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September 2025

Please address all enquiries to W.V.A.H.S. to the Secretary,
Helen Curkpatrick
273 Old Hamilton Road,
Haven, Vic., 3401
Ph: 0413 382 567
E: vvahsinc@gmail.com



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Western Historian

Newsletter of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies

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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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W.V.A.H.S. Executive Committee for 2025-2026

President: Craig Proctor, Mortlake (S) & Jeparit (WM)	0408 311 302	vvahsinc@gmail.com
Vice-President: Brett Leslie, Landsborough (WM)	0404 813 997	bleslie@bigpond.net.au
Secretary/Treasurer: Helen Curkpatrick, Stawell (WM)	0413 382 567	haven273@outlook.com
Immediate Past President: Michael Menzies (S)	0419 546 251	railex@bigpond.com

Members:

Carolyn Olive, Charlton (NC)	0418 361 971	c.olive@bigpond.com
Robin Parker, Carisbrook (NC)	0459 032 068	robinparker81@hotmail.com
Kate van Dyck, Stawell (WM)	0428 841 011	katiejvd@iprimus.com.au
Tracey Potatau-Wright, Glenthompson (S)	0438 774 215	glenthompsonhistory@hotmail.com
Robert McLaren, Mortlake (S)	0407 530 030	mclaren55@bigpond.com
Colleen Forbes, Nhill (WM)	0490 432 265	nhillhistorical@gmail.com

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

Member Groups

at September 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)
 Echuca Edenhope
 Geelong & South Western
 Rail Heritage Society
 Glenthompson
 Goldfields (Dunolly)
 Halls Gap and Grampians
 Harrow Heytesbury
 Hopetoun Horsham
 Inglewood Jeparit
 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)

President's Post

Several months into my new role I have to say I am really enjoying liaising with more of our member groups. I have attended AGMs at Colac and Nhill, visited – along with Helen Curkpatrick our Secretary/Treasurer and Steve Pentreath from Swan Hill – our St Arnaud group and will be attending the AGM at Macarthur. Learning first-hand what some groups are doing and achieving is heartening. Remember that I am happy to be invited to your group, either to a meeting or to view your collection. Of course, still being Newsletter Editor as well remains a great way for me to get 'the big picture' of W.V.A.H.S. members' endeavours.



W.V.A.H.S. welcomes two Historical Societies as members. We are very pleased to have Echuca Historical Society join us as well as having the Jeparit and District Historical Society – of which I am a member – rejoin after a period of absence. Our leadership is actively encouraging more groups either to join or rejoin W.V.A.H.S. which can only be mutually beneficial. Do read the letter from Echuca Historical Society's President Matthew Wilson on page 4.

We have also established a line of communication with our neighbouring Network, the Central Highlands Historical Association. By the time this newsletter goes out I will have attended and presented at the CHHA's Workshop Day at Buninyong. See my report of this event in this issue.

I look forward to attending our upcoming Zone meetings at Cobden, Jeparit and Pyramid Hill in September and October; hopefully as many member groups as possible will be represented at these meetings.

Craig Proctor
 Mortlake and Jeparit

Spring Zone Meetings

Southern Zone and Executive Meeting: Cobden

Sunday 14 September, 10.00 a.m.

Cobden Miniature Railway Clubrooms

Wimmera Mallee Zone Meeting: Jeparit

Sunday 28 September, 1.30 p.m.

Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum, Jeparit

North Central Zone Meeting: Pyramid Hill

Saturday 4 October

Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall

News worth knowing

Echuca Historical Society joins W.V.A.H.S.

W.V.A.H.S. extends a warm welcome to our newest Member Group, Echuca Historical Society. We hope that having EHS as a member of the North Central Zone as well as of W.V.A.H.S. more broadly will be of benefit to all. EHS President and Secretary is Matthew Wilson while Deidre Coombs is Treasurer. With EHS joining the W.V.A.H.S. stable our eastern-most boundary has been pushed well beyond Barham-Koondrook, Cohuna, Pyramid Hill and East Loddon (Mitiamo)!



[Echuca Historical Society Website](#)

[Echuca Historical Society Facebook Page](#)

A big Hello fellow W.V.A.H.S. networkers from what was formerly warm and sunny Echuca.

Some of our closer neighbours will know who we are but, for those further afield, we are the Echuca Historical Society, established in 1960 to save what was left of the historical wharf which was in imminent danger of being completely demolished. We were successful in this venture and, as they say, no good deed goes unpunished....more things came along that needed protecting and saving so a meeting was called and a more structured group was formed. Since that time, we have gone from strength to strength.

The Society has resided in the old Echuca Police Station, which holds our museum and research centre, since 1969. The Society has a membership base of around 50, with about 15 volunteers who help look after the collection, index, guide tours, work with the outside exhibits, conduct research and staff the reception desk seven days a week.

We aim to have two in-house exhibitions per year with our last one coinciding with the NT's Heritage Festival. In July, together with the committee of the Echuca/Moama Blues Festival, we are putting on an exhibition celebrating 25 years of the Blues Music Festival in Echuca. A time capsule is in the process of being constructed and its 'burying' will be a feature of our exhibition opening.

The Society and I look forward to establishing friendships and mutually supporting relationships within the Western Victorian area.

Matthew Wilson
President and Secretary
Echuca Historical Society

Congratulations Helen and Maree!

The W.V.A.H.S. community extends congratulations to [Helen Stevens](#) of the Pyramid and District Historical Society and [Maree Belyea](#) of the Camperdown and District Historical Society on being recipients of Royal Historical Society of Victoria Awards of Merits in 2025.

In over 40 years with the Pyramid Hill Society Helen has been an administrator and archivist and has implemented cataloguing and archiving systems. She has also done much to document and showcase local indigenous history.

In addition to serving as President, Secretary and Research Officer at Camperdown, Maree has become 'the public face' of the Camperdown Society, being involved in many of its activities and initiatives including producing thirty-two heritage signs around the town.

Helen and Maree join a number of other people in the W.V.A.H.S. network who have received RHSV Awards of Merit over the years: [Helen Curkpatrick](#), Stawell, and [Michael Menzies](#), Geelong (2024), [Bob Lambell](#), Camperdown (2023), [Yours Truly](#), Mortlake (2022), [Merle Pole](#), Ouyen (2020), the late [Elizabeth O'Callaghan](#), Warrnambool (2019), [Diana Cowan](#), Colac (2017), [Bill Attrill](#), Stawell, (2002), the late [Les O'Callaghan](#), Warrnambool (2001), the late [Ron Falla OAM](#), Donald (1989) and the late [Norma Wynd](#), Camperdown (1988).

The full citations for Maree and Helen, as well as for all other recipients over the last thirty-seven years, can be read at [RHSV Awards of Merit](#)



Welcome back Jeparit and District Historical Society

W.V.A.H.S. is also very pleased to welcome back (after a number of years' absence) the Jeparit and District Historical Society which had first joined W.V.A.H.S. in 1974. The Society is a separate entity from the Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum at Jeparit which is an existing member of W.V.A.H.S.

