



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Issue 66, November 2025, Vol 4 No 8

WELCOME to your **Perth Modernian e-Newsletter**, **Issue 66, November 2025, Vol 4 No 8**

This newsletter offers two way communication with all registered members, volunteers, families and friends to bring you news, event details and articles from the Perth Modernian Society, its members and Perth Modern School. We hope you find its content 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.

DIARY DATES

REUNIONS

Are you planning a Class/Year Reunion for 2026?

We can help

for further information visit

www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au

e-NEWSLETTER

Do you have something to say?
Memories to share?

Where are YOU now?

Send your news item, letters
and/or photographs to ...

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NEXT ISSUES

Copy deadlines for

Issue 67, February 2026, Vol 4 No 9

18 February copy deadline for
circulation by **1 March 2026**

Issue 68, May 2026, Vol 4 No 10

20 May copy deadline for
circulation by **1 June 2026**

Issue 69, August 2026, Vol 4 No 11

20 August copy deadline for
circulation by **1 September 2026**

Issue 70, November 2026, Vol 4 No 12

20 November copy deadline for
circulation by **1 December 2026**

30th Anniversary of the Perth Modernian Society

17 September 1995 was a very special day for past students and teachers of Perth Modern School. On this day, the newly created Perth Modernian Society was launched at a very well attended function. Attendees were entertained by the music students in the School Hall (now Beasley building). Following the official launch, afternoon tea was provided in the East building (now the Andrews building). Planning for the Society had commenced early in 1995, with the first formal Planning Committee meeting held on 21 February 1995. **Daryl Williams** (1955-59) was the convenor of this committee, with members including **Eric Alcock** (Principal), **Barrie Baker** (1954-58), **Michael Berry-Porter** (1988-92), **Leslie Biggerstaff** (then P&C President), **Jim Davies** (1954-58, retired Deputy Principal and retired acting Principal), **Wendy-Cara Dugmore** (Head Girl in 1993), **Mignonne Gubbay** (nee Wineberg, 1952-56), **Harry Janney** (1957-58), **Philip Jennings** (1954-58), **Jill Lucas** (nee Stuart, 1952-56), **Deirdre Owen** (nee Abrahamson, 1954-58) and **Phillip Playford** (1944-48).

The objects (included in the first Constitution) of this new Society were many with all directed to past students and staff:

- to preserve and enhance the reputation and traditions of the School among present and former students and staff and in the community
- to encourage and assist former students and staff to renew and maintain their associations with the School
- to encourage and facilitate contact and communication among former students and staff
- to support and to encourage and facilitate support by former students and staff of current activities of the School and of present students and staff
- to maintain records and archives of the School and its students and staff and to encourage and facilitate the recording of the history of the School and its students and staff
- to promote and support the Sphinx Foundation
- to do anything incidental to any of the above objects.



Class of 1960 Reunion, 2000



Class of 1951 Reunion, 2001



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Acknowledgments

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This issue of the Perth Modernian e-Newsletter is dedicated to the memory of



Sallie Davies 1938-2025

for her outstanding effort and unwavering commitment to co-ordinating and editing the first 59 editions of this publication.

Please see page 13 for a full tribute.



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au

2025 COUNCIL

info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

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Peter Farr, Sphinx Foundation
Ian Hunt, IT/Communication, Technology
Ed Lazarus, Membership
Barbara Mallett, Reunions
Dr Robyn White, Vice President, Museum Rep
Daryl Williams AM KC, President
Mitchell Mackay, Ex-Officio, PMS Principal

ANNUAL CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

\$40 per annum now due

As well as outlining the objects of the Society, the Constitution included possible functions through which the Council of the Perth Modernian Society might meet its objects as well as providing for membership. An eligible person (past student or staff member) need only provide their name and address in order to become a "registered" member of the Society. However, should that person choose to pay a membership fee, they would become a "contributing" member.

While the launch of the new Society took place in September 1995, it would be at the first annual general meeting (AGM) in April 1996 that those members present and voting elected the first Council to overview the activities of this Society. Until that time, the Planning Committee managed the business of the new Society.

While establishing the Perth Modernian Society was the major focus of interested alumni, alongside this Planning Committee were several intertwined groups. The Historical and Museum Committee that dealt particularly with conserving and recording the school student and staff records and School history, had been in operation since 1974. This group continued its activities and became a standing committee of the Perth Modernian Society.



Past President Barrie Baker at the 2001 Annual Reunion

Another planning committee met throughout 1995 - the Newsletter Committee. This group was made up of **Russell Elsegood** (1958-59, Chair), **Steve Errington** (1956-57), **Keith Kessell** (1958-62), **Roger Simms** (1958-59), **David Watson** (1955-59) and **Daryl Williams**. They developed the basis for the forthcoming newsletter to be circulated to members. That newsletter continues to this day, although no longer in a mailed magazine form but instead as an e-newsletter. The newsletter committee continues as a standing committee of the Council of the Perth Modernian Society.



Early Annual Reunions



The third planning committee was that of the Foundation Committee. Minutes of this planning committee in May and June indicate that there was already an understanding that the new Past President Barrie Baker at the 2001 Annual Reunion Society would be called the Perth Modernian Society. The foundation to be established at the same time, would be called the Sphinx Foundation. Members of this Foundation Committee were **John Karasinski**, (Chair, 1966-70), **Jim Haywood** (1957-61), **Jack Katavatis** (1958-59), **Al Koenig** (1960-64), **Geoff Soutar** (1961-65), **Daryl Williams**, **Grahame Young** (1957-61), Eric Alcock, Les Biggerstaff, Mrs Jan Butcher (staff member) and Ross Ledger (1950-53). By May 1995, the Committee was reviewing a draft constitution and discussing forwarding this draft to the Australian Tax Office for approval of the Foundation as a public benevolent institution (and consequently having tax deductibility status for donations). The new Foundation would be governed by a Board of up to seven members and more than two members approved by the Council of the Perth Modernian Society.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

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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sphinxfoundation@perthmoderniansociety.org.au
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Sphinx Scholarship Fund

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MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

[History Centre and Archives]

Gay Albillos
Deborah Beresford, *Hon Archivist*
Frank Hedges
Ian Hunt
Robert (Bob) Johnson
Jill Lucas
Wendy McCallum
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Thank you for your generous support

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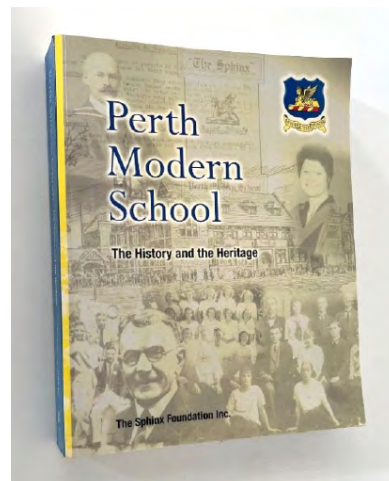
The objects of the Sphinx Foundation were very broad.

