A feature of many post-secondary school journeys has been a gap year. This traditionally has been up to a year away from study, working overseas or locally. Most of Hillbrook’s graduates will go on to some form of further study, over 90% in fact. The vast majority will go straight to university or TAFE, but some defer for work or travel.

There are many organisations that can facilitate this and while many young people take the opportunity straight after school, others will wait till part way through, or at the end of their university courses. This edition of Connections looks at the advantages and difficulties of taking some time out to travel and experience different cultures, what is traditionally called a ‘Gap Year’.

We have included a number of views and make no comment other than an obvious one; it’s a personal decision with many important factors to consider. You will find some wonderful stories from students, parents and teachers each sharing their experiences and perceptions.

Enjoy!

Geoff Newton, Principal
A quick Google search will give you a multitude of options for a gap year. Here are a few points to consider, but as you can see, it is definitely not a do-nothing year!

**ADVANTAGES**

- Learn about the world and all its diversity
- Explore a foreign culture and language
- Gain work experience and independence
- Find your academic niche
- Overcome challenges in a new environment, improve your resilience
- Avoid the social pitfalls of university by being more mature
- Get some serious perspective on your life

**DISADVANTAGES**

- It can be expensive, so you will need to save and plan beforehand
- Parents worry that students won’t ever begin or further their studies after returning
- If you don’t travel overseas, the jobs will probably be part-time and not pay well, limiting your options
- Students may not return settled and ready to return to or resume university study
- Living back at home may be difficult

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**JENNY OWEN**  
(Parent of Thomas Stur, Grad. 2005)

As Thomas’ parents, we felt a gap year was right, he was almost 19 on leaving school and had worked very hard. He’d had enough of being organised and “parented” and was more than ready to go off and lead his own life.

As parents, we came from cultures which expect children to leave home at 18, and make their own way in the world. Gap years are part of our “normal”. Even my parents (in the 1930’s) had gap years before university and when I was at high school, Oxford and Cambridge universities did not take students straight from school.

For Thomas, the gap year worked really well. He grew enormously, became remarkably independent, met people from various backgrounds with a vast range of ideas and experiences. He also had a break from strenuous intellectual activity and was able to develop other aspects of himself, building on Hillbrook’s ideals of “balance”. Perhaps his gap year contributed to him doing well at university, we like to think so!

Different children and different parents need different things, but for all three of us, the gap year experience worked very well, because Thomas made sure that it did and because he is the person that he is.

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**JORDAN BISSELL**  
(Grad. 2010)

Sometimes I wish I had taken a gap year when uni stress gets too much, but overall I’m really glad that I didn’t, preferring to continue studying straight after school to get it all over and done with. I’m planning on taking a year off after uni to travel, so I will have a degree to come home to. Plus, that way it will feel like a reward!

Postscript: Jordan is studying a Journalism/Arts (majors in Modern History and German) degree at UQ. In 2012 she is embarking on a student exchange to the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich for 6 months.

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**ANNETTE ALSOP**  
(Future Hillbrook Parent)

Speaking from experience, taking time off to travel, work and to generally chill after final exams at high school is a good idea. It gives a person time to reflect upon whether the course they chose while still children (not yet 18) is the course for them.

Given that today’s tertiary study fees are more than nominal, I believe that children do need the time out to “find themselves”, free from the pressure of parents and their school’s expectations.
Thanks Mum.
something I took for granted at home! cleaning and washing is definitely exciting. Living by yourself - cooking, alone, makes the adventure all that more solely for yourself, and making decisions had to overcome. T aking responsibility Independence is another major hurdle I perspective and allows you to see just how lower class really places your own life into broad contrast between the upper and it’s not good different; it’s just different”. using the phrase “It’s not bad different, becomes almost natural. We find ourselves idiosyncrasies of life in China, its ambience lifestyle. Once you have overcome the to understand a completely different Firstly, this experience has enabled me and looking into other overseas options, a position became available to work in an international school in China.

For two months I have been an assistant teacher in P.E., Humanities and Science. I give in-class support to students in years three to nine.

So, why consider taking a gap year? Firstly, this experience has enabled me to understand a completely different lifestyle. Once you have overcome the idiosyncrasies of life in China, its ambience becomes almost natural. We find ourselves using the phrase “it’s not bad different, it’s not good different; it’s just different”. Living in a country where there is such a broad contrast between the upper and lower class really places your own life into perspective and allows you to see just how lucky you really are. Independence is another major hurdle I had to overcome. Taking responsibility solely for yourself, and making decisions alone, makes the adventure all that more exciting. Living by yourself – cooking, cleaning and washing is definitely something I took for granted at home! Thanks Mum.

