



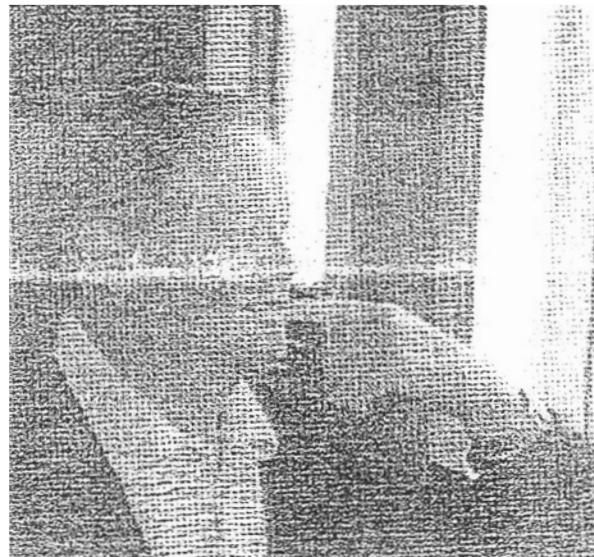
MIV ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria was held at the Melbourne Athenaeum on Saturday, 12 May 2001.

It was a happy occasion with the satisfaction of much achieved in the previous year: the publication of Pam Baragwanath's landmark work on Victoria's Mechanics' Institutes, and the organising and running of the First National Conference of Mechanics' Institutes which produced an impressive set of *Proceedings*.

Then there was the MIV's role in the launch of the Department of Infrastructure's Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program which saw a number of Victoria's MIs share over \$80,000 in grants which were the first grants to several MIs since the 1970s.

The planning and designing of the travelling exhibition Remember the Mechanics'? has occupied Pam Baragwanath, Catherine Milward-Bason, Alan Tonkin and Jim Lowden in considerable effort, but it is now nearing completion. It's really been all go.



A pensive Past President Dr Frank Hurley was re-elected for a further term to lead the MIV into the new Millennium.

The happy group re-elected Dr Frank Hurley to the chair, with John Murphy as Vice-President, Catherine Milward-Bason is Secretary/Treasurer. The Committee comprises: Pam Baragwanath, Graham Dudley (ex-officio), Paul Permezel, Don Taggart, OAM, Alan Tonkin, Dr Alex Tyrell and Leila Winchcombe

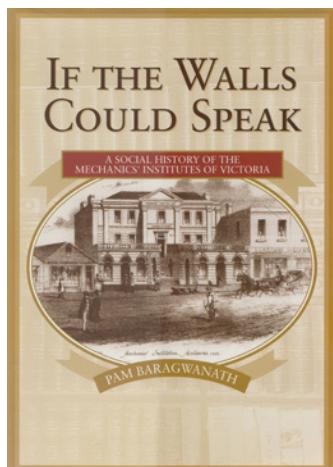
Book Short-Listed in Awards

If the Walls Could Speak has been short-listed in the Victorian Community History Awards. These Awards are sponsored by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and Information Victoria.

Author Pam Baragwanath was on hand in Queen's Hall Parliament House on 28 April for the announcement to receive The Certificate of Commendation which reads 'Commended-Best Print-Publication.'

The book was published with a Centenary of Federation Grant and Pam has donated all proceeds to further the

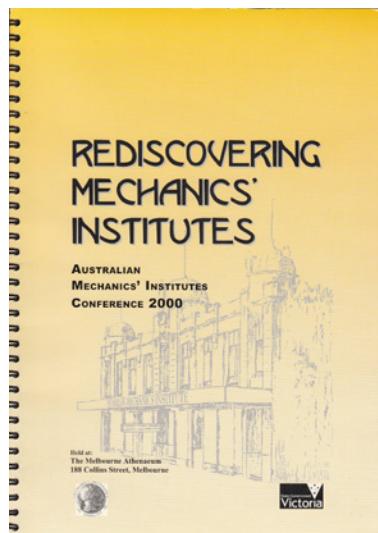
MIV's aims of 'protecting, buildings and collections of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria'.



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First National Conference Proceedings Available



"This...Conference is held two hundred years after George Birkbeck gave his first free lectures to working men in Glasgow, an event that is now taken as the beginning of the Mechanics' Institute movement."

Dr Frank Hurley
(MIV President)

Rediscovering Mechanics' Institutes - The Proceedings of the First National Conference held at the Melbourne Athenaeum on 17-18 November 2000 are still available.

The Conference was sponsored by the Department of Infrastructure - State Government of Victoria.

The Papers fall under a range of headers: Rediscovering the past; 'Those Fountains of Knowledge' - MIs and Education; 'Mental and Moral Improvement and Rational Recreation'; 'More than a Place of Amusement' - Some Local Institutes Considered; and Our Future.

