

# 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. 9 No. 7

JULY 1993

### WELCOME TO THE JULY NEWSLETTER

We regret to report that one of our staunchest members, Lorna Williams, is in Cabrini Hospital having tests for a heart problem and we send her our best wishes. On a happier note, member Perce Mooney is fighting fit after a spell in hospital.

In response to a request from our Society, we have received a letter from the Morwell Centenary Rose Garden Steering Committee indicating that they will be happy to re-locate the Ivan Maddern Memorial park bench in the southern section of the Rose Garden. Representatives of the Committee and the Society will meet shortly to discuss the move.

The magazine "Earth Garden" No.8, June - August 1992 contains an article about 'Abbeywood', the Hazelwood North property formerly owned by the Firmin family and now being restored by its present owners. The magazine is available at the Morwell Library.

Guest speaker at our next meeting on TUESDAY JULY 20 will be Mr WILL McROBERTS who will speak about the development of the Morwell Central Business District over the years. Then on SUNDAY, JULY 25, he will lead a HISTORIC WALK around the C.B.D. Participants should meet at the car park next to Sacred Heart Church in Commercial Road at 1.30 pm.



Morwell Advertiser & Gazette

August 27, 1942

Merton Rush was situated on the Western side of the Morwell River and bounded by four waters, Morwell River on the east, Latrobe River on the north, Wilderness Creek on the south and Narracan Creek on the west. It was more heavily timbered than the runs previously described.

The first man to occupy this run was Charlie Farley, who did so about the same time as Hazelwood, perhaps a little later. Farley was John King's man, "his batman so to speak", and came with that gentleman from Sydney. He was not a very energetic person and put some breeding cows on and let them run wild. Eventually it fell into the mortgagees hands. William Westrope Waller, who was a fairly well to do man at this time, and who had similar interests in Hazelwood was the principal mortgagee. A Geelong auctioneer named Alfred Born had something to do with it but whether he had an interest in the run or only had it on his books for sale I am not quite clear, I think both, as Born was the man who my father Samuel Vary did business with when he purchased the "Brand" in the year 1870. The homestead was built on the Prem. Right which had been selected on the Morwell River and is that portion now owned by F.S. Brinsmead. The house consisted of two hard wood W.B. rooms in the front with two wattle and daub rooms attached; a kitchen and brick oven were detached. It may be of interest to note that the weather boards were sawn on the property with what was known as a pit saw, which consisted of a deep hole or pit into which one man got, the log being laid across the pit, another man was on top and the saw was dragged up and down until the board was cut off. This was a very slow process and the man in the pit had a very unenviable job with the sawdust falling down on him all the time. One can readily understand why they preferred to build of wattle and daub.

As I have already stated this run had a very large amount of timber country, taking in the Haunted Hills, about which there has been a lot of discussion as to how it came by its name. It was given this title because in the dry time of the year, when horsemen are riding on some portions it sounds hollow as if crossing a bridge, and as there was a considerable number of "Shanties" on the old stock route selling "Chain Lightning" as it was called and undoubtedly the name was very appropriate, it was a kind of whiskey made from potatoes. The spot where these potatoes were grown is near Wilderness Creek, and a man named Herd got the credit of being responsible for growing them. He also grew some tobacco plants and it was claimed these were the first plants of this kind grown in Victoria. Herd was a Yank and a "ne'er do well" who roamed about living at every station until he had worn his welcome out. Then he would return back to his hut on the creek. His must have been a queer life but they were queer times.



