

No. 61 Summer 2024

The magazine of the
Mechanics' Institutes of
Victoria



Useful Knowledge



Sorrento Mechanics' Institute, c.1880-1900. See page 3.

Inside this issue

Editors report	2	Campbelltown MI	8-10	Clydebank MI	16-18
Sorrento MI	3	Tolmie MI	10	Vale	19
Mansfield MI	4	People in the news	11	Badger Creek	20-21
Malmsbury news	5	Launceston MI	12-13	Garfield Hall	22-24
Naracoorte & Kincaig	6-7	MI Milestones	14-15		

2023-2024 MIV Committee

President: David Berry
 Vice President: Chris Dormer
 Treasurer: Gary Bester - contact email: treasurer@mivic.org.au
 Secretary: Heather Arnold - contact email: mivnewslettereditor@gmail.com
 Minutes Secretary: Pat Anderson, O.A.M.
 MIV Scanning Project Co-Ordinator: Judith Dwyer
 Useful Knowledge Editor: Heather Arnold
 General Committee members -
 Corinne Brewis
 Denys Correll
 Robert Kingston
 Felix Meagher, O.A.M.
 Peter Nankervis
 Peter Pereyra
 Les Sanderson
 Robert Shackleton

Cover: Sorrento Mechanics' Institute, c. 1880-1900. Photographer: George Levi Carter
 Image: State Library of Victoria Image H2017.285/79



**PMI Victorian
History Library**

Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria, P.O Box 1080, Windsor, 3181.
 ISSN 1835-5242
 Reg. No A0038156G ABN 60 337 355 989 Price \$6.00.
 The MIV would like to acknowledge the support of our 'home' the
 Prahran Mechanics' Institute.

Report from the Editor

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue, I do appreciate the contributions. It was my aim to have this Summer 2024 issue out in Summer, and it would have happened if only February had 40 days, instead of 29 this year, but never mind!

We now have a MIV Facebook page—find us here on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554953512575>

Website - <https://www.mivic.org.au/> What can I say? We still have a few 'issues' which we are working on. Your security may tell you that you are visiting an 'untrustworthy site.' My Kaspersky Security tells me that and explains *One or more of this website's certificates are invalid, so we can't guarantee its authenticity.* However, we are authentic (and also nice and very respectable). This will be resolved eventually.

The reason you might want to visit our website is to catch up on back issues of *Useful Knowledge*, which you can here <https://www.mivic.org.au/magazine.html> The more recent editions are available on-line at the National Library of Australia and the State Library of Victoria here <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-3179681849> Click on 'Browse this Collection' for the back issues. We are required to deposit all our newsletters with both the NLA and SLV and they encourage it be done electronically, so this works really well.

Judith and I will be at the Casey Cardinia Heritage Festival, Sunday April 21, 2024 10am-2pm, Berwick Senior Citizens Centre, 112 High Street, Berwick. Free entry; call in, if you are in the area.

Best wishes from the MIV Committee,

Heather Arnold, Editor

Sorrento Mechanics' Institute

The Sorrento Mechanics' Institute was opened on February 3, 1877. This is the report from *The Age*, of Tuesday, February 7, 1877.

*The Sorrento Mechanics' Institute and Free Library was opened on Saturday evening with a concert, under the conductorship of Mr. Perraton. The building is situated on the road to the back beach, about half a mile from the pier, and is quite a credit to the district. It is built of limestone, 44 feet x 22 feet 6 inches, with a 10 feet square porch. The cost was about £150. The president, Mr. J. Cain, attributed the present success of Sorrento to the exertions of Mr. George Coppin, M.L.A. Mrs. Perraton sang *The Lover and the Bird*, and Kathleen Mavourneen, and obtained special applause. Mrs H. Crispin, a promising vocalist, sang *Little Gipsy Jane* with good effect. Miss Blanche Coppin sang *The Flower Girl*, and was recalled. She also sang a duet with her father, introducing the quarrel scene from the *School for Scandal*, which was very enjoyable. Mr. Coppin also contributed a recitation and song, and took part with Mrs. Perraton in a duet, *When a Little Farm*, for which they were recalled. No encores were allowed, on account of the length of the programme. Master Willie Perraton sang a solo. Mr. Perraton was also successful in his solos, *Love's Request*, and *Maid of Athens*. Mr. H. Crispin sang *The Englishman*. The young lady pianiste, both as soloist and accompanist, gave satisfaction. Sir C. G. Duffy made an excellent speech at the close of the entertainment, and proposed a vote of thanks to the ladies and gentlemen who had taken part in the entertainment. Mr. Harriman seconded the motion, which was carried unani-*

mously.

The Sorrento Mechanics' Institute is home of the Nepean Historical Society, established in 1965. They were granted the use of the Sorrento Mechanics' Institute in 1967. This is their website

<https://nepeanhistoricalsociety.asn.au/>



Sorrento Mechanics' Institute, c. 1896.

Image: Nepean Historical Society

Redevelopment of Mansfield Mechanics' Institute, Ailsa Street, Mansfield

Story and images by Corinne Brewis, President Berwick Mechanics' Institute and Free Library

Work is progressing well on the incorporation of the old Mansfield Mechanics' Institute building as part of the Mansfield Kindergarten in Ailsa Street, Mansfield.

Mansfield's first library contained about seven hundred books in 1874. It's opening hours were 10.00am to 10.00pm although the number of days it was open is unknown. In that year there were approximately 5,280 visits. By 1892 the library was established in the original Shire council building and although many books were borrowed, some were never returned and Council resolved to lock the books away. This caused anger among the local community who thought the books should be available for borrowing, not locked up and only available to a select few. Following a public meeting, tenders were called to build a two-roomed library building.

The Victorian Government Gazette records that a site for Mechanics' Institute purposes was reserved in Ailsa Street on 30th August 1866 although building on the site did not start until much later. The architect for the building was Charles D. Hardy, Shire Engineer, and the work was undertaken by Mr. W.P. Crockett. The Mansfield Mechanics' Institute opened in 1892, serving the local community as a public library for many years. Yea, Alexandra and Mansfield Library Service began in 1952 and the Mansfield Branch operated from Ailsa Street until new a new library was opened in 1985. The building briefly served as the Mansfield telephone exchange. In 1985 one room became an annexe for the Mansfield Preschool next door until 1988. From 1985, the other room was used by the Mansfield Historical Society before the Society took over the whole building in 1988.



Following the historical society's move to the railway station building in 2006, the Mansfield Mechanics' Institute was used for the storage of a historic clothing collection and vintage copies of the local newspaper, the *Mansfield Courier*. By 2013 the building was empty. It was in poor condition with a leaking roof and overflowing gutters causing water to enter the building. There was local concern the building might be demolished but the Mansfield Kindergarten, next door, developed a plan which would mean the building would be saved.



In 2018 Mansfield Kindergarten received a substantial grant to enable the redevelopment of the historic Mechanics' Institute building as part of Mansfield Kindergarten. There have been some delays since that time as the project has been interrupted by the COVID pandemic but work is now scheduled for completion in July 2024. Construction works are being conducted by local building contractor Cronin Constructions, with the project managed by Bent Architecture of Brunswick. In an article in the *Mansfield Courier* dated 6th December 2023, Mansfield Kindergarten Committee member, Andrew Setchell said while the project is being driven by the volunteer committee of the kindergarten, it would not have been possible without the funding and administrative support of the State Government, Victorian School Building Authority, Mansfield Shire Council and the Mansfield and District Community Bank.

Mechanics' Institutes were always built by the community, for the community and run by the local community. They originally had a major focus on education. It is very pleasing too see the Mansfield Mechanics' Institute building will continue into the future contributing to the education of the very youngest members of the local community.

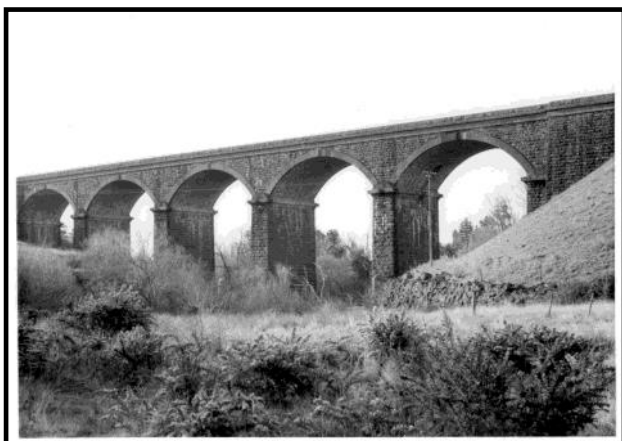
Images: Mansfield MI in 2018, left and December 2023, above.

