March 2025

A New Journey Begins

In November, the Society was officially approved as a charity by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. Soon after, the Australian Taxation Office endorsed it for charity tax concessions and is currently considering its application for deductible gift recipient (DGR) status. That process continues.

Readers may recall that about a year ago, the Society's Management Committee looked into the group's finances and found it wasn't getting enough steady income, and just adding more members wouldn't really solve the problem. The Committee decided instead to focus on increasing donations and grants as a source of revenue.

The review found the Society has faced some confusion in recent years regarding its true purpose. Initially started thirty years ago as an alumni group mainly for reunions and social events, it has since grown instead into an organisation managing an extensive collection of historical artefacts and documents related to the history of Kent Street SHS.

Though that collection has been referred to as "The Archives" until now, it has essentially functioned as a small community museum for several years. Despite its much smaller size, it's even similar to the Western Australian Museum because of its specialised historical research library that few members of the general public even know about.

The review said the Society's primary aim is now more accurately described as to raise public awareness of the school's impact on the WA community and highlight alumni contributions to Australian society.

In 2024, the Society updated its constitution to align with this new emphasis.

Now that the Society has been officially recognised as a charity, and will hopefully soon be endorsed as a DGR, the Management Committee thinks it's time to begin seriously thinking about how to further develop the Kentian Society Museum.

Small independent museums like ours often survive by creating strategies to boost interest and involvement from the community. This helps them attract more visitors, volunteers and donors, ensuring they can continue to operate and grow.

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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Though the full development of a public museum may take several more years, it's crucial to begin preparations now to shape the museum's vision and ensure the Management Committee receives the best advice and support moving forward.

... a much bigger operation than the current archive collection

The Committee thinks that if there aren't clear rules for handling its collections, decisions about getting, keeping, or disposing of items might be random or inconsistent. This could make it hard to prioritise and use resources effectively, resulting in a collection that doesn't match the museum's mission and goals.

A draft *Museum Collections Policy* is now available on the Society's website for everyone to read. It's meant to start an open discussion and allow for any suggested changes to be considered fully. This is an important step to make the museum a place everyone can enjoy.

The draft policy suggests a much bigger operation than the current archive collection, aiming to gather more materials for larger exhibitions, education, archiving, and research.

Some people may even be surprised by how large the museum collection might become in future, covering many historical and thematic areas. But of course not everything will be on display all the time. Many items will likely be kept in storage and shown only during certain permanent or temporary exhibits, as occurs in most museums.

People can also expect that a new Museum Advisory Committee (to provide advice, support and guidance) will be set up soon, and we would like to hear from members and anyone else in the community interested in supporting this new project.

You are part of this journey

Help us shape the future of the Kentian Society Museum by...

- Reading the draft Museum Collections Policy on the Society's website (<u>www.kentians.org.au</u>); and
- Sharing your thoughts with us email the Management Committee (society@kentians.org.au) to comment or express interest in the further development of Your Museum.

Some questions to consider...

What are you curious about?

What are the **important stories** that need to be shared in Your Museum?

This is Your Museum - you're a part of it. How would you like to **be involved**?

Mollie's Travails and Travels

[Editor: This is the second part of an extended story about Mollie Dinham researched and prepared by Archives volunteer Paul de Laeter (student 1960-62). The first section of the story, dealing with her early years as a teacher and first appointment at Kent Street in 1960, was published in the November 2024 edition of our Newsletter. It ended with Mollie in her early forties, experiencing success as an innovative Physical Education teacher but unfortunately with her personal life falling apart. The story continues...]

Jandakot Airport. April, 1981.

A mature-aged woman, just a few months short of her fifty-eighth birthday, sits at the controls of a small two-seat, single-engine Cessna aircraft at one of the busiest airfields in Australia. She takes a deep breath, and speaks into the microphone on her headset.

"Cessna Foxtrot Whisky Mike on main apron, request startup."

Air traffic control [ATC] replies: "Cessna Foxtrot Whisky Mike, start up approved, contact Metro Ground 118.750 for taxi instructions."

The pilot, Mollie Dinham, confirms her instructions: "Start up approved, contact Metro Ground 118.750 for taxi instructions, Cessna Foxtrot Whisky Mike."

