KENTIAN SOCIETY
SUPPORTING KENT STREET SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Newsletter

August 2024

Annual General Meeting

***Editor**: Members of the Kentian Society met for the customary Annual General Meeting in the school Cricket Pavilion on the morning of Sunday 26 May 2024. Extracts from the Chairman's Report to the meeting is provided for all members' information.*

The Kentian Society, which represents the 30 000+ alumni (students and staff) of the first government secondary school south of the Swan River in Perth to be built independent of an existing primary school, has had an interesting and fruitful year.

Since the 2023 AGM (held 18 June 2023 and then 21 August 2023), the Management Committee comprised John Ayling (Chair), David Price (Deputy Chair), Dr Gillian Colclough (Hon. Treasurer), Helen Barns (Hon. Secretary), Peter Gerrard (Executive Member), Graeme Campbell, Vicki Duball (Archivist), Lance Maschmedt, Pat Sanders, and Bill Shepherd.

The Society is grateful to all Committee members for their dedicated efforts. It is also recorded with appreciation that most of these people have served long periods on the Committee. I'm also personally grateful for the support I've received as the new Chair from all Committee members, and particularly from the Executive group who communicated with me regularly as we navigated some difficult waters.

At the first meeting of the new Committee in August, after a period when there had been no nominations to fill any of the executive positions, it was noted that the Society had less than $1000 in its bank accounts. Though there were 400 members, over 80% were "life members" who had paid a one-time fee and would not contribute further revenue. The majority of members were over 70 years old, with only two new members joining in the past year.

To bridge the gap between the Society's current actions and its future goals, the Executive group drafted new Strategic & Operational Plans. These were endorsed by the Committee in October. This strategic approach would later help highlight the diverse views among members about the Society's purpose, recognising that it fulfils many different needs.

WELCOME to your **Kentian Society e-Newsletter,** offering two-way communication with all interested members, families and friends.

We hope you find it both interesting and informative.

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Efforts were made to update and verify member information, while also reaching out to "lost" alumni. A revamped, free e-Newsletter was promoted for all Society and Alumni members who provided an email address (with an assurance that no member would ever receive an “ask for money” through email). The newsletters were deliberately designed to offer two-way communication with all interested members, their families and friends. The positive response from readers has been very encouraging.

Since September, the Society has reconnected with more than sixty alumni, a third of whom have either renewed their paid membership or become Society members for the first time.

The Society is grateful for the volunteers who dedicated numerous hours to the Archives this year. It’s now apparent that the Society has managed to preserve in its Archives some important resources on Western Australian childhood and other social history topics.

This includes a database of student admission records from 1940-2020, which contains details such as parental occupation, home address, schools attended, student siblings and more. However, it’s also clear that additional support is needed if the Society is to turn this area into a public Library and Museum, including more volunteers and an influx of funds to develop the means of digitally interrogating this data effectively for research.

This is partly the motivation for the Committee seeking to obtain charitable status and endorsement as a Deductible Gift Recipient for the Society, with the first step toward this goal being amendments to the Society’s Constitution by special resolution (75% majority). This would be a significant milestone if successful.

*[**Editor**: In conclusion, the Chair (John Ayling) noted that, since preparing his written report for the AGM, Prof Stan Kailis had advised that he was unable to continue as Society Patron due to personal circumstances. In addition, Vicki Duball, Pat Sanders and Graeme Campbell had also recently advised that they would not be nominating again for positions on the Management Committee (for similar reasons).*

John noted that Vicki and Pat in particular had been hinting at retirement for some time, although they intended to continue with their volunteer work in the Archives. Each had contributed with enthusiasm and focus over the years of their tenure (as was reflected in their honorary life membership of the Society) and both would be missed. On behalf of the Society, John then led a thank you by acclamation for all of these people for their long-standing work in these important positions.

All office-holders and other ordinary members of the Management Committee were subsequently re-elected unopposed, as was a further nominee (Chris Lesiter), with the remaining vacant positions to be filled by appointment by the Committee.

