

**MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

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*Vol. 18 No1**January 2001****Welcome to the January Newsletter***

Well, the new year is under way and it looks like being a busy one. Already we are in the midst of Centenary of Federation celebrations which will continue for most of the year.

Our new premises in Church St Morwell have proved very comfortable and, although there is limited room for storage and display of materials, the situation in the Morwell C.B.D. has given us much greater exposure than we had previously in the Town Hall. Many people who scarcely knew of our existence have dropped in, some bringing photographs, family information etc which we may not otherwise have known about.

Our rooms are open to the public each **Wednesday** between the hours of **11.00 am and 3.00 pm**, with two members rostered on each time. At present there are only six members on the roster. If any other members could spare a few hours once a month or so on a Wednesday, it would be appreciated.

Those who have access to the Internet may like to call up

**[www.peoplesvoice.gov.au](http://www.peoplesvoice.gov.au)**

which is a website set up to bring together the histories of communities across Australia, to give towns, big and small, the opportunity to say what they were doing at the time of Federation, how they have contributed to the life of the nation since federation and what they are like now. The site is still being developed and Morwell's contribution will appear shortly.

The **Annual General Meeting** of Morwell Historical Society Inc will be held on **Tuesday, March 20, 2001**, at 7.30 pm in the Society's rooms at 21 Church St Morwell. The election of office bearers will take place at that meeting. All positions will be declared vacant.

**Nominations** for the positions of President, Secretary, Treasurer and committee membership (four) should reach the Secretary no later than **Friday, March 16, 2001**.

***NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 – 7.30 pm***  
***21 CHURCH STREET MORWELL***

## **VALE JEAN MOONEY**

We were saddened to learn of the passing last week of one of our long-time members, Jean Mooney.

Jean and her late husband Perce were staunch supporters of our Society and although she had been unable to attend meetings for some time, due to ill health, Jean retained a great interest in the Society's activities.

Jean and Perce were members of the very successful local drama group, *The Morwell Players* and thanks to Jean the Society has a great collection of press cuttings, programs and photographs of the *Players'* activities over the years, together with the impressive collection of trophies and awards won by the group over the years.

Jean grew up in the Morwell district and members enjoyed her reminiscences of her working life in Morwell and surrounding areas, which were recorded in a number of our Newsletters in 1999.

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*The Latrobe Combined History Group* had its first meeting for the year at Yinnar on Sunday, February 11. Most of the discussion centred on the participation of local Historical Societies in several forthcoming events to mark the Centenary of Federation.

\*On Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, as part of the *Morwell Celebration of Roses Festival*, there will be a *Centenary of Federation Parade* through the streets of Morwell. The parade will be divided into decades and Latrobe History Group members will carry placards at the head of each section, outlining the main local events which occurred in that decade. Schools, community groups, businesses, and private citizens have entered floats in the parade and it is understood that there are more than 50 entries so far.

\*From 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> May, in the Mid Valley Shopping Centre, there will be a display entitled *Celebration of the Women of Gippsland*, focussing on the contribution, largely unrecognised, of women to the development of Gippsland since the time of Federation. The Latrobe Combined History Group will also participate in this display, details of which are yet to be finalised.

## **ZENNA RINTOULL – Morwell's First School Teacher**

Zenna was born near Ballarat on 30th. January 1860. She was the fourth child of Thomas and Margaret McCrory who had come to Australia from Belfast. Zenna was appointed the first teacher at the Maryvale Ridge School in August 1877 at the age of just seventeen.

She married Morwell Blacksmith John Rintoull on April 16th. 1879 at a ceremony conducted at the Royal Exchange Hotel in Sale.

The school at Maryvale Ridge closed on 31st. May 1879 and Zenna moved on to teach at the Moe Railway school (No. 2142) until 1880. She resigned from the Education Department in April 1881. Zenna Rintoull took a great interest in charitable and church matters (Presbyterian), and for many years she gave religious instruction to numerous school children.

Zenna and John had a large family - 12 children: Wilhelmina, Etheline, Violet, Muriel, Zenna (died in infancy) another Zenna, Flossie, Jack, Wilfred, Daisy, Kathleen and Ida.

Tragically, Zenna died of pneumonia at Morwell on 10th. January 1901.

### **Maryvale Ridge School No. 1939.**

The Maryvale Ridge School was established on **17th. August 1877**. It was located at the junction of the Maryvale Ridge road and the railway line, approximately one mile east of Morwell Township.

