



BALLARAT
GRAMMAR

B O O M A L A C K A

ISSUE 130 | SPRING 2025

Celebrating 50 Years of Agriculture

FEATURING:

Introducing the New Director of Agriculture
What Agriculture Means at Ballarat Grammar





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Acknowledgment of Country

Ballarat Grammar acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we learn, live and work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Boomalacka is proudly brought to you by the Ballarat Grammar Marketing and Communications Team. We love receiving your stories and news. If you have something you would like to share, please contact: communications@bgs.vic.edu.au



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Headmaster's Reflection

The dim headlights of the old Landcruiser ute crept up the driveway in the pre-dawn dark. My brother and I would climb in, often squeezing in alongside five cousins already crammed across the front bench seat, with my uncle at the wheel. The cousin in the middle would wriggle and squirm to dodge the gearstick knocking against their knee. I'm not exactly endorsing those relaxed attitudes to safety, it was, after all, a different time.

In the pre-dawn darkness, the air was stunningly cold, with frost coating each blade of grass. Each year the portable yards would have been set up in the paddock the afternoon before. We would muster the sheep, and by the time a glorious sunrise was warming our backs, we were ready to lift lamb after lamb into the cradle for marking. A ring was placed on the tail, a tag in the ear, a pulpy kidney inoculation into a skinfold of the neck, then the lamb was drenched and released from the cradle. Being cousins, shenanigans dictated that I too should be 'inoculated' for pulpy kidney in the backside, when least expected.

By lunchtime our cup of tea and sandwich couldn't have tasted better. Then it was back to work for another round in the afternoon. By twilight we were finished and crammed together again in the ute. In the warm evening air, sitting in the ute cabin wasn't such a necessity so half of us travelled home in the ute's tray, again, a different time.

My uncle always claimed he paid weekly, quickly adding "very weakly". He would go to his 'office', which was the ute, and pull out the battered brown briefcase. To be paid ten dollars a day, even then, was hardly generous, but to get a fifty-dollar cheque at the end of the week had us feeling as if we had entered the world of riches.

The opportunity to spend time with extended family while earning precious cash was a bonus and a regular feature of most breaks. However, the lessons from a day of hard work in the paddock were far more valuable: learning to get along with others, persevering, fixing my own mistakes (although my uncle tended to describe these in more colourful terms).

I knew I was needed and relied upon, and I experienced the satisfaction of hard physical work.

My uncle was someone I admired. A flaming redhead, he made sure you knew immediately if you had made a mistake. He was a bush mechanic, businessman, agronomist (before the term existed), and an environmentalist who carefully nurtured the land on which his family relied for a living. Above all, he was a teacher, quietly hoping that one or more of us would end up on the land. Like many farmers I know, he was also a bush philosopher, perhaps the ultimate defence against the seasonality of farming, with a love of poetry. Despite a very dry sense of humour, he was fundamentally an optimist.

As we celebrate 50 years of agriculture at Ballarat Grammar, we are also celebrating all the farmers across our community, so many of whom embody all the qualities of my uncle and more. We recognise their stoicism in the face of adversity, their extraordinary ability to innovate and adapt to ever-changing environmental conditions, their unceasing hard work, their stewardship of the natural environment, and their often-unrecognised contribution to our standard of living and national wellbeing. We hope that for the next 50 years, Ballarat Grammar will, in some small way, continue to inspire the next generation to pursue this noble endeavour, or to embrace one of the many opportunities across the agriculture sector. Our future depends on it.



Adam Heath
Headmaster

“ As we celebrate 50 years of agriculture at Ballarat Grammar, we are also celebrating all the farmers across our community.

Student Reflections

What Agriculture Means at Ballarat Grammar

Hunter Toohey (Year 9)

I am a Year 9 boarder in Dart, and I am from a cattle and sheep farm in Barham, NSW. Doing an agriculture elective at Ballarat Grammar means that I am able to attend the farm during school to work with the sheep. Through doing both an agriculture subject and being a part of the sheep showing team, I have gained knowledge about sheep showing and sheep care in general.

Being a part of the sheep show team means that I also get to go out to the farm after school for about an hour and a half every Monday and Wednesday to handle the Corriedale ewes and rams, and do other farm work which helps keep the Corriedales in top shape. I have now been a part of the sheep show team for 2 years.

I love being able to go out to the Mount Rowan school farm three times a week and help teach other students my knowledge about sheep. Over the past couple of years, myself and the sheep show team have won many shows, even taking out the Senior Champion Ewe and Ram awards most recently at Hamilton Sheepvention.

At shows we also compete in handling and judging, which helps us learn more about the sheep industry. I also like being able to talk to other sheep farmers and stud owners at shows to keep learning more. I really enjoy agriculture and being part of sheep showing here at Grammar. I encourage anyone who has any interest in farming or agriculture to give it a go.



Georgina Draffin (Year 11)

I began my journey at Ballarat Grammar in Year 7 as a day student, coming from a regional farm. I started Ag in Year 9 as an elective, after looking forward to it throughout my junior years (it's now even offered from Year 8). Ag at Ballarat Grammar is a hugely popular subject, especially since many students come from farming backgrounds.

In Year 9 we focused on sustainability and were introduced to a range of farming technologies and methods on our many excursions to regional farms. In Year 10, I chose to take up VCE Agriculture and Horticulture Studies as a Year 11 subject. This subject is very theory-based, but it really expanded my knowledge of how farming practices need to change depending on the climate and soil of an area, as well as for both animal and plant production. I really enjoyed deepening my knowledge in class and then applying it on the Ballarat Grammar farm out at Mount Rowan.

This year, in Year 11, Ag is my Year 12 subject. So far, we have studied technologies and innovations in agriculture, weeds, pests and diseases, and sustainable land management. Overall, the knowledge I've gained in the classroom has helped me understand why Dad does certain things on the family farm that I might have previously overlooked. Now I can have proper discussions with him and better understand his production planning.



Ag class at Mt Rowan

Annie Dignam & Sarah Swayn (Year 12)

As boarders from farming families, Agriculture allows us to stay connected to something that's important to both us and our families. Studying Ag in a school setting gives us a new environment, context, and perspective to look at farming and rural life, beyond just our home experiences. The subject has given us knowledge and skills that we can directly apply in everyday life and back on the farm such as understanding animal health and crop management to making business decisions and applying sustainability practices. Outside of the classroom, we've also been able to enjoy feeding calves and lambs afterschool which has helped to keep us connected to farming life while we're away from home at school. Our diverse student cohort and curriculum has meant that we're exposed to agricultural industries we might never have experienced otherwise.

