

# MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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*Welcome to the September Newsletter*

## ***WE HAVE MOVED!***

Yes, folks - at long last we have moved into our new - though temporary - accommodation, a move made necessary by the redevelopment of the Town Hall and Art Gallery.

Our new address is **21 Church St, Morwell** - the shop between *Gaztronomy* and the Pet Food shop. This is, in fact a historic site! It is the site of the former pizza shop which exploded in March 1991, an event not to be forgotten by anyone who was in Morwell on that evening. (It will be ten years next March - should we have a re-enactment? No, perhaps not!)

We are sharing the premises with the Morwell Art Group and it looks like being a very happy arrangement. There is a sink, with **running water** (cold AND hot!), a lovely **tiled floor** (easy to clean), our own **toilets**, (no more need for the gents to sprint the 400 metres along Commercial Road to the toilets near the bus station!) - not to mention **air conditioning!** We are not used to such luxuries and we thank Latrobe City Council for its generosity in providing this accommodation.

There is less storage space in the shop than in the Town Hall so Council has allowed us to store various materials, artifacts, shelving etc in the administration building of the former Shire of Morwell nursery in The Boulevard, next to Airlie Bank Gallery.

Sadly, we will shortly be losing the services of our volunteer worker, Kym Tunbridge. Kym and his predecessor Mick Farrell, have catalogued, and entered on computer, our considerable collection of photographs, books etc. and we are most appreciative of their many hours of work at this task.

We plan to keep opening the room to the public each Wednesday, at least for the time being. It would be nice to open more often but the number of members available to supervise the display has dwindled and it is increasingly difficult to fill spaces on the roster.

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 - 7.30 PM**  
**21 CHURCH ST, MORWELL**

***Guest Speaker: Mr Jim Hood, President of Traralgon Historical Society***

## ***FAREWELL, VALMA.***

It is with great sadness that we record the death, on August 17, of **Valma Plant OAM**, after being struck by a car outside her home in Grey St, Traralgon, on July 28.

Val was Secretary of Traralgon Historical Society for many years and was a friend to members of local historical societies throughout Gippsland. She was always ready to lend a helping hand and she was of great assistance to Morwell Historical Society when it re-formed, after a long recess, in 1984. Whenever we planned an excursion or special event, Val would round up a car-load or two of members from Traralgon and bring them along to boost the numbers, and she was always willing to share her knowledge and expertise.

Valma's cheerful presence will be greatly missed, not only by members of the local history community but by those in the many other community organisations for which she worked so hard and we extend our sympathy to her husband Noel and family.

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## **HISTORIC VIDEOS OF YALLOURN**

The Office of the Administrator, State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) is nearing the end of its task of allocating liabilities and assets. The administrator has presented the Society with a set of six videos recording the history of Yallourn township and the Yallourn power and coal undertaking, covering a period of five decades.

Titles include: *Romance of Brown Coal; Pageant of Power; Coal to Kilowatts; Briquette Story; Valley of Power; Behind the Switch; Born to Die- (Yallourn Township); Sir John Monash; Yallourn Royal Tour 1954; YBF Demolition; Fifty Years of Service; Timeless Force; and others.*

We are delighted to add these to our library. They make fascinating viewing and any members wishing to borrow them may do so by contacting Bruce McMaster -  
Tel: 51341149.

## ***NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE***

### **Federation of Australian Historical Societies -**

#### **Tour of Macedon Ranges Region - Saturday 14 October**

On the weekend of 14 and 15 October delegates from each State and Territory will be in Melbourne for the Annual General Meeting of the Federation. On Saturday 14 October delegates will be touring the Macedon Ranges region and members of RHSV are invited to join them. The tour is free but you will need your own transport. Places to be visited include Riddell's Creek Railway Station; Gisborne Court House; one of the historic "hill station" properties on Mount Macedon; Woodend court house; and also visits to the various historical societies in the area - Romsey, Lancefield, Kyneton, Gisborne, Mount Macedon.

Lunch (BYO) will be a picnic at Hanging Rock!

