



# USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

Newsletter No 21 – Winter 2009

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## NEWS HEADLINES

### PRAHRAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE DOES DEAL WITH SWINBURNE

A Special General Meeting of the Prahran Mechanics Institute (PMI) on 16 September voted in support of a motion to accept the offer of Swinburne University to purchase the PMI building at 140 High Street Prahran. The offer did not receive total support from PMI members but its acceptance should be seen in a historical context.

In 1915 The PMI established the Prahran Technical School and leased the premises to the Education Department for a peppercorn rent on condition that it be used for the purposes of a technical school. The lease was renewed in 1947 for 99 years again at a peppercorn rent. Since then the technical school system has been dismantled and the premises have been largely taken over by Swinburne University who have paid no rent even though the lease conditions have been broken

#### **Economic rationalists win the day: A sad event for Prahran, Victoria and Australia**

Pictured above is Alf Lazer, President of the PMI Committee and the Sub Committee who, last night decided the fate of a Prahran institution which began in 1854 and is of state significance on the Victorian Heritage Register. Yet at the meeting the heritage importance of the institute seems to have eluded them. Only one person spoke



due to its non-use as a technical school. PMI has therefore been deprived of annual rental of \$180,000 in today's values. Consequently PMI took action against both the government and Swinburne University on the basis of breaches of the lease agreement of 1947. The parties to the dispute agreed to mediation and the outcome of that process was an offer by Swinburne to purchase the PMI building for \$5.9 million. Other parts of the mediated agreement were that PMI remain in the building for 5 years in order to have time to build or buy another building, that PMI have use of additional space in the building and that Swinburne pay utility bills.

As noted, this agreement did not win total support. One opponent was Pam Baragwanath, MIV historian, who has contributed the following critique.

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up to air the heritage implications and future concerns and that was Jim Lowden, Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Secretary.

At the end of the meeting, I overheard someone say - Well that's the end of Prahran Mechanics' Institute! It is now on the slippery slope to obscurity. How many subscribers will be willing to use a totally different building, with no heritage component? What will Swinburne do with that Heritage building so faithfully built by past enthusiastic committees of management who did such a noble job of providing educational facilities through times of boom and bust, two world wars? They did not sell out. Two questions should be considered - What are we without our past and what are we without our history?

## **FUTURE OF ROBERT O'HARA BURKE MUSEUM UNDER THREAT**

A special issue (no68) of The Friends of the Burke Newsletter has bought to notice the dire situation facing this iconic Beechworth institution. An edited version of that newsletter is given below.

A team of specialist museum consultants was recently engaged by Indigo Shire Council and has reported that Council has three options:

Close the museum and dispose of the contents

Maintain the status quo – that is, do nothing, but rather through lack of resources allow the museum to deteriorate, as has been the case over the past few years

Rectify the problems – implement a plan of action that will restore the Burke Museum to the position of community gem it should occupy.

If you believe in the third option – please read on

The Burke museum is one of Australia's oldest museums and holds extensive and significant town history, natural history and photographic collections, including a nationally renowned Aboriginal collection. Indigo Shire Council holds the Burke Museum with its unique collections and

Three points came out of the meeting:

Just under half of the PMI subscriber attending wanted to be able to consider additional information. (The secrecy was deafening)

Just under half the attendees voted against the sale of the institute to Swinburne. (Surely their opinions should have been respected and extra time for consideration of the issues allowed)

The cynical exercise of treating institutes as just another real estate deal is not new, but usually it is a local council who is doing it - not the Institute Committee making that decision.

This is a first in mechanics' institute history in Victoria, what a shame.

public records in trust for future generations. It must be preserved!

Over the past few years the Museum has suffered a decline in visitor numbers, a lack of travelling exhibitions, and poor facilities for volunteers and researchers. These are a direct result of reduced staffing levels combined with non-existent staff training and development, inadequate storage, conservation facilities and research space. If these problems are not addressed the Burke risks losing accreditation under the Museums Australia (Victoria) program which would mean our Museum having significantly reduced access to cultural and heritage grants. It would also deny the Museum access to many travelling exhibitions. Please take time out to look at the consultants' review and recommendations which are available from Indigo Shire's web site <http://www.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/>. For those of you who do not have internet access, contact the Shire office and ask for a hard copy to be given or posted to you.

If you are convinced that Council should take action to ensure the future of the Burke Museum, please see it as your role –

in fact your civic duty as a lover of historic Beechworth – to sit down now and write 50 to 100 words saying what you believe Indigo Shire Council should do to breathe life back into the Burke and to ensure it has a sustainable future. Either e-mail your ideas to [fotb@live.com](mailto:fotb@live.com) or mail them to The Friends of the Burke at PO Box 624, Beechworth 3747. Then talk to your friends, your colleagues and as well, Indigo Shire councillors. Their contact details are at <http://www.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/yourcouncil/meet-the-councillors> or can be obtained from the Shire office.

A copy of the Friends' submission can be obtained by e-mailing your request to the Friends at [fotb@live.com](mailto:fotb@live.com) or dropping a note to the Secretary at PO Box 624, Beechworth 3747. The Friends Committee has also requested permission to address a Council briefing session and asked that the consultants' report be formally submitted for comment to Museums Australia (Victoria). We are talking to Council staff and also exploring other opportunities of

having individual and group discussions with councillors.

#### MIV RESPONSE:

MIV Secretary Jim Lowden has written to the Indigo Shire Council in response. The MIV submission pointed out that the Burke Museum is the direct descendent of the Beechworth Athenaeum and indeed is housed in the Athenaeum building. Jim also noted that the Burke Museum was visited in 2004 by Dr Robert Anderson, the former long-time Director of the British Museum in London who indicated that he would re-visit the Burke for a further study and would write it up as part of a paper on world mechanics' institute museums that he was researching. Dr Anderson was intrigued with Burke Museum collection and he spent several hours looking over it and through its rich records. He has since re-visited the Burke Museum and finished his paper which will be presented at the Mechanics' Worldwide Conference 2009 in Bath.

## HISTORY WEEK 25 OCTOBER-1 NOVEMBER

We hope Institutes are doing something during History Week to focus attention on the Mechanics' Institute movement. It can be anything, but to get maximum publicity you will need to let the Royal Historical of Victoria know by 1 October at: [info@historyweek.org.au](mailto:info@historyweek.org.au). Give the event title, a brief description of the event, the location of the event, the event time, cost if anything, contact name and telephone

number for more information. As a starter we can advise that both MIV travelling exhibitions have been booked, with one going to Warburton and the other on display at the Frankston City Library. If you have missed out this year in organising an event for History Week, start planning for next year. And again we owe our grateful thanks to the Vera Moore Foundation for sponsoring this event.

## SHARED FACILITIES INQUIRY

MIV has been part of this Inquiry we have made a submission on the draft report and were asked to appear before a hearing of the Inquiry on Wednesday, 26 August 2009. We were represented at that Hearing by Pam Baragwanath (Historian), Bruce Draper (Freehold - Arthurs Creek), Bev Johns (DSE Committee of Management - Kinglake West), Honorary Secretary. Also attending was Libby Webster (Council Section 86 Committee of Management -

Tallarook) who provided material relating to institute management and activities. This enabled a good overview from different management perspectives and highlighted the importance and vital part the community hall plays in a district in good times and bad. We thank Pam, Bruce, Bev and Libby who made a special effort to prepare material for this hearing at such short notice.

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## MEETING WITH MINISTER'S STAFF

We met with our Minister, Richard Wynne and his staff on Friday, 28 August 2009. The MIV delegation which consisted of Professor Wallace Kirsop, Pam Baragwanath, Dr Frank Hurley and the Honorary Secretary went through an extensive agenda with Dan Harper, Colin Morrison and Kane Roach. That agenda included: a new round of library grants, land tax and local government rates, insurance, the local government support equity funding model, MIRC resource, digitising project, funding for directory of members, workshop funding for regional

meetings, newsletter funding, libraries review, access to government utilities supply contracts to enable purchasing of utilities supplies – telecommunications, power, gas and water, and State Government supply contracts for large ticket items such as stoves, ovens, fridges, generators, pumps, chairs, tables and crockery. It is quite a list but we need to keep our community halls at the forefront of government agencies. Our Government contact Dan Harper was very helpful and suggested we have annual meetings to inform him of MIV activities.

