



140 years

DAMASCUS COLLEGE
1881 - 2021

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When I started in my role at Damascus College, I assumed responsibility for the Mount Clear Campus of the College and Sr Marie Davey was responsible for the Victoria St Campus. At that time, Fr Adrian McNerney was Governor of the College with Sr Veronica Lawson. In those three people – Marie, Adrian and Veronica – I came to an understanding and appreciation of the gifts of the charisms that underpin this College community, the charisms of Mercy and parish life and the commitment to Catholic Christian ideals.

For 140 years, families have sought a Catholic education grounded in the faith foundations of the Sisters of Mercy and the parishes of the Diocese of Ballarat that complement and build on their family values. The central tenet of Catholic education is that Damascus College is a place of holistic education of the human person with Jesus Christ as the foundation. Hopefully, the traits that young people across 140 years have experienced and carry forth from this Damascus educational community and its founding schools are its faith and cultural identity, its mission of education as a work of love, and its service to society. These are qualities that we believe have been instilled first by the families of our young people and supported by this evolving school community.

Damascus College, formed in 1995, saw the amalgamation of three Catholic secondary education providers here in Ballarat. The mercy ministry of education in Ballarat commenced in collaboration with the parishes through Mercy Sisters teaching at St Alipius primary school shortly after they arrived in Ballarat in 1881. Sacred Heart College began in 1894 and continued Catholic education in the spirit of Catherine McAuley, which began in 1881 and continues today at Damascus College. Bishop James O'Collins established the diocesan-owned school, St Paul's Technical College, in 1948 and invited the Christian Brothers to run the college. Sacred Heart then spawned St Martin's in the Pines, an innovative and effective senior boarding school for girls from 1967. Our Catholic educational story is one of evolution and response.

One hallmark of this educational community has been a willingness to adapt and change to meet the needs of the times. This continues today, with the Sisters of Mercy recognising the limitations on their ability to govern in the future and beginning a process to establish a new governance model for the entities they have hitherto been

responsible for. The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea have petitioned Rome for a new ministerial Public Juridic Person titled Mercy Ministry Companions. In light of changing governance and the establishment of the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL), the current Board of Damascus College was invited to discern where they felt the best future leadership lay for the College. Following a period of prayerful discernment, the Board recommended that Damascus College transition to DOBCEL from the 1 January 2022. While the Sisters of Mercy still own the college's site, the company will transition to the governance structure established by the Bishop of Ballarat, Paul Bird. Such evolution is further evidence of this college community recognising the need for change and facilitating change in the best interests of the college and the families it serves.

Damascus College today builds on our 140 years of history. Our students, staff and families are living through one of the most significant disruptions to the global society of the past half a century, the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud of how this community has responded to the move to remote learning and lockdown and are grateful for the spirit of collaboration that exists. Damascus College is a valued secondary education provider within the Ballarat educational context, and we see unprecedented demand for enrolment. Our future strategies support our young people to be their best, building on our story and Catholic Christian values.

Throughout this publication, you will see evidence of our historical journey and current achievements; I hope it inspires the next 140-year journey. It has been a privilege to learn from Marie and Veronica, and now Sr Berenice Kerr, women who have epitomised the life and work of Catherine McAuley. Equally, Adrian and Fr Kevin Maloney have ministered with incredible generosity to this community in the spirit of their diocesan forebears – women and men who have used their considerable intellects to collaborate to provide educational, religious and social services to the people of the greater Ballarat region. I am proud to have had a small role during those 140 years. The greatest achievement, of course, in that 140-year journey rests with the students, staff and families who constitute the daily life of this school community. This is your story, your school; I hope you enjoy this opportunity to reflect on our shared journey!

Matthew Byrne, College Principal 2011 – 2022

Not long before the foundation of Sacred Heart College (SHC), the Diocese of Ballarat was established on 30 March 1874, from the Diocese of Melbourne, which became its archdiocese.

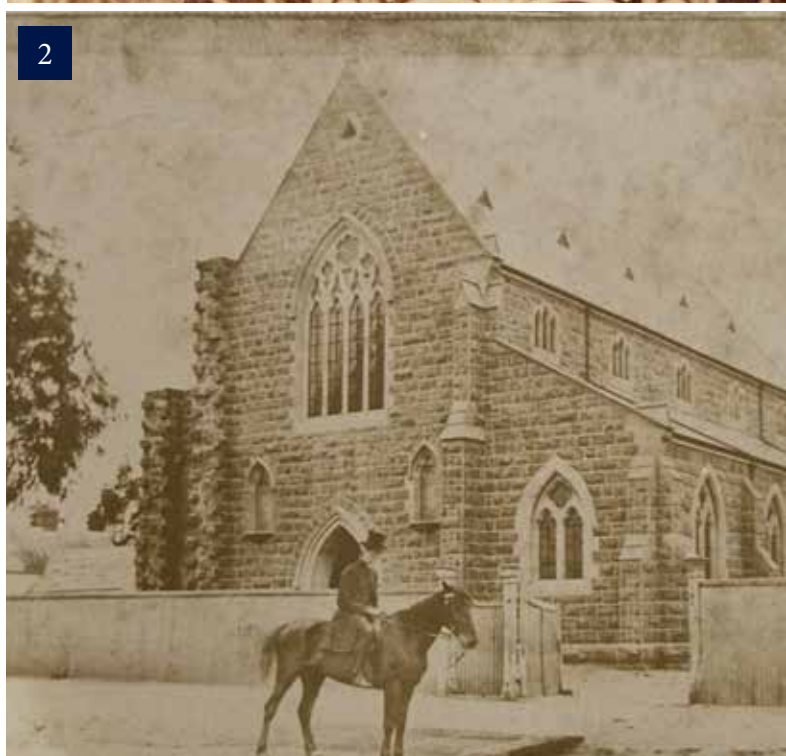
Diocesan support for Damascus College (Damascus) can be traced back to its very beginning. Appointed to Ballarat in 1866, Dr James Moore, vicar-general, business manager and the "Guardian Angel" of the Diocese, claimed he found too few churches for the growing population and listed his priorities as churches, schools, and societies. He soon paid the debt on St Patrick's and built the bluestone Church of St Alipius in Ballarat East. In 1881 he was reported in the local newspaper as instructing the Ballarat East congregation to welcome the five Sisters of Mercy and show them generous and hearty support. From 1875-84 the Diocese had spent £67,291 on education alone and by 1904 had 11 boarding schools, 13 high schools for both girls and boys, and 60 primary schools in 35 parishes.

The Diocese continued to invest in developing Catholic education for the Ballarat community. In the 1940s, the Bishop of Ballarat, James O'Collins, felt that the needs of the times called out for a learning institution that would give young Catholic men some control over their lives. He entrusted the Christian Brothers to set up St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's). In 1949, media headlines proclaimed that there was "No Better Technical College in Australia." Bishop O'Collins had instructed Br Cooke to "alter the buildings as required, get only the best, and when things are finished, don't come back for more."

Father Adrian McNerney began his long relationship with Damascus when he was appointed as the school Chaplain to St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's). This role allowed him to see the importance of Catholic education, that it is "not only about academics, but also the emotional, religious, spiritual, and physical self." In the early 1990s, Fr McNerney joined the investigatory board that recommended the amalgamation of SHC and St Paul's to form a Catholic co-educational secondary school for Ballarat. He was the Diocesan co-governor for Damascus with a Sister of Mercy until his retirement. He was a familiar figure at the Campus for meetings, celebrations, and Mass. Fr McNerney particularly enjoyed the whole school Masses performed at the opening and closing of the school year and on Damascus Day. His gifts to the college over his long connection included his time, financial support and



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contributions of significant artwork. Within the chapel is an icon of Our Lady of Mercy by renowned artist Leopoldine Mimovich, gifted by Fr McNerney and Veronica Lawson RSM while they were College co-governors. It is a symbolic reminder of the collaboration between the Sisters of Mercy and the priests of the Diocese and their support of the young people of Damascus.

The ongoing support of the Diocese of Ballarat was evidenced when Peter Connors, Bishop Emeritus, invested in the growth and refurbishment of the Mount Clear Campus in 2013 and 2014. When the Victoria Street site was sold, the funds were made available to the College to construct a dedicated learning space for Years 9 and 10 and also enabled the construction and furnishing of the Our Lady of Mercy Chapel. This chapel is where the Mercy and Diocesan contributions to Damascus come together harmoniously. It provides a space for liturgy and for students, staff, and the community to reflect and bask in God's creation on Campus within the natural bushland setting of the College.

The College looks forward to ongoing Diocesan support in various ways, from leading the Damascus students, staff, and wider community in prayer at College Masses, to the blessing of College badges through to buildings, and participation at College events.

Pictured:

1. Bishop James Moore Circa 1900
2. St Alipius Parish Church C1880
3. Fr Adrian McNerney C1970
4. Fr Justin Driscoll, Damascus Day Mass 2006
5. Former Damascus College Co-Governor Fr Kevin Maloney, Damascus Day Mass 2018



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As a young girl in Ireland, Catherine McAuley was acutely conscious of the hardship and suffering that surrounded her in Dublin. Upon receiving a large inheritance, Catherine opened a House of Mercy in Baggot Street where she, with other like-minded women, could shelter homeless women, reach out to the sick and dying and provide an education to poor, young girls. As time went on, the group became a religious congregation and the Sisters of Mercy soon spread throughout the world, thanks to the vision of Catherine, a woman who followed the voice of Christ in relieving the suffering and injustices of those around her. Mother Agnes Graham, Sister Philomene Graham, Sister Xavier Flood, Sister Joseph Howard and Sister Bridget Cousens, a small group of Catherine's devoted Sisters, travelled from Ireland to Warrnambool, and eventually on to Ballarat, opening the Ballarat East Convent of Mercy in 1881, starting Sacred Heart College (SHC) and thereby laying the foundation for Damascus College (Damascus).

Today, the Mercy connection at Damascus can be seen in the Christ centred values, and commitment to providing an educational environment where young people flourish and can be their best. The charism of Mercy lived by the Sisters of Mercy is an ongoing expression of the charism Catherine McAuley lived, and one that is embraced at Damascus every day by students, staff, and the wider Damascus community.

In 2014 recognition was given to significant contributors after the completion of new and refurbished buildings across the Damascus campus with the naming of buildings in their honour. The Damascus Board used an extensive discernment process in selecting the appropriate name for buildings.

The original classroom building at Sacred Heart Senior College - St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) pays honour to the Sisters of Mercy foundress, and was named the Catherine McAuley wing. The Mercy connection is further shown at Damascus with the addition of some of her teachings prominently displayed on walls throughout the campus.

Sister Valda Ward was recognised for her significant contributions through the naming of the Performing Arts Auditorium in her honour. Valda was born in 1930 in



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Horsham, Victoria and was educated by the Mercy Sisters, first in Casterton then later SHC. In her school days, she loved ballet and drama and she passed on this love during her years as a Teacher and as a Principal. The Valda Ward Auditorium is testament to Valda's passion for the performing arts. Over the years Valda held many different positions, and was passionate about every post she held – whether it was running the Teacher's College at Patrician House, Congregation leader at Ballarat East, or as Teacher and Principal at St Martin's. Asked once by her dear friend Sr Veronica Lawson to reveal her favourite ministry, Valda didn't hesitate in replying "Anything I did for the Sisters".



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Sister Genevieve McDonald's contributions and love of science were appropriately acknowledged with the naming of the Genevieve McDonald Science Wing. After graduating with Honours in Science from Melbourne University, Sr Genevieve entered the Convent of Mercy, beginning a long career as an educator. She was at one time Principal of SHC and then the inaugural Principal of St Martin's in the Pines, where she remained for ten years. The St Martin's campus grounds supported life in abundance, and significant efforts were made to preserve as much of the original vegetation as possible. With the support of Sr Genevieve, students and staff planted trees indigenous to the area around the buildings.

The Damascus 140 Year history is rich with the Sisters of Mercy as educators, students, and supporters.

As the College moves forward, the transfer of Governance from Damascus College Limited to the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) took place at the start of 2022. The Mercy and Diocesan charisms that have underpinned the Damascus community will continue to be central to the faith and educational experience of the young people of the College.



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Pictured:

1. Portrait of Catherine McAuley*
2. Catherine McAuley Wing, Damascus College 2014
3. Valda Ward RSM
4. Genevieve McDonald RSM
5. Veronica Lawson RSM, Anne Forbes RSM, and Berenice Kerr RSM 2014

*Credit to Mercy International for images

To say that the beginning of Sacred Heart College (SHC) was a humble one is an understatement. As recorded in various publications and local papers, it was March 1881 when two of the Sisters began teaching music to a handful of local girls. The local families who could afford tuition were eager to enrol their daughters in this new Catholic school, where they could undertake respectable studies of music and sewing.

The beginning of SHC may have been a humble one, but its growth and change happened quickly. Upon taking possession of their new property later in that first year, the Sisters promptly embarked on a series of renovations and extensions. It seemed as though one project would finish, and the next was ready to begin.

