

HEADMASTER'S ANNUAL REPORT for 2015

Mr Peter Schuyt, Mrs Charlotte Gendall, members of the Board of Trustees, distinguished guests, parents and families, members of staff and gentlemen of the school. It is, as always, my very real honour and privilege to present the annual Headmaster's Report, the 148th in the history of school and my twenty first as Headmaster.

One of the great benefits of a traditional school is a sense of history and the ability to reflect on those aspects which endure and those which change markedly. *The Wellingtonian* of 1915 provides a fascinating insight into both a school and a nation gripped in the ravages of war. Headmaster J.P. Firth was suffering from the shock of so many of his boys who would never return. This is what he had to say in his Prize giving Speech one hundred years ago.

For years this school has carried out its military exercises eagerly and thoroughly. Naturally there is no lessening of enthusiasm now. All the work is well done. I do not think many schools in the Empire can beat us in equipment for shooting and the attention paid to it. And the same enthusiasm in other departments, the laboratories, the Observatory, the Library, the school paper, the Camera Club, Swimming, the Natural History Club, Cricket, Football, Athletics and Tennis. Some aspects of J.P. Firth's speech will sound very familiar but the permeating influence of the war is very different. The money that would normally have gone to prizes that year had been donated to the voluntary fighting fund and the replacement certificates were presented by the Governor General, The Earl of Liverpool. The Wellingtonian records that His Excellency spoke briefly after he had presented the certificates and the enthusiasm of his reception was increased when he told the boys of the sinking of the Nurnberg, news of which he had received just previously. Even if the certificates were only scraps of paper, still scraps of paper sometimes mean a great deal, as today when they meant the word of honour of the British. Such scraps of paper would always be respected while Englishmen were set in positions of government over the Empire or the dependencies.

It all sounds so far removed from the New Zealand of the day. I suspect there would have been very little support in J.P. Firth's school if the Prime Minister of the time, William Massey, had led a campaign which gave prominence to the Union Jack. The horrors of the warfare are recounted in *The Wellingtonian* through letters from a former staff member, Captain Cross, written from the trenches at Gallipoli. He describes the courage and death of Hāmi Grace, that remarkable young Māori soldier whose life we commemorated this year at an assembly held to remember the brutal Battle of Chunuk Bair. His photograph as Captain of the 1st XI Cricket is on display in the corridor outside my office. Captain Cross writes, *It seems a pity that so gallant a life was not spared, for Lieutenant Grace, after coming unscathed through the advance on August 8, and having dug himself and his men in, was killed through a stray bullet through the brain.*

The two remarkable exhibitions at the National War Memorial and Te Papa, give us a glimpse into the bitter experience of the 223 young men from Wellington College who lost their lives in this futile, colonial war, and the hundreds of others who, like my own grandfather, returned home forever changed, wounded in both body and spirit. Gentlemen, I don't know whether schools in Syria have prize givings, but I suspect that students there and their families would have stories to tell, not too dissimilar from our own Old Boys one hundred years ago. It is so easy to see four million refugees as little more than passing images on a TV screen. And yet, in that same part of the world we call the Middle East, the carnage continues today with equal brutality and increasingly sophisticated weapons.

Remembering our ANZAC Old Boys, as we have done this year, is not a glorification of war but rather a powerful reminder of what our Stage Challenge entry this year entitled so aptly *The Darkness Within Us* – that destructive side of human behaviour that can erupt so quickly when we fail to deal with conflict between individuals, groups or nations in a respectful, civilised manner. In the famous words of George Santayana *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

2015 HIGHLIGHTS

2015 has been another great year for Wellington College.

- **NZ Scholarship Examinations**

While not quite reaching the unsurpassed heights of 2013, our students nevertheless performed exceedingly well in the NZ Scholarship Examinations. The 109 scholarships achieved was still 64 more than any other school in the Wellington region and the most of any school outside of Auckland. Joshua Woolley was named as a Premier Scholar, one of the top 10 in the country and five others, Jack Trevella, Daniel Petrovic, Jazz Kane, Jonathan Logan and Alexander McLachlan, were named as Outstanding Scholars, indicating that they were all in the next 50 students nationally. It is all too easy to take for granted these superb results, and much credit must go also to those dedicated staff who spend so much extra time in rigorous preparation.

- **The Arts**

Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, made the following acute observation, *In my own philanthropy, I have seen the critical role that the arts play in stimulating creativity and in developing vital communities. The arts have a crucial impact on our economy and are an important catalyst for learning and discovery in our country.* The Arts are certainly an important catalyst for learning and discovery at Wellington College. Beginning with music, the Wellington College Chorale has enjoyed a vintage year, achieving success at the very highest level. They had a memorable trip to China where they performed a number of concerts. At the regional *Big Sing*, they received two major awards, and then won a Silver Award and The Best Performance Award of a New Zealand song at the national competition. The Jazz Band have never enjoyed a more successful year, winning the Gold Award at the Tauranga Jazz Festival, and being named as best Big Band at the Manawatu Jazz Festival. At the Wellington NZSM Jazz Festival, two members of the band were named as best saxophonist and best keyboard player. A significant number of our senior students, whose names were acknowledged at The Black and Gold Awards, won national representation in the National Youth Orchestra, the NZSS Symphony Orchestra, the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, the National Guitar Orchestra and the New Zealand Secondary Schools' Choir.

