Condolence messages
received in the Old Boys’ Office
It was a privilege to work with Alan, and as a house-master and Deputy Head, he was a maker of men. I offer the reflection below that might find its way somewhere.

Alan Blackwood is dead, and I salute my former house-master and colleague.
Boys nicknamed Alan “Hoont”, and it was a sort of joke that we all knew why. I never did. I always spelt it in my mind “Hund”, as in the German for “dog”, but that’s the last thing you’d call Mr Blackwood. As a figure of authority – he was Deputy Headmaster for over 30 years – Alan Blackwood had an extraordinary sense of justice. He believed in corporal punishment and regularly handed out 4 or 6 lashes of the cane for serious offences, but boys rarely felt treated unfairly.
He was always for me an exemplar of manhood. Alan was a big man who held himself well with practised military bearing. He carried the mystique of having served in Special Forces during the war. He spoke less about this experience than Headmaster Peter Moyes, who was also reticent to describe his time in Z Force.
When I returned to the school, I worried about how he would receive me as a colleague. On my first day as chaplain, I called him “Mr Blackwood.” He surprised me with a warm smile. “It’s Alan,” he said, “now you call me Alan.” He turned out to be the easiest of colleagues, supportive, friendly and helpful. In particular on the five-man School Executive, Alan was the encourager, the man who could see how others’ vision could be put into action.
As his chaplain, I never really found out what Alan believed. I suspect he had seen things so horrible in the war, things that human beings should never see, that he had suspended his belief in God. But he also must have seen some special padres, so he held my office in high respect. He fought against measures to dilute the effects of Chapel-going. On the other hand, he did not disguise his contempt (in private, at least) for a chaplain colleague who was not, in his opinion, up to scratch.
Other Old Boys and staff were closer to Alan than I was. But I knew him as a decent, upright human being who loved Christ Church and showed many boys how to be men.

Alan’s war record is not well known. I have researched some of it and have included in below. Alan was awarded the Military Cross while serving with the 2/4 Australian Infantry Battalion in New Guinea. He held the rank of Lieutenant at the time.

The Citation for his Military Cross reads as follows:
During the operations in the Wewak area Lt Blackwood commanded a rifle platoon and at all times displayed an outstanding high degree of leadership and personal bravery. The confidence and aggressiveness he imbued in his troops was of such a standard that during those operations his platoon accounted for 53 enemy dead for the loss of only one of his men killed and one wounded.

In the Battle for KOIGIN on 19th June 1945 Lt Blackwood led the final attack on the enemy positions and despite aimed machine gun fire which cut through his clothing, he remained exposed to the enemy fire and led his troops in a determined assault against the feature. The boldness and vigour with which the attack was conducted rapidly disorganised the enemy and the feature was captured with only very minor losses to our own troops, whilst large quantities of material were taken and many enemy were killed.

The example set by Lieutenant Blackwood was an inspiration to his platoon. At all times his actions were such that his men followed him with complete confidence in their leader and their own ability to win.

END OF CITATION

I was on the staff with Alan from 1976 until he retired. He was an astute leader and sorted out many problems that arose before they became more serious.

Peter Hopper (former colleague)

We first met, and attended our first Staff meeting, on 4th February 1949.
(I'll be 89 next month). Greetings to Arthur Pate.

John Moore (1943 and former colleague)
Thanks for letting me know. He was a great yet humble man!

Peter Tooke (1969 and former colleague)

Alan was indeed a very good man. I know a lot of former staff and Old Boys who were very fond of him. Having only known Alan since the late 80’s, I did not know him in his prime, but I know that he made a huge contribution to the life of the school and its members. Vale.

Colin Huntly (former staff)

He was a true gentleman and I had a great deal of respect for him. Unfortunately My wife and I are still in Queensland and will be unable to attend the funeral.

Brian Marsland (former staff)

I’m sure there will be a very strong turn-out. I’m travelling overseas from the weekend so unfortunately will be unable to attend.

