

# **MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

A09016986W

Vol 16 No 1

January 1999

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## *Welcome to the January Newsletter*

This year (the last or second last of the millennium, depending on how you look at it) is a time for looking both backward and forward.

Looking backward,(which is something we historians do a lot of), our Society plans to mark a number of heritage sites in the district. We have received \$500 sponsorship from *Hazelwood Power* to assist with the cost of signage, which will consist of brown metal signs, with yellow lettering, mounted on aluminium tubular supports and placed on the roadside near the site. Among the sites proposed for marking are the locations of former schools, pioneer homesteads and early mines.

Looking forward, we are planning, over the next eighteen months or so, to photograph as many facets of life in Morwell as possible, to serve as a record of our late 20th century lifestyle.

Great progress was made last year with cataloguing our collection and recording it on the computer, using the *Inmagic* archive program but there's still a lot to be done. Any members who are willing to help with the cataloguing (no, you don't have to know anything about computers!) are asked to contact the Secretary.

On the topic of computers, we have been notified that we are to receive \$750 from the LaTrobe Shire's Minor Capital Grants Scheme to be spent on our computer and software. The computer we now use is one which was in excess when the Shires merged and it has seen a lot of service so this money will enable us to upgrade it and make it more efficient.

## *Thought for the Month:*

*If you don't know where you've come from, you can't know where you're going - and if you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else!*

***NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, February 16 - 7.30 pm  
Morwell Town Hall***

## *FEDERATION - What do YOU know about it?*

**MHR Peter McGauran** says Australians don't know enough about their history and to try to remedy this, with the centenary of Australian Federation coming up, he has instituted a series of advertisements to be run in magazines, on trams, etc, which will focus our attention on our history.

Here are a few questions for you. Try them, then read on for the answers.

1. *When, where and by whom was the Commonwealth of Australia proclaimed?*
2. *Who was Australia's first Governor General?*
3. *Who was Australia's first Prime Minister?*
4. *When, where and by whom was the first Federal Parliament opened?*
5. *When were the first Federal elections held?*

In 1898, the Federal Convention drew up the draft constitution for the Commonwealth of Australia and referendums (or referenda, if you prefer) in each state accepted the draft despite a great deal of interstate jealousy, especially between Victoria and New South Wales. N.S.W Premier Sir John Robertson, referred to Victoria as "the cabbage garden"!

It fell to Lord Hopetoun, Australia's first Governor General, to invite a politician from one of the states to form an interim government to run the country until elections could be held. It was expected that he would select Edmund Barton, leader of the federal movement. However, the Governor General, for some obscure reason, amazed everyone by choosing Sir William Lyne, an acknowledged opponent of Federation! Determined opposition by Alfred Deakin, a Victorian politician, made it impossible for Lyne to form a government, so on Christmas Day 1900, the Governor General invited Edmund Barton to form a government, which he did with little difficulty, and Lord Hopetoun proclaimed the Commonwealth of Australia on January 1, 1901, in Centennial Park, Sydney.

Elections were held in March 1901 and Barton and his ministers were confirmed as Australia's first federal government. There were three distinct groups - Barton and his team, who favoured protective tariffs; N.S.W. politician and former premier, James Reid, whose supporters favoured free trade; and the Labour Party, which was the only one of the three which formed an organised body.

On May 9, 1901, the Duke of Cornwall and York, accompanied by the Duchess, declared open the first session of the first federal parliament in the Exhibition Building, Melbourne. There were great celebrations in Melbourne and those who are familiar with our rooms in the Town Hall will have seen the four framed invitations received by John Rintoull of Morwell to attend some of these celebrations. Melbourne's streets were lined with arches, flags and banners were everywhere and all the major buildings were strung with electric lights. There was a monster procession on May 11, and many lavish receptions, concerts and entertainments, to which citizens from all over Australia were invited.

When the Royal visitors left Melbourne on June 7, the Australian taxpayers were left with a hefty bill for the cost of the celebrations. It was also an expensive exercise for Lord Hopetoun. He had spent large sums of his own money on the Royal visitors in an attempt to make the visit a success. He applied to Barton for an entertainment allowance and, although Barton agreed, the House of Representatives rejected the claim, granting him, instead a lump sum which came nowhere near to covering the money he had spent. Hopetoun asked to be recalled to England later that year and he left Australia in 1902, still about 15,000 pounds out of pocket.

## **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO.....**

### **.... The Post Office Clock ?**

The *Morwell Advertiser & Gazette*, on 26 August, 1937, records the unveiling of the electric clock installed in the gable of the Morwell Post Office on the corner of Commercial Road and Tarwin St. Money for the purchase of the clock was raised by Commercial Road School "old boys" and the Morwell Shire undertook to attend to any maintenance costs which may occur. The clock was unveiled on Friday, August 20, 1937 by Mr Gerald Gilbert a former scholar and the first pupil-teacher appointed to Commercial Rd School.

On that same occasion, Mr Llew Vary presented the Commercial Rd School with a bell which, he said, had quite a history. It was originally used on a barque named 'Harbinger' which was used in the China Sea trade, and later in the wheat and wool trade. It subsequently came into the possession of the Vary family and Mr Vary was pleased to present it to the school on behalf of his sister, Alice. (Is it still at the school? It's school holidays at present so we haven't been able to check.)

