

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BI - MONTHLY

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

OLD TOWN HALL , MORWELL

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MAY 1995

WELCOME TO THE MAY NEWSLETTER!

Since this is the first of our bi-monthly newsletters, there is quite a lot to report.

Attendances at the Friday openings of the museum have been quite poor over a number of months, so it was decided at our April meeting to close the museum during the months of June, July and August. Inspections can be made by arrangement with President Eric Lubcke - phone 342203 - and the situation will be reviewed later in the year.

The cataloguing group has been active in the museum and we have had an offer of assistance from the Jobskills Programme, funded by the Federal Government, whereby a worker would be provided to mount, catalogue (on card and computer), and file our photographic collection. The worker would operate in conjunction with the Historic Photographs Cataloguing Project, supervised by the Latrobe Regional Library, which began in 1994 with the collection of Traralgon Historical Society.

On May 6, the combined Gippsland Historical Societies met in Foster. Concern was expressed by almost all those present at the possibility of local records being removed from Gippsland under the new municipal structure. The Societies in the LaTrobe Shire are to meet with C.E.O. John Mitchell to try to ensure that this does not happen, at least in our district.

**Please Note: Fees for 1995-96 are now due and they have increased to:
\$10.00 single member, \$12.50 couple or family.**

Next Meeting: Tuesday May 16, 7.30 pm.

Guest speaker will be Mr Tom Lawless, who will speak about his work on the recovery of crashed aircraft during World War 2, particularly those in the Gippsland area.

**MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1995**

I feel we should be reasonably proud of our achievements of the last year. We have been mentioned in despatches a few times. I think the most important was member Lou Bond receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia (O.A.M.) for his sixty years' service to the Shire of Morwell on various committees.

I myself received a plaque for service rendered and the Yarra Gum Reserve in Maryvale Crescent has been named after me, which is most gratifying.

We have been recognised by the (former) S.E.C. as the custodian of the old Yallourn Fire Brigade trophies that their members have won over the years. Also we have had the chance to select some of the relics of the old 1,2,3 and 4 Power Stations at Yallourn before they are wrecked.

We have also had several speakers talk to us of their early days in the area. Kath Ringin spoke at our March (1994) meeting on her family in the Morwell area and Brown Coal Mine.

On Saturday March 19th we had Ben Walsh lead us on an excursion to his father's old property, 'The Poplars' on Billy's Creek and then on to his grandfather Christie Walsh's selection up Middle Creek, which was very interesting.

In April we had a walk down Commercial Road, being led by Will McRoberts, telling us about the early businesses that were operating around the 1920s to the 1950s.

In May we had Lyn Powter talk about her early life with her parents in the Morwell area.

We have also had some very interesting articles given us by our member Arthur Fish, which we appreciate.

One sad spot was the losing of our valued member Dot Taylor, being our Treasurer for about ten years. She had to move to a better climate for her husband Gordon's sake. Her last great effort was to have a plaque erected out at the Haunted Hills, commemorating the old town.

In July we had an interesting article given to us on the Payne family.
In October, Joanne Newey spoke to us on the Yallourn Heritage Trail.

Several of our members have been meeting on a Monday with Claire Wood who has been advising us on a system whereby we can have all our articles and photos recorded so they will be easily identified.

In November we had another town walk. We went down Maryvale Crescent, Ann St and George St. Will McRoberts was our leader again and was very good at identifying the old homes and buildings.

On our final meeting for the year we again met at the Morwell Hotel Motel where we had a good meal and were given a very interesting talk by Jack Evans on his experiences in the Air Force during World War 2.

At our first meeting for the year 1995 (February) we were given a very interesting talk by our member Gordon Cook on his experiences during World War 2 in New Guinea.

In closing I would very much like to thank the various members who have helped in various ways. Also I must thank our Secretary for putting together our magazine and all the other various jobs a Secretary has to do. Also I would like to thank Dot Bartlett, our Treasurer, for all the work she has done.