Ian Macpherson (1974)

Sad news indeed. However, typically for the man, a long innings.

Ralph Simmonds (1967)

I have many memories of Mr Blackwood administering the cane to me .... Always with a slight smile on his face that said he secretly admired our rebellious spirit ! I leave for Indonesia on Monday morning early, and so I will miss the funeral and morning tea ...... I bet there are many stories told about Alan Blackwood’s skill with the cane, as well as his skill and dedication to providing a fantastic all round education to the boys at Christ Church! RIP Alan Blackwood!

Martin Grounds (1963)

Thanks Andrew. I have wonderful memories of Alan as disciplinarian who was firm but fair, and always put the interests of the school and the boys first.

Peter Atkinson (1958) New Zealand
I would have attended, however am currently overseas in Japan untill the 16th. Please give my condolences.

Scott Williams (1978)

My apologies, I won't be able to attend because I am currently and will be overseas. I had a great regard for Alan as a man of integrity and a dedicated teacher. He was a great role model for us.

Peter Foss (1963)

Thank you for sending me the sad, but inevitable, news. Alan was loyal to the end - even when he disagreed with me. I liked him a lot.

Tony Hill (former Headmaster)

Alan Blackwood was a man that I had a high regard for. He may or may not have been a brilliant mathematician but he was certainly a brilliant maths teacher.

Joe Bainbridge (1962)

Alan displayed integrity of the highest order and held a deep conviction for the School. Thank you for this notice - Alan was there in Queenslea House when I was there in my leaving year in 1969. Curiously, I was just thinking about him this morning before checking my email.....

Richard S Silvester (1969)

Someone passing is always difficult, even when he or she has had a good life and is aged. I won't be able to attend but send my sincere condolences and warm wishes.

Gigi Thiele (former teacher)

Thank you for the sad news of Alan Blackwood’s death. I remember him as deputy principal when I was there. He was a big man who was tough but fair and kept us all in order.

Andrew Gibson (1967)
I did not like Christ Church much, but I remember Alan Blackwood as a decent man, who was my tutor for a few years.

David Bowen (1970)

Unfortunately I will be away in Indonesia on business. I would have liked to have paid my respects. Please pass on my condolences.

Stewart Cole (1977)

I was in one of Alan’s earliest classes and thought him outstanding. He was probably the most liked and respected staff member in those days when the school was in such turmoil. Having read of his progress in “A School with a View” I must say I am not surprised he reached the position of Deputy Headmaster. I’m sure he would have made a fine Headmaster of any school had he aspired to go that way.

Peter Scotney (1952)

I remember him well. Unfortunately given time and distance I must advise I can’t attend. Has anything been set up, re Mr Blackwood's preferred donation in lieu of flowers? Hope all is well, the news notwithstanding.

Craig Wyllie (1979)

I know he was not a boaster, but I believe it appropriate that his post nominal, MC (Military Cross for bravery earned during WW@ while serving with the 2/4th Battalion, 2nd ALF), should be included in our tribute to a strong and honourable man.

John James (former staff)

Alan Blackwood was one of the best. He made math make sense and was one of the eminent dry wits of our age. A famous disciplinarian, he instilled respect in many, yet it is his humour that I remember fondly and with great affection.

Many years after leaving school my parents called upon him and he reminded them he still had the leaving present I had given him - a prickly cactus - and it was flourishing.

I regret I am unable to pay my respects in person, and apologise for my absence. He's a great man. Condolences to all.

Richard Tunbridge (1984)
I am saddened to hear the news.

Rev Fr Evan E Battalis (1985)

Condolences to friends and family. I remember Mr Blackwood.

John Payne (1987)

I am sorry to hear that. Alan was Deputy Headmaster when I was at Christ Church from 1967-1971 and I remember him well. I won’t be at the service as I live in Brisbane but please pass on my condolences to his family. He was a great servant to Christ Church Grammar School and no doubt leaves a very special legacy.

