

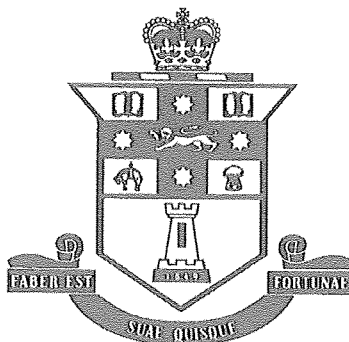
# FABER EST

THE FORTIANS UNION

## BULLETIN

NUMBER 75

September 2006



Produced for former students of:

- ❖ Fort Street Girls' High School
- ❖ Fort Street Boys' High School
- ❖ Fort Street High School

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### This year's dinner

**Date:** Friday, October 20  
**Time:** 7 for 7.30pm  
**Venue:** Menzies Hotel, Wynyard  
**Cost:** \$65

Get together a group from your year. Bookings close on Friday, October 6. A booking form is on the back of this newsletter, or contact the secretary, Don Newby (see top right). The small cost increase this year is because the hotel has put its price up. The last rise in cost for our dinner was in 2000, when GST was introduced.

Guest speaker will be comic and character actor Barbara Wyndon. You may remember in Faber Est 74 that Margaret Wigney recalled Barbara kept her schoolmates entertained at Fort Street in 1952-53. Straight after the Leaving, Barbara was taken on at the



Barbara Wyndon

Independent Theatre, and has since had countless roles in drama and revue, radio, films and television, from the Mavis Bramston Show to The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith and Home and Away. It should be an entertaining night.



### Annual general meeting

The rescheduled AGM on June 20 approved the change to the Constitution, reducing the quorum from 15 to 9. In these times that will be a more manageable number for a quorum. There was no change to the subscription fees, which remain at \$150 for life membership, \$25 annual (\$15 pensioner or student), and free first year after leaving school.

Three new members have been welcomed to the committee: Belinda Conway (Fortian 1997), Chris Mulligan (2005) and Graham Coutts (1979).

Other committee positions remain unchanged: President Jennifer Summers ('57), Vice-President Female Tamsin Calder ('93), Vice-President Male George Jaksic ('71), Secretary Don Newby ('67), Treasurer Peter Dixon ('74), committee members Olive Coutts ('49), Gordon Hill ('62), Pat Morson ('55), and Terry Glebe (teaching staff).



### Getting together again

The **Girls of 1958-62** will hold their annual reunion at Observatory Hill on Saturday, November 4, in the National Trust Café, from 12.30pm. Contact **Beth Brosgarth** (nee Duck-Chong), 02 9977 0457, or email [pbrosgarth@bigpond.com](mailto:pbrosgarth@bigpond.com)

The **Boys of '71** have a reunion with a difference: a harbour cruise with dinner on Saturday, September 30. Organiser **Allan Cowper** says more than 50 are going, including boys living in Queensland and Tasmania, and **Paul King**, now teaching in Hong Kong. **David Howard**, who is Senior Trade Commissioner in New York, expects to be in town then and hopes to join them. More from Allan on 9634 2790 or 0410 530 709.

The **class of 1976** are invited to their 30-year reunion on Saturday, November 11, at Hart's Pub in Cumberland St, The Rocks, for dinner from 7pm to midnight. Cost is \$33; contact **Mary Lyras** at [MLyras@agl.com.au](mailto:MLyras@agl.com.au), or **Rick Yamine**, [Yaminerick.yamine@bigpond.com](mailto:Yaminerick.yamine@bigpond.com)

**John Macnaughtan** reports a good list of **boys of 1956** for their first regrouping in 50 years at the union's annual dinner on October 20. They will certainly have a lot to catch up on. Call John on 6254 2562, or email [macnaug@cyberone.com.au](mailto:macnaug@cyberone.com.au)

The **Girls of '51** meet on the first Friday each November at the National Trust café; this year it's on November 3, at 11.30am. "It is 55 years since we left our dear school and we would love to see as many as possible," says Nancye McKelvey (Adcock). "We must give numbers to the café; contact me at 9527 6196 or 0408 609 042, or Margaret Foster 9528 7266."



