



Useful Knowledge

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

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REINVENTION - THRIVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES AND MECHANICS' INSTITUTES WORLDWIDE 2016 SAN FRANCISCO, USA

The Board of Trustees of the historic **San Francisco Mechanics' Institute** has just confirmed that they have agreed to host the **Fourth Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide Conference** in 2016.

San Francisco's Executive Director **Ralph Lewin** noted: *We at the Mechanics' Institute in San Francisco are thrilled to host the 2016 Worldwide Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes Conference. We look forward to our friends from around the world joining us to celebrate that knowledge should be available to all and is the source of individual and societal improvement. We hope you will join us to contemplate and build a new future for Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes.*

The Conference will be held in conjunction with the annual **American Membership Libraries Group Meeting** over the period **Thursday 6 October to Sunday 9 October 2016.**

Coordinating **IL&MI Worldwide 2016** activities will be San Francisco's Library Director **Deborah Hunt** and Public Services Librarian/Membership Relations and Marketing Specialist **Taryn Edwards**. They will be looking to you all for your ideas, cooperation and promotion to make **IL&MI Worldwide 2016** a notable worldwide event, *with real lasting impact.*



San Francisco Mechanics' Institute. Photo: www.therooksf.com

The theme will appropriately be **'Reinvention – Thriving in the 21st Century'**.

In the first instance register your initial interest with: dhunt@milibrary.org and this will enable you to be kept up to date with programming, accommodation, etc.

The **IL&MI Worldwide 2016** program will include a solid Papers, Posters and Workshop component, with a supporting social program. A draft program will be circulated shortly for your review and potential input.

There will be a **Call for Papers** early in 2016, but you might like to get working on a specific and challenging topic in the meantime.

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Letter From The President



An interesting question was put to me recently.

How do I become a Member of a Mechanics' Institute?

The simple answer is that each Institute has evolved independently in both a legal and organisational sense and criteria for Membership vary. That at least is the present situation.

What though of the past and the future? Is what was relevant over 100 years ago still relevant today?

It is worth reflecting on the manner in which Institutes were founded. Essentially a “top down” initiative whereby a small number of people constituted what we would now refer to as a “Social Enterprise” promoting

- the diffusion of scientific and literary information
- useful knowledge
- rational recreation

It is well known that the principal means of doing so was the provision of libraries along with suitable premises to house them and related activities. Over time Membership of the Library was seen to be synonymous with Membership of the Institute itself. Thus the scene was set for a decline in Membership as Government run libraries proliferated during the second half of the 20th Century.

Shorn of their Library Members, Institutes were kept going by small bands of hardy volunteers concerned to preserve their heritage, independence and on occasion, significant endowments.

Of course this situation cannot go on indefinitely and one by one Mechanics' Institutes have fallen and continue to fall victim to the depredations of developers and Councils coveting the land on which they stand but perhaps most of all to the mystified apathy of the communities of which they have always been part.

So back to first principles. Are the original objectives of Mechanics' Institutes still relevant? We at the MIV believe so. They are as relevant today as they ever were. Quite simply the acquisition and application of knowledge is part of the human condition.

Once upon a time only an elite few could see this and had the means to act. Nowadays not only do the vast majority have the awareness and financial capacity to contribute but can differentiate between education, a service vital to our advanced economy and standard of living provided by the State, and knowledge, a personal asset derived over time from access to information and experience. With the internet providing instant access to information it is the infrastructure and social setting required to gain experience that is required.

If you want to future proof your Institute offering Membership to those wanting to extend the means of acquiring ***knowledge through experience*** to the wider community could be the way forward.

If you would like to be part of the discussion of how to go about doing so why not come along to the Prahran Mechanics' Institute on Friday the 1st May, 10:30 (and 1st Friday of the Month thereafter) where I will be hosting a discussion group on this topic.

Robert Kingston
President.

MECHANICS' WORLDWIDE 2016 CONT...

A century certainly is a long time and that will require some serious thought for 'roadmapping' amongst our leaders of change, innovators and of course our key stakeholders.

Indeed it may sound optimistic, but if we cast our minds back even two decades there has been a massive renaissance in the Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes movement and associated libraries around the world. It seems that this is 'our time' for the Libraries and Institutes to again thrive.

This revival may also have something to do with the four 'local' Associations: **Membership Libraries Group** in the US; the **Association of Independent Libraries** in the UK; the **Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria** and **Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts New South Wales**, both in Australia; and of course the three previous **Mechanics' Worldwide** Conferences.

San Francisco will be a great opportunity to network and put faces to names we already know in the worldwide IL and MI community. It will also be an opportunity to cement and grow those relationships and to be in regular contact with each other by way of newsletters and think tanks.

We want **IL & MI Worldwide 2016** to be a time when each participant will: connect with like minded people; share experiences; learn about improvement; enhance skills; and accelerate that process in and through practice, when they return to their own Institutes, and in league with others.

Indeed by hammer and hand all arts do stand.



*The iconic circular iron and marble staircase of the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute's present headquarters, was designed by Mexican-born architect **Albert Pissis** (1852-1914) and built in 1909-10. Photo: SFMI Facebook*

San Francisco Mechanics' Institute was established in 1854. It was one of several Institutes around the world which embarked on pioneering large scale trade fairs and exhibitions between 1857-early 1900s.

Fire and earthquakes have not diminished the San Francisco Institute's enthusiasm to regroup and rebuild, or in recent times even reinvent itself, building on its past strengths.

Today the Institute is yet again a leading Californian cultural institution with strong community outreaches by way of lecture and social programs, in addition to

its world standing in the chess community.



The oldest continuously operating chess room in the U.S. Photo: SFMI Facebook



FAWCETT: LIGHTS, PIZZA AND... OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

It has been ten years in the making, but the community of Fawcett could finally cut the opening ribbon on the renovation and restoration of their beloved Hall at its official opening on 4 October 2014. After the assistance of two major grants, three smaller grants, ten local fundraising events, the Hall's 'Buy a Brick' program, over 600 hours of volunteer help and countless generous donations from local families and business, the Hall is officially open for business!

The Hall's upgrade project has included the addition of a commercial-grade kitchen, servery windows, three toilets, solar panels, outside decking, wood-fired pizza oven, flag pole, landscaping and gardening around the Hall, tables and chairs, paving and solar lighting on their beautiful big gum tree.

Having far more volunteer help, both hands on and through materials donated, than was anticipated, the Hall was able to add more to their building than first thought: three toilets



Renovations out the back of the Hall - new toilets, kitchen and pizza oven. Photo: Fawcett Hall Facebook

instead of two; a commercial kitchen set up; a larger store room; and steps off the new decking into the grounds.

The Fawcett Hall has already had four Community events in the Hall since its opening. The **Plants, Produce, Pre-Loved and More Market** held on the weekend 25-26 October 2014 saw donated items from local

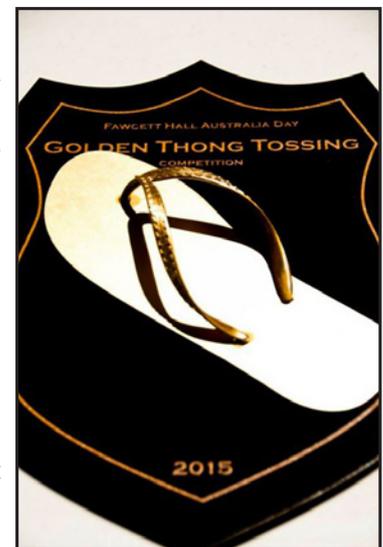
people and business available for sale. Locals had been hard at work for months cultivating plants (guaranteed to survive the weather of the region), crafting and gathering unwanted household items and bric-a-brac for sale at the Hall. Volunteers also staffed the 'Fawcett Cafe' which ensured all who visited were well fed and watered while they browsed items on sale.

Locals were also invited to ring in the New Year at the Hall, with about 80 in attendance. The night proved an entertaining one with both a raffle and auction on the night, as well as gifts for the children, and fireworks on the big screen.

Fawcett have also held their 2nd Australia Day Luncheon at the Hall. This year's theme was '**Celebrating Fawcett's Gold Rush Days**' with activities including digging for painted 'gold nuggets' (and lollies) in the 'Fawcett Super Pit' with Tonka trucks and diggers; panning for gold in the clam shell 'creek beds'; and the highly contested... Golden Thong Toss! A good feed of lamb, prawns and sweets was had in the Hall by the forty-two adults and eight children who celebrated Australia Day at the Hall.



Official upgrade project opening 4th October 2014: (L-R) Jimmy Young (Committee); Sam Hicks (President); Cindy McLeish (Member for Seymour); Lyn Mulhall (Committee); Sandra Macalister (Assistant Treasurer); Bill 'The Builder' Macalister; Joy Burchell (Committee); Les Perry (Treasurer); Geoff Sparke (Committee); Ian Newman (Secretary); Bernhard Sauerbeck (Committee). (Photo: Fawcett Hall Facebook)

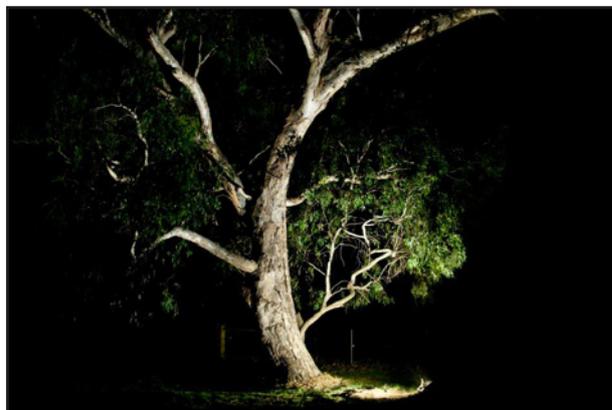


FAWCETT: OPEN FOR BUSINESS CONT...

In addition to a very successful and scrumptious Pizza Night in March, where the new pizza oven was well tested, it reinforces yet again the necessity of such events to bring the community together. The evening concluded with serving of an apple caramel crumble pizza under the large solar powered lit gumtree.

This was followed by the Centenary of Anzac Parade which put the flag pole to good use. An Australian Army colour party, which included local boy Alex, brought yet another event for the closely-knit community to witness and reflect on.

The full run down on recent events can be found on their Facebook page.



*The beautiful gum tree light, kindly donated by the Young and Noble families.
Photo: Fawcett Hall Facebook*

AMERICAN MEMBERSHIP LIBRARIES MEETING

The American Membership Libraries met at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia on 4-5 October 2014 as part of that institution's ongoing bicentenary celebrations. Following a couple of 'weather hitches' in 2013, this meeting went off like clockwork in the historic city of culture.

It also celebrated the phoenix-like revival of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia that has found its niche by specialist collecting in the area of architecture, building and decorative arts and is now a national player in those areas.

An interesting visitor and observer at the meeting was on-line newspaper Crosscut.com businessman and journalist **David Brewster**, from Seattle. He was exploring his idea to establishing an Athenaeum in Seattle in the historic Town Hall to champion the arts and promote 'ideas' within the community.

Generally the meeting was upbeat with most Institutes having steadily rising memberships and some experiencing an increase in their endowments.

Philadelphia Meeting attendees. Back row from left: **Jean Marie**



Procius (Salem Athenaeum); **Natalie Eliker** (Institute Library, New Haven); **Mark Bartlett** (New York Society Library); **Anne Cleveland** (Charleston Society Library); **Pat Larrabee** (Maine Charitable Mechanics' Association); **Erika Torri** (Athenaeum Music and Arts Library – La Jolla); **David Brewster** (Seattle). Seated, from left: **Sandra Tatman** (Athenaeum of Philadelphia); **Alison Maxell** (Providence Athenaeum); **Deborah Hunt** (San Francisco Mechanics' Institute). (Photo: Tom Hardiman (Portsmouth Athenaeum))

'The bronze fellow on the left is Will Shakespeare' is marked Tiffany & Co. and was gifted to the Athenaeum by **Mrs Josephine Stewart Linn** after the death of her husband in 1950. Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice

William Bomberger Linn (1872-1950) was a shareholder of the Athenaeum from 1931-50.

The Athenaeum holds a second sculpture of Shakespeare in plaster donated by **David Paul Brown** in 1847, with a 1955 attribution to **William M Miller** (1750?-1819), but no cited evidence.

A YEAR-LONG EVENT - THE MELBOURNE ATHENÆUM CELEBRATES 175



Things are now in party mode at The Ath with a very upbeat program. The Ath launched its year-long 175th anniversary celebrations with a party and a lecture by Mechanics' Institutes' historian **Pam Baragwanath**. Pam outlined the history of the Mechanics' Movement and then honed in on The Ath's early history, being established just five years after Melbourne was settled. It has been a long stint.

Distributed to all who attended the celebratory party was a set of six commemorative postcards featuring: Montage of Ath exteriors, 1842, c1854; 1976; 2011; Montage of current (1939) Ath borrowers' desk and library interior, 1940 and 1962; Art Gallery 1903-71, c1970; Theatre interior, 2010; and The Theatre Usherettes, c1932. All are endorsed on

the rear with The Ath's new logo and an etching of the building front in the 1930s.

Postcards sell at \$6 per pack at the Library Desk, or \$7.50 posted and are ideal for mailing your note from Melbourne.

Also announced on the day was the purchase from ebay by a member of a unique postcard featuring The Ath with coffee shop to the left front, shortly after the Melbourne Town Hall was built in 1869.

The Ath's March 2015 online newsletter 'News from Your Library' announces a range of activities: A Members and Guests Event, plus the Victorian College of the Arts' **Saverio String Quartet**, with cheese, wine and renditions of Mozart's *Dissonance Quartet* and Smetana's *String Quartet*, etc.; an off-campus event at **Reader's Feast Bookstore**, with antiquarian booksellers **Kay Craddock** and **Jonathan Burdon** on 'The Basics of Book Collecting'; a partnership with **Overdrive** to bring a new collection of 350 e-book titles to members; and an account of the Library's participation in **White Night** on 21 February, styled 'Illuminate - Athena3'. **Dr Lisa Anderson** interpreted The Ath's history to reveal it to a massive external audience, with the co-ordination of **Olaf Meyer** and **Penelope Bartlau**.

Very recently the building has been a-buzz with the Comedy Festival. www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au



PRAHRAN OPENS IN BUILDING NO. 3

The phoenix that is Prahran Mechanics' Institute opened for users in its new home at 39 St Redmonds Road, Prahran on 2 March 2015. It was a red letter day in the Institute's one hundred and sixty year old history which saw the Institute again reach out for its original goals all to meet yet again an expanding membership.

The handing over of the keys to 140 High Street after ninety-years of occupancy was no doubt poignant for those concerned. Indeed if only those walls could speak, for there have been times of despair and of elation.

The new building provides some parking and has more space and facilities for reader/researcher use. It also provides the **William Moss Room** as its own dedicated lecture and/or display space fully accessible to a kitchen and toilets. There is a smaller ground floor meeting space the **James Mason Room**. This has a kitchen and toilets attached.

The building has disabled access by way of ramps and a lift, and also has a dedicated toilet and a ground floor parking space.

Collection management has been made more practical, with dedicated compactus for off-floor storage and all books are now compliant with a security system with operational gates installed. High use history books and other titles are on open access for easier reader use.

There is also dedicated space for volunteers and readers or researchers can bring their own snacks or lunch to be had in the public tearoom.



There are areas for the use of personal computers and there is free wifi access.

A new catalogue management system will in future allow the profiling of readers' interests and will have the ability to generate notification of future acquisitions that may be of interest.

Prahran was one of the inaugural members of the **Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria** which set out with the aims of promoting and preserving Mechanics' Institutes across Victoria but also the

collection of material and information relevant to Institutes. This collection, along with the scanned records of some seventy Institutes, is a world class resource that can be accessed largely on computer at Prahran.