Craig Julian (1971)

Thanks for letting me know. I have very fond memories of Alan. He was Deputy Headmaster during my time at the school and had a fearsome reputation as a stern disciplinarian. In those days he was of imposing size, and was strongly built. Fortunately, he was never called on to discipline me. Alan never taught me but was one of my football coaches in under age, and was the coach of the First XI, when I played in it. I also remember talking to him in later years, when I played for the Old Boys in cricket.

Alan, along with Peter Moyes, Don McLeod and John Leach, is one of my most vivid memories of the school.

Unfortunately, I have another commitment on 9 February, and will not be able to attend the funeral.

John Ley (1968)

That’s sad news, but at 93yrs, a good innings. I remember Alan as a towering authoritarian figure around the school, and his dry sense of humour. A disciplinary visit to Mr Blackwood’s office was possibly one of the most feared journeys, one that I thankfully never had to make.

John Throssell (1977)
Thanks for the update, he was an inspiring leader. He will, long be remembered.
Was he really that old or we are just, all getting older without realising that time is passing us.
Little Arns
Adrian Arnold (1978)

Thanks Andrew for the notification of Alan’s passing. He leaves positive memories in the hearts and minds of so many – both pupils and teachers.
Edward Gifford (1965)

Thank you for letting me know that Alan recently passed away. He was Deputy Headmaster when I first joined the school and a bit of a scary figure at first. I soon found him to be kind and thoughtful under the stern exterior. He knew I had no car and when the school worked on public holidays when buses were infrequent he would always offer me a lift to and from work.
Sue Gordon (former staff)

It is indeed sad news however Alan’s innings was significant. I will endeavour to attend this Monday.
Craig McGown (1967)

Thanks for that Andrew. Please add my name to the apology list?
Alan Edwards (1957)

I remember Mr Blackwood as a a good head of the junior school in my days and a very fair and approachable person.
Trevor Matthews (1959)

I have very pleasant memories of Alan's guidance during my later years at Christ Church - through to 1952. Unfortunately, I cannot make Alan's funeral, but I would like to register my appreciation of Alan's support so many years ago.
Lionel Ward (1952)
Sad news indeed. I have very fond memories of Mr Blackwood. He was indeed a man of integrity and a man I always found to be very fair. I greatly regret that I will be unable to get to the service - my wife and I now live in Hobart. In fact I will be in Perth checking on my mother the last week in February - too late I'm afraid. I am sure however, that there will be very good turn out from the old boys.

David S. Plummer (1969)

Alan was a gentleman as you say with great integrity and a great sense of humour. He was certainly well respected by the staff, and the students, always a very fair man. I remember very fondly of social events I shared with him and Margaret during my time at Christ Church as Matron in the 70's and just recently meeting with him again at the Christmas lunches. Patricia Moran (Kelly) former Colleague

I have held few in my life with quite the same affection and respect as Captain Blackwood MC. Sixty years ago he gave me the strength to cope with a lonely tragedy in my early days at the school; wise counsel whenever I needed it thereafter (which was often) and always a role model I strove to live up to. It is one of my greatest regrets that I did not get around to visiting him in his retirement to thank him for the many opportunities he gave me, or seek his forgiveness for having failed to appreciate them. Regrettably I am unable to make it up to the city in time for the funeral, but he will remain a treasured memory forever.

David B Giles (1959)

Sad news: I was fond of him and he was a very able adjutant to Moyes when I was at school. He won an MC in 1945 fighting the Japanese as a platoon commander (lieutenant).

Marcus Holmes (1977)

Andrew, a sad day. Of all the teachers at CCGS during my 14 years there, Alan Blackwood was my hero.

R.A.Simonsen (Dick) (1955)
I remember Alan well. He was at my job interview in 1979 along with Peter Moyes and Geoff Hammond. Alan Blackwood was as I can now see was 30 years my senior. Alan had excellent knowledge of the boys and staff and did a great job at keeping us all inline. 'Time gentlemen' was his way of hurrying staff off to classes, from the common room, at the end of morning tea. I am not able to attend on the day but send my condolences.

