



PLC
 PRESBYTERIAN
 LADIES' COLLEGE
 SYDNEY
 — 1888 —

STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES:

ONE OF THE BEST HOLIDAYS I EVER HAD

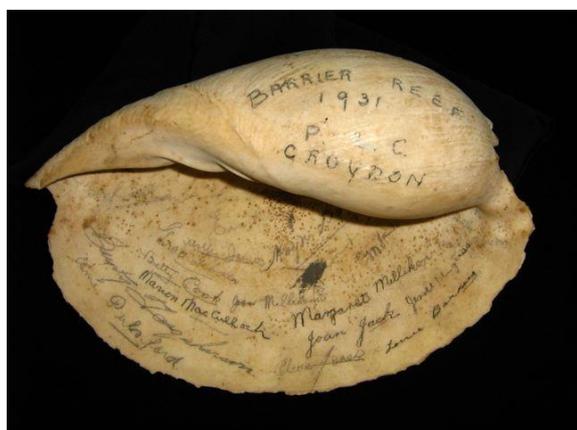
“Our mother had two big trips in her lifetime: the trip with PLC classmates to the Great Barrier Reef in 1931 and a trip to Europe three years later”, recounted sisters Judith Baker and Tricia Waters on a recent visit to the Marden Heritage Centre, “and she always said how much she loved the trip to North West Island near Heron Island”.

“Mother” was Esmé Kemmis (née Pulsford), who was a boarder here from 1929 to 1933 and School Captain in 1933. Esmé herself, writing more than 50 years after the expedition, recalled that “We slept in tents, ate our meals in an open shed, concrete floor and iron roof. We ate fresh fish caught each day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Every day we roamed the reef, sometimes pushing a glass-bottomed fruit box so we could clearly see the wonderful coloured coral and fish. I still rate it as one of the best holidays I ever had”.



Esmé Pulsford (centre) and classmates show off their catch at North West Island in the Great Barrier Reef, May 1931.

Photo donated by Judith Baker and Tricia Waters.



The shell from the Great Barrier Reef Expedition, May 1931. Esmé Pulsford's signature is at the bottom left.

The Archives holds a large shell from the Great Barrier Reef that contains the signatures of the girls on this expedition, the first one organised by a school. The shell is currently displayed in the Marden Heritage Centre.

At PLC Esmé, a boarder from Windsor, was also Captain of Harper House, Treasurer of the Student Christian Union Committee, and a member of the netball team. Her older sister Nancy also was a PLC Sydney boarder and was School Captain in 1928.



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After school Esmé returned to Windsor and worked in the family's general store, Pulsfords, which sold everything from millinery to dresses and haberdashery to suiting fabric and nails. She had learned to drive when she was 17 and this skill served her well during World War II when she worked as a driver for the Women's Land Army and the VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment).

She married Malcolm Kemmis in 1944. After leaving the Army, Malcolm's career was with the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac). Esmé had four daughters and was engaged in home duties and community work. For 36 years she worked as a volunteer for Meals on Wheels as a driver, delivering meals to people in Kings Cross. She played golf, tennis and croquet.

Esmé Pulsford's memories demonstrate the long-lasting importance school excursions can have for both academic and social growth and development.



Tricia Waters and Judith Baker, two of Esmé Pulsford's daughters, with the shell their mother signed.

Photo by Manel Chami