'British Origins of Mechanics' Institutes' by Dr Alex Tyrell of LaTrobe University, Melbourne heads the list. This was followed by 'A Pioneering Mechanics' Institute: Foundation of the Edinburgh School of Arts', by Professor Patrick O'Farrell, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh who jetted into Melbourne the day before the Conference.

Professor Philip Candy, of Ballarat University, a long-time Mechanics' researcher and editor of with John Laurent of *Pioneering Culture* followed with his 'Australian Mechanics' Institutes'.

Victorian, Sydney and Adelaide MIs were covered in the next segment.

Dr Michael Talbot, State Library of South Australia had us 'Dancing by Moonlight and All Sorts of Fun: An Illustrated Celebration of South Australia's Mechanics' Institutes.' We are still searching for Book No. 7297, Class F from Port Adelaide MI, but with several 'listed' pages it was not for the prudish.

In fact The Papers are a very good read for the Special Price of \$10.

Second National Conference Sydney, 2002

AFTER FLOATING the idea at the Melbourne Conference that the Second National Schools of Arts/Mechanics' Institutes Conference may be held in Sydney in 2002, the idea now has 'legs'.

MIV Secretary Catherine Milward-Bason visited Sydney in May and spoke with the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts' Carole O'Brien and Dr Roger Morris of the Sydney University of Technology and the Conference is now *fait accompli*.



MIV ambassador at large, Catherine Milward-Bason ecstatic after her return from Sydney with the good news

Further it looks like a NSW umbrella group will be up and running in the not too distant future. If you're a NSW School of Arts/Mechanics'/Athenaeum or whatever contact the number below and have your organisation put on the mailing list.

It is all very exciting given that the Tenterfield event is yet to happen to commemorate the launch of the Federation movement in 1889 by Sir Henry Parkes. Tenterfield School of Arts have received a substantial grant to restore the building and it now looking pristine for the 'big' event.

So if you've got a paper underway, the NSW Conference is a likely launch pad, and it will also be a place for serious discussion on a whole range of mutual issues

The emphasis is likely to focus on education, with themes of science and the progress of the amateur service provider to the professional.

In the meantime there has been interest from the Boston Athenaeum for a 2004 International Conference. *Watch this space!*

In the meantime you may like to register your interest with the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts at Level 2, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000 Telephone: (02) 9266 0766 or E-mail on www.sydneymsa@nextcentury.com.au

Who was George Birkbeck?



"This is the time for
the universal
diffusion of the
blessings of
knowledge."

Dr George Birkbeck

GEORGE BIRKBECK was born at Settle, Yorkshire, England on 10 January 1776. The son of William, a local merchant and banker, he studied medicine at London and Edinburgh where he gained his MD in 1799.

At Edinburgh University he was a friend of Henry, later Lord Brougham. (It was Brougham that coined the phrase 'Knowledge is Power')

Shortly after graduating he was appointed to the professorship of natural philosophy at the Andersonian University.

He became aware that artisans did not have access to advanced information on scientific subjects, and in 1800 he established a series of lectures where working men were admitted on payment of a low fee.

The 'mechanics class' of the university proved so popular that in 1923 it was named the Glasgow Mechanics' Institution.

However Birkbeck shifted to London in 1804 where he devoted himself to his successful medical practice.

An article in the *Mechanics' Magazine* which suggested that an Institute be established in London, spurred him into action. He lent 3700 pounds for the building of a lecture room, was elected President of the London Mechanics' Institute and delivered the first lecture there on 24 February 1824. He became a trustee along with his friend Lord Brougham.

The Institute initially met with fluctuating success but 'neither the ridicule of its enemies, nor the quarrels of its promoters sufficed to prevent its eventual establishment'.

Birkbeck continued to remain actively interested in the London Institute which eventually became known as the Birkbeck Institution.

However he was also a member of the first Council of London University in 1827. He took a prominent part in the abolition of tax on newspapers (1835-36) and agitated for the reform of the patent laws.

He was a frequent lecturer at the London Institution and also London University.

George Birkbeck died in London on 1 December 1841 by which time Mechanics' Institutes had spread around the world.

Source: *National Dictionary of Biography* (1886)

Travelling Exhibition Ready To Hit the Road

The panels for the Travelling Exhibition 'Remember The Mechanics?' are soon to be laid down and it will then be ready for the road.

The exhibition is largely based on information contained in Pam Bargawanath's book, *If the Walls Could Speak: A Social History of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria*.

The exhibition highlights the role of MIs in city and country Victoria with an overview of a typical country Institute based on Wallacedale in Western Victoria.

The exhibition panels are also illustrated by a number of new photos, not in Pam's book. There are also some enlarged 'classic' photos of some MIs.

The 510mmx640mm panels of laminated board can either be hung on Velcro display screens or hung from strings or wires. The large laminated photos can be displayed as required.

The aim of the Exhibition is to provide a focus for local MIs, Historical Societies, CAE or U3A Groups to gain more knowledge of the district Mechanics' Institutes which are still standing or once existed in the area.

