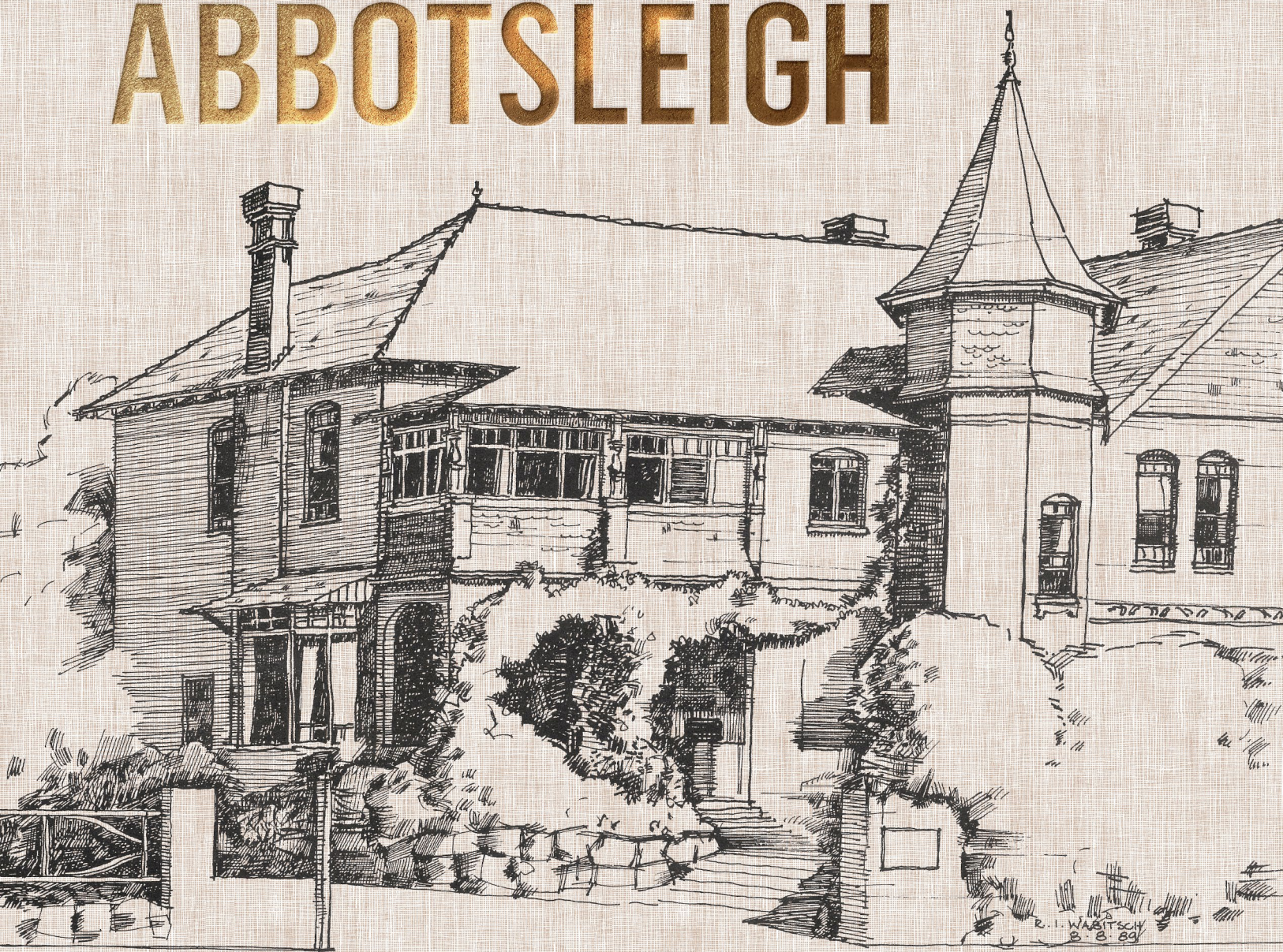
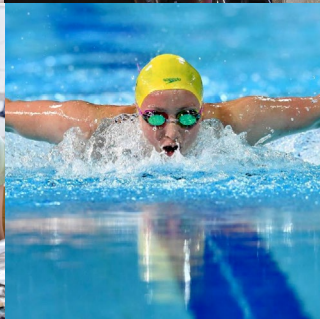


# HUMANS OF ABBOTSLEIGH













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## DIGITAL CONTENT KEY

[abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/hoa](https://abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/hoa)



Abbotsleigh publications



Audio content



Gallery



Extended profile



Website link



Video content

Editorial Committee: This book has been created to celebrate Abbotsleigh's 140th birthday by a talented group of current students under the supervision of Dr Alison Gates and Dr Irini Savvides and with the support of the School Archivist Dr Jennifer McLaren. The student committee members are: Kaitlyn Au-Yeung, Angeline Lam, Kylie Liu, Neve Peters, Audrey Tang, Sophia Xie, Fiona Yan, Lisa Yeh and Eleanor Zhu. Abbotsleigh is enormously proud of these remarkable young women.

Graphic designer: Michaela Gibiec

Cover artwork: *Marian Clarke Building*, 1989, Robyn Wabitsch (Easter, 1968)

Photographs and artworks used in this book have been used with permission of the artists and photographers. Much of the work in this book has been produced courtesy of the Thurles Thomas Archives, Abbotsleigh. We extend our sincere thanks to the many hundreds of students, Old Girls, staff, former staff and community members who have contributed their thoughts and memories to this publication.

Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and other First Nations People are advised that this book may contain names, recordings and images of deceased people and other information that may be culturally sensitive.

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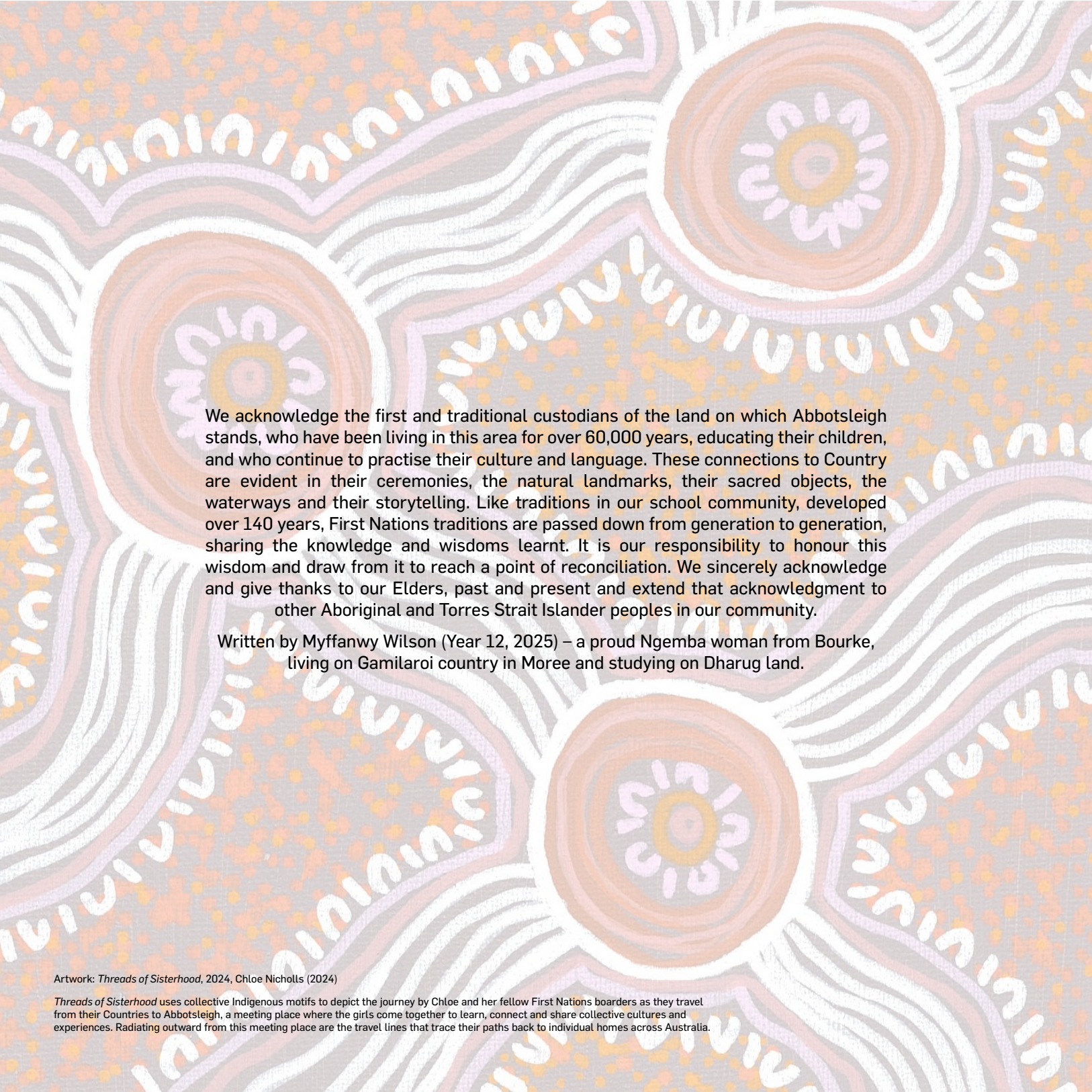
Please refer to the National Library of Australia for cataloguing in publication details.





# HUMANS OF ABBOTSLEIGH





We acknowledge the first and traditional custodians of the land on which Abbotsleigh stands, who have been living in this area for over 60,000 years, educating their children, and who continue to practise their culture and language. These connections to Country are evident in their ceremonies, the natural landmarks, their sacred objects, the waterways and their storytelling. Like traditions in our school community, developed over 140 years, First Nations traditions are passed down from generation to generation, sharing the knowledge and wisdoms learnt. It is our responsibility to honour this wisdom and draw from it to reach a point of reconciliation. We sincerely acknowledge and give thanks to our Elders, past and present and extend that acknowledgment to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our community.

Written by Myffanwy Wilson (Year 12, 2025) – a proud Ngemba woman from Bourke, living on Gamilaroi country in Moree and studying on Dharug land.

Artwork: *Threads of Sisterhood*, 2024, Chloe Nicholls (2024)

*Threads of Sisterhood* uses collective Indigenous motifs to depict the journey by Chloe and her fellow First Nations boarders as they travel from their Countries to Abbotsleigh, a meeting place where the girls come together to learn, connect and share collective cultures and experiences. Radiating outward from this meeting place are the travel lines that trace their paths back to individual homes across Australia.



## FROM THE HEADMISTRESS

It is with immense joy that we present this commemorative book celebrating 140 years of Abbotsleigh. Founded on the unwavering pillars of the Christian faith and a deep commitment to excellence in girls' education, Abbotsleigh is a beacon of learning, belonging, character and community.

Throughout these years, our school has nurtured countless young women, empowering them to become leaders, innovators and global citizens who continually make a positive difference in our world. The stories within these pages are testament to the enduring spirit and achievements of our Old Girls alongside the inspiration and aspirations of our current girls. Each image and narrative reflects the unique journey of individuals who have carried forward the values instilled in them during their time here. It is also the story of the staff and communities that have contributed to the heart and soul of this sensational school.

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone, we honour the legacy of those who have come before us and the bright future that lies ahead. This book is not just a collection of memories, but a tribute to the resilience, dedication and faith that have shaped our school's history, told through the humans that have walked and continue to walk through our campuses.

May this celebration inspire current and future generations to uphold the traditions of excellence and faith that define Abbotsleigh. It is a delight to celebrate 140 years of remarkable stories and we know that Abbotsleigh will continue to shape the extraordinary lives of our girls, staff and community members in the many years to come.

*Megan Krimmer*

Megan Krimmer  
Headmistress







THE GOOD OF THE HIVE  
WINEY



# THE GOOD OF THE HIVE®

**A global art project generating radical curiosity, connection, and change...  
one pollinator at a time.**

'Bees never forget that they are part of something bigger than themselves...  
their hive is a part of them. What if we embodied this idea? What if we got  
curious about the world and each other again instead of intimidated by it? This  
is why I turn walls into windows – to remember that we are all connected...  
that separation is an illusion.'

Artist, Matt Willey





Artwork: *Portrait of G Gordon Everett*, 1955, Joshua Smith

'We must endeavour to send out girls whose consciences will have been quickened to a sense of what is right and what is wrong, and whose actions will be controlled by right feeling and right thinking.'

G Gordon Everett MBE



## G Gordon Everett MBE 1931-1954

Abbotsleigh's fourth Headmistress, Miss Everett, steered Abbotsleigh through the difficult years of the Great Depression and World War II. By 1939 Abbotsleigh was so popular that a waiting list was created and enrolments more than doubled during her tenure. To accommodate this growth, Miss Everett expanded the School's footprint through property purchases and, just 10 days before her retirement, she was thrilled to open the new Junior School in Woonona Avenue. She was described in *The Weaver* 1954 as 'always courageous and eager to try new innovations', including the House System (1931), the first Foundation Day (1933) and launching the new green uniform in 1936. In leading these changes, Miss Everett fostered a sense of community and established traditions that continue at Abbotsleigh to this day.



Mrs Shirley Fong (Lee, 1951) was Abbotsleigh's first Asian student. On her arrival, Shirley spoke little English and was sent alone to study in Australia. Her memories of Abbotsleigh are fond, especially those of Miss Everett with whom she enjoyed a lifelong friendship. After leaving school, Miss Everett gifted Shirley a jade and silver spoon and fork set that had been an Everett family heirloom. These items were presented to the Thurles Thomas Archive in 2000 at the same time that Shirley endowed the Everett Scholarship: 'I am grateful to Abbotsleigh for being the kind of school that welcomes girls of diverse backgrounds and the gifts of difference they bring with them.'








# BEE CONNECTED

Black and Gold have been Abbotsleigh's colours since the School's founding Headmistress, Marian Clarke, introduced the first school hat: a boater with a black hatband and a gold crest. At that time, students wore their own clothes to school and the hat was the only compulsory uniform item.

In 2001, the graduating class gave the School a full-sized bee costume (AbbotsBee) to be used as the School mascot. AbbotsBee was used at school and IGSSA events during the early 2000s. In the 140th birthday year, the prefect theme 'Bee Connected', turns our focus again to the mighty insect whose power and strength come from collaboration and teamwork. We celebrated this with the commissioning of artist Matt Willey's first mural project in Australia.



Meera Nirmalendran (Year 12, 2025) and Josephine Tieu (Year 12, 2025) collaborated on the ideation stage of our 'Bee Connected' graphic, volunteering to develop the image. The credit for the final iteration goes to Meera for a wonderful image that has been coloured and used widely with our prefect theme.

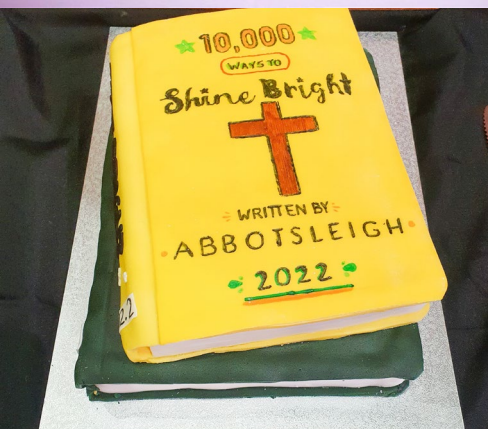


Helena Grice (Year 12, 2025) lent the 2025 prefect theme a touch of science with her Bee of the Week email to her Year 12 classmates, combining exemplary science communication with humour.





## ABBOTSLEIGH BIRTHDAYS CELEBRATING A BRIGHT FUTURE





## THUMBODIES

You're a very special person  
Have you ever wondered why?  
It's because there's no-one just like you  
On earth or in the sky.  
God made us to be special  
There's no two just the same  
No two birds, or clouds or leaves  
Or animals wild or tame.  
Each one of us is different  
And 'specially loved by God  
He loves us every step we take  
Whether we walk or run or plod.  
He's made a lovely world for us  
With beauty all around  
There's colours in a sunset  
And forests full of sound.  
He's made the birds that fly above  
The flowers and mountains too  
But do you know who else he made?  
It's that special person YOU.  
So if you make a thumb-print  
As all your friends can do  
You'll find everyone is different  
For you're a thumbbody too!

By Robyn Claydon, 1987

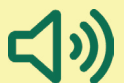


## Robyn Claydon OAM

Teacher 1956 | Assistant Deputy Headmistress 1973-1980  
Deputy Headmistress 1981-1990 | Chaplain 2014

In 1975, Abbotsleigh celebrated its 90th birthday. In honour of this occasion, Mrs Claydon produced a pageant, the first of many she would produce, and which would involve the whole School. For this occasion, Mrs Claydon also wrote our School Song as the finale of the 90th Birthday Pageant. This is the School Song we still sing today.

In 2020, Mrs Claydon was honoured with an Australia Day honour – a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her service to education, and to the Anglican Church of Australia.





# FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS

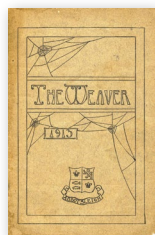
Abbotsleigh embarked upon its partnership with Yalari in 2008 under the leadership of Mrs Judith Poole, and from there we have grown the program for First Nations students to become an integral part of who we are as a school. As Deputy Headmistress and Head of Senior School, Mrs Victoria Rennie says, 'We are so fortunate to currently have 16 First Nations students at Abbotsleigh. We believe that their contributions enrich our whole school community. We work in partnership with our girls and their families, developing an understanding of, and respect for, culture from their non-Indigenous peers and staff, which in turn supports both their sense of pride and belonging and it is this that makes for the rich tapestry that is Abbotsleigh. We believe that having First Nations students is an important part of the steps toward a future of educational inclusion and reconciliation.'



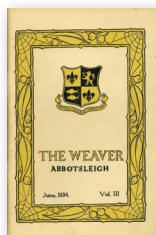
In its inaugural year, the First Nations Artists Exchange saw a collaboration between Abbotsleigh's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and contemporary artist Tiarna Herczeg, to design the 2025 Indigenous Round jerseys (pictured as the background image to this page). Tiarna is a Yalanji/Kuku Nyungkul woman, with family ties extending to Hopevale, Cherbourg and Laura, Queensland. The students worked with Tiarna to develop a design which reflects the journeys they make from their respective Countries to Dharug and Guring-gai lands, and the sisterhood they experience, within boarding and as a group of First Nations students.

Artwork (Detail): Tiarna Herczeg, 2025

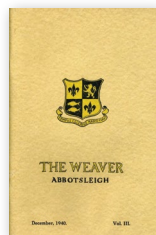




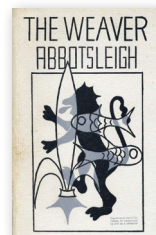
1913-1924



1932-1935



1935-1950



1968-1970



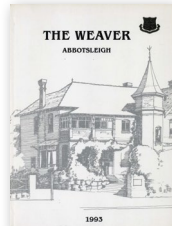
1978



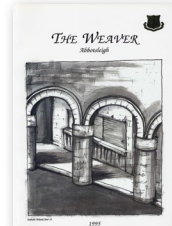
'81 ABBOTTSLEIGH  
1981



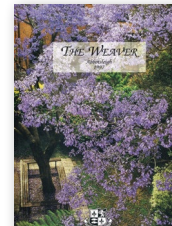
'82 ABBOTTSLEIGH  
1982



1993



1995

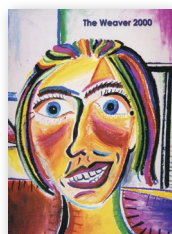


1997

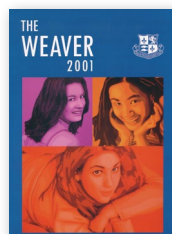
# THE STORIES WE TELL...



1999



2000



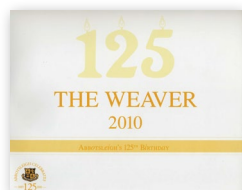
2001



2003



2005



2010



2013



2016



2017



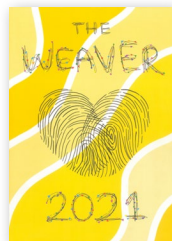
2018



2019



2020



2021



2022

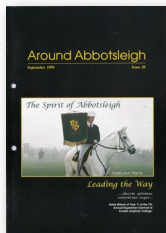


2023

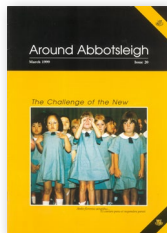




Issue 1, 1991



Issue 20A, 1999



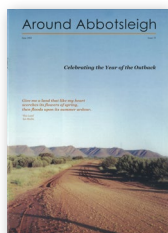
Issue 20B, 1999



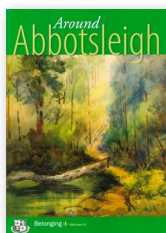
Issue 21, 1999



Issue 30, 2001



Issue 33, 2002



Issue 37, 2004



Issue 39, 2005



Issue 42, 2007

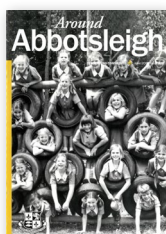


Issue 43, 2007

Abbotsleigh has been publishing its yearbook *The Weaver* since 1913 and *Around Abbotsleigh* since 1992. Other well known publications include the weekly newsletter *The Shuttle* and some former publications such as *Tempus*, *Foundation News* and *The Grapevine*.



Issue 41, 2006



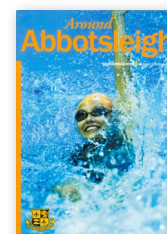
Issue 46, 2009



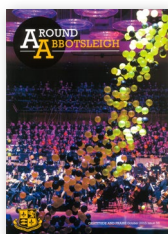
Issue 48, 2010



Issue 51, 2012



Issue 53, 2013



Issue 56, 2015



Issue 58, 2016



Issue 60, 2017



Issue 62, 2019



Issue 69, 2024



Alex Norton (Deane, 1983) joined Abbotsleigh in 2007 as Development Manager and now serves as the School's Publications Manager. While she plays a key role in producing many of the School's publications, Alex is part of a much larger team of dedicated professionals who work behind the scenes to support the School's mission. She is proud to represent the many support staff whose contributions are vital to the life of the School. Alex's connection to Abbotsleigh is also deeply personal: her three daughters, Eloise Gillespie (Norton, 2008), Dimity O'Brien (Norton, 2009) and Georgia Norton (2013) are, like their mum, all Abbotsleigh Old Girls.





# JUNIOR SCHOOL

The Junior School campus was purchased, conceived and constructed under the leadership of Miss Everett and opened in 1954, just 10 days before the end of her tenure as Headmistress. However, primary years education began with Marian Clarke and has always been part of Abbotsleigh.

The Junior School learning environment is one where girls feel safe to explore, experiment and make mistakes alongside educators who are knowledgeable, passionate and dedicated to each child's success. In the Junior School, girls connect deeply with their class teacher who seeks to know each child holistically, nurture their wellbeing and ensure that highly developed literacy and numeracy skills are attained. Quality instruction in HSIE, Science, PDHPE and the Creative and Performing Arts brings richness and joy for each girl.

At the end of 2024, and after 25 years of service to Abbotsleigh, Ms Sally Ruston AM, our much beloved Head of Junior School retired. Ms Ruston's transformational leadership saw the doubling of the staff and student numbers in the Junior School during her tenure, along with revitalisation of the campus buildings and grounds. During the Speech Day tributes to Ms Ruston, Mrs Liz Cannon, Director of Wellbeing said, 'Ms Ruston, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your leadership, vision, commitment, dedication, care and unwavering belief in the potential of every girl as well as the incredible impact you have had on so many lives over four decades [in education]. You will be sorely missed.'



**DIGITAL CONTENT**



History of the Junior School Timeline



Welcome to Junior School at Abbotsleigh





## Wendy Blaxland (1967)

Head Prefect in 1967, Wendy is now an established author and playwright, working in fiction, non-fiction, poetry and theatre. She has published over 115 children's books and written over 25 plays, many for Marian Street Theatre for Young People.

'My time at Abbotsleigh under Betty Archdale brought me lifelong friends and encouraged my love of learning; it taught me that women were as capable as men, the importance of service to others and above all the courage to ask myself 'Why not?' instead of 'Why?' when wondering whether I should take my young family round Europe in a campervan, start a family theatre company, become a writer...'



## Leela Cejnar (Underwood, 1982)

Head Prefect in 1982, Leela studied Arts/Law at the University of Sydney and worked in legal practice, before later completing a PhD and becoming a law academic.