## LOCAL HISTORY GRANTS

A new round of Public Record Office of Victoria grants has been announced and if you fit the criteria below you would be eligible to apply.

- A community organisation based in Victoria;

- the organisation has a legal status such as an incorporated body, cooperative or association;

- The organisation has an Australian Business Number (ABN) or provides written advice from the Australian Tax Office that no withholding tax is required.

- The organisation is interested in sharing local history across multiple communities and can describe how such a project has ongoing benefits for the community.

You might be interested in applying for a grant from the Public Record Office of Victoria through their Local History Grants Program.

Application for the 2009-2010 round of grants open in September. Have a look at <http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/lhgp/welcome.asp> for further details.

## MECHANICS' INSTITUTES RESOURCES CENTRE NEWS

The Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre is situated at the Prahran Mechanics' Institute, 140 High Street, Prahran, 3181, telephone 9510 3393.

The acquisition of a new lockable glass display case has enabled the exhibition of some of the items from our collection of artefacts. Thanks to Pam Baragwanath and Russ Haines, President of the Ringwood Historical Society, we have assembled some interesting items from Institutes across Victoria and around the world to show the diversity of the Mechanics' contribution to community.

We also had a promotional banner prepared in time for the Ninth Australian Library History Conference which was staged at Swinburne University Prahran Campus from 25-27 June 2009.

The former Footscray Mechanics' Institute Librarian, Linda Aspinall, has taken on the role of MIRC Coordinator and is currently involved with indexing and filing material.

We have also had two Swinburne University Library Studies students Sun Young and Yasmeen Doost who have volunteered their services as part of their course work and they have been working to allocate many hundreds of photocopies into the files of the relevant Institutes, and

to scan documents for placing in institute folders. The Big Mech database contains almost 800 of Victoria's Institutes with an individual file. Some are extensive some are a bit thin. The filing cabinets also contain some information on around 400 individual Institutes.

Even though the MIRC is not yet formally launched and only little of the information has been indexed into the site, requests are coming in and are being agreeably dealt with much to the delight of researchers. Some of these requests are listed below.

Seven images were able to be sourced from the Baragwanath and Wesson sub-collections for use in a book about seaside picture theatres which were held in local mechanics' institutes. The researcher had previously been unable to locate the images.

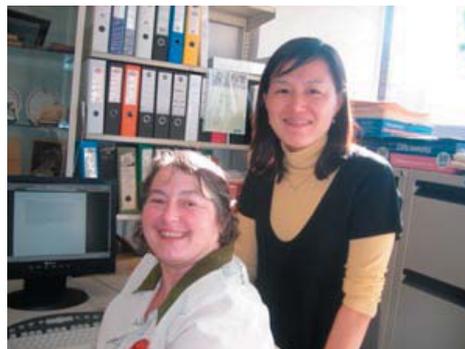
The EBay-sourced Bungaree Mechanics' Institute presentation key was mentioned in an article in Useful Knowledge. It was noticed by a Heritage Adviser who is working on a report for the Bungaree area. Bronwyn Lowden's excellent photos were able to be dispatched instantly much to the adviser's delight.

The Barfold Minute Book which had been in Pam's safekeeping since 1988 and

*Left: MIV Historian Pam Baragwanath with the new display case at the MIRC.*

*Centre: MIRC Co-ordinator Linda Aspinall and volunteer Sun Young Baik.*

*Right: Jasmeen Doost and Pam Baragwanath show off new MIRC banner*



which had been beautifully scanned and put on disc by Peter Pereyra, was ultimately given back to the Barfold MI Secretary, Elaine Murphy. But a Melbourne researcher working on Barfold history was able to come in to Prahran MI and collect the information immediately.

One PMI user, couldn't believe her eyes when she saw a postcard for the Boston Mechanics' Institute in the MIRC Archival Collection Glass Cabinet. The mechanics' institute movement spread from Britain to the USA and their insti-

tutes, athenaeums and lyceums were established simultaneously with those in Australia.

At this stage small donations have been paid for the information which will be useful for administration of the MIRC. Costs have yet to be defined. The MIRC has the ability to be the living, breathing heart of the Mechanics' Institute Movement and as each piece of important MIRC material is more widely used, hopefully it ensures that the MI story will survive.

## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

We are most grateful to Neville Humphris for conducting a MIRC Workshop on a pro bono basis to develop our collection development policy. Much valuable feedback was gained from those who attended the Saturday morning session at Prahran and we thank all those who gave

up their Saturday morning for the think tank. We were particularly pleased to have the attendance of one of our MIRC volunteers, Sun Young, for the session. Neville will get back to us with a draft in October which will be circulated and put to the General Meeting in November.

## AROUND THE INSTITUTES

### ALLANSFORD

Warrnambool City Council and the Committee of Management of the Allansford Hall invited MIV to the opening of their new premises on Sunday 2nd August at 2.00 pm., with a light afternoon tea provided.

### ARTHURS CREEK



Things are just getting back to normal at Arthur's Creek after it had been resumed for several months as a relief centre following the February bushfires. A shortcoming during this testing period was the need for a better kitchen so the committee are looking to get that upgraded. In the meantime that great supporter of the Mechanics' movement across Victoria, the Bendigo Bank, have just weighed in with a grant of \$10,000 to enable the purchase of 120 new chairs for the hall. The Christmas in July dinner, which was a sell-out, was the first big test for the chairs. Plans are underway for the building of a new storage shed which will enable better access to equipment for hall hirers. The recent AGM saw a change of guard at the top with Peter Nankervis stepping down after a most successful term as President and Collette

Apted taking on that role. Documentation from the AGM was forwarded to the State Government Shared Facilities Inquiry, demonstrating the difficulties and costs experienced by volunteer Committees of Management of freehold Institutes in rural Victoria who receive no ongoing Council support. The approach of Spring has also meant that the Arthurs Creek Annual Garden Walk is now well in the planning stage for another range of gardens to open on Sunday, 15 November. The Arthurs Creek Mechanics' is the



Bagshot, just north of Bendigo, was originally the Bagshot Public Hall & Free Library. It was established in the same way as a Mechanics' Institute and has continued to serve the community down through the years. Bagshot has just celebrated their centenary and have produced a centenary history (see Book Reviews). One of the features of the Hall's history was its Ladies Committee duly listed since 1928. The book listed the bands known to have played in the hall over the years. Music is often overlooked as a vital part of the community hall life. Congratulations to you all at Bagshot in completing a selfless century and we wish you all well for the next one hundred years.

#### BALLAARAT

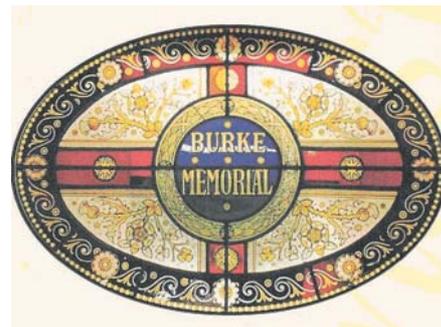


The institute history *Under Minerva's Gaze: 150 years of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute* is taking shape under joint editors Jill Blee and Phil Roberts. To finance the project BMI is offering gold sponsorships of \$5000 and silver sponsorship of \$1000. This is a very worthwhile project with which to be connected. If you want to have your name on an appropriate page in the book and support the publishing of the history of one of Australia's great surviving Institutes then Phil Roberts would like to hear from you on (03) 5339 2343 or email [proberts@ncable.net.au](mailto:proberts@ncable.net.au). In the meantime restoration continues in the former library and a temporary library has been set up in the theatre foyer. Work is also continuing in the theatre. Ballarat City Council accorded the Institute a rare honour recently by hosting a Civic Reception in recognition of the Institute's 150th Anniversary at which BMI President, Dr Frank Hurley spoke.

