



Useful Knowledge

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
MECHANICS' INSTITUTES OF VICTORIA INC.

NO. 51 - SUMMER-AUTUMN 2020

PO BOX 1080, WINDSOR VIC 3181 AUSTRALIA · ISSN 1835-5242
REG NO. A003815G · ABN 60 337 355 989 · PRICE: SIX DOLLARS \$6

DANIELLE GREEN MLA, LAUNCHES MUSEUM DIRECTORY



From left: Benalla Historical Society President, Pat Mitchell; Member for Yan Yean and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria, Danielle Green MLA; Benalla Rural City Mayor, Danny Claridge; and Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Hon. Secretary, Jim Lowden, showcase the new Museum Directory. Photo: Courtesy of Benalla Ensign, 11 December 2019.

The **Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum** was the site for the launch of our first **Museum Directory** on 4 December 2019. This follows on the Launch of our **Library Directory** in 2018 and our efforts to showcase and advocate for our specialist members.

The **Museum Directory** details sixteen member Museums which showcase a wide range of specialised elements of our heritage: Aboriginal; architecture; communications; costume; crafts; farming; freemasonry; horticulture; industry; maritime; medical; military; natural history; notable people; settlement; sport; transport, etc. Most Museums: issue newsletters, detailing their various ongoing projects; have static exhibitions and/or stage periodic exhibitions; conduct lectures; and engage in publishing of some sort.

The Benalla Museum was established in 1967 by the Benalla Historical Society and occupies the former Mechanics' Institute building, which has since been extended.

Danielle Green MLA, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria, who represented the

Hon. Jaclyn Symes MLC, Minister for Regional Development, was on hand for the for the early morning Launch. Ms Green addressed the theme 'Museums of Memory' and mentioned her family's early association with the region, by way of the Plozza and Brady families and their ethnicity and occupations.

She alluded to the increasing awareness of family history and the importance of urgently preserving what we currently have of our past heritage. Museums were an integral part of regional tourism and their organisation and management was largely by volunteers who gave countless hours to document and conserve items and curate exhibitions.

The **Museum Directory** was then declared launched. Danielle Green then took a tour of the Museum, had a quick cuppa, and was conveyed back to the Benalla Railway Station for her onward journey to Wodonga. We must particularly thank: **Virginia Wellard**, Danielle Green's Adviser, for coordinating the launch.

Coming Events - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

2020

APRIL

- 2, 3, 4 Warrandyte Mechanics Institutes Arts Association: 'Calendar Girls'
- 2 Stanley Memorial Hall Festival of Small Halls
- 18-30 Australian Heritage Festival. Theme: 'Our Heritage for the Future'

MAY

- 1-19 Australian Heritage Festival. Theme: 'Our Heritage for the Future'
- 11-17 Museum Week - At a Museum near you
- 25-31 Library Week - At a Library near you
- 29-31 Independent Libraries Association Conference - Leeds Library 'Libraries as the "Great Good Place"'

JUNE

- 5-7 Briagolong Film Festival
- 6 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre: 'Still Alice'
- 13 Museum Group Workshop - Yarra Ranges Regional Museum

JULY

- TBA Library Group - Workshop
- 6 Tolmie Mechanics' Institute Centenary Celebrations

AUGUST

- 20-30 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre: 'This Way Up'

SEPTEMBER

- 5 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre: 'This Way Up'
- 26 MIV AGM
MIV Architectural Awards Announced

OCTOBER

- 1-31 Royal Historical Society of Victoria - History Month

MIV'S EVENTS CALENDAR IS ONLINE
mivic.org.au/events

Member Institutes: email through details of your events, or public events being held at your Institute, both big and small to the Secretary: theruralstore@bigpond.com. Let us help you promote your events.

- 21-22 American Membership Libraries Group AGM - Salem Athenaeum, Salem, Mass

NOVEMBER

- 1-30 **It's Happening at the Hall Month** - At a Hall near you
- 8 Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute - Garden Walk
- 12-28 Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre: 'Witness for the Prosecution'

DECEMBER

- TBA Friends of Castlemaine Library 'Amazing' Book Sale

2021

OCTOBER

- 8-10 Mechanics' Worldwide 2021 - Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

THANK YOU TO OUR PRINTERS

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



Victorian PRAHRAN
History MECHANICS'
Library INSTITUTE

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 Officebearers

PRESIDENT:
Bron Lowden

VICE PRESIDENT:
Steven Haby

SECRETARY:
Jim Lowden - theruralstore@bigpond.com

TREASURER:
Gary Bester - treasurer@mivic.org.au

MIRC AND PLAQUES:
Judith Dwyer - mirc@mivic.org.au

ALL OTHER MATTERS AND ENQUIRIES:
theruralstore@bigpond.com

Editorial

The clock has just clicked over from the Coming of Age of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. Yes, we have been going for twenty-one years! And it is good to report that our Halls, our Libraries and our Museums have probably never been in better shape, save Tallarook which is rebuilding and Emerald which was demolished.

Evolution and change continues and we are particularly grateful to Christine Moysey-Barker for her professional skills in the layout and production of this issue of *Useful Knowledge*.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison in his recent Australia Day address referred to 'Working Together'. This is the theme of the mural painted on the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust Fire Brigade Country Fire Authority truck, which is wholly crewed by a group of ladies from Gunaikurnai community. Indeed 'working together' has seen an unprecedented effort to help extinguish the massive bushfires which have raged across Australia.

By account there was only one Hall lost, in the Northern New South Wales village of Rappville in October 2019. In the meantime there have been a few near misses with the Hall saved and nearby properties burned. In the media, both printed and electronic, we saw Halls being referred to as firefighting staging posts and bushfire recovery centres.

We pay tribute to all those people who selflessly battled the fires and supported the firefighting effort and now is the time for reflection, recovery and renewal, the three Rs.

What lessons have we learned from the recent holocaust and what future role has the Mechanics' Institute Movement got to play in this process? Traralgon-born Nobel prizewinner Sir MacFarlane Burnett said 'if you understand it we can make things happen'. Perhaps it is time to get back to our grass roots in promoting literacy and science, particularly to our youth.

We read how the youthful: Sir Henry Parkes was a 'supernumerary' to membership of Birmingham Mechanics' Institute; Sir Robert Menzies 'lived in' the Jeparit Mechanics' Institute; and how Professor Vincent Buckley pestered the Librarian of both the Lancefield and Romsey Mechanics' Institutes for books.

The Mechanics' Institutes pioneered the promotion of Science, and this role has now been relegated to its TAFE and University successors. Is it time to get back to grassroots with shelves of books and science lectures and forming and nurturing youth groups like Young Farmers to share our Halls?

You will be aware that we have decided to continue the November Hall Month under the theme of 'It's Happening at the Hall', but then it does not need to be only in the month of November, let's make it happen all the year round.

In these very trying times, community life at the Hall will invariably be disrupted with cancelled hirings, along with postponed events and meetings resulting from COVID-19. Watch for the Government directives as to meetings and personal hygiene. Our empathy is with you all and we trust you will all stay safe and well.

Housekeeping

RATES & CHARGES

We would like to hear from any Institute that is presently paying: Local Government Rates, including those that receive a refund of same; State Revenue Office Charges; or have paid Stamp Duty on Land Transfer from Trustees to an Incorporated Association.

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING COMPETITION

The aim is to record as many Institutes as possible across Victoria, particularly those in danger of demolition. This Competition requires a current architectural rendering of elevations and ground plans of an existing Institute. The First 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. Prizewinners will be announced at the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. Annual General Meeting in September 2020.
6. Entries must reach: Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc, Box 1080, Windsor, Vic 3181 by the specified date.

BICENTENARY COMMITTEE

As flagged in the last edition of *Useful Knowledge* the bicentenary of the arrival of the Mechanics' Institute Movement in Australia is fast approaching, the Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institution having been established in Hobart in 1827. This was a landmark event in Australia's cultural and social development.

Ironically the full story of the Mechanics' Institute Movement in Australia is still largely to be told. Except that we can make an estimate of only the number of Institutes based on the work of Pam Baragwanath, Ken James and Bronwyn Lowden and that appears to be around 3500 Australia wide. The Victorian story has been largely told, thanks

to Pam Baragwanath and Ken James, but alas the other States are still to have their stories fully documented, although considerable work has been done in South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania.

Is there anyone out there who is prepared to dedicate time in developing an Australian Research Council Grant Application or to another funding body to advance the study of this worthy part of Australia's pioneering story?

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

We would like to hear from any persons with IT, Library, Journalism, Secretarial, Event Planning or Research to assist us with the day to day operation of MIV. We cannot offer any money but you will be helping to assist us in our vital work in showcasing Mechanics' Halls, Libraries, Museums, Markets, Dance Venues, etc.

The way I see it, if you want a rainbow, you have gotta put up with the rain.

DOLLY REBECCA PARTON (1946-)

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new Institutional Members:

- Barfold Hall Committee
- Labertouche & District Community Centre
- Wingello Village Association Inc. (Wingello Mechanics' Institute - NSW)

NEWS PLEASE

Let us have your news on the Hall, its history and more importantly its people. Email this, with a couple of photos to: theruralstore@bigpond.com. Submission deadline for the next edition is 19 June 2020.

MAGAZINE ROUND

Tick after reading and pass it on

- President.....
- Vice-President.....
- Treasurer.....
- Secretary.....
- Committee (insert your name).....
-
-
-
-

BUS TOUR TO BAW BAW SHIRE

On the morning of Sunday, 13 October 2019 we assembled in the Berwick Mechanics' Institute for the Annual Bus Tour, again ably organised by Committee member **Judith Dwyer**. Titled *'The Mechanics' Institutes of the Baw Baw Shire and the Scenic District of the Shire's North-West'* the tour was to provide much of interest and inspiration. **Helen Davey** of Bunyip River Bus Lines was to be our able coach captain and knowledgeable commentator.



Our transport for the Bus Tour to Baw Baw Shire.

Our first stop was at Warragul, population 14,000. Here the **Warragul Athenaeum and Public Library** operated from 1880 through to 1970. It served variously as a Church, entertainment and meeting venue, and Library. The original timber structure burned down on 18 March 1928.

Rebuilt, the new Athenaeum and Library, which had a billiard room downstairs, opened in March 1929. The Institute continued in community use until it was purchased by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1954. (The Commonwealth Employment Service had rented the ground floor since 1948.) Mrs Violet Ragg continued to run the library in the downstairs basement until 1970, when the building was sold into private ownership. The library then closed and the books were taken over by 'a lady who operated a gift shop'. The Athenaeum building still stands and is the office of **Gippsland Phones**.



The former Warragul Mechanics' Institute building, now occupied by Gippsland Phones.

Following the 1954 sale, the Warragul Athenaeum was rebadged as 'The Warragul Men's Club' and purchased a property at 55-57 Victoria Street. This later became known as the 'Warragul Club' and operates today as the **Warragul Downtowner Bar and Bistro** and it advertises it's main function area as the Athenaeum Room and acknowledges its early Warragul Athenaeum heritage.

We alighted at the **Warragul & District Historical Society Museum** where we were met by **Malcolm and Jo Dickson**. The Museum is housed in the two-storey red brick former Shire Hall designed by Reed, Smart and Tappin and opened in 1892. In accord with its slogan 'Preserving and Promoting Our Local History', the Society showcases an extensive collection of artifacts and memorabilia spread throughout the ground floor rooms.



The Warragul Museum occupies the former Shire of Warragul office building.

Of particular interest was a photograph of the 1905 Foundation Committee of the **Buln Buln Mechanics' Institute**: H Murray; M Butler; R McKee; J Clements; R Kirkpatrick; W Handley; C Venville; J George; B Sharp (Secretary); Count von Horn (President); J Manning; and WD McPhee (Treasurer). Extensive runs of the local newspapers were housed in the fireproof strongroom. There is also a large collection of books, etc. in a reference room, where digitisation also takes place.

We then moved on to Rokeby, where we were greeted by **Jenneanne Leslie**. Rokeby, on the Tarago River, was once a sawmilling centre, but is now a rich grazing area. It was originally known as Jindivik South until the Railway Line was built in 1890 and was named for a village in Yorkshire. Early community meetings were held in the Rokeby Railway Station Goods Shed from 1891.

A large Reserve adjoins the Hall, with Tennis Courts, Park and Oval and undercover barbecue area.

The Reserve also hosts the Pony Club. At the Reserve entrance are the War Memorial Gates with the wording 'Lest We Forget/ 1914-18 - 1939-45' worked into the wrought iron work.



Rokeby Community Hall sits on a large Reserve which is well-used by the community.

The **Rokeby Mechanics' Institute and Free Library** was built in 1914 and opened free of debt. Two rooms were added to the rear of the Hall in 1916.

The Hall came under threat of a bushfire in February 1926 'and the residents were fighting back fires until well into the morning. Then a change of wind came and relieved them of their arduous job'.

A ticket office, stall and change room were added to the front of the Hall in 1933. Later, in 1955 plans were submitted to renovate the rear rooms, relocate the chimney and build a new kitchen. Electricity was connected in 1958.

In 1963: a ladies cloakroom was added externally to the left of the stage; the Hall and kitchen were lined; and toilets were installed in the front foyer.

The centenary of the Hall was celebrated with a 'Back to Rokeby' in 2014.

Since 1998, the Hall and the abutting Reserve has had a longrunning 'Make it, Bake it, Breed it, Grow it' monthly market, which operates on the second Saturday of the month, save during the months of June, July and August. Proceeds from this have paid for a major upgrade of the Hall, including a new entrance area and toilets. The paved undercover verandah, constructed along its east side, provides shelter for the Bendigo Community Bank-sponsored defibrillator machine installed on the external wall.



A 24/7 Public Access Defibrillator is mounted on an external Hall wall, undercover.

The Hall has custody of a distinctive World War I Honour Board headed 'For Peace and Liberty/ Rokeby Men' which carries the names of thirty-three local men, of whom twelve paid the Supreme Sacrifice. The Hall also holds a 'Long Service Board' which lists the names of those who have given long and dedicated service to the Hall.

The very active Badminton and Table Tennis Clubs utilise the Hall. The front rooms also double as a 24/7 community toilet block.

Passing by the **JD Algie Memorial Hall** at Neerim South, we then went by the site of **Neerim North Soldiers' Memorial Hall**. This had burned down in 1981 and the Memorial Cairn was placed there in 1983.

Our next stop was the **Neerim Junction Mechanics' Institute**, 23km north of Warragul, and 5km north of Neerim, named for the Aboriginal term for 'war spear'. The 520 acre Neerim village was gazetted on 19 November 1875. Neerim Junction appears to have been used from around 1907.

We parked behind the large log sign and were greeted by **Sue Bransgrove**, who showed us into the foyer area. There we had a most enjoyable lunch and were served by: **Donna Eilersen; Shirley Gorman; Jeanette Grey; Margaret Lockett** and **Shauna Warren**. We were later to be joined by Hall 'legends' **Charlie and Faye Bransgrove**.

The first **Neerim Mechanics' Institute and Free Library** was built on a site donated by Andrew Wilson and it had State School and Church use for a time.

Then known as the Neerim North Mechanics' Institute, it burned down in February 1898, during the Red Tuesday bushfires. It was noted at the time that it had a library of 1500 'well selected volumes' and that the building was insured for £150.

