



The dining room in the middle and the boys dorm on the right, 1968

Photo courtesy of Glen Cozens.

Edinburgh College

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Edinburgh College was opened in 1964 by the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference as Lilydale Adventist Academy. It was located on the eastern outskirts of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. It functioned as a boarding academy until 2007. In 2016, it amalgamated with Edinburgh Adventist Primary School and Edinburgh Adventist Learning Centre to form Edinburgh College under the administration of the Victorian Conference.¹

Developments That Led to Establishment of the School

In 1957, the education department of the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference conducted a survey of Seventh-day Adventist families with children aged between five and eighteen. The survey generated significant

discussion about the need for an educational institution. The subsequent report recommended the establishment of a secondary boarding school and led to the formation of a planning committee comprising the officers of the conference and the education secretary, William J. Gilson.²

By June 1958, exploration centered on land in the Lilydale district east of Melbourne, Victoria, with members of the committee impressed by one property in particular. The thirty-two-acre (approximately 13 hectares) property, situated between Lilydale, Mooroolbark, and Croydon, was originally part of the Mitchell estate, built by Mrs. Lempriere, the sister of Dame Nellie Melba. Due to the death of her husband, the owner at the time, Mrs. Dawson, had the property for sale.³

The property featured three main buildings, a large garage and chauffeur's quarters situated among "old world" trees of silver birch, oak, spruce, and magnolia with beautiful gardens, and lawns creating a park-like atmosphere.⁴ Purchase of the property seemed unlikely to succeed due to lack of finances; however, two attempts by other buyers failed leading the land agents to accept a £10 retainer from the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference while it sought a means of raising the funds to complete the purchase. The property was secured with financial support from both the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference and Australasian Division totaling £18,500.⁵ Gilson worked tirelessly to ensure that the property was acquired. He became the first principal of Lilydale Adventist Academy.⁶

Building of Lilydale Adventist Academy's facilities commenced in 1963. The builder, Mr. Crabb, and his team worked with determination to complete the facilities in time. Despite the mud and mess of the last stages of construction work, the Academy opened on February 10, 1964. Of the 100 students who enrolled in the first year of operation, 45 were boarders (34 boys, 21 girls). At that time the facilities comprised administration offices, classrooms, and the boys' dormitory. Four staff homes were constructed on the property by Carl Stoneman and Henry (Harry) Epps.⁷

The girls' dormitory was completed in time for the 1966 school year, doubling the capacity to board students. Students came from New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Queensland, and internationally from Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.⁸ Lilydale's international student population continued to grow eventually including students from Africa, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, the United States, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, and Malaysia.⁹

Factors Influencing Growth of the Academy

Lilydale Adventist Academy's role as the educational institution serving the local community, students from interstate, and the families of expatriate missionaries provided an important contribution to the missionary work conducted in the Australasian Division (now South Pacific Division). Diversity across the student body was a characteristic of the academy until the decline in expatriate missionary work in the Pacific Islands in the late 1970s. The era from the 1950s to the 1970s was a period of extensive commitment to mission across the South

Pacific and this contributed to the growth in enrollment.¹⁰

Warburton, a village further up the Yarra Valley, also came to be closely associated with the academy due to the development of a number of institutions owned and operated by the Church. These included Signs Publishing Company (established in 1906), Warburton Health Care Centre and Hospital (established in 1910), Sanitarium Health Food Company (established in 1925), as well as a church and aged-care center. These industries brought significant employment opportunities for Adventist families with Warburton Adventist School providing a primary school education for many families within the township.¹¹ At its peak two buses were needed to transport secondary students from Warburton and the Yarra Valley through to Lilydale Adventist Academy.

Arnold C. Reye followed Gilson as principal in 1966 and continued the vision for a school that would “provide a barrier against the secularism and materialism of the age; to provide a suitable Christian environment for physical, mental, and spiritual development; and to provide stimulus and direction to our young people who desire to find a place in God’s work.”¹² Students from Lilydale Adventist Academy were encouraged in their attention to their studies, their active role in service to others, and faith development in the form of Bible studies for baptism.

