



# PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Issue 68, May 2026, Vol 4 No 10

**WELCOME** to your **Perth Modernian e-Newsletter, Issue 68, May 2026, Vol 4 No 10**

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](http://www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au)**  
**[info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto:info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au)**  
All messages received either by phone or email are promptly forwarded electronically for further action.

## 2026

### PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY HIGH TEA AND AGM



With last year's event proving popular amongst Modernians, the Society again held an afternoon High Tea at the School on Monday 4 May 2026.

Members gathered in the school's Staff Room to enjoy a wonderful array of food and drinks. As can be seen in the photographs, this was a great time for renewing friendships and memories, as well as arranging for future activities amongst Modernians.

Following the High Tea, many members remained for the Annual General Meeting. Daryl Williams gave the President's report and the Annual Report 2025 was formally adopted. Reports from the Sphinx Foundation, Museum Association, School Board and P&C followed, as did the very welcome report from Principal Mitch Mackay. The election of members to the Perth Modernian Society Council included Daryl Williams, Robyn White, Eve Broadley, Deb Beresford, Peter Farr, Ruth Barrett, Ian Hunt and Barbara Mallett. We would love to welcome new members to the Council – please approach any Councillor if you see this as a possibility.

On behalf of the Council, Past President Peter Farr presented Dr Robyn White, past Principal and Chair of the Museum Association Inc. with a memento on being elected by the Council as a Modernian Fellow, and her name will forever be on the Modernian Fellow Honours board in the McCusker Room. Peter next presented mementos to Deirdre Owen (nee Abrahamson, student 1954-1958 and maths teacher 1984-2001), and then to nonagenarian Frank Hedges (student 1948-1952), on both being elected by the Council as Moderna Scola. Deirdre's and Frank's names will forever be recorded on the Moderna Scola Honours board in the Museum. See photos page 8.



Participants thoroughly enjoyed the evening and hope for more opportunities to come together.

### DIARY DATES

#### REUNIONS

##### Class of 2016

Sunday 13 December 2026

##### Class of 1997

Saturday 8 May 2027

##### Class of 1986

Saturday 21 November 2026

##### Class of 1970

Saturday 14 November 2026

##### Class of 1966

Tuesday 28 July 2026

##### Class of 1963

Wednesday 21 October 2026

##### Class of 1959

Monday 23 November 2026

##### Class of 1958

Date TBA

##### 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](http://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](mailto:newsletter@perthmoderniansociety.org.au)



## NEXT ISSUES

### Copy deadlines for

**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**

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### Acknowledgments

Thank you to all letter writers and contributors:

Peta Edwards  
Peter Farr  
Robert Johnson  
Robyn White  
Sharon Williams  
Perth Modern School

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Peter Farr

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PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY

[www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au](http://www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au)

### 2025-26 COUNCIL

[info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto: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

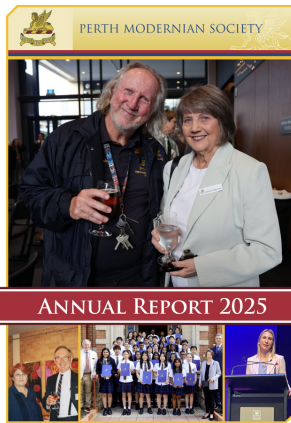
#### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

\$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](http://www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au) further information [info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto:info@perthmoderniansociety.org.au)



## ANNUAL REPORT

Our 2025 Annual Report was presented at our 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting, and is now available to read on our website:

<http://www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/WEB-Modernian-Society-Annual-Report-2025.pdf>

## PERTH MODERN SCHOOL ANZAC SERVICE 2026

On 24 April 2026, the Perth Modern School community came together for a poignant ANZAC Day service, paying tribute to the courageous Australians who have served in wars, conflicts, and peace and humanitarian operations. This year's theme served as a powerful reminder of the families, friends and loved ones who have made their own sacrifices, shaping the ANZAC legacy and inspiring us to build a brighter future.