Over the past two years efforts have been made to resurrect the Society which had suffered from dwindling membership and supporters. Through generous funding from the Hindmarsh Shire Council, the Jeparit Township Advisory Committee, the Robert Menzies Institute in Melbourne and, most recently, Wimmera Southern Mallee Development, the Society has been able to re-group and re-establish its profile both locally and online. Currently a great deal of work is being undertaken by a small band of volunteers to organise the collection which has never been catalogued.

[JDHS Facebook page](#)

Initiatives at Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum, Jeparit

Any of our members attending the Wimmera Mallee Zone Meeting on [Sunday 28 September](#) will have the opportunity to explore the Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum at Jeparit, of which I have been Secretary for three years. This is a good opportunity to share with W.V.A.H.S. members two recent initiatives we have undertaken at the Museum.

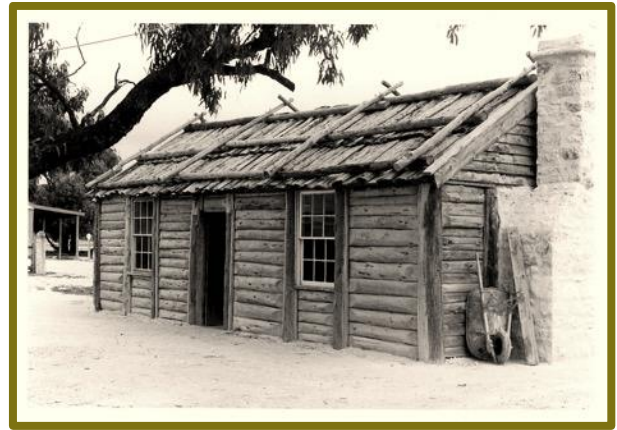
Readers may or may not be aware of the Australian National Museum of Education based at the University of Canberra. One of the ANME's Board Members is well-known to many W.V.A.H.S. members, Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM. Following her visit to our Museum in 2024, Rosalie urged the Committee of Management to register the former Detpa School, one of eleven heritage buildings on our site, as a School Museum. The ANME maintains a Registry of School Museums and states on its [website](#):

Local history museums across the nation hold a wealth of archival material that preserves the historical record of Australian schooling. In keeping with our mission ANME is bringing together these museums in a national network to support their activities and promote the valuable resource that they represent.

Our Detpa School served a rural community near Jeparit between 1926 and 1954. It is described as 'intact' and is full of teaching and learning aids, hundreds of books and even seven district World War 1 Honour Rolls. Part of our Wimmera Mallee Zone Meeting on 28 September will take place in the Detpa School.



Interior of the Detpa State School which served a local community from 1926 until 1954 and is now on the Registry of School Museums. Photos and article by Craig Proctor as former Secretary, Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum.



Our very own 'world premiere'

One of our heritage buildings at the Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum is a log cabin kitchen – pictured above – from the late 1840s which was constructed by early settler and sheep grazier John Coppock. The original homestead complex was at Albacutya, north of Rainbow, but it was relocated to the Museum site in the late 1960s.

Some time ago Horsham teacher and film maker Matthew Polack approached the Museum to explore ideas for a film he was contemplating. To cut a long story short, after interviewing Yours Truly on site, Matthew decided he should refocus his original idea and instead produce a documentary on John Coppock whose story he found fascinating especially once Matthew and I had travelled to the site of his solitary grave and headstone in a paddock near Albacutya. Matthew promptly found himself going down many, many rabbit holes!

John Coppock's early days in the colonies – from 1829 onwards – are a mystery. He may have arrived as a free settler or as a convict; the jury is still out on that. What is known, thanks to Matthew's rigorous research and significant road trips, is that there were 'interactions' between Coppock and First Nations people, principally in the area of Barfold near Kyneton in the 1830s and 1840s.

After more than a year, Matthew was finally ready to launch his documentary on his YouTube Channel. However, after negotiations with the Museum Committee, it was decided that the film would 'premier' not only in Jeparit but at our Museum. So on a horribly wet, cold and windy night in June around forty people gathered in the dark inside our carriage shed to listen to Matthew tell his story and to view the film. It's not often Jeparit gets to host a 'world premiere'! So those gathered had the opportunity not only to view a provocative but wonderfully well-produced and compelling film but did so just feet from John Coppock's original log cabin kitchen building. To view the film on Matthew's YouTube channel click on this link:

[John Coppock: A Hero or a Villain?](#)

A spotlight on Networks

By Craig Proctor

Published in RHSV's *History News*,
June 2025

*We have begun a movement which
is important and may give fresh
impetus to the study of local history.*

- Les Blake, inaugural
President, W.V.A.H.S. Inc.,
1963

We are all familiar with the valuable work undertaken by Historical Societies far and wide. Indeed, most people reading this article will be members of at least one Society or heritage body. Some will be less familiar with the important and complex work undertaken by Historical Society Networks across the State. In July 2024 the Historical Societies Support Committee staged its first Network Leaders Seminar Day in Melbourne and on 23 May we held the second Seminar Day, providing Network Leaders with an opportunity to meet, share, learn and, ideally, to feed ideas and strategies back to their members.

Networks? There are approximately eighteen Networks or Associations – some are Groups – affiliated with the RHSV and covering most geographical regions in Victoria. These are generally 'umbrella organisations' of local Historical Societies, Museums, genealogical groups and other heritage bodies or 'niche' special interest groups. Some Networks have memberships of six to nine; one has at least fifty member groups. Most come together in formal meetings three or four times a year.

The concept of an Historical Society Network is not a new one. Among the earliest Networks established were the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (1963, with nine founding members but around fifty members today), the South Gippsland Historical Network (1964, with around twelve members today) and the South Eastern Historical Association (1965, with around twenty-six members today).

Clearly, even in the 1960s there was interest in and enthusiasm for individual societies and groups joining forces through formalising Networks. This also means that several generations of heritage-minded enthusiasts have steered these ships both in metropolitan and regional areas. Just consider that some of the leaders of these early-formed Networks would have been born in the early 1900s or even in the 1890s! The Gippsland Association of Affiliated Historical Societies (GAAHS) was formed in 1976 with six members but today there are twenty-nine divided into further sub-groups, covering the vast area from Warragul to Mallacoota. Some Networks have come into existence in more recent times such as the Wellington Shire Heritage Network in Gippsland, formed in 2009, and the Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association as recently as 2014.

The Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies, whose membership base stretches from the coast to the northern Mallee, from the South Australian border to the central goldfields region, has, since 1976, been divided into three Zones which have the opportunity to come together twice each year. The Zone structure was introduced not to differentiate between or to separate regions but to enable individual member Societies to travel shorter distances to Zone-specific events; long distances did not, however, inhibit members from the Mallee, Wimmera, Murray regions and far south-western Victoria travelling to the AGM in Geelong in April this year, testament to the value some member groups still see in being part of this Network.

