

# Morwell Historical Society Inc.

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## The "Morwell Post" *December 2014*

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Secretary: Monika Cornell  
Post Office Box 1163  
Morwell 3840

Please address all correspondence to the Secretary.

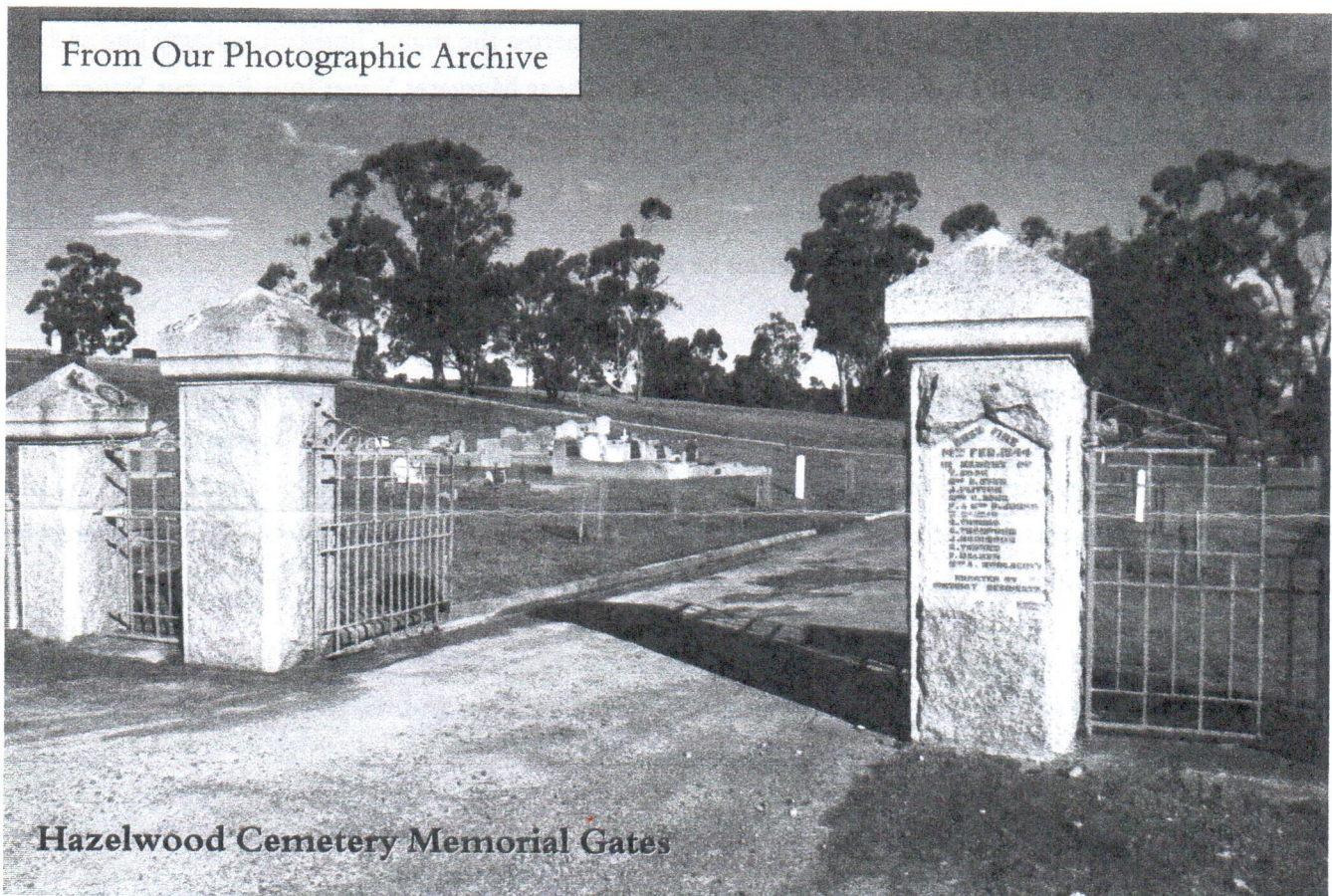
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"Post" are always welcome;  
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From Our Photographic Archive



Hazelwood Cemetery Memorial Gates

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## **BILL HARDY – MEMORIES OF 1944 BUSHFIRES as recalled by a 10½ year old boy**

In February 1944, I was 10½ years of age and in the fifth grade at Morwell State School 2136 in Commercial Road, Morwell. The classroom we were educated in was the old original wood building which had been relocated southwards to make room for the new brick veneer structure which is still in place today – this alteration was in the 1940's during the Second World War.

