



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Issue 69, August 2026, Vol 4 No 11

WELCOME to your **Perth Modernian e-Newsletter**, Issue 69, August 2026, Vol 4 No 11

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

Class of 2016

Sunday 13 December 2026

Class of 2006

Saturday 31 October 2026

Class of 1997

Saturday 8 May 2027

Class of 1986

Saturday 21 November 2026

Class of 1970

Saturday 14 November 2026

Class of 1963

Wednesday 21 October 2026

Class of 1959

Monday 23 November 2026

Class of 1958

Thursday 10 September 2026

Class of 1956

Sunday 18 October 2026

See **Upcoming Reunions** for details

CLASS/YEAR GROUPS

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 ...

newsletter@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Congratulations

SAURABH MISHRA

The Perth Modernian community was delighted to hear this year's Kings Birthday honours list included the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia for past student **Saurabh Mishra** (1986-1990). The citation for the Award is "service to the community through a range of organisations", which reflects a somewhat eclectic journey since leaving Perth Mod!

After leaving school, Saurabh took a 5 year double-degree course at UWA – Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) and Bachelor of Commerce. He then moved to Melbourne in 1996 to start a Management Consulting role with Andersen Consulting (now Accenture).



Saur founded his first business venture eClinic in 2020 and has since founded and scaled a dozen more, including ventures that helped Australian pathology laboratories and medical clinics exchange test requests and results electronically, palliative care providers manage patient information digitally, pharmacies and patients communicate regarding prescription refills, and more recently, a business servicing schools, called Vyatra, which delivers live, online learning sessions from curriculum-linked locations around the world directly into school classrooms. More details of each of Saur's ventures can be found on his LinkedIn profile.

Alongside that, Saur has been involved in a number of volunteer and community organisations. He has mentored entrepreneurs through TiE for over twenty years, volunteered with Eastern Palliative Care for nineteen years, and helped establish and lead organisations supporting music and community theatre in Australia. Saur's book *'My Wednesdays: From Death to Life'* was published in 2019, chronicling his experiences in the palliative care sector.

In the breadth of activities Saurabh has achieved since completing his school studies, Saur embodies the values embedded in the Perth Modern School traditions. He has demonstrated his creative curiosity in both his studies and then his extensive business ventures across multiple contexts. Throughout these same years, he has "given back" to his community with his volunteer activities in palliative care as well as founding and leading a community theatre music venture. An incredibly busy and organised young man!

Huge congratulations to Saurabh from the whole of the Perth Modern School and Modernian communities – such a well deserved award.



NEXT ISSUES

Copy deadlines for

Issue 70, November 2026, Vol 4 No 12

20 November copy deadline for circulation by 1 December 2026

IN THIS ISSUE

- CONGRATULATIONS SAURABH MISHRA
- 2026 ANNUAL ORATION
- REUNIONS
- EDUCATION IN 1916: A VISIT TO PERTH MODERN SCHOOL
- KEEPING FIT
- SPHINX FOUNDATION 2026 ANNUAL APPEAL – THANK YOU
- SPHINX SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS NEWS
- VALE AND THANKS TO NORMA KEYS
- MUSEUM MATTERS
- CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE GENERATIONS
- A VISIT FROM BRIONY STEWART
- CAN YOU HELP?
- VALE and TRIBUTES
- MODERNIANS WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all letter writers and contributors:

Peter Farr
Ken Fitch
Lee Hockley
Jan James
Bob Johnson
Wendy McCallum
Jordan Moro
Robyn White
Sharon Williams

Coordinator/Editors

Robyn White
Peter Farr

Compilation

Stuart Gould

Layout

Shore360 Agency



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au

2026-27 COUNCIL

info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Ruth Barrett, *Honour Awards*
Deborah Beresford, *Hon Secretary*
Eve Broadley, *Hon Treasurer*
Peter Farr, *Sphinx Foundation*
Ian Hunt, *IT/Communication, Technology*
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

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

2026 ANNUAL ORATION

The Perth Modernian Society's 15th annual oration took place on Monday afternoon 17th August, and was delivered in the Cyril Tyler Auditorium by **Ms Gaye McMath**, Chancellor of Edith Cown University (ECU) on the intriguing topic *"Life is short..."*.

In preparation, **Peter Farr**, and the School's acting Principal **Ms Madeline Sinagra** and Deputy **Ms Philippa Roy** took Gaye on an informal tour of the school on 21st July, a highlight of which was sitting in on a Year 7 English Literature lesson in the Stokes Building!

In her oration to Sphinx Society members, Year 10 students and distinguished guests including two previous Orators **Bruce Armstrong** and **Sandy Anghie**, Gaye (photo right) commenced by reflecting on Perth Mod's tradition of having well-known Australians annually deliver the Oration since the first occasion in 2011. She then outlined some of the highlights of her professional careers with BHP as an accountant and Head of Finance, Murdoch University, UWA, Perth City Council and now as Chancellor of ECU. Gaye then discussed that as life is undoubtedly short, it's not to be wasted.



In question time from the students, when asked did she plan out her professional career, Gaye said not at all but she took opportunities as they came into play. When asked about work-life balance as it might apply to stressed upper school students, Gaye said the first essential is to recognise the desirability of work-life balance and to realise that each of us needs to take steps to achieve the right balance for them.

Principal Mitchell Mackay gave the vote of thanks stressing to the students how lucky they were at their young age to receive a 'primer' on having a personal moral compass and future pathways that could open up from such an eminent and humble person as Gaye. The Head Prefects Mary M. and Avash S. presented Gaye with a gift from the School and the invited guests, staff and students then adjourned to the Sir Paul Hasluck foyer for afternoon tea, where (photo right) many students engaged with Gaye and Modernian guests. NB: the girl on the right is wearing the 2026 (XXVI) Leavers jacket.



Modernians membership:

The Perth Modernian Society Council and the Principal are investigating an option for all PMS students to become Modernians from Year 7 via a levy that would give them lifetime membership.





SPHINX FOUNDATION INC.