Malmsbury Mechanics' Institute News

By Dr Susan Walter

Members and readers may recall that the front 1876 portion of the Malmsbury Mechanics' Institute is constructed from local bluestone, and the foundation stone of the rear 1896 Federal Hall portion is also made of the same stone. To add to the history and heritage significance of the building, Malmsbury Historical Society announces that Malmsbury Bluestone is now officially recognised as a Global Heritage Stone Resource (GHSR), sharing the designation with over 40 other stones from around the world.

In a first for Australia, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has accepted the recommendation of their Heritage Stones Sub-commission (HSS) that the nomination of Malmsbury Bluestone be approved. The nomination was lodged by Malmsbury Historical Society's President, Dr Susan Walter. The GHSR designation is reserved for stones that have achieved widespread utilization in human culture. To be accepted, stones must have been used for 50 or more years, have been used in several continents in significant private, public and industrial projects and have recognised cultural significance. Malmsbury Bluestone has been used in VIC, TAS, SA, WA, NSW and New Zealand and some shipments went to Calcutta in India. The durability and workability of the stone made it suitable for a wide range of purposes, from drains, kerbs, pavements, lintels and steps, to base courses of multi-story buildings, and ornate bank doorways. The Malmsbury railway viaduct, and St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne are but two of many notable examples.



Malmsbury Railway Viaduct

Photographer: John T. Collins
State Library of Victoria Image H97.250/2892

The IUGS has also requested that Dr Walter sends a prepared sample of the stone to the Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Berlin, Germany, to add to their 150-year-old collection of natural building stones. This is currently being prepared with the co-operation and support of an owner of one of the former quarries, and Kyneton's local stonemason, Huntly Barton. Mr Bartons' business, Wm Thos. Jones Stonemasons, has a long historical connection with Malmsbury bluestone. William Jones established the business in Malmsbury in the 1890s, having learnt the trade from his father, John Jones, who arrived in Malmsbury in 1862.

The long-term benefits of this designation will partly be determined by how locals, and members of the history, heritage and planning professions, at local, state and national levels respond to this news. Many Malmsbury bluestone sites have already been demolished over a long period of time. Our local rural uses of bluestone are especially at risk, having almost no heritage protection. Even the former quarry sites, where stone may one day need to be extracted for restoration or repair work, have no heritage protection. The basic level of heritage protection which protects some surviving structures doesn't even acknowledge its presence. Our stone is something we can all be proud of, and deserves both preservation and celebration.

Readers may not be aware that the same stone was used to pave under the front portico of the Elmore Athenaeum in 1885.

To assist the celebration and spreading the good news, Malmsbury Historical Society is running three different 1.5 km heritage walking tours as part of the Macedon Ranges Autumn Festival. These will be held on Saturday 6th, 13th and 20th April.

Walk one (6th) focusses on stone, stone use and stone workers in the Malmsbury cemetery.

Walk two (13th) examines our natural and altered volcanic landscape and how this influences our local bluestone industry.

Walk three (20th) features surviving and demolished local bluestone heritage and considers its future.

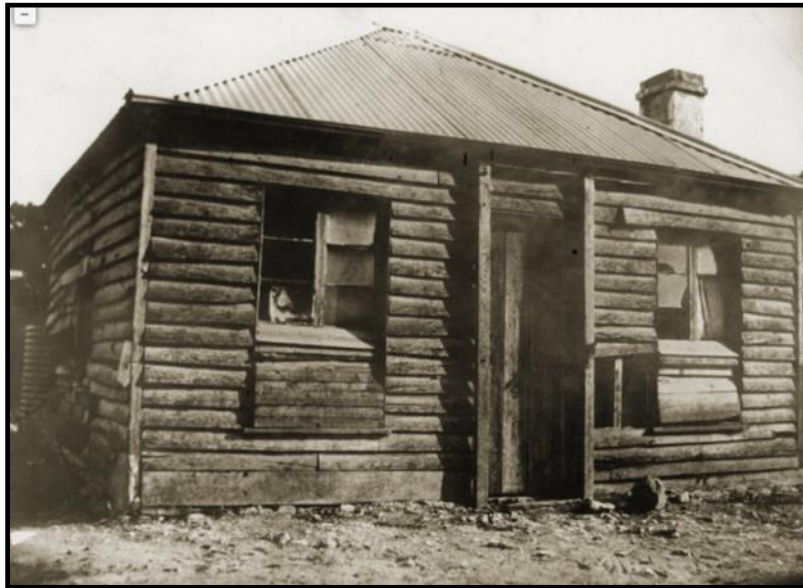
Cost is \$5 per person, cash only, payment on the day. Places are limited to 20 so bookings are essential by email malmsburyhistorical@gmail.com or phoning Susan Walter on 5423 9383

Naracoorte and Kincaig Institutes: Two institutes or one?

By Jolie Hancock, <https://institutessa.com/> Images supplied by Joeline.

This was a question in documenting all the (Mechanics') Institutes that we have had in South Australia. Naracoorte and Kincaig were adjacent towns in 1853 on the route from Adelaide to the Victorian gold fields when Kincaig was an important stop-off point.

When Kincaig Institute began in 1864 it was called the Mosquito Plains Institute. It was in June that year that 'One of the largest and most respected assemblages ever gathered together in this place' met in the local school-room. At the meeting the Rev Mr D McCalman delivered a lecture on Novels and novel reading. Already the Institute had forty subscribers and a large collection of books. Later that year the Institute affiliated with the South Australian Institute as 'Kincaig Institute'. With affiliation the Institute gained an annual government subsidy, support in keeping a library, in maintaining a building and in running an organisation.



The original Kincaig Institute, built 1866
State Library of SA image taken c.1925

In 1866 the Kincaig Institute shifted from the schoolroom to a weatherboard building that it erected on Smith Street. Smith Street ran between the two towns and became the main street for Naracoorte when the two settlements amalgamated just three years later in 1869. The Kincaig Institute was then in Naracoorte but kept its name, Kincaig Institute, for another 38 years. In tracking the histories of the Kincaig and Naracoorte Institutes I found newspaper reports using both names from 1875 as if there were two institutes.



From 1864 the Kincaig Institute's building became the meeting place for community events and it didn't take long before it was replaced by a substantial limestone two-storey building. Opening in 1875 its ground floor had two offices for rent, a reading-room with two fireplaces and a library, while upstairs was a 60 by 26ft hall.

The building became the heart of the community with reports from 'Naracoorte' (original spelling) recording a wide variety of societies and groups meeting, performing and competing 'in the hall' or 'in the Institute'.

Kincaig Institute, built 1875
State Library of SA image B 21766/193 taken 1880

Naracoorte and Kincaig Institutes: Two institutes or one?

Having assumed there was a Kincaig and a Naracoorte Institute, I recorded these reports as relating to a Naracoorte Institute. Only reports that specifically referred to the 'Kincaig Institute' did I record as pertaining to that Institute.

This assumption that there were two institutes seemed to be confirmed when I read in a 1909 report in the *Naracoorte Herald* that 'Owing to the merging of the Kincaig Institute into the Naracoorte Institute the rules governing the same have been carefully revised and gazetted and approved by the Executive Council'. I concluded that it took two bodies to have 'a merging'.

I became suspicious in 2023 that there might not have been two Institutes in that area when I realised that the two towns were so close and read that in the 1870s there were about 400 people in Kincaig and only three families in Naracoorte. With those numbers why have two institutes? Also, there was no record of a Naracoorte Institute in the SA Institute's log books. Each institute was required to send in a report twice a year and their statistics were recorded in these log books.

To confirm my suspicion of one institute only, Ken and I stayed overnight at Naracoorte in October 2023. We drove around the town and checked where the Naracoorte Creek originally divided the two towns. We saw that the Kincaig Hotel has kept its original name and is currently in the middle of Naracoorte on Smith Street. Opposite and nearby on Smith Street is the Naracoorte Institute building that did change its name from Kincaig in 1909.

A closer examination of the newspaper articles from 1876, and also to references in my 'bible' – *A Chance to read* by Michael Talbot on the history of the Institute Movement in SA – reveal that none of them refers to a 'Nar(r)acoorte Institute' when reporting about the Institute in Naracoorte before 1909. The first time 'Naracoorte Institute' appears is in 1909, after 'the merging'.

