



ABBOTSLEIGH

Around Abbotsleigh





In July 2024, a group of Abbotsleigh girls travelled to Tanzania to get to know and share lessons with students at the Bunda Girls' Secondary School.

Abbotsleigh acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to Elders past and present.



ABBOTSLEIGH

Around Abbotsleigh is a publication for the Abbotsleigh school community.

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2024: A Year of enrichment, celebration and learning to 'Brave the Waves'

Megan Krimmer
Headmistress



Commencing with the launch of our inspirational Year 12 prefect theme 'Brave the Waves', Abbotsleigh continued in its tradition of providing enriching learning experiences, both within and beyond the classroom, in order that each girl is given the 'opportunity to do more, so that she has the ability to be more'. Our broader community

also has embraced this, and our Abbotsleigh Old Girls, our parents and grandparents as well as our past parents and members of the Foundation and Marian Clarke Society, have been very active indeed as they have supported the School, been involved in myriad activities and joined with us in celebrating the Junior School's 70th Birthday on its current site.

The launch of the prefect theme saw Head Prefect Lily Thornthwaite, holding her large blue surfboard, give the following message to her fellow students:

'This theme encapsulates our vision for Abbotsleigh this year, with two key elements:

'Firstly, the waves. Waves are a metaphor for the obstacles that are inevitable in life. We are all faced with challenges or waves daily. Some days will be smooth sailing and other days we'll get tumbled by rough surf. Sometimes the waves will appear larger than we can handle and other times the surf will be great. Some days we will be thrown off balance, but we need to learn to get back up again.

'This is where 'brave' comes in.

'Challenges can be overwhelming and stressful, but they can also be heaps of fun and rewarding. When we equip ourselves with the right tools, such as grit, resilience and a growth mindset, we are able to embrace challenges and enjoy the journey...

'In the wise words of [American professor] Jon Kabat-Zin: 'You can't stop the waves, but you can learn how to surf.'

We are very proud of our Class of 2024, who galvanised the whole student body and the staff around their theme. Art installations were created, assemblies and activity weeks organised, and inspirational guest speakers invited to speak about what 'braving the waves' has meant to them.

As you will read in this edition of *Around Abbotsleigh*, our Year 12 girls not only embraced learning, but they also braved the inevitable waves of assessments, possibly uncomfortable feedback and examinations, and, as a result of their hard work, dedication and resilience, they did extremely well in their HSC examinations. In fact, the girls did so well that Abbotsleigh was not only placed 10th in the State for the second year in a row, but the School also was named Top Independent Girls' School in NSW. We certainly wish each girl in Year 12 2024 every success as she moves beyond the gates of Abbotsleigh and embarks on her new and exciting adventures.

Equally inspirational are our Abbotsleigh Old Girls, highlighted in this publication. So many of our Old Girls are eminent writers and I am sure that you will be impressed with the talent, dedication, perseverance and success of these wonderful women. It also is exciting to read news about our Old Girls and of the many reunions organised this year. Equally as fascinating is

the family history of Sophie Miller (Year 9), whose links with Abbotsleigh stem as far back as 1885, with her great-great-great-aunt Olive Lack, being one of our first students.

With learning and developing the 'whole girl' being central to all that we do, I am confident that you will marvel at the myriad activities highlighted in this publication: from Kindness and Wellbeing Days in the Junior School to being successful mathematical sleuths in the Senior School, to participating in adventures overseas that saw our senior musicians perform in concerts in Portugal and Spain, and some of our avid learners undertake Summer School courses at Oxford. Passionate about service, another group of Senior girls had the fantastic opportunity of going to Tanzania to visit our partner school, Bunda Girls' Secondary School, which was established by AOG Rev Helen Hoskins (1969). While in Africa, the girls also visited St Jude's, the school supported by our Junior School, and experienced a sensational African safari!

The highlight of Semester 2 for our Junior School girls was the superb Luminescence concert at the State Theatre, where the girls celebrated the Junior School's 70-year

history through music, dance, drama and song. The grand finale saw every girl (500+) together on stage; an experience the girls will remember and treasure forever.

These wonderful Junior School celebrations were tinged with sadness at the end of the year with the retirement of our highly respected and renowned Head of Junior School, Ms Sally Ruston AM. This publication features 25 years of incredible service given to our School by Ms Ruston who was honoured by the whole Abbotsleigh community on Speech Day. The Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union's Strategic Purpose: 'Connection through Community', as well as their gratitude for all that Ms Ruston has done, were beautifully demonstrated by the union giving her the honour of an invitation to be an honorary member of the Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union. Ms Ruston will be sorely missed, and we wish her the very best for her retirement.

From our littlest people in the ELC, to our oldest girls in Year 12 and everyone in between and beyond, this Semester 2 2024 edition of *Around Abbotsleigh* has captured beautifully the energy and vitality of our Abbotsleigh community. I commend this publication to you; I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have.



‘Walking with Purpose’ and an inspiration to thousands of children and educators

After 25 years, Ms Sally Ruston AM, our much-loved Head of Junior School, has retired. Headmistress Megan Krimmer pays tribute

At the end of the year, the whole school community bid a sad farewell to Ms Sally Ruston AM, who made the momentous decision to retire after more than 40 years as an educator and 25 years of dedicated and transformational leadership as Head of Abbotsleigh’s Junior School.

Ms Sally Ruston AM is a highly renowned educator who has inspired and shaped the futures of literally thousands of young people throughout her incredible career. As Head of the Junior School at Abbotsleigh, she has been a visionary leader and educator who has ensured our Abbotsleigh girls have been enriched by excellent learning experiences and who has inspired her staff to be the best educators they can be.

As a forward-thinking and very hard-working professional, Ms Ruston’s achievements are quite extraordinary. As such, in the years from 2000 to 2024, the Junior School has grown, been transformed, and truly flourished under her leadership. Some of Ms Ruston’s many achievements include:

- the introduction of the Early Learning Centre
- the transformation of the Junior School campus and the completion of the Primary Wing; the Infants Wing and Early Learning Centre; STEM Street; and the recent superb
- Library, Auditorium and Innovation Centre
- the doubling of student and staff numbers.

Most importantly though, Ms Ruston is acknowledged and commended as an educator par excellence. She understands Junior School girls and how they learn, and she ensured that each girl under her care received wonderfully enriching learning experiences throughout their time in the Junior School. Indeed, Ms Ruston must be praised for inspiring literally thousands of girls to be great learners who know what it means to ‘walk with purpose’ and shine.

Equally, under her leadership, Ms Ruston ensured that the Junior School staff developed and grew as outstanding educators. She also worked closely with parents, providing great advice and facilitating excellent information sessions on all matters relevant to educating and bringing up young girls.

Further, Ms Ruston worked as a very active and positive contributor to Abbotsleigh’s Senior Leadership Team, which oversees the education of all our students from Pre K-12.

In addition to all of the above, Ms Ruston has given tirelessly of her time to the wider education community, serving as Acting President and Deputy President of APPA; the Federal President of IPSHA and member of the IPSHA Board; Chair of ISTAA; member of the CIS Board; and member of the AIS Centre of Excellence Council. In 2019, Ms Ruston was named Primary School Principal of the Year – non-Government.

These are superb achievements indeed.

Upon her retirement, Ms Ruston was honoured by students, staff and the Abbotsleigh Old Girls’ Union, who bestowed upon her the incredible honour of being invited to become an honorary member of the Abbotsleigh Old Girls’ Union – this was very special indeed. In addition to a gift from the School, Ms Ruston was given a beautiful box filled with messages from every girl in the Junior School; we are sure Ms Ruston will treasure these messages from her grateful students.

We have no doubt that Ms Ruston’s inspirational proclamation to our Junior School girls to ‘Walk with Purpose’ will forever be front of mind and on the lips of every single Junior School girl, as well as their parents and all members of staff. Ms Ruston will certainly be sorely missed by the whole Abbotsleigh community.

Ms Ruston, we wish you God’s richest blessings upon your retirement. Fare Thee Well.

Speech Day, 4 December 2024

Staff and students were vocal in their appreciation of Ms Ruston. Here are extracts from some of the many speeches delivered in her honour

From Liz Cannon, Director of Wellbeing

Having worked with Ms Ruston for 25 years I am honoured today, as both a colleague and friend, to reflect on her amazing journey. What makes Ms Ruston such a legend? There are many reasons, I will focus on just five.

Firstly, Ms Ruston not only knows her girls and past girls by name, but she knows their sisters' names, parents' names and often their pets' names! But it is not just about knowing a girl's name that matters, it's about the extraordinary commitment to the care and nurturing of each and every girl's learning and wellbeing, and each staff member's professional journey – this is what Ms Ruston does in spades. Our girls have wonderful memories of Ms Ruston, which will hear more about soon.

Secondly, Ms Ruston is leaving us with new phrases and wise words we will never forget. Girls will know her insistence on them 'walking with purpose'. Staff know that, rain or the possibility of rain, will never stop a Junior School event, given Sally's adage of 'a bit of rain will not make our girls shrink!' and her phrase 'NOW, NOW' when something needed to occur immediately!

Thirdly, Sally's commitment to education and her passion for shaping the minds and hearts of young women is nothing short of extraordinary. She has created incredible learning environments, spaces and pedagogies, which, together with fostering of excellence in her staff, has inspired our youngest learners to dream big, work hard and believe in themselves. Sally knows that for our girls to become strong, capable, respectful and confident learners and citizens, they need to be resilient in learning and in life. This focus on resilience is evident in every classroom and in the dynamic Junior School playground, even down to the girls zooming around on scooters and rollerblades. They do bounce back! Sally was espousing 'resilience' long before society understood how important it is to our wellbeing.

Fourthly, Ms Ruston is an exceptional leader and role model, showing us what it means to lead with wisdom, strength, gratitude and compassion. She has mentored countless teachers and has instilled the highest standards in her staff so that they have been able to achieve amazing things often beyond their own expectations. Her wisdom on educating and parenting of young girls across the whole school has been exemplary.

Lastly, Sally's influence has reached far beyond the walls of Abbotsleigh. For her significant service to primary education, and to professional associations, she was made a Member of the Order of Australia. Another extraordinary achievement.

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. You will be sorely missed.



From Donna Moffatt, Director of Learning Innovation

As you can imagine, stories about Ms Ruston could fill an entire Speech Day ceremony without any other items. The stories we've decided to share today are all about building: building a Junior School that is a beautiful space where small girls grow into strong, confident, young women.

I met Ms Ruston when she and I were both young heads of school on what was then called the Junior School Heads of Australia Association, which is now IPSHA. As you know, Ms Ruston became President of IPSHA, but just over 25 years ago, it wasn't easy being two of only three young females on that committee. But Sally approached this challenge with the same determination and unwavering desire for improvement that is her trademark.

When I joined Abbotsleigh just a few years later, Sally was still building – the Primary Wing, a special space for Years 4, 5 and 6 with an inspirational Art room and a surrounding courtyard.

A few years after that, in 2009, we started on the Infants Wing with an Early Learning Centre. Ms Ruston and I worked very closely on this project, and I will always treasure the way in which we collected ideas from around the world and collaborated for hours, late into the night, about the finest of details. Of course, there were all the built elements but there was also the culture. What would our philosophy of Early Learning look like and how would that flow through Junior School, into Middle School and onto Senior College? We had far-ranging educational discussions and we kept returning to the belief that we must consider the environment as more than a space. We must consider what we communicate about our values through our learning spaces.

And, so, after the Infants wing, came STEM Street. A collaborative, aesthetic, spacious and technology-rich area that allows girls to be curious and satisfies their thirst for enquiry, where they can think and problem solve.

The most recent building that Sally has overseen is the Junior School Library, where literature is treasured and a student can lose herself in a book in a quiet corner. Reading is one of Sally's loves and every Junior School child can tell you how much they enjoy Ms Ruston's storytelling during DEAR after a lunchtime full of play.

The outdoor environment is another of Ms Ruston's passions and it, too, has been revitalised under her leadership. There isn't a visitor to Abbotsleigh who doesn't leave inspired by the rollerblading and skateboarding talents of our K-6 girls. Sally encourages outdoor challenges as a way for our students to build resilience. Just this week, one ex-Junior School girl reminisced over the time when Ms Ruston climbed Mt Kosciuszko with her and afterwards went joyfully splashing down a waterslide at a nearby theme park.

As we bid farewell and reflect on Ms Ruston's many achievements, let us remember the words of John Quincy Adams: 'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.' Ms Ruston, you have been that leader for us.



From Mr Murray Keating, Junior School Year Co-ordinator

Ms Ruston's journey with us began a quarter of a century ago, and from the very start, it was clear that her passion for education and commitment to nurturing young minds would leave an indelible mark. Her vision and dedication have transformed our Junior School into a place where curiosity is encouraged, creativity is nurtured, and every child is given the opportunity to shine.

One of the hallmarks of Ms Ruston's leadership has been her unwavering commitment to quality education and lessons that last a lifetime. She has worked tirelessly to create an environment where every student feels valued and respected. Her outstanding efforts have ensured that our school is a place where everyone can thrive, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

Beyond the school gates, Ms Ruston has given tirelessly to the wider education community. In 2019, she was named Primary School Principal of the Year – non-Government.

Her care for others has touched the lives of many. Whether it was a comforting word during a difficult time or a celebratory cheer for a student's achievement, Ms Ruston has always been there, embodying the true spirit of Abbotsleigh. As we look back on the past 25 years, we are reminded of the countless memories and milestones that have defined Ms Ruston's time with us. From school productions and sports days to academic achievements and personal triumphs, she has been a constant source of support and encouragement. Like the ever-reliable captain at the helm of a ship, Ms Ruston has steered the Junior School with wisdom, strength and determination. Her legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of all who have had the privilege of knowing Ms Ruston. She has fostered countless relationships and has set the bar high for those who follow.

Her contributions have been immeasurable, and their impact will be felt for years to come. While we will miss her presence dearly, we are excited for the adventures that lie ahead. We know that Ms Ruston will continue to inspire and make a difference in whatever path she chooses to follow.

Thank you, Ms Ruston, for everything you have done for Abbotsleigh Junior School. You will always be a cherished member of our school family.



From Asha Gunalingam, Year 6 2024

Ms Ruston, you're so many things, to so many people. You're a role model, a leader, someone who inspires people, and someone people are inspired to be.

I'm the youngest of three Abbotsleigh girls and I've been at Abbotsleigh for a long time – seven years – so I can tell you with confidence and reassurance, that you are someone I, and many people here today, look up to. Twenty-five years in the Junior School is a long time but that 'time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle!' And every second you've been here, you've made Abbotsleigh into what it is today. The Junior School has thrived so successfully, with you leading us strongly, with kindness and compassion.

I still remember my first Speech Day, back when I was in Kindergarten in 2018. Everything seemed so fancy and new, and just a little scary. But my excitement trumped my fear. I felt so grateful that I went to a school such as Abbotsleigh and couldn't believe how exciting Speech Day was. I walked across the big stage and said, 'Thank you, Ms Ruston' and shook her hand. She smiled down at me warmly and confidently – like the strong leader we all know her to be – and said: 'Well done.' That made a significant impact on me, and it made me feel so happy. As I reflect on it today, it reminds me of a quote: 'Teachers open the door, but you must enter yourself.'

Ms Ruston, I would like to formally thank you for all the amazing things you've done for us. Your sheer will and determination to learn and teach makes our education even more wholesome, and our willingness to learn, even stronger. Your words of wisdom and guidance have changed our lives for the better. From always telling us to 'walk with purpose', or use 'less screen time, more green time', your words have stayed strong in our minds.

And just because you're leaving, it doesn't mean all the life lessons you've taught us have to leave too. Your encouraging words and endearing messages will stand tall, along with the beautiful legacy you've left us:

You always encouraged your girls to get out and about, whether that be through roller blading, or scootering; you always encouraged us to be adventurous and courageous.

DEAR times are something I, and many people, will remember with fondness, as you showcased your love for learning and literature through reading books with us. You always managed to find hidden messages to teach us.

You always managed to make time for your students, despite an incredibly busy schedule. Your warm smile at carline greeted us each morning, teaching us the value of bucket-filling, and being kind.

Just 'giving things a go' has always been your mantra and your determined spirit and bold attitude rubbed off on us, your students. Whenever there was an activity, in Chapel or assembly, you'd be on the stage, dancing or singing – which led us to dance our hearts out and have fun, too.

So, on behalf of all Abbotsleigh students, past, present and future, thank you. Thank you for your kindness. Thank you for your willingness to listen. Thank you for caring for your students and always keeping their best interests at heart. Thank you for making even the most boring of tasks, fun. Thank you for all your dedication and wholeheartedness. Thank you for opening the door for me, and the students of the Junor School.



From Jazarah Tambyrajah, Head Prefect 2024/25

Having attended Abbotsleigh since Transition, I have many fond memories throughout my school career. I will never forget where this journey all began. My very first 'interview' with Ms Ruston.

I was about four years' old at the time, so it was no surprise that when I walked with my mum into Ms Ruston's office in the Junior School, my attention was immediately captured by the bright coloured LEGO blocks on the carpet. I remember looking up at Ms Ruston, feeling nervous and slightly intimidated. However, it was her warm smile that put me at ease. It was such a brief exchange, and yet it had a lasting impact.

There are many students here today who hold fond memories of Ms Ruston. Roaming the hallways, we always knew if Ms Ruston was coming by the familiar echo of her high heels. It was that confident stride that captured our attention to be on our best behaviour. She caught us off guard, time and time again, by knowing each of us by name. Whether it was a group of three or 10, she knew us all. I don't know how she did it, and to this day it remains a mystery – and a true testament to how she fostered genuine connections with each student.

There was no nonsense with Ms Ruston. Manners mattered, as did uniform etiquette. We were taught to be true Abbotsleigh girls, right from the start: from the ribbons in our hair to the perfectly polished shoes on our feet, Ms Ruston always encouraged us to be the best version of ourselves, instilling in us the importance of respect.

She always involved herself in the activities of the Junior school, enthusiastically watching and participating; 25 years of leading, serving, and truly caring for each girl with a joyful spirit.

In Proverbs 22:6 it says: 'Train up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it.' Ms Ruston, you certainly have trained and equipped the younger generation of Abbotsleigh girls, in the way we should go.

So, on behalf of the girls here at Abbotsleigh, thank you. We hope that as you embark on your exciting adventures beyond the Abbotsleigh gates, and enter into this new season, take those heels off and enjoy a well-deserved break.





Lighting the way

Luminescence, combining dance, music and drama, was a shining display of talent, writes Darcy Tindale, AbbSchool's Speech and Drama Coordinator, and a wonderful celebration of the Junior School's 70th Birthday.

Friday 6 September 2024 saw more than 500 students and staff of Abbotsleigh Junior School celebrate 70 magnificent years at the iconic State Theatre. Staff and students honoured the growth of the Junior School with Luminescence, a collaborative performing arts display of dance, music and drama.

The choice of Luminescence as the titled theme was for 'the steady giving of light that makes vision possible'. The boundless energy and care teachers give in guiding and lighting the path of students felt fitting for the celebratory event. Indeed, it was a perfect choice as the students illuminated the stage with their boundless creativity, enthusiasm, confidence, hard work and sheer talent and gave us a spectacle of incredible talent shining brightly. The thrill of performing at the stunning State Theatre will be a core memory that students will carry brightly with a smile.





Learning how to be a well being

Year 3's Wellbeing Day was a resounding success, for the girls and their parents

Meg Lim

Year 3 Classroom Teacher

At Abbotsleigh, we understand and recognise the connection between wellbeing, learning and academic success. It is essential to equip our young learners with the tools and knowledge they need to care for their minds, bodies and relationships.

Year 3 Wellbeing Day was the perfect opportunity to engage students in learning a range of simple and practical strategies to help them feel happy and healthy. For the first time, parents and carers were invited to participate in the morning's activities. By connecting with families, students were able to recognise the importance of lifelong learning and understand that prioritising wellbeing does not end when you leave school.

The day began with much excitement as the girls welcomed their parents into the playground and learning spaces. After enjoying hot chocolate and marshmallows, we gathered together to highlight the purpose of the day: to better understand what wellbeing is and why it is so important. Students were well-prepared as they moved to their different groups, leading their family members to the first Wellbeing station. Each station focused on one aspect of caring for our mind or body.

