



Useful Knowledge

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

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PUTTING MECHANICS' INSTITUTES IN THE FRAME

During the course of the last few months Mitcham-based artist **Damian Callanan** has been quietly moving around Victoria sketching and then painting a range of Mechanics' Institutes.

The sample that has been chosen highlights the diversity of Victoria's Institutes: hall; theatre; library; museum; arts complex; Institute Friends group; and with a great tinge of sadness, one Institute that awaits the wrecker's hammer.

Trained as a designer, with widespread interior design experience in industrial, commercial and residential developments, Damian admits his real love is sketching.

His sketches are unique takes on what he considers the building and its 'theme' is really about and we know that they will be of general appeal.

We are having an exhibition at Castlemaine on the weekend of 9-10 September 2017, with the launch and final sale on Sunday, 10 September. So lock that date in and head for Castlemaine on the Sunday afternoon and secure your unique piece of the Mechanics' Institute story, in the form of an original pen and ink watercolour.

We are looking at ways that the pictures can be reproduced as promotion for MIV and fundraisers for individual Institutes and details will be circulated shortly.

As the **Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.** heads towards its 20th anniversary in 2018, what better way can we celebrate our diversity and strengths than to tell it in many thousands of words, with a series of pictures.



We thank Damian Callanan for his most generous offer to undertake this exciting and probing project and we count on your support.

FRYERSTOWN BURKE AND WILLS MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

The news of the death of explorers Burke and Wills reached Victoria in November 1861. A local subscription for a memorial was started and it was ultimately determined that the memorial was to be 'a Mechanics' Institute in Fryerstown'. The Institute was built of brick in 1863 and a library and reading room was added in 1864. By the 1970s hall maintenance became an issue. The Institute exists on a large reserve and local resident **Pat Cubetta** saw the potential for an outdoor fair, based on the hall, and so started in 1976 the long-running and now nationally known **Fryerstown Antique Fair** held in late January each year. Proceeds from the Fair have enabled the upgrade of the hall, which is again getting wider community and regional usage.

MIV MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS
ENCLOSED IN THIS ISSUE.

Coming Events - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

MAY

- 1-21 National Trust Heritage Festival - **Having a Voice**
- 20 "We'll Meet Again" Concert and Dance, Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute. Contact: Lois (03) 9714 8447
- 21 Casey Cardinia Heritage Festival, "A Voice for Heritage", Narre Warren Mechanics' Institute, 10am-3pm
- 25-31 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Production 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest'. More info: lilydaleatc.com
- 27 Autumn Dinner @ Fawcett Hall, from 6.30pm. Bookings: Lyn 0402 125 370. RSVP by 19 May 2017

JUNE

- 1-10 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Production 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest'. More info: lilydaleatc.com
- 2 Inveni Ensemble Musical Performance, Melbourne Athenaeum Library, 6-7pm. More details in *Around the Institutes*
- 2-4 Independent Libraries Association Conference 'Bricks, Shelves, Books and People: Building for the Future as an Independent Library', Chawton House Library, Alton, Hampshire, UK

JULY

- 5 Judy Horacek: Cartooning and Collaborating, Melbourne Athenaeum Library, 6-7pm. More details in *Around the Institutes*

AUGUST

- 12-20 National Science Week
- 17-31 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Production 'High Society'. More info: lilydaleatc.com

MIV'S EVENTS CALENDAR IS ONLINE

vicnet.net.au/~mivic/events

Subscribe for weekly email updates on events throughout the week.

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!

SEPTEMBER

- 1-2 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Production 'High Society'. More info: lilydaleatc.com
- 9-10 MIV Art Exhibition of Damian Callanan's Mechanics' Institute paintings, Castlemaine Market, Castlemaine.
- 23 MIV Annual General Meeting
- 23 MIV's 3rd Annual Wesson Lecture

OCTOBER

- 7 American Membership Libraries' Meeting - Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, USA
- 15-22 History Week

NOVEMBER

- 1-30 **Home is Where the Hall Is** Month
- 25 Moonambel Plaque Unveiling - Back-to-Moonambel weekend. Information: Jill Hunter (03) 5467 2211.

THANK YOU TO OUR PRINTERS

Sean, Neal and the team from TDC3 Print Centre, 548 Bridge Rd, Richmond. tdc3.com.au



The MIV would like to acknowledge the support of our 'home' - the Prahran Mechanics' Institute.

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Letter From The President



Welcome to 2017 and the latest edition of *Useful Knowledge*. As always I hope you enjoy keeping up to date with the news and articles about Mechanics' Institutes past and present.

Institutes, Athenaeums and Schools of Arts from across the English (and French in the case of Montreal) speaking world were represented at the **Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide Conference – Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century** recently held in San Francisco, USA. From a venerated pre- American Revolution 270 year old, established in 1747, to a mere Victorian sapling established in 1881, half its age.

Australia made its presence felt with the Melbourne Athenaeum, Ballarat Mechanics' Institute and Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts representing us in the “cultural icon class” along with Berwick and Trentham flying the flag for the rest of us.

The US contingent comprised our hosts, the San Francisco Mechanics Institute; and the Boston, La Jolla, Portsmouth, Providence and Salem Athenaeums; the New York Society Library; Maine Charitable Mechanic Association; and the Redwood Library and Athenaeum from Newport, Rhode Island; Lanier Library Association, North Carolina; and the Mercantile Library, Cincinnati.

With the Atwater Library and Computer Centre of Montreal representing Canada for the first time and the now familiar and enthusiastic contingent from the UK, it truly was a worldwide event.

And as for **Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century** what have I learnt?

Firstly wherever you find them, our Mechanics' Institutes, Athenaeums and Schools of Arts hold a special place in the hearts of the communities they serve. Over time citizens of all religious, ethnic and political persuasions have come to acknowledge and value that our secular, non-partisan, voluntary institutions are just what their charters hold them out to be.

Fiercely independent, community based institutions, open to all comers and seeking the best for everybody via the dissemination of scientific and literary information, useful knowledge and rational recreation.

Secondly, books and consequently libraries are far from obsolete. In fact the opposite. Despite, or perhaps because of the internet, book readership is once again on the increase throughout the western world. However it is worth reminding ourselves that our Institute libraries were never an end in themselves but a means to disseminate scientific and literary information and useful knowledge. They were the appropriate technology of the day.

My personal conviction is that the future of **Our Institutes** will be the activities they choose to specialise in which in some cases can indeed be the literary life that an historic and much loved library can nurture.

However except for a small number of cases our Institute libraries are more likely to succeed if dedicated to the fields of enquiry or activities that our Institutes have chosen to specialise in. Our poster child for this model being the Prahran Mechanics' Institute with its iconic Victorian Local History Library supporting research into ever widening circles of Victorian and Australian history.

Finally, my conclusion. **Re-invention: Thriving in the 21st Century** isn't going to be that hard.

Our cause is noble, our goals are timeless. Just do what we were set up to do. Do it with imagination and integrity and **Our Institutes** will surely find their future.

Robert Kingston
President.

Editorial

In this issue we look at a number of Institutes: their buildings, contents, operations and of course the all important people who give their all to fundraise and maintain these vital pieces of community and cultural infrastructure, not only for their own communities but also for others to visit, use and see.

Such was the case with recent the bus tour which you can read about elsewhere in this edition. These tours are much more than a drive around. They are also a great learning experience and Hall people are encouraged to come along and see how others do it. On such a trip they will meet fellow MI people who really care for their communities as well as their Halls.

Each Institute is central to its individual community, but it must also make a statement to the wider world. Our funders and users drive around and good signage, as a first impression and a useful 'For Hire' sign with contact numbers, hopefully will have enduring impact and will provide some future revenue for Institutes.

We all have a part to play in developing the **Mechanics' Institute** brand. Note the positive use of the capital 'M' and 'I'. The Women's Institute wouldn't be impressed if we lowercased them, and rightly so. Prolonged usage promotes common usage and we urge all to uppercase Mechanics' Institute to its real and enduring status. We all must be proud, for the MI Movement was pre-eminent, and will and has survived the passing fads.

The fact that each Hall has its own identity is something we must cherish and promote. It reflects times past, by its record of Minute Books, photographs, event posters and memorabilia.

Then there are the plaques to 'JT Smith' for twenty-five years of service on the Committee and the War Honour Rolls of 'initials only' soldiers and servicewomen or nurses. Occasionally there are photographs of those who paid the Supreme Sacrifice 'Private Harry Jones. Killed in action'. In print we learn that 'H Thompson' donated the site for the Hall and it was designed by 'Mr Anderson of Colac' and built by 'Hollis Bros' and it was opened by 'Mrs TJ Henderson'.

These are real people and should not remain as but mere initials. Please bring them 'to life' as real caring people who contributed to community and our security. These people, a Hall's very fabric, as well as events and circumstances create a Hall's individual DNA.

Let us all come together to celebrate, not only our proud past but a very positive combined

future, and to that end more than fifty Institutes or their former sites have been plaqued and that is a significant and demonstrative start.

Make this year's **Home is Where the Hall Is** month of November the best ever and let us know what you have planned.

Bron Lowden

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Barrie Brennan
Steven Haby
Nigel Sinnott

NEWSLETTER ROUND

Tick after reading and pass it on

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

Let us have your news on the Hall, its history and more importantly its people. Email the **UK** editor at bronlowden@hotmail.com. Submission deadline for **UK44** is 15 July 2017.

ERRATA UK42

In the Case Study on Trentham, errors have been pointed out. The Trentham Farmers' Market is conducted by the Trentham Lions Club not by the Trentham Food Hub, as was implied. The Trentham Historical Society did not mount the historical exhibition. Boating-related activities are not permitted on the Tylden Reservoir. We apologise for these errors.

AND WE HAVE A SPONSOR!

We are very excited to hear that after our shout out in **UK42**, a new sign for the **Telangatuk East Hall** has been sponsored. We look forward to seeing the town get its name back once more.

MIV DELEGATION MEETS WITH MINISTER'S STAFF

Following contact being made with the Minister for Local Government, **Natalie Hutchins**, MIV was promptly invited to meet on 5 April. The Minister's delegation comprised: **Robert Larocca**, Chief of Staff to Minister Hutchins; **Ismene Thiveos**, Ministerial Advisor; and **Colin Morrison**, Director, Governance and Funding Programs.

In the past, six libraries (Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, Berwick Mechanics' Institute, Footscray Mechanics' Institute, Maldon Athenaeum, Melbourne Athenaeum Library and Prahran Mechanics' Institute) have been recipients of three rounds of untied grants, the last being about seven years ago.

Since then a further four libraries have become increasingly active in their communities: Bonnie Doon; Little River Mechanics' Institute; Stanley Athenaeum; and Talbot Free Library. We also added the MIV **Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre** on to the list for library funding to enable our digitising program to be ongoing and the continued purchasing of Mechanics' Institute related publications.

Libraries represented at the meeting were: Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, **Amy Tsilemanis**; Footscray Mechanics' Institute, **Luke Mitchell**; Little River Mechanics' Institute, **Peter Jones**; Melbourne Athenaeum Library, **Sue Westwood**; and Prahran Mechanics' Institute, **Steven Haby**. Other libraries provided written submissions which were passed to the Minister's staff.



Robert Larocca

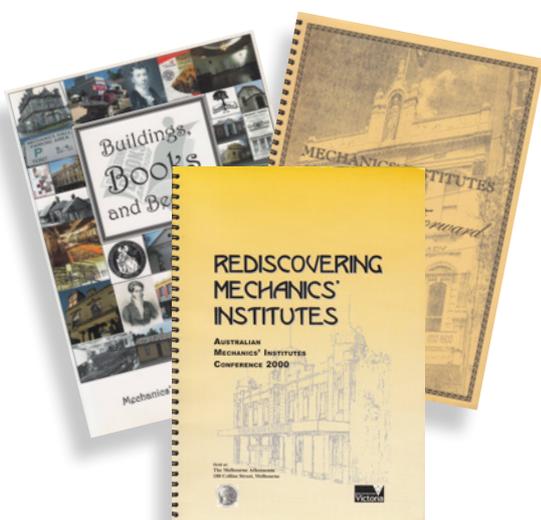
We also sought funding for the forthcoming **Mechanics' Institutes Australia 2018 Conference** to enable Victorian Institutes to send delegates at a greatly reduced rate as has happened at **MW 2004** at Prahran which was opened by the then Minister for Local Government **Candy Broad**. Funding would also be used to produce Proceedings as was done by the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Press in 2004, its first publication, and a hefty one of 400 odd pages.

We also sought funding to establish a package of audio, lighting and AV projection equipment in a Hall, that would serve as a reference and/or demonstration point for Hall managers. Similar packages installed in Britain, have greatly enhanced Hall use for meetings, film, theatrical and travelling performers. Funding for staging shows exists, but there is no specific funding to resource halls in which shows can be staged.

Finally we flagged the need for a significant round of annual grants for Victoria's community halls, including Mechanics' Institutes. This would enable upkeep of the State's 1500 community halls, an infrastructure of between \$3 and \$5 billion in value, for emergency use in times of fire, flood, storm or search and rescue.

Grants of up to \$20,000 would enable a lot of 'stitch in time' work before the costly need for 'megabucks' spending. The latter agenda item was introduced on learning of a recent round of annual grant funding for Men's Sheds of \$879,000 available in grants of up to \$60,000. We also stressed that MIV was a totally voluntary organisation and had no paid secretariat.

We were given a very fair hearing and said that we would send a plastic covered copy of Pam Baragwanath and Ken James' **These Walls Speak Volumes: A History of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria**, to enable reference to any one of the thousand Institutes mentioned, to the Office of the Minister for Local Government with MIV's compliments, and this was facilitated through **Ursula Zamecnik** at Prahran Mechanics' Institute. Thank you to all those attended at very short notice and to all those who sent submissions to be passed in at the meeting.





FAREWELL TO THE EMERALD MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

Opening up the attachment to an email, a poster popped up with a highlighted 'End of an Era'. Reading on, it stated 'Celebrating 60 years of the Emerald Hall (Mechanics' Institute) in our community, Saturday 18 March 2017, 3.30pm onwards.' It was an open invitation to a 'A day and night of memories and... Don't miss a chance to celebrate!'

Emerald we understand was the first township in the Dandenongs, surveyed for and sold by **Michael Callanan** in 1859.

Looking back over our notes it was just over sixty years since **Field-Marshal Sir William Slim**, then Governor-General of Australia, opened the present building on 11 March 1957. The brick structure featured a rear mezzanine floor which housed the biobox and library. This new hall replaced the original hall that had burned down on 20 August 1955, just after its 50th anniversary celebration.

In recent times the Hall has hosted the Emerald Lions Club's **Grow it, Bake it, Make it Market**. It has also been home to the Community Radio Station **3MDR 97.1FM** since the 1990s.



Cardinia Council's Hills Hub, Emerald webpage states: 'The existing hall will either be renovated or demolished and a new building constructed in the space now occupied by the Men's Shed and U3A buildings.' It is now certain that the much loved Emerald Hall will be demolished.

However '60 Years of Memories' was a fitting celebration. Signage had been placed around the district inviting all to come to the 'Free Event'. Arriving at the Hall, there was the SES Sausage Sizzle outside and inside you could get a glass of locally made Cider.

Inside, going around the hall clockwise, was the table tennis table which was much used during the event. Next was Lachlan and Annie Thompson's **Fernglade on Menzies B&B**, where one could have an 'astronomical' experience, looking at the stars of the night sky. Lachlan had set up a working miniature train set nearby to add extra youth interest, symbolic of the iconic **Puffing Billy** railway.

Next was the **Emerald Museum** exhibit which told of Emerald's early settlement and the building of **Rose Charman's** cottage in 1908. The district and cottage, for the next two decades, became the 'bolt-hole' for authors **Vance** and **Nettie Palmer**, and a succession of literary visitors including: **CJ Dennis**; **Katharine Susannah Pritchard** 1916-19; **Mrs Aeneas 'Jeannie' Gunn** and **Louis Esson**. All were influenced in their later writings by their Emerald experiences.

