

Toorak College is an independent, inter-denominational, day and boarding school for girls years 5 - 12 and co-educational from pre school to year four. The school is located on the Mornington Peninsula, above Port Phillip Bay in Mount Eliza, a town approximately forty kilometres south of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

The private school began in 1874 as a boys' school in Toorak, a suburb of Melbourne, and moved to its current location at Mount Eliza in 1928, as an independent school for girls. The college currently caters to approximately 925 students from kindergarten to year 12, including 70 boarders from years 7 to 12,[5] and offers a range of Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) subjects. Toorak College also offers co-curricular activities including a wide range of visual and performing arts and sports. Toorak's co-educational ELC and junior school (years K-6) has been an IB World School since November 2007, and is authorised to offer the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP).[6]

Toorak College is affiliated with the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA),[7] the Junior School Heads Association of Australia (JSHAA),[8] the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia (AGSA),[9] the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV),[1] the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA),[5] and is a founding member of Girls Sport Victoria (GSV).[10]

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History[edit]

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Toorak College takes its name from the township of Toorak, where it opened as a boys' school on Wednesday, 21 January 1874. At first, classes were held in the brick hall of St John's Presbyterian Church on Jackson Street, Toorak, but the school soon moved into specially erected buildings on nearby Douglas Street. The founding principal was John Stevens Miller, a Scot, who had been involved in several schools since his arrival in Victoria, in 1854.

His successor, John Thomas Craig, was also a Scot and consequently the school maintained a nominal association with the Presbyterian church for some years. During his years at Toorak College (1877–1895), Craig built the school into one of the largest privately owned schools in Melbourne, and he had a reputation as a fine educationist. After the prosperity of the 1880s, the economic difficulties of the next decade reduced enrolments dramatically.

Craig, whose health had never been strong, leased his school to Margaret Oliver Tripp. Margaret Tripp was a lady of many educational interests and long teaching experience. Assisted by two of her sisters, she took over Toorak College on 4 February 1895. She figures prominently in the school's history, because, in 1897, she changed Toorak College from a boys' school to a school for girls.

Toorak College was a very small school when its next principal, Ellen Blundell Pye, arrived late in 1899. She encouraged the playing of a range of sports such as tennis, basketball, athletics, cricket and rowing. Slowly, the number of pupils increased and a school spirit developed, expressed in the "Games Song" written during this period. The original building and the Red House, built by Pye to house junior boarders, still stand on Douglas Street as part of Glamorgan School, now the Toorak campus of Geelong Grammar School.

Ill health forced Ellen Pye to retire at the end of 1907, and the three Hamilton sisters came from Alexandra College, Hamilton, to take her place. They remained for nearly thirty years. Isabella and Robina (Beanie) were co-principals and Barbara had charge of the boarding house. Although new buildings were erected, the site at Douglas Street was no longer adequate. In 1919, the school moved to Mayfield Avenue off Glenferrie Road, DOIST Malvern. A severe influenza epidemic delayed the opening of classes that year until 10 March.

The parents and "old girls" of the school came to its rescue late in 1926, as it was proposed to close Toorak College. Many felt that the loss of the college and the influence of the Hamiltons would be detrimental to the education of girls. After speech night, in 1926, a committee of parents was established for the purpose of continuing Toorak College as a private company. The school was moved into temporary premises known as "The Towers", on Lansell Road, Toorak, while a new home was found for it.

Late in 1928, the school moved for the third time, this time to its present site in Mount Eliza. For the next fifteen years, during which the Hamiltons retired and the country suffered another economic depression and then a war, enrolments were very low and the school continued only because of the support of its pupils, past and present. One sign of a recovery in Toorak College's fortunes was when Mrs Wardle (headmistress 1943–1958) established junior classes. These were held in places as far apart as the "Long Walk" (new year nine block), the "Elephant", and the "Dolls House", until 1957 when, due to the gifts of Sir Reginald Ansett and Sir Norman Carson, two benefactors of the school, a separate junior school was built on Charles Street, and named Wardle House.

By the time Wardle retired in 1958, the composition of the pupils at the school had begun to change dramatically from the country boarding school as visualised by the Hamiltons. The growth of the Mornington Peninsula as a residential zone created a demand for education for day girls, and the years Lillian Bush spent as headmistress (1961–1966) saw great developments in facilities at the school. Wardle House gained a hall and an extra classroom; the Norman Carson Library was in full use; the Mary Herring Hall was built and the science block planned.

