

Cultural and physical transformation

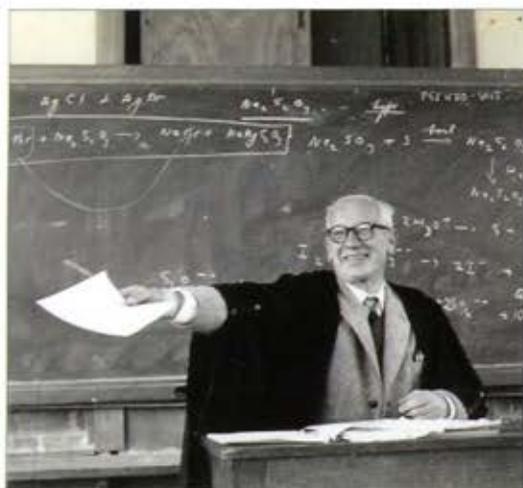
Like Dr Buntine, Mr Thwaites was also the son of a Headmaster, and had the benefit of the experience of two previous headmasterships before being appointed to The Geelong College. Educated at Geelong Grammar, he returned there to teach Mathematics for three years after serving with the navy during World War II. By the age of 30, he was Headmaster of Guildford Grammar in Western Australia (1950–56). An MA from Oxford University was followed by a Bachelor of Education (BEd) in 1958, during his period as Headmaster of Ballarat College (1957–60). A devout man, he was an elder of the Presbyterian Church while in Ballarat and was appointed an elder of St George's in Geelong soon after he moved to The Geelong College.



Mr Thwaites sitting at the far end of table, on the right, with the teaching staff, 1961. Photo: Stephen Miles Album



Vic Proffitt in classroom A, 1955



J.H Campbell in the classroom. Photo: Stephen Miles Album

Buoyed by the opening of the new Preparatory School in 1960 and the Centenary celebrations in 1961, Mr Thwaites was fortunate to have commenced his appointment at the College in such an optimistic atmosphere. At last, many on Council and staff were turning their thoughts to building a positive future for the College and seemed ready to embrace the challenges that post-war modernity and society's new educational expectations had thrust upon them. Many of the best College traditions, established by the Morrison family and Mr Rolland, would survive, but other, less laudable customs would fall away. The 1960s would become a great era of building and renewal, both physically and philosophically, and the community would need to place their trust in an enthusiastic new Principal.

Mr Thwaites was regarded by some as a cautious radical and superb administrator who brought the College into the twentieth century; by others, as aloof, reserved and, as his term progressed, as an increasingly absent Head. Students' feelings about Mr Thwaites were mixed and it was unfortunate that their Principal did not have the gift of remembering their names. Geoff Donnan (1966), Head Prefect, agreed that Mr Thwaites tended to remain aloof from most of the students, but nevertheless described him as 'one of the most capable Headmasters in Victoria', and recalled that he instituted a system that rotated all Form 6 students to dine at the Principal's table so that he could meet and talk to them all at least once during their Matriculation year.' Hugh Seward (1970), Head Prefect,

described Mr Thwaites as being at his best when not busy: 'he is very moody – sometimes he will talk to you for an hour and get your opinion and ideas, while another day he will hardly be bothered with you – so don't get too annoyed when you strike him on an off day'.²

Mr Elliott, then a young member of staff, believes that Mr Thwaites' inherent shyness was often misinterpreted, and that the Principal could be friendly and compassionate once you got to know him. However, Mr Thwaites was not popular among the older staff wishing to remain at the College because during 1960 he introduced a retirement age of 65 and implemented it with what some people believed was a 'very cold and unemotional' approach. It appeared that Mr Thwaites wished to appoint talented young teachers as part of his strategy to improve academic outcomes.³ Certain senior and highly respected teachers left in the early 1960s amid considerable bitterness:

out of the blue came the word that Vic Profitt had been told that there would be no work for him here next year ... The common belief in Staff circles is that the Head has had some applications from younger men that he wants to accept and he can take them on only if he makes room for them by dropping some of the older men who have reached or are approaching retirement age.⁴

Opening of the new Coles Science Wing. Reproduced with permission from Neil Everist



Language laboratory showing Austin Gray, Peter Thwaites, Geoff Neilson, Ralph Humphries (French teacher)