Anne Forbes RSM in her book, *"They Came Uninvited - A Short History of Sacred Heart College, Ballarat East 1881-1994"* wrote "Children were going to feature prominently in the Sisters' apostolic endeavours, and it is interesting to read the sort of misdemeanours they commonly committed:

"...breaking windows, stoning cats, stealing apples, letting off fireworks in the streets, cutting their names on doors, breaking shrubs and plants, and otherwise rendering themselves generally obnoxious." Ballarat Courier, January 3 1881.

The punishment for such "crimes" in the recent past had been to send children to prison for a limited period or give them a good sound flogging so as to inflict the maximum of physical pain but cause no permanent injury. The Sisters would offer an alternative. They would endeavour to provide a school house with discipline to welcome and educate these children."





These were indeed dedicated and seemingly untiring women. The early days of establishing themselves in Ballarat, while simultaneously teaching both primary school and music lessons, as well as visitations to the poor and sick, must have left little time for rest. However, this dedication earned the respect of the community around them. This period of growth was also a period of great hardship, the convent losing at least five young sisters to tuberculosis in those early decades. Adding to their busy lives, the convent would also become home to several orphans over the years. Distressed relatives would appeal to the good Sisters to take in children they could not care for, sometimes as young as two years of age, and the kindly Sisters would welcome their minor charges with open arms.

Pictured:

1. Founding Mothers Dublin, Ireland*
2. SHC students in costume for musical performance Circa 1890s
3. SHC Victoria Street Ballarat 1886
4. SHC students on excursion to Gunn's Gully Circa 1880s
5. Ballarat, Victoria Circa 1880**
6. SHC students C1890s

*Credit to Mercy International for images

** Credit Museums Victoria Collections <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/766962>



From the very early days, music and performance have been the lifeblood of the College. The first students in 1881 were students of music, and as the pioneer sisters were all highly accomplished women themselves, music became prominent in the school's daily life. Although it is not well documented, 1884 is believed to be the year the first concert was given by Sacred Heart College (SHC) pupils, held in conjunction with their annual prize night. An array of talent was demonstrated - songs, instrumental pieces, readings, plays and language demonstrations, and people from all over Ballarat and indeed Victoria were welcomed.

The quality of instruction was such that many students began to show immense talent. Two young sisters, Eileen and Kathleen Meagan, who had been brought to the convent in the very early days by their distressed father upon the death of their mother, were taken in with open arms. After growing up in the convent, Eileen pursued her musical studies in England before returning to the college as Sr Mary Angela and taking on the direction of the SHC Music Academy. Kathleen amazed all who heard both her piano and violin and received many awards and scholarships. Sadly, ill-health prevented her from taking up all the opportunities offered to her, but even so, she was long remembered as one of Ballarat's finest musical talents. In 1925, at Kathleen's Requiem Mass SHC students performed hymns written by her.

Notable SHC student Gertrude Healy achieved international fame from a young age and was invited to study in Berlin and London. She was chief violin teacher at the Albert St Conservatorium and was one of Melbourne's most distinguished performers. Later, she returned to SHC to become a Sister of Mercy and inspire a new generation of musical young women as Sr Catherine of Sienna. In 1948 a College orchestra was formed, and under the talented eye of Sr Catherine of Sienna, the annual SHC Orchestral





concert became a much-anticipated event. The musical teaching at the College was at such a high level that many of the students were selected for the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Later, SHC student Lynette Kierce won the Melbourne Sun Aria, a prestigious Australian competition for emerging classical singers, and became Australia's only female orchestral leader when she founded the Ballarat Symphony Orchestra. The musical history of the College remains evident to this day, as Damascus College is renowned for its strength in the performing arts, and the annual production is a much-anticipated event.

Pictured:

1. Angela La Gruta as 'North Wind' concert Circa 1930
2. Sr Catherine of Sienna
3. SHC concert Gertrude Healy bottom right C1900
4. SHC strings C1920s
5. Lynette Kierce 1953 Sun Aria winner
6. SHC Orchestra – Cello section 1948



Although Sacred Heart College (SHC) opened its doors to students almost as soon as the Sisters of Mercy had arrived, it was in 1887 that the Application for Registration as a School was lodged and approved. These were busy times for the Sisters, but strong leadership would see the college flourish. These early Sisters had many responsibilities; their energy seemingly limitless.

By 1887 boarding had started on a small scale, and day pupils numbered 83 – all taught by the Sisters (lay teachers came later and were often past SHC students themselves), women so accomplished that girls were well prepared for any future that awaited them. This would have been challenging enough, but they also earned the town's respect through visiting the poor in their homes and the sick and dying in the hospitals.

These busy early years were achievable under the strong leadership of Mother Agnes Graham, the first superior and Principal. In those very early days, Mother Agnes was well supported by future leaders Mother Xavier Flood and Mother Bernard McKerrin. By 1887 Mother Agnes had left Ballarat for the congregation in Colac, and Mother Bernard was placed in charge of the college. With the untiring assistance of Mother Xavier, Mother Bernard is generally credited with laying the foundations for a college that was to become recognised as one of the leading educational establishments in the country. Mother Bernard was able to inspire the best from her students through a combination of firmness and kindness and was much beloved amongst her charges.

Mother Xavier Flood took control of the college in 1894, but her dedication was apparent even before this. Mother Xavier had worked tirelessly to gain approval for the school from the Education Board. She was a powerful force around the college, but the young boarders addressed her informally as 'Gran'. With a particular interest in music and a knack for discovering unique talent, Mother Xavier would seek out the best for her students, even sending her gifted charges to study overseas under great masters whenever she could arrange it. The early leadership of these amazing women in often trying and difficult circumstances ensured the college's outstanding reputation was known Australia wide.

Pictured:

1. Mother Bernard McKerrin
2. M. Xavier Flood (seated) and her sister Sr Theodule Flood, a Sister of Cluny
3. SHC students on excursion Circa 1910s



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SECTION OF ONE OF THE JUNIOR DORMITORIES

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The valuable education provided by the Sisters of Mercy at Sacred Heart College (SHC) and its ability to provide accommodation as a boarding school resulted in great success and the need to keep growing and expanding. In 1922 the second storey dormitory and dressing room were opened, allowing more female students from Ballarat and rural areas to enrol at SHC. To accommodate the growing curriculum available to students, three classrooms were also added, along with a dedicated library.

During this time of growth, with the curriculum expanding, sport as an educational tool was recognised by the Sisters. The SHC Magazine of 1925-26 reports that "A sound mind in a sound body, is a very old saying, but it was only recently that the school fully realised its responsibility in the matter, and a definite movement was made towards the systematic training of the body as a basis for and necessary complement of mental development".

The 1920s saw sports such as woman's basketball (netball), tennis and vigaro hotly contested in competition between local schools. The historic SHC Basketball team of 1922-23 was long remembered and celebrated for its brilliant play and unbroken run of success. It was through the development of the recreational grounds at SHC that this was possible. The field was established to support sport's inclusion in the growing list of subjects available to the SHC students.



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This growth spurt at SHC did present some challenges. Buildings not only required money; they also needed the land on which to expand. Sr Anne Forbes noted that the Sisters and students often undertook campaigns of intensive prayer (with the burying of miraculous medals) as the next building project was about to be undertaken, as it appeared that a homeowner often needed some divine intervention before they agreed to sell. However, the wider Ballarat community continued to support the Sisters and recognised SHC as one of the most important educational establishments in the Diocese.



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Pictured:

1. SHC Junior Dormitory Circa 1920s
2. SHC Senior Tennis Team C1920s
3. SHC recreation area 1926

The coming together of the right people at the right time transpired at Sacred Heart College (SHC) in 1928. It was this convergence of people that saw the sciences at SHC blossom. The students found that they could undertake various disciplines as they now had a teacher in science subjects. A dedicated classroom was established for the teaching and learning of science, with excursions to multiple locales designed to inspire and broaden the students' learning scope.

The first piece of the puzzle was the arrival of a new teacher, Mary Raphael Mitchell RSM, known to most as Sr Raphael. Sr Raphael had been a popular and talented student at SHC before gaining her teaching certificate and entering the Ballarat East Convent of Mercy. Sr Raphael would eventually become a renowned teacher of mathematics, botany, and geology while also undertaking the duties of sports mistress.

The next was the enrolment of a bright and studious young woman, Flora McDonald, who would later become Sr M. Genevieve. Reflecting on her studies, Sr Genevieve said that strangely enough, the subject that she had the most trouble with while at SHC was Botany, which she dearly loved. Sr Raphael was a very exacting teacher and required young Flora to redo her botany subject book three times! She found it somewhat ironic that she would eventually major in Botany at university and then would teach it with great delight for many years.

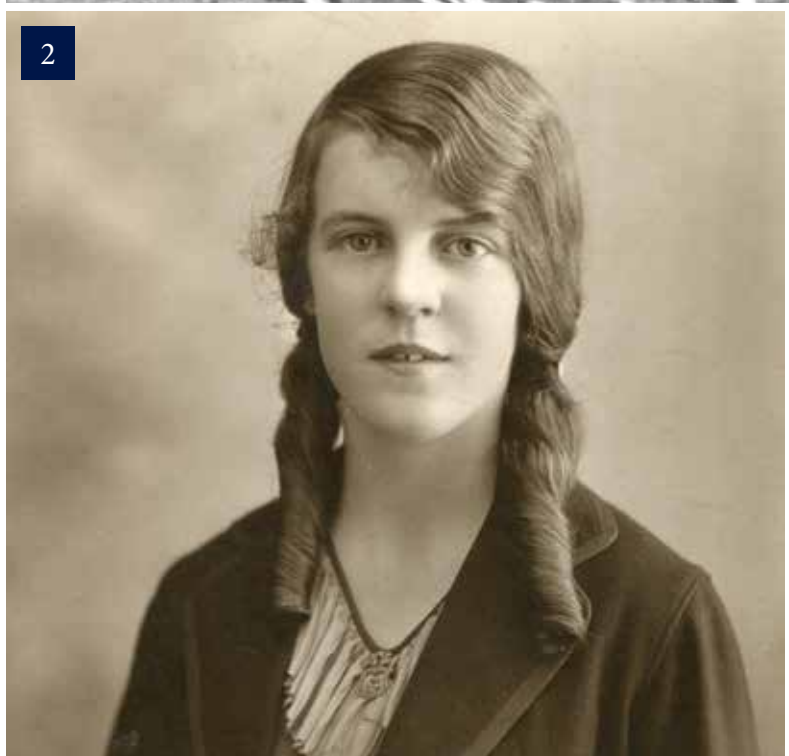
The final jigsaw piece to fall into place in 1928 was the enrolment of Yvonne Aitken. Due to her father's work, Yvonne was educated by the Sisters of Mercy in several country towns throughout Victoria before settling at SHC. Yvonne would become one of the first female students in the Faculty of Agricultural studies at the University of Melbourne, graduating with Honours in 1936.

Yvonne's major contributions to her chosen field of botany were in the science of plant breeding. Her work focused on the factors which controlled or influenced the rate of reproductive development in common agricultural crops.

Along with others in the field, her lifelong goal was to produce a greater range of consumable crops for people and animals. Her research resulted in several publications, including her 1974 book "Flowering Time, Climate and Genotype". She was a Fellow of the Australian Institute of



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Agricultural Science (1981-89) and became a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1989 for her significant contributions to plant sciences and teaching. In recognition of the Sisters of Mercy's contribution to her achievements, Yvonne bequeathed money to the Sisters to support young people in their transition to future learning. The Dr Yvonne Aitken scholarship is now in place at Damascus, awarding financial support to the college's highest academic achiever (dux) each year.

As time passed, additional subjects were added to the science field, including biology, chemistry, physics, and psychology.



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In 2021 Ivanka Saric, Learning Area Leader for Science at Damascus, feels very fortunate to be part of an energetic science team that continues to promote the various sciences and inspire curiosity, thus opening opportunities to both our male and female students to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). In 2021 Damascus held the 9th annual STEM Careers Expo where some past students of SHC, St Paul's, and St Martin's met with our Year 9 students to share their experiences in their chosen careers. The number of students taking VCE science subjects is significant. In the junior levels, students have the opportunity to further develop their skills and knowledge in STEM units such as horticulture and food & consumer science, Year 8 ESTEEM* and Year 10 science electives, as well as in extra-curricular activities and topics relevant to the modern world, such as environmental science issues and the future of the planet. Damascus students enjoy completing practical work and other activities in the recently refurbished science rooms, featuring the periodic table on the floor and an open practical area that can cater for two classes working together. Science at Damascus College continues to grow and assist students in finding their calling and being their best.



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Pictured:

1. Mary Raphael Mitchell RSM teaching SHC students geology at Mount Clear 1952
2. Flora McDonald 1922
3. SHC Science Class Circa 1950s
4. Yvonne Aitken 1936
5. Ivanka Saric and Damascus students 2018

* ESTEEM is a hands on, project-based learning environment which encompasses the science, mathematics and digital technologies components of the Year 8 curriculum.

