



## Issue 251

June 2026

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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.

### W.V.A.H.S. Executive Committee for 2026-2027

|                                                              |              |                                                                                      |
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Please email your report or any other contributions for publication as Word documents with images as jpgs to  
Craig Proctor, [wwahsinc@gmail.com](mailto:wwahsinc@gmail.com)

## Member Groups

at June 2026

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  
 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

This issue of *Western Historian* includes thirty-six reports from our member groups, most presented verbally at our AGM on 11 April. As always, these reports are a valuable record and excellent insight into all the efforts so many groups are making in many ways not only to preserve their district's history but, increasingly, to engage in new and significant ways with their communities. While reading all the reports is a big ask, I encourage you to read at least a few.

We thank and commend the members of the St Arnaud and District Historical Society for their tremendous efforts at hosting our AGM. The fact that we had around 65 people attend confirms Helen's and my 'hunch' that St Arnaud would be an excellent choice for the AGM. We weren't wrong! The feedback on the event has been very positive and encouraging. From a personal perspective, I was so happy that we all converged on a place of great significance to me, my father having been born there, my ancestors having settled there 160 years ago and with me having so many relatives still in the area. As a committee member of the Pebble Church Heritage Association, I know what a great place St Arnaud is and I know that many enjoyed visiting, especially those who had never been there before. With so many staying over for the Sunday tour, we also added significantly to the town's coffers! Thank you, St Arnaud and District Historical Society.

It was also testament to the work WVAHS is doing that all ten Executive members attended from various parts of western and southern Victoria despite the uncertainty around fuel supplies and prices. Your commitment is valued.

I hope you enjoy – and circulate – this issue of *Western Historian*.

**Craige Proctor**, Jeparit and Mortlake

## Spring Zone and Executive Meetings

### Wimmera Mallee Zone and Executive Meetings:

**Sunday 4 October**

**hosted by Nhill and District Historical Society at Nhill**

### Southern Zone Meeting:

**Sunday 11 October, 1 p.m.**

**hosted by Glenthompson Historical Group at  
Glenthompson**

### North Central Zone Meeting:

**Saturday 24 October, 1.30 p.m.,**

**hosted by Donald History Society at Donald**

Further details will be included in our September issue and communicated via email.



## 2026 AGM at St Arnaud

The weekend of 11-12 April saw the St Arnaud and District Historical Society host its 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting. More than 60 people representing 28 groups across the three Zones attended the meetings which was very gratifying given the uncertainty of the fuel situation. This was doubly gratifying given that a significant number of people stuck with their plans to spend two nights in local accommodation rather than to 'bow out'. Well done to everyone!

Member groups' representatives came from: St Arnaud; Ararat; Birchip; Camperdown; Carisbrook; Charlton; Colac; Dimboola; Donald; East Loddon (Mitiamo); Edenhope; Glenthompson; Goldfields (Dunolly); Horsham; Jeparit; Koroit; Landsborough; Minyip; Mortlake; Nhill; Nhill Silo; Nullawil; Ouyen; Port Fairy; Stawell; Swan Hill; Warrnambool; and the Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum. Clearly having St Arnaud as the host society enabled more groups to send delegates.

The venue for the meetings was the magnificent St Arnaud Town Hall. St Arnaud Historical Society pulled out all the stops to ensure all our needs were met in terms of facilities so thank you, St Arnaud. Everything – absolutely everything! – went according to plan.



St Arnaud and District Historical Society members Kaye Medlyn and John Dunstan showcasing some of the Society's offerings.

We were fortunate to have Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM FRHSV, President of the Federation of Historical Societies, attend both days. Rosalie encouraged all societies to consider becoming associate members of the FAHS and outlined some of the benefits of doing so. Rosalie also had the opportunity to renew acquaintances and to make new contacts from societies throughout 'the West'.



St Arnaud and District Historical Society President Len Reid starts the meeting which clearly excites Helen Curkpatrick.



## Election and resolutions

Daryl Meek, representing the Nhill Silo Heritage Project, presided over the election of office bearers. All Executive and committee members re-nominated for positions and so Helen Curpatrick continues in the role of our highly-esteemed Secretary/Treasurer while Yours Truly continues as President. A sincere thanks to all committee members for their willingness to re-nominate.

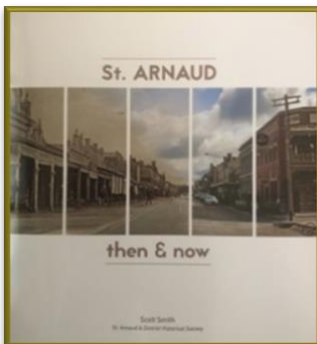
One of the principal resolutions from the Executive Meeting was that WVAHS will, for three years from the end of 2026, finance an award or prize of \$500 for a university student who has been studying a history-related subject. Carolyn Olive had been in discussion with Federation University about this proposal

and it was decided that offering a scholarship is more complex and challenging than offering an annual prize.

We also resolved to increase annual membership from \$35 to \$40 from March 2027, largely in light of increased insurance premiums. From 2027 WVAHS will provide a Society hosting the AGM with \$350 and a Society hosting a Zone Meeting with \$150.

## Value-adding

The St Arnaud Society opened its rooms following the meetings and prior to the dinner at the St Arnaud Trotting Complex which was attended by 44 people. Local historian and publisher Scott Smith who had, in 2025, produced the stunning coffee table book *St Arnaud: then and now*, was guest speaker, highlighting some of the challenges but also the rewards of researching and publishing a book. As always, the geniality and 'networking' at the dinner was a highlight of the weekend.



Left: Scott Smith's book.

Top and right: A varied meal was enjoyed on Saturday night.

Below: Visiting the Pebble Church at Carapooee.



Sunday morning saw 38 people board a coach for, first, an excursion to the Pebble Church at Carapooee where attendees learned the story behind this unique bush church which has stood since 1869. Yours Truly told the story behind the local community purchasing the church in 2020 while Kaye Medlyn gave an overview of the church's history and the story behind the newly-created 'Children of Carapooee' murals. Members of the Pebble Church Heritage Association Inc. committee greeted the visitors with Anzac biscuits and water while recorded hymns sung between the 1830s and 1870s played on an organ filled the air. The Pebble Church committee was amazed by the generous – very generous – 'gold coin donations' left by its WVAHS visitors!





The interior of the 1869 Pebble Church at Carapooee. <https://www.pebblechurch.com.au/>



After leaving the Pebble Church we were taken on a town tour by coach with a commentary on St Arnaud's key heritage sites by John Dunstan.

Following the tour attendees had the option of visiting Kooreh Memorial Hall, a few miles east of town, and to learn of its history as a monument to district enlistees during the Great War. Local Hall Committee members Tony and Jan Rinaldi, Margaret Proctor and Helen Rigby proudly showcased the Hall's archival material and outlined the painstaking restoration of the Hall following the devastating 2011 flood.

WVAHS thanks sincerely the St Arnaud and District Historical Society and its members for their sterling efforts to ensure this year's AGM was a truly valuable and memorable event for all those attending from far and wide.

Top and bottom left: Visiting the Kooreh Memorial Hall. Left and below: Listening to Kaye Medlyn of the St Arnaud and District Historical Society telling the story of the Pebble Church.



