

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED MONTHLY, EXCEPT DECEMBER

Meetings : 3rd. TUESDAY of the month at 7.30 PM

OLD TOWN HALL, MORWELL

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★ NEXT MEETING - TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21st

IT HAS BEEN TRULY SAID . . .

... SHE WHO HESITATES IS LOST!

This refers specifically to Newsletter editors who leave compilation of the Newsletter until the last minute.

... IF YOU WANT TO REALLY FOU~~L~~ THINGS UP —
TRUST A COMPUTER!

This refers specifically to the Newsletter editor's computer, which, at the eleventh hour, absolutely refused to allow said editor access to the newsletter material stored therein.

... NEVER DISPOSE OF ANYTHING - IF YOU DO,
YOU'LL NEED IT THE NEXT DAY!

This refers to the action of the Newsletter editor only last weekend, in giving away her trusty typewriter which has been languishing in a cupboard since the advent of the delinquent computer.

SO - It's back to the inkwell and quill pen for part of this edition. With apologies!

Ed.

Honor for 60 years service

By JAMIE DUNCAN

AFTER more than 60 years service to the Morwell community, former Morwell shire councillor Lou Bond was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Australia Day honors list.

Mr Bond (pictured) has an imposing list of achievements, including 32 years as a councillor with Morwell Shire. He retired from council in 1980, after serving three terms as shire president. He was also a member of the Hearnies Oak Water Trust for 23 years, 15 of those as chairman, and served 15 years as chairman during 25 years with the Latrobe Valley Airfield Committee. A quarter of a century was spent by Mr Bond on the Gippsland Water Utilisation Committee. He also served terms with the Latrobe Regional Art Gallery, Hazelwood Cemetery Committee (where he is still involved), West Gippsland Regional Committee and the Morwell Historical Society (including 10 years as chairman). He was a foundation member of both the Collins Street Primary School Committee and the Morwell High School Advisory Board, serving lengthy stints as chairman on both organisations.

In the sports arena, he has notched up 65 years continuous involvement with the Morwell Football Club, serving as a player, committee member, president (for three years) and life member. He was also one of five Bond brothers to play in the club's 1933 Central Gippsland Football League premiership side. Mr Bond was also a foundation member of both the Latrobe Valley Football League and the LV Junior Football League. He served 10 years as president during his 14 years with the junior league, and was its first life member.

Mr Bond was notified he was being considered for the award in late August, and by mid January knew he was one of only a small number of Victorians to receive an Australia Day honor. He said receiving the OAM was "the icing on the cake" for his more than six decades in active public service. "There's an old saying - some people are born great, others become great and others have greatness thrust upon them," Mr Bond laughed. But conceded he could not have achieved without the strong support of his wife, Leila, and their six children.



Photograph: SALLY PLANT



JACK EVANS' STORY (continued).

In our January Newsletter, Morwell businessman Jack Evans told of his experiences in the Air Force during World War 2, of his posting to the Middle East and the crash of his Hudson bomber while on active duty in the Mediterranean in 1942. One of the crew was killed in the crash. Jack and his other two crew mates were taken prisoner by the Germans. The pilot, Syd Wickham, was hospitalised. Jack and Fred Sturt were sent for interrogation. The story continues:

'Fred and I were flown by Junkers 52 Transport to El Darba German Headquarters. We were pushed into a tent and a German General went berserk and pulled his luger on us - because we didn't salute him. I am very vague about the next week because I was suffering from sunstroke. I remember eating watermelons on a German aerodrome and being bombed each night by R.A.F. Wellingtons on this aerodrome.'

Jack and Fred were sent to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt, Germany, for interrogation and after a week, with about forty other captured airmen, were transported to Lamsdorf Stalag VIIIB, a camp on the border with Poland. They travelled by rail - forty men in a truck designed to hold eight horses.

