

History of MLC School

MLC School was established during a unique period in the history of NSW and has journeyed through the past 120 years encountering immense social and technological changes along the way.

During the 1880's a wealthy and confident New South Wales was experiencing an unprecedented boom period resulting in burgeoning infrastructure and a flourishing cultural environment. The face of Burwood changed dramatically during this period. The Sydney to Parramatta railway line helped overcome Burwood's isolation and stimulated residential and commercial growth. Attitudes towards the education of girls were shifting and MLC School was to embrace this transformation.

The following is taken from a *Sydney Morning Herald* advertisement announcing the opening of MLC School's founding school, Wesleyan Ladies College, Burwood in January 1886.

"The College is situated in an eminently healthy neighbourhood, sufficiently removed from the keen air of the sea, easily accessible by train from Sydney, and commanding a beautiful view for many miles around."

The school opened with ten pupils in the original Kent House on the corner of Park and Rowley Streets, formerly Miss Lester's School. The site was purchased for six thousand pounds. *Pictured top right* is the first picture taken of the assembled school shortly after opening. The Principal Rev CJ Prescott is seated with his wife Mrs Prescott and their son Arnold between them.

Once the school was opened the school colours were chosen: two bands of dark blue (for love of Oxford) with light blue inserted (for love of Cambridge). The school crest was also chosen: the Book of Learning and the Star of Knowledge on the Cross of St George. Also selected in 1886, was the school motto from the Vulgate, meaning, "Walk as daughters of the Light." *Pictured below left* is the school crest and motto.

In 1892 Schofield Hall was built as a dining room for Boarders with the sum of two thousand pounds given by Mrs Schofield. The former boarders dining room is the current chapel. *Pictured below right* is the original Kent House and Schofield Hall. In 1899, the name of the school was changed to Burwood Ladies' College.

In 1907, the school made more additions to buildings with nine bedrooms, two bathrooms and two classrooms and the name of the school was changed to Methodist Ladies' College (M.L.C.)





Above: Etching by Austin Platt, 1932 showing the former façade of MLC School at the corner of Park and Rowley Streets
Below: Abbeythorpe, the former Junior School stood adjacent to Burwood Park



Two towers were added to the Schofield Wing in 1919 and in 1922, Abbeythorpe, which stood where the existing Aquatic Center now stands, was purchased for a junior school. The playing fields were extended and new classrooms and bedrooms were built. In 1926, the kindergarten building was demolished to make room for the new Potts Assembly Hall above and a gymnasium and classrooms below.

In 1933, Rev HC Foreman was appointed Principal, followed by Rev W Deane (1940), Rev RB Lew (1948), Rev WD O'Reilly (1960), Rev EA Bennett (1965) and KJ Cornwell (1970). In 1941, Dr G Wade became Headmistress and the School Council amalgamated the positions of Principal and Headmistress in 1972. The current Principal is Mrs Barbara Stone AM.

In 1977, fire destroyed the boarding area, dining room, offices and classrooms, see *pictured below right*. The façade of the school was to change forever as the front tower was demolished and in 1981 Chapel, art and music studios, drama theatre TAS classrooms and extensions to Kent house were completed. The boarding house was closed in 1979. The Uniting Church in Australia was formed in 1977 and the school was then known as MLC School Burwood.

Other major building works in the last twenty years include the ILC building, Hockey fields and car park, the Centenary Music Center and the Aquatic Center.

