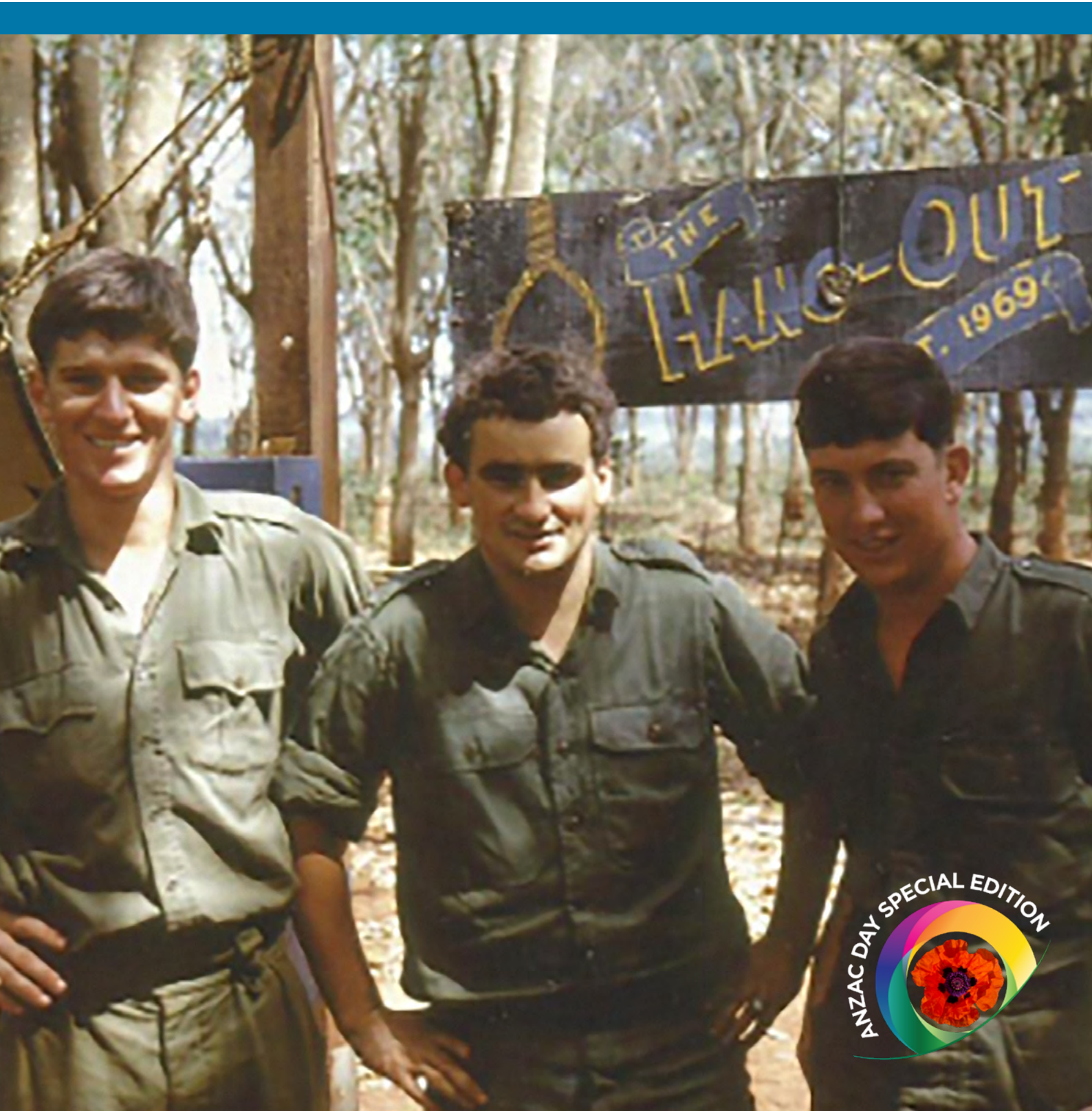


# Foundation news

EDITION 10 AUTUMN 2021

COMMUNITY / CONNECTING / SUPPORTING





# FOUNDATION



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## CONTENTS

Welcome	3
Marco Di Cesare	
Serving our country	4
The Vietnam War from Home - By Tony Dalton	4
The American War - Alan O'Connor	5
The Changing Of A Life - Peter Wallbridge	7
The Battle of Darwin - Gerry Sexton	10
Australia's Youngest Victoria Cross Winner - by John Telfer	11
Life Preparation - Fr Peter Ferwerda	13
Where are they now?	14
Professor Benjamin Cowie	16
2021 College Captain	18
A Moment in History - Leon Magree	19
Events Gallery	20
The Enduring Gift of Education	22
About Marcellin Foundation	23

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Foundation News is a biannual publication of the Marcellin Foundation  
ABN 7485 7223 525 [www.marcellinfoundation.org.au](http://www.marcellinfoundation.org.au)

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## OBITUARIES

John Wright (Alumnus 1955)  
Phillip McKercher (Alumnus 1970) –  
passed away in 2019  
Terry Sandy (Alumnus 1978)  
Frank Natoli (Alumnus 1970)



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Front Cover: Peter Wallbridge (1965), Gavin White (1965) and Gerard Wallbridge (cousin of Peter)



# WELCOME

“ I dedicate myself both to the Leading and serving of this community. ”



## MARCO DI CESARE

College Principal

I recently attended a meeting with a few old collegians who were up to 80 years young. Their energy and passion for this College was evident and it highlighted to me how important our achievements and traditions are. Some seventy plus years ago, the Marist Brothers started our College with 107 students in Camberwell.

Embedded in the walls of this College is the charism of the Marist Brothers. We are now many in number (with more than 1400 students and over 210 staff). We are a strong community, built on strong foundations and traditions and we continue to look forward to further growth and an exciting future ahead. The challenge of being a new Principal of this significant College does not escape me. The College in its various forms, has seen many great and inspiring leaders. I was recently joined by Mr Paul Herrick, Dr Mark Merry and Mr Mark Murphy who were all past Principals of our College. I am honoured to be joining them as a leader of this College and hope that I will be able to add my mark in the servicing and leading of this Marist community.



Marco with wife Moira and children, L-R, Ayrton, Madeleine, Julia-Claire and Arvin

In honouring the richness of our past, I look to the future with a sense of hope and optimism that at Marcellin College, we will strive to be the best we can be, to strive for the highest. Marcellin College is a good school not only because we teach a broad range of subjects but because we provide many opportunities to broaden life skills through a wholistic education. Marcellin College is a good school because all of the commitment, drive and energy of its leaders, teachers, students and parents past and present.

At a recently assembly, I highlighted the fact that we will continue to face challenges and that together we will work through whatever we may face this year. There is something exciting about starting a new year; it gives us an opportunity to start over and try to be the best we are called to be. I particularly like this time of

year because it is filled with hope, optimism and expectation. Being a new leader in a school only heightens that hope, optimism and expectation.

I dedicate myself both to the Leading and serving of this community. While I am new as Principal, I have a long association with Marcellin College that goes back 30+ years. Importantly, I have been formed from a young age in the Marist Charism being a former student of a Marist school. I continue to be inspired by St Marcellin Champagnat to “make Jesus known and loved”, who placed children at the centre of his work, understanding the transformative potential of education. While we are living in different times, we still have a duty to be Good Citizens and Good Christians...and part of that is understanding our responsibility to one another.



## SERVING OUR COUNTRY

In this edition, we honour our Old Collegians who served in the Vietnam War. Peter Wallbridge and Alan O'Connor recently spent time reflecting on the letters they received from home, and the photos they captured, during their service in Vietnam in the early 1970s. We are honoured to share their stories.

Conversely, Old Collegian Tony Dalton was not picked in the 'lottery of death'. He was left behind to question his role on the home front as he watched his mates go off to war – something that would be a turning point in his life

## THE VIETNAM WAR FROM HOME

BY TONY DALTON

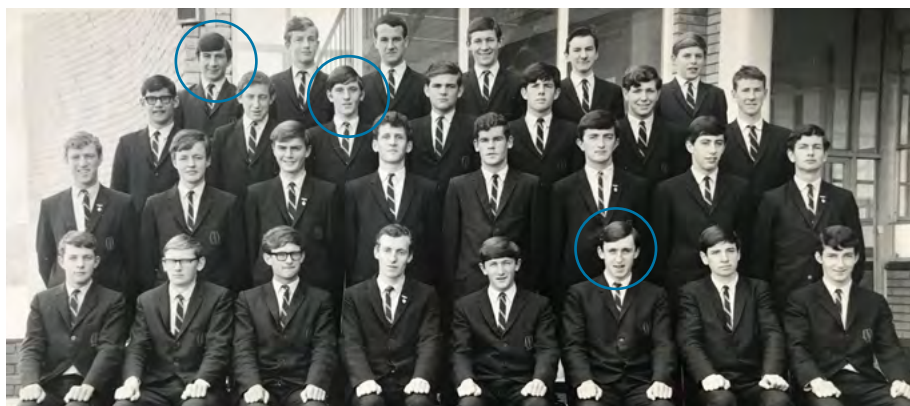
Alumnus 1966

The Year was 1966 and I, along with my school friends, had just finished our education at Marcellin College, some of us starting there in 1958 as Grade 5 students at Canterbury Road. The world was now our oyster, an opportunity to go to University, get a job, drive a car, enjoy live music at local clubs, holidays with mates and develop lifelong relationships.



