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DHSESA Newsletter

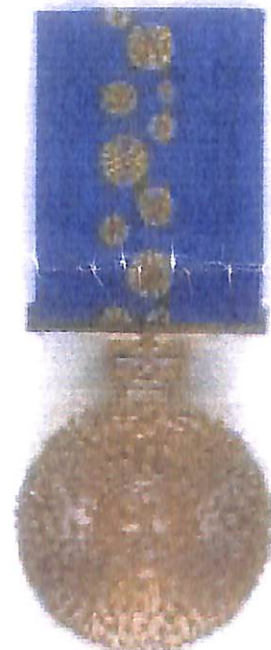
JENNIFER BANTOW OAM (CUMMINGS)

Exciting news from Gee-
long as Jennifer, Life
Member of the National
Trust, receives further rec-
ognition, "...for service to
the community through
heritage and historical
organisations".

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From The Chair

Number 51

FROM THE CHAIR

This year marks my twentieth anniversary as President of the Association. In 1991 I envisaged that I would help restart the organization of the ex-students, establish some scholarships, set up the collection and storage of the archives and then hand over to an eager, younger cohort. In spite of many and varied attempts to entice, encourage and exhort individuals to join our Committee, generational change has not occurred. Although this is cause for concern, I am proud of the achievements made by all members of the Committee over this time, many having been long-serving volunteers. We have felt that it has been a worthy endeavour to foster and keep alive the spirit of the School and preserve its long history.

As reported in Newsletter No. 49, we have been able to broaden the scope of the Edna Dawson Vukmirovic Music Scholarship because of the windfall from the conclusion of the Dandenong Festival of Music and Art for Youth, and the continuing donations from you, our members. As a result, a long-held ambition is being realized this term. An orchestra-quality flute is being purchased for the 2011 recipient of the Scholarship. Koko Wu, a Year 9 student, has impressed with her ability to play the flute and the piano. The flute will be made available for her use while she is a student of DHS and continues to show dedication and progress. In addition, an increase has been made in the amount of money set aside each year to be used at the discretion of the Music Co-ordinator. In the past this stand-by fund has been used to send students to professional performances, master classes and the opera. It is gratifying to be able to contribute in this way to the development of music within the School.

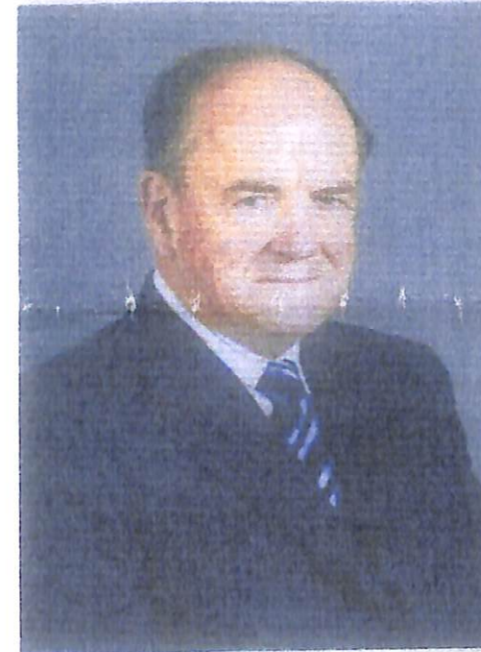
This edition features a piece about the first headmaster, Percy Langford. In this period of change at the School, it is timely to reflect upon his great legacy and how it has endured. He came to Dandenong not long after experiencing the devastation and upheavals of the Great War. He must have come with a determination to establish a school that engendered hope and a bright future for its pupils. This can be deduced from many things known about him. Contemporary students remember an inspiring teacher who encouraged all to do their best. He was held in high esteem yet also elicited great affection from his staff and students. He chose the motto with care and it is one fit for any age. In 1928 he led the Old Pupil's Association as President, thus forging ongoing links with the school community. He stayed for fifteen years and set in train a tradition that would last for much of the century.

It is likely that the present transformation of the School will have a similar lasting legacy. The physical changes to the School plus the complete overhaul of the way in which education is being delivered, is largely due to the drive and vision of the Principal, Martin Culkin. The new buildings have been the subject of many architectural awards and visitors from far and wide have come to see how the teaching of the curriculum is organized. Martin's role in this has been recognized in various ways by the media but still he must have been surprised when he and his wife were invited by the Governor-General to have lunch with the Queen in Canberra, on Sunday 23rd October. There were only thirty guests drawn from sport, the arts and other fields. The Queen was well-briefed because she engaged him in conversation for many minutes, asking questions about Dandenong High School, the ethnic mix of students and the successful transition taking place. The Duke also took an interest and had his own questions. This honour was extended to Martin as leader and representative of a community of students and teachers engaged in the pursuit of positive change in uncertain times.