'Abbotsleigh is my guardian angel, with many of my former teachers still watching over me, now as my mentors! Abbotsleigh is also my family, with both my daughters, Jessica Cejnar (2019) and Olivia Cejnar (2021), my sister, Deanna Underwood (1987), and two nieces, Elizabeth Underwood (2015) and Rebekah Underwood (2018), all proudly AOGs. So, to Abbotsleigh I raise my voice, in gratitude and praise, for the blessings of a lifelong journey!'



## Georgia Dawson (1993)

Georgia was named senior partner of international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer in 2020. It's a remarkable achievement: first female senior partner, first Australian senior partner and first Abbotsleigh Old Girl to run one of the world's elite 'Magic Circle' law firms. Georgia was a boarder at Abbotsleigh and Head Prefect in 1993.

'My horizons were broadened, we were encouraged to be bold and try new things with a sense that anything was possible, and I made some truly amazing friends who I know will always be there for me throughout life.'



## Joceyln Abbott (2017)

Since graduating with a Tuckwell Scholarship to study Arts/Law at ANU, Jocelyn has led a national initiative to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through self-determined solutions. She plays a key role in guiding the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and shaping policies aligned with First Nations aspirations. Based in Canberra with her partner and dog, Jocelyn also serves on the ACT Reconciliation Council and the Canberra Environment Centre. She was Head Prefect in 2017.


'Life after Abbotsleigh has been informed by a passion for service nurtured in me by the School.'



# INTEGRITY

We are honest and truthful

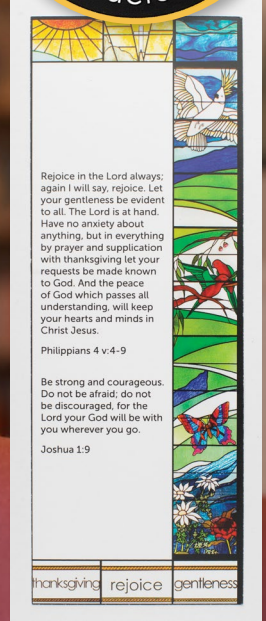




**Therefore, putting away lying,  
let every person speak truthfully  
with their neighbour.**

Ephesians 4:25a





'In Joshua it is written, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid: do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." I encourage you to embrace the joy of learning and to live and lead with confidence and compassion, knowing that you are never alone.'

Megan Krimmer





## **Megan Krimmer 2017-present**

Abbotsleigh's eleventh Headmistress, Megan Krimmer, has dedicated her career to teaching History and English while holding key leadership roles in education. After 10 years as Head of Senior School at Abbotsleigh, she became Head of Roseville College from 2011-2016. In 2017, she returned to Abbotsleigh as Headmistress, where she continues to guide and inspire students toward success, with a strong commitment to advancing education for young women and inspiring them to make a difference in the world.





## Dr Meredith Burgmann AM (1964)

Meredith is a trailblazing Australian politician, academic and activist. A former Abbotsleigh Head Prefect, Meredith was the first female President of the National Tertiary Education Union and later became Australia's longest-serving female presiding officer as NSW Legislative Council President. A lifelong activist, she was famously jailed for protesting the 1971 Springboks tour. She co-founded the Ernie Awards to expose sexism and has championed equal pay, Indigenous rights and environmental causes. She also served on Sydney City Council, led the Australian Council for International Development and consulted for the UN. She remains a passionate advocate for social justice, feminism and civil liberties.



## Dr Sophie Scamps (1988)

When Sophie was elected as the Federal Member for Mackellar in 2022, she became the first Abbotsleigh Old Girl to sit in the Australian Parliament. Sophie worked in emergency medicine and general practice before her parliamentary career. She shared her passion for environmental advocacy, women in politics and integrity in government with Abbotsleigh girls in 2024. Her words resonated with the School community: 'Action leads to hope, action together leads to change'; 'If not you, then who?'; and 'Exercise your courage muscle'.



## Bronte Moules (1984)

Bronte is the Australian Ambassador for Human Rights, having previously served as Ambassador to Zimbabwe with non-resident accreditation to Malawi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Zambia. She held senior roles in Canberra's International Organisations Branch and served overseas in Papua New Guinea, Myanmar and Bangkok. She completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from ANU and a Graduate Diploma in Foreign Affairs and Trade from Monash University.

Photo: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



## Jane Paingakulam (1989)

Jane earned an Arts Law degree at the University of Sydney and was admitted as a solicitor in 1996. She served 14 years in the Australian Public Service, receiving an Australia Day Medal for Public Service. Called to the Bar in 2009, she practised criminal law, often representing Legal Aid clients. In 2024, Jane was appointed a judge of the NSW Industrial Court and Deputy President of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. She recalls Robyn Claydon 'telling a class that she would always pray before she walked into a classroom. I always pray before I walk into a courtroom. The Lord has put me in this role and I need His wisdom to fulfil it.'





## Grace Cossington Smith OBE (c1910)

Marian Clarke, Abbotsleigh's artistic and enterprising founding Headmistress, valued an education in all aspects of life, not merely the academic. In her mind, an academic life in isolation without the sporting and artistic spheres did not create a well-rounded education and Miss Clarke sought to create this at Abbotsleigh, which was quite unusual at the time.

When Grace Cossington Smith attended Abbotsleigh, Miss Clarke had engaged the services of specialist teachers, among whom were three respected artists – Eirene Mort, Albert Collins and Alfred Coffey. Due to this, Grace found an unexpected artistic heritage at Abbotsleigh and a keen supporter in Miss Clarke.

Grace began drawing at Abbotsleigh, but in 1909 she also studied drawing with Antonio Dattilo-Rubbo and in 1914 she started painting. Her oil painting *The Sock Knitter*, 1915, in the Art Gallery of NSW, is considered a significant modernist artwork and was the first work that she exhibited. The Abbotsleigh cape can be seen hanging on the chair behind the subject, Grace's sister Madge.

Grace is regarded as one of Australia's foremost modernist artists and she was a brilliant colourist. In a 1965 interview she stated, 'My chief interest, I think, has always been colour, but not crude flat colour, it must be colour within colour, it has to shine; light must be in it, it is no good having heavy, dead colour.'

Grace lived most of her life in her family home at Turramurra and her paintings of interiors and the Sydney Harbour Bridge have become iconic images in Australian art.



The Grace Cossington Smith Gallery was established in 2013 in the former Vindin boarding house to provide an exhibition program and education resource for the whole School. The gallery has become an established cornerstone for the School, the local community and for the broader arts network.

For more than 45 years, Mrs Mary Faith has been a beloved teacher, Head of Art and now Director of the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery at Abbotsleigh. A passionate advocate for the arts and for girls' education, Mary has shaped generations with her creativity, wisdom and humour. She once reflected, 'To stay for [so long], it is necessary to like the students, to be rejuvenated by their enthusiasm and enjoy their humour.' Her lessons were never just about technique – they were about thinking deeply, seeing clearly and being present. She championed divergent learning styles long before it was common, believing in the power of teaching the individual. Mary's leadership and vision for the gallery has left an indelible mark on the School community. As she once said, 'To be teaching something you love, to know that what you are doing is what you WANT to be doing.'





# 140 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP

Marian Clarke introduced student leadership roles at Abbotsleigh from its earliest days. These opportunities have played a vital role in shaping confident, responsible young women who are prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities. While formal positions offer valuable experience in service and accountability, every senior student at Abbotsleigh is encouraged to take initiative, influence school culture and develop essential life skills such as resilience, decision-making and collaboration. Abbotsleigh is deeply committed to empowering all students to grow as capable, thoughtful contributors within and beyond the school environment.



The original Head Prefect's badge was passed from Head Prefect to Head Prefect until 1924. This badge, along with the original black and silver Prefects' badges, were passed on to each Prefect from year to year until Miss Murray retired in 1924 and Miss Poole became Headmistress. In 1924, those who had the original badges were allowed to keep them. Barbara Munro (Peden, 1924) donated this badge to the Thurles Thomas Archive in 1973.





Artwork: *My school*, acrylic on canvas by Dianne Gregson – submission for Mystery Masterpieces 2025

# ABBOTSLEIGH COUNCIL

The Council of Abbotsleigh was formed in 1924 for the purposes of managing and governing Abbotsleigh, particularly in relation to its policies and strategies, its property and finances and for the appointment of the Headmistress and the Chaplain. Abbotsleigh is located within the Sydney Anglican Diocese and Council has reporting obligation to the Synod of the Diocese. Council comprises 14 members, nine elected by the Anglican Synod, three by the Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union and two by other members of Council. The Archbishop of Sydney is President of Council (ex-officio).



Linda Ellis (Morris, 1990) was appointed Chair of the Council of Abbotsleigh in 2023 and is the first female and Old Girl to hold this significant role. Linda has been Group Company Secretary and Corporate Counsel and a member of the Group Executive at Steadfast Group Limited, an ASX100 company in the financial services sector with a growing global footprint, a role she held for 10 years. Linda is a director of a number of Steadfast's businesses. Key aspects of her role include governance, ESG, compliance in a highly regulated industry, capital raisings, debt financing and stakeholder engagement.



# CURRENT STAFF 20+ YEARS

Annabel Armstrong (2001), Kim Barker (Claydon, 1981) (1990), Sophie Beard (2002), Lorraine Boothby (1996), Steve Bultitude (2003), Liz Cannon (1980), Linda Chapman (1996), Lynette Clarke (2005), Louisa Davidson (2004), Viola Dominello (1987), Sarah Evans (2000), Mary Faith (1980), Greg Fisher (2003), Helen Fletcher (2004), Pat Griffiths (1996), Carole Helbert (2001), Jenn Hurl (2005), Sue Johnston (1999), Jo Jones (1999), Murray Keating (1997), Sean Kelleher (1989), David Knott (2005), Ingrid Little (1980), Jodie Maffey (2003), Donna Moffatt (2002), Warwick Noble (2000), Joe Pocock (1995), Belinda Robertson (1990), Elizabeth Russell (2002), Mel Ryan (Brown, 2000) (2005), Matt Shanahan (2004), Alyssa Squence (2003), Darcy Tindale (2004), Annette Ware (1997), Lyndall Wells (2003), Jo Wheatley (2002), Belinda Williams (1994)





Thurles Thomas (1926)



Avril Condren, Archivist, 1986-2001



Julie Daly, Archivist, 2001-2022



Dr Jennifer McLaren, current Archivist

# THURLES THOMAS ARCHIVES

Abbotsleigh maintains the Thurles Thomas Archives to collect and preserve records and heritage material related to the school, its students, Old Girls and staff. The Archives promotes Abbotsleigh's legacy as a leading girls' school, supports its educational goals, and fosters community engagement.

While working as Abbotsleigh's first librarian, AOG Thurles Thomas (1926) began collecting materials about the school's history. The 1985 Centenary led to the formal establishment of an Archive, with Thomas's personal collection forming the core. In recognition of her service – as student, teacher, librarian, volunteer, AOGU Committee member and School Councillor – the Archives were named in her honour and officially opened in the Abbotsleigh Research Centre in 2006.

Since 1985, Abbotsleigh has had three archivists: Avril Condren (1986–2001), Julie Daly (2001–2022), and Dr Jennifer McLaren. Students from Transition to Year 12 use the Archives for research and volunteering. Treasured items include the suffragette medal belonging to Helen Archdale (Betty's mother), military medals, Marian Clarke's watercolours, candid student photos and early 20th-century autograph books.

Abbotsleigh Time Capsules: There are currently two time capsules buried for posterity at Abbotsleigh. The first was placed in the entrance to the Year 12 Common Room (Old Gym) as part of the centenary celebrations in 1985 and is earmarked to be opened in 2035. The second was deposited during the construction of the new Betty Archdale Library in 2024 by a group of students in the Lipman Student Engagement Program.



Student work: This dress, first displayed at our Opera House Concert 'Night of a Thousand Stars', is the Major Design Project of Meera Nirmalendran (Year 12, 2025), created to celebrate Abbotsleigh's rich history and the unique creative legacy of its students. The garment's fabric features a digitally hand-drawn design inspired by historical drawings, artefacts and past student works gathered from the Archives and includes hand-sewn embellishments with uniform fabric and beading. The details aim to weave a narrative that connects past and present students in a shared tradition of creativity, belonging and community.



Helen Archdale's suffragette medal



The Prichard Zebra









# NIGHT OF A THOUSAND STARS

Many of Abbotsleigh's big anniversaries have been celebrated at the Sydney Opera House. In 2025, our special 140th birthday celebration 'Night of a Thousand Stars' showcased the superb musical talents of our girls in Years 5-12, our 'stars'.

A highlight of the concert was the world premiere performance of 'The Hive's Caper', a unique composition and gift to the School by our Composer-in-Residence, Dr Harry Sdraulig. Reflecting the intricacies and activities of a beehive, this specially commissioned piece showcased the extraordinary talents of our Abbotsleigh students.

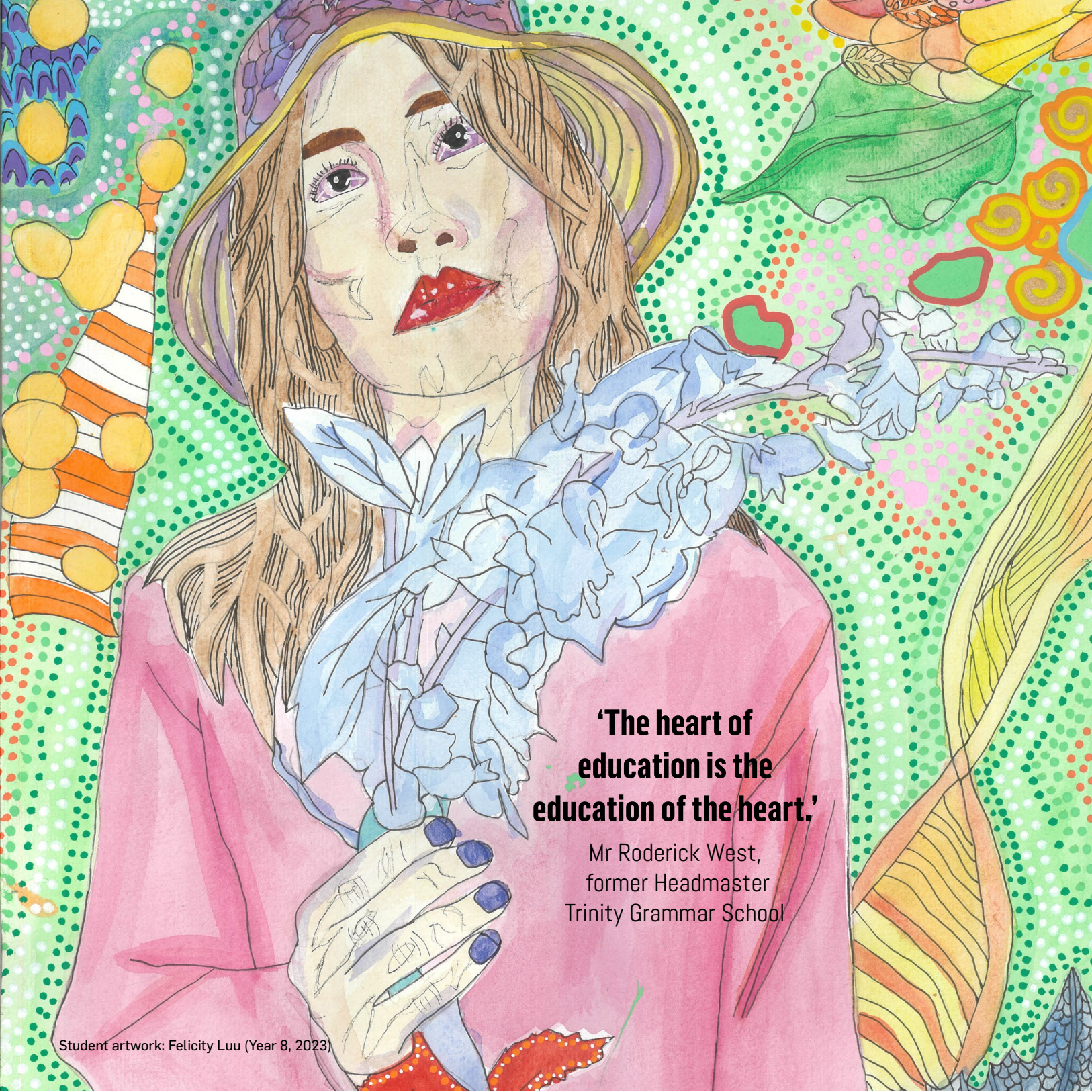


Amy Nelson (2017), known by her stage name Little Green, has pursued her passion in music since she left school, touring Australia as a singer songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. Amy's early work captures the longing for something lost – innocence and childlike wonder – and songs such as 'Little Star' and 'Galaxies' were given new life in her arrangement of 'Night of a Thousand Stars' for Abbotsleigh's 140th Anniversary Concert.



**HEAD, HEARTS  
AND HANDS**





**'The heart of  
education is the  
education of the heart.'**

Mr Roderick West,  
former Headmaster  
Trinity Grammar School





Artwork: *Portrait of Judith Poole*, 2016, Sally Ryan

'We will need to be not only diligent and rigorous in our teaching and learning but also prayerful and reflective in our decision making.'

Judith Poole



A grayscale photograph of an indoor sports hall, likely a basketball court. The image shows a basketball hoop and backboard suspended from a metal frame. The floor is polished wood with visible court lines. The walls are curved and feature large windows at the base. The ceiling is high with several bright lights. The overall atmosphere is clean and modern.

## **Judith Poole 2005-2016**

As Abbotsleigh's tenth Headmistress, Judith Poole was an exemplary strategic and creative thinker with a clear and inspiring vision for the School, matched only by her compassion and concern for each student, staff and community member. Her personal and intellectual qualities, and her infectious enthusiasm, helped to position Abbotsleigh at the forefront of innovation and created an outstanding learning environment. Her unwavering Christian faith, commitment to sport and fair competition, and her sense of fun underpinned all her interactions around the School. Mrs Poole led many initiatives during her tenure, spanning building programs, stained glass windows for the Chapel, deeper engagement in STEM subjects, outdoor education and Indigenous scholarships. She initiated the partnership with Yalari that continues to this day; the legacy of Indigenous scholars at Abbotsleigh enriches the School's connections with Australia's First Nations community and its deep past. Reflecting Mrs Poole's devotion to sport, she was delighted when the Sports Hall was named in her honour in 2016.





# IMMERSION WEEK

Immersion Week evolved from ALE (Applied Learning Experience) as a fantastic opportunity for Abbotsleigh girls in Year 10. The program has three pillars: an immersive experience provides an opportunity for students to dive deeply into a cause or community; a deep learning intention that fosters learning that 'sticks' beyond the actual experience, contributes to meaning and purpose and helps a person find their place in a complex world; and a commitment to positive social impact through collaboration and teamwork and in response to real needs.







# RED EARTH

Red Earth is an ongoing collaboration since 2017 aligning with Abbotsleigh's commitment to work towards reconciliation with First Nations people. It is a deep learning experience that fosters curiosity, empathy and respect, allowing students to develop a richer understanding of First Nations culture and communities.







From left: Melanie Blair (2007), Adelaide Gow (Ferrier, 1996), Marissa Smithson (Flynn, 2006), Liz Begbie (Watson, 1994), Sally Begbie (Marr, 1968), Barbara Blair (Fisher, 1970)

## OLD GIRLS + CROSSROADS

Alexandra Badenhop (Hutchins, 1995)  
 Justine Barnett (Bispham, 2008)  
 Sally Begbie (Marr, 1968)  
 Liz Begbie (Watson, 1994)  
 Jess Bispham (2006)  
 Barbara Blair (Fisher, 1970)  
 Melanie Blair (2007)  
 Alex Chetia (Crawford, 2006)  
 Helen Ford (Lloyd, 1939)  
 Jill Goss (Muir, 1960)  
 Adelaide Gow (Ferrier, 1996)  
 Jane Henderson (Calov, 1968)  
 Jacinta Lin (2018)  
 Marissa Smithson (Flynn, 2006)  
 Hannah Quadrio (Ware, 2004)  
 Wendy Watson (Westbrook, 1961)

# CROSSROADS FOUNDATION

Crossroads Foundation Hong Kong is a non-profit organisation responding to global need. Crossroads sees itself as providing an intersection, literally 'a crossroads', to bring need and resource together. Since its humble beginnings in 1995, Crossroads has grown into a large and reputable organisation. Founders, Abbotsleigh Old Girl Sally Begbie (Marr, 1968) and her husband Malcolm, have been recognised with one of the highest civilian honours, Officers of the Order of Australia (AO) 'for distinguished service to the international community in the provision of humanitarian relief, particularly through the Crossroads Foundation, and as a significant contributor to UN efforts to connect business organisations with those in need.'



Sally AO and Malcolm AO, founders of Crossroads 1995



In 1968, Sally was in a band at school called the Four Little Fishes (Sally, Anne Millard, Cathy Campbell and Margaret Shain) that went to the Adelaide Arts Festival.





# ABBOTSLEIGH + CROSSROADS

It has been a privilege for Abbotsleigh to assist the work of the Crossroads Foundation since 2002 through numerous short term volunteering trips. Each one was a rewarding, and in many cases, life-changing experience for the students involved. Participating in the 'Global X-periences' program, involving simulations on war, HIV/AIDS, blindness, water shortage, hunger, poverty and more, enabled our girls to understand need with their hearts as well as their heads. In 2018, we welcomed David Begbie and his wife Liz Begbie (Watson, 1998) to Abbotsleigh to lead simulations with Senior School students and staff, which was a powerful and memorable experience for our community. Our involvement with the Crossroads Foundation is well aligned with Abbotsleigh's Christian faith, commitment to service learning and aim of developing empathetic and compassionate global citizens.







## CLUBS AND CO-CURRICULAR

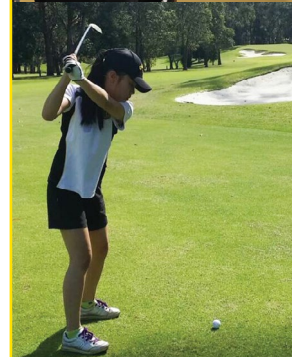
Co-curricular at Abbotsleigh is focused on creating opportunities for further learning outside the classroom. Through debating and public speaking, emotional maturity and critical thinking skills are developed. Through performing arts such as music and drama, girls learn to think creatively. Through sport, girls not only enhance their physical fitness, they also learn the importance of teamwork, time management and the value of a support network. The co-curricular activities that are a feature of the Abbotsleigh journey set girls on paths to know themselves better and light fires of lifelong commitment and connection.







140th Birthday Celebration Archival Projects, Abb Tech Support Club, Agriculture Club, Amnesty Club, Ancient Greek, Art Space, Biology Olympiad, Board Games, Chapel Band, Chess Club, CRU, Cryptic Crossword, da Vinci Decathlon, Embrace Global, eSports, Ethics Olympiad, Fairtrade Club, FCA Huddle, Film Lovers Club, Healthcare Society, History Club, Interact Club, Investigation with Mathematics, Junior Science Olympiad, Language Culture Club, Left-to-Write, Linguistics Olympiad (OzClo), Literary Festival, Lunchtime Sports, Mana Allawah, Mock Trial, Model United Nations Assembly (MUNA), Oaktree Club, Physics and Chemistry Olympiad, Puzzle Mania, SLATe (Student Library Advisory Team), Socratic Seminar, STEAMania, TEDxYouth@Abbotsleigh, Textiles – North Shore Mums, The Freedom Project, The Weaver, Titration Competition, Wool for Warmth, World Vision, Young Curators, Z Club (Zonta)







## Lowanna Grant (2004)

Lowanna is a proud Wiradjuri and Western Arrernte woman, Executive Producer and host of NITV Radio at SBS. With over a decade at NITV/SBS, she's held key roles including host of *The World Game*. She created the *Nginyang* podcast with her grandfather, Uncle Stan Grant Senior. Passionate about storytelling and cultural preservation, Lowanna continues to amplify First Nations voices and studies Wiradjuri to carry her family's legacy forward.



## Hannah Quadrio (Ware, 2004)

Hannah was Vice Head Prefect – Service in 2004, leading support for the Catherine Hamlin Fistula Hospital, sparking her passion for social justice. After studying Arts/Law at the University of Sydney, she worked across legal sectors, including Legal Aid. Time spent living in the Northern Territory precipitated an interest in how Indigenous people experience legal processes. Hannah plans to further research how unconscious bias affects representation of Aboriginal people in care and protection matters.