Tony with Frank Panetta and Peter Wallbridge at the 1967 'Schoolies' equivalent

Was the world our oyster? Perhaps not. We all knew that young men were being randomly selected to serve in the Vietnam war which had begun in 1955. This war, also known as the Resistance War Against America was a conflict in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia which continued until 1975. It wasn't until the 1960's that Australia became involved in support of the American



1966 Matric Blue, back row left - Tony Dalton, second row third left - Peter Walbridge, Paul Quinn also served in Vietnam, seated bottom row, third from the right).

defensive. The Vietnam war was a long, costly, and divisive conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam against South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States.

My destiny after leaving school was certainly unknown, that being decided by a marble representative of a birth date, randomly chosen from a barrel. Would I, or would I not, be chosen for military duty in Vietnam. This was the process the Australian Government put in place for this life changing task that would cause great debate between its supporters and detractors in the years that followed.

Young men waited to hear whether their marble had dropped, and it was a great relief to me that mine hadn't. But what of my friends? How was I to react and feel upon hearing that their marble had come out? My best mate, Peter Wallbridge got his letter stating that his birthdate, the 11th May, had been selected and he would be required to do two years of National Service.



Tony (L) with Peter Wallbridge at a dance hall in Lorne

Peter and I had started at Marcellin in Grade 5 (our friendship now extends 62 years) and I was shocked to hear that he would be spending time in a foreign country, fighting a war that he would never have volunteered for. Between 1964 and 1972, 804,286 young men

registered for National Service and of these 63,735 men served in the Army as 'Nashos'. Some young men had joined the CMF (Citizens Military Forces) which exempted them from National Service.

For those of us not called up, it was like living in a bubble. Overseas travel by young people was not as common as it is today, and it wasn't a priority for those of us that had a job and were saving to buy that new car or a block of land. We were more intent on enjoying our late teens and early 20's as young people should, pub nights out, footy clubs, finding a girlfriend.

When the conscripts left for Vietnam, for most it would have been their first time outside of Australia. Not only did they leave family and mates behind, but also girlfriends, waiting in the wings. Two years away tested relationships with some receiving a 'Dear John' letter ending their relationship. The separation from family and friends would have been hard on these young men who now needed to form new friendships and a sense of trust within their ranks.

At home, we didn't feel imminent danger from the war and had little idea of what our mates were going through. News media in Australia at that time focused on the US forces and it wasn't easy for us to get a full understanding of Australia's involvement.

There were massive protests about conscription and why young Australians should be fighting this war which had little impact on Australia, our way of life or our security, although for some, the fear of communism coming to Australia was of concern. There were conscientious objectors, one who



happened to be Tony Dalton, not me, and for some time I felt very awkward telling anyone my name.

During Pete's time in Vietnam I would write to him frequently about what was happening in Australia, probably telling him about the football and what I and others in his social network were doing. I would visit his parents and sister and have a chat. They too were missing their only son and brother and worried about his welfare.

For those of us not called, it's difficult to describe the feeling. There was a degree of why them, not me, I felt saddened that my close friend had been called up, but mostly I was happy that my life was not disrupted. I had the opportunity to gain promotion in my employment and make new friendships with workmates. I could continue my sporting interests, particularly as a player with Marcellin Old Collegian Football Club and follow and attend the then VFL.

In saying that, if my birthday marble had come out, I would have accepted it, probably feeling a sense of duty but also a degree of nervousness and the regret of foregoing two years of my young life. My father had served in New Guinea in WWII in the bomb disposal unit and although proud of his service for the protection of Australia, he had always felt a loss of what he said should have been the best years of his life. As I grew older, other feelings of guilt emerged as to the unfairness of the system in which young men were conscripted and sent off to fight an unpopular war.

We all need friendship groups but those serving in Vietnam must have experienced a sense of belonging and mateship that their tour of Anzac duty forced upon them. As Anzac Day approaches it is important to recognise and honour all who have served, not only in Vietnam, but in all wars. They have put their lives on the line, some voluntarily, some more forcefully, to give others the freedom they desire and deserve.

The Vietnam War resulted in the deaths of 2 million Vietnamese civilians, 1.1 million North Vietnamese soldiers and 250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers and 58,300 US servicemen.

521 Australian servicemen died

and over 3,000 Australians were injured. That does not take into account the huge number of Vietnam Vets who returned with ongoing PTSD and other health issues. There were no hero's welcomes on their return and until more recently, very little recognition of their service to Australia.

Well done boys, you served Australia well.

## THE AMERICAN WAR

**ALAN O'CONNOR**

Alumnus 1966

I come from a very happy and stable home life, growing up in Melbourne, attending Marcellin College from Grade 4 in 1958 until 1967, where I repeated Year 12 and was appointed School Captain. My Mum, Dot was a full-time carer for her large family (I have two brothers and three sisters), and Dad, Des, was a senior bureaucrat in the Department of Supply (later known as the Defence Support). When Dad was transferred to Canberra at the end of 1967, we all followed, leaving behind our life in Melbourne and all my friends and relatives including 21 first cousins.

I remember when I was first called up. I was a 19-year old Economics student at ANU. My first reaction was shock, and then resignation. Looking back, I was quite naïve about politics and knew little about how Australia came to be fighting in Vietnam, however, my girlfriend at the time, Joan (now my wife), was actively involved in anti-Vietnam demonstrations which made life interesting! My university studies allowed me to defer for a year and I started working for the Australian Bureau of Statistics, before joining the Army in February 1970, aged 20.



Alan 1970

I did my 10-week basic training at Kapooka Training Centre near Wagga Wagga. It was the usual army training routine, attempting to break us down

both physically and mentally before building us up. We had no home leave for the first six weeks. It was during this time that I found out that I was colour blind and short sighted and not surprisingly, I found it difficult to hit targets. At the conclusion of basic training I was chosen for ordnance training for ten weeks at Bonegilla near Albury. Here, the accommodation huts were very basic with no insulation during the freezing winter. I coped well with the training and certainly became much fitter as I learned the key ordnance roles (stores maintenance).

My initial posting was to a base in Liverpool, NSW. I used to hitch hike to Canberra most weekends to see Joan and my family and friends. I soon realised that there was little for me to learn spending the rest of my two years at the base, so I volunteered for Vietnam. Just prior to leaving, I had an operation on a deviated septum and in recovery, I was placed with many of the badly injured guys who had been airlifted back from the conflict in South Vietnam, often missing limbs from the IED1 explosions – not a great omen for me!

I was sent to Canungra which was originally established as the Jungle Training Centre to prepare troops in World War II for combat in the South West Pacific area and in the 1950s and 1960s for Malaysia and South Vietnam. For three weeks we lived in tents and were put through our paces with physical and mental hardening though a battery of obstacle courses and battle inoculations tasks. The course was challenging, but my earlier training prepared me well. I really enjoyed meeting a whole new group of people who would soon be heading off to South Vietnam with me. Before I left home, I arranged to continue my tertiary studies through the University of Queensland and was only one of six attempting this – most of the others would have been officers.



The usual transport in Saigon

## SERVING OUR COUNTRY



Colleagues in Saigon

The Australian Forces in South Vietnam were mainly located in two key locations: Nui Dat and Vung Tau. I flew into Saigon on 7 December 1970 to take on the role of US Liaison NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer). I was taken aback by the pollution, the traffic chaos and the poverty as I travelled from the Canberra Hotel and Cholon district each day. The hotel rooms were built around a central concrete void and the building had a cargo net hung from about the third floor - in case grenades were thrown at us. I did an average of two duties each week - gun pickets of two hours on and four hours off around Army Headquarters at the Free World Building. Our daily routine involved a quick coffee and a Paludrine (anti-malarial), followed by a terror ride as our bus drive took us the 15 minutes from our hotel to work. Sunday afternoon was our only time off and we usually went to the nearby markets.

It was during my early posting that I was very lucky to meet my best friend, Les (a regular army medic) and his future wife Judy whose father was the Military Attache. On our return home we were best men at each other's wedding. Sadly, I lost Les to mesothelioma a few years ago.



Best man at Les' wedding

Only nine days after my arrival, on 16 December 1970, two warehouses were blown up by the Vietcong after which all our vehicles were then required to carry two armed men. On 19th December there were more rocket attacks in the city and there were rumours that all Aussie forces would be shifted back to Vung Tau. During the course of the conflict in Vietnam, four ordnance personnel were killed. Two of these were my colleagues who lost their lives trying to diffuse explosives.

(Diary entry:)

*"This morning we took up two 5-ton trucks to Long Binh, one loaded with four unserviceable engines, each weighing a ton and the other with 27 empty oxygen and acetylene bottles. I was given credits for these and took back 69 flame thrower bottles and 48 full oxygen and acetylene bottles"*

While it was only a short road trip to

the massive American base at Long Binh, it was an extremely busy drive and the scene of many road fatalities. In January 1971, I was on duty at the Canberra Hotel and heard that a student terrorist threw a couple of firebombs and burnt out two buses.

(Diary entry:)

*"We all have to stay alert for incidents during Tet especially after the huge fire yesterday which destroyed 600 shops and killed or injured many people".*

By March 1971, the decision was made for the Captain, the NZ Corporal and I to move to a permanent role at Long Binh.

