

The Morwell Post

Morwell Historical Society

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



Morwell and District Community Hospital c1950



See article page 7

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Morwell Historical Society Directory 2024/2025

President:	Alan McFarlane Phone: 0448 430 394
Vice-President:	Shirley Prosser
Secretary:	Florence Butcher
Assistant Secretary:	Elaine Andrijczak
Treasurer:	Peter Butcher
Committee Members:	Rosalie Davey Rob de Souza-Daw Laurie Williams
Research Library:	12 Hazelwood Road, Morwell, Victoria 3840
Research Queries:	secretary@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au
Public Access:	1st and 3rd Wednesday and last Sunday of each month, 11.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. Open - February to November
Members' Gathering:	Every two months on the 3rd Wednesday - commencing 21st February 2024, then April, June, August, October, at 2pm (informal get-together and afternoon tea)
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 \$30.00 Application Forms available on our website for you to print and send. For a print copy of " The Morwell Post " - \$10.00 per annum
Editor:	email: morwellpost@morwellhistoricalsociety.org.au
Newsletter Team:	Fay Thompson, Elaine Andrijczak, Florence Butcher
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

Front page icon is of the old Post Office c1930 which was on the site of the old Commonwealth Bank, corner of Commercial Road and Tarwin Street.

All photos, unless indicated, are from our archives

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Was great to see so many attend our Gathering of Members on the 19th June and look forward to our next gathering on 21st August.

Things have been pretty busy at the Society including-

- wreath laying on Anzac Day
- Bunnings BBQ in May
- Bunnings Mothers Day event in May
- Volunteer event in Traralgon
- visit from Morwell Neighbourhood House Men's Group

Application will be made to Latrobe City Council's Community Grants program for-

- reprinting of brochures
- lawnmower

The Society is participating in the *Community Turf Force* project sponsored by Gippsland Trades and Labour Council which will see participants providing a lawn cutting and edging service.

A subcommittee of our Society continues to work on the origin of Morwell streets for Latrobe Council. It is interesting to see how much information this process is gaining.

The "*Step Back in Time Café*" is very successful and I thank those members for providing food and assist on the days.

Thank you to those generous members who have made donations to the Society. Hopefully our current debt of \$30,000 will be reduced to around \$10,000 over the next month or so. This amount has to be paid by next March. We are nearly there, a wonderful achievement.

A reminder that subs are now due.
Until next time, stay warm
Alan

SOME OBJECTS IN OUR COLLECTION



Coleman self heating gasoline iron 1930s



Imperial Typewriter 1940s

ERNEST COLIN DAVEY 1891-1960

Troop Ships Collide

The following is a letter from Colin Davey to his parents Charles and Ada and it was printed in the ~~Sturwell Advertiser~~ *Sturwell Advertiser* Friday 25 December 1914 p 2.

Private Colin Davey 2838, enlisted 27 Aug 1914 in the Divisional Ammunition Column at the age of 23, and was a member of the First Expeditionary Contingent.

He embarked on the *HMAT Shropshire* on 20 October 1914.

"At last I am able to write and let you know a little news concerning our trip which has been very uneventful with the exception of 2 cases. I suppose before you get this letter the papers would have published a better account of both the sinking of the Emden and also our collision with the Ascanius but the latter is fresh in my memory that I will give you an account of it.

At 4.45 am on the 20th while most of us were sleeping soundly but while I was sitting up in my bed trying to get rid of a very bad cough, I heard a very loud rumbling noise go through the ship and without any hesitation I jumped up and reached for a life belt. By this time a still louder report was heard, followed by a collision alarm, then the lights went out and the boys were scrambling for life jackets in the dark. Generally they conducted themselves splendidly and it was not long before everybody was at their post.

After the siren had given a couple of blasts and 2 rockets had been sent up as distress signals there were soon other boats ready to help us but it had been found by them that no serious damage had been done. How it happened is easily explained. The boats were a little too close together and as the boat in front of us slowed down we had to nearly stop and the boat behind us instead of pulling up in time struck our stern and afterwards struck us amidships, right where we were sleeping. All the damage was done above the water line and we were able to go ahead at day light. The damage is estimated at over £1000. You can quite understand what excitement there was but it might have been a terrible disaster.