## WVAHS President's Report 2026



My year as President of the WVAHS has been both rewarding and enjoyable especially in regard to networking with member groups and individuals who steer those groups. It has been lovely to travel to Nhill, St Arnaud, Pyramid Hill, Colac, Port Fairy and Ouyen to meet with our fellow historians, all of whom are 'doing their bit'.

I acknowledge the Executive team for their support of WVAHS and for their willingness to travel well beyond their zones to attend meetings: Helen Curkpatrick; Brett Leslie of Landsborough and Stawell; Carolyn Olive from Charlton; Robin Parker from Carisbrook; Kate van Dyck from Stawell; Tracey Potatau-Wright from Glenthompson; Michael Menzies from Geelong; and recently joined members Colleen Forbes from Nhill and Robert McLaren from Mortlake. Special thanks to Carolyn Olive for once again administering our website; keeping up to date with changing member contact details is always challenging. Unfortunately very few people check our Facebook page but, then again, we tend not to post much on this platform.

I need not tell anyone here about the challenges confronting historical societies but these are impacting on metropolitan societies as well as rural groups: dwindling memberships; constantly making resources stretch; the grant writing treadmill; age; succession planning; and now the uncertain economic and fuel crises. For that reason alone I thank each of you for making the commitment not only to travel to St Arnaud but to fork out for accommodation and other expenses we in the volunteering game know only so well. More specifically the WVAHS will need to consider how best to enable members to come together; perhaps the traditional model of alternating between Zones for hosting AGMs and having two Zone meetings a year may have to be rethought. We are already considering enabling members to participate virtually.

But let me also focus on some of our successes. We still have 53 member groups – by far the largest of any network in the State. With the addition of Jeparit and Echuca Historical Societies as members, our geographical reach has actually expanded. Helen and I – but chiefly Helen – have spent some time recently approaching other non-member groups to consider joining or rejoining WVAHS. We invited several to our AGM today with 'no strings attached'.

I was also pleased to accept the Central Highland Historical Association's invitation to present at its inaugural conference at Buninyong in August. It was encouraging to know that there is potential for the two neighbouring associations to communicate and potentially collaborate in the future.

Also, being Chair of the RHSV HSSC has certainly provided WVAHS with a much greater profile than perhaps previously. I assure you that the RHSV and Councillors are only too well aware of the juggernaut that is the WVAHS, at least in terms of member groups and geographic spread. Our newsletter goes to quite a few others involved with the RHSV which late last year asked if I would travel to Pyramid Hill to present Helen Stevens with an Award of Merit on RHSV Council's behalf. This had not happened before. Our Spring 2025 Zone Meetings at Cobden, Jeparit and Pyramid Hill were all successful if we consider that across the three meetings around 100 managed to attend. It was also heartening that we could have the Jeparit Historical Society and the Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum at Jeparit combine forces to co-host the Wimmera Mallee meeting. Perhaps co-hosting will need to become one of our new ways of doing things?

Our March issue of *Western Historian* was our 250<sup>th</sup>. There have been twelve editors over sixty-three years. I only wish everyone could see the staggering volume of history relating to regional Victoria contained in these 250 issues. Continuing as the current editor has been the best way for me to be aware of what our members are doing and achieving and, while I do enjoy the process of putting together the newsletter, the December issue will be my twentieth and so we are looking for either a new editor or perhaps a group of co-editors to take over this important role from the end of this year.

Most of us are only too well aware of Helen's unwavering commitment to being our Secretary/Treasurer, an enormous job. Helen also proofs every single key stroke of our newsletter but, above all the clerical tasks Helen performs, her great strength is her knowledge of so many people in our many groups. On behalf of all of us, thank you Helen for your forensic oversight of all things WVAHS.

**Craig Proctor, Mortlake and Jeparit**

### Expression of Interest for the role of *Western Historian* Newsletter Editor

If there is someone in your organisation who may be interested in taking on the role of Newsletter Editor from January 2027 – or earlier – please let us know!

Perhaps this role could be shared between two or even three people across the WVAHS network?

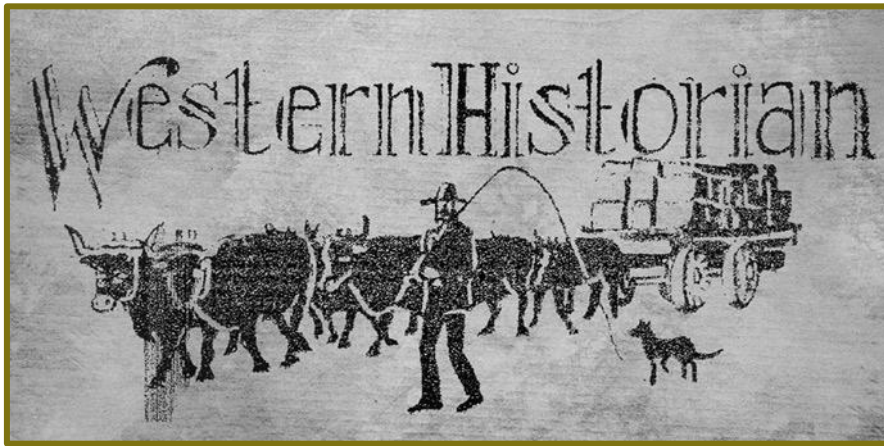
[wvahsinc@gmail.com](mailto:wvahsinc@gmail.com)



## Our WVAHS Logo

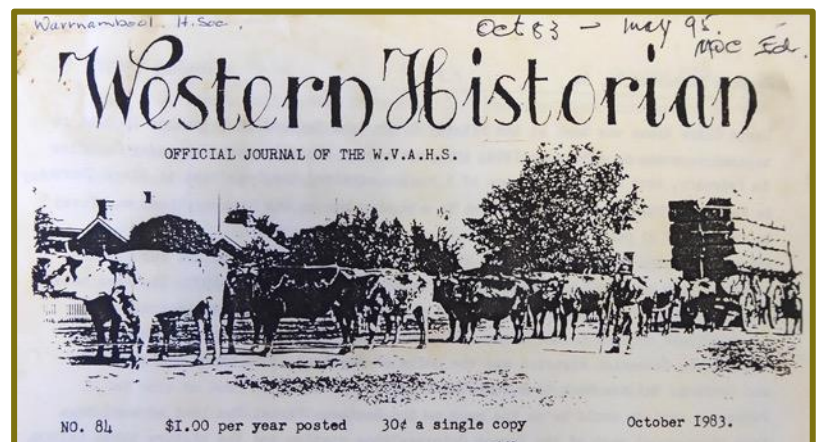


One of the discussion points at our AGM was our WVAHS logo and whether it might be time to retire it for a new, more contemporary design. The current logo first came into use in May 2010. While it has no doubt served its purpose, one element of the graphic needs revisiting as the shaded part of the state doesn't quite reflect the spread of our membership. These days it is relatively simple to generate extremely quickly a logo using AI or websites specifically for logo design; there is a bewildering array of such tools. Perhaps there is someone among our extensive membership who might offer some advice on us adopting a new, fresher-looking logo?