Mr Profitt taught Mathematics to generations of Lower Secondary students, but his contribution to the sporting life of the College has long been regarded as more significant than his classroom service. He was the Coach of Football, Athletics and Cricket Teams and was also responsible for organising all the school's sporting activities. He had been a constant friend of the Exploration Society and the House of Guilds. By the time J.H. Campbell retired in 1963, he had been Head of the Preparatory School, Housemaster of Warrinn, and Senior History Master; had coached sports teams, joined the Cadet Corps, been on many Ramblers Guild trips, helped boys with photography at the House of Guilds and prepared choirs for the House Music Competition. More than anything else, he particularly enjoyed his work with the Boat Club and the Glee Club, but his extraordinary involvement in almost every aspect of College life touched most students.⁵ Mr Henderson, Senior Science Master since 1929, was next to be 'retired' by Mr Thwaites, and left in 1964: 'We said goodbye to Tam Henderson on Thursday ... In his reply at the farewell, Tam asserted (and the Head was among those present) that he did not wish to retire from the College, but that he had been pushed out', reported Mr Carrington.⁶

As Mr Thwaites' incumbency progressed, it became clear that Vice Principal Davey (1958–73) was regarded by some as the lynchpin in the smooth running of the Senior School. He was the key link between the administration, students and parents, and was widely respected for this role, but when he left to become Principal of the new Eltham College, matters of communication worsened. Mr Thwaites' perceived lack of connection with students became the subject of much criticism. In 1974, a parent complained to the Council Chairman:



With regard to the administration of the school I can assure you that there is a growing dissatisfaction among parents of boys at the school at the direction in which the school is moving and I have the support of a number of parents in bringing this before the Council. There is a fear among them that should they express any dissatisfaction their boys may be victimised as a result of their protestations. There is a lack of consistency at all levels of staff. This is resulting in a considerable amount of frustration among the boys. This is in no small part due to the inability of the Principal to communicate with the boys at their own level and ... unless this is solved ... there is little hope for the future of the school.⁷

Interior of the new George Morrison Memorial Library.
Reproduced with permission from Neil Everist

Despite the Principal's interpersonal shortcomings, no one could question his deep commitment to the improvement of the College's academic outcomes and the modernisation of its physical facilities. From the outset, Mr Thwaites made it known that he sought to improve the school's academic standards by providing wider subject choices, but stricter guidance, too, in making those choices. By restricting parental influence, he hoped to lessen the problems of students who struggled with unsuitable subjects:

Unfortunately the subjects that are best for them are not always the subjects which are necessary for the career their parents would like for them. We at the school are usually the best judges of the particular group into which a particular boy fits, and in future there will not really be much choice left to the boy or his parents.⁸

Fundraising for the Rolland Centre, 1970



By 1962, the school was streamed and courses at each of the four streams (A, B, C and D) were carefully chosen to suit that level. Streaming forced the academically able students into Science and Mathematics, and partly explains the consistently good Matriculation results in these subjects. Old Collegian Robert Doyle, who in 2008 was elected Lord Mayor of Melbourne, reflects on being

very much the product of the horizontal streaming which was very strictly followed ... if you were intelligent you were put into a special stream and your whole orientation was towards the sciences. Further than that you were regarded as a university product, and even further, it was suggested quite firmly that medicine was *the* faculty, after that perhaps law or commerce.⁹

As well as streaming, other changes were applied to the College's academic program during the 1960s. Agricultural Science was reintroduced in 1963 as an alternative to General Science for the C and D streams, and Social Studies was extended to Matriculation level. With more options, the numbers of Matriculation students grew, and they were divided into two streams – Science or Humanities. Also from 1963, boys in the D stream who were struggling to gain their Intermediate Certificate were allowed an extra year, to attempt the exams after five years instead of four.