#### BALLAN

The indefatigable Brian Foley reports in with good news of the Ballan's successful grant of \$9245 for the installation of photovoltaic cell panels on the Institute's roof. Ballan will have to match this with \$10,000 from their funds to complete the project. When completed it is expected that the panels will generate 2kw of power. Brian has been at the forefront of developing a funding model for Shire councils to provide annual grants to support community halls. The Local Government Act requires Councils to provide community infrastructure and where this is provided by community committees it is fair and reasonable for Councils to provide annual grants, for facilities that Council would otherwise have to provide. We hope to print Brian's substantial proposal in the next edition of *Useful Knowledge*.

#### BEECHWORTH – FRIENDS



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News has just come through that the Benalla Costume Museum, who occupy the Benalla Institute building, has just been awarded the Herald-Sun 'Best Museum Experience' People's Award. This gives them \$3000 worth of free newspaper advertising to promote their activities and future special exhibitions. Further in the recent Museums Australia (Victoria) Awards in the 'Volunteer Run Museums' section they received the Museum of the Year award. Congratulations to all concerned. Benalla

have also made available some books with the Benalla Mechanics' Institute Library stamp.

#### BERWICK MECHANICS INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY

Life continues to be busy at the Berwick Library. The City of Casey continues to support the activities of the library by increasing their annual grant to the amount of \$30,000 plus 5% a year for CPI. This grant eases the strain on the volunteers in that there is no need for them to carry out many fund raising operations. A new photocopier was recently installed but copies for the public remain at 10 cents each. A new computer for public internet use, together with a new printer was also installed. The Heritage sub-committee has grown in numbers; it continues to care for our collection of older books and documents. On a sadder note, our Librarian Mrs. Pam Darling who commenced in 1962, has been admitted to hospital and has been unable to attend the library for some weeks. She is currently in rehabilitation, and we all wish her a speedy recovery. The current volunteers have rallied round to keep the library running, with Lyn Wyatt acting in Pam's place for the time being.

#### BONNIE DOON

The proposal to relocate the Bonnie Doon Mechanics' building to the current Community Centre to resume its original role as community library continues. Hopefully with asbestos removal and stabilisation works the relocation will take place later in the year. Community centre chair Nola Evans has been working through logistics with conservation architect Ivar Nelsen so the project is in good hands.

#### CARPENDEIT

The Carpendeit Public Hall in Western Victoria was built around 1913 and is very much the model of a rural public hall. The seven member Committee meet four times a year or as required. They charge \$50 for events, \$25.00 for meetings. Trestles and chairs are hired out at \$5 and 50 cents respectively. They stage an annual: Old Time Dance in October; Family Fun Day in February, Trivia Night in April and a Christmas Party in December. They issue Cross-Roads a bi-monthly community

newsletter. Around the internal walls of the hall, they have located a photographic history titled 'Carpenteit Remembered'. Another interesting feature is their 1920s hand painted stage curtain still in place. Google 'Carpenteit Public Hall and Recreation Reserve' for how a good community directory entry can look.

#### CARRUM

We have received notification that the Carrum Hall is now fenced off and we understand that this is in preparation for a major refurbishment.

#### CHRISTMAS HILLS

The new Committee of Management is in place and the land has now been transferred to them, thanks to the pro bono work of Holding Redlich Lawyers. Cr Veronica Hall has been busy getting funding applications for the restoration and rebuild of parts of the Hall which for the time being is fenced off to the public.

#### CLYDESDALE

The Clydesdale Public Hall, north of Kyneton, is now open for full use again after a substantial makeover. It would be good to have some of the history of this 1890s? Institute. Can anyone help?

#### CROYDON



MI Historian Pam Baragwanathenaem recently delivered an address to celebrate the centenary of the Croydon Mechanics' Institute. The building was opened on 29 October 1909 with a grand bazaar. The Premier of Victoria, the Hon. John Murray performed the Opening Ceremony which continued for three days. The hall was built partly on freehold land and over a closed road. The use of the hall over the years has varied from the Masonic Lodge, RSL, picture theatre, library and community hall. Today it is known as EV's and is a district youth

centre which stages a wide range of activities.

#### DEAN HALL AND MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

As always, the Dean Hall Committee is active in organising a busy round of events. The Spring issue of their newsletter (Issue 24) lists the forthcoming events and demonstrates what can be achieved by an active and dedicated committee.

The Annual Daffodil Day is on again this year, on Sunday September 20 from 10am until 5pm. The committee will be launching their new website, deanhall.org.au during the event. Locally made craft, plants and produce will also be available for sale. Doug Bryce from Kyneton will again have hundreds of varieties of daffodils on display for order, and collection at Easter. Andrew Thomas of Ballarat will be exhibiting a selection of photographs taken around the Dean and District over the past eight months. For enquires contact Liz on 53345238.

Three plaques designed to commemorate the historic buildings in the small township and including historic details will be launched on Saturday 19th September at 2pm. The plaques list 16 places on the Heritage Walk which are also recorded in Celebrating Dean & District Potato Farming Heritage, a booklet produced by the Dean Hall Committee for the International Year of the Potato. Councillor Don Henderson will launch the easy walk which takes approximately half an hour, or a longer version of an hour through the picturesque township and farming area. The walk is also connected to the Great Dividing Trail which has an entrance point at the Dean Hall. Details of the sites are displayed on a map at the front of the Hall on the Ballarat-Daylesford Road.

The finer weathenaemer has stimulated a flurry of activity. A Trivia night has been scheduled for Saturday October 17th. The delightful Sally will be again be the MC and Sprocket the entertaining auctioneer. Contact Liz to book a table on 5334 5238. Friday Film Nights are back on the first Friday of the month, (September 4th, October 2nd, and November 6th). Meanwhile Yoga classes are continuing to revitalize tired bodies and spirits on a Tuesday night at the Dean Hall from 7.30. These one hour sessions are co-ordinated by Atma from

the Satyananda Yoga School at Rocklyn. For more info, contact Liz on 5334 5238, or [lizkelly@netconnect.com.au](mailto:lizkelly@netconnect.com.au)

#### DALYSTON

The Dalyston Mechanics' Institute was established around 1890. PJ Daly donated the land and the 'present' hall was built in 1910-11 and opened on St Patrick's night 1911.



A storm blew it off its blocks in 1962 and it was then the subject of a 'moving' experience (see picture) to the showgrounds in that year. It has been refurbished and a foyer, toilet and kitchen blocks have been built on to it. It is now much loved and used for various community events. We thank Doreen Williams for sharing these pictures with us.



#### ECHUCA

Once located in High Street, the Echuca Mechanics' Institute was formed and the hall was built and opened in 1876. By 1880 it had 3000 books in the library. From 1883 technical courses were held there until these were taken over in 1899 by the Echuca Technical School.

The library service continued in the building until a new community library was opened in the old Town Hall. The Mechanics' was then demolished to make way for the Nirebo Motel. Whilst the institute may be no more its legacy is still to be seen in the community. Recently a book was sighted carrying the Echuca Mechanics' Institute and Free Library stamp, along with Library Rules sheet affixed in the front. The book was Queen Victoria's Leaves from the journal of our life in the Highlands from 1848 to 1861 published by Smith, Elder & Co. in 1868. The label printed by RG Foyster, Echuca probably dates from the late 1880s. Some rules were: Subscribers of one pound per annum [payable in advance] are entitled to books for home reading for fourteen days'. A fine of sixpence was incurred if a book was detained beyond that time. Any person writing upon, marking, folding down a leaf, or otherwise injuring any of the library books or papers, will be liable to exclusion from the library'. Thank you to Matthew Philip for showing us this gem and for allowing us to photograph it. Pam Baragwanath also recently located another Echuca Library book.

#### FRANKSTON

We were most honoured and grateful to have the Mayor of Frankston Colin Hampton open the Frankston Mechanics' Institute for our recent Annual Bus Tour. We had morning tea there as Mayor Hampton explained Council's vision for the \$2 million refurbishment of the hall. Mornington Peninsula Family History Society member Anne Ringer then gave us some of the history of the Institute which was started in 1873 as the Frankston Athenaeum by Melbourne's first postmaster and later Frankston district resident Benjamin Baxter. Ann distributed plans which showed how the building had grown with the typical sections added on as the need and money became available. We were pleased to hear that Ann hopefully will have her history of the Frankston Mechanics' Institute for publication next year and learn some of its various uses down through the years. The building has now been closed for more than a year and various architectural investigations had taken place with sheeting, etc. removed to reveal base structure.

