



KENTIAN SOCIETY

SUPPORTING KENT STREET SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Newsletter

February 2026

Balancing Creativity With Logic

A few years ago, on Australia Day 2019, a highly respected Australian writer and media executive was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to television. It recognised his stellar career creating five of Australia's most popular TV dramas — *Always Greener*, *All Saints*, *Packed To The Rafters*, *Winners & Losers* and *A Place To Call Home*. When he received his Australian honour, many may have expected him to rest on his laurels and be content with his legacy.

Instead, he went on to create another drama unlike anything he'd ever done before. It was a concept he'd been working on for six years, and broke the traditional rules of the genre. Every episode ends with a cliff-hanger, but each new one backtracks slightly to reframe the previous finale from a fresh perspective.

"It works really well because after the first hour you assume all sorts of things and then you think 'Oh my God I had no idea that was going on'. That happens every week," he later said of *Between Two Worlds*, his final series in 2020 for the Seven Network.

Then, the following year, he was commissioned to write Amazon Prime Video's first original scripted Australian drama, *Back To The Rafters*. It was a return to a series that had seemingly run its course eight years before. However, bringing back the original cast for a new chapter in the family's story was positively received by critics and fans.

Daryl Sparkes of the website *The Conversation* later stated:

"I always found *Packed to the Rafters* to be honest and authentic. It was ... grounded in realism, [and] this is the key to *Rafters* continued success. It takes the ordinary in our lives and makes it just a little bit more extraordinary on the screen." ¹

That comment encapsulates much of the work of this outstanding writer and script producer.

After 40 years in the industry, he finally retired in 2021 and bid goodbye to the sixty-hour work weeks—the endless plotting, script reviews, scene breakdowns, first drafts, and amendments—all while maintaining continuity for dozens of characters across multiple storylines.

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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Bevan Lee (student 1966-67) was born in Western Australia in 1950 and grew up in Carlisle with his parents Bert and Coral. They'd married in 1942 just before Bert had enlisted with the RAAF, where he was trained as a flight mechanic. During WWII, these crucial flight crew members (often called "knuckle-busters") performed intensive, often outdoor, daily maintenance, inspections, and repairs on aircraft, working in harsh conditions with limited resources to keep planes flying.

Within 12 months of joining the air force, Bert Lee was a specialist fitter (responsible for operating lathes and other machinery to shape metal parts) and, after being posted to Laverton, was soon promoted to the rank of Leading Aircraftman. Following his discharge after the war, he continued to work as a fitter after he and Coral moved to Carlisle.

After completing his Leaving Certificate at Kent Street SHS, Bevan studied for a degree in pure mathematics and went on to work as a Mathematics and Chemistry teacher with the WA Education Department. To "save his sanity" (as he later put it) ², he started to participate in amateur dramatics in his spare time. He later became a professional actor and moved to Sydney in the 1970s to pursue his new career.

Following several minor appearances in film and television productions, Bevan sought supplementary income between roles. A colleague recommended scriptwriting, which led to his submission of material to Grundy Television, who took him on.



Bevan Lee (Photo: Brook Rushton)

Bevan joined the Grundy Organisation in 1979 as a trainee storyliner on *The Restless Years*. He worked his way up to story editor for the show's final season. Later, he helped create two new soap operas: *Sons and Daughters* and *Possession*, and became the first story editor for both shows.

He says many people of his era were very lucky to have a wonderful training ground at Grundy (or at Crawford Productions), turning out multiple storylines and multiple characters to order, where the writers could be creative but really had to train themselves to be pragmatic as well and consider their audience.

Writing for TV means working with limits. Actors might be contracted to only appear in so many episodes each week. You can only film outside so many times. You can only use each set for so many scenes. When making five shows a week, these rules matter. In a recent interview, Bevan said that all his mathematical training in the analysis of dimensional variables really came in handy in dealing with the practicalities of screenwriting, in terms of creativity versus budget:

“You know you’ve got five episodes a week and you’ve got this one contractor for three and that one contractor for two. You get to the end of a half hour and you desperately need that character, but you simply can’t do it budget-wise, so you have to twist the story.”³

In late 1987, Seven Network’s Head of Drama, Alan Bateman, showed Bevan a TV pilot script for a new show called *Refuge* that needed work. They soon realised it required a complete rewrite with only two weeks until filming. After production was delayed, Bevan then spent three weeks at home to give it a complete overhaul.

His new script worked well and, after the pilot was a success, the show (which had been renamed *Home and Away*) went into full production and started in January 1988. However, it nearly got cancelled by executives after only six weeks. Bateman fought to keep it on air for the few more weeks it needed to gain traction with viewers, and Bevan was then asked to stay on as the story editor for the first 18 months.

Home and Away has since become the second-longest drama series in Australian television after *Neighbours*, and has been sold to over 140 countries around the world, making it one of Australia's most successful media exports.

After completing his “domestic trilogy” (*Always Greener*, *Packed to the Rafters* and *Winners & Losers*), Bevan began development of a romance-driven melodrama to highlight how much we have changed as a nation in some areas and how little in others. *A Place to Call Home* premiered on the Seven Network in 2013 and later continued successfully on Foxtel until 2018.

