

OLD MUIRITE UNION NEWSLETTER

4th Quarter, 2022



FAREWELL ROBIN STEPHENSON



Back: Mark Bakker, Lyntin Gouws, Phakmani Nesi, Mark Manlee, Joel Katz, Thomas Terblanche, Ryan Bhana, Riaan Claassen, Jason Henman.
Front: George Yerolemou, Robin Stephenson, Andrew Binning.



OMU President, Andrew Binning, thanking Robin for his support and commitment to the OMU.



Muir College isiXhosa teacher hands over the traditional Xhosa beads to Robin.



Previous headmasters and deputy headmasters, Peter Stevens, Neil Crawford and Bun Hopley enjoyed the evening with Robin.



Robin proudly wearing his newly acquired Xhosa beadwork from the isiXhosa teacher and 2022 Head boy.



Robin saying a few words and thanks.



OMU Vice Chairman, George Yerolemou, along with the OMU committee members, presenting Robin and Penny with a specially made 200 year memorabilia photo book.

A Headmaster retires ...



Robin Raymond Stephenson is a graduate of the University of Port Elizabeth (nowadays NMU) where he majored in History and Linguistics. After obtaining his Higher Diploma in Education, he taught at Daniel Pienaar, Cathcart High and Graeme College before his appointment as headmaster of Muir College in 2016.

After nearly seven years at the helm of Muir College, Robin Stephenson has decided to retire at the end of 2022.

In a recent engagement with Rob Sharman of the OMU, Robin freely reminisced about his career and developments at Muir since his arrival, as well as the school's future challenges.

Asked why he chose to accept the appointment as the 20th headmaster of Muir, he responded, "It seemed a logical post for me. I was a Deputy Headmaster at Graeme, running the Academic programme. Muir is a similar school and I saw it as a challenge that I would like to tackle, especially with the Bicentenary on the horizon."

"When I arrived at Muir at the beginning of May 2016, there were no surprises. The school was well run and the boys were proud of the school – and that is always a good sign."

Robin is justifiably proud of Muir's efforts to strengthen its academic focus. "Over the years, we made some important changes to the curriculum. One of them was the introduction of isiXhosa First Additional Language in the Primary Phase. I'm very happy that we made that decision. The introduction of Coding and Robotics in Grade 8 this year has also been a step in the right direction, as has been the introduction of academic achievement badges."

The introduction of the school's Arts and Culture Week, the extension of debating to the GET phase and the launching of the school's marimba band three years ago are some of the cultural highlights of Robin's tenure at Muir, and he hopes that a junior choir will soon be added to the school's many extramural offerings.

"On the sporting front, shortly after my arrival I noticed that the conditioning of our rugby players was a problem.

The appointment of a full-time conditioning coach and gym manager has made a huge difference.

"Cricket has also received a huge boost with Muir being chosen by Cricket South Africa as a Focus School, after which CSA appointed a professional coach for the school. This partnership is still intact, although bursaries for players have unfortunately been terminated by CSA."

A disappointment for Robin has, however, been the school's lack of development on the hockey field. "It has become almost impossible to compete with teams that have Astroturf facilities. This is not an easy problem to solve."

Regarding overall spirit and discipline, Robin points out that Muir College is a school where the learners are generally content. "Respect is shown to one another and I am extremely proud of this. Hopefully I have made a contribution in this regard."

Throughout his time at Muir, Robin says, he has been able to count not only on the support of many excellent members of staff, but also on the strong support of the School Governing Body - first under Frank McFarlane and then Peter Else. He is also very grateful for the support of Jason Henman and the OMU in his early years as Head.

Within a few years of Robin's arrival at Muir, "with the Bicentenary approaching, the OMU grew stronger and we started planning for the big year, but we were not counting on the arrival of Covid-19. The next couple of years were really tough. I must confess that Covid-related pressures took their toll on me and made it difficult to plan for 2022.

"The 2022 Bicentenary Committee consisted of members of the SGB, staff and the OMU. Numerous events were well planned and successfully completed. The evening with the Drakensberg Choir was special, as was the launch of the Charles van Renen's excellent commemorative book, *Shout till the Rafters Ring*, which had been a massive undertaking.

"Then came the 2022 Founder's Week. I must salute Andrew Binning and his team. Their attention to detail was superb. The memories will remain with us always! Importantly, the profile of the school has been raised and the Muir family has been united - two of our objectives when we started planning for 2022.