Eric Lubcke, President.

DEDICATION OF YALLOURN NORTH WAR MEMORIAL

On Sunday, 23rd April 1995, a ceremony was held to unveil and dedicate a memorial at Yallourn North (formerly Brown Coal Mine). The inscription on the bluestone cenotaph reads: *'In memory of all the citizens of Brown Coal Mine (Yallourn North) who unselfishly served in defence of our homeland and all who supported them in ensuring our peace and freedom.'* The memorial is situated beside the Yallourn North Public Hall.

The ceremony commenced with a hymn and The Lord's Prayer. Mr Mal Bugg, Vice President of the Victorian Branch of the R.S.L. gave the Anzac Requiem. The unveiling and dedication then took place, with the Reverend Bruce Charles (C.of E.), Father Les Lisik (R.C.) and the Reverend Brian Niblock (Uniting Church), asking God's blessing on the memorial. This was followed by a wreath-laying ceremony and Mr Eric Kennedy addressed those present. Mr Bugg recited the Ode To The Fallen, the Last Post was played by bugler Brian Pollard, and Reveille followed two minutes silence. A hymn and the singing of the National Anthem concluded the service and the congregation was invited to afternoon tea in the Yallourn North Hall, where they were able to view an impressive display of military memorabilia, including uniforms, weapons, badges and Gordon Cook's military harness and regalia collection.



THE KOENIG LETTERS

At our April meeting, President Eric Lubcke spoke to members on the collection of letters which passed between his two young uncles, Charlie and Tom Koenig, and their sisters Tilly and Annie, during the First World War.

Tom and Charlie, both of whom worked on the family farm at Jumbuk, joined the army and were sent to Egypt and France. Their sisters wrote to them regularly and kept all the boys' letters. In France, Charlie was badly wounded, losing a leg, and Tom was killed in action. The sisters continued to write to Tom, not knowing for some time that he had been killed. These letters were later returned and were kept by Tilly, forming a unique collection of correspondence from both the home and war fronts. Eric has given the original letters and postcards, many still in their envelopes, to the Latrobe Library. The Library supplied Eric, in return, with two bound copies of the correspondence, one of which he has donated to our Society. The letters make fascinating reading, painting a picture, on one hand, of life in the trenches, in military hospitals, on troopships and on leave in France and Britain and, on the other hand, of life at home in Jumbuk and Melbourne, (where Tilly worked), during the war.

The collection of letters is available in our Library - (to be read on the premises) - and a cassette of Eric's talk, in which he read extracts from a number of the letters, is available for loan.

ANOTHER HERITAGE WALK!

The third in our series of Heritage Walks around Morwell will be held on *Sunday May 21*. It will be led by Mr Will McRoberts and will include the area along the old Princes Highway between Collins Street and McDonald Street. Intending participants should meet at the *entrance to Morwell Railway Station at 1.30 pm*.

THE WAY IT WAS - A.R. Fish. (cont).

I liked the town a lot better when we found a better camp. Camping spots were very scarce in Mount Gambier but we located a shed at the back of the Park Hotel. For this we paid a weekly rent of two shillings (20c) - in today's value, about one dollar. Next to that shed was another one filled to overflowing with potatoes as the licensee had potato growing interests and at that time potatoes were almost unsaleable. Same old trouble - people go hungry, food going rotten, no money to buy it. Jack Kerrin the hotel keeper was a gentleman. He told us we were to help ourselves to the spuds, so this is what we did. As these were freshly dug 'Snowflakes' - a kind we don't see these days - they were good eating and solved our food problems as they were beautiful big potatoes, a good standby to fortify the body against winter's chills. My friend at that time was fortifying himself in a more fluid manner.

