



# Useful Knowledge

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

NO. 50 – SPRING 2019

PO Box 1080, Windsor VIC 3181 Australia ISSN 1835-5242

Reg No. A0038156G ABN 60 337 355 989 Price: Six Dollars \$6

## IT'S HAPPENING AT THE HALL THIS NOVEMBER!



The Committee of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria recently resolved to continue to recognise and promote this established November initiative.

Rebadged as **It's Happening at the Hall** it will resume earlier promotional and support initiatives, albeit on a more limited scale.

**Whilst it may be too late for this year, we urge all Institute members and other community Halls to start planning for November 2020.** Put your thinking caps to make your space the place for an activity. It could be a: lecture; exhibition; dance or music gig; local maker's craft or food expo; market; a Pleasant Sunday afternoon; karaoke in the Country; your own Cup Carnival; or celebration of a local person, place or thing; a progressive dinner or lunch involving several Halls. You may even consider a Working Bee at which all-comers could be invited to participate.

You could even use **It's Happening at the Hall Month** to 'relaunch' your Hall with an Open Day, proudly showcasing your new signage, logo, slogan and even mascot, and exhibiting the various submissions by way of a Public Competition. Involve

your local schools, Parliamentarians, Councillors and don't forget to invite your neighbouring Mechanics' Institutes.

The Hall is central to every community. It is family friendly and provides an opportunity to meet locals and greet new settlers. It is amazing the diversity of activity that exists in communities.

The local Hall also highlights volunteerism at its best and from which every person has some benefit ranging from visual to hands on. Thousands of unheralded people give countless hours in maintaining these vital parts of local, regional and State infrastructure as meeting places, libraries, museums, theatres or safer gathering spaces.

It is important that we highlight the vital role of our buildings and their 'contents' which can include even memory. Government at all levels must continually be reminded of the significance and social capital which our local Halls represent.

Let us have your activities so as they can be promoted. Perhaps we could organise a regional bus crawl to drop in on activities during the November weekends.

# Coming Events - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

---

## NOVEMBER

### HAPPENING AT THE HALL MONTH

- 7-23 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre, 'Ladies in Black'. [lilydaleatc.com](http://lilydaleatc.com)
- 10 Arthurs Creek Garden Walk
- 12 Digby Hall Breast Cancer Fundraiser Breakfast
- 16 Mt Best Hall "Summer Breeze", 7pm. More info: Mt Best Hall Facebook
- 17 Acheron Community Day
- 22-30 Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute, Two One-Act Plays. More info: [warrandytehallarts.asn.au](http://warrandytehallarts.asn.au)
- 24 Nareen Mechanics' Hall - Produce swap, 10-11.30am

## DECEMBER

- 1 Tallarook Market
- 4 Launch of MIV Museum Directory, Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum, 9.30am
- 5-7 Warrandyte Mechanics' Institute, Two One-Act Plays. More info: [warrandytehallarts.asn.au](http://warrandytehallarts.asn.au)
- 14 Acheron Hall Christmas Party. More info: [acheronhall.com](http://acheronhall.com)
- 22 Digby Hall, Christmas Carols, 6pm

## 2020

## MAY

- 29-31 Independent Libraries Association Conference - Leeds Library.

## JUNE

- TBC Briagolong Film Festival

## SEPTEMBER

- TBC MIV AGM
- TBC MIV Wesson Lecture

**MIV'S EVENTS CALENDAR IS ONLINE**  
[mivic.org.au/events.html](http://mivic.org.au/events.html)

Subscribe for weekly email updates on events throughout the week.

**Member Institutes:** email through details of your events, or public events being held at your Institute, both big and small to [editor@mivic.org.au](mailto:editor@mivic.org.au) for inclusion in the online calendar. Let us help you promote your events!

## OCTOBER

- TBC American Membership Libraries Meeting - Salem Athenaeum, Salem, Mass.

## NOVEMBER

### HAPPENING AT THE HALL MONTH

## 2021

## OCTOBER

- TBC Mechanics' Worldwide 2021 - Edinburgh - Heriot-Watt University

---

*Our children are our living messengers to a future we will never see.*

ELIJAH CUMMINGS (1951-2019)

---

## THANK YOU TO OUR PRINTERS

Sean, Wal and the team from TDC3 Print Centre, 548 Bridge Rd, Richmond. [tdc3.com.au](http://tdc3.com.au)



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

This publication is registered for Print Post in Australia. Reg. No. 100023312

## MIV Contacts

---

### President

Bron Lowden - [president@mivic.org.au](mailto:president@mivic.org.au)

### Vice-President

### Secretary

Jim Lowden - [secretary@mivic.org.au](mailto:secretary@mivic.org.au)

### Treasurer

Gary Bester - [treasurer@mivic.org.au](mailto:treasurer@mivic.org.au)

### All other enquiries

[info@mivic.org.au](mailto:info@mivic.org.au)

### MIRC

Judith Dwyer - [mirc@mivic.org.au](mailto:mirc@mivic.org.au)

### Magazine/Website

Bron Lowden - [editor@mivic.org.au](mailto:editor@mivic.org.au)

## *Letter From The President*

Firstly thank you to all those who came along to the Annual General Meeting and to those who sent their proxies. The Rule Change to enable registration of MIV as a charity was approved and we are preparing documentation firstly for a change of rules with Consumer Affairs which is the first step.

You will probably have heard that the **Home is Where the Hall Is!** November promotion that has been happening for almost a decade is ceasing. MIV believes this to be a very worthwhile initiative and we have resolved to continue this under the **It's Happening at The Hall Month**. Whilst it may be too late for this year, let's all start planning events for next year now, so they can get advance publicity and make it have real impact.

Hopefully we might even be able to get a bus tour up that could call in on several halls during a day and see events in action. A progressive lunch or even dinner between several Institutes could be an idea.

Very positive feedback from the very recent Gippsland Bus Tour reports that the Halls are all in excellent shape and reflect the dedicated work that the local Committees of Management put into managing and progressively upgrading their Halls. Our Bus Tours are a great way to garner ideas on how other Halls do things and each Institute should seriously think about sending a delegate on each Tour and to report back. Furthermore the potential for networking or even reciprocal visits is very real. (See Report next issue.)

A great deal of effort is put into the production of each issue of *Useful Knowledge* and we still hear reports that Committee Members of Institutes never see or no longer see a copy because of a change of office-bearer or it is simply filed away by the Secretary with incoming correspondence. You will see on page four of each magazine a Magazine Round box and provision for tick off and then pass it along.

The other alternative is that an Institute pay one dollar per head for each member and you can distribute it by email to all your members.

We also hear reports that if we had known that the Wesson Lecture was happening we would have been there. Similarly the Bus Tours, or Overseas Conferences. Can I appeal to Member Institutes to also publicise MIV events to your members as these are also your events, which are also organised not only for your Committees or staff but for all your members. On the other hand it is very gratifying to see that other Institutes actually have copies of *Useful Knowledge* on display.

You will also see our Call for Papers for the *Mechanics' Institutes Annual* which we would like to publish in the first half of next year. Please send in your articles or contributions as soon as possible so this can be put into production.

We also have our Architecture Plan and History Competitions for you to promote and/or hopefully participate. Failing to do that, perhaps you could seek out records of Institutes that are still to be scanned for the **Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre**. Check our website for locations already scanned and if you know of records which are not listed, please get in touch.

*Bron Lowden*  
President.

# Housekeeping

## MECHANICS' INSTITUTES Annual

### CALL FOR PAPERS OR ARTICLES

To further the worldwide collaboration and aggregation of international research on Mechanics' Institutes it has been resolved to issue a *Mechanics' Institutes Annual* comprised of articles and Papers in the region of 5-30 pages. Articles can be on: Mechanics' Institutes in general; a group of Institutes; a particular Institute; a person connected with an Institute or Institutes; an Institute related event or activity; or Institute artefact, Honour Roll, statue, book, etc.

Contributors will receive a copy of the compiled issue and your work will be guaranteed permanence. Send your article through to the Editor (editor@mivic.org.au) citing "Mechanics' Institutes Annual".

***It could include an article like this!***

### THE SOCIETY FOR THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE IN CHINA

The *Government of India Act* of 1833 relieved the Hon. East India Company of the monopoly of Cantonese trade. The now independent merchants moved to shore up and promote ongoing contact with China's Qing Government by forming the British Chamber of Commerce in Canton in 1834. It also hoped to gain further coastal and inland access points to the profitable Chinese market.

In London the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge issued their map 'China and the Birman Empire; with parts of Cochin China and Siam' on 29 September 1834.

This map was a spur to form the 'Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China' on 29 November 1834 in Hong Kong. It had the following officebearers: Jardine Matheson partner, James Matheson, President; American merchant, David Olyphant, Treasurer; American missionary Rev Elijah Bridgman and Prussian missionary Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, both skilled Chinese linguists, were the Chinese Secretaries; and 'diplomat' John Morrison was English Secretary. The Committee comprised: merchant Thomas Fox; 'the notorious opium trader' Captain James Innes; and American merchant William Wetmore.

The principal object of The Society was 'by all means in its power, to prepare and publish, in a cheap form, plain and easy treatises in the Chinese language, on such branches of useful knowledge as are suited to the existing state and condition of the Chinese empire.' And so the 'barbarians' set out on a contaminating propaganda war against the Chinese.

The other war was China's attempt to protect its citizens from the pernicious opium trade. This led to China's seizure of 1200 tons of opium in 1839 and an exercise in British 'gunboat diplomacy' and the ceding of Hong Kong to the British.

### MW 2021 - EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

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

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

### NEWS PLEASE

Let us have your news on the Hall, its history and more importantly its people. Email the **UK** editor at editor@mivic.org.au. Submission deadline for **UK51** is 1 February 2020.

### MAGAZINE ROUND

*Tick after reading and pass it on*

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



## 5TH ANNUAL WESSON LECTURE

**Associate Professor Alan Duffy** certainly presented his **Case for Space** in a very engaging and persuasive fashion. He started out with some grainy footage of a box being loaded on to the back of utility and later its unloading. The 45kg satellite payload was then bolted onto a nosecone. Yes this was the beginning of the launch of Australia into the space race, and the third nation to do so behind the USA and Russia.

This satellite was a joint project between the University of Adelaide and the Australian Weapons Research Establishment and involved partnership with the US National Aeronautical and Space Administration and the UK Ministry of Technology.

An American two-stage Redstone Rocket was used and the launch took place at Woomera Rocket Range on 29 November 1967. During WRESAT's first seventy-three orbits data was transmitted back to earth stations. Then after its batteries had run down, it finally, after completing a total of six hundred and forty-two orbits, was destroyed on re-entering the earth's atmosphere over the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Ireland on 10 January 1968.

The mission had been an unqualified success and a WRESAT model was optimistically exhibited at the London Trade Fair in 1968. However the subsequent British withdrawal from Woomera saw Australia's space ambitions thwarted.

Australia's location in the Southern Hemisphere has seen it develop as a vital signals and tracking links region. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) developed the Parkes (1961), Tidbinbilla (1965), Cooby Creek (1966) and Honeysuckle Creek (1967) for this purpose. The latter had a crucial part to play in the Apollo 11 Moon Landing 'because they were in the right place at the right time' and were able to receive and transfer pictures.

Signals establishments at Alice Springs – Pine Gap (1970) and at Darwin – Shoal Bay (2000) have world strategic significance.

Australia has since contracted its satellite launch and operational facilities and has been



*Associate Professor Alan Duffy*

engaged in remote sensing as applied to crop management, disease and insect monitoring and grazing management by way of radio controlled collars.

The feature film *The Dish* of 2000 put space back in the Australian public psyche and this publicity has continued

consistently through science presenter **Brian Cox** since 2005 and latterly by Alan Duffy.

Entrepreneur **Elon Musk** and his initial SpaceX success in 2008 and subsequent seventy-seven launches works towards reusable and returnable stainless steel clad space vehicles. His futuristic Starship the 'Mars Colonial Transporter' with which he later plans to colonise Mars is under development as is a planned sustainable city, firstly for the Moon.

Mars was doubted, but even colonisation of the Moon had its logistical problems with cosmic rays from which the Earth's atmosphere shields us. This would necessarily be used as a staging base for refuelling for further space exploration.

The decision of the US to finance a further NASA mission to the Moon in late 2024 is being progressed.

Clearly Alan made his 'Case for Space', for the next day **Prime Minister Morrison** announced a \$150 million funding boost to Australian space research.



*The 'Dish' at Parkes, NSW  
(Source: blog.csiro.au; Photo: John Sarkissian)*

## WARRANTYTE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE AND ARTS ASSOCIATION STARTS ITS OWN REPAIR CAFÉ

Have you heard of the **Repair Café** concept? It began in the Netherlands in 2009 and the subsequent Foundation, developed by **Martine Postma** now provides support to local groups around the world wishing to start their own **Repair Café**.

Well, members of WMI&AA, were introduced to this concept by our President, **David Tynan**, and decided that this concept fulfilled one of the original aims of Mechanics' Institutes - that of people coming together to a place where they can learn some skills, as well as meeting their "neighbours".

After checking out how a few other **Repair Cafés** operate, Warrandyte Hall's own "Café" commenced in July this year. The event was a great success and will continue now on the first Sunday of the month from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

### **How do Repair Cafés work?**

If you have a broken toaster, or a bike whose wheels run out of true, or a sweater full of moth holes, for example, you can take them along to a **Repair Café** where volunteer repairers will fix your problem item, to the best of their ability and using their own tools, while you sit with them and learn how.

At our first Café event in Warrandyte, we had 10 volunteer repairers seated at tables around the hall with skills and qualifications enabling them to fix computers, electrical goods, mechanical things, knitwear and clothing. Items that rolled in with their owners included things like kitchen equipment, holey jumpers, a Tai Chi sword with a wobbly handle, a transformer from a printer, a stool that needed recovering. This was just a start. As word gets around, we imagine



*The Repair Café in full swing. (Photo: WMIAA)*



the program will grow like topsy. I previously attended a session in Alexandra where I saw furniture repairers, book binders and bicycle repairers in action. The sky is the limit.

Also, by promoting repairs, WMI&AA wants to help reduce the mountains of waste that our modern society creates. So many things are thrown away that have practically nothing wrong with them and which could easily be made useable again with a simple repair. Many people have forgotten that items can be repaired and **Repair Café** wants to change all that.

**Repair Café** is also meant to put neighbours in touch with each other in a new way. And to discover that a lot of know-how and practical skills can be found close to home. If you repair a bike, a mower or a pair of trousers together with a previously unfamiliar neighbour, you look at that person in a different light the next time you run into them on the street. Jointly making repairs can lead to pleasant contacts in the neighbourhood. Repairs can also save money and resources and help minimise CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but our president David Tynan also points out that **Repair Café** just wants to show how much fun repairing things can be, and how easy it often is."

Pat Anderson:

July 9, 2019

*You can get more information from the Repair Café Foundation (see <https://repaircafe.org/en/>) or by email to [warrandytereaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:warrandytereaircafe@gmail.com).*

## PMI PRESS CELEBRATES LAUNCH

The **Prahran Mechanics' Institute Press** quietly celebrated its fifteenth anniversary with the launch of President **Dr Judith Buckrich's** latest book *The World Is One Kilometre: Greville Street, Prahran*, and her thirteenth book and PMI Press's seventeenth.

The launch was held on Saturday, 3 August, in the atrium of the new **Prahran High School**, because the over two hundred flagged attendees was too large for the Moss Room at the Institute. Built at a cost of \$32 million, Prahran High School, mesh's in well with Prahran's long-term focus on education. With the slogan 'Make an Impact' it was interesting to see three words emblazoned on the Atrium wall 'Curiosity', 'Challenge' and 'Creativity'.

**Cr Steve Stefanopoulos**, Mayor of Stonnington and Board member of PMI launched the book in the presence of about two hundred and fifty people which included: **Sam Hibbins MLA**; **Cr John Chandler**, also a PMI Board Member; former PMI Librarian **Cathy Milward-Bason** and MIV Committee Members **Luke Mitchell**, **David Berry** and **Jim Lowden**.

Cr Stefanopoulos referred to Greville Street as an extraordinary Street, which not only included the Town Hall, Court House, Fire Station, Library and Railway Station, but also had Leggett's Ballroom and the Station Hotel both meccas for music in the precinct.

