

A College of our own

When the Reverend Alexander Campbell suggested, in March 1861, the establishment of a grammar school in Geelong by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, it must have seemed improbable that The Geelong College could be ready to open its doors in only four months. Yet the first forty boys began on 8 July after an intense period of preparation, many meetings, and much discussion. Why such haste? Who were the men who rushed to support the idea? And how, despite such hasty beginnings, did the College so immediately become a respected and successful educational force in Victoria?

Geelong, in the late 1850s, was a thriving town in the young colony of Victoria. Many Scottish farming families had arrived in Victoria in the 1850s. By 1861, Presbyterians made up 16 per cent of Victoria's population – far more than the 10 per cent in New South Wales – and formed the next largest denomination after the Church of England, which accounted for 39 per cent.¹ The intense commercial and industrial activity produced by the gold rush of the early 1850s added to the Western District's pastoral wealth. The creation of a strong economy set the new Victoria apart from its penal colony cousins, New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Geelong and its seaport were an important part of Victoria's success and perfectly poised to establish a first-class educational institution that could serve families with newly found wealth from gold and sheep. Melbourne, four times the size of Geelong, already had such schools: Scotch College, founded by the Presbyterian Church as the Melbourne Academy in 1851, and Melbourne Grammar, re-established in 1858 by the Church of England after beginning as the Diocesan Grammar School in 1849. The Church of England moved quickly to open a grammar school in Geelong in 1855, but when it closed in June 1860, the Presbyterians stepped into the breach and stole a huge lead on their competitors with the establishment of The Geelong College in 1861.

One man's personal and religious motivations directly led to the school's foundation. The Reverend Alexander Campbell, who arrived in Melbourne with his family in 1859, was posted to St Andrew's Church in Geelong. As soon as he found a house, he had to find a suitable school for his two eldest boys. Disappointed that Geelong Grammar had closed, Reverend Campbell had 'no option but to place my boys at the Flinders National School in the meantime'.²



Reverend Alexander James Campbell, seated centre, surrounded by his family, c1905. He was the first minister of St George's Church, and the instigator of the new Geelong College

By the end of that year, he and another key member of the Geelong Presbytery, James Balfour, had been appointed to an Education Committee by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. This occurred soon after the Presbyterian Union in 1859, which combined the Free Church, the Established Church and the United Church, on the grounds that a united Church would have greater strength against Protestant rivals.³ The Education Committee's main concern was with the pending lack of religious teaching in the many tiny Presbyterian schools that would soon be taken over by the Board of Education, which had no Presbyterian representatives. Ministers and their local congregations, especially those in regional Victoria, were unhappy with this proposed system, and the whole topic received a great deal of attention in the newspapers, where those opposing the denominational schools system were equally vocal. All this focused the Reverend Campbell and Mr Balfour's minds on the local educational scene in their work on the Presbyterian Education Committee.

It was in this context that the Reverend Campbell discovered a proposal for a united grammar school being discussed among 'our Presbyterian Society' to fill the gaping hole created by the closure of Geelong Grammar; when making further enquiries, he was asked to convene a meeting to discuss the idea.⁴ The joint educational enterprise would be funded and managed by the Presbyterian Church and the Church of England, and presided over by Headmasters chosen alternately by each Church, beginning with a Presbyterian.

The official school histories of The Geelong College and Geelong Grammar differ over the origins of the suggestion for this united grammar school: the centenary history of the College, published in 1961, ascribes this visionary notion to the Presbyterians, while Weston Bate's history of Geelong Grammar, published in 1990, credits the idea to Bishop Charles

Perry – then Victoria’s leading figure in the Church of England.⁵ However, the Reverend Campbell states in his notes that it was the Geelong Presbyterians who presented the proposal to local representatives of the Church of England. Although Bishop Perry supported the idea, he referred it to his Church Assembly because of the considerable financial outlay that it would involve. Unfortunately, the response was ‘distinctly hostile’, not because of the cost involved but because of denominational differences, championed in particular by lawyer, parliamentarian and Geelong Grammar School Council member Sir Charles Sladen, who had a history of disagreements with Bishop Perry.⁶ At a Church of England Synod meeting late in 1860, Sir Charles directly opposed the motion to re-open the Grammar School as a combined Presbyterian and Church of England enterprise, saying that it would precipitate the Church ‘into a state of things which they should ever live to repent to bring about a union which, however harmoniously it might work for a short time, must result in troubles and difficulties’, especially regarding the teaching of religion.⁷ Reverend Campbell reports that ‘some very bitter words were spoken in deprecation of it; one Member of the meeting declaring that he would rather see their fine building going to the rats, than have it shared with the Presbyterians’.⁸ So the idea was vetoed, and with it went an opportunity for ecumenical goodwill and the chance for children of both denominations to realise, through a joint education, that ‘they were all brothers and did all belong to the one Great Household of Faith’.⁹

