

THE MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Published every month except December.

The Society meets every 3rd Tuesday of the Month 7-30pm Collins St. State School Library

WELCOME TO THE JANUARY NEWSLETTER

This is the first Newsletter for 1987. With the hope that all readers have a prosperous New Year, the Historical Society wishes to remind all about some matters from 1986 and advertize some of the planned activities for 1987.

First some points from our November meeting:

1. The Society is still keen to check with the S.E.C on the ownership of land on which the historic palm trees are situated.
2. With respect to the History competition... perhaps that next year we hold an open competition (i.e through the L.V Express rather than through schools.)
3. A letter has been sent to the Morwell Shire Council re the desirability of establishing a tourist information centre.
4. FIRST MEETING FOR 1987 WILL BE TUESDAY JANUARY 20,
7.30 pm COLLINS STREET STATE SCHOOL.

5. EXCURSIONS:

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, to Driffield including the site of the original Merton Rush homestead, site of the tallest tree--McDonald's Track, Lawless's historic cow-shed and the "mountain hut".

This excursion will be led by Mr. Lou Bond, a long-time resident of Driffield. Members (and friends) are to meet at the Morwell Arts Centre (Old Shire Offices), Commercial Road, at 1.00 pm or at the Driffield Hall at 1.30 pm. Bring afternoon tea.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, (tentative date) to Yinnar, Martin Walker Park, Hazelwood Cemetery -- to be led by Mr. Andy Coleman. Further details in next Newsletter.

MARCH, proposed excursion to Gunyah. Details to be arranged at the January meeting.

HAZELWOOD NORTH TODAY -

Hazelwood North remains a farming area. Methods of farming and the resultant production have improved with the years.

The application of superphosphate and trace elements has increased the pasture growth especially on the lighter land. The days of the reaper and binder and threshing machines have gone but large quantities of grass hay are baled each year. Modern machinery making this a fast process.

The rabbit menace which plagued the farmers from about the second decade of this century has been overcome. The wire netting of fences though costly and time consuming helped greatly to combat the pest and later the use of myxomatosis practically wiped them out.

Milking machines driven by various types of engines replaced hand milking and when electricity was connected in 1937 another milestone in progress was reached. This made life easier both on the farm and in the home.

Horse drawn vehicles have been superseded by fast cars to fit in with the pace of life today. Mr. George Jones and Mr. Dave Crawford had the first cars in Hazelwood North followed by Mr. Firmin's 1922 Fiat which still goes today and the next was Mr. Sander's Chevrolet.

Water, the most valuable natural resource for any place, does not flow as freely in the streams as it did in early years. Creeks and gullies which once flowed all the year round now cease during a dry summer or when they are most needed. Farmers who once depended on these have had to sink extra dams. Others nearer Traralgon are more fortunate - they are now connected to the Moondarra supply.

Many farms have remained in the families' of the original settlers. There are 5th generation on at least 3 of these - The Sanders at 'Applegrove', Max Cranwell and his family at 'Chishill' and Boldings' at 'The Grange'. Other early families include the Thompsons' who first settled at 'Lovely Banks', Maryvale East near the first site of School No. 2382. Brothers John and Sam came to Gippsland in 1876. Of John's family of 13, 5 died as children under 8 years and another 5 lived past 10 years. Two brothers and a sister married two sisters and a brother. Cranwell's settled nearby. The descendants of these couples still live around the district. Sam and Arch were twin sons of John. Sam's children are living in Traralgon - Tina (Mrs. Beaton), Ivor and Basil. Arch's son Tony and grandson Laurie farm together. Hugh Thompson's son Murray handed over his farm to son Hugh who in turn has son Trevor and grandson Hugh doing the work. Other members of these families are living in nearby areas.

Jim Moody carries on the farm previously owned by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Dick Moody, and before them his grandfather, Mr. Tom Clark. He and his wife Susannah Bibbie were both born at Ballarat and came to Morwell in 1895 and rode on horseback with their belongings on a pack horse in company with Mrs. Clark's sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Ritchie, to take up land in Jumbuk. In 1911 they bought bush land from Mr. Albert Cranwell at Hazelwood North and moved there. They had six children. Their elder son, Tom Clark Jnr. married Miss Jessie Mildenhall and lives on the adjacent farm once owned by Mr. Henderson who had a saw mill as well as harvesting machinery.

