

The Road

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Autumn 2022

OUR COVER

MATTHEW BYRNE

Inside Cover: Damascus College celebrates the contribution of Mr Matthew Byrne and his 13 years as Principal of Damascus College.

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PRINCIPALS WELCOME

CHRISTOPHER GRANT

We begin 2022 with a strong sense of hope – hope that soon we can join together as a full College community, hope that our loved ones and members of our community are safe, and hope that, together, we can navigate our way through this year on our path back to normal.

We acknowledge the uncertainty and concern that the circulation of COVID brings to many within our community and we send our best wishes for a speedy recovery to those who have contracted the illness or are caring for those who have been unwell or vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Damascus College community in a variety of ways over the past two years, and together, students, staff and families, have adapted and pivoted to a 'new normal', keeping our Damascus community safe and engaged throughout this challenging time in history.

We continue to have a committed and hardworking team working at Damascus College, and in 2022, we have added some amazing new people and skills to our team, with the following staff joining the College.

- Isaac Bramble joins the ICT Help Desk
- Michelle Botheras takes on her new role as Learning Support Officer

- Alexandra Crowe joins the Performing Arts team as Education Support Officer
- Mitchell Jolly, is teaching Digital Tech, PE & Science
- Stephanie Kerwan is teaching ESTEEM, Science, Maths, RE
- Fiona Latrobe is teaching Maths (Neale Thompson Term 1 replacement)
- Georgia O'Leary is teaching PE, Junior Maths, Rowing
- Naomi Olthof is teaching Media and is the Learning Area Leader: Arts
- Cameron Ross is teaching Technology (Wood/Metal) and VCAL
- Natalie Ventra is teaching ESTEEM, Science, Maths, RE
- Joseph Carmody is the Learning Area Leader (HPE)
- Vicki Williams is the Learning Support Officer
- Le'Anne Smith is teaching Languages (French)
- Joel Cassidy is teaching Music
- Madeline Fry is Learning & Teaching Support Officer and VASS Administrator

This year, our College theme comes from the fifteenth chapter of the Book of John. We have a theme each year, to frame our liturgies and provide a means of grounding our Catholic identity in scripture.

"Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit." John 15:5.

It is a positive follow-up to the strength and courage we sought as the theme of 2021. God is with us on our journey. We are challenged to remain focused on the light of Christ and so to abide in God's love. Our faith commitments give soul to restorative justice, to student wellbeing and to teaching and learning in an atmosphere of resilience, so that we may be our best.

As a College, we are delighted to launch in 2022 our bold new strategic plan, the focus of which is to ensure that Damascus is strategically positioned now, and for the future. The 2021–2025 Strategic Plan is a product of extensive consultation and a reflective process undertaken by the College Board and Sub-committees, in collaboration with the leadership team. It is informed by community feedback collected throughout the school review process.

It is designed to enable each Damascus community member to reach their potential and to make every individual an agent of their own future. It is in this context that Be. My. Best. has emerged as our aspirations statement.

The plan identifies five core pillars for Damascus College. The five pillars are linked, and each pillar is vital to activating and achieving the strategic plan. These five pillars are: Faith & Catholic Identity, Learning & Leading, Wellbeing in Action, Community Connection and Future & Stewardship.

You, our Damascus families, are a vital component of the Damascus community, and we invite you to learn more about the Strategic Plan via our website, where you can view the video and read through the brochure to learn more about our aspirations from now until 2025.

<https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/about-us/strategic-plan-2021-2025>

The Damascus College 2021 graduates continued to demonstrate remarkable character in working through the unsettling period that was 2021. Mia Lepair was a thoroughly deserving Dux of the College with a very impressive Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR) of 98.2. We also congratulate Olivia King who was awarded VCAL Dux for 2021. Numbers never measure the achievement of young people, and our community has a collective pride in the achievements of our students who graduated in 2021. I again congratulate our most recent alumni on their many successes!

The transfer of governance between Damascus College Limited and the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) has now taken place. DOBCEL is a team of professional and committed directors who govern the schools of the Diocese for whom the Bishop of Ballarat, Rev Paul Bird, has civil responsibility.

Damascus College will continue to honour the joint charisms on which it has been founded. The place of the Sisters of Mercy here in Ballarat and Catherine McAuley's legacy will continue to underpin

the spiritual and educational offerings available to the Damascus College community. This will continue in collaboration with the spirit of service of the parishes from which students enrol.

For staff, students and families, a change in governance will not materially impact the College experience; however, it formally provides the College with the local experience of the DOBCEL Board and the support of the broader network of schools in the Diocese of Ballarat.

There are several key College events scheduled to occur in Term 1 that required us to review and make adjustments, to provide a safe environment for all, whilst preventing the need for large community gatherings. The Victorian Governments Return to School plan provided confidence for our community in their return to learning and working onsite. Students who have been affected by COVID, as a close contact or positive case, have been supported remotely by dedicated teaching staff who provide guidance on the work that has been set whilst they are away, supporting the continuation of learning.

There have been active cases whilst we have been at school this year, but I thank families for completing their twice-weekly Rapid Antigen Tests and alerting the College when a positive case exists. This, along with the other measures that have been put in place, continues to provide a safe environment for all, and the continuation of learning onsite.

We congratulate Daniel Cook, our Damascus Office Manager who has been awarded the Ballarat Citizen of the Year for 2021, for his tireless administration of the Ballarat COVID Info Facebook group, which has provided residents with critical information on the ever-changing COVID restrictions, testing, vaccinations and more. Fantastic job Dan!

In the return to normal, we have been fortunate to run our Year 12 retreat and Year 7 camp – two important activities on the College calendar that sets our most junior and senior students up for a positive start to the year. Later this term we will join together in celebration and acknowledgment of our rich 140-year history, dating back to 1881, at the Gala event on Saturday 26 March. Additionally, in Catholic Education week in Term 2, Damascus College will host representatives from all schools throughout the Diocese as we acknowledge staff within Catholic Education who have provided 30 years of service. This celebration will be held in the Damascus Events Centre, in May.

We are excited about 2022 and the educational journey ahead for our community.

Christopher Grant, Interim Principal



A NEW RECRUIT TO THE DIVERSE LEARNING TEAM

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

The Diverse Learning Team are excited to introduce Remi Brown to the team.

Remi is taking on a graduate position with Damascus College after completing an intensive Animal Assistant training program during the 2021–2022 school holidays.

Remi is an 8-month-old English Pointer. Her mission as a therapy dog is simple: to spread smiles, inspire kindness and bring comfort to those in need.

She has excellent skills in general obedience and empathy and will continue to increase her capacity as a therapy dog through this new role. Remi has extensive experience in providing cuddles and smiles to everyone she meets. She is also a big fan of belly pats and gentle ear tickles!

In her spare time, she enjoys hanging out with her family, playing in the garden, having swims in the dam and lying by the fire in winter. She also loves to play hide and seek with her human family and tug-a-war with her doggie friends.

Remi has an outgoing and calming personality; her presence in the classroom and the yard is aimed at reducing stress hormones (cortisol and adrenalin) in our students while also increasing the health and feel-good hormones dopamine and endorphins.

As Remi gains experience at Damascus, she will explore project-based opportunities with VCAL students, work one-on-one with Diverse Learners and support all students on Immunisation days and through their exam periods.

During semester 1 2022, Remi will be working at Damascus on Mondays in Week A and Thursdays in Week B. If you see Remi in the yard, please make her feel welcome.





140 Year Anniversary Gala



140 Year Anniversary Gala



Amalee Eden, Class of 2021



Andrew Seary, Performing Arts Coordinator, Drama



Lewis Clark, Class of 2022



Guests arriving at the Damascus College 140 Year Anniversary Gala

140 YEAR ANNIVERSARY GALA

DAMASCUS EVENT

On Saturday 26 March, the Damascus College community joined together to celebrate the rich 140-year history of the College, dating back to 1881, at the 140th Anniversary Gala, at the Damascus Events Centre.

The evening commenced with canapes and drinks in the DEC foyer, followed by a full schedule of celebration and entertainment in the event space.

Guests enjoyed a sumptuous sit-down two-course meal, whilst taking a step back in time as numerous speeches and videos celebrated the history of the three foundation colleges – Sacred Heart College, St Paul’s Technical College, and St Martin’s in the Pines – and their amalgamation to Damascus College, in 1995. What a rich, long and proud history!

Current students entertained the audience, including the College Choir, the String Ensemble, Acafellas, a student band, and past students shone brightly with beautiful drama and musical performances.

A special 140th-anniversary publication was distributed on the night, full of wonderful memories of years gone by.

It truly was very special to see the Damascus community come together to celebrate the history of the College. Throughout the night, the current principal, Mr Matthew Byrne was farewelled – our own ‘Mr Wonderful!’

Special memories were made on the night, and there was a great sense of pride amongst the guests, as the community now looks forward to what the next 140 years may hold for Damascus College.

The Damascus website history page has been updated with videos celebrating our 140 years; these were shown at the Gala event.

<https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/about-us/history/history>



FAREWELL TO A GREAT LEADER

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Mr Matthew Byrne commenced employment at Damascus College on 27 January 2009 as Senior Campus Coordinator of the Mt Clear campus.

In 2008 he was introduced and welcomed to the College at the Awards & Achievement Evening at the University of Ballarat Founders Hall (now Federation University), as long-time campus leader Tony Barrett was moving to Hobart.

At the time, Matt was a member of the leadership team at St Joseph's Catholic Secondary College in Echuca.

As the principal's health deteriorated, Sr Marie Davey and Matt Byrne, took on the significant responsibility of jointly leading the College, as co-principals on 21 May 2009. Matt led the senior campus, whilst Sr Marie led the junior campus at Victoria Street. It was also the year that plans were being enacted for the consolidation of the two campuses on the one Mt Clear site, and Matt and Sr Marie led this process as co-principals. It became apparent that the College would need a new principal, and after a nationwide advertising campaign, Matt Byrne was the successful applicant, taking up the reigns at the beginning of the 2011 school year.

As principal, the leadership Matt offered through the subsequent 12 years was outstanding. He was able to bring a positive sense of what a Catholic school is called to be and to the daily workings and long-term plans of the College. It must be said that sheer hard work and long hours in partnership with Sr Marie throughout this time were instrumental in this success.

It is difficult to reflect over the last 12 years, to give a summation of the significant milestones that Matt led during his time at Damascus. The following are but a few of them:

- Building Projects & Site Development including Murrnong Trail & Commemorative Walk
- Establishing the Timor-Leste Immersion
- Reviewing the TA Program
- Conducting Leadership Development Programs

- The response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse
- Introducing the Rowing Program
- Conducting College Reviews
- Completing studies in Theology
- Managing College Board and Governance Projects
- Conducting Office Reviews
- Introducing the My Plan Staff Development Model
- Acting as an Executive Member of the Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools Association of Victoria
- Conducting the Careers Review
- Conducting the Diverse Learning Review and introducing the NCCD funding model
- Establishing the One-to-One Device Program
- The development and implementation of the Strategic Plan and Directions
- The transition of College Governance

And many, many more...

On behalf of the Damascus community, we wish to thank Matt for his tireless commitment and contributions to developing Damascus College into the wonderful school that it is today. His compassionate and kind leadership style has been a beacon of light for the students, staff and families within the community that he loves so dearly.

Good luck with your new appointment as Deputy Director of Catholic Education at the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education (DOBCEL). Your many gifts and talents will now be shared more broadly with the wider Victorian community, and we are forever grateful for you and all that you have given to Damascus. God bless.

FAREWELL TO DAMASCUS

MATTHEW BYRNE

As I sit and write this last reflection in my role as Principal of Damascus College, I reflect with great pride on what has been an extraordinary 13 years of personal and professional growth for me. This community of Damascus College has been the place where my family have invested their life and education, and as I look back and forward it is with great gratitude. I have been gifted with a loving family, a meaningful career, supportive colleagues and a faith tradition to centre my contribution.

Our family moved to Ballarat in January of 2009, and I served for a very short period as Deputy Principal and Mt Clear Campus Coordinator before moving into the role of acting Co-Principal with Sr Marie Davey at the start of Term 2 in 2009.