Prahran also houses the large record of the **Cinema and Theatre Historical Society** in a dedicated room, where five computers allow members to input data into the master file.

The other complementary collection which Prahran hosts is that of the **Australian Railways Historical Society**, with its 2500 book collection shelved separately. MIV shares a workspace with them.

The change of venue has meant a new logo and branding and **Truly Deeply** of South Melbourne was chosen for the task. The new logo design incorporates bright colours against a background reminiscent of old paper. The logo shows a mechanical cog along with a book and a speech bubble (indicating that history at the PMI is not just about the written word, but about lectures and conversations).

The first exhibition in the new building's William Moss Room is titled '**On the Home Front: WWI in Caulfield and Beyond**'. The exhibition has been curated by the Glen Eira Historical Society and opens on 18 April and runs through until 26 May.



MIV'S *Historical Plaques Program*

15 YEARS OF PLAQUING VICTORIA

It has been 15 years since the proposition to place Blue Plaques on Mechanics' Institutes, and their sites, around Victoria. Throughout this time, 46 Plaques have been issued across the State, marking Institutes big and small for the visiting public to identify and understand a bit about the buildings we all know so well.

The 46 plaques issued to date create MIV's **Historical Plaques Trail**. As you can see on the map, multiple Institutes on this Trail can be visited in a day trip.

How many of these Institutes have you visited and spied MIV's Blue Plaque?

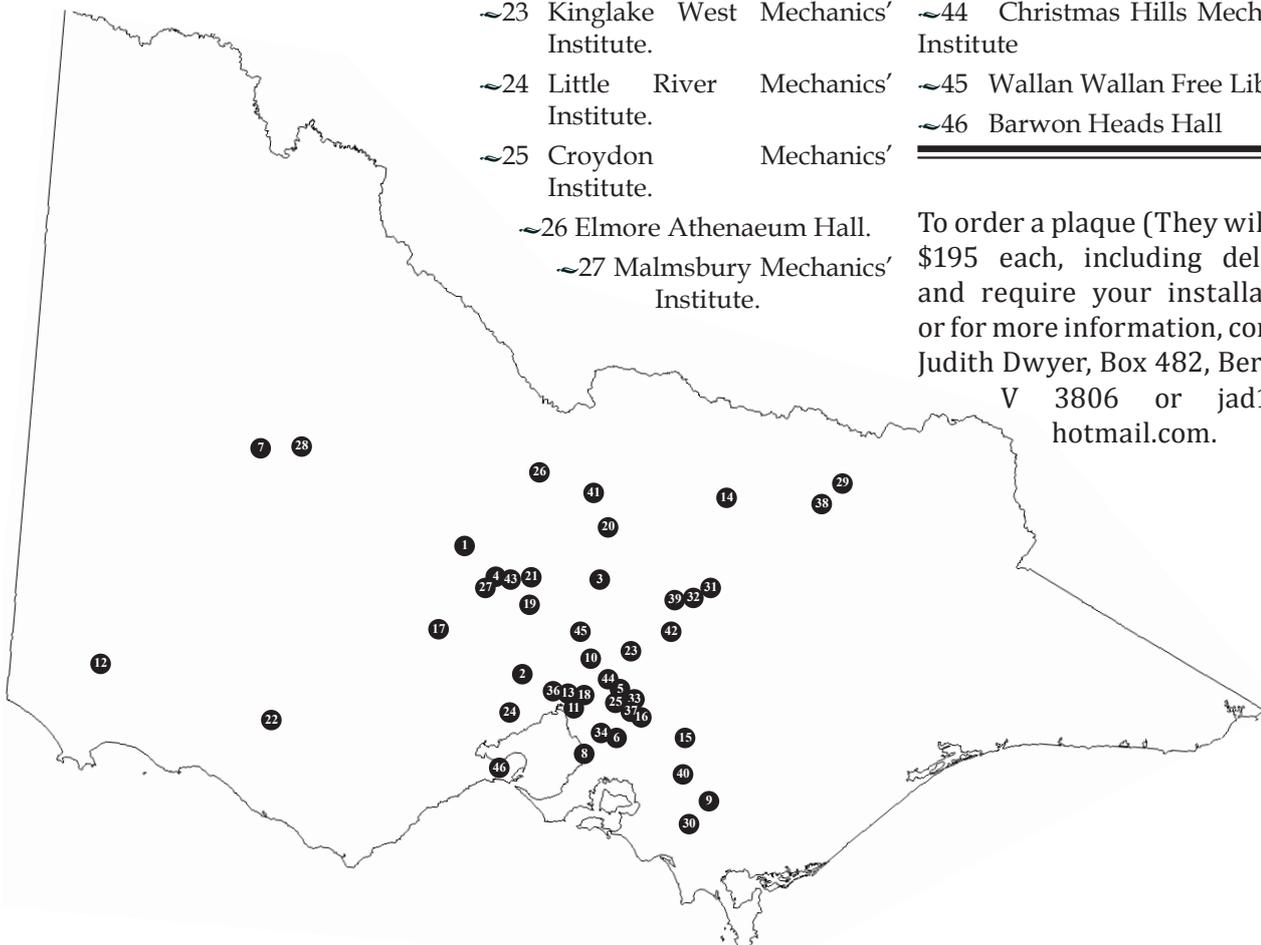
- ~1 Maldon Athenaeum.
- ~2 Ballan Mechanics' Institute.
- ~3 Tallarook Mechanics' Institute.
- ~4 Taradale Mechanics' Institute.
- ~5 Lilydale Athenaeum.
- ~6 Berwick Mechanics' Institute and Free Library.

- ~7 Minyip Mechanics' Institute.
- ~8 Frankston Mechanics' Institute.
- ~9 Mt Eccles Mechanics' Institute.
- ~10 Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute.
- ~11 Prahran Mechanics' Institute.
- ~12 Digby Mechanics' Institute.
- ~13 Melbourne Athenaeum.
- ~14 Benalla Mechanics' Institute.
- ~15 Jindivick Mechanics' Institute.
- ~16 Emerald Mechanics' Institute.
- ~17 Dean Mechanics' Institute.
- ~18 Oakleigh Mechanics' Institute.
- ~19 Newham Mechanics' Institute.
- ~20 Nagambie Mechanics' Institute.
- ~21 Mia Mia Mechanics' Institute.
- ~22 Mortlake Mechanics' Institute.
- ~23 Kinglake West Mechanics' Institute.
- ~24 Little River Mechanics' Institute.
- ~25 Croydon Mechanics' Institute.

- ~28 Laen Mechanics' Institute site.
- ~29 Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room.
- ~30 Leongatha Mechanics' Institute.
- ~31 Bonnie Doon Free Library.
- ~32 Spring Creek Mechanics' Institute and Free Library (Fawcett Hall).
- ~33 Olinda Mechanics' Institute.
- ~34 Narre Warren Mechanics' Institute.
- ~35 Tarwin Lower Mechanics' Institute.
- ~36 Footscray Mechanics' Institute.
- ~37 Kallista Mechanics' Institute.
- ~38 Whorouly Library Hall.
- ~39 Alexandra Free Library.
- ~40 Larder Mechanics' Institute.
- ~41 Rushworth Mechanics' Institute.
- ~42 Acheron Mechanics' Institute.
- ~43 Barfold Mechanics' Institute.
- ~44 Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute
- ~45 Wallan Wallan Free Library
- ~46 Barwon Heads Hall

- ~26 Elmore Athenaeum Hall.
- ~27 Malmsbury Mechanics' Institute.

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



MIV *Bus Tour* - WILLIAMSTOWN TO THE BELLARINE PENINSULA - 26 OCTOBER 2014

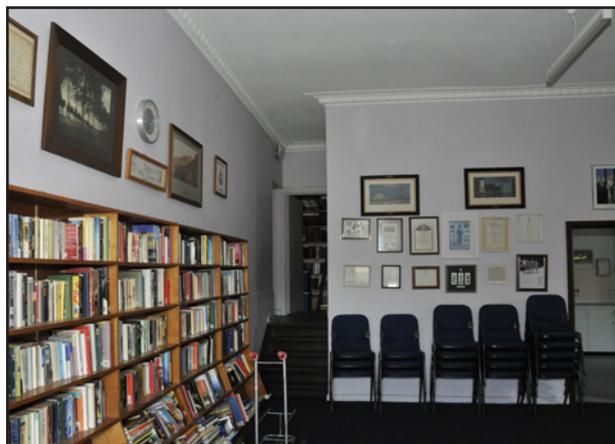
The tour begins at the **Williamstown Mechanics' Institute** where participants from Berwick and those joining at Williamstown come together.

A guided tour of the Williamstown Mechanics' Institute, built in stages between 1860 and 1890, was provided by **Ada Ackerley** of the **Williamstown Historical Society**. The tour started in the former Reading Room, now restored as a reception/meeting room. The interesting displays of the Museum were inspected as we followed the route to the auditorium. It is now a fully equipped theatre with a full lighting rig, but the original ornate interior decoration can still be seen.

All boarded the bus for the journey to Barwon Heads. Aspects of Williamstown history were shared by Ada, and further along the Geelong Road, **Peter Jones** of **Little River MI** gave insights into developments affecting that region.

At **Barwon Heads Hall** we were met by **Laurie Ryan**, Secretary of the Hall Committee. He was a little disconcerted because his planning for the tour visit was completely disrupted by a children's party in full swing. There were children in fairy costumes, babies in prams, mothers serving cakes and lollies, and great fun and games. It was a Community Hall being used by the community, and demonstrated the popularity of the venue for all ages. The original features of the hall have been maintained with the addition of modern sound and film equipment, and a functional kitchen, to meet modern demands. Historic photos and memorabilia from the local RSL are displayed on the walls of the Supper Room.

Peter Mansfield, Geelong historian and Mechanics' Institute researcher, joined the tour



at Barwon Heads. He provided commentary on the history of the district, and the very different origins of the early settlements of Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove. Lunch was at the **Ocean Grove Golf Club**. The chef provided a selection of dishes to each table, and all enjoyed the variety.

As we proceeded to Queenscliff and onto Geelong, Peter provided anecdotes from his research of the origins of the Mechanics' Institutes of the Bellarine Peninsula. The minutes of the committees of **Queenscliff** and of **Leopold** provided glimpses into the motivation and achievements of the pioneers. It is a theme he developed in his published research *Generous providers and stern custodians: the development of libraries in the Colony of Victoria*.

We enter the outskirts of Geelong and pause at the **Geelong Eastern Cemetery**. It recently celebrated its 175th Anniversary with a book launch and photographic exhibition. We then proceed to the historic precinct of Geelong where the juxtaposition of old and new is somewhat incongruous.

The last stop for the day is the **Lara Museum and Historical Centre**. We are running a bit behind time, but a welcome sight greets us. The **Lara Historical Society** have afternoon tea and scones laid out on the patio of the sun-filled, rose-scented, grassed courtyard. After refreshments, participants disperse to explore the many treasures of the museum and its historic displays, returning to the bus for the homeward journey laden with plants, photos and books.

It was a long day, enjoyed by all.

Judith Dwyer

Photos: MIRC Collection

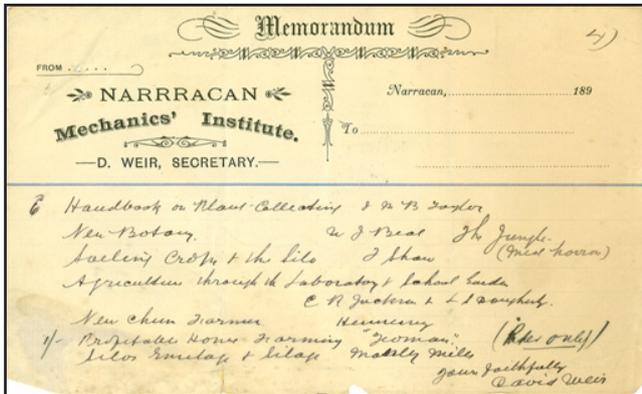


MIV News - RECORD SCANNING FOR YOU

MIV's Scanning Project is nearing the end of its funding grant from the Victorian Government, and we are keen for all of our Institute members to have had their records scanned as part of the project.

Record scanning is a free program and allows your Institute to have a couple of back-up copies of your records in digital format, in case anything happens to the originals. Each Institute which has their records scanned receives a CD (or CDs) of their copied records and an additional copy is kept by MIV in reserve.

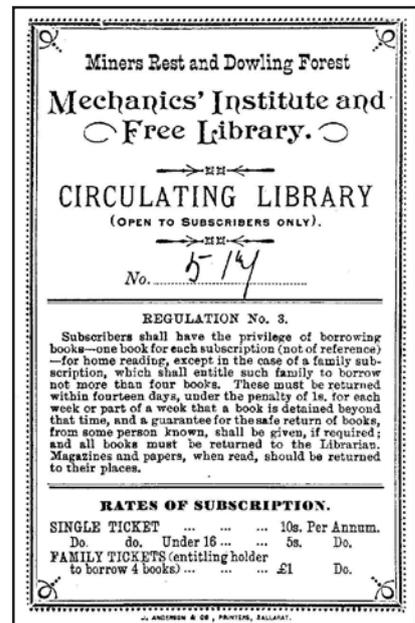
Your Institutes records are a very valuable part of its history and should thus be preserved for future generations. What better way to preserve them for the future than by taking them into the digital era.



Having a digital copy of your records on hand allows you to give access to plethora of items from your archives to researchers a n d c o m m u n i t y m e m b e r s without having to worry about damage, loss or removal of your original records. It is

far less hassle to have someone click through image on screen than don cotton archive gloves and carefully go page-by-page through your precious 19th Century Minute books.

MIV's Scanning Project can encompass a number of different types of records: Minute books, financial records, programs, photos or plans. For more information, contact: Judith Dwyer, Box 482, Berwick, V 3806 or jad134@hotmail.com.



MIV News - YARRA RANGES HERITAGE DAY

The MIV was invited to participate in the **Yarra Ranges Open Heritage Day** on Sunday 19 October 2014. Organised by the local heritage groups, the 2014 Open Day was at the **Mont De Lancey Historic Homestead and Museum**, Wellington Road, Wandin East.

The MIV had a long display space, under cover in the open-sided Machinery Shed. The map panels showing the expansion of Mechanics' Institutes across Victoria were laid out on the trestles. There was also a small selection of Mechanics' Institute history books.

On the vertical display board there was a map of the Shire of Yarra Ranges, with photos of the local halls and their location. There was a panel of historic photographs provided by the **Kallista MI** and a poster of the history of the **Olinda MI**.

Many families were attracted to the venue, and children were fascinated to see pictures of their local hall and to learn its history as part of the Mechanics' Institute movement.

Judith Dwyer

Photo: Corinne Brewis



Opinion

WHO'S LOOKING AFTER THE MINDERS? BY JIM LOWDEN

A small army of several thousand people voluntarily manages billions of dollars worth of vital strategic assets in Victoria in the form of Community Halls. Further that army of volunteers saves the public purse millions of dollars in management and maintenance costs, whilst managing this vital community infrastructure for us all.

This band of helpers is increasing in age, but diminishing in numbers, but still those Halls are available for community events and natural disasters. Many of those helpers dip into their own pockets to enable things to happen in regards to *their* Hall. Some represent second or third generations of dedicated service.

Since the creation of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria in 1998 there has been a massive resurgence of interest in the Community Hall, not the least highlighted by their increasingly extensive use in natural disasters, fires and floods. This has proved the pre-eminence of the Community Hall as a piece of community infrastructure.

But there's much more to the Hall than as a central meeting or gathering place in times of disaster. The Hall is the oil in the community, a place where all the family can and do gather. Indeed '**Home is where the Hall is!**' which **Regional Arts Victoria** has recognised.

The Government considers adult education and community houses worthy of financial administrative support, so the question must be asked why not an agency to support Halls such as the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria.

