



USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

Newsletter No 20 – Summer & Autumn 2009

PO Box 1080, Windsor VIC 3181 Australia ISSN 1835-5242

SPECIAL BUMPER DOUBLE ISSUE

This edition of *Useful Knowledge* is a double issue due to the editor being diverted by other activities, and also due to the large number of contributions received. The normal schedule will be resumed with the **Winter 2009** issue. The editorial team are confident the increased size of this issue will bide subscribers over until then. Concerned as it is with the history of Mechanics' Institutes, as well as current happenings, this issue continues the series by Wallace Kirsop on the Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institution as well as a clarification by Barrie Brennan regarding the Gulgong School of Arts. Katherine White contributes an article on the Victorian Railways Institute.

NEWS HEADLINES

FEBRUARY BUSHFIRES CLAIM THREE HALLS

The loss of life in the recent bushfires is incomprehensible and tragic. We feel very touched by the situation and it is up to all of us to assist those in need in any way we can. Unfortunately the Callignee Mechanics' Institute was lost in the Gippsland fires – most unfortunate as they had recently received a grant of \$4,000 through the Volunteer Grants Program. The Narbethong and Strathewen Halls were also lost. The Marysville Historical Society lost their entire historical collection as well as their headquarters in the horrible bushfires that started on Saturday 7 February 2009. The following Mechanics' Institutes acted as emergency centres or as support for the fire-fighting effort: Acheron, Buxton, Fawcett, Healesville, Molesworth, Mudgegonga, Narbethong, Taggerty, Warburton and Yarck.

This newsletter features two contributions from the Mechanics' Institute community that gives the bushfire experience a personal perspective. Bev Johns from the Kinglake West Mechanics' Institute was in the thick



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

News Headlines	1
MI Resource Centre	6
Around the Institutes	8
The Wonderful World of MIs	17
People & Places	19
History Page	20
Book Reviews	28
Letter to the Editor	29
Coming Events	31

of the fires and this contribution to *Useful Knowledge* - written some two weeks after the event - reveals what a terrifying time it must have been.

Condolences have been received from Professor Roger Morris and Lucy Bantermalis of the Sydney Mechanics'

School of Arts and Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts (NSW). Dr Bob Draper from the Royal Bath Literary and Scientific Institution, England sends his best wishes and extends sympathy on the loss of lives and Institutes during the recent bushfires.

KINGLAKE WEST MECHANICS' INSTITUTE PLAYS KEY ROLE IN LOCAL RECOVERY

Since Black Saturday much has happened. It certainly has been a busy time. We are all safe and well, feeling lucky that we have our home but we are saddened by the loss of friends, acquaintances and for those who lost their homes. Last Wednesday power finally returned. For us power also means water out of the tap and flushing the toilet. It is easy to live without these things when you know you can sleep in your own bed.

On Saturday 7 February we stayed at home as the fires raced from Upper Plenty, Humevale to Kinglake West. We knew of the fire at Kilmore East, but thought we were safe as the radio said it was north of Wandong heading south. When we heard of a fire at Coombs Road, Kinglake West, it was too late to leave.

My mother Mavis Bateman and nephew Brendan were at our house. Fortunately we did not have the intensity of the fire that some areas got. We consider ourselves very lucky only getting embers and our house is untouched. We did have a fire pump and various mops and buckets at the ready. My mother was lucky that the house was saved and she only lost her shed, water tanks and pump. My sister Margaret and brother in law Daryl worked with a neighbour and saved both properties, with the neighbour having some fire damage to one wall of his house. My sister Julie, partner John and daughter are all safe and well, with the majority of houses in the street gone, they are fortunate to have their home. Having extended family in the area we

are fortunate that they are all safe.

Kinglake West does not look the same with many of the houses near the intersection lost and store also gone. The fire caused extensive damage to power poles and the crews have put in a wonderful effort to restore power. There was no logic to this fire; some houses were untouched while others are burnt to the ground. Some houses burnt, while cars parked nearby survived!

We are living in a disaster zone. We have resident tags and the roads are closed to those who are not residents or contractors. Until Wednesday 11 February we had not left the district for if we had left for Whittlesea we would not have been allowed to return home. All the police, army and contractors that we have encountered have been great. Daniel was even given some army badges by a two soldiers.

For those of you who know us through other connections we can report on some Kinglake landmarks.

- Kinglake West Primary school is untouched; this includes the current building and the new school building which will be ready in the next month or so.

- Kinglake West Mechanics' Institute Hall and Reserve have only had fire damage to a few trees. All our buildings are OK. The Hall is now a relief centre supplying people with basic necessities, with a marquee attached serving meals. The reserve is filled with activity with shower, toilet block etc. The new water tank we got for the CFA through the

federal government Community Water Grant has proved a valuable asset.

- The Uniting Church is also standing thanks to a neighbour putting out spot fires; it is now the only church still standing in the Kinglake area, with both the Anglican and Roman Catholic burnt down. All members of our congregation are OK.

- Kinglake and Flowerdale Primary schools are OK, while Middle Kinglake was burnt down. The kindergarten was burnt down again, with the sports stadium being OK, but there is fire damage to the adjoining community centre.

- Our National Park has been devastated, with their headquarters and vehicles all destroyed. Even parts of the Wombelano section that were affected by

the 2006 fires have been burnt again in this fire. The National Park will be closed for some time.

- The Kinglake West store, the Pheasant Creek supermarket and the Kinglake service station have all gone as well.

- Many older homes of the district have also been destroyed.

Many people we know have lost their homes and it will take time to rebuild their lives. Unfortunately we have lost friends through this tragedy and coming to terms with absent friends at schools and community groups will take time. On a positive note we have all found the generosity of others amazing. Thank you to all those who were thinking of us,

Bev, David, Peter and Daniel Johns



The Kinglake West Mechanics' Institute, shown above, was the focal point for the local bushfire relief operation.

Bev Johns photo

BARFOLD MECHANICS' INSTITUTE SURVIVED THE FIRES

Elaine Murphy from the Barfold Mechanics' Institute demonstrates the resilience of the Mechanics' Institute community in this poignant account of her bushfire experience.

The fire went right through our property near the Hall (not the house where we live). I was there, on my own, trying to protect the house and the fire raced straight at the Hall. I thought it would be destroyed and I was mentally trying to compose a letter to you [Pam Baragwanath] to say 'just as well you saw it!' However, when I looked up again the fire was rushing at me, so I had no time for letters. Anyway, all is well! The Hall survived and so did our house. Unfortunately, we lost 300 acres of grass, 101 sheep, lots of fencing and some very old gum trees. We were doing reasonably well until we had to shoot our sheep because of their burns. But there are many people worse than us. Give us time and rain and I'm sure we will bounce back again.

Elaine Murphy and Briony Barker

HISTORY WEEK 2009

The very successful **History Week** of 2008, which staged a smorgasbord of events across Victoria, is to be repeated. This year **History Week** 2009 runs from Sunday 25 October to Sunday 1 November. This is an opportunity for every Institute across Victoria to celebrate our great and unique Mechanics' Institute heritage. If every Institute in Victoria was to stage just one event during **History Week** 2009, it would be a telling demonstration of the strength of the Mechanics' Institute movement across Victoria.

Institutes may like to consider holding events which could include a lecture, a display of artefacts in your hall, front window or even a local shop window, a musical soiree, or a 'Remember the Mechanics?' afternoon for the **History Week**. Let us know what you schedule.



The Barfold Mechanics' Institute – still going strong!

PRAHRAN MECHANICS' SAYS 'NO MINISTER'

A media blitz on Monday 11 May, with press, radio and television participation, launched the Prahran Mechanics' Institute's campaign to engage the Minister for Education for a new lease. The day started with an interview with McKean Park solicitor Ross Blair on Red Symons' ABC 774 Melbourne breakfast show. *The Age* newspaper gave PMI page five and ABC TV a 7pm news slot.

Prahran have served a notice on the Minister to vacate PMI's extensive building in 90 days unless an agreement is reached in the interim. Be sure to drop by the Institute and sign their petition.

GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO SHARED FACILITIES

The Victorian government has asked the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission to conduct an inquiry into the potential for increased sharing of government and community facilities across Victoria, both in relation to existing and new facilities. The inquiry should report by 15 September 2009.

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria made a submission to this inquiry. For submissions and further information, visit the Commission's website www.vcec.vic.gov.au.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES SHARE IN GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Substantial grants have been made to Mechanics' Institutes recently. Under the **Victorian Heritage Grants Program** five Institutes received some \$40,000 in grants. The **Australian Government Volunteer Grants Program** distributed some \$60,000 to twenty-one Mechanics' Institutes.

Institutes which benefited can be found in the **Around the Institutes** section.

NEW HALL SAFETY CODE

This safety legislation will apply to every Institute building across Victoria erected before 1994. We are most grateful to Brian Foley of Ballan Mechanics' Institute for alerting us to Regulation 1214 of the Building Regulations of 2006. This legislation which will require compliance by all Hall Committees, comes into effect on 13 June 2009.

There is one thing for certain that this matter will not go away and we suggest you be proactive and that may give some breathing space.

Unfortunately every Hall is different and there are no set guidelines to follow for a tick off list. To ensure your Hall is compliant we suggest in the first instance you contact your local Council Heritage Advisor if your Hall is on a Heritage Overlay or is listed on the Victorian Register. If your building is not on heritage list your first call should be to the local CFA or failing that the Building Inspector at your local Council.

Have them walk through your Hall, document the visit and list items that you need to update or acquire and get a costing on these. If your building is on Crown Land and you are a DSE Committee of Management we suggest you apply to your local DSE Regional Office or to a Rotary or Lions Club nearest your hall, detailing your plight.

If you are a freehold Institute and own your own site we suggest you try Rotary,

Lions or even your local Council or Clerk of Courts for a special donation.

We also suggest you write to us with the result of your Hall audit so as we can identify issues which we may be able to take to the Government.

DSE UPDATE

This brief update comes from the Public Land Division (Historic Places) Group: Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)

The Public Assets (Historic Places Group) has a small budget for professional heritage advice which is made available to assist delegated managers of historic places on public land (on Crown Reserves). Two consultancies have been tendered for Mechanics' Institutes for 2008/09, they are Great Western and Creswick.