## Sheldyn Briggs (2016)

Sheldyn is a Gamilaroi woman from Moree who was an Abbotsleigh Yalari Scholar. After completing a Bachelor of Education, she moved home to teach at the same primary school she attended as a child. She currently works with the AFL as an Indigenous Academies Coordinator, merging her passion for education and sport. Sheldyn also empowers women through Gamilaroi Sisters United, providing mentorship to Indigenous youth and creating bright futures.



## Holly Austin (2020)

Holly is a proud Gamilaroi woman from Moree, who was a Yalari Scholar at Abbotsleigh and now works in science education. She pursued a university pathway through the Indigenous Access Program (IAP) where she studied Criminal Justice. Having worked in an Aboriginal housing organisation, Holly is driven by a strong passion for learning, working and volunteering. She continues to give back to her communities by applying the skills and knowledge she has gained over the years.





# ABBOX

Abbotsleigh has hosted the Sony Foundation Children's Holiday Camp in partnership with Knox Grammar School since 2009. Students in Year 12 from both schools care for disabled children aged 5-17 in a three-day residential program that offers some respite for families just before Christmas. We affectionately call this the 'ABBOX of Fun' program and it is a rich and rewarding service learning activity.





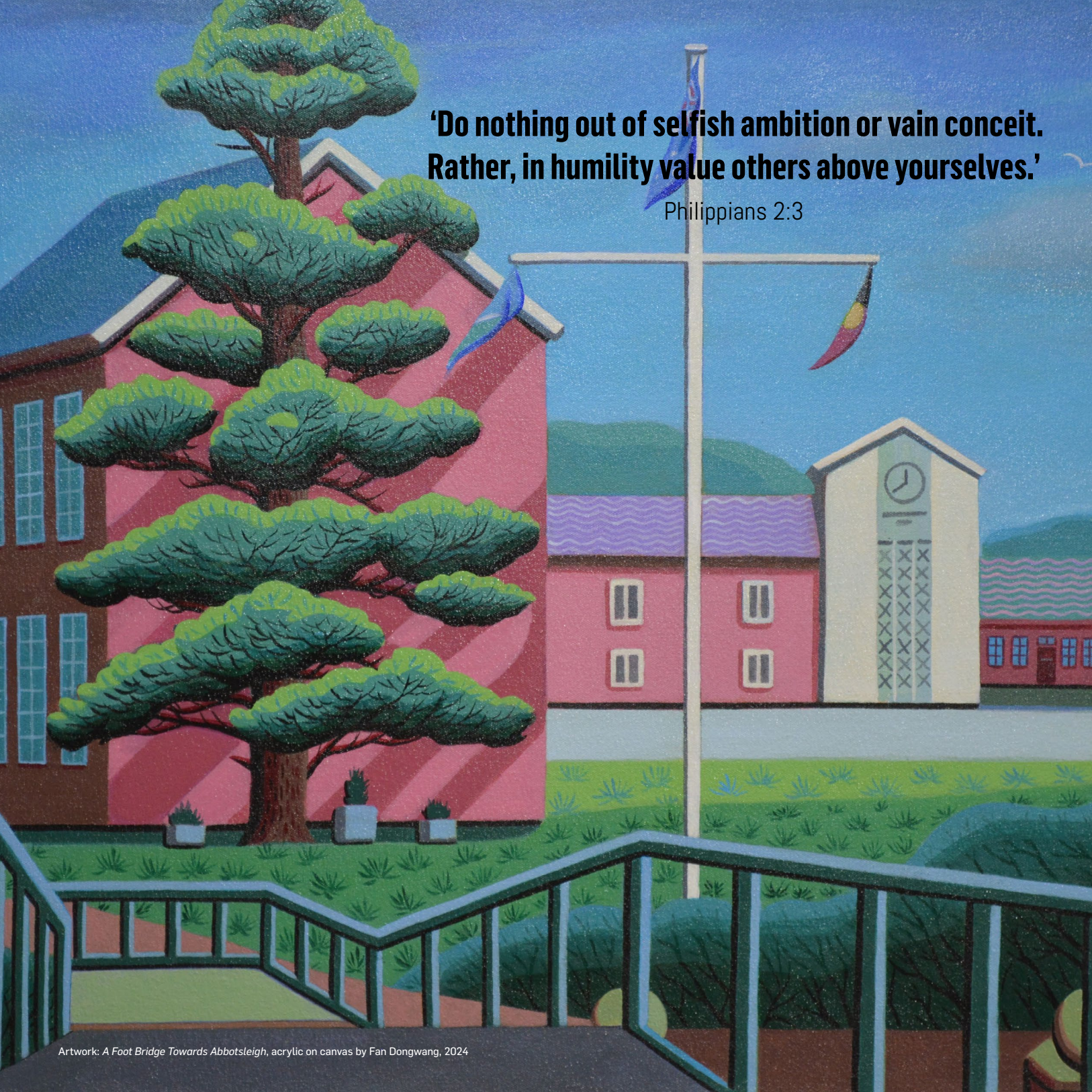
# RESPECT

We value everyone for who they are



**'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.  
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.'**

Philippians 2:3







Artwork: *Portrait of Dorothea Poole*, 1930, Norman Clarke

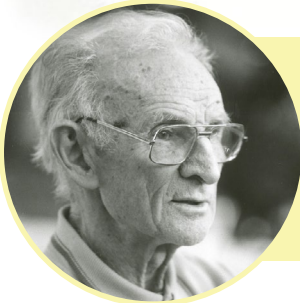
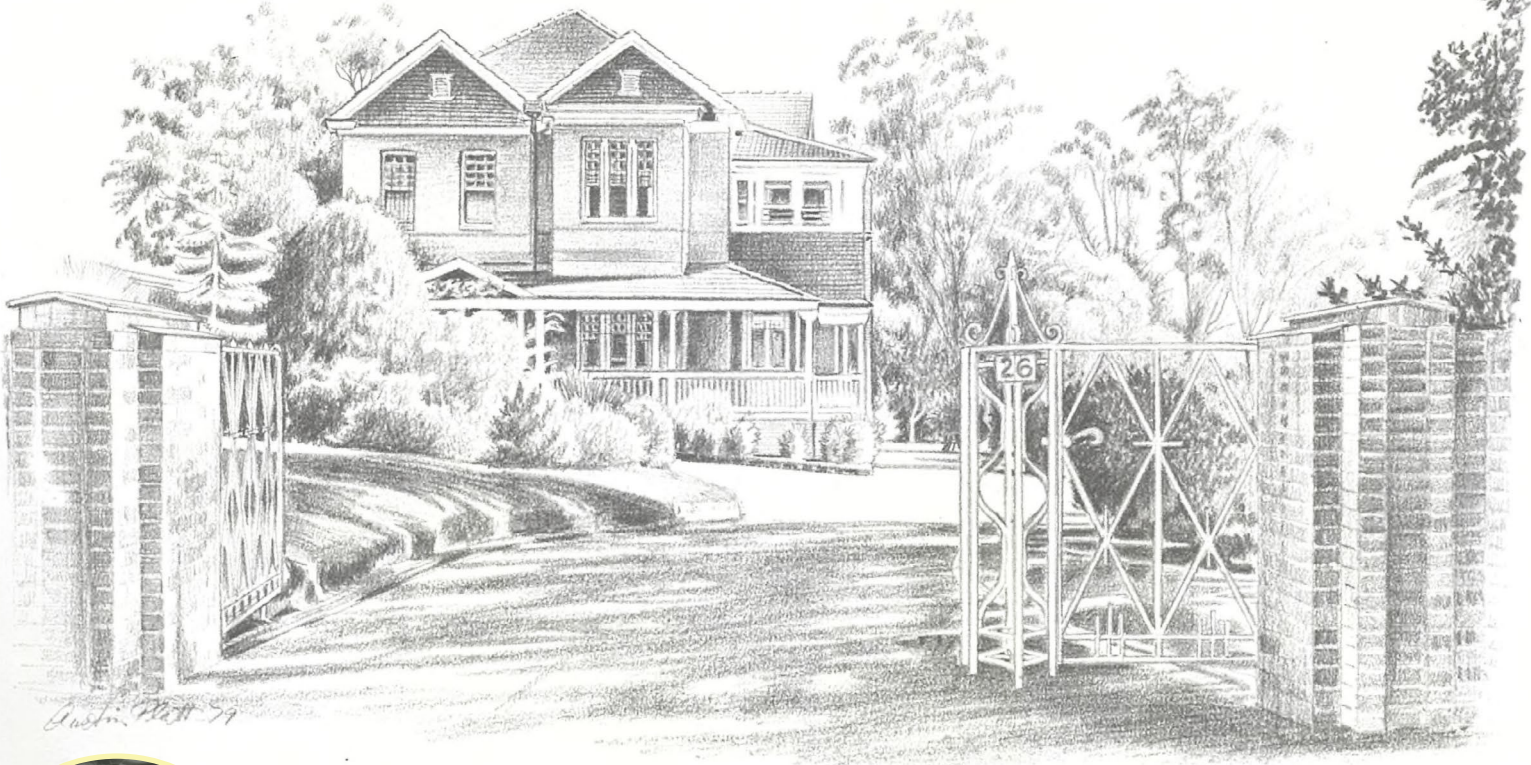
'The welfare of the School rests no less in your hands than in mine. We must all work together to uphold its splendid traditions, to preserve its unblemished name, and to make it an instrument for good throughout the land.'

Dorothea Poole



## Dorothea Poole 1924-1930

At her first school assembly as Abbotsleigh's third Headmistress in 1924, Miss Poole exhorted girls and teachers to 'work together to uphold [Abbotsleigh's] splendid traditions, to preserve its unblemished name, and to make it an instrument for good throughout the land'. She combined this respect for tradition with living out her deep Christian faith, setting an example to the School community. Miss Poole assisted with establishing the Chapel Fund to build a chapel onsite and passed on her love of literature in the form of the Shakespeare Festival, which she initiated in 1925. This remains one of Abbotsleigh's longest-standing traditions. Miss Poole was assured by her students when she left the School that 'there is a place in our hearts that only she can ever occupy'.



Austin Platt was born in Perth, educated in New Zealand but settled in Sydney. He was apprenticed as an artist in a commercial studio and studied at the Sydney Art School and East Sydney Technical College, among other places. He specialised in producing etchings of school and historic buildings. After his retirement he focused on watercolours, primarily of Centennial Park in Sydney. Inspired by his beautiful work in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Deputy Headmistress Robyn Claydon invited Mr Platt to collaborate on their 1984 book *Abbotsleigh: A walk through time*, which was published to coincide with the School's centenary. Many of his sketches appear throughout *Humans of Abbotsleigh*.





## Rosemary Farrow (Farleigh, 1954)

To celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, Abbotsleigh held a Coronation Regalia Competition. Rosemary submitted a crown made of jam tins, replica jewels and coloured velvet wool trim. Despite her efforts, she didn't win. Only 60 years later did she know the reason – apparently the teachers thought she couldn't possibly have made the crown herself! Rosemary donated her crown to the Thurles Thomas Archives in 2014.



## Dr Janet West (Conti, 1952)

Janet is an accomplished Christian educator and writer with connections to the royal family. Before her husband was appointed Headmaster at Trinity Grammar School, Dr West taught at Geelong Grammar School's Timbertop, where she taught French to the future King Charles III. During the then Prince Charles's visit to Australia in 2018, Dr West reminisced with him, showing him *Les Mouches* by Jean-Paul Sartre that they studied together. Dr West attributes her love of languages to her inspiring teachers at Abbotsleigh. Pictured here in the Assembly Hall during a recent visit to the School, Janet was delighted to find her name on the Honour Board for the Ada McIlraith Prize.







The then Prince of Wales (left) talks to his former French teacher Dr Janet West from Timbertop Geelong Grammar School in Victoria, during a reception hosted by the Governor of Queensland His Excellency The Honourable Paul de Jersey AC at Government House in Queensland, Australia, 2018.

*The Commonwealth at 75* is a very special publication that was launched in October 2024 in the Cloisters at Westminster Abbey. The book was researched and written by a select team of academics and award-winning authors and explores the origins, history and impact of the Commonwealth up to the present day, including an article about Abbotsleigh. The book marks the appointment of King Charles III as the Head of the Commonwealth. Abbotsleigh Old Girls Leela Cejnar (1982), Jessica Cejnar (2019) and Georgia Barker (2011) were able to join Headmistress Mrs Krimmer at the launch celebration.







# DEBATING AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

Abbotsleigh has a proud tradition of debating, having offered co-curricular debating opportunities since the 1920s. By participating in public speaking and debating, girls learn lifelong skills of how to analyse differing perspectives as well as communicate their ideas confidently and persuasively. They also develop their teamwork, speaking and listening skills. In the Junior School, group debating activities are open to girls from Year 4 onwards and these continue throughout Senior School, both in an internal non-competitive program as well as a lively program of interschool competitions. House debating is a great Abbotsleigh tradition and is an annual event.

Abbotsleigh participates in the following major competitions across Junior and Senior Schools: Independent Primary School Heads of Australia (IPSHA) Debating Competition, Independent Schools Debating Association (ISDA), The Archdale Debating Competition and Sydney Debating Network (SDN), which involves eight schools from Sydney's north.

The public speaking program teaches confidence, persuasive speaking skills and raises awareness of global issues. Abbotsleigh students compete in a range of competitions including Rostrum Voice of Youth, NSW Junior Secondary Speaking Award, The Plain English Speaking Award and the IGSA Festival of Speech.





## THE POWER OF ONE VOICE: ALICE'S STORY

In 2022, while in Year 10, Alice Harrington (2024) completed a Work Experience placement with Greens MP Abigail Boyd at the NSW Parliament. During her time there, Alice had the extraordinary opportunity to draft a speech that was later delivered by Ms Boyd in Parliament. Inspired by this experience, Alice returned to school and collaborated with Year 6 Coordinator Brittany Carrington and Director of Learning Innovation Donna Moffat to create a video titled *What Matters to Me*. In it, she shared her passion for climate action and explored the power of persuasive language – logos, ethos and pathos – to drive change. Her message resonated deeply with the Year 6 students, who were then challenged to craft their own persuasive pieces. One student reflected, 'Wow, she is so passionate – but she had to work hard to raise her voice.' Alice's journey became a powerful catalyst for student voice and advocacy across the School.



We are delighted that Anika Niles (Year 12, 2025) is a finalist in the inaugural Dame Enid Lyons Oratory Competition, the most prestigious Public Speaking Competition for girls in NSW and named after Dame Enid Lyons, who was the first female Member of the House of Representatives and wife of the Australian Prime Minister Joseph Lyons. The competition involves delivering an eight minute impromptu speech on an unseen topic with 15 minutes' preparation time. The aim of this oratory competition is to provide a platform for brilliant and articulate young women to elevate their speech writing and oral presentation skills and communicate their perspectives about topics that may include social, educative, historical and cultural aspects.



# WELLBEING

Wellbeing has always been a significant aspect of life at Abbotsleigh. This importance has been especially highlighted and articulated over the past two decades. It cannot be overlooked that the devastating Covid pandemic actually helped the Abbotsleigh community to fully realise just how important wellbeing is for all of us. Abbotsleigh has a deep understanding of the inseparable connection between wellbeing and learning, and wellbeing and life. Our girls, staff and parents recognise the importance of belonging, feeling connected, being empowered and able to flourish so as to make a difference in the world. Abbotsleigh has invested in extensive professional learning for our staff and education for our parents to ensure that ultimate care and support is provided to our girls. Our girls are explicitly and implicitly taught social and emotional skills needed for learning and life. Being a person of fine character, living by the values of the School and being able to navigate the ups and downs of life with compassion, empathy and courage is fundamental to wellbeing at Abbotsleigh.



Liz Cannon has been a cherished member of Abbotsleigh staff for more than 40 years, inspiring generations through her many roles – from teacher and psychologist to Director of Wellbeing. Deeply respected by staff and adored by students, Liz's passion for girls' mental health and education shines in all she does. Her wisdom, warmth and dedication have shaped countless lives and her legacy of care and leadership continues to enrich the heart of our School community. Liz reflects, 'I feel incredibly grateful to have worked at Abbotsleigh in exciting and varied roles for nearly half a century. I have had the privilege of working with five brilliant and visionary Headmistresses, amazingly dedicated and dynamic teachers and, most importantly, the wonderful Abbotsleigh girls and their families. Thank you Abbotsleigh for enriching my life personally and professionally!'





### **Dr Agnes Elizabeth Lloyd Bennett OBE (1887)**

Agnes was a foundation student at Abbotsleigh. After studying Science at the University of Sydney, she earned her medical degree and PhD from Edinburgh. She practised in New Zealand, served in WWI in Europe and North Africa, and later led Wellington's St Helens Hospital. In WWII, she helped organise the Women's War Service Auxiliary and worked in England's Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence. A pioneer, she was reputedly the first woman to own and drive a car in New Zealand.



### **Dr Ruth Race (Sanger, 1935)**

Ruth began her time at Abbotsleigh as the School's youngest boarder and left with the prize for all-round achievement. Though she once called herself 'pretty average', she taught herself Physics and Chemistry to study Science at the University of Sydney. Her pioneering work in Rh factor and blood group genetics led to a PhD from the University of London, co-authoring *Blood Groups in Man*, and becoming Director of the UK's Blood Group Unit. In 1972, she was elected Fellow of the Royal Society.



### **Dr Nao Gamo (2000)**

Nao was one of Abbotsleigh's first Organ Scholars and is now a neuroscientist-turned-entrepreneur in Washington, DC. She studied Brain and Cognitive Sciences and Music at MIT, earned a PhD from Yale in Neurobiology and completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Molecular Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins. Today, she helps launch medical tech startups and runs a consulting firm supporting early-stage companies. Nao says 'Abbotsleigh gave me the confidence to pursue a path in science and innovation – and yes, I still miss playing the organ!'



### **Dr Georgia Barker (2011)**

'I developed my love of history during my time at Abbotsleigh and have had the privilege of turning this passion into my career. After finishing school, I completed a Bachelor of Ancient History, a Master of Research, a Doctor of Philosophy and a postdoctoral research fellowship at Macquarie University. Following this, I worked as a lecturer and tutor in Egyptology at Macquarie University and California State University, San Bernardino. Now I am the Curator of Egyptian Archaeology at the British Museum. This career path has given me the opportunity to travel around the world, meet amazing people and learn new things every day.'



# FROM CLASSROOM TO CLASSROOM



## MRS RENNIE REMEMBERS MRS DUKE

I attended Abbotsleigh Junior School from 1979. My fondest memory is of my Year 6 teacher Mrs Duke. In the heat of summer afternoons after lunch Mrs Duke would read to us. She would have us enthralled by the story of *Jane Eyre* – a novel that for 12-year-olds could be quite complex and mature in nature. Mrs Duke was intelligent, strong, passionate and glamorous in that order! Just the type of woman I wished I could be. If I am half as inspiring an educator as Mrs Duke, then I feel I have been a successful English Teacher.



## RAINA HAN (2023) CELEBRATES MRS RENNIE

In Year 12 I had the privilege of having Mrs Rennie as my teacher for the Extension 2 English course. She is a wonderful role model who guides her students with insightful knowledge and wisdom, fulfilling her role as Abbotsleigh's Deputy Headmistress and English Teacher with compassion and dedication. During the creation of my major work, Mrs Rennie instilled a confidence in me that emphasised the importance of respect, not only for myself, but for my work and ideas too. May Mrs Rennie's respect for teaching continue to encourage students to explore their independence and shape the bright future of Abbotsleigh.



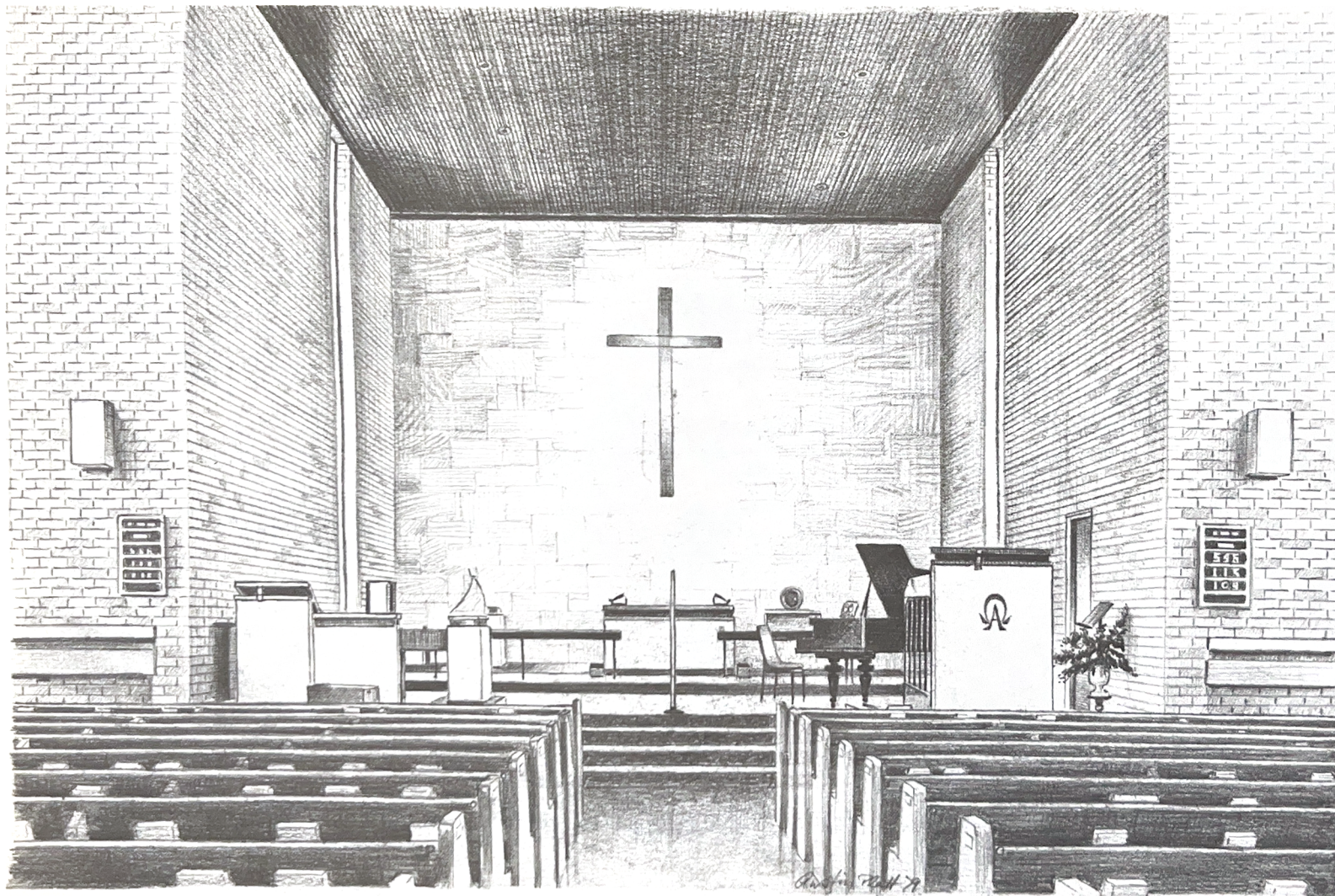






**OUR CHRISTIAN  
FAITH**





## THE SCHOOL LESSON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and seen, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:4-9





Artwork: *Portrait of Diane Nicholls*, 1991, Bill Leak

'Abbotsleigh has a special 'spirit', a spirit that must be treasured and preserved.'

Diane Nicholls OAM



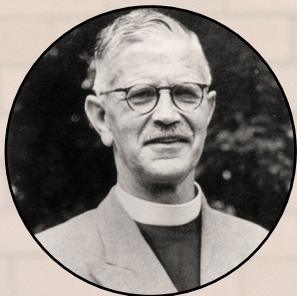
The West-Pemmer Baroque organ was installed in the War Memorial Chapel in 1992. It was constructed in Germany by Rowan West and Josef Diethard Pemmer. The organ has 28 stops and 2,500 pipes and is built of larch wood and oak. Its design is carefully oriented towards the music of Bach, with the tone being very full – and completely unique to Australia. The pipes are specially designed and handmade, voiced and tuned using a blend of modern and centuries-old techniques. Mrs Nicholls wrote in *The Weaver* 1992 that the organ was a highlight of 1992 and had 'brought a new and positive dimension to worship and music at Abbotsleigh'. She quoted Psalm 100: 'Worship the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful songs; Give thanks to Him and praise His name.'