Head Prefect **Avash S.** and Student Councillor **Ekaterina K.** led the service with poise and conviction, supported by the Senior Wind Orchestra conducted by **Ms Celia Christmass.**



*Mr Grant Staffe delivering the Principal's Address*

Associate Principal **Mr Grant Staffe** delivered the Principal's Address, followed by a Cadet Introduction from CSGT **Luke Lynam** and the mounting of the Catafalque Party. **Emmelyn F.** presented the Stokes Sadlier Scholarship Address, and Student Councillors **Jack H.** and **Hinata P.** laid wreaths on behalf of the school. The Last Post, Minute Silence and Reveille were performed with great dignity by trumpeter **Frank H.**, before the New Zealand and Australian national anthems were sung together in a powerful display of unity.

At the service, the school community reflected on the values of courage, sacrifice, and resilience, and the families who carry these stories forward, inspiring us to create positive change.

Lest we forget.





SPHINX FOUNDATION INC.

#### 2023-24 BOARD

[sphinxfoundation@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto: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*

Emeritus Prof. Bruce Armstrong AC  
Laurie Best  
Bryant Bice  
Alexandra Bond \*  
Helen Bond \*  
Greg Calcutt  
Sonu Cheema \*  
Janet Holmes à Court AC  
Peter Farr  
Peter Farr \*  
Rodney G House  
Nigel & Kate Hunt  
Dr Philip Jennings  
Ross Ledger AM (for Ross and Fran Ledger Scholarship)  
Ross Ledger AM (for scholarships, general)  
Tomo Francesca & Teresa Mangione \*  
Dr Annette Mercer  
Dr Annette Mercer \*

\* indicates a donation to the Zander Philogene Memorial Fund appeal - see page 9.



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY  
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION  
INCORPORATED

#### 2026 BOARD

[museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto: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 19 May 2026

*Thank you for your generous support*  
Mr Ralph Bilsby  
Mrs Margaret Pinchback  
Mrs Jeanette McQueen  
Dr Irene Froyland  
Prof Bruce Armstrong  
Dr Neil Bardsley  
Ross Ledger AM  
Dianne Moxham  
Mrs Wendy Watts  
McCusker Charitable Foundation  
Ms Anne Ballard  
Dr Philip Jennings  
Edna Youngman  
Barry Saker  
Sharon William  
Ruth Barrett

#### 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](mailto:lachlain.wylie@gmail.com) or phone 0423 031455

##### 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 1966

A 60-year reunion lunch is planned for the class of 1966 on **Tuesday 28 July 2026**, starting at 12:30pm at **Tassels Bar and Grill, Innaloo.**

For further information, please contact Lee Hockley (nee Florance) at [leetrevhockley@bigpond.com](mailto:leetrevhockley@bigpond.com) or phone 0417 183 679.

##### 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](mailto:mjw461@outlook.com)

##### 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@inet.net.au](mailto:chloeb@inet.net.au) for information.

##### Class of 1958

An 85th Birthday reunion is in planning - date TBA. Contact Peter Farr at [Farr.Peter@farr.com.au](mailto:Farr.Peter@farr.com.au) for information.

##### Class of 1956

The class of 1956 will celebrate its 70-year reunion at the school's Parsons Refectory on **Sunday 18 October 2026, 10am to 2pm.**



**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

**MUSEUM SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES**

[facebook.com/perthmodernschoolmuseum/](https://facebook.com/perthmodernschoolmuseum/)  
[instagram.com/pmsmamuseum/](https://instagram.com/pmsmamuseum/)

**MODERNIAN HONOURS**

[awards@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto: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  
Sharon Williams

This event has become a highlight of the school year, with senior students especially valuing the opportunity to hear first-hand insights, experiences, and advice from leaders they can genuinely look up to. **Ms Gaye McMath** B.Com, the Chancellor of Edith Cowan University, has graciously accepted the Council's invitation to deliver the 2026 Oration in the Cyril Tyler Auditorium on 17 August. Gaye took up the role of ECU Chancellor following an executive career of four decades, including extensive experience in non-executive director roles and 15 years in higher and international education, including with both UWA and Murdoch University. Gaye is also a Past President of CPA Australia.

