

# The Morwell Post

Morwell Historical Society

URL: [www.morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au](http://www.morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au)

Email: [secretary@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:secretary@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au)



Opening of "Celebrating 100 years of Aviation in the Latrobe Valley"



Left to right:

Cr. Graeme Middlemiss, Mayor, Latrobe City; Hon. Darren Chester MP, Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel, Member for Gippsland; John Willis OAM, Vice President, Morwell Historical Society, Researcher for the Exhibition;  
Cr. Darrell White OAM; Melina Bath MLC, Member for Eastern Victoria Region; Bruce McMaster, President, Morwell Historical Society; Russell Northe MLA, Member for Morwell

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# Morwell Historical Society Directory 2019

President:	Bruce McMaster Phone: 0428 528 464
Vice-President:	John Willis
Secretary:	Florence Butcher
Assistant Secretary:	Elaine Andrijczak
Treasurer:	Carolyn Schopp
Committee Members:	Kellie Bertrand Rosalie Davey Shirley Prosser
Research Library:	12 Hazelwood Road, Morwell, Victoria 3840
Research Queries:	<a href="mailto:research@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au">research@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au</a>
Public Access:	1st and 3rd Wednesday and last Sunday of each month, 11.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. Not open - December & January
General meetings:	3rd Wednesday February to November – 2.00 pm
Annual General Meeting:	3rd Wednesday of March each year
Membership Fees:	Due 1st July each year Ordinary Member \$25.00 Couple – at same address \$30.00 Dependants – at same address \$5 each  Application Forms available on our web site for you to print and send.  For a print copy of “ <b>The Morwell Post</b> ” - \$10.00 per annum
Editor:	<a href="mailto:morwellpost@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au">email: morwellpost@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au</a>
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Front page icon is of the old Post Office c1930 which was on the site of the now Commonwealth Bank, corner of Commercial Road and Tarwin Street.

All photos, unless indicated, are from our archives.



## THE UNIQUE TARRAVILLE CHURCH



The tiny town of Tarraville, located about 5k north of Port Albert, on the Old Sale Road is notable for its early Church of England - Christ Church. The building is listed on National Estate records as Victoria's second oldest timber building. The Christ Church is a rectangular timber Gothic Revival building which was built and opened in 1856 to a design by J.H.W. Pettit and George Hastings. The wood was prepared in England and shipped out to Port Albert.

It is reputedly the first church in Gippsland and a rare surviving example of drop slab construction with the building being constructed without the use of nails. The church can accommodate 130 people. When you drive through Tarraville today it is difficult to understand that once the town had over 25 hotels and all doing exceptionally good business with stockmen, drovers, sailors, gold diggers, etc quenching their thirst. When the church opened in 1856 the population of Port Albert, Alberton and Tarraville was 428 and in Gippsland it was 1399.

Sources: *Great Southern Star*, Leongatha Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 1917 p 4 (Diamond Jubilee)  
*Advocate* (Melbourne Thursday 17 February 1949 p12

## JEANNIE, THE FRENCHMAN

In March 1918 on a French battlefield somewhere east of Amiens, Australian troops encountered a young French boy kneeling over a family member killed by shell fire. Heavily shelling from the retreating German artillery had laid waste to the nearby village and pulverised the landscape and the boy had shrapnel wounds to his leg. He gave his name as Jean Berthe and said he was an orphan. The Australians gave him medical attention and when the 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion moved on, he went with them.

And so began a remarkable and enduring wartime mystery.

Initially, the boy was a camp follower, running errands in exchange for food but the troops soon became fond of him and made him their official mascot. They even had an Australian uniform tailored made to suit his small frame. With the Armistice on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918, troops looked forward to the prospect of returning to Australia. One of them, a fisherman from Paynesville named Private Robert Simpson, also longed for home but he could not consider abandoning the orphan boy to the chaos and further deprivation of war-torn France.

