

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. 10 No. 1 JANUARY 1994

WELCOME TO THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER

Well, here we are at the beginning of our tenth year. We have moved into our leased premises in the foyer of the old Town Hall and hopefully this will enable us to get on with the job of cataloguing our holdings and mounting some displays for public viewing.

We were saddened to learn of the death, on January 4th of Jim Bush, one of our society's staunchest members. Jim had been a prominent & public spirited citizen of Morwell since the 1940s when he came here to set up and manage the La Mode Factory (later Ericssons & A.S.C.). He recently celebrated his 90th birthday. We will miss his friendship and support and we extend our sympathy to his family.

On a happier note, it is pleasing to report that two of our members are on the mend after quite serious illnesses. Perc Mooney is back on his feet again after an operation, a heart attack and a severe reaction to medication and Dorothy Fogarty is recovering after an operation to an artery in her neck. We wish them both a full recovery in 1994.

Members who were interested in obtaining a copy of the book "Historic Walks in Morwell" by Grades V and VI, Commercial Road, can purchase it from the school office at a cost of \$5.00.

There will be no meeting in January and you will receive another newsletter to remind you of the February meeting which will be held on Tuesday, February 15.

HARKING BACK Llew Vary

'Morwell Advertiser and Gazette' October 1, 1942

Billy Dodd was another of those men whose deeds should be recorded. He and two other men whose names I forget started from Moe with the object of blazing a track through to Stockyard Creek. They estimated it would take a week to get through and consequently took seven days rations with them. After they had proceeded about three days they came to rough country covered with prickly moses scrub which made travelling very difficult. Thinking each day would get them through this obstacle, they pushed on until they had gone too far to turn back if they had been inclined to do so. After seven or eight days the supplies ran out or, as they put it, the nose bags were empty. Not to be outdone by this slight inconvenience they snared possums at night, which provided them with meat and for vegetables they used the hearts of tree ferns. This substance is quite edible when the snarling wolf is looking in the door. It is very sweet and possums and wombats and such animals are very fond of it. Of course I don't recommend it as a tasty dish for a party. Still these tough wiry men existed on this frugal diet and reached their destination three weeks after they had commenced their journey.

I have received a letter from a lady in Dandenong, whose father was an early settler in Jeeralang, stating that she is interested in these articles and wishes me to write something about that district.

Jeeralang is situated in the mountainous country to the south-east of Morwell and was settled in the late seventies and early eighties. Like its neighbouring parish Jumbuk, it was a land of tall timber, spring boards, pack tracks and side cuttings. Perhaps I had better explain what the springboards are. The mountain ash, commonly called blackbutt, are, I think, the largest trees in the world. They have a diameter of 16 to 20 feet about 6 feet from the ground. The best method of destroying these trees is to cut them down and as the trunk was so large it

was necessary for the axemen to climb up the tree, sometimes 50 feet to 70 feet, where the barrel is smaller and in order to do this, slabs about four feet long were driven into a mortice every four feet working zig-zag up the tree. These slabs were called spring boards and the man stood on the top board and swung his axe, sometimes taking two or three hours to cut the tree down. This was very dangerous work especially in windy weather and as soon as the tree started to crack the men would skurry down those boards like monkey bears. While I am on this subject it may be interesting to note that the destroying of these mountain ash trees was the greatest mistake the pioneers made. The government of the day should never have thrown this land open for selection as millions of pounds worth of valuable timber was completely lost. One man who is living in this town at the present time, Mr James Nuttall, was for eighteen months falling trees in this manner and was considered one of the best men on the spring boards in his day, so it will be easy to imagine how many millions of super feet of this most valuable timber this gentleman alone destroyed.

Billy Dodd, who I have mentioned previously, blazed a track through this country to Yarram and this track the early selectors followed. The first of whom was James Jarvie who cleared a few acres and built a log cabin, then returned to Ballarat and brought his wife and five children. John Beale selected on one of the highest points which is still known as Beales Hill. Another I must give special mention is Mrs Loder who came out from England with son and daughter for health reasons and selected some miles behind this hill. They were very cultured and educated people and Miss Loder, the daughter, was a brilliant pianist. It was wonderful how she adapted herself to the rough conditions, driving her buggy to the foothills where they had a shed built, she parked it, reharnessed her horse to a sledge and drove for miles up a six foot track around side cuttings where many men would have shuddered at the thought of doing such a trip. As there was no school in the

district she invited the neighbours' children to her home once or twice a week and taught them reading, writing and arithmetic, thereby giving them a good grounding for the time when a school did open. Is it any wonder that we are proud of the race from which we sprang.

