Brockway Cup in Queensland swimming. This event was established in 1904 and held in conjunction with the QGSSSA Annual Swimming Carnival from 1949. Two images of Grammar girls are embedded in the sports pages of the *Sunday Mail* in 1961. The posed image of the winning Grammar team captures the girls’ joy at winning the Brockway Cup after 32 years, as well as allowing the reader to clearly identify each swimmer. The action shot portrays the best swimmer and captain of the Grammar team, Jennifer Corish, during the race. This juxtaposition of posed and action images embedded in the detailed newspaper report conveys both the competitiveness of schoolgirl sport as well as the youthful exuberance of young women. The inclusion of the action photograph of Jennifer Corish, Grammar’s and the Carnival’s strongest swimmer, counteracts the passive photograph of the team. A strong, elite swimmer is portrayed while not losing her youthful joy with her teammates. This representation of the winning Grammar team carries powerful material dimensions. Bold headlines suggest the importance of this long-awaited success, the whole team is featured and named, including each swimmer’s suburb, and the

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108 Stewart, *The Life and Times of Dr Brockway*, 81.
actual cup is included in the photograph providing the public with a clear representation of the
trophy, which no doubt was easily identified by the many previous winners who read that story.

Newspaper coverage of schoolgirl sport began to decrease across the 1970s, 1980s and
1990s with photographs dependent on the sports editor’s view of the relevance and importance of
the event, and with other events competing for space and thus the allocation of a photographer for
event coverage. Another major influence on this decrease of coverage was the local newspapers’
access to national and international sports reports, reducing the need for local stories. In the Federal
Government report on Women, Sport and the Media in 1985, women’s sport averaged 1.3% of
available space in all capital city newspapers.109 By 1996, Murray Phillips reported that only 10.7%
of available newspaper space was allocated to women’s sport.110 Though these figures indicate a
slight increase over a decade, the statistics analysed were predominately of adult women’s sports.
In the Brisbane tabloids, results of the two major events of the QGSSSA, swimming and athletics,
were still reported, however, photographic coverage became less frequent. Action shots still
dominated, interspersed with social, passive photographs. The style of image often dictated where
the photograph would be placed in the newspaper with the inactive, posed shot frequently placed
towards the front of the paper or the social pages and the active shot embedded in the sports section
in an article.

**Figure 2.10** is a typical example of the posed image and its placement in the newspaper.
Relegated to page 9 in The Courier-Mail, the image is used as an eye-catcher with Eliza Gower,
Grammar student and elite Rhythmic gymnast, in an unusual pose. This is less about the sport of
Rhythmic Gymnastics and more about the impact the athlete’s extreme flexibility can have on the
viewer. The photograph has been used to stimulate the reader’s interest with underlying
commentary on the extreme flexibility required by the Rhythmic gymnast, the “juggling act”
required by young athletes with regard to their studies, and the Olympic aspirations of an attractive

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female sportswoman. An alternate commentary is that this photograph does not represent the athlete in competition or training mode, thus the photographer has been dispatched at a convenient time rather than when the athlete was performing, resulting in a posed image which devalues the sport and the effort, intensity and commitment needed to become an Olympic athlete. The reader will be momentarily entertained, especially with the pun of the caption, rather than fully appreciate the legitimate efforts made by sportswomen.

Figure 2.10 Eliza Gower, The Courier-Mail 13 February, 2003, 9.

During the twenty-first century, the impact of digital photography and online newspapers resulted in major newspaper consortiums reducing their printed product. These world-wide media empires had speedy access to international stories and images which took priority over schoolgirl sport. The local, smaller papers such as Quest in Brisbane became the more accessible print media for schools and schoolgirl sporting associations such as the QGSSSA, and offered some coverage of schoolgirl sport. These smaller newspapers frequently rely on organisations and individuals supplying stories and often photographs. The current practice for the Girls Grammar Marketing department, and no doubt most organisations, is to contact Quest with a newsworthy story and hope
that a photographer and journalist may visit the School. The story is initiated by the School and normally a passive or posed photograph results. These photographs are representative of the results rather than the active performances. This means that the School has a degree of control over the style of the photograph, clothing worn and the message communicated. The photograph and article therefore become promotional tools for the School but also reinforce the importance that sport and, notably, success in sport, holds. The content of these local newspapers is predominately advertising and real estate, offering two to three pages for sport at the back of the tabloid. To the detriment of women’s sport, they continue to reflect sports coverage of the large metropolitan newspapers with male-dominated, action shots.

Frequently, stories and photographs are placed online and not in the circulated publication. This applies to both commercial newspapers and the Grammar website. Here, the image is central to the article drawing the observer in because, in Huggins’ words, “… (W)e have more empathy with images than texts, because we have all experienced sporting movement, so it speaks to our bodies.”

School Magazines

The role of the School magazine was, and is, a contrasting one to that of newspapers. While the newspaper is a fragile form of ephemera, at one moment relaying highly public, important information, the next moment wrapping up the rubbish, the School magazine has substantial material importance in capturing the events and personalities of any one year in the life of the School. Lynn Hoffman contends that “a high school yearbook is a piece of material culture, a physical object or artefact that can be used as data to interpret ‘past and present human activity’.”

The Grammar magazine is stored in private collections, in the School’s archives and found in library collections of like-minded schools across the state. As a publication, it has the responsibility of not only recording school activities, moments in time, significant milestones and creative

achievements of the students, but also positions the reader with regard to the brand, philosophy and essence of the School. As David Martinson argues, “a good yearbook… undoubtedly can be a positive ‘public relations’ tool for a school.”

Like any publication, the style of the School magazine is responsive to society in terms of what is “trendy”, the current social issues, and elaborate graphics courtesy of improved technology. It can also be idiosyncratic, student-driven and parochial, made more so by the style of photographs included.

The inclusion of photographs was deemed an important element from the first Girls Grammar magazine in 1913 with formal photographs of the Tennis, Swimming and Basket Ball (sic) teams (see Figure 2.11). These photographs were formal; consistent with the era; lent gravitas to the activity; and informative, clearly depicting each athlete, her name, dress and the equipment used. Photographs of sporting teams and reports were always included in each School magazine, which were published bi-annually until 1967, and thereafter, annually. Thus exemplifying the continuing and significant status of sport in the School, and enriched the material value of the publication for the students featured.

![Figure 2.11 Tennis Team, School Magazine 1913, 7. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

Much can be interpreted from Figures 2.11, 2.12, and 2.13, which depict three eras. While demure and elegantly positioned, the girls of Figure 2.11 provide an insight into the 1910s’ social expectation of wearing long, bulky shirts where modesty rather than performance took priority. Their “uniform”, in an era when the School did not have such a formal attire, is significant, suggesting that the uniting impact of a uniform for a team was deemed important with the identifying School badge worn prominently on the tie with pride.

The 1943 swimming team photograph (see Figure 2.12) portrays a different style, reflecting the war years, with the athletes taking on a “Rosie the Riveter” militaristic style coat and posture. This Grammar team reflects the expectation of the times where women needed to be capable, prepared, organised and disciplined. Compare this photograph with its successor of twenty years (see Figure 2.13), where the much shorter blazer has replaced the more modest swim coat. These athletes still appear confident and capable, arranged in an elegant and symmetrical style. In both images, the athletes’ faces and names are clearly shown, the captain is highlighted and the pride this
team has taken in their success, having won the McWhirter Cup for Lifesaving, is foregrounded. Pride in the School and achievement is paramount in this image.

![Image of the Lifesaving team from the 1963 School Magazine](image)

**Figure 2.13 School Magazine 1963, 20-21. Source: BGGS Archives.**

In contrast to the often spectacular action photograph of newspapers throughout the 1960s, the School magazine image continued to be a formal posing of all team members (see Figure 2.13), usually with each athlete’s name below the photograph. These images were conservative in style, with the emphasis on an accurate record, and athletes were even systematically photographed in the same location within the School from year to year. The photographs were embedded in the relevant text of the magazine dutifully created by the captain of the sport.

The 1970s saw a very different representation of teams, magazine style and images. The magazine lost its conservative format and, in the hands of the students, candid images interspersed with action shots became the norm. The magazine was still the official record of the school year,
however a more informal representation of activities was permitted. This reflected the more permissive society of the 1970s, where youth were less willing to accept the hand of authority and sought more creative ways of expression. Free-flowing collages of photographs (see Figure 2.14) became the norm and fewer photographs clearly identified teams and competitions. Teams were captured randomly and often were unidentified. Candid images suffered the same fate. Although unidentified, these collages presented a very powerful message to the reader, portraying the students as being highly involved, wearing sports-specific uniforms, participating in a wide-ranging array of physical activity, having fun and executing difficult skills with precision. The 1973 magazine, as representative of the 1970s product, was 64 pages in length with nine pages devoted to sport which included twenty-seven action shots and fourteen posed images. Twenty-seven pages were focused on School Life which included a range of physical activities such as sailing and fencing, and seventeen pages allocated to “original works”, which included sixteen sketches, essays and poetry. Within the section on School Life, there were eleven action shots of physical activity. The sporting pages, when compared with music (one and half pages) and art work (five pages), demonstrate a clear dominance of focus and the level of importance that sport and physical activities had within school life. The collage (Figure 2.14) clearly illustrated that the School was committed to physical activity and produced a graduate who was involved and active. However, the identity of participants was of secondary importance in comparison to previous eras.
During the 1980s and 1990s, School magazine photographs demonstrated a mixture of formal and informal representations of teams and action photographs (Figure 2.15). This change occurred because of several factors. Firstly, there was a perceived need to return the document to a professionally presented, historical record as well as a student’s keepsake. During the 1970s the Magazine Committee comprised students, who had total editorial control. In 1980, English Faculty staff member, Mrs Robyn Colwill was appointed as the dedicated staff member to advise and guide the eleven-strong committee. This was the start of a transition from total student direction to a more guided approach. The staff member who assisted Robyn Colwill from 1982 until 1986 was Clare Kiolle, who took over the major advisory role when Colwill became Head of English at the School. Kiolle remained in this position from 1987 until 1998. In an interview, Kiolle stated that her brief from the principal, Mrs Judith Hancock (1977-2001), was to create a more professional look as the magazine was to be sent to libraries across Queensland.
Kiolle preferred a more organised approach and improved quality of paper, sourced a highly co-operative and committed printer and oversaw the introduction of colour to the magazine. Colour had a great impact on the presentation of the magazine, enhancing the action photographs and original art works. 114