When asked about how the show had opened Australia’s eyes to the secret and forbidden world of gay life in the 1950s, Bevan said he’d had gay characters in all his shows. He continued:

“The story takes place in a time in which [gay people] were dubbed as ill because we felt love in a different way and people could think they were doing the right thing by us to suggest a frontal lobe lobotomy to remove the condition. I want my gay stories to make the unempathetic feel empathy, make them think ‘Gosh they’re a lot like us’. I want to help diminish the sense of gay people as ‘the other’.”⁴

¹ Sparkes, Daryl (17 September 2021). "[Back to the Rafters review: series reboot is full of heart and reflects changing times](https://www.theconversation.com/back-to-the-rafters-review-series-reboot-is-full-of-heart-and-reflects-changing-times)". theconversation.com

² Bizzaca, Caris (9 September 2021) [Screen Australia Podcast - Bevan Lee: Writing ‘Back To The Rafters’ For Amazon](https://www.screenaustralia.com.au/podcast-bevan-lee-writing-back-to-the-rafters-for-amazon)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Myers, Matt (5 May 2016). “Dismantling The Other”. thecelebritywhisperer.com.au

Building Bridges, Not Walls

The Kentian Society Museum is launching an important project in 2026 to honour everyone connected to our school who has served in Australia's military, including many not yet named on existing memorials.

We've applied for a *Saluting Their Service* grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and, if successful, we plan to hire a commercial web designer to build an online memorial on our website that will be free for everyone to use, for research or just learning about our history. The project comprises three key components.

First, we'll partner with community spaces like council and school libraries to mount temporary physical displays, together with a digital counterpart on our website, contextualising the project with stories about our wartime heritage and encouraging greater involvement by community volunteers on subsequent stages of the project.

Meanwhile, a web designer will develop and implement a digital nominal roll of school alumni and associated family members who've served in Australia's armed forces, with individual profile pages for each veteran listed. These will follow a standard template, enabling new online profiles to be added over time without requiring major technical skills by the volunteers working on the project.

Finally, remembrance will be made accessible and richer online through a trained team of volunteers confirming, through DVA records and other reference sources, key information about nominated service members (including their links to Kent Street SHS), before uploading relevant profile details to the nominal roll.

... more than
just a list of
names.

Our online memorial will be more than just a list of names. It will honour not only those who died but all who served — including the wounded and survivors. Sacrifices beyond the battlefield will also be recognised through providing the option of clearer linkages to the experiences of war widows and other family members of service veterans.

Unlike traditional memorials, the project will link veterans directly to our school community and thereby help support further social history and medical research.

With this aim in mind, each profile will also include an optional password-protected section for confidential information to be viewable only by approved academic researchers, balancing public access with privacy requirements.

This will then also enable valuable datasets to be created (by using our extensive electronic records of former students and staff) to support for example future medical research into veterans' health needs and family dynamics during and after transition to civilian life.

The history of Kent Street SHS provides a methodological advantage for such research, as it has enrolled students since 1940 from diverse backgrounds throughout Perth's south-eastern suburbs (including South Perth, Victoria Park, Canning, and Belmont) that local historical societies normally document separately. Our focus on Kent Street SHS uniquely joins them all.

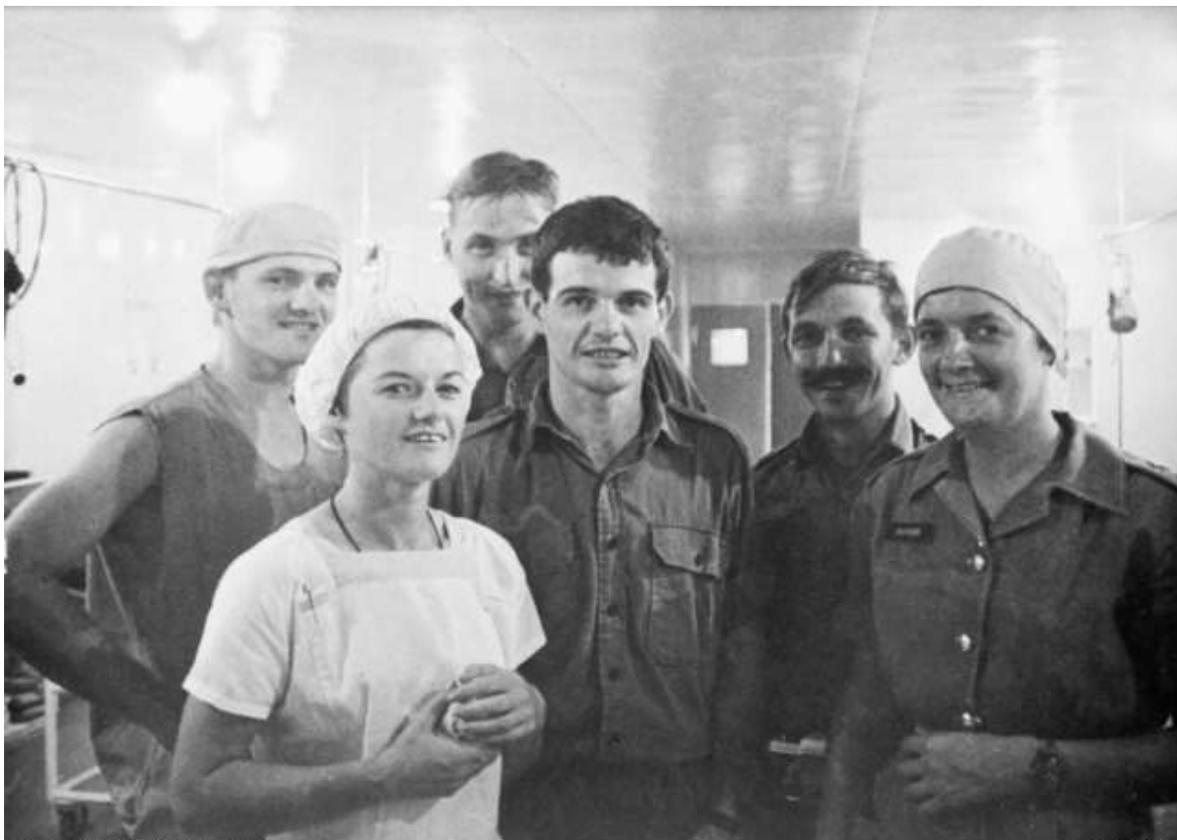
Military affiliations within this one school community span from early in the twentieth century to present-day conflicts, representing a cross-section of Australian experience not typically captured in either large State or national institutions or niche local museums.