Heritage Victoria announced the latest round of grants in December. Quite a few Mechanics' Institutes received funding, mostly for objects and collections. (See *Around the Institutes*.)

The latest DSE Guide to Funding and Assistance for Heritage Conservation was released in late January. Copies were sent to the MIV and to the Prahran Mechanics' Institute, for information. If necessary, further copies can be downloaded from the Heritage Victoria web site.

The Historic Places Photo Cataloguing Project has been completed with over 8,000 photos catalogued and 5,000 photos scanned.

DSE has now completed the transfer of all its historic places data to Hermes, the Heritage Victoria's database. Data from over 10,800 records was transferred. The National Trust has also transferred data from its records (7,000+) as have more local Councils. To date there are more than 80,000 records on Hermes. Eventually most of these records will be accessible to the public via the Victorian Heritage Database online. Some records are available now and can be accessed from the Heritage Victoria web pages.

Janette Hodgson

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE RESOURCE CENTRE (MIRC)

Pam Baragwanath is an avid collector of Mechanics' Institute memorabilia. Since the MIRC has been established there has been a continuing debate as to whether it should include items from interstate and overseas. In this contribution, Pam argues for their inclusion.

The **Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre** collection policy requires more definition, in particular, whether to collect items from interstate and overseas and whether or not to collect objects apart from paper-based materials. Obviously the collection should specialise in items that represent Victorian Institutes but I would like to put forward the case for inclusion of the small complementary collection which we already have from overseas research in the UK, USA and NZ as well as the other Australian States.

Mechanics' Institutes have a multinational history, having originated in Scotland and the UK then diffusing in the 19th century to the colonies including Australia and also to the United States of America. Roger Morris, President of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, toured the US in September/October 2007 and his paper entitled 'Our North American Cousins' has recently been made available.

These Institutes were similar in their aspirations of self-help and self improvement, and in the provision of adult education and libraries. For a fuller understanding of the strength and depth of the movement and the unique Australian experience, a comparison with institutes in other countries can be useful.

In Australia, the social and civic infrastructure that existed in the UK did not exist. The Mechanics' Institute building was often the first public building and was used for police barracks, court proceedings, voluntary defence corps, army barracks, council, Water Board

and Roads Board meetings, bank, infant welfare, doctor's surgery, state school, church services, adult education, refuge centre, art gallery, museum, cultural uses including music and drama and rites of passage, land sales and travelling salesmen, as well as all the social and community uses. In addition, many Institute halls were part of a larger recreation reserve so indoor and outdoor sports were often included on the varied program of uses.

Further research would be required to be able to determine that Australia, and Victoria in particular, is unique in this pattern of usage. The researcher of the future would be limited without the ability to consult the wider history of the Mechanics' Institute movement.

Moreover the MIRC should also collect memorabilia as well as paper based materials. By way of comparison, the LaTrobe Library collection at the State Library of Victoria, includes books and other published material such as manuscripts, pictures and art but also has objects such as: Captain James Cook's celestial globe used on his voyages of discovery 1770-1773, the water cask from the original 1803 Sorrento settlement in Victoria, pistols and other objects belonging to Edward Henty, the telescope from the schooner *Enterprise*, John Pascoe Fawkner's black marble mantle clock, the cabbage tree hat worn by Marcus Clarke and Peter Lalor's pistol. These items are strongly evocative and complement the other LaTrobe collection material. Incidentally Henty, Fawkner, Clarke and Lalor also feature in Mechanics' Institute history.

Already the MIRC has two non-paper objects which surely have rarity value, they were both purchased from eBay.

The first one is a presentation key to Lady Peacock when she opened the Bungaree Mechanics' Institute in 1928, it

has been meticulously engraved by the leading jeweller in Ballarat at the time, H. Marks and Co. The modest door key expresses perhaps even more than the written word, the importance placed on the event in Bungaree and limited budget of the Institute.



The second is a pair of bread and butter plates with the motif 'Foster Mechanics' Hall' clearly shown. These plates illustrate that catering was an important part of their activities and they also demonstrate the pride they had in their own Mechanics' Hall.



These items are strongly evocative of the rites of passage and traditional routines that were important to those institute committees. They are worthy also of being collected where their impact can be appreciated along with minute and cash books and library catalogues.

These objects contribute substantially to a more complete Mechanics' Institute narrative. More than 1,000 Mechanics' Institutes established in Victoria were unique and individual enterprises of the local community is something to celebrate from Ballarat MI to Taradale, Orbost to Murrayville. The history of mechanics' institutes is a proud and influential one. The Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre currently being established at Prahran Mechanics' Institute should reflect this.

SOME RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MIRC COLLECTION

The Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre is happy to receive items of historical interest. Typical contributions include a collection of records of the Elmhurst Public Library, formerly the Elmhurst Mechanics' Institute, donated by Jocelyn Milne, and a dance ticket from the Toolern Mechanics' Institute that was purchased from eBay in January 2009. These contributions are discussed below.

The Elmhurst cash book appears to date from 11 November 1872 it is in poor condition with the front and back pages loose. There is no spine on the book which means it requires careful handling. The last date in the Cash Book appears to be 15 July 1910. The balance sheets are loose and tied in half with a piece of tape. At this stage I am reluctant to handle them too much as the paper tears very easily, but the dates appear to range from 1891 to the early 1900s. The cash book shows just how a Mechanics' Institute or Public Library as it was called raised and spent funds. It is an invaluable document for research.

The dance card from Toolern is a simple example of ephemera, printed by Gazette Print, is the only piece of information about Toolern that we hold in the MIRC at this stage, but it tells us much about what was happening culturally and socially in the Toolern (Vale) community around the turn of the century. This simple dance ticket dated 1st November 1895 reveals an extensive and varied program catering for all tastes. Starting with an illustrated lecture 'A Tour Through New Zealand' and musical program by talented amateurs from Bacchus Marsh, a concert at 8pm was then followed by a Ball. Admission was one shilling, school children were free. Admission for the Ball was two shillings.

*Pam Baragwanath – MIV Archives.
Phone: 03-9870 2386.*

AROUND THE INSTITUTES

ANTWERP

The present Antwerp Hall was built in 1907. The town was named by Horatio Ellerman in 1856 after his birthplace in Belgium. In 1859 the Ebenezer Aboriginal Mission was established by Lutheran missionaries. Antwerp was once a busy place which hosted the famous eucalyptus oil distillery of Joseph Bosisto which was built there in 1882. It employed a team of people cutting the eucalypt brush and firewood to feed the distillery for product which was shipped world wide under the 'Parrot' brand. Today all that is left of the hamlet of Antwerp is a grain silo, the hall and a few dwellings.

AMPHITHEATRE

The Amphitheatre Hall's innovative School Holiday Program for children in the district received \$1541 funding from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program. This may be an idea that other Institutes could take on board.

APOLLO BAY

Apollo Bay Mechanics' Institute was successful in a recent round of Heritage Victoria grants. It received \$16,000 to undertake installation, ridge capping and rainwater collection.

ATHLONE

The Institute has a focus on physical activities such as badminton and carpet bowls. They were also recipients of an Australian Government's Volunteer Grant of \$1410.

BALLAARAT

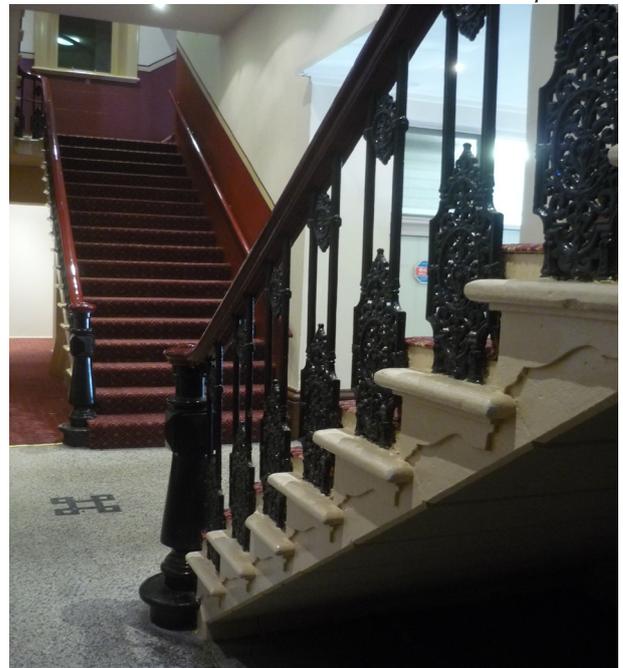
Much is happening at Ballaarat and it is full steam ahead with the production of their history *Under Minerva's Gaze* (Pre-purchase offer of \$35 closes on 31 May with BMI, 117-119 Sturt Street, Ballarat, V 3350). Massive restoration works are imminent on their building in the hope that all will be in readiness for the launch of their 150th celebrations later in the year. Their portrait collection will benefit from a recently

received \$7000 grant from Heritage Victoria for their restoration.



The Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute (above) and the newly reinstated grand staircase on the upper levels of the Institute (below).

Ros Lowden photos



In the meantime a new series of their very successful Twilight Talks got under way in late April.

BALLAN

Ballan Mechanics' Institute is always a hive of activity. Improvement works have recently been carried out with the help of a Shire of Moorabool 2008-2009 \$10,000

Capital Improvement Grant. The works include the completion of a Public Address system with hearing loops in the main hall and supper room and the installation of a twelve camera security system with solid state recording. A DSE Stewardship in Action Grant will enable the sanding of the main hall floor, the repairing of minor damage and the resealing and coating of the floor. Shortfalls on all the above projects will be met from Committee of Management funds. The Ballan Institute was a gathering point in the recent Daylesford-Ballan fires with all its excellent facilities pushed into service for assistance with catering and sleepovers for fire crews.