The second factor underlying the change in photographic representations in the School magazine was a dramatic increase in research and funding by government and community organisations to promote women in sport. This created a more informed public and specifically, the well-educated Grammar community. Examples of opportunities to raise awareness is evidenced in the National Agenda for Women Implementation Reports published in 1990 and 1991; the formation of the Women’s Sport Promotion Unit, which evolved into the Women and Sport Unit as part of the Australian Sports Commission’s Policy and Co-ordination Section; and the establishment of organisations such as Womensport Queensland in 1993.

Thirdly, this era for Girls Grammar was linked with the introduction of the senior subject, Health and Physical Education. An integral element of this course was sociology of sport, with particular emphasis on women in sport. It became important to the Health and Physical Education Faculty to raise the awareness of its students, promote physical activity and present schoolgirl role models to the student body. This was made possible through photographs. The affordability of fast film, access to quality SLR cameras purchased by the School, and a budget which absorbed processing, allowed me, as Head of the Health and Physical Education Faculty, to shoot several films each weekend, process them through the School’s Media Department and display action photographs for the School body each week. Thus, an appreciation of images of active women developed with the regular display of photographs in the Sports Centre foyer. The originals were carefully archived and the enlarged copies on display were then frequently gifted to the athletes represented in the photographs, thus becoming valued souvenirs for the student. These action photographs were then often published in the School magazine.

Reflecting newspapers’ structure of specialist sections, sport in the School magazine evolved from a random sprinkling throughout the publication to a specialist, sizable allocation within the document. In the 1993 School magazine of 190 pages, forty-three pages were devoted to sport, the largest specialist section. There were seventy-eight named team photographs and thirty-eight action photographs. The importance of sport to both the community and the School was evidenced by this decision. Sport benefited from the School’s desire to present itself as a highly professional institution, with an emphasis on excellence, performance and commitment to girls’ education. This resulted in high-quality formal and informal photographs taken and reproduced in the magazine with all teams included and identified.
Viewed semiotically, the lead photograph of the 1993 Sports section (see Figure 2.16) graphically illustrates the benefits of physical activity for developing elegant, co-ordinated and confident young women who relish this involvement. The unique positioning of the group also reflects the teamwork involved in group Rhythmic Gymnastics and represents the sport’s dynamic motion.

Materially, the choice of this particular image as the introduction to the Sports section of the magazine is an interesting one. All these athletes were well-known elite performers in their sport of Rhythmic Gymnastics, which enjoyed enormous success within the School. All four students who are clearly named within the photograph were, or became, leaders in their Year 12 year and were high achievers. Through the placement of their named photograph at the commencement of the Sports section, the viewer is told that this sport is important; these students are valued; and physical activity deserves the effort, creativity and care taken to create this image. The strong messages
embodied by this photograph replicate the philosophy of sport within the School of excellence, commitment and enjoyment.

In 1999 a significant decision was made by the principal not to include every team photograph in the School magazine. The decision was based on the increasing costs of the magazine and the desire to make the magazine a more modern product. Formal, named photographs were sacrificed for colourful action and informal shots. Subjects in photographs were named when there were few in number. Team photographs usually received descriptive captions such as “Eager 15 yrs runners at the start”.

The digital age made its presence felt in several ways with the publication of the magazine and the taking of photographs. From 2000 onwards, sport remained in a specially designated section within the magazine illustrated by a diminishing, but carefully selected, number of colour, action photographs. What polysemic meanings can be extrapolated from the representative sports page of the 2003 School magazine (Figure 2.17)? The selected photographs are all action shots, in the “heat of battle”, warming up or in anticipation of a point. The concept of girls in motion, executing skills effectively, looking to win a point, and caring about a sporting outcome is powerful in this selection of images communicating that sport is an important and worthy pursuit. All levels are represented from the best team, Opens, to the youngest team, the Year 8s, suggesting a valuing of wide participation and each team and athlete, and a depiction of equity. It can be argued that this viewpoint differs from the male perspective where boys’ schools are typically heavily focused on the “Firsts” in any sport rather than all teams having equal importance. Focus and intensity are communicated in the Girls Grammar photographs, giving the viewer an appreciation of the importance of this sport to these students. Uniforms are consistent and activity-appropriate, with the Open team in a specialist design. This suggests a degree of elitism, differentiating the best players in the sport, perhaps to motivate all participants to aspire to greater heights. Materially, several

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116 Peter James. 100 Years of Grammar Rugby. Brisbane: Boolarong, 1988. The “Firsts” are seen as the flagship of each sport in boys’ schools with “old boys” supporting Firsts matches, often in large numbers, on a Saturday afternoon.
aspects emerge as significant. The largest photograph is of the captain, denoting her importance as leader and elite performer. All photographs are captioned, creating a more valued and valuable document for students and the School archive. Each sport in the 2003 publication was allocated similar space and detail, further alluding to the important position of sport for the Grammar community.

![Figure 2.17](image)

*Figure 2.17 The photograph at the top right is of the captain. BGGS School Magazine 2003, 79. Source: BGGS Archives.*

By 2006, extra photographs were included on a DVD attached to the publication. New technology had been introduced to this historical document. Unfortunately, the technology proved to be unpredictable in this year with a faulty DVD and so these photographs are lost to the
generations to come – another illustration of the fragility of images, whether they are printed or digitally produced.

In 2012, a progression from DVD to an accompanying website occurred to guarantee greater dependability and unlimited inclusions. The direct result of this technology was a reduction of the sports photographs in the magazine with a maximum of three colour, action photographs illustrating each sport, but unlimited material on the website. This “modernization” also meant the 2013 magazine was a smaller document and more affordable, allowing for more advanced graphics and artistic concepts. However, did it devalue its importance to the readership with a reduced number of photographs or is the concept of a physical magazine passé? For roughly one third of the 2013 graduating cohort, it appears the magazine was passé. In this Year 12 cohort of 230 girls, seventy-one magazines remained uncollected five months after its publication as opposed to 2012 when there were only twenty-eight remaining. Sport is still depicted in a specialised section with a graphic introductory page, and sports are reported in alphabetical order. Each sport is allocated half a page with two or three colour photographs selected. The photographs remain predominately action shots, however fewer athletes are depicted, none of the images are named, and no named team photographs are included in the publication. As an item of material culture, perhaps the magazine is less valued with fewer photographs of girls and hence their less enthusiastic response to collection.

What role do these most recently published photographs play in communicating the essence of sport at Brisbane Girls Grammar School? A semiotic interpretation of the photographs in Figure 2.18 is of general participation, professionalism evidenced by specialist clothing, intensity, teamwork and commitment to the contest. Materially, a decision was taken to omit captions or names. These images, while lacking captions or names, do communicate the positive sporting life at the School and this message is greatly enhanced by the selection of quality action shots rather than static images.
Conclusion

One is left to ponder the impact and place that “selfies”, Facebook, Instagram and other social media will have on the production of the School magazine for Grammar students, and on newspapers for the general populace. The demise of school magazines or, in North American terms, the yearbook, has been considered over time with authors such as Charles Savedge suggesting methods to modernise and make the product more appealing, relevant and indicative of...
However, the Girls Grammar school magazine and newspapers, generally, have weathered the media storm to this point. Perhaps it is the major point of difference – their tangible, material presence – that will protect the magazine and, to a lesser extent, the newspaper. Their materiality offers a unique element to the role they play and with expert critique, analysis, and innovation, their relevance can be maintained.

The newspaper photograph, like the School magazine image, evolved over time, with changes in both technology and cultural expectation, from a stilted, formal representation of participants to a vibrant and fluid capturing of movement. Both formats allow for “poetic licence”, providing the photographer and the editor with the opportunity to give an event a specific emphasis or interpretation. As camera technology developed, the quality of photographs improved, and the quantity increased, with newspapers having the capacity to produce more action photography. It is ironic that with this improved technology came more accessible world-wide news items that hastened the demise of schoolgirl sporting coverage in this printed medium. The School magazine, however, was slower to benefit from this technology than commercial newspapers, and took longer to accommodate action photography, delaying its inclusion until the 1970s.

Sports photographs play a significant role in the material culture of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School and are indeed a critical resource. They provide a legitimate source from which an appreciation of the visual can unlock meaningful discourse. The captured image is a beautiful thing. It has the capacity to aesthetically enhance a publication; define a moment in time; stimulate reflection; link the viewer to an experience or event; supply evidence; teach the eye of the observer the quality of a skill; provide meaningful information not otherwise accessible; become a precious object; and teach the viewer to analyse and empathise.

