

# MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

published monthly, except December

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm  
in St. Andrews Presbyterian Church Hall

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MARCH 1992

### WELCOME TO THE MARCH NEWSLETTER

This month, we present a brief history of the Keegan family of Morwell, compiled by Mr. Jack Keegan of Mont Albert.

A successful Back-to-Hernes Oak was held on the weekend of 7/8 March and an account of the newly published book "Across the Old Bush Track" appears inside.

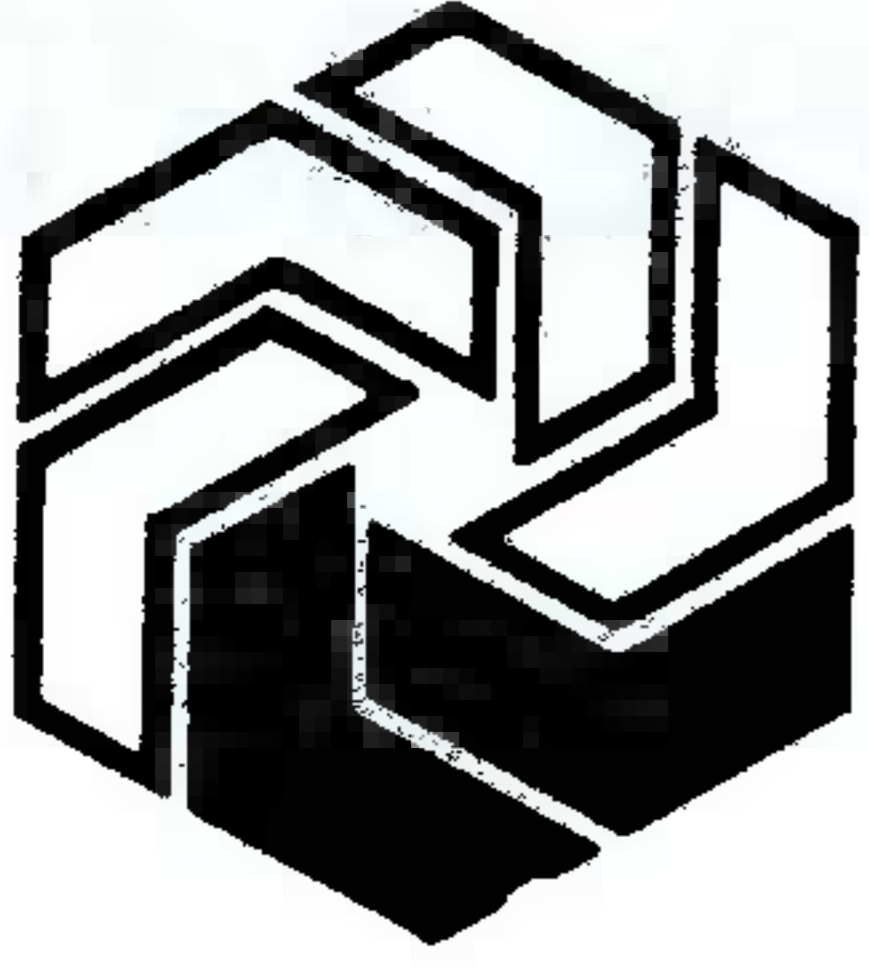
The big news in March 1892 seems to have been the St. Patrick's Day races at Yinnar and the Morwell Turf Club meeting, both held on the same day, and, if your eyes are sharp, you may be entertained by the very public airing of an argument between Mr. Quigley and Mr. McDonald which began in front of "the populace of Yinnar, to wit some 30 or 40 people", ended up in the Morwell Police Court, and was finally thrown out of court, the Bench considering that the evidence was "most unsatisfactory."

Question: What is the 'fangh-a-ballagh' business carried out by Mr. Jensen? (See Morwell Turf Club report).

The ANNUAL MEETING of Morwell Historical Society Inc. will be held on Tuesday April 21st - you will be reminded of this in our next newsletter, but please make a note of it now.

The next ordinary meeting will be held on TUESDAY, MARCH 17th.

Hope to see you there!



# LATROBE VALLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY

P.O. Box 815, MORWELL, 3840 (051) 34 1047

Your ref

Our ref

11th March 1991

Members may be interested in the new edition of Gippsland Heritage Journal on cassette which has just become available at the library.