By identifying a large cohort of thousands of Australian veterans, with data linkage to their extended families, our project will enable research into areas highlighted by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans' Suicide as requiring urgent attention like mental health, trauma, and family wellbeing.

Recent work by the UNSW Canberra's War Studies Research Group shows that while Australians honour their military heritage and often claim family connections to service members, many lack a deeper understanding of it. Our project will help close that gap, especially for younger people.

The associated museum displays will feature people like:

- Lt. **Yvonne Werndly (student 1953-54)**, who served as a Vietnam nurse after growing up in Carlisle and attending Kent Street SHS;
- many of the sailors from Victoria Park and surrounding suburbs lost on the HMAS Sydney in WWII, most with close relatives who were Kent Street alumni;
- Lt. **Bob Grantham (Kent Street manual arts teacher, 1953-60)**, WWII veteran in AIF born on Armistice Day 1918 and aptly middle named "Pax";
- Pte. Stan Gurney, posthumous Victoria Cross recipient for bravery at El Alamein with several nieces and nephews who were Kent Street students; and
- L/Corporal **Paul van Rijsewijk (student 1960-62)**, among the area's several National Servicemen who died in Vietnam.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Lt. Yvonne Werndly (second from left) in group portrait of operating theatre staff at 1st Australian Field Hospital in 1969
(Photo: Australian War Memorial)

As part of the planning for this major initiative, we consulted with school administrators, academic researchers, several veterans' organisations, and local community historical groups, to ensure that the scope of the project was viable and to confirm their backing. Many key stakeholders have provided letters of support for our funding grant application, with comments like the following:

"Edith Cowan University strongly supports this initiative and recognises its potential to contribute to public education, historical preservation, and vital research that benefits veterans and their families. We commend the Kentian Society Inc. for its vision and commitment to honouring service while advancing knowledge in this important field."

Prof. Margaret Jones (A/Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, ECU)

"Community and individual recognition of military service is demonstrated in research to be a powerful psychosocial factor in the support and healing of veterans and their families. It is very likely that the Kentian Society Inc. project will deliver an extensive and generous personal, family, social, and spiritual benefit. I cannot think of a more worthy project to attract funding."

Dr David Cockram (Clinical Psychologist)

"As an RSL subbranch, we appreciate the importance of remembering the role played by veterans in multiple conflicts. The digital honour roll will assist with this objective by contributing to community knowledge about veterans and facilitate future in-depth academic study relating to multiple aspects of veterans' well-being."

Leroy McDorman (President, Victoria Park-South Perth & Districts RSL Subbranch)

"As co-author of the 2014 book *Centenary of Silent Service* detailing the history of the Australian Navy's submarine fleet, I've worked hard for many years to get recognition for Australia's maritime heroes, who are often overlooked. I believe all veterans deserve acknowledgement, and therefore I strongly support this project."

Lloyd Blake OAM (Founding Vice-President, Submarine Institute of Australia)

"It is important to have good records of our soldiers, sailors and airmen. That is why projects like the digital honour roll the Kentian Society is proposing will be vital to help capture much of the story of both those named on the cenotaphs and those who returned forever changed. I sincerely support this project."

Rosemary Ritorto (Local History Coordinator, Town of Victoria Park Library)

The project will be promoted in three phases - awareness, engagement, and sustained interest. First, we'll spread the word. Our team will contact community centres, veterans' groups, libraries, and schools while distributing print and digital materials. We'll also reach out to local media to ensure our project reaches diverse audiences.

Second, we'll get people involved. We'll offer preview sessions for educators and local leaders to incorporate exhibition content into their work. Our website will provide virtual access for remote audiences.

Third, we'll keep interest going through strategic partnerships with local businesses to promote the project, and by recruiting community ambassadors (students, veterans, and parents) to share personalised stories about the project's impact, both online and at school assemblies or community events.

Throughout everything, our message will remain simple — honour and support veterans and their families, and increase understanding across generations, by building bridges rather than walls.

How You Can Help

Our museum isn't a financially wealthy organisation, but we are a group rich in culture and community support known for getting things done. A successful application for a *Saluting Their Service* grant would be an important first step to help secure the project, but then the real work will begin.

There are several ways you can help support our *Building Bridges, Not Walls* digital project commemorating the military heritage Kent Street SHS.

Voluntary Assistance - What You Could Do

We've already identified more than 1,000 Kent Street alumni or their family members who served in Australia's military. We expect to find many more as word spreads about our project. That's why we need as many volunteers as possible to help with research.

Each service member will have a dedicated profile including name, photograph (optional), period of military service details, relevant documents (eg links to National Archives of Australia files or PDF biographies), and summary of their connection to Kent Street SHS.

