



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 46, Nov 2020 (Vol 2 No 21)

WELCOME

WELCOME to your Perth Modernian e-Newsletter offering two-way communication with all members and potential members. We bring to you news, event details and articles from the Perth Modernian Society, its members and Perth Modern School. We hope you find the newsletter both interesting and informative.



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

For further information

Telephone: (08) 6189 3690

www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au

info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

All messages received either by phone or email are promptly forwarded electronically for further action.

CONGRATULATIONS!

ISAAC SEIDL

PMS student 1986-1990

The Queen's Birthday Honours list in 2020 included **Brigadier Isaac Alexander Gregory SEIDL (FRACMA)** who was awarded the honour of **Member (AM) in the Military Division Australian Army** for exceptional service to the Australian Defence Force in health executive leadership.

Dr Isaac Seidl AM is a specialist medical administrator and general practitioner. He completed his medical degree at UWA, then undertook a variety of Army appointments across all military environments, before being appointed to Queensland Health. Following a period of study sabbatical, he returned to the Australian Army. Dr Seidl has published in the literature and presented at national and international conferences. His academic interests include crisis leadership, clinical governance and ethics. He has held academic appointments at the University of Queensland and James Cook University. Dr Seidl lives in Canberra, Australia with his wife and two children.

DIARY RATES

REUNIONS

See news item for details
All being well, all reunions planned for 2021 will take place

CLASS (Year) REUNIONS

Organisers please contact
Barbara Mallett through
reunions@perthmoderniansociety.org.au
For further information visit
www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au

PUBLICATIONS

e-NEWSLETTER

Do you have something to say?
Memories to share?
Where are YOU now?
Send your news item, letters
and/or photographs to ...
newsletter@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Next Issues

Copy deadlines for 2021

(to be confirmed)

20 February

20 May

20 August

20 November

2020 ANNUAL REUNION



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

The Event

Numbers were down but all who attended would agree that it was wonderful to be celebrating again this year and the whole day was an outstanding success.

Many enjoyed the explanatory tour conducted by Steve Jurilj of the building site of the soon-to-be performing arts auditorium and found it most enlightening.
Thank you, Steve.

With no convenient access to the History Centre others browsed the displays set up in the Joseph Parsons Memorial Library by volunteers from the History Centre and Archives of the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association.



In this issue:

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PLEASE CHECK

Have you completed or updated your

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION and/or CHANGE OF DETAILS

Forms are available on the website www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au further information info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

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www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au

(subsequent to 2020 AGM)

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newsletter@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

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(subsequent to 2020 AGM)

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Deborah Beresford, *Catering*

Eve Broadley, *Catering*

Barbara Mallett, *Photography*

Reunions Liaison

Barbara Mallett

reunions@perthmoderniansociety.org.au



Roderick Mason



Dane Gorn



Anne Greenhill



Lilian Garnett

The Music

Neil Coy, Celia Christmass and Neil Barclay once again produced such a wonderful concert, it was hard to believe that the performers have had all the normal demands of school in addition to their music.

As listed in the Concert Programme, proceedings began with four items from the **Perth Modern School Wind Orchestra** under the direction of Miss Celia Christmas and Mr Neil Coy. The performance began with *Pulse*, by Randall Standridge, *On an American Spiritual* by David Holsinger, *Serenade for a Picket Fence* by Norman Leyden which featured soloists **Jasper Jackson, Nick Mahoney,** and **Won Chen Qin**, and finishing with the anonymous (arr. Iwai) *Jungle Fantasy*, with soloist **Raymond Li**.

Under the direction of Mr Neil Coy and Mr Neil Barclay and after a smooth changeover on stage, **Perth Modern School Symphony Orchestra**, played *March Militaire Française* (Camille Saint Saens). Soloist **Raymond Li** performed again in *Fantasia on Greensleeves* (Ralph Vaughan Williams). Dance of the Tumblers (Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov) was followed by *Theme from Schindler's List* (John Williams) with soloists **Jason Zi Ria, Keith Wong** and **Christopher Leak** and finally Music from *Pirates of the Caribbean* (Klaus Badelt arr. Ricketts).

Perth Modern School Choral closed the concert under the direction of Miss Celia Christmass with three presentations. *Daemon Irrepi Callidus* (Gyorgy Orban), *The Hymn of Axiom* (Vera Tang arr. Calgary) with *Medley from the Nylons* (arr. Zegree) featuring soloist **Dom Bresser** in the final item.

