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Western Historian

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The Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies acknowledges the traditional owners of country on the land on which we are meeting throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, culture and community.

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Please email your report or any other contributions for publication as Word documents with images as jpgs to Craig Proctor, wvahsinc@gmail.com

Member Groups

at March 2025

Arapiles (Natimuk) Ararat
 Balmoral Barham-Koondrook
 Birchip Boort
 Camperdown Carisbrook
 Charlton Golden Grains Museum
 Cobden Cohuna Colac
 Coleraine Dimboola Donald
 Derrinallum/Lismore Dunkeld
 East Loddon (Mitiamo)
 Edenhope
 Geelong & South Western
 Rail Heritage Society
 Glenthompson
 Goldfields (Dunolly)
 Halls Gap and Grampians
 Harrow Heytesbury
 Hopetoun Horsham
 Inglewood Kerang
 Koroit Landsborough
 Macarthur
 Maryborough Midlands
 Minyip Mortlake
 Mount Rouse (Penshurst)
 Nhill
 Nhill Silo Heritage Project
 Nullawil Ouyen Port Fairy
 Pyramid Hill Rainbow
 St Arnaud Stawell
 Swan Hill Terang
 Warracknabeal
 Warrnambool Wedderburn
 Wimmera Mallee Pioneer
 Museum (Jeparit)



W.V.A.H.S. 2025 AGM, Zone and Executive Meetings

Saturday 5 April

National Wool Museum, Geelong

Dinner, 6 p.m.: Great Western Hotel,
177 Aberdeen Street, Newtown

Sunday morning: Tour, details to be decided

Members attending should present a brief report to the Zone Meeting or, if not attending, email a report in advance of the meeting to wvahsinc@gmail.com

W.V.A.H.S. Member Groups' online presence

Click on the hyperlinks to go to the sites.

Websites

Arapiles (Natimuk)	Geelong South West Rail	Port Fairy
Barham Koondrook	Heritage Society	Pyramid Hill
Birchip	Goldfields (Dunolly)	RHSV History News
Camperdown	Halls Gap & Grampians	St Arnaud
Charlton Golden Grains Museum	Harrow	Stawell
Cohuna	Hopetoun	Swan Hill
Colac	Horsham	Terang
Derrinallum Lismore	Macarthur	Warracknabeal
Dimboola	Maryborough Midlands	Warrnambool
Donald	Mount Rouse (Penshurst)	Wedderburn
Dunkeld	Nhill Silo Heritage Project	WVAHS
Edenhope	Ouyen	

Facebook pages

Arapiles (Natimuk)	East Loddon (Mitiamo)	Nullawil
Ararat	Edenhope	Ouyen
Balmoral	Glenthompson	Port Fairy
Barham Koondrook	Halls Gap & Grampians	Pyramid Hill
Boort	Hopetoun	Rainbow
Camperdown	Inglewood	RHSV
Carisbrook	Kerang	St Arnaud
Charlton Golden Grains Museum	Koroit	Swan Hill
Cobden	Landsborough	Terang
Cohuna	Maryborough Midlands	Warrnambool
Colac (NEW)	Minyip	Wimmera Mallee Pioneer
Donald	Mortlake	Museum Jeparit
Dunkeld	Mount Rouse (Penshurst)	WVAHS
Goldfields (Dunolly)	Nhill Silo Heritage Project	

60 years ago from the pages of the February, April and June 1965

Western Historian

Member Groups:

Arapiles, Ararat, Donald,
Hamilton, Horsham,
Kaniva, Portland,
Lake Goldsmith Steam Engines
St Arnaud
Clanlister Archives (Havelock)

By the time of the April 1965
issue several more groups had
joined:

Camperdown
North Eastern Association
(Wangaratta)
Swan Hill

A lengthy item was included on E. J. Stephens, Founder of Wimmera Papers. Prior to 1873 Horsham had had no newspaper. While journeying by Cobb and Co. coach, at the Glenorchy pub a maidservant warned him that Horsham was 'a Godforsaken place' but Stephens was undeterred. On arriving in Horsham Stephens found little interest in supporting the idea of a newspaper, including local business-people. Nevertheless, Stephens persevered and in June 1873 set up two printing presses in a log hut in Firebrace Street and the first issue of the *Horsham Times* was produced. [Should anyone wish to have the full text of this item, I can provide it.]

Robin Boyd, architect, and other noteworthies in the Melbourne art world had visited Ballarat to inspect its remaining pillared verandahs and the Ballarat branch of the National Trust took their report and a petition to the Ballarat City Council which rescinded its by-law requiring the demolition of all pillared verandahs. Certain verandahs were selected for preservation. Maryborough had recently lost most of its verandahs.

President: Mr R. G. Hicks, Kaniva

Secretary: Mrs T. L. McKenzie, Horsham

Executive: G. Stevens, Hamilton; R. Falla, Litchfield; Miss A. M. Jordan, Kiata.

Editor: Miss Lorna Banfield, Ararat

Annual Subscription fee: £1-1-0

The Lake Goldsmith Steam Engine Preservation Society had held its Annual Rally in November with an estimated attendance of 1,500 with two aeroplanes bringing visitors. Societies represented were the Victorian Railways' Historical Society, Australian Railway's Enthusiasts, Tramways Museum Society of Victoria, Melbourne Traction Engine Club, Surrey Hills Model Locomotive Club, Adelaide Small Locomotive Clubs and societies affiliated with the WVAHS. So successful had the Rally been that another was to be held in May 1965.

To mark the Centenary of the Shire of Glenelg, the Glenelg Shire Council had produced a history of settlement.

There was an item on Portland's schools prior to 1842.

Mr C. Sayers was writing a history of Stawell and district and was gathering material for this.

The Horsham and District Historical Society had recently received a gift of a piece of tapestry, well over 100 years old, produced in Tasmania.

The C.E.M.A. Historical Group, Portland, had compiled a list of local places of interest and had issued a news sheet with a plan of the town and a list of sixty sites.

There was an item on the electric light coming to Nhill in 1892.

The RHSV was considering a proposal to hold a meeting of affiliated historical societies in Melbourne.

With the Back to Ararat State School in June, a search was on to locate the foundation stone of the building laid in 1875.

The bulk of the April 1965 issue was devoted to a lengthy history of early Hamilton.

The April and June issues included extracts from the reminiscences of an early pioneer settler at Moyston, William Vanstan. Including a description of carting Wimmera wheat to Geelong.