Studying Ag at Ballarat Grammar has also opened doors to a wide range of future career options in an industry we're passionate about, whether that's farm management, agribusiness, environmental science, research, or many other pathways. There are many opportunities to take part in unique, hands-on opportunities like showing livestock, working practically at the Mt Rowan farm, and engaging directly with industry professionals. Agriculture at Ballarat Grammar has also given us a deeper understanding of the practical realities of one of Australia's most vital industries beyond what we have seen at our farms at home, including the different challenges, innovations, and its role in feeding the nation and sustaining the economy. Many schools don't offer Ag as a subject, so having access to it here is a privilege that has enriched our education and helps to set us apart from other students across the state.

Jack Loader (Year 10)

Agriculture at Ballarat Grammar has been an important part of my learning, and I have really enjoyed being involved since Year 8. I chose Ag as an elective in Year 8 and Year 9, and I am currently studying VET Ag in Year 10. I have also been a member of the Ballarat Grammar Corriedale Sheep Showing Team since Year 8.

The Ag program has opened my eyes to a range of career pathways in agriculture. The Year 8 and Year 9 electives were a great introduction, covering different areas such as horticulture, technologies, and the environment.

The VET Ag program has allowed me to deepen my knowledge and explore further opportunities. I have learnt about livestock and how to observe and manage their welfare, as well as cropping, soils, pastures, and weed identification. I have also gained various licences that are important in the industry.

Being part of the sheep showing team has taught me leadership, teamwork, and communication skills, as well as the responsibility involved in caring for and preparing sheep. Overall, the Ag program at Ballarat Grammar has been a fantastic introduction to the many opportunities available in agriculture.

Introducing our Director of Agriculture Emily Cook

Grammar's new Director of Agriculture, Emily Cook, is building on the success of the past 50 years of the School's Agriculture Program to ensure it remains dynamic and relevant. Driven to inspire a love of agriculture in the next generation, she is passionate about broadening students' understanding about what agriculture is and the important role it plays, not just in farming communities but in sustaining our Australian way of life.



Emily Cook and Jasmine Conboy (Year 9)

Emily sees many exciting possibilities for expanding the program so that it reaches more students in more meaningful ways.

"We're always looking at new ways our students can have positive and authentic learning opportunities, combining classroom learning with hands-on experiences where students get to see the outcomes of their work. We're also working to strengthen our connections to industry through community partnerships and mentoring, particularly with our Old Grammarians who bring such an abundance of experience and opportunities."

Recognising the value each student brings to the program, Emily understands the important role young people will play in the future.

"How can we inspire curiosity in our students about what the future of agriculture in Australia could be? How can we help them understand how much goes into producing our food and fibre products and how agriculture can help people? How can we encourage young people to stay in regional areas? How can we support students from rural backgrounds to continue to feel connected to their communities? As a school, how can we continue to connect with and give back to the people in those communities?"

Entire new section here: Even though Emily spent part of her childhood growing up on a small farm with some sheep, her true fascination with the world of livestock production kicked in when she was at university. While studying a Bachelor of Science with aspirations of becoming a livestock Veterinary Surgeon, Emily quickly became passionate about Animal Studies with its focus on nutrition, genetics and animal behaviour. A new pathway seemed inevitable; one that combined Emily's love of science, animals, and influenced

“There's so much more to agriculture than farming. It's about people and communities.

by some wonderful experiences that she had working in schools and farms during her studies. This led her to a Master of Secondary Teaching and subsequently a Master of Education (Research) and she's never looked back.

What do you love most about working at Grammar?

"The people. Everyone, from the staff to the students and their families, has been so supportive and have made it a lovely place to work because of how they go about things. I come into work excited and ready to be innovative."

What do you love most about teaching Agriculture?

"It's different for each year level. I love seeing how excited the CEEd children are when they're at Mount Rowan for bush kinder. Great learning opportunities are created by the children just being at the farm. My favourite thing with Middle School students is their innate curiosity and how I can help to foster that by opening up their thinking about agriculture. With the VCE students it's so rewarding seeing them relate theory to real-world experiences and go on to talk about it in a practical context so they start to really understand it."

What is special about the Ag Program at Grammar?

"The immersive learning approach extends well beyond primary production to areas such as research, marketing, and budgeting. The program is not just about learning agriculture in isolation; we are using it as a vehicle for authentic learning experiences. If we are teaching students about sustainability, our approach is not only environmental but also embraces economic and social sustainability alongside sustainable agricultural practices. It may involve helping students develop empathy for animals, building a connection with the environment, or stimulating social and emotional development in our younger learners. This creates a wonderful opportunity for collaboration and



Hunter Toohey (Year 9)

cross-pollination between different teams across the School, including the CEEd team, the Year 4 team based at the Mount Rowan campus, and the VET and VCE teams. A critical part of the program is the farm campus. Having 50 hectares at Mount Rowan, just up the road from the main school campus, is an incredible asset. It's really powerful for students to be able to authentically connect with a farming enterprise and learn about farming practices using applied science rather than being told that one method is better, whether it's during lamb marking or observing different kinds of pastures. For example, we have two paddocks next to one another. One is sown with a traditional pasture species and the other with a regenerative variety. So, students can see direct comparisons in real time in everything from growth and yield, and then assess how the crops perform in different seasons and the commercial outcomes."

How do you encourage students who don't have a farming background?

"Some students are enticed by the idea of learning by doing, others are enticed by the potential use of advanced technologies and the possibility of being the scientists or engineers or marketers of the future. We try to present all the possibilities so that every student can see where they can belong, regardless of their interests or background."



Old Grammarian Sam Hotchin (2016)

Sam's interest in agriculture started in Year 10 when he did work experience on a cattle farm at Mortlake. Inspired by this experience, he acquired a few calves of his own which became the focus of his Year 12 Ag/Hort project.

After finishing school, Sam spent two years working on a broadacre cropping and sheep farm at Mount Mercer before enrolling in a Bachelor of Farm Business Management at Marcus Oldham College.

