

THE MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

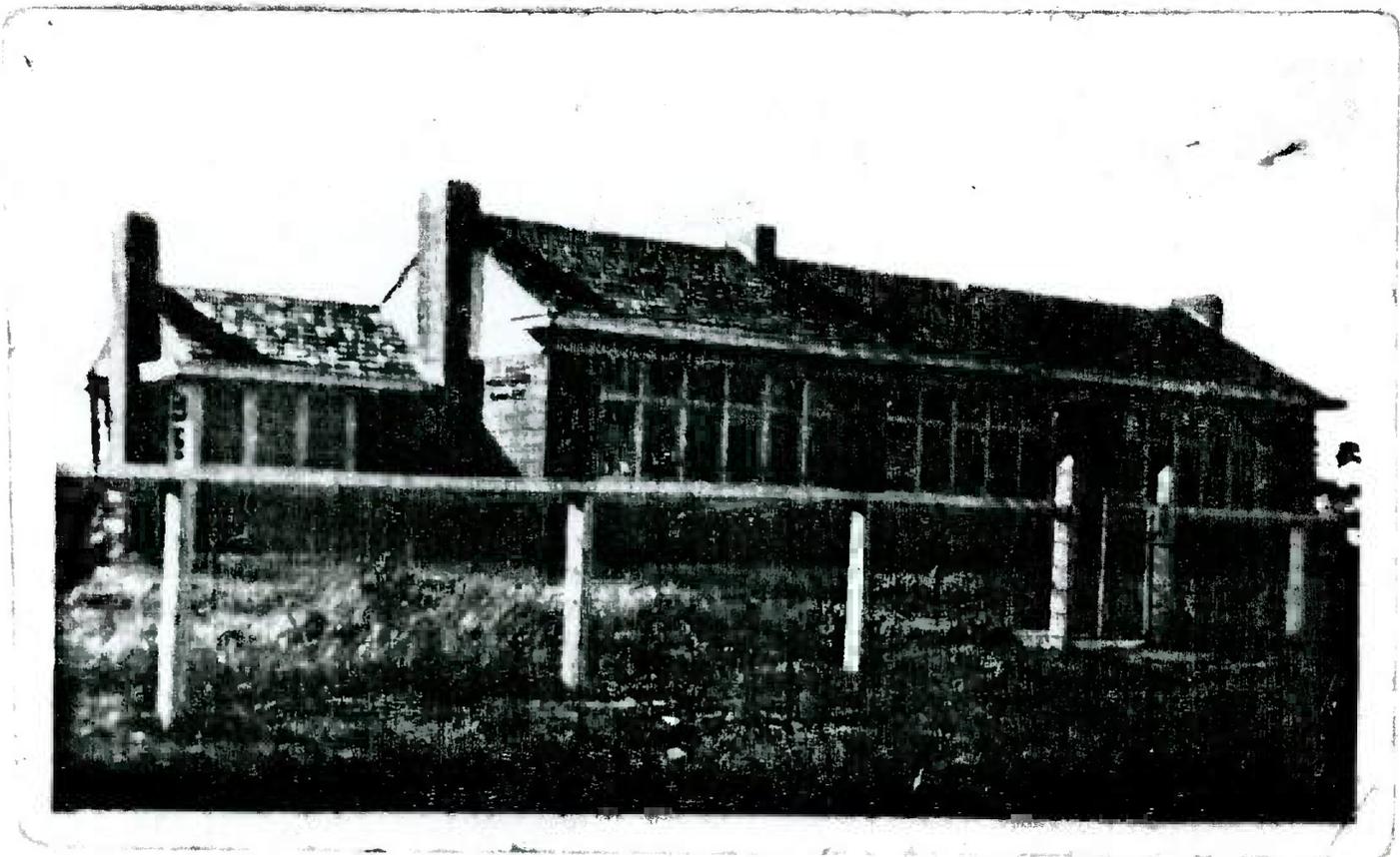
Published every month except December.

