

# HISTORY NEWS

ISSUE.352 FEBRUARY 2021



## Flinders Street Campbell Arcade Entrance

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Protecting local heritage  
Women on horseback  
Mandatory military minors  
'Spanish' influenza pandemic  
in Melbourne  
Royal visits celebrated

# What's on AT RHSV

All events are held at the RHSV unless otherwise noted. Bookings are recommended for all events and can be made through the RHSV website: [historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/](http://historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/)

## AGM MICHELL, AUSTRALIA'S GREATEST ENGINEER

Thursday 4 February

6pm by ZOOM

FREE

In partnership with Engineering Heritage Victoria the RHSV is delighted to offer this Zoom event with Stephen Phillip (based in London).

Anthony George Maldon (AGM) Michell was undoubtedly one of the greatest Australian engineers. A prolific inventor, he is best known for his tilting pad thrust bearing. It remains one of the greatest inventions in lubrication science, and revolutionised ship propulsion: without it, modern shipping would not be possible.

This talk reveals the story of Michell's fascinating life and astonishing achievements, and the motivations of the man behind the inventions. It weaves engineering and technology into the history of the early twentieth century. Michell made significant contributions to Australia's proud engineering heritage, and is truly one of our unsung heroes.

## IN THE NAME OF THE THEATRE

Tuesday 16 February

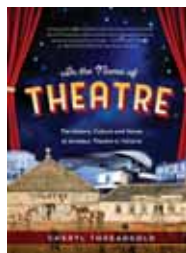
5:30pm drinks for 6pm lecture

\$10 / \$20

We are thrilled that Dr Cheryl Threadgold will be presenting a lecture based on her award-winning history, *In the Name of Theatre. The History, Culture and Voices of Amateur Theatre in Victoria*. Hannie Rayson wrote, "Her sumptuous

book, *In the Name of Theatre*, is a kind of encyclopaedia of the Victorian stage. From the early colonial settlement when entertainment included the viewing of executions or dissections of bodies of the executed, amateur theatre has come a long way. This book is a celebration of and for theatre lovers across Victoria. It is lit by an inner passion which all of us share."

In the citation for this book, which won the 2020 Collaborative Community History Award, 'Frank Van Straten, doyen of Melbourne's theatre history, writes that amateur theatre with its infectious enthusiasm and "homely, intimate venues" creates a "special form of magic". It's this magic that Cheryl Threadgold captures in her book. The colourful cover invites the reader to explore successive periods of amateur theatre in Victoria and reflect on the many people involved in a single production'.



## HISTORY WRITERS' GROUP

Tuesday 23 February

11:30am • FREE

The History Writers' Group is for RHSV members only. It is led by Dr Cheryl Griffin and meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 11:30am – 1pm. These events are hybrid – some people choose to meet at the RHSV and others choose to Zoom. This is a very

interactive group which shares information and assists each other with problems they have encountered in their history writing. Cheryl is not only a respected historian but also a splendid teacher. Her own writing is delightful and she has the rare skill of making history both personal and engaging.

## CATALOGUING CLINICS

Thursday 25 Feb

11am by ZOOM • FREE

Jillian Hiscock, the RHSV Collections Manager, hosts these clinics for an hour from 11am on the 4th Thursday of each month. It is a relaxed gathering of people who are finding their way through the intricacies of cataloguing material in historical collections which, as we all know, fall between a library and a museum with sometimes a bit of art gallery thrown in. Jillian always prepares some material on some specific queries but questions are encouraged and, remember, a problem shared is a problem halved. The clinics are conversational in format rather than a seminar. If you are new to cataloguing or an old hand you will find plenty to interest you in these sessions.

'What's on' is continued on page 19

## History News

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COVER IMAGE: Flinders Street Melbourne, entrance to Campbell Arcade, photo courtesy of Peter Williams. See pages 4-5

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# President's report

The world is hoping for a better 2021 as a result of various vaccines, but COVID-19's onslaught in the United States and Europe shows it is not yet done with humanity. Fortunately, our prospects are brighter in our island continent and give cause for optimism.

The history movement is awakening after long months of apparent inactivity for many societies. However, many have also been busier than ever answering research enquiries as interest in family history ramped up. The RHSV, with paid staff and its own magnificent group of volunteers, has kept things going from home by doing research, maintaining our catalogue, website and online events, and all our committees have been active. *History News* and the *Victorian Historical Journal* have continued and a book publication, *Vera Deakin* by Carole Woods, the RHSV Secretary, has appeared under the Society's imprint.

This week I visited another society, the Lorne Historical Society, that has risen phoenix-like from the lock-downs. The society was able to hold an AGM during 2020, as did the RHSV, in which Peter Spring succeeded Gary Allen as president. The society's rooms were renovated early in 2020 giving it a whole new façade and two large windows, which opens its activities to the world on a busy corner into town.

During lockdown the Lorne Historical Society was busy preparing for 2021. Two members, Will and Frank Beale, prepared a new exhibition called 'Timber' on the timber industry, which existed on many sites in the Otways Ranges. I visited this exhibition last week and talked with the two curators. I have invited them to write about it in *History News*, and I hope they take up the challenge.

The exhibition features the usual fare of images and captions and some artefacts, chainsaws etc. It also features a diorama of the Otways and maps showing the location of the various mills and wooden timber rail lines. Frank Beale also made a sizeable working model of the mill where he and his brother worked.

It is quite a marvellous model for it has miniature working machinery within, and a roof that lifts back to fully reveal all the workings. It was made from a plan drawn by brother Will from his memory of working at the mill as a youth. He told me he could picture it as vividly as if he were still there, even though the mill closed in 1989.

The Lorne Historical Society is embarking on an oral history project to record the memories of the older residents of this town that is changing fast. It is, with advice from the RHSV, considering new cataloguing software and other software to improve the management of its affairs.

The Lorne Historical Society is a model

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to us all, about remaining positive, using the time we have to rejuvenate what we do, and engaging strongly with our local community.

My good wishes for a safe 2021

**Richard Broome AM**

## Editor's Note: Seeking contributions

### History of Aboriginal peoples of Victoria: celebration and awareness

In an upcoming issue of *History News*, we plan to focus on the history of First Nations peoples in Victoria and we invite relevant articles for consideration. We especially extend this invitation to Indigenous authors within the Victorian community.

Suggested topics include:

- The role and importance of Indigenous knowledge in understanding Aboriginal history from Deep Time to the present
- The role of Indigenous knowledge in managing and protecting the land and its flora and fauna

- The role of archaeology in understating the Indigenous past
- Aspects of the history of colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal peoples since 1788
- Impact of early missionaries
- ... and many others.

Please contact me with any questions. We look forward to receiving your proposals and contributions: 200-800 words with an image or two.

**Sharon Betridge**

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## Heritage report: Alert or Alarmed? Heritage in 2021



As we begin 2021, we're all hoping it will be better than 2020.

Twelve months ago, a number of historical societies were affected by the catastrophic fires that devastated our state during the 2019-2020 summer. Then the pandemic forced societies to curtail activities. Some nevertheless continued with heritage struggles. Societies from Ballarat to Ararat sought to protect trees from road-widening works. Buninyong HS is going to VCAT over a proposal to build gimmicky tourist flats in the shape of wine barrels on Mt Buninyong. Essendon HS is working to prevent the development of the gardens of the former North Park mansion, which the developer is appealing simultaneously to VCAT and to the Heritage Council!

Nationally, we faced the appalling destruction of the Juukun Gorge caves in WA and the government's attempt to further weaken the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Stay alert for both issues.

Stay alert too for the Queen Victoria Market. The City of Melbourne has Heritage Victoria's approval for much of their plan to revolutionise the market, though some of the worst architectural features were disallowed. We've heard nothing more from the Council and the Market seems to be left to decay.

Stay alert as well for the Exhibition Buildings World Heritage Site. We have put considerable effort into the review of planning protection for the environs, but now we face applications for a five-storey building behind Royal Terrace and

for a new, much bigger, attention-seeking building for St Vincent's Hospital on Nicholson Street at the corner of Victoria Parade (see 'St Vincent's glass tower opposed over heritage fears' *The Age* 7 January 2021, p5). Both developments would impinge seriously on the World Heritage Environs Area, which was supposed to be kept to low-rise buildings in keeping with its Victorian essence. Will Yarra Council step up to the plate?

In the City, we will be fighting for ministerial approval of Planning Amendment C387 to apply the Heritage Overlay to 133 individual places and five precincts, a potential game-changer for the CBD, which has suffered many heritage losses.

