PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

Australian Government

Community Grants Hub
Improving your grant experience

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Dr Robyn White

Continuing to Honour the History, Share the Heritage





Introduction

Throughout the past year the Museum and History Centre volunteers have again focussed on collecting, cataloguing and conserving artefacts and records relating to the history and culture of Perth Modern School. The commencement of the 2026 year has been especially exciting as the Association has been awarded a WA Community Heritage Grant of almost $10,000. This grant (to be matched equally by Association funds), will be used to digitise the 50 or so heritage and key sites on the Heritage Trail. Students, parents, visitors and interested members of the community will soon be able to easily access and explore information about the school's culture and heritage in person or on-line. Research undertaken by our volunteers includes identifying changes to the built environment of the school over its lifetime, and with that, delving more deeply into the stories associated with the Heritage Trail around the school. In building on the research commenced by Sallie Davies, our volunteers have recognised the extent of work already achieved by Sallie – and the amount of new and additional information to be included.

As in recent years, volunteers balance their time in the Museum with time spent with international and domestic travel and family commitments. Extending our digital records to accurately display student and staff records continues to engage us as does the cataloguing of new acquisitions into our digital database. Researching further stories of alumni involved in military conflicts on behalf of our country is a never-ending quest as is research requested by the children, grandchildren and other relations of past students. Fortunately, we've also enjoyed contact with many visitors over this year – and collected even more family stories and information about the exploits of past students after they have completed their secondary education. As we each learn new skills, we've been able to do so in a lively and cheerful environment. The Board of the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association wishes to thank all of our volunteers for their dedication and enthusiasm!

Grants and Fundraising

While the activity in and related to the museum is undertaken solely by volunteers, the use of digital technology and physical materials in conserving, cataloguing and displaying artefacts means that the Museum continually requires funding. We consistently apply for grant funding for the completion of special projects but otherwise rely on our annual fundraising appeal in order to meet our recurrent costs.

The Annual Appeal of 2026 commenced in late April 2026 and has been well received. We thank all donors and are especially grateful for several incredibly generous donors. For some people, the annual appeal is not an appropriate time to donate but there is a real intent to support the Museum activities at some time in the future or to donate for a particular project. A Bequest strategy has been developed and details can be found on the alumni website at perthmoderniansociety.org.au/index.php/museum.

2025-2026 Donors	
Dr Irene Froyland	Barry Saker
Prof Bruce Armstrong	Sharon Williams
Dr Neil Bardsley	Ruth Barrett
Ross Ledger AM	Dr Ken Fitch
Dianne Moxham	Ray Thurloe
Mrs Wendy Watts	Mrs Hannah Wendy
McCusker Foundation	Dr Robyn White
Ms Anne Ballard	Mrs Laurie Best
Dr Philip Jennings	Dr Dianne Graham
Edna Youngman	

Governance and Compliance

Throughout the 2025-26 Financial year, the Board of the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association Inc. included:

Dr Robyn White	*Chair*
Mrs Sharon Williams	*Hon. Treasurer*
Ms Monica Brierley-Hay	*Hon. Secretary*
Mr Jeff Lai	*Board Member*
Ms Ashleigh Blechynden	*Board Member*
Ms Thalia Cole	*Board Member (reserve Hon. Secretary)*
Ms Philippa Roy	*Deputy Principal, Perth Modern School, ex-officio*
President, Perth Modernian Society	*ex-officio*

In this year, 2025-26, the Board met four times (once per term) and all meetings were available through Microsoft teams as well as face-to-face.

Over the course of the year BAS statements have been submitted quarterly to the ATO (Australian taxation office). Following the 2024-25 Annual General Meeting, the Annual Information Statement required by Consumer Protection (WA) and the ACNC was uploaded in October 2025.



Volunteers Bob Johnson and Gay Albillos (background) hard at work

Collaboration

The Perth Modernian Society Museum Association recognises that our Museum and History Centre is a part of a wider community of both alumni and local community. As such we continue to welcome connection to the organisations and individuals with similar focus.

- The Museum has maintained its membership of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA). Our updating of our digital entry on the Collections WA website is a long-held ambition.
- Our connection with the Kentian Society (Alumni from Kent Street Senior High School) and other schools has continued.
- Through Bob Johnson's research on military history, we continue to form connections with other entities. These include UWA Historical Society, RSL Clubs and the National Military Museum.