2026 BOARD

sphinxfoundation@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Nigel Hunt, *Chair*

Peter Farr, *Director*

Vivian Wang, *Hon Treasurer*

Robert Gray, *Secretary*

Dr Annette Mercer, *Director*

Jordan Moro, *Sphinx Scholarship Fund*

Executive Officer

Mitchell Mackay, *School Representative*

DONORS

Sphinx Scholarship Fund & Zander Philogene Memorial Fund

Thank you for your generous support

Please see **Page 6** for a full list of donors



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

2026 BOARD

museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au

Dr Robyn White, *Chair*

Sharon Williams, *Treasurer*

Monica Brierley-Hay, *Secretary*

Thalia Cole, *Board Member*

Jeffrey Lai, *Board Member*

Ashleigh Blechynden, *Board Member*

Ex-officio:

Daryl Williams AM KC, *Perth Modernian*

Society President

Philippa Roy, *School Representative*

2025-26 DONORS

as at 2 August 2026

Thank you for your generous support

Dr Irene Froyland

Prof Bruce Armstrong

Dr Neil Bardsley

Ross Ledger AM

Dianne Moxham

Mrs Wendy Watts

McCusker Foundation

Ms Anne Ballard

Dr Philip Jennings

Edna Youngman

Barry Saker

Sharon Williams

Ruth Barrett

Dr Ken Fitch

Ray Thurloe

Mrs Hannah Wende

Dr Robyn White

Mrs Laurie Best

Dr Dianne Graham

Mr Walter Turnbull

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS

[History Centre and Archives]

Gay Albillos

Deborah Beresford, *Hon Archivist*

Frank Hedges

Ian Hunt

Robert (Bob) Johnson

Jill Lucas

Wendy McCallum

Deirdre Owen

Roger Stubbs

Loren White

Robyn White

Sharon Williams

Alison Woodman

REUNIONS

Class of 1966

Modernian **Lee Hockley** reports:

"The reunion lunch of the 1966 cohort was held on Tuesday 28 July 2026 and was very successful. There were 26 attendees, (would have been more but some had other commitments). The lunch was held at Tassels in Innaloo. Attached are a couple of photos.

Regards, Lee Hockley"



UPCOMING REUNIONS

Class of 2016

The class of 2016 is organising a 10-year reunion at the school on **Sunday 13 December 2026, 4pm to 6pm.**

Please contact Lachlain Wylie for further information at
lachlain.wylie@gmail.com or phone 0423 031455

Class of 2006

The class of 2006 is organising a 20-year reunion at the **Queens Tavern, Highgate on Saturday 31 October 2026** from 4pm.

Please phone Tori Denn at 0448 855 044 for more information

Class of 1997

The class of 1997 is organising a 30-year reunion at the school on **Saturday 8 May 2027**. Please contact Kenji Kitahara for details:

Phone: 0416 679 410

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/perthmodclassof97>

Class of 1986

The class of 1986 is organising a 40-year reunion for **6:30pm on Saturday 21 November 2026**, at **Paddington Ale House, Mt. Hawthorn**. Please phone Melinda McGowan (nee McIntosh) for information:

Phone: 0447 355 181

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/5133119763>

Class of 1970

The annual reunion for 2026 will be held at **12 noon, Saturday 14 November 2026** at the **Marmion Angling Club**.

Class of 1963

An 80th Birthday reunion will be held on **Wednesday 21 October 2026**, starting at 10:30am for informal coffee, nibbles and chat at **The Old Laundry, Angove St, North Perth**.

Contact: Mary-Jane Whitehead at mjw461@outlook.com



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
Deirdre Owen
Frank Hedges

* Deceased

Honorary Members

Alison Woodman
Tonya McCusker AM
Nigel Hunt
Brendon Dawson

Class of 1959

The annual reunion for 2026 will be held on **Monday 23 November, 2pm to 5pm** at the **Claremont Tennis Club**. Please contact Daryl at chloeb@iinet.net.au for information.

Class of 1958

Classmates are cordially invited to an 85th birthday sit-down luncheon in the **Private Dining Room at the University Club UWA**, on **Thursday 10 September at 11:30am**.

Please contact Peter Farr at farr.peter@farr.com.au or 0419 905 864 for further details.

Class of 1956

The class of 1956 will celebrate its 70-year reunion in the **Andrews Building Staff Room** at the school on **Sunday 18 October 2026, 11am to 2pm**.

Please contact Ruth Barrett at gbrb@millstream.com.au or Laurie Best at laurieandphilb@yahoo.com for further details.

EDUCATION IN 1916: A VISIT TO PERTH MODERN SCHOOL

This is an extract from 'Rambles in Australia', Edwin & Marion Sharpe Grew, Mills & Boon, London 1916.

The complete book gives further insights into Australian life in 1916. It is in the public domain, and may be downloaded from:

<https://archive.org/details/ramblesinaustral00grewiala>

We were not long in discovering that Western Australia, whatever course its future development may take, is at present a paradise for the working man. Nowhere else is life made so pleasant and easy for him in such matters as housing and education, nowhere else are his children given such facilities for making their way in the world in their turn.

To begin with, education is provided free of cost, from the primary school to the University. In the primary school, boys are given manual training and girls are taught cooking and domestic economy. Special facilities are provided by the Government to meet the needs of scattered settlers in the bush remote from centres of population; wherever it is possible to assure an average attendance of even ten children, within a radius of three miles, schools are already established. The Education Act even takes into consideration the case of isolated families, where the muster of children is less than ten; the department pays 7 pounds a year for each child on condition that the parents find a suitable teacher, and will supplement this grant so that he may have a minimum of 30 pounds a year over and above the cost of his board and lodging. In effect, the Government pays a part of the salary of a private tutor. It can be easily imagined that the education grant must be a very heavy one in proportion to the population. It amounts, in fact, to about 1 pound annually for every individual in the state.

From primary schools, children are drafted into the secondary schools, when they are able to profit by the advanced standard of teaching. There are also technical schools, where trades are taught and a training college for teachers.

We visited one of the intermediary schools, the Perth Modern School, as it is called, at Subiaco, a suburb between Perth and Cottesloe Beach. We found a handsome red brick building, looking like a Nonconformist college in one of our older Universities. In the large, well-kept grounds there is room for football, tennis, hockey and a gymnasium is provided in a detached building. The school is admirably constructed for its purpose, the classrooms opening out of a large central hall. We were unexpected and un-announced. In the course of our researches in pursuit of the headmaster, we were impressed with the excellent discipline and tone of a school in which the children's attention was not distracted by the presence of strangers glancing into their classrooms in passing. The teachers, masters and mistresses, all wore university gowns. The headmaster, alert and enthusiastic, showed us over his spacious, airy school buildings, including the well-equipped laboratory and the department of domestic economy. Western Australia does not neglect the practical side of its children's education, and here girls are taught dressmaking, millinery and cooking. The dining-rooms of the staff, and those pupils whose homes are at a distance had the air of a well-appointed restaurant, with its small tables daintily set out with clean linen and fresh flowers bought by the children. We noticed among them what looked like a small edelweiss, the Australian "flannel flower."

The period of education at these intermediate schools consists of a four years' course lasting from 12 to 16. A "Leaving Certificate" on the completion of the four years' course must be obtained by examination to enable the student to pass into the University. Some students are drafted into the Training College for Teachers, or, after the four years course is finished, students may stay on at the school to study special subjects.