### Meet you in Melbourne

Those in southern parts of the nation who can't make it to the October dinner in Sydney might be interested in a dinner for Fortians of all years at the RACV Club in Melbourne on November 17. For details contact Warren Selle, (03) 9783 8223.



### Awards for excellence

Those at last year's annual dinner should remember Year 11 students Michael Condie and Brigid Dixon, who impressed everyone when they addressed the gathering on behalf of the student body. Michael and Brigid were among those nominated for an Education Minister's Award for Student Excellence recently, and Michael was one of 38 chosen from throughout NSW, along with Sadaya Marathe. Our congratulations to them.



## Picking the right answers

A team from the Fortians Union went along to the school P&C's fundraiser Trivia Night in August, and put their selective school education to good use by winning the pointscore! The night, which raised \$5000, was great fun, and the Union has asked the P&C to put us down for a table at next year's. We'll keep you posted.



## Hitting the right notes

The school's music groups go from success to success. The symphony orchestra won their section of the prestigious McDonald's Performing Arts Challenge, against tough competition from North Sydney Girls' and private schools, and the wind ensemble took out the concert band section.

Perhaps some of these talented young musicians will emulate **Lindy Hume (Fortian '77)** the opera director who recently staged the award-winning Australian work *Batavia* at the Opera House. Lindy is artistic director for the Perth International Arts Festival, and has also directed operas in Berlin (*La Boheme*), London (*Così fan tutte*), Switzerland (*Norma*) and Houston (*Barber of Seville*). Her production of Mozart's early work *Idomeneo* will be staged at Sydney's City Recital Hall in December.



Lindy Hume



## Some school dates

**Sept 28:** Year 12 graduation ceremony.

**Nov 1:** School Council meeting

**Nov 21, 22:** Junior Performing Arts evenings.

**Feb 16, 2007:** Speech day, Sydney Town Hall

Details from the school, 8585 1600



## A steady hand

**Eric Bedford**, one of at least three Fortians who have become NSW Education Minister, died recently at 78. **Rod Cavalier ('65)**, who was also Education Minister in the 1980s, writes that: "At one time in the Wran Cabinet there were three Fortians; we may not see that again."

**Eric Bedford** was, in a way, aptly named because throughout his career as a teacher, parliamentarian and minister, he was something of a bedrock. The steady teacher in him remained when he became a minister. One of his first actions was to have a blackboard put up in his office. "You think better with a blackboard," he said. "The education system that has developed in NSW is so large that to expect you can make sudden or rapid change would be a bit ambitious, I think, a bit dangerous."

His old Labor roots and distaste for formality stayed strong, too. He hated queueing for food and he hated dinner suits. He promised that, when he retired, he would have a party on his small farm, run his dinner suit up the flagpole, salute it, lower it and burn it in an open fire. And he did.

Young Eric joined the Labor Party at 14. "I lived in a family where next to God was Jack Lang," he said years later.

After Fort Street and Teachers' College, he taught for 11 years at country schools from 1947, and obtained an arts degree through external study. He taught economics and geography at Liverpool Boys High from 1958.

In 1966, he was campaign director for Gough Whitlam, who persuaded him to stand for the NSW Parliament. In 1968, at the point of being an education inspector, Bedford won the seat of Fairfield. He became Opposition spokesman for police, services, prisons and animal welfare. In the new Wran government in 1976, he was made Education Minister, with a brief to instigate a key ALP policy of having an education commission, giving teachers and parents a role in administration. He worked hard to improve relations with the tempestuous teachers federation and set out to lift quality of education, employing more teachers, reducing class sizes, introducing multicultural education and programs for children with learning difficulties. The number of HSC courses in non-English languages rose.

"If it is possible for a politician to be loved, Eric Bedford was loved by one and all," his former press secretary, Michael Ross, said. Ross recalled visiting Tamworth when all accommodation was booked out. The National Party MP, Noel Park, put Bedford and Ross up at his place, and drove the minister to a local ALP meeting.

In 1980, Bedford moved to the Department of Environment and Planning, where he implemented the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, regarded as a model for environmental planning in Australia. He was reinstated to the Education portfolio in 1984 and then transferred to Industry and Decentralisation, Small business and Technology, until retiring from parliament in 1985. One of his achievements was to withstand pressure to delay the timetable to remove lead from petrol.