The Exhibition is being supported by a Public

Record Office Victoria—Local History Grant.

There is an administrative charge for having the exhibition and this will cover an associated exhibition kit which includes a banner, supply of exhibition guides, leaflets, poster and launch invitation masters, media release and exhibition guide. The borrower will also need to pay for the forwarding to the next site.



The loan period for each venue will be around two weeks and the MIV is calling for MIs and other groups who would like to stage the exhibition in their area. Please write or phone the Secretariat.

Confusion Between The Melbourne Athenaeum and Melbourne's Athenaeum Club

By Pam Baragwanath



**The Athenaeum Club
at 87 Collins Street
is not to be confused
with The Melbourne
Athenaeum at 188
Collins Street**

The Athenaeum Club was part of a group of 'Gentlemen's clubs' established early in the colony of Victoria. Elements of these clubs included comfortable reception rooms, billiards, a bar, reading room, high standard accommodation and carefully selected members.

The Port Phillip Club and the Union Club lasted only a short time, whereas the Melbourne Club and the Athenaeum Club survive to this day.

The Melbourne Club was formed in 1838 for squatters and pastoralists, gentlemen of the land. The following year on 1 January 1839

a committee was formed and a lease was taken on Fawkner's Hotel, at the corner of Collins Street and Market Square. The accommodation provided a quiet and economical home for country people who had no homes of their own in Melbourne.

When the Athenaeum Club was formed it was for 'gentlemen of learning and substance' and was not seen as being in competition with the Melbourne Club. In 1855 a building was obtained at 26 Collins Street East with JG Knight, the builder of Parliament House, being the first patron and entrepreneur. The next address was its present one at 87 Collins Street, Melbourne.

This is not to be confused with what is now called the The Melbourne Athenaeum at 188 Collins Street, Melbourne. This institution was entirely different in concept to the 'exclusive' gentlemen's clubs. The aim and objectives were 'the diffusion of useful knowledge' tak-

ing the form of a lecture program and establishment of a library, which was available to the general public. Then named the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution and School of Ans it was established in 1839. The present site in Collins Street was purchased on 13 August 1840 and the building became an icon in Melbourne as a literary, educational, cultural and social centre. In 1872 the name was changed to The Melbourne Athenaeum to reflect cultural and social uses, rather than educational.

It took until 1912 for the women's club, the Lyceum, to be established, stimulation and relaxation for the thoughtful woman.' With Mrs Alfred Deakin as its first President, the aims were philanthropic, professional and artistic, usually against formidable criticism and opposition.

Refs: John Pacini, *Windows on Collins Street* (1991); Reginald Wilmot, *History of the [Melbourne] Athenaeum [Library] 1839-1939* (1939).

Thankyou all...



Portarlington Memorial Theatre with brick facade hiding a very old building.
(Pam Baragwanath photo)

The information keeps pouring in and we would like to thank the following people for their correspondence.

Kevin and Cyd Shanley from Benjeroop for information on the **Mystic Park Mechanics' Institute**.

Mrs Bertty Pepworth of Croydon who donated a set of books from the former **Portarlington Mechanics' Institute Library**. These display the library stamps, are dated from 1845 and will be useful for display.

Dorothy King of the **Stawell Historical Society Inc.** for further information on the three Mechanics' Institutes in Main Street, Stawell, as well as the **Stawell Literary and Scientific Institute** in Longfield Street, Stawell.

Ken Cooper of **Castlemaine** for the *Castlemaine Mail* article concerning recent grants made available to the **Maldon Athenaeum**, for renovations to the historic hall located at the rear of the library, library refurbishment and also for a computer which provides an internet link with the North Central Goldfields Library in Bendigo.

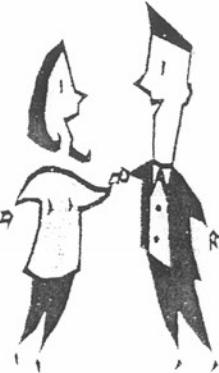
New Members

It's no longer
necessary
to be lonely
out there

We welcome the following new members to the **Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Incorporated**.

Institutional Members: **Narrawong Mechanics' Institute**, Post Office, Narrawong, V 3285. Contact: June Lazelle. Telephone 5529 5495; **Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts**, Level 3, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000. Contact: Carole O'Brien. Telephone (02) 9262 7300; Fax 9266 0778; E-mail [www.sydneymsa@nextcentury.com.au](mailto:sydneymsa@nextcentury.com.au).