There was only ever one institute in the area and it was a very successful one. It was first affiliated with the SA Institute in 1864 as the Kincaig Institute, changed its name to the Naracoorte Institute in 1909 and was dissolved in 1978-79 when the government was phasing out institute libraries in favour of free public libraries. Naracoorte Institute's impressive building is now the Naracoorte Town Hall.



Naracoorte Institute with 1914 addition

Image: taken by Denis Binnion in 2004

Campbelltown Mechanics' Institute?

By Ken James. Images supplied by Ken

About the author: Ken James is currently engaged in writing a history of Campbelltown and has discovered a piece of evidence that the Campbelltown Hall, which opened in 1926, was a mechanics' institute. In the following notes, Ken provides information about the Campbelltown Hall. Ken is co-author with Pam Baragwanath of *These Walls Speak Volumes: A History of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria*.

Campbelltown is a locality in central Victoria, Australia, 140 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, 13 kilometres from Newstead and 19 kilometres from Clunes. It has had three halls. The first opened in April 1926 and was destroyed by a fire in May 1945. Its replacement opened in 1950, only destroyed in a bushfire on 9 January 1969. A third hall opened in 1972. The hall is located at 15 William Street, Campbelltown.

First Hall, 1926–1945

The history of the original hall goes back to 1912. The following notes by local resident William (Bill) Ross in 1963 discuss its origins. He is the W. Ross in the following notes.

'The history of our hall goes back to about 1913. In that year, the school teacher, Mr John Price, called a meeting to start a tennis club. As there was no court in the township, it was decided to ask the Government to grant the use of the only Crown land allotment left, to be used as a recreation ground. Mr W. Ross was asked to make the application, and to get the help of the Shire Council. The North Riding members interested themselves in the matter, with the result that the Lands Department granted the request. However, when war broke out in 1914, the project was dropped. In 1923 a public meeting was called to discuss the building of a hall and a committee was appointed. The local teacher, Miss Ethel Chapman was appointed secretary. It was mainly due to her ability and determination that the project was successful. After about three years of collecting and entertainments about £300 was raised. The Government gave permission for the Hall to be built on the recreation ground. A building 40 x 24 feet was built and opened in 1926.' (1) Fund raising efforts included hare drives.



Newstead Echo, 9 September 1925, p. 2

Was it a mechanics' institute? As mentioned above, the hall was opened in 1926. Two years later, the information on Campbelltown in the 1928 edition of the Victorian Municipal Directory refers to the hall as a mechanics' institute, as do subsequent issues over many years. Following is part of the 1928 entry – 'Campbelltown – On Joyces Creek, with post and telegraph office, State school, church, mechanics' institute, cemetery and hotel.' (2) The 1926 and 1927 entries make no mention of a hall or mechanics' institute. Other mechanics' institutes listed in the 1928 entry for Creswick Shire were at Allendale (1882), Dean (1890), Kingston (1860), Mollonghip (1903), Newlyn (1924), Rocklyn (1900) and Ullina (1869). (3)

Unfortunately, the Campbelltown Hall file at the Public Record Office in the Public Building files (Series 7882) only contains papers regarding the two replacement halls, and no mention is in them of either hall being a mechanics' institute.

Campbelltown Mechanics' Institute?

Second Hall, 1950–1969

As mentioned earlier, the first hall was destroyed by a fire in the building in 1945. In 1963, Bill Ross also described how the replacement hall came into being. He told how 'after three years of collecting and entertainments about £300 had been collected. £500 of insurance was collected and a successful application was made to the Government for a grant of £850. It was used to buy the vacant Creswick Hospital Infectious Diseases Ward building. A mortgage was obtained from the National Bank and Messrs A. D. Clarke, J. Campbell, R. Mizzen and W. Ross acted as guarantors. The small outstanding debt was paid off by 1962.' (4)

The Creswick Hospital Infectious Diseases Ward building was officially opened by Sir Alexander Peacock on 20 September 1930. It was only used up to 1938 when insufficient patients and the cost to maintain it saw it closed by the Committee and the Creswick Shire Council. Future cases were treated at the Ballarat Hospital. (5)



En route to Campbelltown, 1947

Image: Robert G. Orr, History of Creswick District Hospital 1863–2013, p. 26

The building gave a floor space of 60 x 27 feet. It was remodelled to provide cloak rooms, kitchen, stage and card rooms. With fittings and furnishings, the cost was over £2000. The remodelling was completed in February 1950. The official opening on 19 May 1950 was undertaken by Mr Russell White, MLA.



The second Campbelltown Hall

Photographer: Joan Campbell

On 9 January 1969, the hall, along with Campbelltown State School were destroyed by bushfires.

Article continues overleaf

Campbelltown Mechanics' Institute? continued

Third Hall, 1972– present

Efforts were soon underway to erect a new hall and members of the hall committee visited neighbouring halls to get ideas for the design of a building.

As with the previous halls, community fund raising took place in October 1969, including a walkathon jointly organised by the Creswick, Clunes, Newlyn and Newstead football clubs, the Smeaton Swimming Pool Committee, Mount Prospect and District Tennis Association, and the Campbelltown Hall Committee. Twenty-five per cent of the proceeds went to the hall committee, the balance being divided equally between the other organisations.⁽⁶⁾ In another fund raising effort, the Committee purchased calves which were shared out to farmers to agist and look after, following which they were sold.⁽⁷⁾ In October 1970, a fund raising performance was presented by the Ballarat Light Opera Company. ⁽⁸⁾

The hall was completed in 1972 and opened on 10 March by Mr Evans, MLA. ⁽⁹⁾



Campbelltown Hall, 2023

Photographer: Carolyn Stewart

Footnotes

1. Campbelltown school newsletter *The Spectator*, 11 November 1963, p. 2.
2. Arnell and Jackson, *Victorian Municipal Directory*, Arnold and Jackson, 1928, p. 489.
3. Arnell and Jackson, *Victorian Municipal Directory*, Arnold and Jackson, 1928, pp. 489–490.
4. Campbelltown school newsletter *The Spectator*, undated, 1963.
5. Robert G. Orr, *History of Creswick District Hospital 1863 – 2013*, Robert G. Orr, Creswick, Creswick and District Historical Society, 2013, p. 26.
6. *Newstead Echo*, 24 September 1969, p. 1.
7. *Newstead News*, 3 February 1970, p. 2.
8. *Newstead News*, 28 October 1970, p. 2.
9. *Tarrangower Times*, 23 February 1972, p. 1.

TOLMIE.

On the 2nd inst. a very successful dance was held here to celebrate the opening of the new Mechanics Institute, Mr. James Stewart enlised the residents on their enterprise in erecting such a fine building, and formally declared the hall open. A first rate supper was provided by the ladies committee, after which dancing was continued until the early hours of the morning. During the evening harmony was contributed by Mr. J. Beale. Excellent music was supplied by Messrs. M. and J. Dodemalde (violin), and Miss V. Dodemalde and Mr. W. Mitchell (piano). Mr. T. Powell again proved an efficient and capable M.C. The committee desire to thank all those who helped to make the opening such a brilliant success, socially and financially.

Tolmie Mechanics' Hall on TV

Tolmie Mechanics' Hall recently featured in a re-run of an ABC television *Back Roads* episode anchored by Heather Ewart. The segment on the Community Hall included Linda Terry. *Back Roads* often features the heart of the various communities – the local Hall. Tolmie is a venue for the annual High Country Halls Music Festival, shared with Bonnie Doon, Jamieson, Merrijig and Merton. - Supplied by Jim Lowden.

Tolmie Mechanics' Institute was opened on July 2, 1920 with a very successful dance, as this report from the *Benalla Standard* of July 13, 1920 tells us.

People in the News

By Jim Lowden

David Jochinke, a former President of the Sailor's Home Mechanics' Institute and Wimmera mover and shaker, has recently been elected President of the National Farmers' Federation. A member of a third generation farming family, David duxed at Longerenong Agricultural College, undertook leadership courses at Marcus Oldham and Duchy Colleges and was a Nuffield Fellow. He has served on the Committee of Wimmera Machinery Field Days since 2006, the Board of the Victorian Farmers' Federation, of which he was President and has been on the Board of the National Farmers' Federation since 2017. David is well placed to represent farming with a 3000 hectare mixed sheep and cropping property at Murra Warra. Now, as the new President of the NFF he has hit the ground running with a number of pithy TV grab interviews.