## **Diane Nicholls OAM 1988-1996**

Abbotsleigh's eighth Headmistress, Mrs Diane Nicholls, set Abbotsleigh up for success heading into the 21st century. Under her guidance, the School's curriculum was redeveloped to respond to Australian and New South Wales imperatives and to rapid changes in society. Design and Technology, Information Technology, Business Studies and Personal Development were introduced. She oversaw the '21st Century Review' in 1990 and worked with Council on a masterplan which resulted in modernised facilities across the School and translated into academic and sporting success. A new Pastoral Care Program and Special Needs Policy, together with Mrs Nicholls' own example of balancing family life with her busy job, underpinned a caring environment at Abbotsleigh under her leadership.

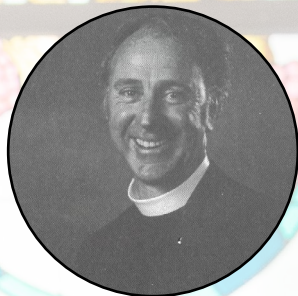




**CANON  
KENNETH W PAIN**  
1933-1954



**REV DONALD  
BEGBIE**  
1954-1973



**REV BRIAN  
KING**  
1973-1981



**REV ROSS  
MCDONALD**  
1981-1998



**REV COLIN  
WATSON**  
1998-2007



**REV ANDREW  
ALEXANDER**  
2008-2013



**ROBYN  
CLAYDON**  
2014



**REV JENNI  
STODDART**  
2015-2021



**REV POLLY  
BUTTERWORTH**  
Senior School Chaplain  
2021-PRESENT



**REV SARAH  
HOBBA**  
Senior Chaplain



Dorothea Allnutt studied art and craft at the Ballarat School of Mines before pursuing a career in fabric design and embroidery in Australia and the UK. She settled with her family in Sydney and commenced teaching Art and Craft at Abbotsleigh in 1953. Dorothea was a member of the London Embroiderers' Guild and a foundation member and President of the Embroiderers' Guild of NSW. In 1963, she visited the UK to study ecclesiastical and contemporary embroidery. She coordinated several group projects, including a series of panels for The King's School assembly hall, ecclesiastical embroidery for St Paul's College at the University of Sydney and a large hanging for Abbotsleigh's Chapel entitled 'The Curtain of the Saints'. She was commissioned to design and create the intricate goldwork embroidery that adorns the chapel linens, coordinating a group of Abbotsleigh mothers to whom she taught church embroidery to create an initial set of communion linens. She subsequently led the creation of the seasonal burse and veil sets for each of the church seasons (pictured as the background image to this page). Mrs Allnutt retired from Abbotsleigh in 1977.

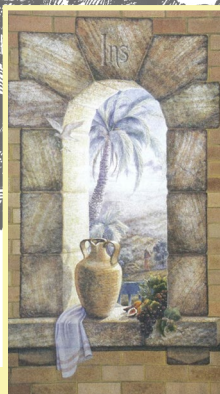




## 60TH BIRTHDAY OF THE CHAPEL 2025

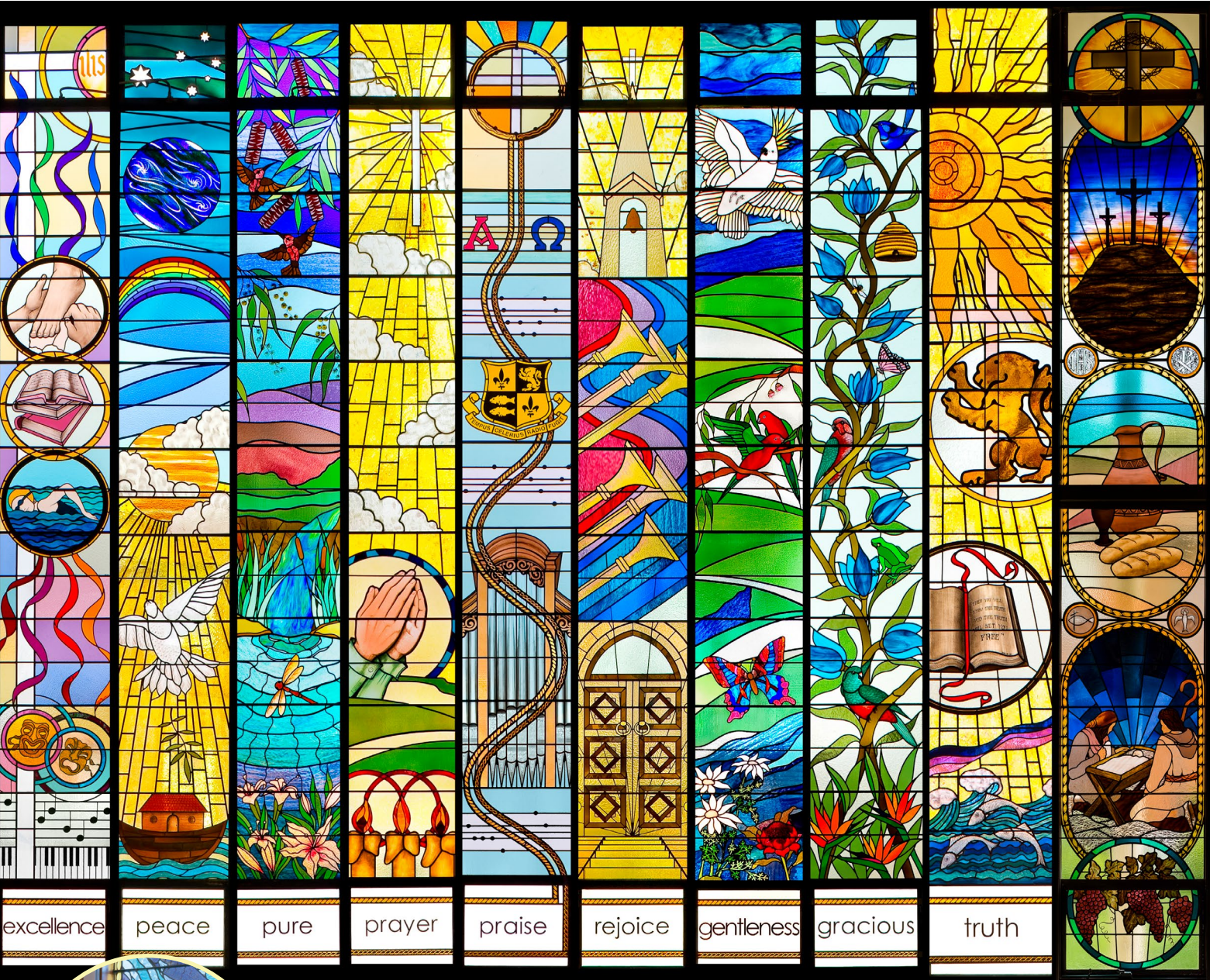






Eve Meagher (1997), known for her artistic talent at school, had two HSC works selected for ARTEXPRESS. One, *My Birthday Party On Line*, featured on the cover of *Look* magazine and was exhibited in Washington, DC. Eve received the Julian Ashton ARTEXPRESS Scholarship and began Communications studies at UTS. Her *Self Portrait on the Verandah* remains on display at Abbotsleigh, a lasting symbol of her creative legacy. In 1999, Eve was commissioned by the Council of Abbotsleigh to create *Towards the Light*, a breathtaking triptych to commemorate the service to the School of retired Chaplain, Rev Ross McDonald. Unveiled at the Foundation Day chapel service, the work explores the theme 'The Water of Life' across three panels – from biblical wells and ancient Jerusalem to a modern schoolgirl looking toward the light. Painted in traditional egg tempera, the mural is rich with Christian symbolism and School Values. Eve's hope is that each girl who walks by will discover something new, drawing strength and inspiration from its message of faith, hope and growth.





Jane Garrett (Maynard, 1983), artist and graphic designer, created the beautiful designs for the Chapel windows, the last two of which were completed in 2016. The project was commissioned to commemorate the Centenary of the Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union in 2008. Jane took the words of the School Lesson and, in collaboration with Headmistress Judith Poole, former Chaplain Andrew Alexander and Deputy Headmistress Rosemary Abrahams, developed a design that is gracefully woven together by the golden thread of the weaver's shuttle, culminating in the crest of the School. The windows were manufactured by Rick Allan, one of the foremost creators of stained-glass windows in Australia.



## Processional

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.

JM Neale (1851)

# ANNUAL SERVICE OF CAROLS AND LESSONS

The traditional Service of Carols and Lessons has been held in the School Chapel almost since its consecration, replacing a nativity concert that was held in the Assembly Hall until the completion of the Chapel. The annual Service of Carols and Lessons is a cherished tradition that brings the community together in a spirit of reflection, celebration and unity. As a cornerstone event in the school calendar, it weaves together music, scripture and community, offering a meaningful start to the festive season and the end of the school year.







**CRU**

Crusader Union groups, now known as CRU, have been held at Abbotsleigh since 1931. Today CRU operates in Junior School and Senior School with weekly meetings. The groups gather students who are interested in learning more about Jesus. Each week they play games, read the Bible and pray together. Senior School students also enjoy going on Shabbots camp where, together with students from Shore, they learn about God in fellowship. CRU groups provide leadership opportunities as senior students grow in their skills in teaching the Bible and supporting the faith of younger years.







# JUNIOR SCHOOL CHAPEL

Junior School chapel services run weekly to help students explore the Christian faith. Each chapel service communicates the Bible with creativity and fun. Girls enjoy learning songs about God and are offered the opportunity to serve through Bible reading and prayer. Chapel offers a time for students to reflect on God's love and consider how the message of Jesus connects with everyday life, while fostering community with their peers.



Charlotte Galea (Yeates, 2006) is a third-generation Abbotsleigh Old Girl who now serves as a Chaplain and PDHPE Teacher in the Junior School. Since graduating, she has worked across the education and health sectors, having studied primary education and gained qualifications in fitness instruction, with a particular focus on pre- and post-natal exercise. Charlotte says, 'I'm passionate about supporting girls in their learning, sporting and faith journeys, helping them grow in confidence and in their understanding of God's love. I'm also a proud mum to three children, which continues to deepen my perspective and enrich my approach as an educator. It's a privilege to give back to a community that has played such a significant role in my own life.'





## **Dr Susan Selby (Chambers, 1969)**

Since leaving Abbotsleigh, I have had the privilege of pursuing further studies in medicine, becoming a GP, undertaking a PhD on re-entry distress in Australian missionaries and more recently working with international medical graduates as a medical educator. Four children and 10 grandchildren have kept me and my husband busy. I have been very blessed to be involved with our local church ministries, six short term mission trips to Nepal and four years in Tanzania as medical missionaries with my husband. My time at Abbotsleigh planted firm roots for the future, being full of people who encouraged, taught and befriended me, and numerous opportunities which I gratefully embraced, including my introduction to Jesus by Deaconess Lawrence, who was a gem.



## **Dr Katrina Clifford (Bell, 1997)**

Abbotsleigh instilled in me a love of learning, a passion for empowering women and a deep commitment to my Christian faith: all three have shaped my life since. After completing my PhD in English literature, focusing on Jane Austen and her predecessors, I became the first female Dean of Robert Menzies College, where I was able to mentor young women in leadership. I now lead a program at Anglican Deaconess Ministries supporting Christian women in their callings. My father often repeated, 'Abbotsleigh girls can do anything.' It's become something of a life motto for me: challenging me to choose the hard road and push myself to see what I'm capable of.



## **Lisa Bateup (Paingakulam, 1989)**

My time at Abbotsleigh was foundational in encountering the gospel of grace – an invitation to all comers standing amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene to follow him. After studying engineering, I spent 15 years in manufacturing leadership roles before studying at Sydney Missionary and Bible College (SMBC) and joining Interserve Australia. For the past decade I have served on the national leadership team, contributing to its mission of holistic gospel witness among marginalised communities in Asia and the Arab world. Founded nearly 180 years ago by women for women, Interserve today is an international community of women and men that exists to see lives and communities transformed through encounter with Jesus Christ.



## **Rev Elizabeth (Lily) Strachan (1999)**

Unsure of my direction after school, I enrolled in Economics and Law at the University of Sydney to delay big decisions. After graduating, I worked as a corporate lawyer until the GFC gave me space to reflect – and I realised that if I could talk with people about Jesus as a job, that would be pretty great. I left law, trained with the Christian group at the University of Sydney and studied theology at Moore College. Since then, I've served as a Christian staff worker and now work as Chaplain at Robert Menzies College. I also speak and write about God's goodness in the midst of mental illness. I adored Abbotsleigh – wonderful friends, thoughtful teachers and freedom to explore new ideas and creative pursuits.



**SHINE BRIGHT**





## DIGITAL CONTENT



Threads Through Time



Abbotsleigh: A Sketch Book



International Women's Day Video 2022





Artwork: *Portrait of Judith Wheeldon*, 2004, Kristin Hedlam

'This blend of tradition and change, of Old Girls who keep the history of the School alive and of new girls who encourage us to look outside ourselves, is the dynamic that renews the Abbotsleigh spirit.'

Judith Wheeldon AM





WHEELDON  
HOUSE

## **Judith Wheeldon AM 1996-2004**

Abbotsleigh's ninth Headmistress, Judith Wheeldon, commenced at Abbotsleigh with a long list of goals, including welcoming infants to the Junior School, a new uniform, creating a Middle School that responded to the needs of early adolescent girls and establishing a differentiated Upper School. She achieved all of these and more. She was applauded for building a teaching and learning program that fostered creative, active and independent learning, and establishing 'experiential education' as an important mode of learning. She also oversaw the introduction of Service Learning at Abbotsleigh, which reflected and built upon what she called 'our concern for the wellbeing of every member of the School, a concern that radiates to include the general community and the world'. Mrs Wheeldon lived in Read House with her husband and two Great Danes, Emily and Frank, and was known for her bright clothes and accessories, as well as her leadership qualities.



## Denise Annetts (1981)

Denise captained the Abbotsleigh First XI cricket and hockey teams in her final year, and at 18 she became the youngest captain of the NSW Cricket Team.



## Meg Bailey (Staff)

Meg made her debut in the Australian Dolphins in 2018, and was selected to compete at the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast where she reached finals for her events.



## Helen Elizabeth (Betty) Archdale MBE (Headmistress 1958-1970)

Betty started playing cricket aged six years and continued throughout her university years while she qualified as a barrister in London. She was invited to captain the pioneering England Women's Team that toured Australia and New Zealand in 1934-1935.

## Jillian Wei-Lin Colebourn (2013)

While at school, Jillian took up biathlon, a snow sport that combines cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. She became the first Australian to achieve a sub-100 IBU point result at an International Biathlon Championship.



## Dianne Jillian (Jill) Colwell (1970)

A marathon runner, Jill set a new Australian record in the 1982 Melbourne Marathon, later achieving her personal best of 2:37:12 in London. She also undertook trackwork to pay her way through medical school and was awarded a professional jockey's licence in 1980.



Abbotsleigh Sport Captains, 2021



## Kiana Elliott (2014)

Kiana is a nine-time medallist across three appearances at the Pacific Games and a three-time Oceania Champion. She secured a personal best at the rescheduled 2020 Olympic Games in 2021 with a 101kg snatch, recording a new Oceania and Australian record.

## Hilary Scott (2025)

Hilary specialised in showjumping from the age of 12, competing regularly from her base in Europe. She rode Oaks Milky Way at the Paris Olympics in the Team and Individual Jumping competitions. Also a horse-breeder, Hilary made history as a member of Australia's first all-female Jumping team.



## The Peden sisters

Margaret (1922) and Barbara (1924) Peden both played cricket at Abbotsleigh and in the Women's Cricket Club at the University of Sydney. In 1934, Margaret organised the first tour to Australia by an English women's cricket team and in 1937 both sisters represented Australia on the return tour.



## Danielle Rigg-Smith (1998)

During her career, Danielle won five Australian National titles and in 1996, while in Year 10, represented Australia in her first ice dancing competition in Germany. In 1999, she and her partner represented Australia at the World Figure Skating Championships in Finland.



**Larissa Pasternatsky (2009, Staff)**

While still at school, Larissa achieved her first podium placing at the 2008 Pacific School Games. In 2017, she placed 2nd in the 200m and 1st in the 4x100m relay at the Oceania Championships. She qualified for the 2018 Commonwealth Games in the 200m with a personal best of 23.27 and placed 5th in the semi-finals.



**Belinda Robertson (Haggett) (Staff)**

At the age of 14, Belinda was playing first-grade cricket with North Sydney Women's Cricket Club. She made the NSW Junior Team in 1979 and the NSW Team in 1981. Belinda played 10 Test matches for Australia, scoring 762 runs, including two centuries and four half-centuries.



**Sue Fear OAM (1980)**

Sue Fear was introduced to adventure by the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. On 31 May 2003, Sue realised her ambition to reach the summit of Mt Everest. She was the first Australian-born woman (and only the second Australian woman) to achieve this feat.

**Lisa Read (1991)**

Lisa was a member of the Australian Artistic Gymnastics Team that won silver at the Commonwealth Games in Auckland in 1990. At the Olympic Games in Barcelona, Lisa competed in six Artistic Gymnastics events, helping the Australian team to 7th overall.



**ABBOTSLEIGH WOMEN MAKING A SPLASH IN SPORT**

From our earliest days Abbotsleigh has empowered women to reach their goals. We celebrate the success of our girls in sport from their days at school to their careers.



**Abigail Nutt (1987)**

Abigail has consistently achieved high placings in Individual and Team Epee and Foil. Her most impressive results to date include placing 2nd at the World Veteran Fencing Championships in 2019 and 3rd in the same tournament in 2023.

**Deborah Clingeffer (1976)**

Debbie first rowed for Australia at the 1986 World Championships in the Lightweight Coxless Women's Four. Later that year she won a silver medal in the same boat class at the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.



**Gillian de Greenlaw (1968)**

Gillian broke the Australian and NSW 100m Junior Butterfly records in her heats at the 1964 NSW Women's Championships aged only 13 and was the youngest Australian participant at the Tokyo Olympics.

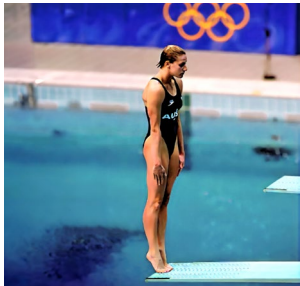


**Libby Bennett (Staff)**

Libby started dragon boat racing in 2010 and in 2014 was selected for the Australian team to compete at the 12th World Dragon Boat Racing Championships in Canada. She represented Australia in the Women's Senior B Division in the 200m, 500m, 1km and 2km races. The crew won silver medals in each event.

**Rebecca Gilmore (Staff)**

Rebecca and her diving partner won the bronze medal in the Women's 10m Synchronised Platform Dive at the Sydney Olympics (2000). She represented Australia in the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur (1998) and Manchester (2002).







## Helen Jane Pickford (Charley, 1946)

Helen Jane Pickford (Charley, 1946) was born on 22 July 1929 in Coimbatore, southern India to Abbotsleigh Old Girl Jean Charley (Lindsay, 1920) and Noel G Charley. Attending Abbotsleigh during the war years, she was a keen student, described by her teachers as 'a delightful pupil in every way'. In 1947 Helen successfully auditioned for a coveted place at the Royal Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art in London. Taking the stage name Helen Lindsay, she debuted on stage in a 1952 production of *Pinocchio* at the Library Theatre in Manchester, and made her screen debut a year later. Helen's stage name honoured her maternal line, which included her great-uncle the famous Australian artist Norman Lindsay.



Recent graduate Aria Munton (2024) was recently featured on the series *Mystery Road: Origin*, where she had the opportunity to play a younger version of one of the main characters. This involved both on-screen performance and voice acting work. 'I'm grateful to Mr Owens who helped me build the skills to take on this role. Being part of such a well-known Australian series was truly a proud moment.'


## Dave London (Staff)

Dave has been a beloved cleaner at Abbotsleigh since November 2008, known for his warmth, creativity and unwavering dedication. Over 17 years, he's worked across both campuses, contributing far beyond his role – from crafting drama sets and costumes, including the memorable oversized clothes for *Cats* in 2015, to building 'Izzy the Innovator', a puppet designed by students. A proud West Australian and one of 15 children, Dave learned dressmaking from his mother and honed his skills through self-teaching and a pattern-making course. Whether helping in the boarding house, laundry or lending a hand to staff, Dave's quiet presence and generous spirit have left a lasting mark on the School community.






Abbotsleigh presents



# CATS

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Based on 'Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats' by T.S. Eliot

29-31 March 2012  
7:30 pm, Assembly Hall  
Book tickets at [www.trybooking.com/BEKX](http://www.trybooking.com/BEKX)  
All tickets \$25



By arrangement with origin "Theatrical" on behalf of The Really Useful Group Limited  
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Abbotsleigh Drama Department presents

## An Evening of the ABBsurd

Thursday August 9  
Friday August 10  
Saturday August 11  
2018  
Drama Studio 7pm




Abbotsleigh Drama Department presents

Neil Simon's

## The Odd Couple

Oct 30, 31 at 7:30 pm  
Nov 1 at 5:30 pm

Drama Studio  
Adults \$15 Students \$8




ABBOTTSLEIGH

Abbotsleigh's production of

# WICKED

The Wicked Story of the Witches of Oz

Music and lyrics by **Stephen Schwartz** Book by **Winnie Holzman**  
Based on the novel by Gregory Maguire

Costume design by **William David Brohn**  
Music arrangements by **Alex Lacamoire & Stephen Oremus**

Licensed exclusively by Music Theatre International (Australia).  
All performance materials supplied by MLI Licensed Australia.

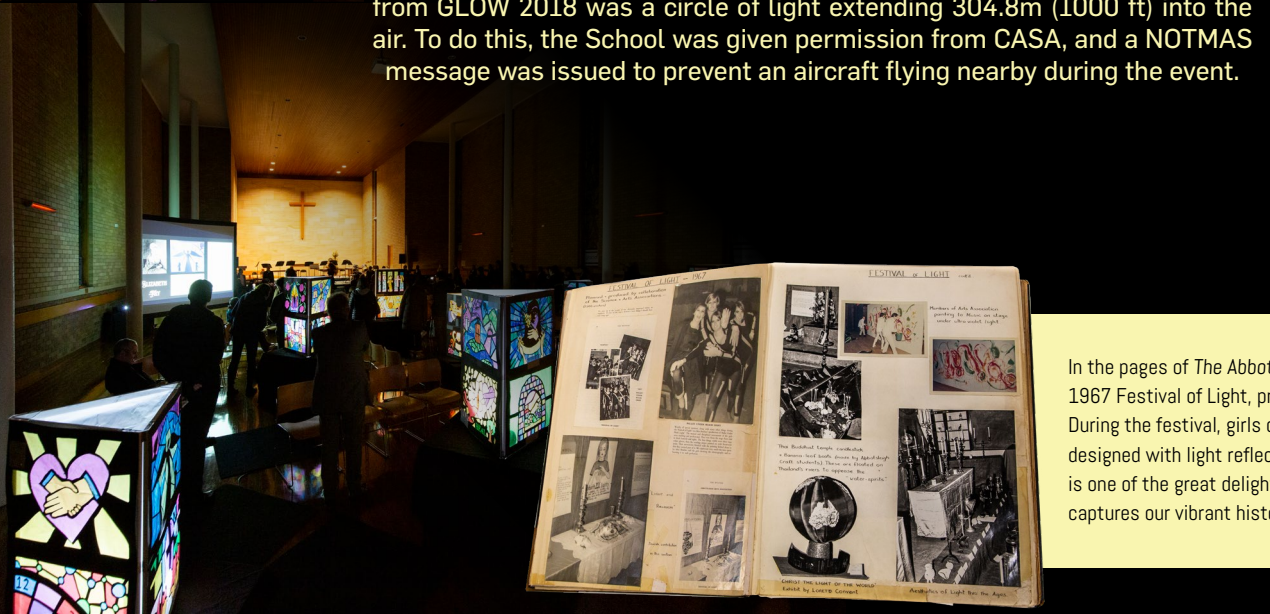






# GLOW

Abbotsleigh's annual festival of light is called GLOW. The first GLOW event was held on 15 June 2016, inspired by VIVID Sydney and coinciding with a GCS Gallery exhibition – Incandescence. GLOW showcases student work across the STEAM disciplines in the whole School. One memorable feature from GLOW 2018 was a circle of light extending 304.8m (1000 ft) into the air. To do this, the School was given permission from CASA, and a NOTMAS message was issued to prevent an aircraft flying nearby during the event.



