



Asquith Old Boys Club Newsletter

Vol. 5 August, 2008

EDITORIAL

All members are warmly invited to the reunion dinner to be held on the second Saturday in November, in Asquith. This occasion will be an opportunity to enjoy the company of schoolmates, and give some direction as to how you would like to celebrate the School's 50th Birthday in 2010.

A former principal, and strong advocate of public education, Chris Bonnor will share experiences of the School's enjoyable and successful 40th Celebrations. Further details about this event are included in this issue, with the invitation.

Two members have offered to prepare a History of Asquith Boys. Members will be asked for contributions to this volume in a forthcoming edition of this journal.

Articles in this edition may provoke readers to reflect on adventures, enjoyed in the bush, creeks, estuaries and beaches nearby, with schoolmates. An opportunity to revisit that experience is offered with an invitation for members to walk The Asquithian Way. Join staff and students on the ANNUAL SPRING WALKATHON, commencing, 9.00 am at the School, on Friday 5th September. Further details include:

- Route departs Asquith Boys High, through Hornsby to the Grosvenor Track head in North Wahroonga, proceeding through Bobbin Head to Apple Tree Bay. (10 km)
- Free BBQ lunch on arrival at Apple Tree Bay
- Meet current students and teachers
- Participation at the karaoke sing along at the BBQ lunch
- Bus return to Asquith for School finish by 3.05 pm. All members are invited.



Chris Kent
Former student 1960 – 1965
Former Head Teacher
Creative Arts 1982 – 2005

VALE JOHN HOPKINS

JOHN ROBERT HOPKINS ("HOPPO" / "NHOJ")

1953 - 2008

Passed away peacefully in sleep

Asquithian 1965 - 1970

Berowra Boy

Champion Cricketer - 1st XI

Champion cricket sledger - "bowl him a trombone,
maybe he can play that"

A mate. Our mate.
Always remembered. R.I.P.

NOEL MORRIS RECALLS THE BONNOR YEARS AT ABHS

Chris Bonnor was Principal of Asquith Boys High from 1991 – 2000. During this decade Chris successfully navigated the School through many changes and tirelessly advanced the welfare of students and staff. Noel Morris, one of The School's Deputy Principals at that time recalled those years at Chris' retirement function in August 2007.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

It really is a pleasure tonight to say a few words about Chris Bonnor, from the perspective of someone who was a colleague in a school. I have the honour, and I do mean the honour of working with Chris at Asquith Boys in the late 1990's. Now its funny, anytime I mention that I worked with Chris Bonnor, the person I am speaking with asks (in a hushed voice) 'what was he really like?' as if the reality couldn't possibly match the image.

Unfortunately we live in an age when teachers are pretty cynical about career educationalists who talks the talk and who doesn't or can't walk the walk. The educationalist who uses impenetrable jargon, who delivers homilies to tell other people how they should do their job, but who couldn't find their way to the toilet without a map, and who wouldn't know what to do when they got there without a management plan. I'm always happy to say that Chris Bonnor not only talks the talk, in a very plain sincere and often irreverent manner, but he also walks the walk. A big striding John Wayne sort of walk.

Chris has always been an eloquent and passionate speaker. A staunch defender of public education but also a genuine and sincere believer in what he advocates, with the ability to put his money where his mouth is. The bottom line of what educationalists and teachers do, or should do, is dealing with kids. Not shuffling papers or promoting their careers but inspiring, challenging, supporting and nurturing young people. As a principal you not only have to do that on a personal level but you've got to ensure your staff doesn't loose sight of this very important bottom line. By this, or any other criterion, Chris was an outstanding principal and a great person to work with.

Now Asquith Boys was a school that was about as far north as you could go in Sydney, without ending up in the wilds of the Central Coast. It was a kind of frontier town where big striding Chris was its sheriff. When he rode into town order prevailed. He was a kind of silver haired Marshal Dillon, who each day left his home filled with women in Gum Nut place, and rode to the deep north to establish the rule of law. Chris had an amazing presence, as he still does. You could tell the days that he wasn't there at School. It was almost as if the folk would sniff the air to detect an absence. They were just a little bit naughtier, a little more unsettled, a little more inclined to odd behaviour. Now that was just the staff.

