

JOHN BROOKE: PRINCIPAL, 1977 - 1979

Principal's Report



There can be little doubt that St. Albans High School has moved further forward during the past year.

Perhaps the greatest impact has been made by the re-introduction of the House system, and the increased participation in sport. The school won the Inter-school Swimming sports, and we came second in the Inter-School athletics our best result since 1962!

Those results were important because they show us that when St. Albans puts its mind to something, it can achieve very highly indeed.

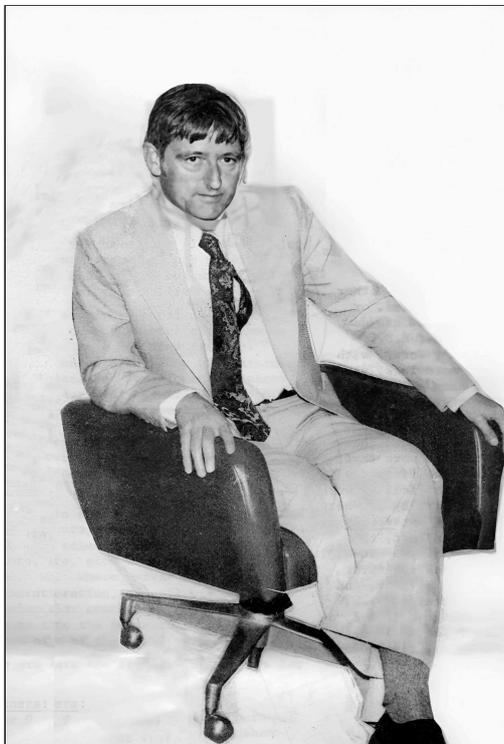
I hope that 1979 will see us again achieving highly in sport. I also want to see the realisation by the whole school that if we can achieve highly in sport, we can achieve the same sort of results in the classroom and in the examination room.

For too long we have seen ourselves as "poor old St. Albans", and as being not quite as good as other schools. I doubt that this had ever been true - it is certainly not true now.

Next year, I want to see us re-building our reputation as the premier school of the west - in every way.

Nothing succeeds like success, and our successes this year will give us greater confidence to go on and conquer new fields next year.

John Brooke, 1978



Reflections on St Albans High School

St. Albans was a big school: 1250 pupils and a staff of 114 including non teaching staff. Of the teaching staff, roughly 80 were aged 27 or younger. Coming as they did, from such a diverse range of ethnicities, the students, like the staff, were all striving to find their place in the world.

Such a volatile mix could have led to a fairly troubled school. That it did not was due to three factors:

The first was the existence of a capable group of senior staff who displayed sound leadership to staff and students.

The second was the enthusiasm of the staff for their work. More than at any school at which I taught, the staff put the students first. They put an extraordinary effort into meeting the needs of the students and their parents.

The third was the response of the students to the efforts of the staff. I think they sensed that their teachers really cared about them as individuals, and as a consequence, an air of mutual trust and respect pervaded the school.

As I look back, through the prism of more than 25 years, I have but one regret about my time at St. Albans. I think that we could (and should) have harnessed the relationship between staff and students and used it as a platform to build a much stronger academic focus and, eventually, an academic tradition. We had all of the ingredients to do this, and we could have done it without sacrificing the really good things which we achieved. The job of the school principal is to provide educational leadership, and I think that the lives of the students who were then, and those of those who came after them, would have been enhanced if I had exercised more leadership in this area.

Having said that, we put a huge effort into focusing the curriculum on ensuring that our students were literate, numerate and socially competent and in these basic aspects of building an academic tradition, I think laid a good foundation for those who followed.

John Brooke
April 2006

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Menu
People
Photos
History
Albas
Top of Page
Home Page