The audience came to its feet as one to show its appreciation of this impressive performance. It was pleasing to note the names of **Sphinx Scholarship** recipients among the performers and we wish all Year 12 students the very best in their future endeavours. The PMS Annual Reunion tradition of singing the school song *Moderna Schola* ended with three rousing cheers for Perth Modern School.

"I thought the standard of the music making was outstanding."
Catherine (Kate) Lewis, student 1977-81, staff 1984-87





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2020 Appeal Donors

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Anonymous (1953)
Lorraine Shepherd
Anonymous (1952)
Judyth Stephens
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Ray Thurloe
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The Donald Tyler Foundation
Meryl Watson (née Williams, PMS 1955-57)
Harold Wilkinson
Daryl Williams AM QC



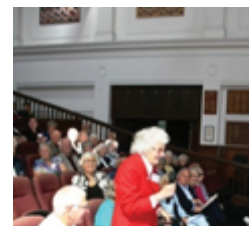
PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

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Prof Alistair Paterson,
Board Member

Vacancy, Board Member

The People



Seated in the front row for the concert were Roger Stubbs, former PMS staff member and now a valuable volunteer with the Museum Association, with his wife Pamela, PMS student 1955-59, and Dr Ken Michael AC. Miss Celia Christmas is seen in the middle photograph as Director of the Perth Modern School Chorale. Phoebe Milne was the oldest former student present.

Phoebe Milne (nee Portner), PMS student 1937-41 stood proudly when she was introduced as the oldest former student present and turned to speak briefly to the audience about her time at Mod.

Greetings were received from **Trevelyan E (Ted) Palmer MD** in New York with the following message:

"I look back on my years at PMS as so rewarding and full of good memories. My wife and I always enjoyed the orchestra and the camaraderie with the alumni. Wishing you greetings from NY. Best wishes!"

Ted Palmer, PMS student 1938-40

We send belated 96th birthday greetings to Ted who turned 96 the next day, 14 September 2020. You can read about his life in "A Celebrations of Contribution" published in 2016 and available for purchase through the School at <https://www.perthmodern.wa.edu.au/memorabilia/>



Modernian Honour Awards

Following the magnificent concert, **Dr Ken Michael AC** was honoured by the Perth Modernian Society for distinguished service to the advancement of education at

Perth Modern School and services to the wider community when President **Julian Grill** presented him with a **Modernian Fellow Award**. Ken was a student at Perth Modern School in 1954-55.

As State Governor designate in 2005, Ken was invited by Council to launch the first historical publication undertaken by the volunteers of the original Sphinx Foundation established for that purpose. His speech on that occasion clearly demonstrated his passion for the School. It is held on record by the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association in the George Burvill Biographical Index.

Dr Ken Michael AC was installed as the thirtieth Governor of Western Australia in January 2006, retiring from this position in May 2011, the PMS Centenary year, and has continued to support the community in retirement. As Member and Chairman of the Perth Modern School Board, Ken's unwavering commitment to public service make him a very special Modernian indeed.



2020 MUSEUM DONORS

PMS Reunion Class of 1958
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Mrs Gwynne Roberts
Dr Irene Froyland
Dr Lindsay Mullings
Mrs Wendy McCallum
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Anonymous (2)

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museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

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Peter Dillon, Member
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VOLUNTEERS

Museum

[History Centre and Archives]

Gay Albillos, Bio Index/Conservation
Deborah Beresford, Hon Archivist
India Creed, Student Heritage Guide
Jim Davies, Bio Index
Sallie Davies, Coordinator
Peter Dillon, Science Collection
Frank Hedges, Bio Index
Robert (Bob) Johnson, Research
Bill MacPherson, Archives
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Wendy McCallum, Data entry
Deirdre Owen, Archives
Alan Porter, Science Restoration
Roger Stubbs, Research
Robyn White, Data entry
Sharon Williams, Displays
Alison Woodman, Research



Three other Modernians were also recognised for their distinguished service to the advancement of education at Perth Modern School and the wider community.

Moderna Scola Awards were presented to **Celia Christmass** who studied in the Special Music Program at Perth Modern School from 1976-81. She was awarded a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of WA. In 1989 she went to Hungary, to the Zoltan Kodaly Pedagogical Institute. Since her return to Perth in 1991 Celia has taught at Modern School, and has been involved in all aspects of its music program.

