

# Useful Knowle THE NEWSLETTER OF THE Mechanics' Institutes Of Victoria Inc.

NEWSLETTER NO. 33 – SUMMER 2013/2014

PO Box 1080, Windsor VIC 3181 Australia ISSN 1835-5242 Reg No. A0038156G ABN 60 337 355 989



# HOME IS WHERE THE HALL IS! LAUNCH AT BARFOLD

The Barfold Launch of the Regional Arts Victoria's Home is Where the Hall is Month of November was a triumph. Few, if any event, with which MIV has had involvement, achieved so much in one day. Indeed we celebrated the significance of the Community Hall for the whole of Victoria.

The Barfold Launch was the culmination of the Pieces of Eight Bus Tour during which we saw Halls large and small. The Barfold Hall and surrounds were impeccably prepared for

the occasion by a working bee at which was attended by the Barfold team which included: Sandra Aitken: **Briony** Barker; Phillip and Susan Don; Brenda Hutchinson; John Lovell: Susan McInnes: Su and Terry Mitton; and Elaine Murphy.

The return of student artwork to what had formerly been the Emberton State

School No. 1450 building was also fitting after some 120 years. Laudatory public remarks made on the artwork prepared by students of the Langley and Redesdale-Mia Mia Primary Schools, under the supervision of Emilie Hanson and Sally Gill respectively, were well deserved.

It was a day to Remember the Mechanics' as the large MIV Travelling Exhibition banner on the front fence proclaimed. Inspite of being created in 2000 the exhibition still opens up well after being shown at dozens of venues across the State. The pictures displayed, also

were historic, as many pf the Halls depicted had since been upgraded.

We were honoured that Regional Arts Victoria agreed to MIV's launch. Further support for the Community Hall was clearly shown with the presence of Ms Amanda Millar MLC, representing the Minister for the Arts Heidi Victoria. Ms Liz Zito, Acting Director of Regional Arts Victoria, stated the Home is Where the Hall is month is now in its third year and outlined its growing

> cultural significance. Millar then not only launched Home is Where the Hall is month of November but also launched A History of Eight Central Victorian Mechanics' Institutes: Barfold, Chewton, Elphinstone, Lyal, Mia Mia, Redesdale, Sutton Grange and Taradale, authored by Ken

James and Noel Davis.

It was fitting that Ms Millar also presented a copy of that book, with a suitably worded MIV bookplate, to student representatives of the two schools that had taken part in the art display, to be placed in their library.

The final duty of the day was to unveil the new Barfold Hall sign 'Mechanics' Free Library', wording based on an old photo. Students from both schools, with Elaine Murphy, unveiled the new sign. A resounding 'Three Cheers for the Barfold Hall and all the other Halls!' followed.



Ms Amanda Millar MLC at the Barfold launch. Photo: Kristina Holdaway

WE NEED YOU! (SEE PAGE 6)

# Coming Events - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

#### **2014 - JANUARY**

- Meeniyan Mechanics' Hall, John Murry in Concert. Bookings: 5664 9239
- 25-27 Fryerstown Antiques Fair, Burke and Wills Mechanics' Institute, Fryerstown. Contact: (03) 5473 4373
- Fawcett Hall Australia Day Celebration, 26 Fawcett, 11am.

#### **FEBRUARY**

- 8 MIV Meeting - Footscray Mechanics' 209 Nicholson Institute. Street. Footscray, 10am.
- 25 Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts of New South Wales (AMISA - NSW) Annual General Meeting - Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt St, Sydney, 12.30 pm.

#### **MARCH**

- 5-22 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre. Production: Double Act: A Comedy. Bookings: (03) 9735 1777
- 8 Meeniyan Mechanics' Hall, Neko Case in Concert. Bookings: 5664 9239
- 22 MIV Regional Halls Forum - 10am, John Taylor Room, Kilmore Library, 12 Sydney Street, Kilmore. All welcome. RSVP: (03) 9873 7202

#### **APRIL**

- **TBD** Camperdown Theatre Company. Production: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. Bookings: (03) 5593 1332
- 13-21 Australian Heritage Week -Start planning your event now!
- 25 Mt Eccles Mechanics' Institute Hall -ANZAC Day Community Afternoon Tea,
- 25 Sheep Hills Mechanics' Institute - ANZAC Day Dawn Service and Breakfast, 6am.

#### MAY

- Williamstown Musical Theatre Company, 2-17 Williamstown Mechanics' Institute. Production: Gypsy. Bookings 1300 881
- 10 MIV Meeting, Place and Time TBC.
- 21-22 Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres, Trade Show, Melbourne

Theatre Company's Lawler Theatre, 140 Southbank Boulevard, Southbank

#### **JUNE**

- 14-15 Acheron Mechanics' Institute Gala and Acheron History Project Book Launch. Tel: (03) 5772 1442.
- 20-22 UK Association of Independent Libraries Meeting, Gladstone's Library, Hawarden, Wales.
- 27-29 Robert Burns Scottish Festival, Camperdown Mechanics' Institute. Derrinallum Mechanics' Institute and Scotts Creek Hall. Inquiries: (03) 5593 7100

#### **AUGUST**

- 9 MIV Meeting - Place and Time TBD.
- 17 Wareek Hall Centenary. Tel: Wes Jolley (03) 5462 2225.

#### **OCTOBER**

- 19-26 History Week Start planning your event
- TBC American Membership Libraries Meeting - Athenaeum of Philadephia

#### **NOVEMBER**

- 1-30 Home is Where the Hall is month -Make something happen in your Hall this month and start planning now.
- 11th Australian Library History Forum, 18-19 Sydney.

WANTED: Notice of your forthcoming events. Email: bronlowden@hotmail.com

# MIV Contacts

President, Pro-Tem: Peter Pereyra

ppereyra@buildingcommission.com.au

Vice-President: Robert Kingston

Treasurer: Judy Owen

MIRC/E-News

rjk.kapl@bigpond.net.au Secretary: Judith Dwyer jad134@hotmail.com jpowen@iprimus.com.au mivenquiry@live.com.au

Archives Scanning Project; Plaques; Travelling jad134@hotmail.com Exhibition: Judith Dwyer Research: Pam Baragwanath

pgbarag@alphalink.com.au

Newsletter/Website: Bron Lowden

bronlowden@hotmail.com

### MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

OF WICTORIA

Annual General Meeting

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 9 NOVEMBER 2013

The past twelve months have appeared to pass quickly but on review it seems quite a long time ago that the first of the year's events, the combined conference, took place. I note that event because I made only minor contributions but gained much from the papers presented, and was also privileged to referee the paper of **Dr Martyn Walker** before its publication in *The Australian Library Journal*.

Many of our continuing programs have shown progress and the MIV Scanning Project has added records from a further 16 Mechanics' Institutes. It would be timely in the near future if the scanning team was able to publish a list of the Institutes for which the extant records have been completed as it must now be a significant and very representative sample.

A further seven historical plaques have been ordered and this is a sure measure of the importance that communities are according to Institutes.

I would like to thank all the committee members for their continued support as it is only as a collective that we are able to address the aims of the society. The work of editing and producing our journal, *Useful Knowledge*, has been very ably assumed by **Bronwyn Lowden**. The magazine broadcasts the work we are doing, and the most recent editions have been much enlarged and thematic, and have brought to the fore some interesting aspects of the local Institutes and welcome news of the activities of Institutes abroad. Our thanks must go to **Graham Hughes** who has slowly made the transition out of the Treasurer's position after many years of sterling work, and handed over an accurate set of accounts to **Judy Owen** who we are pleased to now have in the Treasurer's position. Sadly **Jill Bartholomeusz** stood down as Vice-President at the last AGM and **Dr Jill Blee** was elected to the position until she, too, stood down some months ago and our thanks go to both of them for their work.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made to the MIV over an extended period by **Professor Wallace Kirsop** who will not be nominating for the committee at this AGM. Wallace has been a long-standing committee member, Past-President and Life Member who has been very supportive of this society in many ways over the years and his absence will be notable.

# MIV AGM - PRESIDENT'S REPORT CONT...

My special thanks, again, go to **Judith Dwyer**, our secretary, who continues to devote a considerable amount of her time to MIV business, either on secretarial matters, or monitoring the loans of the historical records from the various Institutes throughout the State. Her work, along with that of **Anne Palamountain**, on our digitising project has continued to enhance our image collection which in its scope and depth must surely be unique in any state or country which had a Mechanics' Institute movement.

There are a number of projects that will require our attention over the next twelve months, the most pressing of which is the housing of the MIRC. The latest news on our submission for accommodation at the new Prahran Mechanics' Institute is not encouraging. **Tim McKenna** has reported that our submission has been rejected and we will have to commence negotiations with the PMI Committee. We have no official headquarters and need to maintain the research centre and its equipment and make provision for best use of our resources.

Work has continued on the MIV aims to seek status with the Australian Charity and Not for Profit Commission; the collation and analysis of the surveys should provide insights into the work we are doing well and the expectations of our membership; the continued digitisation of the historical records of the Mechanics' Institutes throughout the State; and our continued contact with other people and agencies who can promote our work or seek our assistance.

Many of our members have been making contributions to the work of **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James** as they prepare the revised edition of *If the Walls Could Speak*. The first edition became a cornerstone work on the Mechanics' movement in the State and the revised edition has identified many Institutes not previously recorded. The new publication should drive renewed community interest in the Institutes and, hopefully, enhance the knowledge and preservation of the historical records if not the buildings themselves.

In an email several weeks ago I gave advance notice that I would not be nominating for any MIV office for the forthcoming year. My research has progressed extraordinarily well and I find that I have less and less time to devote to many of the matters that require time for other duties. It is important that meetings with stakeholders take place and I do not have the flexibility in my employment to attend. It is clear that I do not have a grasp of many of the administrative matters surrounding new pursuits, such as those with the Charity Commission and monitoring the changing requirements of the Association. I will however, nominate for the committee because, given the opportunity to work at my own pace I believe that I can contribute to some new projects such as the digitisation of the MIV correspondence, of which I'll say more in the meeting to follow. I also hope that some of the work in my own research, focussed on the metropolitan area, will enhance the historical fabric of the MIRC collection.

And as a last matter, for my part, in the AGM, I refer to the minutes of the MIV Committee Meeting held on 14 October 2000, when **Dr Frank Hurley** moved that there should be a policy by which Life Membership can be conferred on such Members of MIV who have given exceptional service. **Graham Dudley** proposed the motion for its adoption and it was seconded by **Cathy Milward-Bason**. An amendment to that motion was that it should include the option that persons who have made worthy contributions to the Mechanics Institute Movement may also be granted Life Membership of MIV. The amendment and original motion was moved by Frank Hurley, seconded by Graham Dudley and carried.

# MIV AGM - PRESIDENT'S REPORT CONT...

A motion passed at the Committee Meeting 10 August 2013, regarding life memberships. That motion was that Graham Hughes and Clive Brooks be granted Life Membership of the MIV in recognition of their work and due diligence on behalf of the MIV.

Both Graham and Clive were supporters of the MIV from its beginnings at the Kilmore Conference in 1998. Graham presented a report on behalf of the Berwick Mechanics' Institute & Free Library and Clive represented that of the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute. Both Ballaarat and Berwick were foundation members of the MIV, and the support of Clive and Graham as respective Presidents of their Institutes lent weight to the significance of the MIV.

Clive retired as MIV Treasurer after the 2005-2006 period, when Graham assumed the position. Whilst in the role, Clive prepared the groundwork for sound financial management practices and the establishment of sound financial control policies. These duties were very ably continued by Graham. Both maintained the membership records of the MIV, another task that proved very time-consuming as the organization grew.

Clive served three terms as President of the Ballaarat MI 1997-1999, and also as Treasurer for a total of seven years. He continues to support the Ballaarat MI as archivist and keeper of records.

Graham served as Treasurer at Berwick MI continuously from 1981. From 1989-2000 he was both President and Treasurer. These years saw great growth and financial activity: there was the fund-raising for the new building; gaining Tax Deductibility status for the library; as well as all the financial transactions associated with the operation of a library. After a successful nomination prepared for the Casey Community Volunteer Award Programme his work was recognised, very much in line with the sentiments of Dr Hurley when he proposed the concept of Life Membership, in these words "Mr Hughes has accomplished immense tasks in his years of involvement with the library and his professional skills are without match. The library has been so fortunate to have a volunteer committee member with such skills and one who has been prepared to devote so much time to its interests."

To close, I again thank all of the committee for its support to me over the past three years and I believe that the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria will continue to be viewed as a model for other associations that have similar aims; fostering the preservation and restoration of the social, cultural and physical heritage of Mechanics' Institutes.

Peter Pereyra

Melbourne Athenaeum

Peter Peregra

9 November 2013

# Editorial

Weaving around the hard topics is something we cannot ultimately avoid and therefore must address head on. We have recently received first-hand and secondhand comments that 'Membership of MIV is not worth it!', or words to similar effect.

I can only say an organisation is as only as good as its membership. MIV is reliant on you, its members to help make it work. We are all volunteers and we must ask you to help share that load. That may involve putting up your hand to host an event, serving a year on the Committee, or taking the reins on one of MIV's projects; but first and foremost, keep us informed of what you are doing and have done.

Rightly given the importance and centrality of your Institute, you who manage it justly may have high expectations of MIV. Such hopes can be based on the significant funding support given to Men's Sheds, CAEs and Arts organisations. MIV presently receives no such funding. All who work for MIV do it in their own time, often in addition to full or part time work and usually at their own expense.

MIV is far more than a few libraries, which you can rightly claim, as they have been the beneficiaries of four rounds of grants brokered by MIV. However, your Institute may well have also gained by way of a letter of support or MIV intervention over the years.

You may have attended a Regional Meeting and have not been given an opportunity to fully participate or have not been impressed with what you have seen. If that is the case it is deeply regretted.

The recent Survey gave you as members an opportunity to comment and we will be sending this to a further sampling of Halls in the near future.

In the meantime think about it. What do you want us to do and how will you empower us to do it? If we could take a case to Government stating we have so many Halls, several thousand volunteers who manage them and therefore save taxpayers and ratepayers heaps, surely Government can resource its facilitator, MIV. If that sounds fair then climb aboard and pay or renew your \$20 membership now. If you have already done it, then you have seen the light, and we thank you.

But that is not all. We need your Institute to be an active participant in the great MIV family.

That role can include: as a basic Hall venue; theatre; library; film venue; market venue; dance venue; horticulture venue; lecture venue; or a major annual event.

However you must tell us what you are doing... and regularly. Empower us to help Halls collectively. That is where we will all benefit by way of insurance, utilities costs, purchasing and information sharing.

Ideally we would like to see each region of say six in Victoria holding an annual workshop with a real and inspiring agenda. Finally we must get youth involved in activities in our Halls.

Let us have your views, with no holds barred. In this case silence is not golden! Sharpen up that pencil!

We wish you all a Happy and Safe 2014!

