

# The Morwell Post

Morwell Historical Society

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## *Merv Medew viewing his sketches on display at the society*



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# Morwell Historical Society Directory 2020

President: Bruce McMaster  
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Research Library: 12 Hazelwood Road, Morwell, Victoria 3840

Research Queries: [research@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:research@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au)

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  
Single Member - \$25.00  
Family Membership -Family living at the same address includes children under 18 years old - \$30.00

Application Forms available on our web site for you to print and send.

For a print copy of "**The Morwell Post**" - \$10.00 per annum

Editor: email: [morwellpost@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au](mailto:morwellpost@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au)

Research Fees: \$10.00 per hour or part thereof, and prices for photo prints on application and postage where applicable.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/morwellhistoricalsociety>

Postal Address: 12 Hazelwood Road, Morwell 3840  
Victoria, Australia

We are taking a long earned rest from managing and monitoring the society and duty roster on Open Days but still continuing to work behind the scenes doing "odd jobs" here and there.  
NOTE: Change in membership structure

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.

## President's Report

As regional Victoria has recently relaxed our lock-down status because of the coronavirus, our volunteers can now return to work in our rooms in small numbers.

We are still not open to the public. As the Society has not been able to hold any fund raising events this year, an application is proposed for an 'Operational Support Grant' that Latrobe City Council has on offer.

During isolation the electrician has upgraded internal and external lighting and installed more power points. The cost of the work, \$4,000, came from a grant from Latrobe City Council in September 2019. I am pleased to say that all electrical work has now been finished.



The Masonic Mosaic Pavement, used by Masonic Lodge members as part of their ceremonies now has a barrier around it. One of our members, Boyd Thompson, a blacksmith in an earlier life, was asked to make the 12 stanchions (posts). The stanchions are removable and are made from steel rod 20mm in diameter and 1m in length. The top of each post is scrolled in the form of a Bishop's crosier or crook while the bottom is fitted with a steel ring to set the posts at a uniform height. They were powder coated by Latrobe Valley Fence-Tek in Moore Street Moe who generously donated their time and skills. This area can now be used for displays.

Thanks to the Latrobe City Council, the Society receives \$500 each year to assist with the costs of operating the Society.

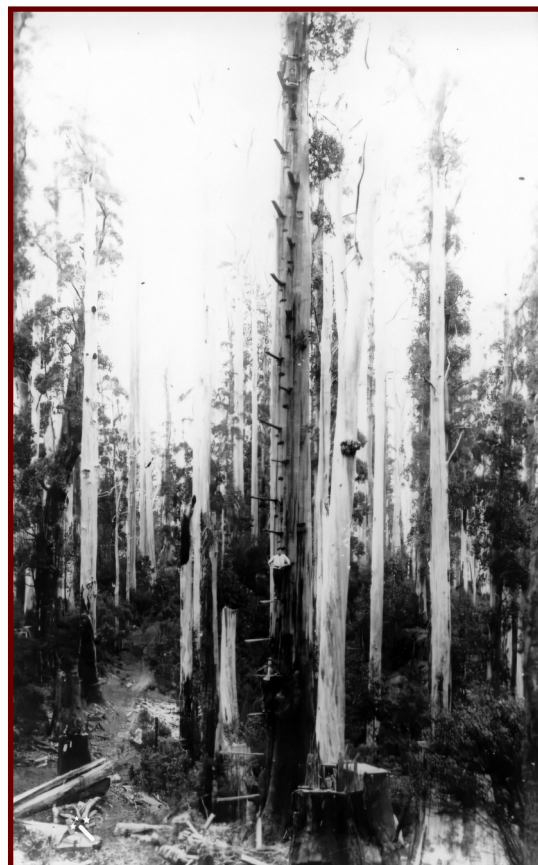
The Society has been advised a 'Community Wellbeing Grant 2020-2021', for \$1,550 has been granted to assist Rob de Souza-Daw in his project to record all soldiers in the Morwell district who died in WW1 and their place of burial. We thank the Latrobe City Council.

We have not been successful as yet to obtain a grant to repair, paint and secure all windows and external doors. As the Society's building is classed as a 'heritage building' by the Latrobe City Council, an approach has been made to council for advice on the maintenance of the building. It is hoped that we will be able to apply for a grant in the next round.