Last year when we were proposing the **Halls Information Forum** at Kilmore we approached several Government agencies for financial support to cover outgoings on the day. All were met with a negative response. One suggested foundation or commercial funders. Fortunately to their great credit that everpresent **Bendigo Bank – Wallan and District Community Bank** stumped up some much needed cash.

Traditionally Mechanics' Institutes provided community libraries from the 1800s to post World War II, when their role was assumed by Councils. However some remained and these were highlighted by **Frances Clancy** in her 1998 study of remnant Mechanics' libraries. Consequently some were considered worthy of Government support to the extent that from 2000 they received regular grants, but alas these grants were discontinued several years ago.

In spite of the lack of Government funding those libraries have risen in stature to become important parts of the State library network. Exactly why they are not considered worthy of Government funding, like other libraries, is something which must again be considered and re-evaluated at a Government level.

Government champions the arts, but the Halls which provide venues for travelling shows and visiting specialists to use in distant communities receive no comparative support. A program in the United Kingdom saw Halls resourced with a kit of audio visual, sound and even lighting components which meant communities could stage films or attract visiting performers. These could then be utilised for touring companies such as with the NSW-based **Festival of Small Halls**.

There is also the matter of equitable funding for Halls. Some Councils support them, others deign to charge them rates. Certainly there are some maintenance grants available but the thirty plus pages makes this an annual grind to ultimately be successful. The visiting **UK Heritage Lottery Fund's Kate Clarke** told us of their low-doc four page application form for grants under £10,000 and this is surely worthy of widespread consideration, even to save a few trees and valuable staff assessment time.

In the UK and NZ, **Heritage Lottery Fund** and in WA, **Lotterywest** signs appear on many community Halls as funding recipients and again we urge the Victorian Government to consider such a funding model in the future.

In New South Wales, Halls on Crown Land are insured for Public Risk at a minimal cost and again it is asked why that could not happen in Victoria, but for all Halls.

Again quoting the NSW model we see Government conducting an annual awards program for excellence in the management of Crown-land based Halls and Community Reserves located on some of the 35,000 Crown sites across the State. These not only provide cash awards for the winners but is also a great showcase for a whole range of community initiatives across the State.

Clearly these are all issues that must be raised with the new Government. I trust that we may be successful in achieving an equitable and innovative outcome on behalf of all those unsung heroes who have managed the Community Hall down through the generations, and still continue to do so.

ASSOCIATION OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES AND SCHOOLS OF ARTS NSW (AMISA) AGM

The **Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts** was the ideal venue for the Annual General Meeting of the **Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts New South Wales**. Held on 12 February 2015 it was attended by representatives from near and distant Institutes.



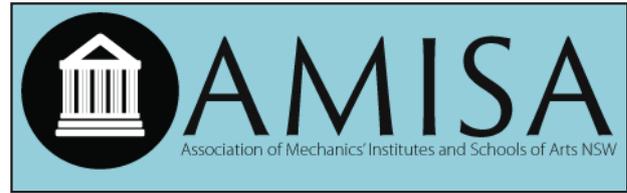
Prof Roger Morris

P r o f e s s o r Roger Morris AM was re-elected as President, with **Ms Winsome Allen** Vice-President, **Dr Carole O'Brien** as Treasurer and **Mr Phil Reed** as Secretary.

The year of activities started with a very well attended Seminar for Crown Land-

based Institutes. Addressed by Government agency staff this was part of the Crown Lands Management Review. To date the outcome of that Review has not been published.

The proposal for freehold Institutes and other groups to sell their properties to Crown Lands for \$1 was well canvassed. The subsequent passing of these properties to Local Government is starting to cause some angst across the State. Notably the handling of the **Randwick Literary Institute**, since it has been passed to Council and the recent fear that the **Lower Portland School of Arts**, an early work of notable architect **Stanley Noble Rickard** (1883-1976), may be demolished



AMISA also launched a study into cost-effective insurance possibilities for Institutes which produced some serious cost savings for Institutes.

Then there was the launch for Gallipoli related **World War I Memorials in MISA Halls** coordinated by **Robert Parkinson** and **Roger Morris**, with a number of volunteers. Contact was made with some eighty Institutes who were believed to have memorials and the results are presently being written up for publication.

Centrepiece of the AGM was the launch of the NSW AMISA's new website: **www.amisa.org.au**, designed and built by **Melanie Ryan**. A feature of the mastheads is the various gable tops of NSW Halls, large and small. A very nice representative touch.

Two 'Certifications of Appreciation' were presented at the AGM. The first to the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts who provided a grant for the website, which was accepted by SMSA Secretary **Grahame Marks**. The second was to **Melanie Ryan** in appreciation for her work in developing the website.

The relaunch of the newsletter, the first of which contained a fascinating article on the **Albion Park Literary Institute (1893-1959)** by **Robert Atkinson**. The most recent edition contains an article by **Dr Barrie Brennan** on the **Tamworth Mechanics' Institute**, established in 1866. The Tamworth building has had two significant re-incarnations in recent times: the first as a **University of New England** Adult Education Campus from the 1960s-late 1980s; and then most recently as the archive and record centre of the **Australian Country Music Foundation** from 1994-2014. The Institute is looking for a new use as it nears its 150th anniversary in 2016.

Membership of AMISA NSW is: \$20 for Organisations; and \$10 for individuals and this can be done online by direct debit on their website.



LAUNCESTON'S CONSERVATION & INNOVATION

It is around two years since the **Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute** were passed the management of the former Institute's remnant collection of some 20,000 titles. Since then it has been something of a roller coaster: seeking a repository, now at University of Tasmania (UTAS); assembling the books from various storages; and starting to see and assess just what is there.

The resolve of the Friends has been well rewarded, not only in the context of Launceston, but also in respect to their maintenance of a unique historic collection for the Australian nation. (A valuable component of that collection is that of early Australian literature.) The fact that such a significant collection still exists is miraculous, particularly having regard to the 'disposal' of its historic home.

If you look on FOLMI's Facebook site and scroll down you will see reference to the ABC's **Now and Then Series** and you will see a 'reinstatement' of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute on its historic site at the corner of John and Cameron Streets, Launceston. The caption is even more to the point *'What would you do with a beautiful building like this? A museum, art gallery, focus of a local tourism campaign? No, of course not! If you were [a] progressively minded person in the 1970s you'd demolish it. And that's exactly what happened: no trace of this building remains.'*

The question must then be asked why did the LMI library survive, until its ultimate fate surfaced for consideration some four years ago? I guess it was fate, waiting for FOLMI to come along on a white charger. Since then the goldmine is unfolding. Not only is this a collection of books, but it also revealing a history of printing, bookbinding, bookselling and librarianship in Tasmania and beyond.

Whilst the Institute ran from 1842-1945, it inherited a previous collection, and items from Tasmania's pioneers, along with ownership endorsements, bookplates and marginalia. The book collection is also backed up by: the



Books from the LMI Collection.

Photo: launcestonmechanicsinstitute.blogspot.com.au

Institute's written and operational record; **Stefan Petrow's** *Going to the Mechanics: A History of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842-1914*; a rallying point for the assembling of a whole range of incunabula - posters, programs, invitations, tickets, etc.; and of course photographs.

The FOLMI even hold a signed letter from author **Anthony Trollope** (1815-82) regretting that he was unable to accept the Institute's invitation during his hasty visit to Tasmania in 1872. He would have been suitably impressed for the LMI collection contains most of his works.

What has been most valuable for us is that we can all share in their discoveries by way of their blog: **launcestonmechanicsinstitute.blogspot.com.au**. Check out their Flickr Albums: Binder's Tickets; Bookplates; Classics; Events at the Institute; Launceston Booksellers; and Member's Tickets. This is what makes technology so interesting, but without the original hard copy nothing could have happened!

However FOLMI's work on the 'ether' has been equally matched by that on the ground. Their National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grant was put to good use by way of the engagement of Adelaide-based **Dr Susan Marsden** who visited Launceston from 7-11 December to commence the process of a Significance Assessment.

Prior to this FOLMI stalwart **Peter Richardson** had attended the National Library of Australia's three day intensive preservation and collection management workshop in October 2014. This not only honed in on collection preservation and restoration, but also making the collection available to researchers and the general public.

This is a great news story for all the right reasons and we will see the fruit continually coming forth via Facebook and Blogs. One can only hope that we might even be able to visit and see the collection in a dedicated home in our lifetimes. Well done all!

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.

ANCONA HALL (Est. 1906)



Photo: Fawcett Hall Facebook

The Ancona Hall (also known as the Borodomanin Mechanics' Institute) was opened in 1907 and burned down in 1923. A new hall was built in 1931. It was used as a school for a time after 1957. Ancona hosts a regular market and this has provided revenue to upgrade the Hall over the last few years. Like many rural halls it is ideally placed for the conduct of meetings, seminars and workshops. One such workshop was conducted by Australian Wool Innovation and Meat and Livestock Australia on sheep. The Bredwell Fedwell Workshop covered the subjects: improving ewe nutrition; developing a breeding goal; developing a feed budget; and breeding better ewes. The Hall also hosts regular Landcare meetings.

ARTHURS CREEK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1886)

The folk at Arthurs Creek seem to go from strength to strength, but then nothing succeeds like success. The annual **November Garden Walk** was a busy day for the Hall and the kitchen was kept busy all day feeding the patrons as they went to and from the various gardens. This year's gardens included those of: **Kate Barwick** and **Chris O'Connor**; **Nan Oates**; **Suellen** and **Stuart White**; **Sue** and **Michael Aldred**; and **Sandra** and **Bart Verdam**. The fine day, a well patronised raffle, donations from non-attendees,

from food and garden admissions resulted in a profit of \$4800. I am sure that will be put to good use in ensuring that the Hall is even more used by the community.

We note the welcome donation of crockery to the Hall by **Caron Nelson** and trust it will have a long life and be well used.

BALLAARAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1855)

Ballaarat played host to a recent **UNESCO Historical Urban Landscapes Symposium** which featured international keynote **Dr Ron van Oers** and **Professor Rohit Jigyasu**.

All aspects of Institute came into focus: staging facilities in the Minerva Space; breakout areas; and hospitality which was dispensed in the Batten Room.

Coordinated largely by **Federation University (Professor Keir Reeves)** and **Deakin University (Dr Steven Cooke)** it provided a smorgasbord of activity commencing with the Welcome to Country by **Uncle Bryon Powell** of the Wadawurrung people, through to a very presentable impromptu workup of 'Oh What a Lovely War' by Federation University's Australia Arts Academy students.

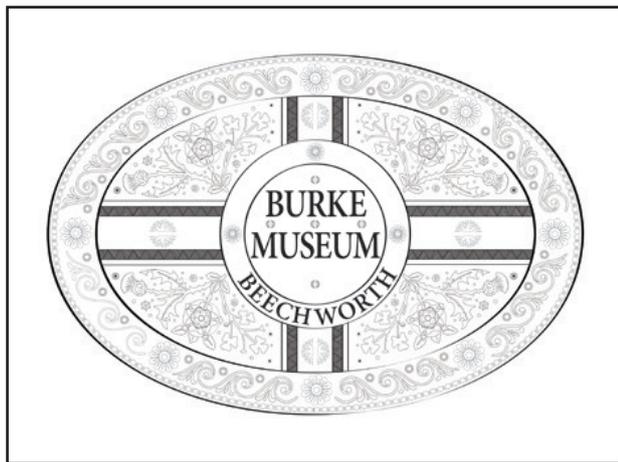
The two day Symposium concluded with **Dr Peter Dahlhaus'** launch of Ballarat's **Historic Urban Landscape** website and mapping tool – www.hulballarat.org.au and www.visualisingballarat.org.au.

Fittingly breakout workshops addressed many of the issues which would have been addressed by and in the Institute down through the years. Indeed each Institute could well stage such a Symposium at a local level drawing on local expertise.

The Ballaarat Institute is now a very busy space with theatre, film, music productions and of course lectures. Check out their website for happenings or better still drop by during **Heritage Month**. www.ballaratmi.com.au

BEECHWORTH ATHENAEUM (Est. 1856)

The Burke Museum which has been undergoing a significant upgrade is contributing yet another static exhibition from its own collection and private borrowed items which will be open during Heritage Month 18 April-26 May. Titled '**World War I Nurses of Beechworth**' it 'tells a story of commitment, compassion and great courage'. 'The exhibition features, the stories,



the notes, the letters and diary entries of these brave nurses, against a backdrop of clothing and memorabilia from the time.

The Beechworth Historic Court House and Burke Museum were the winners of the 2014 Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence based on visitor reviews for the period. Congratulations!

www.burkemuseum.com.au

BENALLA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1869)



Recently restyled as the **Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum**, this busy place was named Victorian Country Museum of the Year 2009 and 2011. The accredited Museum is managed and staffed by members of the **Benalla Historical Society** which has its headquarters there.

The Society's record centre is a model to behold, with most of their hardcopy records, now available in digital form, but backed up by the originals in archive boxes or map storage. Their recently purchased scanner printer has been getting lots of use!

This is by far one of the most significant regional history holdings in the State, well backed up by TROVE's listing of Benalla's five newspapers. It is a great credit to President **John Hanlon** and his dedicated team of volunteers.

A visit by textile conservator **Michelle Hunter**, saw her conduct a workshop around Benalla's

significant clothing collection. It is noted 'She had us stitch samples and advised on the repair and stabilisation of our perishable articles'. To fill gaps in Benalla's very notable clothing collection, the Museum recently purchased five pieces from a significant private Victorian and Edwardian collection, comprising a bodice, skirt and shawls. In October last year photographer **Dale Wright** handed over to the Museum eleven large photographic portraits of Benalla's favourite native son **Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop**. These were taken in a number of roles and poses. Some of these will feature in the ongoing revamp of the static displays.

The Museum also features periodic special exhibitions and one of these will be staged during **Heritage Month** 18 April-26 May titled '**Connections with Home**' which 'relates to World War I events through personal letters, diaries and artifacts of local servicemen and women from the fields of conflict'. www.home.vicnet.net.au/~benmus

CLUNES FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1874)

The fate of the Clunes Free Library building still hangs in the wind. The reputed \$1 million price tag to fully restore it is a major hitch. However what goes on around it is just like a bushfire. Since being established in 2007 the Clunes Book Town activities have grown beyond the major first weekend in May, to a series of author talks and activities throughout the year.

In April 2012 Clunes became the **15th International Book Town** and the only Book Town in the Southern Hemisphere. Today seven bookshops operate permanently out of Clunes, and this is swelled to fifty during the **Clunes Book Town** weekend.

This April will see the rebirth of the **Clunes Farmers' Market**, which has been in recess for a number of years, with a range of historic skills being demonstrated, or a tour of the town powered by the gentle giant Clydesdale horses. Info: clunesbooktown.com.au

DEAN HALL & MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1894)

This Institute, tucked away in 'spud' country, is the ideal venue for the annual Big Spud Dinner, normally held the last Saturday in May. The event starts at 7pm with and 8.30 weigh in of your registered potato. The live music and three course meal makes it an evening to remember. The Hall is very well resourced, by way of kitchen, and lots of parking and is ideal for weddings, reunions, workshops, etc.

GREAT WESTERN HALL (Est. 1881)

Photo: vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au

Standing four square on Great Western's Main Street is the distinctive and solid Great Western Hall complex. The Institute was established around 1881 and tenders were called for the rear building in February 1884 and it was officially opened in September 1884.

The new larger front Hall was added in 1891 designed by **[Charles Douglas] Figgis** and **[Theodore Ernest] Molloy**, architects of Ballarat. (Interestingly Figgis' wife was a granddaughter of the Rev. John Price, a founder of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, the Rev. John Price.)

Built in brick in a rudimentary Federation Queen Anne style, the front Dutch-gable parapet carries the wording 'Mechanics' Institute'. The former Great Western toll booth was moved to adjoin the Hall on the east side.

