

Morwell Historical Society Inc.

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c. 1903

The "Morwell Post" February 2010

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Items for publication in the "Post" are always welcome; please forward your contributions to either Elsie or myself. S. H.
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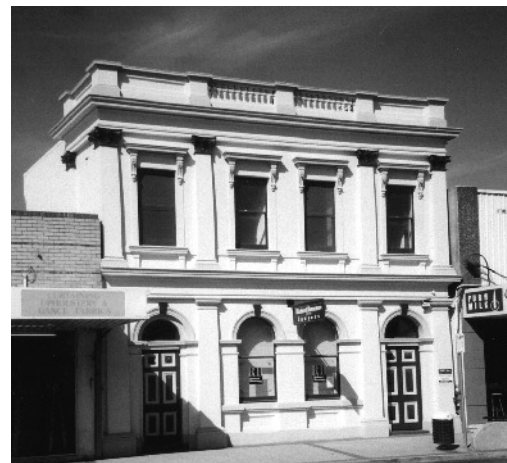
Heritage Activity Weekend:

On Sunday 1st November 2009 the Morwell Historical Society conducted another "Historic Town Walk". We had a good turnout, the weather was not as hot as on the previous day (Cemetery Walk). The walk was led by your newsletter editor (who had to cope with an amount of good-natured heckling from certain members of the Foster Historical Society - you know who you are!).

We strolled around the town looking at the various sites of historical significance that still survive, we learnt a lot and had some fun along the way. My thanks to all those members who helped make the day a great success. S. H.

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Ex Colonial Bank Commercial Road.

Morwell Advertiser

24th. July 1947

Church of England Community Centre

To be Opened by Bishop of Gippsland

On Sunday next, 27th July, at 2.30 p.m. the Morwell Church Community Centre of the Church of England will be dedicated and officially opened by the Bishop of Gippsland (Right Rev. D. B. Blackwood). The new centre is located at the corner of Princes Highway and Latrobe Rd. The service will be conducted by the Bishop and the singing will be led by the choir of St. John's, Yallourn. Lieut.-Colonel G. Bowden, M.P., and the Hon. H. J. Hyland, M.L.A., have accepted invitations to attend and cordial invitations are extended also to representatives of local organisations and to citizens to be present.

District C. of E. History

The first Church of England service in the district was held in 1878 in the Maryvale State School, about one mile east of Morwell. Eight years later saw the opening of St. Mary's Church and the Rectory was built in the following year. Unforeseen difficulties prevented the many attempts over the years to erect a parish hall, but a farsighted decision taken in 1930 by the Church authorities to purchase the site on which the new centre now stands has made easier the work that has just been brought to fruition. In the year following the purchase the new rectory was built. The gradual development of the town commencing with the inception of the brown coal project at Yallourn in 1920, a development intensified in more recent years, made evident the urgent need of a parish hall to cover the requirements of, and remove the handicaps from the many organisations associated with the development of the Church of England in the Morwell district. Following a conference of parishioners about two years ago, and as the result of decisions then made, the sum of £1,000 was raised in direct giving by parishioners and friends within a space of five weeks. Much of the success of the appeal was due to work and enthusiasm of the organiser, Mr. B. Staunton.

This success prompted the committee to proceed with plans for the proposed new centre, but the difficulty of obtaining materials and the high costs generally for new constructions prevented the work from proceeding, and it looked as though the plan might have to be shelved for several years.

The New Buildings and Surroundings

About this time certain R.A.A.F. buildings at Sale were being offered for disposal and the local church committee inspected several and was eventually able to purchase two, formerly used for welfare work. A contract was let for their removal and re-erection, a work that has now been completed with a minimum of

delay, due to the splendid co-operation of the business and tradespeople of the district.

In this connection the committee desires to express its appreciation of the help given, with special thanks to Messrs J. Lovell, J. R. Clarke, J. R. Martin, S. Winchester, R. Hamilton and the many others associated with the construction of the centre.

The interior of the building is lined with masonite and plaster and consists of a main social hall of approx. 2,000 sq. ft., a large meeting room, rooms for Sunday School purposes and a kindergarten. Provision has also been made for a youth library. The kitchen (22 x 30) will be equipped with an electric urn, sink heater, copper and, later, an electric stove. The exterior is at present of galvanised iron, which, when painted, will be of pleasing appearance. Eventually the iron will be replaced by brick.