Commencing in 2011 with **The Hon Michael Kirby** AC CMG, this year's will be the sixteenth Perth Modernian Society Annual Oration.

**YOUR SAY**

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



PERTH MODERNIAN SOCIETY  
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION  
INCORPORATED

**MUSEUM MATTERS**

Term one was one of excitement and activity in the museum.

Volunteers met with Rosemary Lynch, from Millstream, who has worked on the digital aspect of other digital trails and will work with the museum volunteers to help bring the Perth Modern School heritage trail into the digital age. The two meetings to date have expanded our knowledge and created some new thoughts about what the final trail information will look like.

While Sharon, Robyn, Ian and Bob have met with Rosemary, our ongoing work in accessioning and conserving new donations has continued. In the archive room, Deb, Deirdre and Alison continue to update Mosaic digital records, conserving donations and updating photographic records. Meanwhile, Wendy and Jill have been adding historical records to the data-base while Gay has supported the work of accessioning from the museum. Bob has continued his military research – both while in the museum and at other times – the outcomes he's achieved attest to the extent of his work.

At the end of term one, our volunteers faced a different challenge. The ceilings in all of the other rooms in our building, were finally being replaced. The 1922 buildings face a multitude of maintenance issues, so we were pleased to know that action was being taken in at least one aspect. However, it did mean that we would be "locked out" of the museum for some time. Fortunately, the April holidays intervened. For one week of the holidays, no one was able to work on site – in case asbestos was discovered. As school returned, Ian had moved several computers into the library workroom – with Tonya and the school staff being happy to have us taking up some of their space.

While not perfect in our ability to access the digital databases, it was a good experience to spend more time closer to the archive room, its volunteers and artefacts. Finally, on 18<sup>th</sup> May, the museum was open again on Monday mornings as the maintenance work is now completed.

On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May, as reported on the front page of the newsletter as reported elsewhere in the newsletter, the Perth Modernian Society AGM was held following a very enjoyable high tea. It with great satisfaction that two of our volunteers, **Deirdre Owen** (nee Abrahams) and **Frank Hedges**, received Moderna Scola awards for their dedicated and consistent support of the museum, as well as for their various roles with the Society. This was a highlight of the AGM and it was especially special to see both present to receive their awards.





*Deirdre Owen and Frank Hedges receiving their Moderna Scola awards from Peter Farr*

Also in early May, the annual fundraising letter was emailed to Perth Modernian Society members. As you may all recall, the Museum receives its support solely via project specific grants and donations. While all of our volunteers are just that – this ensures that any donations are solely used to conserve school artefacts and research aspects of Perth Modern School's history and culture.

Over the next month or so, the data relating to the heritage trail is being finalised – although additional data can be added throughout the year. Anyone who is keen to extend our knowledge of specific school sites, please email or visit the museum to improve our current understanding

## THE ROTENBERG SISTERS

*This article was researched and written by Peta Edwards, Sharon Williams and Bob Johnson.*

This year in the Museum we enjoyed two visits from descendants of **Issac and Rachel Rotenberg** whose family history includes remarkable women born in the early 1900s. Thank you to **Peta Edwards** and **Karen Harford** for sharing their family history and donating items to our archives including photos, copies of degrees and blazer pockets.

Isaac and Rachel Rotenberg migrated to Australia from Poland in 1889 and had five daughters, **Sarah, Leah, Dora, Eva** and **Raina**. Dora, Eva and Raina attended Perth Girls School and gained academic scholarships to Perth Modern School.

