

## Second innings

The choice of Andrew Paul Sheahan as the next Principal (1986–95) was one of the College Council's most reactive decisions in its history, yet was also greeted with enthusiasm when announced to the College community. Like Norman Morrison, Mr Sheahan was an insider: an Old Collegian of considerable standing; admired for his athletic prowess; charming with an easy, relaxed manner that enabled him to communicate readily with students, staff, Council members, parents and Old Collegians alike. Mr Sheahan's career as an educator since giving up Test Cricket was also promising, but his ready acceptance into the College fold was undoubtedly based on his personal connection to the place. Additionally, he was regarded as having a 'more worldly view' because of his varied background, which assisted interpersonal relationships with people both in and outside education. There is a sense, too, that once he chose education as his career, his destiny would be to become Principal of the College.<sup>1</sup> The Selection Committee was not looking for 'an accomplished sportsman as an antidote to an intellectual Principal', nor someone with the 'glamour' that goes with being an international sportsman, but there is no doubt that Mr Sheahan was a popular choice among Old Collegians with sporting predilections.<sup>2</sup>

While a day student at the College from 1957 to 1964, Mr Sheahan found that Mathematics Teacher Brian Lester (1932–67) had considerable influence over his subsequent tertiary education choices. Remarkable gentlemen such as Mr Davey and Don McLeod (1954–60) also made a great impression. Overall, as Mr Sheahan recalls, 'I found the things outside the classroom more powerful in moulding the sort of person I became than what happened inside the classroom'.<sup>3</sup> Special friendships with students and 'companionable' relationships with teachers were part of this, as were his leadership experiences as Captain of the Senior Cricket and Football Teams, and as School Captain in 1964. While at Ormond College for tertiary studies, Mr Sheahan discovered by observing Dr McCaughey, then the Master of Ormond College, that 'authority doesn't come from the number of decibels in your voice'.<sup>4</sup> Completion of university degrees – a BSc and a Diploma of Education (DipEd) – overlapped with his career as a member of the Australian Test Cricket Team (1967–74). Ten years' experience at Geelong Grammar was especially important in the shaping of Mr Sheahan as a teacher. This period



Paul Sheahan

Paul Sheahan in the classroom



included an eighteen-month exchange at Winchester College in England, and was followed by two years as Second Master at St Peter's College in Adelaide, during 1984 and 1985.

When he returned to The Geelong College as Principal in 1986, he was only 39 years old. He:

found *such* a different place that, although you might almost have said there was green blood coursing through my veins, it was a different institution – and an infinitely better one in many respects. Peter Thwaites had started that process, and Peter Gebhardt had pushed it a long way along the track, of opening it up to scrutiny and giving it real intellectual and academic rigour. And I'd have to say I was deeply grateful to both of those people for presenting me with a school that had great substance to it.<sup>1</sup>

There is a general consensus that Mr Sheahan's initial aim was to be a healer of the school community and that he achieved this by doing what he does best: being frequently among the school community and talking to its members.

Mr Sheahan describes his own leadership style as being that of a 'stabiliser'. Some members of the staff were suspicious, however, at first of the appointment of an Old Collegian: 'there was a fair bit of animosity at the departure of my predecessor, who'd let it be known that he was very unhappy at not having his contract renewed, and he had some very strong supporters





Paul Sheahan on Speech Day

on the staff.<sup>6</sup> Mr Sheahan, in return, let it be known that he was not about to 'sweep the place clean and start again because it was in disarray – it wasn't. It was just that some of the relationships, particularly with outside entities, were not good.'<sup>7</sup> Internally, he 'led by example', teacher Mrs Lethbridge says: 'he was very hands-on in the Senior School and a part of the staff because he taught a Year 11 Maths class'.<sup>8</sup>