Emotional regulation The girls loved making glitter jars. Glitter jars are a simple way to regulate emotions when needing to help your mind settle. Watching the glitter swirl and settle is an excellent mindfulness technique.

Sleep During this activity, students and parents learnt about the importance of a good night's sleep and how sleep routines can promote better mental and physical health. They enjoyed creating vibrant designs on a sleep mask.

Attitude of gratitude Focusing on what we are grateful for can improve overall wellbeing. Students and parents each wrote down what they are most grateful for and added it to the gratitude tree.

Stretch and flex A highlight for many of our girls was seeing their parents dance and join in with the stretch and flex activities. The joy in the hall was palpable! Thank you to all the adults who followed along so well with the dance moves.

While parents said goodbye at recess, the day did not end there. The girls continued learning simple ways to care for themselves by making a healthy and tasty snack with Mrs McCarthy and Dr G, learning about the positive impact of exercise with guest speaker Keval Dave (Ryka's dad), and working with Ms Hunt to code a Micro:bit with positive affirmations.

The day concluded with a whole grade debrief, followed by the opportunity for students to reflect on what they had learnt and which tools and strategies they would like to implement to ensure a healthy body and mind.

Overall, Year 3 Wellbeing Day was a resounding success, providing students and their families with valuable insights and practical tools to support their mental, physical and emotional health. By fostering a community that prioritises wellbeing, we are helping our young learners build a strong foundation for a balanced and fulfilling life.





The Power of Kindness

Year 4's celebration of learning, friendship and empathy was a heartwarming and enriching day, writes Year 4 Classroom Teacher Cassandra Oates

On Kindness Day, Year 4 students engaged in creative activities, meaningful discussions and reflections on the power of kindness. This celebration, heartwarming and enriching, coincided with World Kindness Day and was an inspiring event that not only marked the end of the girls' French learning but also emphasised the significance of friendship, empathy and connection.

The day began with a delightful French Breakfast, impeccably organised by Mme Jacobs, to mark the end of the girls' French studies before they begin Mandarin in Stage 3. The rain cleared, allowing picnic rugs to be laid on the Library Plaza. Dressed in their finest French-inspired attire, the girls and Year 6 hosts enjoyed a spread of delicious pastries, croissants and fresh fruit while practising their French vocabularies. It was a significant milestone for girls who had been learning French since Transition and the atmosphere was a mixture of excitement and joy.

After breakfast, the girls took part in a variety of creative activities, each designed to inspire reflection on how they can incorporate kindness into their daily lives and the qualities needed to do so. They decorated rocks with uplifting messages to leave around the School, wove hearts and created friendship chains after participating in a UR Strong friendship refresher. It was clear that these activities inspired the girls to foster meaningful relationships and let acts of kindness guide their interactions.



Later, the girls were treated to a special screening of *The Boy, The Mole, The Horse and The Fox* in the library. Immersed in the touching story, they had the opportunity to contemplate the importance of cherishing everyone for their individuality and how genuine connections with others enriches our lives. The film beautifully complemented the essence of Kindness Day, reinforcing the idea that we all have a role in nurturing positive relationships.

To finish, the girls took a moment to reflect on the events of the day, recording their experiences, thoughts and feelings. In a lovely touch, they also revisited a skill they had learnt earlier in the year at camp: finger knitting. With care and focus, the girls crafted beautiful friendship bracelets, which they exchanged with their classmates as symbols of the bonds they had strengthened throughout the day.

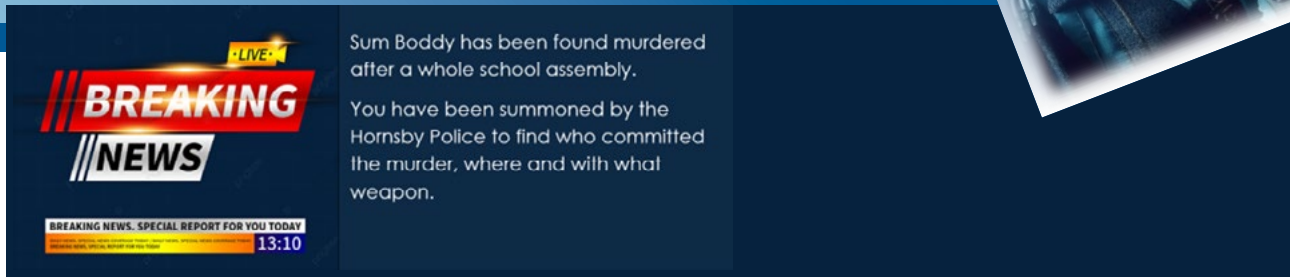
Year 4 Kindness Day was a truly unforgettable experience, one that teachers and students alike will cherish for years to come. More than just a celebration of kindness, it was a reminder of the power of connection, the joy of shared experiences and the importance of treating others with respect and compassion.

As the girls prepare to transition into Stage 3, the activities, reflections and the shared moments of kindness will help guide them as they move forward, ensuring that they 'go gently' with themselves and others as they continue through the Junior School.



Whodunit?

An Abbotsleigh adaptation of the game Cluedo required Year 8 students to use their mathematical and problem-solving skills to solve a murder mystery, writes Senior School Mathematics Teacher Kim Allan



Was it Miss Angles in the PDCH with a water bottle? Or was Doctor Radian in the Sports Hall? Or was it...? Year 8 Band 1 students developed their problem-solving and critical thinking skills to solve a murder mystery using an Abbotsleigh adaptation of the traditional game of Cluedo. To solve the mystery, they also employed their analytical and communication skills, devising questions to gain maximum information, analyse responses and arrive at a solution.

Mathematics in Years 7–10 focuses on developing increasingly sophisticated and refined mathematical understanding, fluency, communication, logical reasoning, analytical thought and problem-solving skills. These capabilities enable students to respond to familiar and unfamiliar situations by employing strategies to make informed decisions and solve problems relevant to their further education and everyday lives.

NESA course description at nsw.gov.au/NESA.

Two dice were rolled to determine the number of moves for each turn; students attempting to reach doorways into locations so they could propose a solution. The winner was the first person to correctly determine the location, weapon and suspect.

Students played in self-selected groups. One location card, one weapon card and one suspect card was randomly selected, without anyone looking, and placed

in an envelope for safe keeping. This was the solution to the mystery.

The remaining location, weapon and suspect cards were then shuffled and dealt. Students could only look at their own cards and, with each turn, could ask one question if they landed in a location.

Each student had their own detective notepad on which to write their intel as they collected information, asking one question each turn in the hope of finding another clue to eliminate locations, weapons and suspects, enabling them to determine who did it, with what and in which room.

The room was abuzz with laughter and animated discussions as students used their skills and aimed to be the first to solve the mystery.

According to the World Economic Forum, 'analytical thinking, creativity and flexibility will be among the most sought-after skills' by 2025. Research into AI suggests the need for human intervention using critical thinking skills to reduce errors and misjudgments arising from the increasing use of AI.

Dumitru D, Halpern DF. Critical Thinking: Creating Job-Proof Skills for the Future of Work. J Intell. 2023 Oct 9;11(10):194. doi: 10.3390/jintelligence11100194. PMID: 37888426; PMCID: PMC10607682.

Student reflections

The best thing ...

Using my problem solving to find out on my own who the murderer was.

The mystery of not knowing who it was.

Having fun with friends.

I got to practise strategy skills in a detective game, with my friends.

Having an end goal.

It was fun and entertaining and included lots of skill and luck.

Using my brain and challenging myself to find the answer.

Challenges

Trying to be patient while other people though through their answers

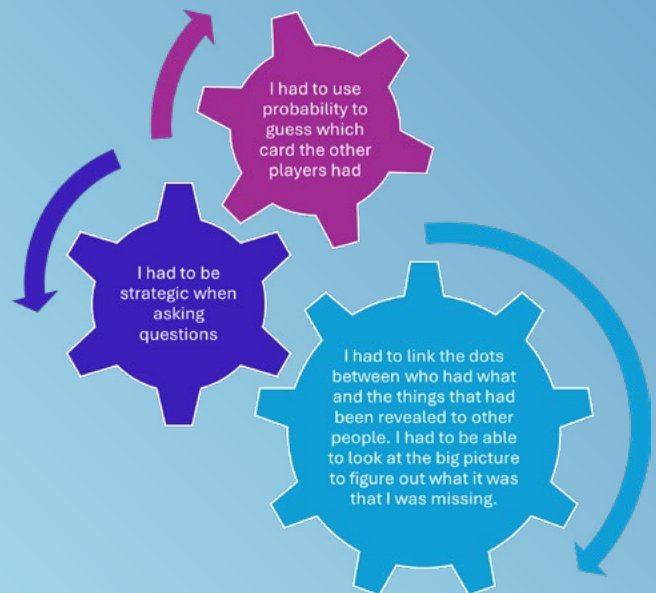
The die kept rolling number 7

Trying to figure out what cards everyone had in their hands

Being strategic to figure out the answer

My own bad choices of guessing too early, which allowed other people to figure out the correct answer

How I used my problem-solving and critical thinking skills...



The experience was...

Fun and entertaining and included a lot of skill and luck



Exploring the world of textiles

Year 9's industry excursion provided a fantastic blend of education and inspiration, says Head of Design, Innovation and Technology Claire Battikha

Year 9 Textiles students embarked on an exciting industry excursion that exposed them to a range of fabric printing techniques and career pathways in fashion. The day was packed with hands-on experiences, starting with a deep dive into various printing methods, including sublimation and screen printing.

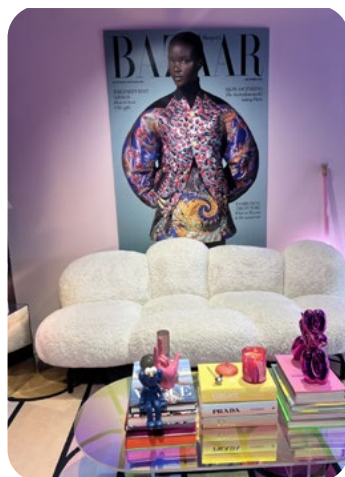
Sublimation is a process where dye is transferred onto fabric using heat, creating vibrant, long-lasting designs. At SubliTech, students saw how this technique is used for everything from custom sportswear to intricate fashion pieces. Year 9 were able to see their own designs being printed using this technique, creating fabric that they will use throughout construction.

Following this, the girls engaged in screen printing, creating their own designs, selecting colours for a design brief and learning more about their case study, Florence Broadhurst. Such practical experience empowers students to make informed decisions about which methods best suit specific projects and client needs, fostering critical thinking and enhancing their overall understanding of the printing landscape.

The excursion continued with a visit to the National Fashion College, where students participated in a styling workshop. This interactive session offered valuable insights into the fashion industry, including current trends, the power of social media and the impact of visual merchandising. The girls collaborated in teams, developing their own styling concepts while receiving guidance from industry professionals.

The day provided a fantastic blend of education and inspiration. Students left with new skills in printing techniques as well as a clearer understanding of the

diverse opportunities available in the fashion industry. It undoubtedly reignited their passion for textiles, equipping them with the knowledge and motivation to pursue their creative ambitions.



Flamenco, fado and unforgettable concerts

The music tour to Spain and Portugal was a true collaboration and celebration of music, reports Head of Music Lynette Clark

During the September/October school holidays, after a year of rehearsals and planning, the Music Tour Choir and Chamber Orchestra – 63 girls in all – set off for their two-week performance tour of Spain and Portugal. From the elegant streets of Madrid to the cosmopolitan corners of Lisbon, each stop on the tour brought unique musical and cultural experiences (not to mention many delicious Portuguese tarts!). With concerts in Madrid, Granada, Seville and Lisbon, the tour left us not only inspired but also deeply connected to the musical traditions that shaped the Iberian Peninsula.

Madrid: flamenco's first steps

We began in Spain's lively capital, Madrid, where we were introduced to the intense and expressive art of flamenco. Our dance lessons were a highlight of the trip, giving us a hands-on experience of the passionate rhythms and intricate footwork that make flamenco so expressive and emotional. A workshop and flamenco concert gave the students a deeper understanding of the Spanish music they were performing alongside our Australian concert repertoire.

Granada: music alongside the Alhambra

Granada, with its rich history and stunning Alhambra palace, provided a magical setting for our second concert. The students performed for a large and appreciative audience in the Auditorio Manuel de Falla.

Seville: a school performance and exciting cultural exchange

In Seville, the home of flamenco, we had the opportunity to perform for a local school. Students and staff greeted us with warmth and excitement, and their enthusiasm was evident throughout the concert. A request for an impromptu second concert came from the primary school, who did not want to miss seeing the Abbotsleigh girls perform.

Lisbon: fado, an inspiring collaboration and a grand finale

Lisbon, our final stop, offered some of the most memorable moments of the tour. We performed in two wonderful historic venues – the grand San Vicente de Fora Church and the Antigo Picadeiro Real, Lisbon's original coach museum. We also attended a fado show, which provided a contrast to the fiery intensity of flamenco and gave us a deeper appreciation of the emotional range of Iberian music.

The concert at San Vicente de Fora was a spiritual experience; the church's towering architecture and exquisite acoustics added emotional weight to our sacred repertoire.

We then had the opportunity of working with the talented Children's Choir of the University of Lisbon, under the direction of renowned Choir Conductor Erica Mandillo, while the string orchestra worked with distinguished Portuguese conductor Pedro Neves.

The final shared concert performance with the Children's Choir of the University of Lisbon left a lasting impression on our young Abbotsleigh musicians. Mandillo's leadership, combined with the choir's vibrant and intense performance, made the evening feel like a true collaboration and celebration of music across the globe.

Congratulations to the students for their hard work in preparing for this concert tour and for their resulting memorable performances. Thank you also to the staff, for not only working with the students in the lead-up to the tour but also caring for them during our travels.





The experience of a lifetime

During our two weeks away, we performed in a wide range of venues – everything from concert halls to cathedrals – and attended masterclasses with European maestros. Between performances, we went sightseeing around the cities and had opportunities to connect with students from Seville and Lisbon.

Our first stop was Madrid, where we were greeted by intricate European architecture and iconic landmarks. We participated in a flamenco workshop, before enjoying a Spanish-style dinner and watching a flamenco show. On Day 4 we visited the ancient city of Toledo, which has three architecture styles: Arabic, Jewish and Christian. Later that afternoon, we had our first performance!

In Granada, we visited the fortress, Alhambra, as well as Sacramonte, the city's historic gypsy quarter. On Day 7, the acoustics at the Auditorio Manuel de Falla, where we performed, left us all in awe.

Our concert at a school in Seville went so well that we ended up doing a second. We then chatted with Spanish students and made some new friends. Our stay in Seville concluded with a river cruise down the Guadalquivir River.

In Portugal, we spent some time exploring Lisbon, with a day trip to the misty, hill town of Sintra. On Day 10, we performed at a cathedral with incredible acoustics.

On Day 12, the strings participated in a masterclass at the Lisbon Metropolitana Symphony Orchestra Hall, and the choir attended a choral workshop with Erica Mandillo and the University of Lisbon's Children's Choir. Between rehearsals, we had the chance to share gifts and enjoy custard tarts with the children. Our choirs took turns performing for each other, before we came together to sing songs as one mega choir – our final show on tour.

Music Tour was an invaluable experience of a lifetime where we learnt so much and had so much fun!

*Kiera Finnerty, Grace Li and Harriet Waters
Year 12, 2024/5*





Standing shoulder to shoulder with girls in Tanzania

Despite physical distance and cultural differences, two Anglican girls' schools, thousands of kilometres apart, are both committed to quality and holistic education. By Annette Ware, Dean of Senior College

Bega kwa Bega', a Tanzanian idiom meaning 'shoulder to shoulder', epitomised the experience of 15 Abbotsleigh students and three staff last July during an immersion week at Bunda Girls' Secondary School in Tanzania. It was a wonderfully rich and memorable time as Abbotsleigh and Bunda girls shared stories and laughter, exchanged letters and gifts, sat side by side in classes learning together, sang and worshipped together, enjoyed games and a debate, played netball and football in mixed teams, and gathered around the flagpole at the start of each day for morning parade and a devotion.

Abbotsleigh staff taught classes and teachers from both schools engaged in professional learning conversations. The mutuality that is encompassed in *Bega kwa Bega*, the name of our partnership, had never been more apt.

It was a privilege to spend our days at the school with Abbotsleigh Old Girl, Rev Canon Helen Hoskins (1969). Helen completed her primary and secondary education at Abbotsleigh, enjoying her school days and grateful for the quality education she received. It was, therefore, a special joy to immerse ourselves in Bunda Girls' Secondary School, which also has a very special place in Helen's heart. She founded the school little more

than a decade ago. It was heartwarming to witness the outworking of Helen's vision to see young women in Tanzania able to pursue quality secondary education that will open pathways for them in the future. The diligence and strong work ethic of the Bunda girls were unmistakable, a reflection of their cognisance of the privilege of secondary education.

In establishing the school Helen was adamant that it needed to be a boarding school so that the girls were safe. 'If they are safe, they are happy; if they are happy, they can learn well,' said Helen. She was also determined that the school needed to teach high level mathematics as well as chemistry and physics, none of which are the norm in secondary schools in Tanzania. She wanted the girls to have every opportunity to pursue careers in fields such as medicine and engineering.

On our final day, students from both schools shared a physics lesson in celebration of a recently opened physics laboratory and the gift of physics equipment through fundraising by Abbotsleigh students in 2023.

Meeting the four Bunda students currently sponsored by Year 7 and Year 8 Abbotsleigh students was a highlight. Getting to know Agness, Elizabeth, Happyness and Ntoji was gratifying. They each have dreams for the future and



are grateful for Abbotsleigh students standing shoulder to shoulder with them in their secondary educational journey. Visiting Agness' home and meeting her family brought home the impact that our sponsorship is having. A visit to the Shalom Pre and Primary School, as well as The Girls' Brigade Sewing Centre, both of which Helen has been instrumental in founding, were other highlights of our visit.

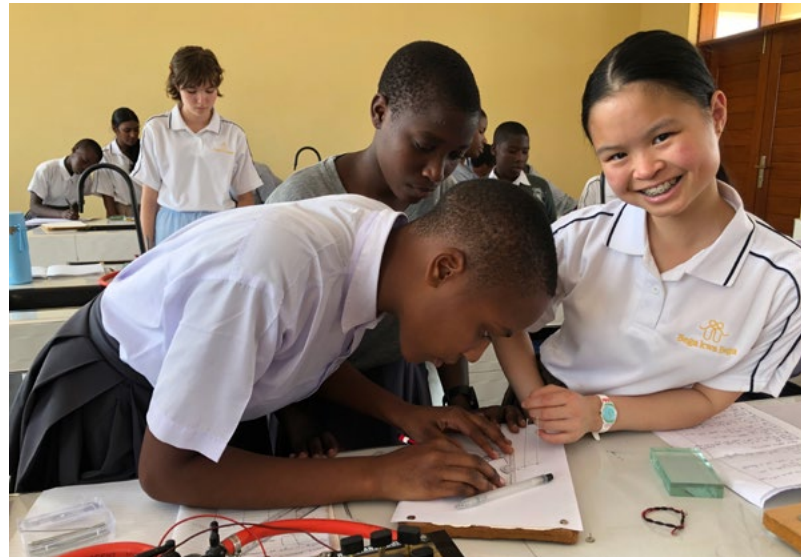
In a moving ceremony at morning parade on the last day, both the Tanzanian and Australian flags were hoisted and both national anthems sung. As we departed Bunda Girls' Secondary School for a safari through the Serengeti National Park, tears flowed freely. We had connected in poignant and meaningful ways despite

our physical distance and cultural differences; two Anglican girls' schools, thousands of miles apart, both committed to quality and holistic education, linked by an Abbotsleigh Old Girl who attended one and founded the other. We hope and pray that as our partnership develops and deepens, many more visits to Bunda Girls' Secondary School may be possible.

