

## A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL IN 100 OBJECTS

### AN INVITATION TO THE OPENING OF THE 2011 GYMNASIUM

Size: 5½ in x 4 in / 140 mm x 100 mm

Description: Navy and black lettering over a faded-out angled view of the centre of the gym floor with the emblem in a roundel, court lines and colour fading from ivory to fawn.



The script is:

### MOUNT ALBERT GRAMMAR SCHOOL GYMNASIUM OPENING

You are cordially invited to attend the opening ceremony  
of our New Gymnasium by the Rt Hon John Key, Prime Minister  
Thursday 5 May 2011  
2.00 pm – 3.00 pm  
Light refreshments will be served following the opening ceremony  
RSVP by 15 April 2011  
Donna Perry 846-2044 ext 8150  
dperry@mags.co.nz

Discussion: As well as the invitation there was a programme, A4 folded to A5, each side left half blank.



The front is an image of the brass lion in the centre of the foyer carpet. The programme page has the same image as the ticket. The Programme was:

Powhiri/Welcome

Address by Board of Trustees  
Chairman, Greg Moyle

Visual Presentation

Opening of New Gymnasium  
Rt Hon John Key, Prime Minister

Light refreshments served  
following the official opening



Prime Minister John Key meets Prefects  
Olivia Hutchinson and Luke Boyle



Prime Minister John Key meets Kapa Haka  
girls who performed at the Powhiri



Prime Minister John Key, Headmaster Dale Burden and Board Chairman Greg Moyle at the unveiling of the Gym plaque



The plaque commemorating the official opening

Earlier, there were images of construction. The following representative photographs are self-explanatory.



(This was the first major building project where good-quality digital SLR system cameras were widely available, so there are a greater number and range of photographs than in earlier times.)

This was the third purpose-built gymnasium.

The construction of the Diamond Jubilee Gymnasium began in 1983, a year after the Jubilee itself.

There was a series of photographs taken during the construction and 16 of them were glued to a board and displayed, under perspex, in the gym foyer. Over the intervening years the light has faded the images, and in some the green and blue has virtually gone, leaving the red. The negatives have not been found. Four representative images have been rephotographed.



This photograph, taken in the late afternoon, shows boys on the tennis courts with the well-constructed elevated 'love seat' umpire seats – three for six courts. The squash courts building is on the right and on the left a basketball hoop can be seen. As basketball became more and more popular several courts were formed and became available in winter when the tennis nets were taken down. Basketball had to compete with many-a-side, rough-and-tumble, so-called touch rugby.

The express purpose of the photograph is to show the builders' office and the start of the earthworks.



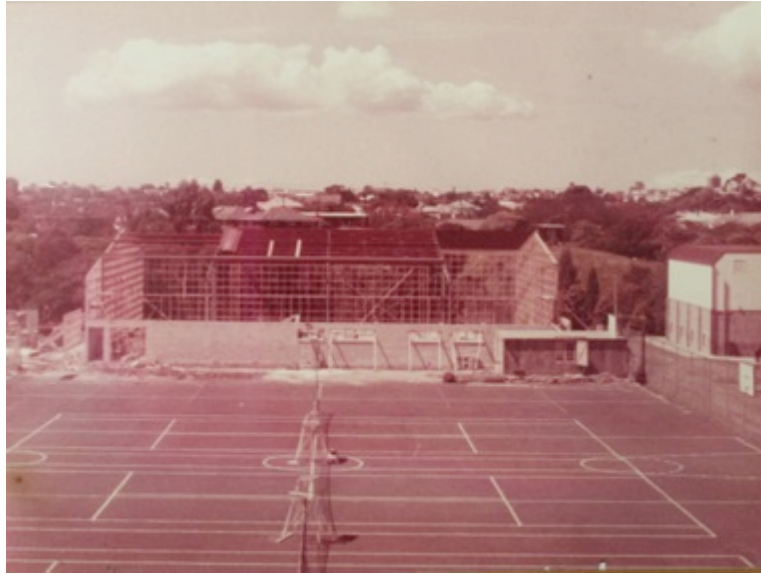
The 1983 *The Albertian* (p75) has this photograph of Rev Milton Campbell, President of the Old Boys' Association, and Maurice Hall, Headmaster, spreading the first ceremonial concrete while a hose of a concrete pump is in the background, ready to do the real business.



This image shows the slab being laid. In the background is a mature Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) on an extensive lawn. (Both were lost for a building commemorating a later jubilee).



This photograph shows a large section of prefabricated framing at one end of the building being craned into place. Although not clearly visible it appears that the workmen atop the framing have vests with lines attached to the crane.



This photograph shows that the lower block work is in, as is most of the framing; ends, sides and roof. The gym was opened on 3 May 1984.

Evan Gray wrote the 1984 'Buildings and Grounds' report in *The Albertian* (p9). With regards to the new gymnasium, he reported:

"... who else but the then Prime Minister Sir R.D. Muldoon could perform the pleasant task of unveiling the brass plaque in the foyer of this newest building at his alma mater." No photographs of this ceremony have been found.

The plaque is now above the double internal doors. It is not easy to read, as much of the black pigment used to highlight the inscribed letters has been polished away. (2014).



