

MEMORIES

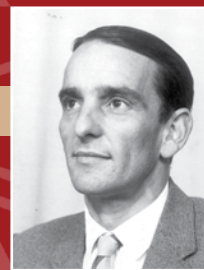
ALUMNI

HISTORY

RECONNECTING

LEGACY

FOUNDATION

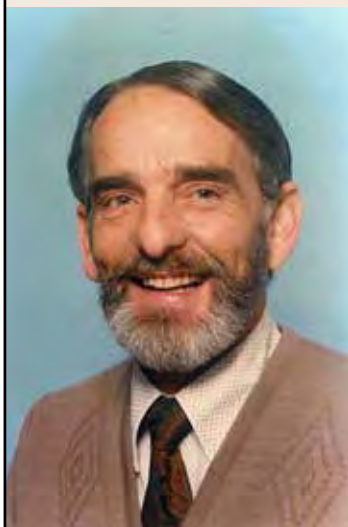
DAVID THORNTON  
HEADMASTER 1961-1978

Issue 8 - July 2018

# The Thornton Years News



ST PETER'S  
CAMBRIDGE  
NEW ZEALAND



David Thornton

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**Well, we are here with Issue 8. Over the last year or so I have been encouraging you to attend the Thornton Years Reunion that was held in April. I make no apology that this issue is largely a report and pictures on that reunion as a large number who wanted to attend but couldn't for a variety of good reasons have asked me for a roundup of the weekend.**

I can say without a doubt it was one of the most satisfying events that I have been involved with in my many years of involvement with St Peter's. It had everything that you could wish for: a great gathering of old friends, the opportunity to make new ones from your era, a chance to see what still exists from your time and what has been improved and added to it, tours of the farm, sporting and academic facilities as well as the cycling velodrome. For those brave enough a swim in one of the two new heated swimming pools. The two chapel services were a blast from the past. The musical recital by current pupils in the Chapel was a class act.

No one who attended the Saturday night dinner will ever forget the experience. It was an emotional time. Grace Thornton kicked off the memories and she spoke so well with great recollect, and was followed by a number of heart rendering memories from a large number of those there. What struck me most is the similarity of so many who shared their story and circumstances of their time at St Peter's. Probably the greatest thing was it allowed everyone to see that their memories and issues were the same as so many others and that drew them all closer together.

Included in this newsletter are two lengthy stories (Christopher Gregory and Quentin Allan) that I have printed in full, as between them they cover the period from 1967 to 1979 and help to put the years and experiences into perspective.

As editor I wish, again, to express special thanks to Kath Carmody, the Graphic Designer at the school who takes what I prepare and puts it into the form that you receive and understand. And also to Kay Greed (the School Archivist) and her team that produce for me many of the old photos and background from the school archives.

**Editor: Neil McLaughlin**

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*A group photo of some of the attendees at Thornton Reunion with Chapel in background.*

## Thornton Years Reunion held 20-22 April 2018

MUSINGS FROM CHRISTOPHER GREGORY (1967-1975)

### NEIL MCLAUGHLIN

Editor / Researcher /Organiser

'The Thornton Years'

Dear Neil,

*It was a pleasure to meet with you over the weekend and to catch up with so many from the past.*

*Neil, please would you arrange to circulate my thanks to all whom I have not copied for I'm afraid I've either guessed or don't know their email addresses. Thank you.*

### TO EVERYONE

*I'd like to say a personal thank-you for all the hard work you contributed and time you gave us in making last weekend such a great success and so enjoyable.*

*And 'everyone' includes the volunteers, administrators, managers, staff – in all your capacities, catering contractors, laundry, choir, pool manager, velodrome presenter, prefects and of course the students that displayed their musical talents so well. A special mention too for Sara Young (Alumni Relations Coordinator), Sharon Roux (Director of Advancement), and Emma James (photo's...actually: 'Media and Publications Advisor'), with apologies for those of whom I've missed and can't find your details...you know who you are!*

*Finally, to Dale Burden, Philip Cole, and Neil McLaughlin; thank-you for your contributions and for enabling this event!*

*Sadly of course, it seems many couldn't /didn't attend, however for those that did, I would be most surprised if any of them didn't thoroughly enjoy the entire experience.*



Christopher at 2011 Reunion.

Christopher in 2018.

### AND NOW, IF YOU WILL PERMIT AND INDULGE ME, A FEW 'THORNTON YEARS REUNION' 'MUSINGS,' FOR THOSE TEMPTED TO READ ON:

**Apologies:** *The disjointed nature of my ramblings reflects the way memories seem to be sparked by other old-boys' memories, and my own wandering mind as I pen (well type) this. I also apologise for any factual inconsistencies with the readers recollections, and so there is a subjective element to this missive with the possibility of historical mistakes. However, my intent is to provide a sense of the experience I felt about this weekend and which others shared or can understand. There are many more things that I recall, and that others too would hasten to remind us, but those are stories others may wish to tell!*

In summary, the reunion was well organised and great fun, especially Saturday evening after dinner with so many recollections so eloquently and humorously recounted by us! But that doesn't express enough of the reason for, or impact of our experience!

To be able to reconnect with schooldays friends, those forgotten or not so quickly recognised (some have changed more than others...thank goodness for the name tags!), was very special, and will remain with many if not all of us as a fond memory for life. I had to be reminded by Mark Dwen that I'd been his Pater, (and presumably he my *filius*) and though apparently strict, and it seems somewhat uncompromising, I trust I inflicted no harm...at least Mark, you seem happy to humour me and I count you as a real schooldays friend! And Quentin Allan who's first, and it seems abiding memory of me was as I brought the school to 'Attention' in I guess a manner that he found quite overbearing as he almost 'jumped' into position! Quentin gave an especially erudite and very humorous talk describing his transition from Southwell and time at St Peter's, and I thank him for not mentioning some of his initial shock at the regimented fashion the prefects used to bring order to the assembled school before every meal!

I guess I was adopting what I assumed to be a 'commanding' voice to elicit a corresponding 'Soldierly Drill Square response' by the assembled 'riff raff'! After all, this was it seemed, a transplanted English Public School and there were standards to be maintained...and, we were all emulating our instructors (principally Mr Hanna, the principle 'disciplinarian'; and Mr Thornton, the 'quality controller' who would demonstrate such positions as 'Standing at Ease' where hands and thumbs were crossed and held palm open, pointing to the ground!) And so it was that as Head Boy or Duty School Prefect, one had to judge one's timing to issue school commands to 'Attention', to coincide with the entrance of the Duty Master through the changing-room entrance doorway in such a manner as to leave no doubt as to the sense of urgency, demeanour, and position to be adopted by way of response! Interestingly, this was a door that only the staff could enter by.

Boys were only to exit via this door, presumably this was the first...and only concession to health and safety, especially as boys used to fling the heavy wooden doors – that were on heavy air compression activated spring closers – open with great gusto. Such force was routinely applied and could easily knock out a small 8-year-old standing on the other side within its arc! More than one boy received the painful consequences and displayed red, bruised, or bleeding parts of their anatomy, usually faces, when other boys playing some game of chase or other, decided to barge through the wrong door! Other commands were to 'stand at ease' (after inspection of hands, hair, shoes, and general presentation state), and to start the 'march' to the dining hall. The marching to the dining hall quickly degenerated to a rambling shuffle, some covert shoving and pushing and other disciplinary transgressions, which if deemed sufficiently detrimental to good order and discipline could at best (as opposed to summary punishment) result in a 'black mark' being awarded (six of which accumulated over a term, earned a caning).

But it was however, much more than just catching up with schooldays friends and random recollections. There was a common thread that underscored our bond – Mr Thornton, aka 'DJT' or 'Digit', and our experiences during his tenure. As an aside and like some others, I have always thought of David, and referred to him as 'Mr Thornton'. This was a sign of respect and a



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*Andrew Williams, Mark Dwen, Richard Black and Christopher Gregory*

product of our upbringing. One could not imagine even thinking of him especially, or any other staff member for that matter, by their Christian name – even well into adulthood. It has only been in recent times that I have considered referring to him as David without subconsciously demeaning any sense of respect toward my memory of him. I think that by this time in our lives, and as friends, he would have invited me (us) to do so. Therefore, I may alternate from Mr to David in my reference to him.... I haven't quite got used to the idea! If wrong, or I offend anyone, then I apologise for such transgression.

Aside from Mrs Grace Thornton, and Lynn Brock, the only ex staff member of my time who attended was Mr Peter Stewart with his lovely wife Robin. Peter set a fine example and remains a true gentleman. It was a real pleasure to see him at the reunion and to hear his recollections.



