



IT man by day, author by night

Some people watch television at night after work. Others play tennis or do crosswords. Christopher Ride ('82) writes novels.

WORDS: MR DAVID ASHTON

AFTER A PERIPATETIC journey through his youth, Christopher Ride is now CEO of IT company, Interactive. His alter ego as an author helps him temporarily to leave the unwired world of IT – even if it is just for an hour or two.

Though he only attended Scotch for one year – 1977 – Christopher has a full Scotch pedigree, with his grandfather Sir Lindsay 'Blue' Ride ('16), father (Edwin '49), brother David (also at Scotch in 1977) and various other relatives having attended the School. Christopher's grandfather was a Rhodes Scholar, and an illustrious physiologist, soldier and university vice-chancellor. Ernest Hemingway is a distant relative. Sally Ride, first American woman in space, is also related.

Christopher told *The Australian Financial Review* in an April interview: 'I would work all day long and then I'd come home and attempt to watch television, and I'd get bored and walk to my computer and tap out a few pages.'

Eventually pages became chapters and chapters turned into a book. Now his

midnight and weekend escapism has turned into three books, *The Schumann Frequency* (2007), *The First Boxer* (2009) and *The Inca Cube*, due for release in 2011.

Great Scot spoke to Christopher about Scotch, business, sport – and his blossoming writing 'career'.

Did your brief time at Scotch have a positive influence on you?

Over my academic career, I went to 13 different schools on six different continents. That's what happens when your father is a career diplomat and both parents throw in a few divorces to spice things up.

On reflection, there's absolutely no doubt that having gone to so many schools has given me a broad view on the world, and what an excellent school can do for a student. It's not just the quality of the facilities and the calibre of the teachers that matter; granted, they are very important, but so much of it comes down to the pedigree of the students. Your peer group has an enormous influence on how

seriously you take your studies and what your boundaries are, good and bad.

That, for me, was where Scotch really stood out. The students genuinely aspired to greatness, both academic and sporting. My only criticism would be that I'm not certain they knew exactly how lucky they were to be going to a School of such great tradition and achievement.

I'd go into the Memorial Hall and look up and see my grandfather's name on the list of Rhodes Scholars. Knowing that he had trodden these very halls, as my father, uncle, brother and cousins had before me, was very inspiring. I used to sit there in that hall and look up at his name and dream of what my life would become. They are good memories.

Do you think the day could come when you become a full-time writer?

If my publisher, Random House, had their way then that would be my full-time job. It's very important to keep releasing a new book every single year, at least until you have five or more successful books on the

shelves. Being a successful writer is about building a loyal readership that you can continue to deliver for.

I love writing, and I do my best to produce a new book each year, but I also have my business, Interactive, which I've been building for the last 20 years. It's an IT business which now employs over 300 staff across Australia and New Zealand. The business grows at 25 per cent compounding each year, and it has a terrific future that I'm loath to miss out on. That means that I have to manage my time very effectively so that I can do both at the same time. Thankfully the people that I work with, and the situations we face, are a fantastic breeding ground for writing fiction.

You are obviously very interested in sports – please provide a few details.

Every year I set a new goal for myself. Among my favourite achievements in the last five years are trekking to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, walking the Inca Trail and climbing to the top of Mount Machu Picchu. Less exotic, but very challenging,

was completing the Melbourne Oxfam 100 kilometre walk in under 24 hours.

From a sporting perspective, I'm a sponsor and supporter of the North Melbourne Football Club and a member of Royal Melbourne Golf Club, where I am desperately clinging to a 10 handicap. Unfortunately my golf has had to suffer as a result of my other commitments, and my short game is becoming increasingly woeful.

What is the connection between Scotch and your latest book, *The First Boxer*, which is set in China during the Boxer Rebellion?

One of the characters in *The First Boxer* is the flamboyant and swashbuckling real-life Australian hero and Times correspondent to Peking, George ('Chinese') Morrison (of Geelong College – Ed). Anyone who knows anything about 'Chinese' Morrison will be aware that he is regarded as the greatest Australian hero of his era – a truly remarkable and fascinating man.

As fate would have it, George Morrison's uncle, Alexander Morrison, was the Headmaster of Scotch for 46 years, from 1857 through to his death in 1903. Alexander's son, Robert was Vice-Principal from 1869-1904.

There certainly is a strong historical connection between Scotch and the heady days of the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion. I often wondered how Alexander Morrison would have talked of the exploits of his nephew, George, and how aware the students of Scotch would have been in the incredible events taking place in China at the time. GS

Special offer for *Great Scot* readers!

Christopher's publisher Random House is providing 20 signed copies of *The First Boxer* for *Great Scot* readers.

If you would like to go into the draw for one of the 20 copies, please email David Ashton: david.ashton@scotch.vic.edu.au or ring (03) 9810 4489, or write to 1 Morrison Street, Hawthorn Vic 3122.



Congratulations to Andrew Wilson ('78), who was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal in the 2010 Queen's Birthday honours list.

Fire Service Medal to Andrew Wilson ('78)

WORDS: MR DAVID ASHTON

ANDREW RECEIVED THE medal for distinguished service relating to bushfire management, especially in the areas of research, fire control, strategic analysis, data and systems.

More recently his work with the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment has focused on adaptive management, social learning and strategic conversation. His 1983 research on the survival of people and houses during the Ash Wednesday fires was most useful during Victoria's recent Bushfire Royal Commission.

The biographical notes for Andrew's award on the Governor-General's website

commended him for his 'creativity, innovation and dedication to bushfire prevention research and its direct application for over 23 years in Victoria.

'His willingness to undertake painstaking analysis has enabled him to develop integrated community protection and fire control strategies that are informed by scientific evidence. The strategies and technology that have resulted from his work have been used across Australia for many years and he continues to shape bushfire management ...'

Andrew is the father of Tom ('08) and William (Year 10), and son of Allan ('55). Andrew's brothers Rowan ('81) and Lachlan ('83) also attended Scotch.