I remember my first Board meeting at the former Victoria Street campus, where a motion was passed to consolidate the two campuses to the Mt Clear site for the commencement of the 2011 school year.

As I reflect on that time, it was a whirlwind.

The planning for the consolidation of the two campuses involved weekly meetings attended by then Board Chair, Maureen MacPhail and Catholic Education Ballarat secondary consultant and Board Member, Bill Slatter. Sr Marie, Paul Jans and I, with the support of the generous leadership team of Rod Mathews, Gerard Macklin, Tony Haintz and Karen Simpson, worked to put in place the foundations for Damascus College as we know it today. Rod, Karen and Gerard were aware that the planning made the roles that they filled redundant, but they did not shy away from the best outcomes for the college. The cultural foundations, the master plan, the leadership structure and the change management process were all given consideration. In planning for that change, one of the key dimensions was bringing cohesion to our staff team, which had operated as two units by virtue of their location. The ability to be able to build a new staff room at the Mt Clear site was incredibly valuable in bringing the staff teams together. The closing of the Victoria street campus and the symbolism of students moving books from one campus to the other remain strongly in my memory, together with the guard of honour formed by the senior students to welcome the junior students onto the Mt Clear site.

One area of great pride in my leadership role was the creation and implementation of the Teacher Advisor program at the College. Tony Duggan, Marie Davey and Rod Mathews had travelled to Canada and observed their model of education at the time. Rod and Marie returned and created the student-centred framework that we have today. Our Teacher Advisor program builds the relationship between the student, the school and the family over a six-year



Matthew Byrne 2020



Matt Byrne and family



Head of the Lake 2019



Swimming carnival 2018

period. It was always intended to ensure that no young person ‘falls through the cracks’. I am very proud of the commitment that staff and families have shown to this framework over time. The house system at Damascus College and the quality of the leaders have been instrumental to the success of this program and to the building up of our school community, which is very important to me.

Community, Community, Community Over the years, throughout my school addresses young people have counted the number of times I used the word community in my speeches. In my experience, faith, learning and social development all occur optimally in communal settings. As I have shared on many occasions, my childhood and adolescence in the small town of Boort in Northern Victoria were grounded in my rich experience of community. To have been able to foster a sense of community over my time at the College and to have young people pick up on it, albeit in a cheeky way on occasions, has been affirming for me. Students could have (and probably did) mocked my monotone, hairline, general content but over the years they have picked up community and passed it on to one another. I know many graduates of our College carry that forward into their broader contribution to society, and that will always bring me and all those associated with Damascus great satisfaction.

I am very grateful for the work of Tony Haintz in bringing forward our relationship with Timor Leste. Tony and Loretta Kaval travelled to Timor in 2009/10 with the support of St Joseph’s College, Echuca and planned a possible student immersion experience grounded in Catholic Social teaching. Members of the Damascus community always came back with a changed experience of the world in which we live following their engagement with the beautiful people of Timor. Witnessing our relative privilege and their desire for an education as a pathway out of poverty always created appreciation in those participating in the immersion. Like so many things, the immersion experience has had to be put on hold due to the COVID 19 pandemic, but hopefully there will be an opportunity in the future for Damascus to re-engage our relationship with Timor. My belief is that we were the greatest beneficiaries of this relationship.

It has been a privilege to be a part of the growth and development of the Emmaus Catholic Primary school community, which commenced on the Damascus site. Foundation Principal, Brendan Maher has been a wonderful mentor to me. Brendan has been firmly committed to the good governance of both schools and their ongoing relationship. This is work continued today by current principal Joanne Bond. The relationship between the schools and the continuity of quality learning from foundation to Year 12 have been among our joint successes. I love to see Damascus students head back over to Emmaus at the end of the day and welcome Emmaus students over to catch the bus at Damascus.

Damascus has so many cultural facets for which the principal role was caretaker. The school’s beautiful setting is one of these. We have worked over the years to combat the blackberry and invasive



Matt Byrne and Damascus students 2018

weeds on the site, and this work is attributable to the Green Group, committed volunteers, Paul Jans and the hard-working maintenance staff of the College. Staff member David Neate brought the community's attention to the humble Murnong Daisy, a small yam and historical food source for indigenous Australians. The Murnong has become symbolic of the biodiversity of the site, and each year we have become increasingly aware of the diverse flora on the site. It is a wonderful asset of the College.

The commemorative trail through our beautiful bush is, I think, one of Damascus College's wonderful attempts to recontextualise our beautiful Catholic traditions. Inspired by the stations of the cross, the different stations of the commemorative trail honour those who enabled our community and who are a part of our ongoing story: Indigenous forebears, Sisters of Mercy, Diocesan Priests, Christian Brothers, ADF personnel, victims of sexual abuse, those who died while attending or working at the College. Along with our Lady of Mercy Chapel, which was developed in consultation with the late Sr Anne Macmillan and designer Anthony Russo, the College has evolved in its responsibility and capacity to nurture the spirituality of all within the community.

The strong culture of the Arts in the College existed well before my arrival. I have gained great joy over my time from the achievements of young people in dramatic, visual, and performing arts. The commitment of the educators in these teams has nurtured generations of young people, and it has been a privilege to work alongside such dedicated and hard-working colleagues who have achieved success with students in both their formal studies and their co-curricular commitments. This has equally been the case with sport and other co-curricular programs such as sustainable racing/EBT. Student participation and success have been key to building engagement with the College, and the diversity of opportunities made available to young people in modern education facilities is extraordinary.

I have been deliberate over time in using the language of educators at Damascus rather than differentiating between teachers and support staff. All adults who work in schools are educators.

Every engagement they have with a young person is a learning opportunity and each staff member is an invaluable part of the educating team. The past two years, as we have reacted and responded to the global pandemic, have been amongst the most challenging of my principalship. To shift education to an online platform and to develop and evolve pastoral and learning structures challenged educational leaders and communities internationally. The Damascus leadership team were extraordinary in their commitment to this response, but equally, so were the team of educators that are the Damascus staff. The extraordinary commitment of educators at Damascus has, across my time at the College, always had the best interest of the young people at heart. Our community has always tried to keep a line of sight to the needs of each young person and their holistic educational growth. I thank all the educators, teachers and support professionals that I have worked with over the 13 years for their extraordinary work in bringing forth the good name of the College, great outcomes for young people and the living of Gospel values.

The reputational, educational, and environmental improvement that we have achieved over time has been the outcome of good governance and strategic planning. The Damascus College Board handed over their governance of the College to the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited on the first of January 2022. For the past 27 years, this corporate and canonical governance model has served our school community well. In my time as leader, Sr Veronica Lawson and Sr Berenice Kerr, together with Fr Adrian McInerney and Fr Kevin Maloney were Governors of the College, and Adrian and Veronica's involvement stretched back to the formation of Damascus, and Berenice and Kevin fostered the future best directions for the College. The charisms of the Sisters of Mercy and the Parishes of the Diocese were underpinned by these four individuals. I remain indebted for their spiritual and pastoral care of me and my family over my principalship. Equally, Board Directors and chairs have been incredibly professional and supportive of myself, the Leadership team and the broader school community. I extend my gratitude and appreciation to each director and chair for your care and commitment.



Matt Byrne, Marie Davey RSM, Tony Haintz and Paul Jans 2015

I have already referenced the Leadership team of the College, but I want to acknowledge the existing team of Christopher Grant, Ashwin Pillai, Justin Marson, Sarah Boswell, Tony Haintz and Andrew Robertson, who together with Paul Jans, Tina Munro and Lynda Calistro committed to meet as needed, which was weekends and evenings right throughout the pandemic response. They were and remain absolutely committed to the best outcomes of the College – as leaders, with previous leadership team members, they have respectfully challenged and grown me as a leader. They have instituted new programs, facilities, and cultures at Damascus with the support of the broader staff team, and we are all beneficiaries of their professional work. I thank them all equally.

Tina Munro in her role as Executive Assistant to the Principal has brought organisation and empathy to those who have sought the support of the principal, her compassion and professional skill have enabled me to lead effectively, and I am very grateful.

My great mentor and friend, Sr Marie Davey was instrumental in my applying for the principal role at the start of 2011. We had been co-principals in 2009 and 2010, and Marie supported me in applying for the principalship and has mentored me across the years. Marie grounded me in what Mercy spirituality entailed and she remains, with our other extraordinary Sisters of Mercy, a living example of the vision of Catherine McAuley. I am indebted to Marie for her belief and support of me.

I can still see Sr Marie at the head of the table late in the interview for my initial appointment to Damascus. She had reflected on my interview responses and asked her final question. “Matthew, it is evident that you have great skills working with young people, but can you work with old people?” Marie’s sense of fun, and her belief in the importance of having fun at work and school, were things we tried to build into all that we did.

My principalship and my immediate and extended family have been intertwined. My parents modelled for me the importance of education and community. My God Mother Kate Cary and her husband Brian from Gordon have been our family here in Ballarat and were my initial connection with the Damascus community. Our

children were very young when we arrived. Thomas was six when we moved to Ballarat and Grace five, both starting at the Emmaus Catholic Primary school. Xavier was three and Ruby 10 months old. Our children have grown up with Dad as Principal. Tom and Grace have recently graduated and Xavier and Ruby approach their final years.

They have had to navigate the challenges of being in the same school as Dad, and I have received very direct feedback on school programs and my speeches at the dinner table. My abiding pride in them for their love and care for me in taking on role modelling responsibilities, and forgoing my presence from time to time, is immense. I have been fortunate to be present on their educational journey and in getting to know their friends. It is great to see the work of a school through the growth of your own children. My wife, Julie, as an alumnus of the College, has been selfless in supporting me and Damascus College. Julie made sure that the wheels at home kept turning whatever was happening within the Damascus community. Her contribution to my ability to be attentive to the needs of the community and our family remains a great gift; her love and support have enabled me to do what I have done.

Finally, as I conclude my time with Damascus, I thank the members of this community for choosing Damascus as your school. The thousands of enrolment interviews conducted over the years highlight the commitment of families to the best outcomes for their young people. Journeying with those young people and their families as a principal, and as educators, we are invited into their lives. We walk with students and families through some of their most intimate and vulnerable times, and we are trusted with that vulnerability. I am thankful for the trust that has been invested in me over my time as an educational leader and principal. I thank the members of the Damascus community for your belief, support and trust, and I remain invested in the future growth of the College and the journey of those who have attended our community. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of principalship in this great community, and best wishes for the future as you continue to live by the light of Christ.

Matthew Byrne, Principal, 2009–2022



WORD CLOUD

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Damascus College staff were asked to describe Matthew Byrne in one word, and the above Word Cloud was created.



FRIENDSHIPS FORGED AT DAMASCUS

ALUMNI STORY

Hi! My name is Aislinn Prendergast, and it has been almost 15 years since I graduated from Damascus College, in 2007.

A lot has happened since then! After leaving school I went to the University of Melbourne to study Chemical Engineering and graduated in 2012. Leaving Ballarat for Melbourne was a pretty big change and it meant moving away from most of my friends, but the friends I made at Damascus are still some of my closest friends today – and I know I'm not alone in that.

After finishing university, I went on to my first job as a graduate engineer in a consulting firm that was focused on the Oil and Gas industry. This job taught me a lot and gave me many opportunities, including (briefly) moving to Perth and working on the company's first Reconciliation Action Plan.

Most of those who knew me at Damascus knew that one of my biggest passions was my sport, Orienteering – and Damascus gave me so much support (despite it being an unknown sport). Since leaving Damascus I have represented Australia at two Junior World Championships and five World Championships. Orienteering has given me the opportunity to travel the world, have some incredible experiences and meet some amazing people. So, in 2016 I decided to move with my partner to the UK for two years, where I worked in a running shop part-time while travelling into Europe a lot to compete on the international Orienteering circuit.

After getting back from the UK, I was determined to move my career to a new industry, so I began studying for a Master's in Water Engineering. However, shortly after, I was fortunate to find a job at Melbourne Water, where I work today, whilst still completing my Master's (very slowly). Melbourne Water is a really rewarding place to work, with a caring culture and a real drive to make a difference in people's lives.