Swan Hill had made the headlines with the proposed Swan Hill Folk Museum. The scheme was estimated to cost £120,000 and an appeal had been launched for funds. The old paddle steamer Gem had been partly restored and moored at Horseshoe Bend. The proposed Museum was considered to be unique in Australia and would attract an extra 2,000 tourists each year.

Horsham' White Hart Hotel proprietor, Mr Righetti, planned to put a plaque on the door of the bedroom occupied by Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain), during his visit in 1893.

The Country Roads Board was considering placing historical markers on declared roads and district historical societies were being asked to suggest local sites.

At the October 1964 WVAHS AGM Miss L. Banfield, Ararat, moved: 'That it be a recommendation to affiliated societies to include in their constitutions a clause providing for appointment of trustees who would automatically transfer all historical records including published and unpublished material to the Latrobe Library or State Archives in the event of their society ceasing to function;' Ararat had had an historical museum for about 30 years, she said, and had lost it and most of the contents.

Guest Speaker at a meeting of the Ararat and District Historical Society was Mr R. McCallum, Librarian of Ballarat City Library. Among his comments were:

“The historical structure of our communities was no skeleton. It was very much alive. Community growth or decline was exemplified not in laborious excavations and corroded antiquities but in surviving landmarks, houses, public buildings, verandahs, mines, implements, vehicles, clothing, utensils, gardens and trees, even elderly citizens.”

“In a local museum it is a mistake and unnecessary to have everything on display at one time. Nothing is so destructive to papers, documents and photographs as light. These should be properly indexed and filed where they will be readily available. As for other material, it is better to exhibit it from time to time in planned projects.”

“It was our duty to preserve and put in order the history that is being made now. This meant contacting every organisation and requesting copies of their reports, programmes, posters and so on. A local Camera Club could be asked to photograph buildings, local wild life, native trees and distinguished citizens. The support of municipal councillors and officers could work wonders in the acquisition of materials we might never see without their help.”

Negotiations were underway by the St Arnaud and District Historical Society to obtain land on which to erect a building to house agricultural machinery, the Society having about fifteen items at the time.

The Donald History and Natural History Group was lamenting the recent demolition of an 85 year-old mud brick building in Hammill Street. The building had once been the Racecourse Hotel and after 1921 became a boarding house.

A portion of the old ‘Tyntynder Homestead’ north of Swan Hill, and dating from 1846, was being used as a museum for aboriginal arts and crafts, pioneer relics, documents, minerals, shells and coins.

At the Centenary of the Ararat State School in June, Premier Henry Bolte opened the modern library. A mock class was conducted by a former head teacher. At the reunion dinner over 100 stood up when the Mayor called on those who had been at the school 50 years ago to rise. Nearly 20 were attending the school in 1900 and two rose in response to the call for pupils who had been at the school prior to 1890.

The Arapiles Historical Society had, sometime earlier, been presented with a Mallee Roller. Having limited space for such large relics, the Committee of Management of Natimuk Soldiers’ Memorial Park had given permission to place the Roller in the park adjoining the main street in Natimuk. The Society was also working on histories of the district’s pioneer families with around forty having already been profiled.

Should any Member Groups like copies of individual items, I am happy to provide these. Craigie

Passing the baton for the RHSV’s Historical Societies Support Committee



After three years in the role of Chair of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria’s Historical Societies Support Committee (HSSC), Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM FRHSV, has relinquished the reins. Rosalie has taken up the role of President of the Federation of Historical Societies.

We congratulate Rosalie on her new and important role.

Many members of WVAHS will be well aware of Rosalie’s unstinting commitment not only to working with historical societies but also to attending regional events. Her enthusiasm for the work of small, rural historical societies has been greatly appreciated.

Rosalie has always been happy to jump into her car to visit, usually over several days, our more physically remote groups and has in recent years been a very welcome presence at our AGMs and Zone Meetings. She plans to attend our AGM in Geelong.

We at WVAHS acknowledge and thank Rosalie for her many efforts and for sharing her passion for local history.

At its December meeting the RHSV Council appointed me as Interim Chair of the HSSC; I have been a member of the HSSC for several years. I will become Chair following the RHSV’s AGM in May. While I cannot hope to emulate Rosalie’s *herculean* efforts during the past few years, I look forward to leading the HSSC and to being a contact person for all historical societies in Victoria. In the short term I will continue as Editor of the WVAHS’s *Western Historian* and continue to serve on the WVAHS Committee.

Additionally, I have been invited to produce the newsletter for the Federation of Australian Historical Societies, an invitation I have accepted; both the WVAHS and FAHS newsletters are due out at the same time. What could *possibly* go wrong?!

Craigie Proctor, Jeparit, Leopold and Mortlake



Around the Groups

Wedderburn Historical Records Museum Inc. (NC)

After a good festive season break Darryl and I are back to work, continuing to digitise more newspapers. The *Wedderburn Express* has now been completed from its start in 1888 up to 1936 and backwards from its closure in 1996 back to 1957. Darryl has almost completed the referencing of the entire editions of the now defunct *Loddon Times*.

We now have over 125,000 records digitised and indexed.

We are still awaiting the move into our new premises at the old court house, the transfer of ownership of the building to the Loddon Shire is still being finalised. Once the move has been completed we will be launching a recruitment drive.

Our latest project is to start sorting out documents ready for the move.

As a result of a successful grant application, a new laptop was purchased for our main server, which has a larger capacity for disk storage, plus a faster processor.

Darryl has completed a project to install a plaque at Soldiers Memorial Park to commemorate the war horses sent from Australia to both World War 1 and World War 2. This has been placed at the same location as the tribute to VC winners *Albert Jacka* and *Albert Borella*. The plaque also incorporates a QR code badge to provide a short film history of the horses in action.

The tribute can also be seen on the home page of our web site at:- <https://wedderburnhistorical.com.au>

Another project in hand for this year is to supply the entire system to our local High School library, along with user instructions so that students can research the database to assist with their school projects. The database will be *View Only* so that it cannot be altered in any way.

Darryl Arnott (President), Alan Mulraney (Secretary)



Goldfields Historical and Arts Society, Dunolly (NC)

SOLAR PANELS FOR DUNOLLY MUSEUM

The Goldfields Historical & Arts Society has received two grants towards installing solar panels at the Dunolly Museum. These are \$3,000 from Central Goldfields Shire Community Grants and \$3,500 from the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) Climate Solution Grant.