Although this conclusion was a great disappointment, the ‘discourteous treatment’ of the Presbyterian representatives galvanised them to action. It ‘led us to adopt the resolution that, without delay we would set up a college of our own’.¹⁰ On 4 April 1861, the Reverend Campbell

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George Morrison

First Committee Minutes held on 18 April 1861

18 April 1861
First Meeting

81 Moorabool St 18th April 1861

A Meeting of Gentlemen was called by circular for today. present Messrs John Galvert, James Balfour, William Blais, James Cowie & James Campbell & the Rev. A. S. Campbell.

The Rev. Mr Campbell was called to the chair Mr James Campbell was asked to act as Secretary for this meeting.

Explanation

The Chairman explained that this meeting had been called to take into consideration the propriety of establishing a Grammar school in Geelong, and that he had brought this matter before the General Assembly of the "Presbyterian Church of Victoria" in Melbourne last month and that they fully approved of such a school being established in Geelong in connexion with the Presbyterian body.

Resolutions to form a school

The Meeting cordially approved of the objects and after due consideration being given to it, Resolved

How conducted

1st That this meeting considered it highly desirable that a Grammar school should be immediately established in Geelong.

2nd That the said Grammar school shall be conducted under the auspices of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria

Committee

3rd That the following Committee be appointed to make all necessary enquiries and report to a future meeting viz

Messrs John Galvert, James Simson, James Cowie, James Balfour, A. S. Robertson, Willm.

and other Presbyterian representatives of Geelong presented a proposal to the General Assembly in Melbourne for 'the establishment at Geelong of an Educational Institution of the highest class in connexion with this Church', and received immediate approval of the plan, especially after he explained that it would be 'for the benefit of the Western District' and 'conducted on the principle of the Scotch College in Melbourne'.¹¹ The Geelong representatives realised that the perfect Headmaster for the new venture was already known to them, and teaching their sons at the Flinders National School.¹²

George Morrison had no rivals for the position of Principal of the proposed new Presbyterian school and was known personally to the men on the committee in charge of setting up the school. Some of them were, with him, members of the Reverend Campbell's congregation at St George's Presbyterian Church. Four of them were Presbyterian ministers, including the Reverend Campbell, and the Reverends Alexander Love (Minister of Scots Church in Yarra Street, Geelong, and Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria from 1861), James Henderson and T.McK. Frazer (Minister of the High Church in Geelong from 1861). Eight were prominent Presbyterian citizens: estate agent, James Campbell; John Calvert; member of Geelong Chamber of Commerce, James Simson; local magistrate, A.S. Robertson; William Blair; Municipal Council Auditor, J.T. McKerras; former Mayor of Geelong and state parliamentarian, James Cowie; and businessman, James Balfour (who in 1861, as a 31-year-old, was elected Chairman of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce and also made an elder of St George's Church; he later became a state parliamentarian). At their second meeting about the new school, more committee men were included: Dr James Carstairs; local magistrate and coroner, Dr Forster Shaw; doctor, justice of the peace and influential Colac landowner,

Knowle House, Skene Street, c1964
sketched by Percy Everett



Dr David Stodart; merchants, Hugh McPhillimy, John Headrick and T. Curle; Mayor William Bell; Robert Anderson; John Middlemiss; Andrew Anderson; W.A. Tolmie and A.B. White.¹³ These men's sons would form the nucleus of the earliest enrolments, including Harry Anderson, William Blair, John Calvert, Lewis Calvert, Leonard Calvert, Frederick and James Campbell (the Reverend Campbell's sons, who transferred from Flinders National School), H. Campbell, J. Cowie, Murray Simson, David Stodart, Leslie Stodart and M. Stodart.¹⁴

When the Flinders National Grammar School was founded in 1858, there was little competition – apart from the new Geelong Grammar School – for those families who required secondary schooling for their sons. Geelong's population of 20,000 welcomed the opportunity of local secondary schooling for their boys, who otherwise were sent 'home' to Britain for their education, or perhaps to Scotch College in Melbourne. The newly established University of Melbourne also added to the appeal for new migrants, many of whom were from Scotland and with a strong sense of the value of education. Religion and learning were inseparable for Scottish Presbyterians, and the Church of Scotland's Books of Discipline included a scheme of compulsory education for intellectual, religious and moral development. Since the establishment of the Church of Scotland in 1592, the Church controlled all its parish schools and most of the private schools, too.

