



Useful Knowledge

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

NO. 39 – SUMMER 2016

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FAREWELL TO "THE SHACK" - UPPER PLENTY MI BURNT DOWN



Photo: Claire McGregor

Upper Plenty Mechanics' Hall, or 'The Shack' to most locals, was burnt down in the early hours of Thursday, 22 October. Police believe the fire was started at about 1am that morning and have located the area of origin of the fire.

The alarm was raised at 3.15am and by the time district units of the CFA had arrived the timber Hall was well alight and there was little they could do except to contain the blaze to the site.

The community's website broke the news 'Fire, Upper Plenty Shack Mechanics' Institute burnt down, last night. I am sorry to report that it has been totally destroyed.' The World War I Honour Roll was destroyed but a plaque was retrieved.

The Hall was built on part of the Upper Plenty State School site in 1914 from local timber by local builder **Archibald Ewen McDougall** and local volunteers. It farewelled and welcomed home soldiers of both World War I and II and was a haven for youth in the 1950s when late night dances were held in the Hall.

In the mid-1990s a revived Committee of Management took on the challenge to refurbish the Hall. Upper Plenty was represented at the

landmark 1998 **Kilmore State Conference** and became a foundation member of MIV. The **Kilmore-Broadford Rotary Club** sponsored the distinctive signage in 2002 and the Hall was progressively worked up with restumping and a kitchen annexe. A community toilet block, bitumenised carpark, barbecue and wetlands walk were constructed in the surrounds. Funding from the **Victorian Bushfire Appeal** meant that the works could be finally completed.

A few days prior to the fire, Upper Plenty Hall stalwarts **Rose King** the **Claire McGregor** received a Certificate of Commendation in the **Victorian Community History Awards** for 'The Upper Plenty History Exhibition' held in conjunction with the Hall's September 2014 Centenary Celebrations. Unfortunately a lot of material assembled for that exhibition was destroyed in the fire.

The plan is rebuild 'the heart' of the Upper Plenty Community and the Christmas Party and Australia Day celebrations proceeded as planned, but with borrowed tables and chairs.

We wish the Committee well in their rebuilding plans for their 'heart' and assure them of our wholehearted support in their endeavours.

Coming Events - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 12 Unveiling of Plaque No. 50 at Somerville Mechanics' Institute, 66 Station Street, Somerville, at 4pm
- 12 Unveiling of 1875 Beechworth Chinese Carnival Banner at the Burke Museum, Beechworth
- 13 MIV Committee Meeting, Prahran Mechanics' Institute, 10am
- 13 130th Tolmie Sports. Enquiries to tolmie.sports@hotmail.com
- 28 Flower and Craft Show, Jindivick Mechanics' Institute

MARCH

- 6 'May the Toys be With You' Star Wars Toys and Memorabilia exhibition closes at the Beaney Institute, Canterbury, UK
- 12-21 Cultural Diversity Week. Start planning your event now!
- 19-20 Romsey Mechanics' Institute Antiques Fair
- 20 Blues and Roots Festival - Glenmaggie Mechanics' Institute
- 28 Long Weekend Market, Tarwin Lower Mechanics' Institute

APRIL

- 9 Gippsland Rare & Unusual Plant Fair, Jindivick Mechanics' Institute
- 25 Long Weekend Market, Tarwin Lower Mechanics' Institute

JUNE

- TBC AIL AGM. Date and Venue to be advised.

JULY

- 14-24 Rare Book Week

MIV'S EVENTS CALENDAR IS NOW ONLINE!
vicnet.net.au/~mivic/events

Subscribe for weekly email updates on events throughout the week. The calendar will include events held at or by MIV Institute Members, and important dates and events that may be of interest to Institutes and other members of MIV.

Member Institutes: email through details of your events, or public events being held at your Institute, both big and small to bronlowden@hotmail.com for inclusion in the online calendar. Let us help you promote your events!

OCTOBER

- 6 Snake Valley Hall Biennial Photographic Show

NOVEMBER

- TBC Ruffartz Biennial Art Show
- 3-6 **Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide 2016** - San Francisco Mechanics' Institute. Contact: dhunt@milibrary.org
- 7 American Membership Libraries - Annual Meeting - San Francisco Mechanics' Institute, USA

NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL

16 April-29 May

7-8 May - Ballarat Heritage Weekend

16 April-29 May - Soldier On: WWI Soldier Settler Stories - Old Treasury Building, Spring Street, Melbourne

16 April-29 May - Russell Street Bombing - Old Melbourne Gaol, Russell Street, Melbourne

16 April - Back to Chiltern - Goods Shed Open Day

28-29 May - Rediscovering the Old Hume Highway 31 - Vintage and Classic Car Club Rally - Melbourne to the Murray

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Letter From The President



The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria held its 2014/15 AGM on the 14th November 2015. An abridged version of the President's report follows:

The Mechanics Institutes of Victoria, being a representative body, is in the fortunate position of being able to claim some credit for not only our progress but also that of our Members.

During the past year not only did the Melbourne Athenaeum celebrate its 175th birthday but also the Prahran Mechanics' Institute moved in to their new building specially designed to house its unique Victorian Local History Library and much more.

The opening of the new Prahran Institute has also been important for the MIV itself as Prahran have very generously provided us with some space and the use of their facilities.

With a stable base from which to operate I hope that the MIV will be able to service our Members in ways that have proven difficult in the past.

As in previous years the appearance of our periodic magazine, *Useful Knowledge* was nothing short of miraculous. So a big thanks to Bronwyn and Jim Lowden our editorial and publishing team.

Judith Dwyer and her team of scanologists continued the heroic task of tracking down, purloining, scanning (and returning) Mechanics' Institute records wherever they could find them.

As many of you will know Judith has decided to stand down as MIV Secretary. On behalf of the Committee and our Members I would like to thank Judith for her extraordinary commitment and hard work. By any measure it went well beyond the call of duty.

The year's other highlights included:

Let's Talk - A Regional Forum – held at Lilydale's gorgeous Athenaeum Theatre.

MIV's Plaque Count reaching a half century. That's 50 Institutes across the State in the hands of those that appreciate what they represent and what they could yet be.

MIV is also proud to have been able to play a small part in helping Pam Baragwanath and Ken James realise their vision for a major update of our bible, *If The Walls Could Speak*. Copies of *These Walls Speak Volumes* are now available from the authors, MIV, PMI or other quality outlets

As for the year ahead it looks like the International Mechanics' Institutes Conference scheduled for November in San Francisco is going to be one of the highlights. So if the thought of doing your 2016 Christmas shopping in the USA appeals now is the time to start planning.

Robert Kingston
President.

Editorial

And a Jolly Happy and Healthy New Year to all our readers. With New Year's resolutions still weighing on our minds, it is time to steel ourselves to put some of them in to practice. There's the corny joke about a multitude of people assembled to replace the light globe in the hope that 'more people make light work'.

In another sense it is very true, the more people you assemble to spread the load the easier it will be on everyone. Your Committee is managing the Community Hall, Library, Museum or Historical Centre for the whole community so it is only fair that everyone share in the load. That may not be physical but it could be financial.

I am thinking of Daniel O'Connell's 'Church Rent' of a penny a week in the 1820s for every household. Make that a dollar a week in today's terms and your new roof, kitchen, or suite of crockery will soon be a reality.

Another way to attack the big tasks is to plan a working bee. Advertise it well ahead for a morning start with an RSVP and allocate tasks. (You may need to follow up some people by phone.) State what you need people to bring mowers, shovels, rakes, chainsaws, power saws, grinders, hammers, ladders, leads, etc.

Plan the tasks and have all required the materials on site. Start with a cuppa and a brief and then go for it, taking a break for morning tea and then a late lunch. You will be surprised what can be achieved.

We are still seeing Halls throughout the country 'Nameless' and those that have names some still have no contact number for hiring, etc. Wear the Mechanics' name with pride for the recent publication of ***These Walls Speak Volumes*** has taken the Mechanics' message far and wide on the radio and in the press. This is an opportunity not to be missed. Sign up with a logo and motto and be part of the action.

Bron Lowden

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

- Badger Creek Hall
- David Berry
- David Duerden
- Shepparton Mechanics' Institute

BUNDLES OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE FOR SALE TO YOUR MEMBERS

Bundles of 5 copies of this issue of *Useful Knowledge* are available for purchase for \$20 (RRP \$6 per copy), excluding postage. Please

contact the Newsletter Editor to order your bundle of *Knowledge*.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Membership fees for the 2015-2016 year **were due on 30 June 2015**. If you have not yet paid your membership for the coming year, please renew ASAP so you will not miss out on any news

WHAT YEAR IS THIS AGAIN?

By now we should have just about stopped crossing out 2015 at the end of each date we write and be set into the year 2016. As with the start of every year, each calendar on the wall needs to be swapped over, meeting dates set and events planned for the coming year. With less and less time on all our hands, sometimes just adding a year to your notices will make it an easy clear up when the next year rolls around. While searching the web for updates to MIV's member calendar on our website, it has been quite noticeable that sometimes you are not sure when an event will take place. Is it this year and they are planning ahead to October, or was it the October just gone? Have a glance over any notices you place in your window or on notice boards - if someone were to find it in 12 month's time, would the information still be correct and an event happening at that time? Four numbers can save a lot of time and running around for everyone.

NEWSLETTER ROUND

Tick after reading and pass it on

- President
- Vice-President.....
- Treasurer.....
- Secretary.....
- Committee (*Insert your name*)
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-

THANK YOU TO OUR PRINTER

TDC3 Print Centre, 548 Bridge Rd, Richmond. tdc3.com.au

INAUGURAL WESSON LECTURE - HOW WE ACHIEVED VICTORIAN GRASS ROOTS CULTURE

A goodly number assembled in the Moss Room at the **Prahran Mechanics' Institute** for the Inaugural **Wesson Lecture** on 14 November 2015. Among those present, we were honoured to have three of **Alf and Gwenn Wesson's** children, **Vaughan, Garth and Ann**. All of Alf's children remember being taken to rural Victoria on his **Mechanics' seeking forays**, whilst he was with the **Victorian Council of Adult Education** from 1962-72.

The Inaugural Wesson Lecture '**How we achieved a Victorian Grass Roots Culture**' was delivered by **Professor Weston Bate OAM**, who like Alf has had great experiences of life, amongst the people. Both had: wartime experience, in Alf's case that was with the Navy in Weston's case with the Air Force; and teaching, in Alf's case as a Methodist lay preacher and later as a Council of Adult Education staffer in the field of rural Victoria and in Weston's case, firstly as a Primary then Secondary School teacher and Australian Studies lecturer at the University of Melbourne from 1965, then later as Professor of Australian History at Deakin University from 1978-89, and as a tireless campaigner and advocate in the cause of local history across Victoria. Finally Alf was a life-long learner, as is Weston.

The **Wesson Lecture** started with the scene in early Victoria, of the pastoral economy, involving individual people, drawn from various backgrounds with diverse talents. This grazing economy relied heavily on borrowed capital. However in 1851 the discovery of gold changed Victoria into a capital generating society, where the farm or village labourer had the opportunity to become a capitalist with 'a lucky strike' either as a miner or as a service industry or business allied to the goldfields.

Located away from established ruling elites, gold created an egalitarian society where the great Australian theme of a 'fair go' was to prevail. Ballarat's daring Eureka Rebellion in 1854 was to set a benchmark for what could



be done and achieved at the grass roots level. This was a serious wake up call to an out-of-touch Government.

And whilst **Governor Charles Joseph LaTrobe** may have played a part in creating the grounds for Eureka, he left all the Victorian people a huge windfall by way of public open space – Parks, Recreation Grounds and Racecourses across the State.

The illustrations of goldfields artist and visual historian **Samuel Thomas Gill** depicted the scenes and people of the time in such an intuitive way. On studying Gill's illustrations carefully there is much to be learned

about the existing and changing state of society.

One such person who 'struck it rich' was Lancashire-born **James Oddie** who was lured to the goldfields, and by 1853 had permanently settled in Ballarat. The Wesleyan Methodist Oddie had enterprise, initiative, definite principles and intense convictions, but moreover he was a passionate democrat, a friend to all, including the Chinese. The public good, largely utilising his own resources, became his lifelong mission in Ballarat – The Queen Victoria Benevolent Asylum Home; Hospital; universal and technical education; and Art Gallery and Public Gardens are just some of his legacies.

Beyond Ballarat, this capital change could be seen in the work scene where gold-generated capital was building Melbourne and the rural cities like Bendigo and Geelong in a grand style.

However, in many cases those who had been the labourer stonemasons back in Scotland were now the bosses in the booming gold economy. So it is not surprising that the eight hour day was first equitably achieved by the newly formed stonemason's 'union' in 1856. (Interestingly **James Stephens** credits this movement's founding to a stonemason's meeting at the Kilmore Mechanics' Institute in 1854, a town subsequently to be known widely for its bluestone structures.)

The 1865 *Land Act* resulted in great change to the pastoral scene from borrowed capital

INAUGURAL WESSON LECTURE CONT...

to applied capital. The rich pastoral lands of Victoria were opened up to settlement by all and the creation of rural communities. These needed meeting places which were to be largely established by way of a Government grant for a Hall site, its building and later its ongoing library. These grass roots developed utilities spread throughout Victoria in many cases providing venues for early schools and churches in remote areas.

Halls were adapted and used for community needs and issues, amongst them Railway Leagues. This led to **Thomas Bent** Railway 'Octopus' Act which included most of Victoria in a network of railways, and resulted in numerous railway sidings, around which in turn villages and halls became established.

Alfred Deakin, a sometime President of the Flemington and Kensington Free Library and Mechanics' Institute, also had a very egalitarian streak and in Victoria introduced the *Factories and Workshops Act* of 1885 and the later implemented Old Age Pensions. Deakin also advocated a federated Australia, a movement promoted throughout the rural regions in Mechanics' Institutes and halls.

Whilst the Institute Movement never achieved the adult education programs of their British counterparts, they did provide a meeting place and an all important library, many of which survived post-World War II. The adult education role was to be later taken up by **University of Melbourne Extension Programs** commenced in 1891, and later conducted in Victorian regional centres.

In 1947 that role was taken over by the newly created Council of Adult Education to be led by **Colin Badger**. Badger assembled a talented team around him to pursue that work in cultural and educational programs. One such result was the **Victorian Drama League** which by 1962 comprised over twenty companies developed largely at the behest of **Veranne Irving**. CAE also held Summer Schools, such as at Mt Beauty



Professor Weston Bate OAM with his wife Janice Bate at the conclusion of the Wesson Lecture

where a diverse range of people came together to undertake a range of discussions and activities.

In 1962 **Alf Wesson** joined the CAE team as Head of Creative Arts, and with the added role of Manager of Touring Companies, he too became involved in rural outreach. Over the next decade, in the course of that work, Alf travelled widely in Victoria and in the course of that work photographed Institutes, quite a number of which,

fifty years on, no longer exist.

Weston likened the spread of the Mechanics' Movement to that of the Historical Society Movement and demonstrable need. In 1960 there were thirty-three Historical Societies operating in Victoria. There was also change at Melbourne University where Local History was no longer despised.

The **Royal Historical Society of Victoria** provided an exemplar role in the rapid growth of the Movement with State Conferences in the 1950s, but specifically one in 1961, which focused on Local History, in which Swan Hill's **Ross Mellor** and **Ross Holloway** took part.

Weston Bate's *History of Brighton* appeared in 1962. This was to become the model for teaching and emulation and the spur to many communities. Consequently by 1970 there were one hundred and thirty-three Historical Societies operating in Victoria. Today there are over three hundred.