- To advance the education, learning and knowledge of the students attending Perth Modern School (then called the "School".)
- To provide and preserve, maintain and develop the standards and facilities of the School whether directly or indirectly
- To solicit attract and encourage bequests gifts and donations to or for the benefit of the Foundation
- To acquire any land or property and to construct improve and maintain any buildings or other facilities for the benefit of the School
- To establish or maintain trusts for education or research scholarships endowments fellowships and to encourage visits from overseas specialist or any other activities seen by the Board as being either of direct or indirect benefit to the students and the School
- To acquire books, works of art, educational equipment and teaching aids for the benefit of the School
- To administer and manage any money or asset of whatever nature placed with the Foundation
- To do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the objects of the School or this Foundation.



Over the intervening years, the Perth Modernian Society and Sphinx Foundation have worked closely with the Historical and Museum committee (from 2018 the Perth Modernian Society Museum Association) - and for many years the membership of the governing bodies of each included many of the same people.

In 2005 when the first history of the school was published, "*Perth Modern School: the history and the heritage*", it was the Sphinx Foundation that was the publisher. At that time, the Sphinx Foundation included **David Black** (1949-53, Chair and also member of the Historical and Museum Assoc), **Ross Ledger**, **Richard Ammon** (1950-54), **Barrie Baker** (also member of the Council of the Perth Modernian Society), **Sallie Davies** (nee Hicks, 1951-55, also member of the Historical and Museum Committee and recent Councillor of the Perth Modernian Society), **Jo Donnellan** (nee Davies, 1954-58), **Diane Tilvern** (nee Elliott, 1950-51) and **Grahame Young** (1957-61). Many of these Board members became major contributors to *the History*, with Sallie Davies and David Black coordinating its final organisation. As the School reverted to becoming selective in nature, the constitution of the Sphinx Foundation was expanded to enable the provision of scholarships for students.



Over the thirty years since the inception of the Society, it and the Sphinx Foundation and the Museum Association, have focussed on contributing to the community and story of Perth Modern School. Throughout this e-newsletter edition, are included some stories and photographs taken from the PowerPoint presentation created by **Barbara Mallett** and **Ian Hunt** for the 2025 AGM and celebration reunion of the 30th Anniversary in May 2025.



Class of 1964 Reunion, 2014



Centenary Gala Dinner, 2011



MUSEUM SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

facebook.com/perthmodernschoolmuseum/
instagram.com/pmsmamuseum/

MODERNIAN HONOURS

awards@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Modernian Fellow

Sallie Davies *
Malcolm McCusker AC CVO KC
Donald Tyler *
Barrie Baker *
Ian Jarvis *
Peter Farr
Dr Kenneth Michael AC Cit WA
Dr Robyn White

* Deceased

Moderna Scola Award

Deborah Beresford
Alan Porter *
Evelyn Broadley
Rosemary Pratt
Dr June Stephenson *
Robert Johnson
Anne Celia Christmass
Neil Anthony Coy
Roger Stubbs AM
Edward Lazarus
Barbara Mallett

* Deceased

Honorary Members

Alison Woodman
Tonya McCusker AM
Nigel Hunt
Brendon Dawson
Sharon Williams



Save Perth Mod Campaign, 2017



Professor Gary Martin delivering the 2020 Annual Oration



Annual Reunion and Cyril Tyler Auditorium Opening Event, 2021



'Music at Mod' Book Launch, 2023

2025 ANNUAL ORATION AND REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

Now in its fifteenth year, the Perth Modernian Society Annual Oration was held on 11 November 2025 and delivered with warmth and insight by **Ms Sandy Anghie**, a distinguished Perth-based architect and civic leader.

A Speaker of Distinction

Sandy's remarkable career spans law, commerce, architecture and public service. She holds degrees in Law, Commerce, Environmental Design and a Master of Architecture, and currently serves as Co-Founder and Chair of Perth Design Week, a Board Member of the State Library of Western Australia, and on committees of the National Trust and Law Society of WA. Her previous leadership roles include President of the Australian Institute of Architects (WA Chapter), Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Perth, and Editor of The Architect magazine. She is also widely known for initiating the Historic Heart of Perth revitalisation project.

Insights and Inspiration

Speaking on the theme "*Designing a Life and Career with Purpose*," Sandy shared ten lessons drawn from her professional journey. Beginning with "Build a good foundation," each lesson connected architectural principles with broader reflections on life and leadership.

Her address concluded with a lively Q&A led by Sphinx Society Year 10 students, followed by a gift presentation from the Head Prefects **Mary McCusker** and **Avash Shakya**, and a closing address by Principal **Ms Robyn Verboon**, who warmly acknowledged the Sphinx Foundation's scholarships supporting many of the Year 10 and 11 students present.

Connecting Generations

During the morning tea in the Sir Paul Hasluck Foyer, Sandy engaged enthusiastically with students, including the Year 10 and 11 girls and boys shown in the accompanying photos, and reconnected with **Dr Heidi Waldron** (pictured right), her former Santa Maria College classmate. Heidi and her husband Dr Nick Waldron were absolute champions in the campaign to *Save Perth Mod* in 2017, and as well generously funded towards the cost of the Harmony Room in the lower level of the Cyril Tyler Auditorium.



Sandy Anghie delivering the 2025 Oration



Sandy with school friend Dr Heidi Waldron at morning tea

Following the Oration, Sandy joined staff, students, parents and guests at the moving Remembrance Day Service held at the Perth Modern School World War I Memorial.