The new Principal set about building on the positive work that had been done since the 1960s. He admits that his great influences included Mr Rolland and Mr Darling. Therefore, we see a renewed equilibrium at the College that blends the best of the eras presided over by Mr Thwaites and Mr Gebhardt with the Rolland- and Darling-esque emphasis on a holistic education that strikes such a chord with Mr Sheahan himself: 'I do strongly believe that you won't get far unless you have distinctive academic training, but you also need to develop your physique, your heart, your sense of courage, your understanding of your fellow man, and a host of other things that don't always come through in an academic education'.<sup>9</sup> By the time he left in 1995, a balance in school life was more evident, and *Pegasus* reflects this: achievements in APS sport are celebrated, but more space than ever before is now devoted to music, drama, camps and other activities. As much as anything else, this mirrored a general change in Australian society, where those whose talents lay in Music or Drama were more readily accepted. There was a greater tolerance of students as individuals – 'a broader acceptance of difference'.<sup>10</sup>



Noble Street classroom block



---

Not only was The Geelong College Foundation an important step in the renewed engagement of the school community, and a recognition of the need to communicate clearly the College's visions and plans for the school, but it became 'a fine bulwark against financial difficulty'.

---

A raft of significant strategic and financial decisions were made immediately after Mr Sheahan's arrival. Although boarding was reintroduced at Years 7 and 8, numbers at these levels remained small. A new Strategic Plan was designed in 1986 and a key part of it was to increase the size of the school up to 1,300 students by adding a new stream from Year 7 onwards. The number of students peaked quickly, at 1,246 in 1989. Council Chairman Mr Fielding drew deeply on his legal background and, as the College's first non-Old Collegian Chairman, brought wise objectivity to the planning discussions which oversaw building plans worth \$4 million. The elegant new red-brick classroom block, which bears his name, opened on Noble Street in 1990 complete with Science laboratories, a Computer laboratory, and general classrooms. The great strengthening of the physical fabric of the College at this time also included a number of new buildings at the Preparatory School (see Chapter 7), refurbished staff facilities at the Senior School, and a new boat shed.

To support the significant spending demanded by the Plan, and to attempt to quarantine the College from expected changes to government funding of independent schools, The Geelong College Foundation was established in 1987, with Mr Betts at the helm as inaugural Chairman, and a long-term aim to amass \$10 million in a permanent fund – a figure that had almost been achieved in 2009. This was one of the most important developments during the 1980s: not only was The Geelong College Foundation an important step in the renewed engagement of the school community, and a recognition of the need to communicate clearly the College's visions and plans for the school, but it became 'a fine bulwark against financial difficulty', says Council Chairman Mr Fielding.<sup>11</sup> An era of considerable economic and financial instability descended on Australia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, nobody was prepared for the devastating impact that the collapse of the Pyramid Building Society would have on Geelong in 1990. The school was 'very mindful of the hurt and tried to deal sympathetically' with the sometimes precarious financial situations of College families.<sup>12</sup> Fees were increased by substantial margins to offset enrolment decline – often more than 10 per cent – and often annually.<sup>13</sup> The triumvirate





of College Chairman Mr Fielding, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer Keith Doery (1974–99) and Bursar Mr Jamieson were 'brilliant at managing a school where money was not free-flowing'.<sup>14</sup> A College win at the Head of the River that year relieved some of the gloom. Boarding numbers, usually the first to suffer in such times, dipped again to eighty-nine in 1992 and student numbers overall declined by a hundred to a low of 1,138 in 1993.