We were impressed with the appearance of the children. They are healthy, well-to-do and attractive, their manners were frank and without self-consciousness. One of the older girls, who was deputed by the headmaster to show us the way to the station, would have compared favourably with any English schoolgirl of the same age. Her father had visited England, "and you have no sand in England" she added, half incredulously, "and father could not make them understand about the sand here." She came from up-country, and was able to tell us that two handsome large grey and black birds with a singularly limpid note were "rain birds." She also pointed out to us two large castor-oil trees, and told us that the magpies, predatory, knowing-looking birds, which are to be seen everywhere in Australia, are called "break o' day boys" in the country, because, like our cocks, they call the neighbourhood.

It is only quite recently that Western Australia has acquired a University; it is in fact of such new foundation, that, like some of Perth itself, it is still housed in temporary buildings. Its professorial staff is appointed, and it confers degrees, but the scene of its labours is at present in a number of classrooms beneath a corrugated iron roof, opposite the charming gardens of Government House – Australia is very good to its governors in the matter of houses and gardens. But Perth is developing with great rapidity, and a probable permanent site for the University is already talked of, on the banks of the Swan River, in the national Reserve, or King's Park.

KEEPING FIT

For three decades **Colin Ross** (1949-53) has led a walking group of about 25 people who like exploring different parts of Perth while they walk to keep fit. Enjoying a morning coffee and a chat afterwards at the Floreat Kiosk are pictured **Peter Farr** (1954-58), Colin and **Dr Max Kamien** (1949-53) (retired General Practitioner/University Professor).

Max is a great raconteur and recounted that in a Third Year Chemistry class taught by the famous **Vincent Serventy**, he was 'caught' by the Headmaster **Noel Sampson** for doing an unauthorised 'experiment' involving 'cooking' a dead fly in nitric acid. For this trivial demeanour Mr Sampson wanted to expel Max from the school the very next day but was foiled when neither of Max's parents turned up for the dismissal, with Mr Kamien also telling Max "You have to fight your own battles in life!"

Footnote: Colin and Max attended North Perth Primary School together, so they go back a long way. As professional engineers and executive managers, Colin and Peter worked together for a long time in Telecom Australia (Telstra).



YOUR SAY

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



SPHINX FOUNDATION INC.

SPHINX FOUNDATION 2026 ANNUAL APPEAL – THANK YOU

The Sphinx Foundation Board of Directors would like to share a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported the Sphinx Foundation's 2026 Appeal. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the donors listed here and in the May 2026 newsletter, we have had a record number of 87 donors and received a record amount of money to support the Sphinx Scholarship Fund this year. Every donation will help us continue to provide life-changing support for deserving Perth Mod students.

The Directors would also like to give special mention to all those who have supported the **Zander (Alexander) Philogene Memorial Fund** through donating or attending fundraising events held in Perth and Adelaide in July.



The Zander (Alexander) Philogene Memorial Fund was established earlier this year in partnership with the Philogene Family following the tragic death of **Zander Philogene**, a young Modernian (2017-2022) and UWA engineering student.

The Sphinx Foundation Board is excited to confirm that the inaugural Zander (Alexander) Philogene Memorial Scholarship (worth \$1,500) will be awarded later this year to a worthy PMS student who shares Zander's love of learning and his enthusiasm for new opportunities. Thanks to all the funds raised so far, this annual scholarship will continue, ensuring Zander's passions will help shape the lives of young Perth Modernians for many years to come.

Commencing from Term One in 2027, several **Zander (Alexander) Philogene Travel Bursaries** per annum will be available and PMS students in Years 10, 11 or 12 will be able to apply for travel assistance up to \$800 to help defray costs of School approved overseas travel for educational, cultural or sporting purposes.

The kindness, compassion and community spirit we have seen over the past few months is truly inspiring and the Directors thank you all for your splendid generosity.

Donations to the Sphinx Scholarship Fund Appeal (June-August 2026)

Tina & Matthew Allen and the Allen Family
Charitable Fund
Joan Costanzo
Fortescue, for the Fortescue Engineering Scholarship and Bursary
Stuart Gould
Douglas Gould
The Gray Family
Anne Greenhill
Hon. Julian Grill
Noel Kagi

The Estate of the late Norma Keys
John Lane
Miriam Mansell (nee Baker), to establish the Zoe E. Baker Mathematics Scholarship
Jeanette McQueen
Prof. Shirley Randell AO, for the Shirley Randell Social Sciences Scholarship
Ray Thurloe
Daryl Williams AM QC
Karen Wood (nee Malone)

Donations to the Zander (Alexander) Philogene Memorial Fund Appeal (June-August 2026)

Nicolas Andre
Asian Students in Australia (A.S.I.A.)
Fiona Besir
Phoebe Brown
Arabella Brown
C Restaurant
Matthew Clarke
Ali Clarke
Helga Cochran
Family Law Mediation SA
Trevor Farr
Rosie Fettes
Andrea Fletcher
AnnMarie Gill
The Gray Family
Luisa Hernandez
Marco Iannetti

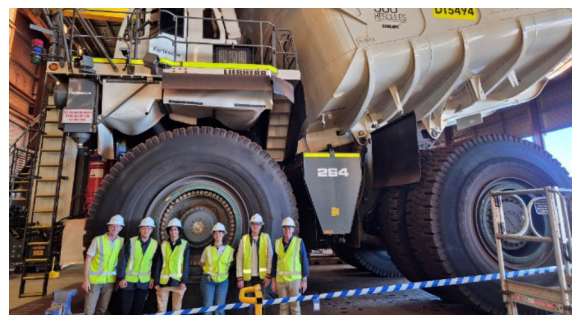
ilIntegrate Pty Ltd
Jarmer's Kitchen (Adelaide)
Oren Klemich
Anita Knowles
Don Luca
Barbara Mallett
Dr Mary J Marshall
Christopher McDonough
Tanya Menna
Tash and Luca Miller
Nicholas Ong & Family
Orwellian Investments
Cody Padroth
Natasha Pannone
William and Jessica Philogene
Jed Richards
Lesley Russell (nee Mitchell)

Marcus Salama
Kylie Savva
Robert Salama
Stephen Shreeve
Snow Legal
Doody Taylor
Jim Taylor
Yasmin Tegen-Anderson
Sebastian Tegen-Anderson
Terry White Chemists Mt Barker (SA)
Themis Corporate
Sean Vanhees
The Vervest Family
Lee-Anne Voigt
Stefania Wink
WLP Investments
Athena Zogopoulos

SPHINX SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDS NEWS

Engineering/Fortescue Pilbara Field Trip

Recently, four **Fortescue Scholarship and Bursary** awardees, plus a teacher and the PMS Principal (pictured right) got up very early on 27th June and flew to the Pilbara where they had a mind-blowing day at Fortescue's Cloudbreak iron ore mine. This was followed by a tour of Fortescue's Hive (remote operational centre) in Perth. The Engineering Studies teacher who accompanied the four students commented on the high level of appreciation from the students and their parents to have this marvelous opportunity.