As she departed, Sandy told Ms Verboon, *"Thank you all for the opportunity to talk to your students - it was an absolute pleasure and privilege."*



Sandy with Year 11 girl students and Peter Farr at morning tea



Year 10 and 11 boy students conversing with Peter Farr at morning tea



Remembrance Day service at the PMS World War I Memorial

PERTH MODERN SCHOOL - YEAR 12 PRESENTATION CEREMONY 2025

For many of us Modernians who attended Perth Modern School in the 20th century, finishing our final Leaving exam was a bit of a letdown. That emotional day also marked our last time on school grounds as a student with no formal farewell or prize-giving ceremony back then. The very next day we typically started a casual summer job to earn some Christmas pocket money or to save for university.

How different it is today. A graduation ceremony is a major celebration for every secondary school, and without doubt the annual Year 12 Presentation Ceremony is probably the premier event on the Perth Mod calendar—a milestone celebration for students, families, staff and special guests. The school is on show. Over the past two decades the ceremony has been held in venues including UWA's Octagon Theatre, the Tyler-McCusker Sports Centre (with staff and official guests in full academic regalia), and in 2021 in the new Cyril Tyler Auditorium. From 2022 to 2024 it took place in the Perth Concert Hall; however, with that venue closed for major renovations in 2025, this year's ceremony on 21 October moved to the Perth High-Performance Centre (AKA Challenge Stadium).

The large audience comprising more than 900 parents, grandparents, staff, students and guests packed the venue - all the Year 12 students looking very smart and grown up in their school uniform plus a blue and red academic gown. Among the official guests were School Patron **Malcolm McCusker**, **Ms Cheryl Townshend** (Director of Education - North Metro Region), **Peter Farr** (Sphinx Foundation Director and PMS Board), and **Dr Robyn White** (Chair, Museum Association).

A memorable highlight early in the program was the uplifting six-minute video "My Year 12 Experience", featuring every graduating student and a dozen candid video interviews, which was a delightful experience for the audience to see.



The evening featured the presentation of Academic Awards to the top student in each Year 12 course, along with major honours such as the Youth Ambassador Award, Sportsman, Sportswoman and Sports Citizen of the Year, the Subiaco Service Above Self Award, the Clare Casey Service Award, and the Principal's Award. The night culminated in the announcement of the Dux of Perth Modern School and the Dux Runner-up (a tied result this year). These prestigious Dux awards are donated annually by the Perth Modernian Society and the Sphinx Foundation, and many of the Academic Awards are funded by Old Modernians.

Despite being on sick leave during Term 4, Principal **Mitchell Mackay** delivered the Principal's Address—an indication of his enduring dedication to the school. Then each student received their graduation folio and were photographed with the Principal **Ms Robyn Verboon**. The Valedictory Speech was jointly delivered by the 2025 Head Prefects **Mahek Aribenchi** and **Thevindu Karunaratne**, who reflected thoughtfully on their year group's journey and on the unwelcome idea of saying "goodbye".

Throughout the ceremony the audience enjoyed polished musical interludes performed by Chamber Trio, Jazz Band 1, the Senior Wind Orchestra (conducted by Honorary Modernian **Neil Coy**), the Jazz Quintet with soloist Jasmine Temby, and finally Contemporary Ensemble 1 with a stirring rendition of Queen's '*Bohemian Rhapsody*' — a fitting finale to a night celebrating talent, hard work and Modern School spirit. Everybody was a winner!



Contemporary Ensemble 1 performing "Bohemian Rhapsody"

RECENT REUNIONS

CLASS OF 1965 - 60 YEARS

The Class of 1965 held its 60th reunion at the Western Australian Golf Club on Wednesday 16 October. **Kaye Barr** provided the following review and photos of the afternoon:

"Our Year of 1965 Sixty Year Reunion was a surprising event. There had been no previous Reunion. Thanks to the inspiration of Peter Stephenson, the word went out, a venue was selected and several people responded. The search was on, and many Year members were found, mostly through connections that still existed over the years while some were more difficult to find. About 30 were able to attend - which seemed a remarkable number after the sixty years.

I enjoyed seeing so many PMS people after the sixty years. Greetings were warm, and heartfelt. A hug here, a smile of recognition there, a bewildered "I would not have recognised you!" in several cases. Some were known to each other but there were many who had not seen each other at all. And many who had not known each other during the school years, as 1961 consisted of 11 first year classes. Furthermore, back then although in co-educational classes, many of the boys did not speak much to the girls, and vice versa.

The venue was the WA Golf Club which has a pleasant, quiet atmosphere, with good food and refreshments available. The group atmosphere was warm, and much interested chat was shared.

Without the efforts of **Peter Stephenson**, and those who assisted in various ways, this event could not have come together; thanks were given by all who attended. It is clear, that had there been no Sixtieth, there would have been no Reunion, ever."



Leonie Lee, Kaye Barr, Anne Masters



Doug Hide, Robin Dalby, Stephen Heal



CLASS OF 1975 - 50 YEARS

On Saturday 15 November, the class of 1975 descended on the staff room in the Andrews Building shortly before 1pm. They came a few at a time, which allowed Carole and Mark to greet their classmates personally. Before long almost 40 had gathered and the stories were flying left, right and centre. They were so absorbed in the dialogue that the beautiful hot and cold food was left largely untouched, before it was time for the group photograph and the school tour ending at the museum.

There they remained at length, finally returning with renewed enthusiasm and hunger to do justice to the beautiful lunch spread.

The group couldn't think of a better venue than to meet in their old school, which held so many wonderful memories and provided the backdrop for the amazing stories.



CLASS OF 1985 - 40 YEARS

The Class of 1985 recently celebrated its 40th high school reunion — a wonderful occasion to reconnect, reminisce, and reflect on the years gone by. Although attendance was smaller than hoped, those who came thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to catch up, share memories, and see how well we could still recognise one another after four decades.

Some classmates remain in regular contact, while for others it was the first time meeting since graduation. The sense of camaraderie and shared history was as strong as ever. We hope to continue these gatherings more frequently in the future and look forward to welcoming even more classmates next time.



Left to right: Wade Groves, Paul Mckeown, Craig Lehmann, Andy Aqualina, Larisa Vanstien, Tom Sideris, Andrea Caple, Mick Vecchio, Sonia Piani, Thi Trong, Sharon Harwood, Linda Angelone, Elena Marchant, Tina Hamilton, Merliee Gregg, Jo Doran, Brett Davies, Amanda Boothey, Jennifer Rule



CLASS OF 2005 - 20 YEARS

The 20 year reunion for the class of 05 was an afternoon full of stories, laughs and memories. It was held at Pirate Life brewing who were very accommodating, and the central location made it easy for everyone to get to. We've now successfully held a 10 year and 20 year reunion and we've all decided that 25 years will be the next. A fantastic afternoon was had by all and thank you to Barbara from the Reunion team at Perth Mod for your help and support organising it.