Despite their geographical spread and diversity in member groups, Networks have a common goal: to provide a valuable framework and networking capacity for their members, to support the preservation of local history and, ideally, to advocate for the viability of their

members often through engaging with Local Government Authorities. There is much value-adding among some Networks through staging conferences. The Association of Eastern Historical Societies holds a major conference every second year, the theme of the 2024 Conference being 'The Value of Local History – into the future' with thirteen speakers. Five new members joined the Network as a consequence of that conference which is gratifying. The AEHS has also embraced Zoom to enable speakers to address meetings and also to enable members unable to attend meetings to participate. Other Networks reach members through their online presence via websites or social media including Facebook pages. Some Networks still produce newsletters for their members and so the initiatives undertaken and the resources developed have been well-documented over many years.

The WVAHS has produced almost 250 issues of its newsletter over 62 years; what an extraordinary repository of local history for the western half of Victoria this has become! While the fifty member groups come from areas very different in terms of geography, the newsletter enables people in the Wimmera and Mallee to be kept informed of what groups in, say, the Otways or the Central Highlands are achieving. Increasingly, the newsletter has become a platform and arena for groups to promote their activities and publications but also to share their expertise in key undertakings such as collection management, funding opportunities and grant submissions.

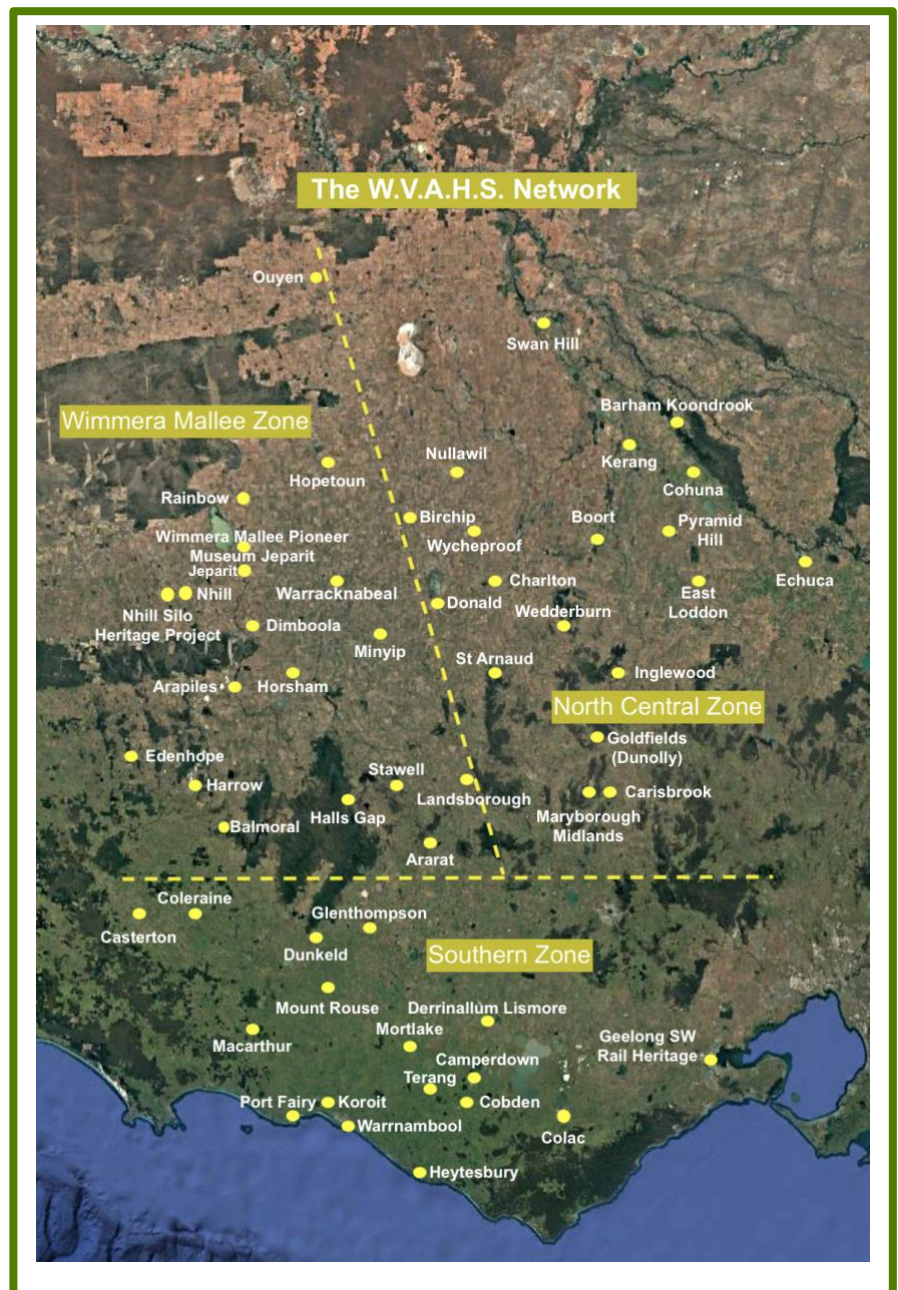
The Association of Eastern Historical Societies makes available through its Facebook page some of its member groups' newsletters, reflecting a twenty-first century way of communicating, sharing and 'doing things'. The South Eastern Historical Association Inc. posts on its website not only its newsletters but other information relating to heritage preservation including Council

reports and an array of other reports on heritage workshops such as textiles conservation. The Mornington Peninsula Local History Network, with twenty-four members, offers an online bookshop of publications by its members while the Western Metro Historical Societies Network deploys its Facebook page to showcase an array of the western metropolitan area's heritage, events, historic photos and other information for its members. Utilising online platforms is an obvious way of Networks contributing to a digital archive. The breadth of content available on these platforms is, quite simply, astounding.

Of course not all Historical Societies and Museums or family history groups are members of Networks or Associations. There are many reasons for this including dwindling memberships and resources. Some groups have let their memberships wane while some have rejoined after a hiatus. The leadership of a Network needs to actively encourage lapsed members to rejoin – much is happening in the constantly-evolving heritage space from which they can benefit – but also to approach recently-formed Societies or groups to consider joining the Network. This becomes a marketing strategy, the success of which comes down to the extent to which the Network can 'sell' membership as worthwhile.

Hopefully we all appreciate that each Historical Society – or similar heritage body – can learn from others. It is desirable, however, that Networks themselves learn from what other Networks have achieved and are continuing to achieve. We can only hope that Networks and Associations continue to 'strive and thrive' but also that the lines of communication between these bodies might develop further as all have much to offer and to share. *How?* is the question.

Craige Proctor
Chair, HSSC
President, WVAHS



RHSV regional events in September & October

The RHSV's Historical Societies Support Committee has been working with two Historical Societies which will be hosting Weekend Seminar events in September and October.