In the pages of *The Abbotsleigh Book*, we find reference to the 1967 Festival of Light, proving that everything old is new again! During the festival, girls danced in black leotards that had been designed with light reflective paint. This special scrapbook is one of the great delights of the Abbotsleigh Archives and captures our vibrant history between 1967 and 1972.





## Janet Laurence (1963)

Janet is a highly acclaimed artist whose immersive installations explore the complex relationship between nature, science and memory. Her work navigates themes of environmental fragility, healing and human connection to the natural world. Exhibiting nationally and internationally, Janet's art is held in major public and private collections and integrated into architectural and public spaces. She has been a recipient of Rockefeller, Churchill and Australia Council fellowships. Janet's practice resonates between art, architecture and ecology, evoking reflection and transformation.



*Memory Matter*, 1992-1995 is a work from a period when Janet was exploring the nature of matter and materials and their spatial relationship to body and to memory.



## Cathy Wilcox (1980)

Cathy is an acclaimed Australian cartoonist and children's book illustrator, best known for her sharp, insightful work in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*. After Abbotsleigh, Cathy studied at Sydney College of the Arts and began publishing cartoons in 1984. She has since become one of Australia's most respected visual commentators. Cathy has won multiple Walkley Awards and Stanley Awards, and was named Cartoonist of the Year by the Museum of Australian Democracy in 2009, 2016 and 2020. Her work spans political satire, social commentary and children's literature, making her a distinctive and influential voice in Australian media and culture.

Photo: Rhett Wyman



Cartoon for the Abbotsleigh Old Girls 1980 leavers, 40 year reunion



Viola Dominello, affectionately known as 'Miss Dom', has inspired generations of Abbotsleigh students since arriving as a practicum teacher in 1986. A passionate artist and lifelong learner, she's studied in Venice, exhibited nationally and won prestigious watercolour prizes at the Art Gallery of NSW – the Trustees' Watercolour Prize and the Pring Watercolour Prize. Viola's teaching is vibrant and hands-on – whether guiding students through sand sculptures at Bondi or artist studios in Europe. Known for her style, humour and love of good coffee, she brings warmth and creativity to every lesson. Her classroom is a place of joy, risk-taking and artistic discovery. Viola's legacy is one of deep care, unforgettable experiences and enduring inspiration.



# MAKING WAVES IN MUSIC

At Abbotsleigh, a strong tradition of excellence has paved the way for countless young women to pursue successful careers in music. The School offers a comprehensive music program, featuring world-class instructors and state-of-the-art facilities, fostering an environment where talent and passion can flourish. Through dedicated mentorship and performance opportunities, Abbotsleigh has empowered young women to break barriers and achieve their dreams in music.



**Emma Beynon (Staff)**

Miss Beynon taught Music at Abbotsleigh 1924-1963. She was a much loved teacher who started teaching singing classes for the younger girls, then took over Senior Choir, and continued as Music Mistress until her retirement. She played the piano for hymns in morning assembly that many Junior School girls would have attended before the 'new' campus was built in 1954.



**Georgia Powell  
(Bassingthwaigte, 1989)**

Georgia discovered her love of music at Abbotsleigh through choirs, musicals and concerts. After a Bachelor of Economics, she studied opera at the Sydney Conservatorium and performed with Opera Australia. She has taught Vocal Studies at Ascham since 2007 and credits her Abbotsleigh music teachers for their lasting inspiration.



**Rachel Scott (1990)**

Rachel studied cello in Canberra and London with David Pereira and Robert Cohen. She performs chamber music, teaches across NSW with the Australian Children's Music Foundation, and runs 'Bach in the Dark,' a concert series in unique venues. A recipient of the AOGU Anniversary Grant, she credits Abbotsleigh's Music Department for inspiring her enduring love of music.



**Caitlin Rowley (1990)**

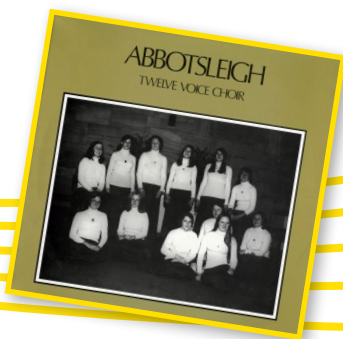
Caitlin is a composer-performer and artist working in experimental music with sound, noise, objects, drawing, and video. After studying with Peter Sculthorpe, she spent 15 years in web development before returning to music in 2012. Now completing a PhD, she collaborates widely, especially with Bastard Assignments with whom she has been composing, performing and making events since 2012.





### Prof Sally Macarthur (1968)

Sally studied music at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and the University of Adelaide, earning a PhD from the University of Sydney. She was Director of Music at Western Sydney University (1994–2021) and now leads the University of Adelaide's Musicology Hub. Her interdisciplinary research draws on feminist and philosophical frameworks to focus on recent music.



### Twelve Voice Choir

Formed in 1971 by Abbotsleigh's Director of Music, Nicola Snekker-Seymour, the Twelve Voice Choir sang in three and four parts and recorded frequently for the ABC. In 1974, the choir appeared in public on average twice a month and recorded this album at public request after attending a conference in Perth. The album was recorded in the Abbotsleigh Chapel.



### Anne Cahill OAM (Carroll, 1972)

Anne began in finance at Banque Nationale de Paris before moving into arts policy with the Australia Council and NSW Ministry for the Arts. A pianist and violinist, she chaired The Orchestras of Australia Network, worked at Musica Viva, and now performs and serves on boards including Sydney Youth Orchestras and Bach Akademie Australia.



### Alexandra Osborne (2000)

Alexandra is Associate Concertmaster of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, returning home after 21 years abroad. A graduate of Juilliard School and The Curtis Institute, she is an internationally recognised violinist with a dynamic career as a soloist, chamber musician, collaborator and educator. Passionate about mentoring young musicians, she credits Abbotsleigh for sparking her curiosity, ambition and sense of responsibility as a global arts citizen.



### Valda Wilson (2000)

Valda Wilson (2000) trained at the Sydney Conservatorium before winning Opera Foundation Australia's scholarship to the National Opera Studio, London. A Stella Maris winner and former Semperoper ensemble member, she now performs leading roles across Europe, Japan and Australia. Known for her radiant voice and dramatic flair, Valda is a principal soprano at the State Opera of Hannover.



### Dr Anne Qian Wang (2011)

Anne studied composition at the Sydney Conservatorium and earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate at Juilliard, specialising in ludomusicology. She is Assistant Orchestra Librarian and teaches Ear Training in Juilliard's Pre-College Division. An active composer, she recently co-directed the New York Youth Symphony's Composition Program. She warmly credits Mrs Little and Mrs McNamara at Abbotsleigh for their support.



# PERSEVERANCE

We get up, we do not give up.





**We know that trials produce  
perseverance; perseverance,  
character; and character, hope.**

Romans 5:3b





Artwork: *Portrait of Kathleen McCredie*, undated, Brian Dunlop

'Most of us when challenged, encouraged, tested, scale heights we previously felt impossible – determination, hope, faith, will remove mountains.'

Kathleen McCredie AM





## Kathleen McCredie AM 1970-1987

Abbotsleigh's seventh Headmistress, Kathleen McCredie, was the first (and so far, only) Old Girl to serve in that position. She was a student 1940-1945 and a Prefect. Miss McCredie oversaw a marked improvement in the School's facilities, including science laboratories, new classrooms and a library extension, a language laboratory and a Year 12 Common Room. The Centenary Building was opened in 1983 and, two years later, the School's centenary was celebrated in style. When Miss McCredie left Abbotsleigh in 1987, staff published a tribute in *The Weaver*, noting 'Her deep, personal faith in God, her encouragement of the pursuit of excellence, her interest in each member of the Abbotsleigh family, and her far-sightedness ... have contributed to a school which is so much the richer for her having been part of it'.



Robyn Wabitsch (Easter, 1968), pictured here at school, loved art at Abbotsleigh and fondly remembers her teacher, Miss Bruce. After school, Robyn completed a Diploma of Fine Arts and taught in schools and higher education. In 1989, she created a 1990 calendar to be sold at the Abbotsleigh Fair in support of the Building Fund. Some of her drawings have been used throughout this book, notably the cover image. Robyn is part of a large family with Abbotsleigh connections across generations. Her mother Peggy Easter (Howell, 1941) was followed by her three younger sisters at Abbotsleigh in the 1940s and 1950s. Robyn and her sister Camilla McGeady (Easter, 1982) were at school with several cousins. Robyn's two daughters are Nerina Scamps (Wabitsch, 1998) and Felicity Slattery (Wabitsch, 2001).





## Like mother, like daughter

The Sturt legacy continues for Jane Brady (Hawker, 1993) and her daughter Amy (Year 6, 2025). Pictured far left as the Junior School Sturt Captain in 1987, it was a proud moment for Jane when Amy was named Sturt Vice Captain in 2025. We have loved seeing Jane back at all the carnivals wearing her Sturt badge with pride!



## Margaret Joynton-Smith (Hoban, 1940)

Margaret Joynton-Smith and her three sisters attended Abbotsleigh in the 1930s. She spent much of her time training for ice skating at the Sydney Glaciarium and featured in shows, displays and the Sydney press. When her plans of competing internationally were overthrown by the arrival of WWII, she chose to focus her talent towards fundraising and performed to raise money for organisations such as the Red Cross and RAAF. In 1940, Margaret was awarded a Gold Medal, the highest skating award in Australia.



## Georgia Black (Wotherspoon, 2002)

Georgia is the Head of English at Abbotsleigh. This photo was taken at Olympic Park in Homebush in 2001 when Georgia was in Year 11. It was the final of the hurdles race, close to the finish line and the shot was taken just before her toe clipped the last hurdle and she hit the ground hard. She remembers, 'It was such a spectacular fall that the announcer (I think it may have been Mrs Selby) let out a large "Oh!" I had badly damaged my left upper thigh; I could hardly stand. Slowly I stood up and could do nothing else but hobble to the end, coming in a very late last! What I remember is just the rest of the day, I had my name down for high jump and all the other races. I still had other things to compete in and I just went ahead and did it. I had committed so I needed to turn up. I came last all day, but no one cared much as it was my house spirit that seemed to matter more than my place. No one was more surprised than I was when I was voted Richardson House captain in Year 12.'





# RISING STARS: OUR BRIGHT SPORTING FUTURE

The international success achieved by our students through their chosen sports is truly remarkable. Each of their stories is a testament to their dedication, resilience and passion, serving as an inspiration to us all. These girls are undoubtedly our rising stars, showcasing exceptional talent and determination on the global stage. With Abbotsleigh girls leading the way, the future of sport is in excellent hands, promising continued excellence and inspiring achievements. Pictured left to right, these outstanding Abbotsleigh girls are representing their country in their respective sports: Syesha Anthony (Swimming), Amelia Bennett (Football), Claire Chavdarova (Rhythmic Gymnastics), Emilie Chen (Tennis), Joselyn Cheung (Rhythmic Gymnastics), Charlize Mackie (Equestrian), Lynelle Northam (Synchronised Figure Skating), Elizabeth Wang (Squash), Zoe Woods (Race Walking), Daisy Xie (Table Tennis).



## WE GET UP, WE DON'T GIVE UP

At the 2023 Athletics Carnival, a Year 7 student who missed her marshalling time demonstrated great perseverance and courage by joining the U18 100m event. The older girls slowed down to run alongside her, showing kindness and bringing joy to the School.



Mrs Rosemary Abrahams was a dynamic and much-admired Deputy Headmistress and Head of Senior School at Abbotsleigh (2004-2012). With a career spanning Africa, Europe and Asia, she brought global insight and a passion for learning beyond the classroom. Her bold leadership empowered student voice and creativity, while her vibrant presence – marked by dazzling jewellery and fabulous fashion – left a lasting impression. A dedicated historian and innovator, Rosemary continues her connection to Abbotsleigh through her leadership of FAbbS.







John Doran served as Abbotsleigh's Bursar for more than 40 years, embodying loyalty, wisdom and care. A true gentleman, he supported students, staff and Headmistresses with integrity and thoughtful advice. Though his office was famously chaotic, his work was meticulous and his integrity unquestioned. A keen sportsman, he refereed local rugby matches well into recent years, and around the School was often seen wearing his signature rugby tie with suave charm. John's kind heart, generous spirit and sharp mind made him the heart of Abbotsleigh.



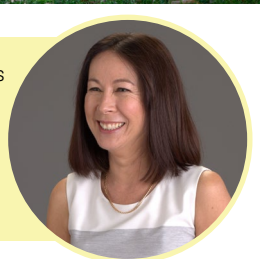


# EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

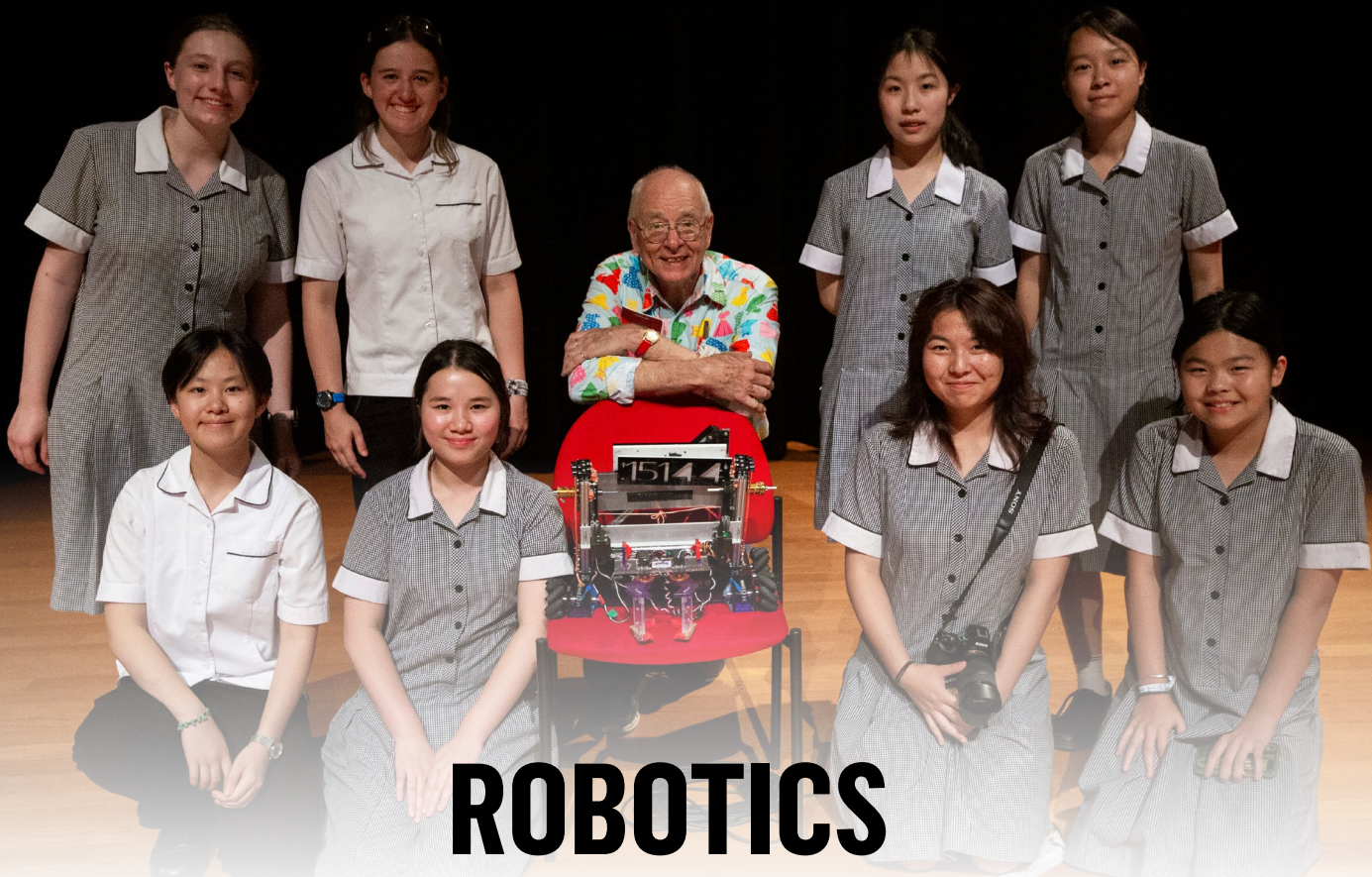
The Early Learning Centre (ELC) was opened in 2010 and continues to work in partnership with parents to better understand and respond to children's individual needs and interests. The environment in our ELC is a stimulating one, where young children feel safe and supported in their explorations. Curiosity, initiative, creativity and imaginative play are all encouraged as children work together under the guidance of their educators and carers. The ELC is dedicated to ensuring that every child feels safe, nurtured and inspired throughout their early years' educational journey.



Mrs Donna Moffat began her career at Abbotsleigh as a Junior School teacher in 2002. Today she is Abbotsleigh's Director of Learning Innovation. Donna was Abbotsleigh's first Director of the Early Learning Centre and the building and philosophy owe much to her vision and foresight. She is one of many Abbotsleigh staff who have sent their daughter to Abbotsleigh. As we prepared this book for publication, we put out a call to current students and staff to nominate Humans that capture the story of Abbotsleigh. Li Moffat reflected with pride on her mum's time at Abbotsleigh, 'I love being at the school where my mum works. Some of my best friends started with me at the ELC at Abbotsleigh. Mum and I love how inclusive Abbotsleigh is, both from the staff and student perspectives.'







# ROBOTICS

Abbotsleigh Robotics began in 2015 with students in Years 7-9, offering them a challenging, creative and rigorous STEM learning experience. Since then, it has grown to include both Junior and Senior School students from Years 3-12. The program fosters innovative design, complex problem-solving and interdisciplinary collaboration. In 2024, a dedicated group of students represented Australia at the FIRST® Global Challenge in Athens, Greece, competing alongside teams from more than 190 countries in a robotics competition themed 'Feeding the Future'. This event emphasised sustainable food systems through robotics and global collaboration, highlighting the program's commitment to excellence and international engagement in STEM education.







# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

For many families, Abbotsleigh holds deep personal significance, with connections spanning generations – great-grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and cousins all having walked its halls. This enduring legacy reflects the School's vital role as more than just a place of learning – it's a cherished part of family history and community identity.

Every year the AOGU hosts a Generations Breakfast where Old Girls returning to Abbotsleigh as parents and grandparents, along with their daughters, are welcomed to the School, rekindling friendships and building new connections. The Marian Clarke Society annually hosts Grandparents' Day in the Junior School, which has become a cherished tradition. Old Girls and current students look forward to these special events each year, proud to form part of the tapestry of generations of Abbotsleigh families.



When Sophie Miller Started in Year 7 in 2022, she knew she had an Abbotsleigh 'heritage'. Both her mum Frances Miller (Watts, 2001) and her paternal great-grandmother Ruth Lack (Short, 1936) were Abbotsleigh Old Girls. But when Frances contacted the Archives to find out more about Ruth, yet another Old Girl emerged in the family tree: Sophie's great-great-great aunt, Edith Olive Lack, who was one of Marian Clarke's very first Abbotsleigh students at the School in Mount Street, North Sydney.





# Caitlin Oschadleus (2019)

Caitlin studied a Bachelor of Arts/Advanced Studies (International and Global Studies) (Honours) at the University of Sydney. After graduating, she completed an internship with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as part of the trafficking in persons research team. She is now based in Switzerland working with SIM International to mobilise, train and support individuals preparing to go on mission.



A relatively recent Abbotsleigh tradition is that the Head Prefect from five years ago (when the Valedictory Class was in Year 7), returns to give the Valedictory address. So, in 2024 Caitlin travelled across the world to join the Valedictory Dinner, speaking on the prefect theme 'Brave the Waves'. The following excerpt is taken from that speech:

'This year you have spent a lot of time exploring the value and practice of resilience, in your theme of 'Brave the Waves', learning to weather all kinds of storms. It's a theme I hope you take deeply to heart because resilience is a skill you will find invaluable to deal with the uncertainties and storms in life that you will face.

Five years ago, just 12 weeks after sitting in this very room, I was sitting in my car outside the Junior School when a tree branch weighing about 300kg fell on my car... I had broken and dislocated three bones in my neck, and my top

two ribs. I spent two months in a neck brace and process of physio and rehabilitation. After just eight months I was able to run my first training on a netball court again. I would also like to take a moment to deeply thank the School for the support they gave me. I remember through the fog of morphine lying in ICU seeing Mrs Krimmer and Mrs Rennie walk in with what I remember to be a smiley face balloon (the details might have been lost with the morphine). And to all the staff and community who came and visited or supported from afar, it is too many to list, thank you. It was in this moment that I realised that resilience is not just about my individual ability to endure a storm, but it is rooted and strengthened in the community around me.

This accident was just one of the storms I had to weather. Developing resilience happens through a series of decisions that you make every day, both big and small,

some easy, some very challenging. You don't always get them right, I didn't, but as with any muscle, you can strengthen it over time and with intentional effort. Time itself doesn't heal, what you're doing with that time is what matters for the seed of resilience to grow.

Now I find myself at another transition point, where this question of who I want to be is so much more important to me than what do I want to do. Because the who gives so much more purpose to the what. While there are many career opportunities and avenues I could go down, what I centre myself on is who am I? I am a valued and loved daughter of God, called to love Him and reflect that love in how I love people. Who do I want to become? At every point in my life, I want to look back and be proud, not of how I lived in the good moments, on the mountain tops of life, but how I lived in the depths of the storms.'

