

# MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

published monthly, except December

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm  
in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church Hall

Vol. 7 No. 8

AUGUST 1991

WELCOME TO THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER

This month we publish further extracts from Emily Walker's diary and a report on the Latrobe Valley Airfields, courtesy of Traralgon Historical Society.

Members are invited to attend the Annual Dinner of Traralgon Historical Society on September 13th - details appear inside.

DON'T FORGET to pay your 1991-92 subs if you haven't already done so. Cost is \$7.00 single member, \$10.00 couple or family.

HELP WANTED.

Does anyone know the origin of the name of Morwell's 'KARMA' Theatre? Morwell City Council is considering naming a lane, to be made alongside the building, Karma Lane, and would like to know the background to the naming of the theatre.

NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY AUGUST 13 - Hope to see you there !

1. FROM R.H.S.V. 'History News' July 1991

## THE CENTRE FOR GIPPSLAND STUDIES

The Centre for Gippsland Studies, Monash University College Gippsland continues to work on the project to index its picture collection. The collection is expanding, especially with the addition of photographs from the Carlyon Collection which consists of negatives and scripts prepared for a television series 'Gippsland's Path of Time', screened in the early 1960s.

Another project is the production of curriculum material for primary schools. A kit, 'School Gardens: A Unit of Work for Primary School Children', comprising document sheets, photographs and a teacher's booklet, has been published. It aims to develop research skills through a wide range of language, maths and general studies activities. Most of the resource material consists of articles written by Gippsland children in the 1920s.

Steve Murphy, a member of the CGS Advisory Board, is compiling a list of films with Gippsland content. Any further information on film relating to Gippsland would be welcomed.

Contact Meredith Fletcher (051) 226-356.

## FAMILY SEARCH

Send copies of your pedigree charts and family group records to the AIGS. We will place the information on computer for you and forward it to the State Library so it can be included in the Electronic Genealogical Research Directory. This directory will be seen in 1500 family history libraries world wide.

A.I.G.S. Library P.O. Box 339. Blackburn Vic. 3130.

## ARCHIVAL HERITAGE PROGRAM

The recent reshuffle of Government Departments sees what was formerly the Public Records Office (PRO) now located in the Ministry for the Arts. The Public Record Office has been renamed, the Archival Heritage Program, to cover its expanded role. The program was established by the then Minister for Property and Services, Ian Baker, and is responsible for the conservation, management, security, promotion and display of the State's Public Records. It encompasses all functions of the Public Records Act 1973 which include the establishment of efficient records' management standards and working with Government Sector Agencies to facilitate legislative requirements and to promote efficient records' management practices.

The program involves two repositories, three search rooms and the administrative office. These contain 40 shelf kilometres of records dating from the 1830's and have 45 staff to administer the program. The four locations from which it operates include: a city office — 4th floor, 35 Spring Street, search rooms, 4th floor, Information Victoria, 318 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, the Laverton repository and search room, 57 Cherry Lane, Laverton and a Ballarat Office at Level 1 Public Offices, corner Main and Doveton Street, Ballarat.

Herald-Sun  
July 29, 1991

# Neglect ruining library

By ALLEN RADOS

THE State Library resembled "one of those miserable East European federated states and bears all the marks of a disgruntled regime", a forum discussing the crisis in the State Library was told yesterday.

Melbourne historian Paul de Serville called for the library's much-neglected collections to come first, and its users —

## — historian

particular VCE students — second.

In an address to about 100 people, Mr de Serville warned that many rare works and much of Victoria's heritage were at risk because of woeful conditions.

They were deteriorating rapidly, he said.

"The library is in a desperate state. The major collections are rare, valuable and in many cases unique, but the energies of the library are directed to serving the users, not for the caring of the collections."

He said the library had been abused by VCE stu-

dents who flocked to its famous domed reading room not to study but to chat, eat oranges, listen to their portable radios and inquire about who was going out with whom that night.

Mr de Serville, author of *Port Phillip Gentlemen* — a book wholly researched at the library — said much of the staff's time and effort was spent answering petty inquiries from the public.

That service could be provided by suburban libraries, he said, and the secondary and tertiary schools system could look after most students.

"There are no votes in books. Politicians can afford to ignore us. Money can always be found, even in the leanest of years, for the Tennis Centre and for the Olympics bid. But for the library, nothing but cuts," he said.

He said the Ministry for the Arts, which controlled the library, was "a bureaucracy which had little interest in the library's plight, preferring the seductive pleasures of a night at the opera or the ballet".

