



Bethel Hall and Rose Garden, 1925.  
Photo courtesy of Mrs. David Sibley; Jenny Hill collection.

# Avondale University College, Australia

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Avondale University College is the senior tertiary educational institution for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific region, located in Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia. Formerly Avondale College of Higher Education, it was granted Avondale Australian University College status in August 2019.

## Early Stages

When the Australasian Bible School was opened in suburban Melbourne in 1892, it was considered to be a temporary establishment.<sup>1</sup> It did not meet the denomination's self-imposed criteria. Their model school required a rural and agricultural setting, not entirely monastic but certainly isolationist in order to nullify any distractions to the nurturing of a religious life.

For two years, 1893 and 1894, a search for an ideal haven was undertaken, chiefly along the proximity to the rail link between Melbourne and Sydney. Suitable sites were inspected at Euroa and Baddaginnie in Victoria<sup>2</sup> in addition to Picton<sup>3</sup> and Dapto in New South Wales,<sup>4</sup> but the prices proved to be beyond their pauper's pocket. In view of the fact that the search party foresaw the attendance of some Polynesian students from the mission field, they were not averse to extending their quest north of Sydney. A warmer climate than Melbourne was one of their selection criteria<sup>5</sup>

Search parties extended north of Sydney, and finally, a piece of land known as the Brettville Estate was located at the hamlet of Cooranbong. It comprised approximately 600 hectares (about 1,500 acres) and was advertised at \$7,500. It had been passed in at auction when the highest bid was only \$4,000.<sup>6</sup> Elder William White, vice-president of the Australian Conference, learned that the owner was willing to sell by private treaty at the bargain price of \$4,500<sup>7</sup>

White wrote to the General Conference headquarters outlining the reasons why the Brettville site met their criteria. It was isolated, the easiest method of transport being by dingy along Dora Creek. The waterway led to Lake Macquarie and Newcastle, providing access for incoming supplies and an outlet for agricultural products from the estate. The lake, he added, was known to hold plenty of fish and could be used during a food shortage. Timber-cutters, he noted, had left sufficient trees for milling building lumber. He admitted much of the soil was poor, but, most importantly, the price was within their means.<sup>8</sup> He placed a retaining deposit on the property,<sup>9</sup> arranged for an employee to camp at the site,<sup>10</sup> and asked a government agricultural expert to test the soil qualities.<sup>11</sup>

The government assessor made a gloomy report<sup>12</sup> that White dutifully forwarded to headquarters, introducing his own newly formed uncertainties. The reply from headquarters sounded caution. This triggered a divide among search party members, with Elder Arthur Daniells, soon to be president of the Australasian Union Conference, and Elder Lemuel Rousseau, principal of the Australasian Bible School, leading the antagonists and Elder White becoming ambivalent.<sup>13</sup> The dilemma was placed before church members at a camp meeting in Sydney in November 1894, where it was freely discussed, and a favorable recommendation was put forward.<sup>14</sup> Church officials then voted to proceed with the enterprise.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the vote, Rousseau persuaded White and his mother, Ellen, to visit an alternative property with rich soil at Windsor, west of Sydney, but the high price tag discouraged any eleventh-hour change of plans.<sup>16</sup> Rousseau, undoubtedly dismayed, was obliged to transfer from the Melbourne school with its equipment and settle at Cooranbong.<sup>17</sup>

## Industrial Department

Disused premises named Healy's Hotel had been rented at Cooranbong as living quarters for Rousseau and others:<sup>18</sup> These also provided classrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, and toilets. Most students were accommodated in tents surrounding the hotel. During 1895 approximately twenty-five men worked at clearing the land and draining a swamp, their hard labor exchanged for board and some elementary tuition by Rousseau and his wife, Emma.<sup>19</sup>

The enterprise in embryo was euphemistically called an Industrial Department despite the fact there were no buildings, little equipment, and no commercial products to sell. From the beginning of 1895, it was overrated as a college, expressly Avondale College. The derivation of the name *Avondale* was never explained. Perhaps Dora Creek on the western and southern edges of the estate was reminiscent of the upper reaches of England's Avon River or the Whau River at Avondale, suburban Auckland, New Zealand, familiar to Elder Daniells and Elder Stephen McCullagh.<sup>20</sup>

Elder William W. Prescott, the General Conference education secretary, arrived in Australia in July 1895 for an extended visit. He recognized the value of balancing academic studies with manual labor but observed that the current situation was too heavily weighted toward physical work. Under his chairmanship, a meeting of the college board on November 15, 1895, voted to change the name of the institution to the Avondale School for Christian Workers, more accurately describing its academic level. Prescott provided some philosophical parameters foundational for the institution. One he advocated was that pagan authors should not be used when teaching ancient languages.<sup>21</sup> The institution would be like the Old Testament schools of the prophets. It would be independent of government accreditation. It would have its own curriculum, adapted for the training of ministers and teachers to be employed by the denomination. That curriculum, he explained, would have the Scriptures as the chief cornerstone, history would be used to interpret Bible prophecy, science would serve to reveal God in nature, and English classes would give the opportunity to express these three basic components.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to his departure Prescott took part in a series of meetings called The Cooranbong Institute, March 26 through April 23, 1896. A large tent was pitched in the grounds of Healy's Hotel, and approximately forty people attended the lectures. Elders Daniells and George Starr preached, Ellen White emphasized the work-study concept, and Prescott elaborated on his model of education. He proposed that everything should be studied from the standpoint of the word of God first, the works of God (nature) second, and the providences of God (history) third.<sup>23</sup> Bible study, he further explained, was best accomplished by studying whole chapters or books, that is, a contextual discipline rather than a topical proof-text method. This suggestion was a novel idea in the minds of his audience.<sup>24</sup>

Rousseau was better suited to the pulpit and classroom than tough physical work. His health and that of his wife deteriorated under the pioneering conditions. They took no part in the Cooranbong Institute and returned to America two months later.<sup>25</sup> In the meantime, Metcalfe Hare and his family arrived from New Zealand to erect the first buildings on the estate. He constructed a sawmill to process the hardwood timber from the property. Bricks were

made from local clay, and a thousand fruit trees were planted in the drained swamp.<sup>26</sup>

Herbert Lacey, a Tasmanian graduate of Battle Creek College, and his American wife, Lillian, replaced the Rousseaus. Hare made a loft in the sawmill where church services were held, and Lacey used it as a classroom for approximately twenty-five local pupils from July to October 1896 on a private tuition basis.<sup>27</sup>

Lacey was considered as a principal for the upcoming school, but Ellen White objected to the proposal because of her prejudice against influences at Battle Creek.<sup>28</sup> Instead, Cassius and Ella Hughes were appointed to transfer from Keene Industrial School, Texas, to establish a similar enterprise. It was an experimental one, operating on the work-study model.<sup>29</sup> While William White was attending the General Conference Session in February 1897, he heard Hughes give a glowing report of the Keene model<sup>30</sup> and persuaded him that he should replicate it at Cooranbong.<sup>31</sup>

Fred Lamplough won the contract to erect the first major building for the school, a two-story dormitory for young women that came to be known as Bethel Hall. It was completed during the southern hemisphere summer of 1896–1897. Hare, together with volunteers, constructed a similar but plainer building alongside with a free-standing school bell tower and a brick-lined underground water cistern located between the two. In the second building, the downstairs section served as the chef's quarters, a kitchen, and a dining room. Male students were boarded upstairs with some rooms reserved for classes and a chapel.<sup>32</sup>

William White was engaged in a protracted and expensive court case that began in 1895 when the owners of Brettville refused to hand over the estate's title deed. They claimed an interest payment was outstanding in addition to some irregularity in the manner White signed the agreement as power of attorney. White won his case in the first hearing,<sup>33</sup> but it was appealed and postponed to 1896. He lost at the appeal and had to pay high court costs.<sup>34</sup> Lawyers eventually sorted the irregularities, and the title deed was transferred late in 1897,<sup>35</sup> months after the estate improvements and early buildings were completed. White was led to believe the owners had either been angling for more money or were prejudiced against American ownership.<sup>36</sup>