This was the model brought by the Reverend James Forbes to the new colony, and he opened four schools in Melbourne from 1838, including the Melbourne Academy (later Scotch College).¹⁵ Religious content, believed to be the key to the development of young men's good moral character, was an essential part of the curriculum for Presbyterians, as were English, Latin and Greek, to cater for university requirements and entry into the professions. It was natural that The Geelong College should follow the same Presbyterian educational principles as Scotch College. The Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC) did the same when it was established in 1875.

The Morrison family name was, by then, already strongly associated with one of the best educational institutions in the state. George Morrison's brother, Alexander, was Scotch College's Principal from 1857 to 1903. The family's connection to fine Presbyterian education strengthened during the next fifty years, with brother Robert Morrison becoming Scotch College's Vice Principal in 1868, and George Morrison's son Norman succeeding his father as the second Principal of The Geelong College in 1898. Like his brothers, George was highly educated. He was born in 1830 in Morayshire, Scotland, and attended the Elgin Academy when his brother Dr Donald Morrison was Headmaster. There George won a scholarship to the University of Aberdeen, where he proved to be an outstanding student, winning prizes for Mathematics, Physics, Philosophy and Greek, and obtaining his Master of Arts (MA) degree. He was later awarded the prestigious Doctor of Laws (LLD) for his work in education, as were four of his brothers.

George Morrison was 28 when, after teaching Mathematics at the Naval and Military Academy in England and the Dollar Academy in Scotland, he arrived in Melbourne to teach at Scotch College in 1858. As Headmaster of the Flinders National Grammar School from 1859, he created for himself and the school an enviable reputation of outstanding scholastic success that was soon recognised as providing strong competition to Geelong Grammar. William Kernot's great success in gaining Exhibitions in Classics and Mathematics, early in 1861, was owed to his schooling under Mr Morrison at Flinders National Grammar School, and could only have improved the Principal's reputation in Geelong. Until 1864, the Flinders School enrolled only boys, and numbers grew dramatically under Mr Morrison, to 175, up from 116 when it opened. Enrolments suffered when he left in June 1861, and dropped to 99 by 1862, as some boys followed him to the College.¹⁶

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St George's Church, c1930. The College had an association with the church for one hundred years.
Photo: Garry O Dell Armstrong Album

The choice of George Morrison as the College's first Principal would prove crucial to the school's early success and earned it the reputation of being able to outperform Geelong Grammar academically after it re-opened in 1863. Only two Geelong Grammar boys passed Matriculation between 1863 and 1868, compared to twenty-four from the College during the same period.¹⁷ Indeed, boys who were expected to attend university were removed from Geelong Grammar and sent to the College during the 1860s and 1870s expressly because of the fine academic performances of the latter: many more boys from the College passed Matriculation and walked off with Exhibitions. This had been the founders' main intention – to 'prepare its senior pupils for passing on to the University, and for entering on any of the various professions'.¹⁸

Knowle House in Skene Street was the first site of the College when it opened in 1861. 'Not known for its pretentiousness', conditions were basic – Knowle House had been a hotel and also a boarding house before its use as a school, first by Geelong Grammar from 1856, and by other schools after the College moved out in 1870.¹⁹ Mr Morrison had married Rebecca Greenwood at Scotch College in 1859 and many of their eight children were born while the family lived in a house at 2 Skene Street, purchased by Mr Morrison to be near Knowle House. He also rented small cottages adjacent to the school to provide extra classroom space.²⁰ The cramped conditions did not seem to hamper the teaching and learning at the College in the 1860s, nor the steadily increasing enrolments.

A separate group of correspondents had been established by the College Committee to spruik for enrolments for the new school in nearby towns, such as Skipton, Shelford, Colac, Streatham, Cressy, Camperdown, Darlington and Rokewood. This appears to have been a successful strategy. During the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, about 50 per cent of boys came from Geelong. The rest were from the thriving western Victorian towns of Ballarat, Colac, Camperdown, Ararat, Horsham, Hamilton and from many smaller towns and large pastoral properties in between. It was a broad catchment area, such as one might expect of a far older boarding school. These boys' fathers identified themselves as 'squatters' in the enrolment records more often than any other profession, followed by 'clergy'. Although a number of occupations are recorded as 'unknown', the general picture is clear. 'Gentleman' and 'landed

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GEELONG COLLEGE.