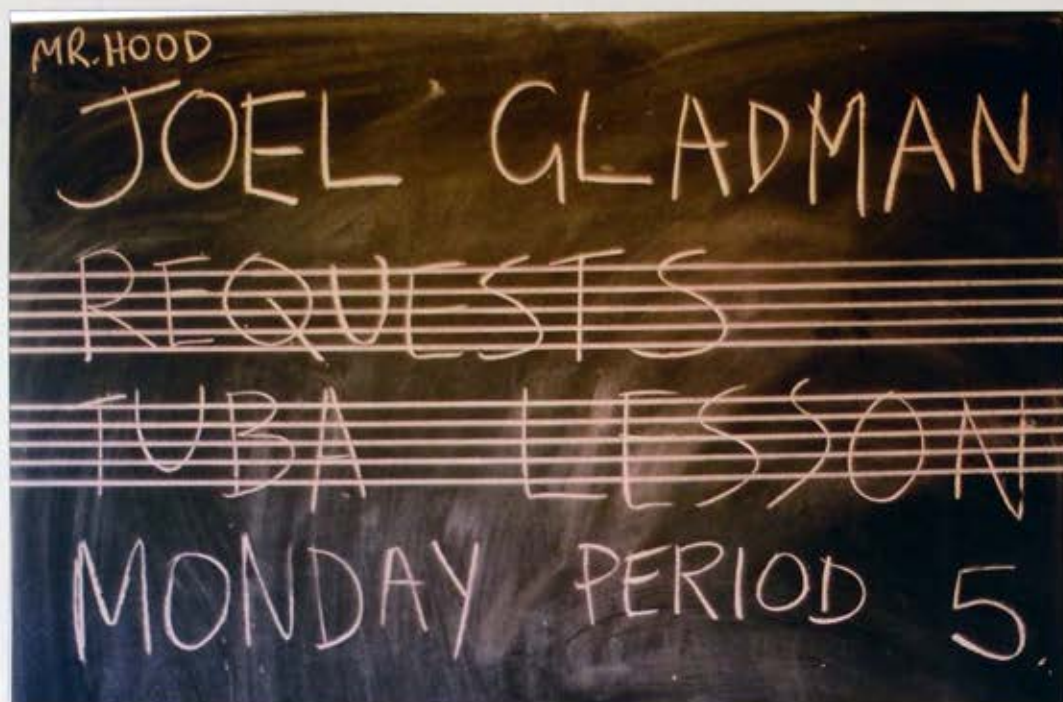
The development of students who were able to take their place in the world with high moral standards and the benefits of a broad education was Mr Sheahan's overarching aim for the College. To broaden senior students' world view, a modern version of the Lecture Series introduced by Mr Rolland fifty years earlier became a compulsory subject for Year 12 students in 1987. Known as Current Affairs, topics included morality, environment, religion, crime, punishment, politics, gender issues, Australia's overseas aid program, the impact of technology, and matters of immediate concern to the students – such as the VCE and careers.<sup>15</sup> In his Speech Day address in 1988, Mr Sheahan quoted Mr Rolland's final Speech Day address in 1945 and emphasised the ongoing need to teach young people about common decency and compassion. Coordinated by the Chaplain, social service at the Senior School strengthened as a House-based activity. Each House developed its own special niche: Wettenhall held a Football Tipping Competition, Coles an Easter Egg Basket Raffle, Shannon sold carnations for Valentine's Day. Whole school projects supported Red Cross, The Salvation Army and other worthy causes.<sup>16</sup>

Outstanding Heads of House and senior teachers, in particular, continued to be essential role models for the students. David Macbryde, for example, a passionate Teacher of Mathematics for nearly twenty years until his retirement in 1998, began the Bushwalking Club and was a caring and generous Head of McArthur. Bruce McLeod (1971–96) was Head of McArthur and Mackie Houses. Boarders built canoes under his guidance to use on weekends and during holidays – typical of his enthusiastic involvement in many school outdoor activities. Richard Morris (1979–present) was, as well as Head of Business Studies, an indefatigable Head of Wettenhall House for many years. He was followed in this position by Julie Gainey (1988–present), also a much-loved

Teaching staff, 1995. Back row: L. Hatton, D. Gow, D. Miller, C. Considine, M. Irwin, T. Egan, G. Smith, D. Clifford, D. Hibbard, M. Seeckts, D. Curnow, M. Whittle, A. Gusbeth, G. Gilby, R. Sullivan, P. Hannah, J. Simandl, K. Manwaring, M. Roland; Fifth row : E. Davis, B. Carlson, L. Quail, C. Mallett, B. Jennings, H. Roberts, D. Parker, P. Taylor, I. Henricus, A. Swaney, A.-M. Mahoney, P. Conway, M. Keary, S. Scott, D. Wade, M. O'Loughlin, D. Macbryde, T. Foley, C. Edwards; Fourth row: R. Salen, J. Thompson, G. Smith, G. Ren, M. Cheatley, J. Claringbold, M. Panckridge, T. Porter, D. Lannan, S. Walker, R. Palmer, H. McLean, A. Juros, Libby Russell, M. Keogh, R. Millen, B. Dickie, C. Lean, B. Edwards, H. Hood; Third row: B. McLeod, R. Purcell, G. Peel, T. Parkes, P. Cronk, M. Torpey, M. O'Donnell, L. Russell, A. Wightman, H. Fitzpatrick, K. Hackett, M. Baggiere, J. Coghill, J. Hobbs, C. Ogston, A. Fitzgerald, L. Ord, Rev. K. Ralph, U. Kamburowski, J. Ross, S. Morgan, D. Cleary; Second row: H. Patchett, L. Lee, J. Gardner, B. Murrells, B. Hollander, D. Andrews, K. Tol, J. Utting, M. Gallus, M. Dickinson, A. McKie, G. Montgomery, J. Gainey, S. Fisher, R. Bowyer, S. McCallum, S. Buchan, J. Hendry, C. Hildebrand, C. Turner, A. Fulton, Rev. I. Parton; Front row: A. Gibson, C. Fisher, S. Lea-Wood, M. Driscoll, M. Oates, M. Lethbridge, G. Millar, M. Lambert, J. Gilson, P. Sheahan, P. Hughes, C. Hazell, W. Harris, D. Bourke, C. Matthews, D. Young, C. Carroll, J. McDonald, J. Mitchell, J. Nelson, R. Morris