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

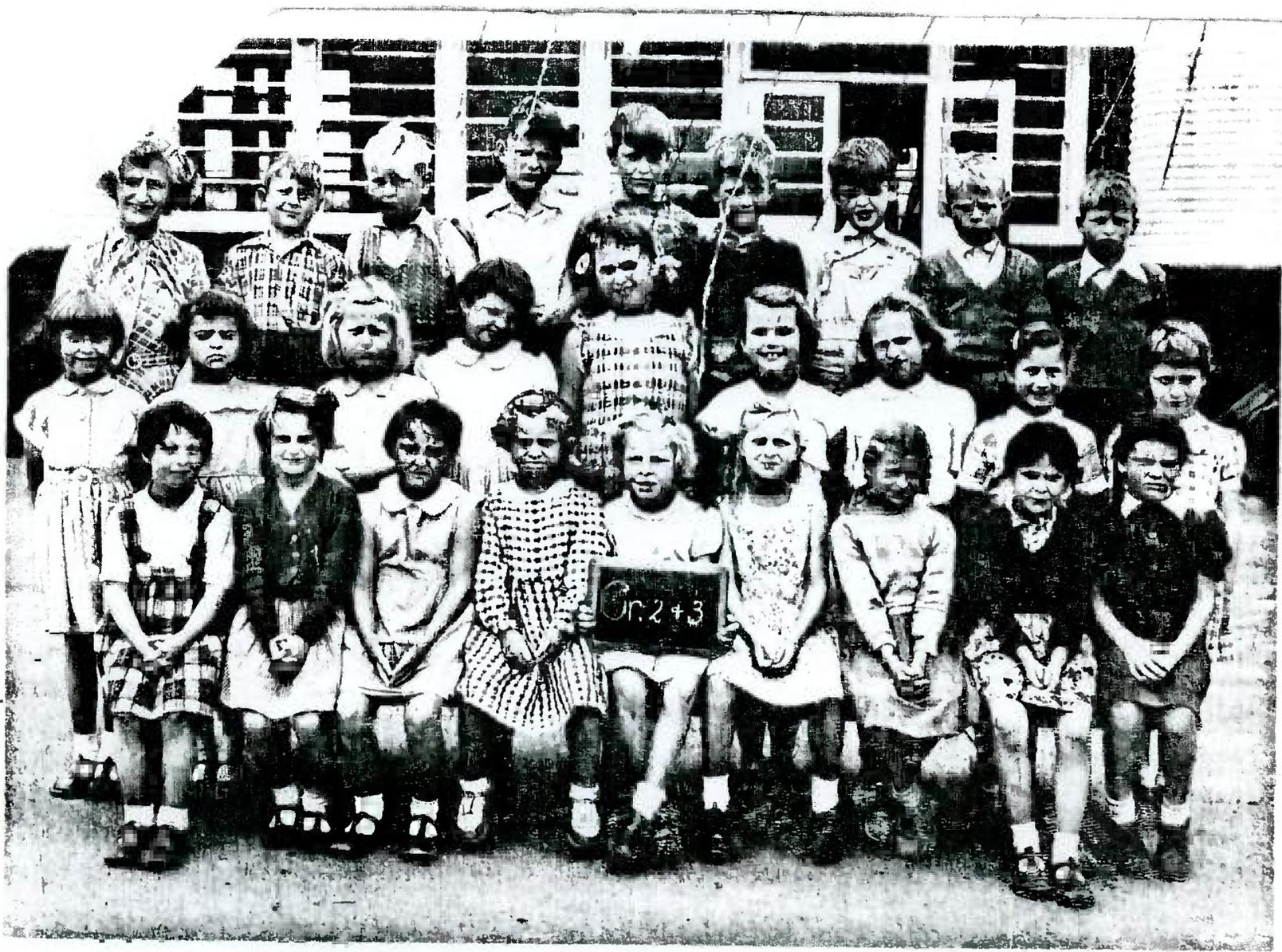
WELCOME TO THE NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

First some points from our October meeting:

1. It was decided that there would be no meeting held in December. Thus our final meeting for 1986 will be on Tuesday 18th November.
2. Excursions to be arranged for the summer period~~s~~ are (a) Driffield (b) Yinnar-Hazelwood (c) Gunyah.
3. Referring back to the two palm trees at the end of Commercial Rd. (see Sept. newsletter), it was decided to follow up the question of ownership of the land on which the palm trees are situated.
4. Mrs. Maddern will be contacted re a suitable date for "unveiling" of I.T. Maddern Memorial Seat.
5. Shire Council to be approached re the possibility of (a) Setting up a tourist information centre. (b) Producing a brochure setting up^{out} tourist attractions of the Shire.
6. Our speakers for this meeting were Messres John Bull, Ted Hammond and Lou Bond. Their interesting recollections mainly of the 1944 fires were recorded on tape and this will be added to the other items and memorabilia the society has in its keeping.
7. We received a request from the Range~~s~~ of Morwell National Park for any material (photos, documents etc) suitable for copying to display in a visitors centre at the Park.
8. A cordial invitation came from Traralgon Historical Society to join their excursion to Kerg~~h~~ard on Nov. 23. More details of this will be given at our November meeting.



Morwell Bridge S.S. 2439
Situated at Morwell West



Mrs. Cafiso with her class at Morwell West
(Morwell Bridge S.S. 2439) c. 1953

Hazelwood North School No. 2382 - This school opened under the name of Maryvale East in 1881. Those who proposed the school were Inspector Tebburn, Messrs. Kirwin, McGauran, Hogan, Thompson, Watson, Junier, Flewin and Minchington. It was half time during 1883 to 1891. The original building was off Firran's Lane, one mile north of the existing one. The name was changed to Hazelwood North in 1894. The first teacher was Miss Amy Bock from 1881 to 1883. She later transferred to the Bennett's Creek School. In 1889 the portable room was shifted from W. Watson's place to its present site in Church Road. There had been argument as to the type of building because it was thought that a school would be erected in Morwell. A new school to replace this one was erected in February 1957.

Names on the first roll of Maryvale East School dated 1881 include - Thompson, Flewin, McGauran, Kirwin, Watson, Robinson, McKaskill, Shaw Sommers, Howard, English, Marshall, Bolding, McManara, Jope, Maxwell, Howe, Hentschell, Sanders, Plant, Biles, Gooding, McInnes, Poore, Flndlay, Blair, Clark, Molrah, Porter.

The school house was moved from near Grigg's to Firmin's and added to their house. Residents remember Mrs. Firmin proudly serving afternoon tea to her guests in the old school house.

Children often walked long distances to these schools. The lucky ones had ponies. The Clarke family had a novel way of travelling. They arrived each morning at the Hazelwood North school by sledge - Tom drove the horse with his brother Bert and his 4 sisters sitting on the sledge.

They were probably envied by all those who had to walk and I think many a child being driven to school in a luxurious car today would think a ride on the sledge much more fun.

Another pupil, Shirley Mills, established a record by never missing a day during her eight years attendance at the school.

School teachers have come and gone over the years and have all had their influence on the children of their day. One early teacher, Mr. Wesley Maclean, came back for a visit after 50 years and was very pleasantly surprised to find quite a few of his old pupils still in the district. Another teacher, Mr. D. Cahill, taught here for 15 years later teaching the children of some of his earlier pupils.

In 1954 the Secondary School Bus began taking pupils to Morwell High School. Before that only those who were able to attend boarding school or board in a town received any secondary education. Today buses run to Maryvale High School and Morwell Technical School.

There is so much traffic on Hazelwood roads today that it is too dangerous for children to ride ponies or bicycles so most parents drive their children to the primary school.

Mails and Telephone - May 23rd, 1877, was the date on which an unofficial post office opened at Hazelwood with John Gooding serving as postmaster at an annual allowance of £.5. This allowance was based on the volume of business done at the office.

At the time of the opening of the office mail was carried by coach to and from Melbourne and Sale by way of Oakleigh, Springvale, Dandenong, Derwick, Pakenham, Drouin, Buln Buln, Shady Creek, Moe, Morwell, Traarigon and Rosedale. There was a six day a week service and the distance travelled was 140 miles. This service was discontinued upon the completion of the railway line between Morwell and Moe on the 1st December, 1878 and mail was then carried by rail.

