



USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

Newsletter No 27 - Spring 2011

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. will be held at 10.30am, SATURDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2011 at The City Library, 253 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

The City Library is located in the CAE building on the corner of Degraeves Street and Flinders Lane, between Swanston and Elizabeth Street. (Melway reference: Map 1B,M9). The City Library Function Room is located on the first floor, overlooking Flinders Lane. Lifts located at rear of Ground Floor.

The Annual General Meeting will include the election of office-bearers for the Association and nominations for all positions are called for: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Committee members. Members are invited to attend, and must be financial in order to vote. Nominations for office-bearers must be signed by two (2) members. There is a Nomination Form on the insert.

MIV Office-Bearers (current):

President: Peter Pereyra ;

Vice-President: Jill Bartholomeusz ;

Treasurer: Graham Hughes ;

Secretary: Judith Dwyer ;

Committee Members:

Linda Aspinall,

Dr Donald Barker,

Corinne Brewis,

Bruce Draper,

Graham Dudley,

Brian Foley,

Dr Frank Hurley,

Prof. Wallace Kirsop,

Bronwyn Lowden,

Bruce Stubbs.

AGENDA:

1. Apologies.
2. Confirmation of Minutes of 2010 Annual General Meeting.
3. President's Report.
4. Treasurer's Report.
5. Election of Office-Bearers: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Committee Members.
6. Setting of Membership fees 2011-2012.
7. Other Business.

Apologies and RSVP (for catering) to:

MIV Sec. Judith Dwyer ,

P.O. Box 482, Berwick.3806

(03) 9707 4254

Email: jad134@hotmail.com

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MIV NEWS

VICTORIA'S CULTURAL HISTORY LIVES ON IN MECHANICS' INSTITUTES THANKS TO VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT GRANT

New funding delivered by the Victorian Government will allow several more years of dynamic activity in the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria digitisation program and make the Resource Centre an even more significant source of localised material for researchers and scholars.

MIV President Peter Pereyra said he was excited about the security the \$48,000 grant which was announced by Prahran Member of Parliament, Clem Newton-Brown, at the Prahran Mechanics Institute on 20 October would give to the ongoing preservation work of the Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre.

"The digitisation program began in 2004 with the scanning of nearly 3000 photographs of Mechanics' Institute buildings, many of which are no longer in existence," said Mr Pereyra.

"The MIV is dependent on the dedicated contribution of our volunteers who did a fantastic job during the early stages of this work."

"It became clear that there was a wealth of material available and only a professional contractor would be able to keep pace with the project. For the past few years, based on relatively small but significant donations and some funding from the MIV, a part time contractor has been engaged in the project which has enhanced the collection."

Mechanics' Institutes are voluntary, independent, self-funded organisations which began in England and Scotland in the early 1800s. They were established primarily for the purpose of self improvement and education of the working classes who had previously been denied these opportunities.

Following the founding of the Melbourne Athenaeum in 1839, the first of the State's Mechanics' Institutes, over 1200 were established in Victoria, the majority in rural areas and the halls became the centre of community life. The Victorian halls have variously seen service as Courts of Petty Sessions, used for Shire Council Meetings and school classes, and been in demand for church services, dances, balls, political

meetings, auctions, weddings, concerts and as cinemas. A vast number had a library attached, and many halls were used for educational lectures.

The Mechanics' Institute hall committees kept meticulous records; minutes of meetings, hall hire files, financial accounts, library borrower and book purchase ledgers, invoices and receipts for all of the committee's transactions. Those institute records and documents are unparalleled in recording the cultural lives and activities of the towns and suburbs which they represented. Even the library registers reflect local industrial activities as books on mining, agriculture, bee-keeping, eucalyptus distilling, mechanical trades and timber milling point to specific provincial production.

A major objective of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria is to establish and maintain a Resource Centre as a repository and place of research to support its purposes, one of which is to foster the preservation and restoration of the social, cultural and physical heritage of active and inactive Mechanics' Institutes.

Since 2004 the document collections of Pam Baragwanath and Alfred Wesson, as well as the architectural drawing series of the Department of Sustainability and the Environment have been digitised, which provided a solid basis for the Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre.

In 2006 the MIRC was loaned the records of the former Narracan Mechanics Institute; an almost complete series of committee minutes from the first meeting in 1877 to its final meeting in 1978, along with cash and account books, balance sheets, library catalogues and borrower's records, and over 1200 documents, which added nearly 3000 images to the collection. A complete set of minutes, 1886 to the present day, of the Arthur's Creek Institute, was followed by the records of Moe, Barfold, Kurting, Harrierville, and Tallarook.

"This new funding from the Victorian Government will allow the MIV to continue

the digitisation project and preserve even more of our State's diverse and colourful history," said Mr Pereyra.

It is not the aim of the Resource Centre to collect original material, apart from some significant items, but to preserve as much as possible of the written records of the Mechanics' Institutes around the State whilst leaving the original material local communities as part of their own cultural heritage.

"BUSSING THE BASS COAST" BY JOHN MERRY

At 10am on Sunday 24th of July my partner Sally Edwardes and I joined a cheerful group at the Berwick Mechanics Institute, enjoying a quick coffee before embarking on a "Mechanics Institute and History Tour". Thirty of us boarded the Bunyip River Buslines Mercedes and headed South, with a running commentary, to view Mechanics Institutes at Clyde, Tooradin, Bass, Kilcunda, Dalyston and Rhyll (pictured below), passing three or four locations where Mechanics Institutes once stood, mostly victims of fire.

The General History component of the trip came in three helpings.