Long Binh was enormous with 60,000 US troops there at its peak and 140 square kilometres of stores. I lived in a small hut in a rubber plantation and used a 44-gallon drum connected to a water tanker for my shower (luckily, I never suffered the after-effects of Agent Orange). The rats were huge, so I kept my boots next to my bed to throw at them during the night. In the wet season, the skies opened every afternoon about 3pm for about two hours. The humidity was incredibly draining. Because of the pollution, we rarely saw the sun.

The Americans that I lived with were mainly tough regular army guys who worked in bomb disposal. Many were African American or Puerto Rican. The Black Power movement was significant back then - a long time before *Black Lives Matter*. I found that many of the new US recruits were very young (17) and had only minimal training of 6-8 weeks. It was not surprising that drug and alcohol use was high. Despite this, I found these guys to be wonderful comrades - friendly with big personalities. While the base was occasionally mortared, I never felt in great personal danger.

### One of my letters home:

*"What a day - one of my busiest and funniest in country. I spent all morning getting approval for us to pick up stores for a convoy from Vung Tau and all afternoon actually loading these on board. At 4.30 we still had 11 tons of*



tank tracks to load and it was obvious that unless 'the locals' really moved the convoy we would not be able to leave (night movement is forbidden). From then it was a real comedy of errors as first the forklift driver was very inexperienced and managed to knock over half a dozen crates before reversing over my big toe; the skies suddenly opened and the downpour completely saturated us for the next 30 minutes; The forklift driver thought it was too late for him to be working so he just drove off into the distance. After complaining to the yard manager another guy took over. However, he just dumped the tracks on any old way and we had to travel at about 5 mph in case we lost the lot. When the truck driver and I finally walked into our office at about 6 pm dripping wet, everyone just burst out laughing and they all decided to stay the night."

R and R leave was granted after an appropriate period in the country (usually around 5 months) with the opportunity to be flown to a destination of your choice within South East Asia - I chose to return home. Joan and I had kept our spirits up by writing to each other every day - in the days before easy access to phones and social media, this proved critical in the development of our relationship.

In August 1971 the Prime Minister, Billy McMahon, announced that the remainder of the Task Force would be withdrawn at the end of 1971. I was flown home by Qantas in October 1971 and was discharged at Duntroon - a very solitary experience.

I found that I had saved enough for a deposit on a house in Belconnen in Canberra. I passed the subject I was studying while in South Vietnam and was given government support to study full time at ANU to complete my degree in 1972. I was also promoted in the Public Service (in the Australian Bureau of Statistics) in my absence (this was to ensure that National Servicemen were not disadvantaged by their service). I became engaged to Joan on her 21st birthday in 1972 and we married the following year. Our son Sean was born in Canberra in 1974. We then decided to move to Adelaide in 1976 to escape the cold of Canberra and be closer to Joan's extended family. Brydie and Shannon were born

there in 1977 and 1979 respectively. We now delight in being involved in the lives of our 3 grandchildren.

I returned to Vietnam in 2017 - a very emotional experience and was able to locate my former work and accommodation places before they were changed forever. It was very confronting visiting the Museum and appreciating the local views of what they call "the American war".



Joan and Alan at a Dawn Service at Semaphore

It took about 15 years before I felt able to attend a dawn service or march on ANZAC Day. I had rarely spoken about my experiences as I was well aware of the community's views on the war. As public opinion changed following the release of the song "I was only 19", by John Schumann and the welcome home march in Sydney in 1987, I decided to attend the annual Dawn Service at my local Semaphore War Memorial and to engage with fellow veterans where I could via the Vietnam Veterans Association, Reunions of Ordnance veterans and the local RSL.



Alan with Joan and sisters Anne and Maureen at Anzac Day 2016 Ordnance Reunion in Albury

Recent years seem to have been about reconnection. I started a family website which really helped me reach out to my extended family who were mainly still living in Melbourne. I had wanted to contact some Marcellin Old Collegians and was given the opportunity at the Old Canterbury Roaders gatherings. Old buddies such as David Leavold, Geoff Tory and Jim Derum and Foundation members have made me feel very welcome.

I am proud of my National Service -

however it has never defined me. We have had full lives with involvement in many organisations in our local community at Port Adelaide and in a charity supporting several schools in Nepal. I have also volunteered to build houses, mainly in South East Asia for *Habitat for Humanity* for many years. We know that we have had very fortunate lives.

While I see myself as a pacifist, I have become fascinated by certain aspects of military history and compiled a photobook on the experiences of Joan's uncle and aunt who served as a doctor and nurse on the Kokoda Trail during WWII. I donated a copy to the Australian War Memorial (along with my diaries and letters). Joan and I were fortunate to be able to travel to the Western Front in France during 2019 and now have a much greater appreciation of the sacrifices made by Australians in both of the World Wars. On retirement from the SA public service, I completed a PhD in 2012 at UniSA with the title, "Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Remote Anangu Communities" involving some wonderful trips to the APY Lands.

## THE CHANGING OF A LIFE

**PETER WALLBRIDGE**

Alumnus 1965



Out in the bush on operations 1970

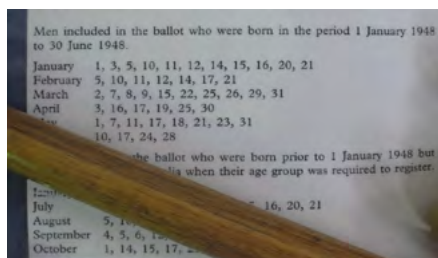
I received my call-up notice in the dreaded brown envelope which read "you are hereby called up for National Service". It was Wednesday 29 January 1969 and I was 20 years of age. I was required to present myself at 8am to the Engineers Training Depot, Swan Street, Melbourne. I was to begin my two years of National Service with the Military Forces of the Commonwealth.

## SERVING OUR COUNTRY

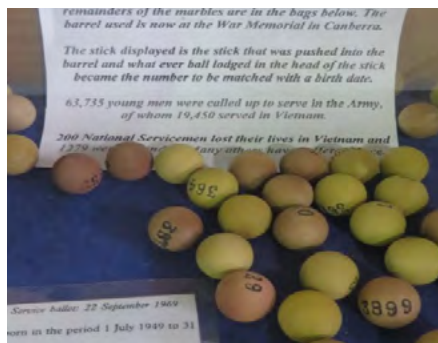
I held a full-time job in Melbourne and I was settled and happy. I was about to be thrust into something new, perhaps even daunting. I felt anxious not knowing what Army life was to hold for me and unable to recognise the experiences I would gain. It was to be the start of a new chapter in my life, but how would I cope? And would I succeed? How would I handle being away from home, from family and friends and the normality of civilian life?

Unbeknown to me at this time, this was going to be the biggest challenge of my life. I was going to build new friendships, learn to take responsibility for my actions and learn to never let a mate down. It was going to change my life forever and be an experience I would never forget and would look back on with pride.

During training I gave my preferences, but ultimately, it would be the Army who decided what my role would be, that of an Infantry Rifleman. I would do a tour of Vietnam and experience first-hand the reality of fighting an evasive enemy and feeling the pain of losing a mate. When discharged after two years, I was a different person, but I have never regretted the opportunity.



The January to June 1948 Ballot and 'The changing of a life'



The changing of a life for 19,450 who served in Vietnam.



Australian Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC)

Conscripts were selected at random by a national ballot dubbed the 'lottery of death' in which young men whose birth dates matched a series of numbered wooden balls, were conscripted. National Service did not give you a choice, it was compulsory.

When my birth date was drawn, I was initially shocked and worried. It was hard for the family to accept, particularly my Mum. My Dad was supportive and offered me advice during my training and time in the Army. I wondered what was going to happen to my work prospects, leaving my family and friends, and what effect it would have on my personal life. It was not until around 1973 that the Government lowered the minimum voting age to 18 years so you could fight but you could not vote. It was inevitable and something to be accepted whatever the consequences. The writing and receiving of letters became particularly important when I was overseas as it provided a lifeline with home and an opportunity to talk about things that were on your mind or were troubling you. I do remember telling my mother that when I was on operations I was 'tail-end Charlie' which possibly worried her more.

My first ten weeks of National Service Training were at Puckapunyal, known colloquially as 'Pucka'. It was good to have a mate from Marcellin, Gavin White, join up on the same day and finish up in the same hut as me. Royce Hart, a Richmond footballer, was also in our hut. The general attitude towards National Service was that it had to be faced up to, but there was still the inclination to dislike it at times. The training was very regimental with

everything being done systematically. We were taught how to dismantle our SLR rifle, all safety precautions and cleaning. One of the Corporals said that by the end of recruit training we would have to dismantle and reassemble our rifles blindfolded and would have to do it in double quick time. During training we did a lot of marching, physical training, grenade throwing practice, map reading and field craft.

My next weeks would be in Infantry Corps at Singleton, New South Wales and then to Ingleburn for further weapon training. The final three weeks was a mandatory course for all soldiers bound for Vietnam. This was the jungle training course at Canungra in Queensland. The men who passed the course were deemed ready for war and were the fittest and best trained troops.

At Canungra we spent the nights out in the bush sleeping in our hutchies and eating Army rations. Most of the obstacle courses had water traps where we had to scale 10ft walls and jump feet first into a bear pit full of water. We also had to climb ropes and cross various other obstacles. We did forced marches of at least two miles out to the rifle range and practised shooting the SLR (Self Loading Rifle) and the automatic Armalite rifle. Life was tough at Canungra.

