

Foundation May 2000 Issue 4

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ELECTRONIC DATA BASE UNVEILED

Foundation member Bruce Cunningham contemplated the daunting task of building and maintaining a reliable database of names and addresses in the run-up to the school centennial. Experience with the Foundation's mail-outs has shown many addresses are inaccurate within even a short time.

The labour to enter corrections and new names would be enormous.

There had to be a better way...

His solution is a new website called Membership Managers. Ex-pupils, staff, board members and parents with children at school can enter and update contact information themselves. With email, and therefore a reliable long-term address, they can be contacted by the Foundation without resort to postage.

There are several options on how visible a name on the register will be to others, and what information the person wants to receive (if any). Some may choose that only the Foundation, or future reunion organisers have access to their details.

Although the site has been designed specifically around the needs of the Gore High Foundation, it is Bruce's own personal enterprise, and he hopes it will be useful to similar organisations.

Check out the Gore High register at <http://www.reunion.co.nz/>

Whatever happened to...

This question may be quickly answered through the register at Membership Managers. The person you seek may even have left an email address, or a website link. It's still early days, but already names are building up and connections have been made.

Just don't put anyone on your email joke distribution list without permission or we'll be unpopular!!!

The Gore High School Foundation aims to keep past pupils informed of what is happening in the school

and to assist in fostering a greater involvement in the school's development and in ex-pupil activities.

John Thomson M.A., E.D.

(1908-2000)

As staff member of Gore High School from 1946, and rector 1951-65, John Thomson's name was a by-word for courtesy and tact.



Former staff member Murray Darling describes him as a good manager, who gave young teachers scope to display responsibility, providing support where necessary. In return staff were loyal, and he held together a stable group of very well qualified and able senior teachers, many of whom also had masters' degrees at a time when this was truly an elite qualification. The school had a very high reputation, partly based on this stability.

"He worked hard for the school, and staff were prepared to work hard for him," Mr Darling re-calls.

Challenging years

Yet the post-war years were not easy. They saw curriculum change, the pressures of the inadequacies of the old building, the move to Coutts Road, then the rapid increase in roll until the new school (and the hostel) was also bursting at the seams.

Gore was booming: the school roll rose from 400 to 900, staff from 19 to 35, with such teacher shortages that married women with families were urged to return to the classroom.

Each school year began with some classes of 40-50 pupils, but numbers dropped off rapidly as children turned 15 and left for the farm or for a buoyant employment market. Mr Thomson worked hard to encourage the farming community of the value of cultivating the intellect.

Those pupils who stayed on at school were there because they and their parents valued education.

"It was very much a family affair," says Alan Condie, who was a junior teacher under Mr Thomson. "It was a privilege to be part of it."

John Thomson grew up in Gisborne, was educated there and at Auckland University-completing his B.A. aged only 19. He taught at Takapuna Grammar, Palmerston North Boys' and Hawera Technical High.

Depression and war

His son, Ken*, says "While outwardly a quiet man, Dad held firm views on a range of topics, shaped by his background and life experiences. Mum and Dad were both fortunate to have been fully employed through the depression years, but what they saw then influenced their attitudes for the remainder of their lives."

Mr Thomson was a territorial officer both before and after the war (retiring as a Major, with an Efficiency Decoration, in 1951), and served with 25 Battalion as Signals Officer in Italy 1942-46. The war also made a deep impression upon him, and shaped his ideas of the kind of school he wanted to lead.

"He preferred subtlety and gentlemanliness to brute force... He was always the soul of discretion and courtesy, and I don't think you'll find that very common these days," Alan Condie says.

"He was also inflexible where he considered this necessary."

Mr Thomson combined intellectual achievement with cultural interests, including singing and drama, and a passion for sports: cricket and hockey in his youth, and later golf and bowls.

In his day the Rector (along with doctors and ministers of religion) possessed considerable authority in the community, yet he apparently used this with restraint.

Retirement

Mr Thomson was only 58 when he retired, having completed 40 years' teaching service. Accord-in to his son, Ken, the bleak survival record of high school principals in retirement was a factor in his decision against continuing.

