

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the November Newsletter

Well, here we are at the end of another year. Our Annual Dinner will be held on Tuesday, November 16, at Tower Gardens. Guest Speaker will be **Mr Greg Hansford** from the Walhalla Heritage League.

Also at that dinner we will be celebrating the 90th birthday of our Past President, **Mr Lou Bond**. Lou came to Driffield with his family in 1916 and has spent most of his life in the Morwell district as a farmer, contractor and carrier. He has played an important role in the civic life of the district, serving the community by his involvement in many local organisations - the Morwell Shire (he was a councillor for many years, including three terms as President,) the Presbyterian Church, the Morwell Cemetery Trust and the Morwell Football Club being only a few of the groups to benefit from his knowledge and ability.

We all know that, behind every good man there is a good woman, and Lou's wife, Leila has been his companion and support for almost sixty-five years. We wish them both a very happy wedding anniversary in December! Lou continues to be involved with many local groups, including our Society, and we are pleased to be able to wish him a Happy Birthday, and many more to come!

The Information Centre will be closed for the duration of the school holidays. It has been open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays this year but it is proving difficult to get enough members to supervise it so we're having a holiday over the Christmas period. We will open by appointment to cater for visitors to the district.

Mike Farrell and, recently, Kym Tunbridge, have been doing a great job in entering our collection of photographs on the *Inmagic* computer program and we thank them for their efforts.

Our first meeting for 2000 will be on Tuesday, February 15

You will, hopefully, receive another Newsletter before that date, to remind you. Meanwhile, the President and Committee wish all members and their families a safe and happy holiday season. See you next year!

STILL MORE TRIVIA!

1. Nowadays, when the dishwasher has been loaded and the doona given a quick flap, most children's chores are done. 40 - 50 years ago, children did many household jobs which no longer exist. What were they?

- a) a cleaning job using damp newspaper, usually combined with use of scissors and kerosene.....
- b) using an iron spike to chip pieces off a block of ice.....
- c) cutting up the "Weekly Times" or the "Argus" into squares and threading them in a wad on a piece of string.....
- d) using red ochre and an old paint brush.....
- e) using blacklead and a brush or rag.....
- f) using hot water and a brush (no soap!) to clean a series of concave discs and a large metal bowl.(City kids may have difficulty with this one.).....
- g) sprinkling hankies, tea-towels etc. with water and rolling them up tightly.....

2. Can you remember the pledge you used to make on Monday mornings before school?

I love.....and my....., I..... the flag, I will serve.....
and..... my parents, teachers and

b) The Education Act of 1889:-lowered the school leaving age from 15 to 13 years?
- raised the school leaving age from 13 to 15 years?

c) The cairn beside Hazelwood Pondage commemorating 100 years of Government-funded education in the Shire marks the site of-Hazelwood North Primary School?
-Hazelwood South Primary School?
-Hazelwood Ridge Primary School?

3. Remember these?

- a) "You can feel it doing you good".....
- b) "You'll go better on a"
- c) "Are you too fat, too fat, too fat? What you need are....."
- d) "A light with every strike".....
- e) "....., a little dab'll do you."
- f) "..... are nine for sixpence".
- g) What type of product was ALBA?

4. At the Morwell Shire Jubilee Celebrations in 1929, Mr Norman Sharpe won:

- the men's motor car reversing championship?
- the Jubilee Sprint?
- the competition for the best dressed gentleman?

5a) Electricity generation from Morwell Power Station began in: 1950 1958 1961 ?

b) Morwell's first reticulated water supply came from

Morwell River Billy's Creek Tyers River ?

c) This man was born on June 26, 1890, in a residence attached to a butcher's shop in Tarwin St., Morwell:

John Flynn Sir John Monash General Sir Stanley Savage ?

Answers next month!

MY WORKING YEARS IN MORWELL (cont)

Jean Mooney

We both loved theatre. Perc joined the Theatre Group when he came to Morwell in 1946 and soon had me helping backstage. I didn't like acting but Perc loved it and he was very good, able to play many different roles on stage and also making theatre sets. He was made a Life Member of the Morwell Players.

Perc also did the decor for all the S.E.C. Balls, Social Club dances and First Aid competitions. He was made a Life Member of the S.E.C. Social Club.

Perc loved gardening. We soon had a lovely garden, back and front, set out beautifully, and we held garden parties for the Players to raise money for the group.

We both loved dancing - went to Yinnar dances every Saturday night. S.E.C. socials and balls were held regularly. Our friends all had cars and we had a marvellous social life. We would have rehearsals, play reading or a meeting once or twice a week. You had to borrow or pay for your own costumes if you were in the plays.

We toured the countryside with the group, winning many honours, and often had weekend trips to Melbourne to see a show, usually travelling by train. We both loved to go to the Victoria Market and buy a few 'treasures' for our home - very old china ware and old brass and silver (not like you buy now) and we paid only a few shillings.