Looking back, Damascus gave me many things. The friends I made there, which goes almost without saying. A drive to always challenge myself. To care for the people around me, and be passionate about inclusion, fairness and equality. Damascus didn't just care about having students that were getting the top marks, but about guiding people into being leaders in their families and communities. How could I forget teachers like Gavin Walsh with his stopwatch (and track pants) during lunchtime cross-country sessions, or the late Tony Purcell, who had us all roaring with laughter one minute but learning some of life's most important lessons the next? Damascus was a big part of who I am today, and I'll always cherish my time there.

Aislinn Prendergast, Class of 2007



Damascus College Rowing 2022

2021 / 2022 ROWING SEASON REVIEW

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

The Damascus College Rowing Program has again performed above expectations! This season we had seven girls coxed quad sculls, one girls coxed four, two girls double sculls, four boys coxed quad sculls and one boys coxed four. This totalled 69 students competing at Head of the Lake in 2022, with many crews being very competitive in their event and placing our program fourth overall out of the five competing schools.

We started the season by receiving two brand-new coxed quad sculls from Sykes Racing, named the St Francis Xavier and the St Alipius, these new boats combined with our new oars set us up very well for a new era in rowing in Ballarat. All junior and intermediate crews moved away from sweep rowing and began sculling, a move that puts Ballarat rowing in line with the rest of the country.

The Damascus College rowing students have shown a natural ability to learn the new technique and have laid the groundwork for a long and competitive future in quad scull racing with our program.

The 2021 pre-season finished with a week-long local training camp for all crews. This week included a talk from recent Olympian Rosie Poppa! Rosie spoke to the rowing students and staff on her journey from schoolgirl rower, to American college rower and to Australian representative rower. This presentation set up the theme of our season, building on your resilience.

The 2022 rowing calendar started with the annual Senior Nagambie Rowing Camp; however, intermediate crews were invited for the first time. Unfortunately, several of the students in both senior and intermediate age groups were unable to attend at short notice. This forced the students who were able to attend to be resilient and focus on the controllable. We had a fantastic week in Nagambie with plenty of rowing, swimming, hiking and stand-up

padding! After the Nagambie camp we returned to Ballarat and competed in the first regatta of the new year; all crews performed extremely well and set the tone for the regattas to follow.

At the time of writing, we have three major regattas left for the season, the Victorian State Championships on 5 and 6 March, the Head of the Schoolgirls from 18 to 20 March, and the Australian Rowing Championships from 28 March to 3 April. I and the coaches are looking forward to each of these events and can't wait to see how our students perform.

Representing Damascus College at the Australian Rowing Championships this year are the following students:

- Daisy Simpson-Kerr
- Jovie Skewes-Clinton
- Charley Gartlan
- Flynn Rivett
- Josh Matheson
- Alex Western

A big thank you to all involved! It takes significant effort from many people to make the rowing program as successful as it is. No matter how big or small your input has been you have not gone unnoticed.

A few special mentions:

- Georgia O'Leary
- Hamish Walsh
- Nikki Hexter
- The entire volunteer coaching team
- Everyone who volunteered at the fundraising BBQ

Paul Blanchfield
Rowing Coordinator





SHC Leaving Class 1956

MY FOND BOARDING MEMORIES

ALUMNI STORY

I was born on 10 June 1940 at the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne. The Second World War had started, and Dad was in the Australian Army. In Terang, where we lived, you could go to Grade 8 at the Primary School and then go on to the High School in Terang or go to a Catholic boarding school. The Terang girls who went away mainly went to Sacred Heart or Mary's Mount in Ballarat and the boys went to St Pat's, so in 1954 I left my best friend Patty Beasley to go to Sacred Heart as a boarder, starting in Form 3.

I loved my four years at Sacred Heart College, even though we only got to go home three times a year, and our parents could visit on the first Sunday of the month. I was 14 and came from a small country town, and as I only had a brother it was wonderful to have so many 'sisters' from all over Victoria. In March of my first year, the Queen came to Ballarat and we very excitedly formed a Guard

of Honour for her down Victoria Street. Mum and Dad came up for the occasion and for their first visit to me. I think they were a bit disappointed that I wasn't homesick.

Another big occasion in my boarding school days was the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. Ballarat was hosting the Rowing and we were taken by bus up to the Lake to see some of the heats. We even got autographs from some of the rowers. (I still have the autograph book). Ballarat was done up to the nines with all sorts of decorations, and one night we were taken by bus through the city to see the coloured lights...very exciting.

Boarding school was very different in those days. We stayed in the school, not going down the street unless on a very important errand and then accompanied by a nun. Our class did walk down to St Paul's Tech in Lydiard St each week to do cooking and sewing and



Lynette Densley, Elizabeth Morganti, Pauline O'Hehir and Georgina Clark Circa 1955

sometimes we even caught a glimpse of a boy. Boys were creatures we saw little of, so I was very popular on the second Sunday of each month when my 'spunky' cousin would come and visit me. The girls would use any excuse to come and speak to me and be introduced. He was a boarder at St Pat's so I guess he thought it was good too – they did not see many girls. All these years later, I wonder if that was why he visited me for four years.

My husband Jim went to school at St Paul's but we were not destined to meet there. He left school at the end of 1954 and started an apprenticeship the next year at John Valves, the Pattern shop, then situated in Armstrong Street. A lot of my friends left school to get jobs after Year 10, but I went on to Year 12, or Matriculation as it was called then. A friend had left to become a Radiographer and I asked Mum in a letter what that was. Sr Raymond read the letter and came to tell me there was a job as a Radiographer coming up the next year at St John of God Hospital if I was interested. I still didn't know what a Radiographer did but went to meet Sr Theodore and see the X-Ray Department and she gave me the job, as I had passed Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Maths in Leaving (Yr 11). I left Sacred Heart at the end of 1957 aged 17 and in Jan 1958 I started at St John's Hospital.

Lynette Muller, née Densley, Class of 1957



Lynette Muller

BRIGHT FUTURES BREAKFAST

DAMASCUS EVENT

The Damascus College Bright Futures Breakfast held on the morning of Tuesday 23 November 2021 was a fabulous success.

Guests began arriving at the Damascus Events Centre at 6.15 am for this annual fundraising event and were treated to the amazing view that encompasses the campus all the way to Wendouree as the sun came up.

A highlight of the event was the Senior Choir's performance. In the last 2 years, due to restrictions and safety concerns, we have been very limited in the number of live performances that our choir have been able to sing. At the event, we were blessed to have Maria Russell, our musical performing arts coordinator leading our Senior Choir as they sang for the assembled audience. It was wonderful to see them back on stage.

Guests of the event were delighted by the speech prepared and given by recent graduate Nicholas Kattula, Class of 2021. Nick was the recipient of the Academic Achievement scholarship in 2018. He shared what a difference this had made not only in his life but also in the life of his family. He spoke of his Damascus education and the breadth of activities he had been able to undertake while a student. He also told the audience about how being a recipient of a scholarship had boosted his confidence and led him down pathways he wouldn't otherwise have walked.

Our special guest speaker, Jocelyn Bignold OAM, then gave a thoughtful and moving presentation on McAuley Community Services for Women. At the conclusion of her Q&A session with the audience, she was presented with a Damascus Jacket that she has passed along to those in need and a glorious bunch of flowers which will be enjoyed here at the Ballarat office. Breakfast was then served, with members of the Year 12 VCAL group on hand to ensure guests had their plates filled as they journeyed along the buffet line.

The annual Bright Futures Breakfast is a wonderful event that provides opportunities for our students to shine and our wider community to come together to support a truly worthy cause. The scholarship provides a Damascus College education to a student and supports families experiencing financial or personal disadvantage, and who demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice activities and contribute to their local community, but may not otherwise be able to access a Catholic education.



Guest speakers: Jocelyn Bignold and Nicholas Kattula

BRIGHT FUTURES BREAKFAST

You are invited to
SAVE THE DATE

Thursday 4 August

7am - 8.45am

Please join us for this annual
Damascus College event to support
the Bright Futures Scholarship



#TogetherWeAreDamascus



JORDAN, THE MAN TO BEAT!

JORDAN ISERGIN

In late January 2022, Year 12 student Jordan Isergin dominated at the 1/10th Victorian Radio Controlled (RC) Off-Road State titles held in Keilor. Jordan took the win in both the Mod 2WD buggy and Mod 4WD buggy classes.

Jordan has long been an enthusiast of RC Car racing, a miniature form of motorsport racing, which consists of the driver and the RC Car. Jordan explained that "professional RC car racing requires dedication and commitment to be at the top of the game". RC Car has a similar format to full-size car racing. The race event starts off with practice, then goes into qualifying, and finishes with the head-to-head races to decide the podium.

The environment within the pits and the competition on the racetrack are just some of what Jordan enjoys about this sport. "Being able to race wheel to wheel with other competitors just like full-size motorsports but in an intense fast-paced race is what I enjoy most about the sport. The friends I've made along the journey have become close mates, which I'm able to also compete against and have a laugh in the pits. I'm able to do this sport as a family with my two brothers who also race, my dad as my pitman and my mum who runs the canteen at my local club in Melbourne."

Jordan has been lucky enough to travel to many parts of Australia, including Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, and he hopes to travel soon to Brisbane. In 2019 Jordan was selected to travel to Slovakia in Europe to represent Australia at the world championships, and he hopes to be able to travel more internationally as COVID travel restrictions ease.

Jordan's success on the track has raised his profile, and he is recognized as 'the man to beat'. Jordan says that his success adds tension to the race event for him, as he feels others' expectations are

high, and they are looking for him to do well. "To be successful over your rivals requires dedication and commitment, which I was able to put in going into this event." His competitors, other crews, and fans of RC Car racing have learned what Jordan can achieve going into a race event. The double win across two classes means a lot to Jordan and reflects his countless hours of practice on the track and preparation going into the event.

"Being told I was the man to beat is flattering, but it also adds pressure. I find it motivates me to work harder and give it my all. It makes me want to become better and achieve the best race result possible. Going into my races I felt confident as I knew my race car was the best it could be, which just meant I had to drive the car to the finish line."

In 2019 Jordan was ranked 61st in the world and was the top Australian driver in the 2WD segment at the world championships. He is sponsored by some large international companies and has also received support from some smaller local companies. It is that support that allows him to have the best equipment possible. "It really means a lot to be a champion, to be recognized and acknowledged by my sponsors and other racers that are well experienced makes me feel proud of what I've achieved at a young age, and to now have four Victorian State Title wins, it's even better," said Jordan.

In May 2022, Jordan is looking forward to competing in Brisbane for the QLD State Titles, and in August he hopes to be in Sydney for the NSW Titles and then back to Brisbane in September for the Australian National Championships. Jordan hopes to be able to travel a lot more once he has finished school. He is keen to travel internationally to be able to gain more experience by competing against the world's best drivers.



St Martin's in the Pines, May 1967

A PIONEER REMEMBERS

ALUMNI STORY

As boarders at Sacred Heart, we were bursting with excitement to leave the confines of the old red bricks and so were naturally disappointed when upon our return to school at the end of March we learned of the postponement of residence at St Martin's and instead were asked to take up our post with Sr Ignatius on the third floor of the noviciate. It wasn't until 29 May 1967 that saw the historical landing of the 'First Fleet' at St Martin's in the Pines. We explored the buildings, grounds and neighbourhood with promising results. We were the matriculation class of 1967 – the pioneers.

In the 1967 Sacred Heart College Senior Campus – St Martin's in the Pines (St Martin's) school yearbook, the 'transit' school principal Mother Genevieve McDonald wrote:

This has been a year of transition for all at Sacred Heart College – from old to new, from crowded places to spacious areas, from all grades to just senior grades, from double desks to single desks, from long tables to round tables, from urban setting to rural setting. There have been many changes in accidentals, but we hope no change to fundamentals. The best traditions of Sacred Heart College must be maintained... As with all new ventures, we have had our problems, but these have been shared by all and generally, in the very sharing comes the solution. We hope that, in the future, this sense of community will deepen and continue to grow.

