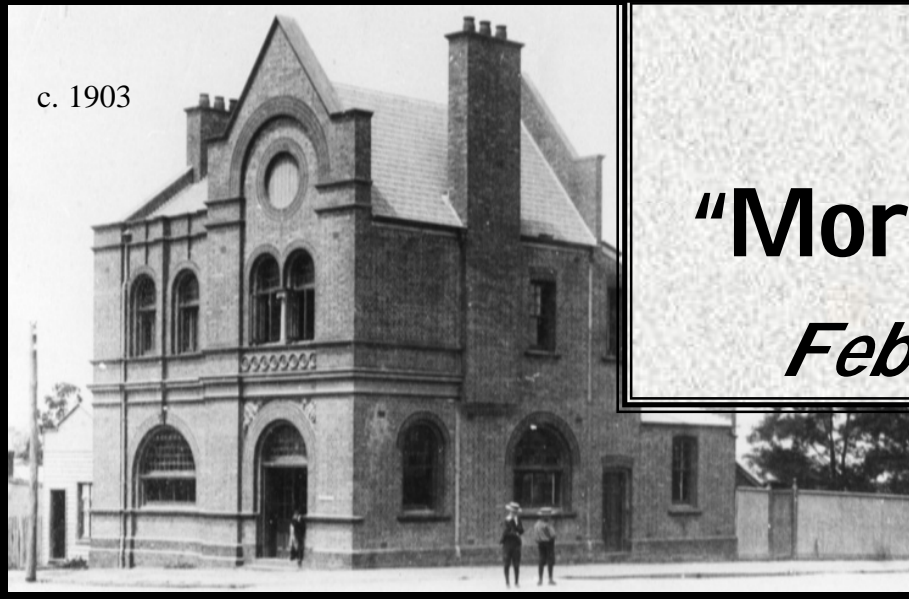


Morwell Historical Society Inc.

