

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the March Newsletter

The **Annual General Meeting** of our Society will be held on **Tuesday, March 16 at 7.30pm** in the Morwell Town Hall foyer, followed by an ordinary meeting.

Members are reminded that, on that day, **membership fees** for the coming year are payable - **\$10 Single - \$12.50 couple or family.**

Mick Farrell will again be working on our computer cataloguing this year and the Information Centre will be open on Tuesdays, 10.00am - 4.00pm and Wednesdays, 10am - 12.30pm.

The Central Business District recording group is under way. They will record changes in both the occupancy and the physical make-up of the Morwell CBD each March and September.

Further to our query in the last newsletter concerning the fate of a number of Morwell 'icons':

** The 'Harbinger' bell is still at Commercial Road School. Staff at the school were very interested to hear of the bell's origin. They had realised that it was of historical significance but did not know any details. (These had obviously been lost in the mists of time). It has been suggested that Morwell Historical Society may present the school with a plaque, detailing what is known about the bell and its donors.

** We may never know the fate of the memorial oak tree planted in 1904 in memory of three local men who died as a result of service in the Boer War. The tree was obviously removed to make way for some further development in the Alexandra Park area. If there was no plaque attached, the history of the tree, like that of the Harbinger bell, was probably lost and the significance of the tree was probably not realised by those who authorised its removal.

** Member Joyce Cleary is on the track of the Post Office clock. Our local Post Master is at present making inquiries to try to discover what happened to it. There is a suggestion that the clock face was simply a set of numbers fixed to the cement wall of the Post Office. In that case the numbers and hands probably did not survive the wrecking of the building. The clock's works may have been discarded also, when the Post Office was demolished.

** There is a suspicion that John Rintoull's anvil may yet be found at the Shire Depot. Member Eric Lubcke is on the trail. We shall keep you informed of developments!

Heritage Walk

On **Sunday, March 28**, our Society will conduct a *Historical Walk Through the Rose Garden*, commencing at **2pm at the Gazebo**, and followed by afternoon tea at the Information Centre in the Town Hall. Members, friends and the public are all most welcome.

THE MORWELL POTTERY

We have had a query from the Curator of the National Pottery Museum in Wodonga about the *Morwell Tile and Pottery Works*. There were two brick works in Morwell - one in Jane St, which dug the clay for its products from the area which is now the bowling green in Helen St, and one at the end of Ann St which dug clay from the area around Aherin St. This latter factory, which also produced pottery, was known at one time as the Morwell Tile and Pottery Works.

The following article is from the *Morwell Advertiser*, 7 October, 1904 and we believe that it refers to the factory at the end of Ann St:

'The syndicate which recently purchased the local Pottery Works have lost little time in getting things into working order. Under the managership of Mr J.W. Corbett, work was resumed last week and on Friday last the first kiln of pottery was started burning. The auspicious event took place in the presence of some members of the syndicate, a few local townspeople and representatives of the press. The kiln was fully charged and the honour of starting the fire was allotted to Mrs Corbett, who performed the ceremony most deftly, only one match being used at each feeder. The first issue of smoke from the chimney stack was watched for with interest. (The smoke, after passing round the kiln, is carried underground for about a chain before it reaches the chimney, which acts as a splendid draft.) A huge stack of wood was adjacent and we were informed that the whole of it would be used in the burning of the kiln, the fires being kept going for about four days and nights before being shut down.

An inspection of the sheds and their contents was afterwards made, and proved very interesting. In one shed were thousands of bricks and pavers drying and almost ready for burning while in another part there was also a large stack of open drain pipes undergoing the same process. The clay appeared to be all that could be desired and they should turn out excellent bricks etc. we were soon among the potteryware which was more interesting than the "brickware". Flower pots in galore, teapots, jugs and several other novelties were all ready for burning. Eventually we were ushered into one of the main showrooms and its contents was quite a revelation to all present. Flower pots of most artistic shapes and designs (some standing about 3 ft in height), were in much evidence and we venture to say the collection is among the best in the State, both for artistic taste, style and finish. The genial manager no doubt noticed the longing eyes cast upon the pots, and heard such expressions as "what beauties" etc, and when he invited all present to take a flower pot home as a memento of the occasion, his kind offer was heartily accepted. There were so many designs to choose from that it was some time before each one had made their selection.

After this, another building was visited containing large bread crocks, jars and other articles too numerous to mention. In this sanctum a pleasing little ceremony took place in the shape of the success of the new company and manager being drank(sic) in bumpers. Shortly after this, the visitors took their departure (each laden with a flower pot and stand) well pleased with what they had seen and the manner in which they had been treated.