Celia's students speak of her dedication to music and to teaching, her warmth, and the support and encouragement she offers. Those who have heard the results of her work with students can testify to the high standard of their performances, and to the delight the students show in their musical achievements, and in sharing that joy with their audiences. Her work has not been confined to Perth Modern School. Her name is synonymous with musical excellence.

Neil Coy who was appointed to Perth Modern School in 2007 as co-director of the school's music program with Lawrence Jacks. Since that time, he has worked with the orchestra as it evolved and has elicited wonderful performances from the students, and assisted with the organisation of overseas tours which have earned the students national and international recognition and acclaim. The traditional concert at the PMS Annual Reunion, much of it put together by Neil, has been a source of joy for attendees for many years.

Neil used the opportunities offered by student trips to Europe to research the names of ex-students of Perth Modern School who gave their lives in the Great War. The information he has garnered has been shared generously with the School and the Museum Association, and has been made available more widely in school publications. His research into the school's military history, his published material and use of technology to enhance learning, have all helped to make information available to students and to the wider community. Neil has shown himself to be an educator in every sense of the word.

Roger Stubbs AM was a councillor in the City of Armadale for 19 years, eight of them as Mayor. These roles stimulated an interest in town and urban planning, and Roger undertook qualifications in the area, for a while becoming a trainer for local and state governments. Roger made himself available as a relief teacher at Modern School whenever required.

When the 2005 announcement was made that academic selection would be reintroduced to Perth Modern School a building project required a co-ordinator. Roger's qualifications as both teacher and town planner made him the ideal choice for the job. He liaised with the architects, staff members and the community as old buildings were refurbished and new ones built.



MODERNIAN HONOURS

Awards@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Modernian Fellow

2014

Sallie Davies
Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC
Donald Tyler

2016

Barrie Baker
Ian Jarvis

2017

Peter Farr

2020

Dr Kenneth Michael AC Cit WA

Moderna Scola Award

2016

Deborah Beresford
Alan Porter

2017

Evelyn Broadley

2018

Rosemary Pratt
Dr June Stephenson

2019

Robert Johnson

2020

Anne Celia Christmass
Neil Anthony Coy
Roger Stubbs AM

Honorary Member

2016

Alison Woodman

2017

Tonya McCusker AM

2019

Nigel Hunt
Brendon Dawson

Subscriptions received CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP New

Insert list (Font 9) of new
Contributing Members (if any)
Renewals

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Contributing Members (if any)

NEW REGISTERED MEMBERS

Insert list (Font 9) of new Registered
Members (If any)

eNewsletter

e-NEWSLETTER

Thank you to all letter writers,
and contributors including:
Ruth Barrett
Deb Beresford
Sallie Davies
Peter Farr
Julian Grill
Robert Johnson
Catherine Lewis

Coordinator/Editor

Sallie Davies

Formatting and Proofing

Pete Farr

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Roger's contribution to the evolution of the school has contributed to his volunteer work in images and in the written word. Many of his photographs were used in the school's centenary publication Past, Present & Future: Celebrating 100 years of exceptional education at Perth Modern School. As researcher and writer, he made a major contribution to the Department of Education's 2016 publication, A Celebration of Contribution: Tales of the Courage, Commitment and Creativity of Modernians 1911-1963.

After the concert

Photo: Perth Modernian Society Councillor Kate Lewis, met up with the inaugural recipient of the John **Christmass Choral Music Scholarship. Kirra Geddes**, a year 10 student and one of the performers at the concert is very much looking forward to using her Sphinx Foundation Scholarship funds in the future to enrich her studies, as this year has limited the opportunities to do so.

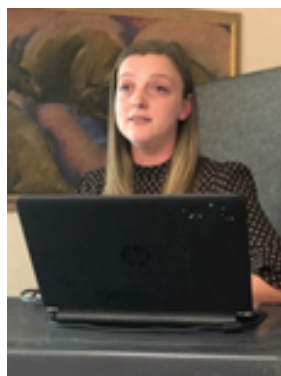


2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It has been a strong year for the Society but we have all been affected by the chaos of COVID-19. Due to the social distancing restrictions earlier in the year, the 25th Annual General Meeting was postponed until 19 October 2020. The meeting received the 2019 Annual Report and appointed Councillors for the 2020-21 year.

Membership transition to Annual Billing 2021

Ed Lazarus presented the membership report at the AGM and he spoke about the need to adopt an annual billing system, in line with the policy of most Incorporated bodies.



Membership subscriptions are the only source of income to the Society and the meeting noted the Council's intention to effect the change which will commence in 2021. Information explaining subscriptions, methods of payment and invoices will be sent out to members soon.