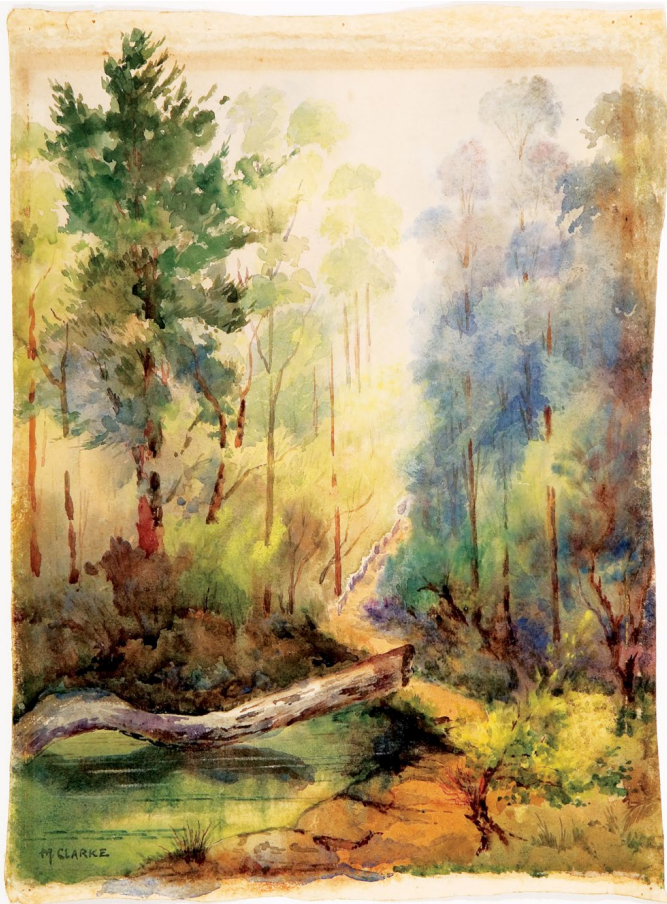
**“Now I find myself at another transition point, where this question of who I want to be is so much more important to me than what do I want to do. Because the who gives so much more purpose to the what.”**





**NEAR AND FAR**









Artwork: *Portrait of Marian Clarke*, 1918-1919, Tom Roberts

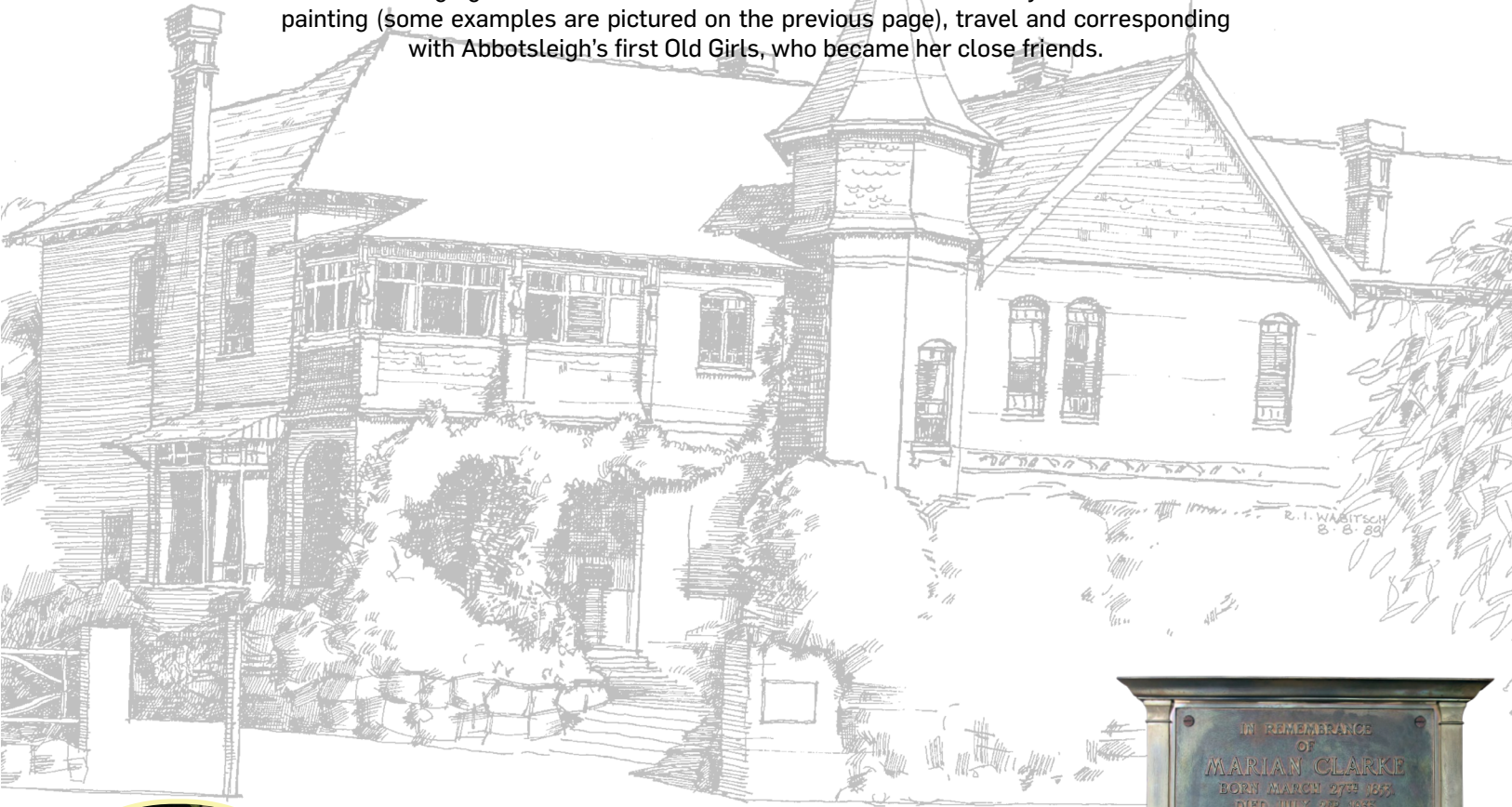
'...work honestly and play honestly – there must be no half measure...'

Marian Clarke



# Marian Clarke 1885-1913

Our first Headmistress Marian Clarke founded Abbotsleigh in a North Sydney terrace house in 1885. The first advertisement for the School hints at her educational philosophy of educating 'the whole girl'. She advertised Abbotsleigh as a 'High Class School for Girls' and highlighted the teaching of 'Gymnastics under able superintendence'. Miss Clarke insisted on a thorough grounding in a range of subjects, many of which were rarely offered to girls. She retired from teaching in 1913 and returned to England. During World War I she volunteered with the Red Cross and distributed the funds and care packages that Abbotsleigh girls sent from Australia. In retirement she was busy with watercolour painting (some examples are pictured on the previous page), travel and corresponding with Abbotsleigh's first Old Girls, who became her close friends.

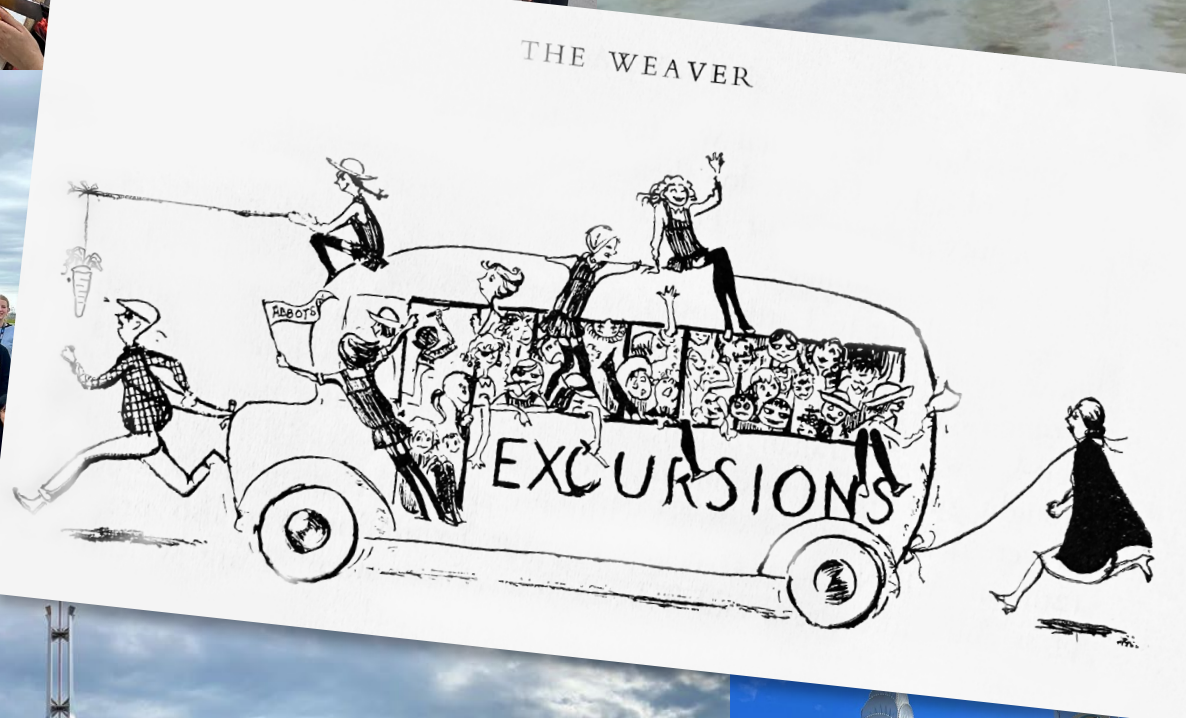


This plaque hangs at the entry to the boarders dining room in the Marian Clarke building.

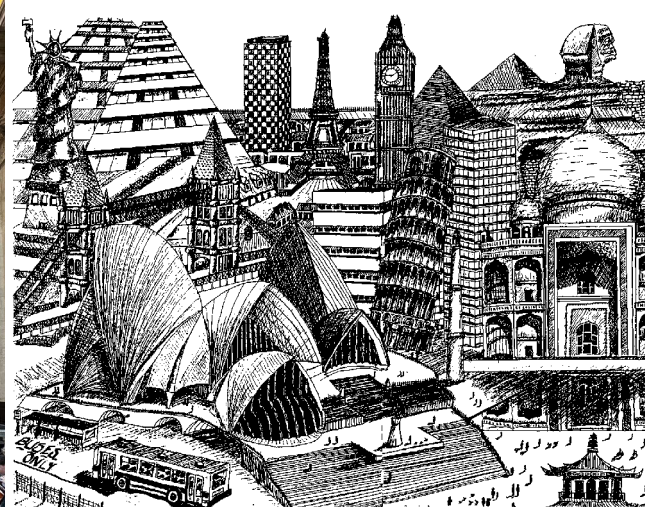
Marian Clarke Society: Marian Clarke, fostered a vision in 1885 which still holds true today – empowering young women with education to change the world in which they live. The Marian Clarke Society is an initiative of the Abbotsleigh Foundation that acknowledges and celebrates the generosity of those who have notified us that they are leaving a gift in their will to Abbotsleigh. The Abbotsleigh camellia was propagated for the Abbotsleigh Centenary celebrations in 1985 under the patronage of Mr Peter Duly, then Chairman of the Abbotsleigh Council. Now the emblem of the Marion Clarke Society, the Abbotsleigh camellia grew from a chance seedling in the garden of Cecil Blumentals in St Ives.











Artwork: S Deuerback, Year 10, 1984

# TOURS, CAMPS AND EXCURSIONS

Tours, camps, and excursions play a vital role in fostering learning and independence among girls. These experiences take learning beyond the classroom, offering hands-on opportunities to explore new environments, cultures and challenges. Whether it's navigating a hiking trail, participating in team-building activities or managing personal belongings during a trip, girls develop critical life skills such as decision-making, problem-solving and self-reliance. These settings also encourage social growth, as girls collaborate, communicate and build friendships in diverse group settings. Most importantly, stepping out of their comfort zones helps boost confidence and empowers them to trust their abilities – laying a strong foundation for lifelong independence and resilience.



Mrs Ingrid Little began working at Abbotsleigh in 1980. A much loved member of staff, Ingrid reflects, 'I have been incredibly fortunate to find such a place in Abbotsleigh – a school where I have grown both personally and professionally throughout the years. I have thoroughly enjoyed the many outdoor education camps I've been part of throughout my journey, each one offering unique opportunities for connection, growth and adventure. Equally memorable have been the music tours, which have brought immense joy not only to the students involved, but also to all those who shared in the experience. An added highlight of my career was the unforgettable exchange year I spent in England – an enriching experience that broadened my perspective and added a special dimension to my teaching journey. I feel truly privileged to be part of the Abbotsleigh community.'





Boarders 1995

# BOARDING

'Boarding at Abbotsleigh is really special for all of us because it gives us so many amazing opportunities that otherwise might feel impossible. Because of boarding, we have access to not only great education, but the opportunity to try countless co-curriculars and make connections with people from Sydney, Australia and the world. Boarding is something that I am so grateful for every day because of each amazing girl that sits before me. As a boarding community we all stand together as sisters to support each other and guide each other through life, which helps create our home away from home here at Abbotsleigh.'

The theme for National Boarding Week in 2025 is 'Threads of connection' as boarding allows us to create bonds which hold our boarding community together, in the same way that threads hold a tapestry. These bonds and connections help create boarding as not only a place to live but a place that can feel like home.'

Nell Owen, Head Boarder Prefect 2025



Katie White (Craig, 1999), 'After a gap year in the UK, I studied Human Movement and Education at UTS while coaching swimming at a variety of schools, including Abbotsleigh. I then spent 21 wonderful years at Pymble Ladies' College in a range of sport, teaching and leadership roles, and during that time I met my husband, Aaron, and we started our family – welcoming our children Archie (10) and Georgie (7). Returning to Abbotsleigh as Head of Boarding has been a full-circle moment – it truly feels like coming home, and I feel privileged to support the next generation of boarders in shaping their own journey.'













2020 was a tumultuous time for everyone, but especially for Abbotsleigh's boarders. Many had to attend their classes from far into the countryside or even from overseas. Despite all these challenges, our boarding girls overcame any obstacle in their way and took to online learning with enthusiasm.





## Emily Harris (Hickson, 1988)

Emily directed an adaptation of *Shrek* in Mungindi, a small farming town located on the NSW-Queensland border. Her cast was composed of farmers, teachers, nurses, ambos, crop-dusters and agronomists – there were no trained singers or Broadway stars in sight. Emily wanted to 'do something positive for the town', which was hit with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Her vision was not to produce a perfect show, but to bring together a community and provide a positive place in which individuals could find a 'common place'. 'I want to live somewhere where we all get together and work towards a common goal, not just individual things.'



## Tara Commerford (Bowman, 1996)

Tara is a passionate advocate for small business, technology adoption and women in leadership. She was the Australia/New Zealand CEO of GoDaddy and a founding team member of LinkedIn. A two-time finalist in *CEO Magazine's* CEO of the Year awards, she was also listed on the Women of the Year Regional Honour Roll in 2022/23 for her management of a large-scale emergency flood relief effort in the Northern Rivers, where she mobilised over 500 volunteers to provide emergency supplies to thousands of affected Australians.



## Annabelle Hickson (McDonald, 1998)

Annabelle is the founder of *Galah*, an award-winning magazine that showcases life in regional Australia. Annabelle created *Galah* as a platform to exhibit the joyous aspects of country life, offering an alternative perspective on regional Australia that goes beyond the coverage of droughts and floods that dominate national media coverage. The magazine is filled with stories, photography and art that document the creative aspects of regional Australia and its people. In 2023, Annabelle won Mumbrella's 'Consumer Publication of the Year' award which recognised the excellency of her work.



## Karen Hamilton (Bootle, 1998)

Karen, a breast cancer survivor, experienced the benefits of mindfulness and meditation during her recovery and was inspired to share them with others. She transitioned from a career in teaching to establish Harmonious Heart, offering classes across rural western NSW to support wellbeing in her community. In recognition of her work, Karen received an AOGU Anniversary Grant to deliver a six-week Mindfulness and Meditation Program at Dubbo's Western Cancer Centre, which serves a large and diverse regional population.





# ACEE

The Abbotsleigh Centre for Environmental Education (ACEE) was opened in 2011 by Dr Jane Goodall. The ACEE is built around the beautiful masonry gardens of a home that was acquired by the School from the Campbell family in 1985. Various projects have added to the garden to incorporate the Agriculture plot (that houses chickens and regular visits from calves), the food forest, kitchen garden, yarning circle and Indigenous garden.

The remnant Blue Gum High Forest, an Endangered Ecological Community, towers over the ACEE from the site adjacent to the garden. It is a haven for birds and other wildlife. Students in the ACEE programs learn key considerations of managing threatened ecosystems and responsible stewardship of our local environment.

The ACEE is an important teaching space for Abbotsleigh girls. Our youngest students in the ELC and Transition classes journey to the ACEE each fortnight to participate in environmental education programs and enjoy the adventure playground. Girls in the Senior School use the ACEE for activities such as Agriculture Club, tutor times, incursions, firepits and interschool collaborations.




Polly Cevallos (1974) was born in Chile, arrived at Abbotsleigh in 1971 and was the Richardson House Captain in her final year. She completed a Science degree at Macquarie University and after a few years landed her dream job at Taronga Zoo. During the zoo's Zoobilee in 1993, Polly met Jane Goodall and became the Founding Director of the Jane Goodall Institute Australia (JGIA). Polly facilitated Dr Goodall's opening of the ACEE on World Environment Day, 4 June 2011. Polly still works closely with JGIA and JGI Chile.



# COURAGE

We dare to take risks





**Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.**

Joshua 1:9





Artwork: *Portrait of Ruth Hirst*, 1957, Mr Boothroyd

'Generosity of spirit and Christian Ideals keep alive Abbotsleigh's established standards.'

Ruth Hirst



## Ruth Hirst 1954-1957

As Abbotsleigh's fifth Headmistress, Ruth Hirst, was a woman of deep faith with an impressive academic and managerial resume. Described as having inexhaustible 'patience, forbearance and kindness', a woman of 'integrity, high principle and true Christian spirit' (*The Weaver*), those who had previously worked with her enthused about her appointment to Abbotsleigh. She was devoted to the welfare of the girls, methodical and conscientious in her work and considerate to staff. As Headmistress, Miss Hirst introduced a Year 7 entrance exam to manage Abbotsleigh's waiting list and raise academic standards. She added Physics and German to the curriculum, revitalised the School orchestra and opened the new swimming pool. Working in tandem with Chaplain Donald Begbie, Miss Hirst grew the religious life of the School and enabled students to join the evangelistic fervour of the times. In 1985, she returned to Abbotsleigh to open Hirst Cottage for Year 12 boarders.





## **Helen Hoskins (1969)**

Helen left Abbotsleigh in 1969 and studied Music and Computer Studies at the University of Sydney, initially working in computer science. Helen then studied Theology at Moore College and devoted her life to Jesus, becoming a parish sister and a missionary. In 1983, Helen left Australia for Tanzania where she served as a missionary for more than 40 years, initially teaching at the Nyakato Bible College. She later established Girls Brigade, a Sewing Centre, Bunda Girls' Secondary School and Shalom Primary School. Her warmth and innovation was felt so deeply in Mara, that the bishop, Dr George Okoth has declared 12 May to be Helen Hoskins Day.



## **Sarah Kingdom (Higgs, 1989)**

Sarah came to Africa for a six-week holiday at the age of 21, finished her trip in Zambia and never really left. Initially working in hospitality, she is heavily involved in running a cattle ranch in the middle of Zambia with her husband. She has since established herself as a mountain guide, travel writer and yoga teacher. She guides trips regularly in India, Nepal, Tibet, Russia and Ethiopia, and takes climbers up Tanzania's Mount Kilimanjaro several times a year.



## **Parissa Bozorg (2009)**

Parissa studied Arts/Law at the University of Wollongong before working at the Family Court and travelling extensively. During the Syrian refugee crisis, she co-founded The Tribe Projects in Turkey to support displaced families. She later worked in Tanzania as Welfare Coordinator at The School of St Jude. Since returning to Sydney in 2021, Parissa has worked at STARTTS, supporting refugees and asylum seekers.



## **Grace Marwa-Pattison (2013)**

After a gap year in Arusha, Tanzania, Grace studied International Studies at UNSW, including an exchange at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She later completed a Master of Gender and Development at the University of Nairobi. Now based in Tanzania, Grace co-founded School Girl Essentials (SGE) to address barriers to girls' sexual and reproductive health and education, for which she received an AOGU Anniversary Grant in 2021. Grace has worked with various research and policy organisations, with a focus on advancing equitable justice and transformative feminist approaches.



'Visiting Bunda GSS was an amazing experience. We had heard so much about the school prior to our visit, but nothing compared with being there in person. The trip has inspired me to use the education I am receiving to improve the world for others.'

Anastasia Berenger  
(Year 10, 2025)



## SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH GIRLS IN TANZANIA

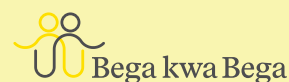
In 2019, Helen Hoskins (1969) returned for her 50-year reunion and rekindled her connection with the School, sparking a remarkable partnership between Abbotsleigh and Bunda Girls' Secondary School in Tanzania – a school Helen founded. She named the partnership Bega kwa Bega, a Swahili phrase meaning 'shoulder to shoulder' that beautifully captures the spirit of mutual respect, learning and shared purpose that has grown between the two schools.

In 2024, Mrs Annette Ware, Rev Sarah Hobba and Dr Alison Gates accompanied 15 Abbotsleigh students on the School's first tour to Tanzania. During their week

of immersion, students from both schools learnt side by side, shared stories, played sports, worshipped together and built lasting friendships. The visit was deeply moving, especially as students met the four Bunda girls sponsored by Abbotsleigh's Years 7 and 8 students. The experience highlighted the transformative power of education and the profound impact of standing shoulder to shoulder – across continents, cultures and generations. This growing relationship is not only meaningful but also a testament to the enduring legacy of one Old Girl's vision and the shared commitment to empowering young women through education.

'Throughout our time at Bunda Dr Gates taught lessons to the girls in Science, even once bringing a goat into the classroom. She shared her skills and passion for teaching with us Abbotsleigh girls and the Bunda girls and teachers.' Annabelle Cairns (Year 10, 2025)

'I was so encouraged by the heartfelt joy that radiated from every girl whilst singing praises at church, morning parades and throughout the entire day. We were overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of the Bunda girls.' Nimue Davidson (Year 10, 2025)



**DIGITAL CONTENT**



Our Sponsor Students  
letters



Around Abbotsleigh Article



Alexandra Balmer Profile





Junior School classroom 1950s



Satara Uthayakumaran (2020) is Australia's 2025 Youth Representative to the United Nations and a Law/Arts (Hons) student at ANU. She is the National Youth Advisor for Amnesty International, a youth ambassador for Anti-Slavery Australia, and the youngest board member of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (ACT). Satara is also a young writer for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, using her platform to elevate overlooked issues and advocate for justice, equity and inclusion across Australia.





'Mr Keating fostered a sense of community in our classroom and from pancake breakfasts to the first and last Year 4 sleepover made school an exciting and interesting place that I looked forward to every day. I particularly remember the convict and First Fleet unit that he taught in such an engaging and entertaining way that prompted a love of history that I have carried throughout my high school years. His ridiculous jokes brought light to every lesson, and his encouragement to always question what we are told has had a truly profound impact on the way that I approach life. Thank you Mr Keating.' by Alexandra Cuthell (Year 12, 2025)



AbbKart Derby 2023





# ABBOTSLEIGH WOMEN AND WAR EFFORTS

Abbotsleigh Old Girls served in World Wars I and II, where their efforts demonstrate the breadth of women's contribution in wartime, despite their absence from the battlefield until the late 20th century. Old Girls distinguished themselves as nurses, physiotherapists, doctors, physical trainers, munitions manufacturers, code breakers and military officers. One Old Girl was a spy for Australian intelligence, and another (of German heritage) was interned during WWII. Abbotsleigh schoolgirls and Old Girls raised funds, knitted socks and provided moral support from home. During WWII, an air raid shelter was built at Abbotsleigh and drills were held under Miss Everett's watchful eye. Refugees from Europe were welcomed to the School. In 1965, the Chapel was dedicated as the War Memorial Chapel in honour of Abbotsleigh Old Girls who 'worked so valiantly for the Empire at home and overseas'.



**Helen MacDougall**

Helen ('Podge') MacDougall (1927) enlisted in the Australian Women's Army Service in 1942 and served for more than three years. Initially she taught physical education to troops in NSW but was promoted to a role, in her words, 'in charge of the feeling of the Battalion'. She took her discharge at the end of the war as an Adjutant Quartermaster.

Photo: Helen (left) wearing her medals (background image)



**Betty Archdale**

Betty Archdale was commissioned in the Women's Royal Naval Service (Wrens) in 1939 and was soon charged with leading 20 Wrens stationed in Singapore. With the Japanese advance in 1942, they ended up on the front line and had a narrow escape. Betty was made a Member of the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire for her 'zeal and wholehearted devotion to duty'.

Photo: Betty Archdale's service medals



**Kathleen Blake**

Lieutenant Kathleen ('Pat') Dixon (Blake, 1930) served in WWII in the Australian Army Nursing Service. While being evacuated on the SS Vyner Brook from Singapore in 1942, Pat was captured and was held as a prisoner of war for more than three years. Of the 65 servicewomen who embarked on the Vyner Brook, only 24 came home.