"The Muir Campus has always been special to me. I have made it my business to make additions where possible. Examples are the benches overlooking the Ellis Field, the new electronic scoreboard, the re-design of the Memorial Garden and pond, as well as new signage. Many of these projects were sponsored by Old Boys or parents. My wife Penny has played a huge part in assisting me. I believe that a beautiful, well-kept campus is essential for our boys and indeed our community. Hopefully our borehole, which has eventually been fixed, will assist us in future, as will the water tanks donated via the OMU.

"Somehow, we managed to complete the new tuck shop, which has made a huge difference to the atmosphere at the school. The old tuck shop was transformed into a modern Resource Centre that was opened in 2022 and was named in honour of Trevor Winer, a distinguished old boy of the school. This has enabled us to convert the old library into an Archives Room, which is an important addition to our school – especially one with such a proud history.

"A huge step forward has been the establishment of the Muir Foundation, as well as the school's solar energy initiative which, I am sure, will be of enduring benefit to the school.

Understandably, not all has gone according to plan. "I was very excited when the DoE promised us a new fence, but unfortunately this never materialized. This will have to be addressed, as well as the gravel road in front of the school, which needs to be tarred."

For most of the school's 200-year history the boarders were the backbone of the school, but declining numbers and rising costs led to the introduction of weekly boarding in 2003, and an inevitable decline in the fortunes of Thomas Muir House. Robin has attempted to re-introduce full-time boarding, which is seen as an essential element in the success of the more prominent boys' schools in South Africa, but he has not been able to generate enough interest, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has not helped. "Perhaps," he says, "as we get more bursaries, we will be able to address the hostel issue."

'Realignment' is an idea that has recently been on the agenda of the Department of Education, which has suggested splitting the school into two separate institutions once again. Robin contends that this is not feasible, especially as College Hill Prep has recently announced its decision to become a full primary school, which will not only change its special relationship with the College, but will probably reduce primary numbers at Muir. "This has been a sad announcement, especially in our 200th year."

In spite of his concerns and the looming threats, there is no doubt that Robin leaves the school stronger than it was when he arrived.

Muir College has indeed been fortunate to have had an extraordinary man at the helm during a crucial period in the school's history. It will take another extraordinary man to fill his shoes and to build on the momentum gained during Robin Stephenson's momentous tenure at 'The Muir.'

Tributes and thanks to a remarkable man ...

Robin Stephenson is a man who has stood out in two ways: Heart and Passion.

He has a soft spot for people, especially his learners, and constantly strives and expects the best from each one. His passion for learning and sport was clear from the beginning of his tenure at Muir College.

Ultimately these traits were very prominent in the 200-year celebrations where he fully immersed himself in the project.

His legacy will undoubtedly be the vision he has had for Muir as demonstrated in the many new additions to the school. The blue heritage plaque in the Memorial Quad epitomises his heart and his passion for everything.

He has left an indelible mark on our school.

Peter Else, Chairman of the School Governing Body

Thank you, Mr Stephenson for your energy, zest for life, a heart for people - always available to listen and give sound advice.

"Mr T" and I wish you and Penny well in the new chapter of your Book of Life.

Janice Trenerry, Headmaster's Secretary

Robin Stephenson has been devoted to Muir, to the constant improvement of the College. His enthusiasm and energy have been contagious - to both learners and staff. He is generous with his time and he shares an open door with staff and pupils alike. Everyone just feels comfortable that they can speak to him, to get his input, his advice.

He has shown great interest in all aspects of school life - academic, sport and the cultural life of learners, sacrificing his spare time, over weekends and even the holidays to attend numerous events.

David Francis, Deputy Headmaster

A true scholar and a gentlemen - these are characteristics that are hard to find nowadays, but Muir was fortunate to find them in Robin Stephenson when he was appointed headmaster of our great school in 2016.

It has been a great pleasure working with him. The compassion he shows is a lesson many can learn from him. His commitment, dedication and passion for the school has had no boundaries. He will be sorely missed as a leader, mentor, advisor and friend.

Lyntin Gouws, Head of Dept: Primary Phase

Written by Rob Sharman, Class of 1971.



Penny and Robin Stephenson with the guard of honour at the Bicentennial Gala Dinner in August 2022

FOUNDERS' WEEKEND 2023

THURSDAY 10 AUGUST 2023 – SUNDAY 13 AUGUST 2023

The date has been set.