Dorothea Cerutti led the school during the decade 1967–1976. Under her leadership, Toorak College experienced a period of considerable growth. It gained audio-visual facilities, and a swimming pool, new boarding house and the chapel were opened. In 1981,

the school council undertook to have a history of the school written and in November 1987, *The Echoes Fade Not: a history of Toorak College*, was launched. Cerutti house, the most successful house in the school, was named after her.

With the completion in 1983 of the new years seven and eight classroom block on the site formerly occupied by the memorial block, and in 1984 of the new year 10 block, and the refurbishing of the "Long Walk" classrooms as homes for year nine students, Toorak College is developing in the tradition established since the years of Ellen Pye's principalship.

Leadership[edit]

The school operates via a well established "prefect system", with year 12 girls being elected into the prefect body. This group consists of 20 girls, each representing specific aspects of school life. The most prestigious student roles at Toorak College are that of head girl and deputy head girl. The student and staff bodies elect two eligible girls at the end of their 11th year. The two elected girls then become the leaders of the prefect body and the school as a whole. They are responsible for representing the voice of their peers, liaising with college staff and the executive, as well as planning and organising school events. It is the duty of the head and deputy head girls to chair the student representative council and other college leadership groups, as well as to represent the school at events such as gala evenings, balls, fundraising dinners, open days and student forums. The head girl and deputy head girl address the school each assembly and become valued members of the college's "official party" at formal events.

Other college prefect roles include those of house captains (one student for each of the six houses); sports prefect; instrumental and choral prefects; arts prefect; community liaison; dance prefect; drama prefect; literary prefect; head and deputy head of Ansett Joan Hall (boarding house); debating and public speaking prefect and Bardon House prefect. This body plays an integral part in the organisation of student life at the college and is responsible for structuring student events, competitions, fundraisers, presentations and forums.[11]

House system[edit]

Toorak College's house system began in 1928, when the school moved to Mount Eliza. Pupils were allotted to Douglas, Mayfield or Hamilton: the first two named after earlier addresses of the school and Hamilton after the then principal. In 1948, a further house, Tripp, for day girls was founded, but as day student numbers grew, a second house, Pye, was introduced for them in 1955. The original three houses remained for boarders until 1962 when boarders and day girls were integrated in each of the houses. In 1984, another house was added, Cerutti, to honour Dorothea Cerutti, who led the school during the decade 1967–1976.

The house system today plays an integral role in each girl's student life. Wardle House (years prep-six) offers three houses: Gold; Blue and Red. Students represent their house in sports including athletics, swimming and cross country.

Upon entering year seven, students become a member of one of the six houses, Cerutti, Douglas, Hamilton, Mayfield, Pye or Tripp. The house system incorporates every student from years 7 to 12, with year level captains voted in by fellow house members at the beginning of each school year.

Each house is led by three-year 12 leaders; a house captain and two supporting deputy captains. It is the responsibility of the house captain to liaise with house staff and ensure that every house member feels valued and is secure in her house life at Toorak College.

Each house is represented by two colours.

Cerutty - blue and white

Douglas - red and gold

Hamilton - blue and gold

Mayfield - red and blue

Pye - green and gold

Tripp - red and white

These colours are used to distinguish house members at house events and competitions, with students dressing in costumes representing their house colours, including face paint for large sporting events.

The six houses compete in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Whole house competitions include house singing and house cross country, while members can also compete in diving, athletics, swimming, drama, variety, debating, football (Australian rules), soccer, small group singing (madrigals) and instrumental groups. Days are allocated throughout the school year for whole school house events, held on campus or (in the case of cross country and athletics) at local sporting stadiums.

The house system has an awards and merits system which worked to reward both individual and collective efforts. Girls who are extensively involved with all aspects of house life during their first three years at Toorak College are awarded "half house colours". These can be re-awarded for continued involvement throughout years 10 and 11. A limited number of students are then awarded the Whole House Colours Award at a ceremony in their final year. This award is very prestigious and an achievement which is an indication of the students' extensive involvement dedication, passion, house spirit and consideration. Senior School Speech Night provides occasion for the announcement of the prestigious Aggregate Cup, which is awarded to the house with the most accumulated points at the end of the school year. Cups are also awarded at Speech Night for all individual events mentioned above.[12]

Sport[edit]

Toorak College is a member of Girls Sport Victoria (GSV).

GSV premierships[edit]

Toorak College has won the following GSV premierships.[13]

Badminton (4) - 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014

Cricket - 2001

Soccer - 2009

Softball - 2002

Triathlon, Mini - 2015

Volleyball (6) - 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2009

School grounds[edit]

Toorak College's grounds cover 11.5 hectares, sloping down towards Port Philip Bay. School buildings provide students with multi-purpose recreational buildings as well as curricular-

specific centres to cater to every students' need.