A growing interest in the cotton industry eventually led Sam to Goondiwindi where he now works as Farm Manager at Boardman Agriculture. A broadacre cropping enterprise, the farm produces wheat, barley, chickpeas and dryland cotton and is recognised for its progressive use of precision agriculture, which is providing opportunities for Sam to broaden his knowledge of the cotton industry.

"We're currently involved in soil mapping, variable rate fertility and seeding programs, camera spraying and detailed data management across every hectare."

"I'd like to keep adopting new technologies that improve soil health and drive stronger gross margins for the business."

50 Years of Agriculture

Dr Alan Ford (1973)

Former Head of Agriculture, current teacher and OG

My involvement in the Agriculture Program at Ballarat Grammar began in the mid to late 1990s. I was asked to attend a local schools' meeting about a new initiative called Dual Recognition, which allowed students to study both VCE and vocational subjects. Agriculture was one of the options discussed, and I felt strongly that we needed to offer it. We had students, especially boys from farms, who would benefit from more practical, hands-on learning.

That conversation led us to writing the Dual Recognition Agriculture program for Victoria during a long weekend at Dookie. From there, Grammar's Ag Program grew steadily. Former Headmaster Stephen Higgs, in his visionary manner, saw the advantage of the School purchasing a farm to support the agriculture program, and in 2008, the Mt Rowan property was purchased and became a vital teaching space. The Program eventually expanded to include VCE Units 1 to 4, VET Agriculture, and Year 4.

Some of my proudest moments include witnessing three senior students finishing in the top five in the state for Agriculture in 2000 and seeing many go on to careers in ag science, veterinary studies and environmental management.

What has made the Agricultural Program thrive at Grammar is the passion of our staff and the engagement of our students. My hope is that the program continues to evolve, encouraging young people to think laterally and innovatively in a rapidly changing industry. Agriculture must remain sustainable while embracing new technologies, and students must understand the vital role of the natural world in the future of food and fibre."



Sarah Sutton (2016)

Farm Manager and Shorthorn Stud Owner

"I've always been a bit animal obsessed. Growing up on our family's mixed farm meant I had everything from working dogs and chickens to horses and poddy calves, and even the odd rescued snake my dad brought home. At age nine, I named all 1000 steers in our feedlot, so it was probably inevitable I'd end up working with animals.

When I joined Ballarat Grammar in 2014, I threw myself into the Agriculture Program. I'd always wanted to put halters on everything, even the cat, so the Cattle Show Team felt like home. Getting to work with cows during school hours was a dream.

The program gave me a solid foundation in animal handling and introduced me to amazing mentors, including Matt Dickinson (Farm Manager and Director of Agriculture at Ballarat Grammar 2005-2022), who went above and beyond for us. I showed cattle all over the country, from local shows to the Sydney Royal. One of my favourite memories is parading a Lowline bull named JD at the Geelong Show. I placed fourth, and while it wasn't a ribbon, it was the moment I realised I could be competitive in the industry.

Since Grammar, I've studied Agribusiness at Marcus Oldham, started my own Shorthorn stud and now work as a farm manager. The knowledge I use every day started in Year 10 Agriculture.

My hope is that Grammar continues to expose all students to agriculture. Even if they don't go into the industry, understanding where our food comes from and being able to question and discuss it is hugely important."

Adam Tippett
VET Agriculture Teacher & Sheep Show Team
Coordinator

"I've been at Ballarat Grammar for 18 months, teaching VET Agriculture and coordinating the Sheep Show Team. My role involves helping students prepare and present our Corriedale stud sheep at major Victorian shows like the Victorian Sheep Show, Ballarat Agricultural Society Show, Australian Sheep and Wool Show, and Sheepvention. Recently, our team became the first school to win Supreme Champion Corriedale at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show.

My connection to the School grew from my farming background. My family's farm was a practical learning site for students completing Certificate II and III Agriculture. When the farm was sold, joining Ballarat Grammar felt like a natural fit. I really enjoy helping students develop both their technical knowledge and confidence through sheep showing and the VET program.

The Ballarat Grammar Ag Program sets a unique and clear pathway from Year 4 through to VCE and VET Agriculture, supported by passionate senior teachers delivering a relevant curriculum. Starting School-Based Apprenticeships in Year 11 has strengthened the program, helping students gain confidence and purpose.

Looking ahead, I hope the program continues to embrace technology and sustainability, using these advances at the Grammar farm to prepare students for the future."



The Corriedale Sheep Show Team at this year's Aus Sheep and Wool Show.



Brochure, Certificate and Report Card from 1976

Joanne Ham
VCE Agriculture Teacher

"I joined Ballarat Grammar in 2023 as a VCE Agriculture teacher after six years teaching VCE Agriculture at another school. Since being here, I've seen some exciting milestones, including the installation of the poly tunnel in collaboration with international company Rijk Zwaan, the acquisition of more land at Mount Rowan, and an increase in the number of agricultural teachers. By having more teachers involved in the Ag Program, it has allowed us to take an integrated approach to the agricultural curriculum, teaching students from junior levels through to VCE.

Ballarat Grammar's Ag Program is special because of the deep passion of the teachers to connect students with the land, to show them where their food comes from, and the many alternatives as to how this can be done. Students choose our School because of this program, and having a school farm and strong community connections enriches their learning.

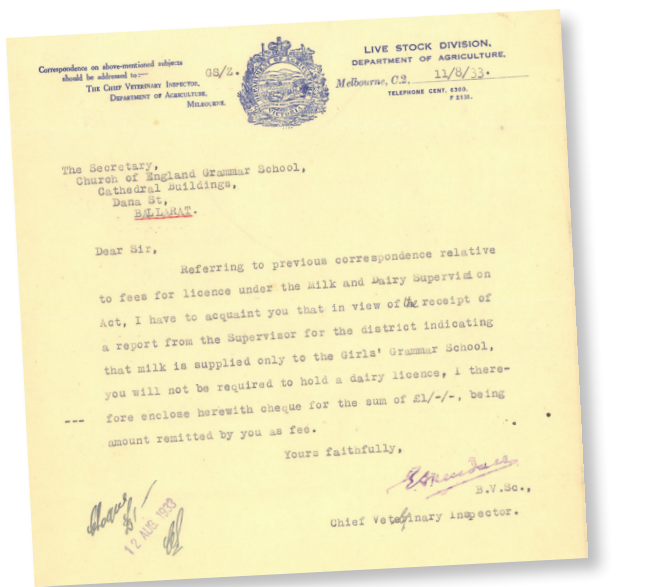
One of my favourite parts of teaching is exploring innovation in agriculture and challenging students to think beyond their family farm experience. Many have 'lightbulb' moments realising small changes in farming can make a big difference.