Firstly, we stopped at Corinella for an illuminating talk from Libby Skidmore, a historian from the Bass Valley Historical Society. Libby explained how the area's history fitted into the earliest pioneering



Mr Pereyra said the importance of preserved digital material cannot be understated as much correspondence with historical societies and hall committees has shown that unique and irreplaceable records have been lost or destroyed over the years.

"The loss of the Marysville Historical Society records, that included those of the Marysville Mechanics' Institute, in the bushfires of 2009 is but one recent example," Mr Pereyra said.

settlements of Victoria.

Secondly, a stop for lunch at the Vietnam Veterans Museum at Newhaven, where we enjoyed home made soup and sandwiches, a sound and light presentation, and a conducted tour of the helicopters, vehicles, weapons and memorabilia of our 10 years' involvement over there. All very impressive, and all run by volunteers, with no government subsidies.

Finally, a visit to the Phillip Island Museum and Heritage Centre in Cowes, (their Mechanics Institute burned down in 1933) for a fascinating glimpse into the Island's past, both before and after the building of the San Remo Bridge, which joined the Island to Australia.

A restful trip back to Berwick led to an informal tour of their Mechanics Institute, in a building dating from the 1860's, moved in 1878, and enlarged (sensitively) in 1982... still providing a free library and a local focal point after 140 years. It also houses the 1500 books of 'The Casey Collection', donated by the family of Lord and Lady Casey, from the library in their long-established Berwick property, "Edrington". All in all a great day, and we look forward to joining our "country cousins" on future expeditions.

BUILDINGS, BOOKS AND BLACKBOARDS - INTERSECTING NARRATIVES. 27 NOVEMBER - 1 DECEMBER, 2012

In 2012 there will be a unique opportunity for those interested in the history of the people, places and institutions which have shaped the culture and learning of communities worldwide. The combined conference is a joint venture of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society (ANZHES), Mechanics' Worldwide

(under the auspices of Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria, MIV), and the Library History Forum.

Buildings, Books and Blackboards - Intersecting Narratives presents an opportunity for the exploration of complementary historical perspectives, sharing of ideas and a forum for cross-

disciplinary engagement through the prism of shared interests. Buildings, Books and Blackboards--Intersecting Narratives 2012 will focus on the ways in which the stories of individuals, including librarians, philanthropists, administrators, educators and also organisations and institutions have intersected throughout history to engage with their communities to promote the diffusion of knowledge and access to learning.

Conference Organisations

- ANZHES
- Library History Forum
- Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria
- Keynote Speakers - Prof. Alistair Black (University of Illinois, USA); Dr. Martyn

VICTORIAN WAR HERITAGE INVENTORY

Many mechanics' institutes have associations with veteran's heritage. For example a number of mechanics' institutes served as the meeting place for the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) when it was formed in 1916. Moreover, a number of memorial halls in Victoria were former mechanics' institutes.

Recently the Victorian Veterans Virtual Museum was launched. The Victorian War Heritage Inventory was developed in partnership with Heritage Victoria. It is a searchable online database containing information and images of places relating to Victoria's war history including war memorials, avenues of honour, places of commemoration and former defence sites. Users can search for places according to keyword, postcode, region, type of heritage, or conflict commemorated

This website contains a number of new resources including:

War-related heritage in Victoria: a report

War-related heritage in Victoria was commissioned by DCPD and gives an overview of the extent and nature of war-related heritage in the state such as memorials, commemorative buildings, honour rolls and memorabilia. The report estimates the number of war memorials and other sites, and explores the preservation of moveable

HOME IS WHERE THE HALL IS

Check out the website <http://homeiswherethehallis> to see the

Walker (University of Huddersfield, UK) and Prof. Adam Nelson (University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA).

The conference is still in the early stages of planning but here are a couple of dates worth noting.

27/11 Bus tour - Mechanics Institutes

30/11 Paper presentations, Keynote

Address and Public Lecture -

The Athenaeum Theatre

Conference Representatives: Dr Mary

Carroll (ANZHES); Dr. Sue Reynolds

(Library History Forum); Jill Bartholomeusz

(MIV); Bronwyn Lowden (MIV)

heritage through a series of case studies involving collections in RSLs, local historical societies and community museums. The report is downloadable and an information flyer is attached.

World War One unit histories

In partnership with the State Library of Victoria the Veterans Unit has digitised many of Victoria's World War One unit (battalion) histories. A number of these books were originally published in the 1920s and are now rare. This important online library can be read from any computer with access to the web.

'In our words' digital stories

The Virtual Museum also hosts the 'In our words' digital stories recorded with Victorian veterans over the past two years. They include personal accounts of war and repatriation by World War Two, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans which make compelling viewing. This project is still underway in partnership with the Shrine of Remembrance and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI).

*Contributed by Marina Larsson,
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exciting activities to be held in Mechanics' Institutes across Victoria during November.

MEN'S SHED ON-LINE

The Australian Men's Shed Association, together with Beyond Blue and the Movember Foundation has launched a new website - The Shed Online - www.theshedonline.org.au. The Shed is an online social community where men can make new mates and share skills.

Like the 400-plus community-based Men's Sheds across Australia, The Shed Online aims to provide a space where men can discuss a range of topics, catch up on news and events,

play online games, exchange ideas and take part in activities.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Ros Lording at Beyond Blue: ros.lording@beyondblue.org.au or call the Beyond Blue information line on 1300 224 636.

Several Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria have developed Men's Sheds in their buildings. How would your community like to get involved as well?