After arriving back in Ingleburn, I commenced a ten-day pre-embarkation leave in Melbourne before my departure for Vietnam. This was a difficult time having to leave friends and family and not knowing what was in store for me.

After a long flight from Melbourne via Singapore, I finally arrived in Nui Dat, the Australian Task Force



“

**Four days after joining 9 Platoon I was deployed by helicopter to the area of operations.**

”

Base in Phuoc Tuy Province. My first impression of Vietnam was that the weather was harsh, tremendously hot and humid and after a while it really got you down. The high temperatures also increased fatigue. The wet season also had its challenges raining almost every day which made patrolling and the movement of equipment difficult at times.

I was assigned to my platoon at 1 ARU (Reinforcement Unit) whose job it was to defend the base at Nui Dat, sending out patrols every night.

In October 1969 I was posted to my first Infantry Battalion 9 Platoon C Company 9 RAR (Royal Australian Regiment) where I spent the next six weeks.

Four days after joining 9 Platoon I was deployed by helicopter to the area of operations. That was somewhat of an initiation to the jungle warfare and extremely nerve racking as it was the platoons last major operation in Vietnam, and they were all on edge and super cautious. I was a reinforcement, obviously somewhat apprehensive, arriving at a new Company and facing my first full operation. It was a whole new experience for me. I vividly remember sleep walking at the beginning of that operation and found myself away from my hutchie. It was a pitch-black night. I managed to crawl back without making too much noise as any movement would have signalled a response from the machine-gunner on duty and I would have been in lots of strife. We were trained to shoot anything that moved.

During the operation there were a series of contacts with groups of enemies varying in size from one to sixty. These contacts were usually initiated either by 9 RAR either in ambush or on locating enemy camps or bunkers. This operation was highly successful in disrupting enemy operations, particularly their lines of troop deployment and resupply.

I was then posted to 1 Platoon A Company 6 RAR and remained with the Battalion until their return to Australia in 1970. During that time,

I went out on several operations ranging from 14 to 30 days. The purpose of the operations varied. Some were 'search and destroy' missions aimed at clearing the enemy from the province, others 'cordon and search' of villages and 'ambush and reconnaissance' patrols. At the time the operations were exhausting, uncomfortable and extreme, unnerving, and often terrifying. By night, the platoon camped with 24-hour sentries behind a claymore mine shield. Diggers wore one set of clothes for the whole operation – army greens, bush hat, sweat scarf, socks and boots. Each infantryman carried 25-30 kilograms in his pack which held four days of rations, a hutchie and a ground sheet, a mosquito net, insect repellent, a small hexamine stove, a cup and eating utensils. We carried extra rifle magazines together with hand grenades, water bottles an entrenching tool and a machete. I also carried an SLR rifle and an M79 grenade launcher.



Practising with the M79 Grenade Launcher on the Nui Dat range

In between operations the Company spent their time at Nui Dat practising on the range, carrying out tasks such as ready reaction defence of the Base, retraining and maintenance, and preparation for the next operation.

The Australians used warfare tactics where stealth and ambush were predominant, a predatory method of seeking the enemy. As an infantry soldier and on the front line of operations, we were frequently reliant on a number of services such as Artillery, Armoured Corps, Field Engineers and RAAF, who gave Infantry, great flexibility and firepower support.



Airlifted back to Nui Dat on a US Chinook Helicopter

The helicopter commonly referred to as the Huey, Bushranger or helicopter gunship moved us to and from our base at Nui Dat to fire support bases or landing zones (LZ) which were in small clearings or paddy fields located somewhere in the Province. At the end of the operations, we were airlifted back to Nui Dat in either a Huey which took seven fully laden troops or the big twin-rotor US Chinook helicopter which could carry a full platoon. Whilst out in the bush we were frequently re-supplied by the Hueys with food rations, water and ammunition and fondly remember the fresh supply of bread rolls and strawberry milk we occasionally received with our field rations.



Map reading in the bush on operations

The Huey's real benefit was the speed at which our casualties were evacuated to Hospital which meant the difference between life and death in many instances. These extractions were sometimes seriously dangerous because of the difficult terrain and the constant likelihood of enemy fire.

I will never forget the throbbing sound of an approaching 'slick' of Hueys, a welcome sound to all the diggers. We were always dropped and picked up in the least amount of time.

## SERVING OUR COUNTRY

I remember that if you were the last to get in the chopper you hoped a mate was hanging on to you and your pack. The Hueys had their side doors fully open which meant that you could get in and out quickly but it was a strange sensation when you flew for the first time flying high above the ground sitting on the floor with a fully laden pack and weapon looking out of a gaping doorway.

It was great catching up with Gavin who was in Artillery and my cousin Gerard who was an Engineer, for a few drinks back in camp at Nui Dat. It was Christmas 1969. (Pictured front cover)

In February 1970 I had one week of R&R leave in Hong Kong. I enjoyed my time there but could not wait to get back to my mates and the 'funny farm' as we fondly called it. Some guys went back to Australia for their R&R with many finding it difficult to say goodbye to their families once again. .

Three months later when my tour of Vietnam finished, I arrived in Sydney. We were told to change into civilian clothes before heading to Melbourne the next day. It was as if the Army did not want us to be seen in our uniform or maybe it was because of the public sentiment toward the war in Vietnam. I was excited, relieved and grateful to be home but feeling strange that 24 hours earlier I was in a war zone. It felt quite surreal to be back in Australia and it did take quite a bit of adjusting.

During the latter part of my tour we all felt that the job we were doing in Vietnam was not being appreciated or valued by the Australian public and we believed we were receiving undue criticism. Anger was particularly evident toward the anti-war movement and demonstrations led by Jim Cairns. We were also bitter at the lack of Government support for us when we returned home. It took until 1987 for Vietnam veterans to be properly acknowledged and honoured culminating in a welcome home parade in Sydney.

Looking back, I can say that strong relationships were formed from my

experience in the Army and those friendships still exist to this very day. I also believe that playing football with Marcellin Old Collegians after I was discharged from the Army helped me to readjust to civilian life and helped to bring back some normality again. However, at times, life did and still does have its challenges.

## THE BATTLE OF DARWIN

GERRY SEXTON

BY LISA GILLIES

There are not too many people who could boast of having six sons educated at Marcellin College across both Canterbury Road and Bulleen campuses, but Gerry Sexton is one of them. He has been, and continues to be, a strong supporter of Marcellin College and the Marcellin Foundation. At 99 years young, he maintains a keen memory and a very sharp wit and, although it is just on 80 years since he first arrived in Darwin, he remembers with some detail his time there in WW11, both before and after it was bombed.

Gerry was educated at St Kevin's by the Christian Brothers (or 'Christies' as he remembers them), completing his Leaving Certificate in 1938. He went on to work at 'The Herald', before joining the Army early in 1940 and being posted to Darwin in May 1940. Not long before enlisting he met Betty McNeill, the start of a romance that

lasted over 70 years. They 'courted by correspondence' before marrying in August 1944.

As an 18 years old recruit and a 'raw gunner' in the Darwin Mobile Force artillery battery, Gerry wasn't really aware of what was ahead of him. The troops had been sent north in anticipation of Darwin being attacked, but that was not uppermost in their minds. It was only as the armed forces numbers began their steady build-up that it dawned on them that something big was about to happen. Gerry's first barracks in the north were in a former abattoir complex some 8kms out of town, which had been owned by the British meat magnate Lord Vesty. About mid-1941 the unit moved to the newly built Larrakeyahld Barracks on the outskirts of Darwin and not long afterwards came the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

Only a couple of months later, on 19 February 1942 came the bombing attack on Darwin and its surrounds. The harbour was full of boats coastal trading ships, an oil tanker and several American naval vessels. Gerry remembers not all of the vessels being taken out by the bombs but it was the oil spill from the tanker and the on-shore oil storage tanks plus the ensuing flames that engulfed the remaining boats and set off the ammunition on board the naval vessels. Many men jumped overboard to try to swim to shore but perished in the burning oil. The main task over



Gerry, March 2021 holding his wedding photo inset: Gerry, 1970





the next few days was retrieving the bodies from the water.

The two raids that day by 242 Japanese aircraft was the largest single attack on Australia in our history. Gerry was only twenty years old, and the horror of that day is beyond comprehension to me, but he recounts this story as he would any other event in his life. Naturally, he was upset for some time afterwards, but it was wartime and emotions need to be kept under control. "That's the main thing that sticks with me" recalls Gerry "after a while things kind of settled down and we had to get back to business as usual".

Just before the Pearl Harbour bombing Gerry had been seconded to the local Army Headquarters, and he still remembers the occasion. One morning, on parade several of the young soldiers were called out and asked to confirm their level of education. "I admitted to having completed Leaving level and the next thing I knew I was pushing a pen at HQ!". The rest of his service 'up north' was spent between Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs before finishing up at Adelaide River which is about 100km south of Darwin. He managed to get some leave approved in August 1944 and came back to Melbourne and wedded Betty. By a stroke of good fortune, about a week after the nuptials he received an Army telegram to say he was being reposted to Melbourne.