**Dora** attended Mod from 1915 to 1919. Dora received swimming, hockey and tennis colours. In 1918 she was Vice Captain of Red Faction and Captain of the successful tennis team that won the Slazenger Cup and Sandover Shield. At the 7th annual swimming carnival Dora won the 50 yards breast stroke and came first in the diving for plates. In 1919 Dora was Red Faction Captain, Hockey Vice Captain and the Tennis Secretary. Dora was one of twenty students in Western Australia awarded with a General Exhibition and also earned distinctions in Mathematics and Biology. She completed a Bachelor of Science degree at UWA, commenced training at Mod in 1923 and become an Assistant Teacher (1924-28, 1930-31). The August 1932 Sphinx Magazine records Dora joining the tutorial staff. The same magazine notes that Dora was "for some time past" attached to the correspondence branch of the Education Department. It also records Dora as receiving "an appointment on the School staff. Everyone is glad to see her back at school once more." Numerous Sphinx magazines recorded that Dora assisted and took an interest in the girl's tennis teams. Dora is also recorded as employed at Albany High III in 1933 and Eastern Goldfields II in 1935 and 1936.

The May 1928 Sphinx magazine records **Miss Edith Tonkin** (1921) and **Miss D Rotenberg** being "awarded travelling scholarships entitling them to free return passage to Europe.....Miss Rotenberg who is teaching at her old school, proposes to do zoological research work in London and also obtain experiencing in teaching science in London secondary schools." School Notes of the same Sphinx magazine states Dora "...proposes proceeding to England to continue research work under Professor Dakin at the Liverpool University." In the September 1929 Sphinx magazine, it states Dora "is at present demonstrator in zoology at the University of Dublin." In August 1931 the Sphinx magazine records Dora returning "after three years' study abroad. She studied at Trinity College, Dublin, and the Imperial College of Technology at London..."

Dora was also awarded a Diploma of Membership of the Imperial College of Science and Technology in London (completed during the session conducted from October 1929 to December 1930) after undertaking a course in Advanced Study and Research in Entomology (insects). Dora was awarded a scholarship to Cambridge University to complete her master's degree.

In 1936 she married Ian Cameron who was a Mining Engineer working in Boulder, Kalgoorlie. They moved to King Island in Bass Strait where Ian managed the scheelite (tungsten) mine. They retired in Melbourne where Ian passed away in 1977 aged 70. In the early 1980's Dora moved back to Perth to the St Louis Retirement Village in Claremont and later to the Jewish Aged Care home. They had no children.

Ian and Dora bequeathed their estate to the University of Western Australia.





Erica Russell (L), Dora Rotenberg (R)  
Front - Barbara Richards (L), Dorothy Milner (R)



Dora Rotenberg

**Eva** attended Perth Modern School from 1921 to 1924. Eva was the Captain of the tennis team and member of the School hockey team in 1924 (see also the below pictures from the Sphinx magazine from December 1924). Eva also taught and became a Monitor (trainee teacher) at Highgate Primary School in 1926. The May 1926 Sphinx magazine announced Eva became engaged in Mr William Finklestein with their marriage recorded in May 1927. William or Bill Finkelstein was a farmer from Shackelton. They had two children, Joy and Ray. Joy and her first husband owned the Shackelton General Store and they had a daughter, Shirley. Jan, Eva's grandniece, taught Shirley when she attended Governor Stirling High School. Joy remarried to a prison officer based in Bunbury. They both retired in Geraldton. Ray was nearby farming in Yuna.

Peta and Jan believe Eva passed away in her 70s in Maurice Zephert homes in Dianella. Regretfully, Eva was very badly affected with rheumatoid arthritis.



Raina attended Perth Modern School from 1925 to 1928. Raina was awarded her Bachelor of Science at the University of Western Australia in 1932. In the Old News of 1932 Raina is recorded as having the occupation of "*Committee lady in social affairs of our University.*" With affiliation to the University moonlight ballet and University social affairs committee. Raina is described as "*A very energetic committee lady in the social affairs of our University... was a member of the University moonlight ballet, which was so successful at the Viennese Cabaret held recently...*"

The Westralian Judean of 1 April 1940 reported Raina "*who was formerly Chief Bacteriologist of the Bacterial Department of the University of Melbourne, has taken up a position as a bacteriologist at the Mackay Hospital, Queensland.*"

Raina served in the Australian Army Medical Corps from 17 January 1945 to 15 January 1947, rising to the rank of Lieutenant. The National Archives of Australia (NAA) have yet to publish Raina's files and documents. The Modern School Museum and History Centre is requesting the NAA to commence this process. An update will be included in a future Society newsletter.