Psychology

In a new initiative, four awardees of the **Peter Farr Psychology Scholarship or Bursary** from 2024 and 2025 (now in Yr 12 and Yr 11) were fortunate to have an afternoon mentoring session with a very well-qualified Psychologist Dr Suzanne Stout on 11th August. Speaking on behalf of the group, one recipient, Jasmine Z. (Year 11) reported back: *"Our discussion was very insightful, and I found Dr. Stout's perspective both fascinating and thought-provoking. I am very grateful to you for providing me and fellow recipients with this wonderful opportunity to gain insight into the work and role of a psychologist."*

New Mathematics Scholarship

After the passing in 2026 of Zoe Baker, her daughter **Miriam Mansell** has most kindly funded the creation of the **Zoe E. Baker Mathematics Scholarship** which is to be awarded annually to a Year 10 PMS student who gets the best result of a PMS Year 10 student in the Australian Mathematics Competition. In combination, four academic Mathematics Scholarships and a Bursary tenable at Perth Mod are named after Barrie and Zoe – a truly wonderful legacy to these outstanding Modernians who always led by example.

VALE AND THANKS TO NORMA KEYS

Norma Keys (nee Finney) was born in Mount Lawley between the wars in 1924. Her father was a commercial traveller. She won a scholarship entry to Perth Modern School and after graduating in 1941, Norma undertook tertiary education at the University of WA and Claremont Teachers College and became a primary teacher and teacher librarian. During her WA teaching career from 1944 to 1961, she taught at country and metro schools including Collie, Bunbury Infant School, Bridgetown and Highgate Primary Schools, and Swanbourne High School. A highlight of her teaching career was the year spent as an exchange teacher in Victoria.

Norma married a Victorian, and had four children (two sets of twins). She passed away at the age of **102** at Strathalan Baptist Care Aged Care Home in Macleod, Victoria, on January 24 this year.

From her estate, Norma's son **Robert Keys** made a bequest to the Sphinx Scholarship Fund. Robert wrote saying *"Please find below a completed donation form and Bank receipt for a donation by my mother, an ex-student for whom Mod was special in her life, asked be made as a bequest."* It is indeed lovely to know that Norma's association with Perth Modern School was special in her long life.

Postscript: This is a landmark gift as it is the first bequest that the Sphinx Scholarship Fund has ever received in its 18-year history.



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED

MUSEUM MATTERS

Digital Heritage Trail

As many of you are aware the Museum was ecstatic to gain almost \$10,000 from the WA Heritage Council's 2025-26 Community Heritage Grants Program. Monies from Museum funds plus this grant are being used to develop and establish a digital Heritage Trail throughout Perth Modern School.

Volunteers have been regularly meeting with Rosemary Lynch, from Millstream, whose company is working on the digital aspect of our project. Iona College in Mosman Park engaged Millstream to assist them to develop their "Presentation Reflection Walk". Modernians may like to explore Iona's walk which has 13 stations and is a mini version of what we are undertaking:

www.iona.wa.edu.au/discover/history-and-the-presentation-sisters/presentation-reflection-walk

Mod's trail aims to include more than 40 heritage and key sites around Mod that students and visitors will be able to look up and learn about via strategically placed signage and/or other means that can be digitally accessed. We are hoping all will be able to engage with this new and exciting way to connect with our history in a few months.

Fundraising

Thank you to all who donated to the Museum Association's 2026 fundraising campaign. Your generosity sustains the preservation of Perth Modern School's heritage for generations to come. All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. For those who wish to consider future donations, please explore our Bequest option at

www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au/index.php/museum/



Biographies Updated

We are always interested in hearing from former staff and students on their journeys. One way you can update your information held in the Museum and History Centre is to complete the Biographical Information Form via www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au/index.php/museum/. Our records are enhanced and improved with your help. Completion of these also helps us to maintain contact.

Biographies Updated

We so enjoy Monday morning openings and the many who take the time to explore the Museum and History Centre, share stories, artefacts or gain information on their or a family member's time at Mod. Visitors during Term Two and Three include the **Paton** family (great nephew of our first School Captain, **David Stewart**), **Briony Stewart** (1997-2001, successful and well published children's author), and **Ian and Helen Morris** (Ian attended 1963-1967). For volunteers, visitors consistently enliven our understanding of the lives of earlier students.

It is also lovely to hear and exchange news and comments via email and the Museum's Facebook page. Thanks to all who engage. Use this link to follow our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/perthmodernschoolmuseum

Here are some of the messages we have received this year.

*"Thank you all so much for this article about my Nan and great aunts - so appreciated. Have sent onto my sisters' and cousins' families. The work you all do at Mod is incredible, I have so much admiration for you all.
Sincerely*

Peta Edwards"

From Hilary W after sharing some photos and Sphinx magazines from when her son attended Mod in the 1990s:

"...there are some real gems here and I appreciate all your help. What a walk down memory lane. Thank you for sending these through."

CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

The museum volunteers were very happy to see Board member **Ashleigh Blechynden** drop by the museum with her toddler Eleanor. Her visit was even more fun when her parents-in-law, **David** and **Dianne Paton** and their daughter Bonnie, joined in. David is the grand-nephew of the school's first School Captain, **David Stewart**.

David had begun secondary education at the Normal School, then enrolled at Perth Modern School in its first year (his fourth and final year of secondary school). David went on to train as a teacher and commenced at Subiaco Primary School in 1913. He enlisted in 1915 as Sergeant David W. Stewart, 44th Battalion (Infantry). He was killed in France in action on 8th June 1917 at the age of 22. He is buried in Belgium 108 Bethlehem Farm East Cemetery, Messines. The Music Tour students in 2011 visited this cemetery as well as many others in Belgium and France.

The Paton family thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the museum, as well as the display in the Beasley building where David's chair is located alongside a biography and photograph.

For more of David's story, please see **page 16**.



Left to right: Bob Johnson (Museum volunteer), Ashleigh Blechynden, Bruce Paton, Dianne Paton and Bonnie Paton



Jarrah chair of David Stewart



As the end of Term Two approached, volunteers in the museum welcomed children's author, illustrator, and former Perth Modern student (from 1997-2001) **Briony Stewart** to the museum. Briony has published a multitude of children's books following her early online success in receiving children's "squiggles" and creating imaginative illustrations. Briony had emailed earlier in the week so that our school library officer (Tonya) was able to be on hand to appreciate the books and illustrations that Briony brought with her.

While re-connecting with the school and alumni organisation, Briony reminded us of the connection that Perth Modern School shares with the Children's Book Council of Australia.