As the buildings will serve for the whole of the district, they will be known as the Morwell Church Community Centre and will in time provide appropriate facilities for children, youth and adults.

A landscape garden plan has been prepared for the Committee by Mr. J. Lawson, curator for the State Electricity Commission at Yallourn, and provision is also made for tennis and basket ball courts and a children's playground.

The complete venture will require much in the way of equipment, and furniture and to this end an appeal is to be made for a further sum of £300.

Morwell Advertiser

31th. July 1947

The Church of England Community Centre

Dedicated by Bishop of Gippsland

On Sunday last the dedication service for the new Parish Hall and Community Centre was conducted by the Right Rev. Dr. D. B. Blackwood, and the official opening performed by Mr. Percy Gilbert, whose association with the Morwell Parish covers three-quarters of a century. Included in the gathering which overflowed from the main hall to other rooms in the centre and to outdoors, were representatives of many other religious denominations and public organisations.

During the special service for the dedication of the buildings, in which St. John's (Yallourn) Parish Choir assisted, the Bishop of Gippsland (Right Rev. Dr. D. B. Blackwood) said it was a great day in the life of the Parish of St. Mary's, a culmination of many years of hope, prayer and striving. It was his first episcopal act in the six years of his episcopate to dedicate such a fine building. He realised

the need for it and its great benefit as a Sunday School Centre and a Parish Hall. It represented the first community centre in the Diocese.

Farsighted Provision of Funds

He was glad that Archdeacon Benn was there, since it was through his efforts and those of his officers that the site had been secured, a far-seeing provision for greater things to come, even perhaps to the construction some day of a cathedral in Morwell. He paid a tribute to the Rev. P. J. Ackland for his work in providing the nucleus of the fund and to the Rural Dean for carrying on the good work.

These beautiful buildings, continued the Bishop, could not have been had but for the interest free loan of £500 from the Church of Gippsland Extension Fund, of £6,000, the whole of which had been earmarked for extending the work of the diocese.

Youth Welfare Work

The call to-day was to provide for the children, the State's greatest asset. The State is doing much for youth, but much still remains to be done. Christ discovered the children and called them to him, and it was the function of the church to continue and supplement this work. At the present time, at Oslo, in Norway, a world-wide youth convention was being held with 25 Australian representatives, including nine from the Church of England and one from the Diocese of Gippsland. These things combined with other activities of the church, such as a mission at present being conducted among Melbourne University students, are part of the great plan of the church for the welfare of Youth.

Function of New Centre

The new hall would be the instrument for making the community Christian and re-capturing the spirit of Christianity of the first century and the centre would be any expression of that. Young people would learn to rule themselves in such environment, which is lacking in State work for youth where no provision is made for the work of god. They would have a wonderful blessing from the building if its uses were directed into such channels.

Practical Help Recognised

The Rev. R. W. G. Phillips, refereed to the attendance that had been checked in at 300, and congratulated all on their good judgment in deciding to be present. He thanked the Bishop who had advised that the huts were available, for inspiring the movement, his political friends, Colonel Bowden, Mr. W. MacAulay and Mr. Hyland, for discovering the owners and the Morwell business and trades people for their grand service. All who had helped realised they were giving of their best in community service.

The dreadful lack of housing conditions that prevailed at the present time would, to some degree, be remedied by the provision of this community home. He believed the council would help in the provision of good footpaths.

While the building might not look so good outside, it would be good to be in it. Exterior finish would come in due course, and for this and other work to be done, he desired the co-operation of all, and invited anyone with a gift or talent to freely offer it.

Future Finance

The position had now arrived where the next £1,000, of which £500 would be devoted to furnishing and other interior requirements, would be required. He trusted that all would subscribe in some way. In this connection it was not proposed to refer to any particular name, and he had not, in fact, made any list of subscribers and helpers.

Opening Ceremony

He proposed to ask Mr. Percy Gilbert, who had celebrated his 80th birthday the previous day to perform the ceremony of officially opening the centre. Mr. Gilbert, as a boy, had attended a service in Morwell conducted under the verandah of his father's shop in Commercial Road and also at the laying, 67 years ago, of the foundation stone of St. Mary's.

After paying a tribute to the pioneers, who had handed down such a glorious heritage, Mr. Phillips requested the Bishop to accompany Mr. Gilbert at the ceremony of officially declaring the hall open.