Jack writes: 'The majority of prisoners were British troops who had been captured at Dunkirk but there were also A.I.F. troops who had been captured in Greece and Crete. I believe that there were about thirty thousand prisoners attached to the camp and many were on working parties. Stalag VIIIB had been used as a prison camp during World War I. Sanitary conditions were terrible - overcrowded barracks and poor water supply contributed greatly to this. Prisoners slept in three tier wooden bunks alive with lice and were issued with only two flea-bitten blankets. The barracks were extremely cold in winter and a sweat box in summer. I spent three winters in the camp.

The average daily food ration consisted of one cup of hot mint tea around 8.00 am and a fifth of a loaf of bread around 10 am. At midday, a cup of either cabbage, swede or potato soup was served and in the afternoon, one cup of hot mint tea was again available. Twice a week we received a little margarine and jam. The diet subscribed to modern thinking in that our food was salt-free and sugar-free. Without the ten pound Red Cross food parcels which were received weekly, many prisoners would have starved to death. I was always hungry. Prisoners organised themselves into eating groups known as "mucking in". This involved the pooling of Red Cross parcels.

We were placed in the R.A.F. compound with about 300 airmen who had been shot down over Germany. Naturally the sixty Australian airmen arranged to

live together and we ran our own barracks. The comradeship among us was excellent. The Aussies are very good at this. It was almost worthwhile being a prisoner to have the opportunity to live with these fine youngmen. I was one of the older ones. I was almost 24. We had all had a reasonable education and in later life most of us were successful.

All prisoners had their highs and lows. Some of the lows I remember most were the German reprisals after *Allied* raids on Dieppe; bitterly cold winters; hunger and sickness. I was envious when the *Allied* wounded were repatriated home - this happened from our camp. Highs included BBC news; Red Cross food parcels; the witnessing of American daylight bombing raids; news of the second front and the advance of the Russian Army.

Soon after my arrival at Stalag VIIIB Lamsdorf I became very ill with hepatitis, no doubt due to the filthy living conditions. The barracks had dirty concrete floors. The walls had never been washed with antiseptic or painted. The sewage from the compound was pumped by the prisoners into a large mobile barrel and then sprayed on the field around the camp. [The stench was similar to our Australian garbage tips and we had to live with it.

I was removed to hospital and almost died. One evening I recall the life in my body left me and I floated up to the ceiling and then I fell asleep. Next morning I woke up feeling hungry. This was the climax. I could have gone. The German Army invalid diet was quite good. I recall having white bread and rice. I was picking up rapidly when the wounded from the Canadian raid on Dieppe arrived and my bed was needed. Back I went to the compound and the rough food before I was well enough. This was a real struggle but my mates helped me.

During October 1942, 10,000 Canadian troops and a few British troops staged a commando raid in the French coastal city of Dieppe. The Germans knew about it and it turned out to be a massacre. The Canadians captured a few Germans and handcuffed them. When the Canadians withdrew from Dieppe the German prisoners were shot. This caused a hell of a stink in Germany - rightly so. The 2,000 captured Canadians were sent to our prison camp. Hitler ordered reprisals on the captured Canadians and the R.A.F. We were handcuffed for 12 hours a day and not allowed in the barracks. Hitler sent the elite S.S. troops to back up the reprisal. The S.S. wore black uniforms and each soldier had a machine gun. One morning some others and I were caught without our handcuffs and were sent to the guard room.

(Jack says the handcuffs were quite easy to remove using a flat object such as the key off a bully beef can). We were handcuffed and made to stand against the wall with nose and toes touching - if not, you copped a bashing

with a machine gun or a belt with a whip. This position is hard to maintain and subconsciously I started whistling. I copped a belt with the whip for this. The S.S. troops remained about a month and then left the re-inforcing of the reprisals to the German guards. This soon became a shambles. The guards would deliver the handcuffs in a wheelbarrow and we would line up to be handcuffed and then go around the rear of the barracks and take them off. This went on for a couple of weeks. The Germans didn't have enough guards to supervise us. The final outcome was - the Germans wheeled in our handcuffs and told us to put the bloody things on ourselves! This went on officially for the next eleven months. Neither the guards nor the prisoners took any notice of Hitler's orders. After the Battle of Stalingrad most Germans lost faith in their Fuhrer.

