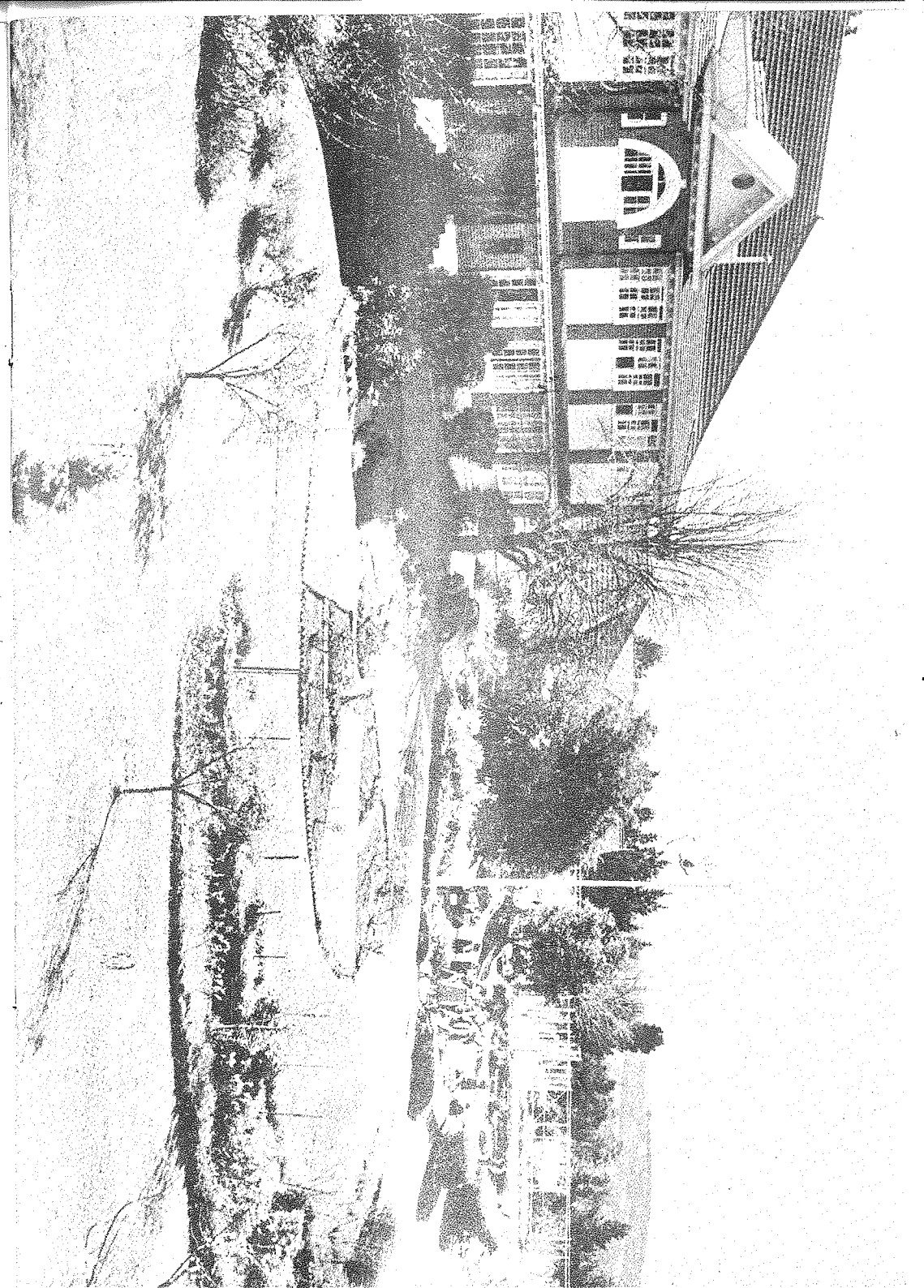


Sydney Church of England
Grammar School for Girls
MOSS VALE

A brief history 1906-1974

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pupil at SCEGGS MossVale 1947-8.

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Archivist.