The move to replace the Hall was swift and by July 1898 the Neerim North Mechanics' Hall was completed, and religious services were being conducted there every Sunday. It had a seating capacity of 200 and 'a first installment of 250 books had just been received for the library'. The State School also resumed in the Hall and remained there until 1914.

Land adjacent to the Hall was donated by William Adney for a tennis court and the Club used the Hall for its pavilion. The Football and Cricket teams also similarly used the site.

In 1909 the Hall was extended and rough stables were also located behind the Hall. These were used for the clandestine storage of beer which was periodically accessed during Hall functions.

A Victorian Bush Nursing Association centre was established on the Hall in June 1914 and a visiting nurse operated from the Hall.

Initially the Hall was lit by candles, then hurricane lanterns and was followed by gas or 'Gloria' lighting in 1911. Electricity from the Noojee hydro plant was connected in 1926 and the State Electricity Commission took over in 1934.

The Hall was an early film screening venue. Firstly, with the projection of magic lantern or limelight slides. Silent movies were provided by promoters Mickie and Jock Wilson and talkies were later screened by the Lawrence Brothers - Alf, Joshua and James, from the early 1930s.

An Honour Roll was unveiled in the Hall on 21 December 1915 which contained the names of forty-six young men 'who had gone from this district to war'.

In the 1930s monthly dances were held in the Hall and patrons were 'trucked' in by: Harry Elston's milk truck from Drouin; Tom Emery's cream truck from Warragul; or the occasional stock truck with a tarpaulin draped over the crate and seats installed. Music for the dances was provided by Mrs Tom Emery and Jack Olsen.

The Hall and Billiard Room burned down in mysterious circumstances on 22 December 1972, around 5.30pm. It was then that the Honour Rolls were destroyed.

The current Hall, built in solid brick, was opened in 1978 and a souvenir *History of the Neerim Junction Hall 1873-1978*, compiled by William Duncan, was launched at the time.

During the 1983 Ash Wednesday Bushfires the Hall was used by the State Emergency Service as a base and also as a refuge centre for people from the Loch Valley and Noojee.

The **Neerim Junction Youth Group**, which was formed in 1984, continue to regularly meet in the Hall as two groups: 8-11 and 12-16 year olds.



The main auditorium of the Neerim Junction Hall is well resourced for any event, with versatile seating and tables, sound, lighting and a large stage.

The Hall is split level, the main hall being on the high end, where the badminton courts are laid out. The rear section, behind the stage, which was constructed in the late 1980s continues under the same roofline, and falls away to form a large auditorium, with toilet and changing facilities. Here squash has been played since the late 1980s. Club members hold keys so they can access the Hall as required. An in-house competition has been conducted over the years.

Also in the late 1980s the entrance was enlarged to become a foyer which can be utilised for meetings and small social functions, such as our lunch.

The various Hall Committees have been in constant fundraising mode since the Institute's inception. Catering over the years: for the annual weekend **Enduro Motorcycle Race** which continued from 1976-2009; the **Annual Neerim Show** at the Recreation Ground; the **Neerim-Nojee Sports**; and other community or special events has enabled the fitout and equipping of a very large commercial kitchen. This is also hired for use by local produce makers.

Annual events in the Hall include: **Function at the Junction**, spread over two nights, when people are invited to sing, dance or whatever before the assembled audience; the **Biennial Mid-Year Goods and Services Auction** of donated goods, the proceeds of which are shared with the **Neerim Junction Primary School**; the **Neerim Flower, Art and Craft Show**; **Mayfair Market**; and the **Family Dance**.

The Hall, with its large resourced stage, provides theatrical staging by way of lighting and sound and is an ideal venue for concerts, conferences, luncheons and dinners. To market these assets the Hall Committee has produced a four colour promotional leaflet '**Consider your Next Function at the Junction...**'

You can follow Neerim Junction Hall activities on Facebook.

Well fed, we moved on to the **Jindivick Mechanics' Hall, Labertouche and District Community Centre** and the **Garfield Picture Theatre** and this part of the Bus Tour will be continued in our next issue.

Travel opens your heart, broaden your mind
and fills your life with stories to tell.

PAULA BENDFELDT

MUSEUMS MEETING AT BENALLA

Following on the *Museum Directory* launch on 4 December 2019 a meeting was convened of representative Museums.



Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum, showing original Benalla Mechanics' Institute building. Photo: home.vicnet.net.au/~benmus/



Double-sided flyer card recently produced by the Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum.

The Benalla Museum is an outstanding example of a Community Museum which is wholly conducted by volunteers and was an excellent and inspirational venue for our meeting.

Benalla was established in 1967 and shortly after commencement it deliberately resolved to specialise in costume, indeed a very difficult and challenging area for exhibition and conservation. Their Museum was first accredited in 1998 and has consistently improved facilities for exhibition and standards of staging.

The Museum holds the priceless blood-stained green cummerbund of Ned Kelly, given to him by a grateful Shelton family, and worn by him at the Glenrowan Siege. The area had association of

the Kelly Gang and the Museum also holds a cell building in which Kelly was held for a time. In addition, the Museum also holds an archive of locally born: New Zealand Prime Minister Michael J Savage; Army medico, Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop; Navy, Captain Hector Waller; and Airforce, Air-Vice-Marshall William Bostock.

The Benalla Museum had produced a double-sided 10cmx21cm card promotional flyer for the occasion. It had cost about \$500 to design and print.

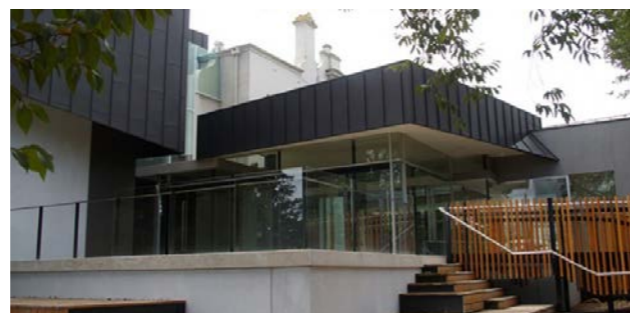
The *Museum Directory* was the first step in promoting and resourcing our member Museums. It was very much a work in progress as members developed logos and slogans for their individual museums. It also hoped to showcase the unique elements of the various museums.

By establishing a Museums Group it was hoped that this would foster communication and even reciprocal promotion by way of perhaps a flyer rack.

Two copies of the *Museum Directory* have been sent to our Museum members, one for the file and one for display in the Museum.

The meeting discussed engagement of our first peoples and the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) document 'First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries' which was downloadable from the website.

Sources of Museum supplies were also identified as being on the AMaGA website and that of Sydney's Powerhouse Museum.



Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, Castella Street, Lilydale. Photo: victorianmuseums.com.au/yarra-ranges-regional-museum

Engagement of volunteers by way of workshops was also canvassed and a future meeting was discussed with a supporting Workshop at Lilydale on 13 June.

In conclusion we must heartily thank the Benalla Historical Society's **Pat Mitchell** (President), **Alan Monger OAM** (Secretary) and **David 'The Legend' Tallis**, and all the Benalla folk who generously hosted us; and to **Sue Ellis** of Absolutely Delicious Catering, Benalla who fed us.

LIBRARY GROUP ACTIVITIES



Over the past year Library Group Chair **Corinne Brewis** and **Judith Dwyer** have been liaising with our ten Library Group members about the development of their projects in anticipation of a further round of Library Grants in 2020-21 and how their previous grants had been expended. Three other Community Libraries with Mechanics' connections were also contacted: **Newstead, Rainbow** and **Toora**.

Image: Library Group Chair Corinne Brewis
Photo: Courtesy of Rob Carew, berwick.starcommunity.com.au

A meeting was convened at Berwick Mechanics' Institute on 20 November 2019 to consider these submissions and develop a strategy and prepare for a meeting with the Minister for Local Government and Mechanics' Institutes, **Hon. Adem Somyurek**.

Also considered as part of the submission was funding for the MIV supporting collection handling, website hosting and administration. Further funding for the MIV's ongoing scanning project was also discussed as were funds for conservation and governance workshops.

It was agreed that the MIV Library Group would endeavour to hold meetings on a quarterly basis in future but if that proved impossible, twice yearly meetings would be organised. These meetings would be an important step towards networking between the libraries and re-establishing better communication.

There was also general discussion on how many small borrowing collections and also remnant collections existed in Victoria and how the holders of these collections can be included in the Library Group.

Finally it was resolved to organise a meeting between Judith Dwyer, Corinne Brewis and Jim Lowden at Prahran to discuss formalising a presentation for the Minister.

That meeting was held at Prahran Mechanics' Institute on 14 January 2020 at which the above named as well as **Steven Haby** and **Rhianan Berkeley**, both of Prahran Mechanics' Institute, were also present.

Progress so far with the proposed funding submission was discussed. More information had been received from MIV libraries and also regarding the scanning project. Work would also continue on the preparation of a detailed submission for the Minister's office.

Discussion took place on the proposal to hold an annual Group Meeting/Governance

Workshop, possibly in Western Victoria in conjunction with a bus tour. Further consultation needs to take place to develop this proposal.

Discussion also took place on a Conservation Workshop (part of the proposed funding submission) which could be held in conjunction with an MIV Library Group meeting.

Other matters canvassed included:

1. Affiliation with **Public Libraries Victoria**. This could be developed between MI libraries and their local Library Corporations to explore benefits on both sides. Berwick MI has an ongoing relationship with Casey Cardinia Libraries which has recently enabled Berwick MI to acquire access to Ancestry.com for its users.
2. The electronic library at Foster was reviewed and also how other libraries could become involved in this type of access.
3. A template for cataloguing was discussed. It might be possible to encourage Institutes to record their remnant and current library collections by providing a template for them to work with.
4. It was resolved to investigate the cost of including remnant collections on Trove by seeking a quotation from Libraries Australia.
5. A meeting time and date with the Hon. Adem Somyurek to be sought.
6. It was suggested the next MIV Library Group meeting could be held in July, with a venue to be arranged.



Since then informal discussion has been held with **Chris Buckingham**, Chair of the Public Libraries Victoria Network, about greater cooperation and involvement. It was suggested that as Prahran

Mechanics' Institute was an Associate Member of PLVN that liaison be through them.

In the meantime it was agreed that our Library Group members should establish a relationship with their Regional Library. They could potentially assist with: book stock, some of which could be less than a year old; computer equipment; library shelving and furniture, etc.; and even access existing subscriptions.

Image: Chris Buckingham, Chair of the Public Libraries Victoria Network
Photo: Courtesy of Victoria Stone-Meadows, pakenham.starcommunity.com.au/gazette

MALDON ATHENAEUM LIBRARY'S NEW ROOM

The Maldon Athenaeum Committee, volunteers and invited guests gathered together in Maldon's **New Room** to celebrate its opening on 1 March 2020 at 2.30pm.

President **Joy Leneaux-Gale** opened proceedings by welcoming guests including: **Maree Edwards**, MLA, Member for Bendigo West; representatives from DELWP, Stoneman Foundation, Maldon & District Community Bank, Readings Foundation, Tarrangower Times, RSL, Presidents of many local Maldon groups and the Castlemaine Pioneers and Old Residents' Association.

Joy then briefly took us through the history of the Athenaeum. On 26 January 1863 twelve men, with no women present, resolved to establish a Mechanics' Institute in Maldon. A public meeting held on 6 March 1863 agreed the body be styled 'The Maldon Athenaeum'. Things then moved rapidly and on completion of the new timber building by contractor John Hornsby, the reading room was opened in January 1864. An early problem was crossing the drain at the front of the building and a 4'6" wide bridge was constructed and it still remains there.



Maldon Athenaeum President, Joy Leneaux-Gale outlining the Athenaeum's history.
Photo: Roslyn Lowden

The remainder of the story is told in the first Minute Book. This was copied in 2015 by John Pollard and the bound facsimile exists in a special case in the Library and the original has been deposited with the State Library of Victoria.

Billiards was introduced around 1908 and caused some concern with neighbours. A fire damaged the Library building in 1933, but most of the books were saved. Another 'suspicious' fire in early 1934 resulted in the building being burned

to the ground along with £50 worth of timber that was on site for the 1933 restitution. The Library however continued to be open via a window front in another building.

Work on a replacement progressed quickly, with a round of fundraising which included a Popular Girl of the Athenaeum Competition, Jumble Sale, Cake Stalls and a Ball. Soon a new brick building was in place and Dr Clive Shields MLA was on hand to open it in late 1934.

The Athenaeum continued to survive into the 1990s when it was opened by a volunteer roster on one afternoon a week. From 1996 this was extended to one hour on Saturdays.

A turning point came in 1999, when the Library had four volunteers and thirty members, and **Frances Clancy** did her Survey of Mechanics' Institute Libraries. Her Report *The Libraries of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria* was launched at the Maldon Athenaeum in 2000. Frances recommended the establishment of a Local and Regional History Collection at Maldon and that continues to grow today.

By 2004 the Library space had been painted, it had some new shelving and it housed some 4000 books. A very substantial Large Print book collection came via Vision Australia and a Children's Room was established and has recently been recarpeted.

Joy pointed out that the local paper The Tarrangower Times has been an ongoing key factor in promoting the Library and today it runs a weekly Book Review column.

Fast forward to 2018 when there were about forty volunteers, four hundred members, some 19,000 books were on the shelves and a computerised borrowing system was in place. The Library space was literally bursting at the seams.

In 2018 a pivotal grant of \$20,000 from the Stoneman Foundation gave the impetus to start the New Room. Local master tradesman **Glenn 'Kinga' Roy** was engaged to work his magic and the New Room became reality, with shelving provided by the Maldon & District Community Bank.

Joy was very keen to point out that neither Government nor Council had contributed funding to the project. Thanks to the cooperation of all, including supportive neighbours, during the building process, the Library was only closed for two days.

Joy then called on author and long-time Maldon resident **Carmel Bird** who had re-located from



Author and Maldon resident, Carmel Bird, unveiling the commemorative plaque in the New Room.
Photo: Roslyn Lowden

Melbourne some years ago. Carmel spoke briefly of her association with the Athenaeum as a place of inspiration 'transforming as a butterfly and spreading its wings'. A place for serenity and reflection.

She then noted another small library, that of the Borroloola Mechanics' Institute on the McArthur River in the Northern Territory, a haven that David Attenborough noted in 1962. Among its literary gems, which once included among its 3000 volume bookstock, were Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* and *The Cantos* of Ezra Pound. Alas the Borroloola Library is no more, having been blown away in a cyclone.

Carmel recalled her early years visiting the Launceston Public Library where books were shelved as: Reference; Childrens and Adults. She borrowed on her father's Library Card illustrated versions of: *Tales of Uncle Remus*; Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol* and *Barnaby Rudge*, with the latter being set in 1780 Gordon Religious Riots.

At aged seven Carmel was issued with her own Library Card and the wonderful world of knowledge was at her own fingertips.

Noting the presence of a copy of Henry Handel Richardson's *Getting of Wisdom*, donated and inscribed by Elizabeth Kobe, it would

be good to think that Ethel Florence's spirit was still present in the Library, which she no doubt frequented during her time in Maldon in the early 1880s.