Newspaper and magazine images have great efficacy as a resource to illustrate the role that sport and physical activity played in the Girls Grammar education. Each image, through its material or semiotic dimensions enriches and complements the written word either in the newspaper or

School magazine. It permits the viewer to share or imagine the experience, or to remember the occasion. Each image holds a wealth of information, not only in the captured details but also in terms of where the image is positioned in a publication, how it is used and captioned and through the fact that the image is saved or protected in a personal collection or the School archives. In a school which boasts 140 years of service to the education of women, photographs are an invaluable reflection of its essence and practice.
Chapter 3  

Material Girls: Uniforms

Flags unify a country, a people, a spirit under common values. In the same way our uniform unites us as a School – just as we fly the same flag, strive for the same goals, and share the same values – our uniform identifies us, unites us and symbolises who we are and what we stand for.118

What can a small, embroidered, triangular piece of cloth, a terry-towelling coat, and a faded dress tell us about the sporting culture of Brisbane Girls Grammar School? Beverley Lemire states that “textiles and clothing have formed a growing focus of study not least for their deep resonance in past societies and past practices; they also served to transfer memories across time and space”.119 I would argue that clothing can transfer not only memories across time but also values and attitudes as alluded to in the quotation above by the Principal, Ms Jacinda Euler, from a School assembly in May 2014. Thus “uniforms have overt and covert lives”120: while identifying, bonding and unifying, they can also help to conform, control and constrain. Evidence of all these elements can be seen in the Girls Grammar uniforms where girls were, and are, encouraged to wear the uniform with pride, to perform well and to be well behaved when in the Grammar uniform, be it on the playing field as a sporting uniform, or in the classroom and in public as a school formal uniform. It is because of the importance of uniforms, specifically sporting uniforms, and what it represents that makes this detailed study worthwhile.

Because of the fragile nature of fabric, the earliest examples of uniform held by the School date from 1910. Consequently, I will examine and discuss generic items of clothing rather than specific, individual pieces. I have relied on photographs and reminiscences of past students for the earliest uniform research. With these early insights and the tangible examples of uniforms across

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118 Jacinda Euler, "School Assembly Speech." E-mail message to author. May 7, 2014.
the decades, I have used these generic material objects to illustrate the School’s commitment to
sport and physical education, the value girls placed on these possessions, and why they were valued.
The fact that many delicate items of clothing have been preserved is indicative of their significance
and place in the sporting culture of the School.

When examining the sporting uniform and its variations, it is significant to note that it
predated the School uniform. A School blazer was worn by Grammar girls, embroidered with
sports awards, years before 1922 when the “Fifth Form took the initiative, and after finding student
opinion favourable … began sketching the ideal [School] uniform as we imagined it”. The Fifth
Form, on gaining the permission of Miss Annie Mackay, Principal 1915 to 1924, chose the occasion
of the 1922 Brockway Cup on 10 March at the Ithaca Baths, the most important swimming event of
the school year, for their “coming out” day. The girls looked resplendent in their white blouses and
royal blue ties which gave them in, Puregger’s words, “a new feeling of pride in the school.” It is
noteworthy, but not surprising, that the student body would use a sporting event to make such a
momentous display of school loyalty and pride, and to go “one better” than their rival school,
Somerville House, which had adopted a uniform earlier in 1922.

Why did the sports uniform pre-date the school uniform, the design of which was such a
significant undertaking? One obvious answer is the inclusion of gymnastic classes in the School
curriculum from the establishment of the School in 1875 and the need for appropriate attire for
exercise. Physical activity necessitated freedom of movement not afforded by tight-sleeved, high-
necked blouses, long, full skirts and corsets. Later, the establishment of the QGSSSA in 1908
heralded regular sporting competition which would require school identification, pride in one’s
appearance and the School during competition, and a uniting team colour. The sporting uniform
also clearly signalled that the educators, Trustees and parents of Brisbane Girls Grammar School

Archives, Brisbane.
122 Ibid., 9.
firmly believed that physical activity and sport were important and necessary elements of a girl’s education.

The sporting attire at Girls Grammar was influenced by social convention, and reflected women’s fashion. However, it was also shaped by practicality, particularly the physicality women were capable of, and it served as a symbol of the School. The babushka, the swimming coat, and the gym tunic have been deliberately selected for this chapter as they tangibly represent the struggle women had between being physically competent yet decorous and the importance placed on sport by the School. The babushka was a piece of cloth which covered a woman’s head – her “crowning glory”; the swim coat, purportedly protected the female body from male view; and the gym tunic provided a woman with the comfort and ease to perform physical manoeuvres. These garments spanned decades when it was believed that girls could not be genteel and demure while being physically active and competitive. Although schoolgirls had the advantage of youthful exuberance and thus less restrictive social expectations, they were still confined by the dictates of the morality and fashion standards of the times. Thus, case studies of the babushka, the swim coat and the gym tunic help explain the place of sport and physical education in Girls Grammar culture.

The Babushka/Bandanna

The covering of a woman’s head appears to be associated with religious beliefs that were transferred into secular societies. Gerilyn Tandberg, in her article Confederate Bonnets, quotes St Paul from 1 Corinthians 7:1 of the New Testament:

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\text{Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head – it is one and the same thing as having her head shaven.}^{123}
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Perhaps as a result of such religious strictures, in the nineteenth century and early into the twentieth century, a woman was not appropriately attired unless she covered her entire body including her head, her hands and her ankles. This attitude was reflected even if she was involved in

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physical activity, with women playing tennis, hockey or rowing expected to have their hats firmly in place during the competition. Schoolgirls had greater physical freedom where skirt lengths rose above the ground and headgear options were explored.

The evolution of the bandanna, as the headscarf was initially called until the fashion-conscious adopted the term babushka, seems to have originated from the 'kerchief worn by men. This piece of clothing was square in shape, folded into a triangle and worn around the neck. The shape was attributed to Marie Antoinette, who suggested to King Louis XVI that the rectangular handkerchief would be more neat and convenient if it were square. Louis XVI then decreed, on 2 January 1785, that the length of all handkerchiefs would equal their width. The square handkerchief was born. Why does this have significance for women throughout history and for Grammar girls? It meant that the bandanna or babushka would be triangular in shape, thus creating a functional item to be worn on top of the head rather than wrapped around the head.

The functional usage of the bandanna has been evident throughout history. The term “bandanna” comes from an Indian word meaning to bind or tie. African American women wore them while working to keep their hair out of the way as well as to absorb perspiration and afford some protection from the sun. The bandanna or headwrap also gave these women the opportunity to express their personalities through colour and patterns. All of these functions resonate with the nineteenth and twentieth century Grammar girl.

It is likely that bandannas were worn from the commence ment of formal fixtures between the three original schools of the QGSSSA in 1908. The School Archive has a bandanna/babushka from 1910 (see Figure 3.1). This bandanna is royal blue with BGGS embroidered in white. The function of the bandanna during this time period was three-fold. Firstly, the bandanna acted as a convenience to control wayward hair during intense competition; secondly, it was associated with

126 "Names of Fabrics," The Maitland Daily Mercury, May 1, 1908, 4.
the convention of covering the head and hair; and thirdly, it was used to identify and place the girl wearing it in competition.

The photograph taken in 1918 of the School sports team (see Figure 3.2) depicts all members of the team dressed in a sports top, skirt and bandanna. The fashion for girls and women at the time was to wear their hair long, rarely short. It stands to reason that the girls would find it helpful to tie their hair back with the aid of the bandanna. As one journalist noted, “For sports or travelling they are very useful to keep unruly locks tidy.”128 This concept was also practised in America at the same time, where young schoolgirl and College hockey players, and occasionally basketball players, wore bandannas during games.129

During the 1920s, the technique to secure the bandanna for the Grammar netballer or athlete was to have a square piece of cloth folded into a triangular piece of cloth positioned tightly across the forehead and then tied at the base of the skull in a knot. The apex of the cloth was tucked in or left out to flutter. Based on photographic evidence, it seems that the preferred option at Girls Grammar was to tuck the apex in (see Figure 3.3). It appears that the bandanna was also utilised by Grammar swimmers. Although there is no photographic or written evidence of Grammar swimmers wearing a bandanna while actually swimming, Figure 3.3 shows the 1921 Brockway Swimming team in their swimmers, blazers, and bandannas. It was not uncommon in Queensland in the 1920s for a foulard, a French word meaning silk handkerchief or scarf, to be worn as a bathing cap. As a journalist explained in his or her column: “Multi coloured foulard, or a bandanna handkerchief, is always effective as a bathing cap. When the latter is used another bandanna handkerchief is draped over the shoulders of a plain stockinette swimming dress.”

130 “Original Bathing Caps,” Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser, April 4, 1924, 2.
The 1920s saw a dramatic change in society as women’s suffrage resulted in a public voice for women in many Western countries, the end of the First World War “necessitated a simplification in dress due to taxation and the shortage of labour and laundry work,”¹³¹ and there was a general relaxation of society’s expectations of behaviour. Sport benefited. For example, the French tennis champion Suzanne Lenglen brought style, athleticism and elegant, functional fashion to tennis, specifically, and women’s sport, generally. She also made the bandeau popular as a headgear for the athletic woman. Variations of this trademark were copied by young women around the world; however, never with Lenglen’s panache of the “two yards of silk expertly wound about her head and secured with a diamond brooch.”¹³² The Grammar girl did not seem to support this style although, as all the photographs available from this era are formal official team photographs, it is impossible to know if girls wore these at other times.