'I was so encouraged by the heartfelt joy that radiated from every girl while singing praises at church, morning parades and throughout the entire day. We were overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of the Bunda girls.'
Nimue, Year 9



'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, Year 9





Symbols of unity, sisterhood and cultural pride

Through creative and culturally driven storytelling, our students have created a unique perspective on Abbotsleigh life, writes Visual Arts Teacher Lauren Barlow

Two remarkable artists, Amaya Sloane-Wood (Year 8) and Chloe Nicholls (Year 12), have captured a unique perspective on Abbotsleigh life through their creative and culturally driven storytelling and painting. As part of the ongoing collaborative initiative, the First Nations Artists' Exchange, they created the paintings Connections (Amaya Sloane-Wood) and Threads of Sisterhood (Chloe Nicholls). These works depict the idea of students from various distant homes and communities traveling near and far to converge at Abbotsleigh. This theme highlights the School as a central meeting place for young women, where students from diverse backgrounds can connect and support each other. The paintings not only showcase their artistic talents but also support a meaningful cause.

and carried a piece of the students' stories with them. The event was a great success and provided the girls with a space to share moments of allyship and discourse around Indigenous histories, cultural art-making practices and Abbotsleigh sisterhood.

The project demonstrated to the student community that they have the agency to support their school and future students while also celebrating the rich cultural heritage of young artists and their community. The original paintings and a T-shirt of each design have become part of the Abbotsleigh Archive Collection, demonstrating how purposeful student projects can give students voice and show meaningful engagement with their time and place.

In a collaborative effort with their Year 10 peers and fellow First Nations' students, Yalari scholars Demi and Lexie, the first NAIDOC Week T-shirt fundraiser was held; with the paintings becoming the feature designs on the shirts. Abbotsleigh students and teachers had the opportunity to purchase a T-shirt and wear it in allyship on Friday, 25 October. In a collaborative effort with their fellow Yalari Girls, Demi and Lexi organised a BBQ and bake sale to further their fundraising. The resulting T-shirt designs were more than just fashion items; they were symbols of unity and cultural pride. By purchasing and wearing these T-shirts, supporters helped fund future Yalari scholarships



Meet our new Head of Boarding

For Old Girl Katie White (Craig, 1999) returning to Abbotsleigh is like coming home. Here she speaks with Rhonda Kaan about her love of the School and her goals in her new role

‘After 25 years I am excited to be back,’ says Mrs Katie White. ‘I’ve been very blessed in my previous roles but Abbotsleigh was always on my radar.’ Katie describes returning to Abbotsleigh as like ‘coming home’, adding she is thrilled that her old school is now also her family’s new home.

‘Family is very much a part of who I am,’ says Katie. ‘I’m of the opinion it’s not just a job for one person but a job for the whole family and I’m excited about us getting to know the girls and their families.’

With a background in PDHPE teaching and boarding, Katie brings with her a wealth of experience coupled with an abundance of energy and warmth, plus, as an Old Girl, she is already familiar with much of what Abbotsleigh has to offer. The City Family Scheme is one example. ‘When I was at school my family was a city family to a boarder and we have maintained a close connection,’ Katie says. ‘I was a bridesmaid for my “country sister” and we are still regularly in contact.’

To help get to know our newest boarder better, we asked Katie to answer a few questions:

Who are the members of the White family?

My husband’s name is Aaron, he works in the car industry. He’s a fantastic partner and a wonderful dad, and we share a love for family adventures. We have two wonderful children: Georgie, who is six years old, and Archie, who is nine. They keep us on our toes and bring so much joy to our lives.

Favourite TV show/movie?

I can watch *Grey’s Anatomy*, *The West Wing* and *The Newsroom* over and over without ever getting bored. I love the blend of drama, humour and strong female characters in these shows – they’re my go-to comfort viewing after a long day.

First concert?

The first concert I attended was Shania Twain. It was with the boarders when we were in Year 10 and it was an unforgettable experience. It was such a fun night and sharing it with the boarders made it even more

special. There’s something about live music that creates a sense of connection and excitement. Something I re-experienced recently by taking my son Archie to Coldplay.

Ideal holiday?

We love to travel and make the most of every opportunity to explore. Noosa is our go-to destination for beach holidays – the relaxed vibe, stunning coastline and family-friendly atmosphere make it a favourite. For skiing, we head to Wanaka, New Zealand; it’s a beautiful spot that offers adventure and breathtaking scenery. Our next big trip is to Hong Kong to visit my sister. The kids haven’t been there since before Covid, so it will be a wonderful chance for them to reconnect with family and experience all that Hong Kong has to offer – especially the food! But I think they will be most excited by Disneyland.

Which team is your team?

Our household is definitely a sports-loving one. My husband Aaron and my son Archie are dedicated Manly Sea Eagles fans and there’s always a bit of excitement when they play. As a family, we enjoy all kinds of sports – whether it’s watching a football game, attending a basketball match, watching the Olympics – especially the swimming – or playing a game of tennis ourselves. We believe sports are a great way to bond and have fun together.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Wahroonga, which holds a lot of fond memories for me. I also had the unique experience of living in Papua New Guinea for two years as a child when my dad’s job took us to Port Moresby. It was an eye-opening experience, giving me a chance to see different cultures and lifestyles. I think those years abroad shaped a lot of who I am today, giving me a sense of adventure and a curiosity about the world.

Favourite memories as an Abbotsleigh student?

My time at Abbotsleigh is filled with fond memories, especially the time spent playing sports with my friends. Sports were always a big part of my school life, from

weekend competitions to after-school practices. I also loved the school camps – there was something magical about being in the outdoors, building friendships and challenging myself. The highlight was our Year 10 trip to Cradle Mountain, where we did the Overland Track for our Silver Duke of Edinburgh expedition. It was tough but incredibly rewarding, and it's an experience I'll never forget.

Favourite teacher/subject and why?

I was lucky to have some incredible teachers who left a lasting impact on me. The PE staff were particularly inspiring and ultimately influenced my decision to become a teacher myself. I also have great memories of Mrs Sykes, who was my Geography teacher. We certainly gave her a hard time but she always went the extra mile to ensure we were supported and prepared. Mrs Buggy, my English teacher, had the patience of a saint, and both Mrs Bradfield and Mrs Cooper were determined to help us grasp Maths concepts – something I deeply appreciated then and still do today.

City Family experience

I had the pleasure of being a City Family for Kieran 'Kizza' McDonald from Gundagai. We were matched because of our shared love for swimming and cooking,

and those weekly dinners at our house became a cherished tradition. I also loved visiting her family in Gundagai; those trips were always filled with laughter, exploration and a few misadventures. Our friendship has endured over the years, catching up recently as part of our 25-year school reunion was well overdue.

Best part about being back at Abbotsleigh?

Being back at Abbotsleigh feels like coming home. It's wonderful to reconnect with the community, meet new faces and immerse myself in the vibrant school environment again. Living on campus has been a great experience, allowing me to engage more closely with the boarders and their families. I feel very fortunate to be part of such a supportive and dynamic community.

What do you hope to achieve as Head of Boarding?

My goal as Head of Boarding is to create an environment where every student feels valued, supported and encouraged to be their best self. I want to collaborate with the staff to make Abbotsleigh Boarding a leader in the field, setting standards that others look to. I hope to foster a sense of community and belonging, ensuring that every boarder has a positive experience that they'll look back on fondly for years to come.



Oxford Royale Summer School

Five 2024 Year 10 students, Evelyn Cooksley, Angeline Lam, Jessica Oorburg, Vanessa Ton and Zhujin Zhang, reflect on an unforgettable learning experience



During the Term 2 holidays, 30 students travelled to England and immersed ourselves in the Oxford Royale Summer School. The colleges of Oxford University are some of the oldest and most prestigious places of learning, not only in the UK but worldwide. Oxford is a hub for education, research and innovation. It attracts students and scholars from around the globe.

And just like international university students, we interacted with students from many cultures, who brought their unique insights, backgrounds and personalities, all of which created a vibrant and exciting atmosphere. Over two weeks, living and studying on campus, students participated in different courses based on their interests. The experience certainly challenged our perspectives and expanded our horizons.

It was a surprise to us that Oxford was not one big campus. In fact, the University of Oxford is comprised of 43 colleges scattered across the city. One of the oldest and most central is Queen's College, known for its courses on Medicine and BioMedical Sciences. It was founded in 1341 and is the grandest piece of classical architecture in Oxford. Students also attended Balliol College to study Law and Politics, Engineering and Technology or Architecture and Design; Keble College, which hosted our Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship students; St Peter's College, where students undertook the Explore Medicine course; Jowett



Walk, which is part of Balliol College, hosted the Film Academy; and St Hugh's College, where students studied Explore Business Innovation courses.

Life on campus was exceptionally busy, and we all did our best to balance classes, while fitting in as many tourist activities as possible. An average day at Oxford was like this:

- a wake-up call at 7 am
- breakfast in the grand dining hall
- a lecture from a professor in a selected field, some of whom were professors teaching or conducting pioneering research at Oxford University
- lectures were followed by a few classes and breaks
- during lunchtime, we could explore the markets and restaurants of Oxford with new friends that we made
- afternoon classes
- a two-to-three-hour block of free time. During this, we signed up for afternoon activities like volleyball or trivia, explored the city and its surroundings, maybe including a walk to a meadow or even the mall. Sometimes we met up with our friends from other colleges, visited cafes (including a Chinese tea house), museums, gift stores and boutiques. We enjoyed the freedom and opportunity to navigate Oxford and its environs independently. We had exclusive access to the campus, which allowed us to explore many hidden treasures, including the gardens and common rooms.
- At the end of such jam-packed days, we returned to the grand dining hall for dinner, followed by some social time connecting with new international friends.

Despite some courses having quite a large workload, the program still offered lots of time for fun and relaxation after classes, in the evenings and on the weekends. Activities ranged from pottery making or visits to the famous Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology, to quiet game nights in common rooms or even karaoke sessions. We could also explore the beautiful city of Oxford.

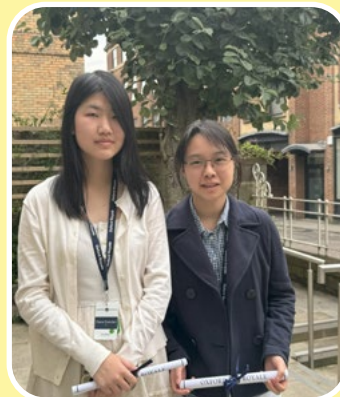
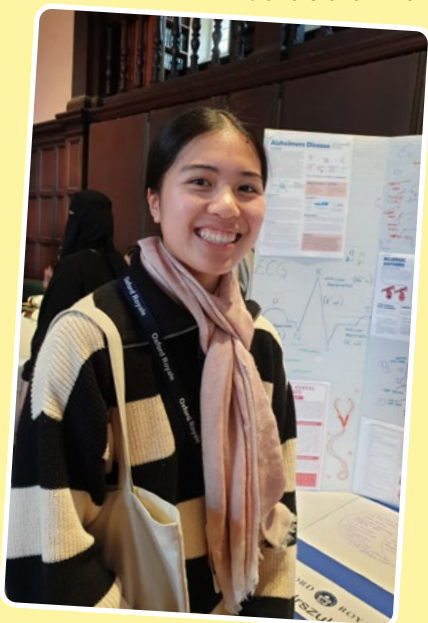
One of the best activities was our day trip to London. Despite the weather being typical English dreariness, we explored the historic capital with our friends and saw sights such as Big Ben, Buckingham Palace and the Camden Markets, making it an unforgettable day. Some students were lucky enough to visit the picturesque city of Bath, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, renowned for its Georgian architectural grandeur and historic Roman baths.

There was a wide range of people from countries all around the world, including Cyprus, Portugal, France and Saudi Arabia. It was easy to bond with others through collaborative projects and social events, and we learnt so much about what life as a high school student was like in different areas of the world. We particularly enjoyed listening to other overseas students' diverse ideas and perspectives during class. The overall supportive atmosphere and engaging activities helped us create genuine connections, making it easy to forge lasting friendships while also exploring academic and cultural interests.

Classes were a combination of practical and theory work. The coursework varied, with medicine students working in Oxford Brooks University, where they had realistic simulation dummies for CPR. Additionally, the medicine students practised respiratory examinations. Law students participated in a mock election and a mock trial. As well as individualised activities, each course included a final project being presented by students during Exhibition Day.

At the Film Academy we learnt to shoot, edit and screen short films. We produced a five-minute horror film based on a pre-written script titled *Remember Me*. During Exhibition Day, our works were shown to all Summer School students, as well as to teachers and other college staff.

The Oxford trip was a wonderful experience and has given us so many great memories. It was fun, challenging and filled with many moments where we had to 'brave the waves'. We not only grew in knowledge, we developed better communication skills, greater independence and a richer understanding of the next big step of our lives – university. We faced the challenge of being away from home and learnt to cope with the fast pace and demands of rigorous seminars and coursework. More importantly, we developed long-lasting friendships, which made our travels even more memorable as we cultivated each other's passions and worked to overcome struggles.



Uncovering family links with one of the first Abbotsleigh girls

Dr Jennifer McLaren
Archivist

When Sophie Miller started Year 7 at Abbotsleigh 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 Olive, who was one of Abbotsleigh's very first students.

Edith Olive Lack was born in Sydney in 1870 to Emily and Edward Lack. Olive, as she was known, had six siblings, all brothers. The family lived in North Sydney in the 1880s. We don't know about Olive's early schooling but when Marian Clarke opened Abbotsleigh School for Girls in Mount Street, North Sydney, Edward and Emily enrolled their 15-year-old daughter for her final school years. Perhaps they were attracted by Miss Clarke's advertisements about the range of music teachers available at the new school as Olive was a budding musician. Abbotsleigh offered girls (and some young boys) a broad education. Unusually for the time, girls were taught maths and Latin, as well as music,

gymnastics, dancing and oil painting. Olive focused on music rather than the academic subjects. A few years after leaving school she passed advanced piano exams at the Sydney College of Music.

After leaving school, Olive moved with her family across the harbour to Dulwich Hill, where her father died in 1892. She next appears in the public record when she married Horatio Nossiter in 1908 at the age of 37. The couple settled in Haberfield, near Olive's mother. Sadly, at the age of 44 on 20 March 1915, Olive died after a long illness.

The family's connection with Abbotsleigh continued when Olive's nephew Douglas Lack married Abbotsleigh Old Girl Ruth Short. In turn their grandson married an Abbotsleigh Old Girl, Frances Watts, pictured below left with daughter Sophie, who is currently in Year 9.





/ The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954) / Sat 19 Mar 1887 / Page 3

ABBOTSLEIGH, Mount-street, St. Leonards.—High-class BOARDING and DAY SCHOOL for GIRLS, conducted mainly on the principle of the English High Schools. Head Mistress—Miss MARIAN CLARKE. Healthy position, large class-room, fitted with gymnastic apparatus. Good school-rooms. Tennis ground.

Vacancies for three boarders after Easter. Single subjects may be taken, if desired. Music—Piano, Mr. Sydney Moss; violin, Mr. Peel; singing, Miss Pedley. Oil-painting—Miss Cobbett (Slade School of Art). French—Mme. Bovin. Dancing—Miss Gilder. Gymnastics—Professor d'Harcourt.

The next term commences on MONDAY, April 18.

Highlights from the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery

By Mary Faith
Director Grace Cossington Smith Gallery

The second semester of 2024 saw exciting exhibitions in the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery, highlighting the work of artists across a range of media. It has been great to see the evolving presentations from the gallery that offer visitors and Abbotsleigh girls an engaging experience and connection through art. *The Local Artists Program* was designed to give emerging and established local artists an opportunity to exhibit in the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery. The exhibitions presented artists who are part of the region's thriving artistic community and enabled the gallery to demonstrate support for the Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby area that surrounds Abbotsleigh.

Local artists Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby 26 June-13 July; and 18 July-3 August 2024

The first of the two exhibitions, each lasting two weeks, presented works from three Ku-ring-gai artists. Eva Barry has been painting for more than 60 years and her works explore landscapes, dreams and spirituality. Annarie Hildebrand is an emerging ceramic artist and printmaker. Architectural forms inspire her ceramics, and her printmaking is inspired by the natural world and past experiences. Alan Tracey graduated from the National Art School in 2020. His extensive career in engineering provided the connection to the shapes and materiality of built environment in his painting.

The second exhibition presented four artists from Hornsby. Zachariah Fenn is an emerging multi-disciplinary conceptual artist, who also works as the GCS Gallery art installer and as an assistant in the Abbotsleigh Visual Arts department. His room installation utilised objects from Abbotsleigh's new library building site along with his drawings, paintings and sculptural works. Hadijah Munting created works using a mosaic of recycled coffee pods on painted canvases. Sally Ryan, the artist commissioned for the portrait of former headmistress Judith Poole, exhibited meticulously observed portrait and still life paintings. Julianne Smallwood is a ceramic artist and teacher who created colourful work in raku ceramics, porcelain, painting and prints



Local Artists Program, Hornsby Mayor Phillip Ruddock and artist Sally Ryan.



Local Artists Program, Zachariah Fenn talking about his work to students.



Local Artists Program, Zachariah Fenn.

The Local Artists Program



The Local Artists Program



Pamela Leung with her crochet rug made from Hong Kong newspapers



Small Matters

5-28 September 2024

The Australian Society of Miniature Art presented traditional and contemporary artworks that conveyed all the beauty and power of larger works. These intimate miniatures were produced in a range of media including watercolour, oil and acrylic painting, printmaking, drawing and mixed media, as well as sculpture and hand-made books.

Small Matters provided a captivating glimpse into the world of contemporary miniature art. While works varied in subject, technique and dimension, they were all linked by scale. The 28 artists produced works in which the perimeter could not exceed 40 cm. These tiny gems invited you to look carefully, and even look through a magnifying glass.



Small Matters.



Small Matters. Pam Slattery In a Southern Garden (artist's book) watercolour, 5.5 x 7 cm



Small Matters, artist Di Sincok and one of her pieces.



Encounter

8 November-7 December 2024

Artists Sylvia Griffin, Pamela Leung, Juanita McLauchlan, Lisa Pang and Sue Pedley encounter and unravel ideas and histories to explore stories and reimagine the culture and physicality of places and objects. The artists create site-based and studio works and have a common interest in utilising fibre and thread, the materiality of art and in place, heritage and memory. Pamela Leung facilitated a meeting and workshop with refugee students from Holroyd High School during the Year 10 Immersion Week.



Encounter, Lisa Pang (AOG, 1985) and her work.



Encounter, Pamela Leung with students.



Year 10 Immersion Week

Grace Cossington Smith Gallery 2025 exhibition calendar

Carving Perspectives The shifting shadows of Fan Dongwang	25 January to 22 February
ART NORTH HSC 2024 Visual Arts from schools in Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai	1 to 22 March
A Studio Community Artists from Blue Apple Studios and Studio Artes	27 March to 26 April
Artists from Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Local Artists in two, two-week exhibitions	1 to 17 May 22 May to 11 June
Young Curators Young Curators and 3:33 Art Projects with artist Tina Havelock Stevens	25 June to 12 July
Possibility as Reality Abbotsleigh past student artists	19 July to 9 August
Hayden Wood Gamilaraay artist	14 to 21 August
HSC 2025 Showcase Abbotsleigh Year 12 Visual Arts	26 to 30 August
Place of Anchors A visual and sonic echo of place by artists Virginia Hilyard and Fiona Kemp	5 to 27 September
Dreaming, Looking Inwards Group exhibition from Open Bite printmakers	2 to 25 October
To Approach the Unknowable Artists, with inclination to the surreal, engage with works from the Hassall Collection	1 November to 6 December



Call-outs for 2026

LOCAL ARTISTS FROM HORNSBY AND KU-RING-GAI

As part of the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery program local artists are selected to participate in an annual, three week exhibition.

If you have not previously submitted your work and CV, please apply on the website application page in 2025.

Proposals: ongoing

2026 EXHIBITION PROPOSALS

The Grace Cossington Smith Gallery seeks proposals for solo and group exhibitions for 2026.

With a focus on contemporary art practices, submissions from emerging and established artists and curators are invited.