## Opening Years

Australian Conference administrators encouraged the youth and young adults to attend the Avondale School by establishing the Students' Aid Fund to assist with student travel costs and their fees.<sup>37</sup> An unpretentious and somewhat secretive opening ceremony took place on April 28, 1897. They did not want to alert the previous owners and lawyers because they did not have the title deed. Ellen White and a few others addressed a small gathering. Hughes, the elected principal, arrived after the opening date. Meanwhile, Lacey acted as principal, and Elder Stephen Haskell conducted Bible classes.<sup>38</sup> There were only two students at the opening, but this number soon grew to approximately sixty.<sup>39</sup> By May the school had settled into a routine. Haskell continued with Bible classes. His wife, Hetty, served as matron. Thomas Skinner was the vegetarian chef and conducted cooking classes. Lacey taught mathematics, geography, physiology, and singing. It fell to Lillian Lacey to begin an elementary school on short notice. Ella Hughes taught grammar, penmanship, and elocution. In addition to being principal, Cassius Hughes supervised the farm and taught history from *Empires of the Bible* by Alonzo T. Jones.<sup>40</sup>

As soon as the title deed was delivered, school authorities quickly pressed ahead with further buildings. Haskell supervised the construction of a church, a project that caused a degree of ill will. Hughes and Hare wanted it located close to the school buildings. Trekking through mud with ankle-length dresses and catching chills in wet weather were, in their opinion, risks to be avoided. However, Haskell snubbed Hare's supply of timber, ordered his building materials from elsewhere, and forged ahead regardless of criticism, constructing it at a distance from the school.<sup>41</sup> During the summer of 1897–1898, Hare supervised the construction of a boy's dormitory that, surprisingly, came to be known as Haskell Hall. The following year, 1899, he built the two-story central chapel and classrooms that was officially called College Hall but came to be known affectionately as "the Chapel."<sup>42</sup> Two staff cottages were also erected,<sup>43</sup> and the sawmill was expanded to incorporate a health food factory.<sup>44</sup> Finally, a two-story health retreat was located opposite the church at the main entrance to the campus.<sup>45</sup>

Friction continued between Haskell and other teaching staff. He served as a spiritual father figure, but he was not a trained teacher and not readily accepted by the teaching fraternity because his teaching style was simplistic.<sup>46</sup> He also had a physical malady that prevented him from participating in any manual labor,<sup>47</sup> something in which Hughes led from the front and expected everyone to participate. Haskell returned to America in 1899, feeling despondent.<sup>48</sup>

Ellen White was not pleased with the turn of events.<sup>49</sup> She insisted on a change of leadership. Daniells was chosen as principal for 1899, but other duties preoccupied him. He was principal in name only. Edwin Palmer, business manager, chaired the staff meetings. Significantly, the teachers overruled these developments by voting to give Hughes the oversight of the school,<sup>50</sup> confident with his leadership. He was reelected principal for 1900 and 1901.<sup>51</sup>

Another controversy arose in 1900 when Hughes allowed cricket and tennis to be played during a holiday.<sup>52</sup> Ellen White objected, but they were played again a week later, and William White called an emergency board meeting to bring an end to it,<sup>53</sup> such amusements being dubbed "the curse of the Colonies."<sup>54</sup> Hughes was caught up in a clash of two cultures, the New England Methodist taboo on games<sup>55</sup> and an Australian penchant for sports. He surrendered to the Methodist view.

Ellen White also objected, especially to the musicianship of the young American recruit Orwin Morse. It was apparently associated with the broader differences between Haskell's dour personality and the debonair spirits of musicians Lacey and Morse.<sup>56</sup> Both men were well-trained and competent as opposed to Haskell's lack of

qualifications. All three were not included in the 1899 faculty listing. The Laceys were replaced by John and Jessie Paap, teachers of science and music respectively, and Elder Asa Robinson, who taught Bible subjects. Ella Hughes conducted the elementary school and teacher training department. Elder Edward Gates was also included to encourage the students to become overseas missionaries.<sup>57</sup>

The Whites sailed from Australia in late August 1900 to return to America.<sup>58</sup> Cassius and Ella Hughes continued their strong leadership. They relished the rural ambiance of the estate, often writing home to their parents, describing koalas in the tall eucalyptus trees, kangaroos grazing on misty mornings, frog choruses, and the woods dotted with ferns and wild orchids.<sup>59</sup> They conducted the school on a sound academic and financial basis, and Cassius farmed the estate brilliantly, supplying the tables with an abundance of honey, fruit, and vegetables.<sup>60</sup> On the eve of their departure in October 1902,<sup>61</sup> they had the satisfaction of knowing six students had attained graduation. Minnie Hawkins and Ella Boyd were the first graduates of the one-year teacher's course. Joseph Mills, Ernest Ward, and Priscilla Hare graduated from the one-year business course. Robert Hare completed the preparatory course.<sup>62</sup> Short courses were urged in view of the imminent Second Coming.<sup>63</sup>

## Professor Irwin

Charles Irwin, son of the Australasian Union Conference president, was appointed to succeed Hughes for the year 1902.<sup>64</sup> His previous experience as principal of the Southern Industrial School, Tennessee, meant that the work-study regimen continued uninterrupted. He had earned a master's degree in Latin and Greek at the University of Nebraska, subjects studied by a rare few at Avondale.<sup>65</sup> In addition to his leadership role, Irwin taught history and was widely known respectfully as "Professor" or "Prof." The majority of the teachers during his seven-year tenure continued to be American. The American influence was so pervasive that the Stars and Stripes were raised on the American Independence Day.<sup>66</sup>

Irwin improved the standard of teaching and business education by extending their courses to two years.<sup>67</sup> Hattie Andre, later assisted by Rhae Allbon, led with distinction in the elementary school, where the teachers received their practical training. William Robbins brought strength to the Business Department in 1908–1911.<sup>68</sup> However, through no fault of the principal, Bible teaching suffered because the ministerial staff came and went in short stints, which did not foster coherence and potency in a department extolled as vital for the school. This dilemma was resolved when Elder Lewis Hoopes came from America in 1906 for a three-year term.<sup>69</sup> Hoopes also cataloged the books in the small library according to the American Library Association's classification system.<sup>70</sup>

Paap, a New Zealander, continued teaching science subjects and some English classes. In a break from American textbooks, he published his own speller with British characteristics. It was a graded collection concluding with unfamiliar words such as *cuirassier* and *sesquipedalian*.<sup>71</sup> Spelling competitions were later held on some Saturday evenings as a form of entertainment.<sup>72</sup> Frank Chaney came from America to assist Paap, especially with the teaching of physiology.<sup>73</sup> Charles Bell replaced him in 1907.<sup>74</sup> Roger Brown arrived in 1906 to teach history and astronomy. Brown and Bell became engaged in the joint venture of building a 10-inch telescope situated between Bethel Hall and College Hall.<sup>75</sup> The intrigue with astronomy was prompted, in part, by Ellen White's assertion that Christ would return through "the open space" in Orion.<sup>76</sup>

Chaney was a versatile man. In addition to teaching physiology classes, he served as preceptor, taught some commercial subjects, and established the Carpentry Department in a long shed to the rear of Haskell Hall. Blacksmithing, plumbing, and tinsmith units were added soon after, together with an electric light plant to cater for the school and industries.<sup>77</sup> Chaney, together with student assistance, constructed Preston Hall for the young women, a three-story building with a Mansard roof adjoining Bethel Hall. It was dedicated in September 1906. A campus telephone system was installed in the same year.<sup>78</sup>

During Irwin's era, he fostered stability in the domestic sciences by employing Brown's wife, Elizabeth, as matron and cooking instructor. Irwin's wife, Minnie, revived the Sewing Department.<sup>79</sup> Irwin insisted on the inclusion of practical units in every course of study.<sup>80</sup> Broom making and tent making were short-lived ventures by Irwin that further demonstrated his commitment to balance academics with practical work.<sup>81</sup> The Avondale School Press, starting as a subsidiary of the food factory, was expanded into a separate building in 1907. Both the factory and the press were removed from school management when Irwin completed his term of office.