It is unknown what they really did to bring Jean to Paynesville because no one would reveal what happened. It is possible that he was smuggled aboard departing troop ships from France to England and then to Australia in a large blanket roll. Another account mentions he was hidden from Authorities behind a wall of soldiers' kit bags. It is also thought that the commanding officer turned a blind eye. Berthe later stated that dressed in his khaki uniform and presumably blending in with the disembarking troops, he simply walked down the gang plank unnoticed at Port Melbourne in June 1919.

Robert Simpson, a commercial fisherman on the Gippsland Lakes already had six children and Jean Bertha joined his family. He even played Australian Rules football and won a trophy for best player. He married Janet Lay, a local woman in 1943 and the couple ventured up and down the east coast chasing fish. They had no children.

It is thought that his name may not have been Jean Berthe. The war left an estimated 9,000 orphans in France alone. Jean died in 1974 and Janet died in 1984.

He was part of a successful Paynesville football team in about 1929 and became a well-known local figure as 'Jeannie the Frenchman'.

In later years, he was an employee at the government shipyard.

Jean Berthe lived for many years but he never spoke about his background, hence his nickname of 'the quiet Frenchman'.

Local historians Sandra Hargraves, had been researching the story for many years with the subsequent book called "*Jean Berthe the Quiet Frenchman*".

Web sites -*War orphans who came to Australia*

<https://tinyurl.com/ybnmrwvf>

"Blending in"



# UNVEILING OF HONOUR BOARD

## Unfeiling [*sic*] Honor Board.

### MORWELL STATE SCHOOL

Notwithstanding the unfavorable weather that prevailed last week, there was a large gathering at the Morwell Mechanics' Hall, on Friday, to witness the unveiling of Morwell State School Honour Board, which contains 93 names of old school boys who left Australia to fight for their King and country, and for truth, justice, liberty and practically all else we hold dear; and also to fight against the introduction of the principle that "might is right."

In the absence of the Chairman of School Board Committee (Mr J. B. Hoyle), who was ill, Mr Chas. Davey (vice-chairman) presided and filled the office admirably. On the platform were Mr Fussell (Chief Inspector of Schools), who had been invited to perform the unveiling ceremony, Mr G. P. Evans (School Correspondent), President of Shire (Cr. W. Ritchie), Cr. D. Dunbar, Rev. J. Garnon-Owen, and a number of returned soldiers.

The Chairman in fitting terms announced the object of the gathering, and also mentioned that a few more names were to be added to the board, and said the committee would be glad to be notified of further names, if any, that had been omitted. He apologized for the absence of Hon. G. H. Wise (Assistant Minister for Defence), Hon T. Livingston. M L.A., Revs. Adeney, Lousida, Pryor, Mr J. B. Hoyle and others, who were unavoidably prevented from being present.

The children having sung "Hurrah for England," Mr Fussell was called upon to perform the unveiling ceremony.

Mr Fussell said he was pleased to be present at a gathering to do honor to brave men who had gone to fight for our Empire, and for liberty, truth and right. Twenty eight years ago he had travelled over miles of bad roads and through mud in various parts of Gippsland inspecting schools. At that time many of the men who were now taking part in the greatest war the world has ever seen, were unborn and others were only in knickerbockers. The splendid manner in which the boys had acquitted themselves was something to be proud of. It caused the blood to run freer through one's veins and made one walk with their head higher. Our boys met the cream of the enemy's soldiers and had combated them in a glorious way. Some of those who had gone to the front simply gave as their reason for doing so, (that they were "going to do their bit" ; other said they were "going to give Fritz one in the neck," whilst others said "their cobbles were there and they were going over to give them a hand," but deep down in their hearts could be found the real reason for their going, and that was loyalty. They realised that the "frontier" of Australia was really in France, and should the enemy break through there and gain his desires, it would be God help Australia and all we hold dear. Great Britain had given us as a free gift this great and glorious land of Australia and had kept it for us under the wings of her mighty fleet.

