



2012

Summer Newsletter

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## Thanks

The OVA Committee would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of the newsletter.

Particular thanks to the editors, Andy Martin and Darren Farr, for their dedication in chivvyng everyone for their contributions. To Stuart A Hill for the design and creation of the newsletter and all OVs around the world for their support.

Please consider contributing to the next edition. Email Andy and Darren on [newsletter@oldvictorians.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@oldvictorians.org.uk) with your news, articles, photos and memories of our school.

May 2012

# Editorial—Summer 2012

It is with positive and welcoming arms we open this newsletter.

A little over a year ago Leigh Bissett, newly elected president of the Old Victorians Association, put out a newsletter stating that the Association had taken a backward step.

Influential characters within the association had left and the overwhelming emergence of social media had rendered our unique association almost null and void.

To quote Major McDonald from his stirring speech at the parade, “When the chips were down...” and with a mercurial spark from some special individuals we seem to have not just turned a corner but we are now in a position where the Association is looking strong and healthy financially and active memberships are certainly at an all time high.

At the recent AGM a new constitution was passed and some noticeable changes were proposed and adopted. Leigh Bissett was duly elected as President with a resounding majority and we all agree that without Leigh's continuous hard work and dedication to the OVA we would not be in the position we are in today, a massive thank you from all Old Victorians.



The 4 teams competing at this year's OVA rugby weekend...

Other positions that had officers elected included the following:

Events Coordinator	Stephen MacKinnon
Secretary	Jennifer MacKinnon
Treasurer	Jon Sutherland
IT/Media Officer	Stuart A Hill

After the meeting other full members declared an interest in supporting the committee including Andrew Martin, Tammy Allan, Darren Farr, Graeme Cassels and Ian McKlellan. Although they have not been formally elected they have volunteered to act in non-portfolio posts until next AGM.



The sale of these shirts has helped raise over £6,000 for Help for Heroes...

There has been extensive and intense debate and discussion on the social network forums over the constitutional changes that were passed. I am pleased to say that this led to the committee taking these comments and members concerns on board and rest assured actions have been implemented to put minds at rest.

If we can take one thing from the threads on Facebook it is that we have a very strong and committed association that is willing to never let the OV tradition and cultures fade away. We can, with hand on heart say that we are exceptionally proud to have been Victorians and part of the school, and even more so that we share this way of life with so many like minded people.

**Andrew Martin and Darren Farr (Old Victorians)**  
**Editors - OVA Newsletter**

# President's Note



# The Old Victorians Association had an

amazing Rugby Tournament in March 2012, one I was proud to be involved with and support, and already we look towards 2013 and more opportunities for members to show off sporting prowess and meet with friends again.

So, a football tournament is being arranged and we will see which year group really is most agile on the pitch; and a hockey tournament to answer that important question – can the boys actually beat the girls on the hockey pitch?

Grand Day is on 29th June 2012, and of course we will have a stall at this important annual event. We hope to see some of you there. The stall will give you the opportunity to make sure you have given in your contact details and update us on commissions, family and career moves. We look forward to meeting you and your friends, partner and children on the day.

Post Grand Day (5pm onward) we will be at the Westlands Hotel in Dunblane to pay tribute to a teacher who has dedicated more than 30 years of his life to the school. Graham Carroll a die-hard Stirling County supporter, lover of Scotland and dedicated teacher will be departing to sunnier shores in New Zealand with his wife and family.

To thank him for the commitment he has shown to Victorians, both past and present, we will be putting on snacks and drinks for all Old Victorians and friends of the association.



OVA President Leigh Bissett signs in the rugby players at the OVA weekend in March 2012

Please make sure you let us know in advance if you wish to attend. Graham will, of course be given lifetime membership of the Association and we hope that you can join us for this presentation to a teacher who has seen more boys and girls pass through QVS than any other member of staff in history. If any of you would like to send a message to Mr. Graham Carroll we will be happy to pass it on for you.

Many of you will be aware that there has been debate about “life” membership online. We listened to the debates and although I personally felt strongly that we should have an annual membership fee, the committee was keen not to lose any member in the process of improving the Association.

So where do we go from here? We will be retaining the “life time membership”, which is a one off payment on leaving QVS. That said, to run an effective committee I would like to make a personal plea to all members of the Association to join the 200 Club to give us a more financially secure future. We do spend all monies wisely and accounts will be published on an annual basis.

The website and online community continues to be developed and we do have big plans which inevitably take time to achieve. Over the next year or two we will make big strides towards online voting, a membership area of the website, more events, commercial membership benefits and much more.