Mortlake and District Historical Society (S)

A much larger crowd than anticipated gathered on 16 February to roll back the years and visit Ballangeich of the 1800s and 1900s. Our President and WVAHS committee member Robert McLaren provided stories of the early days of settlement at Ballangeich, today just a farming district but once the site of a thriving village. Many in attendance were able to provide additional information and anecdotes around these same stories, some having grown up in the district.

It was after the 1865 release of public land that the district population swelled, when families moved on to the blocks that they had successfully applied for. A store, bootmakers, hotels, a school and a small Catholic Church all commenced after this date.

The long cavalcade of cars raised the dust on the gravel road down to the isolated Ballangeich Cemetery that sits on a rise above the Hopkins River. The site is immediately adjacent to the home of the Eddington family, the first European settlers in this part of Victoria. Many wandered the cemetery to view graves of family members and took in the peace and solitude of the place.

The bluestone former Ballangeich School, constructed in 1872, was the final stop. Photos, books and maps chronicling the history of Ballangeich and Ellerslie were on display which people rummaged through over afternoon tea. This was a most successful event which proved to be a great opportunity for people to renew acquaintances and to share their personal knowledge of the landscape and environment beyond what is in the history books.

Nhill and District Historical Society (WM)

On 1 February the Nhill and District Historical Society hosted its inaugural 'Prominent Women of Nhill' presentation; what a great idea for other groups to consider! Despite inclement weather and the risk of fires locally, around 35 people attended the event which was most encouraging.

We had approached Craige Proctor to present the inaugural presentation, choosing as his focus a Nhill-born woman who was catapulted to national and even international celebrity with the publication of her first novel in 1912: the novel was *Smouldering Fires* and the author was Lindsay Russell, the pen name for Ethel Stonehouse, born in 1883. Ethel and her family left Nhill for Charlton in 1888. In her seventeen novels published between 1912 and 1918 while living in Melbourne, London and Ireland, Lindsay Russell 'took on' the Catholic Church, demanding it abandon its rules on celibacy for its priests. Her novels included exotic settings such as the pearl fishing industry at Broome, Indonesia, Mesopotamia – today's Iraq – and Ireland although various Mallee towns feature in her settings. Lindsay Russell was a passionate Australian with an affinity for the Mallee from her years spent living at Charlton.

In 1920 Lindsay Russell – now Mrs Dr John Scott – settled in Mortlake where she remained until 1949 when she was admitted to Mont Park in Melbourne and where she spent the last fifteen years of her life. A grim end to a woman who had risen to fame – and considerable fortune – in the 1910s.

Craige had previously written an extensive article on Lindsay Russell for the September 2022 *Western Historian* (Issue 236) and she is profiled on the RHSV website at <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/search-collection/rhsv-womens-biographical-dictionary/patricia-scott/>

Craige has previously presented this talk at Birchip, Dimboola and in Geelong and it was equally well-received at Nhill. He said "I had long hoped to showcase Lindsay Russell's fascinating story in her birthplace so that goal has now been achieved."

This was the first event the new Committee of the N&DHS has staged since being elected in September 2024. We were all nervous about getting the word out and getting RSVPs to the event and, come the day before, we had only about a dozen attending. Disappointing but as Aussie women we said "We can't let this deter us. If anything, those of us who have replied and we ourselves will enjoy the presentation and afternoon tea and a chat, the day is not lost." In the hope that we might get a few stragglers, we laid out twenty-four chairs. While waiting for people to arrive, I was organising the kitchen for afternoon tea and imagine my surprise when I walked back into the presentation room to find people gathering more chairs and the room filling up.

After Craige's spectacular presentation the room was buzzing with how great it was that everyone loved it and the afternoon tea. Everyone asked if we are planning to do more and to be kept informed as they want to come again.

Wow I was blown away! We made more money than we thought we would by charging just a \$5 donation. I have been congratulated by everyone. I am glad it was a success, not only for the preparation that went into getting it off the ground but for the great talk. He is going to be a hard person to follow! We encourage any Society to ask Craige to give this presentation on an important but long-forgotten Australian woman writer.

It is extraordinary that we had people asking if we had any information about Lindsay Russell and could they come to the Society to see what it is all about? The NDHS Committee has a lot of work to do to keep the ball rolling now.

Our next event/s include a Nhill Cemetery Walk, conducted by Yvonne Gladiss for the UNEARTHED event in April-May. Dates and times are still to be determined. Also, we are planning our next guest speaker.

Colleen Forbes
Secretary/Research, N&DHS



Photos by Helen Curkpatrick and Helen Woodhouse-Herrick.



Macarthur Historical Society news (S)

Our Cataloguing grant finished last year (thank you AGL Macarthur Windfarm). There are now hard and soft catalogues of about 1,000 items in our Courthouse Museum. During this collating we discovered items not pertaining to Macarthur's history. Various 1929 *Weekly Times* supplements featuring football teams and local identities of Wangaratta, Corowa, Port Fairy and Portland have now been donated to the relevant Societies. They have been particularly pleased to receive these as the photographs easily identify local people from the 1920s and are in good condition. Some things to ask when donating goods to Historical Societies: Is the item relevant to that Society? Do they already have the item? Is it in good condition? I visited Wangaratta Museum to deliver their supplement donation and out the front of the Museum is a Bills water trough similar to Macarthur's. Seven hundred were produced by George and Annis Bills for the working horses transporting goods around Australia. They were installed in the 1930s at a cost of £13 each. Look out for them in country towns as many are still on display. And spare a thought for this philanthropic couple whose estate went on to purchase land in East Burwood and set up the RSPCA, a continuing legacy of George and Annis Bills.

Our end of year trip in November was to Glenthompson History Centre. We stopped off at the Light Horse Museum at Dunkeld. Dave Tyson gave an evocative talk on the Light Horse charge at Bathsheba. This is a privately run, free Museum, open daily.

Simone Dalton and I gave a talk on the Haydon brothers at the Glenthompson Cemetery, the Haydon graves having a Macarthur connection. Dr Gerald, a Macarthur doctor and Dr Leonard, a global career doctor, had his Bubonic plague bacteria destroyed in Macarthur and the subsequent 1898 court case had interesting comparisons to recent global vaccine pandemic issues. Thanks to Simone for making the journey from Horsham.