On 1st October, 1877 a mail service was commenced "to and from Hazelwood and Morwell Railway Station, at a rate of £26/8/- per annum". The mode of travel was by horseback, distance 12 miles, and the service was three days a week. From 7th February 1879 the service was increased "to and from Morwell Railway Station and Hazelwood, six days a week".

The Victorian Gazette, 1879, gives an interesting description of Hazelwood -

"HAZELWOOD (Co. Victoria) is a postal township in the electoral district of South Gipps Land. It is situated on the Gel Hole creek, other neighbouring creeks being Billy's creek, Middle creek, and Bunnetts creek, which take their rise in the Hoddle range (a portion of which is in Hazelwood), and flow into the Morwell river. The district is an agricultural and pastoral one. The Morwell township joins, but the township is 4 miles distant from the centre of Hazelwood. The communication is by horse and dray. From Melbourne (92 1/2 miles) the route is by horse from Oakleigh to Morwell. Two trains each way daily. The country is favourable, and is, at the base of the mountains, low and marshy. It is thickly timbered, and in some parts very scrubby. Sandstone, with indications of coal, in the Hoddle range. The population numbers about 300. There is a State school-house, in which ministers of the Presbyterian and Wesleyan churches preach once a fortnight alternately".

Mary A. Gooding was appointed postmistress in 1879 and in 1880 her salary was increased to £21 per annum. Mary Gooding is still listed as postmistress in 1887 records, the last year in which the names of postmasters/postmistresses were listed in Post Office Reports.

A mail service between Hazelwood and Yinnar via Yinnar State School, 2 days a week, was commenced in 1883 and in 1884 "to and from Toolarra, in connection with the Hazelwood and Yinnar service".

By 1886 the postmistress was receiving an allowance of £23 per annum and the number of letters handled during that year was 1,677.

The Postal Guide for October, 1889, shows the location of the Hazelwood Post Office as being at the Railway Station. On 27-3-1893 the post office closed.

There is an entry in the Victoria Post Office Directory 1893-4 which lists Hazelwood as "Buln Buln co. 92 miles E. by rail from Melbourne. State school; post office; agric. and dairy farming; a postal dist. but not a township." Then follows 3 names -

FIRMIN, Alfred, Carrier
 JONES, John, Teacher
 WALDON, Bessie, Teacher.

Mr. Frimin probably carried the mail and the 2 teachers probably sorted it at the schools. This was a common procedure in early times.

On 13th November, 1923 a Telephone office opened at Hazelwood North and at the end of 1924 there was 1 subscriber and 1 public telephone. This office closed on 23rd January, 1928. It was at the home of Mr. Joe Bolding and Miss Thelma Bolding was in charge. Later many Hazelwood North residents were on a party line from Morwell.

On 1st May, 1924 a Telephone and Telegraph office opened at Hazelwood and by 3rd December there were 8 subscribers. The number had increased to 15 by 30th June, 1932. In 1951 the manual exchange was switched to automatic and the Hazelwood office closed.

A Telephone office was opened at Hazelwood South on 12th February 1925 but this office remained open for only 6 months, closing on 5th August, 1925.

The Tragedy of the 1944 Fires -

Fire had been a very real fear during each autumn until rain came for many years. Homes have been destroyed by fires that got out of control during burning off operations but the biggest and most tragic of all fires in the district was the disastrous blaze of February 14th 1944.

From Moe the fire swept through to Yarram in one day causing tragic loss of life and leaving devastation behind it.

An extraordinary set of conditions kept it burning and travelling too fast to be controlled. The summer had been a dry one and the wind that day was from the north and dry and fast. Pieces of burning bark, hay and grass blew away, setting new areas alight. No area escaped. The smoke was so dense, people and animals were at a loss to know where to go for safety. It was difficult to know whether they were going out of danger or into it.