Scripture History,—Old Testament.

1. State briefly what you know of Abel and Enoch.
 2. Give a brief account of the History of Joseph.
 3. Give a brief account of the Life of Moses.
 4. What occurrences do you connect with the following halting places in the Wilderness :—Wilderness of Sin, Rephidim, Kibroth Hattaavah, Mount Hor?
 5. What do you know of Balaam? of Achan?
 6. Who were Ehud? Sisera? Doeg? Shimei?
 7. Give a brief account of Gideon.
 8. State what you know of the Anointing of Saul.
 9. Who were Agag? Goliath? Mephibosheth? Adonijah?
 10. Give a brief account of the Rebellion of Absalom.
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Scripture History,—New Testament.

1. What is commemorated on Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday?
2. Which are the Synoptic Gospels? Give a brief account of the writers of the four Gospels, and mention the characteristics of each Gospel.
3. Give a brief account of the first Miracle Jesus worked.
4. Give a list of the Twelve Apostles.
5. Give a brief account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead.
6. Give a brief account of the trial of Jesus.
7. What are the "seven sayings" of Jesus on the cross? Mention the circumstances of each briefly.
8. How many appearances of our Lord were there after His resurrection? Mention them, and describe the circumstances of one.

Arithmetic.

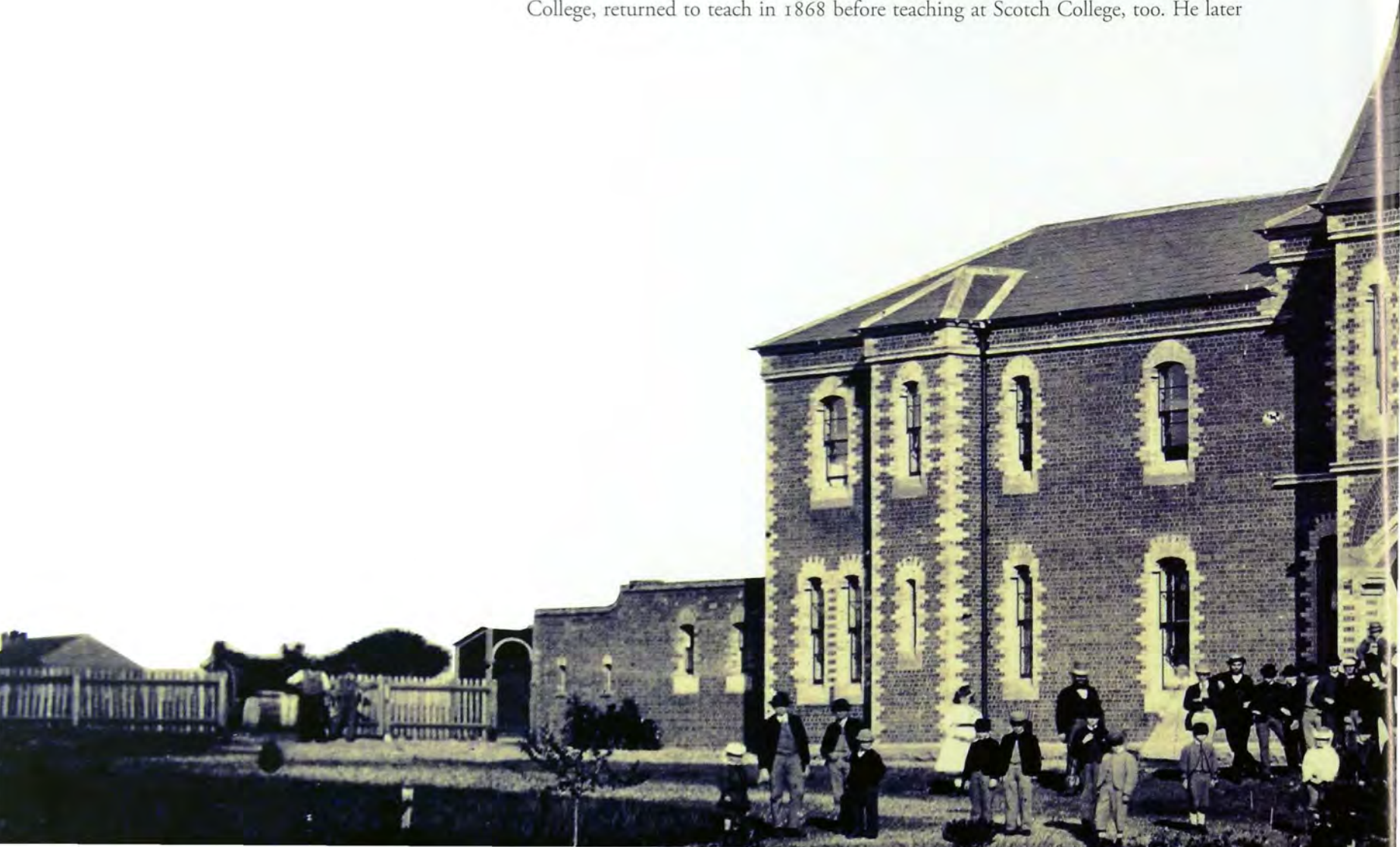
1. Divide the difference between One hundred thousand one hundred and sixty millions, one hundred and ninety-one thousand and ninety-five, and seventy thousand one hundred millions, one hundred and one thousand and thirty-five by three thousand and three. Give the quotient in words.
2. Divide 10 miles 5 fur. 18 poles 3 yds. 2 ft. 6in. by $10\frac{1}{2}$.
3. How many qrs. of wheat at 7s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel can be given in exchange for 6 hhds. of wine at 18s. $10\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon.
4. Find the value of a ton of gold at #3 18s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per oz., Troy.
5. Simplify $(4\frac{1}{4} + 3\frac{1}{4}) \times (2\frac{1}{2} - 1)$
 $(4\frac{1}{4} - 3\frac{1}{4}) \div (2\frac{1}{2} + 1)$
 and $\frac{.00965225 - .000371}{.005 \times .05 \times .01}$
6. Find the cost of papering the walls of a room 6 yds. 2 ft. 3 in. long, 4 yds. 1 ft. 9 in. high, and 5 yds. 1 ft. 6 in. broad, with paper $1\frac{1}{8}$ yd. wide, at $5\frac{1}{2}$ d. per yard.
7. Find by Practice the value of 379 acres 3 roods 36 poles, at £3 11s. 3d. per acre.
8. Find the Interest on £3275 10s. for 3 years 219 days at £5 12s. 6d. per cent. per annum.
9. A bankrupt's estate is worth £15,000: he owes one creditor £11,125, another £8,875, and another £2,500. How much can he pay in the £, and how much will the first creditor lose?
10. How many casks, each holding 25 gallons, can be filled from a prismoidal tank 50 ft. long, 30 ft. broad at the top, 40 ft. long, 20 ft. broad at the bottom, and 15 ft. deep?

