

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

published monthly, except December

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm
in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church Hall

Vol. 9 No. 9

SEPTEMBER 1993

WELCOME TO THE SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

Our accommodation at the Old Town Hall is gradually being licked into shape. Blinds have been fitted to the big front windows and door, and to the two small north-facing windows, to protect the photographic displays from the sun. Several cupboards, filing and map cabinets, table, chairs and a desk have been acquired and it is hoped to begin filing and cataloguing in the near future.

Several events of interest to local historians are approaching:

The launch of a new book - 'Women of the Valley' - Morwell and District 1884 -1944 - on Sunday October 3rd.

The Exhibition "Yallourn Revisited" at the Centre For Gippsland Studies, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, on Thursday October 14 (continuing until April 1994).

A Back To Yallourn North Primary School - on October 23rd and 24th.

Further information on these activities appears inside.

OUR NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 21st.

Invitation

Members of Morwell Historical Society, family and friends are cordially invited to

the launch of WOMEN OF THE VALLEY at 2 pm on Sunday, October 3

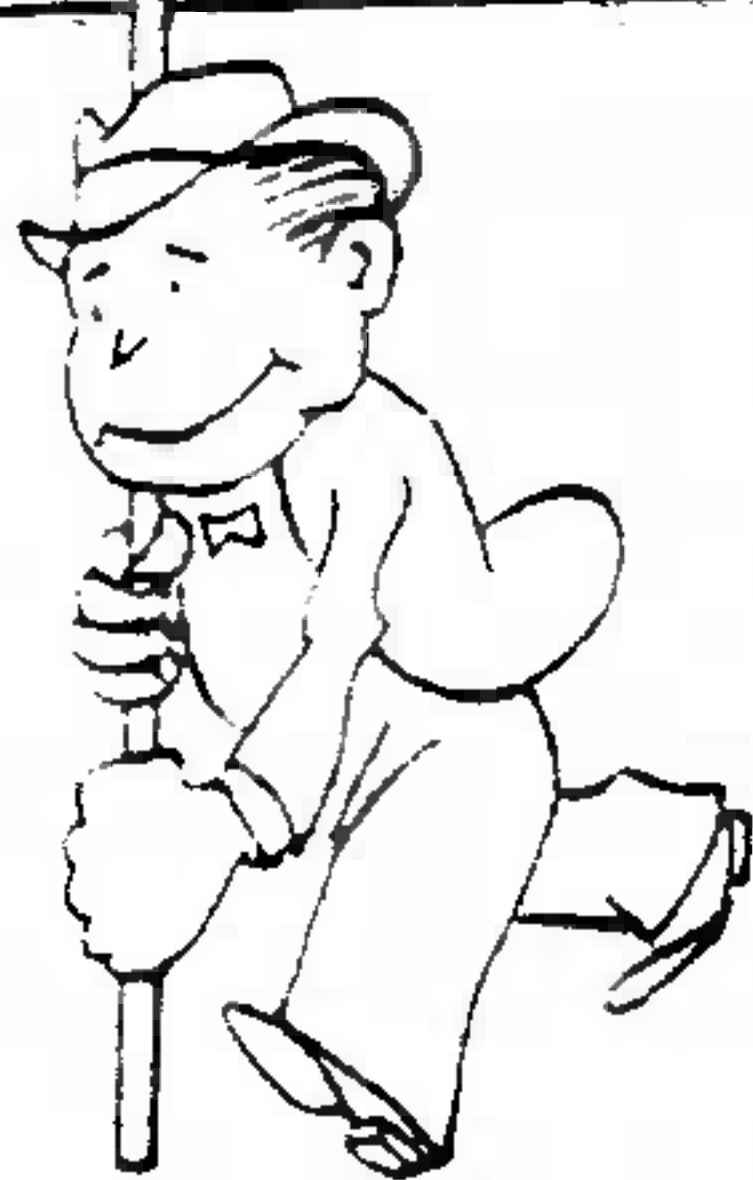
in the Reception Room, Morwell Civic Centre (Council Chamber).

This book, edited by Ann Dettrick and Elsie McMaster, contains twenty-three stories of women of the Morwell district from 1884 to 1944 and includes housewives, farm wives, midwives, teachers, boarding-house proprietors, workers at A.P.M. and Morwell Flax Mill, shop-keepers, a Land Army Girl and a hotel licensee.

An indication of numbers planning to attend would be appreciated to assist with catering. R.S.V.P. Monday September 27.