Proposals open: 28 April 2025
Proposals close: 30 August 2025

The Grace Cossington Smith ART AWARD 2026

Submissions are invited from Australian artists, aged over 18, for original work in any two-dimensional media in response to the theme 'Making Connections'.

The prizes: \$15,000 awarded to the winner (acquisitive), \$2,500 awarded to an early career artist and \$2,500 awarded to a local artist from the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai area.

Submission entries open: Saturday 1 November 2025
Submission entries close: Tuesday 14 April 2026



Congratulations Year 12 2024

It is with immense pride that we applaud the remarkable success of the Class of 2024. This exceptional year group has been an inspiration to us all, embodying their theme, 'Brave the Waves,' with courage, determination and unity. Each girl has achieved so much individually and, as a collective, they have demonstrated unwavering support for one another, approaching their studies with a spirit of teamwork and mutual respect.

The girls' success extends far beyond academics. Outward focused and compassionate, they have embraced leadership, service learning and myriad co-curricular opportunities, and they are leaving Abbotsleigh not only with academic excellence, but also with the qualities of empathy and integrity that will guide them in their future endeavours.

We are deeply grateful for the role everyone has played in supporting the class of 2024. A special thank you must go to our talented and dedicated teachers, whose exceptional guidance and care have been integral to the girls' achievements.

Year 12 2024 – as you embark on your new adventures, continue to follow your dreams, remain true to yourselves and serve others, just as you have done so beautifully here at school. We cannot wait to see all that the future holds for you beyond the gates of Abbotsleigh.



1
Top
 independent
 girls school
 in the **State**


14 students on the
 Top Achievers List

28 students on the
 All Round Achievers List



Top Achievers List

- **Jemma Chamberlain** – 8th in Modern History
- **Sophie Choi** – 17th in Mathematics Advanced
- **Jane Gallichan** – 17th in Mathematics Standard 2
- **Yueer (Susan) Hu** – 8th in Business Studies
- **Audrey Kennedy** – 5th in English Extension 2
- **Rachel Lee** – 4th in Chinese in Context
- **Henglin Liu** – 3rd in Chinese in Context
- **Annelise McCormick** – 10th in Chemistry
- **Camille Murray** – 5th in Ancient History
- **Katherine Schroder** – 4th in Music 1

- **Sophia Sun** – 5th in Chinese Continuers and 3rd in Chinese Extension
- **Sylvia Zhang** – 4th in Latin Continuers and 10th in Mathematics Advanced


All Round Achievers List

- **Gemma Boden**
- **Isabella Bradford**
- **Jemma Chamberlain**
- **Sophia Chi**
- **Chloe Davie**
- **Jane Gallichan**
- **Aaruthi Gangeyan**
- **Evangelin Hagen**
- **Alice Harrington**
- **Yueer (Susan) Hu**
- **Laranya Kumar**

- **Henglin (Evelyn) Liu**
- **Zoe London**
- **Annelise McCormick**
- **Anna Morrison**
- **Camille Murray**
- **Charlotte Pullen**
- **Katherine Schroder**
- **Yihua (Kami) Shen**
- **Kate Stephenson**
- **Sophia Sun**
- **Olivia (Liv) Swiderski**
- **Shiori Tensho**
- **Leah Teoh**
- **Lily Thornthwaite**
- **Claire Wang**
- **Natalie Wells**
- **Erica Wong**




2024 ATAR Results



25 students with ATAR of 99 or above



Ranked 10th in the state



Median ATAR 94.45
NSW Median 71.55

The following students have given permission to publish their ATAR:

- Annelise McCormick – 99.9 and HSC Dux
- Jemma Chamberlain – 99.85
- Kate Stephenson – 99.85
- Sophia Sun – 99.85
- Erica Wong – 99.85
- Camille Murray – 99.75
- Gemma Boden – 99.6
- Sophia Chi – 99.6
- Claire Wang – 99.6
- Jane Gallichan – 99.55
- Alice Harrington – 99.55
- Anna Morrison – 99.55
- Annette Lynch – 99.5
- Aaruthi Gangeyan – 99.45
- Jia Lin (Iris) Li – 99.35
- Chloe Davie – 99.15
- Shiori Tensho – 99.1
- Natalie Wells – 99.1
- Alyssa Sor – 99.05



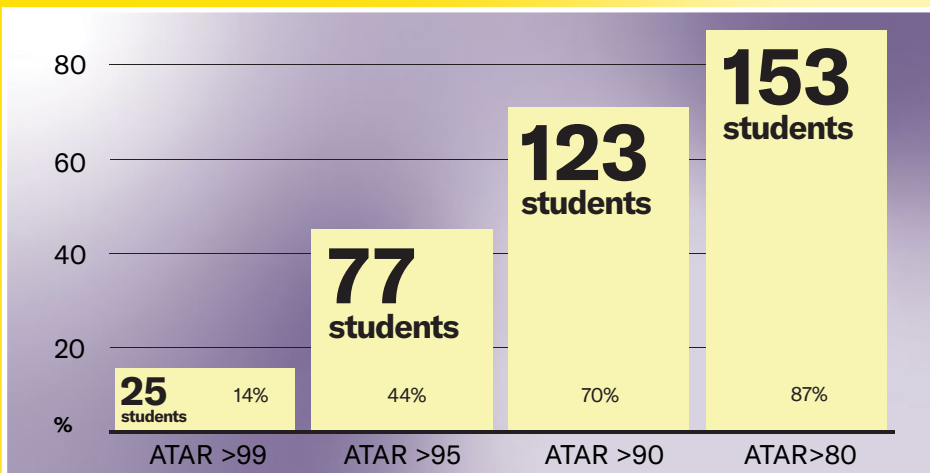

Highest ATAR 99.9

Annelise is the epitome of a well-rounded Abbotsleigh student. She is positive, curious and creative, and she loves to learn and grapple with complex concepts and problems. For her HSC, Annelise studied English Advanced, Mathematics Extension 1 and 2, Chemistry, Physics and Economics.

Throughout her time at Abbotsleigh, Annelise has contributed to, and represented her school with great distinction in debating. Further, she has played touch football, netball and badminton for Abbotsleigh. Empathetic, compassionate and determined to make a positive difference, Annelise was also a member of the Mana Allawah, Amnesty and Fairtrade social justice clubs.

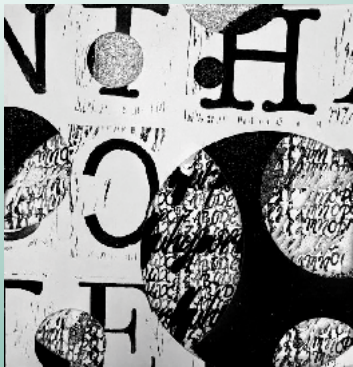
A fine leader, Annelise represented her year group on the SRC and fulfilled her roles as a Year 9 Mentor and Year 12 School Prefect with dedication, verve and aplomb.

We are very proud of Annelise, and we are sure that she will continue to make a very positive impact on our world.





NESA Student showcases



ARTEXPRESS

Nominated

- Laura Adam – *Train of Thought*
- Natalie Chin – *The Deplorables*
- Xi He – *Roll UP, Roll UP!*
- Penelope Hu – *Impermanence: An Untimely Departure – Homage to my grandmother*
- Tessa Maclean – *The Beauty of Nature’s Simplicity*
- Charlotte Pullen – *The Flight of the Powerless*
- Ella Yu – *Passenger Reveries – Past, Present and Future*

Selected

- Sophia Chi – *Under the Fecund Moon*
- Megan Chinniah – *Songs of Ceylon: the imperial marketplace*
- Ana-Lei Elias – *Decoding Dyslexia*
- Fay Iskandar – *Domestic Bliss: Delicate Defiance*
- Olivia Macdonald – *Cattle Crush*

ENCORE

Music Performance Nominated

- Zala Choate
- Katherine Schroder

Music Composition Nominated

- Grace Chen

OnSTAGE

Individual Nominated

- Charlotte Doyle – *Misery*
- Ana-Lei Elias – *I have to leave, Charlie.*
- Kate Matthews – *Beyond Therapy*
- Anna Morrison – *Girls and boys*
- Katherine Schroder – *Little Voice*

Group Performance Nominated



Which witch?

- Xi He
- Kate Matthews
- Chloe Pearce
- Katherine Schroder
- Joyce Sharma



Individual Project Nominated

- Ava Dunnett
- Xi He
- Heeya Mitra
- Nichola Whitlocke-Jones

Selected

- Evangeline Hagen

SHAPE

Design and Technology Nominated

- Skye Barnett
- Elanor Carter
- Evie Christian
- Olivia Coughlin
- Olivia Crawford
- Audrey Kennedy
- Amelie Luong
- Alisha Parker

YOUNG WRITERS

Selected

- Audrey Kennedy



2024 Band summaries

Subject	Number of students	Band 6		Band 5		Band 4	
		% Abb	% NSW	% Abb	% NSW	% Abb	% NSW
Ancient History	8	87.5	9.5	12.5	27.4	0	27.8
Biology	70	24.3	6.7	48.6	28.8	22.9	34.3
Business Studies	42	69	10.4	21.4	26.7	2.4	26.7
Chemistry	70	25.7	11.4	41.4	27.3	24.3	28.4
Chinese in Context	7	100	68	0	25.8	0	5.2
Chinese Continuers	7	85.7	46.6	14.3	32.2	0	15.2
Design and Technology	21	81	12.1	19	35.9	0	29.4
Drama	19	68.4	22.9	31.6	38.9	0	30.2
Earth and Environmental Science	3	66.7	5.7	33.3	26.8	0	30.8
Economics	39	59	13.8	30.8	37.7	10.3	26.5
English Advanced	161	37.9	15.1	60.2	52.4	1.9	28.9
English Standard	14	0	0.6	28.6	12.8	57.1	53.7
French Continuers	5	20	25.2	60	37.9	20	28.1
Geography	55	45.5	10.1	49.1	27.6	3.6	35.3
German Continuers	6	16.7	25.8	16.7	34.8	50	30.3
Latin Continuers	11	45.5	54.9	45.5	36.3	9.1	6.2
Mathematics Advanced	105	59	22.3	31.4	27.7	7.6	27.3
Mathematics Standard 2	57	40.4	9.3	35.1	19.3	12.3	30.2
Modern History	44	59.1	10.4	34.1	28.6	4.5	32.1
Music 1	3	100	20.1	0	47.1	0	21.9
Music 2	2	100	36.1	0	48.1	0	13.5
Personal Development, Health and Physical Education	33	24.2	8.4	54.5	26.2	15.2	32
Physics	33	24.2	12.4	39.4	25.9	21.2	26.8
Software Design and Development	7	28.6	12.6	57.1	25.7	14.3	29.7
Studies of Religion I	4	75	14	0	29.7	25.0	36.3
Studies of Religion II	10	30	12.8	60	33.8	10	34.2
Visual Arts	43	65.1	17.1	34.9	49.7	0	26.9

Subject	Number of students	Band E4		Band E3	
		% Abb	% NSW	% Abb	% NSW
Chinese Extension	4	100	63	0	32.9
English Extension 1	30	80	41.9	20	53.5
English Extension 2	8	62.5	33.9	25	53.3
French Extension	2	0	25.6	100	63.6
German Extension	2	100	71.4	0	28.6
History Extension	7	100	28	0	58.3
Latin Extension	8	62.5	79	37.5	21
Mathematics Extension 1	74	60.8	34.9	37.8	45.3
Mathematics Extension 2	33	51.5	40.2	45.5	46.1
Music Extension	2	100	69.7	0	27.4
Science Extension	3	33.3	8.9	33.3	72.7

Women of Letters

As we look forward to the opening of the new Senior School Library, it is fitting to celebrate the literary talent of Abbotsleigh's alumnae and staff members, past and present

Given its long history of fostering love for reading and writing, it is little wonder Abbotsleigh boasts an impressive list of Old Girl authors. For decades, dedicated teaching staff, well-equipped libraries and numerous extracurricular activities focusing on the arts have provided girls with the skills and confidence to become successful authors in a seemingly endless variety of literary genres and, from next year, a new Senior School Library will become a home for the next generation of budding writers.

With an innovative and modern design, this library will exude the warmth and welcoming atmosphere of the old one, but with multiple levels incorporating a series of flexible, quiet and collaborative spaces combined with classrooms and an event space adjoining an expansive balcony overlooking the Top Oval.

While Abbotsleigh's tradition of excellence in education and its supportive environment for its students have been instrumental in shaping the literary careers of its students, the School's passion for literature also extends to the broader Abbotsleigh community, including numerous past and current staff and parents.

In September, our Speech and Drama Coordinator Darcy-Lee Tindale was a special guest at the Abbotsleigh Parents Association's Author Evening where she discussed her first novel *The Fall Between*. Darcy's adult crime novel was a finalist in the 2022 Penguin Books

Literary Prize and was shortlisted for the 2024 Ned Kelly Best Debut Crime Fiction Book Award. Her second novel *Burning Mountain* will follow in April 2025.

Past deputy head of Junior School and director of development Jacqueline Harvey is now one of Australia's most popular authors, having sold more than two million copies of her Alice-Miranda, Clementine Rose, Kensy and Max and Willa and Woof series around the world.

The official opening of the new library on Saturday 29 March will coincide with the Autumn School Fair, just one of the many highlights on the School's calendar of 140th birthday celebrations.

A dedicated space for books written by Abbotsleigh community authors will be a feature of the library and serve as inspiration for current and future students. If you are an Abbotsleigh community author and would like your book to be considered for inclusion in the new library, please contact the School.

History of our libraries

Abbotsleigh has boasted a library since its relocation to Wahroonga in 1898. Initially only for boarders (then known as house girls), it was opened to day girls from 1927.

In 1925, the library was housed in a room beside our current reception area; previously it had been in a small room in the School House. In 1937, it was moved into the ballroom of the newly purchased Adams House, and we appointed our first



full-time librarian, Abbotsleigh Old Girl Thurles Thomas, after whom our School Archives are named.

In 1960, the new Library Wing was opened, capable of seating 60 girls. In 1971 this was expanded and renamed the Archdale Library, in honour of our recently retired sixth headmistress, Betty Archdale. This remodelled library could seat 105 girls. The space was extended again in 1983 due to the building of the new Centenary Building. The year 2006 saw the opening of the Abbotsleigh Research Centre, affectionately known as

the ARC. This award-winning building saw the library renamed the Betty Archdale Library.

The new Senior School Library is on track for completion in February 2025.

Our Old Girl authors

In the lead up to the opening of the new Senior School Library, we invited Old Girl authors to share their stories as writers and tell us what inspired them on their literacy career path. Their stories can be found overleaf.





Nicole Alexander (1983)

Nicole is a bestselling historical fiction author of 12 novels and her work, which also includes poetry, travel, creative writing and genealogy articles, has been published internationally. She is a former chair of the ARA Historical Novel Prize (Adult Category), and a past judge of the Historical Novel Society Colleen McCullough Residency Award and the Elyne Mitchell Writing Award.

Nicole's debut novel *The Bark Cutters* was shortlisted for an Australian Book Industry Award and she has a Master of Letters in creative writing. Her novels are set at defining moments in history and explore the interplay of kinship, identity, loyalty and love against the Australian landscape. She is known for her gritty, realistic portrayals of Australian life.

Abbotsleigh influence: *Nicole was an Abbotsleigh boarder for six years. She read Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea when she was 14 and that novella, combined with a love of English in Years 11 and 12, was the catalyst for her writing career.*

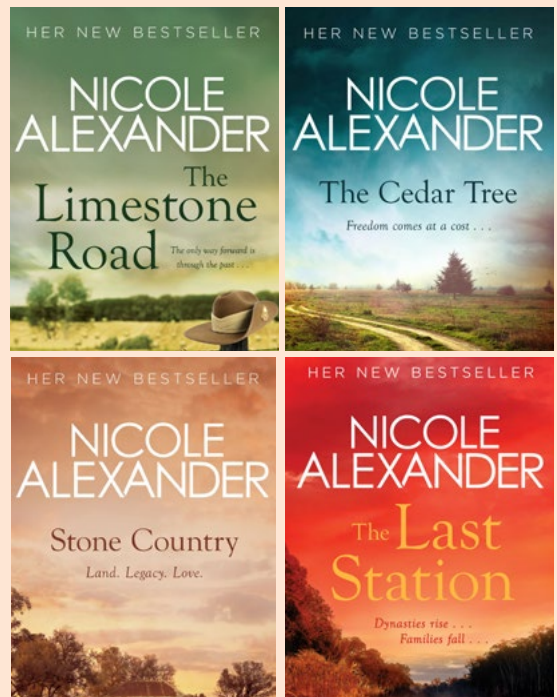


Dr Greta Archbold (Brown, 1967)

I feel humbled you have bothered to encourage me to submit my six books and I thank you. My books shine in authenticity, courage and moralities. I had stories to tell. I disciplined myself to the point of meditating and clinging on to the finishing line of the last book. They are all different books with unique stories. They inspire and connect with today's vibe. My

aim was to try and empower all women. My three religious books are written with truth; the other three are a memoir and two novels. With the forces around me they were easy to write.

Abbotsleigh influence: *If there is a thank you to Abbotsleigh, I would have to say it was Miss Robinson, the 1950's Junior School headmistress who encouraged my imagination. I remember that, during assembly, she directed us to ask our parents to contribute to the Junior School Library. My parents declined. I felt the need to help so, to make some money, I wrote my first play at age ten. There was a successful charity performance, and the money raised was put in a trust. Thank you Miss Robinson, you were my creator, you inspired me to do the impossible!*





Wendy Blaxland (1967)

Wendy Blaxland loves writing in a range of genres. She has published more than 115 books, fiction and non-fiction, mainly for children, from early readers to mid-secondary school series, but also for adults. Her history of Marian Street Theatre will be published soon.

She is also a playwright, with more than 20 plays produced, many for Marian Street Theatre for Young

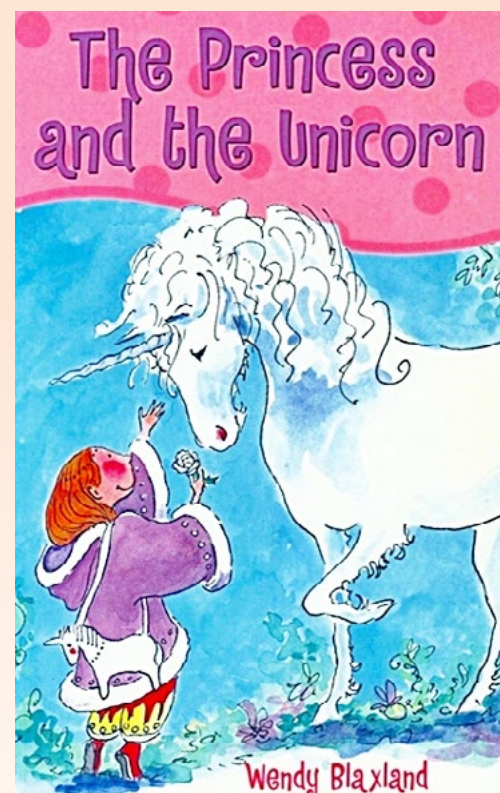
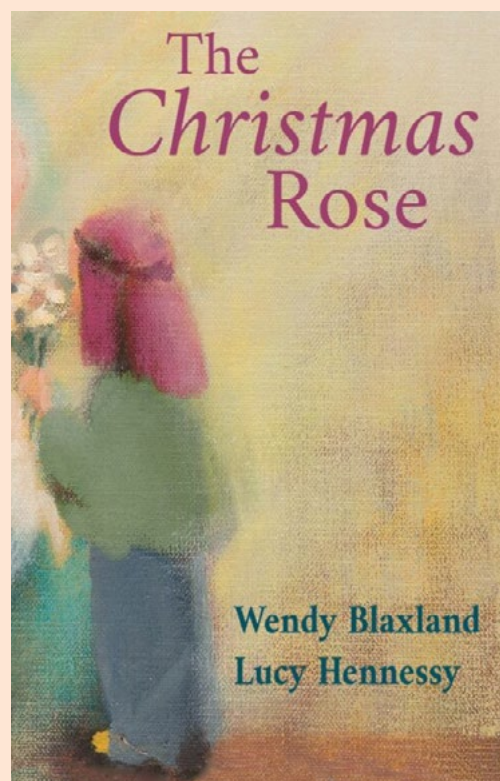
People. She ran a family theatre company, Blaxland and Daughter, to tour her historically based plays to schools, theatres and historic houses. She has worked in radio and print journalism and written television scripts. Her award-winning poetry is published worldwide, including in Australia, England, the US and Europe. She shares poems as email tags, to reach new audiences.