Guest Speaker: Ms Jordan Bishop, Ear Science Institute Australia

Topic: "Let's talk hearing: How we are educating on, treating and researching hearing loss"

Audiologist with Lions Hearing Clinics, Jordan Bishop (photo left) was the Guest Speaker following the AGM meeting. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience, Master of Clinical Audiology at UWA.

Working in Lions' Bunbury clinic since 2015, she consults with adult patients for hearing rehabilitation and tinnitus. In 2018, Jordan began working as the Community Coordinator relocating to Lions' Clinical Hub in Subiaco. She is working to develop and maintain strong relationships with GPs, and aged care and community groups.

Her aim is to promote awareness, provide education and deliver services out in the community.



2020 PERTH MODERN SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Peter Farr, Deputy Chair
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Dr Nicholas Waldron
Ishtar Barranco
Professor Paul Arthur
Dr David Zhang
Bronwyn Rasmussen
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Perth Modern School Principal
Lois Joll
Staff Representatives
Chris Rapley
Elisabeth Gerber

Jordan gave an overview of the work carried out by the Ear Science Clinic. The Lions Hearing Clinic, works throughout the community to protect, improve and maintain hearing health across Western Australia by conducting hearing checks individually as well as Occupational Health and Safety hearing checks in workplaces.

The Ear Science Clinic specialises in helping those with ear and hearing disorders. As one of the largest cochlear implant services in Australia, the clinic provides a seamless implant service for adults and children, with follow up strategies to achieve the best possible hearing outcomes.

Their research team is dedicated to finding a cure for hearing loss. Research at Ear Science Institute strives to improve the quality of life of all people impacted by hearing loss. Through leading research in stem cell biology, regenerative medicine and tissue engineering, Ear Science endeavours to find new solutions to the issues faced by the one in six Australians who live with hearing loss. 50% over 55, 70% over 70. The importance of checking and addressing hearing loss early was stressed.

Jordan gave a splendid 25-minute presentation followed by numerous questions relating to people's personal hearing problems – e.g. tinnitus, cochlear implants, hearing aids, strategies to use when communicating with others, and Occupational Health and Safety issues - including hearing damage risk for many young people who listen to extremely loud music

MONICA BRIERLEY-HAY



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

MONICA BRIERLEY-HAY **PMS student 2007-11**

The Board of the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association has welcomed the appointment of Monica as its newest Board member.

In addition to being a member of the first intake of the revived academic selection program at the School she was also involved in the music program studying classical voice. Monica was the inaugural recipient of the Daniel Girling and John Down Music Scholarship in 2009.



With post graduate degrees in both music and law, Monica now works as a lawyer at Allens and has taken the opportunity to offer her considerable skills, studies and expertise to give back to the school community as a member of the Board of the Museum Association.

YOUR SAY

From: Garry Glover, student 1953-55

Re: Julian Grill, President, Perth Modernian Society

Greetings from London

Congratulations Julian on your election as President of the Perth Modernian Society. I peruse the PMS newsletter as I have fond memories of our school and am eternally grateful to the foundation it gave me. Your dates 1956-57 coincides with my period spent at Sydney Boys High School.



I attended PMS 1953-55 and my family moved to Sydney 1956 so we never met. I maintained a life-long friendship with the late Theo Bredemeyer, visited him and hosted him and his wife in London and was saddened on learning of his sudden death by his widow some years back. You will remember him as well as Cameron Bracks whom I was in distant contact years ago. Cam and I met in the UK where we both trained in ENT Surgery. I became an expatriate living in the UK since 1967. I had a fulfilling and successful career as a Head and Neck Cancer surgeon in London, now all in the past. I have much to be grateful to PMS for. I read the newsletter avidly looking for old names which unfortunately I note in the Vale section.

I wish you all the best in your new post, we must be the same age, I admire your taking it on. My best wishes to you and any who remember me, I still have the class photo from 1954 as well as that of the scholarship winners at North Perth State School 1952. I have deliberately excluded titles and letters after names, both Julian's and my own in that this is meant to be informal. It brings to mind one of my teachers when in 2F in 1954, "Glover, think before you answer, attention to detail boy". This I put to good use in the training of surgeons and now in my twilight I have fallen back to my old ways, O dear. Kind regards, Garry
Ed: Garry, your letter was forwarded to Julian as you requested and your memories deserve to be shared with others.

