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March 2022

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Western Historian

Newsletter of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies
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The 2022 AGM will be held at Warrnambool on
Saturday 2nd April.
See Page 2 for details.

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Please email your report or any other contributions for publication as Word documents with images as jpgs to
Craig Proctor, craige@iprimus.com.au
For the couple of Societies who do not use email, please send a hard copy to our Secretary, Helen Curkpatrick.

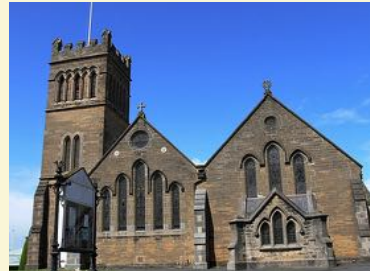
Potential Member Groups

Arapiles (Natimuk)
 Ararat
 Balmoral
 Barham/Koondrook
 Birchip
 Boort
 Camperdown
 Carisbrook
 Casterton
 Charlton
 Cohuna
 Colac
 Coleraine
 Dimboola
 Donald
 Derrinallum/Lismore
 Dunkeld
 East Loddon (Mitiamo)
 Edenhope
 Geelong & South Western Rail
 Glenthompson
 Goldfields (Dunolly)
 Halls Gap
 Harrow
 Heytesbury
 Hawkesdale
 Horsham
 Hopetoun
 Inglewood
 Kerang
 Koroit
 Landsborough
 Maryborough Midlands
 Minyip
 Mortlake
 Murtoa
 Nullawil
 Ouyen
 Port Fairy
 Peshurst
 Portland
 Pyramid Hill
 Rainbow
 Rupanyup
 St Arnaud
 Stawell
 Swan Hill
 Terang
 Warracknabeal
 Warrnambool
 Wedderburn
 Woolsthorpe

Notice of W.V.A.H.S. 2022 AGM

The 59th Annual General Meeting of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies will be held in Warrnambool on **Saturday 2 April**.

**Venue: The Hammond Centre at Christ Church,
 Henna Street, Warrnambool ***



Proposed schedule for the weekend:

Saturday 2 April

Arrival & Registration: 10 – 10.30 a.m.
 Zone and Executive Meetings to follow
 Lunch: Light lunch provided at the venue.
 Afternoon: WVAHS AGM

Christ Church environs tour to follow at the conclusion of meeting
 (optional but highly recommended).

The church is currently undergoing extensive restoration of the interior following major work on the slate roof and bell tower completed over the past ten years. The tour, led by church members, will highlight significant historic artefacts in the building as well as explain the processes and heritage issues involved in the restoration.

Evening: Dinner at Macey's Bistro, Mac's Hotel*
 cnr Raglan Pde and Fairy Street

Sunday 3 April

Bus tour* (optional), 10 a.m. – noon. Guided tour of the Port of Warrnambool and historic South Warrnambool including the former Warrnambool Woollen Mills site which has, over recent years, undergone a transformation into a residential precinct.

Please use the links below to the Destination Warrnambool website for accommodation and other information:

<https://visitwarrnambool.com.au/>
<https://visitwarrnambool.com.au/accommodation/>

N.B. The closest accommodation venues to the conference venue are Redwood Manor, Koroit Street and Warrnambool Holiday Village, Henna Street.

* Please be aware that this meeting and event venues require participants to provide proof of vaccination status.

President's Post, March 2022

We are living in interesting times with Covid-19 impacting WVAHS and its members throughout 2020 and 2021. As an optimist I am hopeful that the worst is behind us and that during 2022 we will gradually get back to something more like 'normal'.

Normal is likely to be different in some ways from what we have done in the past. Several societies have adapted to new ways of operation with both their meetings online and improved capacity to deal with enquiries from the public remotely. There is still nothing like face-to-face contact both between members and also the visiting public. That is one of the reasons that many become involved in their local Historical Society. Often visiting an area to explore its history leads to meeting interesting people, an outcome that cannot occur to the same extent online.

It is good to see many members announcing and promoting events and activities during 2022 that will bring more life and visitors to their towns and districts. I hope to attend some of them this year (in addition to our AGM at Warrnambool and Zone Meetings later this year). With my Geelong & South Western Rail Heritage Society President's hat on we are recommencing our tour program to visit closed (and in some cases still operational) railways to explore their history and that of the local towns and district that they were constructed to serve. That usually gives us an opportunity to bring visitors to some of the WVAHS members' museums.

I look forward to seeing some of you at your towns during the year and at WVAHS meetings, particularly the approaching AGM.

Michael Menzies
President

Also from the President...

Australian 2022 Volunteer Grants

The Australian Government usually announces each March that Expressions of Interest have opened by local Federal Members of Parliament (MP) for funding under the Volunteer Grants program. Applications usually close by the end of April for expenditure to be made prior to 31st December.

Funding of around \$130,000 is usually available for each federal electorate. Grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 are available for each not-for-profit community organisation. Funding may be used to purchase eligible small equipment items for use by volunteers. There are other funding categories but probably not of relevance to most of our members.

Organisations must be nominated by their Federal MP so either keep a close eye on your local newspaper or contact your local MP's Office and let them know that you are interested in being invited to suggest to them that your organisation be invited to apply! It is a slightly strange process whereby you do not apply to the government for a grant but are invited to do so. The local MP is also required to have a reserve list of grant applications so start thinking about your needs and be ready to act. The latest funding round may well have commenced by the time that this issue of *Western Historian* is published so be ready to act quickly. More details should be available by searching Federal Government websites.

