



Old Boys' Functions Australia, New Zealand and Dubai November 2019

What a pleasant surprise, to be seated next to Kyle Dalton (Mackenzie 2009- 2013) on the Durban to Dubai flight on the first leg of this trip, Kyle headed for London and me for Auckland!

Functions were held in Auckland, Brisbane, Sydney Melbourne, Perth and Dubai and it was a pleasure to see again Old Boys who shared their years at Michaelhouse with me and to meet others for the first time. Old Boys' wives and partners who joined us enjoyed the evenings and they were most welcome.

Gatherings of Old Boys generally confirm that we do produce significant men and this trip was no exception. Once again, it was affirming to touch base with men who make a difference to the lives of their families and communities: from introducing new programmes in local schools, supporting Community Partnership Programmes back home, caring for a wheelchair-ridden wife, forgoing university to establish the family farm to supporting local charities. Michaelhouse men are doing us proud.

In each centre, Old Boys organised the venue, meal and then invited members to the function. I hope that my visit has renewed friendships between Old Boys, facilitated relationships between new arrivals in the antipodes and the 'old hands' and, of course renewed the ties with Michaelhouse. Flash-drives with all the necessary information for establishing formal branches have been left with the organisers who may recruit some of the younger members to do the heavy lifting of branch organisation. It will also be a pleasure to collaborate with James Thorpe as he embarks on his study of Character Education, for which he has been awarded a research grant by the Board of the Anglican Church Grammar School in Brisbane.

There appears to be a keen will to arrange more regular gatherings and to plan friendly events including golf matches against Hilton Old Boys in some centres.

At each function I was able to report on building developments on campus, the already visible and impressive benefits of the new wellness and conditioning programme, and new (for almost all present) C Block Journey. These were well received and, in many cases, lively conversation about the school ensued. Of course, the older men who endured the plunge

pools feel the new bathroom facilities are too plush and we really are getting soft. Others suggest that Ramparts should be re-instated to replace every sports practice which has to be cancelled due to bad weather. A common concern at all gatherings was the decline in boys' strength and physical fitness. This is evident at Australian schools too, and all were impressed with our response and the conditioning programme.

The group in Dubai included Old Boys, current and prospective parents and the presentation also provided information for those considering Michaelhouse for their sons. The extended stay-over also allowed me to interview an expat family and their son who may join us next year. I was also able to investigate marketing opportunities through education fairs and expatriate groups.

While in Melbourne I took the opportunity to spend time with Paul Barnett and Natalie Gray and to share with them details of the Community Partnership programme. Natalie is involved in school planning and we discussed modern trends in building design and opportunities to collaborate with universities in this regard.

Inn Perth I visited Christ Church Grammar School, hoping to see our two boys: Jaden van der Merwe and Jason Morby-Smith, currently there on exchange. The boys were away on the school 'Venture', their version of our C Block Journey, but I was able to engage with their host mothers, who are both thoroughly impressed by the boys' character and manners and spoke very highly of them. Both boys are great ambassadors for Michaelhouse. Alan Jones (Parktown Boys' High old boy), the headmaster spent time with Guy Kirk and me. Positive education appears to be the current trend at Australian schools. This includes aspects of character education and mindfulness.

Guy Kirk kindly arranged for me to join the crew of a keelboat for the midweek race on the Swan River. Despite one older deckhand going overboard (not me) "our" boat, Wicked, won her class.

A few of the Old Boys' comments are shared below:

"It was a good evening and all gave us positive feedback on Pauls Presentation."

"My only claim to changed times was that I was one of the last cack's to take the Tatham plunge, mid-winter, before it was filled in. I am not sure the that most of the team attending will even know what or where the plunge was situated in the houses ..."

"An excellent presentation outlining past, present and future of such a wonderful school, we surely will miss our visits to Michaelhouse and beautiful Balgowan."

Sydney -25 OM's attended:

7 houses represented: 7 Pascoe, 5 Founders, 4 East, 3 Tatham, 3 Farfield, 2 Mackenzie, 1 West and 0 Baines (and of course none from Ralfe and McCormick)

7 Decades represented: 1 x '50s, 4 x 60s (3 in '68), 4 x '70s (2 x Founders '74s), 3 x '80s, 2 x 90s, 7 x 2000s, 4 x 2010s

I think your visit here certainly gave us the jump-start we needed, and we will continue with it. I'll be in touch with Sean Lumley in the UK to leverage his knowledge as I think that'll be key. He's very active and we can learn a lot from the UKOM branch - onwards and upwards. I think it was successful indeed. Comments about how it was long overdue, there were some great conversations and I think everyone had a great night. Good mix of youth and experience!"

"We were both very interested your presentation in the Theatrette, particularly the section which set out the importance of exercise for children"

As I reflect on this visit to the Antipodes and Middle East, I am most grateful to the Old Boys and their families who met me at airports, transported me to and from functions, took time to show me places of interest and host me so kindly in their homes. Alan and Peta Turner in Brisbane, and Guy and Kate Kirk kindly looked after me in Brisbane and Perth respectively. Simon Pitout provided the meeting venue and my accommodation at Dukes, The Palm Hotel. My sincere thanks for their generous hospitality. I also thank the Old Boys Club for funding this valuable trip, which brought together about 100 Old Boys and partners and revitalised friendships and contact with Michaelhouse.

Paul Fleischack
2 December 2019