Society members will be able to help on a voluntary basis to:

- Identify a veteran and create a file for that person;
- Research primary sources (eg NVA records) for information about their military service;
- Research secondary sources (eg finding and transcribing Trove newspaper articles, sourcing or taking photographs, summarising books and local history documents) for information about their lives;
- Collect stories from oral histories or interviews with family members where possible;
- Compile information into a suitable format for the person's profile; and
- Send the completed file to the web master to be uploaded onto our website.

Many other small tasks will also need to be undertaken, be it on a "one-off" basis, or over a period of time at your own pace. We know almost all volunteers have many other commitments, such as caring for family members or in other community volunteer roles.

... an outreach volunteering scheme.

Many of the tasks outlined above could easily be achieved away from the museum, which is why our project includes an outreach volunteering scheme.

If for instance a volunteer were to find travel too challenging to get to our museum office at Kent Street, members of the research team could assemble work packages to be completed at home and take them to the volunteer, collecting and exchanging material every few weeks.

If you have information on a veteran who should be listed, photos or any other memorabilia you have which is relevant to this project, or you would like an opportunity to support this important recording of our local history before it is lost, please contact us.

Why not email us (society@kentians.org.au) if you're interested in any of the roles outlined above or want to know more about our project to honour veterans' service?

Funding - What You Could Do

Fifteen years ago, Kentian Society volunteers transformed a disused school storage area through fundraising and donated labour to house our growing collection of archival material. Employing the same approach, and with our diverse membership of librarians, historians, business leaders, and tradespeople, we know we can complete this project on time and on budget — we simply need initial funding to provide the foundation, and we'll do the rest.

The Veterans' Affairs grant would help, but it will only cover basic startup costs: printed materials and hire of portable display stands for an initial promotional exhibition, plus funding for the work of a commercial web designer. Ideally, it will also help attract additional funding for the project's future growth.

Unlike big museums, we don't have permanent investment funds to cover daily operations that government grants won't fund. We rely entirely on donors, sponsors and fundraising to maintain our collections, meet essential costs, and recruit and train new volunteer staff.

While volunteers aren't paid, their time has a significant economic value, often estimated by State-based volunteer bodies using average wage data plus employer on-costs.

Volunteering WA says that to find out what volunteers are really worth to an organisation, the replacement cost of each volunteer should be calculated using the average hourly part-time wage of a person of their age in their State of residence, plus 15% employer on-costs (inclusive of superannuation, payroll tax and administration expenses).

The average Perth part-time hourly wage in 2025 was \$42.00 per hour. With 15% employer on-costs, this results in a total rate of \$48.00 per hour. So, based on the replacement cost for a typical volunteer, to put it simply:

Just \$300 would allow us to fully fund the research of each veteran's story and have it uploaded to our virtual memorial within 3 weeks.

Smaller donation amounts can also help and, as we engage more volunteers and more funding has been sourced, we'll be able to add more and more profile pages of our veterans to the Kentian Society website (www.kentians.org.au).

And don't forget, as an approved Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), most donations to the Kentian Society (Inc) can now be claimed as tax deductions.

Becoming a financial member of the Kentian Society (only \$35 per person for a 5-year membership) or donating to our organisation will support our vision and mission, bring our local stories to life and make them accessible for all.

Financial donations are always very welcome, as they help fund major museum projects like this to ensure the history of Kent Street SHS is protected and accessible for current and future generations.



Vale Rod McGhee

*[Editor: In our last newsletter, we advised members of the passing in August 2025 of former newsagent Rod McGhee. Rod's grandfather Alexander Sr opened a news agency in Mt Lawley in 1933. His father Alexander Jr later took over the business and moved it to East Victoria Park, at 883 Albany Highway, in the late 1940s and to its final location, at 869 Albany Highway, in 1953. Rod's son **Gary McGhee (student 1983-87)** has since told us about an interview conducted by Heather Campbell in 2018 with Rod for the Oral History Collection of the Victoria Park Library (which has the full transcript available online). Here's some extracts to give readers a few of Rod's recollections in his own words.]*

Dad bought into a small news agency in Beaufort Street, Mt Lawley [in about 1935]. At that time my paternal grandparents worked with my father. Dad sold a full range of magazines, papers, a few toys – though toys were hard to get by that time.

I remember my father saying that he bought a case of toys that had been partly broken – they were new, but they just didn't work and Dad set to and fixed them and made them work and then sold them. He used to sell a small range of chemist lines, things like cough medicine and headache tablets. He also sold a small range of paint and bottles of kerosene. I suppose there was confectionary. A lot of it just wasn't easily available because everything was rationed.



Rod (left) and brother Milton, in September 1962
with mother Eva and father Alexander McGhee Jr.

Photo Credit: Facebook

Then Dad met Eva [Hodges], who had a dressmaking shop nearby and consequently later they got married. When I came along in '41 we used to live in a small house behind a shop in Clarence Street which was a very short distance across the road from where the news agency was.

Things at that time were a little bit primitive, for example when my mother did the washing it was in the copper. A fire had to be lit up underneath and heat the water.

I remember my grandfather building a ladder with a step up so I could look over the fence. That was quite useful. One Sunday morning a milk cart was coming down Vincent Street. I think the horse had bolted and the guy couldn't stop the horse.

Anyway, it went straight into a tram and demolished the tram and killed the horse. There was bottles of milk everywhere and glass and the tram was all smashed in the front. They took the horse off, I believe, to the zoo.