I spent some time in this town and, while there, celebrated my sixteenth birthday by bumming my way into the local picture show to see and hear a young English star make her first hit in the 'talkies' (as they were then called.) The star was Gracie Fields, the picture "Looking On The Bright Side". This, of course, was not hard for us to do - we were always on the shady side.

It was not an easy town for wire-workers, so I took advantage of what fine weather came that way to learn something of the town and the hills, hiking around the lakes and up and down the slopes. Climbing down one bit of a steep bank, I got into difficulties and for some terror-filled moments I hung suspended by my fingertips, and here for once I had definite indications that Up-top, Someone was watching over me. A fervently gasped short prayer for help was answered by a shrub leaning near, and by grasping this I was able to slowly edge my way to safer ground. I wriggled my way up to the top and lay panting, thankful that I was not lying in a heap at the bottom of the slope.

A man was killed there on the slopes of the mount one day - he tried to take his car up the steep track to the tower but could not make it. The clutch began to slip, the brakes would not hold. The car ran backwards and unfortunately he swung the wheel the wrong way and the vehicle dropped over the side and crashed down to the bottom.

Wet days I explored the Museum and spent some days and a few nights in the Reading Room, reading up in the old newspaper files the reported, (as it happened), history of the Kelly Gang.

By this time, however, my mate was having difficulty in staying sober long enough to make any sales on his own behalf and he invariably started the day by trying to borrow off me. I had to lie and tell him that I had none but he knew that I was lying. The upshot was that I decided that it was about time I once again became a loner. So, one Saturday morning I rolled the swag and set out along the road to Millicent.

Getting a lift part of the way, I passed through a small township called Snuggery, only a whistle stop now. Strange name for a place. I can only assume that sometimes in that part of the world people are told to go to snuggery.

That night I spent the time in the Glencoe shearing sheds and next day, in drizzling rain, in the middle of the afternoon, walked into the merry town of Millicent.

THE WAY IT WAS (cont).

Millicent the Merry

Far from merry, cold and wet and hungry, I dragged myself into the town and found my way to the local showgrounds. Here was shelter and, after a while, a small fire, but wood was scarce. That day there had been some sort of a 'do' there and I was convinced that there was - shut away where I could not get at it - supplies of leftovers. I could smell it. I groped in the gloom for some time, trying for some way of getting in to the tucker, but all was securely locked, and short of actual breaking in, there was no way I could get at it. So, still hungry but not quite so cold, I finally crawled in between the blankets and wished for day, which eventually came, and, when the sun was up and day advanced, a small group of cleaners-up. Fortune smiled and they were big-hearted enough to give me as much as they thought I could handle. So I put into safe keeping a large parcel of sandwiches followed by other good things, and put away a store for next day. This was a good town, mostly poor people - some themselves out of work - but kind and generous hearted.

I had one hurdle to overcome. Hard to understand the open hostility of the youngsters of the town. It was not the first time I had encountered this antagonism - strange, for I was only a year or so older than they and, time passing, they could easily find themselves in the same situation as I.

It was a hard life, this life on the roads, battling for a crust, often cold and hungry and damp, almost always alone, but never lonely. But always somehow making out, thanks to the Lord watching from above and the kind hearts in the people I met as I went from house to house with the wire gadgets. And, as my mother once remarked - "You always seem to fall on your feet." Anyway, I got good friends with the local lads and through them with their parents. One result of this was that it came to be the usual thing for me to find on returning to my camp that some kind person had been there and left a 'handout' - as we called it - parcel of food. So things were almost pleasant there in that place.