I was a member of Chris Bonnor's posse, who was always riding hard just to keep up with him. I felt like the limping Chester from Gunsmoke. 'Hold on Marshal Dillon I'm coming'. When I was appointed deputy, I was a greenhorn. I realised I had a lot to learn from a straight shooter like Chris. A man like this, a man whose aim was true. My epiphany.

I remember it was quite early in my time at Asquith when I was in his office and a fax came in, brought to him rather breathlessly by members of the SASS staff. It was an important fax I thought because it was from the District Superintendent. Now I didn't know much about those august demigods, but I did know that District Superintendents were important people who would never waste a Principals time with trivial matters.

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Whose every request was reasonable and whose authority was to be respected at all times. Now I don't remember what the request of the fax wanted, but I do remember that it was a request that Chris do something or other that the District Superintendent thought was important. I stood to attention, ready to salute the sacred epistle of our master. Chris as you could imagine was less impressed. He read the fax. Sniffed in what I thought was a less than a reverent manner, took out a big thick black texta and wrote NO in big letters across the fax. He then instructed me to follow, and he faxed it right back. I felt sick. I was conditioned to respect my superiors. To defy a deity like the District Superintendent was unthinkable. What next I thought? I can't remember if I actually articulated the question out loud but Chris said: 'right, now lets have a cup of tea'. He strode, *no*; he kind of sauntered down to the tearoom. We made a cup of tea. I was too nervous to drink. I could see my career dying. I figured we'd be strung up. We chatted about something over the cuppa. I was too distracted to listen but I think he was talking about Faulty Towers, he often did. When I wasn't feeling like Chester I sort of felt like an English speaking Manuel, trailing around after a more benevolent Basil Faulty. We finished our tea and Chris looked at his watch, he could see the time ticking away and we walked back to his office. What about the Superintendent I asked? 'Oh he'll be ringing round about (looking at his watch) ... now!' Sure enough, Nevs, let's called him Nevs, phoned back. I could only hear one side of that conversation, but I'm sure enough, that after a few moments the District Super had apologised for making the initial request. Had seen the error of his ways, and was relieved to be in Chris's good books again. He could see he'd had a narrow escape.

Chris could always cut to the chase, could always head them off at the pass. I remember him telling me what he realised about centres of bureaucracy, when as a consultant he found himself drafting, on the Minister's behalf a response to a letter he himself had written to the Minister. He had a great sense of the ridiculous; anyway it was typical of Chris. There was always something unflappable about him. Although he had contrived to be Basil Faulty, he had Basil's manic side and he certainly was capable (simulating Hitler's moustache with a forefinger) of goose-stepping around saying 'don't mention the war', but he also had a fabulously dry deadpan delivery.

One Speech Night in the School Hall, when all the usual dignitaries were assembled, when a suitable tone of decorum and reverential dignity had been established, Chris was in full declamatory oration when a large and rather ugly rat, took the opportunity to wander across the stage. The thing didn't just wander it strolled and it strolled in a way that made time stand still. Even people who weren't there remember it vividly. Just like the scene in Faulty Towers the audience looked at the rat, then at Chris, then at the rat, then at Chris. The rat looked at Chris. Chris looked at the rat. Without missing a beat he calmly said, 'that's not a rat, it's a Siberian hamster'. He waited with calm dignity whilst the filigreed Siberian hamster wandered off the back stage. Nothing fazed Chris he took everything in his fearless stride.

Now like all good sheriffs and principals Chris knew his town. He knew his patch. He knew the outlaws, he knew the honest citizens, and he loved being with them. He also loved the theatre of dealing with kids. I remember one occasion when he was dealing with one particularly unpleasant, and probably criminal young man. This lad was a thoroughly nasty piece of work, I assumed maybe gang related. Now Chris had had a tip off because kids always confided in Chris and told him stuff, about possible drugs in possession. Chris asked me to his office to watch the process. Now I think the invitation was less to act as a witness and more to have a front row seat to a piece of theatre. Chris convinced the young man that he was responding, with great regret, to a scurrilous rumour and the young man after a while was begging Chris to search his bag, which Chris was steadfastly refusing to do. In desperation the boy emptied his bag on the floor to prove his innocence.