I well remember the day of the fires from sitting in class looking southwards across the Town Common to see great flames running fast across what is now the area taken up by the Morwell Open Cut, but then known to be land soon to be taken up by the SECV. It was an area of grazing land, somewhat overgrown particularly near the old town reservoirs on Morwell Ridge (near where the SECV offices were to be constructed years later). The scene was a terrible sight as we got out of our desks to look through the windows; huge flames and a roaring wind.

Almost immediately, I think it was Mr Goyen our Headmaster, came into our class to tell us we were to go home right away. I gathered my brother Brian and sister Lynette and off we went, with a mob of kids from Papyrus Street.

Our home was at 25 Papyrus Street. The route we always took to and fro was directly across Commercial Road, between the bowls club and the old swimming pool, across the main Gippsland railway line and then the Princes highway, down Hoyle Street, across open land near Margaret Street into Papyrus Street; about 10 – 15 minute walk.

The wind was ferocious, but we arrived home to find mayhem and confusion as the parents, mostly mothers, milling about looking for their children as we came running home.

In the summer of that drought year, the Commonwealth Flax mill in Latrobe Road was in full production making war materials out of flax and linseed oil grown and processed in Gippsland for the defence of the nation. There was a vast area of open grassland from Latrobe Road to the rear of Papyrus Street where this material was laid out to dry and mature to be ready for conversion to the required products. The raw (flax) material came up to our back fences and I recall much conversation at the time saying what a great fire hazard we had thrust upon us, and us kids not to play around in "this stuff".

My mother, Marie Hardy, was a soldier's wife who, with us three children, battled along all those years and for as long as best we could. My father had just come home on leave and we were a family again for a few days. Sometimes we wondered who was this man dressed in a uniform.

There seemed to be a lot of children on the roadside near our home, mothers and parents checking all – a lot of confusion. The flames were galloping across the flax roaring right up to our back and side fences towards the houses.

All of a sudden, my dad came out of the fire area and yelled "Marie, grab all the kids and get out of Papyrus Street and go to the town centre, get going quickly; just go! Don't go back inside, clear out!" (Mills Emporium was a focal point.)

There were a few men about, but most of course were at work. All they had were spud bags and the like; garden hoses were useless as by that time the Morwell Fire Brigade was taking water directly from the mains.

Mum and a few other women with the children came out of Papyrus Street and saw David Davies' house on fire. Also, Tom Holding's house in Margaret Street was nearly gone. It was all a shocking sight. The wind and high temperature knocked us around as we tore out of all this into Church Street and eventually to Mills Emporium at the corner of Commercial Road and Tarwin Street and safety.

My father (Roy Hardy) saw the flames come right up into our backyard. He raced to the rear of the house and saw blowing embers firing up in our back porch. Mum had not long done the washing using the wood fired copper as usual. Dad ran into the wash-house and tipped over the still filled copper splashing the contents all over the floors dousing the flames in one hit thus saving the potential of our house burning down.

As the side fences were alight threatening our wood shed, Dad tore the covering lid from the 100 gallon rainwater iron tank and started bucketing the water quenching the flames. Our Dad saved our house, but we lost half our fences. His terrific action in that short time of saving our home was to play a big part in our family's future and prosperity when he was de-mobbed in 1946 and finally came back home.

Meanwhile, as the women and children were fleeing up Church Street, my Grandfather, Edmund Burke was coming fast down Church Street to the first three houses in (what is now) Margaret Street (which was once the start of Papyrus Street) and raced into the third house belonging to Tom Holding and his family, rounding up all the children and led them to safety thus saving their lives. That house was burnt to the ground.

Grandpa Burke was a Boer war and First World War veteran and had been a captain of the Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade for many years before coming to Morwell to gain employment at the Maryvale Pulp Mill in the early years of the Second World War. To do what he did was so typical of this man and it always made me feel that to volunteer your time to fire brigade work was a continuation of his great service to his fellow man and the community. (Grandpa Burke lived in the second house from the Victor/Church Street corner towards today's Presbyterian Church.)

