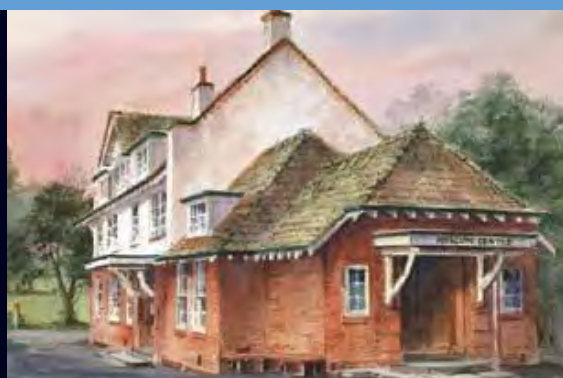


Whanganui Collegiate School Museum and Archives

Private Bag 3002, Whanganui 4541 | museum@collegiate.school.nz

Incorporated Pursuant to the Charitable Trust Act 1957 – Reg No 1714844



NEWSLETTER

Your Museum continues to attract a steady stream of visitors and our collection continues to grow through the thoughtfulness and generosity of Old Boys and Girls or their families who donate items.

When you visit any museum you can view a great range of artefacts but it is the stories behind the items that bring them to life. We are blessed with many such stories, the reason being the vast majority of items link to an Old Boy, Old Girl or past member of staff, opening a chapter in the individual's life.



We were visited recently by **Rupert Vallance (Gn 1967-71)** a member of the 1971 Maadi Cup winning VIII. Rupert kindly donated his colours blazer, 1st XV Rugby cap and 1st VIII Rowing cap and medal.

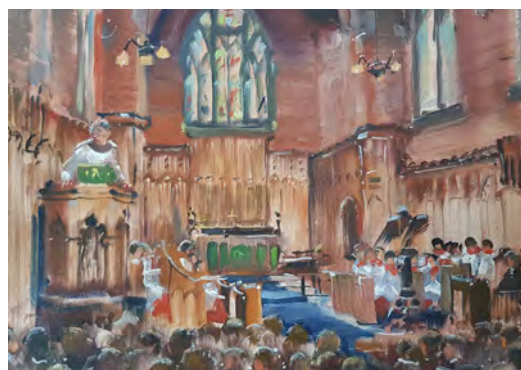
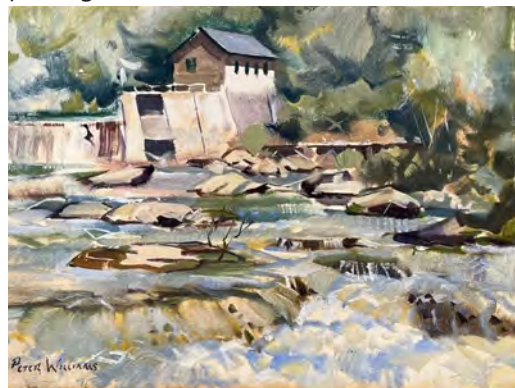
His Maadi-winning medal is particularly special as it was the first year such medals were presented to the winning crew by the NZ Secondary Schools Rowing Association. Prior to that the victors received just a certificate. However, victorious WCS crews each received a crew miniature cup donated by Peter and Janet Irvine. We hold one of these in our collection, awarded to R D (Bill) Riddiford in 1968 - kindly donated by his family.



Hamish Mackay (M 1969-73) called in recently on a fleeting visit from Thailand and kindly donated a painting by **Peter Williams (H 1947-50)**. Interestingly, with the

December 2024

painting are two photos showing the scene and Peter at his easel. This brings to five the number of Peter's original artworks held, including line drawings of the Chapel, the old gym and fives courts, a painting of a 1950s Chapel service plus a 1970s painting of the WCS Campus which hangs in the Headmaster's residence. Peter lived in the USA and although best known for his equine-themed work, he was equally adept at painting landscapes, flowers, homes, vintage automobiles, cityscapes, nautical scenes and figural compositions, always from life and always executed in oil. He was commissioned by royalty, art collectors and equine organizations around the world and was twice invited by HRH Queen Elizabeth II to paint the Sandringham Estate Carriage Trials. We are indeed privileged to have these five artworks in our collection.