Improvements in academic results were, however, inconsistent. Much soul-searching took place during 1966, and the introduction of an academic Entrance Examination was seriously considered to restrict entry to the school and 'improve quality' of the student body. Although it was believed that such a move would improve discipline as well as the school's public image through the improved examination results, the idea was eventually discarded because of various disadvantages. It was thought, in particular, that restricted entry to Form 3 might exclude a



Old Collegian Lindsay Hassett, centre, at the opening of the Rolland Centre with Dr Wettenhall on the left and Mr Thwaites on the right, 1970

number of sons of Old Collegians as well as some boys from the Preparatory School. Instead, promotion to the next form would be more strictly monitored, based on results and behaviour, and an adequate academic standard would be maintained throughout the school to enable entry into tertiary education for the 'more able' boys and, for the rest, a minimum of the Leaving Certificate standard should be obtained.¹⁰

Instead of restricting their entry to the school, a new approach to the education of 'non-academic' boys was introduced in 1967. A Department of General Studies catered for students in the C and D streams. Initially run by Michael Stock (1964–70) for Form 3 boys, it gradually extended to include boys in Forms 4 and 5 who were unlikely to proceed to Matriculation. It was a brave move, but Mr Stock had considerable success with these students: 'One thing Michael said was, "You've got to learn to spell; you've got to be able to write properly". You can't fudge if you're typing, so he got them all to buy a little portable typewriter and they had to learn to type', recalls Mr Elliott. He continues: 'they each restored an old Victa two-stroke lawnmower which they then had to sell. Then they bought a four-stroke and did it all again ... so they learnt Chemistry, Physics, all sorts of things, doing it this way.'¹¹ As part of the new department, a Technical Studies stream was introduced in 1968, and a Business Studies stream in 1973. For several years, the College was the only school in Victoria to offer an alternative to Matriculation (which became Higher School Certificate (HSC) from 1970) through the technical subjects, which were adapted from courses taught in technical schools. Boys were able to sit a Technical Intermediate Certificate and, from 1969, a Technical Leaving Certificate. Results at Leaving level improved dramatically from 1968 (see table).

Students with a preference for technical and practical subjects thrived outside the classroom, too, at the House of Guilds, with the wise and reliable Mr Webb in charge until 1962, followed

Exam pass rates by percentage, 1960–74

Year	Leaving	Matriculation
1960	46	51
1961	65	77
1962	60	66
1963	57	71
1964	71	80
1965	66	66
1966	73	73
1967	69	80
1968	82	70
1969	84	80
1970	83	67
1971	97	66
1972	92	76
1973	90	65
1974	90	78

Source: Council Minutes, 1975

Comparison of 1966 Matriculation results

	<i>The Geelong College</i>	<i>Scotch College</i>	<i>Melbourne Grammar</i>	<i>Geelong Grammar</i>
<i>Number of students</i>	58	143	137	126
English passes	83%	72%	83%	78%
General Mathematics passes	71%	78%	91%	54%
Physics passes	94%	83%	93%	37%
Chemistry passes	76%	90%	93%	54%
Geography passes	65%	78%	79%	45%
Economics passes	46%	83%	80%	45%
Social Studies passes	53%	72%	65%	47%
English Literature passes	71%	94%	83%	45%
Eighteenth-Century History passes	87%	75%	70%	41%
Median number of Honours marks per student	1.10	2.15	2.51	0.81

Source: based on data in I.V. Hansen, *Nor Free, Nor Secular*, p. 84.

The new Library was the last in a series of buildings which, from the early 1960s, were at the heart of the College's modernisation and physical transformation.

by Mr Elliott, and with special instructors such as Woodwork Teacher Rob Wells (1975–94), who had been a builder, and Graphics Teacher Ray Lancaster (1977–91). Mr Elliott's innovative Mobile Study Unit, created in 1971, further enhanced experiential and vocational learning for Technical stream boys by providing portable equipment for field trips and training camps.¹³

College Matriculation results also compared favourably with those of the other APS schools in the 1960s, with exceptional results in Physics. Academic excellence, however, commonly measured by the number of Honours achieved, largely eluded the College, going instead to Scotch College and Melbourne Grammar. Overall, The Geelong College's results were still far better than those at Geelong Grammar. Pass rates in Mathematics, Chemistry, Geography, English Literature and Eighteenth-Century History, in particular, eclipsed those of their main local rival.

The new Science block, a new Physics Teacher, R. Seaton (1964–77), and a new Physics syllabus from 1965, all continued the College's fine reputation in the Sciences. The 'New Mathematics', introduced around Australia in 1967, revitalised the Mathematics syllabus. Although the College's Matriculation pass rates were somewhat inconsistent, an overall improvement was obvious by the end of the 1960s. English was still the stumbling block, and some of the teachers believed that it was neglected in favour of the College's emphasis on Science. In 1966, 'in spite of the poor English results in both Leaving and Matric, the number of English periods in each group has been reduced by one and the numbers in classes has been increased because there is no one to teach them. I hope we produce some Maths and Science students of note – it seems unlikely we will produce anything else under the present system.'¹³ Student–staff ratios were reduced in some other senior classes. A Language laboratory was established for French at the Senior School in 1968, and the old Chemistry laboratory became the new Geography room.