Raina then became the only Australian woman to work for the Atomic Bomb Casualty Committee in Hiroshima and Kure. Many may find the following newspaper articles from 1951 of interest.



## Australian woman member of Atomic Research Commission home

Only Australian woman to work with the Atom-Bomb Casualty Commission in Japan, Miss Raina Rotenberg, said that people who were within a 2000-metre radius of the Hiroshima bomb were still being regularly examined.

"Despite early talks about possible sterility of bomb - shocked people there were young children everywhere in Hiroshima," Miss Rotenberg said when she came home in the Changte this morning.

"The doctors at the ABCC are still doing research on the question and have not published their findings.

"Vital research is also being done on long-range bomb or radiation effects on the new generation of babies."

been amassed to show results yet."

Clinics aimed to handle at least 50 people a day. There were untold thousands on the lists. Greatest interest was taken in those who had been within 1000 metres of the bomb, but a much greater area came within the scope of the commission.

Another former member of the clinical staff of the ABCC, Mrs. William J. Chitts, arrived in the ship with her husband.

He is Captain Chitts, a wounded veteran of the Korean fighting, returning to Melbourne for medical treatment.

An x-ray technician, Mrs. Chitts went to Hiroshima from her home, Philadelphia, US, in 1948. The couple were married 15 months ago but Mrs. Chitts continued her work.

Both women told of radiation cataracts which were effecting eyes of Hiroshima people.

A King's Co wife in very poor-quality doing something.

"Bread from ney bakers doughy, lumpy, plasticine," said today.

"Whichever Monday morn I'll for breakfast lunches.

"I have no the weekend

"There are bakers, but one is unable

## Hospital Patients Take Relation Along As Cook

WHEN patients were admitted to some hospital in Japan it was quite usual for relations to move in also to look after them and provide food.

Miss Raina Rotenberg, of Perth, who has been working as a bacteriologist in Japan and to study the effects of the Singapore for the last three years, radiation on T.B. patients, said this when she arrived in Sydney in the Changte yesterday.

Working with her at the commission as an X-ray technician was an American woman, Mrs. W. Chitts, who returned with her husband, Captain W. Chitts, who had been wounded in Korea.

"Relations or friends bring their own food and cook it in the patient's room," she said. "They make an awful mess, though this does not always happen in some of the better-class hospitals."

After working in the General Hospital in Singapore, Miss Rotenberg joined the Australian Army Medical Corps as a pathologist in Kure. She then became the only Australian woman to work for the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission in Hiroshima and Kure.

As a serologist, it was her job to examine the blood serum of those affected by the atom bomb and to study the effects of radiation on T.B. patients.

AMERICAN WOMEN'S CLUB

THE newly elected office-bearers of the American Women's Club were welcomed by members at the monthly meeting which they held at the Pickwick Club yesterday.

They are Mrs. Marion Ramage (president), Mesdames Berenice Walker and Alfara Haas (vice-presidents), Mrs. June Barker (honorary treasurer), and Mrs. Rosemary Conacher (honorary secretary).

Raina later was the Microbiologist in charge of the Australian Customs Laboratory in Sydney until her retirement. She didn't marry, as she would lose her job and superannuation. Peta shares Raina had a "not quite live-in lover, Stuart, for all the years I knew her until his death". Raina died in 1999 aged 87.



Rotenberg sisters at Karen Harford's wedding - May 1973. L to R: Sarah Masei (Peta's and Karen's grandmother), Leah Croker, Dora Cameron, Eva Finkelstein and Raina Rotenberg