Greta Jungwirth (de Vries)
President

JUDICIAL RETIREMENT

Justice Donnell Ryan



The Law Institute Journal recently carried a farewell to Justice Donnell Ryan, of the Federal Court, who was a student in the 1950's. The LIV vice-president Reynah Tang, acknowledging that he also was representing the Law Council of Australia, reminded the audience that Justice Ryan was appointed to the Court in 1986.

Justice Ryan completed a double degree at the University of Melbourne, and before his appointment to the Court, His Honour was Chairman of the Law Council of Australia Industrial Committee, a tutor in the law course at the new Monash University from 1965 to 1969, a tutor in the Council of Education long articles course at RMIT, a consultant for the Supreme Court litigation unit to the Leo Cussen Institute, and editor of the Federal Law Reports from 1974 to 1980.

Does the following compliment acknowledge his DHS education; 'Clear Thinking' by R. W. Jepson perhaps? - "Judicial colleagues remark on your Honour's profound gift with language—your ability to express difficult ideas precisely, with brevity, and in felicitous language".

Finally - "Your Honour has been an outstanding advocate, and an outstanding judge and collegial member of the Court in a career that has, to date, spanned more than 46 years".

DHS CAREERS TEAM REQUEST

It is proposed that a list of past students be developed who would be prepared to offer an hour of their time to come back to the School and talk to current students about their careers and the pathways they have taken to reach their current positions. The talks could take the traditional form of an exposition followed by a Q and A session, or a program called "speed careering". In the latter the guests are given 30 seconds to tell a small group of students about their chosen careers and after a discussion of 7 or 8 minutes a bell will ring and the groups of students will move to the next table in the room.

An ideal response would be for many people of different ages, experiences and occupations to volunteer to be on the list. If you are willing and able to offer your time in this way please contact our Secretary, Gary Matthews, by phone or email.

JENNIFER BANTOW OAM (CUMMINGS)

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF THE VERY SPECIAL DAY FOR JENNIFER, HER FAMILY AND HER HIGH SCHOOL FRIENDS, FROM GOVERNMENT HOUSE TO LABASSA, A NATIONAL TRUST GEM IN CAULFIELD.



Jennifer with the Governor of Victoria, Alex Chernov AO, QC.



Jennifer with her school friend, Eleanor Taylor (Hodgins)



From left, school friend Heather Wildes (Ross), Jennifer and her sister Judith. Heather's brothers, Roger and Peter also attended DHS.



Jennifer, centre, with Lorraine Metcalfe (Vincent) and the Editor

Also present at the reception at Labassa, was Jennifer's cousin, Lyall Seebeck, who also attended DHS together with his brother Bernard, and Anita (McPherson), whose sister Fay was also a student.

MR LANGFORD'S WAR DIARY:

By Gary Matthews

The school's observance of ANZAC Day this year took on a very special significance, when Dr Ruth Bishop, AO, the daughter of our first Headmaster, the much loved Percy Langford, presented the school with a copy of her father's war diary. The diary, which was written mainly for the benefit of his family, covers his time aboard ship en route to Egypt, (during which some horses went berserk and had to be destroyed). The journal then describes the journey across the Mediterranean to Turkey, culminating in his landing on Gallipoli, followed by his detailed daily account of his time in the trenches there.

Mr. Langford was twice evacuated to hospital in Malta. The first time with a ruptured ear drum from a close shell burst while bathing in the sea, and on the second occasion with typhoid fever, after which he was repatriated home to Australia. (After recuperating from typhoid he was appointed head of recruitment at St Kilda Rd barracks for the war's duration)

Dr Bishop spoke of her father's skill as a horseman, being raised in the then rural area of Mickelham, to the north of Melbourne. It was this skill that saw him enlisting, three weeks after the First World War was declared, in the 4th Lighthorse Regiment¹, being allotted the very early enlistment number of 136.

She described her father as an even tempered, sociable man, with a good sense of humor, and a "fund of stories"; but also someone who could be strict where needed. He was a good footballer, playing for Melbourne University, in the then VFL. He was also a professional runner, winning quite a few races, and "not being above backing himself".