On returning with Mr. Gilbert from the opening ceremony, the Bishop said Morwell appeared to be destined to be the nerve centre of Gippsland and might well, some day, be the seat of a bishop. He recommended the parishioners to get behind their rector and officers and help. He visualised the centre as eventually becoming one of the largest Sunday Schools in the diocese.

The Laity's Effort

Mr. H. Huguenin, for the church-wardens referred to the purchase, in association with Archdeacon Benn, 16 years ago, of the land on which the hall stood and the building of the rectory as a stepping stone to the present achievement. Then came the depression and little was done. Then followed Revs. T. D. Beyer and P. J. Ackland, the latter of whom conceived the idea of a building, and left it with a credit of 200. The Bishop had made a grant of £500, and the Rev. Phillips' challenge to raise £1,000 was answered in five weeks. He agreed with the Bishop that Morwell would, one day, have a "Bishop's Court".

Faith in Morwell's Future

Archdeacon Benn, on behalf of all past clergy, said that a great deal of his interest and affection centred in Morwell, would not have allowed him to stay away. His father and mother, coming to Morwell in 1892 from South Gippsland, were married there by the Rev. (later Dean) Langley, who came from Rosedale for that special purpose.

He believed the days of the pioneers were not over as the work on which they were at present engaged was a pioneering venture. He congratulated all and said he would not be content until he saw a cathedral in Morwell.

He was pleased that buildings, which had done service for the welfare of R.A.A.F should be transferred to the service of the community in Morwell. The right angle shape of the buildings was symbolic of the right angle on life.

Saving of Time in Youth Work

Colonel Bowden, M.P., said he was pleased to be associated in person with the enterprise, and to have been, in small measure, associated with the early negotiations for the purpose. In these days of transition it was imperative to keep both feet firmly planted on the ground. In this regard he had been impressed by the references of previous speakers to adopting the new construction to the needs of youth where training would prevail. Loss of time may not be serious in the life of an adult, but in the period of training of the child's mind the loss was serious. He congratulated the promoters for "taking the bull by the horns" and saving the period during which the minds of children were moulded, and assured them they would be well repaid for their efforts.

Cr. M. F. Walker, shire president, speaking for the shire, expressed his pleasure at the number of representatives of other denominations who were present to do honour to the Church of England venture. The shire was fortunate to have such a band of workers as the Church of England possessed. He regarded the building as having been constructed for the purpose of peace and congratulated the congregation on its foresight in establishing the present centre before thinking of a cathedral.

The collection taken up realised £145. The gathering, which included visitors over the area of Sale to Trafalgar, were entertained at afternoon tea by the members of St. Mary's Ladies' Guild, and afforded an opportunity for inspection of the new centre.

Apologies were received from the Hon. W. MacAulay, M.L.C., and Hon H. J. Hyland, M.L.A.

Morwell Advertiser

18th. September 1947

Morwell Brown Coal Programme

RAILWAY AND FACTORY FIRST

At the termination of a Cabinet meeting on Monday last, the Premier (Mr. Cain) announced that approval has been given to the principles of the bill to be introduced to the next session of Parliament, enabling the State Electricity to proceed with the open cut and briquetting undertakings at Morwell.

Some further light on land acquisition was conveyed by the Premier when he stated that the purchase of 7,000 acres by the S.E.C. would be authorized. Although Cabinet had not as yet decided the rates of compensation to be paid farmers, the Premier confirmed his statement at Morwell on 8th. August last, that the take-over would not be based on 1918 values, but would be made in keeping with recent land values.

The acquisition of the 7,000 acres, Mr. Cain said, would not entail immediate possession by the S.E.C. but would be possessed from time to time to meet the Commission's expanding needs.

The Premier indicated that the programme provided for the construction of a branch railway and one of the briquetting plants within eighteen months to two years. After this period work of removal of overburden from the open cut would be commenced.

Altogether the bill will provide £14,500,000 to the S.E.C. to implement plans for an open cut and two briquetting factories at Morwell as the first stage to boost power output from brown coal.



Morwell Briquette and Power early 1960's

March 1991



The Changing Face of Morwell

(Corner of Buckley and Church)

April 2005



JEERALANG JUNCTION

(By Murray Thompson)

Years ago an area of land was reserved at Jeeralang Junction for a township and duly surveyed into building allotments. This was possibly arranged in anticipation of the opening up of the coal deposits which are at the foot of the hills.

The mining of this coal never eventuated and no building was erected on the site until 1904 when Jim McNamara built a four roomed house with large room attached, which he opened as a general store, on one of the blocks just over the road from where the Post Office now stands. He had in stock the usual grocery lines and it was rumoured that you could obtain a “drop of the doings” from under the counter also.