www.morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au

c. 1903



The AOO 16986 W "Morwell Post" *February 2012*

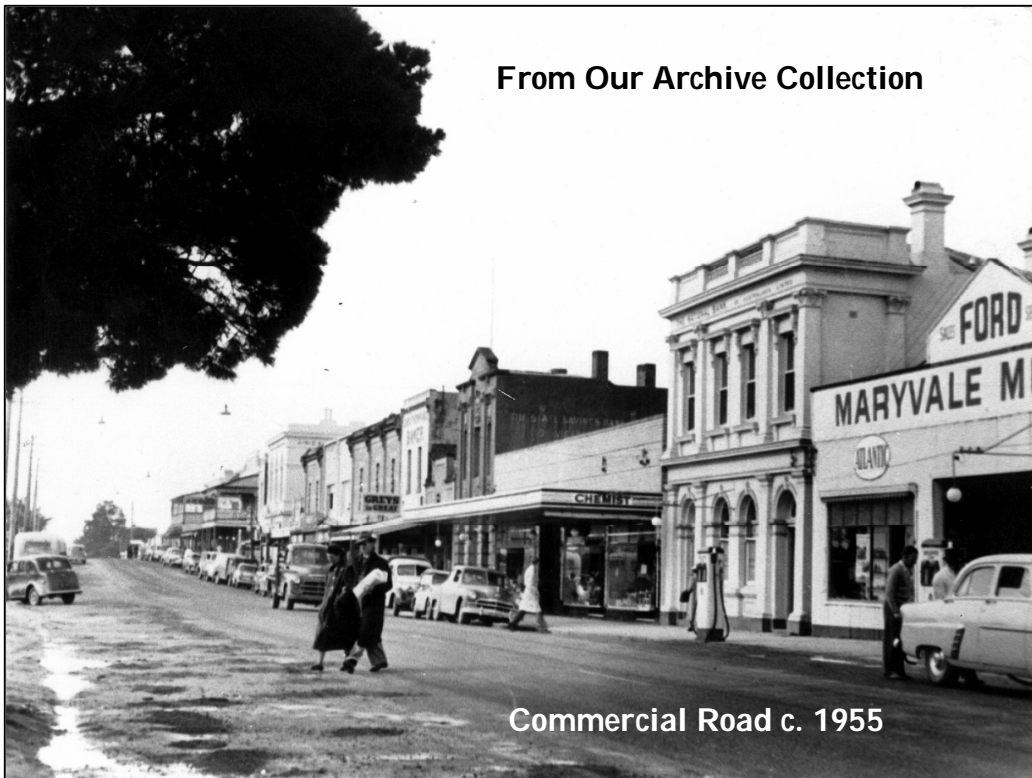
Vol. 29 No.1

Secretary: Stephen Hellings
Post Office Box 1163
Morwell 3840

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary

Items for publication in the
"Post" are always welcome;
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The "official" organ of the Morwell Historical Society Inc.
Published every two months: February to December



From Our Archive Collection

Commercial Road c. 1955

In this issue of "The Post":

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Morwell & District Bushfires (1944) page 6

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Maryvale Mill Memorial Gates - 1953

An inspiring official ceremony was held at the Maryvale Mill on Saturday, February 7th 1953, which marked the opening of the Maryvale Mill Memorial Gates erected in honour of Maryvale Mill servicemen who were killed in the 2nd World War.

The dedication of the memorial was carried out by Major-General Clive Steele, a distinguished soldier of World War II and a Director of Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd., who also unveiled the plaques on the gate.

The names of those commemorated appear below:

ANDERSON, N.	GRIFFITHS, R.
ARMSTRONG, J.	HICKS, W.
ASHBY, J.	LAWRENCE, F.
BROWN, E.	POLLOCK, D.
CATTERICK, J.	STAGG, L.
FINLAYSON, W.	WATSON, F.
GILLIES, A.	WILLIAMS, R.



Photograph: Bruce McMaster

Memorial Gates

Morwell Advertiser

9th February 1950

NEW POST OFFICE, WHEN?

AFTER Senator Cameron, in his capacity of Postmaster General, had inspected postal facilities at Morwell on 14th May, 1948, he said that the old post office building, a pre-Federation structure, was positively dangerous and, if it were to collapse when people were in it, it would cost the Department much more than a new post office.

He was opposed to a temporary building and believed that the new structure, in beauty and design, would be one of the best buildings in the town. As far as was physically possible the new post office would be built.

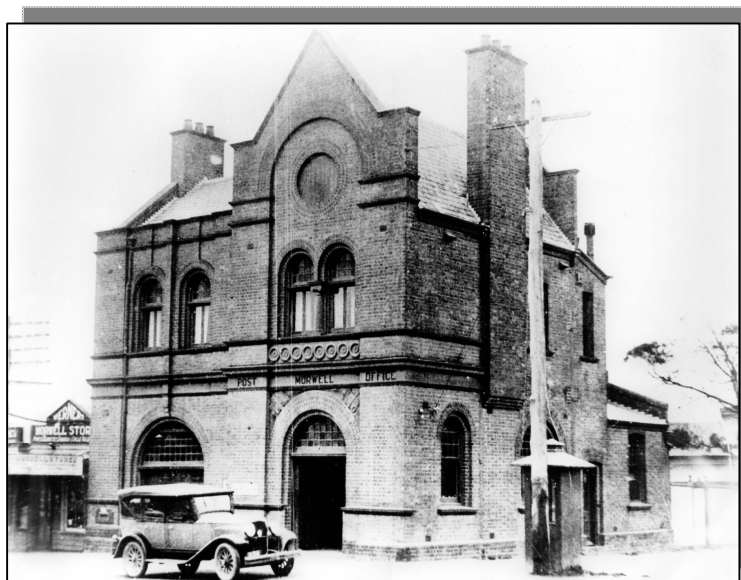
Eighteen months went by and nothing happened beyond bolstering up the western wall with a timber structure, that was both unsightly and a menace to pedestrian traffic.