BERWICK

The 146th Annual General meeting of the Berwick Mechanics' Institute & Free Library Inc was held on 18 March. It has been another busy year with increased activity. Berwick is staffed by a large and happy band of volunteers and the Mechanics Institute serves as the Berwick Library. Those who participate in the 2009 Annual Bus Tour of Institutes will have an opportunity to inspect Berwick, first-hand. See upcoming events for more details.

BOISDALE

The Boisdale Hall keeps the community interested with a range of activities including film nights, youth meetings, playgroups and regional group meetings. They received \$1000 from Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program to further their activities.

BOORT

Successor to the original Mechanics' Hall, the Boort Memorial Hall is the hub for a large rural community with active dance school and arts groups. The Committee of Management received \$5000 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

BUCKRABANYULE

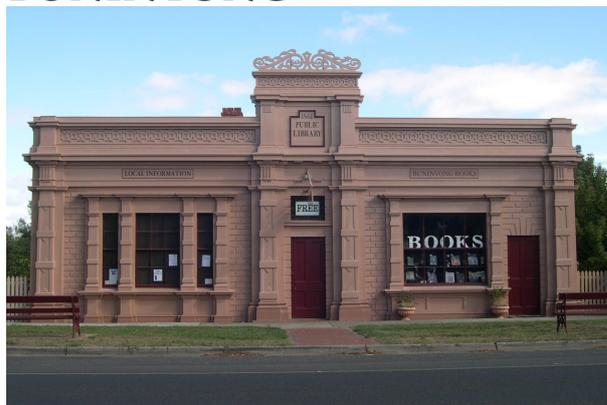
Located at the crossroads and adjacent to a railway line, this Institute has grown with extensions added over the years and is still used for community events and the occasional wake after a burial at the nearby

cemetery. They received \$4816 Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

BULLARTO

Located in the busy Daylesford region, the Bullarto Institute which dates from the mid-1870s still operates. The present hall, built in 1905, is located adjacent to the railway station that serves the Spa Country Railway tourist train. It recently hosted a wedding reception with guests arriving by train and this may well set a pattern for future similar events.

BUNINYONG



Bronwyn Lowden photo

Acting as regional tourism office, a good place to buy books and a community hub, the Buninyong Institute received \$1000 from Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

CALLIGNEE

This Institute was established in Gippsland in the 1880s. It was burnt down on 9 February 2009, making it the third time it had been destroyed by fire since it was established. Callignee also figured in the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program with a \$4000 grant for community development which includes their annual celebrations for Australia Day.

CARDROSS

Located 15km south-east of Mildura, the township of Cardross has a population of 750. It was named after Cardross in Dunbartonshire, Scotland. The present brick Hall was built in 1938. Outside is a noticeboard and blackboard with a protective roof built on top. The hall celebrated its 70th birthday with a weekend

on 15-16 Nov 2008 which took the form of a Back-to event with 'sumptuous gala dinner' to launch a commemorative book and DVD. A great weekend was had by all.

CASTLEMAINE



Bronwyn Lowden photo

Solar panels, located on the historic Castlemaine Mechanics' Institute building which now houses the city library, were recently 'turned on' on Wednesday 25 February. This is in keeping with Castlemaine community's resolve to become a rural leader in harnessing use of solar energy. Bulk buys in solar panels have resulted in considerable savings for local people who want to install panels on their houses or business premises.

CHARLTON

The Charlton Golden Grains Museum tenant the Charlton Institute building providing display and research facilities for historians. The Committee received \$2000 Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

CHILTERN ATHENAEUM

The bustling and growing collection of the Chiltern Athenaeum is due to undergo a significance assessment thanks to funding of \$5500 received from Heritage Victoria.

CHRISTMAS HILLS

Following the election of replacement trustees as reported in the last issue, the interim Committee of Management has become incorporated. They have also been going through the transfer of their land to a new title. MIV was able to facilitate pro bono legal assistance through the law firm of Holding Redlich and thank the partners and staff of that firm for taking this worthy cause on board.

CLUNES

The Clunes Free Library building was again a busy place for the Annual Back to Booktown at Clunes. This year it was held on the weekend of 2-3 May, with trading between 9am-4pm daily. The hall accommodated several booksellers of the fifty or so represented around the town. More information can be found at www.booktown.clunes.org.

CLYDESDALE

The Clydesdale Hall offers a diverse range of activities from film nights to community markets. The upgraded kitchen means they can now cater for wedding receptions and that will provide added revenue for future upgrades. Clydesdale received \$4516 in the recent Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program funding round. Clydesdale also figured in the round of Heritage Victoria grants with \$13,000 to enable roof replacement and associated works.

CUDGEWA

Established in 1887 this Institute has been pivotal to community life. They recently received \$4950 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

DURHAM OX

The Durham Ox Memorial Hall hosts a diverse range of groups including indoor bowls, Fire Brigade as well as youth and playgroups. They received \$3498 in the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

FRANKLINFORD

The Franklindford Community Hall received \$41,000 in the most recent round of Heritage Victoria grants to replace roof sheeting and flashings, water storage and repairs to the timber floor.

FRANKSTON

Good news! Frankston City Council has resolved to spend \$2 million on the restoration upgrade of the Frankston Mechanics' Institute. We hope to have the plans outlined on our bus tour of the Mornington Peninsula on Sunday 10 July.

This is great news and again vindicates the effort of a small band of people from the Mornington Peninsula Family History Group and the Friends of Frankston. Congratulations all. We commend the Council in taking this project on board and look forward to the re-opening.

FRYERSTOWN



The Fryerstown Antique Fair held at the Fryerstown Burke and Wills Mechanics' Institute on Australia Day weekend was again a great success. Pat Cubeta is the brains behind it all, pictured above at her stall just outside the Institute entrance.

GORMANDALE

This Institute dates from 1885 and had an early library. Today it continues its community role and is shared by the school, kindergarten and community house. It received \$3153 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program

HEALESVILLE



Pam Baragwanath photo

Extensive use of the second home of the Healesville Mechanics' Institute during

the recent fires again highlights the need for such pivotal facilities. As a regional Community Recovery Centre it hosted community meetings as well as a range of advisers and services.

HUNTLY

The Institute appears to have commenced around 1880. It received a one-off library grant around 1900. The present Huntly Hall may be a later replacement of a former building that may or may not have been on the same site. Can anyone help with any further information or perhaps a book with the Huntly Hall bookplate?

JEERALANG NORTH HALL

This Institute dates from around 1892. It was not burnt, but badly scorched during the February 9 bushfire. The Hall will require some rebuilding before it is fully usable again.

KATAMATITE

The Katamatite Mechanics' Institute dates from around 1882 and the Hall was first built in 1884. It had a library for a time. Today a Committee still maintains it for the use of the community. It received \$1997 in the recent round of the hall Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

KILMORE

The now annual Carols by Candlelight was well attended in early December. Their calendar of events for 2009 includes lectures and workshops including Money Matters, Chat about Children and a Carer's Workshop. A Bushfire Relief Red Carpet Concert was hastily planned for 21 March. The drought enforced bi-annual Gardens of Kilmore Open Day will take place on 25 October. President Henny O'Shea tells us that planning has already started for the Christmas Carols.

KINGLAKE WEST

In September last year we were invited to an open afternoon at Kinglake to celebrate their centenary. It was a happy occasion with a display of historic pictures and memorabilia and a very friendly welcoming band of people. We had the opportunity to see just what a massive

restoration of the Institute had taken place. Valuable additions included a well-equipped kitchen, undercover verandah, a new attached amenities area, meeting room and a large tank for water storage for the CFA which was obtained through a Federal Government Community Water grant. The recent addition of a sound system had meant that they could easily stage live performances. It all seemed very ambitious for such a rural district. Furthermore a building that was being replaced at the nearby school was made available to the Hall Committee and this was moved next to the oval and tennis courts to become their pavilion and amenities area.

Six months later the Kinglake West Mechanics' was to become a lone resource in an area raked by fire. A Hoecker pavilion was joined on to the verandah side of the hall and the oval became a refuelling station for fire trucks. The sports pavilion was used for showers and rest. When the fires died down, the Hall became a supermarket where people could pick up clothes, basic foodstuffs and essentials.

If ever there was a case to be made for well resourced multi-use shared community halls in rural districts look no further than Kinglake West.

KOOREH

Established around 1884 the Kooreh Mechanics' Institute building was replaced by the Soldiers' Memorial Hall in 1922. The Committee recently received \$1129 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

LANCEFIELD



Bronwyn Lowden photo

The Lancefield Mechanics' is to be the venue for a series of public meetings which

will decide the town's future as it develops its own Community Action Plan. Ever proactive, the community wants to develop a vision for Lancefield with identified projects and people willing to put their hand up to help drive those projects. A meeting for the town's youth is also planned. Meetings will begin with a light meal.

MAFFRA

Established around 1874, Maffra had built their Hall by 1882 which included a library for the district. The original building was replaced in 1892 and extended in 1905. The present building dates from 1925. Maffra recently arranged to have its records digitised by MIV and a copy will ultimately be placed in the MIRC at Prahran and a further security copy will be placed at Ballarat Mechanics' Institute.

MALDON

Continuing on with developing its community facilities, Maldon was the recipient of \$1750 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program. Maldon have recently issued a set of postcards as a fundraiser.

MALMSBURY and DISTRICT

Thankfully the recent Drummond North / Malmsbury fire has not impacted on either the Malmsbury or Drummond Mechanics' Institutes.

Work is due to commence shortly on the Malmsbury Mechanics' Institute, and the \$800 left over from the 2007 Heritage Architect's survey was spent by Macedon Ranges Shire Council (MRSC) on a Hazardous Materials Survey, a prerequisite for any works to commence.

The paperwork for the Heritage Victoria Significance Assessment grant for our remnant library and photograph collection (\$3000) has again been sent to MRSC but this time we have been alerted to this fact and we are already trying to track it down. This sort of red tape associated with grants is a bit of a disincentive; we would sooner be autonomous when it comes to making financial and other decisions.

As a result of the article about our remnant library in *Useful Knowledge* last

year we received further information about T Craig and Co. which would strongly indicate the books were re-covered in the early 1890s, strengthening the argument that the linen coverings and advertising were a depression measure. A local appeal had gone out to try and recover some of the books that appear to have been sold off in the last 20 years.