*"I wanted to share a cool connection between the school and this year's CBCA Book Week celebrations. The Children's Book Council of Australia is marking the 80th anniversary of its Book of the Year Awards. The very first winner in 1946 was former Perth Modern student **Leslie Rees** for 'The Story of Karrawingji the Emu'. His wife, author **Coralie Clarke Rees**, was also a Perth Modern student.*

*Their legacy inspired the creation of the Coralie Clarke Rees and Leslie Rees Memorial Award for Creative Writing at Perth Modern. I was fortunate to receive this award when I graduated, and the support of teachers including **Angela Jones, Brian Williams**, and **Dr Robyn White** played a significant role in encouraging my creative work.*

In 2024, I became the first Perth Modern alumnus since Leslie Rees to win a CBCA Book of the Year Award. As part of that honour, I was invited to create the national artwork for the 2025 CBCA Book Week theme. This is an incredible honour as it becomes a lasting part of the history of Australian Children's Literature. For this year's theme 'Symphony of Stories' I drew a huge amount of inspiration from my time in Perth Modern's music program.

This means that, exactly 80 years after an Old Modernian became the first-ever CBCA award winner, another former Perth Modern student – who once received an award bearing his name – has created the artwork that will appear in schools across Australia during Book Week this year.

I thought this reminder of the school's long connection to Australian children's literature was not only a notable moment in the school's literary history, but also a reminder of the value of nurturing young writers and artists."



Briony with Hon Archivist Deb Beresford



Briony also mentioned that should the school consider reviving the Rees Award for Creative Writing, she would be happy to serve as a judge for the award!



A selection of books authored by Briony Stewart, and medals from her awards

We have been exploring photos and material we have in our archives as part of creating the new digital Heritage Trail. Some of these photos will be included in the 50 or so heritage and key sites on the trail. Students, visitors and interested members of the community will soon be able to explore these in person or online.

We are thankful for the many pictures that have been donated by Modernians. Here are three examples we thought you may enjoy:

Sports Day 1916 or 1917 (ref. 76)

If you look closely, it appears that the high jump is in progress. The boys are in knickerbockers & stockings. Shorts were apparently uncommon. A portion of the original 1912 gymnasium is in the top right-hand corner.



Air Raid Drill at Mod – March 1942 (ref 2153) – name of girls unknown



PMS Cadets – Rifle Inspection (ref 303) – Date and student names unknown but prior to late 1950s

The 1912 Gymnasium and Manual Training Room is in the background. As recorded in The West Australian on Thursday 8 February 1912: “.....On the east side of the block there now stand a fine gymnasium and workshop, both of which buildings have been equipped with all the latest appliances for the training of the body, the hand, and the eye. Not far from these buildings, too, is a roomy play-shed, while between that and the magnificent pile of buildings which form the school itself is laid down a parade ground for, the cadets of the institution. In every way, therefore, the Modern School is developing into an asset of which any State might be proud.....”



Did you know over Mod's history that there have been four gyms? In the 1920s, the second gymnasium was built in the weatherboard building next to the current Museum and History Centre, and the original gym and training room were extended and converted into the Science Block in 1922. In the late 1950s this block was demolished to make way for the third gymnasium, located next to the bitumen basketball courts. This gym, which opened in 1961, remains in use today alongside the Tyler McCusker multi-purpose gymnasium and sporting facility which opened in 2015.

Do you have any photos from your school sport days or other school days pictures to add to our collection? If so, please visit the Museum and History Centre on Monday mornings (9.30 to midday) during school term, or email a high-resolution copy to us at museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au.

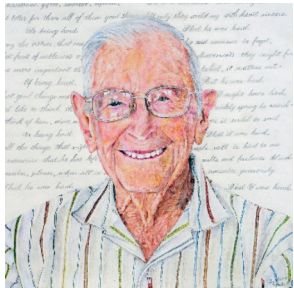
During school hours donations can also be dropped into the main school reception – please make sure they are clearly marked for the Museum and that you also include as much detail as possible plus your name and contact details.

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
Lois Mary ACHIMOVICH	1955-1959	Student	18 May 2026
Gordon Ambrose EWERS	1929-1933	Student	6 June 2026
Max VALLIS		Student	30 April 2026
Joan GAGLIARDI (nee BENNETT)	1939-1940	Student	15 June 2026
Bruce Graham McCALLUM	1954-1958	Student	21 June 2026
John Benjamin Arthur de JONG (Johnny YOUNG)	1960-1961	Student	14 August 2026

TRIBUTES

GORDON EWERS PMS STUDENT 1929-33



Gordon Ewers was born on 2 February 1916 at St John of God Hospital Subiaco.

His father was the headmaster of several schools so he spent his early years at Cunderdin, Caversham and West Leederville before they moved to Applecross where he spent most of his primary school years. He remembered cubbies in the bush, swimming and paddling home-made canoes in the river, bonfires, catching gilgies, wildflowers, tennis, soccer and chess. When Gordon won a scholarship to Perth Modern School, he travelled on the ferry from Applecross to school for the first three years until his family moved back to West Leederville.

His favourite subjects were English, Mathematics and Physics. He was in the Debating Society, wrote poetry and articles for the school magazine and was in the school teams for tennis and cricket, also winning the annual high jump twice. In 4th year he was chosen by the Principal to keep the school accounts.

Outside school, he played in the State Lacrosse Association, as captain and chief goal scorer for the Mount Lawley team. He played the piano and the mouth organ, winning prizes at the Eisteddford. After he left school, he also played table tennis and won the state championship in his division.

He always wanted to be a school teacher but the Teachers' College was closed due to the Depression. So, after school he sat for the Commonwealth Public Service Examination where he came second in the state and chose to enter the Department of Customs and Excise. He was initially a clerk in the Accounts Department where his annual salary was 73 pounds. He studied Accountancy part time and rose in the department to become Assistant Collector for WA. He found his job interesting and rewarding and was happy to be serving his country.

He married Elma Elliott (who was also a student at Mod, a prefect in 1933) and they spent the first years of married life in Carnarvon where Gordon was the Sub Collector. As it was during the war, he applied for the army, but he was manpowered because he was the Naval Reporting Officer for the North West coast, posted in Carnarvon. His work included telegraph coding and decoding and the job of Air Raid Warden in the Home Guard. At the naval battle off Carnarvon, the HMAS Sydney was destroyed and when the survivors from the enemy ship, the Kormoran, came ashore, Gordon was responsible for the prisoners of war, managing their custody until they could be taken to Perth.

A keen Christian, Gordon was very active in the Lake Street Church of Christ. He was also State Secretary, State President, Federal Secretary and Federal President of Churches of Christ in Australia. Church and family were always the main focus of his life.



Gordon Ewers in 1942, serving as an Air Raid Warden



Gordon and Elma travelled extensively in Australia and overseas. He joined the Gilbert & Sullivan Society and appeared in several of their productions at His Majesty's and other venues. At the age of 82 he took up golf and played regularly until his mid-90s.