A big thank you to Tracey who gathered descendants of the Haydon family at the graveside and organised the visit to take in the Glenthompson Art Show and High Tea, a talk on the murals at the Anglican Church, and peruse the collection of the Glenthompson History Rooms.

Sadly, we lost an active member, Lorna Mary Junck, in November. Lorna played a pivotal role in setting up the Barber's Shop room. Her donated scrap-books continued the tradition of recording Macarthur social life. She will be missed.

This year I intend to visit similar small Historical Societies and Museums to discuss strategies for continuation. It is difficult to find the next generation to transition from our octogenarian membership.

Come and visit our Courthouse Museum, open Saturdays 10 -12 or by appointment. Our website is

<https://macarthurmuseum.org.au/>

Contact us by email. 3286mdhs@gmail.com

Wendy Black,
Macarthur and District Historical Society Inc.



Ararat and District Historical Society Langi Morgala Museum (WM)

Ararat Icon “Southern Cloud” has a new home at Langi Morgala Museum

A collaborative effort between the family and friends of the late Eric “Whirley” Wilson and Langi Morgala Museum culminated in the installation of Whirley’s famous vehicle, the Southern Cloud, at the Museum in December 2024.

Anyone who lived in Ararat and surrounds in the 1960s to 1980s would have fond memories of the uniquely amazing vehicle delighting young and old as it proceeded down Barkly Street in the annual Golden Gateway Festival Parade.

Affectionately known as the “Old Bomb”, the fascinating car featured in the 1964 Moomba Parade and many subsequent parades, winning the Moomba Best Country Novelty Award on every occasion. It was parked outside the Southern Cross Hotel in Moyston between 1963 and 1969 as a tourist attraction, gaining even greater attention from locals and passers-by alike.

All the propellers and moving parts are driven by the original motor. The only change is the magneto was replaced by a distributor.

The Museum Committee thanked the Wilson team involved in setting up the installation with a shared meal, a tour of the Museum and the presentation of certificates of appreciation in December.



Above: Eric (left) and Matthew Wilson with the 1964 Moomba Best Novelty trophy, now on display at the Museum.

Langi Morgala Museum’s Photographic Project

Six months ago Museum committee member Marion McAdie began cataloguing the Museum’s extensive photographic collection. The collection then consisted of three external hard drives and 50 CDs. The project aim was to separate the photos of collection pieces from the photos of people and places. The hard drives contained more than 30,000 photos, (many duplicates), all unnamed and unsorted, so that people were mixed in with display item photos. The photos of people were moved onto a separate hard drive, leaving the photos of collection pieces on the main hard drive. All the photos from the CDs were also added to the hard drive. After that Marion began the time consuming and demanding task of identifying and naming the photos.

The final step was to organise the photos into alphabetical order under specific headings/categories and sub-headings, including Alexandra Gardens, the Asylum, Banks, Barkly Street (looking east or west, from Town Hall tower etc.), the Borough Council/Chambers, Bowls Clubs and Businesses (under name of business or owner) to name just a few.

People have been listed under their surname, followed by first name. There are a number of photos in the “Unknown” folder. Photos from the Genealogical Society collection have also been transferred to the Museum hard drive for safe keeping.

Most of the Museum’s hard copy collection of photos are housed in archival boxes in the Storage Room (these have been checked against the photos on the HD).

The next part of the project is to photograph the photos on display within the Museum which are not on the hard drive. This Museum collection contains some very rare photographs. The Museum’s Mission is to preserve the photos for future generations by any means available (e.g. as new technology becomes available).



One of the Museum’s historic photographs picturing an impressive group of unknown men. There are several “unknowns” in the collection that has been catalogued by committee member Marion McAdie. The collection contains some very rare photographs that we believe it is important to preserve.

Thanks to Debbie Verdon for submitting these items for inclusion in our newsletter.

Koroit and District Historical Society (S)

Vale Jim and Carmel Madden

Along with other members, I went to the funeral on 9 November for Jim and Carmel Madden who tragically died in an accident on 25 October 2024.

It is with great sadness that we remember Carmel and Jim who have been involved in most of our activities over many years. They contributed local knowledge in our recording of historical events as well as in family research. Jim was brought up and lived at Tower Hill all his life. Carmel was from Warrnambool. Living at Killarney on the family farm after marriage, their five children were involved in the many activities of this area, schools, clubs and sport. Carmel and Jim were happy to carry out leading roles in supporting committees, hence they had very relevant memories for those looking to revive memories for town and group celebrations. Both had continued in leadership in clubs after their children became independent, for example Lions and Probus, in the ensuing years.

Carmel played an active role in social work and was a leader in the Koroit Chapter of St Vincent de Paul for many years.

Carmel was a volunteer at our Historical Society for several years and we will miss her happy nature and valuable input into our activities. It was always a joy to be rostered to open the museum with Carmel.

Jim and Carmel were instrumental in bringing the Melbourne Cup to Koroit in 2023 on its town tour before the race. Jim was a horse trainer and loved the industry. This was one way they hoped to show their hometown to a wider audience.

At their funeral their son said "They were very good people", a special quality in two happily married people.

[Margaret Trotter, President](#)

L. to R., Margaret Trotter, the late Jim Madden, and Dr Peter Yule. Our 2024 AGM was co-chaired by Margaret and Jim and Peter Yule, our guest speaker, provided an enlightening talk on 'Koroit in the First World War', a pivotal period in Koroit's history. We appreciate you taking up our invitation to speak, Peter.



We have had a very busy start to the year. We open once a month regularly and also on extra days and times for the following: Lake School of Celtic Music and Dance yearly January photo session; Koroit Truck Show; Koroit Dog Trials on February 11-16; the Koroit Agricultural Show on 22 February.

During these extra open days we are inundated with many visitors whom we are always thrilled to accommodate. We continually receive many Research enquiries which are always exciting to pursue.

[Dianne Fary, Secretary](#)

Younger people engaging with Historical Societies: any ideas out there?

One of the perennial issues faced by Historical Societies is the dwindling number of people available to do the many jobs and projects we undertake, a consequence of ageing membership and fewer younger people joining the ranks. Moreover, in an increasingly technology-driven world, not all members of societies have the skills nor, indeed, the time nor wherewithal to develop these skills. How do we encourage more – younger – people to come on board?