Individual Members: **Barrie Brennan** (Tamworth); **Ellen Elzey** (Sydney); **Bruce Gibson** (Kew) nominates his interests as buildings, libraries, continuing education, community development and local government and writes '*As one of the many who try to protect the physical structures and the principles and standards on which the MIs were founded and it is our duty to preserve and protect the past for future generations to benefit*'; **Professor Wallace Kirsop** (Armadale); and Michele Summerton (Travancore) '*As a heritage consultant and historian, I am interested in buildings, libraries, heritage conservation and local history. Thank you for an excellent conference in Nov 2000.*'



MIV Website

Listed on the MIV website are contacts for MIs in Victoria and further afield with links to several overseas Institutes. There's also planned a bibliography of MI histories in print and those known to have been done. If you can add to the list or an entry please e-mail pmiinc@vicnet.net.au

Bookshelf

If the Walls Could Speak: A Social History of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria - Pam Baragwanath. \$55.00, plus \$7 postage.

Berwick Mechanics' Institute and Free Library - Richard Myers. \$38.50

A Chance to Read: History of the State Library of South Australia -

Dr Michael Talbot. \$35.00

Going to the Mechanics': A History of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute -

Dr Stefan Petrow. \$16.50

A History of the Leongatha Mechanics' Institute - John Murphy. \$7.00

Nothing But Gold: The Diggers of 1854 - Robyn Annear. \$7.00

Rediscovering Mechanics' Institutes: Proceedings of the 2000 National Conference - MIV. \$10.00



Calendar

2001

14 July - MIV Committee Meeting, Melbourne Athenaeum 10.30am

3 August - Copy Deadline for Next Newsletter

8 September - MIV Committee Meeting

10 November - MIV Committee Meeting

2002

September - National Conference, Sydney

2004

International Conference, Melbourne?

Melbourne Athenaeum's Welcome



Melbourne Athenaeum
Vice-President Wilma
Stubbs welcoming
delegates to the First
National Conference.
(Kristina Holdaway
photo)

Victoria's oldest library was a most appropriate place to hold the First National Conference. We were welcomed to The Ath by Vice-President, Mrs Wilma Stubbs.

On behalf of the Melbourne Athenaeum I would like to welcome so many delegates from all over Australia. It is a rare pleasure to be the host venue for this special occasion of the First National Conference of the Mechanics' Institutes.

The origins of Mechanics' Institutes go back to Scotland when Dr George Birkbeck started teaching unskilled itinerant people skills in order for them to earn a living. A household would often wait for a particular family to call as other roving people would have indifferent ability.

This idea grew until Dr Birkbeck officially launched the London Mechanics' Institute in 1823 to a crowd of 2000 people. It was dedicated to the education of working people. The new establishment flourished from simply teaching people to read and write to more advanced concepts in the physical sciences and music. This more structured establishment moved all over the world and Australia proved to be a very fertile area for the growth of this very necessary movement. Australia had 2400 Mechanics' Institutes scattered throughout the country

with almost 1100 in Victoria. It is not known why the idea of the Mechanics' Institute took such a strong hold in this state. It has been suggested that the wealth of the Gold Fields and the fact that there were so many gold diggings close to Melbourne and to each other; the number of clergy who migrated here; or it could even have been the weather - a lot is attributed to the Melbourne weather.

Whatever reason, over 160 years ago the Melbourne Athenaeum was set up by our forefathers to provide a place of knowledge, culture and entertainment. The Melbourne pioneers, who were the foundation members, were a canny lot for they selected one of the best sites but also ensured the Melbourne Athenaeum would stay viable with a commercially proportioned theatre and art gallery, and small areas to be used as shops of varying sizes. We are fortunate we still have the records from the original meetings, theatre programs, and other material which gives a tinge of the politics of the times. As you will appreciate we feel that these documents which feature many famous names are historically precious but, better than that, they are a testimony of the continuity of more than 160 years of ongoing service to the original concept of education, culture, and entertainment. The policy of the Mechanics' Institute was always politically correct—everyone was welcome with men and women receiving equal help and care. This was right from the days when women were confined to the kitchen to be seen but rarely heard. But it took the Melbourne Athenaeum

management committee a while to catch up with this principle as I am the first woman Vice-President in 160 years.

Personally I have been a member of the Athenaeum Since I was a junior working in a Flinders Lane office and over the years each of my children have come to the library from the age of a month old and used it as a venue to meet friends because their mother was a bit cranky about them standing on street corners.

The Athenaeum has served the needs of many people and I know of a number of migrants who came to Melbourne from Europe after the Second World War who learned to read and write English through the books they were able to borrow from the Library. The Art Gallery, which is now used as a smaller theatre, features in a provenance of many well known paintings sold in Melbourne.

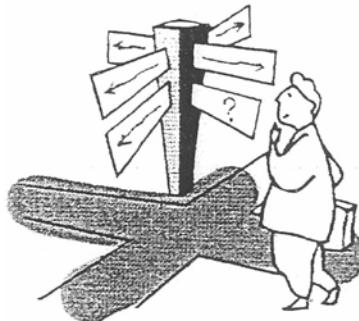
The Athenaeum does not limit itself to Melbourne and its suburbs, for since its beginnings they have been sending books to country and household readers—and the simple act of marking a quarterly list can keep them in touch with the latest fiction or other recreational reading. Many members have a lifetime loyalty to The Ath, and only discontinue their membership when called to a higher place.

