

World wars one and two shaped our entire world. But the impact was also felt much closer to home, right here at MAGS. Everyone in this hall is ridiculously lucky. We live in the most peaceful time in human history and most of us, myself included, take that for granted. All of these men whose photos are hung around the hall, they lived in a completely different world. The school was a completely different place. I think we are so far removed from the wars that they're hard to wrap our heads around. I would like to give you a bit of perspective on how different life was for MAGS students, teachers and the wider community and show what ANZAC means to Mags

We walk to school every day. Worried about tests or homework. Students during the second world war worried for lives, for their brothers, fathers and teachers.

The weekly assembly's here in this hall were also extremely different. The principal F.W. Gamble, whom this hall is named after, stood in my position every week for a somber assembly. He began with the school prayer which is still read today and proceeded to struggle through tears as he read through the names of the MAGS boys killed, wounded or MIA. This list, which will be read shortly, grew longer with the passing of each week. Gamble had a personal connection with each and every one of these boys. He would often add his own comments after the reading of the names. As a childless man he saw each MAGS boy like his own and felt their deaths accordingly. At prizegiving, as well as honoring achievements of students. Gamble was given photographs of those who had died during the year and place them on a stand for a religious ceremony. These men's faces line the hall today. Most of them sat exactly where you sat and listened to their principal speak up here, only to go off and make the "supreme sacrifice" for their country.

The front lawn of the school, the lawn which is today lined with crosses to commemorate each of the 198 MAGS student, had trenches dug into it as air raid shelters. Students did not only go to school worried for friends and family but for their own safety. A teacher at this school, CP Clarence Worley who was severely wounded at the Battle of the Somme became the commanding officer of the first battalion, Auckland regiment. He had the responsibility of defending Auckland. In New Zealand we often feel removed from the world, safe from the chaos of the outside. But during World War 2 it was feared that we would be invaded by Japan. Many believe that if it weren't for US troops here in New Zealand that we would've been. We are extremely lucky we don't live in a completely different world. The men that went and fought effected our lives today more than we realize.

Men like GCL Guy Mcleod who was a Japanese POW that worked on the Burma Railway. Japanese prisoners of war were often the worst treated, I struggle to think about the things Mcleod experienced. After returning home he taught here at Mags. He was described as a broken man. People before the war described him as being "not the same man he was."

Even in such a dark time the MAGS community stayed connected. During the second World war the school tried its best to keep those serving in touch with the school and the war as it spread across the world. Newsletters were sent all over the world that resemble the Friday newsletters we get today.

An In 1943 over 100 Albertians attended a reunion dinner. This dinner was held in the El Maadi Casino, Egypt after the African campaign. I find it astonishing that, amidst all the battle more than 100 old boys were able to get together half way across the world. A group photo is up behind me. Each attendee signed a role which was to be sent to the school. Some of the boys wrote messages to students and staff. They knew Gamble as Freddie and a few wrote messages like "Good luck Freddie." Or . In the bottom right corner they added the names of 44 classmates who they already knew to have been killed and toasted them during the night. This was came to be known as the Maadi roll. This exquisite roll is displayed right here next to me, 76 years later. It is said that later there was another, smaller reunion in Aleppo. For some reason no one could remember the details. In 1996 there was a reunion of those who attended in Maadi. Of the over 100 original men, only 11 returned 53 years later for the reunion. Their photo is displayed behind me. It is amazing that in a time of anguish the MAGS boys pulled together something that we can look back on now and be astounded by. If you have a chance take a look, its one of the most amazing documents I've ever seen.

I've done a fair bit of research for this speech and what I've found can only be describe as sobering. It's been so many years since both wars that we struggle to relate to the soldiers or put their experiences into perspective. But imagining them walking through these grounds, sitting in these wooden benches, only to years later be fighting for their King and Country has helped me to understand. Of the 5000 students that went through the school between 1922 and 1946, 1537 served overseas, 437 served in New Zealand, 444 were wounded and 198 were killed. Sitting behind me is a book in which each of the fallens names are escribed. I'd like to finish by reading a passage which F.W. Gamble wrote in the introduction.

"We remember every Old Boy who shared in the enterprise of saving the world for justice and freedom: we rejoice in the return of so many to take up threads of their interrupted careers, we take pride in those upon whom distinctions fell. But this is the book of those who endeared to us as pupils, had to take the heroic path from which there is no return."