The RHSV continues to play a lead role with workshops and outreach to assist local Societies and has played a major part in their success. Indeed a number of Historical Societies successfully operate in Institute buildings, such as at Sorrento.

The **Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria**, in more recent times, has taken up a similar role to assist Institutes in becoming relevant and viable.

Groupings of people with various complementary talents can achieve much and Weston instanced his wife **Janice's** experience in the 1960s 'Canberra Project' where the **National Capital Development Commission** had decreed

INAUGURAL WESSON LECTURE CONT...

an area for housing development, but deemed most inappropriate by the community.

Janice developed a survey in collaboration with a few 'specialists', which was circulated to all residents, seeking feedback and information which would reinforce the need for the area's retention for public open space. She/ they won. The result was not unlike the positive outcomes of many Railway and Irrigation Leagues or Petitions for the formation of Local Councils started in community halls.

Australia was and is a society where all had and have the right to speak and gather and it offered and still offers the potential to advance various careers or aspirations.

Scrolling as a background to Weston's Wesson Lecture was a set of black and white slides, either taken by Alf Wesson or were from his collection. If the slide remained as a single image that Institute had since been demolished. Otherwise superimposed across the corner was a fairly current photo, generally which reflected a major upgrade. One comment was that 'some of those places I never knew existed'.

Victoria owes a great debt to Professor Weston Bate OAM in making it aware of its unique and

colourful gold-based history. His distinguished contribution to history, by way of its writing, its preservation and its promotion, is one we can but salute. Thank you Weston and Janice for being part of the Inaugural Wesson Lecture.

At the conclusion of the lecture welcome refreshments were served by **Judith Dwyer, Corinne Brewis** and **Graham Hughes** and we thank them organising this.

The Inaugural Wesson Lecture was a resounding success and will go forth into the future. Keep an eye out for the Lecture date and speaker in future issues of *UK*.



HERITAGE LOTTERY IN THE NEWS



On 10 December 2015 newspapers across Australia carried the story of the opening of the new \$1.3 million Welcome Centre at the Sydney Opera House by Federal Environment Minister **Greg Hunt** (left; *Photo:*

worldparkscongress.org).

In the reports it was noted that Mr Hunt says he is open to a new lottery sharing proceeds with arts and cultural projects.

The idea is now set to be put to the States and private sector after it was floated in the Government's **Australian Heritage Strategy**, Environment Minister Greg Hunt said.



The reports went on to note that the **UK Heritage Lottery Fund** had raised some \$71 billion since it began in 1994, with \$780 million being raised last year.

Readers will recall we met with Minister Hunt's staff earlier in the year. We particularly advocated low documentation small loans like the UK system for loans up to £10,000. It was suggested at that meeting that we write to all Victorian Federal MPs advocating a Heritage Lottery, which we have done.

Some MPs have come back with a favourable response to our approach, and these include: **Hons. Kelly O'Dwyer, Cathy McGowan** and **Kelvin Thomson**.

It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive. It was their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant.

GEORGE ORWELL (1903-1950)

WA FIRES CLAIM TWO HALLS

SCADDAN TOWN HALL



Photo: abc.net.au

The wildfires of November 2015 claimed the **Scaddan Town Hall** on 18 November. The small former railway siding community consisted of a school and Town Hall. Now the School is all that remains, although in recent times that had a library and hall built as part of the Federal funding program.

The area, located about 800km east of Perth, was formerly known as Thirty Mile. In 1915 the area was renamed in honour of former WA Premier **John 'Happy Jack' Scaddan** when the township was surveyed and the Norseman-Esperance railway line was planned.

War-time shortages and funding took the community some time to advance their hall project and it was not until 4 April 1925 that the **Scaddan Agricultural Hall** was opened. We are told 'Dancing ceased at 6am' and that it was the second hall to be built in 'the mallee country'.

Exactly when the Agricultural Hall became known as the Town Hall is not known but it was well used down through the years, including in 1930 for a performance of the farce 'Love in the Kitchen' featuring local performers.

The Scaddan School started back on 7 December. We wish the Scaddan community well into the future and mourn the loss of their Hall.



Photo: Google Street View

YARLOOP TOWN HALL



Elsewhere in south-west Western Australia a bushfire also claimed the distinctive building of the former **Yarloop Mechanics' Institute and Public Library** on 7 January 2016. Yarloop was a unique town, having been established abutting the railway line by the enterprising brothers **Charles Gibson** (1839-1900) and **Edwin Franks** (1844-1928) **Millar**. Based in Victoria, the Irish-born Millar brothers, were initially bridge builders and then railway construction contractors on a large scale, eventually operating in most Australian States. Their first foray into Western Australia was the building of the Beverley to Albany line, which needed sleepers. Soon sawmilling was also to become a major operation and the purchase of 300 acres at Yarloop in 1894, saw them establish a sawmill in 1895 and from 1900 their engineering headquarters there which maintained its locomotives, rollingstock and sawmill equipment and operated a foundry. They also established a village of workers cottages. Yarloop was also a major sawmilling and shipping site for milled timber and wooden blocks which were exported to England for street construction. At its peak Millar Trading Co. employed upwards of 700 people in the Yarloop area. The workshop was adapted for the manufacture of armaments during World War I and II.

Its successor Bunnings was to eventually close the sawmilling operation in 2008. Since then much effort has been made to conserve the milling township as a heritage site.



Photos: twitter/Paul Kadak

ST ARNAUD'S OPEN DAY



The **St Arnaud Mechanics' Institute** relaunched itself to the community on 10 October with an Open Day. This was not before the relaying of two floors and a massive paint over by Institute members and students of the **St Arnaud District Dance Studio**. In spite of a massive dust storm mid-week, all was clean and in readiness for the big day.

The Institute, the adjoining Uniting (formerly Presbyterian) Church and the large **Queen Mary Botanic Gardens** share what was the former St Arnaud Water Reserve created in 1864. So it seemed fitting that a tour of the Botanic Gardens start the day.

The tour was led by Gardens Curator **Jason Abbott** whose enthusiasm for his task and care of the Gardens really showed as we were walked through its history from largely a swamp with the St Arnaud Creek running through it.

Following a near vote at Council to turn the whole site over to housing in 1884, the Gardens were laid out in 1889. Since then it has progressively evolved into an impressive town centre space. The **Angwin** gates at its entrance are named for local medico **Dr Stuart Letcher Angwin** (1865-1913) and were constructed in 1913 by AB Blakeley at a cost of 'about £160'.

The St Arnaud Creek was 'harnessed' in 1930-31 when a susso project constructed a stone and brick lined creek bed through the Gardens. The duck pond was lined with plastic in 2013 to conserve water.

In more recent times statues to: French Crimean War hero **Marshall Jacques Leroy de St Arnaud** (1798-1854), for whom the town is named, was created by **Maurice McGrath**

and unveiled in 2005; and **William John Wills** (1834-61), sculptured by **Chris Murphy** in 2014.

Returning to the Hall we noted the MIV Travelling Exhibition ***Mechanics' ... and Proud of It*** was mounted around the Institute walls. There were also displays of the building's former users the **St Arnaud Society for the Entertainment of the Area**, **St Arnaud Drama Group**, **Miss Martin's School of Dance** and current user the **St Arnaud District Dance Studio**.

St Arnaud's living treasure, Institute historian and former Librarian **Ella Ebery OAM** then took us through the history of the Institute. The shifting of the former timber Court House by bullock dray across the Creek to the present site, and the replacement of the building in 1882 with the current brick structure.

Over the years it has various uses from the Buffalo Lodge, with a substantial collection of buffalo horns, to a cinema and a theatre which attracted travelling shows.

It also had use during World War II when it was occupied by R&WH Symington & Co manufacturers of **Kestos** brassieres and **Liberty**

corsetry and employed about twenty local ladies working on eighteen machines from 1943-45.

A solid remnant of the 1800-1900s library still exists in the Hall.

The Open Day was a great credit to the hardwork of President **Paula Ellis**, **Linda Grigg** and the Dance Studio team.

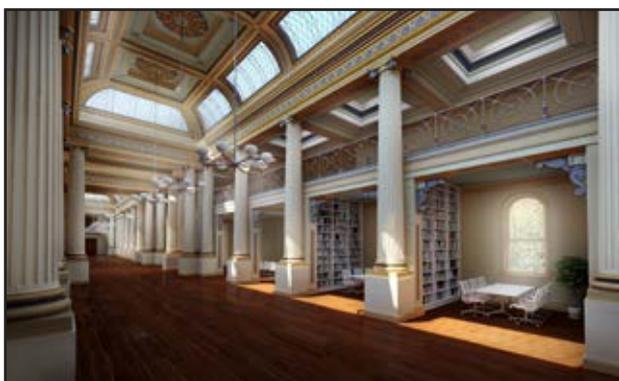


Top: St Arnaud MI Open Day; Middle: displays and set up in the Hall; L-R: Jim Lowden, Jason Abbott, Ella Ebery and Paula Ellis, St Arnaud MI President. (Photos: Ros Lowden)

OUR STATE LIBRARY

MIV has been ably represented on the **State Library User Organisations' Council** for the past decade by our Life Member and former President **Peter Pereyra**. The role of SLUOC is as interface between the State Library Trustees and Government to represent the user public's interests and concerns.

This is a huge responsibility in ensuring that one of the world's great libraries, both in terms of collection, and its management and the building which houses it is kept in optimum condition. One of the hoary chestnuts of very recent times is the full refurbishment of the iconic Queen's Hall with a price tag of around \$40 million. The Queen's Hall, named for Queen Victoria, was opened on 24 May 1859. The opening of the domed reading room in 1913, saw the Queen's Hall turned over as a Museum of Victoria exhibition space. The Museum exited the space in the early 1970s and the room was renovated and opened as the Art, Music and Performing Arts Library in 1975, a use which continued until 2003 and the space has been vacant since then, pending funding.



*Artists impression of the completed Queens Hall.
(Photo: blogs.slv.vic.gov.au)*

The **Andrews' Government** bit the bullet in early 2015 announcing a \$83.1 million redevelopment of the Library, which would include the Queen's Hall to be returned to its original use as a public reading space. Government and philanthropic contributions, including \$10 million from the **Ian Potter Foundation**, will finance the work. The whole project is due for completion in 2020. That said the recent Swanston Street rail tunnel looks like resulting in the closure of the Swanston Street Library entrance and the temporary relocation to Russell Street.

The other major issue has been the funding of a new \$20 million Store to come on stream



in 2017, when it is expected that the existing Ballarat Store at Federation University's Mt Helen Campus will be full. The Government has now given the go-ahead for the building of a duplicate store alongside the existing facility, for Library use only. Hopefully with the large-scale move to digital material this will last well into century 21. The new building will include state of the art digitising and conservation facilities and will also have a cold storage area for glass negatives and film. Hopefully a public reading room will also be included, which would serve Western Victoria.

Other news is that the recent Annual Seminar themed '**e-Publishing and Public Libraries: Challenges and Opportunities**' gave an overview of the present digitising trends. It is planned to hold the 2016 Seminar during **Rare Book Week** 14-24 July 2016. The subject of '**Keeping the Original**' will hold much interest to librarians, archivists and community groups.

If you would like a tour of the current facility please contact **Sarah Slade** at Ballarat to see when the next tour is happening.

In the meantime we thank SLUOC members for the very positive outcome on the large mega dollar issues and we commend the Government for recognising their long-term worth to the Victorian and International community.

We note the recent claim that only the British and Bodleian Libraries can match the collection recently bequeathed to the State Library by bibliophile and barrister the late **Dr John Emerson QC**.



*The late Dr John Emerson QC.
Photo: State Library of Victoria*

CAMPFIRE COUNTRY HALLS

In **UK38** we reviewed Toby Martin's book *Yodelling Boundary Riders* and we alluded to travelling groups of Country and Western performers of which the **Slim Dusty Show** was a notable example. Since then our attention has been drawn to the **Campfire Country Halls** project in Western Australia which is taking country music and people to outback halls.

The project was put together by **David** and **Therese Higginson** of **Downunder Country** based in Bridgetown (WA). The duo have been the moving force behind the annual **Bridgetown (WA) Country Music Weekend** which started in March 2012 and has grown to large proportions featuring C&W in all its genres, from old time and line dances, singers, musicians, bush poets and costumery. A real smorgasbord of pure C&W.

Staged at the Bridgetown Agricultural Showgrounds, the Downunder Country event now attracts performers from across Australia and caravan-based fans who make the annual pilgrimage. The longrunning Bridgetown Agricultural Society was formed in 1885. It also hosts the annual **Blues at Bridgetown Festival** of Blues and Roots Music held annually in November since 1993.

Bridgetown, originally known as Geegelup, is located 260km south of Perth and has a



population of around 2600. The township was gazetted in 1868 and is at the centre of a well-established woolgrowing and cropping area. The town hosts what is claimed to be the only Jigsaw Gallery and Museum in the Southern Hemisphere.

Campfire Country Halls is a caravan-based roadshow, comprising a maximum of fifty caravans and since 2013 the tour has so far taken in some sixty country Halls. When 'on circuit' the roadshow takes in on average three halls a week. The established following now means substantial profits for each venue which can mean the possibility of a substantial hall upgrade.

The Halls visited in the recent 'Hall Crawl' circuit included: **Wickepin** (population 250), **Piesseville** (population 250), **Badgebup** (population 150) and finished at **Albany** (population 30,000). Visitors were welcomed at each event as were walk up performers.

Further info: downundercountry.com.au
Coleen (08) 9761 1740

A NATIONAL DATABASE FOR HALLS? WHY NOT!

Recent events have brought the eventual necessity of a single on-line database for a **History of the Hall in Australia** project into sharp focus. The publication of **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James'** opus *These Walls Speak Volumes* of over 700 pages covered brief summaries on 956 of Victoria's Mechanics' Institutes. The **Elisabeth Richardson** list gives over eight hundred in NSW. There have been several regional Hall studies in NSW: **Barrie Brennan**, New England; **Hellen Trustum**, Richmond/Tweed area; and **Barbara Heaton, Greg Preston** and **Mary Rabbitt**, Newcastle and Lower Hunter. **Bronwyn Lowden's** *Australian Checklist* gives 3300 Australia-wide. Name-changing through rebuilding, etc. muddies the waters, so Hall it must be.

Ken James' recent 200 page book *Chewton's Halls and Lodges* brings this into clear focus.

The Chewton Mechanics' Institute occupied at least two rented sites, a chemists' shop and hotel and the Town Hall. The much used Red Hill Hall was actually part of the Red Hill Hotel. The Forest Creek Free Library purchased the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, eventually selling the building to the Wesley Hill Progress Association. The various Lodges moved around and some even built their own halls.

Many groups have some information on Halls. The first stage will be to get a web presence up with Town Headings, with their Hall listings which can be added to through a moderator.

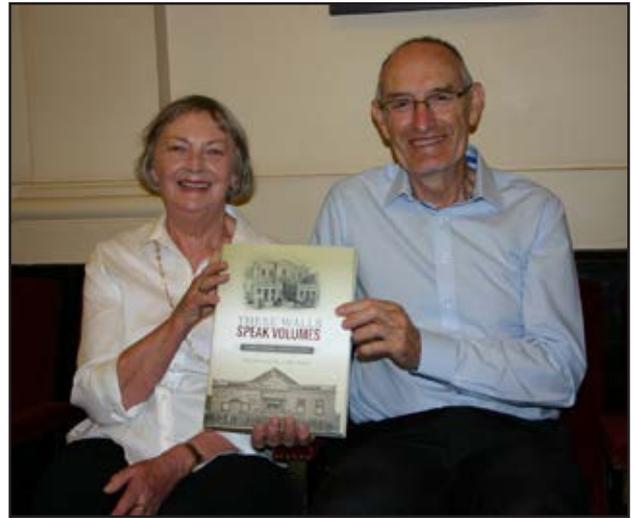
This is real nation building stuff. Halls were the first meeting places, libraries, churches, schools, councils, courts, lodges, etc. You can't get anything more primal than that, so now the idea must be sold to potential participants and funders.