On the stage, decked in streamers and balloons, **Lance Peel and the Endangered Species**, were in full voice and instrument. The group hailed from Belgrave Heights. Group member **Suzanne Frisk** later took to the piano, and sang a Chuck Berry number from the sixties, which got a few rockers up jiving.



Next on the south wall was the big screen, where a slideshow and short films were screened. Finally there was the ‘**Memories Table**’. Sheets of butcher’s paper invited you to ‘Share your memories – Past, Present and ideas for the Future.’ and a few provided comment.

The various snippets of hall life were fascinating: the official opening of the Hall in 1957 by Sir William and Lady Slim; The Revellers Dance Band, with Roy on piano, Percy on drums and ‘Dad’ on banjo; Brownies; making debut before Sir George and Lady Knox; and the bathing beauties competition, which Lorna won.

The afternoon progressed into the evening when the **Dandenong Ranges Hot Jazz Orchestra** took to the stage with a very accomplished singer. The 60th anniversary birthday cake was cut by Hall Secretary **Ray Spencer**. Local historian **Graeme Legge** stepped up on to the platform during the evening to give a potted history of the Emerald Mechanics’ Institute and its highlights.

We salute the work of Ray Spencer and his Committee of: **Ron Harmer; Alan Ward; Eric Buggee; Paul Frisk** and **Brenda Saunders**



down through the years for keeping the doors open and memories continuing. It is with a tinge of sadness that we see yet another Hall falling to ‘Big Brother’ and it is doubtful that such an event would ever be held again.

It looks like the highly successful **Venetian Masquerade Ball**, held on 8 April 2017, could be the last major event to be held in the old hall. Needless to say it is ironic to see a hall go that is



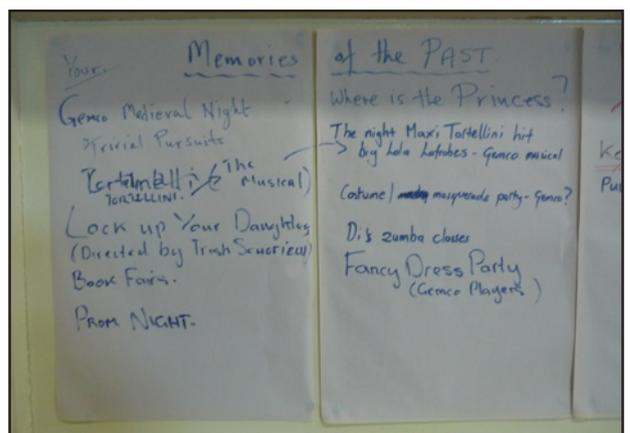
in such good repair and well used, but as ‘they’ say ‘This is progress!’

The concept of the intangible memory is one that few people can grasp. Certainly it was the planners that established the village of Emerald, but it was the settlers that made it. They came together to finance a hall and it was here that the big issues and challenges were talked through, people socialised, and changed their library books.

This isn’t just another building, the Emerald Hall represents a whole way of how people did things. The Governor-General opened the hall; images flickered on the screen beamed from the biobox at the rear; it provided shelter from fires; The Revellers played long into the night; groups of debutantes had their coming out... The Emerald Hall is an archaeological timepiece, and an undeniable adjunct to how the citizens of Emerald lived.

From an outsider's viewpoint it was a privilege to have been present at the ‘End of an Era’ and ‘Thanks for memories!’

Clockwise from below: Memories of the past; 60th Birthday Cake (Photo: Fay Ovenden); Emerald Hall exterior; event banner over the front doorway; the band on stage; locally made commemorative LX EMI pendants issued to all performers.



MIV Bus Tour - BERWICK TO BRIAGOLONG - 5 MARCH 2017

A grey day, with a little mist, heralded those intrepid adventurers that gathered at the Berwick Mechanics' Institute for the Annual 2017 MIV epic bus tour. They were welcomed by the able tour leader **Judith Dwyer**, who distributed a set of well-researched Tour Notes, and MIV President **Robert Kingston**.

At the appointed time of 9am our Mercedes-Benz coach from the Garfield-based **Bunyip River Bus Lines** drew up and we were welcomed aboard by its captain, **Helen Davey**.

The first stop of the day was the **Trafalgar Public Hall** (below), where we were shown around by **Jo** and **Greg Porter**. The striking red brick art-deco building, with angular stained glass windows, was designed by **Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Charles Purnell** and was opened in January 1935. (This building replaced the original Institute which had burned down in April 1934.)



The foyer houses a replica of *'The Victory'* and various documents relating to **Lord Horatio Nelson**, her captain. The main body of the hall has a gallery and the former projection room at one end. (The Traf Hall was once a major regional film centre.) At the other end is a very well equipped stage, with sound, lighting and AV projection facilities, and a sloping stage platform. Another feature was the mobile trolleys, in which were stored suites of plastic hall tables, and when the wheels were locked, the trolleys also served as tables. Elsewhere in the Hall was the commercial stainless steel fitted kitchen, with all the required appliances.

A youthful Traf-born and bred Jo clearly 'lived and breathed' the life of the very well maintained hall, which periodically hosts 'Blues' musical

events, for which it is widely known. It is also a popular dance venue.

We rolled by **Tyers Public Hall**, of solid brick and built in 1932, and which replaced the earlier 1888 hall which had been 'built next to the school in a stand of red box'. Tyers has a well established arts niche of music, dance and visual arts. It is also the centerpiece of an ANZAC precinct with a recently planted Lone Pine and beds of Rosemary for remembrance.

By way of the Scenic Drive, we skirted close by the **Yallourn North Power Station**, with the **Hazelwood Power Station**, since closed, and the **Loy Yang Power Station** in the distance. We soon arrived at **Glengarry Mechanics' Institute** (below) where we were met by **Joy Waltham**. The 1920s building has had various additions, including a bio-box over the front entrance. It shares its 'temporary reserved' Crown site with the nearby Anglican Church and is very much in the midst of a staged makeover, starting in 2013. It's had: a new steel sheeting roof, which replaced an earlier tile version, new spouting and down pipes, all financed by a **Heritage Victoria** grant; and the replacement of windows and doors, and



weatherboards, has been funded by **Latrobe City Council**.

The Hall interior features a large World War I wooden Honour Roll, with the centrepiece being a clock. There were also other Honour Rolls aggregated from closed schools. At the rear of the stage was a mural of a rural scene painted on plywood and which carried the name 'Hoppner Drane'. The room at the rear of the stage was the meeting or Lodge Room and around the walls were plaques to Life Members who had given prolonged periods of Hall Committee service. The

Hall has had a long term Red Cross connection and was the foundation venue for a well-attended kindergarten in the 1960s. It was also noted that ‘nearly every local club or association has grown from its first meeting in the hall’.

Now poised for a final works program to complete their outside refurb and a kitchen makeover on the inside, ‘The Glengarry’ will continue to serve the expanding community into the future.

Further along, a quaint chocolate brown fingerpost, with ‘Mechanics’ Hall’ in white, directed us to the **Toongabbie Mechanics’ Institute** (right). This very impressive two-storey timber structure lies at the heart of ‘The Village Green’, which besides the Hall, houses a 24/7 toilet block, a gazebo electric barbecue area, and a late 1800s style grandstand. The latter was a half-size scale model of one in Bendigo and was built in 1998 as an unemployment project.

Toongabbie was our lunch stop and we can now understand why it is ‘known for its tucker.’ Sandwiches, quiches and Asian nibbles, were followed by a range of homemade biscuits, slices, sponges and an enormous, yes ‘man-made’ pavlova. The clearly capable catering team of **Margaret Foulds, Joy McLachlan**, was headed up by President, **Bev Goddard**.

During the lunch layover (below) Bev took us through the Hall’s history, from being built above an underground stream, in 1883; and then adding a second storey in 1892 at the rear. This housed: the Bank of Australasia, which bought quantities of gold; a dedicated room for the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Odd Fellows formed in the Hall in 1884; and the Library and Reading Room.

The building was added to the Historic Buildings Register in 1983. The following year the Hall was the filming venue for **Strikebound**, based on **Wendy Lowenstein’s** then unpublished



novel *Dead Men Don't Dig Coal*, which depicted the 1930s strikes at the Wonthaggi coal mines. Locals were ‘roped in’ as extras, and we were told that during filming, the hall’s front door parted from its hinges and crashed to floor and it was ‘simply dragged out’.

This was the start of the building’s rapid decline and by the early 1990s it was a derelict eyesore. There was a strong local move to clear the site, by simply burning it down, however this was thwarted by a sixteen year old local lad, **Richard Lansdowne** who tipped off the authorities.

This then galvanised the community into action and with the help of **Gippsland Group Training**, a team of thirteen long-term unemployed, some other tradesmen and some \$220,000 in external funding, the building was transformed back to its former glory, and was reopened by local MP **Peter McGauran** in 1996.

The sloping stage hosts a piano, permanently chocked with a large slab of wood to stop it slipping off the stage, and the rear wall features a skilful black and white painting of the local football team which was salvaged ‘as a piece of rolled up canvas’. Viewed from the hall floor, it looks very much like a large photograph.

Indeed we are so glad young Richard spoke up when he did, for now we still have a unique Victorian building and MI community precinct. Lesson: Never under-estimate the power of one.

Today the Hall, with excellent acoustics, hosts: a monthly dance; an annual flower show; Christmas Carols, which normally involves the Welsh Male Choir; an Australia Day Breakfast; and a range of other functions. **But it does not host 18th birthday parties.**



MIV *Bus Tour* CONT...

Thank you to Bev and her Committee, of seven or was it eight, for a most memorable site visit and the 'bestest' lunch. (We loved the manicured side garden, with fresh herbs.)

In a nearby paddock, we were even treated to an impromptu and impressive dressage display by a very able equestrienne and her well-trained steed, as we waited for all to board the coach.

Then followed a series of drive-bys. The **Cowwarr Public Hall** (1930), replaced the earlier Mechanics' Institute, but on a new site. The library was transferred from the old building and continued in use until the 1950s. Film was also big in Cowwarr and screenings continued into the 1960s. Outside the Hall was a metal sculpture of a cow, made from recycled drums and other scrap metal.

The **Heyfield Mechanics' Institute Hall** (1888) was moved in 1954 to become the St James' Parish Hall, until it was demolished in 1984 and the materials were recycled into other district buildings. The current **Heyfield Hub**, which replaced the earlier hall, now comprises the **Memorial Hall, Library** and **Rural Transaction Centre**.

At **Tinamba**, we saw the now 'debadged' former corrugated iron Hall (1902), which was sold into private hands in 2016. There was a quick stop at **Maffra** (1886, 1892 and 1925) for a picture opportunity at the large corner-based library and hall/s, with entrances to both streets. There is some serious research being done into the history of the Maffra Institute and we hope to report those findings in a future issue of *UK*.

The extent of the post World War I Macalister Irrigation Scheme became very apparent as we moved on through the Boisdale area, where former dairying was replaced by intensive

vegetable production. We flashed by the quaint **Boisdale Mechanics' Institute** which was built of brick in 1904 by **Askin Foster** for the staff working on his estate and the Boisdale Cheese and Butter Factory. Later it was leased to the community and it was finally purchased from the Foster family in 1938 for £750. Control was passed to Council in the 1970s and it is still in community use.

Now, we were very much in the territory of the early Scottish squatters as we passed over the Avon River to our next destination **Briagolong Mechanics' Institute** (below), with stage one being built in 1874. Here longstanding Committee member **Margaret Anderson** ably showed us around. Firstly the original Hall, with its well resourced sloping stage, with sound, lighting and AV capability. A 'Hands On' stage mural, featured the hand prints of the one hundred local children who attend Briag's Primary School, and staged their concert in the Hall last year. Margaret advised the long-used stage backdrop had been 'carefully rolled up' and was in safe storage.

The adjoining space provided for meetings, with its walls adorned by photographic portraits of Hall stalwarts **WG Forbes, M Landy**, et al. A 1960s photo of **Queen Elizabeth II** hung above a large fireplace. Nearby was a framed Red Cross flag which noted the formation of Briag's Red Cross Branch in 1915. Off this area was a dedicated library room in the centre of which was a three-quarter size billiard table with shaded light above. Around the walls six-shelved glass-fronted book cases housed the historic library, all titles of which had been catalogued and barcoded by the Wellington Library Service. Indeed a unique capsule of a Mechanics' Institute library history.

Next we were shown the complex's latest appendage or wing, which is the **Community House**. This is a partial two-storey structure, which architecturally balances the bio-box at the front of the original hall. The internal space is focused and centered around a large tree trunk which anchors the stairs and seemingly 'supports' the upstairs office space. The community IT area is downstairs, as is a storage room, a small kitchen, and a large well-used meeting room for community, conference and kindergarten use. In addition to acting as a depot for the Wellington Library Service, it also hosts a



Community Library where books are borrowed and replaced with another.

The Hall was added to Victoria's Heritage Register in 2008. When considered, given Briag's population of around 1000, this is truly a community space worthy of emulation across Victoria.

The **Stratford Mechanics' Institute** (right) was our afternoon tea stop, where President **Ben Davies**, and Committee comprising **Laurel Davies, Darryl and Val Mildenhall, Judy Richards, Deidre Morris and 'Doc' Deidre Marshall**, welcomed us.

By way of introduction Ben ran through a brief history of the Hall, built in 1888 with the first major addition being a cream brick toilet in front of the fine old building. The supper room was added to rear in the 1980s financed by way of proceeds from the raffle of a Ford Capri car.

In the 1990s Mr Brumby drove into town and promised support for further works, if \$50,000 could be raised locally, and this was done within six months. The works then included removal of the toilet block from in front of the hall and sympathetically placing it along the side of the hall. A new 'transparent foyer' was then added to the restored façade. Council offered to install the largely native garden and they have dutifully maintained it ever since. The rest of the building received a general spruce up and paint which was done by a work party from nearby Fulham Prison.

Judy then took us through a slide show, with the windows blacked out by an impressive display of electrically driven shutters. Stratford, although named after a Scottish settlement, hosts the well-known annual Shakespeare Festival of which the Institute is an integral venue. Afternoon tea then followed with a smorgasbord of 'goodies'. We certainly now know the good places to eat!

Aboard again we motored on past the derelict former **Fulham Hotel** which has been likened to a Mechanics' Institute, with all the same type of activities, except a library. The large **Kilmany Hall** (1923) was the seen off to the west, the product of a post-World War I Closer Settlement Board Scheme.

The last stop was originally the home of the **Rosedale Mechanics' Institute and Library and Scientific Association** (right) and the Institute hosted the community library until 2012. This space is now occupied by **St Mark's Anglican Church Op Shop**. The two storey front section once also housed professional offices and a number of the rooms are presently being



refurbished and painted. The hall was also used for badminton for several decades.

Hall Committee representative **Marion Logan** explained how the hall has been 'gutted' to enable the hosting of major events. The stage has been removed and the wall between the supper room and hall has been taken down. Outside, the 1873-1904 sequencing of the various parts of the brick building, with varying brick types, had us guessing.

Enroute back to Berwick we noticed the **Flynn Mechanics' Institute** (1921), built from donated timber. Today it forms part of a complex comprising: tennis courts and clubrooms; a playground; and CFA shed.

It seemed no time before we were farewelling Helen, our able coach captain and Judith Dwyer who had organised yet another excellent day in which we saw several varied Institutes which were well cared for and still remained pivotal to community life.

We sincerely thank the various people who opened their Institutes for the event.

We acknowledge and thank **John Merry** for his contribution towards this article.

Photos by Roslyn Lowden



MIV'S *Historical Plaques Program*

PLAQUE NO. 56 UNVEILED AT ARARAT



The **Ararat Mechanics' Institute** opened in 1859 in a vacant building near Market Square. Here it established a library, lecture program and classes were conducted in music and art. To house the growing membership the Great Eastern Hotel was purchased in 1869. This was rebuilt in 1889 and subject to a further rebuild in 1908 with **James Irwin** as its architect.