The author then took us into the counter culture of Greville Street: **Jill Jolliffe** of Alice's Restaurant Bookshop, where posters of Mao and Castro could be seen along with one of Marilyn Munro; the wanderings of itinerant poet **Shelton Lea**; and the social documentary photographer **Rennie Ellis** who moved there in 1975, and left a highly visual record of Greville Street. The Monash Labour Club was based on the Bakery building from 1969.



The Station Hotel and its music scene staged most of the local and travelling bands. Dame Edna Everidge alias Barry Humphries was even domiciled in Greville Street for a time.

It was a sort of homecoming as the High School site had formerly been owned by the Prahran Mechanics' Institute and was sold to the Prahran Technical School for £10 in the 1960s. The multi-storey Arts Wing was built with a car park at the front and the first International Mechanics' Institute Conference **Mechanics' Worldwide** was held there in 2004, which was generously hosted and supported by Swinburne University.

The Prahran Mechanics' Institute Press was founded in 2004, with a tranche round of Government funding for Mechanics' Institute libraries. This was during the term of Cathy Milward-Bason who was Secretary-Librarian with **Christine Worthington** as assistant and publisher. Their first title was the massive *Buildings Books and Beyond*, the Proceedings of the Mechanics' Worldwide Conference of 2004, which is still available for purchase.

The Book Launch was supported with an exhibition at the Institute which ran in PMI's Moss Room from 5-30 August.



Some of the books published by Prahran Mechanics' Institute Press over the years.



# HISTORY & ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING PRIZES

## BACKGROUND

There were once around one thousand Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria and we are keen to get as much history on each Victorian Institute as possible. Mechanics' Institutes were in many cases the first public building in many Victorian country towns and today they are the last.

In addition to being Public Halls and Libraries, they were: Churches; Consulting Rooms for Bankers, Dentists, Doctors, Optometrists and Solicitors; Council Offices; Courts; and Schools. Commercial Travellers even used them to display their samples. Music Teachers travelled along the railway lines and used the abutting Hall pianos to give music lessons.

The stories of the promoters and supporters of Institutes; the events that took place in the Institutes; and their buildings; and collections are well worth recording.

## 1. HISTORY

This requires the history of: an Institute or group of Institutes; a person or persons connected with an Institute; an event or particular activity connected with an Institute; or, an artifact or book connected with an Institute. Projects can be submitted in either manuscript or book form. The Prize is \$1500, with five prizes of \$100 each.

## 2. ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING

This requires a current architectural rendering of elevations and ground plans of an existing Institute. The Prize is \$500, with five prizes of \$100 each.

## CONDITIONS

1. Collaborative projects will be accepted.
2. All work must be the original research or drawing of the submitter or submitters.
3. No electronic submissions will be considered and all physical material submitted will become the property of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc., but copyright will remain with the author/s.
4. The Judges decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.
5. Applications close: 'Architectural Drawing' Section on 1 August 2020; 'The History' Section on 1 August 2021. Announcements will be made at the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. Annual General Meeting in September 2020 and 2021.
6. Entries must reach: Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc, Box 1080, Windsor, Vic 3181 by the specified dates.

*Some of the Institute histories written and plans drawn over the years*



# INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT ON MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

---

We note the launch of the **Australian Common Reader Database** <http://www.australiancommonreader.com> on 21 June 2019 by the Australian National University. In the report of the launch it is noted that records of the reading habits of 19th century readers are difficult to locate.

**Dr Juleanne Lamond**, Manager of the Project has been emailed with information about the records digitised by the MIV advising that these include Library Book Catalogues, Membership Lists and Borrowing Records. It is hoped that there may be researchers interested in accessing these and other documents or books.

Thanks to the efforts of **Emeritus Professor Lorne Bruce** of McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, a consolidated list of Canadian Institutes has been created and this has been deposited in the MIRC.

There is also a DRAFT list of the world's Mechanics' Universities doing the rounds. These either have direct descent from a Mechanics' Institute or have 'absorbed' a major Institute. A copy has been deposited with the MIRC.

A growing collection of international resources is located in the **Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre** at Prahran Mechanics' Institute. Items can be viewed and utilised on site but material cannot be borrowed or is available through inter-library loan.

## THE MECHANICS' UNIVERSITIES

Following Dr Martyn Walker's Paper on the 'Mechanics' Universities' which was submitted to Mechanics' Institutes Australia 2018 – Ballarat a search has been undertaken to see just how many exist across the world.

Based on direct descent, amalgamation or merging the number has now reached around fifty, with some doubtfuls. Australia has seven with a further two under investigation. We would welcome comments on the following DRAFT list. We also particularly welcome new University leaders (in parenthesis) who have joined the respective Universities this year.

### AUSTRALIA

Deakin University (Geelong); Federation University (Ballarat and Moe); Queensland University of Technology (Brisbane); RMIT University (Melbourne); Swinburne University (Hawthorn); University of New South Wales (Sydney); University of Technology Sydney (Sydney); and Victoria University (Footscray). The possibilities are:

University of Adelaide (Adelaide); and University of South Australia (Adelaide).

### IRELAND

Limerick Institute of Technology; National University of Ireland – Galway; University College Cork; and University of Limerick

### UNITED KINGDOM

#### ENGLAND

Aston University (Birmingham); Birkbeck, University of London (London); Coventry University (Coventry); Lancaster University; Leeds Arts University (Leeds); Leeds Beckett University (Leeds); Leeds City College (Leeds); Liverpool John Moores University [Professor Ian Campbell] (Liverpool); Sheffield Hallam University (Sheffield); Teesside University (Middlesbrough); University of Bolton (Bolton); University of Bradford [Professor Shirley Congdon] (Bradford); University of Central Lancashire [Professor Graham Baldwin] (Preston); University of Gloucestershire (Cheltenham); University of Huddersfield (Huddersfield); University of Manchester (Manchester); University of Nottingham (Nottingham); University of Reading (Reading); University of Salford (Salford); University of Sheffield (Sheffield); University of Southampton [Professor Mark E Smith] (Southampton); University of Sunderland (Sunderland); University of Surrey (Guildford); University of York [Professor Charlie Jeffery CBE] (York); University of Westminster (London); and University of Wolverhampton (Wolverhampton);

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast Metropolitan College (Belfast)

#### SCOTLAND

Heriot-Watt University (Riccarton, Edinburgh); University of Abertay (Dundee); University of the Highlands and Islands [Professor Crichton Lang] (Inverness); and University of Strathclyde (Glasgow)

#### WALES

University of South Wales (Pontypridd).

#### USA

Caflin University [Dr Dwaun J Warmack] (Orangeburg); Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art (New York); Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore; Rochester Institute of Technology (Rochester); University of Cincinnati (Cincinnati); and Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond)

This is very much a pioneering work in progress and will lead to further additions or corrections.

## 2027 – AUSTRALIA'S BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

Recent contact with the Philatelic Section of **Australia Post** has advised that our application for a commemorative stamp set for the 2021 world Mechanics' Institute bicentennial has been unsuccessful. However Australia Post has suggested we try again for 2027. This is the year that the Mechanics' Institute Movement arrived in Australia, at Hobart and materialised as the **Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institution**. Alas the Institute is no more but the building still stands.

So it is time to look forward to our bicentennial in Australia and what our plans are. Naturally it would be good to open at Hobart and have subsequent events in each State. This is going to take time and money and will require some lead time which we now have.

We still await a substantial history on what the Mechanics' Institute Movement has achieved in Australia beyond its cultural and educational roles, and its part in helping to shape our unique identity in literature and film.

In Victoria the groundwork has been laid thanks to largely to the efforts of **Pam Baragwanath** and **Ken James**. **Bronwyn Lowden's** pioneering *Australian Checklist* (2004, and subsequent updates) has been built upon with Pam and Ken's compilation *Ubiquitous and Necessary: Australia's Mechanics' Institutes, Schools of Arts, etc: A Research Guide* (2016). People in several States are beavering away to assemble their region's basic story.

However we are going to need a national vision to tell the incredible story of this Australian cultural icon. That herculean task must surely include Australia's seven Mechanics' or Mechanics' related Universities.

The **Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre** at Prahran Mechanics' Institute is also a good starting point.

We would welcome suggestions as to how this idea and project can be progressed to truly showcase the unique and ongoing role of the Mechanics' Institute Movement and ethos in Australia.

## MIV'S *Historical Plaques Program*

### **Recent Plaques**

No. 62 **Tatura Mechanics' Institute**

No. 63 **Neerim Junction Hall** - unveiled 11 November 2018

No. 64 **Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute** - unveiled by Dr Frank Hurley OAM, 17 November 2018.

No. 65 **Mt Egerton Mechanics' Institute**

No. 66 **Your Institute?**

The plaques are oval in shape (~30cm x ~20cm), with a blue baked enamel surface and white lettering. In consultation with Heritage Victoria, they recommended that they be the same blue colour as their plaques so as to be noticed from afar as marking an historic building. The plaque will carry the MIV logo, some standard text and a personalised space for details of the Institute (approx. 120 words), and also the plaque number. Pins on the plaque's reverse will enable fixing to stone, concrete or wooden buildings. They can be mounted on board if required. The plaques have an expected life-span of about fifty years.



To order a plaque (They will cost \$195 each for MIV Members, \$250 for non-Members, including delivery, and will require your installation.) or for more information, contact: Judith Dwyer, Box 482, Berwick, V 3806 or jad134@hotmail.com. Check out the Plaques page on the MIV website for locations and individual citations - [mivic.org.au/plaques.html](http://mivic.org.au/plaques.html)

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

<http://openplaques.org/series/43>

# MIV'S *Mechanics' Institutes* Resource Centre

Digitisation continues apace and we have welcomed **Hamish Telfer** to our team with scanning continuing on Ararat, Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance records.

## ***We have added the following items to our growing Library***

*Bath and the Nile Explorers: In Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of Burton and Speke's encounter in Bath, September 1864, and their 'Nile Duel' which never happened.* Jane Sparrow-Niang (Bath: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 2017). Gift of the Author.

An Accurate Plan of Bath [1824] reproduction on card. Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 2018. Gift of Jane Sparrow-Niang.

*A Window on Willy: The Williamstown Mechanics' Institute and Free Library 1854-1968* – Cyril Curtain. (Williamstown: Author, 2019). Gift of Cyril Good.

*Stiwt: Oakdale Institute 100 Years of History* – Canrif O Hanes (St Fagans: St Fagans National Museum of History, 2019). Gift

*Uniting in Measures of Common Good: The Construction of Liberal Identities in Central Canada* – Darren Ferry (Montreal & Kingston: McGill Queens University Press, 2008). Gift.

'Uniquity: Making Your Place the Space' – Jim Lowden. Paper given at the Independent Libraries Association Conference at Devon and Exeter Institution in 2019. Gift.

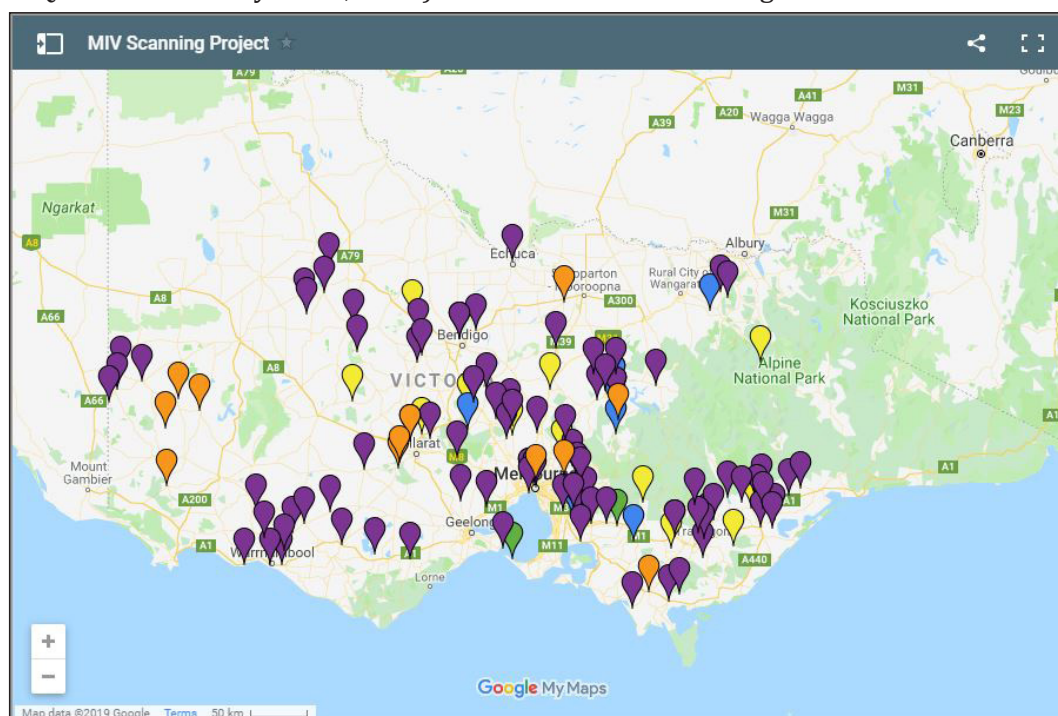
Childers Mechanics' Institute Research Notes and Plan. Gift Mitchell Gorman.

Thanks to **Emeritus Professor Lorne Bruce** of McMaster University the following items have been added: A consolidated list of Canadian Mechanics' Institutes; and a copy of **Professor Yvan Lamonde's** 'Liste Alfabétique de noms de lieux où existèrent des Associations 'Littéraires' au Québec (1840-1900) which was published in *Recherches Sociographiques*, vol 16, n2, 1975. Professor Lamonde teaches at McGill University in Montreal.

Dr Sue Reynolds has generously donated the following Mechanics' Institute histories: Briagalong; Castlemaine; Footscray and Healesville.

## **REMINDER – GET YOUR RECORDS SCANNED**

Institutes can have their records digitised without cost. You keep the original records and get a digitised copy and MIV keeps a copy for research purposes. To book your records in please contact Judith Dwyer on [mirc@mivic.org.au](mailto:mirc@mivic.org.au)



## *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. We have not provided references for any of the articles (as their sources can be longer than the stories!), but we would be happy to send out notes we hold on Institutes if requested. Our newsletter is also indexed to enable histories of various Institutes to be aggregated over time.*

### **ACHERON HALL (Est. 1914)**

#### ***Acheron Community Day - Sunday 17 November***

The Acheron Hall Committee, Acheron CFA and Acheron Tennis Club invite you to join them in a day for the community on Sunday 17th November.

9.30am - Acheron Mechanics' Institute Inc. [The Acheron Hall] Annual General Meeting. Election of Committee and Office Bearers for 2019-2020. All welcome - come along and hear about plans for the Hall over the next few months.

10.30am - Acheron CFA General Meeting and presentation of Life Membership to David Gamble. Acheron brigade will be providing advice on preparing for the forthcoming fire season, and will present David Gamble with his life membership medal after over 20 years of service to the brigade.

After the CFA meeting a BBQ courtesy of the Acheron CFA will be provided, or you are welcome to bring your own picnic. Tea and coffee available.

For those tennis players wishing to have a hit the Acheron tennis court is available.

### **APOLLO BAY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1885)**



We note the recent screening of documentary film maker **Claire Falkiner** at the Apollo Bay Mechanics' Hall. The film titled *The Story of the Road* tells how the 243km Great Ocean Road was converted from an intermittent muddy track to one of the world's great scenic drives. This conversion was undertaken by an estimated three thousand ex-World War I servicemen as a 'susso' project. Alas only about three hundred have their names recorded as being connected with this iconic project which began in 1919.

### **ARTHURS CREEK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1886)**



Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute will once again be conducting their annual Garden Walk on Sunday 10 November 2019. Now in its 31st year, tickets will grant you entry to 5 private gardens in the area. As part of the day at the Hall, there will be for sale: Jane Annois pottery; paintings; garden sculptures; lavender products; cottage plants; devonshire teas and light lunches. All proceeds go towards continuing renovations and upkeep at the Hall. Tickets available for purchase on the day at the Institute from 9.30am until 3pm; gardens open until 5.30pm. Adults: \$20; Kids are free. Eftpos available for tickets and food sales. Enquiries: Lois 0467 511 098; Peter 0400 406 654. Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute, 906 Arthurs Creek Road, Arthurs Creek (Melways Ref 393 B4).

### **BALLAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1860)**

It was good to see Ballan represented at MIA 2018. They now have a Film Society up and running with several successful screenings having taken place. The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute-based **Opera Van Diemensland** staged their production of *La Boheme* at Ballan on 5-6

July to good audiences. There was also another concert on 22 September. Further productions are planned in October and November.