She then starts the engine. After checking that the propeller is spinning smoothly and all gauges are within normal range, she calls ATC again: "Metro Ground, Cessna Foxtrot Whisky Mike on main apron, request taxi for departure."

"Cessna Foxtrot Whisky Mike, Metro Ground, taxi via A to holding point C, runway 6."

"Metro Ground, taxi via A to holding point C, runway 6, Cessna Foxtrot Whisky Mike."

Mollie checks out her windows and then manoeuvres the little machine carefully across the crowded apron near the Royal Aero Club of WA, while quietly wondering to herself once again how she ended up here.



Cessna aircraft like the one flown by Mollie in 1981 **Photo**: by Jack Fleetwood <u>www.jackfleetwood.com</u>

After her marriage had ended two decades earlier, Mollie had been left with two young daughters and facing the difficulties of single motherhood during an era when society frowned upon it. Moreover, female teachers received lower salaries than their male counterparts and those who were married were denied permanent positions because "they weren't the breadwinners".

To make matters worse, when she had moved from Tasmania and resumed teaching at Kent Street in 1960 as a highly qualified senior educator, she had been placed on the same pay scale as a beginning teacher.

By the mid-1960s, Mollie had been campaigning for some time at Kent Street for a change in the structure of the Physical Education timetable, wanting two single periods and one double per week.

Deputy Principal Dick Colgan finally implemented this change to the timetable in 1967; too late however for

Mollie who had been scooped up in the meantime to take on the role of Acting Principal Mistress at the new South Fremantle High School. [**Editor**: in a few years, the title of this position would be officially changed to Deputy Principal (Female)].

married [female teachers] were denied permanent positions because "they weren't the breadwinners"

It was here that Mollie Dinham really began to exercise her administration skills; so much so that she was able to apply successfully for a substantive position as Principal Mistress at a country high school, before moving back to Perth to take up a similar position in 1969.

The following year, she was promoted to Principal Mistress in a Class I senior high school, thereby reaching the highest promotional position for women in the Secondary Service. In 1971, Mollie transferred back to Kent Street, the school she loved, after the retirement of Miss Vera Birkhead, who had served there as Principal Mistress since 1955.

Joining her at Kent Street that year was John Nolan, another young Deputy Principal taking over from long-serving Dick Colgan, who had also been at the school in that role since 1955 and was now moving to become the Principal of the new Thornlie High School.

As Principal Mistress, Mollie undertook a range of administrative duties, including liaising with Nedlands Secondary College and supervising (along with John Nolan) those teachers on staff who acted as 'Training Teachers' for the trainees who came to the school. She was also put in charge of the prefects' fund, social events, timetabling and staffing, and again showed her willingness to try new ideas.

For instance, she soon restructured the prefects body to one of student representation/government. Eight pairs of school prefects (male and female) from Fifth Year had the responsibility of eight sections of the school population (all the male or female students in each school year from First to Fourth Year).

Each pair of prefects participated in weekly meetings with the class prefects from their particular section. They coordinated with form teachers and also arranged social events and end-of-year trips for their section. These social events not only generated funds for the school but also taught good business principles and club organisation skills.

Mollie also had a natural talent for the science (and art) of school timetabling. She later conducted seminars on timetabling at Head Office for new deputy principals, and produced a manual called *Timetabling With Mollie Dinham* that was praised in one review as "a book that describes with balance and warmth, the detailed construction of a typical WA high school timetable."

The 1970s were a time of innovation in high schools, and Mollie sponsored new optional subjects like Computing, Drama and Media Studies. Boys and girls were also given equal time in Home Economics and Manual Arts.

It was during this period that she facilitated in 1979 the introduction of Aeronautics as a subject at Kent Street SHS - the first in Australia. She took a modified course from the United States and provided room for it in the Upper School academic grid, with the aim of the subject being taken up by other schools and eventually end up as a Leaving Certificate subject.

The course was run by Mal Yeo, a Physics teacher (and qualified flight instructor) who was already on staff. However, Mollie later said that fifty per cent of the work of introducing the course and keeping it running was administrative and timetabling. Several years later, Mollie and Mal were both recognised for their contribution to education and aeronautics teaching by being awarded an Order of Australia medal.

She also accepted the challenge of gaining a pilot's licence herself (mainly to see more of her young grandchildren who lived on a remote pastoral station about 450 kilometres north north-east from Perth) and before turning 60 in 1983 had her licences to fly. Not content with that, she also got her aerobatics rating.