Following many discussions with Ararat Mechanics' Institute President **Alan Wetton** regarding Presentation of Life Membership and Certificate of Appreciation for the Secretary/Treasurer **David Rosengreen**, a date was arranged to make the presentation to David, who had no idea this was occurring. On the 8th December, 2016 MIV President **Robert Kingston** and MIV Treasurer **Gary Bester** travelled to Ararat to make presentations of Life Membership Certificates to Alan Wetton (Ararat President) and David Rosengreen (Ararat Secretary/Treasurer) as well as Certificates of Appreciation from MIV to both gentlemen who have served the Ararat MI as well as the local community for over 30 years.

Councillor **Gwenda Allgood** commenced the evening with an introduction about both David and Alan, including the time served by them as local councillors and as office bearers of the Ararat MI. David was totally surprised by the events of the evening. Alan was assisted by David's daughter **Christine Carey** in providing the information to MIV to print the certificates. The presentations were made by Gary Bester to Alan and David at the commencement of the dancing school presentations, which is run by **Laura Cameron** who leases the upstairs area of the Mechanics Building in Ararat.

In addition to the above awards, the Ararat MI also decided to participate in the MIV plaque's program and purchased plaque No. 56 in the

*Left: Ararat Mechanics' Institute building;
Centre: L-R: Alan Wetton, David Rosengreen,
Robert Kingston and Gary Bester (Photo: Laura
Cameron); Right: MIV Plaque No. 56
(Photo: Christine Carey)*

MIV series. The information on the plaque was supplied by Christine Carey and commemorates the history of the Ararat MI. Robert Kingston presented the plaque to the Ararat MI and gave a brief overview of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria.

Recent Plaques

- No. 52 **Moonambel Mechanics' Institute** - to be unveiled in November 2017
- No. 53 **Merton Hall** - unveiled; plaque is situated on the front of the Hall, to the left of the front door
- No. 54 **Amphitheatre Mechanics' Institute**
- No. 55 **Inverleigh Mechanics' Institute**
- No. 56 **Ararat Mechanics' Institute** - unveiled 8 December 2016
- No. 57 **Sea View Mechanics' Institute**
- No. 58 **Romsey Mechanics' Institute**
- No. 59 **Your Institute?**

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.

Check out the Plaques page on the MIV website for locations and individual citations - vicnet.net.au/~mivic/plaques

Wording and photographs can also be found on MIV's Open Plaques page. Please feel free to upload your own images via Flickr or Wikipedia and link them to our Open Plaques entries: <http://openplaques.org/series/43>

CELEBRATING THE CELSUS LIBRARY BUILDING

Few library sites in the history of civilisation have witnessed such momentous times as the Celsus Library at Ephesus in Turkey. It was built in the period 114-117AD, nineteen hundred years ago, by **Tiberius Julius Aquila Polemaeanus**, as a mausoleum for his father Senator **Tiberius Julius Celsus Polemaeanus** (c.45-c.114), the former Roman Governor of the Province of Asia, and a noted bibliophile.

The wealthy Celsus bequeathed the money to build the library, to initially store his own library collection, and it appears he left a further 25,000 denari to augment that collection. His remains, in a lead coffin, within a decorated marble sarcophagus, were interred in a crypt beneath the entrance of his library, a rare honour.

The imposing façade, featuring eight Corinthian columns, has three entrances, which are flanked by four marble statues inserted in niches beside the doors. They symbolise the virtues of Celsus: Sophia for wisdom; Episteme for knowledge; Ennoia for intelligence; and Arete for valour. A life-size statue of Celsus stood in the central niche of the second storey above the larger main door. Inside, in an apse on the opposite far wall, was a statue of Athena, the goddess of wisdom. The Roman architect **Vitruvius** specified the use of brick, rubble and mortar in the library's construction.

Behind the façade was the single 17x11 metre library chamber, constructed within double walls to regulate temperature and humidity, from the outside extremes. The books, in the form of scrolls, were stored in cupboards and on shelves constructed against the three surrounding walls. Stone steps, anchored into the walls, led to the two levels above.

The library is recorded as having over 12,000 scrolls. This ranks as one of the great libraries of the ancient world along with: **Ebla** (2000BC), 20,000 clay tablets; **Nineveh** (600BC), 30,000 clay tablets; **Alexandria** (c.300BC), up to 400,000 scrolls; and **Pergamum** (200BC), 200,000 scrolls.

Disaster struck Celsus in 262 when an



Photo: Wikimedia Commons User: Btaraba

earthquake, followed by a fire which burnt out the library, and only the façade and a shell survived which was later applied to other purposes. A further earthquake in the 1100s finally brought down the whole building.

Since 1903, the **Austrian Archaeological Institute** has had an ongoing interest in the site and the original statues were taken to the **Ephesus Museum** in Vienna in 1910. During the period 1970-78 the Austrian Institute, with a team led by German archaeologist **Volker Michael Strocka**, systematically reconstructed the façade, and copies of the original statues were made and placed in the façade niches.

The original marble statue of Celsus is now housed in the **Istanbul Archaeological Museum** and the Celsus Library image has recently appeared on Turkish banknotes. These are both fitting memorials, to Celsus, one who was engaged in the philanthropy of the 'diffusion of useful knowledge'.

Left: Statue of Arete (Photo: Wikimedia Commons User: Radomil);

Below: 20mil Turkish Lira note featuring the Celsus Library

(Photo: www.romeacrosseurope.com)



BUSINESS IN THE MECHANICS'

It is pleasing to see former Mechanics' buildings being 'recycled' in to useful purposes. In Western Australia the much publicised award-winning Mechanics' Bar is but one such Institute being profitably used. In Victoria we presently know of several that are in commercial use. When you drop by and do business mention the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. as they are really part of our extended family.

Some time ago we noted that the stage curtain was still in situ at the former Newlyn Mechanics' Institute Hall, now located on the Daylesford-Newlyn Road. This Institute has been lovingly recycled into the use of the **Newlyn Antiques and Cottage Garden Nursery** by **John and Raechel Hungerford**. During a recent visit we saw the commencement of the exterior repaint of the building. We also noticed: the large herbaceous and tree peonies; the clematis had burst forth; and a large range of irises growing in beds, which enabled the various colours to be seen. The wide variety of potted conifers, had the rare to the useful, of which the Irish Yew has



a lifespan of five hundred years. Inside we saw a collection of chandeliers, the majority being of Bohemian origin. Why not drop by for a look see, for you will most probably come away with something, we did. Website: newlynantiques.com.au. Tel: (03) 5345 7458.

In 2014 we noted the Healesville Mechanics' Institute at 4 Church Street (above) was again up for sale and later showed restoration work in progress. We can now announce that **The Old Mechanics'** is open for business as a bed and breakfast. It rates on booking.com as 'Exceptional 9.5' with some cracking reviews, including 'We loved everything about our stay at the Old Mechanics.' There is also a new info-sign in the street with a 'potted' history of the Hall as part of the Rotary Club of Healesville and Healesville and District Historical Society's **Healesville Historic Walk**. Check out the booking.com 'The Old Mechanics', Healesville' web page, for interior and exterior pics and booking details. Indulge yourself with a weekend in historic Healesville. Donia and Ozzie will make you feel most welcome and even if you can't stay take in a bite or cuppa next door at the Tuck Inn. 'My if those walls could only speak!'



The former two-storey Nurmurkah Mechanics Institute and Public Library at 60 Melville Street, is now home to the **Numurkah Department Store**, a family owned business, which sells everything from cigarettes to cleaning products.



Former Nurmurkah Mechanics' Institute.

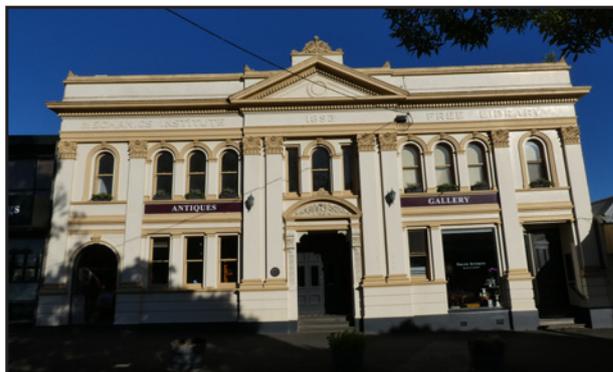
Photo: Ken Roe

The business was started in 1992 by **Alex van Breda**, and was run by his family until it changed hands in 2013. It is now operated by **Angelo Ciccone**. Previous to its current use, the Institute had been: a picture theatre, up until 1952; a tractor workshop; a hardware store in 1980; and a furniture store. Tel: (03) 5862 1750



In Gippsland, the former Warragul Athenaeum and Public Library, at 44 Queen Street (above), is now occupied by **Gippsland Phones** which has been conducted by **Neville Clements** and staff since 1998. Previous to this The Commonwealth of Australia had purchased the building on 12 November 1954. They operated the Commonwealth Employment Service until the early 1990s and the library operated upstairs. **Roy Seville** then bought the building, modified the front, and started **Action Copiers** which ran until 1997. Roy still has the original etched-glass doors in storage. Tel: 1800 300 330

The ornate two-storey Woodend Mechanics' Institute and Free Library (above), designed



by Italian-born architect Louis Boldoni, at 85 High Street is now **Grand Antiques, House and Garden**, with a specialisation in demolition recycling. Indeed well worth a visit, if only to see the building's architectural features. More info, Marianne and Natalie Hollow, Tel: 0400 656 100

In northern Victoria we have the **InnStitute Tavern** at 27 Carlisle Street (Goulburn Valley Highway), Wunghnu. (below) Designed by local architect **Allan McDonald**, it started out as the Wunghnu Mechanics' Institute and Free Library in 1887. It opened as an hotel on 2 November 1992. Mine host **Trish Miln** has been in charge for ten years. It is a great place to stop off for a meal, or an ale. You can also pick up liquid supplies at the indoor bottle shop. Evening meals are served Wednesday through to Saturday. The tavern also stages regular live country and western gigs every second Saturday, and every third Sunday afternoon, in the still largely intact old hall at the rear. Tel (03) 5862 2965

There may be more recycled Halls in Victoria, that exist in business use, besides shearing sheds or store sheds or as residences. Please let us know of any others.



FREETHOUGHT HALLS IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND BY NIGEL SINNOTT

“The basis of true morality is progressive knowledge and this, and not speculative opinion, must be the providence of man.” — William Whitehouse Collins, 26 January 1890.

During the 1880s freethought and secular societies proliferated in New Zealand and the Australian colonies, which were enjoying a period of relative prosperity and attracting a steady stream of migrants from Britain and Ireland. A number of the migrants — particularly miners — were freethinkers, and the spread of heterodox ideas was encouraged by radical booksellers who imported secularist literature from Britain and the United States, and also by the work of freethought lecturers and writers like W. W. Collins, Wallace Nelson and Joseph Symes who came out from Britain.

The “golden age” of colonial freethought came to an end with the trade depression of the 1890s which severely retarded local economic activity until the beginning of the twentieth century. While the good times lasted, however, and even began to decline, some of the freethought organisations were able to build premises of their own — useful assets in an age when it could be difficult to hire public halls for heretical purposes.

I have confined myself in this account to buildings specifically erected by freethinkers for their use during the nineteenth century, and have excluded premises that were rented or bought.

New Zealand led the way with the Freethought Lyceum in Dowling Street, Dunedin, constructed on the foundations of an early church. It was commissioned by the Dunedin Freethought Association, designed by J. A. Burnside, built by Henry Martin, and cost £3,500. The Lyceum hall was a substantial¹ brick building, with a classical façade and statues of Liberty and Justice on top of the pediment. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs John Logan on 15 October 1881. It was a wet Saturday afternoon, but 3,000 people gathered to see the stone laid and listen to a speech by the Hon. Robert (later Sir Robert) Stout, who afterwards became premier of New Zealand. The hall was completed and opened on 31 April 1882.²

The Dunedin freethinkers (an uneasy alliance of rationalists and spiritualists) lost control of their hall in 1889. It became the City Hall. The building enjoyed a period of popularity as the Alhambra (later Kings) Theatre, then became a dance hall and auction rooms. More recently it went through a long period of neglect before being demolished in early 1989. Its destruction is a significant loss to the architectural history of New Zealand. The site is now a car park.

The first freethinkers’ hall to be built in Australia was in Newcastle, New South Wales, where the Newcastle branch of the Australasian Secular Association erected a weatherboard Hall of Science in Darby Street. It was built by Ackman and Morris and cost £800. The Hall was opened on 23 November

1884 by 29-year-old Ada Campbell, one of the first Australian-born freethought lecturers. It was visited by most of the other prominent freethinkers of the period, and Isaac Selby records that he spoke there on “Under the Southern Cross, or the coming Republic” (6 January 1889) — his last lecture before turning Christian.

The site of the Newcastle Hall of Science is now occupied by government offices.

Two attempts were made to build halls in Queensland. At the end of 1887 a prospectus was issued for a Brisbane Lyceum Hall Company, but I am not aware that it succeeded in erecting a building. In February 1890 the Gympie Secular Association launched a Gympie Secular Hall Company with a capital of £1,000 in £1 shares, but by this time the economic climate was already looking cloudy.

In 1889 the Melbourne branch of the Australasian Secular Association built its Hall of Science in Victoria Parade, Fitzroy (an inner suburb). It was a brick building, designed by Thomas O. Roper and built by Cohen, Smith and Ellis. It cost about £4,350 (including land). The memorial stone was laid on 31 March and the Hall opened on 12 May 1889 by Joseph Symes. Symes lost control of the building after a court case in 1891 and regained it in 1897 when it was bought for him “by Dr Samuel Peacock. Symes renamed it the Freethought Hall and relinquished it in 1904 when he gave up his propaganda work in Victoria. At one stage the building was a skating rink (Austral Hall) but in 1913 it was bought by Archbishop Daniel Mannix for St Vincent’s Hospital and was renamed Brenan Hall (after Alderman J. Brenan of the Druids Friendly Society). It served, as an outpatients’ department until 1956 when it was refurbished as a hall, and is still used as such by the Hospital.³

Sydney freethinkers also wanted a building of their own. In 1887 the local branch of the Australasian Secular Association established a Sydney Freethought Hall Company with Ebenezer Skinner as chairman and Joseph G. Rose as secretary. The Company bought a site in Campbell Street and in 1889 the directors accepted designs by Mr E. Evans for what was formally named the Sydney Lyceum (directories call it the Lyceum Hall), but later on it was normally referred to as the Freethought Hall. Skinner was asked to lay the foundation stone but declined in favour of his son-in-law, William Whitehouse Collins. The stone was laid on 26 January 1890, the same hot day as the opening of St Mary’s Catholic Cathedral. (Symes and Archbishop Carr of Melbourne left for Sydney on the same train!)

Work then ground to a halt because the Company’s directors were unable to borrow sufficient funds. After much difficulty the Association and the Hall

Company were able to resume work in February 1892. Skinner died in March and Collins had moved to New Zealand, but Collins returned to Sydney to open the Freethought Hall on 31 July 1892 in the presence of a large assembly which included Symes (from Melbourne), Wallace Nelson (from Brisbane), William Pratt (president of the Canterbury Freethought Association), A. D. McLaren*, William Willis, George Wood and William Lorando Jones (imprisoned for blasphemy at Parramatta in 1871). It was probably the last major gathering of colonial secularism.⁴

The Freethought Hall was finished just in time for the worst of the economic depression. It survived 1893, when even some banks and churches shut their doors; but it had been built mainly on loans and promissory notes, and in August 1895 the Freethought Hall Company was forced to sell the building. “Nearly £6,000 worth of property gone for £2,200,” George Wood commented sadly. It was bought by the Disciples of Christ and became the City Temple. When I first drafted this article I assumed that the Sydney building, with its ornate but tasteful façade, had been pulled down years ago. How wrong I was! It was well looked after and remained a church until the late 1970s when it became the offices of the Church of Christ’s social services department. In 1985 the Church sold the building and it became the offices of Norman Gibson & Company, solicitors. Its modern numbering is 69 Campbell Street.