Then we have William Reidy, whose family are still on his selection; Jame Nuttal, James Summerfield, James Tulloch. Jim must have been a very common name in those days. Alan Jacjung, Sam Young, father of Mr W.A. Young of this town; W.Gourd, John Koenig, E.Ham, Neil McFarlane, Jim Dobbin, Jack Duff and many others, all of whom proved their grit and determination in battling with that heavily scrubbed country where only the stoutest hearts could prevail. And now to give some idea of the dangers of timber cutting in this rough country I will describe an accident that happened over 30 years ago to one who is still living in the district in the person of Albert Drayton. Albert at this time was a strapping young man and while felling timber had the misfortune to get pinned under a big tree. His legs and hip were badly smashed but he had to stay put until the tree was removed, then with an improvised stretcher made with bags and saplings his mates carried him over a mile to his home where he was attended to by Dr McLean of Morwell and Dr McLean (sic) of Traralgon in consultation. After three days the medical men began to think there was a slight hope of pulling Albert through if they could only get him to Morwell where he could get special attention. A stretcher was procured from the local railway station and volunteers were called for and about thirty men undertook to carry him the 20 mile journey to Morwell, and under the generalship of W.A.Young, this was done. Six men at a time carried him in relays of 10 minutes. The doctors would not allow him to be placed in a vehicle so the whole of the hazardous trip over the mountains and through scrub and along muddy sledge tracks had to be accomplished on foot. What an undertaking; and what mates. I cannot remember the names of all these men but amongst them were W.A.Young, Christie

Kleine, Jim Duff, Geo. Firth and W.Gow. He was taken to Miss Townsend's hospital, then situated in Commercial Road, where he spent many months and now Albert, though not the powerful man he was, is like Johnny Walker "Still going Strong".

As I have been requested to mention the severance of the shire I will endeavour to relate something of the happenings during these proceedings.

The Morwell River was the boundary between the Traralgon and Narracan Shires, therefore the Morwell township, previous to the severance, was in the Traralgon municipality. This, of course, did not suit the Morwell people, so an agitation was started to form a separate shire and my father, who at this time was a councillor in the Narracan Shire, was deputed to bring this about. After a number of meetings and several trips to the city interviewing members of Parliament it was accomplished by severing portion from both Traralgon and Narracan. The shire being formed and as the number of candidates exceeded the number of vacancies, an election was necessary and six councillors were to be elected. Then the fun started, plumping was allowed and each little community who desired to have a representative plumped for their particular man. My father stood at this campaign but, as it was beneath his dignity to canvass for votes and he openly protested that there should be no plumping, when the numbers went up he was one of the also ran.

This seems dry reading so I had better quote one of the funny stories of this election campaign held in August 1892. A certain gentleman who came from the Emerald Isle, but whose name I must refrain from mentioning, was a very enthusiastic supporter of one of the candidates, and had been indulging in a few extra noddings during the day. When the poll was declared (as was the custom in those days from the Club Hotel balcony), he learned that his man had been elected. Pat (as we will call him) was overjoyed and climbed onto an empty beer barrel in front of the hotel to make a

speech, pretending he was a candidate for municipal honours. Now just at this period cream separators were coming into vogue and there was a good deal of controversy about feeding the calves on skim milk and when Pat was in the middle of his speech, a smart Alex, whose name also I will not mention, interjected, saying "Is the candidate in favour of feeding poddies on skim milk?" As quick as lightning Pat's reply came in a definite brogue "I'm in favour of feeding poddies in my own paddock and not on the roads and other people's". This was a very cutting reply as the smart Alex referred to was noted for stocking the roads and any other piece of ground that was not very securely fenced.