In her work, Wendy relishes exploring the past, the future and the funny side of life. She listens to the ghosts of real and imaginary people whispering 'choose me' and then works to bring their stories alive. And she loves the quickening of attention that heralds a poem struggling to be created. Writing has become Wendy's way of trying to make sense of infinity within our finite lives.

Abbotsleigh influence: *First, the inspirational headmistress Betty Archdale's years as head of Abbotsleigh coincided exactly with my own. Her life example and her attitude of 'why not?' prompted many of us to challenge ourselves to explore what life might hold in terms of satisfying work. For me, this has been teaching, and then writing.*

A series of supportive and encouraging Abbotsleigh teachers also played a big part. My 3rd Grade teacher Miss Carter applauded my narrative stories (though she did ask at first whether anyone else had helped me...). My 6th Grade teacher Mrs Featherstone encouraged me to submit work to the Weaver, which gave me my first taste of publication. Some of my poems appeared in print, and I was hooked.

In the Senior School Mrs O'Dell was my wonderful English and Drama teacher. A devotee of Shakespeare, she opened my eyes to what it was possible to do with words and how powerful writing could be. Mrs O'Dell was also a fine director, challenging us to perform in plays such as The Crucible. Mrs Morris was an extraordinary Modern History teacher, encouraging her students to think for themselves; Mr Reeves, head of Music, directed many of us in a series of Gilbert & Sullivan productions, which demonstrated how much joy both wordplay and humour could provide. A series of excellent librarians in both Junior and Senior schools also showed us how to read more widely and to research well. I thank them all unreservedly.



However, when I told our careers adviser in Year 12 that I really wanted to be a writer, her smile froze. She hastily suggested that law might be a better choice. I understand she was only trying to warn me that writing is a very hard road: emotionally taxing and economically precarious. She was absolutely right. So I began my subsequent creative and critical writing part-time within the relative economic security of an academic career. Eventually, I had the courage to decide that yes, I am a writer. All I want is more time and skill to keep honing my craft, even though *tempus celerius radio fugit*...

This is a poem I wrote with our school motto in mind:

Threads to knit a poem

Out of the tangled skein of thoughts and words
I patiently unravel threads
to knit a poem that will fit me quite,
curve round the body of my living flesh,
flare and fall like shimmering silk
to drape a patterned cloak around my soul.



Marion Cowper (Single, 1945)

Marion's memoir, *As I Recall*, is a captivating journey through the life of a remarkable woman. Born in 1928, during the Great Depression, Marion's early years were spent in rural NSW and living with extended family in Sydney while attending Abbotsleigh.

Her life story is one of resilience and exuberance. She married Doug Ryrrie at

21 and began farming near Narromine, NSW. However, a devastating tragedy in the 1960s changed her life's course. Her husband perished in a flood and she was left alone with their 18-month-old son and a property to run.

Later, as a young widow, Marion travelled across Europe, Great Britain and the US, meeting diverse people and experiencing rich cultures. Her working career saw her in Sydney as an assistant to the Association of Sheltered Workshops. In 1966, she married Peter Cowper.

Marion's tales are filled with humour, keen observations and a cheeky charm that makes her stories engaging and delightful. Throughout her memoir, Marion's resilience, exuberance and, above all, her love of life shines through, even when dealing with harrowing events and tragedies.

Marion's love of adventure continued well into her late 80s and 90s, with trips to exotic places like Iran and Ethiopia. At 96, she remains a vibrant and active individual, her love for life and travel undiminished. Her memoir is a testament to her indomitable spirit and the rich, eventful life she has led.



As I Recall Marion Cowper

Marion Cowper is a born storyteller. Come with us and explore her life full of joy, sorrow, and adventures to foreign lands. Marion tells her story with a sense of humour and poignancy that is sure to entertain and intrigue.

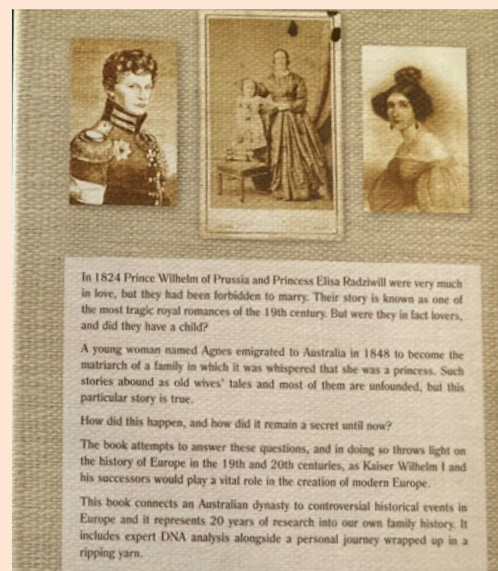
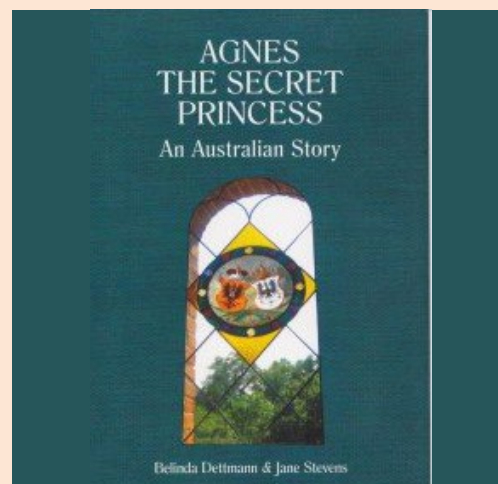
Belinda Dettmann (1958) and Jane Stevens (Dettmann, 1969)



Over a period of 10 years, sisters Belinda Dettmann (1958) and Jane Stevens (Dettmann, 1969) have unravelled a fascinating family history. The legend that their great-great-grandmother Agnes Dettman, nee Kroll, was the illegitimate daughter of Prince Wilhelm of Prussia, later Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany, and Princess Elisa Radziwill of Poland, was verified through research and DNA tests and resulted in a book published in 2015, *Agnes The Secret Princess: An Australian story*, published in 2015.

In 1824, Prince Wilhelm of Prussia and Princess Elisa Radziwill were very much in love but had been forbidden to marry. Their story is one of the most tragic royal romances of the 19th century. But were they lovers, and did they have a child?

A young woman named Agnes emigrated to Australia in 1848 to become the matriarch of a family in which it was whispered that she was a princess. Such stories abound as old wives' tales and most of them are unfounded, but this one is true. How did this happen, and how did it remain a secret until now? The book attempts to answer these questions and, in doing so, throws light on the history of Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries: Kaiser Wilhelm I and his successors played a vital role in the creation of modern Europe.



Berenice Eastman (Rule-Taylor, 1945)



My Capacious Hold-All of Recollections is a largely Tasmanian memoir, strongly embedded in the literary life of Tasmania. In her delightful tapestry of life ranging back over the past century and beyond, Berenice Eastman doesn't simply reminisce about her own experiences. She weaves in many stories of her contemporaries – people she has known, admired and honoured.

Whether they are household names, or people who have slipped away into history almost unrecognised and unremembered, Berenice's eclectic and generous perspectives include musicians, actors, writers, teachers and, above all, the lives and aspirations of women who are or were dedicated to enriching the literature of our society.

The memoir includes numerous references to her schooling at Abbotsleigh, which commenced at the age of nine. A chapter entitled *Tales of Abbotsleigh* is dedicated to Berenice's high school years but her Abbotsleigh story



really begins a chapter earlier with Show and Tell. Finally, she comes full circle with another chapter at the end, Old Girls Postscript to Abbotsleigh, referring to the school reunion she attended in 2005.

Berenice was 90 years old when she launched her book to a packed-out Fullers Bookshop in Hobart; she passed away in 2021 at the age of 93.

Abbotsleigh influence, according to Berenice's daughter Merridy: *'I grew up hearing so much about that school from mum,' remembers Merridy. 'She spoke of its "profoundly charismatic women who left indelible marks on my education and future career". Her passion for literature and language was nurtured at Abbotsleigh. Mum loved her English teacher, a woman who cried with laughter as she read Pickwick Papers to the class; her Scottish French teacher; and an eccentric headmistress, also champion cricketer, who'd walk the school grounds with a torn jumper held together with a giant safety pin. And, as only our mother could say, she LOVED LATIN! "The key to all languages!" Mum could have been a professional writer but always put her librarian teaching work first, and us, then looking after dad.*

'The cover artwork on her book is by the world-renowned painter George Davis, who lived in Hobart and was a dear friend of mum, who taught his daughter, the brilliant actor Essie Davis at school in Hobart. George, who died last October, painted mum in 1986 and called his portrait, The Storyteller.'

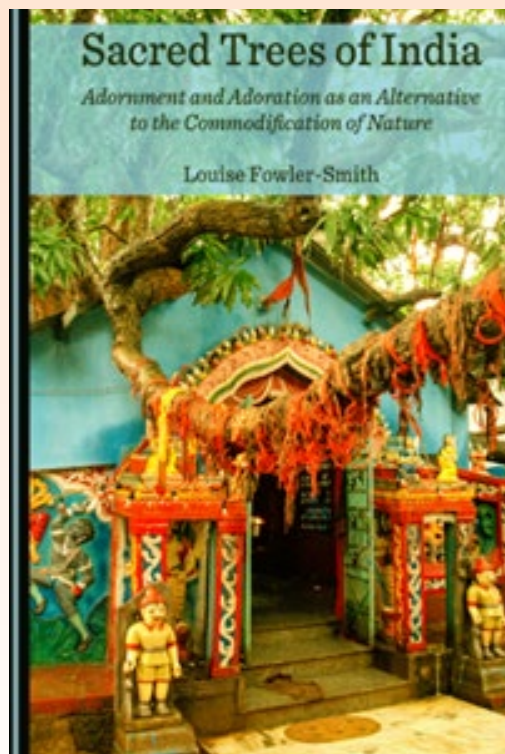


Louise Fowler-Smith (1973)

An Australian environmental artist, writer and educator, Louise Fowler-Smith has dedicated more than a decade to exploring the sacred trees and groves of India. Her book, *Sacred Trees of India: Adornment and Adoration as an Alternative to the Commodification of Nature*, delves into the profound cultural reverence for trees across Hindu,

Adivasi, Buddhist and Muslim communities. This work highlights how contemporary tree-worship in India offers a compelling alternative to the Western capitalist approach that often leads to environmental degradation.

Through extensive fieldwork spanning 17 Indian states, Louise documents the vital role these sacred sites play in ecological preservation. Her book features hundreds of original photographs, showcasing the beauty and significance of these natural sanctuaries. The study focuses on the importance of perception in environmental protection, presenting tree-worship as a powerful tool against deforestation. Her book has led to invitations to speak at prestigious events in India, such as the Jaipur



Literature Festival and the Apeejay Kolkata Literature Festival. Her work not only illuminates the cultural and ecological importance of sacred trees but also inspires a deeper appreciation for nature's intrinsic value.

As well as being published internationally in peer-reviewed journals, Louise has also held exhibitions of her photographic and multidisciplinary work across the globe. She was an academic at the University of New South Wales for 30 years, introducing the first transdisciplinary course on environmental art.

Alexandra Joel (1971)

Starting her media career as a student at the University of Sydney, Alexandra (formerly Susan) performed voiceovers for TV and radio commercials. After graduating with Honours in Government, she interned for a Congressman in Washington DC before returning to Australia to work as a regional reporter and newsreader in Queensland.

Back in Sydney, her passion for fashion and writing led her to be a regular contributor

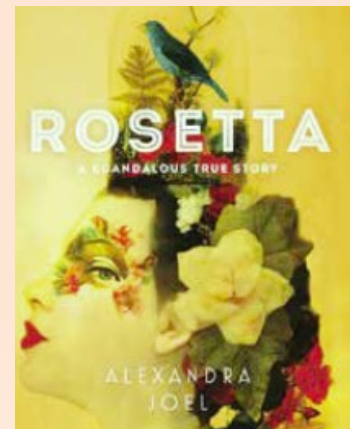
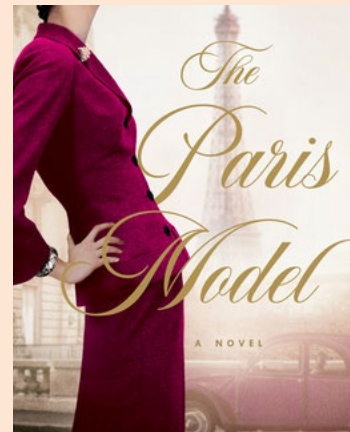
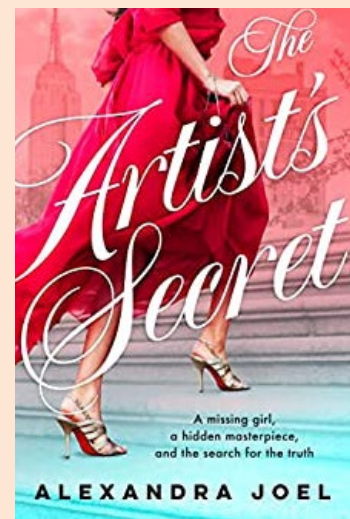
to major publications including *The Australian*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Cleo* and *Harper's Bazaar*. She authored landmark books on Australian fashion: *Best Dressed: 200 Years of Fashion in Australia* followed by *Parade: The Story of Fashion in Australia*, which paved the way for her role as editor of *Harper's Bazaar* and *Portfolio*, Australia's first magazine for working women.

A mid-life career shift, inspired by her role as president of the Royal Hospital for Women Foundation, saw Alexandra studying Applied Psychology and establishing a successful psychotherapy practice. However, her love for writing drew her back, resulting in her memoir, *Rosetta: A Scandalous True Story*, which has been optioned for the screen by a major studio.

Alexandra's debut novel in 2020, *The Paris Model*, became an Australian bestseller and was published internationally. *The Royal Correspondent* followed in 2021 and her latest novel, *The Artist's Secret*, was released in 2023.

Alexandra remains an avid student of art, fashion, history and politics.

Abbotsleigh influence: *Three inspirational teachers are the reason I have focused on historical fiction and non-fiction. Mrs Brice was a great History teacher; Renata Ratzler was an inspiring English teacher; and Mrs Marchand-Williams was excellent. She just 'got' me and I loved writing for her. Having duxed English in Year 12 I couldn't wait to study it at Sydney Uni, but I only lasted a month before switching courses. To be frank, after the standard set at school by the girls and teachers, English at uni was a real letdown. Nevertheless, I have been a professional writer for half a century and a best-selling internationally published author. Thank you Abbotsleigh!*





Jill Ker Conway AC (Ker, 1951) 1934-2018

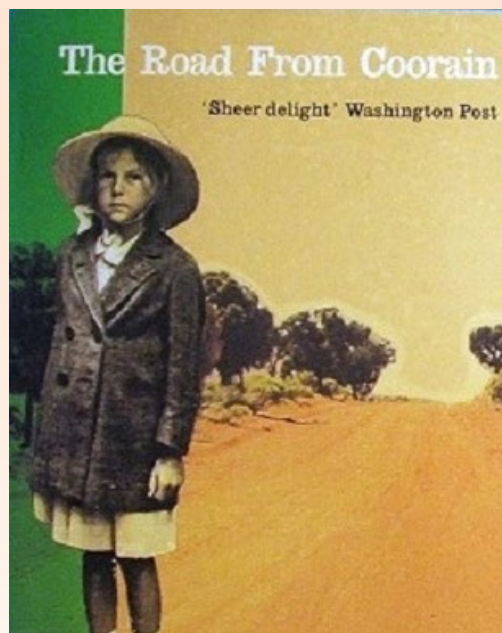
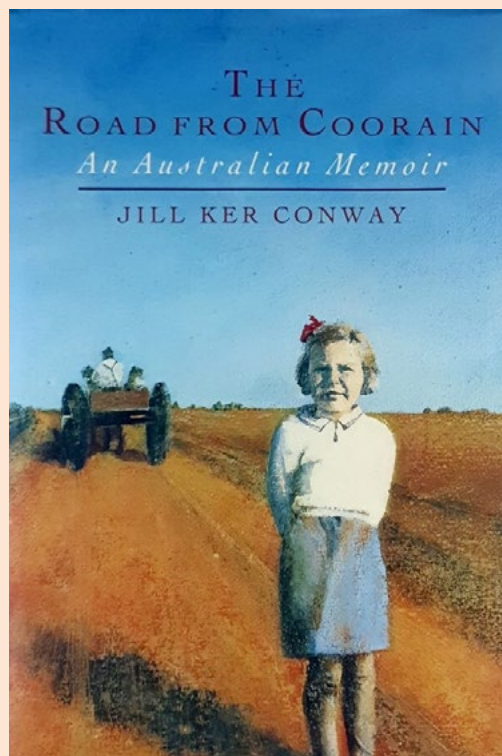
Australian literary icon, Professor Jill Ker Conway is best known for her autobiographical works, particularly her first memoir *The Road from Coorain*. This poignant narrative chronicles her early life on a vast remote sheep station at Hillston in western NSW and her subsequent move to Sydney, capturing the resilience and determination that defined her character.

After completing her education at Abbotsleigh and the University of Sydney (where she won the University Medal in History), Jill moved to the United States and earned her PhD from Harvard University. Her academic career flourished, culminating in her historic appointment as the first female president of the renowned Smith College, the largest and one of the most illustrious liberal arts institutions for women. Throughout her tenure, she continued to write, producing works that explored themes of feminism, history and personal identity.

Jill's work yielded such books as *The Female Experience in 18th- and 19th-Century America* (1982) and *Women Reformers and American Culture* (1987). After editing two anthologies (1992, 1996) of autobiographical writing by women, she explored the memoir as a literary form in *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography* (1998). She wrote her own life story in *The Road from Coorain* (1989), which was adapted for television (2001); *True North* (1994); and *A Woman's Education* (2001). She was also the author of a children's book, *Felipe the Flamingo* (2006).

Jill's contributions to literature and education have been widely recognised and earned her numerous accolades, including the National Humanities Medal from President Obama, as well as being named *TIME* magazine's 'Woman of the Year' at just 40 years of age. During her lifetime, she received 38 honorary degrees and awards from North American and Australian colleges, universities and women's organisations. She was named an honorary AC (Companion in the General Division) in the 2013 Queen's Birthday Honours List for 'eminent service to the community, particularly women, as an author, academic and through leadership roles with corporations, foundations, universities and philanthropic groups'.

Abbotsleigh influence: *Abbotsleigh* features in Jill's first novel *The Road from Coorain*. She has also shown her gratitude and deep affection for the School by making an endowment towards a boarding scholarship at Abbotsleigh.





Elizabeth Lancaster (Carroll, 1977)

After leaving Abbotsleigh I became an occupational therapist. In my mid-30s, my husband and I moved to the United States with our two young children, where my life took several unexpected turns. The first was signing up for a writing course in New York. Immediately, I knew this was the direction I was meant to take.

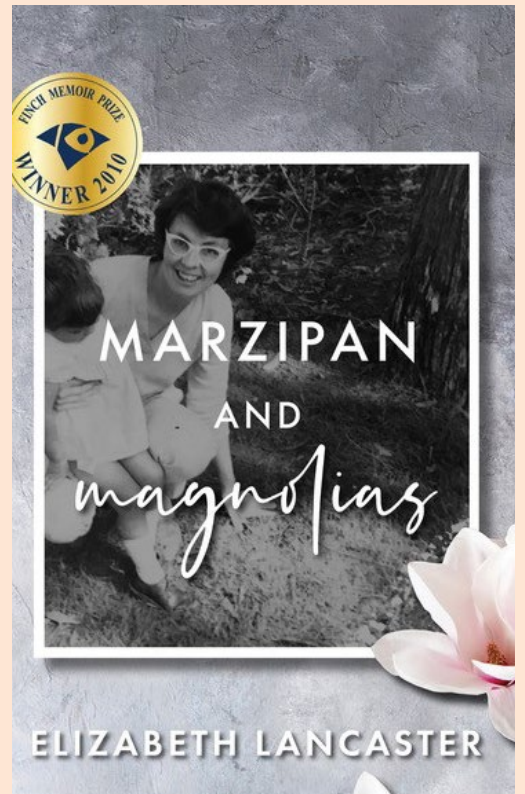
Then in short order, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, my father died and my tricky relationship with my mother became unmanageable. I began writing my way through these events, resulting in my first memoir.