Later on for a period of six months I had carbuncles on the back of my neck. I can't recall how many times the German doctor lanced my very sore neck. I still have the scars.'

Many of the prisoners were allowed out of the camp on working parties but airmen were barred from these excursions. Many of the airmen swapped identities with military personnel in order to get onto one of the work parties.

Jack continues: ' During the summer of 1944 I made a swap with a Western Australian soldier, Norm Joseph, to go out on a working party to a coal mine near Cracow in South Poland. Unfortunately our compound senior guard, Joe Kissel, recognised me in the work party. (He counted me twice a day). He called me 'The Red Man' - I had red hair those days. The penalty for airmen attempting to leave the compound was 14 days in the bunker (solitary confinement). This wasn't too good - nothing to do - no books to read. At least the food wasn't too bad and fortunately the weather was reasonable. Joe welcomed me at morning parade on the 15th day with: "Ah, the Red Man is back!" He had a sense of humour - he was old enough to be my father.'

The prisoners, particularly the Canadians, received cigarettes from the Canadian Red Cross and as these were in short supply in Germany they were able to trade with the German guards for items such as radios. The Germans would turn a blind eye (or ear) to the radios until they ran short of cigarettes, when they would confiscate all the radios. The prisoners would then buy the radios back for more cigarettes - and so on.

Jack continues: 'We heard the BBC news most evenings so we knew how the war was progressing. You couldn't believe the German propaganda. Early in 1944 the American Air Force started daylight raids on Eastern Germany. This created great excitement and of course June 6th, 1944, when the second front

started with the Allied landing in Normandy, was my happiest day. But - I still had to wait another eleven months before arriving back in England. During January 1945, the most horrendous event happened. The Russian Army was advancing on our camp and we could hear the artillery. The German High Command decided to move our camp on foot in the middle of winter. We became aware of the impending march and trained for it. I was fit and had good clothing, sent from home. I wore a R.A.F. greatcoat and uniform, pyjama pants, heavy underwear, a pullover and carried a spare pair of socks in my coat pocket. I wore a towel around my neck, a balaclava on my head and a blanket over my shoulder. I thought my boots would be adequate but, unknown to me, the stitching at the rear of my right boot was broken and when the boots froze, the sharp edge cut into my heel. I also bought a small amount of food. Each group of fifty prisoners was supervised by an elderly German guard.

On **January 22nd 1945** we left Lamsdorf at 2.30 pm and marched 26 kilometres until 1.30 am. The roads were frozen and the temperature below zero. We spent the night in a barn. The following morning we started at 10.30 am and marched thirty kilometres, finishing at 9 pm. The slippery roads made the going hard and many men had begun to collapse. Many of the other nationalities who had not trained for the march found the trek most difficult. The Aussies helped each other as much as they could. I was feeling well. That night we slept in the open on a heap of coal.

January 24th we started marching at 9 am and travelled twenty kilometres, finishing at dark. The going was tough with the sounds of gunfire seeming close at times. We slept that night in a barn. We travelled along secondary roads passing through small villages which was a godsend - we were often given drinks of hot water by German women.

January 25th we started at 8.30 am and marched until 2.30 pm, travelling 28 kilometres. Snow fell all day and the roads were choked with refugees, making extra tough going. A sign post indicated 34 kilometres to Breslau. Eastern Europe has huge barns scattered over the countryside to house cattle in winter and we spent another night in a barn.

They travelled on in this manner, marching 25 - 30 kilometres each day in freezing conditions, through deep snow and for several days receiving no rations from the Germans.

They passed through Jaur and witnessed prisoners from Auschwitz Concentration Camp on the march - a shocking sight.

