

# HISTORY NEWS

ISSUE 355 | AUGUST 2021



*Completed structure.  
Photo from same •  
"9"19.*



*Bridge finished. Georgie  
at the wheel of my car 17409.  
Photo looking towards Walhalla.*

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# What's on at RHSV

All events are held at the RHSV, 239 A'Beckett St, Melbourne VIC 3000, unless otherwise indicated.

Information on booking tickets to all our events can be found on our website [historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/](http://historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/)

In the case of lockdown events, where possible, will be transferred to delivery by Zoom. All those who have booked will be notified.

## PORTABLE BUILDINGS IN AUSTRALIA

Lecturer: Professor Miles Lewis

Thursday 5th August

5:30pm refreshments; 6-7pm lecture  
\$5

Presented in partnership with  
Engineering Heritage Victoria

Portable buildings, today referred to as prefabricated, were imported in larger numbers to Australia than to any other part of the world during the nineteenth century. They were made not merely of timber and iron, but of oilcloth, slate, zinc, papier mâché, and 'portable brick'. Also, more survive in Australia than anywhere else. They range through iron lighthouses, cottages of 'teak' from Singapore, German glazed conservatories, plate iron fronted buildings from Glasgow, and redwood houses from California. Many are of the greatest technical interest. For these reasons it has been proposed that they should be nominated as a group for World Heritage Listing. This presentation will sample these various types, concentrating on those which survive today.

Miles Lewis, AM FAHA, is an emeritus professor of the University of Melbourne, and currently a member of the Portable Buildings World Heritage Nomination Task Force.



## LUNCHTIME MARKETING

Monday 9 August & 13 September

11am by ZOOM

FREE

Jess Scott, RHSV's Marketing Officer, will be conducting these monthly social media powwows to help historical societies harness the power of social media communication for your historical society and community. Over the months Jess will look at Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, websites and how to maximise your investment of time to yield the most. Jess will have prepared material but it is also your opportunity to bring your queries and issues to a forum for discussion.

## CATALOGUING CLINICS

Thursday 26 August & 23 September

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.

## THE WOMEN OF LITTLE LON

Lecturer: Barbara Minchinton

Tuesday 19 October

5:30pm refreshments,

6pm – 7pm lecture

\$10 members / \$20 non-members

Sex workers in nineteenth-century Melbourne were judged morally corrupt by the respectable world around them. But theirs was a thriving trade, with links to the police and political leaders of the day, and the leading brothels were usually managed by women.

While today a popular bar and a city lane are famously named after Madame Brussels, the identities of the other 'flash madams', the 'dressed girls' who worked for them and the hundreds of women who solicited on the streets of the Little Lon district of Melbourne are not remembered.

Who were they? What did their daily lives look like? What became of them? Drawing on the findings of recent archaeological excavations, rare archival material and family records, historian Barbara Minchinton brings the fascinating world of Little Lon to life.

## BRINGING YOUR DIGGERS BACK TO LIFE

Presented by Patrick Ferry in partnership with the National Archives of Australia

Saturday 23 October

2:30– 4:00pm by ZOOM

FREE

This masterclass will show family and local historians how to mine the range of resources available to help tell the story of soldiers in towns, suburbs and districts. Patrick will focus on the great range of records the National Archives of Australia has but will also include information about other valuable sources of information e.g. the War Unit Diaries held at the Australian War Memorial and the Public Records Office Victoria soldier settler records etc.

## History News

History News is the bi-monthly newsletter of the RHSV  
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COVER IMAGE: Tyers River bridge, in Gould, south of Walhalla, c1918 See page 17.

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# President's Report

I wrote *Coburg Between Two Creeks* (1987) as a commissioned historian and attended the Coburg Historical Society meetings regularly for at least a decade into the 1990s. I often drove Doug Gunn home as he lived in my vicinity. He was a humble man, a bachelor, and a great lover of history. He was a member of a few historical societies: Coburg and Lilydale I recall among them. We had good chats as we drove, and I enjoyed those moments. He was also a member of the RHSV. Once I re-engaged with the RHSV upon my retirement from La Trobe University in December 2012, I saw Doug without fail at each AGM. As it was generally cooler in May, he usually wore an overcoat, his hair tousled rather than groomed. He was a man interested in History, not appearances.

When Doug Gunn passed on in 2015 the RHSV found it was the beneficiary, together with the Australian Conservation Foundation, of a bequest from the sale of his modest house in Lilydale. More than \$75,000 was given to the RHSV, which was transformative. For some time, we knew our website was creaking, and our relations with our members in great need of a better management system, including an automated means of taking bookings, generating emails, and managing finances.

With Doug's bequest the RHSV was able to create a new website and a customer management system, and totally modernise our way of working. It has been one of the key developments in how the Society is tracking so well now

into the future. It was wonderful, it was unexpected, and it was transformative. This is what a bequest can do. We cannot plan for them, but we can encourage them, which is why we created the Jessie Webb Society. This fund was finally launched early this year, to encourage and to honour those who might make a bequest.

Of course, donations arrive each day, I know this as I write back to all donors. Sometimes it is in the form of a little extra with a book purchase, a top up to a membership, or larger ones to support enterprises such as our Fund for the *VHJ*. Giving to this Fund has meant that the *VHJ* is secure, is no longer needing to be financed from general revenue, and can finance other publications. *Melbourne's Twenty Decades* was born from this fund, before repaying the seed money after sufficient sales. Gordon Moffatt AM, our amazing long-term benefactor, recently gave the RHSV another large donation, which will help to fund our enhanced activities and pay the staff to do it. We give our great thanks to him for helping us to move into our 112th year of operation with confidence.

Please consider a large or small gift from options in the drop-down box on the donations page, or talk to Rosemary Cameron about a bequest. We are developing an investment policy and may soon appoint a financial planner to manage your donations, and an Investment Committee to oversee decisions.

**Richard Broome AM**

## PLAN FOR HISTORY MONTH NOW

October is History Month. We encourage all historical societies to hold an event during History Month – there is a great 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/)

## THE MACROBERTSON INTERNATIONAL AIR RACES EXHIBITION

**Monday– Friday  
9am – 5pm  
FREE**

MacRobertson's International Air Races of 1934 produced feats of great courage and derring-do. There was tragedy and triumph. A tragedy was averted in the middle of a stormy night when the inventive Albury locals used their towns lights to flash A L B U R Y in morse, then turned their race-track into a make-shift airstrip using their car headlights to allow the lost Dutch entry, the Uiver, to land. The next morning the same locals hauled

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the bogged plane out of a quagmire so that it could continue to Melbourne to claim 2nd place. Every entry in that race had an amazing story to tell. Visit the exhibition and be immersed in the romance and drama of early flight.

## 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.



'Flagstaff Hill, Melbourne' (1879) by Bennett, Charles, 1869-1930.  
From State Library Victoria <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/109450>





*Images: Industrial heritage precinct north of Richmond Station.*

# Heritage Report

It's been a frantic year for your Heritage Committee. Many of the issues I've written about in the last year continue as zombie proposals taking advantage of Victoria's complex planning laws. Right now, I'm at the sixth day (yes, that's 6!) of a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) hearing on proposed tourist accommodation on Mount Buninyong in the form of giant wine barrels on stilts. This should have ended with Ballarat Council's firm rejection, but this zombie marches on.

Some zombies even go beyond VCAT, requiring us to write submissions and speak again and again. We opposed a dramatically inappropriate building proposed for Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, which threatens the Royal Exhibition Building World Heritage site. We wrote a submission to Yarra Council. The Council rejected the plans for the new building, so the developer has gone to VCAT. We wrote another submission. Then the developers referred themselves to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment. We wrote yet another submission. Then the developer withdrew the referral and, since under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act self-referral by the developer is the only way the Minister

will consider the issue, we're back to VCAT. Similarly, St Vincent's proposal for a huge new reflective building opposite the Exhibition Buildings has been called in by the Minister for Planning and referred to a panel, so we're on our second submission, not counting correspondence with UNESCO and the Commonwealth.

The Melbourne City Council presses on with its zombie plan to shift the Queen Victoria Market to 'value-add' (i.e. fast food). The latest proposal is for semi-fixed stalls, known as 'Point-of-Sale Storage', which would impose uniformity on a space known for its heterogeneity. We protested, and I spoke at the Council committee meeting, but the zombie walks on.

How about some positive stories?