## THE STATE LIBRARY NOW — TAKING STOCK A Forum for Library Users on the present and future of an Institution under pressure

The State Library continues to be a problem for its users, and there is cause for anxiety that the situation will deteriorate further. Recent press publicity concerning the overcrowding and demands placed on the Library's services by VCE students simply underlines the difficulties experienced by regular users.

Although Stage 1 of the Library redevelopment has commenced with construction work on infill buildings in Russell Street, there are now severe doubts that the National Museum will be moving from the complex, a premise on which the Library redevelopment was based.

'History News' July 1991

we left Plymouth. The scenery is not so beautiful as I had expected. Still if I had not expected so much, I should have been better pleased no doubt. The town seems to be built of some white stone which glitters in the powerful sunlight. Some of the larger buildings have domes, & minarets. The palace is a red-brick building, & apparently destitute of all architectural beauty, so much so in fact, that many of the passengers mistook it for some manufacturing establishment. One of the state rooms, Alice Halpole tells me, is <sup>lined</sup> covered with tapestry, some of which, is said

to have been worked by Margaret of Arjow. The palace gardens are very beautiful, & have many roses & flowers in bloom. One of the gardeners who showed the Walpoles round, gave them some roses, & orange-blossoms, also some tiny lemons about the size of a pigeon's egg, used for scenting handkerchieves, he said. & Naples seems to be surrounded by groves of olive-trees, dotted here & there by houses. The Museum is a very tiny place, very expensive to look over, & contains nothing of ~~very~~ great importance or of interest even. Many ships, & two or three

12) men of war are in the harbour undergoing quarantine; one man of war is so large as to chumney, as not to answer to the helm, so to never, outside the harbour. A ship came to anchor this morning; a tender, followed by many boats with hawkers &c, came alongside with the mails. There were two or three letters for us which met with the enthusiastic welcome they deserved. It seems a long time since we saw them all at home. When I was describing Naples itself, I omitted to mention a very pretty little suspension bridge there is over one of the

valleys, at least I should see over a stream & waterfall, a little higher up & out of reach. The bay is very calm & still. Mt. Vesuvius is not smoking much. The sides of the volcano are covered in places with the olive trees, there are a few little white houses, & every thing looks quiet & peaceful. A few castles & the smoke being the only reminders of the possibility of their being a fearful eruption sometime. Not a cloud in the sky, - well may the poets <sup>say</sup> reflect of the archaic taint, the glowing relics of Italy. Will the Australian skies be like (these, I wonder!)

these I wonder? ... and now  
3. for a few words about the  
numerous visitors the boats  
brought when the tender came  
alongside.  
with her escort, it might almost  
have been. The Italians  
are reported to be said great  
thieves, so care was taken to  
stow away all moveable  
articles that were not needed.  
I should think about 100  
natives came aboard hauling  
sticks, cans, hats, muslin  
lace, flowers, fruit, deck-  
chairs, cigars, jewelry,  
pictures & almost everything  
besides that one can think of.  
In the morning enormous  
prices were asked for articles.

In the afternoon they were  
more reasonable, & towards  
evening were willing to give  
the things away almost.  
Brahma-pootra, (Mr Bryner,  
chief officer), just now pitched  
one of the boys (native) over-  
board, for trying to steal  
something, bag & baggage.  
B. is very rough with them,  
but I suppose it is necessary  
to treat these, "savagely" as he  
calls them, in order.  
Those who are down in  
the boats die in numbers.  
They behave themselves  
like dogs, I can't bear to  
look at them. Our boys  
think it fun. Dear Mother

feels rather better & enjoys  
the agreeable warmth. We  
all enjoyed the day although  
we did not go ashore, &  
found the hawkers a regular  
nuisance before they cleared off.

Off again by 6 o'clock.  
Some of the passengers are  
going to sleep up on deck  
as it is so stuffy below.  
Our party again prove the  
exception & I comfort myself  
with the reflection that I  
am like the fox in thinking  
the grasses good. However  
the rest had to change quarters  
in the early morning about  
4 o'clock & move "below"  
about to their berths; so

that the decks might be  
"swabbed". Mr Bean, a  
very big man, - an ex-fire-  
-man of a man-o-war -  
who is travelling to Sydney  
to take charge of a fire-  
-brigade, - is well ac-  
-quainted with the  
Mediterranean Sea &  
Naples. He says he has  
cruising about there for  
15 years & so the scenery  
must be quite familiar  
to him. I fancy it is  
a new experience to  
most of the other pass-  
-engers, this voyage being  
their first, & perhaps,  
the last to some of us.