The boys who had gone to the Front to fight for their country had offered their lives to the Empire and many had already made the supreme sacrifice. Greater love could no man show than that of giving his life for friends and empire. It was a privilege to be able to take part in any movement to express appreciation of the deeds and sacrifices made by such brave and noble men. They could not honour them, they could only try to live up to them. If the boys were consulted they would no doubt say that one of the best ways to honour them was by striving to keep up an adequate stream of men to re-enforce them. The spirit of the men was expressed in the following very fine lines composed by a brave soldier, who now lies with comrades, in Flanders, with a cross above his grave :

In Flanders' Fields, the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place ; and, in the sky,  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amidst the guns below.  
We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders' Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe.  
To you, from falling hands we throw  
The torch : be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders Fields.

Continuing, Mr Fussell said they had met that day to offer some tribute to the men who had gone from Morwell, and it gave him great pleasure to unveil the Honour Board bearing the names of so many worthy old school boys. A large flag (Union Jack) which covered the Honour Board was then removed by Mr Fussell, and exposed to view a beautiful oak board about 7ft in height and 4ft in width, designed with great taste and bearing the following words and list of names :

GREAT EUROPEAN WAR.

1914 Roll of Honour 19 [sic]

Scholars of Morwell State School, No. 2136, who left on Active Service Abroad

Alford A.	*Currie R.	Holmes T.	Maxwell G.	Simmons A.	Urquhart H.
*Angus L.	Currie F.	Huey B.	*Maxwell L.	Simmons E.	Vary A.
Brinsmead F.	Davey C.	Huey D.	Macmillan J.	Simmons N.	Vanstan R.
Bruton C.	Davey W.	Hulse R.	McDonagh F.	Smith C.	Wilkens H. F.
Bruton A.	Davey R.	Jones F.	*McIntosh A.	Smith F.	Wilkens F.
Butters H.	Derham F.	Johnstone Eric	McKaskill	Smith A.	Wilkinson R.
Butters C.	Donaldson R.	*Junier A.	*Noy J.	Smith E.	Wilkinson A.
Butters R.	Dusting C.	Kleine F.	Purdue A.	Snell W.	Wilkinson W.
Billingsley A.	*Dusting H.	Lamb R.	*Porter Jas.	Snell R.	Williams C.
Boardman E.	Fraser D.	Law M.	Rintoull W.	Symons I.	Witt W.
*Boardman L.	Gladwin G.	Law P.	Robotham T. E.	Symons H.	Wilson A.
*Brown J.	Hall S.	Lyons W.	*Rodwell J.	Symons W.	Young G.
Campbell C.	Hall J.	Lyons C.	Robertson H.	*Thomas R.	Young A.
Cooper H.	Hare Bert	Maher A.	Ronald A.	Thomas S.	(* Killed.)
Collins W.	Hodson G.	Maher L.	Rowell B.	*Thomson R.H.	
Collins J.	Holmes G.	Manning G.	Rowell K.	*Tulloch J. D.	

Mr Fussell suggested that a handsome book bound in brown leather with leaves of parchment like paper be procured and attached to Honour Board. The book to give a brief biography of all the men whose names appeared in the board, including date of enlistment, time served at Front, and any distinction gained; whether they returned, were wounded, killed, taken prisoner, or met with other misfortune. A short history of each man contained in such a book and attached to the Honour Board would make the memorial complete and much more valuable. He added that the Education Department would pay cost of such a book. Mr Fussell afterwards appealed to those fit, to fill some of the gaps that had been made in the ranks of the boys who had gone, and urged all to help by subscribing money. He pointed out that arms, munitions, and a host of other things had to be paid for in pounds, shillings and pence, and it was said that the side that could find the greatest number of " silver bullets" would win. General Foch, himself, had said " after all, money is the chief sinews of war." He urged people not to spend money unnecessarily, but to divert all they possibly could to national needs "England was carrying a titanic burden, and Australia was richer per unit of population than any other country.

Our children give themselves that we may live  
 Unhurt behind the thunder of the guns;  
 Is it so great a thing that we should give  
 A little from our store to serve our sons?