**DIANA DAL BON**
(Grad. 2011)

Being a parent of a gap year student is definitely a lot more relaxing than it was 30 years ago when I was an exchange student. The expense of ISD phone calls (my mother heard my voice twice) and mail delivery taking at least 10 days, and the content being supplied by her 17 year old daughter was invariably sketchy. Now thanks to Skype and Facebook my daughter in China can explain to me the mystery of the source of the loud music I can hear from our home in Brisbane on a Saturday afternoon. (Answer: Soundwave concert at the RNA showgrounds; a Facebook 'friend' had just posted the news.) Skype lets me see if she is well, how she is living and what her neighbourhood looks like.

Back at home it’s strange. A familiar bedroom with no familiar face inside. It’s a shock emerging from the busy-ness required to parent a Year 12 student to a time that has little of that day-to-day chaos. It goes without saying that I miss her terribly. However I have no doubt that for Clare this gap year experience is a perfect fit. I am so proud of her, particularly her energy and enthusiasm for new experiences. She managed when she succumbed to China-belly, has resolved plumbing difficulties, cooks and cleans when she wants to (with a little help from her housemate), has sampled unusual food and has organised a summer holiday. She happily accepts challenges well outside of her former Brisbane comfort zone.

She is showing me that she is well in control of her destiny and that is all a parent can hope for.

**CLARE DAL BON**
(Grad. 2011)

A gap year was an opportunity I never considered until midway through Year 12. It had its advantages and disadvantages, however after weighing them up, it became clear that this was an opportunity and a challenge I wanted to accept. After applying for a rotary exchange, and looking into other overseas options, a position became available to work in an international school in China.

For two months I have been an assistant teacher in P.E., Humanities and Science. I give in-class support to students in years three to nine.

So, why consider taking a gap year? Firstly, this experience has enabled me to understand a completely different lifestyle. Once you have overcome the idiosyncrasies of life in China, its ambience becomes almost natural. We find ourselves using the phrase “it’s not bad different, it’s not good different; it’s just different”. Living in a country where there is such a broad contrast between the upper and lower class really places your own life into perspective and allows you to see just how lucky you really are.

Independence is another major hurdle I had to overcome. Taking responsibility solely for yourself, and making decisions alone, makes the adventure all that more exciting. Living by yourself – cooking, cleaning and washing is definitely something I took for granted at home! Thanks Mum.

**STEFF WARD**
(Grad. 2010)

Commencing Year 12 I felt pressure to decide what I wanted to ‘do with my life’. I’ve always been academic, however with high grades I placed a lot of pressure on myself to ‘succeed’. Throughout Year 12, I floundered between studying science or social work but somehow decided upon journalism. I had always planned on a gap year and travelling; however throughout Year 12 I talked myself out of this.

On commencing university I found myself resisting study and two days after the census date (enrolment confirmation) I decided to defer for the year. I would still be charged for the semester, even though I wasn’t continuing the course. I feel this decision was pivotal for my personal development in the year to come and provided the foundation of a belief system that I now live by. This is, to never make a decision based on logic, fear, money or other people’s opinions, but on what feels right for me. A little faith that everything will work out perfectly, better than I could have ever planned, has allowed me to have the most wondrous year of self-discovery. I used to believe that success was achieving something or owning possessions, now I gauge my success by the depth of peace that I feel in any given moment.

Gap years often create a belief that a ‘break’ from academic study means you will never return. However, if you have discovered a passion, it should never feel like a chore to return to, or continue with study.

Postscript: Steff has been working part-time and travelling; written a story entitled “Fallen Ibis” and is currently contemplating a future in environmental conservation.

**JENNIFER KEIL**
(Grad. 2006)

I don’t believe in gap years. The term and its associated pressures imply that your life doesn’t begin until you go to uni and get a job etc. A mindset which has set me back. Let’s just say that any time taken for self discovery is valuable and whether people choose to go to uni after one year or ten shouldn’t matter as long as they are happy.

Postscript: Steff has been working part-time and travelling; written a story entitled “Fallen Ibis” and is currently contemplating a future in environmental conservation.
ALLIE NEWTON
(Grad. 2009)

I never thought much about taking a gap year after finishing school. Then again, I never really gave my life after school much thought. I figured that once I started university, I’d love my course, I’d realise what career I wanted and then be set for life. It wasn’t until my second year, in a Bachelor of Business and Creative Industries, when reality started to set in. I wasn’t enjoying my course. There was no challenge or excitement in what I was doing. I was cruising and often not even showing up to lectures. I decided that I needed a change.

I am sitting here writing this in my two bedroom apartment in one of the most fascinating countries in the world, China. I’m no longer faced with the daunting thought of not knowing what I want to do for the rest of my life. I’ve found it. Teaching in an international school is fantastic! If I hadn’t jumped at the opportunity to take some time away, step back and travel to another country, I probably would have wasted three more years at university trying to figure out where my life was heading.