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES AND SCOUT HALLS

If there are any mechanics' institute buildings with scouts and guides as occupants, this may be of interest to hall owners and managers. The 2011/12 Victorian State Budget allocated funding of \$5 million over the next four years (2011/12 - 2014/15) to support Scouts Victoria and Girl Guides Victoria, including \$4 million for a

Scout and Guides Facilities Grants Program. Details can be found at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/news-and-events/news/general-news/the-victorian-governments-scouts-and-guides-facilities-grants-program>

*Contributed by Janette Hodgson
Email: janette.hodgson@dse.vic.gov.au*

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF THE MACEDON RANGES SHIRE

Thunder, lightning and heavy rain did not deter more than thirty people attending the launch of the latest exhibition at the Kyneton Museum, 67 Piper Street, Kyneton.

The exhibition on "Mechanics' Institutes of the Macedon Ranges Shire" was opened by Pam Baragwanath on Friday 7th October at 5.30pm. Pam gave a talk on mechanics' institutes - she briefly outlined their beginnings, their establishment in colonial

Victoria, and their continuing relevance today. The exhibition features the range of mechanics' institutes still operating in the towns of the Macedon Ranges Shire. It explores their history, but also shows their current activities. The Kyneton Museum is open from 11am-4pm, Friday-Sunday. The exhibition is showing from now until the end of January. It is well worth a visit.

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FEATURE ARTICLE - COMMITTEES OF MANAGEMENT

The Department of Sustainability and Environment publishes a newsletter, (Committees of Management News) which contains much information of interest to the Committees of Management of mechanics' institutes. Extracts from those newsletters that should be of interest are reproduced below.

STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF DSE

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) provides advice and assistance to more than 1250 voluntary committees of management (CoMs) across Victoria. These committees rely on the support of thousands of volunteers and DSE staff.

Crown land covers approximately one third of Victoria. Public reserves commonly have community halls, sporting grounds, bushland and coastal areas, rail trails and parks and gardens. Each of these play an important part in the recreational, social and cultural activities of Victorians. Committees are responsible for these facilities on public land and the scope and role of their responsibilities vary considerably.

Responsibilities could be for a fence or pathway in a park, or for one of the many botanic gardens around the state. Members of the public have been involved in the management of Crown land reserves for over 150 years. The committee of management system has allowed communities to develop and maintain their connection to the land in a variety of ways including environmentally, culturally, socially and economically.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) leads the Victorian Government's efforts to sustainably manage water resources and catchments, climate change, bushfires, forests, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation parks and other public land.

Within DSE the Public Land Division develops and implements government policy and legislation for the management of public land. The division, in partnership with Public Land Services, maintains expertise and management systems to ensure effective asset management and property functions across the state.

Public Land Services supports the division to understand the public land issues affecting the State so the division can implement appropriate policies that shape its services. Voluntary committees of management fall under the responsibility of Public Land Services.

Public Land Services staff are your local regional contacts for all matters relating to the management of Crown land reserves. The main offices across the state are located at Ballarat, Bendigo, Benalla, Traralgon and Box Hill, but there are numerous smaller offices across the state. For your nearest office, phone 136 186.

A Transaction Centre provides Crown Land Management Transactional Services across the state. The Centre enables DSE to maintain consistency and streamline service delivery of licence transactions, the collection of data including annual financial returns and more recently, has taken over the responsibility for committee of management appointments and reappointments.

SHARING RESOURCES TO MANAGE CROWN LAND

There are many different models used by committees to manage Crown land.

Increasingly, Committees of Management are managing more than one reserve and are developing working relationships with other committees. Many reserves have very similar issues or are located close to each other and there are numerous benefits to sharing resources.

The Mint Inc Committee of Management for example, was established in 1998 and specialises in managing historic buildings owned by the Victorian Government that are situated on Crown land. They manage ten buildings and among them are the former Royal Mint and Beaufort Court House. The committee leases these buildings out and last year had a turn over of \$2 million – money which goes into maintaining these restored buildings.

The skills required to manage these buildings are similar, so it is logical that the same group of people oversees them all.

Committees all over the state manage more than one reserve. Managing multiple

reserves or having relationships with similar committees provides the ability to increase purchasing power as well as other opportunities. Committees are able to negotiate more favourable works contracts or contracts with suppliers; resources can be shared between committees that do and do not generate an income for the benefit of their community; or if someone wants to book a venue for a function and it's not available, another venue can be suggested or booked.

These are just some examples of how committees can work together to help each other. If you have any stories you'd like to share with other committees or you think other committees would benefit from hearing how this has worked for you, please email voluntary.committees@dse.vic.gov.au for inclusion in the next newsletter.

EVOLUTION OF COMMITTEES

Members of the public have been involved in the management of Crown land reserves for over 150 years.

Our colonial forefathers began reserving Crown land in the latter half of the 19th century as a means of providing land for important community activities.

Through restricted leases (or Crown Grants) the management of this land was delegated to community representatives – either individuals or local municipal councils – who became Trustees, based on the English Common Law system.

Following the Land Act 1862, Trusts were only established where borrowing for major capital works was anticipated and some form of security was required for lenders. Where borrowing was not required, land was normally temporarily placed under the control of a 'committee' representing the local community.

This system was formalised with the Land Act 1898. Issuing restricted licences was discontinued and statutory provision was made for the appointment of Committees of Management, which comprised of a council or a group of at least three people.

These appointments were lifelong appointments, with members replaced when they either died or moved away. A further change occurred when the Public Land Reserves Act 1914 was introduced. Three year appointments for committees (that were not council or registered bodies)

was introduced to give the local public the right of recall at regular intervals in regard to the management of their reserves. It is rumoured that it was said in parliament that appointments without limitations tended to lead to stagnation in management.