Karen Harford and Peta Edwards in the PMS museum, February 2026



Peta with photos donated

## 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
Brenton Bellon	1945-1949	Student	20 February 2026
(Colonel) Michael John Brennan	1969-1971	Student	22 January 2026
Margaret Hart Chambers (nee Gorrie)	1933-1937	Student	27 July 2025
Katrin Elisabeth Wilson (nee Korwil)	1949-1953	Student	5 March 2026
Ian James McMullan	1954-1956	Student	16 March 2026
Rosario (Ross) La Rosa	1971-1975	Student	26 February 2026
Desmond Owen Gaffney	1943-1944	Student	19 February 2026
Peter William Jeffery OAM	1948-1952	Student	14 April 2026
Alexander (Zander) Guillaume Philogene	2017-2022	Student	11 April 2026
Valerie June Fitch (nee Philpot)	1945-1949	Student	23 April 2026

**APOLOGY:** deepest apologies to the friends and family of Mrs Rayma Pervan whose information was wrongly printed in the February newsletter.

Rayma attended Perth Modern School as Rayma RICHTER. Her married surname was PERVAN.



**MICHAEL BRENNAN**  
PMS STUDENT 1969-71



*Colonel Mick Brennan, 2016*

Mike (or Mick) Brennan was born in Three Springs on 14 July 1956. He commenced at Perth Modern School at the beginning of 1969 and left after his Junior exams in 1971. He entered the Australian Army Apprentices School in 1972 at the age of 15 and was selected for officer training at the Officer Cadet School at Portsea in Victoria in 1979. He graduated as a Second Lieutenant and was posted to the Royal Australian Signals Corps.

Mick served in a variety of regimental postings including as the troop commander of 152 Signal Squadron in the Special Air Service Regiment in 1982-84. In 1999, Mick deployed to the US Pacific Command in Hawaii as a liaison officer to assist with the US planning for Operation Stabilise in East Timor. Immediately after that, in July 2000 he deployed to Bogainville for six months where he served as the commanding officer of one of the peace monitoring groups

Mick retired in 2017 after a total of 45 years of Army Service, 34 with the Regular Army and 11 with the Reserves. He was a keen traveller and enthusiastic student of military history, serving for a period as deputy chairman of the Army Museum of WA in Fremantle. He was married to Irene for 40 years and they had three children. Irene died in 2020 aged 67 and Mick passed away six years later on 22 January 2026 after a long illness. He was 69.



*Army Cadet Sergeant Mike Brennan, 1971*

**A CELEBRATION OF LIFE - AND A LASTING LEGACY FOR ZANDER PHILOGENE**

**PMS STUDENT 2017-22**



*Zander in Year 12 at Perth Modern School*

On Sunday afternoon 17 May 2026, more than 450 family members, friends and members of the Perth Modern School and UWA communities gathered at the Mt Lawley Golf Club to celebrate the life of Zander (Alexander) Philogene (PMS Class of 2022). It was an extraordinary and deeply moving occasion. Nine heartfelt tributes were shared by godparents, cousins and close friends - each reflecting on Zander's warmth, intelligence, emotional insight, and his remarkable ability to bring people together. A common theme emerged: in just 21 years, Zander had touched an exceptional number of lives.

In a simple but powerful gesture, attendees all wore something yellow - a visible symbol of unity, remembrance, and the positive energy that Zander brought into the world.

Zander commenced at Perth Modern School as a Year 7 in 2017 and graduated in 2022 with a Certificate of Distinction. He went on to study chemical engineering at UWA, but on 11 April 2026, while on student exchange in Europe, his life was tragically cut short after contracting meningococcal Type B.



**Pictured at Zander's Celebration of Life:** PMS Principal Mitchell Mackay, former Deputy Principal Nicola Reilly, Sphinx Foundation Directors Peter Farr and Nigel Hunt (Chair), and Deputy Principal Monica Franz.



Looking back a decade, in 2017 when Zander was a new Year 7 student, Zander's father, **William** was invited to join the Sphinx Foundation Board of Directors, recognising both his financial expertise and his commitment as a parent. At the 2018 Annual General Meeting, William spoke with great foresight about the Board's role as custodian of the Sphinx Scholarship Fund - a responsibility that the Directors and the Executive Officer take very seriously.