LAUNCH INTO HISTORY

The final event of the 175th anniversary of the **Melbourne Athenaeum Library** was the launch of *These Walls Speak Volumes*, and indeed they do. The Melbourne Athenaeum, which started out life as the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution in 1839 and embraces the many features of the typical Institute. It had a lecture Hall, ran a library and provided a meeting space for a whole range of uses, ranging from Council, Trade Union and even Communist Party activity. Film of course was a part of its life for more than sixty years, but then so were the annual Canary Shows for a similar time.

A good representation of the faithful gathered in 'The Ath' foyer on Thursday 19 November at 2pm and included **Professor Phillip Candy**, who with **Dr John Laurent** had issued *Pioneering Culture* in 1993. Their compilation showed widespread MI Movement throughout Australia. **Cecile Cornford** represented Australia's longest running continuous Institute, The **Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts** established in 1833. MIV was well represented with a number of Past Presidents as well as past and current officers. All had come for the launch of **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James'** massive opus which covers the basic history of 956 Mechanics' Institutes that were established across Victoria

The Event was ably chaired by **Sue Westwood**, Business Manager of The Ath. The launcher **Associate Professor Don Garden**, President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, noted that it was fifteen years since RHSV Director



Pam Baragwanath and Ken James with their new book These Walls Speak Volumes

(Photo: Kristina Holdaway)

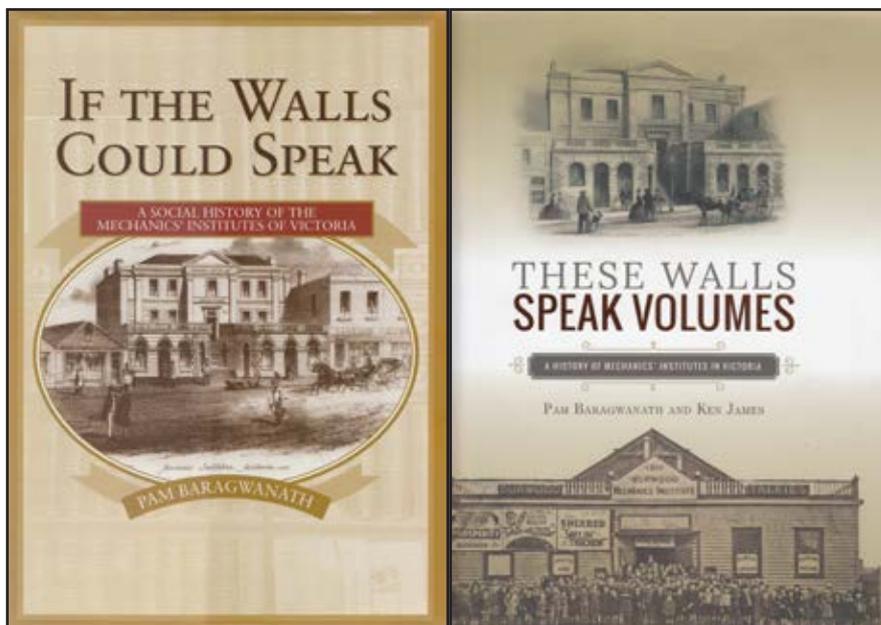
Leonie Foster had launched Pam's *If the Walls Could Speak* during the First National Mechanics' Institute Conference at The Ath in 2000.

Leonie had also launched Pam's history of the **Healesville Mechanics' Institute** in 1992. Since then Pam had been joined by the prolific author of many histories, Ken James to bring this amazing work to fruition. Prior to Pam's wide ranging fieldwork little had been systematically done that had reached fruition in print.

The promotion of Mechanics' Institutes and Mutual Improvement Societies, which emerged in Britain in the 1820s, was 'based on the belief that knowledge and education were keys to a population and workforce that would not only be more skilled and productive but also more moral and law abiding', noted Professor Garden.

These cultural values were imported into Australia, particularly Victoria, in the 1850s and 1860s during the period of the gold rushes and became a common aspiration in the communities in which they settled.

Professor Garden cited the area of Drouin as an example. **Drouin South** was established in 1888, **Drouin West** in 1910. Both buildings and Institutes no longer exist. However, the **Drouin Institute**, established



in 1878 remains. From the original timber structure it served as a library, hall and entertainment venue. It also was the Shire Office and Court. The building was replaced in the 1920 and still exists today as part of the West Gippsland Regional Library Service, and there the Drouin Branch of the Warragul and District Historical Society houses its records.

This is typical of many areas where the tyranny of distance has been overcome by better roads and modes of travel.

The library role has been well maintained with twelve Institutes still operating community libraries, and twelve others, in refurbished buildings, operate as Municipal libraries.

However a good sprinkling of Institute buildings, spread across Victoria, still operate as community halls. The huge research project and resulting book sets out to cover these and those that no longer exist.

Planning Minister **Richard Wynne**, in his Foreword to the book, recognises the Institutes' significant role in the history and heritage of the State and advocates their protection.

Professor Garden concluded 'So we owe deep thanks to Pam and Ken for the book that has enabled us to move from the slightly plaintive *If the Walls Could Speak* to the more assertive ***These Walls Speak Volumes***.

Pam Baragwanath then spoke. She noted her purchase of the down at heel former Healesville Mechanics' Institute. Whilst bringing the tired walls back to life a local approached her. 'Look here lady, this town wants progress, we don't want people tarding up old buildings'. Pam then noted that since the landmark Kilmore Conference there had been scores of buildings 'tarded up' and returned to full community use.

There was also a vital need to record their various histories and of those that no longer existed. Pam mentioned the earlier believers **James Egan, Colin Badger, Alf Wesson** and the able support given by **Jane**



Associate Professor Don Garden speaking at the launch of These Walls Speak Volumes (Photo: Kristina Holdaway)

Lennon, Peter Cabena, Tim Smith and Janette Hodgson in her quest. Then there were the hundreds of people who had collaborated in compiling and updating the various entries.

Ken James then spoke of his role in using available Government records and community resources to document the five hundred extra Institutes not covered in *If the Walls Could Speak*. It had been a demanding but pleasurable task, particularly given the outcome.

Proceedings were rounded off by doyen historian **Professor Weston Bate**, a true believer. Institutes were the means for communities to survive and thrive. They were pivotal and the fact that many are the last public building in a district community is indicative of this. There they still demonstrably maintain a sense of community and will do so as long as they survive.

Afternoon tea was served in The Ath library and allowed many to catch up with faces who have ensured the Institute Movement goes forward. The very weight of *These Walls Speak Volumes*, it is 2.8kg and a compelling dossier of evidence, will ensure that the Mechanics' Institute Movement in Victoria will never be forgotten. Thank you Pam, Ken and all who have collaborated in this massive research project.

That said we must not overlook those who have financially made this visionary project possible: **The RE Ross Foundation; Heritage Council of Victoria; Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria; Melbourne Athenaeum Library; Public Record Office Victoria; State Government of Victoria; State Library of Victoria; and Victorian Scottish Heritage Cultural Foundation.**

The Victorian-based printers BPA, formerly Brown Prior and Anderson established in the 1930s, are also to be commended on the production.

In all a most memorable event commemorating a great pioneering tradition. Well done all!



Weston Bate speaking at the launch of These Walls Speak Volumes (Photo: Kristina Holdaway)

HEALTH & GENERAL LIBRARY WANTS CARING HOME

From time to time opportunity knocks, and someone walks away as a winner. The future of every successful Institute is to find a niche and run with it. In Victoria it has grown through phases where libraries suited local need ranging from those Institutes in fruit or vegetable growing areas to those that were heavy into mining where those were stocked.

In recent times we have seen the success of history and serious contemporary fiction as drivers in our member libraries.

We recently learned of a broad 'church' library of general good health in the widest sense of the word, going to a good home. Subjects range from the pleasing aesthetics of art and craft, music, opera and film, preventative medicine, to good nutrition, to physical fitness and the general well-being of a jolly good read.

The collector who has assembled the library started life in the UK and migrated to Tasmania in 1965 when conservationist photographer **Olegas Truchanas** was stalking the Tasmanian wilderness with his faithful Nikon camera recording the great outdoors of Lake Pedder.

A pharmaceutical chemist by training and profession, our bibliophile has seen the results of both good and ugly lifestyles. By way of education he has worked with University of Tasmania and more recently in Victoria in retirement, giving courses to U3A and Seniors groups. His library has been honed to reflect good life-long health, in

mind and body, with a good sprinkling of travel titles to take away the cares of the world.

The donor would require some understanding that the library would remain largely intact and that he could access it into the future at your convenience. He would be more than happy to give occasional talks on the subject of life-long good health, eschewing the pharmacy as often and as long as possible.

The collection comprises some 6000 volumes and is presently based in Melbourne and at Launceston. Deductible Gift Recipient status would be welcome, but the ultimate aim is to find a good home for this lifestyle library.

This may well be an opportunity to set up a library at a country Institute that could have far flung implications for your Institute and your area. Good health for an aging population is something we must all address one day. This may be one such way of doing this. We think historically of **John Harvey Kellogg** of Cornflake fame at Battle Creek, Michigan and **Jerome Irving Rodale** of Emmaus, Pennsylvania who popularised the word organic by way of his Rodale Organic Gardening Experimental Farm and by his *Prevention* magazine aimed at preventing disease before the need to cure it.

Think about it, this could put your Institute on the map. In the first instance you can apply to 'Library for Life' care of mivenquiry@live.com.au

CALL FOR SPEAKERS! MECHANICS' WORLDWIDE 2016

Preparations are in full swing for ***Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century***. The Conference organisers have issued a Call for Speakers with proposals and abstracts requested for submission by 1 March 2016. Some ideas for presentations or panels include: survival in historic buildings; redevelopment using partners or tenants; innovative fundraising for endowments and specific projects; building and exploiting collection strengths; establishing unique collections or niche programs; building value into membership;



academic interface for internees, speakers and research; exploiting 'local' connections of people and events; partnerships with other institutions; and greater communication between Libraries and Institutes worldwide.

If you are interested in attending or presenting at the Conference, please visit the Conference website (milibrary.org/reinvention)

for more information. Early bird registrations are open until 1 July 2016, after which registrations will still be open until 1 October 2016.

MIV'S *Historical Plaques Program*

JEFFCOTT NORTH MI REMEMBERED

On 20 November 2016 members of the **Donald History and Natural History Group**, along with past and current residents of the district assembled on a site opposite the farm house of **Neil and Jill McEwen** to commemorate the **Jeffcott North Mechanics' Institute** with the unveiling of MIV Plaque No. 48.

The Jeffcott North Mechanics' Institute had a very short nine year history. The timber building took one week to construct before it opened on 19 November 1891 with a concert and ball. It was well used by the district for regular dances. On 3 January 1900 a severe storm swept over the district and there was nothing left standing of the Institute. All the materials were gathered and sold. The Institute was never rebuilt.

A new Public Hall, named the Jeffcott Public Hall, was built in 1926 which would carry on the Institute legacy for the Jeffcott district.



Jeffcott Public Hall in 2009

Recent Plaques

- No. 47 **Ruffy Public Hall**
- No. 48 **Jeffcott North Mechanics' Institute**
- No. 49 **Kyneton Mechanics' Institute**
- No. 50 **Somerville Mechanics' Institute**

On 12 February 2016, MIV will be honoured to have Plaque No. 50 unveiled at the Somerville



*Top: L-R: Norm Hollis, President, Donald History and Natural History Group, and Ken James;
Bottom: Artist Kerry Duncan's impression of what the Jeffcott North Mechanics' Institute and Free Library might have looked like.
(Courtesy: The Buloke Times)*

Mechanics' Institute, 66 Station Street, Somerville, at 4pm.

Among the fifty plaques issued by MIV, two have marked the site of an old Institute. It is more important than ever that these sites are recorded and remembered while there are still people alive who have them in their memory. These long gone and, we hope, not entirely forgotten Institutes have played a special part in lives of rural and urban Victorians. What better way to show older generations that we will remember the impact it had on not only their lives, but the future generations which have not had the chance to experience it first hand.

Plaques Wrap-up

NO. 15 - JINDIVICK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

Plaque No. 15 was unveiled by **Jindivick Mechanics' Institute** President **John Pretty** on 8 December 2005. This plaque is situated inside the Institute on the east wall of the Hall near the honour rolls.

NO. 45 - WALLAN WALLAN FREE LIBRARY & MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The **Wallan Mechanics' Institute** plaque was unveiled by **Mrs Kerry Page** on 8 November 2014. This plaque is situated on the front of the Institute, to the left of the front door.

Check out the Plaques page on the MIV website for locations and individual citations.

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

Opinion

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK BY JIM LOWDEN

As we count down to our 2016 Annual General Meetings at a local level, and as far as the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. is concerned at a State level, we look to fill the various office-bearer positions hopefully through succession planning. **This is the time when people must consider doing their bit for their community, or even the wider community, as with MIV.**

I am reminded of the profound statement of **Andrew Rawsthorne**, a grazier from small-town Trundle in NSW, '**Small communities wither and die when good men and women do nothing!**' Andrew led his dying community, Trundle with the 'second widest main street in the country', to host the major national annual **Abba Tribute Festival**. Andrew put his hand up for his community. But will you?

But then economic and social historian **Richard Henry Tawney** stated '**Only those institutions are loved which touch the imagination.**' Surely nothing is more loved than the community hall. These hold the memories of their various communities. They have most surely touched the imagination.

But what of the Institution the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria? **Has it touched the imagination?** Thanks to the massive pioneering work of **Pam Baragwanath** Victoria has the **best documented Mechanics' regional history in the world** and MIV has been the financial beneficiary from the publication of that work. This work has been ongoing by way of a massive scanning project instigated by former MIV President and Life Member **Peter Pereyra**.

Almost fifty **Commemorative Plaques** have been installed on Institutes across Victoria and more Institutes have hosted a MIV Travelling Exhibition, either **Remember the Mechanics?** or **Mechanics'... and Proud of It!** Scores of Institutes have been touched by **MIV Bus Tours**.

MIV has gone in to bat for many Institutes across the State. A joint letter was even sent from **MW 2009-Bath** reminding a Council that they were custodians of an internationally significant Mechanics' Institute museum collection.

MIV hosted the first **Australian National Mechanics' Institutes Conference** in 2000 and



the first **World Conference** in 2004. MIV co-partnered the **International Buildings, Books and Blackboards** Conference in 2012. It has also hosted a number of Regional Meetings.

MIV has just launched its new website.

We have just seen the publication of a major revision and upgrade of ***If the Walls Could Speak*** by **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James**.

MIV now enters an exciting era and we ask you to come on board and be a part of the future. In doing so we salute and acknowledge the past contributions of: **Pam Baragwanath; Graham Dudley; Lorraine Huddle; Frank Hurley OAM; Wallace Kirsop; John Murphy; Leila Winchcombe**, and our vital newsletter past editors **Julann Meabank** and **Donald Barker**.