Other issues in the CBD include the design of the new Metro stations, especially at Fed Square, and the restoration of Flinders Street Station. We congratulate the government on essential conservation work. Now it's time to restore the concourse, the ballroom and the upper floors and, while we're at it, the station's underpasses, now in a shocking state. Worst are the Elizabeth Street pedestrian underpass linking with the Evan Walker Footbridge and the Degraives Street Campbell Arcade under Flinders Street. The Arcade, built for the 1956 Olympics, is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register as 'a rare and substantial example of late Art Deco design in a distinctive 1950s colour scheme'.

During 2020, the Heritage Committee's Ian Wight fought with some success to prevent planning laws favouring over-

development of the Queens Parade shopping strip in North Fitzroy, but we have been less successful in other shopping strips, such as Swan Street, Richmond. The pandemic has increased the danger for all strips, with vacant shops now common. Bank branch closures are particularly problematic, for banks have been reliable tenants in heritage buildings. Finally, we need to be stay alert on parks and trees. The Myer Music bowl precinct is set to be 're-imagined', but so far, no mention of its heritage character. The Heritage Register describes it 'as the largest, purpose built, permanent outdoor performance venue in Australia' and adds that it has not been 'surpassed in scale or complexity'.

We lost trees on St Kilda Road and on the Western Highway. Clay Lucas reported ('Ire grows as thousands of trees axed', *The Age*, 4 January 2021) that '10,000 trees have been cut down to make way for ... major transport projects, with more than twice that number now facing the axe'. Struggles over trees of significance to Aboriginal groups continue, with a Supreme Court hearing in February. Trees are becoming a focal point, merging environmental, aesthetic and religious sensibilities with heritage. During 2021, let's look afresh at our trees and parks as well as at our heritage buildings.

**Charles Sowerwine,**

10 January 2021.



**Page 4: Top:** View south on Nicholson Street with Aikenhead Wing seen above the tram, looking east along Victoria Parade (St Vincent's Heritage Report submitted to Yarra Council, p. 21).

**Left:** Campbell Arcade in better days

Far left, image courtesy of Simon, Vintage Victoria: <https://vintagevictoria.net.au/>



# Hall of fame: 'An accomplished fact': a brief history of the Montrose Public Hall, 1910-2020

The Montrose Public hall exists on the unceded land of the Wurundjeri people. Negotiations for this building commenced in 1910 when the local government and the European-Australian Montrose community discussed their ambitions for Montrose. The local school had become too small for the regular public meetings residents attended to discuss roads, water troughs, borderlands and other issues that concerned the country town. The community fundraised £225 to cover the construction and to purchase land between a local store and the Church of Christ. It was not until Friday 29 October 1915 that the *Ringwood and Croydon Chronicle* documented the hall as 'an accomplished fact as the timber is expected on the ground this week'.

The hall was used for official events. During February 1917, an election was held to fill a vacancy in the South-Western Riding of the Shire of Lillydale. Messrs A.E.H. Matthews and William Rae ran for the position and each man demonstrated that they held great confidence in the 'large support' they would receive. Montrose hall was one of the local venues where these ambitions were played out.

During 1919, public gatherings were restricted due to the influenza pandemic. With six cases in the Mount Dandenong region, one in Croydon and one in Seville, it was decided by the Shire Health Officer, Dr Syme, that public meetings would be prohibited. Social gatherings of more than 20 people were not permissible throughout the Shire. The only exemptions were 'divine services in churches, provided masks are worn by those who attend'. Montrose residents were given notice of an impending visit by the Health Officer for the purpose of inoculation. Calls were made in the area for 'ladies who are willing to volunteer as nurses, assistants, or cooks in the event of the outbreak assuming a serious aspect'. The Health Officer asked the public to 'assist in every way in preventing the spread of the disease'. Once again, the hall became a symbol of the community. This time to their small town's dedication to the public health.

During July 1919 a 'Welcome Home Reception' took place at the hall for those returning from the Great War. The inconvenience of bad weather did not hinder the celebratory return of 'our lads and a lassie'; the latter being Sister E.W. Yeaman, who was awarded a medal for her four years of service. The hall was

'beautifully decorated with...greenery and flags' and a banner across the front of the platform declaring 'Welcome Home!' Local women contributed the contents of their pantries and considerable cooking skills to ensure a table was well laden for all in attendance. Once teatime passed, there was singing that commenced with the National Anthem and the presentation of medals.

The hall was also a location for community farewells. On Saturday 25 February 1922 Mr and Mrs Fairbanks, fundraisers, organisers and community champions, departed the district. Their significant contributions to the public life of Montrose were recognised during an evening event hosted by the local Progress Association. The PA presented the couple with 'a fine eight-day clock' which held 'a silver plate with the inscription "From the residents of Montrose to Mr and Mrs Fairbanks"'. With 'great feeling' Mr Fairbanks offered a thank you speech to conclude his time associated with the hall. With much merriment, dancing and supper were enjoyed before a final farewell.

Within three years a visitor became closely associated with the hall: Mrs 'Pattie' Deakin. Mrs Deakin, whose husband was Australia's second Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, liked to visit the town for getaways. 'Table Talk', a social column in a local paper, detailed on Thursday 9 July 1925, Mrs Deakin was in residence at her 'charming little cottage in Montrose'. The hall was located just opposite her holiday house and it was not uncommon to see her at the hall. One such instance was in aid of the funds for the Church of England, Mrs Deakin 'sat and chatted amongst those at the rural entertainment and further added to the popularity she has already attained in that mountainside

district'. It was a moment that contributed to her reputation as a philanthropist.

The hall's use was shaped by the baby boom of the late 1940s. A Baby Health Centre was run 'for a half-day fortnightly' by Sister Dolphin in a single room within the hall. The Centre was opened on 13 July 1949, and 14 families attended regularly. This program ran until 1961 then with 101 babies enrolled. Then the single room was defined as 'too cold and dark' for the babies, and a new venue was sought. During the 1950s and 1960s, the hall was transformed once a week, on a Saturday night, into the Montrose Theatre. Patrons paid to watch Hollywood films such as 'The Nun's Story', 'Pollyanna' and 'Pepe'. This trend lasted until the mid-1960s when Saturday hall films became less popular as Melbournians supported the new technology of television or supported other cultural venues that were opening in greater numbers in the Eastern suburbs.

Now, looking down a driveway that runs alongside the hall, you can see the signs of a Men's Shed in the hall's large garage. This addition was built in 1945 and extended after the 1962 bushfires for the local fire brigade. Once a week, the directions for a Zumba class drift out of the hall's front doors. It is easy to see the charm, the stability and the ongoing worth of this community gathering place. Formerly a library, a political venue, a site for celebrations, a local theatre and a concert hall, the Montrose Town hall is a reminder of how a small Victorian community has developed since the early twentieth century.

**Deborah Lee-Talbot**

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# Protecting local heritage



*Elm Grove, Richmond*

*Part of Richmond's Elm Grove Precinct recognised by Yarra City Council, which focuses its land-use policies on protecting the valued heritage character of these neighbourhoods.*

© Hin Lim | HIN LIM AIPP 2020.

The revival of the state's leadership role in the protection and management of local heritage is the key recommendation from a Heritage Council of Victoria review into the State of Local Heritage.

A three-year review included the Royal Historical Society of Victoria surveying and collating the views of member societies across the state as part of community consultation. The review concluded that parts of the current local heritage system worked well and that Heritage Overlays protected local heritage.

However, it also identified many opportunities for improvement, noting that a base level of heritage protection is still to be achieved across the state.

The recognition and protection of heritage of local significance is the responsibility of local councils under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* but many councils appear unaware of their obligations or require support for this task. Councils work from initial heritage studies and detailed assessments to determine if a place's heritage significance warrants statutory protection through the application of a Heritage Overlay (HO).

The review identified large discrepancies in the commitment of councils to heritage. Councils experienced problems in translating heritage studies into their planning scheme. It noted that not every council had completed a comprehensive heritage study, with places of local heritage

significance subsequently unprotected. The gaps were both geographic, place-type and style. The report stated that local heritage was not always a primary consideration or priority within council but was seen as an 'extra' to the core components of planning. The most common issues were opposition from property owners, the expense of administering an amendment and a lack of political will within councils.

The report also revealed huge discrepancies in the resources allocated to local heritage, ranging from \$1 million to zero, with councils blaming a lack of funding as a significant weakness of the current system; State Government funding ceased in 2012, particularly impacting smaller rural councils.

The work of Heritage Advisors was identified as a strength, but the cessation of State Government funding has led to a reduction in the number of Local Government Areas offering a service. While a few have full-time staff, most offer a contract service from three days a week to just half-an-hour per week or none at all.

HERMES, the electronic heritage database designed to manage information about all heritage places identified and protected across Victoria, with the Victorian Heritage Database its public interface, is also not universally used or updated regularly and does not provide access to Heritage Studies.