The Cassette has been very professionally produced by staff from Monash University College, Gippsland and is read by Gippslanders.

This edition of the cassette is taken from volumes 1 & 2 of the Journal. It features articles on Louie Riggall, Paris based Gippsland artist of the pre World War I period; Ada Crossley's concert tour through Gippsland in 1908 with contemporary accounts of Percy Grainger and his walk from Yarram to Sale; and a fascinating account of Ann Currie, a selector's wife, living at Lardner's Track in the late 1800's. Well worth a listen.

## LAUNCH OF MICROFILM READER/PRINTER

On Wednesday, March 11, the new microfilm/microfiche reader/printer at Morwell Library was officially launched by Councillor Merv Massey. Representatives from local schools, libraries, city of Morwell and Morwell Historical Society attended the launch and were able to try out the new machine, which will be of great value to local genealogists, historians and students.

The following local newspapers are available on microfilm at either Morwell (M) or Traralgon (T) Libraries and film from one library can be requested for viewing at the other library if this is more convenient.

Drouin: 'Gippsland Independent & Express' 3/1/1879 - 5/1/1921 (T)

'Morwell Advertiser' 30/10/1886 - 28/6/1965 (M)

'Morwell & Yinnar Gazette' (to 19/1/1894 as the 'Morwell & Mirboo North Gazette') 6/10/1885 - 5/4/1916 (M)

Port Albert: 'Gippsland Guardian' 5/10/1855 - 13/7/1866 (T)

'Rosedale Courier' 3/8/1889 - 23/12/1920 (T)

Sale: 'Gippsland Times' 16/6/1861 - 5/7/1888 (T)

Traralgon: 'Gippsland Farmers Journal' renamed 'Traralgon Journal' Feb 1923 - currently being filmed 1887 - 1930

'Traralgon Record' 14/12/1883 - 22/12/1932 (T)

Following are a few items from the first issue of the Morwell and Mirboo North Gazette - October 6, 1885:

- Local council delegates (includes Traralgon Shire) meet to discuss special Govt. assistance for the construction of tramways.
- Great necessity to have gatekeeper's quarters erected and a gatekeeper located at level crossing in Commercial Rd. Morwell.
- Common practice to give late mail to guard on the evening train to ensure delivery first thing next morning. Now all letters handed to guards must have a late fee attached, or have double postage charged on delivery. This is not fair as nearly all other stations have a letter box in which late mail is accepted. Morwell does not.
- Morwell Rifle club members receive their first lesson in drill practice - good turnout from club's 20 members. Concert to aid Rifle Club funds to be held in Mechanic's Institute.
- Absolute necessity to run two trains a day to Mirboo.
- Mr. W. Livermore, Professor of Music at Royal Guildhall School of Music, London will open class in Morwell for voice production and cultivation.

"ACROSS THE OLD BUSH TRACK" - Dorothy Squires-Taylor.

On Saturday March 7 at the Back-to-Hernes Oak celebrations, Morwell Mayor John Guy launched the book "Across the Old Bush Track - The History and Story of the Haunted Hills, later renamed Hernes Oak, Victoria."

The little town of Hernes Oak had a short life but a merry one if the recollections of a number of its residents are any indication.

Started as a "dormitory" for families of men seeking work on the S.E.C's new undertaking at Yallourn in the early 1920s, it quickly grew from a shanty town into a thriving, close-knit settlement with a strong community spirit which lasted until the end of its life when the land on which it was built was required for S.E.C. expansion. As the author remarks in her Preface:..."it is ironic that it was... the S.E.C. that sealed the end of Hernes Oak: the industry that gave it life in the first place."

There are many stories about how the Haunted Hills got their name but the common thread in all of them is that cattle being driven through the hills became unsettled and inclined to stampede. When settlers came to the area they retained the name of the hills for their little township, until 1939, when, following the 'haunted' theme., it was renamed Hernes oak, probably after Shakespeare's character Herne the Hunter ("Merry Wives of Windsor") who appeared at intervals under an oak tree in Windsor great park and frightened the cattle.