On 4 February the RHSV facilitated a Think Tank via Zoom. The initiative was spearheaded by Kay Ball of the Murchison Historical Society who ran through a program she is developing to engage with young people – children, in fact – hopefully some of our historians of the future. Around fourteen members of groups around Victoria joined the discussion (although, sadly, only two of us representing the WVAHS network). Several participants outlined what their groups have been doing to engage with a younger audience through running prizes and awards, staging photographic exhibitions etc. Engaging with local Youth Councillors in Local Government Areas which have these is another option.

We would love to share with member groups through our newsletter ideas initiated by other groups. This is something future issues of our newsletter will address, hopefully.

A Happy Place: the story of Cooinda Terang

By Craige Proctor

In 2024 I was approached to research and write the 70th anniversary history of Cooinda Terang Inc. I had grown up hearing from older family members about 'Cooinda' but had never really appreciated what it was. Many years later I can say I am privileged to have learned a great deal about this valuable, community-minded organisation which for seven decades has been providing disability support services.

I am used to researching people, places and events in the dim, dark past. There can be a 'safety' in researching the deep past. Researching an organisation which is still functioning, which employs around 170 people in a small community and which offers disability support services to many participants is a whole other ball game. The researcher becomes aware very quickly that the story being told is going to be read by people still very much involved with the organisation – indeed, with its leadership – and this adds layers of complexity and responsibility to such a project. I also found myself having to deploy a completely new vocabulary, not to mention dipping into the world of the NDIS, something I had not had to be aware of.

In the 1950s families with children who were intellectually disabled had few options available to them for providing their child with care and support beyond the family unit. There were State-run and privately-run institutions but these tended to be in the metropolitan areas and were institutions accommodating large numbers of 'inmates', often in demeaning and soul-destroying conditions; they were the vestiges of nine teenth century attitudes towards disability. The term 'Lunacy' was still being used in Australia in the 1930s and 1940s. How appalling it must have been for parents to be told by medical people, family and friends that they should 'put away' their child as essentially little could be done for them? Of course many parents in this situation had few if any resources to call upon for anything except institutionalisation. It would have been a brave but agonising decision to hand over a child to such a place. Yet some parents insisted that the opportunities available to their other children should be available to their child with a disability; they wanted her or him to attend school, to socialise, to be respected by the community. Institutionalisation was not an option for these parents even if they had other children to tend to. Australia in the 1950s was seeing small but significant changes in the treatment and care of people with disabilities being ushered in, Day Training Centres and Sheltered Workshops being two such initiatives.

The first Day Training Centre for intellectually disabled children in Victoria – the Oakleigh Retarded Children's Centre – had been established in 1950 but there was no facility in south-western Victoria to provide disability support for the children of the area.

Mulleraterong Centre at Hamilton and McCallum House in Ballarat were not established until the mid-1950s, Kyeema at Portland commenced operations in mid-1967, Yalundah at Warrnambool was established in the late 1960s and it would be more than ten years before the Colanda Centre, a traditional State-run institution for the disabled, would be established at Colac in 1968 although this was not a Day Training Centre when established.

This has become the story of a group of local people with children with intellectual disabilities for whom institutionalisation of their children was not an option. It is also the story of a community which rallied behind them.

Two Terang women, Mrs Anne Scroggie and Mrs Gertrude Varcoe, both of whom were mothers of children with intellectual disabilities, had travelled to Melbourne early in 1954 to meet with the President of the Helping Hand Association for Mentally Retarded Children. Then in July Mrs Scroggie and Mrs Varcoe and five other mothers of local disabled children met with the President of Hampden Shire, Cr Peter Cole, to request that a public meeting be called to explore options for establishing a Training Centre for providing "education and occupational instruction for retarded children". While the Centre was eventually described as a 'school', even in 1954 the term 'Training Centre' was being used in newspaper reports.

The public meeting took place at the Terang Mechanics' Institute Hall on 24 September with forty local people attending, a testament to the district's curiosity about but also support for a Training Centre being established. The group learned that a Centre could be supported by a government subsidy of £12 per child annually and that building grants could be made available through the Victorian Mental Hygiene Authority. The Centre would need to be registered with the Victorian Council for Retarded Children. In addressing the meeting Mr Glassborow of the Helping Hand Association said that "in the past mentally retarded children had been hidden away and the public at large had been very intolerant of them. You must provide training of some sort, happy associations and protection from exploitation." Mr Glassborow also stated that the focus should be on providing the children with useful craftwork skills rather than literacy skills.

Things moved quickly as within one week a name for the Centre had been decided on: Terang and District Retarded Children's Centre. In October newspaper notices were published seeking one part-time teacher and inviting district parents to enrol children. A General Committee of twenty local people – all women – was established and this General Committee oversaw Cooinda's operations for the next 46 years. An Executive Committee was also established.

The General and Executive Committees were not 'going it alone'. The early Minutes of Meetings detail the ongoing and varied correspondence between the Committee and government agencies as no decisions could be made regarding the Centre and its operations without the guidance and approval of, among others, the Victorian Mental Hygiene Department which oversaw applications, staffing and maintenance subsidies, the Hospital and Charities Commission which oversaw registration, affiliation and governance issues and the Victorian Council for Mentally Retarded Children. Moreover, even in the earliest years the General and Executive Committees were becoming part of a large network throughout the State with Committee representatives visiting other Centres and with a significant number of people from other places coming to Terang to inspect the work of its new Centre. Several times a year Mental Hygiene Department Inspectors would visit the Terang Centre and so in time supportive working relationships were forged with these agencies' staff sometimes being asked to speak at the Annual Meetings.

Without premises from which to operate the Centre, the All Saints Church of England Committee offered the Committee free use of its Hall as a Training Centre. Additional space was offered by the Mechanics' Hall Committee and the local community continued to support the initiative through stalls, dances, offers of support from service groups such as Rotary, pub tin collections, weekly meat raffles, soliciting donations at the saleyards, providing supper for a dance and other fundraising activities as well as a callout for financial contributions.

'Cooinda' was not given that name until 1958; it was still the Terang and District Retarded Children's Centre'. Interestingly, eight names had been suggested – all indigenous – and Pastor Douglas Nicholls, founding member of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, was consulted over the name choice. 'Cooinda – a happy place' had arrived.