The Institute continues to be used by a number of local organisations and events. Apart from the usual Bingo, Landcare and Historical Society events, the Community Planning Group, the Business and Tourism Association and a bi-monthly music night sees the place rocking with activity. A Youth group is being planned for Malmsbury with the MI being an ideal venue for its activities.

There is very little action at the Drummond Mechanics' Institute although the Malmsbury Landcare group is planning to rotate its meetings venues to include the Malmsbury, Drummond and Lauriston Halls in order to reflect its widespread membership.



The Halls at Drummond (above) and Lauriston (below). Bronwyn Lowden photos



Despite the heat and the recent Drummond fire, the Fryerstown Antiques Fair attracted its usual crowd and was no doubt a great fundraiser for their MI.

Taradale Historical Group has also started attempting to try and trace their MI library books, apparently donated to the Castlemaine Benevolent Asylum in the 1950s.

Sue Walter

MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM

The Melbourne Athenaeum Library received a Heritage Victoria grant to restore some of their collection of archival items. Heritage Victoria also granted \$3500 to digitise some of its archives. Membership continues to rise as does the use of its computer bank.



Pictured above is the book launch on 18 February of Robert Forrester, First Fleeter by Louise Wilson.

This event was ably hosted by the Athenaeum librarian, Jill Bartholomeusz and the book was launched by Rosemary Cameron (also pictured above) who has been Director of the Melbourne Writers' Festival since November 2005. Before this she directed the Brisbane Writers' Festival for three years. Rosemary is a judge of the Victorian Premier's Literary Prize for Fiction for the second year, and was previously a judge of One Book, many Brisbane's awards for the Brisbane City Council, and on the selection panel for the John Oxley Fellowship at the State Library of Queensland. Before becoming involved in literary festivals, Rosemary worked in performing arts management in Sydney, Brisbane and London. This included working for the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Stage X Festival at QPAC, English National Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent

Garden, Marrickville Festival, Oslo Early Music Festival, Performing Lines and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

MYALL

With a heavy emphasis on the promotion of community celebratory events, the Committee of Management received \$4862 in the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

NANGILOC

This Hall has a heavy emphasis on sport related activities and received \$5000 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

NARBETHONG

Narbethong Mechanics' Institute dates from 1907 and was destroyed in the Black Saturday bushfire of 7 February 2009. Our sincere sympathy is extended to all the Committee and users of the former Hall.

NARRACAN

This Institute was built in 1879. It received \$4950 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program to promote the Coalville Narracan Local Neighbourhood Advisory Group.

NERRENA



Bronwyn Lowden photo

This Hall dates from around 1899. Today is it very much family-focussed with regular sausage sizzles, barbecues and celebration of festive events. The Committee received \$3913 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

NEWSTEAD

The Newstead Resource Centre, of which the Institute is a part, received \$4849 from

the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program. The Newstead Mechanics' Institute will be the venue for a number of performances at the Newstead Short Story Tattoo to be held from 15-17 May. See www.nsst.org.au.

NYAH

The Nyah Memorial Hall received a Heritage Victoria grant to restump the foyer, store room, meeting room and kitchen.

PRAHRAN

Prahran President Alf Lazer hosted a lunch on International Volunteers Day to celebrate the contribution that volunteers make to their operation. These tasks include: covering books, preparing newsletters for mailing, delivering flyers and indexing books from the library that were published without indexes. A bookbinder and PMI member Trevor Knaggs put his expertise into the restoration of a volume of GC Mundy's *Our Antipodes: residence and rambles in the Australian colonies* (1854). Member Jim Badger saw the opportunity to place surplus newspaper microfilms at Holmesglen College of TAFE with PMI. The December Newsletter carries a fine portrait of Arriness E Watson who donated 2500 books to Prahran's local history collection last year. And then there is the now legendary annual CATHS picture show staged by PMI Committeeman Peter Wolfenden with an eclectic lot of films: *Namatjira the Painter* (1947); *Wirritt Wirritt*, on Aboriginal rock art (1957); *Return to Sender*, about the PMG dead letter office (1956-57); *People make Papers*, a Fred Schepsi documentary on the Age (1964); and *Stan King*, a bookbinder at the Government Printing Office for forty-four years (1978). Membership of Prahran Mechanics' Institute can be had by contacting Box 1080, Windsor, V 3181. The cost is \$12 per annum and it gives you access to the best Victorian local history outside the State Library.

QUANTONG

The first Hall was built in Quantong around 1897. The present well-cared for building was constructed in 1965. It serves as a district gathering point and adjoining

oval hosts local and regional sporting events. The Committee received \$4108 from the recent Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

SANDFORD

The Sandford Institute was formed around 1871 and the Institute was built around 1880. The Committee in comparatively recent times has also inherited another building and this is now used in conjunction with the Institute Hall. The Committee recently received a welcome \$2760 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program to help maintain these two heritage-listed buildings.

SHEPPARTON

The Woodturners of the Goulburn Valley Inc., who are members of MIV, are one of a number of tenants of the Shepparton Mechanics' Institute. They make furniture for local people and groups and also support local charities. They received \$3095 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

SOMERVILLE



Somerville Mechanics' Institute after heritage colours had been reinstated.

Lorraine Huddle photo

SORRENTO

The Nepean Historical Society has conducted their activities from the Sorrento Mechanics' Institute building since 1967. Their expanding museum and research facilities are receiving an increasing number of visitors. The \$4264 the Australian

Government's Volunteer Grants Program will improve and expand their resources. Heritage Victoria also made a contribution of \$3300 to undertake a significance assessment. The Society recently received the donation of a dramatic portrait of Lieutenant-Governor David Collins who established the Sullivans Bay settlement at Sorrento in 1803. Nepean Historical Society publishes a chatty newsletter and a tri-fold membership leaflet advertising membership at \$18 a single or \$30 a family.

Click on to their website www.nepeanhistoricalsociety.asn.au.

STANLEY

Chris Dormer is no longer working at the Beechworth Burke Museum. After four years as the Arts & Cultural Officer for Indigo Shire she is enjoying the first long service leave in her working life.

Chris is putting some time and energy into the Stanley Athenaeum, they have recently had a meeting to form a Friends group and although it is early days a few initiatives are planned for 2009. Initially there is some capital works funds coming from the Federal Government through the Council and this will mean relocating the collection for internal painting and floor coverings, there is also talk of more funds for capital works.

Most exciting is the planned celebrations around our 1861 3rd ed copy of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, inspired by the Melbourne Museums themed dinner for Darwin's 200th birthday, we are planning a similar themed dinner with a speaker for June/July to raise funds for its conservation. The Athenaeum is also planning a Community Heritage Grant application for a Significance Assessment of the Collection.

The Athenaeum collection has been catalogued; Chris has one hard copy and she is hoping to secure an electronic copy from the Upper Murray Regional Library.

STRATHEWEN

This building was well-used by the local community and nearby school until it was burnt down on 9 February 2009 with only a rather blistered sign remaining standing.

However the local Hall community did not waste any time in meeting on the site to resolve to rebuild the Hall. They have a fundraising start with \$1900 received from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

STUART MILL

The Stuart Mill Institute dates from 1876. Today the Stuart Mill Progress Association manages the Hall for the benefit of the whole community. The Hall is used by the CFA and Landcare group and other community organisations. The Association Stuart Mill received \$2250 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

TALBOT

The former Talbot Mechanics' Institute now houses the busy Community Library. Council chose to shut the branch library down and the locals decided they would not drive the 20km to Maryborough for books, so they started their own library after a successful call for books.

TARADALE



Bronwyn Lowden photo

The Taradale Historical Society is trying to trace Taradale Mechanics' Institute books that were donated to the Castlemaine Benevolent Asylum in the 1950s.

TARRAVILLE

Tarraville Mechanics' Institute was established in 1859 and a Hall was built in 1886. The Tarraville Recreation Reserve Committee manage the Hall and reserve for the community and it received \$4400 to further its work from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

TEESDALE

The Teesdale Mechanics' Institute was operational by 1874. Today it is the only public venue for use in the district and is home' for the area's organisations. It received \$5000 the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

TRAFALGAR EAST

The Hall was built in 1925. Like many district Institutes it was and still is the hub of the area. To support this role it received \$1150 in the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

TRUGANINA

An email from the Department of Transport about the possible construction of a new West Werribee to Deer Park railway line which may impact on the site of Truganina Mechanics' Institute, sought a contact name for the Institute. We were able to locate a descendant of one of the original trustees, Wendy Bitans, who was able to inform us of the Institutes' history. In 1908 local farmer John Robert Swaby donated land at the Truganina crossroads for the building of a Mechanic's Hall and the site was conveyed to five trustees: Henry Robinson, Jesse Swaby, William Missen, Robert Hopkins and John Wallace. A Hall was built and it was well used by the nearby school, church and sports ground all aggregated at the crossroads. They took their dancing seriously and a sprung dance floor was later added to the hall. Debating was also popular and Truganina Debating Society toured widely successfully participating in debating competitions. Whilst there is no evidence of a library it would be interesting to know if there are any books out there carrying a Truganina Mechanics' Institute Library stamp. In February 1969 the Truganina Fire Brigade was called to the Lara fires and when they later returned they found little standing in Truganina and their Hall a smoking wreck. The rich heritage of framed pictures around the Hall's walls and the odd Debating cup were also burnt. The insurance payout was modest and not enough to build a new Hall, so the money was invested, to make a tidy sum some forty years later.

Whilst interest received on investments has been used occasionally to help out the Truganina Progress Association, it is generally reinvested to grow the capital further. The Hall site is regularly mown by the successive families who continue the trustee tradition. The small site could now just accommodate a Hall, but parking at the crossroads would be a definite problem. Two years ago the trustees organised a Truganina Mechanics' picture day and a collection of pictures showing activities at the old Mechanics' was assembled. So we have found yet another Mechanics' Institute without walls.

WARBURTON



Pam Baragwanath photo

Those locals who took a stand on the retention of the Mechanics' Hall can now take a bow. To see pictures of it overflowing point during recent bushfire meetings the value of such facilities in any community can be appreciated.

