

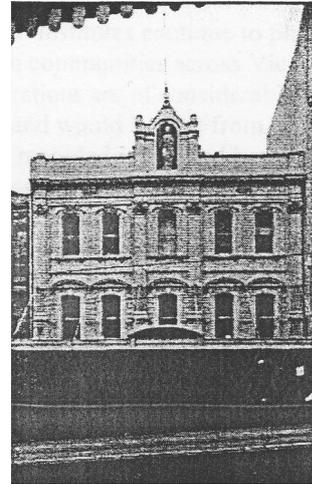


Rediscovering Mechanics' Institutes Conference

The MIV is holding a national conference on 17-18 November 2000 at the Melbourne Athenaeum. This conference celebrates two hundred years of the mechanics' institute movement. Presentations from institute representatives and historians will focus on the roles of mechanics' institutes, athenaeum, and schools of arts in Australia. A free bus tour of goldfields institutes will be conducted on Friday, followed by the launch of an important new history on the mechanics' institutes of Victoria.

An exhibition of photographs and memorabilia will be held during the conference. Please contact the Secretary by 1 October if you would like to contribute material for the exhibition. Tables will be available for members wishing to sell their publications at the conference.

Contact the Secretary on 9510 3393 for your conference program.



Melbourne Athenaeum established as the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution in 1839.

Congratulations John Murphy

Our Regional Vice President was recently made a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for his outstanding service to the Society and the cause of history in general.

A Fellowship is the highest honour that the RHSV can bestow on one of its members.

Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria: A History by Pam Baragwanath

This fascinating and most significant history covers over 400 mechanics' institutes throughout Victoria and is the result of many years of research.

Published by Publishing Solutions, Melbourne - limited numbers, hard copy, over 250 pages, illustrated throughout with photographs (some in colour).

Advanced copies of this splendid publication should be available in early November.

Please complete the form below and send with payment to The Secretary, MIV, PO Box 1080, Windsor 3181 to receive your advance copy.

Name.....

Address:.....

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No. of Copies _____

Price (incl. GST) \$44 plus \$5 postage

and handling. Total \$ _____

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Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program Announced in Victoria

The Victorian Minister for Local Government, Mr Bob Cameron, has launched a landmark report on the libraries of Mechanics' Institutes and the Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program, a funding program to make their collections more accessible through public libraries.

The Libraries of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria

In late 1999, the Local Government Division of the Department of Infrastructure commissioned a report from Ms Frances Clancy on the collections still held by mechanics' institutes in Victoria. This comprehensive report, *The Libraries of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria*, is the first such examination in this State, and possibly in Australia. Ms Clancy is an acknowledged expert consultant in the areas of collection management and development.

In several places, there are mechanics' institutes which still have books on their shelves. At least eight of these continue to lend material to borrowers. Some others are no longer active but have preserved their collections as valuable records of the past.

These resources are of great importance, not only to their local communities, but also to the State as a whole. As Frances Clancy's outstanding report shows, some collections are of great significance. Their preservation and maintenance is a priority.

Where mechanics' institutes are still actively lending materials, opportunities exist to form strategic partnerships with local public libraries to provide even better services to their communities and increase access to these collections.

Each mechanics' institute is different and each has its own needs. This ground-breaking report analyses eleven mechanics' institutes from across Victoria and makes recommendations for each one.

Copies of *The Libraries of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria* are available from Information Victoria at 356 Collins Street Melbourne (☎ 1300 366 356) or from the publications section of the Local Government website - www.doi.vic.gov.au/localgov.

Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program

Mechanics' institutes continue to play an important part in communities across Victoria. Some other collections are of considerable historic significance and would benefit from proper shelving and being recorded in public library catalogues, thus increasing their accessibility.

This strategy aims at opening up the resources to the community and making them more accessible through developing partnerships with local public libraries. As a first step, and based on the research in the report by Frances Clancy, partnerships will be developed between 11 mechanics' institutes and local public libraries.

One-off grants totalling \$85,000 will be provided to help develop these links between mechanics' institutes and their local public libraries.

The Maldon Athenaeum - North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation partnership was the first to be launched on 16 June 2000 at Maldon. A grant of \$10,000 was made to the Athenaeum for collection development and infrastructure maintenance, including the purchase of new materials and a further \$5,000 to the North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation to purchase and install a computer linked to its network and the Internet at the Athenaeum.

