

# MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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## *Welcome to the November Newsletter*

As the year 2000 draws to a close we are looking forward to the Centenary of Federation. Our Society will be participating in various community events during the year-long celebrations and we will also have a display of relevant photos and memorabilia in our room in Church St. If anyone has any appropriate items which they would be willing to lend for such a display, please contact Elsie McMaster.

Members last week spent a pleasant couple of hours with a group from the Royal Historical Society of Victoria who were on a four day excursion. They visited *Airlie Bank Gallery*, which has just opened after extensive renovations to the historic building and which houses the "Dad's War Stuff" collection - a tribute to the Australian Light Horse.

Another pleasant few hours were spent with the members of the Morwell Art Group, with whom we share our new premises in Church St. We got to know each other, they displayed some of their art work and we viewed a video of the history of Yallourn township and works area.

Our room in Church St is at present open between 11 am and 3 pm each Wednesday. We will be closed from December 13 until January 24.

Don't forget our final dinner on Tuesday November 28 at Tower Gardens Restaurant, Morwell. Cost is \$30 per person. Guest speaker will be Dr Meredith Fletcher - her topic: *Three Lives of the Emden Steam Whistle*. Please let Elsie McMaster know by Friday, November 17 if you will be attending.

There will be no meetings in December or January. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 20, 2001 but you will receive a newsletter before then to remind you.

*The President and committee wish you and yours a very happy and safe Christmas and a prosperous and fulfilling year in 2001.*

## **LOOKING BACK**

Some extracts from local papers:

### **POLICE WANTED AT MORWELL**      (Gippsland Times 14/3/1879)

To the Editor of the Gippsland Times

Sir,

Is it not time we had a police constable stationed at the Morwell? Last Saturday night, just as the train was leaving, an exciting pugilistic encounter took place at the station. Scarcely a Sunday comes round but drinking, card-playing and dancing go on pleasantly without any check. There are four licensed houses in the township and any inebriated roughs are a perfect liberty to create at any time as much uproar as they like. The publicans conduct their business well enough as regards their houses but the outside annoyance is anything but pleasant to those who have some regard for the decencies of civilised life.

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### **TOWNSHIP IMPROVEMENTS**      (Morwell & Mirboo Gazette 2/2/1887)

The recent erection of new buildings and improvement of old ones in the township of Morwell give unmistakable signs that the farming community is prospering and that local tradesmen are reaping a corresponding advantage. We do not know why it should be so but of all the townships along the line the architectural display in buildings at Morwell seems to have been most neglected. It is never too late to mend, however, and we are pleased to find that the old buildings are now giving place to structures of a more pretentious character. The fact that the survey of the township was carried out in the most erratic manner has no doubt had something to do with the peculiar look of the buildings. A mistake was also made in overlooking the probable advancement of the district and in forming the township on one side of the line only. This difficulty has been partly overcome by the subdivision of the land owned by Mr Buckley, on the north side of the line and on which there are now erected several places of business and private dwelling houses.

It is said that new churches show signs of prosperity. If this be so, we think the buildings recently erected by the Church of England and Presbyterian denominations would warrant us in saying that we are a thriving community.

### ***FEDERATION - Some Facts***

The planning for the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia, which took place on January 1, 1901, began much earlier. In the closing years of the 19th century, there was much discussion about the possibility of the separate Australian colonies joining together for their mutual benefit. It was finally decided that federation was a good idea and on **September 17, 1900**, Queen Victoria signed the document which **created the Commonwealth of Australia**.

On **July 13, 1900**, the **Earl of Hopetoun**, who had been Governor of Victoria from 1890 to 1895, was named the **first Governor-General** of Australia.

Lord Hopetoun offered Sir William Lyne, Premier of N.S.W. (the senior colony) the commission to form a cabinet for the new Federal Parliament. However, the Victorian premier had refused to serve in a government not led by Mr Edmund Barton, a champion of the Federal cause in N.S.W. so Sir William was unable to form a cabinet and the task was given to Mr Barton.

On **December 31**, Edmund Barton named the **first Australian Cabinet** with himself as Prime Minister.