Start looking at your 2023 Calendar and making arrangements to get to the Founders' Weekend in August 2023.

Programme

Thursday 10 August	OMU Golf Day	Walmer Golf Course, Gqeberha
Friday 11 August	Founders' Day Assembly	Muir College School Hall
	Reunion Dinner	Muir College School Hall
Saturday 12 August	Rugby Derby	Muir College Campus
	Beer Festival	Muir College Campus
Sunday 13 August	Remembrance & Thanksgiving Service	Muir College School Hall

The following classes will be celebrating their milestone reunions:

ANNIVERSARY	CLASS	NAME	EMAIL	CELL
10	2013	Brent Vermaak	brentvermaak@gmail.com	+27 679150886
20	2003	Craig Ross	craig@savoa.co.za	+27 718892179
25	1998	Lyntin Gouws	lmgouws.muircollege@gmail.com	+27 833585057
		Robbie Scheepers	robbiescheepers@hotmail.com	+61 407702053
30	1993	Patrick Cawood	patrickcawood@gmail.com	+44 7715551648
35	1988	Andrew Binning	andrew@inkanyezi.co.za	+27 823729247
		Joel Katz	jkatz@bucu.co.za	+27 836314100
		Mark Bakker	markbakker@bmi.za.net	+27 832273496
40	1983	Jurie Swart	jswart@gigajoule.co.za	+27 824571786
		Robert Meihuizen	robm@topfruit.co.za	+27 834471383
50	1973	Arnold Niemand	apniemand@telkomsa.net	+27 720704099
55	1968	Lloyd Thomson	lloydthomson50@gmail.com	+27 832277003
60	1963	To be confirmed		
70	1953	Wendy Knott-Craig	oldmuiriteunion@gmail.com	+27 732018699





OMU President's Message

In this final 2022 Edition of the OMU Newsletter, we pay tribute to retiring Headmaster, **Robin Stephenson**.

The term “quadruple helix” refers to the sectors of Government, Academia, Industry & Civil Society. These sectors are required to work together to ensure economic growth and innovation. One could say that each survives on its own, but when they work together, they can thrive.

The Old Muirite Union believes that a similar quadruple helix exists with the School, the OMU/Foundation, the Governing Body and the PTA making up the four elements. We can all survive on our own, but when we work together and share a common vision then we will thrive.

Mr Stephenson believes in this concept. He has been a member of the OMU Committee since being appointed Headmaster of Muir College almost 7 years ago and he has been an integral part of the OMU – thus reinforcing the importance of the quadruple helix.

On a personal note, I have had a lot of interaction with Mr Stephenson over the past few years – and especially this year with Muir College turning 200. We have had each other on speed dial and believe strongly that the school and the OMU/Foundation have worked well together in arranging the 200-year celebratory events.

There is always room for improvement, and we have not always agreed or been able to reach consensus. This is OK.

We often refer to the helix as the Muir Family and families do not always agree with each other. However, we have to live with each other and continue to build healthy and positive relationships.

The Old Muirite Union would like to thank Mr Stephenson for his passion, commitment and dedication to the Muir Family – this is all that a family could ask for, and we truly appreciate him and his supportive family.

We wish Mr Stephenson well in his retirement and trust that he will forever remain a Muir College supporter. He has been welcomed into the OMU as a lifelong honorary member – this a unanimous decision by the current OMU Committee. At a special farewell function for Mr Stephenson, I was able – on behalf of all old boys and members of the Old Muirite Union – to thank Mr Stephenson and his wife Penny, while OMU Vice-President George Yerolemou and other Committee members in attendance presented a photobook to the Stephensons on behalf of all Old Muirites. The photobook is a collage of photos taken during the 2022 Founder's Week.

Look out for the photos taken at the Stephensons' farewell function in this Edition.

The OMU leadership would like to wish the Muir Family (the entire helix!) a festive and relaxing holiday season and a very happy Christmas 2022. The phrase has been coined – in 2023 onwards and upwards. See you in the new year.

Andrew Binning

Old Muirite Union President



Headmaster's Message

Early in Term 4 our Prize Givings took place. In the Senior phase, an entrepreneur, Mr Yanesh Naidoo was our Guest Speaker, while Old Muirite, Mr Siyolo Dick addressed our boys at the Primary event. The Valedictory Service was once again a special occasion. The OMU was strongly represented. I thank them sincerely for the ties which were presented to the outgoing class of 2022.