Dormitory life created many memories, due to the lasting friendships formed with other students as well as the supporting roles of teaching and ancillary staff. The cafeteria was the social hub. Kevin Geelan, having just completed his chef’s apprenticeship, was appointed to Lilydale Adventist Academy in 1966. The budget allowed for 33 cents per meal for the 85 boarding students.¹³ Walter Engler managed the gardens, which supplied food to the kitchen. He and the student work teams that were assigned to the gardens and grounds kept the campus looking like a park. The appearance of the campus was a characteristic that left lasting impressions on students, staff, and visitors. The campus successively managed by Tony Voigt, Errol Arthur, and Peter Johanson.¹⁴

Campus expansion continued in response to enrollment growth. Lyn Bartlett, principal from 1980 to 1985, reported an enrollment of 233, comprised of 166 day students and 67 boarding students at the close of 1983.¹⁵ To accommodate increased demand for places, especially for boarding places, the academy undertook additional building projects during 1982-1983. Projects included a library extension (1982) and accommodation for ladies dean, the assistant ladies dean, new residence for the dean of boys and extensions to the administration building (1983).¹⁶ The \$30,000 cost of these extensions was funded from the offerings of 190 churches across the Trans-Australia Union Conference as part of the institutions offering program.¹⁷

Enrollment growth continued throughout the mid 1980s into the 1990s with Allan Butler, then business manager, reporting student numbers at 340, with 100 boarders. Support from the Trans-Australia Union Conference, through its offering program again provided assistance, enabling the purchase of two demountable classrooms for the use of the Bible department.¹⁸ Not only were student numbers increasing, there were also significant changes occurring in the content and delivery of learning made possible through the influence of computer technology. Students were expected to apply newly learned research skills to highlight their

understanding of both local and global events based on analysis of a range of sources. The application of technology to learning was a necessary development in a competitive learning environment but also led to re-prioritizing of available resources.¹⁹ At the same time, the cost of operating a boarding school was becoming a cause for concern. The Trans-Australia Union Conference was supporting two boarding schools—Carmel College in Western Australia and Lilydale Adventist Academy in Victoria.²⁰

A consistent strength of the extra-curricular program at Lilydale Adventist Academy was the music program. The academy concert band played in support of a number of marching events, including regular involvement in ANZAC Day marches. The annual choir tours, led by accomplished music directors including David King and Paul Woodward, created lasting memories for the academy students and their audiences.²¹

Service activities were always a strong feature of student life at Lilydale Academy. Through programs such as STORMCo, Breakfast in Schools, and the Appeal for Mission students supported their community and church.²² Students had first-hand experience with service projects through annual fly and building projects in Vanuatu. The close links between mission field and school were the driving force behind a clean-a-thon in 1985 during which students raised money for a tractor for Mount Diamond High School. In recognition of their efforts, Rosalee Nixon and Marek Stepniak travelled to Papua New Guinea and had the honor of presenting the check for A\$7798.88 in person.²³

Enthusiasm for reunions among former students and staff saw large numbers attending anniversary weekends to celebrate 15 years (1981), 21 years (1985), 25 years (1989), 30 years (1994), 40 years (2004), and 50 years (2014). The number of attendees rose over ensuing generations of students with over 1200 attending the 50th anniversary celebrations held in 2014.²⁴

Bible studies and were a core goal of academy life, with annual reports of the numbers of student baptisms, including students who only came to know about the Adventist church through their attendance at the academy.²⁵ The completion of the academy gymnasium in 1993, after years of planning and fundraising, was another infrastructure milestone that had a significant impact on students' learning experience, offering an all-weather location for recreational activities and the end to games under the boys dormitory.²⁶

Over time competitiveness within the health care and health food industries led to reviews of the sustainability of church industries in Warburton. In 1997, Sanitarium Health Food Company ceased production, followed soon after by closure of the Health Care Centre and Hospital (2001). As a result, the numbers of students attending Warburton Christian School reached a position which was no longer viable and it closed in 2007.²⁷ These changes also impacted Lilydale Adventist Academy, reducing its enrollment and sustainability at a time when the academy had other serious challenges.

Midway through 2000, the former Croydon Adventist Primary School was relocated to the academy site and commenced operations under a new name—Edinburgh Adventist Primary School (EAPS). This was a strategically beneficial relocation for both the primary school and the academy, with Edinburgh Adventist Primary School

advertising the opportunity for K-12 education in combination with Lilydale Adventist Academy.²⁸ Policies and procedures were developed for a shared campus program.

With the academy under Australian Union Conference administration and the primary school under Victorian Conference administration, discussions around the inefficiencies of this arrangement gained traction. The growing interest in educational services for young children led to the opening of Edinburgh Early Learning Centre in 2006.

Changes in the rural economy, availability of Christian schools closer to home, and the transition from expatriate mission leadership to nationally-trained local leadership had led to a decline in the number of boarding students. With fewer students attending the academy from across Australia, other conferences became increasingly reluctant to fund a school perceived to be almost exclusively attended by Victorian students. The boarding program was eventually closed in 2007. After 2010, the girls' dormitory was redesigned into a Language Centre and the library was renamed the Learning Resource Centre in keeping with education in the 21st century. Individual laptops were introduced in 2012 to ensure students received an education that was future-focused.

