



Friends of the

Old Teachers' College, Armidale Inc.

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Patrons: T.G. (Gus) Plater and R.F. (Rod) Davis OAM

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

The year is drawing to a close and it's time for the friends to look forward to Christmas festivities and a brand New Year whilst also casting an eye back over 2017. Could we have done more? Have we done well what we have done? The answer to the first question is NO. Every member of the Committee would like to do more but as every member is also kept busy with life away from the College, that would not be possible. In any case we are a well-organised group and at the beginning of each year we plan the year's activities and what we want to achieve, and we achieve everything. No wonder we enjoy our end-of-year celebratory dinner. As for the second question, the answer is a resounding YES.

So, Friends, your College is being watched over, cared for and promoted to the very best of our ability. We are certainly keeping an eye on events now that the University has relinquished responsibility for the building. We will keep you informed as events unfold.

To my own delight the "Green Room" on the first floor has now been officially named the "Gwenda Shannon Room" and opened in style. Never, ever, having had such an honour bestowed on me before, I am feeling unashamedly delighted. Of course, my name may be on the Room but the magnificent display in the Room is all the work of the Committee led by Ros Townsend, Sue Melville and Karen Marshall.

The lift, by the way, is still in the forefront of our thoughts and plans. We MUST achieve the LIFT particularly as we have received such solid financial support from our Friends to have one installed. We hope 2018 will be the YEAR OF THE LIFT.

Thank you all for your faith in us and the strong support you consistently give us. That support is deeply appreciated.

**With very best wishes,
Gwenda E. Shannon, OAM President**

FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE

I am writing as Deputy Chair of the Friends of the Old Teachers' College concerning the future of the college. You would be aware that when we formed the F.O.T.C. in the 1990s, the University of New England intended to mothball the building. This would have meant demolition by neglect and in time a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the University and Armidale Council to allow us access to the building. We created an office as well as history rooms to ensure that the building was protected. We continued to raise money for conservation projects as well as a lift but the University refused to support our application.

The Armidale Express was informed in February 2017 that the University intended to resign as Corporate Trust Manager. A message was left on our answering machine by the University informing the F.O.T.C. of the decision. Since that time, we have received no formal correspondence from the University informing us of their decision or of the date when the University will end the Trusteeship. What is even more disturbing is the fact that the State Government through the Department of Land and Property and owner of the building, has not been formally informed.

At this stage, Expressions of Interest have been called by the Government for management of the building and we have been informed that one expression of interest was lodged. We will keep you informed of future events.

Graham Wilson OAM

MEMBERSHIP

What can I say about our membership this year? Well, to start with, our numbers are way down and, being a fully paid up luddite, I'm blaming cyberspace for losing our June Newsletters and Membership forms. Are they retrievable? If so then please consider continuing to support us in our endeavours to keep the College building in use and the memorabilia displayed for all to see.

Suggestions for increasing our numbers are always more than welcome.

Lorraine McNamara

HISTORY ROOM REPORT

A warm end of year THANK YOU to our team of dedicated volunteers who continue to keep the History Room open daily from 2-4pm. The Gwenda Shannon Room with its many interesting displays is also open upon request.

The Friends are very happy with the news that NECOM will continue to enjoy their tenure in the College for the next three years. NECOM Director, Russell Bauer has been very encouraging with his many visits to the History Room meeting its volunteers.

While it has been a very quiet year in regards to reunions and weddings, apart from the 1961-62 Reunion held recently at the College, we are aware that reunions have taken place in other areas. Brief recounts of these reunions follow.

We wish all volunteers and members a very happy Christmas and best wishes for a happy and, more importantly, a healthy 2018.

Karen Marshall and Sue Melville



As requested by one of our members, we're continuing to feature sections of our History Room. In this corner, the piano donated to the College History Room in 2006 by Graham, the son of Albert Campbell Morgan Howard(1906-1984), is evident. It was on this piano that 'Cam' Howard composed the College Anthem. 'Cam' Howard was on the staff of Armidale Teachers' College from its inception in 1928 until 1948.