The new College buildings in 1871

proprietor' figure often, as does 'merchant'. Doctors' sons also enrolled, as did sons of local government officials, customs agents, barristers, brewers, pharmacists, hotel keepers and many representatives of the hard-working and newly wealthy mercantile and pastoral elite.

Despite its religious foundations, the College, like Scotch College, was proudly non-sectarian and tolerant in enrolment policy. From the start, boys of every denomination were accepted. Three boys who had been at Geelong Grammar before it closed, for example, were enrolled immediately at The Geelong College in 1861, and four more followed before Geelong Grammar re-opened. Attendance at Religious Education classes was not compulsory. Scripture was, however, an examinable subject and one for which annual prizes were awarded, and there were extra Scripture classes on Sundays for boarders.²¹ An intimate relationship was created with St George's Church, where the Reverend Campbell ministered from 1860 to 1886, and he often officiated at the end-of-year prize nights. George Morrison's hard work was praised frequently and publicly by the Reverend Campbell and valued among Presbyterians as a fine model of the Protestant work ethic and high moral tone. Following the Principal's private ownership of the school, the intertwining of the religious and moral values of Church and society and the ongoing close association of the school with the Church through St George's gave it denominational characteristics, just as other similarly run but privately owned schools had.²²

The importance of well-experienced and highly qualified teachers cannot be underestimated in the assessment of the early success of the College. Mr Morrison taught, as most Headmasters did then, especially those in smaller schools. A number of the earliest teachers themselves went on, by the 1870s, to be in charge of their own schools, a measure long used in the assessment of the quality of senior teaching staff. John Garbutt (1861), first Dux of the College, returned to teach in 1868 before teaching at Scotch College, too. He later



