

FIFTY NINTH EDITION | 2023

SOMERSET

lifetimes



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Contents

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 3. From the Headmaster | 17. Sleepout for Service | 28. Second Generation – Sara Kirby (nee Groen) |
| 6. Leaving a Legacy | 18. Shot Put Olympian Inspires Students | 30. Alumni Visit to Year 12s |
| 8. Storyfest - Out West | 20. The Alumni Chapter Volume 6 | 31. Alumni Staff – Sam Brodar, Class of 2011 |
| 10. SFYP 30 Years and Beyond | 21. Return to Somerset | 34. Staff Updates |
| 12. Fathers' Day Festival | 22. Alumni Awards 2023 | |
| 14. Somerset to Somerset | 24. Alumni Awards 2022 | |
| 16. Nera and Suntae
– A Short Story by Miranda Shum | 26. A Few Years Down the Track | |

Information

Somerset Lifestyles is published once a year by Somerset College to share items of topical interest relating to overall activities of College life and the greater Somerset community.

Cover Photo: Following the success of the inaugural Storyfest Out West our Somerset Storyfest staff and volunteers once again headed north to Longreach for the literature festival.

Editor: Narelle Higgs

Assistant Editors: Esma Zimmermann and Grant Peel

Layout: Susie Allen, My Yearbook

Contributing Writers: Thank you to all those who contributed articles to the edition, including Mr Craig Bassingthwaighe, John Bacon, Andrea Lewis, Mercedes Porter, Hunter Mitchell, Miranda Shum, Brad Walker, Scott Walsh, Laura Griffiths, Sara Kirby, Sam Brodar.

Contributing Photographers:

Move Photography, Paul Broben, Mick Kirby, Grant Peel.

To receive a printed copy of this issue, please email:
publications@somerset.qld.edu.au

Somerset Alumni Association

All students become life members of the Somerset Alumni Association, after graduating Year 12 at Somerset College. Founded in shared experience and comradery, the Association seeks to create, nurture, and grow positive and mutually beneficial associations within the College community.

The Association also provides all members with a copy of the College's annual *Somerset Lifestyles* publication, and works to connect our many Association members with information about upcoming events and engagement opportunities.

All College alumni can access the Association, simply visit us on any of our networks.

This network is your network, so come and join us!

For further information regarding the Association, please contact our Community Relations Office:

Instagram: @ReturnToSomerset | www.instagram.com/ReturnToSomerset

Facebook: /ReturnToSomerset | www.facebook.com/ReturnToSomerset

LinkedIn: /in/ReturnToSomerset | www.linkedin.com/in/ReturnToSomerset

Email: connect@returntosomerset.com.au

Phone: 07 5559 7100

Mail: Community Relations Office
Somerset College
Somerset Drive
Mudgeeraba Qld 4213



FROM THE *Headmaster*

FOUNDERS' DAY, 2023

Our 41st Founders' Day was a wonderful celebration of the College's past, present and future.

Our celebrations commenced with the Official Naming and Dedication of The Craig Sayer Stand. Our guests were treated to heart felt words from the Chair of the College Board, Mr Tony Hickey OAM, Performing Arts Captain, Pheonix Kyaw and Sports Captain, Sophie Clements (Year 12 Starkey and Andrews) and of course, Mr Sayer.

What a brilliant start to the day! Our Founders' Day ceremony included inspirational addresses by the Chair of Board, Mr Tony Hickey OAM, and our College Captains, Benjamin Major and Ava McCarthy. We presented the Spirit of Somerset and Founders' Day Awards amidst magnificent performances from the Concert Band and the Vocal Group. It was a perfect Gold Coast Day to enjoy the traditional Founders' Day activities, the All-Age Swimming Relay, the Steeplechase, the All-Age Track Relay, the Tug-o-War and the Courtyard Dash with its new course. Our Spartans shone as they competed or cheered – such wonderful traditions established to celebrate Founders' Day. We could only continue to be amazed at the passion that Somerset produces.

Mr Hickey OAM reminded us of our humble beginnings and the dedicated and brave people who founded our great school and gave us the opportunity to thank three of the founders, who were in attendance, for their contributions; Mr John Aitkenhead, Mr Tony Cordner and Mrs Mary Rudkin and former Chairs, Mr Lex Bell and Dr Peter Brown.

Mr Hickey made the following announcement:

"Mr Craig Bassingthwaighte, will retire after 16 years as Headmaster of Somerset College at the end of 2024.



*Mr Craig Bassingthwaighte
Headmaster of Somerset College*



Our former Dean of Activities returns for Founders' Day, 2023 for the Naming and Dedication of the Craig Sayer Stand.

FROM THE *Headmaster*

The Sports Facility will be named The Craig Bassingthwaighte Centre and the annual award presented to the Dux of Somerset College will be named The Craig Bassingthwaighte Medal - Dux of Somerset College."

While the students attended their House Lunch our invited guests enjoyed lunch on the Design Centre Terrace with a perfect view of the Tug-o-War and Courtyard Dash on Towers Quad.