Bron Lowden

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Welcome to our new members:

- Louise Box
- Luke Mitchell
- Seaview Mechanics' Institute
- Taggerty Hall
- Trentham Mechanics' Institute
- Upper Plenty Mechanics' Institute

## E-NEWSLETTERS - SEE IT ALL IN FULL COLOUR

If you would like to receive your newsletter by email in addition to your regular hard copy, please send me an email at bronlowden@hotmail. com and I will add you to our mailing list.

#### NEWSLETTER ROUND

Tick after reading and pass it on
President
Vice-President
Treasurer
Secretary
Committee (Insert your name)

# MIV'S Zravelling Exhibitions COMING TO AN EVENT NEAR YOU?

The most recent showing of an MIV Travelling exhibition was at Barfold Mechanics' Institute during the Launch of Home is Where the Hall is month of November. Featured was Remember the Mechanics? produced in 2000 and designed by Kilmore Mechanics' supporter Gita Lestari. (Gita has since married, has returned to Indonesia and has a young family.) Those who compiled the material for the panels were Pam Baragwanath, Cathy Milward-Bason, Julann Meabank and Jim Lowden.

The large file of some 300 laminated pictures was assembled by Pam Baragwanath and a selection of these can be used at random to suit your region.

The costs of producing the exhibition was by way of a Public Record Office Victoria Grant and it was first shown at the iconic Eaglehawk Mechanics' Institute in the days of the late Mansell Davies.

Inspite of its age, now being thirteen years old, the exhibition and its panels have held up

remarkably well, after having been at dozens of destinations across Victoria. At Barfold the panels were displayed on tables and against the wall. An assortment of historic pictures were on other tables. The large multi-coloured banner again had pride of place hanging on the front fence. This is another item that has survived well.

The MIV Travelling Exhibitions are a good item to centre a History Day or Celebration around and you can do a couple of extra Panels on your own Hall. It is suggested that the Panels feature an A3 overlay of material which can be laminated on both sides. These can then be fixed to a hard backing board with double-sided tape. Stored in brown paper sleeves they can be ready for immediate display at any future event and will last a long time.

You can book either **Remember the Mechanics**? or **Mechanics'...** and **Proud of It!** for a showing at your venue. There is no hire cost, but your Institute will be responsible for its freight to and from your venue.

## MIV News - MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

Victorian Mechanics' Institutes are essentially community organisations fulfilling only a small part of the original aims of their 19th century founders - "the diffusion of literary, scientific and other useful knowledge, amongst its Members". Approximately 30% of those who responded indicated they operated a library, and even fewer offer lecture programs. The primary purpose of MI buildings within Victoria is as a venue for hire/ use by community groups. Use of the facilities is critical to the communities it serves, and over 70% of respondents reported their hall was used at least weekly (even daily). The income derived from regular use of halls, followed by members' subscriptions. This income is used to maintain and administer the hall.

The condition of halls was recorded as good (47%) or excellent (23%), which is remarkable given that 56% of halls are aged between 100 – 150 years old, and 10% are older than 150 years. A demonstration of the importance of the hall within the community, and also that while halls are in regular use, they are less likely to fall into disrepair.

The MIV is seen as the "custodian of MI history" as well as being a source of valuable information useful to all Mechanics' Institutes. The activity that local MI's are seeking from the MIV is to lobby government for support of the halls to provide maintenance or upgrade the facilities, information exchange including grant advice and to assist with the recording and digitising of historical documents, which is seen as an important part of documenting the MI Movement.

Good communication with members is critical to the relevance of MIV. Question 8 demonstrates that *Useful Knowledge* is distributed in more than one way within the organisation committee (often the secretary and pinned in the hall), and is recognised as a good source of information about the other MI's. There is strong support to meet with MI's by hosting a conference or regional meetings. Travel was stated as a deterrent to meetings.

Sue Westwood, MIV Survey Co-Ordinator

If you are interested in seeing the full results of the survey, contact the MIV Secretary.

# MIV Bus Zour - PIECES OF EIGHT: CENTRAL MECHANICS' INSTITUTES - 27 OCTOBER 2013



Tour participants outside the Taradale Mechanics' Institute. (Photo: Kristina Holdaway)

The route was driven and planned as a part of the Launch of **Home is Where the Hall is** month of November at Barfold Mechanics' Hall. The tour started from the Melbourne Athenaeum, 188 Collins Street, Melbourne at 8.45am on Sunday, 27 October. There were thirty-two paying passengers, including three MIV Committee members, on the bus chartered from Jay Tee Coaches of Park Orchards, with Coach Captain **Jeff Taylor** at the wheel.

Joint-Tour leader **Ken James** was also on the bus from the start. Substantial Tour Notes were compiled from material provided by **Pam Baragwanath**, **Noel Davis**, **Ken James** and **Bronwyn Lowden**.

We were met at the Gisborne Mechanics' by Ian and Phyllis Boyd, members of the Gisborne and Mt Macedon Districts Historical Society. The Society had provided a series of documents for our inspection. Three other participants joined the bus at Gisborne. We diverted off the Highway for Woodend to drive by the impressive Woodend Mechanics' which is presently for sale. The next stop was Kyneton where we were hosted by Nea Gyorffy of the Friends of Kyneton Mechanics' Institute for morning tea. At Kyneton we were joined by Joint-Tour Leader Noel Davis.

The next stop was Malmsbury where we were hosted by **Sue Walter** of the Malmsbury Historical Society. Their full history is still emerging. We then rolled on to an immaculate Taradalewherewewerehostedbytheindomitable **Olive Penno** of the Taradale Historical Society. President **Gay Buchanan** and Olive had laid out a display of related photos. We then moved on

to the Chewton Town Hall where we were met by Alan Dry, Sera-Jean Peters and Ken McKimmie members of the Hall managers, The Chewton Domain Society. The Hall was still undergoing its final stages of restoration.

The Burke and Wills Fryerstown Mechanics' Institute was our luncheon stop, which was hosted by the Mechanics' Committee and team led by Fryerstown stalwart **Pat Cubeta**. After partaking of a welcome and filling lunch we then moved on through Campbells Creek,

Castlemaine and Harcourt to Sutton Grange where the Hall Committee member **Noel Davis** hosted us.



Lunch inside the Burke and Wills Mechanics' Institute, Fryerstown.

A picturesque drive took us on to the freshly re-badged Mia Mia Mechanics' Institute, where Hall Committee members **Kate Hicks** and **Anthony Ryan** addressed the group and provided a substantial historical display. We then proceeded back driving by the Redesdale Hall to Barfold, arriving there about 2.40pm.



Celebrations at Barfold. (Photo: Kristina Holdaway)

# MIV Bus Zour - PIECES OF EIGHT CONT...

The Barfold Hall Committee greeted us with the Travelling Exhibition – **Remember the Mechanics'?** banner fixed to the front fence which was also festooned with balloons. The Victorian State Flag was flying from the flagpole. Afternoon tea, which included fruit platters, was served to the around 100 people present, which included about twenty children.

The Barfold Hall was decked out with sixty odd drawings of the Barfold Institute, some line drawings in black and white and framed, others were in charcoal, with another set in vibrant colours. These had been hung on the Saturday morning with the assistance of two teachers from the Langley (Emilie Hanson) and Redesdale-Mia Mia Primary (Sally Gill) Schools. The MIV Travelling exhibition had been set up on tables.



The exhibition set up at Barfold before the crowds arrived.

Presentforthelaunchincluded representatives from the Macedon Ranges Cr John Connor and Mount Alexander Shire Mayor Michael Redden, members of the Board and Staff of Regional Arts Victoria and representatives from several Mechanics' Institutes.

Proceedings were called to order at 3pm and the Acting Director and Cultural Partnerships Manager of Regional Arts Victoria Liz Zito introduced Ms Amanda Millar MLC, who was representing the Minister for the Arts, Ms Heidi Victoria. Ms Millar then launched the Home is Where the Hall is Month of November.

Ms Millar then went on to launch Ken James's and Noel Davis's *A History of Eight Central Victorian Mechanics' Institutes – Barfold, Chewton, Elphinstone, Lyal, Mia Mia, Redesdale, Sutton Grange and Taradale.* The authors then spoke on their experience in recording the history of the Institutes. It was also mentioned that the History of the West Melbourne Literary Institute was still forthcoming.



Noel Davis, Amanda Millar MLC and Ken James at the Barfold Hall. (Photo: Kristina Holdaway)

The presentation of copies *A History of Eight Central Victorian Mechanics' Institutes,* with a suitably inscribed book plate, was made by Ms Millar to each of the schools who participated in the art display, for placing in the School Library.



Amanda Millar MLC presenting books to the local schools. (Photos: Kristina Holdaway)

The final task was to unveil the freshly painted Barfold Mechanics' Free Library sign on the front of the building (pictured below). This was done by representative children from both the Langley and Redesdale-Mia Mia Primary Schools assisted by Barfold Hall President **Elaine Murphy.** The unveiling was followed by a resounding 'Three cheers for the Barfold Hall and all the other Halls.'



The bus then was boarded and departed we for Melbourne Gisborne. via drop offs, for and arrived at the Melbourne Athenaeum at 5.20pm. In all it was day that achieved much.

# Featured Institute

#### NAGAMBIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE



Nagambie is a bustling town with a population nudging 2000 located on Lake Nagambie. It is bisected by the former Goulburn Valley Highway which is separated in the township by a pleasant median strip. The district continues to be supported by agriculture with some cropping, sheep and cattle grazing, and large scale vineyards with Tahbilk and Mitchelton being the most notable. Success on the turf has earned it the title of the 'Horse Capital of Victoria'.

The elegant cement rendered Nagambie Mechanics' Institute has abutted the Highway since it was opened in 1873. It was built on a large block of land which stretched through to Filson Street at the rear. This enabled the construction of a large galvanised iron-clad Hall at the rear of the existing Hall in 1930. This contained a large stage, change rooms and a cinema bio-box and mezzanine store.

The site is freehold and over the years has been progressively managed by a voluntary Committee of Management. In the early 1990s the buildings were showing their age and



fundraising was very much an issue. Someone came up with the idea of establishing an Opportunity Shop and this still continues and thrives today managed by a roster of about a dozen volunteers who open the shop four days a week for four hours.

Whilst the Op Shop were raising the money, the Committee were prioritorising and scheduling the much needed works. The first of which was to keep the water out of the building with basic repairs to the roof, spouting, downpipes and drains. Progressively over the years all the spouting, downpipes and drains have been renewed, with a new roof next on the schedule.

In 2003-2004 major internal works took place with the installation of internal toilets and the plumbing of the building was upgraded. The Hall's jarrah floor was underpinned with new stumps and repaired where necessary to restore it to dance quality. Next, extensive internal ceiling works in the front building repaired and/or reinstated hair plaster work and this was painted.

At this time work was started on the electrical rewiring of the building and since then that task is now complete. Similarly work



started on upgrading the kitchen which has now been completed with reconfiguration and the removal of a wall to enable the more efficient serving of food. The addition of thigh-high swing doors keeps the public at bay. The recent installation of a refrigerator/deep freeze and dish-washer has added to Hall usability.

The upgrade of the supper room/community meeting room, with ceiling work and a repaint, has been augmented with couches and chairs. Historical pictures have been placed around the walls largely sourced from the Nagambie & District Historical Society. Glass-fronted bookcases have been purchased and others built



A group of Op-Shop volunteers

across the old louvred window spaces. These house the Institute's remnant 800 hundred book collection, which was found stored in the bio-box mezzanine. The listing of the collection has revealed the sharing of books with other Institutes such as Seymour and Violet Town.

The old wrought iron cinema type banks of seats, with the letters 'NMI' cast into the ends, have been replaced with lightweight banks of folding seats. (One bay of the old seats is presently in the course of restoration and will be placed back in the Hall as a 'museum piece').

In recent times split-airconditioning and heating has been installed throughout the building which greatly adds to its amenity and usability. It can get cold in Nagambie in the winter.

The Hall volunteers are very pragmatic about their responsibilities and the 'dumping' of unwanted goods were causing a few too many visits to the tip and so they have installed wrought iron gates on both sides of the Hall, with the letters NMI worked into their tops which gives a nice touch. The locks have been keyed to 'Commonwealth' so as the Fire Brigade and other emergency services can gain easy access. The recently installed concrete apron on the



north of the Hall is soon to be roofed over and this will be a valuable adjunct for hot evenings and barbecue events.

The most

recent makeover of the front rooms of the building, which comprise the now very extensive Op Shop operation has greatly improved the ambience and comfort of the shop. The original library shelving now houses the several hundred books for sale.

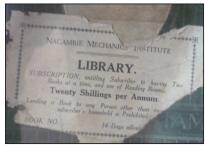
The management of the Op Shop is now well honed and items which 'don't move' are sent on to other agencies or in the case of damaged clothing, these are torn up for rags.

The Committee don't deny it has been a tough road in the last twenty years. They receive no subsidy for providing the community Hall and only recently received a rare \$5000 Victorian Government 'Community Grant' to enable internal works. The annual \$4500 insurance bill certainly bites into their revenue, but at least they are able to meet it.

The Hall has consistent community use. It's placement right opposite the foreshore of Lake Nagambie has enabled the monthly market to hastily take shelter in the Hall for its duration during inclement weather.

The recent unveiling of the larger-than-life statue of **Black Caviar** directly opposite the Hall will also add the Hall's future potential for events and exhibitions.

The Hall is an excellent venue for staging events. It can seat 160 at a cabaret style function or 200 in a



theatre configuration. The large stage with well appointed dressing rooms, with a theatrical capable electricity supply available makes it ideal for stage-based attractions. Similarly the availability of the bio-box can augment lighting or provide for the screening of films.

We take our lid off to the Management Committee: **Bob McMaster**, President; **Lynn Tanner**, Vice-President; **Vonnie Deering**, Secretary; **Helen Perry**, Treasurer; and **Di Akers**, Committee. Then there are: **Claire Sampson**, Grants Coordinator; **Rob Theobold**, Honorary Solicitor; and **Bruce Parris** who holds and issues the keys.

Meanwhile bankrolling the whole operation is the dynamic Op Shop Roster: Di Akers, Alison Howell, Coral Labas, Gwen Machin, Eileen McDonald, Faye McLeod, Isobel McGrath, Coral Paterson, Helen Perry, Sue Pollard, Jess Rayner and Lynn Tanner who have raised the money to enable the Hall to be in such good condition for community use.

We also salute the team of local tradesmen who are on call and ready to help with generally 'materials only' charges. Now that all makes for a very generous, caring and inclusive community.

# MIV'S Historical Plaques Program, NO. 33 AND NO. 35 UNVEILED!

# NO. 33 - OLINDA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE Unveiled 20 October 2013



Olinda Mechanics' Institute's new MIV Plaque.

The centenary of Olinda Mechanics' Institute's quaint weatherboard and much loved community building was celebrated on 20 October. The Mt Dandenong & District Historical Society took the initiative to stage an afternoon and then unveil a plaque. It was a most memorable occasion organised largely by Society stalwart **Pat Hogan**.