At the end of that period Senator Cameron looked the town over again and, addressing a public gathering in the Council chambers on November 17th, indicated that the lack of progress since his previous visit was due to prevailing shortages and inability to get the co-operation of all parties concerned.

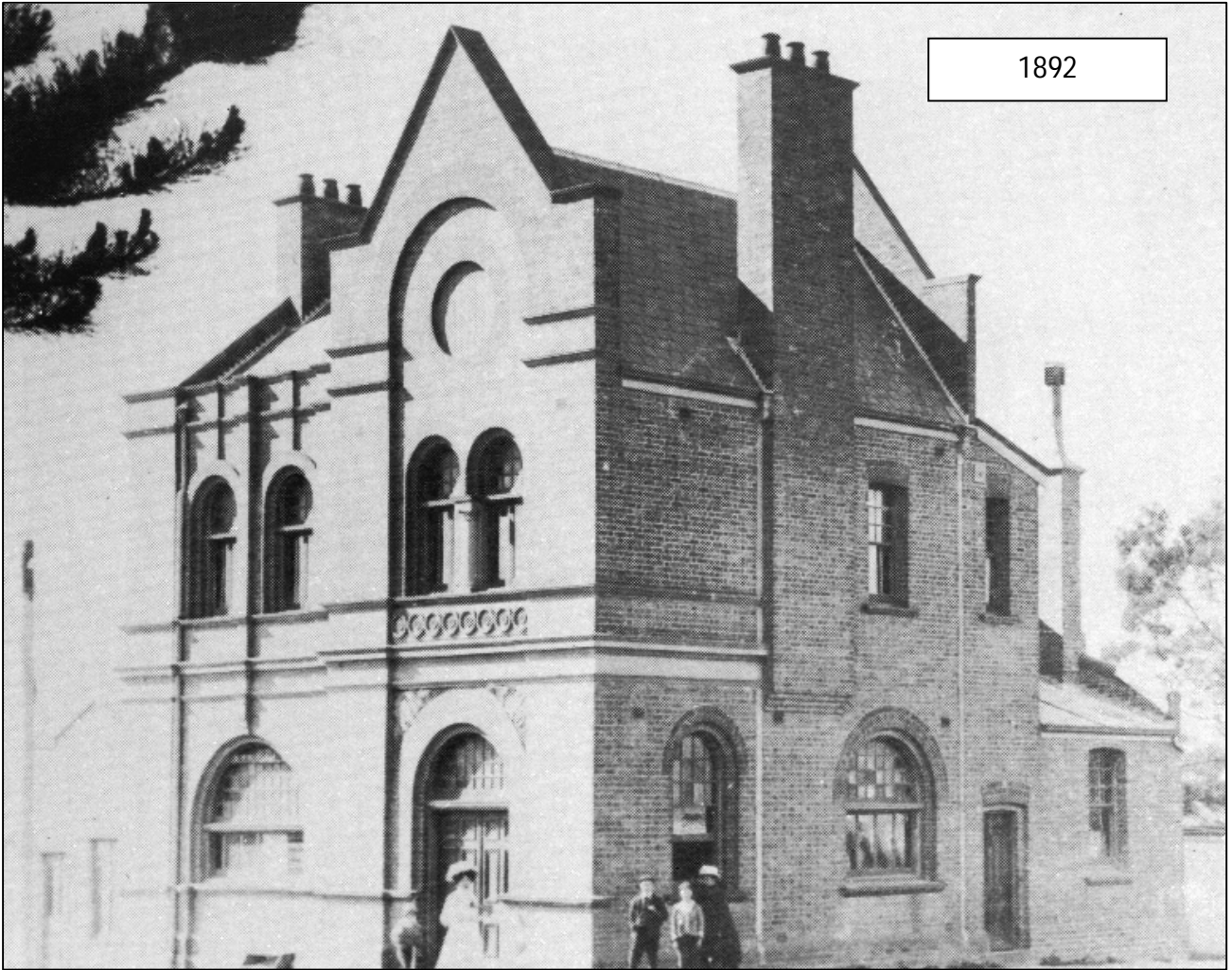
He again promised the new post office, costing £84, 000, and a temporary army hut, to be erected in the post office yard to relieve the congestion for the time being.