The verandahs of The Smith Building, The Brown Building and The Arnison Building – all named for other magnificent servants – were perfect for a wonderful display of all things Somerset and the optimal vantage point for our littlest students. It truly had the atmosphere of a colosseum!

Another Founders' Day tradition is the Recognition of Service Award which is presented to colleagues who have served the College and its students for 20 years.

From this Founders' Day onwards we have decided to recognise and thank those staff who have served the College and its students for 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 years.

As with the 20 Year Service Staff and with our birthdays we tend to celebrate the milestones like 20, 30 and 40 and so on. We will present a gift to those members of staff who have served Somerset for 20, 30 and 40 years.

In 2023, the Recognition of Service Award for 20 Years service was presented to: Mrs Helen Little, and Mr Bryce Leader.

We recognised and thanked those colleagues who have served for 25 years of service this year: Mrs Tania Campbell, Mr Scott Cunningham, Dr Scott Ham and Mr Ross Keefer who has served for 35 years.

The Recognition of Service Award for 30 Years service was presented to Mrs Brenda Millican.

In 2024, Mrs Sue Roberts will be our very first staff member to reach 40 Years of Service to the College.

Mr Craig Bassingthwaighte
Headmaster



Mr Forrest Butcher, Director of Aquatics (right) receiving the John Bacon (left) Staff Award

LEAVING A *Legacy*

AFTER 20 YEARS OF SERVICE, SOMERSET COLLEGE'S DEAN OF ADMISSIONS RETIRES

Before retiring from the College, John Bacon delivered a message to the Class of 2023, to assist the Year 12s with leaving their legacy.

What can I say to you that you have not heard before?

You have information about study plans for next year.

You will hopefully have plans beyond that – a way forward for the rest of your life.

However, I would like to share a few personal thoughts and experiences with you.

Having spent 20 years working at Somerset I have witnessed amazing change and have seen the College grow and mature.

Picture if you can Somerset in 2011 – a short 13 years ago.

- 36 of you were here then – commencing in Prep with Mrs Copperwaite, Mrs Berghofer and Mr Stafford (Still here teaching Year 1.)
- Ms Thomson commenced at Somerset College
- We had 39 Second generation students – now 171
- 1,186 students attended the College – now 1,720 a 45% increase

Heads of House

- Mr O'Brien for Andrews
- Mr Juniper for Franklin
- Mrs Butson for Laver
- Mr Davies for Starkey
- Mr Walker for Veivers

Even without taking into consideration the construction which has taken place here since 2011, a lot has changed.

What have you added to the Somerset Community? How have you made a difference?

As you face your future, what can you contribute to your future community?

Let's take a step back and please bear with me while I reflect upon my life and history.



I was born in Brisbane and have two older sisters. My father served in the RAAF during the second World War and my mother served as well. As was the case in so many families at that time my mother did not work and my father, having left school at the age of 14 was a Public Servant working in the Repatriation Department working with Returned Service Men and Women.

From an early age I saw my parents involved in community - volunteering. My father was a member of the Parents' and Friends' Association at my primary school and my mother was a Leader with the local Girl Guides.

My father was also a member of the Royal Lifesaving Society Queensland Branch Council and the long-term Treasurer.

Thus, it seemed appropriate and natural that I would volunteer to do something after Year 12.

Having finished school and studying at the University of Queensland, I volunteered to be a member of the Old Boys' Association committee at Brisbane Grammar School. In addition, I volunteered as a rugby coach at Grammar.

LEAVING A

Legacy

Cont...

During my years of university study, I also volunteered with the Royal Life Saving Society teaching Resuscitation at community groups across Brisbane. I too was a member of the State Council for a period.

These proved valuable life lessons even things as simple as how to organise and run a meeting.

The biggest impact on my life however came from my work at my old school.

At a meeting of the GPS Sports Masters, discussion turned to the need for a Science teacher at TSS. Having completed an Honours Degree in Science and a Diploma in Education, I was recommended to TSS and was subsequently appointed as a Science Teacher, teaching Physics and Chemistry. I was fortunate to teach there for 10 years and was a Housemaster for Turnock House.

(I also coached the First XV – and took them from third to ninth in three years!)

Interestingly the vacancy was created by the resignation of one Barry Arnison who left TSS to return to the Navy only to return to teaching when he was appointed as the Deputy Headmaster at Somerset College in 1983. It seems that I have had a very lengthy relationship with Somerset College.

The point is, by volunteering I was able to gain employment at TSS and this started my career in Education. If I had not been giving back to something I believed in this would not have happened.

Thus I cannot state strongly enough the importance of Service.

But what is Service?

It is likely to be a personal definition and one that can and does change with time.

For me it is a chance to give back to a specific community and I say community because most of my experiences have been with groups rather than individuals. In many cases helping these groups improve their outcomes.

Since I commenced working in Admissions 29 years ago, I have been fortunate to have been involved in EducatePlus a professional organisation that supports those who work in advancement. International Conferences are conducted as well as events at a state

level. By giving my time, with the support of the schools in which I have worked, I have volunteered as a Committee member at a state level and been Treasurer for the National Board.

