

The background of the page is a photograph of a large, ornate brick building with Gothic architectural features, including pointed arches and a central tower. The image is dimmed and serves as a backdrop for the text.

Alumni News

EDITION 3, JUNE 2023

The culture of a faith-based community of an FCJ college seeks to be characterised specifically by these four Characteristics:



FROM THE ARCHIVES

FCJ College was proud to be part of the National Heritage Festival which was held in Benalla from 3-7 May. The College Archives were open over those three days with Saturday being the main event. Over 50 people viewed the Archives and enjoyed the guided tours of the old convent and the present-day educational facilities. The College was illuminated by Travis Hope from Soundalive Productions throughout the festival. The school looked amazing, and our thanks goes to Travis for a job well done.

Visitors came from far and wide and many renewed old acquaintances and took a stroll down memory lane, reflecting on school days, reminiscing while looking at photos or just being able to tour the facility. A very big thank you to the following students who gave up their Saturday afternoon to act as tour guides to show visitors through the College and its facilities.

Meg Cooke, Elizabeth Ireland, Jayhe-Lee Quattrocchi and Brayden Quattrocchi.

Thank you for such a professional task; many compliments were received about your appearance, your talents and your fine example of young people today.

You should be very proud of yourselves, and you were such wonderful advocates for FCJ College.

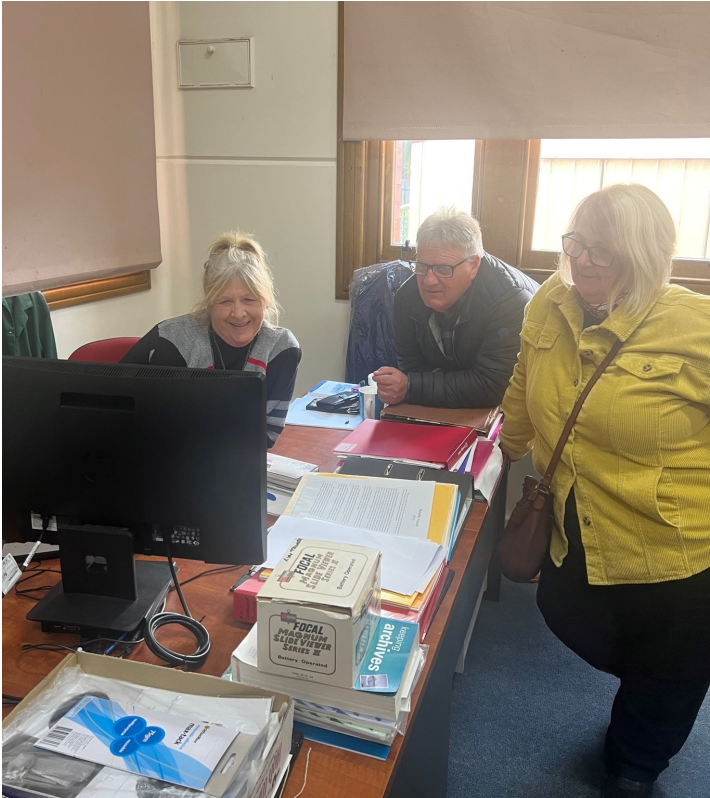
The theme for this year's festival was "Shared Stories." The College was very fortunate to team up with the Benalla Migrant Camp to collect and collate stories from not only past students but those students who attended FCJ College while living at the camp. Some of those stories will be published in future newsletters. They reflected and shared their stories and experience. Devonshire tea was enjoyed at the end of the visit.

Lyn Tanner

FCJ College Archivist



NATIONAL HERITAGE FESTIVAL



MIGRANT STORIES

Lucy Wagner

I had arrived from communist Poland in 1959 aged 11. It was with no regrets that I left my country as deep down in my soul I knew the system was wrong. My arrival was mixed with anticipation for a better life and excitement for the unknown.

On driving into Benalla, I was amazed by the bright lights in the shops. Polish shops at that time were grey and dim. The acres and acres of unploughed land was another surprise. Every bit of Poland was cultivated or under pasture.