When Elma died, at the age of 90, Gordon moved to a Retirement Village in Madeley where he lived independently until he was 106. During this time, he was involved in the Centenarian Portrait Project where teenage artists painted portraits of Australians aged over 100 years. Gordon was linked with Benedict Widjaj who was a student at Perth Modern School at the time. They found that they had a lot in common and developed a great friendship.

When Gordon died on 6 June 2026, aged 110, he was the oldest man in Western Australia and the third oldest in Australia. He leaves 2 daughters, Shirley Burton and Marian Hall (both attended Perth Modern School), 6 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.



JOAN GAGLIARDI (NÉE BENNETT) **PMS STUDENT 1939-40**



Joan Gagliardi passed away a month short of reaching 102 years of age.

At Perth Modern School she was Joan Bennett, who arrived following her earlier high school studies at Perth Girls School. Joan then became a teacher.

Joan taught at Mt Hawthorn, Osborne Park, Albany High School, Geraldton High School, Northam High School and Eastern Goldfields High School. In 1959 Joan was promoted to Principal Mistress at Northam High School, a position that she held at Northam, Merredin, Hollywood and Kalamunda High Schools. In 1971, while Principal Mistress at Kalamunda High School, Joan became Mrs Joan Gagliardi. Fortunately, at this time married women were no longer required to resign from their positions in the Education Department of Western Australia.

In 1979, Joan Gagliardi was promoted to Principal of Governor Stirling High School, a position that she held for two years prior to retirement. At this time it was highly unusual for a woman to rise to the promotional position of Principal – mainly because married women had been required to resign on their marriage. Joan was an outstanding educator and her promotion to becoming a principal was unusual in that time – reflecting her quality.

The accompanying photograph was taken as Joan celebrated her 100th birthday. As described by the Bassendean Council in July 2024:

"Joan Gagliardi marked her 100th birthday on Sunday 14th July, surrounded by close family and friends, and welcomed Mayor Kath Hamilton into her home to share her cherished memories. An Eden Hill resident, Joan was the former Principal of Governor Stirling High School, being one of the few women in such a role during the 70s and 80s. Joan is not only a trailblazer in education but also an avid sportswoman, excelling in tennis and golf and taught Italian at TAFE until just over a decade ago.

Join us in wishing this incredible woman a very happy 100th birthday and many more wonderful years ahead."

JOHN BENJAMIN ARTHUR DE JONG **(JOHNNY YOUNG)** **PMS STUDENT 1960-61**



John de Jong, born 12 March 1947 in Rotterdam, Netherlands moved with his family to Australia in 1953 first settling in Kalamunda. Johnny attended Subiaco Primary School and then Perth Modern School in 1960-61. At the age of fourteen, John was already a vocalist for eighteen months for a group called the Strangers.

By his eighteenth year in early 1965, John was host of a TVW-7 Perth television pop music show, Club Seventeen. As Johnny Young and the Strangers, he released two singles with Clarion records. Then in May 1966, Festival Records released his single (as Johnny Young and the Kompany) 'Step Back with Cara-Lyn' as a double A-side. This peaked at number one on the Go-Set National Top 40 in November and was one of the biggest-selling Australian singles of the 1960s.



Johnny continued to release singles until 1968, supported numerous overseas artists on their tours of Australia, won a Logie as Best Teenage Personality in 1967 and then wrote for Go-Set. He also commenced his own songwriting and through the seventies wrote numerous very successful songs for Australian artists.

In 1970, he formed a production company with Kevin Lewis (formerly of Festival Records). Following from earlier television shows, in April 1971 *Young Talent Time* commenced – a children's variety show and talent quest with Young as the host. Over its twenty five years of operation, this show was the launching pad for numerous Australian singers and actors later found on the International scene. Alongside the show's success, the *Johnny Young Talent School* for performing arts was established in 1979.

In 1990 Johnny Young was inducted into the TV Week Logie Awards' Hall of Fame for "an outstanding and sustained contribution to Australian television."

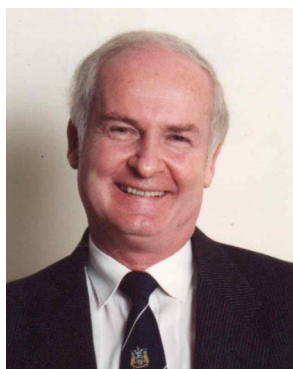
Johnny Young continued in the entertainment industry after *Young Talent Time* concluded. He worked as a disc jockey and occasionally performed live. In December 200 he relocated to Perth to become the breakfast host on 6IX radio. While living in Perth he established a new outlet for his Johnny Young Talent School while continuing with performances. In October 2010 he was inducted into the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) Hall of Fame. In 2021, *Young Talent Time: Unmasked*, a special celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Young Talent Time* was broadcast with Johnny, Dannii Minogue and Tina Arena reminiscing.

Johnny Young passed away from pancreatic cancer in Perth on 13 August 2026 leaving behind his third wife Marisha, sister Cornelia, daughters Anna and Fleur (his son Craig passed away with pancreatic cancer in 2014) and seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

As Russell Morris (musician) explained, "his contribution to Australian music, especially fledgling musicians, could not be understated. He was a success at everything he set his mind to – a force of nature.... He will be remembered as a great talent, and a great person."

BRUCE GRAHAM MCCALLUM

PMS STUDENT 1954-58



Bruce attended Perth Modern School 1954-58. He was always very grateful for his education and very proud of Mod. He attended UWA and received 1st class honours in Economics and won the John Storey prize for the top student.

In 1964 he was selected in the Commonwealth Government Executive Training program which meant a move to Canberra. Bruce and Wendy Becher (57-58) married in that year and spent the next 23 years in Canberra, apart from two and a half years in Princeton in USA where Bruce completed a Masters Degree. During those years three sons and a daughter were born. Bruce was a wonderful Dad to his four children and was always involved in their activities.

Bruce rose through the ranks in the Public Service to become an Assistant Commissioner.

He travelled considerably, making an annual visit to Masterton to lecture to the senior members of the NZ Public Service. In 1982 he spent a year at Macquarie University where he wrote a textbook, *The Public Service Manager*, which was extensively used at the time and is still used for reference.

In 1986 the Commonwealth closed the Public Service Board and Bruce returned to Perth where he had a similar job with the WA Public Service Board. This Board was also closed a few years later and Bruce moved to the University of Western Australia in the Department of Management which later became the Business School. Here he ran the Senior Executive Development Programme where senior management from all big companies came for day, weekend or even week programs. He was very successful at this and UWA received a lot of income.

Bruce also lectured to the MBA students and was the Director of the Exchange program. He remained in contact with many of these Professors and students who as well as at the Uni were entertained at his home. He spent 3 months in Kingston in Jamaica working on a World Bank Program shortly before he retired.