WARRAK

Located near Ararat, the Warrak community use of their Hall includes indoor bowls, the Rural Fire Brigade, youth and playgroups. The Committee received \$4000 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

WARRNAMBOOL

A grant of \$5,500 from Heritage Victoria will enable the former Warrnambool Mechanics' Institute remnant library collection, which is currently housed at Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village, to have a significance assessment.

WAUBRA

The local Pre-School uses the Institute for some of their activities. Recently the

Bendigo Bank through its Community Grants Program allocated \$1500 to install a hotwater service in the kitchen of the hall. However when it was installed extra money was also required to upgrade cabling and switchboard components so they applied to the Pyrenees Shire Council and they have granted them the extra \$1290 to cover the extra work.

WOODVALE

Woodvale Hall is the home for the Woodvale Progress Association and recreation and Reserve Committees. Woodvale received \$1747 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

YANAC

The Yanac Public Hall is the centre of a rural area. It received \$4660 the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

YARROWEYAH

The Yarroweyah Memorial Hall was in existence in 1926 and is the hub of the community. It is the venue for indoor bowls, the Rural Fire Brigade, youth and playgroups. It received \$1250 from the Australian Government's Volunteer Grants Program.

WARRANTYTE

Wired for sound will have real meaning, when Ian Craig shortly flicks the switch and all the lights will go out, for the audience to hear improved sound and see a new range of lighting effects. AV monitors and improved SM desk facilities will also enhance staging quality. Indeed Warrantyte is one of the best kept theatre secrets and hopefully one day cultural funding groups will get behind their dream of a building upgrade. Read all about it at www.warrantytehallarts.asn.au. You can join a family for \$25, adult for \$15, or junior for \$10.

WILLIAMSTOWN

Williamstown Mechanics' Institute recently received a Heritage Victoria grant of \$3000 to restore and conserve a World War I quilt. The Williamstown Institute is largely occupied by the Williamstown Historical Society Archives and Museum.

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

CANADA - ATWATER LIBRARY & COMPUTER CENTRE - THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL



Now recognised as a National Historic Site the Montreal Mechanics' Institute has been serving Montreal for 180 years. Situated in its own 1920s three storey building on Atwater Avenue in Westmount Quebec it has been a beacon of ongoing education since its establishment. Their leaflet demonstrates their range of activities. They include a Beading Workshop, the Atwater Library Luncheon

Series - Golden Stagers, A play reading of I Remain ... J Austen, The Story of the French, Isaac Newton's Principia Mathematica, Funding from the Canada Council for the Arts and 'Dr Norman Bethune, his life and contributions. The Atwater Library Book Club is led by author Mary Soderstrom with a monthly featured book and the Atwater Poetry Project is organised by Oana Avasilichioaei with monthly readings by two new poets. A Computer course - Googling and More - is offered twice weekly. Other computer courses include: Facebook: The Basics, Get Organized: Manage Your Files and Folders, The Magical World of Family History, Creating Christmas Cards and Intermediate Email techniques. Through their association with other independent Montreal libraries (www.independentlibraries.org) they offer a large range of information databases. They regularly let their 100 seat auditorium for community meetings and events as well as the reading room for a diverse range of evening or after hours event. The Atwater is a busy place, check out the website at: www.atwaterlibrary.ca



ST KITTS – CHARLES A HALBERT PUBLIC LIBRARY



This is named for a famous and respected native son, Charles Ashton Halbert (1880-1971), who was employed in the cotton and sugar industries based on Nevis. Charles later ran a bookshop in Basseterre and is regarded as the father of the labour movement in St Kitts. The Library has its origins in a subscription library formed in 1818. It subsequently became a public library in 1890, even though a subscription service for privileged borrowing was retained. Several reading clubs were formed in the 1930s and book depots at Cayon, Lodge, Molineux, Verchids, Saddlers, Dieppe Bay and Sandy Point were set up to support these clubs. Today, three of these depots remain at Molineux, Cayon and Saddlers, with Sandy Point now being a branch library. The library was housed in Basseterre Court House from 1894 and was transferred to Shirley House from 1985-97, when it moved to its present premises in Cunningham Street. The Library runs a full service with public access internet. Its brochure features the slogan 'Libraries are not made they grow.'

UNITED KINGDOM – BEANEY INSTITUTE

A massive redevelopment, The Canterbury Beane Project, is being planned for the distinctive Beane Institute in High Street, Canterbury. To facilitate the development The Institute closed at Christmas and will reopen in

mid 2011. In the meantime the library and most museum items will be displayed elsewhere. The rest will be undergoing conservation. The heritage façade to High Street will be restored and a new more utilitarian entrance will be opened onto the side of Best Lane. The project will cost £11 million with contributions from Kent County and Canterbury City Councils. And you guessed it - the other large contributor is the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is estimated when The Beaney is reopened and fully operational it will make an annual contribution of £13 million to the local economy.



The Beaney Institute in Canterbury, South-East England and the plans for the building's redevelopment (left).

Bronwyn Lowden photos



UNITED KINGDOM - ST AGNES MINERS' AND MECHANICS' INSTITUTE



Some 2300 people live in the Cornish village of St Agnes, the centre of a World Heritage former mining landscape. The St Agnes Miner's Mechanics' Institute was endowed by businessman John Passmore Edwards in 1893. Restoration works are underway with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£150,000), Big Lottery Fund, Cory Environmental Fund and Pennon Fund, which totals £296,500, almost half of the £633,000 needed. Further bids for grant funding have been submitted. The local fund-raising target is £100,000.

USA - LA JOLLA ATHENAEUM MUSIC & ARTS LIBRARY

Published bi-monthly the A3-size newsletter, printed in two colours, brings a host of ideas and projects that could work for any institute. Their regular musical concerts, art exhibitions and lectures are advertised widely through the medium of their membership and mailing lists. Experience shows that people will travel to notable events so don't write off distant members. In fact if your newsletter is interesting enough they will become members just for that.

La Jolla's Campaign to Reclaim, launched in 2002, show that more than fifty subscribers have given over \$5,000, one has given a million dollars, another

has given \$250,000 and ten have given more than \$100,000, and the list is added to with each edition. In addition each edition carries a couple of columns of donors giving less than \$5000 at a time.

The Institute's annual fundraising gala, themed to a country, and planned and advertised many months in advance, always promises to be a sell-out. The event starts with a street parade of guests in national costume and ends at the Athenaeum. The newsletter coverage of this year's event, **Gone Bananas: Caribbean Calypso** carries a page of pics of happy groups, couples and individuals. Then there is the quarterly book sale at which surplus library books of the Institute and its members are sold. Local artists also set up stands to sell their works, musicians play and sell their CDs with a little food and wine.

The back page of the newsletter contains a list of recent acquisitions including art books and artists' craft books, music books and CDs and DVDs. The trustees and staff are also listed in full. Part time staff are given titles such as Grant Writer, Program Annotator, Piano Technician and Artist-in-residence.

USA - NY GENERAL SOCIETY OF MECHANICS' AND TRADESMEN

The General Society was established in 1785 to provide cultural educational and social services to families of skilled tradesmen. Today it provides free courses for those engaged in the construction and allied industries.

The General Society has an excellent library and hosts The New York Center for Independent Publishing. The Center, with its own library of books about books, endows the Annual Poor Richard Award which recognises those who have achieved prominence in the small press industry. The Center received a \$25,000 grant from the Jane Hope Hastings Philanthropic Trust to stage the Annual Small Press Book Fair in December 2008.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Visiting University of London, Senior Research Fellow Dr John Spiers spoke at a free lecture organised by the Melbourne Bibliographic Circle on 19 March at the State Library of Victoria. The title of Dr Spier's talk was 'By Book or by Crook: the hidden history of Richard Edward King, publisher of Victorian fiction'. Dr Spiers established the very successful Harvester Press from which he has retired and he now collects Victorian fiction.

The indefatigable Pam Baragwanath, FMIV (founding Fellow of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria) travelled to Sydney recently for the Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts Annual Meeting. Pam is still on her relentless hunt for the elusive library stamp and for photos and records of Institutes.

Alan Barber is a volunteer at the Beaney Institute in Canterbury. He is writing a biography of Dr James George Beaney (1828-91), alias Diamond Jimmy the once colourful Melbourne surgeon. Whilst Beaney died and is buried in Melbourne his will provided for a Mechanics' Institute to be built in his birthplace Canterbury. Again that massive world-class resource, our State Library, has come up trumps with one of Beaney's books *Doctors Differ* on-line, which was the topic of a lecture given at the Melbourne Athenaeum.

John Cleve, former Kilmore Mechanics' President and stalwart of many Kilmore groups passed away on 25 February 2009. John was always ready to help with a smile, a good yarn and an occasional poem, and if the cause was worthy the cheque book would be drawn forth. His compeering of community events and his presence at the annual Kilmore Celtic Festival will be sorely missed. MIV extend sincere condolences to Gail and his family.

Sue Hughes, wife of MIV's erstwhile Treasurer, Graham, was announced Casey Council's Senior Citizen of the Year on Australia Day. Congratulations Sue on your well-earned award and thank you for all your support and understanding to Graham in his vital role with MIV.

Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute President Dr Frank Hurley recently had a moving experience. Now settled into their new home Frank and Helen can relax. However with the golf course and BMI even closer that makes more time for writing yet another grant application.

Ms Karin Puels has been newly appointed Secretary and General Manager of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. We wish to welcome Karin to the Institute and all the best for the coming year.

Peter Thompson has left the Heywood Library at LaTrobe University and is now working privately as an IT consultant. We all wish Peter well in his new career.

Ken Virtue, of Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute & Arts Association renown, recently celebrated a significant birthday'. The event was celebrated at a place which he knows quite well, the Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute, with friends and family. Musical renditions of Do you Ken Virtue?, Ken the Builder, The Houseboat and Paint, Glorious Paint provided much levity. Have a jolly happy year Ken and from all those which you and the WMIAA gang have entertained and enthused over the years, a jolly big 'Thankyou'.