The fine arts had begun under Hughes as extracurricular studies. Private music lessons were offered. Paap's American wife, Jessie, started private drawing and oil painting lessons during summer vacations.<sup>82</sup> In the 1903 annual announcement, these were advertised as an Art Department, but it was late in Irwin's tenure that art and music units were incorporated into the teacher's course.<sup>83</sup> A brass band was also formed as early as 1904, and the traditional Saturday evening graduation concert had its origin about the same time,<sup>84</sup> together with graduation class mottoes.<sup>85</sup>

Worship, academic studies, and physical work were initially the all-consuming activities of the school. Amusements had to be justified as having some educational or spiritual value. Spelling competitions, travelogs with stereopticon slides, and illustrated talks by missionaries were provided. On one occasion, in the wake of the controversy over cricket and tennis, Irwin addressed the students and staff in a special chapel talk, explaining with some trepidation his reasons for planning a picnic.<sup>86</sup> These outings became a regular feature and included hikes into the nearby Watagan Mountains or dangerously overcrowded boat trips on Dora Creek. The young ladies were dressed in bonnets and ankle-length dresses; the young men, in suits and straw boaters.<sup>87</sup>

Just days before Irwin transferred back to America in January 1909, a bushfire swept into the estate. Smoke filled the air, and hot embers dropped from the sky, advancing the fire into anything combustible. The laundry and the coir mats at the entrance to College Hall caught fire, and the woodpile started to burn. A bucket brigade of students and staff extinguished every spot fire and saved the buildings.<sup>88</sup>

## Benjamin Franklin Machlan

A replacement for Irwin was not easily found. Paap acted as principal throughout 1909. He was capable, but instead of choosing him to continue in the role, the school board appointed another American educator, Benjamin Machlan, for 1910.<sup>89</sup> He remained for three years.

Machlan's brief era was characterized by a strengthening of the teacher training department. He taught pedagogy<sup>90</sup> He had a separate primary school built southeast of Haskell Hall, and trainee teachers did their practical work there.<sup>91</sup> He extended the teacher's course to four years and broke with the denominational aversion to psychology by including it for teachers. He attempted to soften controversy by calling the unit "child study."<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, decades later, some church members continued to lodge complaints about it.<sup>93</sup> Faculty members like C. H. Schowe, Rhae Allbon, and C. V. Bell, who had all experienced training in secular institutions, readily accepted educational psychology. These moves were essential because the quality of government training had lifted, and private institutions were expected to improve their standards.<sup>94</sup> In this context the name of the school was upgraded in 1911 to "Australasian Missionary College (AMC)."<sup>95</sup>

Schowe was elected to lead the Music Department in 1911 and was instrumental in entering students for London examinations, the first Avondale candidates for external qualifications.<sup>96</sup>

Machlan earned the reputation of being a martinet. He introduced the vetting of all musical renditions.<sup>97</sup> The young men formed a Literary Society, but when they gave their performances in the chapel, the windows and doors had to be closed so that the young women could not hear the items from their dormitories.<sup>98</sup> The same group requested permission to publish a school magazine. Such importance was placed on this proposal that the idea had to be referred to the Australasian Union Conference (AUC) Executive Committee.<sup>99</sup> Faculty meetings dealt with petty misdemeanors such as scuffling in the halls, indelicate talking, having pickles in one's room, and visiting the bathroom during vespers.<sup>100</sup> Action was taken to forbid entry to any youth who were deemed "giddy" or "frivolous."<sup>101</sup> It was ironic that Machlan, who appreciated psychology, shackled individuals with rules that inhibited natural creativity and spirit.

## A Time of Instability

The First World War years were times of experimentation with various leaders, some having no previous experience in educational administration. Schowe was arguably the best Seventh-day Adventist educator in Australasia at the time and well qualified to be principal. Instead, returned missionary George Teasdale was chosen as principal for 1913. He inherited significant debt from the Machlan era and urged the constituency to settle any outstanding accounts.<sup>102</sup> He also labored under pressure to lengthen some courses, virtually adding an honors year.<sup>103</sup> His board increased the pressure by asking teachers to increase their work hours in the campus industries.<sup>104</sup> To enable his teachers to cope with these pressures, Teasdale was obliged to discontinue the easier missionary course,<sup>105</sup> combine some ministerial and teacher trainee classes, strip industrial studies from most courses,<sup>106</sup> and ignore the call for teachers to do more industrial work. The moves were apparently interpreted as a push for higher academic standards at the expense of the work-study ethic, and despite his successes, Teasdale was not reelected for the 1915 school year. When he left denominational employment a few years later, an unprecedented retrospective attack on his character was published in the church press, likening him to the biblical Haman and accusing him of being untruthful and wicked.<sup>107</sup> He was not specifically named, but the details unmistakably identified Teasdale as the object of the diatribe. He was not given any right to reply.

Joseph Mills was appointed to succeed Teasdale,<sup>108</sup> a better choice because of his educational training and experience. However, he remained for only 12 months before leaving to pursue a bachelor's degree.<sup>109</sup> He returned later without the degree. A makeshift was arranged for 1916. Chaney served as headmaster, and Johan Johanson, as business manager.<sup>110</sup> Johanson was not an educator but set about to shorten teacher's holidays and revise the timetable so that students alternated whole days of study with whole days spent in campus industries.<sup>111</sup> He thought to maximize the amount of work from both teachers and students. Teachers suffered the arrangements for 18 months before the college board listened to their request to resume the usual timetable in 1918.<sup>112</sup>

Johanson's cost-saving measures were ineffective. His influence waned in 1917, and he was transferred with the institution still in debt<sup>113</sup> and experiencing a 20 percent drop in enrollment. Schowe was the glue that held the enterprise together in 1917, tutoring 11 students for their intermediate certificate in addition to his normal responsibilities. Ten of the students were successful in obtaining the intermediate certificate, a first for the college.<sup>114</sup> Their success suggested that academic standards were rising.

In September 1917 Elder Ludwig Lemke arrived on campus to be both principal and business manager.<sup>115</sup> He had trained in Germany as a teacher but then became a sailor and a book salesman. His two-year tenure was characterized by committee maneuvering to return to the 1897 model. He wanted short courses, the inclusion of more industrial units, and a renewed emphasis on the work-study ethic.<sup>116</sup> He also argued against the external examination

requirement of Shakespearian literature, as Ellen White had done,<sup>117</sup> even urging the deletion of the intermediate certificate as a prerequisite for most courses.<sup>118</sup> Schowe feared the loss of recent academic advances and mounted a spirited opposition. Lemke took his revisions to a subcommittee of the AUC, where he found support, especially from Elder Albert Anderson, the AUC education secretary.<sup>119</sup> Schowe, using his expertise in curriculum development, demonstrated that many extra class periods and additional staff would be needed if the revisions were implemented.<sup>120</sup> The board merely trimmed the revisions, insisting that Lemke's plan go ahead. Schowe and his wife resigned from the college, and they were appointed to pioneer an academy in Sydney.<sup>121</sup>

The constituency still regarded Schowe as a quality teacher and enrolled their children in his academy, and it became a rival for the college. Lemke was transferred in 1919, and Anderson, apparently realizing he was not suitable for the educational portfolio, resigned soon after.<sup>122</sup> The huge college debt had to be liquidated the following year, 1921, by a special allocation from the AUC.<sup>123</sup>

## Return to American Leadership

With Lemke's removal, the board searched unsuccessfully for a new principal. Reluctantly, the college mathematics teacher, Henry Kirk, accepted the role as a temporary measure<sup>124</sup> that extended for two years, 1920 and 1921. He administered the institution capably but then preferred to return under appointment to his home country, New Zealand.<sup>125</sup>

Church administrators finally found an acceptable candidate in the person of W. W. Prescott, highly esteemed as the denomination's top educator. He agreed to return to Australia to adopt the daunting task of serving as both education secretary of the AUC and AMC principal.<sup>126</sup> One of his moves as education secretary was to close down Schowe's Sydney academy, removing AMC's competition.<sup>127</sup> He also conducted a teacher's institute on the Avondale campus, similar to his 1896 Cooranbong institute, outlining a return to the Adventist educational model as he understood it.<sup>128</sup> As AMC principal, he removed external examinations as prerequisites for college courses, manual units were reintroduced for every student, and the less-demanding missionary course was reinstated.<sup>129</sup> In 1922 Prescott was a party to an administrative vote protecting the rigid adherence to the original educational model, attempting to quash any future efforts to align with government educational standards and curriculum.<sup>130</sup>