The Committee of Management concept, as it exists today, has undergone little or no philosophical development over the last 150 years. It has allowed communities to manage the Crown land reserved for their recreation.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT POWERS

Each committee of management gains its powers under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978, the Act that enables the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to

appoint committees. The committee's obligations under that Act must be met and it is also bound by the laws that govern the wider community on matters such as employment, taxation, contracts, tenancy and liquor licensing. The powers given under the Act enable the committee to:

- manage and develop the reserve
- undertake financial transactions and enter contracts
- enter tenure arrangements, such as leasing and licensing, for part or all of the reserve (subject to Minister's approval)
- employ people
- enforce regulations

For each committee, the Minister retains the right to place limitations on how these powers are executed and to prescribe in more detail the extent of responsibilities.

The Minister does this generally at the time of appointment of each committee, in its certificate of appointment.

NEW LEGISLATION BEFORE PARLIAMENT

Public Finance and Accountability Legislation is currently under consideration before Parliament. Once introduced, we will provide you with the additional information you need to complete your annual return. It is expected that the changes will require committees to provide some information about their operations for the year, in a brief written report as well as financial information. Currently, committees of management are only required to provide a financial report.

DECLARATION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

Did you know that each year all appointees to Victorian public bodies are required to annually complete a declaration of private interests form? These forms are required to be kept on your committee files, (not returned to DSE). Please organise for these to be completed by your members and retained on your files; they do not have to be returned to the Department. You can download copies of these forms via DSE's web site.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, such as large print or audio, please telephone 136 186, 1800 122 969 (TTY), or email

customer.service@dse.vic.gov.au

This document is also available in PDF format on the Internet at www.dse.vic.gov.au

THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Committees are public entities for the purposes of the Public Administration Act 2004 and members are therefore subject to the provisions of the Victorian Public Entity Directors' Code of Conduct. This code sets out your duties and accountabilities and is a good tool to support and review member conduct issues. Copies of the code are available from the State Services Authority website www.ssa.vic.gov.au (under public sector governance) or by calling 136 186.

COMMUNICATING WITH AND BETWEEN COMS

There are a variety of initiatives taking place across the state by CoMs and DSE. We would like to be able to share this information with you and for you to be able to contribute to discussions and share your ideas and initiatives. So, what you would like DSE to do? How can we best help committees of management share your information, experiences and ideas? Please email your ideas to: voluntary.committees@dse.vic.gov.au or post to: Sally Burgess Locked bag 3000, Box Hill, VIC 3128

NEED HELP?

DSE staff are pleased to provide your committee with the support you may need in your role. You can contact our Customer Service Centre on 136 186 with your queries or to provide any feedback on how we can make your job easier. If required, your call can also be referred to local staff in your area

who would be pleased to arrange a meeting with your committee to discuss any issues you're facing.

DSE WEBSITE

The DSE website provides some useful information for voluntary committees of management. You'll find facts sheets on all sorts of issues relevant to you:

DSE Home > Property, Titles and Maps > Publications > Crown Land Fact Sheets

We are currently reviewing this information. If you have any feedback on what you'd like included on the website please contact Sally Burgess 9296 4516 or email: voluntary.committees@dse.vic.gov.au

DSE SURVEY

Later this year, DSE will be inviting all members of local Committees of Management to participate in a comprehensive survey about volunteer motivations and attitudes.

The aim of the confidential survey is to inform DSE about what draws volunteers to Committees of Management, and what influences their level of satisfaction with committee work. This is an excellent opportunity to express your views about your Committee of Management experience. The survey findings will provide the department with a better understanding of any issues and challenges you face managing public land and help us to support committees in overcoming these challenges in the future.

Committee members will receive a letter with an attached questionnaire inviting you to participate in the personal and confidential survey. There will also be an opportunity to access a web-based survey. A small number of individuals will be invited to undertake the survey over the telephone. The department is working with Victoria University to undertake this project and will act to preserve the confidentiality of the responses.

As Committees of Management, you are integral to Victoria as the custodians of Crown land reserves. I urge you all to take advantage of this opportunity to have your say.

Please share this information and the accompanying letter with the other members of your committee. For more information on the survey, contact Alex Gunn on (03) 9412 4237 or alex.gunn@dse.vic.gov.au.

NEW COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES RELEASED

DSE has recently released the updated interim Committee of Management Responsibilities and Good Practice Guidelines (Guidelines) – a document providing advice to committees on governance, financial management, record-keeping, leasing, licensing, managing reserve users, hiring workers and more. The interim Guidelines are an update of the previous Guidelines, and DSE expects that they will form a useful resource for committees.

The Guidelines will be undergoing further revision in 2011, to strengthen the value of this resource for committees. As such, the interim Guidelines are a draft for discussion and DSE welcomes feedback on this document.

To access the Guidelines or for further information, see the Guidelines web page at www.dse.vic.gov.au/committeeofmanagement or contact the DSE Customer Service Centre on 136 186. Please email your feedback to: com.guidelines@dse.vic.gov.au.

ANNUAL RETURN DATA ANALYSIS

Many thanks to the committees who have submitted their financial data! Committees are required to do so annually and DSE analyses that information and maps trends over time to better understand Committee of Management finances statewide.

This is a brief snapshot of the financial information DSE has collected. Collecting financial data enables DSE to better

understand committees across the state. We thank you for returning your financial data for the 2009–2010 financial year.