Fellow Old Victorians, I look forward to seeing you at Grand Day or in 2013. I must thank Stephen, Stuart, Jennie, Jon, Andrew and Darren for their support in making the association better and I hope we can continue to serve the membership.

As ever, at your service.

**Dr Leigh Bissett**  
**President—Old Victorians Association**

The OVA is born again...



Stephen MacKinnon - OVA Events Coordinator

I left the school in 1996 but probably since 1992 I've been hearing Victorians and Old Victorians complaining that the OVA weekend isn't as good as it used to be. I was one of those people.

Government legislation and an increased concern for the welfare of current students put an end to the overnight stays in the school, and the always anticipated annual Rugby match between the 'Old Boys' and the current school 1st XV, became a thing of the past. The introduction of girls in 1996 only increased the concern for the students on a weekend where drinking and boisterousness were common place!

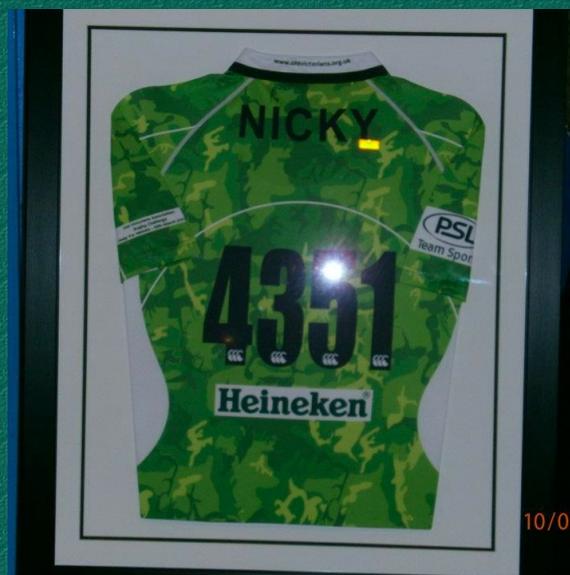


And so the OVA weekend, and indeed the association itself, were struggling to ignite the passion, camaraderie and competitive sportsmanship of yesteryear that we as students thoroughly enjoyed.

Then in an Edinburgh bar sometime last year, myself and James Cornelius talked of how our brothers thought their school rugby 1st XV was better than ours, and how we should organize a match to settle the score once and for all. And so the challenge was set; the 2000 Australian Touring Team against the 1996 undefeated Ireland touring team and Scottish Cup semi finalists. Hoping to scrape together 30 players for our two teams, we used social media to promote the game and get as many of the relevant players as we could involved.

Well, you all know the rest... 174 Old Victorians put their hands up to play, and not wanting to leave anyone out, and with the support of our new President, Leigh Bissett, Headmistress, Wendy Bellars and the School, we arranged for 4 teams to play against each other in a league style tournament on Old Victorians Weekend on 10th March 2012, and of the Blue, Red, Green and Yellow teams, it was the 1996 Red team who came out on top.

I have never been so proud to be an Old Victorian as I was on 10th March and I hope that event can reignite the passion and support we all enjoyed in the past. The OVA is evolving and we want every Old Victorian, former staff member and family & friends to get involved.



So what's for the future? Well, planning for the 25th May 2013\* football & hockey tournament has already begun, so keep an eye on the Facebook events page for more information. It promises to be another fantastic weekend, so we hope you can all attend and enjoy the festivities. We want to make it even more family orientated so bring the family and we can really have a memorable event.

The physiotherapists enjoyed themselves so much at the rugby, that they have already put their names forward for the football next year. Jerseys, discounted hotels, referees, food & drink and children's entertainment will all be provided for again and we promise to have tea and coffee available this time too! We will have special guest coaches, so bring your autograph books!

Also in the not too distant future we want to host a black tie 'Old Victorians Association Achievement Awards' where we will celebrate the achievements of OVs when they were at school and achievements they made after they left school. I am particularly excited about this, as we sometimes don't realise the achievements of our fellow OVs and the impact some have had on other people's lives.

The future looks bright for the OVA and I hope to see you at Grand Day on 29th June and/or at future events to continue our new vision for your Association.

Best regards

**Steve MacKinnon**  
**OVA Events Co-ordinator**

# OVA Weekend Parade Speech



Major Murray MacDonald - Old Victorian

Good morning, Sirs, Ma'ams, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would firstly like to thank the headmistress, Mrs Bellars, for allowing me the absolute honour of standing before you all today.