January 29th - I was unable to carry on this morning. I was feeling well except for my right heel which was badly cut and swollen from frostbite. I

was unable to wear my frozen boots. Our column continued on leaving about thirty injured behind in a barn. This suited us - to wait for the Russians to hopefully liberate us.

January 31st - We were joined by about 1000 airmen from the Luft 7 camp in Poland. They had been prisoners for only a few months but were in a bad way being unable to march any further because of frostbite. I cut a section from my boot which enabled me to march. At this stage we were eighteen kilometres from Goldberg where there was supposed to be a train for us. The Germans did not want to lose any airmen prisoners because they could be useful in bargaining with the Allies.

On February 1st they marched to Goldberg and stayed in a barn in the village. One of the group sold his watch for two loaves of bread. They stayed there for three more days under awful conditions with only a few cups of watery porridge for food.

February 5th - There was a train! Fifty-six of us were loaded onto a forty - man truck. We spent a horrible night in this small, dark truck with sanitary conditions being appalling.

February 6th and 7th - We had remained here for 24 hours, being confined to the truck by the German guards. Air raids were in progress both day and night. We hoped that our train would not be strafed. There was no bread left.

February 8th - There was no sleep last night because of the movement of the train and we finally arrived in the morning at Luckenwalde, which was about fifty miles south west of Berlin. Here I had my first wash in ten days since Lamsdorf. There was no Red Cross food but even the German rations seemed good after having nothing to eat for several days.

February 11th - We were still roughing it with 360 sleeping on a concrete floor. Everybody was hungry but not quite starving.

February 13th - Our diet is at starvation level, being made up of a fifth of a loaf of bread, three small potatoes and a cup of mint tea. We all hoped the Red Cross parcels would arrive soon. That afternoon they did. They were just in time as we were all in a hell of a state. The food tasted wonderful.

March 19th - We moved into decent barracks complete with beds and I was able to have a shower. All my mates looked like skeletons. I must have weighed about seven stone. During the next three weeks we did reasonably well while the Russian Army advanced on Berlin. There was air activity all around us.

During March and April air raids increased and the prisoners had a clear view of the R.A.F raid on Potsdam involving six hundred Lancasters. The

gunfire was coming closer and they felt that it would not be long until they were liberated.

April 21st - Last night and this morning the gun fire seemed even closer. Our camp was close to the main road. The German guards were starting to panic. By 1 pm the guards had gone. The R.A.F.(prisoners) had taken over control. Our colours were now on the main gate. We were expecting the Russians and the Yanks at any time.

April 22nd - A Russian armoured car arrived at the gate. They were tough looking but friendly. The previous night FW 190 German fighters had strafed our camp, making me fly out of bed in a hurry. I found it hard to believe that we were now free. At 10 am, Russian tanks knocked down the front gate and part of the fence.

April 23rd - The previous day and night, small battles had been in progress around the camp. We saw hundreds of Russian planes and heard plenty of artillery fire. The German fighters were around all night strafing the road near our camp which was about fifty kilometres from Berlin. It would not have been so bad had they not opened fire only about 300 feet above our barracks. This was not good for the nerves. I spent the night flying from my top bunk to the floor. There were about twenty of us in a room and we all seemed to hit the floor together.

The Russian commander was a great bloke. He made the Mayor of Luckenwalde organise the bread factory and we were certainly good clients. Our group often went into town which was only two kilometres away. Because the town had surrendered there was hardly any noticeable damage. I have many good memories and stories to tell about Luckenwalde.

It was not until May 8th that American trucks arrived to evacuate the prisoners. They were driven to Magdeburg, then flown to Brussels where they had their heads shaved, were sprayed with DDT powder and were given clean clothes. On May 15th 1945 they flew to England and on July 24th Jack arrived back in Sydney.

As he says: " I was extremely lucky not to be attached to Bomber Command which had suffered ninety percent killed, wounded or taken prisoner."