HEADMISTRESSES/HEADMASTER

1906-1906	Miss Isabella Langley
1906-1926	Miss Constance Smith
1926-1937	Miss Muriel Hammond
1938-1944	Miss Margaret J Steel
1945-1952	Miss Violet T Baddams
1953-1959	Miss Mary Graham
1960-1965	Miss Jean Turnbull
1965-1972	Miss Valerie Horniman
1972-1974	Rev Colin Clark

S.C.E.G.G.S MOSS VALE

The Beginning

In 1895 The Sydney Church of England Girls' Grammar School had been established in Darlinghurst. Ten years later, in December 1905, the governing body of SCEGGS convened a special meeting to consider the proposition from a Miss Swinson to take over a Girls' Grammar School which she had conducted in Bowral. After considerable deliberation it was resolved to negotiate with Miss Swinson. It was thought that such a country school could be advantageous to the Sydney School in so much as the two schools could be worked together and "that the more delicate girls could benefit from the bracing country air". In February of the year 1906, the Bowral Branch was opened in a leased cottage "Warwick", for a rent of 65 pounds per annum.

Miss Isabella Langley was the first headmistress and assisted by a Miss Leeson the school commenced with 15 pupils, two of whom were boarders. Within a month it was realised that "Warwick" would not be suitable for the desired increase in enrolments so in April a large house "Woodbine" was leased, initially for two years. By May there were 25 day pupils and 2 boarders. "Woodbine" was a long, low house surrounded by verandahs, set in a large old fashioned garden it was sheltered in the west by a dense mass of pine trees.

In the operation of the country branch SCEGGS, similar principles were followed as at the Sydney school and the hope was for this arrangement to be mutually helpful. By October of that first year enrolments had increased to 30 but Miss Langley tendered her resignation owing to the necessity for her to return to her parents' home in Bendigo.

With the addition of a new section, attendances increased to 40 girls, 10 of whom were boarders. Miss Badham, Headmistress of SCEGGS Darlinghurst opened the new building and introduced the girls to Miss Constance Smith who then began a significant period of 20 years as the School's Headmistress.

Early Years

The Bowral Branch School (as it was known for many years) grew steadily in enrolments and the complement of boarders increased. One aspect of this increase was the ability to relieve pressure on SCEGGS Darlinghurst for boarding places.

The school remained at "Woodbine" until 1910 when more space was needed so a decision was made by the School Council to buy their own property. "Yerenbah" a 5 acre site with residence, the estate of a Mrs Hill, was acquired and here the school continued. There was a large, gracious brick house on a beautiful area of land bounded by Merrigang, Albert, Shepherd and Ivy Streets. The boarders were encouraged to take part in the gardening and in looking after the school grounds which were much larger than at "Woodbine". There was also a tennis court, so to the joy of the pupils, inter-school competitions were able to be arranged. The pattern of enrolments had, by this stage, undergone a significant change and boarders now outnumbered day girls. This situation was to remain for the entire life of the school.

During 1914 Miss Smith was granted 6 month's leave of absence to visit England, her place during that time being taken by Miss Best from the North Sydney Branch. In that year also, the Old Girls' Union of the Bowral Branch was established, with Gwen Shaw as Secretary and Sigrid Augenson as Treasurer.

In 1917 the school was enlarged and many renovations were made, including a hot water service which received a great welcome from the boarders! Following the closure of a boys' Preparatory School in Bowral, boys were enrolled at "Yerenbah" and numbers continued to increase. It is interesting to see the pupil numbers, in table form, from 1913-1919.

	BOARDERS	DAY GIRLS	TOTAL
1913	24	11	35
1914	-	-	34
1915	20	14	34
1916	25	12	37
1917	26	17	43
1918	24	22	46
1919	28	32	60

The Continuing story

In 1918 the School lost the services of Miss Lillian Anderson who had been Miss Smith's first assistant for 3 years. So that the name of one who had been so devoted to the school in its early years could be remembered, the pupils and friends of Miss Anderson subscribed to buy two Two Pound War Loan Bonds, the interest from which would provide an annual prize, to be called the "Lillian Anderson Prize".

During 1919 a new wing was added to the school and in 1920 there was a record enrolment of 130 boarders and 40 day girls.

In May 1920 Miss Badham died. She had always shown unfailing interest in the Bowral School, the first of the SCEGGS Branch Schools, and each year she had presented the prizes at Speech Day. A prayer desk of English oak and an enlarged portrait were given by the school in memory of Miss Badham. She had always said that her desire for SCEGGS, including the Branch Schools, was a sense of unity. "They were all part of a whole, part of the Rock whence all Christian schools were hewn". She wanted all of the group to share the same tradition and esprit de corps. Miss Badham's desire became a reality as the schools grew and developed.