Mother Genevieve was right. Regardless of the location, we continued with the best traditions of Sacred Heart. Marching as a sport under the guidance of Sr Damian, who conducted steady training and insisted on constant practising, paid dividends twice over. At the interschool sports, SHC's marching team came a good first, gaining 98 out of a possible 100 points. In Melbourne during October, the prowess of the marching team was once again proved through their winning of the marching competition in the Mercy Sports.

The Matrics performed the play *Murder in the Cathedral* in the library, which was reported in the newspaper, the *Ballarat Courier* 'to be a polished and sincere' production. Full credit to Ms Bowman who cast, produced and directed the play for the school. Ms Bowman inspired students with trips to see *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* at Ballarat's Queen's Church of England Girls' Grammar School. Literature was a wonderful subject to study under her.

At the end of November, it was a whirlwind of matriculation exams, the 'Auld Lang Syne' party and the last communal gathering, but the end finally came on 30 November when the majority of the pioneers weepingly departed.

Eileen Walsh (nee Ryan), Class of 1967



Damascus College celebrates the Easter Liturgy together

2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

We are excited to launch the 2021 to 2025 Damascus College Strategic Plan. This plan is a product of extensive consultation and reflection undertaken by the College Board and Sub-committees, in collaboration with the leadership team, and is informed by community feedback collected throughout the school review process.

The Strategic Plan focuses on who we are, what we believe, and who we are becoming. It is underpinned by the principles of Catholic social teaching and the critical importance of a safe and inclusive environment for every child and young person.

It is designed to enable each Damascus community member to reach their potential and to make every individual an agent of their own future. It is in this context that Be. My. Best. has emerged as our aspirations statement. It grows out of the rich Mercy and Diocesan traditions of the College, and it draws heavily on the story of the conversion of St Paul as inspiration to drive our plan.

The plan identifies five core pillars for Damascus College. The five pillars are linked, and each pillar is vital to activating and achieving the strategic plan. Each pillar's strategic priorities will activate concurrently in a measured and considered way with the other pillars over the 5-year journey. These pillars are:

- Faith & Catholic Identity
- Learning & Leading
- Wellbeing in Action
- Community Connection
- Future & Stewardship.

The experience of a Damascus education has a profound impact on all members of the community and develops attributes for life beyond school. Students will have developed a Gospel focus in the Mercy tradition, self-awareness, emotional wellbeing, critical thinking and problem solving, cultural awareness, and global citizenship.

It is our strategic aspiration that by 2025, Be. My. Best. – Be. Your. Best. – Be Our Best will be woven into the institutional fabric of Damascus College. It will enable every student, every staff member and every family member or community partner to become agents of their own futures. We will have opened pathways of self-determination relevant for today, tomorrow and forever.

Be. My. Best. will be evident in the capacities, the authenticity, the discernment, and the humanity of those within the College who learn, teach, and enable. It will shine always in the lives that are illuminated by living in the light of Christ.

Further information on the plan, including the brochure and a video, can be found at:

<https://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/about-us/strategic-plan-2021-2025>

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.

SR MARY CATHERINE OF SIENNA

DAMASCUS SISTER OF MERCY

Gertrude Healy was one of four sisters, all of whom were educated at Sacred Heart College in its very early days. From the age of eight, Gertrude possessed a musical ability for the violin beyond her years. She was a regular victor at Ballarat's famous South Street Competitions and at the age of eleven won the Entrance Exhibition to the Marshall Conservatorium of Music. For four years she studied the violin and cello under Professor George Marshall-Hall, gaining a Diploma of Music. It was during these years of study that she made her first public appearance at the Melbourne Town Hall, at the age of 13, playing the Beethoven Romance in F at a recital by Australian soprano Evelyn Scotney. In 1913, determined to make her way to Europe, she held a fundraising concert in Melbourne, and in February 1914 she set sail with her sister Kathleen (later Sister Mary Francis Xavier). In Berlin Gertrude studied under the great Siegfried Eberhardt. It was an incredible adventure for two young convent-raised women.

With World War I looming, the sisters were warned by friends at home to leave Germany, which they did with regret and in such haste they did not even have time to take their luggage. War was declared just 24 hours after their safe departure. In England, Gertrude was able to resume her studies under well-known English Violinist Albert Sammons, while Kathleen studied piano and singing. Gertrude gave many public recitals in London and then in Ireland, becoming a darling of the London Press. She was committed to the war effort, often playing charity concerts in hospitals. Both Gertrude and Kathleen returned to Melbourne in 1920, via New York where Gertrude gave several successful recitals.

Kathleen then entered the Ballarat Convent of Mercy as Sr Francis Xavier, joining her sister Eileen, then Sister Bonaventure Healy. Gertrude meanwhile took charge of the Violin School at the Albert Street Conservatorium in Melbourne. By this time, her gifts with the violin were widely known and praise was flowing in from musical greats worldwide. For the next 20 years, she continued her work



Gertrude Healy as a young woman

Spencer STEER



SHC school concert 1902



SHC Orchestra Circa 1948

at the Conservatorium, conducting the orchestra and performing in public herself. This commitment was made in part to support her family, and in 1948 after the death of her parents and her beloved sister Kathleen, she found herself free to leave the conservatorium and concert life for the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy as Sister Catherine of Sienna. She joined her sister, now Mother Bonaventure, and began a 35-year long career teaching music and conducting the SHC orchestra. She found particular delight in teaching young beginners, hoping to catch children at the onset of their love of music. She stopped teaching only in her final two years when her eyesight had started to fail, and she passed away at the age of 90.

Sr Catherine of Sienna was known as a born teacher who knew how to use her music to bring much joy and beauty into the lives of those around her. Many past students of SHC still hold fond memories of Sr Catherine of Sienna, and her talent ensured the college kept its reputation for excellence in music education.

With thanks to the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea for their assistance providing us with material for this piece.



Sr M Catherine of Siena



2022 COLLEGE CAPTAIN

MEGAN O'BEIRNE

Hello everyone! My name is Megan O'Beirne, and I am one of Damascus' College Captains this year. I have lived in Buninyong for most of my life with my parents and seven siblings.

Being elected as one of the College Captains for 2022 is a huge honour and privilege, and I hope to make the most of this incredible opportunity to lead and represent the school and its community. I'm very grateful for this chance to give back to the college, as Damascus has done so much for me since Year 7. I'm really looking forward to all the big events we have coming up this year, especially the 140-year Gala in March and Damascus Day later on in the year.

In my life away from school, I am a volunteer cricket coach with the Mount Clear Cricket Club (MCCC) where I coach the U/14s girls' teams alongside Ella Young, another Damascus student. When I was growing up and learning to play, the girls' cricket competitions in Ballarat were brand new and there weren't many older female cricketers at the Mounties, so I see coaching as an awesome opportunity to show girls that there are more opportunities than ever to play and excel in cricket, as well as other typically male-dominated sports. I love that I have been able to come back to the club as a coach and be a role model for the girls – they're all great kids and I love coaching the teams.

This year at Damascus, I am studying English Language, Mathematical Methods, Specialist Mathematics, Physics, and Indonesian, all of which are subjects that I absolutely adore. Although all these subjects are fantastic, my favourite subject at Damascus has been Drama. I accelerated in the subject and

completed Units 3/4 last year. Drama, taught by Mr Andrew Seery, was my creative outlet, and being able to perform both devised pieces and productions to/with my classmates and other peers has been the highlight of my high schooling thus far. To stay within reach of the subject this year, I am auditioning for this year's production of "Clue" which is a straight play and I've got my fingers crossed for the cast list! Although I don't have Drama as a subject in 2022, I still have classes that I love and I can't wait for the year to come.

If any parents and primary school students are reading this and considering Damascus College as a high school option, I cannot recommend our College enough. The support and care poured into the students and their education is incalculable, and the subjects and teachers create learning environments that are so inclusive and fun. Anyone can find their interests and be supported in their pursuit in those areas, regardless of what they are. My advice for new Year 7 students would be to get involved with as much of the school life as possible – put your hand up for the Swimming and Athletics Carnivals, join a club or after-school sport, ask questions, and don't be afraid to explore things that may scare you or are unfamiliar to you. That's what I've done all throughout high school and it has increased the enjoyment of my experience exponentially.

Thank you all for reading! I hope I get the chance to meet all of you in the coming year.



2022 COLLEGE CAPTAIN

LEWIS CLARK

Hello, my name is Lewis Clark, and I was born in Carlton – as I am from a mad Carlton Football Club supporting family, I really couldn't have been born anywhere else. My family (Mum, Dad, and younger brother) moved to Ballarat when I was three years old and we have lived here ever since.

I have been a student at Damascus for five years and this year I will be completing VCE. During my time at Damascus, I have enjoyed being part of a great community. I have been a keen participant in many college activities, whether that has been attending school masses, house assemblies, participating in house sports days or going on the many excursions, retreats and camps.

Having the honour of being College Captain for 2022 is a highly privileged role at any school, especially Damascus. At Damascus I feel as though I have reached the top of the community. In Year 7 I used to look up to the leaders of the school and think how amazing it must have been for them; now I'm one of those leaders, which is a dream come true, and I hope younger students will be inspired by Megan and myself and the other student leaders. I'd like to think that I am as open and welcoming as all the previous College Captains.

As College Captain, I am looking forward to attending many more events than I have in the last few years. I am excited about the possibility of addressing the whole student body and attending events such as Damascus Day, which sadly we have missed in the past few years. I am also looking forward to working with the student cohort to gather feedback and make positive changes to school life here at Damascus.

I have had some very fond memories of Damascus over my time here, and a few stick out. The many camps we have attended have

definitely been up there, giving me the time to bond with my peers and teachers, as well as all the school sporting events such as swimming and athletics carnivals, which bring out the competitive spirit in us all. Being a musician, I cannot look past all of the amazing ensembles and music opportunities I have been able to experience at the college – many of them alongside Megan and other like-minded people, which has been lots of fun.

I am sure you have all noticed by now my passion for music (which my friends say is my personal trait). I have learned how to play an endless number of instruments, with my main ones being piano, alto saxophone, and tuba. Music is one of my passions and hence I study it at school along with my other favourite subject, Biology, and I hope to study both after secondary school. I would like to become a teacher.

For Year 7 students entering the college, some words of wisdom from me would be to get into good study habits as early as possible, as the later you start the harder it is to change. Also, take advantage of all the opportunities the college offers. Damascus is a huge school with so many different groups and after-school activities to join, I can guarantee there is something for everyone. I have made use of some of these opportunities throughout my time, and although I struggled with some, I enjoyed others, and I am thankful I took these chances and was able to meet new people and find common interests with them.

I would like to give all my best wishes to students in this upcoming year: let's hope it is better than the last.



Story of the
Chosen People

Creation of the World and Man.
 ↓
 Fall of Man and Promise of Redemption
 ↓
 The Corruption of Mankind.
 ↓
 The Deluge
 Noah
 Cham
 Cush
 Canaan
 Mesopotamia
 Egypt
 Palestine

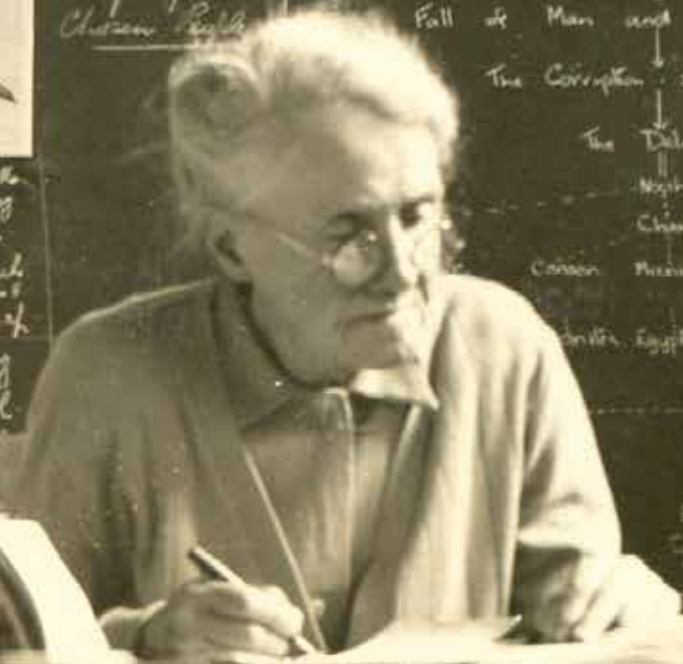


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REMEMBERING MS HARRINGTON

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Something firm and upright in that name suggests the woman who bore it. She never compromised, never accepted anything but the best of which you were capable, never relaxed until the last wisp of cloudiness or uncertainty had vanished from the problem, she was compelling you to grasp. No pandering to the modern trend of making education attractive! You trained your mind as an athlete trains their body to make it do the things they want it to.