Thank You

Throughout the year, the Museum has again benefitted from the absolute support of School staff and administration. Led by Principal Mitch Mackay, school staff members have been thoroughly committed to our needs and our volunteers have welcomed all student visits and queries from staff members. Ms Robyn Verboon (Term 3 2025) and then Ms Philippa Roy (Term 4 2025 and 2026), Associate/Deputy Principals, have attended our Board meetings. They provide us with insight into the school activities while contributing further innovative ideas to our discussions.
The members of the Council of the Perth Modernian Society have continued to encourage us and provided additional connections. Our IT/web master Stuart Gould is a wonder who consistently reminds us of important improvements in our digital presence.

Our Board members continue to provide enthusiasm and essential expertise throughout our deliberations. Each ensures that our decisions are well founded: Jeff Lai with his focussed understanding and advice about networking and software, Monica Brierley-Hay for her legal understanding, Ashleigh Blechynden for her understanding of administration and extending our research capabilities, Sharon Williams and her energy and comprehensive financial advice and Thalia Cole for her understanding of communications and marketing. This year was again demanding for several of our Board members. Sharon has continued to spend much time in Bendigo. We were incredibly sad to hear of her father's passing in July and understand her need to continue support for her Mum and her health battles. Ashleigh is now enjoying the delights of a gorgeous toddler. Despite these diverse circumstances, not one Board member has missed a meeting nor missed providing reports as required for each meeting. Thank you all!

Special thanks to our volunteers, without whom the Museum and archives could not function. Deb Beresford is our honorary archivist who ensures new donations are properly accessioned and conserved – with Deirdre Owen working alongside maintaining the archives. Alison Woodman spends Monday mornings with Deb and Deirdre in the archive room adding photographs to the digital catalogue. Ian Hunt spends his time between the archive room and Museum – ensuring that the digital network is always operational. He continues to work on continuous improvements to our network and digital operations. In the Museum, Wendy McCallum and Jill Lucas update the student database, steadily adding the details of past students. Gay Albillos has mastered the MOSAiC cataloguing system and ensures that new book donations are accessioned, conserved and easily located. Loren White oversights the science collection and Burvill Files as well as attending to the new display area outside the Parsons Library. Bob Johnson meanwhile, spends endless hours continuing his military service research – now having identified over thirty Vietnam veterans of the school. The generosity of our volunteers in committing their energy, skills and friendship on every Monday morning, is absolutely appreciated!

2025-26 ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Sharon Williams, Hon Treasurer

The Perth Modernian Society Museum Association (PMSMA) Incorporated uses cash accounting which records revenue when money is received and expenses when money is paid. The Association is a registered small charity having annual revenue under $500,000. The financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the PMSMA as at 30 June 2026. At the date of this statement there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Association is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable. The 2025/2026 financial year was the sixth full financial year of the Association and our sixth fundraising campaign in May/June of 2026.

Financial Report as at 30 June 2026 **Cash Receipts and Payments for the year 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026**	
Cash Receipts	**$**
Donations from Former Students/Parents	8,635.00
Entertainment book commission	70.00
Interest	2,591.03
Heritage Grant 2025-2026	4,303.20
ATO – Refund of GST	207.00
Music at Mod Sales (including postage)	294.80
Other	150.00
Total Cash Receipts	**16,251.03**
Cash Payments	
Printing, Postage, Stationery & Small Purchases/New PC	741.37
IT software, Licenses, upgrade & AMaGA Membership	529.69
Grants – Volunteer Grants	1,533.66
Heritage Grant 2025-2026	4,892.80
Bank Fees	130.65
Insurance	1,061.21
Total Cash Payments	**8,889.38**
Surplus/(Deficit)	**7,361.65**

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2026	
Current Assets	**$**
BOQ operating account	23,300.54
BOQ term deposits	79,036.79
Total Assets	**102,337.33**
Liabilities	0
Net Assets	**102,337.33**
Members' Funds	
Opening balance as at 1 July 2025	94,975.68
Plus surplus for the period	7,361.65
Closing balance as at 30 June 2026 PMSMA Accounts	**102,337.33**

DAVID BROWN (STUDENT 1958–62)

Described by one student of 1973 as "A mathematical identity without equal in Modern schooltime"



David Brown visited the museum at the end of June to discuss donating his diverse photographic collection from his teaching days at Perth Modern School (1971 – 2006). David has since become a regular volunteer in the museum – especially valued for his extended knowledge about life in the school both as a scholarship student and as a teacher and Head of Department.