The Library for many years has been an oasis in the middle of the city, with staff who call everyone by name and a cup of coffee is always available for those who wish to browse through the books or the morning paper.

Thank you all and welcome to the Melbourne Athenaeum.

"The Library for many years has been an oasis in the city, with staff who call everyone by name and a cup of coffee is always available for those who wish to browse through the books or the morning paper."

Wilma Stubbs



ARTHURS CREEK

Channel 7 used the beautifully maintained Arthurs Creek MI for a segment of **The Mole** program which went 10 air on Wednesday, 7 March.

Participants had to dress dummies with five pieces of clothing from fellow contestants which could include top, bra or teashirt, undermentionables, pants or dress and socks.

It provided a few laughs and quite an opportunity to see parts of the hall as the cameras panned around. Their fine old weatherboard building dates from 1887 and has served the community well.

BERWICK

MIV President Dr Frank Hurley attended the Berwick Annual Meeting on Wednesday, 21 March.

Dating from 1862, Berwick is a busy Institute providing library services to a rapidly growing area under the guidance of Librarian Pam Darling.

BRIGHT

The Friends of the Bright Library have been busy in their determination to keep the Bright MI as their Library. This is their story:

The Friends of the Bright Library thank you for your support over the past several months...

Just to recap, our little Library, built in 1910, was in sore need of expansion. We received advice about two years ago that our Council intended to grant us funds to enable the current historic building in the main street of Bright to be extended to meet current library requirements.

Council had two suggested plans drawn up, neither of which met the requirements of the High Country Library Corporation (the Library groups with which the Library is af-

Around the Institutes

filiated). One plan was accepted by the Council, and there followed several meetings between Council and Library representatives to adapt the plan to meet all prerequisites. However, no final plan eventuated.

Then someone came up with the idea of the Library funding being 'piggy-backed' to enable a multi-media centre to be included as a second storey to the new part of the Library. The people of Bright strongly objected, and as a consequence this proposal was rejected by the Council, who decided that the Library was to stand alone and that work would commence on the Library extension 'soon'. However, with a change in the composition of the Council, the multimedia proposal resurfaced, and Council took the step of undertaking a feasibility study of the proposal.

Finally, in October last, Council reconfirmed its original decision that the Library extension would stand alone, and that the multimedia centre would be investigated further, at a site other than the Library. That was when you sent us your letter of congratulation. However, the saga continues.

A government grant, available to Libraries, was applied for on the design which was previously adopted by Council. The Friends consulted a local Survey Engineer who came up with a design which satisfied the requirements of both the High Country Library Corporation and the Friends of the Library, and which was felt also covered all anticipated needs of such a building for many years to come. Some time in the past two weeks Council received advice that the government grant had been approved. We have presented the new plan to Council and we are awaiting a decision regarding the new design.

We are grateful for your moral support and hope to provide good news in the very near future.

Jan Wymond, Secretary, Friends of the Bright Library

DONCASTER

The Doncaster Athenaeum is sadly said to be set for demolition.

But recently the Lions Club used it for free testing for children's 'lazy eye' syndrome and it was full to bursting during this use.

The Doncaster Athenaeum was built by the dedicated pioneers of the district and managed by scores of succeeding committee members for community use. Funding for it was raised by donations and subscriptions from local people. Their goal of self-improvement and the early provision of excellent library services was admirable.



Is it too late to save the original brick building, a beautiful 'example of renaissance architecture' with pioneer patterned brickwork, fireplace, fancy iron ventilators and round headed windows?

Built in 1871, this building started the library services which were only taken over by the Council in 1961. This fine building deserves respect and heritage recognition for continuing service through the rapid growth of the Doncaster area. **Can some thing be done to save it? Please!**

It is a similar building to the Shire Office and that has been preserved and still in good usage. The Doncaster Athenaeum could surely be included in planning for the future.

ELMORE

At the Back-to-Elmore celebrations on 13-15 April 2001 an exhibition of local work and a morning and afternoon tea was held in the beautifully restored

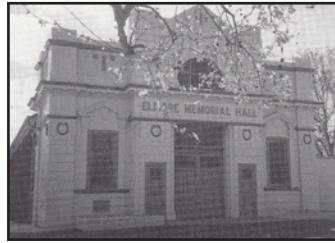
Around the Institutes

building.

It was the work of well known architect WC Vahland who was also responsible for designing part of the Bendigo Mechanics' Institute building, the Athenaeum is now in first class condition and is a credit to the dedicated local committee of management. The Elmore Memorial Hall complex is noteworthy in that three institutes were built on the site and are now all connected to allow flexible usage, a unique situation in Victoria and perhaps in Australia.

"Knowledge is Power."