## Bradman of the flute

Charles Mackerras described **Neville Amadio** as "the greatest flautist of the 20th century"; Eugene Goossens declared him "the Bradman of the flute". Amadio, a Fortian, died in May aged 93.

He was a soloist with many of the world's top conductors: Beecham, Barbirolli, Klemperer, Goossens, Van Otterloo. He performed with singers including Elizabeth Schwarzkopf. Herald music critic Fred Blanks wrote of a concert in 1989: "Neville Amadio, the celebrity guest, proved as smooth and eloquent a talker as he was for most of his 76 years as a model flautist."

Neville heard flute music from uncles John and Adrian. John, who married singer Florence Austral, taught the boy. Much of his childhood was spent in long hours of practice; he was rehearsing and playing two performances a week while still at school.

He was principal flautist with the ABC Orchestra, now the Sydney Symphony, from its inception in 1934 until his retirement in 1978. As such he had a considerable influence on young and old musicians. For many years he was professor of flute at the Conservatorium. He was soloist on many international performances of the SSO, including at London's Royal Festival Hall. He was a foundation performer of *Musica Viva* and the New Sydney Woodwind Quintet, and a strong advocate for SSO tours of country NSW. Neville was honoured with an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) and then AM (Member of the Order of Australia).

## His monuments all around

**Reg Walker**, some say, never received the recognition he deserved. Yet his monuments are there, across NSW and Australia, including the old Fort Street Girls' High School, now headquarters of the National Trust of NSW. He spent a decade as executive director of the National Trust, fighting to preserve Australia's heritage.

Reginald Nelson Walker, who has died at 87, was born near Gosford. After Fort Street and the University of Sydney, he was

trained in public administration and, after artillery service in World War II, joined the NSW Local Government and Shires Association as assistant secretary. It was a useful training ground for what became his life's work. During the war he had married Delma Melville, and with their young family they moved to West Pymble, which their son James recalls as a bushland paradise, with unsealed roads and a community of young families. Reg's attachment to the natural environment deepened; he joined the fledgling National Trust and, by 1963, was its first full-time director.

The Trust, then largely concerned with piecemeal saving of threatened colonial houses, was in the eyes of many a twittering, middle-class ladies' group. But Reg Walker brought his knowledge of the ways of government and decision-making, as well as his own intellectual rigour. (He would later advise James to study philosophy at university as "it will teach you how to think".)

In his long stewardship (he was director until 1983) Reg energised Trust staff and members to take on governments over issues such as proposed mining at Myall Lakes and Colong Caves, and plans for a coal loader off the Stanwell Park escarpment. Richard Rowe, later a president of the Trust, said he was "a bit of a father figure" to the young architects, planners and geographers who worked, often voluntarily, for the Trust.

Reg's belief that both sides of an argument should always be fairly presented enabled him to maintain working relationships with senior politicians, even within the notoriously pro-development Askin government. These working relationships bore fruit: during his tenure, the Trust acquired the school on Observatory Hill as its permanent headquarters; Old Government House at Parramatta, vacated by The King's School, was given into the Trust's care; and through his friendship with poet Douglas Stewart and Norman Lindsay, the artist's home at Springwood was passed to the Trust.

For 15 years Reg was an alderman on Ku-ring-gai Council and, in 1962, its mayor. He was made a member in the Order of Australia in 1975.

## A nursing trailblazer

**Olive Kemmis**, who has died at 96, was a trailblazer in Australian nursing whose work touched the lives of thousands. Her immaculately starched uniform and veil belied her approachability and her understanding of the needs of her nurses and of the welfare of sick children. She established her reputation as a leader who could challenge the status quo when posted to New Guinea in World War II. In a history of the RAAF Nursing Service 1940-1990, she said: "We had tremendously strict rules in our service and one was that we had to keep our hats on at all times, when off duty and in our 'blues' in the mess. We decided it was a ridiculous rule, so we were the first of our service to go bareheaded into the officers' mess."

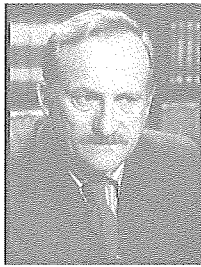
After schooling at Summer Hill Public and Fort Street, Olive joined the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children at Camperdown in 1929, and served the hospital until her retirement.