Jim eventually sold out and became the licensee of an hotel in Argyle Street, Traralgon.

The new owner of the store was Jack Howard who owned a farm nearby. While he was busy with farm work, the store was attended by his mother. However, the shop was patronised more on an emergency basis than a regular one, and not very profitable. The cream wagon plied regularly between the hills and Morwell, so most of the residents traded in the town, the carriers doing the deliveries when returning the empty cream cans to the roadside. The store was finally closed down about 1909.

Some time later, the house and shop were sold to Dave Hendry who was a butcher.

About 1910 one of the blocks was purchased, a building erected and used as a school, also as a hall. It was known as the “Junction” school. The first teacher was Miss Frances O’Flynn, who took a great interest not only in the children but also in the social life of the area. She was responsible for starting a debating club named the “Lyre Bird Debating Society”. There was a membership of over twenty, many an evening being spent in arguments, mock elections and even a play was staged on one occasion. Did I hear someone say, “Big Deal!”? We had to make our own entertainment in those old days so we enjoyed these meetings.

After some years a new school was opened, situated between the original South Hazelwood School and the one at the Junction, so they were both closed and all the children attended the new one. The Junction school building was still used as a hall where dances were held regularly but, after some years, it was unused and removed in about 1920.

It was about 1910 that Dave Hendry and his wife came to live at the Junction. They also bought 90 acres of timbered land nearby and a few head of cattle were grazed thereon, but his main interest was in butchering. He built a slaughter house down towards Billy’s Creek and opened the shop for business. Dave also commenced a meat delivery round, using what was described as a cutting cart. This was a two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle with a box type body in which the meat was packed. The driver sat on top of the body. The tailboard was made of a solid piece of wood, hinged at the bottom, and when let down was supported by a chain at either side. This board was used as a chopping block and for cutting up the meat to the customers’ liking. A hook was also fixed to the framework and was used to hold the spring balance scales.

One of his rounds was about four and a half miles up the Jeeralang Road as far as Beales Hill. The roads in winter were wet and muddy with pot holes. When these conditions prevailed an extra horse was harnessed to the corner of the vehicle. The other round was through North and South Hazelwood and took place twice each week.

Dave was of medium height and wore a well-trimmed white beard which made him seem much older than he was. He walked with a sweeping stride, his toes pointing outwards, and some would refer to him as old "Ten To Two" (behind his back of course). His speech was sometimes a bit blue, as was customary at that time, but his favourite expletive was "my b...y oath". Not inappropriate, really, as he did his own slaughtering.

Dave was a handy man and was called upon often to assist with certain jobs. On one occasion he was helping a neighbour to build a sheep dip, made partly of bricks and cement. He was placing bricks in the bottom of the trench when he asked Paddy Walsh (who was assisting him) to hand him a board so that he would not tread on any individual brick. Paddy handed him the plank, saying "Dave, you could not stand on any individual brick however much you tried!"

Mr. and Mrs. Hendry were well respected and popular, and were missed when they decided, in 1920, to sell out and return to Melbourne. With their leaving went the last prospect of a township at the Junction as no-one attempted to start another business there.

A new road had been made into the hills, on a much easier gradient than the original one. This cut off a strip of Jack Howard's farm and later, when he sold the rest of it, he built a house on the cut off portion. On these premises a post office and telephone exchange was established. Mrs. Howard became the Post Mistress and was a very courteous official.

Quite a lot of Jack's time was taken up in patrolling the telephone lines, locating faults, removing fallen limbs and keeping the phones usable. I don't know if he was paid for his time but he certainly did well for the subscribers. Jack later became the contractor for the Jeeralang mail round. Besides mail, Jack carried passengers at times and was a boon to the hill people as he did much of their shopping. Papers, bread, groceries were bought for them in Morwell and delivered to their gates three days a week. Later on, the post office was taken on by the Willaton family when the Howards retired to Dandenong.

The Junction Post Office was closed when Churchill became established and the postal business is now installed in that modern town.

(This information was originally published by the Traralgon Historical Society in their newsletter:

Vol. 9 No. 1 dated 1978.)

Many thanks to Bruce McMaster for supplying me with this information. S.H.

THE GREAT MORWELL FIRE OF 1944

(By I. T. Maddern)

The Summer of 1943-1944 was another hot, dry season, typical of our worst fire-danger periods, and indeed, in the matter of lives that were lost, the fires of January and February, 1944, must be counted as the most tragic Victoria has suffered.