The three entities—the Early Learning Centre, the primary school, and the academy were, by 2012, catering to a Victorian constituency and market. They were collectively promoted as Lilydale Adventist Schools while discussion of the amalgamation of the entities continued. By mid-2013, under the leadership of principal Malcolm Coulson, a resolution to amalgamate the campus entities under the administration of the Victorian Conference had been endorsed by Adventist Schools Victoria (ASV), members of the Australian Union Conference (AUC), and Victorian Conference executive committees.²⁹ The Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority (VRQA) approved the application for an amalgamated entity to be known as Edinburgh College in time for the commencement of classes in 2016.³⁰

In preparation for launching the three entities under a single name, the Lilydale Adventist Academy crest was re-designed to blend the old with the new. The original crest, designed by Trevor Lloyd, included a dove representing the Holy Spirit, an open Bible positioned diagonally above it, with a crown above symbolizing loyalty to the King of Kings. Decorative components were to reinforce that the academy was Australian and located in Victoria. Across the banner are the words "In Him We Live." The new crest conveyed the original intent by retaining all the core elements. In keeping with the original commitment to providing quality faith-based education, the amalgamated institution has continued to look for ways to support church mission. Under the leadership of incoming principal, Tim Borgas, the Edinburgh College campus became the new location for a Christmas re-enactment program called the *Road to Bethlehem*. The program had previously been conducted at Nunawading for 21 years and retained its community support as it provided a platform for sharing the good news to a new community.

List of Principals

1964-1965	William J. Gilson
1966-1971	Arnold C. Reye
1972-1974	M. Bruce Durrant
1975-1979	Rommert (Bob) Spoor
1980-1985	Lynley Bartlett
1986-1990	Ross Reid
1991-1995	Allan French
1996-1998	David McClintock
1999-2000	Ross Reid
2001-2002	Roy Hollingsworth
2003-2007	Daryl Murdoch
2008-2012	Ben Thomas
2013-2016	Malcolm Coulson
2017	Tim Borgas

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NOTES

1. Much of the information in this article is written from the personal knowledge of the author who was the principal of the school between 2013 and 2018.

2. "Beginnings of the Adventist Academy, Lilydale, Victoria," *Myalla*, 50th Anniversary Edition, 2014, 10-11.
3. ³ Ibid.
4. Arnold C. Reye, "Adventist Academy," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, September 5, 1966, 3.
5. "Beginnings of the Adventist Academy."
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8. "Lilydale Adventist Academy: Education that Cares and Prepares," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, December 18, 1982, insert.
9. Ross Reid, "Is Boarding School for You?" *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, August 16, 1986, 5; Karen Miller, "Lilydale Academy is in Demand," *Record* [South Pacific Division], May 1, 1993, 13.
10. David Thiele, "An Unusual Building," *Record*, June 22, 2017, 13; Aaron Lopa, "Adventism's Explosive Presence: Factors Influencing the Growth of the Church in Papua New Guinea—From 1960-2000," *Journal of Pacific History* 3, no. 1 (June 2003): 3-8.
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13. Kevin Geelan, "Thirty-three Cents a Day," *Myalla*, 50th Anniversary Edition, 2014, 26.
14. Errol Arthur, "Twenty One Years 1985," *Myalla*, 50th Anniversary Edition, 2014, 63; Peter Johanson, "Just a Warby Dag," *Myalla*, 50th Anniversary Edition, 2014, 69.
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18. . Allan Butler, "Designed for Excellence," *Record* [South Pacific Division], July 21, 1990, 6.
19. Arthur Winzenried, "Lilydale's New Challenge," *Record* [South Pacific Division], July 25, 1992, 6.
20. Joy Totenhofer, "TAUC Growing Despite Pressures," *Record* [South Pacific Division], October 13, 1990, 10-11.

21. Ross Reid, "Is Boarding School for You?" *South Pacific Record and Adventist World Survey*, August 16, 1986, 5; Katherine Yeo, "Lilydale Academy Tours NZ," *Record* [South Pacific Division], December 19, 1992, 9.
22. See StormCo.
23. Rosalie Nixon, "Lilydale Academy Meets Papua New Guinea," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, April 13, 1985, 31-32.
24. Sue Judd, "Lilydale Academy Reunion," *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey*, August 24, 1981, 12-13; Linden Chuang, "50 Years at LAA," *Record*, May 31, 2014, 9.
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26. Danny Brooks, "Broadened Horizons," *Myalla*, 50th Anniversary Edition, 2014, 68.
27. "Sanitarium Health Food Company Factory," Warburton Seventh-day Adventists, 2009-2019, accessed December 21, 2018; <http://www.warburtonadventists.com>.
28. See advertising in *Record* [South Pacific Division], January 15, 2000, 15.
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