Mrs. W. Macreadie of Rosedale is a daughter of Mr. T. Clark snr.

At 'Walnut Park' the home of Mr. C. Jones, walnut and cherry plum trees planted by Leon Nuttrich can be seen. A number of people pick the plums every year from this old orchard and make them into jam and sauce. Many birds also help reap the harvest.

Other families who have been in the district many years are Mills, Medew, Macreadie, Rae, Jones and Buckley.

A community spirit has always existed amongst the Hazelwood North people. A strong bond of friendship is evident. Perhaps this is one reason why urban dwellers are now moving into this area. A number of 10 acre blocks have recently been sold by farmers and Mrs. Groppi's whole farm which was formerly Mr. Seth Plant's has recently been sub-divided into 5 acre blocks.

As you travel through Hazelwood North do not consider it just a place to be passed on the way to Churchill or the Jeeralangs. Think of it as an area where several generations have farmed the land they loved despite hardships, bad seasons, low prices and tragedies like the 1944 fires.

Think of the courage and determination they have needed in the past to succeed. They need those qualities again now in 1976 when costs have risen astronomically and prices of farm produce are the lowest ever known. When these prices were very low in past depressions, a little money would buy a lot, but today it takes a lot of money to buy a little.

May prosperity soon return and may the residents of Hazelwood North continue as a happy community.

Christian names to be in full, and to be entered after the Surnames.

Year	Month	Day	Full Name of Parents or Guardian	Full Address of Parent or Guardian	Occupation of Parent or Guardian	School No.	Name of School	Date of last Attendance
1909	11	14	Gill Desmond	Korwell Bridge	Home Duties	3017	Boredale	27/11
1909	2	25	Bennett Charles	Korwell Bridge	Farmer	"	"	"
1909	6	7	Bennett Colin	"	"	"	"	"
1909	9	10	Bennett Norman	"	"	"	"	"
1909	9	10	Bennett Margaret	"	"	"	"	"
1909	9	16	Bennett Ethel	"	"	"	"	"
1909	3	3	Bennett Kenneth	"	"	"	"	"
1909	5	27	Brooker Dorothy	Korwell West	Farmer Sgt. A.M. Honors	"	"	"
1909	1	20	Gray George	"	Home Duties	"	"	"
1909	3	14	Gould Kevin	"	Letter Assistant	"	"	"
1909	3	20	Kelly William	"	Truman Labourer	"	"	"
1909	7	7	Lane Barbara	"	Home Duties Labourer	"	"	"
1909	6	9	Mooney Michael	"	Labourer	"	"	"
1909	2	29	Moore Barbara	"	Home Duties	"	"	"
1909	7	8	Moore Robert	"	Home Duties	"	"	"
1909	10	24	McKenzie Margaret	Kernis Oak	Bedman S. & C.	"	"	"
1909	5	4	McClellan Kenneth	Korwell Bridge	Labourer	"	"	"
1909	7	17	McLennan Donald	"	Plant Attendants Shift Foreman	"	"	"
1909	3	8	McNeill Sandra	Korwell West	Home Duties	"	"	"
1909	9	20	Maes Mary Josephine	"	"	"	"	"
1909	7	24	Blank Hans	"	Farmer	"	"	"
1909	2	2	Blank Ruth	"	"	"	"	"
1909	2	14	Perquon Margaret	"	Farmer	"	"	"
1909	7	18	Perquon George	"	Timber Yard Foreman Caretaker	"	"	"
1909	10	7	Score John	"	Home Duties	"	"	"
1909	6	4	Score Robert	"	"	"	"	"
1909	8	13	Score Patricia	"	"	"	"	"
1909	7	27	Rainbow Brian	"	"	"	"	"
1909	7	1	Sullivan King Maxwell	Kerne, Oak	Farmer	1665	Linsdale	19/10
1909	7	17	Wall Maria Barbara	Korwell Bridge	Domestic Duties Rider	2392	14th Zealand	7/10

6. Mrs. Cafiso reported on the recent "Back to Morwell Bridge" celebrations and the plans to preserve photographic and other material assembled for the event.
7. The final meeting for 1986 closed with two novelty events—a Morwell street names competition and a Latrobe Valley trivia test. History can be fun.