In 1948, when Brother Cooke opened the doors to St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) in Lydiard Street, the Catholic boys of Ballarat finally had a much-needed place to focus on technical studies. St Paul's was managed by the Christian Brothers and inspired by the philosophies of Edmund Rice. The Christian Brothers had been founded in Ireland in 1802 by Edmund Rice, who had a passionate desire to make education available to all. Rice was soon joined by other men drawn by this urge to help the young poor. They formed a community of Christian Brothers and dedicated themselves to educating the sons of poor and oppressed Catholic families. The Brothers were able to provide the education by which these boys gained some control over their lives. When the Bishop of Ballarat, James O'Collins, established St Paul's College in 1948, he invited the Christian Brothers to continue their work for boys through providing technical education in Ballarat. St Paul's College emphasised developing technical skills within a comprehensive curriculum for boys. Importantly, St. Paul's would offer an education to the boys from St Joseph's orphanage, who had previously had to make their way in the world with only primary education.

The opening of the College generated much media and public interest at the time. Headlines touted that there was 'No Better Technical College in Australia'. At the same time, Bishop O'Collins took things a step further when he publicly stated that it was 'second to none other as a technical college in the Commonwealth'. Much was made of the cost and effort that went into converting the building into a school. This was done at great expense, as both Bishop O'Collins and Brother Cooke believed that 'the best was the cheapest in the long run'. Brother Cooke's

dedication was widely known, as he slept at the school during the early days of construction to guard expensive equipment that may otherwise have disappeared in the night thanks to the lack of doors on the building. Much to the boys' delight, the school year was delayed by a week due to last-minute renovations but eventually opened to 55 eager students who were to reap the full benefits of a modern and well-equipped new school. Brother Cooke led the school through its formative years, remaining Principal until 1959. A much-beloved figure in the school's history, he was described by a fellow staff member as a man of intense faith, courage, humour, kindness and industry, and his death in 1984 was a time of great mourning for the St Paul's community. Students formed a guard of honour along Lydiard St in front of St Paul's to farewell the man whose vision and hard work helped to bring technical education to the young men of Ballarat.

Pictured:

1. St. Paul's College Official Opening Sept 1949
2. 1948 opening year group photo
3. Original St Paul's Lydiard St building 1948
4. St Paul's Principal office 1948
5. Students form a guard of honour for Br Cooke's funeral in 1984



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It is certainly no exaggeration to say that Edmund Rice, the founder of the Christian Brothers, was all about the poor. In one of his letters he suggested to "give to the poor in handfuls." But Edmund did not have a simplistic, hand-out approach to the poor. Rather, while he worked untiringly to gain justice for the poor, his whole vision was to uplift them especially through education, so that they could live their lives with proper human dignity, and not be dependent upon the charity of others.

St Paul's College (St. Paul's) successful opening was due in part to the untiring dedication and effort of Christian Brother W.S. Cooke, but standing behind him were the Christian Brothers, who brought with them 70 years of experience and commitment to Ballarat.

Many outstanding leaders followed Br Cooke through the halls of St Paul's, men who perfectly represented the St Paul's motto: - 'Labor Nobilitat' (Work Ennobles). In the early years of the college funds were scarce, so much so that the responsibilities of the Brothers extended far beyond teaching. Many an evening and weekend was spent engaged in the physical labour of maintenance work and building repairs around the college. This attitude later travelled from Lydiard St to Victoria St, where building was taking place amidst normal school activity. Working bees were held on almost a daily basis, as staff were just as involved with the building of new classrooms as they were in teaching within them.

Brother Frank Hennessy led St Paul's through the period of transition from Lydiard St to Victoria St, which saw not only



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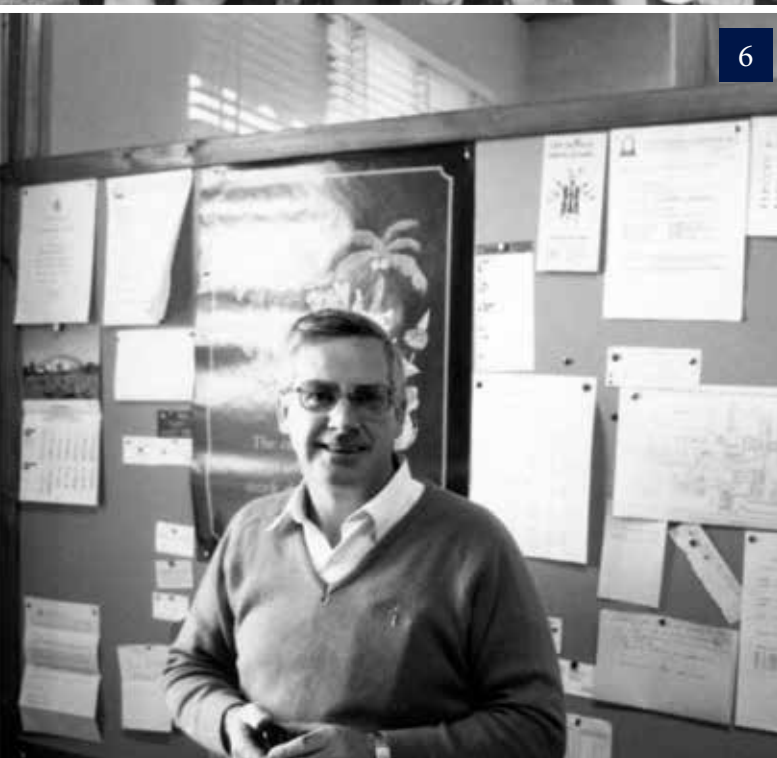


the change of location, but the decision to revert to a Yr 7-10 school, with VCE students heading out to St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's).

Br Laurie Goodison led the college through the final transition to Damascus College and reflected in 1994 that it was a great source of pride that St Paul's had taken boys of all abilities and worked with them so that they could attain their full potential. The qualities shown by the dedicated leaders of St Paul's throughout the years are reflected in the Patron Saint of St Paul's, Paul of Tarsus, a diligent tradesman of great courage and organisational skills. These qualities were always foremost in the minds of those responsible for educating the young men of St Paul's in the hope they would live up to the ideals of their patron.

Pictured:

1. Edmund Rice sketch commissioned by Damascus College
2. Br Cooke, 2nd from right
3. Christian Brothers J. R. O'Kearne, P. Archer, C. F. North and W.S. Cooke, 1954
4. Br Frawley, Br Herrick, Br Kelly, Br Reilly, Margaret Barry and Anne Nott, 1967
5. Br Frank Hennessy with St Paul's students holding the 1971 Garland shield
6. Br Laurie Goodison





1950 was when the first students graduated from St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's). Nineteen students had completed Form III that year and then sat for their Junior Technical Certificate - happily all passed. Importantly, it was noted that jobs had been found for all nineteen before the year had ended. As the first graduating class, these students will always hold a special place in the school's history. This inaugural class had witnessed Brother Cooke's tireless work and dedication in getting the school up and running, knowing that he did so purely so that they would have every opportunity for success. Many of these nineteen students forged successful careers in their chosen fields, including Carpentry, Art, Engineering, Panel Beating and Teaching.

Although St. Paul's provided a complete education for many boys, for others, it provided a solid beginning to their future learning. Class of 1950 Alumni John Collier went on to earn Diplomas in Mining and Civil Engineering before completing a Degree in Mining at Melbourne University. In his later years, he discovered a passion for Art and held several exhibitions of his paintings, which were often focussed on Ballarat scenes. With its broad educational focus, St. Paul's was able to cater to a wide range of needs and provide a sound foundation for the young men of Ballarat. If we consider our Year 9 students today as graduates heading into the world as full-time wage earners, it gives us a great sense of the changes that have taken place in education and society over the years.

Pictured:

1. Form 3A - 1950 1st graduating class
2. John Collier with his mother 1948





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When it opened in 1948, St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) provided a vital service to young Catholic men of Ballarat, as it gave them a place to earn their Junior Technical Certificate (JTC). At the time, this was enough to provide these young men with a secure future, as to gain an apprenticeship, a boy needed to have both his JTC and the recommendation of his Principal. However, the 1950s brought change, and it became apparent that St Paul's would need to adapt and change while continuing to support its students' futures.

In 1952 came the first national enquiry into apprenticeships in Australia. Significant outcomes included: the reduction of apprenticeship periods from seven to four years; an extension of block-release to attend off-the-job training at technical schools (usually one day a week for three years); the eventual disappearance of fully 'on-the-job' training, at least until the late 1990s when it reappeared under a new guise of accredited workplaces providing competency-based training regularly assessed by official visiting workplace assessors. By 1954 there were up to 70,000 apprentices nationally.

1962 was the final year that JTC was offered at St Paul's, as greater emphasis had begun to be placed on the study of academic subjects as a means of gaining employment.

1964 saw a change of focus for St Paul's with Form IV (Year 10) included for the first time in College history. This was a direct result of the tireless work of Principal Brother Kent, who had been quick to recognise and react to the societal changes that had seen employers gradually increasing their educational requirements.

Form V (Year 11) was then added in 1985. It was not unusual for the early academic classes to consist of 50 students, while a trade class was generally 25 students. As time went on, the number of lay teachers at St Paul's increased along with the subjects on offer. Classes such as English, Humanities, Mathematics, Drama, Music and Science co-existed happily with subjects such as Metalwork, Welding, Woodwork, Drafting and Art, making for a truly rounded and holistic education.

As the demand for additional subjects grew, so did the need for flexibility. In 1987 seven senior St Paul's students found themselves at St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) studying economics and accounting.

Pictured:

1. St Paul's classroom Circa 1950s
2. St Paul's woodwork/machine shop C1970s
3. St Paul's welding class C1970s

Eileen Mary Healy was born in Ballarat on 22 September 1888 and enjoyed a rich and full education at Sacred Heart College (SHC). She was then able to study at Melbourne University, where she earned a Diploma of Music and a Diploma of Education. At only twenty years of age, she returned to Ballarat to answer God's call when she entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy in 1908. Eileen was professed three years later as Sister Bonaventure. She became Mother General of the Ballarat East Mercy Congregation in 1956 and a member of the Australian College of Education in 1963.

From 1952 to 1966, Mother Bonaventure was Principal of SHC. She was an enthusiastic educator at SHC and at the (then) Aquin (Aquinas) Teachers Training College, where she was the Mistress of Method from 1951 to 1966 and prepared hundreds of nuns and other trainees for the role of teacher. The College had always striven to meet the needs of the times and offered boarders and day scholars a full curriculum of subjects that covered the humanities, science, commerce and the arts.

Mother Bonaventure's many projects throughout her life included the development of Patrician House, a hostel for undergraduates of Aquinas, construction of many buildings at SHC, construction of four Ballarat primary schools, and the development of convents and schools in 13 other regional areas.

When she decided that sporting facilities at SHC were lacking, Mother Bonaventure planned a nine-hole golf course on unused land at Mount Xavier – the first public golf course to be built and owned by a convent. This was opened in 1949 and was well-used by SHC girls. In the early days of the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy, 'walking nuns' would visit the sick and poor in their homes. Mother Bonaventure systemised this relief effort, which led her to inaugurate the Mercy Home Care and Nursing Service – an early version of the Mercy Health and Community Services we know today.



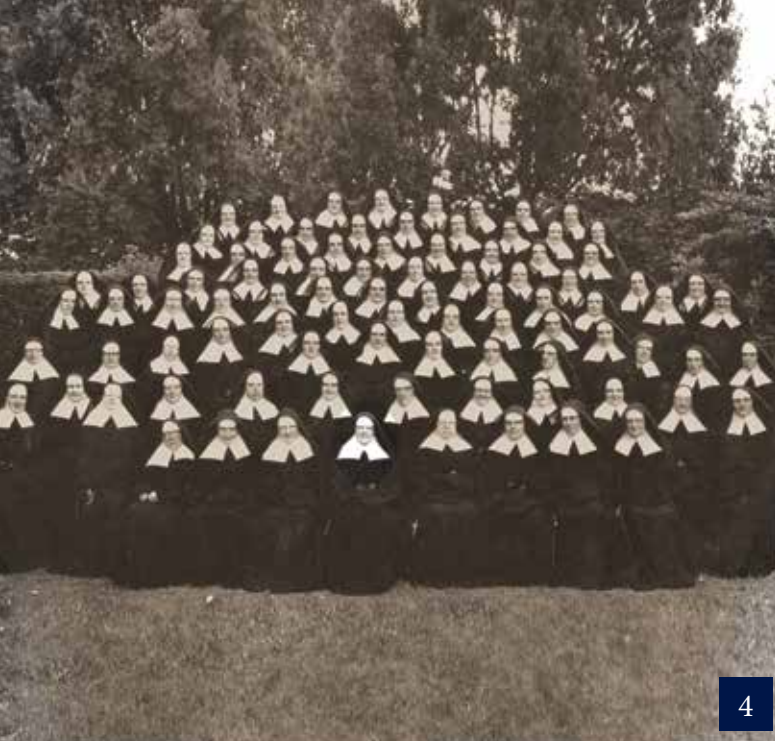
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Perhaps the most well-known Mother Bonaventure project is the beautiful Campus she conceived at Mount Clear. By 1956, SHC was bursting at the seams, and Mother Bonaventure was dreaming of a spacious, modern senior school to meet the challenge of over-crowding. Land bequeathed to the Sisters in 1960 enabled this dream to become a reality. Mother Bonaventure was involved in everything from planning to turning the first sod and laying the foundation stone, for what would become Sacred Heart Senior College – St Martin's in the Pines. Her fervent prayers to St. Martin de Porres for the successful completion of the new school are reflected in the beautiful statue which now stands in the St Martin's Resource Centre at Damascus College.