This fire took out the first two houses mentioned and the last three houses in Papyrus Street adjacent to the Gay Street corner and nearly got our house. Five houses in Papyrus Street were razed to the ground.

I can remember the old Dodge fire pumper leaving the destroyed Holding home and trying to quell fire at the last three houses in Papyrus – but there was no hope. There was too much happening with too little resources on hand. All this was happening in minutes of time as we were gathered up in our flight out of Papyrus Street, up Church Street, to safety.

Eventually we dispersed from the main street and my family went to our grandparent's house in Church Street. The whole grassland looking north where the flax had been was black and still smoking. I think we may have had a meal there then wandered back home to 25 Papyrus Street.

We children were not allowed to check out all the damage. No doubt there may have been injuries and harm to many of our neighbours – I am not totally privy to all that. But I do remember that night when in bed the stench of burning and the glow of burning residue during that night. The next day it seemed that our part of Morwell was ruined and that a great catastrophe had happened in our immediate neighbourhood.

My father, not long after all this, finished his leave and we all went to the station to see him off in the troop train. He finally came home in 1946 for good.

Life continued on as before but with much of our fencing gone, and five homes in the street destroyed with families displaced, as a lad then, it was all quite dramatic but I suppose kids get over it quickly. We, as a family just got on with it; the adults really had all the worries.

It was quite some time before us children ventured into the totally destroyed houses rummaging around to find bits and pieces. But really I think this soon finished for us as we realised there was nothing to gain except curiosity and then a feeling of sadness in other people's disasters.

I know us kids from Papyrus Street were bombarded with lots of questions when we got back to school; bad news travels fast as they say and I was proud to tell of my father's exploits in saving our house whilst home on leave – a miracle I say!

Just prior to Dad going back to the war, there was soon a call for volunteers to go to the Hazelwood Cemetery to dig graves for all the deceased fire victims (13 in Morwell Shire). Dad, and a few other servicemen on leave and others led by RSL members and civic people dug those graves. I can remember Dad saying years later how the pubs in Morwell were full that day with men more interested in "their beer" rather than doing a bit for their deceased fellow men. That's life I guess!

The following account of a particular day is still fresh in my mind after nearly 70 years and it became a life changing event for our family.

The Syndicate that built the Papyrus Street houses cut their losses and eventually put the houses on the market to wind-up the business.

It turned out that a buyer came to my mother (simply knocked on the door without warning) and told her that she had a month to vacate our home. Our family were renters and this buyer had purchased the property. My mother was shocked at this event so she went to her father, (Grandpa) Burke who went to the RSL to check out what could be done to restore the situation.

Eventually enough pressure was put on The Syndicate to forestall the sale as my father had assets of deferred Army pay accrued to guarantee a deferred loan. Thus, when he came home, he had his own home lock, stock and barrel; a mighty effort which paved the way for his future into the trucking business. My parents later built a new home to settle into a good long life in Morwell for the rest of their lives.

Postscript: Roy Hardy lived to 83 years and Marie to 86 years of age. They were Morwell people since 1937. **Written by Bill Hardy – July 24, 2014**

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Morwell Advertiser  
4th April 1946

Do You Remember When It Looked Like This?



Corner of Commercial Road & Tarwin Street c. early 1950's

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup>. December 1949 (page 1)

Level crossing smash

**EXPRESS WRECKS  
DANCERS' BUS  
Passengers freed  
with axes**

**A BUS laden with young people going to a dance was wrecked by an express train on a level crossing outside Morwell railway station last night.**

**It was the fourth smash at the crossing in five months.**

The bus was hurled on its side, spilling some on to the line, and trapping others inside the wreckage. Startled by the sound, which could be heard for half a mile, several hundred people ran to the crossing to assist the injured.

Police hacked the wrecked bus open with axes to get at those trapped inside. On one person was seriously injured – Miss **Joan Hourigan**, 21, of Traralgon, who was taken to Morwell Hospital with a fractured leg – but many of the young people had to be treated for abrasions and for cuts caused by spears of broken glass.

The smash occurred just before 9, as the bus was crossing the line to go to the Shire Hall, and the train had just passed through the station. It resumed its run after about 15 minutes.

Local residents said last night that the crossing was a “death trap.” It had no lights at any time, and no warning devices.

# Morwell Advertiser

Established 62 Years. Published Every Thursday. Telephone Morwell 6.