CLASS OF 1970

The annual get-together of the Class of 1970 was held at the Marmion Angling and Aquatic Club on Saturday, 25 October 2025.



INTERESTED IN HOLDING A REUNION FOR YOUR YEAR GROUP?

We can help!

For details, please visit www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au/reunion-organisers
or email reunions@perthmoderniansociety.org.au



(Compiled by Peter Farr, October 2025)

Elsie was born in 1897 into a farming family. She attended Midland Junction Primary School where she gained a Secondary Schools Scholarship and thereby had the distinction of becoming a foundation student at the then new Perth Modern School. Elsie's older sister Mary ("Mossie") Stevens BA also attended Mod and was teacher at Mod for a remarkable 34 years from 1921 to 1954.

Elsie was apparently a talented student: in 1912, Elsie won a Junior Exhibition (Government Junior Scholarship), and she gained an Alliance Francaise Certificate, then in 1913, on the recommendation of Adelaide University, she was awarded a Government Junior Scholarship. In her final year in 1914, she won the prestigious Mathematics/Physics Exhibition which provided funds to attend university for three years.

So it was that Elsie attended the University of WA from 1915 to 1917. On graduation with a BA, in 1918 she gained employment as a Monitor (Assistant Teacher) at Perth Girls High School. She then taught at Albany High School (1936-38), Bunbury High (1941-46), and Perth Girls HS (1947-52).

Then in 1953, Elsie (see photo right) came back to her alma mater in the position of Perth Modern School's Principal Mistress and Biology teacher 1953-1957. She was also the 'form mistress' for class 1D. So it was that the remarkable Elsie Stevens was one of the first of many Modernians who followed a career as renowned educationists. Elsie and Mossie were staunch church goers for many years; Methodists it is believed.

Whilst Noel Sampson was the Headmaster at Mod, it was the deputies Doug Collins and Elsie Stevens ('Headmistress') who looked after the day to day running of Mod.



Ex-Students anecdotes about Elsie

Describing his first assembly at Mod, **Barrie Baker** wrote in 2008: *"On the stage were a handful of elderly staff. Among them were the First Mistress, Miss Elsie Stevens, not tall, but forbidding, erect, with hair in a bun, plump and very deaf. The girls were terrified of her. There was also Miss Sedgman who later played God Save the Queen and Moderna Scola on the upright piano. They all wore black academic gowns, green with age, which slipped and slithered over their dresses, and had to be continually hitched up."*

Apparently, according to **Gay Albillos** (née Rodda), Miss Stevens taught her mother at another high school and even told Gay that she was not as good at Maths as her mother!

Rayma Pervan (née Richter, 1952-56) recorded these memories about Elsie later in the book 'Perth Modern School, the History and the Heritage' (2005):

"Miss Stevens patrolled the school ground with a torch during school dances and ordering those discovered back into the hall. Miss Stevens making us girls in our gym uniforms kneel on the ground while she measured with a wooden ruler the distance from the ground to the hem. Miss Stevens, who taught us Biology, reaching the hugely anticipated subject of 'reproduction'. She got so far, and then stood back and said discreetly, with a suitably demure smile that bespoke some roguishness inside her, "that being a single lady, this is as far as her knowledge went". On the other hand, it was also Miss Stevens whose description of the sap rising inside the trunk of a tree was sufficiently powerful that ever since that time I have been able to 'see' sap rising in all plants. I already felt an affinity with plants and now thought I knew why".

Leith Conybeare (née Creed) and Jo Donnellan (née Davies) (1954-58) jointly recall in the same book: *"And Miss Stevens told us we should wear good foundation garments and taught a love of Australian history. If only she had written a book!"*

Seventy years after Leith first met Miss Stevens, she recalled: *"Miss Stevens was the 'Head Mistress' when I was at Perth Mod. She was a formidable figure, but she kind of took me under her wing and encouraged me to do my homework, which I had difficulty in doing for lack of motivation. Australian history didn't seem as exciting as European (Modern) history, but Miss Stevens gave it life and breath. I've always been very grateful to her."*



In similar vein **Ronda Beck** (née Neaves, 1954-58) now recalls: *"I certainly value the role Miss Stevens played in our lives at Mod, but probably didn't appreciate her methods at the time. Although she taught us Mathematics by fear, she taught us Biology with warmth and feeling. Her depth and breadth of knowledge was obvious."*

The legendary Elsie Stevens passed away on 28 April 1978, aged 81, having left a lasting stamp on many girl students.

Footnote: Leith Conybeare (née Creed), who lives in Sydney, has recently been in touch with the Directors of the Sphinx Foundation for the purpose of funding a 'Miss Elsie Stevens Memorial Humanities Scholarship', commencing in 2026 and to be open to students completing Year 10.

YOUR SAY

From: Bob Johnson

Re: Kastellorizo - Arthur Spartalis and Dr Ken Michael

An article about Arthur Spartalis (PMS 1961-65) in the August 2025 newsletter mentioned that his family hailed from Kastellorizo, a small Greek island 500 kilometres from Athens and two kilometres from mainland Turkey. It is two-thirds the size of Rottneest. By coincidence, the family of another Mod student and former Governor of WA, Modernian Fellow Dr Ken Michael AC, (PMS 1954-55) also came from Kastellorizo. Ken's father, Agapitos Michael, born in 1883, migrated with his parents from Kastellorizo to Australia before World War 1. He enlisted in the AIF and served at Gallipoli and the Western Front with the 11th Battalion. He returned to Australia in November 1919.

Kastellorizo received a two-second appearance on a map in the 1960 film *The Guns of Navarone* and shot to international fame when the 1991 movie *Mediterraneo*, set on the island, won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.

Request from a 1968 Alumnus

Recently one of our 1968 alumni contacted the museum to ask whether we held a script for one of the plays performed at School in 1966/67. *Le Diplomate* was performed in its original French language and apparently was quite a hit!

Our alumnus has lost contact with most of his classmates and fellow performers - and would love to catch up with some.

We'd love to contact anyone who remembers being a part of this performance, or might recall the script.