What did this mean for me? What did I get out of this investment of my time to attend Board meetings at weekends? What was my reward?

Certainly nothing financial, in fact it comes at a cost.

However, it has meant a great deal as I can see how the organisation has grown and developed and this gives one a great sense of pride and achievement. A very warm feeling inside.

If I return to my first few days at Somerset in 2003 and several years after that, the College was not as successful as it is today. Yes, academic results were consistently strong and students had successes on the sports field and on the stage, but we did not have the resources we do today.

If chairs needed moving, we moved them. If there was a pack down after an event, we would be here on Sunday to do this. There was no logistics team to get things done.

These extra hours at Somerset, volunteered so readily, have all been worthwhile in helping to make Somerset the success it is today.

It is really easy to give back to something in which we believe.

I hope you all understand the concept of Community Service. I have to be honest and say that in my early years here it was not something that Somerset did well.

Things are different now and there are numerous opportunities for you to be involved to the extent you can. The work Mr Walker has done and continues to do makes Somerset a leader in this area.

So back to my earlier questions.

What have you added to the Somerset Community?

How have you made a difference?

As you face your future, what can you contribute to your future community?

In considering these questions, we should only look back to reflect on what we have done. Nothing can change the past, but we can use our experiences to guide our future



decisions on how we will be involved in our Community wherever and whatever it may be.

Do volunteer, not for some recognition but purely because it is right.

Be a positive influence. I know this is easy to say but it is such an important step to making a real difference for the future.

Winston Churchill said

*“We make a living by what we get,
but we make a life by what we give.”*

We do not need to give goods or money, time can be just as valuable!

At the Student Leadership Assembly in 2022, our then College Captain, Riley Davenport said the following: “Seeing my peers help out the students in younger year levels, without a second thought, really embodies my cohort’s compassion and selflessness”. Compassion and selflessness – wonderful attributes for any young adult leaving school and taking the next steps into the unknown.

It has been a pleasure to attend and support Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal launches. At these we are asked to donate to the appeal and help the Army provide

their services to those in need. Mr Hickey, Chair of the College Board hosted these breakfasts for many years and appealed to those in attendance to think of a figure they could donate and then double this – to make it hurt a little.

We can always give more than we think.

And remember, “Selfless acts are a source of profound meaning for yourself and your life.”

Share a thought for those at the working bees conducted in the early days at Somerset when they laid the turf on the Common. And now it has been ripped up for a carpark.

A waste of their time and effort? – certainly not thousands of students have enjoyed the fruits of their labour.

As I leave one part of the Somerset Community, I look back with pride at all that has been achieved and know we are in a good place to ensure future success.

As you leave Somerset to start the next chapters of your lives please consider others and give back to your community – it really feels good inside!

Thank you,

John Bacon

Dean of Admissions

Storyfest

OUT WEST



2023 WAS A HUGE SUCCESS
14 SCHOOLS, 2055
INDIVIDUALS, 36 EVENTS -
ALL IN THREE DAYS!

At the end of July, the Storyfest crew hit the road embarking on their second journey out west! From captivating storytelling sessions to thought-provoking discussions, Storyfest Out West was a true celebration of exploration, creativity, and community.

Engaging Workshops with Acclaimed Authors:

Storyfest Out West proudly presented a series of engaging workshops designed for both children and adults, featuring some of Australia's most beloved children's authors. Jacqueline Harvey, Nat Amooore, Susanne Gervay and so many more graced the event, offering participants an exceptional opportunity to nurture and refine their writing and storytelling skills.

The Drover's Place Literary Lunch:

The week began with The Drover's Place Literary Lunch where, guest author Sally Warriner shared her journey and tales from her latest book, *'Not Just The General Manager's Wife.'* The conversation was captivating and hysterical from start to finish, in the perfect setting of The Drover's Place.

GeoGlide Prologue Party:

The GeoGlide Prologue Party was the opening night of the festival, where families had the opportunity to attend together, visit the bookshop and be entertained by music and comedy on stage. The event not only brightened the lives of rural residents but

also invited the entire Longreach community to come together and appreciate the impact of words.

Young Writers' Dinner:

Imagine a starlit evening in the heart of a vast cow paddock on Nogo Station, where the magic of storytelling intertwined with the natural beauty of the Outback. Gathered around a flickering campfire, students engaged in an electrifying interaction with their cherished authors. This unique atmosphere sparked excitement as the students and authors united their creative forces, giving life to captivating stories, melodious songs, and fabulous dance moves.

THANK YOU! In this moment of reflection, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every individual who contributed to the success of Storyfest Out West. The unwavering support and dedication breathed life into this extraordinary endeavour, fostering an environment where creativity and education flourished hand in hand. A special tribute goes out to Outback Pioneers, whose steadfast trust and belief in our mission illuminated the path forward.