If this were true, he challenged the mean, spend-in another productive 34 years in retirement on the Kapiti Coast. From 1967-74 he was the (part-time) secretary-organiser for the United Nations Association of New Zealand.

Marjorie Thomson, who possessed considerable authority and influence herself in both the school and the hostel, and in the community (especially the National Council of Women) died in 1986.

*Dr Ken Thomson is now a forensic pathologist in Wellington.

Two other significant long-term staff died in 1999, rather poignantly, given their long and close friendship, within a few months of one another. Tributes to Mr MacCartney and Mrs McConnell will appear in the next newsletter.

PROFILES

Shona Elder - sportswoman

Those at school in the 60s will remember Shona Sanson as one of that sporty Rivers-dale clan who did so well at just about anything they tried. She had a national tennis ranking while still at Riversdale Primary, became an under-23 hockey All Black, and in 1972 won the Eastern Southland Sportsperson of the Year for her record in tennis, badminton, squash and hockey. The highlight of her career, she says, was the thrill of twice playing Susan Devoy when Devoy was world no.1.

Today she is Shona Elder, having married Fraser Elder "from across the Mataura" from the family farm at Waipounamu in 1974, and the youngest of their three children is still at GHS. Sadly, their elder son, Stephen, was drowned in a tragic accident at Piano Flat in 1993.

Shona describes herself as "not very involved" in the school today, but this is comparative-these sports people don't do things by halves. She is still a hockey coach and selector, and for the last two years has taken the GHS hockey girls' team to the Federation Cup, the premier secondary school tournament.

"I'm proud to say we have had very favourable comments from other areas about conduct and friendliness, even though our results aren't always what we've strived for," she says.

Her own sporting focus is now golf, which she describes as "easily the hardest sport I've played."

Other interests include gardening, and for 20 years she has been involved with St John's Riversdale division. Besides the usual volunteer hours spent at rugby games, gymkhanas, triathlons etc, this small group operates a First Response Vehicle, preparing patients for transfer to the Gore or Lumsden ambulances for transport to hospital.

But motherhood has always come first, she says.

"My children are top on my priority list, I'm devoted to their happiness and will be proud of them as long as they continue to be honest, loving and helpful."

Others who came to Gore High from country schools will identify with Shona's memories of her early days there, the sheer physical size of the school and the anxiety for the first few weeks about getting lost and being late for class.

The sixties

It was the days of choosing between Rural, Gen-eral and Commercial. I chose General, and quickly made good friends in my new and large class (3G2). Most of the class stayed together through-out our high school years. I have good memories and am still friends with lots of people I met then. My cousin Dianne (Hurley) Herron and Judy (Cunningham) Jeffries are also still around Gore.

We had sports exchanges with nearby schools, and played for our own clubs at weekends.

Sport is more diverse now and there are a lot more opportunities. Not even the rugby boys got the big trips school teams do today.

School Cert was a big deal back then, but to attain a pass we only had to achieve the magic total of 200 plus, and yippee that was that. I sneaked through with the miserable total of 210, but was happy. Then one more year at Gore High before being accepted for teachers college in Dunedin at the tender age of

16. I was quite sad my last few days at school and would have happily done another year. It was the prospect of not seeing good friends again, and I really enjoyed the student teacher relationship that 6th form year.

Unfortunately, in Dunedin I went private boarding. It was a very difficult situation and I left and came home. Hostels are a much better idea.

Back home I got a job in the Post Office in Queenstown, and later in Riversdale. My parents always supported me and made it easy to cram in sport etc, so it was a bonus being at home.

After we married, Fraser and I made our home in Riversdale, farming. Stephen, our oldest, was at Gore High two years before he showed Dennis the ropes at what, for them, was also an enormous place. The boys were both given terrific opportunities. Steve and I both loved a snow camp to Waiorau ski fields - it was like a different world. Another highlight was the rugby team trip to Canada. Dennis is now an apprentice mechanic in Riversdale but Holly is in the 6th form at Gore High.