Member Societies' publications and Book Reviews

Many of our member societies publish books and sell them through their Museums or online via their own websites but members of other societies would not be aware of these new publications. While many publications are of limited interest outside of the local area some interested in local history have wider interests and sometimes a publication on a 'local' topic may have relevance to other areas and interests. If we are not aware of a book we cannot purchase it.

I am proposing that, in future issues of the 'Western Historian', we feature summaries of any new publications available from member groups and information about where and how it may be purchased. Alternatively, we could publish a list of all titles and a summary of the content, cost etc. with a link to the relevant Society for purchase.

It would be great if we had a few members interested in writing reviews of books produced with a local history focus. This would provide a different dimension to our issues of the 'Western Historian'.

Views of Societies are welcome by email now or in discussion at the AGM.

Geelong & South Western Rail Heritage Society Inc.

Our tours and events program for 2020 and 2021 were good exercises in forward planning but, sadly, all were cancelled due to Covid-19 except for one day trip and a Christmas in July lunch during mid-2021.

We planned a tour on Saturday 5 June 2021 from our headquarters at Birregurra station to follow the railway to Forrest. It opened on 5 June 1891 (130 years ago) and closed on 4 March 1957. A Covid lockdown in Melbourne at short notice meant that half of the passengers booked could not travel. We postponed it for two weeks and had to constantly answer requests as to whether the tour would run or not plus liaise with a caterer and the hall booked for the lunch venue - a lot of extra work and worry. Fortunately, it all fell into place and with good numbers we almost earned enough to pay our public liability insurance premium for the year. The two-week late tour then impacted on the time that we had left to organise and sell a Christmas in July lunch at the Birregurra station. We pulled it off but two hectic events three weeks apart were enough for the year!

Planning of tours and events for 2022 and 2023 is proceeding well and a program is almost complete. We welcome involvement of local historical societies in planning and attending some of these tours when we visit your area. Destinations during 2022 and 2023 at this stage include:

Sunday 10 April 2022: North Geelong – Ballarat.

The railway from North Geelong to Ballarat was officially opened for public passenger traffic on Friday 11 April 1862 (160 years ago). Subsequently goods trains commenced running and the full double-tracked line was completed by early October 1862. We will operate a day trip to visit the site of all former stations and sidings from North Geelong to Ballarat.

Friday 30 September – Sunday 2 October: Murtoa town 150th & local railway tour.

In 2022 Murtoa will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of its establishment. We paid a visit in 2016 as part of a tour of the Murtoa – Hopetoun line and other rail interest sites in the district. Our tentative plan is to travel by rail / coach to Horsham on the Friday (AFL Grand Final Eve holiday?), hopefully by The Overland train. There will be two nights' accommodation at Horsham. We will visit all attractions and special events to be held at Murtoa during the weekend. These include the amazing Stick Shed (World War 2 grain storage), local Museum and Sump Oilers machinery display at the former freezing works. We may follow the railway to Hopetoun (and possibly the former railway to Patchewollock).

Saturday 19 November 2022: Castlemaine – Maryborough.

The railway from Castlemaine to Maryborough opened on 7 July 1874. It was one of two routes to this goldfields town (the other from Ballarat via Creswick). A book regarding the construction and subsequent history of the line is being written and may be published during 2022. We will operate a day trip to visit the site of all former stations and sidings along this interesting line. The tour will coincide with the official launch of the book so the destination may change if the book is not ready!

2023

Saturday 22 & Sunday 23 April 2023: Dunolly – Inglewood – Charlton.

The railway from Bendigo to Inglewood opened during 1876, extended to Korong Vale on 15 April 1882 and to Charlton on 20 April 1883 (140 years ago). A link from Dunolly to Inglewood opened on 20 November 1888. We will follow the line between Dunolly and Charlton visiting the site of all former stations and sidings. This will be a weekend (or three days / two nights?) tour.

Saturday 17 or Sunday 18 June 2023: Colac – Alvie line.

The railway from Colac to Alvie opened on 21 June 1923 (100 years ago). We will follow the line, visiting the site of all former stations and sidings. There will be an opportunity to walk some sections of the old formation.

Sunday 2 July 2023: Colac – Camperdown.

The railway from Colac to Camperdown opened on 2 July 1883 (140 years ago). We will follow the line visiting the site of all former stations and sidings. We have previously followed the line from Geelong to Colac and this tour will extend our coverage another step on the way to Warrnambool.

Saturday 5 or Sunday 6 August 2023: Gheringhap – Cressy – Maroona.

The railway from Gheringhap to Maroona was opened for limited traffic in various sections while under construction but the official opening of the complete line took place at Lismore on Friday 8 August 1913 (110 years ago). We will follow the line, visiting the site of all former stations and sidings. It is possible that in one direction we will travel by rail and one by road.

Saturday 2 & Sunday 3 December 2023: Deniliquin and Moama Railway.

The private broad gauge railway between Deniliquin and Moama (NSW) opened on 4 July 1876. It was taken over by the Victorian Railways on 1 December 1923, 100 years ago. We will visit the line (probably by rail rather than following it by road) visiting the site of all former stations and sidings. A weekend trip with no doubt a paddle steamer cruise included.