This is some of what we found in the 2008–2009 data relating to committees made up of volunteers:

- Statewide the annual revenue was more than \$39 million
- Committees had combined liquid assets of more than \$24 million
- Coastal committees brought in 40 percent of the state's revenue
- The revenue from coastal committees tended to be spent within that year
- 28 percent of the statewide committee of management revenue was generated on the coast in the Bellarine/Great Ocean Road area
- 62 percent of committees had an income of more than \$10,000
- 4 percent of committees had an income of above \$100,000
- 62 percent of committees have built assets valued at more than \$25,000
- Liquid assets are spread fairly evenly across the non-coastal areas
- There are 281 public hall committees across the state
- More than 50 committees were responsible for employing people

This is a brief snapshot of the financial information DSE has collected. Collecting financial data enables DSE to better understand committees across the state.

The chart below shows the ratio of the different types of reserves managed by CoM's for the 1659 reserves in Victoria.

Reserve	Percentage	Number
Arts/community	4.7	64
Caravan/camping Park	3.1	42
Coastal land	4.1	56
Mechanics' Institute	6.5	88
Public Hall	20.7	281
Race Course	7.5	102
Rail trail/walking track	0.9	12
Reserve (Conservation)	3.8	52
Reserve (General Nature)	1.2	16
Reserve (Lake)	1.0	14
Reserve (Recreation)	38.6	524
Riparian land	0.6	8
Show grounds	2.3	31
Sporting Club/Facility	4.7	64
Swimming Pool	0.4	5
Total	100	1659

AROUND THE INSTITUTES



ACHERON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The Acheron Mechanics' Institute (pictured above) will be the venue for a Cup Day Picnic on Tuesday 1st of November. The event will feature a BYO picnic & refreshments with a BBQ available. There will also be a Melbourne Cup sweep and a Best Hats competition.

BALLAARAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

A new year has begun for the Ballarat Mechanics Institute and a new Board of Management has been installed. Many of the faces on it will be familiar to those of you who visit the Institute often, but there are some who are joining us for the first time. We welcome them. Much of the last decade has been taken up with saving and restoring the wonderful building which our founding fathers established during the middle of the nineteenth century. Our thanks must go to Dr. Frank Hurley, Rex Bridges and the hard working members of past Boards of Management for their tireless efforts in obtaining funding and managing the restoration projects. They have done a sterling job. Only the stage area of the hall remains to be renovated and funds are in hand for this work. Now it is time to concentrate on the people who make up the Institute, our members and the public in Ballarat generally. Over the next weeks and months we will be asking you to tell us how you use the Institute, what you think of the services we provide at the moment and what you would like us to offer you in the future. As a start we intend to introduce an email newsletter which will be distributed monthly except over the Christmas period.

For those members who do not have email addresses we will post them a printed copy. As well as bringing you news of what the institute is doing, what events are being held, and what new books are in the library, we invite members to contribute as well. If you have attended a function here, or read a good book, we want you to tell us about it. We would also like to hear from you if you have been disappointed by something we have done or failed to do. And we welcome your suggestions about how we can improve our services to you. With your assistance we can ensure that the institute we love stays relevant to the needs of everyone in Ballarat throughout the 21st century.

The 2011 Board of Management

President: J. Blee

Vice President: M. Bevelander [Library]

Vice President: G. Gooding [Buildings]

Secretary: P. Roberts

Treasurer: G. Johnson

Directors: F. Hurley, J. Hosking, C. Brooks, A. Smith, J. Ross, M. Morrow, A Cato, R. McNerney, J Haymes, , R Burrows, J Blytheman.

The first talk in the spring series is on 7 October and they continue every Friday until 11 November. The programme is listed below:

Anne Doggett and the Bell Ringers of Geelong: An evening of charming bell ringing, a little history and book launch

Andrew Miller: A visual account of the Ballarat Town Hall Restoration

Mary Ryllis Clark: The story of a great educator - Mother Gonzaga Barry

In conjunction with the Central Highlands Historical Association Fair: The National School Curriculum

Neil Leckie: Stories of the Ballarat men who fought and died at Fromelles

Jeff Brownrigg: The story of a World War I digger

All talks start at 5.30pm in the Humffray Room and are preceded by refreshments from 5.00pm. There is a charge of \$5.00 payable at the door.

For many months a group of dedicated volunteers led by Marion Blythman have been beavering away in the Old Mining Exchange cleaning, checking and re-shelving



The May meeting of the MIV committee was held at the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute. Pictured above are committee members inspecting the newly refurbished library.

our magnificent heritage of nineteenth and early twentieth century books. Renamed the Heritage and Reading Centre it will be officially opened on Sunday 27 November. Once opened it will be a place where scholars, students, researchers and writers can work, write and study. Thank you to Marion, Wilma, Danni, Nita and all the other volunteers during the year who have worked so hard to have the room ready in time for the opening.

BALLAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

Brian Foley has contributed this summary of the facilities available at the Ballan Mechanics Institute & Free Library, located at 143 Inglis St Ballan 3342. These facilities are a demonstration of what can be achieved by an active and dedicated committee of management. The Institute was opened in 1887 and since has under gone a number of changes the last being in 2003 when a major redevelopment was funded by the community support scheme; to make the facility in to a community centre. Since then further projects have been under taken by the Committee to further improve the facility.

The rooms can be hired on their own or as combinations – hirers have access to facilities provided there are no additional fees for use of the PA system for example. The main hall has an area of 160 sq metres. It seats 200 people theatre style, 120 people restaurant style and can host a cocktail party up to 150 people. The hall has access to a hearing loop PA system and to an upright grand piano (No charge community groups). Gas heating

and Evaporative cooling is included in the tariff. There are 22 rectangular tables, 10 round tables and 180 chairs in the main hall. The Supper Room seats 80 people theatre style and 50 people restaurant style. It has servery access to kitchen, a hearing loop PA system, reverse cycle air-conditioning and a flat screen TV can be connected to a computer for presentations.