The halls described here may not be a complete list of those built in the nineteenth century. I think by now I would have come across references to any others erected in Australia, but I cannot say the same of New Zealand. The halls we know about were pretty modest affairs, comparable with mechanics’ institutes and nonconformist chapels of the period. The Melbourne and Newcastle halls were unpretentious; those in Dunedin and Sydney were more decorated, rather like the Leicester Secular Hall (1881) in England. But none of them was on the scale of the five-storey Thomas Paine Memorial Hall in the United States, which cost \$75,500 when it was built in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1875.

In 1890 Isaac Selby, who had once been a secretary of the Dunedin Freethought Association, celebrated his conversion to “primitive Christianity” by writing a booklet called *From Atheism to Christianity and what I learnt on the way* (Melbourne). In it he quoted Cardinal Newman’s words, “Infidelity has only the torch to burn but not the trowel to build.” In Australia and New Zealand, at any rate, the freethinkers did have the trowel to build, but not the resources and expertise to hang on to the fruits of their labours during a major recession.

For the sturdy rationalists and secularists of a century ago, of course, words and ideas — in the form of the meeting, lecture, pamphlet and journal — were far more important than bricks and mortar. Their priority was what Collins called “progressive knowledge”. So it is perhaps appropriate to conclude with the words of Robert Stout, spoken in 1881 at the foundation of the Dunedin Hall: “All we ask

is that everyone shall have the liberty to hold and express his opinion, consistent with the like liberty to everyone else.” That liberty, 108 years later, is by no means secure but is still worth more today than all those buildings of impressive but inhuman scale: the shrines, palaces and prisons of dogma and repression; the forts of folly.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the many people who have helped me by providing information, suggestions or copies of documents, checking out my ideas or even wandering around streets. My thanks to the following: (for) *Dunedin*, Lois Galer (N.Z. Historic Places Trust), the late Harry Hastings Pearce, Pamela Treanor, the Hon. Philip Woollaston (Minister for Conservation, N.Z.); *Melbourne*, Stephen Davies (National Trust of Australia — Victoria), Dr Bryan Egan and John Pruscino (St Vincent’s Hospital), Dr Barry Smith (Australian National University); *Newcastle (N.S.W.)*, the late Betty & Donald Moore; *Sydney*, the late Alan Rickard; *various*, John Arnold, the late Dr Frank M. C. Forster, Ron Marke, Dianne Reilly (State Library of Victoria).

Notes

- 1 Dimensions. Approximate measurements (width of façade by depth of building by height) of the various halls are as follows: Dunedin, 14.5 x 25.5 x 13.5 metres; Melbourne, 18 x 27.5 x 12 m; Newcastle, 9.5 x 19 x 4.25 m; Sydney, not known.
- 2 For the Dunedin Lyceum see “Profanum Vulgus” [H. H. Pearce], *N. Z. Rationalist*, Sept. 1939, June & Aug. 1941; and L. Galer, *Bricks and Mortar*: p. 22. Lois Galer is preparing a detailed account of the building.
- 3 The Melbourne hall has been discussed in detail by Sinnott in *Rationalist News* (Sydney), Autumn 1989.
- 4 I hope to produce a separate, full account of the Sydney hall in 1992. [“The Sydney Lyceum (Freethought Hall).” *Rationalist News* (Sydney), 26 (2), June 1992: 4 – 8.]

Originally typed 20 October 1989 (62 Powell Street, Yarraville, Vic., 3013 Australia).

Published in *Rationalist News* (Sydney), 24 (1), Summer [Feb.] 1990: 4 – 9; *N.Z. Rationalist and Humanist* (Auckland), March 1990: 11 – 12; and the *Recorder* (Melbourne), no. 161, March 1990: 5 – 9 (but with £ symbols misprinted as \$).

Text scanned and reformatted 15 March 2011 (Sunshine West, Vic.).

* Alexander Duncan McLaren (1868 – 1947) eventually moved to England and lived in London for many years. He became a regular contributor to *The Freethinker*. See N. H. Sinnott, “A. D. McLaren: Freethinker and Helper of Men.” *New Zealand Rationalist* (Auckland), Dec. 1991: 12 – 13; *Rationalist News* (Sydney) 27 (1), Summer, December 1992 [Jan. 1993]: 11 – 15.

A VINTAGE YEAR - 2015-1016

As the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. moves towards its twentieth anniversary in 2018, the year 2015-16 can be regarded as one of considerable achievement. It was a year when the Mechanics' Institute movement gained perhaps the widest publicity ever.

The massive trawl search for Victoria's Institute-related history had been ongoing in earnest since early 2013, largely led by **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James**.

Professor Weston Bate OAM started off the 2015-2016 year with his masterly Wesson Lecture on the Mechanics' theme, one which has been largely ignored by front row historians.

Pam and Ken's mammoth research collaboration culminated with the production and launch of their *These Walk Speak Volumes: A History of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria* by **Dr Don Garden** at The Ath and supported by Professor Bate. Radio interviews and public lectures

followed and then came the *Age/Sydney Morning* article by **Tony Wright**, to be followed shortly after by **Gideon Haigh's** masterly double-page in the *Australian* which circulated nationwide.

The new MIV website and the listing of our plaques program on the World Plaques website has also achieved considerable publicity and we have passed fifty Institutes or their sites which have now been plaqued.

Our digitising program also proceeded and a duplicate copy of the records some eighty Institutes makes the **Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre** a major research facility.

The year was rounded off with the publishing of the massive *Ubiquitous and Necessary: A Research Guide* for the Mechanics' researcher in Australia and the naming of *These Walls Speak Volumes* as the 2016 Winner of the **Victorian Community History Awards** rounded off the year.



State Library
User
Organisations'
Council

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. has been a longtime member of SLUOC and our delegate has been former MIV President, Life Member and current Committee Member **Peter Pereyra**.

Peter was elected SLUOC President at its most recent Annual General Meeting. He succeeds **Ian Keese**, who had held the position with distinction for five years. Ian had cogently and successfully argued to Government that in fact the State Library is very much part of its 'Creative Victoria' and should be funded accordingly. The Government responded positively with an increase of \$5 million in annual funding.

Peter's Presidency comes at a pivotal time in the redevelopment of the State Library and the achieving of balance between the allocation of public use and academic reference library storage spaces. (Presently over half of the library's holdings are stored offsite.) This has been ongoing since the Art Gallery and Museum moved out in 1968 and 1997 respectively.

The beginning of the second stage of the Ballarat Off-site Store is pivotal to this future planning work. The re-development of Queen's Hall will make this historic iconic space available

for public access and use during the day and for evening private commercial functions.

To facilitate the Swanston Street undergrounding, the closure of the Swanston Street entrance and opening up of an entrance to Russell Street is problematic and presents some significant logistical and operational problems for the 1.8 million people who visit the State Library annually. It is anticipated that the Russell Street entrance will remain open until the redevelopment is completed in 2020.

Following the compilation of this article, Creative Industries Minister **Martin Foley** launched the State Library's redevelopment plan on 29 March 2017. The \$88.1 million project is to the design of KD Architects. Minister Foley said "More Victorians belong to libraries than to AFL football clubs...This is a project that will make this landmark even more substantial. It is about putting a new level of life into one of our most loved cultural institutions. It has, right from the start, been a place for all Victorians..." Funding for the Library's **Vision 2020** project is by a Government contribution of \$60.4 million and private funding, of which \$21.8 million has been raised, including a \$3 million contribution from **Maria** and **Allan Myers**, which follows the \$8 million donated in December 2016 by **John** and **Myriam Wylie**. John is Chair of the State Library Victoria Board.

FOLIO: THE SEATTLE ATHENAEUM - SITE VISIT

While researching for our trip to attend the **Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide Conference** held in San Francisco in November 2016, I discovered that an Athenaeum had opened in Seattle, Washington State in 2015. Why, I wondered, would a subscription library not only open at a time when the debate over the demise of the printed word continues, but also in a city that boasts a beautiful state of art and very, very contemporary public library just around the corner?

I travelled to Seattle to meet **David Brewster**, President of **Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum**, and again meet with **Michael Lieberman**, the Athenaeum's Manager, Book Collections. To quote its website, Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum is

Inspired by the country's earliest libraries, often called athenaeums, Folio provides access to a discerning donated private book collection, and a home for reading, writing, dialogue and learning. Public programmes include book-based discussions, readings, presentations of book arts and rare volumes, and musical, cultural and civic events. Folio's public rooms are also available to many other non-profit groups needing attractive, affordable, downtown venue space.

Bringing an active and inclusive 21st century vision to such member-supported libraries, the founders of Folio have created an inviting, intimate home for "the community of the book" while also producing and hosting educational programs for the whole community.

The Seattle Athenaeum is no ordinary library. Indeed there are more books in its "stacks" collection than on the shelves in the public reading rooms. In fact former antiquarian and second hand book dealer, Michael Lieberman



is more of a curator than a librarian. He reviews the collection and determines how books will be displayed for browsing. So what is on the shelves is in no way a full representation of either the collection, or what a regular "library user" might expect to find. So while your Lynda La Plante might be absent from the collection, you may have access to a first edition of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

Regular users will get used to this quirky approach, and the online catalogue certainly helps users to find out what is available. But former journalist, editor and now founder and President of Folio: The Seattle Athenaeum **David Brewster** argues while the library is still young, it is providing much needed access to literary material through the collection, through talks and other literary activities not previously provided in a city with strong cultural and literary roots.

Folio rents stylish rooms on the ground floor of the YMCA building in the heart of Seattle and not far from the city's beautiful new library. It's a little difficult getting in, with a buzzer required for access, but the rooms are spacious, light filled with a relaxed charm that is immediately inviting. There are reading spaces, work spaces and a large room that can easily be set up for performances without disturbing other users.

In terms of size, scale and scope of the Folio, there is much to learn from an organisation very similar in size to the Melbourne Athenaeum. It was a great opportunity to meet new friends and colleagues who share our literary and cultural passions. It couldn't be better said than by author **Bernadette Semple**, "I'm wildly excited about the Seattle Athenaeum and am giddily envisioning all the writing, reading and socializing I'll be doing there. What a wonderful and essential addition to our already exceedingly literary city."

Sue Westwood

FOLIO: The Seattle Athenaeum
314 Marion St, Seattle, WA 98104
info@folioseattle.org | www.folioseattle.org

Left: Inside the Folio.

(Photo: Rosemary Washington via Folio Facebook)

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.

ALEXANDRA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1877)

This Institute was built by **Thomas Carison** at contract price of £465.7s.8d and it opened in June 1883. As part of Murrindindi Library Service the building was extended in 2004-05. Late last year a contract was let to **Adobe Restoration** to undertake restoration of the façade. Their skilled hard plasterer **Simon Nygaard** undertook the intricate work. Whilst in town Simon addressed the **History Café** detailing his work on this and other heritage buildings on which he has worked.

BALLAARAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1859)

The phoenix rising, that is the **Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute**, never ceases to amaze at the depth of its programming. Fresh from its first **White Night** project designed by **Ellen Sorensen** which can be viewed on Vimeo and its groundbreaking **Twilight Talks**, the programs continue. Events like the upcoming: **Movie Luncheon** screening by **The Friends of The Zookeepers Wife** (2017) which tells the story Warsaw zookeepers Antonina and Jan Zabinski, who helped save hundreds of Jews; the **Max Harris Photography Collection Trivia Night**, showcasing their unique collection; the **Beers Through the Years** series which explores samples, the science, and Ballarat's brewing and hotel heritage; and **The Mik Maks - Working on the Farm Tour**, the new Australian voice in kid's music.

Of course we can't forget the now established bi-annual **World Sideshow Festival**, which brings acts like **The Headmaster from Norway**, and the world's greatest sideshow duo comedy act, **The Monsters of Schlock**, straight from the US of A. (Check out their impressive CVs on the 'net).

Then more and more can be seen highlighted in the ongoing library which continues to be an

enhanced feature of the building showcasing its heritage. Website: ballaratmi.org.au

BRIGHT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1874)



Photo: National Trust Database

Architect **JE Lindholm** of Wangaratta designed the current ornate blood and bandage brick building and it opened in 1910. Last year the **High Country Library Corporation** devolved management of the various libraries in its purview to the respective Shires. Consequently **Alpine Shire** now manages its own library network of Bright, Mt Beauty and Myrtleford. The **Friends of Bright Library**, currently led by **Rosemary Withers**, have played a local hands-on role in the transfer of management from High Country to Alpine Shire management. In recent times The Friends have placed a number of historic pictures around the library walls, featuring the century plus of community service. Also recently, pictures from the 2010 centenary celebration of the current building were framed and hung. The Friends' annual booksale is pending and a new banner has been made for its advertising.

GOORAMBAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1887)



This year celebrates the 130th anniversary of the founding of the **Goorambat Mechanics' Institute**. The Institute was established in 1887 and the Committee moved fast and were able to open their Hall on 18 September 1888. **Queen Elizabeth II** overnighted at the Goorambat siding on the Royal Train in 1954.

We recently dropped in on a two-day weekend Market and learned that the Devonshire tea stall yielded \$800 for the Hall!

KYABRAM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1890)



Since taking over management of the Institute building from Council in 2014, the **Kyabram Town Hall Inc.** Committee has been busy. The Committee was named as Campaspe Shire's Arts Group of the Year on Australia Day 2017. They hosted the **Emirates Melbourne Cup Tour** in 2016 which proved a major regional event.

The Institute also houses the **Isobel Harvie Collection** of Victorian and Edwardian historic clothing. This was gifted to the Kyabram community by **Isobel** and **Keith Harvie** in March 2013 on the understanding that it be given a permanent home. This proved the catalyst to bring the then vacant Institute building back to life.

So began Kyabram Town Hall Inc., which leased the building and with the aid of a \$24,400 Campaspe Council contribution and other locally sourced funding, it re-opened the refurbished building, with a large gallery and exhibition display spaces in November 2014. It also houses the town's **Rotary Arts Collection**, which supplements periodic exhibitions by local artists. The current exhibition from the Isobel Harvie Collection is titled 'Cherished Memories' and is 'All About Childrenswear -1900's to Current Day'. It is open until 12 June, daily 10am-4pm except Tuesdays. Website: kyabramtownhall.com.au

LARDNER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1885)

A suite of new water tanks is about to be installed around the Hall which will also provide for septic

tank and firefighting use. The present hall was largely built in 1925 and brick veneered in 1978 and is still well-used by the community and is kept in good condition by a small dedicated Committee of Management.

LILYDALE ATHENAEUM & MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1882)

The Board of the **Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company** recently recognised the long and distinguished contribution of three of its members: **Angela Caldwell**; **Maria Fleming**; and **Jean Steel**, by granting them Life Membership. We congratulate the recipients and commend the Board for publicly noting the service of their fellow members.

Lilydale has also been in the news for the right reasons having had nineteen nominations for the recent **LyreBird Awards**, three of which were successful. And the recipients were: **Robin Le Grand**, for 'Best Lighting in Comedy', *Yes, Prime Minister*; **Graham McGuffie**, for 'Best Set in Comedy', also for *Yes, Prime Minister*; and **Claire Hanley** for 'Best Supporting Actor in Comedy', with *The Vicar of Dibley*. Forthcoming shows include: **High Society**; and **Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks**. Website: lilydaleatc.com.

LITTLE RIVER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1910)

One of Victoria's enduring regional community libraries is that run by the **Little River Mechanics' Institute Free Library** since 1911. The original objectives of the Institute still hold true '*The Little River Mechanics' Institute and Free Library has for its object the diffusion of Literary, Scientific and other useful knowledge, and the supply of rational indoor recreation*'. There has been a continuous succession of Librarians and the current Co-Librarians are Peter and Sue Jones.