The development of a fine Library was essential to the academic progress of the Senior School. Dr Buntine's appointment of the College's first qualified Librarian, Pat Wood (1959–81), gave Mr Thwaites a head start in positioning the Library as a pillar of the school's future success. Mrs Wood gradually modernised the Library's administration with a proper borrowing system, and its appearance, to make it a comfortable and welcoming place that encouraged reading. To her colleagues and students, 'she was more than a Librarian'.¹⁴ A Library Committee of students worked with Mrs Wood to make reading and Library use an accepted and important part of school life. In an innovative move that attracted attention from schools all over Victoria, a guided reading scheme was introduced, in which English staff took some classes to the Library for one period a week to select and read books.¹⁵ The Library became more of a focus of student activity by hosting, for example, lunchtime talks. It was also open all day and in the evenings to cater for boarders.¹⁶ More than 2,500 new books were added and the Morrison Library had to be extended to cope. An entirely new Library, funded largely under the Commonwealth grants scheme for school libraries, was an enormous fillip to academic standards when it opened in 1973.

The new Library was the last in a series of buildings which, from the early 1960s, were at the heart of the College's modernisation and physical transformation. Four major appeals were held during the 1960s and early 1970s to fund key building priorities from the College's Master Plan. The first, in 1960, went towards the second stage of the Preparatory School that included a junior boarding house; the second, in 1963, went towards a new Senior School boarding house; the third, in 1965, paid for the significant upgrade of Morrison Hall, and the fourth, in 1969 and 1970, raised around \$300,000 for the first stage of the Rolland Centre. As well as private fundraising, Commonwealth government grants for major capital works at independent schools were introduced in the 1960s with a focus on Science laboratories and libraries.

Partly because of their fundraising power during the 1960s, Old Collegians continued to exert great control over the College through the position of Council Chairman (held continuously by an Old Collegian from 1908 to 1981). Perhaps the most autocratic was Sir Arthur Coles (1939–69). A business magnate (co-founder of the G.J. Coles empire), first Chairman of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games Committee and influential federal politician during the 1940s, Coles was very strong willed and accustomed to having his own way: 'he was a bit of a maverick, but he was very competent, devoted to the College, and had a "big picture" vision for it'.¹⁷ His prominent public philanthropy also extended to the College, and the new Science wing was named after him in 1964 when he donated funds to match the government grant. He was far from being a risk-taker where the College's finances were concerned. Indeed, he refused to allow the sale of the land owned by the College in Noble Street to fund building projects, and instead encouraged large-scale fundraising. This approach retarded the establishment of the new Preparatory School in particular, but it was not fashionable to take on huge debt in Australian independent schools in post-war Australia. Dr Norman Wettenhall, the next Council Chairman (1970–77), continued the somewhat autocratic leadership style and, as another passionate Old Collegian, was so dedicated to the task that he remained on Council long after his period as Chairman had expired, serving a total of thirty-two years. Dr Wettenhall developed a particularly close working relationship with Mr Thwaites, and became one of the Principal's most trusted confidants. They consulted each other on many different topics in between Council meetings and kept in touch by letter whenever either was interstate or overseas.¹⁸

Council members' work during the Thwaites era was almost entirely devoted to building plans and financial appeals. The need was urgent: at the Senior School, the last classroom had been



Sir Arthur Coles



Neil Everist (right) next to Mr Thwaites at the re-laying of the Morrison Hall foundation stone, 1966

built in 1951, but enrolments had continued to grow from 588 then to 733 in 1960. Space was at a premium. Council members' excitement, in recalling this period, is tangible, and underlined by the fact that most of them were also Old Collegians and tremendously supportive of the school. Among them were Geoff Neilson, Neil Everist, Bill Rogers, Ken Nall, Austin Gray, Niel Davidson and Charles Dennis. Mr Neilson believes that Mr Thwaites was responsible for creating the positive atmosphere: 'He was a breath of fresh air. He said to the Council that we needed to meet monthly and that we needed to introduce two important subcommittees – a Finance Committee and a Building Committee. All of a sudden, the Council became involved and responded to Peter Thwaites and his ideas.'¹⁹ These committees had operated irregularly for several decades, but from 1960 met several times a year.