The kitchen is a full commercial kitchen with a dishwasher, refrigerators, stainless steel benches, evaporative cooling and a microwave oven.

The Green Room is the former library and can seat 20 people board style or 35 people cocktail style 35 people. It has gas heating and reverse cycle air conditioning. A Gallery Space can be hired at no cost by community groups for displays or used as servery point for functions in the main hall. There are kitchenettes located to serve the Green Room and Supper Room to save opening the kitchen.

The facility is equipped with a security camera system, accessible toilets including baby changing facility and an accessible entrance from the car park off Steiglitz St.

For current schedule of rates and Hire Conditions please contact the Hall Manager Ms Dawn DePolo (03 5368 1155) between 9:30 am and 2:00 pm Monday to Friday or email bmi6@bigpond.com

BONNIE DOON MECHANICS INSTITUTE

Work has progressed on the exterior of the library building now in its new position next door to the old primary school. The cleaned terracotta roof tiles, once again a rich orange colour, are back in place, the metal ventilation stacks have been replaced for decoration only, the walls have been reclad and restrapped, base boards affixed below floor level and the chimney rebuilt. The building is once more weatherproof.

Electrical wiring has been attended to but more interior works are to come.

The remnant library has been partially catalogued and this is ongoing. The books range in age from the earlier Mechanics' Institute library of 1902 to the mid 1950's from the later Free Library. Generally the books are in poor condition due to age and care but they provide an insight into library collections of the period. Some have been at

other Mechanics' Institutes but a significant number have been in various circulating libraries in Victoria. The book with catalogue number 1 still exists and the highest number found so far is in the 6000's. There are approximately 1,000 books remaining.

Contributed by Corinne Brewis

LITTLE RIVER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The centenary celebrations of the Little River Mechanics' Institute took place on 23 July. These celebrations were marked by a poetry recital by Emeritus Professor Chris Wallace-Crabbe) a leading poet, critic and educator. Lynne Williams presented Etchings - definitive etchings of the You Yongs from the 1960s- by Fred Williams. There was also a presentation by Joan McClelland - Director for over 50 years of Joshua McClelland Print Room, 150 Collins St Melbourne. The celebrations were launched by Pam Baragwanath. The attentive audience at the event are pictured below.

Contributed by Sue and Peter Jones – Little River MI librarians.



MALMSBURY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The Malmsbury Historical Society meets at the Malmsbury Mechanics' Institute on the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Their room at the front of the Mechanics' Institute is now generally open for research enquiries between 9am and 2pm on Fridays. On 19-20 November the institute will be the venue for a book launch celebrating 150 years of local government in Malmsbury.

NAGAMBIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

Earlier this year the Nagambie Mechanics' Institute Committee instigated and completed major renovation & restorative works to the original building, circa 1874.

This involved the members working closely with a local commercial builder to ensure the restoration to the front three rooms of the NMI were completed with the care and attention required to maintain the hall's authenticity. The works were funded almost entirely by proceeds from the opportunity shop which is housed in these rooms and is staffed by Institute member volunteers.

Over \$27,000 was spent on this restorative work to the three front rooms and the hallway. The walls and ceilings were repaired and painted; the floors were repaired, sanded and polished, and the ceilings were repaired/replaced and painted. Extra ventilation was added to the sub-floor to avoid future damage from moisture and the front windows of the hall were re-aligned. A split system air conditioning unit was also installed to service these front rooms. The existing locks on the hall doors were replaced with deadlocks.

This amazing work has not only given the front rooms of the building a new lease of life, but has given them an impressive facelift. The commitment from the volunteers allows visitors to the hall and the op shop to enjoy the brighter and warmer venue and the community has responded very positively. The volunteers and those who put in the time and effort to organise the upgrade are commended.

Contributed by Claire Sampson (Project Manager), Yvonne Deering (Secretary)

PRAHRAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The PMI is busy making plans for the move to the new building which will include the installation of a lift along with fittings and fixtures.

In conjunction with the planning process a large survey of the PMI membership has just been carried out, and the feedback obtained will greatly assist the committee in its considerations. A full report of the survey will appear in the next PMI newsletter.

Our hardworking volunteers continue to make a dramatic impact on library operations and preparations for the move, including much tattle taping and maintenance of older items in the collection.

The PMI recently received a grant from the City of Stonnington which will contribute towards the scanning of the PMI's first minute books. The nine minute books covering 1861-2006 were repaired and rebound in 2007, also

thanks to a Stonnington Community Grant.

Anne Palamountain, whom the MIV has engaged for some time to scan historic mechanics' institute records, has already begun scanning the PMI minutes on the MIV's large scanner. When this project is complete we will be in a position to index them and make them available to students and others interested in the history of the PMI.

*Contributed by Christine Worthington
(Promotions & Publications Librarian)*

TALLAROOK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The regular and popular monthly farmers markets continue to be held at the Tallarook Mechanics' Institute. After a sell out and highly acclaimed performance of 'Cave to the Rave' by Damien Callinan in October 2010, Damien returns to the Tallarook Mechanics Institute on Saturday October 8. In the sequel to his multi-award winning Sportsman's Night, Damian revisits the dysfunctional Bodgy Creek Roosters Football Club.

WARRANTYTE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The latest book by author Alan Cornell *The Gentle Art of Tossing* was launched by legendary sports commentator Graham 'Smokey' Dawson on Thursday, 21st July

With free pizza and drinks at bar prices. The book relates the adventures of

Ches Fanning who is a sportscaster reduced to calling sheep dog trials in regional Victoria, where he discovers willowy young darts prodigy, Sam Alley, in a local contest at the Fish Creek Hotel. Together, they set off on a quest for glory that takes them all the way to the Old Dart and back.

