

Adelaide High School Old Scholars Association Inc

News - Spring 2024

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100th Anniversary of Conversazione
History of Conversazione

Committee Members 2024/2025

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**ADELAIDE
HIGH SCHOOL
OLD SCHOLARS
ASSOCIATION**

2024 ADELAIDE HIGH SCHOOL OLD SCHOLARS DINNER

**Friday, 18th October
6.30pm for 7.00pm**

Adelaide Pavilion
corner of South Terrace & King William
Road, Adelaide
(PARKING ON SITE – SAFE AND WELL LIT)

**Cost - \$85
Book Through Trybooking**

<https://trybooking.com/CNBLT>
(AHSOSA 2024 ANNUAL DINNER)

**Guest Speaker:
George Diakomichalis
(Adelaide High School 1984 – 1988)**

George is a 4th generation pastry chef and proprietor of Kalymnos Pastries on Henley Beach Road. He has been a finalist and winner in many restaurant and catering awards and hosts a television program titled 'It's All Greek To Me', sharing his and his family's journey from the islands of Greece to Adelaide.

The 100th Anniversary of Conversazione - 3rd of August, 2024.

Over 100 guests attended the event with scholars from the 1940s through to the 1980s enjoying a day of fine music, art, talks, food and company. Gifts of a booklet celebrating 100 years of Conversazione and a school pen were given to each guest. Many guests were slow to leave as they enjoyed themselves so much. It was a very successful day.

We began the event with the school choir leading us through the National Anthem and the school hymn, with a rousing accompaniment from the piano. A spontaneous school war cry followed. . . some things you never forget!

The choir immediately grabbed the audience's attention by singing three beautiful songs; this was followed by the school band performing some very cool jazz. What a treat! How lucky we are to have music teacher and old scholar, Con Piliouras to guide the students so well that they can perform to such professional standards.



School Choir



Jazz Band

Bronnie Young, an Old Scholar, has been our emcee for more than 10 years and is happy to continue for more years to come. She did a wonderful job keeping everyone on track and ensuring the program was followed smoothly.

Cez Green, our Principal, spoke about school events and then introduced three women who have chosen to retire from organizing Conversazione. Kay Koch, who took over from Barbara Stodart 40 years ago, Trish Mibus who has fulfilled many roles (all at the same time) for at least 30 years and Flora Rumbelow who has also contributed for 30 years. Without these three women, Conversazione possibly may not have continued. They have worked tirelessly to make each event successful and have ensured its continuation. They deserve a very well-earned rest.

We cannot thank them enough for their contribution.



Kay Koch



Trish Mibus



Flora Rumbelow

*Cez and Heather Smith (Secretary of AHS Old Scholars Association)
presenting the retirees with flowers.*

We had three speeches. The first, by this year's head prefect Brianna Cragg. She spoke about the challenges of schooling during covid and her journey as a student at AHS.

Bronnie Young talked about her school days. How interesting that though there is a substantial age gap, much of the feeling towards the school, the learning and school friends is the same.

Gisele Blanchard spoke about her time at school and how she was inspired by her teachers to take up opera singing. She spent ten years performing at the Nice Opera opposite the greats ... Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras and Pavarotti. What an amazing experience.

So beautiful was her performance that she received a spontaneous standing ovation!



Gisele enchanting the audience with her singing.

Amy Worswick once again treated us to a slide-show; an overview of decades from 1908 to the present. These slide-shows are different every year. They are always enjoyable and bring back a lot of memories as well as often being very informative. They take an enormous amount of work to research and collate. We are so lucky to be beneficiaries of Amy's passion for history.

Amy also put out a display of pictures and articles that represented the school over the last 100 years.



Amy's historical display



Some of the students' artwork on display

Many thanks to our Principal, Cez Green and the school staff, Kerry Skinner and Warren Eaton in particular, for their fantastic support of Conversazione. To the students who welcomed guests, took entry payments, gave out name tags, sold raffle tickets, served tea, coffee and cake and to the two media students who took pictures and videos we say a big thank you for your support and a job very well done.



The following pages are taken from the booklet gifted to all attendees at the 100th Anniversary of Conversazione.

We are indebted to Barbara Stodart for her contribution.

SIX DECADES AT THE CONVERSAZIONE by Barbara Stodart

When I was a student at AHS in the 1940s, I was not aware of an Old Scholars Conversazione. We had an Old Scholars Week in August with sports matches and a special assembly and an Old Scholars Ball later in the year at the Palais on North Terrace to which the Prefects were invited. When teaching at Adelaide Girls High School in the late 1950s, I was vaguely aware that Maud Arthur, Senior in Commercial Studies, organized a Saturday afternoon for “Old Girls”. There was still an August Old Scholars Week with sports matches. I thought the Saturday occasion was for really old “girls”.

In 1964, I returned (from the wilderness) as a Senior Mistress to find that one of my duties was to organize the Annual Conversazione. Ida Kearney had had this responsibility for some years and there was a certain amount of glee in the way she handed it over to me.

I was initiated into the traditions of the occasion, became the keeper of the Grey Box, the attendance A4 cardboards, the Bankbook and told to await the arrival of Jean Leslie sometime in June.

