

THE HALL

The Mount Albert Grammar School Hall was not part of the original build. Assemblies were taken in corridors. The Headmaster stood at the intersection of the main north/south corridor and the southern east/west corridor and boys stood in both for prayers and notices. Some said, in later life, that they only ever saw the Headmaster in profile.

The contract for the construction of the Hall was let in mid 1925 and it was pretty ready at the start of 1926 and formally opened on 11 March 1926.



Sir James Parr also laid the Foundation Stone, Professor Thomas was a polymath who, as a young Oxford graduate was already known internationally. W.A. Cumming was the Board architect who also designed the rest of the building as well as the main buildings for Auckland Grammar School, Auckland Girls' Grammar School and Takapuna Grammar School and parts of Epsom Girls' Grammar School.

The Albertians of 1926 reported in its Editorial:

"Notable among the dreams realized is the Assembly Hall, that vision for which we yearned so long and which now that it is ready in use contributes so much to the unity and harmonious working of the school."

And the Headmaster in his Annual Report said:

"I must find room in this report to refer to this wonderful addition to the School, the Assembly Hall. Only those who are intimately connected with the work of a school can realise fully what such a hall can do towards the attainment of the *esprit de corps* which much be the characteristic of a sound secondary school. Especially with growing numbers the attempt to inculcate the proper ideals would be supremely difficult without this central rallying point. It will take some time to get the boys to appreciate the dignity of this hall and the respect which is due to it. But already a step forward has been taken, and I have clear visions of the time to come when this hall will be to boys a storehouse of memories and the inspirational point of loyalty and honour."

An arresting architectural feature of the Hall is the hammer beam roof. The first hammer beams were added to Westminster Hall in 1393. Since then many, mostly less elaborate versions, can be found in many Halls in England. Cumming's hammer roof in our hall is pictured below.



The wall posts rest on decorative corbels. Where the curved braces connect the wall posts and the short horizontal hammers, there are highly decorative hammer posts with relief carving. From each of 14, seven on each side, there are pendant light fixture.



There are 36 of these, each with the same careful, intricate relief carving. The other two on each beam fix the collar-ties to the rafters. Our beams are set off by the white ceiling, sectioned by slats. Out of sight, above the ceiling are common rafters with horizontal slats, one for each row of roof tiles.

Some of the decorative elements in the hall mirror some of the external elements of the main building.



The corbels that support the wall posts are decorated with fasces and the Greek Key.

The door lintels have flat relief discs that, like the corbel elements, are a common exterior motif. Above the lintel there are elaborate mouldings and at the top of each vertical architrave is a curved column of botanical elements. Below is an enlarged view of three-quarters of it.



The exterior of the doors that open indoors have the same varnish finish and simple mitred architraves. The two doors that open to the exterior have a paint finish on the outside.

The face of the gallery has a wood roundel with a relief lion rampant surrounded by plaster mouldings. There is a relief moulding running the length of the length of the gallery face, and in this image there are four disc elements.



Under the gallery are several artifacts of a previous use.

There were heavy curtains that could be drawn across the galley front for the purpose of showing motion pictures. A 16mm projector was mounted on a high stand, the curtains were drawn and a large heavy stiff screen was slotted into two wooden blocks made by woodwork master Jack Jenkin (going by the quality of the workmanship). A section of the curtain rail remains as do the blocks.



There was an additional, fortuitous, use of the curtains, to serve as a backdrop for taking some sports photographs as this image of the 1954 Hockey XI shows.



When the Hall was opened in 1926 gold lettered names went back to 1922 so that lists of prefects, masters and sports captains would be complete. Over the years many of these lists have weathered well. Some have not. One such was the Hockey First XI Captains. Owen Haywood, captain in 1954, paid to have the list restored. The image taken in August 2010, shows Owen pointing to his name.



The pendant lights in the hall are not the original ones. The following image is one of the original fixtures. The metal-work was blackened and has been restored to its original brightness.



The small copper element was screwed to the same hammer post as the present lights. The brass hook held the chain and the larger copper element had three screws that held the glass lampshade. The following well-rendered drawing was by R.J. (Russell) Hughes. It appeared in *The Albertian* of 1966 page 2. It features two of the original pendant lights.



There were also sconces which were torch-like. The image below shows the original metal bracket with a plastic lamp shade.

The original shade was torch-like (like a twisted soft ice-cream). None of these appear to have survived. This image shows a spherical plastic lampshade. The brackets were attached to the wall in two places, above attached to a wooden block through which the wires were threaded and a lower support attachment. Artifacts of such sconces can be seen in the hall to this day.



The image above shows the outline of the wooden block and the sawn-off pipe that conducted the flex and below it a small outline of the support piece which rested on the wood above the 1939 Prefects.

In the early days of the School a trophy cabinet was built against the back wall. It can be seen in the following photograph.