Bendigo Historical Society will be staging its event on the weekend of **6-7 September** at the Hotel Shamrock, Bendigo. The theme for the program is '**Making ourselves useful – historical societies in the community**'. This event may be of special interest to some of our North Central Zone members.

Port Fairy Historical Society (Port Fairy Museum and Archives) will be hosting its event '**Preserving and presenting our Stories**' on the weekend of **18-19 October**. The seminar program on the Sunday will be held at the Port Fairy Community House. Hopefully quite a few of our Southern Zone member groups will be interested in attending this exciting event.

[Program and booking details for Bendigo event](#)

[Program and booking details for Port Fairy event](#)

Around the Groups

Pyrenees Rail Heritage Signage Launch, Sunday 25th May

The launch of the Rail Heritage Signage Project and the unveiling of the sign outside Crowlands Hall took place on a pleasant Sunday afternoon on 25th May. In attendance was Martha Haylett, MP for Ripon and Megan Phelan, Councillor for De Cameron Ward, Pyrenees Shire who helped unveil the sign. We retreated to the Crowlands Hall for some light refreshments and thank everyone who made the effort to attend on the day. Both Martha and Megan took time to chat to many of the locals after the launch and we really appreciated their presence.

We had visitors from all parts of the Shire and beyond including Avoca, Moonambel, Ararat, Stawell and Horsham. A special thanks to Corrine Gibson who opened and organised the hall for us as well as providing some refreshments - she did a wonderful job - and to Peter O'Rourke who provided more of the refreshments. The support of many people who helped see the project through to completion was noted during Brett's introduction. The co-operation of the three Councils, a grant from Pacific Blue, a further grant from the Pyrenees Council and the wonderful work of Daryl Leslie, with help from both his son and granddaughter in erecting the signs and installing the pamphlet holders, has seen the project finally completed. It is now ready for visitors and tourists alike to take in a bit of local history of the area, in particular the railways which once served the district. We were also grateful for the attendance of Helen Curkpatrick, secretary of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies, who came with a small group from the wonderful Stawell Historical Society. We sold a number of books and it was a rewarding and very successful day with plenty of photos to record the occasion.

The community spirit for which the Landsborough area is so renowned was on full display with the ladies from Landsborough helping with both the refreshments and packing up – thank you to Pam, Connie, Kaye and Wilma for your great organisational skills. And for coming of course.

The successful *Lost Railway Stations of The Pyrenees* book which inspired the signage project is still available for \$45.00 plus postage from the Landsborough Historical Group and can also be purchased at the Avoca Information Centre and Landsborough Post Office, although copies are depleting fast. A 16-page booklet has also been printed which acts as a full guide to the Heritage Trail and is available free of charge from the Information Centres in Beaufort, Avoca, Stawell, Ararat, St Arnaud and Horsham as well as the post offices in Amphitheatre, Elmhurst, Landsborough and the shop at Navarre. We are confident that the project will see an increase in visitors to the Pyrenees region to explore a fascinating and little-known small piece of district History.

Brett, Diane, Jim, Wilma and Kaye from the Landsborough
& District Historical Group



Top: the unveiling
Centre: Megan Phelan, Brett Leslie, Martha Haylett MP
and Diane Western with the Railway book.
Below: Rail Trail opening supporters



Koroit and District Historical Society

Over the past few months it has generally been business as usual at the KDHS with family history research keeping us busy along with the increasing demand from new property owners seeking information about the home they have purchased. We have also managed to get out and about on a couple of occasions. In June we visited Mt Rouse Historical Society and the Volcano Centre at Penshurst. All very interesting and good viewing. We also visited the Library in Warrnambool and viewed their preservation room as well as their history and maps collection area.

Our Good News Story

Recently we were very excited when we were notified that the Koroit and District Historical Society had received a PROV Local History Grant to the value of \$5,149.76 for the project *Preserving History-Digitising Early Newspapers*. In our application we indicated we wished to digitise the Koroit newspapers from the 1870s and 1880s and make them available on Trove.

It is our plan to include in the project the digitisation of the *Koroit Herald* from 1887-1879 and 1885-1886 and the *Koroit Herald & Tower Hill Advertiser* from 1880-1885.

Koroit and District Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Local History Grants Program and Public Record Office Victoria, supported by the Victorian Government.

Margaret Trotter, President



Carisbrook Historical Society

Veterans Affairs Grant

Our Society was fortunate to be awarded a \$4,000 grant to design and erect signage at Majorca War memorial in Victoria Gardens at the entrance to the settlement.

The design will incorporate extensive details about each of the soldiers commemorated on the memorial. This information provides details of the soldiers' backgrounds, their war service, deaths, burials and awards. Where we have a photo of the soldier that will also be added. On the reverse of the signage there is a brief history of the four public reserves in Majorca, a brief overview of the unveiling of the memorial and the avenue of honour. Our plan is to unveil the signage at the Remembrance Day 2025 with a government representative doing the honours and the local community invited to attend to mark the event.

FAHS Newsletter

The Federation of Historical Societies is the national peak body representing the interests of about 1,000 historical societies and about 100,000 members throughout Australia. Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM FHRV is President of FAHS and your *Western Historian* Newsletter Editor also produces the FAHS newsletter – four issues annually – which anyone can sign up to receive free of cost.

[FAHS website](http://www.fahs.org.au)

Cobden and District Historical Society

Corangamite Shire Grant

We had what we thought were some old medals sitting in a drawer on a piece of cardboard mouldering their life away. We asked Kim at Corangamite Picture Framing what we could do to make them presentable. Kim did some research on them and found our medals were military Hat Pins. After many suggestions we applied to Corangamite Shire for a grant to frame them so we could showcase them in our Anzac display. They took pride of place on the table in the centre of the window. They are now hanging on our wall for all to see. We thank Corangamite Shire for the generous grant.

Below: Colin Kerr with the framed military hat pins.



Charlton Golden Grains Museum

Nostalgia and Fun at Childhood Treasures Day Charlton's Uniting Church Hall comes alive with vintage toys and childhood memories

The Charlton Golden Grains Museum hosted a heartwarming trip down memory lane on Thursday 10th July with its Childhood Treasures and Collectables Day.

Held at the Uniting Church Hall, the event drew a steady stream of visitors eager to explore an eclectic display of toys from yesteryear, unique collectables and handcrafted models. Among the crowd favourites were antique dolls, vintage games, swap cards, children's books and the ever-popular Thomas the Tank Engine trainset which proved a major hit with younger visitors.

A Lego play area and kids' activities run by the local youth group ensured there was something for all ages to enjoy.

The display featured items from both the museum's own collection and treasured possessions generously loaned by members of the local community. A special highlight was a selection of radio-controlled planes and a stunning collection of handmade ships crafted by the late Laurie Harvie.

Despite the chilly winter weather, the atmosphere inside the hall was warm and welcoming. Guests enjoyed cups of tea, homemade biscuits and a sausage sizzle, making it a perfect midweek outing for families during the school holidays.