Every alternate year, the College enters the Stage Challenge Competition. There is probably no other school activity, with the possible exception of the Runathon, which incorporates so effectively and passionately a very diverse group of young men. Entirely scripted, directed and produced by the students, *The Darkness Within Us*, based loosely on the *Lord of the Flies* was a powerful and dynamic spectacular that deservedly won third place. Under the dynamic leadership of Mr Jono Belczacki, the combined Wellington College and Wellington Girls' College Kapa Haka group, Te Haeata Awatea, has gone from strength to strength, performing at many local functions, opening the Cultural Extravaganza and performing at the Regional Secondary Schools' competition. It is heartening to see this group playing an increasingly vital role in the life of the College. How pleasing also to see the dynamism of our Polynesian Club and our re-entry into the Tu Tangata Festival. Much credit must go to another of our incredibly committed staff members, Mr Johnson Taea whose tireless commitment to the development of this group has been instrumental in giving far greater prominence to the culture of our Pasifika students whose zeal for Wellington College is so marked.

Wellington College's collective fervour for the arts culminated in that wonderful celebratory evening, The Cultural Extravaganza held in conjunction with Wellington Girls' College at the Michael Fowler Centre. It was an evening of truly joyous entertainment.

- **Sport**

As was the case in 2014, many of our senior sports teams have performed well, without necessarily winning many local or national championships.

Our Athletics performed superbly well against the odds to win back the McEvedy Shield from a highly fancied St Patrick's (Town). It was very much a team effort with athletics in all four age-groups contributing well.

Football has become the largest sport in the College with over 500 participants. The 1st XI played with great skill throughout the season, winning both the Preliminary Round and the Championship Trophy for the second round, before being upset by a fired-up HIBS team in the College Sport Wellington Final. The team then performed with real credit at the NZSS Championships, coming fifth and defeating Mount Albert Grammar School, Westlake Boys' High School and Auckland Grammar School in the process. The U15A team won not only the local competition, but also the inaugural Westlake Tournament which included all the major Auckland schools. Our Senior A Futsal team won the Wellington Competition, the Wellington Regional title and were third in the NZSS Championships.

The Senior Rowing Squad enjoyed our most successful season for many years, winning four medals at the Maadi Cup Regatta and reaching 9 'A' finals. They were deservedly chosen as our 'Team of the Year' at the Black and Gold Awards.

Our 1st XI Hockey enjoyed another very successful season, reaching the quarter-finals at the Rankin Cup and losing a very close Wellington final for the second year in a row to an excellent Wairarapa College team. Our Senior A Underwater Hockey team had a superb season, winning the Wellington Championships, the Central Regional Championships, and losing narrowly in the NZSS Championships by a single goal.

The Cross-Country team also enjoyed an excellent season. The Seniors won a Bronze Medal in the 'six-to-count' at the NZSS Championships, and the Juniors won Gold in both the 'three-to-count' and the 'six-to-count' at the NZSS Championships.

Our U14 Cricket team were runners-up at the national tournament and our Swimming Team continued its excellent run at the NZSS Championships, coming third behind Westlake Boys' High School and Auckland Grammar School.

Mr Nigel Pollock has been conducting a review of sport at Wellington College, and we look forward to his recommendations which, it is envisaged, will enable codes across the board to move forward together in a more systematic, integrated fashion. It is time to start winning back a number of those competitions to which we have been accustomed over the years.

- **Service to Community**

I would like to pay tribute to the many students in the school who have given so much to help others, whether at home or abroad. The World Vision Runathon continues to be a key focus for our philanthropic endeavour and, once again, raised over \$50,000. It is an event which combines great fun with a schoolwide emphasis on serving the poor. Many senior students have given of their time in support for the Salvation Army and the Home of Compassion Soup Kitchen. Many others have coached sports teams, acted as Peer Support Leaders, assisted with activities in the Arts as well as providing academic tutoring. Gandhi's words were surely true when he said, *the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others*.

- **Appreciation**

Mr Peter Schuyt, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, has thanked those members for their outstanding contribution to the successful governance of the College. I would like to add my thanks, and that of the staff, to Peter, his wonderfully committed Deputy, Mrs Charlotte Gendall, and other members of the Board for their wisdom, advice and support provided in so many areas of expertise. It will be an exciting time for all of us as we see the planning for the new Performing Arts Centre finally come to fruition in the next couple of years. My thanks as well to the retiring President of College Parents, Mrs Christine Young, and her hardworking executive who have done so much to support school activities. Similarly, my genuine appreciation to all of those parents and supporters who have facilitated the smooth running of many of our sports clubs. To those who are leaving Wellington College, and for whom this will be their last formal occasion, all the very best in the challenges of the exciting life before you. Martin Luther King, that hero of the American Civil Rights movement said the following, *Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step*.

It's been a tough week for the College with the death of Rohan Watts, that delightful Y11 student who should have been starting his NCEA examinations this week. Our hearts go out to his family as they try to deal with their unspeakable grief. As your Headmaster, gentlemen, this tragedy provides me with just a little insight into the desolation experienced by my illustrious predecessor, J.P. Firth, on hundred years ago, as he learnt of the deaths of so many of his boys in the field of battle. For an older person, there is nothing sadder than seeing a young life, with all its unfulfilled potential, cut short in tragic circumstances. Value your life, for it is precious. Whatever success you may experience as an individual, value your friends and family and never forget that, in Jesus' words, *It is better to give than receive*.

May I finish my address by quoting one of my favourite poems by the Afro-American Langston Hughes.

Hold fast to dreams

For if dreams die

Life is a broken-winged bird

That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams

For when dreams go

Life is a barren field

Frozen with snow.

Good luck in your exams and may Wellington College always remain part of you.

Roger J Moses ONZM, M.A. (HONS), L.T.C.L, FNZIM
Headmaster