The Library is open every second Saturday between 10am-12 noon and offers its growing collection, including children's books, mostly for loan. Current Council documents can also be inspected during these times. The Government granted Little River *Listed Public Library* status in 2014, having considered it has continuously operated from the same site and room, with original intact shelving since 1911.

In January, Australia Day was celebrated at the Library with a novel event **Children's Books and Billy Tea**, which was well received, and will most probably become an annual event.

The Library has also issued an informative trifold information flyer for potential library

users themed 'Something for nothing since 1911.' It gives its opening dates, and its collections policy and the desire to build on current strengths: local and regional history, including indigenous history and rural themes; fiction, by listed romance authors; and non-fiction, travel tales and biographies of excellence. It lists some of its prize possessions and invites membership in either of two categories: Family, \$5; and Book Plate, \$30. The latter enables the Librarians to purchase a needed book and entitles the Book Plate Member to have their name inscribed in the book. The membership form also canvasses reader interests, and children's age ranges. In all a very thoughtful production and we commend those involved. For further information Little River check out their Member's Pages on the MIV website.

MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM LIBRARY (Est. 1839)

Indeed 'The Pleasure of Words!' But the **Melbourne Athenaeum Library** has more, there are also several Book and Screen Clubs, a Games Group and a quiet place right in the heart of Melbourne's CBD, to read the papers and where you can access free internet, Wi-Fi and use iPads in the library. And if you are into e-books these can also be 'borrowed' and technical advice is available on the use of e-readers and tablets.

Upcoming events

Inventi Ensemble Musical Performance - Friday, 2 June 2017, 6-7pm

One of the library's most popular musical groups, the Inventi Ensemble, is back for another performance, on Friday, 2 June at 6pm.

Inventi will present their arrangement of Saint-Saens' **Carnival of the Animals** with Ogden Nash's verses, and a pairing of Tomasz Spiewak's **Preludes for Vibraphone** and solo Bach works.

The concert is free for members and non-members are very welcome for just \$10. Refreshments provided. If you'd like to attend please call 9650 3100 or email library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au

Judy Horacek: Cartooning and Collaborating - Wednesday, 5 July 2017, 6-7pm

Freelance cartoonist, illustrator and writer, Judy Horacek will discuss how humour, cartooning and collaborating can be used to make the world a better place for adults and children alike. She is currently published twice weekly in *The Age*, has published eight cartoon collections and is about to release her ninth, *Random Life. Yellow is My Colour Star* and *The Story of Growl* are just two

of her children's books, and with Mem Fox she created the instant children's classic and award winning *Where is the Green Sheep?*

Free event, but Bookings required, (03) 9650 3100 or library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au

MOONAMBEL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1901)

The Moonambelles and Moonambellites are busy preparing for their big **Back to Moonambel** weekend on 24-25 November. And what a program they have planned for you. Events include: a theatrical performance by the Moonambel Community Theatre Co.; market; historical displays; and a Cabaret evening. It would be good to get an MIV delegation up to visit for the Plaque Unveiling. If you can help with any history or memorabilia or are planning to visit Moonambel for the Back To, register your interest with: Jill Hunter by emailing: douglasdiva@activ8.net.au. If you are looking for a good quiet country venue to hire, specifications and a plan can be viewed on the Central Highlands Arts Atlas website: artsatlas.com.au.

NEWHAM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1902)



Newham continue to shine with the March sell-out appearance of British folk singer **Martha Tilston**. Newham is also finding the traditional Mechanics' fare of lectures a rewarding and engaging subject. Their previous Winter Series ran into Spring. Their successful format is every Friday night with a start time of 7.30pm with a gold coin admission. The bar opens at 6.30pm with a range of nibbles. The lecture lasts for forty-five minutes with questions after, followed by a cuppa. Look out for the next series and other events. Website: newhamhall.com or email your ongoing interest to nmi@newham.vic.au.

PRAHRAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)

As membership of **Prahran Mechanics' Institute** edges closer to one thousand, we are reminded of what 'finding your niche' is all about. Prahran offers the largest single collection of

Victorian history outside the State Library, and what is more it can be borrowed. So if you are into local history, writing a history of your town, its Institute or your family then Prahran or one of its subsidiary collections: the **Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre**; **Cinema and Theatre Historical Society**; or the **Australian Railways Historical Society (Victorian Division)** is a must see and use. Their catalogue is on-line and they engage in interlibrary loan. They also have Ancestry.com for use. Website: pmi.net.au

ROMSEY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1868)



Members of the RSL sub-branch along with RMI Committee of Management members, Mary-Anne and Jodie Turner (Macedon Ranges Shire) with toddler Katy and conservators in front of the soon to be restored Honour Rolls. Photo: Kathy Lakey

Late last year the **Romsey Mechanics' Institute Committee of Management** successfully applied for a grant to repair and restore the two WWI Honour Rolls that have hung in the Romsey Mechanics' Institute since the early 1920s. These rolls record every Romsey service-person who served during WWI.

All told the works will cost \$5,400. Of this the Department of Premier and Cabinet will fund \$4,100, with the remainder coming from the Committee of Management. It is roughly a 80/20 split.

On Friday, 3 March 2017, state MP for the seat of Macedon, **Mary-Anne Thomas** officially announced the grant and urged people to seriously consider applying for the next round which closes within a few weeks. She spoke of the growing confidence in the many community groups noting that this was a very positive sign for the future of the whole town.

The repair and restoration work will be carried out by Kyneton conservators **Duncan** and **Christine Rolley** with the project expected to be finished towards the end of May.

Members of the Romsey/Lancefield sub-branch of the RSL attended the ceremony and

were very pleased that these wonderful records of the past were to be brought back to their original condition.

The two Honour Rolls will have all the paint removed from the wooden frames, new glass installed and all necessary repair/restoration works to the actual rolls carried out. Once repaired and restored the Honour Rolls will be hung within the main hall on an internal wall and out of direct sunlight. The Committee of Management will install lighting to highlight them.

Anthony Lakey
Chair, Romsey Mechanics' Institute,
Committee of Management

TALBOT FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1870)

Talbot continues its library role and has been operating in the former Court House building since 1881. Staffed by a group of dedicated volunteers, the library currently opens on Tuesdays from 2-4pm and Saturdays 10am-12 noon. It also acts as a depot for the Maryborough library where books can be ordered and returned.

The group also periodically conducts lectures on Friday nights as a fundraiser and hosts the Annual Community Barbecue.

Odd Spot

On the MIV bus tour was **Bob Flavell** (of Miners Rest stage curtain fame) and his wife **Loris** and we had a chat. Indeed a small world! Bob's mother **Melanie 'Dolly' Johnson** attended the Telangatuk East State School from 1920-27, during which time it was located in the **Telangatuk East Mechanics' Institute**.

In *UK 42* we noted 'The old [Telangatuk East] Hall was sold by auction in 1928 to a local farmer Richard Johnson.' That was Melanie's father, and therefore Bob's grandfather. Bob's father, **Thomas Lexington Flavell** was a teacher, and he taught at Telangatuk East State School from April 1929-December 1932 and then shifted on to Berontha State School, near Nhill. Tom and Melanie were married in Hamilton on 12 May 1935, and processed around a number of schools: Urangara; Banyan Reserve; Trawalla; Miners Rest; Bungaree; and Trafalgar East, from where he retired in November 1964. Tom passed away at Ballarat in 1989 and Dolly in 1997.

Thank you Bob for that fascinating piece of information.

The Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

GERRINGONG SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1882)



Photo: www.kiama.nsw.gov.au

News has just come through that the NSW Government has made its share available of the \$3 million redevelopment of the Institute and its precinct. The existing museum will move into the Institute and the museum annexe will be demolished to make way for a new community library complex. The two facilities will be joined by a shared 'amenities block', including kitchen and rest rooms. **Kiama Council** have the \$1 for \$1 share on their forthcoming estimates and it is hopeful that work will start by the end of the year.

NAROOMA SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1895)



Photo: Peter Williams/monumentaaustralia.org.au

The **Narooma School of Arts**, which hosts the art deco **Kinema**, has just received a Government grant of \$197, 439 for three tranches of work to upgrade the theatre complex. Erected in 1925-26, the building was extended in the early 1930s and again in 1955. The cinema is conducted by independent operators **John** and **Janette Griffiths**.

SYDNEY MECHANICS' SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1833)

The recent 'new look' AGM of the **Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts** saw **Winsome Allen**

elected as President. Winsome becomes the second woman to have held that position. The first was **Carole O'Brien** from 1997-2003, who is still a Director. Other office-bearers elected are: **Max Williams**, Treasurer; **Alister Wong**, Vice-President - Strategic Planning; **Cecile Cornford**, Vice-President - Member Services; **Geoff Webb**, Vice-President - Building; and **Paul Reid**, Vice-President - Governance.

In addition three new Directors were elected, namely **Mark Brandon OAM**, **Annette Devrell** and **Steve Warren**. **Tom Thorburn**, a longstanding member of the School, left the Board after many years of valuable service.

This was the first year of applying the recently adopted rule changes to voting with pre-polling for the week before the Annual General Meeting. It resulted in an increased number of voting members and provides a good foundation for increased member participation in future years.

At the same time our membership has reached a level not seen for many years; as at 31 January there were 1549 approved members! Hopefully this is a very positive reflection on the services and programs offered by the School, but population growth and the increase of people residing in the central business district are also other factors. This year will see a substantial focus on strategic planning and setting the School's aspirations and goals for the future. Interesting times ahead and opportunities abound!

Brian Johnston,
Secretary, Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts

QUEENSLAND

BOOIE FARMERS' HALL (Est. 1927)



Located 12km from Kingaroy, the township was surveyed in the early 1900s. Booie is Aboriginal for 'black snake'. The area is now on the **Gourmet Tourism** route.

The move to build a hall started in 1927. A Crown grant was obtained. **Bill Abrahamson** gave the hardwood timber trees and **Seiler** and

Ross the crow's ash trees for the floor. **Harry** and **Jack McAuliffe** felled and barked trees and these were snigged by **Charlie** and **Les Knowles** and their bullock team to the mill site on Bill Abrahamson's place near the Hall.

There the timber was milled by **Ned Ferguson** and **Jack Ewart's** portable sawmill from April-June 1928. The crow's ash flooring was to be later finished at Raventy's sawmill at Nanango.

Contractor **JO Hanson** started work on building the Hall sometime in May 1930, but the winter held up work. It was officially opened by **James Braidwood Edwards**, MLA (1879-1952) in late 1930. It is believed either of the **Radunz** twins or **Neils Sorenson** played the accordion for the evening dance.

During World War II, the 2nd / 6th Battalion established a camp at Broadwater and dances were held in the Hall on Monday and Wednesday nights. A bus brought people out from Kingaroy for the occasion. A feature was the singing of popular wartime songs at the Hall and on the bus to and from Boogie.

The Hall was decorated in red, white and blue streamers and a large V was hung from the Hall rafters during wartime.

The Hall served four district schools: Boogie; Barker's Creek; Hillsdale; and Malar, as well as a number of sporting groups, including the Boogie Racing Club.

Electricity was connected in 1963 and Nanango Shire President **Allan Anger** officiated.

The Hall was extended in 1962. Later, ladies' toilets, an enlarged supper room and men's toilets were added.

The hall is noted for its long-running Annual Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve dances. The Boogie Dance Hall Group also conduct periodic dances in the hall.

YANGAN SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1897)

After the write up on Yangan School of Arts in *UK42*, Queensland member **Steve Kellermeier** was kind enough to send on some recent photos he took on a trip out to Yangan in September 2016.



The current School of Arts building.



Yangan Masonic Hall, the former School of Arts.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

COONALPYN INSTITUTE (Est. 1904)



Photo: Wikipedia User: Dalekerrigan

Located about 160km south-east of Adelaide, Coonalpyn is an original part of the Ninety Mile Desert and was part of the 'Coonalpyn Downs' landholding of **John Barton Hack**. The Murray Bridge to Border Town railway passed through in 1886 and a Post Office opened in 1887. The township was proclaimed in 1909.

A group of Lutheran settlers moved into the area in the 1920s and two congregations were formed: Bethlehem in 1930; and Immanuel in 1940. These combined in 1966.

The wider area was developed by the Australian Mutual Provident Society from 1949, when more than 70,000 acres were cleared of scrub and large-scale cropping resulted in the grain silos being built in 1965, with additions in 1968.

Electricity came to the area in 1961 and a water pipeline was constructed between Tintinara and Keith in 1968. The Coonalpyn Downs Council was merged into the regional Coorong District Council in 1995.

The town has hosted an annual agricultural show since 1944 and has a regional swimming pool.

In April 1904 'A largely attended public meeting was held here on Saturday evening to consider the desirability of taking steps to erect a hall, which is badly needed. It was unanimously decided to erect a hall 30ft long by 18ft wide.'

Another meeting followed in May 1904 'The building of a hall was further considered at a meeting last Saturday, at which Mr Venning presided. Mr Drummond moved 'that the size of the hall be altered from 25x15ft to 20x15ft' Mr Hender moved as an amendment 'That the building of the hall be deferred until after another harvest, as money was scarce in the district. The amendment was carried, and the building committee was instructed to act until the building is completed. Messrs J Hill, GE Venning, PJ Green, Hender and Hollingholme were appointed trustees.' (The resulting hall is now a private home.)

A new 50ft x 30ft hall was proposed in 1938, but the War intervened. Eventually the foundation stone was laid by Minister of Public Works **Malcolm McIntosh** on 9 January 1953. The 120ft x 40ft two storey Institute was built of stone by **T Royans** and cost £8,700. All stone, sand and screenings had been obtained without cost. Grain donations realised £2000; the Women's Auxiliary £1500; and the Girls Club £350. Eight hundred people attended the opening by the Premier **Mr Thomas Playford** on 6 November 1953. 'A Buccaneers' Ball followed which raised £400.'

It was a cinema site with an external entry to the biobox. Today it houses the community centre and archive.

In 2017 the **Sew and Sews Quilting and Sewing Club** meet most Monday nights in the Institute. **Women in Agriculture and Business** also meet there monthly.

TASMANIA

AVOCA WAR MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1907)



Photo: www.avocatasmania.com

Located in the Fingal Valley at the convergence of the St Paul's and South Esk Rivers, the area was firstly known as Camp Hill, then St Pauls Plains. It was named by surveyor and explorer **John Wedge** in 1833 after the 'Sweet Vale of Avoca' in County Wicklow, Ireland.

The community initially used Foster's (Union Hotel) Hall, until the Public Hall was built between May-June 1907 by **C Adams & Sons** from Launceston, with **William Gadsby** as foreman.

The hall or court room was 40ft x 25 ft, with a stage, a porch 16ft x 10ft, and two ante-rooms, the whole being 56.5ft long. There was also an accompanying four-roomed police house with a verandah and picket fence.

These 'public offices' were officially opened on 14 August 1907 in the afternoon, with a social luncheon, concert and dance in the evening. The hall was extended in 1953 and is still in use today.

FRIENDS OF THE LAUNCESTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 2013)

The multi-skilled personnel of the **Friends** have re-created a virtual library on their blog space. It's been quite a ride since that first meeting on 18 October 2013, when FOLMI was established but the reality of its own permanent space (Room 007 on the University of Tasmania's Newnham Campus) is drawing nearer.

The saving of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Collection is something that we are now the much richer for, as of books and their associated minutiae reveal much more than could initially be envisioned.

One of the latest posts (15 April 2017) is on 'St John Browne and the *Penny Cyclopaedia*'. This was the brainchild of the **Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge** (SDUK) and its publisher **Charles Knight**. They took advantage of the new steam driven Applegarth and Cowper printing presses installed by printer **William Clowes**. They produced the *Penny Cyclopaedia* by the thousand, and they were read by hundreds of thousands of teenagers and adults. There is evidence of syndicates of workers being formed to buy a copy and it would do the rounds of the syndicate of perhaps ten people.