Ian Wight, deputy chair of our committee, is working on a proposal for an industrial heritage precinct north of Richmond Station. The precinct contains an extraordinary collection of early 20th-century textile mills linked to Australia's wool industry, including Australian Knitting Mills (AKM), Kookaburra and Golden Fleece brands. During the World War I, AKM produced uniforms for Australian soldiers. We have to fend off an attempt to extend a nearby 'Major Activity

Centre' designation to this area, which would encourage intensive development. Then we will explore the possibility of listing on the Victorian Heritage Register. We are working to build support for these initiatives.

Another positive story is the Fishermans Bend precinct. Melbourne City Council has approved an excellent planning amendment that would give the area significant protection, though the GMH precinct remains problematic. It is now going to a planning panel to advise the Minister on whether to approve it. We have made a submission to that panel.

The precinct bears witness to Australia's World War II mobilisation and to the industrial development preceding the war, as well as to the post-war take-off of Australian industry. These developments supported nearly four decades of increasing prosperity and equality underpinned by these widely endorsed war-time government initiatives. In the current era, such witness to our national organisational abilities in the face of an international crisis is particularly important. All the sites identified for protection are critical elements of this heritage and indeed some are still operational.

The amendment proposes Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) listing for the



former Government Aircraft Factory (GAF), vital to Victoria's industrial and wartime heritage. That a small nation with a limited industrial base could produce 500 Beaufort Bombers by November 1943 is amazing. The factory is substantially intact and the 'collection of buildings within the recommended extent retains a high degree of integrity'.

VHR listing is also proposed for the West Gate Bridge and for the GMH complex at Fishermans Bend. We look forward to the listing of the bridge. The listing of the GMH site presents challenges. The Minister called it in and gazetted registration in December, but the extent of registration is not yet known. In the meantime, State Government planners and University of Melbourne are preparing plans for a new engineering campus on the site. The first plans, presented to Melbourne City Council last year, propose vast over-development, disregarding the historic fabric. We supported Council's opposition to these plans, but Council has no authority once the Minister calls a project in. Watch this space.

**Charles Sowerwine,**

Chair, Heritage Committee.

## Heroic acts in Victoria's history

According to researchers from Federation University, Ballarat, hundreds of colonists in 19th century Victoria were rescued by Aboriginal people: from bushfires, flooded rivers or from being lost in the bush. A history project titled 'Aboriginal Heroes of Fire, Flood and Food in Victoria' has recently commenced which aims to produce a documentary film, a digital map and a book to educate Victorians which will chronicle Victorian Aboriginal acts of heroism. The project will bring to light stories of Aboriginal people saving non-Aboriginal people from bushfire, drowning and the search for food, including the tracking of lost children, stock, etc, in the period 1800 -1930.

I am reaching out to the RHSV with recognition of the potential impact of this project and how it could be significantly increased if interested people within the RHSV community, particularly the many RHSV volunteers and affiliated Historical Societies, were made aware of the information we are seeking.

Note that the key benefits from the project will be that centres of historical research such as historical societies across Victoria could 'confidently showcase Aboriginal heritage in a culturally sensitive manner: it will contribute to more effectively to learning and teaching of Victorian and Australian history'. RHSV volunteers, RHSV subscribers and RHSV Historical Society affiliates are in a brilliant position to help by simply keeping an eye out whilst doing your own research in your societies collections of manuscripts, books, newspapers, artworks etc or in TROVE and alerting us to any instances of Aboriginal heroism anywhere in Australia. Exemplars of the type of item I would like RHSV members to keep an eye out for include:

Muriel McGivern's book (1983, pp.102-3) about the history of the Rutherglen district is a prime example. According to McGivern, Aboriginal people 'saved the homestead, outhouses, and not least, the owner's lives' of many Rutherglen locals who took notice and heeded local Aboriginal people's 'advice and timely warning' about a large bushfire engulfing the region.

George Sugden's reminiscences in the RHSV manuscript collection (MS 000301, Box 115-6, no page number). Sugden briefly, but poignantly notes, repeatedly, of his time on sheep stations across Victoria: 'I was rescued by Sandy the black tracker ... rescued by black trackers [again]'.

Mary Gilbert's (1972, p. 8) book titled *Personalities and Stories of the Early Orbost District*, simply relates an Aboriginal man named Joe Banks who rescued a sick colonist during the floods by 'making a canoe out of a sheet of bark from the roof and placing the sick man in it, swam through the turbulent waters, towing the canoe and its helpless occupant to safety'.

Please email [f.cahir@federation.edu.au](mailto:f.cahir@federation.edu.au), the project manager, any information you think may be of interest, including photos, and provide details of item found:

Collection name,

File number

URL link, if relevant

Citation: book author, title and page number

**Dr Fred Cahir**



# The 'dance hall in the bush': Ferny Creek's Hall of Fame

With origins as a rustic pleasure dome, the Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve Hall is not the oldest such venue in the Dandenong Ranges, but it is perhaps the best known to greater Melbourne.

By World War I it was evident that small farming along the heavily timbered main range of the Dandenongs was doomed to fail. But the district's proximity to Melbourne and natural beauty made it increasingly popular as a weekend and holiday destination. Farms were subdivided and sold off for conversion into sometimes grand but more often humble weekenders. A number of guesthouses sprang up catering to casual visitors.

A road realignment in 1909 isolated a triangular wedge of land in Ferny Creek and this became the focus of community activity. Just over ten acres was set aside as a reserve, which would eventually include a fine example of the distinctive

sloping sports ovals once common in the hills, along with gardens, tennis courts and bowling green. The 'wedge' would eventually also become home to a fire station and Scout Hall.

The origins of the hall are tied up in a grand, seven-day holiday carnival and sports gymkhana organised for the 1927 Christmas-New Year break. The event was planned as a fundraiser to aid improvements at the reserve. With Melbourne gripped by the dance craze, the organisers hastily decided to build a pavilion, a 'Palais de Danse' for the occasion. The driving force behind the event was Mr J.S. Ham, whose family ran the Wattle Café in the Centreway off Collins Street and had a holiday home nearby in Sassafras.

Boasting a floor area of 60' x 40' (18 x 12metres), initial construction was completed in just five weeks at a cost of £850 by Clements Langford Pty Ltd, a well-known Melbourne building firm.

Local plumber George Clarkson affixed the roof. A photograph in *The Argus* in late December welcomed the new 'dance hall in the bush' and noted that a 'first-class orchestra' played there at night.

The gymkhana was attended by hundreds of visitors up from Melbourne and locals alike. On 27 December 1927, no less than Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce arrived in pouring rain and made a brief speech. He then took to the dance floor of the new palais 'with zest, proving himself quite an expert in the terpsichorean art', foxtrotting and one-stepping with Mrs Bruce, the Melbourne papers reported the following morning. At the end of the carnival, despite some appalling weather, the hall was presented to the reserve committee free of debt.

The hall continued to be referred to locally as 'The Palais' well into the 1950s. It was predated by a smaller log cabin, built as home to the bowling club, which, with its big open fire, was the preferred

**Great Mountain Subdivisional Auction**  
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'Holly Hill Estate, Ferny Creek'. [c1910-1918] Farrows Falcon Press, Melbourne <http://handle.slvvic.gov.au/10381/169557>

## Flower Display at Ferny Creek

St. William Harrison Moore will open a display of dahlias and other flowers arranged by Mr. T. Millar at the Palais recreation reserve, Ferny Creek, on February 23, at 2.30 p.m., to aid the Olinda, Bassafras, and Ferny Creek Auxiliary for the Eye and Ear Hospital. Mr. M. H. Sinclair, of the Ormond plant farm, will give a lecture.

Today, 2-6: Daffodil and spring bulb show at Palais Recreation Reserve, Ferny Creek, in aid of local branch Red Cross.

'Flower display at Ferny Creek' (1935, February 16). *The Argus*, p. 10. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11015419>

venue for the meeting of various local committees and even church services. In addition, a caretaker's cottage and kiosk were later added to the precinct. Remarkably, given the bushfire history of the district, all of these original buildings remain standing and are still in use.

The Palais was popular with both visitors to the district and locals alike. With a squat triangular band stand in one corner and a simple kitchen, it was soon catering for both local dances and other celebrations. Over the years it has hosted all manner of gatherings including birthday parties, engagements, anniversaries, markets, public meetings and funerals. It remains a very popular venue for wedding receptions. During local emergencies, most notably bushfires, it has provided rough accommodation for firefighters. Local GPs used it as a vaccination site during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

In its heyday, the hall was also the venue twice, eventually three times, a year for the shows of the Ferny Creek and Sherbrooke Horticultural Society from 1932 onwards. In addition to these regular shows, in the 1950s four-day Rhododendron Festivals were held to raise funds for the building of a kindergarten and other local projects. The festivals attracted large crowds from the city and showcased the outputs and enthusiasms of local gardeners.