That said other Hall communities also have future challenges, the very survival of their Hall against the lavish recreational centres being built by 'enlightened' Councils. Whilst regarded initially as a boon to the community, the required fundraising and the inevitable sale of alcohol, has caused serious social unrest and consequences. This 'phenomena' must surely be worthy of a detailed study in the context of 'community capital' to justify the massive expenditures and any downsides that occur.

If you can lend skills to MIV then put your hand up for a position at the next MIV AGM. Put your name proudly on the MIV Honour Board and volunteer for the ride. Think about it!



Around Victoria's 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.

BADGER CREEK HALL (Est. 1924)



Photo: badgercreekhall.org.au

There's are no wilting violets at Badger Creek and they want to share their Hall. Consequently they threw their doors open during **Home is Where the Hall Is Month** for an **Open Day** on 28 November 2015. An opportunity to 'enjoy afternoon tea – see our facilities first hand and the new toilet block, new disabled access, rear meeting room [with new carpet], rear fenced garden, and a chance to meet the committee of management'. A goodly number took up the offer to see at first hand 'A place where people meet' the apt Badger Creek motto.

There's certainly a host of history surrounding the Hall which prior to 1978, was once located opposite Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary. The Hall has certainly come a long way since it was built 'in a day and half' back in 1924. Check out the Hall's website for a good marketing example: badgercreekhall.org.au.

BALLAARAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1859)

Ballaarat MI's Twilight Talks are taking place again with the opening of the Summer Series on 12 February. The dates and topics are as follows with more details available on their website: ballaratmi.org.au/the-arts/twilight-talks

12 February - **Max Harris** – 'History Lives in Photographs'. Max will present wonderful early images of Ballarat.

19 February - **Cr Samantha McIntosh** – 'A City Resplendent with Heritage Buildings'. Sam discusses Ballarat's heritage buildings.

26 February - **Michael Trembath** – 'The Memory Atlas, History in You'. Mick discusses a Ballarat East oral history project.

4 March - **Lindsay Florence** – 'Policing in Victoria with a focus on a murder investigation'. Lindsay is a former Ballarat Police Superintendent.

11 March - **Brett Dunlop** – 'Sovereign Hill – A Continuing Story'. Brett is Sovereign Hill's Museums Director.

18 March - **Dr Jill Wheeler** – 'Linton: questions about history'. Jill has researched Linton's history and discusses 'who owns the history?'

BEECHWORTH MUSEUM (Est. 1857)



Beechworth, well known for its Chinese connections, is reinforcing its link with the forthcoming unveiling of the newly conserved **1875 Beechworth Chinese Carnival Banner** on 12 February 2016. Located in the Burke Museum and now enclosed in a custom-made case, for climate and dust control, the silk Banner is expected to last well into the future. Guest speaker at the event will be **Kristin Phillips**, Principal Conservator, Textiles, Artlab Australia, Arts South Australia. Conservation work was funded by the **Copland Foundation**, established after the death of art collector **Alexander Ewart Copland** in 2005

BELLBRAE HALL (Est. 1887)

Bellbrae was the venue chosen for the fifth anniversary birthday party of the **Regional Arts Victoria's Home Is Where the Hall Is Month**. People were invited to go along on Saturday, 7 November for an evening of music with country and folk performers **Miles** and **Simone** singing



Photo: homeiswherethehallis.com

tracks from their latest album **Home in Your Heart**. Armed with BYO picnic supper people took their place amongst the rugs, bean bags and lamps scattered throughout the Hall. The oldies purchased a tippie from the Bellbrae Estate range whilst the young fry filled up a lolly bag from the lolly table. And a great night was had by all.

For the history buffs the Hall started out life as the Jan Juc Mechanics' Institute in 1887. The name was changed to Bellbrae in 1922. In 1963 the Hall was demolished for the site to accommodate the new Bellbrae road bypass. The current Hall was then built by the Shire at the other end of School Road in 1963.

BERRIWILLOCK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1894)



Photo: Friends of Castlemaine Library It takes a major national event to place some of Victoria's small towns on the radar. Such was this year's Melbourne Cup when Berriwillock-raised trainer **Darren Weir** brought home **Prince of Penzance**. An online tipping preview noted his horse 'May lack the class to prevail in the Melbourne Cup but he's an honest customer capable of finishing in the top ten'.

Whilst the win was big news for the punters, the Berriwillock Institute was closed for public use following the opening of the new CFA Fire Station and Community Centre in 2013. The Institute was on Crown Land so it will most probably be sold.



Photo: abc.net.au

BRIAGOLONG MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1874)

Briagalong staged a moving tribute to the ANZACS and all returned servicemen and servicewomen on 10-15 November. The Hall was ablaze with the crimson red of handcrafted poppies, at least some 257,000 of them, decking the stage or hanging in strands from the lofty ceiling. Mostly sourced from Gippsland, the symbolic poppies provided a poignant blanket of memory, particularly to those who gave their lives.

The event was coordinated by **Briagalong Mechanics' Institute, Briagalong RSL, Regional Arts Victoria, Wellington Shire Council** and **Creative Gippsland**. The 5000 Poppies exhibition later travelled to venues at Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Morwell, Newhaven, Omeo, Orbost, Paynesville, Trafalgar and Warragul.

FRIENDS OF CASTLEMAINE LIBRARY (Est. 1855)

Christmas Day saw the completing of a big crowd-funding campaign to support their "**Read-Along Dads**" program. Through the support of many generous people, FOCAL has raised \$19,160 which will enable the program to continue to run throughout 2016 and into 2017.

Read-Along Dads was started three years ago at nearby Loddon Prison, which is home to hundreds of low and medium security prisoners from across Victoria. The program was aimed to



Photo: Friends of Castlemaine Library

help with prisoner rehabilitation, while helping father-child relationships and child literacy.

Children are provided with a book and an audio recording of their dad reading through the text which the child can read along, or follow through.

If you would like more information on the project, check out their crowd-funding page: <https://chuffed.org/project/readalongdads>

You can also follow FOCAL on Facebook: www.facebook.com/FOCALinc

KILMORE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1854)

Following on the Institute's ongoing defence and promotion of the Monument Hill Reserve at Kilmore, in December it received a DELWP **Threatened Species Protection Initiative** grant of \$11,660. The project will involve further field work, community education and the production of interpretative materials.

LILYDALE ATHENAEUM (Est. 1882)

The program for 2016 has been released by the **Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company**. The Company will run four shows throughout the year.

Season 1 2016: 2 March to 19 March 2016 (Matinees 6 March, 13 March and 19 March). **The Vicar of Dibley - A comedy by Ian Gower and Paul Carpenter**. Directed by Loretta Bishop.

Season 2 2016: 25 May to 11 June 2016 (Matinees 29 May and 5 June.). **Breaker Morant - A play by Kenneth G. Ross**. Directed by Alan Burrows.

Season 3 2016: 17 August to 3 September 2016 (Matinees 21 August and 28 August.). **Caught In The Net - A comedy/farce by Ray Cooney**. Directed by Bob Bramble.

Season 4 2016: 2 November to 19 November 2016 (Matinees 6 November and 13 November.). **Yes, Prime Minister? - A comedy by**

Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn. Directed by Alan Burrows.

More information is available on the ATC's website: lilydaleatc.com

MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM (Est. 1839)

Vibrant Speakers' Program Honors Melbourne's Literary Heritage and a Milestone Birthday

Four diverse and insightful speakers celebrated Melbourne's passion for engaging conversations at the Melbourne Athenaeum in November 2015. It was the organisation's 175th birthday and celebrations began early in the year with a launch at **White Night Melbourne** and culminated with the inaugural **Marcus Clarke Lectures**.

Four speakers presented four different views of our city across 175 years and beyond in a free lecture series designed to honour Melbourne and one of its finest storytellers, Marcus Clarke. Author of *His Natural Life* (also known as *For the Term of His Natural Life*), he was known for his witty impertinence and mischievous tirades, Clarke was a member of the Melbourne Athenaeum's committee from 1876 - 79. Historian and guest speaker **Dr Andrew Lemon** described him as "one of those whose impressions of the young city around him have endured. He and fellow journalists, particularly the ones who wrote under the nom de plume of *Vagabond* and *Garryowen*, were hugely influential in informing our enduring idea of historic Melbourne."

Dr Lemon was the final speaker in the series, and as the author of the three-volume *History of Thoroughbred Racing*, it seemed fitting that he discuss Melbourne's passion for sport and racing in particular during the city's *Spring Racing Carnival*. **Peter Williams**, one of Australia's top digital influencers presented a passionate and moving lecture about the impact of bushfire on towns and in particular from his personal experience of rebuilding the community of



Flowerdale following the Black Saturday fires in 2009. With film footage and photos to accompany his talk, Williams presented a challenging case for community rather than government driven rebuilding programs.

G i l b e r t Rochecoste spends his life thinking

about how to create community. Born in the small country of Mauritius, Rochecoste is now considered a world leader in the field of placemaking, and community development. He argued that creating place can be as simple and placing a park bench on a nature strip and allowing the community to gather, sit and watch the world go by. He commended the impact of Mechanics' Institutes and the role they played in creating a community heart and centre in so many towns across Victoria, and considered the impact of even developing a simple community garden can have in uniting a community. Even with such diverse topics, the common thread was our desire to better understand how we live and how to unite our community.

But it was **Deborah Cheetham** AO, Yorta woman, soprano, composer and educator who kicked off the lecture series with an impassioned and articulate argument that challenged her audience to engage and consider whether Australia can still consider itself young and free, when we know this nation is home to the world's oldest continuous culture. It was the Melbourne Athenaeum's invitation to present a lecture that caused her to think about whether she can continue to sing the national anthem at major events, something she has done with pride over many years. It was her request to change the "young and free" wording of the anthem to words written by *Seekers* singer Judith Durham AO was rejected by the AFL, and she declined the opportunity to sing before millions. Some may consider her request arrogant, but the precedent made decades earlier changed the opening line from "Australian sons", to "Australians all". It didn't raise a murmur. She will not sing the national anthem again until those words are changed. Moving, witty, challenging, Cheetham's message was simple; there is so much more to be gained by accepting and celebrating our rich indigenous history than by being ashamed of 200 years of ignorance and ill treatment. As a nation it is time to move on.

The *Marcus Clarke* series will continue with a lecture to be held each year in conjunction with the Melbourne Athenaeum's birthday in November. A speaker will be invited, who, like Clarke himself, can challenge our thinking about contemporary and historical issues. Clarke left a lasting impression of his time in Melbourne, this lecture will continue to honour his enduring, bohemian wit.

Sue Westwood
Business Manager

MINERS REST COMMUNITY HALL (Est. 1865)



Some of the residents of the village of Miners Rest looked pleased after Melbourne Cup Day when their tip **Prince of Penzance** was ridden home by local lass **Michelle Payne**. More than a few had a couple of dollars each way. What better way to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the **Miners Rest and Dowling Forest Mechanics' Institute and Free Library**. Today the Hall is still the focus of the community with heritage walks starting and finishing at the Hall.

WINDERMERE ANA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1908)



Photo: victorianplaces.com.au/John Young

Following the closure of the Primary School and the local CWA and the cost of upgrading the Hall, the Hall Committee resolved at the end of 2013 to pass the Hall and site over to the Government. Since then it has been placed on the Department of Treasury and Finance's 'Land being prepared for future sale' list. Located at 30 Weighbridge Road, Windermere, the 0.4957 hectare site comes with an aging hall that was built in 1933.

The Hall has early connections with the Australian Natives Association which in 1887 converted a former hotel. In 1908 the ANA purchased an adjoining site and erected the ANA Mechanics' Institute. It was firstly burned down in 1927 and again in 1932. It was then rebuilt in brick.

The Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes

In noticing Halls, some of which may not be strictly Mechanics' Institutes, we hope their experience, examples and stories will inspire and motivate you to emulate or even record your own Hall's story. You may even like to nominate a Hall not necessarily in our usual parameters. It could even be in Paraguay, where some interesting Halls, with Australian connections existed. We would most certainly like to hear of European continental Halls where Institute-like activities most certainly did take place.

AUSTRALIA - NEW SOUTH WALES

GUNBAR HALL (Est. 1907)



Photo: Wikipedia/Mattinbgn

Gunbar was a regional Riverina community that was established on the red soil plains, amidst a few scattered peppercorn trees and small saltbush clumps in the late 1870s. The township was surveyed in 1884. It had a Presbyterian Church which was built in 1884, was moved to the present site in 1914 and rebuilt as the Pioneers' Memorial Church in 1934. This Church still exists and has been consistently used by all faiths for the conduct of services down through the years. A Post Office, established in 1879, was closed in 1979 and the two schools, both operational in 1909, have also closed.

Early district community events were held in **Frederick William 'Fred' Kopke's** bulk store where 'about thirty couples' could dance.

A meeting was held at the Gunbar Hotel on 29 June 1907 with a view to erecting a public hall of 50ft x 30ft 'with a perfect wooden floor, where the lovers of music and dancing might enjoy themselves.'

The original hall was built 1907 by **Mr Ryan**, a brother-in-law of **Alexander Ross**, who cut

and carted all the blocks for the foundations. The timber came from **Brown Bros** sawmillers of Hillston. The two blocks of land were donated by Fred Kopke who was the Gunbar Postmaster and Storekeeper and these were transferred to the Gunbar Hall Committee.

Fred Kopke was the first Hall Committee Secretary and he supervised the construction of the Hall. In December 1907 it was noted 'The Gunbar public hall is near completion, and it is to be opened in a week or two with a picnic and dance, free to all the public. It has a stage, a well-boarded floor on which 24 couples can dance comfortably, and is only £40 in debt, which eight guarantors became responsible for.'

Mr Kopke had left the district by 1912 and a licence had still not been obtained from the Health Department 'because of the absence of some necessary appurtenances'.

The Hall blew down in a fierce storm on 12 January 1922 and it was restored to public use shortly after, but certainly by October.

The present building, clad in galvanized iron, was erected in 1927 by **Bill Stretton** assisted by **Bill Ashmore** and other locals. A skillion supper room was added later which meant that sit-down suppers could be had during events.

Fortnightly dances were staged on Saturday nights with **Miss Primrose** on piano and male musicians came from McKinley with other instruments such as accordion, violin, etc., played by names including **McLaughlan, Weaver** and **Moore**.

The musicians usually arrived on pushbikes with their instruments on the back. One night they set out in a thick fog and after a time, thought they had passed Gunbar, as there were no trees on the side of the track. So they turned back and made it to the Hall and as the orchestra, they were in soon in full swing.

In later years **Mrs Albert Clarke** played the piano with **Eric Ireson** on the drums.

During the War years there were send offs and welcome homes and Rolls of Honour were installed in the Hall. Local boy **William Jackson**, who won the Victoria Cross for bravery at Armentieres in France in 1916, was the youngest Australian to receive the award.

Ongoing use includes occasional tennis days, with a sit down lunch and tea at night with a dance to follow.

The Hall achieved prominence as a check point in the **London Daily Express-Sydney Daily Telegraph London to Sydney Car Rally** on 16 December 1968. Sixty cars passed through including the successful Hillman Hunter driven by **Andrew Cowan, Colin Makin and Brian Coyle**.

The Local Committee also do occasional catering with one example being a visit from the **Silver City Bush Treadlers** group that were 'passing through' on a 675km fundraising tour for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to purchase dental equipment.

The riders and crew of around fifty camped overnight at the Hall on 22 July 2013. Nineteen local ladies served the group with soups, casseroles, roast and slices, washed down with local wines from **Westend, Warburn, McWilliams and Robertos** of Hay. After a hearty breakfast next morning the riders and crew were sent off with a supply of quiches for lunch and twelve fruit cakes for smokos.