Other Partnerships announced to date are:

Ararat Mechanics' Institute **\$2,500**

Assessment of collection and feasibility of incorporation as special collection into Ararat Branch Library

Chiltern Athenaeum **\$4,500**

Appraisal of collection, including manuscript materials, and possible cataloguing by Upper Murray Regional Library Corporation

Melbourne Athenaeum **\$13,000**

Computer links, including Internet access, with Yarra-Melbourne Regional Library Corporation (\$5,000 to Regional Library) Preliminary work on creating computer catalogue on Regional Library Corporation's system - \$8,000.

Port Fairy Mechanics' Institute **\$5,000**

Shelving and cupboards for historic material

Stanley Athenaeum **\$2,500**

Shelving for collection

Other grants will be announced in the near future.

By Graham Dudley, Public Library Services,
Local Government Branch, Department of Infrastructure

These resources are of great importance, not only to their local communities, but also to the State as a whole.

Berwick Mechanics' Institute History Wins Award.

Vice President Richard Myers, author of the history of *Berwick Mechanics' Institute & Free Library* has been named winner of the Christina Smith Award, the major division of the National Community History Awards conducted biennially in South Australia by South East Books Promotions Inc.

These biennial awards seek to promote excellence in the writing and production of community histories. The books are assessed on "literary merit, quality of research, documentation and the ability to convey the historical, geographical and social framework in which they are set. Judges will also be looking for interest and vitality in the narrative. All entries will require a bibliography, list of sources, index and a table of contents that meet acceptable standards. Presentation will be a factor in judging, including aspects of design and the use of photographs and captions."

Some remarks from the Judges Report:

"This book displays every aspect of historiographical rigour and meets all the criteria for the awards with the exception of mapping the location concerned. There are, however, graphic descriptions of Berwick's environment and other information which locate the town. Myers tells an illuminating story. It is about the idealism of those in the Victorian era aiming to educate, in the best possible sense, the so-called ordinary person without the means to acquire formal education to any extent, as well as to make educative activity a focus for community life. The Mechanics' Institutes & Free Libraries were a product of enlightened thinking

about human potential in an age when the printed word and public speaking were still the two means of exchanging and communicating knowledge.

Berwick Mechanics' Institute & Free Library is well presented, with clear layout and imaginative design and an interesting range of illustrations. The cover perhaps does not convey the sophistication of the contents. The history of this particular Institute is set in the 19th Century context of these institutions in England and around Australia and reflects general historical developments as well as events specific to Victoria. Original sources give us a clear insight into the experience of those using the facility and the efforts of those sustaining it over the years. There are some great characters in this story and the author engages with them in such a way that the reader does also.

Richard Myers is a retired school teacher and amateur historian with the gifts of both story telling and meticulous research. He has given us an excellent history with this publication about a small cog in the huge wheel of human endeavour for self improvement."

Also short-listed for this award were: Bolton & Gregory, *Claremont: a history*; Dickey & Martin, *Building a community: a history of the Port Adelaide Mechanics' Institute*; Murdoch, Judy, *The Last Jam Sandwich: a history of the school and community of Kybybolite*; Taylor, Angela, *A Forester's Log: the story of John la Gerche and the Ballarat-Creswick State Forest, 1882-1879*.

"Myers tells an illuminating story. It is about the idealism of those in the Victorian era aiming to educate...the ordinary person"

Images from the Book of Kells by Julann Meabank

The exhibition "**Images from the Book of Kells**" was a two-week lead up to Kilmore's annual Celtic Festival. It was the 'brain-child' of Kilmore Mechanics' Institute's inaugural President Jim Lowden who succeeded in securing and presenting some material from an important international exhibition. The following is an account of how the exhibition was obtained and presented.

At a reception for the Irish Prime Minister, Jim mentioned that Kilmore Mechanics' Institute would really like the chance to show some of the material from the Australian National Gallery's exhibition of the Book of Kells. Time passed and Jim wrote many letters. Some replies gave hope; some were negative but Jim persisted.

By early May he was able to write to a potential sponsor, "After considerable negotiation with the Australian National Gallery, my Institute has managed to secure the display panels and other didactic material from the Canberra Book of Kells for exhibition in Kilmore. Also on display will be a complete Facsimile Luzern edition of the Book of Kells that has been loaned to us by the Victoria University, Melbourne. We have also devised a substantial education program around the exhibition. This will be available during the school week."