The rest of the term was dominated by the end of year examinations. Currently, we are planning for 2023. We have been disappointed that the Principal's post has not yet been advertised. I assume this will happen early in the new year.

I wish to thank the OMU, members of the Muir Foundation and all Old Muirites for working with me since I took over as Headmaster in May 2016. It has been a huge honour to be at the head of this distinguished institution, especially at this stage of its history. The memories will be with me forever.

Nec Pluribus Impar

Robin Stephenson

Muir College Headmaster

MEMORIES FROM FOUNDERS' WEEK 2022





HEAD PREFECTS AND DEPUTIES, 2023

Congratulations!



Eshaan Prag
High School Head Boy



Matthan Slambee
High School Deputy Head Boy



Rayyaan Nathie
Primary School Head Prefect



Mbasa Mbengashe
Primary School Deputy Head Prefect



Kyno Du Toit
Hostel Head Prefect



Christian Clotz
Hostel Deputy Head Prefect

2023 VALEDICTORY SERVICE

The Valedictory Service for the 2022 Matrics was held towards the end of October.

This very emotional event is well supported by parents and families of the Matrics, and this year was no different. Thanks to the dropping of Covid regulations, the school hall was full of visitors and learners.

As per tradition, the Matrics walk in a line to the Memorial Gate, where the Head Boy is the first one to ring the bell and the gate is opened by him and the Headmaster.

As they step through the gate, they become part of the Old Muirite Union and a group of Old Muirites were waiting to welcome them to the next chapter in their lives.

Because 2022 is the 200th anniversary for Muir College, the Matrics were given special edition red ties.

WELCOME GENTS

Don't forget that we are just a call / email away



WHEN THINGS ADD UP

The story of Arthur Oliver, Class of 1966

Arthur Oliver, from the Class of 1966, who currently lives in Jeffreys Bay, has sacrificed a lot, worked hard and achieved academically, but his start was a bit rocky.

In his matric year, when Arthur was majoring in Rugby, the Headmaster at the time, Cecil Clement, commented on his report "June: Arthur's maths needs serious attention." And in September "Arthur's maths is atrocious."



Nevertheless, Arthur went on to qualify as a Civil Engineer, and realised that there was always a big demand for extra Maths classes for aspiring engineers. Probably because of his understanding of the challenges of mastering Maths, Arthur went on to develop special tutoring skills with remarkable results and success.

During 2021 he signed a contract with Oxford University Press in Cape Town, and this year he has published a series of Maths books. They have been approved by DHET for the new syllabus for technical colleges for the next 25 years in South Africa and Namibia.



The textbooks series are:

Succeed with Mathematics, N4, N5 and N6 and has a textbook and lecturer's guide for every level.

Congratulations to Arthur on this remarkable accomplishment. We wonder what Mr Clement would have to say in his report in 2023?



The Flagpole, the Southender and the Nostrils

Several members of the the matric class of 1962 and some of their friends meet every Friday at 12 noon at the Southender pub, in Walmer.

When organising the 50th reunion for 2012, at the Kelway Hotel, the need for a flag for the occasion was seen, and one was organised to fly on the hotel's flagpole.



Subsequently, at the 55th reunion in 2017, another flag, focusing on the 1962 class, was designed and used and was flown at the Yacht Club, where the reunion lunch took place.

The Southender, however did not currently have a flagpole so Warwick (Dog) Owen asked the owner, Tim Stone, if he would consider erecting such a pole and Tim readily agreed. Emails were sent out and one of the friends of the 62 class, Gail Ebel, whose late husband Nic had been given a flagpole, quickly responded that she had such a flagpole, and would gladly donate it to the Southender. This flagpole had originally had been at Herbert McWilliams' house, The Poop Deck, in Amsterdamhoek.



Herbert McWilliams' house at Amsterdamhoek and the flagpole



Gail, Tim, Warwick, and the flagpole under Tim's hand



The bakkie Tim organised to transport the flagpole to the Southender

She's loaded 🐶🐶🐶

14:49

This was the comment from Tim, made because the weather was horrendously gusty at the time.

Under Tim's supervision the flagpole was sanded and painted. Thereafter Warwick installed the necessary apparatus and rigging to enable flags to be hoisted.

The hole and foundation were laid and ensured that the flagpole's position was in the foreground of the Southender.

All went well and during the last week of November, the mast was erected, without a hitch, in time for Friday 2nd December which was when the Muir gathering for the visit of Old Muirite and expat Ian Jepson took place. Ian was visiting from Australia to attend the 80th birthday of his brother, Old Muirite Barry Jepson.