From: Jennifer Bardsley nee McKenzie, student 1950-54
Re: Perth Modernian Society Annual Reunion 2020

Please convey my thanks and congratulations to all the committee who work so tirelessly for the Society. It was wonderful to be celebrating again today and the whole day was an outstanding success. The talk and explanation of the new performing arts auditorium was most enlightening thank you. Neil Coy, Celia Christmass and Neil Barclay produced such an excellent concert that it was hard to believe that the performers have all the normal demands of school in addition to their music. The lunch with free flowing drinks and great service at beautifully set tables was most generous. Sincerely, Jennifer
Ed: Thank you for your feedback which is most welcome.

From: Bill Macpherson, student 1951-53
Re: Les Smith, PMS student 1951-53

I was saddened to read in the last e-Newsletter of the death of my old classmate Les Smith. We weren't close friends although we travelled to school on the same train on the Midland line. We both left school after third year in 1953 and, unbeknown to each other, joined the State Public Service at the same time. Our careers never brought us together but we would occasionally meet in the street or in the corridors of power, when he would always greet me by name.

Les achieved a lot for our State, but he seems to have been a modest man and he rarely received the merest mention in the press. The bare outline of his career in the eNewsletter doesn't give any idea of the man. His career must have brought him into contact with many Old Modernians. I would hope that someone has recollections of this enigmatic man to be added to the Society's records.

Ed: Museum Association volunteers are always pleased to receive relevant biographical information and memorabilia for the collections they curate. Lifelong memories are indexed in our computer records and collated in hard copy in the George Burvill Biographical Index which is housed in the old Pound cupboard. The files are surrounded by many signatures of students who attended the school during the life of this piece of furniture.

VALE

<u>NAME:</u>	<u>YEAR at PMS</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Deceased</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Julia Grace Halleen (nee Jones)	1942-46	Student	21/06/2018	Registered
Margaret Josephine Doohan, nee Beatty	1948-49	Student	01/08/2020	Registered
Barry John Dennis	1946-47	Student	08/09/2020	Contributing C
Gordon Scott Wise (East Sussex, UK)	1936-40	Student	04/10/2020	Registered
Peta Townsing	1970s/1980s	Teacher	05/10/2020	
Ronald Leslie Jones	1948-50 (Yrs 1-3)	Student	10/10/2020	Registered
Richard Earle Nowotny (Melbourne, Vic)	1959-63	Student	22/10/2020	
Leon Walkemeyer	1946	Student	22/10/2020	
Lance William Woodhead	1951-55	Student	06/11/2020	

Thank you to the many volunteers, members, families and friends who forward information and memories of former PMS students and staff for publication and/or inclusion in Museum records.



From *The West Australian*

WISE GORDON (b. 1923) passed away peacefully at home in Ticehurst, East Sussex, UK on Sunday 4th October. Son of the late Elsie Wise (nee Hunter) and Frank Wise (former Premier of WA 1945-47), husband of Marjory and Father of Gordon. A man who devoted his life to the benefit of others. A Great Aim in Life (autobiog pub 2006), now at rest.

The following letter dated 2016 was received from Gordon's wife Una and published in *The Perth Modernian* Magazine of that year:

GORDON SCOTT WISE

PMS student 1936-40

School Prefect 1940

I am writing this for my husband, **Gordon Wise**, who left Modern School in 1940. He is now 92 and had a serious stroke 14 years ago so finds managing correspondence rather difficult. He lets me know what he wants to write. I will add here that our home is in Ticehurst, East Sussex, in England. After a year of working at the Treasury in Perth he joined the RAAF and started pilot training. He served in Coastal Command flying with Sunderland Flying Boat Squadron 461 from Pembroke Dock, West Wales.



He went into action in the D-Day operations and for this among other veterans has been awarded the Legion of Honour. This was presented by the French Ambassador to UK, at her London Residence on Armistice Day, November 11, 2015. Because Gordon is Australian the High Commissioner, the Hon Alexander Downer was invited to the ceremony and was first to congratulate him after the presentation.

The presentation ceremony

Representing President Francois Hollande who pledged to honour all those veterans who had served to liberate France during the Second World War, French Minister Axelle Lemaire and Her Excellency Sylvie Bermann presented 20 veterans with their Legion of Honour Medals at the Ambassador's Residence in London yesterday, Armistice Day, November 11. Among those present was Gordon Wise of Western Australia, formerly a pilot in 461 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force, flying Sunderland Flying Boats in Coastal Command.