Phone: Elsie (051) 341149

SPECIAL



FOR SALE

1850s HEIRLOOM FAMILY BIBLE

Folio size - in mint condition. Black, grained Morocco leather binding, bronze clasp and corners, unused family register, gilt-edged pages, raised bands on spine. Contains many etchings and lithographs - interleaved with rice paper.

ASKING PRICE \$1,000

For further information contact

John Kidd (051) 221761

• EXHIBITION OPENING •



Yallourn

REVISITED

You are invited to the opening of
"Yallourn Revisited",
an exhibition on the SEC town of Yallourn, to mark the
refurbishment of the Centre for Gippsland Studies

on

Thursday, 14 October 1993 at 4 pm

at

Centre for Gippsland Studies
Monash University Gippsland Campus.

The exhibition will be opened by Dr Geoff Serle, author of
John Monash: a Biography.

Also on display will be items on Yallourn from the
Centre for Gippsland Studies collection: *Live Wire*,
photographs, memorabilia, and a film of the
Queen's visit in 1954.

RSVP

6 October 1993
Centre for Gippsland Studies
Monash University Gippsland Campus
Churchill, Victoria 3842.
Phone: (051) 226 356, (051) 226 339



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BACK TO YALLOURN NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL



On October 23rd and 24th
There's a Back To on at Yallourn North.
The school is 75 years old,
Please come along 'cos you've been told.
There's a ball on Saturday night,
Put your glad rags on if they're not too tight.
The roll call's happenin' on Saturday afternoon,
On Sunday, that's when the children croon.
So bring your partner and your dough,
We've got lunch boxes, coffee mugs and port to go.
Bring your camera, don't be remiss,
Come back to Yallourn North and reminisce.

For more information contact Yallourn North Primary School,
Phone (051) 67 1233

FORGOTTEN SKILLS WANTED

CROSSROADS Live
Directory of Life and
Living from the Past,
to the Present and Future
is seeking people with for-
gotten skills and trades
such as washer women,
rope makers, cheese mak-
ers and hurdy-gurdy
operators.

Crossroads, a commun-
ity organisation, is con-
ducting demonstrations
at Maldon, about 100km
north of Melbourne, from
November 19 to 21.

If you are interested
please phone Michael or
Jennie on (054) 752141.

Herald Sun

Monday September 13, 1993

AN ITEM OF INTEREST FROM "Australia All Over" Sunday September 12th.

Macca had a call from Boyd....., a member of a party of Australian airmen who have returned to the Yorkshire town of DRIFFIELD for the unveiling of a memorial. Australian Squadrons 462 and 466, attached to British Bomber Command, were based at Driffield during the war and a party of thirty ex-members is in Driffield at present for the dedication of a memorial to those who didn't return, and to renew old acquaintances.

HARKING BACK

Llew Vary

From Morwell Advertiser & Gazette

September 10, 1942

Scrubby Forest, the run upon which the township of Yinnar now stands was bounded on the west by the Morwell River and on the east by Billy's Creek, following both these streams back into the ranges taking in both sides of Middle Creek.

The homestead was built on the north-west corner near the Morwell River and some of the old buildings are still standing. They are constructed of wattle and daub with stringy bark roof. These buildings must be nearly ninety years old, and stand along side the present building which is occupied by the Misses Firmin. I am indebted to Mr W.A.Firmin for most of the information concerning this run. He, like myself, is interested in the pioneers, and has gone to the trouble of getting some records from the Lands Department, which he has kindly passed on to me.

This run was first occupied by Nicol Brown and William Hillier in 1850, who acquired the licence by tender. Some time later the partners had a disagreement and separated; Brown taking the homestead portion or western side of Middle Creek and Billy Hillier the eastern side of that creek. He built his hut on Billy's Creek which is named after him. The spot where he had his domicile is on that land now owned by Charlie Bond. He died there and was buried on the bank of the creek, and if my memory is correct I was told his grave is on the Hazelwood side.

The late Mr and Mrs O'Hara, who I have already mentioned, lived in Scrubby Forest homestead in Nicol Brown's time, most of their family being born there. Jim, the eldest son, was born in the homestead in 1864. Things did not go well with Brown and the property reverted to the Crown. Then John Shields of Rosedale secured the licence, which he held until 1874 when he sold to Geo. Firmin, who, assisted by his sons and Jim McDonald, had to build a bridge over Middle Creek before he could get his goods and chattels across. This bridge stood for many years and was on the spot where the present bridge now stands. The late Geo. Firmin will be remembered by many. He was a councillor in the Traralgon Shire and afterwards represented Yinnar at the Morwell Council table.