(To be continued)

Victoria's Timber Bridges

We have received a request from the National Trust for assistance in identifying and assessing the heritage significance of our remaining timber bridges. Information is sought on all timber bridges, whether operational or not, which survive in our area - this includes railway and Vic Roads bridges as well as those managed by Local Government and government agencies, and those on private land. If you can help with information, however sketchy, on any bridge in this locality, please contact Elsie McMaster (051)341149, who has identification record sheets available.

Fellow Historical Societies

Each quarter we receive copies of the newsletters of various Gippsland Historical Societies which make great reading. Here are just a few of the many fascinating items contained in the latest bunch of newsletters, together with news items and coming events gleaned from them.

Gippsland Roundup - Newsletter of the Centre for Gippsland Studies, Monash University Gippsland Campus - Vol.8 No4 1993:

'Yallourn Revisited', an exhibition covering the

history of Yallourn and the lifestyle and perceptions of its residents, is on display at the Centre until April.

C.G.S. has helped and will continue to help community groups to catalogue their collections, particularly local picture collections, using the Gippsdoc Thesaurus

A most interesting account of a journey through East Gippsland by two returned army nurses in 1922 is published.

There is also a comprehensive list of new books on Gippsland history and information on a number of forthcoming events and publications. For further information contact Meredith Fletcher (051)226356

Tambo Shire Historical Society Newsletter - December 1993. (Lakes Entrance area).

Lakes Entrance will celebrate the centenary of the gazetting of the township on March 16, 1994. However, it seems that only half of the present township was gazetted in 1894 - the area known as Cuninghame (roughly east of the Princes Highway to the shores of L.Bunga) was gazetted as an addition to the town in 1915. However, as the editor of the T.S.H.S. Newsletter remarks, "Apparently the centenary of the gazetting of half of the present town of Lakes Entrance is a cause for celebration (as presumably will be the other half in 2015)." Tambo Shire Historical Society will present a display on "The Making of Lakes Entrance" in their new headquarters above the Visitors Information Centre as their contribution to the festivities.

The Newsletter also contains items on the Mississippi Creek tramline and stone quarry, the Cuninghame - Orbost coach line re-enactment and a selection of Christmas reminiscences by members which make great reading.

Further information: Mrs V.Bennett, 133 Myers St, Lakes Entrance, 3909.

Bulletin of the Maffra and Stratford Historical Societies

Vol 20 No 79, December 1993.

Contains news of the Maffra Society's activities

together with articles on The Nicholson Rocks (about half an hour's car trip from Maffra); on Vincenzo Esposito, an Italian P.O.W. who worked in the Maffra district during the second World War; on a very risky air rescue in 1944; and on Stratford Society's 25th anniversary. Further information: Secretary Maffra & Dist. Historical Soc. P.O.Box 321, Maffra, 3860

Moe & District Historical Society - 'Coach News' - Vol 21 No2, December 1993.

Contains lots of good reading in articles on: Will Bloom, a local inventor; the Memoirs of Lindsay McAlpine Gunn 1893 - 1985; the Memoirs of J.J. O'Connor; and the history and memoirs of the Moe-Thorpdale Railway, together with general news of the Society's activities and snippets from old newspapers.

Further information: Annelies Faubel (Ed.) (051)272628

Traralgon & District Historical Society Bulletin Vol 24 No 5 December 1993.

More good reading with articles on: Nambrok-Denison Soldier Settlement; the story of George Auchterlonie with the 8th light Horse; extracts from the 'Traralgon Journal' for 1957; information on the Buntine-Davidson families; Cattanach's Welding in Traralgon East; reports on excursions; an item on the swing bridge at Bulga Park and recollections of the Railway Reservoir Reserve.

Further information: Mrs V.Plant, 114 Grey St traralgon 3844.

Don't forget! You can borrow any or all of the above publications by contacting Elsie McMaster on (051)341149.

Some more bits and pieces from Gippsland Roundup's 'Plain Label Information':

Mirboo Shire and South Gippsland Shire will celebrate their centenaries in 1994 and will both be launching books to celebrate the events: **Wednesday Closest to the Full Moon** by Barry Collett (Sth Gippsland) and **On the Ridge** by John Murphy (Mirboo).

Sale will celebrate its 150th anniversary on March 4 and Peter Synan's book **Gippsland's Lucky City: a History of Sale** will be launched.