Marzipan and Magnolias (2010*), won the inaugural Finch Memoir Prize. It traces my struggle to maintain independence in the face of a mother's inarticulate love, and the threat of insidious illness.

'Elizabeth Lancaster has optimism, buoyancy and a sense of humour, as well as a strong appreciation of human foibles, including her own. This is an honest account of a difficult time but told with a very light touch' – Jacqueline Kent, author and member of the Finch memoir Prize judging panel. My second memoir, *Bounty*, will be published by Vine Leaves Press in early 2026.

*The second edition of *Marzipan and Magnolias* was released in 2020 by the author.
www.elizabethlancaster.com.au

Influence from an Abbotsleigh teacher: *When I look back, I wonder how it took until my mid-30s to take up writing. I still remember the light bulb moments when my Third Year teacher (Year 9), Mrs Robin Williams, revealed the techniques used by Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* to portray her characters and how this shaped our responses to them. As a 14-year-old, it was like seeing behind the curtain. Although it would be years until I began writing seriously, I felt Mrs Williams's insights gave me a head start.*



Belinda Luscombe (1981)



I've written two books, *Hunger for Justice* (with a co-author Matthew Wade) and *Marriageology*. They are both how-to books that attempt to address different quandaries about living with other humans—those you don't know and will never meet and those you know altogether too well. There's a 30-year gap between the publication of the books, in which I suppose my youthful dreams of changing the world were reshaped into the marginally more practical hope that we could maybe be kind to the person

with whom we agreed to live. I have noticed, however, that the way we choose to treat the people we love has a direct application to the way we can also choose to treat people we barely know.

Abbotsleigh influence: *People often ask me how to become a good writer and, since I really don't know, I usually tell them to start reading as much as they can when they are eight years old. I feel lucky that Abbotsleigh had scarily smart English teachers who expected a high level of literary discussion. One of them, Miss Heath, would draw enormous concentric circles around every misplaced apostrophe. (My apostrophe skills are now, I'm reliably informed, second to none.) In my day, Abbotsleigh was known to have students who were particularly good at music, tennis and debating. I was garbage at music and tennis, but the skills I learned at debating really have come in handy as a journalist at TIME magazine, where I have worked for 25 years.*



Elizabeth Manning Murphy (Manning, 1947)

Elizabeth has always loved words and putting books together. Thanks to Miss Shell, her English teacher at Abbotsleigh, she was encouraged to write and design books. Her first training on leaving school was to study typing at a business college in Sydney, then commercial art at East Sydney Technical College. She wrote her first book,

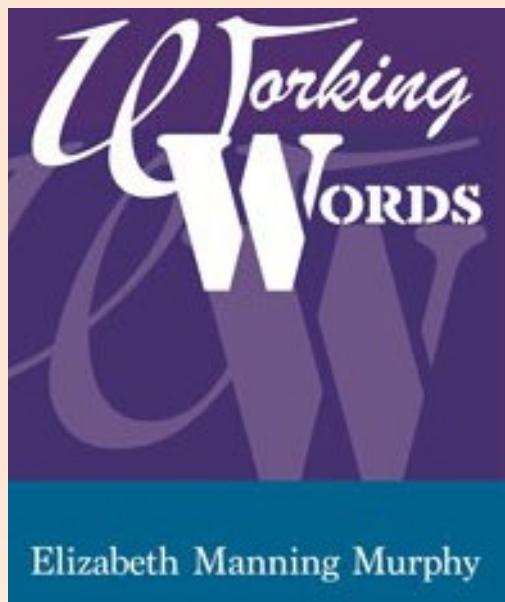
The Better Letter, for staff at Qantas where she worked in staff training in the early 1960s. She has written another 15 books since, about writing, English grammar, business practices and plain English, the two most recent being *Effective Writing* and *Working Words*.

Elizabeth has always been innovative. At 50, she went to university and got an honours degree in Linguistics with Psychology. She has designed and run courses and workshops in English grammar all over Australia and in the UK, South Africa and Belgium; she helps run a national

Marriage·ology

The Art and Science
of Staying Together

Belinda Luscombe



mentoring program for editors; and she specialises in editing research theses for students with English as a second language. She is a Distinguished Editor (DE) (an IPEd award) and is an Honorary Life Member of the Canberra Society of Editors.

At 94 years of age, Elizabeth isn't stopping – she's writing her 17th book – this time a guide to plain English for editors. Music, movies and having small dinner parties are her main relaxations.

Megwenya Matthews (Giblin, 1960)



Growing up with a challenging set of Christian names, Megwenya's childhood was rich with a mix of unusual ideas. Her mother had strong views about almost everything, from ABC radio programs, to wearing jodhpurs when riding a horse, to food, bare feet, medicines, education, Christianity, abandoned Barnardo boys and dancing class – views that were at times stifling, at others, liberating. Her belief in the importance of being different was encapsulated in this little verse:

Most any old fish can drift and float
and drift along and dream,
But it takes a regular live one
to swim against the stream

The young Megwenya absorbed this concept during her childhood, even before her mother had quoted the rhyme. In her memoir, *Swimming Against the Stream: A Turramurra Childhood*, she describes how she negotiated these challenges as best she could, with mixed results. It is the story of her childhood and teenage years, her relationship with her mother, of falling in love with unusual and inappropriate 'boys'. It traces her early life from birth in Turramurra, to her schooldays at Abbotsleigh in preparation for becoming an Arts student at the University of Sydney.

After 10 years as a student, Megwenya left Abbotsleigh in 1960 but returned to teach music to fifth and sixth formers from 1973-1975.

Abbotsleigh influence: *I can very easily pinpoint when I was encouraged to write at Abbotsleigh and it is told in my memoir: We were in 5th Class and our teacher was (again, as we'd had her in 3rd Class) Mrs Palmer. I was 10 years old. Instead of writing a weekly composition, she suggested we write an ongoing story with chapters and illustrations... spread over the whole year... as a competition. I wrote Winnie the Shetland Pony about a young (talking) foal on the Shetland Islands who is captured and joins a family. Much to my surprise, my story won! My prize was a children's copy of Black Beauty. I still treasure both books. I was NOT a leading scholar in our class so it was all a great thrill and, I suppose, gave me enough confidence to continue writing throughout my life. But having work published is an extra bonus I didn't really expect!*

Swimming Against the Stream

A Turramurra Childhood



Megwenya Matthews



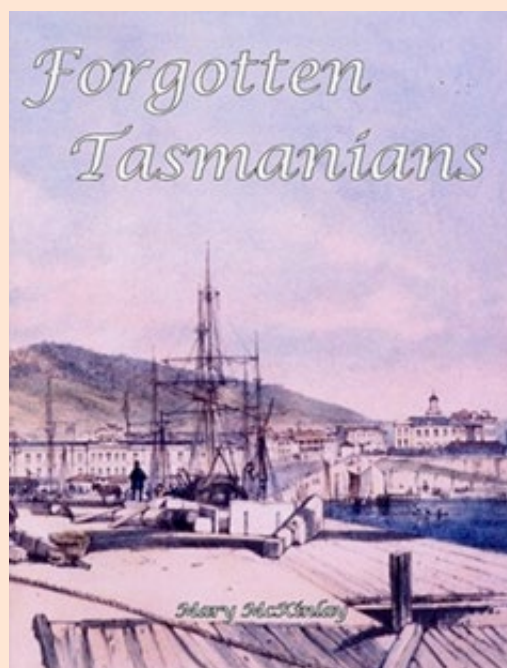
Mary McKinlay (Dodds, 1957)

Forgotten Tasmanians is a history of 19th-century Van Diemen's Land (and Tasmania). The first half of the book is based on the life of George Stokell, who became a rich merchant, pastoralist and entrepreneur and the biggest landowner in Southern Tasmania. The second part is based on his grandson Sir John Stokell Dodds, politician, chief justice and lieutenant governor of Tasmania.

From a depressed England after the Napoleonic wars to the time of the Great War, the development of Tasmania is portrayed through the lives of these two little known men, their families and many of their well-known associates.

This book is edited by Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Tasmania, Michael Roe, who also wrote the Foreword: 'My great-grandfather Sir John Stokell Dodds was administrator of Tasmania and chief justice. He was fortunate in 1901 to be the one to read the proclamation of Tasmania joining the Commonwealth and I have a photograph of him arriving in horse and open carriage to do so.'

Abbotsleigh influence: *Miss Dorothy Hughesdon, my History teacher at Abbotsleigh, was a great inspiration. Her lessons were always thorough, informative and, at times, exciting. She was never boring and gave me a great love of History. It was a shame serious illness denied her a long and fruitful life. One of my favourite teachers.*



Belinda Murrell (Humphrey, 1981)



At about the age of eight, Belinda began writing stirring tales of adventure, mystery and magic in hand-illustrated exercise books. As an adult, she has combined two of her great loves – writing and travelling the world – and worked as a travel writer, journalist and public relations consultant. Now, inspired by her own three children, Belinda is an award-winning, internationally published

children's author with a history of writing in her family that spans more than 200 years. Belinda has written more than 35 books including *The Golden Tower* and *The Silver Sea*, her fantasy adventure series *The Sun Sword* trilogy and her award-winning time-slip adventures, *The Locket of Dreams*, *The Ruby Talisman*, *The Ivory Rose*, *The Forgotten Pearl*, *The River Charm*, *The Sequin Star* and *The Lost Sapphire*.



For younger readers, Belinda has her popular Lulu Bell and Pippa's Island series. Her new junior fiction series, The Daredevil Princess, is about a brave and bold young girl solving mysteries in the Queendom of Blumenfeld. www.belindamurrell.com.au

Abbotsleigh influence: *My favourite subjects at school were always English and History and my teachers at Abbotsleigh encouraged my creative writing, particularly my Year 12 Extension English teacher, Miss Heath. She suggested that I start a daily creative writing journal and encouraged me to submit my work to the school magazine. I can still remember the thrill of seeing my words printed in The Weaver. While I loved writing, I didn't consider writing as a career, until Year 12, when my headmistress Miss Kathleen McCredie called me into her office. I thought I must be in terrible trouble! However, she was concerned that I was planning to study Veterinary Science at university. She pointed out that I was topping Extension English and Extension Ancient History, but my marks in maths, chemistry, and physics were less than brilliant. Miss McCredie told me that I was a beautiful writer and asked me had I thought about studying Journalism or Communication instead of Vet Science. It was this encouragement that led to me enrolling at Macquarie University to study Journalism, Communication, English Literature and Creative Writing. So, I am eternally grateful to Miss McCredie for her wise advice!*



Dr Cindy Pan (1984)

I enjoy reading and writing. As a doctor I am constantly writing: consultation notes as well as scripts, referrals, medical certificates and the like. Writing regular newspaper and magazine columns - for publications including *Sun Herald Tempo*, *Sunday Telegraph Body and Soul*, *Girlfriend*, *New Idea*, *Good Medicine*, *Zoo Weekly* and many more magazines, including overseas publications like *Cleo* and *Women's Weekly* in Singapore and

Malaysia - over the years has been a great experience to complement medical writing. It's really fun, creative and rewarding, interesting and enjoyable. Sending off each article has sometimes felt like handing in homework each week; you don't get a mark or a grade but deadlines with money attached can be just as motivating! I learnt a lot and it was great, especially during the years when I was home with babies and small kids. They say a woman's work is never done and with housework and kids it's true but at least with writing a column or article you get a sense of completion when you hit 'send'.

Through my newspaper columns and other TV and media work I was commissioned to write several books, the first being *Pandora's Box: Lifting the lid on life's little nasties*.



Abbotsleigh influence: The publication of that first book and seeing it on shelves at bookstores was a great thrill especially for my NESB mum who once asked me, 'How do you know so many words?' Well I guess my education at Abbotsleigh and the many teachers who encouraged and fostered intellectual confidence and enthusiasm for reading and writing in me are at the heart of the answer.

Dr Pauline Turner (my French teacher and Head of Languages), Mrs Coulton (my Maths teacher), Mrs Harvey (Physics and Chemistry) and Mrs Claydon (English) are the ones who most stand out in my memory as having deeply impacted my formation. Indeed, Dr Turner is someone I still speak to regularly and see whenever I have the opportunity; a friendship of now more than 40 years that I cherish.



Sue Pickrell (Liddle, 1951)

Sue book, *Granny Duval: She Must Have Come From Somewhere*, was inspired by a friend and local Nundle Aboriginal woman's comment about her grandchildren's curiosity regarding their ancestors. This sparked Sue's almost 40-year journey to uncover the history of several Aboriginal families from the southern New England tableland in NSW, particularly focusing on Granny Duval of the Anaiwan Nation.

Sue meticulously recorded the Anaiwan history, aiming to provide a balanced narrative of the region's traumas and triumphs following the arrival of settlers. Interwoven with these historical accounts is a fictional story about Bidja, a young Aboriginal man, which brings the oral histories passed down through generations to life. The book includes many old photographs and is a comprehensive collection of stories and experiences of the Indigenous families who lived in this region.

Publishing earlier this year at 89 years of age, Sue's book was recently launched at a special event in Armidale.

While living in Nundle, Sue worked with Landcare and several history and development projects including helping to establish a memorial for local Aboriginal soldiers. She was named the Nundle Citizen of the Year in 2015.

Abbotsleigh influence: Sue remembers her Year 11 English teacher as one of the standouts who helped her at school; especially her reading of *Hamlet*. Sue also remembers going to a local picture theatre and seeing the play as a film with a wonderful English actor... but she says it was the act of listening to her teacher in the classroom that really made Shakespeare come alive for her!

GRANNY DUVAL

• She must have come from somewhere •



Sue Pickrell





Katrina Roe (Hutchins, 1992)

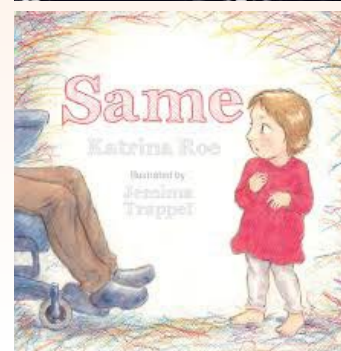
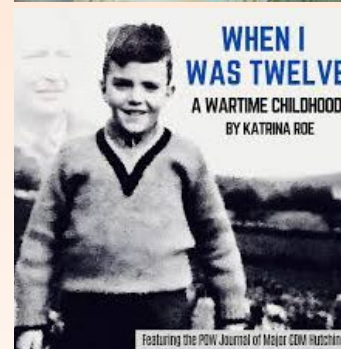
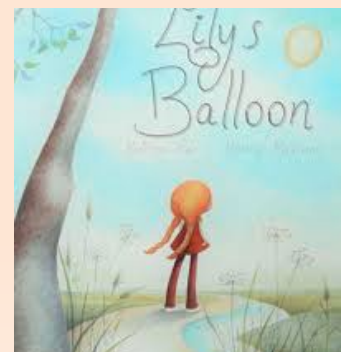
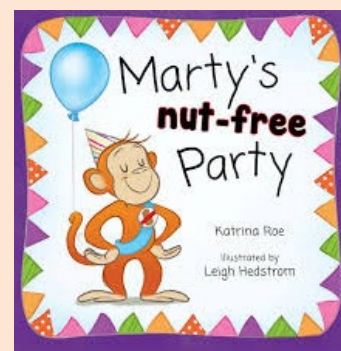
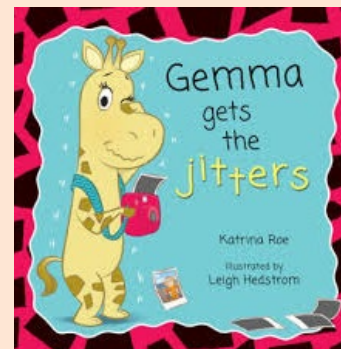
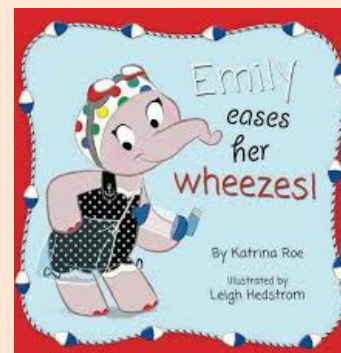
Katrina is a children's author and media professional. She writes inclusive stories that inspire kids to face real-life challenges with courage and kindness. Her first picture book, *Marty's Nut-Free Party* was published by Wombat Books in 2012 and shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Book of the Year, while her second

book *Emily Eases Her Wheezes* was a CBCA Notable. Katrina also won the Forevability Award for *Same*, a true story about her brother, Charlie, who has cerebral palsy.

In 2023, Katrina published an audiobook, *When I Was Twelve*, in which her father voices the true story of his wartime childhood in the United Kingdom. The audiobook includes excerpts from her grandfather's Prisoner of War diary as well as a recount of D-Day, which, 80 years on, her 91-year-old father remembers vividly. It is aimed at readers aged 9-12.

Lately, Katrina has had a lot of fun writing her first middle grade fairy tale, *The Stolen Child*, which won the published author section of CYA competition in 2023.

Abbotsleigh influence: *Katrina dreamed of being an author from age five, an ambition that seemed possible, because there were quite a few authors in her mother's family. In Year 9, when she placed second in the Henry Lawson Literary Awards and was selected to attend a writing camp at Gulgong, the achievement was generously celebrated at Abbotsleigh. This experience encouraged Katrina to take her writing more seriously, and in Year 11 she was thrilled to win the Senior Creative Writing Award. The opportunity to have her writing published in The Weaver also motivated Katrina to improve her work.*

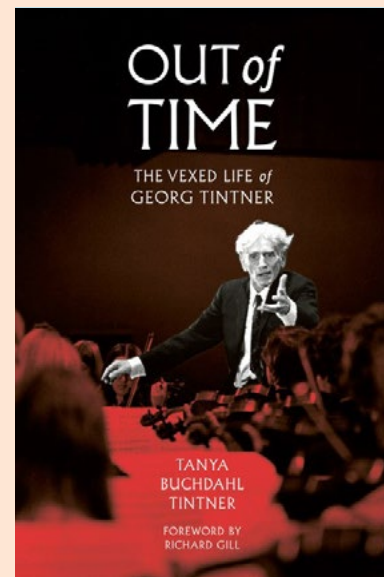




Tanya Tintner (Buchdahl, 1970)

I wrote my book *Out of Time: The Vexed Life of Georg Tintner* as a tribute to my late husband, the conductor and composer Georg Tintner, an Austrian refugee from Nazism who worked for several decades in Australia. His life took him first to New Zealand, then Australia and finally Canada. I spent five years researching in several countries, both

by interview (around 200 of them) and in libraries and archives. It was published by the University of Western Australia publishing in 2013, and in Canada by Wilfrid Laurier University Press in 2015; it is now in translation into German, pending publication in a series of books about exiled composers. The book was a diversion from many years of writing for a number of Australian, Canadian and other overseas magazines and newspapers, mostly on music. Until recently I was the Editor of Naxos Records' online *Dictionary of Music*; I now work as a freelance writer, editor and proofreader, though AI is likely to put me out of business sooner rather than later.



Finding future career paths

By Vivienne Gilkes

Head of Career Education and Post-School Opportunities

‘**Y**ounger learners can benefit greatly from exposure to multiple job opportunities – this enables them to explore different career options early on and find out what they care about.’ These insights from the Harvard Graduate School of Education underscore the importance of the career events Abbotsleigh has hosted this year, all of which are designed to inspire and guide our girls towards their future careers.