Christine Worthington is now back at work at Prahran MI after her maternity leave. Bouncing baby daughter Julia, now almost one year old, is keeping well and will soon be running around.

HISTORY PAGE

THE 1839 CATALOGUE OF THE VAN DIEMEN'S LAND MECHANICS' INSTITUTION

In the succession of published catalogues of the Hobart Town Mechanics' Institute (the name by which it was known at the time of its demise in 1871), the one produced in 1839 is the most interesting. Indeed the range of information provided is unusually full, a fact that makes this record of Australia's first institution to take up – in 1827 – the Birkbeck challenge all the more valuable to researchers.

In his *Bibliography of Australia*, Ferguson (no 2889) records a single surviving copy of *A Catalogue of the Library of the Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institution* (Hobart Town, printed for the Institution by J. C. Macdougall, 1839), and I am indebted to the Mitchell Library for the opportunity to study it. In the same year appeared the Mechanics' Institution's reports for 1838 and 1839 as well as its revised *Rules and Orders* (Ferguson nos 2886–2888).

In a total of 36 pages in addition to the title leaf we are given a "Catalogue of Books, &c." (pp. 1–13), "Addenda to Catalogue" (p. 14), "Rules of the Library" (pp. 15–17), "Donations of Books" (pp. 18–21), "Donations of Money, Maps, Specimens, Models, Pictures, Apparatus, &c." (pp. 22–25), a "List of Lectures" (pp. 26–28) and a "List of Members" (pp. 29–36). Thus we are able to see the contents of the library and of the museum, to follow the Institution's educational work and to assess its audience, for the most part among Hobart's more substantial citizens, with occasional names from country districts and even from England and other colonies. Whatever difficulties may have been encountered, a full spectrum of activities was clearly envisaged from the start.

Little more than a decade after the foundation, donated books were still an

important part of the collections. The emphasis was on useful and improving books: science, philosophy, history, medicine, technology, architecture. Literature was barely present, and fiction not at all. The donors included Sir John Pedder, G. A. Robinson, James Ross, the journalist W. G. Elliston and Samuel Augustus Tegg, the son of the celebrated Cheapside bookseller and founder in the same year of the Derwent Circulating Library, which catered for the fiction requirements of the Hobart gentry. The most curious inclusion – donated by Robert Doolin – was Humphrey Repton's *Designs for the Pavilion at Brighton of 1808*, an imperial folio with coloured plates.

The museum objects, as donated, were highly diverse: "Model of a Geometrical Staircase", "Chart of Port Phillip", paintings and casts by Benjamin Duterrau, "Coronation Medal of Queen Victoria, in red case", "One Wombat, two Echidna, two Native Cats", "One pair Albatross Wings" and so forth. The purchases noted at the end of the list (pp. 24–25) suggest a more obvious pedagogical focus with scientific apparatus, chemicals and drawings to illustrate lectures.

The lectures themselves, some in series, some individual, covered the same serious subjects. The Rev. John Lillie, newly elected as President, had just begun what was to be a dominant role for nearly two decades with "The Connexion of Mathematical Study with Practical Mechanics". Occasionally visitors spoke, for example Alexander McLeay on "the Muscles of the Human Frame and Phrenology".

As for the members, some of whom participated in the donations and lecture-giving, they included such luminaries as James Backhouse, Thomas

Bock, Daniel Bunce, William Crowther, William Gellibrand, Robert Giblin, Henry Hopkins, Phineas Moss, Charles Swanston and Adam Turnbull. What is important, for me at least, is the extent to which the same people were customers of Walch's (late Tegg's) bookshop and circulating library in the second half of the next decade. It is clear, of course, that the Mechanics' Institution at this period was catering essentially for a genteel middle-class audience.

Contributed by Wallace Kirsop

THE VICTORIAN RAILWAYS INSTITUTE

At the February meeting of the Geelong Historical Society Katherine White spoke on 'The Door to Success'? Paternalism & the Victorian Railways Institute 1900 – 1939. The following is a collection of extracts taken from White's university honours thesis of the same title. It provides a brief summary of how the VRI developed, what the organisation provided for members and how it influenced the general railway workforce during the early twentieth century'. The Victorian Railways Institute is of interest for Useful Knowledge readers because it conforms in many ways to the philosophy and practice of the Mechanics' Institutes. The expectation was that a library and educational opportunities would divert workers away from the attractions of drink and gambling. This may have been a vain hope but White shows clearly that it was the motivation for the establishment of the Victorian Railways Institute in 1900.

An official institute for railway workers in Victoria was first considered in 1899, when Commissioner Mathieson requested that a committee formed by the heads of branches investigate the provision of technical education for railway staff. The committee presented a report to the commissioners on 15 February 1900, expressing the opinion that 'the establishment of an Institute with accommodation for classes on technical

BUILDINGS, BOOKS, & BEYOND ...AGAIN AVAILABLE!

The Conference Proceedings from **Mechanics' Worldwide 2004: The First International Conference of Mechanics' Institutes**, etc. have just been reprinted in a small run. The cost is still \$75.00 with postage of \$8.00 to Victoria and \$12.00 the rest of Australia. Overseas by quotation. This 380 page book contains a mass of information on world Institutes.

subjects connected with railway working and under the auspices of the department itself would be a very valuable adjunct to any system of examinations for promotion'.

In January 1909 a draft constitution was drawn up, identifying the Institute's stated purpose as 'the exercise of efficient management to encourage the active and whole-hearted support of the general body of employes [sic]'. A provisional committee, with representatives from the various branches, was appointed on 2 June 1909 to consider the draft constitution, which was subsequently approved by the commissioners. The Institute took possession of its headquarters on the third floor of Flinders Street station in October 1909; however, it was officially launched by the Honorary President, Mr T.H. Woodroffe, on 22 January 1910.

By 1914, demand was growing among country members for the VRI to provide rural branches, with educational classes first made available at Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Seymour during 1914. The council made recommendations that full branches of the Institute should be established at these centres, with provision for classrooms, a library and space for social activities. By 1939–40, fifteen branches of the Institute had been established: Ararat, Ballarat, Benalla, Bendigo, Colac, Dimboola, Donald, Geelong, Hamilton, Korong Vale,

Maryborough, Ouyen, Seymour, Stawell and Traralgon.

The first VRI annual report identified the Institute's purpose as providing a 'railway reference and general library, instruction in the various branches of railway work, lectures on science, art and literature, social and musical entertainments, and gymnasia'. The Institute divided its activities into three distinctive sections: educational, social, and sporting. Social and sporting activities became more popular during the 1920s and 1930s.

The objectives and activities endeavoured to meet the needs of male railway employees, and, during its first decade, the Institute was essentially a railwayman's club. When the employment of women began to increase during the 1920s, it became necessary for the Institute to provide for the female workforce by way of special classes and societies.

The education of railway employees was the primary purpose for which the Institute was formed. Education included classes on both railway-oriented and general topics, the provision of a reference and lending library with associated reading rooms, a series of educative lectures and the circulation of a monthly magazine. The Institute Council attempted to promote these educational activities through methods of persuasion and mild intimidation, stating that the Institute could provide members 'with the necessary knowledge without which promotion to responsible positions in the Service will be very slow, if not impossible'. The Institute's emphasis was on the intellectual improvement of the workforce for the benefit of the department, rather than the employees' personal improvement.

Formal classes in railway topics such as Westinghouse Brake and engine-working, shorthand, telegraphy, and ambulance were provided. Members paid a small fee to participate in these classes but, in 1913, the council altered its policy, allowing all financial members to take part, gratis. By

1919, the syllabus included algebra, English both at elementary and advanced levels, mechanical drawing, and accountancy. After the fee-based system was eliminated in 1913, attendance numbers dramatically increased, with many classes divided into levels to meet demand. However, in 1928, the commissioners had to reduce their financial support to the Institute, limiting the choice of classes and causing a reduction in attendances. Railway subjects continued to be subsidised by the Institute; however, other general classes required the payment of a tuition fee, which led to the abandonment of a number of subjects.

The VRI library, formerly the Victorian Railways Library, was opened on 27 January 1910, and provided members with lending facilities and an extensive reference collection, consisting of works of scientific, technical and general literature. The collection then totalled 11,284 volumes; this had more than tripled by 1939, to 40,478 volumes. The library prided itself on its service to members, regularly preparing catalogues and card indexes, and rearranging the shelves for ease of locating books. In addition, the reading rooms were well supplied with national and international magazines, and metropolitan and rural newspapers. The library was also affected by the reduction of the commissioner's financial support in 1928, and those members using the library were requested to pay a small fee to maintain the service provided. Despite this, the library retained almost two-thirds of its members in 1932, who 'availed themselves of the benefits of library membership'. The significant support for the library service demonstrated that it was one of the most popular aspects of the Institute.

Unfortunately, however, the lecture series were not as successful. In 1911, the annual report records that although the 'Lectures were of an elementary character, and delivered in such language as would enable an ordinary audience

to clearly grasp the points the Lecturers placed before them, we regret that, as a rule, the attendance was small'. Some of the lectures were published in pamphlet form for a wider readership among the general public. During the 1920s, it was noted by the council that larger audiences had begun to attend the lecture series but, in 1929, after the commissioners had reduced their financial support, provision of lectures ceased altogether.

The VRI also published a number of journals for circulation among its members; their content was of educational value and social. The publications aimed to keep members in touch with the Institute, and included 'many useful sketches and paragraphs upon matters of general interest...as well as instructive railroading items and notes on the "Safety First" movement'.

The social aspects of the Institute began with the provision of a billiard room, games room and musical societies. The billiard room proved to be one of the most popular activities provided by the Institute, fast becoming its social centre and forcing the council to increase the number of tables after only a year of use. The billiard room was also a good source of revenue for the Institute, and gave 'member's recreation and social intercourse with their friends without the evils sometimes associated with billiards'. In addition, tobacco cabinets were provided in the billiard room, and members 'who use the "fragrant weed" [were] asked to purchase their supplies from these sources and thus assist the Council in financing its welfare work'.