Contact: Michael Menzies, President. 0419 546 251. Email: geelongrailheritage@gmail.com

All events and tours are open for public bookings. Like us and view updated event details on Face book: Birregurra Station or look at www.geelongrailheritage.org.au

Geelong & South Western Rail Heritage Society Inc. Press Release

Beechy railway 120th

Tuesday 1 March 2022 was the 120th anniversary of the Victorian Railways narrow gauge railway from Colac to Beech Forest being officially opened on 1 March 1902. The railway was much loved by the community that it served for sixty years and was referred to as "The Beechy".

The railway from Colac to Gellibrand and Beech Forest was later extended along the Otway Ridge through Lavers Hill to Crowes where the southernmost railway station on the Australian mainland was opened in June 1911.

It served a vital transport role in assisting to open up settlement and economic development of the area. As local roads were improved from mid-last century the railway was partly closed in 1954 beyond Ferguson but then re-opened to Weeaprounah. The final section from Colac to Beech Forest and Weeaprounah closed on 30 June 1962.

To mark the 120th anniversary of its opening the Geelong & South Western Rail Heritage Society had planned to operate a coach tour along the line to view remains of the stations and structures. Sadly, due to Covid-19, planning and operation of the tour had to be postponed and may take place later this year.

Further information is available from geelongrailheritage@gmail.com

Michael Menzies,
President
0419 546 251
email: railexp@bigpond.com



Opening Beech Forest Railway.
Photo: State Library of Victoria collection. H97.186/2

Wedderburn Historical Records Museum Inc.

Like most other organisations 2021 saw Covid-19 restrictions limit our opportunities for meetings and public gatherings. Fortunately, members are able to work from home entering data into the database which can then be merged into the main office system at a later date. We now have over 76,000 records and digital documents in our system. Enquiries can also be dealt with from home so basically our operation can still go ahead at close to 'full steam' irrespective of Covid-19 issues. 2021 saw the digitisation of over 50 reels of microfilm containing around 100 years' worth of newspapers going back as far as 1861. This was done manually from home using a basic slide scanner which took around nine months to complete. The big task now is to reference the articles from each newspaper. Last year also saw the installation of 2 x 7 kilowatt split systems and solar panels into our headquarters at 26 High Street, thanks to grant funding from the Loddon Shire. We also installed a 65" T.V. to make it easier for visitors to see our information instead of having to crowd around a computer screen. Our current venture is to install QR codes on to the gravestones of some of the towns' pioneers and notable persons buried at the Wedderburn Cemetery. The QR codes link to a talking slide show which gives a brief history of the person interred. We have already prepared a few of these and set up the QR codes for them. You can see the finished articles on our web site at <https://www.wedderburnhistorical.com.au/> along with a host of other information. 2022 looks like being another busy year for our members.

From the February-March issue of *Tailings*, the newsletter of the Goldfields Historical and Arts Society Inc. (Dunolly), comes this item. Our thanks to John Tully for allowing the item to be reproduced.

American Fleet visits Australia

This medallion was found recently by one of our members near the Havelock Railway Station site and donated to the Dunolly Museum.

Sixteen American naval vessels toured Australia in 1908. At the time the USA was extending its influence across the Pacific. The ships were painted white and called the Great White Fleet.

The timing and naming of the visit as the Great White Fleet may have been in response to visits of the Japanese Fleet in 1903 and 1906 who were also extending their influence in the region.



The medallion shows the American eagle flying over the Australian and American flags, two clasped hands and the words 'Welcome to the American Fleet 1908'.

The other side of the medallion also has the American eagle flying. This time it is over the Royal Arms of Great Britain surrounded by the mottos of the six Australian states.

Someone probably went to Melbourne to view the fleet then lost this medallion when they got off the train.

Resources available through the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) website:

Australian Aboriginal History - Podcast series

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/resources/australian-aboriginal-history-podcast-series/>

Lecture podcasts

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/resources/lecture-podcasts/>

Walking Tour Podcasts (Melbourne)

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/resources/lecture-podcasts/>

RHSV Upcoming Events

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-events/>

History Victoria Support Group (HVSG) Resources

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/societies/hvsg-resources/>

Acknowledgements of Country

We all know that these days we read on websites and in various publications as well as on various media programs Acknowledgements of Country (AOCs) in an attempt to acknowledge and show respect for First Nations people's relationships with a specific area. AOCs are not mandated but increasingly they are a feature of official meetings in many workplaces, public organisations and community groups.

It would be interesting to find out how many member organisations have adopted a formal – or an informal – Acknowledgement of Country for their publications and meetings. Presumably many will have done so while others won't have.

Two years ago the Mortlake and District Historical Society adopted a formal AOC which appears at the head of our newsletter, on our Facebook page and which is read at each of our meetings or public events. We endeavour to have a different person deliver the AOC at each meeting and the text has been produced on cards to support people with the wording although not 'getting the wording right' is not an issue! Our AOC is:

The members of the Mortlake and District Historical Society respectfully acknowledge the people of the Girai wurrung language group and the Burug gundidj clan centred on Boorook, known today as Mount Shadwell, their ancestors and Elders past, present and emerging, traditional custodians of the land on which the Society meets and undertakes its work.

Following on from MDHS taking this initiative, the local branch of the CWA also adopted its own – but different - AOC.