John Oxnam (Teacher - Geography 1979-1990)

Alan was my Godfather and, in tandem with my Godmother, Peggie Macleod, was a significant positive on my early years. Although it is many years now since I have spoken with Alan, I am very sorry to learn of his passing. He was a man of the highest moral and ethical standards and yet kind, generous and thoughtful in the manner of his direction. He was known to most as a stern authority figure, but to me and my siblings he was the large gentle man always there to support us in our childhood years. I will not be in Australia at the time of Alan's funeral but my thoughts will be with him and I will always remember him fondly.

Peter French (1968)

Sorry to hear this sad news. Alan Blackwood taught me trigonometry in 5th form in 1967 (third year high then) he was a great teacher of the old school and a man of Honour. He will be sadly missed. My sincere condolences to his remaining family members.

Stephen Bailey (1969)

Please add my name to list of CCGS alumni passing condolences to Alan's family.
I recall Alan as being firm, but fair. He developed the boys both as groups/teams, and as individuals - and always with the goals of getting the best out of everyone.
For me, along with Akos Kovacs and Peter Moyes, Alan was part of a small but highly visible group of staff who represented the commitment of all staff to the students and their personal growth.
I, for one, remain grateful.

Robert Thompson (1984) United Kingdom
Thanks for this Andrew. Sad news, but it was time. My main contact with him was through cricket where he coached the 1st eleven. He was a man of few words as I recall. He taught us maths for a couple of terms as well.

**Jono Evans (1963) United Kingdom**

Unfortunately I won't be in Australia at the time of the funeral. However, I would be grateful if you could convey this story to the family and those who knew him, with my condolences. Sometime in the 1980s or 1990s I visited the school to talk to the boys about a career in engineering. Another old boy from the school joined me in the same session to talk about accountancy, I think. I can't remember his name – let's call him Chris. Alan Blackwood was there to host us. When we arrived he greeted me, saying “Great to see you, James. Thanks very much for coming to the school to do this.” Chris asked Alan whether he remembered him like he obviously had remembered me. Alan scratched his head and said no, I can't recall, but then I only got to know the ones that misbehaved really badly!” I said, ”Thank you so much for that compliment, Alan!” I remember Alan as someone who took the load on his shoulders as being the bad guy when it came to enforcing discipline. But then I knew he wasn't really like that – it was just that he was the one the prepared to do it.

Best wishes and many thanks to Alan, Peter Moyes, Alan Burns, David Hutchinson, Clive Grey (Major), Alan Pate, Monsieur Bertimieux, and all the other teachers that helped me get a good start.

**James Trevelyan (1965)**

Thank you for letting me know - very sad - I have vivid memories of ‘Hoont’ as we boarders used to call him (amongst ourselves).

**Brian Haines (1963)**

My condolences to the family. When I attended CCGS Alan was coming to the end of his time there. He was well respected by us all. I am sorry I cannot attend the funeral but please pass on my best wishes to all.

**Phillip Moore (1985)**
Alan Blackwood was a teacher when I was at CCGS. He was a very good teacher and a great bloke. He headed up the cadet corps and was a very good sports master. Alan went to the Melbourne Olympic Games as an official at the athletics events. He was very instrumental in employing Akos Kovacs as Phys Ed teacher which turned out to be one of the best appointments made. I will not be able to get to Perth for the funeral but hope that you can include my name on any memorial.

Peter Fleming (1959)

Thanks for this message. Alan Blackwood was a man of great humanity and integrity. CCGS owes him much. As a keen cricketer he encouraged me greatly and he bowled a very tidy "offie" himself.

John Macartney (1964)

Thank you for letting me know. Alan was my deputy Headmaster and I had a lot more time for him as a person than some other teachers, so I truly mourn his passing; but hold lifelong gratitude for his contribution to me and many others.