Anyone interested in attending should contact Assoc Prof. Don Garden, History Dept, University of Melbourne Tel: 61 3 83444 5979

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### **Traralgon Historical Society**

Guest Speakers at coming meetings will include:

**Carmel Ford** (Tuesday 10 October) who will speak about the **Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame** situated in Alice Springs.

**Bruce Reynolds** (Tuesday 14 November) who will speak on the **Gippsland Lakes and Shipbuilding there**. Bruce's grandfather went to the Lakes in 1881 as a boy. His father was a boat-builder and farmer. Bruce is a retired engineer who lives at Yinnar South.

Traralgon Historical Society meets in the Kath Teychenne Centre, 11 Breed St Traralgon, on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm

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### **Yallourn North and District Historical Society**

Members are delighted to see work finally starting on renovations to their building (the former Youth Club). The SECV "shell" has promised a grant of \$25,000 to adapt the building for use as a museum, which will house drawings, plans, files and records of the Yallourn Power Station. They hope to have stage one of the work completed by March 2001.

## **A TRIP TO THE GIPPS LAND COALFIELDS**

**From *The Illustrated Sydney News and New South Wales Agriculturalist and Grazier*- No 13,  
Vol 10 - 27 June, 1874.**

People who have travelled on unmade Australian roads may well be able to realise the perils and pains endured by those who have to traverse what is known as the "Middle stage", between Melbourne and Sale; but there are very few who could adequately describe the pains and penalties attached to the coach seat of a traveller who ventures on that abominable track in one of Cobb's coaches. It is generally traversed at night and the prospect is not cheerful. Wherever moonbeam or lamplight falls, water sparkles - if that which is semi-gelatinous can be called water. As the coach wriggles from side to side in search of firmer soil, you constantly sight rough poles stuck into the ground. These are to the wayfarer what the lighthouse or beacon is to the mariner, and each one indicates the site of a quivering bog, into which some unwary traveller has at some time got stuck.....

The dense undergrowth rises for thirty feet like a wall while the tall slender eucalyptus stems spring up from out of the humbler growths like gothic shafts...and the neck aches to follow them up to their topmost bough, 350 feet and more overhead.

Shady Creek was reached at 3am, it having taken four hours to get over twelve miles. The next stage is about as bad but through more open country infested by packs of large and savage dingoes. Their howling on every side made the night hideous and their gaunt, wolf-like forms constantly flitted past the horses and trailed in our rear, sniffing and snapping their teeth over the savoury odour of a side of mutton which was lashed to the rack.

We reached the Moe at six o'clock and after half an hour spent over breakfast we resumed our journey. Morwell being our next and last coach stage, about 8.30 we rattled over the long wooden viaduct, of which we present a sketch. Each end rests on a high bank; beneath is a wide morass, and through its scrub and rushes the River Morwell wends its way into the Latrobe which it joins some few miles below. Morwell Inn lies on the far side and we are quickly at it and step from the coach for the last time with a feeling of relief. The inn is a long, low slab building with a bark roof, and beyond being a rest house for drovers and the end of the coach stage, has no importance or apparent business. It is, however, the nearest point for the divergence for the coal seams, which lie fifteen miles to the south. The ride occupies about three hours, the first eleven miles being over lightly timbered, undulating country through which the Gippsland Railway will run. The last four miles is by a blazed track over a thickly scrubbed spur which runs parallel to the valley.....

Having arrived at our destination, and after a few minutes conversation with the two men who are engaged in opening up the coal, we proceed under their guidance to inspect the outcrops. The narrow path winds a few feet above the little stream and the seams open within a foot or two of the latter in every case. Six out of the seven are only opened out sufficiently to show a black streak of coal varying from four to twelve inches in thickness. The fifth and principal seam is shown in the engraving. The tunnel is driven on it for over twenty-five feet and it has in that distance increased in thickness from one foot to three. Half a ton of coal is on the surface....it breaks sharply and is of a bright black colour....and what is of importance, no trace of sulphur. The workmen have used it to mend their tools with and report that it burns freely and leaves but little ash.

Since our visit we learn that another stratum of coal, four feet thick, has been discovered. By following the gully down to the plains, a tramway could be constructed cheaply to connect with the railway which will come within about six miles of the mine. The Government have promised every reasonable assistance. Good timber for props and other necessary work is on the spot in abundance.