Photo: Kathleen Blake with her nursing colleagues

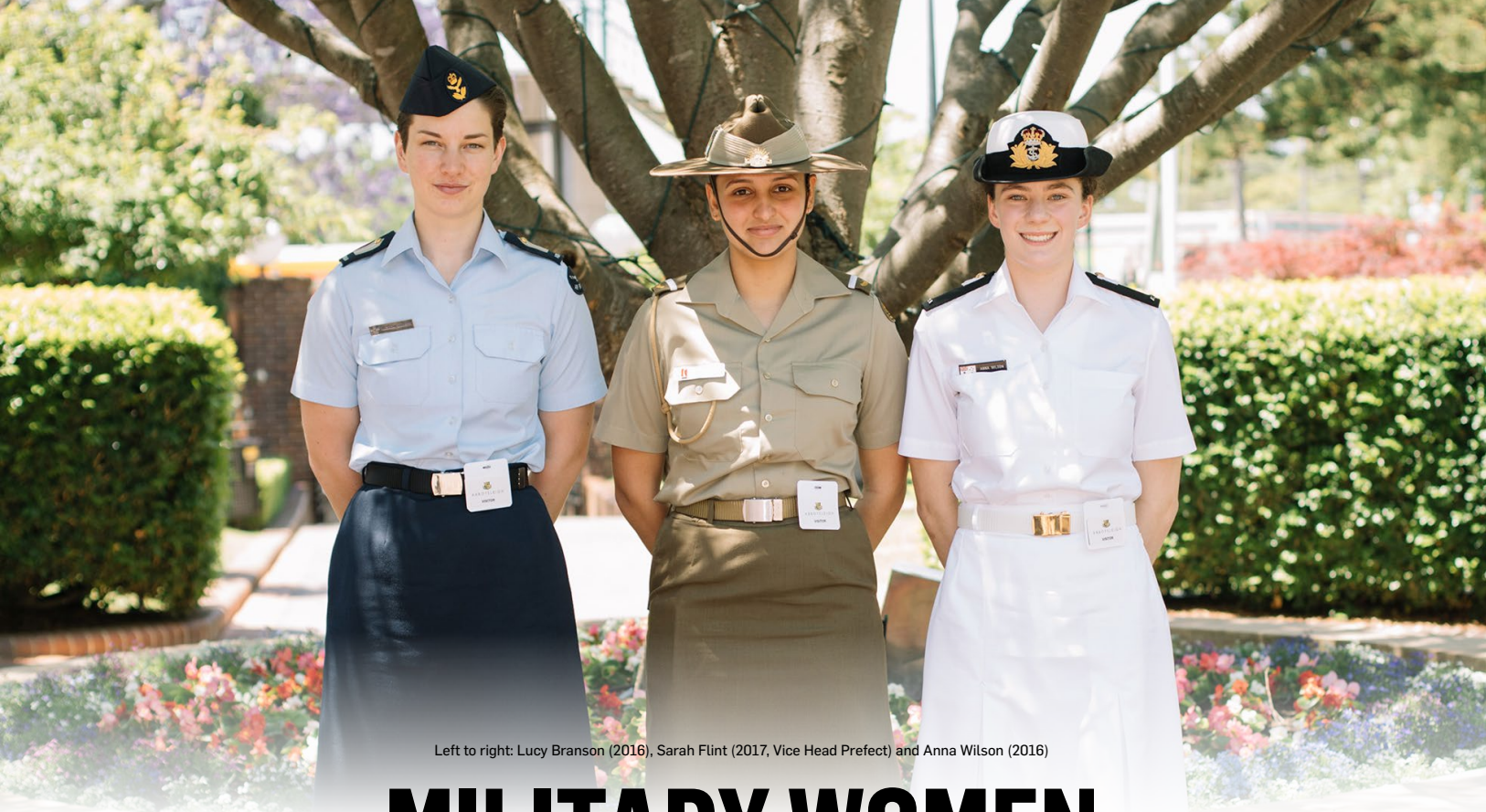


**Bessie Todhunter**

As a trained nurse, Bessie Todhunter (1898) went to Egypt soon after WWI broke out. She was stationed at the 2nd Australian General Hospital with a view of the pyramids at Giza. This photograph shows nurses from Bessie's unit on an excursion. For her service in Egypt and France, Bessie was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

Photo: Nurses from Bessie's unit on an excursion





Left to right: Lucy Branson (2016), Sarah Flint (2017, Vice Head Prefect) and Anna Wilson (2016)

# MILITARY WOMEN

During the Remembrance Day commemorations in 2019, Sarah Flint (2017, Vice Head Prefect) from the Army, Anna Wilson (2016) from the Navy and Lucy (Lucinda) Branson (2016) from the Air Force visited Abbotsleigh to talk about their careers in the Australian Armed Services. Since then, they have risen through the ranks and served around Australia and beyond. Sarah is now an aeronautical engineer and is the first engineering troop commander for the Army's newest AH-64E Apache attack helicopter. Based in Townsville, she leads 30 soldiers and technically manages a fleet of aircraft based in Townsville. Anna has served on HMA Ships *Adelaide*, *Diamantina*, *Bathurst* and *Warramunga*. Lucy is a pilot and flies the C-27J Spartan, a tactical aircraft designed to fly out of remote and austere environments. Anna, Lucy and Sarah remember their time at Abbotsleigh fondly and credit the School with equipping them with the self-assurance and skills to take on military careers. All three share Anna's excitement 'to see where this adventure will continue to take me'.



Lara Fowler (1988) joined the Royal Australian Navy in 1994 after finishing her university degree. She joined as a Seaman Officer (a 'ship driver') and later sub-specialised in surface warfare, communications and intelligence. She has spent half of her career at sea and has sailed much of the world. She has had a diverse career including operational deployments, ship command experience, establishment of Defence Space Command, strategic policy and planning roles, capability management and leadership development roles. Lara says, 'The Navy has provided me with endless opportunities and I have served just over 31 years. I thank Abbotsleigh for starting this journey. When I was in Year 7 in 1983, Defence Force Recruiting was invited to speak at assembly and I knew that was what I wanted to do.'

Photo: Australian Department of Defence



# COMPASSION

We are kind and empathetic



**'Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving  
each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.'**

Ephesians 4:32



Janna Bruce (1909-2000) was a watercolourist, Abbotsleigh teacher and Head of Art from 1954-1976. She travelled widely, living in China, and studying in London, Paris and under Dattilo-Rubbo in Sydney from 1925-1935, at whose school she also taught. She was an exhibiting member of the Australian Watercolour Institute and her work is represented in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. For the School's 127th Birthday Janna's work *Yellow House, McCarrs Creek* was donated by Abbotsleigh's arborist Piers Laverty, whose mother Ursula was a friend of Janna and whose artist father Peter was Director of the Art Gallery of NSW 1971-1978.





Artwork: *Portrait of Margaret Murray*, 1929, Norman Clarke

'A good school teaches us to do right because it is right, to work hard for the mere joy of the thing well done, to respect the rights and wishes of others, to live truly, purely and unselfishly...'

Margaret Murray





## Margaret Murray 1913-1924

When Marian Clarke sold Abbotsleigh to Margaret Murray in 1913, she hoped the School would be reinvigorated under new leadership. Abbotsleigh's second Headmistress, Margaret Murray lived up to this ambition with her 'statesman-like grasp of all the details of school life'. She encouraged cohesion and a sense of community within the growing school by introducing the first full school uniform, *The Weaver* and interschool sports. She purchased a house opposite Abbotsleigh (Wollumbin) for the increasing numbers of House Girls (boarders) and established the Marian Clarke Scholarship to inspire academic excellence. A devout Christian, Miss Murray's students and colleagues recalled her 'loyalty to the Highest, her justice, her sincerity, which was the keynote of her character'. Her 'little unremembered acts of kindness' left a deep impression on Abbotsleigh and its community.





## Melinda Parker (Pickrell, 1977)

Melinda Parker is a dedicated social worker and educator with experience in both India and Australia. Since 2010, she has served as an Honorary Director at Gyanankur English School in India, a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing quality, low-cost education. In Australia, Melinda now works in the field of financial inclusion. She volunteers alongside Anne Weeks (Willis, 1977) to support Gyanankur's mission. Melinda is married and the mother of two adopted Indian children, now young adults. She is driven by a lifelong commitment to fighting poverty, investing in human potential and strengthening communities.

'At Abbotsleigh I was really supported to develop my skills and leadership, as well grow in my faith and it has provided me with some amazing lifelong friends.'



Nicole Prodigalidad (Martin, 1993) is the Head of Practice and Principal Officer for Anglicare's Foster Care, Adoption & Family Support Program. With a degree in Social Work, she has dedicated 28 years to child protection, foster care and adoption. Having worked across both government and non-government sectors, Nicole is deeply committed to ensuring that children thrive within their families – whether biological, foster or adoptive. Her expertise and passion drive her work in supporting vulnerable children and strengthening family connections. Nicole was a recipient of a 2024 AOGU Anniversary Grant.



## Susi Prescott (1971)

After a teaching career and raising a family in Sydney, Susi travelled to Nepal and Rwanda to train teachers and teach students English and French. In 2007, she continued her remarkable journey to Peru where she helped to support a school in Arequipa as a teacher, fundraiser and leader. During her time there, the school gained new classrooms, a library and a computer room. Susi's 2017 memoir provides fascinating insight into her life and the communities she immersed herself in. She returned to Sydney just before the Covid pandemic. As for Abbotsleigh memories, she clearly remembers running alongside Betty Archdale's car leaving Abbotsleigh forever!

'When calamity strikes, it may not be as devastating as you first thought, if you can just see it in another way. By making space in your mind and in your thinking, allowing the universe to surprise you with new possibilities, you can change the way you see things.'

Background image: Cover detail of *Where the Hummingbirds Dance*, 2017 by Susi Prescott





# LIGHT UP LIVES

Abbotsleigh Year 1 students collaborate annually with their Knox Prep School counterparts to 'Light Up Lives' across the world. The project begins with a fundraising campaign: developing a script and filming an advertisement for the project in front of a green screen. Over the years, the fundraising initiatives have evolved. There have been glow stick discos, service-at-home initiatives and a fundraising thermometer to encourage donations. Once both schools have raised enough funds to purchase the solar light kits, Knox and Abbotsleigh come together for the day to learn more about the country the lights will be sent to that year. Students then work in pairs to assemble the lights, learning to help one another and that the best projects come from collaboration. Staff and students are delighted as the pile of assembled lights grow and are then packed in containers that will be used at the village as water purifiers and storage.



**LIGHT  
UP  
LIVES**





Abbotsleigh Front Lawn 1960 Penny Baram (Wilson, 1961), Sue Travers (1960), Jenny Bing (Heath, 1961) and Rosalind Davies (Stone, 1961).

### Marg Selby (Staff)

Since joining Abbotsleigh in 1976, Marg has been a cornerstone of the school community, dedicating nearly 40 years to nurturing generations of students until her retirement in 2024. As a passionate History teacher, she brought the past to life with insight and enthusiasm, inspiring a love of learning in countless girls. Her role as Year Coordinator further deepened her impact – offering guidance, support and a steady presence through the pivotal years of adolescence. Marg also served as the School's long-standing Careers Advisor, where her deep knowledge and personal investment in each student's journey made her a trusted mentor. She remained connected with thousands of Old Girls, many of whom returned for Careers Night simply because Marg asked.

Marg's influence extended far beyond the classroom. Known for her wisdom, warmth and tireless dedication, she was described as 'the epitome of a servant leader', always placing the needs of students, staff and families first. Her deep knowledge of careers and exchanges, and her personal connection with Old Girls, along with her approachability, meant that many turned to Marg for her wise advice. Honoured as an Honorary Life Member of the AOGU, Marg's legacy is one of compassion, commitment and community. Her presence will be deeply missed but forever remembered. Marg reflects, 'It has been my absolute privilege to walk alongside so many remarkable young women. Abbotsleigh will always hold a special place in my heart.'



Artwork: Mrs Selby by Ditni Pannipitiya (Year 10, 2025)







In this photograph the Editorial Team of *Humans of Abbotsleigh* recreated the original 1960 photograph opposite. Our wonderful student editors from left to right: Eleanor Zhu (Year 11, 2025); Audrey Tang (Year 11, 2025); Sophia Xie (Year 11, 2025); Kylie Liu (Year 12, 2025); Neve Peters (Year 8, 2025); Angeline Lam (Year 11, 2025). Absent: Fiona Yan (Year 12, 2025).

## Abbotsleigh Parent Associations

The Abbotsleigh Parents' Association (APA) and the Abbotsleigh Boarder Parents' Association (ABPA) play vital roles in fostering a strong, inclusive and supportive school community. Each association serves a unique purpose, yet both are united in their commitment to enhancing the experience of students and their families.

The APA brings together all families, encouraging involvement in school life through events such as Twilight on the Plaza and the Trivia Night. The APA supports wellbeing initiatives, contributes to scholarships and fosters a collaborative culture aligned with the School's values. It provides a platform for parents to give back, build friendships and create a nurturing environment for all students.

Meanwhile, the ABPA acts as a crucial bridge between the School and boarding families, helping to create a 'home away from home' for boarders. Through events like the Boarder Harbour Cruise and the Regional Produce Dinner, the ABPA builds lasting connections among families and ensures boarders feel supported and valued. Their collaboration with day families and regular Zoom meetings further strengthen the sense of community and belonging.

Together, the APA and ABPA enrich the Abbotsleigh experience, ensuring that every girl is surrounded by a caring, connected and engaged community. Their efforts truly make a lasting difference.





# FIVE SISTERS

It is an Abbotsleigh tradition that the family of the Head Prefect gives a short speech at the Father Daughter Breakfast. In 2023, this responsibility fell to Mr Binh Luu, father of Phoebe Luu (Head Prefect 2023). Phoebe's parents were both refugees from Vietnam and it was this story that he shared at the breakfast.

Mrs Susan Luu arrived in Sydney with her family in 1978 when she was just seven years old, and Mr Luu's family arrived a year later in September 1979, when he was nine. Like so many who fled Vietnam after the war, their families left behind everything: homes, livelihoods and any sense of safety. They faced persecution for their political beliefs, economic hardship and discrimination due to their Chinese heritage.

After Mr Luu's family business and home were confiscated, they escaped by boat to Malaysia, facing six harrowing days at sea, battling storms, pirate attacks and fear.

'Just when we thought we had found safety in Malaysia, we were sent back out to sea in leaking boats without engines. I still remember vividly how we used our bare hands to scoop water out, believing we might not survive.'

They were miraculously rescued by a French cargo ship. While most of those rescued were sent to France, the Luu family was fortunate to be sponsored by uncles already living in Sydney. Mr Luu remembers, 'It was a terrifying and life-defining journey, but the kindness and generosity we received have stayed with us ever since.'

Mr and Mrs Luu met during High School in Sydney and quickly discovered they shared more than just a similar past – they shared the same values, hopes and dreams. They married two years after graduating from university and, five years later, were blessed with their eldest daughter, Elizabeth. The Luus first heard about Abbotsleigh through close friends before Elizabeth arrived

and Mr Luu remembers submitting her application on the day she was born.

Both Mr and Mrs Luu say, 'We attended one of the most disadvantaged schools in NSW and remain deeply thankful for the love, care and education we received. Inspired by our parents and teachers, we wanted to give our daughters the best opportunities. Abbotsleigh's values – kindness, compassion and empowering young women – resonated with us. Though raised in a Buddhist background, we were supported by an Anglican family when we arrived in Sydney, and it felt right for our daughters to grow up in that tradition. With all five daughters (and four nieces) attending Abbotsleigh, the community has truly become like family. We are forever grateful for the nurturing environment and the thoughtful, grounded young women our daughters have become.'



December 2024 on a holiday to Mr Luu's hometown in Vietnam. From left: Elizabeth (2018), Phoebe (2023), Felicity (Year 10, 2025), Susan Luu, Annette (Year 12, 2025), Megan (2021), Binh Luu.



The Luu sisters in uniform taken in January 2015 when Felicity, the youngest, commenced Kindergarten.

The Five Sisters Prize was inaugurated in 1937 by Mr and Mrs G Christie whose five daughters attended Abbotsleigh: Elizabeth (1927-1933), Margaret (1927-1936), Alison (1931-1937), Millicent (1933-1938) and Georgina (1935-1941). The prize is one of the oldest, continuously awarded prizes at Abbotsleigh and is awarded to a student who achieves an excellent all-round record in schoolwork, music and sport in the Senior School. After Millicent Halley (Christie, 1938) died in 2002 her family endowed the prize in perpetuity from her estate.







## Linda Dalton (1979)

The daughter of a stateless refugee, Linda's father whispered into her cot, 'You're going to be a lawyer, it's going to be great.' She fulfilled that vision, earning an Arts/Law degree from the University of Sydney and building a career in community law. For more than 30 years, she has lived and worked in Bellingen, NSW, where she's led initiatives supporting youth, refugees and the arts. Her award-winning 'Two Way Street' driving mentorship program, which fosters intergenerational connection and community resilience, earned her an AOGU Anniversary Grant. Linda's life reflects deep gratitude, service and social justice.



Photo: John Feder, Newspix

## Sofia Shumanska (Year 10, 2022)

In 2022, Mrs Krimmer responded to the unfolding crisis in Ukraine by making available a place at Abbotsleigh for refugee student, Sofia Shamanska. Travelling with her mother Olena from war-torn Kyiv, through Warsaw and Dubai, Sofia joined Year 10 in April 2022, living with a host family in Turramurra and attending Abbotsleigh as a day girl. After her first day at Abbotsleigh, Sofia said, 'It was amazing – the School is very big, much bigger than mine at home in Kyiv... The teachers were very good, the girls were really nice – I love it here already.'

# GLOBAL CITIZEN, LOCAL ROOTS

Ingrid Barnsley (1995) is Deputy Director of the Environment Directorate at the OECD, where she leads work on the International Programme for Action on Climate (IPAC). An Australian-French national and Rhodes Scholar, she holds a doctorate from Oxford and lectures in public international law at the University of Tokyo and the American University of Paris.

Ingrid says, 'After finishing Year 12, I pursued my undergraduate studies in Sydney, Brisbane and

Washington DC, then, following admission as a lawyer in Sydney, left to undertake graduate studies in International Relations and International Law at Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship. Since leaving Oxford, my Australian husband and I have lived in Paris, growing our family and our careers in public international law and international diplomacy there. We are fortunate to travel widely and often, and to call two countries in two continents 'home'. We visit Australia with our four children at least once a year.



Having spent my primary years in a more remote part of Australia, I understood from the first day of Year 7 how fortunate I was to attend Abbotsleigh for high school. The School provided me with a world class education, a set of friends for life and a strong sense of values. It is wonderful – not only for me but for my mother, aunt and cousin who are all also Old Girls – that one of our children, Arabella, has been able to experience Year 7 at Abbotsleigh as a boarder this year.'



**THREADS THAT  
WEAVE US TOGETHER**



## **Tempus celerius radio fugit – time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle**

Our motto represents the rich tapestry that is Abbotsleigh.

The warp (the lengthwise threads) represents our strong foundations – our Christian faith, our moral purpose and our strong values and culture.

The weft represents the woven pattern created by the weaver's flying shuttle, where the beautiful tapestry of Abbotsleigh's rich and complex history continues to grow – day by day, month by month, year by year.

The motto was given to the School by Miss Marian Clarke, whose family's crest was a weaver's shuttle and whose family's motto was: 'Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.'



In 2021 Abbotsleigh hosted Artist-in-Residence, Sarah Edmondson, to work with girls in Year 10 Textile Technology, Year 9 Visual Arts and all Year 6 girls to stitch a version of Grace Cossington Smith's painting *Bridge in Curve*. Staff were also invited to stitch a square. The completed work hangs in the Assembly Hall Foyer and is pictured as the background to this page.



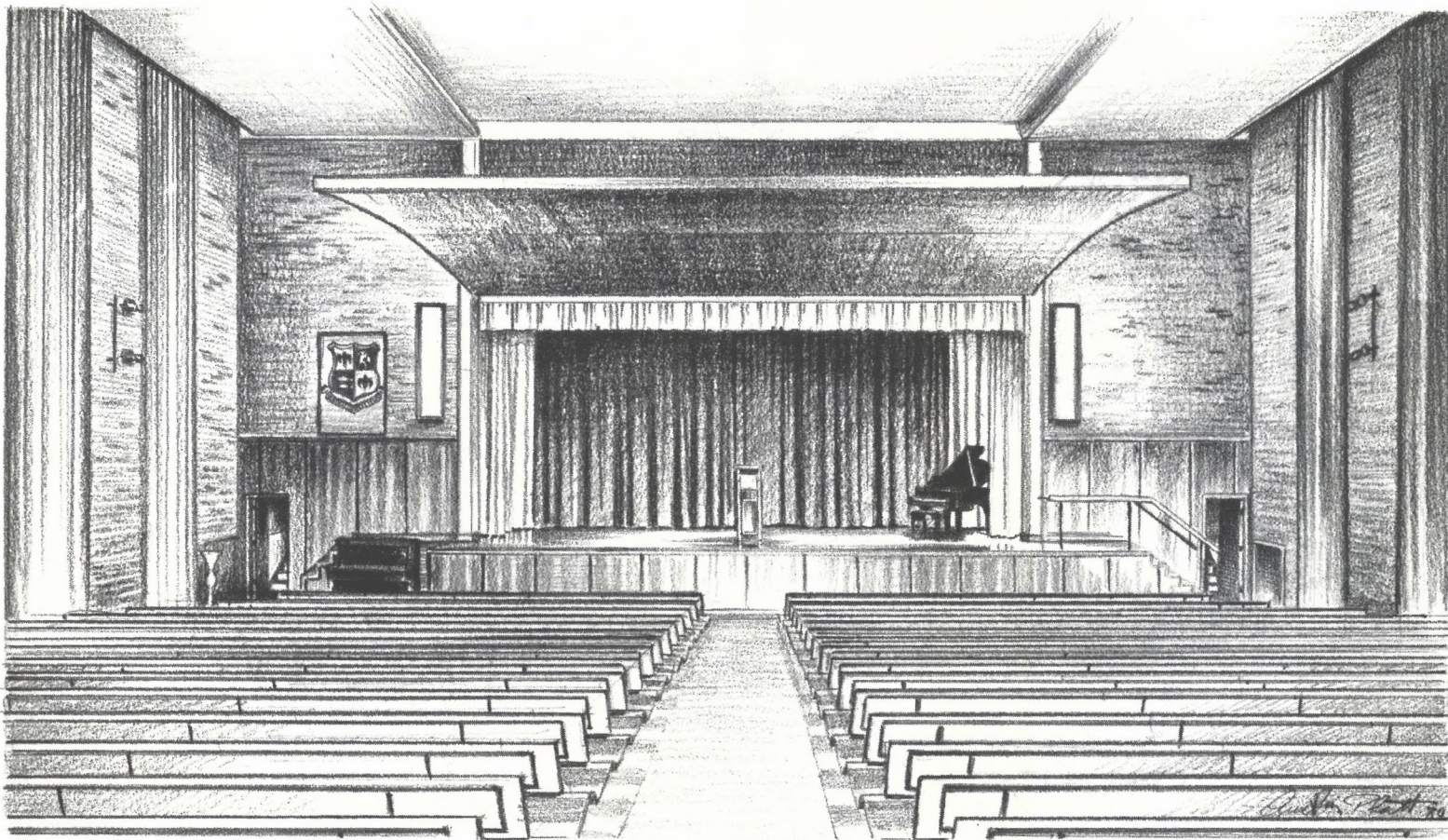


Artwork: *Portrait of Betty Archdale*, 1961, Mr Begbie

'With education, women can do or be anything.'

Helen Elizabeth (Betty) Archdale MBE





## **Helen Elizabeth (Betty) Archdale MBE 1958-1970**

As Abbotsleigh's sixth Headmistress, Betty Archdale's breadth of life experience heralded modernisation across Abbotsleigh when she was appointed in 1958. Educated in Britain and Canada, she was admitted to the London Bar, captained the England Women's Cricket Team on their first tour of Australia, served during World War II in the Women's Royal Naval Service and was appointed Principal of Women's College at the University of Sydney. Post-war shortages were a thing of the past by the late 1950s, so Betty and the Council embarked upon a wide-ranging building program, most notably including the Chapel. Known as 'Archie', her influence over Abbotsleigh girls reflected societal changes outside the School gates. She introduced sex education and empowered the girls to play a larger role in the running of the School. Annabel Baxter (Marr, 1965) recalled that 'As far as she was concerned, the School was there for the girls... not for teachers or parents or Old Girls or anyone else. We all had the feeling that she was on our side.'





## Evelyn Lillian Forster (1937)

Born in Wahroonga, Evelyn attended Eldinhope and later Abbotsleigh from 1931-1937, where she formed a lifelong friendship with Naomi Jacob (Nettleton, 1937). Known for her love of fresh air and spirited debates, Evelyn was a gifted geographer and botanist, with a talent for botanical drawing. One of her prints is held by the National Gallery of Australia.

After teaching at Abbotsleigh in the late 1950s, Evelyn moved to Melbourne with her family, becoming Headmistress at a girls' boarding school. Always impeccably dressed in tweed and with her hair neatly plaited, she was a formidable yet kind educator who deeply cared for her students.

Her influence extended beyond the classroom. Evelyn nurtured her friends' children, encouraging scientific curiosity – gifting chemistry sets and inspiring careers in science. A fearless traveller and staunch royalist, she explored the Arctic Circle and Madagascar, often sending postcards from her adventures.