The proceedings were called to order by Society President Barrie Gilbert, who introduced several speakers who reminisced about the Hall. Noel Cliff told about his experiences since moving to the district to take over the bakery. He was followed by John Faull who was born in the district and he canvassed everything from school concerts, the football club, weekly dances, the library, and the badminton club which still operates after almost sixty years. Then there was the longrunning four Day Rhododendron Festival. He also traced the evolution of the toilets from being 'out the back', to being half galvanised corrugated tanks, where 'huge' spiders bred prolifically. Pat Sanders continued with the toilet theme. She referred to a single thunderbox for the ladies adjacent to the Hall and the men had a hedge out the side. When it was suggested that the hedge be grubbed to provide for greater visability at the road junction and this would rob the men of their 'toilet', there was a sudden upgrade of Hall toilet facilities throughout the Dandenongs. Ruby also told of the history of film screening in the Dandenongs and the Melbourne Film Festival staged at Olinda in 1952.

The final participant was **Joan Zavan** who had long association with the musical society which operated in the Hall – 'I've had a lot of fun in this Hall'. And so MIV Plaque No. 33 was unveiled, to be followed by a jolly good afternoon tea.

#### NO. 35 - TARWIN LOWER MEMORIAL HALL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE Unveiled 5 September 2013



The Tarwin Lower Memorial Hall Mechanics' Institute Committee with Cr Kieran Kennedy.

It was a warm but wet spring day on 5 September when residents of Tarwin Lower and Venus Bay gathered in the Mechanics' Institute for the celebration of the Institute's 125th birthday. The proceedings began at 10.30am with a morning tea, followed by the unveiling of MIV Plaque No. 35 by **Cr Kieran Kennedy**, Mayor of South East Gippsland Shire Council. The Plaque has now been affixed to the front of the Institute.

To see where all MIV's plaques can be found visit: **vicnet.net.au/~mivic/plaques** for the full list, where to find them at each site, who unveiled them, map, and links to more details and photos.

To order a plaque (They will cost \$195 each from the 1 January 2014, including delivery, and require your installation.) or for more information, contact: Judith Dwyer, Box 482, Berwick, V 3806 or jad134@hotmail.com.

Here are some recent and future MIV Plaques:

- ≈34 Narre Warren Mechanics' Institute
- ~36 Footscray Mechanics' Institute
- ≈37 Kallista Mechanics' Institute
- ~38 Whorouly Library Hall
- ~39 Alexandra Free Library
- ≈40 Lardner Mechanics' Institute
- ~41 Your Institute???

#### CAN YOU HELP?

Some details of the unveiling and installation of MIV's Plaques have passed us by. If you have any information which is not included on our website, please email to Bron Lowden (bronlowden@ hotmail.com) as we would like to have all the details for each Plaque for our own records and for any MIV Plaque hunters our there.

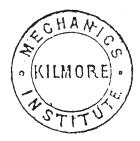
### MIV Regional Forum - WE'RE LISTENING! KILMORE - SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2014

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria is staging a Regional Halls Forum in Kilmore on Saturday 22 March in conjunction with the Kilmore Mechanics' Institute. The venue is the John Taylor Room, Kilmore Library, 12 Sydney Street, Kilmore and the Forum will run from 9am-5pm.

The purpose of this Forum is to canvas critical issues which face all Hall managers and include: Hall and Site Management and Maintenance; Facility Promotion; Event Planning and Management; Community Engagement; Youth Engagement; Emergency Response; Course Organisation and Delivery; Joining an Arts Circuit; Social Media; Insurance; Networking; Fundraising and more.

We would also like to hear of your Hall experiences during the day. Bring your leaflets, newsletters, and any goods or booklets for sale and we will have a market table to sell these.





The Forum is open to all Hall managers not just those of Mechanics' Institutes and you do not have to be a Member of MIV to attend. There will be no charge for the day, and light refreshments will be provided, so those intending to be present must book with Jim Lowden on (03) 9873 7202 or by email theruralstore@bigpond.com. The booking form will also be available for download from the MIV website: vicnet.net.au/~mivic

P.S. If you would like to see an item covered that is not listed above let us know.

# MIV News - YARRA RANGES HERITAGE DAY

On Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the MIV together with the Berwick MI and the Narre Warren MI showcased MI history at the Yarra Ranges Network Heritage Open Day. The event was held at the Upper Yarra Museum, the former Railway Station, Yarra Junction.

The MIV displayed old photographs of halls in the Yarra Ranges Shire, and more recent ones showing the buildings as they are now. To enable people to find them, the photographs were attached to a site map with ribbon.

Berwick MI had its history book for sale and pamphlets were available on the Prahran MI Victorian History Library, the MIV Historical Plaques and the MIV Scanning Project.

Narre Warren displayed a pictorial history of the MI movement, with their own history highlighted. The plaque to be unveiled at Narre Warren MI on November 24th was also on display.

It was an enjoyable sunny day with various groups present. These included local CWA groups, CFA, Eastern Regional Libraries, Lilydale Historical Society, the Lamplighters Association, National Trust, Gulf Station, Kurth Kiln, Coranderrk, as well as two book sellers.

There were also craft exhibitors with childrens' toys, forged metal work and leather



Left to Right: Judith Dwyer (MIV), Jack Stock (MIV), Judy Owen (Narre Warren MI), Corinne Brewis (Berwick MI). (Photo: Russell Owen)

work. The event was extremely popular with the general public and there was plenty of time for groups to network and explore the museum.

Among the visitors were Jack Stock (MIV committee) and Doug Gunn (local MIV member). A great day that we all enjoyed.

Judith Dwyer MIV Secretary

# LAUNCESTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE COLLECTION REPRIEVED

Following on the report on the fate of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Library collection we can now report that on 18 October 2013 the **Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Inc.** was formed. Their prioring was 'locating, selecting, organising, cataloguing and preserving existing materials that were once the property of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute between 1842 and 1929'.

Further on 25 November the Launceston City Council met. The outcome in a nutshell is this. The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery will get the Launceston Mechanics' Institute records, LINC Tasmania/State Library will get the Meston Local and Natural History Collection, but will be required to keep it in Launceston. The Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute will get the rest and that includes the books and runs of periodicals. There may be some argey bargey in relation to the Victorian and Early Australian popular fiction collection but that is for another day. We can report for the present that Australia's oldest remnant Mechanics' Institute collection, which dates back to the 1840s, with items dating even earlier, is now safe.

We can but congratulate all those involved in a very positive outcome, particularly the Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute. It's now down to the hard work to firstly assemble the collection components and seeing just what is there. Then there



The old Launceston Mechanics' Institute (Photo: Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute)



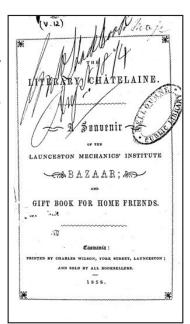
A Launceston Mechanics' Institute Book Stamp found in MIV's Collection.

will be finding an ultimate home where the collection can be stored together and accessed. You may wish to support the cause and become a member and we are sure you will receive a suitably inscribed Member's Ticket.

The Friends will also initially require money for 'housing' [in boxes] and/or restoring valuable items and you might like to make a donation payable to the Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Inc., C/- Peter Richardson, 6 Ellison Street, Newstead, T 7250. Email: launcestonmechanicsinstitute@gmail.com

Checkout: launcestonmechanicsinstitute. blogspot.com.au. For further titillation the State Library of Victoria website (slv.net.au) carries a digitised version of: *The Literary* 

Chatelaine: Souvenir of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Bazaar; and Gift Book for Friends Home (pictured right). It was printed for the Institute by Charles Wilson. York Street. Launceston in 1858. Happy reading.



#### STAGE CURTAINS

Further stage curtains have come to our notice. There is one at the Carpendeit Public Hall and Free Library painted by J[oseph?] Little (d. 1907?) of Hawthorn.

There is yet another player in stage scenic painting, Ernest Clay (d. 1923) of North Richmond. In 1902 he was selected from five tenders to paint and decorate the Kyneton Mechanics' Institute for £100. It was noted 'this gentleman has now completed his task in a manner that reflects the highest skill on his ability and on the quality of his workmanship. Mr Clay's design was chosen from an open competition, in which designs were shown by leading Melbourne artists, and the wonderful transformation effected in the appearance of the hall has fully vindicated the committee's choice. The panels of the ceiling area are a rich golden buff decorated in Renaissance. The ceiling principals, which were of a very obtrusive appearance formerly, now form a very pleasing addition to the embellishments. They have been coloured turquoise blue with white relief ornamentations. The frieze of the walls is a light amber, upon which is a free and bold design artistically worked in with cornucopias and flowing ribbons, divided from the filling of the wall with a rich celestial blue band. The walls are decorated with a series of square Greek panels alienated with oblong panels. The square panels are in a light terracotta colour, upon which is a bold Renaissance ornament in high relief. These panels are supported by a rich stile of a very delicate tinted turquoise blue embellished with white laurel leaves. The oblong panels, the ground of which is Tuscan brown on which are ornaments of a pearl grey, which is greatly enhanced by a surrounding fine gold line. The supporting stiles are in light old gold. The dado of the hall is a rich russet green divided from the upper panels with a bold dada rail in full Greek character both in ornament and colour, the whole giving a most harmonious effect. The proscenium of the stage is tastefully decorated in a series of panels of design of Louis VII. The soffitt of the proscenium is paneled out in exquisite floral designs, and on the top wall of the stage Mr Clay has ingeniously introduced a crescent panel so as to give a more majestic appearance to the stage. The ornaments are of rich pearl grey Renaissance in high relief, and on the spandrel of the panels at the side supporting the same he has introduced the portraits of



The recently renovated interior of the Kyneton Mechanics' Institute

Professor Huxley, Mozart and Shakespeare, representing science, music and literature. The stage scenery has also been renewed by Mr Clay, who has supplied an entirely new landscape. The general effect aimed at by Mr Clay was to have a luminous effect by gas light, and his object has been achieved to an astonishing degree.' (Many thanks to Mal Closter, of the Kyneton Historical Society, who drew our attention to this article that appeared in *Kyneton Guardian* on 16 March 1902.).

An interesting earlier reference is in connection with the lining of the Rosedale Mechanics' Institute building in early 1880, where it states 'In addition to the works already mentioned, the stage has been entirely renewed and decorated; a new proscenium has been formed and painted, the colours corresponding with those of the ceiling, relieved by groups of flowers; and a new set scene featuring a Venetian interior, with a distant view of the Carnic hills, has been produced from the brush of Mr Adamson, scenic artist.' (An Alfred Henry Adamson (d. 1936) worked with JC Williamson and Bland Holt.)

Other artists in the field include: Charles H Hamea at Alexandra; Barry Jaggers, with numerous examples; and F Winters at Bullumwaal.

#### THE ARTS AT YOUR PLACE

Regional touring is a celebration of place and the people who make places special. Touring empowers communities to participate in an ongoing national festival of performing arts, as familiar spaces for art connect together to make an Australia-wide journey of art.

For generations Mechanics' Institutes have housed all manner of community events including professional theatre shows and live music. **Regional Arts Victoria** regularly tours shows to Mechanics' Institutes and Town Halls across the state. Although many smaller, volunteer-run venues may feel that they don't have the financial or technical capacity to host touring productions, we provide a range of tools that makes it as easy and risk free as possible.

Our **Registered Presenter** system allows access to a range of touring and presentation support mechanisms, and a network of likeminded venues and organisations. We also provide access to Arts Victoria's **Guarantee Against Loss** program, offering support if poor ticket sales lead to a financial loss.

With the support of these tools we have toured exceptional productions to some of Victoria's most remote Mechanics' Institutes and Halls of all shapes and sizes. Highlights from this year include: internationally acclaimed artist Jeff Atchem with his incredible show *Sticks, Stones, Broken Bones*; the epically talented music act *The Twoks;* the hilarious and poignant *Everything Must Go* by Rachel Leary; and the bizarre blend of science and physical theatre that is *Squaring the Wheel* by Jens Altheimer.

Our experience of touring productions to Mechanic's Institutes and Community Halls is universally one of celebration. When artists are invited into these communities, the invitation is genuine and locals spare no effort to welcome the travelling artist and in supporting the show. It's a story of full-houses, of deep connection between artists and community members, of bake-offs, workshops, and raffles and of a thirst to do more and more.

If this story sounds like one you'd like to be part of why not consider getting involved?

#### **Registered Presenters**

Registering as a Presenter gives an organisation access to the **Guarantee Against Loss** programs, allowing financial support should a performance bring an unforseen box-office loss.

Regional Arts Victoria manages the Registered Presenter database on behalf of Arts Victoria.

Regional Arts Victoria's Group Members can be registered presenters. Organisations that are not eligible to become Group Members may still be eligible to become Registered Presenters if they meet a range of other criteria. If you'd like to find out more, contact Regional Arts Victoria on 03 9644 1800.

#### What is Grantee Against Loss?

There are two types of Guarantee Against Loss.

Guarantee Against Loss Category One is managed by Regional Arts Victoria and provides support against unforseen box-office loss for regional Victorian arts groups who are planning a one-off performance event. Presenters must be Members of Regional Arts Victoria and signed up as a Registered Presenter.

Guarantee Against Loss Category Two is managed by Arts Victoria and provides support against unforeseen box office loss for presenters of productions on a tour. Presenters must be members of the Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres (VAPAC) or be signed up as a Registered Presenter.

# Our newest initiative – Connecting Places, a community managed touring project.

Connecting Places is a trial initiative of Regional Arts Victoria planned for 2014. Connecting **Places** recognises the important contribution made by volunteer organisations by placing them firmly at the helm of a touring selection and delivery system, with appropriate backing from tour coordination experts. Connecting Places is designed to inspire a significant increase in performances hosted by volunteerand community-managed organisations. We hope the project will encourage networking between volunteer organisations, either through the Connecting Places communication and feedback channels or less formally, leading to a stronger voice within Regional Arts Victoria and the touring sector in general.

If you would like to know more about any of the information provided in this article, contact Regional Arts Victoria on 03 9644 1800 or email enquiry@rav.net.au, or visit www.rav.net.au.

#### **Useful links:**

Arts Victoria and **Guarantee Against Loss Category Two -** http://www.arts.vic.gov.au/
Funding\_Programs/Regional\_Development

Kane Forbes Manager, Performing Arts Touring Regional Arts Victoria

#### THE PERFORMING ARTS

Since their inception in various towns and cities around the world, Institutes have provided a venue for the performing arts, whether that be local performers or travelling showman or shows. As Institutes undergo renaissance around the State, the performing arts are playing an increasing part in Institute life and more importantly providing revenue from event profit and hall hire.

Small Institutes from Mia Mia or Mollongghip to Tallarook are showing that you do not have to be big to be part of the action. Victoria has quite a way to catch up on the UK and even Western Australia, but we are moving in the right direction. An increasing number of Halls are producing specification sheets with stage size, power capability, and hall capacity, as well as any sound and lighting availability.