Early in 2015 a cake day and sale saw money raised for a Fijian charity.

The Local Management Committee still continues to hold the annual Gunbar Christmas Tree function, which started in the mid-1930s, and this involves all the district families.

The event kicks off at 6pm, with 'bring your own chair and don't forget your eskies', and Santa arrives at 7.30pm

Two freestanding display panels in front of the Hall, installed by Carrathool Shire Council around 2010, give details of the Hall and district history.

The Hall's two corrugated-iron clad toilet 'blocks' are located about fifty metres from the Hall.

QUEENSLAND

IRVINEBANK SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1883)

Irvinebank is located in the western foothills of the Atherton Tablelands in the Mareeba Shire. The area was originally known as Gibb's Camp named for prospector **James Gibb**. The payable mining leases were progressively acquired by Scottish-born **John Moffat** (1841-1918). He established the town, built a dam, a mill, smelters and other community infrastructure to attract settlers and workers. A Post Office opened in 1885 and today's population is around seventy-five.



Photo: ozoutback.com.au/Ludo Kuipers

A plaque was unveiled to John Moffat at Irvinebank on 24 May 1950. A member of the Swedenborg Church, he held strong ethical convictions and whilst he controlled a regional monopoly the whole community benefited by his patronage. There was even a prayer in currency in North Queensland 'God Bless John Moffat'. The annual **John Moffat Festival** was revived in 2005 and in August this brings visitors and money to the town to undertake various building restoration works.

The **Irvinebank School of Arts** is believed to have been established in 1883 and the first Hall, a small timber structure, was built in McDonald Street, near the National Bank about 1884.

The second, a larger building was built near the first hall about 1892. Here the Institute had a substantial mineral collection and in 1896 **William Henley Rawlings** (1848-1906) was granted a gold Life Membership medallion for 'collecting, mounting, labelling and arranging of some 600 mineral specimens in the cabinets of the institution.' At the same time there were over 1000 volumes in the library.

This second hall remained as the Reading Room and Library after the new building was completed in 1900, when it was noted that there were sixty-three paid subscribers.

By the late 1920s, the second hall was in poor condition and it was sold for removal either by demolition or shifting. Some hearsay supports that it was shifted on to nearby station property and it became part of a house at Atherton.

The current Hall, Irvinebank's third, is built of red cedar, white beech and pine. It was erected at a cost of £1100 raised by way of public subscription, a bazaar organised by **Margaret Moffat** and a Government grant. It was officially opened on 26 December 1900. Since then it has a number of additions, with the last being a larger stage in 1912.

Around one hundred of the district's people volunteered for World War I service. Only half of this number returned. One who did was **Private Henry Dalziel** (1893-1965), was the thousandth

Victoria Cross recipient, awarded for his actions at the Battle of Hamel. He later became a songwriter using local themes and places.

The Hall holds a distinctive pressed copper Honour Board, with sixty individual metal name plates affixed, each commemorating a district servicemen, of which some twenty-five died in action.

Irvinebank is given as the place of birth of some one hundred and fifty servicemen who enlisted for World War II.

An opening of the new floor was held on 24 October 1953, the installation of which was largely at the behest of trustee **William Robson Cross** (1864-1956) and the local ladies who raised the money.

There is also a memorial tablet in the Hall unveiled on 24 October 1953 to **Alan Ferguson 'Gus' Waddell** (1888-1953), a former employee and assistant of John Moffat, who during World War I became involved in railway construction and later joined Queensland Railways, from which he retired in 1952. Gus then set out writing a history of the Irvinebank area, based on his early experiences and knowledge. At his request his widow scattered his ashes on the lawn in front of the Hall.

Another longtime servant of the Hall was **Richard Marshall Lunn** (1945-2003) who served as President of the Irvinebank School of Arts and Progress Association from 1967-2003, he was accorded a Life Membership prior to his death.

Edward Granville 'Red Ted' Theodore (1884-1950) came to the area in 1906 and in 1907 with others formed the Amalgamated Workers Association of North Queensland which merged with the Australian Workers' Union in 1913. In the meantime he was elected to the Queensland Legislative Assembly representing the area.

A feature of the Hall is a former stage, but now hall wall where performers recorded their appearances. Amongst those signatures is that of **Gladys 'Our Glad' Moncrieff** (1892-1976) who sang in the Hall in 1909.

The Hall is managed by the Irvinebank School of Arts and Progress Association. They also manage nearby Loudoun House, along with six other community buildings including the Loudoun Mill.

Loudoun House is claimed to be oldest high-set timber and corrugated iron house in North Queensland. It was built for businessman John Moffat in 1884 and he administered his mining empire from there. After his death, the nearby

Loudoun Mill was sold to the Queensland Government in 1919 and became known as the State Treatment Works.

The Irvinebank community started in the 1980s to undertake restoration of various town buildings. Since then with the help of the annual John Moffat Festival and other fundraising, including grants, it is estimated that around \$1 million has been spent on conserving the various buildings. Council presently contributes nothing by the way of annual grant to maintain this community infrastructure.

In 1983-84 Loudoun House was entrusted to the community for its use and it has been developed as a Museum. In 2003 the private Trustees relinquished Loudoun House and the School of Arts Hall to the Irvinebank School of Arts and Progress Association. In October 2015 the Association featured as a recipient in the National Community Heritage Grants for a collection assessment.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HAMLEY BRIDGE INSTITUTE (Est. 1880)



Photo: Wikipedia/Mattinbgn

Located on the Adelaide Plains, between the junction of the Light and Gilbert Rivers, Hamley Bridge is the site of two bridges. One which carried the River Light Railway was built in 1868.

Prior to 1880 **Joseph Bell's** wheat store was used for Institute purposes. Premises were then leased from **Friedrich Wilhelm Grosset** (1838-1904), where a library was established. Entertainments were held 'in the Goods Shed, kindly lent by Mr Pendleton'. The promoters were: **William Ray Barker, Joseph Bell, Joseph Black** and **FW Grosset**.

The Institute building was designed by **Benjamin Edward Deland** and built by **WC Turner**. The site was donated by the South Australian Company and the foundation stone was laid by the **Hon. John James Duncan** on 4 June 1884. The building had a floor space of 50ft x 30ft and was 16ft high and cost £600.

The trustees were: **Joseph Bell, Joseph Black, Henry James Charlton, John Condon, Thomas Griffin** and **F McEllister**.

The Foundation stone for new additions was laid on 17 August 1904 by **Thomas Andrew Freebairn** of Brighton, with a newspaper photographer in attendance. These provided for a library 16ftx12ft, reading room 20ftx16ft, cloak room 16ftx7ft, vestibule 20ftx8ft, the lengthening of the hall to provide for a large stage and two dressing rooms of 12ftx12ft.

The 'reopening ceremony' took place on 18 January 1905 by **Joseph Black** in the presence of **Sir Jenkin Coles** and **Joseph Bell**. In addressing the assembled Sir Jenkin noted 'His sympathies were largely with Institutes, as he regarded them as great educational mediums, but considered too much light literature was used. He would suggest the abolishment of novels, as it was better to have a few good books of educational merit than hundreds not of permanent value.' At the time 1200 books were in the library. The cost of enlarging the building, with works being carried out by **JT Quinn**, had been £437, with acetylene lighting the total was £480.

Julian Rossi Ashton exhibited sixty-one of his pictures in the Hall in 1908 and purchases saw the Institute's collection increase to six paintings- *An Australian Pastoral, One Summer's Eve, A Grey Day at Noarlunga, The Last Gleam, San Pierre Moonrise* and *Morphett Vale Beach*. The Gallery opened on 2 October 1908 with further paintings gifted by: **Miss Bishop, Miss Evans, Captain Hendry, Mrs RP Hoepner, Miss Lock, Mrs Alicia Ledochowski, Henry Lowcay** and **Miss Agnes Smith**. The Hamley Bridge Brass Band played. Mr Ashton unveiled the pictures and spoke on 'Pictures and how to interpret them'. President of the Adelaide Institute, **WJ Sowden**, followed with an address on 'Institute Work'. In 1933 mention is made of 'a splendid picture gallery (which) is a unique feature for country institutes'. This once significant art collection has been largely dispersed.

The Hamley Bridge Institute Literary Society was operating in 1910, with an emphasis on elocution, speeches and music.

A Roll of Honour, sponsored by the Alma Council, was unveiled in the Hall on 1 September 1917, with Council Chairman **AEI Smythe** presiding. Council Library Services operates from the building on Tuesday and Fridays. A stone and marble War Memorial Cenotaph was located in front of Hall in 1920. 'Trees of Tribute' avenues of Jacaranda trees, each dedicated to a

district soldier, are located in Gilbert and Hill Streets.

A new stage curtain was installed in 1944. This was followed in 1951 by a series of fundraising concerts and these ran until 1953, by which time some £340 had been raised to refurbish the Institute.

The Institute's centenary was celebrated with a Centenary Ball on 8 June 1984.

The Hall was the subject of massive attention during the November 2015 Pinery Bushfires. It was set up as an evacuation, communication and supplies centre.

TASMANIA

FRIENDS OF THE LAUNCESTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1847)



Community Heritage Grant 2015

Congratulations to the Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute on their successful grant application. From President, Peter Richardson:

'I am pleased to advise that we have been successful in our application for a grant of \$6127 to undertake a Preservation Needs Assessment of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute collection.

This year's round of Community Heritage Grants were announced in Canberra last night and a full list may be viewed at; www.nla.gov.au/chg/community-heritage-grants-recipients-2015

The National Library's media release may be found at; www.nla.gov.au/media-releases/2015/10/26/community-heritage-grants-awarded

Tasmanian supporters will be pleased to see that it was a bumper year for the state with a total of seven grants awarded to Tasmanian organisations.

NLA's wonderful Community Heritage Grants program has funded 338 preservation needs assessments (PNA)s, (previously called preservation surveys). In each case, an external consultant was appointed to conduct the PNA. The aim of a PNA is to look at the physical condition of a collection, the suitability of current housing and storage facilities and to

make recommendations for the development of a conservation program.

Negotiations are under way with an exceptionally well-qualified consultant to undertake the Preservation Needs Assessment on our behalf, including a site visit before the end of the year.'

Peter Richardson, President, FOLMI

To keep up with the activities of the FOLMI, visit their blog: launcestonmechanicsinstitute.blogspot.com.au/

MOLESWORTH COMMUNITY HALL (Est. 1912)



Photo: Panoramio/ Ray Diagram

Located in south-east Tasmania in the Derwent Valley, the area was originally known as Sorell Creek. It was settled by German and Danish migrants in the 1870s and in 1881 portion of the area was named Bismarck. This was to be changed to Collinsvale during World War I, and an adjoining area was named Molesworth.

The area is largely known for its hop growing and fruit growing heritage. But subdivision has turned the area into a dormitory for Hobart commuters. Today the Molesworth Primary School, No. 6177, established in the 1920s, has some 140 students. The School's motto is *Nature, Nurture, Knowledge. A World War I Honour Roll* is held in the Primary School.

About 1982 the former Primary School teacher's residence was converted into the **Molesworth Environment Centre** based on Sorell Creek. This facility, with specialist staff, has become a National educational leader in environmental studies and attracts visitors and student groups from around the State. Extensive district field work is also made possible with the cooperation of local farmers and property owners and Wellington Park.

Certainly as early as 1902, district meetings were held in 'Eiszele's Hall', which may have been attached to their store.

The original Molesworth Hall was built on land in Collins Cap Road, donated by **Christian Frederick Eiszele**. The inaugural Committee comprised: **Henry Edward Otto; Charles Henry Cooper; James Albert Doran; EA Eiszele; AG Farley; Thomas Alfred Miles; and FW Relat**.

The Hall was officially opened on 11 June 1913 by the Hon. Ellis Dean, MLA. There was a woodchopping competition in the afternoon, followed by a concert and dance in the evening.

Those from the district who served in World War I included: Lance Corporal John Edwin Ackroyd MM (1887-); Sapper James Frederick Blackwood (1887-1923); Private Vincent George Collins (1897-1966); Private Albert James Askey Doran (1898-); Private Daniel Pursell (1890-1938); Kenneth Vincent Pursell (1892-1944); Ross Vivian Pursell (1897-1971); Private Leslie Charles Edward Koppleman (1897-1974); Private Walter Koppleman (1893-1960); Private John David Duncan McConnell (1894-1981).

The Country Women's Association Branch was formed on the Hall in the 1930s (1939) and it was wound up in the early 1950s. There was a recent move to re-start the branch and further local action is pending.

The Hall was burnt down in the 1967 bushfires. It was replaced about 1970 with what became known as 'The Tin Shed'. This was found to be inadequate as the site was small and there was no provision for on site parking and discussions were held with Council as to an alternative site.

Council purchased portion of a hop orchard from the **Edgar Bradshaw** family to make five acres as a recreation reserve in early 1990s. Barbecue facilities and a children's playground were built in the early 2000s. Tas Fire Service also built on the Reserve in 2010.

Following an extensive consultation the original Hall and site were sold into private ownership in the late-1990s.

A new hall was opened in 2007 with kitchen, upstairs meeting room, storeroom and toilet block, but with a larger concrete apron for further extension. During the 2013 bushfires the Hall and Reserve was used as a major command and staging post.

Since then the planned expansion has gathered momentum thanks to the financial support of the Tasmanian Freemasons and assistance by **Grand Master Allan Sangwell** and Rotary International, through and **District Governor John Dare**. Derwent Valley **Mayor Martyn Evans** has also played a significant role

in steering the project through Council, and for the waiving of permit charges.

The works project has been capably supervised by **Bob Bradshaw**, son of the previous landowner, and assisted by his wife **Jane** and a Hall Committee, who have kept the paperwork moving and organised materials on site.

The extension comprises a large Hall space with provision for a badminton court. The Hall has also been designated as a Neighbourhood Safer Place. The official opening occurred on 16 January 2016 and the Hall is now available for district activities.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WICKEPIN TOWN HALL (Est. 1919)



Photo: Wikipedia/Bahnfreund

The Wickepin area, in the wheatbelt south of Perth, was developed in the 1890s under the Crown Lands and Repurchase Acts after the Great Southern Railway Line had passed through the region in 1889. The Wickepin Road Board was established in January 1909 and the Narrogin to Wickepin spur line opened in February 1909. The line closed to passenger traffic in 1960 and commercial traffic in 1981, but continues as a seasonal grain receipt and shipping point.

The Shire's current population is 720. Albert Facey of *A Fortunate Life* fame lived at Wickepin and his homestead, since relocated to the town, is open to the public.

The Wickepin website states: 'We have unique wildflowers. Big skies. Lakes. The Swan River springs from here, beginning as the Avon River. So does the Blackwood River. We have the endangered Freckled duck. And the Spider Orchid. We also have sheep. And the Best Regional Steak Sandwich.'

The Wickepin Primary School, which was established in 1909, still functions and with an active Parents and Citizens' Association contributes to the life of the community.

The Town Hall started out life as the White Well or Tarling Hall. It was built in the 1890s for three families the **Fairheads**, **Potts** and **Roses**, all of which resided in different Roads Board

areas. The 60ftx30ft brick hall was built by **Tom Retallick**. The Rose and Potts families shared ownership of the piano.

After the railway bypassed White Well, and the nearby Wickepin became the railhead, Tarling declined as the regional centre. The Wickepin Road Board called a public meeting in 1917 to consider purchase of the Tarling Hall and the meeting resolved to de-construct the brick Hall and use the materials for the building of the Wickepin Town Hall. Remains of the Tarling Hall site can still be seen.