It was these outward looking events which have sustained the hall for many years. While cherished by the local community, the reserve and its hall have also become a special place for generations of Melburnians. Countless large and small family and company picnics have been held here since the 1920s.

An extension to the pavilion, dubbed a 'cultural hall', was added in 1953 at the behest of and with funds raised by the horticultural society. This smaller room was later named in honour of Henry Linden, the son of an early settler. Linden was a builder, deeply embedded in the community as the first captain of the local fire brigade, stalwart of the horticultural society and long-serving president of the recreation reserve committee. In the late 1960s, the horticultural society eventually secured an adjoining site, previously a quarry and later the local tip, and built its own hall there surrounded by 10 acres of magnificent gardens.

The vast main hall of the pavilion remains faithful to its simple, original design. Outside, the weatherboard and cement sheeting walls remain topped with a vast galvanised iron roof. Inside, the main hall, now named in honour of Bob Horner, another long-term custodian of the reserve, measures 21x12metres following extensions. The low band platform and

hardwood timber dance floor remain intact. Dark half-panelled walls hark back to the 1930s. The integrated Linden Hall, measuring 10 x 7metres, is these days used for storage and as a meeting area. A refurbished kitchen area and new toilets have also been added in recent years.

The entire reserve including the hall remains under the management of a local committee, governed by Parks Victoria.

**John Schauble**







Border Morning Mail  
22 October 1959.

*Newly arrived German and Austrian assisted migrants lined up for their identity cards. Within a fortnight, each new arrival would have a one-on-one interview with an employment officer who would direct him or her to a workplace where they were under contract to work for two years.*

## Post-war Bonegilla arrival and reception records online



*'Children from the war'. Photographer Helga Salwe has created a triptych of three anonymous children who arrived as displaced persons.*

*Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, the popular science communicator, has traced his family's migration story. The information on the Bonegilla cards refines the story Dr Karl tells and awakens deeply-felt family memories of employment indignities involved in migrating: <https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/3027884/dr-karl-experience-at-bonegilla>*

Over the last two years, the National Archives of Australia has digitised many of the registration cards compiled for each new arrival at Bonegilla between 1947 and 1971 together with a collection of miscellaneous administrative files retrieved from the Reception Centre when it closed.

In digitising these records, the National Archives anticipates heavy use by researchers, including family historians, seeking the records of individuals. The information on each Bonegilla Card, compiled by employment officers, is spare, but it helps family historians place their families in some historical context. The information within some of the correspondence files will help diligent family historians to form an understanding of the reception processes and the circumstances prevailing at a time of arrival.

The cards with pictures extend the visual memory of the mass migration program. They sit beside the gloss of the picture records prepared with flair by publicists and exhibited on the 'Destination Australia' web site: <https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au/>. Employment officers left a more sober record. Nevertheless, artists have explored emotional responses which the Bonegilla cards evoke.

This digitisation project supports not only migrant centred inquiries, but also host society centred investigations of immigration policies and reception practices. Together, the newly digitised records show how entangled those inquiries are. They have the potential for firing or furthering inquiries ranging from tracking the fortunes of single families or individuals to deepening reflections on the post-war immigration scheme.

The bulk of the materials, now online, relate to migrant and refugee arrivals and administration records from 1957 to 1971. There are, at this stage, a limited number of very rich records relating to arrivals between 1947 and 1957. The National Archives of Australia faces difficult decisions in setting its digitisation priorities. I am sure there is high demand for its World War II service records, where it is currently putting much effort. I hope it might find the resources to complete the Bonegilla Cards sooner rather than later. It might help if it began with digitising the Greek cards in Series A2571 as a searchable collection rather than individually indexed items, as it has with Series A2572.

For more information: <https://bit.ly/3yvfcAd>

**Bruce Pennay**

Charles Sturt University



# History Victoria Support Group

We are delighted to welcome several new members to the History Victoria Support Group.

Box Hill Historical Society member Ric Pawsey joined HVSG last year and has already done some excellent work on our phone survey. He says he derived great pleasure from the phone conversations he had with a number of local history compatriots from regional societies across the state.

Ric, a clinical psychologist who specialised in work with children, settled in central Box Hill in the mid-1980s, near where he grew up. He first attended meetings in the 1990s but, after retiring in 2018, he decided that the BHHS was one of his chosen community groups. He joined the committee and has since helped out with some data recording for archives and in organising some general meetings.

"I also started to attend some RHSV presentations in my retirement," says Ric. "Gary Presland is the admirable president of the BHHS and, in pre-lockdown March last year, I particularly enjoyed his RHSV presentation on the West Melbourne wetlands, and the accompanying display." Ric says he filled some of his 2020 lockdown quiescence reading through the BHHS *Victorian History Journal* collection and learnt of the pioneering work of Weston Bate in getting local history groups connected and supported, enjoyed some online RHSV archiving training and discovered HVSG.

"Like so many others, I dearly look forward to being able to visit local history displays and museums in Victoria and meeting the engaging and interesting people I got to speak with during lockdown!" he says.

Coburg Historical Society secretary Helen Laffin has worked in the museum industry for 26 years and has had what she describes as, "the good fortune to work in a range of fascinating small and large collections and archives in Melbourne".

Helen is currently Museum Collection and Archives Officer at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and Museum Attendant at Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex with the City of Whitehorse. She has been a member of the Coburg Historical Society for four years and enjoys working with the collection and interacting with visitors. Helen also loves travelling with her family, practising yoga, listening to classical music and escaping into a good book, both fiction and non-fiction.

Dalis Law from St Leonards brings great business skills and a 'user' perspective to the Support Group. A RHSV member, Dalis has been helped by eight historical societies in her own family history research in recent years and brings a consumer point of view to our discussions. She is a senior project business professional with hands-on experience in stakeholder engagement, organisational change, gap analysis, risk

management, business processes and project delivery over a 35 year period.

While we welcome Ric, Helen and Dalis, we are sad to lose Jane Nigro from Malvern Historical Society and Larina Strauch from Kyneton Historical Society who have both been valuable contributors. Jane took on the role of monitoring many societies through their newsletters to provide updates on activities and events. Larina, who was awarded an RHSV Award of Merit in 2017, continues to be busy with museum and research roles in Kyneton.

Other members of HVSG are Bernard Bolch of Walhalla Heritage and Development League, Don Garden of Sandringham and District Historical Society, George Fernando of Camberwell Historical Society and Judy Richards from Stratford Historical Society.

We'd love to have some more volunteers from regional societies. While we are looking forward to meeting again and brainstorming the best ways to help societies around the state, our meetings are hybrid so that members can attend in person or by Zoom.

Or, if you just have some ideas to you think we should consider, do not hesitate to send us a message or give us a call.

## Pauline Hitchins

Convenor HVSG (RHSV)

Phone: 0437 29 69 25

Email: hvsg@historyvictoria.com.au



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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 OCTOBER 2021 ISSUE** please send details to [office@historyvictoria.org.au](mailto:office@historyvictoria.org.au) by 22 August 2021.

**ANGLESEA:** Fred Cahir, author of the book *My Country All Gone, the White Men Have Stolen It*, will speak at our October meeting. This is a history book about the invasion of Wadawurrung Country 1800-1870. Fred has carefully researched the records of the station owners and found some interesting facts about the treatment of indigenous Australians. Fred Cahir is Associate Professor, from Federation University. I believe this will give us a new understanding of the first peoples of our area. See <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~angen/>



**BALLARAT:** The Society, formed on 17 July 1933, is now located at the Gold Museum and meets there on the second Tuesday of each month, except January. The Collection had various homes until 1981 when much of it was moved to the Gold Museum. In 2005 it all came together at the Gold Museum and has been housed, managed and displayed there since then. 'Capture the Vision' is an innovative, ongoing project of the Ballarat Historical Society to preserve images of Ballarat's past and capture the changing face of the city as it is today. Images of the past could come from anywhere. Register your interest by contacting the Society <http://www.ballarathistoricalsociety.com/index.php/projects/capturevision>

**BALWYN:** Thursday 12 August 2021 at 3:00pm at 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn. Guest Speaker: Helen Botham. Topic: 'Thomas Johnson: Thorny rose grower of Hawthorn'. He was the author of the first published book on rose growing. This illustrated presentation follows his colourful career.