Carmel then declared 'The New Room open' and drew back the cloth from the New Room's Commemorative Plaque to reveal a list of the people and benefactors who had made it possible.

The assemblage gave three cheers for 'Joy Leneaux-Gale and her Merry Band of Helpers' and heartily sang 'For They are Jolly Good Fellows'. It was then afternoon tea in the glorious Main Room where the sunlight streamed in through the stained glass windows. The volunteers had prepared a large array of savoury, sandwich and sweet treats. These were washed down with a glass or two of bubbly, orange juice or mineral water.

The New Room is yet another substantial milestone in the long history of the Maldon Athenaeum and Public Library, which is a superb example of volunteerism and a caring community.

I sit in my new room and write everything
down. My heart never stops talking.
SUE MONK KIDD (1948-)

Parliamentary Interface



Image: Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Photo: parliament.vic.gov.au

Last year to further our aims to support our Institutional members we continued our contact with various Government Ministers.

We have been in contact with the **Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio**, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, to ascertain if the Solar Panel and Battery Installation Project that has operated very successfully in Gippsland could be rolled out across Victoria. Our latest information was that this is being considered as a forthcoming Budgetary item.

The **Hon. Martin Foley**, Minister for Creative Industries, facilitated the presence of **Danielle Green MLA** at the Launch of our *Museum Directory* at the Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum on 4 December 2020. We have also been seeking a meeting with Minister Foley in connection with: **The Hall with it All** project; a grant round to our Museum members, and other creative arts projects.

Over the years we have had contact with the current Minister for Local Government and Minister for Mechanics' Institutes, who at present is the **Hon. Adem Somyurek**. At short notice, we were offered a meeting on 29 January 2020. MIV was represented at the meeting by: **Corinne Brewis**, Chair of Library Group; **Judith Dwyer**, Chair Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre; and **Jim Lowden**, Hon. Secretary.



Representing Minister Somyurek's office were: **Hannah Wood**, Senior Adviser; **Colin MacDonald**, Senior Program Officer; and **Andrew Clegg**, Senior Manager Capital Programs.

Hannah Wood, Senior Adviser to the Hon. Adem Somyurek, Minister for Local Government and Mechanics' Institutes
Photo: LinkedIn

We canvassed a wide ranging and mostly costed agenda:

1. Equitable Distribution of Council Collected Rates to Institutes (Halls) based on the Wellington Shire Model

2. Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. - Grant supporting Collection building, Website Hosting and Administration
3. Mechanics' Institute Libraries - Round of grants
4. Mechanics' Institutes' Remnant Library Survey - Funding
5. Libraries Group Training Workshop - Funding
6. Record Digitisation of Mechanics' Institutes - Grant for ongoing copying of Institute Records, particularly those in fire-prone areas.
7. Halls as Neighbourhood Safer Places - Solar Panels, Water Storage, Sprinklers and Telecommunications
8. Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. Strategic Plan - Funding of Facilitator

The matter of Stamp Duty on Institute land transfer from Trustees to an Incorporated Association was also raised and we were advised to take it up with **Minister Wynne**, who is responsible for the Land Victoria (Titles) Office. This has been done and it has since been referred to Treasury.

We are most grateful to the work that Corinne and Judith both put in to assembling and preparing comprehensive documentation for this meeting. We were advised a decision on the meeting's outcome would be made after the May Budget.

Following up on a future offer to meet with **Danielle Green MLA**, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria, about our **The Hall With It All** Project, a meeting was held on 19 February 2020 at Parliament House. Her Adviser, **Virginia Wellard** was also present.

The recent horrific bushfires highlighted again: the use of Halls, telecommunication blackspots; power outages; water access; Neighbourhood Safer Places; and limited Hall facilities and resources.

There is a now a demonstrable need to set up a model **The Hall With It All** to showcase items all in one place from: emergency battery storage; defibrillator; satellite telecommunication; security; water storage; and an external sprinkler system.

We also passed on a copy of a letter we had sent to the Community Support Fund about future direct grants to Halls, rather than having to go through local Councils as is presently required, and the past paucity of grants to Halls. We also mentioned the need for a Study of our Museums, much as was done with the Libraries back in 1999.

Since our meeting with Danielle Green, her office has forwarded the details of two grant opportunities.

History Page

LEFROY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

In the last issue of *Useful Knowledge* we ran a story on the Tasmania's now disappeared Lefroy Mechanics' Institute. We left the fate of the building up in the air after 1962. In fact the building was destroyed on Black Tuesday, 7 February 1967 when 'At Lefroy the old Council Chambers were burnt to the ground by a fire which was believed to have been started by children and fanned by gale force northerly winds'.

WHAT PEOPLE READ IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY MECHANICS' INSTITUTES IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

University College Dublin researcher **Dr Sarah Comyn** was in Melbourne in December last year researching at the **Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre**. Sarah was looking for copies of Library Catalogues and borrowing records which we hold.

BLAZE AID CELEBRATES A DECADE

Those who attended the **Regional Halls Forum - We're Listening** at Kilmore in 2014 will remember Blazeaid's **Kevin Butler** and his infectious enthusiasm. Blazeaid celebrated their tenth birthday with an event at Cobden at which both **Kevin** and **Rhonda Butler**, both Order of Australia Medal recipients, were present.

The event was held over the weekend of 1-2 November 2019 and about one hundred people were present on both days. Over the years Halls have been central to a number of Blazeaid's fire and flood recovery projects. We salute this amazing model of ongoing volunteerism and its founders.

AUSTRALIAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTES AND SCHOOLS OF ARTS HISTORY

Pioneer Mechanics' Institute researcher **Joan Beddoe**, and long-time MIV member, has recently generously donated to us a packet of her publication *Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia* published in 2002. Joan travelled extensively throughout Australia to compile this valuable overview of Institutes in Australia. She was particularly interested in those of her home State of Queensland and of South Australia. We

thank Joan for this generous gift. If any Institute would like a copy for their library send us a \$2.20 stamp and we will mail you a copy.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES HISTORY PRIZES 2021

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 districts 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; Masonic Temples; 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.

Project: 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 First Prize is \$1500, 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 on 1 August 2021. Prizewinners will be announced at the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc. Annual General Meeting in September 2021.
6. Entries must reach: Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc, Box 1080, Windsor, Vic 3181 by 1 August 2021.

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 these 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.



Photo: Courtesy Google Earth

ANAKIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1905)

The Hall Committee amalgamated with the Anakie and District Community Group in 2013 to absorb the cost of public risk insurance. The Hall 'Committee' still operates its own accounts and continues to maintain and let the Hall. The Community House conducts a range of classes, activities and services for young and old. They also run the community library. The Community House sounds like a Mechanics' Institute in all but name. www.anakiecommunityhouse.org.au



Photo: Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute

ARTHURS CREEK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1887)

Arthurs Creek was the venue for sessions of CO-LLAB from 24-26 March. The project was delivered by Nillumbik – The Green Wedge Council and supported by Business Victoria. The daily sessions ran from 9am until 5pm and were free and invited people to 'meet new businesses, collaborate locally and explore new ideas' at 'Free pop-up co-working spaces in Nillumbik'. The flyer asked 'Are you tired of working from home and looking for an inspiring space to work for a couple of days a week?' It went on 'With plenty of common areas and spaces to meet and work, CO-LLAB has been designed to help you do great work, in your own way, without the feeling of isolation'. Day 2, 25 March provided a Free Lunch Box learning session 'Sustainability for home based business'. Day 3, concluded with 'Networking drinks and nibbles hosted by the Nillumbik Tourism and Business Association.



Photo: Burke Museum, Beechworth

BEECHWORTH ATHENAEUM BURKE MUSEUM (EST. 1856)

The Burke Museum, in association with Beechworth Historic Precinct, will be staging a novel event during **Heritage Month** titled 'Making Things in Beechworth' on 7 May from 6-9pm. 'The Beechworth and district region has a rich history of innovation and design.' You are invited to join in a panel discussion with leading crafts people, industry members, and local historians as they discuss the past, present and future of making things in Beechworth. Bookings: explorebeechworth.com.au/burke-museum-and-historic-precinct or (03) 5728 8067. Adult \$20; Concession \$15.



Photo: Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum

BENALLA COSTUME AND KELLY MUSEUM (EST. 1967)

This award winning museum has been located in the former Benalla Mechanics' Institute building since 1967. This Museum is currently open seven days a week and houses a Tourist Information Centre and Gift Shop. The Committee is at present putting the finishing touches to architectural drawings to accommodate a building expansion to enable the better display and storage of their collection and provide for visitor amenities. www.home.vicnet.net.au/~benmus/



CASTLEMAINE PIONEERS AND OLD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (EST. 1880)

The Association was formed from a meeting held on 17 March 1880. To celebrate their 140th anniversary the Castlemaine Pioneers and Old Residents' Association staged a major exhibition from 19-22 March in the Castlemaine Town Hall. Titled 'From Horse to Hot Rod', it showcased travel in its various modes. The exhibition opened daily from 10am-4pm.

This was a major project for all concerned and we congratulate them on their enterprise. And a jolly happy birthday to you all on reaching such a landmark. www.castlemaine-pioneers.org



Photo: Christmas Hills Mechanics' Institute

CHRISTMAS HILLS MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1876)

Government has encouraged Institutes to transition from Trustee models to that of an Incorporated Association. However when Christmas Hills achieved that milestone and proceeded with the transition of their freehold land title from the Trustees to the new Incorporated Association they were met with a very hefty Stamp Duty bill. After querying the matter Christmas Hills was told that they would have to pay it. MIV has pursued this matter on their behalf with the responsible Minister. In the meantime if you are looking for a place to hold an event or meeting, Christmas Hills is a quiet and well resourced venue. www.christmashillshall.org.au

EAGLEHAWK MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1868)

Built in 1883, the Eaglehawk Mechanics' Institute was the site of the launch our Travelling Exhibition Remember the Mechanics' by the Hon. Bob Cameron back in 2000.

Recently, following up the remnant libraries which still exist in Mechanics' Institutes, contact was made with **Aylene Kirkwood** of the Eaglehawk Heritage Society. The Eaglehawk Mechanics' Institute Library collection still remains behind locked doors, with the Community Library operating from a room next door. This Library is much used by local residents and is open three days a week and has two public internet computers and WiFi access.



Eaglehawk Heritage Society members Aylene Kirkwood (left) and Elaine Harrington.
Photo: Courtesy Weekly Times, 13 April 2016

One morning, recently, a strange parcel appeared on the Institute's front step. Upon its opening, it was found to contain a framed print of the 1901 Opening of Federal Parliament. This had once hung in the Library. A bit the worse for more than a century of grime, it has however since been restored and now again hangs proudly in the building.



Photo: Fawcett Hall

FAWCETT HALL & PUBLIC LIBRARY (EST. 1882)

In an area not uncommon to bushfires, but thankfully not in very recent times, the Fawcett folk have offered tangible support to those that were impacted. They recently conducted two major fundraisers. The Bushfire Appeal Event of 6 February 2020 featured **Jenny Biddle** supported by **Steve Paix**. The second **This Way North and The Tuckshop Ladies** with 'It's a Long Way to the Shop' in the evening of 22 February at 6pm. Both events were deservedly well attended. www.fawcetthall.org.au



FOOTSCRAY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1854)

After the recent completion of the renovation of the Reading Room, the Committee of the Footscray Mechanics' Institute decided to embark on another huge renovation task – that of the historic Snooker and Billiards Room located above the Library.

The ravages of time had taken their toll and after the removal of the asbestos several years ago and completing some serious roof-related repairs, the time seemed right to start another project. Under the direction and energy of Institute President, **Neville Balfour**, the members contributed to the work like a well oiled team during working bees. They stripped back the layers of paint and grime in this very worthwhile labour of love. The results of the Reading Room inspired us to remove the 1960s paint from all the woodwork, the windows being especially tedious as each bay had thirty-two window panes to be stripped. The historic objects uncovered and rediscovered will have rejuvenation – like the scoreboard which has seen many famous FMI names noted over its lifetime. A new fireplace is planned, as well as the original outer seats being revamped.



Ladders and scaffold in place in the Snooker and Billiards Room during recent renovations.

Photo: Footscray Mechanics' Institute

The beautiful ambience and history of the Snooker Room will be retained and it is planned that this highly valued and wonderful nod to the past will serve our members and friends for many years to come. www.footscraymechanicsinstitute.org.au
(Contributed by Liz Balfour, Secretary, Footscray Mechanics' Institute)



GARVOC HALL (EST. 1889)

We note the preamble to the very recent announcement by the Minister for Regional Development the **Hon. Jaclyn Symes** of a grant of \$400,000 to develop a Community Hub based on the Garvoc Hall. It is being funded from the Government's \$2.6 billion Regional Infrastructure Fund announced in the 2019 Budget.

'The Garvoc Hall became a pivotal centre for relief and support efforts including the provision of meals, supplies and information for local residents during the 2018 St Patrick's Day fires. The very limited existing Hall amenities were significantly stretched and it quickly became evident that facilities did not adequately meet community or user needs.'

'The Hub will provide facilities including a meeting space for community events, the Garvoc CFA and Garvoc Residents Group, as well as providing appropriate amenities for in-venue Family Day Care services to be managed by Moyne Shire Council.'

The Garvoc Hall was established in 1889 as the Garvoc Mechanics' Institute and has been maintained by the community down through the years. The Hall abuts the Recreation Reserve which hosts tennis and other sporting facilities. Both are managed by the Garvoc District Residents Incorporated.



Lilydale Athenaeum, the home of the award-winning Athenaeum Theatre Company.

Photo: Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre

LILYDALE ATHENAEUM (EST. 1881)

The award winning Athenaeum Theatre Company have launched their 2020 Season during March with Simon Beaufoy's play **The Full Monty**, which is based on the 1997 film of the same name. **Still Alice** runs during May and June. This is based on Lisa Genova's book of Alice Howland's heartbreaking journey into dementia.

In August-September is Elizabeth Coleman's Australian comedy **This Way Up** which premiered in Melbourne in 2001 and tells the story 'about love gone wrong'. Elizabeth has recently produced the screenplays for 'Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries'. The Season concludes in November with an adaptation of Agatha Christie's 1925 short story **Witness for the Prosecution**. The case of murder against opportunist Leonard Vole appears to be overwhelming, and he faces the hangman's noose unless he can convince the jury of his innocence. 'This suspenseful thriller keeps audiences guessing until the very end'.

Season tickets are available for either afternoon or evening performances staged in the ambience of one of the best restored small theatre spaces. www.lilydaleatc.com

MALDON ATHENAEUM LIBRARY (EST. 1863)

The last time that I sent you any news was in 2018 when we were just getting the preliminaries in place for permits, etc., for the proposed New Room. I am delighted to say that during the last year (2019) the building started and progressed very well and the room is finished and was ready for occupation in November. It is truly a marvellous addition to the building and people have said that it really transforms what was a great

building into a superb one. **Glenn 'Kinga' Roy**, a local builder, with a great eye for historical detail did the work and the standard and finish are first rate. The Official Opening will be on Sunday, March 1st. Local author **Carmel Bird** will do the 'opening speech'. When it is considered that this room has been built and furnished with no help at all from Local, State or Federal Governments, it's quite an achievement and the people of Maldon are justly proud of it. www.maldonlibrary.org.au

(Contributed by Joy Leneaux-Gale, President, Maldon Athenaeum Library)



Photo: Maldon Athenaeum Library



Photo: www.rokebymarket.org.au

ROKEBY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1914)

The Rokeby Common has been the venue for the local market for over thirty-five years, and continues to be a fixture in the calendar of many between the months of September to May, with a hiatus over the winter months.