Here follows a brief excerpt from the diary:-

"Saturday 22.5.15

Moved our position about 50 yards to a place supposed to be safer. Dug a fine hole. An officer came along and moved us to another hole, but got chased out again. Went back to original place, only to be chased out as soon as we had made everything snug, to a fresh site altogether. Dug another trench and made ready for night. Rained heavily a couple of times through the day - thunderstorms. Andy Fisher of D Troop had a bullet through his cap - near thing. Just about 7 o'clock an order came to get ready to proceed to the support trenches. We marched up and slept on the sloping bank at an angle of 45° or so, till early morning when we relieved some of the fellows in the trenches."



Private Percy Langford, pictured in full Lighthorse Uniform, in Melbourne, in late 1914,, just prior to going to Egypt, and on to Gallipoli.

The Ex Students Association holds a full copy of the diary, as part of the growing archive of memorabilia it collects and maintains on behalf of the school. You can read this and other gems from our past, including a complete collection of "Gates", by calling into the school on a Wednesday, between 1:00 pm and 3:30 pm. Our small group of "archivists", led by Dawn Harris (Burhop) and Greta Jungwirth (deVries) will be more than happy to help you.

¹ The School colours of dark blue, light blue and red are those of Mr Langford's 4th Lighthorse regiment.

Mentioned in Despatches...

Noticed by Secretary, Gary Matthews, selling legacy badges recently at Fountain Gate shopping centre, Beryl Riddell, (1934 '36) and John Taylor (1956 - '61). John is visiting from Canada, where he has lived for many years. Hoping to receive some more news from him soon, about what he has been up to.

Travelling through Noosa airport recently were **Kate Gordon** student of the late 1950's and a generous supporter of the Dandenong and District Hospital, together with her daughter **Melissa**, who was at school in the 1980's.

Joan Reid (Swallow) has passed away in Cranbourne. An obituary read: "Now at rest after working tirelessly all her life for her family and the citizens of Cranbourne." The Editor is very aware of the numerous organizations in Cranbourne that benefited from Joan's hard work.

In addition, Joan was an outstanding stalwart of the Liberal Party, supporting her husband **Len** (dec), who also attended the School. **Len** was a State and Federal politician over the years from 1958 to 1972. They founded the international organization "For Those Who Have Less" in 1962.

Locals who shared community commitments were **Val Slade (Finck)**, **John Finning**, **Lorraine Tucker (Finning)**, **John Tucker**, plus **Peter and Renice Giles (Holberton)**, particularly at St. James Anglican Church.

P.S. I repeat my invitation to those who took Mildura-type trips during their student days to send me recollections. (Being naturally lazy, I really appreciate text, by email, and in 'Word'). Some editing may be necessary.

CONTACT US

If you would like to receive the Newsletter by email, please notify the Secretary, as we are considering this option. Also for those over 80 years, there are no annual fees. Please advise.

The Sorrento Golf Club Committee Members acknowledged the passing recently of one of their members, **Ken Allison**, who attended DHS in the late 1950's.

Our Historian, **Dawn Harris (Burhop)**, has been inducted into the Karingal Star Zone Walk of Fame.

Dawn's award will not surprise anyone as it was for her choral work with the CWA, visiting Nursing Homes and Community Groups.

Recently met up with **Pam McDonald (Hawkins)**, who with her brother **Russel** (dec), attended DHS in the late 1950's.

FROM THE SCHOOL

For those who may not know, the school newsletter is now on-line at the School's website.

We will occasionally reproduce the great stories, like the President has in this edition, highlighting the recent invitation to our Principal, Martin Culkin, to a lunch in Canberra, with Her Majesty the Queen.

I also refer you to the Newsletter of October 25th, where you can literally 'devour' page 7.

STAINED GLASS WINDOW APPEAL:

REGISTER OF CONTRIBUTORS TO BE INCLUDED IN OUR HISTORY ARCHIVE:

Since the Appeal for our "Window into the Past and Future" was launched recently, we've had a most encouraging response. So far, we've received well over \$2000, so well done to those who have made that possible.

As the window will not be able to be installed until scheduled major internal refurbishment of the Langford building is complete, it's difficult to assess its final cost. But clearly, we've made a good start, and our best estimate is that we're nearly half-way. So, while we're well on the way, more support is needed for the appeal to reach its goal.

In recognition of the importance of this project and those who will have made it possible, a Register of Contributors is to be established, for inclusion in the School's history archive. If you would like your name included in the Register, there's obviously still time, and, in so doing, leave a tangible reminder that you were part of this wonderful addition to the front entrance of our old school.