Please email: museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Readers, do you too have something to say? Please address your comments to Robyn White (robynwhite5@hotmail.com).

MUSEUM MATTERS



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

The past term in the museum has been busy and interesting. It has also been a time of sadness and loss, as during 2025 we've seen the passing of several long-term friends and volunteers of the museum - Modernian Fellow **Barrie Baker**, his wife **Zoe Baker** and Modernian Fellow **Sallie Davies**. All donated time, special skills and knowledge towards extending the stories and data held by the museum - and we're very aware of the loss of further stories on their passing. However, there is now added incentive for our volunteers to collect and conserve new stories and artifacts as they can be identified.

We enjoyed a surprise visit from the well-travelled **(Walter) Laurie Turnbull** and his wife Anne, living in Sydney. Laurie had driven across the continent to visit his home city and Anne flew in to join him. They spent a wonderful Monday morning in the museum, keeping our volunteers happily engaged in conversation. Their thoughtfulness in visiting the school during what must have been a busy holiday in Perth, really made our museum people feel very special and valued.



We've also been able to welcome **Daele Robertson** (1955-59) and her son Anthony to the museum. Daele is living in Melbourne and was happy to finally visit in person!

Meanwhile, reunions have also kept our museum volunteers busy. The recent class of 1975 visit in November was very well attended - and volunteers and alumni enjoyed the time in the museum. A bonus was that many of the attendees completed the biographical forms so that more of each person's contacts and stories might be added to the database.



Daele Robertson and Anthony



1975 alumni in the museum

The early weeks of term four were doubly busy for the various Museum committees. The Board met for its final formal meeting of 2025 as well as participating in our Annual General Meeting. The Annual Report 2024-25 is now available via a visit to the museum and online at www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au. The Museum Committee meeting has become an extended meeting over several weeks - as volunteers enjoy wildflower excursions, short holidays to see families and other travel. Our communications expert **Ian Hunt** has again updated several components of the museum's IT infrastructure - so that both the museum and archives room are able to effectively scan the wonderful A3 photographs taken over the past decade or so. This extensively extends our digital library of past events at the school recorded through the alumni photographs.

As the festive season approaches, it's opportune to thank all of our volunteers, Board members, Modernians and the school staff, for their ongoing support for the museum. The museum is totally supported through volunteers with our artifacts donated by thoughtful alumni and their families and research undertaken by interested alumni. We continue to enlist more alumni and friends to volunteer with us. We wish all of the alumni and current school community a happy and safe summer ahead.

MARGARET KERR

Recently the museum was grateful to receive donations from **Alice Ackrill** - daughter of **Margaret Ackrill** (nee Kerr). Alice had visited the school from her home in the UK. She thoughtfully provided the museum with the following bio of her mother's very full life!

Margaret Kerr was born in Perth in 1928 to Cyril Kerr, and grew up in Mount Lawley. She loved her school days, building lifelong friendships, and particularly enjoying English literature, history, and music.

She achieved a Double First in History and English at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1948, and then headed east to work as a research assistant at Armidale College in New South Wales, and to do some academic teaching in Melbourne.

In 1949 she won a Hackett Scholarship from UWA, and went to Oxford, England. She travelled to Europe by ship and was met at the port by relatives she didn't know who took her to London and introduced her to England.

It was a fairly rare thing for a woman to be at Oxford then, they attended women-only colleges (Margaret went to Lady Margaret Hall), and it was rarer to be a female Australian. Margaret reflected that Oxford then was not all golden stone and warm open-mindedness: the buildings were black with soot from coal fires, and food was still rationed, and appalling! However, she enjoyed study, revelled in all the lectures, concerts, and cultural activities available, and made friends. She was awarded a B.Litt. in Modern History in 1951 and continued her post-graduate study at Nuffield College.

She first met John Ackrill in Switzerland in 1951 while she was travelling in Europe, and he was studying for his work as a Lecturer in Ancient Philosophy at Oxford. They continued to build a relationship back in Oxford, and in 1953 John and Margaret married in Perth, then returned to the UK. With their first daughter they spent 1955 in Princeton, USA, for John's philosophical study. Their lives then resumed in Oxford, where in 1966 John became the first holder of Oxford's Professorship of the History of Philosophy. He was a globally regarded academic in the field of ancient philosophy.



The couple had three daughters and one son, and briefly, a foster boy. Once they had moved into their lifelong home, there were many years with lodgers from the UK and overseas swelling family numbers. Margaret focussed on bringing up the children, and also achieved a distinguished academic career in business and economic history. She was a woman of considerable energy, and successfully juggled part-time work that she relished, including tutoring and lecturing at Cambridge University and LSE London, and researching and writing or co-writing books, for example on UK manufacturing, the electricity industry, and Barclays bank. She also researched and wrote papers on the history of British and Australian involvement in the Cocos (Keeling) islands, which she visited. In later life she spent many happy years as a Senior Lecturer with the Post Graduate School of Architecture at Oxford Brookes University.

Margaret and John shared a lifelong love of classical music, were devoted to their immediate and wider family, and both enjoyed supporting and assisting foreign students whom they encountered at Oxford. All her life, Margaret retained a sharp mind, attention to detail, wit, and a deep curiosity about, and kindness towards, people she encountered. Once they could manage it, they holidayed in Greece and the Greek islands, where Margaret loved the sun and the chance to swim in the sea. The couple travelled back to Perth more often after retirement, and Margaret always returned rejuvenated after a visit "home" and time spent in the WA sun.

John died in 2007, and Margaret in 2015, aged 87.

- Alice Ackrill

EXCERPTS FROM "IRONBAR: A MEMOIR" BY WILSON TUCKEY

Having recently read the whole of **Wilson Tuckey's** memoir, several comments relating to life in the 1950s and Perth Modern School, might particularly interest our alumni.

Of his teenage years, Wilson said:

"During my entire time at high school I was always looking for paid work. One Christmas I was a relief postie hired to handle the flood of mail. Another opportunity for teenagers then was to work before Christmas in the department stores such as Boans and Foy & Gibson. Such was the proficiency of our education system then that it was no problem for us to attend to customers, prepare dockets and send them and money by vacuum tube to the cashier. We all accepted the dress standard at the time, arriving at work on time and dressed in a suit or jacket and tie."