Launceston resident **St John Browne** gifted his set of twenty-seven volumes 1828-1843, with the three supplements, to the Launceston Institute in 1861.

Read more on the FOLMI blogspace. FOLMI is also on: [instagram.com/lmi_books/](https://www.instagram.com/lmi_books/)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HAMEL AGRICULTURAL HALL (Est. early 1900s)

Named for politician and solicitor **Lancel Victor de Hamel**, the village lies some 120km north of Perth. In 1898 the land for the township was purchased from the de Hamel estate and subdivided by the Crown.

The Hall was built in the 1890s and used as a short-term adjunct prison to that of



Photo: www.waroona.wa.gov.au

Fremantle. The low-security prisoners cleared the surrounding seventy acres of land, established a large vegetable garden and built the hall, a cookhouse-dining room, a warder's cottage and outbuildings.

The prison closed in 1907 and the remaining prisoners were transferred to Rottnest Island. The Hall was then transferred to community use. In 1912 the site was placed under the management of the Forests Department and it became a tree nursery. Concern arose about fire risk and accessibility and in 1917 it was decided to shift the hall from the plantation area to be nearer the town.

The Hall was relocated to its present site in 1919, a distance of 730 metres, by using logs under the building which were pulled by **Antonio Maschetti's** horse team.

The relocated hall was lit by acetylene gas until electricity was switched on to the area.

Serving as the community Post Office between 1965-77, in 1979 the Hall was classed as unuseable and demolition was threatened. The community rallied and it was gradually restored in the 1980s by the **Hamel Hall Restoration Management Committee** and was reopened in 1991.

The fate of the township hangs in the balance, for it lies within declared the 5km buffer zone of the proposed Alcoa Wagerup Alumina Refinery.

UNITED KINGDOM

MANCHESTER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1824)

We see that Labour has returned to its homeland where the Trades Union Congress first assembled at the **Manchester Mechanics' Institute** in 1868. Labour legends **Arthur Scargill** of Miners' Union fame and long-time Labour activist **Ricky Tomlinson** addressed a full house on 6 April on the subject of 'Socialism or Repression?' Last year Arthur gave the May Day Address at the Institute and received a standing ovation.



Manchester Mechanics' Institute

Photo: Wikipedia User: KJP1

OTLEY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1839)

At a meeting on 28 March 2017 **Otley Town Council** resolved in two clear aims. Firstly, Council is committed to the tenancy of the Orchard Gate premises for the remainder of its ten year term until March 2023. To break that lease would result in a payout of £30,000 a year until 2023. 'Secondly, the Resolution reasserts the strong desire of the Town Council for Leeds City Council – the owners of the building – to prioritise uses for the Civic Centre that benefit the Otley community.'

The Council communiqué goes on 'It is the duty and responsibility of the building's owners – Leeds City Council – to listen to the Otley community and find a solution to the challenge of restoring this long-neglected building that benefits our community.'

SWINDON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)

The long drawn out saga of the fate of the historic **Swindon Institute** was taken to the public with a sold out preview of a 'daring new vision for Swindon's railway village' with the Institute as a key feature. The **New Mechanics' Institution Trust's** Director **Daniel Rose** gave the meeting the full bottle on a proposed staged £20 million ambitious restoration/ redevelopment of the site. This Grade II listed building has been vacant since 1986 and has been in Council ownership for almost a decade.

UNITED STATES

SUNSHINE HALL FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1916)

Located in Sullivan County at the very south of New York State, the area abuts the Delaware River, which is the border with Pennsylvania. Because of its access to water, the region was an early industrial and lumber shipping centre. Today the area is known as a tourist destination.



Photo: sunshinehallfreelibrary.org

Chartered in 1916, the **Sunshine Hall Free Library**, has historically and still does serve the neighbouring towns of Highland and Lumberland. Today it is part of the **Ramapo Catskill Library System** and membership gives access to all the forty-seven constituent libraries.

A very active **Friends of Sunshine Hall Free Library**, established in 1998, stages a varied program of activities based on the library and these range from lectures, recitals, exhibitions and workshops. All are provided free, thanks to external funding.

The Library has community internet computers, wi-fi, word processing, faxing and copying facilities. It also has a public access **Ultimaker 2go** 3D printer, which can be booked by way of prior submissions of a design.

Besides the intriguing library logo, the logo and slogans for the **Century of Sunshine 1916-2016** and **100 Years of Sunshine** are worthy of emulation.

A belated 'Happy Hundredth' to the Sunshine Hall and all those connected with it.

Website: sunshinehallfreelibrary.org



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT ON MECHANICS' INSTITUTES (ICRPMI)



Dr Sarah Comyn

Spin off from **MW 2016 - Reinvention** in San Francisco is already starting to happen with several speakers at the **UK Independent Libraries Association Conference** 'Bricks, Shelves, Books and

People: Building for the Future' at Chawton House, House, Alton, Hampshire on 2-4 June, having been at **MW 2016**. These include: **Catherine Kerrigan** from Adelaide; **Deb Hunt** from San Francisco; and **Eve Hartley** from Huddersfield; and **Sian Williams** from Swansea.

In February we met with **Dr Sarah Comyn**, who is part of the University College, Dublin **SouthHem** research team. See report below.

UPDATE ON SOUTHEM PROJECT

Members of the ERC-funded **SouthHem Team**, based in Dublin, have been very busy sourcing and digitising library, bookseller and auction catalogues from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the Straits Settlements for the period 1783-1870. They have thus far found over 400 catalogues with approximately 10% of those consisting of catalogues of Mechanics' Institute libraries. They are in the process of developing a website where visitors will be able to access these catalogues. They will also be providing descriptive glosses about the history of the various catalogues, the people and organisations that produced them, and the collections they

represented. *Useful Knowledge* will be given the details as soon as the website is live in September 2017.

One of the postdoctoral fellows, **Dr Sarah Comyn**, will be visiting Victoria in May and June of this year to carry out research at various Mechanics' Institutes. In addition to researching the surviving library collections of the early institutes, she is interested in the lectures and popular readings frequently held there. Her research will take her to Ballarat, Bendigo, Beechworth, Chiltern and Stanley.

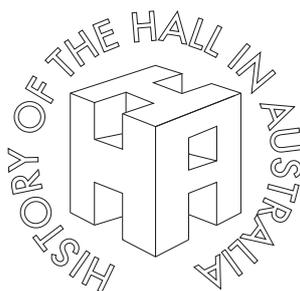
Sarah Comyn, ERC Postdoctoral Fellow, SouthHem Project, University College Dublin

HISTORY OF THE HALL IN AUSTRALIA

The publication of Pam Baragwanath and Ken James *Ubiquitous and Necessary: Australia's Mechanics' Institutes, Schools of Arts, Etc.: A Research Guide* is attracting comment and reviews from a wide range of sources. The message is starting to really bite: **Mechanics' Institutes and their ilk were a pivotal part of community and its infrastructure in the foundation of regional Australia.**

Our next step is to convince those administrators who run the various Public History courses in tertiary institutions that investigation of the **History of the Hall in Australia** can turn up a wealth of subsidiary and secondary information.

We were recently privy to a file that had been compiled, largely about the history of lighting in halls. From the lamps and candles that were lit and pulled up to the ceiling; the various gas generators; the 32 volt generator with accompanying batteries; and even early connection to hydro and wind sources; all prior to the lauded 'switch on' to the State grid.



Similarly people are working on the history of cinema in Australia and the hall record will show when screenings started from the travelling picture show man using lamps, to ones that progressed to 32 volt generators; the volatility of film stock; to biobox construction in various indoor and outdoor configurations; projectors; screens; and box offices, with ticket windows still in evidenced.

One aspect that has not been highlighted is the use of halls by commercial travellers for setting up displays of their wares for shopkeepers to come in and view.

One could certainly go on. But what every reader of this column can do is to ensure all MI records are digitised and in Victoria this is done through MIV at no cost. If you know of the exact location of a former Institute let us know and we can note it and perhaps cover it as part of a future **'Where They Stood'**. Another is to research the history of your local hall or halls and send a copy to MIV for the **Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre** located at Prahran.

FUTURE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE CONFERENCES

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES AUSTRALIA – 2018

It is now over fifteen years since the call went out for potential participants in the first ever National **Mechanics' Institutes Australia** Conference at the **Melbourne Athenaeum**. We are now repeating that call for another National gathering, this time at the **Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute** in November 2018.

In 2000 all States, save Northern Territory were represented along, with the UK and New Zealand, at **MIA - Melbourne**. We are confident that this can be repeated. We are keen to note the progress of the Institute movement since then, as well as celebrating the coming of age of MIV, which will then be in its twenty-first year. It will also celebrate the Institute people who have played pivotal roles in their various Institutes or in research. Think about a Paper, as these will be called for early next year.

Record your interest with: mivenquiry@live.com.au to be kept informed.

MW 2021 - EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

Following on the success of **Reinvention** at **MW 2016 - San Francisco** it was foreshadowed that the **MW 2021** would in all probability be in Edinburgh, Scotland at Heriot-Watt University, a 'Mechanics' University'. This will celebrate the bicentennial of the establishment of the **Edinburgh School Arts**.

However, **MW 2021 - Edinburgh** will not be a history lesson, but it will set out to show just what the Mechanics' Institute Movement achieved and how it influenced around the world. It will also provide an opportunity for national researchers on the various continents to present their progressive reports as part of the **International Cooperative Research Project on Mechanics' Institutes**. In the first instance record your interest with: bronlowden@hotmail.com.

Keep informed - join MIV
vicnet.net.au/~mivic/membership

Where They Stood

BROADFORD MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1888)

Our attention has been brought to an article which appeared in the *Broadford Courier* of 13 October 1911 about an exhibition in the **Broadford Mechanics' Institute** mounted by **Barry Jagers**.

'The Australia Fair. A Beautiful Scenic Display. The Australia Fair in aid of the Broadford Presbyterian Church new building was opened on Thursday last in the Mechanics' in the presence of a very large gathering.

The opening ceremony was performed by Mr **RI Argyle**, MLA, who complimented all connected with the fair on arranging such an excellent display, and hoped that the effort would be a great success, and so be able to realise the anticipated effort in connection with a new church building.

The stall fittings and mountings supplied by Mr Barry Jagers completely transformed the appearance of the hall into one of scenic splendour, and the effect was heightened by the galaxy of brilliantly coloured flags in many devices that spreads like a canopy over it all. The scene is a very striking one, and in what ever direction one wanders, scenery of many lands meets the eye. Perhaps the most striking of all was the scene of the antartic [sic] regions which filled the stage opening. It represents an antartic [sic] exploring vessel in its winter quarters tightly wedged in by ice floes, while the heavens are suffused by the brilliant glow of the aurora. At the foot of this an orchestra of several performers enlivened each evenings' proceedings with some fine spirited music.

A walk among the stalls, which were erected in gorgeous colourings represented the States and other colonies, were devoted to various forms of articles for sale. The Victorian stall which contained a varied collection of useful fancy articles. The Maori house with the tinge of brown and elaborate carvings of the Maori, was stocked with produce of all kinds. The kitchen stall, representative of tropical Queensland. The flower and sweet stalls also command attention of passers by for their unique paintings and decoration in true artistic style. The refreshment



stall is set out in real beauty, the colours vising [sic] with the daintily adorned tables of appetising vivands. The penny dip does not lose its attraction, for it is associated with a gold mine, where the young people risked their brownies for a bonanza.

Entertainments and sideshows were conducted each evening by Mr Jagers and his assistants, both on the stage and places specially erected for the purpose. Each night Punch and Judy enacted over again their well known history, and no doubt to the visitors were taken back to their Punch and Judy days. Conjuring, the America trunk mystery, and other items were given by Vulcan, mystery in art by Mr Jagers, and an exhibition in paper folding by Mr Wilson. Among the side shows of a mystifying character which was given to the presence of very large audiences, was a trip beneath the sea, in which the ocean bed was exposed to view, the fish were seen swimming about. The enchanted cave had its attraction for its weird happenings. The Galatea illusion, Te Pakeha, the legend of a mysterious Maori princess, and other novelties kept sight-seers on the move each evening.

There was a very good attendance of young folk at the Matinee on Saturday afternoon when entertainments were given.

At the closing night there was a very large attendance, sometimes there being hardly standing room.

Though it may take a few weeks before a final settlement takes place it is finally expected that the building fund will benefit to the extent of a hundred pounds.'

The Broadford Mechanics' Institute was established in 1888. A site was purchased and the Hall was built and opened in 1890. The library opened in 1891, with two hundred volumes, a number of which were donated by Miss Gavan and others. The library closed in the late 1930s. The building also served as a Council Chamber, Court House, Lodge Room, Baby Health Centre and skating rink. Pictures were screened there from the early 1920s-1958. The Institute was demolished in 1973.

Curtain Call

BIRREGURRA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1865)

In amongst the various photos of the Birregurra Mechanics' Hall in connection with its **big Arts announcement** was one showing a stage backdrop. An investigation reveals that it was painted by **Jack Henderson** for the 1985 Back to Birregurra.

Universally known as 'Jack', John Savage Henderson was born in Drouin on 18 July 1912, the eldest son of Kerang-born **Allan Robertson Henderson** (1881-1966) and Euroa-born **Grace Annie Young**, nee **Savage** (1882-1941). His father conducted AR Henderson & Co. as a general store in partnership with his brother **James McCallum** (1871-1958) and a 'Mr Parry' in Drouin.

Jack was to have two brothers, **Robertson Allan 'Robert'** (1918-2006) and **Keith Rollo** (1923-88) and a sister **Fay**, all were to be born at Drouin. Jack attended Drouin State School and after his parents moved to Melbourne in 1924 he appears to have attended a technical college where he developed an interest in architecture. His family remember him making models of buildings, doing sketch plans, and that he was good with his hands.

Another family move in the early 1930s, saw a shift to Birregurra where his father took over the Birregurra General Store and Newsagency. Jack was a keen tennis player and he became Secretary of the Birregurra Tennis Club in 1937.

At the outbreak World War II, Jack enlisted as No. VX5055 in the Australian Army from Birregurra at Geelong on 24 October 1939 and served in the 2nd/6th Infantry Battalion and was discharged with the rank of Corporal on



Photo: Sylvia Tyrer

15 December 1941. There is family hearsay that Jack injured his elbow, and had spent a prolonged period in hospital, and this may have caused his discharge from field service. However he was considered fit for administrative duties and he re-enlisted as No V145589 from Burwood at Royal Park on 10 January 1942 and served in Australia until he was discharged as Warrant Officer Class 2 from Headquarters, Australian Military Forces on 20 March 1946.

Both his brothers enlisted: Robert in the Army as a Gunner from 1943; and Keith in the Royal Australian Air Force and saw service over Europe. Both returned. Jack and Keith went to work in their father's store and eventually took it over.

We can't be sure what prompted Jack to take up the call to paint the Birregurra stage backdrop, but he may have remembered his father's involvement back at Drouin when he stumped up a respectable five guineas to help rebuild the Drouin Mechanics' Institute after it had burned down in 1918. In any case he was good for the task in 1985 and this appears to be his lasting work. Unmarried he was something of a loner. Jack died on 9 November 1990 and is buried in the Birregurra General Cemetery.

Whilst they no longer run the General Store, the Henderson name is still well known, Jack's nephew **Ian Henderson** is the local vet and his son **Lachie** currently plays football for Geelong.

Left: Birregurra Public Hall (Photo: Wikimedia Commons User: Mattinbgn)



Ex-Libris - FROM THE SHELVES OF A MECHANICS' LIBRARY

The Mechanics' Institutes are known universally for their libraries, which were in most cases the first in the many communities in which they were established. Whilst many books were taken to the local tip or sold, even the blandest title can tell us much about the Institute and the conduct of its library.

Our title for this issue is ex-libris **Emerald Mechanics' Institute**, which was established on the eastern fringe of Melbourne in 1904.