Holly is following on from the boys in taking the Fitness for Living course, an outdoor education programme with kayaking, abseiling and camps. She has been busy with her hockey, last year attending three national tourneys-and Senior Women's. Talk about cycles. Holly commutes to school by bus every day just as I did, and thinking back over the years even that is a pleasant memory.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OTHER GORE HIGH SPORTS ACHIEVERS?

OUR MAN IN KABUL - DEREK WILLIAMS

If you watch the credits on television documentaries you'll know cameraman Derek Williams has lived close to the action. Over the last 30 years, he has covered major Asian and Middle Eastern events: the fall of Saigon, the Bangladesh war, the siege of Beirut, the assassination of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, the Intafada in Israel, the Armenian earthquake, the People Power revolution in the Philippines, the Tiananmen Square massacre, the Gulf War; the hand over of Hong Kong to China, APEC conferences in Tokyo and Jakarta.

Unfortunately- but not surprisingly -Derek couldn't fit writing for the newsletter into his 12 to18-hour day working schedule, but shared a resumé suggesting the pace of life since GHS days.

He began, after leaving school in 1964, as a soundman, first as a radio technician at Radio 4ZA Invercargill, then with television in Wellington. In 1971 he became a film soundman with CBS News in Asia, based in Hong Kong and Thailand.

Following his coverage of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, Derek moved to camera work.

How the guy from Gore came to be the only western media man in Kabul at the critical moment bears out his description of the vital professional attributes being "good common sense and the ability to bull-shit with a straight face."

THE BIG SCOOP

"The world's press was gathered in India to cover a general election. When word came through that the Russians had invaded Afghanistan, everybody forgot about the Indian election and tried to get to Kabul. A patriotic Afghan who worked for Indian Airlines thought the press corps should go on the first flight in after the invasion. We all flew into Kabul, and by chance I was first in line at Immigration. I listed my profession as technician, and they stamped me into the country. The others listed their actual jobs... cameraman, reporter etc... and were held at the airport. I saw this happening, grabbed all the camera gear and headed into town. The others were all expelled from the airport back to Delhi. I was thrown out about three days later once they realized somebody had slipped through."



Derek Williams in action

Award winning stories

As well as general CBS news assignments, Derek also worked for award-winning CBS programmes like 60 Minutes. He was the cameraman on some highly acclaimed stories, including The de-Mining of Kuwait; Land Mines-the Deadly Killers in Cambodia with Mike Wallace; Vietnam Veterans Initiative in Vietnam; Child Prostitution with Ed Bradley; Mail Order Brides with Leslie Stahl; and Hong Kong-The Last Governor with Steve Kroft.

In 1991 Derek went freelance, based in Bang-kok, and in 1996, with three partners, he started a television production company called AsiaWorks Television Ltd. (<http://www.asiaworks.com/>) His clients still include CBS News, as well as other major international networks. He also shoots regular business features for CNBC Asia, as well as corporate videos for a Who's-Who list of corporate clients like Intel, PepsiCo, Nike and MasterCard.

Some of his more recent documentary subjects include stories on migrant labourers in Thailand; the tortured and the torturers in post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia; street children in Bangkok; Khun Sa, the opium warlord; the business of Buddhism; and the Death Railway.

The Williams Family

As for the rest of the Williams family from the Vicarage: Peter is a vet in Invercargill; Pip is a diplomatic wife, currently in Canberra, and has recently returned to her own nursing career specialising in oncology; Christine is very involved in local politics in New Brighton; Tim is a clinical psychologist in Christchurch, and lives at Little River. And Mrs Williams (who will be 90 next year) is an avid email user based in Christchurch. The Rev Phillip died in 1985.

WHO ELSE FROM GORE HIGH IS (OR HAS BEEN) WORKING IN THE MEDIA?

TONKINS MOTTO: NO PALMS WITHOUT GREASING



In the half-world of the pre-fabs at the back of Gore High School in the late 1960s was the chalk-dusty realm of one Harold Hill.

Those who foregathered round the warmth of the pot-belly stove in that cultural outpost were treated to

animated readings from E.B. White's *Sword in the Stone*, interrupted by history lessons and insights into a teacher's perspective of inspectors.