*Grace Thornton and Peter Stewart.*

Peter Stewart is a remarkable person and a fine example of staff that also made an enormous contribution to the school. A house tutor, Housemaster, later the Bursar, Urewera leader, sometimes choir member – with a truly incredible Bass Operatic voice (later he performed as an accomplished 'Real' Opera singer for many years). Peter also headed the printing club and set up the Confidence Course, coached and refereed rugby and many other things. He deserves his own biography, so I won't elaborate any further!

Some of us, were lucky enough to have experienced rides back from Karapiro rowing practice in Peter's new Red Ford Capri 3.0 GT ...not quite adrenaline producing, but close...suffice to say speed cameras hadn't been invented, or at least not deployed in NZ at that time ... it complimented the Rolls in that it was most things that Mr Thornton's Rolls Royce wasn't (i.e. it went FAST, and looked to us like a supercar back then. To put this into context, this was when most cars seemed to be poorly manufactured and unreliable British Leyland's, basic rattling Holden's or Ford Falcons, or cheap Japanese imitations of Lada's - haven't times changed!



*Lynn Brock*

So, if you need to know what it looked like see the insert on page, 4. though this photo doesn't do it justice. It was quite something for a schoolmaster to own...but then the Headmaster owned two RR's (and a Subaru if my recollection is correct). Without question Peter's Capri was more fun to ride in the passenger seat than the Rowing Eight squeezing into Mark Hanna's circa 1972 'Toyota Land Cruiser', especially after a hard workout! However, I concede that Mark Hanna's mode of transport was well suited to the many Urewera excursions and associated off-roading!

The reunion accommodation... well, suffice to say not what it used to be – but in a vastly more positive way...even the toilets were 'real' and the showers had doors – not the circa 12 inch high units with broken wooden seats and doors, and a dozen or so boys all sharing the same shower room when I arrived in 1967!

The food and drinks were umm, not down to boarding (and day) school standard – thank goodness! Oh, the drinks would certainly have been on the list of illicit items, experienced by only those that imbibed a little extra communion wine from the sometimes-unlocked cache in the Chapel after a Sunday morning Communion Service. Those that did so, undoubtedly kept a low profile for some

# Memories



time afterward, staying clear of staff and prefects, as the odour of a small sip taken from the chalice had usually dissipated by the end of the service, not so one might imagine after taking a few swigs from the bottle! I have it upon good authority ...i.e. a guilty party, confessed to an ex Head Boy, during one of the services over the weekend! Mind you, the communion wine did seem to have quite a pleasant taste to it, and I don't recall any complaints or calls for there to be a fruit juice or non C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH alternative being made available. It was of course, before the time of political correctness, and HandS concerns. After all, don't we all know Broadhurst coined the notion that St Peter's is to be a place to develop 'Mind, Body, AND Spirit'!

And so, it was with some mirth that I and others, heard about, then saw the developing vineyard across the field near Broadhurst house. It seems that the school authorities are truly imbibing – whoops, 'embracing' the various meanings of introducing 'Spirit.' No doubt it won't be long before some enterprising students see the 'main chance' in their 'Business and Entrepreneurial Centre (BEC)' innovation ideas, to establish yet another academy, and St Peter's will become a tourist mecca for wine and cheese tasting, with bus loads enroute to and from the Waitomo Caves! That aside, if prisoners/inmates or 'Porridge' characters can create alcohol with virtually no resources and in a confined environment; and boys of my time could 'raid the orchard' for a fresh apple (such temptation, and something of a prize considering such fresh fruit wasn't often available from the dining room); then it seems improbable that the vineyard so freely accessible will not tempt some enterprising, albeit illicit exploits resulting in some underground and potentially potent vintages! Perhaps, as is the convention these days, I might suffix this thought with an 'LOL' and emoticon!

Well, I'd better get back to the point. It was fantastic to observe, and to be a part of the camaraderie and rekindling of relationships, and the recollection and telling of fond (and some not so... e.g. the food, etc.) memories of our time at St Peter's during Mr Thornton's steerage.

Having said that, there is no doubt I'm sure, that everyone agreed in expressing their high regard for Mr David Thornton, and the positive example – and enduring impact this great man has had on so many lives during, and more significantly, beyond our schooldays! I am quite certain he would have been proud, and yet more so – most humbled, to have been able to witness how his vision and toil has translated 40-50+ years later into the application of today's development of the Mind, Body and Spirit with the resultant positive impact that undoubtedly remains with the current cohort!

The school Arthur Broadhurst built, David Thornton with Mrs Grace Thornton's active support – rescued.

As we know, in physics, (or applied maths) the greatest amount of work/effort is required to overcome inertia and to change the direction of trajectory. Even more so to halt and reverse the direction of motion. So, it must have been an immense challenge when he arrived at St Peter's at a time when it was facing the gloomiest of prospects. So much more the character and skill

of the man to have saved the school from economic disaster, and reputational failure as its 'posh' status and existence was threatened with being ignominiously relegated to the history bin!

After years of toil, David Thornton re-established the viability of the Prep School and its reputation, started the secondary school, and overcame barriers to introducing co-education with the introduction of girls. In so doing, he forged and ignited a pathway in which the current campus, centre of learning and personal growth, is unparalleled in this country, and must be an aspirational bar that any school in the world would be proud to mimic.

In management philosophy/business terms, Mr David Thornton was extraordinary. He was a trouble shooter, change manager, a project manager, a leader, an entrepreneur, a tradesman, a marketer, an HR manager, a mentor, a psychologist, a social worker, councillor, and so much more. As an educationalist and teacher, he was visionary and inspirational. With high 'emotional intelligence' and wisdom, as in Albert Schweitzer's precept of example which Mr Thornton would espouse (he also mentioned Schweitzer's precept of example: which is that "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing," in his 1972 Headmasters Prize Giving Speech). He became 'the example' of so many values we deem important in life, and for the young to learn. From the simple: not putting your hands in your pockets, posture, etc; to the more difficult values of hard work, application, responsibility for one's actions (or lack of), honesty, consideration, empathy, fairness, etc.

Yet there was so much more to the man. Foreign language skills, magician, chess player, accomplished actor, singing, mechanics, DIY, his amazing handwriting – a script that should be a font style; often emulated/copied by boys yet never quite mastered...though I do recall my distinguished classmate Richard J. Black coming close...but a potential forger in the making not... and thank you to Richard for travelling all the way from Silicon Valley to attend!



Richard Black (1960–75) and Peter Baxendale (1970–77).



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I could add to this list, as no doubt could his students, staff, and friends; ...philosopher, story teller, ...the list seems endless. And poignantly, he was a loving and very much-loved husband and father (and I assure you that is not a polite assumption) who was robbed of life long before he was able to enjoy and reflect upon his remarkable and lasting impact upon our young minds - as we were able to over the weekend.

Lest anyone imagine that I am misguided in portraying David Thornton as some sort of guru or saint, he was as human and had failings as any of us do. Yet the abiding impression and memory I have of this intelligent gentleman was of his uprightness, warmth and humanity, his sense of humour, of humility and fairness to all, and his ability to get to know the person inside every boy, and to truly master the art of listening to and considering those who entered his sphere.

As we all know, the School Motto adopted by Broadhurst was '*Structa Saxo*.' David Thornton understood that it takes much more than a Motto to realise its implication. And so it might be said that through his actions, and the example he set, and others have since followed - St Peter's is now well and truly if not built upon, at least anchored to the 'granite rock' of great educational example in all of its facets - staffing, facilities, environment, educational and academic, sporting, music, cultural achievement, and community involvement.



*Dale Burden (Principal) and Richard Black.*

In my opinion, it's people like David Thornton, so few in life that we might have had the privilege to have met or even known a part of, are the ones that should be recognised and awarded with honours such as CBE. Alas, as is often the case, the unrecognised stars, are really the brain surgeons, luminary teachers, and other leaders and worker bees who quietly make the world a better place for us all in so many ways. David Thornton epitomized such people and was more than a scholar and gentleman, he was and remains an inspiration.

Today's inheritors and beneficiaries of what is now St Peter's school have an incredibly daunting, though inspirational challenge however; and that is to maintain, to build upon, to keep up with the changing world, and to find ways to advance the high standards already achieved without doing damage in the process! By that, I mean that as with any institution and system, there will always be constraints and dependencies, the trick is to apply knowledge, skill, wisdom, insight, assess the internal and external environments and needs, mitigate risks. Harking back to mention of the predilections of physics: to expend energy most efficiently (resources of all kinds) and maintain the schools forward momentum whilst



*Tony Brown, Robyn Brown, Grace Thornton, Rose Todd.*

incrementally adjusting the direction to face the right place to be in our ever-changing world. The school is endowed with the very best of facilities and a campus to be envied by any school in the world; and students results in all fields of endeavour, and the obvious demand for enrolment places, are a testament to the dedication of all who work there.