### **.... John Rintoull's Anvil ?**

It seems hardly possible that an item as large as a blacksmith's anvil could be mislaid but no trace can be found of the anvil, used by well-known Morwell blacksmith John Rintoull, which was donated to the Shire of Morwell in 1958. It was to be mounted "in a prominent position in the town" as a memorial to the pioneers of the district. According to a number of sources, the anvil was, in fact, handed over to the Shire and was stored in the Shire depot. Repeated efforts by our Society over the years have failed to locate it.

### **.... The Hub ?**

Remember the big cart wheel which was mounted on a pole at the intersection of Tarwin St and Commercial Road in the 'sixties, proclaiming Morwell to be the hub of the Latrobe Valley? Where is it now?

### **.... The Memorial Oak Tree ?**

The *Morwell Advertiser and Gazette*, 5 August, 1904, reports the opening of Alexandra Park on Morwell's 'first Arbor Day'. This was an occasion of great celebration in Morwell - a number of local dignitaries gave speeches, children from Commercial Road School, Morwell Bridge, Hazelwood and Hazelwood North Schools and 'the local R.C. School' (presumably Sacred Heart), presented a number of appropriate songs - 'Tree', 'Sing for the Oak Tree', 'Arbor Day Anthem' - and recitations - 'Charlie's Tree', 'Blithe May Day', 'Wattle in Bloom' - the head teacher, Mr Robinson gave a lengthy address to the students on the importance of trees to the environment and local band played several numbers. The Shire President complimented the local Patriotic Committee for its efforts in getting the Park established - *'the Shire Council had for some time contemplated such an undertaking but the matter, no doubt, would have remained in abeyance for a long time had not the Patriotic Committee assisted them so materially.'*

He said it had been decided to name the park *'after one whose name was dear to every British subject'* (presumably Queen Alexandra, wife of Edward VII). *He then planted the first tree - a Wellingtonia Gigantea, the giant tree of California, which grows to a height of 300 feet.*

*The second tree - an English oak - was planted by Captain Hall to perpetuate the memory of the three soldiers - Sgt McDonald, and Ptes Thos. Rose and Geo. Bolding- who went from this district and died at the front in South Africa, in the Boer War.*

Many residents and school children planted further trees and shrubs, the band played some more numbers and about 4 o'clock *'an adjournment was made to the state school where the children were treated to sumptuous refreshments, after which the adults were similarly treated.'*

***If any of our readers can throw any light on the fate of these Morwell icons, please let us know - call the secretary on (03)51341149.***

## A SUBURB IN THE MAKING

From the *Morwell Advertiser* - 9 December, 1937

'To one who has not traversed Morwell further north than the Methodist Church for some time, it would be an eye-opener to take a walk along Church Street, turn east into Papyrus Street (very fitly named as it owes its existence to the paper industry which is being established at Maryvale) and very soon find one's-self in what is the nucleus of a residential suburb, where twenty neat, up-to-date cottages are being erected by Messrs Pomeroy and Lumley of Melbourne, for the "Morwell Investments Pty Ltd". Some are made of cement sheets and others are partly of weatherboard.

The four-bedroomed houses all have bathrooms, built-in linen presses, laundry with troughs and copper, and sink. Electric light throughout. Some have the additional convenience of a sleep-out, and built-in cupboard in the kitchen. One-fire stoves and a galvanised iron tank to supplement the water supply, add necessary comfort. Some of the houses are nearing completion and two of them are tenanted. Being directed to the house which was first occupied, the reporter was hospitably received, refreshed with tea and scones (the first baked in the new stove, in the new house, in the new suburb) by Mrs A. Morrison from Perth W.A. Mr and Mrs Morrison, with their little son, arrived in Morwell a month ago; but until the house was ready, they were guests of Mrs Jeffrey, of Hoyle St.

The water mains are now being laid in Papyrus and Gay Streets. Nearby, on Maryvale Road, is the bachelor domain, where twenty cubicles are being erected by the Paper Pulp Proprietary, For the convenience of the men, a hot water service is being installed, and in a separate building (also cement sheets with cement floors) are two plunge baths, three showers, and six cement washing troughs (made locally by Mr Angus). The fine mess-room which Mr Angus is building is nearing completion. It is about 40 ft by 20 ft, is well ventilated and lighted (six large windows).

A well-equipped modern kitchen adjoins it where are two double stoves, and with four windows. A meat room is built nearby.

Electric light is everywhere, and it is hoped that by the New Year, a number of the homes in this desirable residential area will be occupied.'

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## THE NEW A.P.M. SETTLEMENT

From the *Morwell Advertiser* - 15 February, 1940

'It must be very gratifying to Morwell residents to visit the New Settlement in Morwell East, where the Paper Pulp Mill proprietors have erected a number of pretty cottages for their employees.

Mr James Carmichael of Wonthaggi is making great headway with the street construction and is putting down concrete kerbs and channels to the footpaths in Fairfield Street, Botany Street, Vincent Road and the Reserve Road. The reserve is to be laid out for tennis courts, children's playgrounds etc. All the household connections have six inch pipe drains.

The Princes Highway is to be regraded and approaches made to every house. The whole will make an ideal suburb, and it is hoped the authorities will find a suitable name for it, in keeping with its beauty. Four new houses are being built in Botany Street and looking south there is a most refreshing view of Hazelwood Flats, with the hills in the background.'