NOTICE The Boolarra and District Historical Society's museum is now open on a regular basis, on the first Sunday of every month, 2pm to 4pm in the old school building, corner of Irving and Tarwin Streets, Boolarra. The museum may open at other times by arrangement. There is no admission charge.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION, re a family named McGrath, who lived in Morwell during the war—presumably the period 1939–45. Mr. McGrath was a magistrate or he may have been in the police force. It is believed there was a son in the RAAF.

Further to our intention to explore the history of Morwell Bridge and Morwell West, this issue contains an article by Mr. Keith Shepherd. Mr. Shepherd is now 81 but has lost none of his talents for writing and drawing. On display at the recent reunion (November 9), was a book of his drawing and poems which bore testimony to his expert skills. It is believed that this book was titled "Around the Camp Fire Ashes" (sub-title Tales of Old Gippsland: a collection of yarns of life in a small country town in the early days of this century.) by Eddie Clements and Keith Shepherd. Keith Shepherd's family tree is quite interesting and the details will be included in the next Newsletter.

Interesting to ponder: Since the Morwell Historical Society was reformed in January 1985, 19 Newsletters have been published. This will be number 20 and many more will follow. Is your set complete? The complete collection holds a wealth of information and there is still more to be recorded. For example, the planned alterations to Faulkener's Store on the corner of Commercial Road and Tarwin Street may see an old town landmark disappear. Photographs could be taken.

Another school photo from Morwell Bridge School, S.S 2439 situated at Morwell West. These students are from Grades 4,5 and 6. The date is believed to be 1956.

Front Row: 1. M.Nathan, 2. ? 3. D.McSweeney, 4. ?
5. V. Gardner, 6. T.Slusarczyk, 7.C.Lean

Middle Row: 1. A. Clegg, 2. Janet Kennedy, 3. E.Thurgood,
4. C.Crozier, 5. J.Moyes, 6. ? 7. C.Foster,
8. J.Arbrecht, 9. ?

Back Row: 1. N.Grundy, 2. F.Reynolds ? 3. M.Nathan
4. G.Blonquist 5. J.Grech 6. ? 7. R.Moyes
8. J.Jack, 9. ? 10. ?

Head Teacher Mr. W. Ryan

We may not have correctly identified all the children in this photo. It is rather hard to do so after 30 years. Some readers may be able to fill in the gaps and/or correct any errors we have made. We are also guessing the grades and the year.



Battling with Depression

in Morwell-West

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I was familiar with Morwell-Bridge from 1925 when I often drove through on my way to Melbourne, but it was 1929 when I commenced work for the S.E.C at Yallourn. I first lived at the old South Camp, but married ~~married~~ after some four months and moved to Hoyle Street, Morwell.

But I was to continue working at Yallourn for 25 years; played football and was a member of their fine band for fifteen years, so I daily rode my old push bike along the loose gravel road through Morwell-Bridge.

In 1932, becoming fed up with the lack of ever owning anything while paying high rents, I moved out to the Morwell-West area to build for myself and did it the hard way, stick by stick. Pay day would find me trundling to Moe in my T model Ford and there, I would load her to the waterline and trundle homeward over the Haunted Hills.

When on night shift, the sound of hammer and saw would not cease until 5pm. When there was no money, I split posts for fencing. The front fence I erected with concrete posts which I poured myself. And one of those posts still stands as a lonely remnant of a town which is no more.

Life was hard, but it was free and unhindered by Morwell Shire which did not wish it to be there and did nothing to assist.