Towards the conclusion of the Celebration of Life, Sphinx Foundation Director Peter Farr delivered a poignant address, formally launching the Zander (Alexander) Philogene Memorial Fund, and inviting those present to contribute to this lasting legacy. Peter concluded his address with these words:

*"And especially for Zander's sake - let us all take extra special care of one another."*

Perth Modern School Principal **Mitchell Mackay** captured the sentiment of the Celebration in a message to the family:

*"It was quite humbling to see how many lives one young man could impact in such a short but incredibly full life... His lovely positive energy and impact on his friends will help them all be better people... It will inspire us to continue to encourage our students to be so much more than just academically intelligent."*

The purpose of the Memorial Fund is to honour Zander's life in a practical and enduring way - through a perpetual scholarship, a travel fund, and other targeted support for students of Perth Modern School.

Importantly, this is not a one-off tribute. The intention is to create a **perpetual legacy** - ensuring that, even 100 years from now, scholarships in Zander's name will continue to support and inspire future generations of Perth Mod students.

Each year, the scholarship will be awarded following a rigorous selection process at a special assembly at the School. In a deeply personal tradition, Zander's siblings, **Lucien** and **Giselle**, will be invited to present the scholarship, along with a certificate and citation reflecting Zander's life and the family's aspirations for the awards.

To establish a meaningful and sustainable start, a funding target of **\$60,000** has been set to support an initial three-year scholarship, with the intention of growing the Fund over time.

Are you ready to make a difference?

In transforming grief into opportunity, the Philogene family and the Sphinx Foundation are creating a legacy that will continue to make a difference for generations to come.

You can make a fully tax-deductible donation online via EFT or PayPal at the link below:  
[www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au/index.php/sphinx-foundation/sphinx-scholarship-fund](http://www.perthmoderniansociety.org.au/index.php/sphinx-foundation/sphinx-scholarship-fund)

For EFT, please include your name and the word "Zander" as a reference.

**Account Name:** Sphinx Scholarship Fund

**BSB:** 066 125

**Account No:** 1050 8733

## MODERNIANS WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY

*Number 31 in a special series of articles researched and prepared for publication by  
Robert Johnson, PMS student 1961-65 and Museum Volunteer*

**IAN JAMES "PING" INGLE (PMS STUDENT 1936-40)**

**ALEXANDER MCBRIDE "ALEX" KERR (PMS STUDENT 1934-36)**

**ROBERT ALEXANDER WALTON "BOB" BLAIR (PMS STUDENT 1935-39)**

Four West Leederville Primary School friends joined the RAAF and went to war. Three of them were former Perth Modern School students. Only two came home.

### School Days

Ian Ingle was born on 22 April 1923 and lived in Cambridge Street in Wembley. For reasons lost in time, his nickname was Ping. His best friend, Stan Watt, lived three doors down. Bob Blair (born 1922) and Alex Kerr (1921) were also best friends, and, as members of their very own Monger's Lake Yacht Club, the four lads spent countless hours exploring Monger's Lake in canoes of bent sheet iron, collecting turtle eggs from the lake's thick bulrushes,



cooking sausages on hidden islands and diving in the lake using an empty kerosine tin as a diving helmet and a house brick in each hand as weights.

After primary school, Ian, Bob and Alex won scholarships to attend Perth Modern School. Stan's father sent Stan to Wesley College. Alex left Modern School in 1936 during third year when his father lost his job in the Depression. Bob graduated from Modern School in 1939 and Ian in 1940. Stan completed fourth and fifth years in one year at Wesley and passed his Leaving exams in 1939.

### War Years

After studying at night school and working at The West Australian newspaper, Alex joined the RAAF in April 1940. Posted to Britain, Warrant Officer Kerr joined 115 Squadron RAF as a pilot of twin-engine Wellington bombers.

Bob joined the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac) and was posted to its Kellerberrin branch. He enrolled in a Commerce degree at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1940 and enlisted in the RAAF in June 1941 when he was 19. After completing his training, Pilot Officer Blair was posted to No. 77 Squadron RAF in England. The Squadron flew four-engine Halifax bombers.