Claim the date

**The 2018 All-Sessions Armidale Teachers' College gathering will be held in the
CENTRAL COAST LEAGUES CLUB, GOSFORD**

on

Wednesday, March 14th at 10.30am

**I invite you to circle the date and join us in a day of reminiscence and respect for the great institution which
was ARMIDALE TEACHERS' COLLEGE.**

From: Gus Plater at gusandmarg@exemail.com.au

OPENING OF THE GWENDA SHANNON ROOM

On Wednesday, June 28th, the former Armidale Teachers' College was a hive of activity. Apart from over 80 excited youngsters enjoying Junior Orchestra Workshops held by NECOM, there was a large number of former College lecturers, students and ancillary staff of the College in attendance at a very important function. On the first floor in what was known as the Green Room, a dedication to a great Armidale citizen was taking place.

The F10 Room, as it was originally known by many occupants of this historic and heritage listed building, has been converted to a museum displaying memorabilia donated or on loan from the many generous A.T.C. and Armidale College of Advanced Education personnel whom themselves or had a family member attend the College from 1928 to 1989.

To honour the dedication of Ms Gwenda Shannon OAM, the first and until now, the only President of Friends of the Old Teachers' College, the room has been named in her honour and is now known as The Gwenda Shannon Room. It recognises her tireless work as President of FOTC formed in 1997 to prevent this beautiful building from being mothballed and to return it to life as a centre for educational and cultural activities.

The occasion was chaired by Mr Graham Wilson OAM, and at the invitation of the FOTC Committee, the opening ceremony was performed by Mr Gus Plater. Gus was the former chairman of the Teachers' College Council and to many ex-Armidale High students, a former Principal of that school. Gus, as Patron of FOTC was supported in his role by Mr Rod Davis OAM, a former Registrar of the Teachers' College and also a Patron of the group.



In his speech, Gus spoke of the honour it was to perform the opening of The Gwenda Shannon Room for a lady who had effectively championed the College cause through vigour, drive and enterprise required of a strong leader. He listed the achievements of the group, led by Gwenda, viz rental of spaces, repair of the gym spring floor, sanding and polishing of the parquet in the foyer and Honour Boards, the initiation of a fund for a vitally needed lift, and significantly the fire protection and award of a licence for the public use of the auditorium allowing its use by NECOM, the Eisteddfod Society and other community musical/ dramatic groups.

In conclusion, Gus mentioned two previous awards Gwenda has received in recognition of her contribution to the community. Gwenda received an Order of Australia medal in 2003 and was named Armidale Senior Citizen of the Year in 2000, just two of many honours she has received.

The special occasion was attended by Gwenda's close friends; volunteers who weekly man the College History Room; local ex-lecturers, students and ancillary staff and who are members of FOTC; staff from UNE Heritage Centre, Mr Bill Oates, University Archivist, and Michelle Arens, the former Art Collection Manager. The two organisations who have tenancy in the building were represented; Mr Russell Bauer, new director of NECOM and a representative for Mr Tim Catterall, CEO of UNE Partnerships. Two important guests were Jan and Barry McKelvey. Jan's father, Mr Norman Morrow was a lecturer in the Manual Arts Department of the College from 1936 to 1967. A corner of the room is occupied by a large wooden loom Mr Morrow had made for students' use; many of his work samples, wools and cotton; reference and workbooks.

Apologies were received from Mr Adam Marshall MP, Member for Northern Tablelands; Dr Ian Tiley, Administrator of Armidale Regional Council; Mr Ian and Mrs Rosemary Sinclair; Mrs Rosemary Leitch; Mrs Lila Hawkins, a 92 year old ex-student; Chris Reading and John Harris; Mrs Jill Schaefer; Mrs Judy Davis; Mrs Kate Prosser; Mrs Susan Dunn.