#### **BRIAGOLONG MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1874)**

With newly installed solar electricity panels, the Briagolong Institute hosted its seventeenth Annual Film Festival in June. The Festival opened on Friday night with *Ladies in Black* (2019) based on the bestselling novel by Sue Milliken and adapted for the screen by Madeleine St John and directed by Bruce Beresford. Saturday's fare included: *Peter Rabbit*, adapted from Beatrix Potter's 1902 classic by Rob Lieber and Will Gluck and directed by Will Gluck; and *Breath*, of surfing interest, based on a script by Gerald Lee and Simon Baker and directed by Simon Baker; with a short film program in the evening. On Sunday was *Jirga*, depicting a former Australian soldier Mike Wheeler, who returned to Afghanistan seeking forgiveness from the family of a civilian he had killed during the war. This was written and directed by Benjamin Gilmour. Watch out for next year's Festival and make a weekend of it. [www.briagolongfilmfestival.com](http://www.briagolongfilmfestival.com)

#### **BRUNSWICK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1868)**

Moreland City Council is continuing with works in the forecourt and surrounds of the Brunswick Mechanics' Institute to accommodate patrons to performances and activities and 'to create a new civic space right in the heart of Brunswick'. Council has allocated \$1.26 million for the works which are expected to be complete by November this year.

#### **FOOTSCRAY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1857)**

Footscray now has its own website and it went live in June. It's Home Page depicts the historical artifact of the door of the 'Gentlemen's Reading Room' and elsewhere the door of the 'Ladies Reading Room'. It notes 'The Footscray Mechanics' Institute is run by a dedicated Committee of Management, several of who have devoted decades to the cause.' Indeed a familiar line. During a current renovation and restructure the Library is open on Wednesday and Friday afternoons. [www.footscraymechanicsinstitute.org.au](http://www.footscraymechanicsinstitute.org.au)

#### **HALLSTON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1886)**



*The new sign on the front of Hallston Mechanics' Institute. (Photo: Hallston Hall Facebook)*

Hallston has put itself out there with a newly carved sign 'Hallston Mechanics' Institute 1933'. The sign was carved by Grant O'Neill from Mirboo North in oak sourced from an old tree on River Road, Hallston in the 1990s. It was the idea of Hall Committee Member Steve Reinisch who mounted the finished piece and it was hung in June 2018.

This was Hall number two, built on a new site by G Emmett and opened by Herbert Hyland MLA. A Library was added to the building in 1946 and a remnant collection is believed to be still there. It had school use in the 1970s and internal toilets were added in 1987. The Hall is well used including for a weekly Wednesday afternoon get together over a cuppa of district women. Email: [hallstonhall@outlook.com](mailto:hallstonhall@outlook.com)

#### **KILMORE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)**

Early this year a memorial seat was unveiled to local citizen Herbert James 'Bon' Chapman who died on 16 November 2017. Bon had made a significant contribution to Kilmore's social and sporting life. The seat overlooks Apex Park and the Kilmore Creek and the first permanent site of the Kilmore Mechanics' Institute, which had been built as the Police Lock Up in 1850. It is therefore fitting that incorporated into the memorial seat is a stone plinth, which had been a step up to front of the Kilmore Mechanics' Institute Hall which had been demolished in 1976.

#### **MALDON ATHENAEUM (Est. 1863)**

The new extension is really taking shape as now the framework is up and the roof is on. Currently we are waiting for the bricklayer to arrive to build the walls. It is exciting to look at

the progress so far and to know that within a few months the room should be up and running.

During the Maldon in Winter festival the Athenaeum held a very successful wine / juice and cheese afternoon. Guest speakers were two well known authors, Jen Storer and Joan Dalton both of whom are Library volunteers and live in Maldon and Baringhup. A hamper full of goodies was donated by another volunteer, Marion McLellan and one of our long standing volunteers, Chris Crassweller was the lucky winner. Financially and socially the afternoon was a great success.

Story telling has also been held in the Junior Library during Maldon In Winter and also a book sale was held on Sunday 14th July to coincide with the monthly Maldon market.

Maldon Athenaeum Library

### **MEENIYAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1892)**

To facilitate greater Hall use for Meetings, Conferences and Workshops the Committee have recently added Wi-Fi to their impressive list of Hall meeting resources. Given its central location and a diversified range of shops and eateries Meeniyam is an ideal place to stage a meeting. [www.meeniyam.org.au/Meeniyam/Home.html](http://www.meeniyam.org.au/Meeniyam/Home.html)

### **MT BEST HALL (Est. 1909)**



The Mt Best community is welcoming summer with a tropical themed night. "Summer Breeze" will be held on Saturday 16 November at the Hall. Doors open at 7pm, BYO drinks and meats/other to cook on the BBQ and bring either a salad or dessert to share that has a "summery" theme. Entry is by gold coin donation. What a great way to bring the community together!

### **NAGAMBIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1873)**



*Repainting the inside of the Nagambie Mechanics' Institute. (Photo: Christine Schindler)*

The Nagambie Mechanics' Institute is grateful to the Shire of Strathbogie for a \$5,000 Community Grant toward the painting of the hall interior. Nagambie is fortunate to retain its original Mechanics' Institute building which still serves as a community hall and is a significant part of the town's local history.

The volunteers who staff the hall's opportunity shop, raising funds for its upkeep and upgrade, have been putting in a great effort; they are constantly working to improve the shop, making it more attractive and rewarding for shoppers both local and 'from out of town'. Funds raised by the op shop can't cover all the projects the committee of management hope to carry out which is why they are pleased to have received the grant from the Shire of Strathbogie toward the painting.

As well as major projects like the painting of the hall, there are always small jobs being done to keep the hall in good repair and make it more 'user friendly'. Recent improvements have included the purchase of a container for storage, re-concreting of the pathway to access the container, purchase of two new air conditioning units, a new fence along the north side of the building and flood lighting at the rear of the hall. A new dishwasher is soon to be installed along with additional shelving in the kitchen.

The Nagambie Mechancis' Institute hall remains community owned and is an asset to be proud of. The Committee of Management appreciate the support of its volunteers and members, the support of the Nagambie community, and the support of the Shire of Strathbogie.

Yvonne Deering  
Secretary, Nagambie Mechanics' Institute

## NEWHAM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1902)

The Newham folk celebrated Grand Final Day down at the Hall with a live broadcast on the BIG screen with a 1000 watts of sound. The bar opened at 1pm with pies and footy snacks on sale. There was a special going on the Rock and Ranges Dark Mild brew. Entry was free and open to all. What a great idea for major events. In the UK major events and concerts from London and elsewhere are beamed live to rural halls.

## RAINBOW COMMUNITY LIBRARY



*The "Bell Room" from the outside which now houses the relocated library (Photo: Peter Ralph)*



*Diane Wall, President of the Rainbow Archive and Historical Society, the mainstay of the library, at work in the "new" library. (Photo: Peter Ralph)*

Even though the Mechanics' Institute was demolished in 1978. The Rainbow Archive and Historical Society then took over its library and continues to provide a Public Library Service.

The premises in Federal Street where the Library was housed for a several years have been sold and the new owners required the space for offices. Local volunteers were marshalled to ensure quick and economic transition to the new rooms at 'The Oasis' which is located in the former bluestone Rainbow State School building. This houses cultural and performance activities

and is a community resource centre, so the Library is a perfect fit.

There in the 'Bell Room' shelving has been installed to accommodate most of the original books. (The Bell Room is so named for the School bell which used to be housed there.) However some culling was necessary and the surplus books were passed to the Horsham School Chaplaincy Book Fair. The Library is open twice a week and is managed by **Diane Wall**, who is also President of the Rainbow Archive and Historical Society. Email: rahs342@gmail.com

## STANLEY ATHENAEUM & PUBLIC ROOM (Est. 1863)

### *Fourth Geoff Craig Memorial Lecture a Huge Success*



*Fourth Geoff Craig Memorial Lecturer Dr. Jacqui Durrant (Photo: Scott Hartvigsen); Dr. Durrant's new book Fire on the Plateau.*

Well-known local historian and researcher, **Dr. Jacqui Durrant**, delivered the fourth Geoff Craig Memorial lecture to a crowded Stanley Memorial Hall on 15th September 2019 last month. Dr. Durrant held the almost 100 people in attendance spellbound as she spoke on the topic of 'Revisiting the Forgotten World of Victoria's Alpine Valleys and Ranges – the Case for Restoring Our Ancient Open Woodlands'.

Dr. Durrant described the long-destroyed environment as featuring an open woodland of stately trees, an understory of rich native pastures, and soft, open soils which supported extensive areas of banksia and grass trees as well as, now extinct, local fauna.

Co-ordinator of the Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room, Chris Dormer, thanked Dr. Durrant for what she described as an, 'important, inspiring and innovative lecture exploring the past to inform the future'. "We are still dazzled by the way you can bring together your findings to tell yet another 'ripping yarn which will be talked about and remembered for years to come".

**Launch of 'Fire on the Plateau' – by Dr. Jacqui Durrant**

Beechworth historian Dr. Jacqui Durrant's book 'Fire on the Plateau' was launched by Curator **Ali Rowe** following the Geoff Craig Lecture on 15 September 2019.

*From Aboriginal people's burning practices through to the catastrophic bushfires of 2003 and 2009, Fire on the Plateau brings to vivid life the history of bushfire on the forested plateau of Stanley in Victoria's north east. Jacqui Durrant's examination culminates with how the community of Stanley adjusts as their surrounding environment transitions from being historically bushfire-free to becoming one of extreme bushfire risk.*

**Fire on The Plateau** is now available directly from the Stanley Athenaeum or Stanley Post Office for \$30 a copy. Posted and packaged for \$10 (One copy), \$13 (Two copies) anywhere in Australia. Direct Debit - BSB 803- 070 a/c 89975 to Stanley Hall and Athenaeum Management Committee (include Fire book on your transaction). E: stanleyathenaeum@gmail.com or M: 0458 606 922

**Exhibition – 'Fire on the Plateau: a history of fire and its management in Stanley'**

*Showing until April 2020*

The Stanley Athenaeum's current exhibition 'Fire on the Plateau' on Saturday, which opened in May commemorating 10 years since the bushfires of 2009.

'Fire on the Plateau' documents how bushfires affect communities, especially in the aftermath, and how governments and local regions change and plan for subsequent fire events. Local historian Dr. Jacqui Durrant, who has researched the history of fire in the Stanley area, has written the text and the exhibition has been curated by Ali Rowe M.A. who designed the interpretive panels and exhibition layout.

Funding for the exhibition was received through Indigo Shire Council from the Victorian Bushfire Commemoration and Community Grant and the In Our Hands Foundation in partnership with Stanley Land Care and Spring Ditch and Wetlands Committee.

Visit the exhibition at the Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room, Main Street, Stanley. Open every Friday & 4th Saturday each month from 10am to 12.30 pm or by appointment, contact: 0458 606 922 or 03 5728 6702

**Stanley Women of the 19th Century: Hearts of Gold & Minds of Mettle, Mary Rawes to Mariette Craig.'**

Stanley Athenaeum's award-winning exhibition is currently on display at the Prahran Mechanic's Institute until 27 November 2019.

The exhibition presents the little-known stories of Stanley's C19th women. Of diverse skills and occupations ranging from horticulture to gold mining and retail, these resilient women include a group who signed the 1891 Monster Petition for women's suffrage.

Prahran Mechanic's Institute, 39 St Edmonds Road, Prahran VIC 3181 (Melway 2L H11) P: 03 9510 3393. Open - Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri: 9.30am 4.30pm & Thur: 9.30am-7.00pm.

**2020 Stanley Athenaeum Calendar**

Later this year the Stanley Athenaeum will once again produce their very popular annual calendar. The 2020 edition will feature seasonally appropriate photographs and recipes focusing on the wonderful wine and food producers and other local businesses of the Stanley Plateau.

The calendar will retail for \$20 and proceeds from the sale will fund the internet services for the Athenaeum which are also available for community use.

For further information or to order a copy please contact the Stanley Athenaeum through email: stanleyathenaeum@gmail.com

Chris Dormer

**TALLAROOK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1890)**

*Demolition of the last remaining structure of the Tallarook Mechanics' Institute - the chimney  
(Photo: Libby Webster)*

Tallarook recently celebrated a milestone in their renaissance, the tenth anniversary Sunday Farmers' Market. Even though the original building is no more the Market continues to go from strength to strength beside the Tallarook Railway Station. Indeed it is a leisurely railway

journey worth thinking about. We are pleased to report that work has started on the rebuild of the Institute Hall. [www.tallarook.org.au](http://www.tallarook.org.au)

### **TARADALE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1858)**

Managed and occupied by the Taradale Historical Group, the Hall holds a significant archive and museum with both static and changing exhibitions. In recent times it has co-shared the bi-annual exhibitions of Taradale Arts Group, which is part of the Taradale Mineral Springs Festival held on the March Labour Day weekend.

Local resident Donna Fearne is currently busy uploading data onto the computer to enable easier search and access to the local history archive.

### **TOONGABBIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1883)**



Based on their recently installed Wall of Remembrance, with its returned and restored Honour Boards, the Hall hosted Toongabbie's first ever Anzac Day service. This was attended by about one hundred people and according to Hall stalwart Roger Reis will become an annual event.

Thanks to the grant writing of Kevin Kennedy, money has become available to enable the removal and restoration of five windows by a Warragul firm. The stairwell has also been restored. Toongabbie's newly installed solar panels are expected to free up some money for further works.

The longrunning first Friday of the month Spring to Autumn dances start again in October and these are supported by some local, but mostly out of town, people who travel to the Institute for the night. [www.toongabbie.vic.au/community/toongabbie-mechanics-institute-inc/](http://www.toongabbie.vic.au/community/toongabbie-mechanics-institute-inc/)

### **WARRANTYTE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1882)**

The Warrandyte Mechanics Institute Hall has seen a lot of activity recently. The hall is managed by the Warrandyte Mechanics Institute and Arts Association Inc, which has several resident

artistic groups, whose activities generate funds to help maintain and improve the hall so that other groups and individuals in the community may also enjoy the use of the building.

The Warrandyte Theatre Company (under the umbrella of WMI&AA) has staged some excellent and diverse productions in 2019, including "Animal Farm", "All My Sons" by Arthur Miller, "The Lady from the Sea" by Henrik Ibsen – performed in the round. For its 4th season, rehearsals are under way for "Crimes of the Heart", 2 brilliant One Act Plays by Mike Bartlett and Arthur Miller, to be staged in late November/early December. Details can be found at [www.warrandytehallarts.asn.au](http://www.warrandytehallarts.asn.au).

Meanwhile our Pottery and Visual Arts groups combined to stage a fantastic show/sale of work in September.

The newest activity to fall under the umbrella of WMI&AA is our Repair Café, which operates on the morning of the first Sunday of the month. This goes from strength to strength. Initially there were as many volunteer repairers as objects brought by people for repair, but in October, there were so many objects that people had to sit and wait in a queue.

As for most MIs, maintenance is an on-going issue. This year, as well as coping with rising power bills and having to replace our gas space heater, we are faced with a huge expense to repair damage caused by water inundation, both from a storm and from long term issues. A large grant from the Bendigo Bank Enterprise Foundation will go a long way towards carrying out these repairs and improved drainage, but once again there will need to be fund-raising activities.

In line with our efforts to ensure our ongoing custodianship of the hall, and to continue our charter of support and promotion of the arts in Warrandyte, we will be holding a members and friends forum on Friday November 8.

At this event, we will outline our achievements and current challenges, and then ask for input from our members and the Warrandyte community about the future direction of the WMIAA and in particular our role as custodians of the Mechanics Hall. The night will be facilitated by local Bruce Turner, who is a professional facilitator.

We want to hear from as wide a range of voices as possible and at this stage, the response has been excellent, with positive responses from a number of council, government and key community personnel.

Pat Anderson

# *The Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes*

## AUSTRALIA

### NEW SOUTH WALES

#### MOLONG SCHOOL OF ARTS (Est. 1878)



*The Current Molong Community Hall buildings.  
Photo: Google Streetview*

Now styled the Molong Community Hall, the Hall is scheduled for a \$5 million upgrade as announced in the NSW State Budget in June. The Molong School of Arts building will receive a makeover to enable the library to be returned to the Hall, an upgrade to state-of-the-art learning centre, and complete makeover of the Hall.