Vendors have a range of produce for the family table, with fresh baked goods, excellent local vegetables, eggs, orchard fruit and incredible coffee.

The garden gets a look-in too, with the market selling an enormous range of plants, including shrubs, succulents, hanging baskets, indoor

varieties and advanced trees.

The 'Make it, bake it, grow it, breed it' gives customers the opportunity to purchase goods straight from the vendor's farm, barn or craft room, adding to a more unique consumer experience.

Keep the second Saturday of every month free, put it in your diary and join us at Rokeby Common for the local market. Or if you have 'Make it, bake it, grow it, breed it' products, we would love to hear from you! www.rokebymarket.org.au

(Contributed by Kate Hill, Rokeby Market Coordinator)

SHEEP HILLS MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1887)



Photo: Pam Baragwanath

Located at the cross-roads of a small rail-based Wimmera village, the Hall was not seen by many visitors down through the years. However since the painting of the nearby silos and their addition to the **Silo Art Trail** there has been a lot of traffic past the door. The Sheep Hills silo complex was built in 1938. Recently they were painted by artist **Matt Adnate** to depict members of the Wergaia and Wotjobaluk indigenous communities.

STANLEY ATHENAEUM AND PUBLIC ROOM (EST. 1863)



Photo: www.explorebeechworth.com.au

International Women's Day

To celebrate International Women's Day, a selection of panels from the Stanley Athenaeum's award-winning exhibition *C19th Women: Hearts of Gold and Minds of Mettle* will be showing during the month of March at Beechworth Library, Ford Street, Beechworth. A launch with a speaker will be held on Saturday, 7th March 2020. As an added attraction, the fascinating new panel titled *Hot Tubs, Haberdashery and Hats: The Fabric of Stanley Society* will also be on display. A 'not to miss' event.

Saluting Our Service Commemorations Program

The Friends of the Athenaeum have been successful in receiving a grant from the Saluting Our Service Commemorations Program for the restoration and relocation of the Stanley State School and Hurdle Flat State Schools Honour Boards to a new position in the Stanley Memorial Hall. After the Hurdle Flat State School closed in 1917, both boards were formerly displayed at the Stanley State School until recent times. The project will include a display about Stanley's contribution to the First World War and stories of the men and women whose names are on the Honour Boards.

'Fire on the Plateau: A History of Fire and Its Management in Stanley' Exhibition

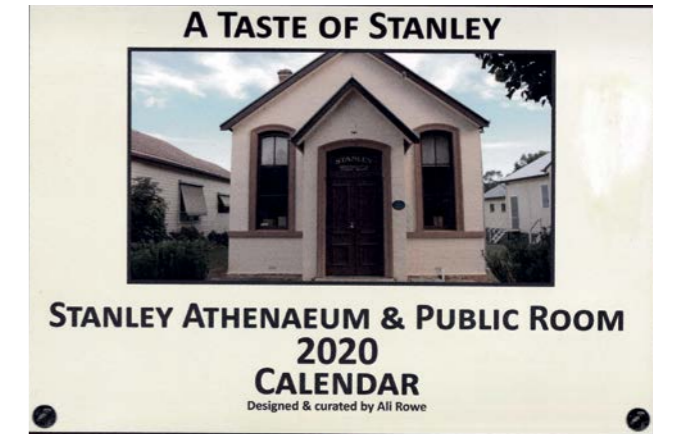
The Stanley Athenaeum's current exhibition *Fire on the Plateau*, has been of the moment with catastrophic weather conditions and the bushfires in all States of Australia. The exhibition, which opened in May 2019, commemorates ten years since the bushfires in Stanley in 2009.

Fire on the Plateau documents how bushfires affect communities. Especially in the aftermath, and how Governments and local regions change and plan for subsequent 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 MA** who designed the interpretative 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 Stanley Landcare and the Spring Ditch and Wetlands Committee.

Showing until April 2020, you can visit the exhibition at the Stanley Athenaeum and Public

Room, Main Street, Stanley. It is open every Friday and the 4th Saturday of each month from 10am to 12.30pm or by appointment, contact 0458 606 922 or 03 5728 6702



A Taste of Stanley

In time for the new calendar year, the Stanley Athenaeum produced a novel calendar featuring a local recipe for each month. Each month also features historic photos from the Stanley Athenaeum Collection and an advert for the sponsor of that month. It also carries public holidays, key dates and meeting dates for Friends of Stanley Athenaeum and Stanley Hall and Athenaeum Committee. Produced in colour on laminated board this calendar will be a collector's item in the future. They cost \$20 each and \$5 to post.

www.mivic.org.au/stanley.html

(Contributed by Chris Dormer, Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room)



Photo: tolmietimes.com/hall-sportsground/

TOLMIE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1888)

The Tolmie community staged the annual 134th Tolmie Sports in February. The Hall Committee is planning the centenary celebration of the

building of their current Hall. They are presently selling pavers for insertion in the Centenary Path that will be laid in front of the Hall. They will be staging a series of major events in July to celebrate their centennial milestone. www.tolmietimes.com/hall-sportsground/



Photo: walhallaboard.org.au

WALHALLA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1865)

Featured in the *Royal Auto Club of Victoria's Magazine* for December 2019-January 2020 was an article 'Valley of the Ghosts'. The cover story features a photo by **Anne Morley** looking down from the hill towards the Mechanics' Institute. Now in its third incarnation, the Institute is central to the small remnant community, which in its heyday had 3500 residents and ten pubs. Indeed what stories could be told if the Institute walls, in their several reincarnations, could speak! www.walhallaboard.org.au



Photo: warrandytehallarts.asn.au

WARRANTYTE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1882)

Warrandyte's Repair Cafes, which started in July, have been ongoing with monthly happenings, attracting between 30-40 visitors

per session. The Repair Café convenes on the first Sunday of each month between 10-30am-12.30pm.

Warrandyte's monthly magazine *The Artful Dodger* went to electronic only from February 2020. It showcases the activities of the art, craft, music, pottery and theatre groups that operate around the Institute.

Again the Warrandyte Theatre Company picked up a swag of nominations for the Annual Lyrebird Awards. Shows scheduled for 2020 include: **Calendar Girls; Love Letters; Love/Sick;** and the **2020 Visionary Follies.** www.warrandytehallarts.asn.au



Presently undergoing a major restoration program, then Williamstown Mechanics' Institute is believed to be the only Institute that still has its Librarian/Caretaker's Cottage still standing.

Photo: Hobsons Bay Council

WILLIAMSTOWN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1856)

'Described as a bright light in the waste of darkness around', the Institute was built in 1860 to a design by John Flannagan. Since then there has been a two-storey wing added in 1869, with further additions in 1880 and 1890. The Institute continued to operate until 1963 when it was taken over by Council.

The Williamstown Historical Society opened their Museum in the building in the late 1950s and has been progressively accumulating a significant collection of artifacts and research materials.

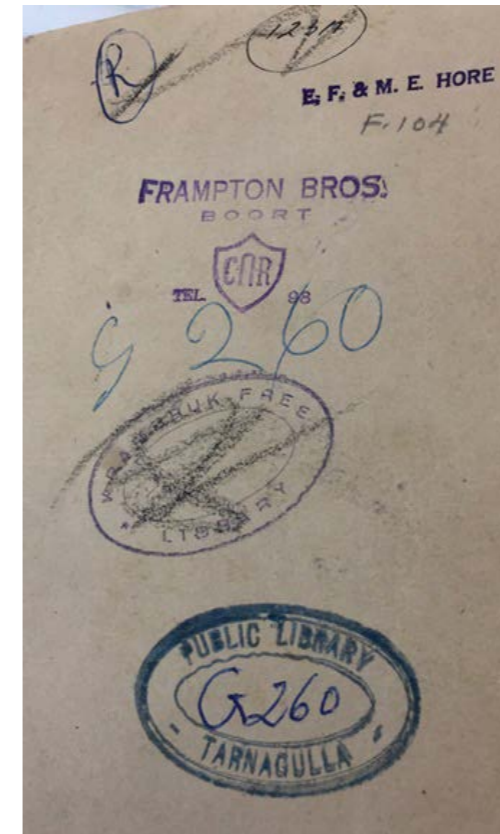
In more recent times the building has also been home to the Williamstown Theatre Company and Williamstown Film Society. The Theatre was equipped with a lighting rig and full audio visual facilities. It has also been hired for various community and private uses.

Now managed by Hobsons Bay Council the building has been closed since February 2018 to allow for a \$5.8 million refurbishment. Significant work is also being undertaken on the historic caretaker's cottage. It is expected to open again for use in 2021.

TARNAGULLA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE LIBRARY REMNANT



In November last year long-time MIV member **George Swinburne** was back in the old family haunt of Tarnagulla, where he found the old family home, and once office of the *Tarnagulla Courier* newspaper, was up for sale.



This book carries the rubberstamps of EF & ME Hore; Frampton Bros, Boort, agents for COR (Commonwealth Oil Refineries) fuel; Krambruk (Apollo Bay) Free Library; and Tarnagulla Public Library.

We quote from George's email: It was exciting to find a trove of ex-Tarnagulla Mechanics' Institute Library books. Many were sourced from other libraries all around the State. I remember being in Tarnagulla in the early 1950s and what later became known as Burstall Hall, but still had Mechanics' Institute on the window in the photographs. In one room the shelves were lined with books, but I remember many were water damaged and apparently insects had attacked many more. It meant nothing to me then'.

George also sent us several photographic images of the library stamps and bookplates, some of which illustrate this article.



The Variety Library Service of Thornbury operated post-World War II into the 1950s. The Redan Book Club of Ballarat appears to have operated from the mid-1950s into the 1960s.

However a remnant of around 200 books has survived and is now held by the Archive Centre and is being stored in the Tarnagulla Public Hall. This building started out as the Victoria Hotel, built in 1861-62 for George Barlow. It had a theatre attached which is claimed to be 'the oldest known purpose-built theatre attached to a hotel building in Australia' and still retains the timber sloping stage and high coved plaster ceiling.. It remained in hotel use until 1916.

And what of the Tarnagulla Mechanics' Institute? It first built its own premises in 1867, which appear to have been extended down through the years. A legacy was received from Harry Bousefield Burstall in 1960 for £400 and at that time the second storey was removed from the building and it was re-named Burstall Hall. It came into the ownership of Council seemingly around that time and they moved for its demolition in about 1980.

OTHER MECHANICS' INSTITUTE REMANENT LIBRARIES

The discovery of the quantity of books at Tarnagulla led us to compile a list of remnant Institute libraries that appear to still exist. Some are held by other Institutes, Public Libraries or are in storage. Collections range in size from a few books to several thousand. In all they represent some 40,000 volumes. A sampling shows some interesting finds of considerable age that had been donated to Institutes by subscribers or former subscribers.

Four notable remnant libraries that still exist in their original rooms are at: Briagolong; Digby; Eaglehawk; and Stanley.

Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre

BOOK COLLECTION

Members and researchers are advised that a growing collection of monographs about Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts is available for viewing and reading at Prahran Mechanics' Institute. A printed guide tells what is available. (Prahran Mechanics' Institute could be closed due to coronavirus precautionary measures. Please phone ahead.)



Recent additions include a gifted set of publications from the Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution:

Louise Cochrane, with additional material by Charles Burnett, *Adelard of Bath: The First English Scientist* (2013).

Jude Harris, ed., *The Journal of Edmund Rack: An Enlightenment Gentleman's Observations of Georgian Bath* (2018).

David McLaughlin and Michael Gray, *Shadows and Light: Bath in Camera 1849-1861 – Early Rare Photographs. Calotypes by the Rev. Francis Lockey, LLD 1796-1869* (1989).

Rob Randall and Jude Harris, eds, *Adventures of a Merchant Banker: The life and exploits of William Herbert Vacher, tea merchant in Shanghai during the Second Opium War and first London agent for the HSBC, dismissed after a major scandal involving misuse of the Bank's funds* (2013).

Jane Sparrow-Niang, *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* (2014).

Jane Sparrow-Niang, ed., *Bath's Extraordinary Women: A guide to women who have lived in or have visited the city of Bath through 1000 years of its history* (2020).

Jane Sparrow-Niang, *The Remarkable Miss Breton: Artist, Archaeologist, Traveller* (2017).

Elizabeth M Vincent, *BRLSI Revealed: Its Times, Its People, Its Possessions: A Short History of The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution* (2019).

Julian Vincent and Jude Harris, eds, *Mr Pinch's Well: The sad story of how Mr Pinch, the brewer, inadvertently jeopardized the flow of hot water to Bath's famous hot baths* (2012).

Ian Wallace, ed., *Leonard Jenyns: Darwin's Lifelong Friend* (2005).

Peter Wallis, ed., *Innovation and Discovery: Bath and the Rise of Science* (2008).

John Whiteley, Julian Vincent, with additional material by Elizabeth Vincent, *Saving the Dodo: The good works of the 'Brothers Duncan' in Oxford and Bath. How two brothers transformed an antiquated museum of curiosities into the forerunner of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum* (2015).

Walking Tour Maps: *Walk with Adelard; Queen Square Tree Trail; The Tree Gazing Trail; The BRLSI Science Trail*.

SCANNING

Scanning of records continues apace with a number from Gippsland currently in line for completion. If you would like to have your records digitised, you keep the originals and get a disk, and MIV archives a copy. There is no cost, thanks to Government and philanthropic funding. Inquiries: jad134@hotmail.com

PLAQUES

An MIV Commemorative Plaque is ideal to recognise a milestone or just add information to the exterior of your building for passing public interest. Plaques are \$195 for MIV members and \$250 for Non-Members. Inquiries: jad134@hotmail.com



Mount Egerton Mechanics' Institute that is shortly to have MIV Commemorative Plaque No. 65 installed. Photo: www.artsatlas.com.au

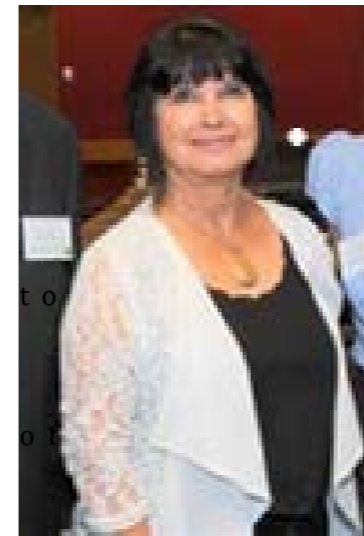
RESOURCES

The MIRC holds, in addition a treasure-house of Mechanics' Institute history, a host of information ranging from catering equipment supplies, insurance, event planning, etc.