For those not fully familiar with the reasons behind and the considerations to be taken into account when formulating an AOC, three of many very useful resources and starting points are:

<https://www.indigenous.gov.au/contact-us/welcome-acknowledgement-country>

<https://www.commonground.org.au/learn/acknowledgement-of-country>

<https://australianstogether.org.au/resources-2/welcome-to-and-acknowledgement-of-country/>

These resources provide guidelines rather than rules – although there are a couple of rules! - for formulating the wording of an AOC depending on the context and place which, in themselves, provide interesting discussion points for any group. They

each make the point that an AOC may be complex and detailed or, where appropriate, simpler and non-specific.

It would be good to hear from member groups about their initiative in developing – and delivering – an AOC or even about the challenges faced in taking such an initiative. By all means share your story with your newsletter editor at craige@iprimus.com.au and hopefully, in subsequent editions of the newsletter, we can share the AOCs which some member groups have adopted.

Craige Proctor

From the current issue of the Maryborough Midlands Historical Society's newsletter *Diggings* comes this update on the Worsley Cottage & Research Centre.

It's been two years now since our Society was informed by Central Goldfields Shire Council (the property owners) that, for health and safety reasons, Worsley Cottage would have to be closed to the public (and to our volunteers) pending repairs to the southern wall (pictured below).

Tenders were called in late 2021 and closed in mid-January this year. We're hopeful that work will commence shortly and that the cottage (and its collection) will once more be accessible to visitors and our volunteers. The cottage, one of the most historic buildings in Maryborough, has always been the centrepiece of our complex.



Mortlake & District Historical Society Inc.

Even though the group was unable to meet during 2021 we continued to work 'behind the scenes' to publish two local histories under the auspices of MDHS.

Mount Violet: hope and despair on an Australian Farming Settlement

For some time the Mortlake and District Historical Society has been liaising with a U.K. author with a view to having the memoirs of her parents, Bruce and Margery West, published.

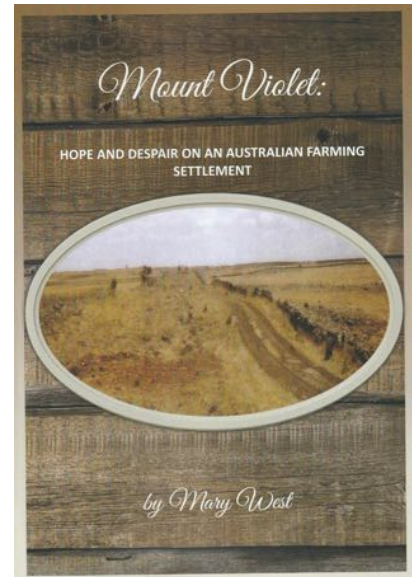
Mary Royle, a 95-year-old former journalist living in Paignton, Devon put her faith and trust in MDHS and handed over her manuscript and all of her mother's original letters, which arrived in Mortlake via snail mail.

Mary West was born at Lismore in 1926 and her parents had hopes of raising her on their Mount Violet Closer Settlement Estate at Dundonnell. But Mary's upbringing on the small farm block lasted only three years. By 1929 the family had given up all hope of succeeding at Mount Violet and walked off their block and returned to Cornwall.

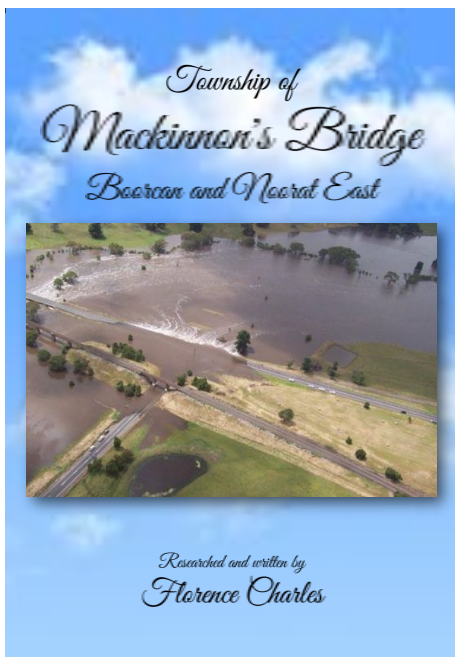
The book is based upon the letters sent by Mary's mother Margery to her family in the United Kingdom while on the Mount Violet block as well as contemporary records and newspaper reports. They tried in vain to pursue a living and make progress but land prices, faulty advice by supposed experts both in Australia and the U.K. and the attitude of the Closer Settlement Board in managing the estate all earmarked it for failure. This was not only the case with the Mount Violet Estate; other areas across Victoria were affected by management in much the same way.

Over the years Mary has visited Dundonnell several times and has met with descendants of the original British and Australian settlers of Mount Violet. It has always been Mary's desire to have the story of these keen but struggling pioneers, their hopes and their despair, told and recorded. This has now been done.

Mary's book was launched at the Darlington Hall on 12 December. The occasion was tinged with sadness for MDHS as our highly-esteemed long-serving member, Joanne Jackson OAM, who had been corresponding with Mary since the 1980s and who had overseen every aspect of the publication as well as planning the official launch, passed away unexpectedly, aged 90, just days before the event. MDHS has now presented Mary with her own copy of this important reference book.



Township of Mackinnon's Bridge, Boorcan and Noorat East



This 200-page history by Florence Charles is about the settlement of *Marida Yallock* by Stephen Ewen in 1840, Hugh Scott and Daniel Mackinnon in 1853 and then Daniel Mackinnon in 1854 continuing on to Daniel's descendants who still reside at *Marida Yallock* along with the lives of many of their employees.