Looking ahead, I hope Ballarat Grammar continues to invest in quality teaching and resources and embraces new technologies. Future farmers face many challenges, but knowledge is power, so never stop learning and leave your farm better than you found it."

Agriculture Through the Years

1 Sharing Their Bounty 1933

The boys at C.E.G.S obtained a license to enable them to supply milk from their dairy cows to the girls at C.E.G.G.S. Below: A letter from the Department of Agriculture regarding a dairy license, from the Butler Archives.



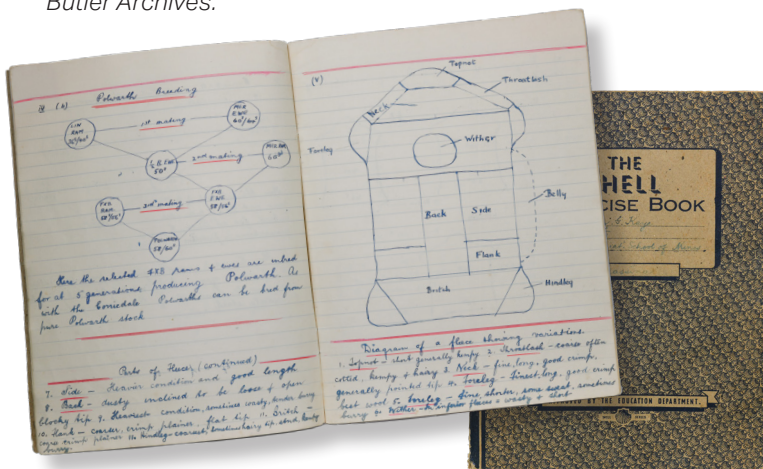
2 Horse-powered Lawnmower

“Draughty” was a familiar sight for many years, providing the horse power for tasks around the Forest Street campus. Below: An image of the School’s draught horse mowing on the oval, with students, c. 1930s. from the Butler Archives.



3 Studying Hard

Before the School had its own Agriculture & Horticulture program students attended classes at the School of Mines (now called SMB). Below: An exercise book belonging to John Geoffrey Kaye (1943). Part of the Julian Kaye Collection, from the Butler Archives.



4 ‘From Cow Patch to Rose Garden’ 1961

Matron Catherine ‘Kit’ Williamson had an enduring love of all things botanical and is remembered with Kit’s Garden, located on the north side of the Founders’ Wing. Below: An image of ‘Miss Will’ in the garden beside the Chapel. Part of the Kit Williamson Collection, from the Butler Archives.



5 Keeping Hungry Bellies Full

Backyard vegetable gardens were common during the Depression and War years. The impressive garden at Grammar provided fresh produce to the students for decades. Image of the School's vegetable garden, c. 1960s. Below: *An image from the Kit Williamson Collection, Butler Archives.*



6 Food for Food

Students were involved in caring for the livestock that also provided them with fresh eggs. Image of students feeding chickens, c. 1960s. Below: *An image from the Kit Williamson Collection, from the Butler Archives.*



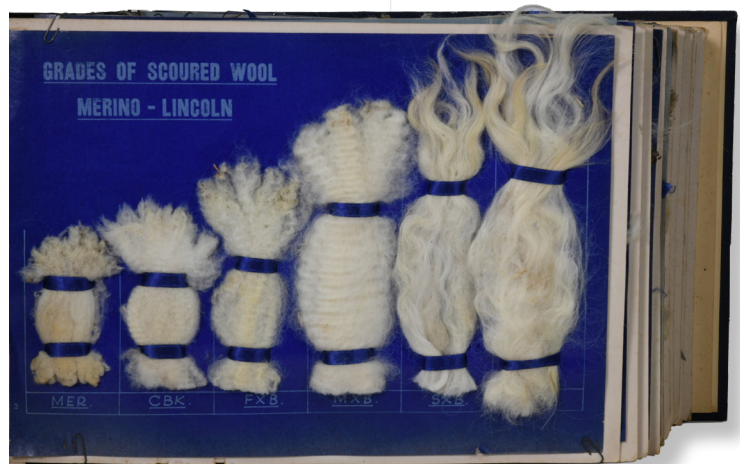
7 Pigs Galore!

Former staff can recall an evening in the late 1960s when the pigs escaped and senior staff had to chase them down the road! Below: *An image of students feeding pigs in 1955. Part of the Kit Williamson Collection, from the Butler Archives*



8 Like Father, Like Son

Julian Kaye (1973) completed his woolclassing studies at the Ballarat School of Industries (now known as SMB), continuing the family tradition. Below: *A practical workbook belonging to Julian Kaye (1973). Part of the Julian Kaye Collection, from the Butler Archives.*







Mt Rowan Campus (2018)

Celebrations

We are delighted to share these special and magical moments with our community.

Hardik Ranpura (staff member) and wife Sneha Ranpura, welcomed son Maahir Sneha Hardik Ranpura.



Kate Brusamarello (staff member) and partner Jack James, welcomed daughter Joey Ann James.



Nindy Adlington (staff member) and partner Duncan Adlington, welcomed son Beau Rama Adlington.



Alexia Yianoulatos (staff member) and partner Daniel Althaus welcomed son Aristotle Althaus.



David Brunton (2010) and wife Alicia welcomed son Jasper Perry Brunton.



Grania Hughes (staff member) and partner welcomed son Darcy Fiachra Leonard



Louise Callaghan (staff Member) married James Behncke on 10 July 2025 in Westport, Mayo, Ireland, pictured with son Cillian.



Alexandra Bruns (Sinkis, 2014) married Zach Bruns on 13 March 2025 at Stones of the Yarra Valley.