¹³² Ibid., 28.
By the 1920s, the bandanna was definitely an official part of the athletics uniform (see Figure 3.4) and it was used to identify athletes at the finish line. An article in the Brisbane Courier illustrates this function when it reported “(t)he blue and white costumes and royal blue kerchief of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School (the successful team) were effective, whilst the Brisbane Girls’ High School, with their refreshing green jumpers and blue kerchiefs were pleasing. The Brisbane State High School wore white and blue with red kerchiefs. Tunics of navy blue and headkerchiefs of maroon were worn by members of St Hilda’s team.”

The concept of wearing bandannas or kerchiefs as sporting identifiers and faithfully displaying your institution’s colours was not new, as illustrated by the establishment of Harvard University’s colour of crimson which involved the purchasing and wearing of red handkerchiefs as early as 1858 to identify the team and keep the sweat out of the students’ eyes while competing.

![Figure 3.4 Inter-School Sports, 1924. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

The use of colours to identify a sporting group was also evident within the School where intramural or form colours were worn as a bandanna and ribbons attached to blazers. Like the

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133 “Inter-School Girls’ Sports,” The Brisbane Courier, September 8, 1924, 14.
School’s royal blue, form or class colours were important and celebrated, as the following excerpt from the Form 3B poem written by Dorothy L. McCorkell indicates:

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\textit{Choc’ate and gold} \\
\textit{Our colours old} \\
\textit{We hope will lead the way,} \\
\textit{In scholarship and sports as well,} \\
\textit{When comes the testing day}^{135}
\]

The Brisbane Girls Grammar Sports Club minutes of 7 December, 1928 list the Form Colours. These colours were worn as bandannas and occasionally ties, as illustrated in Figure 3.5. Marjorie Elliott, a former pupil (1918 -1922) and staff member responsible for teaching English and co-ordinating Athletics (1930-1971), explained the colour allocation. In her words, there was a “keen interform competition – second to fifth form had two colours (all Thirds had black plus another; Fourths navy plus another) Sixth form had the three colours blue, black and gold.”^{136} Examples of these colour combinations were: lower 3A wore brown and purple; 3A’s colours were black and green; and 4A carried navy and cerise. Each form’s bandanna was made in the appropriate colour with the Fifth form wearing a tartan design of gold and royal blue in 1928. In 1920, 5A commented in their Form notes in the School magazine that “unfortunately this year we were unable to buy tartan for our Form caps, so that we were forced to change our colours… we compromised on large red spotted handkerchiefs of the ‘honest workman’ variety which we considered almost as original and very becoming.”^{137}

This style of headgear continued into the 1930s with the forms using them as part of their interform competition uniform and the School team wearing the royal blue School bandanna at all interschool competitions. It was in this decade that the terminology changed from bandanna to babushka, with newspaper advertisements promoting the babushka and the dirndl, a dress with a full

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gathered skirt, as the latest “thing” to be worn to a picnic or the beach. The babushka was described as “a gay square, folded into a triangle.” The Grammar girls, however, continued to refer to the headpiece as a bandanna for several decades after this.

The Form colours were once again clarified in 1946 in the BGGS Sports Club Minutes with greater detail and stipulation of the colour of the embroidery. For interform competition, each babushka was embroidered with the form’s number in Roman numerals. For example, in 1946 the Sixth Form’s babushka was royal blue with the ‘VI’ in yellow lettering and black binding; 5B was gold with royal blue lettering; and 6E was cerise with navy lettering. The School babushka remained royal blue with white lettering (see Figures 3.6 and 3.7).

![Figure 3.5 Fifth Form Interform babushkas c.1930. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

The babushka, as a fashion item, did not always receive good press and was scathingly referred to in Winifred Moore’s column in the Courier Mail in 1950 as “slovenly headwear”; she quoted a Chicago college director referring to the babushka “as regimented rags which suggested potato-digging time on a Soviet farm.” As the babushka continued to be a compulsory part of the schoolgirl sporting uniform, it would appear that practicality overrode fashion in most instances.

139 Interviews with a range of past students, Schubert, McNamara, Morton and Laidlaw, who attended BGGS between the years 1945 to 1965.
This was further illustrated when the 1950 babushka was worn fashionably by tying the ends under the chin. Once again, practicality and comfort overrode fashion as this under-the-chin style would have proven to be most uncomfortable and restricting for any athlete (see Figure 3.9).

It would appear that often the shape of the material for the Grammar babushka was a triangle, not a square of material folded diagonally (see Figure 3.6 and 3.7). This would result in a more economical approach where two babushkas could be made from the one square piece of cloth at a time when a variety of materials may have been difficult to purchase. Also, with a different form colour required each year, it would have been much more affordable for families.

Figure 3.6 Examples of babushkas. Source: BGGS Archives.

The BGGS Archives has a collection of babushkas which are predominately triangular in shape. The 1910 bandanna (Figure 3.1) illustrates the alternative shape.
By the mid-1960s, the babushka was permanently adapted to a triangle with two long, narrow ties making it less bulky and easier to keep on the athlete’s head in competition (see Figure 3.8). The last year the babushka was worn by Grammar athletes was 1967, when I had the joy of keeping it in place while competing in the Interschool Ballgames competition which was held in conjunction with the QGSSSA Athletics Carnival. My babushka was triangular in shape with narrow ties and was made and embroidered by my mother out of the same white fabric as my gym tunic. We wore it during competition and the march past at the completion of the carnival. It is interesting to note that it was not worn by the team for the official magazine photograph and so it seems it had outgrown its usefulness. As an athlete, I was certainly very pleased not having to battle with it in another competition. Other athletes felt similarly, with Judy Schubert (BGGS 1962-1965) admitting “I tried to forget it!”^142

However, Daphne Pirie (nee Welch 1946-1947) wore hers with pride stating: “if you didn’t wear it you weren’t in the team. It was alright, it stopped your hair getting in your eyes but I always

cut my hair before competitions for less wind resistance.” During Pirie’s school years, in the 1940s, the bandanna was supplied by the School and it acted as the predominant identification for the athlete. Brenda Laidlaw (nee Cox 1958-1961), Australian Commonwealth Games sprinter, thought it was “a foreign thing to wear on your head to run in but you just wore it because you followed the rules. I will never forget my mother embroidering the BGGS on my babushka…I’ve got a very special bandanna.”

Figure 3.8  Interform Athletics, 1960, Normanby Oval. Source: BGGS Archives.

Figure 3.9 Interform Athletics, 1960, Normanby Oval. Source: BGGS Archives.

143 Daphne Mary Pirie, "Bandannas in the 1940s." Telephone interview by author. May 18, 2015.
144 Brenda Laidlaw, "Babushkas in the 50s-60s." Telephone interview by author. May 18, 2015.
By 1968, babushkas were removed from the athlete’s wardrobe. Grammar headgear transitioned to what was fashionable in a particular sport at international or representative level. In the early 1980s, caps were introduced. The style was an unlined six-piece cap – a copy of the standard softball cap of the time. The cap was superseded by the visor made popular by lady golfers in the late 1980s. This was really an attempt by me, as Director of Health, Physical Education and Sport, to encourage fashion-conscious schoolgirls to wear some form of sun protection. The visor met with some success. However, fashion being a constant evolution, and even reworking past designs, the cap has experienced regular iterations as has the visor.

The truly interesting development in the modern schoolgirl’s sporting wardrobe is the appearance of the headband. This is almost a revisiting of the babushka or bandeau. Pared back to a modern version, for the Grammar girl, this was not a method of keeping loose locks under control or covering the head for modesty but became a motivator for competition, a tradition reflecting success, and a proud indicator of being part of the team. As seen in Figure 3.10, the Under 13 age group, which was part of the successful 2007 Cross Country team where the School won its 14th consecutive QGSSSA competition, mostly wore their motivational headbands. This concept was introduced by the Cross Country captains of 2001, Sophie Cameron and Jennifer Davis, and is a feature of all cross country teams, and some Athletics and Swimming teams ever since. Suzanne Lenglen would fully endorse this addition to the Grammar girl’s kit!

Figure 3.10 QGSSSA Cross Country 2007 Under-13 competitors. Source: BGGS Archives.
The Swimming Coat

By the foundation of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School in 1875, swimming for women and girls was becoming a more acceptable leisure activity. For Girls Grammar, a significant catalyst for incorporating swimming into the School’s curriculum was the sinking of the RMS *Quetta*, a three-decked steamer bound for England, on 28 February, 1890. This devastating event caused great loss for many Queensland families: 134 people drowned and of the 158 survivors, only four were women. This created such a public outcry that there was demand for the building of public pools and the inclusion of swimming in the school curriculum. Grammar families were directly affected by the tragedy with one of the female survivors being Alice Nicklin, daughter of Reuben and Jane Nicklin, who both perished in the sinking of *The Quetta* along with Annie and Isabel Wight, sisters and past students. Annie Wight had also been a staff member. The response from Sir Charles Lilley, Chair of the BGGS Trustees, was to donate prizes for competitive swimming in the same year of the tragedy.

While women were still restricted by voluminous clothing and limited opportunities to swim, segregated swimming times at available venues provided greater freedoms. Seclusion assisted in the rationalisation of the swimming costume whereby swimming attire progressed from drawers with an overlaying bathing dress in navy serge to a bathing costume of thick, dark cotton or wool fabric from neck to knees. This style enhanced the efficiency of strokes and the ability to swim, but created its own problems with regard to society’s view of female dignity, modesty and exposure.