Note for the teacher, 1995



teacher of English and English Literature. Multi-talented Mrs Nelson taught Computing in the late 1970s, Mathematics, French at the Preparatory School, was Head of McArthur House for several years, as well as coaching many girls' sporting teams. Another tireless Sports Coach, Tim Parkes (1989–present), has been in charge of the Girls' and Boys' Athletics Teams for twenty years, and is a rigorous English Teacher and former Head of that Department. John Gilson, Vice Principal (1989–97) and devoted Chemistry Teacher, was a supporter of the entire House system, as well as the boarding houses.

Mr Harris, a rigorous Teacher of Mathematics and Chemistry since 1974, was also a Housemaster and an inspiring Athletics Coach. As Head of Science (1988–98), he continued to oversee the school's distinct academic strength in that area. Many of the College's longest serving teachers continued to be in the Mathematics and Science subjects, including unorthodox and creative Physics Teacher, Roger Salen (1968–99); Teacher of General Science and Computer Science, Michael Whittle (1984–2000); Kip Manwaring (1980–98), who taught Science and Physics as well as Computer Science; and David Young (1982–2008), who taught Science, Mathematics, Biology and Environmental Science, as well as coaching many sports teams. Some teachers with shorter periods of service have, nevertheless, had a profound impact in the classroom: French Teacher, Anne-Marie Butt (1989–94, 2003–06), challenged her students and was chiefly responsible for writing a new VCE French course, and Teacher of History and Philosophy, Hartley Mitchell (1984–89), was an erudite man and rigorous thinker whom the students loved.

Alongside strong Mathematics and Sciences faculties, the Arts and Humanities continued to be valued and a number of developments in these areas took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Harry Hood, Director of Music (1984–98), raised the profile and standard of instrumental music at the College, particularly through the establishment of the (now multi-award-winning) Concert Band and a Symphony Orchestra, and through the good fortune of having adaptable and talented classroom Music Teachers such as Carmel Edwards (1974–2003) and Peter Hannah



(1983–present). The strong string program put into place by Marilyn Keogh (1988–99), and Mr Hood's own fine teaching of brass instruments, provided the core of these groups. The Symphony Orchestra was formed in 1989 and quickly achieved a high standard of performance when both it and the Concert Band were selected to perform at the Sydney International Music Festival in 1992. Several jazz bands, trained by enthusiastic Music Teacher Barrie Edwards (1978–2001), often performed publicly and won local competitions and Eisteddfods. A String Quartet was formed in 1993. From 1994, Year 8 Music students could elect to study composition. The Concert Band and Vocal Ensemble continued to impress, with wins in public Eisteddfods in Geelong and Ballarat. As instrumental and choral groups grew in number, the Music Department outgrew the House of Music and was relocated to the Austin Gray Centre in 1989, which made way for converting the House of Music to a chapel. Mr Hood's greatest wish – a purpose-built Music Centre – did not come to fruition until much later.