*All of the proposed constitutional amendments were passed unanimously by all members present at the AGM. A copy of the complete constitution (as registered on 11 August 2024) is available on our website (**www.kentians.org.au**), and a formal application to the relevant federal agencies to register the Society as a charity with DGR status is now underway. Further information about its progress will appear in future newsletters.]*

Meanwhile, the new Management Committee is also considering the matter of the vacant Society Patron position. It believes the process could take a while.

Remembering A Pandemic Survivor

In February 1936, a young woman named Mary, who had celebrated her nineteenth birthday just over a month earlier, walked through the entrance to what is now one of the oldest continuously operating primary schools in WA.

She had just been appointed as a Monitor-on-Probation in the infants section of North Perth Primary School, established in 1899 as a result of the spread of settlement north of Perth city following the gold boom of the late 19th century.

The initial phase of teacher training in WA at the time involved a two-year "apprenticeship" or probationary period working in a school, prior to admission at Claremont Teachers' College. Most of those who became monitors had completed the Leaving Certificate exams at the end of their secondary education. Some monitors like Mary had also matriculated and were allowed concurrent enrolment at the University of WA in preparation to becoming secondary school teachers.

Indeed, Mary had already been studying for a year towards a Bachelor of Arts degree while waiting to be admitted at Claremont (which had been closed for three years as a savings measure during the early part of the Great Depression in the 1930s).

She was a long way from her childhood home in a solid stone house on a small orchard at Stoneville, a fruit-growing area on the edge of the Darling Scarp east of Perth. Now living alone in a boarding house in Perth, young Mary had had to show a great deal of determination to reach this point of starting her teacher training.

Eight years before, her father had died suddenly following complications from abdominal surgery - he survived the initial operation but succumbed to kidney failure a week later, leaving a 54-year-old widow and three children (the youngest still in primary school).

Mary had already had her own brush with death less than ten years earlier. She was born in December 1916 in the Northern Territory. Her father Edwin, a mine manager at Pine Creek, had married the local school teacher Mabel (May) Bell in 1908, and in the next nine years three children were born: Jessie, Norman and Mary.

In March 1919, soon after Mary's second birthday, she suddenly became very ill with a new form of influenza that was sweeping the world in a pandemic after the First World War. As there was no doctor or nurse at Pine Creek, her mother and father had to treat her under instruction through telegrams sent by doctors in Darwin. Eventually, she was able to be transferred by train to Darwin, but the trip made her worse and she was then hospitalised for five weeks. After Mary recovered, Edwin sailed with his wife and family south to Western Australia.

Initially, the move was meant to be temporary after Mary's serious illness and Edwin soon returned to work at Pine Creek while his family stayed with his brother's family on a farm in the northern wheatbelt. However, he soon realised that the slump in metal prices after the Great War would lead to the end of mining development in the Northern Territory for the foreseeable future, and by 1921 the family had settled at an orchard he'd bought in the Perth hills. When he eventually left the Territory for the last time, Edwin took south with him a trunk of papers which remained virtually untouched for more than thirty years after his death in 1928.

Following the sudden loss of Edwin, the eldest child Jessie (19) would stay at home helping her mother May run the orchard for the next three decades. The only son, Norman (16), was about to complete high school at the time. He would go on to study for a Science degree at UWA and then move, following his marriage in 1938, to the Eastern States to pursue his career as a wood scientist with the CSIRO.

Meanwhile, Mary (11) applied herself to her primary school studies at Midland Junction Central School and, by the end of the following year, secured an academic scholarship at Perth Modern School for her secondary schooling over the next five years. As noted earlier, she successfully matriculated and entered university studies in preparation to becoming a secondary school teacher.

The construction in 1921 of the Infant School at North Perth where Mary started working in 1936 was to a design influenced by the Montessori teaching method. In Montessori classrooms, children make creative choices in their learning, while the highly trained teacher offers age-appropriate activities to guide the process. This approach reflected significant changes in educational philosophies that the WA Education Department was leading the way in adopting at that time.



Kent Street School Dux Honour Board. **Photo: John Ayling**

Kent Street SHS, for instance, has a long history of high academic standards. This is due in part to the deliberate decision made by the Labor State Government when the school first started in 1940 to staff it with outstanding teachers who, it was felt, would be capable of preparing the local students to achieve results at least as good as those attending schools in the more affluent suburbs of the Perth metropolitan area.