## Harking Back (cont)

I mentioned previously Bill Windsor and Sam Newman, and purposely left them until I started on this station as it was here that the story of the "blue bull" originated, and which I will relate. To begin with I must inform my readers that there were a lot of wild bulls roaming over the place. They were a source of annoyance to the squatter, so my father arranged with Windsor and Newman to shoot them for their hides. They pitched their tent on a spot where a number of these animals came by to water, and shot quite a few but missed the blue bull. However, they took the hides to Moe where they could sell them to a travelling skin buyer, and as was to be expected they sampled the "chain lightning". The next day they arrived back at the tent stony broke, and after lying on their bunks for some time each complained that he was bad and each thought that he was going to die. Sam said "if we're going to die, someone had better say a prayer." Now this was said with all reverence because although they could not read or write they had been taught something of the "Hereafter" at their mothers' knees. "Now Sam, you're the better hand at it" said Bill. Both got on their knees and Sam prayed. While the devotions were going on Bill heard something coming through the scrub and glancing round saw the blue bull. Pushing Sam on the shoulder he said "Hold your ----- tongue and hand me the rifle". Bill fired, and after the cloud of smoke had gone they discovered the shot had been effective. One can readily understand the smoke screen there would be from a rifle which was the type used in the Crimean War and a muzzle loader. They removed the hide, sold it and "got a bit of the dog that bit them" but this time not "chain lightning". They forgot their devotions so I suppose it was a case of:

God and the Doctor we all adore  
On the brink of danger but not before  
Danger past and health is righted  
God is forgotten and the Doctor slighted.

(My apology to the original poet).

When my father bought Merton Rush and all the stock on it, there was a special and interesting clause or covenant in the agreement which read: "All the stock depasturing on etc. etc. except one bay horse branded TS on near shoulder." The reason for this was because this bay horse was owned by a man named Tom Sutton who had died on the run. He had been stock riding on the place for some time but nobody knew if he had any relations or anything about him and the authorities asked that the horse, which was all he possessed, be allowed to stay on the run, in case some relative should turn up. But no-one did so the old horse, like his owner, found his last resting place not far from the old stockyard where they had so often wheeled the wild bush cattle. Sutton's grave is about half way between the old stockyard and the Homestead. A wattle tree was planted on the grave and a fence put around it



### Harking Back (cont)

but time has removed these and I doubt if anyone could find the exact spot now.

The station brand was five stars under a half circle which represented the Southern Cross under a half moon. This brand used to blotch badly so Father had it altered to a cross under a half circle.

The nearest stock sales in those days were at Maffra and Sale, and the store bullocks were generally driven to these markets. I can remember seeing some old account sales of one hundred and fifty, four and five year old bullocks at thirty seven and six per head, sold in October 1877. At the present time, 65 years later, they would realise twelve pounds per head. I wonder what those old squatters would say if they could only come back. My opinion is they would collapse with an extreme cardiac attack and yet when I come to think of it, my father lived to see the day when he got twelve pounds for stores and sold fat bullocks at twenty-two pounds ten. In those old days he had to go to Melbourne for his provisions, taking three days each way with a pair of horses and a wagonette. He made these trips twice a year in the late Autumn and in the Spring. These times of the year the roads were the driest. He also lived to see the day he travelled to Melbourne in three hours, over almost the same route, by car. My oldest sister, Mary Eleanor, has told me that she can remember Father paying at a toll gate either on St. Kilda or Dandenong Roads. She was too young to remember the exact place. Here again I find myself wandering off the subject and bringing the personal pronoun into the picture, something I was hoping to avoid.

(To be Continued)

#### TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir, - I have been reading with interest "Harking Back" in your valuable paper. I think it was Mr Vary's father who was responsible for the severance of the Morwell Shire from the Traralgon and Narracan Shires in 1892. I hope Mr Vary has something to say about it.

Yours etc, "T.W."



# Not everyone suffered equally during the depression. BRAD NEWSOME reports.

Herald Sun, Tuesday, July 13, 1993

**F**OR several years after World War I, the Australian economy boomed.

The country coasted through the 1920s with hardly a care, but by 1930 Australia was in the grip of the Great Depression.

It was by far the worst financial disaster in the country's history.

A third of all workers were left jobless, thousands of tenants were evicted, homes and farms repossessed and businesses bankrupted.

Countless unemployed men were forced onto the streets, hawking soap and darning needles, queuing for hours for job interviews, offering to do odd jobs or simply begging for a meal.

It was not until after World War II that Australia really began to shake off the effects of the depression.

But the image we have today of the depression era

is far from complete. Many Australians were hardly touched by the grinding poverty and hardship experienced by others.

Two thirds of all workers remained employed, and the richest classes were not affected at all.

The image of the "little Aussie battler" who made it through the depression has become part of our folklore.