In addition to the core of the exhibition outlined above, The National Gallery and The Museum in Victoria lent display panels, spotlights, display cases and mineral specimens of the kind that were used to make pigments for paint many years ago. The Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, brought up facsimiles of other illuminated manuscripts and speakers who came to Kilmore provided us with support which went far beyond their prepared talks. Their generosity of spirit will long be remembered.

At the local level we had tremendous support. Cheerful volunteers from PROBUS looked after the ticket desk; a local handyman gave us hours of his expertise as a builder when he assembled the intricate display panels; an electrician made our illumination safe and effective and the town's best computer shop provided us with computers and set them up in a way that made the disks *Ductus* and *The Book of Kells* readily available to our visitors. Assumption College gave its usual invaluable assistance and manpower of "Holdaway, Holdaway & Holdaway" helped to make the exhibition stunning and elegant.

Our publicity machine ran hot. Local and Community radio helped at every turn. The ABC mentioned the exhibition, Val Noone gave us a spot on the cover of *Tain* and "flyer gremlins" delivered sheets to every organisation that we thought would be interested.

It was a great two weeks. The launch by Professor Manion on Saturday evening was well attended and patronage was actually increasing as we were closing the doors. As we are a non-profit organisation the little money we made after meeting costs will go to the presentation of books and computer disks to local organisations.

Funding Opportunities

Looking for Funding? Here's a few possible sources. The recent State budget included a provision of funds in several programs administered by the Department of Infrastructure. The following items have been taken from the Department's Budget Information Kit Some of them may be of interest to Mechanics' Institute management groups who are looking for assistance to maintain or restore their buildings.

Heritage Programs:

\$15 million over two years for urgent repairs, restoration and refurbishment of important government and local government heritage places as well as assistance to local government on the identification of heritage resources and the provision of professional advice to the commu-

nity on the management of such places. For further information contact Heritage Victoria, Tel. 9655 9728

Pride of Place Program:

\$9 million over 3 years commencing in 1999-2000. The program operates across Victoria with an emphasis on metropolitan and regional locations and funds both design studies and capital works projects. (Leongatha Mechanics' Institute has successfully applied for funds from this program). Call for Second Round applications will be mid 2000 and for Final Round in mid 2001.

For further information contact the Local Government Division of the Department of Infrastructure, Tel. 9655 6876

Tour of Mechanics' Institutes in North America

Secretary Catherine Mechanics' Milward-Bason met with representatives of the New York Mechanics' Institute, The Boston Athenaeum, Atwater Library of the Mechanics' Institute of Montreal and the Mechanics' Institute of San Francisco in April. These meetings provided an outstanding opportunity to discuss issues relating to the management of historical membership libraries and their future directions. Many of the discussions focused on building use and reconstruction projects, access to and applications of new technologies, and how to attract new members through the development of new marketing strategies and expanding services.

The North American institutions exchanged their histories and promotional literature with the Prahran Mechanics' Institute. This material has been added to Prahran's growing collection on the mechanics' institute movement and will be displayed at the Conference in November.



Cathy gave a talk and slide presentation based on her tour on the 4th of July at the Prahran Mechanics' Institute. Her talk traced the development of the North American institutions and compared them with our own.

Tour of British Mechanics' Institutes

by Pam Baragwanath

It is generally accepted that the three first mechanics' institutes in the U.K. were the Edinburgh School of Arts 1821, Glasgow Mechanics' Institute 1823 and London Mechanics' Institute 1824. During June, I visited Edinburgh, Glasgow and London to see if I could find the early institute buildings and learn how they had developed.

In Edinburgh and Glasgow I was able to locate and photograph the early buildings and in both instances received much help from the Archives Department of major institutions that had developed from those first institutes. From the Library History database on the internet I had a list (42 pages) of U.K. institutes and was able to photograph or research some of those, including Truro, Camborne, Bath and York in England, Inverness in Scotland and Dublin, in Ireland.

MI Contacts and Resources:

Glasgow - Roddy McKenzie, Strathclyde University Archives Department, McCance Building, Glasgow, John Anderson Campus. Their resources are extensive collection including minute books from 1823, letter books from 1823, annual reports, histories, etc. I was generously given a copy of "John Anderson's Legacy, the University of Strathclyde and its antecedents 1796-1996."

