



Useful Knowledge

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

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THE MECHANICS' ON SHOW



*Scarsdale Mechanics' Institute at Sovereign Hill,
Ballarat. Photo: Lorraine Huddle*

In late June, early July there was evening TV saturation advertising for Sovereign Hill, Ballarat's **Christmas in July**. It was a well produced advert, and in part it featured their floodlit Mechanics' Institute and Free Library.

The Institute building, which you can enter, is the former Scarsdale Mechanics' Institute (est. c1868). Sparsely furnished, as those old Institutes were, it has: some of the remnant library, along with some other books from regional Institutes, behind glass in the original bookcases; the ever present clock; a framed lithograph of Queen Victoria; and 'a cheery fire' still heats the building. The building was purchased in 1971 for \$200, with the clock being an extra \$20, and then shifted to Sovereign Hill.

This publicity got us to thinking about the other Institutes in theme parks. There's the: Hall (est. c.1872) at **Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement**, Victoria's first outdoor museum, which opened with the arrival of the Paddle Steamer *Gem* in 1963. Later the Hall was relocated to the site and

the Stereoscopic Panoramic Theatre was established in it in 1977. It also has a collection of books.

Other Institute or Hall relocations followed around the State: the Narracan East Mechanics' Institute (est. 1877) at **Old Gippsdown**, Moe; the Kardella Mechanics' Institute (est. 1893) donated and relocated to **Coal Creek**, Korumburra in 1977; and the Warrup Hall at **Wimmera-Mallee Pioneer Museum** at Jeparit; and the South Lillimur Institute (est. 1883) which was shifted on 25 October 1995 to **Old Tailem Town** just across the border into South Australia. More recently there has been the recreated Flagstaff Hill Mechanics' Institute, **Flagstaff Hill**, Warrnambool;

But then all Institutes are on show to the general public as street frontages, road frontages or in isolated paddocks. Who knows who is looking? Check out the range on flickr, some unfortunately aren't signed. So we can put our best foot forward for the forthcoming **Home is Where the Hall Is Month of November**, can we suggest a sign preferably and proudly declaring the Mechanics' Institute name, with an establishment date. Also do a small sign 'For Bookings Contact: Phone Number'.

Plan an activity for November even if it is only a very important **Open Day** for the community. The local school may even like to run a drawing competition for a picture or model of your hall and these can be displayed on the day. Our youth are after all our and your future.



NEW DATES FOR REINVENTION -
THRIVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY
SEE PAGE 5

Coming Events - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- 12 **Let's Talk - MIV Community Halls Forum** @ Lilydale Athenaeum
Gunn's Plains Hall (Tas), 90th Anniversary Celebrations

OCTOBER

- 3-4 Pomonal Hall - Native Flower Show
9-11 Birregurra Festival and Art Show.
Enquiries: Liz Bashford 0475 265 249
10 St Arnaud - Open Day
18-25 History Week

NOVEMBER

- 1-30 Home is Where the Hall Is!
14 MIV Annual General Meeting, Prahran Mechanics' Institute, 39 St Edmonds Road, Prahran, 10am.
15 Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute Garden Ramble
22 Bundalaguah-Myrtlebank Hall - 60th Anniversary Ball

2016

JANUARY

- 22-24 Fryerstown Burke and Wills Mechanics' Institute 41st Antique Fair

FEBRUARY

- 7 Ruffy Gymkhana and Sports Day
13 130th Tolmie Sports. Enquiries tolmie.sports@hotmail.com

MARCH

- 12-21 Cultural Diversity Week. Start planning your event now!
19-20 Romsey Mechanics' Institute Antiques Fair

JUNE

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

OCTOBER

- 6 Snake Valley Hall Biennial Photographic Show
History Week

NOVEMBER

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

MIV'S EVENTS CALENDAR IS NOW ONLINE!

vicnet.net.au/~mivic/events

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

Member Institutes: email through details of your events, big and small to bronlowden@hotmail.com for inclusion in the online calendar.

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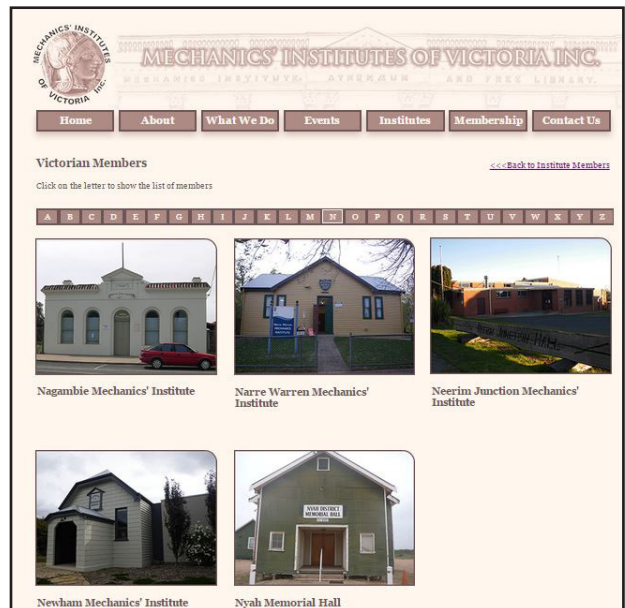
MIV News - VICNET.NET.AU/~MIVIC

Over the past few months, MIV has been rolling out its new website - still currently hosted through the State Library of Victoria's Vicnet web service.

Our new site is aimed at putting our Institute members on show - front and centre - for everyone to see. In this digital age, more and more people rely on searching the web for the information they need about a place, and often what you are looking for cannot be found in enough detail. The majority of Council directories will only list an Institute's name and contact number without any photographs of the place you are trying to find, and unless you have the capability for your Institute to have its own website (which can prove difficult and costly to manage for some Committees), Institutes can be overlooked by people trying to find a space for their activities or events.

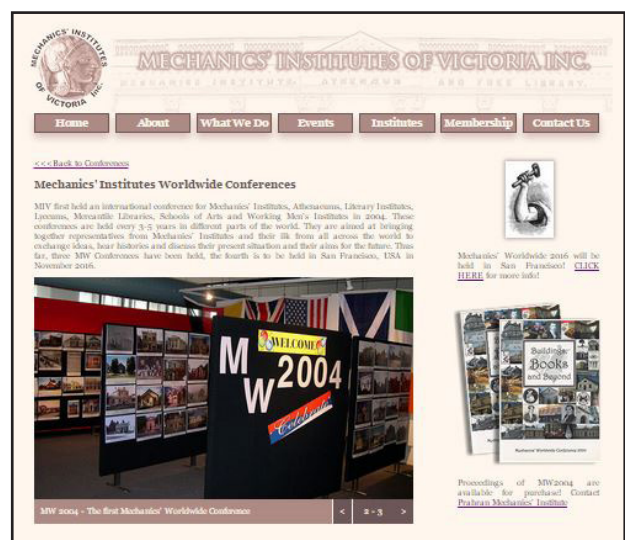
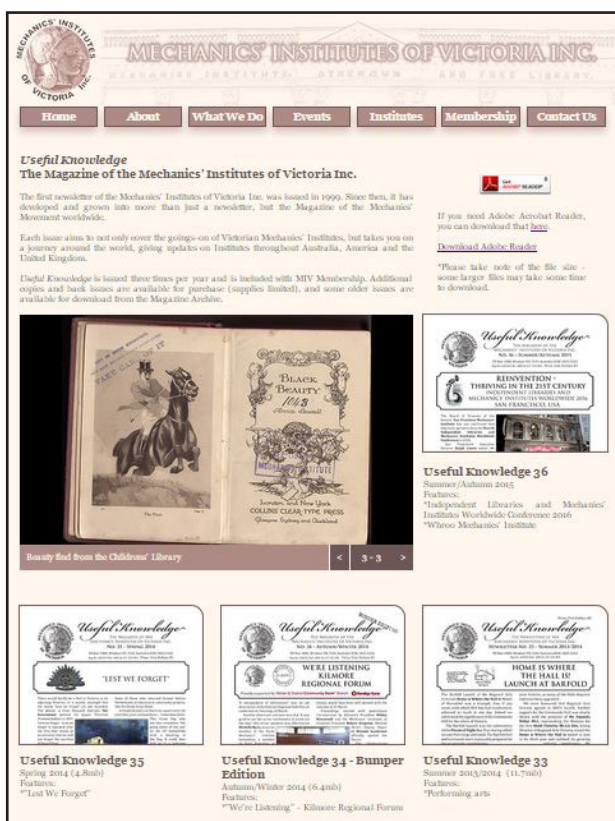
We are endeavouring to create a little place on the web for each of our members to showcase their Institute to the web surfers of the world. By providing a snippet of history, a few images of your Institute, both inside and out, hire availability and rates, facilities, regular events, membership details, contacts and social media profile links, we hope to be able to connect people with your Institute to encourage use and support of our members.

MIV receives a few enquiries every year about Institutes that may be available for hire for events like weddings, exhibitions and photo/film shoots,



and we would love people to be able to find your Institute as the place for their event. Our member profiles are for our financial Institute Members who wish to have their information available.

We are also in the process of digitising our old newsletters (our first issue, a seven page, text only document from way back in 1999) is now available online in our magazine archive (vicnet.net.au/~mivic/magazine-archive). It is interesting to see how Institutes have changed over the years, and the ups and downs they have gone through to get to where they are today, and we are happy to have these articles and stories available for people to follow through the 16 years of MIV's newsletters and magazines. Keep checking back as new newsletters (with coloured pictures added back in where available) are uploaded to our website.



Editorial

As we settle into the second half of the year, we look back at the first half and wonder where that time has gone.

Our upgraded website has opened new opportunities for MIV to carry out one of its objectives: "...to foster the preservation and restoration of the social, cultural and physical heritage of Mechanics' Institutes...". We want to put our member Institutes on show for people to find on the world wide web.

Bron Lowden

USEFUL KNOWLEDGE

If you would like to receive *Useful Knowledge* by email in addition (or as an alternative) to your regular hard copy, please send an email to bronlowden@hotmail.com and I will add you to our mailing list. Receiving your *Useful Knowledge* via email enables you to see all the photos in full colour, and you can forward the magazine onto your Institute's Committee or members.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

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

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members:

- Gary Bester
- Gunns Plains Hall, Tasmania
- John Graham
- Tamaki Makaurau Library (National Library), New Zealand

NEWSLETTER ROUND

Tick after reading and pass it on

President

Vice-President.....

Treasurer.....

Secretary.....

Committee (*Insert your name*)

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**REINVENTION - THRIVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF INDEPENDENT
LIBRARIES AND MECHANICS' INSTITUTES 2016
SAN FRANCISCO, USA**

NEW DATES! 3-6 NOVEMBER 2016

The San Francisco Mechanics' Institute has advised of a change to the dates of the International Conference of **Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes 2016** due to limited accommodation and other events on the previously appointed dates.

The new dates for IL&MI 2016 are 3-6 November 2016. The **American Membership Libraries Group** Annual Meeting will be held on 7 November 2016, after the conference.

Reinvention is the fourth in a series of conferences for Independent Libraries, Mechanics' Institutes, Athenaeums, Societies, Literary Institutes, Lyceums, Mercantile Libraries, Schools of Arts and Working Men's Institutes. At this critical time in our evolution and in relation to information we will bring together representatives from around the world to exchange ideas, explore histories and discuss their present situation and their aims for the future.

ARMY APPRENTICES DEPLOYED TO WALHALLA

The Walhalla Mechanics' Institute was originally built in 1867 and was twice burnt to the ground. In 1988 a completely new building was opened. It was built over two to three years by a dedicated group of Walhalla people and with the assistance of the Army Apprenticeship School and other groups. The building is now the responsibility of the Walhalla Board of Management - a group of volunteers that look after four community properties in Walhalla.

As committees can imagine, with only 14 permanent residents in the town and an irregular tourist trade, managing the upkeep on the Mechanics' building is never easy.

In March of 2015 the Army returned to Walhalla to undertake urgent works to replace a large deck at the rear of the building. Through the good work of **Barrie Seear**, an original member of the committee that rebuilt the Mechanics, the Army agreed to come back and undertake the work. There was also support from **Bowens Hardware Group (Hallam branch)**, which assisted in the original construction and from **Dulux**, which helped out with paint. All of this was co-ordinated by **Bob McKee**, the Board member who manages the building.

The Army apprentices were absolutely fantastic, completing the work in good time to a very high standard and generating great interest



in the town. Not only have they completed the work planned, they are keen to return. More importantly for the town, they returned for ANZAC Day to march in the morning service.

Dulux also provided the Board with paint so that the entire building can be painted later in the year. This is a huge exercise, not only because of the size of the building but because of the location and the possible variations in the weather.

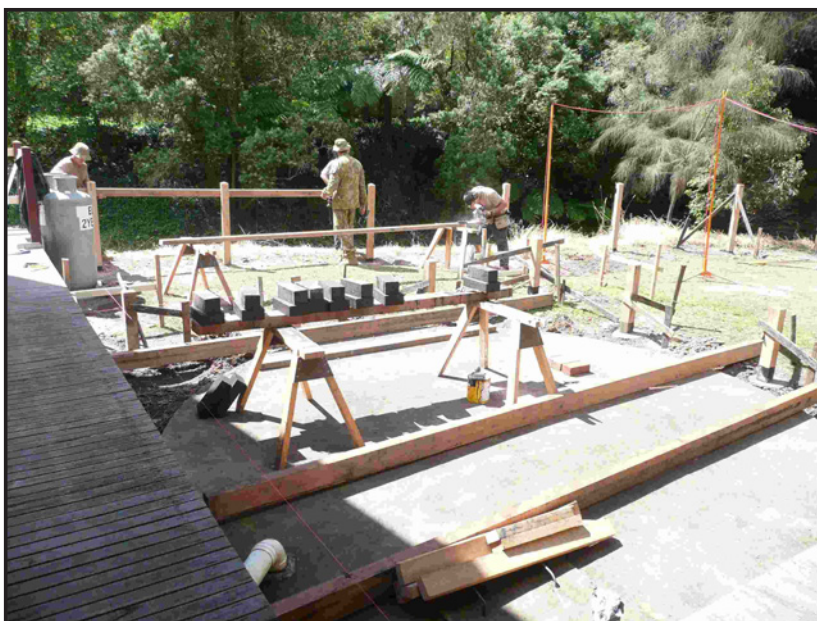
The Board has been most appreciative of all the assistance given for these projects. Such a wonderful building deserves all the attention it can get.

Reverse cycle air conditioning has also been installed in the building. Walhalla winters can be especially cold so this has been a huge improvement.

The library has also seen a check through the book stock to identify the few books that came from the original library and to identify the books of value within the collection. A long term aim is to obtain copies of the books that were listed in an 1895 catalogue that was found when cleaning up the library.

Graham Goulding

Left: Army apprentices at work replacing the back deck at the Walhalla Mechanics' Institute; Top: Walhalla Mechanics' Institute from nearby hill. (Photos: Walhalla Board of Management)



PRAHRAN: A HARDY SURVIVOR INDEED



Saturday, 30 May 2015 was designated for the official opening of the now relocated Prahran Mechanics' Institute. As one walked upon the Institute the very recently removed scaffolding had revealed a distinctive new frontage, carrying signage in traditional seraphic lettering painted in tangerine. Beside it was the new logo for a new era.