The Grammar girl was swimming competitively from at least 1890 when results were reported in the *Brisbane Courier*, and Principal, Charlotte Pells, introduced swimming into the curriculum with the appointment of Miss Merry in 1893. The School affiliated with the

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Queensland Amateur Swimming Association in 1904 and subsequently competed at their swimming events. It is difficult to ascertain the exact style of the Grammar swimming costume at that time; however, it may have reflected the style Annette Kellerman made scandalously fashionable in America in 1910 which “bore a strong resemblance to men’s gym wear… since it borrowed the foot tights, small sleeves, modest scooped neck, and form-fitting torso typical of men’s gymnastics wear.”\footnote{Patricia C. Warner, \textit{When the Girls Come out to Play: The Birth of American Sportswear}. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2006), 78.} This revealing style of swim wear (see \textit{Figure 3.11}) appears to have led to the use of the swim coat, as indicated in the \textit{Australasian} in 1920:

\textit{Women abroad are not bathing without a tunic or jumper, belted or sashed. This style is rigidly adopted where mixed bathing is the custom… The cape that envelopes the figure on the walk to the water is also of stockinette. Indeed, it would appear that nowadays no girl or woman need look a sight in her bathing attire…}\footnote{Queen Bee, "The Bathing Dress," \textit{Australasian}, January 10, 1920, 35. Stockinette is the basic knitting stitch creating a “v” design with each stitch. It was also known as knit one row, purl one row stitch.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{BGGS Swimming Costume, 1928.png}
\caption{BGGS swimming costume, 1928. Source: Lilah Lucy W. Marriott Collection, BGGS Archives.}
\end{figure}

It appears that the modesty “cape”, which was \textit{de rigueur} for the fashion-conscious in the 1920s, had an impact on the schoolgirl attire at the pool. As indicated in \textit{Figure 3.12}, St Hilda’s...
students are dressed in striking, striped swimming coats while the other schools, including BGGS, appear to be clothed in their swimmers and blazers. This is consistent with the Grammar Brockway Cup team in 1921, as previously seen in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.12 Brisbane Courier, 29 March 1926, 15. Caption reads: “Some of the competitors at the Secondary Schools’ Swimming Carnival at the Booroodabin Baths on Saturday.”

The style of cloak worn by the St Hilda’s swimmers was common in the previous decade in competitive swimming circles and, perhaps, took the lead from swimmers such as Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie, Australia’s successful Olympians of the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games. For these women, a serious battle was waged to gain permission to attend the Stockholm Games as there were strong opinions that social dictates were being compromised with mixed swimming, exposure of the female form and lack of chaperoning. Heated debate ensued with Miss Rose Scott, staunch feminist and President of the New South Wales Ladies’ Swimming Association, resigning when the meeting of the Association voted to send both girls to the Olympics.\(^{153}\) No doubt a convincing argument for those voting in the affirmative was captured in the *Daily Telegraph*, which quoted a critic stating: “‘(i)f strict rules were made and carried out unflinchingly there would not be the slightest excuse for the most prudish to say that it would be lowering for our sex and to our womanly dignity also to swim in the presence of men.’ The main rule she suggested was that competitors should not mix with the audience, should wear long coats to cover their costumes whenever they were out of the water.”\(^{154}\)

\(^{153}\) "Lady Swimmers." *Evening News*, (Sydney), March 7, 1912, 8.

The swimmers arrived in Stockholm and were issued with their uniforms: “green swimming caps, green woollen swimming costumes with short sleeves and legs and long green cloaks to cover their legs and bodies.” Figure 3.13 reveals that Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie wore the coats as part of their uniform, rather than a blazer as the men did. Consequently, the swim coat became a uniform item for Australia’s leading female swimmers, serving as a model for both domestic swimmers and schoolgirls. Swim coats provided a range of practical uses, which included modesty, warmth, identification, and pride in their uniform.

Figure 3.13 Australian Olympic Team Stockholm 1912. State Library of NSW. Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie, seated left, wear their coats.

The first reference to the swim coat for Girls Grammar was in the Sports Club Minutes on 18 March 1936 implying that the addition of the swim coat contributed to the team’s professionalism:

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Miss Benney reported that she had bought at Finney’s, blue flannel bathing coats for swimming for the price of 18/11 each, and Miss Elliott proposed and Ethel Carson seconded that these were a great improvement to the appearance of the team. This was carried unanimously.156

Photographic recording of the swimming and lifesaving teams for the School magazine was typically taken in school uniform. However in 1939, the Brockway (swimming) and McWhirter Cup (lifesaving) teams were photographed together in swimming coats and caps (see Figure 3.14). The coat had a militarist flair, reflective of the times, and was a royal blue flannel wrap-around coat to the knee in length, with a wide revere collar and a belt to secure it closed. The coats were purchased by the School and issued to the girls for the QGSSSA competition only and then returned to the School.

Figure 3.14 Brockway Cup and McWhirter Cup Teams, 1939 School Magazine, 32. Source: BGGS Archives.

When reflecting on wearing the BGGS swim coat, Margaret McNamara (nee Hislop 1945-1948) remembers marching into the Valley Pool wearing the “royal blue dressing gowns” (see Figure 3.15). She described the coat as wool flannel, to the knee and as being “a bit moth-eaten”. Not only did these coats provide protection for the girls’ modesty, but McNamara alludes to its function as a

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uniform and subsequently, the pride in representing your school by wearing the coat. She spoke of her sister wearing the BGGS swim coat several years before her, when McNamara aspired to represent the School so she, too, would wear the same coat. All the schools in the competition proudly wore a school colours swim coat and usually carried a towel in the march past at the commencement of the carnival. The coats not only identified the swimmer’s school and protected their modesty during the march past, but also provided warmth between races and events. The program for the early swimming competitions included diving as an event, which meant time lapses between each dive, making the coats most useful in providing protection on wet Brisbane March days. The same can be said for the lifesaving competition, the McWhirter Cup, where girls would be in and out of the water on a regular basis, owing to the structure of the competition.

Daphne Pirie (nee Welch 1946–1947) authenticates these observations having represented the School in the same era as McNamara. She also speaks of a royal blue, heavy absorbing flannel material –“a cross over dressing gown style with a separate flannel tie belt.”

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Daphne Pirie, “Hi.” E-mail message to author. December 16, 2014.
These coats continued to be worn into the 1950s when Nola Slade (nee Welch 1952-53), Daphne’s sister, remembers wearing “that blue flannel coat with the revere collar and belt.” The coats were not regarded as elegant and Welch recalls saying “look at these funny coats we have to wear.”¹⁵⁹ The coats were old by this time; nonetheless, Welch stated that the girls were very proud to wear them for the magazine photograph and on the competition day. Not only did the coats identify the team, but once again they were a welcome addition to the uniform for warmth as each girl was usually selected in two or three events with the relays held last in the program. The students utilised the coats while watching events, as can be seen in Figure 3.16. The swimmers seated at the front of the School at the Valley Baths are clearly wearing their swim coats.

![Figure 3.16 The Valley Pool c.1953-1955. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

By 1953, the School struggled to keep the original swim coats in good repair. At the Sports Club meeting held on 6 December, 1954, Ada Ball, Swimming captain “suggested new coats should be bought for the whole of the swimming team as the coats now used are very shabby and there are only enough to supply half the team with them. The rest wear blazers.”¹⁶⁰ It may partially explain

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why we see the coats cut off to a short length, as well as reflecting changes in fashion (see Figure 3.17). The 1950s saw the length of skirts for women rise; tailored shorts as a common choice of leisure attire for women; the two piece swim suit; and short beach coats. After the Second World War, society was becoming more accepting of more revealing women’s fashion.

On 14 April 1955, Miss Elizabeth Marks, past captain of swimming and current Physical Education teacher, “proposed that the swimming coats, the purchase of which had been discussed last year, be bought during this year rather than next year when suitable material might not be available.” In August 1955, a sub-committee was established of three Fifth formers to look into new coats. These girls were Wendy Churchill, Moya Colledge and Diana Jessop. Churchill and Colledge have no memory of the sub-committee; however, both women remember “those dreadful coats”. Wendy Wilson (nee Churchill 1953 – 1956) had suggested a track suit with a zip and School pocket. This was “immediately discounted as we were girls and did not wear trousers…I seem to remember we ended up with something more like a long sleeved dressing gown that was in a Navy (sic) blue fabric which was prickly (and hot)…” Her suggestion of a track suit evolved from her experience as a swimmer with the Leander Swimming Club where Wilson swam against

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161 Ibid., 126.
163 Wendy Wilson, "Hello from BGGS." E-mail message to author. January 20, 2015.
interstate swimmers who wore track suits. In her view, the girls wore the coats for modesty as they “certainly were not practical or comfortable.”

The saga of the coats continued with their purchase in November 1955. Unfortunately, “(t)he new coats bought for the Interschool carnival this year did not seem to be holding the dye so the principal asked Moya Colledge and Judith Histed to approach McWhirters Ltd. with a sample.” The problem was eventually solved and reported to the Sports Committee by the Principal, Miss Crooks. Swimmers from this year until 1962 were photographed in their togs and blazers. This was an interesting choice, as most adolescent girls would have felt self-conscious walking around the School in such attire waiting for their official photograph. Perhaps their ambivalence about the swim coat as a stylish addition to their swimmers resulted in the choice of blazer as an alternative. The coat reappeared in the official shots in 1962 and were an improvement on the prickly flannel, with terry towelling being the material of choice. The style was very similar; however, the fabric was softer and more absorbent and appeared not to have a belt.