Ian Ingle



Stan Watt



Alex Kerr



Bob Blair

Ian and Stan were 16 when war broke out in 1939 and, after reading an article about the double amputee fighter pilot, Douglas "Tin Legs" Bader, decided to join the RAAF. Ian was a week older than Stan and when Stan turned 18 on 1 May 1941, they presented themselves to the RAAF Recruiting Centre in Perth. However, the RAAF would not take them until 1 February 1942 when they were taken to RAAF Pearce for the start of their training.

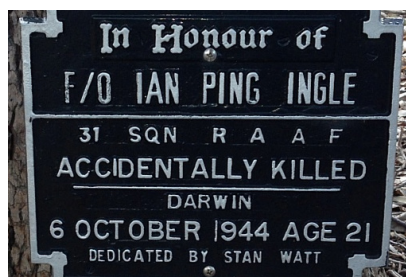
When their training was completed, Flying Officer Ingle was posted in September 1944 to No. 31 Squadron at Coomalie Creek in the Northern Territory. Flying Officer Watt served primarily with No. 450 Squadron RAAF in Italy in 1944-45 on P40 Kittyhawk fighter-bombers in ground attack roles where the squadron's pilots established a reputation for accurate bombing of enemy positions and transport.

### What Happened to Them

Alex was on his fourth mission on the night of 10/11 May 1941 when his Wellington bomber was shot down by a night fighter. Alex was hit by seven bullets. He survived because the rear gunner attached Alex's parachute to him and ejected him from the aircraft. He was taken prisoner and, after a long recovery in hospital, survived the war in Stalag 357 in Germany. After returning home, Alex enrolled at the UWA where he earned a Bachelor of Arts, a Master of Arts and a Doctor of Philosophy. It proved the beginning of a distinguished academic career. He married Joan Langridge who was a prefect at Modern School in 1937. Alex died on 30 December 2018 aged 97.

Bob's last mission was on the night of 16/17 June 1944. He was pilot and captain of Halifax NA508 which was shot down by Luftwaffe ace Major Martin Drewes while returning from a bombing mission to Germany. There were no survivors. Bob was 22 when he died.

Ian was the pilot of Beaufighter A19-203 on 6 October 1944 on a rocket-firing exercise at the gunnery range 10 kilometres from the aerodrome at Coomalie Creek. A rocket exploded while under the aircraft's wing and the aircraft crashed, killing Ian and his navigator. Ian was 21 when he died.



Stan was devastated when he received a letter while in Italy from his father informing him that Ian had been killed. He survived the war and was discharged in April 1946. He married and had two children which he said was "very settling". He worked in the family's printing firm, Imperial Printing, and started Snap Instant Printing in 1967. He paid for and arranged a memorial plaque for Ian in Kings Park. Stan died in 2009 aged 86.





## AN UPDATE ON THE SCHOOL'S HONOUR BOARDS

As many Modernians already understand, Bob Johnson has been researching the identities of past students and staff who served in the armed services.

Recently, Bob calculated the outcomes of his work to date, with the following data.

There are now 75 names on the Board who served during the Vietnam War (3 August 1962 to 29 April 1975) - four on the Honour Board and 71 on the Nominal Roll. In comparison, three years ago we only had three and thirteen, and there are sure to be more waiting to be revealed in birth years 1944, 1945 and 1949-52.

### **Of the 71 on the Nominal Roll,**

- 64 served in Vietnam only
- one (Davied Leach) served in WW2 and Vietnam,
- three (Phillip Bennett, Vincent Harris and Charles Yacopetti) served in Korea and Vietnam
- one (Ron Grey) served in Korea, the Indonesian Confrontation and Vietnam
- one (Robin Morison) served in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam
- one (Lawrence O'Donnell) served in Malaya and Vietnam.

### **On their DVA records:**

- 35 (49%) are shown as conscripted
- 24 (34%) are shown as not conscripted
- 12 (17%) are not stated - more searching required!

Bob promises that there are many years of research ahead!

Of course, if anyone is able to provide further information about alumni who have enlisted at any time, please contact Bob via the Museum's email address:

[museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au](mailto:museum@perthmoderniansociety.org.au)