Gerry remained with the Army in Melbourne until discharged in August 1946, when he commenced work with the Commonwealth Bank. He stayed there until retirement in 1982, after moving through the ranks to Branch Manager, Branch Inspector, Regional Manager, and finally as Manager General Administration at Chief State Office (he refers to his last assignment as the 'dogs body department'- it handled everything that no one else wanted to tackle!). He and Betty enjoyed his retirement, until sadly she was hit by a car in May 2005. That started a gradual decline in her health, but with help from the family Gerry was able to keep her at home until she

passed away in May 2012.



Gerry and wife Betty

Gerry remains living independently in the family home which he and Betty built back in 1948/1949. He is supported there by his son Peter and widowed daughter Mary, with regular visits from the other members of his large family (Mary is a trained nurse -in the old style- which is all the more important).

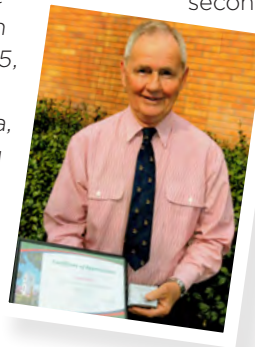
## AUSTRALIA'S YOUNGEST VICTORIA CROSS WINNER

### A SHORT STORY BY JOHN TELFER

John was born in Brisbane in 1938. His Marist connection goes right back to his secondary education at Marist College Rosalie. John enlisted in the RAAF in 1955, age 17 completing recruit training in Laverton, Victoria, as a Trainee Physical Training Instructor and became the youngest Corporal in the RAAF at age 18.

John completed various postings during his twelve-year service, including Army Jungle Warfare in Canungra, Queensland. John left the RAAF in 1967 and took up teaching PE at various Melbourne schools whilst undertaking studies. He graduated with a Bachelor of Education and Diploma of Education in 1974.

John went to on teach English and History at Marcellin for eleven years and to this day, still earns immense respect and gratitude from his students.



Having taught history for many years, John became committed to the Anzac cause and has written nine books on local history including the 100 Year History of the Warwick sub-branch (where he has lived since retirement). He is also a guest writer for the Warwick Daily news and has written around 130 short stories on the Anzac legend.

The origin of the Victoria Cross award came about from the aftermath of the Crimean War that Britain was involved in from 1854 to 1857. Queen Victoria was so impressed with the bravery and commitment from British forces in the siege of the Baltic port of Sebastopol in 1855, that she ordered a special medal called the Victoria Cross be instituted for acts of valour of: "The most conspicuous bravery, or some daring, or pre-eminent devotion to duty, in the presence of the enemy".

Since 1857, over 1,300 Victoria Crosses have been won by British Commonwealth army, navy and air force members up to 1991, before other commonwealth governments decided to award their own honours for bravery on the battle field. Before 1991, 96 Australians have won the VC under British conditions with 6 in the second Boer War, 64 in World War 1 (9 at Gallipoli), 2 in the Russian Civil War in 1919, 20 in World War 2, and 4 in Vietnam. Since 1991, 4 have been won by Australians in Afghanistan with the last being the posthumous VC won by Cameron Baird in the Khod Valley in 2013. One sad statistic is that of the 96

Australians to win the VC, 28 have been awarded posthumously.

One of the youngest Australians to be awarded the Victoria Cross in battle was a 17 year- old country boy born on 13th September 1897 at "Glengower" Station in the small settlement of Gunbar, near Hay, in New South Wales. His name is John William Alexander Jackson, who went by the name of "Bill" and coerced his father into

# SERVICE



John with his fiancée Joy on St Patrick's Day 1956 on the announcement of their engagement

falsifying his age of 17 to enlist into the army in 1915. Here is the story of Private Bill Jackson who is the youngest Australian to be awarded the honour of the Victoria Cross in action at Armentieres, France, on the 18th July 1916 at the age of 18 years.

Bill was a tall, strapping young man who, after deceiving the recruiting officer, was posted to the 17th Battalion to undergo training before embarking on board HMAT "Themistocles" on 12th May 1915, bound for Egypt. On 20th August he was sent on to Gallipoli but was eventually evacuated to Malta suffering from severe dysentery. He returned to his unit, now in France, on the 8th March 1916, and was in the trenches near Armentieres on 25th June, when he volunteered to carry out a raid on the German trenches. In the ensuing battle, Bill was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, later upgraded to the Victoria Cross for his outstanding bravery in that action. The citation read:

"For his gallantry on the night of 25th June 1916, in rescuing wounded under fire. While returning from a successful raid on the German trenches south of Armentieres, several members of the raiding party were seriously wounded in "no-mans-land" by shell fire. Private Jackson returned safely to our lines through a most intense barrage of shellfire, shrapnel, HE, and

crossed machine gun fire, escorting a prisoner. Hearing that some of his party had been hit, Private Jackson handed his prisoner over and immediately returned to "no-mans-land" and assisted in bringing in the wounded. He then set out again notwithstanding the fact that the hostile bombardment was more intense than ever. Undeterred, he, along with Sergeant Camden, was bringing in Private Robinson, who was seriously wounded, when a shell exploded close to Private Jackson's right arm which was blown off above the elbow. Private Robinson was wounded again and Sergeant Camden knocked unconscious. As Jackson could not do anything by himself, he returned to our trenches, obtained assistance, and went out again to search for his two comrades. They were, however, met just outside our trenches.

Private Jackson's condition was serious but throughout he showed wonderful fortitude. His work with the raiding party as a scout and also with the Battalion in the same capacity has always been of the highest order, marked with the greatest coolness, dash and bravery".

Bill's war was now over. He was returned to England from the Australian General Hospital at Boulogne, France via HS "St. Patrick", to have his shattered arm repaired

surgically, then repatriated back home to Australia.

On arrival home, Bill was feted as a hero and given a public reception at Hay. He was offered a property but declined it, because he felt it would be too difficult to operate it with only one arm. In the 1920's Bill moved to the New England area and became a dealer in skins. In 1927, he took over the license of the Figtree Hotel at Wollongong for a short time. In 1932 Bill married Ivy Alma Morris, a dressmaker, at St Pauls Anglican Church in Kogarah, Sydney, where Alma eventually gave birth to a daughter.

In 1942, with Australia at war with Japan, Bill decided to enlist in the Volunteer Defence Corps on 16th April 1942, and served with the 2nd Australian Labour Company. When Bill was challenged about his right to wear the Distinguished Conduct Medal which was promulgated in the London Gazette and posted to him. A serious bureaucratic blunder was made when the British War Office upgraded Bill to a Victoria Cross. he was still under the impression that, as he was in possession of the DCM, he was entitled to wear it. However, Bill was a bit disillusioned so he resigned from the army, but after things were sorted out in regards to his medals, Bill went back into the army three weeks later and was promoted to Corporal. He was finally discharged on 18th October 1946.

John William Alexander Jackson was the youngest Victoria Cross winner in the 1st AIF, and the first VC winner in France. His record is uncanny for a man so young who showed all those qualities that surround the Anzacs. Extreme courage, mateship, initiative, and commitment. One can only imagine the pain that he experienced when losing his arm, and his complete disregard for his own safety to save his mates. In his records he said that "for the first 30 minutes I only felt numbness". His bravery and coolness in that moment of extreme danger





## I praise God for the parents He gave us, for the wonderful prayerful Sisters, and for the Marist Brothers...



under fire is legendary and would be among the bravest of those valiant Anzacs of World War 1.

Bill Jackson moved to Melbourne in 1953 and worked with the City Council as a Commissionaire at the City Hall, and attended the 1956 Victoria Cross celebrations in London. Bills brave heart gave out on 5th August 1959 when he passed away in Melbourne's Austin Hospital. He was cremated at Springvale Cemetery and his ashes placed in Boronia Gardens there. Bill's service to his country in World War 1 is commemorated by a monument dedicated to him at Private Jackson Park, situated 23 kilometres south of Merriwa, New South Wales, not far from his birthplace.

### LEST WE FORGET

## OLD COLLEGIAN PRIEST LIFE PREPARATION FR PETER FERWERDA

Dear Readers,

At the outset I would like to express my gratitude to my late parents, and to all those dedicated religious and lay teachers who taught me at Our Lady of Victories Primary School (1953-1957) and then at Marcellin College (from 1958 to 1964).

My parents migrated from the Netherlands on 16th December 1949 with three boys of whom I was the youngest, arriving in Australia on 26th January 1950 (Australia Day). We were able to stay with Dutch friends who arranged for dad to work in an office as a clerk. His Accounting Diploma was not recognized, so he had to start from the bottom of the rung so to speak, and was able over the years to advance in his work. Mum was a stay-at-home mum, and both struggled initially to learn English. In those days they paid for our education which was dad's top priority, sending us, and later our

younger Australian-born brother and sister, to Our Lady of Victories Primary School in Camberwell (Sisters of St. Joseph- founded by St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop and Fr. Julian Tennison-Woods), where we sang our times-tables, received a good primary education, and learnt the daily prayers which I still say today.

Then we four boys went to Marcellin. I remember feeling proud to be at Marcellin, to make new friends, and having a beautiful uniform, which was changed and appropriately lighter during the summer months. We had uniform inspection each morning and marched off to our respective classrooms. There is something beautiful about the students wearing the same uniform and looking neat, as it gave us a sense of dignity.