After the war, she was supervising sister of Wade House at the children's hospital, then deputy matron and later matron and superintendent of nursing, from 1958 to 1971. A board member, referring to her diminutive stature, said on her appointment as matron: "We didn't get much for our money." D.G. Hamilton, author of *Hand in Hand: History of the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children*, was closer to the mark: "She was just the right sort of person for the troubled state of affairs that existed: a gentle soul and a peacemaker, but a capable one. She had a rare gift of getting on with most people and was never too busy to see a nurse."

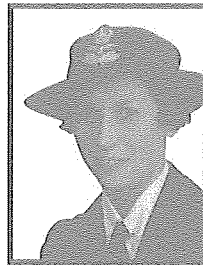
Kemmis improved conditions for patients and staff. Nurses were given more freedom to reflect changing community attitudes. They could live outside the hospital after marrying. One nurse said: "It was so nice to have a matron who actually smiled at the staff and spoke to the children, instead of worrying about whether the cot wheels were straight." Kemmis worked with many well-known doctors. **John Yu** and **Kim Oates**, who later became CEOs of the hospital, started as residents during her time as matron. In 1973 she was awarded a medal in the Order of the British Empire (BEM).



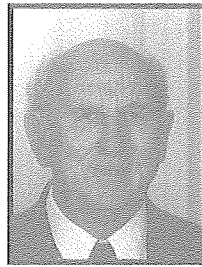
Neville Amadio



Eric Bedford



Olive Kemmis



Reg Walker

## An instrumental man

**Dr Clive Keith Coogan** AM (Fortian '41) who died in December 2005, was a solid-state physicist largely responsible for the expansion in Australia of a small scientific instrument industry into a billion dollar sector of the economy.

Clive grew up at Molong where his father was a bank manager. He returned to Sydney in 1937 to attend Fort Street where he had the

nickname "Molong". He excelled at English, physics and maths and was a good long-distance runner. From engineering at Sydney University, he transferred to science, gaining first class honours in physics in 1947. He gained his PhD at Bristol under a CSIRO Senior Studentship.

Back in Australia, he began a career in CSIRO, researching solid-state physics and developing scientific instruments. For 10 years he worked in the CSIRO Bureau of Scientific Services, helping set up an export market for a growing scientific instrument industry. He founded the Australian Scientific Industry Association, led trade missions to Asia and was involved in floating companies to raise capital to develop and market scientific instruments. As a result, by 1990 exports totalled more than \$1 billion. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1986.

*(These pieces on the lives of noteworthy Fortians have been adapted from articles appearing in the Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian and other sources.)*

As this Faber Est was being finished, news came out of the death at 86 of **Abe Saffron**. He was often referred to in the newspapers as a Fort Street student, but was hardly one that our teachers would have held up to us an exemplar. Saffron was a bright pupil, but left school at 15 and soon began the career in sly grog, nightclubs and the like that led him to being known as the Mr Sin of Sydney.



Postage of the newsletter is the greatest cost against the union's limited funds. Would you prefer to receive Faber Est via e-mail? If so, send an e-mail to [newbyd@email.cs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:newbyd@email.cs.nsw.gov.au). The newsletter will continue to be posted to those who prefer it.

FABER EST



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**FORTIANS UNION ANNUAL DINNER**

**BOOKING FORM.**

**Date: Friday, October 20, 7pm**  
**Menzies Hotel, Sydney**

Please complete this form and mail it with your payment to:

The Fortians Union  
 PO Box N1, PETERSHAM NORTH NSW 2049

Cost per person \$65, no. in this booking: \_\_\_\_ : \$ \_\_\_\_  
 I enclose my cheque or money order made payable to the Fortians Union for \$ \_\_\_\_.

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Given name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name at School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to sit with the following year group: \_\_\_\_\_ (ie last year at school)

Others in this booking: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please book no later than Friday, October 6**

**NO TICKETS WILL BE MAILED OUT**

**BOOKINGS WILL BE CHECKED AT THE DOOR.**

Parking on the evening is available at Secure Parking - entry in Wynyard Lane off Margaret Street.



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