*The redevelopment and construction plans:*

## QUEENSLAND

#### HELIDON SCHOOL OF ARTS HALL (Est. 1910)



*Photo: [www.lockyervalley.qld.gov.au](http://www.lockyervalley.qld.gov.au)*

Located in Lockyer River Valley, 80km west of Brisbane, the Helidon School of Arts took over the old Helidon State School. This was integrated

into a new building which had a Library and Reading Room and it was opened in 1920.

In 1928 the Hall was being run jointly by the School of Arts and the Soldiers' Memorial Improvement Committee. The Hall was extended considerably in 1940 to accommodate military activities from the nearby Army Camp and Airforce Base.

In the late 1980s a new Helidon and District Community Centre was built in Arthur Street, across the railway line and the Memorial Hall fell into disrepair. The Memorial Hall was dismantled in 1992, with part being donated to the Gatton and District Historical Society and that was shifted to Freemans Road, Gatton and opened in 1996. The other part went to the Girl Guides for a 'Guides Hut'.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

#### BURRA INSTITUTE (Est. 1856)



*Burra Town Hall, 2017 (Photo: Joelle Hancock)*

As in other parts of Australia, many of South Australia's early Institutes were in mining towns. Copper was discovered in Burra, 160 km north of Adelaide, in 1845. By 1851 the Burra Mines employed 1,000 miners, supporting a population of 5,000. It didn't take long before a core of forward-thinking men recognised the need for self-improvement through 'instructive recreation'.

Two separate initiatives were taken in the early 1850s – one by a Lodge and another by an enterprising miner. Both had opened a library to the public in private rooms before a group of citizens began exploring ways to raise £600 for a purpose-built library. This seemed a daunting amount in 1856, but after lobbying the state's

Premier, the South Australian Mining Association (SAMA), the English and Australian Copper Company, the secretary of the Philosophical Institute, and the state's Governor, a committee was sufficiently encouraged to commit to the project. These leading citizens of Burra had contacts!

The Government promised a third of the estimated £900 needed, donations were collected and promised. SAMA granted land with a substantial 204ft frontage, a Working Men's sub-committee was formed so that 'their views and wishes ... may more easily be conveyed' and tenders were sought for the Burra Miners and Mechanics Institute.

Just sixteen months after the initial meeting in October 1857, the institute had an official opening. It was one of the first institutes to be affiliated with the newly-formed South Australian Institute and to receive the government pound-for-pound subsidy. Speeches at the opening repeated the intention that the Institute was 'to increase the comforts of the poorest and humblest of individuals in the district' as well as those who had 'already received a liberal education'.

The Institute Committee's disappointment at the Government's grant being £50, instead of an expected £700, was matched by dissatisfaction with the small number of books, rough seating, cold rooms, poor lighting, and the few non-secular lectures. Lack of funds prevented most of these shortcomings being remedied, but the lecture themes did change - to topics such as Railways and their Appurtenances, Self Improvement, Calico Printing, Practical Science, and The Life of Alexander the Great.

The focus for public gatherings shifted in the early 1870s to more entertainment, which boosted audience numbers and the Institute's coffers so that extensive additions and renovations were called for and completed in 1874. By then the main building had an entrance hall, 20 by 35 and 20 ft high, and a main hall, 54 by 34ft. Four rooms off the entrance hall were for committee or classrooms, a reading-room and the library. Six large chandeliers graced the hall and entrance, with another two in the front rooms.

The building was well used: for public, sports and Temperance meetings, bazaars, farewells, flower shows, AGMs, Sunday School services and school performances, a Literary Society, and entertainments. These included before 1880 the U.S. Minstrels, visiting dramatic and choral

groups, trapeze acts, a war panorama from America, and an exotic illusionist (the Fakir of Oolu). And there was no lack of local talent, the town having a Burra Orchestra, a Philharmonic Society, a Choral Society, an Amateur Dramatic Society and an amateur Christy Minstrels. Serious presentations such as 'The Sad Consequences of Intemperance' and 'The Overland Route to India' were less popular.

Into the 20th century the building continued to be the centre of Burra activities with dances, concerts, the National Defence League, Farmers and Producers' Political Union, Burra Racing Club meetings, a literary class, weekly painting classes, Saint John's Ambulance Society classes, a set of lectures titled 'Builders of Empire' by **Professor George Cockburn Henderson** of the University of Adelaide Extension, a **James Ashton** art exhibition, election meetings, Spinsters and Bachelors Balls and Rate Payers' Meetings.

From 1874 until 1969 the Burra Town Council rented rooms in the Institute for its office and meetings. Through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as providing the town's Library and Reading Room, the Institute remained central for the town's entertainment and public meetings, and continued as the meeting place for groups such as the CWA and a literary, a painting and an orchestra class. The West Burra Mining Company paid rent for regular use of one of the rooms, while the British and Foreign Bible Society could use a room gratis.

Every 20 years or so substantial additions and improvements were made. Several of them were to upgrade for projection nights, beginning with magic lantern shows as early as the 1870s. These regular movie nights proved to be a lucrative and regular source of income. Even so, finances were a frequent problem for the Institute until 1945 when the District Council took over the building, which then became the Burra Town Hall. The Town Council office remained there until 1969, the year the Burra Council merged with the District Council, which was located elsewhere.

The building was looking run down in 2006 when the Burra History Group stepped in with its volunteers, arranged for the building to be restored, and was successful in having the building listed as National Heritage. The Burra Institute library was dissolved in 1978 after negotiation with the Education Department and Local Council as part of a state-wide commitment since 1975 to a free public library system. The new Burra Community Library opened at the Burra Area School in 1978.

The Burra Town Hall now encompasses the original Institute building and is a well-appointed function centre and museum, under the care of the Burra Institute Committee. It continues to be the home of the Burra History Group.

Joelie Hancock

## TASMANIA

### GUNNS PLAINS HALL (Est. 1922)



Three veteran champions. L-R: Peter Foster; David Foster; and Henry Maine. (Photo: Yvonne Downes)

It was standing room only at the Gunns Plains Hall on Friday night 26th July, as the cream of Australian woodchopping talent performed on the stage in the hall. Patrons packed the hall for what is becoming one of the most popular events on the local calendar.

There were 13 axemen and women wielding their shiny and well honed axes and cutting it fine in exciting competitions. There were 10 seasoned axemen, including three members of the Australian Veterans Team, and one junior. **Bryce Maine**, who made his debut at the Gunns Plains event a few years ago when he was only a six year old. The two lady woodchoppers who put on a grand performance were **Bec Maine** from Burnie and **Chris Brown**, who has only recently moved here from Victoria.

An added attraction on the night was **Aaron Worldon**, who gave two stunning demonstrations of his amazing skill in whipcracking. He can virtually make those whips sing, and with **David Foster** as his guinea pig, he performed some absolutely amazing tricks.

Patrons were treated to a feast of home made soups, toasties, pies etc and many were lucky enough to go home with a great prize in the raffle or from the selection of lucky door prizes, thanks to some very generous sponsors. One lucky patron had the winning bid for the huge ute load of woodchips at the end of the night.

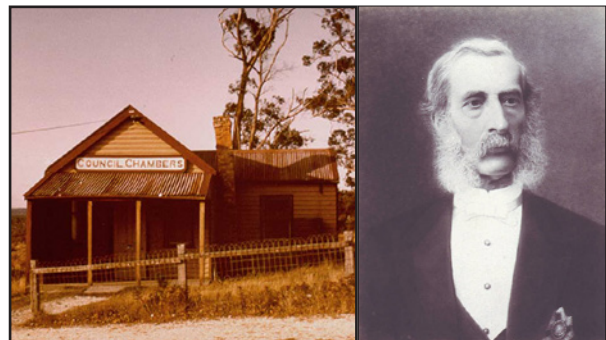
Outright winner of the evening's events was young star **Josh Bates**, who topped the Hard Hitting contest.

It was a great success - the best one yet.

Our next event will be our Potato Festival which will be held on Monday November 4th (Public holiday here - Recreation Day).

Yvonne Downes

### LEFROY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1881)



L-R: Lefroy Council Chambers, 1962. (Photo: Libraries Tasmania); John Henry Lefroy (1817-1890). (Photo: John Watt Beattie)

Located close to the central north coast of Tasmania, Lefroy was once an important goldmining centre with gold being discovered there in 1869. Early Community meetings are mentioned as being held at Fletcher's new Hall (1883), Hunter's Hall (1886), Town Hall (1889), Masonic Hall (1890), Stubs' Hall (1898).

The move to establish an Institute appears to have started from a meeting held on 25 July 1881. A provisional Committee was established and £38 was promised along with 200 books. It was also resolved to apply for a Crown site. This was forthcoming and a Hall was built in 1882-83 at a cost of £150. A large number of valuable books was given to the Institute by His Excellency Sir JH Lefroy, the former Governor, and other people.

Court Cases were heard in the 'old Public Library' in June 1893 and a meeting of miners was held in 'the library' in August 1893. In 1893 the building was damaged by fire but was soon restored to use.

A Debating Society and Patriotic Committee met in the public Library and in 1901 it was mentioned as a potential polling place in

connection with the appointment of two trustees for the George Town Road Trust in March 1901.

The Annual Meeting of the Lefroy Cricket Club was held in the 'Public Library' on 7 October 1905. In 1908 it is reported 'Improvements have been already commenced for the conversion of the library into temporary council chambers. The Hall was enlarged in 1934 and was still in use in 1952.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### BODDINGTON AGRICULTURAL HALL (Est. 1922)



*Photo: Roslyn Lowden*

Located 120km south-east of Perth, the area was settled in the 1860s. The town developed adjacent to the Hotham Valley Railway which was constructed in 1912. It had a thriving sawmilling industry until this was wiped out in the 1961 bushfires. In recent times the bauxite mine in started in 1979 and the goldmine developed from 1987 has seen a resurgence in the town's fortunes.

The Boddington District Hall Association was the moving force for the construction of the Hall from 1922 and the Boddington Agricultural Hall was opened in September 1923 by Mrs Emily Farmer. It was built of timber and could accommodate 350 people. A Sports Day had been held earlier in the afternoon and the total proceeds from the day amounted to £169. A supper room was added in 1938 at a cost of £65 of which the Women's Section of the Pastoral Producers' Association contributed £30.

Initially pictures were screened from an outside projector through the open doorway which got a tad draughty in winter. In April 1939 consideration was given to a built-in asbestos bio-box and this was ultimately built. Charles Legg and RH Gordon held the power concession from 1944, which reverted to Legg who held picture

shows in the Hall and the Picture Gardens next door.

In February 1955 residents voted overwhelming in favour of the proposal to borrow £15,000 to construct a new brick hall. Architects William G Bennett & Associates of Perth prepared plans and Marradong Road Board called for tenders in March 1955.

The old Hall was demolished under the direction of HH Richards in April 1955 and the replacement hall was soon started and it opened on 10 March 1956. Pictures continued and are still screened occasionally.

## IRELAND

### GALWAY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1826)



*Photo: Galway Mechanics' Institute Facebook*

The Galway Mechanics' Institute was set up in 1826 and it established a library and newspaper reading room in the Corn Exchange ballroom located in Eyre Street. Its current building, in Middle Street, dates from 1844 and today 'is one of the biggest buildings in Galway City'. In recent times it is progressively being upgraded and renovated and the present project includes the painting of the front of the building, some minor repairs and 'hopefully a repaint of the snooker room'.

## UK

### ENGLAND

### HUDDERSFIELD MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1824)



Now morphed into the University of Huddersfield, this University has a state of the art archive centred on Heritage Quay. The current exhibition **Echoes of Colonialism** is curated by the University's second year History students based on the University's archive holdings. It is part of their course's 'Hands on History' unit in which they are required to search the archive catalogue to find themed collections and then interpret and present them by way of exhibition.

### **LONGWOOD MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1844).**



*Photo: Roslyn Lowden*

This vibrant Yorkshire village Institute, which overlooks to the Colne Valley, is seeking a twin Institute in Australia to communicate with, share monthly happenings, and perhaps even later visits. Check out their website [www.longwoodmechanicshall.org.uk](http://www.longwoodmechanicshall.org.uk). Direct your email to the attention of Derek Fairbank.

### **SCOTLAND**

#### **BIRNAM MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1880)**



*Photo: [www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk](http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk)*

Formed in 1880, and built in 1883, with an ancillary building from 2001, it is still a meeting

space, has a library, café and community learning space. Now rebadged as Birnam Arts, the community-based management committee are looking to celebrate the 140th anniversary of their building in 2023. They have a vision for a redevelopment of the Institute by that time. Work started in early October at the front door, with the front entrance and reception being the first stage of their dream. We'll keep you posted on this project.

### **WALES**

#### **BLACKWOOD MINERS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1924)**

Located in the upper Sirhowy Valley of Monmouthshire, Blackwood was a major regional centre for coal mining. The town was a Chartist centre in the 1830s with meetings being organised by **John Frost** and **Zephaniah Williams**. Today, with coal mines closed, the town has a population of around 9000.

The original 1925 Institute building, with additions, fresh from its massive makeover, has become a major regional arts hub with regularly programmed Theatre, Live Music and Comedy.

### **USA**

#### **SAN FRANCISCO MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (Est. 1854)**



*Photo: Photos: Geri Koeppel/Hoodline.com*

This was the site of **MW 2016** and since then there has been considerable networking with a delegation of six representatives of US Membership Libraries attending a joint meeting with Independent Library Association members at the London Library on 25-27 September. Ballarat Past-President **Graham Gooding** and his wife recently called in on Librarian **Deb Hunt** and was shown around the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute building.



## SYDNEY MECHANICS' SCHOOL OF ARTS

In her **President's Communique** for August 2019, **Winsome Allen** addressed the long-term future of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. It has been in its current building since 2000 and the Board was looking towards the future management and maintenance of the building. It was also looking towards its future rentability, in its current condition, given the amount of new office space that was being developed in the region.

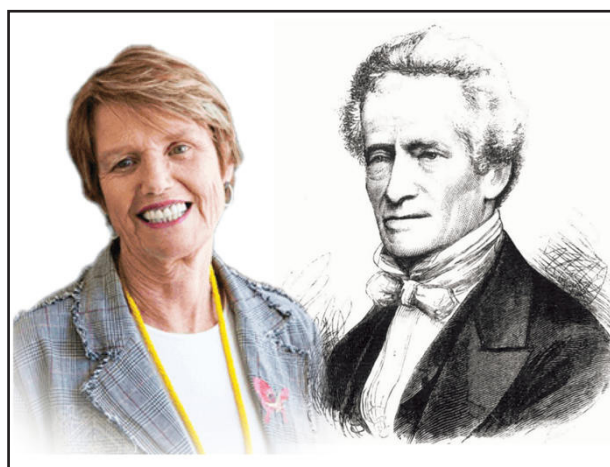
A building upgrade was estimated to require \$15 million to bring it to a standard to compete with new adjoining spaces and given the need to vacate the building for a considerable time this was not viable.

Market demand for investment properties in the Sydney CBD was currently buoyant, based on the advice of two leading property consultants. It was therefore decided to test the market with a view to sale and the future purchase or rent of another property.

Legal advice had been obtained as to a course of compliance with its 1886 Act of Incorporation, much as had been done with the sale of 275 Pitt Street. A Special General Meeting of Members

would be called to consider the reasons why the Board has considered these actions. Should this meeting decide to proceed with a sale a second Special General Meeting would be called to authorise the signing of the 'contract of sale' which would be in the best interest of members.

A Special General Meeting was held in September 2019 and it was resolved to take the necessary steps to test the market value of 280 Pitt Street.



*Left: Ms Jo Karaolis AM, 2019 Carmichael Lecture on Education speaker; Right: Henry Carmichael*

The 2019 **Carmichael Lecture on Education** was presented by **Ms Jo Karaolis AM** who has spent a lifetime in the education sector, with a wide experience in private and public sector schools.

Jo is passionate about educational outcomes and her challenging subject 'What are Schools For?' did not disappoint. (The Carmichael Lecture is named for the Rev. Henry Carmichael, a founder of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, and equally passionate about education and its effect on society.)

Tasmanian-born Jo has spent forty years in teaching and administration in Sydney. The last twenty-three have been as Principal, firstly at St Catherine's School, Waverley and most recently for ten years at St Lucy's Special School, Wahroonga. Now retired, Jo spends time as a coordinator for H.O.P.E. (Hearts Open for People Everywhere). She also works with a women's cooperative in a South African township. Her memoir *With Enough Love* was published in 2016.



