

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. 7 No. 4

1991

WELCOME TO THE APRIL NEWSLETTER.

IMPORTANT NOTICE!!! There will be NO APRIL MEETING. Due to the absence on holiday of several of the office bearers it has been decided to cancel the April meeting. The next meeting will be held on MAY 21st.

The Annual General Meeting of Morwell Historical Society was held on March 19th, 1991. The following office bearers were elected: President: Mr. L. Bond; Vice-President: Mr. E. Lubcke; Secretary: Mrs. E. McMaster; Treasurer: Mrs. D. Taylor; Committee: Mesdames C. McRoberts, J. Cafiso, D. Bartlett, Mr. P. Mooney.

A copy of the annual report and financial statement appears inside.

About fifteen members spent an enjoyable few hours at Scrubby Forest, home of Mrs. Carmen McKay, on Saturday March 16th. An outline of the history of this charming old property appears in this newsletter. In restoring the garden and repairing the house, Carmen has attempted to re-create the old-world atmosphere of the property's early days and she is making the garden (a memorial to her husband, Keith), available to local charities free of charge, for fundraising activities. The first garden party will be held on May 11th in aid of the L.V. Cancer Support Group and any offers of assistance would be appreciated.

The recent explosion in Church St. prompted the thought that Morwell has probably not seen an event which caused such damage since the bad fires in Commercial Rd. in 1912 so we reproduce here reports of those fires and of an earlier one in 1890.

COMING EVENTS

GENEALOGY LECTURES

1. "Tracing your British Ancestors" and "What to Do Before You Go to England" - Colonel Iain Swinnerton, President of the Federation of Family History Societies, will present these two lectures on Tuesday, 14th May, 1.00pm - 4.00 pm in the State Library Theatre, Melbourne. Admission \$7.00. Tickets may be purchased from Jenny Carter, P.O.Box 339, Blackburn 3130.

2. REGIONAL MEETING OF GIPPSLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETIES - Yarram/Port Albert.

Saturday 4th May

The meeting will start at 2pm and will be followed by a dinner to be held in connection with Port Albert 150th Anniversary celebrations. Jane Lennon will speak on "Reflections on a Gippsland Celebration". Cost of dinner will be \$20. Further details available from Elsie McMaster - 341149.

RHSV EXCURSION — TWO-DAY VISIT TO THE NORTH-EAST

3. TUESDAY, 30 APRIL - WEDNESDAY, 1 MAY

This RHSV excursion, under the leadership of Mr Dudley Sheppard FRHSV, starts and finishes at Wodonga Railway Station. Participants make their own way to Wodonga. This allows for greater flexibility in individual arrangements and the RHSV hopes that it will bring participation from members and affiliated society members from country Victoria, as well as from the Metropolitan area and from Wodonga itself.

The Tuesday afternoon tour leaves Wodonga Railway Station at noon. The Mylor's coach will wait for participants travelling by the 8.10 a.m. train from Spencer Street. The Albury district and the award-winning Jindera Museum will be visited and those who have booked overnight accommodation in Wodonga will be taken to their motel. On the Wednesday the coach will pick up from the motel, leaving at 9.00 a.m. for Yackandandah and Beechworth districts, returning to Wodonga Station to enable train travellers to catch the 4.13 p.m. train to Spencer Street.

The cost of the tour Wodonga/Wodonga is \$38 per person. This covers coach travel, admission to Museum, afternoon tea on Tuesday and lunch on Wednesday. Participants may join the tour on Tuesday afternoon only for \$13 and/or all day Wednesday for \$25. Priority will be given to two-day bookings.

The motel charge is \$32 per person on a twin share basis. A very limited number of single occupancy bookings will be available at \$ 15.20 surcharge. Cost includes continental breakfast, cooked breakfast \$ 4.00 extra. All coach bookings and motel reservations must be made through the RHSV on the form provided at the end of this newsletter. Information for those travelling to Wodonga by train —

The Inter-City Service, 'Melbourne, Seymour, Albury', leaves Spencer Street at 8.10 a.m. on Tuesday 30 April and is due at Wodonga at 11.40 a.m. Advance booking and seat reservations are necessary. Morning coffee is available on the train. The return journey may be made on Wednesday 1 May (the 4.13 p.m. from Wodonga is due at Spencer Street at 7.35 p.m.), or Thursday 2 May, or Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of the next week. This mid-week 'Super Saver' ticket now costs \$45.60 Melbourne-Wodonga return, or if a person holds a '60 Plus' card, \$22.80 return. These '60 Plus' concession cards are available on signature of a statement that the person is over 60 and not in full-time employment. Please check all train information with V/Line on (03) 619 5000.