"Across the Old Bush Track" aims to record the history of Hernes Oak township, which spanned little more than 50 years, and this it does admirably. Extracts from the minutes of the Progress Association, the Hall Committee, the Water Trust, the Recreation Reserve Committee and various sporting clubs, together with selections from the Hernes Oak school newspaper "oak Leaves" and newspaper reports of various social events, bear witness to the strong community spirit which existed in the little township. The book contains many photographs of people, places and events but the most fascinating and enjoyable parts, the parts that really bring Hernes Oak back to life, are the memoirs of many of its former residents. It is obvious, reading their recollections, that Hernes oak was a happy place . Life was often difficult, especially for the women struggling to make homes for their families but it seems that most who lived there have only fond memories.

"Across the Old Bush Track" is dedicated by the author to "my mother with love, and to all the mothers who endured the hardships of those times; also to my grandchildren that they may have a record of that part of their heritage."

## St. Patrick's Day.

## RACING.

## Yinnar Race Meeting.

Patrons—P. C. Mason, A. C. Groom, M.L.A.  
H. Wicks, Esq.

Officers—Judge, Jno. Cahir, Esq; Starter,  
Thos. Walsh, Esq.; Clerk of Scales, G.  
Karl; Clerk of Course, Thos. Keogh;  
Treasurer, A. Donaldson; Hon. Secretary,  
J. Butler.

Stewards—G. Firmin, T. Walsh, A. Donald-  
son, H. Solomon, F. W. Edney, C. F. Bates,  
T. Keogh, J. Keogh, F. Koenig, J. Donald-  
son, J. Penycuik, B. Turley, J. Bintonill,  
J. Cahir, W. E. Kemp, J. Butler, W. F.  
O'Grady.

Notwithstanding the Morwell Turf Club holding their meeting on the same day as the above club a very good crowd assembled at the old trysting place, Park, and the races throughout were fairly contested. Mr. Walsh was at his post as usual and got the fields away to nice even starts. Mr. T. Keogh once again kept the course clear, Mr. Firmin, who was to have acted as judge was absent, but his place was efficiently filled by Mr. J. Cahir, whilst Mr. Geo. Karl officiated as clerk of scales. All other officers filled their positions ably, including of course, the well-known secretary, Mr. J. Butler. The weather was really lovely, and the course was in good going order. The Trial Stakes was the first item on the programme, and was won very easily by Mr. T. Walsh's Maude, with young Coleman in the pigskin. In all eight started Allegro ranking as first favorite, who, however run off, and spoilt whatever chance he had. The Selling Hack Race brought four into the straight and secured an easy win for Anagram, who beat Maryvale with the utmost ease, Paddy who was an even money favorite being third. The next item was the St. Patrick's Day Stakes, and eight sported silk, True Love and Princess being firm favorites at even money, and the running in this race proved the judgement of the punters, for Princess won a good race from True Love, with Disowned third. The Galloway Handicap the next brought out five, and resulted in Countess getting home in front of Paddy. The latter started at evens, and Solomon says he would have won only he started off the wrong leg. The Trot only induced five to the starting post, with Lubra at the head of affairs. Mr. Morrow's mare, however, was defeated by Ruby rather easily, Dick being third. The last race of the day the Pony Race was won by Mt. J. O'Hara's little mare Dolly.

Altogether the meeting was a success and was thoroughly enjoyed by all present. Mr. A. Donaldson, who was at his old post at the gates can vouch for the truth of the former part of our statement.

## Morwell Turf Club.

President.—J. Brown, Esq.; Vice President,  
—W. Murdoch, Esq.; Judge.—J. D. Laid-  
law Esq.; Starter.—J. English, Esq.;  
Clerk of Scales.—J. Donaldson, Esq.;  
Clerk of Course.—J. Jensen, Esq.  
Stewards.—Messrs. C. P. Nind, J. Graham,  
M. Mulcare, Dr. Moir, J. Cavanagh, B.  
Turnley, A. Brown, H. Solomon, W. Edney  
J. Allen, J. Porter.

The meeting held yesterday under the auspices of the above club was a very decided success, there being fully 500 or 600 present, and the fields being exceptionally large, and Mr. J. Harris is certainly to be complimented on the arrangements as carried out in detail. Mr. J. D. Laidlaw acted as judge, and as usual gave every satisfaction, Mr. J. Jensen did the "Fangh-a-ballagh" business as regards the course, and Messrs. English and G. Manning did the starting between them. The former having to leave after the Galloway Handicap. All the other officers performed their various offices satisfactorily. It is only fair to say that this meeting was one of the best yet held on the course, and the promoters cannot fail to be pleased at the result. As regards the racing the finishes, especially in the St. Patrick's Day Stakes, Galloway Handicap, and Maiden Hurdles were good, and the fields large, in nearly every case. The Steeplechase of course was the greatest race of the day, the excitement being intense, the race home between the first three being pretty close.