Edinburgh - Ann Jones, Caroline Scott, University Archives, Heriot-Watt University, Riccarton, Edinburgh gave me a copy of "Heriot-Watt 1821 -1991". Another extensive collection which could be sourced. Made contact with Prof. Patrick O'Farrell associate principal for student recruitment. He is writing the history of Heriot-Watt University and is most interested in its mechanics' institute/school of art beginnings.

London - Birkbeck University of London, Josie Charlton, Director of External Relations, was very helpful. I was given some Birkbeck materials including 2 badges. The College recently purchased a gold and silver snuff box inscribed "Presented to Dr Birkbeck By his Mechanic Class Glasgow 1804". A literature search in the reference library brought forth some interesting works. There was nothing at all about Australian institutes so I suggested they obtain "Pioneering Culture" Candy and Laurent. We checked some major libraries in the U.S. and found that copies were held there. I found that major contemporary works had been written on the U.K. institutes by a Japanese author (in Japanese).

I endeavoured to meet the Master of Birkbeck, Prof. Tim O'Shea but spoke to his secretary instead who seemed very familiar with our conference details after Cathy's visit in April 1999.

Annual Reports of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics Institutes were most interesting.

CAE News

By Alan Tonkin

The Council of Adult Education launched its "visual history of Adult and Community Education in Victoria" presentation on Friday 1 September. The presentation includes photographs from the CAE archives, and a mural and mosaic depicting Mechanics' Institutes—well worth a visit next time you are in the city. The works were completed by Work for the Dole project participants from November 1999 to August 2000, as a vehicle for individual learning, growth and development.

At a recent CAE Brainfood conference, Dr Philip Candy spoke on "The Challenge of Change: The Lifetime of Learning" commencing with an overview of the history of Mechanics' Institutes and finishing with a detailed account of the development of the Learning City concept in Ballarat and his visions for its future.

Contact Point

Apollo Bay

Renovations on the hall were completed last year using grants received from the Community Support Fund and Shire. The Minister for Rural Development Tom Reynolds MLA re-opened the hall on 9 september 1999.

Arthurs Creek

Trustees of the (113 year old weatherboard) hall will hold their Annual Garden Walk on Sun 12 November.

Bright

Plans for the extension of the Bright Free Library have been completed but works have been deferred whilst a feasibility study to incorporate a commercial multi-media centre is undertaken.

Castlemaine

The Castlemaine Free Library recently received \$1 million from the State Government to redevelop the rear of the library (incorporating the theatre foyer) whilst retaining the historical aspects of the building. The grant was won largely through the support of their local member Bob Cameron, Minister for Local Government & Work Cover, and the activities of the Friends of Castlemaine Library group.

Elmore

Work on the hall has been undertaken by the Save the Athenaeum Hall Committee using grants from Parks Victoria and the City of Greater Bendigo. The Athenaeum Hall together with the Mechanics' Institute and Memorial hall forms a large building complex for meetings and events. The Committee hopes that renovations will be completed in November and the hall officially opened in the New Year.

Footscray

The Mechanics' Institute now shares its building with the Spanish Latin Welfare Society and Consumers & Tenancy Advice Centre as part of an initiative to encourage community groups that provide essential services. The Institute has an growing membership and receives many visitors including library studies students from VUT.

Kilmore

The Mechanics' Institute committee ran another very successful Celtic Festival on 11-23 June

Kyneton

Plans for the redevelopment of the Mechanics' Institute building will be finalised by the end of the month. A conservation report is currently being prepared on the building and Frances Clancy is assessing the library collection for the Council.

Lakes Entrance

The new Lakes Entrance Mechanics' Institute building was

officially opened by the Hon Robert Cameron on Monday 6 December. The Committee of eight are committed to making their hall available to as many people as possible including the local drama group, bridge club, garden club, Lions club and local school groups. The hall has been used for weddings, parties and funerals, literary competitions and martial arts demonstrations.

Maldon

The Maldon Athenaeum hosted the launch of the "Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program" on 16 June 2000 and received a grant of \$10,000 (see article on page 2). The committee are currently obtaining costings on reproduction book cases to house their Victoriana collection and archives.