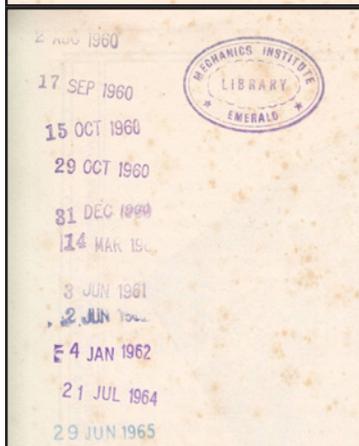
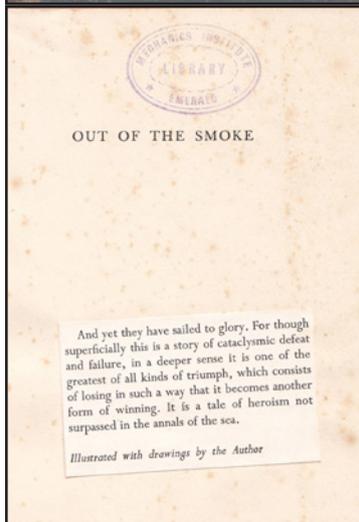
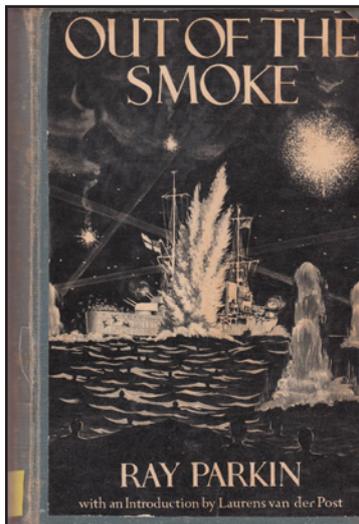
Titled *Out of the Smoke: The Story of a Sail*, it is authored by **Raymond Edward 'Ray' Parkin** (1910-2005) and has line illustrations throughout and endpaper maps drawn by the author. It has an introduction by **Laurens van der Post** (1906-96), whom he met as a fellow Japanese Prisoner of War.

Published in 1960 by the Hogarth Press in London, a business established by **Leonard and Virginia Woolf** in 1917, it was co-published in Canada by [William H] Clarke, [John CW] Irwin & Co. in Toronto, a business started in 1930.

Hardbound in skyblue cloth, the book was printed and bound by T and A Constable Ltd of Edinburgh, a firm which could trace its antecedents back to 1760.

The book appears to have been bought new by the Institute for the first borrowing stamp is of 2 August 1960. It carries twenty-six other borrowing stamps until the last of 5 July 1975.

Markings throughout the book include a handwritten 'N.F.' [presumably Non Fiction] on the front free endpaper. The book's clipped blurbs are pasted opposite the half title and on the half title. The latter carried the oval stamp, in purple, circled with 'Mechanics' Institute - Emerald', and 'Library' in the centre. (It is noted that this stamp varies from that which appears in Pam Baragwanath and Ken James' *These Walls Speak Volumes* which carries the wording 'Emerald Mechanics' Institute and Library'. The book then remains unmarked until a blank page at the end which carries the library



stamp and borrower stamps. These stamps continue on the free endpaper and pastedown. It carries the pencil marking '\$1-00' on the free front endpaper, presumably for what the Institute sold it.

The cover and rear of the book carry the front and back panels of the dustjacket, clipped and pasted down. The book cover does not have the usual painted varnish treatment. A 20mm wide yellow blank tape is pasted at the base of the spine.

The book tells the story of Parkin's wartime experience aboard the cruiser HMAS *Perth*, which was sunk by the Japanese on 1 March 1942. He and nine other crew swam or were washed ashore on a small island. There they found a steel life boat and sailed and rowed for sixteen days until they reached Tjilatjap, where they were taken prisoner of war. As a POW Parkin did numerous sketches and when he was sent to Japan these were given to surgeon **Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop**, who secreted them away until the end of the war. Sir Edward later returned them to Parkin, who by this time was working on the Melbourne wharves as a tally clerk.

Parkin wrote two other books of his wartime experiences: *Into the Smother* (1963); and *The Sword and the Blossom* (1968). However he is best known for his definitive award winning two-volume work *HM Bark Endeavour: Her Place in Australian History* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1997), which details **James**

Cook's 1770 voyage to Australia, and specifically the sea voyage drawings of **Sydney Parkinson**. A biography, *Ray Parkin's Odyssey*, authored by **Pattie Wright**, was published in 2012.

The History Page

MUSIC AT THE BOOIE HALL

We have recently been shown a small booklet *Booie Hall: Golden Jubilee Celebrations Saturday, January 24, 1981*. The booklet in itself tells a fascinating story, but loose inside were three photographs. Two of the hall, as advised on the back as being taken from (Nth) and from the (Sth), which shows the new extension and signage.

The other was the one that caught our eye, of two elderly gents, one at the piano and another on the piano accordion. It was marked 'Jubilee Concert/ The Radunz Twins (identical), who enjoyed swapping over [roles] to confuse people. They claim [to have] played at the first dance at the Booie Hall.'

The district of Booie is located near Kingaroy in the South Burnett Region of Queensland. The district was surveyed in the 1880s, and a school reserve is shown in 1888, but never built on until 1905 and remained open until 1963. The largely timbered area was not settled until the 1890s, and a cemetery reserve was set aside in 1907. The holdings were small and settlers would clear an acre of ground and build a hut of slabs, with a bark roof.

Entertainment was firstly at Harry Levick's barn, which had a wooden-slab floor, but when he sold his property social activities were transferred to the barn of Bill Abe (Abrahamson), with music provided by Jim Ross, who rode thirty miles to the venue.

Glad Hood's Booie Jubilee Poem then takes up the story. 'In the twenties funds were short/ Though they played a bit of sport,/ But their hearts were young and gay,/ So the farmers out Booie way/ Got together for yarn,/ Held their dances in a barn,/ Kept admission prices small,/ They were saving for a hall.'

By 1928 enough funds were in hand to enable the Committee to plan a building and all participated either in donating trees, cutting them down, and/or snigging and carting them to a nearby site where Ned Ferguson and Jack Ewart had set up their travelling sawmill. The crow ash flooring, after being milled, was sent to Raventy's sawmill at Nanango to be planed smooth.

The application for a land grant was less prompt and was not approved until February 1930 and contractor 'PO Hansen' [probably in fact local building contractor Hans Peter Hansen] did not start until after May. The opening of the **Booie Farmers' Hall** took place later in the year, at which **James Braidwood Edwards** MLA officiated, and the Radunz twins (Otto and Alf) and/or Niels Sorenson played.

Otto David and **Alfred Henry Radunz** numbered among the sixteen children of Johannes Gottlieb



Leberecht Radunz (1866-1933) and Magdalena Dorothea, nee Lotz (1869-1964). Their parents had moved to the nearby Coolabunia area in the early 1900s. Identical twins Otto and Alf were born on 18 June 1910 and like the rest of the family they became accomplished musicians being able to play a number of instruments. They successfully competed in local eisteddfods and shows, and worked as woodcutters during the day and travelled the district playing for dances at night. Relishing in their 'likeness', they dressed identically and would swap places on instruments during breaks confusing all. Even their siblings had trouble identifying them, and it was only in later life that Alf had a car accident and sustained a cut and subsequent scar on his right cheek that they could be positively told apart.

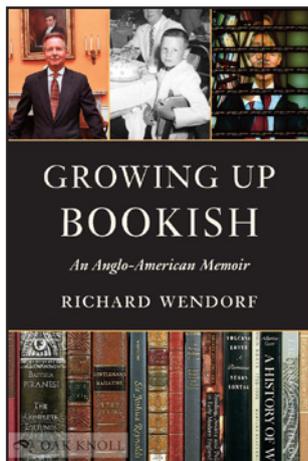
Otto and Alf married the Wagner sisters, Isabell Mary Lila (1914-76) and Elsie Ruth Henrietta (1912-1942), respectively on the same day, 28 July 1934. Otto died in 1984 and Alf in 1996.

And now back to the Booie Hall, **Heather Wall** has the last word in her poem **Music Then and Now** 'There've been may musicians over the years,/ Who've played for functions at Booie/ It's hard to bring all their names to the fore,/ But amongst them are Otto and Louie,/ Although we cannot recall all their names/ They certainly are well remembered,/ The piano and drums, the saxophone, too,/ The walls of hall really trembled.'

Indeed on a still night the music carried for a great distance to entertain no less than the **Booie Monster** first sighted in 1954, and which has appeared occasionally at the Hall since. And Booie in the Wakawaka language means 'black snake'.

Thank you to the folk of Booie for putting together such a great story and the twins' nephew **Roy Radunz** for their story. The pic has obviously been used for reproduction hence the white line and the cropping signs, but it does tell a thousand words.

Book Reviews



Growing Up Bookish: An Anglo-American Memoir – Richard Wendorf. New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2017. Hardback, with jacket. viii, 195 pages, plates. 150 x 210 mm. 9781584563587.

This is a collection of stand-alone autobiographical essays that focus on the author's life as a scholar

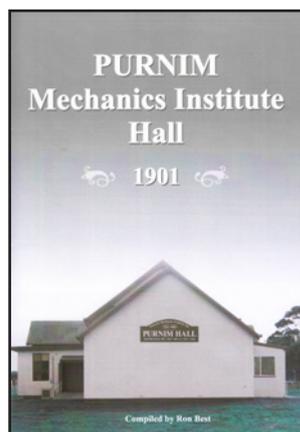
and as a library and museum director. **Richard Wendorf** was Stanford Calderwood Director and Librarian at the **Boston Athenaeum** for a decade of great change and renewal. He currently serves as a trustee of the **Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution**.

The author takes us through the phases of his life: growing up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; academic life: at Washington High School, Cedar Rapids; Williams College, Worcester (BA, 1970); progress to Oxford University (BPhil, 1972); and finally to Princeton University (MA, 1974, PhD, 1976). Then to a career commencing at: Northwestern University, 1976-88, transitioning from the English to the Art History Departments; Harvard University, Houghton [Rare Book] Library, Director 1989-96, collection building with notable fiftieth anniversary events in 1992; Boston Athenaeum, Director 1997-2009, where he fundraised a massive \$30 million restoration program and staged the Institution's bicentenary; and since 2010 American Museum in Britain, Director located at Bath. In 2014 Richard was appointed Visiting Professor at Bath Spa University.

Along the way he includes a laudatory note on his College mentor **Charles Rykskamp** and others who helped shape his career at Williams, Oxford and Princeton. He observes that all taught him the importance of wide reading and careful observation and the need to write clearly. **Henry James** would describe him as a person 'on whom nothing is lost'. His career as an academic writer, collector, interior designer, and skilful fundraiser, has greatly influenced the destinies of those institutions, latterly as a 'highly skilled migrant'. Richard Wendorf is an engaging personality and there is material in this book to interest and attract a wide readership,

ranging from the book world, museums, antique trade, art history, collecting, eighteenth century studies and the polymath.

Available from: Oak Knoll Press, 310 Delaware Street, New Castle, DE 19720. US\$36.00, plus postage. Online: www.oakknoll.com



Purnim Mechanics' Institute Hall 1901- Ron Best. Purnim: Author, 2014. Paperback, saddlestitched. 24p, illustrated, index. 185x265mm.

Ron Best has done a great service to the Mechanics' and Hall community by compiling the Purnim story. It is typical

of many communities, but in this case is the personal story of the Purnim Mechanics' Hall.

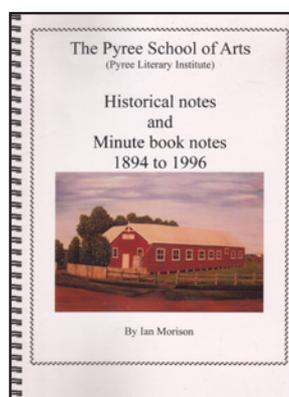
Purnim was once a thriving district located on a busy main through road, now known as the Hopkins Highway, midway between Warrnambool and Mortlake. One of Australasia's greatest thoroughbred studs was centered around the palatial mansion of the Bryan O'Lynn Station at Purnim. Today all that remains of the homestead are a few scattered stones and the town no longer exists. Still standing however is the Purnim Mechanics' Institute and the new St Anne's Catholic Church, built in 1940.

The author draws heavily on the Hall record which is near complete. The other main source is the *Warrnambool Standard* newspaper which on 17 May 1885 urged the people of Purnim to 'bestir themselves now, put up a hall, and establish a Mechanics' Institute in their town'. They did, for in July 1886 a Government grant of three acres was gazetted. However the Purnim State School continued to be the district meeting place for some time, but it was a meeting there on 14 June 1900 that elected a Committee to plan and build the Mechanics' Hall. From then on the Hall Committee Minutes take up the story of the planning and building process. Subscription lists were raised throughout the district and fundraisers were held. **Richard Vicars Foote** even promised to donate some books to start the library when the Hall was opened. The Government site was deemed unsuitable, and

Book Reviews cont...

a ballot was taken for the sites that had been offered and that of **David Charles Botterill** was overwhelmingly chosen and a 4ft picket fence was erected around the site. Warrnambool-based architect **James McLeod** was selected to prepare the plans. The Government site was sold with the stipulation being that funds realised could only be used for building the Hall which was determined at being in weatherboard 60ft x26ft with 14ft high walls. Tenders were called three times, until that of **R Boyle** for 'complete work' for a price of £212. Issues of financing and building delays ensued until the Grand Opening on 17 October 1901. In total this event realised a profit of £37.18s.8d. The Hall was burned down in 1912 by an arsonist and rebuilt on the same site in 1913. The Purnim Debating Club, Polo Club and Tug-of-War team all used the Hall for meetings and/ or events. Electricity came to the Hall in 1952. In 1986 a welcome grant enabled the building of a supper room and kitchen on the west side of the Hall.

The booklet is illustrated with local pictures, mostly of groups. It also contains a list of people who contributed to the building fund, and the amounts subscribed in 1920-21, totalling almost £200, which was taken from the Treasurer's Ledger. The minutiae of *Purnim Mechanics' Institute* makes for fascinating reading and we commend Ron Best for compiling this well produced and printed publication. Available from: Ron Best, 9 Eccles Lane, Purnim, V 3278. \$15, postpaid.



The Pyree School of Arts (Pyree Literary Institute): Historical Notes and Minute Book Notes 1894-1996 – Ian Morison. Pyree: Pyree Literary Institute, School of Arts, 2007. Paperback, spiralbound. 94 pages, plates. 210x300mm.

This chronicle charts the history of Pyree's much loved and universally known '**Red Shed**' from its building in 1894. The chapter heads make for interesting reading: Overview; History of the Building; Forms of Light and Heating Energy; Stage Curtain and Back Screen Mural; Life Members Roll, with their good deeds spelt out; World War I & II Honour Rolls; Notable

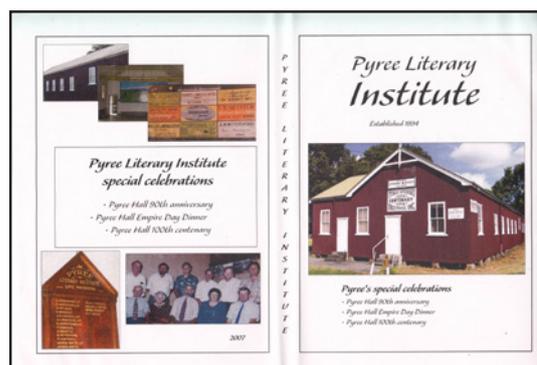
Servicemen Killed in Action; Memorial Tree; Kennedy Block; Australian Performing Rights Association; Records Deposited at Nowra Library 2005; and notes taken from the Minute Books 1894-1996. One overwhelming theme is the humanity, past Committee members are remembered, with their passing minuted, Life Members are accorded mention on a Hall Honour Roll, and successive families have husbanded the Hall. The author being one such representative. Mention is made of the 'Official Flushing' in the new toilet block in 1982 and on 14 July 1994. 'Mrs Elaine Herne announced that the 'Pyree Hall Book' she was writing, using her computer, was lost when the computer hard disk crashed.' Needless to say the Hall centenary celebrations went ahead, but without the book. Almost as a postscript, after finding some lost Minute Books, the Committee resolved to deposit the records of the Institute with the Nowra Library on Remembrance Day, 11 November 2005. The items deposited are listed, noting eight years of missing Minutes 1909-17, but also including correspondence and a scrap book and photo album.