When Leigh Bissett asked last year for someone to take the salute at an Old Victorians Weekend, I volunteered not knowing what a huge event it would become. I'm sure all of us here today will probably be amazed by the turnout. Thank you all for coming and making this weekend what it has been and thank you to those many people, Old Victorians, staff and pupils, who have worked so hard to ensure the weekend has been a success. I take my hat off to all of you.

When Mrs Bellars asked me earlier in the week to say a few words today, it didn't take me long to think about what my theme would be. As a very proud Old Victorian, I can honestly say that this school was the making of me. Those of you stood here on this Parade Square today are still in the early stages of an exciting journey. Those more senior are about to enter a period of the unknown and are probably nervous and excited about what the next few years will bring.

When I left the school in 1994, I was itching to get away, not because I didn't enjoy it, but I wanted to move forward in life. I was extremely fortunate to go to University before joining the Army where I learnt about what life outside the umbrella of school was all about. I loved it: meeting new people, and learning new things educationally and socially. People still here at QV asked me if I missed school and I remember telling them I didn't. However, even at the time, I did miss school.

I didn't miss itchy shirts, polishing shoes, boring prep and room inspections. I didn't miss endless band practices, Drill in the Play hall and Tez Boast making me do cross country with no shoes on because I'd forgotten my trainers. I didn't miss hanging from the wall-bars in the gym early in the morning on Days and didn't miss getting caught skiving chapel by Skip Carroll. I didn't miss being whacked over the knuckles by a fourth year for speaking in prep or being hung out of a window in a kitbag in first year.

I didn't miss Harry Buchanan giving me 100 'paragraphs' for messing around in French (although I must admit I did miss James Welsh being given 10000 lines by Harry Berry, the then School Sergeant Major for mucking about during Drill – that was amusing). I didn't miss the walks to the First Shop in my itchy kilt and often sneaking out in civvies just so I could be 'normal'. I didn't miss being shot in the backside by Mel Mutch with an air pistol. I didn't miss 'round-ups', sticks and enforced hobbies. I didn't miss the building, or the pitches or Wavell Wood or the Central Hall... What it boiled down to was that what I missed after leaving here was my mates.



Major Murray MacDonald in the 1st XV

One thing that many of you maybe don't appreciate is that one amongst the plethora of opportunities this school offers you is an ability to forge friendships that will last you a lifetime. Many of you will never lose touch with the people stood next to you today.

This place has a knack of bonding people together that I believe kids at other schools just don't get. Perhaps it's a shared background, with one of our parents serving in the Forces. Perhaps it's being a long way from home so young, in a strange although beautiful place.

Perhaps it's the opportunity to undertake so many team activities, such as the rugby we watched yesterday. It's difficult to pin down. The only organisation I think that comes close to offering the same thing is the Armed Forces, which obviously underpin much of the ethos and what goes on here.

I remember someone, probably Ben Philip (God rest his soul), telling my classmates and I, in P6 or P7, that the school isn't the building, the grounds or the uniform. It's not the teachers or admin staff. It's not the Headmistress or the military staff. It's not Her Majesty's Commissioners or any of the others that work so hard in support of what is achieved here. This school is the people stood before me on parade today. It's you. And your mates stood beside you. You make it what it is and from what we've seen this weekend, it's in better shape than ever.

So from all Old Victorian's, thank-you for taking care of QVS. We're very grateful; and on behalf of the Old Victorian's Association, we wish you all the very best of luck in whatever you choose to do with your lives in the future; and look forward to welcoming you in to a new and invigorated Association. Finally, if I can offer a few humble words of advice for now and for the future: remember to look after your mates; because if you do, when the chips are down, they'll look after you.

Thank you.

**Major Murray MacDonald**  
**Old Victorian**

# You know you're from QVS if...

1. Know where the magic circle is.
2. Know the meaning of 'black no backs'
3. Worried about getting 9 out of 10 in Latin vocab test.
4. Still say 'twos up'
5. Thought it was a good idea to hide in your locker to avoid chapel.
6. Allegedly' have been ripped off at the first shop.
7. Have eaten a munch box from Papa's
8. Know the true meaning of 'Biscuit boys'
9. Experienced 'pine bending'.
10. Witnessed/felt the embarrassment caused by a gundi parade.
11. Are still emotionally scarred from bottom bar bends or the glass house.
12. Bought tuck on Sunday at an exorbitant price from a senior pupil.
13. Had a sugar sandwich.
14. Won a water baby race.
15. If you know what days are