As a Sister of Mercy, Mother Bonaventure vowed her life to the service of the poor and the sick. Mother Bonaventure died on 26 May 1966 at the Sacred Heart Convent, Ballarat East, and was buried in the new cemetery at Ballarat. Sadly, she died before seeing the first students arrive at the Senior College.

The strength and spirit of Mother Bonaventure are still evident throughout Ballarat. Affectionately nicknamed 'The Builder', where Mother Bonaventure saw a need, she found a way to build a solution.

Pictured:

1. Eileen Mary Healy, 1889
2. SHC students Eileen and Kathleen Healy Circa 1900s
3. SHC students enjoy golf lessons at Mount Xavier Golf Course 1949
4. Ballarat East Mercy Sisters, Mother Bonaventure, front row centre 1955
5. Mother Bonaventure Healy C1955
6. Sacred Heart Senior Campus Mount Clear, turning of the first sod. Mother Bonaventure on the right 1965
7. Turning of the first sod celebration 1965



In 1956 the Sacred Heart College (SHC) Old Collegians' Association were enlisted by Mother Bonaventure to assist with the fundraising needs of the College as it dreamed of expansion and an exciting new building project.

The Association had set itself to raise funds for the College from its beginnings. The first considerable effort was to raise the necessary funds to expand the Chapel as a memorial for Mother Bernard. A few years later, the furnishing of the Chapel was undertaken by the Old Collegians as a memorial for Mother Xavier. The funds raised for these two projects were achieved through direct appeals.

Dating back to 1916, the Old Collegians' Association of SHC was first presided over by Mrs. J. Coghlan, who led the group in fundraising efforts and supported College Reunions. The gatherings of past students were auspicious occasions at SHC. They were held over two days and included a formal dinner, entertainment by present and past students, and a Benediction. For some years, the SHC Reunion even included an Invitational Ball open to the wider Ballarat community.

The 1926-1927 SHC Annual reported that the Reunion Concert was such a success that a public performance was later held at Her Majesty's Theatre in the heart of Ballarat. The seats were jam-packed on the 19 May as the curtains were raised to reveal the Fairy Queen's Court. Entertainment included grand performances by Miss Gertrude Healy, a fairy operetta, choir performances and a moving recitation before the audience was dazzled with the finale, 'the March of the Flowers'. A dazzling display of 48 senior SHC girls, dressed to resemble a basket of flowers, sang beautiful melodies and marched and performed eurythmic movements. It was reported that gasps could be heard at the climax of the performance, a white-robed,

silver-winged angel slowly descended with a great crown in which the letters S. H. C. were outlined in ruby coloured electric lights.

Another significant contribution by the Association was the establishment of the Old Collegians' Scholarship. Over the years, many alumni contributed small and large amounts to ensure that current students benefit. It allowed students to gain a valuable education at a respected learning institution, which they otherwise couldn't afford, thereby continuing the tradition of Catherine McAuley.

By 1964 Old Collegians' fundraising to support SHC's expansion needs was detailed in a brochure they produced that was distributed along with the annual. "Each year our enrolment increases; each year our waiting list is longer, and the number we must refuse greater. We feel this demand is a tribute to the education provided by Sacred Heart College and are moved to raise funds to facilitate this need for expansion."

Throughout the years, the groups' fundraising activities for the new Campus, Sacred Heart Senior College – St Martin's in the Pines, included card parties, golf tournaments, raffles, fetes, Vanishing Tea Parties, and mannequin parades, dinner dances and garden parties.

Pictured:

1. SHC Old Collegian's Association 1956
2. SHC Reunion concert Circa 1929
3. Mother Bonaventure fundraising appeal letter 1956
4. SHC student, unknown date
5. Old Collegian's reunion dinner, C1950s





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My Dear Friends

I speak to all of you whom I have known through the years — but first to the S.H.C. children of yesterday, a loyal body, thousands strong.

Strawn far and wide through Australia and beyond it, some of you still come home. How we at S.H.C. look forward to seeing you from time to time or at least to hearing of your triumphs, better still, of your daily struggle to live the Christian life, the struggle itself a triumph! Yes, we thrill to hear of your names in the headlines, but think more of the tribute warmly spoken: "The real S.H.C. spirit!" And we hear it from far and near. God be praised for it: the toil was ours, the blessing of fruition His.

Next, I speak to the parents of children past and present, and to that host of other helpers, intimates of Mother M. Alacoque and myself, who have ably seconded and liberally supported our many ventures — and ventures they usually were. It is you who have thought and begged and toiled and built, for our sake. Your names are writ deep in our memories and prayers.

To each and all of these — our Old Collegians who know and live our spirit, our other friends who know and uphold it, we can now call for support as we stand on the brink of the most venture-some enterprise you and we have yet envisaged. Frankly, I feel afraid, but God being with us, why should I fear?

One special word to you, dearest friends of all, the fathers and mothers of our nuns, you who have given your choicest gift to this Institute — a treasured daughter — perhaps two, even three — and have not stopped giving since. We dare not ask more, but we know your generous, loving hearts which will not be denied the chance of giving. May we suggest to you — as indeed to all our friends — the help of prayer, solid patient prayer to guide and sustain us at this critical moment in the fortunes of S.H.C.? Thus only can we rear the spiritual fabric of a mighty work and build to the honour and glory of God.

Yours lovingly and gratefully in J.C.,

Mother M. Bonaventura, R.S.G.

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A notable figure in the history of Damascus College (Damascus) is Miss Alice Fanning. Alice owned 21 hectares of glorious natural bushland in Mount Clear, which she opened to Sacred Heart College (SHC) students in the 1950s, where exciting and informative science excursions were held. Students enjoyed geology with Sr Raphael and studied the ancient grasses that still flourish at the Damascus campus.



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Alice never married, and for the last decade of her life, she was cared for by the Sisters of Mercy. Upon her death on 29 February 1960, she bequeathed her entire property to the Sisters of Mercy on the understanding that a school or hospital would be built upon it. Work could finally commence on the Sacred Heart Senior Campus – St Martin's in the Pines, at Mount Clear through this generous gift. Today the Damascus community continues to enjoy the stunning vistas housed on these same 21 hectares, where the College is committed to the stewardship of this land that students, staff and guests get to experience every day.

Throughout the College's 140-year history, many generous contributions, gifts, and bequests have been bestowed to Damascus and its foundation Colleges. Numerous past students, co-governors, staff, parents, and community members have gone above and beyond to gift a variety of kindnesses to Damascus, including land, scholarships, their time, precious keepsakes and much more, to support the legacy of providing contemporary Catholic education that meets the needs of the time, within the Ballarat Diocese.

The College fosters a life-giving partnership with families; in the education of students, and there have been extensive parental contributions over time, where parents and guardians have volunteered their time at a multitude of College events and activities, including at camps, the canteen, formals and at various working bees, with the overarching goal to enhance the delivery of quality education for young people.

For the last twenty years, there has been a voluntary board at Damascus College, where members of the community, including parents, have navigated the strategic leadership of the college with the leadership team. Opportunities continue to be available for parents to engage in College life today, particularly through the many extra-curricular activities available at the College, including the Rowing Program, Sustainable Racing Team (SRT) and Performing Arts Program.



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Sincere thanks go to all those who have contributed in small and large ways to assist Damascus to become the innovative and progressive school it is today.

Pictured:

1. Miss Alice Fanning
2. Fanning property Mount Clear
3. Denise Briody chalice and paten, gifted to Damascus by the Briody family in memory of their daughter, a St Martins student 1971-1972
4. "Madonna and Child" icon style painting by artist Leopoldine Mimovich a gift to Damascus from Fr Adrian McInerney and Veronica Lawson RSM while Co-Governors 2014



4

1965 CONSTRUCTION BEGINS AT MOUNT CLEAR

In 1965 construction had finally begun on a spacious, modern senior boarding school for Sacred Heart College (SHC). The original campus was designed by renowned architect Gerald McKeown, with much input and direction from the Sisters, to embrace its natural bushland setting. The campus would include a separate boarding house and purpose-built classrooms for Science, Drama, and Music and a chapel. The foundation of those first buildings that began in 1965 can still be seen today at Damascus College. They were embraced and incorporated as the campus has grown with new facilities added and original ones refurbished to support the learning of more than 1,150 students in Years 7 through 12.

Pictured:

1. Support beams were lifted into place in 1966
2. Students and staff of SHC visit the Mount Clear location to view work 1965
3. Special guests, students and staff of SHC at the ground breaking celebration 1965
4. Mr Tim Fletcher helping to construct the stairs leading down to the Undercroft 1966
5. & 6. Concrete for the foundation was poured in 1965



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In 1967, a separate campus for Years 11 and 12 girls opened its doors at Mount Clear to form Sacred Heart Senior College - St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's).

The Sisters were acutely aware of the natural beauty that was the home of this new senior secondary Campus of Sacred Heart College (SHC). They considered St Martin de Porres, a 16th-century Dominican brother from Peru, and an extraordinary lover of the natural world, to be a fitting patron and protector for the College.

The Sisters were challenged in many ways during the planning and construction of the new Campus and found that they prayed the prayer that they had turned to so often in the past: "In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God, in the name of Mary Queen of Heaven, in the name of Joseph, patron of the universal church, Martin de Porres help us, for the honour and glory of God and the salvation of all [creation]. Amen."

Rumour is that although the intention had always been to call the new Campus, Sacred Heart College - Senior Campus, it came to be known as St Martin's in the Pines, as this was how the construction crew working on the project called it - "that St Martin's place out in the pines". When it came time to name the school, before her death, Mother Bonaventure said, "what better name could it be known by, it is St Martin's in the Pines".

The buildings were solid and architecturally remarkable; the artwork was intended to be as educative as the curriculum, and the grounds supported life in abundance. Every effort was made to preserve as much of the original vegetation as possible. With the help of Sr Genevieve McDonald, the first principal of St Martin's, students and staff planted indigenous plants and trees around the buildings. Pope Francis proclaimed "care of our common home" in 2016 as the eighth work of mercy, evidenced at the Damascus College campus in Mount Clear.

Students and staff alike embraced the changes and freedoms afforded at the new Campus. They thrived in the open spaces of the bush setting after the increasingly cramped and stuffy hallways of the Victoria Street campus. The Campus affectionately became known to students and locals as "St Micks in the Sticks".



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One of the first teachers at St Martin's was Veronica Lawson RSM. Veronica was a past student of SHC, which deepened her love of learning and the Mercy charism to the point that she "threw in her lot with the Sisters of Mercy". Veronica's commitment to education, and St Martin's, was evidenced later when she returned to the school as its Principal when Sr Genevieve became ill. During her time in leadership, she developed the curriculum and added more lay teachers to support students' learning.

The additional space in the Boarding House meant more opportunities for students to attend and gain a valuable education that would enable them to study at university. In the late 1960s, many rural communities offered an excellent Catholic education, but it fell somewhat short in preparing students, especially girls, for further education. In answering this need of the time, St Martin's saw many new students enrol at the school, some of whom had never attended the Vic Street campus.