The UK have made available grants to Community Halls to upgrade their facilities to enable tailor-made sound systems, drop down screens, and lighting systems to be installed. This enables travelling shows to access and perform at small venues at minimal cost. However in Victoria at least one regional centre has provided a mobile unit to carry 'a package' sound and lighting to small venues to make regional touring possible. This is an interesting pilot scheme, worthy of wider emulation.

Increasingly students and emerging graduates from various performing arts, staging and promotional courses need 'work experience' and they may be prepared to be part of your special event such as a centenary or even a **Home is Where the Hall is** event. However they need considerable notice to arrange this.

We recently learned of one student with skills in event management, and more importantly a flair for sourcing funding, who assisted a town with their big event over a year-long period. That student attended critical-path meetings throughout the year and at the conclusion of the event assisted with the grant acquittal forms.

Involvement of your local or regional school could have very positive outcomes. Graphic arts students could design advertising posters or event logos. Media students could write press releases to progressively promote an event. These are but some of the ways we can involve youth in our Halls. In any case involve your local school or schools in either performing or assisting with the next event in your Hall. At the

very least you need volunteers for staffing events and this could be their life-long introduction to your Institute.

Your town may have alumni who have even made it big in the wide world of the performing arts. Have you thought of inviting them back for a command performance? You could well be surprised, as was one town in NSW.

One final point if you are upgrading your Hall's facilities in the near future, please also think of upgrading your stage area. This could give your Hall the edge over the new spaces such as pavilions that are being created at the recreation grounds.

In any or all cases let us have your feed back – both good and bad – your experiences will be valuable case studies for us to assist us in the future.

#### Useful sources and websites for inspiration:

#### Regional Arts Victoria (Est. 1969)

Level 3, 370 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, V 3000. Tel: (03) 9644 1800; Fax: (03) 9646 3832; Websites: rav.net.au; Email: enquiry@rav.net.au and homeiswherethehallis.com

# Australian Performing Arts Centres Association (Est. 1987)

Box 265, Glen Forest, WA 6071. Tel: (08) 298 8822; Fax (08) 9298 8833. Website: apaca.com. au; Email: admin@apaca.com.au

#### Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres

79 Bryces Lane, Newham, V 3442. Tel: (03) 5427 0180; Fax 5427 0851; Website: vapac.org.au; Email: exec@vapac.org.au

This Association has sixty members and conducts an annual Trade Show, the next of which will be held on 21-22 May at the Melbourne Theatre Company's Lawler Theatre, Southbank.

# **University of Melbourne - Victorian College of the Arts**

234 St Kilda Road, Southbank, V 3006. Tel: (03) 9035 9495; Website: vca.unimelb.edu. au; Email: 13MELB@unimelb.edu.au or vcastudentassociation@gmail.com

#### Lyrebird Arts Council Inc.

230 Garvies Road, Nerrena, V 3953. Tel: (03) 5664 9239; Website: lyrebirdartscouncil. com.au; Email: lyrebirdarts@hotmail.com; suzanne8487@gmail.com

#### THE PERFORMING ARTS CONT...

Lyrebird travels local and international acts in the Gippsland region and stages an annual Summer of the Soul Concert at Mossvale Park in Gippsland in January.

# THE THEATRE COMPANIES BRUNSWICK METANOIA THEATRE



Metanoia Theatre was recently formed to take over the management and programming of the Brunswick Mechanics' Institute building and its performing and meeting spaces. Prinicipals of the group have widely diverse theatre related skills and are Gorkem Acaroglu, Greg Ulfan, Shane Grant, Leslie Simpson and Rohini Sharma. The Mechanics' building has been operating for many years as a theatre and meeting space, is well equipped and is NBN connected, with some parking, and easily accessible to public transport. The principal spaces are the 103 seat studio or gallery exhibition space, and a 60 seat studio. They are presently ramping up interest to become a significant venue in the **Melbourne** International Comedy Festival and are seek expressions of interest from individuals and groups. They also plan a future program of workshops, participatory art works, forums and discussions to engage audiences and artists. Tel: (03) 9387 3376. Website: metanoiatheatre.com; Email info@metanoiatheatre.com.

#### **CAMPERDOWN THEATRE COMPANY**



Formed in 1947 and based on Camperdown's Theatre Royal/Mechanics' Institute, the company normally produces one big event each

year. The 2013 production was the ambitious Hairspray which attracted a combined audience of over 1500. Local charities benefited from a distribution from the charities gala by \$3200. In all the show, under the direction of Kate Meade, involved some sixty people including a cast of twenty-nine and a band of eleven. Their pantomime Jack and His Amazing Technicolour Beanstalk opened in December. In the meantime casting and preparations are in hand for a production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat to open in April. The company is currently regrouping after news that their dynamic President the Rev. Cameron McAdam has received a call to Mt Eliza and his inspirational role will be hard to fill. Tel: (03) 5593 1332; Website: camperdowntheatrecompany.com.

# FOSTER AMATEUR MUSIC AND DRAMA ASSOCIATION



Photo by Graeme Saunders; Courtesy of Monument Australia website.

The Foster Mechanics' Institute was where this group was established in 1953. After the Institute burned down it was replaced by the new Foster War Memorial Art Centre in 1966. It was officially opened on 12 November by the Governor of Victoria Sir Rohan Delacombe. This gave a huge boost to the Company and its ongoing productions have involved, inspired and enriched the community of South Gippsland. It produces one or two full length productions annually, as well as the annual two-day One Act Play Festival, which attracts more than a dozen Companies, mostly from Melbourne. The sponsorship of the local Bendigo Bank has enabled leading Companies to participate. This vear a section will be included for schools. The Company tackles the hard projects and have also produced several locally written works over

the years, which has resulted in an impressive range of awards. FAMDA also has an affiliate the **Prom Coast Singers**, which has just come out recess, to perform for the sixtieth anniversary of the Theatre Company which was staged on the weekend of 29-30 November. FAMDA members perform at events throughout the region. Contact: Peter Clyne; Tel: 0400 867 872; Website: foster.vic.au/famda/; famda.org.au; Email: via website.

#### LILYDALE ATHENAEUM THEATRE COMPANY



The Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company was founded in 1975 by Russell Johnson (1927-2009), Geoffrey Page (1924-2002), Pat Lyall, and Dr Bill and Gwen Hardy. The aim was to resurrect the Athenaeum building, erected in 1888, from its decrepit condition and turn it into a performing theatre space. This has been achieved beyond the wildest dreams, inspite of some hick-ups along the way, like the fire in 1991. The company has consistently produced award winning productions, from their program of four productions a year. During the 2013-14 break, a new suite of theatre seats is being installed. Further in 2014 online bookings will be possible. Lilydale Athenaeum also sell season tickets which helps to bring the price of shows down. Tel: (03) 9735 1777; Website: lilydaleatc. com; Email: a.t.c@bigpond.net.au.

#### VALLEY PRODUCTIONS THEATRE COMPANY



Formed in 2008 this Company is based on the Warburton Mechanics' Institute and the adjoining Arts Complex. The Company normally produces plays involving both adult and youth roles. Contact: Sally Kellerman; Tel: 0410 480 887; Website: valleyproductions.org.au; Email: valleyproductions@hotmail.com

#### WARRANDYTE THEATRE COMPANY



Formed in 1975 this group has been largely responsible for the survival of the Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute Hall within the community. Funds generated from their productions have been ploughed back into Hall restoration and just about every aspect of the Hall has been updated since 1975. The Company normally produces three events a year: the Fantasy Follies; One Act Plays; and a full scale production. To this has recently been added the Warrandyte Youth Theatre, which produces one play each year. The Company has had challenging times, but with a sponsorship program now in place, it frees up the Company to get on with what it does best. Their website gratefully acknowledges the sponsors with their logos. Contact: Daryll Mitchell; Website: Warrandytehallarts.asn.au; Email: renacent10@gmail.com

# WILLIAMSTOWN MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY



This group grew out of the Williamstown Light Opera Company which was formed in 1954. Relaunched under the new title it presents two adult and one junior musical each year. In its long life the Williamstown Light Opera Company produced over one hundred shows including the Gilbert and Sullivan standards. In its new incarnation the Company produces contemporary shows and in 2011 it achieved wide praise and awards for its production of **Chicago**. Three Productions are planned for 2014: **Gypsy**, a Junior Production; and **Frankenstein**. Season packages are available and bookings can be made on-line. Tel: 1300 881 545; Website: wmtc. org.au; Email: perform@wmtc.org.au

#### MUSIC IN THE MECHANICS'

From the establishment of each Hall, music has been part of its activity and life. Each Hall generally opened with a concert and ball and a piano was used. In some cases they were borrowed, in other cases they were purchased outright, but in other instances they were purchased on time payment. At least two companies were involved in the sale of pianos on time payment and they were Allans and Winterthur. Occasionally Winterthur made pianos available on a try before you buy basis. Both companies provided annual tuning services.

The availability of a piano locally meant teachers could travel to a district by train or later by car and use the local hall piano to give lessons to local students. This provided a ready supply of pianists for local events and the churches.

The piano was the core of any dance orchestra which assembled further available instruments around it. Generally there was a drum, with a violin, accordion, saxophone, trumpet, cornet, etc. Such bands sometimes just comprised family members with an occasional friend and they sometimes travelled extensively in a region with regular Friday and Saturday night gigs for dance circuits. One Hall history recently sighted listed the various bands that had played in it over the years and it brought home that a band listing, however incomplete, should be added to any future Hall history. The listing of instruments and their players would be the ultimate goal.

Many Halls became the home of community bands and they practiced in the Hall. In the case of some larger Institutes, which had a substantial Hall Reserve, bands played in the rotunda which was constructed adjoining the Hall.

In certain districts, particularly the Western District, Pipe bands were started and later the Salvation Army provided the basis for the assemblying of town bands.

The State took a lead role in assembling bands. Military bands were commissioned with each military establishment.

The Victorian Police Band was formed in 1897 under the leadership of Constable George Thomas Wescott. They were joined by the Victorian Police Pipe Band in 1936, which was largely kitted out by WE McPherson, hence it still wears the McPherson tartan. The Pipe Band has had an illustrious career appearing at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 1975 and winning the World Pipe Band Championship





in 1998. Today the **Police Band** unit comprises three sections: the **Show Band**; **Code One**, a Rock and Pop Band; and the **Pipe Band**. Combined, and sometimes they actually do, they did over sixty gigs around Victoria last year. The future of these bands is under review but they are currently based at suburban Westgarth and they are available on application to perform at community events and details can be found on their website: police.band@police.vic.gov.au.

Your attempt to book them free of charge for your event may well tip the scales for their retention, try and book them now for an event in your area.

The Victorian Concert Orchestra was formed in 1926 under the leadership of Arthur Calwell during John Allan's Government. (Allan was a stalwart of the Kyabram Mechanics' Institute.) Largely comprised of Public Servants, the band has had a hand to mouth existence and for a time was personally funded by Premier Sir William McPherson. The Band still exists today with substantial funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Charitable Trust. The Victorian Concert Orchestra shares the Old Drill Hall in A'Beckett Street, Melbourne with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. For bookings and inquiries (03) 9329 6254. Check out the website: victorianconcertorchestra.org. au. Book them for your next event, for there is an old saying 'If you don't use it, you'll lose it.'

# Opinion

### GET YOUR NAME OUT THERE BY JIM LOWDEN

In recent months I have had some involvement with a massive trawl across the State of Victoria seeking information on past, present and successor Mechanics' Institutes. It's been an amazing experience. From time to time I see Institutes with no identification board on the front, let alone a 'For Hire' sign in the window. Similarly we see images on the internet that do not have signboards.

Further itinerant photographers are putting up random pictures of Halls on Flickr and Bonzle, but alas they do not have addresses or contact details, although a couple did have large signboards in front with readable contact details, if enlarged.

Sure locals may know what the Hall is called, or who the person to contact for hiring maybe but what of the other several million Victorians who may drive past your Hall. These range from tourists to potential users. Those users can be from: 4WD Clubs; Field Naturalists; Bird Observers; Bushwalkers; University Study Teams; family historians; groups looking for an occasional bolthole; even brides to be. They can all be people who could book your Hall for a day or even a weekend. There could even be repeat business.

If there is no sign, who do they contact? Your Hall may be listed on the internet with a widespread listing site, which seems to be out of date as numbers given are now answered as 'disconnected'. Similarly Shires on occasion have not been supplied with current or any information.

Some Halls have had past bitter experience of 'trashing' by 18th and 21st birthday events. You do have the right to refuse or alternatively you can place a hefty \$1000 or even \$1500 cash bond on such events. If things get out of control one Hall manager we know simply wanders over to Hall and takes the electricity fuse out.

I am well aware of Halls being financially 'skint', but believe me advertising pays. There must be some way to scrape some money together. Be brave write



or phone Apex, Lions, Rotary, the local Masonic Lodge or even the Court Poor Box may yield some shaekels. Contact the local signwriter to do a sign for you either directly on to the Hall or on a board. Similarly a prominent 'For Hire' sign or at least a sign in the window. Those with porches may also consider a holder with a trifold leaflet with some details of your Hall's history, a form for membership with a space for donations, and current contact details. These could be printed on a computer printer or photocopied by the dozen as required.

I recall seeing a television program where dozens of people descend on an isolated town each year and are progressively restoring it. Perhaps one such group could be persuaded to adopt your Institute for some annual TLC. But without contact details, it is all too hard!

Remember faint heart never won a fair lady or handsome man. Get out there and promote your Hall. List it with MIV along with contact details. Let us know of forthcoming events. List your Hall with your Shire. Better still invite them to have a meeting in your Hall. Invite your local MP

and Councillors to events and if your Hall is in serious need of an upgrade keep your MP in the loop. They may have an allocation and a thousand or two could be a possibility.

There is an old saying 'If you don't use it, you will lose it.' This is very applicable to your district Hall.

Top: Dean Hall's sign certainly stands out from the road; Left: Sassafras Mechanics' Institute's simple window sign grabs the attention of passers by from the

footpath.



#### DANCE ON

The dance story still continues with other significant dance venues being brought to out attention. The following are but two. If you know of others contact us.

# COOROY MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HALL (Est. 1926)



From Queensland we attach an interesting article by Betty Sutton from her *Cooroy Memorial School of Arts & Hall: A Brief History* (2013) headed 'A bit of old world Ball etiquette – The Dance Card! Dance cards are small folding cards, usually palm-sized or smaller, with a list of dances scheduled for the evening: a miniature program. Each lady is given a dance card as she enters the ball room, and the men may receive cards also.

Next to each musical number is a blank line where she may write a man's name (or have him write it) to reserve her company for that dance. Reserving someone's company is really 'dating ahead'! The advantage to the lady is that as she fills her dance card with promised partners, she worries less about having to sit out some dances. If she is popular or diligent early on, she may fill her card for the whole evening. The advantage to the man is similar. He needn't scramble to get some lady's attention after a musical number ends, then quickly ask her hand for the next dance. So far so good. It's a charming custom with a long history as an auxiliary to dance, although much less important than costume.