The social societies affiliated with the Institute attempted to supply 'an active centre for the social and educational improvement of members of the Institute, providing them at the same time with wholesome recreation and entertainment'. At the inauguration of the Institute, only three social societies had been formed: a musical society, a dramatic society, and the VRI orchestra. By 1914, a photographic

society, literary and debating society, draughts club, and classes in dramatic art, elocution, public speaking, and vocal and instrumental instruction had been formed, expanding the range of social interest groups available to members. The Institute considered the social classes to be a 'valuable adjunct to the many educational facilities that the Institute provides'. These classes and societies were initially only available to financial members of the Institute; however, upon the outbreak of World War I, they were made accessible to 'the wives, sons and daughters of members, with the view to encouraging the families of railway men to take an active part in the work of the several social societies'.

With the introduction of women into the railway department during the 1920s, social activities for female members became necessary. In 1924, a ladies' committee was formed. These clubs initially assisted in the organisation of weekly social dances and special charity events; however, by 1932, the VRI ladies' club had changed its name to the ladies' social club, which began to hold picture nights and bridge parties for the amusement of the female members of the Institute.

Other popular social societies included the VRI wireless club, which ran a successful radio station called 3RI throughout the 1920s and 30s, halted only by the outbreak of World War II. In 1931, it was noted that '3RI is one of the most popular stations on the air, and it has been found necessary to appoint a member to attend to the telephones each Sunday as so many listeners ring the station for request numbers'. The retired railwaymen's social club was formed during the late 1920s, 'to maintain a social atmosphere among members as they retire from the Railway Service', and also to help in the expanding charitable section of the Institute.

The third aspect of the Institute was its focus on physical culture and sport. The influence of Commissioner Clapp

throughout the 1920s and 1930s prompted the expansion of the VRI's sporting activities. In 1937, the council promoted the facilities of the gymnasium as part of the world-wide trend of people to develop a capacity for enjoying a more healthy existence, through the medium of physical culture. The use of the gymnasium was particularly promoted to the younger members of the Institute. During the 1920s, ju jitsu, heavy weight lifting (Figure 17), acrobatics and gymnastics were added to the syllabus, in addition to specialised physical culture classes for businessmen, where members were put through specially graded series of exercises calculated to gradually restore them to physical fitness'. The 1930s saw the introduction of women's and 'grown-ups' physical culture classes, and the acquisition of an Electric Health Motor 'for the use of mechanically massaging the entire masculine or feminine frame for the purpose of promoting physical fitness'.

In addition to the promotion of the gymnasium a number of sporting clubs were formed, mostly during the 1930s. These club supported teams that competed in locally organised competitions, often through the YMCA, or with other state government departments. These sporting clubs included football, cricket, golf, harriers/athletics (separate women's and men's clubs), ice-skating, baseball, basket-ball (women only), swimming, table tennis, tennis, hockey, and a sword and rifle club. The establishment of these clubs prompted the council to consider the development of a sports ground at Royal Park, which occurred between 1931 and 1933.

The VRI was conceived, developed, and funded by the commissioners, and managed by a council comprising elected and appointed members. This fostered the paternalism embedded in the Institute's objectives and the organisation of its activities.

An address by Commissioner Tait

revealed the commissioners' essentially paternalistic and pragmatic rationale: He noted that what the commissioners had done in the way of aiding the institute had not been done solely for philanthropic reasons. It was because they considered the institute a good business investment... It was to the advantage of employers to see that their employees received fair treatment and worked under healthy and favourable conditions, and it was also to their advantage to see to the well-being and welfare of the employees when off duty to see that their moral and physical welfare was promoted, and that their education was advanced.

The commissioners, as managers of Victoria's largest industry, established the VRI as a means of controlling railway employees' leisure time, and to inculcate in them middle-class values of respectability. It seems that the commissioners and council wished members of the Institute to avoid influences they judged to be detrimental to the men's welfare (specifically alcohol, gambling, and women of ill-repute). Hence, the Institute provided facilities that would enable members to take part in popular and healthful activities, such as billiards, boxing, and social dances, in what was imagined as the broad familial company of other railway employees.

Whilst the establishment of the VRI was the achievement of earlier commissioners, Clapp played a significant part in advancing the paternalistic purpose of the Institute as a labour management strategy. He was greatly influenced by the rational recreation movement in America, and hence, advertised the Institute as a means to transform the department into the 'great family of railway workers'. Clapp was directly involved with the management of the Institute, and actively promoted its social and recreational aspects, resulting in a threefold increase in membership between 1910 and 1939. At its inauguration, Institute membership numbered just under a fifth of the railway workforce; however, by 1939

membership amounted to nearly two-thirds of the entire railway workforce. The growth of the Institute during its first thirty years demonstrates its popularity within the railway department and its acceptance, often for their own reasons, of such a strategy by railway employees. It is important to note that although the commissioners used the VRI as a management strategy, it was promoted to employees as a club and welfare organisation to provide for railway workers' education and social benefit, and not as a method of paternalistic disciplining and departmental improvement.

The increase in employees partaking in the various educational classes during the 1920s demonstrates the importance many railway workers placed on educating themselves, thus creating a means for their promotion within the department. Similarly, the expansion of social and sporting clubs during the 1920s and 1930s, provided greater opportunity for members to further their interests and potential in specific fields. Every activity that the Institute offered to members was developed to promote

the improvement of railway employees, and hence the department as a whole. Efficiency, loyalty and cooperation, the principal ideals of modern forms of paternalism, were extensively used as the basis for the promotion of the Institute. The *VRI Review*, as the Institute's primary means of communicating with members, advanced paternalistic ideals through its articles, whilst also advocating middle-class values and morality.

It is difficult to assess whether the existence of the Institute increased loyalty and efficiency within the Victorian Railways; however, industrial action between 1910 and 1939 was restricted to the Waitresses' Strike in 1925. Hence, the VRI, as one of the Victorian Railways methods of labour management, seems to have proved effective in limiting conflict. In addition, as the state's largest employer, the railways department could demonstrate how paternalism might influence the wider workforce and create an efficient, disciplined and cooperative organisation.

Katherine White



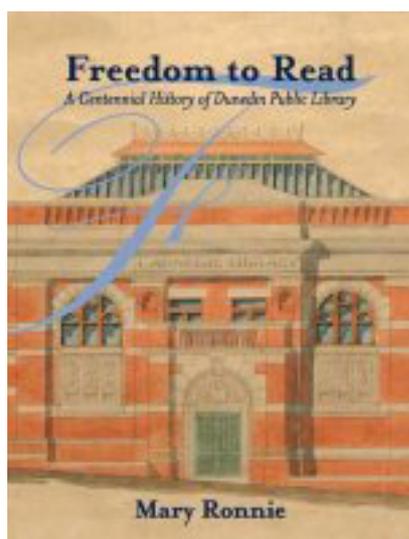
WE NEED YOUR HELP

If you think you know your Institute buildings, please take a look at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/31337922@N02/> and see if you can identify any unnamed Institutes from the Wesson Collection. It would be most helpful to us.

Communities which were affected by the February bushfires are calling for relevant photos and documents which may have been destroyed, notably Marysville, Callignee and Strathewen. Please contact their local historical societies.

BOOK REVIEWS

Mary Ronnie. *Freedom to read: a centennial history of Dunedin Public Library*. (2008) ISBN 9780473134624. 412 pages. Paperbound. NZ\$49.95, plus NZ\$7.00. Dunedin Public Libraries and Dunedin Public Library Association.



Centennial histories of major New Zealand public libraries offer the opportunity to look back on the various mechanics' institutes that preceded them. However in this case the Dunedin Mechanics' Institute (formed 17 June 1851) and its successor the Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute receives less than a chapter. This is despite it being the only main centre Institute still operating. There was a New Zealand Historic Places Trust registration report done on the Institute's building in May 2008 at <http://www.historic.org.nz/Register/pdfs/Dunedin%20Athenaeum%20Report.pdf>.

Ronnie includes details on athenaeums and mechanics' institutes at Mosgiel, Port Chalmers, Blueskin Bay and Waikouaiti. As a result of the 1989 local government amalgamations, Dunedin Public Libraries now serve these areas.

Nevertheless, as a history of one hundred years of Dunedin Public Library it is unsurpassed. For those who know

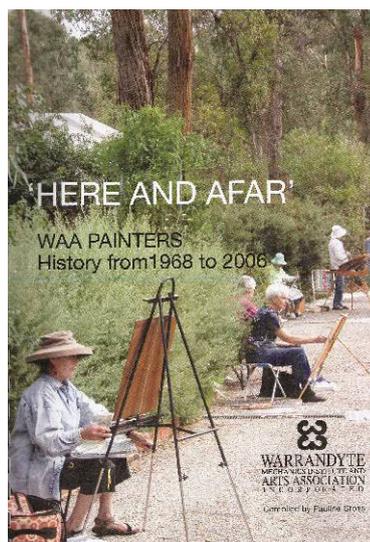
Dunedin and its library, or like myself have worked in a large public library, one can certainly relate to Ronnie's story of a library she obviously cares about very much.

Available from library@dcc.govt.nz. Please include number of copies required and your postal address.

*Reviewed by David Verran,
Auckland Public Library.*

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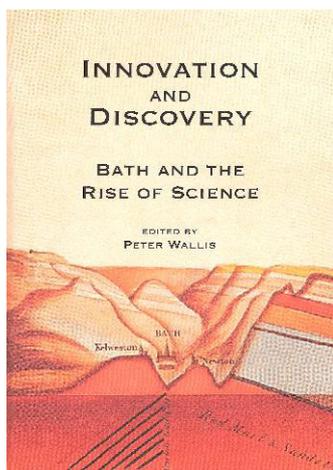
Pauline Cross. *'Here and afar' WAA painters history from 1868-2006*. (2008). 19p. Comb bound. \$9.00 (Posted). Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute and Arts Association Inc., Box 150, Warrandyte, V 3113



The Arts Group of the Warrandyte Arts Association was formed in 1956 and this booklet takes the story from 1968 when the author joined the Association as a brush-pushing member. The text is drawn from various newsletters, newspaper accounts, sundry contributors and the compiler's own memory. The pictures, many in colour, take the reader down a nostalgic memory lane of painting 'safaris', and heady exhibitions and a line of great friendships forged at the easel. This is a splendid example of what can be

done with a group of like-minded people formed on an Institute. A belated Happy Birthday to 'The Artists' and may all your sales increase.