Construction of the Wickepin Town Hall started in 1919 and it had several additions up until 1963. In 1926 a new supper room was added by **Mr Dear**.

Further additions, in 1939, catered for the relocation of the Road Board office from Yealering, into the front of the building. **Hobbs**, **Winning** and **Leighton** were the architects and **Toia and Power Pty Ltd** were the builders for these works at a cost of £2,300. The upgraded building was opened on 22 March by **Senator KB Johnston** with an afternoon tea in the Hall and a Ball in the evening, which was lit for the first time by electric lights. Council continued occupancy of the Town Hall until it relocated away from the building in 1980 into purpose-built premises.

A new floor was laid in the Hall in 1938. Regular Saturday evening dances and annual balls for most organisations became a feature of Hall life as was the music provided by **Charlie Rose** on piano and **Jack Chick** on drums.

Toilets were constructed to the east side of the hall in 1960. In the 1963 refurbishment, new kitchen facilities were added at the rear of the Hall, the roof was painted and new stage curtains were installed. **Brady & Co** then fitted acoustic tiles throughout the Hall.

Pictures were screened in the Hall from 1921 by West Pictures. **Mr Nelson** took over in 1925 and continued until 1931. **Paddy Baker** recommenced the pictures in 1935 from a new biobox and these continued into the 1960s under various operators.

The Wickepin Country Women's Association was formed in the Hall in 1929 and their World War II fundraising activities along with those of the Red Cross were granted free use of the Hall.

The Wickepin Tennis Club leased part of the Hall grounds in 1927 and tennis courts were built and later upgraded in 1935. Also located on the Hall grounds was the town's Power Station, seemingly set up by Road Board Secretary **TK McCracken** in 1939, with generators tended by

Theo McCracken. The Town was connected to the State grid on 21 December 1964, the same day that Scheme water arrived.

The 1979 Back to Wickepin celebrations were centred on the Town Hall and culminated with a Ball there.

In the 1980s the Wickepin District Sports Club became the main meeting venue, and this in turn has been replaced by the Wickepin Community Centre.

The Wickepin Arts and Crafts Association formed in 1984 and based on the former Wickepin Masonic Lodge Hall, utilises all venues with its various activities. In 1985 regular Saturday night Blue Light Discos were commenced in the Hall by **Constable John Vivian**. Friday night roller skating also commenced around this time.

In 1994 a full Mormon funeral service was conducted in the Hall in memory of **Len Walters**. The excellent acoustics of the Hall makes it an ideal venue for travelling artists.

NEW ZEALAND

POUAKANI MARAE (Est. 1972)



Photo: www.wairarapamoana.org.nz

Following on the story of the Dunalley (Tas) rebuild after fire (UK37), we recite the story of Pouakani Marae or Meeting House located in the Mangakino region of New Zealand's North Island.

After the completion of the Kourarau Hydro-electric Power Scheme based on station Lake Wairarapa, the Pouakani nation took over the former Ministry of Works Men's Camp cook house and dining room.

They then converted this into their Marae and it was opened in 1972. It was destroyed in a devastating fire on 29 May 2007, the result of arson.

The reconstructed Marae, which features recreated panels and hangings and some of the original wood carvings which have been restored or copied. It was officially re-opened to the public on 17 November 2012, following several communal events.

Like some communities here, the Pouakani have also resisted Government pressures on their region. Comparatively recently the Government sought to appeal the New Zealand Supreme ruling in favour of the Pouakani and take it to the High Court.

Mangakino's favourite son is **Corporal Bill Henry 'Willie' Apiata** of the New Zealand Special Air Service who was awarded the Victoria Cross on 2 July 2004 in Afghanistan for carrying his wounded comrade across a battlefield under fire. Corporal Willie has donated his medals, including his VC to the New Zealand nation. In 2008, following the death of **Sir Edmund Hilary**, Bill succeeded him as the 'most trusted New Zealander'.

UNITED KINGDOM - ENGLAND

SKIPTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1847)



*Logo of the now 'homeless'
Skipton Mechanics' Institute*

Skipton is regarded as the gateway to the Yorkshire Dales and is located on the River Aire, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, railway network, and close to the A65 and A59 highway routes. It hosts the Craven Museum and Gallery and annual Sheep Festival.

Today it has a population of around 14,500. In March 2014 *The Sunday Times* voted Skipton as the best place to live citing: its proximity to the Yorkshire Dales; great schooling; and independent shops along a 'buzzing' High Street.

Several attempts were made to establish a Mechanics' Institute in Skipton, firstly in 1825, then in 1839 utilising two rooms in the Hole in the Wall yard, with Anglican patronage. The 1847 attempt proved successful with the support of people such as **Alcock, Boocock, Dewhurst, Farey, Heelis, Kendal, Moorhouse, Robinson, Tempest, Thompson, Thornton, Watson and Wilkinson**.

It operated from a two roomed property in Chancery Lane. By 1852 it was issuing two thousand book loans annually, and seventy-five members were attending classes in arithmetic, geography, grammar, French, higher

mathematics, histories, reading and writing. Lectures were being on subjects such as Ancient Art, Electricity, Nineveh and Phonography.

In 1853 the Skipton Building Society was formed and this included a number of Institute members. In the same year People Concerts began which were 'especially designed for the working classes'. Penny Readings then started and soon the Temperance Hall was being filled. 'It was a beautiful sight, the Hall lighted up with the sunshine of happy human faces'. Readings continued for almost a decade.

The building of the new Town Hall in Skipton meant that the old Hall in Sheep Street, became vacant and so the Institute moved into there. There the Department of Practical Art flourished by way of Government support.

The Institute celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria by launching an appeal which raised £2382/5/6. This enabled the Science and Art School to be built in High Street on a site donated by **Sir Richard Tufton** in 1894.

There a library was opened which eventually was taken over by a **Carnegie** funded community library in 1920. The Institute also supported the Craven Naturalists in fundraising to establish the Craven Museum in 1928.

Post World War II, when Council took over control of technical and further education, the trustees leased the Science and Art School to the Council.

On 1971 the structure of the Mechanics' Institute changed when the High Street building was sold to North Yorkshire County Council for the continued occupation by Craven College. Since then the Institute has been a funding body for good ideas and a supporter of individual excellence.

SCOTLAND

HOULDSWORTH INSTITUTE, DALLAS (Est. 1919)

The Morayshire district, straddling the valley of the River Lossie, takes its name from the Dallas family a purported member of which, **George Mifflin Dallas** (1792-1864), was a Vice-President of the United States and founder of Dallas, Texas. In Gaelic 'dallas' means 'watery valley'.

Dallas was an early religious centre, on the bank of the River Lossie, with the heather thatched Dolas Michael (St Michael's Church) first mentioned in 1226. It was repaired in 1580, but eventually fell into ruin. The present St Michael's replaced this about 1793.



Photo: geograph.org.uk/ Anne Burgess

The 16th century twelve feet high cross in the St Michael's churchyard, is reputedly located at the centre of the Morayshire. This market cross was site of the important St Michael's Fair which dated back to mediaeval times.

Traditionally the Dallas district depended on slate mining which was in the hands of the Gordon family, and it was **Sir Robert Gordon**, of Gordonstoun fame, who built Dallas Lodge around 1688. Today the Lodge still exists at the heart of a 10,000 estate. The Estate was purchased by the **Houldsworth** family in 1908 with the purpose being for the sport of grouse shooting.

However Dallas, the small village largely dates from the Victorian period and today it has a population of around 200.

Nearby is the Dallas Dhu Whisky Distillery complex established in 1898. Production ceased here in 1983, but the former distillery site is now open to the public and is a regional tourist attraction.

Traditionally the Dallas community had always met at the Church or in the School House and there was a pressing need for a larger community meeting space. It was felt that this could be in the form of a memorial hall.

Consequently, in 1919 the Houldsworth Institute was built by **Rev. James Hamilton Houldsworth** (1867-1941) and his wife **Albinia Mary**, nee **Filmer-Sullivan** (1865-1950), in grateful remembrance of the safe return of their sons **Captain James Filmer Hamilton Houldsworth** (1892-1981) and **Captain John Hamilton Houldsworth** and other young men of the parish from World War I.

(There is also a **Captain Henry Walter Houldsworth** (1896-1963), a son of Captain J and Mrs Hamilton Houldsworth, who enlisted from Moray.)

The Hall was designed by architect **John Wittet** (1868-1952) of Elgin. It was built from sandstone quarried from nearby Hatton Farm and was utilised by contractor stonemason **Provost Ross** of Forres. The timber was sourced from The Wangie hillside and carpenter **A Mitchell** from Dallas did the timber framing. Other contractors included: plasterers, **R and R Murray** of Forres; plumbers, **Boyne and Martin**, Forres; slaters, **Davidson and Son**, Forres; painter, **Mr MacDonald**, Forres; and heating contractor, **Donald and Skene**, Edinburgh.

In June 1921 **Captain James Hamilton Houldsworth** formally handed over custody of the Houldsworth Institute to the Dallas community. At the time this was one of the best equipped public halls in Moray and continues to be so.

Another of the Rev. Houldsworth's sons, Brigadier **Sir Henry Walter Houldsworth KBE, DSO, MC** (1896-1963), late of the Seaforth Highlanders, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Moray, served with distinction in World War II. A function was held by the community in the Institute to celebrate his elevation to the knighthood in 1960.

The Hall is used for youth groups; as an indoor shooting range; for bowling; and barn dances when 'all the farmers like to come down from the hills and have a really good hooley'.

In recent times community meetings have been held on flood mitigation after the May 2015 flooding of the village and the impending Meikle Hill wind farm.

In the early 1980s **Mark and Simon Houldsworth**, together with local resident **Tim Griffiths**, became entrepreneurial in fundraising through the marketing of **Dallas Torchcastle Whiskey**, an eight year old vintage made by Gordon and MacPhail in Glenelgin. They also marketed a single malt. Proceeds went to the maintenance of the Institute.

The Hall is also centre stage for the annual Dallas Gala, a weeklong July celebration, which brings thousands of people to the village. The imputation of 'actors wanted, no experience necessary' generally sums up the village's approach to this fun time. Street parade floats featuring the Blazin Barrows, Dallas Cowboys, Kweer Leaders, Dallas Dad's Army, Wayward Sheep, Sheilas on Wheels, Dallas Royal Marine Corps, Sisters of the Desert Bell Dancers, the Nae Reel Ceilidh Band or the Save our School are just some of the 'acts' of past Galas.

WALES

TREMADOG SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL INSTITUTE (Est. 1923)



Photo: britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/ Alan Fryer

Tremadog is a coastal village at the base of Lleyn Peninsula. It was established as a model village by Lincolnshire businessman **William Alexander Madocks MP** (1773-1828). Madocks purchased the estuary land in the hope draining the marshes and establishing a viable seaport. In the period 1805-10 he started to build the village around a square which included: a Town Hall; churches, an Anglican St Mary's Church and the Non-Conformist Peniel Chapel; and warehouses and shops. A water driven sawmill, the first 'manufactory' on North Wales, was built to create employment and alleviate poverty.

Originally the Town Hall was used by the community. A market was located on the ground floor and dance hall was on the second storey. A large warehouse, adjacent to the Town Hall, was used as a chemist shop and pill factory. This became vacant after World War I and in 1923 it was taken over and converted into the Tremadog Soldiers' Memorial Institute with areas allocated for a library and reading room and billiards.

Since then the Institute has been a community meeting space and houses a library. The Tremadog Women's Institute has long held meetings there and are known for their 'dressing up' to celebrate various community events and milestones.

The Institute was the site of the celebrations commemorating the 125th anniversary of the birth in 2013 and the recent May 2015 80th anniversary of the death of Tremadog's most famous son, **Thomas Edward Lawrence 'Lawrence of Arabia'** (1888-1935). The commemorative lecture was delivered on 18 May

by **Simon Weston OBE** in Welsh, with English translation.

Next day author **John Johnson Allen's** book *TE Lawrence and the Red Sea Patrol* was launched in the St Mary's Church building, now converted into office and community space.

Like Lawrence's life, his birth was one of intrigue. He was in fact the illegitimate son of **Sir Thomas Chapman** and **Sarah Junner**. The couple hastily moved from Ireland and lived as a couple under the assumed name of Lawrence in Tremadog, where TE was born.

UNITED STATES

LA JOLLA ATHENAEUM MUSIC AND ART LIBRARY (Est. 1894)



Photo: www.ljathenaeum.org

The energy and enthusiasm of the La Jolla Athenaeum never ceases to amaze us. We received notice of the recent 11 September, 26th Annual Gala which this year featured the nation of 'Cuba-a-a', celebrating its music, arts and cuisine by way of an 'Havana Ball'. This is a major fundraiser, with the Archangel Table of Ten being \$5000, Angel ditto, \$3500, and Standard ditto \$2500. There was also a charity auction. The striking invitation is evocative of the Athenaeum's vibrant School of Arts which now caters for classes at all levels through to exhibitions. Check out the website www.ljathenaeum.org

ORANGEBURG – SOUTH CAROLINA STATE AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL INSTITUTE (Est. 1872)

This Institute was established in 1872 by State statute in Orangeburg as a part of **Clafin College**, which had been set up in 1869 by Methodist missionaries with finance provided **William** and **Lee Clafin**. The charter forbade discrimination of any sort among, faculty, staff and students and was the first such College in South Carolina open to all students regardless of race, class and gender.



Tingley Memorial Hall, Claflin College.

Photo: bu.edu

In 1870 Columbian resident **James Webster Smith** became the first black to attend the West Point Military Academy, but ongoing discrimination eventually led to his dismissal in 1874. Smith returned to the South Carolina and Mechanical Institute to become Professor of Military Tactic and Mathematics, a position he was to hold for many years.

In 1877 legislation integrated the Institute into Claflin College, which was then to become the authorised State College institution to serve all black students. Thus with the State providing for the higher education for all students, the Institute's presence qualified the State as eligible for Federal Morrill Land Grants.

In 1896 the State Assembly passed an act of separation, which severed the **State Agricultural and Mechanical Institute**, from Claflin College to become a separate institution, to educate black students.

After World War II a graduate program and law school were added to the Institute in the pursuit of the 'separate but equal' policy. Civil rights demonstrations saw the University open to white students in 1966. The campus was the site of the **Orangeburg Massacre** when three students were killed and twenty-seven were wounded by State highway patrolmen. The agricultural program was discontinued in 1971 and the farm was turned over to a golf course and playing fields. Today, known as South Carolina State University, it has a largely black student population of 5000 and the motto 'Follow Your Dreams!'



Photo: loc.gov

Claflin College continues today using the slogan 'The World Needs Visionaries' and still trains military personnel.

Curtain Call

JEPARIT SOLDIERS' AND CITIZENS' MEMORIAL HALL AND FREE LIBRARY (formerly JEPARIT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE AND FREE LIBRARY, Est. 1891)

The move for a hall started in 1891 and a hall was built shortly after.

Prior to World War I the community decided that a replacement hall was needed which gained momentum. Finally the RSL, Shire and community agreed to build a new hall on a different site. Architects [George William] **Clegg and Morrow**, of Ballarat were commissioned and builders **Lovell, Dudden and Jones** of Jeparit were contracted to build the Hall.

The foundation stone was laid on 5 February 1924 by **Hon. Arthur Rogers**. The two-storey red brick structure was opened on 27 May 1925.