The Way to the Stars A College of our own



A page from the Enrolment Register that was possibly written up in Principal Norman Morrison's era

36		GEELONG	
Kew Boys 1871			
NAME.	DATE OF ENTRY.	DATE OF LEAVING.	ADDRESS.
Carstairs	31 st January		James Carstairs, Doctor
William	1 st Oct 1858		Abenden Street.
McMullen	31 st January		W ^m McMullen, Wine merchant,
	18 th July 1859		Parsons Terrace.
Hope	31 st January		George Hope, Squatter,
James	3 rd Aug 1856		Darriwell.
Longden	31 st January		Duncan Longden, Gentleman, Greencliff Road.
Robert	21 st Jan 1858		
Longden	31 st January		
Edward Wilson	17 th Oct 1856		
Longden	31 st January		
Walter Campbell	25 th May 1859		
Longden	31 st January		
Arthur	3 rd April 1861		
McCormick	31 st January		William H. McCormick, Solicitor Home Hill.
John	14 th Oct 1856		
McCormick	31 st January		
William Henry	1 st June 1858		
Gillespie	31 st January		Robert Gillespie, Banker, Stone Street.
James McGeer	1 st June 1859		
Gillespie	31 st Jan 1859		
John McGeer	6 th April 1861		
Lloyd	31 st Jan 1859		George D. Lloyd, Gentleman, Kypri Street.
George	11 th Aug 1857		
Lloyd	31 st January		George D. Lloyd, Gentleman, Kypri Street.
James DeGraaf	2 nd Aug 1858		

was the Principal of Ballarat College for more than three decades. Henry Wall taught commercial subjects in 1867 and 1868, and later became the Principal of Hamilton College. W. Barnard became the Principal of South Yarra College. John Curnow, also educated at The Geelong College, was later the Principal of a school in New Zealand and A. McArthur, the Principal of Mt Gambier Grammar School. G. Hutton taught English and Commerce (1861–69) and by the 1880s was a Headmaster at state schools in Victoria.

Of the other early teachers, many had outstanding qualifications. In 1871, Samuel Fiddian came to teach Mathematics, with a background that included a stint as Principal of Prince Alfred College in Adelaide. John Martin, with a Bachelor of Arts (BA), taught Mathematics in the 1880s and obtained his MA in 1885, becoming the first student at the University of Melbourne to pass Astronomy.²³ Robert Hopkins taught Classics with great success during two separate stints (1869–71 and 1875–76), and was succeeded by M. Fearnley, with a Master's degree from Cambridge, and then Thomas Rout in the 1880s.²⁴ J.P.E. Francis, MA, served as Mathematics Teacher and Vice Principal from 1872 until he moved to Wellington College in New Zealand as second Master in 1879.²⁵ G.B. Vasey became the new Vice Principal in 1887 but left at the end of that year to be a barrister, and was replaced with an outstanding Mathematics graduate, R. Barnard, MA, who had won an Exhibition in the subject and was regarded as the best mathematician of his university cohort.²⁶

A cornerstone of academic success at the College was an early emphasis on languages, both ancient and modern, and Matriculation passes in Latin and Greek were essential for progress to a university Arts degree. From 1862, Matriculation demanded passes in six subjects chosen from English, Latin, Greek, French or German, History, Physical Geography, Arithmetic, Euclid (Geometry) and Algebra. The curriculum for boys at the College in the early 1860s included Latin, Greek, Modern Languages, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Drawing and English.²⁷ Indeed, Latin was compulsory for almost every student, and this provides a key to George Morrison's academic philosophy:

With the exception of a few boys from the country, whose previous education has been neglected, and whose stay at school is too short to admit of their taking up the Ancient Languages, every boy learns Latin. That this subject is subordinated to the other and perhaps more important branches of education is obvious from the consideration that only an hour a day is devoted to it. Parents, in many cases, fancy that no good can result from Latin, forgetful that it enters so largely into the composition of the English language, which cannot indeed be thoroughly understood without it; one single fact is enough to prove this, and it is that one hundred and fifty-four Greek and Latin primitives yield nearly 13,000 English words – about one-third of the words contained in an English Dictionary.²⁸