The cover features a painting by **John M Smith** of 'The Red Shed' and how it would have looked in the 1950s.

The book also comes with a DVD package of: **Pyree Literary Institute Special Celebrations: Pyree Hall 90th anniversary; Pyree Empire Day Dinner; and Pyree Hall 100th centenary.**

For the social historian the minutiae of the Minutes are fascinating and the DVD footage is an irreplaceable legacy of good times at the hall. Clearly with a developed 'specialisation' as a rural wedding venue, memories are still being generated.

Available from: Pyree Literary Institute Inc., (Attention: Janelle Pritchett), Box 1099, Nowra, NSW 2541. Book and DVD, \$40, posted.



Our People

The Mechanics' family is vast and we would appreciate notification of any items that would be of interest to our wider readership in Australia and across the world.



Amongst the Australia Day Honours Recipients was **Philip McKenzie 'Phil' Roberts OAM** 'for services to the Ballarat community' in the widest definition of the phrase, which range from sporting, professional and cultural associations.

He has also authored an impressive range of books as well as being co-author of *Under Minerva's Gaze: Ballarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-2009* (2010). He was well qualified for this having been Secretary of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute from 1999, President 2004-07 and current President and Life Member. *Photo: ballaratmi.org.au*



Also in the Honours List was **Dr Timothy James 'Tim' Smith OAM**, Executive Director of Heritage Victoria since 2013 'for services to public administration, and to maritime history preservation'. Prior to coming to Victoria Tim

had been Deputy Director, Heritage Branch, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage 2011-13. He has had a longstanding interest in marine archaeology and has been associated with numerous projects and related organisations. *Photo: www.dtpli.vic.gov.au*



Longtime Director of the University of Southern Indiana's Historic New Harmony, **Connie A Weinzapfel**, stepped down on 31 December after thirty-one years as Director. Prior to her retiring Connie was awarded the prestigious

Sagamore of the Wabash. She is being replaced by Interim Director **Leslie Townsend** who

brings twenty years of experience working with heritage-based outreach programs that work in the areas of cultural/Heritage Tourism, historic preservation, history education and community engagement. **Historic New Harmony** is a unified project of the University of Southern Indiana and Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, which manages the community established by utopian **George Rapp** in 1814. *Photo: 44news.wevv.com*

Birregurra's **Sue Bateson** has stepped down after some twenty years on the Committee, and fifteen of those as Treasurer. Sue has moved to Moama to be closer to family members. She will be most certainly missed by the Birregurra community. We thank Sue for her energetic and positive contribution to the MI Movement and wish her well in 'retirement'.



We note that **Janelle Pritchett** of the Pyree Literary Institute (NSW) has successfully had her 'dodgy' appendix separated from her body and is now recovering. We wish Janelle a speedy return to full health, so as she is able to organise the

next Annual Black Tie Ball at Pyree. *Photo: www.southcoastregister.com.au*



From time to time one sees incredible service and such a case concerns the Secretary/ Caretaker of the **Long Plains Memorial Hall** in South Australia. Long Plains-born **Allan Parker** has been Booking Agent for the Hall since 1957. Allan

tells us he was given a gold watch in 2007 for fifty years service. He has seen the lean times of the Hall and he has fundraised by selling over \$10,000 worth of potplants over the years. However in recent times fundraising, to cover insurance, has been by way of organising three dances a year. Back in the early 1980s, Allan's daughter **Deidre**, an architect, designed and oversaw the building of an extension to the Hall, which included kitchen, supper room and toilets.

Our People cont...

Thanks to Deidre's meticulous drawings and volunteer labour the \$40,000 budget blew down to a mere \$16,000. It was a proud Dad that officially opened the extensions, designed by his daughter, on 30 April 1982. Allan recently supervised the treatment of the Hall's floor with **Polysol** (a Solvent Paints product) which has greatly enhanced its use for dancing. In the meantime Allan is looking forward to seeing the Long Plains Memorial Hall celebrate its centenary in 2023. Well done Allan, you good and faithful servant.



We missed the Buninyong Joint Library Trust's **Liz Lumsdon** being awarded the **Leonie Dunbar Memorial Award for Community Websites** at the 2016 Australian and New Zealand Internet Awards. This prestigious award was announced at

the Plaza Ballroom in Melbourne and we all congratulate Liz on her significant contribution to community life since the site went live in 2008.

Photo: www.buninyong.vic.au

Vale



Bruce Henry Turner 'crossed the bar' on the morning of 15 January 2017, and was given a rousing Maori farewell at the conclusion of his well-attended funeral service at Springvale on 20 January. MIV was represented.

Bruce was born in New Zealand on 27 August 1929, entered the New Zealand Navy at aged 15, and saw service in the Korean War. He took a degree from the University of Melbourne majoring in Australian History and worked in the library sector. Cyclone Tracey in 1974 flattened the Darwin Library and Bruce was closely involved in its rebuilding and restocking.

Following that he joined **Prahran Mechanics' Institute** at a pivotal time in September 1984 as Secretary Librarian. Then, in consultation



We note **Tom Thorburn** has very recently stepped down from the Board of **Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts** after twenty odd years of sterling service. Tom joined the Committee, as it was then known, back in April 1994, after having been a member since June 1961. He has certainly seen the bad and the rapidly increasing better days at SMSA. Thank you Tom from the whole Mechanics' Institutes' community for your dedicated service. We know that Tom and his wife **Norma**, who has been a member since 1997, will continue to play an active life in the affairs of SMSA.

Photo: www.justmomentsintime.com.au

with **Professor Don Schauder** from Monash University, it was determined to develop PMI into a local history library, and the rest they say is history. Bruce served as Secretary Librarian until 1996. To recognise his long and valued service, Prahran inaugurated the annual **Bruce Turner Lecture** several years ago and he always attended, save the last one.

He is survived by his wife Pam, and two sons Mark and Stephen, and we extend our deepest sympathy.

The Stratford community turned out in full force for the Thanksgiving Service for the life of **Gordon Leon 'Lee' Muir** on 6 March 2017 at the **Stratford Mechanics' Institute**. Lee served on the Institute Committee for about twelve years. He passed away on 25 February 2017, aged 84. A private interment preceded the service.

Vale cont...



We note the passing of **Susan Margaret 'Sue' Bromilow** nee **Ivone** on 18 January 2017. Known simply as Sue to her wide circle of friends, she was a great worker and friend of the **Whorouly Library Hall** and its long-time Secretary-Treasurer. She

died peacefully at home aged sixty. Sue did not live to see her Australia Day Citizen of the Year Award from the Rural City of Wangaratta and instead it was presented to her children **Taryn** and **Shane**. Shane read the speech his mother had prepared for the occasion. **Mayor Ken Clarke** then said Sue had left her handprint to be carved on the Marmungun Rock in Apex Park to begin a new Citizen of the Year tradition. Our deepest sympathy to her husband Kevin, and children Taryn and Shane.



Word has come through of the passing of **Dr Carlotta Kellaway** on 22 March 2017. Carlotta is readily known in connection with the preservation of Victoria's built heritage whilst working with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and as a

member of the Victorian Heritage Council. Many of her National Trust building files formed the basis for adding them to the Victorian Heritage Register. In 1973 she attained her PhD at LaTrobe University, in the Department of Politics with a thesis titled 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance 1855-1889'. A summary of which formed the basis of her *Melbourne Trades Hall, Lygon Street, Carlton: The Workingman's Parliament* published in 1988. Her involvement in countless heritage studies and identification of built structures leaves an indelible mark in favour of their retention. Frank, her ex-husband, poet and bird and music lover, and daughter Maria both predeceased her.

The Koondrook district has lost a sterling supporter of many Mechanics' Institutes in the passing of **Leslie William 'Blue' Pardy** on 5 January 2017, aged 94. Les or 'Blue' to his many



'gunner' mates was born at Mildura in 1922, the youngest of four children. At the age of two his family moved to the Melbourne suburb of Carnegie. He attended school until the age of 14 and then was hired as a carpet layer. He enlisted in the Australian Army as No. VX134043 in

1943, just short of his 21st birthday. He served in Western Australia and Papua New Guinea with the 4th Field Regiment and was demobbed from the Army in February 1946. Upon his return, he continued at his carpet laying job until he retired to the Koondrook region on the Murray River across the river from Barham. He was noted for the 'Bluey's' range of sauces, jams and relishes he produced from his large vegetable garden and orchard which were much sought after and enjoyed by his family and wide range of friends. One of Les' greatest traits was that he had the ability to connect with people of all generations, and this led to him being involved in many community activities, not only in Koondrook, but also in neighbouring towns including Benjeroop. Following a service held at the Koondrook RSL Hall, to which he was farewelled to the AFL's Collingwood theme song, he was cremated. His wife June, predeceased him and he is survived by his children Janet and Andrew.

DIGITISING RESEARCH PROJECT

A massive resource which supported the publication of the award-winning *These Walls Speak Volumes* was MIV's own **Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre** which has assembled a set of digital records which presently covers of some eighty of Victoria's Institutes. This project was started in 2003 and is presently coordinated by **Judith Dwyer**, who with her husband **Denis**, travel widely to collect and deliver Institute records.

Institute records and an expanding collection of printed Institute histories are available on the Prahran Mechanics' Institute's online catalogue and for viewing on computers at PMI.

Your Institute records can be digitised without charge. We copy the originals and return them to you with a digital copy. For Inquiries or Bookings contact Judith Dwyer, jad134@ hotmail.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 and made products will help reward them.

YO-YO BISCUITS

Makes about forty biscuits

Biscuit ingredients

180 grams of softened butter
4 tablespoons of icing sugar
220 grams of plain flour
2.5 tablespoons of custard powder
Raspberry jam

Butter filling

2 tablespoons of softened butter
12 tablespoons of icing sugar
2 tablespoons of custard powder

Method

1. Lightly grease four baking trays and preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Sift icing sugar and combine with butter in a bowl stirring until the mixture is pale and creamy. Sift the custard powder and flour together and mix well with existing mixture.
3. Teaspoon out portions of the mixture and roll them into small balls. Place these on the greased trays and press down each with the back of a fork. Bake for 10-15 minutes.
Allow biscuits to cool on the tray.
4. Combine all the filling ingredients together into a smooth paste. Spread half of the biscuits with a small amount of jam and the other half with butter filling. Join one of each covered type together and allow to set.

SPOT THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 43

1. Which Institute is to have its sign freshly painted in Victoria's Wimmera Region District?
2. What defunct hotel in Gippsland was likened to a Mechanics' Institute?
3. Who has been recently drawing and painting some of Victoria's Mechanics' Institutes?
4. How much does it cost to have your Institute's records digitised by MIV?
5. Where is the Celsius Library?

6. What Agricultural Hall started out as gaol in Western Australia?
7. Name the two trustees honoured by the Ararat Mechanics' Institute?
8. Who wrote the prize-winning book *HM Bark Endeavour*?
9. What Queensland Institute was built in two distinct parts?
10. What occupation was Barry Jaggars?
11. Who painted the Stage Curtain at Birregurra Mechanics' Institute?
12. Name the recently elected President of the State Library User Organisations Council?
13. What Institute in the Dandenongs is destined for the wrecker's hammer this year?

SPOTS THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 42 – ANSWERS

1. Chawton House, Alton, Hampshire; 2. MIV President – Robert Kingston; 3. Rhyll Mechanics' Institute; 4. Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts; 5. Cricket, football and tennis; 6. University College, Dublin – SouthHem team; 7. Francis Ormond; 8. Burke and Wills Fryerstown Mechanics' Institute; 9. 90th anniversary of the building of the Moonambel Institute; 10. 1854; 11. Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts; 12. Extinct Lancefield Megafauna Festival; 13. Harrietville Athenaeum.

INVOLVE YOUTH

We were most impressed with mural artist **Guido van Helten**'s decision to theme the silo art project on the silos at Coonalpyn (SA) '**Images of the Future**'. How apt, children of third and fourth generation community families being passed the baton of recognition.



Ideas & Opportunities

REMEMBERING THEM

During the past three years there has been massive focus on commemorating World War I – 1914-18 and rightly so, for most country towns were robbed of a whole generation of young men, who were either killed, maimed or mentally scarred for life.

Many Institutes host Honour Boards, not only for their own district, but some from other areas where halls or schools have been demolished or since sold.

A few Institutes have applied for grants to restore their Honour Boards and a most recent successful recipient has been the **Romsey Mechanics' Institute**. Last year **Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute** took an approach from scratch, and assembled an Honour Roll for Arthurs Creek in the form of a Memorial Cenotaph in their newly created Commemorative Garden and they also produced a booklet giving the full name, save one, of all the soldiers mentioned.

The latter is something all Halls should try to achieve. It might be opportune to enlist your local schools to make a cooperative attempt to assemble a detailed Honour Roll booklet for archiving in your hall.

Look out for a future round of Veteran's Affairs grants for World War I commemorative projects. We still have not seen a welcome home re-enactment: with the steam train coming in; troops getting off; town march; welcome home; presentations in a decorated Hall; and a tribute roll call of the fallen.

For Anzac Day 2018, perhaps school students could be involved in reading out the full names and serial numbers of the district's service personnel, to make these names into the real people, which they were in fact and deed.

A HALL HONOUR ROLL

We were most impressed that the **Pyree Literary Institute** in NSW had an Honour Board for Life Members. Further in their 2007 **History**, a chapter spelt out the full names and deeds of the respective honorees.

START A BOOKSHELF

We've mentioned this before, but it is pertinent for above. Every Hall should have a securely locked cabinet or display case to hold valuable items and memorabilia. It should be the aim of every hall to secure a collection of memorabilia, past library catalogues, newsletters, flyers, posters. It should

be an ongoing mission to collect material relating to events held in your hall, for the use of future historians. Photocopies of fragile material could be displayed in frames securely placed around the walls.

WHAT IS 'MEMORY?'

The concept of 'Memory' in terms of a building is a complex issue, which could be debated ad nauseam. It is something that is highlighted in the seemingly inevitable demolition of the **Emerald Mechanics' Institute**. The building is in sound structural shape and reports from engineers support this fact. So why knock it down? The claim that it has no architectural merit may have validity, but the structure does hold rare and unique memories of and for the Emerald community.

NATIONAL LIBRARY GRANTS

We note the National Library of Australia Grants close on 8 May, and you may well have missed the deadline for this year. However there is always next year and you may start on a future application. Visit: www.nla.gov.au and search for grants.

HERITAGE FESTIVAL

A quick glance of the recent **National Trust Heritage Festival** booklet throws up three Institutes that will be participating this year: **Narre Warren**; **Berwick**; and **Williamstown**. No doubt there are more. The theme this year for April-May Festival is 'Having a Voice'.

Can we now throw down the challenge for all Institutes to do something during the 2018 Heritage Festival and help MIV celebrate its 20th anniversary with a real 'out there' getting to know you approach.

MEN'S SHED GRANTS

We see the **Victorian Department of Human Services** have recently made available \$879,000 for this year's annual round of grants of up to \$60,000 to: construct a new men's shed; redevelop an existing men's shed; or co-locate a men's shed within a multifunction community facility or hub. Grants of up to \$30,000 are available for: modifications to meet health and safety and/or disability access standards; modification to meet public access needs; modifications to increase shed capacity; refurbishments to expand activities based on community demand. Maybe there is an opportunity to relocate a shed to a dedicated hall room or to a little-used hall. Applications close on 16 June 2017.