So, my advice would be; if you are positive of what you want to do at university, go ahead. If you ever start feeling lost, not enjoying what you are doing, or simply can’t figure out which course to pick, then get out. Go to another country and see what the world has to offer. It may be different, it may not be what is expected of you, it may seem stupid and a waste of time, but honestly, sometimes you just need that little bit of distance, perspective and experience to find your passion and direction.

MATT NEWTON
(Grad. 2007)

“So, what are you going to do after you finish school?” was one question that I remember very clearly from my final year of schooling. I remember it so clearly because it was asked so often. I had no idea what I was going to do and was never able to successfully convince people that I did.

I had three options open to me, find a job, go to university or head overseas for a gap year. I suppose inertia took over and I ended up taking the simplest option. “I’m going to university,” became my stock-standard response to the incessant questioning of my direction and purpose in life. This evolved into, “I’m going to university to study Journalism”.

Fast-forward four years and the decision to continue my education after finishing school and defer taking a gap year, although taken for rather flippant reasons, has turned out well. The time spent continuing my education and learning about the world has fortuitously done me no harm. If anything, when I do embark on my gap year in June 2012, it will allow me to appreciate it all the more than if I were fresh out of high school. My main concern here is not what it is that you do before going on a gap year, rather that you take the time to do it. Allow me to elaborate. I was talking to a friend about her travels overseas and during the course of our conversation she remarked that as an 18 year old in Asia, she and her friend always found themselves to be much younger than their fellow backpackers. She went on to say that although she had enjoyed her time overseas, she couldn’t help but feel that with a few more years under her belt she would have been able to emulate the confidence of the older backpackers she encountered on her travels, hiring motorbikes to roam the countryside or turning up in strange places with no plans and no idea of where to begin.

Some people finish school with a concrete idea of who they are and what they want to do with their lives and they set about doing it. The majority of people do not. If you belong to the latter group, it becomes very easy to fall into the trap of simply doing a gap year because you can’t think of anything better to do. There is a saying that, “If something is worth doing, it is worth doing right,” and planning a gap year is no exception. If you want to get the most out of it, you have to really want to do it. And for many school-leavers, that means giving yourself some time.

TAMARA GERLIC
(Hillbrook Art Teacher)

When I emerged from high school triumphant as the youngest (16), and shortest member of my graduating class, I could think of only one thing. I wanted a break. I needed a break. This was my thinking, unfortunately, it wasn't my parents’ I pleaded and cajoled, then changed tactics making calmly rational statements based on my unquestionable maturity. Nothing. It seemed I had to go, so off I marched to UQ eventually settling on the scary prospect of Russian and Japanese languages.

My first days at uni were peppered with frustration, confusion and fear. Finally, I thought, it had to stop. Knowing my parents wouldn’t support my decision, but also knowing that my GPA would drop dramatically if I remained, I made my first adult decision. I took control of my life and deferred from university.

I didn’t mind hard work and got a job working as a lowly Junior for a fashion designer. Eighteen months later I went to live in Japan teaching English. Japan eventually kicked me out with strict instructions that I could only return as a tourist, or an employee (with a working visa). Ironically I could only get a working visa with a university degree.

Hmm...conundrum...

I returned to Australia and got a job at a film company where I met the film editor. Their job fascinated me so the next day I applied to the Qld College of Art, had my panel interview and received my acceptance letter soon after. Quitting my job seemed the right choice.

So...after a ‘three year’ gap year, I was finally ready to go to uni. I’ve been addicted to study ever since. I guess all I ultimately needed to succeed at university was a light dusting of passion. My parents eventually forgave me for opting out of that first degree, after they’d paid three years of HECS fees up front!
ANNA GRAHAM
(Grad. 2010)

2011 was the best year of my life! After I graduated in 2010 I was in no way ready for university. I was stressed, exhausted and had no idea what I wanted to study. Luckily I came across Antipodeans Abroad, a program that allowed me to volunteer in Ghana for 3 months whilst living with a local host family. Before I left on my crazy adventure I needed to raise a lot of money, and organise a lot of paperwork. Throughout the year I worked full time as a clerical assistant at GHD Engineering, and waitressed by night. It was difficult preparing for something so out of this world, but various training camps and information nights run by Antipodeans had me ready as anything for my departure in September.

In Ghana the family unit was a little different – I lived in a house with 13 other people, there was always laughter, singing, and noise, and just so much joy. It taught me that you can get used to anything really. Often there was no running water or power, we ate the same food every day. My life was simple but not once was I bored, I found that I adapted easily to the slow pace of life and grew to love simple happiness.