In 2024, the Careers Office was bustling with activities. We hosted four ‘Women in...’ breakfast events for Years 9-12, focusing on careers in construction, defence, business and technology. These events were a tremendous success, thanks to the industry representatives from Lipman, the ADF, FUJIFILM Business Innovation Australia, WiseTech, Adobe and Atlassian, who shared their experiences and supported our girls in finding their paths. We also extend gratitude to the Old Girls who returned to share their career stories, helping to educate and inspire our current students.

Our collaboration with builders Lipman continued to flourish as we organised student engagement sessions throughout the year. These included insights into architecture with AJC architects, engineering with TTW engineers, and design fit-out and finishes. These experiences provided students with a deeper understanding of these fields and the various career opportunities they offer.

In addition, the Careers Office hosted representatives from several universities, including UNSW, UTS, Macquarie University, Western Sydney University, Monash University, Charles Sturt University, Bond University, USYD and the University of Arts London. We also welcomed First Nations support services from a range of universities and offered virtual tours of residential colleges across the country, all of which helped students explore their options for higher education and understand the support available to them.

These events provided our girls with opportunities to discover their interests and set realistic goals for their futures. We encourage all students to take advantage of similar events during 2025 to explore and shape their career paths.

For more information about Careers Office events, please contact Vivienne Gilkes, Head of Career Education & Post-School Opportunities: gilkesv@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au



From the Presidents of the ABPA

Katrina Cogan and Kylie Wood

In December, the Abbotsleigh Boarder Parent Association was excited to come together for their 'Jingle Mingle', a night when boarder families can get together and celebrate the year that was. This year, parents met at the Greenwood Hotel for drinks and nibbles, the night before Speech Day, when they collect their girls (and a very full car of belongings!).

The highly anticipated Boarder Parent Harbour Cruise will be taking place on Friday, 28 February. Parents will jump aboard to welcome new families and build on existing friendships, all while cruising our beautiful Sydney harbour.

The ABPA is looking forward to the 140th celebrations in 2025 and is busily preparing for its stall at the Autumn Fair on 29 March. This will be a fabulous opportunity for our community to showcase our rural and regional products.

The ABPA would like to wish everyone a safe and joyous 2025.



Bequests to Abbotsleigh

A woman's will is a powerful thing

She chooses how she leaves her money; who it goes to and how it's best used.

A bequest to Abbotsleigh is an investment in independent young women.

Your will, your way

You can speak confidentially to us about how you create a will, what kinds of gifts you can leave, and if you'd like them to go towards a specific cause such as Indigenous or needs-based scholarships, a prize, or school improvements.

No matter the size of your gift, Abbotsleigh is deeply appreciative of bequests from members of our school community.

Further information about gifts in wills can be found at abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/giving/gifts-in-wills

Alternatively, you may contact the Director of Development and Community Relations, Alex Lightfoot, for a confidential chat by phone on **02 9473 7737** or by email at lightfoota@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au



Championing philanthropy

President of the Marian Clarke Society Penelope Thompson speaks with Rhonda Kaan about her family's involvement with Abbotsleigh and why giving back to the School is so important to her

As a mother of three Abbotsleigh Old Girls, Penelope Thompson is constantly amazed at the network the School has created for her and her family. 'Not just for our girls, but also for us as parents and the people we meet,' Penelope says. 'You don't have to look very far to find an Abbotsleigh connection... or collection!

'I hear these sorts of stories over and over again... our girls have friends in Philadelphia, New York, London and right across the globe. Their network is huge and they've really enjoyed and benefited from that collegial connection.'

Penelope's network has no doubt been boosted by the fact she is someone who volunteers and gets involved wherever she is in the world. 'I've always been a committee person,' she says. 'In high school, at church and local community.'

As a 'trailing spouse' when she moved with her husband Malcolm and young children to Singapore in the late 1990s, Penelope was in a situation where she was not permitted to work and it wasn't long before she joined and became president of the Parent Association at the Australian International School her children attended.

'It was a really big role because the school was expanding exponentially while we were there,' she says. 'Each term you would have maybe 200-300 new families come and go.'

'It was busy because it wasn't just a titular role; it was a pastoral role as well. People would come to a completely different country with little children and they'd have no idea about where to start! How do I cope? How do I exist? We were there to help.'

Penelope's involvement in her children's school continued when the family returned to Australia and decided to send their daughters to Abbotsleigh.

'Abbotsleigh had a good name pastorally and academically and we felt it was big enough that it could cater to the differences in our three girls – it met our all-round criteria. That's when our "investment" started,' Penelope laughs.

Among other Abbotsleigh roles, Penelope helped run the sports canteen, co-headed all her daughters' Valedictory Dinners and served as president of the Abbotsleigh Parents Association.

'We were also "city" parents to boarders from the country (Dubbo, Walgett and Camden) for each of our daughter's years – as well as a few extras who were without boarder parents – so most weekends we had at least one boarder staying with us,' Penelope says. 'It was an enriching experience for us all.'

Today, Penelope is President of the Marian Clarke Society, the first non-Old Girl to serve in the role. 'There are people out there other than Old Girls and former staff members who are really passionate about the School and what it has done for their girls,' she says. 'They want to see that continue for other girls and they know it's good to give back.'

However, while Penelope believes it is getting better, she thinks there is not enough philanthropy in Australia. 'For me, philanthropy isn't about the amount of money or even that it is money – it's about giving,' she says. 'It's giving of yourself and, if you are giving money, it doesn't really matter how much it is. It's about the "philanthropic code" of recognising what you've received and the kindness and generosity of those in the past and what you can do for those in the future.'

Penelope says all three of her daughters were very involved in dance and drama at school with each receiving her Trinity College London Drama Diplomas. 'Their passion for drama is the reason we endowed the Thompson Sisters Prize for Drama in Year 12,' she says. 'Endowing a prize is another form of philanthropy, an example of the different opportunities available to the community to contribute.'

Penelope's current focus is giving the Marian Clarke Society a higher profile. 'People often don't know where to begin with wills but our eldest daughter Phoebe works for a specialist wills and estates law firm and having her in that position has made us more cognisant of how important it is to think about what you would like to see happen in the future,' she says.

'It's important to know where to begin, with whom to speak, and to have objective conversations about how you would like to structure your will and your bequests because it is actually a lot easier for your descendants if you make those decisions and have the conversation with them while you're alive, even if they are not comfortable with it.'

Penelope says that while she believes we are strong as a community, when it comes to bequests, most people still 'duck their heads' and don't want to talk about it. She wants to help provide a safe space for the community so they can chat. 'Come and have a conversation with someone. You can know there will be no judgment, there's no direction; just have a conversation.'

Penelope says supporting the education of their girls at Abbotsleigh has enriched their lives through the amazing people they have met, become friends with and have continued to be friends with.

'Now it is the joy of giving back that is the biggest thing for me,' she says. 'We had some difficult times when the girls were in high school and Abbotsleigh was always very supportive.'

*The Marian Clarke Society is an initiative of the Abbotsleigh Foundation that acknowledges and celebrates, during their lifetime, the generosity of those who have notified the School that they are leaving a gift in their will to Abbotsleigh. **For more information on gifts in wills, please contact Alex Lightfoot, Director of Development, on 02 9473 7737.***



Abbotsleigh Marian Clarke Society President and past parent Penelope Thompson with her daughters, Old Girls Prudence (2013), Phoebe Codling (2008) and Beatrice (2012).

From the President of the AOGU



It is worth celebrating every year that passes – whether we are finishing our studies, watching our children or grandchildren grow, celebrating milestones with our family and friends, exploring new places, surviving a hardship or something else equally

important. I dearly hope that you were able to celebrate many fabulous aspects of your lives in 2024.

The year 2024 was a special one for the AOGU. Not because we had a significant milestone birthday or did something newly grand, but because it was an opportunity to nod to the quiet passing of time for some AOGU traditions.

It is a core tradition of Abbotsleigh to empower young women to be able to do anything, as well as to champion equality for women and girls, and to instil a sense of social responsibility and service. One of our aims at the AOGU is to keep these traditions alive and we have been doing so in various ways over the years.

In 2024, we quietly celebrated the anniversaries of three traditions we believe benefit Abbotsleigh, girls and the community beyond.

• **40 years ago, we established the Centenary Scholarship** during the School's 100th birthday year. This scholarship celebrates generations of Abbotsleigh girls and is awarded to a Year 11 student whose mother was an Abbotsleigh Old Girl. Congratulations to Reanne Alwis on being awarded the 2024/25 Centenary Scholarship, becoming the 40th recipient. This was presented at the School's 139th Birthday Assembly, at which Reanne's mother Ruwanie Dias (1997) was also present.



It is a deep hope that many Old Girls' daughters are able to attend Abbotsleigh and this award recognises their achievements and contributions in continuing Abbotsleigh traditions.

• **25 years ago, we established the Kathleen McCredie Award**, which supports a student who would otherwise not be able to study at Abbotsleigh for Years 10 to 12. This award is part of the way that the AOGU champions educational opportunities for others. So far this scholarship has given the opportunity of an Abbotsleigh education to eight recipients. We love that this is a scholarship that many Old Girls and others in the School community continue to contribute towards and hope that, in time, it can be awarded annually.

• **And eight years ago, we established an Anniversary Grant**, providing Old Girls with the opportunity to apply for financial support to deliver their social justice endeavours in the community. We have funded domestic violence shelters, education and menstrual hygiene in Tanzania, clothing recycling in Tasmania, and in country NSW, driver training programs and mindfulness programs for cancer patients. This grant supports the delivery of programs that Old Girls are involved in, thereby maintaining the tradition of giving back to others. The AOGU is excited that there is a multiplier effect from these grants, by which the broader community benefits from what Abbotsleigh Old Girls enable.

The AOGU is proud to be able to champion girls in their studies and to support our women to contribute to society beyond the School gates.

As we prepare for the joy of Abbotsleigh's 140th Birthday in 2025, I am sure there will be plenty of Abbotsleigh traditions to enjoy, both the fun ones and purpose-based ones, and that Old Girls and all those across the School community will be filled with the memories and the mindset to continue Abbotsleigh's special traditions. I look forward to seeing you on campus at one of the special celebratory events.

*Sarah Franks (1991)
Honorary President*

Welcoming our newest Old Girls!

In September, after trials, oral exams, music and drama performances were completed and major works were handed in, we were once again delighted to welcome our newest Old Girls from the Class of 2024 to the AOGU. In the transformed Year 12 Common Room (known to many Old Girls as the Gymnasium and then the Old Gym), which was decorated with sunflowers, the girls ate delicious wraps and brownies while AOGU President Sarah Franks (1991) spoke. Her message about taking risks was closely aligned to their prefect theme, Brave the Waves. AOGU merchandise and novelty chocolates (saying 'Congratulations... Now you are like smart and stuff', perfect as an HSC precursor) were prizes in the Kahoot!

trivia quiz, with questions focusing on what it was like to be an Abbotsleigh student over the generations.

The girls learnt that the swimming pool was dyed purple not once, but twice, in the 1980s, and that the last year Old Girls won both the Athletic and Swimming carnival relays was 2021.

This year we ensured that all OG tutors and teachers of the leaving class were invited, which made giving the girls their Welcome Gift Bag all the more special. The bags contained a camellia keyring, sweet treats and a handwritten card by one of the AOGU Committee who was a former member of their house. There was a warm feeling to the day, which was the first of the valedictory events for the Class of 2024.



All smiles after receiving their Welcome Gift Bags.



The Headmistress with Committee members, from top left: Megan Krimmer, Sarah Franks (1991), Belinda Burton (Tjeuw, 1991), Anne Mitchell (Macfarlane, 1964), Bronwyn Cooper (Ross-Jones, 1980) and Catherine Twyman (Gorfin, 1990).



The Class of 2024 enjoying their lunch.

Sculpture by the Sea

Old Girls joined FAbbs (Former Abbotsleigh Staff) for a fabulous tour of Sculpture by the Sea on 30 October. We were lucky to meet Lucy Barker (1992) and talk to her about her exhibit *Glittering Prize*. Her work is a twist on an iconic Australian material and encourages us to think about ageing and self-discovery. Lucy likes to use familiar objects to connect with her audience and the 1950 Glomesh Bag, originally produced in Bondi, was an ideal and glamorous object to inspire her work. We congratulate Lucy; this is 11th time she has exhibited on the wonderful walk between Tamarama and Bondi beach. We are very grateful for the invitation from FAbbs to join their tour and delicious seafood picnic, and look forward to catching up with some more of our former teachers at another event.

Lucy's website is <http://lucybarker.com.au> A video about her work has been made by Capral, the aluminium company that sponsored Lucy to create this work. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EHxP12SJQg>



FAbbs and Old Girls at Sculpture by the Sea, 2024. From left: Meg Matthews (Giblin, 1960), Jill Sherlock (Paterson, 1960), Sarah Franks (1991), Linda Buggy, Elspeth Richards.



Glittering Prize: 'The gift of growing older is self-discovery and the peace it brings,' says Lucy Barker.



Lucy with her work *Glittering Prize*, which she constructed out of powder-coated aluminum and based on the iconic Glomesh Bag.

Old Girls vs Current Girls Debate

Held on the eve of the royal visit to Australia by King Charles and Queen Camilla, the 2024 Old Girls vs Current Girls Debate saw the Old Girls debate in the affirmative: 'That royalty is no longer appropriate in today's world'. It was particularly special to see the first of the previous Current Girl participants graduate into the Old Girls team! Charlotte Allan (2023) adjudicated in 2022 and debated in 2024, and Zarah Fardin (2023) debated for the Current Girls in 2022, adjudicating in 2024. Zarah was joined by Antonia Mallia (2016) an 'Old Girl' ring-in in Annie Zhang, who is a student from the Class of 2025. She debated against her Archdale Senior A teammates, who recently won the SDA competition. The Old Girls claimed victory this year (unlike the previous two contests!). Many thanks to all the Year 11 students who were spirited competitors and professional chairs and adjudicators.

Special thanks to Head Debating Coach Niki Nojournian (2017) and Debating and Public Speaking Coordinator Melissa Dooley for their support and enthusiasm. We can't wait till next year's debate, which once again will be open to the whole School community.



Adjudicator Zarah Fardin (2023); debaters Charlotte Allan (2023), Antonia Mallia (2016), Annie Zhang, Saskia Beletich, Anika Niles, Olivia Zhou; adjudicator Beatrice Chung and chair Helena Grice.



Current Girls team, Saskia Beletich (2nd), Annika Niles (1st) and Olivia Zhou (3rd), all from Year 11.

Scenic golf and lazy lunch at Long Reef Golf Club

The dramatic backdrop of the Pacific Ocean makes this one of Sydney's prettiest courses. If the golf is bad you can always be on the lookout for a passing whale or dolphin. Long Reef is able to accommodate a 'shotgun start' so that everyone finishes playing at the same time and can assemble at the club house together for lunch. The weather wasn't stunning for the 2024 Golf Day on 15 November but overcast conditions and drizzle was not to stop our stoic golfers. Forty keen Old Girls and a few mothers of Old Girls and staff enjoyed a fun day of golfing and lunch. It was great to see Old Girls from as far back as 1964 through to a team of our most recent 2023 leavers. The weather held off (mostly); conditions weren't easy but a few players managed to tame the course. The rest of us enjoyed a good chat and some spectacular scenery!

Congratulations to Kerry Skellern (Howell, 1982) who won the AOGU Salver for best gross score and Carolyn Holmes (Butler, 1981) who won the AOGU President's Trophy for best nett score.

Thanks to all the Old Girls, mothers of Old Girls and ex-teachers who make this day so much fun. Many thanks to Libby Myles (Gilder, 1981) for organising the day. Please come along next year and don't worry if you don't have a team of four because we can organise a team for you. We welcome all Old Girls, current and past parents and teachers to join us on Friday 5 December 2025.



Tina Armati (Travers, 1964) and Annabel Baxter (Marr, 1965) presented the salver to Kerry Skellern (Howell, 1983), which each of their respective mothers (who were sisters-in-law) donated in 1966.



AOGU Honorary President Sarah Franks (1991), Carolyn Holmes (Butler, 1981) and Golf Day organiser Libby Myles (Gilder, 1981).



Left to right: Zahra Hui (2023), Raina Han (2023) and Trinity Teh (2023).



Kerry Thomson (1985), Susie Wales (Seaborne, 1981), Louise Birt (Atwill, 1981) and Carolyn Holmes (Butler, 1981).

Abbotsleigh's 140th Birthday Save the dates

As part of the upcoming celebrations for Abbotsleigh's 140th Birthday, please put the following dates in your diary:

Saturday 29 March: Autumn School Fair

Sunday 27 July: Back to School Day

The Archibald Wynne and Sulman tour at the AGNSW

The Archibald Wynne and Sulman tour at the Art Gallery of NSW was popular again with a capacity attendance of 63 Old Girls (ranging from 1964 to 2021) and their guests in June. Two groups were led through the exhibition by experienced guides, offering a relaxed and private tour of the artworks before general public admission. It was a highlight to view Abbotsleigh Old Girl Emily Galicek's (2012) work *Encaustic and majolica (orange)*, a finalist in this year's Sulman Prize. We also saw portraits of inspiring women such as Professor Marcia Langton AO, Chanel Contos and Courtnee Vine. After the exhibition, Old Girls and guests gathered at the Gallery Cafe for coffee and a good chat at long communal tables.



Looking at Eliza Bertwistle's *Chanel Contos (smiling feminist)*.



Congratulations to Abbotsleigh Old Girl Emily Galicek (2012), who was a finalist in this year's Sulman Prize for her piece *Encaustic and majolica (orange)*.



Archibald Prize 2024 ANZ People's Choice award winner, Angus McDonald's *Professor Marcia Langton AO*, and the Archibald-winning portrait of Tim Winton by Laura Jones.



Beatlemania, not quite Biology!

Back in 1964, Jenny Wardell (1964) showed true Abbotsleigh grit and perseverance in organising an (at first clandestine) excursion to The Beatles concert in Sydney



I was desperate to see The Beatles, but how? As a boarder it didn't seem likely until I saw an advertisement on the weekend *Sun Herald* for block bookings of 20 tickets or more. I had to make a plan to access a phone come Monday morning.

So, I spun a tale of a death in the family (not true) and that I had to phone my parents. Of course, it was the stadium at Rushcutters Bay, I was phoning, which I did between classes throughout the morning. No one questioned me. I was just lucky!

The venue was a dusty old boxing stadium, very rustic, and was used as Sydney had no large auditoriums. The Opera House wasn't completed until the 1970s. Johnny Ray and Frank Sinatra sang there.

Each time I phoned, I booked 20 tickets in my name and then rushed to each classroom between lessons calling out: 'Does anyone want to see the Beatles?' Hands shot up; few girls said no.

I took names and replied: 'I must have your money by tomorrow.' Tickets were £3.30 each, from what I recall, and I did have a waitlist – just in case. Fingers crossed all would go to plan, and it did!

I booked nearly 100 tickets. I had to collect the money before I collected the tickets on the Tuesday. No worries, the money flowed in. No one refused, with parents reassured we were in a group booking with friends – so all safe?

Now came the next problem. I needed a cheque and still hadn't told Betty Archdale, our wonderful headmistress. So, I made an appointment for 4 pm with her secretary Mrs Baume, who thought the concert a grand idea and wished me well.

With fingers crossed, I entered Miss Archdale's office. I felt hopeful. I said: 'I had a confession to make...' And told her what I had done.

Archie's immediate reply: 'Thank Heavens someone made a good decision as I thought you would all go in

drips and drabs and make fools of yourselves. Now you will be all together.'

The next problem was a cheque. Archie couldn't give me a school cheque as she had an ongoing thing with Miss Knox, the PLC Pymble headmistress who had banned her pupils from any form of 'Beatlemania'. This had become a news item in the evening papers, *The Mirror* and *The Sun*.

Miss Archdale said she would discuss this with Mrs Baume, who would provide the cheque for the £300 I had collected. Archie made one of her jokes: 'Maybe the School could try this for future excursions.'

My reply: 'The Beatles aren't quite Biology!'

Archie laughed and agreed.

The money arrived promptly, so on Tuesday more than £300 in cash was exchanged for a personal cheque from Mrs Baume. Then with two friends and in school uniform (very stylish!), we set off to the stadium via train and bus (having received permission to leave school early) Rushcutters Bay, new territory for us all.