SYDNEY MECHANICS' SCHOOL OF ARTS

In keeping with its slogan 'Making a Difference Through Learning' the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts launched The SMSA News Letter on 31 January 2020, as Volume 1, Issue 1. It carried the invitation to 'Enjoy the first edition of the School's newsletter that will keep you informed about happenings at the School, delve into its rich past and let you know about future plans'. Inside this issue were: President's Message; The Way We Were; Talks and Events; and in the Library.



President **Winsome Allen** leads off with comment on the catastrophic bushfires in Eastern Australia and notes the School donated the Red Cross Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund and the universal wish from us all 'that those who lost their homes and those who lost their

livelihoods will benefit from the overwhelming generosity of so many Australians.

Notice of a progressive upgrade of the School's building was given, with works to start on the ground floor and then be addressed in priority. 'An exciting range of events and activities' for 2020 was foreshadowed.

In 'The Way We Were' it detailed how the SMSA had been set up in 1833 under President Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales. It was temporarily housed in the former residence of The Principal Superintendent of Police on Church Hill, Sydney. Lectures became so popular that a movable scaffold for seating 120 people was constructed.

Events scheduled at the SMSA for February included lectures of: **David Hush** on the violin solos of Johann Sebastian Bach; **Walter Mason** on the works of pulp fiction writer Edgar Wallace; and **Opera Bites** with a recital featuring examples of opera through the ages.

In the Library there are now 32,000 volumes, with access to a growing collection e-books,

e-magazines and more recently e-movies through Beamafilm. The Tom Keneally Centre Collection and the School's Mystery and Crime Collection are now catalogued online with Trove, via Libraries Australia and help was available for those who wanted to use on-line based items.

The 2020 Annual General Meeting was held on 10 March 2020. **Winsome Allen**, being unopposed, was re-elected as President. **Paul Reid** and **Alister Wong** were again elected to the Board, after both having had a rest from the Board for a time. These replaced **Max Williams**, who had been a Board Member since 2013, and latterly as Treasurer and **Mark Brandon**, who had been on the Board since 2017, and Vice-President. Both had resigned prior to the AGM.

Secretary **Brian Johnston** stepped down in November 2019 and his position was temporarily filled by **Bruce Ramage**. The appointment of new Secretary **Max Bosotto** was recently confirmed at the AGM.

The School's four existing Committees: Building; Library and Membership; Strategic Planning and Governance; and Finance, was joined by a new Committee styled 'Innovation and Programs'.

This new Committee was formed to further develop, in conjunction with the events manager, the School's annual program and to focus on the SMSA's 200th anniversary in 2033. Each year leading up to this significant event the Committee will oversee research into and deliver lectures exploring the School's history and heritage.



Dr Lesley Scanlon, SMSA Vice-President, Chair of their Innovations and Programs Committee, and Coordinator of the 'Towards 200' anniversary for the School, is to launch the latter with a lecture series '**On the Shoulders of Giants**'. Lecture No. 1 being 'Henry Carmichael – Educational Progressive, Social Reformer, Secularist and Winegrower' which is to be delivered on a date to be announced.

The Wonderful World of Mechanics' Institutes

AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

BOBIN SCHOOL OF ARTS (EST. 1921)



Bobin School Arts, depicting Peter Schouten's mural of the black glossy cockatoo. Photo: <https://www.winghamchronicle.com.au>

Bobin is located in the Mid North Coast region of NSW, 330km north of Sydney. Numerous homes and the Bobin Public School were burned during the 8 November 2019 bushfire.

Early community meetings were held in the Bobin Presbyterian Church Hall built in 1906. Consequently it was not until a meeting in May 1921 that it was resolved to build a public hall on the Reserve near the Bobin Public School. By August 1921 some £200 was in hand for the proposed 60ft x 25ft building.

Fundraising continued and eventually the Hall was officially opened in August 1922, with a Sports Day in the afternoon and a Ball in the evening. It was noted over £80 was taken during the day's activities.

In July 1925 Wingham entrepreneur Frederick Lagettie installed an electric lighting plant at the Bobin Hall for screening films. Lagettie allowed the Hall Committee the use of the plant when other entertainments were held, so the Bobin Hall had electric light in 1925.

In June 1928 a well attended meeting decided to hold a race meeting in Mr Hemingway's paddock in aid of the piano fund.

Private Stanley George 'Stan' Hoad, the first person from the district to enlist in World War II, came home on leave for Christmas 1939. He had been in training with Tank Corps at Ingleburn and the locals gave him 'a farewell' in the Hall where

he was presented with a wallet of notes and wristlet watch.

Formed in 1940, the Bobin Junior Farmers' Club held their first Show in the Hall grounds on 9 May 1941 and this was followed by a dance in the evening. The 'Bryant's 6d Bus' brought out people from Wingham. However it was not until March 1944, that their 'highly successful' Second Annual Show was held.

In 1943 the local community also recognised the War service of Sheila Horan of the Australian Women's Army Service, also home on leave, as was the first woman to enlist from the district. She was accorded a hasty 'welcome home' in the Hall, with a social dance. During the evening she was presented with a cheque and the assembled sang 'For She's a Jolly Good Fellow'.

Bobin-born Private Percy Towns 'Pat' Green was welcomed home on 16 February 1944 with a dance in the Hall. Private Green had been captured in Greece and had been a Prisoner of War for 2.5 years in Germany.

A novel Gift Evening and Dance was held in the Hall in January 1948 for the recently married Mr Sid and Mrs Rita Green. Later in the same year the 'Invasion of Bobin' took place in the form of the Great Gospel Rally which was organised by the Church of Christ in the Hall. A bus 'loaded to capacity' had come from Wingham and boosted local numbers. A projector powered by car battery threw the words of the hymns on to a screen and these 'were sung in very hearty way'. In September 1951 a permit was granted to screen films in the Hall.

Faced with a down-at-heel Hall around 2000 the local community realised the need for a Hall makeover and progressively set to work to make it happen with fundraising and grant applications. Painting was eventually completed both inside and out. The kitchen had a refit as did the toilets.

In November 2017 the Hall launched its new logo featuring the endangered black glossy cockatoo which was painted by local wildlife artist Peter Schouten AM. A blackboard outside the Hall was also launched around that time to advertise coming events in the Hall.

Based on the commercial kitchen, The Arts Caf is a feature of events held inside the Hall and the Gatherings, Markets and Swap Meets staged

outside the Hall.

Local MP Stephen Bromhead visited the Hall in October 2018 and announced a grant of \$32,000 from the Crown Reserves Improvement Fund for the Hall Committee.

After the devastating 2019 fire, when the Hall was saved, Peter Schouten said the fire 'heralded a new beginning for the community. Anything in the past, just leave in the past. It's a new start now'.

Friday nights at the Hall are still a feature of community life, where the 'Mayor of Bobin', Ronnie Miller, is available to share a story or three.

QUEENSLAND

MARYBOROUGH SCHOOL OF ARTS (EST. 1860)



Maryborough School of Arts, now home to the Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

Photo: Mattinbgn available at wikipedia.org/wiki/Maryborough_School_of_Arts#/media/File:MaryboroughSchoolOfArts.JPG under CC BY-SA 3.0

Located 250km north of Brisbane, the coastal settlement of Marybrough grew up around the Mary River where wharves were established in 1847 to ship wool from the Burnett River region. It was proclaimed a municipality in 1861 and a city in 1905. It became a significant passenger, freight and shipbuilding centre.

The Maryborough School of Arts was established in June 1860. In January 1861 the Government advised it had granted a two rood site and the foundation stone of the Institute was laid in February 1861 by Gilbert Elliott, MLA. The substantial brick building was officially opened on 10 October 1861.

The passing of the *Maryborough School of Arts Land Sale Act* in 1884 meant it could sell a portion of its site to finance a new larger building. The Committee launched a design competition for a new Institute and that of Melbourne-based John Harry Grainger was accepted in November 1886.

In March 1887 the contract was awarded to Jacob and John Rooney at a cost £3,500 and Institute President T Dickens laid the foundation stone in June 1887, with full Masonic honours. At the time it was noted that the Institute had a library of 5482 volumes and 306 subscribers, of which 51 were minors. The imposing two-storey rendered brick building was opened on 21 May 1888, with the Library on the ground floor.

In 1888 local benefactor Janet Melville bequeathed £500 to establish a museum. Glass cabinets were purchased and fixed in the foyer and reading room. In these a substantial collection of timber and mineral samples were exhibited, along with taxidermied specimens. Paintings were hung on the walls.

The Institute received a Government grant of £2,500 in 1890 to establish technical classes in art and science and these soon commenced. By 1895 their popularity required more space and the timber classroom at the rear of the building was completed in June 1895.

A Recreation Club was organised around 1904 and billiard tables were installed in one of the timber rooms and this was also used as the smoking room. The Reference Library was then established on the first floor.

The Maryborough Technical College became a separate entity in 1910, but remained in the School of Arts building until 1936. Although it had been greatly enlarged by the purchase of the Old Town Hall in 1908.

The building went on to house various offices: the Country Women's Association; and Grammarians Recreation Club. During World War II it was requisitioned for the Australian Comforts Fund and extra bathrooms were built. It also served as an RAAF Club for personnel from the nearby Maryborough RAAF base.

Post-War the various local tenancies continued until 1949 when the Australian Broadcasting Commission and a branch of the Engineering Section of the Post Master General's Department moved into first floor. Brisbane architects Hennessy and Hennessy designed broadcast studios and the ABC established a radio station there. The verandah was enclosed at this time to accommodate PMG offices.

The *Libraries Act* of 1943 had provision for the establishment of Municipal libraries. However it was not until 1972 that agreement was reached with Council and the Institute Committee to take over the building and library. The Committee continued to operate the library until May 1977 when the Municipal Library opened.

The Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, established in 1955, then remained as the sole tenant of the building and Council gave them a forty year lease, and are still in occupancy. The building was added to the Queensland Heritage Register on 21 October 1992.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

PENOLA MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1862)



Penola Mechanics' Institute, 2018.

Photo: Joeline Hancock.

Four prominent towns close to the South Australian border with Victoria – Bordertown, Naracoorte, Penola and Mount Gambier – had established Mechanics' Institutes well before the turn of the 20th century. Both Naracoorte and Mount Gambier affiliated with the SA government-funded Institute Association in 1864, Penola the year before, and Bordertown in 1875. All four made invaluable contributions to the early intellectual and social life of those towns through their libraries, public meetings and social activities. All four have left legacies of handsome buildings still used by their communities.

Penola, the first of these four, began its move for a public library and mechanics' institute in December 1862 when nine men called a public meeting in the local schoolroom. By March, premises for a reading-room had been rented and in April the first lecture for the Institute was delivered on *The Advantages of Mechanics' Institutes*. With 50 subscribers the Institute lost no time in affiliating with the Institute Association in Adelaide. In its second year it spent £5.5s on a set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and had a library of 621 books. At first its reading-room was open only on Saturdays, but soon its members had access to it every weekday from 1 to 10pm as well as 2 to 10 on Saturdays.

A building fund was opened in 1866 and three

years later a tender of £683 was accepted for a hall 50 by 20ft with a library 25 by 18ft. Plenty of land was left for future additions. A few months later the town took a half-day holiday for laying the foundation stone and for the procession that preceded it. A banner proclaiming *KNOWLEDGE IS POWER* led off, followed by the local amateur band, students with banners from the school, the grand banner of the Order of Foresters and their members, the contractor carrying the plans, a librarian carrying a scroll, workmen, the building committee, trustees, Freemasons and finally the general public – about 400 in all.

In the first five years the Institute organised three or four lectures each year, began a museum, built up the library and was the venue for many activities such as a five-day bazaar, Amateur Christy Minstrel performances, Penola Dramatic Society activities and Lodge banquets. In the 1870s readings and music were the fare of the day, with lectures on Byron and Burns drawing attendances of up to 180.

In 1885 a new reading-room and chess room were added. Membership increased to a high of 98 in 1887. By 1895 the library, with 5,200 books, had the second largest bookstock out of Adelaide and by 1900 the reading-room was open from 10am to 10pm daily and used each day by an average of 40 people. Occasional lectures on topics such as *Astronomy*, *Exploration in Palestine* and *Fruitgrowing in New Zealand* and on different authors drew audiences of 30 to 100. Through the 1920s and 1930s the Institute hall was a popular venue for picture shows, balls, exhibitions, celebrations, fetes and competitions.

In 1938 the Institute Committee explored the possibility of the district council taking over the Institute building and from 1945 there were moves to replace the Institute with a combined 'Institute Town Hall' that could house the library and the district council as well as provide rooms for the CWA and a Mothers and Babies Centre. However, the estimated cost of at least £16,000 proved prohibitive. Social and fundraising events continued through the 1950s despite the hall being labelled "the second worst Institute building in the state".

In 1962 the Institute Committee's offer of its land and building to the district council for £300 was not accepted and the hall was closed until 1969, when the council finally obtained the titles to the Institute hall and restored the building. Further renovations and additions were made in 1975 when the Penola and District Youth and Community Centre was established to provide for the 'mental,

moral, social, physical and material wellbeing' of the Penola young people and community in general.

The Institute Library remained open throughout this time but in 1978 when the Education Department was negotiating for school community libraries, the Penola Institute Committee supported the development of the Penola School Community Library at Penola High School.

The Institute Library finally closed on 29 May 1981 and the Institute building became the John Riddoch Information Centre - for visitor and local history information and displays. John Riddoch was an early mover and shaker who supported local industries, the birth of the Penola Institute and the local council, and also represented the area as an MP.

In 1989 the Penola Public Library and Mechanics Institute was registered as one of the eight State Heritage buildings in the area. The Penola branch of the National Trust now looks after its buildings so well that for a number of years it has won several Keep South Australia Beautiful (KESAB) awards.

(Contributed by Joeline Hancock, Researcher, Adelaide)

TASMANIA

BEACONSFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY & INSTITUTE (EST. 1885)



Beaconsfield Public Library and Institute, c1900.

Photo: Courtesy of Prue McCausland

Beaconsfield, about 40 kilometres north of Launceston in Tasmania, is a gold mining town. It grew up around the gold reef discovered in 1877, in a farming area previously known as Brandy Creek.

In 1881 a Debating and Mutual Improvement Society was formed with 130 members and it promised "to lead up to a Mechanics' Institute ere

long". On 29 October 1884 the *Launceston Examiner* reported that the first quarterly general meeting of the Beaconsfield Public Library and Reading Room would be held in the Alfred Hall on 30 October, so it seems it had been established in June or July of that year. The Library was in rooms connected with the Alfred Hall and also included a gymnasium.

On 13 November 1884 the *Launceston Examiner* reported "On Wednesday evening a meeting of the committee of the Beaconsfield public library was held. Mr. James Crawford occupied the chair. From the report of the secretary it appears that the cash receipts for the last three months amounted to £29 8s. This sum included subscriptions - principally from the Tasmania Company's employees £13 19s 6d; collection in the Wesleyan Church during Mr. M. Burnett's mission £1 19s 1d; members' subscriptions £10 6s 6d. Books had also been received, of the estimated value of £15. The expenditure amounted to £28 4s 3d, leaving a credit balance of £13s 9d. Mr. J. Crawford was again appointed president, and Dr Mathieson vice-president. The Committee has been strengthened by the addition of many of the leading residents. The expenses will be less during the current quarter on account of the diminished consumption of oil and firewood."