A sincere apology and update to our obituary process

We offer our sincere apologies for the error in the Autumn edition of the Boomalacka, where the names of Chris Gardner (staff member 2002–2007) and Lesley Davies (Coxall) (1970) were mistakenly included in the obituary section. We deeply regret the confusion and distress this mistake has caused their families, friends, and members of our community.

We take this matter seriously and have used this opportunity to review how other schools manage this sensitive process. We have made important changes to ensure greater care, accuracy, and respect moving forward. From now on, all obituaries will be published only at the direct request of family members. Submissions from other individuals will only be considered after consultation with the family of the deceased, where appropriate.

As mentioned in previous editions of Boomalacka we have been working towards moving the obituaries online to enable the inclusion of more images and words of remembrance. Therefore, from this edition all obituaries will appear solely in a dedicated online section on our website, rather than in the printed Boomalacka. This change will allow us to ensure that information is accurate, that families' wishes are always honoured, and that no further hurt is caused.

To learn more about the updated obituary process or to make a submission, please visit:
www.bgs.vic.edu.au/obituaries

For any further feedback, please contact:
archives@bgs.vic.edu.au.

Megan Boyer, Archivist

Inspiring Old Grammarian

Riordan family

A love for agriculture runs strong in the Riordan family, with three of the four sisters, Eliza (2020), Ruby (2021) and Sophie (2023) all pursuing a future in the industry. Following different pathways since finishing school, one common experience for Eliza, Ruby and Sophie has been their gap years. The youngest sister, Matilda, started at Grammar this year in Year 9.



Eliza, Sophie and Jim



Jim and Ruby



Sophie in the NT

Eliza

My two gap years were full of hands-on experience and learning and incredibly valuable. I worked with Riordan Grains for 18 months, gaining experience across the operational side at various sites before transitioning into domestic logistics. I also spent 10 months working in the Export Department as Logistics Support at Malteurope in Geelong.

The variety in the role at Riordan's kept every day interesting and provided a comprehensive view of the entire supply chain, from the receival site to transport coordination. The big-picture perspective I gained gave me a strong foundation in the industry.

Ruby

I worked on a remote cattle station in the Kimberley region in WA. This was daunting for me as an 18-year-old, but it's turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences I've had. I met amazing people and learnt a lot about the northern beef industry. This experience helped me understand the value of having diverse skills. Exploring different areas within the agricultural sector has given me a broader knowledge base and helped me realise just how many opportunities exist in this amazing industry.

Sophie

I came up to the NT after hearing great things from past students. A bunch of us from Grammar ended up here in the same area and it's been pretty special being able to catch up on the other side of the country.

What I've loved most is that no two days are the same. The work keeps you on your toes and, while it's definitely tough with the heat, the dust and the long days, it's also incredibly rewarding. The social side of life up here is unbeatable and I've already made lifelong friends. I've come to realise that when you love what you do even the hard days feel worth it. Looking after yourself, laughing with your crew, having time to yourself and finding balance is what keeps you going long-term.

Where they are now

Eliza relocated to Hamburg, Germany in January 2025 and works at grain trading company GrainLi where her role involves sourcing raw materials for pet food production across various markets. She has a Bachelor of Business (Agribusiness) from Marcus Oldham College.

"I wasn't sure what path to take at the end of Year 12, and if not for a nudge from my Dad, I may not have found the industry I now love. He suggested I try working at the Riordan's Balliang Grain receival site over that summer. I discovered how dynamic and rewarding the agricultural industry can be and that was the turning point."

Ruby is currently studying a Bachelor of Business (Agriculture) at Marcus Oldham College following a period of building her skills and knowledge working across the ag sector in both production and logistics.

"Growing up around agriculture from a young age and seeing my Dad's passion for the industry has been incredibly inspiring. It's been exciting to watch his business grow and witness the evolution of agricultural practices over time. I feel very fortunate to be part of such a progressive industry."

Grammar's Agriculture program and being part of Woodbridge and the amazing boarding community, surrounded by motivated and inspiring peers from farming backgrounds, were also huge drivers of my interest in agriculture.

Sophie is currently on her second gap year in the NT, working on a 610,000-acre cattle station where she has completed a Certificate II in Agriculture and is working towards a Certificate III.

"My family played a big part in my love for agriculture. I grew up in a household where it was always valued, and spending time on our farms in NSW is what really sparked my interest in pursuing a career in the industry."

Another big influence was Woodbridge. It was full of like-minded girls who shared a passion for the ag lifestyle and there was such a strong culture of support. Doing Agriculture as a subject, I really enjoyed learning about how broad and diverse the industry actually is. It made me realise that there's something for everyone in ag, no matter what you're into.



Jim

The girls' father, Jim, says Grammar has played a big role in shaping each of the girls.

They interact with country kids with similar views and values who understand what rural life is all about. The boarding house helped them understand that everyone is different and you need to all work together. The support and opportunities on offer, from the teachers and boarding house staff to the programs and facilities, allowed the girls to explore different options and helped bring out the best in each of them.

Jim started Riordan Grains in 1996 with one employee and one truck. Today the family business has 150 employees across 10 sites and provides integrated grain marketing, transport and storage services to domestic and international customers.

With a strong focus on innovation and sustainable practices, the business is constantly looking at opportunities for continued growth and improvement across the grain supply chain.

"We've established a logistical system to load over one million tonnes of grain from farmers to export markets via a portable conveyor belt on the wharfs. We're also heavily investing in the latest and most energy efficient transport assets available to us as well as new systems to create a fully sustainable farming system into the future."

Inspiring Old Grammarian

Peter Mackay (1971)

Building on the success of the business established by his father in Ballarat more than 60 years ago, Peter has grown Field Air into a diverse agribusiness, with operations extending across Australia and throughout Asia and the Pacific region.

Pathway since school

After leaving school, I studied Architecture at RMIT and worked as an architect in practice with two of my friends before deciding to move back to Ballarat after over 20 years in Melbourne. I wanted my children to experience the enjoyment of growing up in the country as I had done.

I had a great friendship with my father, and he had always been a fantastic business mentor to me. Drawn to work with and learn more from him, I started working with Field Air in 1993. My father passed away a little over a year later, leaving me to run what was a diverse, complex and seasonally fluctuating business, made possible by the strong support I had from all of the staff. My enjoyment of working at Field Air continues to grow every day.