In January, 1944, fire swept through the Western District of Victoria, causing 35 deaths. The later fires, and particularly the one that devastated the Morwell-Yallourn area, on the 14th February, 1944, increased the death toll to well over 50 persons.

The Great Morwell Fire started at Hernes Oak early in the afternoon of the 14th February. It is said that an old tree stump which was being burnt a day or two earlier had been left smouldering, and when a gale force wind sprang up, sparks from this stump were carried far into dry, inflammable grass and scrub. In a short time, the fire seemed to have leapt for miles and the whole countryside was ablaze.

It was wartime and in Latrobe Road beyond the town, was a flax mill, where flax, an important war-time commodity, was stacked waiting to be processed. Flax is an oily substance and very inflammable. The water supply which would have helped to lessen the destruction in Morwell, was diverted to save the flax mill, but the mill did not escape, and the flying, burning flax set further fires blazing.

The thirteen people who lost their lives that day have been commemorated by memorial gates at the Hazelwood Cemetery, and a plate on the gate pillar lists their names. They were:

T. Cook;	J. A. Robinson;
Mrs. E. Dyer;	C. Tanner;
J. Flitton;	R. Thomas;
Miss G. Hare;	A. Thompson;
P. Jones;	F. Walker;
Mrs. V. Jones;	Mrs. A. Woolacott;
W. McNair.	

Reports in the Melbourne papers of the following day, 15/2/1944, stated that over 100 houses had been burnt down (including 19 at Hernes Oak and 10 at Morwell), that patients had been removed from the Morwell Hospital to the Town Hall as a safety precaution, and that the Yallourn Open Cut was on fire for a distance of a mile.

The fire at the Yallourn mine was gradually brought under control and finally extinguished on Friday, 18th February. This was the second fire there, the first being caused by the bushfires of January, 1929. On that occasion the mine had to be flooded by the Latrobe River to extinguish the blaze, and it was some weeks before the water could be pumped out and work could begin again.

This fire of 1944 also burnt fiercely along the Ridge, and destroyed the old wooden bridge over the railway line. This bridge, an important part of old

Next Meeting:

Wednesday

17th February at 2.00 p.m.

Same value for money as in previous years

Morwell Historical Society Inc.

Annual Subscription Rates:
(Subject to Annual General Meeting 2010 approval)

Single: \$17.00

Family/ Double: \$20.00

Payable March each year

44 Buckley St. (next to T.A.B.)

Visitors are most welcome

**We are open to the public on
Wednesdays from 11am to 2 pm
February to December**



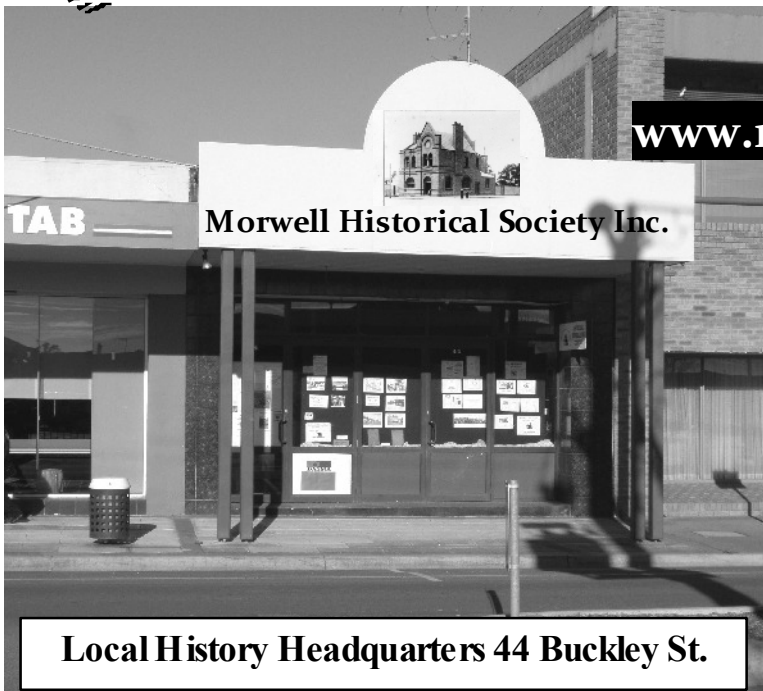
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