Other issues included underutilization of Heritage Advisory Committees, a lack of heritage content in planning degrees and the use by some owners of 'demolition by neglect' to remove or modify heritage places.

The review recommended three principal pillars to support the return of the state's leadership position. These were:

- the establishment of dedicated local heritage roles within Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), to provide necessary focused leadership and direction;
- the creation and maintenance of a centralised, up-to-date repository of clear and consistent guidance material;
- direct support and assistance to ensure base-level heritage studies are completed and translated into the planning scheme.

The review surveyed all 79 local government areas across the state and conducted community and other surveys and workshops, which included RHSV and the National Trust. Interstate heritage systems were also examined.

Further interviews were conducted with councils with innovative and best practice schemes, and these are included as Case Studies in the final 68 page report. They showcase successes such as a Heritage Advisory Service with an advisor available on a weekly basis, the appointment of a representative Heritage Advisory Committee, a cost-effective Heritage Strategy, successful Communications and Promotional activities, targeted studies such as Post-War heritage, the implementation of study recommendations and financial incentive programs from grants and loans to rate rebates.

While the major initiative will rely on the Minister for Planning and DELWP planning to implement, the Heritage Council will lead a number of smaller initiatives or 'practical improvements' to address other identified issues:

- development of a 'demolition by neglect' model local law
- creation of a 'Heritage 101' information pack for councils and the public
- creation of a 'Heritage 101' induction pack for new councillors
- facilitation of discussions to clarify demolition application processes
- expansion of the local government heritage forum
- clarification of the role of HERMES and the VHD
- advocacy for a tertiary heritage planning subject
- promotion of the use of Heritagechat among planners.

The report is one outcome of the review, with a promotional program planned to showcase best-practice local cultural heritage protection and management, and the benefits that appreciation and protection of heritage can bring to local communities.

The full report is available at <https://bit.ly/39ixHGE>

**Pauline Hitchins**





**PIONEER ROLL OF RENOWN**  
THE FAMILIES LISTED BELOW WERE AMONG  
THOSE WHO SELECTED LAND IN THE  
MOE SWAMP AREA PRIOR TO 1914

AKERS	ANDERSON	ARNOTT	ASHBY
BANKIN	BOEHM	BRADLEY	BRAITHWAITE
BRIGGS	BROWN		
CLARKE	COLEMAN	COMERFORD	CONWAY
COOK	CONNOR	COLLYER	COOKE
CROWB	CUMMING		
DAY	DEAN	DEARNLEY	DONOVAN
DOWIE	DUGGAN	DIVER	
ERBS	EVANS		
FARRELL	FURNELL		
GIBBETT	GIBSON	GOODE	GOODING
GRANT	GREEN	GRIFFITHS	
HODKIN	HARRIS	HEYWOOD	HILL
HODGEWAY	HOGAN	HORROCKS	HOUGH
HUGHES			
JOHNS	JOLLY		
KEOGH	KEOGH	KENNEDY	KIRWIN
LING	LLOYD		
MCCORMY	MCDONALD	MCDONNELL	MCLAUGHLIN
MCCOONE	MCMAHON	MURAS	
MURPHY	MARTIN	MATHESON	MATTHEWS
NEALE	MILLER	MILLS	MORRISON
MORTON	MUNRO		
NILSON	NESTOR	NICOL	NIX
OSBORN	OSCHARD		
PARKER	PERKMAN	PLOZZA	PRICE
REDFORD	REEVES	RICE	RICH
ROBERTS			
SCOTT	SWALLCOMBE	SMITH	SOMERVILLE
SEAR	STEPHEN	STEWART	STOCKS
SCOTT	SUSSEX	SWINGLER	
TURNER	TEMPEST	THOMSON	TULLO
WALSH	WALSH	WARD	WARREN
WATKINS	WATKINS		

UNVEILED IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR  
BY SENATOR JULIAN MCGURRAN M.P.  
ON SUNDAY 27TH NOVEMBER, 1988

# Women on horseback

**Top left:** General view of Moe Swamp, 1909, courtesy of Victorian Places, John Young Collection

**Top right:** Willow Grove Road, Trafalgar, 3824

## Introduction

It is often not recognised that, in the days of early exploration and settlement around Victoria, women played an essential role in managing their families as well as tending to the farming tasks; allowing the men to clear land and turn felled trees into palings and slabs for buildings. Their days likely starting around daylight with the preparation of food for the men, to enable them to get away early and put in a full day's work. The role of women supporting their menfolk in this way was essential because if insufficient acreage was not cleared each year, the family would have defaulted their allotment lease terms with the Government and likely forfeit their properties.

This account describes the contribution of four women to the communities of the Moe Swamp just north of Trafalgar, later Yulungah and Trafalgar East where their responsibilities also included adhering to their contracts with the Commonwealth Postmaster Generals Department (PMG), and as described, much on horseback.

## Moe Swamp/Yulungah

Annie Julia Moulin, (nee Dumeresq/ Dumeresy) Keogh and husband John Valentino Keogh, settled with their three children, Irene, Clarice and Elaine on their allotment on the Moe Swamp north of Trafalgar in 1900. The Moe Swamp, some thousands of years in the making, swarmed with snakes, insects and vermin; not to mention the regular flooding and

mud tracks that served as ways around the district. Surely the only attractions to the area would have been the peat reportedly up to seven feet deep in places, abundant timber nearby for building and plenty of water.

The PMG established a 'Receiving Office' mail service in 1903 at the Moe Swamp school, with the Head Teacher was co-opted as the 'Keeper' of the mail service. The area became known as Yulungah and the mail service moved across the road to the Keogh home in 1905, with Annie appointed Keeper.

With husband John involved in community activities and his land and farm agent business, Annie no doubt managed the household with her postal commitments. Together with her girls, Annie also attended to farming needs and chores around the home, also purchasing and placing orders with the merchant who regularly called in.

Annie added to her postal responsibilities when she was awarded the inland mail contract between the Yulungah Receiving Office and the Trafalgar Post Office. With income being unreliable off the land her mail contract, which added £23/8/0 per annum (\$3,570) to the family income, would have been well received. With her horse saddled and the mail bags sealed and lashed firmly she carried the mail three days each week for the 4 miles (6.4 kilometres) round trip. With only a track for much of the journey Annie would have plunged her horse through fast running

water in times of flood and in summer taking care of the paths she selected around the caked mud, dodging snakes. A track atop the embankments of the controversial main drain, which was built to take away flood waters, became the section of the route between Yulungah and the road north from Trafalgar.

In 1910, Annie, aged 50, carried 2140 letters and 192 packets from Yulungah; her Keeper allowance was £5 (\$704) for that year. She carried the mail until 30 June 1917, with her last contract reaping an income of £26 per annum (\$2,538). She also relinquished her postmistress position in June 1917, which was taken over by Edwina Miller who held the postmistress position and her husband Edwin the mail contract.

Jump forward three years and we find Albert Arnott and his wife Sarah Ann (nee Danson) on the allotment adjacent the Keogh property; Albert was the Keeper and held the mail contract until 1921. An accomplished horsewoman, Sarah took over the mail contract in 1921 which supplemented their income by £39/0/0 (\$3,173) for each of the next three years.

Albert played a key role in establishing the Trafalgar sub-branch of the 'Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia', in February of 1919 and with his school and community involvement it is highly likely that, as with Annie, Sarah carried out both postal roles for much of the time in addition to the household and farming needs.



Sarah was also associated closely with the war effort and the recovery following the conclusion of the WWI; finding time, she became the first president of the Trafalgar branch of the 'Union of Soldiers, Mothers, Wives and Sisters' when it formed in February 1920.

When John was tragically killed in a bridge building accident in August 1925, Sarah became the postmistress; the service having been previously upgraded from a receiving office.

Sarah now conducted the post office business and continued her three days per week on horseback while maintaining the farm and household. Sarah passed away in 1933 with the post office passing to her son Allan and the mail service reverted to a roadside delivery service from around 1935. Allan Arnott retained the service until its closure permanently in 1958.

### Moe Swamp East/Trafalgar East

Meanwhile, only 2½ miles (4km) east of Yulungah at Moe Swamp East, later Trafalgar East, a similar life was being lived by the Plozza family. Bernardo with his wife Caterina and children had settled in 1909 and took over the postal service in 1924. The service had been located at the Trafalgar East primary school since 1908. The head teachers had also been the Keepers of the postal service.

Bernardo was appointed the postmaster and Catherine Ida, known as Kit, one of his daughters, as his assistant postmaster.

Kit was not a newcomer to the postal service as in 1920 she had won the mail contract between the School and the Trafalgar post office. This contract, as with Sarah Arnott's, required skill and resilience in travelling the tracks, now at last being formed into crude roads and much later sealed.