We were fascinated by Mr Hill's teaching notes, every available space crammed to overflowing with doodles. Much as he might attempt to keep these away from our prying little eyes, we soon realised the drawings included highly recognisable caricatures of our elders and betters, from Rector D.N.Y. Olson down.

Eventually it also leaked out that a cartoon strip bearing no little resemblance to life at GHS was appearing in the PPTA journal. Staff were stalwart in remaining non-committal about this national notoriety, and it was only when an anthology was published by the PPTA in 1980 that the life and times of Tonkins became accessible to a wider audi-ence.

The title, *A Remedial Persiflage*, springs from a Condie turn of mind, and the booklet was edited by Lauris Edmond, no less. The cartoons appear with poems by fellow PPTA member Chris Ward, which, although very clever parodies of well-known poems, have no particular connection with GHS or Tonkins. Even then, limited publicity and distribution meant many who might have taken an eager interest probably remained unaware.

Some may think the stoic and philosophical Tonkins, battling under the motto *Palma Non Sine Greasere* owes something to our Mr MacCartney; the cartoonist says this was not initially intentional. In a postscript, Hill said over time Tonkins took on a life of his own, becoming a sort of alter ego, so it became increasingly difficult to distinguish the man from the act. It took a week of going round in a state of "gleeful glumness" (Olsonian for cynicism) to gestate a Tonkins, he wrote.

The GHS connection was confirmed by the inclusion of a 1966 staff photo and the admission that "A number of the shell-shocked creatures in it jostled their way through the corridors of Gore High School into the frames of Tonkins over the years."

Anyone at GHS at the time will be able to identify those appearing below as Messrs MacCartney, Alexander, Foster, Olson-and just maybe Miss Logan. ("It's as close as I dared," says Hill.)

Hill, now Major Hill of the Salvation Army and national education director, can recall no vast enthusiasm from his colleagues for his efforts, apart from the occasional "Ha-ha very funny." Maybe his most appreciative audience is yet awaiting. Could there even be a demand for a souvenir with Hill's version of the school motto?

Anyone for a coffee mug?



GOREY DETAILS

This section is aimed at old Gorey schoolmates in far-flung places, to entertain with a little gossip from the scene of your youth, now famous as the brown trout fishing capital of the world; the country and western music capital of NZ; the cradle of Hokonui Heritage; the centre of Romney breeding excellence and educator and exporter of youthful talent.

Thanks to the Ensign for the Gorey Details graphic

Main Street milestone

First shock to anyone who hasn't been here for a while will be last year's Main Street revamp. Transit New Zealand has finally had its wicked way and abolished the centre parks. When Transit's forbears

attempted this in the 1980s the farmers came to town on tractors and paraded in protest to "protect our parking heritage."

This time they've been won over by the return of angle parking (or maybe they have protest fatigue.) With fancy kerbing and street furniture and lots of plants, it looks good, suits pedestrians, but cars crawl.

It has removed the centre parks' club, but they have found other spots where their anti-social habits are even less welcome. Gore has yet to find a solution for its hard core of disaffected, booze-sozzled youth, despite the outrage two years ago when a car load of them crashed into a yard in East Gore, killing a child.

Those who insist Gore is "no than anywhere else" continue to miss the point.

Moonshine Museum opens

Southland's ambivalent relationship with alcohol is the theme of the town's latest attraction, the Moonshine Museum, opened to acclaim in February. It tells the tale of moonshine production in the south, and of the temperance movement. It's a must-see next time you're in town. The museum is part of the \$1.1m development of the Hokonui Heritage Centre in the former Davidson's supermarket, administered by a Trust headed by Ian Tulloch.

The complex also incorporates the Information Centre and Historical Society museum and research centre, presided over by curator Mrs Win Hamilton, aka Miss Hurst. She still turns out at netball through the winter, but has admitted perhaps she might slow down a bit and stay home more often and indulge in watching Sky Sport. Other former staff living in happy retirement here include Miss Logan, now a cheerful 90-year-old, whose 60+ years of golfing was saluted by her mates at the golf club. ('My golf is a disgrace but I can still walk the course.')

Arts and heritage

The Eastern Southland Gallery is now well established as one of the best small public galleries in the country. It generated some big news last year, with the announcement of the acquisition of ex-patriate sexologist John Money's art collection.