Best described by one of his students Brett Wright (1973): 'Mr Brown enjoys a legendary status. Discussion at the reunion (1973) and since has homed in on three reasons: he was an exemplary teacher with total command of the subject; he was an early adopter of new ideas, such as computer programming in the maths course; and he possessed an understated manner and dry wit which amused and intrigued us. Maybe too, the black desert boots and sunglasses. In 1973, out of cheeky respect, one of his students, Rob Puglisi, screen-printed the beard and sunglasses on a 'Brown's Bombers' T-shirt for the diehard fans. A search is underway for surviving examples of this rare work of educational homage."

Following his school days, David achieved his B.Sc. and then B.Ed. at UWA before teaching at Busselton SHS and Mt Lawley SHS. In 1971 he returned to Mod as a mathematics teacher. He stayed until his retirement in 2006. David was renowned across the education community as an innovative, knowledgeable teacher. In his own words:

"Over time I began to get the students in my classes, and the mathematics staff as well, to realise that everyone would achieve much more if they worked together as a team. Then, around 1980 I started off the mathematics camps. It gave us a chance to look at different aspects of mathematics we couldn't do very much in the classroom. For example, a tug of war is interesting but what's even more interesting is a three-way tug of war as a practical representation of vectors and what strategy you might use to do it.

In terms of introducing technology and computers, we could have been the first. But I was interested in technology and over time we got quite a range of computers. It was regarded as a mathematics department thing initially. It allowed us to do some things better than before but it also allowed us to do things we couldn't do before in the way of quickly visualising things. A significant recognition was the recording via video of a lesson that I conducted in 1999 using the first iMac computers. It was chosen as an exemplar and one of only five from Australia for worldwide distribution via TIMSS (the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study)!

Over time, the school community became diversified with the music programme, the IEC/ESL programme, gymnastics and classical dance. All this contributed to the school ethos and the feeling was that it was a very welcoming school. We would get kids referred to us from other schools and sometimes they would say they were being bullied at this other school. We were regarded as a safe place.

There were a lot of curriculum changes or different organisations as the years went by in the 70s, 80s and 90s. I was quite often on various curriculum committees run by the Education Department. I got to be on the examining panel—that's the three people who set the examination papers for the Leaving or TEE or TAE or whatever. Later I got to be chief examiner, who is the head of those responsible for setting the papers at the end of fifth year or Year 12.

I supported the return of the school to being fully selective. I think there are good reasons for having some selective schools, otherwise some bright students feel pressured not to show they are bright, and not develop to their fullest potential, which can affect them right through life."

As you can imagine, David is a wonderful addition to the diversity of our able volunteers in the museum.

MUSEUM COMMITTEE REPORT

Museum Volunteers at Work

Overview

The Museum Standing Committee has continued to operate in accordance with the requirements set out in the updated 2025-28 Forward Plan reviewed and adjusted by this Committee and approved by the Board at the April 2025 meeting.

2025-26 Reunions

As noted in 2024-25, the number of reunions and community activities has diversified. The Council of the Perth Modernian Society determined that the 2026 Annual Reunion would be on May 4 as an afternoon High Tea with the Annual General Meeting following. This time change ensured that attendees would be able to travel in daylight to enjoy catching up with old school friends.

We are continuing to support year groups who wish to conduct their reunions off-site from the school. Several have requested the Museum to open during the same afternoon so that alumni can review photographs and articles in the Sphinx's and other artefacts – enjoying the comprehensive reminder of their days at Mod.



Volunteers – Robyn and Deb



Sharon Williams and Norm Chosid – February 2026

Ongoing Volunteer Projects

IT Delivery, Networking etc.



We struggle to recall how our Museum operated before the arrival of Ian Hunt. He has provided us with a stable platform for the remote network, and in the past year totally updated the operating system. He now plans to update all of our second-hand computers during the next financial year. Ian has ensured that digital software is backed up weekly, he is always available for queries and continues to research the most effective ways in which we might convert paper records into digital records that will save us from damaging originals through overhandling. There are so many different hard copy records to digitise, we can see no end to our need for Ian's support!