My placement had me working in an orphanage in Gomoa Abaasa. It was hard at first but soon became less overwhelming as I became attached to the kids. In the beginning the school classes had the orphanage split into two halves, the younger half and the older half. Teaching the younger class was nearly impossible with a 6 month old on my hip and multiple 2 year olds tugging at my legs. I decided to use my fundraising money to build a classroom, $2600 went such a long way over there! I had a class of about 16 little boppers who were just gorgeous! It was difficult structuring lessons with some of the kids unable to speak English, but was so rewarding. The orphanage changed so much when I was there. I saw the construction of my classroom and witnessed the beginnings of a new day care program, as well as a new sleeping area with bunks and mosquito nets.

Ghana has taught me a lot of things, but mostly I have learnt to be much more patient. Living in a slow-paced and developing country has given me this whole paradigm shift that has made me so appreciative of the lives that we lead.

After Ghana I went backpacking overland style through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa and Namibia. I saw the most incredible things and had the most overwhelming sense of freedom and independence.

I’m about to start studying Speech Pathology at UQ, a career path that I wouldn’t have come across if I jumped straight into university. The year off was perfect for me; I had experience working full time in a corporate environment, I had the amazing challenge of living in a third world country, I had the fantastic independence of backpacking and I was able to experience a whole new way of life. I am now ready to start university full of drive and passion for all that I am about to learn.

SUE FORBES
(Hillbrook Careers & Guidance Counsellor)

Taking a gap year after school can be a fantastic opportunity to see the world, have a break before work or continued study. Whether it involves working, volunteering or travelling, a gap year is often a way to gain increased maturity and independence as well as increasing career prospects and develop skills that many employers are looking for. With these benefits, however, come many questions. Will students return to their chosen study or career paths? Will they be safe? What is the best way to structure the year?

In Queensland the proportion of university new enrolments that are school leavers is down to about 41% at some institutions. However, the proportion of new enrolments for students under 20 years of age is still around 70% suggesting that many students who take a break do return to study. University research also tells us that students who take a break have particularly good retention rates for the duration of their study. In addition, many universities now recognise the benefits of a global experience and most of the major institutions have opportunities for students to study abroad in their second or subsequent years of study.

Gap year options include volunteering, a working holiday, student exchange, au Pair, Defence Force Gap Year and teaching English overseas. Volunteering allows young people the opportunity to travel and work, but to experience other cultures and lifestyles whilst making a difference in the world. Working holidays are a more traditional gap year, allowing young people to travel whilst funding the experience. There are many organisations that can set you up with a job before leaving home. Many of these involve working in boarding schools, pubs, ski resorts or summer camps. Students exchange may involve school-leavers attending a foreign high school and living with a host family. This can be a great way to get immersed in a new culture and learn a new language. University students also have many opportunities to study abroad allowing students to gain credit towards their qualification.
JOHN MCTAVISH
(Grad. 2010)

The rush I got out of finishing school continued long after schoolies so when university offers came out I decided to delay further study for a good six months - not a gap year but still a significant period of time.

This was a decision I regret. Despite having spent the last five years moaning about how much I hated my schedule, I found myself missing the structure that was previously present in my life and no amount of work could fill this void. The buzz of almost limitless socialising, clubbing and the potential for seemingly endless wealth (for me, anyway) wore off very quickly.

To summarise, I would recommend taking a gap year only if you had some kind of travel or specific plan in mind. You might think that taking six months or a year to earn money will really set you up, but realistically there is very little you can do in that year that you would not be able to do over time whilst studying. Even at university I still have time to work and socialise, and do exceedingly well in areas I thought I would struggle with. Best of luck with your decision, and enjoy school while it lasts.

Postscript: John is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Queensland, focusing on ancient history and political science.

PAUL BRITTENDEN
(Grad. 1992)

When looking back over one's entire life, is there ever evidence of a gap, or is there just a continuation of participation, experience, knowledge and growth?

ROSMARIN ZACHER
(nee Briner, Grad. 1999)

I graduated from Hillbrook with an OP 2, after spending an idyllic childhood in Northern NSW, attending a Steiner School until the end of Year 10. I worked hard at school despite “knowing” that I wanted to be a chef for the “rest of my life”...

After graduating I secured an apprenticeship at the award-winning restaurant e’cco. I had also applied to study a Bachelor of Applied Science (Medical Science) at QUT, which I declined. My first gap year included working 55+ hours a week and moving out of home in my second week as an apprentice. I managed to live on $250/week, buy food and pay rent, buy (a cheap) car, bicycle, computer, and still have a bit of cash saved at the end of the year. The skills I learned still stand me in excellent stead and I would never swap that year, but 13 months was enough so (after shedding tears) I accepted that a change would be a good idea and re-applied to University.

Applied Science (Medical Science) was a challenging and interesting degree. I had renewed enthusiasm and motivation to make it work (which definitely set me apart from many of the other cohort). I also qualified for Centrelink payments.