18. May 10th. We are passing through the Straits of Messina. The scenery is very beautiful & we all admire it much. How clear the water is! But in the distance, <sup>to the N.W.</sup> we see a wreck, which is said to have been grounded on the rocks a long time ago & left, perhaps as a warning to other vessels; & yet there seem to be no dangerous rocks at any rate to us, but I don't think we should be going so slowly if there was no danger to be apprehended, & what does that beautiful little white light-house mean? danger, I think must be, & yet how calm & pretty all is! The sea is like glass, with hardly a ripple

made by the steamer, as we move slowly along. And 4 now for a few words about the town of Messina itself. It is built at the foot of the Mountains, & like Naples, it is surrounded with groves of olive trees on 3 sides, & the Straits on the other. Also the houses are white, but appear larger than those of Naples, perhaps that is owing to our being rather nearer the town). In the background, are the Mountains of Sicily. Some covered to the tops with olives, others again bare & capped with the "everlasting snow". It seems strange that there should be snow here.

20 but doubtless, it is because these Mountains are so high. A great many little boats sailing about. What gay flags they have to be sure! We are just passing between Cylla & Caribdis. How well I remember dear Annie Maden, at Ackworth, teaching us about them! We never thought then, that we should see all these foreign lands, & yet here we are. How wonderful it all is! Mama is up on deck again today, enjoying the scenery as much as anyone. It is nice to see her a little better. Little Nell is a great favourite with nearly every one. Dear little girl, she knows how to dirty her pinafore

almost as soon as they are put on! <sup>21.</sup> John, Frank, & Bob too, are good friends with the sailors especially one of the quartermasters, a little cabin-boy. They have been nearly all over the ship I think & Mr Noble, one of the engineers has promised to take them into the storeroom & refrigerator. They have a fine time of it, boys are able to do so many more things than girls, & when we are grown up it will be just the same I suppose. It is Saturday night tonight, & supper, consisting of bread, cheese & water, is just being put on the tables by the

5 stewards. Poor men, they don't appear to have much rest from their labors. Today is the beginning of a new week, Sunday May 11<sup>th</sup>. Service is held generally at 10.30 a.m. The notice was pinned up in the various hatchways, leading down to the Saloons. A Church of England Minister - the Rev. Mr Ashe, well named by some, "Dust, Ashes" - officiated, in a very holy surprise. It was not a very interesting sermon, & we were glad when it was over. It was so very close in the first class saloon, all the first, second, third & steerage class passengers, who liked

to attend, were there, so we were rather tightly packed. In the afternoon, a Mr Brewster - a Bible hawk - instituted a Bible class of about a dozen. An evening sermon, singing, were also, commenced by another Bible hawk, a Mr Hambleton, & Mr Brewster, in the steerage. Some of the first & second class passengers went to hear as it was an open-air performance. Mr Hambleton has a powerful voice; he seemed to be something of a bigot however, & used rather stronger terms at times, than were liked by the majority. These even-

24. Any meetings must be allowed; long I don't think; the captain doesn't seem to care much about them. I understand Mr Hambleton was an actor in Australia in his youth & opened the first theatre in Melbourne, also that his object in again revisiting the colonies is to undo, at least try to undo, the great evil he did when younger. We are passing the island of Cook, but as it is night we can only see the beautiful revolving light, so I don't know what appearance it presents in daylight. May 12<sup>th</sup> can see Cook very indistinctly now, a big cloud it almost looks like. The ocean is still very

25. <sup>clear</sup> still & blue. Got I think it will be a very warm day today. Some passengers came aboard at Naples; two Germans joined, who have great difficulty in making themselves understood as they speak pigeon English. A lady - Mrs Francis alias Cusa I believe, & her baby are very ill. The husband is a very unkind sort of man I think, & leaves her to take care of herself & pretty & much & the baby too. The children & babies (3) dine before their elders, at 7.30 12.30 & 4.30 & then play & amuse themselves on deck. There is not sufficient accommodation for all to dine together.

THE LATROBE VALLEY AIRFIELDS

Following is a report on the talk given by Mr. Roger Vanstan, an instructor with the Latrobe Valley Aero Club, to Traralgon Historical Society on 14th May this year. The report appeared in the July 1991 edition of Traralgon Historical Society's newsletter - Vol.22, No.3 - and is reproduced here by kind permission of the Society.

In 1949 a small group of enthusiasts, including ex-servicemen, met at Morwell and formed The Latrobe Valley Aero Club.