Bookings, accompanied by remittance for tour and an additional \$10 deposit on accommodation, to be with the Director, RHSV, by 17 April.

RHSV FUTURE EXCURSIONS 1991

The tour of East Melbourne churches has been deferred until June. The revised programme is as follows:

15 May Tour of Police Museum, Russell Street, 2.30 p.m. Maximum number of participants — 30. Cost \$2.

Details have yet to be finalised for following tours. Watch future issues of **History News** for information.

25 June East Melbourne Ecclesiastical Tour.

23 July Percy Grainger Museum and History of Medicine Museum.

25 August Braeside Park, Dingley, and Springvale Heritage Centre.

22 Sept. 'A Geographer's View of Melbourne'. Stuart Duncan is leading this excursion.

10 Nov. Harcourt area.

RHSV COPYRIGHT SEMINAR — SUNDAY, 19 MAY

Another important seminar will be held on Sunday, 19 May at the Royal Mint. It will deal with all aspects of copyright and will include a series of expert speakers on this subject which is important for all societies. Particular attention will be devoted to the copyright of photographs.

The full day seminar (10 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.) will be chaired by Professor Weston Bate. The sessions will cover the legal aspects of copyright, copyright and photographic material, copyright and written material. The afternoon programme will conclude with a panel discussion covering facsimile reprints, newsletter reprints, photographs, negatives, oral history and other relevant matters. Further details of the programme will appear in May **History News**.

The fee for the seminar is \$7.50, which includes morning and afternoon tea. BYO lunch. Registration and fee should be sent to the RHSV, Royal Mint, 280 William Street. Telephone enquiries can be made to the RHSV on 670 1219.

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

ANNUAL REPORT - 1990 - 91

The past year has been an interesting and productive one for our Society. Meetings were held monthly and members appreciated the convenience and comfort of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church hall as a meeting place.

The Society has 40 members who, together with seven sister historical societies, receive a monthly newsletter aimed at cultivating interest in the Society's activities.

Members have assisted a number of students with their V.C.E. local history studies and there have been numerous requests from members of the public for information about families who once lived in the Morwell area.

Our President and Vice-President have been serving on the advisory committee of the Shire of Morwell History Project and also on the committee set up to assist in the Latrobe Regional Commission's Heritage Study.

Delegates attended the Regional Conference of Gippsland Historical Societies at Sale in May 1990 and the Gippsland History Conference, "Gippsland in Focus", at Monash University College, Churchill. Several members also took part in the series of history workshops organised by Shire Historian Mr. Stephen Legg.

Amongst the excursions enjoyed by members were the launch of "The Koenig Letters" and trips, in company with Traralgon, Moe and Rosedale Historical Societies, to Port Albert, the Old Royal Mint, the Yallourn navigational marker and Scrubby Forest Homestead.

A display of the Society's photographs and documents at the celebrations marking Morwell's rise to city status in September 1990, proved very popular.

The first edition of 1000 copies of "Glimpses of Our Past", compiled from the Society's photographic collection, sold out within the year and a reprint of a further 1000 copies was commissioned.

Altogether it has been an enjoyable and satisfying twelve months and we look forward to even bigger and better things in the coming year.

MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28TH. FEBRUARY. 1991

	<u>RECEIPTS</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE</u>
BALANCE 28/2/90 - BANK ACCOUNT	1,779.98	DONATION TO COLLINS ST. SCHOOL	20.00
SUBSCRIPTIONS GLIMPSSES OF THE PAST	240.00	REGN. OF COMM. GIPPS. HIST. SOCY. REGN. OF INC. ASSNS.	10.00 12.00
BOOK BOUNTY	5,302.45	SUB. ROYAL HIST. SOC. OF VIC.	50.00
BANK INTEREST	1,904.22	INSURANCE	57.00
TERM DEPOSITS - REDEEMED	9,000.00	GIPPS. IN FOCUS JNL. GIPPS. HERITAGE JNL. DONATION TO ST. ANDREWS CHURCH	12.00 14.00 100.00
		CORP. AFFAIRS COMM. ANNUAL FEE FILMS & PRINTING NEWSLETTERS & COPY PAPER REPRINTING BOOK	13.50 389.04 91.65 7,920.00
		LOAN REPAYMENT TERM DEPOSITS GOVT. BANK. TAXES PETTY CASH BALANCE 28.2.91 - BANK ACCOUNT	4,000.00 6,000.00 16.15 100.00 812.71
	<u>\$19,618.05</u>		<u>\$19,618.05</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 28.2.91