From 1963 until at least 1990 – but possibly well into the '90s – the masthead for *Western Historian* included a logo which was actually a sketch which went through a couple of iterations over the decades. This original design was created by Warrnambool and District Historical Society President and WVAHS President and Life Member Les O'Callaghan. The sketch was based on one of Les' ancestral photos of a bullock team pulling a loaded wagon.

Les O'Callaghan's ancestral photo which was the basis of the WVAHS logo for three decades.  
Courtesy Barbara McLeod.



Information kindly provided by Barbara McLeod of Warrnambool and District Historical Society:

Les was a highly regarded microbiologist who worked at the Kraft Cheese Factory at Allansford from the early 1930s until his retirement. Les was a keen historian and an amateur artist. The WVAHS logo with the bullock team and teamster is taken from a photograph of Les' grandfather (I think that's right) and used as the masthead for the WVAHS newsletter for many years.

# WVAHS

Western Victorian Association  
of Historical Societies Inc.

If anyone has ideas for a new WVAHS logo, we would be keen to have your thoughts and, even better, some samples!  
[wwahsinc@gmail.com](mailto:wwahsinc@gmail.com)

# WVAHS

Western Victorian Association  
of Historical Societies Inc.

## Member Reports

### Echuca Historical Society (NC)



Starting off the year strong, the Echuca Historical Society's '60 years of the Southern 80 Ski Race' exhibition has almost tripled our regular summer admission numbers with many locals and visitors coming through our doors.

Being a holiday destination, we are used to having most of our admissions being visitors to Echuca but it was very heartening to see so many locals making the effort. One of the most common remarks we receive from Echuca's citizenry is 'I've lived here for 20 years and didn't know you existed'. I am certain we are not the only historical society to hear this comment over the years but it definitely highlights the need for our existence and to have our face out in the community.

Over the years we have partnered with many local community groups to support their fundraising, research their history, write about it or advise them on how to protect their records and artefacts. 2026 will be no different as we connect with the Echuca Federal Band to help celebrate their centenary of bringing music to the masses. While not the first or oldest band to have existed in Echuca, they are the only one still around today. So, we are very busy planning an exhibition featuring the band while some of our other members are working on writing a book showcasing their history and achievements. This exhibition is set to open for the April school holidays.

Day to day operations consist of the usual: researching, tour-guiding, indexing, conservation and general maintenance to keep the exhibitions and building in first class shape. To accomplish the never-ending task of building preservation, we have applied for several local and federal grants to assist us in maintaining our National Trust listed building. This year we will be embarking on a full replacement of our front verandah floor. Over the decades it has held up well but, with regular visits from local spinning groups, who exhibit their craft on the verandah and the constant visitor traffic, it is certainly showing its age. We are hoping that it will be fully completed by the end of Autumn.

To end on some sad news, we lost our head researcher just after Christmas and, with her, a lifetime of knowledge of the local area. We often forget that our members are also fantastic sources of local interest, facts and tidbits and are ripe candidates for oral history interviews. Heather Rendle was an institution on the Murray River; her intimate knowledge of the area and her connections with every quarter of the community is something that will be extremely difficult to replace.

**Matthew Wilson, President**

### Rainbow Archive and Historical Society (WM)



We are continuing to sort and establish a usable filing system for the collections. We have procured surplus filing cabinets from the local P12 school and called out to the community for second hand suspension files. The response was amazing with donations of new and second hand files. These have enabled us to file collections into categories in 92 drawers. Yes, we've had to play Tetris but it's a much better system for us and community members to access.

We are actively sourcing grants for an archival quality storage system for our many years of the *Rainbow Argus* newspapers, dating from the late 1800s until now - a huge job.

Our displays are all getting a dust, clean and a refresh: RSL/War; Wedding Dresses; Local trader and War veteran Mr Jack Nulty; early Pella photographer and reproduction photo display, Paul Mackenzie; A&P Show; Miss Swallow, music teacher; Rainbow Telephone Exchange; a huge Rainbow School Display; Rainbow Band display; local Football display; Horse Racing; local Hotel display; and, right up the front, the Masonic Lodge display whose building we now occupy.

We are brainstorming open days in the future but we have to have the ol' girl in her party clothes before we do that; she wouldn't appreciate being shown in her apron!

So apart from the occasional research request and visitors, we rely on fundraiser raffles and donations. It's a hard slog to keep things keeping on.

Wishing you a good productive few days. Sorry Rainbow couldn't join you.

Regards,

**Jan Edelsten, President**  
**Allira Roberts, Secretary**  
**Ruth Gosling, Treasurer**



## Jeparit and District Historical Society (WM)



The past year has been one of consolidation and wholesale profile-building for JDHS.

Eighteen months ago we established our online presence via a Facebook page which has not only gained us 1,200 Followers - not just

locally but all over Australia - but has also been largely responsible for our membership increasing to 57, Jeparit's population being only around 380. The vast majority of our research queries come via our Facebook page.

Our online presence resulted in the *Rainbow-Jeparit Argus* reaching out to us for regular articles in the paper and, to date, around twelve items have been published, some relating to the Society while others focus on local historical topics. The published items are then shared via the Facebook page.

We now produce a 2-page newsletter for members, laminated copies of which are placed in the cabins at the caravan park and also at the local shop for the community to read.

We were successful in gaining a Squadron Energy grant to purchase a computer and printer which has been a boon to storing files, especially digitised photos.

We were very pleased to receive a generous donation from the Jeparit Angling Club to fund block out blinds in one of the rooms in the Memorial Hall and we are currently working on refurbishing this area as a display space.

We have also benefited greatly from local volunteers willing to build shelving, pull up old carpet and complete other important works.

In addition to an increased membership, we have been fortunate to receive generous financial donations not only from our members but also from community members which has been very gratifying.

We have continued to forge our relationship with the Robert Menzies Institute at the University of Melbourne and had an RMI professional historian visit us for four days to explore Jeparit and district prior to the Institute revamping its exhibition on Menzies and his family in Jeparit. We agreed to loan RMI several Menzies-related items for two years. We are very grateful for this relationship which clearly has two-way benefits.

We have also strengthened our relationships with district historical societies, especially Rainbow Archive and Historical Society and Nhill and District Historical Society, with some sharing of knowledge and collection items being greatly appreciated.

While Craig Proctor has been focussing on managing our social media presence, digitising a large number of photos, writing newspaper articles and our newsletter and generally networking with other bodies, members Gaye Golder and Debra Schumann have spent many hours over the past year doing the 'hard slog', sorting through the vast collection and organising it into manageable sections.

We were also fortunate to have Dr Rosalie Triolo meet with members of our group during her four days in Jeparit in January, Rosalie being able to see first-hand how much we have achieved since her last visit two years previously. Very graciously, Rosalie arranged for JDHS to be given a profile via the FAHS website, we having become an Associate Member. Thank you, Rosalie! (The FAHS badge at the head of this report is available to all Associate Members to put on their communications, websites etc.)

Currently we are testing the waters by opening each Friday afternoon and on special event days including Australia Day and ANZAC Day. While some days see no visitors, others see a few people come to inspect our collection but also to donate items for which we are grateful as this suggests people are happy to entrust long-held items to the Society.