Mr Thwaites, Dr Wettenhall and Mr Jamieson had to work hard against the ingrained Presbyterian reluctance to spend money and to change the 'don't light the fire on Sundays' attitude.²⁰ Other Old Collegians not on Council, and with sons enrolled, saw no reason to contribute anything except school fees. Nevertheless, some Old Collegians, through the agency of key people like Mr Betts, gradually began to support the concept of fundraising. Even though Mr Betts was not an Old Collegian, he had proved himself to be a very successful businessman in Geelong and, as Chair of the College's Finance Committee during this period (1960–75), was at

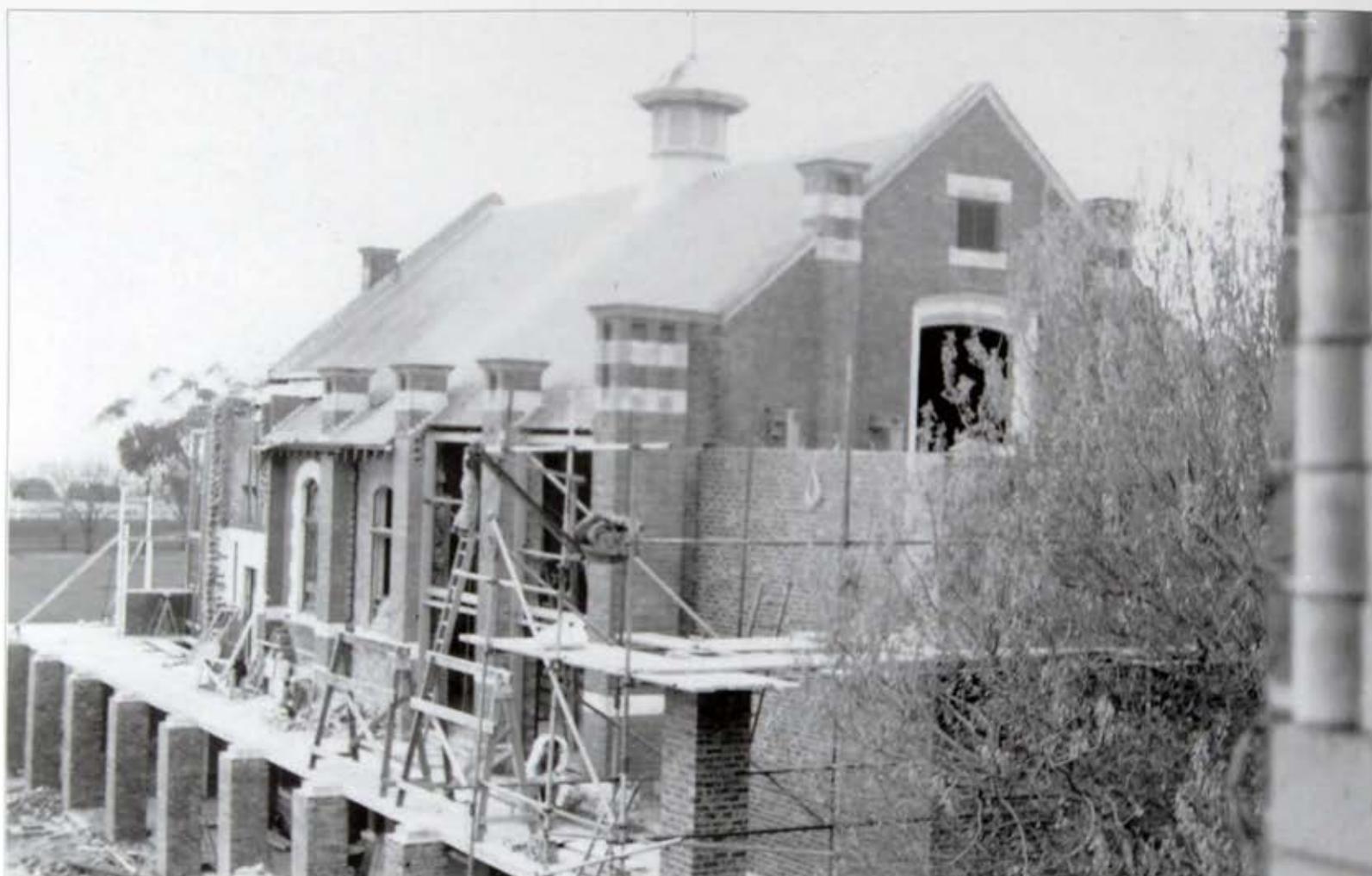
the core of the school's administration. It may have been somewhat frustrating to fight so hard to finance the modern buildings and improvements needed to achieve a high standard of education at the College, but the relentless fundraising did have certain other benefits, as new Council and Finance Committee member Mr Nall (1960–74) recalls: 'We had a number of appeals and cultivated the old boys to a greater extent than before. It brought back the people who were on the fringe of their association with the school.'²¹