Professor Stefan Petrow attended the launching of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria at Kilmore in 1998, and was the keynote speaker there. He was awarded the prestigious Royal Society of Tasmania's Clive Lord Memorial Medal in 2022 for his sustained service in the research of Tasmanian history. More recently though he has authored *A Priceless Gift: The Launceston Mechanics' Institute and Public Library 1906 to 1948*. This is a follow on to his *Going to the Mechanics: A History of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842-1914* published in 1998. *A Priceless Gift*, which reflects a lot of material that has been assembled by the Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, was published by the Friends of the Library, Launceston and is publication number four in their Local History Series. Stefan is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Tasmania. (see pages 12 & 13 for more about *A Priceless Gift*)



Professor Stefan Petrow

Dr Julann Meabank is another person who was also at Kilmore in 1998 and served as MIV's first newsletter editor. Julann is now living on a rural property near Braidwood in NSW, where she raises sheep and donkeys. A recent drive-by found her in fine fettle with fond memories of MIV. Julann has gifted her three-volume set of Les Blake's monumental compilation *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, published in 1973, to the Mechanics' Institutes Research Centre. This will be useful for quick reference, as many schools in Victoria either started in, or later used a Mechanics' Institute, after a fire or storm. Some Halls were even used as supplementary or overflow accommodation until a new school or extra rooms were built. Many Institutes were, and some still are, venues for annual concerts or fundraisers.

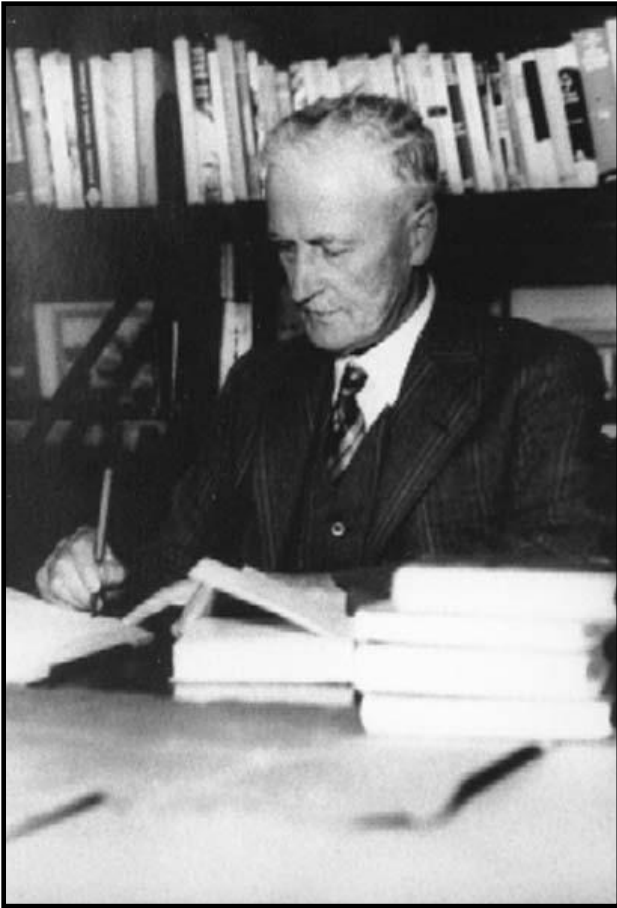
The name of **Dr Michael Richard 'Mike' Stephens** featured in the list of Australia Day Honours with the award of an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) 'for significant service to primary industry and to the community'. Many will have met Mike at the Mechanics' Institutes Australia 2018 – Ballarat Conference. More recently he served a term as President of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute and continues as a long-time member of its Board. Mike is a graduate of Marcus Oldham Farm Management College, Geelong and has headed a farm management consultancy based at Yendon, near Ballarat, for most of his adult life. He has had a wide involvement in industry, education and community affairs. One of Mike's favourite sayings is 'There's not much 'I' in the work that we do, it's done by a team'.

Professor Sally Wheeler took up the role of Vice-Chancellor of Birkbeck University of London on January 1, 2024. Previous to this Sally had been Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the Australian National University in Canberra since 2018. Worcestershire-born, she read in law at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford and took her PhD from Pembroke College, Oxford. She has had a wide academic experience with postings at a number of Universities: Nottingham; Brunel; Keele; Manchester; Birkbeck; Belfast; and Leeds. She has also been Visiting Professor at: University College Dublin; University of Waikato; and Jilin University in China. Sally sits on the editorial board of many legal journals and has published widely, notably in contract and company law. We wish Sally well in her new role as Birkbeck enters its third century as an innovative educator.

Launceston: From Mechanics' Institute to Regional Library

By Mike McCausland

All over Australia so many mechanics' institutes paved the way for social and cultural institutions vital to their regions. In Tasmania a watershed year was 1890 when the Launceston Mechanics' Institute changed its name by Act of Parliament to include 'and Public Library', admitted the general public to its Reading Room, and passed its eclectic collection of minerals, biological specimens, artworks and curios to the local council to found the Victoria Museum & Art Gallery.



For the next 55 years the LMI&PL remained a subscription library; only paying members could borrow from it. The 1860 building was enlarged and renovated repeatedly to house its growing collection, at its peak nearly 50,000 volumes of fiction, nonfiction, periodicals and reference works.

The story of this transformation over the first half of the Twentieth Century has recently been meticulously documented by Emeritus Professor at the University of Tasmania, Dr Stefan Petrow. His book, a follow up to his earlier history of the Launceston Mechanics Institute from 1842 to 1914, is titled *A Priceless Gift: the Launceston Mechanics' Institute and Public Library 1906 to 1948*. It has been published by the Friends of the Library, Launceston and launched late in 2023.

In 1945 the Launceston Public Library became a free library for borrowing and was open to all Launceston residents. Focusing on the people who promoted, shaped and advanced its work, this history of the period 1906 to 1948 explains how the library, under the guiding hand of its librarian Joe Forward, built its widely admired collections, including its book, Tasmaniana and newspaper collections and Children's Library.

Above: Joe Forward, Librarian 1906 to 1948.

Below: Launceston MI with the newly installed trolley bus stop outside. Images: State Library of Tasmania.



Launceston: From Mechanics' Institute to Regional Library

It also reveals how important reading became in 1930s Launceston and what people of all ages were reading. It highlights points of tension, controversy and misbehavior, explores competition from other libraries, and teases out the social and political reasons why the library became a free public library. Full of insight and telling detail, this book gives one of Launceston's most venerable institutions the recognition its contribution to the city so richly deserves.

A Priceless Gift is A4 in size, 173 pages in length and costs \$35.00. Postage is \$15.00 for one or two copies (EFT details: Bendigo Bank BSB 633-000, account # 172 969 347). For enquiries or to purchase copies, please email launceston.friends@gmail.com or phone 0363272540.

A PRICELESS GIFT

*The Launceston Mechanics' Institute
and Public Library 1906 to 1948*



Stefan Petrow

Institutes celebrating Milestones

By Jim Lowden

Birkbeck, University of London

COVID interrupted many events around the world including the bicentenary of Birkbeck, University of London. Birkbeck is a direct descendant of the London Mechanics' Institution established by George Birkbeck and others on 11 November 1823. Its trailblazing in technical and adult education, and the later involvement of its membership led to the establishment of London University and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, pioneers of tertiary education and technical and educational publishing, respectively.

Birkbeck concluded their celebrations with a landmark event on 13 December 2023, The Foundation Day Dinner in the Mansion House, courtesy of the Lord Mayor of London, Professor Michael Mainelli, MStJ. (Professor Mainelli, until his recent retirement, was connected with Gresham University, which traces its foundation back to 1597 and the will of Sir Thomas Gresham which was to provide 'new learning' to the Londoners, and it still does, by providing around 140 free public lectures each year.)

Over two hundred guests were seated at twenty-five tables, with each table named for a Birkbeck luminary. Naturally there was a table each for Birkbeck and Brougham, but there were also tables badged for the notable female staff and graduates: Annie Besant; Alice Coleman; Rosalind Franklin; Helen Gwynne-Vaughan; Edith Lanchester; Ada Lovelock; Lillian Penson; Marion Rosenberg; Phyllis Somers; Marie Stopes; and Virginia Woolf. We would like to think that Webb represented that influential duo Sidney and Beatrice, but it was Sidney who had the Birkbeck connection.