## A USA MEETING & A UK CONFERENCE

---

### US MEMBERSHIP LIBRARIES GROUP

This year the Annual Meeting of the Directors of the **American Membership Libraries Group** met at the **Center for Fiction** in New York from 20-22 September. Established in 1820 as the **Mercantile Library of New York**, by 1870 it was the largest lending library in the US. In 2005 it was renamed the Center for Fiction to reflect the uniqueness of its collection. Since then it has become a focus of book launches, writers' lectures and readings and book discussion groups. These activities have been staged in collaboration with the literary magazines *Fiction*, *Noon* and *Granta*.

However in 2017 the Board resolved to sell the East 47th Street, Manhattan building which they have done. They recently moved into purpose-built three-storey premises at 15 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn which they have purchased. The new Center for Fiction has spaces for writers and researchers, programs for children as well as adults and it incorporates: a high-tech Lecture Theatre with a wide modular screen; Bookstore; Café and Bar; and meeting spaces. It is largely modelled on the **Oslo Litteraturhuset** and other European Book and Literature Centres, such as in Rome.

It has been a brave move, firstly by moving away from its traditional membership and this has also resulted in almost the change of its whole Board. The Center opened on 11 February and after a little over six months of operation membership is now around 600. A Third Century Fund to support the Center and its programs into the future has also been launched.

A justifiably proud **Noreen Tomassi**, who has been the Center's Director since 2004, greeted delegates. In such surroundings delegates were very upbeat about their previous year's activities, with a future focus on core collections, membership programming and promotion. The Café provided an out of session venue for the usual valuable networking which took place during the weekend.

The next Conference will be held in Massachusetts at the **Salem Athenaeum** in October/November 2020, where Executive Director **Jean Marie Prociou**s will be host. The Salem Athenaeum was established in 1810, and took over the collections of four earlier libraries. Salem promises 'Inspired works, lively discourse, and serious fun for the entire North Shore... and the world.'

### UK INDEPENDENT & USA MEMBERSHIP LIBRARIES CONFERENCE

We note the very recent 25-27 September 2019 Conference which was coordinated at the **London Library** and comprised members from the Independent Libraries Association of the United Kingdom, Ireland and the Channel Islands and a strong delegation from the Membership Libraries Group of America. This historic meeting stemmed from contacts made at **Mechanics' Worldwide 2016 - San Francisco** when the UK (and Australia) had a good representation.

The historic London Library was formed in 1841 by **Thomas Carlyle** and others and has been based at 14 St James's Square since 1845. There it houses a collection of a million plus books, of which 95% are on open access, and the majority of which can be borrowed. The collection includes large runs of Russian and Swedish titles.

Currently the London Library has a membership nudging 7000, with members scattered around the world. The President is **Sir Tim Rice** and **Philip Marshal** has been Director since 2017.

The US delegation comprised: **John Flaherty**, Mercantile Library, Cincinnati; **Carolyn Waters**, New York Society Library; **Noreen Tomassi**, Center for Fiction, Brooklyn; **Caroline Cumming**, Folio - Seattle Athenaeum; **Laura Mina**, Charleston Library Society; and **Erika Torri**, La Jolla Athenaeum.

With numbers being more than twenty, the Conference was staged at the nearby **East India Club**, also on St James's Square.

Subjects covered included: Developing, sharing and caring for collections; Trends in membership; Raising awareness and engagement, using events, marketing and communications; Fundraising from individual and giving bodies; Staffing and volunteering; and Working with trustee boards to improve governance.

Most sessions consisted of round-table discussions managed by a facilitator, interspersed with several presentations.

Included in the Conference was admission on the Wednesday evening to a lecture given by BBC radio producer and announcer **Kavita Puri** on the subject of 'Partition Voices: Untold British Stories'.

All voted this historic event as most worthwhile and a delegation is being considered for the US Membership Library Group meeting in Salem next year.

## 30TH UK INDEPENDENT LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE – EXETER 7-9 JUNE

This landmark event was held at the **Devon and Exeter Institution**, which was established in 1813 with the aims of ‘promoting the general diffusion of Science, Literature and the Arts, and for illustrating the Natural and Civil History of the County of Devon and History of the City of Exeter’.

The Devon and Exeter Institution has been housed in the former two storey townhouse of the Courtenay family of Powderham Castle since 1814. Dating back to the 1500s, with various changes and additions it had been purchased by Courtenays in 1662. The Institution is located in Cathedral Close, and faces the Exeter Cathedral founded in 1050. Public tours of the building and library are held each Wednesday.

The theme of the Independent Libraries Association three day Conference was ***‘Adaptation, Change, Reinvention: Continuity and Change in Independent Libraries’***.

The Conference started on the Friday afternoon and Institution Chair of Trustees, **Margaret Knight**, welcomed delegates and spoke on the Library’s history, its collections, and operation. She explained how students and volunteers formed a task force which received basic training on book conservation. This program operated between 2011-16 when every book was removed from the shelf, cleaned and catalogued. Some titles were earmarked for repair and these were listed as potential Adopt a Book items where a donor paid for its restoration. Quotation specifications accompanied each book, outlining the work that was required and a total cost. Some restored books, suitably bookplated, were on display. The Library had long runs of journals including a complete set of the *Edinburgh Review*.

The Institution’s Librarian **Anne Howard**, **Emma Dunn**, and heritage architect **Simon Cartledge** led the opening discussion ‘Upholding Tradition while Challenging Perception: Our Three-Year Development Project at the Devon and Exeter Institution’.

The £750,000 restoration program of the Institution building was detailed and how the roof was comprised of five separate sections and two domed cupola skylights. Past restoration works had been piecemeal and proper restoration required the stripping of the whole ceiling to the original woodwork. Some of this necessitated replacement and it was strengthened with steel beams. The cupola domes were clad in lighter copper sheeting rather than the heavier and more expensive lead. Work took three years, under a false tent ceiling to keep the water out. The Institution now plans to



*The Devon and Exeter Institution.  
(Photo: Roslyn Lowden)*

open the upstairs front rooms to commercial and public use. The library had 750 members

Then followed a presentation by **Dr Robin Wootton**, Research Fellow of the School of Biological Science, University of Exeter and former President of the Devonshire Association, which had been established in 1862.

In a very polished off the cuff lecture, with seemingly no notes, Robin addressed the topic ‘Science Moves On: are 18th and 19th Century Biology Books still Useful?’. The slides flashed up convinced delegates in no uncertain terms that the books and certainly the illustrations had great merit as printing and scientific artifacts. They also played a valuable role in the evolution of scientific thinking and were an intrinsic part of the supporting evidence. In effect the 18th and 19th biologists were the David Attenborough of their day.

Robin’s talk was supported by the Institution’s latest exhibition ‘Books of Wonder’ a display of relevant illustrated titles from the Institution’s collection, together with explanatory text panels, in the Library foyer.

Then came the Independent Library Association’s 30th anniversary celebratory Cocktail Party, held in the Reading Room. This comprised of a range of wine, soft drink, and a large variety of cheeses, fruits, breads, toasts and biscuits.

Saturday’s proceedings started with the Independent Libraries Association Chair **Emma Marigliano**, noticed as ‘dripping in dior and diamente’, welcoming delegates. ILA President, **Neil Pearson** was unable to be present, because of his engagement in the London Book Fair, and sent his ‘heartfelt thoughts’. Emma read his Presidential Address which communicated the theme of engaging the community.

Anne Howard chaired the sessions titled 'Changing Perceptions with Large-Scale Projects'. Leading off was 'Digital Gladstone' delivered by **Louisa Yates** of Gladstone's Library, Hawarden, Wales, who showed how large-scale projects and public engagement programs had positively changed Gladstone's direction and fortunes.

**Carl Hutton**, Librarian of Leeds Library, spoke on 'A Year of Celebration' the Leeds Library 250th celebration 1768-2018 and the production of their history, along with innovative collaboration with the community and other organisations on the theme of 'Books Share Knowledge'. The Library became a registered charity in 2008 and the number of trustees had since been cut back from 21 to 12.

At Leeds there had been radical and ongoing discussion and debate as to the need to recognise the Library's history, engage Library members which ranged in age from 25-90, and create an interface with the public, partners and funding bodies. Over the year some fifty events were staged, many shared with partners, with examples being Leeds White Night and Bronte in the Kirkstall Abbey Chapel.

The Leeds bicentennial exhibition 'Through the Pages' opened on 14 September and ran to 24 November 2018 and cost £5000 to produce.

Keynote Speaker **Naomi Korn**, who trained as an archaeologist at Sheffield University, is a long practitioner and consultant in the field of copyright. Naomi followed morning tea with 'Copyright: Balancing Risk, Ethics and Compliance'. She canvassed copyright issues of text and picture, and particularly photography. Rights and permissions in the cultural heritage sector which are essential and deserving of widespread consultation and universal address. Naomi is joint author with Charles Oppenheimer of *Information Law: Compliance for Librarians, Knowledge Managers and Information Professionals* published by Wildly & Sons Ltd.

The Annual Meeting of the Independent Libraries Association followed, with Emma Marigliano Chairing the Proceedings and all Office-bearers were re-elected.

This was followed by a series of Paper presentations themed 'Responding to Challenges: Flexibility in Individual Libraries'. Chaired by Louisa Yates. **Lisa Di Tommaso** of the Morrab Library, Penzance spoke on 'How the Morrab is Facing the Future' on fighting 'the invisibility' of being an independent library and the need to 'tread carefully and slowly, and to communicate not alienate' and finding the balance of loyalty to existing members and open to new ideas and members.

Next was **Ann Barwood** of the Exeter Cathedral Library who spoke on 'Recent Changes in Building

and Culture'. This was a passionate story. The Library was commenced in 1072 by Bishop Leofric when he gave sixty books, twenty-eight of which were in English. One of the latter is a manuscript of poetry known as 'Liber Exoniensis' which still exists in the Cathedral Chapter. In 1602 some eighty-one books were sent to **Thomas Bodley** to help establish the Bodleian Library at Oxford University.

This was a story of solid planning, determination, persistence and faith and resulted in very real achievement for the housing, conservation and the future of the Cathedral's Library.

Ann distributed copies *Caleb Hedgeland's 1811 Model of Exeter Cathedral: A Description and Comparison with other Contemporary Depictions* by Sadru Bhanji published by the Devon and Exeter Institution in 2018. The model was first displayed at the Institution in 1824 and gifted to the Institution in 1870 and was placed with Exeter Cathedral on indefinite loan in 1974.

Following afternoon tea the 'Bookbinding' alternative, which was in the gallery upstairs, was taken by **Rebecca Newman** of Newman Bookbinding and Restoration. Rebecca is a graduate of Brunel Arts and Technology College, Bristol and the Further Education College at Guildford. Prior to establishing her own bindery fifteen years ago, she had worked in the Cardiff University Bindery and Cardiff Central Library Bindery. Rebecca was also part of a conservation team that worked on the late medieval Library at Seminario Barbarigo at Montefiascone, Italy.



*Rebecca Newman conducting a bookbinding workshop. (Photo: Roslyn Lowden)*

Rebecca, clearly a well resourced practitioner, had meticulously laid the long table out with binding utensils and equipment along with materials that were used in the bookbinding or conservancy process. It started with: page repairing with tissues, or even tissue sandwiching; restoration options; basic sewing; selection of endpapers; boards; covering materials, including the various sort of leathers or skins; scoring and blocking;

making book storage cases; and book care. It was a most comprehensive session with costings.

The evening Conference Dinner was held in a function room at the Ask Italian Restaurant, also located opposite the Cathedral. Delegates were seated at the one long table and enjoyed the food, drink and company until well into the night.

The Sunday program started at 9am, with the alternative of the 'The Hidden' a performance of **Visible Fictions**. A staff of four people were involved, under the leadership of **Katie Childs**, a former Librarian at the Imperial War Museum. The aim was to save Daisy Sinclair who had gone missing and participants were to tell no one. This engaged groups to search for book titles that had been planted at various places throughout the library. Using a letter code each book led a group to the next title and clue.

Some groups even had to ascend the narrow winding steel staircase to the balcony for one title. On reassembling, groups had to pool their information under a moderator and working on a computer screen. The whole purpose was to excite youth into research and reading. *Semper Quare* 'Why is it always?'

The session following morning tea was titled 'Changing with the Times: Digital Independent Libraries' and chaired by Emma Marigliano.

The first speaker was **Darren Bevin**, former Librarian of Chawton House, who spoke on 'Reading with Austen: A New Virtual Library Website'. The aim was to see what author **Jane Austen** (1775-1817) may have read. An 1818 handwritten list of books at Godmersham Park in Kent, the home of Jane Austen's brother Edward Knight (1768-1852) existed, and Jane had stayed there on a number of occasions.

The project was launched by **Dr Peter Sabor** and a team at McGill-Queens University in Canada in 2015 and the aim was to either assemble physical or digital specimens of the library and arrange them in the order in which they had been originally shelved on the south, west or east walls at Godmersham Park in accord with a watercolor image by **Jessica Irene Joyce**. It was also complemented by the Reading with Austen website. A click on the relevant book's spine will reveal title page, etc. on items that have been located along with further information on the project and Chawton House.

**Matthew Haley**, Director of Bonhams and Head of their Books, Maps and Manuscripts for the UK and Europe since 2013 and based in London, followed with 'Changing Fortunes: How Rare Book Auctions Have Adapted to the Times'.

Matthew's talk took delegates through the history of book auctions starting with the catalogue of **Johannes de Witt** in 1668. The rise of significant auction houses that still exist today: Sothebys as **[Samuel] Baker**, **[George] Leigh & [John] Sotheby** established in 1744; Christies by **James Christie** in 1766; and Bonhams, set up by **Thomas Dodd** and **Walter Bonham** in 1793.

Commissions varied with charges for packing, porters, cartage, the town cryer and exhibition. The auctioneer's Commission may have been 2.5% but could go to 20%.

The entry of the New York market, with buyers such as **Henry** and **Arabella Huntingdon**, **Henry** and **Emily Folger** and **John Pierpont Morgan** increased prices. Today in addition to the selling charges to the vendor there is also the buyers premium at around 25%.

With technology and on-line possibility from bidders from fifty-five countries it is now possible to clear items from one a minute to 150 in an hour. There is also the matter of cultural heritage with restriction on items that have been more than fifty years in the UK. Digitisation and online sites have also made inroads into the profitability of book auctions.

Louisa Yates then summed up. The reformatted AGM, with a Conference, organised speakers, a dinner and tour, which was started by **John Killen** at the Linen Hall Library, in Belfast, was now a well established success. The next AGM would be held at Leeds Library in October 2020 and details would be circulated. She then announced gifts for the volunteers and speakers and placed them on the table.

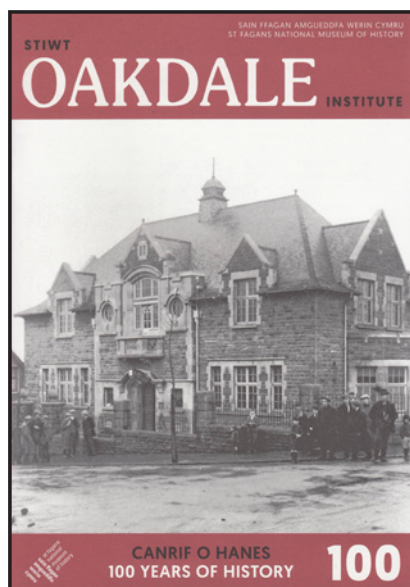
A strange feature of the Devon and Exeter Institute was a door in the wall that was faced to look like the books and shelves on either side.

In all a very worthwhile event for information, networking and superb hospitality.



*Louisa Yates of Gladstone's Library, Wales, speaking in the Devon and Exeter Institution.  
(Photo: Roslyn Lowden)*

# Book Reviews



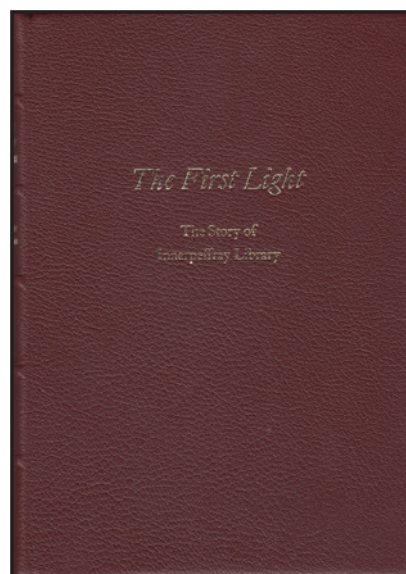
**Stiwt: Oakdale Institute; 100 Years of History** – Canrif o Hanes. Paperback, saddlestitched. 44 pages, illustrated. 210x300mm.

