

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the November Newsletter

Well, here we are almost at the end of another year. Our final meeting will take the form of a **DINNER** at **SILVER'S RESTAURANT** in **HAZELWOOD ROAD, MORWELL** on **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13.**

Our Guest Speaker for the evening will be local author and historian

MR PATRICK MORGAN.

All members, their friends, families and members of other societies are most welcome. The meal will cost \$15 per head.

☞ If you plan to attend, please let Elsie McMaster know by

Thursday, November 13 - ☎03 51341149

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THREATENED CLOSURE OF CENTRE FOR GIPPSLAND

STUDIES: At our October meeting, members expressed concern at the possible closure of the *Centre for Gippsland Studies* at Monash University Gippsland Campus, due to funding cutbacks. The Centre, which was set up in 1986, is a repository for a great deal of valuable historical material and for more than ten years has provided not only a source of information on Gippsland history, but a focus for the study of that history. It was decided to write to the Vice Chancellor of Monash University, to Premier Kennett and to local members of Parliament expressing our concern and requesting their assistance in maintaining this most valuable asset in our region.

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MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE

There will be no meetings of our Society in December or January.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday February 17, 1998.

(You will receive a Newsletter before that date, to remind you!)

**THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE
WISH ALL OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS A SAFE AND
RELAXING HOLIDAY SEASON!**

LATROBE SHIRE COMBINED HISTORY GROUP

At a meeting in Morwell on September 15, the *Latrobe Shire Combined History Group* was formed. The group consists of representatives of Moe, Morwell, Traralgon, Boolarra and Yinnar Historical Societies, and the Mid Gippsland Family History Society.

Since these Societies obviously have much in common, it was thought that a joint approach to displays, problems, requests for assistance with research, etc would be beneficial to all. The group will meet quarterly, with the member Societies taking turns as host.

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STRZELECKI FESTIVAL A SUCCESS

Despite rather inclement weather, the recent festival, held in Morwell to honour the 200th anniversary of the birth of *Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki* was pronounced a success by those involved. Morwell and Traralgon Historical Societies provided a display of photographs in Church St on Saturday, October 18. There were plays, a Chopin concert, a parade, a display of the art work of local artist Artur Santowiak, and the unveiling of a memorial to Strzelecki on Mount Fatigue, over the weekend of October 17, 18, 19. The Festival drew many visiting Polish folk from other parts of Victoria and a descendent of Sir Paul Strzelecki presented the LaTrobe Shire with a pressed flower, picked by Sir Paul when he climbed Mount Kosciuszko. The Festival also revived the debate on the actual route taken by Strzelecki and his party on their journey of exploration through Gippsland. This, it seems, may remain a topic of disagreement among historians, since there seems to be no conclusive evidence as to the route travelled by the party.

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PHOTOS FROM TENTERFIELD

The Society was pleased to receive, a few weeks ago, a set of four photographs of Morwell, taken in the 1930s or 1940s, we think. Mrs M. Condrick found the photographs among her late mother-in-law's belongings and, though she has no connection with Morwell, took the trouble to locate our address and send them to us. She says that her mother-in-law ran a boarding house in Tenterfield during the Second World War, and people visiting soldiers based at the nearby army barracks often stayed there. She has no idea where the Morwell photos came from nor why her mother-in-law kept them.

MORWELL BRIDGE

A letter was received recently from Mr David Cafiso, a former Morwell resident, who is studying for a Diploma in Natural Resource Management, enquiring whether the Society had considered having the site of the first crossing of the Morwell River (near the old Morwell Bridge township) recognised as culturally significant.

The development by Yallourn Energy of the Maryvale Coalfield, and the associated diversion of the Morwell River will probably place the site under threat and, while there may be little we can do to preserve it, it would be good to have it recognised and perhaps to place a marker at or near the crossing, if this is possible.

David considers the site significant because:

- a. It was the site of the first permanent crossing of the Morwell Rivr (1847)
- b. It was the location of the first post office and non-farm settlement within the Morwell Shire (1858) and later the first hotel.
- c. The crossing of the Morwell River and flood plain was one of the barriers to the transport of mail to Sale (the major urban centre of Gippsland at that time). It was often impassable in winter and impeded the early development of this district.
- d. In relation to the above, it was the site of many interesting stories about attempts (successful or otherwise) to cross the river.
- e. It was the first staging point in the Morwell area for Cobb & Co coaches (1867) and was an important point on the old coach road from Melbourne between Drouin and Sale. This was the first trafficable road through Gippsland. It is one of a possible number of historic sites along this route.

**The Society has requested information from Yallourn Energy regarding plans for the site and if possible will move to have it recognised in whatever way is most suitable.*

The following article was printed in the *Morwell Advertiser* on December 22, 1916:

A very old landmark known as the 'Morwell Bridge Club' on the Melbourne Road about three miles from Morwell, was on Tuesday afternoon last destroyed by fire, together with contents. An adjacent building used as State School was also burnt to the ground. The buildings were erected many years ago by the late Mr Henry Godridge, who held a "club licence". It was a favourite stopping place for travellers in the days gone by. The licence was, however, allowed to lapse some years ago and the premises have, for a long time, been owned and occupied by Mr and Mrs Wm Godridge.

On Tuesday, Mrs Godridge was busy preparing the house for visitors that were expected at Xmas. She had also during the day made Xmas pudding and cakes in the kitchen where the fire a little later broke out. Mrs Godridge was engaged in the front portion of the house and was not aware of the outbreak until the flames had a firm hold. Mr Godridge was in Morwell at the time and Mr McKenzie (school master) and children were on their way home. Messrs W. Smith, Jos. and S. Kay, D. Dunbar and Pettit were, however, soon on the spot but found it impossible to save anything beyond a few things which included separator and school furniture.

We understand that the building was insured but nevertheless Mr & Mrs Godridge will be heavy losers.

MORWELL BRIDGE HOTEL



Mr and Mrs Henry Godridge and three of their six children outside their hotel at Morwell Bridge, c. 1890. The cottage at left was used as a school before a permanent school was built. Henry Godridge was the first man to discover brown coal in our area but he was unable to interest anyone in mining it and it was not until after his death that development of the rich coal deposits commenced. Morwell Bridge was a staging place for the Sale-Melbourne coach service and the first commercial area in Morwell Shire.