I took a second gap year after I finished my undergrad degree. Once again I was totally burnt out, I think a break or change of scene is necessary at times to come back with renewed energy from the drain of full-time study. I got married and worked as a scientist. Being a scientist wasn’t for me, so I applied to study Medicine and was accepted with a rural scholarship, graduating as Dux (a massive surprise).

I certainly have a few take-home messages, some are life lessons I’ve learnt, some are general advice:-

1. Take as many breaks as you need, you will probably come out more interesting than you could have thought, not to mention opening yourself up to new opportunities.
2. If you bother doing anything, do it well and put 100% effort in, otherwise don’t do it.
3. Keep your options open – statistics show that you will have at least 3 careers – this means trying not to burn any bridges.
4. Your career is important, but hopefully not the most important thing in your life – make an effort to maintain relationships with important friends and family (2 of my best friends are from Hillbrook!)
5. And finally, the way you live your life shows what you believe in. This doesn't mean you have to try to be perfect, but recognise your own strengths and weaknesses, prioritise the important things to you and don't take anything or anyone for granted.

The opportunities created by having families who value education enough to send you to Hillbrook means that you can achieve great things (whatever that great thing is for you). We all struggle with our own personal issues, but what will set you apart is your attitude to it all and your willingness to make it work even when times are tough. Don’t forget to enjoy the journey!

Postscript: Rosmarin is currently a Senior Medical Officer (advanced-skill Anaesthetics ) in Kingaroy.

Some useful websites
http://www.lattitude.org.au/
http://www.aupair-australia.net/
http://www.uq.edu.au/uqabroad/
http://www.griffith.edu.au/international/exchange
Helping as a community

9 White has recently completed a fundraising venture called ‘Denial Day’. Similar to the 40 Hour Famine, students spend 1-7 days being denied something (or many things). The key difference is that they don’t get a say in what they will be denied, nor for how long. The funds were raised for a Balinese boy named Echa, who does not have a say in what he is being denied, so the students get a taste of what it might be like for children just like him.

Parents sponsored their children $5 per day for each item being denied. As parents got to choose what their child would be denied, there were many groans while I imagine parents looked on, rubbing their hands in glee. They denied their children a range of specific things, from technology, to furniture, to processed foods and more. Parents said this was a great success and we have achieved our goal of raising $500, which will pay for Echa’s school fees for the year.

Swimming Carnival 2012

At the start of 2012 there was much talk amongst the students and staff, predicting whether this would be Team White’s year to prevail. The last time Team White won a swimming carnival was in 2006 and before that was in 1998. Mr Sharland began some serious rallying of students early and his efforts paid off. Team White was successful in winning the 2012 Swimming Carnival by over 400 points!

Although it was a very hot day, there were some awesome team efforts and a lot of fun had in the novelty events. In the pool there were some fantastic individual races. All age group champions and runners up should be congratulated.

A big thank you must go to our Student Sports Council and all of the staff at Hillbrook who helped to make it such a successful and enjoyable day for all.

Year 7 at Hillbrook

In 2015 Hillbrook will be welcoming Year 7 students to our school for the very first time.

Preparations for their arrival are well underway with new staff joining our team and new classrooms in the pipeline, but there is still plenty of work to do. We are planning a number of events between now and the beginning of the 2015 school year to ensure you and your child feel confident about what to expect in Year 7. We will be conducting interviews for Year 7 on 28 and 29 August 2012.
Science and Engineering Challenge

On 28 February students in Year 10 emulated cool scientific geniuses such as Dr Karl and Adam Spence by competing in the UQ Science and Engineering challenge. Our school won three separate challenges (Future Power, Eco Habitech and Engineering). We then went on to win the day overall. Awesome work!!

Year 8 First Day
On Monday 13 February the Hillbrook community held a special ceremony to welcome The Reverend Sharon Baird and to celebrate her formal commissioning as Chaplain to our school community. At Hillbrook, the School Chaplain leads us in thinking about and exploring our Christian faith, and in relating our individual understanding of it to our own lives. We were privileged to have Bishop Jonathan Holland lead the ceremony, along with Father Jim Nolan. You will see from Sharon’s story that we are truly fortunate to welcome her into the Hillbrook community.

Growing up on the southern Gold Coast, one might assume a beach-loving, outdoorsy Chaplain had arrived at Hillbrook. Well almost. I do love a walk on the beach, however most of my childhood was spent in music practice rooms. I did sense a call from God on my life from a fairly early age, however my passion for teaching was clear from the moment Dad attached my first blackboard to the wall of our garage at around age 7.