On **January 1, 1901**, in **Centennial Park, Sydney**, Governor General Lord Hopetoun read the proclamation of **Australia's Federation** - "one people, one flag, one destiny" - to the assembled crowds and this was followed by a grand parade of troops, brass bands, shearers and many others, and performances by a choir of 15,000 school children.

On **March 29, 1901**, electors in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania went to the polls to **elect their representatives** in the first Federal Parliament. South Australia and Queensland held their elections on March 30.

On **May 9, in Melbourne**, the Duke of York opened the **first Federal Parliament** in the Exhibition Building. He read a message from King Edward VII (Queen Victoria had died on January 22). As he read the final words "I now declare the parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia open", the Duchess of York touched an electric button which gave the signal outside for the hoisting of the Union Jack.

Melbourne was to be the seat of government for the Commonwealth for the next 26 years until the construction of the national capital, Canberra.

## Having my say

Whatever happened to jacks, tip-cat and saddle-me-nags?

# When children went out to play

**W**HEN did you last see assorted children playing on footpaths and back streets those magical games of skipping, hop-scotch, jacks, marbles, hoppo-bumpo, tip-cat, and spinning tops?

Sadly, our modern lifestyle has stopped boys and girls from playing those frisky games that children in a near-forgotten era took for granted.

A recent newspaper article bemoaned the lack of sports in Melbourne schools these days.

There was a time when children spent most of their spare moments playing some sort of schoolyard sport — in the lunch hour, before classes and even after school.

At the schools in Collingwood and Richmond in the '20s and '30s, no pupil had to be forced to participate in school sports of any kind.

After we had played the sports and games laid down by our teachers — football, cricket, swimming, tunnel-ball, rounders, basketball and swimming — we only had to wait for the school bell to end our day so we could start games of our own.

The girls needed nothing but a fair-sized rope. A girl at each end would turn the rope and keep time, while one, two or more would skip inside the turning rope.

Another whiz-bang game for little girls was hop-scotch, a game played on a footpath where they hopped in and out of numbered squares.

Like many more children's games of that long-gone era, they were simple, they were exercise and they were fun.

But of all the myriad of games that little girls evolved, none required more dexterity than jacks.

Jacks was a complicated game (only understood by girls) and was played with the knuckle bones from legs of mutton.

After mother had cooked the leg of mutton and the family had polished it off, the knuckles were removed, washed, dried in the sun, painted, then whizzed off to school.

Boys, too, devised a variety of games — stoopers kick, saddle-me-nags, hoppo-bumpo, toodlembuck, marbles and kick the tin.

And there was the game that was played outside schools every lunch hour called tip-cat.



**Child's play:** Computers have taken the place of outdoor games such as marbles.

In those days, we had no cars to contend with. At worst, you could encounter a council dray, a bottle-O pushing his hand-cart or perhaps a butcher boy delivering meat to a customer. So we could play tip-cat in the side streets without a worry.

All that was needed to play was a 75cm-long piece of broomstick for a bat, and a smaller piece which was sharpened slightly at both ends and called a puck.

A boy would throw the puck a fair distance and another boy would be set a number of paces to retrieve it. If he failed he had to pay three cherry bobs (or cherry

stones) as a forfeit.

Then there was footy. As our parents could not afford a real football, we had to make do with a paper footy. We would roll up a newspaper and tie it with string.

**I**T MAY have been a makeshift football, but we could still pretend we were Gordon Coventry, "Chicken" Smallhorn, Jack Baggott and even the great Jack Titus.

But do not think boys and girls only put their minds to "fun" sports.

One of the most important dates in the school calendar was the yearly sports day held at the Motor Drome,

which was on the site of Olympic Park. For weeks the children practised sprinting, relay races and swimming.

These inter-school competitions were taken very seriously.

In today's computerised world — with its kung-fu devotees, kick-boxers and uniforms of jeans with sneakers — one does not see many games like hop-scotch or jacks or even tip-cat.

I'll be more sure of seeing Richmond win a flag in the next few years than seeing a group of girls skipping along a side street.

**BERTIE BERTRAM** grew up in the inner suburbs of Melbourne during the 1920s and '30s.