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WANTED - 1st XV photos of 1937, 1974, 1982**



Tom McGrath, grandson of Master **G F (Holy) McGrath** and son of **Hugh (M 1932-33)**, has written a book *War Time Secrets from the Family Home*, covering their war time service with much drawn from the 200 or so letters Hugh wrote to his parents while serving overseas.

Tom and Julia McGrath donate a copy of the book

They have visited a number of times over the years, donating a range of items including WCS photos, a book presented to 'Holy' when he retired in 1945, signed by fellow members of the Common Room, plus two tankard prizes won by Hugh when Swimming Champion at St George's in 1930 & 31.



Back in 2020 we received 21 tankard trophies won by **Braden Innes (Grey 1925-30)** donated by his sons. Obviously an outstanding sportsman, Braden was in the 1st XI for three years and 1st XV for two. In 1930 Braden won the coveted Morison Cup for the best all-round sportsman, with his name dominating cricket, rugby and athletics sports reports of the 1929 and 1930 Collegians. Each tankard is engraved with the event and winning times where applicable - a truly significant addition to the Museum's collection. Our thanks to his sons Renton, Philip and the late Grant for their foresight in wanting the collection kept intact and their generosity in donating it to their father's old School. Interestingly the three boys did not attend WCS making their donation even more significant. In May this year we had a visit from Renton and Philip as they were keen to see their father's old School.

We were able to show them Braden's many trophies plus the display of the 21 tankards they had given.



In November Giles Bayley visited with his father **Chris (S 1956-59)** and uncle **Mike (G 1951-54)** bringing with them a couple of old photos and an old WCS rowing blade.



We now hold the academic gown and hood of Master **Peter Dickenson (WCS Common Room 1969-2005)**. PBD will be well known to the Old Boy & Girl community having served the School in so many ways, ably supported by his wife Mary. PBD was HoD Geography, Housemaster of Gilligan and Harvey, co-ordinator of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Deputy Headmaster and also Acting Headmaster on a number of occasions. Awarded a WCS Honour Tie, Peter is also an OBGAs Honorary Life Member and a current WCS Museum Trustee. Over recent years Peter has donated a range of items, photos and files, thus ensuring the 1969-2005 years are well documented in our Museum.



PBD Gown, WCS Fleece and Parka





In November we had a visit from Anna and Gordon Mather - Anna being the great granddaughter of **T N Holmden (WCS 1899-1904)**

and daughter of **R H T**

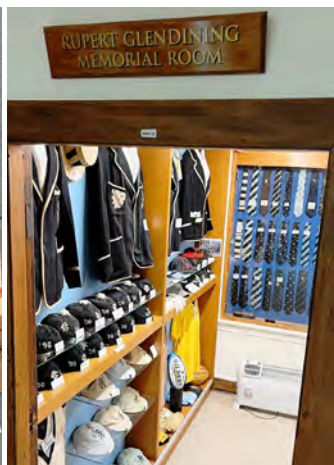
Holmden (H/Hy 1934-37). Our Museum holds a significant range of items of T N's donated over the years including his personal photo album covering his time at WCS, and his 1904 Rugby Cap. We hold RHT's 1937 Rugby cap and Rowing shirt.



While at Otago University WCS rowing and rugby stalwart **John R Thurlow (M 1959-63)** along with fellow OB **John D M Powles (M 1961-65)** (both Maadi Cup winners) took it upon themselves to introduce women's rowing at Otago (they assured the editor there was no ulterior motive.) To mark this occasion Thurlow has put together a photographic montage to be displayed at the University. John will be visiting Otago in March to present the photo board - well done



In July we received a package of items that had belonged to **John H Glendinging (S 1956-59)** sent by his wife Danna, covering many items from both John and his father **Rupert's** time at School (1926-30), adding to the significant Glendinging collection already held.