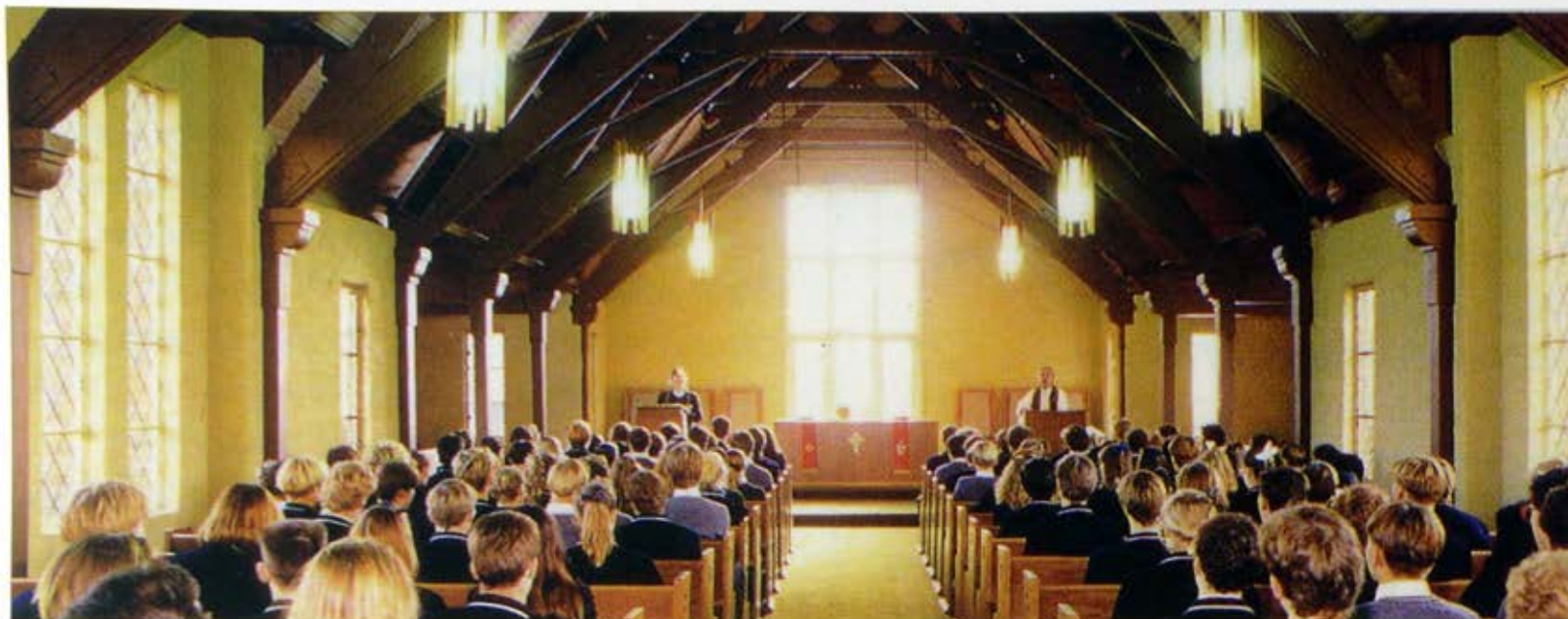
Although the Lecture Series and the Creative Arts Fellowships of the late 1970s and early 1980s were abandoned, the Artist-in-Residence program continued. Every Year 9 and 10 student selected at least one subject to explore at the House of Guilds each week, beginning in 1994. French, now firmly the College's most popular language other than English (LOTE), produced several students capable of winning prizes in the annual Alliance Française competition. A stellar year, for example, was 1988 when six students each won First Prize in their respective categories. Enthusiastic performers continued to enter the Rock Eisteddfod and, in 1989, were selected to appear in the grand final at the National Tennis Centre.<sup>17</sup>

Building on the work done by John Gibson, Drama continued to flourish under Michael Roland, an Old Collegian (1955) who had taught at the College on and off since 1958, as Head

Concert Band, 1989







Above: Chapel interior, 2009

Below: Stained glass window in the chapel commemorating Sir Frank Rolland, 1993

of Drama from 1989. *Cinderella*, the Year 12 production in 1988, won the Best Schools' Musical Award that year. Theatre Sports started in 1991 as a popular lunchtime activity. Challenging school plays included *The Crucible* and *Oh! What a Lovely War*. Drama's standing in the school was underlined when students won two major Victorian awards, at the Australian Natives' Association and Department of Education Schools' Drama awards in 1992, for the production of Brian Friel's *Freedom of the City* as the best play, and Milan Perkins (1992) as best actor.