In the days when Miss Harrington first went out teaching, the hallmark of success was the number of Government scholarships a teacher could win for their school, and the competition was fierce. The boys and girls who won them were confidently expected to have brilliant careers, and many of them did. Up in the Mallee last year I met a well-read and very intelligent young lady who told me that she had been the first of Miss Harrington's pupils to win a government scholarship and that it happened in Miss Harrington's first school at Snake Valley. You can imagine the children awestruck at the rather tall, serious young girl, with the plait of fair hair hanging down her back, who had managed to stuff so much learning into her head that Father Barrett had given her charge of the whole school, big boys, and all.

Years and years after, Miss Harrington told me that she was simply terrified by this first school. She felt helpless and useless, with all the book-learning, in the midst of these down-to-earth country people who looked at her with such frank curiosity. Why, oh why, she thought, are young girls sent out into the world with no idea at all what life really is? You get the impression that she withdrew into herself and gave up all ideas of making contact with people her own age. They got the idea that she was aloof when she was merely shy, severe when she was merely embarrassed. She would have been amazed if she had known with what awe they regarded her and saddened if she had known the little ones were afraid. I can remember well that they were, for I was one of them, in her second school, Allendale. However, as soon as she returned to Ballarat East and began to teach for the Sisters of Mercy who had educated her, there was never any question of breaches of discipline. Who would have thought of playing up in Miss Harrington's class?

While teaching at St Alipius, Miss Harrington lived with her sister in a small cottage near the school owned by the Sisters of Mercy. Kathleen Meagan often came over from the convent to spend the evening. Though neither of the Harringtons were musical, and Kathleen was a musical genius, the three of them were kindred spirits in many ways which made these happy years. With her warm and generous nature, Kathleen knew how to uncover the vein of humour and kindness which lay very close to the surface in Bridget Harrington, though few realised it, seeing only the school-ma'am, firm and stern. It would have done her pupils good to see their teacher helpless with mirth while Kathleen, a born mimic, read aloud the adventures of Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster. It might have made life easier for themselves and their teacher if they had only known she was a very human person, after all!

Eventually, she moved over to Sacred Heart and senior students, where she taught English and history right up until her last illness. There are girls who seem to have gone through secondary school and emerged with minds as blank as a wiped slate. I don't think that could be so with any of Miss Harrington's girls. She left each one with some hardcore of knowledge, some cud of learning as it were, that could be chewed over for years to come. In a world that is no longer sure of anything, the values she implanted still stand firm.

Her last years were lonely, in spite of the care lavished on her by the Sisters of Mercy. Her beloved sister had gone to heaven, and Kath Meagan had been dead many years. What a happy homecoming it must have been for them all when heaven opened to the last comer of the three! She kept her own thoughts to herself. A pity! They were very warm and human thoughts after all.

L. M. Quinlan, taken from the 1950 SHC Annual



2022 STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

DAMASCUS COLLEGE



Absent: Jayden Bickley, Isla Casey, Morgan McCann, Lara Lee, Shannon Cargill, Casey Hennig, Will McGifford, Jack Corrigan, Ryder Lavery, Paris Govan, Matilda Watt, Anna Hodge, Hannah Brightly and Duke Pilmore

POSITION	MCAULEY	ST MARTIN	RICE	XAVIER
College Captains	Megan O'Beirne Lewis Clark			
House Captains	Thomas Ashley	Mackenzie Aspland	Jayden Bickley	Isla Casey
House Captains	Shannon Craggill	Brady Lucas	Morgan McCann	Laura Lee
House Captains	Casey Hennig	Mikayla Montgomery	Samara McLeod	Tiarna Parry
House Captains	Will McGifford	Campbell Palmer	Amy Wells	Brayden Welsh
Year 11	Jack Corrigan	Julia Primerano	Ryder Lavery	Daisy Simpson-Kerr
Year 10	Zoe Newman	Zoe Kierce	Lucas Wells	Paris Govan
Year 9	Matilda Watt	Anna Hodge	Hannah Brightly	Lucy Baldwin
Year 8	Dana Reynolds	Lucy Gravell	Emily O'Brien	Samuel Handreck
Year 7	Oscar Henderson	Riley Kelly	Emily Meade	Duke Pilmore



SRC PRESIDENT

TIARNA PARRY

After a challenging and exciting high school journey, the class of 2022 has reached our final year. My name is Tiarna Parry, and I am the SRC president for 2022.

I have attended Damascus since 2017, starting as a small, eager Year 7. Now in Year 12, following the unprecedented times over the past couple of years, I am aiming to make the most out of this year.

As SRC president, I hope to make 2022 as memorable as possible. Events such as Damascus Day, bake sale, sports days and other fundraisers are just a few of the activities that have been impacted, but this year the SRC are working hard to ensure these events are put on and enjoyed by everyone in the college community.

Being SRC president, to me, means that I am approachable, and I am someone who can work with anyone. It means I include everyone and am someone who people can trust and listen to. It means I am someone the SRC and students can look up to and rely on, as being voted in by my peers.

In 2022, I have set many goals, which I aim to achieve. These include academic goals, such as ATAR and SAC scores, but also many non-academic ones, such as making and building new

relationships with people in the cohort, successful organisation and participation in school and non-school events, and just ensuring I enjoy my last year of secondary education.

As a Year 12 student, I am most looking forward to being a leader and being involved within the school as much as possible. As a house captain, I am quite excited for swimming sports, athletics day, and lap of the lake, as it is an opportunity for my house (Xavier) to come together as a community and celebrate together, and for students to showcase what it means to them to be a part of their house.

I am looking forward to making many lasting memories and friendships, which I can take away with me after high school, as well as continuing to learn and grow, as I navigate my way through my final year. After high school, I hope to go to Melbourne or Deakin University and study for a Bachelor of Science.

Tiarna Parry, Year 12 student



2021 Award Recipients

ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY

DAMASCUS EVENT

On Monday 21 February 2022, Damascus College welcomed back members of the Class of 2021 as we celebrated their academic excellence throughout 2021 at the annual Academic Assembly.

It was a wonderful affirmation of the students' hard work, dedication and perseverance displayed throughout what was another very challenging year.

Due to COVID-19, the event had limited attendance, and in order to share this wonderful occasion with the whole school cohort, it was recorded and shown at a later TA.

Our 2022 College Captains, Megan O'Beirne and Lewis Clark, were the emcees for the evening, and we were excited to welcome back our College Dux, Mia Lepair, as she addressed the audience and shared some beautiful memories of her time at Damascus. She also provided insight as to how she achieves academic excellence.

To entertain the audience, Year 11 student Zeb Nelson performed 'Arabesque No 1' by Claude Debussy on the piano.

Congratulations to all award recipients. Following are the award recipients recognised and celebrated at this event.



2021 VCE UNIT 3 & 4 STUDY SCORE OF 40+ AWARD			
Name	Year	Subject	Score
Lillian Snare	11	Physical Education	40
Maya Tolliday	12	Health and Human Development	42
Amber Kennett	12	Health and Human Development	43
Payton Overall	12	Drama	40
Megan O'Beirne	11	Drama	40
Maya Tolliday	12	Drama	42
Maya Tolliday	12	Chemistry	43.58*
Xavier Clonan	11	Chemistry	40.97*
Mia Lepair	12	Chemistry	44.4*
Mia Lepair	12	Mathematical Methods	41.41*
Nicholas Kattula	12	Mathematical Methods	40.35*
Nicholas Kattula	12	Specialist Mathematics	40.43*
Aimee Gunn	12	Specialist Mathematics	40.43*
Maya Tolliday	12	Further Mathematics	41
Fraser Crumpler	11	Biology	40.04*
Nicholas Kattula	12	Physics	40.31*
Amber Kennett	12	Psychology	41
Amber Kennett	12	French	40.79*
Ruby Gibson	12	French	40.79*
Tia Clarkson-Pascoe	12	French	40.79*
Mia Lepair	12	French	46.85*
Mia Lepair	12	English Language	40.85*
Benjamin Wright	12	English	41
Benjamin Wright	12	History: Revolutions	46.49*
Benjamin Wright	12	Legal Studies	48.23*

* Scaled study score

SPECIAL AWARDS			
Name	Year	Award	
Amber Kennett	12	2021 VCE Baccalaureate Award	
Mia Lepair	12	2021 VCE Baccalaureate Award	
Zac McCarthy	12	2021 VET Achievement Award	
Joshua Matheson	11	2021 Westvic Staffing Solutions VET Excellence Award	
Scarlett Dockerill	11	2021 Westvic Staffing Solutions VET Excellence Award	
Campbell Palmer	11	2021 Westvic Staffing Solutions VET Excellence Award	
Hannah Fratantaro	11	2021 Westvic Staffing Solutions VET Excellence Award	
Olivia King	12	2021 VCAL Achievement Award	
Mia Lepair	12	Academic Honours Award	
Amber Kennett	12	Academic Honours Award	
Name	Year	Award	Score
Nicholas Kattula	12	2021 VCE ATAR of 90+ Award	93.05
Aimee Gunn	12	2021 VCE ATAR of 90+ Award	93.4
Amber Kennett	12	2021 VCE ATAR of 90+ Award	93.45
Maya Tolliday	12	2021 VCE ATAR of 90+ Award	93.4
Benjamin Wright	12	2021 VCE ATAR of 90+ Award	97.25
Mia Lepair	12	2021 VCE ATAR of 90+ Award	98.2
Mia Lepair	12	2021 Damascus College Dux	98.2



St Paul's Technical College Multi-cultural class 1982



Gerard Robertson, 2015

MY FIRST DAY AT ST PAUL'S

ALUMNI STORY

When the school contacted me and asked me to write about myself, I wasn't sure what I would write, but after thinking about it for a while I decided to share my first day at St Paul's.

I remember when I arrived at Ludbrook House for my first day of school at St Paul's, that I was surprised when I survived. My family had just moved from Penola in South Australia famous for wine growing; it's in the Coonawarra.

Dad (Gerard) had gotten an opportunity to lay bricks with one of my mum's (Frances) uncles (Kevin), so after lots of talk around the kitchen table, the decision was made to pack up and give it a go. My oldest brother, Harry, was engaged so he was staying behind, but the rest of our large Catholic family was off on a real adventure. My older sisters were enrolled with the nuns at Sacred Heart and the rest would be at Villa. It was already halfway through the school year, and I remember the conversation Mum had with Mrs James about uniforms and books, and her being described as a "good woman". I now know that was because we couldn't afford to kit me out with all new gear, so she was helping Mum out with things that had been donated.

The Sunday night before school on Monday was spent in front of the TV, interrupted by Mum wanting me to put on pants so she could make sure they were hemmed correctly. Now it should be known that while my mum was a fantastic cook, she couldn't and shouldn't have been allowed to wield scissors or a needle and thread. That night she used both and let's just say everyone at school knew what colour my socks were.