## FRYERSTOWN

The 35th Annual Fryerstown Antique Fair, Victoria, will be held on 22-24 January 2010. It will be open on Friday 22nd from 7.00 am to 5.00 pm, on Saturday 23rd from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm and on Sunday 24th from 9.00 am to 3.00 pm. Refreshments will be available.

Follow signs from Chewton near Castlemaine, Vic Roads Country Map 59 F4

Admission \$5.00, children under \$12.00 free.

A Fryerstown Film Night was held on Saturday 22 August in the Fryerstown Mechanics Institute Hall at 7.30 pm. The feature film was the comedy THE PHILADELPHIA STORY made in 1940 and starring Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant. The short film was FRESH PAINT (1920), a Snub Pollard classic comedy.

## GEELONG

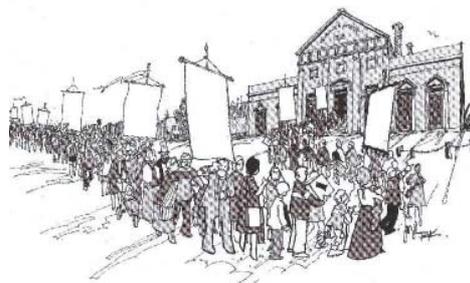
Brussels-born Geelong artist Edmund Sasse arrived in Melbourne in February 1853 with his brother Harry. The son of an artist to the Belgian Court, shortly after arrival he advertised drawing art and painting lessons before moving to Geelong. There he continued his painting and instruction courses. He was on the Geelong Mechanics' Institute Exhibition Committee and arranged regular art displays for his students and others in the Geelong and Ballarat Institutes. He established a school for art in conjunction with Mr Pye which subsequently was absorbed into a newly formed Geelong Technical College.

## KILMORE

Kilmore have had considerable grant success in recent times and have a women's fraternal group meeting regularly under their auspices. They also have improved plans for the Carols by Candlelight this year. The recent AGM saw Henni O'Shea returned as President, with Ruth Collins taking on the Secretary's role. Ruth recently sent to MIV an interesting set of documents received from Warrnambool solicitor J James Tait. Mr Tait's firm inherited the law office of John McDonald Taylor, whose father was born in Kilmore. The documents include a very crisp photocopy of the original KMI Declaration of Trust and correspondence between a Kilmore solicitor and JM Taylor as to

successor trustees of the KMI. The documents have been sent to the MIRC to be scanned into the Big Mech file for Kilmore. We have written to Mr Tait thanking him for his thoughtful gesture and we wonder what other Mechanics' documents are in solicitors' files throughout the State.

## KYNETON



The local watchdog for happenings at the Kyneton Mechanics' Institute is the Kyneton Mechanics' Institute Inc. They took over from the Friends of the Kyneton Mechanics' Institute which was established almost a decade ago to thwart the taking over of the Institute building for a gaming venue. KMI's dynamic President, Michael Kennedy who crowds so much in his life has been engaging Macedon Ranges Council on other takeovers relating to the Kyneton Institute. Presently the now 150 strong Kyneton Citizens Group, who once were tenants of the hall, want to move back into it as their home for bingo, entertainment, meals and carpet bowls. Council, as the delegated Committee of Management of this gazetted town centre Public Hall and Heritage Victoria-rated Mechanics' Institute recently granted the Kyneton Historical Society a large part of the north wing for record storage and a research area. There is fine line between Council managing this grand old hall, built by and for the community and using it as way of discharging its statutory obligations for which it receives appropriate funding. If some \$2 million is to be used in full restoration from ratepayers and no doubt the public purse it provides little public value for a building which will largely be locked to the public. The KMI is the only purpose-built public theatre in Kyneton and it has superb acoustical qualities. Hopefully the KMI will have an opportunity for an Open Day and people will be able to hear the difference. That talented cartoonist Jock McNeish who has provided many a belly laugh for the Warrandyte

Mechanics' Institute has also lent his pencil to the Kyneton cause. Many thanks Jock for this generous gesture.

#### LANCEFIELD



Mechanics' Institute stalwarts Greg and Eileen Parks, John White and Barry Hunt, after a combined service of many years to Institute, have recently passed on the baton. New President, Mark Cruise and Secretary Inge Nieman-Edwards have taken the running with guiding the Lancefield Institute into the future. Strategically located on the north-east corner High Street and The Crescent is regarded as the key building in the new Town Centre Strategy that is currently being developed. A Ball was held on Friday 4 September at which a message of congratulation from MIV was passed to the above former Committee members and to the late Bill Shanahan's family. Bill served on the Committee for some forty years. MIV have also been asked to organise a preliminary inspection of Lancefield's remnant library.

#### LARDNER

The Lardner Institute folk are taking a proactive stance by placing a For Hire sign on the front of their Hall. Located next to the Primary School, the hall is presently used for music lessons given privately by a local resident and this provides other music opportunities. Plans are also afoot for some experimental activities to engage the local community.

Lardner started as a small Mechanics' Hall built on an acre of land donated for the purpose by John James Hamilton in 1885. The timber for the hall was gained from trees cleared from the building site. Shortly afterwards a larger hall was built alongside. This was used as a church and from 1912 as a school. In 1925 these two halls were sold for removal and to become farm buildings and a new hall was erected on

the site.

#### MAFFRA



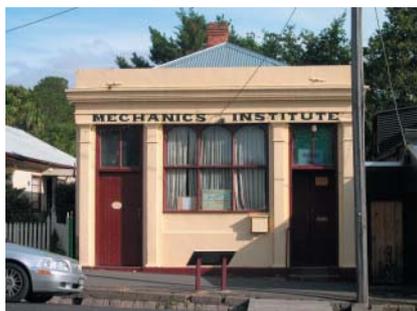
Established around 1875 the Maffra Institute was erected in 1882 where a library was established with 175 books. It is all part of the story told through the minute books and other records which have just been scanned to The Big Mech Database as part of MIV's programme of copying of institute records from fire prone areas. Some 3000 images were scanned for Maffra and the records have been returned to Maffra with a digital copy on two disks. Ken Cooper in looking through the minutes found that an emergency meeting was held on Feb 4, 1919. Mr Appleby explained that the meeting was called to consider a suggestion that the Institute should be used for hospital purposes on account of a local outbreak of influenza'. The resolution 'that the Institute be placed at the disposal of the Maffra Shire Council for hospital and other purposes if required' was carried. Indeed the Spanish Influenza or Black Flu caused havoc and many fatalities in late January and February of 1919 and even the Melbourne Exhibition Building was pressed into service in late January, initially as a 400 bed hospital. Interestingly enough it was Maffra born nurse Amy Jane McKinnell who headed up the nursing team to manage the Exhibition Hospital. When it closed in August some 4000 patients had been treated and almost 400 deaths had been recorded.

#### MALDON

Maldon is now on-line at [www.maldonlibrary.org.au](http://www.maldonlibrary.org.au). Their most recent promotional event The Library at Twilight was a great success with a number of new faces in the crowd sipping a pre-dinner drink in front of the fire. Their recent part in the Maldon in Winter

Festival was also a winner with storytelling for the children while mum had a relaxing coffee and chat with some of the volunteers. That followed on from the Easter Festival in which the committee of management all taking on a fancy dress role. One came as ‘Travel’, another ‘DIY’, then there were ‘Detective/Mystery’, ‘Classics’ and Junior Library. But there were more including: Dame Edna Everage, Miss Marple, Sadie the Cleaning Lady and Harry Potter. (Whilst Thomas Hardy and Daphne du Maurier were not on parade, all or most of their works are available for borrowing the library.) The ‘assembled’ were led by President, Joy Leneaux-Gale as ‘Queen of the Library’ riding a white charger. With all that fun it is hard to believe that less than ten years ago the Maldon Athenaeum had little future. Today it is one of those great mechanics’ institute stories that are happening around Victoria and across the world.

#### MALMSBURY



The Mechanics’ Institute and Federal Hall was the scene during May and June of an exhibition of local mechanics’ institute related material. The exhibition was curated by the dynamic Sue Walter. The Hall is at present undergoing repairs and is being painted. Underneath the floor was found a pair of boots and there appears to be an old belief that if you put a pair of boots underneath a building it brings ‘good luck’. Is there anyone who can elaborate on this tradition?

#### MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM

The Athenaeum under President Kevin Quigley and his team have turned in another very welcome modest profit in the operation of Victoria’s oldest Institute. The recent annual election showed a number of quality candidates but unfortunately only

two could be elected. A pleasant afternoon tea followed. Like a number of other institutes across Victoria, the Athenaeum also applied to the Federal Government for part of their stimulus package. The Athenaeum also has an innovative Annual Giving Program which is tax deductible.

Almost three thousand people queued to walk through the Athenaeum on Melbourne Open Day Sunday 19 July and as a result enrolled several new members. In the meantime workshops, entertainments and author talks continue to inspire. The talk of Richard Siegersma on E-books on 18 September took a challenging look at Kindle® and the Espresso Book Machine now very much on the agenda. All talks at The Athenaeum are podcast, in accord with the latest technology, and are accessible on The Athenaeum’s website [www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au).

In the meantime Archivist Marjorie Dalvean and assistant Margaret Bowman are working on aspects of The Athenaeum’s history and have compiled significant files on past secretaries Walter Thompson (1855-73), John HB Curtis (1879-1908) and RWE Wilmot (1909-49) and have now turned to the larger-than life Garnet Walch (1873-79) who spiced up Melbourne theatre in the late 1800s. In the meantime 170th anniversary events are in full planning for November and you can log on to their website for the latest events.

#### MIA MIA

A poster advertising the launch of the Mia Mia-Redesdale +25 Community Plan Launch at the Institute in June advertised a Fingerfood Lunch, Face Painting, a Balloon Man, local businesses and artists, an opportunity to meet the Bridge Connection Newsletter folk, and a chance to chinwag the local councillors. Then more recently we received from the June Bridge Connection newsletter headed ‘Mia Mia Mechanics’ Institute News’. It announces an onsite Burke and Wills meeting at The Flat aka The Recreation Reserve, a working bee at the institute, and finally the institute’s Annual General Meeting on 14 July, with wine tastings provided by Rowanston Wines.

The current office bearers are: W

Hulls President, R Bennett Secretary, G Hulls Treasurer.

The Flower show is coming up with entertainment from 3+1, and the guest speaker is Robert Field from Tennyson Cactus & Succulent farm to talk on the topic of dry gardens.

There will be more Sat morning working bees to repair and varnish the old seats ready for 2010, so anyone with a sander, brush or wood tools will be welcome. Contact Wendy Hulls 54255590

#### MOLLONGHIP

The Mollonghip Hall Committee trying to raise \$20,000 to help bring the Mollonghip Community Hall facilities into the 20th century. Treasurer Viv Diamond is anxious to receive ideas for fund raising - her phone number is 5334 5331. The community mid-winter feast and goods and services auction successfully raised \$1,600 which will go towards paying for the overhaul of the Hall's electric wiring. The Hepburn Shire Council provided a further grant of \$3,000 towards this improvement.

Architects-in-the-forest, Geraldine Maher and Peter Stephen have prepared detailed plans for a kitchen upgrade. They worked on a pro-bono basis, and Peter supervised the first stage of interior renovations at the hall which involved a complete overhaul of the electric wiring. The new kitchen will be built within the existing structure at the east end of the supper room. The plans, including extensive decking and painting the hall throughout and have been submitted for state government funding approval.

The next events scheduled for the hall are a dance in October; the annual John Bolton directed play and the 5th Poetry Slam in November. Exact dates are still to be set but if you want to be informed about any of these contact secretary Gib Wettenhall, email [gib@active8.net.au](mailto:gib@active8.net.au)

#### MOGLONEMBY

Lyndal Dean recently reported in with news of a kitchen upgrade and the creation of a small function room 'so small parts of the hall can be hired out'. Hopefully all will

be in readiness for the May 2011 centenary celebrations. Lyndal is presently compiling a history of the Moglonemby Mechanics' Institute and anyone who can help with pictures, material or stories please contact her [kdandld@harboursat.com.au](mailto:kdandld@harboursat.com.au).

#### NEWHAM



Newham Mechanics' Institute has been successful in obtaining \$456,000 mainly in state government grants with some federal government ones also. Macedon Ranges Shire Council has also put in a substantial sum of money towards new toilets which can now be accessed from inside the building instead of having to go outside. Our small community raised \$30,000 towards this so we are now up to \$486,000.

The old meeting room on the side of the main Hall has been taken off and a new meeting room, kitchen and toilets architect designed. There will be significant conservation works done to the main hall and externally we will be providing appropriate car parking and landscaping which will integrate us with the adjacent park to make a community precinct.

We now have adequate heating and with all these works will make the hall a more comfortable place to use. We also hope these improvement works will increase the hiring rate of the hall.

We have passive solar features and hope to add to this with 2 KW of solar panels to feed into the grid to pay for our winter heating costs. Our aim is to leave our Hall in good condition for the next 100 years so our euchre card group which has been going for over 80 years can go for another 80. We have also aimed to keep running costs minimal and be environmentally friendly. Contributed by Sally Stabback Ph: 54 22 68 45

### PRAHRAN

The media blitz concerning rental owed to PMI from Swinburne University continued with members and others coming on board. Prahran long-time member Keith Dunstan was a recent guest on the ABC Radio 774 with John Fain and he ably pleaded the Prahran case. Keith has also agreed to become the Patron of the Institute. He is the second person to hold the position, the first being Governor Sir Charles Hotham from 1854-55. The parties involved agreed to have the dispute submitted to mediation which took place on 14 August and the recommendation was to sell the building (see headline article).

### REDESDALE

The Redesdale folk are doing their part for Cancer Council's research programs and they held a Biggest Morning Tea in their hall in May. The well attended event saw \$258 go to the head office to keep the research moving on a cure for cancer.

### ROMSEY

As one trawls through various pieces of material you invariably find mention of a Mechanics' Institute. On this occasion it was a mention of dressmaker 'Mrs Jeffs' who was also stated as being Librarian of the Romsey Mechanics'. We recently established what books were in the Romsey Library in the 1880s and Mrs Jeffs was there around the mid-1880s, possibly into the early twentieth century. She was born in Redfern, Sydney and whilst in Romsey her husband appears to have departed.

### SOMERVILLE

During the recent MIV Mornington Peninsula Institutes' tour we stopped off at the Somerville Mechanics' Institute. Built in 1891, with an art nouveau front and signage added in 1916 the hall was and still is an integral part of the Fruit Growers' Reserve, although the growers' display area has now been replaced by a children's playground. It was the community library until about 1988, when the collection was integrated into the local library service. On our visit the main hall was set up in readiness for an evening Church service which is a

regular Sunday use. We were also able to see the recently (2008) refurbished and well resourced rooms of the Somerville, Tyabb and District Heritage Society in the front of the building. Look at their website: [www.home.vicnet.net.au/~stdhs](http://www.home.vicnet.net.au/~stdhs) or phone them on (03) 5977 6489.

### SORRENTO

Sorrento's Nepean Historical Society regularly advertise activities through The Nepean which always provides ideas on how a building and events can be run. Their Planning Watch is an interesting feature as developments in the region are monitored to maintain character and amenity. Our annual bus tour visit showed just what a dynamic place the institute building is, with its adjacent reserve and historic cottage. Their award winning introductory video set the stage for a most rewarding visit with our team of well-honed guides. Their museum shop was also well stocked with regional history publications and souvenirs. Thank you to all at Sorrento for a most enjoyable and hospitable stopover.

### STANLEY ATHENAEUM

One of the first to prepare a grant application for the recent Federal stimulation package was Chris Dormer. MIV President Professor Wallace Kirsop, wearing his hat as Centre for the Book Convenor was able to provide letters of support for a grant application for the conservation of their historic library. Chris was able to provide an electronic version of the catalogued collection and this has now been placed with the MIRC.

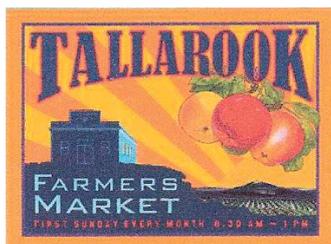
Stanley holds a couple of Charles Darwin's early works and their innovative Charles Darwin Dinner held on 27 July was a sell-out. On top of all this has been the relocation and storage of the library to enable an internal paint job and the resurfacing of the floor. So yet another historic Institute is coming back to life.