In the top centre of the plaque is an early version of a lion rampant and under the dates 1922-1982. The rest of the inscription is:

THIS DIAMOND JUBILEE GYMNASIUM WAS OPENED  
BY  
THE RT HON SIR ROBERT MULDOON  
G.C.M.G., C.H.  
THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND  
IN THE YEAR  
ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY FOUR  
PER ANGUSTA AD AUGUSTA

ARCHITECT  
TCM PATTERSON REG ARCHITECT

BUILDER  
WILKINSON & ORR LTD

Reporting on the opening in the 1982 *The Albertian* (p 78) in the Old Boys' notes, President David Willmott said:

“Without in any way derogating the major and extended contribution of teachers, parents, the local community, and not least the boys themselves, it is appropriate in this corner to extend the executive’s deep appreciation of the outstanding contributions, both temporal and financial made by so many of the old boys. ... there was a very strong turnout for the opening of the gymnasium, with the usual excellent address given by Sir Robert setting the tone for what turned out to be one of the really great afternoons in the history of the school.”

Forty years earlier the first gymnasium was officially opened on 8 April 1954. Construction started in April 1953 and was in use in February 1954. It had a rocky genesis.

The Department of Education gave priority to new Schools and “if a School had an assembly hall then a gymnasium was unnecessary.”

Caradus wasn’t going to take that lying down. He was a man of detail and on 13 September 1951 he wrote a lengthy letter to the District Superintendent of Education headed:

*“Gymnasium development at the Mt Albert Grammar School and impracticality of using assembly hall for physical education work.*

Our School hall is of splendid design, lofty and spacious, well lit and panelled all-round to a height of 10ft. Round it centres the life of the school and I cannot accept serious curtailment of its proper use.”

He went on in this vein listing five points to support his argument.

“(1) The hall is furnished with seats ... for 800 boys. We have a morning assembly and an afternoon assembly ...

(2) There are numerous occasions when the whole school ... are needed in the hall. Massed singing for the whole school is an important part of our musical work ... Increasing use of the hall for orchestral and drama work will follow the acoustic improvement which has resulted from the recent treatment of the hall walls with asbestos flock spray.

(3) The rear part of the hall is fitted with curtains so that film work can be carried out ... up to 250 boys can be present for a film showing.

(4) The panels round the hall are used as extensive honours boards. This method of recording outstanding boys in scholarship, offices of responsibility and sport was commenced in the first year of the school ...

(5) ... Something more than an area of appreciable size is required for the gymnasium work that should be expected in a school of this size and standing..."

He then enlisted his 'physical education master' to make five points: the first concerned the impossibility of wall bars and second concerned ropes, Roman rings and ladders "since the gabled roof was 50-60 feet high."

The third concerned the impossibility of using tennis balls, basketballs or medicine balls "on account of the panelling and asbestos flock". Next, concerned the fact that the "nearest storage space was 75 yards away". Finally, Caradus dismissed the Department's suggestion that seats be removed and boys stand for assembly since the floor would need cleaning anyway.

The letter carried the day. Within three months a grant of £7,150 was approved. Work began in April 1953 and was ready for the 1954 school year and officially opened on 8 April 1954.

*The Albertian* of 1954 (p11) reported that those present were:

"... Mr A.H. Anderson, Mayor of Mt Albert; Mr D.W. Sumner, Chairman of the Auckland Grammar Schools Board; Mr Ensor, Senior Inspector of the Auckland District; Messrs McGowan and Wallace, architects from the Education Department; Mr Hitchcock, architect of the Ministry of Works; and Mr W. Freer, M.P. for Mt Albert."

No plaque was made and no photographs of the construction or opening ceremony have been found. After labouring long, and with such vigour, for the Gymnasium, Mr Caradus retired mid year, on 30 June 1954.

This gymnasium has now been put to other use. The wall bars have been removed, though the sprung floor remains. The body of the gymnasium has been turned into classrooms, storerooms are used as offices, the foyer and showers are now the Property Office and the lower workman's area is now the many-times relocated tuck shop.

Prior to the opening of this gymnasium Mr Caradus reported that there had been an earlier building erected about 1938 out of school funds, and from grants from the Board of Governors. This dressing shed (about 40 feet long 20 feet wide) was soon inadequate. As *The Albertians* of 1954 reported (p 11): "... it became increasingly hopeless." It went on to say: "In 1946, Physical Education was brought into the new School Certificate curriculum as a classroom subject. Thus the old room presented many difficulties beside being congested and unhealthy." This was the spur for Caradus's crusade for a gymnasium.



There is no mention of the dressing shed construction in copies of *The Albertian* of the late 1930s. Prior to its construction there was nothing; apart from the shelter shed.

The Caradus gym was excellent for gymnastics but as indoor team sports developed it was too small for competitive basketball, though hoops were installed, the floor was marked out and basketball (and other sports such as badminton) were played for recreation and for training.

The opening of the squash courts in 1978, originally for House boys, but soon for everyone, meant that we were able to host an indoor inter-school sport.

The Golden Jubilee gym was a step up with a full-sized basketball court, composite floor, bleachers, good changing facilities, a mezzanine with offices and fitness machines and floor space not just for basketball but also for a wide range of other court sports with markings to suit.

The 2011 gym is larger again and much more hi-tech. There is a full-sized netball court, and like the earlier gym, markings for other sports. There are retractable bleachers and other systems run by remotes.

The three gymnasia are each of their time and exist because of the vision and sense of purpose of the three Headmasters under whose watch they were built.

Brian Murphy