

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY

Meetings: 3rd TUESDAY of the month at 7.30 pm

OLD MORWELL TOWN HALL

Sec/Editor-Elsie McMaster, 2 Harold St. Morwell 3840 Ph.051 341149

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Welcome to the September Newsletter

* At our July meeting, well-known local identity Denis Quinn gave a fascinating and inspiring talk on the Anzac tradition and on his own wartime experiences in the Royal Australian Navy. Unfortunately, Newsletter space does not allow us to do justice to Denis's presentation but a cassette recording of his talk is available for loan to those who were unable to be present at the meeting.

* The August meeting was cancelled to allow members to attend the Gippsland Salute commemorating the end of World War 2.

* Our Society has been given the care of a number of items from the old Yallourn Power Station, now being demolished. These are on display in our rooms at the Town Hall.

* President Eric went along to the LaTrobe Council offices on Tuesday last to receive a Special Grant cheque for \$500. This will prove very useful in furthering our cataloguing and filing project.

* The *Centre for Gippsland Studies* will present the *1995 Gippsland History Conference* at Briagolong on Saturday, 14 October. The theme will be *Mechanics Institutes of Gippsland*. These conferences are always enjoyable and informative and members are urged to attend if possible. **Details appear inside the Newsletter.**

* There are only three meetings left until the end of the year (can you believe it?) and we plan to hold our final meeting, in November, at a venue where we can meet for a meal then have the use of a private room afterwards. Several possibilities are being investigated. The next Newsletter will be issued a little early (in October instead of November) to advise members of the venue and allow for bookings.

NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 19.

Guest Speaker: Mr Jack O'Callaghan

Further Meetings: - Tuesday October 17

Guest Speaker: Mrs Connie Keat

- Tuesday November 21 (venue to be advised)

Guest Speaker: Mrs Gloria Auchterlonie

THE WAY IT WAS - Arthur Fish

(Continued - Arthur is at Penola, South Australia)

Ralph Norton and his cousin Maurice went out after rabbits one day, taking a rifle with them. A rabbit went into a hollow log and Maurice struck at it with the butt of the rifle, which then discharged. The bullet struck him in the heart and he died there instantly. This was a great shock to Ralph and I remember his white face and tears as he told me about it. Sudden death was not the common occurrence in those days as it has now become. Ralph was fourteen at the time and his cousin about the same age.

Well, that was Penola in the depression days, a place of "dear hearts and gentle people", and I often wondered how different my life might have turned out if I had stayed there. But it was not to be.

I had one experience that led to the cutting short of my stay in Penola. While I was still camped in the Showgrounds I was visited by three or four youngsters who pretended friendliness but suddenly made off with a wild rush - taking with them some of my stock-in-trade. They went over the fence in a hurry and I did not go after them but was left lamenting. However I did write to the school teacher asking him for help in tracking them down and he took the matter up and these boys were reprimanded. The upshot of this was that a couple of the larger boys came again to my camp one night while I was seated by the camp fire and sat themselves down, one on each side of me. Again they pretended friendliness and expressed their regret at what they had done. However, it was just pretence, as I caught a look that they passed one to the other as they closed in on me from either side. But my quick reaction saved the day for me. I grasped a wrist on either side - months of wire work, working with pliers, had made me very strong in the hands - and I did a sudden backflip. I went over backwards onto the ground and they came down on top of me, but as they did so their heads came together with a crack which must have made them see stars, and not the kind that were in the sky. I rolled clear and got to my feet, while they rather more slowly got to their feet and went away slowly. They did not come back and I had no more trouble with them at that time. But I had made enemies, which is a thing I never like doing.

Because of these happenings there came a day when I fell out of favour with my friend the blacksmith. Came one wet Sunday when I was visited by my friends the Marcus boys. Because they were grandsons of the old boy, there was no worry there, but a group of boys bent on mischief, and headed by the other two young ruffians, also sought entrance. However, we had to resist them as I knew that Mr Black would not want the whole mob mucking about in his shop. But they were determined to get in and we were just as determined to keep them out. In this business, one of the doors was damaged. Also in the argument, one of the windows was cracked. Mr Black was somewhat annoyed when he came into work the next morning. I suppose the sensible thing for me to have done would be to have told him the story, or even better still, left the telling to one of the Marcus boys, Bob or Dick. But I said nothing as he went on and it seemed to me that I had out-worn my welcome, so I made up my mind that I would move on.