Finally, on behalf of our members, I would like to wish our member Merv Medew, a happy 90th birthday. In this edition of *The Morwell Post* you can read an article written, by Merv. The front page also shows some of his drawings that he has done of buildings and scenes around Morwell. Merv was self taught and has a wonderful drawing ability.

I hope that next year will be a normal year and we will be able to hold monthly meetings with guest speakers and be open to the public three times a month and by appointment.

Bruce McMaster. 22 August 2020



Tree felling at Gunyah Gunyah  
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I was born in the Morwell Hospital in 1930 but grew up on a dairy farm at Hazelwood South. My earliest memories of Morwell were when my parents, my siblings and I would travel to Morwell in our T-model Ford to do our weekly shopping.

This happened every Tuesday as Tuesday in Morwell back then was known as Cockies Day as this was the day that all the farmers came to town. I believe that back then Gippsland towns had their different week days as Cockies Day and I think it had something to do with the scheduling of the stock sales yards.

My mum's routine on those days was firstly to take her grocery list to the Jenkins shop on the corner of Tarwin and George Streets. She would return an hour or so later to pick up her order after she had been to Pearson's the Butchers, Kirby's the bakers, Hinkley's the green grocers and finally Sharpes Emporium (all in Commercial Road). Dad would always be close by to carry her purchases to the car, but would not accompany her into Sharpes. Instead he would always find a farmer friend to talk to. We kids were always given a few pennies to buy ice creams which were a rare treat as there was no electricity or refrigeration on the farms.

From the time I was 5 years old I attended the Hazelwood South Primary School which meant that from then on I only got to Morwell on school holidays. Sometimes our whole family would go to the Morwell Town Hall movies and I remember seeing "Gone with the Wind" there in 1939 just before World War 2 started.

The Town Hall now the Art Gallery, that had only opened in 1936 was also a dance hall etc. On one occasion early in the war years it hosted a captured German Messerschmitt 109 fighter aircraft that was on a tour of the country towns to raise money for the war effort. During the war years my dad was a sergeant in the Volunteer Defence Corps and I can remember an occasion when his unit conducted a training exercise and demonstration on the Morwell football ground.

In 1944 I began attending the Yallourn Technical School. This meant that I had to ride a bike 7 miles from Hazelwood South to Morwell every day where I would catch a bus to Yallourn. The bus was unusual in that it was a articulated or semi-trailer configuration and could have been the only one of its kind as I've never seen another one like it since.

Each morning as we Tech school boys and a group of High School girls waited for this bus in Commercial Road we would watch a man rolling barrels of beer into the cellar of the Club Hotel.

Early in that year one hot afternoon a thick cloud of smoke followed our bus back into Morwell. This was the start of the grass fire that destroyed more than 100 homes and killed 13 people throughout the Shire of Morwell. The fire raced through our farm at Hazelwood South but we were luckier than some families in that our house was spared, but we lost our milking and hay sheds. Had I ridden my bike home on that afternoon I would have been caught in the middle of the fire, but fortunately although I was determined to ride home, I was stopped and given a bed for the night by the lady of the house where I used to leave my bike. The lady was Mrs Henderson who had a son named Jack who also went to Yallourn Tech and I was always grateful for their kindness.

I think that it was later that same year when a couple of Awza aircraft from the RAAF base at Sale, while on a night exercise, crash landed in an open field just east of Latrobe Road. By the next afternoon the crews must have been taken back to Sale and the planes were unguarded, so a group of lads and myself had no trouble getting inside them and sitting in the pilot's seats etc.





The best we can do in lock-down with Shirley delivering a cake, chocolates and a balloon on Merv's birthday

I left Yallourn Tech at the end of 1945, the year the war ended and in January 1946 I started my first job at Stan Gude's garage on Princes Drive just west of a church on the corner of Church Street. By this time my big brother Ken, who had also studied at Yallourn Tech, worked as an apprentice for a Mr Clarke, a plumber who had workshop just east of where the Morwell Post Office now stands. Ken was by then old enough to own a motor bike that we both travelled on from our farm to Morwell each day.