For the past week I have been very ill and suffering from the effects of inoculation, also the cold. The second injection was into our sides. Only a few of us were done and we had to suffer for the lot. The doctor found out that the men couldn't stand it so the rest are being injected into the arm. I have had to go to the doctor every day for a week and today is the first day that I am able to go on duty. I feel a good deal better. The heat is rather too much for me. I am sitting at the mess table with nothing but a pair of blues on and I never wear boot or socks. I have just finished tea and helped with the washing up.

It is five weeks now since we left home with a week being spent in Albany harbour waiting for the troop ships to come in. We got very tired of it and were glad to move off. Our next call was Colombo last Sunday and there was plenty there to amuse us. The natives came up in their funny little boats and they had a busy time diving for coins. One of them dived off the top of the bridge for 2 shillings. Although we were not allowed to go ashore we were right along the shore and were able to see what a pretty place it is. There were thousands of niggers carrying coal and we could see plenty of rickshaws going along the road. Inside and out of the harbour there were between 80-100 ships and at night it was a pretty sight. We expect to arrive in Aden tomorrow night. It is about a twenty day trip from there to home. I will not be a bit sorry to get off the boat."

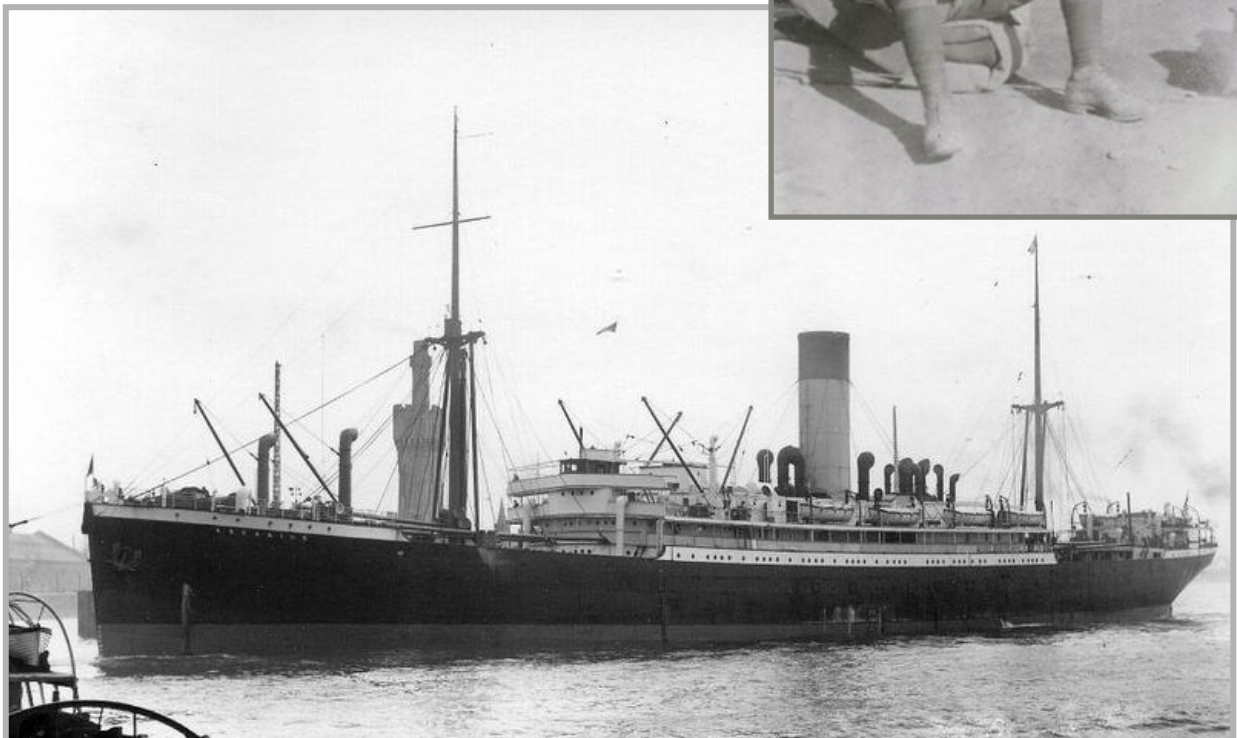




Colin embarked on the HMAT Shropshire
20 October 1914



Colin reading a letter from home - Egypt



HMAT Ascanius

The following is an intensely interesting account of the voyage of the First Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force, by Military Headquarters for publication:

...“I must describe an exciting little experience that occurred this morning about 4.30 o’clock on the 21st. Everyone was awoken by what appeared to be a collision and upon rushing out on deck from my cabin my first impression proved to be only too true. Our line of ships comprised of the Euripides, Argyllshire, Shropshire, Ascanius and Benalla and other ships and for some unknown reason, though many rumours are current, our vessel ran right up to and severely bumped into the HMAT Shropshire about the quarter broadside, and in endeavouring to get out of the grave position, another bump was experienced. The result, I believe, meant very little to the Shropshire but tore a hole in the ship about 20 feet long and 4 inches in width.