Like all myths, the image is based on fact, but it is important to determine how widespread such experiences were.

**A**LAN Collie's family never knew the grinding poverty that afflicted so many other Australians during the depression.

Mr Collie, 71, is retired and lives in Belgrave. He said his father had a well-paid job and, though it required some tough budgeting, he was always able to look after his 11 children.

"We never went without food, though instead of having bread and jam we sometimes used to have beef dripping and mum would say 'This is good for you, eat it'.

"But every Sunday night the table would be laden down, and we'd have a big roast meal, right through the depression."

Mr Collie said many of his classmates at Ripponlea State School in St Kilda were much worse off.

"I remember kids going to school there without lunches... the school had little bottles of milk for the kids to have at their lunchtime or playtime," he said.

"But there was no refrigeration, it would be left outside and half the kids used to get sick through it because it was bloody hot."

Mr Collie said his parents and their neighbors would often get together and make up food parcels for people they knew were hungry.

"And many a time there was a knock at the door and someone would say 'Could you spare something to eat?'" Mr Collie said.

"Mum would just cut the food off, roast beef or roast lamb, and give it to them."

"There was a great spirit... one of my brothers worked for a nut factory, and they would send the school big packets of nuts for the kids," he said.

Mr Collie left school at 14, and immediately found a job as a dispatch clerk for a city department store.

"I got work without any trouble, and so did most of my brothers," he said.

**B**ETTE Boyanton remembers being on the wrong side of the huge gulf between rich and poor during the depression.

Mrs Boyanton was one of 11 children, and her father was constantly "in and out of work".

"There was a very strong contrast between those who didn't have enough to eat and those who did very well," Mrs Boyanton said.

Mrs Boyanton said this was brought into sharp focus by her mother's work as a housekeeper for a well-to-do woman.

"I remember the class attitude the woman had. She had fruit trees and we were allowed to pick up the plums and fruit off the ground, but we weren't allowed to pick them off the trees," Mrs Boyanton said.

Mrs Boyanton grew up in poverty-stricken St Kilda, Windsor and Prahran and said her poverty caused her dreadful embarrassment

at Ripponlea State School.

"However, the thing I noticed then was the kindness of the poor people to each other, they didn't have much but they shared what they had," she said.

"We used to have to go around to the shops and ask for "specks" (speckled fruit).

"But it was a real battle, I remember being really hungry.

"It was humiliating, but there were a lot of kids in the same boat."

Mrs Boyanton said her

father was a member of the Unemployed Workers' Union, and tried to stop people being evicted from their homes.

"I have very vivid memories of women and children in the street crying, not only because they were hungry, but because they were homeless and had nowhere to go," she said.

Mrs Boyanton, 72, completed a Graduate Diploma of Community Education in 1981, and has published a collection of poems. She is currently working on her autobiography.



BETTE Boyanton ... poor kind to each other.

**W**ENDY Lowenstein grew up in middle-class Camberwell and Malvern, and was largely unaffected by the depression.

"Being rich or middle-class, you were aware of the depression but you weren't threatened by it," she said.

"But it sent out waves of fear, and it made some of the rich feel insecure. Some of them said if a man's wife and children are starving, he'll do anything... but the crime rate wasn't particularly high."

Ms Lowenstein's father was a clerk for a medium-sized fertiliser business, and although thrift was essential, their family survived the depression relatively unscathed.

"My family were middle class and we were never out of work, we were never hungry or anything," she said.

"My experience was that the middle class looked after their own.

"My grandfather sent my brothers to Scotch College, not so much for the education, but for who they'd get to know... and my brothers and sister all got jobs through contacts either from family or school."

Ms Lowenstein said those worst hit by the depression were extremely sensitive and ashamed of their plight, and told of a time she visited a working class girlfriend.

"I went into the kitchen and they had a wood fire stove burning and I said 'Oh, my mother's got a gas stove' meaning 'My mother's only got an awful old gas stove and it would be lovely to have a fire'," Mrs Lowenstein said.