It is difficult to ascertain the actual year the new royal blue, terry towelling short swim coat was introduced but it would appear that the new style of swim coat was introduced in 1965 or 1966. The captain of the swimming team in 1964, Lesley Carter, remembers wearing the long coat for her four years at the School. The swimming co-ordinator, Ms Pam Verney, remembers changing from long coats to the new short design in her first year at the School in 1964, but not the process of the change. Verney commented that “I used one (old, long coat) for my dressing gown for years.” She also believes that she would not have changed the coat in her first year of teaching at the School. This decision was consolidated with the captaincy of the 1966 Swimming team, Barbara Devenish-Meares. Her photographic evidence shows the long coats being worn in the march past in

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164 Ibid.
1964, her first year at school. Her photograph of the 1966 march past at the Valley Pool shows the swimming team in royal blue short coats carrying pristine white towels.167

Barbara Alexander (nee Harris), captain of swimming in 1967, remembers wearing the short coat during the majority of her Grammar swimming years. Alexander has clear memories of the coat, which was secured with one button at the neckline and a patch pocket on the hip as illustrated in Figure 3.18. Both the swimming and lifesaving teams wore this coat at competitions. The coat was still bought by the School and distributed on the competition day and returned laundered by the girls. It appears that this style of coat was adopted by most QGSSSA schools. Chris Moore, captain of the St Peter’s Lutheran College 1972 swimming team, has photographs of the St Peter’s teams from 1969 to 1972 wearing white, short, terry towelling swim coats with accompanying towels.168 The style of the St Peter’s coat is very similar to that of the Grammar coat. The function of the coat continued to be one of modesty for the march past, but also generated espirit de corps with the girls marching behind their School crest held on a banner, which had strong Olympics overtones.

![Swimming Coat, 1967. Source: BGGS Archives.](image)

Not all staff saw the short coat as a modern addition to the athlete’s uniform. Elizabeth Hatton, past BGGS student and Physical Education and History teacher from 1967 to 1975, recalls that “I saw them as anachronistic. They should have gotten rid of them and the march past to make the event more professional. It was an old fashioned view of the sport with the coats.”

The schools continued the ritual of the march past where teams entered the Valley Pool in their swim coats carrying, in Grammar’s case, a white towel over their arms. Figures 3.19 and 20 were taken in 1966 at the Valley Pool, capturing the BGGS swimming team marching in the royal blue coats and carrying their towels.

Figure 3.19 Barbara Devenish-Meares leading the BGGS Team at the QGSSSA Swimming, Valley Pool 1966. Barbara Devenish-Meares Private Collection.

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The swim coat continued to be worn until 1973 by Girls Grammar. Anne Belcher, 1973 swimming captain, remembers the coat and the march past ritual clearly. The School-issued swim towels were embroidered with BGGS on the corner in royal blue (see Figure 3.21).

Figure 3.21 BGGS Swimming towel. Source: BGGS Archives.\(^{170}\)

\(^{170}\) The School swimming towels were numbered to enable efficient allocation to each swimmer and its return.
For Belcher, the coat represented School unity and immaculate presentation for the march past, and she likened it to the Olympics.\textsuperscript{171} When the decision was made to use track suits instead of the coats, the School sold the coats and towels to girls who wished to keep them as memorabilia. I purchased two towels in 1977 in my first year at the School as a Health and Physical Education teacher and used them as my babies’ bath towels and then returned them to the School Archives when I appreciated the value of these as important memorabilia. All the towels had been sold by the time I became Director of the Health, Physical Education and Sport Faculty; however, there were still a number of the iconic swim coats in storage. Several were sent to the BGGS Archives and the others disposed of.

While some felt the coats were anachronistic, it is interesting to note that the Olympic swimming uniform included a green and gold swim coat until the Barcelona Olympic Games of 1992. This was worn on the podium for medal presentations. One must assume that the rationale of the coat remained a combination of practicality (for functionality and comfort) and tradition. The swim coat was replaced by the track suit in 1996 in Atlanta. The coat or robe, as it is referred to in water polo circles, continues to be an important part of water polo uniforms for representative teams. It is worn at the opening ceremony of each tournament by all teams for each country’s national anthem and during the Games. Once again the robe (see \textit{Figure 3.22}), is worn for team recognition and pride, warmth and modesty. Sophie Smith (1999-2003) who competed in the London Olympics in 2012, reflects this view: “My understanding is that it is a respect thing…the boys wear them as well. If we don’t have robes we have to wear track suits. It is respectful and for modesty. I have always worn a robe in these competitions, they are great for the cold and are very popular in Europe.”\textsuperscript{172} It is interesting that society’s demands for feminine modesty in the 1910s should be a practical, patriotic item of clothing for women one hundred years later.

\textsuperscript{172} Sophie Smith, "The Olympic Water Polo Robe." Telephone interview by author. December 19, 2014.
Gymnastics Tunic

Like the babushka and the swim coat, the gym tunic was a distinctive item of Grammar sporting attire with a history of its own. How did the gym tunic evolve at Brisbane Girls Grammar School? Did this evolution reflect fashion? Were Grammar girls experiencing the same restraints or freedom as other schoolgirls and women?

Ten years prior to the establishment of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School, women’s formal fashion shifted from the full crinoline gown to the bustle. The fashionable woman of the time could find herself in a skirt and a tailored jacket with lapels and collar, and the heavy, multiple layers of skirt material predominately behind her in the form of a bustle. She was still imprisoned by the corset, laced to give a wasp waist which severely limited her ability to breathe, exercise and think. The nineteenth century Grammar teacher and students suffered similar fashion impositions.

The corset was a metaphor for the limitations placed on women’s lives and Brisbane Girls Grammar School was one institution that challenged this societal view. In 1884, a prize was awarded in honour of Lady Musgrave, wife of the Governor of Queensland. Lady Musgrave decided to:

award a prize at the breaking up of the school in June 1885 to the pupil who shows most improvement in physical training, has gained most in carriage of her figure, in a natural and graceful walk, in breadth of chest, and in calisthenics. Competitors must have worn no stays at any time during the eleven months. The awarding of the prize shall be settled by a committee composed of the Lady Principal, the drill masters, and a lady to be trained by Lady Musgrave. 174

Elizabeth Ewing argues that although the bicycle was credited with enhancing freedom and comfort for women’s fashion, it was schoolgirls’ clothes that anticipated the safety bicycle, and educators were the innovators of rational dress for physical activity. 175 This view is validated by Lady Musgrave’s prize and beliefs, which pre-empted progressive thinkers such as physical educator, Madame Bergman-Osterberg, who according to McCrone, banned the corset at Dartford College and insisted on functional dress for classes from 1885. By 1886, the Brisbane Girls Grammar School Regulations included the stipulation that “girls were expected to be provided with a gymnastics dress”. 176 This was significant acknowledgement that physical activity had to be experienced in attire which would facilitate and encourage movement.

While supporters of sporting involvement and feminists may have been in agreement about the tyranny of fashion, progressive women at the end of the nineteenth century trod a difficult path between equality and social demands: “Mainstream feminists were reluctant to endorse dress reform. They recognised the detrimental potential of too radical an appearance”. 177 During the 1870s and 1880s, some “feminists and physicians were in agreement that a main cause of female invalidism was fashion, and not, as was generally believed, the natural lot of women as determined by their sickly constitution.” 178 Women, such as the formidable Viscountess Florence Harborton, co-founder of the Rational Dress Society in the UK in 1881, encouraged women to make healthier choices in their dress and designed the divided skirt. 179 Rational Dress Societies were formed

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176 Harvey-Short, To Become Fine Sportswomen, 20.
178 Ibid., 13.
179 McCrone, Playing the Game, 220-221.
across Europe, in countries such as Sweden and Norway. Australian newspapers in the 1880s discussed the Rational Dress Society, its beliefs, and Lady Harberton’s rationale for an improved dress code as well as the more practical aspects such as patterns for the divided skirt. Lady Harberton’s rationale included that “… the female garb of to-day was intensely dirty…Next, it was a trap for catching crumbs and other nondescript articles…Hours of one’s own or another’s lifetime were occupied in mending…Then a woman took up at least the space of three men.” ¹⁸⁰ This article also discussed women’s health, stating that “chronic indigestion and shortness of breath soon followed manual labour done in the tightly fitting bodice…” ¹⁸¹

An early photograph depicting a tennis match on one of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School’s courts shows the girls playing in ankle-length dresses, stockings, boots and long-sleeved blouses, rather than sports clothing which was typical of the day (see Figure 3.23).

Figure 3.23 School Tennis court on the western side of the BGGS Main Building c.1909. Source: BGGS Archives.

However, as in England, the gymnasium required gymnastics attire and Grammar girls were photographed in dark uniforms to the knee with black stockings and shoes. Perhaps the privacy of the gymnasium allowed for more practical attire, than did an open air court, thus allowing the

¹⁸⁰ “Dress and Fashion.” The Queenslander, January 12, 1889, 68.
¹⁸¹ Ibid, 68.
schoolgirl freedom of movement required to perform more vigorous activities. It was inevitable, in time, this freedom would translate to outdoor activity.