Various campus improvements took place regardless of the ideological struggles. In 1916 College Hall was extended, giving more classrooms downstairs. The seating in the upstairs chapel was turned to face the opposite direction,<sup>131</sup> and the library was relocated from the small room under the belfry to a larger room.<sup>132</sup> Wooden fire escape ladders were added to the exterior walls of the dormitories in 1918.<sup>133</sup> In 1919 a general store was erected close to the staff homes.<sup>134</sup> In the same year, the influenza epidemic brought quarantine regulations that prevented the students and faculty from attending church. Instead, services for campus members were conducted in the chapel in College Hall, while the Cooranbong village members continued to meet in the original church building. This arrangement solved a problem of overcrowding and was more convenient for the students, so the separation became permanent.<sup>135</sup>

## Wood, Cossentine, and Martin

Prescott's hand-picked successor was Lynn Harper Wood, an American science teacher who fitted the college board's ideology. Wood accepted the mandate to prioritize strengthening the industrial and domestic departments over lifting the academic level. He arrived in October 1922.<sup>136</sup> The board immediately made his task easier by voting that AMC would carry the leading role in training a denominational workforce while the West Australian and New Zealand schools would act as feeder institutions rather than operate in competition.<sup>137</sup>

The health food factory had absorbed the industrial departments, so a new single-story building in which to teach carpentry was erected in 1923 between the boys' dormitory and the factory.<sup>138</sup> Most instruction took the form of furniture making. Only the advanced year included something approaching real carpentry, when students were required to construct a timber-framed model house.<sup>139</sup> Initially, this was an invaluable exercise for all prospective missionaries to the Pacific Islands, but in time, specialist carpenters were appointed to build mission homes, schools, and hospitals.

Wood's next project was the construction of a domestic science building in 1924. The board generously provided £1,000<sup>140</sup> for a two-story building with a Mansard roof to match the front of the girl's dormitory. Known as "The Laurels," the domestic science cottage was furnished as a modern American home, boasting a vacuum cleaner for the large rugs, electric lighting, a brick fireplace, and even a rocking chair.<sup>141</sup> It was in stark contrast to the tents that some staff had to live in during the cold winter months.<sup>142</sup> Edna Walker came from America as the instructor for the Domestic Department. Groups of four students would take turns living with her in "The Laurels" and learn cooking and housekeeping.<sup>143</sup> This effort had many flaws. First and foremost was the fact that it did not offer the prospect of a salaried career. And it was entirely unnecessary for a young woman who, in all likelihood, would find herself in a mission house of plaited bamboo, grass thatch, and an earthen floor. Prescott, Wood, and the college board had not done a needs assessment for the program, and it faltered within a few years.

In the southern summer of 1924–1925, a brick building began to take shape between Bethel and College Halls. Completed in 1925, it provided separate musical instrument practice rooms and one larger room at the rear to house an Art Department.<sup>144</sup> Four Poole pianos were shipped from America in preference to European brands readily available in Australia.<sup>145</sup> The Music Department, which had started as private lessons by Herbert Lacey and Jessie Paap, finally had a place it could call home.

A matching brick building was erected in 1926 to 1928 between Haskell and College Halls. The 1919 influenza epidemic, together with the earlier closure of the Avondale Health Retreat, underscored the need for medical wards on campus. Wood planned for the front rooms of the building to serve as a sick ward and hydrotherapy facility. The rear portion was reserved for a science laboratory.<sup>146</sup> Its small size soon made it inadequate for both science teaching and medical purposes.

The college board invested significant amounts in capital works during the Wood years. Enrollment figures slowly rose, partly because the academic level was lowered but also because Wood initiated the Student Movement. He divided the student group into their various states of origin, each with a leader, and encouraged them during their summer vacations to exhort fellow youth to come to AMC with them when they returned.<sup>147</sup> Wood initiated the handshake ceremony that took place at the beginning of the college year, in which everyone moved in a line around the chapel walls until all had introduced themselves to students and staff.<sup>148</sup> He also had a new college badge designed that incorporated the freshly minted motto, “For a Greater Vision of World Needs.”<sup>149</sup> These innovations fostered esprit de corps. The college board members were apparently pleased with Wood, for they kept subsidizing the institution’s losses with annual financial grants.<sup>150</sup>

Wood, however, struggled to plug every leak. The Business Department, for example, was long conducted without a comptometer, an instrument that graduates would meet when they started work in any church office.<sup>151</sup> Bible teachers, in accordance with an early policy,<sup>152</sup> came and went as frequently as the passing seasons until one, Elder Hubert Martin, a Canadian, arrived for the 1927 college year and remained for six school years.<sup>153</sup> The college board had trouble enlisting good teachers and ate a lot of “humble pie” when they recalled Schowe in 1927. Although an American had closed down his academy in Sydney, he had found work during the interim in the denomination’s Atlantic Union College in Massachusetts, United States, and as principal of the Greater New York Academy in the United States.<sup>154</sup>

Elder Erwin Cossentine transferred from the New Zealand Missionary School to succeed Wood for 1928.<sup>155</sup> His two-year term was unspectacular. His only curriculum innovation was the introduction of the literary course for prospective writers and editors. Only three individuals completed the course before it was dropped. He was, however, fortunate to welcome three new teachers who proved to be exceptional in their chosen fields. Catherine Walker, who owned a dressmaking business in New Zealand before arriving at Avondale, taught sewing for two decades.<sup>156</sup> George Greenaway led the teacher-training department with distinction.<sup>157</sup> In 1932 he introduced students to the Royal Life Saving Society classes, and scores of young people received bronze medallions from the society.<sup>158</sup> Robert Johnson proved to be an outstanding music teacher. As a teenager, he had conducted renditions of Handel’s *Messiah* in his English homeland.<sup>159</sup> He started at AMC in 1929, and his versatility enabled him to lead the brass band, orchestra, and choir and to teach individual music lessons.<sup>160</sup>

Cossentine returned to America after graduation in 1929 and was replaced by Martin, the Bible teacher.<sup>161</sup> Once again, some eminent teachers began tenure in the early 1930s. Elder Alfred Kranz, a trained teacher, replaced Martin in the Bible Department,<sup>162</sup> remaining for the entire decade and later returning for a second period. Kranz broke the mold of ephemeral Bible teachers and wrote his own textbooks that were used in other Australasian classrooms and correspondence courses. Ralph Watts, the long-time science teacher, began his tenure at AMC in 1932.<sup>163</sup>

Martin’s leadership was synonymous with the onset of the depression years. Students struggled to pay fees for long courses, so the short Bible worker’s course was introduced with some success.<sup>164</sup> The downside was that it gave rise to a generation of ministers and ministerial administrators who offered only simple outlines of ready-made proof texts rather than sound contextual Bible studies. The harsh times brought a 10-percent reduction in teacher’s wages while house rents remained unchanged.<sup>165</sup> Holiday pay was cut completely, forcing teachers to colporteur during the summer breaks.<sup>166</sup> Even the dining room cuisine suffered. One former teacher recalled that boiled beetroot tops, normally thrown to the poultry, were regularly served in the dining room.<sup>167</sup> Martin’s health deteriorated in 1931, and Kranz often stepped in to help. This unfortunate situation grew worse in 1932, necessitating Kranz to carry much of the responsibility.<sup>168</sup> Martin returned to America after the 1932 graduation service.<sup>169</sup>

## Australasian Leaders

Seven different principals or acting principals served during the 14 disorderly years of 1933 to 1946. It was a time of recovery from the depression that became engulfed by the Second World War. Both Schowe and Kranz were overlooked as prospective principals. Instead, Albert Speck was transferred from West Australian Missionary College to lead at AMC.<sup>170</sup>

College finances paralleled the improving fiscal conditions worldwide, and by 1935, the institution showed a profit!<sup>171</sup> At the same time, teachers received a wage increase that partly recovered predepression rates.<sup>172</sup> Speck was also fortunate to have Eunice Durrant begin her long tenure as head of the Commerce Department. Durrant submitted her students to a number of external tests, such as those of the Incorporated Phonographic Society of Australia, lifting the standard to equal any secular business college.<sup>173</sup>

Oleta Leech, the wife of the food factory scientist, taught some history and German classes. The shortest route from her home to her classes was by dingy across Dora Creek, but she was terrified of deep water, so factory engineers built the swing bridge for her in 1934.<sup>174</sup> It became a campus landmark as iconic as Amen Gate near “Sunnyside,” both representing limits beyond which male boarders and female boarders respectively were forbidden to stroll!<sup>175</sup>

Speck was abruptly dismissed in August 1935 when it was discovered he had a history of trysts with a female teacher.<sup>176</sup> Within days, Cyril Palmer was appointed to transfer from West Australian Missionary College for 1936. Kranz, once again, was asked to act as principal during the interim.<sup>177</sup>

Palmer maintained the status quo. His two-year term corresponded with the coming of Geoffrey Richardson to manage the building construction course<sup>178</sup> and Lionel Large to supervise the Teacher Training Department. Significant developments took place under Large. Some AMC teaching graduates were inevitably appointed to Victoria, where the government insisted that all teachers hold certification from an accredited institution. Large, who had been certified from his experience in Tasmanian public schools, applied to the Victorian Education Department for certification of his graduates. His application was successful after Victorian authorities inspected the curriculum and training facilities at AMC.<sup>179</sup> This meant that music students, commerce students, and now teacher trainees were all subject to external standards, in sharp contrast to the declared early model of the school.