Casterton Comrades

I rolled the knot one sunny morning and headed out along the road to Casterton, which town was down over the border, about forty miles distant. This meant a two day trip. I must have been a bit lazy or perhaps I started a bit late, as one time I would have rolled it

up in one long day. However it was dry and dusty work trudging along the red gravel road, rough and corrugated under foot and sparsely populated. I did try to flag down the mail man, with the intention of paying my way, but he swept by in a cloud of dust, no doubt thinking I was trying to bum a ride. So I faced it alone.

This was one of the few nights I had to spend under a tree - the weather fortunately was dry, and I slept well. In the early morning I was partly rewarded for my open-air stint by observing a mob of emu (or is the plural emus?) going down over the road. They were coming from the direction of South Australia and appeared to be headed off away into Victoria so I took this as an indication that even they had found South Australia to be an unfriendly state. At that moment of time I was myself in a rather hungry state so I boiled the billy and had some breakfast, then, strengthened by this, made my way into Casterton about lunchtime.

To be continued

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE FOR OLD ST. MARY'S

The old St. Mary's Church of England, now owned by the Commercial Rd. School, is to be restored and will become part of a new Historical Precinct in the school grounds. In a joint venture by the School Council and the LaTrobe Council, with additional funding and labour supplied by DEET, the old church will be refurbished - external walls are to be underpinned, damp courses installed, the building will be repainted in heritage colours and new floor coverings laid.

A plan has been drawn up for the landscaping of the surrounding area and the Historical Precinct will include the old Commercial Road School building which is still in use. The addition of paved areas, a rotunda, amphitheatre, lighting seating and fencing will make the area a historic focus for Morwell.

The cost of the project will be in excess of \$120 000, to which the School will contribute \$10 000 and LaTrobe Council \$15 000. There will be a public appeal organised by the school to raise funds for its contribution to the project.