In conclusion we desire to wish the syndicate every success in the venture and trust they will receive the support of the town and district as well as trade from other parts of the State. The success of the company means that a large number of hands will be employed and that also will be advantageous to the district.

A DATE WITH CONFUSION!

Having trouble deciding when the new millennium actually starts? Is it January 1, 2000, or January 1, 2001?

A millennium is a period of a thousand years and since we date our present era from the birth of Christ, we use that date as our reference point.

Thus, the first century after the birth of Christ ended on 31-12-100 and the first millennium ended on 31-12-1000. So, the second millennium will end on 31-12-2000 and the new millennium will start on 1-1-2001.

However, human nature being what it is, people started counting centuries from, say, 1800 to 1899. (Surely 1800 was the first year of a new century? The last one started with 17).

Our present system of dating originated in the Roman Era which began with the foundation of Rome in 653 B.C. By 46 B.C. the Roman calendar, through various imperfections, had fallen into confusion so Julius Caesar decided to reform it:

- the year 46 B.C. was made to consist of 445 days.
- thereafter, each year consisted of 365 days except that every fourth year was a leap year of 366 days. This Julian Calendar remained in use in Europe until 1582.

By 1582 there was a difference of ten days between the Julian calendar and the solar year so, in that year, Pope Gregory XIII ordered that:

- 5 October be called 15 October, and
- of the end of century years (years ending in 00) only the fourth should be a leap year.

So - any year which can be divided evenly by 4 is a leap year except '00' years, which are only leap years if they can be divided by 400.

(The year 2000 will be a leap year, but the years 1900, 1800 and 1700 were not).

To add further to the confusion, historians now believe that early dating of Jesus' birth was incorrect and that he was born somewhere between 4 B.C. and 7 B.C.! Does this mean that the new millennium really started on January 1, 1997? Did we miss out on a party?

Also, when Julius Caesar reformed the calendar, the year began on March 25, the Spring equinox in the northern hemisphere. It was not until 1752 that the British adopted the new style (Gregorian) calendar and in that year that they altered the beginning of the official year to January 1.

Kim Lockwood, writing in the Herald Sun, suggests that, on March 25 we pretend it's 1997 and have a millennium party. Then, we can have another party on 31 December this year and another on December 31, 2001!

Acknowledgement to Kim Lockwood - Herald Sun 25-1-99.

La Trobe v Latrobe

We have received a request for clarification on the spelling of LaTrobe/Latrobe from Mr J. Vanselow of Blackburn. The letter was addressed to the C.E.O, of La Trobe Shire and was passed on to us, (possibly after landing in the Shire's "too-hard" basket)!

Mr Vanselow writes:

'...while studying Professional Writing and editing at Box Hill TAFE, I became aware of the varying usage of Latrobe/La Trobe - the Letters editor for the *Herald Sun* uses "La Trobe Valley" as does that newspaper's weather map. My editing tutor suggested that I write a newspaper article. Easier said than done!

'To illustrate the varying usage, in the telephone directory you are the **Shire of Latrobe** - however the *1996 Census Statistics for Victoria's Local Government Areas*, published by the Department of Infrastructure, calls you the **Shire of La Trobe**.

'I note from the telephone directory for your region that **Latrobe** is by far the preferred form with little more than six "La Trobe" listings. I found the listing of the **La Trobe Valley Aero Club**, located at **Latrobe Valley Airport**, delightfully illustrative of the desirability of adopting a standard form.

'The form of La Trobe/ Latrobe may not seem all that important, but data-base computer programs require cross-referencing of all forms to ensure retrieval of the record on the first request.

'We now have the La Trobe Library (State Library of Victoria) and the La Trobe University. Perhaps on the strength of the naming of these institutions, the Melbourne City Council decided to change the naming of LatrobeSt, Little Latrobe St and Latrobe Place to the "correct" La Trobe form. My personal opinion is that this was a step in the wrong direction, especially as Melbourne appears to be now 'out of step' with the rest of Victoria... the old name will exist for many years on titles of land and plans.

'On the historical side, I have the as yet unproven theory that (Governor) La Trobe intended the Latrobe form to be used for place names, as it sounded less French, while using his correct name on documents. The British had been at war with France until after the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the district of Port Phillip was comprised almost entirely of English, Scottish and Irish settlers in 1840.

'With all the talk of the millennium it appears people are overlooking the fact that the Colony of Victoria was proclaimed on 1st July, 1851, which makes the 150th anniversary of Victoria in the year 2001. La Trobe's name should be making feature articles in that year and I hope by then to have come up with some interesting material.'