With Melbourne having coaching strife this year, we present a picture of **Bryan Kenneally**, dressed in the finest Melbourne dressing gown, taking in the advice of legendary coach, Frank "Checker" Hughes in 1965. Bryan played 171 games for the Dees between 1959 and 1969. During that time they won 3 premierships from 9 finals appearances.

JEANETTE GIBSON on ASYLUM SEEKERS

When she worked with asylum seekers based at Curtin detention centre, psychologist Jeanette Gibson kept a diary. It is a disturbing insight into life behind the fence. Russell Skelton reports.

JEANETTE Gibson believes Australia has treated its hardened criminals more humanely than asylum seekers marooned in the legal limbo of indefinite detention. After more than 10 years working as a professional psychologist with prisoners in jail and asylum seekers, she is not surprised that events spun out of control at Sydney's Villawood immigration detention centre on Monday when a Fijian detainee, Josefa Rauluni, leapt to his death from a two-storey building.

Gibson, who now operates a counselling service in country Victoria, fears that conditions at the recently expanded Curtin detention centre in Australia's remote tropical north (it will be expanded to accommodate 1200 single men) are likely to be far worse and will put detainees under extraordinary and unnecessary mental stress. She says the local weather, with temperatures soaring into the 40s during summer, and the acute isolation will make for a lethal cocktail.

"Don't get me wrong, I have seen some pretty hideous things in prisons," she says. "But in jail prisoners have access to swimming pools, computers, libraries and gyms. In some facilities they grow vegetables. Those of good behaviour are allowed out to do community work.

"Remember also, prisoners do not face the barriers of language and culture and live with the certainty of knowing when they are going to get out."

For boat arrivals there is no such certainty after the Rudd government decided to suspend processing of many claims. And the physical isolation at Curtin - Derby is 50 kilometres away, Broome over 200 - where detainees will have few visitors, will breed desperation.

Gibson was contracted by private corrections company Australasian Correctional Management, which ran the centre, to provide counselling at Curtin during the Howard government years. It was a period of her professional life she cannot forget because of the levels of pain, desperation and mental trauma she encountered.

"The facilities prisoners are entitled to today were non-existent at Curtin then, even though some detainees - over 500 men, women and children - were held for up to four years while their fate was decided."

Unlike prisoners in a jail, asylum seekers have committed no crime against society apart from turning up. She says their ranks do not include people convicted of rape, murder and robbery. Yet at Curtin, even visits by the Red Cross and church groups were rare.

And it was not just the detainees who were traumatised, Gibson says. ACM employees involved in the constant riots, who dealt with repeated incidents of self-harm and the persistent demands of bewildered and disoriented asylum seekers, were also profoundly affected.

"It was an odd thing: they would not talk about their experiences with each other, but they opened up to me," Gibson says. "Many were troubled by what they were being asked to do."

Gibson recorded her encounters at Curtin in "Thirty-eight Days in Detention", a document she compiled during her two-month stint at the former military base in 2002. Although expressly forbidden from speaking publicly about her experiences, she believes that it is in the public interest that the past dysfunctional and dehumanising system of immigration detention at Curtin be revealed.

"It seems governments have learnt nothing about the mental distress and anguish caused by that place; I don't want to see it repeated. The human price paid was too high."

Gibson's recollections paint a picture of a fractured detention environment with bureaucratic divisions between ACM and immigration department staff as well as between the Sri Lankan, Iranian and Afghan detainees. She describes Department for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs officials, who lived in superior quarters, as being aloof, "seldom venturing from their air-conditioned offices".

She describes ACM staff as a mix of "good and evil", between those who were sympathetic to the plight of the asylum seekers and those who could barely conceal their contempt for them.

She describes Curtin as being located in the middle of nowhere. "The road is mostly straight. Red earth [is] on either side and then the seemingly endless, grayish, stunted gums ... It's about 200 kilometres of sameness from Broome. Huge Brahman cattle, anthills, the occasional frill-necked lizard. No sign of life, not much traffic."

Soon after she arrived, there was a security incident, with a man screaming, frustrated with the delays in processing and the loss of freedom. "I am a bit anxious where I go for the next little while. From the clinic I can hear and see the yelling. Things eventually settle down," she wrote.

The following day Gibson encountered a man "yelling for two hours", demanding to see DIMIA officials about his claim for asylum. She is told he does this regularly and is urged to ignore him. She finds detainees "earmarked for relocation to Nauru" have been kept isolated in Echo compound and are not allowed to mingle with other detainees.