### TALBOT

The historic Talbot Free Library was unroofed during the tornado which swept through the Maryborough area in June. Hasty and frantic work after the event

meant that most of the book-stock in their library was not damaged and the building was subsequently protected. Survey work by Heritage Victoria and DSE has recently been concluded and plans are now in hand to replace the roof. In the meantime, thanks to the generosity of local resident David McDonald, he has made free shopfront space available in the historic 1860s Bank of Australasia building for the library. All the books have now been relocated to this Scandinavia Crescent site and the volunteer roster continues with the six hours of opening time a week. Donations of books continue to flow in and there is an increasing number of children's titles for the young readers. We wish Lindsay Hazelman and his dedicated Committee well during this disruptive time and we look forward to the re-opening of the refurbished building.

## TALLAROOK



Theatre, art and music continue apace at Tallarook. A regular attendance has now been built up for their annual events. Tallarook is very much a flagship for the arts in the region and has found its niche. Their busy weekly activities provide community interaction and lessons in a range of disciplines. Tallarook have recently embarked on a new venture to further enliven the town and this time it is a monthly Tallarook Farmers' Market with the theme 'From garden fork to table fork at Tallarook'. The range of stalls provides fruit, vegetables, wine, olive oil, meat, eggs and homemade breads. The market started on 5 July and was opened by famous town Crier James Carter and fresh local and imported musicians. So far they have attracted thirty stallholders and in excess of 500 patrons on their two happenings. The Tallarook Farmer's Market is held on the first Sunday of each month 9am-1pm and you can be assured of a rollicking fresh time. Stall inquiries or market information

can be directed to Ellise Rickards on 0427 801 633 or Libby Webster on 0407 522 597.

## TOORADIN

We took a tea break during our visit to Tooradin on our bus tour. We were given a talk by the very able manager as to how to control behaviour and protect the hall. Cash bonds and some interesting ideas into how to coerce compliance by hall users all made good common sense. Their hall and their meeting room were well serviced by a newly renovated commercial kitchen. They have regular bookings from non-profit groups and are the regular venue for dance classes in ballet, jazz, tap and contemporary, conducted by Abby's (Meredith) Dance Studio. There was also a bookcase with a range of books available for borrowing on the honour system and a large collection of National Geographic magazines for perusal or borrowing.

## TRENTHAM

On Monday 7 September the Trentham Sustainability Group (TSG) held its first Community Information Evening: Tackling the Impossible - 5 million Victorians Safeguarding our Environment. Local resident and TSG member Russell Fisher spoke about past, current and future directions for community action on issues such as climate change, healthy rivers, protection of biodiversity, and sustainable living. Russell is an accredited volunteer with the Australian Conservation Foundation and Al Gore program and is President of Environment Victoria.

## TRUGANINA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The Truganina Institute had its foundation and initial funding from the Truganina Debating Society. The hall opened in 1908 and one of the first regular users was the Truganina Debating Society who booked it for alternate Saturday evenings. Whilst the Institute Hall was burnt in the 1969 Lara bushfires it still holds its land and its insurance payout plus interest. Further it did have a library and Committee member Barry Hopkins has recently sent us a photocopy of a book with the oval library stamp. It is assumed this book was out on loan at the time when the rest of the books

would have been burned.

## WARRANTDYTE



Two of Warrantdyte's theatre family, Charles 'Bud' Tingwell and Nick Parsons have recently passed on. Both gave unstintingly to Warrantdyte's theatre program and will be greatly missed. Warrantdyte's Artful Dodger newsletter arrives regularly and reports that there are several exciting projects in the pipeline. An upgrade of steps to the bio-box and safety rails brings that area into line with new compliance regulations. Ever on the watchout for a fundraiser Warrantdyte have recently sampled and had bottled a range of wine to be marketed under the WMI&AA label to sell at events. Their recent play reading for their September production 'Love Song' was accompanied by a curry night. They have also farewelled a German visitor, of some seven years. Christine was a member of the Painting Group. Another faithful servant Joan Rogers, whose Old Bakery Cottage Bookshop, was the Theatre's booking agent office for over ten years also went out with a bang. On her last day in the shop a delivery truck caught the edge of her shop veranda and brought the lot down. Joan heads for Clunes where she will run an internet bookshop.

The Arts Association's connection with the Bakery goes back along way into the 1950s, poetry readings, music recitals and play rehearsals were held there. The shop's new owners, Steve and Jo Brazil, were recently apprised in London of the encumbrance of ticketing that goes with the business and have agreed to continue as the booking agent for WMI&AA activities.

Warrantdyte's recent trilogy of one act plays did not disappoint with 'St Francis talks to the birds', 'Borneo' and 'The mystery at Twickenam Vicarage' giving scope for great performances and good belly laughs. They then successfully took

the show on the road for the Maroondah, Macedon and Foster one act play festivals. At Foster they took out a number of awards. Check out Warrantdyte's activities at [www.warrantdytehallarts.asn.au](http://www.warrantdytehallarts.asn.au).

## WARRNAMBOOL

The book collection of the former Warrnambool Mechanics' Institute is now located in a special area at Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum. The former Masonic Lodge and Craft Centre are now being jointly occupied by the Warrnambool Historical Society and Warrnambool Family History Group as a research facility and reading room. The latter will look like and be known as a Mechanics' Institute with books in locked cases around the walls. Volunteers who work in the reading room will be expected to wear period costume. Warrnambool stalwart Elizabeth O'Callaghan advises that the present Manager of Flagstaff Hill sees the importance of the historic items being treated well and used and he realises their value and the interest of the public in general in the interpretation of our local history'.

## WERRIBEE

This building started out as the Wyndham Mechanics' Institute had its start in 1875 and shares were sold at £15 each and the hall was built on land donated by Simon Staughton in 1883. In 1886 Andrew Chirnside donated a library. Lectures, readings and debatings were core activities. Film screenings started in the early 1920s when the hall appears to have been re-fronted in the 1920s. It was finally demolished in 1994 to make way for the Werribee Civic Centre.

## INTERSTATE

### SYDNEY MECHANICS' SCHOOL OF ARTS

New Secretary Karin Puels continues to run a busy lecture and discussion program and membership continues to increase. SMSA's Professor Roger Morris is also heading for Mechanics' Worldwide 2009 in Bath where he will deliver a Paper.

## THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

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

The only Mechanics' Institute left in Canada is the Atwater Library in Montreal. However there are numerous successors to the Women's Mechanics' Institutes which were started in Canada in 1919. Realising the need for a national voice for rural women, the Superintendent of the Alberta Women's Institute, Miss Mary MacIsaac, called a meeting of provincial representatives in Winnipeg, Manitoba to form the Federated Women's Institutes of

Canada. Today it has 1257 branches representing some 18,000 members across Canada.

The movement spread throughout the world to be simply known as Women's Institutes.

Whilst initially groups were known as Women's Institutes in Australia from 1922, the name was changed to Country Women's Association in the 1930s.

### **UNITED KINGDOM - BRIDPORT LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC INST.**

Bridport is located on the Dorset coast a town famous for the manufacture of netting for almost a thousand years and beer for the past two hundred. It is the centre of region with a population of around 13,000. The Bridport Mechanics' Institute was established in 1835 and reconstituted as the Bridport Literary and Scientific Institute in 1855. Educational courses were a feature of its activities and its School of Art provided a number of notable scholars. It also conducted the community library. During World War II the building was taken over as a Red Cross recreational centre for US troops

and a Quartermaster Store. After the War it was passed back to the community and in 1951 the community library was established there. In 1997 the library was relocated and until 2002 it had a number of community users. Today a vacant building in East Street it remains as the original registered charity managed by the Dorset County Council awaiting a determination by the High Court as to who the liability of maintenance to the Institute falls. The Institute's record from 1872-1951 is held by the Dorset History Centre in Dorchester.

### **UNITED KINGDOM - SWINDON MECHANICS' INSTITUTION**

The Swindon Mechanics' Institute was sold into private hands a number of years ago. It has been the subject of much local debate as the owner has proposed flats and a hotel development.