Pictured:

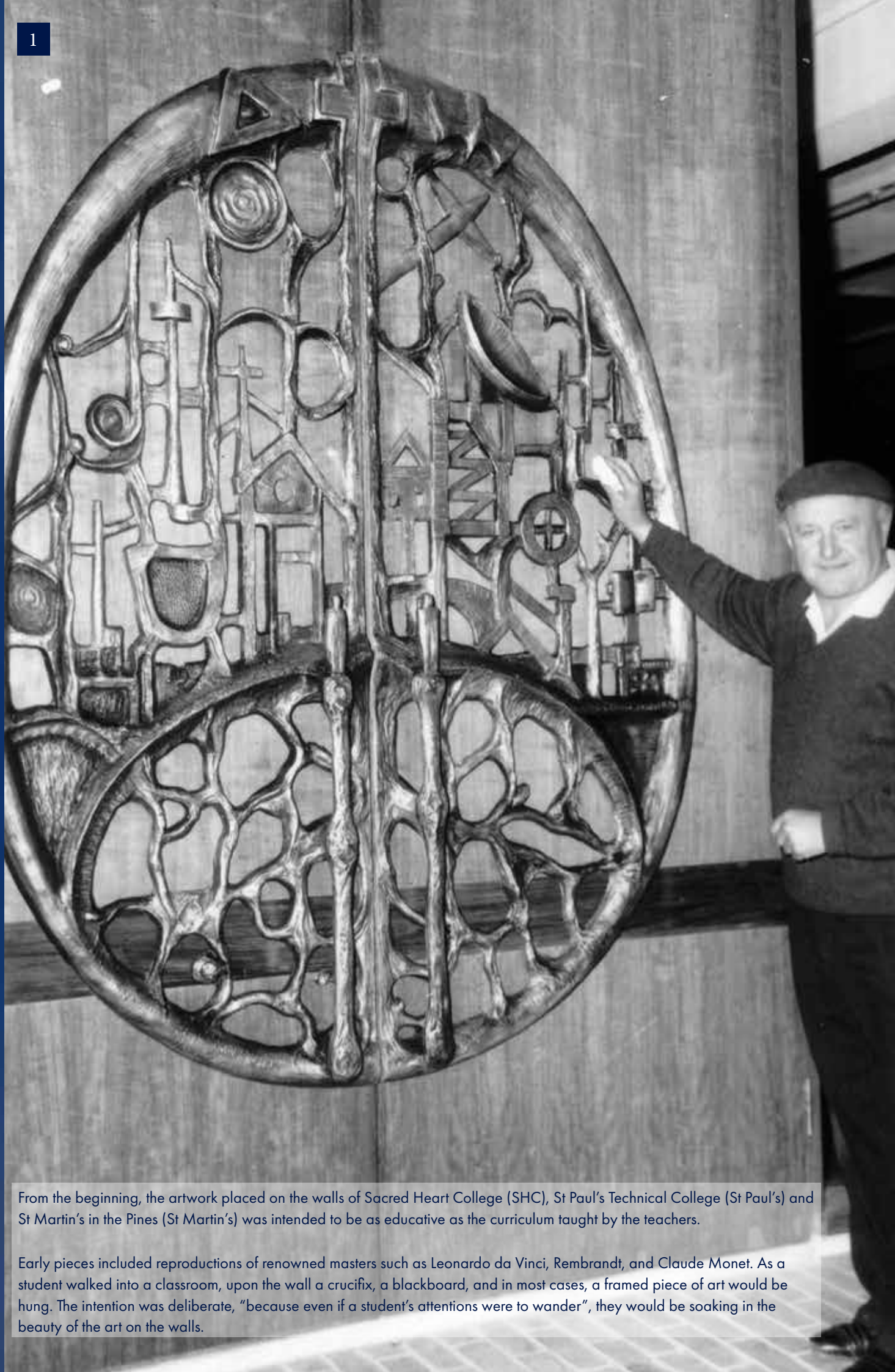
1. St Martin's students gathered on the stairs eating rice as part of the Project Compassion fundraising Circa late 1960s
2. St Martin de Porres statue by Italian artist Ernesto Murgio in the admin/dining room atrium
3. St Martin's library 1968
4. St Martin's science laboratory/classroom C 1960s
5. St Martin's campus Chapel 1967



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From the beginning, the artwork placed on the walls of Sacred Heart College (SHC), St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) and St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) was intended to be as educative as the curriculum taught by the teachers.

Early pieces included reproductions of renowned masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, and Claude Monet. As a student walked into a classroom, upon the wall a crucifix, a blackboard, and in most cases, a framed piece of art would be hung. The intention was deliberate, "because even if a student's attentions were to wander", they would be soaking in the beauty of the art on the walls.



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As the first construction phase of St Martin's was drawing to a close, it was time to hang the crucifix, the blackboard and install the artwork.

The St Martin's Resource Centre (SMRC), currently at Damascus College (Damascus), began its life as the administration wing and boarders' dining hall. In 1968 two pieces of art that the Sisters of Mercy had commissioned would finally be installed in this area. The first was the Statue of St Martin de Porres, which stands majestically at the centre of the space, within the pond of the atrium. The piece was sculpted in 1967 by Ernesto Murgo, a sculptor whose works can be found in private collections worldwide, including the Vatican. St Martin is depicted with his arms outstretched and eyes aloft.

The second piece is the iconic sculpture "Education and Achievement" by artist Hans Knorr that graces the exterior doors of the St Martin's Resource Centre. Sr Genevieve, Principal at the time, felt that the aim of this school is symbolised in the sculptured aluminium panel. It is semi-abstract and represents man's growth through education - from embryonic beginnings, with roots in the earth, to an increasing mastery of his surroundings and ever upwards toward the things of the spirit. The piece incorporates and embraces the themes of education, achievement, knowledge, and growth. This piece is a reminder that whilst the school has undergone many changes, the education journey is at the core of our mission and the heart of our Damascus community.

Art appreciation continues at Damascus for both current and past students through the acquisition of artwork that is then curated and displayed throughout the many buildings and spaces of the Campus. Damascus awards a junior and senior Art Acquisition prize to current students at the end of each year. The acquired pieces are then displayed around Campus, where all students and staff can admire them as they go about their school business.

In 2014 the Alumni Art Prize was launched to engage alumni (past students and staff of SHC, St Paul's, St Martin's and Damascus) in the life and community of Damascus by producing a piece of art that explores the Damascus motto 'To Live By the Light of Christ'. The chosen piece is prominently displayed for a year in the Mercy Wing Visitor Reception at Damascus, featured in publications, and with the broader community on social media sites.

Pictured:

1. "Education and Achievement" sculpture by artist Hans Knorr, 1968
2. Statue of St Martin de Porres by artist Ernesto Murgo
3. Olga Batros RSM "Sister Margaret Mary" painting gifted to the College by the Sisters of Mercy, Ballarat East
4. "To Live By the Light of Christ" artwork by Kim Anderson, 2014



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4

After almost 100 years of nurturing, sheltering and providing a home away from home for hundreds of students, 1978 saw the Sacred Heart College (SHC) boarding house close its doors for the last time.

Demand for the boarding facilities had lessened considerably, while numerous expensive repairs were required to maintain the high standard of the building. Boarding had begun at the college sometime around 1887 when the number of boarders was listed at four, expanding to twenty-two by the time the Bishop opened a new dormitory wing in 1890. Even as this new wing was finished, plans were already being drawn up for another extension; such was the growth of the college at the time.

It was said of the Sisters of Mercy at the time that their faith was greater than their poverty, and so they found ways to continue to expand. The constant pressure on the boarding facilities, though partly due to the reputation of the College, was also a result of students staying so long. When the Aquinas Teaching College was approved in 1909, students often remained in the boarding house until they finished their teacher training. A boarding school for boys was established at Villa Maria, while girls as young as toddlers lived at the Victoria Street site.





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By 1922 the college's excellent reputation had spread far and wide, and there was twice the number of boarders as there were day students. Yet another extension was required – the second storey of dormitories and a dressing room. When the senior Campus opened at Mount Clear in 1967, boarders found themselves enjoying the open spaces of the bush setting, providing much-needed relief from the increasingly cramped hallways of the Victoria Street campus.

Boarding continued at the Sacred Heart Senior College (St. Martin's) before also becoming a thing of the past in 1994.

Pictured:

1. 2nd Floor bathrooms SHC boarding area
2. SHC dressing room
3. SHC boarders dining hall
4. St Martin's boarders enjoying a meal
5. St Martin's boarders



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1982 marked the year that the Outward Bound survival camp became part of the Sacred Heart College (SHC) experience. Students would embark on a ten-day hike through the Grampians, carrying all they needed to survive in what for some seemed like the ultimate test of resilience. The goal was personal development through outdoor adventure and team-building exercises, and there would be few SHC girls who would claim not to have benefitted from the program in some way. Even today, class reunions are punctuated by talk of Outward Bound and its joys and horrors, an experience that genuinely created lifelong memories and friendships. Responses are often polarised, it was either loved or hated, but all would agree it was a necessary rite of passage for the SHC girl.

Although current students no longer enjoy the whole ten-day Outward Bound experience, camps remain a vital tool in helping students build resilience and develop a more profound sense of themselves and others within the community that is college life.

"School Camps and Excursions continue to be an integral part of a holistic education at Damascus. Camps provide students with fun recreational activities, and in later years focus on developing confidence, perseverance, independence, and resilience. Excursions can support quality curriculum delivery and provide important social and emotional development opportunities for students that are often not available in the classroom."

Andrew Robertson, Assistant Principal Student Wellbeing

Students of St Paul's College (St Paul's) camps were varied and adventurous. Destinations included Tasmania, the snow fields, Anglesea and Central Australia. Practical skills suitable to the times were often taught on these adventures, and, likely, many of these activities would not pass the risk assessments of today!



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While the retreat experience has changed markedly since the early days of SHC, it remains a time of spiritual reflection and an opportunity for students to examine their own life and goals away from the school setting. It provides the opportunity to leave school life behind, removing the distractions that often prevent students from really connecting with their feelings and spirituality. The following passage is taken from the 1927 SHC Annual and highlights the changes that have taken place in the retreat experience over the past 140 years and the importance of having time for self-reflection.

"This year we felt lonely when the last morning of the Retreat came, that something was passing away which we wanted to hold just a little longer. Silence for three days and only the reading of spiritual books permitted! Will healthy, fun-loving Australian girls submit to such discipline? Yes. The days of retreat are the happiest days of the school year and are the days on which we will look back with the greatest longing and pleasure. In the convent, hours pass like minutes, and we are glad of the silence that gives time for meditation. At a time like this, if at no other, the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts. But to quote one of the nuns, retreat has come and gone, like everything else earthly."

Rosa Fraser 1927

Pictured:

1. St Paul's Year 10 Angelsea camp 1986
2. SHC retreat 1919
3. Damascus Outward Bound camp 1996
4. Damascus Year 8 camp 2017
5. Damascus Year 12 retreat 2016



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1987 ST PAUL'S ON THE MOVE



St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) was originally based in the Ludbrook House building on Lydiard Street in the heart of Ballarat's central business district. The growth of the student population, along with staff and curriculum, meant they were bursting at the seams. The move to the Victoria Street campus would allow for the expansion of classes and provide students with more outside space and grass and trees instead of the urban concrete landscape of Lydiard Street.



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The move was made possible thanks mainly to a \$1,039,500 government grant that allowed the school to expand from 0.24 to a whopping 5.2-hectare site.

On a cold, wet day in mid-1987, St Paul's students and staff were ready to move to their new Campus. It was a mammoth undertaking, and it would be a significant change to the Ballarat landscape as the boys of St Paul's left the busy central business district for the calm of Ballarat East's historic Victoria Street.



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St Paul's Principal Br Frank Hennessey reflected on the move. *"It was at the beginning of Term 3, on a cold and wet July day that the whole school left Lydiard Street for the new campus at Vic Street. To announce to the Ballarat community of the campus move, we decided students would form a procession carrying chairs and other school items along the 3km journey. I didn't like being at the centre of it all, but the whole event was a lot of fun and got lots of attention."*

A teacher of St Paul's, Bart Mossop, suggested the use of a litter or sedan - a chair inside a cabin with a roof, mounted on poles and carried. Br Frank reluctantly agreed to take part and was carried by the senior students all the way from the old school to the new. This stream of St Paul's students and staff marching through the city's streets was captured by Ballarat Courier Photographer Herman Ruyg.

Alumnus Jason Fletcher, Class of 1988, was there that day. As he looks at the pictures taken by Herman, he remembers, *"that's my Year 11 class carrying St Paul's Principal Brother Frank Hennessey along Lydiard Street from the original St Paul's building (Ludbrook House on the corner of Lydiard and Market Streets) to the Victoria Street campus. You can see the Mining Exchange in the background"*. It was a momentous and historic day for the St Paul's community, one that many remember fondly.



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Pictured:

1. Procession of staff and students as they leave Lydiard Street, 1987
2. Br Frank Hennessey and being carried in sedan by St Paul's students, 1987
3. Procession turning onto Sturt Street, 1987
4. St Paul's students with chairs on Victoria Street as they move to the new campus, 1987

St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) students moved to the new campus in 1987, and some found the new space overwhelming.

In a yearbook reflection, Year 8 student Mark Azzopardi remembered his introduction to the Victoria Street campus in July 1987 *"I arrived at the school bewildered and somewhat lost. I gazed around at all the buildings, trying to find a familiar face. It felt like my first day of secondary school all over again. Overall, the first two days at Victoria Street were a bit hectic, but nonetheless enjoyable. The best part of all.. no steps to climb!"*

Principal Br Laurie Goodison reflected that the new campus had a number of challenges in the early days. About 80% of the campus was out of bounds as work was being completed on buildings and landscaping. He remembered the mud, and open trenches that had to be crossed on narrow planks. But mostly he remembered the wonderful and exciting time as *"we pulled out walls, painted, carpeted, installed new ceilings and turned bedrooms into classrooms"*

Pictured:

1. Channel 6 helicopter arrives at St Paul's campus
2. Students enjoying an icy pole treat as part of the First Assembly at the new Victoria Street Campus
3. Aerial view of the St Paul's Victoria Street campus





What was possibly the impetus for the formation of Damascus College was the arrival of 59 male students to the Sacred Heart Senior College - St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) Campus at Mount Clear on 2 February 1988.

Reflecting on the enrolment of the first male students at St Martin's, Principal Valda Ward RSM wrote, "Looking out my office window to see boys exiting the buses on the first day of this school year, I was reminded that prayer doesn't change God, it changes us." Sr Valda's prayers certainly opened the door for change.