And of Perth Modern School:

Perth Modern School was a unique institution that put public education at the head of the list - so much so that a State Labor government closed it down in much later years as being too elitist, ignoring that not only was Perth Modern School the school of choice for the wealthy but it created the opportunity for the son of a motor mechanic to mix with anyone - and earn higher academic scores than many!"

Wilson's memoirs offer many reminiscences that our alumni will thoroughly enjoy. The Museum Association is the beneficiary of Wilson's generosity in offering a number of these books to interested alumni, for a cost of \$50. Please contact the museum at museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au.

VALE

Thank you to the volunteers, families and friends who have forwarded/alerted us to the following information and memories of former PMS students and staff for publication and/or inclusion in Museum records

Name	Year at PMS	Position	Deceased
Noreen Merle Campbell (nee Ogilby)	1947 - 1948	Student	September 2025
Shirley McWhirter (nee Whitman)	1947 - 1948	Student	26 November 2024
Sallie Elizabeth Davies (nee Hicks)	1951 - 1955 1961	Student Staff (Teacher)	27 September 2025
Zoe Elizabeth Baker (nee Matthews)	1954 - 1958 1967	Student Staff (Teacher)	28 September 2025
Albert Henry Tognolini	1940 - 1944	Student	25 October 2025
Howard William Olney	1947 - 1951	Student	26 October 2025





SALLIE ELIZABETH DAVIES (née Hicks)
PMS Student 1952-1956

The Perth Modernian Society has lost an alumnus who lived and breathed Perth Modern School and its history - someone respected by us all with an incredible depth of knowledge about all things "Mod". Her passing is mourned by us all.

Sallie Elizabeth Hicks was born at home in Kalgoorlie in 1938, the younger sister to two older brothers. Sallie attended North Kalgoorlie Primary School and was then sent to MLC as a high school boarder in 1950.

However, Sallie had won a scholarship to Perth Modern School - but was too young to take it up until 1951. She then attended Perth Modern School from 1951 until 1955 - a wonderful set of life experiences she explained often. Sallie's attributes must have shone early as she was made a School Prefect. Sallie's father passed away while she was at Mod. However, these five years helped to shape the person that Sallie became.

Following her school graduation, Sallie attended Teacher's Training College and then spent two years teaching in Pemberton, before a move to Perth Mod. At some stage while at Mod, female staff colleagues noticed a particular male teacher frequently near their "ladies staffroom." Sallie and Jim Davies married a year later.

For Sallie, the next years involved being Mum to Megan, Jeremy and Chris while supporting Jim as the teaching family moved to Margaret River, then Collie and in 1971 to Wembley Downs and the house they'd built on the block purchased while in Collie. While in country locations, Sallie was homemaker, gardener extraordinaire, parent as well as P&C member and local volunteer.

Once back in the city in 1972, with three children attending school, Sallie first volunteered with the City of Stirling and quickly became a part time employee. By 1989 she was the coordinator of the City's volunteers and a member of the WACOS Steering Committee that set up the new Volunteering WA. In 1990, Sallie became the CEO of Volunteering WA, a position she held until 2002. Over that time, volunteering and its organisation saw a huge growth with Sallie's organisational skills, interpersonal skills, motivation and total focus on making a difference, ensuring success. Sallie's ability to embrace change and new technologies and to utilise these effectively, supported her leadership of the new Association. In her later years with Volunteering WA, Sallie was part of the planning to establish a National organisation - Volunteering Australia. Sallie served as a founding director of the national organisation.

2001 was the International Year of Volunteering when Sallie received a Centenary Medal for services to the community. In 2002 she retired from full time employment with Volunteering WA in order to join Jim in retirement - time for travel and relaxation. However, for Sallie, the flexible time became focussed on all things Perth Modern School. Initially she joined the Board of the Sphinx Foundation and with David Black, coordinated the writing and publication of the first history book of the School - "Perth Modern School: The History and the Heritage". This was a massive undertaking requiring loads of negotiation, patience and focus. With the book launched successfully, Sallie's interest in conserving historical records, researching and documenting trends and people, created a new interest that would then encompass both Sallie and Jim with the Historical and Museum Committee and then the Museum Association.

Sallie was also a Council member and past Vice President of the Perth Modernian Society. Over the next two decades, Sallie became instrumental in the forward planning and actions associated with the alumni organisations. Over this time, with the support of Ian Jarvis and his computer programming skills, Sallie spent hours and hours adding data to Ian's newly created alumni database. With remote access at home, Sallie was able to continue to enter data at any time - and she did. With the advent of the Perth Modernian Society website in 2009, Sallie relished the emails received and this new form of communication with fellow alumni. In 2014, the Perth Modernian Society conferred on Sallie its highest honour of **Modernian Fellow**. Sallie was the tireless editor of the Society's quarterly eNewsletters from their inception in 2009 through to February 2024 - 59 issues! In the past eighteen months, Sallie felt it was time to relinquish her access to the database - reflecting her mobility and health challenges. However, Sallie continued to answer any queries regarding the museum or alumni or past school activities - always our mine of information, that will be missed by all volunteers in the museum.

Sallie's family remembers a matriarch for whom time for family was paramount. Sallie sewed Megan's wedding dress, she also transcribed interviews Megan had recorded for her PhD. Additionally, she cast a critical eye over Megan's analysis, in the same way as more recently she'd continued with her research for the museum. Sallie's gifts were always books - for new learning. Sallie's love of new technology was first evidenced when she purchased a knitting machine in the days that they were very new! Family members described Sallie as a teacher by nature - always wishing to extend peoples' knowledge and understanding, providing connections so that outcomes might be achieved. She was a poet, a singer and most of all, a leader - of family and of others.



Over the past 30 years many Modernians have contributed to make the Perth Modernian Society, the Sphinx Foundation and the Museum the treasures that they are now, but Sallie's participation for each of these was marked by her hard work, her willingness and her persistence when others might have flagged. It's no understatement to say that Sallie's vision and determination for such a long period drove the Society. By her awesome example Sallie's efforts inspired others to do their part to further Perth Mod and the vital cause of public education. As Modernians, we miss her.

RIP Sallie.

(Contributed by Dr Robyn White and Peter Farr)



HOWARD WILLIAM OLNEY AM KC
PMS Student 1947-1951

Howard William Olney was born in Nedlands on 7 October 1937. He was educated at Perth Modern School and was Head Boy in 1951, before studying Law at UWA. Following his graduation he joined his father's firm, Olney and Neville in St George's Terrace and worked in private practice (mainly in industrial law) until 1974. He was called to the independent bar in 1974 having also served as Stipendary Magistrate in Carnarvon from 1965 until 1967. He took silk in 1980.