The Institute started in 1844 through the New Swindon Improvement Company to fund the building and adjacent undercover market. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Methuen in 1854 and the building opened on 1 May 1855. Whilst it does have connections with the Great Western Railway through some of its of-

fice bearers it was truly a community initiative. It was the first community library and community centre. It was also the cradle of the Great Western Railway Medical Fund which established a cottage hospital. This was to be studied in great detail when setting up the National Health Service a century later. The market was also well supported over the years providing fresh fruit and vegetables to the region.

Today there are ambitious and detailed plans to return it to public own-

ership which have been put forward by The New Mechanics' Institution Preservation Trust Limited. The idea of returning the 1855 building to its original uses has gained some momentum as it lies in the Railway Precinct which also contains the Great Western Health Centre and Baths. The proposal includes space for voluntary organisations, a crèche, boutique theatre, cinema, conference rooms, shopping mall, youth area, and a fully restored buffet railway carriage adjacent to the conservatory concourse.

The building has languished behind a developer's fence for more than a decade with little maintenance as the communi-

ty debate and an unsure Council looking on. Quoting from a related website 'The tragedy is that unless the ambitious New Mechanics' Institute Preservation Trust achieves its aim in giving the building back to the people our own generation may be remembered as the one that allowed the vital piece of our heritage to crumble quite literally into the dust'.



## UNITED KINGDOM – UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Gloucestershire is yet another one of the technical universities to have been established as a Mechanics' Institute. In this case it has two Institute parents Cheltenham Mechanics' Institute established in 1834 and Gloucester Mechanics' Institute established in 1840. Along the way it also collected: Cheltenham Church Training College (est. 1847); the Cheltenham School of Art (est. 1852); St Paul's College of Education (est. 1920); and St Mary's College of Education (est. 1920).

Gloucestershire gained its University charter in 2001, with the motto 'In Spirit and Truth'. Today Gloucestershire has five campuses, three in Cheltenham, one in Gloucester and one in London with a joint enrolment of some 9500 full and

part-time students.

It has had an academic emphasis based on environmental sustainability since 1993 and was the first UK University to meet ISO 14001 environmental management standard. Courses include Business Management, Computing, Media, Art and Communications, Geography, Biology, Social Science, Education and Sports.

The County of Gloucester has just celebrated its millennium and its now over sixty-five years since the first English jet-propelled aircraft rolled out the factory door of Gloster's in 1943 and was launched en-masse into the skies a year later as the Gloster Meteor.

## USA

The Annual Meeting of the US Membership Libraries Group will this year be held at the Charleston Society Library from 23-25 October. Director Eric Emerson invites visitors 'to arrive early and stay later. The weather should be beautiful, and we are organizing tours that will highlight the history and culture of Charleston and the low country' as well his 'home away from home' the Charleston Society Library, America's third oldest. The CSL was estab-

lished in 1748 by seventeen young gentlemen of various trades. It quickly assembled a library, established the Charleston College and passed its museum collection over to found the Charleston Museum in 1773, the first America. We trust all will have a great weekend and we look forward to a report in due course. For the latest Charleston Reader (newsletter) click on to [www.charlestonlibrarysociety.org](http://www.charlestonlibrarysociety.org).

## HISTORY PAGE

### MECHANICS' INSTITUTE FUNDING

Brian Foley from the Ballan Mechanics' Institute makes the following comments on an article published in 2002 in the Australian Library Journal (51.3). The article, Funding communal culture: opportunism and standardisation of funding for mechanics' institutes in colonial Victoria discussed how Victorian mechanics' institutes were subsidised by the government. Brian converted the grants quoted in the article to current values using a conversion table provided by Robert Campbell of the Clunes Museum and also the ABS historical CPI data table.

Year	Current values	Initial
1867	\$366,280	£3,000
1872	\$665,960	£6,000
1875	\$648,480	£4,275
1885	\$1,220,930	£10,000
1886	\$2,005,190	£15,485
1890	\$2,589,840	£20,000
1893	\$758,450	£5,000
1894	\$379,230	£2,500

Brian notes that many mechanics' institutes became the local hall over time and in a significant number of examples

### COOKS TOUR?

If you think group touring started with Thomas Cook organising a group to attend a temperance rally in Loughborough, England in July 1841 then you are wrong. This fascinating story, researched by Susan Barton of Hinckley College, Leicester appeared in the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society in 1993.

Cook got the idea from reciprocal visits by the Mechanics' Institutes of

any reference to mechanics' institute was removed from the name. He poses the question: why did the strong community support that existed initially decline over time?

The answer can be found in the economic and political situation that existed in Victoria between 1890 and 1920. The large reduction in grants after 1892 was a direct result of the severe economic depression affecting Victoria at that time. After economic conditions improved these grants did not return to their previous level and the reason for that was a change in Victorian politics. Liberalism was the dominant political paradigm in nineteenth century Victoria and an important strand of 19th century liberalism was support for government intervention in economic and social affairs. The impact of the 1890s depression and the emergence of the Labor Party strengthened the conservative side of politics who then dominated Victorian politics for many years. A significant feature of conservative politics was economic austerity reflected in low government expenditure. Subsidies to mechanics' institutes and libraries were a casualty of these politics. [Editor]

Leicester (est. 1833) and Nottingham (est. 1837) in 1840 on the newly opened Midland Counties Railway.

Both institutes organised exhibitions in their towns during that year to provide education, entertainment and to raise funds.

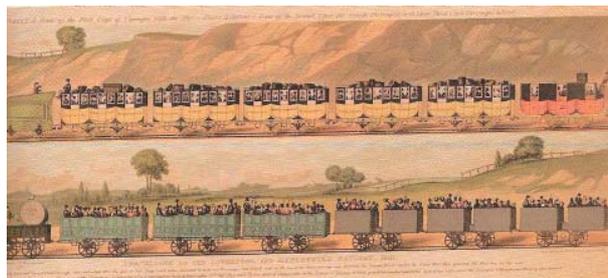
However institute excursions started in Wales on the horse-drawn railways of the Swansea to Mumbles line of the Oystermouth Railway in the 1820s. There

was an excursion the day after the Liverpool to Manchester Railway opened on 15 September 1830. *The first recorded trip at reduced rates was in 1839 on the horse-drawn Whitby-Pickering Railway to visit the Gros-mont (television show Heartbeat's 'Aidensfield') Church Bazaar. Later that year the York Mechanics' Institute visited the Leeds Public Exhibition of Works of Art, Science Natural History and Manufacturing Skill organised by the Leeds Mechanics' Institute and Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society.*

*Exhibitions provided huge opportunities for promotion and fundraising and those organised in the United States by the Ohio Mechanics' Institute at Cincinnati and San Francisco Mechanics' Institutes achieved In-*

*ternational fame and reaped huge rewards for their communities through their successive exhibitions. Geelong Mechanics' Institute also staged several successful exhibitions in the 1850-60s.*

*Interestingly enough group touring still continues with Mechanics' Institutes in Ipswich and Bradford who undertake group tours, and no doubt there are others.*



## PEOPLE & PLACES

The MIV delegation to Mechanics' Worldwide 2009 is being led by our President, Professor Wallace Kirsop. He will be ably supported by Jill Bartholomeusz, Judith Dwyer and Bronwyn and Jim Lowden. All plan visits to other Institutes before and/or after the Conference.

Congratulations to Ian Ross of Mia Mia. Ian served as secretary of the Mia Mia Mechanics Institute Committee (previously the Mia Mia Hall Committee) from 1989 to 2009.

The Mechanics' community was saddened to hear of the passing of MIV Committee member Jill Bartholomeusz's mother on 31 August. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Jill and all her family at this sad time. In the meantime Jill continues to make The Athenaeum a vibrant library and arts space and she has been an example in how to make things happen. Jill is also heading for Mechanics' Worldwide at Bath and will return just in time for the Athenaeum's busy 170th Celebrations.

Grace Cadzow of Charlton's Golden Grains Museum was one of the worthy nominations for the Individual Achieve-

ment Award in the recent Victorian Museum Awards. Grace and her team of volunteers have done much to lift the profile of their museum and it is one of the few notable Mechanics' Museums in Victoria.

