**Ainslie School Days: Memories of Generations of Ainslie School Students 1927-2017**

**Oral history interviews conducted by Ainslie School students**

**Transcript of excerpt from interview with Kate Chapman**

Kate became Principal of Ainslie School in 2012.

Location: Principal’s Office

Date: 12 December 2016

Interview facilitator: Mary Hutchison

Sound recordist: Kimmo Vennonen.

Interviewers: Isaac Watkins, May Flanagan, George Baker

Isaac: What are some your first memories of being principal at Ainslie School?

Kate: I think the beauty of the building. It's a beautiful building and it's quite overwhelming walking into the principal's office because it’s got old furniture and there are things in the cupboards that go back a very long time. I have the enrolment books in the cupboards that go back to 1927 and that is quite old for Canberra - it's not old for other parts of Australia, but it is old for Canberra. So that was one thing. The other thing that really struck me when I came to Ainslie was the singing because I had never heard a school sing with such clarity and volume before, in any school. So that was something else that really struck me. The amazing students that we have here – you know you are fine examples of it [delighted intake of breath by interviewers] - are just fantastic. And those three things I think stand out for me, the beauty of the place, the – well actually there’s a fourth thing – and that’s the heritage; the history; all the stories that are within these walls. And that's one of the reasons why we wanted to do this project to bring out a lot of those stories.

Isaac: So what knowledge do you have of other people coming to the school? How connected are you with past students?

Kate: We have visits from past students quite frequently because they love coming back just to stand in the school and look around. And they tell me stories about their time at the school. They tell me about when the canteen was up in what is now the music room and they tell me about the planting of the cherry trees - the *Sakura* trees - in 1967. And it was Doug Anthony that did that who was the then Minister for the Interior. He came to the ceremony where they planted those *Sakura* trees.

I talked about Lady Lois Hicks before and she looks at the honour board and tells me stories about that. She tells me that story that I told you a couple of years ago about a little boy called Ian Ray. Now Ian Ray was dux of the school in 1937 I think. So, he was a very clever little boy and he wasn't in this school because this school – this part of the school - wasn't built until 1938, so he was in the old school, but he played in the playground and he went to that part of the school. Now he went to World War II and he was injured in the elbow in Papua New Guinea. They were flying back the injured people and the plane disappeared. And they didn’t – so he was listed as missing in action, presumed dead.

Now years later, in the 1970s, they found his plane and they found all the, the bodies of the missing people and they had a ceremony to bury the remains up in Papua New Guinea.  Now I told that story on the 11th of November 2013 and two days later an old man came in through the front door. I introduced myself - I always like to talk to ex-students - and he said he was an ex-student and his name was Alan Ray. And I said to him, ‘Are you Ian Ray's brother?’ And he said, ‘Yes I am.’ I said, ‘I told Ian's story two days ago,’ and he was really touched and he told me a little bit more about going to Papua New Guinea and collecting Ian's effects and donating them up to the Australian War Memorial. But he [Alan] was also very involved in the Ainslie football club, and if you go up the stairs towards the library you’ll see an Ainslie football club jersey and that was his jersey - it’s got *Alan Ray*. So I took him upstairs and took a photo of him in front of the jersey.

And then, the following March, there were some people having a look at the honour board and I said, ‘Oh, can I help you at all?’ And they said, ‘Well we're Alan Ray's [family]’ - one was the son-in-law and the rest were the grandchildren. They’d come back from his memorial service. He’d just died. So he’d come to the school just a few months before he died to have a look. I think that’s a nice story because it just brings – it shows our school as part of the community and stretching back through time, and forward through time as well.