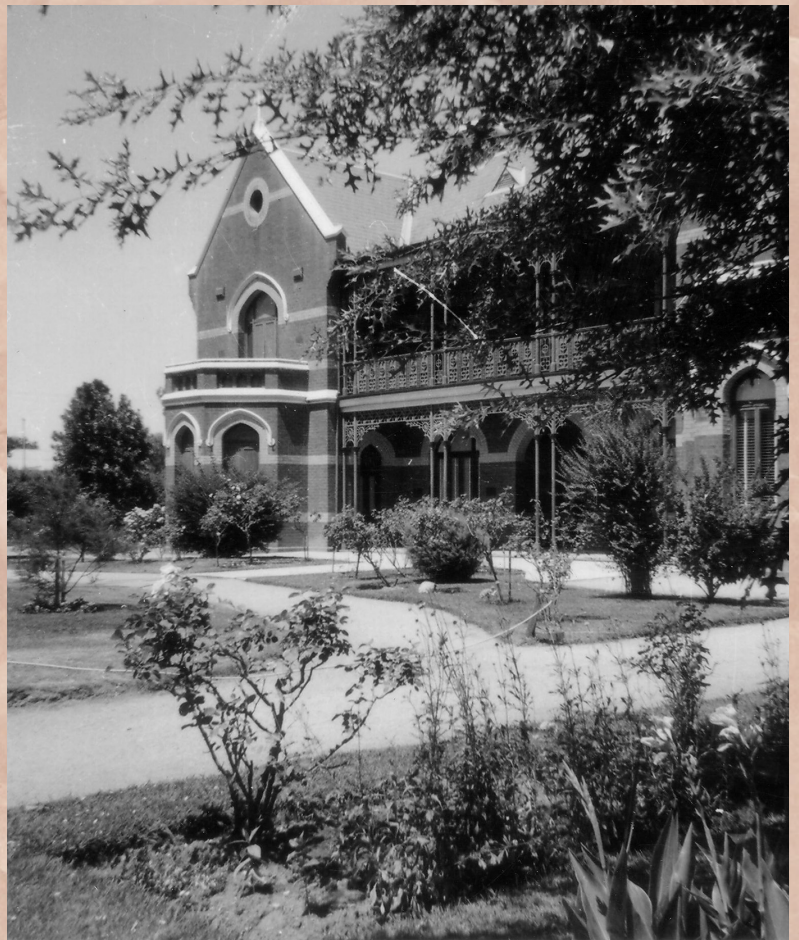
My first year was spent in the camp school where I was faced with the possibility of learning the English language. I say "possibility" because at that time I didn't think I could learn it. What sort of language was this? You wrote it one way and read it another!! I decided I would never learn it or even try. As children play, they talk, and I couldn't help learn the meaning of wachuwannerdo and weruwannergo?

On entering FCJ College a year later, that was the sum total of my language skills. Bits and pieces of language picked up from my peers. It was with a surprise that the above were actually sentences and not just words. What do you want to do? And where do you want to go?

Thus started my career at FCJ College. As I write this paragraph tears well in my eyes. It was a place where I felt loved and respected, my work in maths admired and my attempts at English lovingly corrected. I remember one teacher saying "Put your hat on your head" to help me differentiate between the two sounds of a and ea.

It is with deep gratitude to the FCJ Nuns that I write this. They not only taught me English but laid the foundation for my life. A foundation where the moral code for living was always consistent with the highest value. My message to the students of FCJ College is: Choose the subjects that you are best at. Choose the career that you will love working at. Value your education as it is the one thing that no one can take away from you, ever!

With love and gratitude to the FCJs
Lucy Wagner
Prefect 1960s.



MIGRANT STORIES

Stephanie Merry (Swist)

It was not unusual for children of migrants to commence school with very poor English language skills, and this certainly was the case with me and my siblings when we started primary school. We couldn't speak a word of English. Fortunately, at St Joseph's Primary School I was able to learn English and by the time I started at FCJ College, I was speaking like a local.

The migrant camp had closed in 1967 but many of the residents had settled in Benalla and district and in 1975 a Polish priest from Melbourne started visiting once a month. Fr Slowik would celebrate Mass followed by a gathering to share a meal, watch a concert or film, remember our culture and pass on traditions to the children. I was a member of the dancing/singing group, and we also attended a Polish school on Saturday either at the College or in the hall. At the time I disliked going to school on Saturday, but the dancing and singing was fun, and it was good to see friends that went to the high school.