The Sportsman's Arms Hotel was built in 1867 by Seth Selby on the Mount Emu Creek across from *Marida Yallock* and where he was the landlord until 1886 when the hotel was closed due to the opening of the Camperdown to Terang railway extension. Selby also operated the Mackinnon's Bridge Brick Works situated on the Mount Emu Creek adjacent to his hotel, taking over the business from Lewis Spilsbury in 1870.

In this book Florence also touches on the families who lived around Mackinnon's Bridge - mostly dairy farmers - and at nearby Noorat East where she grew up. The railway line between Camperdown and Terang opened in 1887 and included the first Mackinnon's Railway Bridge built over the Mount Emu Creek.

The World War 2 Soldier Settlement at *Marida Yallock*, Boorcan is also featured in this book along with a brief history of Boorcan situated halfway between Camperdown and Terang.

For further details 'phone Florence on 0438 925 176.

Boort Historical Society Inc.
President's Report for year ending 31/12/2021

Well, what can we say? It has been a very quiet year with the pandemic still around; we saw the introduction of QR codes and masks are still in force. The museum has been closed to the public for many months now, only opening by appointment. Our group suffered a sad loss with the death of two members: Wes James and our secretary Jennie Weaver. They were both great assets to the Historical Society over the years with their wisdom and knowledge of the Boort district. The cancellation of the Boort Show was sad as we had two great displays planned - the ladies' tating and Ken with his mechanical organ. Gayle Huggett and Robyn Evans have been doing research throughout the year. We have received many marvellous donations including the tuba engraved with Peter Cameron's name. With the Godfrey stable not being able to be rebuilt it was decided to save the best timber from the property and put up at the machinery shed for display. We received a grant from Loddon Shire to the value of \$3,655.00 and, with the addition of our contribution, we have brought a cordless vacuum cleaner, a 3x3 shed that is erected behind the museum with a concrete slab, display stands for a machinery shed, a sign for the Bills trough when it has been repaired; we are still waiting. Lighting in the rooms has been finished which will make it safer and the lighting in the cabinet is also finished. I would like to thank everyone who has helped throughout these tough times and hoping for a great 2022.

Robert Collins
President

JENNIFER WEAVER

1942-2021

Jennifer was born in Numurkah in 1942 to Gerald and Dulcie Heard and had four siblings - Barry, Noelene, Karen and Alan. Jennie had learned the piano, was involved in swimming and diving when younger and later began teaching and coaching. Jennie was involved with The Royal Life Saving Society with awards including Distinction and Diploma and also as an examiner, Aust Swim as a teacher, Water Skiing, Boort Ski Club, playing netball, founding member of Amity, Boort National Party of which Jennie was the branch secretary for eleven years, Probus and many other clubs, societies and sports. Jennie met Peter (Jock) Weaver and it was the beginning of a beautiful partnership, marrying in 1963 and starting their wonderful life at "Southerton Vale". They had three children Dianne, David and Kate. Jennie was a wealth of knowledge and had a keen interest in the history of Boort and district. Jennie joined the Boort Historical Society in 2004, became Secretary in 2010 and held the position until her death in 2021. Jennie was great in her position as Secretary. She would apply for grants and whatever the Historical Society needed Jennie worked hard to achieve it. Jennie compiled a book "Chats with Old Friends" which involved many hours interviewing people then transcribing them in their own words to be in the book. Jennie was honoured to receive the Australia Day Boort Community Service Award in 2019. She was indeed a most valued member of our Historical Society and the Community of Boort and will be truly missed.



THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST OFFICIAL AIR RACE

SERPENTINE Air Race

Sunday March 20th 2022

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

SERPENTINE AIR RACE for BIPLANES **RAAF ROULETTES**
RAAF 100 SQUADRON **PAUL BENNET AIRSHOWS**

LODDON VALLEY HWY **SERPENTINE** VICTORIA
<https://serpentineairrace.com.au>

PROGRAMME

- 9.00am Gates open
- 10.45am Flag flyover
- 11.00am Serpentine Air Race
- 11.30am Air Show display
- 12.00pm Serpentine Air Race finish line
- 1.00pm Air show continues
- 2.00pm Serpentine Air Race presentation
- 5.00pm Air Show finish

Times are subject to change

Aviators please note:
 Prior Permission Required:
<https://serpentineairrace.com.au>
 Russell Mountjoy 0429 189 473
 Richard Evans 0407 095 279

New book!

SERPENTINE Air Race
 1920 - 2020
 Celebrating Australia's first official air race

AVAILABLE NOW \$30.00

The historical story of the Aerial Derby and the Second Peace Loan
 East Loddon Historical Society Inc

The small village of Serpentine, Victoria was selected to be the starting point of Australia's first government sponsored aerial derby. This was the first of many to follow around the nation in the early years after World War I. The air race was part of the promotion of the Second Peace Loan to raise funds to pay for the return, repatriation and care of the many soldiers and nurses to settle them back into community life after the Great European War. Beneficiary of this event will be Legacy to support their work aiding our defence service personnel return to civilian life.

Further enquiries can be directed to East Loddon Historical Society Inc elhs@bigpond.com

The current issue of the Horsham Historical Society's newsletter *Horsham Historian* includes reports from the *Wimmera Mail Times* from 1972 - fifty years ago.