There were but half a dozen houses on the hill and it was impossible to ride my push bike down the road for huge potholes, so I'd carry it on my shoulder, slipping and sliding in the pouring rain and darkness, until I reached the Old Sale Road. But despite low wages, the assisting of relatives and the destitute unemployed who regularly called at our door and never failed to receive a plate of hot soup with bread and butter, we progressed. Within seven years I had acquired a further ten acres of land, kept two cows, forty fowls, twelve duck and had a good vegetable garden, while the old shotgun kept rabbit regularly on the menu. Then, dear silvery-haired Mr Coghlan arrived to build the next house. He apparently needed little sleep and my wife commented on it one day ... ' You don't sleep for very long, Mr Coghlan'.

Tom replied with a twinkle in his eye, ' No, but I sleep fast'.

We grew very fond of Tom and helped him quite a lot.

Eventually, Mr Kaye cut up his big paddock and the race was on.

I was now about to lose sleep myself while organising a Progress Association, a bushfire brigade, in registering the name "Morwell-west and battling for a Post Office while serving on the School Committee. In this, a good, solid core of the men co-operated and the ladies were always there with hot tea and scones. There was plenty of banter and camaraderie and we lost plenty of sweat. Indeed, I believe the hardest day I ever put in was in the formation of our first street when someone lent a tractor and I took the handles of the plough to tear up the rock-hard surface of the old track. I went where the plough threw me and ached for days afterward. After we formed our main inlet, "Kaye's Road", Foster Meredith donated a couple of his trucks to cart gravel from the old sandpits and we had a long and reasonable Street. Those sandpits, by the way, were opened for the building of the Gippsland line and my grandfather carted from them while sub-contracting for Miller & James.

It would need a book to tell it all. I witnessed the river breaking into the Open Cut in 1934; witnessed it at dawn from the top floor of the Briquette Factory and carried my bike through water to the chin to reach the railway line to cross a half mile wide Morwell River. Six weeks of drizzle followed by a sudden ten inches of rain was too much. That old river has never been so robust since. I saw the country from Moe to the coast burnt black in 1939. It swept over and around our home while my family sheltered in the well, driven by an 80m.p.h wind. But while many homes were burnt down and I lost my poultry and fences, our home survived. But burnt into my memory are the sights of horses and cattle roaming around on the blackened ground in search of grass.

The war period, when doubt and reality were hard to separate. Times when lost planes roared low over the factory at night and landed in a paddock on Latrobe Road, clipping the tops of pines as they came in. One pilot told me he had a cupfull of fuel left. But they were lucky. Some finished in the sea. Then, there was the crack Ack Ack Unit based at Yallourn North, which would open up and put a pattern of flack around a plane which had ignored orders by flying over the area. How were we to know it wasn't real?

Proper tribute should be paid to the late Mr Kaye. Many a Morwell- Bridge family in dire distress, had reason to remember his generosity in not sending accounts for milk supplied. At Morwell-West, all were aided with easy payments for cheap building blocks. And, his promise was his bond and was never overlooked.

There were happy periods, sad moments and times of illness that drew us together. I have jumped a neighbour's fence to cut firewood when hubby was down and a load of wood was brought into my yard, cut up and stacked when I was down myself. Your neighbour knew your needs. The kind word and voice of cheer were ever present and folk made time for a yarn. It was a

place where children grew up loved, wanted and with room to ramble to heart's content.

And how nice at a recent " Back To " to have folk who were little babies and children at the same time as our own, so glad to see us, recall " Shepherd's " pool at the river and to introduce us to their daughters and grandchildren. They did not forget happy childhood. How nice to hear the ladies discussing their efforts with their Mother's Club. How nice to hear recalled, our pride in the new brick, thoroughly modern school; built only after persistent pressure on the Education - Department.

And, to top it all, meet again that fine educator " **Mr Godfrey** " who taught our children in a manner we could only sing praises of.

There were at least sixty dwellings on the west side of the river when I left the district, while the population may have reached 150; a going, thriving **Postal** town, until shortly afterward the State Electricity - Commission laid the cold hand on it for coal-winning purposes.

The one really sobering thought I had after returning home from those recent celebrations, was the fact that I am the last of the senior, male residents left to write of it.