The book is for sale from Black Pepper Publishing 403 St Georges Road North Fitzroy 3068 Ph: 9489 1716 Email: bpepper@blackpepperpublishing.com Web: blackpepperpublishing.com

OVERSEAS INSTITUTES

Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria are linked with a common heritage to the nonprofit membership libraries in the United States, and the independent libraries in the United Kingdom.

The Athenaeum Music & Arts Library, located in La Jolla, California, in San Diego County, is one of only 16 nonprofit membership libraries in the United States. The library is devoted exclusively to music

and art. It is open to the public, and members can check out materials for an annual fee.

The Athenaeum publishes a bi-monthly newsletter that provides notice of forthcoming exhibitions and events, a photo gallery, a list of recent donors and contributors to the Athenaeum, and new acquisitions by the library.

Browsing their website <http://www.ljathenaeum.org> provides a glimpse of the variety of art exhibitions, concerts (classical, jazz, and new music), lectures, art classes, tours and special events. The library catalogue is also online. We may be unable to participate in the activities outlined, but it does present an exciting and vibrant organization. Include the Athenaeum Music & Arts Library in your future travel plans to the United States.

The Association of Independent Libraries in the United Kingdom was founded in 1989 to further the conservation restoration and public awareness of these little known but significant cultural institutions (<http://www.independentlibraries.co.uk>) Its primary aim is to develop links between its constituent members by means of co-operative agreements, newsletters, social gatherings and meetings.

The founding members of the Association were all institutions that began life specifically as independently funded subscription libraries. They were founded between 1768 and 1841 in a period when there were no rate-supported libraries and no university libraries outside Cambridge, Dublin, Edinburgh and Oxford. However, more and more people were reading and books were very expensive to buy, so groups of individuals combined together to form libraries which could be both of everyday use and of increasing value in the future. Many of the Association's members also provided other facilities for their members including museums, adult education and dining facilities.

The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (BRLSI) was founded in 1824 and was opened to members in 1825, providing a museum, library and reading room, lecture hall and botanical garden. The BRLSI moved to its present building in 1932, but fell into rapid decline with a dwindling membership following requisition of its building by the Admiralty during World War II. The BRLSI

was successfully re-launched in 1993 and is currently establishing itself as a significant educational resource in the area.

There are lectures, special events, exhibitions, a film society, research groups, specialist discussion groups on literature, science and the arts, and scientific demonstrations for young people. The BRLSI's antiquarian library contains over 7,000 volumes, notably the Jenyns and

Broome natural history libraries. Smaller collections cover local history, theology, travel and government.

This is the Year of the Museum in Bath. You can visit the Online Museum of the BRLSI at <http://www.brslsi.org>. Browse its collections of books, minerals, fossils and other items. The website also has interviews with the lecturers and artists that have participated in the institute's programs.

HISTORY PAGE

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE LIBRARIES.

by Peter Pereyra

For some years I have been researching the circulating, or subscription, libraries of Melbourne. These were privately owned libraries, usually in shops, and often adjuncts to other businesses such as dry-cleaners, haberdashers, newsagencies and the like, which loaned books on payment of a periodic subscription or a small fee-per-book. This aspect of library history has been largely neglected by scholars, and there are few primary sources available to obtain an accurate picture of that trade or even to establish the full extent of the operating libraries. However, an important source of information is the books which were circulated by those libraries, a surprisingly large number of which found their way into the collections of mechanics' institutes. For the most part only the novels from those circulating libraries have survived; mysteries, westerns, romance, adventure stories and so on. I am grateful for the assistance of Joy Leneaux-Gale at the Maldon Athenaeum, and Rex Fuge at the Chiltern Athenaeum, for providing me the opportunity to photograph hundreds of books from those collections, and the stamps and other identifying marks within those books have already provided information on dozens of circulating libraries of which no other mention has been made in any of the available records. To that end, until recently, I kept a desultory record of the significant, and remnant, mechanics' institute libraries with the intention, when time permits, to continue my research using

those collections.

However, in recent meetings of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria, library collections have been increasingly mentioned when discussions touch on the material held by institutes which might be available for the MIRC digitizing program. I consulted the substantial catalogue of correspondence which Pam Baragwanath prepared as a result of her Project MIS-ing program from 2004 to 2008 and it was apparent that the many correspondents not only reported on original documents, such as minute and account books which they held, but also on existing library collections. I have, therefore, been motivated to compile a more accurate list so that the MIRC will have an additional resource, which might prove to be an adjunct to library catalogues, accession registers and borrower's records which are increasingly being loaned for digitization.

It is reasonably certain that over 1200 mechanics' institutes have existed in Victoria since the establishment of the first institute, the Melbourne Athenaeum, in 1839. It can also be stated with some confidence that the majority had a library, whether of reference material or more general reading stock. As Pam states in her book,

The aims of the Institutes were usually: The diffusion of literary, scientific and other useful knowledge and the literary advancement and recreation of its members and the community generally. The means to be employed are – the delivery of lectures, a library of references and circulation, a reading room and the formation of classes.

(Apsley Mechanics' Institute, Back to Apsley, p. 11.)