We First Years in 1944 had named Miss Leslie the Bellum Equum – with complete disregard for Latin grammar. She was quite terrifying. Later, in her Leaving Maths class, not terrifying but memorable. Quite often, she needed to answer the phone in Miss Law’s office next door and would dash out of the room in mid-sentence and finish it two or three minutes later on return. And I will never forget: “Aileen Chambers! A chair’s got four legs and you’ve got two. How’d you like to stand on one leg? Therefore, a chair doesn’t like to stand on two!” “QED” we would mutter.

At our meeting in June, I realized that Jean loved her old scholars connections. Associated with the annual August reunion from the beginning, she was determined to keep it going. In 1964, she was keen to include “a special welcome to prefects of 50 years ago”. 1914 was apparently the first year for prefects at AHS. From her connections as a former student and teacher at AHS, she had found names and addresses of the 1914 prefects. So now was the time to get the invitations typed and printed and include a personal letter for the 1914 prefects. As Keeper of the Grey Box, I could now access the card index (going back decades), address the envelopes and post them. Replies came back by post. Jean “popped in” occasionally. And that idea of hers has continued for 60 years.

Ida Kearney's instructions to me were quite clear. Alert the "tuck shop ladies" who catered for the afternoon tea. Request that the Madrigal Choir and their music teacher would attend and perform and serve tea. My class for last lesson on Friday would set up Price Hall. Six trestle tables in a circle of chairs. Cups and saucers set out in the corridor behind. On Saturday, put a vase of violets on the Soldiers Honour Roll in Price Hall. (Reminder: many of these women were at AHS during the First World War). Flowers on the table just outside Price Hall. Special tablecloths, the cardboard attendance sheets with freshly ruled pages pasted on and the year level notices (1910 – 1920, 1920 – 1930), the bowl for the honour system of collecting money. Expecting women in their sixties, I anticipated a degree of decrepitude and helpfully placed chairs on the stair landings. (I recall this when my turn came in 1997 when I was enjoying my retirement with great gusto).

On the day, Jean Leslie took over and I could merge with a few contemporaries at the 1940 – 1950 table. I did interfere one year. Jean knew these people well and would include mention of those who had died during the year. As time went on, the segment became longer and longer including not just the name but when and where and why. I sneaked behind the stage and turned off the microphone. The PA system was temperamental, so this was not unexpected, but it took a little while for me to "fix" it.

Over the years I met remarkable women. Pioneers in their careers and engaged in community. Sharing stories of their time at AHS and life since and their families. Some of the special prefects continued to come for a few years. So the attendance grew. We owe a lot to Jean Leslie's persistence and enthusiasm at a time when the Old Scholars Association was not so active.

When Jean felt it was time to pass the baton, Elsie Morriss and Alice Dermott volunteered to take her place. They set up a committee which would meet in June. Alice tidied up the rather haphazard finances and established an Old Scholars Prize Fund. Between August and June, they worked on tracing the next year's prefects. Meanwhile, Margaret Rudolph's typing class were addressing envelopes, Bev Blackburn was helping with School arrangements. We moved the Reunion to West Terrace AHS. John Wood revived the Old Scholars Association.

The Morriss/Dermott arrangement lasted for some years and we were assured of a well-organized and enjoyable *Conversazione*. Support from a revitalized Old Scholars Association also helped the numbers to grow. At West Terrace, the Women's Auxiliary Committee catered and we had extra support from the office staff who received replies by telephone. The Music Department entertained and helped the Prefects serve tea. When Alice Dermott became too ill to continue their good work, Elsie Morriss continued to come for many years to see her "beloved girls".

Anne Baldock took on their legacy and devoted huge amounts of her time finding the 50 years 'ago's' and putting together an entertaining account of local and world events of fifty years ago. A committee undertook the catering to keep costs down and we enjoyed Anne's bright program and the results of the committee's hard work.

The Grey Box and its historic Index Cards was still in use – an anachronism in a developing computer age. It had a miraculous survival one year at Grote Street. I was taking it home to update it. I had to unlock the Morphett Street gate, drive through, relock and I discovered the Grey Box on the roof of my car. What if those cards had been strewn on Morphett Street at 5 o'clock? What if indeed!

It was Trish Mibus who suggested that she create a database and the rest is history. I cannot begin to describe the contribution Trish has made. She and Kay Koch and their loyal band have, for more than thirty years, organized an annual reunion for us to enjoy. We owe them immense gratitude. Immense gratitude.

Margaret Fenwick and Bronwen Young and Amy Worswick have done research and steered the afternoon's program during that time. The welcome from the present students and their help is always a feature. The audience has come to enjoy the music and the visual presentation. I am told that it is time for Trish and Kay to pass the baton. I hope there will be takers.

Non Scholae Sed Vitae.

Kay Koch has worked tirelessly for over 40 years to organize this popular event.
Trish Mibus and Flora Rumbelow have both contributed for over 30 years.
That's over 100 years of service between them!



Kay Koch

Trish Mibus

Flora Rumbelow

We have a new contingent of people following in the footsteps of these amazing ladies. The school is committed to supporting Conversazione in future years. Let's see what the next 100 brings us!