Kit was paid a subsidy of £25.0.0 (\$1,777) per annum for her first three year contract. Her next contract ending 30 June 1926 attracted an increased rate of £30/0/0 (\$2,441) and for her last contract, which ceased 30 June 1928, she was paid £36/10/0 (\$2,962) per annum.

A telephone exchange was established around 1924 in the Plozza home with Kit operating the switchboard, postal business and mail contract up to 1928. Kit continued operating both the postal and exchange business until the closure of the telephone exchange. It is likely that she also supported her mother around the home with the domestic chores.

The devastating floods of 1934 that closed the Gippsland railway and caused massive destruction on the swamp properties meant the little telephone exchange became the sole means of communicating outside of the area. With

all roads closed, phone contact took on a new importance. Kit attended the switchboard until the flood waters had risen to a depth such that she could no longer attend to the calls. On leaving the switchboard and post office room to join her family in their roof, Kit marked the water level in pencil; it measured 3'8" (1120mm). Another local family also spent the evening in the roof with the Plozza family.

Following the closure of the exchange Kit's devotion to the local community was recognised at a social event held in 1939 in the Trafalgar East public hall. She was presented with a set of mulga wood book ends and bedroom clock encased in Mulga wood.

Such was the resilience and skills of a few of many women who endured the hardships of their times and forged with their menfolk the country we now enjoy.

Editor's note: Reserve Bank of Australia's 'Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator' was used to calculate the value of the pound at the time with the 2019 dollar value.

### John Hanley

*Derived from the book The Moe Swamp – Yulungah & Trafalgar East: The people, postal and telephone services' by John Hanley (To be published early 2021)*



Plozza family  
(c. 1910)

The Ruby Post-office was flooded to a depth of 3ft., but the young woman in charge remained by her switchboard with the water up to her waist. Three feet of water covered the township of Ruby.



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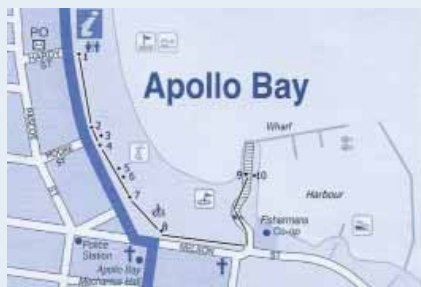
# Around the societies

**Prepared by volunteer  
Glenda Beckley on  
behalf of the History  
Victoria Support Group.**

We welcome Societies to submit an article/event of around 50 words, or email your Newsletter to us and we will write up around 50 words for you around twice per year.

**FOR THE APRIL 2021 ISSUE** please send details to [office@historyvictoria.org.au](mailto:office@historyvictoria.org.au) by 1st March 2021.

**APOLLO BAY:** The Gadubanud people occupied the rainforest plateau and rugged coastline of Cape Otway including the current towns of Lorne and Apollo Bay. By the early 1800s this area was also familiar to sealers and whalers. In 1845 the Bay was named by Captain Loutitt after he sheltered here in his vessel *Apollo* on a voyage from Melbourne to Port Fairy. In 1849 timber cutters commenced harvesting the trees. The first timber mills were constructed in the early 1850s and the huts built for the workers were the beginnings of a settlement close to the Barham River (Barrum-burrum). Apollo Bay provided comparatively protected waters for anchorage. The surrounding flat and undulating land was suited for the location of the township. In 1853 it was surveyed by Skene and was named Middleton. By the 1860s land became available for farming, by mid 1870s the first township blocks were offered for sale. The Apollo Bay History Trail has 10 locations, including hotels, piers and jetties. Full details can be found on the website at: <https://bit.ly/3oCetZm>



**BRIGHTON:** Brighton Historical Society was delighted last night to receive the Victorian Collections Award for Excellence for organisations with volunteer staff. The award is an acknowledgement of the hard work our volunteers have undertaken in cataloguing our collection. BHS was commended on our thorough, well-provenanced records with exceptional collection photography. We thank all our wonderful volunteers who have dedicated their time to help preserve our collection and tell its stories, and Victorian Collections for providing us with a quality platform to catalogue and share our community's history with the public. Visit our page at [facebook.com/brightonhistorical](https://facebook.com/brightonhistorical) or website at [brightonhistorical.org.au](https://brightonhistorical.org.au)

**BRUNSWICK:** The new committee has made plans for a meeting in February 2021. Please mark your calendar for 'Sharing Our Stories of COVID-19', Saturday 6 February 2021, subject to COVID-19 restrictions, 1.30-2.30 pm at Siteworks, 33 Saxon St, Brunswick. We continue to receive and welcome your contributions of events and stories and information regarding the History of Brunswick. And check our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/brunswickcommunityhistorygroup](https://www.facebook.com/brunswickcommunityhistorygroup)

**CAMBERWELL:** Our meetings for 2021 will recommence via Zoom with a meeting on 23 February at 7 pm. Our March and April meetings are also planned to be on zoom. Volunteers are needed to help scan drawings and historical files especially as we have a large new collection of beautiful drawings of local houses donated by Margaret Picken and we have many files still to scan from our collection. Thank you to those members who have already helped the committee with the backlog of scanning.

**COLAC:** The Society was established in 1950, making Colac one of the first regional townships in the state to have such an organisation. The Society's collection includes maps, photographs, ephemera, books of local relevance, and original manuscript material. Newspapers from the 1880s to the present day are available on microfilm, and in some cases, in hard copy. A range of clothing has been suitably stored, complemented by furniture and other objects of district significance. There is a wide-ranging collection of school material, including the archive of the former Colac High School, and data relating to the former Colac Technical School. Since 1970 the Society has published books. Many of these, and a range of other publications, are available for sale, both at the Centre or via our website [colachistoricalsociety.org.au](https://colachistoricalsociety.org.au)

## **FRIENDS OF CHELTENHAM CEMETERIES:**

The past year has, in some ways, given us a rest from tours. However, it has also meant that our ability to raise funds has been severely curtailed. In spite of this, our members have been amazing in their generosity, with many making donations, as well as a 90 percent renewal rate. The year has also prompted members, old and new, to offer their services for

projects that we have been unable to undertake due to lack of resources. We are delighted to have helpers who freely give of their time, as it makes everything we do worthwhile. Are you interested in helping? If so, we would love to hear from you. Maybe you have administration skills that you are happy to use, perhaps even helping with our website or social media. Or do you love the thrill of the chase, when it comes to researching many of the interesting people who are buried at both cemeteries? Maybe you are interested in military research, there are many service personnel buried at Cheltenham cemeteries and the committee is currently attempting to put together a catalogue of all these gallant men and women. If you are interested in helping the group, please contact us for a chat: [info@focrc.org](mailto:info@focrc.org)

## **GISBORNE AND MOUNT MACEDON:**

The Court House, home of Gisborne & Mount Macedon Districts Historical Society, at 4 Hamilton Street, Gisborne, was built in 1858 to a design by the Public Works Department. The 1855 records of the Police Station have many references to police attendances at the Court. The Borough Council was granted use of the building from 1860. When the Gisborne Shire was formed in 1871 it took over the role of Borough Council and continued to use the building until the first Shire office was erected in 1929 in Hamilton Street. By July 1861, a bluestone lockup, with brick stables and an adjoining police station had been erected. The Court House building has been home to numerous organisations: during WWI, food and clothing bundles for the war effort were stored and packaged, Dixon & Son, Real Estate and Auctioneers, had an office from 1860 to 1927, in the 1900s the space in the Court House was occupied by The Vermin & Noxious Weeds branch of the Lands Department, Gisborne Waterworks Trust, Gisborne Police and Gisborne Unit of the SES.





**LEARMONTH & DISTRICT:** The Society's home, the 'Old Shire Offices' 326 High Street, Learmonth, have been closed since March and we have not met as a society since then. During this time there have been numerous research enquiries and we have been busy with family histories and responding to general requests. In September we applied to the Bendigo Community Bank Beaufort for a grant for a ride on mower. We were successful and along with donations we purchased a Kubota mower from Westag. We have a large area to maintain and our volunteers have kept the grounds mown and looking very neat and tidy. Thank you also to all other members who have attended to other jobs including weeding, pruning, general maintenance, bookkeeping and archiving. We plan to resume our regular monthly meetings on 16 February and would appreciate suggestions for guest speakers.