Walking along Lydiard street with the other kids of St Paul's that morning I could feel my lips turning blue, I wasn't prepared for the

cold of a wet morning in winter in Ballarat. Since leaving Ballarat I have been to Canada, Russia, and Ireland, all in winter, where the ground is buried by snow, and still nothing compares to the cold that I experienced that morning. The moisture in the air soaked into the socks on my feet, and the wool of my pants so that it felt like I was shrouded in an ice cocoon. Entering the building brought no relief. If anything, it was colder inside than it had been outside. As I stood in my misery, I was approached by Mr Gibcus who took me by the shoulder, spun me around and told me to get to class. The problem was that I was so cold, and my brain was so overwhelmed with the move and the new school that I couldn't remember where I was supposed to be or how I was to get there.

Putting one foot in front of the other I stumbled down the hallway, found a staircase and went up. I was fairly sure it was where I was supposed to be, or maybe I just thought it was a good option, as it was closer to heaven. At the top of the staircase, I realised that I had stopped shivering and that I was no longer cold, I had passed over to that blissful state when your body stops feeling and your mind tricks you into thinking your skin is on fire. It was bliss. My feet stuck to the floor as I tried to decide what to do next, Mr Mossop came barrelling up the stairs behind me and demanded to know what class I was supposed to be in and why wasn't I there. Through my berry blue lips, I explained that I was newly arrived in Ballarat and lost. Without missing a beat, he held out his hand, introduced himself and asked me to follow him as he directed me to my first class.

Mr Mossop became a favourite of mine, a decent bloke who was always happy to make sure I knew where I was supposed to be.

Gerard Robertson, Class of 1983



MY LOVE OF SPORT

FREYA PALMER

My name is Freya Palmer, and I am a year 10 at Damascus College. I have lived in Buninyong my whole life with my mum, dad and older brother, Campbell. I started playing cricket at the end of Grade 5 at Buninyong Cricket Club. At that time, Buninyong did not have a girls' side, so I started playing with the boys. The next season, Buninyong decided to put forward an Under 14 girls' team, and since then it has grown to include an Under 14, 17 and senior women's team.

I play for Buninyong in the Under 17 girls, Senior women, Under 17 boys and the Men's competition. I also play 1sts for the Ballarat Women's Cricket Club and have recently completed a girls' Youth Premier League and a Ballarat representative competition.

Earlier this month, I was invited to play for Geelong Cricket Club in their Premier Second XI team, which was a fantastic experience and one I thoroughly enjoyed. Due to these teams, I play several times a week between Ballarat, Geelong and Melbourne.

Cricket is a great way to meet new people and I have been given many opportunities, including heading to Darwin mid-year to play. I'm very much looking forward to this. I also play AFL and netball, with footy probably being my preferred sport!

A recent challenge I have faced was being diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes in October last year. This means that my pancreas doesn't produce insulin and I need to give myself four injections of insulin per day (minimum), I also must prick my finger to check my blood glucose levels regularly. I'm pleased to say that this has not held me back; I just need to plan and think about things a bit more in preparation.

In the future I hope to keep building my confidence and improve my skills to continue to play higher levels of cricket and continue to challenge myself as much as possible.

My favourite subject at school would have to be Physical Education as I love spending time outside and being active. My hobbies are sport in general, spending time with friends and family, and being active outdoors.

My favourite thing about being a student at Damascus College is the encouragement and support from my peers and staff at the college. The college has many opportunities, it is up to us to embrace them. When I complete my schooling, I hope to continue my sport, if not at a professional level, then perhaps a career in the nursing or the health industry would be my dream.

My advice to a Year 7 student starting at Damascus College would be to have a go at absolutely everything you can, whether it's drama, sport, public speaking or after-school opportunities. Get in and have a go. It's the best way to make friends and participate in the college.

My most treasured memories so far from my time here have been the camps, sports days and Damascus day.

Freya Palmer, Year 10 student





2022 SWIMMING CARNIVAL

DAMASCUS EVENT





Submissions are open for the
DAMASCUS COLLEGE ALUMNI ART PRIZE

*This is your chance
to earn \$2000 for a piece of your artwork*

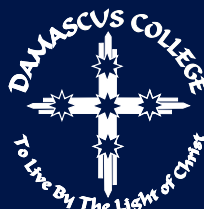
The Art Prize is open to Damascus College Alumni, including past students or staff from Damascus College, Sacred Heart College, St Paul's College and St Martin's in the Pines.

Your artwork might be a drawing, sketch, painting, photograph, sculpture, textile, glasswork, lithograph, screen printing, or even an etching but must explore the College motto 'To Live By the Light of Christ'.

Application deadline: 4pm Friday 1 July, 2022

Details and application form

damascus.vic.edu.au



connecting@Damascus



NOT DEFINED BY A SCORE

ALUMNI STORY

As he commenced Year 12, Jordan Walker, Class of 2017 had set himself the goal of following his educational and career pathway into medicine. With this aim, he focused and worked extremely hard during his final year at Damascus College as he prepared for his Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) exams and their results.

Each year as an educator I know the pressure our senior students feel and place upon themselves as they work towards their goals. For some it is finding employment in their chosen field, securing an apprenticeship in their desired industry, or obtaining a certain Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) score.

As a teacher, I know that the ATAR score doesn't define who my students are and that it is only relevant for a short period of time, but I do know that it can be the gateway that they can't pass through to get to their desired goal.

At the end of 2017 after completing his exams, Jordan achieved an excellent ATAR score that many would be proud of. However, on the day he received his results that score didn't transfer into the offer from a University to study medicine as Jordan had hoped it would.

Undeterred and having an unflinching will, Jordan was fully aware that if he continued to work hard, his dream was not lost. In 2017 Jordan Walker selected this quote for the yearbook: "If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you".

At the start of 2018, Jordan enrolled at Deakin University and undertook a three-year undergraduate degree in Biomedicine. After completing this course, Jordan again applied to study Medicine and was unsuccessful.

Instead of backing down, giving up, or being satisfied with all he had already achieved, Jordan continued to work towards his goal and undertook an Honours year in 2021. He was based out of the Hamilton hospital researching Quadbike rollovers and the safety procedures that have been put into place in our rural communities.

I know Jordan to be quiet and very humble and I was thrilled to catch up with him towards the end of 2021. We chatted about his time at Damascus College and his appreciation of the staff who supported his educational journey. He spoke of Gail Petrie, his Teacher Advisor "a ripper who went far and beyond anything that would have been expected of her. In fact, our whole family was grateful to her for being a part of our lives".

As Jordan and I were about to go our separate ways he quietly said, "Oh Rod, by the way, I have been accepted into medicine at Deakin". I was floored. A goal from six years ago has become a reality for Jordan.

Jordan is just one example of a Damascus student who has travelled unexpected pathways as he journeys to reach his goal. He didn't allow an ATAR score to define him or limit his dream of studying Medicine.

Rodney Mathews, Teacher of Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, and the Learning Analytics Team Leader

YEAR 7 CAMP REFLECTION

LUKE JANS

My name is Luke, I am the youngest of six children who loves riding my bike and playing soccer. All of my older siblings have been to Damascus, and I have been told many stories about Year 7 camp, so now it's my turn to experience camp and life at Damascus.

The first day of secondary school arrived, I was feeling nervous and a bit excited for the first day of a new school and a new beginning of a brand-new chapter of my life. I was feeling pretty much the same when the morning of camp arrived. Due to my siblings telling me how much fun they had, I had pretty high expectations for a great camp and it certainly didn't disappoint.

I arrived at school nice and early and waited with my mates for the bus to arrive. It certainly wasn't a quiet trip to Creswick. Upon arrival at camp, we got sorted into our cabins and then we went on to our activities. We participated in three activities, which included kayaking, ziplining and archery, and we had free time after completing our activities and everyone went swimming in the dam. At the dam, we had a little zipline rope that went over the water and a teacher got pulled in by it and lost his glasses (to never be seen again). After that little incident we had dinner and then went for a night walk. After the night walk we had some damper (which is like flour and water) and then went to bed. It was hard getting to sleep that night because everyone was too excited and found it hard to settle down.

One of my favourite activities at camp was the leap of faith, where you had to climb a tower then jump off and try to hit the ball in front of you. Another activity that I loved was the giant swing where you get strapped into a harness and then get pulled up. When you're at the top you pull a cord and the swing lets go. This was extremely fun, and my adrenaline went crazy.

One of the great things about camp was the new friends I made. I now hang out with my new friends at recess and lunch. After attending camp, I feel a lot more comfortable about being at Damascus, as I now know more people and have gotten to know my teachers and classmates better.

Moving on from camp I hope to make the most of all the opportunities that come my way and enjoy a great year at Damascus. Year 7 camp was an amazing experience and a great way to meet new people and make new friends.

Luke Jans, Year 7 student





YEAR 7 CAMP

DAMASCUS EVENT



AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENT

DAMASCUS EVENT

The annual Awards and Achievement evening was again different in 2021 due to COVID and the restrictions on events. So, as a College, we pivoted and produced a video to celebrate this special occasion. The video was broadcast to the student population on Friday 3 December 2021. This event recognised students throughout 2021 who have achieved academic excellence, general endeavour and sporting endeavour, as well as age group champions.

The 2020 College Dux, Grace Young-Harvey, was invited to develop a speech via video to receive the Dr Yvonne Aitken Scholarship sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. Grace provided a light-hearted address to the audience on what she had been up to in the year since finishing high school.

Throughout the video, House Leaders, Assistant House Leaders and the House student leadership team shared House Team messages of congratulations to all award recipients. It was a wonderful way to involve students and staff in making the video as engaging as possible.

Also acknowledged and celebrated was the 2021 Junior Art Acquisition Award, which went to Noah Gault with his piece titled 'Weeping Skulls'. The Senior Art Acquisition was awarded to Freya Wallis, Year 12, for her work titled 'Lullaby'.

Following are the 2021 Special Awards and Scholarships recipients recognised and celebrated at this event.



Kaitlyn Handreck



Quinn Moore



Brayden Welshe and Tiarna Parry

2021 SPECIAL AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Award	Name	
Catherine King Community Shield	Damascus IT Team	Staff
Jo Reilly Award	Quinn Moore	7
Social Justice Award – Junior	Jonah Skewes-Clinton	9
Social Justice Award – Senior	Kaitlyn Handreck	10
Performing Arts Award – Junior	Archie Jones	7
Performing Arts Award – Senior	Eliza Karlake	12
Leadership Award – Junior	Kylan Jans	8
Leadership Award – Senior	Kiara Dowie	12
Sports Person of the Year	Tara Gannon	12
Academic Honours	Mia Lepair	12
Academic Honours	Amber Kennett	12
Australian Olympic Change-Maker Award	Jessica Blackmore	12
Bill O'Loughlin English Endeavour Award	Brayden Welshe	11
Bill O'Loughlin English Endeavour Award	Tiarna Parry	11
Damascus College Academic Endeavour and Excellence Scholarship	Sara Abu Asbeh	10
Damascus College Sporting Endeavour and Excellence Scholarship	Jarrod Joyce	9
Damascus College Arts Endeavour and Excellence Scholarship	Sage Seear	10
Sisters of Mercy Dorothy Griffin Scholarship	Sophie Busutil	10
Sisters of Mercy Dorothy Griffin Scholarship	Leah Stevens	10
Dorothy Irene-Ellis Thomas Scholarship	Shaun Leonard	12
Dorothy Irene-Ellis Thomas Scholarship	Maya Tolliday	12
Diocese of Ballarat Scholarship	Kaitlyn Handreck	10
Dr Yvonne Aitken Scholarship	Grace Young-Harvey	Dux 2020



Sparky Sainsbury

NEXT GEN EXHIBITION

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

The 2022 Next Gen exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, showcases the creative endeavours of government, Catholic and Independent schools in Ballarat and the broader region in VCE Art, Studio Arts, Design and Technology, Visual Communication and Design and Media.

Four Damascus College students were invited to exhibit as part of this modern exhibition, and we wish to congratulate these talented students from the Class of 2021: Charlotte Grimes, Peggy Yandell, Samuel Payne and Sparky Sainsbury.

Charlotte created a digital print of a brochure for a fashion label. The established alternative fashion label, Dangerfield, required a brochure to promote its new range of clothing.