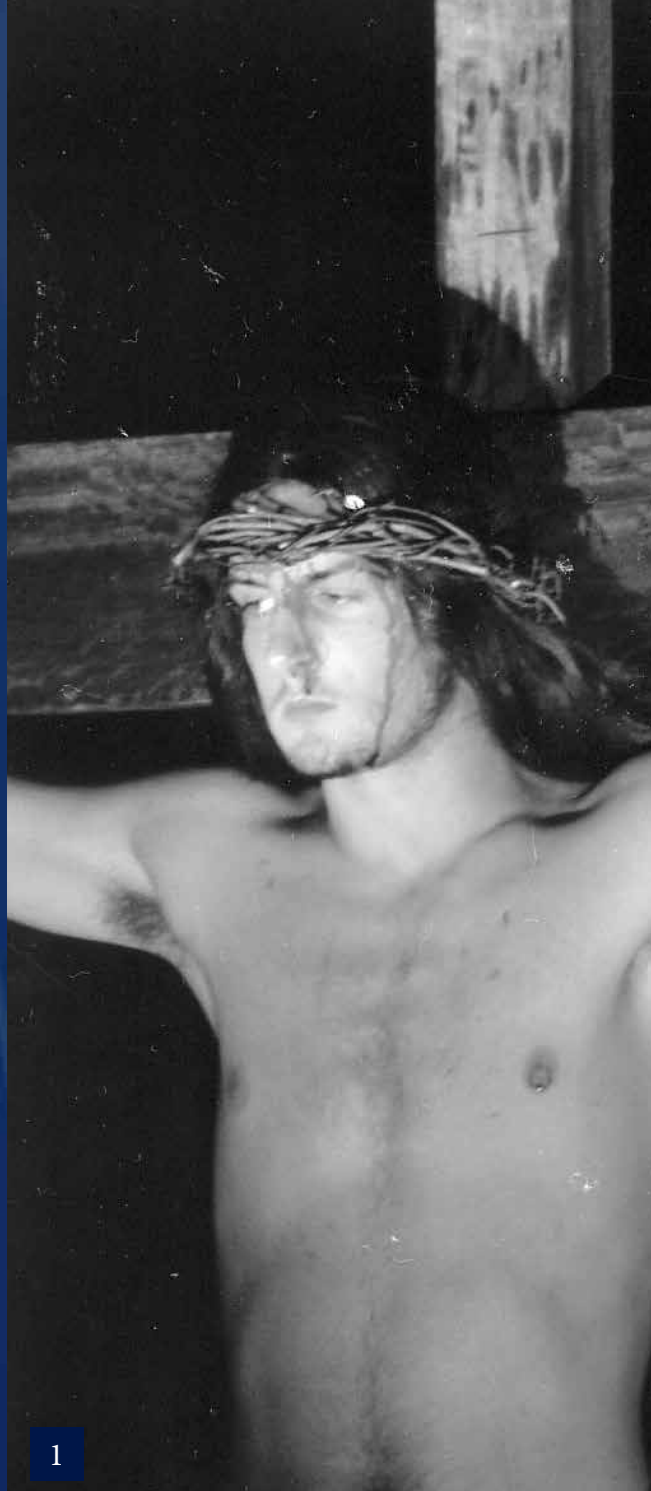
Most boys were continuing their education at St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's). Seventeen were in Year 12, and 42 were in Year 11. The inclusion of these students in the roll makes St Martin's Ballarat's only co-educational Catholic school, and Damascus College proudly continues this tradition today



Pictured:

1. St Martin's male students undertaking performing arts 1988
2. St Martin's tug of war 1988
3. First St Martin's male students 1987 - St Paul's students taking on subjects offered only at St Martin's







"Who would have thought when a group of senior drama students at the then Sacred Heart Senior College - St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) stepped up onto a small wooden platform in 1991 that they would be starting one of the college's most memorable traditions? This, of course, is the biennial production of "The Final Hours". This longstanding Easter tradition began from humble beginnings with two lights and a simple raised stage and has grown slowly into a very complex theatrical event produced every other year. It is an incredible and moving production always portrayed with passion and sensitivity. It is the story of Jesus' final hours on earth and is the heart and essence of our Catholic faith tradition.

From its humble beginnings over 30 years ago, this Passion Play utilises interior and exterior locations around the Mount Clear campus. It often involves over forty students in both acting and technical roles. The play tracks the final hours of Jesus of Nazareth before his being put to death on the Cross. The structure and script focus on the gritty realism and raw emotions of various characters that witness the event.

It is one of the most recognisable and well-known stories in the world and has been told for generations in so many forms," said Andrew Seeary, Performing Arts Co-ordinator and Director. Andrew developed and designed the production and has remained involved from its inception. "Like Christmas, Easter's true origin is founded in an event, one that sometimes gets lost amid holidays and commercialism. The production has always been an attempt to reconnect with the true message of Easter."

Andrew Seeary, Performing Arts Co-ordinator Drama

Pictured The Final Hours Productions:

1. 1998
2. 2000
3. 2011
4. 2004
5. 2019

In the early 1990s, the formation of a new Catholic co-educational college in Ballarat East was mooted. After feasibility studies, consultations with parents, and much to-ing and fro-ing, the decision was made to amalgamate Sacred Heart College (SHC), St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) and Sacred Heart Senior College - St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) to create a new co-educational College under the co-governorship of the Sisters of Mercy and the priests of the local parishes. Thus Damascus College was formed and opened in 1995. While it was an exciting venture, there was also grief at closing three institutions with their own unique history and culture.

"I was Principal at Sacred Heart at that time, and we decided that we were going out with a bang – not with a whimper! We had various occasions to mark the closure of Sacred Heart – the end of an era:

- *a reunion to which any previous students of SHC were invited*
- *a symbolic ritual that involved turning off lights and locking doors to mark the closure*
- *a big party where we bussed the whole school to Luna Park for the day*
- *a beautiful final liturgy at St Alipius Church*
- *and then the big pack up and procession with library books to the St Paul's site, which was to become the Year 7, 8 and 9 campus of Damascus College.*

And so, in 1995, Damascus College commenced on two sites: Years 7, 8 and 9 in Victoria Street at the St Paul's site and Years 10, 11 and 12 at Mount Clear on the St Martin's site.

It was a challenge bringing three cultures together, and there were some difficult times in working to establish a new culture that was to be the Damascus College culture while striving to keep what was good in our former schools. As with any change, there was always the temptation to look back at how 'we used to do things.' We worked hard to become one and had small successes along the way as we built up a sense of ownership of the new College, but while we were on two campuses, there was always an underlying sense of being two parts.



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I believe that it was not until we moved to one Campus on the Mount Clear site in 2011 that we were truly able to 'come of age' and become a force to be reckoned with in Catholic education in Ballarat with our unique identity.

That identity is still developing and will continue to do so with each passing year – developing fine young people to go out and make a difference wherever they are.

As a Sister of Mercy, I take pride in the fact that I have been part of something that those founding Sisters began in 1881 and which, through the years, many Sisters have contributed to through teaching, administration and governance.

Damascus College today is a College we are truly proud of in our local community."

Marie Davey, RSM

Pictured:

1. Final school assembly at SHC, 1994
2. Staff celebrate the end of the SHC era with a 'mourning tea', 1994
3. Final ritual in the SHC Chapel marking the closure of SHC 1994
4. Sr Marie Davey closing the doors, 1994
5. Procession of SHC students to Damascus Victoria Street Campus, 1994



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"The announcement came before the end of 1993. Once we were past the initial shock, we started to prepare. I remember 1994 being full of meetings upon meetings, and policy and curriculum development.

We at St Paul's also took on staff from Sacred Heart as they had excess staff. That was a bonus as people like Jo Kennedy, Brendan Bawden, and Neale Thompson joined our Campus. During this time, John Shannon, the first Damascus College Principal, together with a Sister of Mercy, worked hard to get the magical 200 Year 7 enrolments needed to keep our existing staff. We had 225 applications on our books by September 1994.

My first day of 1995 gave way to many nerves as I started teaching in co-ed classes. It was very different and good for our boys as they suddenly had substantial academic competition from the girls. We worked hard to reflect the school motto, "To Live By The Light of Christ."

The students were generous to a fault and raised significant amounts of money for several charities, including Caritas, St Vinnies, MND and the Leukemia Foundation. In times of national disaster, students were sent to help with fencing and other relief work with the BlazeAid.

Our classes reflect many levels of ability, and our students are very good at fostering and nurturing those with special needs.

I have seen the school become the place we dreamed of and aimed for way back in 1994. I consider myself very lucky to have been part of both schools and to be spending my final years of teaching in such a vibrant Christ-centred school on this amazing Campus of natural beauty."

Deb Glasson, commenced as a teacher at St Paul's in 1990.

At the end of 1994, the Principal of St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) Brother Laurie F. Goodison prepared, in part, this message that appeared in the final St Paul's annual:

"As the school closes and the staff take up positions in Damascus College or elsewhere, I would like to thank them for their dedication, their generosity and their belief in the students of St Paul's. It has always been a source of pride for me that St Paul's has taken boys of all abilities and worked with them so that they have been able to attain their full potential."

Pictured:

1. Deb Glasson St Paul's staff picture 1992
2. St Paul's student leadership Circa 1980s
3. Principal Br Frank Hennessy at new Victoria Street campus 1987



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Late in October 1994, the "Ballarat Courier" reported that the Year 11 and 12 students of St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) said goodbye to their school with a final assembly. The students underwent mixed emotions, feeling sadness, regret, and excitement as they prepared to close the St Martin's chapter and transition to Damascus College (Damascus). Students of St Martin's enjoyed the senior aspect of their Campus; no bells to mark the end of classes, staff were addressed by their first names, curriculum and activities were designed for young adults. It felt like it was the introduction to the university education many of these students were hoping one day to undertake.



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As the assembly drew to a close, John Shannon, the freshly appointed first principal of Damascus, was presented with a banner bearing the Damascus logo.

"I remember the excitement, hope, resolve – yes but also fear, confusion, grumbling, a sense of loss and perhaps even a little dose of resentment here and there. I remember thinking that if we had a few more years to plan this, we might be ready. There were cherished customs that St Martin's staff wanted to retain. By 1994 many of the pines had been lopped, and the boarders had gone. Period bells and PA announcements were introduced, but the staff wanted students to continue to call them by their first name, and the year 12's of 1995 would expect it."

Tony Barrett, Staff 1984 - 2008



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Pictured:

1. St Martin's campus 1994
2. St Martin's students planting the 'Hiroshima Peace' cherry tree 1985
3. Tony Barrett, 2015

1995 saw the culmination of years of planning when Damascus College (Damascus) opened to students under the leadership of Principal John Shannon.

By 1991 it had become clear that the Sacred Heart College (SHC) buildings lacked the facilities required to deliver high-quality education. Only minimal improvements had been made over recent years. Lack of space meant that refurbishment was difficult. Co-education was mooted and so the decision was made to amalgamate SHC, St. Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) and Sacred Heart Senior College - St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) into a new Year 7-12 Catholic Co-educational College spread across two campuses, the St. Martin's site at Mount Clear and the St. Paul's site in Victoria Street.

The aim in establishing the new College was to carry forward the best of the Catholic traditions, educational philosophies, and practices of each of the existing schools. This was undoubtedly a challenging and stressful time for staff, who felt the uncertainty of change. Many were to have their first experience teaching in a co-educational setting. Others were apprehensive at the thought of losing their job. There were concerns about the location of year levels and how increasing student numbers would affect the current environment. Staff consulted people from other schools who had been through amalgamation themselves for reassurance, and a PR campaign was undertaken to spread a positive message regarding the new college within the conservative Catholic community of Ballarat. In 1994 each foundation college held its own celebrations to mark the closures, including re-enacting the ceremonial procession carrying school items from SHC to the new



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Damascus junior campus. Staff and students began to look to the beginning of the 1995 school year with excitement.

Students arrived to start the year on 3 February 1995, and the new College was officially opened with Mass and a family dinner gathering on Sunday 19 February. Forging a new Damascus identity would not happen instantly, but new traditions helped bring students into the fold. Damascus Day grew and changed into the wonderful annual celebration students currently know and love. Having two campuses meant that the Damascus Identity could be slightly different for students at each site, with students at the Mount Clear site often referring to themselves jokingly as free-range chickens compared with the battery hens of Victoria Street.

Pictured:

1. 1995 Damascus College Captains Corrina Dichiera and Brett Madigan
2. 1995 Damascus Athletic sports winners
3. Year 7 to 9 Damascus students at the junior campus in Victoria Street
4. Damascus Senior campus - Mount Clear
5. Damascus Principal, John Shannon 1995 - 2004
6. Damascus Junior campus - Victoria Street



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Of course, the decision to amalgamate the three colleges required much planning and organisation. The work being done, by a hard-working team, was collectively known as “The Damascus Project”. Back in the year 33CE, while on the road to Damascus, a man known as Saul of Tarsus had an experience that altered the course of his life. Saul had rejected that Jesus of Nazareth, whom Pontius Pilate had crucified, was alive and condemned those who believed. However, Saul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, and that experience turned his world around.