Strains of music wafted down the stairwell provided by the **Stonnington Symphony String Quartet** *in plena voce*, a nice touch, as music had been an integral part of Institute life. A liberal array of food, along with drinks of choice provided a worthy prelude, as faces from the past and present arrived to pay homage to a Mechanics' that has not only survived, but has clearly thrived.

President **John Chandler OAM**, who has served on Prahran's Committee since 1981, chaired the proceedings. He noted the presence



of **Bruce Turner** and **Laurie McCalman**, who had determined the Institute's fate in 1981 to go the 'Victorian Local History Route' recommended by Monash's Professor **Don Schauder**. Past-President **Alf Lazar** [and **Catherine Milward-Bason**], in more recent times, had driven that vision.

At the time it was a niche risk but, in hindsight, clearly has made the PMI of vital interest to Prahran, the State of Victoria and beyond. Today it is unique in Australia offering a nationwide lending service, with its own now unique 1899 Parliamentary Act, under the purview of the Minister for Local Government.

This activity has been reinforced by specialist collections such as those of the **Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria, Cinema and Theatre Historical Society** and the **Australian Railways Historical Society (Victorian Division)**. President John mentioned additional outreach into work, studies and leisure and noted the most recent World War I Exhibition from **Glen Eira Historical Society** that was held in the Gallery (**William Moss Room**) would be the first of many.

Whilst the Institute could look on its illustrious past of 160 years, there was the exciting future to look to for at least the next 150 years. The St Edmonds Road site offered more space and some welcome car parking.

Tribute was paid to the support from previous Councils which largely 'staffed' the Institute's Committee, but in recent times has dwindled to



PRAHRAN: A HARDY SURVIVOR INDEED CONT...



one member. The Stonnington Council has shown its past recognition by way of ongoing support in a very tangible way by providing funding of \$120,000 spread over three years to fund the shift and re-establishment.

Mention was made of the refurbishment of the current 1964 building overseen by architects **Curnow Freiverts Glover** and undertaken by **Keon Constructions**.

President John referred to the support his fellow Committee members and particularly role of the dedicated long-serving staff: **Tim McKenna**, Secretary Librarian; **Christine Worthington**, Librarian; and **Ursula Zamecnik**, Library Technician, in the seamless shift to 39 St Edmonds Road.

Stonnington's Mayor **Melina Sehr** then took the podium and in doing so she referred to the PMI's long service to the citizens of Prahran by providing its first community library and later longstanding technical education. The Institute had been a huge part of the character and viability of Prahran, a most desirable place to live



work and visit. She noted Council's involvement and the past significant contribution of **Chris Gahan** and **Steve Stefanopoulos**. Mayor Melina then proceeded to officially open the building and unveil the commemorative plaque in collaboration with President John.

The Heritage Council of Victoria's **Jon Hickman** was next to the microphone to not only recognise the historical contribution of the Prahran Institute, but also noting its contemporaneous and ongoing role. Heritage Victoria was now shifting to also recognise not only tangible elements but also 'spiritual' aspects as well. This was one such occasion that this was being done by presenting a plaque to **Glenn Blair** of Melbourne Polytechnic, Creative Arts Department, marking the Institute's previous presence.

And Chairman John's closing remarks 'Look around and enjoy our hospitality' tested the new kitchen with the provision of a well catered for afternoon tea. So concluded an event which marked the beginning of the exciting third epoch in the Prahran Mechanics' Institute's illustrious history.

Photos, clockwise from below: (L-R) Ben Quin, Cr Claude Ullin, Chris Michalopoulos, Peter Wolfenden, Cr Melina Sehr (Mayor, City of Stonnington), Cr John Chandler OAM (PMI President), Dr Judith Buckrich, Steve Stefanopoulos; the old Mechanics' Institute building at 140 High Street, Prahran; Stonnington Symphony String Quartet; the new frontage at 39 St Edmonds Road; new shelving and signage in the library; Cr Melina Sehr and Cr John Chandler OAM with the new plaque commemorating the official opening of Prahran Mechanics' Institute at 39 St Edmonds Road, Prahran.



LITTLE RIVER'S "ROSES OF NO MAN'S LAND" REMEMBERED

On 17 July 1915 His Majesty's Australian Transport A67-*Orsova*, with members of the 2nd Australian General Hospital, sailed away from the Station Pier, Port Melbourne. Aboard was 29 year old Little River-born Geelong Hospital-trained **Sister Catherine 'Kit' McNaughton**. Unbeknown to her at the time, she was about to write her name indelibly into Australian history, by way of her exemplary wartime service and the wartime diary she was to keep.

She worked in the military hospitals of: Lemnos, with Gallipoli casualties; and on the Western Front, where after the Battle of the Somme, she rendered assistance to mostly the German wounded. She was mentioned in despatches and for 'distinguished and gallant service and devotion to duty in the Field' was awarded the Royal Red Cross (First Class) on 18 November 1916.

After taking leave in England in December 1917, Kit was appointed to No. 3 Australian General Hospital at Dartford, Kent. In August 1918 she was promoted Theatre Sister at the new facio-maxillary (myofacial reconstruction) unit at Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup working in pioneering plastic surgery work.

Kit returned to Australia aboard the Hospital Ship *Wiltshire* on 19 August 1919. Stepping off the train at Little River she was noted as 'smoking a cigarette'. However her military service was not done until discharged on 3 September 1920.

Back home, Kit was to marry 'the boy next door' **Joseph 'Joe' Ryan** and they had two sons **Bernard** and **Gerald** and one daughter **Patricia**. She died at Werribee on 14 February 1953, aged 68 from a heart attack. Following a requiem mass in her loved local Catholic church, St Andrew's, her remains were interred in the Werribee Cemetery with a guard of honour being formed by former nurse colleagues.



Kit's proud grand-daughter, Federal Labour MP **Joanne Ryan** was one of those who spoke at the unveiling ceremony.

Little River's other 'Rose', **Staff-Nurse Sarah Helen 'Sadie' McIntosh**, was also born at Little River, but in 1885, and had trained at the Geelong Hospital. Sadie also sailed on the *Orsova*, but later on 12 December 1915, with 1st Australian General Hospital, Special Reinforcements. She served in Egypt at the Choubra Infectious Diseases Hospital, Cairo, where she contracted influenza; then later in France, where she was mentioned in despatches; and finally England at the Kitchener War Memorial Hospital at Brighton. Prior to returning home she was granted study leave with pay at the 'Municipal School of Carthery?', 8 St George Street, Bristol? She returned to Melbourne aboard the Hospital ship *Wahehe* on 13 December 1919 and was finally discharged on 13 April 1920. Sadie did not marry. Being not eligible for a pension and near destitute, in desperation, Sadie sought the financial assistance of the Edith Cavell fund in 1950. She died in 1970, aged 85, and her remains were buried in the Rothwell Cemetery Little River.

The above two nurses are representative of the vital part played by Australian nurses in the various World War I theatres of war. One World War I surgeon New Zealand born **Dr Robert**



LITTLE RIVER'S "ROSES OF NO MAN'S LAND" REMEMBERED CONT..



Campbell Begg MC, later wrote that the role of the nurse was pivotal not only in hospital duty, but by their simple provision of a hearty cup of tea, a warm blanket and a word of comfort. Such actions did much for morale and patient welfare.

Some 2800 nurses volunteered during World War I of which 2300 served overseas. Forty-seven were decorated with the Royal Red Cross and seven received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Thirty-one died during active service. Some 340 were discharged as medically unfit, with others suffering from trauma or pulmonary infection. Many of these had died within a decade of the War's end. Less than fifty per cent of ex-nurses married, with many dying in impoverished circumstances being ineligible for war pensions.

In addition to the above there were another 2000 ladies who served with the Australian Red Cross. The noted **Bluebirds**, a group of twenty civilian nurses, including a masseuse served with the Red Cross in France. No Australian medals were awarded to these personnel but several were recognised by the French Government and awarded the *Medaille de la Reconnaissance Francaise*. Their salaries were seemingly paid by the **Australian Jockey Club** and their distinctive dark blue uniforms and other 'kit' were provided by the Sydney department store **David Jones**.

Little River's **Australian World War I Nurses Memorial** was auspiced by the **Little River Historical Society** and funded by way of a \$50,000 grant from the

Federal Government's Anzac Centenary Local Grants Program.

The memorial was crafted by **Lodge Bros** of Thornbury from stone sourced from the McNaughton property and marble. It is located on the Little River Mechanics' Institute Reserve, which was gifted to the community by the McIntosh family. The Memorial was unveiled on 17 July 2015 by the **Hon. Michael Ronaldson** and family members of Kit and Sadie, in the presence of large audience which included the whole student community of the neighbouring **Little River Primary School**.

Historian **Dr Janet Butler** spoke on the role of nurses in the World War I and specifically on the war experiences of nurse and diarist Sister Catherine 'Kit' McNaughton.

The book *Kitty's War: The Remarkable Wartime Experiences of Kit McNaughton* by Dr Janet Butler, published by the University of Queensland University Press, is available at most bookshops, RRP \$32.95



Photos, clockwise from left: The new memorial outside the Little River Mechanics' Institute (Photo: Josie Hayden); the crowds gathered under marquees (Photo: Peter Jones); Les Sanderson, President, Little River Historical Society, with Lalor MP Joanne Ryan (Photo: Josie Hayden); local councillors and author Dr Janet Butler being given a tour of the library room at the Institute by Les Sanderson before signing the visitor's book (Photo: Peter Jones).

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON TEA AT HALLSTON HALL

On recent wanderings in Gippsland we noted a car parked outside the Hallston Hall and drove in. Before we readied the camera, another half a dozen cars pulled up after us. It was surreal as we watched all the lady occupants purposely stride towards the back door of the Hall.

On duly presenting at the door we noted the ladies seated on both sides of a long table in the kitchen. This was the weekly **Women's Wednesday Afternoon Tea Set**. The group have been meeting on Wednesday afternoons at 1pm for at least twenty years. A recent query had established at least that estimate, but as no Minutes or proceedings are recorded and no membership fee is paid it was difficult to establish just when 'the group' started.

On reflection a regular date at the Hall is a great idea. Everyone knows it is on every Wednesday and locals are welcome to just turn up. People take a plate and coffee or tea is available and they just talk and network, plan community events and deal with any local crises, not necessarily based on the Hall.

The Hall is adjacent to the jointly managed Tennis Court Reserve, on land donated in 1914. The well resourced kitchen was fitted out in 2010. The internal toilets were upgraded and the ladies toilets were completely replaced thanks to a 2013 grant of \$2500 from the **Michael's Supa IGA of Leongatha Community Chest**.

In 2014 the west wall weatherboard cladding was replaced with Hardie Plank and four new windows were installed. These works were undertaken by voluntary labour and financed with \$5000 grant in 2013 from the **Gardiner Foundation** which supports dairy communities. The area underneath the Hall is well fenced with netting to keep out wombats and rabbits.

The Hall has a shelved library of about 400 donated books, mostly paperback, established in 1980s by a former librarian who had moved

into area from Dandenong. In 2015 the library is little used, but not so the Hall which is used for Church services, table tennis and badminton. The supper room was used for the school in the 1970s.



There have been four Hallston Halls. One Hall is now a milking shed. Another Hall burned down about 1928.

Tenders for the first Hall, to the north of Grand Ridge Road, were called on 15 April 1886 and it was built in the same year.

In March 1903 Messrs Griggs and Clarke formed a deputation to Narracan Council stating they 'had to move the Institute from its present site' to seek permission to occupy one acre of Council-owned land leased to J [James] O'Neill.

In 1915 it was reported 'New additions to the cost of over £20 have been effected to the local hall, consisting of a front porch and side verandah (the latter also serving as a shelter shed), &c, and add to the appearance of the building, quite apart from the question of utility.'

During World War I the Hall was used extensively for fundraising as well as for soldier send-offs and welcome homes.

The present Hall, in a different location, dates from 1932 and is on land donated by the Dekker family. The *Argus* of 8 May 1933 announced 'The official opening of the new hall at Hallston was performed by Councillor [John Edward] Cook (1866-1945) before a large attendance.' Extensions took place in 1934.

Honour Rolls from World War I and World War II hang on the wall, behind the portable stage. A plaque was unveiled on a Memorial Stone in 1978 to celebrate the district's centenary and carries the wording '1878-1978. This plaque commemorates Hallstons' first 100 years and was unveiled by Cr MJ O'Bryan on 11 March 1978'. Underneath the stone was placed a time capsule to be opened in 2038.



LET US NOT FORGET WHERE OUR PRESENT LIBRARY SYSTEM BEGAN BY PAM BARAGWANATH

It is surprising and significant that the Mechanics' Institute libraries can be regarded as the first substantial library system in Victoria, given that the institutes were not part of an organised system but rather individual, local, voluntary enterprises. Also inspiring is that they not only held the fort for library services in Victoria, arguably for the first 100 years of European settlement but that they paved the way for the establishment of the present rate-supported regional library system. The provision of modest government grants not only gave the institutes widespread legitimacy but helped to stimulate the establishment of community buildings and the early luxury of libraries.

Why was that?

To get some idea we need to look at their general objectives:

“The diffusion of literary, scientific and other useful knowledge and the literary advancement and recreation of its members and the community generally. The means to be employed are – the delivery of lectures, a library of references and circulation, a reading room and the formation of classes”. (Ref: *Back to Apsley*, 1965.)

Against a background of the new settler's experience of the institutes in the UK, the desire for a more egalitarian society and the impetus for self improvement via education, the institute committees made a rational decision to incorporate mutual benefit and social well-being into a practical, community building. A building for all seasons it provided much needed infrastructure nearly always including a library of reference and recreation, current newspapers, journals and a reading room.

Proudly surviving in Victoria are seven purpose built Mechanics' Institute libraries in their original heritage listed buildings, heroically and continuously providing a substantial library service to their communities. They deserve to be preserved and funded in order to survive as the outstanding historic treasures that they are. Not only are they an essential part of the history of the development of library services in Victoria but in 2015 continue to serve the public at: the **Melbourne Athenaeum Library** for 175 years; **Prahran Mechanics' Institute Library** for 161 years; **Footscray Mechanics' Institute Library** for 158 years; **Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute Library** for 155 years; **Berwick Mechanics'**



Chiltern Athenaeum Library Collection

Institute Library for 152 years; **Maldon Athenaeum Library** for 150 years; **Little River Mechanics' Institute and Free Library** for 105 years; and **Bonnie Doon Library** on and off for 84 years depending on necessary relocations of the original building.

Also housed in their original buildings from the 1850's are 14 smaller Mechanics' Institute library collections at:

- Ararat Mechanics' Institute
- Beechworth Athenaeum and Burke Museum
- Briagolong Mechanics' Institute
- Chiltern Athenaeum
- Digby Mechanics' Institute and Free Library
- Eaglehawk Mechanics' Institute
- Kyneton Mechanics' Institute
- Lancefield Mechanics' Institute
- Linton Free Library
- Mollonghip Community Hall
- Scarsdale Mechanics' Institute
- Stanley Athenaeum
- Talbot Library
- Wandiligong Athenaeum.