On the left-hand wall in the reception area of the school is an honour board listing all the students who, since 1990, have received the School Dux Award (for achieving the highest marks at the end of their secondary schooling).

A plaque at the top of the honour board says it is in memory of Mary Tamblyn, who died 25 years ago this year, and notes that she was held in high regard by students and colleagues at the school.

No doubt, many busy people have regularly walked past this display without giving it much thought, let alone wondering who Mary was or why she was held in such high regard.

Mary Tamblyn, teacher 1953-1977 spent the last twenty five years of her long career with the Education Department relieving as Principal Mistress from time to time and teaching senior students at the Kent Street school. She was known for her innovative approach to teaching, especially her favourite subject History.



Mary Tamblyn in her later years. **Photo: Kentian Archives**

Teachers who have now long since retired still speak fondly of Mary's generous and welcoming attitude to them as a senior colleague when they first started teaching at Kent Street many decades earlier.

While most students were stuck in their classrooms, Mary's classes were gaining incredible insight into the difficult early years of settlement in the 1800s in the Swan River Colony by going on visits with her to the East Perth Pioneer Cemeteries on top of the hill behind the WACA ground and Gloucester Park race course.

Here, they would journey back in time as they looked at a variety of graves and headstones marking the burial sites of people laid to rest from 1830-1899.

Back in the classroom, and irrespective of whether the area of study was the French Revolution of the 1790s or the rise of Adolph Hitler in the 1930s, students could always expect their time to be enriched by the many detailed and colourful supplementary materials that Mary would bring in and share with them.

However, it wasn't all fun and games in Mary Tamblyn's classroom as she had very rigorous expectations. Final year students preparing for their university matriculation exams were still required to find time to undertake a major research project (in their own time) using primary source documents from the *J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History and State Archives* in James Street, Perth.

Moreover, despite photographs like the one on the previous page, she wasn't always the venerable teacher many people may choose to remember now. After all, she was still a relatively young woman in her mid-thirties when she first started teaching at Kent Street.

And she was only 22-years-old when she completed her training and was first appointed in 1939 as the sole teacher at West Yorkrakine Primary School, thirty kilometres north of Tammin, a town in the central agricultural region about 180 kilometres east of Perth.

There, she dealt with all the usual happenings of a small agricultural community, including the sudden death from illness of one of her pupils, the eleven-year-old son of a local farming family.

In 1942, young Mary finally became a secondary school teacher when she transferred to Northam High School, where she taught History and English for the next decade, rising to a senior teaching position by 1952. Her new location was far more convenient in terms of being able to visit her mother May and sister Jennie at the family orchard in Stoneville.

Mary also participated enthusiastically in Northam's social life, particularly (as reported in the local newspaper) in the local Repertory Drama Society where she produced some of the one-act plays and appeared on stage in entertaining and substantial roles, such as a coy and flighty widow (in the play *Admiral Peters)* who leaves her sweetheart to philander with his friend.

After eleven years at Northam, Mary transferred to Kent Street SHS in 1953 and within only two years was promoted substantively to a Senior Mistress position. In 1960, she was promoted again to an even more senior position as First Mistress and continued in this role, apart from times when she was relieving as Principal Mistress, until her retirement from the Education Department in 1977.

Moreover, Mary Tamblyn wasn't just a teacher of History; she was also a working historian. As a member of the Royal WA Historical Society, she actively promoted WA history studies by for instance organising and leading two buses and several cars filled with Society members (and overseas visitors from Canada and India) on a tour of places of historical interest at Beverley and York.

In 1958, Mary's mother eventually died at home in Stoneville soon after her 84th birthday and Mary's older sister Jessie then moved to live with Mary in her house near Kent Street SHS in Leonard Street, Victoria Park.

Jessie brought with her many family possessions, including the unopened trunk of papers that had accompanied their father Edwin when the family moved to WA in the early 1920s.

The unopened trunk of papers … was an historical treasure trove.

When Mary eventually examined her father's collection of papers, she discovered it was an historical treasure trove.