On hand was the Chancellor of the University of London, Her Royal Highness, Anne, the Princess Royal. Princess Anne noted the long Royal connection with Birkbeck and how Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex laid the foundation stone of the Institute building back in 1825. (That stone is now in the Malet Street, Bloomsbury, Birkbeck Administration Building, opened by Princess Anne's Grandmother, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother back in 1953.) The Princess Royal then went on to outline the Royal family's unbroken connection with Birkbeck.

Birkbeck's Vice-Chancellor Professor David Latchman CBE also spoke on how Birkbeck's proclaimed 'universal benefits of the blessings of knowledge', still pervaded Birkbeck's ethos and how technology had enabled its classes to be beamed 'real time' around the

world fulfilling its commitment to its mission of 'Life Long Learning'. After twenty years Professor Latchman said he was stepping down as Vice-Chancellor and in alluding to the incoming, Vice-Chancellor Professor Sally Wheeler, OBE, said 'I know that the University is good hands with her [Professor Wheeler], and she will continue to take Birkbeck from strength to strength.'

The University of London's Vice-Chancellor Professor Wendy Thomson, CBE, then gave an address on the Birkbeck's origins and its becoming a constituent part of University of London in 1913. She outlined its unique contribution to adult education and knew that it would continue to contribute and thrive under the University of London banner. (Professor Thomson authored and compiled a small booklet outlining Birkbeck's history and this was distributed to The Foundation Day Dinner guests. MIV has been sent a copy of the Dinner Program, with a list of attendees, for the MIRC.)



Princess Anne, the Princess Royal cutting the cake

Following the drinks on arrival in the Mansion House Salon, the three course meal was served in the Egyptian Hall, where, after the speeches the Birkbeck's 200th Anniversary Cake was cut. 'Carriages' were called at 10pm.

Birkbeck is a *truly unique Institution*, and we wish Professor Sally Wheeler, well in her new role and may Birkbeck power on from strength to strength. And we thank Professor David Latchman for his twenty years as Vice-Chancellor at Birkbeck and wish him well in his retirement.

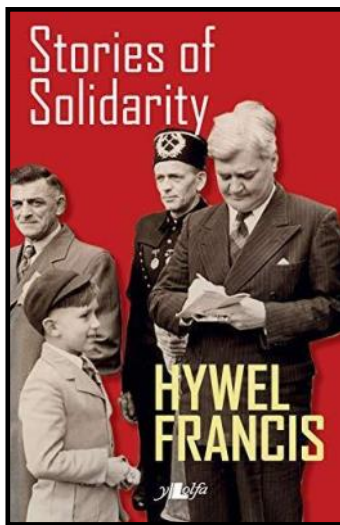
(Also present at the Dinner was Birkbeck's Professor Emerita Joanna Bourke, author of *Birkbeck: 200 Hundred Years of Radical Learning for Working People*, a copy of which is available for use at the Mechanics' Institute Resource Centre at PMI.)

Institutes celebrating Milestones

South Wales Miner's Library

The University of Swansea's South Wales Miner's Library, 50th Anniversary celebration, was also curtailed by COVID. However, they took it online, with their integrated Miner's Lamp '50' logo, and its '50 Items at the South Wales Miner's Library' exhibition. Staff chose the items to reflect the diversity of the holdings of the Library, largely representative of the remnant collections of more than one hundred Miner's Institutes which the Library has assembled. They posted one item each week on their website and an aggregation of items 1-20 can be seen at <https://collections.swansea.ac.uk/s/swml-50/page/history-swml>

This is well worth a run through to show the diversity of Miners' Institute activity and influence. The book, *Stories of Solidarity* (2018), by the late Hywel Francis, the 'architect' of the South Sales Miners' Library back in 1973, is appropriately featured as item 15. Hywel wrote 'It has always been my view for celebrating communities which place great store on solidarity. That act of celebration should define us'.



Headed up by Sian Williams, who spoke at MIW 2016 – San Francisco and MIA 2018 – Ballarat, the South Wales Miners' Library is engaged in much outreach particularly in the Dulais Valley and at the Banwen Campus.

(The other great collection of Mechanics' Institute and Working Man material is at the Working Class Movement Library at Salford, near Manchester. Established in 1958, this was built on the private collections of Eddie and Ruth Frow, and now occupies an entire building of its own, with a cottage fruit and vegetable garden attached.)

Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution

This year, 2024, celebrates the two hundred year milestone since the founding of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (BRLSI). Indeed, much has happened since the late Bob Draper enlightened us on the Institution's near death back at Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide 2004 – Prahran. The BRLSI impeccably hosted Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide 2009 – Bath from which the Self Help Proceedings were published.

The BRLSI was founded in 1824 'to enrich the cultural life of Bath and the wider world, and to promote the joy of learning among new generations of the curious'. It was headed up by Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, Marquis of Lansdowne as its first President and Prince William, Duke of Clarence became patron. Whilst Royal patronage has continued it received its first Royal visit since its foundation by Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh last year.

BRLSI has powered on since its founding, even in spite of COVID, lectures continued online and still do as 'hybrid'. Their publishing program has produced a considerable range of books and booklets. (A set is available for use at the Mechanics' Institutes Resource Centre at Prahran.) Many of the 120 lectures delivered annually now appear on Youtube and their exhibitions, which draw on their 150,000 artefacts and books, are on their website.

One 2018 exhibition Chosen featured individual items, which invited guest curators had selected from the BRLSI collection. Journalist and historian Richard Wyatt chose a bottle of liquid which carries the label 'Part of the liquor in which the body of Lord Nelson was preserved – after the Battle of Trafalgar'. With the body of Nelson aboard, the Victory was towed back to England, via Gibraltar, a voyage of a duration of forty-four days. It seems an implausible story but Wyatt has sleuthed it out to make it very probable.

Fast forward to today, the BRLSI is now headed by Professor Ian Gadd, of Spa University, as President, but Charles Maurice Petty-Fitzmaurice, Lord Kerry, the great-great-great-great grandson of the Marquis of Lansdowne has agreed to become Honorary President for the bicentennial year. The bicentennial's theme is 'Two Hundred Years of Inspiring Minds' and it will cement BRLSI's place as 'the cultural hub' of Bath. Follow the year on their website <https://www.brlsi.org/>

Clydebank Mechanics' Institute

By Heather Arnold

You can read the original of this article, with footnotes, here

<https://victoriaspast.blogspot.com/2024/03/clydebank-mechanics-institute.html>

In November 1893 the *Gippsland Mercury* reported on an Avon Shire Council meeting and one of the items on the Agenda was the Clydebank Mechanics' Institute. It is published here in full as it gives some information about other local Mechanics' Institutes -

A deputation consisting of Messrs M'llwain, Mitchell, and Miller waited on the council. Mr M'llwain said that they wished to see if the council would give them some assistance towards putting up a Mechanics at Clydebank, as they wanted some place for recreative purposes and to hold meetings in. They had thought that they would have been able to build it themselves, but found that they were unable to do so, as times were so bad, and then, thought that they might get a little assistance from the council.

The President: Monetary assistance? Mr M'llwain: Yes. Cr Latham: Where do you think of erecting it? Mr M'llwain: Near the schoolhouse.

Mr M'llwain: I do not come to ask for £10 and take £5, but have come to ask for what I think the council can afford to give - £50. Cr Latham said that he had been president when the Stratford Mechanics had applied for £100 or £200, and they were granted £20, and it was then agreed that any other portion of the Avon Shire erecting a Mechanics' should have a donation of the same amount. The Heart people had received that amount, and it was held in trust until they commenced to build, and was bearing interest, and they were going to build shortly, and there was an expression given then that when the Stratford Mechanics was given £20 any other portion of the shire building an institute was to receive one donation of a similar amount.

The President: I do not think that it is right to get money from the council and put it in the bank, unless they are going to build at once. Cr Latham: I think The Heart people ought make an effort with respect to it. Cr Killeen said that he had made some remarks at a recent meeting at The Heart, and he thought that they would bear fruit.

The Secretary then said that the Dargo Mechanics had received £5, The Heart £20, in December, 1889; Stratford £20, in November, 1887, and a second donation of £10 in December, 1889. Cr. Killeen: When The Heart people got the £20 it was said that the Stratford Mechanics had received £75 altogether. The

Secretary: It was only £30. The President: We have placed the limit at £20 and cannot exceed it, and Mr M'llwain says that he does not come to ask for £10 and get £5, but if he asks for £50 he cannot expect to get that. I would be happy to support a motion that they get £20, but we cannot, give any larger sum.