While a Council member (1960–79) and school architect, Mr Everist's role was among the most crucial in the College's history. Having the opportunity to take part in discussions on future requirements was essential to the great latitude afforded him by fellow Council members as he set about creating a new Master Plan for the school in 1967. It blended old with new and enhanced the beautiful grounds: 'We eliminated public car access, introduced more Australian trees and lawns and gave as much care to siting and developing outdoor spaces as to the buildings themselves ... Overall, our vision was to accept and introduce technological change but maintain a harmony and continuity embracing the old and the new and developing a tranquil oasis.'²² Before car access was restricted, some masters used to park their cars outside their classrooms, and visitors would park around the oval to watch sports matches.²³

McGlashan and Everist, the architectural firm formed by David McGlashan and Neil Everist in 1955, has since 1960 provided architectural continuity at the College. Mr Everist's innate sense of place and understanding of the historical uses of different buildings and spaces enabled him to pay homage to the old using references in the new. No new building appears taller than the iconic Morrison building of 1871, nor Mackie House. Modern piers were used on the Morrison Hall refurbishments and on many of the new buildings, including the Sir Arthur Coles Science Wing (1964), the Rolland Centre (opened in three major stages in 1970, 1984, 1999) and the Garnet Fielding Academic Wing (built on the old tennis courts on Noble Street in 1990), as a recurrent architectural motif to tie the old and the new together. Beautiful courtyards of lawns and gardens link buildings throughout the site, as does the grey and red paving.²⁴

As well as considerable attention to exterior physical spaces during the 1960s, the College devoted resources to improve internal, intangible structures. The school timetable was reorganised to provide space for the introduction of new clubs and activities. It was part of a renewed emphasis on 'Learning for Living' in the kind of Christian school community that the College should be, with the expression of a Christian faith 'not restricted to the formal acts of worship or the teaching of Scripture' but also in the wide range of activities that create a learning community: 'A boy's sense of adventure and growth in mental and physical challenge, the fine balance between freedom and dependence on others, and the ability to gain from all who teach him, a self respect and concern for others – these should become realities in a school that is a Christian community.'²⁵ Mr Thwaites was also concerned that the dominance of sport meant that few boys had time to do anything else. Some activities had completely stopped because of this: in 1965, for example, there was no time to produce a school play.²⁶ New clubs and activities were introduced to allow every boy to find his niche (not necessarily sports), 'broaden his horizons' and to give students 'a clear indication of the importance the school places on a sense of proportion in all things'.²⁷

In this way, Mr Thwaites underlined the best values of the Rolland era, and brought to the College something of the Darling emphasis on the whole student that he had experienced while at Geelong Grammar. Holiday activities were organised to broaden students' experiences, including camping, and a bus trip to Adelaide to play football. In 1966, two afternoons a week



Morrison Hall in the process of being remodelled, 1966

after school until 6 pm were set aside for existing activities such as music, debating, the Cadet Corps, the House of Guilds and Presbyterian Fellowship Association meetings. Sports training was only allowed on three nights a week instead of four. However, participation in the activity afternoons was voluntary, and several new sports alternatives were also introduced to the activities timeslot, such as karate and golf. This eroded the original intention that the activity afternoons be reserved for the pursuit of non-sporting, extra-curricular activities.