Henry,
Lord Brougham



Over the years many improvements have been made by the Hall Committee, with the Elmore Machinery Field Days Committee also playing an important and supportive role. In 1994 a public meeting was held to decide whether to retain control of the Athenaeum or hand it back to the Crown. This meeting was unanimous in keeping control of the building and new appointments were made to assist the existing committee. A lot of hard work had also been done to find out who were the legal owners were and it was with great relief that the titles were eventually received stated that the legal owners are the Committee of Management of the Memorial Hall.

The complex is a credit to the town of Elmore. An informative Back-to Elmore booklet is available from the Elmore Progress Association for \$10.

KILMORE

The recent annual distribution of the **George Hudson Memorial Awards** resulted in a

young local musician being given \$750 towards the purchase of a flute. The minor awards went to a range of interesting projects.

Kilmore is gearing up for the fifth annual Kilmore Celtic Festival to be staged on Friday/Saturday, June 29-30.

MALDON



During the Easter holidays, 2001, Mrs Liz Leneaux-Gale kindly opened the Athenaeum to explain the new changes to accommodate the considerable book collection.

The building is impressive with its collection of old paintings and prints, furniture on loan and assorted rooms, Maldon was a recipient of the Department of Infrastructure's Partnerships Program, which was launched by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Bob Cameron at Maldon in 2000. The effects of which have added considerably to the library and the library service provided to the local community of Maldon.

MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM

Change is in the wind at the Melbourne Athenaeum with its catalogue going on to computer and a second computer soon to be installed.

Heritage Week saw a talk by Pam Baragwanath on MIs and a memorable tour of the building by Leila Winchcombe.

The Ath has also had author Christina Hindhaugh speak on her book *The Great Herb Tour* recently. Christina is certainly a great ambassador for rural Australia.

PORT FAIRY

The Port Fairy Mechanics' Institute is now occupied by the Port Fairy Historical Society and they have been supplied this interesting article taken from the *Banner of Belfast* and reprinted in the *Argus* of 25 January 1856.

'We are glad to see a movement on foot to establish a Mechanics' Institute in this town. The want of some place for intellectual recreation is too well known to need any illustration from us. One great result of such an institution will be that it will collect together the thinking portion of the community and form a nucleus for other useful organizations. Heretofore 'gold' monopolized every institution in the colony, and if a grisly bear were possessed of it in sufficient quantity (provided he could talk) he would have no difficulty in attaining a high position in colonial society. No great achievement for the benefit of mankind was ever yet achieved by mere money-grabbers, and if we desire a happy future for our colony we must look to other agencies. We have no doubt that there is a fair average of talent lying rusty amongst our population and a Mechanics' Institute will help polish it.'

PRAHRAN

Following on John Leahy's talk on 'Federation', Prahran has recently had a 'full house' night for Andrew Ward who spoke on 'Melbourne Metro Railway Architecture' which was illustrated with slides.

Prahran also hosted the Public Record Office Victoria Travelling Exhibition 'Victoria's Buildings and Builders' during the month of April.

The Library Week Family History Tutorials were most successful and you can reserve your place for further tutorials now on 9510 3393.

Around the Institutes

TARRAWINGEE



Located in the north-east, near Wangaratta, Tarrawingee Hall is relatively modern. Several local farmers under the leadership of Ogilvie Stewart went guarantor for the cost of the brick building in the early 1930s. Since then there has been two major additions, a toilet block in the 1970s and a supper room in the 1980s. It is located behind imposing entrance gates, at the front of a sixty acre paddock which contains a nine-hole golf course and the hall serves as its licensed club room.

It also serves as clubhouse for the tennis courts. Various other community groups use the hall for meetings, including the local CFA and CWA.

Ken Stewart, Ogilvie's son, is President of the Committee of Management.

WARRANDYTE



The Warrandyte Arts Association amalgamated with the Mechanics' Institute in 1986. Since then substantial funds have been raised through theatre productions. Their latest project has been raising money to put a new roof on their MI and thanks to a generous top up by the Manningham Council their goal has been met.

They then organised a working bee and the Warrandyte MI building now has a new roof. Besides theatre, the hall is used for music, pottery, painting, craft and tap dancing lessons.

New South Wales

CLIFTON

Kathleen Bearfby advises that Clifton School of Arts received a NSW Heritage grant to restore the hall and they have also been busy fundraising.

Hazel Hawke re-opened the building with a gala occasion on 21 April.

QUEANBEYAN

We understand the Queanbeyan Mechanics' Institute is still operational but have been unable to make contact. Can anyone help?

SYDNEY

The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts was established in 1833 and at its height had 1500 students doing a variety of courses from art to minor surgery. Their building was sold to Bond-Corp in 1987 and in 1996 they acquired a 10 storey building at 280 Pitt Street which is being refurbished.

In addition to their scholarships, awards and grants program they revived lectures in 1996.

Their extensive Library is still a very busy place, with heavy use of the internet.