Many of the young men were away at the war and others had gone to help fight a fire burning earlier at Traralgon South. Neighbours used the party line telephone to warn each other of the approaching danger.

It was a day of tragedy, of courage and of heroism. Lives were lost trying to help others. Some houses were saved because a break had been burnt around them previously. A shortage of water hampered the fire fighters. Most people depended on tanks and dams and both were low.

One family sheltered in a water trough and others in dams while the fire swept over or around them. One lady carrying her baby wrapped in a wet blanket sheltered in a dam having filled all available buckets with water. Her husband and the local teacher were fortunately able to save the house by throwing this water on the fence as it caught alight. Another resident led her aged father to safety by the dam, spraying him with water from a watering can as sparks flew around them, thus saving their lives but their home and all their possessions were burnt.

One man stayed at his home determined to ^{save} it or perish with it. He sheltered on the clear side of the house till the main blast passed by, then rushed out and managed to put out the parts that caught alight but all his sheds were burnt.

In another home Mr. and Mrs. Percy Jones who tried to rescue Miss Hare and Mrs. Dwyer all lost their lives. On nearby farms Mr. C. Tanner, Mrs. Woolacott and Mr. A. Thompson perished in the flames or died later of burns. Mr. Woolacott was also very badly burned.

It was some time after the fire before it was known if some people were safe as telephone lines and bridges were gone making communication impossible.

Many people were almost blinded by smoke and others were suffering from shock. Everyone rallied to help those worse off than themselves. Those whose homes still stood gave shelter and comfort to neighbours who had lost theirs.

Mr. Dick Cahill, the local teacher, will long be remembered for the help he gave. The school didn't burn as it had sufficient bare sand around it to save it. The hall close by was completely destroyed. As well as helping fight the fire, Mr. Cahill, who lived in Morwell and rode a push bicycle out each day, managed to cross the creeks although the bridges were burnt.

He became messenger, shopper and 'finder out' of all sorts of things. The eye drops he brought out were a great help as so many were suffering with sore eyes.

Wedding Couples of Yesteryears



Other matters brought up at the October meeting were:

1. The competition for history students(Secondary) 'The History of My Home'. We have printed here a copy of the letter the secretary sent to all Secondary High Schools in Morwell. Up to the date of our meeting we had had no response. If we have to abandon the idea this year we may have more success at some future date.
2. Also enclosed is a letter from a Mrs. Heathcote which explains itself. As the Traralgon Society could not help the letter was passed on to us. Does anyone know of a Malahide farm at Hazelwood or have any memory of the name Willan at Maryvale?

NOVEMBER MEETING

TUESDAY 7.30 pm - 18/11/1986

at Collins St. State School Library.

Being our last meeting this year we hope to make it especially enjoyable. We intend to have supper and a couple of competitions to add interest. We ask all members who can possibly do so to make a special effort to come. If you would like to bring a friend they would be very welcome. Also could you bring a plate of some eats to help with supper?

136 Harrington St.
Warrnambool, 3280

24th August, 1986

The Secretary,
Traralgon Historical Society,
114 Gray Street,
Traralgon, 3844.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am researching my family history and have recently *Precious* obtained the death certificate for my great-grandfather, ~~Proctor~~ Clark Willan, which shows that he died at Hazelwood on 16-4-1900 aged 88 years. The informant was his son, William Isaac Willan whose residence is given as Morwell.

According to "Victoria & its Metropolis", P.C. Willan was the owner of the Malahide farm of 200 acres at Maryville when the book was originally published in 1888.

I feel that Maryville should possibly be Maryvale given his address at the time of his death, especially as in the ten lines he gets in the book there are three errors that I know of already. So far I have not been able to trace what happened to his son, William. Would your society have any information in your files regarding either of these two men? Could you please advise me what a search of your records would cost?

Do you know if there was a Malahide farm at Hazelwood one hundred years ago?

Looking forward to hearing from you soon,

Yours sincerely,

Jill D. Heathcote (Mrs.)

P.S. My grandmother was married in Traralgon on 2-1-1888 and her place of residence is given as Morwell, so presumably she was living with her brother then.