Mr M'llwain said that the reason that made him ask for £50, was that in consequence of the Clydebank creamery having been erected the council would not now have to spend money on roads that had hitherto been used. He would be thankful for the £20 to-day, and the council might put it on the minutes that they would allow them another £20 next year in consequence of not having to spend money on the roads that he had referred to. The President: The council cannot bind their successors.

Mr M'llwain : Can I apply next year? The President: Oh! yes; but I cannot say what answer you will get. Cr Crockett: I wish that this application had come in at an earlier date, as I think that the east riding will be in a curious position as regards paying their share, as they have so little placed on their estimates for contingencies. The east riding estimates are fixed, but personally I am in favour of it. Cr Thomson moved, and Cr Killeen seconded, that £20 be given towards building a Mechanics at Clydebank. The motion was carried unanimously.

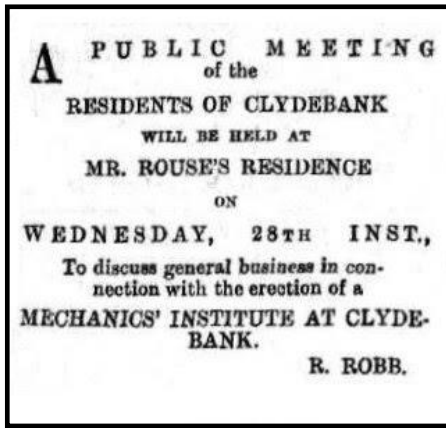
The President: I would suggest that the money be not drawn until it is wanted, as I do not think it is right to do so. Cr Killeen: I think they should get the cheque before they go away. Mr Mitchell said that the council had behaved very well to them, as that was the limit they had set on granting in such cases. Several councillors suggested that if The Heart people did not soon erect their Mechanics that the £20 granted to them for that purpose should be given to the Clydebank people. Cr Latham said that Cr Killeen should take what had been said to heart, and The Heart people should make a commencement. They had been in possession of this money since 1889, and had done nothing yet. The President said that he was of the same opinion as Cr Latham.

Mr M'llwain: I would be thankful if you gave me the cheque to-day to show the people down there. The President: You will get it all right. Have you a properly constituted committee, secretary and treasurer?

Clydebank Mechanics' Institute

Mr M'Ilwain said that they had not appointed any yet. The President: We cannot hand it over till you have properly constituted officers. Cr Thomson: Show them the resolution in the paper. The deputation then withdrew.

That seemed like a good result for the people of Clydebank and in March 1894 a public meeting was held at Clydebank to discuss the erection of a Mechanics' Institute. The meeting was held at Mr Rouse's Residence, this was my great-grandfather, James Rouse.



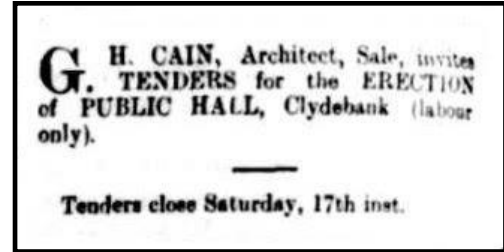
Gippsland Mercury, March 22 1894

It appears that nothing came of this early attempt to erect a Mechanics' Institute, and in 1904 a new committee was formed and the early minute books list the members (or the regular attendees) as - President J.R Jenkins; Secretary Mr McKay and committee - J.M. McIlwain, Murphy Brothers, Miller Brothers (J. & R. Miller) and Mr Robb.

The 1903 Electoral roll gives a few more details about these men - John Roberts Jenkins, Grazier; James McIlwain, farmer; Murphy Brothers - George, James, John, Robert and Williams, all farmers, are listed on the Roll; Miller Brothers - presumably John and Robert - farmers; William John Robb, a farmer. Angus McKay was the head teacher at Clydebank school, he left in May 1908, after four years as he was transferred to Sale North school. James Rouse, who was involved in the 1890s effort to have a Mechanics' Institute, had left Clydebank in 1903, to take up land at Cora Lynn, on the Koo Wee Rup Swamp.

From 1905 the community raised money for the Hall with raffles, dances, euchre tournaments and donations. In February 1906 tenders were invited for the erection of the Clydebank Hall by the architect, G.H. Cain. This was for labour only, the committee having already acquired

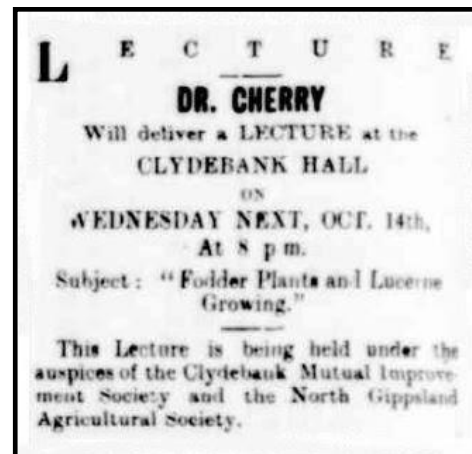
the timber, based on Mr Cain's calculations, from Mr Treloar, for £69/12/6. The builder of the hall was C. Poole, whose tender price was £20.



Gippsland Times February 15, 1906

The Architect, George Henry Cain, born in 1870 and was based in Sale. In 1895 he took over the business of the late Mr J. H. W. Pettit of Sale, having worked with him for the previous four years. G.H. Cain designed many buildings in Sale, was the Architect for the Anglican Diocese of Sale and thus designed many Gippsland Churches. In 1904 he also designed the additions and alterations to the Cowwarr Mechanics' Institute. In the 1880s his father, George Cain had been the President of the Sale Mechanics' Institute.

The Clydebank Hall was opened by June 1906, but I don't have an exact date. As you might expect the usual range of activities took place - dances, concerts and public meetings. In October 1908 Dr Cherry gave a lecture on Fodder Plants and Lucerne Growing under the auspices Clydebank Mutual Improvement Society and the North Gippsland Agricultural Society. Other functions included a Maypole Fair to raise money for the Anglican Church building and a concert for the Methodist Church.



Gippsland Times October 12, 1908

Article continues overleaf

Clydebank Mechanics Institute, continued

During World War One events included a Belgium Relief Fund concert and other patriotic concerts; recruiting meetings and farewells to local soldiers Robert Miller, Willie Jenkins and Johnnie McFadden and at a later function, Trooper Hagan and Privates White, Scott, H. Sanders, W. Sanders, Wilson and Pickup. In April 1918 a welcome home was held for Lieutenant T.J. Adlard.

In April 1921 the *Gippsland Times* reported on this interesting function -

In the Clydebank Hall on Saturday afternoon the ceremony of handing over the machine gun allotted Clydebank as its war trophy eventuated in the presence of a large assemblage, both young and old. The machine gun has been placed under the honour roll in the hall, on which was placed a floral wreath in commemoration of Anzac Day, and in memory of the local soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice. Cr. Chinn, who presided (in the unavoidable absence of the President of the Shire), intimated that the trustees appointed by the shire to take care of the gun were Messrs. Johnson Thomson (father of two soldiers), Arnold Hagan (a returned soldier), and himself. He pointed out that the trophy would serve to remind the people of the part played by the people of the district in the war.

In November 1936 the *Gippsland Times* noted in a report from of an Avon Shire Council meeting that correspondence had been received *From Public Health Department, stating that the plans and specifications for alterations and additions to Clydebank Mechanics' Institute had been approved of.* Tenders were called that same month, but as reported in March 1937 - *Clydebank - Public Hall Meeting - There was only a moderate attendance at the public meeting called by advertisement to consider matters effecting the public hall. It had been proposed that the hall be removed from its present location to another site about four miles towards Airly. The meeting after due consideration, decided that it would be as well to let the hall remain where it is. A short while ago tenders were called for enlargement but only one tender was received and that was considered to be too high.*

During World War Two the reports I could find of functions in the Hall were all of a patriotic nature. In July 1940 the Stratford War Service Fund Committee held a dance and euchre night. In January 1941 a farewell was held at the hall for Private Norman Fox, where he was presented with a brush and comb set and a wallet; a few months later in the June *Pte. Reginald Nicholls and Gunner Campbell Thomson were each presented with a pen and pencil set from the Clydebank residents.*

In July 1942, the local school children held a concert to raise money for the State Schools' Patriotic Fund and at the same event *the young ladies of Clydebank organised a stall which was so well stocked that along with several cash donations the sum of £12 16/ was raised - the money going to the Avon Shire Prisoner of War Fund.* In November 1943 a euchre and dance night was held in aid of the State Schools' War Service Fund; in March 1944 euchre and dancing was once again held at the hall, this time in aid of the Prisoners of War Fund and a year later in March 1945 in aid of Red Shield and the Y.M.C.A. patriotic funds.