The last year of Bruce's life was very challenging with poor health, but he was always positive and very grateful for the life he had had, the wonderful people he had met, his family and all those friends, some of whom were classmates from his first year at Mod. He was very happy that he had been able to make some positive changes in his career and in his community. A life well lived!

- Wendy McCallum



VALERIE FITCH (NÉE PHILPOT)
PMS STUDENT 1945-49

In 1945, Val entered Perth Modern School, having won an entrance from Perth Girls School. She commenced to play hockey in 1948 and immediately was selected to play left wing for the school team. In 1949, Val was appointed a school prefect and co-captain of Sphinx. In June of that year, her Sphinx co-captain, Ken Fitch needed a partner to go to a College dance to which he had been invited as PMS school captain. He asked Valerie who accepted and both Val and Ken acknowledge that their lives changed that night.

At the final school assembly, Val and Ken walked the long aisle of the school hall, as then existed at Mod, to receive the faction shield – it was the Sphinx faction's first success for twelve years. In 1957, they would walk down another aisle in Subiaco to be married. By then, Sister Val Philpot and Dr Ken Fitch were both working at Royal Perth Hospital.

After her five children were at school, in 1973 Val commenced at UWA and obtained first, a BA Hons and then at fifty-four, a Masters in Anthropology. The focus of her Masters' thesis was how WA was established by recruiting and importing indentured servants – how and why this occurred and the fate of some. Val's interest in this topic was personal as her great, great grandparents Daniel and Hannah Wansbrough had arrived in WA in January 1831 as servants indentured to their master Tanner - who promptly abandoned them. Later, Val published a very readable and important book "Eager for Labour" that discussed in depth the topic of indentured servants in early WA.

Val had much success at Cottesloe Golf Club winning two major "honour board" events and more than twenty other competitions. Even later, Valerie began to paint, but unlike her father Ernest Philpot, Perth's first abstract artist, Val used water colour not oils and nor was she seduced by abstract painting like her father.

At the seventy year reunion of the Class of '49 that Val and Ken organised, Val presented the Perth Modern School Principal Lois Joll with an abstract painting of her late father's to replace the one of his that the Class of '49 had presented to the school but had since been lost or stolen.

Aged 94, Val died peacefully at home, surrounded by her five devastated children and her soulmate Ken and mourned by her seventeen grandchildren and ten great grandchildren.

- Ken Fitch



This photo, taken at the wedding of our third daughter in 1993 was when Val was 61 - with not one grey hair - Val never dyed her hair. It was selected by our daughters, framed and on her coffin at her funeral service. Val always looked much younger than her chronological age and was always extremely fit.

LOIS MARY ACHIMOVICH
PMS STUDENT 1955-59



It is with sadness and with a sense of great honour that I inform alumni that my dearest friend Lois died peacefully in the arms of her beloved daughter Anne, clutching her late son's "Froggy" while listening to Norah Jones sing. This was at Mirambena Nursing Home in Margaret River, where Anne, her husband and daughters live.

Aged 84, Lois lived a remarkable life, dedicated as a family psychiatrist and therapist, to the care of families and individuals who benefitted from her expertise and humanity in dealing with the effects of stress in troubled family situations. She was extremely helpful to thousands of people in WA.

Lois and I met on our first day of Infants grade at North Perth Primary School. We immediately decided that we would be friends and walked hand in hand. Marcus Adonis and Alan Fletcher were in our class and Marc continued with her, even through medical school at UWA. Our friendship continued for seventy-nine years.

(At this point I must remind scholars and alumni to treasure those friendships made in youth, as they will often last and give joy for a lifetime!)



At North Perth, Lois' academic abilities were quickly recognised by classmates and teachers alike. She shone her light of intelligence in every way, in class, in her musical abilities and her creative stories. This continued throughout her years at Mod and medical school here and ultimately to John Hopkins University and Medical Centre in Baltimore, Maryland in USA. She was always well ahead of her peers.

At Mod, we were divided alphabetically in first year, placing Lois in 1C and me in 1D as Mitchell. We each made new friends and joined together at recess and lunch breaks on the oval where we'd sit on the fence on the Subiaco Road boundary. We'd sit with our heads on one side and our bottoms on the other. Hence was born our special mob, the Mugwumps. Some brave boys would break all rules and come to chat with us, and Lois would say archly, "Come back when you're in third year!" Lunchtime concerts were held in the School Hall, which was then a flat area where school dances were held during the year.

The Mugwumps would "perform" silly dances like the "Charleston" and we were trained by Diane Briggs (later Moxham) who had "trodden the boards" at the tender age of fourteen at His Majesty's Theatre in various shows, one being "The Boyfriend." We would sing songs and dance, sometimes in matching pyjamas we'd made in domestic science sewing classes.

In her "Leaving" or "Matriculation" year, Lois achieved distinctions in all seven of her subjects with two University Exhibitions – one general and the other the coveted English Literature.

Lois always loved singing at primary school where we knew all of the "hit" songs by heart. At about fourteen she began singing lessons which rounded out her always good voice into a rich mezzo soprano. She always gained the lead roles in our school productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. "Little Buttercup" in "HMS Pinafore" and Aileen in "The Sorcerer."

Lois, Neville Hoffman and myself were also in the Perth Modern School Debating team in our final year. We would be jeered at by the boys at Guildford Grammar School with looks of disdain as the boys thought mere girls would be easy to beat. However, our team of me as first speaker, Lois as second and Neville as third speaker with Lois and Neville's extremely clever rebutting skills, soon put paid to that idea!

We loved to jive to Elvis Presley and Bill Haley and the Comets, and twist to Chubby Checker – and always attended church dances, eventually the Subiaco City Hall and the famed Canterbury Court with its mirrored balls. Lois was always enormous fun with a great sense of silliness and humour.

In later years, Lois wrote several excellent plays and even a musical. Her American inspired plays were "Eugene and Carlotta", a strongly feminist play about American writer Eugene O'Neill and his wife Carlotta. "Red Silk" is about Anne Sexton, an American poet and writer.

"Meekatharra" was autobiographical and named for her Aboriginal godfather, Dixie aka Arthur Dix, who gave her a love of books and reading broadly. "John Boyle O'Reilly" is a rollicking musical about the escape on the Catalpa.

Throughout her life, Lois had many Aboriginal mothers and children living in her Fremantle home for extended periods. Her kindness and sharing nature was a breath of fresh air in a predominantly self-centred world.

Lois was like a dog with a bone with a cause and would devote weeks, years to fight for justice for some people in the prison system. Lois was the epitome of an honourable person and I am eternally grateful for the honour of calling her my best friend.