Samuel's piece is a framed photograph entitled 'Screen Time', which attempts to use a dreary and hushed aesthetic to communicate presumed ideas about mobile phones and their negative effects. The body language and expression try to mimic that of a person who is going through a rough time, barely clinging to the screen of their mobile phone as they await some sort of self-assuring notification, their last hope.

Sparky's is called 'Perceptions of Being Human', and it reflects on gender and how societal perceptions of someone's gender are

influenced by their masculine, feminine or androgynous features. This effectively puts them in a box based on their appearance. Sparky wants to express, with the use of labels, that appearance doesn't equate to gender. The "labels" we choose for ourselves must be respected. However, at the end of the day no matter what, we are all one thing. Human.

Peggy's piece is titled 'Health of Identity' and in her words, 'my intention with these pieces was to capture the way my self-image fluctuates with my health. Generally, I am a happy, confident person and love the fact that I am caring and optimistic, but my health sometimes makes it impossible to be that way. I have narcolepsy, a sleep disorder, which means I can't control when I fall asleep and am always tired, so I often feel I was born with less energy than everyone else and am trying to make up for it with medication. This leads to a struggle between my perceived abilities and my body, causing anxiety and distress.'

The College was excited that Sparky Sainsbury won the 'Award for Excellence' for her Unit 4 work entitled 'Perceptions of being human'. Well done, Sparky.

Well done to Charlotte, Samuel, Peggy and Sparky in gaining this significant acknowledgement for your creative work.



Phoebe Yandell



Samuel Payne



Charlotte Grimes



Sparky Sainsbury



Charlotte Grimes

BLAST FROM THE PAST

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Students of the late 1990s and early 2000s will have not forgotten their experience with the 'Baby Think it Over' program.

The object of the program was to teach young people just how much work was involved in having a baby, with the aim that they would 'think it over' before taking on the responsibilities of parenthood. The life-like dolls were a significant change from the previous program – taking care of an egg – as the dolls would cry and require regular attention (although, unlike the real thing, the noise could be turned off with a key).

For the duration of the program, these realistic looking and sounding infants could be seen sitting in class, out in the playground, and on one occasion taking part in the walkathon. Students were required to keep a diary of their experience, focussing on the way they felt when the baby cried, but also providing an honest look at life with a baby – the broken sleep, the lack of social life, and of course the odd fall down the stairs or accidental night spent left in the car.

The dolls have long since been retired to the archives, but we know there are many of you out there who, fondly or otherwise, still remember this brief addition to their family.

We would love to hear your Blast from the Past requests. If you have a special school memory you would like us to revisit, send us a message at archives@damascus.vic.edu.au and we will do our best!





OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

WYATT PILMORE

My name is Wyatt Pilmore, and I am in Year 11 studying sound production in the VCAL program at Damascus College. I was born in Ballarat and have lived in Buninyong my whole life and am the eldest of four kids. My sister and brother go to Damascus and my youngest sister is in her last year of Primary School.

Towards the end of Prep, when I was six years old, I started to feel really tired, fell over a lot and got a lot of headaches. For a while we put it down to Dyspraxia, which I was diagnosed with when I was four years old. Eventually I was diagnosed with a brain tumour, it was pretty scary. I remember the neurosurgeon talking about how they would go about the operation; it freaked me out. It was only about six weeks between finding out about the tumour and having it removed. It had to be removed because it was growing.

The operation went for about eight hours, and it was a bit complicated because it was deep in the brain. I was the third patient in Australia to have the 'intraoperative MRI' used during neurosurgery at the Royal Children's Hospital. We didn't know until about a week after the operation if it was cancer or not. Luckily it was not cancer.

Once I had recovered, I felt really terrible for the other kids at the hospital who were not as lucky as me. With the help of my family, we wrote a book and sold it, and we raised over \$5,000 for the neurosurgical ward at the hospital.

My life has been impacted by the tumour; my fine motor skills were affected and I can't write and have no 3D vision. I was told I would never be able to ride a bike, but I have managed to prove this wrong.

Despite the challenges, I think life is an opportunity and you have to make the most of it. You have to play the cards you've been dealt as best as you can. I try not to focus on what I can't do but focus on what I can do. I have a great family, I love playing sport and I love music.

Everyone will go through major things that will shake up their life and turn their world upside down, but the important thing is not to give up. People need to make choices that will help them excel, not drag them down. Self-destructive choices will only make a bad situation worse.

I work at KFC Canadian outside of school and I absolutely love it. I got the job there as soon as I turned 15. I can't sit still; I need to be doing something all the time, so I take on as many shifts as I can. I enjoy customer service and working with other people. When I won employee of the month I was absolutely thrilled. I also love driving. I got my L's as soon as I turned 16 and have been saving for a ute.

I would love to secure a role in sound production when I finish school, whether that be with radio, putting ads together, recording podcasts, or other people's music. My favourite subject at school is 'Healthy Living' but I can't wait to start my 'sound production' VET course. I spend a lot of time outside of school writing music. I'm also pumped about my work placement on a Wednesday at Hardy Audio.

I really enjoy the community feeling at Damascus. The teachers care about the students and they try to encourage the students to look out for each other.

Over the years, I have loved the extra-curricular activities offered by Damascus as well. I have done after-school cricket and football. You get to meet people that aren't in your class at school. The camps have been great as well.

For those Year 7 students coming into Damascus, the best advice I can give is to 'just be you'; the more you try to 'fit in' or be how other people want you to be, the more unhappy you will be. Be true to yourself and take as many opportunities as you can along the way.

Wyatt Pilmore, Year 11 student

MY BALLARAT GIFT

SHONA WILLS

Year 9 student Shona Wills is originally from Melbourne and moved to Ballarat when she was 9 years old. On Sunday 13 February, Shona placed second in the Ballarat Gift Junior 100metre event at the Ballarat City Oval.

Competitors competed from all over Victoria

Shona said that she started to run the Ballarat Gift four years ago when her mother entered her brother in the junior event.

“In the last three years, I have placed 4th, so placing 2nd this year is a big achievement.”

“I love to run and first got involved in running by watching my brother compete in Little Athletics in Melbourne. When we moved to Ballarat we joined a local club – the YCW Harriers,” she said.

“That was six years ago, and since then I have been running ever since, and received a silver and bronze medal through the clubs’ athletics.”

Shona trains with the YCW junior and senior squads, at the Llanberris or Mt Clear Ovals three times a week for 1.5 hours each night, as well as doing personal training with the coach for long jump and triple jump.

“I chose running as a sport because I love it and it’s so much fun. I found running has helped my confidence in moving forward to achieve my goals.”

“My hopes and dreams are to represent Damascus College in the all-school athletics and BAS carnival. I also dream of representing my club at the nationals, and one day representing my country in the Olympics. I would love to compete at the 2026 Commonwealth Games.”

Throughout Shona’s schooling, her favourite subject has been Physical Education, and she enjoys school events, the friendships made, the teachers and the support received from staff.

“I hope to go to university to study one day, and my dream career is to be a professional athlete.”

Shona Wills, Year 9 student





Nun's rooms



Guest room



Sacred Heart College Chapel

A NIGHT IN THE CONVENT

ALUMNI STORY

As a past student of Sacred Heart College and St Martin's in the Pines, and as the current Archivist for Damascus College, I found the opportunity to spend a night in the old SHC convent too good to resist. Being a day student, many of the more interesting areas of SHC were out of bounds to me during my school days, so it was a delight to explore rooms such as the old infirmary, the bedrooms of the nuns and the fascinating convent kitchen without the fear of being caught and sent to the office.

Even in unfamiliar rooms, the smells brought the memories flooding back as only the smell of an old building can. As students at school we are often ignorant of the history that surrounds us. How many of us each day walked past the Stations of the Cross so beautifully crafted by Sr Margaret Mary Batros, unaware of their significance, and of the remarkable woman who created them. I wonder how many stopped to ponder the numerous works of stained glass scattered around the school and really take in their meaning. Those who would once gaze upon the beautiful Kathleen Meagan memorial window in the chapel and pause to reflect upon the kind and talented woman it represented are long gone, and so it is up to us to pass the knowledge down in the hopes of piquing the interest of the next generation.

Little has changed in the beautiful simplicity of each room. As I lay there on a warm night feeling the breeze from the open window, it was not at all difficult to imagine how the hard-working Sisters would have often been at the mercy of the Ballarat weather – an open window had to suffice in summer, an extra blanket and warm cup of tea to combat the icy chills of winter. Despite the weather, the building itself could provide sufficient refuge from the sometimes-harsh realities of the outside world. For me, it was a peaceful stay, but peace and solitude must have been hard to come by in the days when 200 SHC girls were clattering up and down the stairs and boarders were juggling for their place at the basin each evening. I would like to think it was the cheerful business of happy girls and am delighted to know that the building still stands as it was, with its memories intact.

Natasha Adam, Archivist, Class of 1991



2000



2020

THEN AND NOW

TONY HAINTZ

Tony Haintz commenced teaching at Damascus College before it was known as Damascus College. He was hired by then Principal Sr Valda Ward in 1990 to join the staff at the Sacred Heart College Senior Campus, St Martin's in the Pines. Within five years the campus at Mt Clear would see some significant changes with the amalgamation of the foundation schools to form Damascus. Tony remembers the opening celebration of Damascus at Victoria Street on a summer evening in 1995, a song penned for the event by Roger Hillman was titled after the College motto: Live by the Light of Christ. Roger's lyrics remain powerful:

Live by the light of Christ
Take it as your guide
Leading, Caring
Healing, Sharing
Live by the light of Christ.

Tony was appointed to the position of Religious Education Coordinator, which was understood broadly as a member of the leadership group. He was responsible for establishing patterns for prayer and liturgy, maintaining and enhancing the religious education curriculum, staff faith development processes, as well as retreat and reflection day. The role was filled with enormous challenges that Tony was only able to accomplish because of the amazing teams of dedicated practitioners.

Tony said that the Religious Education faculty at Damascus is a highly qualified group of committed people who understand that the spiritual heritage that Damascus holds is our most precious possession.

"Our collective faith gives us courage for times of struggle and purpose when hope is difficult. The faculty has been adaptable as guidelines for our work have evolved over time with the latest incarnation, Awakenings II, offering a profound insight into the central characteristics of the human religious journey. Our call is beyond intellectual mastery of religious ideas but to the exploration of the experience of journeying in faith even to the point of accepting leadership in faith."

After more than 30 years as a teacher at Damascus, Tony believes that it is special because it nurtures students, staff, and families. *"It does this because we understand ourselves to be nurtured by a God of mercy and compassion who we know in the life and mission of Jesus,"* said Tony. He spoke of how the staff, students and Damascus community look out for each other. That the witness of the Damascus community is expressed most beautifully in our concern for the neediest, especially at the local level, but also nationally and beyond the borders of our greatly endowed country.

"Our remarkable college environment teaches us that the natural God-given world is also a gift to be nurtured," said Tony.



MY BOOK OF POEMS

ELOISE MCGIFFORD

I'm Eloise McGifford, currently in Year 12. During my time at school (primary and secondary) I have always enjoyed English, whether that was analysing texts or creative writing. I have always considered myself a creative person; for example, I relished in the Arts, thoroughly enjoying drama, and during Year 12, I have picked up Art for the first time in four years to further express my creativity and do a subject I know I will enjoy.

During COVID, I began my creative writing, and I wrote a creative story and submitted it to a podcast, as I also enjoy listening to stories. As a result, my story was picked out to be read out of thousands of stories, which helped fuel my creativity.

Once I noticed I could write, I began writing poetry and I slowly began showing people, including my parents, twin brother and my partner. Once I received positive feedback from them, I presented it to my English Teacher, Ashleigh Brown, who found a writer's challenge with a small publisher, 'Book Leaf Publishers'.

I entered this challenge, and I was able to succeed; through this I was able to write a collection of 21 poems to be published, working in tandem with the publishers to finish off the book.

If you choose to read my book 'Greenhouse of Graves' you'll find a deep connection with nature and discovery, as I wrote it during

lockdowns, when I almost left Damascus and had difficult points in my high school life. It is a collection of my best writing.