**Wendy Zanker, President**



The Jeparit and District Historical Society occupies the upper floor of the Memorial Hall.



Find out more about becoming an associate member of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies Inc

<https://www.history.org.au/become-a-member>

## Ouyen District History & Genealogy Centre (WM)



Since the last report in September for the Wimmera Zone Meeting our well attended AGM was held in October. Craige Proctor was our guest and spoke on the topic 'Resilience and Renewal for Historical Societies'. A presentation was made to Merle Pole who is serving her 25<sup>th</sup> year as President. Amongst other Office bearers elected were Sue Willox (Secretary), Colin Willox (Treasurer) and Roy Jones (Vice President).

After a well-earned break over the Christmas holidays we reopened on the 6<sup>th</sup> February to find large donations of research, local history books, objects and photographs. This required much sorting and collation of information so it can now be readily sourced. The donated local history books, of which we have multiple copies, are resold. Currently there is a valuable range of now out of print local history books for sale.

Other donations include minute books from the Ouyen RSL 1921-1988. The earliest minute book has been carefully read and a summary made of office bearers, key events and items of interest. Amongst other donations of interest are copies of pupil registrations for Turriff and Tempy State Schools plus some items from Ouyen's Victoria Hotel including a 1924 Gramophone, a washing machine, vacuum cleaner and several old photographs of the Victoria Hotel.

The Underbool Swimming Pool Committee has asked for help with research into the beginnings of the pool which opened in February 1978. The Underbool Pool is about to undergo a major upgrade and the Committee is preparing a Renovation Celebration. The Ouyen Municipal Saleyard Committee have asked about the date of the opening and beginnings of the current saleyard. We have found the former Shire of Walpeup Minute Books to be a valuable source of information for these types of enquiries.

A successful Mildura Regional City Council Grant has enabled the purchase of a new desk top computer to upgrade our system so that volunteers can better access, research and reply to enquiries. This is up and running.

The Centre has assisted in providing information and photographs for the two Walpeup storyboards about the town's Silo Art and for town points of interest and local history. These storyboards are to be installed in the coming months.

Members have attended Mallee Heritage Network Meetings in Mildura. When unable to attend, a report has been sent. These meetings help to keep us informed of the activities and ideas from history groups to our north and within Mildura Rural City Council.

Alongside these activities volunteers are kept busy with constant ongoing research in answering email requests, mainly concerning family history. Some visitors come in person to make enquiries, one recently coming from as far as Queensland to access the valuable records held at the Centre. It is important that we remain open each Friday to assist visitors with enquiries and also keep up to date with office work, cataloguing filing and answering emails. When requested the Centre has opened on other days.

**Merle Pole, President**

## Edenhope and District Historical Society (WM)

Our AGM was held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The results of the election saw Geoff Langsworth being re-elected as President, Ashley Caldwell becoming the new Vice President, Marian McDonnell re-elected as Secretary and Jan Lampard re-elected as Treasurer.

Since the establishment of the Edenhope and District Historical Society Inc. in May 2007, our biggest problem has been the lack of a home. So we have explored many opportunities to try to establish a proper home to store our collections but this has proven to be difficult.

We are investigating the possibility of being able to use the storerooms at the Edenhope P & A Society Pavilion which are currently being used by the local football club for their changerooms. New clubrooms and facilities are being erected by the Football Netball Club and, once they are able to vacate the old change rooms, we are hopeful that we can at last be able to have a place to call our own.

**Geoff Langsworth, President**



### Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum, Jeparit (WM)



As with most museums, the Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum continues to face the usual challenges but this brief report will focus on some of our recent achievements.

In September, along with the Jeparit and District Historical Society, we co-hosted the Wimmera Mallee Zone Meeting in the Woorak West Church on site; it was a pleasure to have representatives from other Wimmera Mallee Zone groups attend, something new for our Museum.

As a Hindmarsh Shire Asset Committee, the Museum's Committee of Management undergoes a nomination process every two years. We have had new members join the Committee and they bring fresh perspectives and – even more importantly – different skill sets to our management group. After three years in the role, our Secretary relinquished that role in order to focus more on other Museum projects and we now have two recently-joined members sharing this role so we are in a transition phase. We are exploring new ways of fundraising and merchandising as well as networking. We have also initiated – or resurrected – the concept of Museum Membership and the initial response from the community has been encouraging. There is a general perception that we need to keep trying new approaches to ensure our viability and profile, not only locally but in the broader tourism landscape.

In the course of the year we registered our Detpa School building a National Museum of Education following the advice of Dr Rosalie Triolo who serves on the Board of the Australian National Museum of Education. Ours is only the fourth National School Museum in Victoria. We were grateful that Rosalie spent four days in January sorting through and providing information on the collection within the school, something we could not have done without her expertise and guidance. We are currently planning a centenary event of the school in June. We have also begun work on producing short videos about the school and the nature of education in rural communities which visitors will be able to access via QR codes to links on the Hindmarsh Shire website.

In collaboration with the Shire we allocated significant funds to engaging a professional historian to reimagine two of our buildings which required us to remove to storage a large number of items from the collection to create new display areas. One of our Halls has become a focus for telling the story of 'community' in the Wimmera Mallee while the other space has been overhauled and now focuses on telling the story 'A woman's world'. While this exercise proved challenging in terms of logistics and dismantling displays which had been in place for almost sixty years, it has spurred us on to continue the reimagining and renewal process.

Recently we had Marion Littlejohn - former Education Officer at Sovereign Hill - visit us to provide us with ideas for developing a more formal Education Program. Traditionally this has been fairly *ad hoc* but we are keen to constantly enhance the visitor experience through storytelling and activities, especially for younger people.

**Wendy Werner, President**

### Swan Hill Genealogical and Historical Society (NC)

Our group continues to be busy and involved both within the community and more widely. Research enquiries, both historical and for families, seem to be ever present with some involving known local families and others involving families who were in the area for short times or local events or buildings. At times these requests present challenges and occasionally we are faced with being unable to find anything relevant. We are beginning to grapple with the best ways of storing the vast amount of information that is generated from these enquiries. A similar question has been raised by some of our guest speakers who have asked for ideas about what to do with all the digitised information collected for occasions like centenaries.

Our recent speakers have showcased the community involvement of locals, the contribution made by some of our younger people in agriculture and told us about the centenaries of the Annuello township and the Beverford Primary School. All have been informative and, as usual, we have enjoyed supper afterwards.

Our digitisation of the Swan Hill Cemetery records is something that we are very proud of, consisting of the burial listings, headstone inscriptions, family relationships and photos, and of course is an ongoing project needing regular updating by our volunteers. Like most groups we continue to battle with the online indexing of our collections and new volunteers are always welcome for this task. The more we can index, the easier it is to find information when needed. We have also replaced our printer in the hope that the new model will be cheaper to run. At the AGM last year we instigated a new Certificate of Appreciation to be presented at the AGM each year (if appropriate) as a way of acknowledging the efforts of some of our longstanding members.

In May Steve Pentreath is leading a major venture as part of Law Week which will feature some of the legal people and cases in our area from the past, resulting in a two-week Folk Law Exhibition visual display in the Swan Hill Regional Library.