Keith Shepherd Snr
Ringwood
3-12-86

Corrections to "Reminiscences of an ex-resident of Morwell West"
in November's Newsletter.

Page 1 Paragraph 1 line 6
"unfinished" not "unfurnished"

Page 2 Lines 3 and 4
The sentence should read, "At the time of our arrival,
there were about 160 students".

Page 2 Paragraph 3
a reunion of ex-residents, not ex-students. (Of course
it was a reunion for both but not just a school reunion.)

Apologies for these errors.

Morwell Primary School, S.S 2136 Commercial Road, probably
1925. (Thanks to Mrs. Amy Tibballs, Ollerton Ave. Moe.)



THE CONCLUDING PAGES
OF THE HISTORY OF
HAZELWOOD NORTH.

22/.

Red Cross, Police, clergy and army worked side by side with neighbours and strangers to help provide food, clothing and temporary housing and attended to the disposal of dead and maimed stock.

Thirteen funerals were held on one day. This was a terrible experience. Out of this tragedy, as does happen so often, a great bond of friendship and understanding grew and many people were comforted and encouraged to start out again and rebuild.

The wind blew for weeks afterwards sending black dust over everything. Most of the hay meant for winter fodder had been burnt, some stacks smouldered for days. The pastures were practically all burnt and no rain fell until the 6th April. There was a shortage of water, tanks had been drained in an effort to save homes.

Temporary homes had to be set up. Many families lived under great difficulties. One family used a tent, another a caravan and another had a house moved from another area. Even a dairy was made use of.

Rebuilding was greatly hampered by the shortage of materials owing to the fact that it was war time. Endless forms had to be filled in for everything needed - even a pound of nails.

Most people built their new homes of brick and instead of building on rises as they had done previously chose sites on the low land. Fire travels faster up hill. With better water supplies people are able to keep their gardens around their houses green and this is a very big factor in making for safety.

A.P.M. forests have been planted on large areas and so the A.P.M. fire spotters are very watchful and their Fire Brigade and the S.E.C. Fire Fighting Units help reduce the danger. Fire fighting equipment and water supply have improved so much that the well trained local brigade can control outbreaks much easier now.

Floods - Floods have been a lesser problem as they follow a more restricted area but some years when heavy rain falls in the nearby Jeeralangs there can be 13 or 14 floods in one year. They recede quickly but cause trouble while they last. One year in December when harvesting was in full swing a freak thunderstorm caused 2½ inches in one hour and bales of hay went sailing down the middle of the road. Other bales and loose hay were washed down the creek and were caught in the trees.

Harvesting - Some hay was never carted in that year. In earlier years oats and barley crops were grown and harvesting with horses was a long tiring programme for many weeks as neighbours worked together and women had big teams to get meals for. Now with modern machinery and good weather 1,000 bales can be done in a day.

Storm - In August 1959 a terrible storm hit the district and caused great damage. The windows of Mr. and Mrs. D. Mildenhall's home were blown in. The sudden strong current of wind caused the curtains to blow near the open fire and caught alight thus setting fire to the house. The home was one of the early ones of the district having previously been owned by Mr. Joe Cranwell.

Industry - After the war the S.E.C. started work on the Morwell Briquette Factory and the Open Cut.

It was necessary to buy several farms - Williamson, Porter, Alexander(2), McInnes, K. Cranwell, Medew, Caughey were some on the Hazelwood North side. A hill was cut away to get down to the foundations and in the first 2 years \$19 million were spent then the project came to a standstill for some time. Material was idle for a period until the work continued.

The Lurgi Gas plant also started on part of this area and a big conveyor belt was erected to carry the briquettes from Morwell Briquette Factory to make the gas. Natural Gas found off the Gippsland coast caused this costly project to close and at present part of it is being used as an engineering project by Di Fabrizio Bros.

One incident at the Gas and Fuel shock the district in its early days. We have been told that because it was a German plant and built to German measurements there was a miscalculation somewhere in changing to Imperial measures and an explosion was caused. This happened exactly 24 hours before the Duke of Edinburgh was due to officially open the plant in 1956, when he was also here to attend the Olympic games in Melbourne.