**LILYDALE:** For those who already follow our Lilydale & District Historical Society Facebook page, we now also have a Facebook page, Nellie Melba Museum and an Instagram page, NellieMelbaMuseum. Our first photo of Melba was taken on the 8th November 1902 on her return to her beloved Lilydale, taken at Cave Hill with her brother Charlie Mitchell and a pet kangaroo. The people of Lilydale gave Melba an enthusiastic welcome home that day which included a procession to Cave Hill from the band rotunda in Main Street. That evening her brother Charles Mitchell gave a dinner at the modern, well appointed Crown Hotel. At the close of the evening Madame Melba and her party walked to the railway station, escorted by a torchlight procession and the local band where she was given a most enthusiastic send off.



00959 Madame Melba and Charlie Mitchell with a kangaroo, November 8, 1902.

**MALVERN:** The Society is 'Keeping Stonnington's History Alive' in many ways. Since 1972, the Society has actively collected, promoted and shared the history of Stonnington with the local community, schools and family history researchers. The Society supports the

work of the Stonnington History Centre at Northbrook through the passing on of all historic items to the Centre for the Stonnington History Collection, and through publicising their work. When you become a member, you are helping to preserve our history for present and future generations.



Northbrook, High Street, Malvern 1929  
Stonnington History Collection MP5028

**MORWELL:** During the last couple of months, we have been actively upgrading the display of some of the Society's artefacts. We have put up a row of 12 large framed photos on the north wall in the Hare-Campbell room. One is an excellent water colour painting by Bob Pelchin of the Morwell West Primary School. The site of this school has now been swallowed up by the Yallourn Open Cut. We have also put up two walls of plaques in the passage into the side door. Possibly the most interesting plaque is the one that was on Kernot Hall in Yallourn. We also hung the plaque that came from the Morwell Library in Hazelwood Road. This building was opened in 1966 and demolished in 2002 to make way for the current Police Station. We have also included the Hazelwood Guides Honour Roll and the opening of Morwell High School in 1959. We have the Kurnai College Student Leaders Board, the Commercial Road Primary School Scholarship Board, the Crinigan Road House Captains Board and the Morwell High School House Captains Board all for viewing. All together we have added 44 plaques and honour rolls for display. We also have a shelf of 15 trophies above the plaques. Some from Commercial Road School, a couple from the Technical School, and the Maryvale Football Club Memorial trophy among others.

**NHILL:** It has not been possible to run any activities such as day tours of the district historic spots or to have any evening events such as film evenings. However, we have still answered emails, continued to work two afternoons a week as usual and assisted the Nhill Free Press with numerous stories and photographs, which we hope has awakened an interest

in local history. We have a collection of household goods, linen and clothing including day wear, evening gowns and wedding dresses and the John Shaw Neilson display. The Archive contains photographs, records of past and present community clubs: newspapers from Nhill Free Press from 1882 thru to today, Shire rates, cemetery records and family histories which are all used for family research by the public.

Email: nhillhistorical@gmail.com

**PORT FAIRY:** The Museum opened on 2 January with the 'Three men in a boat' exhibition. It tells the story of the Haldane family and the building of the boat *Tacoma* in Port Fairy, nearly 70 years ago. There will also be a number of smaller exhibitions for our members and visitors to enjoy. We are still keen for more volunteers to sign up for the duty roster so please feel free to contact me if you have a few spare hours in the month. Port Fairy Historical Society: Museum and Archives, 30 Gipps Street Port Fairy, Victoria

**ST KILDA:** The Society turned 50 in 2020 with far less fanfare than we had anticipated. Nonetheless, the Committee continued its activities where possible. We completed our Mirka Mora Project, which will feature in the Jewish Museum's Mirka Exhibition from February 2021, uploaded our photographs to Victorian Collections digital archive, progressed our Maps overlay project with Public Records Office of Victoria, compiled the Society's history, and uploaded new information to our website stildahistory.org.au

**WARRACKNABEAL:** Housed in Warracknabeal's first State Savings Bank, the Historical Centre houses a collection of items that make up the history of a typical Wimmera town. The display consists of furniture, pictures, maps, kitchen utensils and the personal items found in the homes of the pioneers of the area. The Society is dedicated to preserving the history of Warracknabeal and surrounding districts, from the life of early inhabitants through to the present time. Warracknabeal is located in the heart of the Victorian wheat belt and the collection celebrates Victoria's farming heritage and the people who contributed to its success. With a long history of innovation and the landscape dotted with iconic grain silos that now make up part of Victoria's Silo Art Trail. warracknabealhistory.org.au



## Windows on history: Leadlight in Victoria's Infant Schools: c1907-1918

Hidden in Victoria's primary schools are some little-known gems of leadlight windows that enhance a handful of the 50 or more schools, dedicated to infants, that were built in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Victoria's Education Act (1872) aimed to provide 'free, secular and compulsory' schooling for children from the age of six to fourteen. The benefits of education that we assume today were not universally appreciated and there was some reluctance to attend by children who were unimpressed with rote learning in dimly lit classrooms, rigid rules and regular punishment, and by parents who could use extra hands at home or on the farm. By 1902, not only educational philosophy but also school architecture placed the needs of the children at its core. Purpose-built infant schools, detached from the main primary school, expressed these new educational ideas in which long rooms packed with rows of desks were replaced with well-ventilated, light-filled rooms

and desks, where little feet comfortably reached the floor. Chalk boards attached to the walls were placed at a suitable height for children to reach, with ledges, where finds, such as seashells, leaves, cicada cases, skeletal remains of birds and other treasures could become aids to teaching and learning.

Stand-alone infant buildings, described as 'admirably built and fitted', were first opened in 1902 at Armadale, Ascot Vale and Essendon, implemented through a plan that became the prototype for the 'model design' – a group of classrooms, usually six, grouped around a central drill hall with all necessary cloakrooms, lavatories and teachers' rooms. Many school committees and councils, supported by their local members of parliament, lobbied for years to secure new accommodation. After eleven years of agitation, Camberwell's infants moved into their purpose-built school in 1909 from a single long room 48 feet long and 16 feet wide, where the 200 children

were divided into three classes. Designs differed, but Camberwell, and Canterbury (1907), epitomised the Federation 'model school', a single-storey structure of red brick with contrasting Waurn Ponds stone, later, concrete, dressings and tiled roofs, stucco rendering in the gable ends, multi-light round-headed windows and white painted window frames glazed with Art Nouveau leadlight in the upper sections.

Leadlight windows installed in infant drill halls were as up-to-date as the buildings themselves, adapted from domestic leadlight styles, such as those illustrated in *The Studio* and other British art journals of the period. Stylised flower and leaf designs incorporated the sinuous lines of the period, set against a rectangular clear background leadlight grid that allowed for maximum light within the teaching and hall spaces. At Glenferrie (1907), Middle Park (1909) and Malvern, Tooronga Road, (1908), variations of these designs were inserted into groups of lights at either end of the drill hall, with less ornate versions in



single side windows. But windows in two infant schools erected in 1910 epitomised changing times: a new Coburg school continued the popular Art Nouveau style, but at Footscray new subjects, based on pastoral scenes and Australian flora and fauna, made their first appearances.

Why it was decided to include kookaburras, cockatoos, rosellas and eucalypts in the windows is not clear from Public Works Department records, but it was an innovation that pre-dated the enthusiastic embrace of Australiana that appeared in many inter-war Melbourne homes a decade later. As leadlight cost significantly more than plain glass, three to five times, its inclusion seems more than a mere decoration or design whim. It may reflect the 'scientific' curriculum

espoused by the Director of Education, Frank Tate, a former teacher and school inspector, who kept abreast of current thinking and the need to establish the groundwork of a good education for each child in the kindergarten. The addition of these leadlights accorded with a greater emphasis on Australian 'nature', along with stimulation of imagination, drawing and personal initiative within the school curriculum.

Designs at Moonee Ponds West and Auburn (1913), Malvern, Park Street, and Brunswick South (1914) are unique to each site, and although subjects remain constant, they were adapted to the shapes and sizes of the window opening. The arrangements of trees, clouds and birds resemble later designs by stained glass

artist William (Jock) Frater (1890-1974), who was then employed in the stained-glass department at Brooks, Robinson & Co. By 1915, Frater had joined a rival firm, E L Yencken & Co, but closely related designs, signed 'WF', appear in their catalogue from around the 1920s. The distinctly Arts & Crafts style of the work suggests that Frater drew on his experience as an apprentice in the studio of Oscar Patterson, Glasgow.

The origins of these delightful leadlight windows may remain a mystery, but the windows themselves continue to be enjoyed by generations of school children, adding to their growing store of knowledge before going on to the 'big' primary school and beyond.

**Dr Bronwyn Hughes OAM**



## Start planning....

### Victorian Community History Awards

For more than 20 years these awards have been growing stronger and more impressive with every year. Managed by Public Record Office Victoria and the RHSV, the awards include the Premier's History Award.

Applications open in late March and close in early July: entry forms will be available from the RHSV website. The 2021 awards cover project which will come to fruition between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021 (inclusive).

