

# Alumni Newsletter

## Hurlstone Agricultural High School

Address: Roy Watts Road Glenfield NSW 2167  
Email: [hurlstone-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:hurlstone-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au)

Tel: 9829 9222 Fax: 9829 2026  
Website: [www.hurlstone.com.au](http://www.hurlstone.com.au)



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I welcome everyone to the next edition of the Alumni newsletter. In this newsletter we have a lot of poetry on show from both our present day students to our Alumni. In this edition, the Archive Group has been looking into the history of John Edmondson and also the history of the Memorial Forest. John Edmondson was the first Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross in WW2. John was the only child of John and Maude Edmondson and was a Rat of Torbuk. He was awarded this honour posthumously. John was under heavy fire one night and with little thought to his own safety rushed out in heavy fire to save Lieutenant Mackell. In the process John was shot in the neck and stomach. He died a couple of days later of his injuries. John was extremely close to his mother, and one of the last words from her to her son was "Jack, never any decorations". Maude kept a diary of her thoughts and feelings while John was fighting. The day he died, John's beloved cat ran screaming through out the house and was never seen again. Maude then and there knew that something awful had happened to her son. She received the grim news a couple days later on April 26th 1942. We have recently uncovered a diary that Maude kept. In it is letters, poetry, articles about her beloved son. I believe the diary was her way to grieve for her only child. The Archive Group has read the diary and has really impacted on the group, of the horror and heartache of war both on the battle site but also at home. John's parents were immensely proud of their brave son but also grieved for him for the rest of their lives. We have included in this edition a poem that was sent to Mrs Edmondson from one of the boys who served in World War 2. The Memorial Forest has two trees planted to honour John Edmondson.

In this edition I have also included the school poem called "Blue and Gold Malaria". The Hurlstone poem is one I give out to the Alumni all the time and I think best represents the passion and loyalty the "Old Boys" and "Old Girls" feel about their old school. It is feeling of pride I hear from the Alumni all the time. I could be out doing some shopping after work and someone sees my name tag or recognises my uniform and I will see their excitement in their faces when they realise I am a staff member of Hurlstone. I will see their joy expand when I explain to them I look after the Alumni. Our Alumni are proud to be called Hurlstonians or "Old Boys" or "Old Girls". I have come to realise people like to feel like they belong to something that is good, this can either in a community group, church group or their old school. I sincerely hope that everyone who is reading these articles and the poem catches a little bit of the Blue and Gold Malaria.

We also have our Anzac Service happening here at Hurlstone on Thursday 28th April 2016. We are starting at 11am in the Memorial Forest (weather permitting). I am pleased to note that the Memorial Forest is to be preserved and will be looked after by the school with additional support from the RSL and Campbelltown Council. Procedures are happening at the moment by the RSL and Anzac House in Sydney to pass a motion to have the Memorial Forest heritage listed. It means the Memorial Forest will be preserved forever. I hope to see many of the Alumni and Hurlstone Community at our Anzac Service. Please remember that any new developments pertaining to our school will continue to be sent out to the Alumni and one of the ways is through the HAHS Alumni facebook page.

Mrs Johanna Leglise, Archivist

Hurlstone Agricultural High School has ploughed many preconceptions, both of benefit and of doubt. Beside the rail tracks of Glenfield station, there is a magical school where student from lands far and near unite upon one act of clemency: to be part of the best agricultural school in Sydney. A school posthumously known for the dichotomy of its students; partying boarders and sceptical daygoers. A school with a leader that broadens all horizons. So laying down the potato sacks and the horror of pregnancy testing, it's difficult to point out what truly gives Hurlstone its fame. Hurlstone began when one man, John Kinloch, decided to purchase a generous piece of land and start his own private school. It was the 1870's and education was only starting to gain importance in society's culture. Kinloch who was mathematics teacher initially sold off the land due to substantial debt. However, in its place, education continued in forms of colleges and by 1907, a vision for a school finally started to solidify. The first principal, Frank McMullen who was 35 years of age at that time and was previously exposed to the fields of teaching was employed as a headmaster, housekeeper, farmer and his wife Mrs McMullen was given the unpaid position of Matron which entailed the organisation of the school and to look after the welfare needs of the students. His goal was to establish a fine all boys high school that would provide a well-grounded education in particular to agriculture. It took an ordinary man with a vision, a dedicated leader, five teachers, a handful of staff members and thirty enrolled students to give birth to a place of excellence. The school gates were opened on the 1st of April 1907 and those gates welcomed the students of Hurlstone for over a century. The pupils have made it the school that it has become, and as we find ourselves manoeuvring around questionable patches of brown matter and perhaps sometimes landing on the most unfortunate encounters, we can take pride in knowing that in that moment we are walking amongst Hurlstone's past, present and its future.

By Labiba Rahman

### Corporal John Edmondson

Only a boy, to him life was fun  
His cares and his worry had not begun,  
When he answered the call and he sailed away,  
To take a part in this bloody fray.

Only a boy when he gave his life,  
Gave it so willingly in this world of strife,  
That those at home might live and be free,  
Of the dreaded Nazi rule, the Fruehers tyranny.