Neither the Morwell Council nor the Department of Civil Aviation could provide the land required for an airfield so the Aero Club accepted the offer of land from Brinsmeads on their farm adjacent to Morwell near Driffield Road and Sewerage Road. Being close to Morwell, this land was ideally situated.

In late-1949 to early 1950, club members and the Brinsmead family, with their own and borrowed equipment, marked out a strip 750 yds. long and 50 yds. wide. This was later extended to 900 yds, fence to fence, in an East-North-East/West-South-West direction. This became known as Brinsmeads Field.

Flying was carried out using borrowed aircraft and with Doug. Leckie, from Yarram, as Instructor.

In 1951 an Air Pageant was held and this raised sufficient funds to purchase the first Club aircraft, a Tiger Moth.

Because of inadequate drainage in winter, it was necessary to develop a further area, on higher ground, and the mid-strip, 500 yds. was built, running East-West.

In 1951 the Department of Civil Aviation approved the airfield and authorised it as a Landing Area; the Latrobe Valley Aero Club was approved to carry out flying operations including flying training.

A North-South strip, 500 yards long including a small piece of land leased from the Sewerage Authority Farm at a peppercorn rental, was added in 1952. Further developments in 1953 included a steel-framed hangar and a fuel bowser.

With its own aircraft, the Club continued part-time instruction and after adding more Tiger Moths to the fleet it opened training outposts at Meeniyan, Yarram and Orbost.

The first appointment of a full-time Instructor was in late 1953. The mid-'50s saw the purchase of 4 surplus Chipmunk aircraft to replace the ageing Tigers.

Whilst the Airfield was an Authorised Landing Area, it was not protected from adjacent development, and in 1954 the S.E.C. constructed a 66,000 volt line crossing the approach path to the eastern end of the main strip. This closed the strip for training which was a major part of its use. The D.C.A. reluctantly allowed a short time concession during which the Club had to find an alternative site.

7. The area bounded on the West by the Midland Highway (on its original alignment) and North by Bonds Lane was then suggested by the S.E.C. Once again, members set about to construct a new Airfield, with 2 strips cleared and marked to the satisfaction of the D.C.A. All flying training was carried out from there, the aircraft being ferried to and from Brinsmeads where they were hangared. This was known as the "Gas & Fuel Field" as it was sited just south of the Lurgi Gas Plant. Because of its location, a long-term lease could not be obtained.

A power line to Yarram was planned, crossing the site, and the planned Hazelwood Power Station, with its 450 ft. chimneys, jeopardised the future of this airfield.

The Latrobe Valley Aero Club, now acclaimed by the D.C.A. as an efficient flying training organisation, once again faced the possibility of having to close or relocate to the West Sale Aerodrome. However, a Latrobe Valley Development Plan (1952) nominated an area of land between Traralgon and Morwell as a suitable site for a future air-port.

With pressure from the Aero Club, the Shire of Morwell and politicians, the D.C.A. surveyed the area in 1957 and designed the airfield layout suitable for the use of light aircraft. The design utilised the highest and best-drained 160 acres of the total 600 acres considered in the original nomination.

This property was purchased from the Hourigan family and the Aero Club members began clearing the site. Fences were removed and trees were removed by explosives. The Club was able to arrange for a RAAF Aerodrome Construction Unit, recently returned from Cocos Island, to make available equipment and operators to help grade and form the strips.

A huge grader formed 3 strips with a camber and side drains allowing for grass sowing. A Hawksley building was purchased and transported to the Field to become an Airport Terminal and L.V.A.C. club-house/operations centre.

Operations commenced on this aerodrome in mid-1959, with aircraft still being hangared at Brinsmeads. However, with the construction of hangars at the new site in 1960, operations at the Brinsmead site concluded.

It is of interest to record that the Brinsmeads had provided the use of their property exclusively for aviation, free to all, from 1949 to 1960.

The trend in aviation in the late '50s saw the purchase of 2 Piper Tri-Pacer craft to offer 4-place touring aircraft; 1961 saw the purchase of a Piper Comanche, an advanced retractable fast touring aircraft.

The early '60s saw the development of the Australian Air-Tourer Aircraft. The Club purchased the first production aircraft and by 1966 it was operating 4 of these, as trainers. (They also purchased the last.)

With the great growth in general aviation in the 1960s, the Club extended its training programmes and in these boom times employed a staff of 12. But just as quickly, the scene changed and by the late '60s, the Club faced its most trying financial time. Aircraft were sold, staff dismissed, country training outposts closed, and the Club carried on with 2 aircraft, 1 Instructor and 1 Office lady.