After working at Purvis Stores for sixteen years, I left as I didn't get on with the new manager who came after Bill Panther had resigned to have his own men's wear shop in Tarwin Street. I started work for J.H. Dunlop Butcher, in Commercial Road, as cashier and ledger keeper. I didn't know much about book work but thought if I couldn't do it they could only sack me. I ended up working twenty-seven years, for three generations of the Dunlop family, a job I retired from in 1987.

I remember some of the shops that were in Morwell when I first came to work there. Some were very small shops and some of these, in later years, would be joined with others and made into one large shop. Sharpe's Emporium was always a large building. They sold anything and everything and Mr Sharpe would go out of his way to please you. He first started business selling goods from suitcases, travelling around farms door to door. Later, Michael Gus started his business the same way.

I remember, when I was still young, out on my parents' farm, an old Indian hawker called Allum travelled around the farms selling his merchandise in a covered horse drawn wagon.

I can also remember Purvis Stores in a small shop opposite Sharpe's. They then moved up in Commercial Road (where *House and Gift* is now) - that's where I worked. Later they moved over to Buckley Street as a supermarket.

Sharpes opened late Friday nights. Buses were run from Yallourn for shopping in Morwell. Sharpes sold frocks for 10/- (ten shillings) each, coats 15/-, evening frocks 15/- and one pound, at sale time.

[Morwell Historical Society has a list of businesses of the period, provided by Jean, which is too lengthy to reproduce here but which is available for reference in our archives]

MY WORKING YEARS IN MORWELL (cont)

In the 1940s and 1950s, Council employed Mr Tim Kennedy and Mr Wesley with their horses and drays to clean out the open drains and sweep the streets.

A dentist visited Morwell fortnightly. Years later G. Haugh was a resident dentist and had his own dental mechanic.

Grocery stores had sawdust mixed with a little kerosene on the floor behind the counter to walk on and butchers shops had dry sawdust behind the counter.

Morwell had a 9-hole golf course with sand greens, situated on Buckley's Hill, where later housing commission homes were built.

Football was played at the football oval (entrance from Travers St) and a small ground next to the tennis courts in Hazelwood Road was used for junior cricket and football. Croquet was played next to the football oval and bowls next to the small swimming pool situated near the band hall across the road from the Commercial Road School.

Table tennis was also played in several halls.

Dances were held in many of the small halls and there were also many social evenings in places such as the Band Hall, Scout Hall, Mechanics' Hall, Town Hall, Karma Theatre and Hall, the R.S.L. hall and a venue built in the grounds of the Church of England.

The Morwell Flax Mill burnt down in the bushfire of February 14, 1944. Thirteen people lost their lives in the Hazelwood - Jeeralang area. Homes, livestock, sheds and equipment were destroyed. I was riding back from having lunch that day. It was so dark you could hardly see in front of you. The wind and heat were terrific. All the shops were closed and men went fighting the fires around Yallourn Hospital, which was in danger.

Where my parents lived in Wilson Street, there were open paddocks behind all the houses, where the S.E.C. was. Everyone had to get out and beat the flames out with wet bags, towels, branches - anything we could find. The Bairnsdale evening train was not able to get through as some sleepers were burnt between Traralgon and Morwell. The airmen stationed at Sale were sent down to help fight the fires and later to get rid of the dead stock.

Back in 1960 we bought fourteen acres of bush land in Halls Road, Boolarra. We spent most weekends picking up wood from the ploughed land and carrying it across the paddocks to make windows and, later, to be burnt. We cleared it all, fenced and sowed the paddocks and bought four or five cattle to run on the place. Three dams were built and a building moved there to use as a weekender. After a few years we decided to have a home built on the property. We ran twelve head of beef cattle and calves.

We both got used to travelling to work in Morwell but didn't like the foggy mornings. We enjoyed living out at 'Moonyah', Halls Road, Boolarra, for almost thirty years.

When Perc passed away in August 1996 I sold the farmlet at Boolarra and moved back here to Morwell - 12 Travers St - on 18th January 1997, exactly 45 years to the day from when we first moved into that house in 1952.

WORKING IN MORWELL DISTRICT (cont)

Lou Bond

In the 1930s and 1940s when we carried on a transport business in Morwell, firewood was sold to most of the residents and dried wood was obtained from most areas of the Shire. This wood was cut into ten to fifteen foot lengths then transported by motor truck to the wood yard and cut by saw bench to the needed lengths.

By 1940, the A.P.M has established its mill at Maryvale and large tracts of secondary growth of our eucalypts were denuded by private contractors. Many of these men over-capitalized in plant and lasted in business less than twelve months. There was one man who, it was said, had three hundred men working for him - one hundred working in the bush, one hundred going and one hundred coming. Evidently he forgot to pay them.

We were one of the first contractors to the A.P.M. supplying mountain ash timbers from the Strzeleckis and also the butt lags of this timber to the local sawmills. We ceased contracts to the A.P.M because most of our workmen were called up for active service in World War 2.