	<u>LIABILITIES</u>		<u>ASSETS</u>
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS	6,812.71	CASH AT C'WEALTH BANK	812.71
		TERM DEPOSITS	6,000.00
	<u>\$6,812.71</u>		<u>\$6,812.71</u>

AUDITED AND FOUND TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH RECORDS PROVIDED

John Evans John Evans. Hon. Auditor. 19.3.91.

SCRUBBY FOREST

By I.T.Maddern

Reprinted from Morwell Historical Society News, October and November 1963.

If you drive out of Yinnar towards Morwell for half a mile, turn off just before Middle Creek on the Driffield Road, and travel for less than half a mile along this road, you will see on your right hand side a gate bearing the name of Scrubby Forest. This was the entrance to Scrubby Forest Homestead, the headquarters of a cattle run, which extended for an indefinite distance south of Middle creek, and Billy's Creek (the boundary of Hazelwood) and which had Morwell River as its western boundary, and Billy's Creek as its eastern limit.

The homestead, therefore, was right in the north western corner of the run, which site gave it the advantage of being as close as possible to civilization. The homesteads of the three other stations, Hazelwood, Maryvale and Merton Rush, were fairly close together, strung along the Morwell River, from three to five miles further downstream from Scrubby Forest. In 1870, Samuel Vary took up a section of Merton Rush, and his residence on the western side of Morwell River, opposite Mcmillan's Hazelwood homestead, made the fourth dwelling.

Nicholas Brown and William Hillier, 1850 to 1869, were the first holders of Scrubby Forest run. They eventually had a disagreement and divided the station into two, with Brown taking the western half between Morwell River and Middle Creek, and Hillier taking the eastern half between Middle Creek and Billy's Creek. Billy's Creek was named after billy hillier, who built himself a hut there, and stockyards, and who was buried on its bank when he died, perhaps about 1870. For a time there were the remains of the hut, of a garden round the hut and some old furze bushes which Hillier had planted, it is said, as some sort of protection against the blacks, who had been a little troublesome in the early years.

Brown did not live on his section, or if he did, not for long. He had a hotel and coach stables at Shady Creek, grew horse feed at Scrubby Forest and carted it to Shady Creek to supply Cobb and Co's horses. Brown's wife was unfaithful to him. He shot the second man dead and was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for murder. When he was released, Nichol Brown returned to the district and took up his life from where this incident had interrupted it.

The O'Hara family, employed by Brown, occupied Scrubby Forest homestead for many years and a road close by is still called O'Hara's Road today. In these early days, there were plenty of dingoes in the area and also great mobs of kangaroos.

John Shields was in occupancy from 1869 to 1874, the period during which the squatters with their vast areas held on lease, gave place to the settlers

SCRUBBY FOREST (cont)

with their small settlement blocks. John Shields had come to Scrubby Forest from Rosedale. His two sons, Frank and Harry, were notable horsemen, able to handle the wildest mounts. Frank Shields, in 1872, was the first settler to carve his block out of Scrubby Forest. He was followed by James McDonald, 1873 and George Firmin in 1874.

Walter Firmin was 11 years old when his father, George Firmin, brought him to Scrubby Forest in August, 1874. Many years later, in 1933, when Walter firmin was 70 years old he sat down and recorded the story of his arrival.

George Firmin, with two of his sons (Walter and a brother) travelled in a bullock wagon from Narre Warren to Scrubby forest. They arrived at the Hazelwood side of middle Creek but were unable to get their wagon across because there was no vehicle bridge. They managed to patch up an old horse bridge there, and to get a horse across with sufficient supplies to camp the night. These three were the advance party to establish some sort of a home before the rest of the family could be brought.