Sport still took pride of place at the College and in 1967 a majority of the Form 6 students declared their belief that sport should be compulsory for students in Forms 3, 4 and 5.²⁸ Although this did not occur until the early 1980s, the gradual introduction of more diverse sports offerings – some acceptable in APS competition – helped sport to retain its strong position at the College. Victory at interschool athletics continued to elude the school (and has escaped the Boys' Athletics Team ever since), but the occasional APS Premiership win in other sports boosted morale: both Cricket (shared with Carey Grammar) and Football Premierships were won in 1963, and backed up with a shared Football Premiership in 1964. Talented sportsman Paul Sheahan (1964) excelled at football and cricket, and proved rather typical of the boys who were selected as School Captains. He broke Lindsay Hassett's long-standing College batting records as well as most APS cricketer records. From 1965, groups of boys were trained as football umpires, and their

service to the school in this way even merited qualification for School Colours. A Cricket Tour to New Zealand with a combined team from the College and Geelong Grammar at the start of 1966 offered excellent experience. Hockey proved to be a popular sport and the College won a Premiership in 1967. The opening of the first stage of the Rolland Centre in 1970 provided a modern gymnasium and further boosted sport's profile.

The early 1970s were an important turning point in the College's history. Academic streaming was abolished in 1971 and the subject groupings reorganised, partly as a response to the new Higher School Certificate (HSC). In 1972, the College was still the only school in Victoria to offer an alternative to HSC courses.²⁹ In 1971, the activities program was revised and Tuesday afternoons were set aside for the pursuit of electives. From a range of more than forty activities, each boy had to choose and attend one each term. Teachers conducted a survey which found that some boys were 'wildly enthusiastic' about the program, and that the large majority agreed it should continue.³⁰ Attendance at the House of Guilds soared, and newer activities such as film appreciation, chess, psychology, first aid, gliding, skiing, surfing and the Science Club were popular. The first computer terminal arrived in 1973, linked to a computer at the Gordon Institute of Technology, and a Computer Club began soon afterwards. The Cadet Corps remained a huge entity at the College until the early 1970s, when compulsory membership for Senior School students was abolished. Form 6 students were allowed the privilege of voluntary membership. After a former student complained loudly about compulsory cadet service, as 'one of the most repulsive aspects of school life', he suggested to Council that students be allowed to choose between the Cadet Corps or social service.³¹ Cadets became voluntary for everyone from 1974 but the unit was disbanded in 1976, soon after the government subsidy was abolished. Other new activities gave more Form 6 students the opportunity for responsible leadership. They were allowed, from 1971, to be in charge of running the daily Assembly during Term 3. Assemblies included worship, but also drew the whole Senior School's attention to a range of topical issues: censorship, war, peace, freedom, poetry, aid and relief, violence, apathy, racial prejudice and advertising.³²

The debate between voluntary and compulsory activities had begun to preoccupy students and staff from the late 1960s. *Ad Astra* revealed students' awareness of huge societal change: 'We live in an age of revolt, upheaval, turmoil, heart transplants, moon probes, satellites and cybernetics. Africa is in ferment, China seethes with cultures, America is tense with racial suspicion.'³³ Students won a small victory in 1968, when those in Form 6 were no longer required to wear caps.³⁴ Compulsory church attendance, an issue far graver than those of uniform rules, could not be as easily resolved and went to the heart of the College's values. By 1971, students and parents were lobbying staff and the Principal to make church attendance voluntary, and the matter was discussed at length by teachers and the Council. Eventually, the Principal was encouraged to 'continue to set and maintain high standards in all matters relating to the life of the College, even at the expense of removing students and staff who are unwilling to accept and adhere to such standards, to maintain compulsory Church attendance, for the time being'.³⁵ Attentive to the needs of the College's boarders, and with a new minister, in 1973 St David's introduced a Youth Service at 9 am on Sundays.³⁶

Student opinions were voiced in a range of forums (although not necessarily acted on). A Student Representative Council (SRC) was formed in 1970. Form 6 students were increasingly consulted by the Principal at other meetings from the early 1970s, and their views were even extensively canvassed in a written survey. This was during the period when most Australian

Pat Wood, 1981



Extracurricular Form 6 Social Work – conservation,
1971



schools were experiencing some form of student unrest as adolescents became less tolerant of discipline and more questioning of authority. The anti-Vietnam War demonstrations epitomised this change, but in schools, several smaller, private battles were fought. The Geelong College had its share of these battles, most of which were aired in the appropriate forum of the SRC, but some of which grew to become 'red hot issues'.³⁷ These were not trivial matters such as hair length, but concerned serious topics such as demands for more democratic processes at the College. Mr Thwaites did not hide his despair, and laid the blame on a 'rampant commercialism' which bred selfishness, and a 'sick society'; it was his belief that more freedom for young people worked against adolescents' needs for appropriate behavioural boundaries.³⁸