A crawler tractor with winch attached was the means of hauling ash timbers from the steep gullies of the hill country and this was commandeered by the Government for war purposes along with some of our trucks. We finished the war years transporting essential materials and farm produce for the war effort with only two trucks which we had retained.

Some Comments on Timber Getting:

The working hours of bush workers were generally daylight hours. Walking three to four miles to work, carrying your lunch in a sugar bag tied at a bottom corner and gathering the open top with the other end of a piece of hayband. This would be slung over the shoulder, swag fashion. Water bags were used if water was not available nearby and ususally the prized axe was taken home to be honed to a sharp edge. The heavier tools were usually left where you were working.

A tree with a three to four foot diameter and sixty feet in length would split into a hundred average posts and perhaps a few strainer posts as well. Our father used to tell us stories of accidents that have occurred to bush workers. One sad story was that of a man working on his own, who died from a freak accident. When splitting a tough log, he double banked his wedges, that is, he drove another wedge alongside the first to further open the split. If it was a large log, and very tough, these gades would sometimes fly from the log with tremendous force and could injure a person if they were struck by the flying gades. This man had double banked and was reaching into the split to retrieve another wedge when the wedges 'popped' or flew, and the man's hand was caught, as in a vise. When found days later, the man was dead but, before dying, he had made a deep hole in the earth, trying to gather his axe, which was just out of reach of his foot, so that he could sever his arm and so release himself.

Another version of this story is that the man was caught by the fingers and did sever them and reached help in time to save his life.

A rather humorous story is told that, when carting posts by horse and tip dray, the catch of the dray became loose and, the dray being loaded 'light on', the tray tipped back and emptied its load onto the road.

Another hazard in bush work was that, when a tree was felled, it often broke branches from other trees or even branches from itself. These branches were sometimes left suspended or hanging in the foliage of nearby trees. When a wind disturbed the treetops, these suspended limbs would fall and could strike a man if he happened to be nearby. These limbs were known as 'widow makers' by bushmen and there are many known accidents of this nature that caused fatalities or bad injury.

WORKING IN MORWELL DISTRICT (cont)

Bushfires in the Area

Driffield, with the Haunted Hills to the north west and the heavily timbered country of Thorpdale and Delburn to the south west, was always at risk from bushfires in the summer periods. It can be presumed that the district was affected by the destructive fires that swept Gippsland in 1898, but the first recorded fire was a fire that destroyed the Driffield school in 1905. When we came to Driffield in 1916, ashes and debris could be seen at the site of the present school. On the opposite bank of the Wilderness Creek there was shown on early parish maps the site of the Yinnar Cream and Butter Factory Ltd. And concrete, iron work and debris could be seen where the brick house of F.C. Bond now stands.

From 1916 onwards, there were fires every few summers, in the heavily forested areas of the Haunted Hills, but these were generally contained when they encroached on open pasture land. In the war year of 1944 we saw the disastrous fire that swept through the Latrobe Valley on 14th February. This fire cost the lives of fourteen people in the Shire and destroyed property of all descriptions that was in its path. This fire started where the township of Newborough now stands and, fanned by northerly winds, swept through to the sea in a few hours. Fortunately most of Driffield escaped this holocaust owing to the valiant efforts of the local residents who contained the fire to the approximate area of Deans Lane to Brodribb Road, then across the Morwell River to where the Hazelwood Pond is now situated.

The main threat of the fire was through Herne's Oak, past Yallourn, where it went around the town of Morwell then spread fan-wise to the Strzeleckis and beyond. The Yallourn open cut mine was set alight and burnt for weeks, but was finally quelled by army and air force personnel, called in to help the S.E.C. workers.

A Royal Commission set up to prevent similar occurrences in the future recommended a large area of forest land be cleared as a huge firebreak. This was acted upon and this is why the lovely forested areas of the Haunted Hills are as we know them today - just pastured bare hills, subdivided into 10 acre farmlets.

From Mrs Lance Rawson's Australian Cook & Laundry Book - 1897

The young housekeeper who has all her own housework to do should always get her puddings and sweet dishes made through the day, that is, if she indulges in late dinners as many young wives are obliged to do on account of their husband's business keeping him away all day. If the dinner can be in the middle of the day, so much the better, as tea is an easy meal to prepare and there need be no greasy plates and dishes to wash afterwards. But, in many households the husband takes his lunch in town and dines late at home and then, if no servant is kept, everything will depend on the good management of the wife.

If she makes her puddings beforehand and leaves them on the sideboard ready to take the place of the previous course, she will not have to be running from the dining room to the kitchen. All milk puddings are best eaten cold but boiled puddings will, of course, have to be taken up just before serving.

Two tablecloths should be enough each week where there are not many children and where the cloth is carefully folded and pressed after each meal. In the kitchen, six tea towels and cloths for drying the china will be sufficient and the young housekeeper should have a couple of kettle-holders and an iron holder.