On 12 December 1885 it was reported that the Beaconsfield Public Library had undergone considerable improvements.

By Easter 1887 the Library was languishing, one of the problems being the disruptive noise associated with being connected to the Alfred Hall. Especially mentioned was noise associated with gatherings of the Salvation Army! By May 1887, however, it was reported that "the Committee have completed the purchase of Mr James Barnes' property and intend to make alterations." By 16 July the Library had moved to the new premises adjoining Mr Woodman's warehouse.

Requests for funds to mining companies and fundraising bazaars seem to have kept the Library afloat but by the AGM in May 1896, there was a debit balance owed to the National Bank of over £50.

A report of a meeting of the Beaconsfield Town Board in the *Launceston Examiner* on 10 September 1902 noted that correspondence from the Trustees of the Public Library had been received granting permission for the Board to take over should they desire to do so. It is presumed that the Library must have closed soon after this time.

(Contributed by Prue McCausland, Friends of the *Launceston Mechanics' Institute*)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BOOLADING HALL (EST. 1905)

Located about 220km south-east of Perth, on the Coalfields Highway, the area was settled by William Gibbs and his family in 1866. Originally known as Boolading, but latterly also known as Bulading.

In November 1905 a meeting of residents of the surrounding district was held at 'Boolading', 'to discuss the ways and means to have a hall erected'. However it was not until September 1915 that the Hall was opened on the 'Ballading' Recreation Ground and was celebrated with a dance which continued until 3am. It was stated that the 18ft wide and 30ft long Hall had been erected by the local [Darkan] Rifle Club which had been formed in 1907.

On 13 July 1917 'The little hall at Boolading was the scene of a happy gathering on the evening of the 13th inst, the occasion being the send off to Miss Mitchell, the school teacher, who is leaving the district to enter college. Later in 1917 'a very enjoyable social and dance was held in the Boolading Hall on 30 November in aid of the Returned Soldiers' Fund and about £7 was taken at the door'.

'A very popular wedding' took place in the Hall on 2 March 1921 'when Miss Charlotte Gibbs... was united in the holy bonds of matrimony with to Mr JH [Joseph Henry] Steddy, late Sergeant of the 28th Battalion AIF. The Rev. W Cotterall of Collie officiated. The reception was held at Boolading House the residence of the bride's parents Mr and Mrs William Gibbs.

The Darkan Rifle Club held their Annual Dinner in the Hall in May 1922. The Cup, donated by the late W Gibbs a former Club Captain, was presented to TH Gibbs. Medals were presented to: TH Gibbs, C James, J Spencer and J Wunnenberg. After the prizes were given and speeches made the Hall was cleared for dancing. Supper was served at midnight and dancing went on 'until two or three o'clock'. The Rifle Club held their 25th annual dinner in the Hall in March 1932 and Captain E Bloxsome presided. The Rifle Club continued to meet at the Hall until at least 1939.

In August 1939 'At a meeting of the Bulading hall committee, held recently, it was proposed to erect a new hall at a cost of £150. It was decided that the building be asbestos lined. All the work would be undertaken by busy bees'. This appears to have been done for the original hall, became known as 'the old hall'.

Two hundred guests gathered on 29 July 1944 at the Hall to celebrate the 90th birthday of Mrs Sarah Ann Gibbs, mother of nine children, grandmother to forty-seven and great-grandmother to seventeen children. Mrs Gibbs had been born at Brunswick Junction but had spent seventy years at Boolading. 'A pleasant interlude was the lighting and extinguishing of the ninety candles which adorned the birthday cake... Later the young people danced in the large hall, while Mrs Gibbs seated in a cosy chair by a log fire in the old Hall, welcomed and chatted with each member of her family and her many friends'.

In December 1954 'It was a great thrill for Darkan last week when the Junior Farmers had three ABC speakers down for the evening when they opened their new club-room, the Bulading Hall, for which they have taken out a twelve months lease.

The Annual Meeting of the Darkan Junior Farmers was held in the Bulading Hall on 10 January 1955. A Committee was elected. 'It was decided that the club have busy bee to remove the trees from the Bulading tennis courts and prepare them for use'. Table and deck tennis were played for the remainder of the evening.

The demolition date is presently not known, but the Boolading Hall site, appeared as being signed in 2013.

UNITED KINGDOM



Eccleshill Mechanics' Institute, 'The Eccy Meccy', c2018
Photo: [Eccleshill Mechanics' Institute Facebook page](#)

ECCLESHILL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1868)

We missed the 150th anniversary of the Eccleshill Mechanics' Institute in 2018. They proudly proclaim their industrial heritage with the logo 'By Hammer and Hand All Arts do Stand'. After a long battle to reclaim the Hall for the community, it appears a truce has been recently reached with the regional council in favour of the local community. Well done all and best wishes for the future. Check out their Facebook page for action and inspiration.

SWINDON MECHANICS' INSTITUTE (EST. 1854)

Built in 1855 and financed by subscriptions of local railway workers. In 1893 it opened a community health service, upon which Nye Bevan later modelled the UK National Health Service. The Institute was closed in 1986. Vandals and arsonists caused the building to be subsequently barricaded.

Since then the longrunning saga of the fate of the Swindon Mechanics' Institute building has had twists and turns. Last year Swindon Borough Council served an enforcement notice on the owner Forefront Estates which was ignored. Council has since moved on to the site to clear the rampant vegetation and has also commissioned a survey of the building. The recent galeforce winds of Storm Dennis flattened the protective fencing so that has provided further angst and publicity.



The Coat of Arms was granted to the University of Bolton on 5 March 1990.

UNIVERSITY OF BOLTON (EST. 2004)

Established in 1825 as the Bolton Mechanics' Institute, the need for training saw it setting up of the Bolton Technical School in 1887. Through various name changes this became the Bolton Institute of Higher Education in 1982, and finally the University of Bolton in 2004. Today it has some 6500 students and some 700 staff. It's motto is 'Wisdom overcomes Difficulty'.

On 15 November 2019 fire gutted the multi-storey student accommodation known as The Cube at Bradshawgate, near the University of Bolton. Vice-Chancellor Professor George Holmes was to the fore in organising alternative accommodation, basic supplies and meals. Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited students shortly after.

The Cube is privately owned and an investigation of the building cladding has taken place.

USA



Salem Athenaeum, Essex Street, Salem, built in 1907
Photo: Fletcher6 available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salem_Athenaeum#/media/File:Salem_Athenaeum.jpg under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

SALEM ATHENAEUM (EST. 1810)

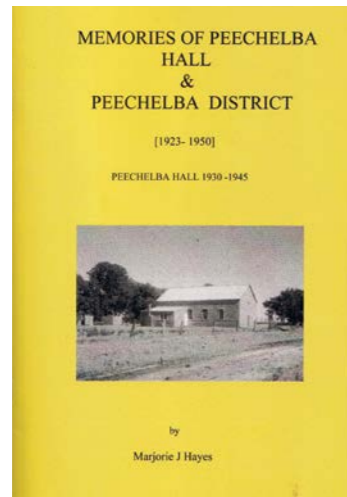
Set up in 1810, this was based on two earlier foundations the Salem Social Library (1760) and Salem Philosophical Society (1781). The Social Club had even earlier roots in the Monday Evening Club. It has been in its present elegant two-storey brick home at 337 Essex Street since 1907 and today this houses a library of some 50,000 volumes.

It has strong lecture, music, book and writers' programs which promote 'Inspired works, lively discourse, and serious fun for the entire North Shore'. Not surprisingly, the Athenaeum has also been the key host venue for the Salem Literary Festival which has been running since 2008.

The Salemites celebrated 29 February 2020 with a Rock 'N' Roman Fundraiser. It was in Roman style and honoured the 'slightly longer solar year created by Julius Caesar and the astronomer Sosigenes of Alexandria'. Live music was provided by Alan and the Alligators and the evening was provisioned with a cash bar and epicurean treats. The silent auction was well supported.

And we will let the Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43BC) have the last word 'If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need'.

Book Reviews



Memories of Peechelba Hall and Peechelba District 1923-50: Peechelba Hall 1930-45 - Marjorie J Hayes. Paperback, saddlestitched. 32 pages, illustrations. 145x210mm. 9780958600095. (Wangaratta: Author, 2017).

This slim volume is packed with information on a pioneering district and its later occupancy by Soldier Settlement after World War I. Like many Soldier Settlement Memorial Halls it had a library.

Located in Victoria's north-east, near Wangaratta, this district was settled in 1842 with the establishment of the 162,500 acre Peechelbar [sic] Run.

Early district meetings were held in either Cameron's Hall, Peechelba or Brice's Hall, Peechelba. Both were used as Election speaker venues in October 1900. 'Peechelba Hall' is mentioned in legal proceedings in 1905 in regard to 'amorous happenings' at a dance held in October 1904.

A meeting of the Peechelba Soldier Settlers was held in McLeod's barn at Peechelba on 1 August 1923 to form a Progress Association. Item 6 on list of proposed activities was 'Building and Financing a Public Recreation Hall'.

A Sub-Committee of five was set up to prepare a plan for a Hall and in October 1923 it was advised that a loan of £133 could be obtained. Working bees were planned and two carpenters were engaged to proceed with the work and the Hall was officially opened on 23 April 1924.

In February 1925 the Committee leased some land abutting the Hall to the recently formed Tennis Club at one shilling per annum. Two courts were then constructed and the Hall was used as 'the Clubhouse' and for afternoon tea.

In June 1927 *The Weekly Times* did a feature

on the Peechelba Soldier Settlement and this included a picture of the 'Soldiers' Hall', Peechelba Soldiers' Settlement'.

The fate of the Library was considered in 1930 and it was resolved to continue with it and that George Thomas Pyke be appointed Librarian.

The Library again came on the agenda in 1931 when it was resolved to spend £8 on books and that Mr Pyke be requested to attend on Wednesday evenings to issue books.

A Government Grant of £4 was received in 1932 towards the purchase of books and in June 1932 it was resolved to move the Library into another room.

A Branch of the RSL was formed in the Hall in March 1932. In January 1935 three Government Closer Settlement Commissioners visited Peechelba and were lobbied for 'the allocation of land adjoining the hall as a public reserve'.

Their lobbying was obviously successful for 'A Big Sports Day was held on the reserve adjoining the Peechelba hall' in November 1937.

A World War II internment camp was located just north of Peechelba in the Killawarra State Forest. From here work parties cut wood or individuals were sent to work or even reside on local farms. Internees frequently attended local dances and even occasionally played instruments or sang.

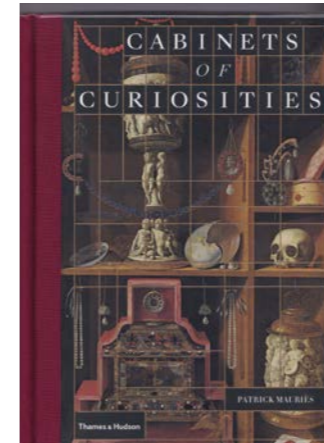
The District Electricity Switch-On was held at the Hall in 1952 and was celebrated with a dance.

A Back-to Peechelba District Reunion was organised largely by Sylvia Johnson and held in 1989 on Easter Saturday and was attended by an estimated 700 people. The day started with the launch of the History of Peechelba by Reg Howard, Yarrowonga Shire Engineer. The day concluded with a barbecue tea and dance with music provided by Bruce Way's Orchestra'. The event was widely reported in the press.

The minutiae of Hall and daily life covered in this work will resonate with many people involved with Community Halls across Australia.

The Peechelba Machine Embroidery Group still regularly meets in the Hall. The Hall holds a photographic Honour Roll from World War I and another from World War II.

Available from: June Hayes, 13 Broadribb Court, Wangaratta, V 3677. Tel: (03) 5721 2942 Email: june.hayes@bigpond.com. Cost: \$15, plus \$5 postage.



Cabinets of Curiosities - by Patrick Mauriès. Hardback. 256 pages, colour and black and white illustrations, bibliography, index. 195x265mm. 9780500022887. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2019).

In sixteenth century Europe a number of astute collectors started to independently assemble a series of cabinets of curiosities or 'rooms of wonders'. They varied in their owner's individual tastes and access to the bizarre and unusual. Some cabinet's comprised thousands of items from the minute to the huge.

The first notable English collector was: John Tradescant (1577-1638), a gardener who assembled natural history and ethnographic specimens in his house 'The Ark' at Lambeth, London. He opened his Musaeum Tradescantianum to the public in the 1620s dividing the collection into two sections: natural objects (naturalia); and manmade objects (artificialia). The Museum was passed his son, also John (1608-62) who added to the assemblage, notably with manmade objects. After John Junior's death it was bequeathed to scientist Elias Ashmole (1678-92), another formidable collector.

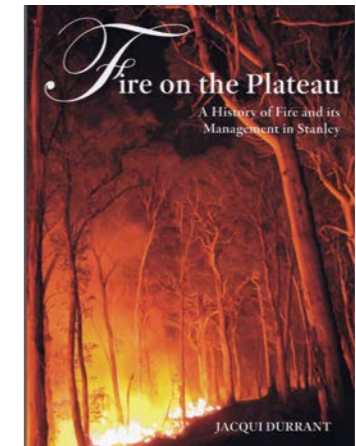
Ashmole gave his collection to the Oxford University in 1683 to found the Ashmolean Museum and Library, the world's first University Museum. This has since been supplemented by the Augustus Pitt Rivers (1827-1900) Museum (1884) and the Museum of Oxford (1975).

Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum was endowed by Richard FitzWilliam (1745-1816) and opened in 1848 and the Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873) Museum of Earth Sciences opened in 1904.

Lavishly illustrated with black and white and colour plates the author reconstructs several complete cabinet interiors by way of contemporary prints and drawings. These 'theatres of the world' assembled in one room reveal the totality of knowledge at the particular time.

Mauriès also looks at the collectors themselves, ranging from the great princes of Europe to humble scholars, along with their individual interests. This book is a valuable primer for the origin and operation of early museums.

Available from good booksellers at about AUD\$40.



Fire On The Plateau: A History of Fire and its Management in Stanley - Jacqui Durrant. Paperback, perfectbound. 109 pages, illustrated in black and white and colour, bibliography and index. 175x250mm. 98780648395515. (Stanley: Friends of the Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room, 2019).

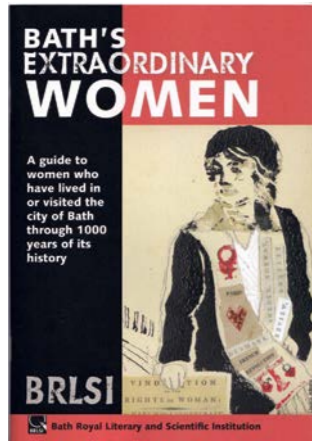
From the Aboriginal people's burning practices through to the catastrophic bushfires of 2003 and 2009, *Fire on the Plateau* brings to vivid life the history of bushfire on the forested plateau of Stanley in Victoria's north-east. Jacqui Durrant's examination culminates with how the community of Stanley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

The Chapter headings tell the story: A Changing Fire Landscape - 1824-1900; A New Fire Management - 1901-1944; A CFA without a Bushfire 1945-2002; 'Nobody Needed a Laxative' - Fire on the Stanley Plateau in 2003; 'Not your average feed-at-a-fire' - the Community Response in 2003; 'Nothing could stop that fire' - Fire on the Stanley Plateau in 2009; and 'If I hadn't seen it, I wouldn't have believed it' - the Community Response in 2009.

