

# WHS Ex Students and Staff Association



"Seek the way of life"

Autumn Edition 2008  
Vol 1- No.8

www.whxers.org.au

## People and Places

Ken was raised in Kurri Kurri, and upon completion of his HSC, elected to study for his science degree (majoring in Geology), at the University of Newcastle.

Although seriously tempted to practice as a geologist, he followed in the family tradition, completing his Diploma of Education, and started in 1976 as a science teacher at Whitebridge High School. His initial duties included teaching science to the junior students, (years 7 to 10), and specialising in Biology for the seniors (years 11 and 12). Ken introduced Geology as a specialised science option from 1980, and for the remainder of his career chose chemistry as his particular speciality.

Ken related that he was fortunate to have begun his career with an excellent group of teachers from whom he was able to garner much knowledge and insight into the teaching profession. He has always enjoyed great rapport within the Science faculty and much laughter would often emanate from the staffroom. New ideas and methods were often discussed within the faculty, but these discussions were tempered with a healthy dose of humour.

Ken relished teaching his students, and did not work to a structured set of teaching notes, and to ensure fresh ideas, constant research to discover different methods and variety were the order of the day. His technique was to tailor the practical instruction in science as it related to everyday relationships, and which would capture the imagination of his young charges. Quite often there would be a loud explosion coming from his laboratory preparation room as new and interesting experiments were trialled by Ken and the lab assistant!!

Ken was a member of the founding committee for the establishment of the very popular camping and white water canoeing program which is still enjoyed by students today. He also introduced Australian Rules football to the school and coached junior and senior sides at the school for many years as well as other sports from time to time as needed.

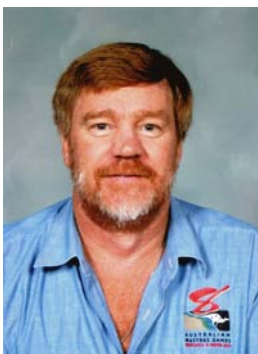
Although opportunities for promotion came along, it was Ken's passion to make front line teaching his priority, and he did so at Whitebridge for just over thirty years! At this level he could continue to be forthright in expressing the views of teachers, students and their parents. "The support and positive feedback from everyone makes teaching a very satisfying profession", he related.

Ken retired from teaching about two years ago on medical grounds, and commented that he really misses teaching but not the "system". During his career, the most disturbing change observed has been the lack of discipline and respect shown by an increasing number of students in recent times as well as the tendency to blame all of society's ills on the teaching of kids in schools. The non-grading, on academic ability, of junior students, has been challenging and any perceived 'benefits' should be questioned. He also reminisced on the demise of the old Harry Messell Blue Science Books - an excellent set of reference books!

In his semi-retirement, Ken and his ex-teacher wife Jenny are still very busy at their original home in New Lambton Heights. Of their seven children (six boys and the youngest a girl), three are attending secondary school, and their older siblings are following very successful professions.

Ken is actively involved in the preparation of educational chemistry software following the completion of the traditional teaching facet of his career.

## KEN DAWES



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## Newsletter Spotlight

*This quarterly newsletter intends to keep you up to date with who, what and why from ex students and staff of Whitebridge High School.*

*Any relevant items of interest you may have are most welcome.*

*Please feel free to forward this newsletter to any ex- students or ex- teachers of WHS.*

*Our thanks go to everyone who has contributed in any way to the compilation of the newsletter.*

## Where Are They Now??

Robert (Bob) McKibbin left school in 1965, and served his apprenticeship as a compositor with Newey & Beath printers. On completion, he joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1970, serving for 9 years as a radar operator.



After his naval engagement, Bob skipped various vessels for the Dept of Defence on Sydney Harbour and went back to sea as a merchant seaman out of Newcastle (although living in Sydney), serving in BHP and ANL ships. He then worked for the Maritime Services Board for some years as a Master, then patrolled the Sydney waterfront as a MSB Patrolman, before joining the State Boating Service. He worked on Botany Bay and the Georges River before being appointed to the Clarence River in Northern NSW as Boating Officer. Bob is married to Raelene, has a 35 year old son, Jason, and is currently retired on a TPI/Service Pension and has lived in Yamba, (compiling newsletters!!) since 1987.

## Reunions & Forthcoming Events

We are not aware of any forthcoming Whitebridge High School reunions at time of publication, but one of our feeder primary schools turns 100 this year.



**Redhead Public School** is celebrating its centenary, with a Centenary Ball being held on Saturday, 31st May 2008, and an Open Day at the school on 31st October 2008.

31st May - Centenary Ball at The Glades Warners Bay

31st October - Open Day at the School and hopefully, Official Opening of our Centennial Hall.

1st November - Fete and Opening of the 1988 Time Capsule

2nd November - Cricket Match

For further information please phone 49447215 during school hours.

## Achievements of Your Association

A little over two years ago, a group of interested former students held a meeting at the school to formalise the creation of the Whitebridge High School Ex Students and Staff Association. Regular meetings have been scheduled every six weeks since then.