The work of our band of volunteers is varied and truly amazing.

**Leone Walbran, President**

### Birchip Historical Society (NC)



We have had lots of family research which included looking for suitable photos for the new Silo Art depicting Ray Neville (aged 15), the Birchip jockey who won the Melbourne

Cup on Rimfire in 1948. The museum also had visits from builders working on the old home built in approximately 1923 and renovated on the TV Show "Budget Battlers". Fortunately, the history of the house was found on a card from a CWA project many years ago when members had a project to call in to all houses for information from the owners or tenants.

Our archivist has spent a long time updating records onto our new computer but, of course, that has brought problems as the new computers don't have built-in CD players. Updating is difficult for DVDs and older records which we have.

Students from the P12 School worked with us at the museum to find information for historical stories for their annual magazine and that was most rewarding as those stories have been able to be shared afar.

We had one family visit from England with friends from Birchip researching family members who had worked on a farm here but left and went back to England after several years and another man researching his grandmother who lived at Morton Plains before the town of Birchip was settled in 1882. He was shocked to find she was the youngest of fifteen as the family had split up and the grandmother married and moved to Melbourne. I suspect that religious differences could have been the problem. The Cecil and Grogan family histories also brought visitors seeking information as well as the Rennick family whose grandfather was a Shire Secretary.

Barbara Kelly, noted historian, researched the Catholic Men's Organisations of the early days, in particular the Hibernians of Watchem, Birchip and Donald as well as the Holy Name Societies. She was also guest speaker at Donald Historical Society to which we were invited.

We are eagerly awaiting further news on the canonisation of Dr Sister Mary Glowrey who is in line to be our second Saint. Mary was born in Birregurra but spent several years of her school days at Watchem where her family lived in and ran the Watchem Hotel and then a small business. Mary's father and uncle had actually opened the first shop in Birchip after conducting a business at Corack. Watchem could be set for stardom with their beautiful community owned Church and pilgrimages.

We have had members involved throughout the Cumming Avenue streetscape and our 1982-installed (and then removed) Centenary clock has now been returned to a new position with new mechanism, across the road from its present site at the Shire Office front garden. The 1963/64 Pioneer fountain has also had a new pump, surroundings cleared and watering system installed with new plantings to happen too. Thanks to our two local Buloke Shire councillors who have been very proactive with our heritage quests.

Our member numbers continue to be small and getting older. We are very sorry to lose our local teacher Marian Haddrick – she has left the district – who brought students to our museum several times and was very interested in all our pioneers.

Our museum building has some repairs needed to the front wall and windows. The climate and constant vibration of massive trucks through the intersection on the corner are, we suspect, the problem. It is Shire-owned and they are repairing it at the moment.

Our archivist Elaine continues to trawl through the micro-film for news items from a century ago for the *Buloke Times* weekly feature.

**Maureen Donnellon, Secretary**



The North Central Zone meeting at our AGM.



## St Arnaud and District Historical Society (NC)



On behalf of the St Arnaud Historical Society, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the members of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies and first-time visitors to St Arnaud. We all hope that you enjoy your time in our town and get to experience some of the many places of interest.

Our museum was closed for approximately eighteen months due to an accident to the front wall and a demolished verandah. During this time we still managed to function with the doors closed, continued with family research, cataloguing and a book launch along with members meeting regularly.

We have finally finished the repairs to the front wall and the verandah which have taken many volunteer hours to complete and we are incredibly pleased with the outcome.

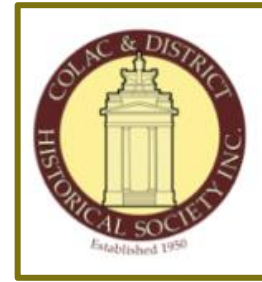
We recently retrieved several items that had been stored away from the museum and returned them for display in the Fire Station. These items were all manufactured at the G. & W. McGlashan Agricultural Machine Makers St Arnaud Foundry, founded in 1879 opposite the main gate into the St Arnaud Hospital. These items included a wagon, chaff cutter, winnower and a horse drawn hay mower. The Fire Station has had to be rearranged to accommodate these items.

We have just recently applied for a Tiny Towns grant from the State Government to get the original roof on the museum and the Fire Station replaced and plan to apply for available grants in the future to help us replace the original doors on the Fire Station. Our next project is to complete our display in the Frank Medlyn Display Centre and we hope to have it open very soon.

We hope you all enjoy your visit and can join us on our coach tour tomorrow to the Pebble Church and then a tour around St Arnaud.

**Len Reid, President**

## Colac and District Historical Society (S)



There has been considerable activity since CDHS provided its last update in April 2025.

- Long-standing President Robert Missen has stepped aside and continues to contribute as Vice President, assisting in the role of Research Practitioner. Paul Constantinidis (formerly President of the Brunswick Historical Society prior to relocating to Colac five years ago) has taken on the role of President and is committed to continuing the excellent work achieved by Robert and the team over the past 10–12 years.
- Roger Lawton and his team have commenced cataloguing and digitising our artefacts with the aim of eventually making them available online to ensure our history is preserved for future generations.
- Led by Alan Doyle, we are currently developing an updated version of our local walking tour handout.
- While the centre was closed over the holiday season, our district experienced both fires and floods, resulting in the postponement of our January meeting until February.
- It is encouraging to see the willingness of several volunteer members to contribute wherever they are able.
- Research enquiries continue and increased collaboration with our co-tenant, the Colac Family History Group, is delivering more comprehensive outcomes for both organisations.
- A highlight has been the high-quality window displays prepared by members of both groups, which are frequently commented on by visitors to COPACC.
- We are currently preparing grant applications to secure funding for a new photocopier.

Cheers and regards,

**Paul Constantinidis, President**

## Macarthur Historical Society (S)

Our activities have included:

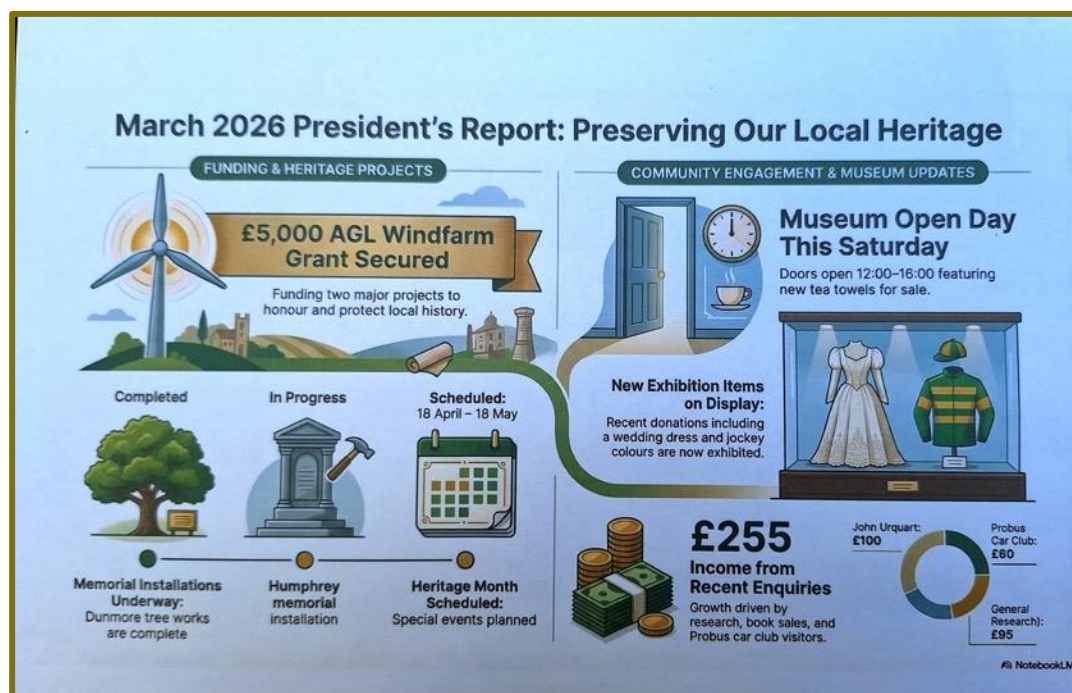
- Lending photo folders and a 1902 photo to Macarthur Primary school for their reunion
- Displaying previous donations including a wedding dress and jockey colours
- Receiving a \$5,000 AGL windfarm grant for two projects honouring and protecting local history: Dunmore Turkish bathhouse and memorial installation and completing Dunmore tree works
- The bathhouse is a gothic inspired bluestone structure comprising two Chambers with a pointed portal and highlight window and a steeply pitched roof. It is of historical significance to the State as it is the only bathhouse built for a mid-nineteenth century pastoral homestead. It is one of two known privately owned and built Turkish bath houses in Australia
- Installation of the 1899 Thomas Humphrey memorial tablet  
This project will install the memorial tablet outside the Victoria Hotel in Macarthur. It will be an addition to the town's Heritage Trail. The accompanying plaque would detail the heroism of Macarthur publican and Belfast Shire President Thomas Humphrey in sacrificing his life saving others from a fire at the Kirkstall Hotel. The Macarthur Catholic Church community were inspired by this selflessness to raise money for his widow and commission the double marble tablet.
- Visiting Skipton Historical Society and Courtroom
- Compiling oral and written histories: I took the opportunity to read a passage from the 1946 floods story to encourage people to write stories, memoirs or simply borrow a voice recorder and speak their own tales.

Our Museum is open by appointment, so if you are passing through, send an email to [3286mdhs@gmail.com](mailto:3286mdhs@gmail.com) and arrange a visit.

**Wendy Black, President**

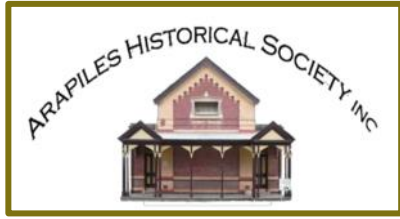


Below: when Wendy submitted her report I had problems working out what this included graphic was. It turns out that when 'clicking an AI button', the report was turned into this graphic. Some of our members will be interested to see the unexpected outcome...especially the inclusion of £ instead of \$!





## Arapiles Historical Society (WM)



It has been a busy and eventful year for the Arapiles Historical Society (AHS), marked by strong community engagement, significant challenges and continued progress toward our long-term goals.

### Federal Grant Application – Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program: Precinct Development and Planning (G06311)

During this financial year, AHS undertook the preparation and submission of an application for the Federal Grant G06311. As the grant round was closing, we were given only four weeks to complete what was a highly detailed and comprehensive submission. This was an extraordinary effort by our volunteer team, who committed countless hours to bring together the application within the limited timeframe. As of today, we have not yet received any feedback regarding the outcome.

### Community Events and Engagement

AHS has placed a strong focus on community events and increasing local engagement.

During the Natimuk Frinj Festival, AHS activated the old courthouse as a pop-up café, Dinky Di's. This initiative was extremely well received by both locals and visitors, creating a vibrant and welcoming space within a historic setting.

The courthouse also hosted an exhibition by Gillian Turner, centred around the theme of the Old Exchange and party lines, which added a valuable cultural dimension to the weekend.

On the Saturday evening, AHS held a Blues and BBQ night in the Old Garage Museum. This event attracted an attendance of nearly 200 people and was a standout success, demonstrating the strong community appetite for social and cultural gatherings in heritage spaces.

### Sponsorship Program

In September, AHS launched its new sponsorship program which has already seen encouraging support from local businesses.

We are pleased to acknowledge our current sponsors:

- Gold Sponsors: Natimuk Excavations and Arapiles Multimedia
- Silver Sponsor: Natimuk Plumbing.

This program is an important step toward building financial sustainability and strengthening partnerships within the community.

### January Fires – A Significant Community Event

January 9th marked a deeply significant and challenging day for Natimuk. Under extreme conditions, a fire swept through the town, resulting in the loss of around 30 buildings 10 of which were in the township including two historic buildings:

- The former West Wimmera Garage (Flaherty Woolbuyer)
- The historic homestead *Fairview*.

This occurrence represents a significant historical event for Natimuk as the township has not previously experienced a bushfire overrunning the town. Accordingly, it stands as an important point in the town's historical record.

While the loss was considerable, many homes were saved due to the tireless efforts of the CFA and local residents, who worked diligently to identify and manage spot fires throughout the town.

In the aftermath the town has demonstrated strong resilience, entering a recovery phase supported by widespread community effort and fundraising initiatives for those who lost their homes.

In response to the fires, Dinky Di's reopened over the January long weekend with all funds raised donated to the local recovery fund. This initiative once again highlighted the role AHS can play in supporting the broader community during times of need.

### Upcoming Event – Bush Dance

This weekend AHS is supporting a Bush Dance at the Natimuk Soldiers Memorial Hall. The event has generated considerable excitement within the town with local school children learning traditional bush dances in preparation. It promises to be a wonderful community celebration.

### Looking Ahead

Over the coming months AHS will be focusing on developing new exhibits to refresh and enhance our museum displays. This work is essential in ensuring we continue to provide engaging and relevant experiences for visitors while showcasing our growing collection. Despite the challenges faced this year, particularly the devastating fires, AHS has continued to demonstrate resilience, community leadership and a strong commitment to preserving and celebrating our local history.

I would like to sincerely thank our dedicated volunteers, sponsors and the wider community for their ongoing support.

**Pat Ford, President**

### Port Fairy Historical Society (S)



This was quite a busy end of year for our Society. A highlight for 2025 was the weekend seminar in October, held in Port Fairy in conjunction with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. This event, titled "Presenting and Preserving our Stories", was well attended by members from other Societies as well as our own. We heard four wonderful speakers which included a Saturday night dinner at Charlies on East. Thank you to Craige for all his help in organising the event.

At the Port Fairy Show "to fly the flag" we always have a stall selling our books and photographs. This is always a good day where we engage with many of our locals. That same evening in the Museum, a talk and display was presented to the public by three Marine Archaeologists from Heritage Victoria talking about our shipwrecks and the latest work being done to help preserve these very vulnerable artefacts.

A combined effort by the Photo group, Publications group, Research group and other members of the Society resulted in an extensive research project requested by Moyne Shire for background information required to help them obtain a permit for the construction of a new Moyne River bridge.