Further additions were made to "Yerenbah" in 1922 and a second tennis court was added in 1923. In 1925 the church wardens at Bowral offered 30 acres to the SCEGGS Council for the extension of the Bowral Branch. This offer was accepted and plans were made to build a new school with all modern equipment as soon as possible.

1926 was a year full of changes and promises of advancement for "Yerenbah". A special appeal was made for a Building Fund and soon a total of 1,947 Pounds was in hand. However by 1928 the school was having difficulty in meeting its current expenses and Mr Peter Tait of Queensland and Bowral kindly guaranteed the school against loss for 2 years. Renovations to the house were made which cost 600 Pounds, these included repainting, repapering and a re-organisation of room use so that school and residence were separated. Grounds and playing fields were also arranged to better advantage. With these improvements the school

gradually filled and met its expenses, so that Mr Tait's kind generosity was not called upon. In the same year a Parents' & Friends' Association was formed to help the school, with Mrs Tait as its first president and Lady Street and Lady MacCallum as vice presidents. One of its objectives was to found a scholarship scheme for the school and this was achieved; Gwen Allnutt and Betty Wheeler being the first recipients.

A sudden reversal of plans was made by the School Council when they were offered a property, the Masonic Boys' Home at Bong Bong 1.1/2 miles from Moss Vale. Buildings were set on 380 acres of freehold land with a frontage to the river. This was too good an offer to resist so plans for a new school at Bowral were abandoned and the Moss Vale property was bought for 12,000 Pounds. In the 23 years since its foundation the school had seen many changes but now it was to have its permanent home at Bong Bong. It became SCEGGS Moss Vale, a truly country boarding school.

The Prize Giving in December 1929 was the first function to be held at the new school and although the contractors were still working on the main buildings it was possible to use most of the ground floor. Attendance at the prize giving was so good that it filled the large and spacious hall (in later years the dining room). The Archbishop presided and Miss Macarthur Onslow was the guest of honour. In His Grace's address he said that "this purchase was a most significant step in the progress of the school, which was to be a great and progressive one. The education of women was quite modern; it came slowly, but it had done much to make the lives of women happier and fuller."

It was in term 2, 1930 that the school actually moved into the Moss Vale site. The new building surpassed all expectations with separate cubicles, sleeping-out balconies and all modern conveniences. Prefects had the privilege of occupying corner bedrooms which, like all the cubicles, were made attractive by gaily coloured curtains. There was a large lake, splendid paddocks for horse riding, fine playing fields for cricket, rounders, tennis, hockey and netball. Flower gardens were laid out and a long driveway led from the roadway entrance to the main building.

Miss Muriel Hammond had become headmistress in 1926 and one of her dearest wishes was for a school chapel. Through the help and interest of Miss Wilkinson (Headmistress of Darlinghurst) this was made possible, with gifts of a holy table, a prayer desk, a lectern and a chapel bell. A room in the school was set aside for chapel purposes and stood as a constant reminder of the unity and the connection between the SCEGGS schools.

The House System was inaugurated and great keenness was shown by the members of both houses - MacCallum and Tait. The former name was honouring to Lady MacCallum, a member of the School Council for many years and the latter to Mr Peter Tait. The motto for MacCallum House was "In Ardua Tendit" (Aim for Higher Things) and for Tait House "Dum Spiro Spero" (While I Breathe I Hope).

Details of extra curricular activities, as recorded in editions of "Lux", the school magazine, testify to the scope of life at the school - Girl Guides, Brownies, Library, Music, Sports, Visiting speakers, Excursions, Community Services, Drama and other entertainments.

The school farm was developed and proved most valuable in supplying meat, milk, butter, eggs and vegetables. It also provided a genuine touch of rural life which all students will remember with fondness. Much later in the school's history it formed the basis for the study of Agriculture as part of the curriculum.

On the academic side the school had, in 1928, been registered by the Department of Education to the Intermediate Standard and in 1930 for the Leaving Certificate. Over the years many creditable results were obtained by the students in the NSW public examinations. A good proportion of these girls entered University and pursued successful professional careers.

During the depression years when most schools had to struggle to keep enrolments up, SCEGGS Moss Vale almost doubled in numbers. This success was attributed to Miss Hammond, together with the great support she received from the School Council and the parents. A Junior School was opened in 1933 with 13 pupils under the care of Miss Coult.

