

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

published bi-monthly

Meetings third Tuesday of the month - 7.30 pm

Old Morwell Town Hall

Sec/Editor: Elsie McMaster 2 Harold St Morwell 3840

☎ 03 51341149

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Welcome to the January Newsletter

.....and a happy new year to everyone! We look forward to a prosperous time, both for our members individually and for our Society as a group, and we invite your continued involvement and support.

We finished 1996 with two very pleasant activities. On November 17 we held a Heritage Walk around the western end of Morwell, north of Princes Drive. Mr Will McRoberts guided the walkers through the area pointing out places of interest and noting the many changes which have occurred over the past years. The highlight of the excursion was an hour or so spent in the company of Mrs Darling and her family who invited us into the family home, spoke about the house, (one of the oldest in Morwell and beautifully maintained), and showed us many of the Darling family's 'treasures' - photographs and memorabilia.

On November 19 we held our final meeting for the year at Tower Gardens. Guest speaker Meredith Fletcher gave a most enjoyable after-dinner presentation. With the aid of slides and cassette recordings, Meredith took us back to the 1930s at Crooked River in East Gippsland and recreated a picture of life there through letters exchanged between the local teacher and his pupils during the summer holidays.

At the end of last year we received, from LaTrobe Shire, the donation of a computer from the excess materials pool created by the merging of several shires. This comes at exactly the right time. Our cataloguing group, who have been putting in many hours each week sorting and recording the materials in our collection, would like record and index all these materials on the 'Inmagic' program, widely used by museums and historical societies. The gift of the computer is the first step towards this end.

Well, all that was last year! This year we look forward to even bigger and better things. Read on for some of the activities coming up in the next few weeks.....

AN INVITATION

Our esteemed and hard-working President turns 80 this month and we're all invited to help him celebrate!

Eric's wife June writes:

You are invited to celebrate the 80th Birthday of Mr Eric Lubcke at St Andrew's Presbyterian Hall, Church St, Morwell

Date: 26-1-'97 Time: 2pm -4pm

This "Afternoon" is open to any of Eric's friends - neither invitation nor reply needed. (No Presents - just your Presence).

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AUSTRALIA POST DELIVERS!

An interesting postal item arrived at your Secretary's address in November last year. It had been posted in Forster, N.S.W. on 11 December 1989 ! It was from Mrs Shirley Yeatman, formerly Shirley Harding, whose family were business people in Morwell in the 1930s and 1940s. It contained several interesting photographs of early Morwell and a letter with information about the photos. The strange thing was, though, that the packet had been forwarded to Morwell from Leongatha Post Office on 11 November 1996 - it was received here the next day. It was correctly addressed and it is anybody's guess how it got to Leongatha, or where it has been for the past seven years!

A letter of thanks to Mrs Yeatman at the Post Office box in Forster, given as her address in her letter, was returned, undeliverable. If anyone happens to know the whereabouts of any of the Harding or Yeatman families, please let Elsie McMaster know - we would like to thank them.

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→ **KINGSFORD SMITH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS** **SUNDAY FEBRUARY 9**

As reported in our last issue, Traralgon and Morwell Historical Societies, together with the L.V. Aero Club, will be celebrating the centenary of the birth of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith on Sunday, February 9. There will be a gathering at Black's dam, Hazelwood Rd Traralgon, at 10 am. This was the site of Smithy's landing field in Traralgon when he was barn-storming in 1932. This will be followed by a gathering at the site of Smithy's Morwell landing field - along the road leading from the PowerWorks museum to the present Prince's Highway. (We'll meet at the Big Dredger at PowerWorks about 10.45 am and proceed from there). A speaker at each site will point out places of interest and give a brief account of Smithy's visit. Then it's off to the Latrobe Valley Airfield where guest speaker will be Mr Des Kelly. A very pleasant little park has been developed at the Airfield and, with permission from the LaTrobe Shire, this will be named the *KINGSFORD SMITH CENTENARY PARK*. There will be a display of photographs and Smithy memorabilia at the Airfield and light refreshments will be on sale.