Besides flying to the station, Mollie later completed several interstate flights in a twin-propeller aircraft across the Nullarbor to Cape York, and through northern Australia crossing the Tanami Desert.

She later delighted in receiving an Australian Women Pilots Certificate of Achievement for 500 hours as Pilot in Command presented by Nancy Bird Walton AO, OBE.

1982 was a big year for schools in WA. The State Government decided to reduce the Education Department budget by closing underpopulated schools, and Bentley High School was one of the schools earmarked for closure. As a result, about 50 per cent of its enrolment was expected to move to Kent Street, bringing the numbers there up to around 1000 students.

This necessitated the building of new facilities to free-up classrooms. The Department initially suggested transportable classrooms but Mollie (who was now acting as school principal following the retirement of Bill Gibney) would have none of it.

She suggested instead quite a number of upgrades, many of which were accepted. A Drama and Media block linked to the English block was one of her achievements, along with a Commerce block and TAFE office. Extra storerooms were built under the Science block, and she instigated a number of other changes - the Language Lab was relocated and its former room became a Computing classroom, the former girls cloakroom became a properly designed sickbay, and the former boys cloakroom became Social Studies equipment and staff study area. There were also upgrades to Home Economics and Manual Arts and ESL areas.



Mollie Dinham with her Order of Australia medal

Mollie also provided an extra 'gift' - the purchase by the school of a Cessna aircraft, VH-WIF, for aeronautics students to learn to fly at fuel cost only (with the payment of insurance and fees being met by the Education Department). She had also arranged for the Aeronautics department to meet half of the purchase cost through fundraising walkathons, quiz nights, and by renting out the aircraft to external parties.

In 1983, William Eborall (who'd been made redundant by the closure of Bentley High School) was appointed as Kent Street Principal and Mollie returned to her substantive position as Senior Deputy Principal. She became the Relieving Principal again for the first half of 1984 when Mr Eborall took leave, but then retired on Friday, 6th July that year.

There were several 'retirement' functions leading up to that date - morning and afternoon teas, a final school assembly organised by the school prefects and a luncheon at Parliament House organised by Ron Davies MLA.

Mr Eborall was glowing in his praise of Mrs Dinham and said she had served the school in a dedicated and distinguished way as both teacher and administrator:

"She has been a kind but firm administrator and thousands of students and parents and hundreds of teachers have had the benefit of her wisdom. We wish her a very happy and productive retirement and she will be sorely missed at Kent Street."

"The iron fist in the velvet glove"

Here are some extracts from Mollie's 'Staff Evaluation' presented to her at her retirement:

"The Formidable Deputy". "The iron fist in the velvet glove - and you surely know when it comes to rest on your shoulder."

"Thank you for being a strong Headmistress - I only have to quietly ask one of those feisty Year 11 girls whether she would like me to mention her name to Mrs Dinham, and that is the end of the matter."

Mollie Dinham didn't go in for the usual retirement program of having a quiet life enlivened with an annual overseas tour or cruise. She did travel, but in a style in keeping with her tenacity of spirit and willingness to take the road less travelled.

Sometimes she journeyed solo, sometimes with adventure groups, through 70 countries; places that many people hadn't heard of - Ladakh, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, the Shetlands, Mongolia, Yemen, as well as Iraq and Iran, Alaska and Paraguay. She recounted these trips in three published books - *Travels to Exotic Places*, *Exotic Places Too* and *More Travels to Exotic Places*.

After Mollie Dinham died in 2019, her daughter Judith wrote an obituary for publication in *The West Australian* and concluded:

"She is remembered for her integrity, her steadfastness, her humanity, her adventurous and indomitable spirit, her stoicism and her love of life. She was 96 and as lucid as ever when she passed away peacefully with her family around her, after a short illness."

She was a remarkable woman.

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

Subject: A Poke At The Woke

From: [Name withheld to avoid embarrassing the correspondent.]

You lot have gone bloody Woke so remove me from your mailing list. I no longer wish to be a member, thank you. We as Australians voted a big NO in the referendum. But we are still hearing welcome to country all pushed along by a race-based money-making agenda. Also along with being continually reminded of whose land we are on at every chance a television program can throw at us including your news letter....I'm 75 and do not want my grandchildren being bombed with this divisive bull****. Seems like we are allowing the media Including news letters to throw the guilt trip at every chance they get.