It would be remiss to fail to acknowledge the part that Mrs Thornton played, indirectly and directly, in enabling and supporting David, and contributing to the success of the school as it stands today. She remains an inspiration - and clearly has not lost any of her insightfulness, acuity, or ability to hold an audience, which was so evident during her poignant and humorous recollections on Saturday evening! It was wonderful that she and Nicky were able to attend, and I trust, able to enjoy the reunion as we all did.

So long as St Peter's remains true to Arthur F. Broadhurst's and David J. Thornton's values and vision, these men will have established an enduring and proud legacy. A legacy to inspire future generations of people that know right from wrong, who strive to do the right thing, who are proud and confident, well educated, empathic, trustworthy, good parents, selfless...just good well developed people, confident in life skills, resilient and able to fully access their physical, intellectual, and spiritual endowments in the best manner they can, no matter the trials, tribulations, success and failures that cross all journeys through life. The school will then truly be able to maintain that it is a place where the 'Mind, Body, and Sprit,' are indeed developed without compromise, and without doing harm. Where young people can fully exploit their potential as they depart its environs and start on their next journey in life!

Well I am guessing the few that have read this far are ready for me to end, and so I say thank-you to David Thornton, and thank you to all those that have in the past and continue into the future, to ensure St Peter's School remains an example of the best it, and all who dwell within its orbit, can be!

With best wishes,

**Christopher M Gregory**

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'Nine Year Club' (don't think this exists, at least the tie doesn't!)

Boarder: Feb 1967-Dec 1975

## Hamish Russell (1970-1973)

SHALL I GO TO THE REUNION?

### RECEIVED BEFORE THE REUNION

Hi Neil

Firstly, thanks so much for posting out the six issues of the *Thornton Years*. They have been a great read! Reading through some articles has brought back old forgotten memories and others which have remained with me since leaving the school.

Issue 5 brought back long unforgettten memories regarding Archie Rush. I recall being in class with him (1972-73) when suddenly he collapsed in front of the class (probably all 10-12 of us!) Myself and another boy rushed to Matron for help (in the process causing much consternation amongst other classes with our ensuing racket) Archie lived through that, but I was saddened to read he passed away at school in 75' (I had left St Peter's as we had relocated North by this time) It would seem through that incident in class his collapse was a precursor to his untimely death.

Regarding the reunion, I am still deliberating whether to attend or not. Apologies for my procrastination! I have contacted an old school acquaintance, Guy Vosper (1971-72), who lives in Cambridge and has on occasion met with Miss Swears and Mr Hanna. He is not a member of the alumni (nor myself it would seem) although I was sure I was!!)

He is keen to come to the Thornton Reunion, but surprisingly has no social media networks. No computer and all that goes with it.

**Hamish Russell**

### RECEIVED AFTER THE REUNION

Without a doubt attending St Peter's was the highlight of my schooling years, every other school paling in comparison. Apart from excellent teaching by staff who cared for the boys education and welfare I remember with fondness other incidents.

Smoking rolled up newsprint (who knows what effect that had on young lungs!), raiding the orchard, walking AWOL into Cambridge, swimming naked in the freezing pool overseen by Miss Swears, Saturday sports and the Tuck Shop, music study through lunch, and of course the inevitable caning by Mark Hanna for misdemeanours. All but a few fond memories!

But a lasting profound memory I have was the obvious mutual respect between Mr Thornton and my father. These I hold dear after nearly four and a half decades. As seen through the eyes of a 9 year old boy!

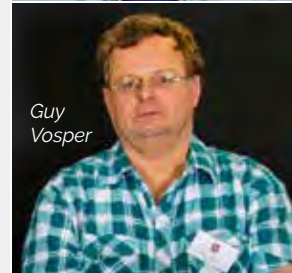
Regards

**Hamish Russell**

Email: vcstcere83@gmail.com



Hamish Russell



Guy Vosper

Both attended the Thornton Reunion

## The AFB Carved Wooden Bust

During the reunion some concern was expressed by Ross Hoole (I think) that the much admired wooden bust of AFB was nowhere to be found. It used to sit in the alcove at the main entrance and I have seen it in various positions over the years.

I told Ross that maybe it was put under lock and key for the reunion? But I told him I would track it down. I found it in the entrance foyer of the auditorium (where I had seen it previously where it sat on a grand piano). This was on the night of one of the school productions in May this year, so I took a photo as proof and it is below. So all is well and AFB still is looking down on his school!!

I found in the school history book a piece on it and its origins and here it is:

*"New quarters were provided for the bursar and the school manager and the doorway opposite the main entrance to the school was provided with an alcove to house the bust of the founder. The Old Boys had commissioned a bust of Broadhurst and the work was arranged by Stormy Land in England. It was unveiled at the official opening of the secondary department on 1 April 1972, when Broadhurst was present."*



The original photo 1972.



Photo taken 11th May 2018.



## Tim Glasson (1961)



I was at St Peter's for one year, 1961. I was undecided about if I should attend or not. But having decided to attend for the full weekend I am so glad that I did.

I don't really know why my mother sent me to St Peter's as I could not sing. But I later realised, at that time the school was largely centred around Guyon Wells, the Chapel and the Choir. That seemed very unusual to me for a school. Names like Bach, Beethoven and Mozart were very strange to me. I dreaded Mr Wells as if you were not musical you felt that he had no interest in you. One time, on my birthday, he yelled at me during one of his lessons but later in the day I came across Matron Burgess in a corridor and she said "happy birthday Glasson". I was surprised and asked how she knew but she said "I have a list of all the boys' birthdays".

I also remember a few things like Mr Ball reading our letters which we wrote weekly, Miss Swears supervising us in the showers (which I found embarrassing), I found, generally the food was good despite some derogatory comments. But I did loath porridge and one time we had tripe, which I never had before, and wouldn't eat it but Mr Ball at the head of our table really enjoyed it.

My main memories are of my cricketing endeavours. At that time my cricket coach who I remember was Mr J E Ball. I had no idea of batting technique at that time. Mr Ball would implore me to "play straight Glasson" when I continued to hit across the line.

In a match against Kings School at school I hit three 4s in a row then was bowled next ball. (I still remember the look on Mr Ball's face!). I was a keen fielder at square leg but once stood too close and the ball passed over my head. Alister Greig was a fine cricketer in our team and was our captain and awarded colours for cricket.

I was also a keen table tennis player and was runner up in the senior table tennis tournament to Alister Greig.



*Tim and Allan Gallagher catch up at the Thornton Reunion.*

I made some good friends in my one year at St Peter's but have had very little contact with them since, only three at the reunion but in different classes. I often wonder where they are and what they have done since. I am eagerly looking forward to any photos and stories of the reunion and other news.

Since leaving St Peter's I went on to Te Awamutu College and have been involved in farming and commercial property.

### **Tim Glasson**

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**Editor's comment:** *Thanks Tim it was great that you could make the reunion and that you enjoyed it. There are a number of photos I can also get to you as well as ones published here. You were in Upper School 1 in 1961 and maybe some of your classmates who read this might like to make contact. I know some of you do receive this newsletter).*



*L-R: Tim Glasson, Ray McKimm, Charles Bayly and Alison McKimm.*

## Campbell McMullen (1976–1981)

Hi Neil,

Thanks for the photo link - some good shots there. I'd forgotten a lot of things, but suddenly I remembered my friend and I would secretly visit the Thornton's house for coffee occasionally. Afterwards, we'd lie in wait for the school bursar who'd drive us in the old Rolls whilst he wore chauffeur's regalia. There was a button we could push to raise the glass pane between us and our 'chauffeur' which was good because I recall a drinks cabinet being

in the backseat. It was all great until the engine blew up one day and we became a steaming spectacle on the side of the road. I don't remember the Rolls ever going after that lol.

Thanks again.