I almost fell foul of the law. I had gone out hunting with some of the boys, taking my trusty little .22 rifle. Being still a couple of years short of my eighteenth birthday - the legal age for using a rifle - I had to be a bit careful where and when I did my shooting. This time I must have been a bit careless, as the local gendarme arrived on the scene. Fortunately, on the wide open plains it was impossible for him to arrive unobserved, and because the plains were so wide and open to the eye it was impossible for us to disappear. So he questioned us about some shooting. Well, we had heard some shots, we admitted. But the barrel of the .22 was up my sleeve with the bolt resting in my partly closed hand and the stock was concealed under my coat, so of course not having any gun, we could not have been the ones responsible. But, none-the-less, one of the youngsters yarned to me a couple of days later that he had seen the two policemen going through my bedding and inspecting my camp. Well, they did not confiscate the gun, so it must have been something else they were looking for, but not found there, and I was not a thief, though I admit to telling a few lies occasionally.

A quieter way of getting rabbits was by snare, made out of fence wire, which I set in a thicket where rabbits ran. I did get one or two that way.

To be continued

GLIMPSES OF PIONEER DAYS - Jesse William Huggett (cont)

One fine young fellow from Collingwood, a big powerful young man, came up to the Palmer and then went to Sandy Creek and in two months he had made no less than £2000 and he returned to Palmerston on his way home. He took ill with the fever and offered the doctor all he had if he could cure him so he could go home to Victoria, but he was in his grave in two days. Every camping place was a cemetery, either by the blacks murdered or by the fever. My brother saw the bones of the blacksmith from Ballarat - he and his son perished there. I was living in Ballarat when they went off to the diggings.

Some of the miners also got scurvy. The doctors said it was from eating too much salt meat but this was not borne out by experience. There was a Chinese garden at the Palmer and the doctor told those who had the scurvy to go and camp by the garden and eat nothing but vegetables for a week or so. It was so hot at the Palmer that salt meat would not stay preserved so they had to do it the same way as they did it in India - cut it in strips and hang it out in the sun to dry.

There was no timber anywhere growing there. It would grow alright but all the inside would be eaten away by white ants. There would just be the bark and the sapwood and if you hit it a blow with an axe the axe would go right through. Also up in that part of Queensland there was a peculiar type of snake - as thin as a piece of rope and about three feet long, and it had a great liking for getting in your bedclothes, or under your pillow at night. Some Chinamen were leaving their tents and my brother went to get the logs they had been using as pillows and he found under one of them one of these snakes which must have been there all night. The adders, too, were very dangerous in these parts as they would almost bury themselves in the sand and you might tread on one any moment as it was not possible to see them. One Sunday a miner went for a stroll and when he had not returned by midday his mates went to look for him but did not find him until next day - Monday - in a hollow log. He was quite dead and his body had turned black. He had written in the sand that he had been bitten by an adder and he would crawl into the log to die as he knew there was no cure.

Well, my brother made up his mind to come back to Collingwood but his mate made up his mind to stay, saying he would be just as well off as anywhere else as he had no relatives in the country. He arrived home in Collingwood just before Christmas 1874. He took his gold to the Mint and got about £50 for it. He had splendid health all the time he was away. Most of the miners were too fond of the bottle and would rather have a bottle of whisky than go to the trouble to strain and boil water, or take any other precautions against disease.

Some notes: The Bass River, Gippsland, was really alive with fish in 1868 and the bush alive with wild cattle which anyone could have for the shooting. When there I saw the Explorers Track, made by Captain Bass along the Bass River in 1794, with the remains of some big logs he cut, some four or five feet in diameter. Also about what is now called South Wandin and also about the head of the Woori Yallock river when I was there, 1860 to 1864, there were mobs of wild cattle - also dingoes. I would go to Lilydale six miles away every Sunday for my boss to get fresh meat - bush track all the way, and coming back, always dark - and the dingoes would surround me, being drawn by the smell of fresh meat, and they would follow me. I could hear them but not see them. I would fire my gun and they would scatter but would return, thirty or forty of them at once. I was never frightened of them although a Lilydale man said they got after him in the same district and he was forced to spend three days and nights up a tree while they walked around it and tried to scratch it down.

The End

DO YOU REMEMBER THE BLACKOUT?