They spent the night at "Old Scrubby House", about half a mile distant from the crossing, "the only clear spot on that side of the creek". The next morning the two boys were sent across the creek to round up the bullocks and were angrily intercepted by John McMillan of Hazelwood station, who complained that they were trespassing on his land. Here we have an example of the common antagonism of those days between the old squatter, jealous of his leased lands, and the pioneer settler, eagerly grasping the chance the new land laws had given him of taking up a selection.

The times were difficult for settlers in so remote a place as this, with rough tracks as the tenuous link between them and the markets of the city. Once, George Firmin sent the boys to Dandenong Market with a wagon load of pigs - and the journey took twelve days.

None of the country between Scrubby Forest and Port Albert had been occupied by either squatter or settler. O.P. Whitelaw blazed a bridle trail, still known as Whitelaw's Track, from Scrubby Forest to Port Albert in 1874, the year the Firmins arrived.

Rosedale was the nearest centre for supplies and Morwell Bridge was the nearest Post Office. This meant about a ten mile ride for the boys to collect the mail. Sometimes they made a little pocket money by collecting the mail for the other settlers too.

Shire Councils had insufficient revenue to tackle the huge but necessary task of building roads, so the settlers had to help themselves. For example, they made a road from Middle Creek to the Tarwin River, even building the bridges.

The construction of the main Gippsland railway line was of vital importance to the selectors. At last they could transport and sell their produce.

GREAT FIRE AT MORWELL

"Advertiser" Fri. March 7, 1890.

Probably one of the greatest disasters that ever happened in Morwell occurred on Tuesday night last. At about half past ten the cry of "Fire!" brought many residents to the scene of the disaster. It appears from what we are able to gather that the fire started in the butchery establishment of Messrs Howlett and Allen. Mr. Cleaver, the manager, was aroused from his slumbers by a lad in the employ of Easton's bakery and together they raised the alarm, with the result that, before many minutes had elapsed, a good crowd had gathered and were endeavouring to subdue the flames which had by this time made great headway.

Mr. B. Miller, who was about to retire for the night, had barely time to rescue his children before the flames burst through the walls and despite the splendid endeavours of the volunteers, the building, in a few minutes was a mass of flames. Attention was next turned to the Bank of Australasia which was beginning to scorch and to save this building, a constant supply of water had to be kept up. The wind, which was very slight, changed and blew towards the west. This made things lively for Mrs. Patton's shop which was soon blazing, only giving time to save her account books and, indeed, so rapid was the advance of the fire that the adjoining shop which was occupied by Mr. J. D. Robinson was soon in flames.

At this stage the fire was at its height and to a casual visitor the sight would have been magnificent but for the serious nature of the calamity. The road was strewn with the articles saved from the various shops of the tradespeople but the fire was not yet over and before long the saddlery department of Mr. R. Stephenson was in flames.

The only hope now left of saving the block was by demolishing Mr. F. Holmes jewellery establishment so, quickly clearing the shop of its valuables, ready hands were soon found to cut away the building which was successfully tilted out into the centre of the road, followed by some enthusiastic cheering. Next an attack was made on Messrs Adams and Maxwell's which was being licked by flames from Mr. C. A. Earle's office and the volunteers were kept actively engaged keeping up a supply of water on the building. This state of affairs continued for about a quarter of an hour before they were successful in throwing the burning portions of the office in on top of the fire, this being accomplished by levers and handled by skilled workmen.

All was now comparatively safe and the band of workmen had breathing time during which they refreshed themselves with frequent pulls at the lemonade bottle and also a few "revivers". All that now remained to be done was to keep watch until daylight to prevent any fresh outbreak. The list of insured and uninsured shops are as follows:

- Messrs J. B. Miller - Insured
- Howlett and Allen - (property owned by Mr. Theobald) - partly insured.
- J. D. Robinson - (bootmaker) - Uninsured

GREAT FIRE AT MORWELL (cont)

R.Stephenson - saddler - Insured
G.A.Earle - auctioneer - Uninsured

F.Holmes - Insured
Mrs.Patton - Uninsured

The fire, before it was subdued, extended about 70 yards and where, but a few hours before , stood a lively run of shops, nothing remained but a few charred verandah posts. It has been decided by the Morwell Minstrel Club to give an entertainment in aid of the distressed. Speaking aside, it is our candid opinion that there was never a body of men worked better than our residents on this first and, we trust, last occasion.

Members are reminded that ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1991 - 1992 ARE NOW DUE.

