



*The Warrinn dorm in the 1940s*

# ‘The Cottage’: Boarding at Warrinn

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The Warrinn boarding house has become somewhat of a school legend. From the tales of life in ‘the dorms’ told by students of the past, it’s clear their time was quite different to the boarding experience of today. We have been in touch with some OGCs who braved Warrinn and have their stories to tell.

Warrinn House, standing on the corner of Noble Street and Claremont Avenue, was purchased by the school in 1906, having been a residential home for about 15 years previously.

The building initially housed only school masters but was soon repurposed as boarding house for boys as enrolments increased. In the 1920s, junior boarders were based in Warrinn. As numbers grew, additional wings were added to offer more capacity, and facilities were improved. Warrinn became home to Senior School boys.

Known as ‘The Cottage’, the conditions at Warrinn offered a unique experience for those who boarded there. Old boys recall the fifth dorm where, instead of glass, windows were ‘glazed’ with chicken wire.

“The fifth form dorm was an extension which was enclosed with chicken wire

and canvas blinds, great in summer but a tad chilly in winter,” Tony Storey recalls.

Gav Depeller continues, “in the fifth form dorm if your bed was along the window side and the rain and wind came from the North you had to shift your bed. The blinds billowed and there would be wet strips along the floorboards in the morning. A bit nippy during Winter as well!”

Having boarded at Warrinn, Eoin Barnett returned after school, along with Peter Cronk, to become Assistant Masters at in the boarding house.

“On cold wet nights,” Peter remembers, “the students wore overcoats, socks and beanies to bed.”

In fact, some students tried to use the chilly conditions to their advantage. With a Cadet Camp only a day away, some attempted to catch a cold overnight,

Barnett recalls, “they swallowed at least one tube of toothpaste and lay on top of the bed all night. Much to their disgust they woke up the next morning feeling better than ever!”

In fact, despite these conditions, Barnett reflects, “it must have been pretty healthy as I don’t think we were sick any more often than those Mackie boys that slept behind glassed windows with heaters!”

Cronk continues on this topic, “it always made me smile to myself when prospective boarders were shown around the relative comfort in Mackie, but finished up allocated to Warrinn!”

Yet it was these experiences that built camaraderie between the boarders and house staff. Colin Bransgrove remembers, “if you asked nicely, Miss Dale [the house matron] would make hot chocolate before bed.”



And there was time for mischief. During Andrew Humphry's time, he recalls: "in the dorm at the end of the passage there was 20 + of us in the chook pen. Sometimes after lights out there would be some (lots of) talking and messing about. To hear House Master Patchett coming down the hall to check on us, we sprinkled sugar on the passage floor. The sound of 'crunch-crunch' under his shoes did the trick!"

This period in Warrinn's history was a time of great change.

Tony Storey explains, "living in Warrinn we basically had two homes, Warrinn for sleeping and Mossgiel for all other activities."

Mossgiel also became home for the assistant masters, and later the Warrinn senior boarders. Then construction commenced on new boarding accommodation behind Mossgiel.

These changes flowed through to daily school life. Prior to 1974, the close-knit boarding students of Warrinn remained in their boarding house group as part of the Senior School House system.

Then came the 1974 modifications.

Designed to create closer connections between the boarding and day students, the boarding students allocated between the entirety of the 5 House Groups, a student's boarding house would no longer also be their Senior School House group.

In 1975 the boarders relocated to what was colloquially known as 'New Warrinn' - Mossgiel boarding house. The Warrinn building, itself, ceased to be home to boarders in any capacity and was therefore no longer part of the house competitions. As a last hurrah, Warrinn won the interhouse sporting competition, the Stanley B Calvert Inter House Cup in its final two years.

Today, Mackie House is home to our boarding boys, whilst Mossgiel has become the home of our boarding girls.

Warrinn House lives on in the memories of its boarders and the walls of 'The Cottage'.

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*Warrinn students (from top): 1948, 1975, 1973, 1974)*