One day a chap – he was called Nobby Clark – he was to do with the Sunday Times – wanted Dad to come out to Vic Park and take over the shop and [newspaper] round in East Victoria Park. So we eventually did that. It was quite a move to sell the business at 563 Beaufort Street and then move over to Vic. Park.

We moved to 883 Albany Highway. There was the shop and then the house behind and then there was a shed which butted onto the laneway, where we kept the Austin A40 Tourer. There were also benches there that we used to roll the newspapers on.

The newspapers then were rolled by hand. You rolled them up and then bent them over a bench so that they came out like the shape of a banana. You'd be able to roll a bundle of newspapers in about ten minutes because you got very quick and papers were thin enough to do that.

I remember helping my father renovate the house before we moved there, because the walls were painted with a calcimine paint. That needed to be scrubbed down, and then repainted, to make the house liveable for us as a family to move in there.

[The house] was two bedrooms but there was also a verandah section between the house and the shop. I remember myself sleeping on a bed in part of that closed-in verandah on one side. I remember my sister Win had a bed on the other side and my brother Milton – I am not sure where he slept.

At that time there was a massive influx of migrants that came to the area because of the Second World War. So we had a lot of Italians in the area, we had quite a few Dutch and there was a few – even – Germans and a few Greeks. They all contributed to what Vic. Park has become. In that time the whole area was expanding because you had suburbs coming and being built that weren't there before.

From East Victoria Park you had St James, you had Bentley, you had Wilson. On the other side you had places like Kewdale and of course, Carlisle – but it was greatly expanded. Lathlain, Redcliffe – Cannington of course. Some of these suburbs were there before but they were almost semi-rural at one stage.

Starting from Canterbury Terrace there was the prefab Post Office. Then next to us there was a barber [who was also a tobacconist]. The other side of us there was a furniture shop called McGlew's. They also had a factory behind. I think the factory was organised by a chap named Tommy Hale. They used to produce some of their furniture there.

Just down the road a bit from where we were, on the same side of the road there was an Italian family there that used to run a fruit shop. I am just trying to remember their name.

They had a very big thriving business with selling fruit and veg. They had a son there who ran a small place, a farm at Byford, and ran horses.

Round the corner in Basinghall Street, there was a doctor there, which I later went to. Across the road from us there was Hullett's Hardware and there was a line of shops on the other side of the road.



The former East Victoria Park Post Office, circa 1998
(Photo: HeritageToday for the Town of Victoria Park Municipal Heritage Inventory)

We had a full newspaper run. I know my father used to deliver something like about sixteen hundred West Australians and that's when it got to its height. Then to cover the same area we had at least six newsboys [to deliver the Daily News in the afternoon]. I sold the papers from outside the Balmoral Hotel [but] every now and again somebody wouldn't turn up and of course there'd be people wanted their paper and they'd get on the phone and say, "Where's my paper?" And Muggins here, used to have to cycle up there; my father might have even gone out there in his car and delivered it.

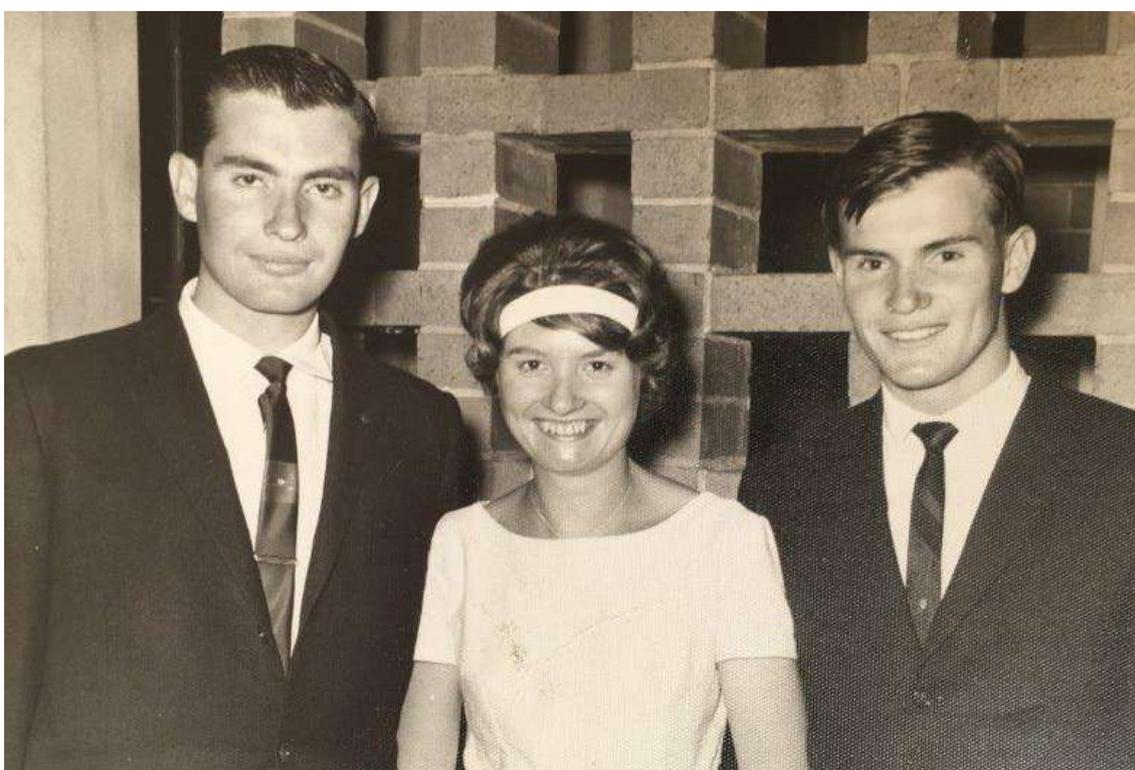
Consequently over time I had to learn each round. I was delivering newspapers let's say in Westminster Street, Nottingham Street or Hillview Terrace or in St James – it might be Canny Road or Blechynden Road or even over to Boundary Road and Jarrah Road. Then also I used to push the bike up to Walpole Street where Diesel Motors is today; there was also a workshop there that used to service the trucks that used to go to White Rock Quarries. They were old English Foden trucks. I used to go up there. They probably had a team of guys servicing these trucks.