"Her mother said 'Don't you bring your stuck-up

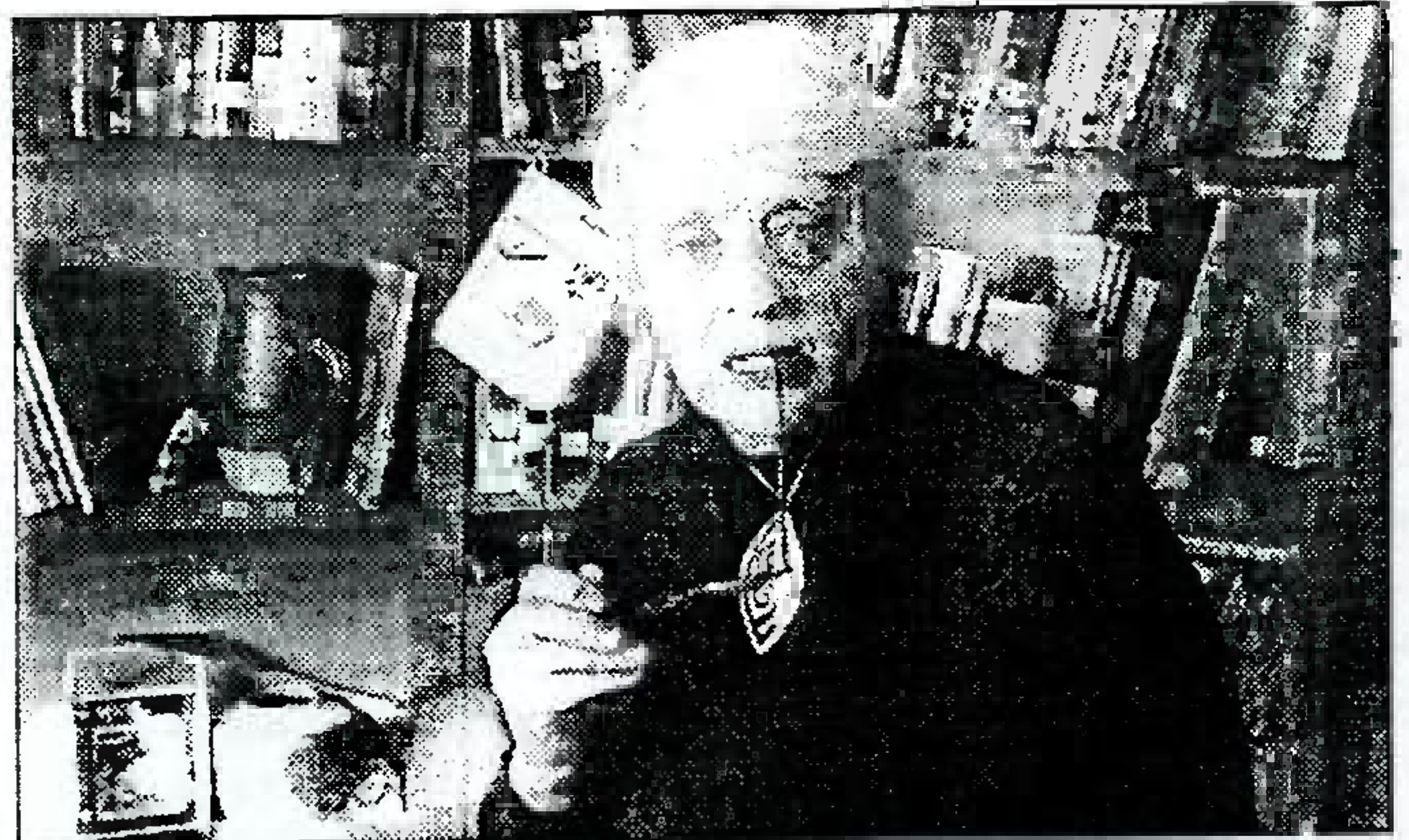
friends here making remarks about us, I can't help it if my husband's unemployed' and burst into tears."

Those more fortunate were equally concerned with maintaining their position.

"There was a lot of snobbery among the middle class too about 'going down the ladder'," Mrs Lowenstein said.

"My father would lecture me endlessly about doing well at school... because if we didn't we'd end up working in factory."