Museum President Diane Wood said the day exceeded expectations. "It was lots of fun putting the displays together," she said. "The local community has been very generous in loaning us their treasured possessions for the day — and in some cases, they're even donating them to the museum. This was a great opportunity to take our Museum to the people and offer a fun, affordable activity for families during the holidays."

The success of the day is a testament to the community's support and the enduring charm of childhood memories, both old and new.

Carolyn Olive



Macarthur and District Historical Society

As we approach our annual AGM this month, I am hoping that one of our six new volunteers can take over as Secretary. Our Society needs to transition to the next generation.



Our strategy was to make a leaflet asking for volunteers.

We partnered with the Men's Shed which distributed our A5 flyer to 180 homes in the district. Each year the Men's Shed delivers the green FOGO compost liner bags to homes in Moyne Shire. The six interested people have formed a Volunteers Pool, working on projects such as oral history, recording Macarthur residents at Coleraine Aged Care, Museum presentation and curation, cataloguing new donations, the annual Health Newsletter collation and working bees.

Our Open Day received visitors from Hamilton and Warrnambool via Queensland. Visitors were able to see the new donations of jockey racing silks – the “all-white” colours of the Macarthur Racing Club and a 1950s wedding dress and shoes. We welcomed the Primary School children who enjoyed both being locked up in the jail and treasure hunting in the Museum. The Outreach visit engaged in a lively mock trial.

There are enquiries on family history and new residents' houses. We are fortunate to have the services of a local historian, Bev Ross, who can generally answer the curly questions on genealogy. Our updated databases provide a fast turnaround for biographical and cemetery details as well as the township's social and school photos. From the archives I was able to curate an exhibition of Church history for the 150th Presbyterian/Uniting Church celebration.

My intention to visit other historical societies has been through donating relevant items from the collection. A maritime map went to Portland Club, History House in Portland received a 1934 Centenary lift out from *The Weekly Times*, as did Winchelsea, Wangaratta and Corowa Societies.

Our end of year trip will be to Dunmore Station. While the original 1844 homestead, painted by Eugene Von Guerard, no longer exists, the property contains the National Trust listed 1866 Turkish Baths, one of only two in Australia.

A big thanks to Port Fairy community branch of Bendigo Bank whose community grant allows us internet access and free Public WiFi at the picnic table.

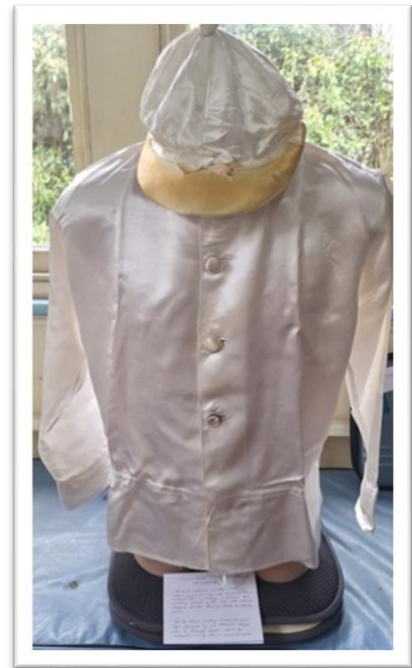
We have produced canvas tote bags which are available from our website shop and for purchase at Port Fairy Info Centre.

Contact us via email 3286mdhs@gmail.com

Wendy Black, President

Macarthur Museum
MACARTHUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



Ararat and District Historical Society

"Linking Our Future and Our Past" Schools Project

It's a common saying that children are our future, and this has well and truly been taken on board by the committee at Langi Morgala Museum.

The Museum was successful in its application for an Ararat Rural City Community Grant to engage with the 11 primary and secondary schools in the rural city to enhance the students' knowledge of local history.

More specifically, the aim is that the youth in our community will not only benefit from better knowledge of the history of Ararat but will also experience more pride in the local area and consider remaining in the Ararat district to pursue study or work after secondary school.

An increased awareness of Ararat's past will also assist new arrivals to understand and identify with their adopted community.

For more information or to make a booking for a schools tour at the Museum email langimorgala7@gmail.com

The Museum is open Tuesday and Thursday 10am to 3pm, and Saturday 1pm to 4pm.

Debbie Verdon

Langi Morgala Museum

is proud to announce the launch of its
Schools Engagement Project
"Linking Our Future and Our Past"
(Aimed at students from Year 5 to Year 12)

What do you know about your past?
How much do you really know about the area you live in?
The amazing people, the incredible stories, the natural and built environment – all that and more is found right in your own backyard.



The Museum is now home to Whirley Wilson's iconic
"Southern Cloud". Come in and see this amazing vehicle for yourself.

Langi Morgala Museum - 48 Queen Street, Ararat
Open Tuesday and Thursday 10am to 3pm
Saturday 1pm to 4pm.
Or at other times by arrangement.

To find out more email langimorgala7@gmail.com or find us on Facebook.

Langi Morgala Museum is an Ararat Rural City Council asset run by
Ararat and District Historical Society.
"Linking Our Future and Our Past" is funded by an Ararat Rural City Council
Community Grant.

Names of Member Groups' Newsletters

While most of our Member Groups which produce a newsletter call it 'Newsletter', some have somewhat more creative names.

**HORSHAM
HISTORIAN**

CAMPERDOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
CAMPERDOWNHISTORY.ORG.AU

PAST MATTERS

Mallee Roots

Swan Hill

THE LANDSBOROUGH TIMES

Tailings

Goldfields (Dunolly)

WARUNDA REVIEW

Warracknabeal

IN TOUCH

Echuca

Diggings

Maryborough Midlands



Carisbrook

PORT FAIRY POST

DIGGING UP THE PAST

Stawell

Nullawil Historical Society

Room of Remembrance Mural

The image displayed on the wall was created over approximately two years, progressing through multiple stages and beginning with an initial sketch contributed by one of the members. The majority expressed a preference for representing all branches of the armed forces – land, sea and air – which informed the development of a comprehensive illustration. This concept was subsequently refined by our artists to produce the final design.

An initial digital rendering was presented to the group, allowing collective input in shaping the image. Symbolic elements such as the rising sun and birds signify hope while the numerous poppies and crosses commemorate the significant loss of life experienced during the war. Additionally, a hospital ship was featured on a side wall. Following consensus regarding the content, the artist projected the image onto the wall to provide a clear representation of the envisioned work. The project underwent several adjustments throughout its progression.

Extensive research was undertaken by the artist to ensure historical accuracy in depicting the period and events of the war, demonstrating considerable sensitivity and commitment to the integrity of our project. Periodic building repairs were necessary to prepare the wall surface appropriately. Once our Historical Society members were satisfied, painting commenced. This work was conducted at night, utilising a projection of the image onto the wall as a guide during the painting process.

We are extremely grateful to the artists for their willingness to work with us and we appreciate their efforts. We now have this wonderful mural on the wall.

Kaylene James



Nhill

Members of the Nhill and District Historical Society at their AGM on 27 July.