16. If you've ever hidden food in a kettle, milk carton, shoe or pocket because you're scared that Taff Williams will make you eat it!!!
17. If you dread the words "Haig Round-up"
18. You remember the 'good ol' days before the girls came and ruined it **(Editor: Made it better)!**
19. You went sledging on a tray up the farmers field
20. Know the game sticks
21. All had the same haircut administered by the Hells angel barber
22. Got caught in the pub by Clive Bruce who forced you to play the quiz machine against him to see if he would grass you up or not...always grassed you up!!!
23. Understand the term Edgy
24. Had to wear manky green socks for three days solid days. They were great for sliding on the polished dorm floors however.
25. Piled up mattresses in-between lockers to play WWF
26. When you believe that a paracetamol and a salt gargle will cure a sore throat, cold, headache, broken leg and amputation

**With thanks to Duncan McLay (Old Victorian)  
who started this thread on our Facebook site...**

# An OV Down Under...



A memoir by Robert Williams

# QVS to Scots PGC College

It was a late Wednesday afternoon in November in my last year at the school when Mr Tomkins, former Drum Major of the school, started shouting my name from the dancing hut and presented me with a double sided piece of paper advertising a GAP placement in Australia.

He told me that I should send a CV in and see what would come of it, which I did, not giving much thought to the idea of a Gap Year as I was already planning for University. It was very much in hope that I put forward my CV especially as there was a long list of international applicants.

Eventually, after months of waiting, I was accepted for the Drumming Assistant Role at Scots PGC College.

The generosity and support of the Norman MacLeod-MacNeil Trust fund from within the school greatly assisted in providing me financial backing and allowing me the incredible opportunity to experience a whole new culture.



The Scots PGC College in Queensland, Australia is a rural, agricultural school set up by Scottish immigrants in the area of Warwick, two hours inland of Brisbane. It is proud of its Scottish Heritage and shows this through its School Pipe Band.

Throughout my time there, I had to provide drumming assistance to students from the age of 4 to 18 whilst also providing assistance within the school's boarding houses. This proved to be a rather unusual situation as almost mirroring my time within Cunningham House but being the supervisor rather than the supervised.

Another one of my duties was that of Teaching Assistant in the Junior School. At that age, you are a huge influence on the children and are helping to provide them with basic life skills. Teaching these kids also provides you with a new set of abilities, mostly patience and (lots of) tea/coffee drinking, but also a sense of satisfaction, an inner feeling of joy, that, yeah, I taught that kid how to cut with scissors, how to hold a pencil and more importantly you instill in them the drive to learn.



SCOTS PGC College—Queensland Australia

Although living independently in another country is no easy task, especially at such a young age, I was determined to make good use of my time outside of 'term time' to see as much of this fascinating country as I could.

Months of detailed planning, working out my budgetary constraints for the first time in my life and booking flights and accommodation required perseverance and a good internet connection (which is hard to come by in outback Australia).

In my longest stint of travelling over the Christmas/New Year period, I made my way from Brisbane to Canberra for New Year, from Canberra onwards to Melbourne where I met up with some Australian friends and old QVS school friends before travelling to Adelaide and flying north to Alice Springs and Uluru (Ayres Rock) in a 19 day trip.

On this trip I: crossed four states and two territories; travelled to five of Australia's biggest cities; saw the federal Government; went to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG); drove the Great Ocean Road; went shopping in Adelaide; looked out over the Red Centre in Alice Springs and walked round the base of Ayres Rock.



Uluru (Ayres Rock) - Northern Territory Australia

My year did however have a major low point. At the start of 2011, Queensland experienced one of the wettest seasons on record. Nearly everyone in the world was gripped by what was happening in South East Queensland with the flood-waters washing away everything in its path. If you type in Warwick, Queensland, in Google maps you will soon realise where I was living was right in the middle of all the chaos.

I was in my house when the warning of potential floods and flash flooding was issued. Unfortunately, I was on the wrong side of the bridge with all the shops being on the other side so I quickly ran out and stockpiled food for the house before rushing back. Shortly after this all the bridges in Warwick were closed down and soon water was rushing everywhere.

The school is situated next to the Condamine River on a slightly elevated hill, and fortunately the school and my house were unaffected, but only just, as the water reached the bottom of the church at the school. However, once the flood water began to recede we got an idea of the destructive capabilities of nature as whole houses were washed away.

I was stuck for about two days unable to get anywhere but this was nothing compared to the people of nearby Toowoomba and the Lochyer Valley who lost their businesses and tragically 17 people lost their lives. This tragic event affected me and made everyone involved realise just how much they have and appreciate life a little more.