In classes there was good discipline, and we were commanded to pay attention, which was so important since there were 64 boys in my 6th Grade Class and one teacher. The Brothers were strict but fair, and looking back, I admire their dedication to their work, and their religious duties in their Marist Community, which would have left little free time! We had a rhythm of prayer throughout each day; Morning Prayer, The Angelus at Midday, and Prayer at the end of the day. We had kick to kick on the asphalt playground round the school in Canterbury Road, and sometimes the Brothers would also have kick of the footy.

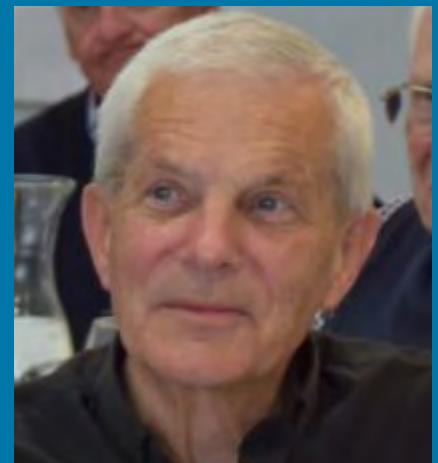
The school moved to Bulleen in 1963. We had three lay teachers that I can recall; Mr. Evans, nick-named "Pop", Mrs. Burke, and a dear man, Mr. Cantlon (I hope I've spelled their names correctly). On his first day in front of our Grade 7 class Mr. Cantlon said; "Boys, my name is Esmond Cantlon, I'm 63 years old, I come from Yackandandah, and I've come to teach you. I will tell you a story at the start of the day and then we'll get down to work". He would tell us stories of his own experiences, and got our attention. He was kind and

I can only recall one occasion on which he needed to punish one of the boys.

As the years passed by, I noted the good results the boys were getting through the disciplined hard work of the Brothers, and in Matriculation, from memory, 27 of the 54 of us won Commonwealth Scholarships, enabling me to go to Monash to study Medicine.

After graduation in December 1970 I spent five years in various hospitals and then worked in general practice for the next 25 years before finally responding to God's call to the Priesthood with the help of Our Blessed Mother, Who has been appearing in Medjugorje since 1981 (under investigation by the Church) and giving monthly messages for the world. I'm most grateful for having been to that grace-filled place in Hercegovina-Bosnia where I was able to discern God's Holy Will for me (I met many others over the years who were also discerning their vocation to religious life or married life).

I was ordained on 8th December in 2006 and after 14 years as a Priest I'm still on a steep learning curve! I praise God for the parents He gave us, for the wonderful prayerful Sisters, and for the Marist Brothers who gave their all in teaching us about our precious faith, and preparing us for our work in the world.



Fr Peter in recent years at the Canterbury Roaders Lunch

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW

We begin a new series whereby we find out what has happened to some of our Old Collegians. We begin with past School Captains.

Unfortunately our first three Captains, Michael Hehir, Ross Aldag and Brian Lacey have passed away.



**MICHAEL HEHIR**

College Captain 1950–1952



**ROSS ALDAG**

College Captain 1953 & 1954



**BRIAN LACEY**

College Captain 1955

Which brings us to our next captains from 1956 to 1963



**BRIAN MCCROHAN**

College Captain 1956 and 1957

BY PRUE O'SHANNESSY

It is well documented that Brian was actually the first student to enter Marcellin College. (You can listen to an interview with Brian here: <https://soundcloud.com/marcellinfoundation/brian-mccrohan-interview-all>).

These days Brian lives happily in Benalla where he is retired, making the occasional trip to Marcellin for Canterbury Roaders Lunches. He also attended the 70th celebrations early in 2020. Brian and his wife Margaret have four children (two girls and two boys) and are Grandparents to one eight year old Grandson.

Brian has been a keen tennis player over the years though old age and health have put a stop to that. He still plays some golf when health allows, and enjoys walking and gardening. Unfortunately Brian has had a few health complications recently and we wish him a good recovery.



**MICHAEL MULLINS**

College Captain 1958

BY MICHAEL MULLINS

Upon completing my matriculation at Marcellin in 1958 I entered the novitiate of the Marist Fathers in Sydney the following year and in 1965 was ordained to the priesthood at St. Patrick's Church Hill, Sydney. Teaching appointments followed in Lismore, Geelong and Wollongong. During this time I graduated with a BA by external studies from the University of New England. In 1973-74 I studied at the East Asian Pastoral Institute Manila where I gained an MA in Religious Studies. Upon returning to Australia I was appointed to the Catholic Theological Union (CTU) at Hunters Hill, Sydney, taking up the roles of Registrar and latterly, Principal. At that time the CTU was a merger of a number of religious congregations delivering tertiary level theological education to candidates for the priesthood, religious and lay-people.

The experience of adult education

increased my awareness of the importance of human development in the formation of those destined for ministry in the Church. Consequently I undertook post-graduate studies in clinical psychology and graduated with an MA (Hons) from the University of Wollongong in 1988. This was followed by an enjoyable three year stint at our multi-cultural parish in West Sunshine, Victoria.

I had always entertained the dream of somehow marshalling the insights of the social sciences for the service of the Gospel. In 1991 this became a reality when with a Marist anthropologist, Fr. Gerry Arbuckle, we established at Hunters Hill what became known as the Refounding and Pastoral Development Unit (RPD). RPD is a small research unit which focuses on action-research, writing and consultation. This has been very satisfying work over the past thirty years, engaging with individuals and groups in Church organisations as they contend with the challenges of our complex and ever-changing world.

In retrospect, I consider myself to have been fortunate to have completed my schooling at Marcellin. In the strange ways of Providence I suspect that experience somehow helped to establish the general trajectory that set me on course for my final destination, a destination which, with the passage of time, looms ever closer.





## RICHARD OLIVE

**College Captain 1959 and 1960**

**BY PRUE O'SHANNESSY**

Richard Olive sees the mathematics and physics which he learned at Marcellin as the building blocks of his life-long career in Civil Engineering. Even the French he was taught by the Marists proved useful when he spent some years working in Quebec. He specialised in the design and construction of dams and hydro-electric facilities, and his work took him to 24 different countries.

Through all his travels he has remained loyal to the two faiths of his school days – the Catholic Church and the Hawthorn Football Club.

He is now retired and well settled in Port Melbourne, with his wife, Dorothy, an immigrant from USA. He draws delight from his four children and eleven grand-children, all in Melbourne. Each year, travel restrictions permitting, Richard and Dorothy visit her family in the States.

Over recent years Richard has been a valued contributor to Marcellin's Heritage Group.



## BRENDAN MILLANE

**College Captain 1961**

**BY PRUE O'SHANNESSY**

These days, Brendan lives in Kew, he is "semi-retired". He manages some small trust funds, but he also spends time volunteering at Endeavour Foundation and Epworth Hospital (subject to covid restrictions).

He enjoys exercising the communication

skills he first got encouragement in at Marcellin - through public speaking at Toastmasters.. He is working on a book project on economics in the Bible.

He retains a passion for travel, highlights being the Holy Land, Ireland and the Pacific, but after several recent cancelled trips, has fingers crossed for the future.

Like others who commenced in the maths/sciences, Brendan's path forms somewhat of a winding road moving from chemical engineering into economics and econometrics.

He worked with private consultancies in Australia and London, with the International Energy Agency. and the Victorian government, then started his own economic consultancy, largely focusing on minerals and energy issues.

He is looking forward to catching up at future Old-Boy gatherings.



## KEVIN BELL

**College Captain 1962**

**BY KEVIN BELL**

Right now, I have taken on a further 3 years with Pardoo Beef Corporation at Pardoo station in the Pilbara of WA, managing a research and innovation program involving Wagyu beef production from a harsh arid environment utilising artesian water for irrigating tropical pastures and crops. Absolutely fascinating and a real challenge for science and economics.

After leaving Marcellin I did Veterinary Science at Melbourne University, where I met my wife Jo.

Following a few desultory years in research I joined Jo in a mixed rural practice at Bacchus Marsh, and opened a branch in nearby Melton. However, the Lord had more in store for us, and whilst open to voluntary work in some capacity we spent five wonderful years in Korea with the Columbians.

Returning to Melbourne with five

children and no money, we were led to WA and a research project on meaningful veterinary work with sheep producers. Working in southwest WA followed for 23 years as a private whole farm consultant, including a PhD and two more children! Then came a move to Perth for 6 years as Professor of Animal Production Systems at Murdoch University guiding a new degree in Animal Science.

A brief step back from employment followed in Broome, where we joined a son and his family. Back to work after a few years in a variety of disparate occupations (Catholic Education Office – remote housing officer; Centrecare – rough sleeper outreach in Broome; Agriculture Dept – vet for Kimberley, that brings me back to what I'm doing now. Life is good, thank you God for the path on which you guided me, including those 11 years at Canterbury Road!



## JOHN MCMAHON

**College Captain 1963**

**BY JOHN MCMAHON**

After leaving Marcellin College at the end of 1963 I now find myself living at Fitzroy North in Melbourne. The journey in between has been a fulfilling one, one that is even more unpredictable now than it was then. I experience happiness through living my life as a Marist Brother and working in education.

Br Sylvester inspired me as a student. He taught me to aim high courageously. Over the years I have worked across Australia and studied overseas. Now much of my work is online. I am very grateful for all that being a Marcellin student means.

I am the leader of our senior Brothers' community here at Fitzroy North. We have 11 Brothers in residence some of whom have worked at Marcellin College.