**Cam Campbell McMullen)**

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Wondabook Media, [www.wondabook.com](http://www.wondabook.com)



**The 1981 Class Photo of Form 6 and Form 7**

Form 7: Peter Doole, John Eyre, Kester Gordon, Barry Hayes, Connor Maloney, Kenneth McCallum, Sigi Spath, Form 6: Nicholas Adams, Timothy Blake, Geoffrey Brown, Paul Castle, Simon Cole, Michael Collins, Timothy Connell, Stephen Emile, David Goodman, Sunil Kadri, Grish Kanji, Dean Lawson, Sean McLeod, Campbell McMullen, Roger McQuitty, Stephen Salt, Anthony Short, Andre Syben, Brett Tolley, Mark Twyman, Greame Wilson, Simon Wrigley, Teacher: Ted Dorman

**Editor's comment:** I can't name you but those in photo might be able to help – a large number of Thornton Years. So if you recognise someone let me know which one – Neil



# Memories



*Allan Gallagher, Marty Seifert reminiscing at the Thornton Reunion.*

## LOWER SCHOOL 1 - 1960

At the reunion Ray McKimm produced some older photos. One was a class photo that he had from the early 60's. From class lists I was able to identify it as Lower School 1 in 1960. I sorted out all the possible names and circulated it to a few of that class seeking to name as many as possible.

I got a good response and in particular from Rob McCallum who was able to name all (amazing). So I have included it below as most are Thornton Years boys and I am sure will bring back some memories. If anyone feels we have a wrong name for any of them please drop me a note so I can check. (Editor)



*Back L-R: Peter Hodges, Maurice Elliot, Roger Cowell, Ray McKimm*

*Middle row: Kent Robertson, Brian Wood, Michael Cowell (Teacher), David Peryer, Peter Barnes-Graham*

*Front row: Stephen Allsop, Thornton Bayliss, Michael Spitzer, Rob McCallum, Peter Gratton (missing Russell Barr)*

## REUNION – WHAT A MEMORABLE TIME

This will be long remembered by those from the "Thornton Years" who attended some or all of the reunion. The turnout was great and from the feedback an emotional time was had by many. There was around 100 in attendance at some time of the event including partners and a few past staff. Added to that, a number of supporters and present staff, including Dale Burden the Principal.

We had a number traveling a great distance including Ross Hoole (South Africa), Richard Black (USA), Ben Hepworth (Solomon Islands) and three from Australia. It was great to have Grace Thornton and daughter Nicky (pupil from 1977) attend and take a full part in the event.

In addition there were a number who have made a visit to the school around this time, (like Connor Maloney, Switzerland), who wanted to attend but travel, family or work commitments prohibited.

### THE CHAPEL

The Chapel featured largely in the event with a chapel service to start the reunion on Friday evening then we returned to the chapel on Saturday afternoon for a music recital by current students, a talk on music at St Peter's and what it offers, as well as a talk on the organ, its history and state of repair. We again went to the chapel on Sunday morning for an Organ Recital by Thornton Old Boy, Mark Eyre, as well as a talk on the organ, its history and state of repair, then a final chapel service.

The music recital was of such a high standard and so well delivered it left the old boys talking about it for some time while they tried to sort out a favourite (I think Danny Boy was right up there). It really showcased the current music offerings and standards at the school and showed clearly that the tradition started by the Founder, Arthur Broadhurst, continued by David Thornton and successive Headmasters is still of an exceptional standard.

### THE BOARDING HOUSES

An accommodation option was to sleep in the school boarding houses while at the reunion. We housed 45 of the participants in the school boarding houses and it was very well received. As well as the old boys and their partners aged from around late 40's to 60's, Grace Thornton also stayed on site. All were delighted to have the opportunity and other a little trouble with angle parking (see photo) and late night gatherings in the common room it was enjoyed.

### THE SWIM

No return to St Peter's would be the same without the traditional early morning swim. On the Saturday morning before breakfast we arranged for the use of one of the two new pools (yes we now have two, 8 lane 25 meter pools, one indoor one outdoor). We needed to confirm that togs were required in case some thought they were back in the 60's and 70's) and that the start time was 7.00am or they would miss breakfast. I arrived just before 7.00am to find some keen ones already in and more joined during that time. The comment was "much warmer and nicer".





# Memories



## THE VALLENTINE ROOM (IN THE NEW JUNIOR BLOCK)

This became reunion headquarters. You registered there and returned there for morning and afternoon teas. It had the displays of the archive material that was extensive and well received. It was a place you could sit out any parts of the days with a cup of tea and a chat with old friends.

## THE OLD PREP SCHOOL

We toured the old prep school, visited the dorms and explored in all the old rooms and saw what they are now used for. The old shower block that is now in staff rooms brought back some memories.

We visited the old classrooms that are still there, but with a modern look. Now used as the "Business and Entrepreneur Centre"

We talked with the current Headmaster, Dale Burden, in his office and compared old stories with new ones. It was a real trip down memory lane with the old photos on the walls, portraits of past headmasters and trophies sprinkled around.

## THE DINING ROOM

We had our breakfasts, lunch and dinners in the school dining room. It is still the original dining room but doubled in size with a mirror image of the original one added. The comment was "that if this is boarding school food - bring it on".

## THE HELPERS

No event like this can succeed without a lot of help both in sight and behind the scenes. But special thanks to all those that helped make it a success. To Phil Coles (Alumni President), Geoff Styles (Alumni Committee), Sharon Roux (Director of Advancement), Sara Young (Alumni Manager), Jenny Lala (Foundation Member), Lynn Brock (as always, reliable), Shae Brophy (Events Co-



Above: Fou Walker, Robin Walker, Peter Baxendale, Richard Black, Andrew Haworth, John Hallett.

Below: Murray Melville, John Mathieson, Kester Gordon, Duncan Laing, Tim Glasson.



# Memories



1. Jane Williams, Andrew Williams, Marty Seifert, Shae Brophy 2. Ross Hoyle centre stage in Principals office 3. John Mathieson, Pru Wood, Keith Hurst inside main doors. 4. Geoff Styles, Dale Burden (Principal), Peter Doole and Duncan Laing

ordinator), Kay Greed (for the displays and history), Lyndal Bartley (Accommodation), Emma James (photographer), Dale Burden (for supporting and joining in) and to Montana Catering Team (for the great food and service), as well as many others who helped.

## THE SPORTING FACILITIES

For many the guided tour of the new cycling velodrome, that is the home to Cycling NZ, was special. Built on the school grounds and with school reps on the trust that manages it and time allocated for use by students it is the latest jewel at the school.

It goes along with the Equestrian Centre, Golf Academy, two heated swimming pools (one indoor) all weather hockey field, tennis academy and so much more. As was already said "the school has come so far and has exceeded what Arthur Broadhurst and David Thornton would have thought possible".

## THE FARM AND FARM TOUR

A visit to the farm is always a welcome event by any returning Alumni. So many memories and adventures (many that would not now pass an OSH visit) happened in this area, some approved – some not. With the use of the school mini vans and a few other vehicles we transported all to the farm and some photos below were taken during the farm tour.

We were treated to a very enlightening talk from Demonstration Farm Manager, Louise Cook. The school has entered into an exciting joint venture with Lincoln University to make the farm into a model farm and be at the forefront in research into dairying and the disseminating of that to other farmers by way of open days and discussions.

This is another example of your school, St Peter's, being at the forefront of innovation as it has since founded in 1936.



Top left: Shae Brophy and Philip Coles, Top right: Lynn Brock  
Bottom: Sharon Roux and Jenny Lala.



# Memories



1. L-R Simon Trevethick, Robyn Trevethick, Peter Stewart, Peter Reilly and Robin Stewart in the velodrome. 2. A group on the Golf Academy tour. 3. Peter Stewart and Chris Plaw at the Equestrian Centre. 4. L-R Murray Melville, Sara Young, Andrew Williams, Sharron Rhodes and Ben Hepworth.

## THE FEATURE DINNER

We took a risk and decided to do away with formal speeches and run an "open mic" to allow stories to flow from the floor. It was kicked off with Grace Thornton who told a number of stories about her late husband David, the school and events she enjoyed, as well as comments on a number of the pupils from the time. A very clear and concise presentation that had us all hanging on every word.

If we had any worry about a lack of stories flowing this was quickly extinguished as the "brief" stories just flowed. The stories were interesting, seemed to come from the heart. These memories were by far the highlight of the weekend and in many cases very emotional. Many had a common thread, the absolute dedication of David Thornton to the boys, his ability to understand and relate to them and bring out the best in each. He treated each boy as an individual, not all the same. For many they felt it was the defining moment in their lives that they have taken with them into later life.

There was also a real sense of comradeship as so many could relate to others stories. Many had learning issues that had been addressed by David and he empathised with them. Others had felt abandoned at the school and it became a "home" for them. Many have promised to put their thoughts and stories into words for me, once the emotional effects of the reunion have passed, so I can share them with you in future newsletters. So this is the reminder for them.