The college board showed confidence in the teacher training program by investing in a new building for the elementary school where the trainees did their practical training. Following a recommendation from the Victorian inspector, the new brick school incorporated a special classroom arranged as a typical rural situation with multiple grades. It was officially opened in 1938.<sup>180</sup>

Albert Piper was appointed as principal for 1938 and remained for 1939. He was principal of the West Australian Missionary School in its early days, but two of his faculty members later testified of his inability at AMC.<sup>181</sup> Their criticisms may have been colored by his mishandling of the high-profile Johnson case in April 1939. Johnson, the brilliant music teacher, became the victim of a cruel student prank. Two young men wrote a love letter, purportedly from Johnson to the choir pianist, and dropped it in the chapel where someone would pick it up. It was delivered to Piper, who marched to where Johnson was milking his cow and fired him on the spot.<sup>182</sup> Piper did not examine the evidence thoroughly. Other faculty members meant to interview Johnson but apparently did not get the opportunity, and Johnson was not given time to defend himself.<sup>183</sup>

The imprudence of Piper was in sharp contrast to the wisdom of Lionel Turner, a 1939 addition to the faculty!<sup>184</sup> Students called him Socrates. In contrast to Piper, he was a thoughtful preacher, an incisive thinker, a wit, and an articulate teacher, and he inspired the students to excel in swimming and gymnastics.<sup>185</sup> He was instrumental in building a diving platform for the young men and making a separate swimming spot for the young women.<sup>186</sup> He had a gymnasium built behind College Hall and physical education incorporated into all courses.<sup>187</sup> He argued for social reforms such as courting privileges. If the institution was to be truly coeducational, he reasoned, then males and females had to be given opportunities to understand each other.<sup>188</sup> This was the era when the Bible teacher, John Conley, wrote against table games as a form of Saturday evening entertainment, blocking yet another opening for interaction between the sexes.<sup>189</sup> Conley's influence was not enduring. Turner and other faculty members moved the college toward relaxing the puritanical rules.

Thomas Lawson replaced Piper for the 1940 college year.<sup>190</sup> He was a ministerial graduate of AMC and had spent some years as a teacher. Like Palmer, he was a placid man and maintained the status quo in difficult times. The high enrollment figures of the late 1930s, approximately 200 students each year, dropped during the Second World War, and Lawson inherited significant levels of debt from the Palmer and Piper terms.<sup>191</sup> Church authorities continued to inject annual grants into the accounts, but student debt remained problematic.<sup>192</sup> At one time, the college board floated the desperate proposal of banning debt-ridden graduates from marrying.<sup>193</sup> Such control was never followed through.

In 1944, Benjamin McMahon was appointed to the role of principal. Benjamin, or “Big Ben,” came from the chair of the education director for the Australasian Union Conference. He adopted the attitude that his new broom was going to sweep AMC of all its woes. He increased the load on teachers in order to cut costs. One staff member pled that she knew little of the extra subject he asked her to teach, so he fired her.<sup>194</sup> McMahon arranged for a probe of accountant John Abbott's ledger, indicating some distrust. Abbott was happy for an audit from the head office but objected to McMahon's intrusion and was terminated.<sup>195</sup> McMahon also forced the farm manager, John Strange, to appear before the board and explain to them the reason for the farm's debt. Strange was made to feel that he should work harder. Little consideration was given to the fact that the enterprise had just experienced a severe drought. Strange resigned.<sup>196</sup> All year the faculty suffered under McMahon's bombast.



The health of students deteriorated markedly under McMahon's cost-saving measures. Many broke out in boils. One student later attributed their predicament to the poor diet. Breakfast, he recalled, was unsaleable Weet-Bix in hot water and stewed plums in curdled milk. Staples were lettuce leaves and boiled wheat. Satirists were known to stand at their tables and crow like roosters.<sup>197</sup>

McMahon wiped out the debt, but due to staff complaints to church leaders about his style, he was removed after 12 months. Edward Rosendahl, who always signed himself as "Acting Principal," served to steady the institution throughout 1945 and 1946.<sup>198</sup> He had held the same role at the New Zealand and West Australian schools. The end of the war brought many ex-soldiers to train at AMC.<sup>199</sup> The shorter ministerial course was introduced to cope with the influx, and in 1946 a second tier was added to the Woodwork Building to accommodate an expanded Commerce Department. Elva Thorpe, daughter of missionaries Ethelbert and Lily Thorpe, was a leading teacher in this department from 1941 to 1967, having succeeded Durrant.<sup>200</sup> When the Commerce Department transferred out of their classrooms under the chapel in College Hall, the area was used for the library. Students enjoyed browsing rites, and reading desks were supplied for the first time.<sup>201</sup>

## William Gordon Campbell Murdoch

The college board was very fortunate to gain the services of William Murdoch in 1947. He was a true leader in all respects, having a commanding stature and genuine piety and being compassionate, scholarly, and a thoughtful preacher. Raised on a Scottish farm, he understood more than books.<sup>202</sup> While serving as principal of Newbold Missionary College in England, he delivered a lecture at a convention in Norway in August 1939 that cast him as a devotee of the Seventh-day Adventist educational model.<sup>203</sup> He was the first principal of AMC who had earned a doctorate. Many students were in awe of him, and he became their role model.<sup>204</sup>

Murdoch, unlike McMahon, was content to delegate authority on the farm and in the finance office. He concentrated on raising the academic level. The constituency had had enough of short and unaccredited courses heavily weighted with manual units. Their brighter students were being attracted elsewhere. Murdoch had to offer an alternative. During his term, a fund was established to support lecturers while they furthered their studies.<sup>205</sup> Turner earned a doctorate, and Watts completed a master of science, both from the University of Southern California.<sup>206</sup> Geoffrey Rosenhain of the Teacher Training Department added a bachelor of education,<sup>207</sup> and Noel Clapham, the humanities lecturer who replaced Schowe, gained a master's degree.<sup>208</sup> This momentum petered out when Murdoch left in 1952, largely due to depleted funds.