After the unveiling of the plaque by Gus and Rod, and presentation of a bouquet of flowers by Mrs Ros Townsend, the many guests enjoyed morning tea prepared by the members of FOTC working committee. The Gwenda Shannon Room, with the original College History Room, is open each weekday from 2 to 4. All are welcome. Entry is via the imposing front steps and through the massive wooden doors into the foyer. The History Room is on the right where a welcome sign is in place when rooms are open.

Anyone wishing to become a volunteer is also welcome and can contact the College on 0401760238 or by emailing fofc@nsw.chariot.net.au A message can be left and will be answered by a committee member as soon as possible.

Words from Gus Plater

Could I start by saying that I think that it would be difficult for those gathered to understand the pleasure Marg and I derive from returning to Armidale. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

The fact that I can carry out a task such as this of course simply amplifies the satisfaction.

The Friends OTC is a unique and remarkable organisation. Its members have taken on a novel, distinctive and challenging task on behalf of the Armidale Community, the wider educational milieu of Australia and literally hundreds of ex students and staff of the College.

I am actually in a position to validate the appreciation and affection that the TC community feels for this institution and thus the work done by the Friends. As well as for my own session I play a part in organising an All Sessions reunion in March each year in Gosford. The enthusiasm for the College is exemplified, I think, by an apology received from Frank Atcheson from the 1940/41 Session who regretted his inability to attend but would certainly hope to be there next year.

Of course the group of dedicated, enthusiastic and ever reliable volunteers who have been responsible for this wonderful resource are simply carrying on and working not in the shadow but in the shining light of the greats who have gone before. The Eric Dunlops, The Fred Kirkwoods, The Lionel Gilberts, the Jock Elphicks and dare I say it, the Graham Wilsons and their colleagues.

...And to that end I am able to convey, the best wishes, encouragement and delight of the said Jock Elphick at the completion of this History Room. Jock although not well at this juncture nevertheless wished to have his message conveyed.

There is a great deal said about leadership in the discourse of today. Opinions, assertions, postulations and judgements are offered in all quarters. However the best assessments come from observing successful leadership in action.

There is no better example of the effective championing of a cause, the vigour, the drive and the enterprise required of leadership than that which Gwenda Shannon brought to the Friends. In 2006. It is entirely appropriate that this initiative bears testament to that example.

Since 1987 when that admirable band of citizens gathered to stave off the moth-balling of the building, initiatives have flowed, some requiring sustained representation, some have been achieved in the face of total initial scepticism, still others required repetitive, pedestrian patience, but all were aimed at successfully sustaining a viable, living institution. Spaces were rented, fire protection instituted, the gym spring floor, steps, parquetry, honour boards repaired and maintained.

- Memorabilia areas, the Howard Hinton corner a first history room established.
- A lift fund initiated
- Even the award of a licence for the public use of the auditorium was achieved.

Gwenda Shannon has already been recognised for her contributions to her community, she has an Order of Australia Medal and she has been made an Armidale Senior Citizen of the year. It was my privilege to unveil the plaque above the front steps to C B Newling, I deem this honour with the same significance to that of the 10th December 1989. I invite Rod Davis my fellow patron to assist in this auspicious unveiling.



Gus Plater
28.7.17

REUNIONS

A group of men from the 64-65 Session responded to an ad in the Telegraph, placed by Graham Lennan, to attend a reunion in Kirribilli in September. Despite a small response, the group found it very easy to spend 4 to 5 hours together recounting old times, remembering how good Armidale and the College were and being grateful that they enjoy reasonable health and live in such a wonderful country. John Maurer reporting on this occasion, commented they have been a very lucky generation. Others who attended were Brett Stuart, Ian Wilson, Graham Wilson, Graham Lennan as well as Noel Edgell from the 63-64 Session.