The ground floor was occupied by the Mechanics' Institute and Returned Soldiers' Association. At the entrance hung the Honour Board with the names of 120 men 'who went from the district to serve at the war'. The two front rooms were the reading room and the library. The soldiers' lounge and meeting room was on the left side 'most comfortably furnished'. On the right hand side was 'the fine billiard room containing two tables'. The public hall was 63ft x 40ft, and initially had 300 hundred chairs, but was to be increased to five hundred.



Photo: Debra Schumann

'The stage scenery is very effective and was painted by **Mr Edgar Finlay**, of Melbourne, but formerly of Jeparit. There are also, at the back of the stage, a dressing room and large supper room with collapsible doors, so that another dressing room may be made if necessary. The kitchenette is a useful acquisition, and with its stove and built in copper will be most convenient for social evenings.'



Photo: vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au

The municipal offices and council chamber occupies the top floor of the building.

PORTLAND FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1883)

The Hall was built in Bentinck Street, Portland and was officially opened on 14 January 1897. The 72ftx31ft hall was fitted with gaslights by **Frank Austin Nevill**. It had a 15ft deep stage, with dressing rooms underneath.

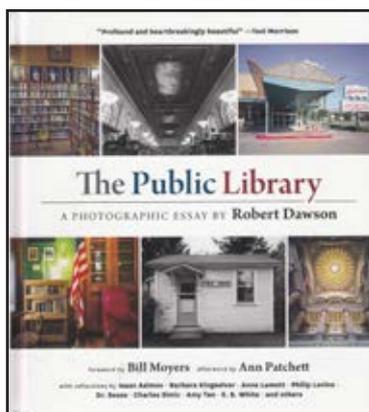
'The front of the stage itself is painted a light grey to match the proscenium, which is a very excellent piece of work, the production of **Mr John Little [and sons]**, of the Bijou Theatre [Melbourne]. The monogram 'PFL' is conspicuous above the proscenium opening, and the effect of the whole is heightened by the addition of two gas lights, with handsome shades, within the wings of the proscenium. The scenery is also the work of Mr Little, and in that too he has succeeded admirably. The rural scene depicts a church situated near the junction of two rivers, having a background of undulating country with hills in the distance. The foreground is taken up by a rustic fence, over which is trained a gorgeously coloured passion flower creeper. The chamber scenes are a cottage and a palace. In the latter the draping is very bright, and lends life to the whole stage surrounding.

The stage fittings are the work of **Mr George Ives** also of the Bijou Theatre, and the excellence of the work is shown by the smooth manner in which everything runs.'

Alas we don't have a picture of the curtain, but as the building survived until 1968 there is some possibility someone will know details.

We will try and do an article on the Hall in 'Where they Stood' when more information comes to hand.

Book Reviews



The Public Library: A Photographic Essay – Robert Dawson. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014. Hardback. 192 pages, illustrated, mostly in colour. 210 x 235 mm. 9781616892173.

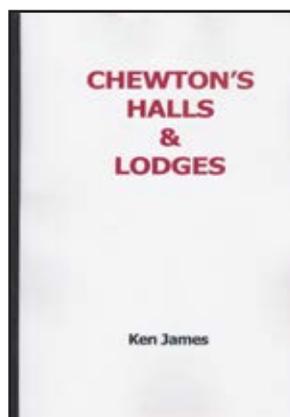
This book is a photographic record taken over a period of eighteen years around the United States and is a sample of the some seventeen thousand odd public libraries that exist. The first tax-supported library was established in Peterborough, New Hampshire in 1833. Since then many libraries have been progressively built, with many endowed to the community, including those by Andrew Carnegie.

The selection, all taken from film, comprises the: large (Central Library, Seattle, Washington) and the small (Roscoe, South Dakota); the ornate (St Johnsbury Athenaeum, St Johnsbury, Vermont) to the utilitarian (Library, Death Valley National Park, California). Then there are the add-ons: the Richmond Grows Seed Lending Library, California; Tool Lending Library, Berkeley Public Library, California; Rifle Training, West Wendover Library, Nevada; and Street access Wi-Fi, Morrill Memorial and Harris Library, Strafford, Vermont; and the Richard F Boi Memorial Library, First Little Free Library, Hudson, Wisconsin. There are also the now closed libraries of: Dakota Club Library, Eagle Butte, South Dakota; Camden Free Public Library, Camden, New Jersey; Elks Club, East St Louis, Illinois; and those damaged by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The architecture and art of libraries features throughout Robert Dawson's skillfully photographed record. Interspersed throughout the book are 'reflections' on the library by a number of worthies. Ann Patchett has the final words 'Support libraries in your words and deeds... Make sure that in your good fortune you remember to support their quest for a better life. That's what a library promises us, after all; a better life. And that's what libraries have delivered.'

A fascinating book to inspire and rekindle and reinforce support for community libraries wherever they may be.

Available from: Most good booksellers, or on ebay at around \$60.00.



Chewton's Halls & Lodges – Ken James. Camberwell: Author, 2015. Paperback, thermobound. 206 pages, illustrated, index. 210 x 300 mm. 9780992308797.

Fresh from his massive collaboration with Pam Baragwanath on *These Walls Speak Volumes*, Ken James sets out on

the elusive trail of documenting the history of Chewton's eight halls, in addition to the **Forest Creek Library Hall**.

Then there were Chewton's six fraternal Lodges, none of which still operates, that variously occupied the halls, either as tenants or owners.

The author backgrounds us on the beginnings of the Friendly Societies which had their beginnings in 18th century England, when Trade Unions were illegal, and they like the emerging Mechanics' Institute Movement were an alternative. Friendly Societies offered health and generally funeral benefits and by the 1890s one in three Victorians belonged to a Friendly Society.

Chewton's Societies comprised: Independent Order of Rechabites (1856-1949); Freemasons (dates elusive); Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (1858-1965); Sons of Temperance (1869-1180); St Augustine branch of the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (1870-89); Orange Lodge (1891-??); and the Ancient Order of Foresters at Wesley Hill (1862-1956).

The **Chewton Mechanics' Institute**, which was established in 1862, and never had its own hall, operated first from a rented room in the Chewton Dispensary, later William Tell Hotel, until 1889, when it moved into a room constructed at the rear of the Town Hall and from where it continued to conduct a library.

Book Reviews

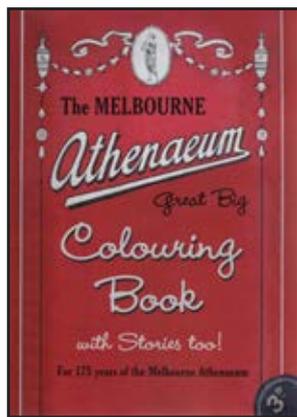
The library was dispersed around 1960 and the annexe was demolished in 1995.

The **Forest Creek Free Library and Reading Room** at Wesley Hill opened in 1882 in what had been the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church and provided a community service into the 1950s. In 1957 the Hall was passed over to the Wesley Hill Progress Association.

Mention is also made of the **Red Hill Hall** attached to the Red Hill Hotel which had long Lodge and community use.

This book is well illustrated with photos, newspaper facsimiles and the Rules and Bye-Laws of some of the Friendly Societies. It also comes with a valuable names index. If ever there was documentation needed for a **History of the Hall in Australia**, documented by town, this is a blueprint landmark work.

Available from: Ken James, 18 Lofty Avenue, Camberwell, V 3124. \$35, posted.



The Melbourne Athenaeum Great Big Colouring Book with Stories too! For 175 years of the Melbourne Athenaeum – Lisa Anderson. Melbourne: Melbourne Athenaeum Library, 2015. Paper back, saddlestitched. 20p, illustrations, mostly in colour. 210x300mm.

This book was created by the author for her ‘**Illuminate Athena**’ **White Night Melbourne** presentation and subsequent exhibition at The Ath for its 175th Anniversary. In the text and illustrations Dr Anderson explores ‘Trickster Dreams: The Gift Shared’ with figures ‘worked within the framework of Athena, the Goddess of wisdom, learning and strategy, and the patron figure of the Melbourne Athenaeum.’

The author commences ‘I opened a book and looked inside to see what I could find. I found a story of a secret room of dreams.’ And so we are ushered into the Ath and the story unfolds. It ends with the classic World War I recruiting poster cover of the ANZAC forces magazine *Kia-ora Coo-ee* of the ghostly digger mouthing ‘Coo-ee- Won’t YOU come? At the base of the page is ‘Enlist Now’.

Indeed why not enlist. ‘The Athenaeum features prominently in Melbourne’s cultural history and continues to serve as a beacon of knowledge with a recognised stewardship of Melbourne life, thought and art.’

We can but express admiration for the **City of Melbourne** and the **Besen Family Foundation** for supporting such an innovative artist in residence project. It brings back memories of **Dr Anke Heins** paper at the **MW 2004**. Happy Colouring!

Available from: The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, 188 Collins Street, Melbourne, V 3000. \$5, posted.



Women’s Century: An Illustrated History of the Women’s Institute – Val Horslen and Ian Denning. London: 2015. Hardback, dustjacket. 192 pages, illustrated, mostly in colour, index. 180 x 255 mm. 97819088990501.

Born out of urgent World War I need, the Women’s Institute rapidly spread across Britain from 1915. This book is a remarkable pictorial documentary of the WI in action. In time of war and peace the WI Movement has been one of action and innovation. During World War II members combed local tips to get jars for bottling, whilst other members combed hedgerows to get fruit for jam. One Institute ran a canning factory during WWII.

Denman College, at Abingdon in Oxfordshire, was established in 1948 to further the constitutional aim of the WI ‘to make provision for the fuller education of women’ and its motto ‘For Home and Country’. Here one can: see a carcass butchered; make the perfect sponge, scone or loaf of bread; undertake needlework training; engage in dramatical productions or choir recitals; debate issues of the day; learn to curtsy; or just rest. In any light it is a place of renewal and enervation.

And whilst the MI Movement’s constitution precluded involvement in politics, it has never eschewed issues which affect its members, hence Chapter 1 titled ‘Campaigning’. Issues like women’s education, equal pay, prison reform

Book Reviews

and more recently AIDS and fair trade have been on the national agenda. Public interest issues are also highlighted. **Wiltshire Federation** conducted a survey of ladies' public lavatories and published its findings under the title *Skip to the Loo* in 1997. When Prime Minister **Tony Blair** turned his opening address at the 2000 WI AGM into a political advertorial, he was first greeted with heckling, then slow handclapping, jeering... and rounded off only by 'polite applause' at the end. Ten years later Speaker of the House of Commons **John Bercow** addressed the AGM by video conference and was more careful stating that 'If it [the WI] were a political party it would be at least the second largest in the land'.

Modern girl, **Jane Fonda** addressed the 2005 AGM for the WI's ninetieth anniversary. This came after the world wide release of the film *Calendar Girls* starring **Dame Helen Mirren**.

The film highlighted the **Rylstone and District WI's** approach to fundraising. In spite of the film's depiction of luke warm approval from the National Federation, this was definitely not the reality. Since its launch in 1999 the *Calendar* has raised some £2.5 million for leukaemia research. It has also lifted the profile of the WI and continues to do so with the stage version of *Calendar Girls* travelling the world.

'...to do our utmost to make our village the centre of good in our neighbourhood.' was the stated aim of **Llanfairpwll MI**, the first WI to be established in 1915.

This book is an inspirational read and its pictures, many in colour, depict the versatility of the WI Movement, which has world alliances.

Available from: Third Millenium Publishing, 3 Holford Yard, Bevin Way, London WC1X 9HD, England. £14.99, plus postage.

In Remembrance

This year celebrates the 150th anniversary of the birth of author **Helen Beatrix Potter** who crafted her illustrative talents from natural history specimens to the portraits of Peter Rabbit and friends. Beatrix was born at Kensington, London on 28 July 1866 and died at Sawrey, Lancashire on 22 December 1943.

She gifted a significant collection of botanical illustrations, mostly of fungi, to the **Armitt Museum and Library** at Ambleside. Her longtime friendship with **Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley** no doubt influenced her to will some 4000 acres of Lakes District property, comprising sixteen farms, cottages as well as herds of cattle and her beloved Herdwick sheep to the National Trust. Most of the area is still farmed. Her literary and artistic legacy continues on with the republication

of the twenty-three tales, starting with *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in 1902, and finishing with *The Tale of Little Pig Robinson* in 1930.

Beatrix Potter's tales are much loved among children and adults alike. Here are some activities to hold at your Institute in honour of her Birthday:

- * hold a Beatrix Potter tea party;
 - * readings after school or in the evenings for kids and adults of Peter Rabbit or Jemima Puddle-Duck, or hold a series of readings over weeks or months;
 - * colouring pages for the little (and big kids!) which can then be displayed around your Institute for coming months as part of a community exhibition (Google search: Beatrix Potter colouring pages);
 - * create a 'fishing pond' with paper fish and magnets to catch them;
 - * crafternoon creating bunny ear hats (Post-Easter sales may have some things of use!)
- Happy Event Planning!



Beatrix Potter photograph taken by Charles G.Y. King, 1913. Photo: National Portrait Gallery, UK.

Where They Stood

MURCHISON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (EST. 1872)

An Aboriginal Protectorate was established on the Goulburn River at Murchison in 1840 and a school and police station were built in 1841. French vigneron **Ludovic Marie** arrived after 1850 and established a vineyard. In 1855 he installed a punt at the Goulburn River crossing and built the Punt Hotel.

The two rood or half acre Mechanics' Institute site on the north-east corner of Stevenson and Impey Streets, Murchison was gazetted on 18 October 1872. Fundraising for a library was underway with an entertainment in Barratt's Assembly Room in 1873 and in August 1874 it was noted the Murchison Mechanics' Institute library had fifty volumes.

The foundation stone for the new Institute was optimistically laid during a visit of Parliamentarians and Railways Commissioners on 17 October 1874.

However it was not until 1875 that work really got underway and it was finally opened with a Grand Ball on 19 August 1875, at which a hundred couples took part. The cost of the Hall was £1300.

The first instructional lecture delivered was 'Temperance, Moderation and Women's Love'.

In 1903 the library contained 1800 volumes. In 1917 it was resolved to replace the carbide lighting system 'owing the ruling high prices of carbide' with a 'safety air gas' system. There was a proposal in 1921 to build a new Soldiers'



Murchison Mechanics' Institute prior to refurbishment in 1926. (Photo: Courtesy State Library Postcard Collection)



Memorial Hall and a new front to the building, but this never eventuated. However in February 1926 tenders were called for 'Repairs and Renovating and Painting' of the Institute and in September it was reported that works had been completed at a cost of more than £600.

Electricity was connected to the Hall in 1926 when the Waranga Water Trust pumps were converted to electric motors.

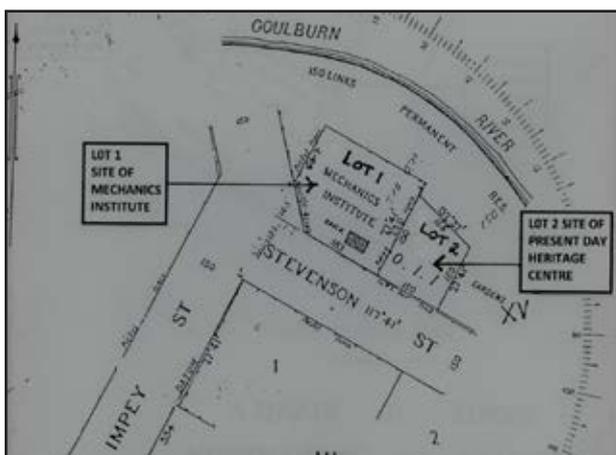
The Hall was repainted in 1935 and it was decided to pick out the lettering of 'Murchison Mechanics' Institute' in dark grey. Interestingly enough in the same year the Secretary reported 'with very much pleasure' that repairs

to the grave of Tambo, an Aboriginal, had been completed and 'it was now in perfect order'.