From left: Joan Bennett, outgoing President Helen Woodhouse-Herrick, David Brown, Secretary Colleen Forbes, incoming President Don Keam, Yvonne Gladdis and Irene Colbert.

Photo courtesy of Helen Woodhouse-Herrick.



Colac

I was very pleased to attend the Colac and District Historical Society's AGM on 30 July and also be guest speaker for the evening, presenting on the evolution of the Australian accent.

After twelve years as President, Robert Missen has relinquished the reins and Paul Constantinidis has assumed the role. Well done Robert on leading C&DHS during the past twelve years.

Craige

Central Highlands Historical Association Workshop

I was privileged to be invited to attend and be one of the presenters at the Central Highlands Historical Association's **Preserve, Support, Connect** Workshop for its member groups at Buninyong on 9 August.

The CHHA, formed in 1984, has some thirty member groups in the Ballarat-Daylesford-Goldfields and southern parts of Victoria. The groups comprise historical societies, special interest heritage groups and family history organisations.

The day offered attendees four presentations. Clare Gervasoni, Director of Ballarat Heritage Services, reflected on the past thirty years of the CHHA but also offered sound advice for dealing with challenges faced by societies today. Graham Goulding of Moe Historical Society travelled from Gippsland to present on successful strategies for applying for grants. Textile Conservator Larry Edwards gave a highly engaging presentation on the storage and preservation of fabric items from which we all learned a good deal. I presented on the role of newsletters for historical societies in the age of social media. The program concluded with a forum discussion, always a worthwhile finale to such events.



This was the first time the CHHA had attempted to stage such a program and I, for one, was inspired even more to encourage the WVAHS to consider staging a conference-type event, possibly in 2026. Hopefully the lines of communication between our two associations will continue into the future. Many thanks to CHHA President Barry Files of the Daylesford Historical Society for inviting me to attend and participate.

Craig Proctor



[CHHA Inc. website](#)

[CHHA Inc. Facebook page](#)

The venue for the Workshop was the delightful and beautifully-maintained Buninyong Town Hall, dating from 1886.



TOTTINGTON STATION

Lawrence Rostron was born on 21st March 1800 in Manchester, England. His father John owned a cotton mill and the business had been very successful with rapid expansion and large warehouses erected with ships operating enabling trade between South America and England. John Rostron established a shipping office in Rio De Janeiro and in 1822 sent his son Lawrence off to co-manage the South American business and join his older brother Richard. This family decision appeared to be prompted by a relationship Lawrence had previously had in 1821 with a young cotton mill worker, Alice Pickup, who was expecting his child, young Elizabeth being born in 1822 after Lawrence had departed. In 1827 he returned from Brazil for a visit to the mother country and any thought the family had that he would cool his affection for Alice was quickly dispelled when he married her and whisked her back to Rio De Janeiro with their young daughter. Their next child, John Reid Rostron, was born in 1833 followed by William in 1835.

Meanwhile, Lawrence was pursuing many business interests and, besides managing the South American trade for which he received a handsome salary, he was also engaged in trading on his own behalf and made a private fortune of over £40,000. In 1838 Rostron made the decision to return to England. A daughter Mary was born in 1838 and they settled into a new home in Holcombe with twins Eliza and James being born in 1840 although James died at 8 weeks of age. Lawrence's decision to turn to a pastoral career seems to have been prompted by the family's ongoing disapproval of his marriage as they considered that he had "disgraced them". Parental disapproval affected him little though and, given the news that came from Australia that vast sheep runs could be obtained for little outlay and the prospect of bountiful returns, Lawrence decided that colonial life offered a better future for him and his family.

When Lawrence left England on the *Two Sisters* in October 1841 he was well-equipped for his future pastoral career. On board were his wife, family and two experienced Lancashire sheep men, Daniel and Joel Pennington, along with forty thousand gold sovereigns. The locality of Joel was named after Joel Pennington who passed through the area while herding sheep from Warrnambool up to *Tottington*. Lawrence Rostron initially took up Holcombe run near Daylesford but found this too small and in late 1843 made an expedition to the Northern Pyrenees where he took up 160,000 acres on the Avon River which he named *Tottington* after his village in England. In 1844 the station was established and flocks of sheep moved up with Rostron's diary notes including the progress of the construction of the river red gum woolshed which was finished in time for the first shearing on 16th October 1845. Soon afterwards the building was extended with a lower ridgeline. Rostron did not live on the property but had Daniel and Joel Pennington manage *Tottington* on his behalf along with the neighbouring run *Ramsbottom* with a combined

holding of 164,000 acres. The original run stretched far south, incorporating what is now the localities of Rostron, Paradise and all the way down to Navarre. By the late 1840s construction had begun on the stone cottage along with the stone and brick homestead, and the works were completed by 1852. The run was then managed by Lawrence Rostron's son John Reid Rostron and the 640 acres pre-emptive right of the section of the *Ramsbottom Run* was purchased in 1857 and in 1861 John purchased *Tottington*. The sheep station and estate then contained 60,000 acres and was known as Sandy Creek with the boundaries then being Barkly, Marnoo, St Arnaud and Stuart Mill. Early settlers in the Sandy Creek area included the Dale, Fulton, McDonald, Wingfield, Benson, McGowan, Kennedy, Locheed, Haynes and McErlain families.

Lawrence Rostron spent time in England and Melbourne before the passing of his wife Alice in 1872, aged 71. He then married Annie Honora O'Leary in 1874 at Richmond prior to his passing on 16th July 1877 at the age of 77. He was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery with his first wife but sadly there is no headstone or memorial to mark the site or memory of one of the district's earliest settlers.



Lawrence and
Alice Rostron





Rostron grave
site,
Melbourne
General
Cemetery

THE HOMESTEAD AND WOOLSHED

The woolshed was completed in late 1845 and is of slab construction. It received National Trust Classification, along with the stone cottage and main Homestead, in late 1980. It is regarded as a rare and splendid example of wood construction in the typical bush manner and has remained largely unaltered over the years. Its ongoing use as a shearing shed is a tribute to the carpenters responsible for its erection. What is believed to be the original homestead was a small stone cottage erected by Lawrence Rostron in the late 1840s and over the years has been used mostly as a shearer's quarters. The larger homestead also consisted of hand-made bricks and was erected in the early 1850s, and was gradually built up over the years to a U-Shape with its two front wings enclosing a courtyard garden. The centre wing opened up into the old ballroom, a relic of the days when station hospitality was lavish and leisurely. The large stables, a blacksmith's shop, a schoolroom and other buildings were also all made of solid brick which, like the homestead, were burned on the property. The large garden surrounding the house is bounded on one side by a creek featuring many old beautiful redgums and was carefully tended by many generations over the years. The original stone shepherd's cottage, also used by Rostron's Lancashire shepherd Joel Pennington, survived although many employees' cottages built along the banks of the river for the families who worked the large estate were lost due to flooding after nearby hills had been cleared of timber. *Tottington* was sold out in 1866 when Lawrence Rostron concentrated on his racing stud and other interests while residing in Melbourne. His son John Reid Rostron (also known as the "Squatter of Bolangum" from 1866 until 1869) purchased many township allotments in Navarre and St Arnaud and built the Tottington Inn in St Arnaud in 1859. This Inn was sold in 1864 to George Denny Edwards and became known as the "Farmers Arms" – with the present brick building erected on the site in 1900. The small township of Paradise, named by Joel Pennington and originally part of the Tottington Pastoral Run, has seen the settlement of many pioneering district families, and a school was also operated between 1892 and 1946 along with a post office (until 1960) and telephone exchange (until 1973), a timber mill (Dowsley's) and finally the present hall which was built in 1960.