In 1980 Howard was elected as a Labor member of the Western Australian Legislative Council. He resigned from this position in 1982 when he accepted an invitation to become a judge of the Supreme Court of WA - the invitation made by Sir Charles Court's Coalition - an incredible testimony to the widespread respect his Honour had achieved in professional and public life.

His Honour served on the Supreme Court until 1988. In 1985 he decided a case in favour of Lang Hancock and against his partner, Peter Wright and Hammersley Iron P/L. The Full Court reversed it and then it became one of the last cases to be appealed to the Privy Council, who restored and praised Justice Olney's decision.

In 1988 his Honour accepted joint commissions for both the Federal Court and the Family Court and moved to Darwin. In 1991 he moved to Melbourne and sat in the Federal Court whilst continuing as Aboriginal Land Commissioner in the NT. In that role he heard 24 claims and returned hundreds of thousands of square kilometres to the traditional owners. He then joined the Victorian Bar at the invitation of the then Chairman, the Hon Susan Crennan AC KC.

In the Yorta Yorta native title case in 1998, his Honour ruled that "the tide of history" has "washed away any real acknowledgement of their traditional laws and any real observance of their traditional customs." His Honour's judgement was upheld by the Full Federal Court and the High Court of Australia.

In 2005 his Honour was made a Member of the Order of Australia "for service to the law and the judiciary, particularly in relation to indigenous land issues."

Justice Olney was not only a pleasure to appear before - courteous and respectful - but his broad life experience, fairness and legal intellect ensured that the decisions that he made in superior courts for over twenty years, from 1982 until 2003, were very rarely appealed successfully. He took great pride in that.

From the Victorian Bar website, written with the assistance of James Paterson, Barrister (Associate to Olney J 1991 - 1993)



DR LYNN G B WADLEY
PMS Student 1954-1956

Lynn was the eldest of five children and attended Bayswater and Claremont Practice Primary Schools before entering Perth Modern School in 1954-1956. Although he could have continued at Perth Mod, his parents asked him to leave school to work at Masters Dairy to help support the family. Determined to complete his education, he later enrolled at TAFE and completed his Leaving Certificate in 1959, achieving five distinctions.

With assistance from Dr Don Watts for the £100 enrolment fee, Lynn entered the University of Western Australia, graduating in 1964 with First Class Honours in Physical and Inorganic Chemistry. He completed his PhD at UWA in 1972, studying part-time while employed by Western Mining Corporation (WMC). During his university years he also enjoyed serving as a Resident Tutor at Kingswood College.



Lynn married Rosalie Gronow in 1966, and their children, Carolyn (architect and writer) and Ian (lawyer), enriched their lives. The family spent a memorable Canadian winter in Alberta while Lynn undertook a secondment at Sherritt Gordon Mines in Research & Development. Upon returning to WMC, he became Senior Research Chemist at the Kwinana Nickel Refinery, with responsibilities across Canada, Kwinana and the Eastern Goldfields.

Lynn's entrepreneurial spirit emerged vision and drive saw him become joint operator of a small gold project in the Ravensthorpe district (1982-1984). This period yielded many fond memories and enduring friendships. Returning to Perth, he joined BHP Engineering in 1985 as Principal Consultant and Manager of Minerals Technology and Development. His work took him to many around the world, including many "non tourist" situations including Iran, Zimbabwe, Zambia, China, the Philippines and South-East Asia.

From 1994 to 2000 Lynn returned to academia, serving as Chief Executive and Company Secretary of Curtin University Consultancy Services Ltd. A highlight of this role was hosting international delegations supported by AUSAID and enjoying the vibrant cross-cultural exchange at their concluding events.

In retirement Lynn remained very active, including developing a coastal retreat in Eagle Bay, where harvests from the fruit orchard and garden were shared with friends and family. In the 2011 reunion booklet for the Perth Mod Class of 1954-1958, Lynn wrote: *"An enduring passion for Rosalie and me is working out what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ today; this is a work in progress."* He concluded his bio by reflecting: *"My focus is now moving from work to a family-focused retirement, allowing me to give more time to the things I really want to do."* True to this, Lynn contributed generously to community and church life, serving on many professional committees and chairing several organisations including Church committees, Scripture Union, and the Residents of Eagle Bay Association. His Christian faith, leadership, and profound love for family and friends remain enduring gifts he has left with those he touched.

Lynn is survived by his wife Rosalie, their two children, and six grandchildren.

(Contributed by Rosalie Wadley and Peter Farr)



ALBERT HENRY TOGNOLINI AM
PMS Student 1940-1944

Albert Tognolini was born in Armadale on 10th August 1927, the eldest brother of six children. Albert won a scholarship to attend Perth Modern School from 1940 - 1944 and then attended UWA studying engineering.

Upon graduation, Albert joined the Main Roads Department of Western Australia (1949). Albert remained with Main Roads until 1990, fulfilling numerous positions. 1957- 1960 he was Divisional Engineer in Geraldton; first Divisional Engineer Kimberley (in Derby) 1960-1964; Assistant Commissioner Operations in 1969- 1987; and Commissioner 1987-1990.

Following his retirement from the Main Roads Department, Albert was President of the Kings Park Board from 1991-1994.

Throughout his life, Albert believed in supporting his profession while also "giving back" to his community. He was Chair of the Institution of Engineers Australia, WA Division in 1975; National Vice President 1979; National President 1984 and then Honorary Fellow. Amongst community organisations, Albert was Captain and Vice-President and then President 1985- 1986 of Karrinyup Country Club, Honorary Life Member of the Geraldton Railways Football Club where he was also President from 1958- 1959. Albert was inaugural President of the Derby Apex Club, and President of the East Perth Rotary Club 1981-1982.

In 1986 Albert was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia award, "for services to engineering, particularly with the Main Roads Department of Western Australia."

Albert was a devoted husband to his wife Gladys (nee White) for sixty-three years (1952-2015). Their family included three children and partners, eight grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Albert Henry Tognolini passed away on 26 October 2025 at the age of ninety eight.