In 1937 Miss Hammond retired. She had seen the school transferred from Bowral to Moss Vale and with untiring energy had guided it through a most important stage of its development. Her successor, Miss Margaret Jesse Steel, had the difficult task of leading the school during the war years. In the dark days of 1942, when invasion seemed so close, she managed to re-organise the school so as to accommodate a huge influx of new pupils and to cope with the shortages of staff. Many of these new pupils were from SCEGGS North Sydney which closed in 1942. After the war the School Council bought "Redlands" which became SCEGGS Redlands. Miss Steel was a most learned person with profound Christian faith; a real scholar, highly esteemed by everyone who knew her, an inspiration to all

especially to those who were privileged to have her as their Head. Overwork and extra worry took toll of Miss Steel's health and when she had to give up her position of Headmistress at the end of 1944 each girl felt a personal loss. To speak today with any of "Miss Steel's girls" will reveal the very fond affection in which she was held.

Miss Violet (better known as Thenie) Baddams assumed headship in 1945. She was the youngest, at that time, to hold such office in the church school scene and was outgoing and enthusiastic. She saw the great potential the school had and did much to consolidate what had been established, as well as initiate plans for future development. Much was accomplished during her 8 years as Headmistress and it was with regret that the girls heard of Miss Baddams' resignation in 1952. Miss Mary Graham who had been on the staff at SCEGGS Darlinghurst became the next Headmistress and was officially inaugurated by Archbishop Mowll in February 1953. So began a period of significant and tangible growth.

Miss Graham felt strongly that the lack of a School Chapel should be addressed. Instead of waiting for a special building, it was decided to convert a double classroom into a chapel. A new floor was put down, walls were painted and a small reed organ was given by St John's Church at Moss Vale. Plans were made to furnish the chapel with pews, a holy table, a lectern and a communion rail. Much of this was accomplished through the support of parents, friends and old girls of the school. For the first time in its history of 47 years the school had a proper place set aside for worship. On 10th April 1954 His Grace the Archbishop of Sydney dedicated the Chapel. Also at the beginning of 1954 two new Houses were founded, Smith and Steel, both named after previous headmistresses.

In 1956 the School celebrated its 50th Anniversary and it has been said that the year was one of the most outstanding it had known. Higher standards in work and sport were achieved and enrolments reached 200, of which 160 were boarders. The number in the Leaving class rose to 20 and the

Intermediate class 25. A new Assembly Hall was completed and opened by the Governor of NSW, Sir John Northcott. The ceremony was attended by representatives from other schools, the local member of Parliament, School Council members and other dignitaries. It was particularly pleasing to have greetings read from three previous headmistresses - Miss Hammond, Miss Steel and Miss Baddams. The Chapel played an increasingly important part in the life of the school with daily services in which the girls assumed leadership and participating roles, a weekly service taken by the School Chaplain and there were regular visiting speakers. To celebrate this 50th year a special service was held conducted by Archdeacon Begbie, a former School Chaplain.

Miss Graham left to be married at the end of 1959 but her love for the school and her contact with the Old Girls remains to this day. She was succeeded the following year by Miss Jean Turnbull. 1960 was significant not only because of the change in Headship but for two other major occurrences - the purchase of "The Briars" property and the fire which gutted Howard (formerly, Senior) House, on Old Girls Weekend!

"The Briars", originally an old coaching inn built in 1832, was set on 180 acres adjoining the school property and with a frontage to the main road between Bowral and Moss Vale. This acquisition increased the school property to 560 acres. The lovely old home was later altered and equipped for the teaching of Home Science. The girls enjoyed this new aspect of the curriculum and also learned valuable skills in catering for social functions and how to run a home.

"The fire" began in the Kindergarten room on the ground floor of Howard House in the early hours of Sunday June 19th. The blaze itself lasted for only an hour or so but damage was considerable; fortunately insurance was adequate. However, the loss of personal possessions on behalf of the girls and particularly on the part of Miss Turnbull and Miss Holt who lost

everything must have been traumatic. What a start to a headmistress's new career! Old Girls responded magnificently by sending replacement bibles and prayer books also blankets, warm clothes etc.

The next year, 1961, saw changes in the school timetabling including the extension of the Commercial Course, the restoration of Howard House, dormitories modernised (colour schemes etc chosen by the girls); the planting of 70 new trees; the introduction of House Choir competitions; the refurbishment of "the Briars" plus plans for an internal roadway connecting it with the main school; the beginning of the Chapel extension and an increase in the activities of the Parents' & Friends' Association and the Old Girls' Union.