Jack and his mates have held regular reunions since the end of the war. Sadly, in May this year, due to thinning of the ranks, the last reunion will be held, in Sydney.

Paddock amid the paving

A BOOK called *My Paddock*, set in the industrial suburb of Sunshine, sounds a little out of place.

But it all makes sense to author Prue McGoldrick.

My Paddock tells the story of a child growing up in Sunshine from 1920 to 1940.

Beatrice Faust, in her review of *My Paddock*, says the title comes from an incident when a lad eyed off young Prue Hyett and her non-identical twin sister, Mary, at a dance and said, "reckon you was rear'd in diff'rent paddocks".

Prue's paddock, then, is the environment in which she grew up. Physically, it is the Sunshine of the 1920s and the Depression.

Spiritually, it is the Irish-Catholic working class Australian culture that has been eroded since by various influences.

For people born before World War II, the book will hold the charm of recognition: Prue describes places and habits that have disappeared.

For those born afterwards, the book will charm by its unfamiliarity. Silver sticks, Coolgardie safes, brown-paper bags, and laundry blue mean different things to readers of different ages.

Prue's description of her parents' struggle to feed, clothe and educate a growing family is both inspiring and depressing.

The Hyetts were full of inventiveness, cutting the tops off



Prue McGoldrick: author of 'My Paddock'.

beer bottles with a hot wire and using the bottles for preserves, saving dripping to make soap, and a wealth of other skills.

Beatrice Faust believes this mastery over simple things was good for morale, helping to foster a sense of competence and optimism even in rough times.

Prue McGoldrick's other literary works include producing *Steamhorse to Power* in 1980, for the town of Morwell; *Yallourn Was . . .* in 1984; *When the Whistle Blew*, a social history for the City of Sunshine, 1920-50, in 1989.

● *My Paddock: An Early Twentieth Century Childhood*, by Prue McGoldrick, published by Gippsland Printers, PO Box 1110, Morwell, 3840. RRP: \$16.50.

R.H.S.V. Excursions

EXCURSIONS 1995

- 26 February — Sunday Traralgon — "Old Gippsland and New"
- 9 April — Sunday "Through the Kilmore Gap to Puckapunyal"
- 16 May — Tuesday "Through Jolimont to the Paddock that Has Grown"
- 14 June — Wednesday "They Liked to be Beside the Seaside" — 'Billilla', Brighton
- 18 July — Tuesday Flagstaff to the Yarra Port. A Guided Walk
- 12 August — Saturday "Puffing to the Packing Sheds" — Aboard Puffing Billy
- 5 September — Tuesday Flemington Saleyards in Retrospect
- 19 September — Tuesday Inner City Lanes — a Guided Walk
- 31 October — Tuesday, 4 days Exploring North Central Victoria from Dookie — an Extended Tour

OTHER 1995 EVENTS

- 30 April — Sunday — "Tracing our Victorian Military Ancestry 1850-1918"
- 7 May — Sunday Open Day and Book Fair at the Royal Mint

Members of affiliated Societies are most welcome to attend R.H.S.V. Excursions. (Yes, we are affiliated.)

* Prue McGoldrick, author of 'My Paddock', is a member of our Society and has contributed the article on WORLD WAR 2 - the HOME FRONT.

* The continuing adventures of Arthur Fish and J.W. Huygett have been held over until the March Newsletter - with apologies!

WORLD WAR TWO - ON THE HOME FRONT



by Prue McGoldrick

It was Sunday evening, September 3, 1939, I was ironing a blouse to wear to school next day, when crackling through the wireless came the voice of Prime Minister Menzies with this momentous message. "It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war on her, and that as a result, Australia is also at war."

This announcement, which preceded six years of war, reflected the attitude of the majority of Australians in their desire to provide traditional support for Britain. All who lived through the Second World War will have memories of their particular circumstances and involvement in wartime activities at that time. My reminiscences are from the point of view of a teenager (Although we did not use that term then) living in Melbourne and engaged in war work there.