Another request came from the Port Fairy Basketball Association for photos and historical information on basketball in Port Fairy. This was researched by the Photo Group and compiled by Carol Heard. They especially wanted photos of teams which played in the Drill Hall from the 1960s until the competition was moved to the newly built stadium in the 1980s. This was quite a mammoth task considering how many played the sport over that period of time. We have sourced some team photos from our archives but the Facebook posts asking the public to share photos of their old teams has been very successful.

Our Publications committee has printed another two small booklets with two more due out shortly.

Our book of Lilian Powling's 1950's photographs with comparisons to the same location in the present day will be launched later in the year. Richard Patterson and Carol Heard are responsible for the majority of researching the information in it and the present day photos are being taken by several members of the Society.

Towards the end of April this year we will commemorate the war service of several nurses who worked at the Port Fairy hospital by placing a plaque in the front garden of the hospital.

Late last year we embarked on a large renovation project to upgrade our computers and remodel the front office as well as the kitchen at the back.

We have installed large banks of power points with usb chargers to cope with the tree computers we have installed and two wall heaters to keep the offices warm during the winter months. There will be a new desk and shelves added to these rooms to make them more useable. The next stage will be the kitchen in the back room to make the area more efficient for the increasing number of events we have been hosting.

Re-accreditation is due this year so there is a lot of work to be done.

Lynda Tieman

### Horsham Historical Society (WM)



Former Society President Mr Bob McIlvena was recently inducted as a Life Member following the January release of his latest book

*Waters of the Wimmera*, which draws on his own experience and details the management and evolution of water supply throughout the Wimmera from 1830 until now.

Horsham currently has a couple of milestones of note with the Fire Brigade recently turning 150 years old and the Girl Guides celebrating its centenary this year. Fifty-year volunteer John Davies of Horsham Fire Brigade presented his version of the organisation's history to Society members at our last monthly meeting and is in the final stages of producing his own book on that subject.

In late 2025 we unveiled a new website from which customers can order books from our collection for pickup or postage. We also implemented a web-based database in which our photo collection is stored safely in the cloud and easily accessed from any computer.

Several of our members are busy at work on the update of *Horsham Street Names*, first published in 1998 and well overdue for a second edition. We expect the new version might go to print perhaps early next year as the researchers are in the early stages of gathering information on more than 100 new streets which have appeared in the last 25 years.

In the meantime, members continue to work on cataloguing the thousands of photographs left to us by former *Wimmera Mail Times* photographer, the late Ian Ward.

Stuart Hall, President



### Landsborough and District Historical Group (WM)



Just prior to Christmas we were thrilled to receive the news that our application for a grant from Pacific Blue wind farms had been successful and we have received funding to print our long-awaited 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book – a

comprehensive history of Landsborough. The book will be around 450 pages and work is now well advanced. We are hoping to have it printed later in the year for the Christmas shopping period.

Our books sell well with the generosity of our local post office which stocks all our publications. Our latest book on the history of the pubs and publicans of Redbank, Barkly and Moonambel has been released and is also selling well in Avoca, thanks to the information centre there stocking some copies.

As I was preparing this report we were very saddened to hear of the news of the passing of two of our long term and much-loved members. On 15<sup>th</sup> March we lost Bernie Browne who, along with wife Wilma, were stalwarts of the Landsborough community. Bernie was 81 and had been unwell for some time and spent his final weeks in palliative care in Ararat. Just as we were preparing to pay tribute to Bernie at his funeral on the Friday we learnt of the death of Jim Browne, a cousin of Bernie's, who suddenly passed away at home at the age of 75. Although Jim had some previous health issues, he was recovering well and back doing what he did best – his handy-man work around our precinct in Landsborough including fixing the doors to the lock-up and the Barkly Room. His passing came as a shock to us all. Jim was a past president of our group and one of the instigators, along with the late Tim Western and Diane Western, in establishing our history group back in 1995. He was a wealth of knowledge about all things Landsborough and took a genuine interest in the history of the district. He leaves behind wife Connie, three children and three grandchildren who will all miss him very much, as will our Historical Group

We will soldier on as this is what both Bernie and Jim would have wanted. Sadly many of our members are not getting any younger and we face the same challenges of an ageing volunteer workforce as many Historical Groups.

**Brett Leslie, President**

### Pyramid Hill and District Historical Society (NC)

Our Society has had a busy time over the past year. We hosted the WVAHS North Central Zone meeting in October which was a great event and well supported by our member Societies. We enjoyed the opportunity to showcase our town, crank up our Magic Lantern, and meet many old and new faces.



A highlight of the day was when long-time member, Archivist and Secretary Helen Stevens received her Award of Merit from the RHSV's Craig Proctor.

The book *The Major's Vision* was reprinted in August last year with updated photos, information and an index.

We received a grant to repaint the exterior of the former RSL Hall which houses our Military Collection and a subsequent grant has been applied for to upgrade the signage on the Hall and in Kelly Park. The roof of the RSL Hall is also due to be replaced this year (by Loddon Shire Council).

We continue to have numerous requests for family history research with the common sentiment of 'If only we had asked while they were still alive!' This is when we truly appreciate the work of those before us in documenting, printing and cataloguing all the stories, keepsakes and artefacts which have contributed to our collection over the last 60 years

**Cheryl McKinnon, Secretary**

### Heytesbury District Historical Society (S)

At our last Zone meeting in Cobden we reported how our membership and attendance at meetings had increased significantly since changing meeting times from an evening to Sunday afternoon.

Since then we have also incorporated a guest speaker at each of our monthly meetings. Advertising has been through local community, school Facebook groups and word of mouth.

These changes have been extremely satisfying. Our meeting attendance has gone on occasions from less than ten to more than. The increased interest and exposure has also led to the discovery and donation of new objects and photographs and significantly increased membership.

This report is to share our experience, hoping it may be of use to other societies.

**Peter J. Younis, Treasurer**

### Koroit & District Historical Society (S)



If visiting Koroit at the moment you will see many changes. Bluestone footpaths are being laid on the south side of the main street and footpaths are being upgraded in High Street and Victoria Park. This will improve access to our historical society.

We have met visitors from many areas over the last few months with The Great Vic Bike Ride in November, then Lake School and Truck Show in January, Sheep Dogs and Agricultural Field Day and Show in February. Many visitors have connections to Koroit from the past as well as new residents. We have stayed with a gold coin entrance fee to encourage visitors but unfortunately many do not carry cash. Maybe other societies can help us with cost effective ideas.

The Koroit Irish Festival is coming up May 1-3<sup>rd</sup> when we will be busy again.

Our society is pleased that we now have our early newspapers *The Koroit Herald* 1878 to August 1886 digitised and online on Trove. This was the result of a successful grant application through the Public Records Office Local History Grants Program 2024-2025. We are now aiming to continue with this project (digitising microfilm) but it will require help from grants and any ideas or tips from other societies would be helpful.

In attempting to be more visible, two members have agreed to manage a Facebook Page so now we are more accessible online.

In March members enjoyed a visit from Dr Spark from the Indigenous Studies Centre at Monash University who photographed and explained possible uses of the stone tools in our collection. Recently Chris How, a local nail expert, has described nails and material collected when the old building was renovated from a Common School to Koroit and District Historical Society.