Head of House and School in 1930 and captain of the XV & XI, Rupert was killed in May 1944 during the Battle of Monte Cassino. The Uniform Room in the Museum is named in his memory at the express wish of a Selwyn Old Boy who in 2000 funded the display cabinets saying "I owe more to him than anyone else outside my family".



The headstone of Headmaster **Bache Wright Harvey (1882-87)** stands by the Chapel facing Harvey House. The writing on the headstone fades quite quickly. To ensure the wording can be read, current Harvey boy **Hector Hewins** has kindly taken on the task of

overwriting the lettering each term as part of his Duke of Edinburgh service. Hector also helps out in the Museum as we work through scanning and digitising historical photos from **St George's School** ready for their Centenary coming up in 2027.

WANTED

old **Grey** and **Gilligan** rugby jerseys | House running singlets for all houses
Early items of **Godwin** and **Bishops** sports uniforms.



James A Cowie (Hy 1956-60) visited recently with his daughter Kirsty and gave a collection of items, programmes etc from his time at School. James seen here holding the boxing cup he won in 1959.



In June we helped out manning the WCS stand at the Mystery Creek Field Days, Hamilton. Our laptop enabled us to show the many Old Boy and Girl families their OBGA Register entries including photos etc. Connecting with the wider School family in this way enabled us to update records.

Tom Boon (H 1979-83) seen here with **Richard (Wal) Bourne (M 1963-66)**.

We are always pleased to host visitors to our Museum.

In October we hosted a number of tours during Whanganui Heritage Week. Groups meet in the Museum for a history presentation and to view the collection, followed by tour of the heritage campus.



A group takes in the history of our Chapel



In November we were interviewed by Sharon Stephenson, who writes for the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga magazine. Her article appears in the March 2025 issue.

Sharon and photographer Marty

A group of 'Round Square' exchange students took a keen interest in our School's history



L-R Angus Hunt, Oliver Wilson, Zoe McKay and Rose Hedley.



Old Boy **Craig Melhuish (M/Hy 1986-90)** took great pride in showing his family his old School.

Always good to see some of our overseas Old Boys -



Zhilang (Kevin) Pang (Hy 2004-09) with Jasmine. Kevin spoke very highly of his Housemaster Rob van Dort and Matron Jane Love

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Looking Back

from the pages of the Collegian magazine

125 Years Ago – 1899

The School roll stood at 180 - 136 boarders and 44 day-boys

The Fire: "On the night of Sunday July 30th at about 12.15 the cry of fire broke on our ears for the first time in the history of the School. In some inexplicable manner the Masters' room had burst into flames, the alarm was given in the dormitory immediately overhead and within one minute from the first discovery a dense cloud of smoke was rolling up the School staircase and through the floor of No 6. With very few exceptions everybody behaved with the utmost equanimity. A fire drill had been held a few days before the calamity and the dormitories quietly filed down the dining-room staircase as they were called. The fire-bell at the corner of the street was rung vigorously - vigorously indeed that it now hangs limp and rope-less - and the reel was run out of its shed carrying away the back wall in its headlong course. However, the squad in charge were unable to fix the hose on to the plug, but the speedy arrival of the Fire Brigade quickly remedied this, our only failure. In the meantime, the dormitories having been carefully reconnoitred for derelicts, a reconnaissance in force was made on the seat of the mischief, with buckets, basins and even ordinary drinking cups. These heroic efforts however had but little effect on the fire beyond preventing it from spreading as the Masters' room was now a veritable furnace. This was the critical second, another instant and the building was irretrievably lost, but just in the nick of time the Fire Brigade threw themselves into the breach and in five minutes more the welcome news was circulated that all was over. Of the fact that the whole School was within an ace of total destruction there can be no doubt, and though succeeding generations will stare at the revised versions which will be poured into their ready ears, we sincerely hope that they may not have to experience a similar mishap" – I F Johnston's account in the Collegian.