[**Editor**: "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." - from a 1948 speech to the House of Commons by Sir Winston Churchill. Understanding the historical significance of the land on which the school is situated is an important first learning step.]

Subject: Other Feedback About Our Last Newsletter

From: Maaike Kemner (Brands), student 1956-58

Thanks for the most interesting newsletter.

From: Barry Foster, student 1955-57

I recently visited Cargill Street Primary School in Victoria Park for their 130th anniversary (I had earlier attended their 100th). An enjoyable afternoon. I attended Kent Street SHS from 1955-57, and then joined the RAAF and continued on to Year 12.

From: "Edward" [another former student 1953-57 - also wanting to remain anonymous]

Dear Editor, Please find attached various items in response to your comment about receiving memories of days at KSSHS. Attached are some photos and a document with my additions to the list of ideas published in your last edition. [**Editor**: see also the next section of this newsletter - "More Memories From The Days of the D.A."]

Some major events I remember:

 In about 1957 a senior girl had a torrid accident when a spring-loaded classroom door sprung back at her and she put her hand through one of the class panels. She sliced her wrist badly and there was blood spurting out in jets.

A nearby male student involuntarily grabbed her arm under the armpit and squeezed hard, while holding the arm in the air. This stopped the bleeding and soon after, expert assistance arrived.

 The school's cadet unit was part of a mortar platoon and as well as basic drills with rifles and Bren guns, also learnt to deploy, lay and fire 3-inch mortars. On a couple of occasions the unit conducted firing exercises at the school.

The mortars were set up behind the demountable classrooms on the lower side of the school and dummy rounds were fired 200-300 yards across what was then a large expanse of vacant ground on the lower south-west side.

The good 'fun' then became to find and account for the fired bombs!

A comment written for a school 40-year reunion, held in 1997:

"I wonder if Stephanie Wharton (was it Stephanie??) will remember the time I put a mouse in her inkwell" (inkwell!! For Heaven's sake...!!)

I happened to find a dead mouse in the classroom, and sat it face up in Steph's inkwell. I don't think the teacher appreciated the "Eeeek!!" that resounded through the room the first time Steph went to dip her pen.

From: Lloyd Blake, student 1957-60

Thank you very much for the newsletter - interesting reading indeed.

I particularly liked the Mollie Dinham story - excellent piece of history.

It brought back memories of Kent St sport eg I played junior baseball in South Perth - the entire team were KSSHS students, we rarely lost a game and also played for the school.

Kent Street was very successful in inter-school swimming contests. There were no swimming pools in Perth then, so competition was in the Swan River at Crawley or Como.

Also interesting to see familiar names of students/staff of KSSHS days. Team sports were very successful.

Excellent Sports Master **Ken Armstrong** coached athletes in several sports. After school he coached Perth Football Team (Demons at Lathlain). He developed the track & field skills of many students including Len Vlahov and Eva Kempe (she later married Len) and both were Australian and international successes.

Mr Armstrong also coached/aided the success of Olympian Phil May (National hop-step and jump champion) and later founder of DOME Coffee.

Best wishes for a great Xmas and successful 2025.

[Editor: Lloyd also forwarded what he called "some KSHS history for future consideration".

It's a story about his former neighbour and good friend Allan Gilbert, student 1957-60.

This is currently being prepared for publication in a future newsletter.

More Memories From The Days of the D.A.

In our last newsletter, we published some of the memories of "Paul" - a Kent Street student from about 70 years ago. He'd made a list of the names of students and teachers he could remember, and included some of his personal impressions of them.

Another student from that time, who wishes to be known as "Edward", has responded with some photos and his own impressions (added to the original list in dark red italics).



Graduation Dance - Dec 1957

L to R – Andrew Outh-Aut plus three members of the school rugby union team scrum - Pearu Terts, John Rozentals and Barry Bamford

Students

(I put one question mark after a name when I was a little unsure of its correctness, and two when I was even more uncertain).