As she was later to write in a book about the results of her research into the matter:

> *In September 1886, the day after his twenty third birthday, a young Cornish miner, Edwin Tamblyn, stepped ashore at Port Darwin in the Northern Territory. He was to spend the next thirty five years there, working first as a practical miner employed for wages, then as a prospector and small claim holder and finally, after a brief period as underground foreman, as a mine manager for English companies.*

Mary realised the collection was significant in three ways. First, it gave a detailed picture of mining development in the Territory over a very long and important period.

Second, the mining world is brought to life through such simple things as a letter, a mention in a diary, a receipt. All of a sudden one meets the characters of the day: government officials, miners, teamsters, publicans and Chinese tributers and labourers.

Third, the events of Edwin Tamblyn's own life (his marriage, the birth of his children, his personal successes and failures) run through the papers. He draws a picture of the Territory life of an ordinary man who had neither the education nor the authority of a trained professional or a government official.

Over the ensuing years, Mary Tamblyn wrote up the results of her detailed research into the struggles of the early miners, based on her father's papers. The story is told in an extensive unpublished manuscript, copies of which were eventually lodged in the Northern Territory Archives and the Northern Territory State Reference Library.

Later, she would publish an edited and shortened 75-page version of the original text through the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, entitled *Mines, Money and Men: Top End Mining 1895-1921*.

While this 1989 publication omits some of the illustrations and copies of the old records, as well as a section on the varied characters in the mining world contained in the original manuscript, it still vividly conveys a rich and lively story.

***Editor**: Mary Tamblyn donated a personally-signed copy of her shortened text to the Kentian Archives in the early 1990s.*

Society members wishing to see it should first contact the Archives, to arrange a suitable time to do so, by sending an email to archives@kentians.org.au.

A digitised copy is also available online through the Northern Territory Historical Society at https://www.historicalsocietynt.org.au/territory-stories.

Mary Tamblyn's story is just one of many more that can be told from the information held in the Kentian Archives. Readers are invited to write to us (by sending an email to society@ kentians.org.au) to suggest the names of ex-students or staff who they think might make for a story that would be of interest to other Kentians and the general public.

Call For Volunteers

Join our friendly community of alumni volunteers and use your skills and expertise to make a difference to the lives of the next generation of Kent Street graduates.

We have a diverse range of volunteering opportunities, with flexibility in mind, to work around your existing commitments.

When you share your time and expertise, you enrich the lives of everyone at the school – and the experience gives you so much back.

There are many ways you can volunteer, from supporting the planning of a class reunion, sharing your story and talents at alumni events, mentoring a student or becoming an alumni leader.

Here are eight opportunities for alumni to give their time:

- **Support the Scholarship Foundation by volunteering your time.** Quite apart from the many people who generously donate funds to the Scholarship Foundation, this program also relies on a volunteer team who give their time through the school year to meet with students and encourage them to apply, and then help assess and interview applicants.

- **Assist the team in the Kentian Archives to help develop our proposed public library and museum.** The Archives group has been operating since 1992, gathering, collating and archiving school records, photos, films, newspaper articles, programs, uniforms - anything of interest relating to the 80+ years of the school's existence. The tasks performed by the volunteers are many and varied, and everyone is welcome to join in.

- **Support the school by becoming a Volunteer Helper at school events and celebrations.** In this post-pandemic era, coming together for serious or fun reasons is so important - we know that this strengthens our school community, enables us to make a difference and give back to the school, and also supports the wellbeing of all of our alumni and their extended connections. Please note that most people need a Working With Children Check to work as a volunteer in a school.

- **Support communication with alumni through the Society eNewsletter.** Stories are powerful – they move people. We want our alumni to inspire our current students and each other - giving them examples of Kentians out in the world, making a difference. We know the stories of our alumni, and the impact of those stories, will further inspire and connect our community. Our publications team is always looking for more volunteers.
- **Provide guidance to alumni wanting to Plan a Reunion.** Reunions are an exciting and rewarding way to reconnect with old friends and the school. We encourage alumni to take control of their reunions using a committee structure to share workload and come to consensus decisions about the type of event they wish to run. The Kentian Society is able to offer a range of support, and particularly welcomes alumni with past experience of organising reunions to share their knowledge and expertise.