View from the Albert Tognolini rest area, Juna Downs

*Number 29 in a special series of articles researched and prepared for publication by
Robert Johnson, PMS student 1961-65 and Museum Volunteer*

JOHN ALAN MELLOWS **PMS STUDENT 1934-1937**

Earlier this year, Margaret and Doug Walsh visited the museum. Margaret's father, John Mellows, had been a student at Modern School and Margaret wanted to donate her father's school blazer to the museum.

Early Days

John Mellows was born in Perth on 27 April 1921 to Percy and Arlene (nee Crabb). He attended Nedlands Primary School from 1927 to 1933 and commenced at Modern School in February 1934. He passed his Junior exams in eight subjects in 1936 and left the school in April 1937, having obtained a clerical position at the Swan Brewery in Newspaper House in Perth. In a reference in 1936, headmaster Joe Parsons described John as "A lad of good character, high principles, honest and upright in his dealings."

War Years

John had been serving for several months in the 16th Battalion, a Western Australian Militia unit, when in February 1940 he decided to apply to the RAAF for training as air crew. His application was unsuccessful due to a lack of medical fitness. Not to be deterred, he applied for a ground staff position in July 1941 and was accepted in September as a Trainee Radio Mechanic with the rank of Aircraftman Class 1.

John commenced his initial training at No. 1 School of Technical Training in the Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne on 26 October 1941. On passing out in May 1942, he was posted to No. 1 Radio School in Richmond, NSW and then in late August he was transferred to No. 20 Squadron RAAF in Pt Moresby. No. 20 Squadron was born out of No. 11 Squadron in August 1941 when five Catalina Flying Boats were transferred from No. 11 to No. 20. Both squadrons conducted long-range patrols between bases scattered around the islands to Australia's north.



John Mellows, 1941



Consolidated PBY Catalina

Conditions were tough in Pt Moresby with humid heat, heavy rainfall, a severe lack of basic necessities, poor food, a harsh climate and tropical diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, scrub typhus and dysentery taking a high toll. Frequent Japanese air raids increased the tension and early warnings from radar stations was critically important so that fighter squadrons could be "scrambled" to intercept the bombers before they bombed.

John took a few days' leave in May 1942 and married Helene Haydon at the Methodist Church in Subiaco. Their daughter, Margaret, was born in 1945.

In response to the threat of invasion at Port Moresby, both squadrons moved to Bowen in Queensland in May 1942 and then to Cairns on 11 November 1942 a week after John had been promoted to Leading Aircraftman. He was reclassified as a Radar Mechanic in March 1943, in April he was promoted to Corporal and a year later he was promoted to Sergeant.

The two squadrons, known as the "Black Cats", carried out bombing and mine-laying missions, often flying for up to 15 hours at a time. Several crews, flying on their solitary missions, disappeared without trace².



*Radar section, pay day, Cairns, May 1943.
Corporal John Mellows is on the left*



Light Weight Air Warning Radar

In September 1944, 20 Squadron became part of No. 76 Wing RAAF, along with 42 and 43 Squadrons, and moved to Darwin. All three squadrons operated Catalinas, their primary purpose being mine-laying on Japanese shipping routes and outside ports.

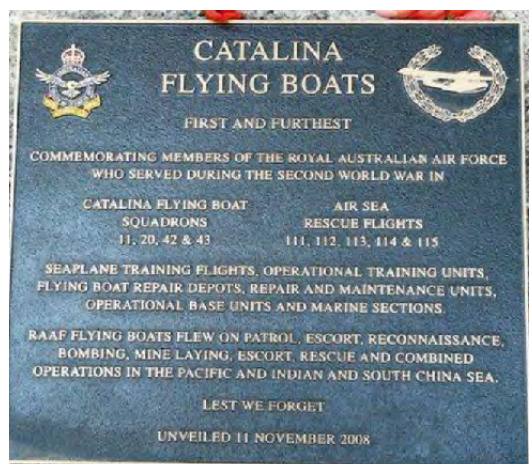
Two months later, with the Japanese in full retreat from the South West Pacific Area, John's war began to wind down. On 26 November 1944 he was posted from 20 Squadron to No. 2 Reserve Personnel Pool in Coomalie, 90 kilometres south of Darwin. Two months later he was posted to Headquarters Western Area in Perth. In May 1945 he was promoted to Flight Sergeant and on 12 December 1945 he was discharged from the RAAF after four years' service.

¹ Black Cats: Black was their camouflage colour to blend with the night sky and Cat was short for Catalina.

² The stories of Wing Commander Jack Daniell (PMS 1931-35) and Pilot Officer Joe Miller (PMS 1936-37) of 11 Squadron are on the digital honour board at <https://honour.perthmodern.wa.edu.au>.

After the War

John grew up and lived for most of his life at 34 Everett St in Nedlands, about 400 metres from the World War 2 Catalina flying base.



*Plaque at Crawley Commemorating Members of RAAF
Catalina Squadrons and Air Sea Rescue Flights*

He was living there in 1949 when he was taken to Royal Perth Hospital. Tragically, he died on 16 April 1949, eleven days short of his 28th birthday. John died from lymphosarcoma lymphatic leukaemia, a cancer of the blood and bone marrow. An internal memo dated 7 August 1950 by the RAAF's Director of Personnel Services stated that John's death "was attributed to war service". It is highly likely that his cancer was caused by emissions from the radar tubes that were central to his work.

Helene married again in 1958 to James Groves. She was living in Mt Claremont when she died on 13 September 2012 aged 91.

John's daughter, Margaret, married Doug Walsh in 1968 and they have two children and four grandchildren. Margaret and Doug met when they were both members of Companions of Legacy. Their mothers, Helene and Edna, received enormous support from Legacy after their husbands, John and Claude, died.

Doug's father, Claude Walsh, participated in the first attack by Australian soldiers on the German lines in France in World War 1. Known as the "Black ANZACs" because they blackened their faces with burnt cork, 73 men carried out a highly successful trench raid on the night of 6/7 June 1916. Their story is told in a book called "The Black ANZACs" written by Doug and published in 2016. Claude served his country again in World War 2.



A more detailed and fully referenced version of this article is on the digital honour board at honour.perthmodern.wa.edu.au



Seasons Greetings



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

The Perth Modernian e-Newsletter team would like to thank all our readers and contributors for their support throughout this busy year.

We wish you all a safe and enjoyable Festive Season, and a Happy New Year in 2026