The Centre opened with nine enrolments on 11 January 1955. The ages of the 'children' ranged from 5 to 37. I have been immensely privileged in interviewing two of the first 'teachers' or 'instructors' from 1955-1957; the first, Beth, was 17 when she was engaged by the Centre and is now 87; the second, Corona, was 23 and is now 93. Both women have crystal clear memories of their time with the 'pupils' seven decades ago. I have also had the privilege of interviewing one participant, Ian, whose association with Cooinda goes back to when he enrolled as a 15 year-old; he is now 85 and the 'senior statesman' of Cooinda today.

For five years Cooinda had no buses of its own to ferry its charges between Camperdown, Cobden, Mortlake, Timboon and Garvoc and the Centre so it established its own transport network and a significant part of this history has been tracking the origins and evolution of the Cooinda 'fleet', something anyone from the district will recognise.



*Top: some of the initial 'children' around 1957. The ages range from 5 to 36. Note both boys are wearing ties.
Middle: In 1957 the Centre – still not yet 'Cooinda' – moved into its own premises in Terang which is still the Centre's hub today.*

Below: Supervisor Mrs Marjorie Court with some of the 'Farm Boys' and prize winning calves on the Cooinda Farm, 1960s. The Farm was not just a 'hobby farm' but a vocational training enterprise teaching skills such as animal husbandry and farm management. Until 1986 Cooinda was still operating its Dairy here.

After almost three years operating from the All Saints' Church Hall, the Centre moved to its own premises, the building and land being donated by the Ministry of Education.

Yet this story is not just about an organisation. It is the story of local communities rallying behind it for seventy years with an astonishing number of groups and organisations from Terang, Noorat, Camperdown, Cobden, Mortlake, Timboon, Simpson and further afield as well. The fundraising efforts by several generations within these local communities tells us much about the valuable role Cooinda has played and continues to play.

The story of Cooinda is also a story of firsts. It had been the first Day Training Centre in south-western Victoria. In 1963 it became the first such Centre to acquire a farm – adjoining the Centre – which would become its vocational hub for the next sixty years, providing a small number of clients – ‘the Farm Boys’ – with training in animal husbandry and welfare along with land management. It provided, in time, woodworking, craft, sewing and pottery programs for its clients and still today ‘Cooinda Ceramics’ is well-known and has its own building and outlet in town. All of these initiatives have become business enterprises and there are still strong partnerships between Cooinda and businesses throughout south-western Victoria and even beyond. Cooinda was the first Day Training Centre to establish non-institutionalised Residentials for a small number of clients. Twenty years into Cooinda providing support to its people, some were advancing in years and becoming orphans without parental support. The first of the residential Villas opened in 1974,

the second in 1978, the third in 1982 and today there are not only four residences for clients with a variety of needs but Cooinda has a large property portfolio in Terang providing valuable residential services and outreach programs to its participants. The term ‘participants’ replaced ‘clients’ with the rollout of the NDIS in 2018.

The rest of the Cooinda story is, in a word, a marvellous one of community support and leadership enterprise. In 2016 Cooinda branched out into the hospitality industry by opening The Little Acorn Café in the main street of Terang, a mecca for locals and travellers and a valuable vocational training provider for some of the clients. Since the 1990s Cooinda has been involved in garbage collection, green waste and recycling collection, along with a variety of other locally-based enterprises. In 2023 part of the original farm area was reimagined and has become the Yellow Tail Nursery, raising shelterbelt trees for farmers. In 2023 and 2024 Cooinda established the first Container Deposit Scheme Reverse Vending Machines in the district, a hugely successful enterprise both for Cooinda and the local community.

What a privilege it has been to learn about the story of and the background historical context to this extraordinary service provider right in my own backyard!

A Happy Place: the Story of Cooinda Terang. A 70th Anniversary History, 1955 – 2025 will be launched by Cooinda Terang Inc. in Terang on Friday 4 April coinciding with Cooinda's 70th anniversary celebrations. The book will be available for \$45 – a bargain! – directly from Cooinda Terang Inc.

<https://cooindaterang.org.au>

Vale Elizabeth O'Callaghan

Warrnambool & District Historical Society is sad to announce the recent passing of our life member and mentor. WVAHS groups will be aware that she was a keen supporter of the WVAHS, along with her late husband Les.

Elizabeth Douglas was born in Colac in 1933, spending her early years in a small community in the Otway Ranges prior to the family move to Melbourne during World War 2. Throughout a long career she gained three university degrees and taught in primary and secondary schools across Victoria and in the UK. Following her retirement as principal of Derrinallum Secondary College in the early 1990s she moved to Warrnambool. It was through her volunteer work at Flagstaff Hill and the historical society that she met Les O'Callaghan.

Until quite recently Elizabeth had been coming to HeritageWorks to pursue her passion for history and order. A woman of strong principles and beliefs, she was somewhat of an anti-monarchist, who refused to use the word ‘royal’ in titles. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate in years to come to refer to the last three decades at W&DHS as the *Elizabethan era*. Her local history publications include five books and over forty booklets. *Silent Lives: Women of Warrnambool & District 1840-1910* was awarded the Local History book prize at the RHSV and PROV Awards in 2018. She wrote statements of significance for our artefact and document collection. Her systems and databases will be in use for years to come.

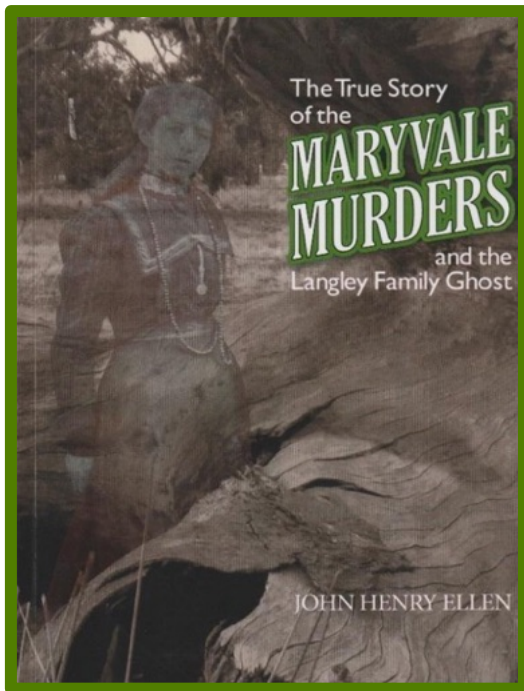
Elizabeth was fun to work with as she always had an entertaining story to tell about the past, whether it was her past or something she had discovered about some person or event in the course of her research.