A. R. P. Bulletin No. 3. 1941
(unfortunately incomplete)

THE BLACKOUT - 23RD SEPTEMBER, 1941.

Victoria's most extensive Blackout, held on 23rd September, 1941, proved successful in almost every respect.

It demonstrated that the public generally was most anxious to co-operate; it revealed the keenness of the wardens' services and exhibited, in a most satisfactory manner, the degree of co-ordination existing between the many services concerned.

Within a comparatively short space of time the staff of the State Emergency Council was required to perform a tremendous amount of co-ordinating and administrative work. Likewise heavy duties and responsibilities were imposed on the Police, the Railways, Tramways and other services and upon Commonwealth and State instrumentalities generally, as well as upon the general public.

That the test proved satisfactory is a tribute to the efforts of all the authorities concerned and it shows that where proper and adequate publicity is employed, and where explicit instructions are issued, the public reaction will be satisfactory.

Area of Test.

The areas affected by the Blackout comprised:-

A. All the territory lying within a radius of 13 miles of the General Post Office at Melbourne and within a radius of 10 miles of the central Post Office at Geelong, together with the whole of the Shires of South Barron, Bellarine, Flinders, Frankston and Hastings and Mornington and the Borough of Queenscliffe and all territory lying between the foreshore of Port Phillip Bay and Princes Highway East and West and the South Gippsland Highway, including such highways, and any towns and their immediate environs situated thereon.

B. All the territory within a radius of 12 miles of the Post Office at Yallourn.

C. All the territory being the area of the township of Thorpdale.

D. All the territory within a radius of 10 miles of the Post Office at Wonthaggi.

This was the first occasion on which the Wonthaggi area had been affected by any lighting restriction tests but the Geelong area experienced a blackout on 25th May while restricted lighting tests had been held over the Melbourne metropolitan and extra metropolitan areas on several occasions.

Schedule of Events.

The schedule of events associated with the blackout can be simply told in tabular form:

Time (hours)	Time (clock)	
2030	8.30 p.m.	All main highways leading into blackout areas were policed and drivers of all vehicles informed of their obligations regarding lights if within the areas on the sounding of the Air Raid Impending Signal.
2045	8.45 p.m.	Air Raid Wardens commenced duty.
2054	8.54 p.m.	First Signal. "Prepare for Air Raid" (a series of alternate short and long blasts) was sounded on sirens.
2059	8.59 p.m.	Commencement of Second Signal. "Air Raid Impending" (a series of short blasts of 5 seconds on with 2 seconds breaks) given by sirens and radio stations. Emission of light ceased. All vehicles (except those exempted) were parked at side of road with all lights extinguished. Wardens checked their sectors, saw that exterior lights were extinguished and that no light was emitted from enclosed buildings.
2100	Period from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m.	Aerial observation was made of blackout areas. Police and Auxiliary Police were on patrol. Wardens patrolled their sectors. Essential service vehicles (trams, trains, etc.) operated with screened and dimmed lights.
2200	10 p.m.	Third Signal. "All Clear" (a continuous blast of 2 minutes duration) given by sirens and radio stations. Normal lighting was resumed. Roads opened, and normal traffic procedure was resumed. Wardens returned to their posts and passed in reports.

Statistics are sometimes regarded as uninteresting but in respect to the Blackout they tell a striking story and permit of some appreciation of the magnitude of the test.

Some 3,000 square miles of territory was affected, this representing 3.4 per cent of the area of the State of Victoria. About 35,000 street lights and about 4,000

Documentation before demolition

Last year the HBC granted a permit for demolition of the Yallourn Power Station subject to a number of stringent conditions. They included the collation and storage of historic documentation showing the evolution of the complex, a comprehensive record of the existing buildings and plant, and the construction of a model of all plant and associated surrounds for viewing by the public at an approved venue.