\$7.00 Single membership

\$10.00 Couple or Family

ALARMING FIRE IN MORWELL

Morwell "Advertiser" Friday Aug. 2, 1912

'Tis the unexpected that always happens and will be so to the end of the chapter. That the office of the 'Tiser, a butcher (Mr.Kleine), a saddler (Mr.Dusting), a fancy repository (Miss McWhae) should all be burnt out in the space of two brief hours is a disaster so great that many people can hardly realise that such a catastrophe has occurred in our small town. All the above businesses were situated, so to speak, under the same roof, and it only wanted one of the number to ignite for the whole lot to go in quick succession, which they did. As they were mainly constructed of wood and deal, well seasoned, they were all that could be desired for the flames to feed upon; the only exceptions were Kleine's shops which had brick fronts, and a solid brick wall at the west end which doubtless saved the adjoining stores of Messrs McDonald and Hone, and the fact that there was no wind.

About 2 am or a little later, Dr.McLean, who is always on the qui vive, was lying awake in his bed and, as his dwelling is only separated about a chain from the shops burnt, he saw the glare through the window and, on going outside, discovered the fire, which was then only in an infantile state and, with a little assistance and only a fair supply of water, could easily have been extinguished, but as neither was available at an opportune moment, Dr.McLean had no alternative but to see what help he could procure straight away. As he is quick at conceiving an idea, which no sooner presents itself to the mind than it is put into execution, our much esteemed disciple of Esculapeus made straight for Barry's hotel where he knew Mr.Barry had his bed on the balcony. At the first call, Barry was out of his bunk in a jiffy and aroused all the hands in the hotel, when he made straight for the scene of the conflagration. In the meantime Dr. McLean returned to the fire when he found that Mr.Hone, who was working in his bakehouse a few yards away, was walking up and down the street crying out "Fire!" Mr. Hinson in Station St. heard him and was quickly out. In the short interim, Mr. Fred Bruton and then Mr. Dayble came on the scene, also Mr.Gaw, our local Postmaster. In a few minutes time the boarders in Mrs.Lamont's Coffee Palace were aroused, and one of the lady boarders, Miss Myers, a miliner at Mr.J.Hall's Universal Emporium, with great presence of mind, ran to the Church of England bell and its shrill notes soon spread the alarm far and wide, and in the meantime, people were turning up in all directions and soon there was a goodly crowd present, all willing workers. When the fire was observed it was easy to locate it at Miss McWhae's shop and it soon spread to the buildings on either side. As nothing could be done to check its ravages, those present confined their efforts to saving the goods in the buildings while it was safe to enter them. In order to do this Mr.Kleine's shop was broken into and all portable articles removed as soon as possible. By dint of great exertion, all Mr.Dusting's saddlery stock was got out and some valuable papers from the office of our contemporary, but nothing was saved from Miss McWhae's, that being the first place to fall to the devouring elements. While it was safe to enter the buildings, the volunteers never spared themselves, but did all they could to remove what came within reach. Of course in the excitement many things of value were overlooked that might have been taken out. This was notably the case with a cask of skins in Mr.Kleine's shop, valued at £11. As might be expected, things taken out in such a hurry were damaged more or less. Mr.A.Green rendered great service by bringing his hand pump by means of which he was able to keep up a supply of water on the two wooden tenements, owned by Mr.Kleine, at the rear, and only some ten feet from the shops destroyed. This only goes to show that with concerted help and the aid of proper appliances, how adjacent buildings can be saved where a fire breaks out. If these means had only been available at the time Dr.McLean and Messrs F.Bruton, Barry, Dayble and a few others arrived on the scene, the "Advertiser" office might have been saved but with nothing to work with, all that can be done is to look on and watch the fire run its course.

The buildings destroyed were: The "Advertiser" building and plant; then came Miss McDonald's two wooden shops, adjoining which were Mr.Kleine's three brick shops known to old pioneers as Cavanagh and Harris' Buildings but they were rebuilt since occupied by that firm.

Although the property destroyed was covered by insurance, still the owners will be considerable losers in a monetary sense, to say nothing of the inconvenience and loss resulting from the stoppage of business and the time that must elapse before they get their places going again. Great credit is due to all who did what they could to save property, especially Dr.McLean, F.Bruton, A.Green, Dayble, Barry, Gaw, Keegan and others.

