

All Saints College Memoirs by Richard (Dick) Crossing (1936-1942)

I have had a very long association with All Saints College and Marsden school. I was a border for seven years from 1936-1942 and later on married a Marsden girl. If you take all my siblings and my wife's, our own four children and four grandchildren, it adds up to 76 years of attendance at the two schools. If you add cousins, another 14 years, making a total of ninety. I was very proud that my youngest grandson Toby Llewellyn was school captain in 2006.

When I was at All Saints the school was only half as old as it is now! It was much smaller and there were many differences. The average attendance was about 105 borders with about half a dozen dayboys. More than half came from western NSW. At one stage during the war it dropped to about 50 as a lot of the boys had to go home and help on their fathers' properties. Our uniform was black shoes, dark grey trousers, double breasted navy blue coat, school tie, grey felt hat with vertical stripes, cardinal and blue on the hatband. Prefects had a blue hatband with the school crest on the front. We were not allowed to wear shorts, only long trousers. This was not very comfortable as one of our greatest pass times was playing marbles on the ground.

There were very few buildings in those days. The old Esrom House had the classrooms, dormitories and the colonnade attached. There were two classrooms behind this near the kitchen plus a room for the gardener and workshop for Mr McLeod. There were a few storage sheds and garages plus the chapel, built in 1925 and the recreation hall on the Bathurst side.

There was only one small shower room with hot water. This was adjacent to the junior dormitory above the headmaster's study. We were allowed two to three hot showers after football training in the Winter, but in Summer they were mostly cold. The hot water system was added to the main locker room in 1937. At the same time a wing extending from the archway was added including a library, a prefect's room and a tuckshop. The flagpole was also erected on the lawn near the colonnade. In 1941 the steps leading down from the oval were built using the old bricks from the original school building in Bathurst. The Education Department had purchased the building and were having it demolished. Luckily they gave 2,500 bricks to All Saints.

There were no windows or blinds on the sides of the dormitory. It was completely open to the elements on both sides and believe me the winds blew through! We piled everything we had on our beds during the cold Winter nights and we all survived! We were given open shelves and some hanging space along the passage way on the western side of the dormitories for our clothes. We also had a steel locker in the locker room for our sporting gear. The Headmaster Rev Watson would not allow padlocks. He ran the school on an honesty system and in the whole time I was there I only remember one enquiry into anything being stolen. The boy responsible was found and expelled from the school. Four years later he died in a Japanese POW camp and the headmaster gave him a posthumous pardon and added his name to the WW2 honour board.

Another big difference was our relationship with the girls. We were not allowed to receive letters from girls or write to girls. If a suspicious letter arrived we were called to the Headmaster's office where it would be opened. If it was from a girl it was confiscated and we never got to read it. We were allowed one dance per year with Marsden alternating between the two schools. Even here the doors were guarded and we were not allowed out of the hall. Those of us who had sisters at Marsden were a little bit more fortunate! We

were allowed to ride our bikes over to Marsden one Sunday afternoon per term to see them. This was "How are you sister, have you heard from mum and dad" then we always found someone far more interesting than a sister to talk to. One term we got rather excited when we were told that we were to go to Marsden EVERY Sunday to dig air raid shelters. Unfortunately the girls were not allowed to come near us. Other war efforts were picking fruit at some of the local orchards and making camouflage nets which the army used for covering equipment. The isolation from the girls while we were at school opened up a whole new world of excitement after we left school!

I can clearly remember most of the boys that were there but I will mention one in particular. He was a loveable larrikin from Brewarrina. He was a year older than me but was a great friend. He was always up to mischief. In the apple season on a moonlit night he would organise an "apple safari". Four or five of the boys would ride their bicycles over to Winterbottom's orchard near Marsden and bring back apples in their pillow cases. These of course had to be eaten with much discretion out of sight of the teachers. One time a horse wandered into the school grounds and this fellow was able to catch it, jump on without bridle or saddle and galloped around until he eventually fell off and broke his wrist. He was made a prefect in his last year so that slowed him down somewhat! After school he joined the Airforce and eighteen months later was shot down over Germany and died.

School honours for sport were very difficult to get. For Rugby Union or cricket you had to represent Bathurst district while at school. For athletics you had to win or gain a place at the NSW all schools championships. One boy won the broad jump while I was there and another broke the mile record running in bare feet (this was the same boy who organised the "apple safari")

The two old boys' reunions after the war were memorable events. There was a big attendance as lots of the boys had been away in service and we were in the mood to relax. They were fairly wild weekends but no damage was done. One morning when we arrived the big road signs to Marsden and All Saints had been swapped over which caused a lot of amusement.

I could not talk about All Saints without mentioning Albert Emms. He was my school teacher for six years and then left to join the Air Force. I left the year after and joined the RAAF and trained in Australia for one year. Unfortunately when all the ones I was with left for overseas I was in hospital with an outbreak of meningitis so I missed the draft. When I came out I was a lonely figure in the camp waiting for the next intake to arrive. Then who should step off the bus but my old teacher Albert Emms!. I more than likely went up to him and said "How are you sir" I can't remember. He had remustered into aircrew after me. He was twelve and a half years older than me but we became close friends for the next two years and ended up flying in the same air crew. He was about half a generation older than most of the others that he was mixing with but was very popular and was known as "Old Albert". He was a man of very high principles himself and looking back after the war I know that he had a guiding influence on all of us. Our close friendship continued long after the war with Rugby Union and then Bathurst Legacy.

I have never missed an opportunity to let people know that I attended All Saints College. I think the last verse of the school song sums it up.

"So years after this, mid the lengthening rays
Of the sunset of life, may each turn his gaze
To something like pride to those schoolboy days
Which he spent at All Saints in the morning"