The decision followed an extensive site inspection and thorough consideration of all material presented to the HBC. Although the HBC recognised the significance of this site, the difficulties associated with retaining a large industrial complex covering many hectares and containing hazardous materials like asbestos, coupled with the unsuitability of public access to the buildings and the lack of any viable alternative use, created problems.

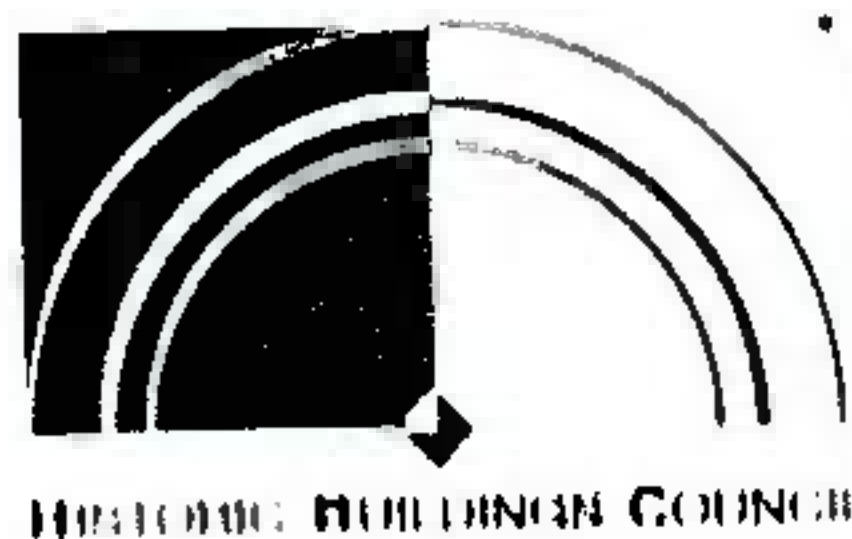
The HBC accepted that retention of the power station was not only impractical, but would cause its owners, Generation Victoria, undue financial hardship.

A working party comprising representatives from the HBC, Monash University (Clippston), the Moe Historical Society and Generation Victoria has been meeting monthly to implement the HBC conditions.