Michael Mills (1975)

This is sad news indeed as Mr Blackwood was indeed one of the true legends of CCGS, a great pedagogue, sportsman and soldier, (Military Cross) I understand. Although he whacked me a couple of times, well deserved, he gave me a glowing reference for my entry into the British Army. I had so much respect for him. Sadly, I will be unable to attend his funeral due to work commitments, but would like to pass on my sincere condolences to his Family, friends and all at Christ Church Grammar School.

Anton Gavin (1969)

I left with a respect and a feeling that verged on a like. I remembered him well and when we met it was respectful and full of an almost fondness.

Jon Doust (1965)
I do remember Mr Blackwood well when I was at Christ Church Grammar School during the few years from 1958. He was a tall man and strict. But, we all knew that he had a kind heart and was a man truly dedicated to Christ Church Grammar School. Please register my deepest condolences to Mr Blackwood’s family.

**Phillip Wong Y. C. (1959) (Singapore)**

I was sorry to hear that Alan Blackwood has died, but he had a long life. I will be 88 this month! Regretfully, I will not be able to attend the funeral because of another commitment at the time.

**David Hutchison (1944 and former staff member)**

Thank you so much for informing me of the passing of Alan Blackwood. He was a man I respected very much during my time at Christ Church and an excellent teacher. As you have correctly said, he was a man of great integrity and was devoted to the School and it's students. I am sorry I shall be unable to attend his funeral but I shall be thinking of him at 1000hrs on the 9th.

**Johnny Walker (1969)**

Sad news, but a good life. He was a feared, but very fair deputy head with a reputation for a strong right arm with the cane. He was a remarkably good teacher and I am pleased he taught me maths as well as being my hurdling coach. He was my Deputy Head of my entire time at CCGS from 1971 to 1982.

**Henry Willis (1982)**

I remember him well. A disciplinarian but a fair one. My most memorable moment was when someone asked if we could take our ties off one hot summers day. His reply was “Why? It’s not yet a hundred degrees” (Fahrenheit in those days). “I tell you when it reaches 100”.

**Ashleigh Seow (1973)**

What can I say but he was a great man and may he RIP. Sorry I will not be able to attend the service as I am still in Vietnam.

**Michael Singleton (1971)**
Unfortunately I am unable to attend due to the fires in our area, they are slowly creeping closer. Our brigade is on standby and we are preparing our property at the same time. Hope the funeral goes well. You are right, he was a very honourable man.

Glen Ryan (1982)

Each of the schools making up the PSA have their own special people who past pupils hold very dear in their memories from their time at their parents’ chosen school. Alan Blackwood ‘Hoont’, ‘Charcoal’ or ‘Sir’ was indeed one of those to so many of us – particularly me. I enjoyed ten years (1949 to 1958) at Christ Church with this man, mentor, teacher, coach and friend.

David Steadman (1958)

93 years of age was a “good innings”. I endorse your remarks of ‘integrity’ and his great conviction for the school. Whilst not directly involved in 1949, being in the junior school, I later had a further 4 years of highest involvement with Alan Blackwood, especially with his dual roles in sport and especially the army cadets. It was through his efforts that CCGS became the leading cadet corp in the state and I still remember clearly my honourable relationship with Alan and as his Warrant Officer and Cadet marker in Kings Park, during the visit of Queen Elizabeth to WA in 1954. Vale Alan Blackwood, a man of Honour who was so important to the development and success of CCGS, especially when the school became part of the PSA. Condolences and apologies at being unable to attend the funeral.

Barry Jones ESM (1955)

Sincere condolences to all. Alan Blackwood was a highly revered and greatly respected man. Three Giffords spent a fair amount of time under Mr Blackwood and today will be very sad day for all.

Ray Gifford (1961)

I am very saddened to read of Alan departing. Certainly a great mentor for me.

Grant Fergusson-Stewart (1956)
Remembered with great respect and appreciation – a great man and a great mentor – RIP

Paul Tomlinson (1963)

Mr Blackwood and Mr Moyes together with Mr O'Connor provided me with a new base, foundation, criterion -- call it what you will -- on which to build my behaviour in life.