Today the Hall is well managed by the local community. It is well used for events during the Great Western Races in January and during the Easter Rodeo.

KILMORE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)

Kilmore' President **Wilma Hammond** and her team have had a hectic year advocating the long-held project of Kilmore's Crown Land Monument Hill. First there was the VicRoads' Highway Bypass Option Committee of Inquiry Hearing of six days into the three bypass options of which the town-based Monument Hill was one. Based on submissions the Committee found the least desirable route was Monument Hill with **Minister Luke Donnellan** visiting the Monument to make his announcement on 11 March.

Early in December there was the Institute's annual Carols by Candlelight with a near record attendance.

The Institute hosted a day at the Hume and Hovell Monument on 13 December 2014 to

celebrate the 190th anniversary of Hume and Hovell's visit to the site in 1824. A worthy crowd turned up to hear **Ken McInnes** and **Lady Lunchalot (Anne Goble)** give their findings on the Hume and Hovell story.

On 2-3 February Victoria's Heritage Council Listings Committee visited Kilmore to hear submitters on the nomination of the **Kilmore Outdoor Recreation Public Heritage Precinct**, which covers the whole 157ha of the Kilmore town-based Crown Land Reserve, of which the Monument Hill is a contiguous part.

Material presented at the Hearing by expert witness Ken McInnes and others clearly showed that the history books and charts will need to be altered. (This is very much in line with **Professor Geoffrey Blainey's** recent belief that history should be the subject of periodic review.) The outcome of the Hearing is still pending.

KYNETON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)

The unveiling of Light Horse Monument, which culminated in a project which began in 2006, took place in the forecourt on the Mechanics' Institute. This was where the Kyneton Mounted Rifle Corps met from 1859. The Monument was unveiled on 31 October 2014 by Kyneton-born the **Hon. Jamie Briggs**, Federal Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development in the presence of military personnel, of which **Flight Lieutenant Mike Garnett** spoke. This was in time for the World War I anniversary of the Charge on Beersheba, in which the 800 members of the Light Horse Regiment played a major role, and is the last successful cavalry charge in history. The bronze near life-size statue is by Trentham-based craftsman **Rob Curtin**.

Following vandalism attacks the statue has since been relocated to Jennings Street, outside the Kyneton Police Station.

LANCEFIELD MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1868)

The Lancefield Institute has just recently been announced as the recipient of \$40,000 in the recent distribution of **Romsey-Lancefield Community Bank - Bendigo Bank** of some \$142,755. This is the largest single grant made by the local Bank to date and recognises the centrality of the Hall to the wellbeing of its customers and the community.

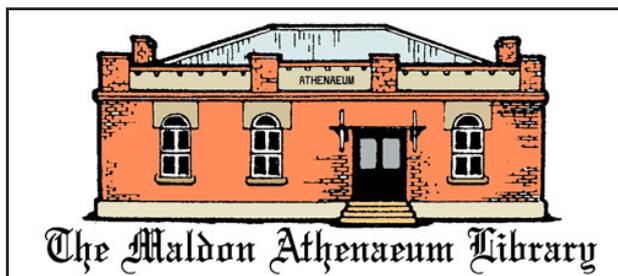
The grant will enable and upgrade of the entrance and kitchen annexe to further develop the Institute as a community hub.

LITTLE RIVER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1910)

The Little River Institute's Farmers Market on 16 November 2014 was an unqualified success which indeed 'experienced the beautiful'. There was much to buy but there was also a balloon man, face painting, Wyndham City's listening posts, live music and more. Work is proceeding on the Little River Historical Society's World War I Nurses' Memorial. The Society received a \$52,965 grant for the project which will feature local nurses **Sister Kit McNaughton** and her cousin **Sister Sadie McIntosh**. Sadie nursed in Egypt at the Choubra Infectious Diseases Hospital and later in France and England. Kit was posted to Egypt where she nursed the wounded from Gallipoli. She was then transferred to the Western Front and saw the horrors of the wounded from the infamous Battle of Passchendaele that went through her operating theatre.

The memorial will be unveiled on the Mechanics' Reserve in Rothwell Road on 17 July, at 1.30pm.

MALDON ATHENAEUM LIBRARY (Est. 1863)



Maldon's new website www.maldonlibrary.org.au is worth checking out. Its simple but very effective with the header being a coloured version of its stylised logo. A click on the toolbar at any one of: **Home; Library; History; Gallery; Newsletter;** and **Links** leads you quickly to the required section.

The Library features, the standard fare of fiction, with its strengths in mysteries, thrillers, science fiction, westerns, romances and short stories. Non fiction has strengths in biography, gardening, craft, cooking/food, travel, architecture/art, religions, science, DIY, Australian and a plethora of others. Then there is the **Junior Library** covering toddlers to teens with its feature mural by local artist **Sally Roadknight**.

The Maldon Collection which comprises books which reflect the lifestyle of the goldfields in the Victorian and Edwardian eras as well as books which trace the development and history

of the town. Local authors both from the past and the present are represented in this section.

The **Gallery Section** shows a range of photos, both external and internal. The internal feature the distinctive standard solid timber custom made shelving throughout the library which give it such a presence, with a portrait of Queen Victoria commanding centre view. Then there are those amazing stained glass lead windows.

By the time you read this Maldon will have played out its annual Easter Parade in which the Athenaeum has regularly had a float, since the Festival started in 1878.

Run entirely by volunteers, a great camaraderie has grown up among its thirty odd 'staff' and its membership and the recent garden harvest has seen the main library table being used as a swap centre for a whole range of fruit and vegetables.

Why not drop by for a look. Ask to see some pictures to show just where the Maldon Athenaeum has come from in the past fifteen years. You will be amazed to see what has been achieved, and all on a shoestring! Yet another great Mechanics' Institute good news story!

NARRE WARREN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1891)



The Institute after its restoration and repaint in 2014. Photo: Russell Owen

Built on land donated in 1890 by **Sidney John Webb**, of 'Holly Green' farm and one-time publisher of *The Age*. The original hall, which cost \$769.50, opened in 1891. It has had several additions since then. Its early library just grew and grew and eventually bookshelves stretched from floor to ceiling on every wall. Webb was Institute Secretary/Treasurer for twenty-five years.

Now affectionately known locally as 'the little old hall', this is a very busy place with daily usage by many community organisations and members of the public. Billed as a 'Small wooden hall with a stage and large kitchen. Kitchen has

stove, pie warmer, oven and fridge (no freezer). Approximately 80 people seated.

The facility features include: Parking at the rear of the building 25-30 spaces. Unisex disabled toilet, ramp- access. Functions finish at 2am. Saturday entry only after 2.00pm.... Bookings on (03) 8790 5988'

Accompanied by an external pic, this web-based summary tells any potential hirer from wherever they come what they need to know.

The Hall is to be subject of a major exhibition on 3-5 July 2015. It is being supported by the Federal Government Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program and involves thirty local artists who have been commissioned to complete a series of paintings for the Anzac Centenary in the Holt electorate.

In addition to individual pictures, the Holt ANZAC Centenary Fine Art Exhibition will feature the unveiling of five long Holt Anzac Mural which details the twenty-nine Holt electorate who paid the supreme sacrifice, with graphic pictures of battlefield action.

At the conclusion of the exhibition the individual pictures will be distributed to local schools and institutions by the Member for Holt, the Hon. Anthony Byrne.

SOMERVILLE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1891)



Damage to the roof of the Somerville Mechanics' Institute. Photos: Mornington Peninsula News Group Facebook/Yanni

The storm which passed through the Mornington Peninsula on 7 January 2015 resulted in the collapse of the roof of the Institute. Next day the major permanent tenant of the Institute the **Somerville, Tyabb and District Heritage Society** believed their collection to be safe. A regular hirer of the Institute the **Door of Faith Church** advised that services would be transferred to the Tyabb Hall until the roof was fully repaired which was believed to up to six months.

In the meantime the roof space was temporarily covered pending an assessment and

the planning of reinstatement works of this large roof space.

TALLAROOK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1891)

Tallarook continue on with their now well established monthly **Sunday Farmer's Market**. Join the monthly email notice and you will share in their regular tantalising recipes. The most recent notice being on cooking the quince, but more specifically the evolution of quince jelly. Tallarook's 'enthusiastic group of locals' really do 'strive to offer something different, something unavailable in the local area, for all to enjoy. www.tallarook.org.au.

UPPER PLENTY MECHANICS' HALL (Est. 1914)

The Hall Committee, as a part of a regional syndicate, have been submitting items on district World War I soldiers as a part of recording and information seeking drive to eventually publish a regional listing of World War I personnel.

WANDONG PUBLIC HALL (Est. 1900)

Wednesday 15 April 2015 was a red letter day for the Wandong community. It was the day when they finally unveiled their town's War Memorial to its 160 soldiers in Wandong's Memorial Park.

Victoria's Governor **His Excellency Alex Chernov AC** came to town and officiated at the new Memorial, witnessed by soldiers' relatives, the general public and '322 school children'. (A Memorial was first mooted by the then 'Mr Wandong' **Angus McDonald** back in 1920.)

Having paid due respects at the Memorial, the official party then adjourned to Wandong's much-loved Hall, which had been used in connection with Soldier Send Offs and Welcome Homes. There the Governor launched **Karen Christensen's** *There was a Soldier Who Wandered Far Away: When Wandong Went to War*, which covers Wandong service personnel in the Boer War, World War I and World War II. Official proceedings over, all then partook in traditional country hospitality at the Hall.



Photo: Twitter/MayorOfMitchell

Karen's book is a most fitting tribute and reinforces General Sir Thomas Blamey's Order of the Day for 15 August 1945 headed 'Surrender of Japanese' in which the good General exhorts 'We are now to go to our homes, having done our part in ensuring freedom, for which we have fought so long and successfully, and so let us stand together in future years to ensure that it remains the crowning heritage of Australian people.' Indeed! (The book *There was a Soldier* is available from the author, Karen Christensen, 35 Rail Street, Wandong, V 3758, \$30, posted.)

WARRNAMBOOL - FLAGSTAFF HILL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

Located in the grounds of **Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum**, this is the busy home of the **Warrnambool and District Historical Society**. It is well resourced with computer and copying technologies and has a large airy reading room overlooking the seaport.

Flagstaff Hill and the Warrnambool Garrison are combining to conduct an Anzac Eve (24 April) campout 'under canvas' on the original Garrison site. There will be special talks and presentations, dinner, attendance at the Dawn Service, then breakfast followed by the firing of two 80 pound cannons. Indeed 'You will remember the night overlooking Lady Bay with your family and the Dawn Service.' Bookings: 1800 556 111. www.flagstaffhill.com

WEDDERBURN LITERARY INSTITUTE (Est. 1859)



Photo: wedderburn.vic.au

Originally known as the Korong Miner's Literary Institute, the original Hall had a caretaker's cottage adjoining it but this has long since been demolished. In recent times this area has been landscaped, a street lamp has been installed, and along with new seating it makes a very pleasant street corner.

The Hall we see today has its genesis in the work of local Bank of Australasia manager **Edwin Herbert Hunt**. Tenders were called on 2 November 1912 by **William Beebe** FRVIA and **George Dawson Garvin**, Architects and Sworn Valuers of Mitchell Street, Bendigo for

the 'erection of public hall at Wedderburn'. The contract was let to Faravoni and Marrows of Bendigo and the foundation stone was laid on 8 January 1913. It was officially opened on 11 March 1913 by Messrs Thomas Langdon MLA and Richard Bloomfield Rees MLC. The brick Hall, with 'blood and bandage' treatment, was 'equipped with modern lighting controlled from the stage and a device on the outside wall enabling picture shows to be held without danger to the audience'.

Now entering its second century the Hall is well used by the community and has been the subject of much **Wedderburn Lions Club** activity and largesse. Over the last few years local fundraising and grants have enabled: the kitchen to be renovated and new appliances installed; installation of new toilet facilities and hand basins; and the replacement of the ceiling in the supper room, which was part of the original Institute. Today it is claimed to be 'the busiest Hall in the Loddon Shire'.

WILLIAMSTOWN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1856)

On 16-17 May, during Heritage Month, the Williamstown Historical Society will coordinate '**We Will Remember Them: A Tour of World War I Honour Boards and Memorials from Williamstown to Laverton**'. Tours start at the Institute each day between 10am and 4pm.

YARROWEYAH MEMORIAL HALL



The Yarroweyah Hall threw their doors wide open during **Home is Where the Hall is** month on 22 November. They provided a free cuppa and a chance to look at displays and demonstrations from a number of community groups. There were also some for sale stalls. And a jolly good time was had by all. The Hall is also the base for the Moira Film Screening Group.

The Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE OF NELLIGEN/ NELLIGEN SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1901)



Photo: Wikipedia

Nelligen, on the south coast of New South Wales, was first settled as a pastoral district from the 1820s. Based around the Clyde River it developed into a significant port with the township being gazetted in 1854, and the Post Office being opened in 1858. The township was originally served by the Victoria Hall which by 1900 was regarded 'as old and shabby'.

The movement to erect the present Hall was started in 1901 under the direction of the energetic Secretary **HJ Berry**, Nelligen's Postmaster. A fundraiser 'School of Arts Ball' was held in the Victoria Hall on 28 September 1901 'panning out in every way a marked social and financial success' and continuing 'till lamps burnt low and star beams paled.'

A land Grant was obtained and the contract for the building was let to **Charles Robert Stubbs** (1855-1943) of Moruya and finally cost £140. It was a structure of 64ftx22ft and contained the usual hall which was floored in tallow wood and had a well appointed stage, library and reading room. It was noted that Hall Treasurer **Alfred Allen Shoebridge** (1866-1938), a storekeeper, advanced credit on timber and other materials during the construction.

The first event in the Nelligen School of Arts, was a meeting of members to elect its officers: **Captain William Millard MP** (1844-1921), Patron; **Emil Francis Pfeiffer** (1857-1932), the Nelligen school teacher, President;

AM Campbell, Vice-President; and **HJ Berry**, Secretary/Librarian; **AA Shoebridge**, Treasurer; and a Committee of seven.

It was officially opened on 20 March 1903, at 4.30pm by Captain Millard and **Austin Chapman MP** (1864-1926). A concert followed in the evening, when thanks to Messrs Berry and **Donald Cameron**, the teacher from Currowan, 'electric lights gleamed and glowed'. A 'flashlight' photo of the audience was taken by Mr Cameron during a five minute break in the program. The door proceeds from the 'record attendance' totalled £14.

In June 1903 the Librarian Berry was authorised to pick out and purchase an assortment of one hundred and seventy-five secondhand books from the Braidwood Library.

In 1906 a Committee meeting room was added, and it was noted at the time that it had a piano, all of which had been paid for.

The Hall was well used by community groups such as the School, Church of England and Catholic churches, as well as the by the Buffalo and Manchester Unity Lodges.

On 1947, Hall Secretary PM Ryan, advertised the Hall's Victor piano, stated as being 'in good order', for sale by tender.

Grid electricity was connected to Hall in 1961. It also had school use from June-December 1961.

The Hall has a growing collection of memorabilia and photos and it was noted in 1943 that the collection contained the polished horns of the bullock Major which had plied the roads with local teams.

Located on the east bank of the River, the area is prone to flooding and those of 1964, reached underneath the Hall. Its location renders it most suitable for weddings on the riverbank and receptions in the Hall, which is well resourced with tables, chairs and crockery. The Hall also contains a modern kitchen, which was largely financed through raffles and a series of dances.

In recent years the Hall has been well managed by a Committee of six-eight members who have become particularly astute at financial management. Rates and insurance were issues tackled head on. To overcome the rates issue, the Committee registered the Hall as the Mechanics' Institute of Nelligen as a Deductible Grant Recipient with the Australian Taxation Office, thus gaining rate exemption as a charity.