The collection for the fund to purchase new uniforms for the local Fire Brigade, as a mark of appreciation for their services in the fire, amounted to £6 6s 3d. "No-one will confess to having been frightened on the night of the fire, but the purchase of a reel and hose and the establishment of a regular fire brigade service in the School will, no doubt, not be unpleasant".

It happened again – this time on 19 November, in the wall of the fifth-form room. "The alarm was opportunely given" and although the Brigade turned out their services were not needed as the boys had dealt to it. (NB. In 1899 all buildings on site were constructed of timber, with huge potential for destruction should a fire take hold. - Ed.)



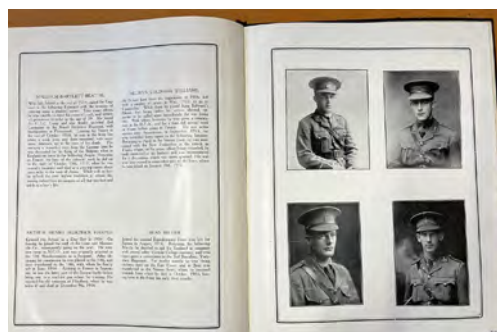
Rear of the School when in Victoria Avenue

Arbor Day was celebrated by the planting of several hundred acorns, some of them in such out-of-the-way places as the middle of the Gymnasium (which had an earth floor) and the cricket ground (presumably around the perimeter!)

Sickness: "Our old friend or rather enemy, the influenza, paid us a passing call about the end of last month, but being received with volleys of quinine he soon beat a retreat. The casualties on our side were not numerous, but they included two or three officials, whose absence for a time severely hampered the forward movement of the forces" and an outbreak of measles "in a severe form has made it necessary to shorten the term by a few days. It was particularly unfortunate that it should have come at this time as it has interfered most lamentably with both School and University Examinations".

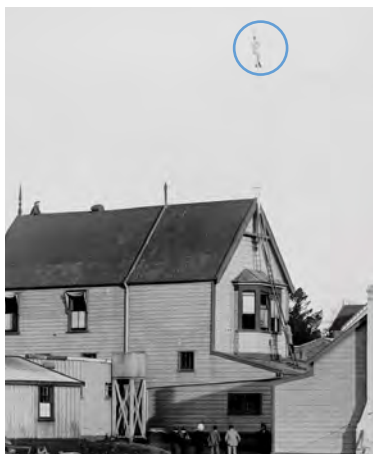
100 Years Ago – 1924

An obituary appeared in the October 1924 Collegian for Mr **F Leslie Peck, organist and music master from 1904-1921**, who died on 13 May. Noted as being the composer of the music for the WCS School song, with words written by W S Marris, he also compiled and published **In Memoriam 1914-1918** which contained the obituary, biographical notes and photographs of each of the 156 Old Boys and seven Masters who made the supreme sacrifice.





Harvey Housemaster during the first year of operation, Leslie Peck's declining health forced his resignation and subsequent departure to England for specialist medical intervention. Returning after six months "manifestly worse than when he left, there was general grief when it came to be understood that he would never resume his duties. After a long illness, borne by him with a fortitude and resignation remarkable in a man the joy of whose life had been in action, the end came on 13 May".



Another death noted in the Collegian was that of **M A West (WCS 1892-98)** in a motor accident in London while on leave from his position as a Magistrate in East Africa. Although a prominent member of WCS football and cricket teams, he is best remembered for climbing to the top of the Gymnasium flagpole in 1897, to disentangle the jammed halyards – some 22 metres above ground level.

Debates: Topical moots for Senior debates included "that the prosperity of New Zealand depends solely on sheep-farming" and "that the migration of country people to the towns is disastrous to the welfare of this Dominion" and, for Junior debates, "that the cinematograph is of great educational value to the country" and "that the country would be better served if the railways were run by private companies instead of by the State".