Flags were flown at different intervals as shown below:



Above, left, the SA flag with the Muir 1962 matric flag underneath. Above, right, the Dutch national flag, in honour of Gail Ebel who donated the flagpole and flags, with the new Nostrils' flag, made to represent old Muirites and friends of old Muirites.

The flagpole is indeed a triumph for the Southender and all who helped. The main thanks are for Gail, Tim, Warwick and Dallas the handyman. It will be used every Friday when the Nostrils' meet and at appropriate occasions, by Tim, when he sees fit.



The 1962 Old Muirites, and the 'friends of' were named, collectively, the Nostrils. The reason behind this was an overheard conversation, at one of the group's early gatherings, that described a vivacious lady and a certain gentleman commented, "she so gorgeous it makes one's nostrils flare."

*Written by **Neville Ross** and **Warwick Owen**, Class of 1962*



DATES

We have a few events coming up in the 1st quarter of 2023

TEACHER WELCOME BACK TEA

The inaugural Teacher Welcome Tea took place in January 2022, on the day that new teachers reported for duty at Muir for the first time and returning teachers and support staff returned after their summer vacation.

It is hoped that this gathering will become a tradition, affording the OMU an opportunity to welcome new teachers and to acknowledge the vital role of teachers and staff within the Muir family. The occasion also highlights the support of the OMU for the school.

If you are in the area, please feel free to join us:

Date : Monday 16 January 2023

Time : 10h30

Venue : Muirite Clubhouse, Muir College Campus

RSVP : The OMU Manager, oldmuiriteunion@gmail.com



BREAKFAST AGM

Please diarise the AGM:

Date : Friday 24 March 2023

Time : 08h00 to 10h30

Venue : Hostel Prep Room, Muir College Campus

Cost : R100pp, to cover catering expenses

Invited Speaker : Vernon Naidoo, VWWSA Community Trust Manager.

Title of presentation: "The impact the Volkswagen Trust is having on the community"

Book a table of 8 and invite your fellow Old Muirites to join you for an interactive and informative morning.

RSVP : OMU Manager, oldmuiriteunion@gmail.com

The AGM will also be live streamed for those who wish to participate from afar.

WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

We would like to remember Old Muirites and Friends of Muir who have passed away since April 2021. Our condolences go to their family, friends and loved ones.

If you hear of a classmate who has passed on, please contact Wendy Knott-Craig (oldmuiriteunion@gmail.com) with the information.

Graham Gradwell

1946

Roy Shamley

1960

Paul Saayman

1972

James vd Riet

1948

Christopher Abbott

1961

Allen Schultz

1983

Herbert Loftie-Eaton

1948

Ralph Watson

1961

Carl Hahn

1987

Malcolm van Vuuren

1950

David Hayes

1962

Wayne Venter

1987

Daven Baxter

1953

Christian Venter

1963

Ewan Krain

1996

Theodore Donald

1954

Dave Cooper

1963

Thulisa Ncholu

2003

Anthony (Tony) Reid

1954/55

Bruce Gillmer

1964

Nkosi Yamntu Gawe

2015

Colin Hartman

1955

Clive Shamley

1964

Keegan Stokes

2015

Anthony Fouche

1959

Lionel Prinsloo

1965

Abongile Kula

2016

John Millson

1959

Richard Hargreaves

1966

Bunny Seaford

Neville Row

1960

Rowan Swinnerton

1966

Neville Niemand

BACK PAGE

Message from the OMU Manager

Another year comes to an end... and what a year it was. I think in the history of Muir College and the Old Muirite Union, this has to be THE year. Future years will struggle to match the pride, the fellowship, the fun and the nostalgia that this year brought.

Let's keep the "gees" going and make the 2023 Founders' Weekend just as memorable and fun. **The dates are 10 – 13 August 2023. SEE YOU THERE!!**



I would like to take this opportunity to thank Headmaster Robin Stephenson for his support, kindness, and gentle ways since I met him almost 2 years ago. Robin, it's been a pleasure working with you. All the best on your retirement. I'm sure we will be seeing you at our events in 2023.

For those who celebrate Christmas, have a blessed one. For those going on holiday, travel safe. For those who are working, hang in there. And for those who are having a staycation, enjoy the peace and quiet.

See you all in 2023

Wendy Knott-Craig
OMU Manager

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