I left Gude's garage in 1947 and worked for about another year at Maryvale Motors in Commercial Road before I got a job with the State Electricity Commission in 1948 when I was 18 years old.

At that time the SEC Morwell project was just starting and I worked with a gang of men servicing and operating earth moving machinery. On the job I had the pleasure of meeting "New Australians" from all parts of Europe and regardless of which country they came from they all became good friends. In 1950, apparently because of limited funds the "project" almost

came to a halt and retrenchments began on a family based process, with single men going first, and then married men with no children etc so I was one of the first to go.

Being unable to find local work, I spent a season along the Murray River towns picking fruit. When the season ended I went to Queensland where I not only found work, but I also found a wife. In 1954 I came back to Morwell with my new wife Kathy and I got my old job back at Maryvale Motors. Then with some help from my dad I started buying a house in Morwell and I have lived there ever since. While I was working at Maryvale Motors I also worked part time, 3 nights a week at the Panoramic drive in theatre in Latrobe Road on the site of the now Sunday Market. This was before television started and the "Drive In" enjoyed a full house most nights of the week.

Tragedy comes to most families from time to time and it did to mine in 1955 when sadly my younger brother Graeme died in a road accident after his car rolled over from the highway into Waterhole Creek.

In 1957 I left Maryvale Motors and started work at a Ready Mixed Concrete plant, also in Latrobe Road before going back to the SEC in 1962 from where I retired in 1990.

I have witnessed a lot of changes over the years, but I still love living in Morwell because there is everything here that I need and even though we have lived through mine fires and a freeway threatening to collapse etc, this is all part of living with the energy that has made Morwell what it is.



James and Helen Medew's home  
With grandad and Ken



## St John Ambulance in Morwell

Written by Corps Officer (retired) Reginald Kemp MSJ



Member of the Order of  
St John

The original division was originally called the Gas and Fuel Division and the first Superintendent was Clive Williams.

Clive was a supervisor at the SECV at Yallourn.

The Division was started in 1960.

Uniforms were supplied by the Gas & Fuel and were hand made in Melbourne by a Melbourne tailor.

I joined the Gas & Fuel Division in 1961 as a Private under Superintendent Mr Reg Andrews who had taken over from Clive Williams when he retired.

Reg Andrews died from cancer a short time later.

With the closing of the Gas & Fuel, the division was moved to the training centre at the SECV Morwell Workshops.

The centre was just inside the main gate and was to become a major training facility as St John was given the task of training SECV employees working across the power stations in the Latrobe Valley. This meant that our services ran a continuous training service for all people monthly.

Terry Clarke became the Superintendent of the Division and was also the Squad Leader of the Search and Rescue Squad.

Reg Kemp became the Divisional Officer responsible for training and First Aid Services.

Principal trainers were Reg Kemp, Les Willoughby, and Trevor Simberg.

This was at the time of major changes to St John as it became involved in Search and Rescue operations under the leadership of Terry Clarke, and a vehicle which was moved from Warragul to Morwell fully equipped with equipment for the purpose.

The division numbers increased dramatically to 40 members drawn from the local community.

Division was involved in many search and rescue operations and spent many hours training at various locations around the state.

The unit carried out many search and rescue operations under the command of Police Officer in Charge at Morwell police Mr Phil Bennett.

Terry Clarke retired and moved to Queensland to be near his son who had joined the Police Force in Queensland.

Reginald Kemp took over the Division with Les Willoughby as his Divisional Officer.

They purchased a building at 3-5 Ryan Street, Morwell as their permanent home from where they trained many people in First Aid.

Rescue Squad operations were being wound down as the State Emergency Service took over this role.

St John Ambulance would not accept government funding as this would mean losing control of its operations.

Superintendent Reg Kemp resigned his commission and took up the post of St John Administrator for Gippsland in the new premises in Morwell.

However due to the carve-up of the SECV, the need for first aid training by industry was not seen as a major requirement by private companies so the need for first aid training was severely reduced.

Reg left the organisation in 1992 to take on a consultancy role in safety management which took him to all parts of Australia.