Alarm bells, signals of distress and even sky rockets could be heard and seen. It was exceedingly dark and a fair sea running. The consternation on board can be better imagined than described. The conduct of the officers and troops has been the subject of warm compliments from all quarters. The men behaved positively heroically, put on their life belts and marched quietly to their allotted places where they remained perfectly calm for an hour or more, when it was ascertained that the damage was not sufficient importance to cause immediate alarm. The aspect of the situation was not known to the men until they were actually dismissed. They did not know at what moment they might be ordered to jump overboard and swim clear of a sinking ship and await rescue.

The Ascanius was adjudged as unworthy of negotiating the Red Sea and is to be put in to Aden for repairs. The incident of the collision will form a subject of a naval inquiry“.

In 1914 the *HMAT Ascanius* was converted at Cockatoo Island to Transport 1,820 troops and 12 horses. She completed 9 transport voyages from Australia. After the war she serviced the refrigerated meat trade between Australia and Liverpool before being used again as a troop ship during WW2.

In the convoy there were 46 vessels of which 37 were troop ships, carrying approximately 35,000 men from Australasia.

Colin’s two brothers also enlisted - Reginald in the 8th Light Horse Regiment on 4th April 1917 aged 20 and William on 2 August 1915 in the 24th Battalion and they all came home.



Colin returned to Australia on the *HMAT Nestor (Hospital Ship A71)* 22 July 1917

MORWELL HOSPITAL AND MORWELL DOCTORS

As remembered by Sue Hateley (nee Green)

I was born in the Morwell Hospital on Jan 1st 1944 and my 3 sisters followed in 1945, 47 and 49. Mum said she walked to the hospital.

There was a bed (I don't think it was a ward) sponsored /dedicated/ bought by Arthur Green in memory of his son Ian who was killed in Bardia in 1942. A plaque was on the wall or bed. Was it ever called a Bush Nursing Hospital??

I remember the doctors of my childhood.

DONALD FANCOURT MITCHELL

"Digger" Mitchell, as he was know to the community, was our doctor and Dad's (Barras Green) good friend. We called him "Uncle Dig". Big loud no-nonsense bloke! Not that we saw a doctor too often. A bit scary to kids. His wife was Nancy and they lived in Commercial Road in a big double story house called "Clovelly". It had a big cypress hedge around it. The surgery as it was called was in that house for many years. Dig was descended from an English "Sir".

Dig's father, **DR HUGH MITCHELL** also practiced at Morwell before him. (and perhaps with him)

DR DESMOND (DES) RODGERS-WILSON and wife Lois. They lived in George Street just behind Mitchell's.

Think he was a pilot during the war. He worked out of the Mitchell's house. After the family left Morwell Des died in a car accident in Melbourne at about 47.

DR RIC BOUVIER and Carol

Lived in Maryvale Road. I used to babysit for them.