**BOX HILL:** Leading up to Heritage Week the following month, with its theme of the 1950s, the August meeting will take us back in time to the excitement of the

1954 Royal visit, when the Box Hill Council and citizens pulled out all stops to make the occasion memorable. Events ranged from a massive flower show at the town hall to the *Cavalcade of the Southern Cross* held at what is now City Oval. Do you have any memories of the occasion? If so, please contact the secretary. Date: Sunday 15 August at 2.15pm. Venue: Bert Lewis Room, First Floor, Box Hill Library, 1040 Whitehorse Road Box Hill. Please RSVP to [boxhillhistory@gmail.com](mailto:boxhillhistory@gmail.com) as attendance numbers may be limited, due to COVID restrictions. A gold coin donation would be appreciated, to help cover rental costs

**BRIGHT:** The museum is in the historic Bright Railway Station. We have some rolling stock typical of that used on the old Ovens Valley Railway. The museum covers railway history, gold mining history and also the social history of the area, with local family histories and a photographic collection. Wander the streets of Bright and see it as it was in the early days. Follow the Blue Plaques for an informative and interesting peep into the past. The map can be found at <https://www.bdhs.org.au/explore-bright/>

**CASTLEMAINE PIONEERS AND OLD RESIDENTS:** The Association held its first meeting on 17 March 1880. Our home is The Old Telegraph Station which was built in 1856 and opened officially on 1 January 1857. The building, and the land it stood on, was granted to the Pioneers & Old Residents Association on 22 December 1893, and we have lived there ever since. Over the course of 139 years our organisation has collected, purchased, and been gifted an incredible assortment of Castlemaine's historic memorabilia that we now take pride in preserving, protecting, and promoting. See more at our website [castlemainepioneers.org/](http://castlemainepioneers.org/)



**CIVIL AVIATION AND AIRWAYS MUSEUM:** We're working with our good friends at Essendon Fields Airport to celebrate its centenary on Saturday 4 September 2021. As part of the celebrations, we at the CAHS will be also holding our annual 'Open Day' on 4 September. We will be featuring a new photographic exhibition on the airport's history, guided walking tours of the historic Wirraway Rd hangar precinct, guest speakers and films about the airport see our Facebook page at [facebook.com/airwaysmuseum](https://facebook.com/airwaysmuseum)

**C J LA TROBE SOCIETY:** The Society celebrates twenty years of promoting an appreciation of the life, work and times of Charles Joseph La Trobe through its events and journal *La Trobeana*. It has sponsored seven La Trobe Society Fellowships at State Library Victoria on topics ranging from the Mount Macedon Aboriginal Protectorate, Melbourne's first mayor, the European experience of Gippsland, an emigré gentlewoman midwife. Visit our website at <https://www.latrobesociety.org.au/> to discover more.

**DONCASTER TEMPLESTOWE:** The Schramm's Cottage Museum Complex comprises: the fully furnished Schramm's cottage (1875) and its old world garden, the Pioneer Orchard Museum housed in Henry Finger's Barn (1870), Atkins Orchard Cottage (1870s), the Box Hill - Doncaster Tram Replica and the Waldau Lutheran Cemetery. In 1858, a wattle and daub Lutheran Church was built on the site that is now covered by Schramm's Cottage adjacent to the cemetery. In 1860, Pastor Max von Schramm, an educated German, used the church as a school. In 1875, Schramm had a stone cottage built for himself and his wife Kate in Doncaster Road beside the present site of the municipal offices. In 1971, when Doncaster Road was widened, the cottage had to be moved, and in 1975, members of the Society, with the help of the council, dismantled the building and rebuilt it on its present site. The cottage provides a picture of life in the pioneering days of the late 1800s.



**EAST MELBOURNE:** Wednesday, 18 August at 7.30pm at East Melbourne Library, 122 George Street, East Melbourne: Cliveden Mansions: a sequel. Bruce Trethowan, heritage architect, will follow up on his earlier talk on Cliveden as the family home of Sir William Clark with the story of its conversion to luxury apartments and its new inhabitants. Visit our website at [emhs.org.au/](http://emhs.org.au/)

**KYNETON:** Celebrating 70 years in 2021. A gathering of local people interested in history held an informal meeting on 8 October 1951 to garner interest in establishing a historical society. This was successful and on 3 November 1951 the Kyneton Historical Society was founded at a meeting held in the Kyneton Mechanics Hall. A constitution was adopted in 1955 and the society joined the RHSV in 1956, a member now for 65 years. The society became incorporated in 1988. Over the years the society has met in many buildings as we did not have a permanent home. From 1995 til 2007 the 'Front Room' at the Mechanics Hall was arranged to house records. We moved to our current premises at 75 Piper Street in March 2012. What a journey it has been, and here we are seventy years later celebrating this magnificent milestone. [vicnet.net.au/~kyhist/](http://vicnet.net.au/~kyhist/)

**MARYBOROUGH MIDLANDS:** Worsley Cottage Museum, an 1894 stone cottage, is the home of the society. The collection includes domestic items and artefacts from the era, outdoor displays and a cottage garden. There is also an 1840 slab and daub pioneer hut with wooden shingle roof. Research facilities are also available. Please visit our page at <https://bit.ly/3yleFdG>

**MURCHISON AND DISTRICT:** The Historical Society received two awards at the City of Greater Shepparton Cultural Heritage Awards ceremony in April. One was for the Society website, citation: 'An invaluable and comprehensive website containing news of recent local happenings, promotion of coming events, historical items, education about local history and a platform to answer enquiries'. A second award for Community, Multicultural and Indigenous Events and Tourism, shared with the Albanian Society Harvest Festival, was for the successful event 'Rock on Murchison', citation: 'The event celebrated the arrival of the Murchison meteorite and the impact it has had on the local community. The event was entertaining and educative and extremely well liked. This event will continue in the memory of those who attended it as being one of the most successful events held in Murchison and the Greater Shepparton region'. A temporary exhibition titled 'Four

Lives of Dhurringile Estate', launched at Easter time has been very successful in attracting visitors and receiving lots of positive feedback. The history of this property must surely be unique; listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, over the past 145 years, Dhurringile Estate has been a private home, Prisoner of War camp for German naval officers, rural training farm for young immigrant boys and now HM Dhurringile, a low security Prison Farm.

Further information: <https://murchisonhistoricalsociety.wordpress.com>

**PORT PHILLIP PIONEERS:** 2.00pm Saturday, 11 September, St Andrew's Uniting Church, cnr Burke and Malvern Rds, Gardiner. Speaker: Miles Lewis

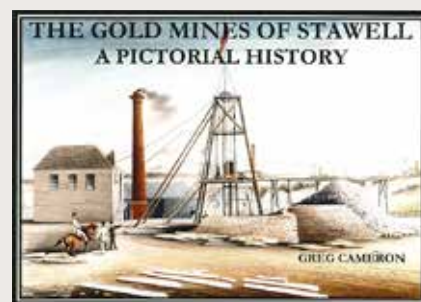
Topic: 'Portable Buildings in Early Australia'. We are fortunate to have Professor Miles Lewis, one of Australia's most notable architectural historians to be the speaker in September. Miles will speak about portable buildings in early Australia, including a proposal currently being developed to nominate some of them for World Heritage listing. There are more such buildings surviving in Victoria, particularly in Melbourne and Geelong, than anywhere else in the world, and several date from the Port Phillip District period, such as La Trobe's Cottage.

**RINGWOOD:** Our Heathmont History Group has published a booklet, *Heathmont's Olympians*. It has a photo and brief description of each of our nine Olympians. It also includes a list of 30 other 'Sporting Stars of Heathmont' and an acknowledgement that all local sporting clubs have their 'stars', often long-time stalwarts of canteens and equipment. Ron Clarke and Dave Culbert are probably the best known of our Olympians. Both represented Australia in athletics and our others in basketball, swimming, shooting and gymnastics. We have given copies of the booklet to all local schools.

**ROMSEY LANCEFIELD:** The Society holds a range of books created by our members from our records. One example is the publication, *He drew his last breath and expired : obituaries taken from papers of the former Romsey Shire*. In this case, the records held at the Society are the hard copy and digital copies of the Lancefield Chronicle (1870-74) the Lancefield Examiner (1872-1882), the Lancefield Mercury (1874-1965) and the Romsey Examiner (1882-1965). In 2011 Robyn Miller compiled this book. In short, it is a gateway into the history of the many pioneer families who remain in this region. If you joined the Society to assist you to look for your forebears, or

you have lived here all your life and have begun to take an interest in family history, this book will provide an excellent starting point in your research. Visit our new website at [romseylancefieldhistorical.org.au](http://romseylancefieldhistorical.org.au).