The crisis point came in 1972 when boarding students demonstrated against the Principal's decision to remove beloved Boarding Housemaster Alan Mahar (1960–72) from his post by walking out during a school Assembly. Some also sent a letter of protest to a newspaper, outraged that they were not consulted, and another letter to Mr Thwaites who, seriously displeased, nevertheless calmly explained to the students that Mr Mahar had become so closely involved with the planning of the buildings and new academic program that the Principal needed to reduce his workload and so appointed a different Housemaster. 'I am saddened by their apparent lack of humility and respect for authority and by their assumption that they know better than others how the College should be run.'³⁹

The incident was important for what it represented: students desired ever greater freedom to make their own choices and decisions, and rebelled against what they perceived to be an undemocratic school structure that also demanded conformity as a way of upholding the College's public image. Student Ned Dennis (1972) wrote: 'This present atmosphere will not be cleared by increasing restriction on the students – an action like this will only broaden the gap ... the students of this school, and students everywhere in the world, have realised that they want a far greater degree of control in their schools than they now have'.⁴⁰ For Mr Thwaites, the

whole episode was 'symptomatic and illustrative of so many of the false assumptions which are confusing the present educational scene', and although he wanted students to be able to think for themselves, he lamented the loss of loyalty and respect for authority.⁴¹

It was not a problem peculiar to the College, but one felt keenly by Principals around Australia:

Other Headmasters and Headmistresses confirm our own experience of increasing examples of dishonesty, increasing petty theft, increasing vandalism, increasing demonstrations against authority whenever a requirement is unpalatable, including of course the current fashion of attempting to show independence by smoking, drinking and efforts to shock the adult world by sexual display, and casual dress.⁴²

One solution was for both parents and staff to encourage more responsible leadership. Another was to rewrite the school rules, which the Principal did, with this specific introduction:

uncouth, near-larrikinish behaviour, pertness, deliberate rudeness, dishonesty, bad language, deliberate non-cooperation, any action liable to damage or deface School property, are never justified. The happiness of a community living at close quarters depends upon a spirit of mutual helpfulness and comradeship. This includes a concern for good manners. A Geelong College boy is expected to show respect and courtesy to his elders at all times.⁴³

Aware of his own weighty workload and perhaps also of his shortcomings in relationships with students, Mr Thwaites specifically appointed Mr Stott as Vice Principal from 1973 to have responsibility for all the community relationships within the school, and between the school and parents. Mr Davey continued for one more year as Deputy Principal and was in charge of the academic side of the school. Overall, Mr Thwaites was determined to focus on the relationships within the school community, and the introduction of co-education in 1974 was his greatest legacy to the College in the quest to improve student relationships and behaviour (see Chapter 9).

Not long after the introduction of co-education, Mr Thwaites resigned. His departure did not come as a surprise. His absences, even through ill-health, had always attracted disapproval, and began to increase. His study leave in Term 2 of 1965 was followed by heart problems and sick leave in Term 3 that same year. Mr Thwaites was a member of the Council of La Trobe University, on the executive of the Victorian Universities and Schools' Examination Board, and he was also the Victorian representative on the National Council of Independent Schools when it was first formed in 1969.⁴⁴ Then, from the early 1970s, he became closely involved with the foundation of Deakin University. Privately, he considered resigning from College in 1973. He confided in Dr Wettenhall about his uncertain health, and also his belief that he felt 'more successful, and less harassed, in dealing professionally with adults than with adolescents' and that he would seriously consider an appointment to work with adults if one were offered.⁴⁵ Soon after his appointment in the middle of 1974 as Chairman of the Interim Planning Committee for Deakin University, his wish came true. In 1974, on the request of Lindsay Thompson, the then state Minister for Education, Mr Thwaites became a part-time Principal of the College, with the rest of his time devoted on secondment to the fledgling university.⁴⁶ This arrangement continued until the end of 1975, when he resigned from the College. This significant era in the College's history was firmly concluded when, early in 1976, Mr Stott (unsuccessful in his application to be the next Principal of The Geelong College) left to be Headmaster of St Peter's Girls' School in Adelaide.

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