For more information call Elsie McMaster ☎ 03 51341149

**FAMOUS AIRMAN VISITS MORWELL IN "SOUTHERN CROSS"
MANY HAVE A FLY**

Saturday was quite a "Red Letter Day" in Morwell. In the first place the weather was delightful, being by far the finest day for many weeks, and was greatly appreciated by residents after the long spell of unsettled conditions.

Quite a number of things were "on", including the opening of Bowling Green, cricket match and two tennis matches; but the most important event of the day was the arrival of the famous Airman Commodore Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, in his noted aeroplane - "The Southern Cross."

The landing ground was located in Kleine's paddock, at rear of Presbytery. The Southern Cross was due to arrive at 11 am but long before then quite a number gathered at the site.

Shortly after 10 am an "advance" 'plane" arrived at the landing site (the surroundings of which were very soft owing to recent heavy rains), to "try it out", and in doing this the 'plane nearly bogged on the outskirts, in a crabhole, and had to be assisted out.

About 11.15 the "Southern Cross" was seen in the distance. Before it arrived the other "advance 'plane" rose and led the way to the landing ground. Both machines made a perfect landing, and when Sir Kingsford Smith stepped out he looked as though he had just walked out of a cosy room. After being provided with a cigarette, he was introduced by the Shire Secretary (Mr Horsfall) and Mr W. Smith to members of Morwell Shire Council, Returned Soldiers and others, among whom was Mr D.Reid of Traralgon, who acted with Sir Kingsford Smith as despatch rider, on motor cycle, in the early stages of the Great War. Sir Charles expressed great pleasure at meeting his old "cobber" again.

Cr.D.J.White, on behalf of Shire Council, and Mr.A.Shaw, on behalf of Returned Soldiers, extended a very hearty welcome to the famous airman. He was congratulated upon his wonderful achievements, and the hope expressed that his visit to Morwell would be a happy as well as profitable one.

In responding, Sir Charles said he very much appreciated the welcome extended to him and the kind sentiments expressed. In referring to the "Southern Cross" he said it was the same old bus and the same old pilot.

The gathering continued to increase in numbers, people coming from near and far.

The "Southern Cross" will seat 16 comfortably, and during the day both 'planes were kept continuously engaged making flights.

No mishaps of any kind occurred and those who enjoyed a "fly" and viewed the town and district from the air for the first time, greatly enjoyed their unusual experience.

At about 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, the "Southern Cross" left for Leongatha with some passengers aboard.

**Morwell Advertiser and Gazette
Thursday November 3, 1932**

**RETURNED SOLDIERS and CITIZENS MEET SIR CHAS.
KINGSFORD SMITH**

On Saturday evening quite a number of Returned Soldiers from Yallourn and Morwell as well as a number of Morwell Councillors and citizens had the pleasure of meeting Sir Charles Kingsford Smith at McKay's Hotel Sitting Room.

Mr. Highway said that Sir Charles was very tired after his day's flying, but nevertheless he would spend a quiet hour among the gathering chatting, etc. but he would not make a speech or talk on aviation.

Sir Charles Kingsford Smith then shook hands with all present.

Cr. D.J. White then said he was delighted to meet Sir Charles who was the best aviator in the world. Sir Charles had flown over many countries, and many oceans, had done many fine deeds, had risked his life, had helped greatly to improve the standard of flying, and was still alive to tell the tale. He (Cr. White) hoped Sir Charles would be able to continue for years. No man had done more to put Australia on the map than Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. On behalf of the President of the Shire he extended to him a most hearty welcome.