Insurance is arranged through the Crown Lands entity at very reasonable rates.

A good working relationship also exists with local parliamentarians and subsequent grants have enabled the Hall to be reroofed, and painted inside and out, all with appropriate building restoration works along the way.

The **Eurobodalla Country Music and Social Club** stage monthly free concerts in the Hall and the Hall Committee supports this initiative with nominal rentals. Gratis use is extended to Anzac Day commemoration services.

QUEENSLAND

UPPER COOMERA SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1887)



Photo: Cassie Lowden

Located inland from Queensland's Gold Coast, Upper Coomera was once a farming community, but now is a rapidly growing residential area. The **John Siganto Park** is located nearby the Hall today.

Land for the building was purchased from the Coomera Division Board for five shillings and a title was issued for same on 17 June 1895. A concert in July 1895 raised £16 for Hall funds. In December 1896 the *Queenslander* noted 'A school of arts building is under erection, which will furnish which was long wanted here – a public hall.'

In 1900 it was reported 'Local matters have always received warm sympathy from **Mr [Frederick George] Walker**, [of the Sherwood Orangerie] amongst which may be mentioned the reception of a neat comfortable church and a commodious School of Arts.'

In March 1900 it was noted that **John Shirley**, BSc. delivered a lecture in the Hall on 'South Africa', when 'The audience numbered fully 300.' The lecture concluded with the screening of seventy lantern slides mostly loaned by Messrs Baker, Rouse and Tyas. Some £15 was taken at the door and a further £2.15s during the singing of 'The Absent-Minded Beggar'.

A welcome home was tended to **Private John Edward Hughes** (1894-1959), No. 1853 and **Private P Lenham** in the Hall on 12 April 1919 and they were each presented with an illuminated address. (Another soldier, **Sapper Henry Lenham** (1897-1917), No. 9457, was killed in Belgium on 9 June 1917.) **Private Sydney Kingston Bignell** (1893-1946), No. 3526 also served.

A 'Benefit' was held for the School of Arts in 1932 when a euchre party and dance was staged. Music was provided by W Taylor's orchestra from Canungra. The euchre tournament was won by **Mrs JW Siganto** and **Mr A Peachey**. A Boxing Tournament was advertised in 1938 as a fundraiser when 'lads from Southport, Ormeau, Cedar Creek, Coomera and Beenleigh' were expected to take part.

In 1938-39 an honorarium of £1 each was paid to the President, **Arthur Henry Barr** (1875-1953) and Honorary Secretary **Jesse Thomas Bird** (1890-1967) for 'their excellent work'. Both promptly donated their honorariums back to the Hall Committee.

Following 'extensive interior alterations to the Hall' in 1939 a ball was held to mark the reopening of the Hall. Shortly after the first farewell function of soldiers to World War II was held in the Hall when each member of the 2nd AIF leaving the district was presented with a 'suitably inscribed wristlet watch with luminous dial'. The Coomera Shire Council also offered to provide an Honour Board to list those district soldiers.

An Anniversary Ball was staged by the Hall Committee on 14 August 2014. Today the Hall is well maintained by a Management Committee.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

BORDERTOWN INSTITUTE (Est. 1878)



Photo: heritagebuildingsofsouthaustralia.com.au

Based on pastoral settlement, the township of Bordertown was surveyed and laid out in 1852.

The first Institute was built on the corner of Woolshed and De Courcey streets, Bordertown and it opened in 1878 with a library. Flooding from the nearby Tatiara Creek destabilised its foundations and town growth saw the need for a replacement.

The original survey provided for a town-centre oval known as Maclaren Place. Following the construction of the Council Chambers on this space in 1904, it was resolved by a meeting of ratepayers in 1905 that a new Institute be located alongside it.

Plans were drawn up by Adelaide-based architects [**Edward**] **Davies** (1852-1927) and [**Charles Walter**] **Rutt** (1875-1932), but it took some time to raise the funds before the contract was let in 1909 to: stonemason **Thomas Robert Webber** (1847-1932) of Mount Barker. **William Essery** (1855-1937) and staff of Adelaide did the carpentry work. The foundation stone was laid on 24 May 1909 by Congregational minister the **Rev. David Milne** (1827-1910), the sole survivor of the original trustees.

The Institute, with a 50ftx40ft main hall with kauri flooring, was opened on 26 November 1909 by South Australian Premier, **Archibald Peake**. The cost was £1800. Electricity was connected in 1918 and a bio-box for screening films was installed in the 1920s. The library remained to operate from the old building until the 1950s, when the new Hall was extended. (The old Hall was finally demolished in 1970.)

When an office extension was built to the rear of the Council Chambers in 1978, the Institute building was linked and in 1983 a re-design of the building saw the library take over the ground floor and the theatre occupy the second floor.

In 1989 an extension, in concrete brick, was added to the south side of the building. The stained glass windows were added to the library facade in 1992. The implementation of wheelchair access and the installation of a lift followed, with further works in 2011 to extend the library and refurbish the 230 seat theatre.

TASMANIA

GUNNS PLAINS COMMUNITY HALL (Est. 1925)

Situated about 20km south of Ulverstone on Tasmania's north-west coast the district is noted for: its numerous limestone caves; its agriculture-based rich red volcanic soils; and the Leven River which meanders through the district, a notable fishing place.

A Post office was established at Gunns Plains in 1900 and the movement to build a Hall at



Photo: Gunns Plains Hall Committee

Gunns Plains started in 1921. The proceeds of the Gunn's Plains Athletic and Sports Club meeting held in March 1922 were advertised to be 'in aid of the new hall' and resulted in a profit of £52.

In July 1922 a quarter acre site was selected on the corner of Preston and Gunns Plains Roads, Gunn Plains. This was later purchased for £12 from **Lewis Bonney**. In June 1925 we learn 'A start has been made to erect the building.'

The Hall was officially opened on 9 September 1925 with 'a social gathering and a dance.' The building, which was 25ft x 50ft exclusive of the stage, was 'packed' for the occasion. The estimated cost of the Hall was originally £600 but with volunteered labour this was actually £200.

On 20 January 1926 Gunn's Plains Hall and Sports Committee, Secretary **Thomas Joseph Britton**, a 'well known chopper and sawyer' spent the day fighting a district bushfire, and in the evening, at around 7pm, a dry tree 'about 100ft long and about 3ft in diameter at the butt' suddenly fell on him and he subsequently died.

His wife, Hannah, with eight young children, was the subject of the Britton Relief Fund from a district canvas and Hall fundraisers.

In 1926 Crystal Pictures started periodic film screenings in the Hall. An Honour Roll for World War I soldiers was installed in the Hall in September 1930 and carries twenty-seven names. The Board was made from blackwood by **Captain Thomas Henry Piper** (1891-1993) of Ulverstone, with the names in gold lettering.

An almost identical Honour Roll from Lowana School, but with ornate multicoloured heading, eventually came into the possession of the Hall.

The Hall remained unlined for most of the 1930s. Lighting was by way of fixed lamps on the walls and with mantles fed from a Shellite petrol plant which had to be pumped up periodically to keep inline pressure.

The Hall was used regularly by the CWA, Catholic and Methodist Churches and a Farmers' Group.

A feature of Hall life was badminton which started in the early 1930s and went through to 2014. Another feature was the hedge at the side of the Hall where supplies of drink were stashed to be accessed between dances. Such hedging activities were occasionally subjected to police raids.

The World War II Honour Roll was prepared for unveiling on 1 November 1949 which was made by Pipers of Ulverstone. The cost was £26.

In July 1950 the Hall was the venue for the district electricity 'switch on' by **Dame Enid Lyons MHR**, and **Mrs Rosland Mabel Amy 'Granny' Ansell**.

The celebration night in 1953 for the premiership win of the Gunn's Plains Football Club after a drought of forty years, saw 'a large crowd danced to the bright lead of Hiscutt's Orchestra'.

In the early to mid-1950s a major push to upgrade the Hall took place and a supper room and toilets were added to the side of the Hall in 1956. Major fundraisers included a Horse and Pony Gymkhana and regular cake stalls held in Ulverstone's main street. Paddocks were also planted with peas and potatoes for harvest and fundraising. **Bill Carter** carted the timber for the works.

A grant in 2012 enabled the Hall to be painted inside and the toilets refurbished. The kitchen was upgraded in 2014.

Over the past few years the Hall has hosted the annual Potato Festival since 2007; Indoor Woodchop since 2012, organised by world champion chopper David Foster; Trivia Nights; Casserole Nights; and an Annual Christmas Barbecue since the 1950s.

A Craft Group, established in 2008, met in the Hall monthly for the day and all-comers were invited along to teach or be taught in a whole range of craft related activities. They also staged periodic demonstration and sale days. The distinctive framed quilt which hangs in the Hall, is largely a result of their work.

In 2010 a Memorial Garden was installed to honour the founder of Gunns Plains, **Ronald Campbell Gunn** (1801-81). It comprises plantings of native species that were recorded by Gunn in his botanical works.

A Memorial Day at the Gunns Plains Hall was held on 29 November 2014. A barbecue table and seat, based on a concrete plinth, had previously

been unveiled by the **Brett Whiteley**, MP at the Gunns Plains Caves. Plaques on each end of the seat record the names of the twenty-seven people who enlisted from the district in World War I.

Launched in connection with this project was Raymond Hyland's excellent compilation of the *Gunn Plains Honour Roll: World War I Centenary 1914-2014* which gives details of the lives and service of those listed on the World War I Honour Rolls.

The Hall Committee also took the opportunity to restore the three Honour Boards, the one from the Lowana School being in most need of retouching.

Today the Hall Committee of six proudly act independent of Council and are hopeful that the Hall will remain in community ownership for many years to come.

Most of the Hall records were lost in house fire in 1986, but since then an early Minute Book has been discovered elsewhere and this dates back to 1926.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

TOODYAY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est 1874)



Photo: www.toodyay.wa.gov.au

Toodyay, an area 85km north-east of Perth, has recently been ravaged by bushfires. It hosts the Toodyay Public Library building, with AD 1874 highlighted above the door. This was the original home of the **Newcastle Mechanics' Institute** which was established in 1866. Fundraising continued and with the extra funding provided by the **Toodyay Young Men's Reading Club**, which had been established on 30 August 1871, the present building was constructed in 1874.

It continued to provide a regional venue for concerts, meetings and public lectures and eventually was taken over by the Toodyay Road Board. The foundation stone of the Toodyay Memorial Hall was laid in 1899. It was initially used by the Toodyay Road Board, but has been

extended as a community Hall in 1910 and again in 1990.

Today the Toodyay Mechanics' Institute building is again in full use as the regional library. In very recent times it has had a massive upgrade to not only highlight its distinctive architecture but also to be a regional leader in library technology, with internet and WiFi, the making available of information and e-books and self-service borrowing and returns.

The library has a substantial local history collection. In addition it provides young borrowers with not only books, but DVDs and CDS, with inhouse television and DVD player.

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND

BRIDPORT LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE (Est. 1834)



Photo: Bridport Literary and Scientific Institute facebook

Located abutting Dorset's 'Jurassic Coast', Bridport has a centuries long connection with net and rope making and more recently brewing.

The **Bridport Mechanics' Institute** was given to the town by Liberal MP **Henry Warburton** (1784-1858) in 1834. On the Institute's demise, the property reverted to **Howard Warburton Elphinstone** (1830-1917) in 1863 and he agreed to lease it to the **Bridport Literary and Scientific Institute** for 1000 years at a peppercorn a year rental.

It subsequently became a vibrant library and housed the **Bridport School of Art** from 1865 and achieved prominence in the graphic and visual arts under the tutelage of **Francis Henry 'Fra' Newbery** (1855-1946). The building was requisitioned during World War II and was a US base prior to the Normandy invasion in 1944. Later it was occupied by the Red Cross and then the community library.

Since being vacated by the library in 1997 and a commercial tenant in 2002, the building has

been empty and has deteriorated. In very recent times it has been the subject of legal dispute as a trust property in which Council claimed an interest, but as it no longer fulfilled the use prescribed by the original lessor, whether it be reverted to his descendants.

The **Bridport Area Development Trust** (BADT) launched a fundraising appeal in 2013. It was supported in its campaign by art historian and TV presenter **Dan Cruickshank** who came to town and appeared at a special fundraiser at the **Bull Hotel**. He spoke on the architecture of Bridport and the quality of that of the Bridport Institute and noted **Nikolaus Pevsner's** comment 'Bridport is one of the best towns in Dorset, and for a continuously sustained urban feeling perhaps the best of all.' The event raised almost £9,000.

The very recent news of 'Earlier this month [March 2015] BADT, together with Dorset County Council and **Sir John Elphinstone**, whose great grandfather originally gave the building to the town, went to the High Court where a vesting was made that ended years of uncertainty about the legal status of the building. At the hearing the freehold of the building was vested in BADT, so it can be restored and maintained as a community asset for the future.'

This landmark ruling comes on the heels that the **Heritage Lottery Fund** had awarded a grant of £1,421,500 towards restoration of the Grade II listed building, with a further £300,000 being committed to the project by **English Heritage**.

We can but congratulate **Mike Carter** and his team at the BSLI Working Group on this notable outcome and wish them well with yet another Institute, phoenix rising.

MORRAB LIBRARY (Est. 1818)

Located in Cornwall's Penzance, the Morabb Library is indeed 'a rich resource for research or a place to borrow the latest novel'. Its two-storey Georgian building is idyllically located in the Morabb Gardens. However that can have its drawbacks for during high winds the Gardens are closed and that also means the Library.

One of the rich features of their collection is some 15,000 glass and celluloid negatives and back and white prints, largely from the Richards photographic family. These cover from the mid-1800s to the late 1970s and include a wide subject range from family portraits to shipwrecks.

The Morabb has just had a major refurbishment and extension thanks to the Myner and Tanner Trusts. It is also in the process of digitising its large photographic and records collection. The



*Photo: Morrab Library website
(morrablibrary.org.uk)*

Library runs regular exhibitions based on its collections and has a lecture program. www.morrablibrary.org.uk

SCOTLAND

INNERPEFFRAY LIBRARY (Est. c1680)



*Photo: Innerpeffray Library website
(www.innerpeffraylibrary.co.uk)*

Located near Crieff in Perthshire, Scotland, the Innerpeffray Library was the first lending library in Scotland, and it operated as such until 1968. It has been administered by the Innerpeffray Mortification charitable trust since 1694 and contains the library of **David Drummond**, the 3rd Lord Maddertie who died in 1692.

The Library contains key titles of the known knowledge of the day on a range of subjects, in a number of languages.

The Library was later supplemented by the collection of relative **Robert Hay Drummond** (1711-76), a former Archbishop of York.

Located on a rural site, abutting the River Earn, beside the Library is the Collegiate Chapel of St Mary's, the library's original home. The Keeper of Books (now Library Manager) is now housed in the old Schoolhouse at the entrance to the property.

The Library's distinctive Drummond coat of arms on its bookplate features the armorial shield bordered by two hefty gentlemen carrying clubs, perhaps signifying enforcers, thus ensuring the return of borrowed books.

A Friends of Innerpeffray group stages periodic musical and dramatic events to support the maintenance of the library and its buildings.

For those anticipating a visit it is suggested that you make prior arrangements, but it was recently noticed that the Library is closed between the months of November and February, inclusive. www.innerpeffraylibrary.co.uk

USA

WAGNER FREE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE (Est. 1865)



Photo: Wikipedia Commons

Located in North Philadelphia in a National Historic Landmark three-storey building, the Wagner Institute was endowed by Philadelphia merchant **William Wagner** (1796-1885).

During his lifetime Wagner, a keen amateur scientist, amassed a significant collection. He built the Wagner Institute to house it as a part of his mission to provide free science education for the people of Philadelphia.

On his death the trustees hired notable curator **Dr Joseph Leidy** (1823-91) to run it. He assembled the collection in 'evolution' order and it remains today as he arranged it. He also instituted a lecture program which is still in place.