Recently a heavy fall of plaster from the ceiling in the passage way again reminded the authorities of the unsafe conditions to both public and staff, that has been long apparent. Repair work carried out soon after included taking down the existing plaster in the public section as a safety precaution, but no one is prepared to predict when the next weakness will develop in a building that is tottering to its doom.

Morwell Post Office



c. 1930



1892



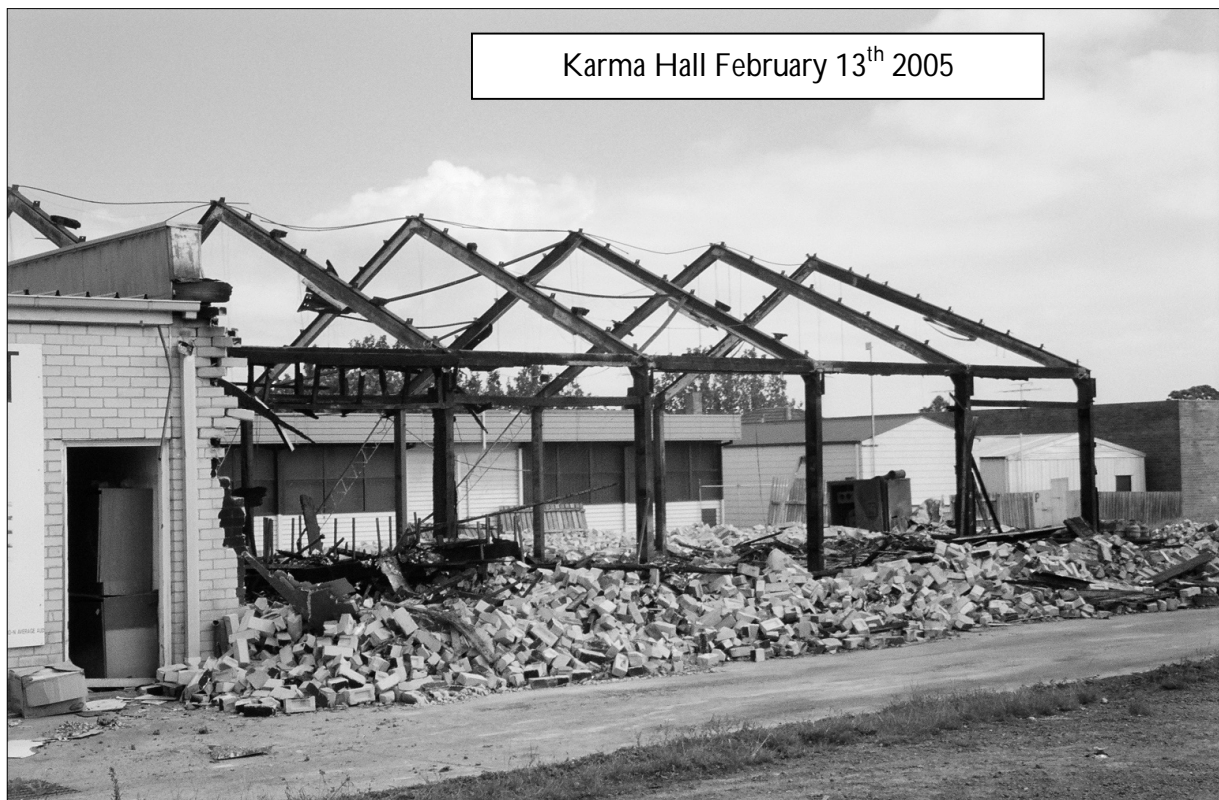
c. 1939

Photographs:
Morwell Historical
Society Archives

It Happened in February!