Ms Lowenstein, 66, is a historian and author of several books including the best-selling oral history of the Depression *Weevils In The Flour*.



WENDY Lowenstein ... plenty. Picture: JOHN DONEGAN



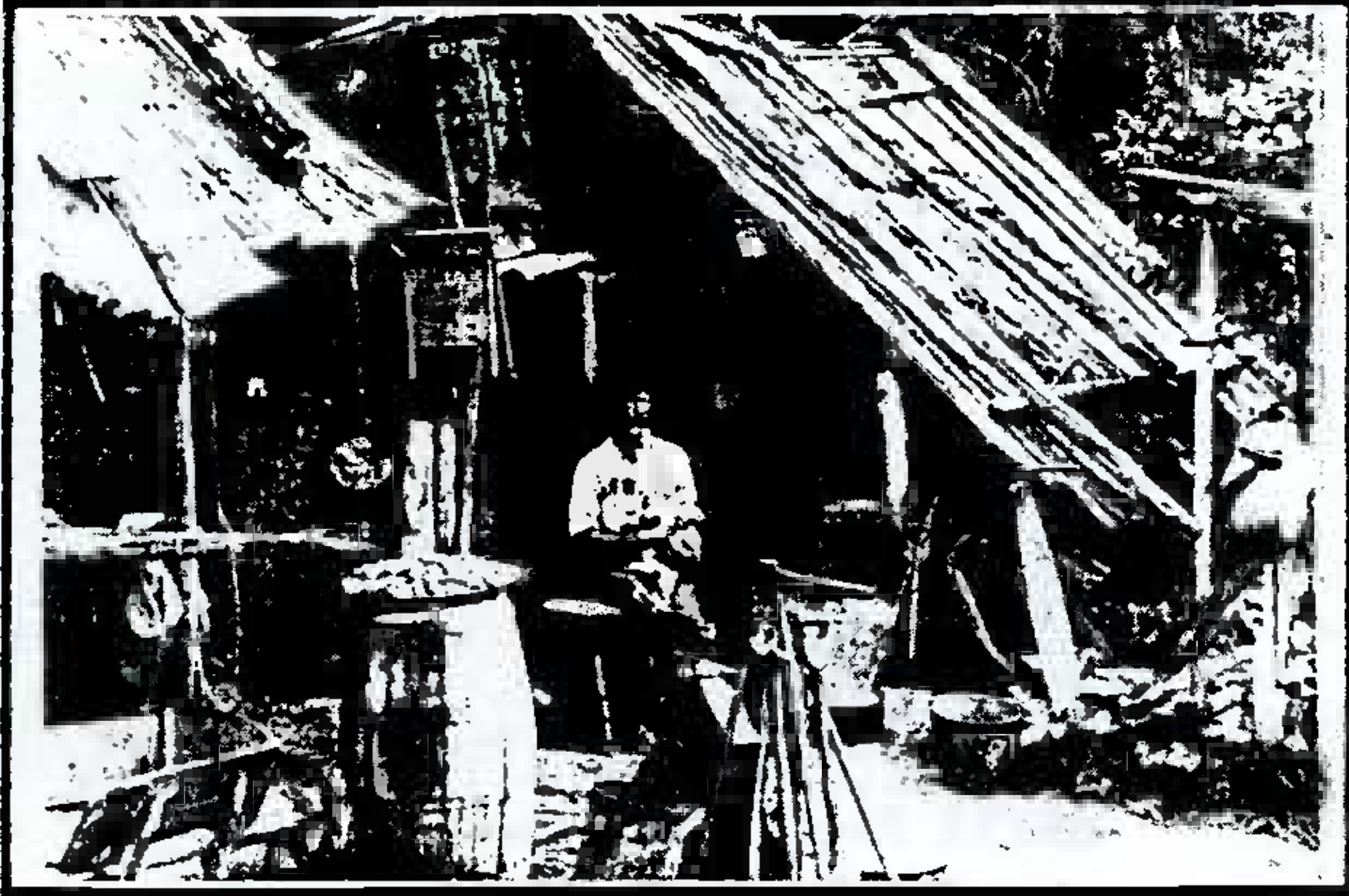
## PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

Nicholas Caire is regarded as one of Melbourne's finest landscape photographers. Caire made travelling throughout Victoria his life's work in order to capture the beauty of the mountains, forests and rivers. More importantly, his images carry a deep empathy for the early settlers of the land.