Then we come to the 'Lost Partner Waltz'! What do we do when we have a reserved dance and you cannot find your 'date ahead' or wish not to as you have strayed and found a preferred option? Easy. Smile, grab the first available person, and enjoy the dance! After all, Cooroy Balls have been the event where many a romance has blossomed, which in turn led consequently to marriages, christenings, life celebrations and anniversaries all held over the years in the same hall. Very romantic!' (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

# POPANYINNING AGRICULTURAL HALL (Est. 1893)



Established in 1893 as a siding on Western Australia's Great Southern Railway, the township was originally known as Popaning. It has two possible meanings based on Aboriginal dialects one being 'waterhole' and the other 'place where battles are remembered'.

A Hall site was given for lots 19 and 20 Francis Street, and the Popanyinning Agricultural Hall was built of stone with brick quoins by the Howard Brothers, with George Denton who carried out the stone work. During construction one of the builders fell from the roof and later died.

The Hall was opened on 24 November 1905. It has a distinctive verandah covered side porch entrance, and a new brick entrance foyer at the front. A brick kitchen has also been added at the rear, which has recently been upgraded.

It has a distinctive World War I Honour Roll, featuring a wooden surround, an embossed decorated copper overlay, on which are individual brass plates, fixed with rivets, and carrying the names of individual soldiers.

The Hall was the subject of an arson attack in 1978, but a resident raised the alarm and only minor damage occurred to the stage.

The Hall has staged a regular monthly dance on the third Saturday of each month for the past forty years. It still has an existing set of dance cards, which not only feature regular steps, but also the: Altona Barn Dance; Destiny Waltz; Emmada; Fascination; Friendly Waltz; Killarney Waltz; Phyllette; St Kilda Barn Dance; and Teddy Bear Picnic.

The town, with a population of 100, has a large sheet metal engineering works which has been conducted by **Don** and **Jill Bird**, since 1973, **Bird's Silos and Shelters**. The entrance signage to the town states 'Hard to say, Nice to stay.' The locals call their town 'Popo'. (*Photo: Cuballing Shire Council website*)

# Around the Institutes

This column is comprised of contributed articles and those written 'in house'. Whilst care has been taken to ensure dates and facts, the scant history of Institutes makes it an impossible task to verify these. If you find a date, spelling or fact incorrect let us know and we will publish amendments in our next issue. Our newsletter is indexed to enable histories of various Institutes to be aggregated over time.

# ARTHURS CREEK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1887)



**Shining Floors** recently completed the resurfacing of the Hall floor, partially financed by a generous un-named donor of \$1000. A recent working bee cleaned up, cleared the garden and planned the shelving and the painting of Laurie's Shed.

#### **AIRLY CLYDEBANK HALL (Est. 1905)**

This is the tale of one hall on two sites. The current Hall was originally built at Clydebank in 1905 and was shifted to Airly in 1955. The longrunning dispute over a part of the Hall land which had been donated to the Hall but unfortunately not registered on the title is over. The subject land has been finally acquired by compulsory acquisition. The Hall Committee can now get on with it and to celebrate recently staged an Embracing Our Hall Bush Dance. They have been involved the CWA and CSIRO in staging a Month of Sundays Science Exhibition in their Hall.

# BEECHWORTH ATHENAEUM - BURKE MUSEUM (Est. 1856)

The advertised sale in Ireland of a pistol belonging to ill-fated explorer **Robert O'Hara Burke** caused considerable Australian interest.



Robert O'Hara Burke's Pistol set. Image courtesty of The Border Mail website.

The gun was presented to Burke by his Victoria Police colleagues in November 1858 on his transfer from Beechworth. Exactly how it got to Ireland and in to its long-term ownership is unclear. Dublin auctioneer **Stuart Cole** was most certainly surprised to be knocking the item down to Australia's, Victoria's **Indigo Shire Council** for \$18,000. Needless to say that the Burke Museum's **Linda Peacock** was overjoyed. 'It's an iconic piece of Australian history. We believe Beechworth is the right place for it to be.' Complete with its case and loading paraphernalia it will soon take pride of place in a new Burke Museum exhibit.

#### **BENGWORDEN HALL (Est. 1883)**

A community casserole was held in the Bengworden Hall on 18 October 2013 to celebrate the opening of the newly renovated kitchen. Vinyl lino has been laid in the meeting room and 7kw heater/cooler has been installed to facilitate greater year-round meeting use. This event follows hard on the heels of a highly successful **Better Beef Forum** conducted in the Hall in September. The afternoon tea was catered for by the indomitable **Bengworden Country Women's Association** team.

#### BYADUK HALL (Est. c1890)

The Byaduk community recently celebrated their 107th **Annual Spring Show** in their well maintained Hall. The Hall was built in 1904, although the Institute appears to have been started about 1890 and may have operated as a library in the Byaduk State School. In any event its library function ceased in 1955 and the biobox was pulled down in 1960.

#### **CASTLEMAINE LIBRARY (Est. 1855)**



The long-running **Friends of Castlemaine** (FOCAL) completed another year of frenetic activity with recent their wellattended Annual General Meeting. Denise Jepson was re-elected President, with Eve Banks as Vice-President, Ann McAlpin Secretary and Karin Moses as Treasurer. The Committee

comprised: **Pam Harris**, **Jenny McIntyre** and **Gloria Meltzer**. Their AGM was concluded with a talk by local author **Susan Green** who spoke of her love of libraries and how they influenced her own writing of young adult literature.

# CHRISTMAS HILLS MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1873)



Before (left) and after (right) the rebuild at Christmas Hills.

Things are moving at Christmas Hills. It started with an invited public viewing on Saturday, 21 September. Then followed a Grand Opening Ball which celebrated the official opening of the new **Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute** building on Saturday 26 October. Longtime trustee and Hall stalwart **Harold Muir** performed the honours in front of a crowd of about one hundred people. **Harold** and his wife **Mary** continued the dancing well into the early hours. The Hall features dado lining boards and again features the Red Cross Honour Roll and a new historical display. A feature of the new Hall is the distinctive wooden trestle tables which were constructed from recycled flooring from the old hall.

The hill side site has been imaginatively landscaped with native plants. Nearby are the two tennis courts which have been refurbished and now include a petanque area. External paving enables full use of the facility on warm balmy evenings. Congratulations all, it has been a long time coming, but the wait has been well and truly worth it.

# DEAN HALL AND MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1890)



Ariel view of the Dean Kite Festival. Photo by user jhn.holgate at Extreme Kites website forum.

On Sunday 15 September Dean recently hosted the **Dean Kite Festival**. It was a great day which attracted all manner of kites including one which carried a skycam to look down on the event's tranquil rural setting. Check out the facebook site and the film clip. Register your interest with Liz Kelly (lizkelly1967@gmail.com) in case it is being staged again this year. Congratulations all on such an innovative event.

# DERRINALLUM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. c1906)



A good example of sharing is the spreading of the Camperdown Robert Burns Scottish Festival to the region with 2013 gigs, by local and international artists, being staged in the Derrinallum Institute and Scotts Creek Hall. (Camperdown was gifted a statue of Robert Burns, of impeccable provenance, in 1883 and after being vandalised in 2009 it has since been restored and moved indoors to the foyer of the revamped Corangamite Civic Centre.)

#### **DOOKIE MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1888)**

The Dookie Hall was built on land originally owned by John Curtain and was known as Victory Hall. In 1897 it was purchased by the Dookie Public Hall and Library Company for community use. It also housed the community library for a period. It had no supper room, so when needed the skin store next door was cleaned out and this served the purpose. The Shire purchased the Hall in 1951 and changed the name to Dookie

Memorial Hall and built an abutting supper room around the same time. It was the home for the Dookie Brass Band for a time. Dookie CWA was founded in the Hall in 1929 and still meets there regularly. In recent times the Hall has undergone a major upgrade and is now well poised to become a regional centre for the arts. Dookie recently celebrated the conclusion of major works with a celebration of film and music.

#### **FAWCETT HALL & FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1882)**



Work in progress... the wall frames are up and the decking going down at the Fawcett Hall. Photo: Fawcett Hall facebook

The kitchen, bathrooms and decking additions to Fawcett Hall are now well under way with the nearly all of the wall framing complete and the decking almost finished.

Fawcett is also currently conducting a major fundraising event for the Hall by selling named bricks and pavers to supplement the grant received for the building extensions. For \$50 your name will be engraved onto an individual brick and for \$100 the name of your family members will be engraved into a paver or double brick set. All of these bricks and pavers will be installed in the pathways to surround the Hall.

Applications for the first round of 100 fundraising bricks and pavers close on 1 March 2014, so get in quick and make your name a part of Fawcett Hall's history!

For more information: http://www.rossparkwoolshed.com.au/community/fawcett-hall/Fawcett-Hall.asp - follow the links to the application form.

#### FERNBANK MECHANICS' HALL (Est. 1884)

The Hall was built and opened in 1884. Extensions were opened by then Shire President Cr Graeme Evans in 1984 and a plaque was unveiled to commemorate the occasion. Recently three local potters **Malcolm Boyd, Paul Jennings** and **Wendy Reeves** showcased their art during

a weekend. There was much activity with pot throwing, glazing, firing, etc. and of course some very welcome sales. This a great idea for local artisans to get together in the local Hall to jointly showcase their wares.

#### FISH CREEK MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1899)



**Prom Coast Film Society** received a \$6,000 grant from the **Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation** to purchase and install quality audio and projection equipment in the Hall. The monthly film screenings at Fish Creek Hall are gaining increasing support.

# FRANKSTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1873)

The long-awaited history of this now revamped building is in its final stages of research and production. Authored by long-time Hall supporter and campaigner **Ann Ringer**, it will show the Hall as being a pivotal element in the history of the Mornington Peninsula.

# JOHNSONVILLE MECHANICS' HALL (Est. c1900)



Johnsonville Mechanics' in East Gippsland is one of those Halls that continues in the tradition of dance. It has staged monthly dances for over sixty years. Further to ensure that it is ongoing learners and young folk are marshalled week for lessons and the numbers are in fact increasing. For further information Tel: (03) 5155 5721

# KILMORE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)

The Kilmore Mechanics' Institute continue to show their long-standing interest in the welfare of the area's notable Monument Hill or Kilmore Parks and Gardens set aside by Government legislation in 1911. President **Wilma Hammond** recently presented to a Planning Panel on Mitchell Shire's Planning Scheme Amendment C56 a statement on the significance of this area to the Victorian people and she was supported by a number of other submitters. The Monument Hill has been the subject of one of the routes for the Northern Highway to bypass Kilmore. The 130ha area has been in Public recreational use since first set aside in 1853.

# MACARTHUR MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1876)



The Macarthur community recently celebrated the centenary of the building and opening of the current Hall in 1913. The supper dance on 2 November featured the award winning Rockabilly band **Bec and the Big River Trio.** The original Hall was built some time after 1876 and was gutted by fire in 1913.

#### **MACMILLANS HALL (Est. 1913)**

The Macmillans Hall started out life as the Mead Mechanics' Hall in February 1913. It was on the corner of Macmillans and Semples Roads. A library was conducted from the Hall. By agreement it was shifted into Cohuna in 1934 to be the supper room of the Cohuna Memorial Hall. A recent gathering held in the Macmillans Hall celebrated the centenary of the bulding.

#### MEENIYAN MECHANICS' HALL (Est. 1892)

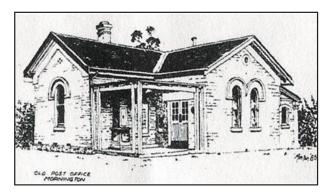
As part of the recent restoration project Meeniyan received a \$5,800 grant from the **Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation** to paint and refresh the kitchen and supper room.

#### **MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM (Est. 1839)**

The Melbourne Athenaeum continues to expand its outreach through Book Clubs, Lectures and its

Film Group. We welcome the recent appointment of Honorary Librarian **Rose Blustein** who comes from a library technical background. The recently 'booked out' lecture by State Librarian and Library CEO **Sue Roberts** gave an overview of the changing role of libraries and future challenges.

# MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Society recently obtained a grant to restore the grave of **James Edward Fenton** (1864-1950) in the Mornington Cemetery. Fenton was a former acting Prime Minister of Australia (1930). Fenton had involvement with the Broadford Mechanics' Institute when he was proprietor of the *Broadford Courier* from 1904-10. (Photo: Mornington & District Historical Society website)

#### POOWONG PUBLIC HALL (Est. c1874)

The Poowong Athenaeum and Free Library was established about 1874, and the first Hall was built in around 1884. Recently the staging of events in the Hall has been greatly enhanced with the addition of a new stage header and wing curtains. The curtains replace the previous curtains which were showing their seventy-five years of age.

# PRAHRAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)



The Institute's September 2013 newsletter carried the following 'Notice. We would like to inform readers that the PMI committee have

decided that as of next year, general collection books will not be budgeted for. This means that we will not be buying general fiction, mysteries or international histories and these items will be removed from the collection. The committee feels that as a specialist library we should concentrate on our mission of providing a good collection of Victorian and Australian history (we will still collect some Australian literature). SORRENTO NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (Est. 1884)



Nepean have their new website up and running at www.neapeanhistoricalsociety.asn.au. The Society took over the Sorrento Croquet Club building for three days during **History Week** to give children an experience of domestic life in the 1800s, including a hands-on wash day.

#### **STANLEY ATHENAEUM (Est. 1856)**



*Geoff Craig. (Photo: Stanley Athenaeum)* 

Stanley's inaugural **Geoff Craig Memorial Lecture** was staged recently and 'the place was packed' to hear the engaging and informaive lecturer **Richard Pattison** speak on local and regional history. It was a brave experiment and the Stanley folk pulled it off. It is hoped to stage the lecture as a biennial event. The flyer advertising the event showed Geoff Craig

resplendent in his kilt and he no do doubt would have been well-impressed with the turn out.

#### WARBURTON MECHANICS' HALL (Est. 1886)

The Warby Artisan and Produce Market is held in the Hall on the first Sunday of each month (not January), 11am-3pm. The Market specialises in showcasing 'stallholders that produce quality homemade, home grown, home baked and handcrafted products along with yummy produce.' Inquiries: Anita Juffermans on 0423951137 or (03) 5908 6909; or Theresa Reynolds on 0447 277 513 or 5966 5634. Why not make a day of it in historic Warburton and check out the magnificently restored Hall.

#### WAREEK PUBLIC HALL (Est. 1914)



Preparations are under way for celebrating the centenary of the Wareek Hall on 17 August 2014. Some \$13,000 has been assembled by way of Government, Council, Trust and local fundraising to enable the hall to be painted and it is expected work will start soon. Wareek's novel way of raising money is a guided tour of the district which takes in the Hall for morning or afternoon tea or for lunch with local homemade catering. In 2012 such tours brought in around \$1000. If you would like a bus or car tour of the Wareek-Bung Bong district give ex-teacher **Wes Jolley** a call on (03) 5462 2225 and he will tailor a tour to your needs.