I was still at secondary school when war broke out and I remained there until the end of 1941. I applied for and obtained a job as laboratory technician at the Division of Forest Products, CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research). Later it became the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation).

Although I later transferred to the drawing office, I started work in the Timber Mechanics' Laboratory where we tested timber for use in aircraft. Using strain gauges and machines we tested sample specimens of timber for hardness, tensile strength and brittleness. This work was carried on 24 hours a day. Boys did the night shift but we girls worked alternate weeks of day and afternoon shift. Following afternoon shift, I caught the last train (11.45 p.m.) to Sunshine. It was quite safe to travel by public transport at that hour.

Interior lights of the train were so dim, it was hard to see details of the person sitting diagonally opposite. At the same time, a brownout in street lighting and on road transport reduced visibility to walking pace after dark. Blackout regulations required householders to draw blinds or blacken windows to reduce lighting that might assist

enemy aircraft. A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) wardens checked that blackout regulations were observed.

After the entry of Japan into the war, there was a real fear of invasion and air raids on our cities and war production sites. I suppose it was to avoid panic that there was no explanation given of the night sound of guns at Williamstown or the air raid siren that froze the congregation at a Sunday morning service. The Government realised that the war was not just something happening far away, it was actually on our doorstep. Thenceforth, measures were taken to assist in the defence of our huge country.

The Ministry of War set up the War Office which determined and listed priorities for everything in relation to military and civil production requirements and sources. The government introduced controls on import licensing, foreign exchange and trade, and price controls on rent. New sources of funding the war included payroll tax. Uniform income tax was introduced in 1942. War Loans were raised by public appeal.

Win-the-War rallies, accompanied by rousing speeches and Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory" were held in public halls and workplaces. After attending such rallies, I bought War Savings Bonds. Patriotic fervour in the community sparked a spate of fundraising activities for "the war effort". We also responded in kind to overseas appeals such as Food and Fat for Britain, British Bombing Victims Fund and Clothing for Refugees.

Salvage depots were set up for the collection of rubber, metals, (including lead toothpaste tubes and silver foil), glass, newspapers, rags etc. for recycling. Private citizens sent local newspapers and comforts (food, cigarettes and knitted items) to personnel on active service or in P.O.W. (Prisoner of War) camps. I made fruit cakes in round "Willow" brand tins, stitched on an unbleached calico cover and addressed them to my soldier boyfriend.

Rationing was introduced in 1941 to release goods and services to supply the armed services with food, clothing and weapons of war. The Government issued ration books containing coupons which had to be surrendered when buying petrol, food and clothing. Officially, no coupons meant no goods but the inevitable black market lurked behind the scene.

Petrol was rationed to those who required it for essential travel. Many car owners put their vehicles up on blocks (to save the tyres) "for the duration". Ungainly gas producers, which burnt charcoal, were attached to some cars. As fewer families had cars in those days, petrol rationing was not a great issue, but clothes rationing affected everyone.

In order to save cloth, the Government introduced "Austerity" wear in 1942. No frills were allowed. Men's Dedman or Victory Suits were single breasted with no trouser cuffs or pocket flaps. Such a suit required 38 of a man's annual issue of 112 clothing coupons and the price was fixed at £7-7 (Seven guineas or seven pounds, seven shillings).

Coupons were also required for household linen and dress materials. I wore a long evening dress made of mosquito netting (No coupons required) over taffeta for which coupons were required. Women wore head scarves and gave up wearing hats except on special occasions. Lisle stockings were hard to get so they were mended and re-mended. I wore bobby socks and rubber-soled, leather golf shoes to work.

Prime Minister Curtin's Austerity drive included bans on dry cleaning, evening wear, wrapping of parcels, (string bags were widely used) manufacture of toys, patterned socks, bath heaters, lawn-mowers, racing equipment, pyjamas and swimsuits. We had to go without or mend and make do with what we had. The only jewellery to be made were wedding rings.