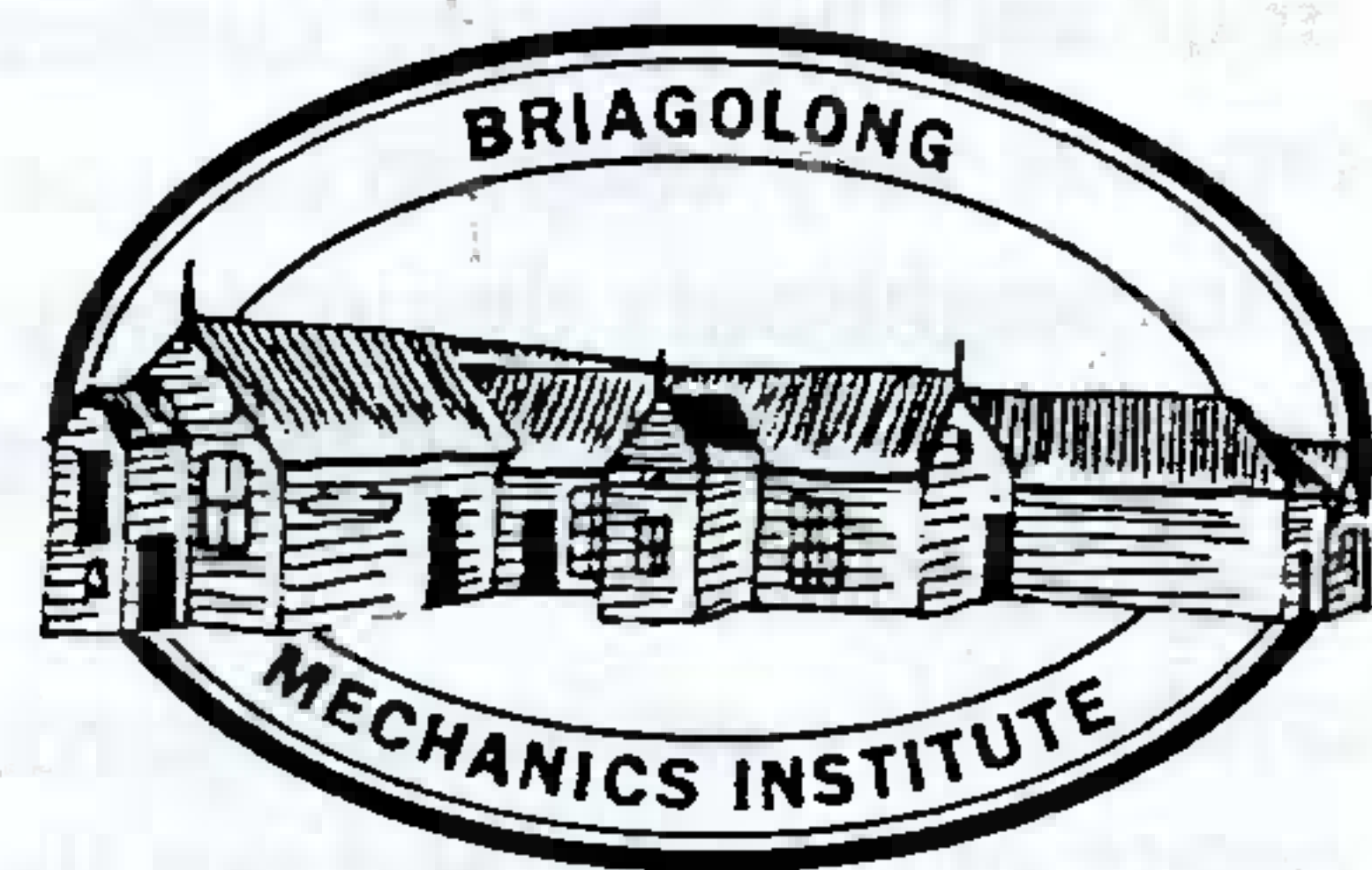
Morwell Historical Society has been invited to provide a representative on the Working Party for the project.

MECHANICS INSTITUTES OF GIPPSLAND

Centre for Gippsland Studies Annual History Conference

Saturday, 14 October, 1995, 9.30 - 4.00

Briagolong Mechanics Institute, Briagolong.



Topics covered by speakers will include the history of the mechanics institute movement in Victoria, architecture and conservation issues, case studies of Gippsland mechanics institutes and a visit to the Toongabbie Mechanics Institute. An index to the Gippsland Times, compiled by Sale historian, Peter Synan, will be launched at the conference and there will also be a display on Gippsland's mechanics institutes and a bookshop selling Gippsland publications.

The conference venue, the Briagolong Mechanics Institute, was built in 1874, and constantly extended to meet community needs. It still holds its original library.

For more details contact Meredith Fletcher, Centre for Gippsland Studies, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Churchill, Victoria 3842. Phone (051) 226356, fax (051) 226359.

THOMAS SANDERS

Written by the late Mr Murray Thompson in June 1976

The Tramway Road, which extends through Hazelwood North and South, began at Jeeralang Junction and ended at the Gippsland Railway Line at Maryvale. This road was surveyed at three chains wide, in contrast with most others which were just one chain in width.

A deposit of coal had been found at the foot of the Jeeralang hills and the extra width of the road was to enable a tramline to be laid should this coal ever be mined. When the operations began about 1920 in the Yallourn area it was considered that the coal here would not be used and two chains of the road was offered to landholders along the route for purchase, and was readily bought. Now the road extends at its original three chains width only as far as the north side of Churchill.

This road at the Jeeralang end forms the eastern boundary of a farm owned since 1919 by the Fox family. The new Midland Highway, which had to be re-routed owing to the Morwell open cut operations, now passes through Churchill, continues south for a time then turns west and on to Yinnar and Boolarra, cutting the farm diagonally in two.