# WARRANDYTE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE ARTS ASSOCIATION (Est 1882)

The Warrandyte Youth Theatre Company recently completed a very successful season of their production *The Real Inspector Hound.* In the meantime the adults carried off their very successful production of *Thirty-Nine Steps* in November. The set design was by Jock Macneish.

With success comes success and most welcome grants have recently come from **Manningham Council** and **Warrandyte Bendigo Bank**.

# The Wonderful World of Mechanics Institutes

#### **AUSTRALIA**

#### WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

#### CELEBRATES AUSTRALIAN CENTENARY

The Workers' Educational Association was established in England by **Albert Mansbridge** in 1903. His aim was to establish an 'An Association to promote the Higher Education of Working Men'.

The University of Melbourne invited Mansbridge to Australia in 1913 and branches were subsequently set up in all States of Australia. They were the principal provider of adult education through into the 1980s when a range of other providers started in adult education training.

The WEA claims to be 'Australia's largest non-government adult education community organisation.'

In spite of the title the WEA is determinedly non-partisan and has no political affiliation.

#### **NEW SOUTH WALES**

# SYDNEY MECHANICS' SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1833)

#### SYDNEY LAUNCH GETS OFFICIAL IMPRIMATUR



Attendees at the launch of Garry Wotherspoon's history of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts by Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales. (Photo: SMSA)

Sydney turned on a fine day for the launch of Garry Wotherpoon's long-awaited *Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts: A History.* The venue was Government House, the planning of which started out in 1834, a year after the Institute started. Bennelong Point having been chosen for the setting of Government House, construction started in September 1836 and it was completed in 1845. Current resident, Institute Patron and NSW Governor **Her Excellency Professor** 

**Marie Bashir, AC, CVO** hosted the event. Some 180 members, guests, staff and board members attended.

In her welcoming speech, Her Excellency acknowledged the significant role that the SMSA had played in the development of Sydney, a role in which it was continuing today. Speeches were given by Institute President **Paul Reid**, author **Dr Garry Wotherpoon** and Institute Secretary **Grahame Marks**.

The book did not disappoint, not only as the first history of the Institute, but for its depth of original research and the selection of its illustrations, many in colour, most of which had been rarely published before, if at all.

With the conclusion of formalities guests adjourned to the Government House gardens, which are in fact part of Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens, for their stunning views over Sydney Harbour. There drinks and savouries were served.

The SMSA history has been a long time coming and it will most certainly not disappoint. Indeed thanks to a grant enabling its production and the Institute Board's wish to get their history out there, it is 'a steal' at the price.

Copies can be had by mailing \$20 plus \$10.00 post to Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000.

# URANA SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1883)



The Urana district was first settled in the 1850s and the Post Office opened in 1861. A 'successful' meeting was held on 21 June 1883 and 'an influential committee was formed to carry on the project' of a community Hall. The Urana School of Arts and Mechanics' Institute foundation stone was laid on 27 May 1884 by **Mrs Mary Newton** from Urana Station and she 'was presented with a handsome silver trowel.'

It was noted on 18 June 1884 that the 'Shell of this building is rapidly approaching completion.' It opened on 27 September 1884 with a Ball at which Lewis B Culley's group provided the music. The cost was £1000. Tenders were later called for an extension to cost around £360.

In 1920 Dr Conway Montgomery Macknight's (1867-1953) seat as trustee was declared vacant, for he had left the district in April 1919. It was noted his send-off had been held out of doors in front of the Hall because of the prevailing flu epidemic.

The Urana Literary Institute Annual Meeting considered tenders for the Memorial Hall 1921 and resolved to borrow £2000 for the erection of the Memorial Hall. It was noted that it was near completion on 4 July 1924. The Urana Soldiers' Memorial Hall was officially opened on 21 May 1925 by Senator General Charles Cox. It was reported at the time 'The Urana Memorial Hall, one of the biggest in NSW, is being erected at a cost of £4000. Included in the new structure is the old hall, which is now to be used as a supper room. The main hall is 100ft long and 40ft wide and abutting the hall are spacious ladies' and men's dressing rooms. Provision is also being made for a reading room and library. Upstairs is a large room for the use of returned soldiers. Cement concrete is being used throughout.'

The Hall structure has lasted well, but not so the roof and this was replaced with Colorbond steel sheets in 2010.

Events staged in the Hall include: Shire concerts, social events, exhibitions and visiting artists. Sporting clubs and service clubs meet there. The Schools stage concerts and presentations. Anzac Day celebrations, Drought Relief meetings, and the Christmas Carnival all use the Hall which is also a Primary Emergency Evacuation Centre.

The district was proclaimed a Shire in 1906. Today, with a population of around 1000 people, it has the objective: 'To preserve and enhance the lifestyle of our communities by encouraging, promoting and facilitating the sustainable development of the shire. (Photo: Urana Shire)

#### **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

# TUMBY BAY DISTRICT SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL HALL (Est 1903)

Tumby Bay is located on the Spencer Gulf and the Bay was explored and named by Matthew Flinders in 1802. The area was settled from the 1840s. Today the region is largely engaged in cereal cropping and sheep, with some fishing and tourism.



A meeting was convened on 28 November 1903 'to make arrangements for the building of a public hall, to

be called the Tumby Bay Institute Hall'. Patrons and a Committee were elected comprising: blacksmith Charles Mashon Ochtomann, President; H Barraud, Vice-President; A Garrett, Treasurer; and SM Bawden, Secretary.

A further meeting was held in Garrett's store on 9 January 1904 and 'It was unanimously agreed to have one [a Hall] built forthwith'. Tenders were finally advertised on 20 November 1905 for a 'Building to be of stone; size of Hall, 66 x 35 feet'.

It was reported on '29 January [1906] – The contractors for the institute started last week, and hope to have it completed in about four weeks' time.' 'Progress is being made with the Tumby Bay Institute, which when completed will be a very imposing structure.' 'The building is a substantial one of stone...'

The Institute was officially opened on 28 April 1906 by South Australia's Premier Hon. Thomas 'Tom' Price in the afternoon, having inspected the jetty in the morning. Changes were approved to the building in 1909. A Women's Committee was formed for fundraising in 1924. The Tumby Bay Country Women's Association was formed in the Hall in 1933 and continued to meet there until the Memorial Hall was built.

In 1938 the Committee found the management and upkeep of the building too onerous and formally resolved to hand the Institute over to the Tumby Bay Council.

Pictures were also regularly screened in the Institute with a particular mention of 'Kangaroo: The Cry of Mighty Adventure', being shown in 1952. Set in outback Australia c 1900 it had a budget of £900,000 and starred Maureen O'Hara, Peter Lawford, Chips Rafferty and Charles 'Bud' Tingwell. It was partially shot in the Port Augusta region.

The foundation stone for the Tumby Bay District Soldiers' Memorial Hall was laid by James Kintore Schramm OBE on 2 June 1953. A Dance was held in the Institute for the 'new hall fund' in March 1954. It was officially opened on 23 January 1957 by Charles Alfred Darling. The rendered brick building had the dimensions of 80ft x 55ft, with an upstairs gallery.

It was noted that the Tumby Bay Institute Library reopened on 1 September 1954 with forty-two subscribers. The Tumby Bay Council had made 'a generous donation'. It was also noted that 'Now that the library has been rehabilitated with over three hundred new books and more to be added each month, catering for all tastes, the committee is expecting many more [members].' Today library services are provided by the Tumby Bay School Community Library.

#### **QUEENSLAND**

#### **DOWS CREEK COMMUNITY HALL (Est. 1929)**



Located in the Mackay region of northern Queensland the area has had a diversity of names. However Dows Creek seems to have been the most constant. The Dows Creek State School opened on 17 April 1895 and finally closed in 2009 and now only the Hall remains at the centre of this rural cane growing district. The nearest town being Mirani which is 11km away.

This Hall started out as the McGregor School of Arts. Fundraising started in 1929 and the Hall was opened in 1931. Interest in the Hall waned and it was taken over by the Mt Martin-McGregor Creek Country Women's Association. When they closed down in 1995, a group of locals took over the badly run-down building. They started to conduct weekly dances, which became fortnightly after a time. These still run as themed Old Time Dances, with a few brackets of Rock 'n Roll and are gaining increased patronage. Live music is provided by Keith and Rob.

They make their own fun and in December 'the jolly fat man' arrived in 'a green and yellow tractor' and he certainly thrilled the kids. Also during the year the Hall Committee ran 'Jiggle in the Jungle' a Prep and Primary School Disco which was well attended.

Meanwhile in the Hall the adults were cooking up a treat in their new kitchen, with stainless benches and new stove and warmer. It has been a long haul but the corner has now been turned as to Hall maintenance and upgrade. Proceeds from the catering for the motorbike Kungurri Hill Climb have been very helpful.

The year 2013 also saw the advent of films to the Hall, thanks to a \$5000 from the State Government for the purchase of audio-visual equipment in April, and film nights are now gaining popularity.

The Hall holds World War I, II and Vietnam Honour Rolls. Two local soldiers served in Vietnam. The Hall also holds many memories and a vibrant community that rallies around it. (Photo: Dows Creek Hall facebook)

#### **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

# SWAN RIVER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1851)



The logo of Perth's Mechanics' Institute Bar.

#### AWARD FOR PERTH'S M E C H A N I C S ' INSTITUTE BAR

It's just over a year since the **Mechanics' Institute Bar** opened for business. And it's been quite a ride for **Siobhan Blumann** and **Hamish Fleming**.

the proprietors of 'the fountain of knowledge... Nestled amongst the heritage rooftops of Northbridge in Perth, Western Australia, we offer an escape from the everyday below.' Check out their website mechanicsinstitutebar.com.au and note the catchy logo and library card. The Mechanics' Institute Bar took out the Best Small Bar in Perth in the Small Bar of the Year Awards in October. Congratulations to the management and staff of 'The upcycled cocktail bar, which is accessed via a laneway in Northbridge'. (The Swan River Mechanics' Institute first opened its doors in 1851 and became the Perth Literary Institute in 1909.)

#### WILLIAMS AGRICULTURAL HALL (Est. 1898)

The quaint stone and brick quoin construction rose from the ground in 1898 when the foundation stone was laid by pastoralist **Michael Quinn** of Glenfield Estate and builder and later brewer **John Robert Quigley** completed the task. Its early use was typical for Western Australia – Roads Board meetings, and Church and Freemasonry use. **Mrs Playle**, the town's midwife and mother of fourteen children, was an early caretaker. Lectures were held, as were club swinging classes conducted by **Mrs Burbridge**.

The Hall had long term school use and had its own sound projector by 1951. The CWA also initially met there. When the school finally moved out the Arts and Crafts Group moved in and remained there until their purpose built

facilities were progressively built in the 1990s. Today the Hall is occupied by the Anglican **Bush Brothers** as an Op-Shop with proceeds financing their outreach to the outback.

#### UK

# STAINLAND MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1883)



Located in the West Yorkshire region of Calderdale, Stainland is located on a high level Pennine packhorse track and dates to mediaeval times and is

mentioned in the Domesday book. The villagers were engaged in wool and textile production.

The two-storey bluestone **Stainland Mechanics' Institute** was built in 1883 by the textile manufacturer John Shaw & Sons who owned the village. It was 'to improve the moral, social and intellectual habits of the inhabitants' many of whom were employed in the firm's Brookroyd mills. The Mayor of Leeds Alderman Edwin Woodhouse opened the building on 7 June 1884.

Over the years maintenance proved a problem and Elland Urban District Council became involved with the development of Community centre in 1954. The Institute was eventually taken over by Council in 1967 and 'some maintenance was undertaken'. In 1974 Calderdale Borough Council became the owners. In 1977 Council demolished the twin towers at the entrance.

Several surveys put the restoration bill at over £500,000 and whilst a local Committee tried to raise the funds they were unsuccessful and the building closed on 18 December 2009 and the Stainland and District Community Association signed the building back to the 'cash-strapped' Calderdale Council. In 2010 Council considered a report 'The property is in poor condition and ongoing repairs and maintenance liabilities are unlikely to ever be adequately supported by income. In January 2011 Council sold the building at auction for £130,000.

The ground floor was turned into a residence. In 2013 a proposal to turn the second floor into three apartments was approved by before Council. (Photo: Wikipedia Commons)

#### **USA**

#### LA JOLLA ATHENAEUM (Est. 1892)

There's plenty happening at La Jolla with the recent juried art exhibition which attracted 750 entries. They recently completed their seventh annual series of 'flicks on the bricks' with outdoor films with wine. Golden oldies screened included: *The Big Sleep* (1946); *Rear Window* (1954); *Cinema Paradiso* (1989); and *The Big Easy* (1986).

#### **OHIO MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1828)**

In 1908 philanthropist Mary H Emery gave money to build the Institute's Emery building in memory of her late husband Thomas J Emery. The donation came with a stipulation that the building would contain an assembly hall available to the public. The University of Cincinnati gained control of the building in 1969 and subsequently proceeded to develop it into apartments which was subject to a Court ruling in 1999 that required profits from the building to be channelled into the restoration of the 2200 seat Emery Theatre. In 2008 the community launched the **Requiem Project** to reinstate the theatre to community use and use the profits generated to restore the theatre. A letter of intent was signed between the Requiem Project and Emery Center Corporation, to the effect that it would sublease the theatre to the Requiem Project. (The Emery Center Corporation leases the theatre from Emery Center Apartments Limited Partnership, which in turn leases the whole building from the University of Cincinnati.)

The Requiem Project's co-founders **Tina Manchise** and **Tara Lindsey Gordon** were advised by the Emery Center Corporation in January that it would not renew its management agreement and that Requiem would be required to vacate the building in August. So the Requiem folk took the matter to Court. A hearing has since been reset for February 2014. (The Emery Theatre was modelled on New York's Carnegie Hall and it has been described as 'acoustically pure'. The **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra** used it as their home-base from 1912-36 and cut a number of recordings there.)

# ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (Est. 1885)

The local Rochester newspaper *The Democrat* and *Chronicle* of 23 November 2013 states: 'On This Day in History: Nov. 23: The start of an institution.

On Nov. 23, 1885, the Mechanics Institute opened in downtown Rochester, welcoming its

first students to an evening course in mechanics drawing.

Founders included Capt. Henry Lomb, Max Lowenthal, Ezra Andrews, Frank Ritter, William Peck.

The school provided technical training to a skilled industrial workforce. Donations funded the operations that first year, and tuition was free for the 400 students who enrolled.

Lomb was the first president. Eugene Colby was the first teacher and principal.

The school later added art, with courses housed in the Bevier Memorial Building, now awaiting redevelopment in Sprint Street and South Plymouth Avenue.

In 1891, the Institute merged with the Rochester Athenaeum founded by Col. Nathaniel Rochester. In 1944, the school adopted the current name: Rochester Institute of Technology.'

In other RIT news...A choice piece of printing history found a final resting place after Christie's 6 December New York auction. There RIT, with the financial support of alumnus Brooks Bower's family, purchased the Kelmscott/Goudy Albion hand operated printing press for \$233,000. Made in London by Hopkinson and Cope in 1891, the press carries the serial number 6551.