Above: The Dining Room from days gone by.  
Below: Dale Burden (Principal) in the dining room on Friday night.



# Memories

From this evening (and the whole reunion) the "Thornton Years Alumni" now have a common bond that we will help enlarge on in years to come. On the right are some group photos of the evening. The short (?) talks given at the feature dinner were fun, entertaining and a trip down memory lane.

## A REMEMBRANCE TREE

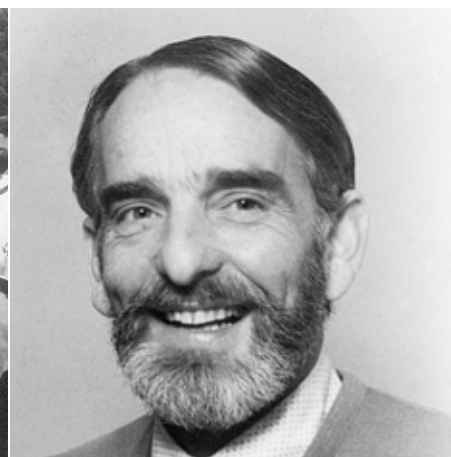
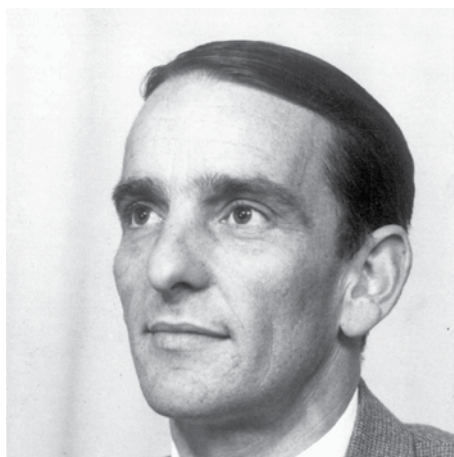
Thanks to the idea of a Thornton Old Boy, Craig Gerzon (1977 to 1982 - Prev Craig Lawson) we have planted a remembrance tree for the staff and pupils of the Thornton Years. It will hopefully be an area that can be visited by those with memories of this period when they return to the school in the future. The plaque was unveiled by Grace Thornton on the Saturday afternoon. It is situated on the grassed area between the north side of the Main Block and the Chapel.





## DAVID THORNTON RECOGNITION

(AND SUGGESTIONS FOR A COMMEMORATIVE FUND)



**A number of old boys who were at the reunion have approached myself and Sharon Roux (Director of Advancement) about the Thornton Years Alumni finding some way to firstly remember David (and Grace) Thornton, their own time and involvement while at the school, and also assist the further development of the school with some Thornton Years initiatives.**

We are working on a method whereby this could be achieved and identifying the style of any fund put in place. We are very mindful that not all would have an interest in this and some may not be able to contribute so we plan to set achievable goals. This introduction is really aimed at getting some feedback from any who are interested so that we can "tailor" the fund to best suit this group. We have had suggestions already of major projects including fund to purchase more land to enhance and extend the schools farm, the renovation and up keep of the organ and Chapel and assist in any development plans to enhance it, assist in the newly planned AgHort Centre when final plans are submitted, to help provide scholarships for current students to ensure the mix and viability of the school can be maintained into the future as well as maybe helping some who cannot afford to either attend or remain at the school. But we would like some input and suggestions from "Thornton Alumni."

The Foundation has picked up on this wish to commemorate David Thornton and "The Thornton Years" and is planning to set up a structure to allow this to happen and at the same time ensure that any funds donated are protected and used only for their intended purpose.

We will have the rules of the fund approved by the School Trust Board before circulating them to anyone interested in this venture.

### OUR THOUGHTS AT PRESENT

- The St Peter's School Foundation will operate funds known as "The David Thornton Commemorative Funds"
- One such fund would be a "Preserved Capital Fund" where the capital must be retained and only income used for the objects. The other would be "Special Purpose Funds" where any money donated would be used in full for those purposes.
- A donor can specify which funds their donation goes to or by default we would allocate 75% to the "Preserved Capital Fund" and 25% to the "Special Purpose Fund". (None of these ideas would prevent a donor to make a donation or bequest to the Foundation for any purpose they decide after consultation with Sharon Roux, Director of Advancement, or Neil McLaughlin, Chairman of St Peter's School Foundation.

- They will be funds that receive donations or bequests the capital of which is to be retained and used only for the purposes and under the conditions it was donated for if a Preserved Capital Fund or if a Special Purpose Fund then the total amount used for those purposes.
- Any grants from the fund must fall within the rules of the Foundation
- Grants are to be made to projects or activities that would be in keeping with the wishes of David Thornton.
- We would seek input from Thornton Years Alumni on the continued operation of this fund (Already several Thornton Alumni are members of the School Foundation and two (Tim Fookes and Richard Crafts are on the Foundation Committee)
- The grants will be aimed in particular at maintaining and enhancing the historical aspects of the school (like the organ, chapel, buildings, farm and other historical objects)
- The grants will be used to expand on David Thornton's philosophies by providing funding for scholarships to assist those that may not have the financial means to either attend or remain at the school and to ensure that the school is able to attract a diversified role that will enable it to provide an all-round education of Mind, Body and Spirit".
- Grants can also be made to improve the skills and development of the teaching staff at St Peter's School (who intend to remain at the school for at least two years) to ensure St Peters is able to deliver the latest in teaching development by teaching staff skilled to deliver it.
- Grants can also be made to any teaching aids or equipment that is deemed in keeping with the ideal of maintaining education at the best level available.

*Please send your thoughts and ideas to either:*

**Neil McLaughlin**  
**Chairman**  
**St Peter's Foundation**  
 Email: neilmcl@xtra.co.nz  
 Ph: +64 (0) 21619 171  
 PO Box 33 1520  
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**Director of Advancement**  
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 Private Bag 884  
 Cambridge 3450  
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# Memories

## Thornton Reunion

SATURDAY AFTERNOON - FORMAL GROUP PHOTOS



*Back L-R: Peter Baxendale, Peter Hull, Gregory Gyde, Christopher Gregory, Scott Tulloch, Mike Fisk, Richard Black, Ben Hepworth, John Mathieson, Carl Gillies.  
Front L-R: Gavin Pitt, Hamish Russell, John Fayerman, Brian King, Grace Thornton, Nicky Thornton, Grant Telfer, Allan Gallagher.*



*Back L-R: Sigi Spath, Kester Gordon, Henry Wright, Craig Gerzon, John Rennie, Barry Hayes, Keith Budd.  
Front L-R: Peter Doole, Geoff Styles, Quentin Allan, Grace Thornton, Philip Coles, Ross Hoole, Mike Jack.*



*STAFF Thornton Years  
L-R: Loryn Sinton, Peter Stewart, Grace Thornton, Rose Todd, Lynn Brock.*



# Memories

## Thornton Reunion

SATURDAY AFTERNOON - FORMAL GROUP PHOTOS



Back L-R: Michael Spitzer, Russell Brown, Duncan Laing, Simon Trevethick, Andrew Haworth, Murray Melville.  
Front L-R: Charles Bayly, Charles McKimm, Peter Hodges, Grace Thornton, Anthony Brown, Julian Hughes, Timothy Glasson.



Back L-R: Charles Rhodes, Chris Lipscombe, John Hallett, Keith Hurst, Guy Vosper.  
Front L-R: David McCormick, Robert Walker, Andrew Williams, Grace Thornton, Peter Reilly, Craig Morgan, Roger Lorigan.



L-R: Lenny Kaipara, Dean Lawson, Michael Kearney, Andrew Pool, Ross Hoole.



Marty Seifert



Mark Dwen



Andrew Schnauer



Maurice Guernier

## REFLECTIONS ON DJT

BY QUENTIN ALLAN (1972-1979)



Quentin, 2011 Reunion



2018 Reunion



2018 Reunion

**In the days immediately after the Thornton Years Reunion I mulled over what it was that made those childhood years at St Peter's so rich in memory. Reflecting on some of the stories that had been shared over the weekend, many more came to mind – such a 'kaleidoscope of recollections' - and I resolved to write them down while they were fresh in my mind. So with a couple of days annual leave tacked onto the mid-week ANZAC day holiday, I took advantage of the beautiful autumn weather, loaded up my trusty little Herreshoff 28 and sailed over to Rocky Bay, a picturesque anchorage on the south of Waiheke. Then, with no distractions other than my idyllic surroundings, I jotted down these thoughts.**

Observing people over the weekend, clearly, what had motivated all of these former students and staff members to revisit their old school, was firstly, the curiosity of seeing what had endured relatively unchanged over the decades of relentless transformation and development, and of course, the pleasure in re-connecting with friends and familiar faces from our years at St Peter's, also the interest of meeting people from just before or after our time, and hearing about the remarkable lives that people have been leading, and not least, the rare opportunity to reminisce about what appears, for most people, to have been a very positive time in our lives. Emerging from the conversations and anecdotes shared over the weekend was the unmistakable sense of affection, respect and gratitude we each had for DJT. So here, in no particular order, are some salient memories from the early to mid-1970s.