17th October 1986

Dear History Student,

Morwell Historical Society invites you to enter a competition entitled

THE HISTORY OF MY HOME

Perhaps you think your home is quite ordinary but you may be surprised at what you can discover about it.

A few things you could investigate are

- Who built the house you live in? When?
- Who first owned the land on which it is built?
(the aborigines, then who?)
- Who, or what, was your street named after?

You can get help with your research from

- Morwell Public Library
- Morwell Shire records
- Housing Commission
- You could also ask some of the older residents in your area for their help.

Your entry should be about 250-300 words in length, presented in any way you like and if possible illustrated with sketches, photographs, maps etc.

- First prize will be a record voucher and a book voucher - total value \$25.
- Second prize will be a record voucher - total value \$15.
- Closing date is Monday, November 10th.

Please print your name, address, age and school on your entry.

The Historical Society will photo-copy all entries and the originals will be returned to you.

The prize-winning entries will be published in the Society's monthly Newsletter.

Entries and enquiries to Mrs.E.McMASTER

2 HAROLD ST.

MORWELL

PHONE 34 1149

GUNYAH

The Gunyah Hotel, Store, Butchery and Post Office was one of the focal points of these settlers. It was built and owned by Mr. Donald Rogers in 1900 on the north side of the Grand Ridge Rd., west of the Hatchery Rd. All that remains to show the site are cypress trees and fruit trees among the blackberry brambles. Once there were saleyards there and cricket was even played on the ridge west of the cypress trees. Mr. Rogers sold out and moved to Boolarra where the family still has a butcher's shop. Others to run the Hotel were Messers. Williams, Carter, Boyson, and Miss Lawless who was the publican when the Hotel was destroyed by fire in 1939.

Mr. Fretwell, who was Bank Manager at Toora used to ride a horse out to Gunyah, via the Toora-Gunyah Road, on the Gunyah sale days, to handle business for his clients. He had the misfortune, one windy day, to be knocked from his horse by a falling branch. However, although he layed unconscious for some time, he was able to carry on without any bad results.

In the Ryton, Wonyip, Gunyah and Budgeree districts, where allotments went through to the rivers, a chain on each side of the river was left as river frontage for fishing, picnicing and watering stock. Landholders could, however, lease these frontages providing they left access to the public.

The first landholders leased large areas and then were given the option of selecting 640 acres (1square mile) of their choice. They would then own the surface of this land, and underground as far as anyone could dig. Later a limit of depth was imposed and the lower areas belonging to the Crown. Still later, the allotments were reduced in size to 320 acres (1 mile x $\frac{1}{2}$ mile).

Some of the county was kept as Reserves, the biggest in the Strzelecki area being the Gunyah Gunyah Forest. Most however, are Water Reserves under the jurisdiction of the Crown Lands Department. There is one area at Wonyip set apart from the Recreation Reserve. Another Reserve was left at Budgeree to be used for an Agricultural College.

The first of the families were the selectors and their families. These selectors were offered blocks when the land was opened for settlement in the 1900s. These men had only explorers' and surveyors' tracks to follow in order to get their blocks. They then had to clear an area for their homes and some of their farms.

The Strzelecki hills had had a considerable acreage of bush and timber felled by 1905 and when a good burning day came in 1906 some owners decided to burn this, creating a tremendous holocaust, nearly burning all the Strzeleckis out. Huts, houses, stock and native fauna were destroyed and there was some loss of life. Messrs. Crisp and Brown were two who died at Wonyip.

The above method of clearing the hills was carried on until it was realised that uncontrolled burning was dangerous and often did more harm than good.

REMINISCENCES OF AN EX-RESIDENT OF
MORWELL WEST

by: J.L.Cafiso

"I'm sorry. This is the only house I have on my books," said the Estate Agent. The year was 1950. My husband had just begun work at the S.E.C., Yallourn and we needed a roof over our heads. We looked at the house the Estate Agent referred to. It wasn't exactly a dream home - on the outskirts of Morwell, jerry built, unfurnished, no electricity and the only water supply - a small tank.