- **Participate in our Mentoring Program.** A mentorship or career development program provides current students and alumni (including recent graduates) an opportunity to network and interact with one another. For students, mentor programs offer career and development advice from alumni volunteers; for alumni, these programs offer the ability to give back and help students with career decisions and life advice.

- **Become a Social Media Ambassador.** Ambassadors help generate positive buzz about Kent Street SHS and the Kentian Society by helping disseminate and generate online content via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and more. As an alumni social media ambassador, you help us reach more alumni, friends and supporters, and serve as a valuable asset to our communication efforts.

- **Serve in a Leadership role.** A lot of leadership involves soft skills such as critical thinking and people management. All of our volunteer teams need alumni who can help plan myriad events and deliver results. Individuals may also serve on the Kentian Society Management Committee. This volunteer opportunity, however, requires a significant time commitment and, depending on the role, an alumnus or alumna must be nominated or elected.

Your Say

Readers appreciate the news brought to us by members, and often are important for inclusion in Archives records and displays, allowing us to honour the history and share the heritage of Kent Street Senior High School. Your contributions should be sent directly to society@kentians.org.au

From: Phil Rebakis, student 1966-70
Subject: School Memories

I attended South Perth Primary until 1965. I remember that I was struck by how much bigger Kent Street SHS was than my primary school. My view of the Kent Street school now is only positive. Great fun, people, and education. Many memorable moments. The mere fact that the Kentian Society is active supports this view. I particularly remember our regular parties, hockey matches, tricks on teachers, and final assembly.

Kent Street allowed us more freedom than many schools would have tolerated. The teachers were generally excellent. In those days we respected them. They still had to put up with a fair bit of grief from us boys (most of whom were not shrinking violets).

One day a good friend of mine was dressed in his Army Reserve uniform and a trainee teacher came into our maths class and tripped over my colleague's boots. The trainee teacher had a piece of him. We were all shocked as teachers never treated us in that manner. The teacher dragged the trainee off and we didn't see him again. I never remember any teacher mishandling us without a very good reason. And even then, it was measured.

A feature of the 1960s was that students were streamed. As a result, students tended to stay together for most of their secondary school education. This meant we became good friends with many other students. We made our social lives around them. Parties were regularly undertaken. We played cards, got drunk, and plotted tricks on our teachers.

Being in a co-educational school was a real bonus for us all. We learned to respect females. They were generally smarter and better behaved. But not always. We were largely allowed a lot of freedom with our uniforms. Only one teacher insisted we wear a tie. It is amazing how many ways one can put on a tie. The girls were frequently chastised for wearing short skirts (although never from the boys).

My sister was a year in front of me. In Year 11 she was offered a scholarship to study Art at Applecross Senior High School. She was fit, good-looking, and smart, so many Applecross boys came to our house and I later became friends with them. Applecross was more conservative and formal than Kent Street. Our parties, and sport, were much better. Kent Street had good hockey, athletics, swimming, cricket, and baseball teams which I was involved in. I was also involved in a successful debating team.

Throughout my school years, we wanted to break the shackles of school rules. The Kentian students invented Mash Ball, which was Mat Ball with fewer rules. Perhaps Hogwarts (Harry Potter's school) developed Quidditch from our invented game.

Mash Ball had roughly 10 players a side fighting for a ball to put in the hands of the goal scorer who had to have some part of his body on the mat holding the ball to score. After the score, the ball was thrown up in the middle of the game. Lunch time siren ended the game. We all played hard and frequently were injured and unable to attend afternoon classes. It became a cult for a brief period.

The teachers decided that they would play against the students. The teachers tried to dominate us but they underestimated our strengths. In Year 12 there was a 100 m runner who had broken the state record. For the student side, our secret weapon was our champion runner. We consistently delivered the ball wide. Our runner was quick. The teachers were thrashed. And that was our last game of Mash Ball.

On the final day before our Year 12 exams, we organised a spectacle - an egg and flour throwing session. Not long after we began, the teachers came over to break up the rabble. A teacher who probably had a score to settle with me saw an un-cracked egg on the ground. He threw it at me. I caught it and it didn't break. I returned it to the sender and he had egg on his face. It all ended as you would expect. I think even the teachers enjoyed the fight.