Sir Charles Kingsford Smith said: I thank you Cr. White for your remarks. It is much more jolly to meet you chaps like this than it is to be on a cold platform. I have had a wonderful reception in Morwell and I appreciate it. I will be able to pay my rent and grocers bills for a few weeks. I am very fond of my country and I am glad to be able to stay in Australia. I am able to do this by running flights. I prefer that to positions in other countries which have been offered me. The people are interested in the old bus and she has been a good friend to me. I hope I don't break anyone's neck because it would mean breaking mine at the same time; anyway I'm pleased to meet so many cheery faces.

Mr Fred Jenkins said: On behalf of the Returned Soldiers, I wish to thank Sir Charles for the opportunity he has given us to meet him. The Returned Soldiers are proud of him because he has made a name for Australia.

Mr Wheeler-Brown, President of the Yallourn Branch of Returned Soldiers (who was a Captain of Tunnelers in the war), said: We also appreciate the opportunity to meet Sir Charles, whose life on the other side was totally different to mine. Sir Charles was always going high up and up in the heavens and I was always going deep down and down.

Sir Charles: I would sooner go up than down.

Mr Wheeler-Brown: I was always "windy" about going up.

Sir Charles: I would always have the "breeze up" about going down.

Mr Wheeler-Brown: Anyway Sir Charles can show us how to fly.

Sir Charles then told a "story" which created a good laugh, shook hands with all and retired.

**Morwell Advertiser and Gazette
Thursday November 3, 1932**

→ THE PEACE LOAN AEROPLANE VISITS MORWELL

Although the visit of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith to Morwell and surrounding areas in 1932 created a great deal of interest, there had been aeroplanes in the district much earlier. Probably the first was the Peace Loan aeroplane.

The *Morwell Advertiser and Gazette* reported on 12 September, 1919:-

AEROPLANE VISITS MORWELL AN INTERESTING SIGHT

The visit of the Peace Loan aeroplane, on Friday afternoon last, was looked forward to by a large and eager crowd who assembled in the "Show Grounds". The plane was timed to arrive here at 4pm but for some time before that hour there was quite a flutter of excitement, all eyes being turned towards the sky in the direction of the Haunted Hills, each one being anxious to get a glimpse of the wonderful flyer. As the plane had not arrived about an hour after the appointed time, many went home disappointed, some being of the opinion that the machine had broken down, others that the airman had got "bushed" in the clouds, while not a few grew sceptical about the visit. Just on 5.30 when the people had practically all left the "Show Grounds" and returned to the town, a tiny speck became visible below the clouds on the horizon and it was not long before the plane was recognised coming at a great pace like an immense bird. A few minutes later it was hovering over the town, dropping leaflets. After circling round for a time preparatory to landing with the gracefulness of a bird, in Mr Ben Ronald's paddock, close to fence on south side of "Show Grounds", people became quite excited and there was a general rush to see the machine. As Capt Mathieson (pilot) and Cpl Parsons (air mechanic) stepped from the plane they were cheered and congratulated upon their achievement. They informed a representative of the "Tiser" that the fly to Morwell had been accomplished under most favourable and pleasant conditions. A large crowd soon gathered to inspect the machine, which was a novelty to most of those present, as well as being a wonderful piece of the work of science, and one could easily imagine the telling effect of these monsters, armed with bombs and machine guns, in actual combat with the enemy.... After a brief stay the airmen got ready for their departure to Traralgon. The propellers on the "nose" of the machine were set revolving at a great rate, creating a strong wind that blew off the hats of several persons standing close by. The machine was then set in motion and headed for Hazelwood Road it raced along on its wheels for about 150 yards and just when it looked like crashing into an adjacent fence, it rose beautifully from the earth and soared into the air like a bird. Six minutes later the airmen were hovering over Traralgon.