Ambassador Bermann said, "I feel privileged and incredibly moved to award these veterans with France's highest distinction, which is our way of thanking them for their tremendous service to our country in the Second World War. Just as to-day we remember the fallen of the First World War, so we shall never forget the courage of those who fought for France's liberation over 70 years ago. To them France owes its freedom".

Each veteran's war service was described briefly by a pupil of one of London's French Schools.

...

Gordon's War Service

As an Australian, I served as a Sunderland Flying Boat Pilot with 461 Squadron of the Australian Air Force in Coastal Command. In preparation for D-Day, Air Vice Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas gathered three Squadrons in a hangar at Pembroke Dock where we were stationed. He warned us that probably fifty percent of us would not survive the coming operations. On our first night in action we saw a U-Boat on our radar so prepared for attack. Captain Neil McKough called for the flares to light up our target but the flares failed despite previous testing and the U-Boat submerged. We lost three of our planes during that first week due to enemy action. We were lucky to survive. Flying at a height of fifty feet along the coast to avoid enemy radar we felt extremely exposed and we could not turn the plane for fear of dipping the floats in the sea.

We had a fire on board after take-off when I was accompanying the Squadron Leader. We landed on the water of Milford Haven with 2,000 gallons of petrol on board and bounced home across the bay. The fire went out but the plane was not used again for operations.

Our patrols went halfway across the Atlantic Ocean, South to the coast of Spain, North to Sullom Voe and the Norwegian coast, always 13-14 hours of night flying at 1,000ft in all weathers, continued throughout the last year of the war. Historians will note that not one of our allied ships was lost due to enemy action during the first week after D-Day. I was one of the lucky ones.



Number 9 in a special series of articles prepared for publication by Robert Johnson, PMS student 1961-65 and Museum Volunteer

William (Bill) Smith
PMS student 1918-22

William (Bill) Smith was born in Boulder on 11 July 1904. He attended Perth Modern School between 1918 and 1922 and passed his Leaving Certificate in six subjects. Bill was a keen athlete and captain of Red faction. His school record shows that he maintained a good place in the class and was popular with his classmates.

Bill gained his early experience as a journalist on farmers' and wheat growers' journals in WA. He enlisted in the Australian Army at Claremont on 15 September 1941. His service record shows that he was posted to Headquarters Northern Territory Force on 12 August 1943. He worked in the School of Army Education, was promoted to Corporal on 18 November 1943 and to Acting Sergeant on 6 December 1943.

Bill was discharged from the Army on 19 February 1945 so that he could join the Commonwealth Department of Information and serve as a war correspondent. He was a feature writer and his contributions to the overseas magazine "South West Pacific" had been widely republished in the USA. His "Diary of Bill Smith" was a well-known broadcast feature which brought comfort to thousands of families with its factual references to the men who were serving in the South West Pacific Area.

The accompanying photo of Bill was taken on 26 June 1945 when Bill was covering the landings on the island of Labuan Island off the north-west coast of Borneo in June 1945. It is part of a photo that includes war correspondent Alan Dawes (left) of the Melbourne Herald.



Bill's next assignment was to cover the landings at Balikpapan on south-east Borneo on 1 July 1945. Two days later he was mistakenly killed there by Australian infantry. Fellow war correspondent John Elliott of the ABC, whose life was a mixture of poverty, adventure and tragedy, also died in the incident.

A letter dated 10 July 1945 from the Department of Information representative in Balikpapan to Robert McCall of the ABC in Sydney explains the circumstances of their deaths

"Both men were seeking names of troops in the forward area when they were shot down - Elliott getting material for his broadcasts and Smith for his weekly Diary feature. For reasons unexplained they had wandered into enemy territory near where Jap snipers had been holding up our troops for some hours. They picked out a Jap shelter, sat down in front of it, and began exchanging notes and having a bite to eat. Just a few minutes before, three Japs were killed a few yards from where they were sitting. Smith had removed his slouch hat, but Elliott retained his American visor cap, which from a distance looks very like a Jap cap."



An Australian Bren gunner 700 yards away saw the two figures, was convinced they were Japs and fired killing both men instantly. He cannot be blamed for what happened. He was only doing his duty. The official Army version is that both men were killed in action. That is as it should be."

William was 40 when he died.

LEST WE FORGET

The above article on former student William Smith, class of 1922 was on display at the 2020 Annual Reunion accompanied by the large photo of Bill Smith taken on Labuan Island held in the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association photographic collection.

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