In June 1947 it was reported that - *the Clydebank hall on Wednesday night was the scene of a pleasant function when the certificates printed and framed by the Avon Shire Council were presented to Members of the fighting forces who enlisted from the Clydebank district. Certificates were presented to Messrs. Robin and Malcolm Cowie, Gordon Chinn, Jock Fulton, Tom Granger, Matt Harris, Gordon Hughes, Allan Murphy, Vincent Murphy, John Login, Eric Murphy, Reg Nicholls, Michael Purcell, Thomas Purcell, Lloyd Ross, Roy Smith, Campbell Thomson, Colin Thomson and David Thomson.*



Airly Clydebank Hall in 2019 . Image from <https://www.facebook.com/AirlyClydebankHall>

In May 24, 1955 a wind-up meeting was held by the Clydebank Hall Committee and the balance of the funds were transferred to the Clydebank Airly Hall Committee. The Hall itself was also moved to Airly and is now known as the Airly Clydebank Hall.

Vale Tim Hayes

By Jim Lowden



Some will remember Tim Hayes from the day our bus tour called by the now well-known Clunes Free Library Mechanics' Institute* around 2005. He showed us through the then down at heel building, occupied by a family of pigeons, which seemed to getting in via a broken window. MIV unanimously voted that day to provide the money to fix the window!

Today fully restored the Clunes Free Library, is now the home of the Clunes Neighbourhood House and is the meeting place of key local groups.

Now back to our subject, Timothy Kevin Hayes was born at Coburg in 1950, the youngest of four boys born over five years. He was educated at St Mary's and Marist Schools in Brunswick and then went on to Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, where did an arts course and obtained a Certificate of Proficiency in Local Government. Tim then spent the next thirty years of his life in Local Government with postings at: Coburg; Camberwell; Kilmore and Essendon.

In retirement, he moved to a sleepy Clunes in 1998 and purchased a former hotel building and opened a restaurant. This was to become the meeting place and think tank for Clunes on a Friday afternoon. Tim's next venture was Widow Twankey's Confectionery Emporium in Fraser Street, Clunes' near deserted main street. The Widow Twankey's was the Aladdin's cave of lollies, and attracted national publicity and a wide clientele. (Prime Minister, Julia Gillard even patronised Widow Twankey's, when in town.)

At Clunes, Tim threw himself into community life and the Free Library building needed a use, but the walls were deemed unstable, which took some time to sort out, but it served initially as an Information Centre. Clunes required a raison d'être and a Booktown was suggested in 2007 and as Secretary he drove that, along with subsequent other community projects of film, theatre, show, museum, art, market, Wesley College, Christmas in Clunes, etc., to provide a range of annual events.



Free Library, Clunes, in 1959. Photographer: Colin Caldwell.
State Library of Victoria image H84.276/7/18C

Wherever he went, Tim was the master grant writer and consummate organiser, he aimed high and achieved much for the various communities in which he worked. His inclusive networking included the annual Mayoral Dinner and Ecumenical Church Service and direct political engagement at both State and Federal levels.

Tim died at Ballarat on 23 October 2023 and some four hundred people gathered at the Clunes Showground Pavilion for the Memorial Service on 24 November 2023 to pay tribute to this remarkable man who spent his life supporting 'community'. This very much resonated with his oft repeated epithet 'You know there is nothing better than getting together with good friends, enjoying good food, good wine and good conversation...' Rest in Eternal Peace Tim!

*The Clunes Free Library has its genesis back in 1852 when a number of local ladies came together to learn and read.

Badger Creek Hall is turning 100 in 2025

Badger Creek Hall is planning for its centenary in February 2025. Their busy committee of management wish to form a Centenary Working Group to bring to life ideas for the celebration, especially help to seek grants/funding to pay for the Centenary. If you have a connection to the Hall or wish to be involved in the planning of the celebrations, contact Kathy on 5962 3639 or email enquiries@badgercreekhall.org.au



The Badger Creek Hall

Image: Badger Creek Hall Facebook page

This is an abridged report of the opening of the Badger Creek Hall from the *Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian* of February 21, 1925. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60209629>

BADGER CREEK AWAKENING. NEW PUBLIC HALL. BIG OPENING NIGHT

The residents of Badger Creek and district have built it fine hall for public purposes. The building was erected, practically, in one day, by voluntary labor, and the money for the material was obtained by issuing debentures amongst the residents. The Granton Sawmill gave liberal discount on much of the material. Disregarding superstition, the hall was opened on Friday, the 13th February. Mr E.H. Everard, M.L.A., performed the opening ceremony and the opening entertainment was arranged by Misses Barnett, of "Summerleigh Lodge."

Never before in the history of Badger Creek has there been such an assemblage. Dozens of motor cars, cabs, drays and motor lorries were parked amongst the eucalypts which surround the hall. The bright lights from the cars threw weird shafts of light into the encompassing bush. It is estimated that three hundred people assisted in making the night a memorable one. There was a thrill of enthusiasm through all the proceedings.

Cr. A. J. Mullett, president of the shire, in receiving Mr. Everard, said that the people of Badger Creek welcomed their member amongst them. Mr Everard helped them in every possible way. Although a man of many engagements, he was never too busy to assist in promoting the interests of the people of the district. It had been suggested that when Mr. Everard became Premier of Victoria he should deliver his first policy speech in the hall at Badger Creek. The idea of a public hall had been the result of a happy inspiration of the Badger Creek Progress Association.

Badger Creek Hall is turning 100 in 2025

Mr. Everard, who was warmly received, complimented the people of Badger Creek and district on the fine building which their community work had enabled them to erect. He said that the people of Healesville were also to be congratulated on the fact that they had come out in such numbers to help make the evening such a great success. They likewise had evinced that community spirit which stood for so much in making life brighter and happier. The Hall was a fine building, and reflected credit on the designer and the builder. He had been asked to submit the plans to the Health department, and that department had told him that it was at pleasure to deal with a plan which was so acceptable and complete. He felt glad that he had been asked to participate in such a pleasant function, and he hoped the people of the district would have many similar happy gatherings. He had great pleasure in declaring open the Badger Creek public hall.

The concert was an excellent one. The artists were: Mrs. Guthridge, Misses Barnett, Mr. Kirwan, Mr. Smith, the Messrs. Barnett, and Mr. Robert Ladie, O.B.E. Every item was a success and each was enthusiastically encored. Mr. Eadie proposed a vote of thanks to the Misses Barnett for their keen and hearty support. He said they had offered to supply the program for the concert, and, as usual where they were concerned, it had proved a great success. It was their custom to assist in promoting the interests of the district in which they lived. He hoped that the new hall would prove a happy meeting place. He trusted that they would learn there to know one another better, and that they would look for the good points in each other. There would be an energetic committee and during the year there would be dances, concerts, cards and games and the intellectual side would be kept well in mind.

Mr. Clarke, the president of the Badger Creek Progress Association, proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Everard, whom he eulogised and thanked. Mr. Clarke remarked that the successful consummation of the work of building the hall was due in a large measure to an energetic working committee comprising Mr. George McCrohan, Mr. Eadie and Mr. Thorpe. He also pointed out that, in the first place, Mr. W. J. Dawborn had given the land. This grant of land had been increased by Mr. Coverlid. He thought that the thanks of the community around Badger Creek were especially due to these gentlemen.

The opening of the hall was a memorable event in the history of Badger Creek, and nothing so popular had ever before taken place in that district.The idea of building a hall originated through the erection of the grand Memorial Hall at Healesville, and as the old council hall was to be removed a suggestion was made to Mr. A. E. Thorpe, hon. secretary of the Badger Creek Progress Association, that an effort should be made to give the Badger Creek people an opportunity of securing it. The association took up the matter wholeheartedly, and a committee was formed, Messrs. R. Eadie and R. G. McCrohan being deputed to examine the old hall, with the view to making an offer; but it was decided by the association that steps should be taken to erect a new

hall....The hall is built of timber and fibro cement, with "Dindi" (Granton Company's) flooring and lining, wonderfully well put together, and is as solid on its foundations as a brick structure. The seating capacity is set down at 230, and it was gratifying to see that at the opening ceremony every available inch was crammed to its uttermost.

At the conclusion of the evening hearty cheers were given for all the helpers, and Mr. Everard jovially predicted a new era of happiness and prosperity at Badger Creek.