The organisation was completely revamped in 2000 to a company type organisation and today is purely a training and welfare organisation with everything being run from its Melbourne Offices.

#### **ADDITIONAL NOTES**

St John Ambulance Brigade ran the first ambulances in Melbourne with branches across the state.

The first ambulance can be seen at the St John Ambulance Museum at Williamstown. (on the foreshore of Williamstown beach)

The Brigade grew and I can remember St John personnel helping the local ambulance on weekends.

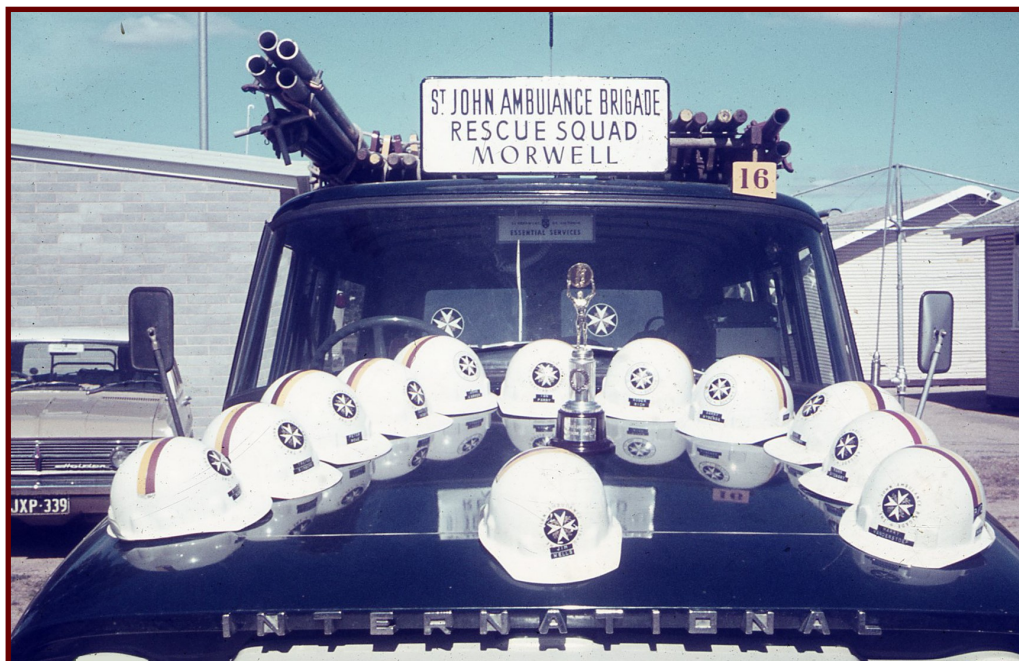
Our First Mobile Unit was donated by the Morwell Ambulance Service complete with a two-way radio directly to the Morwell radio base. This was due to an agreement between Superintendent Reg Kemp and the Ambulance Superintendent Mr Arthur Davis.

This was mainly used at the Hill Climbs where an ambulance was required but rarely used.

The squad activities ceased in 1992 and was transferred to the State Emergency Service.

In 1988 Reg was awarded the Membership of the Order of St. John on the recommendation of the Governor of Victoria to her Majesty the Queen.

Reginal Norman Kemp MSJ





## John Hall

John Hall was born in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland in 1866 and arrived in Victoria in 1884. He conducted a general store in the Goulburn Valley for 5 years and then in Traralgon before coming to Morwell in 1894. John had married Catherine McTavish in 1889. He rented the store on the corner of Tarwin and Main Street (198 Commercial Road) from Annie Donaldson. The shops had a frontage of 40 feet in Main Street while the block in Tarwin Street having a frontage of 130 feet. The Tarwin Street frontage was occupied as a timber and iron yard. This yard was well stocked with all kinds of building material, because Mr Hall, as well as supplying the trade was also a builder. In the grocery store was kept a good general stock of groceries, crockery and ironmongery along with a fine selection of choice wines, beers and spirits. John Hall held the only wine and spirit licence in Morwell and he had the depot for "All Saints" wines. Next door, was the drapery establishment, which was run by his wife Catherine, where he had a large stock of drapery. John Hall



employed several assistants. Dress making and millinery were also done on the premises.