The year 2015 celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Institute's building and will be accompanied by a range of events held throughout the year. Happy Birthday WFIS!

www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Where They Stood

WHROO MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1859)

The Whroo Mechanics' Institute was established in 1859 and was on land occupied by mining entrepreneur **John Thomas Lewis** (1831-1906). The Institute began in a slab building, with a bark roof which had previously been constructed by Lewis as his home in 1857. Lewis occupied the chair at the inaugural meeting and offered to sell the building to the new six man Committee for £40.

Instead it was agreed that the Institute pay £13 per year and this would be regarded as part payment. When the Secretary offered Lewis £6 during the first year, Lewis is alleged to have declined it remarking that any time would do. From then on rent was not paid.

It was in that building that a reading room was set up and a library was accrued. It opened on the first Monday in 'July 1859 the whole population of Whroo surged on to the streets for the opening of their Mechanics' Institute, in the good part of town...Flags are flying and everyone is here.' A sign proclaimed 'Whroo Mechanics' Institute and Reading Room.' The Institute was open every evening between 7pm-10pm, except Sunday. On Saturday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday it was a Reading Room, with a lecture delivered on Thursdays and Fridays were made over for the discussion of subjects 'of interest to the district'.

The first Secretary **James Tinson** was also the correspondent for the *Mclvor Times*. 'Tinson had a great talent for sketching local identifies. He sat on a high stool with spectacles perched on the end of his nose whilst sketching the absorbed readers in the quiet Whroo Library.' He was by 1860 replaced by **Arthur Henry** a former employee of Lewis, who had started with him in 1856 and in 1858 took up alluvial mining on his own account. Henry was appointed Institute Secretary at ten shillings per week.

Henry was to become the Whroo correspondent for the *Mclvor News*, *Mining Journal*, and *Dicker's Mining Record*. Henry, or as his journalist predecessor at the Institute lampooned him in the *Mclvor Times* called him Arthur Henry Scratchgravel in prose and as Twaddle Banting in verse. 'And on a judge's kindly intimation/ Our hero turned his thoughts to emigration!/ A chance of a free passage soon arises,/ A short time after Lancashire assizes!/ A gap occurs - our hero disappears -/ In silence we pass over seven years...

The Institute was the scene of ugly meetings when the Parliamentary Member for Rodney, **Moses Wilson Gray** (1813-75) an Irish-born barrister, had declared that 'every man must have three things, a vote, a rifle and a farm - even if

he had to use the rifle to get the farm.' Lewis and others were concerned at this 'unparliamentary' behaviour and sought to have him dismissed. A public meeting in the Institute convened to discuss the conduct of Gray confronted Lewis with slander allegations and a vote of confidence in Gray was passed.

Lewis was miffed that 'his' building was being used as a rallying point for meetings against him and Henry was also using his press column to challenge Lewis' interests. Lewis was also surprised to learn that the Institute had run up a debt £47 by 1861, even without paying him rent.

Matters came to a head and without warning he called the bailiff to take possession of the books and other property of the Whroo Mechanics' Institute. Exactly what prompted him 'to smash the Mechanics' Institute' is only conjecture but it may have been to prevent the miners from organising opposition to his proposed lease. In any case the ploy backfired. A public meeting was convened at the Victoria Hotel and took the following resolution:

'That this meeting is of the opinion that the action taken by Mr Lewis to recover an alleged debt, by seizing on the books, papers and furniture, of the Whroo Mechanics Institute, is illegal, and in every way oppressive and unjustifiable, and that the committee at once demand from Mr Lewis the immediate and full restitution of all the aforesaid property; failing which they will be at once empowered to take legal proceedings for the recovery of same.'

The resolution was carried unanimously, and another followed to the effect that a large new building should be immediately put up near Alexander Doig's garden, due west of the Balaclava in Reedy Lake Road. The proposed building was to serve as the new Mechanics' Institute.

A contract was let and a 30ft x 18ft, 9ft high structure was soon underway.

The new building opened in October 1862. The Trustees were **Samuel Joseph Rousseau** (d. 1909); **Isaac Barrett**; **John Mann**; **Edwin Kittle** (d. 1906); **Thomas Renison** (d. 1918); **J Jones**; **C Mason**; and **Thomas Kittle**. The President was **William Herbert Mallock** (1831-86), the Secretary **Henry James Haines** (1832-86), Treasurer was **Alexander E Doig**.

In the meantime Lewis sold up the former Institute building and contents. People brought items for transfer to the new Institute. '...the feeling of disgust at Lewis's conduct was strongly manifested' by those present. A large lot of books was bought on Lewis' behalf, and it was announced that they would be donated to the Institute.

Where They Stood CONT...



In August 1864 it was reported 'The room of the Mechanics' Institute at Whroo is spacious and well lighted, and well warmed in the winter by a log fire, the walls are papered and hung around with maps of reference, engravings, etc. There are four tables each covered with green baize, ranged in various parts of the room; at one table a game of chess may be going on, a game of draughts at another, and, at the risk of those who make a great struggle when swallowing a gnat, but think nothing of bolting a camel, we will chronicle the fact, that at a third table in the Whroo Mechanics' Institute a harmless and amusing rubber of whist may be played. The Secretary sits at his desk at the end of the a table – generally lined with readers, and with the shelves containing the library at his right hand, he takes a note of all books and papers taken out and returned. The utmost order prevails, the Institute is patronised by tradesmen and miners, employers and employed, and it undoubtedly first class testimony to the intelligence of the people.'

A Government grant in 1864 enabled another room to be built on the east end of the Hall and bark roof was replaced with galvanised iron.

There was lots of activity in around the Hall in 1865. Some 140 books, two newspapers and four monthly magazines were added during 1866-67 when there were 68 members.

Officebearers for the year 1867 were: **WH Mallock; Thomas Kittle; Henry J Collier; Thomas B Price; Frederick William Burgoyne; John G Menon; John Mann; Joe Haig; Samuel Boyd; Isaac Barrett; HJ Collier**, Treasurer; Messrs **John Sharpe** and **W Bazeley**, Auditors; **Arthur Henry**, Secretary.

'The first cheap Popular Readings' took place at the Institute in June 1868. In 1868 there were 5460 library visits.

The Mclvor Times of 19 November 1869 carried the following: 'Mr Henry Arthur, who for so many years has been Secretary to the Whroo Mechanics' Institute, has disappeared and some ugly rumours are in circulation about him, of which we shall be able to speak after the Committee have met. Mr Henry has been the mainstay of the Whroo Mechanics' and it is a great pity that so useful a

man should have fallen. It will be a hard matter to supply his place.'

Henry was sacked in 1869 when a discrepancy of £40 was found in the Institute's accounts. At the time liabilities were listed as £91.12s.11d, with assets at £91.2s.1½d. **Thomas Barclay Price** (d. Q, 1911) was appointed as Secretary. He was to be succeeded by **Mr Avery, William Herbert Mallock** [1831-86], **Henry James Haines** [1832-86] and then **Joseph Henry Collier**.

A new weatherboard building was constructed in 1887 and opened with a Grand Opening Ball on 9 December. **James [Richmond] Tinson** [1836-1914] was then the Secretary. The Hall never had electricity connected and it progressed from candles to lamps, hurricane lanterns and finally pump-up Tilley lamps.

In 1936 the children of Whroo State School No. 651 planted a row of sugar gums along the front of the Institute building. The School, which also had occasional use of the Hall, closed in 1941.

Gradually the Whroo population dissipated and only a few families were left. Finally only one family remained. **Bob Darroch** was the local Returning Officer and for years he sat in the Hall on polling day from 8am-8pm knowing that only one family would vote at his booth.

The Hall was finally sold by Dalgety & Co. of Tatura for removal by auction for £160 on 4 April 1955. Auctioneer Alex McDonald of Rushworth also sold the contents of the Hall. The piano made £128, and the books, which sold in a number of lots, grossed £5.3s. In all the sale realised £475.10s., with the proceeds of £417.2s.6d. A large crowd attended the auction.

The Trustees: **John Birney** (1871-1955), **Frederick George LeDeux** (1905-88), **Ronald Henry 'Harry' Pettifer** (1921-) and **Mrs Mary (Jack) LeRoy** (1882-1971) as Secretary met for the final time and resolved that the money be divided equally between the: Mooroopna Base Hospital; Rushworth Bush Nursing Hospital; and Whroo Public Cemetery.

It was to be another fifty years before the site was finally sold.

Retired former Rushworth schoolmaster **Graeme Duke** recalls his time as returning officer for local elections based on the Whroo Mechanics'. The booth would open at 8am and by 9am the ten local families would have voted. Tea and coffee was then served and the lunchtime barbecue was readied. All generally remained engaged in conversation until the booth closed in the afternoon. (Photo: Nancy Pew)

The History Page

NORTH MIDLAND RAILWAY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE, DERBY

It was traditional in the early years of the railway operations in Britain for companies to purchase locomotives, carriages and trucks from independent companies and the network was relatively small scale and the companies had not the skill or finances to build their own rolling stock. Derby became a railway town in 1844 when three railway companies, the Birmingham and Derby, the North Midland and the Midland Counties merged into one which was named the Midland Railway Company. A railway works was built after the merger of the three lines and the first Derby-built locomotive steamed out of the sheds in 1851. In all, a total of 2,941 steam locomotives were built at the Derby works during the Midland, London, Midland and Scottish and after 1948 nationalisation, British Railways. Added to this were the continual overhauls and repairs to support the ever expanding Midland Railway. The last steam locomotive to be built at Derby rolled off the production line in 1957. However, the works continued to make diesel locomotives until the plant finally closed in 2004.



*Derby railway works and passenger station.
Photo: English Heritage*

Derby Railway Angling Club was originally formed in 1895 for employees of the then Midland Railway.

As a result of railway expansion, the North Midland Village was founded near the railway station and works. It was built to house

railway employees. Originally, there were 80 houses and four shops. As the railway network and works expanded, a further terrace was built with workers also living in the suburbs of Derby. Apart from the railways, the other major employer was (is) Rolls Royce.

The Railway Institute

The Railway Institute was formed in 1850 when a group of Midland Railway employees started a reading society, using the Brunswick Inn as their base. The popularity of the Society was such that the Brunswick had not enough space for them all to meet. The employees convinced the directors of the Midland Company to fund new premises and they moved into two allocated cottages in the Village and at the same time the Society was renamed Derby Railway Literary Institution.



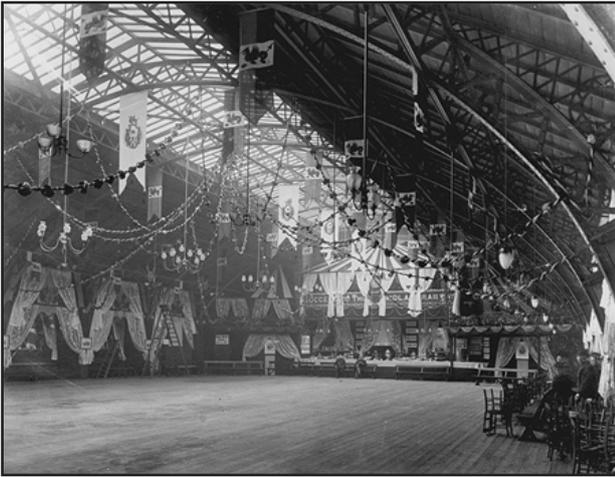
*The North Midland Railway Mechanics' Institute
Photo: Trip Advisor*

In 1894, with space being a serious issue once more, the membership moved into a purpose-built institute (see below). Several cottages and, ironically, a book sellers shop had to be demolished for the space. The Institute's facilities were available to all employees of the Midland Railway Company, wherever they lived and worked on the network and not just those who lived in Derby. At its most popular, there were 14,000 books in the library. Catalogues were distributed to all employees annually and they could request books from the library which were carefully boxed and

The History Page CONT...

left at the employees nearest railway station. The library only closed in 1963. As well as the library, there were reading rooms, classrooms, games rooms and a concert hall that could seat 500 people.

The Institute building is now the home of the Waterfall Party Venue, which is a restaurant and is hired out for family events.



The Midland Railway Institute Ballroom set up for an event in 1896. Photo: English Heritage

This article is based on the work of S. Hudson (2009) *Derbyshire In the Age of Steam* (Countryside Books, Newbury, Berkshire) pp.32 – 36.



The first Derby Mechanics' Institute building, later known as Albert Hall.

Photo: Courtesy of Derby Telegraph

Derby also had a separate Mechanics' Institute which was opened in 1825 and founded by Joseph Strutt, the cotton spinning



Lithographic print of the Derby Exhibition 1839 held in the Derby Mechanics' Institute (later known as Albert Hall). This print is currently housed in the Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

Photo: Wikipedia Commons

factory owner. In 1880, it ceased offering technical education although it carried on offering social activities.

A F Chadwick, 'The Derby Mechanics' Institute 1825 – 1889' in *The Vocational Aspect of Education* (1975) Issue 27, No. 68, 103 – 105.

Martyn Walker

The Derby Athenaeum was designed by Sydney Smirke (1798-1877), who also designed Derby Hall. The Athenaeum dates from around 1851-1852.

This large building was also largely funded by Joseph Strutt with a frontage to Victoria Street.

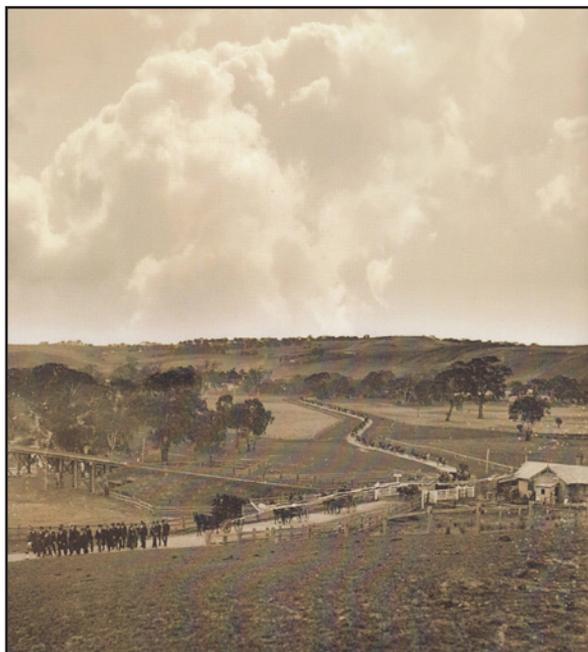


Victoria Street, Derby - from left: Post Office (arch window); Post Office Hotel and Restaurant (double doors); Athenaeum; and Royal Hotel.

The History Page CONT...

A PICTURE TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS

On the back cover of the book *Dunrobin Community Centenary* there is a photograph depicting a funeral procession, to say the least, it is extraordinary. Taken from the hillside, it shows a kilted piper ahead of a group of men on foot, including some possibly of a Masonic Order, walking in front of the horsedrawn hearse, followed by all manner of carriages, gigs and mounted horsemen stretching back into the distance for more than a mile.