I will always keep writing, but in the future I would love to become a teacher. Throughout VCE I have discovered a passion for Sociology, which I take through Virtual Schools Victoria. Through it, I have developed my understanding of the world. I enjoy learning and I want to make others enjoy learning too. I write to understand the crazy world we live in; I would suggest to anyone to write. It is a beautiful way to express your feelings or be conscious of everything you feel.

'Greenhouse of Graves' is available on the Book Leaf publishing website or Amazon.

Here is a little bit of it:

*we grow a society we think we want
instead, we are normalizing never changing,
staying in our graves. - you'll come to reason
explores how we shape ourselves of what others want to
see, what if we finally learn how to heal and let ourselves be
empowered by who we are.; We can own our wicked wit.*

Eloise McGifford, Year 12 student



GET TOGETHER

ALUMNI EVENT

On Saturday 19 February more than 150 students from the Classes of 2020 and 2021 returned to Damascus College to celebrate a get-together.

The College decided to host a special event to recognise how challenging 2020 and 2021 had been, especially for the Year 12 students. This served as an acknowledgement for the Year 12 students, and recognition that they had missed out on so many events but had also become much closer because of it.

The event was held in the Damascus Events Centre and past students were joined by members of the Damascus leadership team, as well as some house leaders, learning area leaders, teachers and other staff.

Attendees enjoyed finding the space laid out for their event. Drinks and refreshments were served upon arrival before a few formalities.

College Principal for the Classes of 2020 and 2021 Mr Matthew Byrne spoke of his pride in their resilience, perseverance and strength as they navigated the challenges of being a high school senior student while also living through a global pandemic.

Watching the 2020 Year 12 final day video brought back some great memories for the assembled crowd. Next to the stage were 2020 College captains Hannah Mroczkowski and Will Smith ... or was it? As many in attendance did a double-take, Charles fessed up, departed the stage and made way for Will. The Smith twins had done it, fooled us all. Last to speak were the 2021 College captains Maya Tolliday and Shaun Leonard.

The Welcome reception held at the campus included an opportunity to get some great pictures, including group shots. As the entire alumni group assembled once more on the steps that lead down to the undercroft, Assistant Principal of Catholic School Culture Tony Haintz conducted an impromptu sing-along with tunes from the Year 12 retreat once again being sung.

The get-together was a wonderful opportunity for members of the Classes of 2020 and 2021 to come back to the Damascus campus, reconnect with friends and teachers, and enjoy each other's company.



TOP CLASS AUDITIONS – VCE SEASON OF EXCELLENCE

DAMASCUS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Congratulations to past students Payton Overall and Maya Tolliday, Class of 2021, and Year 12 2022 College Captain Megan O’Beirne, as these three students were invited to audition for Victoria’s Top Class Drama Concerts in Melbourne.

The Top Class Drama Concerts present performances by inspirational students who received outstanding grades for their 2021 VCE performance examinations.

Top Class is presented by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) as part of the VCE Season of Excellence 2022.

Students were given 10 structures with which to create their solo drama performance. Megan chose the story of a statue and its

relevance looking forward. Payton chose a concierge at the Savoy Hotel, trying to save the hotel from becoming a car park, and Maya chose to represent a character from Thunderbirds, Alan Tracy, an international rescue team member helping the Australian Department of Defence with an international space station rescue.

Following the auditions in February, Maya and Megan were selected to perform their solos at the Art Centre Melbourne on 28/29 March 2022. Well done Maya and Megan.

Congratulations to Payton, May and Megan, this is a wonderful affirmation of your creative abilities.

HIGHEST RANK IN ARMY CADETS

JAYDEN BICKLEY

Year 12 student Jayden Bickley was recently awarded the highest leadership role within Army Cadets. He is now the Cadet Under Officer (CUO) at the Ballarat Cadet Unit, which is the most senior cadet role at the unit and is equivalent to a junior officer in the Defence Force.

Jayden said that he always wanted to join the Defence Force, and it helped that his dad also did Army Cadets when he was in high school, which also motivated Jayden to join.

“This rank means a lot to me as it is the highest rank that you can get in cadets, and it has taken quite a while to get where I am. There is an age limit in Army Cadets of 18 years old, that is why I want to do as much as possible before I age out,” he said.

“I joined Army Cadets when I was in Year 8 so this will be my fifth year in cadets where I will finish at the end of this year.”

Cadets are run on a Monday night at the Ranger Barracks in Sturt Street, Ballarat.

“The best part about it is definitely building better teamwork and leadership skills. I also love that everyone is so friendly, which makes it so much better.”

“The biggest challenge is building the confidence to do things that you’ve never done before; as you do these things more, you learn to trust yourself and your peers more confidently.”

To be a CUO, the Officer in Charge of the unit must nominate you. Then, nominated cadets attend a week-long course that trains them in the role/rank.

Jayden undertook this course at Puckapunyal Military Base, where he learned of the many duties of the rank.

A CUO conducts ceremonial parades, assists in the planning activities, conducts and runs activities, and teaches and coaches subordinates.

“After school, I have plans to join the Defence Force as either an Infantry or Combat Engineer.”

“I would encourage others to get involved in Army Cadets, as you learn so many skills, including building self-confidence, learning to lead, whether a small group or unit, learning how to work effectively in a team and much more.”





Chiara Angeli



Matthew Byrne



Beth Carroll



Damian Foster



Taneka Gardiner



Angela Hoban

FAREWELLS & RETIREMENTS

DAMASCUS COLLEGE

Chiara Angeli

Chiara, a former student of Damascus and 2016 school captain, returned to Damascus College in 2021 as the Performing Arts Administrative Assistant. Chiara is relocating for exciting opportunities this year, so we wish her every success as she explores new horizons and moves interstate.

Matthew Byrne

Matthew Byrne has been at Damascus College for the past thirteen years as Senior Campus Coordinator, Deputy Principal, and more recently, as Principal of the College since 2011. Throughout his thirteen years, he has led many significant milestones for the school, and his kind and compassionate leadership style has assisted our community to be their best. The students, staff and families of Damascus are forever grateful for his contribution, and we wish him well in his future appointment leading the Diocese of Ballarat in Catholic Education.

Beth Carroll

Beth Carroll also finished up her IT help desk role at the end of last year. Beth has been at Damascus for nearly three years, and her positive and friendly nature has been a great extension of the support of the IT helpdesk. She and the team have been extraordinary in the support of Damascus as the College switched over to MS teams and remote learning over the past 18 months. Beth has been an enthusiastic supporter of Performing Arts and has assisted all staff at one stage or another. We wish Beth well and thank her for being a caring and generous contributor to Damascus.

Damian Foster

Damian finished up his role as Network Administrator of the College towards the end of Term 1 2022. Damian, a past School Captain at Damascus College, had been with Damascus as a staff member since 2014; he quickly hit the ground running, developing the existing ICT infrastructure and implementing new technologies.

Damian has been pivotal in all aspects of ICT infrastructure, particularly with migrating to a virtualized server environment, implementing the Sophos Firewall platform, upgrading the school wireless network, and building infrastructure to allow support to staff and students off-campus during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Damian has been an integral part not only of the ICT team but the college, and he will be missed. We wish Damian all the best at the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) and thank him for all that he has contributed to Damascus College.

Taneka Gardener

Taneka Gardiner was a valued member of the Damascus College staff from 2016-2021. In her time at the College she undertook many roles and assisted over several departments. Taneka worked tirelessly assisting Matthew Hollowell in VCE; Carmel Russell, Tom Inverarity and Belinda Dwyer in VCAL; Maria Russell in the Music Department and with the College Administration team. Taneka's warm and enthusiastic attitude will be missed. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Angela Hoban

Angela commenced at Damascus College in 1996 and for the last 25 years has been a committed and hard-working member of the Damascus staff team. Angela has taught predominately PE and Science, and more recently Food Technology. Angela also assumed different leadership roles, such as the inaugural TA Leader, and she fulfilled the Sports Coordinator's role for a period of time. Angela has always enjoyed a great rapport and engagement with students, particularly those in Rice 5, and I thank her for her great work as she enters this exciting next stage of life.

Stephanie Hoey

Steph finished at the College at the end of last year. We wish her well as she moves to a new school following her 5-year contribution to the languages and humanities team. Stephanie provided great insights to students into French language and culture, and we wish her the best.



Stephanie Hoey



Paul Jans



David Neate



Brett Stone



Jamison Thomas



Nick Yandell

Paul Jans

Paul Jans concluded his time as Business Manager at Damascus College in July 2021. Over the 14½ years he served in the role he has been instrumental in bringing Damascus College to where we are today, a school of first choice within the greater Ballarat educational community.

Among Paul’s many achievements is the delivery of the College master plan to consolidate this school on the beautiful Mt Clear site. Under his leadership, the College has achieved over 20 million dollars of capital works, as Paul ensured that the College was appropriately resourced to provide contemporary quality learning and teaching. His work with the Board, the finance team and the finance sub-committee has ensured that our fee structures and financial processes are true to our Christian foundations. Paul has overseen the development of our grounds to optimise our beautiful setting. As a member of our College leadership team, Paul displayed a holistic and faith-filled perspective. His support as the pandemic unfolded was enormous, as he led changes to cleaning regimes and operating practices and provided support to colleagues and supervision to students here on site.

We acknowledge Paul’s supportive wife, Michelle, and his children Taylah, Caitlyn, Ryan, Zack, Jake and Luke for enabling Paul to be such a loyal and committed servant leader to the Damascus community.

Paul remains with the Damascus community as a proud parent, and he will continue to maintain business oversight through his new role with the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL). We extend our deepest gratitude to Paul for his commitment to improvements for the Damascus College community and wish him well supporting all the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat.

David Neate

David commenced at Damascus College in May of 2004 and has been a committed member of the Science and Mathematics team over the last 18 years. David has developed a thriving Horticulture program and he has been an extraordinary advocate for our natural assets: the native flora and fauna, of the Damascus College site. David was the instigator of the Murrnong Trail and the College’s Sustainability and Environment Management Plan during his time leading sustainability at the College. We have all grown in our knowledge and understanding of this humble yam, as a symbol of

the diversity of the local bush. There are significantly fewer invasive species on this site than there were 18 years ago, a result of David’s dedication, work and care. David is a wonderful TA and Xavier man, and his TAs greatly value his care and commitment. We wish David the best as he moves into retirement.

Brett Stone

The Damascus community is grateful for Brett Stone’s leadership of Health and PE since the commencement of the 2019 school year. Brett has progressed the learning and teaching agenda of the College and developed excellent working relationships with students and colleagues. He has had an active role in coaching, and this has been appreciated by students. He has been a fun and respected TA of Xavier. We thank Brett for his contribution and wish him well in his new role this year.

Jamison Thomas

Jamison, a former student (Class of 2016) returned to Damascus College as part of his tertiary degree in 2020 and has been an invaluable member of the Marketing and Development team over the last two years, particularly in his contribution to videography. We wish him every success as he follows his passion for Marketing.

Nick Yandell

Nick has been at Damascus College for the past eleven years and has been Assistant Principal of Learning and Teaching and is currently the Arts Learning Area Leader and Sustainability Coordinator. Nick has extended the opportunities for young people in the study of Media and has been a key member of the English team. Nick is a wonderfully caring and compassionate colleague and leader, and he has contributed significantly to the development of this community. His contribution to the Early Start program and support of our flourishing Arts program are

Our Alumni are the wind beneath our wings.
They have the power to **inspire, electrify**
and **motivate** our students.
Please, help our students **soar**.



SHINING LIGHT AWARD

FOR INSPIRING ALUMNI

The Shining Light Award is bestowed upon chosen alumni who have contributed significantly through their chosen field to Damascus College and our global community and who will be an inspiration to current and future students.

Categories for nominations are:

**Service to the global community • Science/Technology • Arts
Sport • Business • Academia • Faith Development**

PLEASE NOMINATE A PAST STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER

Anyone can submit a nominee for The Shining Light Award. Full details at
damascus.vic.edu.au/community/alumni/shining-light-award

Nominations Close: Friday 26 May 2023 at 4pm.



Be. My. Best.

damascus.vic.edu.au