The opportunity to hurtle down a narrow rail, perched on a metal tray, propelled by nothing more than gravity was always worth queuing for. Perhaps the first thing that impressed me about DJT was his ingenuity – the mind that could conceive of, design, and build the Monorail suggests a headmaster endowed with an extraordinary sense of what a prep school should be about. For a boy, the Monorail was sheer delight – fast, with a sense of danger provided by having to traverse bumps and curves – along with the possibility of connecting with the barberry hedge just on your right as you went over the big hump, then a decisive challenge as you negotiated the final curve needing enough momentum for the home straight.

I was light, wiry, and had good balance – and the trick was to keep the tray absolutely centred so that with the minimum of friction you could develop sufficient speed to hit the fence at the end – and be catapulted back a wee way. The Monorail was a popular and characteristic feature of the school – such a ride would not be permitted by OSH in the risk averse world we inhabit today, but from memory it was well designed, engineered to a high standard, and no-one was ever badly injured.

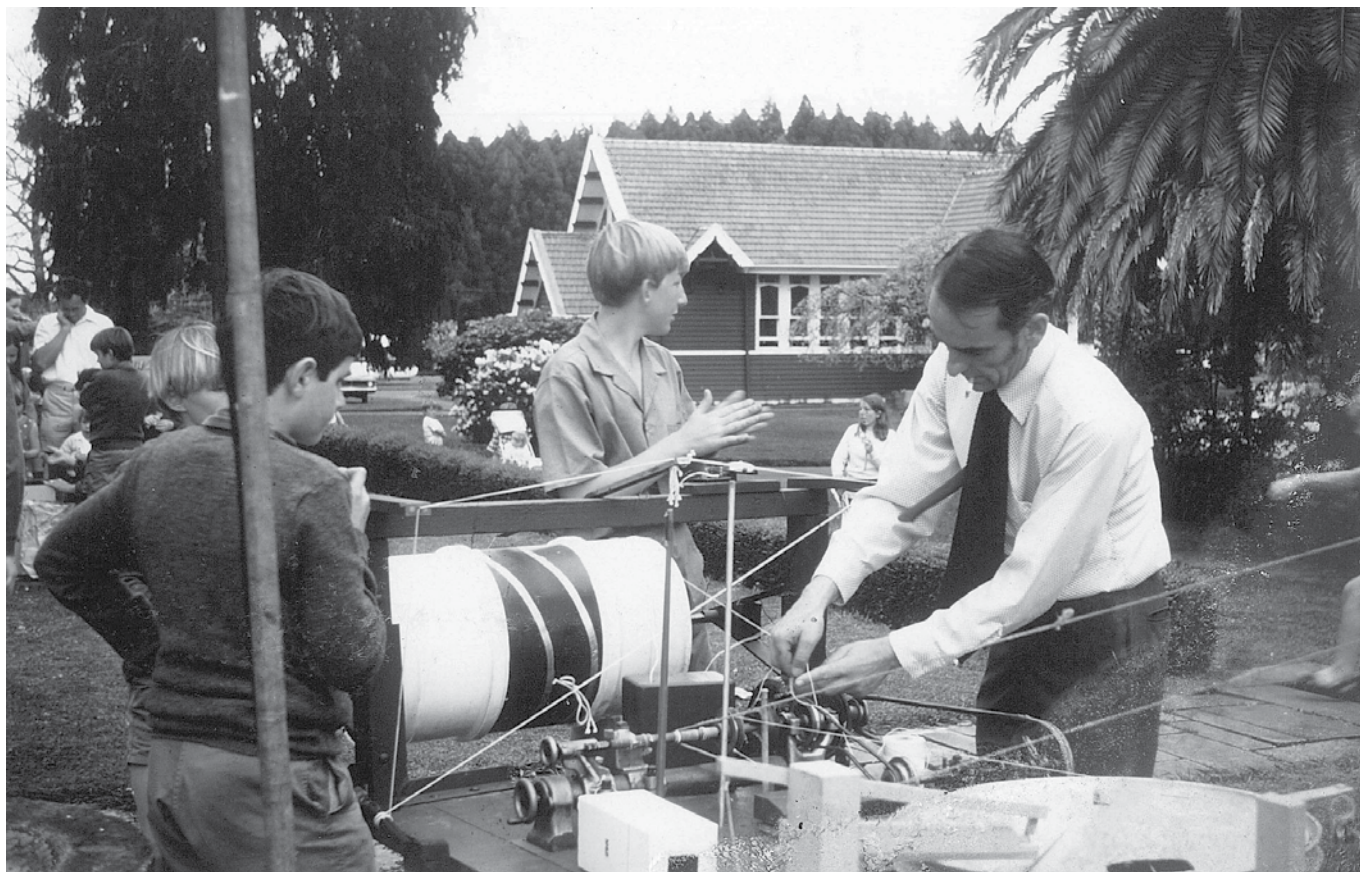
Then there was the annual school fair – DJT designed and built some of the attractions. One of my favourites was 'the Haunted House' – you made your way tentatively through a series of black curtains, likely to be startled by explosive pops and bangs as your feet set off an unstable powder (nitrogen triiodide?), then you were put out of countenance by various distractions such as a hanging skeleton, and perhaps called on to investigate a dish containing eyeballs (peeled grapes), and other curiosities, depending on the creativity of the curators involved. Out of the shadows, blinking your way back into the daylight, you encountered a variety of side-shows, for example, 'Test your Nerves', a fairly rudimentary device involving a wooden box onto which had been artfully arranged a convoluted wire.

The objective was to run a metal hoop over the wire without metal touching metal. If the electrical circuit was completed, a bell would ring, and the game was over. Then there was the 'Rook Machine' – a contraption of which Caractacus Potts would have been proud. From memory, this involved a large wooden board (about the size of a table-tennis table) onto which a course had been laid out for a ping-pong ball to travel – but along this route had been drilled holes, and to further complicate the picture, the surface gyrated on an ingenious mechanism powered by a re-purposed washing machine motor running a system of gears and pulleys – so that with the table pitching and rolling, it was extremely unlikely that the ping-pong ball would ever reach its final destination.

A prize was offered to anyone who could beat the machine – but the machine invariably won – hence the name, the 'Rook Machine'. This sort of device was of great interest to us in those relatively low-tech days of one channel, black and white television, before our expectations were artificially distorted by the heavy saturation of the now ubiquitous information technologies.



# Memories



*The Rook Machine*

DJT had a certain sense of style and he looked quite at home behind the wheel of his 1947 Silver Wraith – a magnificent motor car – oversized, black, with running boards, protruding silver headlamps, and of course, the 'Spirit Of Ecstasy' or 'Flying Lady' mascot decorating the radiator. On a suitably fine day, DJT's Rolls might be seen parked under the trees in the Quiet Zone, always a group of boys crowded around, peering through the windows to marvel at the luxurious trimmings – burr walnut cocktail cabinet for back seat passengers, and an electrically powered window to separate the driving compartment from the rear – once, a group of us were given a privileged glimpse of the bespoke tool kit, each tool nestled into its dedicated position in the boot lining. Along with other members of the debating team,

I was fortunate enough to ride in this vehicle to St Georges for an inter-school tournament. On the way down, we were entertained with a variety of stories including a recount of a previous trip during which, on a long clear stretch of road, the Rolls had overtaken Mr Stewart's car; as they swept past, DJT instructed the boys in the back to be pouring out a cup of tea from the thermos, carefully focusing on the job at hand, and not to look at the car they were passing – as he explained, "They will be looking in at us, there is no need for you to look at them. They will observe us having tea en-route, and assume that we have been doing this all the way down." This sense of humour was never far away, and helped to explain his popularity as a headmaster, and as a teacher.