The MIRC holds a large collection of images of library stamps and labels, and examples of two of those, a book cover embossed with the mark of the North Melbourne institute, and a label from the Miners Rest and Dowling Forest institute appear on the rear of issue number 16 of *Useful Knowledge*. The books are a primary source of evidence of the libraries of which they were a part but in the absence of the library catalogues, little can be known of the complete collections from which much information about the institute and its members can be assumed. This contention was made by Frances Clancy in her report on the Narracan Mechanics' Institute collection held at the Old Gipps town Museum, which provides some information about other libraries which were contemporaneous with the Narracan MI, both in the same region and elsewhere in the State. Frances observed of the Thorpdale collection that it 'is not significant in terms of its ability to shed light on the contemporary life of the area'.

In relation to mechanics' institutes, this is an important point as only a knowledge of the total collection can give an indication of the readership preferences of the institute members. The various documents held in the Narracan collection show that books on mining, agriculture, horticulture, and mechanical trades formed part of the collection. The library records of other institutes, already digitized, show catalogued items relating to viticulture, eucalyptus distillation, irrigation, and construction. While those technical volumes reflect the 'mechanical' trades of the area, even the fiction collections can vary from place to place and provide a further insight into the reading habits of the members.

For many other institutes there is excellent secondary evidence of the library collections



where, in most cases, none of the books appears to be extant. The available records of the Harrierville Mechanics' Institute, digitized and held at the MIRC, include the library catalogue of nearly 400 pages and library account book 1947-1954.

The Barfold Mechanics' Institute was established in 1895 and, as far as is known, only the first minute book is still preserved. It records the first meeting on 3 April 1895.



It was at the meeting held on 22 September 1897 that the rules were drawn up for the management of the library but, unlike Harrierville, it can only be presumed that a library was formed as there is no verification of its existence.

In some instances the existence of a library is suggested only peripherally. The digitised ephemera of the Mordialloc Institute includes an insurance certificate dated 20 September 1888 (bottom of next page) which covered '... Bookcases £33, Books (to be delivered) £108 ...', and a set of library rules dated in the same year. £108 would have provided for the purchase of a significant number of books but there is no other indication of what they were.

The progress already made by the MIRC volunteers in preserving and recording the material of and about the institutes in Victoria is noteworthy and cataloguing information about the library collections can only add to our overall knowledge of the history of the institutes. It is certainly imperative to advance this work as, given the passage of time, some of the books and records will escape our attention or ability to preserve them. One instance is to be found in the Lake Marmal Institute (top of next page) which is showing signs of distress.



And a bookcase inside the building shows damage to the books that remain. Whether they were from the Institute’s original collection is unknown.



This article is intended to be an introduction to what I hope will be a more complete index of the known institute library collections. In a future edition of Useful Knowledge I expect that the list I have already compiled will be published. In the interim, I would appreciate any information relating to institute libraries, or books from any of the institute collections,

which can be added to the list for the next publication.

I can be contacted at the email address: ppereyra@buildingcommission.com.au.

¹ While the library books of the various institute collections often provide information in some aspects of research, the value of the library registers cannot be understated. See especially the article by Wallace Kirsop on the volume from Hobart at page 20 of Mechanics’ Institutes of Victoria, Inc., Useful Knowledge, Melbourne, Australia. Issue No. 16, Summer 2008.

² I have referred to Bronwyn Lowden’s, Mechanics Institutes, Schools of Arts, Athenaeums, etc.: An Australian Checklist, 2nd ed., Donvale, Victoria, Lowden Publishing Co., 2007. There is a later edition but I have annotated my copy of the second edition so all references made in this, and subsequent reports, will be on the basis of that edition.

³ Pam Baragwanath, If the Walls Could Speak: A Social History of the Mechanics’ Institutes of Victoria, Windsor, Victoria, Mechanics’ Institutes Inc., 2000, p. ix.

⁴ Mechanics’ Institutes of Victoria, Inc., Useful Knowledge, Melbourne, Australia. Issue No. 16, Summer 2008. p. 20.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 8. See also Frances’s more comprehensive report on eleven mechanics’ institute collections in The Libraries of the Mechanics’ Institutes of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, Local Government Division, Department of Infrastructure, 2000. This report can be found on the web at: http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/37918/LibrariesMechanicsInstitutesVictoria.pdf

⁶ I am grateful to Bronwyn Lowden for passing on to me these photographs, which she took in 2007.

and agree to pay the sum herein specified in respect of any loss or damage to the property hereinafter described for the amount hereinafter mentioned, not extend or give on any one article the sum specified on each item, namely:

On Building Freehold having Walls Partly Brick, Ceiling Wood, Roof Iron, detached fifty yards, situated Albert Street, Melbourne, and temporarily occupied as mechanics' shop

<i>Plans</i> £ 8.	<i>Demery</i> £ 50.	<i>Seats</i> £ 56.	<i>Book cases</i> £ 33.	<i>Books (to be delivered)</i> £ 108.	<i>Chairs</i> £ 25	
<i>contained therein</i>						<i>£ 342</i>
						<i>£ 942</i>

Nine Hundred and Forty Two Pounds

It is hereby declared that the Assured holds any policy subject to average on Property covered by this Insurance, this Policy shall in like manner be subject to average.

Now be it known that from the *Seventeenth* day of *September* *One thousand eight hundred and eighty nine* and for so long afterwards as the Assured shall be so insured, the *two* Years Executors or Administrators shall from time to time pay or cause to be paid to the Assured the sum required for the Renewal of this Policy, and the Directors of the said Company shall agree thereto by accepting the same: the Funds and Property of the said Company shall be subject and liable to pay, reinstate or make good to the said Assured *two* Years Executors or Administrators such Loss or Damage as shall be occasioned by Fire to the Property above mentioned and hereby Assured, not exceeding on each case respectively the Sum or Sums hereinbefore severally specified and stated against each property.