Twelve substantial regional libraries are housed in the original Mechanics' Institute buildings or in new buildings on the same site at: Alexandra, Bairnsdale, Benalla, Bright, Castlemaine, Drouin, Lakes Entrance, Newport, North Melbourne, Oakleigh, Queenscliff, Port Fairy.

Healesville, Fitzroy, Prahran and Mildura original Institute buildings served as libraries until fairly recently.

Many Mechanics' Institute library collections have now been catalogued and preserved including two large, valuable collections, that of

LIBRARIES CONT...

*Bairnsdale Mechanics' Institute*

Ballarat and Warrnambool Institutes, as well as many smaller collections. Narracan Mechanics' Institute library collection has been catalogued and housed in a custom built building at the Moe Heritage Park where the original Narracan Mechanics' Institute building is also on display.

Other archival materials such as accession registers, borrowing registers, lists of borrowers, correspondence, lists from booksellers, purchases, minute books, balance sheets, librarians' reports, library book stamps and rules, censorship, annual general meetings etc. all help to tell the complete story of how a committee of amateurs organised, learned and took very seriously, the availability and delivery of up to date library resources to their own particular community.

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. (MIV) scanning project has scanned many thousands of records and hopes to continue this worthwhile work for future researchers, making the MIRC (MI Resource Centre) the best Mechanics' Institute archival collection in Australia. This is situated at Prahran Mechanics' Institute Library, now relocated to a new building at 39 St Edmonds Road, Prahran.

Hundreds of early settlements and over 1,000 institutes were established in Victoria with varying degrees of life span. Settlement populations waxed and waned depending on availability of resources and where people could earn a good living and imagine a future. Many of the Mechanics' Institutes struggled on with voluntary labour and the responsibility of onerous fundraising, others

disappeared along with their communities but amazingly, half the original number of institutes survive, many with their library collections and records intact.

Some early institute office bearers were in the forefront of library reform urging for professional staff and council supported finances. They had been holding the fort for long enough and when the Munn and Pitt Report was generally, but unfairly, critical of their library service, it led to positive change. Eventually library associations were created but progress was slow in achieving the goal of – rate-supported libraries, professionally trained staff, systems and suitable premises. They were generally realised well over 100 years after the first one, the Melbourne Mechanics' Institute Library, was established in rented premises in Bourke Street, Melbourne in 1839.

That the idealism of the Mechanics' Institute committees and community members in achieving their goals for the wider benefit is nothing short of amazing. These human resources and their buildings deserve to be recognised and celebrated for the valuable contribution of a library in nearly 1,000 settlements in Victoria. It's almost unthinkable to imagine intellectual and personal growth in those times and in remote areas, without the comfort, latest news and companionship of a local Mechanics' library collection and facilities. The travelling library box scheme initiated by the Melbourne Public

*Port Fairy Mechanics' Institute*

LIBRARIES CONT..

Library proved to be a great addition to the often remote institute collections. **Sir Redmond Barry** supported the institutes in many ways, by attending official openings, making speeches expressing the importance of the availability of reading materials for the general public and by further lending of articles from the museum and art gallery for display.

Some present-day committees have seen fit to re-instate the original name on their hall.

The Institute libraries embody a proud education and literary heritage in Victoria, made successful by idealism and voluntarism. Some

present day committees have seen fit to re-instate the original name, Mechanics' Institute, and the establishment date on their buildings, keeping their proud and continuous heritage alive. Although anachronistic and suggestive of previous eras, the original name does serve to convey to future generations, the ideal of self improvement through libraries and education and that they should be available to everyone. That message is just as relevant today as it always was.

Lakes Entrance Mechanics' Institute



A NATIONAL REPOSITORY AND STUDY CENTRE?

Early this year MIV member **Captain Bill McAuley** suggested the idea of a National Repository and Centre for the study of Australia's 3500 odd Mechanics' Institutes and their ilk, which could also extend to Community Halls.

Mechanics' Institutes were after all Australia's first libraries, and continued to be so even into the second half of the 20th century. But Institutes were very much more, they were also the hub of pioneering communities. In many cases they were initially used by Local Government, Education Departments, Crown Law, Churches, visiting health professionals and the place where a community's organisations were formed and ideas were aired, eg. Federation.

Institutes were also the first museums, art galleries and even technical schools, roles which like libraries were later transferred to Government. All Institutes were independent and largely did their own thing.

The landmark **History of the Book in Australia** project has touched on the Mechanics' Institutes, but if only to highlight the fact that the Institute Movement was very important in

the early community, cultural and educational development of Australia.

It took John Laurent and Philip Candy's work *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia* published in 1994 to highlight the Institute role. Pam Baragwanath has plumbed the Institute Movement in Victoria to show its extremely wide diversity with her landmark *If the Walls Could Speak* (2000). Since then Bronwyn Lowden has shown the number of Institutes in Australia to be more than the 'about 2500' to be in excess of 3000 Institutes, with her *Checklist* which has gone through several updates since 2006.

The serious study of the Mechanics' Movement Australia-wide is long overdue, as is the establishment of a central national repository. The timing is critical before the current existing oral tradition and aging and remote halls in regional Australia either dies or falls down.

Consequently MIV recently wrote to the National Library of Australia to float the idea suggesting an initial National Working Party with representatives from all States to move the project forward. Watch this space.



AIL AGM PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Excerpts of Presidential Address written by Dr Robert G.W. Anderson, delivered by Emma Marigliano in his absence from the Association of Independent Libraries AGM, Morrab Library, 15 June 2015.

I suppose the biggest national event of the past year was the General Election at the beginning of May. I suspect that many librarians in the public sector were even less happy with the result than we are. In recent addresses to you, I have made a point of talking about the decline of the local public library, and the desperate measures which local communities have taken to redress the situation. Things seem to have gone from bad to worse, and they may even get even less palatable as local authorities are squeezed even more by the re-elected Chancellor's ambition to run down the funding of public services. Cambridgeshire County Council, which runs the City Library, has had the wonderful wheeze of getting a private company to run a 'Library Enterprise Centre' on the top floor which will, and I quote, "support individual employment prospects and the growth of small local businesses" – for a fee, of course. It looks as though this may displace the local studies collection, and meeting rooms for local societies.

It is instructive to see what, prior to the election, the political parties said about libraries in their manifestos. Labour, LibDems and the Greens said nothing at all. The Scottish National Party said they would spend an additional £30 for every pupil in Scotland, £20 on school books

and £10 for every child to invest in better school libraries. UKIP said nothing about libraries *per se*, but there was a posed photograph of the deputy leader, Paul Nuttall, seen reading a book in front of what seemed to be a bank of filled library shelves. It was soon realised that the books were fakes, photoshopped to provide Mr Nuttall with a scholarly setting. The book he is reading was quickly identified: it was in the 'Britain in Pictures' series, Harry Roberts' *British Rebels and Reformers*, of 1942.

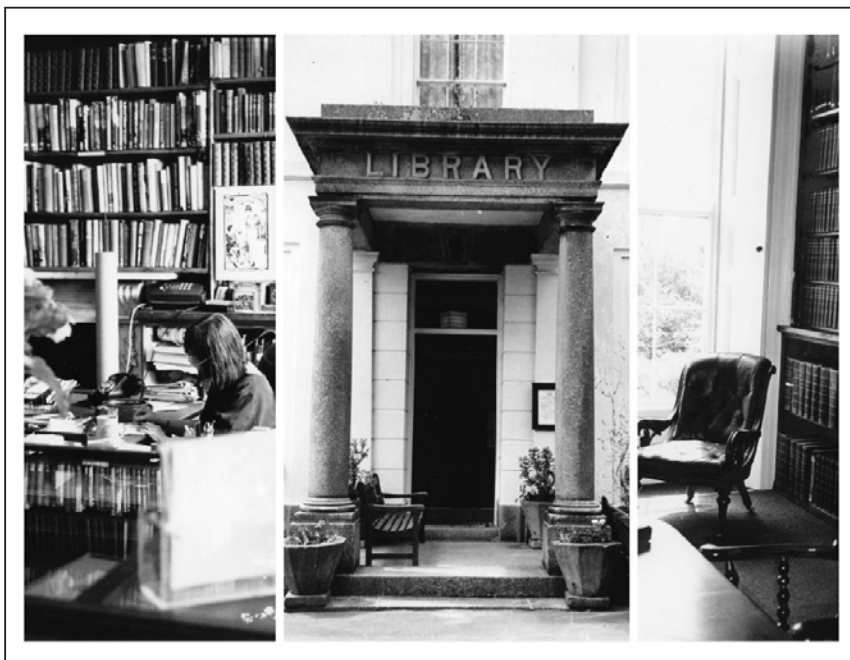
The Conservative manifesto was the only one to include anything of any substance on libraries, but considering the government's record over the past few years, its opening words were less than convincing: "We will continue to support local libraries", it read, and continued: "We will help public libraries to support local committees by providing free wi-fi. And we will assist them in embracing the digital age by working with them to ensure remote access to e-books, without charge and with appropriate compensation for authors that embraces the Public Lending Right Scheme".

So there wasn't much about the books themselves, and considering it likely that local authorities will be squeezed even further, there are scarcely grounds for optimism. It is interesting that keeping neighbourhood libraries open seemed to be a live issue amongst local communities, and yet not a single opposition party thought it worth addressing.

I have brought up the topic of public libraries

in the past because even if they don't seem to affect us directly, it is important that they thrive if only because developing the habit of book selection and reading amongst children is necessary preparation for those who in the future will take out subscriptions to our own libraries. I would be very interested to know whether the decline in public library provision has had a beneficial effect on the subscriber levels of independent libraries. It should be easy enough to plot a graph showing numbers of closures

Left: Morabb Library, Penzance, Cornwall.





AIL AGM PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS CONT...

against time and compare this with a graph giving membership levels against time. The analysis would be crude – for example it couldn't indicate whether success in the independent level was, in part due to public libraries dumbing-down in addition to their closing down – but I think that it might be worth doing.

I suspect we shall hear of further cuts and further desperate measures to maintain a semblance of a library system. I recently saw my first red telephone-box library, in the very small village of Great Snoring in Norfolk. That is quite close to where I now live. I moved from Cambridge to King's Lynn largely so I could get my books and papers out of storage where they had been languishing for the last ten years.

One early thought after I moved was to wonder whether an independent library existed in King's Lynn which could be recruited as an AIL member. I was encouraged by the name of a passage I pass through on my way to the Marks and Spencer café for coffee and a cheese scone. Library Close, I have discovered, does indeed refer to a subscription library established in 1797 in an adjacent Georgian house. The house remains, but the library is long gone. This wouldn't have been the first library - King's Lynn is an ancient Hanseatic port, and the two mediaeval churches both had their own libraries, but these disappeared even earlier. In the 19th century, the town, like many others, has its libraries established in a mechanics institute, an Athenaeum, a school of arts, and so on. These, too, are no longer extant. In the usual manner, their collections deteriorated, were stolen and were amalgamated with others, until in 1884 an aristocratic benefactor, Lord Stanley, revived the subscription library idea. Only eight years later, that was brought into public ownership. This was not terribly satisfactory as Lord Stanley's building was too small to meet the increased demand, and the Town Council applied for a £5000 grant from Andrew Carnegie to build a new library. This was agreed. Cynics say that he chose King's Lynn because it was close to Sandringham and Carnegie was wangling for a knighthood. This is a trifle unfair, as he funded more than 600 libraries. Carnegie's library is a dramatic castellated edifice of dark red brick which Carnegie himself opened in 1905. The building still serves as the public library. This year is its 110th anniversary, and ceremonies

were held in the library, mainly involving children and librarians wearing funny hats. I imagine that should drive a few readers into the independent sector, though the nearest independent library is either the Saffron Walden Town Library Society, or the Midland Institute in Birmingham. Much closer is Spalding Gentlemen's Association, though it still resists being drawn into the AIL.

In my addresses I usually begin with something about our host institution. Because I am not here, and, indeed, have not been to the Morrab Library (even if I have visited Penzance on occasion), I have left it to the end. I must first congratulate the library which has clearly weathered a number of vicissitudes in recent years, has emerged triumphantly, and is looking wonderful (if photographs don't lie). *In absentia*, I want to thank the organisers of this meeting, though I am sure that Emma will add her voice on many occasions in this respect. I have been fascinated to know why institutions like the Morrab have survived, whilst so many others, in larger population centres, have disappeared. I feel sure that it is something to do with the relative remoteness of the South-West from the South-East. Wondering what distance Penzance was from King's Lynn, I was surprised to discover that the Morrab and Innerpeffray are equally distant, around 380 miles, and that our Dublin member, the Central Catholic Library, is nearer than both. Another thought was how, before the railway network spread, young people who would become major public figures came from such distant parts. They must have received an excellent education locally, and books must have been available. The obvious Penzance star in this category is Humphry Davy, born in 1778, who experimented and taught so successfully at the Royal Institution in London. I believe that he isolated more chemical elements than anybody else, before the era of atom smashers. A near-contemporary who was equally fascinated by electricity came from an equally remote situation. He was the inventor, Alexander Bain, born in 1810 near Wick in Caithness, more than 800 miles to the north of here. He, too, was fascinated by electricity and he constructed the world's first electrical clock.

Here I shall finish. I wish you all a very fruitful meeting, both in terms of the serious business which will be transacted, but also socially, in this lovely part of the country.

Opinion

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK BY JIM LOWDEN

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

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

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

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



The MIRC at Prahran Mechanics' Institute

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



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

MIV has just launched its new website. We are now on the eve of seeing the publication of a major revision and upgrade of ***If the Walls Could Speak*** by **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James.**

MIV hosted the first **Australian National Mechanics' Institutes Conference** in 2000 and the first **World Conference** in 2004. MIV co-partnered the **International Buildings, Books and Blackboards Conference** in 2012. It has also hosted a number of Regional Meetings.

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

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

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

MECHANICS' WORKPLACE RESIDENCE PLAQUED IN ARMAGH

On 12 March 2015 the Ulster History Circle unveiled their first blue plaque in Armagh to a true Mechanic. The function took place in Charlemont Gardens beside the Armagh County Museum, a site of great cultural significance and the longtime workplace of one **Thomas George Farquhar Paterson** (1888-1971).

TGF or Thomas, as he was universally known, was born in Toronto, Canada of Irish parents, John Paterson and Rachel, nee Farquhar, on 29 February 1888. Shortly after his birth his parents returned to the family farm at Cornasreeb, County Armagh.

From there he attended the National School at Aghory and took an apprenticeship with Portadown grocers, Davison Bros. He moved in 1911 to Couser's Provision Store in Armagh, where he was to meet the nobility of the County. This later stood him in good stead when endowing the Museum.

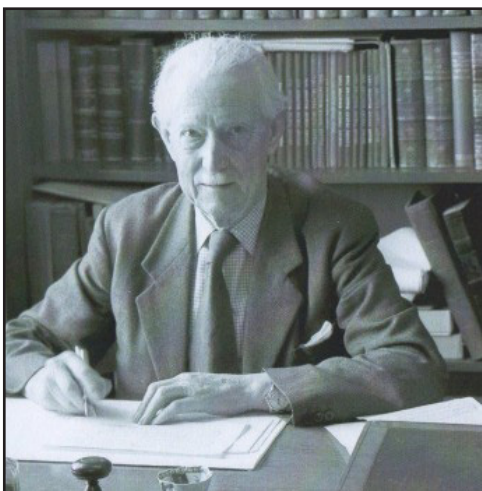
During World War I he served with the Black Watch and was invalided out before the end of the War. During his long recuperation he read voraciously on the history of his county.