A small group of us were fortunate to have French lessons with DJT in his study – and I have fond memories of him disappearing behind plumes of tobacco smoke as he drew on his pipe, reaching for his heavy desk copy of the Larousse dictionary to check the meaning of a word, and saying, "Yes, I thought that was the meaning ...", and of his entertaining anecdotes to illustrate various teaching points, often involving his adventures as a young man riding a motorbike around the Continent, and the absurd little



*Confidence course at the fair.*



# Memories



*Monorail at the fair*

ditties he taught us to sing, all the better to fix in mind the form of possessive adjectives and conjugation of irregular verbs. We had been given a reasonable foundation with Miss Swears in the early years devoting a goodly portion of each lesson to the singing of French folk songs, and Mrs Thornton kept us motivated in 3A with her own fund of diverting stories, along with chocolates and toffees to reward us for learning our vocabulary. Without anyone having to labour the point, we were given to understand that mastering a language required little more than a balance of fun and discipline.

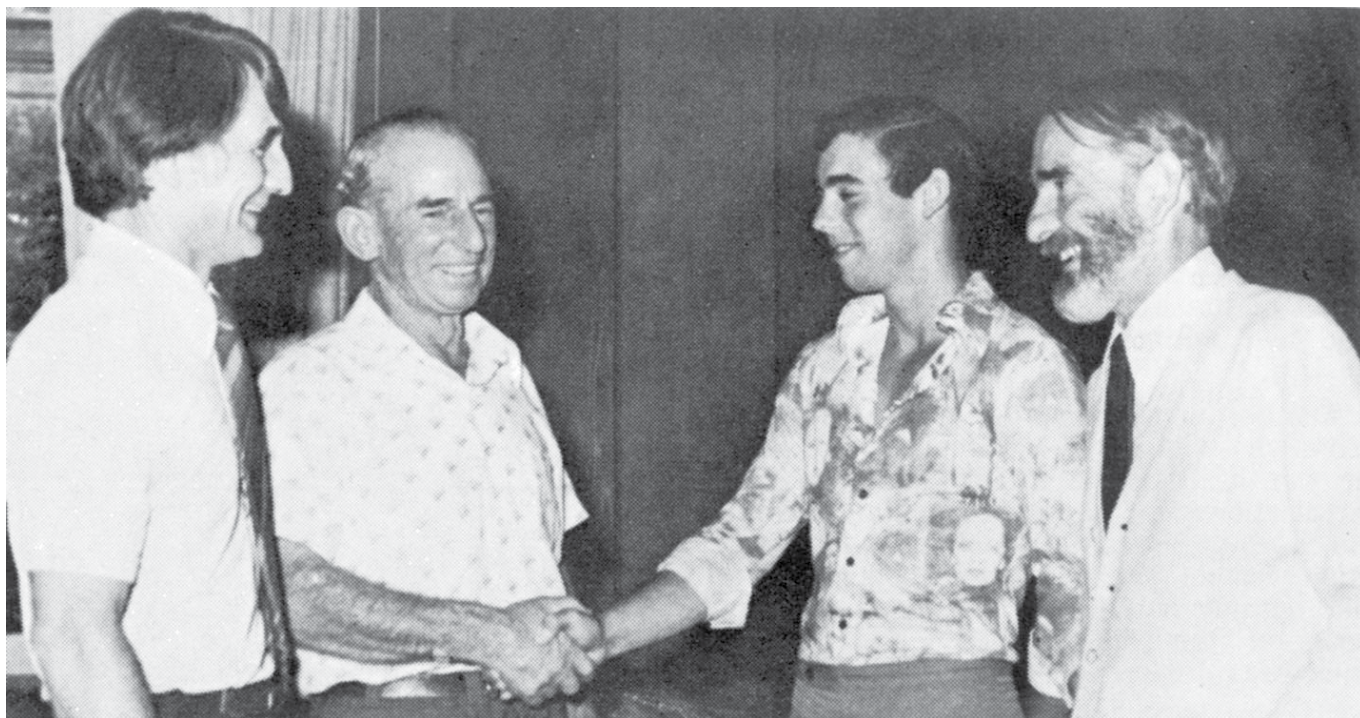
DJT had many talents, but above all he was hard working, and he paid meticulous attention to detail, as could be observed by anyone who saw him patiently engraving all the trophies for the annual prize giving, and, for the book prizes, inscribing each name in his distinctive copperplate writing. To do this every single year for two decades suggests extraordinary reserves of patience. He also exhibited unusual sang froid under moments of stress. One vivid memory was of an exploding candle during Sunday morning chapel – apparently some boys had gained access to the locked cupboard in the sacristy, and after working their way through the communion wine, had drilled a hole into the candle and positioned a fire-cracker beside the wick in such a way that it would go off with a spectacular bang at the quietest moment of Holy Eucharist. This was high drama, and those of us in the congregation expected some equally thrilling response, but with barely a raised eyebrow DJT calmly continued handing around the chalice, even as the chaplain had ducked behind the altar, perhaps interpreting the sounds as gun shots.

I recall DJT being really angry just once, his anger being in response to an incident that occurred towards the end of the cricket season when the rugby fields were being measured and marked out. The groundsman (under the direction of Mr Plescher) had spent the morning carefully positioning corner pegs and string lines along which they trundled the marking machine, filled with a mixture of creosote and weed-killer.





# Memories



*Cecil Plescher retires. L-R Colin Allan, Cecil, Carl Gillies (70-78), DJT*

Around midday, they went away for their well-deserved lunch, leaving all their equipment on the field, ready to continue in the afternoon. On returning from their break, Mr Plescher was somewhat dismayed to find that during their absence one of the senior boys had used the marking machine to produce a bizarrely surreal art effect, creating a series of intricate whirls and arabesques that remained clearly visible from the bank for the duration of the winter. DJT was furious, and the perpetrator was given to understand that there would indeed be 'consequences' for such behaviour.

My abiding memories are of the fun we had, and the relative freedom we enjoyed. Twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) we had no scheduled sport, and so, after queuing to make our selection from the Tuck Shop, served by a patient and ever-smiling Mrs Brock, we were free to amuse ourselves as we chose until the bell for 'fall in' inspection before the evening meal, and the resumption of the routine of chapel, prep, and bed. During fine weather in the summer this free time would be spent by many on the playing field, the keen cricketers practising at the nets; or an impromptu game of bullrush might erupt in the quad; these were games that could only have been invented by schoolboys of a certain age. 'Kick tin' was another such, with rules that were understood by the players, but which might not have made too much sense to an observer.

Other activities or fads depended on the season, such as autumn's conker competitions, using horse chestnuts which were drilled through with the sharp point of a compass, threaded with string - or more commonly, shoe laces; the game required patience and some skill, and carried the possibility of bruised knuckles until a certain knack was acquired. The school also had a couple of mature chestnut trees of the edible variety - not much to do with these, except during one memorable winter when the orchard was removed, and the trees bulldozed into a series of large bonfires, from which numerous smaller fires were carefully tended and used for roasting chestnuts.

Another stand-out memory is of dirt fights in the Kahikateas - impromptu skirmishes involving the defence of huts that had

been constructed out of make-shift building materials. Walter Mitty-like, we might have been commandoes on a raid, engaged in earnest and deadly warfare with the enemy - invariably against the 'filthy Hun'. I'm not sure that many adults were aware of this, but amongst ourselves, these dirt fights were legendary; they involved careful stockpiling of suitable ammunition - fist-sized clods of dried earth were the norm, but (for a time) some of the missiles were considerably less forgiving than clods of dirt - I recall a pile of building rubble from the demolition of some concrete pillars in the classroom block being a source of missiles at one point - a miracle that we survived without any cases of concussion, and with our eyesight intact. When Mr Stewart got wind of the concrete, the rubble was very quickly removed, and dirt fights officially discouraged.

Warfare involving projectiles also featured prominently when our Form 1 class went to the Ureweras for the first time in 1973; I recall an adrenaline-charged riverside battle between those of us on opposing banks - the heightened sense of awareness that comes from ducking and hearing the unmistakeable whizzing of river stones was not quite what Mr Hanna and Mr Brock had in mind when they took our class off on a tramping expedition to experience the serene beauty of our native rainforest.

Perhaps our preoccupation with war was not surprising given that twice a week the Junior School was shown a film in the gymnasium, and many of the films appeared to celebrate the glorious victories of the valiant Allies during WW2, especially in Europe: 'Guns of Navarone', 'Battle of Britain', 'Dam Busters', 'Reach for the Sky', 'Escape from Colditz', 'The Wooden Horse'. The protagonists of these films were our heroes and role models, so it made sense that the more adventurous would engage in escapades such as such as 'raiding the orchard' which involved meticulous planning, an almost palpable sense of danger, and rewards including not only the sweet and succulent apples, but a sense of having successfully evaded the enemy - housemasters armed with a sandshoe.