Sadly the Berwick Mechanics' Institute Librarian of almost fifty years, Pam Darling is in indifferent health. Pam's story is one to tell, she has seen the both the times and the good times at Berwick. Much of that story was told in Richard Myers's Berwick Mechanics' Institute and Free Library. (Copies are still available from BMI.) We all wish Pam well and thank her for her continued long and distinguished service at Berwick and to the ethos of the Mechanics' Institute movement.

Joan Hunt was one of the worthy nominations for the Individual Achievement Award in the recent Victorian Museum Awards. Joan organised the seminar at Kyneton last year on Mechanics Institutes' as part of her busy workload.

Former Long-time MIV President Dr Frank Hurley was recently elected a Life Member of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute as part of their 150th Anniver-

sary Celebrations. Frank has served on the Institute's Committee in a number of capacities, the most recent being as President.

We note the passing of Kyneton Historical Society President Larina Strauch's mother in May. We extend our sincere condolences to Larina at this sad time. Larina and her team of volunteers have assembled a great deal of the history of one of Australia's most significant Institutes. The Kyneton Institute was host to key military, political and cultural events in Australia's evolution.

A long-time friend of Mechanics' Institutes throughout Victoria Ray Tonkin retired from his role as Executive Director of Heritage Victoria on 30 June. Ray was officially farewelled from the Department at a well-attended function on 11 September. We thank Ray for his long service to the Heritage of Victoria and wish him well in his retirement. That retirement seems however to have been short-lived as he was recently seen a Strategy Workshop being conducted by the Melbourne Athenaeum Library.

Bruce Turner, former Prahran Mechanics' Institute Librarian, celebrates the landmark four-score on 27 August. Bruce kept the lights on at PMI and was there when the decision was made to assemble a local history collection. Happy birthday Bruce and may there be many more with much good health. In the meantime

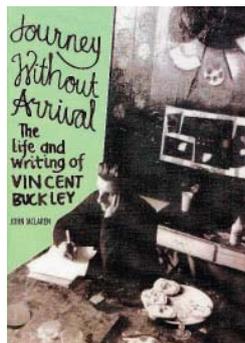
Bruce's oral history of his time at the PMI is being taped by Librarian Christine Worthington.

Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution's President Professor Julian Vincent visited Brisbane and delivered a Paper on 20 August at a conference. We were able to put him in contact with our Queensland agent Joan Beddoe and she gave him the names of several Schools of Arts to visit.

Peter Wolfenden of the Cinema and Theatre Historical Society has recently donated to the MIRC a sound recording of a bush dance in progress at Wedderburn at which the Wedderburn Old Timer's were performing. This is the second such sound recording added to the MIRC collection and we are most grateful to Peter. Perhaps there are other sound recordings out there of notable MI events.

Prahran's face for their recent 'No Minister' campaign, Christine Worthington has just completed a distance education course in library marketing and promotion through the University of Sheffield in the UK. Sheffield's motto 'To discover the causes of things' is very much in the Mechanics' vein. Indeed the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute was a great pioneer in making things happen from its establishment in 1830 by Ebenezer Elliott as the Sheffield Mechanics' Anti-Bread Tax Society.

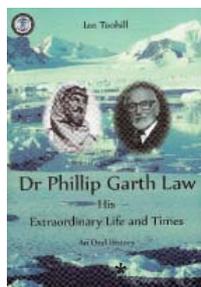
## BOOK REVIEWS



John McLaren, *Journey without arrival: the life and writing of Vincent Buckley*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2009. 377 pages, illustrations, index, pb. \$39.95. Available from most booksellers.

Professor Vincent Buckley (1925-88) was a product of rural Victoria. His early reading was based on books that Mrs Hemphill in her capacity as librarian at the Romsey and Lancefield Mechanics' Institutes loaned to him. His talents were spotted by the local Parish Priest and he was sponsored to boarding school in Melbourne. From then on he grew to become a major figure in Melbourne's literary, political and religious life. His books *Cutting Green Hay* and *Memory Ireland* and his poetry are his lasting legacy.

Biographer John McLaren has done well to bring the many threads of Vincent Buckley's complex, intriguing and private life into this fascinating book.



*Dr Phillip Garth Law: his extraordinary life and times – an oral history. As told to Ian Toohill.* Melbourne: Royal Societies of Australia, 2009. 9780980610604. 237p, illus. Paperback. \$45.00 plus \$15.00 pack and

post. Available from: Kasima Consulting, Box 165, Kew East, V 3102

Indeed Dr Law has had an extraordinary life, from his youth in northern Victoria, to becoming a trainee teacher and teaching in rural Victoria. During his time as a teacher he played the drums in various bands which travelled to rural Mechanics' Institute halls for dances and he became a competent musician. Later he was engaged at Melbourne University working on wartime projects in optical munitions. He then spent the third phase of his life in the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions headquarters organising and leading polar expeditions and much more. Then his career changed course again to set up the Victoria Institute of Colleges which aggregated various tertiary training organisations around the State into a single unit. Dr Law's credos include: Appreciate the value of time and that every second of your life is important, don't be afraid to jump at an opportunity and, It is a good idea to change jobs every ten, or fifteen or twenty years.

This is a fascinating book of self-motivation and extraordinary achievement and which, thanks to Major Toohill's interviews over a twenty year period we have a first-hand account.

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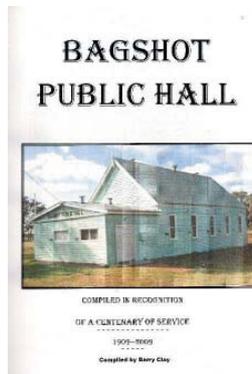
*Ferdinand von Mueller's flora.* CD-ROM. \$22.50, posted. Available from: Ballarat Mechanics' Institute, 117 Sturt Street, Ballarat, V 3350

Baron Ferdinand von Mueller (1825-96) arrived in Adelaide in 1847 and crossed to Victoria in 1852. He travelled extensively in the course of his work as the Victorian Government Botanist and was Director of the Botanic Gardens from 1857-73. His energetic mind enlisted the support of like people from across the world and established

botany in Victoria to international standard. His *Flora Australiensis*, published in seven volumes from 1863-78, was placed in many Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria. The many fine detailed illustrations contained on this CD-ROM are from that work.

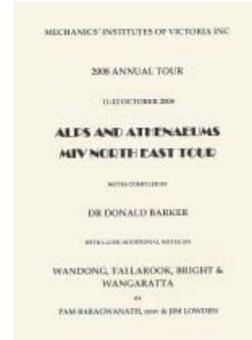
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Barry Clay, *Bagshot Public Hall: compiled in recognition of a centenary of service 1909-2009*, Bagshot Hall Committee, 2009, 53p, illus, index, Sopiralbound. Available from Bagshot Hall Committee, Bagshot, via Huntly, V, 3551. \$20.00 posted.



This is a fascinating book in the way it has been produced and the information it contains and Barry Clay and the Hall Committee can be justly proud of what they have done. Flood never appears to have been far away, particularly in the 1920s, 1938 and 1956. Then there was the 1980 bushfire that came within five metres of the hall! The book is packed with pics of the above events, the hare shoot results, the long awaited supper room, as well as of documents - insurance certificate, subscription list and renewal of the hall's registration. Then there are pics of the people - the founders, the Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, Committees of Management, Belles of the Balls, Ladies' Committes and their various concert activities... and more. There is also a list of books still held from the Hall's Free Library' days. This is a book to emulate and would be a good starting point for just what to assemble for an historical collection.

Dr Donald Barker, Pam Baragawanath and Jim Lowden, *Alps and athenaeums MIV north east tour [2008], with additional notes on Wandong, Tallarook, Bright & Wangaratta Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.* 12p, illus with photos, saddlestitched. Available from: Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc., Box 1080, Windsor, V 3181. \$2.50 or \$4.00 posted.



This small guide details the variety of Institutes located along the railway line to and in the north-east. Besides their community hall function, a number have remnant libraries and two have very significant museums, the Burke at Beechworth and the Chiltern Athenaeum. This booklet adds to the growing material on Mechanics' Institutes in regional Victoria.