Andrea Lewis
Storyfest CEO, Festival Director



Jacqueline Harvey Workshop



Ian McIntosh Session



Richard Kinnon Session



Prologue Party

SFYP 30 YEARS AND

Beyond



*Mercedes Porter
(nee Wilson)*

Class of 2000

Now in its 31st year, our Somerset Festival for Young Performers was held this term with participants coming from all over the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia and even from overseas.

Mercedes Porter (Class of 2000) returned to the festival as a parent for the second year. She can recall performing at the very first event back 30 years ago, when she was just nine years old.

“Oh, I remember being really nervous for the first festival. I was in the old chapel, which was then the computer rooms.

“I had a lot of friends that I knew from other piano teachers, and it was just a really good community vibe.”

“I just remember being nervous because any time I performed I was super nervous. I was excited though because I learned organ outside of school with a different teacher and I was able to perform at a festival that was at my school. It was kind of bringing my two worlds together, so that was exciting,” Mercedes says.

The Somerset Festival for Young Performers offers young talents the opportunity to perform in front of a small audience on an informal stage.

“So now my children are performing in the festival.

“My youngest, Walter, did not want to perform, but it was still a lovely welcoming atmosphere.”

Mercedes says, “It seems really like no pressure.”

The festival began with a small number of performers and in 2023 grew to include 1795 performances by over 1000 students from Somerset, all over the Gold Coast and surrounding areas. This year the event was supported by the 22 adjudicators and 105 student volunteers.



“So as a teacher and as an adjudicator coming back, I’ve really noticed the amazing community feel from all the students. I adjudicate each year and I watch children from all different schools around the Gold Coast and Brisbane grow and it’s so nice.

“It’s like this little family event where you get back to come back every year and you can say, you know, Oh hi, how are you?” Mercedes says.

Somerset’s peripatetic teacher, Mrs Helen Little co-ordinates the festival with help from student and parent volunteers and staff who worked as adjudicators and assisted with organising.

“Alfred, who’s almost five, he was super nervous, but he performed and was so proud of himself. And as we were walking back, there

were all these children in the audience who were all waiting for their section and they gave him high fives and they were like, ‘Great job’. And it was just so lovely because he didn’t expect that.

“It’s an amazing cycle. I love that my kids can do what I have done. And also now I’m seeing people who I went to school with and I’m adjudicating their children. And so it’s like this beautiful community which is so wonderful about Somerset in general, but that festival just expands that out into the wider community.”

For more information about the Somerset Festival for Young Performers visit www.somerset.qld.edu.au/festival-for-young-performers

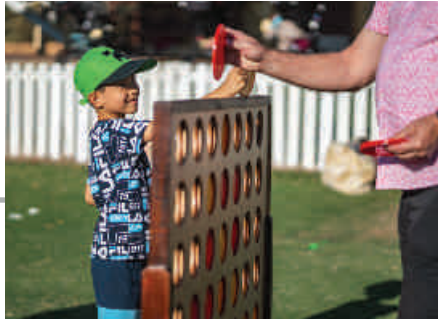
FATHERS' DAY *Festival*



After the success of the inaugural festival for fathers in 2022, the Somerset Parents' and Friends' Association returned to make the event bigger.

Fun on the field with sports and activities occupied the crowds who flocked to support the event. The afternoon wrapped up with a movie in the park for guests.





SOMERSET TO *Somerset*



Hunter with the Year 6s

My name is Hunter Mitchell, I am 16 years old and in Grade 10 at Somerset College, in Somerset West, Cape Town, South Africa.

I was born in Auckland and made the move in 2013 with my family to South Africa. In 2015, I made the life changing decision at eight years old to start, what is now a worldwide campaign, to be a key role player in the fight to save our rhino here in Africa.

I have worked incredibly hard over the past eight years to not only raise much needed funds that are making a very real difference but to also raise awareness. I feel so honoured that my work has earned me the Steve Irwin Visionary Wildlife Warrior Award, an

International Young Eco-Hero Award, the Commonwealth Points of Light Award from Her Majesty the Queen and the Diana Award.

I had the privilege of travelling back to Australia in July this year as a keynote speaker for the Luminosity Youth Summit in Port Macquarie and visited Brisbane and Gold Coast area.

My goal is to use every opportunity while in the country to raise awareness in schools. I enjoyed speaking at Somerset

College on the Gold Coast presenting my rhino conservation talk. It was extra special to visit another independent school with the same name as the one I proudly attend in South Africa.

Our schools seem to have many similarities including a beautiful campus and our ethos and values - <https://somersectcollege.org>.

To learn more about me and my conservation work, scan the QR codes:



Hunter Mitchell
Somerset College, South Africa



Hunter addressing students in the Suzanne Roberts Centre for Performing Arts



Hunter Mitchell from Somerset College, South Africa meets our Headmaster



Hunter with Saving the Rhinos

NERA AND

Suntae



A SHORT STORY BY MIRANDA SHUM

The Fox Clan mumbled anxiously. An avalanche was coming. They needed to get off the mountain, and quick. The rumbles of the avalanche grew louder, and louder, and louder until the Fox Clan finally saw something: snow. Screams erupted and people scattered everywhere. The Fox Clan held on tautly to their weapons and children. The avalanche poured over them. Death had come.