Escape from captivity was another theme - and we had observed the endeavours of Prisoners of War in 'The Wooden Horse', so we knew all about tunnelling underground. During weekends, we



# Memories

were allowed to go on farm leave as long as we were in a group of at least three, wearing our PE gear, and at least one of our number had a watch. Our obligations were clear: keep out of any paddock containing livestock or shut up for hay-making, and keep away from the river. No-one ever said anything about tunnelling being prohibited. We gave our names to the master on duty, and made our way to the farm. On my first farm leave excursion, I was taken by some of my classmates down to an area where the velodrome now stands, and introduced to the joys of underground excavation. Over a period of weeks, my companions had industriously applied various implements – pieces of wooden fence posts, old number plates, etc to scrape away the sandy clay and work our way into the bank. There wasn't enough wood for shoring up the sides and walls, but the clay appeared to hold up without the need for support, and so in we burrowed with never a fear of anything going awry. On my first Sunday exeat, my parents were chatting with Mr Stewart, and at one point my father inquired about our activities when on farm leave. I enthusiastically (and naively) explained about the tunnels we had been excavating, and I still recall the look of consternation that appeared on the faces of the adults as they immediately realised the potential for a collapse. Very soon after, the entire area was bulldozed, and tunnelling was from then added to the list of forbidden activities.

Life at St Peter's was orderly and regulated, and so any change to routine was greatly appreciated – especially the annual outing to Stones' farm. On the appointed day the entire Junior School piled into a series of ancient buses, hired from a local firm, and we drove in convoy away from the school for a morning of gloriously unstructured, self-directed amusements, followed by a picnic lunch. The weather was invariably favourable, and the day away from school was keenly anticipated by all, not least for the prospect of drama as we approached our destination. Access to the farm was via an unsealed, one-lane road that wound its way through picturesque Waikato farmland. I don't know what the driver of each bus must have been thinking, but my abiding

memory of the final stages of this drive through increasingly steep countryside was our collective desire to make the bus roll down one of the banks. To this end, we waited until the bus was about to negotiate a bend, then, with a cry of "Leeeeeeeaaaan!", a group would rush to the downhill side of the bus, in a (thankfully futile) effort to unbalance the vehicle, and cause it to roll over down the hillside. Our enthusiastic efforts were to no avail, and once safely deposited in our recreation area, we were given a briefing which was notable for its brevity – when the bell rang for lunch we were to meet again at the picnic area, and in the meantime, "Don't go out of bounds, avoid any paddock with livestock, and have fun".

So, briefing over, we scattered across a vast paddock fringed with native bush, and with a good stream flowing down the middle – which of course needed to be dammed. By the end of the day, a series of dams had been carefully constructed – and then, with memories of "The Dam Busters" no doubt fresh in mind, our final activity before leaving the farm was to breach each dam, starting upstream, and watch with glee as every downstream dam in turn fell prey to the relentless power of the water, which had built up over the day. And then as we scrambled back onto the bus at the end of the day we would be greeted by a genial DJT enquiring if we had enjoyed our day out in the open air.

Many more stories and recollections come to mind, but perhaps I'll stop here. Reflecting on the memories that were shared over the weekend, one common theme emerged: a sense of thankfulness that our lives had been touched by this singular gentleman, one who led by example, and whose life was a model of resourcefulness, imagination, wit, good taste, and above all, integrity – not to mention a tolerant acceptance of the bewildering antics of small boys. So, many thanks to the hardworking individuals from the Foundation, the Alumni Association, and the school who made the reunion such an outstanding success.

**Quentin Allan, 1972-1979**

Email: [quentin.allan@aut.ac.nz](mailto:quentin.allan@aut.ac.nz)



*Grace Thornton and daughter Nicky Thornton.*



# Memories



1. Marie Laing, Duncan Laing, Peter Hodges and Julian Hughes. 2. Peter Hull, Jenny Lala (at Registration table). 3. Peter Stewart keeping an eye on his wine. 4. John Fayerman, Murray Melville, Peter Hodges and Ray McKimm. 5. Lynne Gerzon, Craig Gerzon, John Fayerman and Grant Telfer. 6. Sigi Spath and Geoff Styles

# ALUMNI

ST PETER'S, CAMBRIDGE INAUGURAL

## *Distinguished Alumni Awards*



### THORNTON OLD BOY HONOURED

St Peter's School has introduced annual awards for distinguished alumni. It will involve recognising some of our many distinguished alumni who have made a significant contribution to society and been successful in their chosen field. The awards will be presented this year at a black tie dinner on Saturday, 8th September in Cambridge. The inaugural recipients for the St Peter's School Distinguished Alumni Awards are **Distinguished Professor Sir Vaughan Jones** and **Sir Noel Robinson**. The Distinguished Young Alumni Award (for under 35 years old) will be presented to **Nicholas Mowbray**.

#### **DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR SIR VAUGHAN JONES (1961–1965)**

Vaughan Frederick Randal Jones was a boy fascinated with mathematical discovery, who has become a man of high academic of achievement. Born in Gisborne in 1952, he attended St Peter's from 1961 till 1965. In his final year at St Peter's he was a prefect, Vice-captain of 1st X1 cricket team and played in the 1st XV rugby team (winning "Colours" in both sports). He also won the Founders Medal for English speaking, the Alan Cox Science prize and the Brewster French Essay Prize. Alan also won school prizes in English, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics, Latin, French, Music and Special Music.



From St Peter's Vaughan went on to Auckland Grammar then studied at the University of Auckland (B.Sc. 1972, M.Sc (Hon) 1973) and the Ecole de Physique and Ecole de Mathematique in Geneva for his PhD (Docteur es Sciences (Maths) in 1979. In 1979 he married his wife Martha in New Jersey, USA and they went on to have three children (two girls and a boy) and so far two grandchildren.

He moved to the United States of America in 1980 where he took a job at UCLA in California. His career path led to positions at the University of Pennsylvania and California, Berkeley before becoming the "Stevenson Professor of Mathematics" at Vanderbilt University in 2011.

He has received numerous awards including both the Fields Medal (said to be the top award in Mathematics worldwide and said by some to be the "Nobel Prize of Mathematics"), and the NZ Science and Technology Gold Medal (now known as the Rutherford Medal). He is a "Fellow of the Royal Society". He has honorary Doctorates from Auckland University (1991), University of Wales (1993) and University of the Littoral Opél Coast, Dunkirk, France (2002)

He was again honoured in New Zealand by receiving the DCNZM in 2002 and the KNZM in 2009

**For enquires and/or tickets regarding the Distinguished Alumni Awards please contact:**

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#### **SIR NOEL ROBINSON (1953–1957)**

Noel Robinson attended St Peter's School from 1953 to 1957 (So is Broadhurst Era Alumni). He started in 1953 in Lower School 11 and left at the end of 1957 from Upper School 11. In 1957 he received the Reeves Cup for Hockey and general prizes for Craft and Art, as well as mentions in Mathematics, Science and Art. From St Peter's he went on to complete his schooling at St Kentigen's College from 1958 to 1961.

Noel is known for his love of visionary projects. He has been developing manufacturing and commercial properties since 1970 when he founded Robinson Industries. After his retirement in 1999, Sir Noel became actively in large scale philanthropy mainly centred in the Counties Manukau region. He was awarded a knighthood (KNZM) in 2006 for services to business and the community. He is heavily involved in a number of trusts including Sir Woolf Fisher Charitable Trust, John Walker Find Your Field of Dreams Foundation, Highbrook Developments, Auckland Airport Community Trust and the Lions Club of Nelson North Charitable Trust and the Second Nature Charitable Trust. He is not afraid to speak out, to the point of being controversial if it will further a cause dear to his heart.

#### **NICHOLAS MOWBRAY (1998–2002)**

Nick Mowbray is known as one of the three Mowbray business partner siblings (all St Peter's Alumni) who founded the toy production company, Zuru (one of the world's largest toy companies.)



Nick is the entrepreneurial mind behind numerous toys and is the marketing and media front-man of the three. He's described himself as having a huge inner confidence, coupled with naivety and has learned some hard lessons but in learning, has developed both his own abilities and those of the company. Nick has the drive and determination and well understands the paradox between financial cost and sustainability; most of the toys are made from plastics and it is an ongoing task to make the products more environmentally friendly. Plant-based plastics and electronic apps may both feature in continuing innovation. He cites the story of the development of Lego and the business model ethos of 'less is more'. He is quoted as saying that 'simplicity is really powerful in building a profitable business'.