

10. TWO FOUNDATION STONES



Beneath the Clock Tower, by the entrance to the Main Building, are two Foundation Stones recording decisive events in the history of Geelong Grammar School. To the south of the steps is part of the Foundation Stone of the Old School in Geelong, laid by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly, on 24 June 1857 – not on the original

(1855) site of the School in Villamanta Street or its second (1856) site in Skene Street, but on the site (bounded on three sides by Maude, Moorabool, and McKillop Streets) which it was to occupy from 1858 to 1913. The northern stone was laid on 3 April 1913 by the Governor-General of Australia, Lord Denman, at an early stage of the work necessary to build the New School at Corio to which it moved at the beginning of 1914. Its laying was immediately followed by that of the southern stone by Allan Davenport (GGs 1908-13), Senior Prefect of the School, and then the laying of the Foundation Stone of Manifold House by William Thomson Manifold (GGs 1873-79; Chairman of Council 1911-22) on behalf of the six members of the Manifold family, all Old Geelong Grammarians, whose munificent gift to the School Manifold House was.

Sir Henry Barkly (1815-1898) had already governed British Guiana and Jamaica when appointed Governor of Victoria late in 1856. The first Lady Barkly was accidentally killed on Princes Bridge in Melbourne in April 1857 (Sir Henry remarried in 1860). A reticent but hospitable man, he attended a Ball in Geelong after the laying of our Foundation Stone, and the next day opened the Geelong-Melbourne railway and returned to Melbourne by train. He later governed Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope. When the School celebrated its Jubilee (two years late) in 1907, Lady Barkly kindly returned to it as a gift the silver trowel with which Sir Henry had laid the Foundation Stone fifty years earlier, and it was reused by Lord Denman in 1913 – and is now on display in the Archives Centre.

Thomas 3rd Baron Denman (1874-1954) had been a (Liberal) government whip in the House of Lords before coming to Australia as Governor-General in 1911, to live at Government House in Melbourne, the capital of the new nation until the move to Canberra in 1926. He was accompanied to Corio by his wife, Gertrude Mary née Pearson (1884-1954), a daughter of the 1st Viscount Cowdray and later famous as chairman of both the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the National Birth Control Association in Britain. A few days before coming to Corio, she had named the future capital on what was to be the site of Canberra. On both occasions she was attired in a sweeping dress of strikingly broad stripes somehow suggestive of the Union Jack. Lord Denman was presented with a replica of the silver trowel that he, and Barkly before him, had used, and this replica is now in the possession of a son of the 5th Lord Denman who himself has sons at Hurstpierpoint College in Sussex where Stephen Meek, our Principal since October 2004, was shown it while still Headmaster there but destined for GGS – and showed it to me when I visited him at Hurstpierpoint on 24 June (our traditional Founders' Day, commemorating the 1857 laying) last year (I took it as a very pleasant omen).

Allan Davenport, who was at Gallipoli in 1915, was awarded the Military Cross while serving with the East Lancashire Regiment, and was killed in action in France in 1918. His family gave the Allan Davenport Prize, awarded annually to his successors in the office of Senior Prefect. Beside him as he relaid the old Foundation Stone was another prefect, Charles Hawker (GGs 1905-13), who survived the war despite being wounded fourteen times and losing an eye and the use of his legs; his courage, intelligence, and exemplary public service became legendary. Killed in an aircraft crash in 1938 on the eve of another World War (when many thought he would be Prime Minister), he bequeathed to the School a large sum which enabled an expansion and improvement of the Library. As a boy at the Old School in Geelong, he had catalogued the Library. What was the original Library of the School at Corio (doubling in earlier days as Classroom 4) is now named the Hawker Library in his honour, and his portrait hangs there today.

Above the Foundation Stones are bronze portraits in relief of William Thomson Manifold and his son John (GGs 1900-06; Chairman of Council 1932-37 and Acting Chairman 1940-46), to each of whom the School owes an immeasurable debt for his generosity and service. John's third son, William Grey Manifold, DFC and Bar (GGs 1931-38), also gave long service on the School Council (1950-65). His grandfather was the first of an unbroken succession of Old Geelong Grammarians to serve as Chairmen.