I spent two years at East Victoria Park Primary School (prior to that I went to Highgate Primary) and then later on went to Kent Street High School, one of the few five-year high schools in Perth. You had Midland, Fremantle, Perth Mod. – there probably were one or two other high schools, but they weren't too plentiful.

East Vic. Park had a separate building for junior primary and then they had the upper primary, which I went to. Today it is looked upon as being a much older type brick building, but it had extra wide verandahs [that] were at least six or seven metres wide [and] ran down the length of the school.

You could, if it became necessary, have a class sitting on the verandah as well as being inside the actual classroom itself. I remember also we used to hold concerts out there and there was a lady by the name of Miss Phillips, who used to hold singing classes.

When Mum and Dad were establishing the business at 883, it took a few years to build up so that my dad could support someone going (in my sister's case) to Penrhos and my brother, Milton, he went to Wesley College. My sister [later] went to Royal Perth as a trainee nurse and she became a double-certificate nurse. Then my brother, he went to university and stuff. Both my sister and brother had a better education than I did.



Rod, with his sister Win and brother Milton **Photo Credit:** Facebook

I don't think my mum and dad could have afforded to send me to Wesley although they would have liked to have done.

Now I look back I would have liked to have gone myself, but at the time the boys I made friends with, they were all going to Kent Street [which] at that stage had a reasonably good name. At the time Kent Street had 1,600 pupils, and there was a row or two of prefab buildings running down between playing fields. Also for the first-year students, the boys, they had an overflow that used the top floor of the Victoria Park Primary School.

I think I would have been around about fifteen [when I left school]. My father encouraged me to look for a job and I saw a job advertised with Atkins WA Ltd in Perth so I went there for an interview and they took me on.

I was to work in the paint store. You'd get a truck turn up with pallet-loads of the stuff and you'd have to take your pallet trolley down there and load stuff onto it and then pack it into the shelving. Then we had orders that you had to fill out; some went to places like Broome and other country places. I learnt quite a bit about paint at that time.

I went from the paint department on to the tool department which was connected with the mechanical department, where you had to learn about abrasives, driving wheels, packing, belting (that was used by the timber mills). In the tools you had to learn all about different threads, all sorts of bolts. They may be Whitworth or BSF or metric. Then there was the cycle threads. All of this I had to learn as I went.

I also went into the section office and took phone orders and wrote out orders for the mechanical department, by hand and send that on to the typist. You had to order enough stock to last whatever it was for at least three or four months. One of the main things was to learn the turnover of stock because that comes back to cash flow. So it was important to order enough, but don't overdo it. So you ordered the stuff that you knew that you could sell, or you had orders for.

I think my parents were watching me quite closely and just seeing what sort of person I'd turn out to be, I suppose. I think of us three kids, I was the one that went and did things more. You used to ride your bike over to Como and jump off the jetty there and have a swim in the river. I remember at one stage riding my bike out to Kelmscott. I had a fairly adventurous spirit so that's what I did.

Dad wanted to own the premises that we had the business on. He didn't particularly like having to pay rent. So when the opportunity came to buy land Dad sort of jumped at it. Originally the block of land at 869 Albany Highway had an old house on it. The house straddled what would be two blocks today but in that time it was considered as one block.

The block was subdivided and so we bought one half and the Commonwealth Bank bought the other half. They must have liked the idea of having a news agency beside them because we attracted people in our own right but at the same time people used to go to the bank to get their pension, for example.

Dad had an agreement with the bank to [have in the deeds] our two passageways together. In other words when you have a building you had to have right of way so that you can get from one end of the block to the other.

It made sense to put the bank's right of way and our right of way together making a driveway, so we could have a shed down at the back of the property and you could put your vehicle in the shed and maybe use the shed for other things as well. We had a double shed at the back at the time and then the bank simply chose to have a vacant open-air area at the back, where they could park their vehicles.

Initially the bank was smaller and then later on they expanded it. Our business was expanding as well and then we had a basement built in the shop. As the years went by we needed more storage and so also expanded the basement. The basement became virtually about two-thirds the size of the shop – so there was a lot of soil removed.

We found it quite necessary at the time because Vic. Park and East Vic. Park became quite a centre for shops and selling stuff. People like John Hughes will tell you that.

Good Friends — Hard To Find, And Impossible To Forget

Did you know we can help you celebrate your past and enjoy the present by getting together with classmates from your school days?

Interested in contacting former classmates? Please contact us with their details and we will do our best to put you in touch. Want to reunite classmates from your school days? Check out our *Organising a Reunion* section below for tips.