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No. 1366 Price 3d.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1947.

Printed and Published by J. G.  
Lawless for J. G. Lawless & Co., at  
the Office, 226 Commercial Road, Morwell

Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1954 (page 5)

## Wedding Budge-Derham

A wedding of wide interest took place at the Morwell Methodist Church on May 1<sup>st</sup>, when the marriage of Miss **Anne Derham**, youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. **T. G. Derham** "Latrobe View," Morwell with Mr. **Leslie Budge**, third son of Mr. and Mrs. **J. K. Budge** Bairnsdale, formerly of Yinnar and Morwell, was celebrated by Rev. **N. E. Derbyshire**. Miss **Hicks** was at the organ.

Swiss embroidered white organdie over satin fashioned the bride's lovely gown, the strapless bodice topped by a bolero jacket with long fitted sleeves, and the full circular skirt sweeping back to a train. A Juliet cap with clusters of orange blossom held the finger-tip tulle veil and she carried a bouquet of white chrysanthemums, azaleas, nerines and carnations.

Given away by her father, the bride was attended by Mrs. **Dorothy Derham**, her cousin, and Miss **Patricia Turner**, their sleeveless frocks of ice blue embroidered organdie over taffeta featuring a full circular skirt and with pleated fold of deeper blue across the slim bodice, designed with envelope shoulder line. They wore matching blue egg shell caps with pink nerines at one side and rhinestone necklets, the bridegroom's gift. Their bouquets were pink carnations, nerines and blue hydrangea, with blue satin ribbons.

Mr. **Charles Budge**, the bridegroom's brother, was best man and Mr. **Dick Seccor**, groomsman.

The reception was held at the Town Hall Supper Room. Mrs. Derham received her guests in a suit of charcoal grey, white hat and accessories, and shoulder spray of frangipanni. Mrs. Budge wore a black hat with her grey tailored suit, and spray of pink rosebuds. The tiered wedding cake made by Mrs. Derham was beautifully decorated by Miss **Gladys Rae**.

The honeymoon is being spent at Hayman Island. For travelling the bride chose a charcoal grey suit, with pink hat and black accessories. She wore a spray of pink nerines.



# Morwell Advertiser

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>. September 1947 (page 1)

## Old Pioneer Passes.

### WILLIAM HENRY GODDRIDGE

THE death occurred on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> September, at his home at Morwell Bridge, of **William Henry Godridge**, at the age of 72. Mr Godridge's health had been noticeably failing for the past few months, and he peacefully passed away after only a few days of confinement to bed.

It is believed that his health was undermined by the strain of the suspense undergone over many months while waiting for tidings of his son, **Keith**, who had been taken by a German raider in the Pacific early in the war.

The late Mr Godridge was born at Morwell Bridge in 1875 at the Club Hotel, owned by his father, **Henry Godridge**, and situated on the old Melbourne Rd. This hotel had been erected to cater for the needs of passengers on the Melbourne-Sale coach run in the pre-railway days of early Gippsland, and change horses were kept and cared for to provide the needs of the two-way traffic.

Here, in company with his parents, one brother (**Harry**) and sisters, **Harriet** (deceased), **Susan** (Mrs **Marshal**, of Yallourn North), **Mary** (Mrs **Edwards**, of Melbourne) and **Nellie** (Mrs **R. Eastman**, of N.S.W.) he spent his early boyhood. His father died in 1892, but the family remained intact until the hotel was de-licensed in 1916 after which it dispersed.

At an early age he became interested in the working of the brown coal deposits on the Latrobe River, discovered by his grandfather in 1890. For many years this interest in coal getting took him in turn to Wonthaggi, Kilcunda and Outtrim, in addition to devoting considerable time to the first briquetting plant established on the Latrobe River by his grandfather. Despite his preoccupation intermittently with coal mining, the late Mr Godridge never lost his interest in dairying and grazing on the original selection, and with his marriage in 1908 with Miss **Elsa Smith**, a daughter of a pioneering family of Moe, they settled in the old Club Hotel.

This building was destroyed by fire in 1917, and he lost his mother in the same year. Then the deceased with his wife and family moved across the road to take over the

old homestead, attached to the local butcher shop, which had been run under the direction of the late **Fred Savige**.