The closure of the coal mines in the 1980s saw many large Institutes demolished or gutted. The Oakdale Institute, which closed in 1987, was chosen to be a representative building in St Fagan's National Museum of History and it was deconstructed and shifted to there in 1989 and re-erected and opened in 1995. Recreated in the minutest detail, the Oakdale Stiwt is complete with posters, books, artifacts and it looks across the village green and its maypole. The text is bilingual Welsh and English and was issued as a commemorative part of the World War I Armistice.

Available from: St Fagan's National Museum of History, St Fagans, Cardiff, CF5 6XB

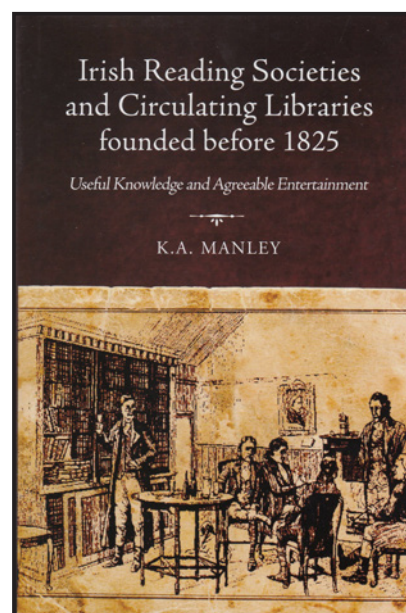
**The First Light: The Story of the Innerpeffray Library** – George Chamier. Limited to 500 signed and numbered copies. Leatherbound. 138 pages. Timeline, illustrated, tipped in facsimiles, bibliography, index. 180mmx260mm. (Crieff: Innerpeffray Library, 2009).

We missed this title when it was published but it is still worthy of review by way of the story which it tells. Located at the end of a road in rural Scotland, the Innerpeffray Library, along with accompanying Chapel and School is unique. Established in 1680 on the edge of the River Earn, the Library has survived and indeed in recent times has thrived by way of use and programs. This book probes the treasures of the



Library, particularly items from the library of founder **David, Lord Maddertie**. (The collection has been recently augmented by a donation from an American bibliophile and collector of Scottish first editions and documents, **Janet Burns St Germain**.) The technical qualities of this book makes it a collector's delight.

Available from: Innerpeffray Library, Crieff, Perthshire, PH7 3RF, Scotland. £150, plus postage.



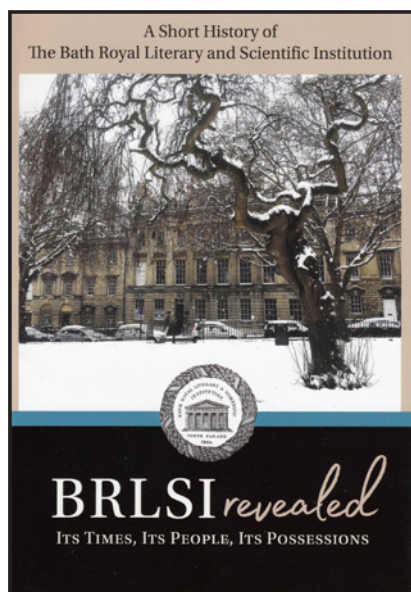
**Irish Reading Societies and Circulating Libraries founded before 1825: Useful Knowledge and Agreeable Entertainment** – KA Manley. Hardback, with dustjacket. 248 pages. Supplementary annotated List of Libraries by County, bibliography, topographical index,

general index. 240mmx165mm. 9781846827174. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018).

This book complements Keith Manley's previous work *Books, Borrowers and Shareholders: Scottish Circulating and Subscription Libraries before 1825* (2012). Ireland was surprisingly well-resourced with reading material by way of a number of avenues to satisfy 'useful knowledge and agreeable entertainment'. Ecclesiastical, religious and school libraries, co-existed with subscription libraries for the middleclass and workers. Private libraries also played their part in the distribution of books, as did the the reading societies. However Government was mindful with what was being read and in 1798 Government troops cleansed libraries of 'seditious' material.

The annotated List of Libraries, arranged by County, gives the breadth of libraries and their members and/or readers. This is a worthy study of readers and reading in an often forgotten region.

Available from: Four Courts Press, 7 Malpas Street, Dublin 8, Ireland or online at: [fourcourtspress.ie](http://fourcourtspress.ie). €65.00, plus postage.



***BRLSI Revealed: Its Times, Its People, Its Possessions: A Short History of The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution*** – Elizabeth M Vincent. Paperback, saddlestitched. 40 pages, illustrations. 150mmx210mm. 9780993567438.

This book is dedicated to **Bob Draper** 'whose idea it was' to resurrect the BRLSI from almost certain oblivion. Those who attended **MW 2009 – Bath** will know of this massive contribution made by Bob, not only to Bath but by way of example to us all. It can be done.

Established in 1824, and nearing its bicentenary, the BRLSI still stands firm in its building and husband's its historic and unique collections. The building's spaces are well used by various groups, for lectures and periodic exhibitions. This is an important contribution to the telling of the BRLSI story and its long and ongoing connection to the wider community.

Available from: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HN, UK. £5.00, plus postage.



***Longwood Mechanics' Hall 1858-2018: The First 160 Years*** – Margaret E Woodcock. Paperback, saddlestitched. 16 pages, illustrations. 150mmx210mm.

The Longwood Mechanics' Institute was established by 1844 and met in the Baptist Schoolroom in Longwood Gate. There classes were held and 'gentlewomen were persuaded to take female classes'. Things progressed and eventually the Institute moved into its own premises on 8 October 1858, when **Edward Akroyd MP** opened the building. Its life became linked to the nearby Prospect Woollen Mills owned by **Joseph Hoyle**. (The Institute holds the World War I Honour Roll which lists 192 staff from Hoyle's Mill.) A thriving Savings Bank once operated in the building and the teller's windows still survive. The author admirably tells the story of the Hall's revival, and ongoing restoration and adaptation, since 2005 and its now daily use. An admirable tribute to all concerned.

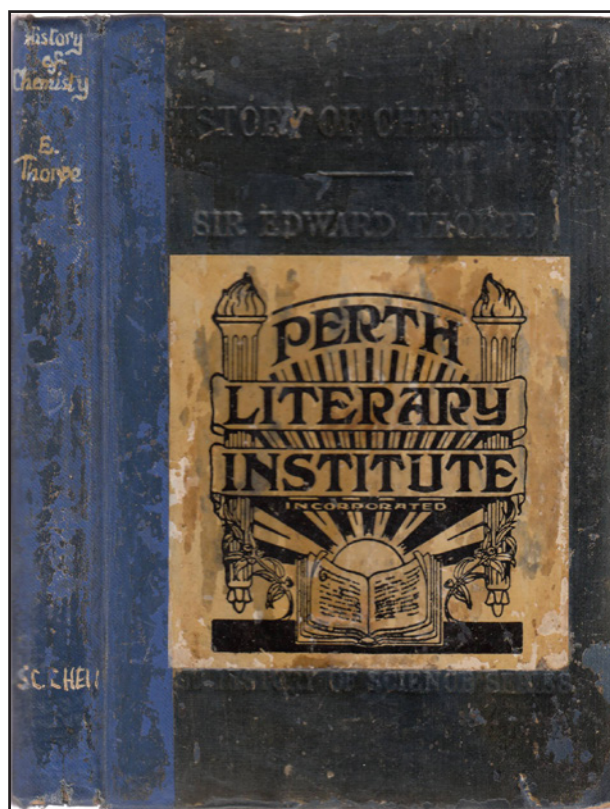
Available from: Longwood Village Hall Committee, Longwood Gate, Longwood, Huddersfield HD3 4UUI. £5 includes postage.

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

The title sighted for this issue is *History of Chemistry: Volume 1 - From the Earliest Times to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* by Sir Edward Thorpe CB, LL.D., FRS, published in London by Watts & Co., 17, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, EC in 1909.

Hardbound in blue cloth, blind blocked on the cover, it is 125mm x 3185mm, and comprises, viii, with 148 pages, which include a bibliography and index. There are several full page halftone portraits of people scattered throughout the text. At page 100 there is also a diagram of Elements: Simple; Binary; Ternary; Quarternary; Quinquary and Sextenary; and Septenary, which 'contains the arbitrary marks or signs chosen to represent the several chemical elements or ultimate particles'. No printer is mentioned so it is assumed that this was printed inhouse by Watts

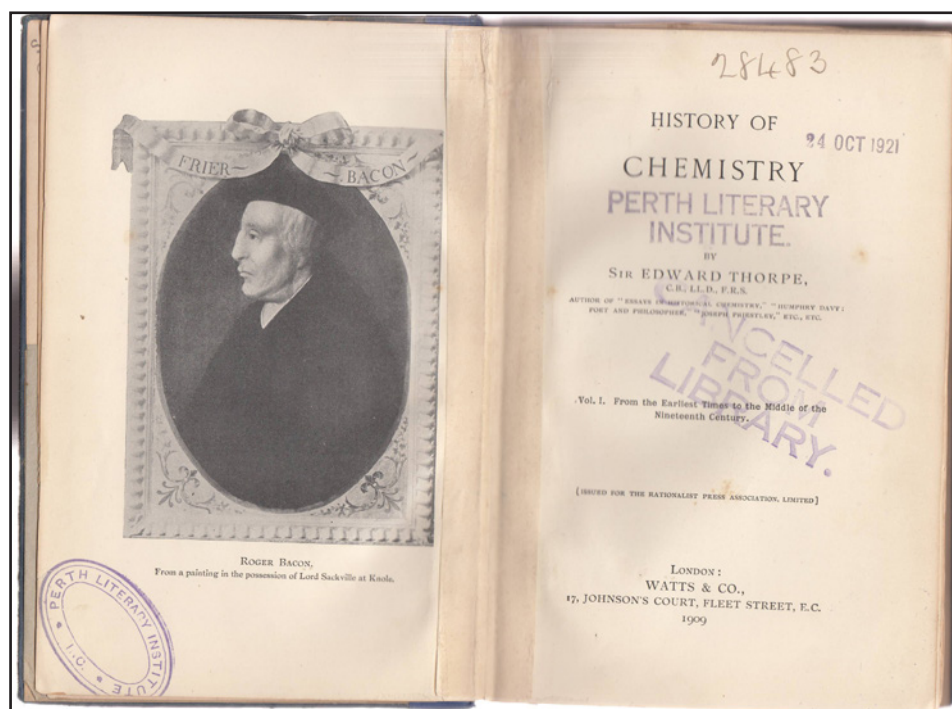
It was from the Perth Literary Institute, established as the Swan River Mechanics' Institute in 1851. It was located on the south-west corner of Hay and Pier Streets, Perth and there it conducted a library and museum. The name was changed to the Perth Literary Institute in 1909, at which time it had a library of 9443 volumes. The Institute was taken over by the City of Perth in 1957 and the Library was shifted to Council House. The Institute building was demolished in the 1970s and the site is now occupied by the Perth Law Chambers.

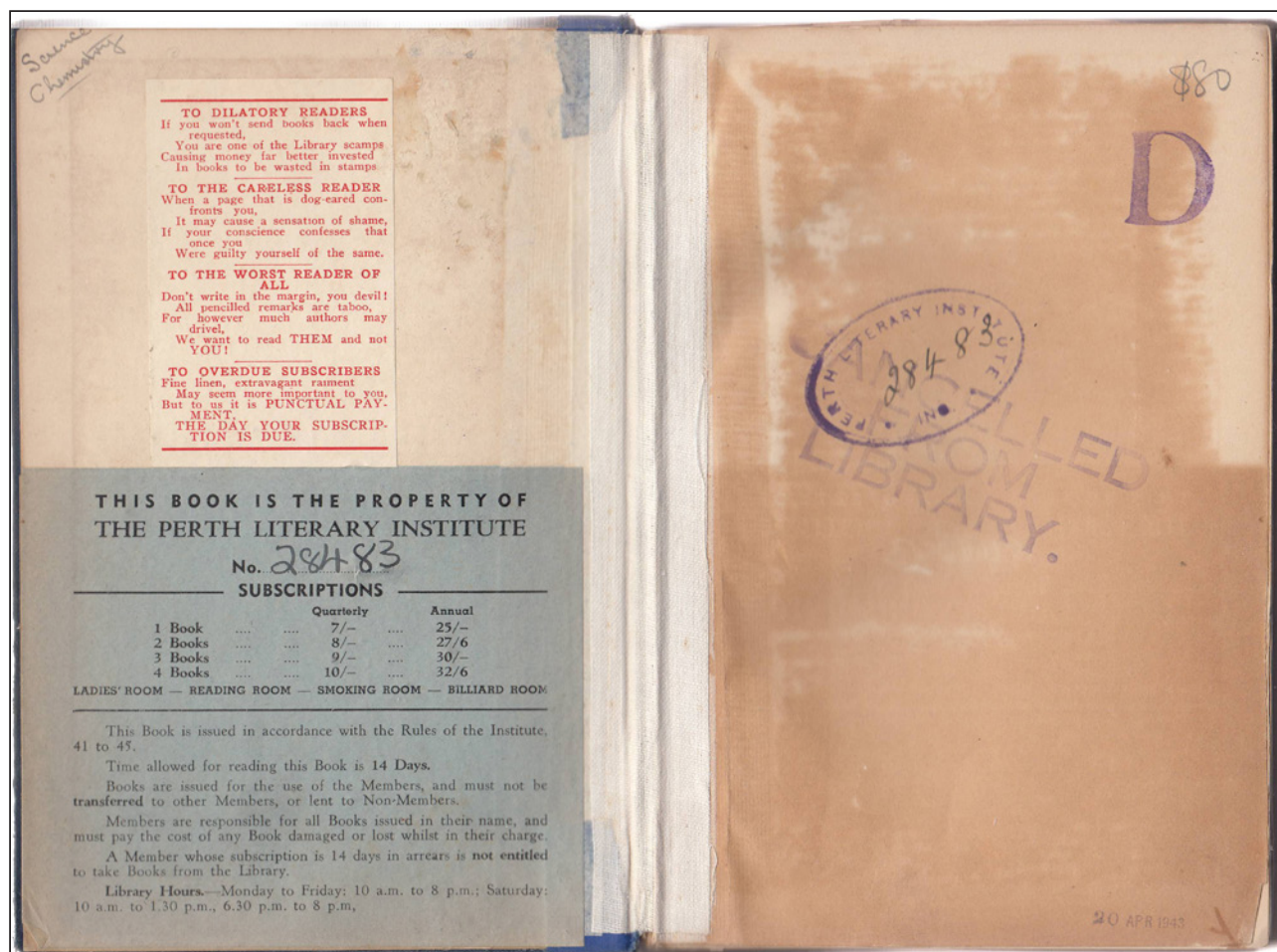


This book was No. 2 in A History of the Science Series and was published for the Rationalist Press Association Ltd which was founded in 1885 by **Charles Albert Watts** (1858-1946). His father Charles and uncle John had founded the publishing business of Watts & Co. in 1864. Watts & Co. went on to publish The Thinkers Library which issued a series of some 140 reprints of early writers between 1929-51, published initially at sixpence each.

The author **Sir Thomas Edward Thorpe** (1845-1925) was educated at Manchester Victoria College and was Chief Chemist and Director of the British Government Somerset House Laboratory from 1894-1909. Thorpe wrote several chemistry textbooks which sold many copies and these included both volumes of *History of Chemistry*.

This copy appears to have been accessioned





on 24 October 1921 as title 28482 and was 'Cancelled from Library' on 20 April 1943. It has three labels affixed. The first affixed to the front cover is a 95mm square in white paper with black printing 'Perth Literary Institute Incorporated' on the cover with armorial artwork. The second on the top section of the front pastedown, a 77mm x 50mm white label with red printing with notes to: Dilatory Readers; The Careless Reader; The Worst Reader of All; and Overdue Subscribers.

The third label, on the lower section of the front pastedown, is 95mm x 110mm on light blue paper with black printing 'This book is the property of/ The Perth Literary Institute/ No. [and handwritten in black ink] 28483.' It also covers subscription details for 1-4 books, with quarterly and yearly rates. Mentioned are the 'Ladies' Room – Reading Room – Smoking Room – Billiard Room' and that the 'This Book is issued in accordance with the Rules of the Institute 41 to 45.' This label appears to have been pasted over an earlier label of the same size and colour.