I completed a degree in creative arts (music performance) in 1995 and continued my studies to become a teacher. I very much enjoyed my work as an IT and Business teacher with a little music thrown in here and there, however I knew that God was preparing me for more. After nine years of teaching in both State and Catholic schools I accepted a position as Middle School Chaplain at All Saints Anglican School and began training for priestly ministry. It has taken six long years of study and formation and I am thrilled to have been appointed as Chaplain to Hillbrook.

I have one daughter, Claire who is 8; and we have two cats (Harry and Harriett) that complete our little family. I am privileged to be able to combine my passions for teaching, music, IT and God into my role as Chaplain. I look forward to journeying with all members of our Hillbrook community, sharing my faith and shining a little of the light of Christ, through the grace of God.

Sharon Baird

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Leisa Bye World’s Greatest Shave

Inspired by the courage of some Hillbrook staff, and a close family member who have all battled cancer, our much loved receptionist Leisa Bye participated in The World’s Greatest Shave.

On 23 March during a moving assembly Leisa had her head shaved by art teacher Tamara Gerlic and Year 11 student Claire Gaunt (Claire participated in the shave last year). Prior to the shave, Leisa produced a moving presentation she shared with the students during their weekly Chapel service. Leisa successfully raised over $7000!
On Tuesday 13 March the whole school and many parents gathered to acknowledge our Year 12 students taking on their Senior Leadership responsibilities, as well as to see our newly elected Student Representative Council members pledging their commitment to their role for the year.

This ceremony, highlighting our Year 12 students and our SRC members, illustrates Hillbrook’s shared approach to leadership. Collectively, we are looking at over 2,400 hours of activity which certainly will make a positive difference in the lives of others in our school community. On concluding his speech, Geoff Newton paraphrased Rudyard Kipling: “The strength of the person is in the community and the strength of the community is in the person”. We wish our Year 12 students, SRC members, indeed all members of our community, all the best with their leadership journey this year.

On 15 March 7 excited students, along with Ms Lane and Ms Phair went to Somerset College’s Festival of Literature.

We met authors Karen Healey, Ghostboy, Cath Crowley, Scott Westerfield, Neil Grant, Claudia Gray and Jane Caro. We learnt how to make umbrellas talk, how to eat an apple, that writing takes a long time to do, and to write about what you are passionate about. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience and hope to go back next year!

(Isabelle, Victoria, Lulu and Nadia)
1992 Graduates’ Twenty Year Reunion

The scenic Northshore Riverside Cafe was chosen as the venue for this year’s Twentieth Reunion. We were treated to delicious food, good music and surrounded by lovely parkland and a river-side vista. Thanks to Tina Gilbert for encouraging so many of her classmates to attend and to past teacher Peter Kerr for acting as the MC for the evening.

Vale Scott McKenzie

Sadly Scott McKenzie who was a parent, P&F President, School Council member and Chairperson for 6 years (2005 – 2011) recently passed away after a short illness.

Scott was a passionate supporter of Hillbrook and as Chair lead the Council and the school through a very exciting time in Hillbrook’s journey. His humility, integrity and quiet resolve were hallmarks of the man and he will be missed throughout the Hillbrook community.

Ride2School Day

58 students, staff and parents either cycled or skateboarded to school under threatening skies and were rewarded with a cooked breakfast hosted by Green Justice students. The event was organised by Simon Roberts, one of Hillbrook’s Outdoor Education teachers. A keen cyclist himself Simon says “It’s cheap, it’s good for your health and it reduces demand on natural resources.” Ride2School day is an initiative to encourage people to become more active as the number of students travelling to school by car over the last 40 years has increased from 20% to 50%.

Time Capsule

On 15 November 2011 we gathered together to bury our 25th Anniversary time capsule at the foot of ‘Trees’, our sculpture commemorating the Enoggera Home Boys.

The capsule contains school paraphernalia, and written contributions by our staff and students including letters, memoirs, expectations and hopes for the future. Staff and students were all invited to throw a handful of sand into the hole. The time capsule will be opened on 13 May 2036, celebrating Hillbrook’s 50th birthday – see you all there!
An exceptional event at Hillbrook that highlights the joy of belonging to a vibrant and dynamic school community is the biennial school musical.

This year’s production, ‘The Boy Friend’ had a cast of just under 70 student performers from Years 9 to 12, an orchestra of 15 musicians, a crew including choreographers, assistants to the Directors, set painters, set builders, sound, lighting and stage crew, programme designers, front of house volunteers, makeup assistants, ticket administration and Café crew. We congratulate everyone who participated for their dedication, commitment and unwavering enthusiasm. In particular we would like to honour the students for their impressive talent (in front or behind the scenes) and their mature and responsible behaviour. For a school to produce a show of such calibre is a credit to the students, and of course their parents and teachers who were tireless in their assistance and support.