Barry Bamford (serious and reliable - cadets - played guitar) Played 'lock' in the school's rugby union team.	Gavin Bromley <i>Bromilow</i> (a bit of a clown) Got into trouble when he attended school with an Elvis hairdo and wearing desert boots.
Brian Carthew – played hockey. Joined the CMF later in life and was awarded a medal for saving a crewman from a burning armoured vehicle.	John Crute – a hockey fanatic. Continued to be involved as a player and administrator for many years.
Roger Downing – Quiet and studious. Under-officer in the school cadets.	Cliff Fernie
John Fisher	Lyn Fuller

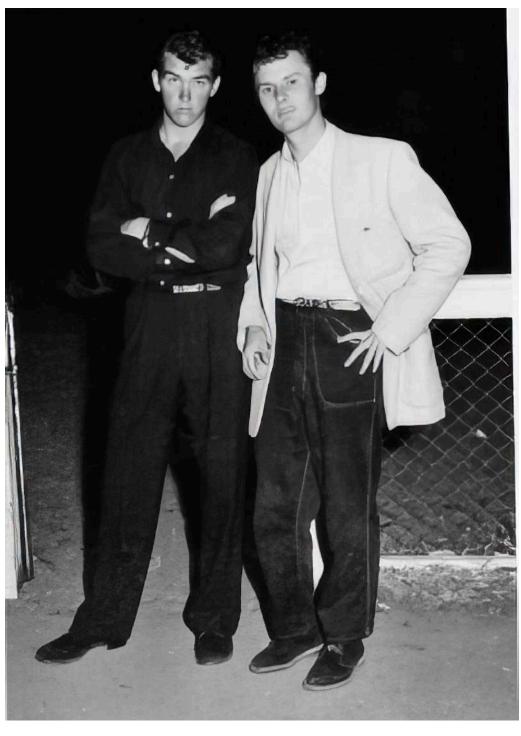
Trevor Gallagher – Head Boy in 1957. Played hockey. Sang 'That Old Black Magic' at the graduation dance.	Joy Harmer – had a nasty accident when a classroom door sprung back at her.
Mildred Hawking	Gunter Hopfmueller
Margaret Jarvis	Margaret Johnson
Stan Kailis? (one could not help but notice him) Played classic guitar with consummate ease.	Ross Keirle – played hockey (I think).
Kevin Langoulant liked a bit of style.	Charlie Leaver – Killed in a car crash about 1962.
Don Lyall (father something to do with the zoo?) His father was Curator of the South Perth Zoo.	Bob Maxwell
Val Perry	Winston Rose
John Rozentals. Nick-named 'Rosie'. Under-officer in school cadets, played 'front row' in the school's rugby union team	John Schoen
Leslie Slater quiet and shy.	Bev Smith
Marie Spencer	David Spitteler (very honest)
Pearu Terts - (liked things electrical) Played 'front row' in the school's rugby union team.	Bill Toussaint – very inventive, rode a 'hot' BSA 650 Gold Flash.
Joan Vincent	Jan Wagner
Ron Wallace	Kingsley Waterhouse
Phillip Watson Rode a Triumph 500 from somewhere in the hills near Lesmurdie.	Stephanie?? (tallish, slim, dark haired, no-nonsense) Probably Stephanie Wharton. Flashing eyes, dark black hair cut in page-boy style, one gold ear stud – definitely no nonsense
Kevin White? Probably Kevin Williams (small but very observant). Nick-named 'Shorty'.	Cath Yates
Joan Zaliki – definitely liked to jive! Was still jiving at the Hyde Park Hotel in 1997.	

There was also a boy who came about 1955 I think, who was keen on all things related to newspapers. He probably became a reporter or editor. I cannot remember his name at all.

Probably 1956, Andrew Outh-Aut.

Didn't take much notice in classes, sat at the back of the room and wrote his own stories.

Rode an old pedal-change Indian (might have been a Harley-Davidson). Became a photographer.