Earlier in the day there had been an assembly. The night before, the ne'er do wells (of whom I was one) planned a surprise. Two of us were speleologists (aka cave climbers). We had removed a large desk from one of our classrooms. At night we hoisted the desk on top of the assembly area. As we all sat down at the assembly, the furious Deputy Head Master came out onto the porch. As I remember every student was laughing. The staff weren't.

We learned more than a school curriculum at Kent Street. I never thought of what to do once I finished school. I just knew I was going to university as I enjoyed education. Everything worked out. Good friendships had been made, I received a good education, and had many good times. I encourage you all to write something about your memories.

Editor: *These are extracts from a much longer reminiscence submitted by Phil which will be lodged in the Kentian Archives. We agree with him that more of you should write something about your memories of attending Kent Street.*

From: Ross Easton, student 1963-67
Subject: School Photos

I was at lunch with two friends from Kent Street (we all started in class 31 together and finished in V V) and, of course, the school and old school friends were a significant topic of conversation.

We were discussing who the prefects were in 1967 (two of us had been) - we could remember Head Boy, Head Girl and four others.

After much searching when I got home, I eventually found three photos from 1967.

I hope these photos are useful for the Archives. While most of the faces are familiar, the names are not quite there. It was a great school. Thank you for keeping the memory alive.

[***Editor:*** *Our team of Archives volunteers later posted the photos on Facebook and (with the many contributions made by people responding to that post) were able to add most of the missing names to the people in the photos. Thanks all who made this possible.*

The photos are now also being published in this newsletter. It's hoped that this will jog old memories and the rest of the names can be added. If you can identify the un-named people, please send an email to society@kentians.org.au stating the photo by title, the row (front or back) and the position in the row (L-R).



1967 KSSHS Prefects

Boys (L-R): __ Beven Lee Stan Foster __ Brain Armstrong Graham Smithers Ross Easton Glen Joyce

Girls(L-R): Estelle Doust — Judy Temple Susan Gould — Robyn Wilson Janette May Francine Fairhead



1967 KSSHS School Ball—Prefects

Boys (L-R): __ Graham Smithers Stan Foster Bevan Lee Glenn Joyce Ross Easton Brian Armstrong __

Girls (L-R): — Susan Gould Judy Temple Estelle Doust Francine Fairhead Janette May Robyn Wilson



1967 KSSHS Hockey Team - Woodville (SA) Tour

Back Row: Wayne Martin Alan Bassett __ I an Bryant Gordon Tucker Tony Morgan KenDowning Craig Drummond D avid Porter __

Front Row: Ian Kane Les Green Peter Smith Steven Benton __ Steve Matzkov

Kent Street Senior High School 50th Year Reunion

for those who attended KSSHS in the 1970 -1974 cohort





You might remember some of these faces! !

We would love to see you all in the next photo!



Come along at 11am on Sunday 17th November to catch up with old friends and reminisce about old times and lives lived. For further details please contact the organising committee (Annette Connop (née Bawden), Cathy Fetherston (née Taylor) Leanne Hair (née McManus), Erica Henderson (née Yates), and Kate (Kathy) Webster) Kate.kentst74@gmail.com

Society Membership

New Society Members and renewals since 1 ***February*** *2024:*

Bev Adam (Smith), student 1953-56
Lloyd Blake, student 1957-60
Bev Booth, staff member 1992-2018
Stephen Cohen, student 1971-75
Marg Fox (Jarvis), student 1956-57
Warren Grellier, staff member 1973-76
Jim Langford, student 1957-61
Hailey McArthur, student 2021-23
Jude Quinn, student 2020-23

Have **YOU** completed your **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / UPDATE?**

Membership Application Forms are available on our website **www.kentians.org.au**

Your membership contributions help us to keep you connected, build new connections, promote reunions, and preserve your memories in our archives.

Don't risk YOUR membership falling into arrears. A review of our membership register is currently underway, so if you want to remain a financial Society Member please make sure to update your details (including your email address) on our new Update Form and pay your membership contribution into the bank account specified on the form.

Don't delay - do it today.