Iona Primary School's centenary celebrations which were to have been held in July this year have been brought forward to Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th March due to the school's closure in December 1993. Interested people can obtain further information from Margaret Cousins (056)295511.

The **S.E.C Photographic Collection**, now housed at the Scienceworks Museum, and consisting of 175,000 negatives, is being sorted and catalogued. A selection of about 5,000 negatives will be made and the images transferred to laser disc. The Public Records Office is managing the collection.

The **Mid Gippsland Family History Group** is compiling a database on the district's pioneers from Moe, Morwell, Traralgon, Traralgon South, Rosedale, Walhalla, Willow Grove, Hazelwood, Callignee, Toongabbie, Carrajung, Glengarry, Trafalgar, Tanjil, Yinnar, Driffield, Erica, Gormandale, Hill End, Narracan and Tanjil South. Contributions are sought on people who were resident in those areas before 1900. For more details and data sheet contact Michelle Freeman, 15 Saunders Court, Traralgon 3844.



FROM



R.H.S.V. HISTORY NEWS

NO. 144 NOVEMBER 1993

RHSV CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR ARRANGEMENTS

The office and library will close on Wednesday, 22 December, until Monday 17 January, a limited library service may be available between 17 January and Tuesday, 1 February when the library will reopen fully. **During this period please ring before your visit to confirm the library is open.** This is the last issue of *History News* until February 1994.

SPRING IN THE BOTANIC GARDENS

Works are proceeding in several areas of the Gardens during Spring. A new computer controlled watering system is being installed which will ensure that each plant gets exactly the right amount of water and will result in a significant saving of water consumed. The restoration of the Temple of Winds, one of the most significant structures in the Gardens, is completed and the re-building of the William Tell Rest House, destroyed by fire in July, has commenced. Free guided walks leave from the Visitor Centre (entrance in Birdwood Avenue, near front gate) leave at 10 and 11 am every day except Monday and Saturday. Walks at other times with particular themes are available. For bookings telephone 665 2341.

OLD FARMING FILM CONVERTED TO VIDEO

In 1990, an old film depicting life on a cereal farm during the 1930s was discovered, and created so much interest at public screenings that it has been converted to video format.

The footage is a fascinating insight into the agricultural practices of that time when mechanisation was gradually replacing the era of horse-drawn equipment. Another highlight is the detailed coverage of the construction of an enormous sheaf haystack.

This film has been recognised by the National Film & Sound Archive as being unique and of extremely high quality in both camera technique and clarity. With the assistance of the Archive, Ian Sloane's original footage has been converted to video format by his son Alexander and wife Ann, with commentary and musical soundtrack. The video, *Heritage Farming in Australia*, is available to the public for \$35.00 posted, from A. & A. Sloane, Box 77, Yarrowonga, 3730. Enquiries Ph: (060) 35 9415.

PETROL STATIONS IN VICTORIA-INFORMATION WANTED

Daniel Catrice and Michele Summerton are researching a history of petrol stations in Victoria, and wish to contact people with information, including published material and archival records (documents, photographs) that may be relevant to the study.

Information or inquiries may be directed to Daniel Catrice (03) 532 4403 or Michele Summerton (03) 654 4711.

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This issue of *History News* is my last as Editor. Mainly because of recent health problems the time has come to begin clearing my desk for a new Director and Editor in the New Year - a fresh start for 1994.

In the three years I have been in the Director's chair I have been most fortunate to have worked and associated with the many wonderful people connected with the Society and the history movement.

To all those who have given me their help and support - and the pleasure of their company and friendship - I say a sincere "thank you". May I wish the RHSV and member societies success in their endeavours to preserve our past and to promote an awareness of the importance of our history and cultural heritage.

POLLY WOODSIDE MARITIME MUSEUM SHIPWRECK!

Until 30th January 1994

An exhibition of shipwreck artefacts, photographs and information to complement the Federal Government's new legislation designed to expand the protection of historic shipwrecks.

HERITAGE HILL - DANDENONG LAUREL LODGE LABOUR AND LOVE: BECOMING A MOTHER IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES.

Until April 1994

This time saw changes in ways mothering was perceived and experienced and the exhibition focuses on what was both an intensely private experience and one of public and even national interest, with objects, photographs and oral histories.