“What you take from life and how you relate to people is surely influenced by a number of factors, your family, your education and life experiences gathered along the way.”



Grammar connections

Peter started in Grade 5 at Grammar in 1963. His three children, Andrew (2005), Jemma (2006) and Paige (2010) have all attended the School. He also served for 18 years on the School Board, mainly as Chairman of the Building Subcommittee, working closely with Stephen Higgs and Peter Hunt on building projects during a period of significant expansion.

I have happy memories of a very small school community of approximately 300 students. I knew the names of all the teachers and students. My teacher Bob Northey was a part of these early memories in a class of about 10 others, including Mark Gingell, John Nevett and David Flecknoe.

There was a strong sense of family at the School. My parents were both very involved in the Parents and Friends Association, and my father was on the School Boards of both Queen's and Ballarat Grammar. We often had boarders to stay on the weekends and would head off to farm school holidays with the Kaye family at Elmhurst.

I will always be grateful for my years at Ballarat Grammar and the influence of the school community that has helped shape my life and the enjoyment I have living in a regional environment. I delight to see the ongoing connection my children all have with their school friends years after leaving school.



Field Air

Peter's father started Field Air in Ballarat in 1963 with two small aircraft spreading fertilisers and spraying crops in the Western District, Mallee and Wimmera regions. Over time the business has continued to innovate and grow. Today, Field Air provides diverse aerial agricultural services directly to farmers throughout Victoria, southern New South Wales and eastern South Australia, operating out of its Ballarat, Deniliquin and Finley bases.

The business has adapted its operations in response to changing needs, embracing new opportunities and technologies.

"In 1978 we became sole dealers for Air Tractor in Australia. Over the past 30 years the Field Air dealership has extended to include the Australasian region, with aircraft sales into China, Malaysia and Indonesia. The opportunity for our staff and myself to travel into these countries has given us all a great range of cultural experiences."

"Following the 2010 drought Field Air moved into aerial firefighting as a back-up to our ag operations. Today, in addition to our fleet of dedicated fire aircraft, we also bring larger airtankers from Canada to provide fire protection. During the Australian fire season, we maintain contracts for aircraft based in Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania. During the Australian winter, some of our water scooping aircraft head off to Greece where they are based on the island of Rhodes."

"Technology in our industry has given us a good opportunity to improve the accuracy of aerial application and maximise cost effective productivity in farming. We were the first ag operator in Australia to adopt GPS guidance in ag aircraft and to adopt variable rate application."

"We continue to embrace the latest technologies with application job management software. Our system enables our operations staff to plan jobs and send this information out to the aircraft in the field, which means we can track these jobs in real time. It includes features that allow us to overlay a range of critical information that enhances safety and efficiencies in our operations, and to monitor in-flight engine parameters and alert us to issues, similar to airline aircraft."

Inspiring Old Grammarian

Jock Lawrence (2010) and Samantha Glenn (2013)

A shared love of agriculture has led to the paths of two Old Grammarians converging. With an interesting and varied career revolving around Australia's agricultural industry, in 2024 Samantha Glenn joined Mobble, a farm software start-up where co-founder Jock Lawrence is CEO.



From a four-generation farming family, Jock's love of agriculture stems from growing up and enjoying a "great lifestyle" on his family's farm, Brantwood Farm, in North Central Victoria.

The idea for Mobble came about when I came home after studying Engineering at UniMelb and saw that the farm records were in a bit of a mess. Everything was in Dad's head or the notebook he kept in his back pocket which was

always at risk of going through the washing machine a pretty common scenario for farmers I knew!

What started as a simple record keeping app for my family's sheep and cattle operation has grown into a farm management platform trusted by more than 3,500 farmers, from Clunes and Skipton to New Zealand, Canada and Argentina. Mobble is now a 14 strong remote team, all regionally based.

Basically, it's a farm app that's really easy to use. Everyone working on a farm has their phone on them at all times, so it means they can keep track of things wherever they are on or off the property.

It helps different farmers in different ways, depending on if it's a 200 acre hobby block at Creswick, a corporate grazing outfit near Horsham or my family's operation at Avenel. Farmers know their business best. We just try to make their lives a little easier and more successful through software.

As well as helping farmers around the country and overseas, I'm really proud to be helping my Dad and brothers. It has meant my brothers are not needing to constantly call up Dad and has empowered them to help manage the farm.

Jock's time at Grammar

School was great. Coming from a small rural area, Grammar opened my eyes to the possibilities of different career pathways and ways of doing things. I've always had a passion for building things, both physical and technical. My teachers were great at seeing that in me and helping me explore different ideas.

“ AgTech has become a booming sector in Australia. It's transforming how farmers farm and is leading to better productivity and efficiency outcomes.



The Mobble team, with Samantha on the right Jock centre back



“ Working across multiple sides of the industry has given me a broad perspective and highlighted how much of a positive impact agriculture has on people, communities and the environment.

I truthfully never expected to end up in this industry, but I said yes to every opportunity and over time found myself building an exciting career in agriculture.

Career pathway

My position is Head of Customer Experience. I was drawn to work at Mobble because I wanted to be part of an Australian company with a touchpoint to agriculture that is producing a product or service I believe in. It was also important to me that an employer would provide opportunities for growth and development and would prioritise a positive and high-performing culture. Mobble does all of that. The business is also in an exciting growth phase, and I saw an opportunity to contribute meaningfully while learning about AgTech which was a new space for me.

My role blends elements of customer service, marketing and strategy to foster long-term customer loyalty while growing our footprint across Australia, New Zealand, North America and beyond.

The growth of technology in ag has enabled rural-based careers, allowing me to continue forging my career while being based on our family farm near Moulamein in NSW.

Before Mobble, I spent seven years at SunRice where I held diverse roles across sales, marketing, retail and business development and worked with clients across South-East Asia, the UK and the EU.

Samantha's time at Grammar

I'm so incredibly grateful to have spent such formative years at Grammar. The friendships I made are some of my most important relationships to this day. We were nurtured in such positive environments in Larritt and Hayhoe by incredible role models such as Jill Coote, Hannah Wise, Karen Werner and Alana Murdoch, and their positive impact is still felt by many of us. Grammar provided me with endless opportunities that didn't exist in our rural area, including an exchange to Switzerland in Year 10, endless sport and academic endeavours and leadership opportunities such as being House Captain.