## Severance.

The following notification appeared in last week's Government Gazette—

SHIRES OF TRARALGON & NARRACAN  
Proposed Severance of Areas and Constitu-  
tion of a New Municipality.

IN pursuance of the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1890 (No. 1112, section 43) the substance and prayer of a Petition in accordance with the said Act, which has been presented to his Excellency the Governor, are published:—

The petitioners purport to constitute majorities of the ratepayers in the respective portions of the Shires of Traralgon and Narracan which are described in their petition, and they desire that the areas so described may be severed from the Shires of Traralgon and Narracan respectively, and constituted a new municipality under the name or title of "Shire of Morwell." Areas described in petition: The west riding of the Shire of Traralgon, and so much of the Shire of Narracan as is included within a line commencing at a point on the south bank of the Latrobe river; from thence running due south to the highest point on the Haunted Hill; thence south to the Gippsland railway line; thence along McDonald's Track to its junction with Stockyard Creek Track; thence along said track to north corner of Mr. Hart's block; thence west to the western corner of Cook's block, south to G. K. Townsend's, west to J. Cornthwaite's, south to G. Mair's, and west to the parish boundary of Narracan South; thence south to the shire boundary; and thence following that boundary easterly and northerly to the Latrobe river, and following that river westerly to the commencing point. The petitioners consider that the interests of the district urgently demand that the proposed new shire should be formed and therefore pray that His Excellency in Council may be pleased to sever the said areas, and constitute them a separate municipality under the name and title of the "Shire of Morwell." Notices for the petitioners may be served on William Murdoch, Esq., J.P., Morwell, GEO. GRAHAM, Commissioner of Public Works.

## THE KEEGAN FAMILY

Philip Keegan was born in Ireland in 1831 and arrived in Melbourne in 1855. He went to the goldfields at Chewton, where he selected land, and in 1860 married Mary Ann McDonald, aged 16.

In 1877, he and his family, by then including eight children, moved to Morwell, where Philip worked on the building of the railway as a platelayer.

The family selected a block of 320 acres on the west side of Hazelwood Road (in the vicinity of the present Keegan St.) and the Keegan house was one of several in which Catholic religious services were held before the building of the first Catholic church in 1892.

Philip died in October 1900, aged 69 and is buried in Hazelwood Cemetery. His wife Mary Ann was buried at Hazelwood in 1912, aged 67.

John Henry Keegan, eldest son of Philip and Mary Ann, came to Morwell at the age of 15, and worked with his father on the construction of the railway line. He married Mary Roche in 1889 and gave his occupation as 'farmer'. Their son John (Jack) appears in the photo of the Morwell Brass Band on p.93 'Glimpses of Our Past' and in the photo of the 1909 Morwell football team (p.104 'Glimpses').

John and his brother Frank enlisted in 1915 from Morwell and served in Gallipoli and France. Both were wounded - John lost a leg. Frank is listed on the Morwell war memorial but not John.

Molly, daughter of John Henry (sister of John and Frank) married Ted Maxwell and they purchased a dairy farm on the Morwell River near Morwell North. Ted died in 1956, Molly in 1960. Their children Jack, Lola and Moira Maxwell lived near Morwell for many years. The family farm was acquired by the S.E.C. when the Morwell River was diverted to accommodate the Yallourn Open Cut extensions.

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### A WALK ALONG THE RAILWAY LINE - Sunday April 5th

Boolarra Historical Society invites anyone interested to take part in a walk along the old Morwell-Mirboo Railway Line on Sunday, April 5th. Starting from the Information Bay, Railway park, Boolarra, at 11 am, participants will walk along the walking track which follows the picturesque route of the old railway line. Historical sites such as a black coal mine and old settlements will be visited along the way. B.Y.O. lunch to eat en route. Arrangements will need to be made for transport from the end of the walk back to Boolarra.

Boolarra Historical Museum will be open 11am - 4pm and afternoon tea will be available. Enquiries: Mrs. Mengar Hibbins (051)696210