DR ALAN CROOK and Phyllis English

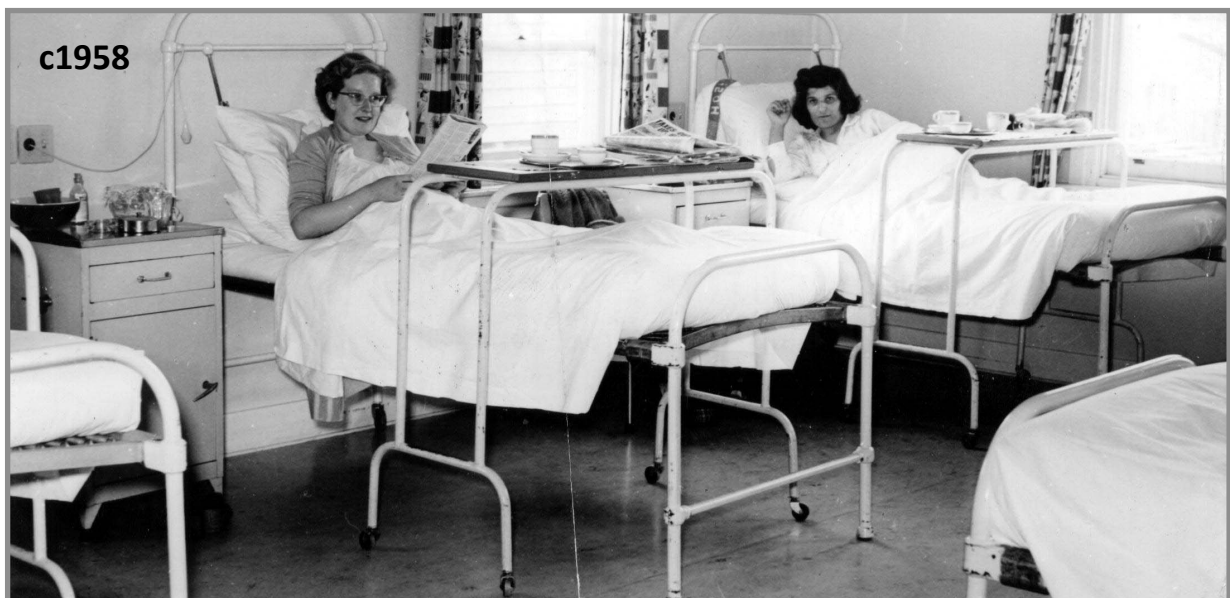
I think they lived in Tarwin Street for a short while and then Hopetoun Avenue.

DR JOHN WISEMAN and Maureen

All these doctors and wives contributed much to the community. Nancy Mitchell worked in the practice too. I think. They all had children of about our ages They were in Morwell circa 1940s and 50s from memory.

THE DENTIST was GERRY HAUGH, wife Chris

His surgery was at home, corner of Elgin St and Hazelwood Road. He later moved to upstairs rooms in a new building in Commercial Road. In that "modern" surgery he had a train that was attached to the top of the drill apparatus and it sort of ran back and forward as the drill ground its way around our dodgy tooth. Ouch!



MORWELL CITIZENS BAND

The Early Years

As early as July 9th 1887 a meeting was held in Murdoch's Hotel with the purpose of forming a brass band. William Murdoch chaired the meeting and there were 16 people present. It was moved by Mr Waldon and seconded by Mr Houghton that a band be formed and named Morwell Brass Band Association. Practises were held in a shed or in the back of Rintoull's Blacksmith. Later, in 1907, the name changed to Morwell Brass Band, then in the 1930s to Morwell Maryvale Band, In the 1930s, to Morwell Shire Citizens Band and in 2005 to Latrobe City Brass Band. After a brief period of being known as the Latrobe City Brass Band, in 2020, they changed their name back to Morwell Citizens Band to realign themselves with the township of Morwell.

By July 10th 1887 the Secretary, Mr Howlett had arranged with Sutton Music House of Melbourne to purchase 12 instruments and a supply of music on terms. On September 9th 1887 all keen members were given instruments and asked to attend band practice twice weekly in a shed, or in the hotel or sometimes in the back of Rintoull's blacksmith shop in Commercial Road.

A concert was arranged to liquidate the debts and the townspeople, starved for entertainment turned out in force to welcome the band and listen to their music. The concert was followed by a ball which proved to be the highlight of 1887.

On February 11th 1888 Mr J Donaldson became the president of the band and enthusiastically planned a concert for 15th March and once again the locals turned out. From 1895 to 1903 Thomas Slattery was Head Master of the Morwell State School and he wielded the baton for the next 3 years.

On Friday evening, January 1st 1897 Morwell was alive with late shoppers and business was booming. The band played on various sites and at midnight the band and followers paraded down the main street and played and sang 'Auld Lang Syne'.

St Patrick's Day races were held each year and the band was asked to play Irish songs. The procession started at 11 am, it was led by the band and banner, the band leader Mr Slattery followed by parents with their children clapping and marching along to the sports ground where all events were conducted.