The change in the district from rural to industrial was very hard for farmers who had worked the land from native state to productivity to have to sell under pressure to allow industry to take over.

One of the families affected was Watsons. Mr. James Watson married Martha Graham and arrived in Australia from Donegal, Ireland in 1874. They went to Malmesbury and then came to Morwell by bullock dray with two children and selected land one mile from Morwell. There were five children - Jane, James, Margaret, Isaac and Catherine. The father died in 1886 and after a few years the family let the farm and went to Melbourne where the girls took up careers. Jane-nursing, Margaret-school teaching, Catherine-music. James died of typhoid fever at the age of 18. Isaac took up photography and later married and came back to the farm where he remained for several years. The property is now S.E.C. land. Isaac bought a property in Tramway Road in 1918 formerly known as Plewings.

After his death in 1937 the farm was owned by his daughter Jean, (Mrs. Ken Cranwell) till it was acquired by the S.E.C.. This land is now the site of engineering works owned by Di Fabrizio Bros.

Another family was the Porters. Mr. Robert Porter was born in Donegal, Ireland in 1839. He arrived in Victoria by the ship 'Chancellor' and first farmed in the Malmesbury district where he married Margaret McPherson Tolmie in 1863. In 1874 he selected 'Maryvale Park'. They had a family of 11 children - William, Harry, Maggie, Robert, James, Alexander, Agnes, Ernie, Zilda, Arthur and Fanny. Arthur married Jean Copeland of Traralgon West at Traralgon Presbyterian Church in June 1911. Their family consisted of 5 children - Isobel, Robert, Alexander(dec.), Jessie and Heather. Robert carried on the family farm and he and his wife, who was Elizabeth Whitney Gilmour of Traralgon, and their 6 children continued to live there until the S.E.C. took it over. They then purchased Mr. Frank Bolding's property about 4 miles further south in Bolding's Road.

Fire Brigade - On December 12th, 1928 a meeting was held in the Hazelwood Mechanics with a view to forming a Bush Fire Brigade. Mr. E. Sanders was appointed Captain and Mr. J. McInnes was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

Subscriptions were 5/- for landowners and 1/- for non-landowners. Subscribers were - A. McInnes, J. McInnes, E. Sanders, A. Cranwell, J. Macreadie, J. Ellis, W. Maxwell, R. Henderson, W. McKenzie, T. Dempsey, H. Furnell, A. Jones, A. Firmin, Clark Bros., T. Clark snr., G. Jones, L. Tanner, W. Pirmin, R. Furnell, C. Tanner, R. Tanner, W. Judd, T. Black, J. Bolding, F. Bolding, H. Hentschel, J. Matson, W. Medew, P. Jones, V. Hourigan, D. Cook, A. Porter, Farmer Bros. - these were landowners. L. Ellis, W. Sanders, D. Cranwell, K. Cranwell, A. Cranwell were non-landowner subscribers.

At the next meeting of the Brigade on January 2nd, 1929 boundaries were decided and they remain the same today (1976).

It was moved by J. Bolding, seconded F. Jones that a No. 10 Furphy fire cart be purchased. Mr. A. Cranwell was the caretaker of the water tank. The price of the water cart was £30 less discount for cash in 30 days of £1/10/- making the price £28/10/- plus freight of £1/0/4.

The Brigade was reformed in 1942 with D. Cook as Captain and A. Cranwell and Mr. Barnett Lieutenants.

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|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Captains - 1928-29 | E. Sanders | Secretary/Treasurers - |
| 1942-55 | D. Cook | 1928 |
| 1955-61 | W. Woolacott | 1943-52 |
| 1961-67 | B. Hunter | 1952-67 |
| 1967-69 | C. Jones | 1967- |
| 1969 - | K. Rae | A. Cranwell was treasurer |
| | | in 1943 and 1944. |
| Apparatus Officers - 1929 | A. Cranwell | 1945-65 |
| | Harold Jones | C.A. Thompson |