Mr Fussell then referred to the War Savings Certificates issued by the Commonwealth Government. A certificate worth £1 in three year could be obtained for 17/6. If a person did not have 17/6 they could put a little aside each week till they had the amount. The local State School had become a centre and he was pleased to know that a number of the children had opened " War Savings Certificate Accounts at the school. In addition to helping the nation, it was a sound investment, and he strongly recommended it to both old and young. He mentioned that the State School children had already contributed £275000 towards patriotic funds, and provided Caulfield Hospital and nine other hospitals with all provisions needed. When boys and girls denied themselves many things in order to help others, it was putting something good into their character. It was putting fibre and unselfishness into it, and without sermonising he wished to say that the only way to be truly happy was by serving others.

The children who had been helping the soldiers had really put on khaki, and they had reason to feel proud of what they had done, and should be thankful they had been brought under the influence of loyal teachers who had directed their thoughts into such channels. In conclusion, Mr Fussell said all honor was due to our soldier boys and to their parents. He sympathised with those who had lost loved ones, and especially with the mothers. He trusted that those now at the Front would be spared to return after the great campaign had been successfully accomplished and victory won. (Applause.)

Mr Evans read list of names of the school boys who had been killed since going to the front, after which the "Last Post" was sounded by Pte. Richardson (a returned soldier.) The National Anthem and " God Bless our Soldier Men" was afterwards sung. The Rev. J. Garnon-Oven congratulated the school committee on having secured such a magnificent board for the roll. It compared, he said, with the best he had ever seen. The names inscribed on it are worthy of the very best that can be done for them.

They had the names of 93 gallant boys who were one time scholars in the Morwell State School. They are names which today remind us of the heroic tradition that enriches the history of the British nation. They are specimens of the type of mankind upon which depends the future of Australia. Men that will not shrink from any sacrifice in the hour of their nation's danger. Yes, some of them have paid the high price of nationhood in the red coinage of their blood. Gallipoli, France and Egypt have witnessed the payment of this price. Their very names in this roll will always inspire us ; their spirits will encourage our pilgrimage ; their sacrificial service will stimulate our flagging energies. The memory of their devotion to duty in the cause of freedom and right will be enobling to the rising generation. In conclusion, Mr Owen said it is men of this calibre that mould the Empire, and ensure its predominance, influence, and safety. It is left for us to follow them in the same noble path of duty, in their dauntless valour, and their devotion to the national ideal. (Applause.)

Mr Evans mentioned that Mr Hoyle, who was Chairman: of School Board Committee, was the prime mover in the matter of securing the Honour Board, and to him great credit was due for his efforts in connection with same. Mr Hoyle also sent following letter to be read : "I regret that circumstances will not permit my being present this afternoon at the most important ceremony that ever taken place in connection with the school, and to my mind will be the greatest historic one of all time. I enclose account front Messrs F. K. Cox & Coy showing the price of the Board £15 2s 9d with freight cartage and erection to be added on this will bring the cost in round figures to £16.

As you are aware it was at first the intention of the committee to secure a size smaller board and the price would have been reduced by £2 12s 6d. The Business was financed as follows, the committee, considered it advisable to erect a board in the school and met the teachers, at that time Mr Boyce and Miss Cook, and they promised their active assistance it being arranged that the whole of the details re the concert and sale of tickets be left in their hands.

The children were afterwards addressed by me and the position explained to them and they also took up the work of placing the tickets very enthusiastically. The public :completed the job by acting generously; result a successful gathering. In order to make the result of the school children's efforts as big as possible a few of the leading residents of the town clubbed together and paid for the hire of the hall. So that the relations and friends of the soldiers whose name appear on the board and also have them posted to the boys still at the front, we have had 500 post cards issued. The board was photographed by Mr A. A. Green and the cards turned out by one of the leading printing firms of the state.