Klemscott/Goudy Albion Press No. 6551. Photos: Christie's

is a sort of 'homecoming' as the press was once owned by Melbert Brinkerhoff Cary Jr (1892-1941) for the Press of the Woolly Whale. Previously RIT had acquired MB Cary's unique graphic arts collection 2,300 books and his archive in 1969. Supplemented over the years, particularly

with Kelmscott titles and incunabula, the RIT's Cary Collection now ranks amongst the world's best.

The provenance of Albion No. 6551 goes like this. William Morris (1834-96) purchased it from Hopkinson & Cope in 1894 for use in his Kelmscott Press. Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942) then bought it for his Essex House Press in 1898. It was subsequently used by Washington Herbert Broome (1860-1940?) in connection with his Old Bourne Press and James J Guthrie (1874-1952) for his Pear Tree Press titles. In 1924 it was sold to type designer

Frederic Goudy (1865-1947) and he had it shipped to America in 1924 and he used it for his Village Press. Soon after he sold it to Spencer Kellogg Jr (1876-1944) who ran the Aries Press. MB Cary purchased it in 1932 and bequeathed it to his pressman George W van Vechten Jr (1907-62) in 1941.

GW van Vechten had previously been pressman for Frederic Goudy and from 1941 operated it on his own account until 1960 when the Albion was sold to **Jay Ben** (1902-97) and **Elizabeth** (1914-2001) **Lieberman** for their **Herity Press**. The Liebermans had a Liberty Bell fixed to the top of the press as 'a reminder of the vital role that private presses play in the freedom of the press' thus replacing the standard eagle.

The press was finally auctioned on behalf of **Jethro Lieberman**, J Ben's son. It will join a stable of fifteen other historic working presses, which utilise some 1500 fonts of metal and wooden type held in the collection.

Graphic arts has long been a core subject at RIT, having Kodak located nearby, and it has driven technological change in the evolving photographic and printing industry.

The Cary Graphic Arts Collection Museum at Rochester Institute of Technology is open daily Monday-Friday and check out the website: cary. rit.edu.

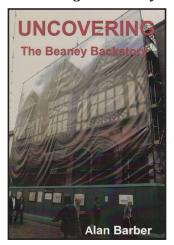
#### **WOOD LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (Est. 1857)**



William Wood (1777-1857) was a wealthy merchant with interests in the US. Canada and Britain. He established a number of libraries across the US in the 1820s, the last being in the town of Canandaigua, in New York State. He died there at his sister's residence in 1857. The library was continued on after his death and was relocated into the former mansion of lawyer Mark Hopkins Sibley (1796-1852). The library still operates today with the motto 'Where tradition, technology and community meet'. In May 2013 supporters turned the first sod for extensions which will house the Bill Rayburn Children's Library and will complete renovations and upgrades started in 2010. Website: woodlibrary. org. (Photo: Wood Library website)

# Book Reviews

#### **Uncovering the Beaney Backstory**



by Alan Barber. Self Published, 2013. Paperback, saddlestitched, 60p, illus, 150x210mm. 9780757689602.

Long-time volunteer at the Beaney Institute, Alan Barber, started out on his hunt for the 'Beaney Backstory' a decade ago. The search led him to

Australia and Melbourne, for that is where Dr James George Beaney, a son of Canterbury went and accumulated a tidy nest egg.

However Beaney, or 'Diamond Jim' as he was more widely known practiced 'brave' medicine. He was three times tried for murder at the surgical table and was each time acquitted much to the disgust of some of his leading and not so brave contemporaries. 'Diamond Jim' also played a significant role in establishing the University of Melbourne Medical School.

Clearly his harsh treatment in Melbourne affected Beaney's philanthropic bent, hence the endowment to found the Beaney Institute in Canterbury, England. Beaney had also seen the benefits of Mechanics' Institutes in Melbourne and from time to time he lectured at the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution, later Athenaeum. This may he have influenced his decision to establish 'mechanics' like' Institute in Canterbury.

Beaney died in Melbourne on 30 June 1891 and a mile long procession followed his coffin to its burial place in the Melbourne General Cemetery. From then on we see how the formation and building of the Beaney Institute enabled the assembling of collections since 1769. In 1847 Canterbury became the first Public Library in England. The Beaney opened on 1 January 1900. It continued to be the repository for Canterbury's history until 2009 when it closed for a massive refurbishment. In May 2013 the Beaney reopened as the Beaney House of Art and Knowledge after a £16 million redevlopment.

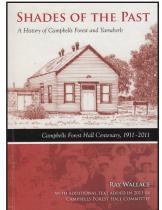
Alan Barber takes us through Canterbury's history and weaves in the evolution of the

library and the museum from Friendly Society (1769), Historical Society (1802), Historical and Philosophical Society (1822), then Philosophical Society and finally to Canterbury Literary and Philosophical Institution (1826). Council purchased the building and collection in 1847 and it was to be another fifty years before the whole collection could be brought together in the Beaney Institute.

Alan Barber's well-researched and illustrated story is one of which Diamond Jim would have been proud. And to let Dr Beaney have the last say: 'The three Rs are but stepping stones to true culture; besides book learning there is the study called Art. It throws a grace, a charm and beauty over every-day life; otherwise it would be so poor, so bare and so hard'.

Available from: Alan Barber, 1 Riverside Mews, Bridge, Canterbury, CT4 5TW England. Posted £10.00.

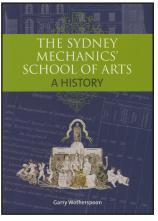
#### Shades of the Past: A History of Campbells Forest and Yarraberb. Campbells Forest Hall Centenary, 1911-2011



by Ray Wallace, with additional text added in 2012. Paperback, viii, 128p, illus, maps, ports. 120x300mm. 9780646552064. Committee.

Available from: Mrs Toni Shea, Campbells Forest Hall Committee, 6 Kenny Court, Kangaroo Flat, V 3555. \$30 Posted.

#### The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts: A History



by Garry Wotherspoon. Paperback, 181, illus, ports, bibliog., index. 1 7 0 x 2 4 5 m m . 9780980824247.

This is the first published history of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts established in 1833. It is long overdue, particularly given

# Book Reviews cont...

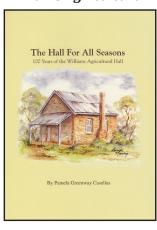
the influence that the Institute has had on the cultural and educational development of Sydney. Professor Roger Morris AM and Institute Past Secretary JD Atkins had previously done much to unearth the Institute's exceedingly rich history. Author Garry Wotherspoon has combined this information with further research and his own wide knowledge of Sydney's cultural history to make this a highly readable text. Given the constraints of length imposed it can only be hoped that this is but the start of much wider research based on the various Chapter headings and themes.

A watershed in the Institute's history came in Australia's bicentennial year 1988 when the original building was sold to Bond Corp and which is covered in the Chapter 9 'Thank You, Mr Bond 1987-1999'. Whilst the Institute's virtual closure saw membership tumble, the 'new' building has provided the means for a vital new beginning that has evolved since 2000.

This 'must have' book is well put together with bibliography, end notes, list of office-bearers, and a comprehensive index. Special mention must also go to **Kay Templeton** and **Melanie Ryan** who assembled the images which appeared in the text. Many were new of well known subjects and these are supported by comprehensive notes 'About the Images'. The project was supported by the City of Sydney's History Publication Sponsorship Program

Available from: Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 180 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000. Posted \$30.00.

# The Hall For All Seasons: 100 Years of the Williams Agricultural Hall



by Pamela Greenway Casellas. Williams Art & Craft Group, 1998. Paperback, saddlestitched. 32p, illus. 100x210mm. Coloured cover by Lucinda Mounsey.

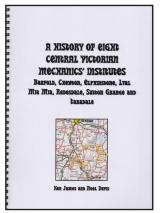
This well produced booklet was issued for the Hall's centenary in 1998 and a few copies remain to tell the Hall's

story to the wider community. At the story's commencement the author poses 'If its walls

could speak...But the walls can tell us nothing. And so we must tell it ourselves.' It is told from the extant Minute Books, the Narrogin Observer and other newspapers and key players in its history, of which the author is but one, having attended school in the Hall in the 1950s. One resident noted 'it has seen more life and been a greater benefit to the public than the Memorial Hall ever will be.' Hall use ranges from the typical: Road Board meetings, church, freemasons, sporting clubs, CWA, to the not so typical round the clock aircraft spotting during World War II. The longterm occupancy as a school annexe was followed by that of and the dynamic Art and Craft Group that has become a role model for similar groups in WA. The Hall also acquired it own sound film projector in 1951. The cover depicts the work of two Art and Craft Group members Lucinda Mounsey and Hazel Chapman. In spite of the constraints of size, Pamela has told the story of the Williams Agricultural Hall well.

Available from: Williams Art & Craft Group, Box 104, Williams, WA 6391. \$10 Posted.

#### A History of Eight Central Victorian Mechanics' Institutes



by Ken James and Noel Davis. Self Published, 2012. Paperback, 190p, illus, 210x300mm.

This book will be reviewed in the next issue of the *Useful Knowledge*.

Available from: Ken James, 18 Lofty Avenue, Camberwell, V 3124. \$34.00 Posted.

#### **MIV Bus Tour Notes**

by various authors. 2006-2013. Paperback, number of pages vary, illus, 148x210mm.

Tour Notes booklets from some of MIV's bus tours are available for purchase.

- Goldfields (2006)
- Heading for the Hills (2012)
- Pieces of Eight (2013)

Available from: Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria. \$5.00 per copy. Postage: \$2 per copy, discount postage for bulk orders.

# The History Page

These pages are a clearing house of ideas and trivia that people come across. Let us have your snippets or queries and who knows? Send your items in to the Editor.

## ALF WESSON'S ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATIONS

Following up on our article **In search of Alf Wesson** we are reminded that Alf classified
Mechanics' Institute buildings into three
categories: **Chapel Cheapies**, timber buildings
like small country churches; **Goldfields Glorious**, build in solid bluestone or brick and
occasional of two storeys; and **Bush Classical**,
where elegant facades were added to earlier
buildings.

#### THE COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Listening to the ABC on the radio recently we learned that a roster of country ladies head to Melbourne each weekend to staff the CWA Hostel at Toorak.

That program told us that this 'country friendly' place was open to all comers, not just CWA members. This could be the home away from home for country Mechanics' Institute folk when they are in Melbourne or researchers working at the MIRC.

After all we are related with our history in the same roots. Whilst there were a few Women's Mechanics' Institutes in the UK. They did not survive. However in Canada they did. In the 1870s it was realised that there were few women mechanics in the Institutes so they simply dropped the 'Mechanics' part to become Women's Institutes.

The idea spread back to Britain and around the world to become the universal group that it is today.

Back to the real point of the story. If you wish to stay in Melbourne at the CWA Hostel phone or email in the first instance to ascertain if there is a vacancy. Tel: (03) 9824 0239

#### TRACKING BILLY BARLOW

Another collation of documents that we recently sighted was *Barlow: The Inimitable Blue-tail Fly* by Joy Hildebrand, with Valda Low. **William Robert 'Billy' Barlow** (1820-1907) was a travelling showman that performed to the world particularly in Mechanics' Institutes and their ilk in England, Ireland, Scotland, throughout Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. His versatility was as varied as were his name

changes which ended as 'The Great Barlow' and a list of people who used the name 'Billy Barlow' including **General Tom Thumb**. The publication includes a Timeline, places he performed, co-performers, and the songs he wrote and performed. This collection gives a fine insight into the life and work of a travelling showman.

#### WARTIME WATCH

Pamela Greenway Casellas in her *The Hall for All Seasons: 100 Years of Williams Agricultural Hall* (1998) has an interesting section headed: 'WAR TIME. With the outbreak of war, the Agricultural Hall took on a new, and most unusual role. It became the district's centre for aircraft spotting. That is, a watch was kept on the skies to report any unusual aircraft in the area.

When Darwin, Wyndham and Broome were bombed and the Japanese were advancing, it was believed that it would only be a matter of time before the rest of the country was invaded. To keep the yellow peril at arm's length, the help of the general public, and particularly country people, were enlisted.

The day was divided into three shifts. In the early morning, two women of the district would arrive, often with their knitting, some sandwiches and a thermos of tea to help pass the time.

At midday they would be relieved by two more women, and in the evening by some men, the first of three night shifts with the motto:

We came in our threes in all shapes and sizes A vigil to keep until the sun rises
We'd settle in with a yarn or a jok-io
To listen all night for the bombers of Tok-io
What we said of the Japs would cause no surprises.

The chief spotting officer was **Mr Bill Panton**, manager of the National Bank, who kept a log book of every aircraft sighting. In their slower moments these spotters made camouflage nets. Altogether, taking your turn on the roster was not an easy option, particularly as some people had to walk long distances. As one old-timer recalled: 'You had to have eyes like a bloody spider.' Whether these spotters ever recorded an aircraft which shouldn't have been there remains unclear. But certainly they learned a lot about different markings and dimensions of the aircraft at the time.

# Our People



Castlemaine Library staffer Robyn Annear has retired after many years valued service. The Friends of Castlemaine Library noted she 'will be missed by all the library members who found her to be an innovative and

inspiring worker for the Castlemaine library, always giving 120%!!!' Indeed she will be missed! However, now with more time she will no doubt add to her stable of history books which have included *There Are Not Many Votes in Books: A History of the Castlemaine Library 1855-1996*, which she authored with Robyn Ballinger. Robyn has also been an active member of the Friends of Castlemaine Library over the years. Happy retirement Robyn. (*Photo:* The Bendigo Weekly website)

Former Footscray Mechanics' Institute Librarian and MIV volunteer **Linda Aspinall** has recently had a severe set back in health. We wish Linda a full and speedy recovery.