John Hall did well in Morwell, building up a big business known as Halls Universal Emporium and expanding to a branch business in Yinnar. He built the Cowwarr Butter factory in 1897, the old Sacred Heart Church in 1902, the Boolarra Catholic Church in 1907, The Advertiser Office and many other buildings. He also had farms in Hazelwood and Tyers.

John Hall was a Lieutenant in the Victorian Mounted Rifles, Morwell detachment and later then Captain and finally Major of the 16<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse Unit at Morwell. He was President of the St Patrick's Day Races for 30 years and a J.P. for many years, a member of the Masonic Lodge and chairman of the Patriotic Committee. He was a Councillor in the Shire of Morwell -1898-1911 and 1918-1923 and Shire President on five occasions -1899-1900, 1905-1906, 1908-1909, 1909-1910 and 1921-1922. In 1923 they sold their Morwell business to W Martin and bought the Co-operative Store in Traralgon.

He retired to live privately in Morwell with his wife Catherine. Their home was the corner of Wilson and Elgin Streets. Later this was the site of the Sacred Heart Convent. On 6-2-1929 John Hall died in the Sale Hospital following a stroke leaving Cath who died in 1936 and 3 children, Stanley, Ethel and John.





John was buried in the Presbyterian section of the Hazelwood Cemetery with his sister in law Annie Baird and Catherine was buried with her daughter Ethel in the Anglican section of the Hazelwood Cemetery. Catherine had been closely connected to St Mary's Church and Secretary of the Ladies Guild for many years while her daughter Ethel played the organ at St Mary's.

John and Catherine Hall had three children –Stanley, Ethel and John.

**Stanley Dawson Hall**, who was born in 1890, in Traralgon, enlisted in August 1914 and served with the 13<sup>th</sup> Australian Light Horse Regiment. He joined the Mediterranean Force at Gallipoli in May 1915 and four months later he was wounded. He ended up in Military Hospital in Wales but by June 1916 he was in Egypt and transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Brigade. The following year he was promoted to Lance Corporal and in November 1918 he embarked on the HT Port Darwin for his return to Australia.

On 14th June 1922 Stanley Hall married Jane Christensen at the residence of her parents in Tyers. The Morwell Advertiser 23 June 1922 p 3 gives us an account of the wedding.

The bride who was given away by her father was sweetly attired in ivory charmeuse and georgette and wore the usual veil. She was attended by her sister Miss A Christensen who wore a pretty gown of blue crepe de chine. Mr John hall, brother of the bridegroom carried out the duties of best men. As the bride entered the room on the arm of her father "The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden" was sung and on the happy couple leaving after the ceremony Mrs L Davey of Morwell played the "Wedding March". An adjournment was made to the large veranda at the side of the house which was enclosed for the purpose, where wedding tea was partaken by the large gathering. The tables were laden with edibles of most appetising nature and ample justice was done to the good things provided and the usual toasts were duly made. The happy couple motored to Morwell and caught the evening train en route to Sydney where the honeymoon was spent. The bride travelled in a navy twill costume with a hat to match. Mr and Mrs Hall's future home was on their farm at Tyers where they raised 3 children – Richard John (Jack), Stanley McTavish (Mac) and June Margaret and by 1954 Stan and Jane Hall were living in Traralgon.

Stanley died in 1955 and Jenny in 1973.

**Ethel Hall**, who was born in 1892, in Traralgon, married Leonard Davey at St Kilda in 1913 and they lived in Morwell with their four children –Norman, Roma, Gwendolin and Lorna. Ethel is reportedly the first woman in the district to drive a motor car. Ethel died in 1930 and is buried in the Anglican section of Hazelwood Cemetery and 6 years later her mother was buried with her.

**John Alexander (Jack) Hall** was born in Morwell in 1895 and also went to the 1<sup>st</sup> World War a year after his brother Stanley. He was gassed in France and sent to England to convalesce. Jack returned to Melbourne and on 10-7-1919 was discharged as medically unfit. In 1923 Jack married Gladys Duggan but she died in 1930. Jack moved to Queensland and in 1936 he married a widow, Betty Bowring. Jack died in 1973 and Betty in 1995.