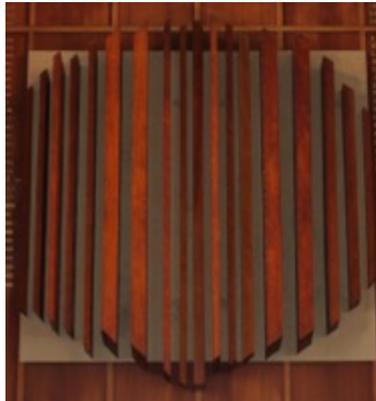


This image was printed in *The Albertian* of 1939 as a frontispiece. It was taken from the gallery, during assembly, by JB Jasper, a professional photographer who took class and sporting photographs. During assembly, the staff sat on the stage on either side of the Headmaster.

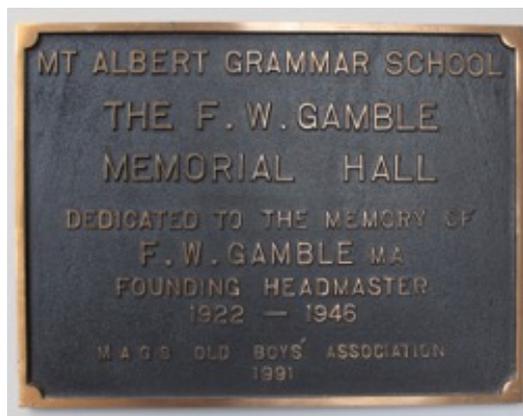
At the time of the Golden Jubilee (1972) a more elaborate structure was built. A section of the back wall was pushed out to make an arched recess and a high Honours Board was erected. This was a gift to the School by the Old Boys' Association. The Board honours scholars with international reputations, boys and girls of the School who have won a significant number of modern scholarships and international sportspeople who have competed at the highest level of their sport.



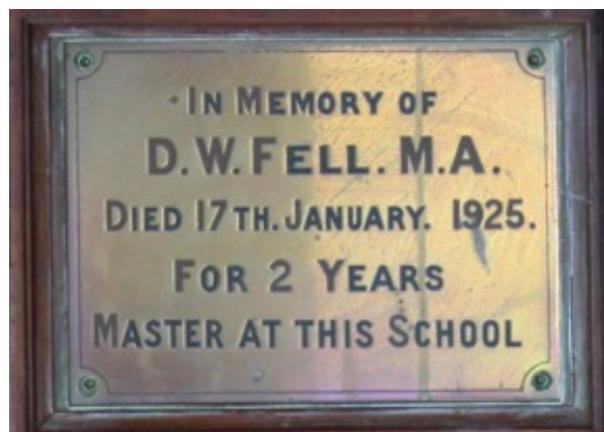
In the middle is a heavy sculpture by the renowned carver Arnold Wilson who was head of art at the time. Each individual piece is different, yet the whole forms a circle. It is a metaphor for the School, unity in diversity, *e pluribus unum*.



In 1991 the Mount Albert Grammar School Old Boys' Association erected a plaque outside the Hall, renaming it the F.W. Gamble Memorial Hall.



The Hall is a memorial to others, too. All the members of the staff who died in office have a plaque in the Hall. The first was David Wilson Fell who died on 17 January 1925 as the Hall was being built. He was 26 years old. His funeral notice can be read in *The New Zealand Herald* for Monday 19 January 1925. (Papers Past). The only photograph we have of him is this small image printed in *The Albertian* of 1925, page 10.

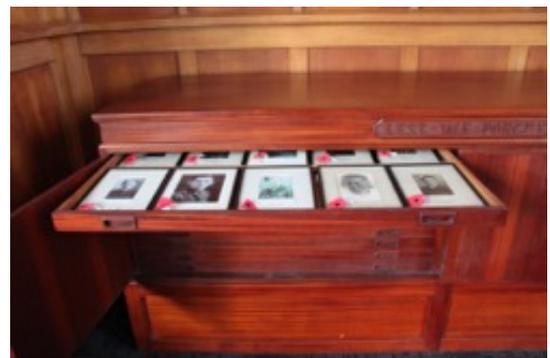


His obituary ends with: "Mr Fell took a keen interest in 'Varsity affairs, was a popular figure in tennis, hockey and music circles and had made himself deservedly popular throughout the School." He had an Honours degree in history.

Another memorial is the annual ANZAC service. The first was in 1957. A few days before the service the photographs of the fallen are displayed around the Hall.



The above image shows Graham Burgess MNZM, who was a Warrant Officer in Bomber Command in WW2, remembering his fallen comrades. The photographs are housed in a restored cabinet which is located in the wall recess under the Arnold Wilson sculpture.



Over the years, the Hall has been used for many other events; formal and informal, grave and gay, apart from more than 15,000 assemblies and annual prizegivings. There was an annual Prefects' Ball, regular dramatic and musical performances. There have been years of group photographs as well as funeral services, dinners, powhiri, reunions, cocktail parties and other party events, commercial events, tests and examinations. Some examples, in no special order:



Paul Gardner receives the Albertians Association Travel Award from Chairman Dale Griffiths. November 2010.