In his email John spoke of recently attending Walter Pike's funeral in Kiama. You can read more about Walter's passing elsewhere in this Newsletter.

On 12th September this year ex Armidale Teachers' College graduates from several Sessions (as per photo) met for a Luncheon at the Ballina RSL Bowling Club.

This has been an annual 'get together' on the 2nd Tuesday in September. The large number of apologies indicates the continued interest in this function and it is intended to put in place a communication network. For further information contact Marcia Kelly (Poynting) on 66864280 or Des Burke on 66286948.



ATC Reunion Luncheon: BALLINA, 12th September, 2017

Back: Brian Willis, Ted Williams, Bob Spence, Ron McLennan, Bob Gordon, Brian Moore, Howard Brockington, Don Nealon, John Cooper, Ian Loxton, John Fraser

Middle: Des Burke, Dora Brockington (Cigana), Margaret Willis (Junor), Shirley Gordon (Avery), Yvonne Schuhmacher (Blackman), Neville Rogan, Pat McDonald (Vout), Isobel Williams (Smith), Max Bigg

Front: Lyn Dixon (Rendall), Helen Loxton (Larrescy), Patricia Wilson (Wilson), Marjorie Stubbs (Sullivan), Gay Gilmour (McCarthy), Marcia Kelly (Poynting), Anne Bigg (Clark), Mary Burke (Walsh)

VALE WALTER PIKE 1917-2017

Armidale Teachers College staff member, 1956-1969



Many readers might not have heard of Walter who died this year just short of his 100th birthday. However, his life achievements are of greater significance than his longevity.

Walter came from humble origins. Born in a village, East Chinnock in Somerset England, his father was a farm labourer and his mother took in washing. Yet he became Principal of Wollongong Teachers College and finally in 1980, Assistant Director of Wollongong Catholic Education Office.

He showed early promise and won a scholarship to a Grammar School. Later, he was offered a scholarship to Exeter College, London University and was able to accept thanks to a benefactor. Here he majored in history and achieved BA(Hons). Because from an early age he had decided to be a school master, he then took a Diploma in Education in 1939. This helps explain how he finished at Armidale Teachers' College.

But...The Second World War interrupted Walter's professional aims. He had joined the Reserves and then volunteered to the army and reached the rank of Captain of Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Around this time he married Sheila Hobbs. He was deployed on many missions and was eventually reported missing. Finally he turned up having been a prisoner of war in Germany.

When repatriated he started school teaching and took an M.A. at London University. After Sheila's father died they decided to immigrate to Australia where Walter had gained a position at Sydney Boys' Tech. High School. So, with two daughters, Walter and Sheila took SS Esperance to Australia in 1952.

After short periods at Sydney Boys' and Narrandera High Schools he was appointed to Armidale T.C.'s History Department in 1956.

With the example of colleagues like Eric Dunlop, the historian who established the Education Museum in Kentucky Street, and the support of his Principal Dr Bassett, Walter's career blossomed and advancements in positions ensued. His family grew and his community involvement increased.

Walter claimed that Dr Bassett could smell trouble and gives the example of the time he was in charge of exams and checked one room only to find no supervisor, no papers. He ran and collected the papers and began distributing when Bassett appeared. "Why are you giving out papers?" and when told, "Go and find Mr X and I'll continue here."

Always a willing contributor Walter once offered to help Dulce Lyndsay by reading the Dictation section of her exam. "I can't let you do it. Your Somerset accent would confuse them."

His tenure at Armidale T.C. ended in 1970 when he accepted the Deputy Principalship of Wollongong T.C. Later he became Principal.

Sheila and Walter spent their retirement in Kiama and enjoyed community involvement, travel, golf and their grand- and great-grandchildren.

References.

His was a Life Well Lived: Remembering Walter Pike, Kiama Independent, Sept. 13, 2017

Armidale's College on the Hill, p.75 Bookmen Publisher's History and Heritage

Collection, Qld. Australian, nd.