John Shield's eldest son, Frank, was the first selector on Scrubby Forest. He took up land along Middle Creek now owned by Alfred Firmin and his brother Walter, and is divided by the new Jumbuk Road. Jim McDonald was another early settler who selected both on Hazelwood and Scrubby Forest. The site where he

chose to put his house was on the knob or hill overlooking the bridge he helped to erect.

Other early settlers on this run were Henry Wicks, who later conducted the Yinnar Hotel, John Quigley who moved from Morwell and commenced business as a butcher and storekeeper in Yinnar. Many hill settlers told me that had it not been for the assistance that John Quigley gave them they would not have been able to hold their selections.

William Francis, the school teacher, who selected 320 acres just outside the township, was born in Wales. He was my first school teacher and I have very kind memories of him.

The next who comes to my mind are Geo. Bond and his brother William, both good hearted men who were charitably disposed. It was always recognised by any collectors for charitable and patriotic funds that they could be certain of a substantial donation from these gentlemen.

Glancing over the plan I see the name of Joseph Keogh, who dearly loved a good horse and who was for years the judge at the Yinnar Races, held every New Year's Day. These races were the main attraction after the Ridge Picnic had died out. And that reminds me I must not forget Seymour Coleman, who selected the race course and allowed the club to hold their races and other sports free of charge. In fact, he was a great host on these particular days, always keeping the hot water up to the refreshment booth. These races have now been abandoned, which I often think is a pity, as most people looked upon them as a days outing where they would meet old friends whom they had not seen for twelve months or more.

Now I come to David Sullivan and T. Cummins, who owned the property known as "The Poplars" now occupied by Tom Walsh. The row of poplar trees which gave this property its name were planted by either Sullivan or Cummins and they are a landmark which serves as a monument to their memo-

Following up Billy's Creek I find the names Arthur Williams, Joe Fisher, C. Champ, F. Deitrick and others.; while crossing to Middle Creek there were J. F. Deppeler, Ted Heesom, J. Walker, W. Vagg, W. Bryson, James Brewster, J. Brazel, Christy Walsh and J. Healey.

These were pioneers indeed, taking up the rough scrub country, with no roads, they had to cut their own tracks and pack or sledge their stores in and their produce out. I venture to say that none of the young men of today would tackle the job these stout hearted men did in those early days.

With these remarks I will leave Scrubby Forest to those who are still living and able to verify the accuracy of these memories. If I have left out anything or anyone my only excuse is that I have written this from information gleaned from old settlers about things that happened long before I had my first birthday.

HARKING BACK (cont)

I will now cross to "The Wilderness". This run was bounded by the Morwell River on the east and the Wilderness Creek on the north. The other boundaries were only a line on the map and were never surveyed. I have not been able to ascertain who was the original holder of this licence, but I remember being told that Ned Shields of Rosedale, and Joe Hoddinott had cattle running on this country on some occasions but whether they had any lease or not I cannot state. There was no Pre-Right or homestead, so it would appear that someone had a lease for a short period then abandoned it. The early selectors, of whom there were not very many, came in the late seventies and selected the land along the river, while others, who came later, followed the creek. Most of this land is still held by the descendants of the original settlers. Names that I can remember are David Jones, David Williams and Thomas Hopkins, all Welshmen, who had known each other in Wales. They came out together to the diggings in the early days and were in the "dust up" at Eureka; if not actually mixed up with it they were in the locality. Then on the Wilderness Creek were Dick and Charlie Fitzgerald and their brother-in-law Alex Deru, who also came from Ballarat. Fred Koenig and Whitholz whose selection is now owned by Harry Bond, were farming at Berwick before they came to live in this district. A.B. Taylor and Geo. Barnes, whose properties are now owned by Claude Deppeler and Caldwell, were orchardists, and what splendid fruit they had, but strange to say I have never heard of their gardens being raided by small boys. Perhaps it was because the youths of this particular district were all well behaved. There is one old identity which must not be forgotten because he was well known on all the stations for miles around and later selected some country on the old Mirboo Road near the Mountain Hut. His name was Tom Toogood, born at Box Hill. In the early days he came to Morwell before the railway and worked on the stations, stock riding, fencing and later bullock driving. He had a very original way of expressing himself and, although he could not read or write, he was humorous without knowing it. On one occasion he had his leg broken, while working alone in the bush, he crawled to his horse and managed to climb onto its back, then supporting his broken leg with the stirrup strap he rode several miles home. When asked if it was awkward carrying his leg in this manner, he replied: "Awkward! You talk about carrying a billy of water!" This expression was particularly apt for all horsemen will agree that the most awkward thing to carry on horseback is a billy of water, except perhaps, a broken leg. Another thing I would like to mention about this man is the peculiar way he used to sign his name. He just printed two capital TT's and six small o's. After this he put an upward stroke on the last o and a downward stroke on the third.