Organising a Reunion

1. Contact someone who has already done one. Contact the Kentian Society for details of organisers of previous reunions (see note at end for how to contact us).
2. Use the 'Can You Help' page (every Monday in the **West Australian**) for free advertising. Send requests to Jenny Kohl, PO Box 1702, East Victoria Park 6981 or email canyouhelp@wanews.com.au.
3. Use local newspapers also – **Community News, Southern Gazette** etc. for free advertisements.
4. Develop your own phone/email network of ex-students.
5. Check names against Leaving Certificate results. eg from the **West Australian** newspaper c. January 1959.
6. Source addresses of known students from the White Pages or electoral rolls.
7. Advertise on free websites eg 'Facebook', 'Friends Reunited', 'School Friends' etc. Once your reunion is organised, we can also post the details, (from a 'Word' or PDF document) in one of our quarterly e-Newsletters or on the *Kentian Society Alumni* Facebook page. This is a free service.
8. For future reference and reunions, please help the Kentian Society update our extensive electronic alumni registers from 1940 to the present. We have the names of all ex-students on our database but we also need people's last year of enrolment and their current email address. This will help us provide better data to members in future.

Note: For details of organisers of previous reunions, please contact the Kentian Society on one of the following:

Postal Address: c/- Kent Street SHS, 74 Rathay Street, Kensington WA 6151

Email: society@kentians.org.au

Phone: (08) 9262 0500

Our Museum Needs You

Making it easier for potential visitors, volunteers or donors to get a taste for what our museum is about is critical for them to take the next step and either visit, join, or donate.

Kent Street SHS boasts unique characteristics: a long history in public education of achieving results above expectations, notable architecture, a wide intake area since its inception covering the south-eastern suburbs of Perth and beyond, and a robust community museum and scholarship foundation operated by its alumni.

Ever wanted to contribute your skills, life experience, diverse background, and interests to a wider purpose, working in a friendly and stimulating environment?

Our museum is growing, and many of our dedicated senior volunteers are stepping back after years of service, so we need fresh faces. We're seeking curious minds from all walks of life — people eager to learn while making a real difference in our community.

We'd like to hear from people interested in helping more generally in a range of tasks (some big and some small) associated with the:

- [Museum collection](#) (people with experience, or even just an interest, in working as curatorial staff responsible for the care, interpretation, and display of our various collections, as well as the development of exhibitions and educational programs);
- [Library and Research collection](#) (people with library, archival, genealogical or general historical research skills or experience); and
- [Education collection](#) (people with teaching or practical skills).

If you'd like to learn more about helping out with any of these various museum roles (training is provided), please email us (society@kentians.org.au).

From You To Us

Readers appreciate the news brought to us by members, and often they're important for inclusion in our museum collections 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: Enquiry About Astronaut Visit To School
From: Stuart Newbould, student 1993

I attended Kent Street in 1993 for one year as part of the Aeronautics program. I'm after some information that you may or may not be able to provide about details of an astronaut from NASA who visited the school and gave us a talk. I was wondering if there would be any record of this visit that you could provide.

[Editor: Stuart's query has been forwarded to our archival researchers - if any readers can shed some light on this, please email us at society@kentians.org.au.]

Subject: Kaye Hill Story In November 2025 Newsletter
From: Wendy Coultas (McNally), student 1964-66

I grew up in Vic. Park and attended Kent Street. I would love to read the article about growing up in East Victoria Park. Would you please send it to me?

From: Dawn Carver, student 1968-72

Could you send me a copy of this story? I would love to read it as Kaye was my friend and lived up the road from me. Thanks very much.

[Editor: As they contacted the Society by email, Wendy and Dawn will now also be receiving their own copies of our free e-Newsletter every quarter. Maybe you could forward a copy of this newsletter to any former classmates who don't currently receive it and encourage them to get in touch with us at society@kentians.org.au.]

Subject: Life After Kent Street
From: Max Francis, student 1956-60

While not as comprehensive as Kaye Hill's story, which many of us can relate to, here is where my time after Kent Street took me. I wrote this profile specifically for a church readership about a year ago. You may or may not find it suitable for archiving.

I first attended [South Perth Uniting Church] briefly with my parents in 1948, as a 5-year-old. We lived in Glyde Street when the Como tram, now housed opposite the Windsor Hotel, passed by the end of the street.

I attended South Perth Primary, Kent Street High School, then worked as a lab assistant while studying part-time.

After multiple exam failures and re-sits, I recall doing my 4th supplementary exam in the newly built WAIT, now Curtin Uni, while the carpenters and joiners were banging in the cupboards.

I was awarded a conceded pass to get rid of me and asked to leave as I was an embarrassment to my supervisor.

With only six months to go to my long service leave, I managed to move sideways and resigned on my 25th birthday along with years of accrued leave, amounting to \$1,950.

With this, and feeling uncomfortable in the beer-swilling, foul-mouthed, sarcastic, male culture of the time, I decided to take a voyage of self-discovery and make use of cheap flights to the UK. Within a week I found a job as a medical lab technician in London. I attended the local Methodist church: there my attention was drawn to a lab supervisor vacancy in a newly constructed mission hospital in the Ivory Coast, West Africa.

Being the only applicant, I was awarded the post and arrived mid-1969. Known as “the white man’s grave”, I struggled there with ill health, foreign language, and different culture.

After six months, when I had recruited six competent locals, there was a complete turnaround. I quickly learned some skills of leadership by intuition, “firmness but fairness”, and we became a model team. Laughter was a major ingredient in long days of slog.

Around this time Audrey appeared on the scene, and we eventually married there. These were the ten best years of my life. With great sadness we left there with our one-year-old daughter in 1979. We tried a post in Nepal, but I did not like what I saw so bought my way out of the contract and returned to Perth.