Janet Macdonald on behalf of the
Warrnambool and District Historical Society



The Maryvale Murder Mystery, 1874 - 1918 - 2025

Submitted by Helen Mulraney-Roll



A family ghost story handed down through generations, the legacy of a triple murder near Edenhope, has captivated Wimmera people for 150 years. This week a step has been taken in solving the mystery thanks to an Edenhope Tourism project.

Maria Langley, an attractive 21 year-old woman, was indentured as a house maid to Joseph Sugars, a prominent Mt Gambier family during the 1870s. She ran away from her employer twice but, being indentured, was forced by law to return. She became pregnant and her employer along with her father arranged for her to marry a local bakery worker named, oddly, "Cook". Maria and Robert Cook were married on 14.3.1874, Maria's daughter Louisa being just 18 months old. It was not a happy marriage.

Robert, Maria and Louisa were heading from Mt Gambier through Edenhope to begin a new life north of Horsham. They were to meet up with her father and stepmother who had settled on land at Ashens between Murtoa and Rupanyup. They never reached their destination. Research identifies Maria and Louisa were murdered on 20 March 1874.

In 1884 three men clearing land found human remains near Maryvale Station, 15kms east of Edenhope, hidden under a hollow log. Constable Hilliard from Murtoa station confirmed that the remains were those of Maria and Louisa. Maria's brother identified the green leather boots which

were laced up at the sides and were handmade for Louisa in his bootmakers shop in Horsham. Robert Cook was still missing and became the prime suspect.

Detective Sergeant Nixon travelled from Melbourne to investigate the disappearances, to no avail. He ordered the remains be taken to the Edenhope Police Station. They were stored in a square box and placed in the horse stables at the back of the station. A reward of £200 was offered for the apprehension of Maria's husband. In 1889 Robert was seen in the Edenhope area but when police arrived he had escaped. He was never apprehended and has never been charged.

There was an appeal for the bodies to be buried, but the Chief of Police in Melbourne vetoed this, saying that the bodies were needed as evidence if Cook was ever caught and brought to trial. When the Edenhope Police Stables were renovated in 1918, 44 years after the murders, they discovered the square box still containing the remains of Maria and Louisa.

Maria's family were consulted by the Coroner and he requested they pay 15 shillings to bury them. The family refused to pay, as the police had not released Maria's jewellery, so the Government paid to have their remains interred at the Edenhope Cemetery in the square box in an unmarked pauper's grave.

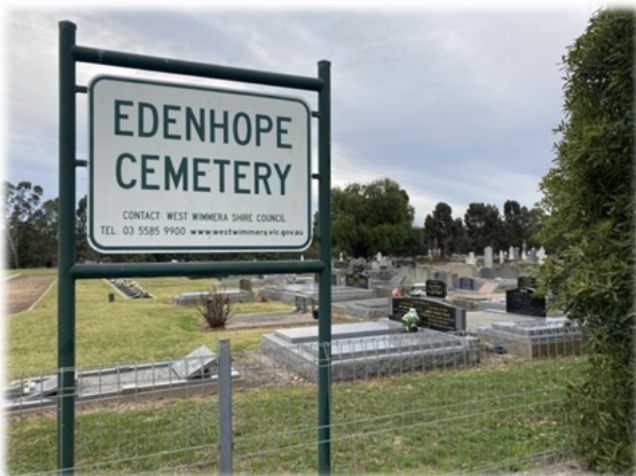
Many twists and turns have been taken to resolve this murder mystery with quite a few researchers having looked into resolving the disappearance of Cook and locating the final resting place of Maria and Louisa. It has been an ongoing, frustrating mystery for the family, the Cemetery Trust, Edenhope Tourism, the Historical Society, interested locals and captivated researchers. Memorials have been installed around Edenhope and at Maryvale in the absence of knowing the women's final resting place. Family members believed Maria's unhappy ghost has been observed.

In 2022 the Edenhope West Wimmera Shire Cemetery Trust was approached to employ a Grave Hunter. He was asked to map out the cemetery at a cost of \$900.00. A generous local member donated the money to start an extensive search for Maria and Louisa. That led to Geophysicist and Cave Diver

Ian Lewis from Mt Gambier providing free assistance with an expert colleague to scan part of the monumental section of Edenhope Cemetery where the unmarked graves might be. Again, this procedure was unsuccessful.

Nick Manganas, history schoolteacher from New South Wales, stumbled on the story and began his journey. Intensive research analysed evidence in paper clippings, birth, death and marriage certificates, police records and oral histories which Nick hopes to publish. Further discussion took place with Ian, the Langley family, West Wimmera Cemetery Trust Advisory Committee, Edenhope Tourism and Nick. Edenhope Tourism applied for a grant to employ Andrew Frost, SEE Spatial and Geophysics, to search for Maria and Louisa's remains using non-invasive and non-destructive ground penetrating radar.

An emotional, exciting event happened on Thursday 23rd January 2025 at 2pm when Andrew Frost identified a square item the size of the box and 80cm underground. It was just as the historic records had indicated. Andrew stated he had only been able to identify coffins previously, not boxes, and was truly excited to explain his find. The Langley family were overjoyed that they had finally found their



ancestors' resting place. A warm thank you was made from James Bentley, Director of Corporate Services, West Wimmera Shire Council on behalf of the Cemetery Trust to Edenhope Tourism, the Langley family, Ian Lewis, Andrew Frost, West Wimmera Women on Farms Gathering, Nick Manganas, the Cemetery Trust Advisory Committee and other interested persons for their passionate and ongoing drive to locate these two human beings.

The family and relatives will now memorialise their ancestors in the coming months and give them the respect and dignity they deserve. May Maria and Louisa now rest in peace.

The "True Story of Maryvale Murder Mystery" is available from the Edenhope Tourist Information Centre, 96-98 Elizabeth St, Edenhope 3318.

Contact: Secretary Helen Mulraney-Roll JP.
0427514140 or 0355851509.

Opening Hours for the Centre are Monday to Friday 10.00-3.00pm, Saturday 10.00-1.00pm. Sunday Closed.



The descendants of Maria and Louisa Langley,
24.01.2025.

Remember that all Member Groups have the opportunity to promote their events, achievements and publications and to share stories in *Western Historian*.

It costs nothing!

Please allow *Western Historian* to support and promote your group.
Contributions for the June issue should be submitted by mid-May.

Publications and Upcoming Events



Geelong Museum Association Inc.