Inspiring Old Grammarian

Noni Gabb (2005)

One of four children growing up on a sheep and cropping property at Skipton, Noni and her siblings spent very little time indoors. "As kids, we spent most of our time outside, helping Mum and Dad with the sheep and planting trees and just roaming around. I guess that started my love for the land and the environment and being in the outdoors."

With no idea what she wanted to do after school, Noni headed off to work on a sheep station on the Nullarbor. She went on to a cattle station in Queensland's Channel Country.

"I loved the freedom, learning new skills and working with livestock— riding motorbikes and learning how to ride while breaking in a horse! I also made incredible lifelong friends."

This led her to the University of New England where she studied a double degree (Arts/Science majoring in Crop and Animal Science and Peace and Development Studies). After university Noni worked for Rice Research Australia before moving to Central West NSW where, unable to find Ag Science work, a friend convinced her to retrain as a teacher.

“Above all, it’s the lifelong friends I have from Hayhoe that are my most special memory of my time as a student at Grammar. We were key players for each other in a time when we were unsure of who we really were and 20 years later, despite distance, they’re still my best friends.



In 2017, Noni returned to Grammar as a teacher. She taught Year 9 Science and Yr 11 and 12 Agriculture and Horticulture, was a Year 9 Level Coordinator, and a Tutor and MOD in Hayhoe House.

"A highlight of my career was my first Year 12 Ag/Hort class at Grammar. Four of my girls got an ATAR above 40, they were four of only eight students in the state to achieve above 40 that year. I was so proud of them. Another highlight was teaching Year 9. Working out of the Heinz Centre was amazing; we had such a great team and the program was a blast to teach. The Melbourne Experience was also always great, especially having done it as a student."



Noni's current chapter

"In 2020 I took a year's leave from Ballarat Grammar to travel the world. With my plans disrupted by COVID, I ended up locked down in Queenstown, New Zealand where I found my place—trail running, mountain biking, ski touring, packrafting and hiking through the mountains. My love of all outdoor pursuits, the environment and mountains led me to stay and here I still am six years later, living my best life. These days I spend my free time up mountains or packrafting down rivers.

I've been teaching Biology at Wakatipu High School in Queenstown for five years, and this year I re-introduced Ag/Hort for the Year 12s and 13s. While there's no space for animals or an ag plot like at Grammar, we're really lucky to be close to a wide range of agricultural and horticultural enterprises and I'm hoping I'll be able to develop the program and facilities over the years."

Noni's time as a student at Grammar

"I loved it. Of the things that stand out, one is my school camps, especially the snow camp which I did three times as a student and another three times as a teacher. This sparked my love of being in the mountains. The opportunity to go to Kenya as part of a Round Square service project was instrumental in me wanting a career that was about helping others in some way. These experiences also opened me to my love of travel.

Even though I was quite academic, I really wanted to do VCE Ag/Hort. I also did Year 12 Biology and had the most incredible teachers in Alan Ford and Nola Squire. At the time, I never considered that one day I would be doing what they did, but I absolutely love that I am."



(L-R) Andrew Watson, Jason Simmons, Alice Humble, Kath Milne, Noni Gabb, Anthony McKnight, Rachel Williams

Ballarat Grammar Foundation

At Ballarat Grammar, we believe that education is a transformative journey that shapes young minds, instils lifelong values, and empowers students to make a meaningful impact in the world.

Central to supporting this vision is the Ballarat Grammar Foundation. Established to preserve and enhance the School's services, property, and facilities, the Foundation bridges the financial gap between tuition fee and government grant income, and the School's operational budget. It plays a vital role in sustaining and advancing our commitment to educational excellence, achieved through prudent investment management and active philanthropic engagement, and includes donations, corporate support, gifts, and bequests.

Over recent years, the Foundation Board, Property and Investment Committees, and Development Office have worked tirelessly to expand the Foundation's philanthropic impact. Thanks to the generosity of our community, we have continued to offer scholarships to deserving students, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent motivated young people from benefiting from a Ballarat Grammar education. Scholarships remain a strategic focus for the Foundation as we strive to provide broader educational opportunities and nurture the potential of every student.

A wonderful example of this generosity is the Rintel Seat Dedication initiative, part of our recent Annual Giving campaign. Through an interactive online platform, donors have been able to select and dedicate a named seat as part of the Rintel development. In the past 18 months, over 286 seats have been named or dedicated, a testament to the enthusiasm and support of our community. Opportunities to participate remain open and we invite you to visit changethegame.bgs.vic.edu.au to learn more.

The Foundation also acknowledges the outstanding work of the Capital Campaign Committee in planning for the transformational Rintel development and the Outdoor Education Program at Mafeking. While discussions with many prospective donors are only just beginning, or are in their early stages, these ambitious initiatives have already received overwhelming community support. Anyone interested in learning more or discussing these exciting projects is encouraged to contact our Director of Development, Mr Travis Polkinghorne.

We are also proud of the growth of the Manifold Circle, which recognises those who have chosen to include Ballarat Grammar in their will. A gift in your will is a powerful way to leave a legacy, ensuring future generations of students continue to benefit from the same exceptional Ballarat Grammar education and opportunities that have shaped countless lives. We warmly encourage community members to consider this meaningful way of giving.

Our School is fortunate to enjoy valued partnerships with various Trusts and Foundations who support both our capital ambitions and scholarship opportunities. Notable among these are The Joe White Bequest, The Glenyis McIver Trust, The Meakin Charitable Fund and The Vedmore Foundation. Their generous support significantly enhances our ability to provide financial assistance to students in need and to deliver world-class learning and teaching facilities.

The Foundation remains steadfast in its mission to support Ballarat Grammar's growth and success well into the future. We are truly grateful for the generosity of our community and partners and look forward to continuing this important work together.



Phillip Mann
President, Ballarat
Grammar Foundation

“ As a graduate of Ballarat Grammar through the support of a scholarship, I’m extremely grateful for the generosity and care I experienced, during my 4 years as a Woodbridge boarder. When I was introduced to the Grammar community, I was immediately welcomed with open arms.

