

## Rostrevor Memories – Hilary O’Connell 1923 Foundation Scholar

Many thanks to Blake Appleby and Alison Appleby for compiling this profile



been ‘rekindled and strengthened’ of late through his extended family (his great niece is a current staff member and great-great nephew is a current student of the College, Blake Appleby Year 9).

Hilary believes it is this modern connection rather than his status as a Foundation Scholar, that is making him ‘seem important’ amongst the Rostrevor Community. If not for the family at the College he believes he would not be receiving attention. Of course this is not the case. It is those of us who continue the tradition of the College who want to unlock the knowledge, hear the stories, share the memories that Hilary holds as they may be the last link to those founding days...treasures that if not recovered now will be lost for future generations.

*These recollections were collated after speaking with Hilary at his home in Snowtown. Having celebrated his 94th birthday in January of this year, Hilary was happy to share some of the fond memories of his days as a boarder*

Hilary attended Rostrevor College in 1923 & 1924 beginning when he was 9 years of age. Unfortunately the Depression placed increased financial pressure on families and like many other students Hilary was not able to return in 1925. Though he was only at the College for a short period, the Rostrevor spirit has remained strong and he has maintained a strong connection with the College over the years. His sons were boarding students in the late 60’s and early 70’s (Anthony O’Connell ’63 and Phil O’Connell ’70). This connection has



From the 1923 Annual: The interior of the Chapel

*in the Foundation years of the College and he is looking forward to being a part of the celebrations on March 2nd at Open Day 2008.*

Hilary came from the farming community of Mt Templeton, near Lochiel / Balaklava, to begin his boarding education at Christian Brother’s College (CBC) in Wakefield Street. After spending the First Term in the city, he joined the other boarding students in moving to the new boarding school to be known as Rostrevor College. The First Term at CBC was crowded. There were many day students and it seemed that the boarders were being ‘shunted out’. When it was time to move to the new location none of the boarding students had any idea what to expect.

*“CBC was too big, too many students. They weren’t really ready when we moved out to Rostrevor; there was a still lot to do. It (Rostrevor House and the grounds) was very very grand.”*

*“Sometimes trams went past the gate but they didn’t always come to Rostrevor. At certain times of the day they would go up to Morialta to the kiosk but mostly they went to Magill and then turn back. You would have to walk to Magill to catch it.*

When they first arrived at Rostrevor the boarders slept upstairs on the balconies. When asked if it was cold and wet, Hilary responded:

*“The junior boys slept on the balcony at the start. There were blinds hanging on the sides that kept out the rain. I didn’t notice the cold; I just got into bed and went to sleep.”*

There were about 10 to 15 junior boys, all of us around 9 or 10 years of age. There was one boy Carlton ‘Sport’ McFadden who was a good friend. Carlton would sometimes go home with Hilary on exeat weekends and spend time on the farm.

*“There were trains to get you home on the weekends but you didn’t go home all the time. There were friends of the family in town you could stay with sometimes. If you did go home by train, you would have to catch the train to Blyth or Balaklava and get picked up from there. The Snowtown line wasn’t finished then”.*

*“I remember one time when ‘Sport’ (Carlton McFadden) came home with me one weekend. We took a team of cattle over to Koolunga (about 40km away) on horseback. Sport’s Dad was a bookie from the city and he got one of his mates to drive him to Mt Templeton for a*



Mr Hilary O’Connell unveils the EREA plaque as Rostrevor’s oldest known graduate. Joining him is Br John Ahern. The EREA plaque commemorates the new governance of Edmund Rice Schools and has been located in the Valley.

## Rostrevor Memories – Hilary O’Connell



From the 1923 Annual: The Balcony Dormitory



From the 1923 Annual: The Lake



From the 1923 Annual: Picking Lemons



From the 1924 Annual: Oranges! Is anybody coming?

visit. I don’t know how they found the place but when they got to the farm Sport and I weren’t back yet. When we came in, Sport’s Dad copped one look at him and started laughing. He was dressed in an old pair of dungarees with an old hat on – he looked a sight and being a city man Sport’s Dad couldn’t stop laughing. I ran into Sport’s Dad years later at the Kadina races, he was still laughing”.

Along with the Brothers there were a number of ‘lay teachers’ at the College.

“Tyler was the person who taught us I think. Then when you got to Intermediate the Brothers taught you. John Meegan was the music teacher. You could learn pretty much anything you wanted to and had to learn some things you didn’t want to. I learned piano for a while then gave it up. Bands and choirs – they are a good idea, you can get people to help you. You get caught on your own playing the piano.”

Br Purton was the Foundation Headmaster of the College and was well loved and respected by the Foundation students and staff.

“He was someone who you could talk to about anything. He had a

big job to do getting the College up and running. He was only there for a year and then he was sent somewhere else, Victoria I think. That was a messy business, but I won’t go into that. People didn’t want him to leave. Br O’Brien took over the next year but he wasn’t so well liked. He had pretty big shoes to fill.”

The grounds were a source of great fun for the boys. Although the extensive orchard was generally out of bounds there was plenty of other space and The Lake (the dam) offered a place to cool down and have some fun. Hilary shared one particular memory of The Lake.

