



PLC  
PRESBYTERIAN  
LADIES' COLLEGE  
SYDNEY  
— 1888 —

## STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES:

### Schoolies

Schoolies: the proclamation that the exams are over, school is finished, and that now is an interlude of freedom, fun and “letting your hair down”.

We associate this “cultural rite of passage” with the beaches of southern Queensland, starting in Broadbeach in the 1970s. Over the decades the geographical extent of “Schoolies Week” for New South Wales students has extended as far north as the islands off Townsville and as far south as Port Macquarie. Some may even go overseas.

“Chilling out”, enjoying the sun, sand, and surf is are key ingredients for Schoolies Week, and local authorities organise outdoor events to provide activities that are both safe and fun for the graduands, although sadly sometimes drug and alcohol abuse enter the equation.



*Paradise Beach, 1946  
Photo donated by Winsome Menzies (née Wood),  
student 1942-1947*

But the idea of schoolies predates the 1970s, at least with PLC Sydney pupils. It was sometimes known as “after the Leaving”, referring to the Leaving Certificate, the public examination that preceded today's Higher School Certificate. The destinations were arguably not as exotic: Paradise Beach (Avalon on the Northern Beaches) or Austinmer on the near South Coast, for example. And a photograph from 1938 shows a teacher/chaperone as part of the group, which would be an anathema today!



*“At Austinmer after the Leaving, 1938.”  
This is the earliest photographic documentation the Archives holds of “schoolies”.  
The teacher/chaperone is at the left in the back row.*



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Schoolies in the year of the pandemic will be quieter, yet the members of the Class of 2020, being “young women of integrity and purpose”, will find ways to celebrate the end of their secondary education with relaxation, recreation and friendship.



*At last out of uniform! 1950*  
Photo donated by Jean Beaumann (née Hunt),  
student 1945-1950



*Paradise Beach, 1946*  
Photo donated by Winsome Menzies  
(née Wood), student 1942-1947



*Dressed for the beach, 1950*  
Photo donated by Jean Beaumann (née Hunt),  
student 1945-1950

Debby Cramer, Archivist