75 Years Ago – 1949

Titled "*The Better Team Lost*", a thoughtful article appeared on Page 3 - "This is not our comment on the Football (Rugby) Tournament but the reported comment of two All Blacks on the Test Matches in South Africa. It is now, apparently, accepted as normal that a defeated side should explain its defeat by references to the unfair tactics of its opponents or to the unscrupulous partiality of the referee. Or, if the team keep silence, their supporters will find a scape-goat somewhere. To admit that the better side won and to offer them congratulations is merely naive and old-fashioned".

"This is of some importance to us because games play a large part in School life and it has always been held that they help in the formation of character. So they do, but the kind of character they help to form matters a good deal. Boys are naturally imitative and often uncritical and they may be forgiven if they assume that a man who has inherited or acquired an exceptional degree of skill in some game is also an authority on sportsmanship. Many comments on the All Black tour show that this assumption is unjustifiable. It will be sad if post-mortems on school games are ever degraded to the same sorry level, and sometimes the danger does not seem to be remote".

An **epidemic of influenza** in the early part of the term compelled the cancellation of the Steeplechase and the Cross-country runs with the Technical College, and also interfered to some extent with the October examinations for the Upper School. **Floods in the Hawke's Bay** resulted in cancellation of the 1st XV match with Te Aute College.



A correspondent wrote to the Collegian suggesting that members of the School take too much liberty with dress, and that striped and double-breasted suits should be strictly barred. A plea is also made for the restoration of the straw "boater".

Clubs: The Workshop, with 54 members, was making toys for the fair to be held in aid of the Wellington City Mission; the Camera Club, although quite well equipped, suffered from a low membership and money for upkeep was insufficient. In the Printing Room the boys produced the Tournament programme, order cards and House pads. The School News Sheet (last published in 1929) was re-introduced, with 350 copies issued each week, giving School news to its readers.

Music: "The whole School was present at a Schools' Concert in the Opera House given by the National Symphony Orchestra. For many, this was the first time a symphony orchestra had been seen in the flesh, and the occasion provided a genuine thrill - perhaps a little marred by the stifling heat the Opera House provided that afternoon".

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WANTED - 1st XV photos of 1937, 1974, 1982



Cadets – Barracks, Linton Camp, 20-26 April This first time that the Cadets had been into camp, provided a test of adaptability and organisation which they stood very creditably. On 19 April an advance party under the C.O. went by truck to Linton Military Camp and by the afternoon of the following day had made the necessary arrangements for the main body. Bedding had been drawn, messing arrangements made, H.Q. set up and the necessary liaison with the Camp Staff established. When the main body marched in, led by the band. they were able to go at once to their lines and settle in.

A Company (Specialists) carried out training for signals, 3-inch mortar and prospective NCOs. **B and C Companies** carried out training in drill, rifle, light machine gun and fieldcraft. All Companies carried out practice on the .22 range.

"It is not possible here to enlarge upon the lessons learnt as a result of Barracks undertaken in a military camp but the need of willing co-operation and conscientious carrying out of fatigues and unspectacular duties in the interest of general comfort and efficiency was perceived by everyone".

Air Training Corps (formed 1941) The unit went into Barracks at the RNZAF Station Ohakea earlier in the year, the Air Force providing a very interesting programme. Drill and physical training were undertaken, plus Air Force history and organisation, Morse signalling, elementary air navigation, recognition of aircraft and non-flying technical training. Every cadet had at least one flight, with three having flights in Mosquito bombers.

50 Years Ago – 1974

The roll was 555 - 421 boarders 134 dayboys

Cultural Awards: In view of the increased activity and the improving standards of achievement in the cultural and recreational spheres during the last few years the Headmaster introduced a three-tier awards scheme.