No drugs, which was all the boy was concerned about, but a nasty looking knife. Now Chris apparently didn't see the knife although he gave me a wink. I thought maybe he had something in his eye. Chris congratulated the boy, ensuring him that he had always believed in his innocence until suddenly as if shocked, 'O my God a knife'. Chris fell back in his chair, stunned and grief stricken. Somehow he managed to make himself look as if he turned white. 'Oh no. What am I going to do Mr. Morris? I'm too afraid to look. Could you grab the suspension book and look something up? I think there is something about knives in there'. He thrust the book at me, doing his best Nellie Melba. He somehow managed to have me morph from Marshal Dillon into that kiddie. All a tremble and a flutter. I took my cue from Chris's production and opened the book at the appropriate page. I'm sorry Mr Bonnor there is reference to a knife in here. "What does it say"? 'It says you have to call the police'. 'No! Read it out maybe there is another course open to me'. I read out the relevant pieces. 'Oh no, I'll have to call the police'. Chris uttered these devastating words with tears in his eyes, a sob in his throat. 'Wait outside please I need a few moments to compose myself'. Now as he sat outside I sure that kid thought Mr Bonnor was hysterical with grief because how else could you explain what sounded like garbled laughter.

Chris like all western heroes could sometimes deal with half a dozen villains at once. Now whenever he filled every nook and cranny outside his office and my office and Gary Johnson's (Deputy Principal) with some ne'er do well, he would have to use a tree outside his office. 'Right you sit there under that tree and that bloody tree had better still is there when you are done'.

Chris was the very model of what they knocked into us at Dip. Ed. about the firm and fair doctrine. I never heard a student complain to me that he had been dealt with unfairly. They always, if they did it, left chastened but admitted they had a fair go. Overwhelmingly Chris's contact with the kids was incredibly positive. The boys looked up to, trusted and respected him in a way I've never seen duplicated in any other school. They knew he was interested in them, they knew he cared they knew they could trust him. Even the boy who tried to burn down his office one weekend was very possibly expressing his love in the only way he knew. Expressing himself within his own individual mode of masculinity.

Now Chris was aided in his best endeavours for the School, by the Asquith Boys High speaker's lectern, which was used for each Formal Assembly. Now I don't know if they still use the lectern, I wouldn't be surprised if they have retired it. The late Les Miller, one of 702's Weekend Woodies, who was an Industrial Arts teacher at the School, had built this magnificent lectern on the front of which was the School Crest, and a piece of a tree which had once graced the School grounds. This piece of wood from the tree was shaped like a very large (gesturing) scrotum. When Chris spoke to the boys from behind that scrotum, he spoke with a sense of power at a level they could understand, only in the sort of subconscious Freudian sort of way. When I pointed out one day about the scrotum resemblance Chris said 'Yes it is like a scrotum, only smaller'. Perhaps that explains why his stride was so big.

Now the highlight of the year was Chris's farewell speech to year 12. It always took the form of a poem. And in that poem he included every year 12 boy and an anecdote about their most embarrassing moment or their greatest idiosyncrasy. He interviewed every year 12 boy every year, he knew their aspirations and their background and I've lost track of the number of boys who wanted or needed to see Mr. Bonnor for a chat. For a man whose personal life was more like the pages of little women, he had a great rapport with the boys in his charge. Chris took the education of boys very seriously and his practice matched the rhetoric. Without doubt the most memorable words I heard at Asquith Boys didn't come from Chris, but they described what Chris had achieved. They came from a kid there. He said: 'This school lets me be free to be the kind of boy I want to be'. Wonderful words and a fantastic tribute to what Chris has done.

Chris took a school that was sandwiched between a highway and a railway yard and with declining enrolments, surrounded by private schools, who by

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the way every time they expelled students, gave them an enrolment form to our place and a map showing how to get there. He made that place a beacon of boy's education. He touched many lives and developed an ethos where boys were encouraged to develop their own identities and where staff were challenged and encouraged to reflect on their own practice. I never once heard a staff member bad mouth Chris. When he left Asquith the farewell venue was large and filled with staff, parents and kids, many of whom had left the School years earlier in fact many are here tonight. The respect Chris was held in was humbling. Chris Bonnor was an outstanding practitioner, not just a theoretician. An educator who was a role model for me and for many other staff members, and to thousands of students, in his career. Importantly, he was and is a character, the kind of character this system, probably the world needs. A human being who generates respect and admiration in all those he interacts with. His integrity, intelligence, sense of humour, oratory and advocacy has made a difference. I wish him, on behalf of all those who have worked with him on the chalk face over the years, a long, happy and semi retirement. Chris will never really retire. If he has a chance to take the bolt out of his head and drive the caravan slowly up the highway to annoy the s.t out of everyone behind him, it will be done with a knowing smile and sparkle in his eye.