These measures allowed the Club to survive and through steady growth it has developed once again into one of the premier country flying organisations undertaking private flying, training, charter, aerial photography, fire spotting and controlling, also other diverse activities, such as possum tracking.



Improvements at the Latrobe Valley Aerodrome include :- one sealed strip, one gravelled all-weather strip, terminal buildings, sealed access roads, radio navigation beacon and runway lighting. These have been provided for by the co-operative efforts of the Latrobe Valley Aero Club, the Airfield Advisory Committee and the Civil Aviation Authority (which replaced the earlier Department of Civil Aviation). The Airfield Advisory Committee is now the responsible body for the management of the airfield and comprises the City of Morwell, the City of Traralgon, the Shire of Traralgon and the Latrobe Valley Aero Club.

.....

TRARALGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL DINNER

Members of Morwell Historical Society are cordially invited.

13th September, 1991 (Friday)

Annual Dinner: Our Dinner in 1991 promises to be as successful and enjoyable as those in past years.

We will have as our Guest Speaker Canon Dennis Smallbone, and he has chosen as his subject "A Service Life, in Many Respects".

He joined the R.A.F. as a young man and as a pilot he flew many missions during World War II. When the war ended he continued his flying career in the R.A.F. which included a posting to the R.A.A.F. Base at Sale in the 1950s. After his return to England he continued as an Instructor with the R.A.F. for some time until he decided to enter the Anglican Church.

Eventually Canon Smallbone came back to Australia and has ministered in a number of Parishes in the Gippsland area, including Leongatha and Yarram. He now lives in retirement at Port Albert but still acts as Chaplain at the R.A.A.F. Base at East Sale.

He is a gifted speaker with a wonderful sense of humour and members can be assured of an entertaining evening. You will have the opportunity to meet with friends from our own and other Gippsland societies. We will meet at 6 p.m. for a pre-dinner drink and sit down to dinner at 6.30 p.m. The price will be \$20 per person.

It is necessary to book by 1st September to enable our Secretary to finalise the catering arrangements. Final details, including the venue, will be announced in our September Bulletin.

To book, please contact Mrs. V. Plant  
Secretary, Traralgon H.S.  
Phone 74 2096

FAMOUS LAST WORDS!

A recent Merck Sharp & Dohme (drug company) publication gives the following quotations, with the comment:

"From a vantage point on the high end of the 20th century, it's hard to believe these extraordinary technological advances could have gone perilously close to never happening."

"The radio craze will die out in time."

Thomas Alva Edison, 1922.

"X-rays are a hoax."

Lord Kelvin, former president of the Royal Society, 1900.

"There is not the slightest indication that nuclear energy will ever be obtainable."

Albert Einstein, 1932.

"People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."

Darryl F. Zanuck, Head of 20th Century Fox Studios, 1946.

"Space travel is utter bilge."

Dr. Richard van der Rief Wooley, on becoming Astronomer Royal, 1956.

.....

**MAPPING OUR CULTURE — A POLICY FOR VICTORIA**

'History News'  
August 1991

On Tuesday 2 July the Premier launched this policy — the first in Australia.

That seven government departments co-operated should seal some of the cracks through which initiatives have fallen in the past. Within a broad definition of culture five major policy objectives seek to recognise the value of cultural activity, foster an informed community, increase access to resources, conserve heritage, and support diversity.

With relevance for historical societies the commitment to cultural heritage is spelt out as:

'To co-ordinate the identification, conservation, management and interpretation of Victoria's cultural heritage'.

Strategic action related to that commitment will provide legislation to protect, a register to define, and programmes to conserve heritage.

In particular the strategy proposes to:

- support local historic collections, and museums through:
- the implementation of the Museums and Historical Collections Policy of the Museums Advisory Board:
- the development of thematic museums, based on existing collections, facilities and sites, such as a multi-locational Victorian Maritime Museum and a network of Historic House museums;
- the provision of support services to encourage regional co-operation between museums and historical societies.

There is a commitment to social history — to provide opportunities for all Victorians to understand and explore their past. The strategy here is to develop collections and research on broadly based themes, to encourage education and cultural tourism to make use of them and to support local and family history.

Copies of the book are available from the Ministry for the Arts (03) 649 8888 or (008) 134 894.

What teeth the policy provides will be seen through the performance of the sadly (shall we say desperately) understaffed and underfunded State Library.