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria holds a unique collection of his work, comprising over 300 photographs from which this exhibition is drawn. In addition, we are fortunate to have on display material made available by other contributors, most notably that of Miss Edna Bennett, granddaughter of Nicholas Caire.

This Exhibition will be held in the Ramsay Gallery, Royal Mint, from 21 June until 20 August.

## IMAGES OF SOLITUDE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICHOLAS JOHN CAIRE (1837-1918)

## AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF GENEALOGICAL STUDIES

14 July Cornish Research, Bill & Gwen Phillips, Lutheran Church Hall, Station Street, Box Hill, 8 pm. (Enquiries Olive, 870-9950).

19 July South Australian Research, Dr Graham Field, Flemington Library, 313 Racecourse Road, 8 pm. (Enquiries Joyce, 337-6228).

26 July St James' Old Cathedral: The Church of the Pioneers', Helen Carolane, Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Cnr. Warrigal Road & Princes Highway, Oakleigh, 8 pm.

### LONDON FAMILY HISTORY SEMINARS

Sunday 15 & 29 August 2-5 pm. or Thursday 16 & 30 September 7-10 pm.

AIGS Library, 6 Lavelle Street, Blackburn, 3130. Cost \$40 each; Enquiries (03) 720-4030.

## NATIONAL TRUST SEMINAR

"RESEARCHING BUILDINGS AND GARDENS", Sunday 11 July 1993.

All-day seminar. Melbourne Town Hall, featuring leading heritage experts: architectural historian Professor Miles Lewis; Trust historian Dr Celestina Sagazio; architectural historian and interior design Robyn Riddett; horticulturist John Hawker; chairman Allan Willingham, architect and historian.

Ideal for house owners and restorers, local and family historians, local government officers and heritage professionals. Cost: \$75, conc. \$65 (incl. morning and afternoon tea and lunch). Registration: Dr Celestina Sagazio (03) 654-4711.

FROM  
R.H.S.V. HISTORY NEWS  
JULY 1993

## 'DAD'S WAR STUFF'

10-27 AUGUST, Queen's Hall, Parliament House, Melbourne

An exhibition of selected memorabilia of George Auchterlonie, a Lighthorseman who served in the 8th Lighthorse Regiment in the Middle East in World War I.

Enquiries and information contact:

Glorie Auchterlonie

3 Valerie Court

Morwell 3840. Tel. (051) 344-602

or

Allan Box

School of Education

Monash University

Churchill 3842. Tel. (051) 226-375

## IONA PRIMARY SCHOOL CENTENARY

A public meeting was held recently to organise celebrations for the Iona Primary School Centenary on 9 July 1994.

A committee was formed and members would be very pleased to receive as much information as possible about the school, past students and photographs, and hope to produce a publication to mark this special occasion.

A large number of children attended the school in its early years before the original building was destroyed by fire. The present school was opened in 1914.

A display of photographs will be a feature of the celebrations and we hope to identify as many names of people as possible.

Listed below are some names of early families attending the school and the committee would like to make contact with as many descendants of these, as possible.

SHANDLEY	SCHURMANN	BASSETT
NATTRASS	MASTERS	GULLY
HEATLEY	DAW	FORSYTH
MILES	MILLER	ROFFEY
FITZGERALD	DUNCAN	BARNETT
STRAFFORD	TUTTON	WITHAM
SPENCE	MAYBURY	GAGHIN
AHEARN	O'LEARY	LEASK
GRUMMISCH	CREELY	DESSENT
BURLEIGH	HOBSON	SCHMUTTER
FEILD	KAVANAGH	SULLIVAN
MATCHETT	HOWIE	STEWART

If people would like to contribute in any way with information, photographs, etc., please contact the Centenary Committee, C/o Iona Primary School, RMB 2500, Garfield 3814, or telephone Margaret Cousins on (056) 295-511.