Another unabashed nod to former Principal Mr Rolland was an emphasis on the relevance of religion in an increasingly commercial world. It was clear from the start that Mr Sheahan 'made some deliberate efforts to project outwardly the Christian values of the school'.<sup>18</sup> Religious Studies became part of the core curriculum for Years 9 and 10; the Reverend Ian Parton (1987–98) was appointed as the new Chaplain, and it was decided to convert the House of Music to a chapel. 'Everyone felt we should have a chapel. But [at Geelong College] the idea of a chapel had never really established itself as a top priority, particularly economically', reflects Mr Everist, who was responsible for the sensitive architectural conversion of the House of Music to a space for worship in 1989.<sup>19</sup> Students used it regularly and there were many among the College community who were delighted with this development. 'Although chapels have never been seen as important buildings in Presbyterian schools, it was important to my understanding of a complete Christian education to have contact with the formal structure of spiritual worship within a religious building', said Mr Sheahan in 1991.<sup>20</sup>

The Uniting Church viewed with great interest these outward tangible expressions of faith and a renewed commitment to the relevance of a Christian education and values of social service. It was still very early in the period since the formation of the Uniting Church in 1977 and incorporation of the College in 1982, and some more devout members of the College community were sceptical about the changes. Mr Jamieson, Bursar and St David's parishioner, had also been the Moderator of the Geelong Presbytery in 1975, and did not see the looser ties between the College and the Church as an improvement.<sup>21</sup> The very public battles between both Scotch College and Presbyterian Ladies' College and the Continuing Presbyterian





At the Sydney International Music Festival in 1992 with the massed band of 500 performing

Church, which had won control of those schools in 1980, led to the non-renewal of Joan Montgomery's contract as Principal at PLC in 1985. Staff left in droves and the resignation of PLC's Council Chairman came in 1992. It was hardly surprising, then, that the other nine former Presbyterian schools (now Uniting Church schools, including The Geelong College), viewed attempts initiated by the Uniting Church to create a closer relationship with a degree of suspicion. 'I do think that there is a genuine desire on the part of the administration in the Uniting Church to see a closer working relationship. My only fear is that there is still a "rump" within the Uniting Church that is inimical to the existence of schools like ours and, in the "wrong" hands ... might not be so benevolent in practice.'<sup>22</sup> Attempts to define and describe the exact nature of the relationship continue today.

Curriculum changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s around Australia focused on national priorities set by Prime Minister Paul Keating that demanded greater knowledge of the Asian region and relevant business skills. Vocational subjects were reintroduced, as well as an emphasis on Asian languages. A Department of Business Studies was established at the College in 1986 and accounting was an HSC subject by 1988. By 1989, many activities that were once the preserve of the House of Guilds could also be studied as units of work or whole subjects, including Photography, Woodwork, Ceramics, Textiles, Printmaking, Painting and Sculpture.<sup>23</sup> The VCE replaced the HSC in 1990. Preparations for its implementation consumed vast amounts of time, as did the many alterations to the VCE during the early 1990s. The Geelong College trialled Units 3 and 4 of the new VCE Mathematics in 1989, and was a trial school for the computer system that was to link all schools to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The International Baccalaureate was investigated but not adopted, partly because it was thought that such a move was perhaps merely reactionary to the difficulties posed by the VCE. There were still small classes of Latin, which continued to survive as a VCE subject, mostly due to the outstanding teaching of Mr Keary. A tour of students and staff to China in 1988 indicated a growing interest in Asian language and culture, and Preparatory School students had for some years enjoyed a close relationship with a school in Japan.



The introduction of Chinese as a new LOTE in 1990 was a long-awaited conclusion to the desire to expand this part of the curriculum. Overseas tours also began to provide students with valuable cultural experiences. In 1990, the Cricket Team toured England, a Rowing Tour went to Hong Kong and China, and a Girls' Athletics Team went to Hawaii and Los Angeles. Similarly, students of French went to Noumea.