Peter Wallis (ed) 2008, *Innovation and discovery: Bath and the rise of science*. ISBN 9780948975820. 239 pages. Hardbound. GBP£25.00, plus GBP£9.50. Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HN, England.



This book is co-published with the William Herschel Society and contains contributions from fourteen authors. Bath's connection with architecture, fashion and culture is well recognised,

but its connection with science, medicine and technology is not so well known. From the putative qualities of the healing springs in Roman times to heady research times and archaeological discoveries of the present day Bath personalities have played a leading role in science and innovation.

The interesting biographical notes at the back of the book highlight the diverse range of Bath's scientific talent, and their area of specialisation. Eminent scientists mentioned include the first English scientist, Adelard of Bath (c. 1080- c.1152) who was a scholar, astronomer and mathematician. Others who spent time in Bath were inventor Alexander Graham Bell, civil engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, public health crusader Dr William Falcone, astronomer Sir William Herschel, roadmaker John Loudon McAdam, economist Rev. Robert Malthus, chemist Dr Joseph Priestley and photography pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot.

The illustrations, plans, photographs and images of artefacts and text, many from the BRLSI's own collection, are also a feature of the book. In all a fascinating read with a large range of science-related subjects covered.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Barrie Brennan responds to Pam Baragwanath's article on the Henry Lawson Society that appeared in Useful Knowledge 19:

Now somewhat fearfully someone from north of the Murray has to point out that there is a factual error in that piece. But pointing out this error is not to cast doubt on the writer of the piece but confess to some mischievous very unhistorical behaviour by some north of the Murray, around communities like Mudgee and Gulgong.

Henry Lawson (formerly Larsen) was in fact born in Grenfell near Forbes. He was born in a tent on the goldfields just

east of Grenfell on the Young Road and the birth was registered in Forbes. He did in fact live in Gulgong but that was later in his life. Why do I know? I taught at Grenfell Intermediate High in the 1960s during which time the Henry Lawson Festival was launched and the second school renamed Henry Lawson High. I played cricket and hockey on playing fields in the corner of which is an obelisk supposedly on the spot of the birth [that] celebrates that event and the life of the poet and short story writer.

Perhaps the playing fields should be called after another son of Grenfell (who lived in the community much longer than

Henry) namely Stan McCabe.

To satisfy Pam's eternal thirst for knowledge of Mechanics' Institutes and their like I can report that she is correct with regard to the Grenfell School of Arts. It had a brick front and the main hall area at the back was made of iron. It served as the Town Library in the 1960s when I was there but has now become the local historical museum.

There was also as she states a School of Arts at Eurunderee. In one of my forays into collecting information on MIs I received from a member of a family that lived in Eurunderee for many years some details of the diary of a grandmother who

was a child in that period and recorded in her diary as a child the many enjoyable evenings she spent in the Eurunderee SOA watching plays and musical concerts. My source of information suggested that her grandmother had told her how the community activities of the SOA were the major reason that those in the community being able to carry on in the face of difficult economic and climatic conditions. The plays and concerts, very amateur performances, were looked forward to by those who participated and were the audience – something good to look forward to.

Barrie Brennan

PLAQUES

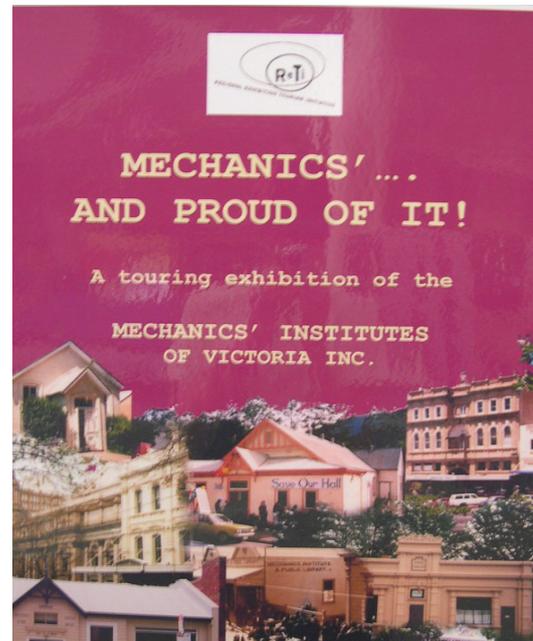
Have you ever wanted people who pass by your Institute to know a little bit about its history?

The idea of putting a plaque on Mechanics' Institute Halls was advanced by Committee member Alan Tonkin in 1999. Committee member Paul Permezel brought the idea to reality in 2003 and since then plaques have been installed at Maldon Athenaeum, Ballan Mechanics' Institute, Tallarook Mechanics' Institute, Lilydale Athenaeum, Berwick Mechanics' Institute, Taradale Mechanics' Institute, etc... to number some 22 plaques so far installed.

If your Institute would like to order a plaque they are \$185.00 which includes GST. Orders should be placed at least five months ahead with Dr Frank Hurley on (03) 5330 3052.



TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS



The lead up to, or during, **History Week - Mechanics' Week** 25 October-1 November would provide an ideal opportunity to book one of the MIV's Travelling Exhibitions - **Remember the Mechanics? or Mechanics'... and Proud of It!** You will be required to pay for the return freight or to the next venue. Each Travelling Exhibition comes with its own display banner for advertising on front of your hall or fence. There is also a selection of pictures of regional Institutes. Bookings can be made through Judith Dwyer on (03) 9707 4254

COMING EVENTS

MECHANICS' WORLDWIDE 2009 - BATH, ENGLAND

23-28 September 2009



Papers include: Richard Wendorf 'America's Membership Libraries'; Adrian Jarvis 'The paradox that Smiles presents many of his heroes (engineering and otherwise) as self-taught but was also strongly in favour of technical education'; Stuart Burroughs 'The life and work of Isaac Pitman: a Bath resident'; Keith Manley 'Books, Baths and Billiards: The story of the Greenock Library and Institution'; Gary Mathlin 'The Herschel family'; and Stephen Bird 'The cultural heritage of Bath'.

Geoffrey Forster, Robert Anderson and others will give power-point presentations on various independent libraries followed by a panel discussion on 'The future of Independent Libraries, Athenaeums, and Workingmen's Institutes. An exciting social program has been organised including a tour to Stonehenge.

For further information email mechanics@brlsi.org or have a look at <http://www.brlsi.org/mechanics09/>

HISTORY WEEK 2009

Start planning your events for the 25 October - 1 November 2009. See page 4 of this newsletter for further information.

ALL ABOARD FOR SORRENTO AND BEYOND

This year's Annual Bus Tour, which is heading down the Mornington Peninsula on Sunday 12 July 2009, leaves from Prahran Mechanics' Institute, 140 High Street, Prahran at 9am sharp. We will be stopping at Frankston, Somerville, Sorrento and Tooradin. Drive-bys include Balnarring, Berwick, Hastings, Mornington, Red Hill and Rosebud.

We will be given a guided tour of the Nepean Historical Society's award winning interactive Museum.

Then there are the pleasant views across Port Phillip Bay and beyond.

The cost, including lunch and morning and afternoon tea will be \$50.00. Book early by 30 June 2009 to help us plan the bus size and catering. Judith Dwyer, Box 482, Berwick, V 3806. Tel: Judith on (03) 9707 4254 or email jad134@hotmail.com.

AB FOXCROFT LECTURE - DUNEDIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

This former Mechanics' Institute library is now Dunedin Public Library, absorbing number of other Institute libraries along the way. Its story will be told at the Annual AB Foxcroft Lecture at the Village Roadshow Theatre at the State Library of Victoria on Thursday, 25 June 2009 at 6pm. This event is co-ordinated by Monash University's Centre for the Book and is an appropriate way to introduce the Ninth Library History Conference which takes place from 26 to 27 July. The lecture will be given by one of New Zealand's most distinguished librarians Dr Mary Ronnie who was Dunedin City Librarian from 1968-76 and is the author of *Freedom to Read*, the history of the library. Bookings are essential to (03) 8664 7099 or email bookings@slv.vic.gov.au.

COMING EVENTS

NINTH AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY HISTORY CONFERENCE

This conference is to be held from 25 to 27 June 2009 at Swinburne University, Prahran campus. The exciting programme of speakers is listed below and a registration form for the conference is included in this newsletter. Further details can be found at the Centre for the Book website www.arts.monash.edu.au/cftb/conferences/library-history/2009/

Edmund Balnaves - The origins of Inter Library Loan in Australia in relation to special libraries.

Michael Birkner - "Not yet ready": Australian university libraries and Carnegie Corporation philanthropy, 1935-1945.

Fiona Brown - The Australian Law Librarians' Association.

Mary Carroll - The role of outside agencies including the Carnegie Corporation on the development of education for librarianship in Australia.

Mark Cryle - "Our excellent little library": an account of the Cosme library.

Judith Dwyer - The Casey collection at Berwick Mechanics' Institute.

David Headon - Daniel Henry Deniehy and the founding of the Goulburn Mechanics' Institute.

Dr David Jones - John's Gospel: Metcalfe and the writing of Australian library history.

Carmel Maguire - War between the states averted: How the NSW Free Library Movement's territorial ambitions came to little.

Dr Peter Mansfield - Libraries on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Peter Pereyra - Melbourne's circulating libraries, 1858-1974: Their demography and geography revisited.

Susan Reynolds - Characters and Conflict at the Supreme Court Library: Redmond Barry, Robert Pohlman and George Higinbotham.

Andrew Sergeant - To elevate the tone of moral and intellectual attainment: The Braidwood Literary Institute and its subscribers.

Peter Thompson - Challenges and opportunities in conserving and using heritage library collections.

David Verran - Government promotion of public libraries in New Zealand, 1869-1935.

Robin Wagner-Bush book clubs: Books and reading for women in outback Australia.

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