- Millie

Giving Back

Every gift to Ballarat Grammar helps shape opportunities for students today and for generations to come. If the School has made a meaningful difference to you or your family, we invite you to consider giving back in a way that reflects your connection whether through a donation, a gift in your will, or another form of support.

To explore this opportunity in confidence, please contact:

Travis Polkinghorne, Director of Development
travis.polkinghorne@bgs.vic.edu.au
03 5338 0884

Recognising Special Contributions

Peter & Meredyth Hunt - Why We Are Leaving a Gift In Our Will

Our connection with Ballarat Grammar

Peter joined Ballarat Grammar as Business Manager in July 1995, retiring in August 2018. With the unwavering support of Meredyth, he worked closely with former Headmaster Stephen Higgs and, more recently, Adam Heath to strengthen the School's financial position and support its remarkable growth. During Peter's tenure, the School expanded from 564 Senior School students and 173 Junior School students to more than 2,000 students today.

Some of the most significant projects and developments during Peter's time at Grammar include the purchase and construction of Mt Rowan, the approval and construction of the CEEd, the creation of the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts, and the establishment of the Year 9 Heinz Centre and City Cite. These transformative initiatives were made possible through the generosity of the Ballarat Grammar community.

Peter continues his connection with the School as a Board Member of the Ballarat Grammar Foundation and founding Director of BGS Educational Services.

Why we are leaving a gift in our will

Having been deeply involved in the day-to-day operations of the School for more than 23 years, and through my ongoing Board involvement, we have witnessed firsthand the impact a Ballarat Grammar education has on young people. This experience has inspired us to give back in a meaningful

way, ensuring that future students have access to the same opportunities.

We take great pride in seeing how past projects and scholarships provided through the Ballarat Grammar Foundation positively impact students. Watching students seize new opportunities and go on to succeed in life brings us great joy.

Our hopes for the future

We have chosen to leave a gift in our will to help enhance the facilities and experiences offered by the School and to provide scholarships for deserving students. Having grown up and worked in regional communities, we hope our contribution will allow more rural and remote students to benefit from the opportunities that a well-rounded education provides.

Through our own experience, we have seen the power of giving at Ballarat Grammar. We hope others will also consider joining us in supporting the School, ensuring it continues to thrive for generations to come.

Encouraging others to give

Having experienced the generosity of our community and the meaningful impact that giving has had on both our School and students, we encourage others to consider giving. It is a meaningful way to directly contribute to the extended School community, benefitting students today and into the future.



Manifold Circle

A gift in your will to Ballarat Grammar is a powerful way to make a lasting impact. If the School has made a meaningful difference to you or your family, we invite you to consider leaving a legacy that will continue to inspire and support students for years to come. If you have already included Ballarat Grammar in your will, or are thinking about doing so, please let us know. We would love to acknowledge your generosity.



Named Scholarships

Our scholarship program provides lifechanging opportunities for students. Through the provision of scholarships, Ballarat Grammar values and encourages diversity. We value and learn from others, from the experiences they bring and the potential they show. Through your support we aim to increase the number of scholarships available to deserving students who may otherwise be unable to enjoy the benefits of a Ballarat Grammar education.

Shantini & David Deutscher - Why We Give

Our connection with Ballarat Grammar

Ours has very much been a grassroots association with Grammar over 34 years. As parents of three Old Grammarians, David and I have come to value the experiences our children gained at school which have nurtured skills, character and resilience, attributes standing them in good stead to this day.

Through volunteering from assisting with milk and fruit, reading, the canteen, library, fundraising with the Auxiliary, through to editing a Grammar cookbook, we both came to deeply know and support the ethos behind our school. These experiences, with David's support, were invaluable when I joined the School Board in 2007. I was privileged to serve as Chair for 6 years until 2024, and now on the Foundation Board.

However, our most cherished memories of Grammar centre around our three children, each with their own unique study interests and career aspirations. The staff supported and nurtured each of our children's unique abilities and talents, recognising them for who they were while encouraging them to reach their full potential, both as individuals and members of their communities.

Why we give to Ballarat Grammar

The words written on the door at the Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts, from St Luke's Gospel, summarises why

we give, "From those to whom much is given, will much be required." Our children have been the beneficiaries of the foresight and generosity of our school's community, and we wish to continue that legacy of generosity so others can continue to benefit from a well-rounded education based on Anglican values that our community needs now.

Our hopes for the future

Through annual giving and in setting up a scholarship named after our parents, whose lives were defined by generous service, we hope to see rural and regional young people thrive in the context of a robust and broad values-based Grammar education, enabling them not only to become the best versions of themselves, but to give of their best to whatever community they belong to.

Encouraging others to give

Most parents at our school work very hard to ensure their children get the very best education to help set them up for the future. By giving to Grammar, we help families in a practical way to give their children a leg up in life. In seeing young people thrive at our school, learning in excellent facilities, making the most of the many opportunities available to them, growing into adulthood with meaning and purpose and becoming people who work towards the common good, we believe that we can make a difference.

2 Year Reunion (2023)





(L-R) Isabelle Lancucki, John Watts, Amy Schreenan, Alex Herrod, Ruby Hopkins



(L-R) Matilda Conner, Chloe Warmington, Mia Callaway

Upcoming Events

2025

5 years (2020) Reunion

Saturday 1 November, 3pm-6pm
Lake View Hotel

2026

FOSSIL Gathering (Past Staff)

Sunday 29 March 2026, 12pm-4pm
The Rintel, Ballarat Grammar

50+ Luncheon

Friday 17 April 2026, 11am-4pm
The Rintel, Ballarat Grammar

2 Year (2024) Reunion

Friday 15 May 2026, 6pm-9pm
City Cite Melbourne

Gala Reunion 1986, 1996, 2006 & 2016

Saturday 12 September 2026, 1pm-6pm
The Rintel, Ballarat Grammar

Headmaster's Luncheon Sydney and Queensland

Dates TBA

5 Year (2021) Reunion

Saturday 7 November 2026, 3pm-6pm
Lake View Hotel

Register for your reunion:



bgs.vic.edu.au
+61 3 5338 0950
development@bgs.vic.edu.au



Ballarat & Queen's Anglican Grammar School

201 Forest Street, Wendouree Victoria 3350 Australia
+61 (0)3 5338 0700 | bgs@bgs.vic.edu.au | www.bgs.vic.edu.au