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Battlefield notes for today's youth

BY SARAH O'CONNOR

DANDENONG High School has received a "remarkable" gift from the daughter of its inaugural principal.

Ruth Bishop has donated her father Percy Langford's handwritten notes, from his time serving in the trenches during World War I.

Mr Langford was Dandenong High School's first principal and the colours of his Fourth Light Horse Regiment now make up the school's uniform — red, light blue and royal blue.

Dr Bishop presented her father's notes to current principal Martin Culkin at the school's Anzac Day assembly on Friday, April 29.

She said her father studied to become a teacher before joining the army in 1915, during World War I. He first trained with horses in Egypt and was sent to Gallipoli.

"They left their horses behind [in Egypt] — there wasn't much room for horses in a trench," Dr Bishop told students at the

assembly. Mr Langford served in Gallipoli until he became ill with typhoid and was sent back to Australia.

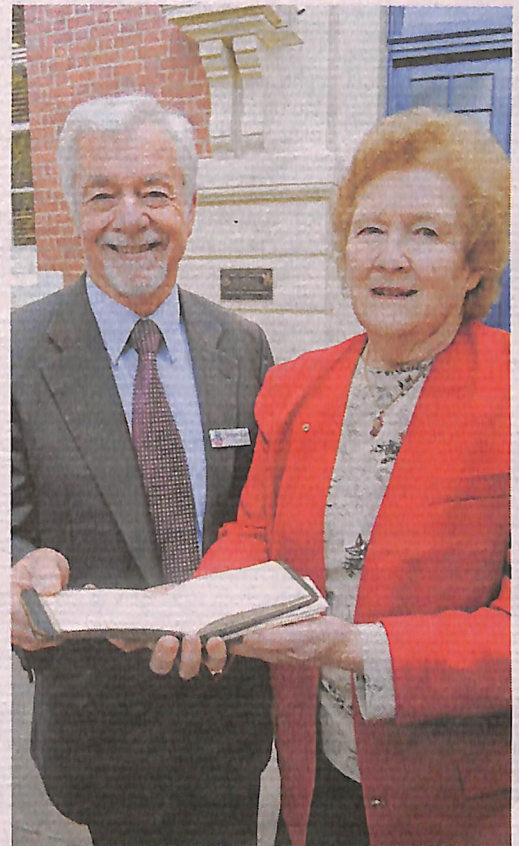
Dr Bishop said the notes Mr Langford wrote during his time in the trenches were intended to be a record of his life for his family.

"They recall the day-to-day life in the trenches," Dr Bishop said.

"I think he was typical of Australian soldiers at that time — no more brave or less brave than the people who served and fought against him."

Mr Culkin said the notes were a "remarkable" acquisition for Dandenong High School and would also serve a practical purpose.

"It will have a very special ongoing practical application, using the words of the first headmaster as he grappled with the day-to-day challenge of survival in the trenches of Gallipoli as the basis for teaching today's students about the conditions our soldiers endured in the battlefields of World War I."



Handover: Dandenong High School principal Martin Culkin receiving the war notes from Ruth Bishop.