Evelyn was a cherished Old Girl and generous benefactor whose legacy lives on in The Evelyn Forster Infants Wing in the Junior School, opened in 2010 and named in her honour. Much like Abbotsleigh's founder Marian Clarke, Evelyn was an artist, educator and world traveller. Though her drawings were sadly lost, her spirit lives on in the lives she touched and the values she embodied. Another Abbotsleigh Old Girl, Sue Cross (Jacobs, 1949) recalled Evelyn having a long affection for Abbotsleigh and wearing her Prefect badge as an elderly woman!



## Aldyth Jones (Beale 1946)

Aldyth's connection to Abbotsleigh begins with her mother, Edith Beale (Allard, 1917). A school Prefect, she was the first girl to be awarded the prestigious Marian Clarke Scholarship, enabling her to study Medicine at the University of Sydney.

Born 24 April 1930, Aldyth attended Abbotsleigh 1937-1946. Edith herself had been raised and educated by an enlightened father who had been a great believer in reading and gave his daughter one new book each week.

This erudite man, Aldyth's grandfather, Sir George Mason Allard, was an accountant and Chairman of AWA, who lived at the family home, Bundarra. Upon his death in 1953, Bundarra was sold to form part of the Junior School and he is remembered at Abbotsleigh by the provision of books to the Junior School Library through the Sir George Mason Allard Trust.

Three generations of Allard-Beale-Jones girls have attended Abbotsleigh, covering the years 1917-1986, concluding with Aldyth's daughter Laura Jones (1986). Both Aldyth and Laura were Jubilee Scholars. Aldyth was proud of her unique ties to Abbotsleigh. She herself lived at Bundarra for 11 years, and was proud of the 'firsts' attached to the family name – the first Marian Clarke Scholar and the first Old Girl to marry in the School Chapel. Aldyth was a staunch supporter of the Old Girls' Union and worked on the founding of the Thurles Thomas Archives.





# SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

In 1925, Abbotsleigh's Headmistress, Miss Dorothea Poole, instituted a day of performances to celebrate William Shakespeare's birthday. In the first year, eight classes each performed an act from one of his plays. A Shakespeare Festival has been held every year ever since, except for 1947. The format of the Festival has varied over the years. By the 1950s it occupied an entire frantic school day. Open-air performances in the 1960s were a mixed success. In some years, the Festival was simply an Assembly recital, in others houses competed for glory. Several Abbotsleigh Old Girls have gone on to become professional actors having first trodden the boards on the Abbotsleigh Shakespeare Festival stage.







## HOUSE CHOIR

The House Choir competition began in 1959 having evolved from the Roseberry Cup, which began in 1951.



Melba came out on top with their performance of 'Somewhere out there' from *An American Tale*... Judged by Abbotsleigh staff, the girls were commended on their diction, song choice, tone harmony and overall sound.

*The Weaver 2009*



In association with the theme 'Songs of Protest' Wright sang 'I am woman' with confidence and musicality.

*The Weaver 2002*



In the Annual Choir Competition we sang 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds'. Lou, Cad and Lucy did a great job... putting much fire and effort into the performance.

*The Weaver 1984*



We came 4th in the House Choir competition, singing the Australia International Year of the Child song 'Care for Kids', and won the hockey which was tremendous.

*The Weaver 1980*





House spirit revived with a good old singalong... Franklin sang 'Sentimental Journey' by Bud Green. The choir devoted much time to practising and this was rewarded when Franklin won.

*The Weaver 1977*



House Choir was an absolutely fantastic way to end the year. The talent was just amazing and special thanks must be given to... all the musicians who led us to a fantastic 1st.

*The Weaver 1995*



After an almost three year hiatus, that somehow felt as long as One Direction's break, House Choir 2022 finally came to fruition... Richardson performed 'Bella's final' from Pitch Perfect.

*The Weaver 2022*



Second term got off to a good start with Pritchard winning the choir competition, with the song 'Who will buy' from Oliver.

*The Weaver 1985*





Photo: Laura Tunstall (2001) and Edwina Bartholomew (2001) hosted the Foundation event: Gala at the Gallery, 2022

# ABBOTSLEIGH FOUNDATION

Every Abbotsleigh girl, past and present, has benefited from the generosity of our community. Donations to the Abbotsleigh Foundation assist in providing state-of-the-art learning environments in the Junior and Senior Schools, as well as means-tested scholarships, such as the Indigenous Scholarship. These scholarships provide an opportunity for girls who, without these scholarships, would not be able to attend Abbotsleigh. Each year the community comes together at either the evening Gala event or a Sports Lunch to raise these much needed funds.



Camilla Love (1996) was appointed Chair of Abbotsleigh Foundation in 2023 and is the first female and first Old Girl to hold this significant role. Camilla was a Director at Perennial Investment Management Limited and also a Director at Perennial Private Ventures GP LP Pty Ltd, governing Perennial's venture capital limited partnership. In 2017, Camilla founded F3 – Future Females in Finance, fostering the next generation of female talent in financial services.

Upon her election, Camilla said, 'I had many wonderful experiences at Abbotsleigh from social netball, to Geography classes with Mr Kelleher, to Tennant winning House Choir (go Tennant!), and building strong, lifelong friendships. The one thread that runs through my experience at Abbotsleigh is the ethos and culture of the School to develop creative, determined and community-minded young women who go on to strive for and develop a better future in whatever they choose to do.'

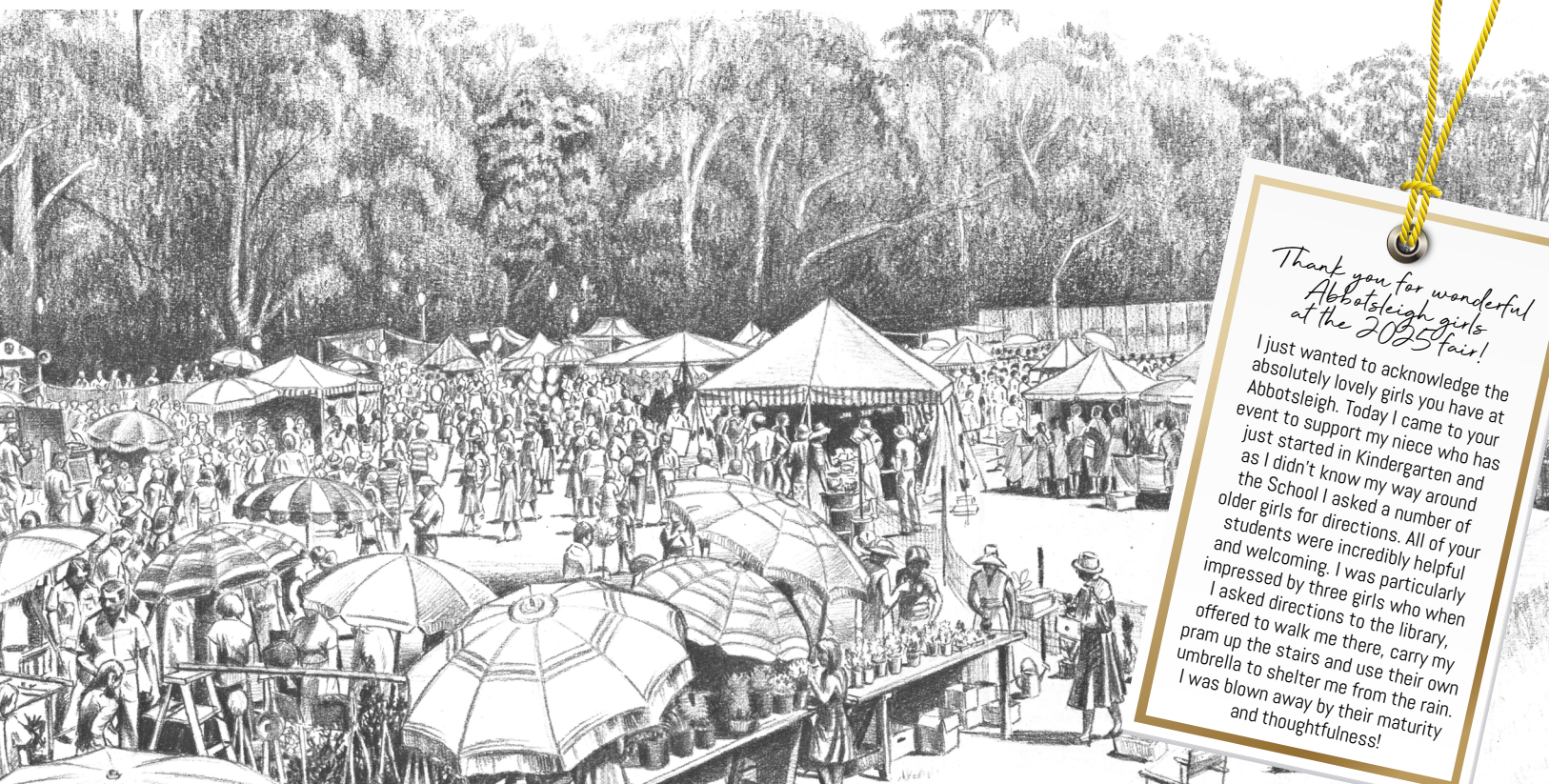




# AUTUMN FAIR

The 140th Birthday Autumn School Fair saw the return of a proud Abbotsleigh tradition. Many fairs or fetes have been held on the Top Oval over the years, with stalls, games and jumping castles. It is a community event that connects us and brings us joy.

From *The Weaver* 1916, 'Lately our energies have been absorbed by our School bazaar, which was held on 6 November and proved a great success, realising the sum of £160.' The funds were donated to the Allies' Day Fund, Wahroonga branch of the Red Cross, Nurses' Christmas Gifts Fund and the War Chest 'for the men in the trenches'.



Thank you for wonderful  
Abbotsleigh girls  
at the 2025 fair!

I just wanted to acknowledge the absolutely lovely girls you have at Abbotsleigh. Today I came to your event to support my niece who has just started in Kindergarten and as I didn't know my way around the School I asked a number of older girls for directions. All of your students were incredibly helpful and welcoming. I was particularly impressed by three girls who when I asked directions to the library, offered to walk me there, carry my pram up the stairs and use their own umbrella to shelter me from the rain. I was blown away by their maturity and thoughtfulness!



## Welcome Song

Welcome to Abbotsleigh once more  
Bringing bright mem'ries of days of yore!  
Linked are the lives of Old and New  
For you have been us and we shall be you.  
In work and sport we strive to uphold  
High in the sunshine the badge of gold,  
To your traditions loyal and true,  
For you have been us and we shall be you.

**AOGU**  
est. 1908

# ABBOTSLEIGH OLD GIRLS' UNION

This 'Welcome Song' was sung by present girls to Old Girls returning to the School on the occasion of the inaugural meeting of the Old Girls' Union in May 1908. One of the oldest school alumni associations in Australia, the Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union (AOGU) was founded by our first Headmistress, Miss Marian Clarke. The AOGU aims to maintain and pass down the traditions of the School and promote its interests, unite past students of the School with the present, and keep past Abbotsleigh girls connected with each other.

To celebrate their 110th anniversary, the AOGU initiated the Anniversary Grant program. The Grant highlights and supports the philanthropic work of Old Girls to 'pay it forward' through an activity or project designed to have a positive social impact, aligning with Abbotsleigh's tradition of social responsibility and service. The Kathleen McCredie Award was initiated through a generous gift from the AOGU in 1999. The Centenary Scholarship, also supported by the AOGU, is awarded to the daughter of an Old Girl entering Years 11 and 12.



# SISTERS AND FRIENDS



Catherine Bailey (Year 7, 2025) and Neave Bailey (Year 10, 2025)

## THE BAILEY SISTERS

Catherine said, 'The picture you see is a picture of the afternoon of my first day of Year 7. My sister waited at my locker for 30 minutes just to make sure I'd had a good day. She organised my schedule for me and helped me haul all my books over the bridge. Because of Neave, I feel like I can do anything because I know that no matter what, she will always be proud of me.'

Neave said, 'Abbotsleigh is my life. I live at school and visit home. My friends are like my school family: school is everything. Every year school gets harder, but for the better. It teaches me persistence and self-esteem. My interests and hobbies have been developed at school. My personality has been developed at school. All my 12 years at Abbotsleigh have always empowered me to keep going. That is why I love Abbotsleigh.'



Sophie Aylès (1987), Vanessa Burges (Forndran, 1987), Anna Rudd (Gyles, 1987), Sarah Sandilands (Elmslie, 1987), Kirsty Albert (1987), Emma Press (1987).

## ENDURING FRIENDSHIPS

As leavers of 1987, we forged strong friendships that have endured far beyond the School gates. Some have pursued careers in medicine, others in finance, law, media and sponsorship. Over the years, we have been scattered across the globe pursuing jobs, meeting partners and building families in London, New York, Europe and Singapore. As a group we've navigated life's highs and lows. No matter how busy life has been, we have all been connected online sharing old photos of birthday parties and school excursions. Several times a year a get together is organised and those who can, attend. We all realise how lucky we are to still have our school friendships of more than 40 years.



Yojana Adhikari, Jennifer Allan, Kim Allan, Lisa Andrawes, Adam Antonio, Lauren Archer, Jovan Aristoki, Annabel Armstrong, Kathleen Atterbury, William Austin-Cray, Meg Bailey, Aidan Baker, Fiona Louise Banks, Emily Banning, Kim Barker, Melinda Barker, Lauren Barlow, Anna Barraclough, Paul Barrett, Carlos Barroeta, Manish Basnet, Sofie Batchelor, Samuel Batchelor, Claire Battikha, Sophie Beard, Kellie Beatson, William Beaumont, Jenni Beaumont-Hunt, Janelle Behrens, Barbara Beilharz, Anthony Bell, Elizabeth Bennett, Crystal Bensley, Dale Berg, Xavier Rene Bernard, Ivars Maris Berzins, Corey Black, Georgia Black, Renee Black, Lorraine Boothby, Xavier Colin John Boucher, Ross Bowden, Sarah Bradstock, Tayla Brass, Ainslie Breckenridge, Damian Brindley, Fiona Brown, Thomas Bruce, Steven Bultitude, Deborah Burasiddhi, Sophie Claire (Pulvers) Burnett, Polly Butterworth, Emma Cabuil, Emma Cairns, Michelle Cameron, Elizabeth Cannon, Jessica Carlisle, Brittany Carrington, Sophie Carrington, Glenn Maurice Casey, Hannah Cecchini, Zeina Chacty, Cassandra Chan, Paula Chan, Linda Carol Chapman, Jin Chen, Yue-Ying Chen, Angela Cherry, Stephanie Chiha, Phillip John Church, Lynette Clarke, Lauren Cleary, Jodie Clough, Jennifer Collins, Lucy Collins, Mandy Corbett, Adrienne Renee Counsell, Rong Crundwell, Corey Crundwell, Elizabeth Cuza, Sarah Dallen, Josh Darley, Wendy Davey, Louisa Kjaelskov Davidson, Jordan Davies, Lisa Davies, Paige Day, Gregory Denmark, Katie Devine, Bongseon Do, Viola Olivia Dominello, Melissa Jane Dooley, Natalie Doyle, Claire Drury, Dover Zelig Dubosarsky, Jack Duggan, Jonathan Dunk, Allison Dunnett, Kristofer Egan, Mickel Eisermann, Jake Enasio, Danielle Esterman, Sarah Evans, Jayne Everingham, Mary Faith, Colleen Fenn, Catherine Ferguson, Gregory Fisher, Timothy Fitzadam, Eliza Fitzgerald, Lee Fleming, James Flood, Lyndon Franks, Bronwyn Friend, Helen Futchter, Kimberley Fyffe, Charlotte Galea, Jessica Galvin, Adele Garner, Jason Garrett, Peter Garside, Carmen Gaspersic, Alison Gates, Margaret Anne Geehan, Kylie George, Ella Gibbs, Michaela Gibiec, Vivienne Gilkes, Rosanna Goode, Matthew Goodyer, Michelle Barbara Gouveia, James Green, Praphaporn Greene, Joao Filipe Gregorio Loureiro, Patricia Griffiths, Heidi Grout, Belinda Grove, Romualdo Gulla, Ishara Chrislani Gunsekere, Carolyn Hallissy, Shane Hamilton, Robyn Hamilton, Jiajia Hammerton, Kerry Anne Harding, Elizabeth Harknett, Elizabeth Jane Harnwell, Andrew Stuart Hartwig, Katie Hawkins, Zoe Haydon, Clare Haymen, Carole Helbert, Hendri Hendrigus, Virginia Hetherington, Alicia Highfield, Sarah Hobba, Winifred Ruth Diana Hodson, Jo-Anne Hogan, Zheng Hua Hu, Emily Hughes-Franco, Rachel Huljich, Georgina Elizabeth Humphries, Nicole Hunt, Andrew James Hunt, Benjamin Lewis Hunter, Jennifer Hurlll, Amanda Jane Isaac, Sarah Louise Israel, Kathryn Louise Jacobs, Naomi James, Rangsiya Jantrasri, Suzanne Margaret Johnston, Donita Joan Jones, Lisa Jones, Joanne Jones, Leonie Jonker, Rhonda Kaan, Murray Keating, Bradley Sheldon Keep, Sean Kelleher, Louise Maree Keller, Bradley John Kelly, Anisha Khatri K C, Mall Suk Kim, John Klimes, Jenna Hayley Knott, David Knott, Brett Kriedemann, Megan Krimmer, Jeehun Lydia Kwak, Sophie Jean Laing-Peach, Christopher John Lambeck, Isabelle Laurent, Shelley Laycock, Je Sung Lee, Wing Yee Lee, Kim Patrick Lejao, Pui Pui Leung, Deborah Kuo May Liang, Stephanie Liang, Alexandra Lightfoot, Margaret Lim, Yongjae Lim, Lisa Lin, Natascha Lipman, Sofia Lipman, Ingrid Little, David Bernard London, Kelly Elizabeth Love, Jamie Andrew Love, Sally Lucas, Bruce Luff, Georgia Luikens, Jane Lynch, Alice Dawn Mackenzie, Sarah MacLeod, Jodie Leanne Maffey, Taryn Mahoney, Merna Malek, Evguenia Malko, Lilianna Maltezos, Emily Mannix, Rebecca Ellen Manuel, Michael Massa, Alexis Masterton, Linda Elizabeth Matheson, Linda Mathews, Jennifer Mathews, Fabian Matuszewicz, Jacqueline Leonie McCarthy, Nathan McEvoy, Shelley McKaysmith, Jennifer McLaren, Emily Jae-Hee McMahon, Rowena McMicking, Kalie McMurtry, Michelle Sherine McVeigh, Sujatha Mehta, Callum Meikle, Cooper Menget, Nadia Merchant, Nicoletta Michaelides, Ernesto Mina Ovalle, Donna Moffatt, Teresa Moore, Jessica Morrison, Catherine Mortimer, Martina Muehlenbernd, Jodie Murray, Sudheera Siva Das Nair, Naoko Nakagawa, Shankari Narenthiran, Amanda Neville, Jennifer Ellen Nicholson, Warwick Noble, Alexandra Norton, Cassandra Karina Oates, Rebecca O'Brien, Cheryl O'Byrne, Catherine Louise Oliver, Jacqueline Maree Olsson, Bruce Andrew Oppenheim, Justin Owens, David Owens, Jasmine Palmer, Madeleine Papp, Basanta Raj Pariyar, Jessica Ruth Parker, Larissa Pasternatsky, Yael Payne, Marilen Pena Gomez, Michelle Anne Maree Penn, Susannah Pinter, Lucy Plummer, Joseph Pocock, Kristen Jane Pollock, Marilyn Maie Powell, Enza Daniella Puscas, Mahta Rahimi, Fiona Redknap, Victoria Rennie, Belinda Robertson, Kylene Rogers, Eloise Rogers, Brendon Rose, Isobel Royston, Annika Rose Rungwerth, Elizabeth Russell, Melissa Kate Ryan, Danielle Helen Salt, Rhod Sampaga, Christien Samuel, Mary Santone, Irini Savvides, Anthony Sawyer, Josephine Scalone, Harry Sdraulig, Karen Seeneevassen, Margaret Selby, Danielle Sellars, Fenny Setianingsih, Caitilin Jane Shairp, Matthew Shanahan, Julie Shannon, Georgie Sharman, Louise Shaw, Nishant Shibabhakti, Indra Shrestha, Pei Siau, Helene Simic, Victoria Small, Ian Charles Smith, Angelique Soliman, Alison Jean Soper, Sally Southan, Jodie Spencer, Alyssa Jane Squance, Victoria Staas, Isabelle Yamna Stacey, Penina Stafford, Caroline Anne Surendra, Yumiko Takedomi, Easter Tang, Hilary Taylor, Olivia Taylor, Melissa Rachel Taylor, Luke Taylor, Marina Elizabeth Taylor, Nicole Lynnette Terry, Angela Catherine Thomas, Bruce Michael Thomas, Renee Thomson, Melissa Tilbrook, Darcy Tindale, Ella Toll, Allison Tomicki, Olivia Grace Turner, Emma Tuttielt, Thomas Urbaniak, Ming Yue Urwin, Elizabeth Peita van Bussel, Ruihua Varcoe, Sean Vidal, Sarah Elizabeth Vincent, Colleen Walsh, Nina Wang, Hui Wang, Annette Ware, Simon Ware, Aaron Wartmann, Kym Weathersten, Diana Webster, Lyndall Wells, Angela Welyczko, Joanne Wheatley, Beth Wheeler, Joanne Whelan, Kathryn White, Noni White, Kimberley Ann Wicks, Belinda Williams, Johanna Wingrove, Robert Winslow, Siu Chun Sarah Wong, Matthew David Wood, Victoria Woodhouse, Rebecca Woods, Timothy Worthington, Betina Wrightson, Minna Xing, Dawn Yang, Evan Yueh, Gabrielle Zeaiter, Min Zheng.





Abbotsleigh Staff 1974



Jill Tuffley (Staff 1972-1999) joined Abbotsleigh in 1972 as a Senior Geography Teacher and soon helped establish the Economics program, becoming Head of Economics in 1976. In the 1980s, she founded the Recycled Book Club, reflecting her practical and forward-thinking approach. After retiring in 1999, Jill's dedication to the Abbotsleigh community continued. In 2000, she reached out to former colleagues, proposing an annual reunion. The enthusiastic response led to the formation of FAbbS – Former Abbotsleigh Staff Association – named by Sue Hutchins. With Robyn Claydon as President and Jill as Secretary, the group flourished, fostering connection and camaraderie among retired staff. In 2025, after 24 years of devoted service to FabbS, Jill stepped down as Secretary. The association continues under the capable leadership of Rosemary Abrahams (President), Janine Cooper (Secretary), and Denise Foot (Treasurer). Jill's legacy lives on in the enduring bonds she helped create – proof that her impact at Abbotsleigh extends far beyond the classroom.





IGSA Football, 2024



Junior School sport, 1960



Leaving Certificate Class, 1938



Swimming pool and Read House, 1960



Junior School Swimming Carnival, 2024





Betty Archdale Library, 2025



Betty Archdale Library, 1971



Year 12, 2025



Leaver's hat signing, 1969



Year 12 uniform signing, 2024





Mrs Lesley Sykes, a long-serving and much loved staff member, taught at Abbotsleigh 1965-1967 and then 1977-2005. Mrs Sykes was married in the Abbotsleigh Chapel in 1967. A teacher of Geography and Economics for many years, when Design and Technology was introduced into the School, Mrs Sykes offered to teach this subject. She skilfully made the generations of uniform dolls for the Archives with the encouragement of Anne Robinson, Head of Library at the time.





## To Abbotsleigh

To Abbotsleigh we raise our voice  
In gratitude and praise  
For all that she has stood for  
Through many years and days  
We think of those who've led her  
We think of those who've shared  
We think of those who've done their best  
And the countless ones who've cared  
We praise God for our heritage  
For our School that's stood the test  
And ask for strength and courage  
To give to her our best.

To the tune of 'Thaxted' by Gustav Holst  
Lyrics by Robyn Claydon

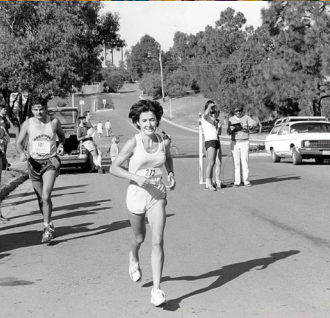
Artwork: *Untitled*, watercolour and coloured pencil on canvas by Hua Ye – submission for Mystery Masterpieces 2025





ABBOTSLEIGH GATES - WAHROONGA









ABBOTSLEIGH

140 Years  
Abbotsleigh  
1885 - 2025