"The idea is to keep these people from communicating with anybody else ... They might get ideas about what to say to DIMIA ... None of it makes sense."

JEANETTE GIBSON on ASYLUM SEEKERS (Continued)

An encounter with Red Cross workers leaves her stunned. They tell her they visit Curtin once a month but are not allowed into the compounds to talk to detainees. "We have more access to refugee camps in Iraq," they tell her, adding that their main task is to locate separated facility members, in which they report little success.

Eventually, she sits with the "yelling man" who tells her that he is a 35-year-old engineer from Iraq who cannot return home for fear of being executed by Saddam's secret police. He has been at Curtin for 11 months and is deeply frustrated by the delays in processing his claim.

In between her responsibilities, which also include looking after unaccompanied minors, she visits Ashra, a woman on a hunger strike. "Her husband and kids look on and I talk to them through an interpreter. Such despair ... They have been here for a year or more. She eventually agrees to drink and engage."

Elsewhere in another compound she comes across a young mother who lives with an irrational fear of her baby being stolen and refuses to sleep. Gibson learns that a big reason for the delays in processing can be traced to the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation that is unable to deal with the large numbers from the Middle East requiring security clearances.

"Since September 11, the looking into has become more stringent," she is told. Gibson regularly notes people are becoming so desperate that they have no alternative but to resort to desperate measures.

One of her most troubling discoveries concerns 30 Sri Lankan men who have been locked in a compound for several months.

"The reason? Well, a few of them were accused of sexually abusing some little Iraqi boys. The case was dismissed because of not enough evidence. The mother and the grandmother of the children are convinced they were abused and remain furious. But there are all sorts of threats about a huge riot if any of these men are let out.

"So there they stay. I just cannot take that one on for the moment. Every day is a day of moral dilemma."

During her final weeks at the detention camp, Gibson treats a man she refers to as "Z", a Bedouin and one-time policeman from Kuwait. His arm was broken during a beating by four ACM guards while at the Port Hedland detention centre. She writes that the officer responsible for the fracture was released on a good behaviour bond.

"Z" has been refused a visa, but DIMIA does not know where to return him. He has no passport and his wife and children live in Jordan, but Jordan will not accept him without a passport.

"I tell him about a strategy for dealing with his nightmares ... It all seems so trite in the face of such a dilemma."

Gibson concludes her account with the words: "I constantly remind myself that I cannot change the world, or even Australia for that matter. I can only make a difference for this person now. I could not sustain my work here otherwise."

A spokeswoman for the immigration department confirmed yesterday that 752 Afghan unauthorised boat arrivals were being held at Curtin and facilities would be expanded to accommodate another 500. She said the department was mindful of Curtin's history and significant steps had been taken to improve conditions there.

She said the freeze on processing was being reviewed and that a decision would be made early next month. She said the asylum seekers were not isolated and had received visits from the Afghan community in Perth and groups in Broome.

"In terms of the department, there has been an extensive reform process taking place over the past five years to improve conditions in detention centres."

At the new and refurbished Curtin there were English language and Australian history classes, a multilingual library, a gym and a soccer field.

"These facilities are all in operation now," she added. The Gillard government would decide the future of the Afghans, although she could not say whether the freeze on processing would remain in place.

For her part, Gibson believes there must be a better way of dealing with asylum seekers. She is puzzled why they cannot be treated the same as the Vietnamese were when they arrived in the 1970s. That involved speedy processing and release into the community.

"We had 25,000 coming then, and 5000 now. You have got to ask what has changed?"

Russell Skelton is a contributing editor.



Membership of the Association

Membership of the Association is taken to be for a calendar year, regardless of which month the payment is made. Some people choose the option to pay for 2 or 3 calendar years. If a new member joins in the last 3 or 4 months of the year, their membership is usually carried into the next year. These practices have been adopted to be in line with the rules of the Association and to create the least work for the committee.

SCHOOL BADGES

Available from our memorabilia collection, and can be purchased through the Association. Price is \$10, which includes postage within Australia.

- A. Replica school badge;
- B. Stick pin;
- C. Special 90th Anniv. Badge.

DHSESA Office Bearers

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Greta Jungwirth
- Secretary — I. T.
Gary Matthews
- Treasurer
Russell Weber
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WEBSITE

The web address is www.dhs-exstudents.synthasite.com A further option for finding us is to do a "google search", and simply type **dhs ex students**, without clicking Australian sites, and you will see our site at the top of the list.

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