Christmas holidays were cancelled. I remember working on New Year's Day and Melbourne Cup Day. Whether at work or at home however, everyone stopped to listen to 3DB's Eric Welsh call the Cup. One cannot imagine what kind of cataclysm it would have to be to stop that revered ritual. Horse racing was banned on the first Saturday of each month. Beer production was reduced and people queued to share in the unofficial rationing of bottled beer. Deliveries of goods were virtually stopped because of the shortage of labour.

Tea, sugar, butter and meat were rationed by the Commonwealth Rationing Commission. One person's weekly ration consisted of one pound of sugar, a half a pound of butter and up to two pounds of meat. The tea ration was half a pound for five weeks. (One pound equals 454 grams). Cream was banned until 1946 and real coffee was a rare treat.

Instant coffee was unknown, instead there was an "ersatz" coffee made of burnt wheat and Excelsior and Turban brands of coffee essence with chicory. Icing sugar was so extended with substitutes that the icing on many a wedding cake set so hard it had to be taken aside and "cut" with a hammer.

Women were encouraged to take the place of men in the workplace and in the services. For all that they were paid less than men. Women found they could do all manner of undreamt of things - and do them well. Those who worked in munition factories had to sign a form promising to relinquish their jobs when men returned from the war.

So much for the restrictions which we accepted as part of everyday life in wartime. People were keen to assist the war effort. Everyone turned a hand to help. My mother was in charge of a Wartime Emergency Cupboard full of food and clothing in a church hall. Such halls were designated emergency aid posts. To confuse enemy aircraft, factory rooftops, army vehicles and tarpaulins were painted in swirling earth-coloured patterns to disguise them. For the same purpose, camouflage nets made by volunteers, were thrown over defence equipment in the field.

Householders in certain areas were encouraged to dig bomb shelters in their backyards. Sandbagged dugouts and trenches appeared in public places. The basement where I worked was fitted out as an air raid shelter with supplies of first aid equipment, food, blankets and fire-fighting gear. When pre-arranged air raid sirens sounded over the city we proceeded "in an orderly fashion" to assigned areas in the shelter, reported our presence and waited for the all-clear siren. Blast shelters made of concrete blocks were erected around our laboratories and certain public buildings such as the local post office.