A five member committee was formed and included Lorraine McEwan-McKenzie (Secretary), Brian Goodwin (Treasurer), Paul Jeffress, Karel Grezl and Ron Aurelius.

This inaugural team will not be standing for re-election at the next meeting, so it's timely to review some of the achievements of the Association so far.

- \* The formal establishment of the Association as part of the Whitebridge High School community
- \* A recognised voice on school governance through representation on the School Council
- \* Participation in and provision of role models for major school ceremonies and presentations, (eg; Year 7-11 and Year 12 Presentations and Induction ceremonies).
- \* Establishment of major awards, to date, 'Sportsperson of the Year' and 'Industrial Arts'.
- \* Participation in improvements and enhancements to school facilities - eg; the recent performance area upgrade and the establishment of the wetlands study area.
- \* The establishment and continual improvements to an ex students' website, to increase the level of interaction between, and provide a meeting place for, ex students.

These are major achievements and hopefully this momentum will continue into future activities - a great deal of effort by all concerned. Some photos taken at an early meeting of the association are included opposite.

## 'The Bridge' - Whitebridge High Newsletter

The newsletter which keeps students, parents and community up to date on events affecting the School Community is issued some eight times a year and is posted or emailed to those interested parties. Since the inception of the Association, Principal Ian Wilson has used this publication to promote the existence, goals and achievements of the Association.

'The Bridge' is very comprehensive (typically some 12 pages), covering all the school faculties, as well as the office, safety, welfare, sporting and cultural perspectives. Ian refers to its role as the 'glue' which holds it all together!!

Copies have previously been forwarded to our membership, but all agreed that the best way of communicating is to advise where it can be accessed on the web. To stay abreast of what's happening at your old school, log on to the school's website at [www.whitebridg-h.schools.nsw.edu.au](http://www.whitebridg-h.schools.nsw.edu.au), click on the 'Parent/Community' tab and you will find the latest 'Bridge' and archive newsletters. This link is directly available from our Exers' site on the 'Links' page.

## Link to Peter Imberger Memorial website

From a previous newsletter, you will be aware that Peter Imberger was the first sportsmaster and a mathematics teacher at Whitebridge for the first six years of its operation.



Peter had a major impact on many of the inaugural students and has always held a special place in their hearts.

Despite his beloved teaching career being cut short in his early fifties due to failing health, he had a wonderful and fulfilling life, but his final years in a nursing home following a stroke in 2002 were very testing.

What started out as a proposal to upload a small tribute to him on the Exers' website, expanded to a dedicated site, [www.peterimberger.net](http://www.peterimberger.net) when Allan Searant took on the challenge of presenting all the facets of his life.

For those who knew Peter during his term at Whitebridge, please be encouraged to log on and reflect on the achievements of this special person.



Chris & Karel Grezl & Elaina Young



Elaina Young, David Podmore & Ian Wilson



Elaine Brock & Brian Goodwin



Noel Brock, Paul Jeffress & Diane Gillespie



Early Days - More Work Required



Chris Blake, David Guy, Ian Wilson



Performance Area Completed

### *Ex Students Lend a Hand*

As part of the construction of the new Music Building (G Block) in the mid nineties, an outdoor stage area was built, early last year, it was decided to upgrade the adjacent grassed area, by the installation of bench seating and other enhancements, to improve the usefulness of this outdoor Music Bowl/Performance Area

The project was started in February, but stalled in May. As there was no budget allocated for these works, the success relied totally on voluntary community and staff support with minimal expenditure of school funds.



Kate Bestwick

A conceptual layout was prepared by ex student Rod Seymour, with the initial installation of some concrete bench seating by Hunter Group Training and Community Service labour.



Ian Wilson

As pressure mounted to complete the job, in the last quarter of 2007, a group of ex students, school staff and other volunteers finished the civil works, formed up and poured the remaining bench seats, (giving a total seating capacity for about 150 students), installed new turf and pressure cleaned the stage and surrounding areas. The majority of the work was completed during the Christmas school holiday period.

Craig Pettit, Brian Goodwin, David Guy and Allan Searant (ex students) all contributed in some way to the project. Staff included Kate Bestwick, Chris Blake and Ian Wilson, as well as Brian Campbell, the Principal of Hunter School of Performing Arts. Another long awaited project in which ex students participated was the construction of the permanent wetlands study area.

“The combination of time and effort by ex students and staff has brought great benefits and enhanced the learning facilities for environmental science, performing arts and drama in the school”, said Ian Wilson.



Performance Area In Use



Lining of Wetlands Study Area



Study Area Complete

If you have and comments or concerns, please contact Allan Searant at [asearant@optusnet.com.au](mailto:asearant@optusnet.com.au)

This edition was written by Allan Searant and compiled by Bob McKibbin who takes no responsibility whatsoever for any negative feedback.

Life is too good in sunny Yamba to have any hassles!!