St Arnaud

The Mechanics' Institute hall is used by a variety of groups for all manner of community events as well as art classes, theatre productions, and dance classes. Cr Small, Ms Jude-Rose and Ella Ebery head a group of dedicated people who are committed to the future of the Mechanics' Institute.

Stanley Athenaeum

The hall and library collection have been beautifully preserved and are well worth a visit. A proposal to include a food and beverage outlet is being considered. The Athenaeum successfully hosted a Royal Historical Society of Victoria conference in November. Former President Geoff Craig donated over 30 local histories to the Prahran Mechanics' Institute.

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts

The SMSA celebrated its 175th birthday earlier this year by moving into its newly-refurbished building at 280 Pitt St. The building was opened by Hazel Hawke, Chairperson for the Heritage Council of NSW, during a week of festivities in late June. The 11 storey building will provide a home for the School, meeting rooms for hire, office space for non-profit groups, and commercial office space for lease.

View Point

Pam Baragwanath recently visited this heritage listed Mechanics' Institute and Free Library in View Street, Bendigo. It was home to a Temperance Society and the ANA. Sir John Quick wrote much of the Constitution of Australia in it. Its 1861 fresco remains intact and under the stage there is a full emersion tank once used by the Baptists.

Walhalla

The Mechanics' Institute board is currently looking at leasing arrangements for the private accommodation attached to the hall. A conservation report is currently being prepared on the building and Frances Clancy is assessing the library collection for the Council.

Trust News Article

President Dr Frank Hurley has written an article on Mechanics' Institutes for the August issue of *Trust News*, the journal of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Copies of this article may be obtained (faxed/mailed) from the Secretary.

Royal Historical Society of Victoria Conference

The RHSV will hold its biennial conference at the Williamstown Mechanics' Institute (est. 1853) on 21-22 October. The theme is "Plains, Ports, and Planes." Contact R. Hawkins (03) 9369 1496 for a registration form.

Incidentally, the foundation stone of the Williamstown Mechanics' Institute hall was laid in February 1860 amidst great ceremony (including the pouring on of wine and the passing of wheat). John Pasco Fawcner attended and donated 103 volumes of standard works to the library.

List of Members

Dr Frank Hurley, President (Ballarat Mechanics' Institute)
 Mr John Murphy, Regional Vice President (Leongatha Mechanics' Institute Inc)
 Mr Richard Myers, Metropolitan Vice President
 Ms Catherine Milward-Bason, Secretary and Treasurer (Prahlan Mechanics' Institute Inc)
 Leila Winchcombe, Public Officer (Melbourne Athenaeum Inc)
 Mrs Pam Baragwanath, Committee Member (Historian)
 Mr Peter Lovell, Committee Member (Melbourne Athenaeum Inc)
 Mr Alan Tonkin, Committee Member (Council for Adult Education)
 Dr Julann Meabank, Committee Member (Kilmore Mechanics' Institute)
 Mr Bill Ashworth, Walhalla Mechanics' Institute
 Ms Carolyn Carver Gibson, North Central Goldfields Library
 Mr Brian Chirgwin, Save the Athenaeum Hall Committee, Elmore
 Mr Graham Dudley, Co-ordinator Public Library Services Office of Local Government
 Mr Garth Foxwell, Secretary Hall Committee Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute
 Mr Rex Fuge, Chairman Chiltern Athenaeum Trust
 Ms Denise Jepson, Friends of Castlemaine Library
 Dr John Laurent, School of Science Griffith University
 Mrs Dianne Le Quiniat, Secretary Kilmore Mechanics' Institute
 Miss Joy Leneaux-Gale, Secretary Maldon Athenaeum
 Mr Daniel McOwan, Southern Grampians Shire Council
 Mrs Agnes O'Donnell, Friends of Bright Free Library
 Ms Roslyn Ryan, Wimmera Regional Library Corp
 Ms Lin Scholz, Secretary Footscray Mechanics' Institute
 Mr Colin Stone, Secretary Lakes Entrance Mechanics' Institute
 West Gippsland Regional Library Corp
 Ms Marie Cooper
 Ms Jenny Dalrymple
 Ms Dianne Kueffer, Heritage Consultant
 Mrs Susan Reynolds, Lecturer Library Studies Department, Victoria University