According to the story, Saul (Paul was his Roman name) was fanatical in wiping out the new Christian Jewish movement that formed around Jesus of Nazareth. He supervised the stoning of one of the movement’s key leaders and terrorised its members. Many followers were arrested and imprisoned, while others left Jerusalem in fear and scattered far and wide. Paul sought authorisation from the Jerusalem High Priest to arrest the Christians in Damascus and bring them to Jerusalem. These people were known in the city as the Followers of the Way. As Paul approached Damascus, he had a blinding vision, a sudden realisation that he was perpetrating a terrible injustice. He came to accept Jesus as the Messiah and became just as intent on promoting the movement as he had been eradicating it. Paul felt called, as the prophets of Israel had been called, to be “a light to the nations” and accepted baptism into the community of Christ’s disciples at Damascus. He then began his mission to spread the good news to the ends of the earth. From that time on, Paul lived by the light of Christ and brought others to do likewise.

Two of the most important decisions to be made were naming the new college and designing a uniform that would bring students of the two campuses together.

When it came to naming the new college, parents were surveyed and asked for their suggestions, and a wide range of responses was received. Some early suggestions included Eureka Catholic College, Trinity College, Catherine McAuley College and Mercy Regional College. Many felt that the well-established history of Sacred Heart College (SHC) warranted keeping Sacred Heart in the title. In contrast, others felt that a Catholic school should most definitely have a religious title. However, the community was already well acquainted with The Damascus Project, and it seemed as though the name would stick. Not only was Damascus College the most popular response among those surveyed, but it was also felt that the name would provide continuity as the Damascus Project had been in the works for many years. The word ‘Damascus’ provides a link to the traditions of all three foundation colleges, the story being one of transformation and new beginnings, insight and hope for the future. It was agreed that ‘Damascus’ would perfectly symbolise the three schools coming together.

Through the mercy of God, Damascus College continues the tradition of bringing the message that Paul came to accept to the community in new ways. Damascus brings the Mercy tradition and local church into partnership. Individually and collectively, the members of the Damascus College commit to living by the light of Christ.

Together. We are Damascus.

Pictured:

1. St Paul on the road to Damascus, by Peter T. Chattaway 2015, credit to Patheos.com for image use

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During the amalgamation period, leadership was challenged with bringing together the three colleges with one uniform, forming the basis of the uniform as it is today.

Once again, parents were consulted via survey, and responses were varied. Small touches were important, with each foundation college needing to be represented in the final design. The uniform has undergone many changes over the years, whether through new policy or simply the trends of the time. The blazer has long been a feature, but Ballarat winters also saw the importance of a stylish knee-length fitted woollen coat that was prominent until around the 1940s. The dark coloured winter tunic was a feature until the 1960s, while the early summer dresses were light and flowing. Jumpers have been shades of grey, blue and maroon over the years, alternating between round and V-neck.

For the young men, the uniform has featured shorts or long pants, with subtle changes in style over the years in the stitching and embellishments of the blazer. While some incarnations of the sports uniform will be remembered less than fondly – the red netball skirt and unflattering T-shirt of the 1980s is one example – it has definitely become more practical over time.

Pictured: A selection of photos representing the school uniform over the years



1. Sacred Heart College uniform 1956
2. St Paul's Technical College uniform 1972
3. Amalgamation concept sketch for sports uniform, boys and girls, and winter and summer options shown



The inaugural Damascus College (Damascus) staff were an amalgamation of teachers from Sacred Heart College (SHC), St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) and St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's). They would bring years of teaching experience, trepidation about what this change would mean to them, and excitement about this new school, Damascus.

Past SHC student and current Damascus teacher Patricia Rowe shares a reflection on the photo of the foundation staff of Damascus from 1995.

"Excitement, initially. I recall a beautiful late summer morning, gathering on the lawn at the front of the Victoria Street campus. Victoria Street always retained its sense of its history as the orphanage for those of us who were assigned there. I'm going to name the former schools as I reflect here, which was very much discouraged (and rightly so) at the time as we all tried to forge another sense of a united Damascus College staff. The St Paul's and Sacred Heart and St Martin's staff worked with each other towards that sense of unity over a number of years. I think that it has been achieved now. I'm not quite sure, though, when that actually happened. The Sacred Heart staff did feel very much the orphans, having lost our Campus. Throughout the

first couple of years, there were still references from the St Paul's staff to "how we do things here" on their Campus.

I knew many of the St Martin's staff through working with them over many years in various gatherings of the staff of the SHC middle school at the site of the Mercy Convent and the Sacred Heart College senior school - St Martin's in the Pines. I also knew many of the St Paul's staff through gatherings of all of us through 1994. An end-of-year gathering at St Paul's comes to mind. Plenty of icy eskies with cold beers. Not much wine – and most of it warm. It didn't seem a good omen at that point. Jo O'Mara and I wore fairy wings we had found while cleaning out the drama cupboards in the old Sacred Heart laundry earlier that day. We sensed that a number of our new colleagues were avoiding us. (I'm remembering even further back now to dropping into the laundry to say hello to Sr Teresa when I was a Sacred Heart student.)

It was exciting on that 1995 summer morning, though, to be forming a new staff.

Looking at the photo now brings sadness, too. Most of the teachers who worked so hard to establish Damascus in

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those years have moved on to other schools or other work or retired. Some have since died while still on the Damascus staff. Maureen Gibcus and Tom Millington. Ron Matthews and Jo Reilly were good friends, both of whom I miss very much.

For the first few years of Damascus, I worked with Years 7 to 9 at Victoria Street. It was challenging. I suspect, though, that in many respects, the Sacred Heart women were as much of a challenge to the St Paul's boys as they were to us. Among the lesser challenges was having the boys in the intermediate football team that I was driving to their game in the old Toyota Coaster bus getting changed on the bus while I was driving. Among the greater challenges was the Melbourne Experience camp. The Queensberry Hill Youth Hostel had to be evacuated at 1am when a Damascus student sprayed deodorant on a smoke detector, and the detector thought it was smoke.

For a few years, I commuted between the two sites – often over recess. Twenty-two minutes at a comfortable pace to leave a Victoria Street classroom, call at the library and then at the office for the “green bag”, drive to Mount Clear and drop the “green bag” at that office, check my pigeon-hole and be in my classroom for period three. Coffee was

out of the question. Lunch on commute days was planned and packed to be eaten while driving. The commute to Victoria Street was sometimes longer because, even though there were labelled “traveller” car parks at Victoria Street, they were often occupied by (non-travelling) Victoria Street staff, while travellers often parked half a block down Stawell Street. Nevertheless, I could still get to my Victoria Street classes before my students.

At some point, I found myself working just at the Mount Clear campus – dare I say, with the St Martin's staff and a few other tolerated additions like me. Year 9 also moved to Mount Clear. And then Years 7 and 8. And their teachers, whom I know, found that transition challenging too.

The 7 to 12 campus is home to, very definitely now, Damascus College staff. A few of them are in that 1995 photo with me. Even more are past students I taught, had in my TA, or just passed by during school life. I'm surprised at how well I still recall the excitement of that morning when that photo was taken. I'm surprised to find that it's still there.

Pictured:

1. 1995 Damascus College Staff



The original buildings on the Mount Clear campus were constructed to house a relatively small number of day students and provide a home to boarders. The amalgamation of the three colleges saw an increased number of students on the Campus, with the addition of Year 10, while boarding was no longer required. It was clear that the campus would need to grow and change to meet new needs.

The One Campus Building project officially began in 2007. The Mount Clear campus catered for approximately 480 Year 10-12 students at the time. Space was needed to accommodate another 580 students from the Junior Campus while maintaining the educational and pastoral advantages of the two campuses. Stage 1 of the project involved creating a dedicated VCE/VCAL space, complete library refurbishment, a new administration building and an additional Design and Technology Foods facility. The completion of Stage 1 was designed to allow Year 9 students to move to the Mount Clear Campus from the beginning of the 2009 school year. There was much to celebrate when these new buildings officially opened to the Damascus community in 2009, a testament to the College's response to the changing needs of its students and their families.

Stage 2 of the One Campus Building Project involved constructing two new Science rooms, extending the Arts and Technology facilities and Wood and Metal areas, constructing a new staff facility and refurbishing the Performing Arts Auditorium (Audi). The Audi was completed in time for the 11th season of The Final Hours in 2011, and the official opening of the Stage 2 buildings occurred later that year. The development did not end with the move to one Campus. Works during 2012 included a new classroom facility, music studio and the chapel. July 2013 saw the final stage completed with the opening of the Year 7 and 8 multi-storey classroom wing, and it was estimated that more than 15 million dollars had been spent on building works over this time. In addition to the new and refurbished buildings, the College grounds had also undergone a transformation with new native gardens.

Pictured:

1. Construction of courtyard, 2010
2. Building 4 renovation, 2013
3. Opening of new buildings, 2011





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"During my time at Damascus, I was fortunate to support the transition of the College from a two-campus arrangement to the consolidated site now enjoyed at Mount Clear. The building works and refurbishment program over my 13 years at Damascus exceeded \$26m. While the future always demands more to be done, the Campus currently offers contemporary facilities with an open design to support student safety and productivity, beautiful views and vistas and a relaxed and confident feel in harmony with the beautiful environment it is nested within.

The facility and grounds design and the choice of materials and finishes externally and internally were selected to be calm and grounded while taking in the beauty of nature surrounding the school. Some examples include the bluestone, timber and metal used within the chapel, with a feature window of forged glass that draws your gaze upward and outward in contemplation. Within the McAuley wing, features such as the timber used in the ceiling and foyer off the central stairwell are a nod to the past, reclaimed from dado boards that previously lined the corridors for decades. Many recent works, including the science wing and music room, have emphasised open and productive spaces with good visibility and views to the environment. While settled into the landscape, the commanding outlook from the Damascus Events Centre beautifully illustrates Damascus's growing capacity and confidence within the educational and broader community.

Some of the best comments were from visitors or contractors, many of whom couldn't believe the facility supported a bustling community of 1,300 students and staff, given the generally calm nature of the college. I always appreciated that the space allowed for all of us, together with two mobs of kangaroos, koalas and echidnas, blue tongue lizards, rosellas, lorikeets, galahs and plovers, all within the broader territory of a pair of wedge-tailed eagles."

Paul Jans, Business Manager, 2008 - 2021

Pictured:

1. Damascus Commemorative Walk, 2017
2. Damascus campus aerial view, 2021
3. Paul Jans, 2020

"In 2005 the Governors announced that a decision had been made to amalgamate Damascus College (Damascus) into one Campus at Mount Clear. It was anticipated at the time that it would take five or six years for this process to occur, with major building works required to accommodate the number of Year 7-9 students who would eventually call the Campus home.

Improvements included the construction of new Science rooms and staff facilities, an extension of the Arts and Technology facilities and the refurbishment of the Performing Arts Auditorium. From the beginning of 2011, all students came together on the one Campus, marking the end of the Victoria Street campus, home to St. Paul's Technical College from 1987 until 1994 and the junior Campus of Damascus from 1995.

At the end of 2010, the Victoria Street campus closed forever, and students re-enacted the tradition of walking to the new site while carrying items from around the school. All students began the 2011 school year together, enjoying the spacious surrounds and stunning vistas of the Campus that was once Sacred Heart College Senior School – St Martin's in the Pines



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During the early days of Damascus, when the school was spread across two campuses, the Staff Association at Victoria Street (Vic St) built up quickly. It was strongly supported on Friday nights by those at Vic St, with a number of the Damascus Mount Clear teachers coming in to join us. There were also many staff "Social Evenings" that were theme-based, such as "Spicks and Specks", "The Footy Show", "Sci-Fi", "A Day at the Races", and even Elvis made a few appearances. We also had our own staff band, "DAMIT", that would play at a number of these functions. As a result of these evenings, the differences between the three amalgamating staffing groups of 1995 slowly became a thing of the past.



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In the initial years, the leadership from John Shannon and Sr. Marie Davey made it a fantastic place to work. Everyone was there to support one another, and it felt like you were trusted to make a decision that was having a positive impact on this newly established college. I was always very strong in my defence of the college if anyone dared to challenge me on how Damascus compared to other schools.

It was a sad day when we heard that the Victoria Street campus was closing, but also exciting to turn the page on that chapter of Damascus and move to Mount Clear. It was like starting all over again, and so the story continues..."

Brendan Bawden, Indonesian and Humanities Teacher

Pictured:

1. Final assembly at Damascus junior campus, Victoria Street, 2010
2. Procession of students from Victoria Street to Mount Clear campus begins, 2010
3. Procession of students along Geelong Road, 2010
4. Damascus whole school assembly, 2011
5. Damascus whole school opening mass, 2011
6. Brendan Bawden, 2016



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Damascus College (Damascus) students are offered multiple opportunities to experience life beyond their shores. Cultural experiences such as the French or Indonesian language trips or the Timor Leste immersion offer students a chance to see themselves as a part of the broader world community while living and experiencing other students' cultures of similar ages.

In 2011, the college ran its inaugural Immersion Program to Timor-Leste for several Year 11 students. This was the culmination of a relationship fostered over many years, beginning in 2005 when Damascus was linked with Santa Maria College through the Ballarat Friends of Ainaro Community Committee Sister School Program.

After the success of this first trip, the program became an annual event. Students make a year-long commitment and participate in planning meetings, fundraising and community liaison events, with the actual trip being only a small part of the entire experience. It can be a life-changing experience for those selected. Some students have even returned as part of a gap year to foster further their relationship with the Ainaro community in Timor Leste.