A determined quest was mounted by Murdoch to gain external recognition for the courses offered by AMC. He found that the University of Queensland was willing to have candidates sit for their examinations, but when two students attempted the bachelor's level exam, they found it too difficult, and efforts were abandoned. A few students achieved a three-year licentiate of theology from Moore College in Sydney, but this link survived only until 1957 because a preference grew out of a visit Murdoch made to Pacific Union College (PUC) in 1952. His visit resulted in a formal request in 1953, after he transferred, for PUC and AMC to exchange teachers on a regular basis and establish a bachelor of arts program by affiliation. This initiative was more enduring. Furthermore, Murdoch was naturally attracted to links with his alma mater, London University, and gained permission for Watts to tutor three young men for their bachelor of science degrees. These men, Eric Magnusson, Lawrence Draper, and Kenneth Thomson, successfully completed their studies, but it was a decade before further candidates were submitted. Murdoch also tried to negotiate with the Printing Employee's Union of Australia to receive recognition for correspondence students to study compositing at Avondale Press through Sydney Technical College. It was ambitious in view of the fact Avondale Press did not employ unionists. Murdoch's efforts in this respect failed.<sup>209</sup>

Under Murdoch, a number of physical changes took place on campus. Money was spent on new library books, including basics such as the multivolume set of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>210</sup> Richardson, with the assistance of student labor, built a four-story brick dormitory for young women, later named Andre Hall in honor of Hattie Andre, tutor of teacher trainees (1900–1908).<sup>211</sup> He also began construction of a large auditorium modeled on a wartime Nissen hut, with classrooms underneath.<sup>212</sup>

George Greer had arrived from America at the same time as Murdoch. He was not as versatile as Johnson but excelled in choral work, forming the Avondale Symphonic Choir in 1947.<sup>213</sup> It became a lasting feature of campus activities. College Hall was lengthened to include a sound shell for the choir in the upstairs chapel, and a large room was included at ground level for the Art Department. The transfer of art classes then enabled the Music Department to occupy all of the building that housed the piano practice rooms.<sup>214</sup>

## Edward Eric White

Turner was a likely contender to succeed Murdoch, being the only lecturer on campus holding a doctorate, but his eyesight was failing.<sup>215</sup> Instead, the AUC Associate Education and Youth director, Edward White, was appointed to begin in 1953.<sup>216</sup> He remained until 1958. During those six years, he did a world tour (1953) and spent nine months (1956) in residency at London University pursuing his doctorate.<sup>217</sup> At other times he was preoccupied with his studies by correspondence. The board was fortunate to have Kranz to take the leadership in White's absences.<sup>218</sup>

The classrooms were filled to capacity with both boarding and village students,<sup>219</sup> but the institution still relied heavily on annual cash grants from the AUC. The fund for additional infrastructure was almost depleted. Only the auditorium

with classrooms underneath was completed, in addition to a larger baptismal font set in concrete behind College Hall, all on a shoestring budget.<sup>220</sup>

Being a science teacher, White showed an interest in strengthening the Science Department. He actively sought the services of Magnusson,<sup>221</sup> who, after White had transferred, did eventually agree to shape an expanded department. Most lecturers who began during White's tenure started as a result of natural attrition, not as a consequence of White's head hunting. Morriss Kennedy (Art Department) came in 1953,<sup>222</sup> the beginning of a 25-year tenure. Alwyn Salom (Bible Department) joined in 1956,<sup>223</sup> and Alan Thrift (Music Department) arrived the following year.<sup>224</sup>

White's main contribution was to guarantee smooth passage for affiliation with PUC. In those years, it was unique in denominational circles and needed adjustments. Originally, in 1954, George Caviness and William Hyde came from America to teach some units and supervise the two bachelor's degrees, theology and secondary education. Later, the board recommended that only one lecturer was needed as a campus representative of PUC. The scheme persisted but was fraught with problems as American educators grappled with marked differences between the Australian and American curriculum and style of teaching. Caviness covered the same ground as Murdoch, seeking Australian accreditation for the degrees. All his efforts failed as government education authorities followed their prejudice against the American model. The AMC Board was disappointed with the outcome, realizing they could not offer their graduates a pathway to Australian universities.<sup>225</sup>

## Ernest Gordon McDowell

When the Australasian Division Session convened at Cooranbong in late 1958, White was appointed to return to the education portfolio, and Gordon McDowell, then at the division, swapped roles with him.<sup>226</sup> The move heralded 12 years of infrastructure improvements, partly due to an improvement in funding but chiefly because of McDowell's proactive style.

Rightly or wrongly, McDowell did not have confidence in Geoff Richardson's ability, with student labor, to accomplish major building projects on campus, even though Richardson had overseen a number of major building projects including the construction of a large multipurpose auditorium on campus. McDowell engaged non-Seventh-day Adventist architects and builders. Richardson was appalled by this policy and resigned, claiming a higher ideological ground.<sup>227</sup> The first building to be constructed was a small dormitory for missionary's children followed by a large center comprising the library, administration offices, and a two-story classroom section. It was opened in mid-1961 and named the Ellen G. White Memorial Building.<sup>228</sup> Further construction continued immediately with a start on a new men's dormitory, Watson Hall, that began to accommodate some students in 1963 and was officially opened in 1964.<sup>229</sup> In 1967 a large new cafeteria was built with a bakery located on the lower level.<sup>230</sup> McDowell's final project was an outdoor swimming pool at the rear of the cafeteria.<sup>231</sup>

McDowell's energy was matched by the impetus that Magnusson brought to the Science Department beginning in 1961. After exploring a number of avenues for external recognition of his science course, Magnusson found the best option was to submit his students to the London Bachelor of Science examinations, the same route he himself had taken. Candidates were successful.<sup>232</sup> Negotiations with the federal government resulted in students becoming eligible for scholarships beginning in 1966.<sup>233</sup> In this context, the institution came to be recognized as a College of Advanced Education and the title "Australasian Missionary College" was phased out in preference for "Avondale College."<sup>234</sup>

Other disciplines lifted their standards. The Commerce Department offered the diploma of commerce, recognized by the Australian Society of Accountants. The elementary teacher's course was increased from a two-year to a three-year training period.<sup>235</sup> The Bible Department was enlivened by Desmond Ford's lectures, which were truly inspirational. No teacher at the institution had ever quickened so much interest and attracted so many students. The affiliation agreement with PUC became less dependent on American input. Salom, who understood both the American and Australian education systems, satisfied requirements as a liaison officer on campus, and periodic inspections from America proved adequate.<sup>236</sup>

McDowell maintained the Christian ethos of the college but never promoted the original ideological model on which it was founded. He was a pragmatist. He understood the expectations of the constituency, and with the full support of the board, he employed highly qualified teachers and built the infrastructure to accommodate them. Agriculture was superseded by academics. Shakespeare and psychology carried no stigma. McDowell taught psychology. As a keen golfer, he saw no harm in ball games. Basketball became popular. Musicians and speakers from non-Seventh-day Adventist communities were invited to appear on campus more frequently.<sup>237</sup> In a decade, enrollment rose to 547, the highest in the history of the college.<sup>238</sup>

## Eric Alfred Magnusson

Late in 1970 plans were well advanced for McDowell to transfer and take the Education Department at the Australasian Division office.<sup>239</sup> In November, Eric Magnusson, who was head of the Science Department at the college, was appointed to replace him as principal.<sup>240</sup> Magnusson had conducted the Science Department efficiently but had no experience as a principal of any educational institution. Gerald Clifford, the academic dean and registrar, would prove to be his dependable shepherd.<sup>241</sup>

On Magnusson's watch, there were some additions to the infrastructure. The White Memorial Building received

extensions at both ends, one given to the Theology and Humanities Departments<sup>242</sup> and the other as an annex for the library, Heritage Room, and Ellen G. White Research Centre. A little settlement of 18 units for married students, named "College View," was opened in 1975.<sup>243</sup> Additional units were constructed later.

One of the first tasks that faced Magnusson was to align the education courses with the new requirements specified by the Advanced Education Board of New South Wales. From 1969, New South Wales (NSW) State accreditation became the prerequisite for Commonwealth scholarships. By 1974 Avondale College was fully registered in the disciplines of elementary education and secondary education (applied arts, fine arts, humanities, and science)<sup>244</sup> The diploma of business (accountancy) was added in 1976. There was an abiding reticence to accept government money, but individual scholarships came without strings attached. Gradually, money was accepted for science equipment, library books, and other capital items but never for teacher's wages. The denomination wanted to maintain control of staffing and their rates of pay.