Good luck Chris and thank you for teaching me some of the most important lessons I've ever learnt.



ASQUITH BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

2010 Creative Arts Scholarships

Scholarship opportunities are being offered to acknowledge, encourage and extend students showing excellence in the creative and performing arts

Visual Arts

Senior School Scholarships for
Year 11 students in Visual Arts

School Certificate Scholarships
for Year 9 students in Visual Arts

Stage Band & Music

Year 7 Stage Band Scholarships

Year 11 Stage Band Scholarships

Year 9 School Certificate Music
Scholarships

Year 11 Senior School Music
Scholarships

Contact

Mr Bruce Collins

Deputy Principal

Phone: 9477 3508

or email:

bruce.collins@education.nsw.gov.au



ASQUITH OLD BOYS CLUB DINNER

LET'S TALK

BE PART OF THIS OCCASION & BRING YOUR IDEAS FOR
CELEBRATING THE SCHOOLS 50TH IN 2010

VENUE: Asquith Bowling Club

DATE: Saturday, 8th November 2008

COST: \$60 per head includes: Buffet Dinner and Dessert
Tea/Coffee and limited table drinks

TIME: 6 – 10pm

RSVP: 24th October Group bookings welcome

Entertainment: Asquith Boys High School Stage Band 6.30 –
7pm

Guest Speaker: Mr Chris Bonnor

Chris is a recent President of the Secondary Schools Principals Council
and former Principal of Asquith Boys throughout the decade of the 1990's

Asquith Boys High School – Payment for Old Boys Club Dinner \$60

Phone: 02 9477 3508 Fax: 02 9482 2546 Email: christopher.kent7@education.nsw.gov.au PO Box 242, Hornsby NSW 1630

☐ Cheque enclosed - please make cheque payable to *Asquith Boys High School*
or

☐ I would like to pay the amount of \$..... by credit card * (fill in details below)

Number of tickets: Name(s):

Who would you like to sit with:

* Name on card (please print):

Address:

Type of card: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard Card Expiry Date: /

CARD NUMBER:

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Exceptional learning opportunities for boys

Year 7 Enrichment Class



In 2009 an Enrichment class for Year 7 is being formed to address the needs of gifted and talented students through a specific curriculum designed to extend and challenge students. Entry to this class is via a placement test designed to identify gifted and talented students and provide a baseline profile of student achievement.

The placement test is produced and marked in conjunction with Educational Assessment Australia (EAA), a part of UNSW. It provides an independent and objective measure of student achievement towards the end of primary school. The test can provide information on the strengths of students in the areas of English, Mathematics, Science and Writing.

Contact

Bruce Collins

Deputy Principal ABHS

Phone 02 9477 3508 or email

bruce.collins@education.nsw.gov.au

for an information package

Leadership and citizenship, technology, community participation, creative arts and sporting excellence

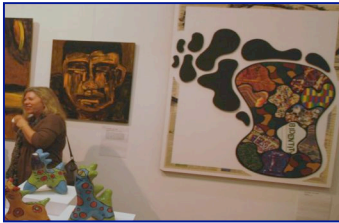
CREATIVE ARTS EXHIBITION

Asquith Boys High School was lucky enough to be invited by Hornsby TAFE to exhibit in their gallery. This was a fantastic opportunity as it is a highly visible location and allows the community to share the excellence of Visual Arts students from ABHS. The concept of the exhibition came about in 2005 when Gary Shinfield, a member of the Arts Faculty and ex-Asquith Boy, hosted a group exhibition of local high schools in the gallery. We were very excited about this opportunity and submitted work into the exhibition. From there Gary invited our school to use the gallery for our own exhibition. It was decided that a retrospective exhibition would be a brilliant idea and would showcase all the outstanding students who have achieved Band 5s and Band 6s in the HSC. It would also highlight ArtExpress successes and those students who have achieved places in the Top 10 of the state in Visual Arts.