A truly engaging work on environmental change and its very real consequences and well produced by the Friends of the Stanley Athenaeum.

Available directly from: the Stanley Athenaeum or Stanley Post Office for \$30 per copy. Post and packing for one book is \$10 or \$13 for two copies anywhere in Australia Direct Debit - BSB: 803-070; Account: 89975

Stanley Hall and Athenaeum Management Committee (include *Fire Book* in your transaction). Email: stanleyathenaeum@gmail.com or Mobile 0458 606 922.



Bath's Extraordinary Women: A Guide to Women who have lived in or visited the City of Bath through 1000 Years of Its History - Jane Sparrow-Niang, ed. Paperback, saddlestitched. 32 pages. 150x210mm. 01225 312084. (Bath: Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, 2020).

This slim volume is crammed with details of fascinating female personalities who either have lived in or have visited Bath. Colour-coded into nine regions it is also a valuable walking tour guide for visitors to Bath as well as local residents.

The text finishes with two most interesting appendices. The first lists 'Women with Bath addresses that were awarded compensation' for freeing their slaves after 1833. The twenty-one names account for some 3200 slaves. The second, 'Destination Equality – A Timeline', starts with Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni in 60AD and concludes with the placement of the first statue of a woman in Parliament Square, London in 2018, Millicent Fawcett and Anna Gillespie's Maid of the Bridge, a modern version of the Roman Goddess Juturna, also from 2018.

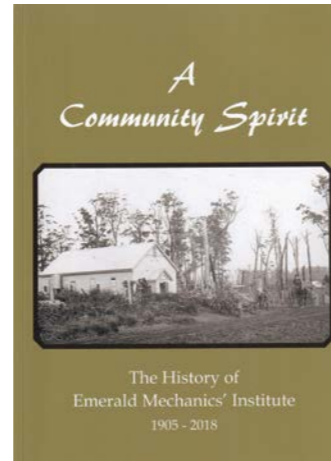
Compiler Jane Sparrow-Niang takes us through a journey of discovery of the extraordinary women of Bath: abbesses; anthropologists; archaeologists; architects; artists; astronomers; authors; Blue-stockings; courtesans; divines; goddesses; medical practitioners; mistresses; musicians; Olympians; philanthropists; police; politicians; refugees; royalty; slave owners; slaves; sports stars; and suffragettes.

Also mentioned are some places in which they gathered: Asylum for Teaching Young Females Household Work; Assembly Rooms; Bath Ladies Boat Club; Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution; Bath War Hospital; Boatstall Quay; Citizen

House; Old Theatre Royal; Partis College; Pultney Bridge; Queen Square; The Seven Dials; Stead Hostel; Sulis Minerva; The Min (Royal Mineral water Hospital).

This book truly engaging book leaves one with the impression that Bath was a place where women really did have a say and were respected for doing so. It is deserving of emulation in every city and town.

Available from: BRLSI, 16-18 Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HN. GBP5, plus postage GBP2.50.



A Community Spirit: The History of Emerald Mechanics' Institute 1905-2018 – Chris A'Vard Britton. Paperback, perfectbound. 179 pages. Illustrated in colour and black and white, bibliography, index. 210x300mm. 9780958021531. (Emerald: Emerald Hall Committee of Management and Emerald Lions Club, 2019).

This book encapsulates the history and memory of a Mechanics' Institute community of Emerald, to Melbourne's east. It is a very worthy read from the beginning of the dream of the Emerald Mechanics' Institute through to its fall to a demolition trackscavator and the enlightening archaeological finds.

Following the discovery gold in the region in 1858, the district was surveyed by Michael Callanan and the township of Main Ridge was designated in 1859, but was gazetted in 1861 as Emerald, supposedly named for murdered gold prospector Jack Emerald.

It was near here that Finish-born nurseryman Carl Axel Nobelius purchased land in 1884 and developed his nursery and fruit growing empire. By 1900 he had also secured the extension of the narrow gauge railway.

From the time of the gazettal of the 'Site for a Mechanic's Institute and Free Library' and the abutting 'Site for Public Recreation' in 1894, these areas have been the focus of community activity.

In July 1900 fifty-three men and four women met in Charles Cooke's store and agreed to establish a Mechanics' Institute and Library. A one acre site was purchased from Mr Crighton for £10, but things moved quite slowly until Carl Nobelius offered to advance the sum of £600 for building materials and labour as an interest-free loan in 1904.

Building then soon got underway and the new Emerald Mechanics' Institute was opened on 24 March 1905 with a Celebratory Ball. It soon had Church and lobby meetings for a new school building, council representation, community groups and other community amenities. A billiard room was added to the Hall in 1907 and the Hall was inspected later in the year by Victoria's Governor, Sir Reginald Talbot.

War came and sendoffs concluded with a celebration in the Hall for the signing of the Armistice in November 1918 and the welcome home of soldiers. An Honour Board, erected in the Hall showed one hundred and five local men enlisted, but the large number of thirty-two men had paid the Supreme Sacrifice and did not return. The Honour Board was destroyed in the 1955 fire.

The Hall was moved across the oval to its final site in 1923 and was officially opened in 1924 by Frank Groves MLA.

It was the centre of activity for the Back to Emerald celebrations from 28-30 December 1932, which was followed shortly after in 1934 with the electricity 'Switch on'. With the installation of a bio-box in 1934, the Hall then had long term cinema use and it was during this use that disaster struck on 20 August 1955 when the Hall was burnt to the ground.

Shortly after, the community came together to launch the Emerald Community Centre Building Appeal with a Hall completion date of 1958, Emerald's Centenary.

The Hall was officially opened on 16 November 1957 by the Governor-General of Australia, Field-Marshal Sir William Slim who delivered 'a powerful speech' to a gathering of two thousand people. His Excellency also declared the following Monday a holiday for the local school, much to the delight of students. This was followed by a Gala Opening Ball of the 'New Emerald Hall' on 27 November 1957.

After the Hall was rebuilt, equipment was purchased from Laurie Peters to screen movies as a community venture. A projection room was fitted out and the Emerald Cinema – Showplace of the Dandenongs – started screenings in 1957.

These continued until 1964 when the equipment was sold.

A red-letter day for Emerald in its centenary year of 1958 was the Centenary Ball at which Miss Anniversary and Miss Centenary were chosen.

In 1958 the Library was revived, initially with book boxes from the Melbourne Public Library. However by 1978 the Library held some 6000 books and it was issuing 1000 books per month to the 624 members. It closed in 1979 and books were transferred to the Regional Library service. It was not until 1989 that the new Community Library was built abutting the Hall.

Further land mark events included another Back to Emerald in 1965 and when mains water was connected to the Hall in 1968.

A plaque to Stanley Victor 'Stan Jones' 'an esteemed member of the Emerald Community' was affixed to the Hall after his death in 1980.

A Mural, with a regional map, was painted on the front of the Hall in 1995 and MIV Commemorative Plaque No. 15 was unveiled at the Hall in 2005. The Hall celebrated its 60th anniversary on 8 March 2017, the last big event prior to its demolition in January 2018.

It was interesting to note the various Hall users and their activities in going through the book: Emerald State School (1879), Emerald Rifle Club (1900), Emerald Football Club (1905), Emerald Progress Association (1906), Emerald Brass Band (1910), Emerald Cricket Club (1910), Emerald RSL, Emerald Gymnasium Club (1934), Emerald Scouts and Girl Guides (1930s), Emerald District Young Farmers' Club (early 1930s), Emerald Youth Club (1939), Emerald Fire Brigade (1941), Country Women's Association (1945), Emerald Badminton Club (1947), Emerald Life Saving Club (1940s), Emerald Garden Club (1960), Basketball and Netball Club (1960s), Emerald Brownies (1963), Emerald and District Historical Society and Museum (1968), Emerald & District Welfare Society (1969), Emerald Arts Society (1969), Lions Club (1975), Emerald Traders' Association (1978), Mountain District Radio (1983), U3A (1992) and Men's Shed.

There has been a most interesting Community 'can do' Spirit at Emerald and this well designed book showcases that in an exemplary fashion with facsimiles of documents and photographs. These come mostly from the Emerald Museum which first opened in the Hall in 1981. For those interested in community dynamics this is a valuable text.

Available from: Emerald Lions Club, Box 99, Emerald, 3782, \$30 per copy, \$15 postage.

Our People



Jean Beamish, President of the Budgeree Hall Committee was recognised in the Shine Awards as Australian Rural Woman of the Year – Dedication. (The Hall was built in 1910 as the Budgeree Mechanics' Institute.) Jean and her

husband John moved to the Budgeree district thirty years ago and in recent times has become President of the Hall Committee and 'is determined the hall will be standing in another one hundred years' time'. Her award put Budgeree on the map and photographs of her both inside and outside the Hall appeared in the national press. Jean maintains that without the Hall, Budgeree 'would be left with a big hole, with everything missing'. She continues 'I'm up at the Hall, involved in events and it's good fun. You need a committee to keep it going'.

Photo: Courtesy Weekly Times, Shine Awards



Mentioned in the 2020 Australia Day Honours was **Emeritus Professor Richard Broome** who was made a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to education in the field of history, and to historical groups. Richard is Emeritus Professor of history at Latrobe University and is an authority on Aboriginal history in Australia. Richard is currently President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and is the author of fourteen books.

Photo: www.htav.asn.au/about-us/patron



We note the recent appointment of **Professor Nishan Canagarajah** as President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester. Nishan was

born and educated in Sri Lanka and went on scholarship to the Cambridge University where he graduated BA Honours in electronics and

information sciences. He joined the University of Bristol in 1993 where he was engaged in research and enterprise activities and rose to Pro-Vice-Chancellor in 2014. Nishan asserts 'Everyone of us can change some one else's future.' The University of Leicester has its genesis in the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society established in 1835. The University's slogan is 'So that they may have life'.

Photo: commons.wikimedia.org



At Anakie **Ray Tucker** continues the Tucker family association with Anakie Mechanics' Institute since it was established in 1905. He has served on the Committee for some fifty years and remembers the good

old days of the pump up gas lights and the copper for boiling the water out the back. His father 'Ted' was Institute Librarian for a period after World War I when the Library opened on three evenings a week. The Tucker family gifted neighbouring land in 1971 to enable a new toilet block to be built.

Photo: Courtesy www.bethanykeats.wordpress.com



We were saddened to hear that Grange Institute (SA) stalwart **Margaret Mitchell** took a tumble in her garden and broke her hip. Margaret is one of those unsung heroes who serve on a Hall Committee and in her case she has opened the

library on alternate Saturday mornings between 10-11.30am for many years. Born in England, Margaret came to South Australia with her young son in the 1960s and worked as the Headmaster's Secretary at Immanuel Secondary College, in the Adelaide suburb of Novar Gardens. She became involved with the Grange Institute and was a charter member of the Henley and Grange Historical Society in 1973. She was elected to the Henley and Grange Council in the late 1970s and remained a member through into the late 1980s

Our People cont...

just prior to amalgamation. Interestingly Margaret's grandson Matt is a Councillor on the newly restructured City of Charles Sturt.

In the meantime the State Government was keen to bring all libraries under Local Government and cut off funding to Institutes. Grange under the leadership of Margaret Mitchell and **Don Lewis** hung on and so the Grange Institute survives to this day. Get well Margaret

Photo: Courtesy of Grange Institute



University of Huddersfield graduate **Eve Hartley** has recently been awarded her PhD. Eve presented Papers at Mechanics' Worldwide 2016 – San Francisco and at the Independent Libraries Association Conference at

Chawton House in 2018. The working title for Eve's dissertation was 'The Impact of the Mechanics' Institute Movement on Art, Design and Culture in the North of England'.

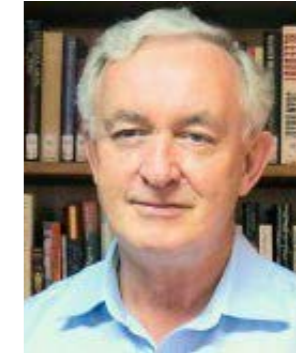
Photo: LinkedIn



Longtime Ballarat Mechanics' Institute Board Member and former President **Phil Roberts OAM** was announced as the winner of the Victorian Premier's History Award for 2019 in

November. Phil's book *Avenue of Memories* was produced to commemorate the centenary of Ballarat's Arch. The Avenue of Honour stretches for 22km and comprises 3801 trees, one for each soldier, airman, seaman or nurse that enlisted from the Ballarat area. It was the idea of Tilly Thompson a sales representative with the large Ballarat clothing manufacturer E Lucas & Co. The 'Lucas Girls' fundraised for the project and planted the first five hundred trees. Since then the Avenue of Honour has largely been maintained by the community. This well-documented work admirably tells the story of this iconic World War I Memorial and details some others in the Ballarat district. Published by the Arch of Victory/Avenue of Honour Committee, it is available for

purchase and collection from the City of Ballarat, Phoenix Building, 25 Armstrong Street, Ballarat. Photo: Courtesy The Courier



We note the recent retirement of **Brian Johnston** as Secretary of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. It has been a pleasure working with Brian for the past four years as we progressed the promotion and interests of the Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia. We wish Brian well in his retirement.

Photo: Courtesy of Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts



The recent Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts Annual Meeting confirmed the appointment of its new Secretary **Max Bosotti**. An Applied Science – Mechanical Engineering graduate of the University of Toronto, Max has had a diverse experience over a number of industry sectors. These

include disability, investment banking, innovative technology and petroleum. We wish Max a fruitful and fulfilling time at SMSA and look forward to working with him into the future.

Photo: Courtesy www.coasit.ifhg.org/event-items/max-bosotti



The 2019 Victorian Museums Awards were presented on 26 June 2019 at the National Gallery of Victoria by AMaGA (Australian Museums and Galleries Association) – the peak body for more than one

thousand museums and collecting organisations. The AMaGA Victoria Award for Excellence

Our People cont...

(Volunteer) was presented to **Norma Grubb OAM** for her tireless contribution over forty-five years to the Development of the Benalla Historical Society. Mrs Grubb joined the Committee of the Historical Society in 1974, bringing a wealth of knowledge in textiles, garment construction, needlework, and a strong interest in costume history. Her skills were well-suited to the needs of the Society's large costume collection. She has been responsible for exhibition selection and presentation, the Society's accreditation policies, creating reproduction millinery items, care of the costume collection, and working with and training volunteers.

(AMaGA Awards citation)

Photo: Courtesy of AMaGA.



At the recent AGM of the Footscray Mechanics' Institute, the Committee were glad to recognise and celebrate their newest member of the Over 90 Club, **Mr Keith O'Brien**. He joins **Mr Doug Clymo** – both long serving and respected Life Members of the FMI. Like Doug, Keith is still a very active and valued member of the Committee. Their contributions to meetings, working bees and management decisions, reflect their long term and ongoing commitment to the Footscray community and the Mechanics' Institute.