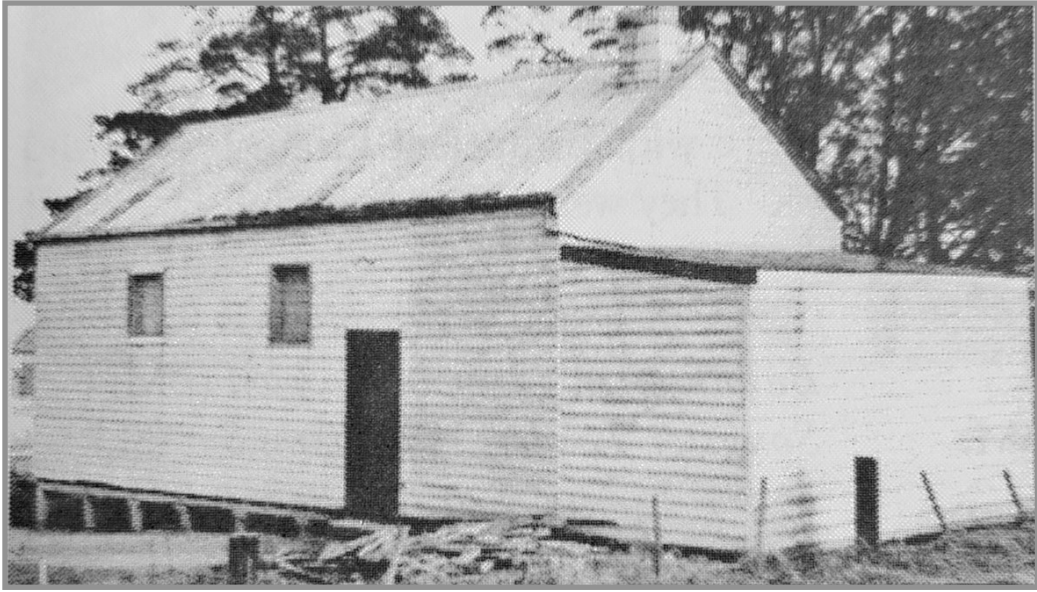
Boat excursions down the Thomson and Latrobe Rivers from Sale to Lakes Entrance were a popular way of raising money and enjoying a picnic outing on the water. Eager ticket holders caught the train at 5am for departure to Sale, then by boat down the river to the Lakes, and returning home after dark.

The band has had a few homes, including the old Fire Station and owning their own hall, which was opposite Commercial Road Primary School, in the railway plantation, now Alexandra Park. The old hall was condemned and the land was needed for road widening sometime in the 1960s, so the then council promised the band a hall to call their own. Practises were held in Ronald Reserve Hall in the football club dressing rooms for many years as a temporary measure. On 30th November 1986 they finally moved into the Town Common Pavilion or rather part of the building which has had a few alterations and now at last has been refurbished and is a great home for the band.



1905

Mr Sandegren (Conductor), Maggie Hentschell (Euphonium), May Hentschell (2nd Cornet), Ada Hentschell (Baritone), Olga Cooper (Solo Cornet) and Lill Williams (Tenor Horn)



Band Hall in Alexandra Park - 1955



Morwell Brass Band, January 1908

Back row (standing): C. Dayble, C. Brinsmead, Theo Hentschel, J. Sandegren, Bill Manning, R. Sandegren, E. Hentschel, H. Bridle, J Scheibel

Front row: J. Keegan, Dusing, T. Goldsworthy, H. Symens, J. White, R. Hentschel

Source –*Century of Brass 1887-1987* by Alf Warren

MARTIN WEIBERG

For more than 140 years the tale of Martin Weiberg has intrigued historians and Gippslanders as to what happened to the gold sovereigns that he stole?

Much has been written and speculated as to what happened to the money and where did he die.

Weiberg was a ships carpenter aboard the *SS Avoca* who, in 1877, managed to steal 5,000 gold sovereigns that today would be worth millions of dollars. Weiberg had seen this chance when he was instructed to do a repair job on the box that contained the sovereigns. He took the opportunity to obtain a wax impression of the key and cut a duplicate.

After removing the 5,000 sovereigns from one of the strong boxes he filled the box with sawdust and resealed it carefully so that when the box was transferred to the *SS China* in Melbourne the robbery was not detected. The theft of the coins was not noticed until the *SS China* arrived in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The heathen Ceylonese would not accept the Christian St George sovereigns so the Sydney mint stamped out sovereigns with a wreath on the obverse side of the coins for the Oriental Bank in Colombo.

“Acting on a lead, Inspector Secretan, Detective Mackay and Constable O’Meara travelled from Melbourne to the Tarwin River to pay Weiberg a visit. Their paths crossed by chance and Weiberg appeared very much surprised, but offered no resistance. He was at once searched and a number of sovereigns found upon him. He was then taken to the Griffiths Point lock-up, and the three officers proceeded to his hut on the Tarwin River. The hut was minutely searched, and the officers were rewarded by finding some sovereigns concealed in a large carpenter’s plane, in the end of which a hole had been bored, to a depth of about two feet. A piece of wood was very neatly fitted into the end of the hole, and on this being removed about 200 sovereigns dropped out. In all about 400 sovereigns have been recovered. “

After Weiberg spent 6 weeks in Pentridge the police took him to Tarwin River to show them where the rest of the gold sovereigns were hidden. During the search he punched one of the officers and ran into the bushes. He managed to evade capture for the next 5 months.