Max Francis nowadays

I was unable to get the West African experience out of my system and found it difficult to settle back in Perth.

I moved from job to job, even spending my leave and overtime entitlements assisting and filling in African mission hospitals: in Madagascar, Benin, Burkina Faso (at Ken Elliott's hospital), Mali, Niger, Cameroun, Malawi, Zambia as well as several months working at the Khmer refugee camps on the Thai border.

After a successful stint with MSF in Angola, I decided to leave “well alone” and “get over it”. During this time I enjoyed being a volunteer “African” French language interpreter at the Sydney Olympics and Paralympics and at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.



Max at his drums in church

“With a little help from my friends” I stayed in my final job in Perth for 17 years.

Now having come full circle, 75 years since my initial attendance at this church, I sit on my drummer’s throne and survey the congregation from this privileged perspective, and ask myself: “Is this where it has all come to?”

As for my spiritual dimension that's another story.

Subject: Kent Street Swimming Pool(s)

[Editor: here’s a few related posts for readers unable to access our [Kent Street Alumni](#) public Facebook page]

From: Lorraine Burke, student 1960-61

I attended KSSHS in 4th & 5th year (1960-61) and was a swimmer with State records. Later when my children were young, I was asked to swim at the opening of the Kent Street SHS Pool. There was a medley relay team of people from different years & a team of then-present students. I was asked to swim the Butterfly leg. The school had changed. Uniforms were obviously not a requirement. Great to once again be a part of “my school”.

From: Stephan Manasijevik (Aleksic), student 1980

I was at Kent Street on a swimming scholarship in 1980. My name then was Stephan Aleksic. I lived on Queens Street in the flats and worked at the milk bar. I remember going to Beatty Park swimming pool. [Would be] great to catch up with someone from the past.

From: Delecia Hall

Hi Stephan, did you do any swimming at the Kent Street swimming pool that was across the road from the high school oval? It's the pool that had the old train carriage ticket office at the entrance next to the big metal turnstyle.

There was a small tuck shop there too from what I can remember. Also there was an old man at the ticket counter who only had one hand and the other one was only a stump at the wrist. Looking for any info about the pool and its staff as I used to go there back in the mid to late '60's. My grandfather Robert Hadden was the groundskeeper and took the money at the ticket office.

From: Rod Davies, student 1968-72

Used to play handball at lunch times down on the bitumen tennis courts or go to the fish and chip shop up in Master Street. Also used to go to the pool at the deli across the road including on weekends and meet up with Lorraine Wells and Emma Percic.

From: Shirley Phillips (Fearn), student 1967-69

I have fond memories of the Kent Street pool and jukebox in the adjoining delicatessen. Probably more so than school. We would hang out there on a hot day with kids from school. Fun times!

We lived near Kent Street High and used to play in the pine forest next to the school before they built the tennis courts. I remember Sharon Wilson — her parents ran the deli on Berwick Street (near Ashburton and Sussex Streets). Ray Wilson her brother was older. He ended up a sports writer for the West Australian newspaper. Would love to know if anyone else was around in this vintage?

From: Phil Stevenson, student 1965-69

The Kent Street swimming pool was part of Skipworth's Shop, which had pinball machines. They sold cigarettes to teens on the sly too. They built the pool, change rooms, etc and did alright for some time.

I remember many Saturdays walking bare foot from Brandon Street, through the old toilet truck dump acreage, now called the George Street Reserve (cnr George Street and Anketell Street), and then running from one cool spot to another on the burning sands that were next to the first bottom oval. The sound of the cicadas buzzing is still with me.

From: Lynne Rockliff, student 1970-74

The pool at the actual school was only built in 1974!! I know, because as Prefects, we donated the mosaic school crest in the bottom and, as we were leaving, got the first unofficial dip before it was officially opened, I think early the next year.

There was a pool in Kent Street on the east side of the road, where I did Vacation Swimming lessons and had fun outside of lesson hours, weekends and holidays.

Although we only lived a couple of streets away from the pool, I distinctly remember my earliest Vac. Swim lessons down at the jellyfish- and seaweed-infested waters at Como "Beach", opposite the Pagoda, or near enough.

I went to Vic Park PS and we did In-Term Swimming at Como as well until the Somerset Pool opened, maybe Year 4/5, so about '66 or '67? Somerset was full size Olympic, but Kent Street Pool (note: not the school pool) was quite small, maybe 25m and not 8 lanes wide either as I recall.

From: Jan Arnold (Britton), student 1962-65

The shop at the top of the hill opposite the school gates in Kent Street was run by Jack and Joyce Skipworth. Between the shop and the first house, going towards Devenish Street, there were stables (with horses when I was very young).

In the '50s there wasn't a canteen at the school, so during morning recess and lunch the shop was inundated with kids wanting/needing food. My mum worked for Jack in those days and knew a lot of the boys by name and their daily orders for lunch.

In the early '60s Jack bought the land that the stables were on and increased the size of the shop to accommodate the ever-growing lunch crowd. He then had the pool put in. It was always Skipworth's Pool never Foy's Pool [as some have suggested] and entry was through the shop. I loved going to the pool and hanging out with the two Skipworth boys who were close friends.

Society Membership

*New Society Members and renewals since **June 2025**:*

Geoff Cooper, student 1985-89
Wendy Coultas (McNally), student 1964-66
Jennifer Hughes (Morris), student 1971-73
Saikhanbileg Munkhbaatar, student 2023-25

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 museum.

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.