We despondently made our way back to Yallourn to visit a friend. This was indeed a lucky visit, "What coincidence," said the friend. "Just today a workmate told me his house at Morwell West was for sale. They are leaving the district." This sounded a better proposition and it was.

So it came to pass, we settled at Morwell West at the corner of Old Melbourne Rd and Kaye St and never regretted it. We had the best of both worlds - country and urban. About 4½ acres of land went with the house. We had a tennis court in front, a little bungalow, and numerous sheds at the back. The sheds included a garage which housed Joe's motor bike and our old black Studebaker car (the latter a very temperamental lady, although quite regal in appearance). We also had Baldy the placid cow, who supplied us with generous amounts of rich milk and its by-product delicious cream and home made butter. Then there were our 'chooks' and our home grown vegetables.

The solid brick school with its spacious grounds was just across the road and would, we thought, be very handy for the family we planned to have. It was not long before we discovered that friendly helpful neighbours added to the attractions of our new abode.

Having spent my youth in the flat dry northern plains of Victoria I found the Gippsland scenery indeed "a thing of beauty and a joy for-ever". One could wander down the hill to Morwell Bridge where there was a natural swimming pool which had been divided with a little human help, into a deep pool with a diving board and a shallow paddling pool for the little ones and even a little sandy beach.

Although it was situated at Morwell West the school was known as Morwell Bridge. It was built, so we were told, to replace the wooden building at Morwell Bridge, that had been burnt down in the fires (of 1939 or 1944?), just at the time of our arrival. There were about 160 students at the school. Besides children from Morwell Bridge and Morwell West there were about 80 children (two bus loads) being brought from Newborough. Education facilities had caught up with the British migrants being brought out to the district. So it was, that I responded to an urgent appeal from Mr. Chas Jackson, the H.T. at the time, to relieve the acute shortage of teachers. Thus I found myself back in the classroom before the end of 1950. Little did I expect then that I would be spending most of the next 30 years teaching in the district, in various schools and in various capacities.

At the moment I am looking at a photo of my class about 1953 at Morwell West - Grades 2 and 3. The photo has been damaged but I am hoping it can be photocopied and put in this newsletter. How many of our members will recognize the children in the photo? Here are just a few surnames in the group - Foster, Cain, Moyes, Williams, Kulbaro, Arbrecht, Chinnock, Godridge, Thurgood and Kennedy.

I am writing this on Sunday November 9th 1986. I have just returned from a re-union of ex-students of Morwell Bridge and Morwell West. What an interesting and enjoyable re-union it was, and how our tongues have wagged. There was too, inevitably a little sadness for there is nothing now to mark the spot of hamlet of Morwell Bridge - just a big hole. In Morwell West there are still a few scattered houses but most have gone. The school has been completely dismantled - just some rubble left.

So it's easy to understand how the young generation ask when told of this re-union - "Where's Morwell Bridge? Where's Morwell West?"

These reminiscences of mine are only a drop in the ocean of memories that should not be lost. We have decided to do something about it. Mrs Lois Starkey (nee Shepherd) and Mrs Dorothy Sharpe (nee Crozier) are two of the people who have pledged to gather all the material they can to compile a book and memorabilia to be preserved, for future generations. Anyone who can contribute please let us know. Hopefully some former early residents of this area, will contribute reminiscences to be printed in some of our 1987 newsletters.

S.S - 2439 Gr. 4,5 and 6 1952

Front Row- R Wong, F Osborne, L Godridge, C Nathan,
J Arbrecht, F _____, G Kennedy, A Clegg.

2nd Row- R Wall, K Kennedy, P Lear, M Broadway,
E _____, I Snow, M Stares, M Clegg, D Crozier,
B Wilcox, B Vernin, M Nathan.

3rd Row- M Wall, _____, K Mc Sweeney,
B Broadberg, K Godridge, _____, R Gardner,
L Gill, W Hicks, W Lane, V Gardner.

4th Row- B Walsh, I Jackson, _____, N Gardner,
P Clegg, R Hicks, _____, G Grundy.