Weiberg met up again with the police at Eagle Point, near Paynesville. He was arrested, taken to Melbourne and sentenced to 5 years hard labour.

Upon being released he travelled to Hobart, purchased a yacht, sailed back to Waratah Bay and rowed a small boat ashore to collect supplies. When he was rowing back to his yacht the weather turned bad. His small boat was found on the beach and it was presumed that he had drowned but his body was never found. But did he drown?

The question is -Where are the gold sovereigns buried?

Many people go to Screw Creek in Inverloch with metal detectors and spades hoping to find the treasure. People also go to Waratah and search in a cave that is known as Weiberg’s cave. Then there are people who are looking in the Tarwin River. It is believed that the gold sovereigns are now worth over \$5,000 each.

Source:

- Many articles in the Victorian newspapers
- The Waratah Story* by Patricia Fleming
- Martin Weiberg* by Peter Cook

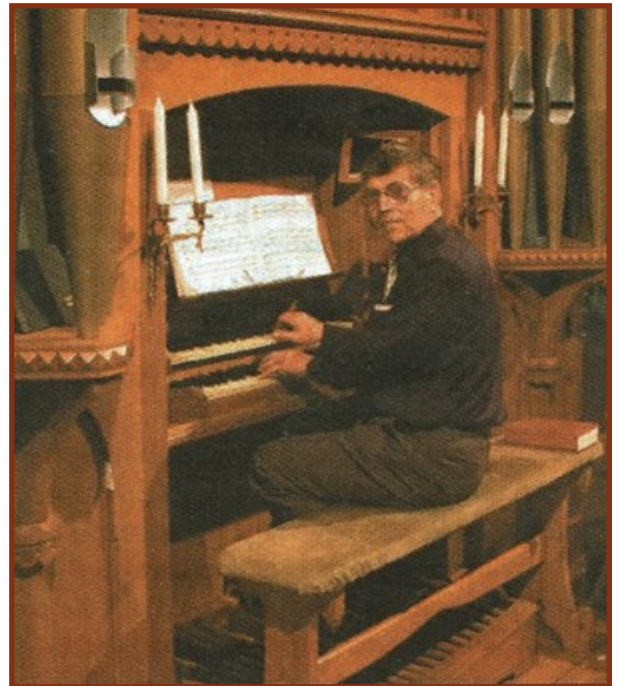
ST ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ORGAN

The 700 pipes organ was built by Speechly and Ingham in England in 1873. It was dismantled, packed in a crate and shipped to Melbourne. Its first home was the Athenaeum Hall in Collins Street before it was sold to the Anglican Church in Brighton. Its next stop was a 40 year stint at St Thomas' in Moonee Ponds before spending the next 60 years at a Methodist Church in Thornbury. When that church was sold to the Greek Orthodox Church it was transported to Thomastown and stored in the Uniting Church for almost 10 years.

When members of St Andrews Presbyterian Church in Morwell heard about the organ they made a successful bid for it. Each and every component was transported to Morwell. John Lagerway and Rod Bennett spent two years restoring the organ. In 1873 air was pumped in by hand but in 1920 an electric blower was installed.

The organ was dedicated on 27th July 1997.

The historical pipe organ now runs on electricity but originally worked with a person physically pumping air into the pipes.



Above John Lagerway playing the organ

Source -*Latrobe Valley Express* 15 November 2017
Booklet *Pipe Organ Restoration March 1997* by John Lagerway and Rod Bennett
Our own files





OPEN DAYS 2024

7th February || 21st February || 25th February
6th March || 20th March; AGM || 31st March
3rd April || 17th April || 28th April
1st May || 15th May || 26th May
5th June || 19th June || 30th June
3rd July || 17th July || 28th July
7th August || 21st August || 25th August
4th September || 18th September || 29th September
2nd October || 16th October || 27th October
6th November || 20th November || 24th November

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Please deliver to:

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CWA Morwell Evening Branch

Morwell Neighbourhood House

We sincerely thank Harriet Shing, Member for Eastern Victoria and staff for printing our Newsletter