Alluvial gold was discovered near *Tottington Station* in 1856, a few miles from the homestead, and caused a small rush known as the "Rostron" Diggings in 1861. Rostron State School opened in 1879 and was originally known as Sandy Creek until 1913, when it was renamed "Rostron" after John Reid Rostron. Although at one time it reached 45 pupils, attendances declined until it closed in 1937 due to a lack of pupils. The nearby locality of Beazley's Bridge was named after another of Tottington's shepherds, Robert Beazley, who also built the first landmark in Navarre, the Navarre Inn back in 1848 along a stock route leading southwards from Tottington.

LATER OWNERS

In the early days of district settlement, many pioneering families were employed on the *Tottington Run*. In 1855 the Martin family of Navarre resided near Beazley's Bridge on the original estate before taking up land in Navarre in 1862. Tottington employed many staff and later on some children and grandchildren of the Martins, also linked to the Bennett, Coates and Pritchard families, continued to work on the station. Other district families including the Paulden and Pegler families, plus those of George Simpson and James Maxwell, were also employed on the estate when it was at its peak.

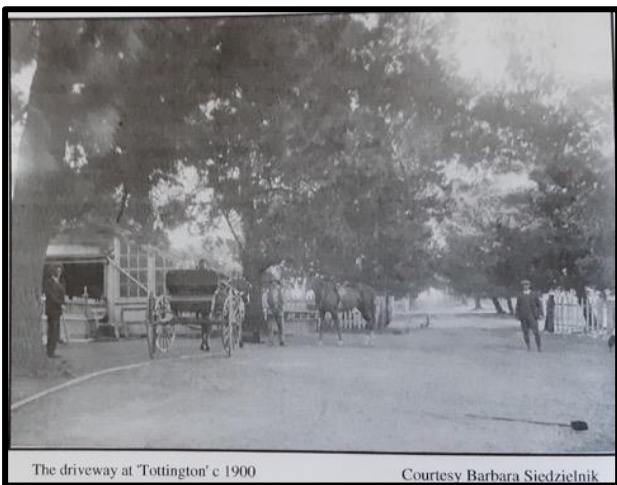
In 1866 *Tottington* was sold to a consortium of Grice, Benn and Sumner, who then sold it to Andrew Anderson and the Count De Castelnau in 1873. Anderson had previously managed neighbouring *Wallaloo* and *Bolangum* stations and provided the management of the estate with the Count providing the capital. In 1876 Andrew was shown as the owner of *Tottington* and *Ramsbottom* with a freehold of 1,280 acres. A bedroom wing extension of the homestead which formed a courtyard, along with the infilling which led to the establishment of the ballroom, took place during Anderson's occupation during the 1870s and 1880s. Andrew was also a Member of Parliament and Chairman of the 1890s Royal Commission into the Water Supply of Victoria and continued with the sheep breeding tradition that *Tottington* was renowned for, also establishing vineyards at the site. He died at *Tottington* in poor financial circumstances in 1897 and was buried in the private graveyard which the family also established not far from the small stone shepherd's cottage. Besides the unfortunate accidental deaths marked by headstones in the private cemetery, the suicide of 65-year-old Joshua Jackson took place in 1868 at Beazley's hut. He had been employed at *Tottington* station for twenty years and his death was witnessed by James Grice, the owner, and William Doyle the boundary rider, on the station. Joshua was buried in an unmarked grave in the St Arnaud cemetery.

Sadly, after Andrew Anderson's passing his wife Ada and large family realised that he had lost heavily in the land boom and subsequent economic depression so the property came under the control of the Union Bank until 1907 when it was run by his son Harry. After being sold to the Edwards family from St Arnaud and the vines were pulled out after their arrival. The historic woolshed continued to be used with only minor changes including a change to machine shearing and although plans to demolish the building and

erect a new shed in the early 1950s were made, in 1953 Percival Edwards died and *Tottington* was sold to the Small family from Birchip. The woolshed survived and, after an amazing 180 continuous years of use, is still standing today. Burials in the small private cemetery had ceased by law but headstones and memorials were added in later years for family members who were cremated. *Tottington* remains in the hands of the family today, with Bryan and Rosalind Small inheriting the property from Bryan's father Allan Small in 1976, succeeded by Bryan's son Tom and wife Jenni who still run the estate for wool production and cropping. Allan died in 1981 at *Tottington* with wife Mabel dying the following year and they are buried at Gray's Bridge Cemetery near Marnoo. Bryan, a Shire Councillor and former Northern Grampians Shire Mayor, passed away

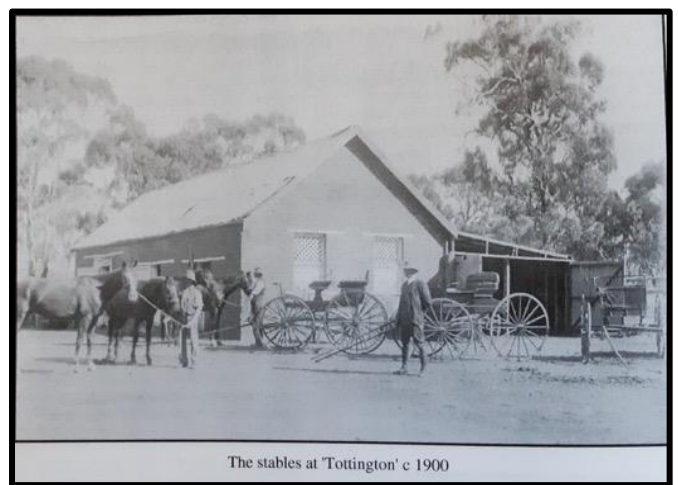
in 2014 and a memorial has also been added to the small cemetery on site along with those of his father and mother-in-law John and Mary Urie. His wife Rosee still resides on the estate with son Tom, Jenni and his family in the main homestead.

Tottington retains its title as "A location of Historical Significance" in heritage studies conducted on behalf of the local council in more recent years. Back in 1985 the shearing team created a setting for Tom Roberts painting "Shearing The Rams" for the ABC TV series "One Summer Again" which included a double-page centre spread in Melbourne's *Sun News Pictorial*. The historic woolshed has also been used as a set for a series of television commercials commissioned by the Australian Tourist Commission aimed at attracting European tourists.