**STAWELL:** A second reprint of *The gold mines of Stawell: a pictorial history, with photographs, art works, illustrations and maps* by Greg Cameron has now been completed and is available at our premises on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 am - 4 pm. The books are \$35 each, plus postage if required. The book was first published in 2014 and with the first reprint, has sold out twice since that time. Our Facebook page is still creating a lot of interest including the recent articles on 'Zumstein's in the Grampians', 'Railway Station and Yards' of past years, 'Kaolin Mining in Stawell' and the 'Stawell Boomerang Club'. [facebook.com/Stawell-Historical-Society-901746499903222](https://facebook.com/Stawell-Historical-Society-901746499903222)



**WANDONG:** The Wandong History Group was formed to collate, catalogue and preserve the past history of Wandong and Heathcote Junction for the benefit of future generations. Currently the group is helping the Friends of Mt Disappointment in getting a plaque installed on the summit of the mountain to remember the eight serving airmen who lost their lives there. The service is set for 5 August 12.45pm, the time and day the first plane crashed. See our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/wandongheathcotejunction>



# Windows on history: St Andrew's Uniting Church, Colac

**St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, now Uniting Church, at Colac in western Victoria contains the most spectacular circular stained-glass window ever made by the colonial glaziers Ferguson and Urie of North Melbourne. It is dedicated to Colac district pioneer William Robertson (1798-1874), renowned pastoralist who was a landholder in the Western District. The window has been mesmerising the Colac congregation with its kaleidoscope of colours for nearly a century and a half.**



photo by author, 10 August 2013

In October 1876 the Secretary of the Colac Presbyterian Church invited architects to present designs for their new place of worship. A dozen submissions were received, and the designs of Melbourne architect Peter Matthews were chosen. The foundation stone was laid in April 1877 and construction began with bluestone quarried from the estate of the late William Robertson's son George, at nearby Coragulac. In the same month George made a generous donation of £150 towards the building fund on behalf of himself and surviving brothers James and William.

St Andrew's archives contain original correspondence, memos and minute books recording dates and discussions about the church construction. The concept of erecting stained-glass windows is prominent and in February 1877 the committee held a meeting at which the architect and James Urie, from the Ferguson and Urie stained glass company, were present.

*'Mr Urie submitted designs for stained glass windows...Mr James Robertson announced that he and his brothers had decided to defray the cost of putting in the large central window in a highly ornamental design of stained glass estimated at 100 guineas...Resolved; that the thanks of the committee be given to Messrs Robertson Brothers for their very handsome gift to the church... Resolved; that ornamental leaded margins of stained glass be erected in all the windows in accordance with designs submitted.'*

The large central window mentioned is an eight lobed oculus, commonly described as a rose or wheel shaped window. It cost £100 and was designed and manufactured by Ferguson and Urie to complement the elaborate stone tracery in the liturgical west end of the church. It measures approximately four metres (over twelve feet) in diameter and dominates almost half of the entire west wall. Four of the eight outer oculi contain the biblical attributes of the

Evangelists, surrounded by gold and red rays, separated by circular floral patterns which include vine leaves and the passion flower.

In relation to a clock face, at twelve o'clock is the winged St Matthew, at three is St John as the Eagle, at six is St Mark as the Winged Lion, and at nine is St Luke as the Winged Ox. The large central oculus depicts an elaborate representation of the shield of the Trinity. Viewing the window at the right time of the day will reward your senses with a spectacular kaleidoscope of rich reds, yellows, blues and purple cascading across the floor and pews. It is truly spectacular to see in person. From outside, a passer-by has no idea what breathtaking display lies within.

William Robertson, a native of Alvie, Inverness-shire, Scotland, arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1822 with his brother John. Their younger siblings James and Daniel arrived later and together they formed 'Robertson Brothers Mercantile Importers' at Hobart in 1829 and also





'1877: St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Colac, Victoria.'  
(2013) <https://fergusonandurie.wordpress.com/>

selected land near Campbell Town. Their business interests made them a considerable fortune. John and William had interests in sheep and cattle and a land holding of 7,500 acres at Elizabeth River near Campbell Town until its sale c1835.

Becoming disillusioned by the land grants system in Van Diemen's Land, William began to take interest in the exploits of Hume and Hovell. He was subsequently invited to become a member of the Port Phillip Association, which led to the first European settlement at Melbourne. He partially funded the cost of John Batman's first two expeditions to the district and in 1836 he explored the Western District of Victoria in the company of Joseph Tice Gellibrand and the legendary convict escapee William Buckley.

In 1837 he returned to Port Phillip for the Government land sales and purchased 5,000 acres at Colac and began transporting livestock there from Tasmania. In early 1866 he moved his family to Colac where his wife Margaret died only weeks later.

William built a substantial residence, known as 'The Hill', on the outskirts of Colac, where he hosted the Duke of Edinburgh in December 1867. He died there in January 1874 and his land holdings were listed at probate as a massive 219,656 acres, which were divided equally between his four sons, John, William, George and James.

Beneath the stained-glass window at St Andrew's is a modest brass plaque which reads:

*'This window was erected by William, George, & James Robertson in memory of their late father WILLIAM ROBERTSON, who died 18th Jan 1874, aged 76 years.'*

Further detailed information can be found at <http://fergusonandurie.wordpress.com>

Ray Brown 2021

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## A glimpse into the past: Australasian Catholic Assurance building

**Building demolition works have exposed signwriting on the northern side of the adjacent Australasian Catholic Assurance (ACA) building in Queen Street, Melbourne, renewing interest in the building and its original business.**

Edward Joseph Mooney was described as ‘one of the ablest and most experienced “live wires” in the assurance world’ with ‘an abundance of energy and capacity for “big” things’. With thirteen years of business experience, including a period as chief superintendent at a major life insurance office in Sydney, he founded the Australasian Catholic Assurance Company in 1921.

He started with authorised capital of £100,000 and paid-up capital of about £14,500, including £8,500 in cash. (There are discrepancies between figures in different reports.) He employed an accountant, a typist, and an office boy; had ‘a few sticks of furniture’ and paid £3 per week for an office in Sydney. Within three years the company established branches in Melbourne and Newcastle and expanded from life insurance to include fire, accident and general insurance.

ACA had no official connection to the Catholic church and the business name was a source of disagreement with the church. The directors, employees and most of the shareholders were Catholics

and they targeted Catholics as insurance prospects.

In 1930 the *Australian Insurance Journal* reported that ACA had broken Australian records for the first nine years of a life assurance company in saving 53% of its total premiums, building premium income to £124,000 and bringing its funds to £250,000. This was achieved during ‘a bad time for Australian life assurance owing to the operations of a pack of adventurers’, and the Great Depression did not dampen the 1930 results. By 1938 ACA claimed a world record for growing assets to almost one million pounds.

In the same year a Royal Commission on Industrial Assurances questioned ACA about its lack of connection with the church, wages paid to employees and holding inadequate reserves for future expenses. However, regular record-breaking claims continued at least into the 1950s.

ACA started building its own offices during the 1930s. In Melbourne it bought the Queen Street site with an existing four-storey building for £36,000 and

*Sievers, Wolfgang (1967) ‘Scottish Amicable House 140 Queen Street Melbourne’, image provided by Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria.*

<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/337671>

engaged Sydney architects Hennessy, Hennessy and Co. The Art Deco style building, completed in 1936, was striking. It was built to the maximum allowable height at the time, 132 feet (40 metres), with a tower bringing the total height to 160 feet.

The stepped fins of the design and the use of a colourful synthetic stone suggested to some the appearance of pale old rose. Benedictine stone was made in Brisbane in various colours. The ACA building cladding ranged from deep pink at the bottom to a pinkish buff at the top.

ACA used the two lower floors and offered the upper floors to tenants. Construction costs of more than £100,000 included two lifts travelling at ‘the very high speed of 450 feet a minute’ and extensive use of black marble, sanded ashlar, silky oak and patterned glass.

**Jennifer McNeice**



# Queen's Birthday honours awards: our congratulations

Dr Elizabeth Anne Rushen AM  
Russell Martin Haines OAM  
Mr Lindsay Charles Cox OAM  
Charles Henry Martin OAM  
Shirley Ann Smith OAM  
Pamela Elizabeth Cupper OAM  
William (Bill) Ewart Church OAM  
Claire Agnes White OAM  
Shelley Jane Penn AM  
Jaynie Louise Anderson AM



Former Executive Director of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (2001-2004), Dr Elizabeth Rushen was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia in the recent Queen's Birthday honours for 'significant service to community history and heritage preservation'.

Weston Bate, then Chairman noted **Liz Rushen's** success in obtaining a number of grants for innovative new projects while she was RHSV EO. She is a former History Council of Victoria chair, is currently a Director of the Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network and has been involved with numerous other history and heritage committees and projects. Liz was also a co-founder of East Melbourne Historical Society and involved with Foster Historical Society for several years where she co-authored several local history publications.