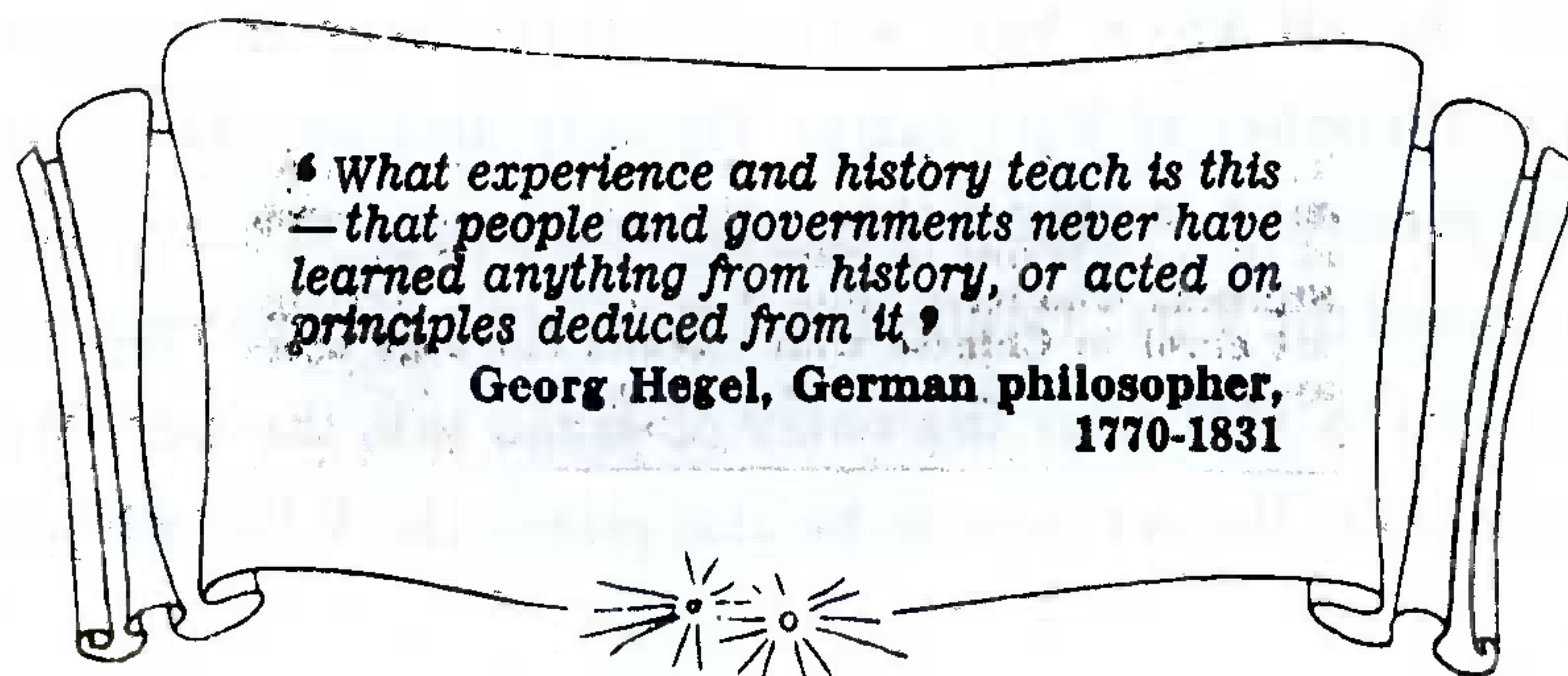
There were six years of tension as those at home worried about the well-being of loved ones in the services. We all knew boys who lost their lives in combat or were incarcerated in P.O.W. (Prisoner of War) camps. My only brother old enough to be a serviceman was not permitted to leave his apprenticeship at the Maribyrnong munition factory. He joined the V.D.C. (Volunteer Defence Corps) Australia's first Home Guard, which was formed in 1941 after the entry of Japan into the war. My father, a W.W.I veteran, was too old for the services so he also joined the V.D.C. while doing war

work at the McKay factory in Sunshine. Daylight saving was introduced to allow longer working hours and thus increase production for the war effort.

A younger brother who turned 18 in February 1945, the year the war ended, enlisted in the Army and eventually became part of the B.C.O.F. (British Commonwealth Occupation Force) in Japan. Despite the absence of so many young men, as a single girl I led a busy social life. I did my share when, troops on leave in the city were entertained by Red Cross, Toc-H and church organisations. I took leave from work to spend time with my soldier boyfriend and wrote many letters to a number of servicemen. Letters were a link with home and normalcy and were much appreciated by recipients.

The war ended officially on V.P. Day (Victory in the Pacific), August 15, 1945. I was at work when the announcement was made at 9.15 a.m. We were released for the day and a group of us surged down into the city proper. According to my diary: "The crowd and noise was terrific, we sang and crocodyled in the streets" Singing and dancing to band music continued well into the night. Searchlights slashed the sky and fireworks added to the excitement.

Celebrations carried over into the next day which was declared a public holiday. I attended a crowded Victory dance in the Sunshine town hall where a spontaneous line of dancers formed a crocodile and wove its way out of the hall into Hampshire Road and back again. It was all very exciting. In the months that followed, the initial relief and euphoria faded as people faced the realities of post war rehabilitation and reconstruction. But that is another story.



The ANNUAL MEETING OF MORWELL HISTORICAL SOC. INC
will be held on TUESDAY, MARCH 21st at 7.30pm.
in the Old Town Hall, Morwell.