In 1931 he was invited to become honorary curator of the Armagh Natural History and Philosophical Society Museum. Here he showed shrewd and sound judgement in curating and supplementing the existing collection

When the Museum was taken over by Council to be rebadged as Armagh County Museum he became full time curator in 1935. In 1938 he was pivotal in restarting the long dormant *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*.

During Council's redevelopment of the Museum, the usually retiring TGF, boasted that he was now a resident of Armagh Gaol and 'had been allocated a cosy cell'. There he continued his research and writing awaiting 'his' Museum redevelopment's completion.

The Museum redevelopment included the rebuilding of the caretaker's cottage and TGF



took up residence in 1962. Following his retirement in 1963, he was succeeded by his able 'apprentice' **DRM 'Roger' Weatherup**.

On retirement he served as Museum, Honorary Advisor and Board Member and was allowed to live in the cottage until his death on 6 April 1971.

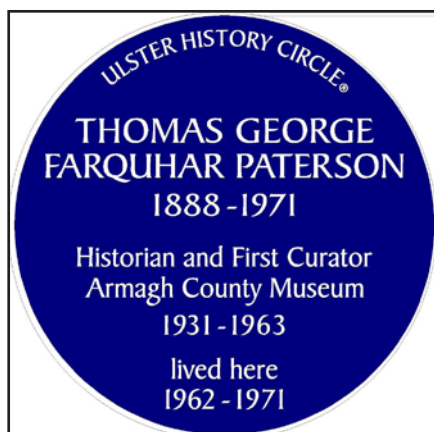
TGF's other interests included: National Trust, Northern Ireland Committee; Irish Astronomical Society, Armagh Centre; and Northern

Ireland Field Naturalists Society. For services to the Museum and cultural life of Armagh he was awarded an Order of the British Empire in 1954. He was also elected as a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1914 and was accorded a Master of Arts (honoris causa) by Queen's University, Belfast. He was a prolific writer and compiled twenty-four volumes of the *Armagh Miscellanea* and published *Country Cracks: Old Tales from the County of Armagh* in 1945.

An obituary noted him as 'A gentle, unambitious personality, deep in his probings of the past and disinterested in worldly rewards, his bachelory hospitality of a glass of wine will always be remembered by his friends.' One recent facebooker observed 'He lived and breathed for the City and County of Armagh.' Speaking prior to the unveiling, Ulster History Circle Chair **Chris Spurr** observed: 'Thomas Paterson, 'TGF', was both the creator and the first curator of a museum Armagh County can forever be proud of. Always aware of the importance of history, Thomas is now making his own piece of history in a really special way, for this Ulster History

Circle blue plaque is our first to be unveiled in Armagh City. The Circle is delighted to honour the achievements of TGF Paterson, and we are particularly grateful to Friends of Armagh County Museum for their support towards the plaque.

(Photo: Top: armaghi.com;
Bottom: Armagh County Museum
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.

AIRLY-CLYDEBANK HALL (Est. 1905)

After years of being closed the Hall is again coming to life. Their Facebook page tells an interesting story 'We've had a pretty quiet year down at the Hall but great fun catching up with friends and neighbours... We have started out reasonably well on Facebook (thanks to all our Likers!), got a strong committee and looking forward to building a great community network, like the 'old days ' when the Hall was the Hub of the Community. Let us know if you can help out, (mow the lawn, plant trees or run a community event/get together... got ideas post them here. Ps. Share us with your friends... and come share with us. Pps. Wishing you a Happy 2015!

The Airly-Clydebank crowd are certainly out there and were part of a **Regional Community Progressive Dinner** on 15 April which started with: Entrees at **Airly-Clydebank**; Mains at the **Stratford Mechanics**; and Dessert at the **Bundalagwah-Myrtlebank Hall**, where **Brett Glover** also entertained.

AMPHITHEATRE (PUBLIC HALL) MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1901)



(Photo: commons.wikipedia.org/ user: Mattinbgn)

The district of Amphitheatre was a gold mining area and a Post Office was established in 1859. Today it is centred on the Pyrenees Highway. The area is noted for its agriculture and horticulture. In 2011 it had a population of 236, with a surprising average age of 43.

The present Hall owes its existence to the work of local Amphitheatre State School No. 1637 head teacher **Albert Milton Barry** who was based in Amphitheatre from 1900-10.

In August 1901 it was announced 'There is going to be a public hall and library built here shortly'. The Hall was built in 1901 by **William Whitley** for £179. It was also used as a cinema site from time to time.

Memorial gates were later added in October 1936. The Honour Boards went missing when the Hall was being repainted in 1968. Plaques containing the names of the soldiers who served in World War I (59 names, five of whom paid the Supreme Sacrifice) and World War II (64 names, three of whom did not return) were unveiled on 28 October 2001.

A major event celebrated at the Hall in 2003 was the 150th anniversary of the arrival and marriage in Melbourne of **George Charles Studd** and **Victoria Isabella Spurgeon**, when 100 descendants attended from around the world.

During the winter months there are family casserole nights held in the Hall. (These are held outdoors in Bakery Park during the warmer months.) There is the well resourced 'Glenlogie Room' which is used for meetings. The Hall has recently had a new entrance portico, a roof replacement and a kitchen refit.

The recent Community Action Plan strategy 'To maintain and promote the Hall as the hub of our community.' rings true universally.

As part of this strategy a bridge has been erected over the stream at the rear of the Hall to enable the school community to access the Hall for physical education and other group activities which have included the use of the commercial kitchen.

Earlier this year the Hall interior was repainted throughout, so it is again open for business for the traditional activities of the family life events: birthdays, weddings and wakes; and an occasional auction.

BALLAARAT MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1859)

The recent AGM at the BMI has seen **Ann Cato** step down as President and **Graham Gooding** step up to the plate. Now that the restoration is almost complete an increased use of the building by an amazing 37% has seen a flurry of activity in all its spaces, and some much welcome revenue to

resource the building further. Concerts, displays, seminars increasingly use the well resourced Minerva Space and Humffray Room, and the Hooper Room and Williamson Foyer provide for meetings and small gatherings. Recent meetings with Council and Parliamentarians has seen the BMI receive a further \$150,000 from Victoria's Heritage Restoration Fund. The BMI website holds much valuable information, ideas, newsletters at www.ballaratmi.com.au. BMI is also on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute will also play host to some of the performances from Ballarat's **Festival of Slow Music**. More information can be found on the Festival's website: www.festivalofslowmusic.com

BIRREGURRA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1865)



(Photo: commons.wikipedia.org/ user: Mattinbgn)

Standing in the grounds of the Hall is Birregurra's War Memorial, a granite obelisk, which holds the names of the seventeen district servicemen who gave their lives during World War I and those who served from the district. Plaques have been added to the obelisk later to commemorate those 'who served their country on active duty or at home, as combatants or as peacekeepers, during the Boer War, World War I, World War II and conflicts in Malaysia, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, East Timor and Afghanistan'. The memorial, erected by **Wilson Bros**, and unveiled on 8 March 1924, has stood the test of time.

The Hall is pressed into major usage during the annual **Birregurra Festival and Art Show** held this year on 9-11 October. The Main Street is closed to traffic and the Hall is the venue for the now acclaimed Art Show. The 'Gala Opening' takes place on Friday night and viewing and sales continue throughout the weekend. In addition to offering over \$6000 in prizes, last year's proceeds of some \$9000 were distributed to various arts related projects, activities and to 'fostering young talent at the Birregurra school'. Website: www.birregurra.com/festival

The report of the *Colac Herald* of 30 May 1884 seems very apt 'The Birregurra Public Hall, which has just been completed and will be opened tonight (Friday), is a splendid monument to the energy and prosperity of the people of that town and district.'

BOORT MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1880)



The current hall, built in 1930 succeeds the former 1880 Mechanics' Institute which burned down in 1928. Designed by architect and engineer **Edgar Clarence Dunning Graham**, the Memorial Hall cost £7000 to build.

Today the Hall is well used and recently hosted the Annual Footballers' Ball and a '**Local Business on Show**' where local businesses were invited to set up a stand and spruik their wares. A craft group meets regularly 'in the back room'.

The Boort Committee is in the process of restoring and placing the former **Lake Marmal Mechanics' Hall** Honour Rolls in their Hall. These were removed from the derelict Lake Marmal Hall by the Shire Council and were given to the RSL who had them in storage until they were passed to the Memorial Hall last year.



The interior of the Lake Marmal Hall in July 2009. By this time the Honour Rolls had already been removed - only the unpainted areas on the wall showed where they once hung in the Hall.

BUNDALAGUAH-MYRTLEBANK HALL (Est. 1955)



(Photo: Support the Bundalaguah-Myrtlebank Hall Facebook)

The Hall was built on donated land for the Bundalaguah Country Women's Association in 1955 and has been well-used over the years.

In 2012 it was closed on account of electrical and safety issues. The community responded accordingly to save their Hall, and since then the Bundalaguah Hall Committee of Management has incorporated and gone into fundraising mode. They also have their own website www.bundyhall.org.au.

Recent Government funding, arranged through local Member for Gippsland **Tim Bull** has enabled the Hall to be restumped and reroofed. A new 5000 gallon water tank was also installed. And this was funded by the enlightened **Wellington Council**, which provides annual funding for its forty-eight Shire-based halls.

Fencing, landscaping and painting has taken place outside and inside. New curtains, improved acoustics, and a sound system with stage lighting supports the **Live at the Bundy** monthly music program which continues to generate significant funds.

In the meantime with works almost complete they are in countdown for the 60th Anniversary Ball which will take place on 22 November 2015.

The Hall's latest acquisition/ installation is a World War I 1914-18 Roll of Honour for the Bundalaguah - Montgomery - Myrtlebank Districts, based on the research and efforts of **John Shroeder**, which was unveiled on 30 May 2015.

DARLINGTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1894)

The original hall was built in the early 1870s, also as a library, for the Darlington Temperance Tent and the building and site was transferred to the Darlington Mechanics' Institute in 1895. A new Hall was built behind the original Hall in 1896. The original Hall was removed for the

larger present hall that was built in 1908. A World War II Honour Roll was unveiled in 1946 and the library was dispersed in the 1950s.

The Darlington Institute has been ongoing host to the **Darlington Arts and Crafts Group**, on the second Saturday of each month from 1pm-4pm. The sessions have been facilitated by **Carmel O'Connor** a teacher who holds an Honours Fine Arts degree. The promotional material states 'No prior skill necessary'. Courses run through until November.

The Hall also hosts the monthly Darlington Market.

Recently the Hall was the assembly point for a **Darlington: 1837 and Beyond** event. The public were then bussed to the historic Darlington Cemetery to witness the unveiling of the installation of historic wrought iron gates. The cemetery, which has a redgum marker dating from the 1849 burial of John Miles, is presently being upgraded to allow for the creation of further new burial plots.

DOREEN HALL (Est.1907)



In early May 2015 the fate of the Doreen Hall was finally sealed when the bulldozer moved in and levelled the site for future road duplication and installation of traffic signals. This puts an end to the lobbying by local residents to retain the Hall, or a similar presence on the adjoining Recreation Reserve.

In the 1990s the management of the Hall was passed to Council along with a 'substantial amount of money to continue to run the Hall for hiring and other uses'. Council closed the Hall in 2000.

When Whittlesea Council resolved at its December 2014 meeting the Mayor **Ricky Kirkham** said 'Parts of the structure will be salvaged and stored to be used as part of a commemorative piece at the site to honour the history of the reserve and community built hall.'

We wonder what was salvaged as locals had no knowledge of exactly when the demolition was to take place. The matter of whether a photographic

record was made of the building before its demolition by stealth is also ponderable.

GEELONG MECHANICS' INSTITUTE/ PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE (Est. 1846)



(Photo: commons.wikipedia.org/ user: Wongm
(Marcus Wong))

The rumour mill has it that what is left of the former Geelong Mechanics' Institute building at Ryrie Street is to be demolished in favour of a multi storey arts complex. This is part of the Victorian Labour Government's pre-election commitment of some \$100 million to 'revitalise' Geelong. The \$30 million arts component will see the present Little Malop/Ryrie Streets site with: 'a new façade, revitalising Ryrie Street and the Central Business District; conversion of the Church to a 150 seat cabaret and music space; doubling the number dance studios; adding a floor of office space for creative industries; addressing disabled access and safety issues, including a new entrance and universal access to Playhouse Balcony; securing the Barwon Health site for later development.'

This will finally see the end to the old 1856 building, which has grown like 'topsy' over the years, with additions in 1857, 1860 and 1867. The foundation stone was laid on 4 September 1855 by **Alexander Fyfe** MLC who uttered the words 'May God, without the invocation of whom no work should be undertaken, bless this work and crown it with success.' A bottle was inserted in 'the orifice containing the current coins, a copy of the laws of the institution, prospectus, and syllabus of lectures, a programme of the day's proceedings and a parchment.' The building designed by **John Young** was opened on 19 March 1856. The Chairman, **James Gattie Carr** noted 'It [the Institute] has at length got a building for itself, where I trust that in later times the arts and sciences will find a resting place and a palladium'.

The concert Hall was added in 1857 and opened by the Governor of Victoria **Sir Henry Barkly**, with a Fine Art Exhibition, on 18 April. The addition of a second storey in 1867 caused the Committee to state 'Geelong can now boast

of possessing the largest Mechanics' Institute in the Australian Colonies.'

Besides being a major exhibition space, it became a: performing arts centre; and lecture theatre which hosted **Mark Twain** on the stage; and ongoing cinema venue.

A Mechanics' Institute for Geelong was first raised in 1842 by the Presbyterian the **Rev. Andrew Love**. The Geelong Literary Institution was formed in 1844 and met and had lectures in a Reading Room at Mack's Hotel, under the Presidency of the Rev. Love.

In January 1846 it was noted in the press under 'Petrifactions: A quantity of fossil remains from the shores of the small salt lakes between Bolac and Corangamite, are now on view in the Reading Room of the Geelong Literary Institution...'

The Mechanics' Institute was formed in December 1846 and it obtained the Ryrie Street site by way of Government grant in 1850. It merged with the Literary Institution in 1855 to build the initial Hall in 1856.

MERTON MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1923)

Merton is a rural district in north-east Victoria located west of Bonnie Doon. The area's main claim to fame is the long-running Merton Amateur Turf Club, established in 1865, which stages one meeting a year.

Interestingly the *Shepparton Advertiser* of 12 July 1923 tells us 'The memorial hall at Merton was officially opened by Mr EJ Mackrell MLA.' It was the Merton Mechanics' Institute that it was officially opened on 20 June 1923. A library was established within the Hall but this was converted to the supper room in 1952 and the books were dispersed.

The Hall name was officially changed to Merton Memorial Hall in February 1945 to reflect the supreme sacrifice of a number of district soldiers. The Hall holds the Honour Rolls for Merton and Brankeet districts.

The major event that is most remembered is the Electricity Switchon Ball in 1965 when dancing went into the early hours.