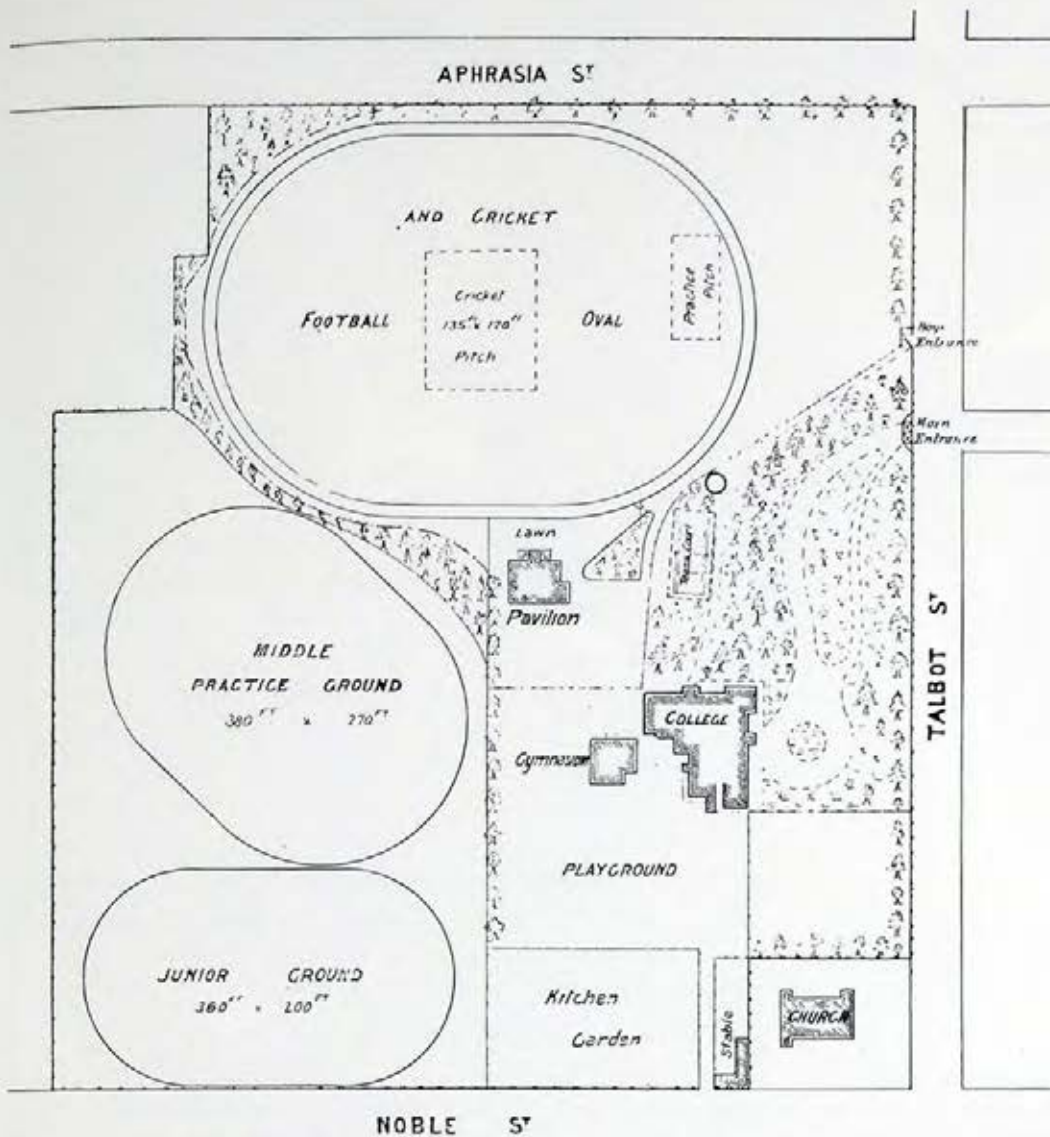
In contrast, Latin was not compulsory at Geelong Grammar. Indeed, Bracebridge Wilson's educational philosophy as Headmaster (1863–95) could not have been more different to George Morrison's. Mr Wilson tried to cater for the 'ordinary boy' and developed a system that saw each boy progress through the school according to his performance in each subject, rather than his overall performance in all of them each year. Mr Wilson frowned on corporal punishment and detentions, and was loved by the boys for his humanity, his emphasis on gentlemanly conduct, and for the way he sought 'the good which is in every boy'.²⁹ Mr Morrison's high standards were rigid in comparison and succinctly expressed: 'No boy should consider his school education finished till he can pass [the Matriculation examination], and it is much to be regretted that many of our wealthiest men do not insist on their sons going through the excellent curriculum [at] the Melbourne University'.³⁰