In 1942 the Institute wrote to the Mooropna Institute seeking support to obtain someone to replace Mr Reckner, who had enlisted in the Air Force, to continue the picture theatre circuit.

In addition to serving as the community meeting place and library and reading rooms, the Institute served as a Masonic Lodge, church, Magistrate's Court, and RSL Rooms. An Infant Welfare Centre was established in the Hall in 1947 and ran until 1960 when a special purpose building was opened. The Hall was demolished 1971 and the Swimming Pool was constructed partially on the site.

Photos and map supplied by Murchison and District Historical Society



Our People



The St Arnaud district turned out in force to celebrate the 100th birthday of their Living Legend **Ella Ebery OAM** on 23 December. The *North Central News*, St Arnaud's newspaper, which was edited by Ella for almost a quarter

of century turned over its front page for the occasion. The many organisations with which Ella has been associated, including the St Arnaud Mechanics' Institute paid tribute to this worthy centenarian. A hearty Happy Birthday and Good Health, Ella! (Photo: twitter/@LinleyJustine)



British **National Federation of Women's Institutes** Chair **Janice Langley** has just hosted a very busy year with the WI's Centenary. Janice has spent the greater part of her life with the WI having first joined the **Shoreham**

Greenways WI in 1970. She was co-opted on to the NFWI Board in 2002 and has served variously as Vice-Chair, and Chair of the Membership Committee, and has chaired **WI Enterprises** and the *WI Life* Editorial Boards.

(Photo: lincsnorthfedwi.weebly.com)

Ardent golfer, **Professor Weston Bate OAM** recently won the C Grade Championship at Melbourne's Metropolitan Golf Club. He played off to the 20th hole in a cliffhanging nail biting finish, to a large appreciative crowd. Weston then went on a punishing media circuit with the radio and print media getting their stories. So even at 91, anything is possible.

The new incumbent of the role of Chief Executive of the **State Library of Victoria** is Ballarat-born **Kate Torney** who took office in November 2015.



Kate will oversee the \$83.1 million redevelopment of the Library and its spaces noting 'Books will always be a really important part of who we are, but libraries are no longer just about books. It's about discussion, debate and sharing

knowledge in a range of different forms – digital media, digital literacy.' It will be a challenging time for all and we wish the State Library team well in their mammoth task. (Photo: slv.vic.gov.au)

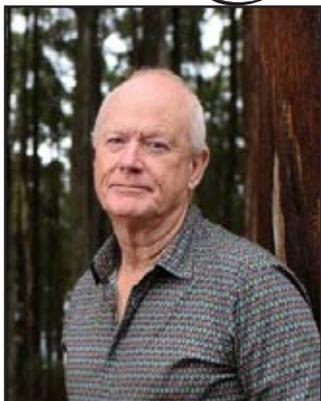


Claire McGregor and **Rose King** were present at the recent **Victorian Community History Awards** to receive the Highly Commended Award on behalf of the **Upper Plenty Mechanics' Hall**. The Award was for the Hall History Exhibition staged during the 2014 Hall Centenary celebrations in October 2014, with panels featuring 'Families, Fires and Floods'. (Photo: rhsvnews.blogspot.com.au)

Mentioned in the Australia Day Honours was Associate **Professor Donald Stuart 'Don' Garden OAM** 'For service to community history and heritage preservation organisations'. Don is currently President of the **Royal Historical Society of Victoria** and was in 2015 appointed to the **Australian Heritage Council**.

Mollonghip Community Hall's champion **Gib Wettenhall OAM** also appeared in the Australia Day Honours 'for service to conservation and the environment'. Gib has been on the Hall Committee

Our People



since 1996 and during his watch has seen the Hall rise from near dereliction to a well-used community meeting point. Why not drop by the Hall on a Saturday morning for the papers and coffee. Now there is an idea we could all use. (Photo: Dylan Burns)

Closer to town the visual chronicler of **Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute and Arts Association, Raibeart Wallace 'Jock' Macneish OAM** has received an award 'for services to



the visual arts and to the community of Warrandyte.' Jock's cartoons have been used to further the cause of the Mechanics' Institute movement both at Warrandyte and further afield. An architect by training, Jock has since 1969 been a

resident of Warrandyte and recently addressed the **Warrandyte Historical Society** on 'A Cartoonist's Insight into Living in Warrandyte'. Indeed a picture is worth a thousand words! (Photo: warrandyte.org.au)

Vale



Photo:
readingtime.com.au

The wide community has noted the passing of librarian, author and bibliophile **John David 'John' Adams** at Warragul General Hospital on 13 September 2015 aged 80. Born in Gippsland in 1935, John was educated at the University of Melbourne where he received a Master of Education and Diploma of Education.

He was a Royal Historical Society Councillor from 1966-2005, and was elected a Fellow in 1976. Besides being editor of the newsletter and *Journal* for a time, he also indexed the *Journal*.

Author of five books on Gippsland and Heidelberg: *Centenary Magazine 1864-1964* [Bairnsdale State School] (1964); *So Tall the Trees: A History of the Southern Districts of the Narracan Shire* (1978); *Heidelberg: A Brief History* (1983); *Path Among the Years: History of the Shire of Bairnsdale* (1987); editor of George Cox (1871-1946), *Notes on Gippsland History*, 6 vols (1988-97); and a manuscript 'History of St John's Anglican Church, Bairnsdale' (1974?).

John moved to Macleod in 1966 and visited an exhibition held at St John's Church and this was his introduction to local history. He attended the foundation meeting of the Heidelberg Historical Society on 17 April 1967. He subsequently produced 285 editions of the Heidelberg Historical Society newsletter and was elected a Fellow of the Society in 1984.

After a stint at Primary School teaching he became a lecturer at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Department of Librarianship in 1968 and remained there until 1993.

John was also a Children's Book Council of Victoria Councillor and **Reading Time**, Board Member for sustained periods.

At the time of his death John was working on a further database for Australian history for RMIT Publishing in the Auschron database of Australian history series: Subject Keyword Guide (1995); Source List (1995).

Following a service at St Mary's Anglican Church, Trafalgar his remains were cremated.

We record the tragic death of Hamley Bridge (SA) community worker **Janet Hughes** in the South Australian bushfires on 27 November 2015. Janet had just unlocked the Hamley Bridge Institute to allow emergency access for families and had driven back to her husband when her car was

Vale cont...



engulfed in flames. Local café and gallery owner noted: 'She was a lovely person, she was a customer of mine ...but she was a friend as well... She was involved in community groups for a long time.' Our deepest sympathy to her husband Alan and to the Hamley Bridge community. *(Photo: abc.net.au)*

Faithful MIV member **Douglas Neville 'Doug' Gunn** passed away on 8 December 2015, aged 80. A long-time resident of Millgrove, Doug was a vocal supporter for the retention of the Warburton Mechanics' Hall, a campaign which was ultimately successful. His funeral service, held at Tobin Brothers Chapel in Ringwood on 22 December 2015, was well attended and **Dr Andrew Lemon** gave an impressive eulogy. It was followed by a private cremation. Doug is survived by his brothers **Ken** and **Laurie** and their families and we extend our sympathy to them.



We note the passing of the **Honourable Jane Alice Camilla Macgowan AO** on 26 August 2015, aged 86. The daughter of **Lord Richard** and **Lady Maie Casey**, Jane was born in London in 1928 and followed her father's appointments

living in London, Canberra, Washington, Cairo and Calcutta. She married engineer **Murray Macgowan** in 1955 and lived variously in Melbourne, Adelaide, and Brisbane and finally settled in Sydney in 1963. A lifelong practitioner and patron of the arts, she had a role in establishing the **Brandling Art Society**, now the **Brandling Street Painters** in 1974. The group met first at the Macgowan home, then the

Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, and from 1983 in an old canning factory in Alexandria, which she purchased with a friend and donated to the Society.

Throughout her life she was never without drawing pad, pencil or pastels to capture some scene or face. She was well known on the art scene and collected widely.

Jane was a prolific reader, particularly of poetry and loved choral music and worked for a number of charities.

Her husband pre-deceased her and she is survived by children **Anna, Marian, Tempe** and **Richard**.

On the death of her parents, Richard (1976) and Maie (1983), she and her brother **Donn**, organised for a large portion of the Casey book collection to eventually be passed to **Berwick Mechanics' Institute**. *(Photo: www.smh.com.au)*

Tribute.



We note the posthumous induction of **Colin Robert 'Colin' Badger** (1906-93) into the **International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame** on 18 November 2015 at the Association's Annual Meeting held at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Colin led the Council of Adult Education in Victoria during from 1947 until his retirement in 1971 and is the first Australian to be elected to the Hall of Fame.

Photo: www.globalfeline.com

Community Page

RECIPE

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

THE HARE THAT BITES YOU!

Chilgrove Gin

Elderflower cordial

Tonic

Slices of Bramley apple and lime

Sprig of mint

Serve in a jar

This was described as the Backroom tippie to be served by the Ladies of the **Singleton and East Dean Women's Institute** at their Centenary bash at **The Fox Goes Free**. 'Foxy ladies. Inspiring antics. Still Jamming and 100 not out. 'The Fox' was where the meeting to form the WI was held in November 1915.

The WI meets in the **Singleton Village Hall** a gift to the community by **Issette Miller**, widow of **Thomas Horrocks Miller**. Mrs Miller provided the land and materials for a Parish Hall and she formed a 'trust' saying in statement of intent 'that the hall was to be used for social occasions, entertainment, educational and intellectual meetings.'

SPOT THE BAKER'S DOZEN REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 39

1. Name the three Halls that have burned down in recent times.
2. Who delivered the inaugural Wesson Lecture?
3. Where is MIV plaque No. 50 being unveiled?
4. Who spent some time as President of the Flemington and Kensington Free Library and Mechanics' Institute?
5. How much has the UK Heritage Lottery Fund raised for distribution since 1994?
6. Which notable bibliophile and Queen's Counsel gifted his book collection to the State Library of Victoria?
7. In what State of Australia is the Hamley Bridge Institute?
8. Where did the *London Daily Express - Sydney Daily Telegraph* London to Sydney Car Rally check at on 16 December 1968?

9. In which town did 2015 Melbourne Cup winning rider Michelle Payne grow up?
10. Who was the Aboriginal leader of the Yorta Yorta People who gave the lead address to the recent Marcus Clarke Lectures at the Melbourne Athenaeum?
11. What is the name of the Western Australian Project which takes music concerts to remote country halls?
12. What is the title name of the updated and recently launched Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria history?
13. What is the motto of South Carolina's Claflin College?

SPOT THE BAKER'S DOZEN REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 38 - ANSWERS

1. Alf Wesson; 2. North Melbourne; 3. Debra Schumann; 4. Mount Gambier; 5. Sue Mann; 6. William Barak and the de Purys; 7. Cobargo School of Arts; 8. Alan Tonkin; 9. Helen Creagh; 10. Frankston Theatre Group; 11. Tatura; 12. Ella Ebery and Colin Badger; 13. Millewa Club.

INSPIRATION - THE BRIDPORT LITERARY & SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTION

The citizens of Bridport have really taken their landmark Institute to heart since the High Court ruled in favour of local management under the Bridport Area Development Trust. Fundraising has taken many forms, with huge local support from many spheres. Now the work of the administration is to begin in earnest leading up to the commencement of restoration.

They have recently advertised for a 'Website Designer. We are looking for a logo and new website that reflects both the aspirations of the LSI and its distinct historic character.' For the 'Oral History Coordinator. We are looking for a motivated individual to work with local people to capture and share their memories and stories of the building and its history.' Finally they require a 'Mural Artist. We are looking for an artist to work with local schools to create a mural for the hoardings that will protect the LSI site once construction work is underway. The history and heritage of the building will be the inspiration.'

Why not commission: a logo; start an oral history project; and create a mural in conjunction with your local school/s? As an afterthought also add a motto or slogan. You might be surprised to see what the results are.

Ideas & Opportunities

A NEW YEAR AND A NEW RESOLUTION/ REVOLUTION

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the horrendous **Battles of Verdun** and the **Somme** which robbed our rural communities of many menfolk. Their names are recorded, as having paid the Supreme Sacrifice, on the many Honour Boards which hang solemnly on the walls of our Halls. Plan an event to remember them and all those who served in the Great War from your community.

The year 2016 also marks the centenary of **Albert Einstein's** publication of the *Theory of Relativity*. Playwright **William Shakespeare** died four hundred years ago and landscape gardener '**Capability**' **Brown** was born three hundred years ago. Author **Beatrix Potter** was born one hundred and fifty years ago. There may even be some big celebratory '0' for some local place, event or person, maybe even your Hall. Perhaps a lecture on one or even all could feature in your Hall's 2016 events along with a display prepared by your local school/s.

And when they volunteer recognise them in programs, intros and perhaps at an end of year cuppa.

VOLUNTEERS

Every community has people with a vast diversity of talents. Most of those people are not averse to 'chipping in' on a worthy project, or even a lecture, providing their time is not wasted. Every Hall Committee should have a 'Talents List' of people that can be called on for various projects that could be undertaken. In compiling that list don't forget the very IT savvy youth who know their way around design, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Before you approach them plan your project to paper and then it can be progressed from there. Let us know what you plan and who knows we may be able to swell the numbers.

OUT THERE

Huddersfield (UK) has a neighbourhood **Longwood Mechanics' Hall** and livewire **Derek Fairweather** is a vital part of its renaissance in the community. Longwood has its own website and a monthly e-newsletter. They sell Memberships for a £1 a year or Life Memberships for £5. That sum also includes insurance when you use the Hall. Derek notes that there are 2000 houses in the Longwood catchment and if everybody gave a £1 a month to the roof appeal,

it would soon be done. So 'Don't delay sign up today!' No wonder 'Work is scheduled to start on the [Longwood] roof shortly.' Go for it.

NEIGHBOURLY VISITS

MIV Regional Meetings have the potential to much more than that. Ideally it could be the start of a beautiful friendship with Halls alternating for annual get-togethers, sharing ideas and perhaps even events. You host an event and we will support it, either by sharing the risk or putting some bottoms on seats. Even a Car Rally Hall Crawl around district Halls, with an Open Day at each. Think outside the square.

SHARING SOUVENIRS

Apropos the above. There may be potential to create a teatowel, postcards, calendars or even tee shirts with a regional theme, with a picture of your Hall or logo being part of the action. Start talking.

GET READY FOR A GRANT

Take a walk around and through your Hall. What's the most pressing need? It may even be an indulgence, like a suite of crockery, a few new tables or even chairs. Get a firm quote for the work or item and carefully file it away ready for the next grant round or even windfall. MIV will soon write to all Councils in Victoria that presently do not give untied annual grants to their Halls arguing that they collect rates to provide community facilities like you guessed it, the Community Hall, the hall for all.

MAY THE FOURTH BE WITH YOU

May the 4th is officially marked as Star Wars Day. With the release of *Star Wars Episode VII - The Force Awakens* late last year, there is a whole new generation of Star Wars enthusiasts. How about holding a barbecue at your Institute for all the little jedis in your community?

REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN THERE BEFORE YOU

Why not put some of your Hall's benefactors or district pioneers in the celebratory frame with an exhibition or event in your Hall? You might even consider a group of people or even an organisation. And one thing, don't forget to make a photographic copy of your exhibition and turn it into a photo book for the archives. The local school or Historical Society might also like one, as would MIV.