AEROPLANE WRECKED AT TRARALGON ENGINE GOES WRONG

The aeroplane arrived in Traralgon safely on Friday evening and after circling round the place, landed in Mr Hugh Campbell's paddock. Unfortunately, however, disaster was met with the next morning and in reference to the matter the "Record" says:

-- Some difficulty was experienced in getting the engine started on Saturday morning, but eventually the huge propellor revolved at an amazing speed, and the aeroplane ran a couple of hundred yards across the paddock. Just as the onlookers were expecting to see it crash into the fence, it gracefully rose on the air like a bird and soared aloft. Over the town it flew and was back again in the course of a few seconds and as it passed a few feet over the heads of the crowd, quite a thrill of excitement was felt by many, some of whom ran for safety. As they looked back the plane was flying over the town again and it was a wonderful as well as a pretty sight to witness.

Unfortunately, on the way back, Captain Mathieson had engine trouble and attempted to land in Mr Burnett's paddock, joining Mr Cone's residence. In doing so, the aeroplane struck a small pine tree growing in Mr B Sellen's place, and landing in the paddock, ran along the ground and crashed into a 6 ft paling fence surrounding Mr Cone's.

The impact broke two of the propellor blades off and damaged the wheels and wings of the machine but Captain Mathieson escaped unhurt and was perhaps the coolest man in the excited crowd. A message was despatched to Melbourne of the accident, and in the afternoon another aeroplane flew over Traralgon on its way to Sale, travelling at a great speed. The damaged machine was dismantled and sent back to the city by the afternoon train.

Mr Farmer mounted the damaged aeroplane, and said he felt sure all regretted the mishap to their brave young Gippsland aviator, who had come among them on an important mission. He hoped they did not think the visit was simply to show the aeroplane. Last year they were called upon to provide a loan for fighting the enemy, and this year they were asked to subscribe to a Peace Loan for the repatriation of Australian Soldiers. He hoped all who could afford to do so would subscribe. (Applause).

Three hearty cheers were given for Captain Mathieson as he mounted the wrecked plane. He said he was very sorry the accident had happened owing to the pine tree. The engine gave out and it could not be helped. He was after bonds and hoped that they would subscribe after having the pleasure of seeing this. The loan was for repatriation and demobilisation of soldiers, and for the widows dependent on the Government for support.

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PAPERS BY AEROPLANE

From the **Morwell Advertiser and Gazette, 23 July, 1920:**

On Friday next the "Herald" newspapers will be delivered in Morwell to local newsagent (Mr Evans) by aeroplane.

It is also intended, in order to demonstrate its usefulness, to arrange for a "Herald" aerial mail delivery of letters. Each letter left at "Herald" office will have stamped on the envelope "By 'Herald' Air Mail Express" and will be duly delivered with the newspapers at Mr Evans' newsagency. Residents who will be receiving letters in the town will be able to obtain them from Mr Evans, while regarding those people residing outside the town it will be necessary for the senders in Melbourne to add the ordinary postage when leaving them at "Herald" office.

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The **Advertiser** also reported on **3 December, 1920 :**

The Shaw-Ross Engineering and Aviation Co., of Melbourne, are sending an aeroplane to Morwell on Sunday, 5th December, for conducting passenger flights on that and the following day (Monday).

The object is to stimulate public interest in aviation generally. Aerial transport will become a great factor in the development of Australia, and needs all the encouragement and assistance now, whilst it is in its early stages, that the public can give.

The Shaw-Ross Co are organising an Aerial Taxi Service throughout the country, making it possible for the public to obtain an aeroplane for their long distance journeys, with the same ease but with greater rapidity than they could accomplish short trips by means of taxi cabs or motor cars.

As soon as the commercial public realise the immense advantage of air transport over other means of communication for long distances it is almost certain there will be a boom in this direction. Many people without experience of flying think that it is attended by feelings of giddiness, sickness or danger, but it is a fact that none of the slight tremors that one feels in a high speed elevator, for example, are felt in flying. In fact the passenger is hardly able to tell when the machine has left the ground, without looking over the side, and all are agreed after their first flight that the most curious thing is the absolute sense of security whilst in the air - it is pure joy.

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