The awards are not just for publications but cover collaborative community projects, oral history, multimedia, podcasts, apps, maps, walking tours, virtual tours, exhibitions, musical interpretation, journal articles, videos, projects which cover cultural diversity and activities which enhance awareness of local community records including digitising, indexing, and original research.

### Holsworth grants

The RHSV administers the Holsworth Grants each year which were established to aid the publication of rural and regional history.

The Holsworth Local Heritage Trust, a charitable fund within the Victorian Community Foundation, invites applications

for grants from not-for-profit organisations such as historical societies, clubs, schools and museums in regional and rural Victoria. The Trust is interested in supporting enthusiastic community groups and organisations with a true interest in heritage preservation and appreciation and the enhancement of community life. Grants of up to \$2,000 are awarded.

Applications open 31 March and close 31 July each year. More information: [historyvictoria.org.au/programs/holsworth-local-heritage-grants/](http://historyvictoria.org.au/programs/holsworth-local-heritage-grants/)

### History Month

October is History Month. We encourage all historical societies to hold an event during history month – there is an exceptional suggested list of events on our website which is a great place to start your brainstorming. We encourage you to think about collaborations with local schools, libraries and other community organisations – spread the joy!

History Month overlaps with the Seniors Festival and Children's Week so why not devise an event or two which can be featured in more than one program?

[historyvictoria.org.au/brainstorm-history-month-event-ideas/](http://historyvictoria.org.au/brainstorm-history-month-event-ideas/)

John Yeoman & Co. (1894).  
Stawell Cadet Corp. forming  
a British Square, R. Z. Davies  
commanding. Courtesy of the  
State Library Victoria



# Mandatory MILITARY MINORS

**'In 1911 Australia became the first modern English-speaking country to demand universal and mandatory military training in times of peace; for 12- to 18-year-old boys. Caulfield Grammar School with its long-established Cadet Unit was an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme.'**

Australia's bitter conscription debates and referendums of the Great War belies the fact that our country had, only a few years earlier, instituted compulsory military training and service for all boys aged 12 – 18, the Army Cadet movement. School cadet units had existed in this country from the 1860s onwards and often grew out of the practice of students undertaking various forms of military drill, mainly in the form of marching. But in nineteenth century Australia, secondary schools were heavily influenced by the moral directions of British models and sympathetic headmasters who avidly supported the view that success in war depended upon patriotism and military spirit and that preparation for war would strengthen 'manly virtue' and 'patriotic ardour'. At countless speech days, the assembled boys were told that their schools were providing training in character and duty to make them leaders of men and defenders of the Empire. These attitudes helped foster the growth of the cadet movement in Australian schools.

In Victoria in the early 1880s, the Minister for Defence, Lt. Col. (later Sir) Frederick

Sargood, while on an overseas trip to Europe, had been much impressed with the defence system in Switzerland. School boys in that country from the ages of six to eighteen received progressive military instruction as a regular part of their school training. He sought to establish a somewhat similar military training in Victorian schools. He hoped it would serve the purpose of familiarising boys and youths with habits of discipline, regularity, and obedience to authority and exercise them in military drill and the ready use of a rifle. Sargood stated that he looked to cadets as furnishing a most important recruitment ground for the militia forces. He aimed to bind together in one patriotic brotherhood in the youth of this country so that, should occasion arise, they might be able, in years after, to defend their country with the most telling effect.

In due course, Sargood called a meeting of the principals of private colleges and prominent head teachers of State schools for the purpose of formally establishing the 'Victorian Volunteer Cadet Corps'. This body was first gazetted on the 23 January 1885, with Caulfield Grammar School (CGS) listed as the fifth unit to be established in this state. Just six months

later, by June 1885, the number of cadets enrolled in the program had risen to 1,850 in both Education Department and private boys' schools.

In 1902 Sargood remembered that of the large number of cadets that had passed through its ranks, it had been found that more than two-thirds of the men who had served in Victorian Contingents in the South African War had formerly been cadets. The Sargoods became heavily involved in the Cadet movement and Lady Sargood presented a handsome silver cup for annual competition in rifle-shooting. Sir Frederick, seen as the 'Father of the Cadet Corps,' held the first general parade of the cadet corps on the grounds of his own 23-acre property 'Rippon Lea' at Elsternwick. These grounds were also used for rifle shooting practice and cadet training by his adjoining neighbours, Caulfield Grammar School, perhaps encouraged by the fact that his son William also attended the school.

By 1908 at CGS, this training was borne out in a practical way with a stated view to moulding future soldiers. For boys under 14, the chief aim was physical improvement and musketry practice using the miniature rifle range constructed at the school, which necessitated the erection of rifle racks to store the weapons during the days when students attended their usual classes. The older boys completed company drill and more especially open-order training, giving them, it was claimed, some insight into the methods employed in early 20th century warfare and was seen to be of great use





Caulfield Grammar  
School Cadet Unit  
1908

for boys intending to join the Imperial Army. Little did anyone foresee the trench warfare of the Great War!

But the whole structure of the voluntary Australian Cadet movement changed in 1909 when the Prime Minister Alfred Deakin extended an invitation to the British Army's Lord Kitchener to assess Australia's military preparedness. Kitchener's report, *'Defence of Australia: Memorandum'* was submitted to the Australian Government in February 1910. Chief amongst his recommendations, were the establishment of the Royal Military College at Duntroon and the formation of an army of 80,000 men. One of the final effects of his report, enacted on 1st January 1911, was the compulsory provisions of the *Defence Act (1909)*, which made Australia the first modern English-speaking country to require universal and mandatory military training in times of peace. This saw compulsory Cadet training being overseen by the Commonwealth Government for all Australian boys aged 12–14 years old. The youngest became Junior Cadets and were required to complete 120 hours per year on physical drill and attendance at parades. All 14–18 year olds had to serve in the Senior Cadets and complete 16 days a year or equivalent of training in elementary musketry and drill. Alfred Deakin's vision of universal training and the creation of a citizen army would both express and enhance Australian patriotism, even though he said he would have rather that it was done willingly rather than by compulsion.

These moves of compulsory cadets and Commonwealth oversight were greeted enthusiastically by many educators and

schools such as CGS, as reported in the 1911 school's magazine.

The Commanding Officer (CO) of the CGS Cadet Unit, Lt. McCullough, extensively outlined the changes in the cadet scheme, reminded boys of the seriousness of the work they were about to undertake, and pointed out that they now had a Record Book in which to record their service. He also singled out those boys who were seeking promotion through the scheme. McCullough stated that, having decided that Australia must prepare to defend itself, the nation also had to have the best system of defence and training it was possible to achieve under Kitchener's scheme. The CGS cadets were encouraged to see that they would begin to play their part in this system of 'national insurance'. McCullough stated that some of them might possibly regard their years of cadet service as a necessary evil, others as a pleasant long-drawn out sweetness, and others as a duty they owed to their country. But the young cadets were left in no doubt that their cadet service was based on the understanding that they might learn how to save their own lives and those of others.

The CO closed his remarks by pointing out, that it had been clearly noted by the school community that seventeen boys in the school had realized that there was something more serious than cricket or football, as since the very beginning of the year they had been seen on parade every lunch hour at half past one. Some of them, he noted, would soon have written in their Record Books that they would be among the first non-commissioned officers of the

Senior Cadet Forces of Australia. Of these seventeen cadets, sixteen of them later enlisted for active service in the Great War with four of them being killed.

But as the cadet scheme unfolded, opposition emerged from other quarters, including some church, religious and union groups. On 22 October 1912, fifty-one boys of 'tender age' appeared in an Adelaide courthouse charged with not having attended the necessary drill parades as required by the Defence Act. Six boys who could not pay their fines were jailed overnight. In turn, these prosecutions for non-compliance led to an organised campaign against compulsion and some minor concessions and changes were made to the scheme.

During those years, Australia conscripted its youth on a scale that was far in advance of any other English-speaking country and it became apparent that for a recently federated nation, the introduction of the scheme had been a positive move. One correspondent reported that the 'great majority of the lads are drilling cheerfully and there is little doubt that the people as a whole are convinced of the necessity for the system'. However, although the lads at home might have been cheerfully drilling, the horrors experienced by many in the trenches during the early years of the Great War, would begin to sway public opinion against the necessity of compulsory military service for adult Australian men.