The government also brought a recommendation that trainee nurses should do their theory at an accredited liberal arts institution. Avondale College and Sydney Adventist Hospital therefore found it advantageous to unite their training programs. The first of such nursing classes was inducted in July 1980, Magnusson's final year as principal, and graduated in July 1983.<sup>245</sup> The Theology Department was also exploring the possibilities of a liaison with Andrews University in order to offer master of arts degrees. The first graduates from this program occurred in 1981.<sup>246</sup>

Avondale broadened its base in the late 1970s with the commencement of a flight instruction course under the direction of mission pilot Colin Winch.<sup>247</sup> The little airstrip in the northern section of the property was improved, but the enterprise took some time before it was fully recognized as an integral part of the college. Those receiving their private pilot license did not have a part in graduation ceremonies until 1993.<sup>248</sup>

Since the earliest days of the institution, many students had attended for one year only and left with nothing in hand to show for their study. Magnusson tried to address this situation with the introduction of short courses such as the general studies certificate and the biblical studies certificate. To these were added the carpentry and joinery pre-employment certificate, the motor mechanics pre-employment certificate, and the farm technology certificate. They proved to be weak options because they had no status with employment agencies. The secretarial certificate did assist some to find employment, and the commercial studies certificate enjoyed some recognition from the Society of Affiliate Accountants.<sup>249</sup>

The corporate realization that the 1890s ideological model had drifted under McDowell's leadership brought about some pressure on Magnusson to introduce units called, for want of a better term, ancillaries. These included orienteering, bird-watching, guitar tuition, first-aid, welding, leatherwork, cake-decorating, and embroidery.<sup>250</sup> Students could choose which unit they studied, and eventually, these units were included in their fees.<sup>251</sup> At the same time, some volunteer physical exercise was encouraged under the Blueprint program. Students volunteered from two to six hours per week landscaping, tending the flower and vegetable gardens, or participating in village community service.<sup>252</sup>

## James John Charles Cox

New Zealander James Cox had made a brilliant career for himself in America, earning a Harvard doctorate, becoming a world-renowned scholar, and lecturing at Andrews University. He was recalled to Australia as the nonteaching principal of Avondale for 1981. He had been nominated a month before Magnusson was voted out.<sup>253</sup>

Cox's mandate was to shepherd the new master of arts (religion) program in affiliation with Andrews University. He was very familiar with it. He was not so familiar with the Australian education system, but he cooperated with his department heads to lift several diploma courses. The diploma of business, for example, grew into a bachelor of business, and the diploma of education became the bachelor of education with different specialties. Graduates for these degrees first appeared in 1985.<sup>254</sup> Cox was persuaded, too, to introduce lecturer's academic regalia at graduation services to showcase the wide spectrum of training that the faculty represented.<sup>255</sup>

Cox was happy to inaugurate an annual homecoming weekend, a feature borrowed from American colleges. Avondale's first homecoming took place on November 6–8, 1981. Murdoch and his wife, Ruth, visited from America and spoke at the services. McDowell and Magnusson were also honored guests. Magnusson was especially pleased to be present at the official opening of the Chemistry Building on the same weekend. The Avondale College Foundation, an active auxiliary, presented a minibus to transport trainee teachers and singing groups to their appointments.<sup>256</sup> At least two additional buses were donated later.<sup>257</sup>

College administration will be forever grateful to Cox for the leading role he adopted in gaining a heritage listing for College Hall. The building was the campus hub since its construction in 1899. Rather than have it demolished, Cox set in motion the plans for its restoration as a useful heritage piece.<sup>258</sup> Plans were underway to cease using the upstairs chapel as the campus church and to build a large modern church alongside the White Memorial Building. It was fitting that Cox, whose pastoral care was highly appreciated by all, should turn the sod for this building just prior to his return to America in mid-1984.<sup>259</sup>

## Bryan William Ball

Favorable impressions of the Murdoch era still lingered at Avondale, so the announcement that another Englishman would replace Cox was met with high hopes. Bryan Ball transferred from the Religion Department at Newbold

College, England, to begin almost seven years as principal, from mid-1984 to 1990.<sup>260</sup>

Ball carried forward the building of the new campus church, officially dedicated on March 8, 1986.<sup>261</sup> A year later, the Recreational and Physical Education Centre was completed. Annexed to the auditorium, it provided facilities for squash, badminton, basketball, weightlifting, and gymnastics.<sup>262</sup> This building was named the Jim Hanson Fitness Centre in 1994 as a posthumous tribute to Hanson, who had pioneered modern physical education at Avondale from 1981 to 1983.<sup>263</sup> In the southern summer of 1989–1990, occupancy of a new dormitory for young women began after its opening on November 26, 1989.<sup>264</sup> It was named the Ella Boyd Hall, a curious choice in view of the fact it was Ella's mother, Maud Sisley Boyd, who was an early preceptor (1900, 1904–1906). Ella was an early graduate, but her name was no more worthy than any other graduate's.

Some academic advances were made in the 1980s. A Mathematics and Computing Department accepted its first intake in 1985.<sup>265</sup> By 1989, the diploma of applied science (nursing) was changed to the diploma of health science (nursing), the new name reflected in the 1991 graduation brochure.<sup>266</sup> In July 1990 the nursing graduates took part in the Cooranbong campus ceremony for the first time, a move that the Wahroonga campus faculty reluctantly surrendered.<sup>267</sup> The nursing graduates' traditional Friday evening Candlelight Ceremony was maintained.

A wages dispute occupied a considerable amount of Ball's time during his presidency. A small group of the teaching faculty appealed to the Australian Teacher's Union (ATU) for assistance to achieve government wage rates. Even though the Avondale faculty were not members of the ATU, their request prompted a willingness by the ATU to support the faculty. Church authorities hired legal help, and the case was eventually heard by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. After considering the matter for 18 months, the commission ruled in favor of the college retaining its own wage scale.<sup>268</sup>

## Geoffrey Allan Madigan

When Ball was elected to be president of the South Pacific Division in late 1990, Geoffrey Madigan was recalled from his study leave at Andrews University to be principal. He had lectured in the Science Department and served as registrar.<sup>269</sup> His tenure as principal would prove to be the all-time longest, lasting until the close of 2003.

Madigan returned to campus to find infrastructure in dire need of repair. The auditorium, for example, was infested with termites and had to be closed for safety reasons. No new buildings would be erected until finances were found for all existing structures to be properly maintained. Preston Hall, together with the original building that Hare had completed in 1897, was demolished in the southern summer of 1991–1992. This wooden building had become a fire risk, being so close to Andre Hall. Bethel Hall, the very first major building on campus, was saved and restored according to heritage building codes in 1992. Most of the funding for the restoration came from the Avondale College Foundation.<sup>270</sup> The same auxiliary provided the funds for the restoration of College Hall, saved from the wrecking ball by James Cox. It was reopened during the centenary homecoming in 1997.<sup>271</sup> The restored auditorium was later completed in time for the 2002 homecoming. Generous funding for this project was forthcoming from the General Conference and the Canadian-based Chan Shun Foundation.<sup>272</sup>

In 1994 Madigan gave the first indication that Avondale College was seeking university status.<sup>273</sup> The previous year the New South Wales government accredited Avondale's bachelor of science degrees (biological science, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and geography) and bachelor of arts degrees (English, history, mathematics, geography, visual arts, and religion). The first graduates appeared in 1995.<sup>274</sup> The aviation certificates (commercial pilot license and private pilot license) were also granted accreditation in 1993, with graduates completing their course in 1994.<sup>275</sup> In 1995 the master of arts (theology) and the master of theology degrees were accredited, making the link with Andrews University unnecessary.<sup>276</sup> Despite this development, Avondale College maintained a brief link with La Sierra University in order to graduate 16 master of arts (counseling) candidates in 1995.<sup>277</sup> The master of nursing (acute care, cancer nursing, midwifery, orthopedics, and wound management) candidates first graduated in the centenary year of Avondale College, 1997.<sup>278</sup>

The Avondale Academic Press was established with their first publication in 1995. It gave faculty members the option to publish their research internally and attract kudos for the college.<sup>279</sup>

Under Madigan's leadership, the advertising of faculty vacancies became an established practice in order to make the appointments process more transparent and defensible in the context of their quest for university status. Madigan became increasingly involved with the Council of Private Higher Education (COPHE). This body was the peak lobby group for private higher education. It was instrumental in the introduction of FEE HELP, granting low-interest student loans. The same group assisted Madigan's appointment as a representative on the Australian Universities Quality Agency Board when it was formed in 2000. This prestige group was responsible for auditing higher education providers in Australia. Avondale remains a member of COPHE.<sup>280</sup> Part of the fine-tuning for university status also involved nomenclature. The title "principal" became "president," and the "Board of Governors" became "Avondale College Council," first mentioned in the 1998 graduation brochure.<sup>281</sup>

In 1994 the recorded enrollment was almost eight hundred.<sup>282</sup> The education and nursing faculties continued to be the most popular. For example, in 2003, education graduates numbered 64, and there were 45 nursing graduates. Other departments, aviation (12), religion (16), humanities and creative arts (21), and business services (33), contributed to a grand total of 237 graduates for the year.<sup>283</sup>