***Wimmera Mail Times* - January 1972**

POST OFFICE - OFFICIAL OPENING SOON

The Assistant Manager for Primary Industry, Mr King, expects an official opening for Horsham's new post office in February or March.

Mr King, Member for the Wimmera, said yesterday he was very impressed with the new building.

Mr King made his comments after inspecting the post office with Horsham postmaster Mr Bill McGowan.

He said staff would be working in near-perfect conditions when all amenities were complete in the half a million-dollar building.

The full range of postal services are available although some minor work remains to be finished after the Christmas-New Year break in building activity.

"The official opening ceremony will be held as soon as practicable after the building is completed, possibly late February or early March" Mr King said.



The beautiful old Post Office which was demolished to make way for the new building.

***Wimmera Mail Times* - 14 January 1972**

NEW BOTTOM FOR ZUMSTEIN'S POOL

Swimmers will dive into a rebuilt Zumstein's swimming pool within a month. Commonwealth Government employment relief money will pay for a new pool bottom. The job will mean work for six unemployed men.

Wimmera Shire President Cr Rupert Levitzke announced that work would start next week to rebuild the road to State Government requirements. Wimmera Shire applied for a grant to replace the pool's bitumen bottom with concrete. Zumstein's pioneer Walter Zumstein dug the pool using a wheelbarrow to cart dirt.....

The Public Health Department said Zumstein's pool must close if water is not chlorinated. But chlorinated water cannot be used in a bitumen-bottomed pool. Chlorine causes a breakdown of bitumen and water becomes discoloured. The bottom of the pool would leak. The pool has been closed this summer - the first time since Walter built it more than 50 years ago.....

The six men who will make the concrete bottom will be registered unemployed from the Commonwealth Employment Service. The job will take about three weeks.

Mr Levitzke said that Horsham district people had a particular affection for Zumsteins and its pool.

Parents had taken their children to Zumsteins before Horsham's pool was built. "They have retained their affection and that's why I am particularly pleased that the work has been done. It will help retain the charm Zumsteins has always had" he said.

He said the pool would be filled after concreting but that the Shire could consider applying for money for work on the stone and concrete sides of the walls.

Note: The pool measured 90 by 40 feet and varied in depth from three to five feet. By 1995 the pool (which was no longer in use) was full of rubbish so it was decided to fill it in and level off the site. The pool edge remained and a plaque was to be erected to mark the site.



Workmen cementing the pool base in 1972 (Photo: HHS 006852).



The pool site in 2015 (Photo: Wendy Donald).

Put them to music: the Troy Knight Family Singers of the Wimmera

By Craige Proctor

The following article is a mere fragment of a book I have spent many years researching and writing. It is one of those 'larger than life' stories which exemplify the adventures, successes and disappointments of so many of our ancestors in colonial Australia. The main protagonists are Richard Troy Knight (1830-1912) and his wife Mary Cookson (1831-1891) but this is no conventional family history. The book, *Put them to music: the Troy Knight Family Singers* – tells the story of Troy and Mary and their family of thirteen who lived at least part of their lives at Ararat, Horsham and Natimuk between 1857 and the late 1880s – as well as Nhill, Dimboola, Donald and Warracknabeal – and so I would like to share aspects of it with the W.V.A.H.S. member groups as some episodes in this sweeping story are played out in those towns although nobody in those towns' historical societies will have heard this story before. Troy and Mary Knight were, incidentally, my great-great-great-grandparents.

Richard Troy Knight – known as 'Troy' – was born in London in 1830. By eighteen he was appearing on stage in Holborn, London and was just nineteen when he left his family and voyaged to South Australia, arriving in 1850 along with the Ethiopian Serenaders, a minstrel troupe; it was the 1850s! Troy was an entertainer: musician, singer, minstrel, actor and from quite a young age a theatrical entrepreneur. His first appearance on stage in the 'colonies' was in 1850 at Mack's Rooms in Geelong and soon he began appearing with the then-famous Miss Sara Flower at the Queen's Theatre Royal in Melbourne. He was also an 'associate' of actor and theatrical entrepreneur George Coppin. Soon Troy was off to Hobart and Launceston, appearing at various theatres and courting as much publicity as he could in the newspapers of the day. It was while in Van Diemen's Land that he began advertising himself as a banjo teacher (the instrument having only recently 'arrived' in the colonies). After a year or so there he returned to Melbourne, appearing at various theatres and also performed before Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe. In 1902 Troy stated that he had been in California during the gold rushes – could he have come across the banjo there? – but I have not been able to substantiate this claim. 1851 saw Troy continuing his theatrical pursuits but also to-ing and fro-ing between various goldfields to try his luck. By year's end he was in Adelaide performing at the Theatre Royal.