Only a boy in a soldiers grave,  
He proved himself the bravest of brave,  
Heart-broken, but proud, his mother must be,  
As she dreams of that grave far over the sea.

Only a boy was this mothers son,  
And when war is over and victory won,  
We'll pause and we'll think amidst all our joy,  
Of this great fine soldier, who was only a boy,  
Corporal John Edmondson VC.

By John C Holston  
2/13th Bn  
20th brig  
Middle east 1941

For Alumni / reunion enquiries please contact Johanna Leglise on phone 9829 9222 or email [Johanna.Leglise@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Johanna.Leglise@det.nsw.edu.au)



### The Hurlstone Poem: Blue and Gold Malaria

The day would soon arrive when I could not ignore the rash.  
 I was obviously ill and so I called Doctor Nash.  
 This standard consultation would adjudicate by fate.  
 I walked into his surgery and gave it to him straight:  
 "Doc, I wonder if you might explain this allergy of mine,  
 I get these pins and needles running up and down my spine.  
 From there, across my body, it will suddenly extend-  
 My neck will feel a shiver and the hairs will stand on end.  
 And then there is the symptom that a man can only fear-  
 A choking in the throat, and the crying of a tear."  
 Well, the doctor scratched his melon with a rather worried look.  
 His furrowed brow suggested that the news to come was crook.  
 "What is it, Doc?" I mentioned. "Have I got a rare disease?  
 I'm man enough to cop it sweet, so give it to me, please".  
 "I'm not too sure," he answered, in a puzzled way.  
 "You've got some kind of fever, but it's hard for me to say.  
 When is it that you feel this most peculiar condition?"  
 I thought for just a moment, then I gave him my position:  
 I get it when I'm standing in a far off country town,  
 When I hear some parents mention that their kid is Hurlstone bound.  
 I get it when the school is featured in the land,  
 And then again I feel it when asked to lend a hand.  
 I got it back in 64 when Grey held up the cup,  
 And when I heard that girls were there, I knew something was up.  
 I get it when an Old Boy is made polliie fed,  
 And when at night I reminisce in the quietness of my bed.  
 I get it when a mate talks of wagging at the river,  
 And the chanting of the war-cry causes me a body shiver.  
 I got it when a Old Girl was crowned Miss Australia,  
 And when I hear Hurlstonians are proud to serve Pro Patria.  
 I get it when Hurlstonians as farmers make a go,  
 And it hits me hard when I recall the Harrow & the Hoe.

So tell me, Doc, "I questioned. Am I really gonna die?"  
 He broke into a smile before he looked me in the eye.  
 As he fumbled with his stethoscope and pushed it out of reach,  
 He wiped away a tear and then he gave this stirring speech:

"From the dungeons in the dormitories to the turbulent dining mess,  
 From the dairies of the coastlands to the wheatfields of the west,  
 From the offices of the cities and the sporting halls of fame,  
 From the hallowed halls of learning to the sun-drenched outback plain,  
 From Hurlstone to Hill End,  
 From Cowra to your Area.

The medical profession call it "Blue and Gold Malaria"  
 But forget about the text books, son, the truth I shouldn't hide.  
 The rash that you've contracted here is "Good Old Hurlstone Pride".  
 I'm afraid that you've acquired it and one thing is for sure-  
 You'll die with it, young man, because there isn't any cure".



### **Hurlstone Awakens**

6.00am The dorms are silent  
 Like a riverbed in fall  
 But the farm hands with the cows  
 Even teachers sleep, then drone  
 About lethargy at the school  
 In the bed its nice and warm.

7.30 there is movement  
 A knock and yell next door  
 "Wake up, its morning", they call  
 A plethora of teachers every week  
 The students rise from there sleepy trance  
 Rubbing slumber from their eyes.  
 There's a flurry for bed inspection  
 Hackett checking all the rooms.

8.45 We've been in roll call  
 With Sproule and her morning coffee  
 Calling our names loud and clear  
 "Rico, Michael...where's Claire  
 "I'm here!" She's radiant as always.  
 "I've marked you absent darling, get a note"

12.50 second lunch  
 "Attention all staff, the Coffee van is here!"  
 The rush of teachers just stampedes  
 To get their energy for 5 and 6  
 These minutes just drag by  
 I laugh with my friends  
 Crack the lamest jokes, and then  
 Get Olivia annoyed, that's right.

By Dean Mokrozhaev



An open forum will be held for all Alumni and members of the Hurlstone community early Term 2. This will held on a Saturday on the school grounds.  
 Further information will be confirmed closer to the date.



**You are invited to attend  
 Hurlstone Agricultural High School's  
 Anzac Day Service**

**Date:** Thursday 28th April 2016

**Time:** 11.00am

**Place:** Memorial Forest

Hurlstone Agricultural High School

Roy Watts Rd

Glenfield NSW 2167

**RSVP:** Tuesday 5/4/16 to

[richard.mokrozhaev@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:richard.mokrozhaev@det.nsw.edu.au) or

[johanna.leglise@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:johanna.leglise@det.nsw.edu.au)

or phone 9829 9222

(a light luncheon will be provided at conclusion of the service)