“21 Canterbury Road, 1950”: Thus began my transition. From the first six years of schooling, I spent half with the Josephite sisters at St. Roch’s and half with the ‘Pressies’ at St. Michael’s Ashburton.

Shepherded by our mother, my brother and I arrived at a brand new college by train to Camberwell Station, then a fair walk which was to become a regular route for the next six years.

The first impression was the very beautiful gardens, richly endowed with huge flowering Rhododendrons, high palm trees and a wealth of greenery. Midst this, the very unfamiliar appearance of the French Marist brothers garb seemed so incongruous.

Classrooms there were six I think, however desks had not yet arrived but somehow we got on with becoming a college.

I was in First Form, the then equivalent of Year 7. Sixth Form was the final or Matriculation year; however in 1950 I think we went only as far as Third Form.
The subjects we had were English Expression, English Literature, Maths, Algebra, Geography, bits of History, Physics, Chemistry, Latin and French. Plus Religion!

This left us rather devoid of art in any shape except Literature, though to his credit, Brother Nilus taught singing in Form One.

It was normal to have a separate exercise book for each subject and the total weight, plus textbooks were enough to fill a standard ‘kitbag’ with solid paper. A great weight to carry in one hand indeed. Textbooks were usually second-hand from Hall’s Bookstore in the city.

Some changes came after the first year. A sport’s jacket was added to the uniform. It was more colourful than the formal navy-blue suit.

A shelter shed was built against the western fence, used for a place to eat lunch under the tight regulation of the Brother on duty.

The roof of the one upper classroom was raised to make a laboratory space.

An annual event was the city St. Pat’s Day march with Dan Mannix seated in an open limousine right in front of Parliament House. We would spend days practicing for this, marching around the streets north of the school.

There was one significant element in about 1953/54. A Jesuit, Henry Wilkins was allowed to introduce the ‘Sodality of Our Lady’. This was of considerable value to me. It was a devotional way of life that revolved around a daily commitment to fifteen minutes of meditation every day. This meant I had to find some sort of book to learn a bit about mediation, admittedly with a Jesuitical bent, though this was to grow later. It was the link I needed to take a step in prayer from where my family life had brought me.
It was completely normal on arriving at school and on leaving each day, to call into the little chapel for a moment of informal prayer. As I recall, it was in no way demanded. We simply did it as part of the day.