(A random selection of events that took place during the month of February)

- Bushfires sweep through Morwell District in 1944
- Edmond Kelleher (Club Hotel) dies in 1911
- Donald McDonald leaves the district and moves to Melbourne in 1903
- St. Mary's Church of England (Anglican) opens in 1886
- Memorial Gates at Hazelwood Cemetery handed over to Cemetery Trust in 1948
- Memorial Gates at Maryvale Mill officially opened in 1953
- Croft Brothers opened a store in Morwell in 1963
- Morwell High School established in 1956
- Morwell Technical School established in 1959
- Construction works began on Gude's Arcade in 1955
- Karma Hall situated in Buckley Street destroyed by fire in 2005
- Tobruk Street Primary School (4680) opened in 1954
- Morwell Park Primary School (4975) opened in 1969
- Morwell telephone exchange was automated in 1955
- Morwell Fire Brigade moved from Church Street to McDonald Street in 2005
- S.E.C. announces in 1948 future closure of Morwell Bridge Township
- Collins Street Primary School established (at Commercial Road) in 1951
- R.S.L. Memorial Hall construction commenced in 1953



The following has been extracted (exactly as written) from "The Morwell Advertiser" edition dated Thursday 17th February 1944:

Monday afternoon and night right into the early hours of Tuesday morning a fire, which came from the Haunted Hills locally swept towards the town with startling suddenness. A wind, reaching gale proportions at times aided it appreciably. It commenced soon after lunch hour and by 5 p.m. thousands of acres of grass, houses, fencing and stock had been licked up.

Other houses were saved by desperate efforts of fire-fighters who rallied splendidly to the call. This fire, before reaching Morwell, swept homes away at Herne's Oak and Morwell Bridge as if they were mere sheds. While the flames were at their peak on the western fringe of the town fires started to the south beyond McLean Street.

Evidently burning leaves and gas currents started them.

Later this flare swept on over the Ridge Road towards Hazelwood, and beaters were almost powerless to arrest it. How some houses were saved is indeed a miracle. Other fires swept from the back of Yinnar to the hill areas.

One started near Traralgon South and later in the evening the fire from the Ridge ran into it. The area swept covered a large scope and the fire burnt itself out in timber country near South Callignee.

A fire that started on the Prince's Highway just beyond the Long Bridge at Traralgon went towards South Callignee also, after licking up fences and herbage right over Hilltop and along the old Switchback Road. All homes were saved. In a couple of cases the flames seemed to part company, sweep on either side of houses demolish sheds, etc., but leave the house intact. Even on occasions the flames reached doorsteps and consumed the flowers and vegetables in gardens.

However, the most strenuous fight of all was waged at night on the northern outskirts of Morwell. A wind took flames all over the area from the western approaches to beyond Hourigan's home, and across the overhead railway bridge (which was destroyed) to the south. Houses went up in smoke despite hard fighting by firemen and others.

Every house in the area was menaced and so close was the call in some that even the hedges and outbuildings were burnt like unto tinder.

The sad loss of life has cast a gloom over the entire district. Residents of the town were quick to render assistance and a casualty clearing station was established at the Town Hall, where sufferers received attention and the needy clothing to tide them over a definite critical period. Food there was in abundance.

Troops were rushed to danger areas from Royal Park and stations in East Gippsland.

They rendered yeoman service and deserve the best thanks of all. These men also brought Red Cross and food waggons. The troops stood by all day Tuesday putting out burning stumps and logs and doing anything asked of them by the more experienced in fire fighting.

The bulk of traders on Monday afternoon closed their doors in order to release personnel to assist at the various fire fronts.

A complete ring of the township discloses a scene of devastation. Scores of miles of fencing are down and stock wander aimlessly about the back roads. In many paddocks dead sheep dot the blackened.

So dangerous did the fire appear in the Hospital locality that patients were removed to the Town Hall by nurses and assistants. Here again a rare save was effected.