This farm was first selected by Thomas Sanders when first opened for settlement in the 1870s. He was an Englishman of medium height, good natured, and was, as most men in those days, bearded. He had never married and when I first knew him was aged about 65.

For a number of years, Tom Sanders had not worked the land but had let the farm to various tenants. In 1904 my Father became the tenant on a three year lease. Our house was built near Billy's Creek, which formed part of the western boundary. In those days, homes were erected as close to a water supply as possible. It consisted of three rooms placed in a row, made of weatherboard walls, iron roof and had a verandah back and front. There was also a detached kitchen made of slab walls, shingle roof and slab flooring (probably the original dwelling).

We had a family of six so wanted more rooms and our landlord consented to erect two more rooms. He wanted to add the two rooms on the end to the original three, making five in a row, but he was persuaded to erect them across the end of the three, which made the house T-shaped.

Tom Sanders lived in a hut about five hundred yards away from our house, also at the west side but further away from the creek. This hut was built of slab walls with shingle roof and earthen floor and measured about 10'x12'. The chimney and door took the whole end which faced the east. The chimney was of various sized stones cemented together.

The lock on the door was put on upside down - usually you turn the handle to the right to open but this one you turned to the left. An intruder would presume the door was locked when it failed to respond to the right hand turn of the knob.

Just inside the door was hung a large meat safe, attached to the rafters, the legs about two feet off the floor. I don't know if it was so placed to keep ants out, or to dissuade anyone who broke into the hut. You certainly could not avoid contact with it in the dark. Without doubt the lock on the door and the hanging cupboard enabled him to sleep more soundly.

Tom was very adept in the use of the scythe, which he used to mow the rushes that grew on the flat. His neighbours thought this a futile way of controlling the growth of this pest, but he continued. In later years this method was adopted by many farmers, but of course they used mowing machines.

Tom had his own ideas regarding post and rail fencing. The normal method was to cut a hole in the centre of the post and put the ends of the rails (narrowed down) into this hole. They were all three rail fences that he made and his way was thus: three niches were cut on each side of the posts to hold the rails, the first three rails on the right side of the post, but the next three on the left side, then back to the right side with the next panel. The ends of both rails were secured to each other with a twitch of No.8 wire. It must have been his own style, for I never saw this method of making a rail fence anywhere else.

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Church was attended once a fortnight. It was held in the South Hazelwood School which stood just off Tramway Road where the Churchill shopping centre is now, almost opposite the Churchillian Cigar Symbol.

A young missionary from the Presbyterian Church would come to Morwell by the 9 o'clock train on Saturday night; next morning he would hire a horse and ride off, arriving at South Hazelwood at 11 o'clock. After preaching, he would have a meal at one of the homes, then ride on to Beales School at Jeeralang where a service was held at 2.30. His next meeting was at Jeeralang North at 7 o'clock, after which he rode back to Morwell to return to Melbourne on Monday morning. The round trip by this young chap was over forty miles, and for a man unused to horseback, was a great feat of endurance. The times were not the only tough things in those days!

I fear I have wandered from the main subject here. Tom Sanders had no vehicle or horse so he often came to church with us. We had a double seated buggy! He always placed a half crown in the collection plate. This was a silver coin, bigger than a twenty cent piece and worth (now) twenty-five cents. You can imagine how large it appeared amongst the threepenny and sixpenny bits which comprised the rest of the collection.

Tom was a musician. He played the flute, and spent many an evening at our house where my Mother played the organ and we held a general "sing-song". It was one of the simple ways with which we entertained ourselves on those old days.

Although he enjoyed the meals he often shared with us, when on his own he lived very frugally. He always ordered the same cut of beef - about six pounds of topside - which we brought out from Morwell for him each week. At times also he would order a twenty-five pound bag of flour. He would either roast or boil the meat and this was eaten with boiled white turnips - no potatoes, just turnips! He grew this vegetable all the year round.