We are selling these cards at 6d each and with the profit we propose to pay off the balance short on the board and provide for funds to put the balance of the names on at the end of the war. 93 names are now on the board and we expect to have to put on about 20 more, some names which we are not sure of will be sent to the Base Record Office for endorsement. It is also the intention of the committee to make the board of great historic value.

We propose to print catalogues giving the history of each name on the Board, as regards parentage, the war and the school, In catalogues we will also have reprinted the report of the ceremony as given by the local and, if considered advisable the report in the Melbourne dailies. As I do not desire to take up any more time I conclude with the hope that the school children will in their future lives take the brave soldier boys as their example. The latter played the game, let them at all times do likewise, and it will be the highest compliment they can pay some of Australia's most worthy sons. Trusting ceremony will past off very satisfactorily. Yours faithfully J. B. HOYLE, Chairman.

Mr Hart (Head Teacher) congratulated the Morwell School upon its fine record, and said the Honor Board was the finest he had seen. He referred to the boys and girls who, as Mr Fussell had mentioned, had put on khaki, and he wondered if all the adults were fully dressed in khaki, or only half dressed.

He hoped every-one would do all they possibly could, and not forget those left behind who were suffering and in need. Cr. Dunbar, who arrived late, said he had just returned front a Conference of Gippsland Shire Councillors and desired to take advantage of the opportunity to state that at the Conference it was resolved to present the British Government with a battle-plane. (Applause.) The cost-about £2,700 would be spread over 26 Gippsland Shires. If the people responded as he felt sure they would, he thought there should be no difficulty in raising the money required. He congratulated the School Committee upon the very fine Honor Board unveiled, and said it was the best he had seen.

In responding to a vote of thanks moved by the Chairman, Mr Fussell said it was a pleasure to be in the atmosphere of such a gathering of loyal folk. He also made an appeal on behalf of British Cross and mentioned some of the splendid work carried on by the Society among soldiers and prisoners of war.

The proceedings terminated with the singing of National Anthem.



The Honour Board still sits in the foyer of the Morwell State School

## CONCERT AT MORWELL.

The concert on Friday night last, notwithstanding the threatening weather, was a great success. The State school in which the concert was held was crowded to excess, many not being able to obtain seats. Thanks to Mr Irving, the secretary, who spared no pains in making it a success, not forgetting Mr Hurren, who came all the way from Rosedale, and Mrs Savage and Miss Donaldson, of this township, who acted as accompanists for the singers, and played some beautiful selections of music from some of the best composers.

Misses Gilbert and Irving opened the entertainment with a pianoforte duet, "Pretty Bird Quadrille," which was well rendered. Miss McCrory is also deserving of great praise for the manner in which she went through her songs, it being her first appearance before an audience. Mrs Rintoul also sang "Eileen Alannah" with great taste and feeling. Misses Donaldson's and Irving's pianoforte duet, "La Fille De Madame Angot Lancers," was highly appreciated by the audience, while Mr Irving with "Nancy Lee," and Mr Mooney "Minding the Baby," or, in other words, with "Patrick Mind the Baby," fairly brought down the house. Mr Murdoch and Mr Scott were also very amusing in their songs, especially Mr Murdoch in "My Mither Mends My Auld Breeks," and Mr Scott in "The Strict G. T."