The original school had been a part of the old hotel, and with its destruction the pioneers were faced with the task of providing other accommodation. A new school was built to cater for 30 pupils. This building was destroyed by fire in 1925. The next building, a government structure, was destroyed in the 1944 bush fire.

Following his marriage, the late Mr. Godridge confined himself exclusively to dairying until the early thirties when he turned his attention to grazing. The proximity of his property to the Yallourn undertaking brought about its acquisition by the State Electricity Commission in 1924, but the property was leased to him and was so held until the time of his death.

For a place of worship at Morwell Bridge, the late Mr Godridge played a leading part, with other residents, in the construction of a log cabin for the use of the Church of England. This structure was later removed to the present site of the Morwell Church of England. He was one of the original founders of the Yallourn Church of England.

The late Mr Godridge was a sound judge of stock, and his transactions in cattle took him all over Gippsland where he was a familiar figure in the saleyards. While unable, by reason of the need to devote practically all his attention to his own affairs, to give much time to public service, nevertheless he was intimately concerned with the progress of the settlement at Morwell Bridge, which grew up around his property following the Yallourn operations.

He was a member and Past Master of the Moe Masonic Lodge. As one with lifelong association with the Morwell district, he made strong friendships and earned the respect of his fellow citizens by his unswerving probity and willingness to render assistance when required. The public tribute to his work was most fittingly expressed by the large number of mourners contained in more than seventy cars which followed the remains to their resting place at Hazelwood last Sunday.

He leaves a widow, one daughter **Marie** (**Mrs Jones**, of Melbourne) and two sons, **Keith** and **Harry**, to mourn his loss.

The service at the grave was conducted by the Rev. **Harvey Brown**, of Yallourn, and was followed by a Masonic service in the presence of a strong attendance of brethren. The funeral arrangements were conducted by **D. & W. McCubbin**, of Traralgon.

From the Back of the Filing Cabinet!



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22<sup>nd</sup> July 1963

**SPECIAL!**

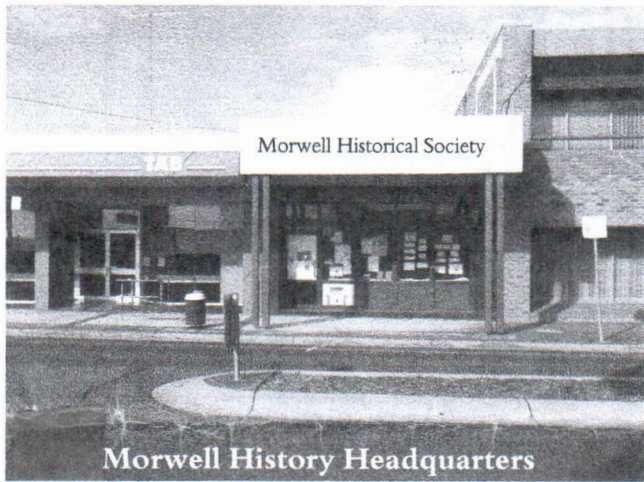


**1'10½**

NINE IN PACKET

## Information Page:

Please note that the next meeting will be on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 2.00 p.m.  
At 44 Buckley Street (Next to T.A.B.)

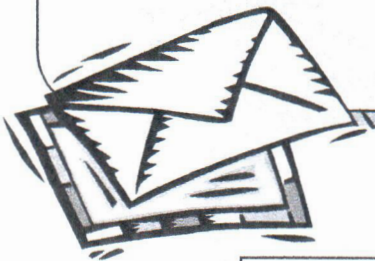


### \*Meeting dates for 2015:

February 18<sup>th</sup>  
March 18<sup>th</sup>  
April 15<sup>th</sup>  
May 20<sup>th</sup>  
June 17<sup>th</sup>  
July 15<sup>th</sup>  
August 19<sup>th</sup>  
September 16<sup>th</sup>  
October 21<sup>st</sup>  
November 18<sup>th</sup>

\*subject to A.G.M. approval in March

Please deliver me to:



If undelivered please return to P.O. Box 1163 Morwell 3840

### *From Our Morwell Fact File:*

*The Memorial Gates at Hazelwood Cemetery were officially  
opened on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1948*

Sources: Morwell Advertiser & Gazette February 19<sup>th</sup> 1948

**A Very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year  
to all our readers of the "Morwell Post".**



The next edition of the "Post" is due out in February 2015.

Stephen