TAMWORTH

Barrie Brennan has had an interest in Mechanics' Institutes since he began to work in the Tamworth Mechanics' Institute for the University of New England in 1973.

Barrie has just retired from the

UNE and one of his plans is to encourage research and various sorts of publication on the 'regional' MIS—starting in the New England and North-West of NSW. He congratulates his Victorian cousins in setting up MIV!

His contacts are: post: 54 Roderick Street, Tamworth, NSW 2340; phone (02) 6766 3058; or on e-mail: www.bbrennan@metze.edu.au.

South Australia

South Australian Librarian, Dr Michael Talbot has been out and about looking for MIs. He supplied the following information

GAWLER

The Gawler Institute is believed to be still occupied by a group that conducts an archives or museum. Any more information please?

MITCHAM

The Mitcham Village Institute was established in 1870. Today it is a busy place hosting: bridge; classical ballet; Flamenco Centre of South Australia; highland dance; Mitcham Historical Society; judo; MVAC Gallery; recreational gymnastics; Tae Kwon Do; yoga; and the Heritage Dancers of SA.

PENOLA

The Penola Mechanics' Institute building has multitudinous community uses and is soon to become the area's history centre, promoting local names like the founders of the Australian St Joseph Teaching Order Father Julian Tenison-Woods and Mother Mary McKillop.

Several local farmers went guarantors for the cost of the brick building at Tarrawingee

News Roundup

Spreading the Word

PAM BARAGWANATH has been a very busy lady out on the hustings selling the word of the Mechanics'.

Pam's appearances in 2001 to date reads: Croydon U3A Australian Studies Group; The Melbourne Athenaeum, Heritage Week Lecture; Monash Library Service, Monash Federation Centre; Warragul Historical Society; Croydon Probus Ladies Club; and an interview on air on 96.5FM.

Then there is the extensive travel around the country following up leads and photographing new 'finds'.

We are all very much indebted to Pam and George and we thank them for all their efforts.

An Archive on the Americas

LAST YEAR Catherine Milward-Bason went on a tour of the North American Mechanics' Institutes—Boston (established 1807), New York (1785), San Francisco (1854) and Montreal (1840). The result was a very valuable exchange of information and the accumulation of quite a lot of data on these Institutes.

This material along with a large collection of material on Australian Mechanics' Institutes is available for use at the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Library at 140 High Street, Prahran.

Prahran also a large collection of family and Victorian local history resources for use.

It may pay to ring ahead on (03) 9510 3393 to book the material at a mutually convenient time.

Grant Application for Clean Up

COMMITTEE MEMBER Alan Tonkin and our Secretary Catherine Milward-Bason recently spent some time putting together a grant application for Volunteering Australia.

If successful, it may see MIV members tripping into the country for weekends to work on some of the country MIs. Thank you Alan and Catherine for your efforts.

A Letter from Boston

THE DIRECTOR-LIBRARIAN of the Boston Athenaeum Richard Wendorf, has recently responded to his receipt of the Conference Proceedings. He describes them as a '*new installment in our joint institutional history*' and '*I look forward to hearing more of your conference in Melbourne in 2004*'.

Boston is Melbourne's Sister-City and the Melbourne Athenaeum recently posted off copies of its newsletter.

Government Interest in MIs

HISTORIAN PAM BARAGWANATH has recently met with the Hon. Lyn Koske's Ministerial adviser Jeff Malley to discuss concepts of MIs in relation to the Victorian Government's **Kirby Review** on post-compulsory secondary education.

It's very interesting given the tenets of the movement and its apparent success in achieving literacy and the education of the working class.

Exhibiting Your MI

MEREDITH FLETCHER of the Centre for Gippsland Studies at Churchill Campus of Monash University has an interesting web page. Meredith organised an exhibition on The Mechanics' Institutes of Gippsland in 1998 and chose the Bairnsdale, Brigalow, Leongatha, Rosedale and Seaview Institutes for her project.

The display is available for viewing at Churchill or you can access and view this very interesting page on www.mugc.cc.monash.edu.au/gss/chist/TOPICS/Topic_Six/t6_casestudy/t6_cases

Alexander Sutherland - Man of the Mechanics'

IF ONE READS Alexander Sutherland's two-volume *Victoria and Its Metropolis* you will be surprised at

the number of mentions to the Mechanics' Institutes.

It was Linda Barraclough who originally drew our attention to this fact. Now we've been sent some notes on the author.

Alexander Sutherland was born in Glasgow in 1852 the son of George who was a carver of ship's figure-heads and a skilled draughtsman. He migrated to Sydney with his family in 1864 and in 1870 he came down to Melbourne and became a teacher.

In 1877 he wrote, with his brother George, *A History of Australia 1606-1876*, a textbook which sold over 120,000 copies. He followed this up with *A New Geography* in 1885.

He married Elizabeth Jane Ballantyne in 1879 who collaborated with him in his various projects.