On Wednesday, I distributed the tickets but I had booked two extra ones so I visited Miss Archdale to ask if she and her brother Alexander might like to join us? I will remember her reply after thanking me. 'I wouldn't be seen dead with you all but, yes, we will be attending a Beatles concert, and I am pleased you will be there as a group and delighted someone did what you have done. Have fun, and how will you all travel to the stadium?'

Fortunately, parents and friends helped out; mine did with a car full. It was a 6 pm concert and the support act was Johnny Devlin! Our tickets were close to the revolving stage – which got stuck in front of us. How lucky we were! I doubt we heard much of the Beatles singing: screaming deafened us all. I also took some very grainy photos of the Fab Four, a great memory to treasure.

I still have the program. It is a much-remembered night, and I was deaf as a post afterwards.



Early love of history blooms later in life

Who would have thought that the love of history encouraged and nurtured by the young Ancient History teacher, Miss Faulkingham (aka Mrs Marg Selby), back in 1977/1978 would give rise to a newly hatched business in the Southern Highlands of NSW?

Old Girl and long-time Southern Highlands resident, Eloise Ross-Jones (1978), has recently launched Bowral Historical Walking Tours during the heady Highlands springtime.

‘This new venture is the convergence of a number of long-held passions of mine: not just history, but the love of walking and exploring, architecture and gardens, meeting other curious people and, dare I admit, a medicinal dose of theatrics to bring it all together in a bowl!’ Eloise said.

She offers the 90-minute guided tours every weekend in Bowral and on weekdays on demand for groups of four or more (especially appealing to golfing groups). She looks forward to meeting other Abbotsleigh Old Girls through her walking tour. For more information, please email eloisewalking@gmail.com



A path to justice

In July 2024, Jane Paingakulam (1989) was appointed as a judge of the NSW Industrial Court and as Deputy President of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. Justice Paingakulam followed an unconventional path to the bench. After her Arts Law degree at University of Sydney and 1996 solicitor admission, she had a distinguished 14-year career in the Australian Public Service in a variety of roles across employment advocacy, corporate regulation and whistleblowing, for which she was awarded an Australia Day Medal for Public Service. She was called to the Bar in 2009 where she had a predominantly criminal practice, appearing both for the Crown and the Defence, usually for Legal Aid clients. Jane saw the worst of humanity in the criminal jurisdiction, however she ‘found it very satisfying to provide good legal representation to people who could not afford it for themselves. Because people’s liberty is on the line, there is a lot at stake.’

Jane was a boarder from regional NSW and has fond memories of swapping classes with her twin sister Lisa to see if the teachers would notice! She attributes Robyn Claydon’s modelling of the Christian life as enormously inspirational, saying ‘I remember her 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.’

We congratulate Justice Paingakulam on her appointment, and are grateful for her ongoing public service.



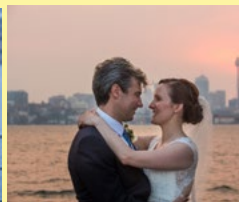
New arrivals and birthday honours



Vanessa Brownhill (Hegarty, 2009) and her husband Jock Brownhill welcomed their second son Angus Brownhill on 1 May 2024. Mum, dad and big brother Henry are thrilled with the new addition to the family.



Hannah Janzen (Robinson, 2004) and her husband David are delighted to share the news of their daughter Rebekah Ruby Hannah Janzen, born in March 2024. She is a much loved and cherished new sibling to her big brother, Oliver.



Alix Collantes Celador (Dumitrescu, 2002) and Enrique Collantes Celador married on Sydney Harbour in 2020 and were lucky enough to have Old Girls Amy Hannelly (Greenwood, 2002), and Alix's sisters Kristen Dumitrescu (2005) and Lucy (2008) Dumitrescu as their bridesmaids. Alix and Enrique have since welcomed two sons – Henry in 2021 and David in 2024. Happy times!

2024 King's Birthday Honours List

Congratulations to:

Dr Robin Beryl Fitzsimons AM (1965), who has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) 'for significant service to tertiary education, to neurology and to medical research'.

Professor Helen Reddel AM (Graham, 1970), who has been appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) 'for significant service to respiratory medicine and to medical research'.

Dr Penny Browne OAM (1974), who has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) 'for service to medicine as a general practitioner'.

The ‘gals’ of 1954 share a 70th Anniversary Lunch

‘Our lunch is in Ev’s old office! And that half was the teachers’ staff room!’ Fifteen of us 1954 leavers exclaimed as we assembled for a long-awaited celebratory get-together. ‘Ev’ was our much-revered headmistress, Miss G. Gordon Everett. A visit to her office was NOT recommended at the time.

We should not have been surprised at the architectural changes in the School. Most of us had just toured it (who would think that we would ever have been permitted to travel in golf buggies), marvelling at the development since our post-World War II days... the superb facilities for science, art, sports and – really? – a café. We watched the six tennis courts of our Tildesley Shield triumphs disappearing beneath a huge new development.

During a delicious lunch the most meaningful part of our day was the laughter and the sharing. We raised our glasses to classmates unable to join us or, sadly, no longer with us. Seventy and more years disappeared as we reconnected, sharing reminiscences – the boarders seemed to have the most daring stories – with the noise level escalating markedly. A wonderful opportunity to celebrate the ‘gals’ of 1954. The AOGU was privileged to provide the luncheon for the 70th reunion.

Margaret (Margie) North (Gill)



1959 Leavers 65 Year Reunion

On Friday 18 October an intimate but animated group of 14 1959 Leavers came together for their 65 Year Reunion lunch at the school. It may have been a small group of Old Girls, but what they lacked in numbers, they certainly made up for in chatter, laughs, catch-ups and walks down memory lane. Everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. Abbotsleigh was delighted to be able to host this extremely special event with the wonderful assistance of Diana Dickson (Cay). Many 1959 leavers sent apologies but passed on their best wishes to everyone in their cohort.

1964 Leavers 60 Year Reunion

For our 50th reunion a committee of eight was formed to organise it. None of us can remember how this happened but we jelled so well that we have continued to meet at least twice a year for the past 10 years. So, when the 60th reunion came around, we set to work again. We would like to acknowledge the wonderful help we had from Heidi Grout, the Old Girls Relationship Manager, and Sarah Franks, Honorary President of the AOGU.

After many emails and much planning, on Saturday 19 October 55 excited ladies returned to Abbotsleigh for their 60th reunion. We had left school at the end of 1964 with the belief, instilled in us by our wonderful headmistress, Betty Archdale, that the world was our oyster and we could achieve amazing things. Many of us did, but I believe enduring friendships come close to the top of the list!

As we gathered, memories were rekindled and the years slipped away. A relaxed, very happy time was had by all.

For most of us the day began with a tour of the school, concentrating on the numerous grand new buildings – for those who hadn't returned in years it was almost overpowering!

We had a delicious lunch in the School dining room, chatting and reminiscing. Led by our MCs Meredith Burgmann and Susie Lyle (Craig), many girls got up to tell stories of their favourite teachers. The end of the afternoon came around far too quickly.

On Sunday many of us reconvened at the Pymble Pub for more chat and a relaxed lunch. Several joined us for the first time. It was special seeing them and cementing the previous days' catch ups. Thanks to Penny Stratton for organising this day. We would like to acknowledge the wonderful help we had from Old Girls Relationship Manager, Heidi Grout, and we thank the AOGU for subsidising the lunch.

By the 1964 Leavers 60 Year Reunion Committee: Judith Matheson (Baldry), Ann Austin (Jones), Meredith Burgmann, Prue Carpenter (Woodham), Sandie Henry (Ross), Susie Lyle (Craig), Anne Mitchell (Macfarlane) and Penny Stratton.



1969 Leavers 55 Year Reunion

Several 1969 leavers came together on the weekend of 13 and 14 September to reminisce on 55 years since finishing at Abbotsleigh. We held a boarders' reunion on the Friday night at the Orchard Hotel in Chatswood, with 10 Old Boarders attending. Saturday saw around 27 of us back at Abbotsleigh for a tour of the School (which astounded many of us), drinks, canapes and lunch. The smaller numbers at each event meant everyone could catch up with each other and reminisce, brag about children and grandchildren and generally talk about our lives since leaving Abbotsleigh. It was wonderful to see several Old Girls who haven't been able to attend past reunions. We look forward to our 60th reunion in 2029 and would like to thank the Old Girls Office and dining room staff for all their hard work.

Meriel Barlow (Beale)



Class of 1974 50 Year Reunion

We started with a school tour in the morning of 19 October with about 10 of us checking out the incredible changes to the School in the past 10 years: new gym, new hockey field and the art and science building.

Following that we had afternoon drinks at Manly Skiff Club, with about 55 girls. A great venue and stand-up drinks gave everyone the opportunity to mingle and chat.

Our head girl Sarah Gardner made a speech and we all couldn't believe it had been 50 years since we left school. We all clicked back into our school chat seamlessly!

Annabelle Chapman (Davey)



1984 Leavers 40 Year Reunion

We held our 1984 Leavers 40-year reunion at the Garden Pavilion at the Oaks in early September. It was way too much fun, with more than 80 old girls attending.

The noise level rose as you would expect with storytelling, raucous laughter and ‘Do you remember whens...?’ It was a night full of memories and reconnections. We were all so happy to see one another again. For some, it was the first reunion they’d attended. It’s always fascinating to hear what everyone has been up to.

Lovely messages were sent from people unable to attend, and a big shout-out to those who made such an effort to travel internationally, interstate and from country NSW.

Very sadly, we named each of the girls who were no longer with us. We raised a glass to them and acknowledged their absence, which was more keenly felt when we were together.

It was hard to believe that 40 years had passed since we left Abbotsleigh, but we all agreed that none of us had really changed or aged and that we still looked and felt fabulous. Despite the time that has passed and the experiences we have all had, we are essentially the same old girls from our old schooldays. There is something very special about that.

We were thankful for Suzie’s amazing balloons and Heidi’s nametags (weirdly, not as necessary as you’d have thought) and incredibly grateful to everyone who made it such a great night.

We believe our year group is the only one that has had a reunion every five years since leaving school. So, we are well known for staying in touch and celebrating our school years, life and friendships. We are a fab year group.

Caroline Rigby (Miller)



1989 Leavers 35 Year Reunion

The class of '89 had a fantastic 35th reunion at Four Hundred Bar & Kitchen in North Sydney. More than 70 women gathered on 7 September for an afternoon of great food and, more importantly, wonderful chats. A number of those were there for the first time or were not necessarily part of the Year 12 cohort but had been at Abbotsleigh at earlier stages of their schooling. There were so many stories shared and renewed connections made. Quite a few of us were still gathered late into the evening and many of us are already looking forward to 2029!





1994 Leavers 30 Year Reunion

The class of 1994 held their 30-year reunion at the Centennial Hotel on 19 October for an afternoon of laughter and reconnecting. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces that instantly transported me back to our school days. Conversations (and the champagne) flowed as we shared stories of families, careers and adventures intertwined with memories of our younger years. There was a genuine sense of support and pride in seeing how far we have all come and an ease that comes from the bonds we form in childhood.

Thank you to all the ladies who travelled from overseas, interstate and the country. The extra effort to attend really was appreciated and I hope to see many of your faces before our next reunion.

Kirsty Gunning (Broad)



1999 Leavers 25 Year Reunion

Our reunion was held in November at the Bridge Hotel in the Rocks. It was a fantastic event because it involved:

Reconnecting: A wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends and classmates, rekindle friendships and reminisce about shared memories.

Great atmosphere: The ambience was warm and welcoming, making everyone feel comfortable and excited to be there.

Good food and drinks: The catering was excellent, which added to the enjoyment of the evening.

Inclusivity: Everyone was made to feel welcome, regardless of their current life situation or past experiences.

Memorable moments: The reunion created new memories that will be cherished for years to come, reinforcing the bonds formed during school years.

Belinda Thomas



2004 Leavers 20 Year Reunion

On 2 November, the 2004 Leavers met at the Tilbury Hotel in Woolloomooloo to celebrate our 20-year reunion. The truth lies in the Abbotsleigh motto: Time really does fly faster than a weaver's shuttle. An incredibly special night. Thank you to those who were able to be there and for apologies sent. Old Girls travelled from all over Sydney, NSW, interstate and from overseas. In the company of 80, the night was far too short and as we got closer to midnight, panic started to set in as we were running out of time. Thus, it has unanimously been decided we just need to do it more often.

It was so wonderful to see so many familiar faces – no one looked a day over our graduation day. The highlights and favourite moments were being able to share, listen, encourage and celebrate the variety of paths, adventures, challenges and triumphs everyone has been on. The night concluded with all our hearts and cups full and reflecting on the special time we had at school together. Those who were not able to be present were missed and we hope to see everyone again in a few years' time.

Gria Barlow





2009 Leavers 15 Year Reunion

On 9 November, Abbotsleigh 2009 Leavers met at the Tilbury in Woolloomooloo to celebrate their 15-year reunion. It had been five long years between catchups (not to mention a global pandemic) and in that time there were marriages, pregnancies, births, moves across the world, career changes, hair changes! We had continued to move forward and yet it felt as though no time had passed. We laughed about our school antics, reminisced fondly about House Choir, drama productions, chapel hymns (Lord of the Dance!), Harry Potter Day and, of course, our many beloved teachers (Upasiri, Kelleher, Sarmiento).

We discussed with admiration the women among us who had become boss ladies, business owners, mothers. There were those sporting bumps, those who had become teachers, those who had become doctors, farmers, barristers, MBA students, even the new SAO at Narromine High. Who knows what will happen in the next five years (hopefully I can get my maths sorted)?

Thank you to those who travelled interstate and from the country to make the big day – we really are a special year group. Until next time: 2029!

Alex Davis



2014 Leavers 10 Year Reunion

The 2014 10-year school reunion at the Tap House in Darlinghurst, was a really lovely evening. About 55 Old Girls attended, including some who made the journey from interstate. Before heading to the pub, a few of us went on a school tour and were amazed at how much it has changed in the past decade.

A highlight was welcoming our old Year 12 coordinator, Sheri Upasiri, who flew down from the Gold Coast just to join us. It was a lot of fun catching up on where life has taken us since schooldays.

Georgie Mac Smith



2019 Leavers 5 Year Reunion

Five years on from graduation it really is incredible to reconnect and see the range of life experiences and pathways people are on. We, as the class of 2019, are still at the beginning of exploring all the world has to offer, yet life looks so different to how it did five years ago. The growth that happens within those five years can really be exponential! I am so excited to see the places that our year will go, deepening their passions, their skills, their dreams, their connections. Class of 2019, you really are special.

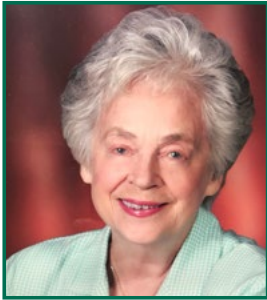
Caitlin Oschadleus



2023 Leavers 1 Year Reunion

A group of 2023 Leavers meet at the Greengate, Killara on Saturday 14 December for a casual and relaxed one year reunion on a beautifully warm summer's evening. It was a lovely gathering that provided an opportunity for everyone to catch up on what they had been up to since leaving the Abbotsleigh school gates over a year before. Special thanks to Phoebe Luu, the 2023 head prefect, who kindly assisted the AOGU and the Old Girls Office in putting on this event.





Eleanor Rosemary Moore (Steel, 1947)

Died 23 November 2024

Mum was a boarder during her high school years at Abbotsleigh and graduated in 1947. Miss Everett was headmistress and Kathleen McCredie was a prefect, two years mum's senior. These were the years when day girls were not permitted to fraternise with boarders, with detention or even expulsion deemed appropriate punishment. Perhaps this is where the term 'day bugs' originated, by their potential for infecting the closed boarder community. Mum was an A student with English and History being her favourite subjects. Sport was also one of her strengths. She captained the hockey team and played in the cricket and baseball teams. In her latter years, lawn bowling gave her great pleasure with many club trophies won. Mum's delightful nature endeared her to others; she became head boarder prefect and vice captain of the School in 1947.

An Arts degree was commenced at Sydney University; however, secretarial college became her preferred path and she worked for many companies during her working life, retiring at the tender age of 68.

She wed James Moore in 1953, enjoying their 50-year marriage. Her three daughters, Sandra, Joanne and Bettina, attended Abbotsleigh, graduating in 1972, 1973 and 1975.

In 2017, the class of 1947 celebrated their 70th reunion at the School. I attended with mum and enjoyed seeing this group of women relaxing and relating schoolday memories with each other. There was much laughter shared. Stories included what a wonderful view it was atop the water tower, keeping warm under rugs, listening to the races on the wireless, Miss Everett on stage giving students walking lessons, instructing 'heels first girls'. Other memories included the western side of the Oval being used for suntanning (aided by rubbing in butter from lunch sandwiches), detentions being given for climbing over the Lucinda Ave fence if running late for School, and the odd chalkboard duster being thrown at students by a teacher exclaiming 'bloody nincompoops' as she threw it.

Mum had an amazing conversion experience at a Billy Graham crusade in 1959, which enriched her life enormously as God's love gave sound meaning and purpose to her life. Lovingly raising her family, church commitments, volunteering for 20 years at Meals on Wheels, knitting hundreds of scarves for the homeless were the rich fruit of her relationship with her saviour Jesus.

When mum passed away on 23 November last year, just shy of her 93rd birthday, her loving family farewelled a beautiful mother of three daughters, eight grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren into God's eternal care.

By Eleanor's daughter, Bettina



Jill Bruxner (Doyle, 1953)

Died 15 October 2024

Jill died peacefully after a period of gradually declining health.

After leaving school she had a full, adventurous and gregarious life raising two fortunate sons with her kindred spirit husband Michael (who survives her).

Jill worked in publishing (she was the editor of the Jacaranda Atlas). She conquered the bush and travelled the exotic world in variable levels of comfort, spying on birds everywhere. She created gorgeous landscapes at home and shared her vast and diverse knowledge of her rich interest in genealogy and many other things under the sun, especially bromeliads.

In her last years she provided loving care for Michael, who struggles with health issues that severely impact his quality of life.

By Jill's son, George



Elizabeth Ann Bowen (Harding, 1953)

Died 11 November 2024

Elizabeth Harding, the eldest child and only daughter of Beryl and Norman Harding, was born in Chatswood in 1935. Her brother Bill was born two years later.

Liz grew up in Kylie Avenue, Killara, and was a student at Abbotsleigh from 1945 to 1953. Liz's only daughter, Christine also went to Abbotsleigh (1980).

After marrying, Liz lived in St Ives and then Gordon. Many family holidays were enjoyed at Fingal Bay, Port Stephens, and Liz eventually moved there permanently.

She had three children: Andrew, Christine, and Peter; four grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Liz died on Remembrance Day 2024, aged 89.

By Elizabeth's daughter, Christine Bowen



Emily Huang (2006)

13 June 1988 to 24 August 2024

Emily joined Abbotsleigh in 1997. She immersed herself in a variety of activities and sports, particularly enjoying tee-ball, hockey, netball and cross country. She was a prefect and was elected Franklin House Captain in Year 12, receiving a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Following schooling, Emily attained a Bachelor of Business, majoring in Marketing and Human Resources at UTS. She later joined Secure Parking as Corporate Marketing Coordinator before moving to Elsevier, where she progressed through various roles, ultimately serving as Education Marketing Manager. She recently celebrated her 10-year anniversary with the company.

Emily was a loving daughter to Aylwin and Penny, and sister to Jessica, Nicholas and Melissa. She was happily engaged to her partner Darren and a devoted mother to their two-year-old son, Archie. During her spare time, she enjoyed spending time with family, baking for Archie and eating out with friends.

Emily's life was tragically cut short, suffering a brain aneurysm at the age of 36.

Emily left a lasting impression on many and we will forever miss her bubbly personality and her kind, selfless and thoughtful nature.



Thank you to our donors of 2024

Warm thanks to all who supported the Foundation's work in 2024. Thank you also to those who have chosen to remember Abbotsleigh in their wills and to those who gave but have asked to remain anonymous.

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