With the flour he made what was known as damper: a scone-like mixture with no rising element. This was baked in a camp oven - a circular pot about eighteen inches in diameter, five inches deep and made of cast iron. The lid, also of cast iron, was raised in its centre but around the edge was a depression in which coals were placed when in use. The bottom portion was placed on the open fire and thus heat was applied to top and bottom. The damper was always well cooked because he used the brown crust to make what resembled weak tea. A few flakes of crust were placed in a cup and water added!

When the three year lease of the farm expired Tom offered to sell it to my Father and the sale was duly effected in 1907. Tom said he would like to try some other district or would perhaps go home to England. He continued to live in his hut and, while chopping down a tree for firewood, he somehow fell under it and was crushed to death. People wondered how an experienced bushman could have such an accident but he had a goitre in his throat and became breathless at times. Perhaps with the exertion of chopping he passed out. He had left a Will and a neighbour as executor and his relatives in England received the benefit of his estate.

When we first came to this farm I was ten years old and was advised by old Tom to poke a stick in the grass ahead as I walked to school to avoid walking on a snake. This never happened, but when we cleared about 20 acres in one corner of the land we killed 100 snakes from six inches long to six feet long. There were tiger, brown and black ones. The big one must have been old because his backbone stood out like the knuckles on the back of your hand.

We lived there for fifteen years and sold out in 1919. These are just some memories of a fine old man who passed on nearly seventy years ago.

Murray Thompson - June 1976

-AUSTRALIA REMEMBERS -

Some Nostalgic Memories of the War Years from the Herald and Sun Newspapers, as presented in 'Our Home Front 1939-1945'

* *'Herald'* October 12, 1940 - Many hand knitted socks received by the Australian Comforts Fund have to be "touched up" by the "sock censors"! Twenty women work each day at a long table in the Melbourne Town Hall, unpicking, measuring and re-knitting. Many knitters seem to have difficulty turning the heel, 'sidewhiskers' (ridges which appear at the side of the heel flap) must be undone and re-knitted, and many of the socks are too tight at the top. Another problem is the finishing off - instead of grafting the stitches, some knitters simply draw them all up into a bunch and sew off, leaving a most uncomfortable knot at the toe.

* *'Herald'* November 3, 1940. SubscrbrsFindNewLtwPhneBkHardtoRd

As a war measure the Post office has saved 300 tons of paper in the new telephone book but the slim volume is much harder to read. Condensation was achieved by smaller type, packing of four instead of three columns into each page and elimination of unnecessary details in subscribers' entries. All the puzzling abbreviations for suburbs have been included - with a few extra catches thrown in to make it harder and addresses are run together -

Smith J Mrs 90EsplanadeBtnBh X4134

Subscribers who live in crescents, parades, avenues, and roads or even on highways, have the fact recorded in abbreviations; but common streets are not mentioned. A comparison is:-

Stokes F P StonningtonPITk

* *'Sun'* Feb 27, 1941. Navy Bans Kisses - In Letters.

Kisses will be forbidden in future letters between R.A.N. sailors and their wives or girlfriends, a naval spokesman said today, commenting on a similar ban by the British Admiralty.

It is believed kisses could be used as a code for giving messages to the enemy.

* *'Sun'* July 22, 1941. A "Victory V" campaign will be launched throughout Australia on August 1. Shoppers will be asked to say the slogan before making purchases, theatre-goers will be asked to utter it before buying tickets and it may even be used as a greeting between friends. If the campaign organisers - the Army and Air Force - are successful in their efforts, 'Victory V' may become the equivalent of the Nazi's Heil Hitler.

'Herald' August 24, 1941. A gigantic 'Victory V' campaign reaching the furthest corners of Australia is being planned by the Post Office. It will include:

- huge neon signs on all general Post Offices.
- the greeting "V for Victory, number please" by telephone girls at all manual exchanges during non-rush hours.
- a new postmark incorporating the V sign and morse symbol ... _
- V and morse sign s on all telegraph forms
- V posters for display in all post offices and V stickers for windows and vans.
- Formal letters will end "Yours faithfully, V for Victory".