

DAVID WORLAND: COMMERCE TEACHER 1963-1964



I'm a country boy originally and grew up in Terang, a small town in the western district. I went to Terang High School in the 'fifties and in 1959 I went to Melbourne University where I trained in commercial studies and also did the teacher training course. It was a big change to country life but I completed my university studies in Melbourne and have lived here ever since.

I had a studentship whilst at the university. In those days if you had a studentship you would be paid a stipend; it wasn't a significant amount but it was a payment towards your living costs and the student fees were minor compared to these days. The requirement

was that when we finished our training we were bonded to the education department for three years. I had been offered a Commonwealth scholarship but it was inferior to the studentship, financially speaking. With the studentship I was accommodated via one of the hostels at the university, which was an enormous help. After a time I went back to the hostel as a supervisor, but that was after I left St Albans.

I met Barry Rayner when I was at Melbourne University. He was also a country boy from Warrnambool and we were staying in the same hostel at the uni. We became friends and coincidentally he started teaching at St Albans High in 1963, the same year that I started. Barry and I have maintained the friendship ever since and we were best man at each other's wedding.

I first went to St Albans High School in 1962 on a teaching round. I enjoyed that and made some inquiries about being posted there which was successful. Rick Ford was instrumental in getting a posting for me in 1963. I was there for only two years so it was not possible for me to get a really in-depth knowledge of the place. It was a big shock to me in that I remember there being at least 28 nationalities amongst the students who had names that I never had a hope of pronouncing — with a combination of letters that I'd never seen or heard before so it was hard for me as a white Anglo-Saxon male to comprehend. There were some Dutch people living in Terang when I was there but it wasn't like the spectrum of people that had settled in St Albans, but everyone of European origin in Australia is a migrant of some sort. I guess that particular history is something that will not be repeated because it was a unique time and period of migration from Europe.

After I started at St Albans High School I chose to board in West Footscray because it was a lot closer to work; I didn't have a car in those days but it was easy to catch the train to St Albans. That occurred because Doug Hill, one of the people teaching

at St Albans, was recently married and living in a unit in West Footscray and he mentioned that the lady next door was looking for a boarder. I met her and her daughter and boarded there for a couple of years.



David Worland (second left, second last row) and teaching staff, 1964.

I remember the Cameron family because Lorna was the school librarian. She was a conduit for many people in establishing links between the school and the community. I remember being invited by Lorna to join them for dinner and we spent the evening talking about what was happening in St Albans. I suspect that she held those background dinners for the benefit of many a new teacher.

I became involved in school sports, which was interesting as the school's policy at the time seemed to be that students were encouraged to adopt Australian sports and that meant playing Aussie Rules football, rather than soccer. I don't know whose policy it was – either the school or the Department, but in the early days I believe that soccer was discouraged, which is crazy when you think about it.

I was the assistant sports master, which was a challenging role because the school would not allocate sufficient money for sports equipment and I remember this was quite frustrating. It was a battle with the principal at the time. At one stage I was able to get half a dozen footballs for the school from the Footscray Football Club. I attended a sports masters' meeting with the club and Charlie Sutton and Ted Whitten were there at the time. I was able to take delivery of a number of footballs to take back to the school. I think this marked the beginning of a policy by the VFL to encourage football in schools.

Tom Walsh used to organize football presentation nights. One night he invited Alan Killigrew as a guest speaker – he used to be the senior coach at North Melbourne in the 'sixties; he was very down to earth. Walsh would sometimes invite a couple of league players or officials to give motivational talks to the budding footballers at the high school. Doc was well known for interspersing his class discussions with football news and notices. I think I might have had the footy team only for a year before someone else took over. Norm McLeish also put in some dedicated years as a junior football coach. He was keen on sports as building character and was an avid participant himself, always willing to challenge his students. He took up running marathons as his personal athletic challenge.

I remember the school at one stage taking swimming sports quite seriously and I would come at some ungodly hour in the morning to take the students by bus to the Sunshine swimming pool. They were an enthusiastic lot.

One of the other events that Tom Walsh had organised was a sort of exchange program with a school from Geelong, where groups of students would visit the schools to play football. I don't know how long that visiting program lasted.

I enjoyed my time at St Albans. I was teaching commerce, which was mainly shorthand and typewriting and commercial principles and practice. I think John Conroy was the economics teacher. I was teaching mainly the form three and form four girls. Tom Scarff was another teacher at that time who was teaching in the commercial stream.

Alison Gliddon was the senior mistress when I was there and she followed Miss Taylor. Brian Torpey was the principal during most of the sixties. When I was there a number of young teachers were posted to the school - people like Doug Hill, Barry Rayner and Tom Scarff. In contrast there were some older European teachers like Paul Pavlov and his wife Ludmila. Bruce Alcorn was one of the senior teachers who started with the school in 1956. He's now been retired for many years and living not far from me in Ivanhoe.

In its earliest years the school had a good reputation and was seen as innovative in being open beyond normal school hours as a kind of community resource. That did not occur during my time there. I think Torpey followed a more traditional bureaucratic line of operation. Despite this we had a lot of fun even though we didn't have enough resources. I was inexperienced when I started but you change as you learn the job by doing it and you had to be adaptable.

I remember getting assistance from the State Savings Bank in introducing students to banking. The SSB ran a school banking service and they also made available their branch at the Melbourne showgrounds for the purposes of showing students how a bank operated. As part of teaching Commercial Principles and Practice, I also arranged for officers of the bank to come to St Albans to demonstrate equipment

used in the banks. I remember that on one occasion, one of the staff attached to this section of the bank was a pop star (Merv Benton), and when he came to the school as one of the representatives of the bank, there was such a reaction by the students that it was impossible for classes to function. In the end Alison Gliddon intervened and we sent him away.

After leaving St Albans I taught at Blackburn High School and then moved to Elwood High.

In 1976 I left the Education Department and went to LaTrobe University where I was doing my Masters and involved in a research project investigating overaward payments in the Australian wages system, a project for which I had been recruited. After finishing my Masters I joined Victoria University at Footscray and was there for about thirty years, lecturing in economics.

One of my colleagues at VUT has been Alex Pliaskin, who was a student at St Albans when I was there in the sixties and then I saw him again in about 1969 when I was teaching economics at Footscray.

My role at VUT has been pretty varied. I was Professor and Deputy Head of the School and Academic Director of the Workplace Studies Centre and, more recently, Honorary Professor in the School of Management. I've been involved as a researcher in a number of projects concerned with workplace participation and consultation. I've conducted research into wages in the building and construction industry and into self-employment. I was a member of the International Industrial Relations Association Study Group on worker participation in relation to workplace training issues.

On the personal side, my wife died 20 years ago, which was a sad event. I have two children and four grandchildren.



David Worland, 2015



Peter Karol, Barry Rayner, Joan Rayner, David Worland, class reunion 2005.

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