“There was a dam on the grounds and we would go swimming up there. One day the older boys got the idea of making a waterslide on the side slope (bank). They poured water over it and got it really slippery so we could run and slide in. Someone must have told the Brothers because Br. Dean came up to see what was going on. He didn’t say anything, he just looked over the top didn’t like what he saw and went again. It wasn’t until we got back down to class that he let loose and the older boys copped it. He gave ‘em hell, they got a good

telling off. It was a good time. [laughing]”

In the early years students from other Colleges would often visit the Rostrevor Grounds. One visit, from the girls of Convent of Mercy (SAC), is particularly poignant as unbeknown to him at the time, Hilary’s future wife was one of the girls involved.

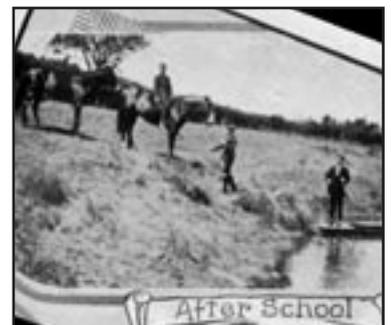
“The girls would come out to the College sometimes by bus or on the tram. This one time they were wandering around the orange orchard. They must have liked the oranges because they filled every bag they could find with oranges and took them back to Angas Street. I didn’t find out until later when my wife told me that when the girls got back to the Convent, the Sisters discovered the oranges and the girls got a good telling off (probably like what happened with the waterslide to us boys). AND the Sisters took all the oranges!”

Originally the Chapel was located behind Rostrevor House. The boarders’ cloakroom was on the lower level with the Chapel above.

“We used to cross over the creek to get to the cloakroom where our things were kept. I can’t recall the



From the 1923 Annual: One of the Classrooms



From the 1923 Annual: After School



From the 1924 Annual: View of the New Sleeping-out Dormitory ( The Bungalow or Aquinas House)

## Rostrevor Memories – Hilary O’Connell



From the 1924 Annual : Fourth and Fifth (Grades)

Front Row: Names missing from photo

Second Row: H O’Connell, W Kennedy, J Whallin, J Siebert, B Ward, W Fay, A Brennan, J Fanning.

Third Row: H O’Loughlin, G Mahar, C Hartwig, J Morrissey, M Fennell, J McLean, K Mahar, A Oliver, J Kinnane.

*creek ever flooding too much – it must have been blocked upstream somewhere, maybe at the dam, because 1923 was a very wet year.”*

The classrooms were near the sheds where the vehicles were stored at the rear of Rostrevor House near the south entrance.

*“The classrooms were old closed sheds, maybe for hay and chaff that had been lined and laid with floorboards. That’s what we had, the Junior boys up to Intermediate. Not the older boys though, they were in the College itself (Rostrevor House).”*

*“There were open sheds near the classrooms where cars and other vehicles were kept. The Siebert boys would drive up from Glenelg every Monday and park their Model-T Ford in the shed until Friday when they would drive it home again. You know, no-one would go near that car during the whole week. None of the boys ever touched it. I don’t know if the same would happen today. Are they still good boys up there?”*

There were plenty of things to keep boys occupied, lots of sports – cricket, tennis, football, athletics and boxing. Stanley, Guthrie and Walsh were top athletes and footballers. There was a great admiration and respect for the

talented sportsmen of the College by their peers, and particularly by the younger students.

*“Leo Stanley from Wanderah was a great athlete. Others like Guthrie and Walsh were too, well above the standard of students from the other colleges. I wasn’t very good at sports but I remember coming second for my age group in athletics. Don’t know where the silver medal is now – probably somewhere at Mount Templeton.”*

A very strong memory that Hilary has is of the great camaraderie amongst all the boys in that first year, a new community banding together, supporting each other. (It is a theme he mentions often)

*“I think they were a different lot of students in those days than they are now. They all mixed together. When they first went out there they were all new. It didn’t matter what age or where you came from everyone got along and played together. The older boys would include the younger boys in games. This began to break down the following year as more students came to the College when the older boys began keeping to their year levels more. But that first year it didn’t matter.”*



From the 1924 Annual: Inter-Collegiate Boxing Champions. Governors Cup Winner 1924



From the 1923 Annual: Br David Gabriel Purton, Founder of Rostrevor College



From the 1925 Annual: Homeward Bound



From the 1924 Annual: Approach to the College



From the 1924 Annual: Waiting for the Tram

## Joseph Boulus



From the 1923 Annual: Joseph Boulus

*Earlier this year Red&Black was made aware that current Year 2 teacher, Ms Abby Williams is the great granddaughter of 1923 graduate Joseph Boulus. R&B sought some information on Joseph and Abby was able to contact her great uncle who provided this profile.*

Joseph Boulus born at Broken Hill 19th April 1906, was the first of four boys born to ‘Lebanese Catholic immigrants’ who settled in Broken Hill in far west New South Wales. He was educated by ‘Sister of Mercy’, then moved to Marist Brothers – at Broken Hill.

His family was in the retail clothing and drapery business and picked him being the eldest of the four boys and decided to give him further education. Arrangements were made for him to go to ‘Christian Brothers College’, Wakefield Street, Adelaide – as a full time boarder.

‘Christian Brothers College’ (C.B.C), Wakefield Street, Adelaide later became too crowded and Rostrevor was purchased and all boarders moved there so he was a last boarder at ‘Christian Brothers College’ and a first boarder at Rostrevor, when it opened in 1923. He was in Intermediate class and as a senior he was sleeping on the open veranda.

On leaving school he went into the family business in Broken Hill, he expanded it to include a block of four shops – ‘Drapery’, ‘Shoes’, ‘Furniture’ and ‘Fruit and Veg’.