Liz is widely published in the field of migration history, women in colonial Australia and the social history of the Port Phillip District. In 2018-19 Liz was awarded a Creative Fellowship by the State Library Victoria to research the life and writings of Edmund Finn ('Garryowen'). Her latest book is 'John Marshall: shipowner, Lloyd's reformer and emigration agent' (2020).

**Pamela Cupper**, a life-long Wimmera-Mallee teacher who has pursued a desire to promote the importance of the region's service, involvement and sacrifice in the First World War was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of her service to education and the preservation of military history. Pursuing her passion for history Pam worked to preserve the teaching of history in schools. She explains that, "there was a time when it almost disappeared from the curriculum. I'm glad it's back ... I suppose I've always wanted the kids to have as much interest in history as I have."

In 2017 Pam went on a tour with a group of western Victorians to the Western Front that involved some people from Hopetoun. "I've always tried to relate the war to the local area and community," she said. Ms Cupper's publications include chapters in a range of humanities textbooks and work as co-author of *Gallipoli: A Battlefield Guide* (1989) and *ANZAC* (2003).

**Russ Haines**, who received an RHSV Award of Merit in 2019, has been president of the Ringwood and District Historical Society since 2007 and archivist since 2002 was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.

Russ presented a monthly historical program on local FM radio for more than a decade. He has been the Ringwood representative on the Regional Historical Committee for more than a decade and served as Secretary of the Association of Eastern Historical Societies.

**Bill Church** also received his RHSV Award 2019, was awarded a medal of the Order of Australia for services to the community of Yarrawonga.

During his 14 years as president of Yarrawonga Mulwala Historical Society, Bill oversaw many major projects and expansions of the Pioneer Museum and the installation of information plaques at historically important sites during the streetscape project in Yarrawonga's main street.

Manager of the Salvation Army Museum since 1997, **Lindsay Cox** of Pascoe Vale South received his Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition for service to community history. Lindsay is the author of several books on the Salvation Army and Victorian Horse Artillery as well as being a member of the Salvation Army Historical Society.

**Claire White** of Yaaapeet was recognised for her services to the community of the Wimmera with a Medal of the Order of Australia. Claire is chair of Yaaapeet Community Club History Board and coordinates the Yaaapeet History Facebook page. She was also involved with centenary publications for Yaaapeet Primary School and Yaaapeet parish.

Minyip Historical Society secretary **Shirley Smith** was recognised for services to the community of Minyip with a Medal the Order of Australia. A founding member of the society, Shirley has also served as President and Vice President and was Minyip's Citizen of the Year in 2013.

**Charles Martin** of Kilsyth was a founder of the Ambulance Historical Society of Victoria and has been honorary curator and manager since 2005. His Medal of the Order of Australia acknowledges his services to community history and his long service to the ambulance service in Victoria.

Another honour recipient was former Heritage Council of Victoria deputy chair **Shelley Penn** of Williamstown, who was awarded Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to architecture and design in the public realm, and to professional institutes.

RHSV also congratulates Emeritus Professor **Jaynie Louise Anderson** for her Member of the Order of Australia award recognising her significant service to tertiary education, particularly to art history in Australia.

# Digitising The Bacchus Marsh local press 1919-1954: a journey

**In April this year The Bacchus Marsh Express 1919–1945 and the Express Bacchus Marsh 1946 – 1954 went ‘live’ on TROVE after nearly two and a half years, some delays resulting from COVID restrictions.**

This journey began in 2018 when members of Bacchus Marsh and District Historical Society Inc (BM&DHS) worked on a grant application. For a project to digitise the *Bacchus Marsh Express* from 1919 to 1945 and become available on TROVE.

This time-frame covers some important aspects of Bacchus Marsh’s history: the Great Depression, the Centenary Celebrations (1838–1938) and the Darley Military Camp.

The application was submitted in December 2018.

In July 2019 the BM&DHS received news that we had been awarded a grant of \$12,973 to support this endeavour from PROV’s Local History Grants Program. This program is administered and awarded through the Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) and the grants are state government funded.

On the 22 July 2019 the grant money was in our account. This grant, with a small

contribution from our Society, enabled digitisation of the *Express* to extend through to the end of WWII.

The State Library of Victoria undertook the process of digitising the records. Their support and experience in timelines and costing, played an important part of the Society’s grant application.

Some members then started thinking how wonderful it would be to have the years 1946 – 1954 digitised as well. Under copyright law, *The Express Bacchus Marsh* was only available for digitisation up until 1954. For the extra cost, it would certainly be worthwhile to have all available copies digitised.

In the meantime, our IT project was getting underway and much of our focus was on costings and purchasing our new IT equipment. The Community Bank Bacchus Marsh was very generous in supporting our IT project. So, the 1946–1954 *Express* digitising project went on the ‘back-burner’.

In 2020 we were encouraged by the Community Bank Bacchus Marsh to apply for the funding to have 1946–1954 *Express* digitised and thanks again to their generosity, we received a grant of \$7,000 which allowed us to do this.

We are fortunate that previous members of our Society had the foresight to ensure that physical copies of the *Express* were made available to the State Library and that current members have ensured a continuing positive relationship with this library.

These Bacchus Marsh local papers, which are highly valuable resources to both local and family historians, are now available for all from the National Library of Australia, through its TROVE website.

**Barb McMillan**

Secretary

Bacchus Marsh and District Historical Society Inc

Stephen McGhie, State Member for Melton, attended the BM&DHS Inc meeting on the 30 May 2019 where he presented the cheque for the grant amount of \$12,973.





# RHSV Collections

The RHSV Library collection is one of the oldest and most important historical collections in the state. As well as books, the collection consists of rare pamphlets, documents, ephemera, newspaper cuttings on a variety of topics in the Vertical Files. The Library also contains journals and newsletters of historical societies, organisations and schools, and published and typescript family histories.

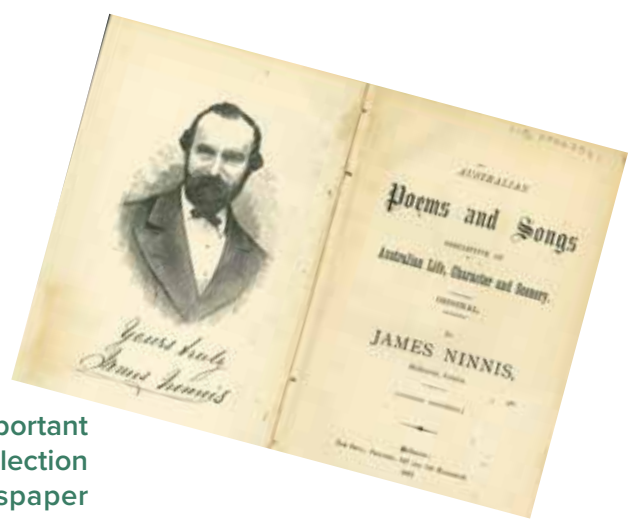
## You cannot judge a book by its cover

Included in the recent Les Blake donation of material to the RHSV collection was a fragile copy of *'Australian poems and songs descriptive of Australian life, character and scenery'* by James Ninnis of Melbourne. Published locally by Rae Brothers in 1891, this book has a number of stories to tell. This seems to be Ninnis' only publication. Sands & McDougall lists him first as a pawn broker, c. 1858, then watchmaker, then jeweller. TROVE newspapers tell us that he had a partner, William, in the 1880s. His last shop was in the Victoria Market Buildings in Elizabeth Street. The poetry reflects his thoughts and life, including 'Among the barmaids'; 'An evening's stroll by Yarra's stream'; 'A plea for the inmates of the benevolent asylum'; 'Melbourne Arab boys'; 'Sweet Nell of Clifton Hill' and 'Thoughts on visiting the Public Library'. Ninnis died in 1907 and a will is held by PROV; his estate was left to his five children and three nieces. We can expand our research further to understand more of his life, or to understand the nationalistic fervour reflected in his poetry, or look at the ebb and flow of the jewellery or publishing businesses in Melbourne over time. One book, many stories.

**Jillian Hiscock**, Collections Manager/  
Volunteer Coordinator

## Fruitful collaboration

The recent cataloguing of a photograph album has been a wonderful example of research collaboration at the RHSV. Volunteer Sallie Muirden catalogued a small album (AL019) created in 1919 by the Brunswick-born civil engineer Athelstan Brown. It includes sixty photos of Victorian bridges, bridge construction sites and subways, mainly located in Gippsland. There is an obvious pride in Brown's work, as he documents the state of old, unsafe timber bridges and their replacement with modern structures.