**Dr Daryl Moran**  
RHSV Member  
November 2020



*Prahran's emergency hospital was established in the Armadale primary school.  
Stonnington Library, PH61425*

## 'Spanish' influenza pandemic in Melbourne

Until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 'Spanish' influenza had vanished from collective memory. Unlike other natural disasters such as bushfires and floods, pandemics are amorphous and hidden from sight; and even human suffering is unseen since loved ones are often isolated in hospitals. Consequently, as case numbers mount focusing on individual suffering becomes more and more difficult, and gradually we tune out. Yet, there is much to learn from exploring the individual stories of those affected. This is my objective in researching and telling stories of 'Spanish' influenza in Melbourne, for my aim is to burrow down beneath the statistics and unearth individual stories and gain a better understanding of the cost to the broader society.

Spanish influenza began attacking victims in Melbourne in January 1919. One of the first infected was a 15-year-old Coburg boy, Roy Biggs, who was employed at the wool and skin brokers Wm Haughton and Co, a business that had close ties with New Zealand where the pandemic had raged. Roy became ill in the second week of January. Soon the boy's parents were infected, followed quickly by Roy's 21-year-old brother Alan and, after that, the nurse caring for the family was also sick. The virus spread rapidly throughout the metropolis. Three weeks into January there were 75 cases reported in Melbourne. By the end of the month metropolitan numbers had leapt to 260. Then case numbers exploded with nearly one and a half thousand reported in the first week of February. The disease had become a tsunami that overwhelmed the health system. Public hospitals were inundated, compelling the government to create at least five additional emergency hospitals,

including at Wirth's Circus, now the site of the Arts Centre, and in army base hospitals in St Kilda Road, Caulfield and Broadmeadows. The largest of the government emergency hospitals was in the Royal Exhibition Building, which opened in the first week of February. It was initially intended to operate as a 500-bed convalescent hospital but, such was the demand on the public health system, within a couple of days it began admitting the acutely ill and forcing bed numbers to swell to about 2,000. Although more beds could have been accommodated there was not enough nurses and doctors to look after additional patients, for many had not yet returned from the war. This scarcity affected the entire State, despite the efforts of the Australian Red Cross in enlisting 670 volunteers.

Extra hospital beds were needed outside the city. Local governments throughout the metropolitan and country areas created emergency hospitals, many in converted schools, and the State





**Clockwise from top:**

Photograph published in the 2003 Yarraville Club calendar

Source: Victoria. Victorian Year Book (1919).

Signs similar to the above were distributed to households and used to call for local help

State Library of New South Wales, HQ 2020/0621



government agreed to share the cost. More than 40 emergency hospitals were set up in places such as:

#### Metropolitan Melbourne

Albert Park	Ivanhoe
Armadale	Kew
Braybrook	Malvern
Brighton	Mont Albert
Brunswick	Mordialloc
Camberwell	Newmarket
Caulfield	North
Chelsea	Melbourne
Coburg	Northcote
Collingwood	Oakleigh
Coode Island	Port Melbourne
Essendon	Richmond
Fairfield	Sandringham
Fitzroy	Sunshine
Flemington	St Kilda
Footscray	Williamstown
Hawthorn	
Heidelberg	

#### Non-metro

Ballarat East	Lorne
Beaufort	Mildura
Buchan	Morwell
Cranborne	Traralgon
Healesville	Wonthaggi
Korumburra	

original use, allowing students to return after their longer than usual summer break. Places of entertainment like billiard halls and theatres reopened, and race meetings resumed with thousands coming together in close contact for the autumn racing carnival; and, doubtless helping to spread the virus.

Several weeks later in April, case numbers and mortality rates soared once more as a second wave of the virus took effect. But by now there were fewer hospitals, so the sick had to be cared for at home, causing whole households to become ill. Self-help groups sprang up in the neighbourhoods of the more affected areas of Melbourne and regional Victoria.

One was created in Yarraville's south ward where a Spanish influenza cluster or 'hot spot' had developed. The local women divided the area into fifteen sections and appointed a 'captain' to each section, who arranged street patrols that provided help to victims in their homes. SOS signs were dispensed to households with instructions to place them in front windows if help was needed. Two tents were erected in a local reserve to prepare soup, local businesses donated fresh produce and Footscray Council provided financial support. Coppers were also set up in the tent to launder bed linen and clothes of the sick. \*

The second wave of the virus peaked in May and subsided in June. A third milder wave arose in winter before the virus ran out of victims and disappeared in October.

The centenary of the Spanish flu pandemic coinciding with COVID-19 has caused me to wonder how many generations it will take for this twenty-first century pandemic to be lost to collective memory. But maybe this pandemic is different? Perhaps COVID-19 will embed for longer in collective memory. But much could have – and can still – be learnt through close examination of the Spanish influenza pandemic that will provide a better understanding and help prepare should another global event arise in the future.

#### Mary Sheehan

Mary Sheehan is a Melbourne University PhD candidate undertaking research into the social effects of the Spanish influenza pandemic in Melbourne and Victoria. She would be grateful to be contacted if anyone is able to share information about the pandemic, either individuals or holdings in local historical societies. Mary may be contacted via email: [mmsheehan@student.unimelb.au](mailto:mmsheehan@student.unimelb.au) or by phone: 0408 305 499.

\* I am grateful to the Footscray Historical Society for much of this information on the Yarraville women.

Then, in March case numbers and mortality rates began to decline, and a number of emergency hospitals reverted to their



**Above:** The author at two and a half practising her royal wave after watching the Queen in Sale.

**Left:** Samuel Calvert engraving of fireworks in the Yarra Park for the Duke of Edinburgh's 1867 visit. Fireworks displays often celebrated a royal visit to Australia even in towns the Royal didn't visit. State Library of Victoria collection.

## Royal visits celebrated

Royalty has provoked widespread celebration since the first Royal visit by the Duke of Edinburgh Prince Alfred, son of Queen Victoria, in 1867. Prince Alfred visited the capital cities and some significant towns such as Geelong and Bendigo but there were religious riots, fatal accidents and even an attempted assassination attempt.

In regional Victoria there were many celebrations to mark the Prince's visit, even though he didn't tour outside the main cities. He enjoyed rabbit shooting at Barwon Park, where, in 1859 Thomas Austin had imported 12 pairs of rabbits which, despite earlier failed attempts, succeeded in firmly establishing rabbits in Australia.

In dozens of towns across the state which he didn't visit, there were 21-gun salutes, street displays, concerts, dancing, bonfires and fireworks, picnics and treats, games such as races, football, cricket and 'kiss in the ring', which is apparently 'drop the handkerchief', in which the pursuing player may kiss the player he catches.

In 1901 the Duke of York, Queen Victoria's grand-son and later George V, came to open the first Federal Parliament in Melbourne and visited a number of regional centres. In Gippsland he planted an oak tree at Kilmany Park, home of local MP William Pearson.

In 1934, when the Duke of Gloucester, George V's son, visited to mark the Victorian Centenary Celebrations among the numerous regional visits included one to Sale where he planted a seedling of the same tree in a local park. Large cheering crowds lined the streets in Sale and Maffra. He also planted a pinoak at nearby Boisdale House after inspecting local farming stock, with the highlight being a wombat 'sighting' which was guaranteed by the wombat being tethered near his path.

The Duke cheekily decreed a day's holiday for the school children and then travelled on to stops in Traralgon, Morwell, Yallourn, Warragul and Berwick.

The first visit by a reigning monarch occurred in 1954 when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip came to celebrate her coronation. This trip also included many regional visits across Australia. She flew into Sale, landing at East Sale RAAF base, and left on her first trip on the Royal Train to visit other towns along the line such as Traralgon, Yallourn and Warragul.

In Sale, with street and shop decorations to welcome her and streets lined with well-wishers, some who had travelled hundreds of miles to see her, the Queen made a short speech near the Royal Oak before boarding the special Royal train. Although her visit was brief, the celebrations

continued in Sale with maypole dancing and callisthenic performances and sports for the students, many visiting from nearby towns. The race club held a Royal Visit Cup and there were evening celebrations with fireworks and concerts in many local towns.

With today's electronic coverage of every movement and alleged thoughts of all members of the Royal family, there just doesn't seem to be the same enthusiasm and excitement!

**Pauline Hitchins**



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# What's on

AT RHSV continued from page 2

All events are held at the RHSV unless otherwise noted. Bookings are recommended for all events and can be made through the RHSV website: [historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/](http://historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/)

## VERA DEAKIN IN WAR AND PEACE

Tuesday 16 March

5:30pm drinks for 6pm lecture

\$10 / \$20

Vera Deakin in War and Peace, the second in our major lecture series, will be delivered by Carole Woods.



The daughter of Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, Vera studied music in the Habsburg Empire on the eve of the Great War. Driven by British imperial fervour on her return to Australia, she bypassed the government's restrictions on women's participation in the war effort by serving with the fledgling Australian Red Cross. Aged only 23 in 1915, she became the founding secretary of the Australian Red Cross Wounded & Missing Enquiry Bureau in Cairo and later London. Narrowly avoiding replacement by a man, she showed outstanding leadership and was appointed OBE. In peace she married an adventurous military pilot, Captain Thomas White, later a cabinet minister. When he was knighted, she became Lady White. Vera led several humanitarian causes but her lodestar remained the Red Cross.