Other than that I work with postgraduate students who are studying for their degrees in educational leadership. This work is based at our Marist Centre, 1 Dawson Street, Brunswick.

# SERVICE

## PROFESSOR BENJAMIN COWIE ALUMNUS 1990

BY PRUE O'SHANNESSY



Wouldn't it be nice to know that as a teacher you had a significant impact on a student's life, and that that student went on to have an important influence on many others?

And wouldn't it be satisfying to know that the programs in a school were right now impacting on our State's vaccination program?

These are two of the impressions I came away with after spending some time with Professor Benjamin Cowie at the Doherty Institute.

Ben has been seconded to work with the Victorian Department of Health until (at this stage) June 2021 and is leading the state in rolling out the Covid Vaccination program for Victoria as the senior medical advisor.

### MEDICAL CAREER

Upon completing his studies at Monash, Ben did an internship at Frankston and then the Alfred before entering specialty training at the Royal Melbourne.

Ben is the Director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Viral Hepatitis. He is an infectious diseases physician and epidemiologist, with appointments in both the Epidemiology Unit at Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory and Victorian Infectious Diseases Service. In addition, Ben is a medical epidemiologist with Communicable Disease Epidemiology and Surveillance, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, and is an Honorary Principal Fellow in the Department of Medicine at the University of Melbourne. He serves on a range of communicable disease,

clinical and public health committees at state, national and international levels.

### MARCELLIN SCHOOL DAYS

But back to Ben's Marcellin school days. Ben completed his HSC (as it was then) in 1990 and remembers his time here with very positive memories. He wasn't a particularly sporty student, instead favouring the debating team rather than the First XVIII. At lunchtime Ben could be found playing Dungeons

was inspired by his teachers who he credits with his passion for learning and the fact that they set him up well for tertiary life. Some of the teachers who inspired Ben and that he can still recall were: Rosemary Dolzan, Carmel Philpott, Carmel Laffan and Georgina Hammond. Ben says they were exceptional teachers and fantastic educators, and understands that teaching can be challenging when you are dealing with all types.



Row 3: Roger Holland, Marko Cek, Jason Kowalewski, Paul Albano, Tony Toce, Michael Burgess.  
Row 2: Jason Vespa, Andrew Stroud, Jason Grollo, Matthew Neugebauer, Benjamin Cowie, Darren Bevilacqua, Paul Wakim.  
Front: Anthony Russo, Matthew Williams, David Gentle, Joseph Carbone, Paul Coates, Oscar Suarez, Paul Dalloglio, Adriano Raiola.  
YEAR 12.1  
TEACHER: MRS CHRISTINA ENGELBOGEN

and Dragons. He also enjoyed 'rough housing' and playing Brandy and invariably arrived home with his shirt pocket torn off at least once a week. One time he recalls he had his tie ripped off and had to keep his jumper on as there was only the top part left!

Ben's Mum actually worked at Marcellin's Bulleen campus as a teacher, while Ben attended the original campus in Camberwell. When Ben transferred out to Bulleen, his Mum resigned from her post. Ben has a younger sister who currently works at the Murdoch Children's Institute in the area of genetics.

The influence a teacher can have:

Ben claims not to have been a top tier academic but found that he was very engaged with his learning and

### MARCELLIN MEMORIES

Becoming friendly with a Swedish exchange student when he was in Year 11. Such was Ben's propensity for learning that in that year Dennis Skantz the Swedish student was able to teach him Swedish. Ben subsequently used this when he took sabbatical leave along with his wife and visited Sweden, to spend time in the European Centre for Disease Control.

Arriving at school to find the ovals under water, and canoes floating on the surface.

Being told to shave when he got to school.

Getting an infected ear as he was continually taking his earring in and out so he could hide it at school.





Ben is adamant that Marcellin's real commitment to Social Justice both inspired him at school and really impacted his decision to work in global and community health



## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ben is adamant that Marcellin's real commitment to Social Justice both inspired him at school and really impacted his decision to work in global and community health, becoming Director of the Hepatitis International Division. He still recalls conversations with teachers which have influenced his thinking.

During his time at Monash, Ben took an interest in infectious diseases, especially the Global Health elements and with his Marcellin background in social justice desired to help people in needy areas. A fascination with how the immune system works has seen him become an expert in this field.

## COVID 19

For Ben the pandemic has been a stressful time with Victoria suffering disproportionately. The Royal Melbourne has had significant cases and staffing and morale has been difficult at times. Looking after patients including colleagues has been draining but at the same time it has been rewarding to be a part of the solution and it is great to be contributing.

However, on an international scale Australians are so lucky and it has been a globally significant achievement that our population has in general been compliant and are where we are today.

Ben states that the Pfizer vaccine is reasonably easy to adjust and that with the Astra Zeneca it is feasible that new versions can be produced to cope.

How long will the vaccines last? At this stage nobody knows as variants are breaking through and we may need a booster to cope with this. The virus will not ever enter into a steady state.

How has the pandemic shaped and changed the future of vaccinations/immunology and research? It has been challenging because at the same time the vaccines are being developed, phase 3 clinical trials were taking place. The vaccines were only approved in Jan/Feb and at the same time they were trying to roll them out. However no steps have been omitted and the research has ensured the system was ready. The aim is to have 50,000 Victorians a week immunised with

a number of sites being organised.

What do you think of anti vaxxers?

Ben's sentiment is that healthy people ask questions and to challenge information is healthy. He also believes that many may be hesitant rather than anti and are just asking questions. He is more than happy to be able to alleviate people's concerns. Ben and his family (wife, daughter Helena and son Anders) will all be "having the jab").

In conclusion, it is immensely satisfying knowing that the staff and ethos of Marcellin College have had such an influence on Professor Ben Cowie, and we in turn should be extremely proud of his achievements.



# MARCELLIN COLLEGE CAPTAIN 2021



## JOEL DIMATTINA

### 2021 College Captain

The name Dimattina is synonymous with Marcellin, and we are lucky to have Joel Dimattina as our 2021 College Captain. Although his father John didn't attend Marcellin, Joel's many cousins have affiliations with the College, from Angela Dimattina and Anna Dimattina, who taught here for many years through to Phillip, David, Adrian and Simon, Chris, Michael and Xavier, and Paul and Frankie.

Joel's father John attended St Leo's in Box Hill North and Mum Jackie grew up in Wellington New Zealand. John works in the family business, the well known Dimattina Coffee, with a café called 30Kerr65 in Fitzroy as well as warehouses in Fitzroy and Reservoir. Jackie works in the pre-prep area at Fintona.

Joel has one sibling Josh who completed his schooling in 2019 at Marcellin and is now doing Arts/Law at the Australian Catholic University. Joel feels they have a great sibling relationship.

Joel remembers feeling nervous and apprehensive when he entered Marcellin as a year 7 boy. Then in Year 8 he developed a friendship with one of the older boys in his pastoral group who really influenced how he felt about the

school and taught him the ropes. (One of the huge benefits of our vertical Pastoral system).

Joel had never pictured himself in any leadership roles but by the time he hit Year 9 he decided to put his hand up to be the SRC Representative which ignited his passion and interest in the school. He followed this up with another SRC role in Year 10 and by this time bigger goals were brewing in the form of trying out for House Captain.

Joel hadn't initially thought of applying for School Captain but in Year 11 decided to give it a go. He had great support from his parents who Joel feels put more emphasis on good character rather than the number of trophies and awards on a shelf. The idea of taking opportunities, building relationships with teachers, meeting new people and getting his name out there all contributed.

In the Year of Covid, all of Joel's interviews were online. He made it to the top six candidates and then was informed by 2020 Principal John Hickey that he'd been elected.

Joel's goals for the year focus on sparking new connections between junior and senior students. He feels that 2020 saw people lose that sense of belonging and he aims to foster this through taking advantage of Marcellin's pastoral system. He also wishes to put more emphasis on well-being.

Realistically Joel realises it will take more than one year to implement this, but he hopes to put the building blocks in place.

Fittingly for a leader, Joel embraces diversity, moving between different friendship groups comfortably. He enjoys sport and for 2021 is a member of both the First XI Cricket and is currently trialling for the First XVIII AFL Football team. Hopefully a quick recovery from a dislocated knee will see him taking the field in both.

On completion of his Year 12 studies Joel hopes to take a gap year, depending on world circumstances possibly travelling and working overseas. He is not sure what university and career choices he will make and thinks this 'year off' will assist him to broaden his horizons.

Finally, Joel is finding great satisfaction as College Captain, trying to be proactive, a good role model, forming different relationships with other students and staff and managing his time efficiently between the many demands on this role.

**GOOD LUCK AND CONGRATULATIONS JOEL.**



# CONNECT

## A MOMENT IN HISTORY

LEON MAGREE (ALUMNUS 1954)

### THE SHANE WARNE ADAGE 'CAN'T BAT CAN'T BOWL' COULD APPLY HERE....

In 1950, sport at Marcellin was restricted basically to House games of cricket in summer and football in winter with the occasional combat against other Catholic Colleges which exceeded Marcellin in numbers and ability. One early such foray was against St John's Hawthorn on a Saturday morning when the writer fitted out in College blazer and whites set off with high expectations only to be clean bowled first ball.

I suspect the bowler was Ken Frieberg. Ken was an outstanding sportsman from an early age at St John's and later went on the play 151 games for Camberwell in the VFA.