Macbeth. Lady Macbeth Kristin McKenzie and Macbeth, Ivan Luketina-Johnston. April 2005.



International students annual pizza lunch.
2010.



1956 Prefects 50 year Reunion.
2006.



Class photographs in the Hall.
2008.



Headmaster Greg Taylor presents Katie Strachan
with the Senior Girls Tennis Champion trophy.
2005.



The Hall is a forest of scaffolding and platforms
as the ceiling and walls were repainted.
2006.



Careers evening.
2010.



Sports' Dinner.
The event was organized by Chris Metcalfe.
2003.



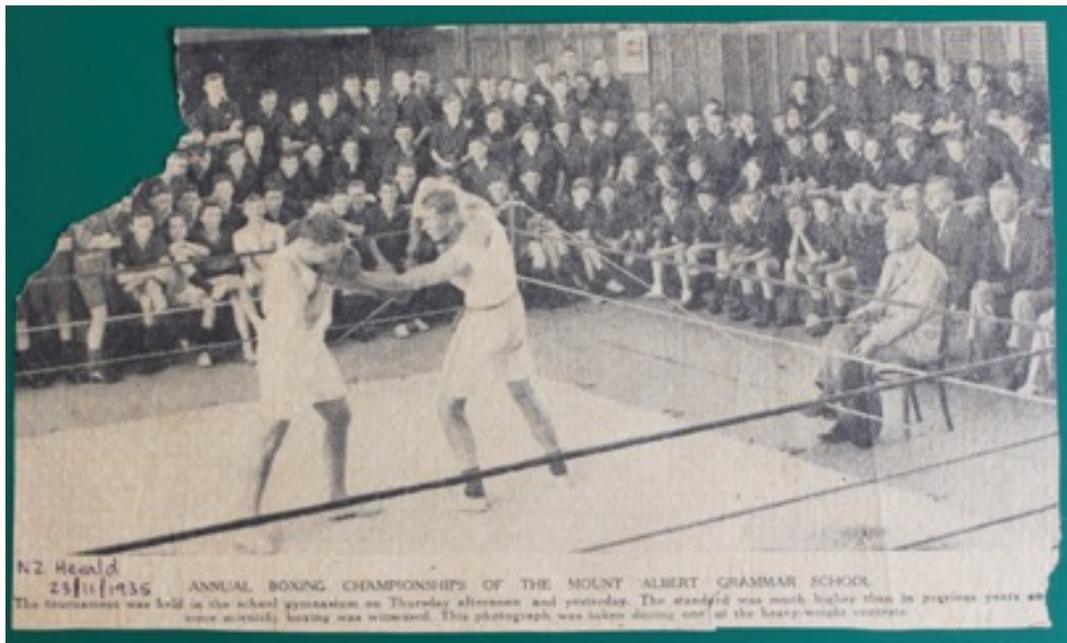
Professor John (Jack) Sinclair inducted into the
Mount Albert Grammar School Hall of Distinction.
2004.



Girls lunch a decade after the first girls arrived.
Three head prefects; Mary-Grace Aballe 2005,
Rachel Peeters 2009, Lisa Blackmore.
2010.



ANZAC service.
2011.



A boxing match. The caption says it's the gymnasium, but it's the Hall.
1935.



Year 8 testing.
2008.



Blood donor day.
2008.



Concert in the Hall.
2010.



The First XV Team of the 1980s Dinner.
2010.



CK Stead receives a prize.
1949?



Flowers awarded to Vanita Curin for
organising the Art Auction.
2010



Year 9 girls learning the School Hymn.
2017.



Henry Swanson plays the French Horn
in the Orchestra.
2005.

Old Boys' reunion 1930.

The Albertian of 1930 page 21 reported: "The attendance far exceeded the expectations of the committee and extra accommodation had to be provide. Nearly 400 Old Boys were present."



Senior students' subject selection.
2010.



Headmaster Greg Taylor addresses parents of
New Year 9 pupils.
2005.



Lunch for members of the cast of *Much Ado About Nothing*. The play was performed in the quad. 2006.



The Lions of '05 reach the heights.



The Discovery 1933. In *The Albertian* of 1932, page 26 reports: "... The play outlines the events directly leading up to the mutinous outbreak and the subsequent quelling of it by Columbus himself."



The Rev. Tony Ross conducted the funeral service for Ron Hemus, August 2008. Others on the stage were Headmaster Dale Burden, Head Prefects Carl Perry and Abby Manley and Alan Burton who delivered a eulogy.



A cooking competition as part of the promotion of *MAGS Flavours*, the School's cook book. 2010.



The 90th Jubilee Celebrations. June 2012.

And Finally:



Dr Ross Moore here for the 60th reunion of the Prefects of 1947. April 2010. The photograph is emblematic of many who come either to see their own name or that of their boyhood comrades or the name of a deceased relative. They come in contemplative mien, as Ross does, some with wistful smiles, some in tears.

The prescient Gamble was correct when he announced in 1926 that: "... this central rallying point ... will be to boys a storehouse of memories ...".

Brian Murphy
Archivist