Presently closed the Hall is undergoing a major upgrade thanks to a \$271,500 Government grant in 2014 from the Regional Growth Fund and a \$40,000 contribution from the Merton Recreation and Memorial Hall Reserves Committee.

This will see the old kitchen demolished and this will be replaced with a new annexe which will also include toilets. It is expected that work will be completed by the end of the year.

The Hall and Recreation Ground Racecourse is now run by a joint Committee of nine people of which the long-serving **John Fraser** has been Secretary since 1988.

MOOROOPNA MECHANICS' HALL (Est. 1875)



The original Mechanics' Institute was built on the bank of the Goulburn River, alongside the punt. After another flood, the present McLennan Street site was granted in 1906 and the Hall was moved to there. In the 1920s, a smaller Hall, now known as the **MG O'Brien Hall**, was purchased and shifted and placed to the east of the Hall.

The original Hall was replaced in 1933 by a cement structure, largely funded by a Back to Mooroopna celebratory event. In 1974, and after being flooded to a depth of 25cm across the floor, it was significantly renovated.

The side (O'Brien) hall was replaced in 1953, and this was also largely funded by another Back to Mooroopna.

From the outset a library was established in the building and it continued to serve the community until 1983 when it finally closed, and the books were dispersed.

Recently a new Committee of Management has been elected to take the Institute forward. Since then they have had a variety of bookings ranging from: weddings; an Australian Broadband Network shopfront; John Shah's Carpet Bazaar; and a Rock n' Roll Dance Seminar. These are in addition to regular community users. The enlightened **Greater City of Shepparton** has also resolved to give the Hall an annual grant.

NYAH DISTRICT MEMORIAL HALL (Est. 1896)

Located in the Murray riverland, the township originally known as Tyntynder is now Nyah. This is the tale of two halls. The Mechanics' Institute was built in 1896, at the bottom of the hill, on land transferred from **George Jeans**. The Mechanics' Hall was sold to the RSL in 1922 who used it as clubrooms, but later sold it to be utilised as a wool and skin store.

The Nyah Public Institute and Reading Room was built on the present hall site, at the top of the



hill, by the Taverner Cooperative Society. Tenders were let and the successful one was announced in January 1896. The Hall was then built and was immediately used for school purposes as Nyah State School, No. 3263.

A meeting was held in 1919 which decided to replace the Hall 'in cement'. The old Hall was then sold for removal. The new Nyah Mechanics' Institute was built on the top of the hill and opened in 1922. It opened with a library and had an adjoining open air picture theatre, operated by **Tom Hayes** from 1923. The Hall's name was changed to Nyah District Memorial Hall in 1945 when management was passed to another group.

From the 1930s-50s the Hall hosted a very active Gymnastics Club which put on community displays and concerts.

The Nyah community celebrated its centenary in 1993 and various celebratory activities were centred on the Hall throughout the weekend.

ROMSEY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1868)



*The Romsey Antiques Fair in full swing.
(Photo: romseymechanicsinstitute.com)*

In March 2015 the Romsey Mechanics' Institute and the **Romsey Neighbourhood House** joined forces to hold the inaugural **Romsey Antiques Fair**. It was held on Saturday 21st and Sunday

22nd of March in beautiful sunny conditions with the stall holders setting up on the Friday.

There were ten stalls set up in the hall. Items for sale included;

- antique china and porcelain,
- books,
- furniture,
- jewellery,
- antique oil lamps,
- vintage and antique sewing machines and
- vintage materials and clothing.

There was also a display of works, in a variety of mediums, by local artists. The **Romsey and Lancefield Historical Society** had a display on the history of the area and items for sale. The **Romsey & Lancefield RSL Sub Branch** also opened their room to display their collection of military memorabilia for the visiting public.

The **Romsey CWA** and the **Romsey Golf Club** provided morning and afternoon teas.

This antiques fair was sponsored by the **Romsey Community Bendigo Bank** and the **Macedon Ranges Shire Council**.

Over 400 people attended the event over the weekend. The organisers were very pleased with the results of the weekend and the planning for the next Antiques Fair is well under way.

The 2nd antiques fair will be held on Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th March 2016.

Kathy Lakey

RUFFY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE & FREE LIBRARY (Est. 1888)



Photo: [www.panoramio.com/user: Muzza](http://www.panoramio.com/user/Muzza) from McCrae

Ruffy, in the State's north-east, had its hall site reserved in 1888 and the first building was erected in 1893. However it took six years to have it suitable for registration with the Department, but in the interim that did not stop the community from using it for the St Patrick's Race Day balls or for church services.

The present hall was built in 1905, to replace the earlier hall which was sold for removal.

Since then it has been well used by the self-proclaimed Ruffians.

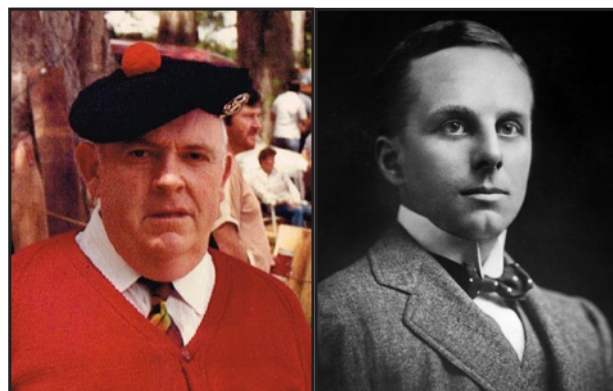
Solar panels were installed in 2010. Some trees have been replaced with a more suitable species to enhance World War II Soldiers' Memorial

Precinct. In 2011 café blinds were erected on the rear skillion, a barbecue area was established and a wheelchair accessible toilet was installed. A large community noticeboard, in front of the hall, advises of forthcoming events.

A Happy Hour is held on the third Friday of each month. BYO meat, drinks and a sweet.

RuffArtz, established in 2007, holds four musical/drama events a year and stages a Biennial Arts Show in November. The nearby Reserve hosts an Annual Gymkhana Sports in February.

STANLEY ATHENAEUM AND PUBLIC ROOM (Est. 1860)



*Left: Geoff Craig (Photo: Stanley Athenaeum);
Right: Dr Clunes Mathison
(Photo: www.wehi.edu.au)*

The lecturer for the **Second Geoff Craig Memorial Lecture** in 2015 is renowned historian and acclaimed speaker **Dr Ross McMullin**. His books include *Farewell, Dear People*, a multi-biography illuminating Australia's gifted lost generation of World War I, which was awarded the **Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History**.

Presented by the **Friends of the Stanley Athenaeum** Dr Ross McMullin will speak about **Clunes Mathison**, of all the 60,000 Australians who died during the conflict, there was no more devastating individual loss to the nation than the remarkable **Dr Gordon Clunes Mackay Mathison**, who was born in Stanley and should be better known than he is. Fatally wounded by a stray bullet at Gallipoli, the 31 year old doctor died 9 days later. Already an internationally acclaimed medical scientist he had been appointed as the initial director of the **Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research**. Come along and find out what was so special about him.

The **Second Geoff Craig Memorial Lecture** will be held Sunday 13 September 2015 at 2 pm in the Stanley Soldiers Memorial Hall, Main

Street Stanley, with afternoon tea to follow and this is a free community event.

'Memorials Memory and Loss: Stanley and the First World War' is the new exhibition now on display at the Stanley Athenaeum, the exhibition tells the stories of the 20 men from Stanley who lost their lives in the First World War, in total 70 men enlisted from the Stanley community and many local families lost one of their men

The research undertaken by the **Friends of Stanley Athenaeum** had a terrific response from the community in developing the exhibition revealing momentoes and family treasures not seen outside the homes of these families. Beechworth historian **Richard Patterson** and writer of **'Beechworth at War'** opened the exhibition to a large audience on the 27th June. The exhibition is on show until 30th June 2016.

Visit the exhibition at the Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room, Main Street, Stanley and it is open 2nd Wednesday & 4th Saturday each month from 10am to 12pm or by appointment, contact 0458 606 922 or 03 5728 6702

Chris Dormer

TOLMIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1888)

The Tolmie team led by **Linda Terry** manage the 1920-built Hall, with added amenities and the

Sports Reserve, all for the local community, but clearly for a much wider use. Facilities available for campers at \$5 per person per night include: toilets; showers; electric barbecue; camp kitchen and sinks; microwave; kettle, etc., combined with a sports oval and stable. The Tearoom comes with: electric power; hot water; kitchen with fridges and oven. The Kiosk has a commercial size fridge.

This significant resourcing comes largely from the profits from the **Tolmie Sports** which has been held annually, generally in February, since 1888. The Hall hosts the Saturday night dance. The other major use for the Tolmie's Reserve is the **Craft and Farmers Market** held monthly between September and May.

The Hall has a well-appointed and resourced kitchen and seats 120 for a sit-down dinner. Tolmie residents get a discount on usage. However Tolmie not-for profit groups have free use of the Hall for their meetings. This is an initiative that all community Halls should aspire to. Small groups with a few members find it hard to manage a \$10 charge for their several meetings annually.

Download the Tolmie Hall and Reserve's inspirational info brochure at: www.tolmietimes.com.

The Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

WOODVILLE SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1870)



(Photo: Woodville School of Arts Facebook)

Located in the Lower Hunter region on the Paterson River, Woodville is a very early

agricultural and rural community settled in 1814 as Albion Farm.

The Woodville initiative started out as the **Woodville Mutual Improvement Society** in 1870. It assembled a library and conducted debates, readings and lectures. In 1876 it was decided to build a hall and **John Pearse** donated a site. The Woodville School of Arts was built by **Albert** and **William King** of Wallalong. The 40ft x 20ft building, 'with a neat porch', cost £150. It was opened on 20 March 1877, with three local; clergymen participating. The building was then occupied by the Woodville State School until 1879.

The present Hall, which replaced the original one but on a larger purchased site, was built in 1923 of timber and weatherboard on elevated brick piers. It was officially opened on 9 August 1923 by **John James Pearse** with a tea at 6pm, and a dance followed.

The Hall holds a very distinctive marble World War I Roll of Honour, with an accompanying framed Roll of Honour which lists those that paid the Supreme Sacrifice. The notable trees in the Hall grounds are South African Cape Chestnuts planted in 1936 by the Boy Scouts.

The April 2015 floods did not get up to the Hall, which those of 1955 almost did, and its high ground provided refuge for a pony called **Spirit**, until its owners could reclaim it.

A major spruce up of the Hall took place in 2015 undertaken by the **Proctor Family Carpenters** and **Turnbull Painting**. To help finance the project a major fundraiser at the **Coffee Cubby at Woodville Store** started with 'a delicious hot breakfast' and a day-long barbecue. Supplemented with the sale of donated goods the fun day netted a tidy sum.

The Hall is well-used by the community and the neighbouring **Iona Primary School**. It is also noted for the staging of drama and music events.

QUEENSLAND

GURULMUNDI SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1935)

The district name is taken from the local Aboriginal dialect and means 'low range of hills', which border the area. It is a railway station located on the Wandoan line about 50km (31 miles) from Miles, the regional centre, and Taroom, constructed in 1912-13.

There was some initial sawmilling, but the area is now mostly used in beef cattle production, with some cropping, and some medium scale mining including coal seam gas production. However the district is most probably noted for the controversial Gurulmundi Toxic Waste Dump established in 1991.

Prior to the building of the Hall community meetings appear to have been held at the Gurulmundi Railway Station or occasionally at the Gurulmundi State School, which opened in 1928 and closed in 1965

The 50ft x 30ft Hall and adjoining 12ft x 50ft supper room were built in 1935 from locally sawn timber and weatherboards and it still retains its original galvanised roof.

The Gurulmundi CWA came into being in 1938 when Kowguran branch changed its name since it had been established in 1927. The CWA have consistently met in the Hall and have fundraised for the Hall over the years with various functions, including catering for the annual tennis tournament. Branch President **Susan Gale** was named Queensland Country Woman of the Year for 2012.

The Hall was also used by the Junior Farmers from its formation in 1953. Club Secretary, **Margaret Genge** was named as the 'State's leading girl farmer' in 1953. In the following year the Club's **Mary Woodside** was chosen as Zone 2 representative.

In 2010 the Hall Committee received a grant from **Xtrata Wandoan Coal Fund** for painting the roof and exterior of the hall.

The very recent AGM in July narrowly averted the Hall Committee being wound up, and it has resolved to 'soldier on' for another year. We wish them well and inspiration in their renewed endeavour to 'breathe new life' into the Hall.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

TOOLIGIE HALL (Est. 1932)



The township of Tooligie was proclaimed in 1929. It is a farming community engaged in large scale cropping and wool growing inland from Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula.

The aggregation of smaller holdings has meant a diminished district population which has resulted in the school, established in 1933, alongside the Hall being closed. However the silo complex adjacent to the railway line still operates, but the railway siding which housed line workers no longer exists.

In February 1932 **Cr David Henry 'Harry' Dearman** submitted to Council, on behalf of the Tooligie Hall Trust, plans for a 32ft x 22ft wood and iron hall and these were approved. The Hall was subsequently built on a site donated by **David Cullege Dearman** and it opened in 1932 and has been well used by the community ever since.

The Hall has also the venue for the community's longrunning **Annual Strawberry Fete** which is held towards the end of the year, and is presently held at the end of October. This has been variously organised by the CWA Branch and more recently the Christmas Tree parents.

The Hall has also been the home of the annual **Christmas Tree and Party** which started in

1934. Since then Santa Claus has arrived by various means which have included, on a: horse; tractor; Harley Davidson motorbike; firetruck; and an iconic restored Holden ute. In 2014 about fifty local children received gifts from Santa. This is the major annual gathering of the community.

The **Tooligie CWA** has met in the Hall since its inception in 1956 and continue to contribute to various community initiatives.

Fundraising over the years to facilitate Hall maintenance has included the grubbing and carting of tree roots to the rail siding and trucking them to Port Lincoln for sale there. District farmers have also been generous with donations of grain and wool in good times.

TASMANIA

DUNALLEY COMMUNITY HALL (Est. 1897)



(Photo: abc.net.au)

Dunalley is located at the entry to Eaglehawk Neck. The Hall, destroyed in the 4 January 2013 bushfire, has since been rebuilt and it was re-opened to the community on 18 May 2015.

The press noted the original Hall was built at the instigation of **Miss Edith Ambrosine Scrimger**, who spearheaded a fundraising campaign commenced in 1897. Eventually £40 was raised and this enabled the purchase of materials, 'which Captain [Tasman] Spaulding generously brought up for nothing in the *Tasman*. The actual construction of the building is due to Messrs **Arthur Hyatt**, **William Greenlaw**, **George Scrimger**, and **John Allanby, sen**, with some others who have given several weeks' work. The result is a roomy hall, lined 8ft high all round, and capable of seating comfortably 200 persons.'

The Hall was officially opened on 16 May 1898 by the **Rev. Joseph Boss Williams Woollnough**, followed by a musical and vocal program for which Miss Kemp lent the piano.

The oldest resident present at the 2015 re-opening event was **Mrs Audrey Deverall** who married her husband **Lloyd** in the original building in 1944. The present \$1.63 million Hall brings back the staging facilities including lighting and sound and hopefully arts related activities will restart in the community. It has also seen the reinstatement of Honour Boards burned in the fires.