Sallie researched Brown's education and career in detail. What was missing was engineering knowledge of the bridge types. Our friends at Engineering Heritage Victoria kindly offered their assistance. David Beauchamp augmented our catalogue records with valuable detail, including the correct terminology for materials, machinery and bridge components. He noted which bridges were standard Country Roads Board designs, which elements were unusual, and the function of infrastructure types.

Ken McInnes became our next collaborator, offering his draft biography of Brown compiled for the online 'Encyclopedia of Australian Science'. Ken confirmed that Brown managed many Country Roads Board contracts in his time as Narracan Shire Engineer between 1915 and 1920, hence the Gippsland bridge photographs.

The album has a poignancy as Brown died a year after it was produced. He had

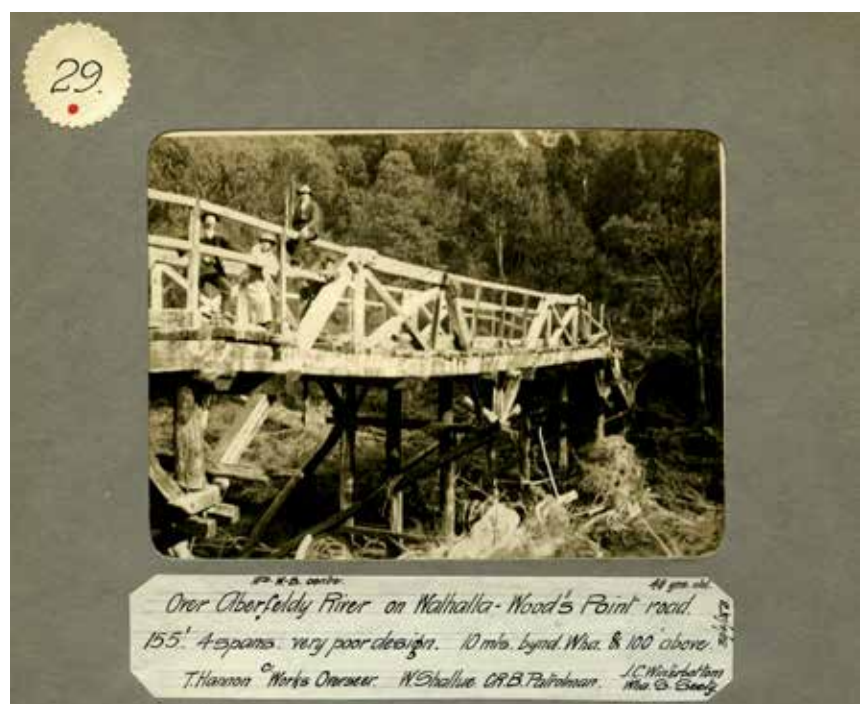
only enjoyed a plum new role as Prahran City Surveyor for two months when he was tragically killed, at the age of 32, when a bolting horse ran into his car and he was fatally injured by the shaft of the horses cart.

If you have specialist knowledge you would like to bring to our catalogue records please get in touch. Volunteers interested in offering occasional help should contact [collections@historyvictoria.org.au](mailto:collections@historyvictoria.org.au).

**Helen Stitt**, Collections Officer (Images)

For further insights into the RHSV collection visit the collection lounge at <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/collections-lounge/>

Accessing the collection - If you want to visit and make use of the collections, please make an appointment. You then use your time productively as we can confirm whether we have the material you need. Call 03 9326 9288 or email [office@historyvictoria.org.au](mailto:office@historyvictoria.org.au)



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or visit the Bookshop at the RHSV.



## Jas A. Munro & Co: the largest garage in Melbourne

Ian Berg (2020), edited by  
Christopher Berg, Alastair  
Berg  
HB – 150pp – 215 IMAGES  
- \$50

Jas Munro was a  
businessman who was  
captivated by the horseless  
carriage. The Munro  
archives, undisturbed  
and unseen for nearly  
a century, came to light  
following the sale of his  
business premises adjacent  
to Melbourne's iconic  
Queen Victoria Market. This  
beautifully illustrated and  
engaging volume tells the  
story of *Jas A Munro & Co.*



## The Convent: a city finds its heart

Stuart Kells (2020)  
193pp - \$39.99

The Abbotsford Convent  
was a haunted place, left  
to languish after the Sisters  
of the Good Shepherd had  
gone. In its prime it had  
been a school, a retreat, a  
workhouse and a prison -  
the single largest charitable  
institution in the southern  
hemisphere. In the late 1990s  
a proposed high-density  
development threatened  
its idyllic riverside location,  
sparking outrage in the  
local community. Years of  
protesting and fundraising  
followed and the convent,  
now on Australia's National  
Heritage List, started a new  
life as a vibrant cultural  
centre.



## The invention of Melbourne: a baroque archbishop and a gothic architect

Janie Anderson, Max  
Vodola, Shane Carmody  
(2019)  
HB – 328pp - \$54.99

*The Invention of Melbourne*  
defines the relationship  
between an architect of  
genius, William Wardell,  
and the first Catholic  
Archbishop of Melbourne,  
James Goold, an Irishman  
educated in Risorgimento,  
Italy. Their partnership  
produced St Patrick's, the  
largest cathedral of the 19th  
century anywhere in the  
world, and some thirteen  
churches.



## Melbourne

Sophie Cunningham (2011)  
320pp - \$29.99

Melbourne begins on Black  
Saturday, when bushfires  
tore through the outskirts  
of Melbourne, destroying  
the townships of Marysville  
and Kinglake. Sophie  
Cunningham writes about  
what happened over the  
year that followed.

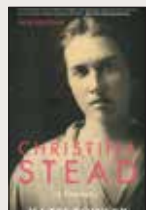
Cunningham captivates  
us as she shares her  
Melbourne, its history, its  
stories and its characters.  
In a new introduction,  
Cunningham reflects  
on how much her city  
has changed: it is hotter,  
greener and has endured  
the rollercoaster ride –  
from boom times to  
economic depression –  
that defined 2020.



## Truth-Telling: history, sovereignty and the Uluru Statement

Henry Reynolds (2021)  
288pp - \$ 34.99

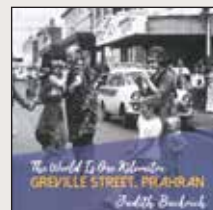
Henry Reynolds pulls  
the rug from legal and  
historical assumptions,  
with his usual sharp eye  
and rigour, in a book that  
is about the present as  
much as the past. His  
work examines a number  
of issues including why  
our national war memorial  
must acknowledge the  
frontier wars and that the  
Uluru Statement is no  
rhetorical flourish.



## Christina Stead: a biography

Hazel Rowley (2007)  
497pp - \$44.99

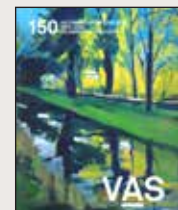
A beautiful new edition  
of Hazel Rowley's  
compelling biography of  
one of Australia's most  
important writers, Christina  
Stead. Christina Stead left  
Australia in 1928, aged  
twenty-six, for Europe,  
not to return to Australia  
until she was seventy-two.  
Stead's fiction was large  
and passionate, original  
and challenging, as was  
her life. Hazel Rowley's  
compelling biography is  
vigorous and penetrating.



## The World is One Kilometre: Greville Street, Prahran

Judith Buckrich (2019)  
213pp, 200+ images - \$50

This book begins in the  
1830s and leads to the  
Greville Street we know  
and love which found  
fame with its groovy music  
venues, clothes shops  
and eateries in the last  
30 years of the twentieth  
century. In the 1970s it  
was a venue for Captain  
Matchbox Whoopie Band  
whose members lived in  
the street. Photographer  
Rennie Ellis 'captured' the  
street for decades.



## Victorian Artists Society 1870-2020, Celebrating 150 Years

Rosemary Noble (2020)  
104pp - \$45

The book consists of a  
timeline of the Victorian  
Artists Society's activities,  
from the early years of its  
inception with members  
Fred McCubbin, Tom  
Roberts, Charles Conder  
and Arthur Streeton, and  
going on through each  
decade until the present  
milestone of 150 years  
was reached in 2020. The  
book is liberally illustrated  
with anecdotes, sketches  
and paintings.



# 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.



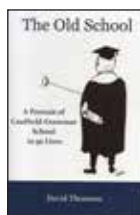
**Berthe Mouchette Celebration.** Alliance Francaise de Melbourne, St Kilda, 2019, pp. 1-99, ISBN 9780646810454.