- Jan James
(née, Janice Mitchell)



Left to Right: June Balinski, Judy Wilson, Ada van Ballegooyen, Lois Achimovich, Janice Mitchell, Janice Chapman, Dianne Briggs, Susan MacDermott



*Number 32 in a special series of articles researched and prepared for publication by
Robert Johnson, PMS student 1961-65 and Museum Volunteer*

DAVID WALTER STEWART PMS STUDENT 1911

After surviving Western Europe's worst winter in years, infantry Sergeant David Stewart wondered if it could get any worse. Then came the Battle of Messines.

David Stewart was born on 16 March 1894 in Braidwood, NSW, to parents Walter and Amelia Stewart. Two sisters were born in NSW, Helenor in 1897 and Millie in 1900. The family moved to Menzies in Western Australia where Walter worked in the mining sector. David's brother Francis was born there in 1907 and his sister Jean in 1910.

David attended the Perth Normal School in Perth. The school provided a two-year high school program from 1907 to 1910 for students wishing to train as teachers. He transferred to Perth Modern School for his last year of high school when the Normal School closed in 1910 and Modern School opened in 1911. Recognised for his leadership qualities, he was selected to be the school's first captain at the beginning of the year.



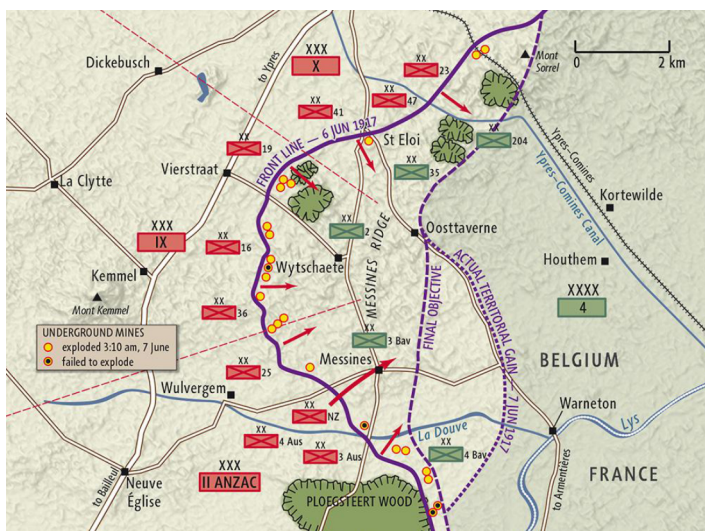
After leaving Modern School at the end of 1911, David was appointed as a Monitor at Subiaco Primary School in 1912 and studied at Claremont Teachers' College in 1913 and 1914. He was appointed to North Perth School and granted leave by the Education Department to join the Army. He was, however, permitted to withdraw from the Army on compassionate grounds because his mother was seriously ill. He was appointed to Bunbury School and again took leave to go to the war in 1916.

David enlisted in the 44th Battalion on 7 February 1916. The Battalion was formed in February 1916 in Western Australia and was one of four battalions that comprised the 11th Brigade of the 3rd Australian Division. David attended NCO school in April 1916 and was promoted to Corporal on 9 May and Sergeant on 1 June. The Battalion left Fremantle on 7 August on HMAT Miltiades, arriving in Plymouth on 25 September 1916. On 9 October David was sent to the Musketry School at Tidworth in England and on 25 November he proceeded to France.

The Battalion spent the harsh winter of 1916-17 alternating between service in the front line and training and labouring in the rear areas. Labouring was back-breaking, exhausting work, digging new trench systems, repairing old ones shattered by German artillery fire, and carrying miles of duckboards into the trenches to keep the mud at bay.

The Battalion fought its first major battle at Messines Ridge in Belgium between 7 and 14 June 1917. The Germans held the 12-kilometre long ridge which formed a salient, or bulge, into the British² lines. It provided the Germans with commanding views of British defences and artillery fire could be called up whenever there was movement above ground in the British lines. The British were planning a major attack at the end of July on Ypres just 10 kilometres north of Messines and the Ridge had to be captured first.

Messines was an experiment – British and Australian miners had been constructing mine shafts up to 27 metres deep³ that had been extended with horizontal shafts under the German front line positions. These shafts were packed with enormous explosive charges, or mines, and coordinated to detonate at the same time. The objective of the four divisions of the 2nd Anzac Corps was the southern part of the ridge and Messines village, near the bottom of the map.



Map showing the town of Messines, the Messines Ridge, and the front line before and after the attack (6 and 7 June 1917). Courtesy of NZ Government - <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/battle-messines-map>



The battle began at 3:10am on Thursday 7 June with the detonation of 19 mines beneath the German front line which devastated it and shattered the defenders, killing around 10,000 Germans⁴. The 44th Battalion was in reserve on the 7th and moved into the attack on the 8th. It was responsible for the right flank with a frontage of a kilometre and was subjected to a bombardment by gas shells. Its objective, the "Green Line" on the Ridge, was taken; however, holding onto it proved costly due to German counter-attacks and saturation artillery fire. British artillery was also directed onto the Battalion's positions by mistake, causing more casualties. David was killed during the day, one of a staggering 300 casualties suffered by the Battalion from a pre-battle strength of 700. The Battalion was rendered ineffective and was relieved on the night of 11/12 June.

The overall battle was a resounding success although the casualties were heart-breaking; around 26,000 British, half of which were suffered by the 2nd Anzac Corps, and around 30,000 German, thousands of whom were never seen again.



British soldiers stand looking into one of 19 mine craters at Messines Ridge, blown up on the morning of the battle. Photographed on 11 June 1917. © IWM (Q 2325)

David is buried in Bethleem (Bethlehem) Farm East Cemetery, two kilometres south-east of Messines. He rests in lush Belgian farmland. His parents wrote the inscription, "*In Memory of The Dearly Loved Son of Mr. & Mrs. W.D. Stewart of Perth.*" David was 22 when he died.



A fellow 1911 Modern School student, Charles Johnson, was serving with the 48th Battalion at this time. The 48th had also been in reserve on the 7th and on the 8th moved into the front line on the left of the 44th. Charles and David, friends at school, were within a few hundred metres of each other on the 8th when David was killed. Charles lost his life the following day. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres.

David's younger brother, Frank, served in the RAAF in World War 2. He was an instrument designer and was posted to No. 548 Squadron RAF in Darwin in September 1944. He settled in Melbourne after the war and was living in the Melbourne suburb of Bittern when he died on 14 March 1995 aged 87, 78 years after his older brother, David.

LEST WE FORGET



1. A role similar to an assistant teacher.
2. 'British' includes troops from the UK and the countries of the British Empire.
3. About eight storeys of an office building.
4. See the 2010 Australian film "Beneath Hill 60".

A fully referenced version of this article will be posted in the next few days on the Honour Board at honour.perthmodern.wa.edu.au.