Foreign Language trips allow students to develop their language skills and experience a culture and lifestyle that can vary widely from their own. Students of Sacred Heart College (SHC) had the opportunity to visit New Caledonia to improve their French skills, while Damascus language tours included Malaysia, Indonesia, France and Switzerland. The current pandemic has caused the Timor Leste trip and language tours to be placed on hold. However, it is hoped this is a temporary measure, and students will soon participate in these valuable programs once again.

Pictured:

1. Notre Dame 2004
2. Malaysia 2007
3. Indonesian LOTE trip 2007
4. Timor Leste
5. Indonesian LOTE trip 2013
6. French LOTE trip 2010
7. Timor Leste 2011





Throughout 2020 and 2021 the Damascus community proved its resilience and ability to adapt to change through the way it responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. A very sudden plunge into lockdown occurred in March 2020, taking the classroom into the safety of students' homes through the magic of technology. Students and staff were required to be flexible as Victoria went in and out of lockdown several times throughout 2020 and 2021. Teaching staff had to adapt very quickly to the notion of delivering content and engaging students remotely, and the pandemic provided educators with the opportunity to be innovators in a previously unknown sphere. For students, this was an opportunity to develop their skills in resilience, organisation and perseverance as they took on the challenge of attending school from their homes. Staying connected was vital, as was keeping the college community spirit alive. Ashwin Pillai, Assistant Principal of Learning and Teaching reflected: -

"I am extremely proud of our students, teachers, staff, families and wider community on their dedication and creativity of using what we've learned to continue to engage our students into the future. This crisis provided opportunities for reflection and real potential for making this happen."

The COVID-19 pandemic was not the first global health crisis in college history. Just over 100 years ago the Spanish Flu pandemic devastated the world, lasting from 1918 to 1920 and taking the lives of at least 50 million people worldwide. In Australia it claimed the lives of 15,000 people, while around 40% of the population fell ill at some point during the pandemic. The flu dominated Ballarat headlines at the time, and the restrictions imposed to reduce the spread of the virus will sound familiar today. Limits on movement around town were put in place, maximum numbers were introduced for outdoor picnics and concerts, and large crowds were outlawed. Masks were required in public; good hygiene was promoted, and people were encouraged to maintain their distance from others.





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Schools did not open for the 1919 school year until March 10th, and with no such thing as remote learning students found themselves on an extended summer break. Sacred Heart College (SHC) was not left untouched, with Mother Xavier Flood sadly falling victim to the flu virus in October 1919. One of the founding members of the Ballarat Convent of Mercy, we remember Mother Xavier's contribution to the College still to this day, through the naming of Xavier house. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has given us an insight into what life would have been like for our SHC forebears during 1919 in Ballarat, one can only imagine the difficulties of maintaining both social distance and sanity within the increasingly cramped and crowded walls of the SHC boarding house and convent. While COVID-19 has permeated every aspect of our lives and remains an ever-present reality of each school day, perhaps in 1919 the lack of social media, television and online news provided much needed respite for those living through the Spanish Flu pandemic.



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Pictured:

1. During COVID-19 pandemic Damascus Principal Matthew Byrne and student Mia Lepair wear masks while displaying 3D printed mask extenders 2020
2. Teachers Hannah Muirhead and Gerard Macklin wearing masks as part of COVID safe guidelines at Damascus Subject Selection event 2021
3. College captain Hannah Mroczkowski studying at home during remote learning 2020
4. Ambulance with nurses during the Spanish flu epidemic 1919*
5. Mother Xavier Flood commissioned artwork by Damascus College
6. Office workers wearing masks in Melbourne to combat infection during the Spanish flu epidemic 1919*



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*Credit Museums Victoria Collections <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au>

Damascus College (Damascus) has a long, rich and diverse history dating back to 1881. As the College celebrates its 140th anniversary year, thanks must go to the students and staff from each foundation college. Today, Damascus strives to continue the legacy of providing quality and contemporary Catholic education that meets the needs of the times. Damascus continues to offer innovative and progressive learning and teaching that inspires and challenges students to become their best within supportive pastoral care and student well-being programs that caters to the whole person's needs.

Staff do not take this responsibility lightly, as the young adult minds currently enrolled will be the creators of our future. The College must, and does, empower them to be agents of their future and to contribute confidently and meaningfully to the world around them.

In looking to the future, the College staff is reminded of their calling as educators of young people. A driving force is the "Be. My. Best." Framework, a holistic approach to a Christ-centred education that provides Damascus College students

with the opportunity to gain greater social and emotional awareness and practice interpersonal skills as they learn and grow.

The five pillars to Be. My. Best. (as below) underpin the unique experience of a Damascus College education. Together with the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) attributes, Damascus students are inspired and challenged to reach their potential, be their best, and contribute confidently to the global community.

The capacity to demonstrate resilience, engage in relationships, be organised, persevere, and demonstrate confidence are the foundation of SEL learning skills that shape students' positive academic and well-being outcomes.

Damascus College students are ready to take on anything without limitation! Students are supported and encouraged to recognise their own individual interests and strengths to find their calling in life. Damascus students are part of something greater – they are part of a long and proud

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DAMASCUS COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 - 2025



VISION

Damascus College is a dynamic Christ-centred learning community that values each member and is committed to inspiring and challenging students to reach their potential and contribute confidently to the global community.

tradition with a strong commitment to social justice and helping others. It is what is inside a Damascus student that counts, and it is the beautiful environment surrounding them that contributes to them being the best version of themselves.

This holistic framework will also be evident in the proud College community, with three key strategic priorities:

1. Foster a confident and diverse means of communication that builds pride, creates dialogue, celebrates our points of difference, and enhances the position as a College of first choice.
2. Develop strong intergenerational connections that build parent and alumni engagement opportunities and involvement.
3. Build quality links to the local, national and global community with partnerships that strengthen capacity, student pathways and student experience.

The Damascus community looks forward to the College's future and all that it contributes to the community, with a more profound sense of gratitude and confidence in the knowledge that this 140-year legacy will continue to grow and strengthen for many generations to come.

Damascus students and staff are part of something greater here at Damascus College, and isn't that a wonderful thing!

Sarah Boswell, Leader of Marketing & Development

Pictured:

1. 2021-2025 Damascus College strategic plan
2. Sarah Boswell, 2020



While it is true that no school can exist without students, it is equally true that it must also have educators. Throughout the 140-year history of Damascus College and its foundation schools, hundreds of educators have given of themselves in their quest to provide a full and rich education to the young people entrusted to their care. The following is a small selection of reflections from some of these educators...

"regarding the attitude of the girls themselves, we cannot refrain from expressing our satisfaction. We congratulate ourselves on the spirit of co-operation that exists between teachers and what is taught throughout the school. We commend the nurturing of kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity of spirit, often overlooked, but this is what we prize above examination successes and the praise of the outside world. It is this that marks our success as a school."

Except from a Sisters reflection in the 1927-28 Sacred Heart Annual

"We can give - and will because the public expects it - a list of examination results, but this is not necessarily a record of progress. One cannot so easily assess gains or losses in such a spiritual world as our school. If a school report is a futile thing at any time, it is more so now when education is frantically striving to shape itself to fit the changing conditions of a post-war world. We question 'are we aiding in the best possible way the complete development - intellectual, moral, and spiritual - of the children entrusted to us'.

Reverend Mother Alacoque Connell, Speech on 19 December 1945

"I began my teaching career at Sacred Heart College in 1977, and I can honestly say it was a wonderful experience. I had some great mentors, and the girls were fabulous. They were so easy to teach because they wanted to do well. Our biggest discipline problem was those tricky students who tried to sneak to the corner shop during recess and lunch!"

Karen Simpkin, Teacher

"The boys at St Paul's were some of the finest young people it has been my pleasure to meet. They were hard-working, enthusiastic, and talented. To see a boy in Year 7 making a simple box for his pencils, and then just two years later making a pool table - the math required for that, isn't simple. It can't have any slant - is just one example of how great their educational journey was."

Br Frank Hennessy, Principal of St Pauls 1983 - 1990





"My time there was one of the most enjoyable and satisfying times of my life! The girls were exceptionally nice and friendly and the staff, both lay and religious, were a delight to work with. To today's students at Damascus I would say: 'seize every opportunity that comes your way and give it your best effort!' And, to staff, if Damascus is anything like St Martin's was: 'enjoy every moment of it!'"

Deidre Duncan, St Martins first lay Principal, 1979-81



"Teachers in our schools have a responsibility to provide students with hope, alternatives and possibilities. With belief in themselves, with belief in their power to affect the world. They must also provide them with the skills to promote change within the solid framework of the Catholic school. A sense of welcome and belonging is the most enduring quality that Damascus College has provided for me. From the earliest time, the staff knew we were on a journey to becoming our best. Yes, there has been lots of change, but without this, we would not have grown in the way we have. It has been a great privilege to work with people who had the vision to form Damascus College and to witness the sheer hard work that has gone into making the school the community it is today. I taught at Victoria Street in the earlier years and then moved with some of the student cohorts to our current site around 2009 – and I'm still here! I have worked predominantly in the areas of mathematics and VCAL, and it has been most rewarding to learn from my colleagues in these areas, and even more rewarding to work with the young people of Damascus College."

Neale Thompson, Teacher



"Damascus College has been my place of employment for most of my adult life. I have learnt a lot of life lessons and hopefully been able to teach a few as well. My move from PE into Indonesian and Humanities was as much a surprise to me as it was to my friends and family. Teaching Indonesian has offered me the chance to experience so many new things, both in and outside of the classroom with students, and to see their faces light up is something I hold close to my heart."

Brendan Bawden, Teacher

Pictured:

1. Reverend Mother Alacoque Connell
2. Karen Simpkin, 2020
3. Br Frank Hennessy, 2014
4. Deidre Duncan, 1979
5. Neale Thompson, 2021
6. Brendan Bawden, 2021

Whether it be a coat of arms or a modern logo, the college crest is an essential part of a school's visual identity. It is reserved to identify its uniform, location, and equipment. A college crest is often used to promote the heritage and history of the school, on regalia, degree certificates, invitations to formal school events and sports team clothing.

The Sacred Heart College (SHC) crest bears the words: "In altum oculos tollite" (Raise thine eyes aloft), a reminder to the wearer that, though she moves in this workaday world and must share its burdens, her motives, typified by the uplifted eyes, must be turned towards the things which are above. The badge is shield-shaped to represent the stout buckler of resistance that the girl – and later the woman – must oppose to whatever would turn her from the pursuit of her ideal. Within the shield is set the emblem of the Lamb of God, who, Himself sacrificed, will uphold her in the painful struggle, the Lamb resting on the open book, a symbol of knowledge, ever the support of religion.

The St Paul's Technical College (St Paul's) crest incorporates many of the themes used by the Christian Brothers at the time. The star at the centre evoking Daniel 12:3, "those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the heavens; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." It is set upon a Celtic cross, a supreme Christian symbol of redemption. The cross sits on a circle, a symbol of eternity. The outer ring has the St Paul's Latin motto, "Labor Nobilitat" (Work Ennobles).

The Damascus College (Damascus) logo was designed by Anne McMillan RSM. It evolved through the reflection on joining the three foundation schools, the Christian symbol of the Cross, and our location in Ballarat at the heart of the Eureka Stockade story.

Pictured:

1. SHC crest
2. St Paul's crest
3. Damascus logo



1



2



3



SACRED HEART COLLEGE*

1881-18	Mother Agnes Graham
1884-	Mother Bernard McKerrin
1894-	Mother Xavier Flood
1918-	Mother Alacoque Connell
1952-1966	Mother Bonaventure Healy
	Sister Genevieve McDonald
	Sister Adrian Parsons
	Sister Dorothea Ballinger
1976-1986	Sr Therese Power
1977	Mr. James Turner
1987-1991	Mr. Adrian Mullaly
1992-1994	Sister Marie Davey

ST PAUL'S TECHNICAL COLLEGE

1948-1959	Br. W. S. Cooke
1960-1963	Br. K. P. Kent
1964-1965	Br. W. T. Miller
1966-1969	Br. D. S. Herrick
1970	Br. J. F. Cunneen
1971-1972	Br. D. E. Zoch
1973-1976	Br. B. J. Scott
1977-1982	Br. F. D. McGuane
1983-1990	Br. F. T. Hennessy
1991-1992	Br. J. O'Halloran
1993-1994	Br. L.F. Goodison

SHC SENIOR COLLEGE - ST MARTIN'S IN THE PINES

1967-1976	Sr. Genevieve McDonald
1977-1978	Sr. Veronica Lawson
1979-1981	Deirdre Duncan
1982	Fr. Bernard McPhee
1983-1994	Sr. Valda Ward

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

1995-2004	John Shannon
2005-2010	Tony Duggan
2011-2022	Matthew Byrne

* The SHC dates are as accurate as the information available at the time.

Principal's Pictured:

1. Sr Therese Power (left), Circa 1970s
2. Br. J. O'Halloran (left), C1991
3. Tony Duggan, 2007

Together. We are Damascus.



1881
Sacred Heart
College



1948
St Paul's
Technical College



1967
St Martin's
in the Pines



1995
Damascus
College