The air hung with silence. The avalanche had completely obliterated the entire Fox Clan. All except one: a girl 12-summers-old called Nera. Nera's green eyes were emeralds. Her dark red hair with white and orange streaks whipped her face. She had the exact features of a fox, if not for her green eyes. She heard a lone raven hopping around. The sight of the avalanche obliterating her clan like trees was unbearable. Suntae barked.

The fox bounded over. Nera finally had the courage to say something. "Ma? Fa? Can you hear me?" Her words were heard by no one. Nera began to weep. She was alone. Suntae whimpered and began locating the bodies. Nera, you

know crying won't help! Find the Reviving Potion, it will bring your clan back to life. Nera's mind was made up. "Suntae! We're going to find the Reviving Potion!"

Nera was skilled in magecraft. She knew every potion that existed. That night, she found a place to build a shelter. The fire was comforting. It spat orange embers and sparks.

Nera tucked into a fat mountain hare and a handful of nuts. The Reviving Potion was close. She could feel it pulsating in her veins. Suntae snuggled up close Nera. Her fur was a deep dark red and her eyes were piercing blue. Don't leave me, Nera wanted to say. She was missing, Ma, Fa and her clan. She wouldn't give up her search.

Nera trudged through the thick snow. The wind was howling and it pierced through her ears like a knife. Finally, she and Suntae reached a plateau covered with grey snow and willow trees. Nera spotted the Reviving Potion. It was perilously perching on the edge of the plateau. Suntae raced over to a rock with words etched on them. It read, "A soul, for a soul." Nera saw the words too. Dread coursed through her.

Suntae knew what she had to do. Nera screeched and tried to stop Suntae. Before her beloved fox leapt off the plateau, Suntae gave Nera a bark. "Suntae! No!" Nera's eyes were blinded by a brilliant bolt of light.

"Suntae?" Nera realised that she was back at the avalanche site. The Reviving Potion was in her hands. She poured it over the bodies. "Revive them!" As if on cue, all the bodies slowly sat up. Nera cried for joy. Her clan was eternally grateful and Nera was appointed the mage. However, her heart was still full of grief. Although she and Suntae were now separated, there was an impenetrable wall of love between them...forever.

Miranda Shum

Year 6J

Sleepout FOR SERVICE

Students from Years 7 to 12 slept rough at school in Term Three, as part of the Homeless Sleepout to raise funds. Before a night in the cold, the students spent the evening serving meals with local charity Walk with Us in Burleigh.

The group's fundraising efforts of almost \$9000 will go towards the purchase of Backpack Beds and Fire Retardant Polar Fleece Sleeping Bags for those experiencing homelessness or who are without shelter across the Gold Coast and interstate.

By way of reflection, students ended the evening by writing a letter to a Backpack Bed recipient.

Brad Walker
Service Learning Co-ordinator



SHOT PUT *Olympian* INSPIRES STUDENTS



A group of 20 students had the privilege of meeting and being coached by double Olympic Shot Put Champion, Dame Valerie Adams.

New Zealander, Valerie Adams was at Somerset College at the end of Term Two, as part of the weeklong Oceania Throws Clinic hosted here at the College. Valerie was here to help upskill athletes and coaches from the Oceania region, as well as help her Para Olympic Champion sister, Lisa Adams prepare for the World Paralympic Championships in Paris.

Head of Athletics, Mr Scott Walsh organised a 45-minute Q and A with Valerie followed by a 45-minute Shot Put masterclass coaching session. The Q and A was an enlightening affair with Valerie talking about her tough upbringing in South Auckland amongst her 12 brothers and sisters, her rise to the top of world athletics, her two Olympic Gold Medals (2008, 2012), her damehood (equivalent to the male knighthood honour), her retirement and family life. Her powerful messages of making sure you have great people 'on your bus' and not being afraid to kick people off your bus, when they're not helping you get to where you want to go. As well as when a 'ray of light' is

offered to you, you take full advantage of that opportunity. These messages, along with many others, helped Valerie to achieve five World Athletic Championships Gold medals, three Commonwealth Gold Medals, a World Athlete of the Year award in 2014 as well as remain undefeated for 100 plus consecutive athletic meets. A dominance in sport that few other athletes can claim!

Following our chat, Valerie helped guide our up and coming Shot Putters in a 45-minute coaching clinic where she provided each individual with quality feedback about their throwing technique. Valerie's hulking 6 foot 5 and 120kg frame made her look like she was throwing a marble as opposed to a three-kilogram shot put! Her cheeky nature and positive comments quickly endeared who to all the students present. I think all the students who were lucky enough to meet Valerie, were enthralled by her presence and advice. It's not often you get to meet an athlete who has achieved such success at the highest level possible.

Scott Walsh

Head Coach – Athletics and Cross Country



THE *Alumni* CHAPTER



RETURN TO *Gomeriset*



Alumni AWARDS

On Friday 21 July 2023 the Somerset Alumni Association celebrated the 2023 Annual Alumni Awards for Somerset College

We were thrilled to be joined together to celebrate the winners and nominees of the 2023 Early Career, Community Engagement and Annual Alumnus Award.



A HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE ANNUAL ALUMNI AWARDS 2023

Annual Alumnus
WINNER
Chris Page
(Class of 2004)

Community Engagement
WINNER
Holly Halford-Smith
(Class of 2013)

Early Career
WINNER
Tian Behenna
(Class of 2016)





Congratulations to our Finalist Nominees for 2023;

Annual Alumnus Finalist Nominees:

Laura Griffiths (class of 1995)

Jordan Kuhnemann (class of 2013)

Community Engagement Finalist Nominees:

Melanie Bryson (class of 1990)

Ben Munro (class of 1990)

Early Career Finalist Nominees:

Lilliana Swainson (class of 2021)

Eliza Young (class of 2022)



Alumni

AWARDS

Cont...

ANNUAL ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS 2022

Annual Alumnus
WINNER
Alex Beck
(Class of 2009)



Community Engagement
WINNER
Damir Muftic
(Class of 1987)



Early Career
WINNER
Risa Utama
(Class of 2017)



Congratulations to our Finalist Nominees for 2022;

2022 Early Career Category

Thomas Nowakowski (Class of 2018)

Jessica Gore-Jones (Class of 2021)

Risa Utama (Class of 2017)

2022 Community Engagement Category

Yassamin Olson (Class of 2014)

Samantha Price (Class of 2015)

Damir Muftic (Class of 1987)

2022 Annual Alumnus Category

Nicole Tough (Class of 1989)

Despina Priala (Class of 1987)

Charles Tomlinson (Class of 2000)

Alex Beck (Class of 2009)

The Somerset Alumni Association ensures that all our Alumni are provided with excellent opportunities, even after graduating from Somerset College. Your support allows the prospect for new opportunities for all our graduates and ensures the Somerset Community continues to stay connected for years to come. On behalf of the Somerset Alumni Association, we wish to share our congratulations and thanks to all the nominees and winners of the 2023 Annual Alumni Awards.



ALUMNI – A FEW YEARS DOWN THE

Track

Laura Griffiths

Class of 1995

What are some of your fondest memories of your time at Somerset?

I have such rich and happy memories of my 12 years at Somerset College. The class of 1995 was a close cohort of students, and we laughed a lot - you know the kind of laughter where your cheeks get sore and tears stream down your face - we did that often. Besides the wonderful lifelong friends I made, other favourite moments include drama with Mr Moulder. I really enjoyed performing on stage and playing different characters, it gave me the skills and confidence to speak in front of an audience which is something I have had to do throughout my career as a scientist. I also loved visual arts with Mr Keifer and Mrs Bidmead - I found experimenting with different media liberating and in one of these classes I found my love of oil painting. Overall, I think being part of the school community is what I reflect on the most. There is rarely a time in our adult lives where we get to see our friends every day, learn, and be inspired, active and creative.

How did Somerset shape your career path?

It played a very significant role. In my very first biology class in Year 9, my biology teacher, Mrs Yates, encouraged the class to explore the concept of 'why' and to question observations

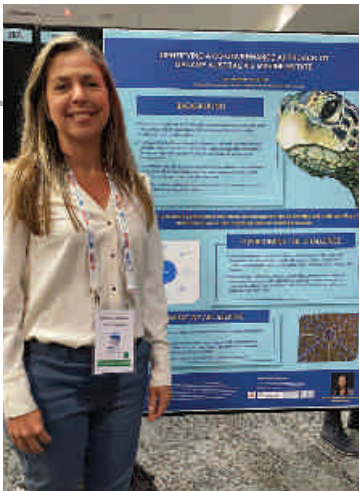


about the living world. It was like my eyes were open for the first time and I started questioning everything. In the same year, I enrolled in the SCUBA diving program as part of an extracurricular activity offered by the school. From the very first moment I breathed underwater in the ocean, I knew what I wanted to be. I never wavered from this path, despite the limited job opportunities there were for marine scientists at the time. I have spent the better part of 25 years as a marine ecologist (BSc, MSc and PhD) learning about what lies beneath the blue and more importantly, how we can better protect it.

How do you spend a working day?

I work as a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Griffith University, Gold Coast. This means I get to do research every working day. I don't really get to spend my time in the field scuba diving anymore, which is something I miss, but my role now is about creating change. I am working with government, industry and non-government organisations within Australia and internationally to improve the way we manage our marine ecosystems

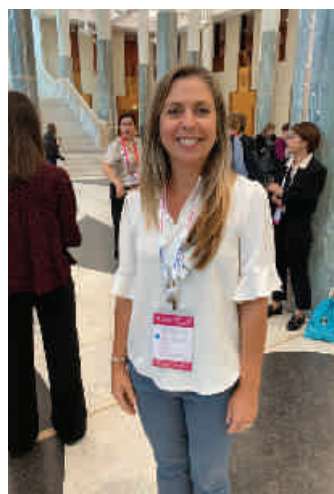




Measuring crayfish



Laura - Fiordland Dive Trip Feb 2010



and move to a system that is based on sustainability and science (through Marine Spatial Planning). My everyday involves meetings (largely through Microsoft Teams), writing scientific papers, liaising with stakeholders, coordinating research teams, undertaking research projects, attending science conferences, and teaching and supervising students.