Long-time supporter of the Mendooran (NSW) Mechanics' Institute **Barry McDonald** recently celebrated his 80th birthday in the Hall with his six children and their extended families. A momentous night was had by all. (*Photo:* The Daily Liberal website)

**Elaine Murphy** our genial host for the Launch of **Home is Where the Hall is** Month at Barfold

Mechanics' Hall is truly unflappable. In addition to running her 300ha sheep property which abuts the Hall, Elaine serves on some twenty Committees. Adept at anything from climbing the ladder to veil the new sign to overpainting the



graffiti on the external toilet wall the day before the Launch, or mustering a team for a major Spring clean, Elaine takes it all in her stride. (Photo: Kristina Holdaway)



**Professor Geoffrey Blainey** AC has been named inaugural recipient of the **Thomas** George **Tucker** (1859-1946) Medal bv the University of Melbourne. Professor Blainev was awarded the medal ʻin recognition of his

substantial contributions to the University, the Faculty of Arts and to public life'. Since starting at the University of Melbourne as a student in 1948, he later went on to become Dean of the faculty of Arts in the 1980s and awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws in 2007. In public life he has authored many books including *Black Kettle and a Full Moon: Daily Life in a Vanished Australia* (2003), chaired the Australia Council in the 1970s, stimulated debate on the big issues over the years and was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2000. Professor Blainey received his well-deserved award in December at the University of Melbourne. (*Photo: Ballarat University*)

In October, Rhode Island's and Providence Athenaeum's **Christina Bevilacqua** was awarded the **Tom Roberts Prize for Creative Achievement in the Humanities** by the Rhode

# Our People cont.. In Memoriam.

#### Island Council for the Humanities. The citation reads: 'Christina was selected for innovative her Athenaeum, Salon Series. which provides the public with thought provoking content and context around creative



and scholarly pursuits in Rhode Island. Since beginning the series over seven years ago, Bevilacqua has developed the Salon Series into an exemplary presenter, amplifier, and connector of local arts and culture, where organizations, scholars and artists can engage in spirited conversation with an interested audience.' (Photo courtesy of Frank Mullin)



We salute the memory of David Gordon Fitzpatrick (1927-2003), who as Slim Dusty was arguably Australia's most notable travelling showman. In both his and our *Old Time Country* Hall he celebrated and brought much joy to people in the country Halls of outback Australia. Slim adopted his stage name in 1938, at aged eleven, and at the time of his death at St Ives (NSW) on 19 September 2003 he was working on his 106th album for EMI. Indeed we hope those outback towns continue to be nourished to his memory When the Rain Tumbles Down in July. (Photo: Slim Dusty Centre website)

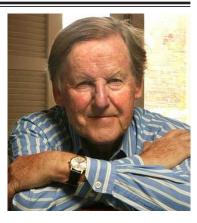
# Vale



Longtime community worker and Walpole (WA) Hall stalwart Joseph 'Joe' Burton OAM died on 17 August 2013, aged 84. The funeral service was held in the Hall he helped move from Shannon River in 1972 and it was crowded to overflowing. A fitting tribute to a great community worker.

Our sympathy goes to his family and to the Walpole community. (Photo: Walpole Weekly)

Few people who grew up in Victoria were not acquainted with journalist and columnist Keith **Dunstan** and his long-running A Place in the Sun (APITS). We remember seeing him ride up to the Prahran Mechanics' Institute to change his books. He was a long supporter of the bike and was the first President of Bicycle Victoria founded in 1972. As patron of the Prahran Mechanics' Institute he championed its laudable cause in recent times. Keith Dunstan died in Melbourne on 17 September 2013, aged 88, from cancer. However not before he had written his own obituary which laid down the bare facts. He started the Anti-Football



League in 1967 'which, although it failed to suppress football, ran for thirty years.' Ironically its 'AFL' initials were used by the 'nationalised' Australian rules football code.

The title of his autobiography No Brains at All, one of his thirty books, was given to him by a former science teacher. Completely selfeffacing, Keith Dunstan had a unique talent and he plied it well in his Sun APITS column and in the Bulletin's Batman's Melbourne column. As the consummate wordsmith, we will sorely miss his erudite commentary on public affairs and that wry smile. Our sympathy goes to his wife Marie and his children. (Photo: The Age website)

# Community Page

#### RECIPE

#### **CHERRY JAM**

#### You will need

2kg fresh cherries, pitted and halved 250ml (a cup) lemon juice 2kg sugar 25g kernels from cracked cherry stones

#### Method

Place the cherries in a large saucepan. Crush the cherries with a potato masher.

Then add lemon juice and cherry stone kernels. Cook over a low heat for 5 minutes, whilst occasionally stirring.

Then add the sugar and cook over low heat for 15 minutes, whilst stirring to ensure the sugar is dissolved.

Increase heat and bring to boil for 5 minutes. Allow to cool for 10 minutes then spoon jam into sterilised jars and seal Enjoy!

#### BRICK BY BRICK...

Does your Institute need a new paved area or pathways around your Hall? Would you like to raise some extra money for renovations or upgrades to your Institute as well? Have you ever thought of funding your project by having a named brick or paver fundraiser? By having individuals or businesses in your community sponsor a named brick or paver for your project, not only does it help to bring money to your project, you are collecting the resouces to build another project as well. Sponsored bricks or pavers allow the contributions (both large and small) of individuals or groups in your community to be permanently placed in the grounds of your Institute. It is a great way for your Institute Committee and community to leave their stamp for future genetations.

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS**

Australia Day is nearly upon us, and there are many Institutes across the State which organise BBQs or entertainments for their communities which can offer up a fundraising opportunity for your Institute. Be sure to put a donations jar out for any event you hold at your Hall. You never know who might drop by and put a little extra in appreciation of your efforts.

## LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE MECHANICS'?

Would your Institute or local historical group like to learn more about the history of the Mechanics' in Australia? MIV has speakers which travel far and wide to shed light on the history of the Mechanics' Institute Movement. If you would be interested in having a speaker visit, contact the Newsletter Editor. Alternatively, MIV's Travelling Exhibitions are available for loan and more details are on page 7.

# SPOT THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE No. 33

- 1. What was the name given to the most recent MIV bus tour?
- 2. Who launched **Home is Where the Hall is Month** at Barfold in October?
- 3. Which Institute claims association with Minerva, the Goddess of Knowledge?
- 4. The Lyrebird Arts Council provides entertainers for which Gippsland Institute?
- 5. Which Institute was under the patronage of the late Keith Dunstan?
- 6. The Chewton Town Hall is managed by which community organisation?
- 7. Dance has been a part of which Institute for sixty continuous years?
- 8. Who termed the architectural style of small country Institutes 'Chapel Cheapies'?
- 9. Which Institute has is known by the initials WMIAA?
- 10. Where was MIV Commemorative Plaque No. 33 recently unveiled?
- 11. Which Institute features 'The Altona Barn Dance' in its dance repertoire?
- 12. Who is the sponsor of the One Act Drama Festival at Foster?
- 13. What is the name generally applied to Institutes in Western Australia?

(How did you go? Answers in the next newsletter, if we can find them!)

# SPOT THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 32 - ANSWERS

1. Carlton Dancehouse; 2. Coal Creek, Korumburra; 3. Footscray; 4. Belly dancing; 5. Barfold; 7. Diamond Jim; 8. Betty Burston; 9. Linen Hall Library; 10. Grange; 11. Tarwin Lower; 12. 'Bad clearing'; 13. Newlyn.

# Ideas & Opportunities

#### ANZAC CENTENARY LOCAL GRANTS

The Australian Government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program assists and encourages communities across Australia to undertake their own Anzac Centenary projects that commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australian servicemen and women in the First World War.

The Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program is a key element of the Australian Government's Anzac Centenary program through which funding of up to \$125,000 is available for each Federal Member of Parliament (MP) to support projects in their electorate commemorating the First World War.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is responsible for administering the program.

Funding will be **available until 30 June 2014**. See the website for more details: www.anzaccentenary.gov.au/grants/index.htm

#### **COMMUNITY HISTORY GRANTS**

The Community Heritage Grants (CHG) program provides grants of up to \$15,000 to community organisations such as libraries, archives, museums, genealogical and historical societies, multicultural and Indigenous groups. The grants are provided to assist with the preservation of locally owned, but nationally significant collections of materials that are publicly accessible including artefacts, letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and audio visual material.

Since 1994, \$4.5 million has been awarded to community organisations throughout Australia.

The types of projects supported include Significance Assessments of collections; Preservation Needs Assessments of collections; conservation activities and collection management; and training workshops.

**Applications open in March 2014**, see the website for more information: www.nla.gov.au/awards-and-grants/chg

# FOUNDATION FOR RURAL & REGIONAL RENEWAL GRANTS

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal has a range of general grants available, provided in partnership, to support rural, regional and remote communities across Australia. Projects are considered within specific programs rounds, through an application process and

must be for a charitable purpose (benefit the broader community). Applications are open to community based, not for profit groups with an ABN or Incorporation certificate.

Many Mechanics' Institutes and Halls throughout Australia have been the recipients of FRRR grants. It is worth having a look as see what grants have been awarded for in the past.

Website: http://www.frrr.org.au/cb\_pages/general\_grants.php

#### LITTLE AND OFTEN

A loose sheet of iron not nailed down promptly or a broken window can lead to bird invasions and costly repairs. Similarly bare wood around windows can lead to the need for costly replacement. A few nails, a new pane of glass, and even paint touch up can save heaps. A tin of paint in the exterior colour is always good to have on hand. Much can be achieved by regular planned working bees. Several people over a couple of hours, with an afterwork barbecue, can achieve a lot.

#### WELL DONE MACEDON RANGES

When looking for Hall venues on the Macedon Ranges Council website it is noted a separate listing is given to Mechanics' Institutes: Gisborne, Kyneton, Lancefield, Malmsbury, Newham, Riddells Creek and Romsey. Each entry comes with a thumbnail picture of the building, details of its capacity features and facilities and contact details for each Institute. Indeed this highlights a proud heritage element within the Shire.

Maybe you and your neighbour Institutes could suggest your Council do the same?

#### **CYBERPADDOCK**

Cyberpaddock is an Australia-wide online networking tool for the performing arts touring industry with particular emphasis on regional and remote venues and producers of tour ready shows. The site brings together the creators and presenters of performing arts from across Australia and helps generate tours and performing arts seasons.

The website allows you to register your Institute as a performing arts venue which would be willing to host a touring arts show.

Website: www.cyberpaddock.net.au

#### MECHANICS' INSTITUTES THEATRE DIRECTORY

This Directory is a guide only and it is suggested that you ring or email ahead for confirmation of dates and times. If contacts or phone numbers have changed please let us know. Equally let us know if we have missed out on regular Mechanics' theatre venues.

### BALLAARAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

117-119 Sturt Street, Ballarat, V 3350 Tel: (03) 5331 3042

Contact: Rosemary McInerny

Email: bmilibrary@ncable. net.au

Website: ballaratmi.com
Productions: Travelling
theatre groups, occasional
local productions, Minerva
Space for hire

# BRUNSWICK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

270 Sydney Road, (Cnr Sydney and Glenlyon Roads), Brunswick, V 3056 METANOIA THEATRE Contact: Rohini Sharma Tel: (03) 9387 3376 Email: rohini@ metanoiatheatre.com

Website: metanoiatheatre. com Productions and Space for

Rental

### C A M P E R D O W N MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

210-212 Manifold Street, Camperdown, V 3260 CAMPERDOWN THEATRE COMPANY Contact: Andrew 0'Flynn Tel: (03) 5593 1332

Address: Box 186, Camperdown, V 3260 W e b s i t e : camperdowntheatrecompany.

 $\begin{array}{c} camper down the at recompany. \\ com \end{array}$ 

Productions, Pantomimes

#### **CARLTON DANCEHOUSE**

150 Princes Street, North Carlton, V 3054 Email: info@dancehouse.

com.au Website: dancehouse.com.

au

Tel: (03) 9347 2860

Activities: Productions, Studio Space, Volunteer Program

### FOSTER WAR MEMORIAL ARTS CENTRE

Main Street, Foster, V 3960

### FOSTER AMATEUR MUSIC AND DRAMA ASSOCIATION

Contact: Peter Clyne Tel: 0400 867 872 Address: Box 186, Foster, V 3960

Website: foster.vic.au/famda

Activities: Productions and Play Festival

### KYNETON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

81 Mollison Street, Kyneton, V 3444 FRIENDS OF KYNETON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE Contact: Barry Murphy Tel: (03) 5423 5253 Address: Pastoria Road, Pipers Creek, V 3444

Email: Roseberyhill@gmail.com

Activities: Community Concert Series

### LILYDALE ATHEANEUM & MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

39-41 Castella Street, Lilydale, V 3140

#### LILYDALE ATHENAEUM THEATRE COMPANY

Contact: Lesley Bailey
Tel: (03) 9735 1777
Email: a.t.c@bigpond.net.au
Website: lilydaleatc.com
Activities: Annual Series,
Venue for Hire, Volunteer
Program

### MEENIYAN MECHANICS' HALL

Whitelaw Street (102 South Gippsland Highway), Meeniyan, V 3956 Contact: John Nichols Tel: (03) 5664 7210 Address: Box 96, Meeniyan, V 3956

Website: meeniyanhall.com Activities: Lyrebird Arts Circuit Shows; Local Amateur Nights

### MIA MIA MECHANICS' HALL

Valley Road, Mia Mia, V 3444

Contact: Kate Hicks
Tel: (03) 5425 5565
Email: kerandan@gmail.

Email: kerandan@gmai

Website: miamiahall.com.au Activities: Annual opera recital, concerts

### MINHAMITE SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL HALL

Minhamite-Caramut Road, Minhamite, V 3287 Contact: Joy Hildebrand Tel: (03) 5576 62327

Email: idaclare@activ8.net. au

Activities: Annual Christmas Pantomime; Ukele Workshops

### MOLONGGHIP HALL & TENNIS CLUB

521 Dean-Molongghip Road, Molongghip, V 3352 Contact: Gib Wettenhall Tel: (03) 5334 5490 Email: gib@activ8.net.au Activities: Concerts and Theatrical Productions

#### REDESDALE HALL

2631 Kyneton-Redesdale
Road, Redesdale, V 3444
Contact: Carolyn-Anne Boyd
Address: Lot 8 Oldfield Road,
Redesdale, V 3444
Tel: (03) 5425 3194
Email: bredesdale@
harboursat.com.au
Activities: Annual
production by Redesdale

Agnes Mudford Reserve,

## ROSEDALE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

Revellers, visiting groups

39 Princes Street, Rosedale, V 3847 Contact: Marion Silk Tel: (03) 5199 2547 Email: marion\_silk@ hotmail.com Website:

# Activities: Travelling shows STRATFORD MECHANICS'

Hobson Street, Stratford, V 3862 Contact:

Tel: (03) 5145 6861 Email: stradylions@

bigpond.com Website:

**INSTITUTE** 

Activities: Travelling shows

### TALLAROOK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

44 Main Road, Tallarook, V 3659

Contact: Val Barry Tel: 0448 000 672

Email: valbarry45@gmail.

com

Website: tallarook.org.au Activities: Travelling shows

### WARBURTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

3409 Warburton Highway, Warburton, V 3799

Contact:

Tel: (03) 5966 4500 Email: yarraranges.vic.gov. au/uyac

Website: warburtoninfo.

Activities: Workshops, travelling shows

# W A R R A N D Y T E MECHANICS' ARTS ASSOCIATION

Cnr Yarra Street and Mitchell Avanue, Warrandyte, V 3113 Contact: Pat Anderson Tel: (03) 9844 3442 Email: Anderson.pat50@ yahoo.com.au W e b s i t e : warrandytehallarts.asn.au

warrandytehallarts.asn.au Activities: Stage four productions annually, one for youth

### WILLIAMSTOWN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

#### WILLIAMSTOWN MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY

5 Electra Street, Williamstown, V 3016 Tel: 1300 881 545 Email: perform@wmtc.org.

au

Website: wmtc.org.au Activities: Stage three productions annually, one for youth.

# NEXT ISSUE: FILM VENUES

Please email venue and contact details to the Newsletter Editor: bronlowden@hotmail. com