In that first year at Marcellin there was emphasis on physical fitness. This brought to the school Mr. Felix Russo, ex St Kilda footballer, splendid in his white singlet and long white trousers to teach us how to jump over the vault, etc.

The inter house football games were umpired by the Brothers giving us the chance to see Brother Nilus and later Brother Evangelist in shorts for the first time. The latter could blow the whistle to let him catch up with the play, or stop everyone so you can watch 'so and so' pick up the ball one handed.

The first athletic carnival together with a marching display was held at the Camberwell Cricket Ground where Michael Hehir the school captain dominated the sprints and high jump doing the Western Roll into a pile of sand.

But, to finish off my sporting memories during my time at Marcellin, I need to share a story that brings me both joy and a tear to my eye...

Attached we see the young batsman ready to take up arms against St John's equipped with the Gladstone bag and bat signed by Bill Johnston a fast/medium bowler from Bradman's 1948 Invincibles. Bill worked with my father Frank at Dunlop Rubber Coy in Flinders St. From the 1948 tour he brought home a beautiful leather case cricket ball for the eleven-year old Leon, signed by the Australian team

e.g. Bradman, Hassett, Lindwall, Tallon, Morris etc etc. What did the youth do, yes, bowled with it in the back yard from the outdoor dunny to the gates you see in the photo until it would have worn out. I get emotional thinking how much it might have been worth if stupid had put it away in a glass case!





## EVENTS GALLERY

**Year 7 Parents Social Evening** As Melbourne turned on a magnificent night, an enthusiastic cohort of Year 7 parents joined us on the Functions Room balcony to enjoy getting to know each other. There was much mingling and 'finding' parents of their son's new friends. We were treated to a spectacular sunset and enjoyed delicious food and drinks. Thank you to the many parents who came along, it was great to meet you.



**Business Network Breakfast 2021 Launch** After a year of webinars and zoom meetings, it was wonderful to welcome our guests in person to the first Business Network breakfast for 2021. It was an excellent turn out with the largest numbers we've ever had, indicating that everyone is so happy to be mingling again. Michael O'Brien, Opposition Leader was our guest speaker and was more than generous with his time. We also welcomed five members who 'spruiked' their businesses for one minute each. The morning concluded with networking opportunities and a chance to enjoy more breakfast goodies.





I always look forward to a Marcellin event, to connect, meet new parents or catch up with friends we've made through our boys being at the the College.



### Marcellin Mums Movie Night

There was a real buzz in the air as we welcomed back in person many Marcellin Mums to enjoy a champagne together before heading in to the theatre to watch 'Nomadland'. Many commented that it was so exciting to be out and about again, and it was wonderful to welcome many new Year 7 Mums, as well as those who had sons in Year 12 last year and a great cross section of our community.



### Year 7 Parent Core Group Get Togethers

The beginning of 2021 has seen all Core Groups having at least one 'get to know you' function. These have ranged from coffee mornings, to wine nights, to family get togethers in various parks. Our wonderful Core Group Reps have more things planned to try and be as inclusive as possible. It's a wonderful way of feeling a part of the community, and getting to know some new faces.



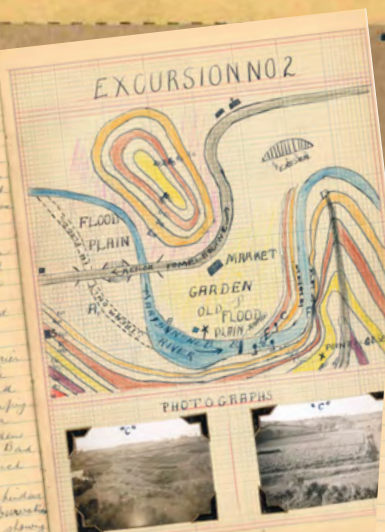
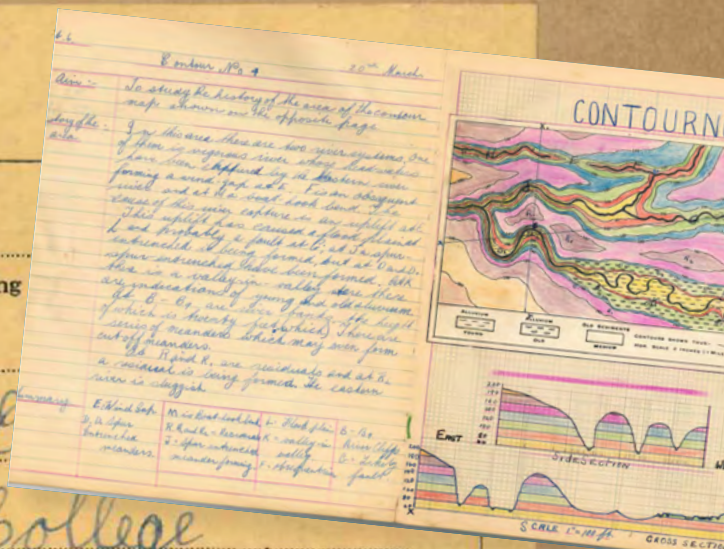


his education at St Josephs in North Fitzroy. He has very fond memories of the Brothers and their overwhelming dedication to the education of their students. We visited John in his aged-care facility and he very proudly passed on to the Marcellin Archives examples of his school-work.

As we chatted to John about his decision, one thing that he made very clear was that his family will be taken care of first. We understand that this is always first and foremost for anyone thinking about leaving a bequest.

Thank you John.

SIDE COVER  
 Leaving  
 Subject Chemistry  
 (State whether Intermediate, Leaving)  
 Number 5351  
 Name John Gerard L.  
 School St. Joseph's B.  
 East Brun

[illegible]



## ABOUT MARCELLIN FOUNDATION

Our vision is to uphold the work of St Marcellin Champagnat, "to make Jesus Christ known and loved". St Marcellin believed that we need to look after the young, especially the most neglected and the poor. By providing education to the poor, we offer a way to break the cycle of poverty and provide opportunities of hope. For so many boys in the surrounding Marcellin catchment (which also includes one of the poorest suburbs in Melbourne), a Marcellin education is out of the question, that is, without the assistance of the St Marcellin Champagnat Bursary Fund. We know that our Old Collegians, parents (past and present), and friends of Marcellin are keen to support us in providing these opportunities, so we invite you to consider one of these opportunities to give:

## RECENT DONORS

Thank you **Franz Tursi,**  
**Geoff Tori and**  
**Anders Uhlig**

**LAVALLA GIVING CIRCLE YOUR GIFT IN WILL** Like John Ditchburn and Franz Tursi, after you make provisions for your family and other important people in your life, we invite you to consider a bequest, or gift-in-will. This is one of the most meaningful gifts that you can give. No matter what the size, your gift will assist families in need who otherwise would not be able to afford a Marcellin Education.

**MAJOR DONORS PROGRAM** In 2019 we successfully launched our Major Donors Program with all donations going to the St Marcellin Champagnat Bursary Fund. You are invited to join this generous group of people to provide the gift of education to those who otherwise could not afford it.

**ONCE-OFF / RECURRENT DONATION** If you, like so many others are bearing the financial burden of running a home and keeping a family, but would still like to support those whare doing it really tough, we invite you to make a donation that suits you – not us! It might be \$10 fortnight, or \$50 month or a once-off donation when you get your tax refund. All contributions, no matter how small, add to the bigger picture.

Please call the Foundation Office on (03) 9851 1464 if you would like to discuss any of these options. All donations are tax deductible and come with the wonderful feeling of knowing that your generosity keeps the work of St Marcellin Champagnat alive.

☒ **Yes, I would like to make a donation to the Marcellin Champagnat Bursary Fund.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Option One** I wish to make one-off gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Cheque – Return this slip with cheque payable to Marcellin College Foundation Ltd
- Credit Card – [marcellinfoundation.org.au/donate](http://marcellinfoundation.org.au/donate)
- Direct Deposit – BSB: 063 010 ACCOUNT: 1295 8493 – Reference your full name
- In Person – Call (03) 9851 1464 to make a time, an over the phone donation or discuss bequests.

☐ **Option Two** I wish to make a regular instalment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ **Option Three** I would like to consider the Lavalla Giving Circle - leaving a gift-in-will.

Please call (03) 9851 1464

**All Donations are Tax Deductible.**





## THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Many lie silently in foreign soil, others in the oceans deep,  
These mother's sons of wars gone by, reposed in eternal sleep.  
They will never again smell the wattle, or shade beneath a coolabah tree;  
Nor hear the call of the kookaburra, or surf in the clear blue sea.

They fearlessly followed the imperial drum, many with brothers and mate,  
To defend their King and country while tempting the hand of fate.  
So how do we remember these Anzac heroes? Is it one day of the year,  
When old diggers march to honour them, mothers to shed a tear?  
As the years roll on and memories fade who will attend their grave,  
Those legends of Gallipoli and France, enshrined in the glory they gave.  
One wonders what the years have done for youth who took up the gun,  
To make the ultimate sacrifice and stay forever young.

They answered the "Call" in thousands, undeterred by the casualty list.  
Some were fated to never return, to be lost in death's swirling mist.  
So, rise up you ghosts of legends made! Let the bugles sound again!  
And recognise the unknown soldier who brought this country fame.

John Telfer

LEST WE FORGET

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DAY   
25th APRIL

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EDITION 10 AUTUMN 2021

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