Both Stanley and Jack were awarded 3 service medals –the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. Their names are on the Morwell War Memorial and the Morwell State School Honour Board.

John Hall -Morwell Councillor and 5 times President of the Morwell Shire and his wife Catherine. They rented The Universal Emporium on the corner of Tarwin and Main Streets, (now Commercial Road) from 1884-1923 initially from Mrs Annie Donaldson and from 1905 her daughter Edith, who married George Irving, (John's younger brother), in 1906.



John Hall



Catherine McTavish



Their three children –Stanley, Ethel and Jack

Sources:

*The Weekly Times* Sat 20<sup>th</sup> November 1897

*"Heart of the Valley"* by Stephen Legg pp 122 and 144

*"A Souvenir History of Morwell"* by Ivan Maddern

Thank you to our member Rob de Souza-Daw for researching the Hall family

## About Gunyah

“Curry Rival” Gunyah Gunyah, via Boolarra

Dear Aunt Connie

Perhaps it may be of interest to your readers to know something about the back blocks of Gippsland. We are living in Gunyah, 16 miles from Boolarra Station. It is a dairying district, and being all new country, is still heavily timbered. During the summer and spring we send cream to the Boolarra Creamery twice a week, the carter coming to the Morwell River to take delivery of the cream cans. My two sisters and I are milkers on our farm.

We received, whilst attending the Berwick State School, lessons on dairying and science. These lessons are now useful to us. I may mention that in the dairying districts of Victoria that these two subjects are in the curriculum. This is a very wise step on the part of the Education Department. Being such hilly country, with the Fumina Mountains at the back of us, we are obliged to use sledges, instead of carts.

We have one great drawback – no school. The nearest is eight miles distance, in Mirboo East; but the Education Department have promised us one when we have more children in the neighbourhood.

Like all districts where there is good land the roads are bad, and no carting can be done in winter. One of the frontages to our farm is the Morwell River in which there is good fishing, eels, trout, and blackfish being very plentiful. In spring and summer parrots come in great flocks. This affords fine sport in the shape of shooting to our brothers. It gives us the opportunity of having parrot pie, which is a great change from meat as well as being a delicacy. Then we set the traps to catch the hares, which are very destructive, tearing the bark of the fruit trees and eating the vegetables.

We are now stoving out the stumps of trees, a very interesting piece of work. We dig out the earth down to the roots of the trees, a foot below the surface. Then having put fires all round, we bank it up well with clods of earth and grass, and leave them to slowly burn away. This sometimes takes three months. There are great fires to be seen every night, as our neighbours are burning off their surplus logs, timber, and dogwood to minimise the danger of bushfires in summer, at the same time clearing the ground to sow grass, as the natural grasses are not sufficient to make the cattle profitable. The rape seed is about the best to sow. It is very prolific, and, as a fall back serves as an excellent vegetable. It is hard to distinguish from spinach, when cooked in the same way.

The trees here are simply giants. Some people think it would take a mint of money to clear them away. The different kinds of timber on our farm are blackwood, blackbutt, blue gum, white gum, mess mate, hazel gum, blanket wood and musk scrub. Of course there are a great number of ferns. It seems a dreadful waste to be burning away such beautiful woods; but it is not worth anyone’s while to purchase them.

The very fine varieties of potatoes are grown by the local farmers. The varieties include carmen, snowflake, and coronation. The rainfall up here is almost perpetual. There are a number of different creeper seeds up here, principally clematis and supplejack. If you wish any seeds, should feel happy to forward some. I need hardly say that snakes are in great number.

Tonight it is bitterly cold. Sitting round a large fire reminds my sisters and brothers of the piece of poetry in the old school books. “Around the fire one winter’s night the farmers rosy children sat, etc.” it is a fire in striking contrast to the fires in the towns and suburbs. I was 15 years old on June 1. From your loving niece, DAISY HARTLEY

Source – *The Weekly Times* 2nd July 1910 p 37





## OPEN DAYS 2020

We are closed until further notice.

We will monitor the health professional and government advice and open as soon as we can.

Please deliver me to:

If not delivered please return to 12 Hazelwood Road, Morwell 3840

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