Carole Woods OAM is a Fellow and honorary secretary of the RHSV. A former librarian, bibliographer and freelance historian, she has been a long-time advocate for community history. She chaired the judges' panel of the Victorian Community History Awards for seven years and curated two exhibitions at the RHSV. Her books include, *Vision fugitive: the story of David Allen, Beechworth, A Titan's Field* and the recently published *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*.

## TALES FROM THE GREAT AIR RACE 1934: EXHIBITION LAUNCH

Thursday 4 March

5pm • FREE

MacRobertson's Trophy Air Race of 1934 produced feats



of great courage and derring-do including the inventiveness of Albury locals who, in the middle of a stormy night, turned their race-track into a make-shift airstrip allowing the damaged Dutch entry, the Uiver, to land for vital repairs before the same locals hauled the repaired plane out of a quagmire so that it could continue to Melbourne to claim second place. Every entry in that race had an amazing story to tell. Join us for the exhibition launch and to be immersed in the romance and drama of early flight.

## BOOK FAIR

Thursday 18 February

5–8pm • Members only

Our second-hand history Book Fair promises to be more impressive than ever and we are honoured to offer the Les Blake Collection. Leslie Bamford James Blake, OBE, FRSHV was born at Bendigo in 1913 and died in 1987 at Karingal. A long-time member of the Victorian Education Department, during which he was an Inspector of Schools (1958-1972), and official historian of the Department (1966-1974), after which he became Victoria's State Historian. He made major contributions to the Australian Dictionary of Biography. He was President of the RHSV from 1966-1971 and Foundation President of the Western Victorian Association of historical Societies (1963-1964).

The Book Fair is open to the public however it kicks off with a Members-only night on 18 February. The fair then remains open to the public on Friday 19 February, Saturday 20 February and Monday 22 February, times: Friday and Monday 9am–5pm, Saturday 10am–4pm).

## CORAGULAC: BOOK LAUNCH

Wednesday 24 March

6pm • FREE

Author and historian, Jennifer F. O'Donnell, invites RHSV members and friends to celebrate the launch of her latest history, *Coragulac House*. Drinks and light refreshments will be served in the RHSV's Gallery Downstairs.

In the early 1870s, George Pringle

Robertson built 'Coragulac', nestled in the shelter of Red Rock near Colac. Three generations of the Robertson family lived in the area, their story being integral to the history and the development of Colac.

Andrew Spence Chirnside bought 'Coragulac' in 1901 and set about radically restructuring the building and adding a host of art nouveau additions. For 64 years from 1950 'Coragulac' was owned by members of the Matthews family. Today, with new owners Gary and Sharyn Gibson, 'Coragulac' is being restored to earlier glory.



## DATE CLAIMERS

Friday 12 March 5pm Launch of the RHSV Women's Biographical Dictionary.

Wednesday 31 March 11am

Award presentation for those who were made RHSV Fellows or who received other RHSV awards in 2020.

Tuesday 20 April 6:30pm

The AGL Shaw Lecture, jointly presented by the CJ La Trobe Society and the RHSV

Tuesday 18 May 5pm

RHSV AGM & Weston Bate Oration.

## FLAGSTAFF GARDEN GUIDED WALKING TOURS

Chris Manchee is taking his very entertaining guided walking tours of Flagstaff Gardens again. The tours are at 11am or 2pm every Monday and cost \$10. Bookings on 03 9326 9288. Chris can often accommodate larger groups on other days too.

Visitors will climb Flagstaff Hill to consider its place in Melbourne's topography and pre-European history as well as its early roles as a burial ground, flagstaff signalling station and magnetic and meteorological observatory.

# Books received

John Schauble

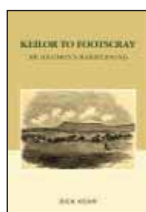
Authors, publishers and Historical Societies are invited to contribute books to the RHSV for the library and for consideration for inclusion in Books Received.

Please note: these books listed are not necessarily offered to the bookshop by authors, please check the shop catalogue.



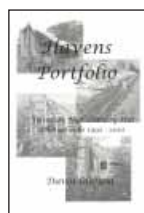
**Truganini: journey through the apocalypse.** Cassandra Pybus, Allen&Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020, pp.vii-244, ISBN 9781760529222.

For the Aboriginal Peoples of Van Diemen's Land, the coming of the Europeans was a 'journey through the apocalypse', as the subtitle states. Pybus, whose forebears were granted land on North Bruny Island that was Truganini's country, sees her as a "hugely significant figure in Australian history". This Nuenonne clan woman lived through an unfathomable transformation as her land and people were stripped away across the seven decades of her lifetime, her culture disintegrating before her eyes. Some of Truganini's life was lived in disastrous exile in Kulin country around Port Phillip and Western Port before she was exiled again, this time to Flinders Island. This gut-wrenching story deserves to be widely read.



**Keilor to Footscray: Mr Solomon's Maribyrnong.** Rick Keam, Australian Scholarly Press, North Melbourne, 2020, pp. v-123, ISBN 9781925984750.

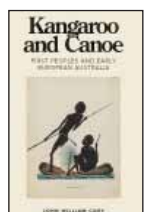
Rick Keam might be better known to some as a musician and to others as a fly fisherman, so it should come as no surprise that this foray into local history should centre on the river of his youth. Keam has walked the lower 20 kilometres of the Maribyrnong with a keen eye as part of his exploration of its past. His book is also a re-examination of the place of Joseph Solomon and to a lesser extent Joseph's cousin Michael in its early European exploitation. Here are some fresh and curious insights into the history of an area that became synonymous with noxious industry before the rejuvenation and partial rehabilitation of the river.



**Havens Portfolio: Victorian High Country Hut Photographs 1992-2010.**

David Oldfield, The author, Maldon, 2020, pp. 1-85, ISBN 9780648790617.

The Victorian high country is dotted with a variety of simple huts. Some were built by cattlemen, others by government utilities, yet more by pioneering bushwalkers and skiers. The universal purpose of all was to provide a place of refuge. Many have succumbed to the ravages of time and of bushfire. A dedicated band of volunteers works to keep them in shape, restoring and sometimes completely rebuilding. David Oldfield has walked the high country for many years and documented many of these huts, some before and after their destruction. This collection of fascinating black and white photos builds on previously published work, since when he became inaugural secretary of the Victorian High Country Huts Association.



**Kangaroo and Canoe: First Peoples and Early European Australia.**

John William Cary, Australian Scholarly Press, North Melbourne, 2020, pp. vi-215, ISBN 9781925984903.

Every historian dreams of a steamer trunk – or in this case an old-fashioned tennis racquet case – laden with primary source material that opens the door on a forgotten aspect of the past. John William Cary had one such, containing the records of his great-uncle John James Cary. Cary the elder trained as a tailor, manifested himself as a journalist but died as a 'Gentleman' according to probate papers. Financially independent, Cary devoted his life to that of a man of letters. Cary's enduring legacy was the collection and publication of the surviving language records of the Wathawarrung and Gulidjan tribes of western Victoria.



**St. Mary's the Virgin A history of St Mary's Anglican Church Sunbury: Celebrating 150 years of worship (1867-2017).** Peter Free, The author, Sunbury, 2017, pp. 1-73.

This book marks 150 years of worship at St Mary's the Virgin in Sunbury, a beautiful bluestone church that serves a community first settled by squatters in 1836. The parish itself had a rocky start in the early 1860s after the railway pushed through to the north; services were originally held in an increasingly dilapidated wooden building. St Mary's enjoyed the patronage of the Clarke family, whose nearby country estate, Rupertswood, meant they have been both prominent parishioners and generous benefactors for generations. The church itself is graced with splendid stained-glass windows and other adornments. Sunbury has morphed into a different community as Melbourne expands but St Mary's parish remains a pivot of the local community.



**The Accidental Town: Castlemaine 1851-1861.** Marjorie Theobald, Australian Scholarly Press, North Melbourne, 2020, pp. v-330, ISBN 9781925984354.

For a time, the goldfield at Mount Alexander was the centre of the world as people waited to discover if there really was a mountain of gold there. This book is important not just as a local history but as an interpretation of the birth of a central Victorian goldfields town. Focused on Castlemaine's first 10 years, it tells us as much about the broader colonial society of the day as it does about the evolution of a ramshackle collection of miners' tents into a place of substance and certainty. Marjorie Theobald writes of her hometown with passion and precision; an eye to detail in telling a much bigger story.