The driveway at 'Tottington' c 1900

Courtesy Barbara Siedzielnik



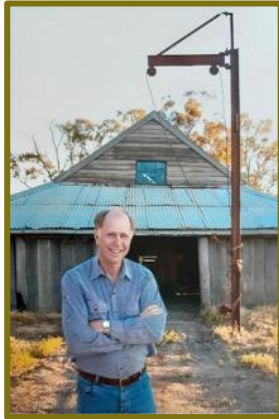
The stables at 'Tottington' c 1900



Top: *Tottington* driveway and stables, 1900.

Centre: The main homestead in later years.

Left centre: Stone-built shepherd's cottage.



Above: The woolshed and the blacksmith's shed.

Left: The late Bryan Small outside the woolshed.

Right: Tom and Jenni Small in 2025.



TOTTINGTON PRIVATE CEMETERY

This was established as a private cemetery by the Anderson family after their takeover of the estate in 1873 although some burials did take place in unmarked graves in earlier times. The list of known interments and memorials include:

Andrew Anderson b. 16.11.1838 d. 10.04.1897. Born Glasgow, Scotland. Died *Tottington*. Owner of *Tottington Station*. Headstone erected along with his grandson Neil Watson Anderson.

George William Anderson b. 06.07.1862 d. 25.03.1881. Son of Andrew and Ada. George and his brother were driving cattle and during a thunderstorm they sheltered under a tree. The cattle broke and the boys galloped after them, their horses colliding head-on resulting in the death of George at 18 years of age.

Harold Andrew Anderson b. 30.10.1903 d. 01.04.1988. Son of Harry and Margaret, grandson of Andrew.

Marcus Thomas Anderson b. 1873 d. 01.03.1878. 4 years old, son of Thomas Anderson and Rose Bertha Watson. Unmarked grave.

Neil Watson Anderson b. 1896 d. 1977. Son of David and Jane, grandson of Andrew.

Unknown Bennett (Infant) – Henry or Thomas. Son of Henry Bennett and Abby Bennett née Martin who worked on *Tottington Station* (Henry was a boundary rider.)

Robert Coates b. 01.12.1869 d. 30.08.1872. Son of George and Christina. Born and died *Tottington Station*. Parents employed at Station. Unmarked grave. Memorial plaque added by family in later years.

Henry Peter Mallman b. 1830 d. 18.05.1878. Unmarked grave

Annie Pritchard b. 1871 d. 08.11.1892

Sarah Pritchard b. 1835 d. 08.11.1892. Sarah and daughter Annie were driving home in a double-seater buggy from a dance when they passed under a burning tree that fell and crushed them both on John Bull Road. Also killed was Frances King who was buried at St Arnaud.

George Bryan Small b. 26.10.1943 (Birchip) d. 22.12.2014. Owner of *Tottington Station*. Husband of Rosalind. Son of Allan and Mabel.

John Dunlop Urie b. 12.10.1915 d. 20.07.2001. Father of Rosalind.

Mary Taylor Urie b. 17.11.1917 d. 20.02.1997. Mother of Rosalind.

There are a total of five unmarked graves on site with not all currently identified.



The private Tottington Cemetery. Headstone for Sarah and Annie Pritchard, mother and daughter who were tragically killed in 1892 by a falling tree.



Article submitted by Brett Leslie, Landsborough and District Historical Group with thanks to Rosalind, Tom and Jenni Small and Frank Abruzzese. Information from the Small family and the Stawell and St Arnaud Historical Societies.

KERANG MUSEUM



HERITAGE WEEKEND

SATURDAY 6th & SUNDAY 7th SEPT 2025 9AM - 4PM

Admission Adults \$10, Children (school age) free.

DAIRY, BICYCLES AND BLACKSMITH DISPLAYS,
RESTORED & RUNNING ENGINES, MACHINERY, CARS,
TRUCKS, TRACTORS, HOMEWARES, CLOTHING,
MILITARY DISPLAY, HISTORIC VIDEO SCREENINGS ETC.

HISTORIC FASHION PARADE 2pm Sunday

See the progress of the Koondrook tram restoration

Guest appearances from Daniel Stubbs' model locomotive
and John Schultz's model 6" Burrell steam traction engine

FULL FOOD CATERING

17 Museum Drive Kerang

Enquiries: 0412487854



Oral History Victoria

For those who may not be aware, Oral History Victoria – a State member of Oral History Australia – is a body offering membership, resources and training for those of us seeking support with developing oral history projects. In addition to annual conferences in different parts of Australia, OHV offers shorter one-off online training sessions and discussion forums.

[Oral History Victoria website](https://www.oralhistoryvictoria.org.au/)

Submissions for the December issue of *Western Historian* should be submitted by mid-November.

Any items relating to your Society's activities, achievements, projects, historical articles, event and publication promotions or tributes to members are always welcome.

wahsinc@gmail.com

The March 2026 issue will be the 250th issue.

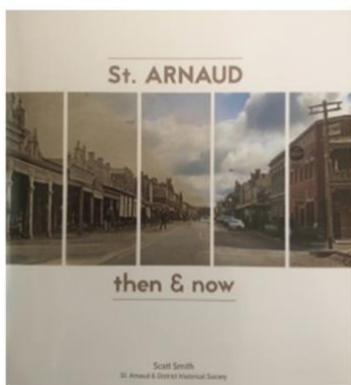
One of the more enjoyable aspects of being involved with W.V.A.H.S. is liaising with and meeting up with people in our group.

Recently our Secretary/Treasurer Helen, Steve Pentreath of Swan Hill and I travelled to St Arnaud to discuss the Society hosting our AGM in April 2026. Much genial discussion took place and we explored potential venues for the AGM and the dinner. The St Arnaud Town Hall is an ideal venue with the vast Stewart Hall and the smaller McDonald Hall, now operating as a cinema, providing all we would need and more.

Planning for our AGM in 2026



We also explored options for showcasing aspects of the district's history and sites including the increasingly-famous Pebble Church at Carapooee, a short drive from St Arnaud. While visiting the site we met with local artist Kyle Torney who has been commissioned to create a number of murals on otherwise unsightly water tanks near the church. Kyle has produced more than twenty murals around St Arnaud. The Pebble Church murals are nearing completion and will doubtless become talking points for visitors to the area. The plan is to include a visit to the church as part of our tour program for the AGM.



In 2024 the St Arnaud and District Historical Society published a wonderful pictorial record of St Arnaud, produced by talented member Scott Smith. This handsome volume provides old, more recent and current photos of the same sites around town.

St Arnaud then & now is available through the Society starnaudhistoricalsocietyinc@gmail.com



Top: Steve Pentreath, Helen Curkpatrick and Craig Proctor meet with Len and Bev Reid in St Arnaud's Stewart Hall.
Centre: McDonald Hall in the Town Hall and the Pebble Church at Carapooee.
Above: Artist Kyle Torney at work.
Left: The Society's Museum.