All these very positive things were marred by a tragic and almost unbelievable incident in November. An armed intruder held the school at gunpoint while in Chapel and one of the girls lost her life. I quote from the Headmistress' Report at Speech Day. "it is hard to gauge just how valuable the girls consider the compulsory chapel services, but when danger threatened us during an actual service, what prevented the situation from having an even worse outcome than it did was not the actions of one single person, but the acknowledgement of God's power which was revealed in the corporate act of prayer at that service. No one who was present then could doubt the sincerity of the congregation. One of the strengths of the school, which was shown clearly at this time, was the ability to rise to an occasion, to meet a crisis"

Miss Turnbull's own courage and presence of mind in coping with the incident was later honoured by the Queen's award of the MBE for gallantry. The new and very beautiful extension to the School Chapel was dedicated in March 1963, with a memorial window to Wendy Luscombe.

The closure of Annesley School in Bowral in 1964 resulted in 70 of their girls transferring to SCEGGS in 1965. Miss Stacy (Annesley Headmistress) also transferred and acted in the capacity of Deputy Head for one year. To assist in what must have been a very difficult time for the girls, two extra Houses were formed Annesley and Kingswood.

At the end of 2nd term 1965 Miss Turnbull left to be married after serving the school with great devotion and competence for nearly 5 years.

Miss Valerie Horniman was the next headmistress whose term of office saw more exciting developments but also increasing pressures from changes in education generally, particularly in NSW. The new Science Block was opened in 1967; a 25 seater school bus was purchased; Day girl numbers topped 100 for the first time and total school numbers exceeded 200; the Moss Vale Committee was formed, as an advisory body to the School Council (which resided in Sydney); a record number (49) sat for the School Certificate in 1968; a new senior uniform was adopted as was the wearing of slacks in winter; a new Common Room was built (The Turnbull Room) and in 1971 the new Library. Miss Horniman felt that another way in which the school could develop was to introduce Asian and Pacific Studies, to be of mutual benefit both to the significant number of Asian girls in the boarding house (22% in 1970) and to the Australian girls. A proposal was put forward but did not eventuate. Horse riding and gymkhanas became increasingly popular, as did a variety of extra curricular activities. The introduction of audio-visual equipment into schools was gathering momentum and this was another area which had to be addressed. When the Rev Colin Clark succeeded Miss Horniman in mid 1972 his expertise in the audio visual sphere brought about a quite dramatic development for the school. All teaching areas other than science laboratories were connected to the Library by closed circuit television and each classroom was wired for individual closed circuit TV within the room. Education programmes were taped and students learned skills of video filming. An equestrian centre was set up at the school, work was begun on a swimming pool,

driving lessons became part of the "extras" and weekly boarders were successfully introduced. A strong earth tremor in the local district in March 1973 caused some cracks in windows, walls and ceilings but nothing too serious and the school year appeared to end on a high note.

Barely 7 months later this letter was received by parents -

2nd July 1974

"As a result of changing academic requirements and economic factors in education it has become almost impossible for small schools to survive. It is therefore, with great sorrow that I announce the closure of the Moss Vale School at the end of this year, 1974.

The present enrolment of some 190 girls is now insufficient in the face of the costs of the educational demands of the Wyndham Scheme, increasing staff salaries and the day-to-day running expenses of the School.

The Council did not make this decision without considering alternatives. Academic standards could have been lowered, but this would not have been either in the best interests of the student or acceptable to many parents. Fees could have been substantially and continually increased but this would have put the School beyond the reach of most parents who value the benefits of education at an independent school.

After thoroughly exploring every possibility it became obvious that a small country boarding school such as ours could not survive without immediately doubling the present enrolment and existing facilities are already strained to the limit.

Therefore, the Council has had to decide, most reluctantly, to close the School after 69 years of dedicated service to thousands of girls from all walks of life, from all parts of Australia and from overseas.

The Council is concerned to minimise the disturbance to the education of the girls of S.C.E.G.G.S. Moss Vale and guarantees a place as a day girl in Redlands, Darlinghurst and Wollongong. Boarding accommodation will be made available at Darlinghurst and at Wollongong from 1975. Those holding scholarships should contact the Executive Office. I am enclosing for your information some details about these three Schools.

I would prefer to have made this announcement personally, but this is not possible. However, I will be available to meet parents at S.C.E.G.G.S. Office, 129 York Street, Sydney on Wednesday, 10th July, 1974 at 7.30pm and at S.C.E.G.G.S. Moss Vale on Saturday, 13th July at 2.00pm.