The developments in the Arts and Heritage Precinct, which also includes the library, owe a great deal to the vision and skills of Arts and Heritage Director, former GHS student Jim Geddes.

The goal is to develop the precinct in such a way it straddles a variety interests: arts, heritage, tourism, community and economic development, Jim says.

"We want to get away from the traditional view of the arts as a lame duck, something that absorbs community resources. "People will see that well structured and delivered arts programmes can have positive community and economic spin offs."

Jim has rather mixed memories of his days at GHS 1972-75. The school was very sports-oriented, and there wasn't a lot going on in the arts -although theatre was strong, he recalls. He did however pick up on the enthusiasm emerging at that time for New Zealand writers and artists, but makes it clear he would not be included on the school's list of out-standing students.

These rather jaundiced memories have been a factor in the development of gallery programmes reaching out to the schools, to improve what's available to young people now. The gallery has initiated artists in residence projects, visiting writers and musicians, and has also exhibited and instigated tours of high school art work.

"One thing we have tried to do at the gallery is to create dialogue," Jim says. Watch more developments...

Who's still Who in town? If any wanderers return for a visit, who will they find plying their trade in Gore? Here's some, and they would be pleased to see you (so long as you don't intend settling old scores, as one nervously suggested.) Drewe Carran, Merv Hanna, Kay [Smith] Whiteside, Roger Barnett will sell you a house; Pam [Bridgeman] Crowther will help you decorate it; Spike Bristow will sell you a Honda to put in the garage; and Ewen Whitefield a computer to set up an internet.com to take care of business while you go fishing with Bunny Burgess. Peter and Bev [Black] McDonald at Table Talk keep Gore up with the latest in food and coffee. Johnny and Ainslie [Smythe] Matheson are at Fashions and Fabrics in Irk Street, Karen [Cunningham] Byars at the Red Barn gift shop....and more... Call in and they'll tell you who else is around.

Otago Daily Times columnist Margot-Jane Smith wrote this when Dr John Money announced the gift of his art collection to the Eastern Southland Gallery. The collection includes works by New Zealand artists he supported (Rita Angus, Theo Schoon) carvings and sculpture from West Africa, and aboriginal works. Money was determined they should go to an institution that would respect the collection's integrity.

SMALL TOWNS HAVE MUCH TO OFFER

Congratulations to the Eastern Southland Gallery for the acquisition of the John Money art collection! Maybe the news that an influential art collector thought highly enough of the Eastern Southland Gallery to gift his collection will help refute Gore's unfortunate reputation as only a town of drunken hoons.

Small towns get put down a lot in New Zealand. They are seen as places to gallop away from at top speed the minute high school is over. Places where people stop on their way to somewhere else for the toilets and an ice cream. Then, having only driven down the main street, people feel qualified enough to say "Oh Gore, (Palmerston, Cromwell, Te Anau, etc.) I've been there. It's all right, but I wouldn't want to live there."

Small towns are scorned for being conservative, petty and full of gossip. Coming in for much less mention is the warmth, support and closeness that comes from living in a small town where you work, socialise and shop with your neighbours. Scarcely ever mentioned is small town creativity.

Gore seems to get more stick for being a small town than others in the South Island, maybe because it's so far inland. Towns beside the sea or on a lake are not quite so dull. Lying around in the sun becomes an activity if you are lying on a beach.

Whenever I tell people I come from Gore they say "Oh I'm sorry" or make lewd jokes about sheep. Yet these are the same people who spent an extra week in a small town in Thailand and plan to go back there next holiday because "the people were so nice", and the same people who dream of retiring to a small town somewhere in the south of France. Small towns overseas are exotic and quaint while those in our own backyard are dull and insular.

People who move from large cities to small towns are thought to be taking a backwards step. I know some Aucklanders who transferred to Dunedin and chose to live in Milton and commute. They think nothing of the 40-minute drive into town since it took them longer than that in Auckland, and had the added stress of dealing with crowded lanes, traffic lights and rarely shifting into second gear. Most people think they are crazy. Why would anyone live in Milton when they could live in Dunedin? When it was announced that Gore was receiving the John Money collection a lot of people up and down the country were saying "Why Gore?" in the same tone they used to say "Why are flares coming back into fashion?"