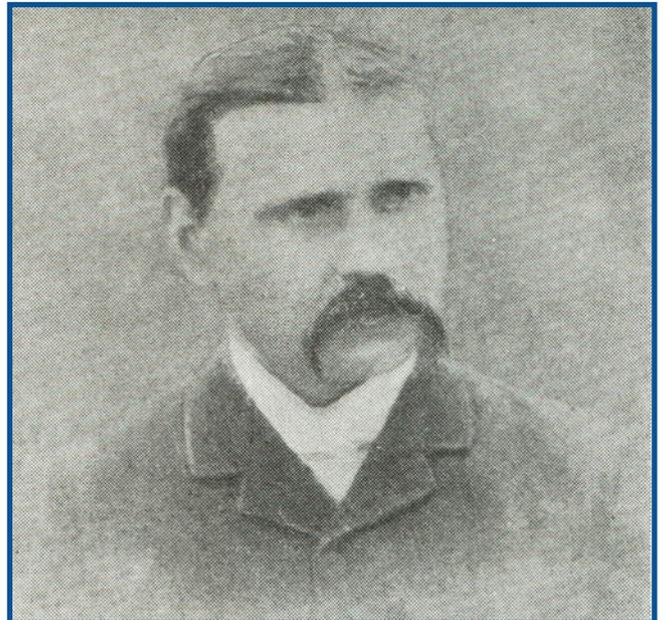
After the concert was over, the room was cleared, and dancing commenced, Mr Rintoul acting as M.C., which was kept up till daylight. "Auld Lang Syne" having been sung by the company, the first concert in aid of the Morwell Mechanics' Institute, Morwell, was brought to a close.

*The Gippsland Times* Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1879

It is interesting that John Irving is not only the school teacher but the secretary.

John had 2 sisters, Barbara who taught at Hazelwood Ridge from 1880 till 1886 and Christine (Teenie) who would have been the Miss Irving who played the piano duet. Christine taught at Morwell State School when John was the head teacher. She was Morwell's first music teacher and taught the piano, violin, singing and elocution.

John Irving taught at Morwell State School from 1879 till 1884 when he left to go and teach at Boolarra.



John died in 1894 aged 38 and left a wife, Georgina (Ina) and 5 children.

## MARYVALE RIDGE SCHOOL No 1939

The first State School to serve the scattered farming community that preceded the village of Morwell was Maryvale Ridge State School which opened on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 1877 and closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1879 after an existence of only 1 year and 9 months. Andrew Matthews and James Matson, two farmers who had made their selections out of the old Maryvale cattle station, east of what was to be Morwell village, petitioned in January 1877 for a school. Mr James Holland, agreed that the Department would provide a teacher and school furniture, if the community could make a building available. During its short life, the school had only one teacher, Miss Zenna McCrory.

The school building, situated at the junction of Maryvale Ridge Road and the railway line, which was then being constructed, was north of the line and east of the road. (Between what is today McDonalds and Farnham Court Motel) It was quite unsatisfactory as it was a small hut with perpendicular slabs, a thatched roof, bark ridging, an earth floor and gable ends of white canvas. Miss McCrory complained that rain poured through the gaps between the slabs and through the torn canvas, leaving the floor awash. She used planks to find her way through the puddles on the floor. To build up the floor level the parents carted a load of soil which turned into choking dust in the dry weather. The children had to walk half a mile to get a drink of water (today Waterhole Creek)

Attendances, which never reached the estimated maximum of 30 pupils, dropped sharply from an average of 16 children to 3 or 4 after a snake was found in the classroom in February 1879. When the school closed the majority of the pupils transferred to the new Morwell School No 2136 which had opened its doors on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1879. The school was then used for a short time for Church of England services with the first service on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1879.

In 1879 Zenna married Morwell's blacksmith John Rintoull and they had 12 children. Zenna died in 1901 aged 40.

We have in our collection two pairs of socks that were knitted by Zenna and labelled Zenna Rintoull.

Source: *The Education Magazine* –March 1965. p 95



Recently, Nancy Gordon, nee Rintoull, came for a visit to our rooms and she did not hesitate to hold the socks that were knitted by her grandmother. Nancy's father was Jack (Jock), the eighth child and first son of Zenna and John who married Effie McDonald in 1928.

Zenna

Nancy with socks





### OPEN DAYS 2019

2nd October / 16th October / 27th October  
6th November / 20th November / 24th November

### OPEN DAYS 2020

5th February / 19th February / 23rd February  
4th March / 18th March / 29th March  
1st April / 15th April / 26th April  
6th May / 20th May / 31st May  
3rd June / 17th June / 28th June  
1st July / 15th July / 26th July  
5th August / 19th August / 30th August  
2nd September / 16th September / 27th September

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