Condomine river in flood

Once back from Australia in July of 2011, I was straight off to University in September after having been accepted into The Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen to study Honours in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering.

I quickly had to adapt once again to change. Once settled down into Halls, made easier by my experiences in Cunningham House, I decided that the best way for me to gain some money was to join the Officer Training Corp in Aberdeen. I would suggest all who leave the school for University to consider the OTC as it is a great way to transfer the skills and traits you have gained from your time at QV into a payable job.

This allowed me to continue playing in a pipe band while also being paid to practice my hobby. After completing the first year of my course and looking back, I would have to say that if it was not for the kindness and patience of the teaching and boarding staff at Queen Victoria School I would not have been nearly as successful as I have been.



University life is not easy; it requires a lot of self-discipline and sacrifices to be able to get the coursework and dissertations in but also it is about adapting to independent life.

As Mr Eastham used to say: "Self discipline is the only discipline". QVS teaches you a lot about being away from family but it also gives you the skills and assets needed to make it in the big bad world outside.

A Gap year is also an excellent way of taking those raw skills learnt and transferring them to practical life. QVS now has a link in Australia through the Scots PGC College with two of the students from Scots having now worked as Gap Students for our pipe band and boarding houses.

I hope that my experiences of the last 2 years can rub off onto the pupils still currently at the school but also that this short essay can show people what QVS can do for them

**Robert Williams**

**Old Victorian**

# 60 seconds - QVS Senior Monitor



Current QVS Senior Monitor Jordan Angus  
with his father,  
former QVS Senior Monitor Cameron Angus

### What have been your best experiences at QVS?

Probably has to be the band trips to Basel. The atmosphere around the Tattoo is awesome, it's almost like a two-week holiday and the Swiss appreciate massively what you're doing. Other than that just general banter around school, living with your friends all the time as I'm sure you know always turns mischievous, and lastly it has to be the rugby, this year we won the Regional Bowl and got to the final of the nationals so that was pretty special but every Saturday, rain, snow, sleet or Sun I always found myself out on the fields.

### What influence has QVS had on who you have become?

Apart from my parents, the biggest influence. All OVs know it doesn't compare to other schools. It has moulded me into becoming a more all-rounded person- I don't know how but it has - I'm a lot more confident than I thought I would ever be when I first came in P7. The influence of the Senior boys around the house probably had a big impact. Going into Haig with a "little" encouragement, I learned to respect everyone very quickly and that's conveyed in my personality now as I hit the World.

### My Plans?

Tough question! I hope to go to University and get a degree in Business. After that? I don't really know. I would love to travel around for a bit and the Forces have always been in the back of my mind obviously with my family's background but I'm not completely sure what my next step will be.

### How do you see the OVA and what would you like to get from it for the future?

I think the OVA is a great set-up. It encourages and maintains the family vibe you get during your time at QV. The OV rugby tournament this year I think was a massive hit and everyone at school said how they would love to do it in the future. I'd like to see it keep encouraging the return of OVs for OV weekend and Grand Day as the reunion of all the OVs is I think what makes these days so special.

**Jordon Angus**

**Senior Monitor (and soon to be) Old Victorian**



### **Mr Harry Eric Robinson 1921 – 2012**

I am the son of the late Harry Eric Robinson who passed away sadly on the 14th April this year at the age of 90 years. I am writing to tell you how proud my father was to attend "The Queen Victoria School" during school life - possible in the early 1930's. He also attended the school with his elder brothers - Jack, Jock and Mac.

Their father was a Gordon Highlander - named John George Robinson and lived at "The Farriers Arms" PH, Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley, near Watford, Hertfordshire whilst my father and his brothers attended the school.

I and my family have been up to Scotland many a time and have made brief visits to the school and try to trace dad's footsteps and thinking what a wonderful place it is but it may have been different to a person as young as my father was when he attended the school and been so far from home.

Thanks for your time

David Robinson - Colchester, Essex

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# Old Victorians Association Online



Website - [www.oldvictorians.org.uk](http://www.oldvictorians.org.uk)

Facebook Group – Old Victorians Association

Twitter - @oldvictorians

Minutes of meetings – see website



The OVA 200 Club allows us to develop the association and put on future events.

Please consider joining so we can continue to make things better. See the website for details on how to join or email the treasurer for more details.

We look forward to you joining. Members of the 200 club will get discounts on future events, merchandise and we will be introducing an incentive scheme over the next few years.