**2025 'Last Sunday Series'
at the National Wool Museum
1.30 pm - 3 pm**

Free entry. Afternoon cuppa provided; gold coin donation. Details of talks are updated on the Geelong Museum Association Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/geelongmuseum>

Sunday 30 March

A Short History of Geelong. Geelong has a fascinating history, both prior to and post European arrival. This talk, 'A Short History of Geelong', will have a focus on Wathaurong street names and municipal buildings.

Colin Mockett is a writer, historian, broadcaster, entertainer, editor and tour guide. He's a graduate of both Geelong's Gordon Institute and Deakin University. He regularly hosts walking tours of the Geelong Waterfront and is a step-on guide to coach parties visiting the Geelong region. He writes and produces monthly Morning Showtimes for the CoGG's Potato Shed venue and co-presents *The Sustainable Hour* weekly podcast and radio program.

Sunday 27 April

Kangaroo Grassland to Geelong Botanic Gardens and Eastern Park. Geelong was barely ten years old when prominent citizens first raised suggestions of a public garden in 1848. Those first inspirational thoughts led to what we know today as the Geelong Botanic Gardens, the fourth oldest botanic gardens and oldest regional botanic gardens in Australia.

Ian Rogers has an extensive horticultural knowledge and had personal direct leadership of the gardens as curator for almost twenty years. He has spent almost thirty years in researching their history.

Railway history events 2025

During 2025 there are a number of railway lines in Victoria that will celebrate the centenary (or other significant dates) of their official opening. I have listed lines in the part of the state covered by WVAHS. Local historical societies may wish to recognise some of these events by holding relevant displays, etc.

100 years:

Merbein to Yelta, 27.6.1925. Currently open.

Werrimull to Meringur, 30.10.1925. Line closed 1988.

110 years:

Swan Hill to Piangil, 27.5.1915. Currently open.

Murrayville to S.A. Border, 29.7.1915. Currently train services suspended.

Hamilton to Cavendish, 1.11.1915. Closed xxx.

Elmore to Cohuna, 10.11.1915. Closed Woomboota to Cohuna xxx,

Elmore to Woomboota xxx.

130 years:

Wycheproof to Sea Lake, 8.3.1895. Currently open.

150 years:

Clunes to Maryborough, 2.2.1875. Currently open.

Note: Clunes to Maryborough opening provided a second connection to Maryborough (via Ballarat) after the route via Castlemaine opened in July 1874.

Beaufort to Ararat, 7.4.1875. Currently open.



Michael Menzies

Women of the Mount

The lives of the earliest immigrant women to settle in the Mount Shadwell district, 1839 – 1864.



Revised Edition

Florence Charles & Craige Proctor

Mortlake and District Historical Society Inc.

The Mortlake and District Historical Society has republished its 2009 book *Women of the Mount* which proved highly successful following its launch fifteen years ago.

Fifty of the district's pioneer women who arrived in the area between 1839 and 1864 are profiled through detailed stories. The book also captures snapshots of many other women settlers.

These are the stories of entrepreneurial women who became property owners in their own right, wives of small farmers and tradesmen, dairy maids and shepherds' wives, businesswomen and some women who had commenced their lives in Australia as transportees to Van Diemen's Land.

Enquiries: Mortlake and District
Historical Society
mortlakedhs@gmail.com

\$40
plus P&P

We have a history book!

We are very excited to announce that local historian and journalist, Tammi Sladdin-Munro has written

'Moyston Primary School 150 years 1874-2024.'

The book will be available from 1st November at our 150th celebration for **\$20 per book**.

Pre-ordered books will be available to pick up at all three of our 150th celebration events on **1st and 2nd of November**.

Books will be available to purchase at the events (cash or direct transfer only, sorry no EFTPOS facilities)

If you would like to pre-order a copy please make payment to -

MOYSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL OFFICIAL ACCOUNT

BSB: **063 500**

Account: **1004 3733**

Please provide a clear reference.

Please email or text the school to confirm your order - moyston.ps@education.vic.gov.au or **0402 340 601**

Moyston Primary School

150 years

1874 ~ 2024



TAMMI SLADDIN-MUNRO

Melbourne Welsh Male Choir
MacCribbin
The Raglins
Luke Plumb
Pete Daffy
Fiona Ross
Ceilidhs
Concerts
Gala Dinner
The Twa Bards
Geelong Scottish Dance
Markets, Art Competition
History Talks, Poetry, Golf
Warrnambool Pipes & Drums
The Australian Irish Dance Co
Harpistry, Peter & Merran Moir
Don Stewart & Aniar: Henry Lawson's Story
Choir Competition, Lakes & Craters Band
Blair Memorial Solo Piping Competition
Tuniversal Music Group & More

CAMPERDOWN
Robert Burns
CELTIC FESTIVAL
27-29 JUNE 2025

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Burns Beyond Scotland



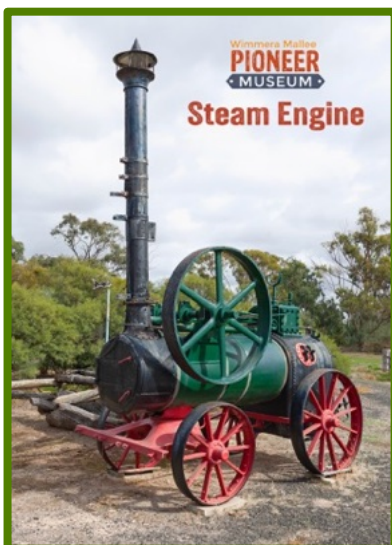
#RBCF2025



**CAMPERDOWN
CELTIC FESTIVAL
VICTORIA, 3260**
27-29 JUNE 2025
/ROBERTBURNSCELTICFESTIVAL
CAMPERDOWNBURNSFESTIVAL.COM.AU







Here's a novel idea!



The Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum at Jeparit has commissioned a number of jigsaws to add to its merchandise. Perhaps this is something other Historical Societies and Museums might consider in order to promote themselves? The jigsaws are designed and manufactured here in Victoria and the creator can provide custom-made designs ranging from small-sized (for children) to much larger and more complex puzzles as well as in a variety of shapes. WMPM has ordered twelve different jigsaws just two of which are shown here. An added bonus is that the creator – a professional photographer – can take all the photos and the group merely has to fund the final production....less complex than producing a book and something different to promote an area's history.
Contact WMPM – wmpmjeparit@gmail.com – if you'd like further details.