Who are the people who inspire you?

People who dedicate their life to a cause and live with integrity and passion. People who understand the intrinsic value of nature and live their life by this belief. People who speak up for the environment and are advocates for positive environmental change and climate change action.

What advice would you offer current students?

I have so many tips! Here is my top four:

- To live with passion is one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself so go and find your passion, whatever it maybe. You will find a much more rewarding and successful pathway if you do.

- Don't sweat about grades but it's important to learn to be self-motivated. Despite trying really hard, I received very mediocre grades at school and had to complete a maths bridging course prior to enrolling in a Bachelor of Science at Griffith University. I received high grades during my undergraduate degree because I was interested and motivated to learn.
- Enjoy and embrace your schooling journey. Get as involved as possible in school life, utilise opportunities to extend yourself and make friends everywhere you go. I know the stress of learning, assignments and exams can be a lot at times, but there are so many opportunities to find balance and enjoy the times in-between.
- We are in a time of significant environmental change and the living world needs your brain! If you have a strong connection to nature and want to make a difference, then become a mechanism for change and study science (particularly ecology or conservation).



SECOND *Generation*

FIRST GENERATION



Sara Kirby
(nee Green)
Class of 1998

What did you most enjoy about your time at Somerset?

Somerset is full of opportunities and I enjoyed trying new experiences across the board, be it sporting, cultural or academic. I have fond memories of the school musicals, camps, and playing soccer in the mud and rain! The overarching sentiment is one of community. I remember feeling supported by my teachers and recall moments with specific teachers, too many to mention here, that spurred me on to try new things, stretch myself and look at situations differently.

How did you decide on Somerset for your children's education?

The advent of AI and advancements in technology are changing the landscape. Critical thinking, emotional intelligence and executive function skills are critical to navigating the future. Somerset fosters these skills from the outset with the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the launch of Somerset Ignites builds on these

concepts by inspiring, educating and empowering students to develop future capabilities. I want my children to be lifelong learners with the confidence and skills to inquire and ask questions no matter where they go in life, I want them to be empowered to choose their own path.

What are the biggest changes you have noticed at Somerset?

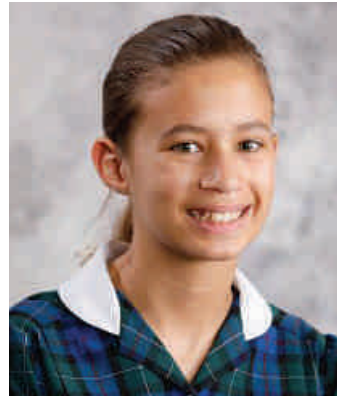
The biggest changes right now are tangible with construction of the new Junior School precinct well underway. Technology has enhanced the learning environment and helped to build community and streamline processes through the development of Schoolbox. The growth of Storyfest has been wonderful to witness as has the opportunity to engage as a family volunteering for Storyfest out West. The principles and values underpinning the Somerset spirit remain while the opportunities continue to diversify and adapt.

How does your education journey compare to your children's?

The learning environment today is more multifaceted and the classroom facilities including technology are extraordinary. I recently completed the PYP learning walk and was struck by the variety of teaching and learning strategies, which give students the chance to engage and connect in their own way.



SECOND GENERATION



Estelle Kirby
Class of 2029



Eloise Kirby
Class of 2031



Nina Kirby
Class of 2034



ALUMNI VISIT TO *Year 12's*



- Laura Griffiths** Class of 1995

- Hayley Tarr** Class of 1998

- Darcy Beynon** Class of 2022

- Nick Richards** Class of 2003

An entrepreneur, a lawyer, a scientist and a student delivered their messages of perseverance to our Year 12s from the stage of The Suzanne Roberts Centre for Performing Arts.

The four Somerset College alumni, Laura Griffiths (Class of 1995), Hayley Tarr (Class of 1998), Darcy Beynon (Class of 2022), Nick Richards (Class of 2003) each shared the journeys since graduating from Somerset.

Their stories gave hope to the cohort as they prepare for their final year exams before launching into tertiary education.

"I liked hearing about Nick moving between different careers to find what he truly wanted to do and hearing there isn't only one direct pathway for everyone."

- Bongani Mhlanga

"It's important to make small changes to stay motivated rather than feeling the need to change degrees or careers."

- Brit Ingr

"Darcy was discussing doing medicine and it was great to hear about his personal experience about getting into Med and going through Bond."

- Josh Cotton

"One of the speakers said, 'find your passion'. I like this, as it leads to finding out who you are as a person and what direction you want to take your life."

- Indy Hammer

ALUMNI

Staff

Sam Brodave

Class of 2011

I started at Somerset in 2005 in Year 6. I came from a small country town where my grade consisted of 19 students to then being at a school with a grade of 100 students was shall we say somewhat daunting.