The red gum beams throughout the new building came from the old Launceston Brewery. These linked in with the rammed earth walls and the polished concrete floors make a striking interior. Local resident **Tim Holmes** undertook the design of the building with **Michael Cooper** which was built by **Wyatt Constructions** of Kingston.

Sorell's Mayor **Kerry Vincent** had the last word and observed '*They say a town needs a pub and a post office to be a real town... well a community needs a real community hall as well.*'

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CHOWERUP HALL, SPORTS GROUND AND CEMETERY (Est. 1925)



(Photo: www.panoramio.com / user: GasGasL€X)

The pastoral district of Chowerup is in south-west part of the State. The need for a Hall was considered at a dance held in **Flint's chaff shed** held on 4 July 1924. The matter must have been well discussed for **William Spencer** a diarist of the day noted he arrived home at 7.30am the next morning.

Things moved fast from there, sawmill owner **Sidney Foden Flint** donated forty acres of land for a hall site. It was cleared of trees and these were milled at Flints into building timber and weatherboards. 'Busy bees' then built the initial 25ftx30ft Hall and painted it with 'sump' oil.

Chowerup Hall was opened on 11 March 1925 by **JH Smith MLA** with an afternoon tea, followed by a dance. Shortly after that a school opened in the building and it remained there until 1950, along with its small library. The school continues the Hall for various activities.

Planning of the site, resulted in further clearing and levelling for: tennis courts; cricket and football oval; rodeo ground; cemetery; and later enlargement of the Hall.

The annual Sports and Rodeo, staged in March, was the 'big event'. People came in from the region's districts by all means of transport. Men and women competed in the athletic program on the oval. Everyone competed in the two-legged, egg and spoon and sack races. Others competed in the events held on the rodeo arena, which was fenced to a height of six feet with five rows or bush poles.

The liquor booth was located discreetly away from the main activities in a bush pole shelter, with a large sawn beam for the bar. Elsewhere refreshments were to be had in a galvanised iron clad bush pole shelter. Underneath were tables and benches set into the ground. A servery was located in one end with timber benches and a sink, made from a four gallon kerosene tin cut in half, which was set in a frame. A copper for hot water was located out the back.

A hearty meal was available at the end of the day and the Hall was ready for dancing. Children would be bedded down in the back room of the hall, or babies were simply put under the hall seats snuggled up in their bassinets. Music was by way of piano accordion, with percussion being a rhythmic tapping of a heavy foot. Supper was served at midnight and dancing concluded at sunrise. Several trucks would then be seen departing, their trays loaded with seated 'passengers'.

Friday night at the hall saw those available turn up, some by truck which picked people along the way, for billiards, table tennis or badminton. Tennis, cricket or football was staged on Saturday or elsewhere in regional competitions. The Premiership of the Under 13 **Chowerup Cats XVIII** is still talked about.

Occasional picture show men dropped in for screenings, as did the Anglican Bush Brothers, as did other clergy, who performed weddings, baptisms and confirmations.

One talented school teacher started the **Chowerup Drama Club**, based on the Hall. Auditions were held and parts were allocated, with understudies. One production was Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which was entered in the regional drama competition with riotous results as a performer tried to level out partially filled glasses, drinking them to a set level. Truly an 'Oscar' performance, but apparently lost on the judges.

Funerals in the Hall Cemetery were day long events from grave digging, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea. One such event was that of the Reserve's benefactor Sidney Flint, who had died aged 75, in 1937.

Rodeo riders complained of the hard ground and this was particularly noted when the septic tank was being installed. The solution, an old chain saw was used to cut the borders of the required rectangle and gelignite was then simply used to loosen the soil. On the following Friday night the badminton folk wondered about the dirt all over the hall floor, which had been dislodged from the grooves of the floor boards.

In 2003 the saviour of Western Australia's small halls, **Lottery West**, provided a \$5000 grant to reroof the Hall.

The Hall's ninetieth anniversary was celebrated with a major weekend event on 2-3 May. A hundred people turned up. At the Saturday barbecue several locals and returnees stood up and recalled their stories of the Hall and its Reserve, with youthful reminiscences, Bush poet **Ron Evans** dropped in and gave his recital of the 'Wengundy Hall' which drew more than a few laughs and sparked memories of the good old days at the Hall.

A few spent part of the day meeting with their families, generations of which were buried in the Hall cemetery. (Local MP **Terry 'Tuck' Waldron** happened by the Hall on the previous Friday to tender personally his apologies for his inability to be present on Saturday, and also left some boyhood memories.)

This is one of the most remarkable Hall stories that has come our way and we thank **Susan Mead** and the Chowerup folk for sharing it. **This amazing story must be published!**

NEW ZEALAND

RUNANGA MINERS' HALL (Est. 1905)

Located near Greymouth in the South Island the Runanga Miners' Hall readily reflects its mine worker origins. This activism resulted in the township being styled as 'Red Runanga'.

This Hall was to serve the model town set up to accommodate the workers from the State owned coal mine at nearby Dunollie in 1903. In 1905 the Mine Workers' Union resolved to set aside money to build a hall, a movement led by miner activist **Bob Semple**, and the first such project in New Zealand.

Plans were drawn up by **George Millar** and **Walter Murray** of Cobden was awarded the building contract in 1907. It was officially opened



(Photo: Friends of Runanga Miners Hall Facebook)

before a crowd of 800 people on 2 December 1908. **Sir Harry Lauder's** nephew **Matthew** sang 'The Miner'.

Electricity came to the Hall and town in 1926. The Union purchased a 'talking picture' machine in 1931 and staged four different weekly movie programs as a fundraiser.

The Hall burned down in 1937, with suspected arson, and it was rebuilt on a larger scale.

Whilst the mine has closed, the Hall is still very much a memorial to pioneer New Zealand unionism and its origins, with slogans, murals, portraits and plaques adorning the interior walls.

Attempts to turn the Hall into a factory were thwarted by an anonymous donor and the Hall was transferred to the Runanga Community Centre in the 1960s and the building was partially renovated. In recent times it has been used as a venue: for a monthly market; school holiday programs; and an op shop, which generates money for Hall maintenance.

It is currently controlled by the Runanga Miners' Hall Trust who are planning a staged restoration plan based on the recently found 1938 architect's plans. The first major phase, the roof, is now complete and was recently celebrated with a barbecue.

Work now continues with exterior wall restoration, with the removal of the stucco revealing the original weatherboards 'in remarkable condition'. Some replacement boards were however required and two local sawmills are contributing: **New Zealand Sustainable Timber Products - LP**, **Reefton Mill** are providing the Rimu timber; and the **Ngahere Mill (Gibsons)** are machining the planks into with the required original profile, which they hold.

But the best news is for last, in June the **New Zealand Lottery Grants Board** granted the project \$400,000, followed in July by recognition

by the **New Zealand Historic Places Trust** as a Category One building. A reopening date for November 2016 is now planned. **Well done all at the Runanga Hall, Paul Thomas, Les Holmes, Sandra Gibbens et al.**

Website: runangaminershall.org.nz and follow them on Facebook.

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND

CHELMORTON WAR MEMORIAL VILLAGE INSTITUTE (Est. 1922)



(Photo: www.derbyshirelife.co.uk)

Located 8km from Buxton in the Peak National Park of the Derbyshire Dales, the largest building in the village of Chelmorton is the War Memorial Institute. Built in 1922, as a memorial to its World War I soldiers, the distinctive two-storey Institute has been and is still well used.

Historically Chelmorton was located on the banks of the Illy Willy Water, which rose from a spring and ran down what is now the main street and slipped away into a swallet hole. A dam constructed at the top of town now renders the creek bed redundant.

It is the highest town in Derbyshire, and is still surrounded by quaint remnants of the ancient mediaeval field strips which contribute to its historic hillside setting. Chelmorton's other claim to fame is that it has a phone box constructed from stone, with a slate roof and is painted green.

The township is engaged in annual festivities such as: the **Dressing of St John the Baptist's church well**, a summer festival in June; the **Chelmorton Chase** in September, climbing over one thousand feet to The Low in a five mile course; and **Christmas Carols in December**.

Traditionally the town's menfolk used the Dissenters Hall for the activities of the Social and Literary Institute, more specifically as a Reading and Billiard room. In 1922 the upper floor of the Hall was used by a local builder for storage, the ground floor was controlled by the vicar, the **Rev. Albert Holmes**. The would-be Hall purchasers were told by the vicar 'that something favourable might transpire if they began to attend the church and ring the bells!'

The result was an 'indignation meeting' under the chairmanship of **Samuel Swindell**. **Mrs Bertha Housley** donated a block of land and so the construction of the War Memorial Village Institute commenced. It was to be built by voluntary labour largely supplied by the Chelmonton cricket and football clubs who quarried the stone, which was carted by local farmers to the site, where other members mixed mortar for stonemasons. Both clubs put their official activities on hold for a time to concentrate on the Hall project and both clubs contributed financially to its building.

The upper floor comprised a stage and dressing rooms enabling local theatrical productions. The downstairs hall contains the War Memorial. Electricity was switched on in 1931.

The 9th of December 2014 was a red letter day for Chelmonton and a good bye party was organised for the library van and its staff that had visited on every second Tuesday for many years.

The Church of St John the Baptist's spire is topped by a weathervane featuring a locust, noting its association with St John. Inside the church is an embroidered tapestry with panels depicting the epochs of the district's history: fossils of the Ice and Stone Age; Roman; Norman; Mediaeval; National Park Boundary Stone; and two enduring links the sheepdog and the village pub. A distinctive map of 'The Village of Chelmonton' has been drawn by local artist and calligrapher **Margaret Morgan**.

Checkout the town's website: chelmontonvillage.org.uk

SCOTLAND

KIRKCALDY SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION (Est. 1832)

'Upwards of two hundred and thirty individuals have agreed to form a society under the above designation, the terms of which they are constituted members being a subscription of 5s. The society by this time has commenced operations; Dr Murray, of Edinburgh, having

been engaged two or three weeks since to deliver two courses on Geology and Chemistry, each consisting of twelve Lectures. Such of the working classes are not members, can obtain admission to these by a subscription which does not amount to 1½d each lecture.' (*The Printing Machine; or Companion to the Library, and Register of Progressive Knowledge: Vol. 1. London: Charles Knight, 1834*) Introductory Lecture to the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts 23 April 1833 by **Rev. Henry Carmichael, AM**, Vice-President.

WALES

PENRHIWCEIBER WORKMENS HALL AND INSTITUTE (Est 1892)



(Photo: Penrhiwceiber Hall Facebook)

Located in the Rhondda Cynon Taf region of south Wales the Penrhiwceiber Workmen's Hall and Institute has its origins in 1892.

The Institute's present Hall at 33 Penrhiwceiber Street appears to have been built in 1888 at a cost of £2000 and has a seating capacity of 600. The site and hall was conveyed to the Institute in 1892 and the trustees were registered in 1900.

Over the years the Institute has leased and owned several parcels of land which included premises for a library and reading room. The Hall had a major refit in the late-1960s when a foyer was added to facilitate ongoing film use.

The Institute was refurbished in the early 1990s, but the early projection booth was retained at the front of the building. The Institute is much used by the community which includes: Play Scheme; School; Advice and Information Centre; Communities First; Police; Amateur Dramatics; Bingo; Art and Computer Classes; Diabetics Support Group; Health Forum; OAP Club; and Snooker.

The Hall contains a distinctive mural which features aspects of town life. The film staging equipment was upgraded with a £25,000 grant

in 2011 and the theatre reopened with the **Penrhiwceiber Film Festival** and Hollywood actor **Michael Sheen** attended.

USA

PORTSMOUTH ATHENAEUM (Est. 1817)



(Photo: Portsmouth Athenaeum Facebook)

Located in State of New Hampshire, the Athenaeum was established as a subscription library in 1817. It took over the remnants of the **Portsmouth Library**, which had been largely destroyed by fire in 1813. This had succeeded **Portsmouth Social Library** established in 1750.

The Athenaeum operates from the former 1805 four storey home of the **New Hampshire Fire and Marine Insurance Company** which the Institute purchased in 1823. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Over the years it has built up a significant library and collection of artefacts. One such collection is of Pacific artefacts donated by **Lieutenant John Collins Long** in 1827, the key item being a 'u'u [sic], 58.5 inch long carved wooden club from the Marquesas Islands. The Institute's Museum was traditionally housed on

the third floor, but this now houses the **Joseph P Copley Research Library**.

In recent times women have played an increasing role in the management of the Athenaeum and the first woman President, **Eleonore Sanderson** was elected in 2001. The mezzanine floor also carries the name of **Loretta Hassett Slawson** in recognition of 'generous contributions in her memory by an anonymous donor'.

In more recent times the library has been given wide prominence in the community with lectures, seminars, exhibitions and the advertising of its unique collection for wider research use. Membership has substantially increased and this new optimism caused the Board to purchase the remainder of the Foye Building, portion of which had previously been gifted to the Athenaeum, in 2013. This was stated as being an opportunity never likely to arise again. Fundraising continues apace and included the First Annual **Original and Unique Proprietors' Follies** held in May. The Annual Book Sale is scheduled for September.

In the meantime the **Athenaeum Bicentennial Book Project** [for 2017 publication] continues to canvas wide input covering themes, proprietors and community.

The Proprietors, Tom Hardiman, The Keeper [Executive Director] and the Portsmouth Athenaeum team of **Robin Silva, Carolyn Marvin** and **James Smith** never cease to amaze with their innovation and enthusiasm for their buildings and their collections and their relevance to the wider Portsmouth community.

Check out their website and newsletters at: www.portsmouthatheneaeum.org.

Where They Stood

BOOLARRA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1886)

The township of Boolarra was gazetted on 17 August 1885. Early local meetings appear to have been held in: 'Clarke's Hall' from the 1880s [1888, 1890]; Biles' Hall [1892]; Neil's Hall [1894]; Boolarra Hall [1896]; and Scanlon's Hall [1901, 1902]. In 1890 Messrs **Howlett** and **Firmin** were given a licence, on payment of £1 per annum, 'for dancing at Boolarra Hall'.

A site was set aside for a Mechanics' Institute on 3 March 1886. The Boolarra Mechanics'

Institute and Free Library received a library grant in 1891.

In March 1903 a meeting to consider the building of a Mechanics' Hall and Reading Room was held. It was noted the site 'had at one time been cleared by an old Committee'.

The press reported in September 1904 that 'The site of the Mechanics' Institute has been partly cut down [levelled?] by Mr **[John] Bastin**, and the architect has the plans well in hand. Nearly an acre has been reserved for the building.'

Where They Stood CONT...



The Mechanics' Hall was built on the north-east corner of [Mechanics] Hall and Church Streets, Boolarra by **J Hall** of Morwell. It opened on 1 March 1905 with an advertised Grand Opening Concert followed by a Grand Ball noting the 'splendid floor [of kauri] 30x60[ft]'. The Hall was reported in August 1907 to be free of debt.

Over the years the Hall had use for: church services, dances, skating, bazaars, drama, gymnastics, concerts, meetings, film nights and card nights.

Boolarra residents have contributed substantially to the Australian War effort down through the years. It is noted in the 1946 press 'that the patriotic district [of Boolarra], which had supplied at least 170 uniformed personnel and many more to assist in defence industries from the region' during World War II, would be worthy of a memorial.