On 18 March 12 very keen Hillbrook parents enjoyed a day’s hike along Dave’s Creek Circuit in Lamington National Park. The weather was reasonably kind, the leeches slightly less kind, the lunch-time picnic was gastronomic and hot chocolate with marshmallows overlooking the view from the tea house at the end of the walk topped off a wonderful day. This Lamington hike gives parents an insight into the Year 11 overnight camp and one of the Year 12 self-directed 4-day camp options conducted in this breathtakingly beautiful national park on Brisbane’s doorstep.

‘The Boy Friend’

School Musical
Music Camp

The Junior and Senior Music camps were held at Brookfield over 3 days in early March. This camp is designed to allow students to develop both musically and socially in a relaxed environment in readiness for their concert performances throughout the year, and this year’s camp was particularly successful. All of our students need to be commended for their commitment and behaviour. A full weekend of music, games, great food, music, swimming, music and of course the ‘talent quests’ was enjoyed by everyone, especially the staff.
Past connections

HEDGE FAMILY NEWS

Susan Hedge (Grad. 2002)
Susan completed a Masters in Law at Oxford in 2010, whilst rowing for her college’s Women’s First Eight and loving every minute. During 2011 Susan has been working on the Flood Commission. Susan is about to start work for the State Director of Public Prosecutions in Townsville.

John Hedge (Grad. 1998)
John, Danielle and big sister Isabelle were thrilled with the arrival of Annora in November 2011. John continues to work as a solicitor in Brisbane in the area of Energy and Resources.

Robyn Hedge
(Science Teacher 1991 to 2010)
Robyn and her husband Rik felt a great sense of achievement completing the Inca Trail hike to Macchu Pichu in 2011.

Thomas Stur (Grad. 2005)
Thomas finished a degree in Mechatronics and Mathematics in November 2011 (First Class Honours in Engineering) at University of Queensland and has recently commenced working with GE in Melbourne. Thomas is currently sharing a house with Sasha Rust, a good friend from Hillbrook.

Tim Hausler (Grad. 2000)
Tim Hausler recently won the AusIMM New Professional Award 2012. Tim studied Electrical Engineering at QUT and graduated in 2004 with 2A Honours. During the second half of his studies Tim commenced worked with a company that provides automation engineering for mining, metallurgical and industrial plants. Tim spent several years working on the development of a wireless sensor network culminating in its recent deployment in Kazakhstan. Over the last few years Tim has travelled widely to various mines in Australia and extensively overseas for work and pleasure. Tim continues to play the flute for a local orchestra, is awaiting patent approval on an engineering invention and has plans to return to Kazakhstan with his partner Lena in the near future.

Luke Constable (Grad. 2004)
Luke Constable’s video clip featuring the band ‘Hey Geronimo’ was the #1 watched Australian song on YouTube, back in early December. Have a look at...
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrsoLu5juKc&feature=channel_video_title
To date the clip has had about 900,000 views and made it onto the LA Times, Reddit and Techcrunch websites.

Jessica Cucchiaro (Grad. 2005)
Whilst holidaying in Bali last year Jessica became engaged to Shaun Filer from Texas, USA. The couple had met whilst studying at UQ, their wedding being planned for November this year. Jess and Shaun currently live in Sydney, Jess has completed her psych undergrad studies and is about to finish her post grad. Jessica is working as a rehabilitation consultant for a large company handling workplace psych injuries.
Allen Grace (Grad. 1992)
Allen has been living in Germany for the last 7 years, working as a freelance software developer, and making use of the German language skills acquired at Hillbrook. In his spare time Allen plays bagpipes and travels regularly to Scotland and Ireland for major international competitions. Allen travels back to Brisbane for a visit every year to remind him of his roots and this year timed his visit perfectly to coincide with his 20 Year Hillbrook Reunion. Queensland is still where Allen calls home.

Samuel Irvine Casey (Grad. 2011)
Congratulations to Samuel, who has been awarded a Merit Scholarship for excellence in academics, leadership and community service from University of Queensland, where he is studying a dual Law/Science degree. Samuel is coaching an under-tens soccer team at Bardon/Latrobe and will be participating in a science excellence program with UQ, in mathematics.

Georgia’s Davies (Grad. 2011)
Georgia has been awarded a Vice Chancellor’s Academic Scholarship from QUT, where Georgia has commenced her Law degree. This is a substantial scholarship and is awarded to undergraduate students across various faculties who in addition to excelling academically have demonstrated skills in leadership, community involvement and an interest in and involvement in extracurricular activities. Well done, Georgia we are incredibly proud.

Steff Ward (Grad. 2010)
After being shortlisted in the Elyne Mitchell Rural Women’s 2011 Writing Award competition Steff Ward was invited to the awards ceremony in Victoria. The topic was ‘A Bird’s Eye View’ and Steff’s story, about the effects of urbanization from the bird’s point of view, was called ‘Fallen Ibis’. Steff won the Emerging Writers Category which was judged and presented by Fiona Inglis CEO of Curtis Brown Literary Agency and she has been invited to submit more work. Steff is planning trips to Hawaii and Nepal during 2012.