DISASTROUS FIRE IN MORWELL

Morwell "Advertiser" Friday Jan. 3 1913

The most disastrous fire that has occurred in Morwell broke out shortly after 1 o'clock on Tuesday morning last in the terrace of fine two-storied brick buildings in the main street and for a considerable time there was every reason to believe that practically the whole town would be reduced to ashes; but fortunately, by the splendid efforts of a hastily formed but splendidly organised "bucket brigade" and a parapet wall, the damage was confined to three buildings and their contents.

As in the case of the last fire, the prolonged whistling of the midnight goods train that happened to arrive in the station yard at the time the fire started, disturbed people from their peaceful slumbers. In a moment everyone realised that there was another fire and a hasty toilet was made. Soon there was a hue and cry of fire; the Presbyterian church bell started ringing (by Mr. Clayton) and there was a general stampede in the direction of the main street where smoke and flames were seen issuing in increasing volume.

The first person to get disturbed by the fire was Mrs. Hall (Mrs. J. W. Bryden's mother) who, with her husband, had been spending a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Bryden. Mrs. Hall woke to the fact that the room was full of smoke. She quickly called Mr. and Mrs. Bryden who, at the time were sound asleep, enveloped in smoke, in an upstairs room. Mr. Hall and a young man, a recent arrival from Scotland, were also asleep in an adjoining room. They all realised there was not a moment to lose and grabbing a wrap or two they hurried downstairs in night attire. There is no doubt that but for the timely warning given by Mrs. Hall more than one person would in all probability have been suffocated by smoke. Mr. Bryden noticed that Mr. F. Rogers' saddlery shop which was the end building on the west side of the terrace, next to Mr. J. Rintoull's premises and Mr. Lowe's workshop on one side, and adjoining Bryden's shop on the other, was full of fire. He quickly informed Mr. Steve Cooper who was working in the bakehouse close by. Steve ran to the front with a bucket of water. The door of Rogers' shop being locked, Steve smashed in a window but immediately he did so he was almost "licked up" by a tongue of flame that shot out through the opening and enveloped him and he was forced to retreat singed and burned. Miss Rintoull was about the next to notice the outbreak and in a surprisingly short time the whole town was astir.

As the crowd gathered in the street the hopelessness of the situation was fully realised. People looked at one another and said "What can be done?" to which the general reply was "Nothing, but remove the things!" So people set to work to remove goods and chattels from every shop up to Haiz's where there was a substantial break between that place and the Bank of Australasia. At the latter place the windows were protected by sheets of iron and spraying pumps attached to tanks so as to save the bank and prevent the fire spreading to Barry's Hotel and adjoining places to J. Hall's establishment which had a strong wind sprung up, looked not only possible but very probable.

It was impossible to save anything out of Rogers' shop, the Masonic Lodge room above or Mr. Trood's apartments at the rear. Neither could anything be rescued from Bryden's shop, upon which, unfortunately, there was not a penny insurance. A good deal was, however, got out of Cooper's and all the adjoining shops and railway reserve being strewn with a miscellaneous collection of all sorts of things.

When everything in the way of removal of goods had been accomplished the fire was still burning fiercely and increasing in volume. Old residents remembered the scene a little over 20 years ago when the whole block was previously destroyed by fire and they were loath to see a repetition of things.

Everybody realised the great need for a water supply and a Fire Brigade but as unfortunately there is neither in the town it was suggested that the Traralgon Fire Brigade be wired for, and that course was adopted. It was recognised that it would be at least an hour before they could be expected to arrive with an engine and it was also doubtful whether, upon arrival, they could get the fire under control with the water that was available. Everyone felt they could not stand still and see such a fine lot of buildings destroyed without an effort being made. It only needed someone to suggest something practical and there was an army of willing workers ready to carry out commands. Mr. Wm Tulloch pointed out that between Cooper's and Brown's shops there was a thick parapet wall, also a passage way. It was the only parapet wall in the terrace. Mr. Tulloch believed that, with a fair supply of water, the fire could be checked when it reached the said wall. If it could not be stopped there it would go to the end of the terrace. Mr. D. Dunbar, Mr. Hoyle and others were of the same opinion and it was resolved

DISASTROUS FIRE IN MORWELL (cont).