A public meeting on 6 February 1946 was held in the Mechanics' Institute to consider a suitable memorial, known as War Memorial No. 2. Various ideas were advanced, including a swimming pool, and a sub-committee was set up to consider ideas.

However before the meeting closed it was resolved to establish the Boolarra Memorial Fund to finance what idea was proposed and £250 was subscribed in fifteen minutes with the promise from Boolarra Sports Club of 'at least £250' from the recent sports meeting.

A Queen of Queens Competition held from March 1946 was stated as being a Memorial Hall fundraiser, resulting in the proceeds of £1,100.17s.7d being announced at the Coronation Ball on 10 December 1946.

About 1946 the Boolarra Memorial Hall Committee purchased the former Fitzgerald's

hotel site on the south-east corner of Monash Way and the Christian Street. There it planned to build a new hall.

The siting of the Hall came under scrutiny at 'the largest public meeting ever held in Boolarra' on 11 February 1954. It was estimated that 150 people turned out for the meeting which was to discuss the two sites: the Mechanics' Institute site 'at the top of the hill', which was voted as the preferred site by a public meeting in January by a vote of 25-21; and the site purchased by the Memorial Hall Committee in 1946 from Mr Cook for £500, for which funds had been specifically raised for building on that site, and which had precipitated legal opinion.

In 1954 a report noted the difficulty in raising the required £11,000. It was suggested that the Hall be progressively built in sections, with parts generating income to finance further sections.

The Boolarra and District Memorial Hall was finally built and opened in 1962. It was noted at the time that this was to commemorate the nine district people who paid the Supreme Sacrifice during World War II and Korea. The Institute site and Hall was passed to the Memorial Hall Committee in 1962 and in 1969 the Hall was demolished and the site was offered for sale.

Over the years various murals have been painted outside and inside the Hall featuring war related themes. The 'Boolarra & District Memorial Hall' sign on cement sheet in acrylic carries the wording 'They gave their Today for our Tomorrow'. (This wording comes from a plaque inside the Hall.)

Today the Hall is still owned by the community and managed by a local Committee which by astute handling and grants have managed in the past to periodically upgrade facilities to meet regulatory standards and community expectations.



CURTAIN CALL

Two halls have come to our attention where stage curtains still exist. Their stories follow.

AUBREY HALL AND RECREATION RESERVE (Est. 1881)



*Stage curtain at Aubrey Hall.
(Photo: Janine Elliott)*

The district was originally known as Cannum North up until it was renamed Aubrey in 1888.

A five acre site for public purposes was set aside in 1879. The Cannum [North] Free Library appears to have started in 1881, for at the 1882 AGM the Secretary noted 'We have accumulated a goodly amount of instructive and entertaining books, comprising more than 150 volumes, besides periodicals.'

The first hall appears to have been erected of mudbrick in 1881 and served as a school, library, church and meeting place. By 1886 it had a library of 425 books and in 1888 it became known as the Aubrey Free Library.

A new hall was erected in 1895 from galvanised iron and this continued in use in later life as a supper room until it was replaced by a new brick structure in 1939.

A third Hall was erected alongside the galvanised structure in 1923 and opened with concert and ball on 31 May. 'Over 100 motor cars were parked in the vicinity, and the hall was packed with an enthusiastic audience.'

Electricity was switched on to the Hall in the 1960s. It has had a long-running annual Christmas Tree celebration since at least the 1970s. There has also been a monthly Friday Men's Night at the Hall for the last few years, at which the football is watched. The Wallis' had their wedding reception in the Hall in 2000.

The Hall's stage curtain is painted in the style of Barry Jagers, if in fact it is not by him. It is of a mountainous scene, which could well be Italy.

Hearsay has it came from the Dal Monti Hall in Warracknabeal and was certainly in place in the Aubrey Hall from the 1960s. (The flamboyant Joseph Vasquez opened the Wimmera Fruit Mart in Scott Street, Warracknabeal in 1915. In 1925-26 he had the Dal Monti Hall built on the same site. It may have been named for Italian operatic soprano Toti Dal Monte. The Hall could accommodate 1400 people and had two shops in the front facing Scott Street, and a residence above. Vasquez became insolvent in 1930 and the Hall was sold to picture theatre interests. His brother Salvatore Vasquez continued with the fruit shop and café until his death in 1948. The Hall still stands.)

WATCHEM MECHANICS' HALL (Est. 1892)



*In the Rockies painted by Barry Jagers
(Photo: wimmera-w-b-w.blogspot.com.au)*

This Institute was established in 1892, and a site of two roods was set aside for a 'Mechanics' Institute' on 26 September 1892. Tenders for a hall were called in 1898. In 1916 the opening night of the Watchem Dandies filled the hall 'to its utmost capacity' with the proceeds going to district soldiers overseas.

In October 1922 tenders were called 'for alterations and additions' to the Hall by RE Carne. The hall was a film venue for a time.

The Hall had a library and its remnants were donated to the Donald Historical Society. A Bookmobile now serves the community with occasional visits to a site adjacent to the Hall.

The Hall has a distinctive stage curtain titled 'In the Rockies' painted in 1928 by Barry Jagers.

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.

This issue's title is ex-libris San Francisco Mechanics' Institute. It was clearly circulated within the fifty year period when the stipulated required use of Mercantile, after the 1906 merge, was incorporated into the Institute's title. It was 'released' from stock after 1965. The book is in the **Constable's Miscellany Series**, which was started by **Archibald Constable** (1776-1827) in 1826 [Constable commenced publishing the successful *Edinburgh Review* in 1802.]. He died in 1827 and the Series was taken over by series editor **John Aitken** (1793-1833), **Henry Constable** and the London publisher, Hurst, Chance & Co. The consortium broke up when Hurst's was restructured in 1831, with more than seventy volumes in print. The Series then appears to have been taken over by London-based Whittaker & Co. and ceased at volume eighty in 1835. (This Series was started two years before that of [John] **Murray's Family Library**, and was the first of a number of series.)

Each volume, hardbound in linen cloth, was issued at one shilling and some titles ran to more than one volume as the one below, vols. 53 and 54. The Edinburgh printer **John Hutchison** appears to have taken over the printery of **David Willison** (1747-1821). The latter was Constable's father-in-law.

The artist **George Frederick Sargent** (1811-64) appears to have lived in Australia in the 1850s. The engraver **William Archibald** (1769-1847) produced many works for books.

Authored by **John Donald Carrick** (1787-1837), the title is *Life of Sir William Wallace of Elderslie*: In two Volumes - Vol. 2. Edinburgh:

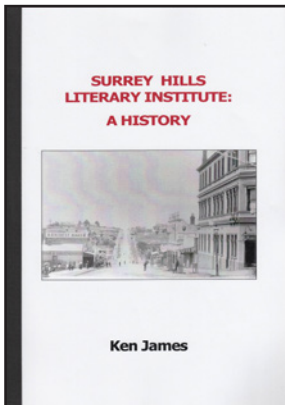


Constable & Co./ London: Hurst, Chance & Co., 1830. Hardback. 296p, steel engraving after GF Sargent by W Archibald. 100x160mm. Constable's Miscellany of Original and Selected Publications in the Various Departments of the Literature, Science and the Arts Vo1. LIV. Printed by J Hutchison for the Heirs of D Willison. Bound in emerald green linen, with maroon leather patch, gold blocked with 'Constable's/ Miscellany/ LIV/ Wallace.'

Marginalia: On the base of the spine is handwritten in white ink '800/ C756/ V.45'. The front cover carries a 60mm circular canary label on top left corner with black printed Hammer and Hand logo and '1855' with additional wording 'Mechanics' Institute/ Mechanics-Mercantile/ Library San Francisco'. The front paste down carries a 65x135mm white label with a printed in black engraving of an 'Athenaeum-like' building under construction by 'Arthur F

Mathews' (Arthur Frank Mathews (1860-1945)). The words 'Mechanics-/ Mercantile/ Library' appear in a panel at the base. Over this wording, rubberstamped in black, is the wording 'Released by/ Mechanics' Institute/ San Francisco'. On the lower part of the title page is an oval pin pierced tattoo with the wording 'Mechanics' Institute San Francisco'. The Contents page, at the top, carries a green vertical rubber stamp 'Apr-5'18'. Next to this in pencil horizontal across the page is '800/ C756'. At the base of the page in a blue steel stamp are the numerals '63157'. On the back paste down in a green rubber stamp 'This book is due/ on last date stamped on Pocket'. Underneath this is 95x105mm light tan ruled label carrying the handwritten notation '800/ C756/ V54'. Printed alongside in black is the wording 'Mechanics'/ Mercantile Library/ 57 Post Street/ San Francisco/ This book should be returned on or before the last date stamped/ below. Two cents fine for each day it is kept overtime.' Three borrowings are recorded in a blue steel stamp below 'Nov 17'41/ Jun 29'50/ Jul -3'65'

Book Reviews



Surrey Hills Literary Institute: A History – Ken James. Camberwell: Ken James, 2015. Paperback, perfect bound. 62 pages, illustrations, index. 210x300mm.

Following on Ken James' amazing sleuthing on the elusive West Melbourne

Literary Institute, he now takes us in search of the Surrey Hills Literary Institute and its satellite the Surrey Hills Literary and Debating Society. Again the Institute's official record is missing and the story has been pieced together from newspaper extracts, directory and Public Record Office Victoria sources.

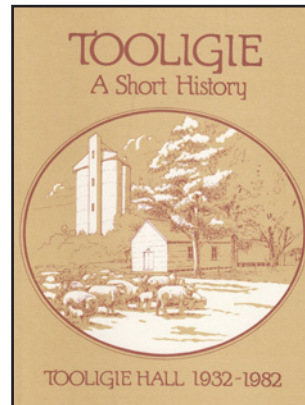
During the Institute's brief life from 1892-1917 it occupied the upper floor of Mrs Elizabeth Ellerker's private Surrey Hall, a building which still exists at 101-105 Union Road, Surrey Hills. Here it established a substantial library of perhaps 3000 books, a record of which has not survived, save some listings in Annual Reports.

The role of the various officebearers, of diverse occupations, and their interaction with a range of community sporting, church and fraternal groups is teased out through biographies and the occupational listing of some key players.

The participation of Protestant clergy is also noted in this vigorous but relatively short-lived Institute. Particularly notable is the youthful Rev. C Bernard Crockett MA based at the Wyclif Congregational Church, Surrey Hills. A photo showing his Church's signboard advertising his ANZAC [sic] sermon themes 'Out of Egypt' and 'A Deathless Army' are typical of his challenging style. He later became a leading social commentator who led his Church in Australasia and travelled the world, providing commentary on contemporary humanitarian issues.

This is a very worthy contribution to Mechanics' Institute studies, for which Ken has now made a very significant contribution. This will be further consolidated with the forthcoming revised and updated edition of Pam Baragwanath's *If the Walls Could Speak* to be published later this year.

Available from: Ken James, 18 Lofty Avenue, Camberwell, V 3124. \$25, posted.



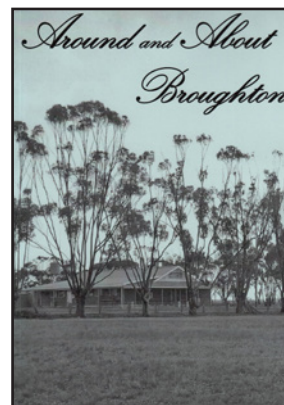
Tooligie: A Short History – Tooligie Hall 1932-1982 - Tooligie Hall Jubilee Book Committee. Tooligie: Tooligie Hall Jubilee Book Committee, 1982. Paperback, perfect bound. viii, 68 pages, illustrations. 185 x 240 mm. 0959338608.

Located in South Australia, and north of Port Lincoln, on the railway line to Lock, Tooligie was a railway siding for the loading of ballast and grain. This is the story of the region's hall and the people that it served and still serves as a meeting place, school and church.

'It all began with a meeting, called on 9 June 1931, in Ray Shah's shed, when residents of the Tooligie district decided to build a Hall.' The facsimile of the Minutes of that meeting were precise and dealt with two resolutions: 'that Mr DC [David Cullege] Dearman's offer of block No. 8 to be accepted for the purpose of building a hall'; and 'that the allotment be transferred to the trust of TD [Thomas Dunleavey] Hill, H [Harry] Dearman and R[Ray] Shah.' Both resolutions were carried.

Compiled for the Hall's fifty year celebration, this is a worthy well-illustrated history of a railway siding hall. I am so glad that the Hall Committee took the extra print run and have retained copies so that others further a field can appreciate the history, significance and centrality of the remote Tooligie community hall.

Available from: Tooligie Hall Committee, Ms Toni Sheridan, Box 1311, Lock, SA 5633. \$20.00 posted.



Around and About Broughton: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Broughton Memorial Hall 1957-2007. A Photographic and Literary Sketch of Family and Community Groups - Joy Wheaton, Ruth Dickinson and Delwyn Colbert. Broughton: Broughton Memorial Hall

Book Reviews cont...

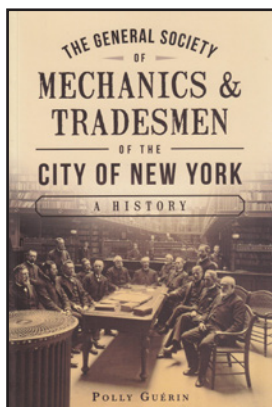
Committee, 2007. Paperback, perfect bound. 160 pages, illustrations, maps, facsimiles. 210x300mm.

Located in Victoria's Mallee region, the Broughton area is noted for its large scale cropping and grazing. This is a very well produced book, by an un-named printer, with excellent well-chosen photos and maps. It tells the story of those district families which have used Broughton's hall, since the first was built in 1904, and the ultimately much-needed replacement built in 1957. It highlights a caring community with many fourth, fifth or even sixth generation descendants who are part of and still contribute to district life.

Memories, prompted by the various photos, will flood back to those readers who lived similar lives in rural Victoria when communities made their own fun and recreation.

The book concludes with a thoughtful paragraph. 'This would seem to indicate the end of a story. On the contrary, it is only a pause before a new beginning. There are many more chapters to be written in the years ahead, many more 'symphonies' to be played by the 'orchestra' we call Broughton. **The characters who have played centre stage have passed on the torch which we, in turn, must pass on those who follow us.'**

Available from: Broughton Memorial Hall Committee, Ms Joy Wheaton, 451 Yanac South Road, Broughton, V 3418. \$35.00, posted.



The General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York: A History - Polly Guerin. Charleston, NC: The History Press, 2015. Paperback, 220 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index. 1 5 5 x 2 3 0 m m . 9781626194762.

This Institute had its start in 1785, in the fledgling New York, and it established its apprentices' library in 1820. Lectures began in 1837 and the Mechanics' Institute opened in 1858 to provide free night school education in the trades, notably building. Its membership has included: Benjamin Franklin; Andrew Carnegie; Peter Cooper of the Cooper

Union; Abram S Hewitt, New York Mayor; and Duncan Phyfe.