Graduation Dance Dec 1957Barry Bamford and Andrew Outh-Aut

Teachers Names I Remember

Mr John Bremner (cadets) Nick-named 'Jock'. A very unassuming character. Was Officer Commanding the school's cadet unit and particularly helpful during cadet camps.	Miss Ann Barbatt. Taught English. Young and attractive. Set the male students wishing but was married in the interim.
Mr Fred Chaney. (Cargill Street) Became a Federal Government politician. Father of Fred Chaney Jr.	Mr Richard Colgan (nasty - used words as a weapon to demean students) Deputy principal. Not a very nice person indeed. Told me I was 'Agin' the Government' and should leave school and get a job.
Mr Nick DeGaris - Taught Economics	Mr Cecil Dixon. Taught Manual Arts,Woodwork
Mr Geoff Ewing (Cargill Street). Easily distracted to talk about his experiences during WW2. (Tell us about the war, Sir.)	Mr Vince Heinrichs (abrasive and unsettling) Taught Maths - not very tolerant of students who struggled with the subject. In later life I used him (not by name) as an example of what teachers should not be like.
Mr George McClure (far too self-centred) - had a Morris-Minor car - taught us about the 'sausage-machine'. Probably one of the most effective teachers in the whole cohort. Taught multiple subjects in Junior year and got me though the eight subjects when I didn't think I would.	Mr <i>Eric</i> McGrath (Headmaster - focussed but narrow minded)
Mr Lawrie McGrath – Librarian (I think).	Mr Edward (Ted) O'Keefe. Was a champion light-heavyweight boxer during WW2. Coached the school's rugby union team.
Mr John Rutherford (Science - daring with experiments) Played WA State Cricket. Had a torrid encounter with English fast bowler Frank Tyson.	Mr <i>Lawrie</i> Sawle (new teacher - brilliant - liked cricket)
Mr Don Smallman Taught English, a most pleasant person. Nick-named 'Snake' because of his dramatic rendition of the D.H. Lawrence poem Snake and the extended class discussions of the rhyme, vocabulary, text, and moral implications.	Mr Marshal Walker. Phys Ed teacher. Insisted the boys always had cold showers after PE sessions.
Mr Brian Willis – taught languages, French and German.	



Last Day At Kent Street - Dec 1957
L to R – Bill Toussaint, Phil Watson, Margaret Jarvis (seated),
Barry Bamford, Kevin Langoulant, 'Bubbles' (standing rear: name ??)

The Wizard of Idiom

Some of our readers may also find their memories stimulated by the following piece by American linguist and author Richard Lederer.

Recently, I was thinking about some old expressions that have become obsolete because of the inexorable march of technology. These phrases included "Don't touch that dial," "Carbon copy," "You sound like a broken record" and "Hung out to dry."

We wake up from what surely has been just a short nap and before we can say, Well I'll be a monkey's uncle!/This is a fine kettle of fish! - we discover that the words we grew up with, the words that seemed omnipresent as oxygen, have vanished with scarcely a notice from our tongues and our pens and our keyboards.

Poof, go the words of our youth, the words we've left behind. We blink and they're gone. Where have all those phrases gone?

Back in the olden days we were in like Flynn and living the life of Riley and even a regular guy couldn't accuse us of being a knucklehead, a nincompoop or a pill....Not for all the tea in China!

Back in the olden days, life used to be swell but when's the last time anything was swell? Swell has gone the way of beehives, pageboys and the D.A, of spats, knickers, fedoras, poodle skirts, saddle shoes and pedal pushers. Oh, my aching back. Kilroy was here but he isn't anymore.

Long gone: Knee high to a grasshopper. Well, Fiddlesticks! Going like sixty. I'll see you in the funny papers. Don't take any wooden nickels. Heavens to Murgatroyd! It turns out there are more of these lost words and expressions than Carter has liver pills. This can be disturbing stuff! We of a certain age have been blessed to live in changeful times. For a child each new word is like a shiny toy, a toy that has no age.

We at the other end of the chronological arc have the advantage of remembering there are words that once did not exist and there were words that once strutted their hour upon the earthly stage and now are heard no more, except in our collective memory. It's one of the greatest advantages of ageing.

See you later, alligator.

Society Membership

New Society Members and renewals since 1 February 2024:

Bev Adam (Smith), student 1953-56 Lloyd Blake, student 1957-60 Steven Dobson, student 1994-98 Alun Dufty, student 1954-59 Marg Fox (Jarvis), student 1956-57 Jim Langford, student 1957-61 Hailey McArthur, student 2021-23 Jude Quinn, student 2020-23

Have YOU completed your MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / UPDATE?

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. We are always reviewing our membership records, 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. Also, remember to pay your membership fee into the bank account specified on the form.

Don't delay - do it today.