Credit Award: For keen, enthusiastic and able participation at a level of performance that showed talent appropriate to what is being attempted and assists in the projection, enjoyment, and success of the cultural activity with which the award is associated. Acknowledged by a "mention in despatches" i.e. an announcement in a full School assembly and publication in the "Collegian".

Merit Award: For (in terms of schoolboy standards) a high level of skill shown in one (or more) cultural activity. Recipient to wear a special tie (a light tie with small dark mitres).

Honours Award: Where a boy has shown a distinction unusual amongst schoolboys in one activity or has reached a level only slightly below this over a range of activities, entitling the recipient to wear the special Merit tie and also to have added to the ordinary school blazer a light blue bar on the pocket above the crest.



Cadets/Venture Training: With Cadet Units re-styled as Venture Training Units the previous year, 1974 saw consolidation of the various year groups' activities, the aim being to give a solid foundation in the first three years for the major exercise at the conclusion of the programme.

1st Year: Basic map reading & first aid, weapon safety, life-saving, self-defence, campcraft and cooking.

2nd Year: As for 1st year plus watermanship and advanced campcraft.

3rd Year: Advanced map reading, campers' bushcraft, field first aid, living off the land.

4th Year: Survival course in semi-bush country or course at mountain training school.

Some 4th years were sufficiently well trained to embark on a survival course. Provided with limited rations and limited protective materials they were then required to "survive" for three days.

6th Form (Year 12) boys who had been "accredited" University Entrance in Term 4 were required to stay on at School; to keep them occupied until term finished they were sent out into the wider world with "a programme to illustrate a theme – social awareness" exposing them to life's realities for many people much less fortunate than they, but also viewing a range of industries, an art gallery and Parliament. A two day "look at leadership" course introduced those returning as 5th years in 1975 to the dimensions of leadership, with role play, problem solving and improving their communication skills.





"The School Brass Band was making its first proper appearance since its acquisition of a number of new instruments made it particularly appropriate that Mr Ormrod was present. Not only has he supplied the instruments, but he is a player and manager of the NZ National Band".

25 Years Ago – 1999

As well as Bishops' House completing its first year of operation (with 62 girls in the initial intake), during the year Hadfield House underwent a total refurbishment through a generous donation from the Willis families.



Opening ceremony of refurbished of Hadfield funded by the Willis Families

L-R Jill and Tom Willis with Board Chair Peter Cutfield. Also completed was the first year of day boys' amalgamation

with the Boarding Houses. The Cricket Supporters' Club first year of operation achieved much, including improving wicket surfaces and planning for the International Cricket Festival in January 2000.

1999 saw the retirement of three long-serving Masters – **R E (Bob) Griffiths** - 27 years' service; teacher of Mathematics, 1st XV rugby coach, 11 years as Selwyn Housemaster; **N S (Norm) Birkinshaw** - 30 years, teacher of Chemistry and 11 years as Porritt Housemaster, (who died later that year) and **D J (David) Russell**, Hadfield Housemaster 1988-94, teacher of Geography who also headed the introduction of physical education as an academic subject. Listing their main official areas of responsibility touches on only a fraction of their outstanding contributions to the lives of many students at WCS.



Bob Griffiths



Norm Birkinshaw



David Russell

Richard Bourne
Chairman
WCS Museum Trust

Frances Gibbons
Museum Archivist

The Museum Trust welcomes feedback. Your comments and questions may be sent to:

Email museum@collegiate.school.nz | Ph: 0274 812 324

or write to: WCS Museum, Private Bag 3002, WHANGANUI

Online Presence: We continue to add items to our pages on the NZ Museums website:

[WCS Museum on Ehive](#) **HERE**

The WCS Museum Trust is a registered Charitable Trust and relies solely on the generosity of

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To make a donation deposit to ANZ **06 0793 0262210 00** (Ref your Name).

If you are aware of a Trust that may respond positively to an application for funding, please contact **Richard Bourne** museum@collegiate.school.nz