His landmark work, *Victoria and its Metropolis* came next in 1888. This had involved him in a lot of travel through country Victoria.

In 1890 he published his *Thirty Short Poems*, followed by *Growth of the Moral Instinct* and with HG Turner *Development of Australian Literature*, both in 1898.

He was a remarkable man whose 'devotion to scholarship and education had led him in 1883 to head the campaign for a science degree' at the University of Melbourne, where he had been a brilliant debater with Deakin, Pearson, Higgins and Hodgson.

His interests were multidisciplinary and discursive in the William Edward Hearn style. He was an associate of HG Turner the *Melbourne Review*, and interested in evolutionary theory.

'With his wife's help he gave popular lectures on Shakespeare and other literary subjects at Mechanics' Institutes'.

In 1892 he retired to 'Huronswood' at Dromana to study literature and science, but later returned to the University of Melbourne as Registrar and lecturer.

He was an exemplar, and in his enthusiasm and enlightenment a typical Mechanics' Institute man.

He died in Adelaide in 1902 and was buried in the Boroondara Cemetery. He was 50 years old.

The Northern Territory MIs - Pam Baragwanath

FROM 1863, the Northern Territory was under the control of the South Australian government until 1911 when the Commonwealth took responsibility for it.

The story of the early libraries in the Territory is one of extremes and difficulties in remote situations. Problems of a suitable building, staffing, bureaucratic changes, funding, the difficulties of trying to supply books to inaccessible areas such as the Flying Boat base on Groote Eylandt railway fettling centres, missions and station properties. The libraries were blown down by cyclones, including cyclone Tracy, termites who attacked the buildings and the books, silverfish, cockroaches, mildew and damp, lack of trained staff and the problem of staff training, e.g. having to go to the National Library in Canberra. The vast distances that the books had to travel before arriving at the Library in Darwin, either by steamer from Adelaide or overland and events such as the bombing of Darwin in February 1942 during World War II, which seriously damaged the Darwin Institute and destroyed all the books that were out on loan at the time. Against all these odds, three colourful Institutes were established in the Northern Territory during this period.

Darwin (then Palmerston), established the Palmerston Insti-

was seen as 'an antidote to the bane which caused the imprisoned ones to fail'.

At that time the population consisted of 130 Europeans and 300 Chinese. Darwin was so named in 1901, but the Palmerston Institute retained its name and its library function has been continuous ever since.

To illustrate the financial difficulties of these Institutes, the subsidies paid by the Commonwealth Government in 1911-12 to: the Palmerston Institute, 12 pounds 14 shillings; the Macarthur River Institute, 9 pounds 7 shillings and 6 pence; and Pine Creek Institute, 7 pounds 15 shillings and these subsidies were paid on the basis of 15 shillings for each 20 shillings raised!

During the 1930s the Institute was taken over by the Darwin Town Council, which in turn was taken over by the Northern Territory administration in 1937.

By 1960, the Institute had evolved into the Darwin Public Library. By the next year, there were over 6000 registered borrowers. In 1980 it became the State Reference Library, with a stock of 15,000 books and a staff of one. Since 1990 it has been known as the State Library of the Northern Territory and it continues to contribute enormously to the Territory with increasing bookstock and modern services.

Pine Creek was a settlement of galvanised iron, tin shanties and bark humpies. The goldrush occurred in the 1870s thus launching the mining industry. By 1874 a Telegraph Office was opened and the Palmerston to Pine Creek railway line was completed. An active Institute in Pine Creek was established by 1913 after an initial attempt in 1904.

A site was formally gazetted, but there is little information about the activities of the Institute.

In 1926 the building was repaired after being damaged in a cyclone. A plaque has been suggested for the Pine Creek Institute Library and Institute site. This Institute may have operated at the hospital site for a time.

The remote town of Borroloola on the Macarthur River was a thriving centre for the cattle and copper industries. The Macarthur River Institute was established on 29 October 1895.

It was renamed the Borroloola Institute and was set up in the Court House, administered by the Resident Magistrate.

Bill Harney and Douglas Lockwood wrote of this famous library in their books. Convicts could access the library and the story is told that Bill Harney learned to read there while 'doing time'.

Members of the local police and their wives worked in the library and other members of the Borroloola community.

Ted Egan, Australian folk singer and writer has written two songs about Roger Jose, a colourful character who worked as a librarian there.

'Rum and Johnny cake for his tea, he said Borroloola was the place to be'. He had an Aboriginal wife, lived in an upturned water tank, liked a spot of arsenic and always wore a long coat.

By 1927 there were 2091 books in the well stocked library.

In 1937 the Court House/ Library was blown over by a cyclone and the books had to be stored in the police cell.

The Historical Society house an information display in the nearby building as the stumps of the Court House/Library are all that remain.

'The vast distances that the books had to travel... either by steamer from Adelaide or overland...'



Darwin Mechanics' Institute building after being blown down by Cyclone Tracy.