Phillipa Coulthard (Grad. 2010)
Phillipa is currently in Los Angeles auditioning, after filming a small but challenging part in Bikie Wars: Brothers in Arms (a TV miniseries for Channel 10 based on the Milperra bikie massacre) in Sydney. Since finishing at Hillbrook Phillipa has had a lead role in Lightning Point (a 26-part children’s TV series), and a small role in an American movie ‘The Philosophers’ shot over 7 weeks in Indonesia. Phillipa also plans to head to the UK to look for more acting work.

Alex Rankin (Grad. 2003)
Alex moved to New Zealand eighteen months ago to the positions of National Sales Manager and Human Resource Manager for Billabong New Zealand. Alex commenced working at Billabong while a student at Hillbrook and continued after finishing school, working full time while completing a Bachelor of Business (Human Resources).
Justine & Neil Favell

Justine and Neil Favell are the proud parents of their very own quartet, with the arrival of another beautiful daughter, Zahra Belle on 21 February, a little sister for Zac, Sam and Summer.

Steve Cambridge

Steve Cambridge and Sarah Munro were married on 24 March at Wirreanda Park, Buderim. Steve and Sarah met whilst both were studying to become Physical Education teachers at QUT. Father Phil, our previous school chaplain, performed the ceremony. Steve and Sarah will enjoy a honeymoon travelling to Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Brian Kedzierski

Brian, Melissa and big sister Erin welcomed Lara Rose who was born on 16 December 2011 at 3.22 am, weighing 4lb 10oz.

John & Holly O’Sullivan Williams

John and Holly are making sure Hillbrook enrolments remain strong with the arrival of Maisie Fortune just in time for Santa on 17 December, a little sister for Jasper and Poppy.

Kerry Sims-McLean – Computers & Information Technology Teacher

I relocated to Queensland from Sydney at the end of 2010, where I had been teaching IT and IPT at Bradfield Senior College for the last 11 years. I was also working as a part-time lecturer at The University of Sydney, in various teacher education courses. I have a Masters of Education (IT), Cert 3 Information Technology and various other IT qualifications, and Cert 4 Training & Assessment; and bring to Hillbrook a broad range of experiences.

I have two daughters – Ellesse who is in Year 12 and Jayde, who is completing her Bachelor of Fashion Design & Marketing. I have always been involved in sport and dance with my children’s activities, which has taken us all around Australia and overseas. I enjoy cooking, travelling and photography. My partner, Jeremy, is a personal trainer and together we lead a happy, healthy and balanced lifestyle. I look forward to working with the staff and students of the Hillbrook learning community in 2012.

Julie Nash – Home Economics Teacher

I have been teaching Home Economics for many years, most recently at Mt Alvernia College.

My husband and I have two sons and a daughter who have all finished school. I enjoy spending time searching the internet for creative ideas for teaching, the weather (so boring!!), sewing and interior design projects, Youtube for “how to” clips for crafts, and gardening.

My other favourite pasttime is working in the garden, particularly my veggie patch. I also love cooking; using the foods I have just picked. I have enjoyed the warm welcome from the Hillbrook Community and am delighted to be working with our students.

Magda Soto – Laboratory Technician

I’m originally from Argentina and I been living in Brisbane for a little more than two years with my husband. Since arriving I have been exploring Australia and getting familiar with the “Australian way of life”, especially the Aussie slang! In Argentina I enjoyed science at school, so studied to become a biology teacher and spent a couple of years teaching in a remote township in Southern Argentina before moving to Brisbane. I’m looking forward to the year ahead at Hillbrook and getting to know everyone.

Pedro Ramos – Laboratory Technician

Half raised in Brazil, half raised in Canada, all raised in science, I am looking forward to adding Australia to my list and am excited to be doing so at Hillbrook! I graduated in Microbiology and Immunology from McGill University, and have been working in laboratories since 2007. I have always had an ineffable passion for educating the next generation (particularly about the environment) and can’t wait to contribute whatever I can to enhance students’ science experiences.

I have been wonderfully welcomed by the inimitable Hillbrook staff.

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Connections is printed on Revive Laser, Australian made, recycled paper.

IMPORTANT DATES

3 May 2012
Hillbrook In Action
Open Day

15 & 16 May 2012
Year 8, 2015 Interviews

8 June 2012
2002 Graduates’ 10 Year Reunion

22 August 2012
Year 7 Expo

28 & 29 August 2012
Year 7, 2015 Interviews

28 October 2012
Family Day (Year 8 2013 Orientation)