Well, why not Gore?

Firstly, what's wrong with a small town getting a major art collection? It isn't unprecedented for otherwise ordinary provincial towns to be home to important artworks. Small towns in the US house priceless Picasso collections in specialised museums. The Urewera Visitor Centre displayed Colin McCahon's "Urewera Triptych" worth millions.

Why should large cities get everything? The trend is for businesses and services to pull out of small towns and centralise in cities so that more and more people have to leave (even if just for the day) to take advantage of them. Most country children already go off and visit the city, but how many city children go on school trips to provincial towns? Art should be spread around.

Secondly, there is a lot more to Gore than hoons drinking in the centre parks of the main street. Small towns raise independent resourceful children who often enjoy greater physical freedom than city kids, and who are forced to be a little more creative in their play because there isn't the same level of entertainment available.

What isn't seen are the thousands of talented people who grew up in Gore and are now scattered around New Zealand and around the world.

Children are small towns' most valuable exports. It is because these children are likely to leave their hometown to seek their fortune somewhere in the wide world that it is important they grow up with a connection to the wider world. And what creates more connection than artwork? Looking at the product of another culture's creative tradition, their worldview and skill.

And who knows, as John Money suggested, this collection might even be the start of something bigger. New Zealand doesn't have a national gallery of contemporary art; wouldn't it be great if one established itself in Gore?

Then when I say Gore is my hometown, people won't smirk, but ask, "Are you an artist then?"

What are ex-GHS pupils doing round the world? Whether you are labouring in Londonderry, doing a PhD on dung beetles in Djibouti, pottering in Pakistan, trading for a transnational in Transylvania, ambling up the Amazon, making millions in Mongolia, weaselling in Wellington, running a computer security firm in the Philippines, the editor would like to hear from you to establish an external affairs gossip column. One thing is clear from news already to hand; an education in Gore has equipped people to foot it with the best in the world at some of the most prestigious centres of learning. It's also given them a 'can do' approach to work that makes them and their no.8 wire toolkit highly valued as employees in some very competitive market places.

For the next edition of the newsletter will hopefully feature ex-GHS people in London - let's hear from some more of you.

This newsletter was edited by Rosemarie Smith. Suggestions, comments, requests, can be sent to her at rvoland@yahoo.com or to the Foundation secretary bruce@reunion.com

FOUNDATION NEWS

The Gore High School Foundation was established five years ago by a group of ex-pupils wishing to develop strong networks of former staff, students and friends of the school.

The Foundation's primary focus is to foster a sense of community among people who had their formative years at Gore High. The aim is to create communication channels, both in New Zealand and overseas, to pass on news about the school community past and present, and especially to develop a strong ex-pupil database to ensure as many as possible are aware of the school's centennial in 2008. In our day, schooling was free, but now funding constraints place limits on what can be offered. The Foundation decided to ask for financial contributions from ex-pupils as a thank you for their time at GHS, to benefit pupils of the present. A trust fund is now established and our intention is to use the interest for the betterment of the school and its students, and particularly to enhance both the physical environment and the technology hardware necessary for a state school to remain truly educationally competitive in the 21st century.

But the Foundation is not just about money - it's about communication. The major problem to be overcome was the lack of records, and the initial focus has been the development of a reliable database of names and addresses. To date over 5000 names are recorded on this database. This is progressing well.

Many of you have been receiving our regular newsletters and have responded to the request to become members of the Foundation, and your donations have been critical to maintaining its momentum.

Thank you for this, and we urge you to encourage others to join. (A membership form is enclosed). If you have access to email, register with Membership Managers at <http://www.reunion.co.nz/> Getting the Foundation established is a very long-term process; however, we now have some funds on hand, the database is up and running and the newsletter established.

We would encourage you to take the time to respond, if you are not already a member. Through your support the Gore High School Foundation can reach its full potential in communicating with as many of your former classmates as possible.

IAN TULLOCH
CHAIRMAN

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