With the death in Yallourn Hospital of Mr. Harry Cook (who fell off a truck) and John Robinson (aged 16) of Jeeralang, the list of dead due primarily to the fires, is as follows:-

Miss Grace Hare Morwell, Mr. Charles Tanner Hazelwood, Mr. Arch Thompson Jeeralang, Mrs. Woolacott Morwell, Mr. Percy Jones Morwell, Mrs. Vera Jones (his wife), Mr. Jim Flitton, Hazelwood, Mrs. Dyer The Ridge, Mr. Frank Walker Yinnar, Mr. Dick Thomas Hazelwood, Mr. Harry Cook Morwell, John Robinson Jeeralang.

MORWELL BRIDGE

When the fire swept down on this settlement no fewer than 7 houses and the school were destroyed in double quick time. The lack of water precluded any attempt at organised fire fighting. So rapid did the flames descend that many residents rushed to the Morwell River and took shelter. They suffered only from heat as the flames licked from bank to bank. Their presence of mind proved their salvation. Those who lost their homes and belongings were:- Mr Pringle, Mr Davis, Mr Bennett, Mr Tierney, Mr Johns, Mr Toseland, Mr Cane. State School, shelter shed and outbuildings.

ANOTHER ALARM ON TUESDAY

Beaters were rushed to a further outbreak opposite Mr Edward McGauran's home on the Prince's Highway, on Tuesday afternoon. It was confined to a big patch of bracken fern and a wide strip of grass land on the east of the ferns. It was under control by the setting of the sun.

The army of beaters, in which the troops were noticeable, rendered good service. It was a lucky save considering the high wind that was blowing at the time. This was the nearest burn on the Highway between Morwell and Traralgon following the great fire on the Monday night, which swept the properties of Messrs Bridle, Jones, Watson, Buckley and McGauran. In this fire many sheep and cattle perished, and fences are down for miles. One of the greatest

losses to farmers is feed, which was scarce enough before the flames licked over the countryside.

In the late afternoon a call came from the Paper Mill area, where a fire had entered the heavily timbered paddocks known as "Derhams". It burnt fiercely right to the bitumen road on the west side of the mill. A fortunate change of wind allayed any fear that damage would accrue to mill property.

By nightfall all danger had gone, much to the relief of a big gang of men who were standing by to render assistance if necessary. These included many A.P.M. employees. This fire came direct from the west, and was not an off-shoot of Monday night's fire at Morwell.

Commonwealth Flax Mill Goes Up in Smoke.

An important industry that will be lost to Morwell – at least for some time – is the Flax Mill on the west side of Latrobe Road. The Mill came in a direct line of the flames after they reached the north side of the township. All around the mill proper were stacks of this season's flax. These, also have been lost. In addition fibre spread in paddocks adjacent to the A.P.M. cubicles and at the rear of private homes from Maryvale Road to Hopetoun Avenue were consumed quicker than a kiddy can eat ice cream.

It was this wealth of fibre, as dry as thistledown that gave added impetus to the inferno that nearly caused dozens of homes in the immediate area to be lost.

Manager Arthur Fehring cannot give a conservative estimate of the loss sustained. It must run into thousands of pounds. Quite a number of employees will be minus pay envelopes for a period. Of course these can be absorbed in other avenues, as the labor problem is distinctly acute in every direction.

Let's hope no great hardship follows the unfortunate demolition.

Although every precaution had been taken to safeguard the mill and flax stacks nothing would have been of avail. The gale swept everything before it and carried lighted twigs and leaves chains ahead of the main blaze.

Stock Losses.

The loss of sheep, cattle, horses and pigs has been enormous. It is impossible to make any calculation yet. On almost every farm swept some stock were burned, and others had to be destroyed after the fire had passed on. At Budgeree on one property the flames came across so quickly that the dogs could not be released from the chains and they were roasted in that sorry predicament. Pigs suffered a similar fate in the styes.

Gangs of men, including members of the V.D.C. have been engaged disposing of carcasses of animals. They have worked grandly without any thought of even being thanked. It is times like these the best in the human being is brought to the surface.

Open Cut Ablaze at Yallourn

Igniting from sparks and debris carried from the bush fires in close proximity the open cut at Yallourn became an inferno by Tuesday.