Year 11 experienced curatorial practice and set up the exhibition. They did an excellent job.

When we had finished putting up the exhibition it was difficult not to stop smiling. In the professional gallery environment the work looked fantastic. Ex Asquithians who contributed their work to the show include; Joel Pryor, Lachlan Anthony, Tim Wilson, Brendan Jenkins, Andrew Hadju, Ian Bennett, Morgan Anthony, Dane Armour, Max Foskett, Lewis Marr, Craig Cosier, Ryan Sinclair, David Green, Ian Stubbings, Tristan Collins, Toby Fenn, Barton Johnston, Simon Milligan, Kane Newham, Josh Stubbs and Alex Beck. A handful of current students were also selected to exhibit their work and this was an enormous privilege.

They were selected because of the excellence of their work and their diligence in class.



The opening of the exhibition held on Wednesday 18 June was attended by many of the old boys, parents, colleagues, friends and families. All were excited by how wonderful the exhibition looked. Although some of the older boys were disappointed with apple and orange juice, Mrs Miller's sandwiches were a hit with everyone. We were very fortunate to have our own "paparazzi" who documented the entire proceeding. One of the highlights was our special guest, first time gallery goer; Erin Lillian (3 weeks old - who sported a fabulous pyjama ensemble of pink and mint green). She managed to sleep through the whole event! Mr Kent also attended and his unending support is always appreciated. It was also lovely to see a handful of staff and Mr Bob Dunne (our Boss's Boss) there to experience such a wonderful event.

Ms Caroline Cooke, Relieving Head Teacher Creative Arts

DUKE OF EDINBURGH

The latest practice expedition was for the new 2008 Year 9 Bronze Group. It was a two day paddle from Brooklyn to Crosslands, camping at Bunyah beach, looking at both the Aboriginal and European history of the magnificent Hawkesbury River and Berowra Creek.

The students paddled hard against the tide and were rewarded by some majestic sights: Sea Eagles duelling high in the sky, the wreck of a century old destroyer stuck fast in its final resting place deep in sticky mud and the spectacle of a misty morning sunrise over calm waters with the towering cliffs of Graces Shore as a backdrop. They learned a little about bush tucker and also about how the Aboriginals used the shells from millennia of seafood feasts to reclaim the land from the water of the river.



Most of the Year 10 Bronze Group that began last year, completed their test expedition at the same time. These students paddled from Brooklyn to Crosslands as well, but they camped at The Orchard, a further 6km paddle up Marra Marra Creek. They set up camp among 100 year old orange trees, the remnants of a failed attempt to cultivate the hidden backwaters of this formidable and unforgiving landscape. They were greeted in the morning by fog and a fast run-out tide that carried them and their craft, floating through the reflections on mirror-calm waters, creating a surreal experience that they will long remember.

Asquith Boys High School would like to thank Mr Ted Moxon, an instructor from Canoeing Australia, who donated much of his time and made this expedition possible. Thanks also to Mr Bennett, Mr Millett and Mr Murphy for their Sunday, energy and enthusiasm.

Mr C Philip, DOE Coordinator

HAVE YOU REGISTERED WITH THE ASQUITH OLD BOYS CLUB?

(If you receive Asquith Old Boys Club Newsletters by e-mail you are already registered as a Member)

This Club was commenced in 2006 with the purpose of:

- Assisting former students of The School maintain links with their peer group and their former School and teachers
- Organising and communicating information about former student events
- Assisting in the development of a program for celebrating the School's 50th Birthday, to be celebrated in 2010

To facilitate these goals, an Old Boys Newsletter is published twice a year. This is e-mailed to members free of charge

ASQUITH OLD BOYS CLUB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Full Name: (please print) _____ (tick your preferred contact)

☐ Address: _____ Post Code: _____

☐ E-mail: _____ Phone () _____

Calendar Year Graduated: _____ Academic Year/form: _____

What recollections do you have of your school days? Do you have any photos? _____

What benefit did you derive from your time at Asquith Boys? _____

How would you like to celebrate your years at Asquith Boys, in 2010? _____