to make the effort. Ladders were procured and a "bucket brigade" hastily formed. Percy Norman and Col Davey were the first to scale the wall to make investigation and, amid showers of sparks and intense heat, they announced that, if supplied with buckets of water, they could beat the fire. Then the work of the brigade began and how the lads worked! They put the renowned Trojans completely in the shade. Percy Norman is a "fireman" (on railway engines) but he proved a fireman in every sense of the word in fighting the flames and he was well backed up by Col Davey on top of the wall. It is surprising how, in face of heat and flames, they "stuck to their guns" and threw bucket after bucket of water on the leaping, devouring and merciless flames. On the top ladder were Percy Hopkins and Percy Kelly whilst Bill Miller, Rowell Bros., P. James, J. Bryden, G. Phillips, H. Cooper and a host of others formed a chain and supplied water from an underground tank at rear of Brown's chemist shop. From the front Messrs R. Noy and Steve Cooper kept a continuous stream of water going from two spraying pumps which proved very effective, especially when the front window of Cooper's shop gave way and great tongues of flame shot out and threatened to set things going on the opposite side of the parapet wall. Jack Lowe, Stan McKay, Jack and Bill Rintoull and others battled hard on the west side and so the fight proceeded; many working hard, some giving advice and not a few watching the proceedings with anxiety.

After about half an hour's strenuous fighting it was recognised that the fire was beaten and word was sent to Traralgon telling the Fire Brigade, which was about to start, not to come.

The front portion of buildings having been brought well under control, energies were directed to the rear, where the fire was making some headway. It, however, did not take long to check its progress there and just as daylight appeared the battle ceased and the army of workers and onlookers soon after retreated to their respective homes, realising that, although considerable damage had been done, things might have been worse.

The origin of the fire is unknown. Mr. Rogers was working in his shop until about 9.30 on Monday night and left everything apparently quite safe.

(There follows some details of the insurance held by the various shopkeepers)

Mr. J. Rintoull, blacksmith, also suffered loss in consequence of a brick wall falling on his machinery shed, which it completely wrecked. Sets of harrows and other implements were also damaged. Mr. J. Lowe was another to suffer loss owing to wall falling on his workshop, which it demolished, damaging tools etc.

A splendid photo of the ruins was taken by Mr. Green shortly after daylight and before the crowd had dispersed.

It is to be hoped that no time will be lost in pushing on with the water supply scheme and that efforts will be made to form a fire brigade.

GIPPSLAND ROUNDUP

Vol 6 No 1, 1991

Newsletter of the Centre for Gippsland Studies
Monash University College Gippsland
Switchback Road, Churchill, 3842
Contact Meredith Fletcher: (051) 226356

1991 has opened with much of Gippsland's attention focussed on Port Albert, which is celebrating its sesquicentenary. Large crowds have enjoyed the feast of entertainment organised for the occasion: beach and recreational activities, historical re-enactments, dinners and sailing ships. A special exhibition which has been mounted at the Port Albert Maritime Museum, displays many of the important documents in the museum's collection.

Here at the Centre we are still working on the project to index our picture collection. The picture collection is expanding, especially with the addition of photographs from the Carlyon Collection. As *Roundup* readers will know, the Carlyon Collection consists of negatives and scripts prepared for a television series 'Gippsland's Path of Time', screened in the early 60s. We have just had printed an interesting series of photographs on Lett's Beach (Programme No. 38: 'The Changing Face of Gippsland') These photographs were copied from the albums of the Lett and Wilson families who farmed at Lett's Beach, and document changes to the landscape of what is now Golden Beach and Dutson Downs.

Another project the CGS is involved with is the production of curriculum material for primary schools. With the help of John Pearson, a lecturer in the School of Education, Monash Gippsland, and Sue Allen, a teacher at the Bundalaguah Primary School, the CGS is publishing a kit about school gardens which will give children experience in using primary sources, assessing change, plus a range of practical activities. Most of the resource material consists of articles written by Gippsland children in the 1920s, originally published in *The Gap*, *Valley* and *Echoes*. The kit is being trialled at the moment in a small school 'somewhere in Gippsland', and I hope the children are enjoying the activities.

Steve Murphy, a member of the CGS Advisory Board, is presently compiling a list of films that contain Gippsland content. This should be a valuable resource, and we have included a sample of Steve's work in this issue of *Roundup*. We welcome any further information from *Roundup* readers of film relating to Gippsland.