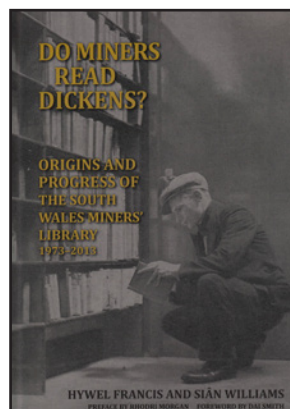
Generations of the Institute's alumni have built or managed New York over more than 150 years and its graduates, educated without fee, are still highly regarded. The Institute commenced teaching young women the use of the typewriter from 1877. Many guest lecturers also provide their services without cost.

The Institute conducts the city's second oldest library, holds one of the most significant collections of historical locks in the world and still holds its 1785 banner depicting the 'By Hammer and Hand All Arts Do Stand' logo and slogan.

We learn throughout its long history, the General Society has survived by adapting to change, which includes recently restarting classes covering the 'old' trades enabling students to gain skills for historic building restoration work. The Institution has been located on five sites since its beginning, the current one being at 20 West 44th Street since 1899.

Polly Guerin has done the Institute proud in documenting its rich history through word and the careful selection of fascinating photographs.

Available from: Amazon approx US\$20.00, plus postage. It is also available as an ebook.



Do Miners Read Dickens?: Origins and Progress of the South Wales Miners' Library - Hywel Francis and Sian Williams. Cardigan, Wales: Parthian Books, 2013. Hardback. 136 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index. 2 1 5 x 3 0 5 m m . 9781909844445.

This book creates the compelling case for the establishment of a central repository for the collection of information on a stated subject area, in this case the South Wales Coal Miners' libraries of which there were over one hundred.

The public trigger came with an article by journalist Trevor Fishlock in *The Times* of 1 January 1973 headed 'Great working-class libraries of Wales destroyed by 'ignorance, accident and plunder'.' The article detailed the

Book Reviews cont...

rescue 'in tact' of the Bargoed Miners' Library and remnants of others, in total some 11,000 books, by the University of Swansea to create 'a South Wales Miners' Library to preserve what survives and to be a centre for private bequests'. This action had been part of the Social Sciences Research Council-funded South Wales Coalfield History Project 1971-73.

The authors, Labor MP Hywel Francis and Sian Williams, Librarian of the South Wales Miners's Library have produced a masterful study of the modus operandi of a visionary team comprised of David Egan, Hywel Francis, Connie Jones, Merfyn Jones, Alun Morgan and Mona Robinson, who combed the valley coalfields for material and conducted face to face interviews. All this confirmed the notion as to why these libraries were contemporaneously described as 'the brains of the Coalfield'.

The book's title comes from the reported conversation of two [unnamed] Swansea University Professors, whilst scanning the shelves of the South Wales Miners' Library 'Do miners read Dickens?' Indeed they did and much more. In reviewing the Library's ten years of progress in 1983, the distinguished miners' leader Will Paynter described his Rhondda-based Cymmer Workmen's Library as 'an educational citadel.' This was 'his Eton'.

Little wonder the miners during their marches proudly carried aloft banners proclaiming 'Knowledge is Power'. And this book plumbs knowledge's forms in an economic, cultural and democratic context. The Library's collection ranges from books, pamphlets, book catalogues, printed rules, posters, banners, taped interviews to memorabilia.

The use and experience of the Library and its Collection is detailed in the Chapter 'Enriching Lives' with influential men and women providing their life's perspective.

The Library runs courses, exhibitions, international exchange programs and has a strong digital web presence on the Swansea University website.

A visit to the South Wales Miners' Library in the Coach House, Hendrefoelan Campus, Swansea should be the aim of every serious archivist, but firstly read this book.

Available from: Parthian Books, The Old Surgery, Napier Street, Cardigan, Wales SA43 1ED, £15 plus postage.



On a Saturday Night: Community Halls of Small-Town New Zealand - Michele Frey and Sara Newman, with photographs by John Maillard and John O'Malley.

Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2012. Paperback. 295 pages, illustrations, plans. 235x235mm. 9781927145371.

This entrancing book, lavishly illustrated throughout with colour photographs and some black and white archive material, could only come from a heavily subsidised project, with printing being done in China.

That said it is a remarkable time capsule of New Zealand's north and south island rural halls. The project team selected some forty country halls for detailed coverage. Each hall is given the history, architecture, major events, 'different', people and today treatment. There are internal, external, some quirky and a scattering of archival pics or facsimiles of memorabilia.

It records the initial builds, rebuilds, restorations and the various upgrades of kitchen and 'anteroom' or toilet and lighting requirements. However the fascinating part of each Hall is its people. The authors note 'These locals love the history of their halls and believe in their future. They welcomed us warmly and shared their knowledge with great generosity. Their enthusiasm for this book was inspiring.'

The skills of the two award winning photographers however made this book, for indeed a picture is worth a thousand words. They have probed the various individual elements of each hall, from broom cupboard, stage curtains, remnant library, ticket box, and of course the indomitable hall people.

Again quoting the authors: 'We hope we have captured and thus preserved something of its [the hall's] essence within the pages of the book.' Indeed they have and any discerning reader will gain much from perusing this book's captivating pages.

Available from: Canterbury University Press, Box 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand. NZ\$45.00. You can buy on online www.nationwidebooks.co.nz. It is also available as an ebook.

Our People



The South Wales Miners' Library's **Sian Williams** celebrates twenty years with this dynamic library. Besides her work as Librarian, Sian has coordinated the Library's and Swansea University's Department of Adult Continuing Education

programs under the banner 'Promoting Your Learning, Preserving Our Past'. Sian was short-listed for the CILIP Welsh Librarian of the Year in 2014 'a much deserved nomination, for all her hard work, dedication and passion'. (Photo: minersite.wordpress.com)



Heriot-Watt University recently announced the appointment of **Professor Richard Williams** OBE as its new Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Richard has wide international experience from his previous major appointments at the University of Leeds, and most recently at Birmingham. 'I am delighted to be joining a University that has a proud heritage and evident track record of outstanding achievement in science, engineering and business and with such a profound global reach.' Indeed HW has come a long way since being established as the Edinburgh School of Arts in 1821. (Photo: www.hw.ac.uk)

In the listings of Parliamentary farewells in the last issue we overlooked **Dr Bill Sykes**, the former National Party Member for Benalla. After an early career in football, during which he played forty-eight games for Fitzroy he progressed into the role of veterinarian. Dr Bill was elected to Parliament in Opposition in 2002. Until his retirement last year he served the community well and many Halls in the region received



grants thanks to him. In his farewell speech Dr Bill noted 'I am a farmer by love, a veterinarian by training and a politician by an error of judgment.' However, his judgement when it came to Community Halls was never found wanting.

In the number of farewells throughout his electorate, there was one notable theme 'He was always accessible.' And clearly still is, for he opened the 129th annual Tolmie Sports in February this year. Thank you Bill for your care to the community. (Photo: Twitter/@MarkJesser)



On the other side of the world we see the University of Cincinnati's President **Santa J Ono** turning down his bonus for the third year running. He has asked that the \$200,000 sum be applied to fourteen scholarships and charities, including \$10,000 to the family of

Cincinnati Police Officer Sony Kim who was shot and killed in June 2015 in the line of duty. (Photo: www.uc.edu)



Another US Mechanics' University, Rochester Institute of Technology is working through its new strategic plan titled 'Greatness through Difference'. **Sandra 'Sandy' Johnson** has recently completed her first year at RIT as Senior Vice-President for Student Affairs. Sandy

Our People

oversees an annual budget of \$25 million and a staff of 200 people in the University's Student Life, Wellness, Student Learning and Athletics Departments. With nine colleges, 15,000 undergraduates, 2,900 graduates from all 50 US States and 100 countries it is no easy task. On top of that you can add the 1300 deaf and hard of hearing students at its National Technical Institute for the Deaf. (Photo: www.rit.edu)



The Mechanics' Institute of New Haven Executive Director **Natalie Elicker** is continuing on with her predecessor **Will Baker's** relentless building restoration and Institute renewal program. However it came as a surprise to receive the prestigious New Haven Preservation Trust's **Landmark Plaque for the Extraordinary Devotion to Preservation** on 26 May 2015. Natalie, who stepped down from practicing law with attorneys Wiggin and Dana in New Haven, is a graduate of the University of Virginia and was an occasional worker in their Rare Book School. With two further subsequent grants to support ongoing works, New Haven is on a roll and it is not surprising that the Institute is hosting a **Flying Pig Roast** in September. (Photo: www.newhavenindependent.org)



Our hardworking and innovative President **Robert Kingston** recently addressed the AGM of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute on the future of Institutes around the world. Robert likened an Institute to an aeroplane, which is in

essence an engine. It needs fuel, people on board and a whole team to keep it running. How apt. Are you ready for takeoff?



Ballarat - Federation University of Australia (FedUni) retiring Vice-Chancellor **Professor Terry Lloyd** was recently elected to the position of Vice-President - Library at the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute. Emeritus Professor Terry is present

President of the Sovereign Hill Museums Association, where the Gold Museum Collections Centre has recently been built. (Photo: www.highlandslen.org)



The Shepparton Mechanics' Institute Trustees were recently named in the Greater City of Shepparton 2015 Cultural Heritage Awards in the Category of 'Conservation of a Place'. The SMI Trustees Chair, **Lance Woodhouse**, was on hand to receive the Award on behalf of the Institute.

L-R: Greater Shepparton City Council, Cr Dinny Adem, Katandra & District History Group Inc's Garry Wallden, the Historical Society of Mooroopna's Bob McClure, Greater Shepparton City Council Mayor, Cr Dennis Patterson, Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation's Leon Saunders, Shepparton Mechanics Institute's Lance Woodhouse and Greater Shepparton City Council, Cr Jenny Houlihan.

Photo: www.sheppadviser.com.au

Community Page

RECIPE

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

STEAK PASTE

You will need for a good multi sandwich batch

1 kg Topside steak, thinly sliced

0.25 teaspoon Nutmeg

2.5 tablespoons Margarine

Pinch of Cayenne Pepper

Salt and Pepper to taste

2.5 tablespoons Worcestershire Sauce

Method

1. Combine ingredients in a basin with a lid.
2. Cook on medium heat for two hours.
3. Mince meat, and place in shallow dish.
4. Pour liquid over minced meat.
5. Cover and place in the fridge for two hours before use.

SPOT THE 'BAKER'S DOZEN' REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 37

1. Where is the next MIV Regional Forum 'Let's Talk' to be held?
2. Which Hall hosts **Wednesday Afternoon Tea at the Hall**?
3. Which Hall has the MG O'Brien Hall as an annexe?
4. Which Hall Committee manages a Cemetery on its Reserve?
5. Who has recently joined the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute as Vice-President - Library?
6. What was the name of the Surrey Hills Institute?
7. In which State is the Gurulmundi School of Arts located?
8. What WA Hall received a **Lottery West** grant to fix its roof?
9. Which Halls are featured in **Curtain Call** in this issue?
10. Which Hall was associated with Edith Ambrosine Scrimger?

11. From which Institute did the book featured in **Ex-Libris** originate?
12. Who are the two nurses featured on Little River Australian Nurses' Memorial?
13. What New Zealand Institute is featured in **Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes** of in this issue?

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

1. Prahran Mechanics'Institute; 2. Melbourne Athenaeum Library; 3. Gunns Plains Hall; 4. Ballarat Mechanics' Institute; 5. Dr (now Professor) Stefan Petrow; 6. Kilmore Mechanics' Institute; 7. Sally Roadknight; 8. Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts NSW; 9. John Killen; 10. San Francisco Mechanics' Institute; 11. Narre Warren Mechanics' Institute; 12. Alexander Sutherland Murray; 13. Waterfall Party Venue.



MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA REGIONAL FORUM

'LET'S TALK'

Lilydale Athenaeum, 39-41 Castella Street,
Lilydale

Saturday, 12 September 2015 - 9am-4pm

Speakers – Information Exchange –
Book Trading Table

Each Institute is given time to tell their story.

Let's hear of your activities, aspirations and
concerns.

All welcome.

This is FREE day.

RSVP: theruralstore@bipond.com;

Tel: (03) 9873 7202

Please advise any special dietary requirements.

Ideas & Opportunities

The **State Library of Victoria** has launched a new website called '**Victorian Places**'. This comprises every town and suburb in Victoria and provides a history for each place along with maps, photos, newspaper extracts and current demographic information.

This excellent innovation will be a valuable complement to the much used *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and will be a boon to all those working in the heritage sector.

It has been a massive project co-ordinated with **Monash University** and the **University of Queensland**. Check it out at **www.victorianplaces.com.au**. If you can fine tune it or add other vital information like the establishment of the community hall please communicate with the webmaster. It would be good to see localities also listed, particularly for the benefit of family historians, to supplement the now thoroughly thumbed Les Blake's *Place Names of Victoria*.

The **Federation of Australian Historical Societies** e-Bulletin No. 139 – July 2015 brings some great news that a **National Arts, Culture and Heritage Lottery** is definitely on the table. The bulletin summarised the proceedings of the June meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of History and Heritage. 'Arts, Culture and Heritage Lottery – This was described by the Minister [Greg Hunt] as the real prize which is being proposed by the government – and would be based on the successful example of the Western Australian Government [Lottery West] and the UK Heritage Lottery [Fund]. The Minister outlined this as a high priority, with a six months time frame proposed to work out details of this initiative. This funding mechanism will help address community concerns about limited funding available for heritage initiatives.' MIV has made a representation to the Government on this in regards to small low-doc grants under \$20,000 for vital hall maintenance works, plumbing, rewiring, painting, restumping, etc.

The success of the low-doc loans in WA and the UK is immediately evident, timely action by small works can obviate the need for major works later on if action is taken promptly, particularly as regards to roof leaks, broken windows, external paint work, etc.

In the past the idea of having projects 'in the can' on the offchance that some funding may come your way has been raised. This is a vital part of a management strategy. Why not schedule your next Hall meeting early, and in the daylight, for a thorough walk around and walk through of your hall. Look at the roof, spouting, downpipes, cladding, windows, doors, internal signage, electrical cabling, gas connection, kitchen facilities, and crockery.

Prioritise what needs doing, what needs replacing and get the elements costed and then discuss it with Council and your Parliamentary representatives as to possible funding sources. You could be surprised.

A secure records store in your hall is a must. The current *Incorporated Association* legislation requires the passing over of Institute records when an officer ceases in a position. In some cases an Institute's accrued records might comprise several boxes which is an added burden on officers. Get a secure vermin proof cabinet and store these records in your Hall. They will then be available for access at meetings or even placing in order at a working bee. They can be placed in self-sealing plastic bags to keep out dust and moisture and can be labelled. Replenish the insect repellent from time to time as this will further protect them. PS. Before you seal them all up you might like to have them digitised by MIV without cost. In the first instance email: mivenquiry@live.com.au

With the warmer weather approaching now is the time for spring cleaning. This need not be major works, but can be very minor like touching up paint on bare or knocked woodwork, puttying or silconing window surrounds, replacing cracked panes, putting up some netting to keep the possums or birds out, and door seals, and baiting to deter mice and rats.

There are also excellent compounds which will actually cover over small rusted holes in galvanised iron roofing. Whilst aesthetically it might not look good, at least it will keep the water out thus protecting the all-important internal roof structure and flooring. The old adages of 'little and often' and 'a stitch in time saves nine' really do apply.