A past student, Charlotte Jane England, reminisced in 1957:

_There was no gymnasium in 1888. After dressing, girls walked across to the Boys’ gymnasium. Gymnasium suits were of navy serge, one piece with rows of white braid, high necks, sleeves to the elbow, skirts to the knee with bloomers to knee-length where they joined long black stockings._ ¹⁸²

As Charlotte England’s recollection illustrates, the evolution of the gym tunic at Brisbane Girls Grammar School closely tracked the developments in England and the United States. Circa 1900, the Girls Grammar gym tunic was a belted, dark-coloured, short-sleeved dress to the knee covering knee-length bloomers. Thick black stockings were worn so legs were fully covered. The length of the dress varied occasionally to show the bottom of the bloomers (see Figure 3.24), either by design or individual growth. This gymnastics outfit closely resembles Diocletian Lewis’s gymnastic dress of the 1860s in America. Lewis developed a form of gymnastics in America which he introduced to Boston in 1860, establishing a school called the Normal Institute for Physical Education to train teachers of “the New System”. ¹⁸³ He also advocated the gymnastic tunic, which echoed “both the bloomer costume and the bathing dress of the 1850s and 1860s”. ¹⁸⁴

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¹⁸³ Warner, When The Girls Come Out To Play, 171.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 174.
By 1913, there was a School sports uniform which was a light-coloured shirt and skirt. Homemade uniforms naturally varied slightly in style; however, the top usually had a square neckline with buttons running from the left shoulder down to the bottom of the blouse. The skirt was slightly gathered into a waist band. This was accompanied by black stockings and shoes and a light-coloured babushka embroidered with “BGGS” (see Figure 3.25). During this decade, the sporting uniform varied and transitioned into a dark, buttoned, loose-fitting blouse accompanied by matching baggy bloomers to the knee with black stockings. However, the dominant aspect of the uniform provided clothing in which young women comfortably explored their physical capabilities.
It appears that the bloomers remained as the bottom half of the uniform during the late 1910s and early 1920s. This ensemble evolved into the white, loose-fitting blouse with royal blue, sateen sailor collar and tie with enormous, knee-length bloomers, black stockings and black sandshoes (see Figure 3.27). Whether this uniform provided greater freedom than the knee-length skirts, which also accommodated bloomers underneath, is open to conjecture; however, the bloomers did maintain the modesty of the athlete. Girls Grammar transitioned into this uniform earlier than some QGSSSA schools that were still depicted in a top and skirt at official competitions (see Figure 3.26).

Figure 3.26 Athletics Day, 1924. An opposing school to the far right of the photograph illustrates the old-style uniform.

Source: BGGS Archives.

This sailor-style blouse was a common choice for young women in athletic pursuits across the world, with Dana Hall students in Wellesley, Massachusetts also electing to wear a very similar top in the 1910s during physical activities.\(^{185}\)

The transition from the shirt and bloomers to the English-designed three-box-pleated tunics did not occur at Girls Grammar until 1938. Mary Tait, a graduate of Madame Bergman-Osterberg’s college in England, had designed the three-box-pleated, sleeveless gym tunic in 1892. This costume was worn to the knee with knickers and woollen stockings and either a white blouse or woollen jersey, dependent on the season. This ensemble was worn by both the British teacher and the student into the twentieth century (see Figure 3.28).

186 McCrone, Playing the Game, 223.
While observing the shapeless, and thus modest, requirements of women’s attire, the tunic gave more freedom to the athlete by allowing the bulk of the bloomers to be reduced. Meg Rorke (nee Ritchie), old girl of Somerville House and, later, Girls Grammar’s Physical Education teacher from 1944 to 1955, spoke of begging her Headmistress in the late 1930s to change the uniform from bloomers to the tunic because of the yards of material impeding her action over the hurdles (see Figure 3.29). The other advantage of this style was that the blouse could be laundered easily and dried quickly as opposed to the original bulky, woollen gym suit, a particular difficulty for the colder climes from where the tunic originated.

As mass-produced clothes became the norm, the uniform was standardised, with advertisements being placed in School magazines (See Figure 3.30). This three-box-pleated uniform was the standard style in sports uniforms universally in the 1930s and 1940s, with variations in the length of the skirt. The only adaption for Girls Grammar was a white version for the Athletics teams with white stockings and a white babushka (see Figure 3.31). In correspondence to the School archivist, Jan Riley, Margaret Short happily states, “How delighted we were when we progressed from those awful baggy navy bloomers to white box-pleated tunics for Athletics and deep royal blue tunics for Netball!”

It appears that stockings were discarded and replaced with socks between 1939 and 1941, perhaps another casualty of the rationing of the Second World War and evidence of women’s greater freedom.

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Figure 3.29 Meg Rorke (nee Ritchie) hurdling, 1938. Source: Meg Rayner Private Collection.

188 “Correspondence on Memories.” Margaret Short to Jan Riley. September 30, 1999. BGGS Archives, Brisbane.
In 1949, the uniform for Athletics was redesigned. This change occurred because Meg Rorke, the coach of the team, thought they would look “smart” and professional in a new uniform.
and this would enhance their performance.\textsuperscript{189} A white, button-through waisted dress was the result with an “action” short sleeve and a royal blue BGGS embroidered on the top-left-hand side of the bodice. This signalled the transition from the box pleats to the one-piece gym tunic, heralding a more functional, professional uniform for athletics. Meg Rorke was seen as an innovator and an educator ahead of her time. One of her students who was to become an elite athlete, Daphne Pirie (nee Welch), stated that “Meg Rorke was an inspiration to all Grammar students – she possessed the following qualities: Champion athlete…; highly accredited coach…; sports scientist: Her starting techniques – using teammates’ feet to provide stability – slashing sandshoes soles for maximum grip…; sports psychologist; mentor… I guess what I am trying to say [is] that Meg, in this modern era, would have been five people – not one.”\textsuperscript{190}

The box-pleated gym tunic was completely discarded at Brisbane Girls Grammar School in 1954. At the Sports Club meeting held on 18 July 1953, “Mrs Rorke suggested that next year the sports’ uniform be changed to a sports’ dress. The matter was to be discussed later by Miss Crooks, the current principal, and Mrs Rorke.”\textsuperscript{191} On 24 April, 1954 “(m)embers were shown the new Sports’ Uniform, which was a one piece costume in junior navy blue. It was decided that the dress should be six inches above the knee.”\textsuperscript{192} The new gym tunic (see Figure 3.32) was a waisted dress with a square neckline, cap sleeve and flared skirt. As in previous generations, the Athletics uniform was a white version of the royal blue gym tunic worn with short white socks and sandshoes.

\textsuperscript{189} Meg Rayner, "Meg Rayner on Bloomers." Telephone interview by author. December 10, 2014.
\textsuperscript{190} Pirie, Daphne Mary, Mrs. “Daphne Pirie.” Interview by author. September, 1999.
This gym tunic served as the sports uniform for physical education classes and all competitive sporting activities which included netball, softball, athletics, and ballgames during the 1960s. Tennis traditionally had a different uniform across its development at the School and is not analysed in this chapter.

The next iteration of this ubiquitous garment occurred in 1965. The royal blue, caesarella “Princess” line gym tunic with a side seam pocket was introduced (see Figure 3.33). The tunic, with no waist line and no sleeves, allowed more movement. Once again, the athletics uniform was a white version of this tunic. It is unknown who initiated this second change in style since the box-pleated tunic, or who was responsible for the design. The consensus of old girls from the era was that the design was less restrictive and more modern.193 This uniform was the last gym tunic to be used for all sports – netball, athletics, softball, and ballgames.

193 Correspondence between Pauline Harvey-Short and various old girls, 2014-2015.
While bowing to fashionable standards, sporting attire for the Grammar girl adapted to afford greater movement and more comfort by using a more streamline style and lighter fabric in the pursuit of sporting success. Sports-specific clothing, with the exclusion of the swimming costume, became common practice from 1965 with the introduction of artistic gymnastics and the Grammar leotard, and in 1971, with knickerbockers for softball. In 1971, the Health and Physical Education teacher, Mrs Jan Salzman, my mother and I put to the Principal, Miss Nancy Shaw, that knickerbockers were both safer and more appropriate attire for the serious softballer. The principal agreed with this premise and subsequently all Grammar softballers were issued with a description of the uniform for the 1971 season (see Figure 3.34).
Figure 3.34 Instructions for the making of the new 1971 Softball uniform. Source: BGGS Archives.

The final major development of the gym tunic occurred in 1982 when the Commonwealth Games were held in Brisbane. Uniforms were making headlines, women in sport and in the media were highly topical, and athletes dominated news reports. Grammar girls moved into shorts for athletics and “bummers” for basketball. The softball top was utilised for the basketball, ballgames and athletics uniforms and teamed with shorts or basketball briefs. In an effort to have an adaptable physical education uniform which could accommodate the increasing range of sports offered to Grammar girls, as Director of Health, Physical Education and Sport, I designed a royal blue, wrap-around skirt with a sleeveless, polycotton top in 1982 (see Figure 3.35). It was intended to give the girls the opportunity to have a variety of uniform combinations so they would dress appropriately for the sport in which they were involved with the minimum of cost and effort; give

194 “Bummers” was the name given to the Grammar royal blue, lycra athletics briefs worn with a Physical Education top.
them a strong sense of pride with sports-specific attire; afford comfort to exercise and compete effectively; and to have a competitive edge.

Figure 3.35 Official School 1986 Physical Education uniform worn by Elizabeth Hartley. Source: BGGS Archives.