Dexter Lee (1956)

While I never attended during his stewardship my grandparents lived next to Mr Blackwood in Safety Bay. He was a gentle, kind and generous man. He will be missed.

Ryan Dawson (2000)

I have been wanting to see Alan for a long time, and of course regret not doing so even though he didn’t recognise me a few years ago and I realise he wouldn’t know me anymore now. Alan and Margaret came here to my home when I was caring for my mum when she was dying in 1996, and of course Alan and I started at Christ Church and met on the limestone drive between the Plane Trees near the Corner Church on the very first day for both of us in 1949. I boarded with Alan and Margaret...and they were very good to me...as I was the only one who stayed with them during the holidays, so I was taken for drives into the hills in their little Standard 8 car, and allowed into their lounge in winter to sit by the fire with them. I have to admit that this news has left me with a lump in my throat. I never used to believe in “signs” or the “hereafter” but before I came downstairs to look at my emails...I was watching an old black & white movie with a very young Peter Finch and Valery Hobson in it and wondered when it was made...so I looked it up in the TV directory. The moment I saw it was made in 1949...I instantly thought of my first day at Christ Church as described in the story below ‘Starting Out’...as that date is a “sort of” milestone in my life.

John Carroll (1955)
STARTING OUT

Angelic, baby-faced and just ten years old, I thought that adults were very strange sometimes. Taken out of State primary school and placed in a Private College, with a new school uniform, books etc. it was my first day, and I insisted I was old enough to catch the bus without my mother’s help.

Arriving late at the College Campus, no boys anywhere in sight, my instructions were to go “somewhere” to an assembly. Sweat beads formed on my forehead as a warm, morning sun glistening through the green and yellow Plane trees that lined both sides of the long dusty limestone drive between the main school and the chapel.

Suddenly, ahead of me appeared a very tall man, with a long flowing black cape. Swinging my book filled satchel over my shoulder, and half-bending as I tried to pull up my socks, I quickened my steps to catch up with this imposing schoolmaster!

“Where is the school assembly, please Sir?” I stammered breathlessly, raising my cap with my free hand. The tall athletic man looked down at me without altering his large stride.

“Is this your first day?” he asked

“Yes Sir?”
“It’s mine too, so if you walk with me, we shouldn’t get into too much trouble if we are a bit late?” he smiled kindly down at me. Stress-free warmth filled through my face and shoulders.

That was a few weeks ago, and I fell into a new routine... the morning marches down the picturesque driveway to the chapel for morning service before marching back to class, and finding the tuck shop where I bought lunch.

But this morning something new happened!

I had marched to morning chapel, filed into the front pews with the smaller boys, and partaken in the customary hymns with gusto. During the first hymn the offering plate was passed to each row by a prefect. I suddenly realised my mother had given me only enough money for lunch, and as the plate went from hand to hand I had to think quickly! “Waft, waft ye winds his stooooorieeeeee...and you ye waters rollllllll” they sang lustily. The plate was rapidly approaching... “Till like a sea of glooooooory, it goes from pole to pole”...and as it passed, my quick ‘slight of hand’ hadn’t gone unnoticed by the prefect.

Filing out of the pews after the service, we passed the front vestry.

“Boy, come here!” demanded the same tall schoolmaster.

“Yes sir?” I looked up puzzled by his serious tone.

“Did you take money out of the plate?”

“Yes Sir”

This frank admission caught the master by surprise. Not only was this young boy a thief he thought, but also... he didn’t have enough sense to deny it!
“But...but... why? Stammered the master.

I looked up puzzled. “Well Sir, I only had a shilling, so I put in a shilling, and took out sixpence!”

“Er...but...but... didn’t you know that the money is blessed?” His stern composure slowly changed as his face creased into a suppressed smile. “Oh... go on... off with you!”

Yes, I thought at lunch when I had to go without my vanilla slice. Adults can be very strange sometimes!

By Derrick John Carroll... ©

Forty-seven years later... I painted that master’s portrait ... and gave it to the school. It now hangs in the entrance with the portrait I did of the headmaster.