Morwell East farmers **Andrew Mathews** and **James Matson** petitioned the education authorities for a school in **January 1877**. The district school inspector Mr. Holland agreed to provide a teacher and school furniture if the community could provide a building.

Unfortunately, the building was not at all satisfactory. It was a small hut with perpendicular slabs; it had a thatched roof, bark ridging and an earthen floor. In wet weather the floor was always awash and wooden planks were often used to negotiate a safe way around the puddles.

If drinking water was required it necessitated a trip to Waterhole Creek, a distance of half a mile! Wet conditions were not the only problem that the children had to face. In **February 1879** the class room received an unwelcome visit from a large snake, this had an immediate impact on attendance figures which fell from an average of 16 children per day to only 3 to 4 children per day.

Maryvale Ridge School closed on **May 31st. 1879**.

The majority of the pupils transferred to the new Morwell school No. 2136 (we know it today as Commercial Road Primary school) which had opened its doors on **3rd. April**,

*Stephen Hellings*

## RHSV EVENTS AND AFFAIRS

### TOUR 2000 RETROSPECTIVE

West and South Gippsland came alive for our busload of tourists, thanks in large part to meeting with 'the locals' from our associated societies at Traralgon, Morwell, Yarram, Foster (S. Gippsland) and Leongatha, as well as the Walhalla Heritage and Development League. They convey so vividly the spirit of their locality, its past, its present and their inspiration for its future. Thank you all for the memorable (and delectable) experiences.

For anyone contemplating a private visit to the region, we can recommend some new highlights, the Dad's War Stuff exhibition at Airlie Bank, Morwell (pamphlets available at RHSV), Walhalla and its restored mountain railway, Foster's newly accredited museum and the Yarram Court House for its combination of historical and visitor information, and locally-made gift shop.

The wooden Anglican church at Tarraville (1856), still with its lamps and pedal organ, is undergoing conservation work and will be rededicated in early Autumn, 2001.

### MEMO TO RHSV MEMBER SOCIETIES FROM THE RHSV LIBRARY

The RHSV has received a Grant to enable the purchase of material published/produced by local government authorities relating to heritage surveys, land and urban profiles, conservation assessments and coastal management reports and reviews, following numerous requests from researchers for such information.

The RHSV Library hopes to build a significant collection and has contacted local government authorities across Victoria seeking assistance in obtaining copies of material. [To date such material is held in different repositories within the metropolitan area.]

The library would appreciate assistance from local societies who may hold copies of heritage surveys pre dating 1992. We offer to re-reimburse Societies the costs of photocopying such material and postage. A listing, of known reports, reviews and assessments pertaining to municipalities would be most valuable for Society files.

The library staff asks for your assistance in canvassing the societies within your region to help us create a significant collection of municipal reports which will be readily accessible to researchers of Victoria's heritage.

### FEBRUARY EXCURSION

**"Earliest Northcote, with Batman, Hoddle, Howitt and von Guerard"  
Saturday 24 February, 2001**

Our first excursion for 2001 will be a Saturday bus tour visiting sites of interest from the early years of settlement on the Yarra upstream to Northcote. Our guide will be RHSV member, Rex Harcourt, whose history of Melbourne's foundation, *Southern Invasion, Northern Conquest*, will be published in 2001.

Participants should meet on Saturday 24 February at 12.00 noon at the Society's premises at 239 A'Beckett St, where Rex will give an illustrated pre-tour briefing. Please BYO lunch - the Society will provide tea and coffee. Afternoon tea will be taken at the Alphington Bowling Club and is included in the price. A minimum of 25 people is required for the excursion to go ahead. So please book as early as possible and invite your friends. The cost is \$20. Book with RHSV Secretary, Wendy Baker on 9326 9288.

### ARMY MEDICAL CORP DRILL HALL - ARCHIVE

The Society is patiently building up its archive of the history of its new quarters, the former Army Medical Corp Drill Hall. Members will have read the memoir provided by Max Chamberlain which was printed in the September 2000 issue of *History News*. Can you contribute? Do you know of particular links that should or could be followed? Do you have any photographs, other documentary material or reminiscences that can put further light on the use of the site since the 1900s? Did you work in the building or attend activities there? Can you offer information on the architect George Hallendal, the Corps itself, the 3rd Psychology Unit or drill halls in general? Please let us know so that they can be collated in a systematic manner and so assist in the planning of a conducted tour scheduled for 2001. In the first instance please contact Wendy Baker, Secretary: (03) 9326 9288; e-mail: rhsvic@vicnet.net.au