Outdoor education came under closer scrutiny, too. Mr Sheahan aspired to the development of a 'mini-Timbertop' experience for Year 9 College students, dividing the year level into four groups which would spend one term each at a remote site.<sup>24</sup> Experience at a remote or rural campus was now increasingly regarded as being important for adolescent students' development of independence. Caulfield Grammar had opened a remote campus in 1947 at Yarra Junction, which was followed in the 1950s by Geelong Grammar's Timbertop and Melbourne Grammar's L.G. Robertson Camp at Licola. Many more independent schools in Victoria entered the field in the 1990s, beginning with Methodist Ladies' College, when Marshmead opened in 1991 in Gippsland.<sup>25</sup>

Until the 1990s, Outdoor Education was part of the curriculum at The Geelong College only up until Year 8. Formerly, activities that provided some sort of experience in this area for older students had included the Cadet Corps (abolished in 1976) and the Exploration Society (defunct by 1977). The Duke of Edinburgh scheme had not been particularly popular, and the outdoor challenge components of it became more difficult to fulfil with the demise of these other activities. The College had not considered the establishment of a rural campus until the early 1970s, when Mr Thwaites was keen to develop camping and exploration activities. By this time, the College already owned two undeveloped properties: one at Barwon Heads and the other near Halls Gap. The block of land at Barwon Heads was given to the College in 1920 as a memorial to Old Collegian Neil Leslie Campbell (1911). Regarded as being 'too dangerous', it was never really used and so Council agreed to sell the property in 1966 (although this was not done until 1980).<sup>26</sup> Dr Wettenhall and his brother gave the College 150 acres near Halls Gap in 1970, but the site was used irregularly. In 1982, when the property, by then called Hankelow, was still not developed as a remote campus, the decision was made to sell it if it was not going to be used for this purpose.<sup>27</sup> By 1990, it was being used for a week for the Year 7 camp, but possible development of Hankelow for the College in the early 1990s went on the backburner as financial difficulties dictated other priorities.

Following a visit in 1993 to Howqua, Lauriston's new remote campus, Mr Sheahan returned to the idea, despite College parents' reluctance for camps longer than one week – based, he believed, on a misplaced fear of potential interference with the academic program. For the Principal, education was largely 'about discovering one's self, one's human capacity, and one's relationship with other people', and invaluable training of the body and the mind took place in an extended outdoor experience. He saw that 'the learning of competence in practical ways and from the growth of self-reliance and independence', as embodied in the ideas of educator Dr Kurt Hahn and his establishment of schools in Germany and Scotland, had also been proven in the Timbertop experiment in Australia.<sup>28</sup> Building a remote campus would require a huge financial outlay, and choosing the right location was essential. Meanwhile, Wollangarra, near Licola in Gippsland, was selected as an Outdoor Education campus, and from 1995 hosted small groups of Year 9 students for a week at a time to experience basic outdoor camping and an exhausting three-day hike. Conditions were suitably primitive, with wood-fired stoves and boilers, old gaslights,





---

Experience at a remote or rural campus was now increasingly regarded as being important for adolescent students' development of independence.

---



Above: The Outward Bound program. Shane Groom and Aaron Hunt provide support to Robert Moreton on the ropes, 1995

Below: Hankelow, the Grampians property donated by Dr H.N.B. Wettenhall and his brother, 1996





Above: Wollangarra, 1999

Below: Andrew Gibson's History class with computer notebooks, 1994



and no electricity or vehicle access. The students certainly left with 'a greater understanding of their land and the simpler qualities in life'.<sup>29</sup>

Momentum for the development of a fully fledged remote campus was lost when Mr Sheahan left at the end of Term 1, 1995, to take up his new position as Principal of Melbourne Grammar School where he remained until his retirement in 2009. Before he left, however, a significant decision was made that would have immense influence on the school's future. In 1993, the introduction of laptop computing was announced. Initially, it was not compulsory for each student to own a laptop. Instead, the Senior School Computer laboratory (CR2) had its desktop computers removed and replaced with laptops in 1994. From that year, class sets of laptops were available for use throughout the Senior School. Students' appetite for their use appeared to be voracious: individual borrowings of notebook computers from the Library and outside class time were almost double those of book borrowings at the start of 1994, foreshadowing the greater changes to come in information and learning technologies.<sup>30</sup>