I will be the first to admit that I was reluctant and unsure where I could fit in but with the support and encouragement of my teachers' I quickly made friends and got involved in school life.

I was definitely not a natural academic student; I had to work really hard and put a lot of focus into my studies. However, it was the various activities outside the classroom like the sporting events, school musicals and the ski trips where my fondest memories lie. I found no greater joy than jumping in the pool, singing and dancing on stage or flying down a snowy mountain. I remember the first time I went on the ski trip; I was in Year 8, none of my friends were there and I had not been on a pair of skis since I was about three. I was absolutely terrified I was going to stack it and make a fool of myself. Two of the teachers on the trip were Mr O'Brien and Ms Payne. All I can say is thank goodness they were there! They both encouraged and helped me every day, sometimes literally picking up off the ground when I fell off the chair lift for the dozenth time. But each day my confidence grew and I found I wasn't so scared anymore.



Yes, I still fell down multiple times and yes I still fell off the chair lift but every time I got back up and kept going. By the last day I was zooming down the mountain and absolutely loving it! I am so very grateful to both Dallas and Tracey for all their patience and encouragement without whom I would not have had the courage to discover my love for skiing!

As my final year of schooling was drawing to a close, I started to panic. I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to after graduation, unlike all of my friends. I enrolled in university but wanted to do a GAP year so, I went off to the UK. I had the most amazing time. Being completely immersed in an entirely different way of life and culture was life changing. I travelled around Europe before returning home and just three weeks later experienced medical complications. The degree I had enrolled in was no longer an option.



ALUMNI *Staff* Cont...



This was a really difficult time for me, but through the encouragement of my family I was able keep going. A few months later an opportunity popped up to do a short-term cover as a receptionist in a school. I still had no idea what I wanted to do but I enjoyed the work and it was a good distraction. A few months later an opportunity popped up to do a short-term cover as a receptionist in a school. I wasn't sure at first but it was a new experience and opportunity to try something different.

As it turns out, I really enjoyed working there. So much so that when it was over, I enrolled and completed a Business Administration course at TAFE. A few months after that, I got my first full-time job as a Junior Receptionist in an Accounting Firm. I worked there for two years, and although I did enjoy the work, I came to realise that an accounting firm just wasn't the place for me. I decided to actively start looking for administration jobs in Schools and was lucky enough to land a job on the Junior Reception at a private school on the Gold Coast. I worked there for four years and although I loved the work and the challenges of the day to day running of the school, the stress of it all was starting to take its toll. This is when I received the phone call from Dr Brohier asking if I would come for a job interview to work at Somerset. I jumped at the chance and in no time at all I was sitting in reception, shaking like a leaf from nerves waiting for my interview. To my surprise none other than Mr Bassingthwaighte greeted me by name, shook my hand and told me not to be nervous and that I would do brilliantly.

In that one moment of encouragement and reassurance; my nerves were gone and I knew this was the place I wanted to be. Three and half years have gone by and I can safely say that I still love working here and I can't imagine myself anywhere else. For me Somerset College is not just a workplace, it's a family. It is plain to see why so many Alumni choose to come back.

Although I didn't know it at the time the lessons being taught to me as a student have helped me overcome the challenges I have faced as an adult.

I am so very grateful to all my teachers (some of whom are now my colleagues) for all their support and encouragement. I would not be the person I am today without them. They say it takes a village to raise a child; and I am very honoured so say that I am now a small part in helping raise the next generation of students at Somerset College. To any current students my advice would be this; if like me you're not sure what you want to do after school, that's completely normal. It's OK not to have your life sorted at 18. Take the opportunity to try something different, something you enjoy, and if you fall down, that's OK.

Pick yourself up and try again. You never know what opportunities are just around the corner.





Staff **UDPATES**

BABIES

Harvey Alan

Harvey Alan Whish-Wilson soon to celebrate his first birthday! The son of Sam (Head of House – Veivers) and Kylie arrived 9 November 2022 at 11.16pm.



Taj Scott

Lisa (Teacher – Senior School) and Tim Beere welcomed a little boy to their family on 28 October 2022. Little Taj Scott Beere weighted in at 3.5kg and was 51cm.



James Robert

A new Spartan arrived Monday 22 May 2023. Rohan Stevenson (Head Coach – Basketball) and his partner Rachel welcomed, James Robert Stevenson, a little brother for Julian.



Lexi Chen

Maarten (Head Coach – Football) and Hebe de Kruijf welcomed their daughter, Lexi Chen de Kruijf. Lexi was in a bit of a hurry, arriving a little early at 36 weeks and two days.



ENGAGEMENTS

Gara Rosentreter

(Teacher – Junior School) is now engaged to fiancé Justin Nichols. The pair were engaged 3 April 2023.





<https://www.facebook.com/somersetcollegeaustralia>

<https://www.instagram.com/somersetcollegegc>

<https://twitter.com/SomersetAus>

<https://au.linkedin.com/school/somerset-college/>