The Concours Berthe Mouchette is an annual poetry reading competition for school students organised by Alliance Francaise in Melbourne. It has been held since 1894. Berthe Mouchette (1846-1928) was a French-born artist and educator who lived mostly in Australia from 1881 until 1923. She founded the Alliance Francaise in Melbourne in 1890, an expression of a global movement to promote French language and culture. This small volume tells a little of its history, contains reminiscences of competitors and reproduces in French and English some of the poetry performed.



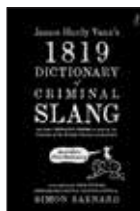
**"Bonleigh": grand dame, beloved home.** Abigail Belfrage, The History Dept., Carlton North, pp.1-236, ISBN 9780648788409.

This is the story, in part, of the purchase and restoration by Graeme Samuel and Jill Davies of one of Elsternwick's remaining grand homes: Bonleigh. But it is much more the story of one of the families who passed through it, their triumphs and tribulations. Author Abi Belfrage has skilfully provided the context of the settlement and eventual construction of the substantial home on the property, which dates to the 1850s. In the boom-and-bust cycles of colonial Victoria, the property has known many owners, been sub-divided to a fraction of its original, seen death and partial destruction. This is a beautifully presented work: a slice of Melbourne's social history by the bay.



**The old school: a portrait of Caulfield Grammar School in 50 lives.** David Thomson, Connor Court Publishing, Redland Bay, 2019, pp. 1-234, ISBN 9781925826708.

David Thomson attended Caulfield Grammar as a student before tertiary education and eventually returned as a teacher. His portraits of 50 students reflect upon not just the school but the author himself. These are not just the stories of the great and the good: the products that public schools build reputations upon. Thomson's vignettes embrace former students who did momentous things or provided lifetimes of service to the community, but also those who challenged orthodoxy and authority. One became Premier of Victoria and another was a drug dealer murdered by hitmen in a St Kilda backstreet. There are 48 other equally fascinating stories.



**James Hardy Vaux's 1819 dictionary of criminal slang: and other impolite terms as used by the convicts of the British colonies of Australia.** Simon Barnard, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2019, pp. v-312, ISBN 9781925773897.

James Hardy Vaux was a scoundrel, swindler and thief. Transported three times to New South Wales for a variety of offences, he wrote what is regarded as the first autobiographical account of life in the penal colony while working as a clerk in Newcastle. Into his account was inserted a *Vocabulary of the Flash Language*, compiled on a previous stay. Regarded by many as Australia's first dictionary, much of the slang it contains was brought from the streets of London. Nevertheless, his compilation of the terminology of the criminal underclass offered a useful guide to their colonial jailers and magistrates. It is reproduced here in annotated form, with additional notes, 200 years after its original publication.



**One hundred years of Euroa and District cricket: incorporating the EDCA 1904 to 2000 and the AEDCA.** John Gilbert, the author, Longwood East, pp. i-323.

It is hard to know whether cricket begat statisticians or the other way around. Suffice to say there are statistics in this book ... lots of them. And many, many lists. This is a chronological account of cricket in the Euroa district from 1904 to 2007, although the game is known to have been played there from the 1860s onwards. Sport is essential to many rural communities in Victoria and even though the bulk of this work is devoted to setting down teams, matches, results and detailed scores, something of the struggle that such competitions have faced and continue to endure emerges through the data.



**Place names of Hamilton and the Southern Grampians Shire of Victoria: an outline of the origins of the names of towns, settlements, rural districts, localities and geographic features of the Southern Grampians Shire.** Bernard Wallace, the author, Portland, 2019, pp. i-46, ISBN 9780980758559.

How places get their names is of fascination to many people, for each place has a story no matter its origins. The naming places may be casual or even accidental but can also be an overtly political act. The "namers" in Southern Grampians Shire included the Aboriginal peoples of the area, overland explorers, early European settlers, squatters, government surveyors, postal and railway officers. This brief but thorough account of the local place names explores the sources and rationale behind the names that describe towns, localities and features past and present. It also touches on why some names have changed over the years.



**Land is family. Jenani Therone.** House of JT for The Jenani, Melbourne, 2019, pp. 1-111, ISBN 9780648590682.

This is a fine art photographic record of a grain farm in the Wimmera-Mallee, compiled over a 12-month period during 44 sessions. The focus of the work is not upon the individual farmer, but on the process of agriculture and its intergenerational nature. It is also about the promotion of an industry which needs an injection of new, professional participants increasingly needing different skills from those who came before in order to remain relevant and competitive. There is a brief introductory conversation, but the core of this record is the imagery. Photographed in black-and-white, it is a dramatic record.



**On a wing and a prayer: the race that stopped the world.** Di Websdale-Morrissey, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2019, pp. 1-262, ISBN 9781925773989.

In 1934 an air race was held from London to Melbourne. This sparkling tale is of a time when air travel was still relatively new, although World War 1 had propelled technical developments in aircraft design and manufacture. The mix of craft that participated in the race reflected this. Some were constructed mainly of wood, including the sleek DH88 Comet designed and built to win, which it did in just 71 hours. Another, the shiny aluminium Douglas DC-2, was a fully equipped long haul passenger aircraft. *VHJ*, December 2018 issue, readers will be familiar with the story of the Dutch-owned Uiver. The race claimed the lives of two pilots, as did many such adventures in those days.

The RHSV's current exhibition, *Tales from the MacRobertson International Air Races*, is all about the drama of this 1934 race.



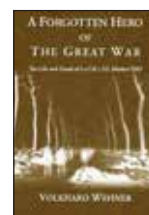
**The old Dunkeld cemetery 1855-1905.** Heather Funk, David Gordon and Joyce Gordon, Dunkeld Museum Inc., Dunkeld, 2020, pp. i-161.

The ever-growing interest in family history, not to mention local history, makes compilations like this one of significant value. The old Dunkeld cemetery contains 263 known burials. It was closed in 1905 because the ground there was too rocky to dig graves to the required depth of six feet; some coffins were interred just 18 inches below the surface! Long forgotten, the old cemetery is now cared for by a dedicated group of volunteers who have researched the individual stories of those buried there in mostly unmarked graves. Sometimes the detail is scant, in others the stories are rich in detail. There is also a section on known lone graves in the Dunkeld district.



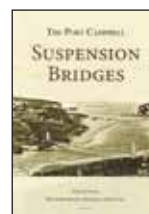
**The case of Eichengruen-Edwards and Continental Tyres.** Andrew J. Kilsby, the author, Melbourne, 2019, pp.1-197, ISBN 9780646804842.

Edward Edwards, as he had become by then, was the hapless victim of racist political persecution in Australia during World War 1. A naturalised Australian of German origin, Edwards carved a home for his wife and two Australian-born children in Melbourne world. He established a hugely successful branch of the Continental tyre company, lived in style, was a long-term office bearer in the RACV and an officer in the military reserve. All of this came crashing down with the outbreak of war. Edwards was vilified by his commercial enemies, interned, stripped of citizenship and deported by the state on the flimsiest of pretexts. A sad, fascinating tale; commended in the 2020 Victorian Community History Awards.



**A forgotten hero of the Great War: the life and death of Lt-Col L.F.S. Mather DSO.** Volkhard Wehner, the author, Glen Iris, 2015, pp. 1-147, ISBN 9780977524853.

This is a poignant tale, more so it is emblematic of the horrors of World War 1. Lieutenant-Colonel Leslie Mather DSO was a gifted and brave career soldier. An officer in the Australian engineers. He served from the landing at Gallipoli until the fighting ended in France. Badly wounded at Pozieres, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order after leading his company into action under heavy shellfire. The son of prominent Melbourne artist John Mather, little is known about Leslie prior to his military service. Just two months after the Armistice and three weeks after his marriage to a young French woman, Leslie Mather took his own life in France, one of many "survivors" of that war.



**The Port Campbell suspension bridges.** Peter J. Younis. Heytesbury District Historical Society Inc., 2020, pp.1-16, ISBN 9780646828480.

This modest booklet tells a tale familiar to coastal and rural communities ... stuck on one side of a river, creek or estuary, how do you get to the other? The answer was sometimes a suspension bridge, a rudimentary structure of bush poles, cables and wires with a narrow wooden decking suspended below; known also as "swing bridges", probably due to their precarious stability. At Port Campbell, it was all about tourists and the first structure straddled Campbells Creek near the estuary mouth in 1911. A second was built in 1928 and lasted 20 years. A lengthy interregnum followed but the bridge was not forgotten. The third, engineered and constructed of more durable materials, was opened in July 2020.