(To Be Continued)

NICOL BROWN

Many readers will be familiar with the story of Nicol Brown, mentioned in "Harking Back" this month. Brown, in partnership with Billy Hillier, held Scrubby Forest run for some time. In 1859-60 he established the Drovers Rest Hotel at Shady Creek. His wife and small daughter died in 1860 and he remarried shortly after.

In 1868 he was convicted of murdering William Laughton ("Billy the Mail Man") whom he believed was having an affair with his (Brown's) wife. He was sentenced to death, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment (20 years) and he was released in 1887 under Queen Victoria's Amnesty.

After spending some years in Western Australia where it is said he struck it rich on the gold fields, he returned to live at Rosedale. He and his son later went to live near Trafalgar where he became a well-known identity. In 1903, aged 83, he married for the third time. He died in Melbourne in 1916 at the age of 96.

One of our members, researching police files at the Public Records Office, came upon the following report:

Police Department
Inspector's Office, Sale
24th April, 1869

Sir,
I have the honour to forward herewith the substance of a telegram forwarded yesterday referring to the antecedents of Convict Nicol Brown and have to express my regret that I accidentally omitted to forward these particulars earlier. Brown arrived in the Colony of New South Wales in 1844, free. He came to Gippsland from Maneros as stockman to a Mr Broomfield 22 years ago. He left him and took up a small run called Scrubby Forest with a man named Hillier and subsequently became a carrier. For some years he appeared to have led a token industrious life, and married his first wife. During the time he was a carrier he was remarkable for having an uncontrollable temper and for his cruelty to his working bullocks.

He opened a public house at Shady Creek in 1860 and his first wife died about six months subsequently leaving him two children. He married again in 1861 and gave way to periodical fits of drinking during which time he always kept loaded firearms and not unfrequently threatened the life of his wife and of others with whom he had differences and the principal cause of his enmity to the man whom he shot is believed to have been that about two years ago Brown tendered for a new mail(run) from his house to Stringers Creek and expected to get it as he had expended

NICOL BROWN - POLICE REPORT (cont)

various sums in clearing a track and putting temporary bridges along the line. The contract was however given to Robertson & Co who sent the deceased Wm Laughton to act as their mail man. Laughton was compelled to live at Brown's public house. Brown disliked this man, and once before the murder treated the deceased in such a violent manner that he had to apply to his employers for protection. Mr Robertson wrote to Brown threatening to write to the police to have his licence cancelled if he did not conduct himself better, he behaved better for some time after this but took to drinking again and treated his wife to much cruelty, not unfrequently driving her into the bush at night and always regretting it when sober. He was looked upon in business as being straightforward in his dealings and was possessed of considerable property. These particulars were chiefly obtained through Const. O'Connor 1385 who knew the prisoner well. The police have not been able to ascertain any foundation for the doubt, if any, entertained by Brown of his wife's fidelity. This woman did sometimes give way to drinking, and I believe acted towards her husband in an injudicious manner by continuing angry altercations with him, until he became so violent that she had to fly from the house until his anger cooled.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your most obt servant,

(signature unreadable)

Inspector

COULD OUR PIONEER DAIRY FARMERS EVER, IN THEIR WILDEST DREAMS, HAVE IMAGINED THIS ?!

LONDON — Dairy farmers may eventually have the luxury of sleeping in — thanks to robot milkmaids.

The robots are designed to milk between 60 and 100 cows a day, and the first is expected to be installed in Britain by Christmas.

The robot, developed by the Dutch government over eight years at a cost of \$A7 million, welcomes the cows, checks their health, connects them to the milking machine, takes the milk and ushers them out.

Cows will reportedly queue to be milked by the robot after three or four days of introductions.