Those present enjoyed a shared birthday cake which was decorated with a tribute to Keith's loyal canine mate, whose devotion and comfort means everything to Keith. During a short speech, Keith thanked those present for their long term support of both he and his late wife Edna, and the friendships he has enjoyed from the members. Everyone present hoped that Keith's good health and vitality continue for many years to come and his

interesting anecdotes of Footscray life continue to be shared during his next decade.

(Contributed by Liz Balfour, Secretary, Footscray Mechanics' Institute)

Photo: Courtesy of Footscray Mechanics' Institute



Rose Blustein, after six years as Honorary Librarian at the Melbourne Athenaeum Library, has stepped down. During her time Rose has overseen the transformation of the Library for both members and staff. In

developing and implementing a strategic plan for the Library she has nurtured the professional development of staff and set clear guidelines for Athenaeum volunteers. For members she has improved library systems and procedures and improved reader access to the fiction collection. She also programmed The Athenaeum's, now very popular, music events and established the Library's Crime Fiction Book Club. Rose was also an able ambassador for The Athenaeum Library by attending various meetings and conferences. We thank Rose for her contribution to the Mechanics' Institute community and wish her well for the future.

Photo: www.milibrary.org



Stepping up to the position of the Melbourne Athenaeum's Honorary Librarian is **Fiona Malcolm**, who started on 2 March. She is a career Librarian who claims an old connection with The Athenaeum, as her great-aunt, Vida Renshaw, was a

theatre usherette who features in one of the photos in The Athenaeum foyer. Fiona is a current Library member and with a particular interest in crime fiction, she is a Sisters in Crime member. She lists her interests as: reading, musical theatre, calisthenics, local and family history, gadgets and catching up with family and friends. Fiona will be in the Library on Mondays, with occasional stints on Fridays helping with events. We wish Fiona a

Our People cont...

happy and enjoyable time at The Athenaeum and welcome her into the Mechanics' Institute Library Group.

Photo: Courtesy of Melbourne Athenaeum Library



We note the secondment of **Professor Rory Duncan** from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh to become Director of Talent Skills at UK Research and Innovation. On taking up his position, Rory said 'Joining UKRI at such an important time for the organisation and for the UK

is a tremendous opportunity. I have seen, and share, the passion of talented UKRI colleagues for researcher development and I am excited to have the chance to shape strategies and careers across the amazing work that all the Research Councils support nationally. I am absolutely behind the UKRI vision and I believe firmly that its success relies on people, talent and skills'. We wish Rory continued success with his research and fellow researchers. The recent micro images of the COVID 19 virus look very much like the ones we saw screened at **MIA 2018 - Ballarat**.

Photo: Courtesy of Heriot-Watt University, esrig.org



The University of Huddersfield's current exhibition at Heritage Quay is titled 'Visions for a Better World'. This 'explores the utopias, dystopias and other futuristic visions'. It showcases items for the first time from the **Sir Patrick Stewart** Archive. Actor, director and producer, Sir Patrick is best known for his role as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in the *Star Trek* movies. He served for a time as Chancellor of the University of Huddersfield from 2004-15 and funds post-graduate study into domestic violence. He is

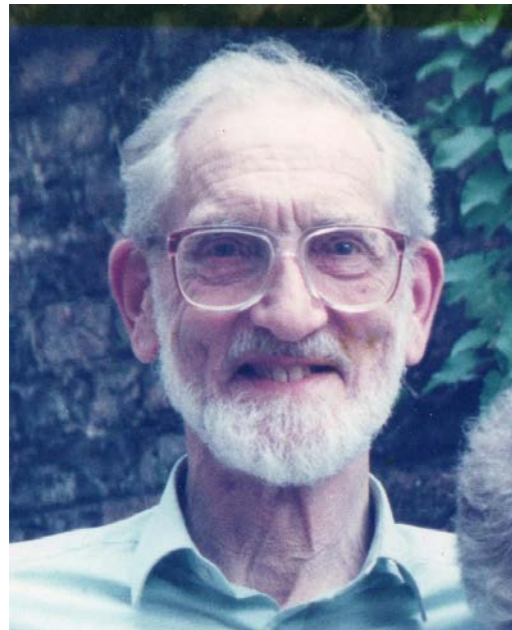
patron of Refuge, a UK charity for abused women. Sir Patrick was knighted in 2010. His collection is available for public viewing.

Photo: Courtesy of University of Huddersfield

Word has just reached us that **Professor Philip Candy** has been inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony took place on 12 March 2020 at the Philadelphia Marriott Hotel and Phil was represented at the induction by his son Stuart. The IACE Hall of Fame was established by the University of Oklahoma in 1996 'to honour leaders in the field of continuing education and adult learning and to serve as a record and inspiration for the next generation of continuing education leaders'. Phil joins a small number of Australians that have been inducted in to The Hall. He, with the late Dr John Laurent, was co-editor of the major pioneering work on Australian Mechanics' Institutes, *Pioneering Culture: Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts in Australia*, published in 1993. Congratulations Phil on a well-deserved award.



Stuart Candy acknowledging the induction into International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame of behalf of his father, Professor Philip Candy. Photo: Mary-Anne Candy



We note the passing of **Geoffrey Arthur David 'Geoff' Catchpole** at the Royal United Hospital, Bath on 15 January 2020, aged 94. A commemoration service was held at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution of which he was a long-time member. He is survived by his wife Nancy and children David and Elizabeth.

Geoff was born at Ipswich, Suffolk in 1926 and was adopted by Miss Florence Catchpole who ran a greengrocers' shop, so he had a very healthy diet of fruit and vegetables. He cycled to school daily. Upon leaving school he worked in a factory where he met 'Uncle Wilden' who opened his eyes to art, music, philosophy, politics and literature.

In his teens he joined the Young Communist League because 'their sausage suppers were superior to those offered by the Young Conservatives'.

During World War II he saw service in the Royal Air Force working in radar. Post-War he clerked in an agricultural machinery factory, later followed by civilian work in radar.

In the meantime he had won a scholarship to Ruskin College, Oxford University where he gained a Diploma in Political and Economic Studies. At Oxford he also chaired the Young Socialist Society. Later he travelled around the country with peace campaigner Shirley Williams, later Baroness Crosby, on a bus, and marched against the Suez War. He was a passionate anti-war campaigner at an early age. He firmly believed that education was the key to securing peace throughout the world.

Next he took a degree in Philosophy at the

University of Southampton. Backed up by a post-graduate certificate, he started teaching General Studies, mostly to technical students in their late teens, firstly at Ipswich Civic College until 1959, then at the City of Bath College, where he taught until his retirement in 1988. His student cohort, which included those in engineering and car mechanics, were obliged to take his lectures in General or Liberal Studies. While their relevance was questioned Geoff believed 'that they needed to understand how the world worked and that they had a role to play in making the world a better, more peaceful place.'

Geoff met Nancy at the United Nations Association when they were both teaching in Ipswich and they married in 1959 and Geoff got a job in Bath and they purchased a new house in Upper Weston. There the clay soil was coaxed into producing a vegetable crop, notably prizewinning runner beans.

Besides his fine collection of 1960s and 1970s pop music his musical tastes were classical and both he and Nancy would go to recitals. His choice of music for his own cremation service reflected this: a piano quintet by Edward Elgar; Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony; and a Ludwig van Beethoven romance.

Technology was his lifelong interest and he had a BBC Basic Computer in the 1980s and he regularly updated computer technology over the years. Wide scientific reading brought him to the subject of climate change long ago and he joined Greenpeace, had solar panels installed on the roof and was a keen advocate for the reuse of objects, or failing that recycling.

Upon retirement both Geoff and Nancy became involved with the U3A and the fledgling rebirth of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. Besides helping to clear the upper floors of the museum collection and move it to the basement for later cleaning and cataloguing, his sage advice and dry wit in trying times was much valued. Later Geoff set up the World Affairs discussion group and was convenor of the Philosophy group. For both groups he sourced notable speakers from all around the country to share their knowledge at the BRLSI. He was also a pioneer supporter of the Young BRLSI group and had key input into their activities program.

(Extracted from the Eulogy delivered by his daughter Elizabeth Catchpole at his memorial service.)

Community Page

RECIPE

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

TURKISH DELIGHT

A Middle Eastern sweet that packages well. It is delicious served with strong coffee.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon of lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons of gelatine
- 2 tablespoons of rose water
- 1 cup of water
- 3 cups sugar
- 2/3 cup of cornflour
- red food colouring
- icing sugar

Method:

Sprinkle gelatine over a ¼ cup of water and allow it to soften. Place sugar, rose water, lemon juice and ½ cup of water in a saucepan. Bring slowly to the boil, stirring to dissolve sugar before reaching boiling point. Boil without stirring for 4-5 minutes until a confectionery thermometer reads 105 degrees C, or when a spoon of syrup when dropped in to cold water forms long threads.

Combine cornflour with remaining cold water, then add to the syrup along with the softened gelatine. Simmer until the liquid is clear and the gelatine has fully dissolved. Stir occasionally and add a few drops of food colouring. Strain into a lightly oiled lipped lamington tray. Allow to set overnight. Cut into squares and roll in sifted icing sugar.

Storage:

Cover with a mixture of cornflour and icing sugar and store in a dry airtight container (not in the fridge).

SPOT THE BAKER'S DOZEN REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 51

1. Which Hall solicits 'Functions at the Junction'?
2. When is the closing date for the MIV Architectural Drawing Prize?
3. What is the pseudonym of author Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson?
4. Where was the MIV *Museum Directory* launched?
5. Who was recently inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame?
6. Where did Olaf Frederick Schmidt 'expire'?
7. Which town recently received a \$400,000 grant

'for a new hall and integrated community hub'?

8. What is the logo and slogan of the Eccleshill Mechanics' Institute?
9. Which Gippsland Institute has a 24/7 heart defibrillator under its side verandah?
10. Which Soldier Settlement Hall had a library?
11. When was the Emerald Mechanics' Institute demolished?
12. Who chairs the MIV Library Group Committee?
13. Who was inaugural President of the Buln Buln Mechanics' Institute in 1905?

SPOT THE BAKER'S DOZEN REFERENCES IN USEFUL KNOWLEDGE NO. 50 - ANSWERS

1. Tallarook Mechanics' Institute; 2. Colin Jackson; 3. Hallston Mechanics' Institute; 4. Trevor Chapell; 5. Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute; 6. Leeds Library; 7. University of Huddersfield; 8. Stanley Athenaeum and Public Room; 9. Sir Edward Thorpe; 10. Redstone Rocket; 11. Keith Manley; 12. It's Happening at The Hall; 13. Dr Kathy Alexander.

Odd Spot

'LILLYDALE [sic], Wednesday.

A magisterial inquiry was held on Monday touching on the death of a Dane named Olaf Frederick Schmidt, who expired suddenly in the morning at the mechanics' institute reading room. It was elicited that the deceased suffered from chronic heart disease, and was in the habit of taking large quantities of tincture of digitalis. Schmidt was about to leave for Melbourne, where he expected to receive between £1000 and £2000 through the death of his mother. A verdict of death from heart disease was recorded by Mr D Lay, JP'

Age (Melbourne), 5 May 1898, p6.

The deceased was a native of Copenhagen in Denmark and had been living in Lilydale for about twelve months in the employ of Fred Benyan. His parents, who lived in Denmark, were well-to-do and he had recently inherited £1800 upon the death of his mother. Olaf was observed reading in the library when 'he suddenly fell back in a fit, and in a few minutes had died'. Dr Arthur Syme was called for, but on arrival found life to be extinct and the body was removed to the Police Station, where the inquest was held. His body was laid to rest in the 'strangers' quarter of the Lilydale Cemetery, with W Wilson reading the burial service. He was about forty years old.

Healesville Guardian, 7 May 1898, p2 'Died Whilst in Fit'.

Ideas & Opportunities

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Danielle Green MLA and her Adviser Virginia Wellard have flagged the following grant opportunities. **Creative Activation Fund through Creative Victoria.** Next Round August 2020. [Creative@vic.gov.au/grants-and-support](mailto:Creative@vic.gov.au). **Community Heritage Grants** - Open 2 March Close 4 May. CHG@nla.gov.au.

A DONORS' WALL AND REGISTER

A very meaningful way to recognise donors is to establish a Donors' Wall. One we saw recently consisted of named tiles of different sizes in multiple colours. In some cases tiles were stacked on top of one another to represent multiple gifts from that same donor. The sponsorship or gift of an item should always be plaqued if possible. Another Hall had a **Register of Donors** along with details of the gift: 'A Citizen, crockery suite, 10 December 1925'.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION SESSION FOR ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENTS

The recent mention of a Hall calling a public meeting to consider an agenda of fundraising events for the coming year, had very real purpose. Firstly it involved the whole community and thus gave them ownership. It also had the opportunity to canvass 'left of field' ideas which may not have been thought of by the Hall Committee.

20-20 VISION

We note that the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts is already preparing for their bicentenary in 2033. This got us thinking as to how many Institutes plan future events well in advance. We saw how the tiny community Peechelba had a Back to Peechelba at their Hall which attracted around 700 people. There is a real opportunity, that if events or projects are planned well ahead, that they will be well supported. One Hall advertised sponsorship of a window for replacement as part of its 'Back To' package and was successful in having the cost of the eight windows replaced and their installation in place suitably plaqued in time for the 'Back To'. Others sell pavers to raise restoration or refurbishment funds. Each Hall must have a vision or roadmap to where it is going and how to ensure its long-term survival.

Please share your visions and ideas with us and who knows what could happen.

CHILDREN'S LIBRARY SHELF

The involvement of youth in Hall life can be problematic as most Halls either do not permit youth events or require very hefty bonds. There has to be some way to get youth involvement in Hall life, for after all they will, in time, be your Hall's future managers. A few of us started our association with the Hall in a bassinette under the bench seats. Later we attended events to either help or watch. We had an early sense of respect for the Hall instilled in us. To get youth involved from an early age can we suggest the placement of a Children's Library Shelf or Shelves, for which books can be either purchased or donated. Library Cards could even be issued to give borrowers token ownership. Seek out some books on natural history and basic science and put them on the shelves and promote knowledge of local landmarks, flora and fauna and the science that makes things tick.

PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Each Hall Committee should have a Press Correspondent and that could be a budding journalist from the local school. They can contribute Hall-related items to the local newsletter or newspaper or to this magazine.

SET UP A BLACKBOARD

It was interesting to see a recent photo of a blackboard chalked with a coming event, outside a Hall in New South Wales. Given that it was in a dry area there was little chance of the message being erased by rain. It was placed facing south-east and had a small roof over the top and gave a very clear message using multi-colour chalks. In rainfall areas it could be fitted with a glass front. One we saw in Western Australia was actually fixed to the front of the Hall announcing the forthcoming wedding of a local couple.

FUNCTIONS AT THE JUNCTION

On our recent Gippsland Bus Tour we stopped off for lunch at the Nerrim Junction Hall and sighted their trifold multi-colour promotional leaflet. This gave a description and dimensions of the Hall's facilities and contact details. Indeed a very well thought through promotional item soliciting 'Functions at the Junction'. They had our support and endorsement and deserve ongoing success in their exemplary management of their much revered Hall and the Institute's proud history.