Lilydale Express, July 24, 1925

Kiln Seasoned Hardwood
(MOUNTAIN ASH)

Floorings and Linings
DINDI BRAND
(Registered)

"The Flooring that DOES NOT Shrink"

MILLED AND SEASONED IN YOUR OWN DISTRICT

Special Prices for Local and Country Orders

PROMPT DELIVERIES.

Granton Saw Mills and Timber Seasoning Ltd.

Telephones 108 and 127 ————— HEALESVILLE

Garfield Public Hall

By Heather Arnold

You can read the original of this article, with footnotes, here
<https://kooweerupswamphistory.blogspot.com/2014/06/garfield-public-hall.html>

The Garfield Mechanics' Institute was opened in March 1889. Garfield is a small town in West Gippsland, on the main Gippsland Railway line. The town was originally called Cannibal Creek and re-named Garfield in 1887 in honour of the assassinated American President, James Abram Garfield, who was shot on July 2, 1881 and died September 19, 1881 at the age of 49.

In the 1890s Mechanics' Institutes had to send in a return to the Government and these returns were published in the annual *Statistical Register for the Colony of Victoria compiled from official records in the office of the Government Statist*. Garfield appears in the 1890, 1891 and 1892 editions of the Statistical Registers. They tell us that the cost of the building was £224 and that it initially had a Library of 100 volumes; in 1891 the number of books had increased to 150, it was open from 7.00pm to 9.00pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays and had 500 visits through the year. In 1892 the Library had decreased to 120, the opening hours were the same and the number of visits was not listed.

The new Garfield Mechanics' Institute was used for a variety of functions. In October 1889, the *Great Southern Advocate* reported that-

A conversazione was held in the Mechanics' Institute on the 4th inst. The attendance was very large considering the state of the weather. The following ladies and gentlemen took part in the programme provided: Miss Garrett played "Les Cloches du Monasterie" with great taste and execution. Mesdames Skinner, Spence, and Canning, with the Misses Skinner, Canning, and Jefferson, contributed some vocal and instrumental selections. Miss Watson and Master Farrow recited. Mr. Spence did not appear to remember the words of the pretty little ballad he sang, which met with faint applause. Messrs. Carter, Jefferson, and Garrett were encored for the rendition of their comic songs. Mr. Pollock's song, "Happy Moments" and Mr. Murphy's "The Good Rhine Wine" elicited warm approval from the audience. Mr. Edwards, suffering from a severe cold, attempted to sing "Nil Desperandum" but his voice was almost inaudible. Mr. Skinner sang "Doctor Quack" with his usual ability. The three consecutive comic songs of Mr. Hargreaves, completely took the audience by storm, thus proving that the comical element is better appreciated in Garfield than the sentimental. The services of those old favorites, Mr. and Mrs. Skinner, are quite indispensable to Garfield.

The Mechanics' Institute very nearly had a short life as in August 1890 the *Warragul Guardian* noted that -
On Sunday evening last an attempt was made to burn down the Mechanics' Institute, at Garfield. Mr. Ritchie who lives in the neighbourhood noticing a bright reflexion through the window of the hall, and knowing no one should be in there at the time went across to the building. He found the door open and the building on fire, but fortunately was able to extinguish the flames before they had attained any material headway. Immediately after he had successfully achieved this object, he informed Constable Canty of the occurrence, who with a party of trackers started to discover the incendiary. So far we have no information as to the search for the incendiary having been successful.

I have no information as to where this first hall was located or what happened to it, but by 1902 there was a movement in the town for a new Hall and a committee was formed to start collecting money and fund raising activities such as balls at Tynong and Iona were held over that year and the next. This is the report of the ball at Tynong in July 1903 from the *South Bourke & Mornington Journal* -
The ball held at Tynong on Friday last was in aid of the Garfield Hall, and turned out to be very successful. It was carried out in a creditable manner, as is usual when this district arranges anything for the benefit of Garfield. The catering was splendid, and reflects great credit on Mr. Bird (Garfield) for the splendid, small goods he supplied, there being full and plenty for all. The committee, which consisted of Messrs. Hogan, Rutledge, R. Hardwick, A Thorne, G Middenway, C Register, J. Gillespie, F. Edis (Sec.); Misses Rutledge, and Middenway, deserve great praise for the way they worked to bring things to a successful issue. The musicians Messrs. F. Elis (violinist) J. Rutledge (melodian) supplied music of a splendid description, and were heartily thanked for their services gratuitously given. Mr. G. Ellis acted as M.C. and carried out his duties in a worthy manner.

Garfield Public Hall

At a public meeting held on July 4, 1904 it was decided to purchase some land, on the north side of the railway line and opposite the Railway Station, to build the new public hall. The land, next to the School, was purchased from Mr J.M Gillespie for £10.00 and an *energetic working committee was appointed to further the movement, which is undoubtedly another step towards the improvement of the township*. The Secretary of the Committee was John Daly, the school teacher. The rest of the committee were J.J. Lyons, C. Pitt, G. Park, W.J. Walker and G.W. Ellis.

The official opening of the Hall was on Saturday, November 26 1904 with a concert of *a high class nature*. A report of the official opening in the *Bunyip and Garfield Express* said that *the hall was a very commodious building, capable of accommodating between 250 and 300 people. It is constructed of pine walls with hardwood beams and is very tastefully designed. The staging and dressing rooms being up to date, altogether no fault could be found with the structure. The main hall is 45 by 25 feet width, walls 14 feet, with stage fitted up in latest style and built into the foundation. In addition there were two dressing rooms which could be opened to one large room, 25 feet by 10 feet and used for Lodge meetings etc. The hall was designed by J.H. Walker and built by Ingebert Gunnelson.*



Garfield Public Hall, which opened in 1904
Berwick Pakenham Historical Society photograph (image has been cropped)

There had been an earlier function in the hall when the Garfield Branch of the Australian Natives Association (A.N.A) had held a banquet there on November 18. The A.N.A was a Friendly Society, with the aim of offering financial assistance to its members so thus provided sick pay and funeral benefits. It also aimed to promote the moral, social and intellectual improvement of its members.

The opening ball was held on Wednesday, December 7, which was *an unqualified success* according to the *Bunyip & Garfield Express*. Other early functions included the Garfield Cricket Club's concert and ball held on December 30, where *dancing was kept up till the early hours of the morn*. In the August of 1905 a progressive euchre party and dance was held by the Garfield Progressive Association and in the same month the A.N.A organized a public lecture where Senator Findlay spoke about his recent trip to Japan and China.

Article continues overleaf

Garfield Public Hall, continued

A new Garfield Public Library was opened on February 12, 1906. The subscription was 2 shillings and six pence a quarter or 10 shillings per annum. A report in the *South Bourke & Mornington Journal* said the Committee had *secured a splendid stock of books*. It is likely that this Library was located in the Hall, perhaps in one of the dressing rooms.

The Garfield Public Library was opened for the first time on Monday night last. The subscription has been fixed at 10/ per annum, payable quarterly in advance. The committee expect to land another lot of books at an early date.

The opening of the Library
Bunyip and Garfield Express February 15, 1906, p. 2.

The usual range of events were held in the Garfield Hall - dances, dinners, use as a polling booth, concerts, wedding receptions etc. Then on Thursday, April 15 in 1937 the Hall was destroyed by fire. It had apparently started at 1.30am in the supper room and everything was destroyed except for some military equipment in a semi detached room at the back, according to a report in *The Argus*. The Hall was insured for £400.00 and its contents for £100.00. It was rebuilt and was re-opened possibly as early as September 22 the same year. Once again the hall hosted a range of social events - in the early 1950s my Dad, Frank Rouse, remembers that square dancing was very popular and that the Hall was packed for those dances - the caller was Bill Colvin of Koo Wee Rup.



Garfield Public Hall, which opened in 1937
Berwick Pakenham Historical Society photograph.

Over 1953 -1954 improvements were made to the Hall and the kitchen, supper room and ladies toilets were updated. In March of 1954 a Civic Ball was held in the Hall to celebrate the visit of the Queen and Prince Phillip to Australia, they had visited Warragul the day before. Naturally the Queen and Prince Phillip were not in attendance but the local M.L.A, Les Cochrane, and the Berwick Shire President and most of the Councillors were present. The Hall had been decorated with flags and bunting and special lighting effects. The ballerina of the ball was Miss Elvie Cameron.

The Hall was destroyed by fire, once again, on February 2, 1984.