Yours sincerely
A. W. Prescott
Chairman of S.C.E.G.G.S. Council"

This was worse than an earth tremor, it was more like an earthquake to the girls, the staff and the parents. Those no longer immediately connected with the school but to whom SCEGGS Moss Vale was very dear, received the news with dismay. A special meeting of parents, friends and old girls was convened at the school and a number of proposals to keep the school open were considered by a committee of parents elected for the purpose. There seemed a reasonable chance that the dedication of the parents' group would produce a viable proposition, but it was not to be. With enormous sadness and considerable bitterness the imminent closure was accepted and SCEGGS Moss Vale ceased to exist from December 1974, just one year short of its 70th Anniversary.

Was SCEGGS Moss Vale a special school? A unique School?
A large majority of ex pupils and staff members would say definitely "yes".

The fact that an annual Foundation Day Dinner is still held in Sydney and regularly has attendances of 30-40 Old Girls, spanning the generations, speaks for itself.

SCEGGS Moss Vale was a SMALL school, never intended to be a large one, where girls received individual attention both academically and personally. Its size also meant that opportunities for leadership, responsibility and school representation were far greater than at larger schools.

It was a COUNTRY school which provided a delightful and healthy environment. Pupils were drawn from city, country and overseas. The school farm and its managers did more than provide food, they were part of the extended family.

It was primarily a BOARDING school where girls learned the importance of personal organisation and the joys (and trials) of corporate living. The close knit community fostered understanding and respect for others.

It was a SPORTING school where girls could participate fully in all sports offered, and they were many. The significant number of Moss Vale pupils who went on to train as PE teachers testifies to the sporting influence of the school.

Above all else it was a CHURCH school, more than that, a CHRISTIAN school. The spiritual influence it provided was one which had a profound effect and guided the future careers of many of its girls.

“Luceat Lux Vestra” - “Let your light shine” (Matthew 5:16) is the school’s motto. This light shines brightly still in many for whom SCEGGS Moss Vale was a very special school - it is a tragedy indeed that the school is no more.

SCHOOL SONG

Girls of the Grammar School, girls old and new,
Gathered or parted, all the world through,
Still to the motto that binds us keep true -

Luceat Lux Vestra.

Your lamp may light you to hard mental toil,
Your distaff reel with science’s great coil;
Often, may be, you’ll burn youth’s midnight oil -

Luceat Lux Vestra.

Your lamp may kindle a glow warm and clear,
Light of the hearth and home, keep that light pure,
Kindle at that bright source lights far and near -

Luceat Lux Vestra.

You, whose lamp shines to us now from afar,
Bright, still and clear your light, e’en as a star;
Still you are joined to us - over the bar -

Luceat Lux Vestra.

Life-giving, far and near, our light is one
Pledge of our union through years yet to come;
Light from our God above, our risen Sun -

Luceat Lux Vestra.

SCHOOL HYMN

Winds, off these uplands blowing, unseen but felt by all;
That rise beyond our knowing, and tell not where you fall,
In coming and in going, what means your speechless call?

It means, that, as the breezes, fly far o'er plain and hill,
The Holy Spirit pleases, to move among us still,
And by His presence seizes, and sways the heart and will.

The winds to us are token, that, till the ages end,
The pledge shall ne'er be broken, that He o'er earth will wend
In ways no tongue hath spoken, to bless us and befriend.

May on this School His blessing, as on a garden light,
And, rousing or caressing, to richer growth invite,
That we, His life possessing, find favour in His sight.

Be more than ours that favour! wind of the Spirit, blow,
Till all the leaves that waver, beneath they breath may throw
Their healthful scent and savour, around us high and low.

Yet not as wind but warden, here stay thy flight and dwell,
Beholding in our garden, the shrines that please thee well,
Wherein for love and pardon, our prayers and praises swell.

SCHOOL PSALM

Psalm 15

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?
Who may live on your holy hill?

He whose walk is blameless
and who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from his heart
and has no slander on his tongue.
who does his neighbour no wrong
and casts no slur on his fellow-man.
who despises a vile man
but honours those who fear the Lord,
who keeps his oath even when it hurts,
who lends his money without usury
and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things
will never be shaken.

SCHOOL LESSON

Matthew 5:1-16

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

In the same way

*let your light shine before men,
that they may see your good deeds
and praise your Father in heaven.*