The front pastedown carries a handwritten 'Science/Chemistry' across the top left hand corner. The flyleaf carries a large 20mm 'D' in blue stamp ink. In the top half is an 45mm elliptical stamp circled within by the wording 'Perth Literary Institute Inc.' Written across the centre of which is a handwritten '28483'. Stamped across this is the 75mm parallel wording 'Cancelled/ From/ Library.' In the lower right hand corner is the date stamp '20 Apr 1943'. The title page carries the following additions, from the top: in handwriting '28483'; and as rubber stamps '24 Oct 1921'; in 50mm wording 'Perth Literary / Institute'; and in 75mm wording 'Cancelled/ From/ Library.'

The elliptical stamp appears at random throughout the text and on the back pastedown. The 'Cancelled/ From/ Library.' again appears on pages v, and the front of the back flyleaf.

Unfortunately there is no recorded borrower use, but the cloth cover which has been varnished shows considerable wear and the spine has been rebaked, so it may have been 'a lot'.

# Where They Stood

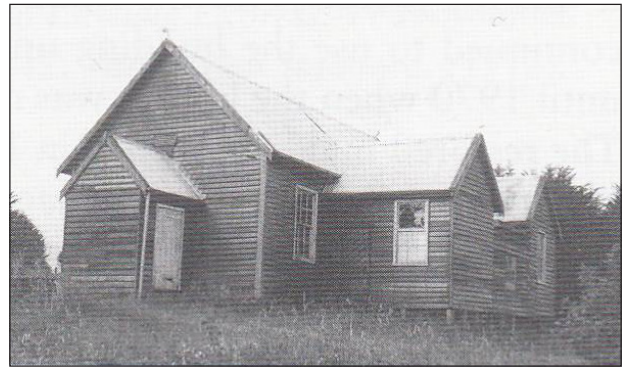
## CHILDERS MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1886)

Site Address: Allambee-Childers Road, Childers, V 3824

### History

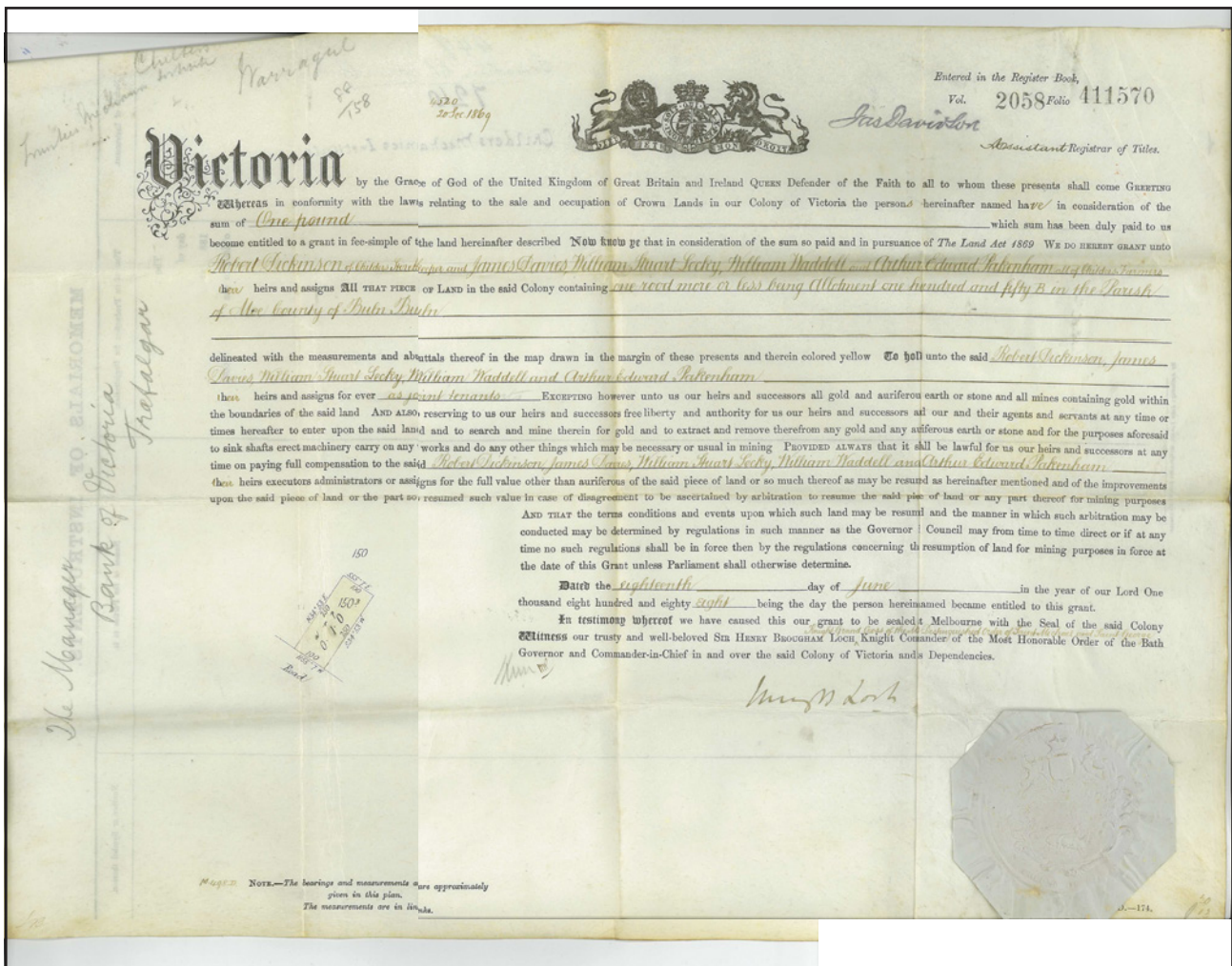
Childers is a district located in the Strzelecki Ranges, in central Gippsland, near Trafalgar, in the Shire of Baw Baw. It is named for a former Inspector Schools and MLC, Hugh Culling Eardley Childers (1827-96). The Childers State School No. 2350 opened in March 1881 in temporary accommodation. It later moved to a permanent site near the Childers Post Office and remained open until at least 1969, when the teacher was Mr B Mauder. It had an average attendance of 30-40 pupils over the years.

A move to establish a Mechanics' Institute started around 1886 and an application for a Government grant of a site was made and the locals started fundraising to build the Institute.

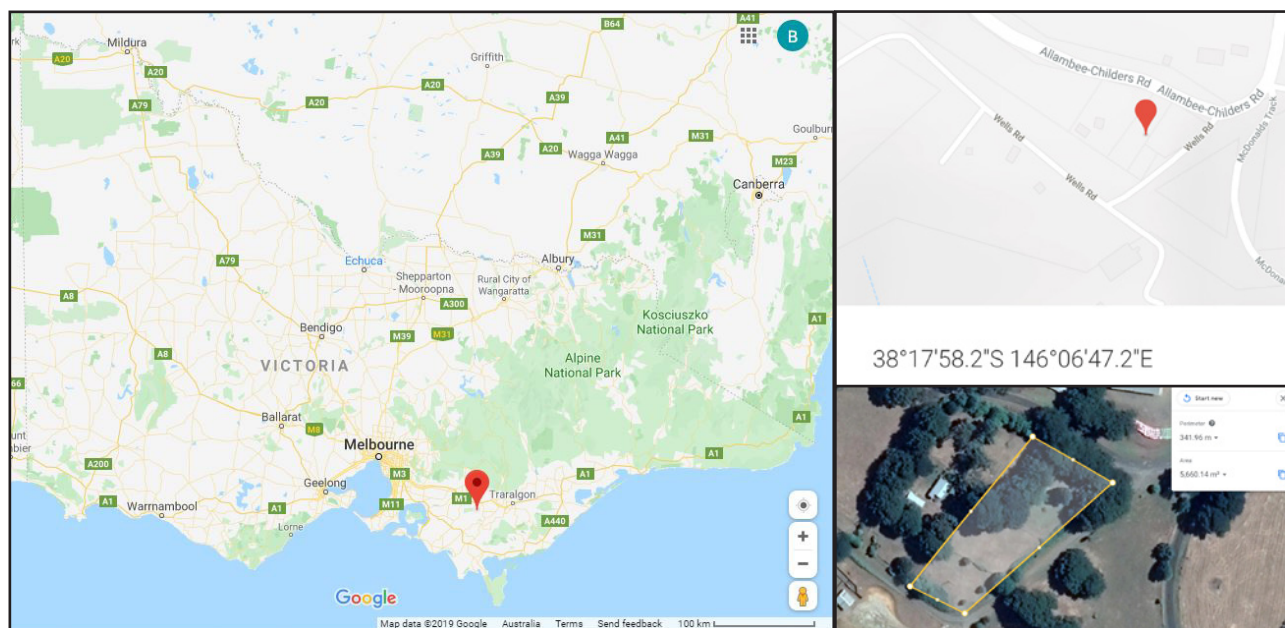


Childers Mechanics' Institute. (Photo: Alf Wesson)

A gala concert and ball, chaired by **Arthur Champion Groom MLA** (1852-1922), celebrated the opening of the Hall on 19 November 1886. The press noted 'the settlers coming from miles around, the closer residents carefully picking their way on foot, others coming in jinkers and buggies. Those further out rode their horses



The Crown Land Title relating to the Childers Mechanics' Institute. (Source: Mitchell Gorman)



*Clockwise from above: location of Childers; location of the Mechanics' Institute in Childers; the Childers Mechanics' Institute reserve. (Source: Google Maps)*

along ridges, down across the babbling creeks, the ladies riding sidesaddle, taking great care as their mounts clambered up steep banks. As the night progressed many speeches were made. The tempo of the music played on violin and accordion varied from the graceful waltz, to the rather boisterous set dances. Meanwhile, outside the stoker was boiling the water for the tea and coffee in preparation for the lavish supper, after which the ball continued to daybreak.'

The Library had 200 hundred books in 1886 and it was open from 7pm-10pm one evening a week. By 1894 the library had increased to 648 books and Annual Library grants were received until at least 1906.

In February 1887 Hon. **John Lamont Dow** (1837-1923), Minister for Lands delivered a lecture on his travels in America. Mr Groom MLA was also present.

The land grant allotment 150B, in the Parish of Buln Buln, comprised one rood 'more or less' and was finally conveyed to the Trustees of the Institute on 18 June 1888. The trustees were named as: **Robert Dickinson**, Storekeeper of Childers; **James Davies**; **William Stuart Lecky**; **William Waddell**; and **Arthur Edward Pakenham** (1858-1937), all of Childers, farmers.

A plan of the Hall dated 1895 shows the main hall, porch, platform and library room.

**Miss Frances Barton**, Hon. Superintendent of the City Lanes Mission, Melbourne, delivered an address titled 'Mission Work in the Slums' in the Hall in January 1897.

In August 1898 it was reported 'The contract recently let for the additions and alterations

to the Childers Mechanics' Institute has been finished, the hall being now capable of seating from 180 to 200 people'.

On 1 February 1898 'a large bushfire bore down on the Childers township, and residents have been battling with the conflagration ever since... The Childers Mechanics' Institute has caught fire on three occasions, and so far has only been saved with great difficulty.'

In October 1900 'A pound night social was held in the Childers Mechanics' Institute on Saturday night. The attendance was good.' Recitations, songs and 'Mr P Hirt also gave an exhibition on phrenology. A splendid supper, and the National Anthem terminated the evening's pleasure.'

The Childers Mechanics' Hall was used as Polling Place in 1900 and this continued to be so until at least the late 1940s.

Alternate Anglican and Methodist Church services were held in the Hall for forty years.

A meeting was held in the library on 9 June 1914 and it was decided to expend £6 on books. Frank Mayo was Secretary.

A World War I Photographic Honour Roll, with thirty-four photos, existed in the Hall. This is now in the Thorpdale Mechanics' Institute/Trafalgar RSL.

Meetings were held in the Hall in the 1930s (1934) about the financial hardship of the Soldier Settlers on the Childers Estate.

In 1950 the Committee advertised twelve wooden seats with backs, about eight or ten feet in length 'suitable for a hall'.

The Hall was demolished about 2005.

## Our People



**Stewart Hill** of Brechin Mechanics' Institute (Scotland) has recently stepped down from the Institute role of Hon. Construction Manager. After a lifetime in the construction industry Stewart has returned to

Brechin where he has transformed the Institute into a very viable community space, along with heating, cooling and a lift. (Photo: Roslyn Lowden)



Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute President, **Professor Terry Lloyd** recently announced the appointment of **Colin Jackson OAM** as the Institute's new Executive Manager. Colin had

previously headed up the Ballarat-based office of Conservation Volunteers Australia for thirty-two years and comes with a wealth of not-for-profit managerial experience. Colin commented 'The BMI is a well known establishment in Ballarat, with a very long history, yet many don't know the existing and potential roles, services and facilities the BMI offers to the wider community. One of my tasks will be to address this.' We wish Colin a fulfilling time at the BMI.



We note the recent resignation of **Associate Professor Don Garden OAM** as President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, a position he has held since 2013. Don launched Pam

Baragwanath and Ken James' *These Walls Speak Volumes* in 2015. He also served a two year term as President of the peak body the Federation of Australian Historical Societies and secured substantial funding notably for digitisation. He is the author of seventeen books, several with an environmental focus. We wish Don well in his 'retirement'.



Succeeding Associate Professor Don Garden as President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria is **Emeritus Professor Richard Broome**, former Vice-President, Councillor and Chair of the Publications

Committee. Richard has been integral in establishing the Society's present home History House as a viable and hopefully long-term record, meeting and exhibition centre for Melbourne and regional Victoria. We can only but support this exciting concept and trust he will be successful in his goals.



Mechanics' Institutes largely rely on volunteerism and the Buninyong Free Library Trust [Mechanics' Institute], built in 1861, is no different. It houses the Buninyong Information Centre and the Buninyong

community archive. We note, **Ken Nicholls**, one such volunteer who was recently written up in the local press. His father Harry was the local carrier and Ken succeeded him. Now retired Ken has helped out at the Institute for the past ten years and the Visitor Book comments: 'Top place for information'; 'Lovely, delightful people'; and 'wonderful to see such a marvellous Information Centre in such a small township'. To Ken and all the other volunteers out there your efforts are truly appreciated. (Photo: <https://www.thecourier.com.au>)



Entrepreneurs and philanthropists **Jenny and David Haymes** were recently elected as Life Members of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute. The Haymes paint company is now some eighty years old and the family have done well, and they

## Our People cont...

have decided to share some of that wealth by way of philanthropy and the acquisition of the **Max Harris** picture collection for the BMI was one of those gifts. Haymes is also a leader in 'green' paint technology making fume free odourless paint. Congratulations David and Jenny and long life and good health to you both. (<https://ballaratmi.org.au/>)

We note **Russ Haines**, President of the Ringwood and District Historical Society and Secretary of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies since 2007 has deservedly received a **Royal Historical Society of Victoria Award of Merit**. Russ provides tips and leads for Mechanics' Institute history as he moves around the State. Congratulations Russ.



Singer-songwriter **Emeli Sandé** was appointed Chancellor of the University of Sunderland in May. Emeli was born in Sunderland of an English mother and Zambian father and was raised in Scotland. She is quoted as

saying 'I hated to be ill and to miss a day [at school] because I was so hungry to learn.' Stepping on to the stage at fifteen, she had a recording contract at sixteen, and later graduated from the University of Glasgow Medical School in neuroscience. (Photo: *Emeli Sande (@emelisande) / Twitter*)



**Kimberly Scrafano** took up the position of Executive Director of the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute on 8 July. Kimberly has long connections with San Francisco's East Bay and connection with the

Oakland Museum and East Bay Children's Book Project. Mechanics' Institute trustee **Lindsey Tonsager** stated 'During an extensive search with many qualified candidates, Kimberly stood out for her expertise, knowledge and passion for the work of the Mechanics' Institute, as well as her vision for the role of the Institute in today's San Francisco and the larger Bay Area.'

Kimberly takes over a library of some 150,000 titles, with access to a wide range of e-books and on line databases, notably the Value Line Investment Survey (NASDAQ: VALU). The Institute is nudging around 5000 members, with the fastest growing segment being 'the under 40-set'. She will also oversee building repairs funded by a \$500,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Whilst attending the joint US Membership Libraries and UK Independent Libraries Association, La Jolla Athenaeum's **Erika Torri** took in a VIP event to celebrate her friend **Dame Zandra Rhodes'**

fifty years in the Fashion Industry. Dame Zandra founded the London Fashion and Textile Museum in 2003 and this was the venue for the party where everyone dressed in a Rhodes gown for the special night, at which **Princess Michael of Kent** was a guest. Dame Zandra divides her time between San Diego and London, where she is Chancellor of the University of the Creative Arts.