In 1852 Troy became a member of Tolmer's Gold Escort from Victoria to Adelaide and in July of that year he attended the Gold Escort Ball in Adelaide where he met Mary Cookson who had arrived in Adelaide with her parents in 1849. Troy and Mary married in Adelaide in 1852. Two children were born in Adelaide but by 1857 the family was on the Chinaman's Flat diggings near Maryborough – Troy was also now working as a tailor – but by year's end they were at the new Ararat diggings, living in a tent like thousands of others. By late 1858 Troy was working the old Canton Lead mine which today is the site of the Gum San Chinese Heritage Centre. While still on the diggings Troy was also frequently appearing on stage including performing as Hamlet but mostly appearing in musical concerts at various Ararat venues including the Shamrock Concert Hall and the Mechanics' Institute. Troy was also acknowledged to be quite an athlete and there are various newspaper references to him engaging in the then-popular sport of 'pedestrianism' or hurdle jumping. Troy seems to have taken up his interest in this athletic activity in 1857 and 1858 when living at Creswick and then Ararat. It was also a way of him making money as people would bet that he could not achieve the goals he had set himself with hurdle jumping. Always the entrepreneur! By 1863 the family had moved to a weatherboard cottage and the family remained at Ararat for the next twelve years where eight of their thirteen children were born. Also in 1863 the family suffered the loss of their young daughter Madeleine (whom Troy referred to as his 'Prairie Flower') who was buried in the Ararat Cemetery. By 1875 Troy had set himself up once again as a tailor in Ararat. Mary Knight's mother, Elizabeth Cookson, had by now left Adelaide and was living with the Knights at Ararat where she died in 1876 and so I have a great-great-great-great-grandmother buried at Ararat.



At around this time the family left Ararat for Horsham where their thirteenth child was born and by November 1876 Troy was publican of the National Hotel at Natimuk. In September 1877 the Natimuk Amateur Dramatic Club staged a concert with Troy and featuring some of his children. Troy's hotel venture at Natimuk was short-lived as by 1879 he had taken over the licence of Horsham's Bull and Mouth Hotel and by 1881 he was operating the Railway Refreshment Rooms at Horsham (although a fire destroyed both the refreshment rooms and many of the family's possessions). Another tragedy to befall the family at this time was the death of son Thomas, 8, who was crushed between two goods carriages at the Horsham station. Another of the many concerts staged by the Knight Family Singers was a Horsham Fire Brigade Benefit in June 1882 with the family's appearance being billed as 'their last'. Not quite!

In 1885 the Knights departed Horsham for Adelaide although they must have planned to leave Horsham earlier as in 1882 the Knight Family Singers gave a 'Farewell Grand Night's Performance' at the Horsham Mechanics' Institute but in 1883 they performed a concert at Dimboola's Victoria Hall, eight of the Knight children appearing. Still among the family

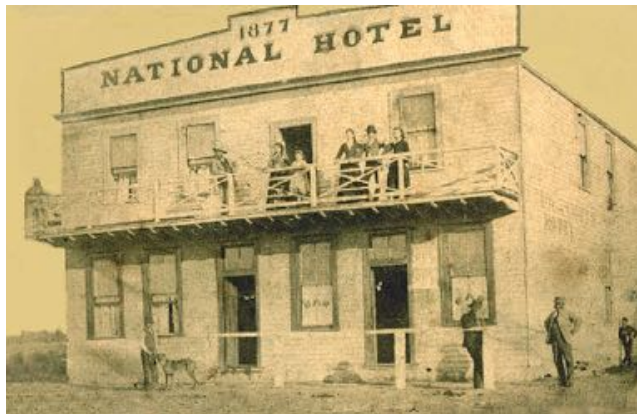


Mary Knight née Cookson

possessions are the original banners promoting the Natimuk and Dimboola concerts which are printed on pure silk and so have withstood the ravages of some 140 years. Even though the family had been at Natimuk and Horsham for around nine years Troy and Mary did not sell their house in Moore Street, Ararat, along with all contents and livestock, until 1885.

By 1886 Troy was the licensee of the Dolphin Inn, Adelaide but later that year he had decamped with Mary and the younger children to the diggings at Teetulpa, 310 kilometres north-east of Adelaide; poor long-suffering Mary! The following year the family was back in the Wimmera giving yet another 'Farewell' concert with almost all the family members appearing on stage. Astonishingly, the family returned to remote Teetulpa, leaving there in 1888 for Collingwood in Melbourne. By this time Troy's stage performances seem to have lessened and the former miner, publican and entrepreneur - now in his late fifties - set himself up as a tailor in Islington Street, Collingwood. It was here that Mary Knight died in 1891. Mary had not appeared in most of the family's concerts over the many years they were traipsing around the countryside although she is listed as a

performer in an 1883 concert at Dimboola. With thirteen children to raise and no doubt making all the theatrical costumes for her many daughters and sons and packing up the family's possessions and 'moving on' over forty years, Mary no doubt had her hands full.



Left: Troy and Mary Knight and some of their children on the balcony of the original two-storey timber National Hotel, Natimuk.
Right: Troy outside the hotel with two 'pedestrians' about to start a foot race. Both photos date from 1877-79.

But Troy was not going to remain idle in his widowhood. He moved to Sydney where he would remain until his death but made visits to various states to visit his large family and huge number of grandchildren and even travelled to New Zealand where two of his daughters were living. By now he was aged 79 yet still he appeared in a concert at Port Chalmers near Dunedin in 1909 along with his daughter Florence who was a singer of some note. In 1902 Troy wrote an article for the Sydney 'Mail' which takes the reader back to his days on the colonial stage and makes for fascinating, if rather self-aggrandizing, reading! The article identifies several theatrical luminaries from the 1850s and 1860s and a number of the 'celebrities' with whom Troy appeared on stage; Troy was quite the name dropper. In 1909, soon after returning from New Zealand, Troy returned to Horsham to visit his old haunts and the *Horsham Times* carried a report of the once well-known Horsham identity Troy Knight. Troy died in Sydney in 1912, aged 82, and was buried in the Rookwood Cemetery. To commemorate the centenary of his death I organised a gathering of descendants at Troy's graveside and his original mother-of-pearl inlay banjo from the 1840s, which he had played before Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe and which is still held by a descendant, took centre stage at the graveside.