Herald Sun Mon. Sept 13, 1993



R.H.S.V. HISTORY NEWS

No. 141 SEPTEMBER 1993

JOHN IRVING, OAM, FRHSV 1910-1993 A TRIBUTE TO A LEADING GIPPSLAND HISTORIAN

John Irving was born at Balloong, north of Yarram, on 12 May 1910. He attended the Darriman local school, Sale High School and Scotch College. In 1939 he married Ailsa Mactier. During the war he saw action in the Middle East with the 7th Division AIF and British Army, being mentioned in dispatches after El Alamein, and he later commanded AIF forces at the Tarakan landing. After the war he was, for a record 47 years, president of the Yarram sub-branch of the RSL, was made a Life Member of the League and, in 1991, awarded the OAM. He was prominent in local organisations including the Alberton School Council and the Yarram Agricultural Society. His interest in local history was profound. He was a founder long-time member and president of the Yarram & District Historical Society and was prominent in the founding and management of the Port Albert Maritime Museum. The valuable library at the Museum owes much to the many years of effort he put into collecting and copying early records. He gave great support to me as author of the shire history, *From these Beginnings*.

John was a member of the RHSV from 1960, and was elected a regional delegate to the State Committee of Historical Societies in 1978. He served as Committee President for several years. He was made a Fellow of the Society in 1986.

The RHSV extends to his family and friends their deepest sympathy and honours one of its finest and most dedicated historians.

John Adams (with thanks to Fergus Irving, *Yarram Standard News*).

EXCURSION, "TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT": A ST. KILDA ROAD WALK. 21 SEPTEMBER

Meet at 1.45 pm under the Witherby Tower (with clock) at Melbourne Grammar School. Enter from Domain Road or St Kilda Road. After a tour of the school we will walk (or tram if necessary) along St Kilda Road to compare/contrast Wesley College. There will be inspections or archives and a commentary by Weston Bate and resident experts. Cost \$4 (\$5 non-members). Bookings to RHSV no later than Wednesday 15 September. Parking available at Melbourne Grammar.

RESEARCHING FAMILY MILITARY HISTORY

The Military Historical Society of Australia (Vic branch) will hold a workshop on Sunday 12 September at the Orbon Quarry Pavilion (adjacent to the John Gardiner Secondary College) Cnr. Burgess Street and Auburn Road, Hawthorn, commencing at 9.30 am. There will be formal presentations on subjects ranging from pre-Federation to WWII Australian history, with Guide Kits to help those intending to pursue research in their own areas of interest, using resources not normally available elsewhere in Victoria.

Cost is \$20, inc. tea, coffee and light luncheon, but those intending to participate are asked to contact Lt. Col. Neil C. Smith AM on 555 5401 beforehand.

EXHIBITIONS

POLLY WOODSIDE MARITIME MUSEUM "MY FAMILY AND OTHER OLD SHIPS" SUNDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 1993

The Melbourne Maritime Museum and Shiplover's Society is arranging a special day at the *Polly Woodside*, 11 am - 5 pm. The theme is the immigrant/convict ship *Edwin Fox*, now undergoing restoration in New Zealand. Information on immigration shipping and tracing family history also provided, highlighting the records available.

The last Sunday of each month is also "Family Day" at the *Polly Woodside* Maritime Museum and special entertainment will be available to supplement the displays.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAUNCHING "S.S. GREAT BRITAIN" UNTIL END 1993

To celebrate the launching of this famous ship in 1843, and to illustrate the *SS Great Britain's* important role in immigration to Victoria, the *Polly Woodside* Maritime Museum will have on display photographs, prints and diary extracts. There will also be regular screenings of "The *Great Britain* Story".

BENDIGO CHINESE ASSOCIATION MUSEUM

Until end 1993. "Alien Edwardians: Chinese Immigrants and the Commonwealth Government 1901-1920", by the Australian Archives.

"The Salvation Army in China" exhibition is still running.

AN EXTRA EVENT IN OUR SPEAKERS PROGRAMME! TUESDAY 12 OCTOBER 1993

A special joint meeting has been arranged with the Australian Jewish Historical Society - Victoria Inc. and the Jewish Museum of Australia.

Speaker: Rabbi Ronald Lubofsky, Emeritus Rabbi of the St. Kilda Hebrew Congregation

Time: Kosher wine and cheese, 5.15; Lecture 5.45 pm.
The topic of Rabbi Lubofsky's lecture will be:

'The malicious, seditious and libellous Lord George Gordon, and the transportation of convicts to Botany Bay'.
Rabbi Lubofsky has discovered a unique copy of Lord George Gordon's dissertation on transportation to Botany Bay. Lord Gordon died on 1 November 1793 so it is appropriate that this lecture is to be held shortly before this bicentennial anniversary. Join us for this important extra-curricular lecture.

Cost: \$5.00 non-members of either the RHSV, its member societies or the Australian Jewish Historical Society - Victoria.

For further information, contact: Mrs. Beverley Davis, Honourary Secretary, Australian Jewish Historical Society - Victoria, (03) 882 2600.