School facilities include:

Four purpose-built pre-school rooms (two for three-year-old and two for four-year-old groups)

36 general-purpose classrooms

Seven science laboratories, including one special-purpose science and technology room in the junior school

A school-wide wireless computer network to support the notebook computer program

Many other specialist computer and technology resources

A senior student centre (Bardon House) for girls completing their VCE, years 11 and 12.

This facility provides girls with an interactive lecture theatre, equipped with computer networking and desks for 134 students; three adjoining "breakout rooms" for year 11 and 12 classes of 6-12 students; a silent study room, equipped with individual computer networked alcoves for exam preparation and general senior study, accessible print and copy facilities and also a large student common room. The common room includes a student lounge, a kitchen, breakfast bar, stereo system and television, as well as multiple computer network banks to support the school's extensive notebook computer program. Bardon House houses all year 11 and 12 lockers, as well as the head of VCE and deputy head of VCE staff offices.

Adjoining Bardon House is the Pavilion Cafe which operates as both a canteen and coffee shop for use by the whole school community.

The college also provides arts students with a purpose built visual arts centre, including specialist resources for textiles, graphics, photography, painting and drawing, multimedia (including a state-of-the-art video editing suite), catering, textiles and ceramics.

A music centre is currently beginning construction, set to replace the current music building, consisting of specialist classrooms for music, individual music tuition, dance and drama stages and rehearsal rooms.

Other school buildings include:

School chapel

Senior school hall (Mary Herring Hall), which seats 650 people

Junior school hall (MacLean Hall)

Boarding house (Joan Ansett Hall) for 90 students, international and local

Dining room

Printing department

Six bed health centre

College store

Specialised year 10 common room

The majority of administrative and teaching staff offices are in the original school building (The Hamilton Building, established 1928). The college offers two libraries. The senior school library (the Norman Carson Library) contains an audio visual centre capable of transmitting audio and video images throughout the school. The junior school library (the Denise Hargreaves Library) was extended in 1994.

The library is also home to the Toorak College Old Girls' Association Archives Centre which

houses the Elizabeth Beischer memorabilia collection.

The junior school has three well equipped outside play areas as well as purpose-built foundation years areas.

There is a sport and performing arts complex (the Marjorie Williams Centre) which includes a gymnasium (basketball court), dance studio, drama rooms including a theatre for performance, two squash courts and two fully equipped weight-training rooms.

The school features an aquatic centre complete with a heated 25-metre swimming pool and competition standard diving pool (including one- and three- meter towers). College grounds also include three large playing fields (including the Jean Robinson Oval), five tennis courts and a netball/basketball court.[14]

Alumni[edit]

Alumnae of Toorak College are commonly referred to as "Old Girls", and may elect to join the schools alumni association, the Toorak College Old Girls Association (TCOGA). The TCOGA was founded on 15 June 1908, as a way of keeping past students in touch with one another. In 1918, its name was changed to "The Old Girls Association of Toorak College", and featured a membership of 389. Today there are approximately 3,000 members, and the association aims to support the college by providing such things as funds for the archives centre, scholarships, student prizes, the year 12 leavers' cocktail party and year seven luncheon. The TCOGA also supports a golf and tennis team which compete against other old collegian associations.[15]

Some notable former students of Toorak College:

This list is incomplete; you can help by adding missing items. (August 2008)

Architecture

Arthur Anderson – architect

Aviation

Freda Thompson – pioneering aviator, fifth woman in Australia to attain a commercial pilot's license[16]

Clergy

Sir Francis William Rolland – clergyman and educator[17]

Entertainment, media and the arts

Dame Zara Bate DBE – fashion designer and wife of former prime minister, Harold Holt (also attended Ruyton Girls' School)[18]

Jean Kittson – Australian performer, writer and comedian best known for her role as the news commentator on the ABC TV comedy program The Big Gig in the early 1990s

Brooke Satchwell, Australian actress from the TV show Neighbours

Lara Jean Marshall – actress and recording artist best known for her co-star role on The Saddle Club

Marion Sinclair – wrote the popular nursery rhyme "Kookaburra (sits on the old gum tree)"

Joanna Murray-Smith – novelist, screenwriter and playwright[19]

Medicine and science

Vera Scantlebury Brown – pioneering medical practitioner[20]

Gwynneth Buchanan – zoologist[21]

Thomas Stephen Hart – scientist[22]

Dame Mary Ranken Lyle Herring – physician and community worker

See also[edit]

List of schools in Victoria, Australia