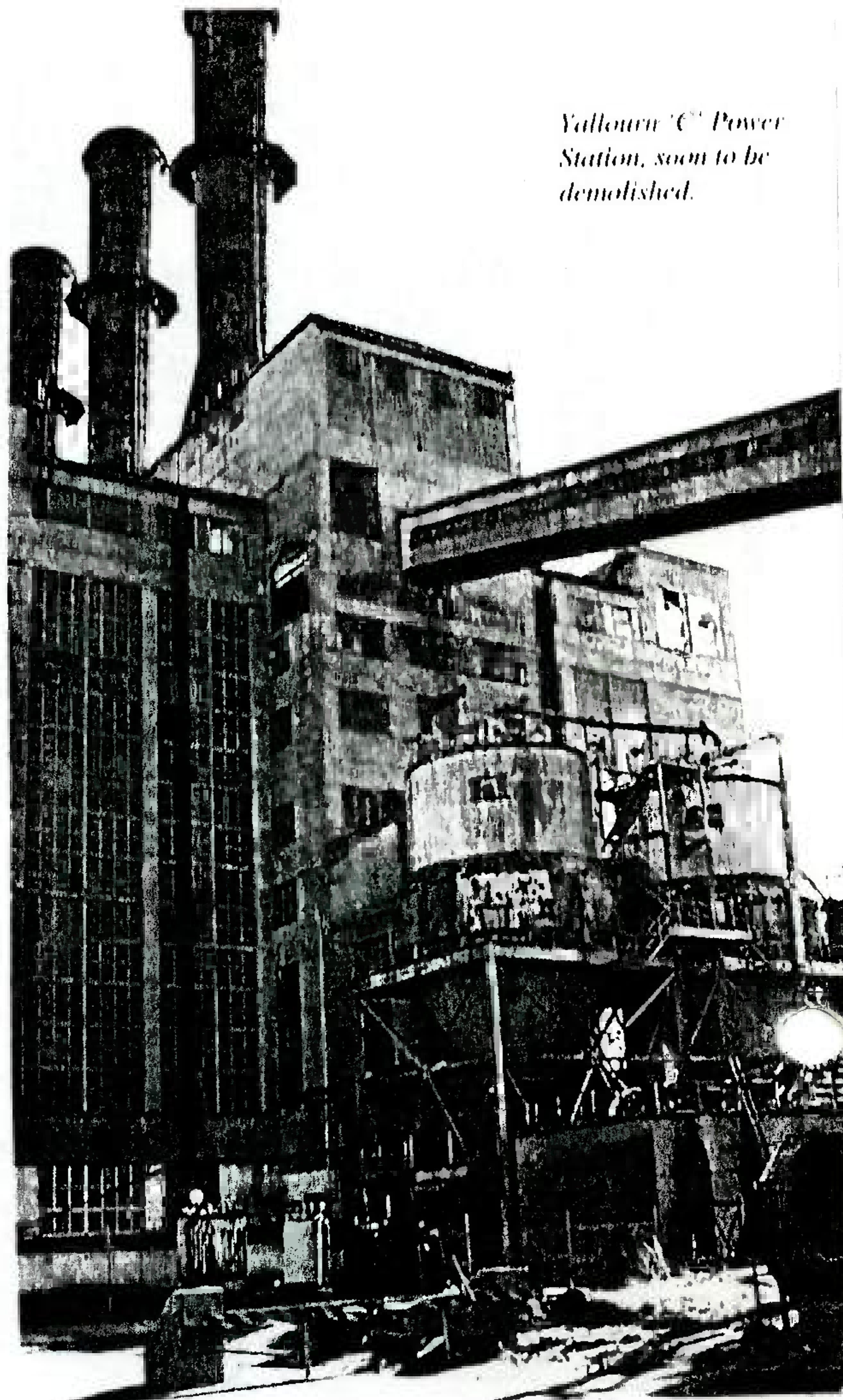
According to the HBC representative and Institute of Engineers nominee, Julie Lamborn, the sheer volume of records is extremely rare. "There must be over 5000 photographs and between 50-100 kilometres of paper. We have never come across an organisation with such extensive records," she said.

The HBC has been impressed by the diligence with which Generation Victoria has gone about fulfilling the conditions that accompanied this permit.

"I am particularly excited about a video they are preparing to comply with the permit conditions. It is going to be great. It will use archival footage to show the construction and working life of the power station. Filming will also take place during demolition, providing an opportunity to view the inside of the machinery as it is being dismantled so you can see just how it worked," said Julie.



HISTORIC BUILDINGS COUNCIL



Yallourn 'C' Power Station, soon to be demolished.

Herald Sun, Tuesday, March 7, 1988

Mint sale plan angers historical groups

By NICOLE MURPHY

HISTORICAL groups have accused the State Government of putting dollars before heritage over the proposed sale of the Royal Mint.

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria, which is housed in the 1869 building, says the Mint belongs to the community.

"The Government seems to think the bottom line is about dollars, but this is about who we are and giving meaning to our history," society president Professor Weston Bate said.

The Royal Mint was last used as a mint in 1968.

The Bullion Room is now used for civil marriages and the Supreme Court has courts on the upper floor.

National Trust conservation manager Mr Ian Wight said the trust disagreed with the sale.

The Mint is listed by the Historical Buildings Council, so is protected from demolition or radical change, but HBC president Dr Jan Penny said a wider issue was at stake.

"The Mint is one of Melbourne's most eminent public buildings," she said.

Mr Gavin Clancy, a spokesman for Finance Minister Mr Ian Smith, said the Government would entertain any development proposals which recognised the site's historic value.



A piece of history: Prof. Weston Bate wants the Mint retained as the home of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.