Beechworth's Burke Museum has recently appointed **Ashleigh Giffney** as Collections Manager and **Victoria Cooper** as Experience Curator. It was noted that 'both bring exciting skills and knowledge to the Cultural Heritage team'. This followed strong visitation results for the April-June quarter of 6353 ticketed visitors.

MIV Committee Members **Russell** and **Judy Owen** have a big Wedding Anniversary coming up. As a warm up they took The Ghan railway journey to Darwin and back and plan other activities before and on the big day. Congratulations and a big 'Thankyou' to you both for your contribution to not only to the preservation of the Narre Warren Mechanics' Institute but also for your ongoing positive input into MIV.

# Vale



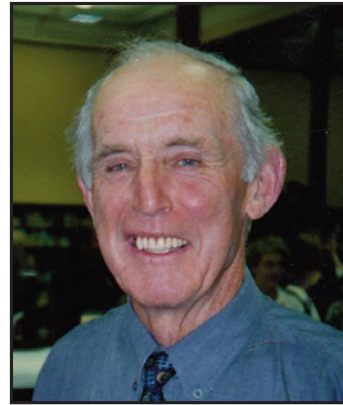
**Ella Ivy Ebury, nee Robinson** was born at Slaty Creek, near St Arnaud on 23 December 1915. She married a local shearer and became cook for a contract shearers' crew in outback New South Wales. Later they settled in St Arnaud where she got her first paid job at aged 58 and became editor of St Arnaud's *North Central News* at aged 63, a position she held until aged 97. In 2000 she won the **Country Press Shakespeare Family Award** for excellence in editorial writing.

In addition to journalism, Ella also served on the St Arnaud Council and became its first female Mayor and completed two terms. She was passionate about regional Victoria and campaigned on their behalf. Her hard hitting editorials likened her to The Thunderer of *The Times*. One such successful campaign was the saving of the iconic Edna Walling designed park which abuts the Mechanics' Institute. Another was for a Nursing Home.

On recalling the early Slaty Creek Hall Saturday night dances she wrote 'Two kerosene lamps swing, dust rises, and the floor springs, while pregnant mothers sit gossiping or hand out coffee and lamingtons, their children asleep under seats.' As to the toileting arrangements out the back 'No female in her right mind ever enters the dark snake-and spider-infested dunny, but lifts her skirt in its fairly secluded vicinity, with a friend to keep watch'.

Our last memory of Ella, who after having spoken at an Open Day in 2016 at the St Arnaud Mechanics' Institute, got in her car, backed out and drove off up the hill. Ella was Librarian at the St Arnaud Mechanics' Institute for a time and co-authored its brief history. Regrettably her much laboured memoir of her life was not published.

Ella died at St Arnaud on 16 May 2019, aged 103. She had a Private Funeral. Indeed a life well lived by example and deed. Her husband Jack predeceased her in 1975. She is survived by a daughter Robyn, and our condolences go to her.



We record the passing of **Nicholas John Murphy OAM** at Leongatha on 1 June 2019, aged 95. His wife of sixty-eight years, Kath having died in 2018.

He was born in Leongatha on 21 January 1924 and spent his whole life working in the service of the community.

In the eulogy delivered by his eldest son Damian, he 'noted that the service took place in a Church that he had worshipped in for his whole life, in which he married 69 years ago, in a town that he wrote the history of, up the road from the High School where he was educated and was later president of the School Council. The milk tankers that rumble past were from the town's main employer, the butter factory, whose history he wrote. Mourners may have driven from Mirboo North, a town where he wrote the Shire history as well as that of the Bush Nursing Hospital. The Church was not far from the site of Leongatha's Labour Colony, he documented.

John Murphy wrote the history of the Water Authority, and mourners arriving would have driven into Leongatha and passed the paddocks of chocolate-red soil similar to that he farmed for his whole life. They would have passed the statue of the famous local **Lennie Gwyther** with whom he went to High School, the Post Office where he began the mere 5.5 years of his long working life for someone else, the architecturally impressive Memorial Hall, whose history he wrote, the unique Mechanics' Institute where he played billiards, borrowed their books, helped to preserve, and gathered with the founders of the Leongatha and District Historical Society.

He farmed Rubybank, Leongatha for the greater part of his life and had widespread dairying and

## Vale cont...

potato and onion growing involvement. His last book, *One Bag in Six: Onion Growing in Gippsland 1900-2007* was the subject of a memorable lecture before the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and an equally memorable onion soup tasting.

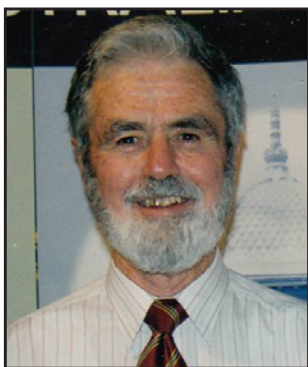
He was awarded an OAM in the 2004 Australia Day Honours and the Gippsland Association of Affiliated Historical Societies presented him the Gippsland Regional History Award for 'an outstanding contribution to recording and publishing the history of Gippsland'.

John Murphy attended the inaugural State Conference of Mechanics' Institutes in 1998 and as MIV Vice-President chaired the first **Mechanics' Institutes Australia** Conference in 2000. Travelling down from Leongatha, he attended Committee meetings for several years and later remained an MIV member.

We can but agree with his eulogist 'He was an honest, generous benefactor of many charities, a pillar of the community and a person of great integrity of whom all the Murphys can be proud'.

The Funeral Service was conducted at St Laurence' Church, Leongatha on 6 June 2019 and his remains were interred in the Leongatha Lawn Cemetery.

Our sincerest condolences to his children Damian, Josephine, Nicholas, Kath, Luke, Angela, John, Gregory and their extended families.



**Clive Brooks** died on 17 September last. He was a much-loved, highly respected member of the BMI community and one of the Institute's greatest servants over the last thirty years.

Clive was born and grew up in north Queensland. In 1952, aged 16 he joined the RAAF as an apprentice radio technician. Over the next 30 years, he progressed through the ranks at various RAAF based postings around Australia and overseas including two years at the Air Attache's office in the Australian Embassy in Paris. By the time of his retirement in 1983, the junior airman

from Queensland had become a Squadron Leader in charge of all the radio apprentices in the RAAF.

Clive and Helen settled in Yendon in 1987. A few years later they moved into Buninyong. In these districts and nearby Ballarat, Clive was soon active in a range of community organisations including the Buninyong Uniting Church, several historical societies in the region and the Friends of Sovereign Hill where in period costume he entertained visitors in his role as a bloke down on his luck.

He was elected to the Committee of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute in the early 1990s. He was President for three successive terms 1996 -1998, just about the time the Institute was beginning to develop its strategy for building restoration and revitalisation. He later served terms as Treasurer, often stepping into the breach in an acting capacity when no-one with the necessary skills was available or willing to take on the task. In the leaky office that was then squeezed in the tiny space between the now Batten Room and the Heritage Reading Room, Clive kept meticulous records. As financial management became computerised, he quietly applied himself to learning use of new tools like MYOB though, with typical modesty, he always downplayed his work. When Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria (MIV Inc) was formed in 1998, Clive was its foundation Treasurer.

The Institute's collections and archives were his great interest and love. With the help of volunteer assistants, he oversaw the systematic curating and conservation storage of 150 years of BMI records. With characteristic patience and thoroughness, he regularly researched responses to enquiries referred to him from office-bearers, members, visitors and, as email developed, from around Australia and overseas.

Ill-health over the last few years curtailed Clive's Mondays at the BMI. Helen Brooks died in 2009. In 2017 Clive married Delia de Jong who with her late husband Hank had been long-time friends of Clive and Helen. At Clive's funeral service, his son Ian and Delia's grand-daughter Kate Duggan expressed appreciation for Delia's care of Clive in the last few years of his life, a sentiment warmly endorsed by the many family and friends present.

The marks of Clive Brooks were courtesy, dignity, integrity, generosity and modesty. His was a life of selfless service to his family, friends, church, community and nation. How fortunate we people of the MIs were to know him.

Dr Frank Hurley OAM  
BMI Patron and Past President  
MIV Past President and Life Member

SHOP NOW: CARDS, PRINTS, BOOKS



**BOOKS**



**A4 PRINTS**  
\$10 ea  
Full set of 20 - \$95

ALL AVAILABLE FROM OUR ONLINE SHOP - FOLLOW THE LINKS FROM MIVIC.ORG.AU.

PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE POSTAGE.

**CARDS**  
Single card - \$3 ea  
Full set of 20 - \$25  
Pack of 5\* - \$7.50 per pack

WATERCOLOURS OF FIVE VICTORIAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTES  
BY DAMIAN CALLANAN

CASTLEMAINE  
ELMORE  
SORRENTO  
STANLEY  
WARRANDYTE

**GREEN SET**

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.  
PO BOX 1468, WINDSOR VIC 3181 | MIVIC.ORG.AU | PAINTINGS © DAMIAN CALLANAN 2017

WATERCOLOURS OF FIVE VICTORIAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTES  
BY DAMIAN CALLANAN

ARTHURS CREEK  
MALDON  
MELBOURNE  
SHEPPARTON  
TALLAROOK

**RED SET**

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.  
PO BOX 1468, WINDSOR VIC 3181 | MIVIC.ORG.AU | PAINTINGS © DAMIAN CALLANAN 2017

WATERCOLOURS OF FIVE VICTORIAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTES  
BY DAMIAN CALLANAN

BALLARAT  
EMERALD  
FAWCETT  
FRYERSTOWN  
MURTOA

**BLUE SET**

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.  
PO BOX 1468, WINDSOR VIC 3181 | MIVIC.ORG.AU | PAINTINGS © DAMIAN CALLANAN 2017

WATERCOLOURS OF FIVE VICTORIAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTES  
BY DAMIAN CALLANAN

CHILTERN  
FOOTSCRAY  
LILYDALE  
MOONAMBEL  
WALHALLA

**YELLOW SET**

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.  
PO BOX 1468, WINDSOR VIC 3181 | MIVIC.ORG.AU | PAINTINGS © DAMIAN CALLANAN 2017

\*Packs of 5 cards are available in 4 kinds of mixed sets as shown above, or as 5 cards of the one Institute

## Community Page

### RECIPE

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

### STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING

#### Ingredients:

35g chopped dates  
2 teaspoons bicarbonate of soda  
Half cup of boiling water to cover dates  
100g of butter  
18g caster sugar  
14g light brown sugar  
35g self-raising flour  
4 eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla essence

#### Method:

Cream butter and sugar, add eggs one at a time, fold flour in gently, then add date and bicarbonate of soda mix, add vanilla essence. Bake at 180°C for 25 minutes.

### BUTTERSCOTCH SAUCE

#### Ingredients:

800g light brown sugar  
500ml double cream  
500g butter  
vanilla essence to taste

#### Method:

Bring all the ingredients to a boil and stir until all the sugar is dissolved.

### SPOT THE BAKER'S DOZEN REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE No. 49

1. Which Institute has just started its rebuild after its 2018 fire?
2. Who has been appointed Executive Officer at Ballarat Mechanics' Institute?
3. Which Hall has recently installed a new carved sign?
4. Who is one of the presenters of the ABC radio overnight program?
5. What Institute conducts an Open Gardens Day in November?
6. Where is the next UK Independent Libraries Association Conference being held?
7. Where is the Heritage Quay?

8. Which Institute currently has its exhibition on display at the Prahran Mechanics' Institute?
9. Who was the author of the *History of Chemistry*?
10. What was the name of the rocket that carried the Australian payload into space in 1967 to make it the third nation to join the space race?
11. Who is the author of a book reviewed that came to Mechanics' Worldwide in 2004?
12. What is the new badging name for events being held at Halls in November?
13. Who is Chairing the Victorian Government's Rate Review Panel?

### SPOT THE BAKER'S DOZEN REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 49 – ANSWERS

1. Esther Anne Ringer; 2. New York Society Library; 3. Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute; 4. Associate Professor Alan Duffy; 5. Amy Tsilemanis; 6. Murtoa Mechanics' Institute/Merton Memorial Hall; 7. Gippsland; 8. Philip Reed; 9. July; 10. Emerald Mechanics' Institute; 11. Learmonth; 12. Jolie Hancock; 13. Andrew Hill.

## Odd Spot



Photo: <https://www.aheadpartnership.org.uk/>

One of the UK's Higher Education Colleges, Leeds East Academy, touts the following Seven Core Values across the top of its Library space: Excellence, Punctuality, Ambition, Confidence, Resilience, Positivity and Respect. Principal Sarah Carre states 'This guide will make our expectations in terms of the core values explicitly clear so that they will permeate throughout our academy'.

Put your slogan up on the wall. Think it, breathe it, do it.

## *Ideas & Opportunities*

---

### **CREATIVE SPACES**

Get listed for free. This initiative is sponsored by the City of Melbourne - Arts Melbourne Branch and supported by Government, philanthropic organisations, private businesses and educational institutions. Check out their website [www.creativespaces.net.au](http://www.creativespaces.net.au), get all the pertinent information together, including all the assets your Hall has to offer, then log in and upload the information. Then email the result to us.

### **RATE REVIEW**

The Victorian Government has recently appointed a Rate Review Panel to look at ways Local Government collects and spends rates. The Three person Panel comprises: former Royal Children's Hospital and City of Melbourne Chief Executive, **Dr Kathy Alexander** (Chair); **John Tanner AM**, with wide experience in Local Government administration; and **Dr Ron Ben-David**, a former Chairperson of the Essential Services Commission. The Panel will accept written submissions up to 1 November 2019 and will report to Government in March 2020. Information: [www.engage.vic.gov.au/rating-review](http://www.engage.vic.gov.au/rating-review).

### **ELECTION TIME OPPORTUNITY**

Halls can make good money as Polling Venues and if you do not have this activity contact your local Electoral Office. Not only could the rent be valuable but the rewards from the 'Sausage Sizzle' could also be equally attractive. Good Luck!

### **PLAN A BACK-TO**

The life blood of many small communities is their Hall or Mechanics' Institute. We recently read of a small rural Hall that was overwhelmed when around 700 people turned up for their weekend... and left several thousand dollars behind.

### **THE HALL AN INVALUABLE PIECE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL**

On 18 July, ABC radio's Overnight Program hosted by **Trevor Chappell** ran a segment on 'Country Halls'. The anchorman was a rural reporter who espoused the importance of the 'Community Hall' as an essential piece of social capital and community infrastructure to the survival of any community no matter how small. Halls

mentioned included: **Harston**; **Strathmerton**; and **Youanmite**, all in Victoria; and **Warra** in Queensland. All are very prominent buildings within their small communities.

### **SIGN UP**

We keep banging on about 'Putting your Hall out there'. There are still Halls around Victoria that have no name on their building, let alone a contact number. Badge your Hall with its name so as those who photograph it will be able to put it on the internet as a record of their travels and it will be immediately recognisable. Also place a sign on the Hall with a contact number in large figures. (We recently sighted a remote Hall with an open door and there was no number to alert.) Finally let the local Council know your contact details. Remember also as members of MIV you are able to add those details to your page on the MIV website.

### **GET CREATIVE**

Every Hall should have a logo and slogan. Perhaps even a mascot to take on parade or tourist promotion. Let us know of your deliberations and perhaps we can rustle up a bottle of white, red or even bespoke cordial for the best selected at the next MIV Committee meeting.

### **TOUCH UP TIME**

As we drive around we see bare wood on a number of buildings, particularly around the windows and on doors. With the warmer weather and drying out, it is time to cover up the bare wood. Paint samples can be matched from a flaking piece or even a near colour is better than dry wood. You might also consider a spouting clean and perhaps a piece of mesh fitted over down pipe inlets. It may be even opportune to call a Working Bee coupled with a barbecue to clean up around the Hall both outside and in.

### **HOW DO WE REMEMBER THEM?**

How well do we remember our Hall pioneers and helpers? One Welsh Miner's Institute does in a very permanent way. They have issued so far a four page A5 coloured flyer on about twenty locals that have made it in the wide world or have been major supporters of their Institute. They also had a rack which could be restocked as required.

What a way to Remember Them!