1976



MIGRANT STORIES

When I started Form 1, Sr Mary John was not impressed with my attempts at knitting, the yarn was unpicked several times but still the finished vest had holes and dropped stitches everywhere. I was so scared of her and was terrified of making a mistake. Embroidery was more to my liking, and I still have the apron that I made in Form 1 in those craft classes.

Camelot was the school play one year not sure which year, but we were all encouraged to be involved. I remember bringing in some of mum's hats and it was lots of fun dressing up in costumes. We rode our bikes to school, taking the back roads past the scout hall, over the bridge and through the gardens and I remember the tin roof covering the bike racks along the Wedge St fence. The racks always seemed to be full of bikes. Sometimes we would climb on the fence to watch the Tech school boys ride past and you had to watch out so the nuns didn't catch you. The bikes gave us good cover.

Sport was a big part of my school life. My older sisters played for the convent Rockets netball team in the 1960s, I think it was called basketball then. They looked very smart in their light brown tunics with the gold tie belt. I wasn't up to that standard so with some classmates we started a team in the lower division. I think we called ourselves Red Devils. Wendy Rombouts was in the team, I can't recall anyone else. Not sure how we went but I did enjoy playing. We would practise on the courts at school. The new science block was built around Form 2 or 3. Sr Margaret was our teacher and I remember lots of experiments with the new equipment.

Looking back, I have very fond memories of my time at FCJ College and being part of the school community.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY BREAKFAST

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated globally on 8 March each year to recognise and celebrate the achievements and contributions of women. In Australia, International Women's Day holds significant importance and is widely observed.

In 2022, FCJ College held its first International Women's Day Breakfast and this year in 2023 it continued this tradition and opened the event to the public.

Our Guest Speakers were FCJ College Alumni Cynthia Mahoney and Jordie Willcock.



FCJ SISTERS

CELEBRATING THE LIVES OF TWO WONDERFUL FCJ SISTERS BOTH PAST STUDENTS OF FCJ COLLEGE BENALLA

The FCJ Community, family and friends came together to celebrate two jubilees - Sr Frances Kennedy and Sr. Benedicta Quinlan (affectionately known as Sr Ben). Both these women enjoyed long and happy connections with FCJ College Benalla and celebrated the 60th Anniversary of their vows.

Sr Frances Kennedy was a boarder from Cobram and completed all her secondary schooling at FCJ College before joining the order. A former teacher, Deputy Principal and Board Director at Genazzano, she was a wonderful educator at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Frances was a strong leader but was always fair and professional. She had a keen intellect and wonderful sense of humour. Her celebrations took place at Genazzano and friends and colleagues from the many stages of her life were able to express their gratitude to her. Frances now resides at Sr Catherine's in Balwyn.



Sr Ben, or those who went to school with her would have known her as Kaye Quinlan, a member of a well-known local Benalla family. She spent time at Genazzano in charge of the boarders and was a founding member of the new FCJ community at Stella Maris in Frankston. After leaving Frankston, she served as Community Leader and the FCJ Province Bursar, working from St Raphael's. Her last active ministry before returning to Benalla was for many years a valued pastoral care minister with Mercy Palliative Care in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Her jubilee celebration took place at Cooina Aged Care Benalla where she now resides.



ALUMNI WEDDINGS



Sophie Ardjugin
&
Thomas Exton

Sophie and Thomas both attended FCJ College from Year 7-12. Thomas completed his studies in 2012 and Sophie completed her studies in 2015.

The tie to FCJ College does not stop there, Sophie is currently the Daily Organiser at FCJ College.

Thomas is the Works Manager at Extons Pty Ltd.

Sophie and Thomas were married at The Sebel Pinnacle Valley Resort in Merrijig on 25 February 2023.



**If you have suggestions for news articles within this publication
or to organise a reunion, please contact
Kristy Hanrahan - Community Engagement Officer.**

Keep updated with the latest FCJ College news - follow us on social media



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Embracing hope for a better world FCJ College Benalla promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people