At the beginning of 2003, Madigan notified the Avondale College Council that he planned to step down at the end of

the year.<sup>284</sup> He would transfer to the laboratories of the Sanitarium Health Food Company.<sup>285</sup> John Frederick Cox acted as principal during the changeover until graduation and then assumed sole control for 2004.<sup>286</sup>

## John Frederick Cox

John Cox was no relation to the previous principal James John Charles Cox. His specialty was Shakespearian studies, and he had come to Avondale's Humanities Department in 1970. He had served as dean of the Faculty of Arts (1998–2000) and vice-president, academic administration (2001–2003).<sup>287</sup>

The years 2004–2008 saw an enrollment growth of 40 percent, topping more than one thousand in 2005, due largely to continued government assistance with tuition fees.<sup>288</sup> A bachelor of education (early childhood) was introduced in 2005.<sup>289</sup> The graduation service that same year was the first time an indigenous individual received a degree, a graduate who had begun his religious studies at Mamarapha College in Western Australia.<sup>290</sup> During the graduation weekend, an Institute of Church Ministry was opened in the Laurels building, a facility that is devoted to research and planning for needs-based ministries in local churches.<sup>291</sup>

In 2004, Avondale College made a formal application for university status,<sup>292</sup> but it was rejected two years later. One of the reasons given for failure was the low level of research produced by the institution. Lecturers were so heavily loaded with tutorials that they were left with little time for any research. Cox tried to remedy this situation by increasing staff, encouraging the publication of research in eminent magazines, and offering degrees in research. By 2008, the Australian University Quality Agency was positive in its audit of the college.<sup>293</sup> Master's degrees in research first appeared in the graduation class of 2008.<sup>294</sup> It was a sure sign that the academic standard was lifting.

During the earliest years of Cox's term, there was much discussion about the viability of the aviation program. There was less need for mission pilots and mission planes because it was becoming cheaper to use commercial airlines in the Pacific Islands. The vast area occupied by the airfield did not warrant the small numbers of annual graduates, on average being fewer than 10. The land itself was becoming more valuable as a housing development site. For these reasons, all aviation training was transferred to the Cessnock Airport in New South Wales in 2006 and eventually sold to Illawarra Technology Corporation,<sup>295</sup> the last graduates completing their program in 2012.<sup>296</sup> The long-range plan was for the sale of building sites to establish a fund that would underwrite the finances for the institution.<sup>297</sup> At approximately the same time, late 2004, a group of philanthropists called the President's Circle had formed to complement funds from the site development plans.<sup>298</sup> This was fortuitous, for in less than four years, in 2008, the Avondale College Foundation auxiliary that had donated several millions of dollars was placed in voluntary administration.<sup>299</sup>

## Ray Clarence William Roennfeldt

In April 2008, Cox announced to his faculty that he would retire at the end of the year. Following the Avondale College Council meeting, August 26, the faculty learned that Ray Roennfeldt, dean of the Faculty of Theology, was appointed the new president for 2009. Roennfeldt had sentimental ties to the Sydney Adventist Hospital campus, graduating as a nurse in 1969. He then began theological studies at the Avondale campus, culminating at Andrews University, Michigan, where he was awarded a doctor of philosophy (systematic theology).<sup>300</sup>

Roennfeldt continued the resolve to lift the academic standard. Professor Anthony Williams of the Newcastle University's School of Architecture was commissioned to study ways of improving Avondale's research output. The 2009 Williams Report was a seminal turning point for the institution, leading to Williams himself joining the faculty in 2012 as vice president (research).<sup>301</sup> Some faculty attracted government sponsorship for their research.<sup>302</sup> Some generated significant amounts of research and were awarded associate professorships.<sup>303</sup> Eventually, in 2017, one was awarded a professorship.<sup>304</sup> To assist the faculty with their research, the library expanded their resources in 2011 to gain access to 120 online databases.<sup>305</sup> Further, in 2014, the library connected with the Australian Academic and Research Network, which included 38 Australian universities and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization.<sup>306</sup> Williams reported in 2013 that annual faculty publications had reached 1.2 each, a favorable average comparable with Australian universities.<sup>307</sup>

More tangible capital improvements included the transformation of the baptismal font site at the rear of College Hall into a grassed area for outdoor music and relaxation. On graduation weekend 2010, it was officially named the Brandstater Amphitheatre in honor of the Brandstater family, well known and generous alumni of the institution.<sup>308</sup> The restoration of the Music Hall culminated in 2013. At the same time, the Music Department was renamed the Avondale Conservatorium in view of the fact that it was offering not only bachelor degrees but also a master of arts (music) that majored in research.<sup>309</sup> In the same year, 2013, the Clinical Education Centre was opened on the Wahroonga campus. Generous funding had been donated by the University of Sydney, the Peters Family Foundation, Dr. Charles Warman, and others. The building provided a library, two lecture halls, and other facilities for Avondale's Faculty of Nursing and Health.<sup>310</sup>

Enrollment levels continued to rise, reaching a high in 2013 of 1,399 over both campuses, Avondale and Wahroonga. The Schools of Education and Nursing attracted the majority of students.<sup>311</sup> A bachelor's major in chaplaincy was first offered in 2012 in response to government regulations demanding chaplains be properly qualified.<sup>312</sup> The same year witnessed the first conferral of a Ph.D. degree.<sup>313</sup>

In July 2013 a landmark agreement was signed with Charles Sturt University (CSU). It would provide mentoring from

the university in the areas of governance, research, and teaching standards. Providing proper levels were maintained in these areas, graduates could transfer to CSU for further study. The deputy vice-chancellor of CSU would be an ex officio member of the Avondale Academic Board to liaise in all relevant matters.<sup>314</sup> By 2015, all testamurs carried the seals of both CSU and Avondale College of Higher Education. In August 2019, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency granted Avondal Australian University College Status.<sup>315</sup>

The School of Ministry and Theology received a new title at a service in the Ladies Chapel on March 24, 2015. On that occasion, the department was dedicated as the Avondale Seminary. Dr. Barry Oliver, South Pacific Division president and chairperson of the Avondale College Council, spoke of the imperative for a well-educated ministry to meet the needs of modern society.<sup>316</sup>

Throughout Avondale's quest for higher academic levels, the presidents and faculty have continued to encourage the students to participate in humanitarian projects both in Australia and overseas. This is in keeping with the long-time motto of the institution, "For a Greater Vision of World Needs." Avondale continues to sponsor numerous cross-cultural endeavors in which students serve as volunteers.<sup>317</sup> Holistic education remains the ideal for the institution, incorporating the religious, the academic, the social, and the practical aspects of life.

## Former Names

Avondale School for Christian Workers (1897–1912); Australasian Missionary College (1912–1964); Avondale College (1964–2011); Avondale College of Higher Education (2011–July 2019)

## Principals/Presidents

Cassius Boone Hughes (1897–1898); Arthur Grosvenor Daniells (nominal principal) (1899); Cassius Boone Hughes (1900–1901); Charles Walter Irwin (1902–1908); John Henry Paap (acting principal) (1909); Benjamin Franklin Machlan (1910–1912); George Teasdale (1913–1914); Joseph Mills (1915); Frank Lawrence Chaney (headmaster), Johan Marius Johanson (business manager) (1916–1917); Ludwig Daniel August Lemke (1917–1919); Henry Kirk (1919–1921); William Warren Prescott (1921–1922); Lynn Harper Wood (1922–1928); Erwin Earl Cossentine (1928–1929); Hubert Martin (1930–1932); Alfred Frederick John Kranz (acting principal) (1932); Albert Edward Speck (1933–1935); Alfred Frederick John Kranz (acting principal) (1935); Cyril Stewart Palmer (1936–1937); Albert Henry Piper (1938–1939); Thomas Charles Lawson (1940–1943); Benjamin Hamilton McMahon (1944); Edward Rosendahl (1945–1946); William Gordon Campbell Murdoch (1947–1952); Edward Eric White (1953–1958); Ernest Gordon McDowell (1959–1970); Eric Magnusson (1971–1980); James John Charles Cox (1981–1984); Bryan William Ball (1984–1990); Timothy Gorle (acting principal) (1990); Geoffrey Allan Madigan (1990–2003); John Frederick Cox (2003–2008); Ray Clarence William Roennfeld (2009–)

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