Archives

The Museum archives are curated by Honorary Archivist Deb Beresford alongside her able assistant Deirdre Owen. As new donations are received by the Museum, Deb and Deirdre catalogue and accession (into our software MOSAiC) these before appropriately conserving and storing them. They are also responsible for properly archiving newly arrived school records so that these will be preserved for future researchers.

Photographs

The digitising and cataloguing of photographs is undertaken by Alison Woodman. This is an incredibly time-consuming activity and we are grateful for Alison's persistence! Being able to find photographs via MOSAiC then saves enormous time when displays are being created or family members request information about their forebears.

Photograph Collection (1970s–2000s)

David Brown (student 1958–62, maths teacher and Head of Department 1971–2006) has joined the Museum volunteers armed with a collection of photographs taken at school and on camps during the 1970s and until the early 2000s. David is scanning these to add to our digital library of images.

Book and Sphinx Collections – New Accessions

Over the past two years, Gay Albillos has undertaken a massive organisation of the books and Sphinx magazines donated to the Museum. Books are now catalogued and easily found while the Museum and Archive rooms now share three complete sets of Sphinx magazines. While continuing to ensure these collections are maintained, Gay is also accessioning new donations and artefacts provided by the school.

Military Commemorative History

Bob Johnson continues his research into all military history related to alumni of Perth Modern School. Bob's work extends far beyond the Monday mornings in the Museum. The Nominal and Honour Roll found on the school website, details the 153 former students who have lost their lives in the service of their country as well as the Nominal Roll including 1,614 students who served and returned home. Bob continually reviews data we hold and edits and improves where appropriate. Bob has created excellent links with various RSL groups (Highgate), UWA Historical Society, WA Military Museum and the Australian War Memorial museum through his own continuing research.

George Burvill Biographical Index

The old Pound cupboard in the Museum holds a multitude of files of the George Burvill Index. Here, hard copy information (letters, newspaper articles etc) is filed under alumnus names primarily through the efforts of Loren White.

Data Entry into JED

Wendy McCallum and Jill Lucas make up an exceptional team volunteering and effectively updating files. The digital student data base lacks much information for the years post 1961 – which is gradually being rectified.

Science Collection

Loren White is continuing to refurbish the science collection. Identifying, cataloguing and making usable various pieces of equipment is requiring some research and innovation.

Publication and Social Media Presence

The Museum members contribute articles and check on historical facts for the Perth Modernian Society e-Newsletter and Perth Modern School Newsletter. Stuart Gould, Robyn White, Peter Farr create and secure articles while David Brown now edits the draft newsletters.

Sharon Williams and Robyn White manage and create content for the Museum's social media presence.

Heritage Trail

Originally researched and devised by Sallie Davies, this trail is valued by the school community. In late December 2025 the Museum Association was successful in securing a grant from the WA Community Heritage Grants. This grant application requested support to install metal QR coded signage at locations along the trail, linked to the appropriate digital site, so that visitors might self-guide across the campus.

MUSEUM VISITORS AND DATES

The Museum is open to the public on all Monday mornings during school term time. When visitors are unable to attend on a school Monday, emails to the Museum can provide a negotiated time to visit.

2025	
28 July	Ken Tobin visiting from Florida
11 August	Arthur Spitalis, Paul Hammond
16 August	Visit to Wilson Tuckey who donated ten of his autobiographies for us to sell
20 October	Ross Kelly visit and discuss his post Modern School activities
3 November	Walter (Laurie) Turnbull visited from Sydney. Walter is a consistent donor to the museum
10 November	Ellerin Gilbert
17 November	Daele Robertson

2026	
2 February	Norm Chosid visited from Sydney (his biography appeared in the February newsletter)
9 February	Peta Edwards, grand-niece of the Rotenberg sisters
16 February	Peta Edwards and Karen Harford: donating items relating to the Rotenberg sisters
23 February	Rosemary Lynch, Millstream
9 March	Rosemary Lynch
23 March	Rosemary Lynch
4 May	High Tea and AGM for the Perth Modernian Society Inc.
8 June	Owen Br and Andrew H from Mt Lawley SHS to review our programme
15 June	David Brown visited and has since joined our volunteer group



Peta Edwards & Karen Harford, including some of the items donated – February 2026



Watercolour by Margaret Hart Gorrie (student 1933-1937), donated by son Robert in 2026