The book does not identify the subject but with some digging it has been revealed as being that of **Alexander Sutherland Murray** (1846-1900), grazier, philanthropist and sometime artist. He was born in Hobart in 1846 and educated in England at: Harrow School; then privately with Rev. Robert Seppings Beloe (1823-96), Holton, St Peter's Rectory, Suffolk; and finally at Cambridge University, Gonville and Caius College, where he was Captain of the Boat Club in 1868. He then returned to Dunrobin and on the death of his father in 1871 took over the 11,118 acre Dunrobin Pastoral Run which he held until his death. He was an able cricketer and paid professionals to visit the town to encourage and promote the game. He was also a competent artist and several of his pictures were hanging in the Casterton Mechanics' Institute. In 1890 he gifted his oil on canvas 'A view on the Derwent', circa 1880s to the Art Gallery of Ballarat. He was also a member and 'a liberal donor' to the Mt Gambier Institute. His other interests included angling and he fished regularly in the Glenelg, with The Punt Hotel being his headquarters. He appears to have been living in Capetown, South Africa, in 1898. He was the author and illustrator of: *Twelve hundred miles on the river Murray* (London: JS Virtue & Co, 1898), with fifteen facsimile illustrations in colour; and *Tasmanian Rivers, Lakes and Flowers* (London: JS Virtue & Co., 1900), with facsimile reproductions in colour by the author. He died at Buninyong on 11 June 1900, aged 53, by his own hand. 'He had a sunstroke in January last whilst fishing at Portland, and this is thought to be the cause of his tragic end.' The

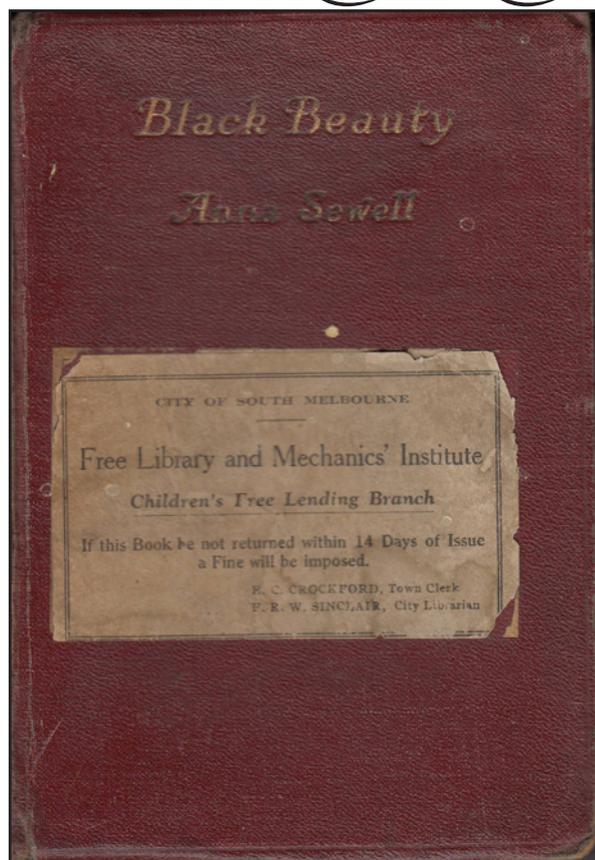
funeral cortege concluded at the Casterton Cemetery. He left an estate valued at £120,272, comprised of Realty £83,327, Personalty £36,944. Probate amounted to £11,920. He bequeathed several paintings to the Art Gallery of Ballarat, valued at £500. Those pictures were accessioned in 1900 and include: Dudley Hardy (1867-1922) - **A camp in the desert** (c. 1895), watercolour on paper; Thomas Hardy (1842-97) - **Towing a disabled vessel into Ramsgate Harbour**, (1885), watercolour on paper on board; Henry James Johnstone (1835-1907) - **Idle Thoughts** (1855-90), watercolour on paper; **In the Woods** (nd), watercolour on paper; **The Primrose Gatherer** (c. 1870), watercolour on paper; David Law (1831-1901) - **On the Whitby Scar, Yorkshire** (c. 1890), watercolour on paper; **Scene on the Isle of Skye** (c. 1890), watercolour on board; **Showery weather, Shiplake on Thames** (c. 1890), watercolour paper; **A Yorkshire fishing village** (1900), watercolour on paper; George Alfred John Webb (1861-1949) - **A Stern Chase** (1883), watercolour on paper; Augustus Walford Weedon (1838-1908) - **Southwold common** (1884), watercolour on card.

BEAUTY FIND FROM THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

Following on from the **Where's Bobby?** picture of the former Emerald Hill (South Melbourne) Mechanics' Institute an interesting ex-libris item has come our way. It is well thumbed copy of Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* published by Collins' Clear-Type Press of London and New York/ Glasgow Sydney and Auckland. Printed on heavyweight paper, it appears to be in its original maroon cloth binding, with blind embossing on the cover with gold blocked title and author and similarly on the spine.

The book has no publishing date but has a distinctive ornate title page designed by **[Alfred] Garth Jones** (1872-1955) of Norfolk, with a plate opposite entitled 'The Hunt' which carries an initial 'G' which is Jones' style, so it is also presumably by him. Given similarity to his other work it appears to date from the early 1920s.

The History Page CONT...



The book has a white paper rectangular bordered bookplate on the cover with the wording: 'City of South Melbourne./ Free Library and Mechanics' Institute/ **Children's Free Lending Branch**. If this book Book be not returned within 14 Days of Issue a Fine will be imposed. EC Crockford, Town Clerk/FRW Sinclair, City Librarian.' On the front pasted down there is an oblong plate in bottle green

which states 'By order of the Trustees' the rules of the 'Children's Free Lending Branch/ Notice to Subscribers.' Rule 4 states 'Lending Library Books must be immediately returned in the event of an outbreak of any infectious disease in the house in which the borrower is dwelling.' This was probably reflective of the Spanish flu epidemic of 1919-20. Rule 6 recites 'The Children's Library shall be open for the exchange of books on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons, from 3.30 to 5.30. Above this plate is the handwritten number 1043.

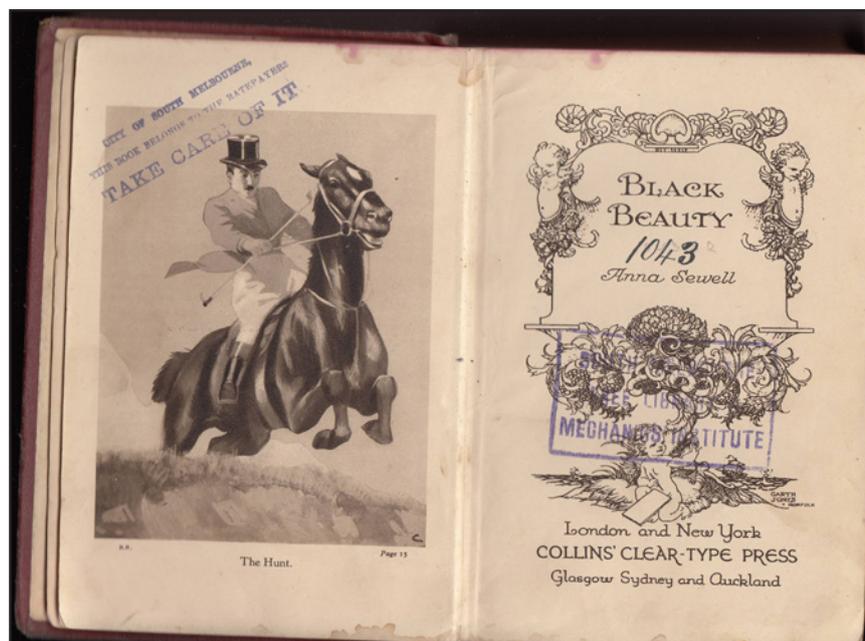
The book carries two purple rubber stamps, one 'South Melbourne Free Library & Mechanics' Institute' in a rectangle and the other, a three line stamp, repeated a number of times throughout the book 'City of South Melbourne./ This book belongs to the ratepayers/ Take Care of It.'

It is an interesting item for a number of reasons. South Melbourne had one of the first dedicated Children's libraries in Australia, established in 1923. It opened in the front room of the Bank Street Mechanics' building with 1169 books and twenty-six borrowers. In 1931 it was transferred into the vacated Baby Health Centre in Fishley Street by which stage it had 1921 books and 237 borrowers.

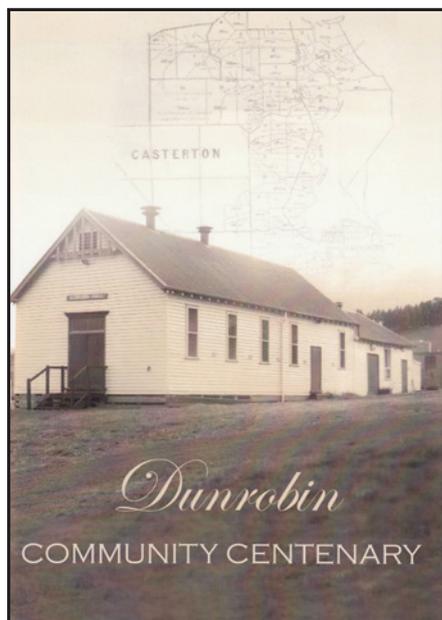
From the above it would appear our *Black Beauty* was part of the initial 1923 stock. The Librarian **Frederick Robert William Sinclair** (1883-1956), who was born and educated in South Melbourne, gained early employment in the general Mechanics' Library under the watchful eye of **Edward Drinkall Heather** (1848-1934), sometime bookseller, hotelkeeper, councillor, and City Librarian for more than thirty years. Sinclair

succeeded Heather as City Librarian in 1920, a position he held until 1947, when he retired. Married with seven children, he was much respected in the community.

The other name on the bookplate was that of Town Clerk **Edward Charles Crockford** (1865-1936). Crockford was born in Port Melbourne and after rising to Town Clerk at the City of Port Melbourne, he transferred to South Melbourne in 1910 and held the position until his accidental death in 1936. Crockford was a progressive and astute financial administrator and was noted in cricket and lawn bowling circles.



Book Reviews



Dunrobin Community Centenary

Dunrobin Public Hall Committee. Dunrobin: Dunrobin Hall Committee, 2014. Paperback, saddlestitched, 28p, maps, illustrations. 210x295mm.

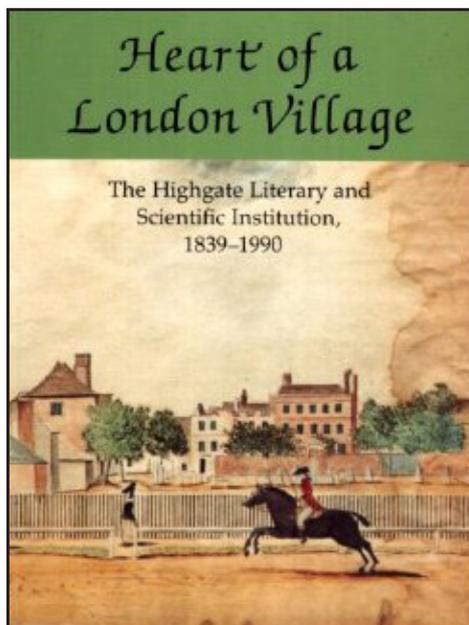
This is an interesting history of an area in Western Victoria that came under the Closer Settlement Board in 1912, through the purchase of the Dunrobin Estate. Taken up by **John Elliot Addison** (1796-1848) and **William Murray** (1796-1871) in 1840 the Dunrobin Run originally comprised 153,600 acres.

Closer Settlement resulted in the construction of a Mechanics' Hall, which struck a hiccup with the first contractor, and a new builder came on board. It housed a library and hosted all manner or events: School, Church; Football; Indoor Bowling; Fire Brigade; Flower Shows; and Queen Carnivals took place in and around the Hall. Well illustrated this is a good example of what a community can create for a special event – the centenary of their Hall.

'The Dunrobin Public Hall Committee acknowledge the Support of the State Government of Victoria Public Record Office of Victoria in making this project possible.'

The book concludes with 'The Dunrobin Hall is the hub of our community and it is hopeful that it will continue to be, long into the future.' Hear! Hear!

Available from: Judi Rees, Dunrobin Hall Committee, 89 Henty Street, Casterton, V 3311. \$23.00 Posted.



Heart of a London Village: The Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution 1839-1990

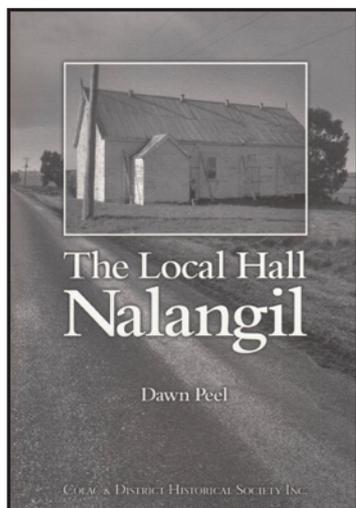
Vera Crane, ed. for Archives Committee. London: Historical Publications for the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, 1991. Paperback. 80p, illus, index. 185x245mm.

Established in 1839 this Institute was very much at the heart of the village by providing meeting and library facilities and more. It was also to become the repository of the archives of defunct local community groups – Highgate Book Society; Mothercraft Training Society, involving New Zealander **Sir Frederic Truby King**; Wollaston and Pauncefort Almshouses; the Highgate Horticultural Society; and Robert Whipple Trust. These diverse elements have greatly enhanced its ongoing program of exhibitions. Well researched and illustrated, this book highlights the HLSI's strength in the community which has been reinforced with a number of endowed lectures. It also shows how a major celebration, in this case its 150th can be used as a proactive catalyst for fundraising with a target, a restored building.

As a model Institute history, this book provides ideas for compiling a history and energising an Institute.

This book is officially out of print, but is widely available from booksellers on abe.com, at about \$25, airmail posted.

Book Reviews cont...



The Local Hall: Nalangil

Dawn Peel. Colac: Colac and District Historical Society, 2014. Paperback, saddlestitched. 48p, illus, plans, index. 150x210mm.

This is a fascinating, well researched, story of a Hall that once was. It is a tribute to a small Western Victorian community of yesteryear and a model of how such a project can be undertaken.

Author **Dawn Peel** has taken what documentation, memorabilia and reminiscences that have been available and turned this into a narrative we can all identify with.

There is something in this book for every hall manager, user or social historian.

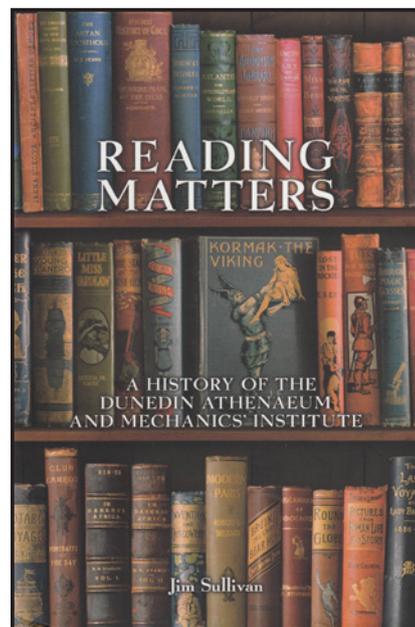
Available from: Colac and District Historical Society Inc., Box 154, Colac, V 3250. \$20.00 Posted.

Reading Matters: A History of the Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute

Jim Sullivan. Dunedin: Dunedin Athenaeum & Mechanics' Institute, 2013. Paperback. 80p, illus, index. 185x245mm.

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Dunedin was the largest urban area in New Zealand, before being supplanted by Auckland and its growth as a manufacturing, shipping and population centre from the beginning of the twentieth century. Across New Zealand, mechanics' institutes were formed in most settlements in the 1840s and 1850s, although not all lasted for long. I have elsewhere written and spoken about the 'export' of the concept of mechanics' institutes to New Zealand to provide libraries, reading rooms and venues for popular 'infotainment'.

The Dunedin Mechanics' Institute was formed on 17 June 1851, while the Dunedin Athenaeum Committee dates from 1858. The Institute and



Athenaeum Committees combined in 1859, as they saw great similarities. The Institute had previously struggled to either act as a library or provide stimulating lectures, while the Athenaeum could certainly supply the 'movers and shakers' in Dunedin society at that time. Sullivan chronicles the hey-day of the Institute in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the contest with Dunedin Public Library from 1908 and the long-term decline of the Institute to 2013. The only thing missing is a separate chronology of major events in the life of the Athenaeum.