Latest reports indicate that a copious water supply is aiding firemen to get the blaze under control.

The following article appeared in the "Advertiser" edition dated: **24th February 1944**

MR W. MCNAIR'S BODY FOUND.

Missing since bush fires swept this district last Monday week, the body of William McNair, 52, of Morwell, was found badly burned in bush country at Jeeralang North Sunday morning. His death brings the total in the Gippsland fires to 13.

McNair, who was an employee of Australian Paper Mills, at Morwell, was last seen a few days before the fires broke out, at his property at Jeeralang North, where he periodically visited and camped. A search of the locality was begun by police when it was found that the man's camp had been destroyed and he was missing. His nearest neighbor was Mr Mac Beaton.

About 5 years ago McNair was reported missing when a fire swept through the same area. He was later found unharmed.

The unfortunate man was evidently making his way towards Morwell when the flames overtook him.

The remains were found by Mr C. Mele.

Mr McNair, who was on a fortnight's vacation from Maryvale Paper Mill, was popular among his workmates, and general regret is expressed at his sad end.

The remains were interred in Hazelwood Cemetery on Monday, the cortege moving from the Presbyterian Church, Rev. Hovenden read the service at the grave side and the mortuary arrangements were in the hands of W. McIntosh and Co.

For more information on this subject please refer to: "**On that Fearful Monday**", produced by the Morwell Historical Society Inc. (February 2004)

1944 Bush Fire Victims (incomplete)

Hazelwood Cemetery Headstone Inscriptions:

CHURCH OF ENGLAND (NEW ANGLICAN) SECTION

Dyer:

In loving memory
of
ELSIE MAY
beloved wife of
FREDERICK DYER
died as a result of the bush fires
14th Feb 1944
aged 56 years

Hare:

In loving memory of
GRACE HELENA HARE
died as a result of the bush fires
14th Feb 1944
aged 47 years

Walker:

In loving memory of
FRANK
loved husband of LEILA WALKER
died 14th Feby. 1944
aged 35 years

Robinson:

In loving memory of
JOHN ALFRED ROBINSON
15th August 1927
15th February 1944

Thomas:

In
loving memory of
our mother & father
MARY J.
died 12 Aug 1944
RICHARD W.
died 14 Feb 1944
Ever remembered

UNITING (METHODIST/WESLEYAN) SECTION

Flitton:
In loving memory
of
JOHN THOROLD
beloved husband of
EVLYNNE SHIRLEY FLITTON
died 15th Feb 1944
aged 43 years

Woolacott:
In loving memory
of
EMILY ALICE
beloved wife of WILLIAM
died (result of fire) 14th February 1944
also
WILLIAM WOOLACOTT
died 11th April 1956

Jones:
In loving memory
of
PERCY AND VERA JONES
died 14th Feb. 1944
Result of bushfires



Hazelwood Cemetery Memorial Gates

Information Page:

Please note that the next meeting will be on 15th. February 2012 at 2.00 p.m.
At 44 Buckley Street (Next to T.A.B.)

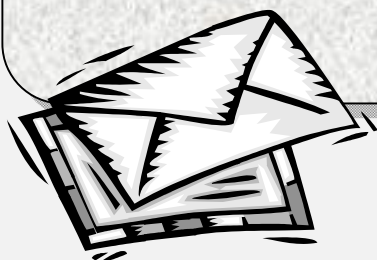


Membership Fees:
Per Annum
\$20.00 per Member
(Payable March each year)
(Subject to A.G.M. deliberations)

Meeting dates for 2012 (provisional)

February 15th
March 21st
April 18th
May 16th
June 20th
July 18th
August 15th
September 19th
October 17th
November 21st

Please deliver me to:



Morwell Historical Society Members

A very important date for your diary:

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 21st March 2012 at 44 Buckley Street commencing at 2 p.m. immediately followed by our normal monthly meeting.

The Annual General Meeting is probably the most important meeting for the year as it sets out or confirms our processes and procedures for the ensuing twelve months.

Please come along and have your say and exercise your voting rights.