His high standards were met in 1862, when three of the total eleven boys who passed Matriculation and were accepted at the University of Melbourne had been in the 1861 cohort. Another measure of academic success was the award of Exhibitions by the University of Melbourne to the most outstanding students. In the 1860s, there were only three annually but College students won them several times. Samuel Leon, in 1865, won two of the three on offer, for Mathematics and Classics, and was the second student from the school to have achieved such distinction. By 1870, the school could proudly boast that, of the forty-five candidates from Geelong who had passed Matriculation, thirty were from the College.³¹ It was also the only school outside Melbourne at the time whose students won university Exhibitions. High standards were expected and met throughout the school, not just at Matriculation, and especially in Classics and Mathematics, to the great surprise of external examiners invited by Mr Morrison to supervise an intense and thorough two-day examination of the whole school at the end of 1869. The results and the overall success and progress of the students and their teachers were praised in glowing terms at length in the *Geelong Advertiser*, and this was the best possible publicity.³²

Born of such swift success, a rapidly expanding school enrolment meant that the Principal and the Presbyterian Church began to look for a larger site as early as 1862. There were, by the end of 1861, seventy students, including twenty boarders.³³ Various sites were considered during 1862 and 1863. Early in 1863, the College Committee came close to purchasing land between Pakington Street and Elizabeth Street, but attention was diverted to a block of government land near St George's Church. It had been promised to the Geelong Town Council for bath houses and, although these had never been built, the town council refused to part with the land, so another six months were eaten up with unsuccessful negotiations.³⁴

Mr Morrison reminded the School Committee of the need for a speedy resolution, 'as the very great success that has attended the progress of the College rendered the present Buildings quite inadequate for the proper accommodation of the boarders and the proper classification of the students'.³⁵ The Committee even attempted, in 1863, to purchase the Flinders National School from the Board of Education, to use the buildings for the College, but without success.³⁶ Demoralised, only four members of the Committee attended the last meeting, in August 1863. The Reverend Campbell records the various reasons for most councillors' lack of drive to sustain the new school as a Presbyterian institution: 'some of them ... had given two years service to the College now wished to retire, being weary of the many calls made upon their time. Weary especially of the fruitless work of site-hunting. Others again were afraid to face the primary responsibility which they would incur if they became Parties to the £3000 Contract for the College Building.'³⁷ They were relieved when, in June 1864, Mr Morrison proposed that he take over the College, pay its liabilities and run it himself as a private enterprise. He was, anyway, 'dissatisfied and disappointed' by the 'failure of the Committee of Management to obtain a suitable site' and could see no alternative but to take over the school.³⁸ As the Reverend Campbell writes, 'there was a large measure of natural justice in the new arrangement', for if Mr Morrison could buy a new site for the school and meet all of the associated financial responsibilities, 'was it not right that the fruit of all this labour and expenditure, when it came to be reaped, should go to him and to his Family?'³⁹

So the College barely missed a beat and, as a private school entirely run and administered by Mr Morrison and unfettered by the bureaucracy of the Church, continued to grow in size and reputation. He purchased, at his own expense, a new classroom in 1867 at the Knowle House site. By May 1870, he had bought the land in Newtown and engaged prominent local architects, Alexander Davidson and George Henderson, to design a new school. Henderson's



Plan of the school grounds, 1904

local reputation had in 1869 been elevated with his design of the majestic mansion at Barwon Park, Winchelsea. Building of the new school began almost immediately, and the elegant two-storeyed red and white brick school rose quickly, complete with a 90-foot tower (and Mr Morrison's initials carved over the main entrance). Tall Gothic windows made for well-lit classrooms, with lofty dormitories above.⁴⁰ Atop Newtown Hill, the new building was impressive, commanded a fine view of Corio Bay and was a sharp contrast to the College's humble beginnings in Skene Street.

The total cost of the 12-acre site and building was reported to be £12,000, with the building costing over £5,000.⁴¹ Mr Morrison was able to afford to build such an impressive new school because, from the early 1860s, he was making a profit of between £2,000 and £3,000 on an enrolment of seventy students. The sale, early in 1871, of his two-storeyed house at 2 Skene Street also helped to meet this financial commitment.⁴² When the boys returned to school in February 1871, it was to the 'new college' at Newtown on, as Mr Morrison proudly mentioned at the end of his Speech Night report in 1870, 'unquestionably, the best site in Geelong for a school'.⁴³