Troy and Mary Knight had eleven surviving children all of whom married and had large families but only two remained in the Wimmera: Mary Louisa 'Polly' Swindells (Mrs Herbert George Swindells; their son Frank Swindells was winner of the Stawell Gift in 1917) who remained at Horsham and Harriette Emily Ward who lived variously at Horsham, Minyip, Nhill, Wail and Dimboola, Warracknabeal and Donald and I cannot end this story without providing a few details on the life of my poor great-great-grandmother 'Hetty'.

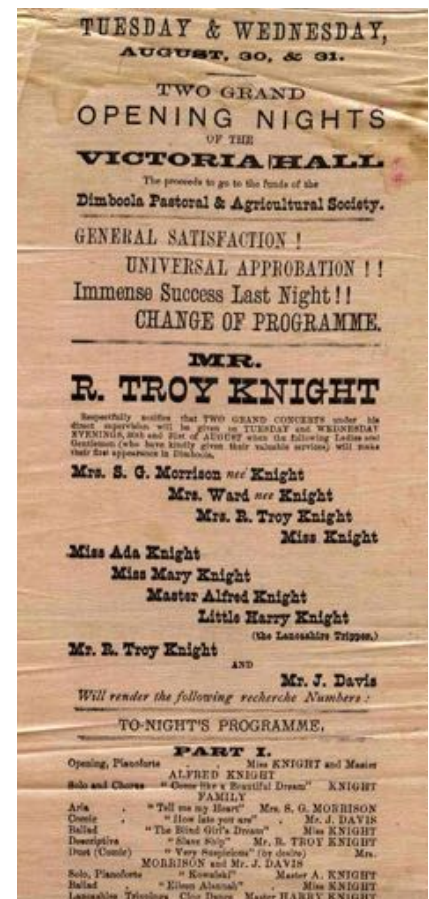
Hetty Knight and her sisters – Elizabeth, Annie, Ada, Polly, Emily and Florence – along with two of their brothers Alfred and 'Little Harry Knight, the Lancashire Tripper' – all appeared with their father as the Knight Family Singers even after some of the girls had married. Hetty was considered to have had the finest voice of all the siblings. She was known for her renditions of 'Rocked in the cradle of the deep'. Born in a tent on the Ararat Diggings in 1859, Hetty was aged 16 when the family arrived at the National Hotel, Natimuk in 1876. The following year Hetty became engaged to Norman Wilson, scion of the famous, wealthy and socially prestigious Wilson family of *Vectis Station* near Natimuk. Troy and Mary must have been thrilled that one of their daughters had made such a good match. An engagement ball was thrown at the National Hotel for Hetty and Norman but, the story goes – documented by Hetty's younger sister Emily in her 1960s memoir – Hetty, dressed in her silk gown and ready for her engagement ball, fled the hotel with the cook's brother William

Ward, a mere carpenter, leaving a note and initiating a lengthy estrangement from her family...and quite likely regretting her actions over the next twenty-three years. Oh dear! Hetty and William married at St John's, Horsham in December 1877. During the next twenty-three years Hetty would bear fourteen children and would move between Minyip, Nhill, Wail and Dimboola, Warracknabeal, Horsham and Donald with her itinerant carpenter husband. William was also a bit of a rogue – I will not go into details here as the story of my Ward ancestors of Horsham is a whole other book – and at one point 'got religion', threatening to burn down the family house with his wife and all their children in it, the court case being reported in the *Horsham Times* in 1888. Hetty had also taken her husband before the Horsham court in 1886 to get him to support her and their five children. Yet they remained together and there would be nine more pregnancies! In 1901 poor Hetty succumbed to fever following the birth of her fourteenth child and was buried at Donald along with two infants she had lost. She was just 42. Four months after Hetty's death William had moved to Melbourne, remarried and had 'given away' his younger children to be raised by others in various places around the Wimmera; I have never been able to trace what happened to two of these children who have vanished from the historical record. William did return to Warracknabeal and was living there in the 1900s but that's a whole other story! What memories great-great-grandmother Hetty Ward must have had of her days on the stage with all her siblings and travelling from town to town, receiving accolades for her exquisite voice and no doubt regretting 'what might have been' had she not made the choice she had.

I have called my history of these forebears *Put them to music* as Troy is known to have advised people to always give their children a musical upbringing to stand them in good stead. I have many photos relating to my Knight ancestors along with hundreds of newspaper articles referring to Troy Knight as well as Troy's own photo album and scrapbook not to mention all the information on my Ward and Dalton ancestors of Horsham and Warracknabeal! Should any of the Wimmera Historical Societies be interested in reading the full story of Troy Knight and his 'doings' I am more than happy to share these details. crage@iprimus.com.au



This photo of Troy accompanied the autobiographical article published in the *Sydney Mail* in 1902.



Silk banners promoting concerts at Natimuk in 1877 (left) and at Dimboola in 1883.

Robert Lassau, a great-grandson of Troy and Mary Knight, holding Troy's banjo, dating from at least the 1840s, which took centre stage at the Rookwood Cemetery event commemorating the centenary of Troy's death in 2012. This banjo, reputedly the first banjo ever played in Victoria, featured in many concerts in various venues across the Wimmera into the 1880s.