**Conclusion**

The continued adaption of the sporting uniform illustrates the desire to provide the Grammar athlete with a “sporting edge” and to be modern in outlook whatever the era, and represents the value of sport within the School and the respective principals’, teachers’ and girls’ willingness to be innovative. Frequently, the students’ adaptations to the sporting uniform anticipated permanent modifications and improvements to their attire, which were ultimately embraced by the School.

These changes in uniform across the School’s 140 years reflected an interest in, and emphasis on, the athletes and their successful outcomes. Brisbane Girls Grammar School frequently introduced improved uniforms to enhance performance, which was replicated by the other QGSSSA schools. This created greater competitiveness, increased intensity of performance and an improved standard across the QGSSSA schools, adding to the credibility of the Association.
which became a role model for other schoolgirl associations. This desire to improve, and
encouragement given to staff and students to innovate, reinforces the importance that Girls
Grammar placed on sport and physical education and assisted in creating a strong school culture. It
also reflected the School’s desire to educate young women about the benefits of physical activity,
competitive endeavours and leadership in a society that placed constraints about appropriate
sporting attire for women.
Conclusion

There are many reasons for pursuing this research about sport at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. There is limited research, analysis and conversation on the development of sport and physical education for Australian secondary schoolgirls generally, and Queensland specifically. There is even less research on the sporting and physical education culture in independent girls’ schools and the impact of this culture on both the students and the school. Sport plays an important role in the growth and development of schoolgirls and warrants comprehensive scholarship.

Furthermore, there is value in exploring the significance of sporting and physical education culture in girls’ education generally, and Brisbane Girls Grammar School, specifically. In modern girls’ education, value is placed equally on resilience, decision-making, and leadership as well as on academic acumen. Sport and physical education play a significant role in this development in any girl and it is intriguing to explore its role within the evolution of this school. As Milisent Wilkinson, Principal, so eloquently wrote in her Annual Report of 1910:

*The question of the right education of its women is of paramount importance to Queensland; we must therefore make it our supreme aim to train brain, body and soul, to imbue the girls with the spirit of industry, and instil in them high ideals of duty and honour. A nation has two valuable assets; one is the courage of its men, and there are many people that think there is nothing else of importance. There is, however, another no less precious asset, and that is the ‘goodness’ of womanhood. To send out from the School good women and true, women who know the meaning of ‘Duty’, who have learnt, no less than their brothers, how to ‘play the game’ and who have done no less grandly, though perhaps more silently, in shaping the destinies of the country…*¹⁹⁵

This thesis also affords the opportunity to broaden the parameters of my previous book and delve into the status of sport and physical education within the School as indicated by Principal Wilkinson. Physical activity for women has fought for credibility, relevance and acceptability against deeply entrenched social views and practices, medical myths and beliefs, minimal opportunities and prejudice. This research has explored these attitudes and celebrates a school’s achievements.

There is also a strong argument for exploring and utilising material culture as a methodology. Material culture is a valid, relevant and exciting way to investigate the establishment of sport and scrutinise the sustainability and evolution of this practice. It is undeniable that material objects generate strong emotions, evoke memories and uncover important information. In a school context, this is particularly evident when a student of the 1940s can produce a school magazine from her bookshelf within minutes of a telephone call or emotionally hands the School archivist her treasured pocket. Material artefacts have a legitimate place in sports history scholarship and add a breadth and depth to concepts, ideas and beliefs.

The particular forms of material culture I utilised in Chapter One included brooches, books, trophies and pockets. The Brisbane Girls Grammar School’s philosophy has always been excellence in all pursuits, and the celebration of excellence is illustrated by the presentation of prizes and awards at formal assemblies and the end-of-year prize giving, Speech Day. Although academic pursuits have always been the “core business” of the School, a well-rounded, “Renaissance” Grammar girl is highly regarded and held in great esteem. This is evident through the longevity of many of the Speech Day sporting awards, the exquisite quality of the trophies and the importance that girls and staff place on their existence as evidenced by their preservation. These material objects are indicative of the importance of physical activity and sport in the Grammar landscape and send a clear message that excellence and involvement in sporting pursuits have a significant place and role to fill.

Chapter Two examined newspaper and School magazine images, with both sets of photographs being sources of information as well as possessing their own materiality. Firstly as a source, the newspaper photographs depicted the Grammar girl as an athletic, competitive, healthy young woman. Their inclusion in the tabloid newspapers is an indicator of what was regarded as significant in the life of Brisbane and Brisbane Girls Grammar School, and provided social commentary on the female image and how women were portrayed. Photographs, while enhancing a piece of writing in a newspaper, also captured a moment in time, linking the viewer to an
experience or event, and thus helped the reader analyse and empathise with the activity. On analysis, photographs provide visual evidence of locations; clothing modifications and innovations across the decades; and social practices and expectations while stimulating skill analysis and reflection.

In contrast, the School magazine image initially recorded team membership for historical reference only, by conveying young women in conservative, conforming poses. This style of photography and publication reflected the function of the School magazine, which enhanced the image of this well-established bastion of Queensland womanhood. There is an interesting juxtaposition of a highly conservative publication illustrated with formal, serious photographs, and a message of feminism and innovative educational ideas which has always been the School’s narrative. Viewed through a social lens, it is predictable that the 1970s would see a shift in the style of this publication and photographs evidencing great freedom, more informality and movement. Greater freedom and action were preferred by the students, and were evident in publications produced from this time on.

So, through comparing the School magazine images to the newspaper images, we can see how the viewer was given a different perspective on, and deeper access to, understanding the meaning of the athletic pursuits of the Grammar girl. Post the 1920s, newspaper images of active girls enhanced the historical, static, school magazine image. Each reinforced the concept that physical activity and sport were important elements of a girl’s education. As media coverage of schoolgirl sport became increasingly sporadic at the end of the twentieth century, the School magazine’s visual portrayal of the active Grammar girl subsequently became more important. It is unfortunate that while seeking a dynamic, colourful product, with active images central to this delivery, the historical sporting element of the School magazine was compromised.

Although the photographs for this thesis were in fact the actual newspaper clipping or taken from the School magazine, as a personal material possession of “old girls”, photographs are of great individual and institutional value. As an artefact, they provide a tangible connection to an era,
moment in time or an important event for an individual or institution. For this research, these objects are vital to the interpretation of the life of Brisbane Girls Grammar School and its students. It was often these personal photographs which found their way into the School magazine, or were donated to the School in the form of an album or individual postcard to be now found catalogued and kept safe for further analysis or reproduction.

The analysis of the development and use of three items of Grammar sporting clothing – the babushka, the swim coat and the gym tunic – in Chapter Three illustrated the vicissitudes of fashion and social dictates. While demonstrating progressive attitudes and ideas of principals, Health and Physical Education teachers and the Grammar community, these material items also often reflected the conservatism of the times and the constraints imposed on physically active women.

The overwhelming message, however, was that Grammar girls had the opportunity to change, or at least contribute to changing their attire, which alludes to independence and encouragement of leadership and confidence. These items of uniform also illustrated the competitiveness of the QGSSSA, the intensity of performance, and the standard of the schoolgirl competitions. The interest shown in sporting uniform and its compulsory inclusion in the Grammar wardrobe further reinforced the belief in the importance of physical activity in the girls’ curriculum and a desire for girls to have similar educational experiences as their brothers, and thus helped to sustain the Grammar sporting culture.

The significance of this research, while uncovering and analysing an element of the history of a major Queensland school, resides in the methodology utilised. Historians have traditionally relied on written resources to discover, unfold and illuminate stories, social development and progress. By using material culture, a colourful, emotive story unfolded. It resulted in my asking different questions of the owners of the artefacts: I would start the concrete questions about the objects, and be lead to more abstract answers involving philosophy, traditions and culture. By discussing the swim coat, swimmers alluded to the emotions of wearing it or aspiring to wear it, the philosophy of being active, the desire to win and pride in the School. Individuals discussed and
reminisced about the traditions surrounding these items and the culture they nurtured. The impact that “things” had on these women and the memories they evoked was profound. I found a tangible object had great power to simulate thoughts and feelings, which often resulted in different information than that stemming from written documents. I found that traditional resources of documents, articles and books, teamed with the interpretation and analysis of material culture, was a most powerful catalyst in unfolding not only important historical facts, but also the culture, emotion and beliefs of the people who received or used these treasured items.

The methodology also has other tangible benefits, not only through the capturing and cataloguing of oral histories but in relation to historical acquisitions for the School. During the process of this research, the School’s Archives acquired more examples of past uniforms and it encouraged the Collections Librarian to increase her efforts in organising the many photographs the School possesses. Motivated by the dialogue of prizes and awards, a detailed exploration of School badges led to the minting of a commemorative 140th birthday School badge for the 2015 cohort. This research also resulted in raising the profile of the archives and the collections held within it, making it a living, viable resource for the curriculum, and a realisation of the valuable and diverse acquisitions held by the School.

Material culture provided an assessment of sport and physical activity at Girls Grammar by conveying insights of the times and attitudes of the Trustees, educators and girls in a manner never previously explored. As Prown argues, the study of material culture will reflect “consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which they belong”. This thesis explored the sporting and physical education culture of Brisbane Girls Grammar School in a unique manner that evaluated the role sport played, and continues to play, in facilitating independence, teamwork and leadership in a Grammar girl’s education.

196 Prown, Mind in Matter, 1.
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