The text is never boring. Sullivan often relies on extensive quotes from the local newspapers of the time, and lets those newspaper reports speak for themselves. He also had access to Institute archives.

This is not just an institutional history. Sullivan also contextualises the Athenaeum within wider Dunedin and Otago Provincial society at the time. Sullivan's "*If you were anybody in Dunedin you were probably a member of the Athenaeum*" largely rings true for the nineteenth century at least. Those active in the Athenaeum included local politicians, professionals and business people.

Unlike New Zealand's other athenaeums and institutes, the Dunedin Institute did manage to survive. It well deserves this history.

Available from: Dunedin Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institute Box 5619, Dunedin 9058, New Zealand. NZ\$50.00.

Reviewed by David Verran.

(David has presented papers to New Zealand and Australian conferences, and written several articles on Mechanics' Institutes in New Zealand.)

Our People



MIV will be well represented at the Gallipoli celebrations by Committee Member **Judy Owen** and her husband **Russell**. (Both are stalwarts of the **Narre Warren Mechanics' Institute**.) In an historic re-enactment they sailed from Bunbury in Western Australia tracing the route of the original troop ship convoy and will be anchored off Anzac Cove for the Gallipoli Dawn Service on 25 April. They will later take in the Battlefields of the Western Front and hope to visit Villers-Bretonneux. Have a safe and enjoyable trip. (Check out their story of volunteerism on youtube.com at 52 stories in 52 weeks. Well done and Congratulations!) (Photo: Screen capture - Youtube)

Retirements of long-serving staff on both sides of the Atlantic are matters of note in the phoenix-like survival of their Institutions.



At the Linen Hall Library in Belfast we see the well-earned retirement of **John Killen**, after some thirty-seven in various staff positions, finally as Director. John saw heady times at the Linen Hall, and then

with the virtual siege in central Belfast, the almost closure and demise of the Library. However the (recently painted red) hand above the front door, reminiscent of O'Neil, was seized firmly by John and his team and they piloted the Linen Hall back to its original position as being one of the great cultural institutions of the whole of Ireland. In doing so his team amassed an unsurpassed archive of the 'Troubles' with

material from both sides. Author of thirteen books, including a history of the Linen Hall, he retires to his hometown Loughinisland, Co. Down. The **Portico's Emma Marigliano** tweeted 'A lovely testament to a librarian in the true sense of the word - the kind who recognised so well what his library was because he became such an integral part of it.' We extend our very best to John and perhaps a visit down-under could be part of a well-earned retirement. (Photo: Linen Hall Library Facebook)



In **San Francisco** we missed the retirement of Executive Director **Jim Flack** in August 2014. Jim had been a member of the Mechanics' Institute, for almost thirty years before taking on the role of ED in 1999. He expanded the role of the Institute to be a serious book source, a leading chess centre and a forum for provocative speakers. A whip around of staff provided the following word montage 'Steady. Dedicated. Honest. Fair. Trusted. Supportive.' However the common theme was a 'lot more fun to be here.' That fun place carried though into steering the Institute to financial stability and expanding programs for an enlarged membership. Again the door is open to an Australian visit in a well-earned retirement. (Photo: SFMI Newsletter)



Meanwhile **Ralph Lewin** has taken over Jim Flack's role at San Francisco Mechanics' Institute. Ralph comes to the Institute after serving as President and CEO of Cal Humanities. In his enthusiastic inaugural speech he noted 'I firmly believe that the work of the Mechanics' Institute always has been and will be essential to the DNA of the

Our People

Bay Area.’ A note that rings true for Mechanics’ Institutes in communities around the world. We wish Ralph well in his role and look forward to meeting him in 2016. (Photo: SFMI website (www.milibrary.org))



We noted the cameo appearance of the University of Tasmania’s Associate **Professor Stefan Petrow** on the ABC TV’s **Who’s Been Sleeping in My House?** It concerned a property at Battery Point, a Hobart suburb, once owned by Lieutenant-Governor William Sorell. The house ‘Oljato’ dates from around 1895. It’s stunning Derwent River views influenced its Navajo Indian name ‘Moon on water’. Stefan was the keynote speaker at the inaugural State Mechanics’ Institute Conference held at Kilmore in 1998. He is also author of *Going to the Mechanics: a history of the Launceston Mechanics’ Institute 1842-1914*. (Photo: University of Tasmania website)



Regional Arts Victoria’s Marketing and Publicity Manager **Pia Cook (Richardson)** (upper left) went on a year’s Maternity Leave in March and is being replaced by **Jessica Alice**. Jessica (lower left) has wide experience in marketing, broadcasting, literature and the arts and we look forward to working with her on this year’s **Home is Where the Hall is!** Month of November.

In the meantime we all wish Pia well during this happy and joyous time. (Photos: Regional Arts Victoria website)

Late last year Molesworth Mechanics’ Institute’s **Patricia Zerbe** stepped down after being Secretary/Treasurer of the Institute for twenty-two years. Patricia, during her term saw very lean years at the start, with a down at heel Hall. However astute management soon turned this into the present more affluent era, with proceeds of the now hugely successful annual ‘Clearing Sale’ of the district’s unwanted and donated goods.

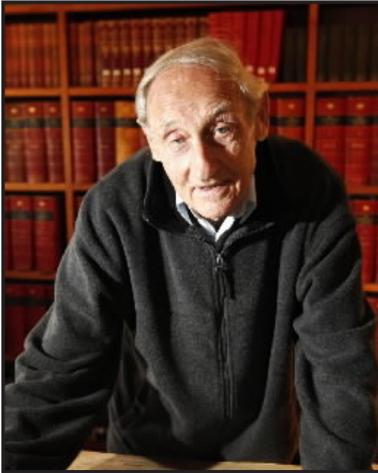


We note the appointment of **Julie Andrews** as the new Director of Belfast’s **Linen Hall Library**. Julie has been a staffer of the Library for a number of years and in the meantime has developed a great understanding of this iconic library which has been on Donegall Square for over 225 years. (Photo: Linen Hall Library website)



We note the retirement from the Victorian Parliament of the **Hon. Candy Broad**. After a gruelling fourteen years in the service of Victoria from 1999-2014, Candy stepped down and did not seek re-election at the last elections. Representing Northern Victoria in the Legislative Council, she was Minister for Local Government and Minister for Housing in the Bracks Government and was a good friend of the Mechanics’ Institutes. She later served as Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Ports. Her other community interests have included: Emily’s List; Victorian Women’s Trust; Oxfam; Australian Conservation Foundation; Australian Football League; and Dying with Dignity Victoria. She also opened the first **Mechanics’ Institute Worldwide** Conference at Prahran in 2004. We all thank Candy for her valuable and dedicated service and wish her well in her ‘retirement’.

Vale



Leslie Alexander 'Les' O'Callaghan was a prodigious worker for the Warrnambool & District Historical Society, firstly as Secretary from 1974, then later as President for thirty years until 2009. 'Mr History' as he was widely known could be regularly seen working in the Mechanics' Institute building at Flagstaff Hill of which he was a foundation member and a long-serving Committee member.

Les was born at Balmoral on 1 August 1918 and won a scholarship to Warrnambool Technical College and spent a lifetime working as an industrial chemist and microbiologist in the butter and cheese industry. In his retirement he worked on local history. Les died at Warrnambool on 26 November 2014 aged 96 and was buried in the Warrnambool Cemetery, in the pouring rain, in keeping with an old Irish saying, happy is the corpse that is buried in the rain. Indeed a life well lived. His first wife Mary pre-deceased him. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his devoted wife Elizabeth, and his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. *(Photo: Rob Gunstone)*

Dr Lionel Gilbert OAM, the grand old gentleman and Freeman of the City of Armidale (NSW), died on 28 January 2015. He was ninety years young. One of Armidale's great adopted sons, he did more than anyone to record and promote the history and heritage of Armidale and its region, by way his writing and the teaching of applied history based on the record.

He moved to Armidale with his family in 1960 and turned the down-at-heel Armidale School of Arts and Mechanics' Institute (Literary Institute)



1915 building into the now dynamic Armidale Folk Museum and assembled a massive archive. A generous man of great charm and wit he noted that, as an Armidale Freeman, he could exercise his right to sell fish without a licence in the main street. He also published a collection of humorous gravestone epitaphs.

His weekly presence at St Peter's Anglican Cathedral will be missed, as well the notable hospitality dispensed, with his wife, at their table. Our thoughts are with his wife Margaret, daughter Anne and their extended family. *(Photo: www.anme.org.au)*

The passing of **Dr Elizabeth Richardson Tibbitts** in Sydney on 9 March 2015 at the age of 84 is advised. Elizabeth was born in Melbourne in 1931 and married Graham Oliver Tibbitts. Described as an academic, publisher, editor, teacher, organist, livewire and friend, Elizabeth, for the last few years, was commissioned to assemble a comprehensive list of NSW Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts. At last count the list had climbed to over 800 sites, including some elusive Station Institutes. Elizabeth is survived by her three sons Frank, Hugh and Charles and our deepest sympathy goes out to them.

WHERE WAS BOBBY?

The photo in issue No. 35 is of the former **Sunshine Mechanics' Institute**. The original Hall was built and opened in 1907 and burned down in 1924. This is the replacement building.

Community Page

RECIPE

Australian farmers and manufacturers, many of which are Institute volunteers and supporters deserve our support. Hopefully the purchase of Australian grown or made products will help reward them.

ANZAC BISCUITS

You will need for a good batch of about 35 biscuits

- 1 cup each of plain flour, sugar, rolled oats and coconut
- 4 ounces butter (115g)
- 1 tablespoon of treacle (golden syrup)
- 2 tablespoons of boiling water (add a little more water if mixture is too dry)
- 1 tablespoon bi-carbonate of soda

Method

1. Grease tray and pre-heat oven to 180°C.
2. Combine dry ingredients.
3. Melt together butter and golden syrup.
4. Combine water and bi-carbonate of soda.
5. Mix butter and water mixture and it will start to foam up.
6. When it foams immediately add dry ingredients and mix together.
7. Drop teaspoons of mixture onto tray, allowing room for spreading.
8. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until golden.
9. Allow to cool on tray for a few minutes before transferring to cooling racks.

(This is taken from a recipe of Bob Lawson, an ANZAC present at the Gallipoli landing. There were five Bob Lawsons at the Gallipoli landing: Private Robert (1892-1915), No. 935, a labourer from Williamstown (V), died from wounds, received on Gallipoli, 20 August 1915; Corporal Robert (1892-1917), No. 949, a labourer from Liverpool (NSW), killed in action, Ypres, Belgium, 4 October 1917; Lance-Corporal Robert Allen (1886-1963), No. 1377, a sailmaker from Kogarah (NSW), wounded in action Western Front, returned to Australia 6 September 1919; Private Robert Cook Allen (1891-1982), No. 231, a labourer from Mildura (V), wounded in action Gallipoli, 9 May 1915 (gunshot

wound to head), returned to Australia 12 December 1915; Private Robert Henry (1886-1915), No. 1154, a labourer from South Ballarat (V), killed in action Gallipoli, 26 April 1915.)

SPOT THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 36

1. Which Institute opened in new premises on 2 March 2015?
2. Which Institute launched its 175th Anniversary celebration in 2014?
3. Which Hall in Tasmania is associated with woodchopping?
4. Which Institute hosted a UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Forum recently?
5. Who was guest of honour at the 1998 Kilmore State Conference of Mechanics' Institutes?
6. Which Institute celebrated the 190th anniversary of the overlanding of Hume and Hovell?
7. Who painted the mural in the Children's Library at the Maldon Athenaeum?
8. Which Institute group recently launched its website?
9. Who recently retired from Belfast's Linen Hall Library?
10. Where is the next World Conference of Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes to be held?
11. Which Institute has been referred to as 'the little old Hall'?
12. Who was the subject of the funeral cortege pictured?
13. What is the name of the business that currently occupies the Derby Railway Institute?

SPOT THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 35 – ANSWERS

1. San Francisco; 2. Axel Heyst; 3. Breeches Bible; 4. Dean Hall and Mechanics' Institute; 5. West Melbourne Literary Institute; 6. Longwood Mechanics' Institute; 7. Emerald Hill or South Melbourne; 8. Malmsbury; 9. George Cumming; 10. Victorian Environmental Assessment Council; 11. Bushy Park, Tasmania; 12. Prahran; 13. Athenaeum of Philadelphia

Ideas & Opportunities

LOOKING AFTER WAR MEMORIALS AND HONOUR ROLLS

The first of these most worthwhile seminars was held at Anzac House in Melbourne on 20 February 2015. Coordinated by Heritage Victoria, the Workshop was aimed at owners and managers of War Memorials and Honour Rolls.

Workshop sessions included: Documentation and records; DPC – Veterans Affairs Branch grant programs; Materials – stones, mortars, inscriptions, gilding and metals; Care, including cleaning and graffiti removals; and Care of timber honour boards. A neighbourhood tour took in several examples.

Presenters included: **Adjunct Associate Professor David Young OAM** (University of Melbourne); **Ms Jenny Dickens** (Heritage Victoria); and **Ms Cathy Nash** (DPC), all with wide experience conserving various materials.

This very worthwhile Workshop was repeated at Bairnsdale on 27 March. Others are planned for Geelong and Western Victoria later in the year. Info: Pauline.hitchins@dtpli.vic.gov.au; Tel: (03) 9208 3543.

HOW'S YOUR LOGO?

Two new logos to hit the public are the recent redraft of the Melbourne Athenaeum's for its 175th anniversary year and that of Prahran Mechanics' Institute's Victorian History Library to recognise its shift from High Street.

This is a great way to badge your Institute and add some collectables, glasses, teeshirts, hats, even scarves to promote your Institute or for gifts. Such items are popular overseas and provide a steady income from sales.

WELL DONE GREG AND LINDY!

Those of you who attended the 'Pieces of Eight Bus Tour' last year will remember visiting the **Chewton Town Hall**, at the rear of which the Mechanics' Institute operated for a time. The Hall was noted in the National Trust **Heritage Awards for 2014** in the category 'Specialist Heritage Trade Skills'. Main contractor on the works was **Period Building Conservation Pty Ltd** of which Greg and Lindy Owen are the principals. Greg presented at the Kilmore Halls Forum last year, giving very valuable tips on

building conservation, the first being to keep the water out. We will run Greg's valuable summary in the next newsletter.

WHO'S FOR MORNING TEA?

A recent phone conversation concerning the success of a hall in obtaining grants was keeping in touch with your local State and Federal parliamentarians and your local Councillors. They have periodic access to grant money and if you have a costed project ready and waiting like we heard at Chewton amounting to over \$200,000. Get your MPs and Councillors to drop by for a real traditional country morning or afternoon, with the works, scones jam and cream and some of those great homecut sandwiches. Have your works prioritised and costed and show them your Hall 'vision'. Send them home with a memento so they will remember the visit to your Hall. Include them on your mailing list for newsletters and major events. Who knows they may turn up? Even if they don't, but don't let them forget your project, for when the 'pork barrel' rolls by in future.

IF THESE HALLS COULD TALK

This is a project being coordinated by **Arts Northern Rivers** (NSW) which 'is a region of villages, most with a hall that lay at their heart. Some sit proud on hills, some tilted with age, but all are places with stories and keepers of secrets. *If These Halls Could Talk* is a multi-arts project celebrating these halls and the role they play in our communities.' The projects invites nominations from across the Northern Rivers region, from which seven 'will be selected to have a renowned creative team collaborate with their community to create a site-specific work inspired by the unique narrative of their hall.' The result will 'culminate in a region-wide celebration of halls!'

This is something like anthropological archaeologist **Dr Anke Heins** was doing in the early 2000s in NSW halls which she described at **MW 2004 Melbourne**. Check out the website: www.ifthesehallscouldtalk.com.au.

And don't forget to start planning your event for **Home is Where the Hall Is** month in November!