We are a small group but continue to add to our collection accepting donations of relevant items, scanning photographs, sorting files as well as assisting with research, be it for families or clubs experiencing reunions. We aim to be involved in and involve the community in our activities in the hope that others may join our society.

**Margaret Trotter, President**

### Boort Historical Society (NC)



A continual run of donations of artefacts and memorabilia have been arriving at the Historical Society Museum. It is great that the people of Boort and surrounds (and sometimes from further afield) are happy to donate their treasured possessions to the Historical Society collection. The Society is fortunate to have members who are willing and able to help with cataloguing and have commenced cataloguing our archive centre, quite a large job but very rewarding. We also have frequent requests for family history which keep our researchers busy, a very time consuming task.

In late 2024 we applied for a grant to repair some of the weather-affected sides on the Historical Pillars in the main street of Boort but unfortunately we were not successful. However, due to our waning membership, the Boort Development Committee has agreed to take on the project and for this we are very grateful. We should see some action soon.

The Historical Society membership still remains small but all members have an enthusiasm for the preservation of our local history and that is why we can still continue. This falling membership is very concerning for the long term viability of our Museum and we are struggling to find a solution.

**Gayle Huggett President**



Visiting the Pebble Church on our AGM weekend.



## Warracknabeal and District Historical Society (WM)

We have just held our annual Vintage Machinery Rally that came with its challenges due to the fuel situation. We decided to cancel the Saturday evening Vintage Tractor Pull because the usual participants had difficulty with the cost and obtaining diesel fuel. Instead, we held our evening dinner. Crowds were down on previous years for the same reason. However, considering all of this, we were happy with the crowd we had and the activities that we ran.



Our new grounds development is looking really great particularly because of the recent rain we have had. On Sunday visitors took advantage of the lawned area for the Music Festival to sit in comfort and listen to the entertainment.

This year we featured Massey Harris tractors and what a great display with about 20 tractors lined up on the tarmac. Locally made agricultural implements were also featured with a Nhill winnower and a Western Australian made Rotensor, which was used in the Hamilton area, on display in the Foyer. The tarmac also had a very good display of locally made ploughs and implements.

Many, many years ago, before we had the Museum, items of machinery were stored in the local water tower. It has now been decided that we do not need to lease it, so many Saturday working bees have been spent removing all items from the four floors. This was a mammoth task but is now completed and we find that we have quite a few items that are in excess to requirements. Some were sold at the recent Rally. Others will be sold through the Warehouse.

Our Historical Centre continues to receive a lot of inquiries for family information, much of which we can find and pass on. Lately we have received several donations, all of which add to our collection of historical Warracknabeal items.

The Warehouse continues to be very popular with visitors and locals. We closed for several days in January because of the heat and we have had major work down on the roof. Treasurer Jean is regularly kept busy recording sales and sending out payments to vendors. At present the Warehouse is full but stock is turning over regularly so come and visit! We have approximately 2,000 vendors.

We have also held all our AGMs with office bearers not changing much!

Like all Societies, we find that we are very short of volunteers to assist with the everyday running of our organisation and our three enterprises. We wish all Societies a great and interesting year ahead.

**Lesley Stephan**

## Stawell Historical Society (WM)



We have started 2026 with a number of projects that are keeping us busy

- We are currently going through the re-accreditation process. Brett, Gary and I are ploughing through the online process which has become very convoluted with the requirements being in line with major metro museums. We are keen to open discussion with other Societies about whether they are going through the process.
- Recently established two temporary (6 month) display rooms featuring
  - a) the communication history of the Stawell region and
  - b) significant women with connections to Stawell – costumes, stories and paraphernalia. If these prove popular we may keep them on display longer
- Digitisation and merging of records is progressing well which includes Cemetery records, BDM records, Hospital admissions dating back to the old Pleasant Creek Hospital (1861 onwards) and Street naming history
- Headstone Project relating to Service Personnel – Boer War, WW1 and WW2. WW1 we have an additional 500, WW2 now have 900 recorded. This has taken a lot of effort and work by Bev and Frank. Also Meredith has been diligently digitising and updating all the Freemason's records
- I have slightly revamped the School Visitation program to seven schools in the close region. We have two of the schools already booked and confirmed group visits for a number of students and teachers
- We now have 14 active Volunteers with two new Passionate History Buffs joining us recently (including Hayley who is here with us today). Our current financial memberships number 120 which includes people from interstate and overseas with family connections to Pleasant Creek/Stawell

**Kate van Dyck**

### Maryborough Midlands Historical Society (NC)



#### 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The most significant milestone of the year 2025-6 was the Society's sixtieth anniversary. To celebrate the occasion a special afternoon tea was held at the Bull and Mouth Hotel. Attendees included current and former volunteers and committee members.

The first meeting of the Society (originally Midlands Historical Society) was convened in 1965 by a descendant of the Bucknall family pioneers. After meetings at a variety of "borrowed" venues, in 1975 a permanent home was found: the old stone cottage at 3 Palmerston Street (built originally by stonemason and contractor Arthur Worsley), purchased with a combination of Society fundraising, Council and Shire grants, bequests and donations. A naming competition produced the logical result: Worsley Cottage. Society members worked hard to develop the garden and set up the cottage as a museum and local residents donated artefacts and furniture. Worsley Cottage was officially opened on October 30th 1976.

#### Garden and buildings

Our dedicated garden volunteers have continued the daunting task of restoring the cottage garden (following the renovation of Worsley Cottage) and keeping the new plantings alive over the summer months. They've also organised the upgrade of the shade sail area outside the Research and Resource Centre. Thanks to Central Goldfields Shire Council the wash house, dating from the 1950s, has been repaired.

#### The collection, visitors and research

We receive a constant stream of researchers - many of whose ancestors arrived during the gold rushes - and we liaise with the Council, the Tourist Information Centre and the Art Gallery, providing historical information and advice. Our three Tibbits watercolours plus a set of gold scales are currently on loan to the Art Gallery. It's encouraging to note that many of our enquirers are purchasing older historic homes to renovate rather than demolish. We're also fortunate to receive a variety of donations of items relating to Maryborough's history. Photographs, uniforms, community organisation records, show awards, school magazines, paintings and WW1 certificates are making their way to us rather than the tip and the stories behind them help us to document and illuminate the town's history.

**Barb Nielsen, President**

### Carisbrook Historical Society (NC)



Hello everybody, new and old members. This will be my final report as time has forced me to step down from my job. Carisbrook Historical Society has been my life for the last thirty or so years, countless like-minded friends and many joys. Our particular group has been very supportive and we have collected many workable indexes for researchers to use and to assist people researching their particular field and occasionally we score a new working member.

We have been successful in obtaining two grants, one for planting an Avenue of Honor for Majorca War Memorial and the other to supply and install a Split system for our work rooms.

Meanwhile the members are plugging away collecting information. Our BDM Index is now up to the present day, member Alex Stoneman is working on small information booklets for Maryborough Information Centre. Our editor Alex has kept our Newsletter up to date with beautifully crafted stories, although I prefer a monthly Newsletter sent to all sister societies. Thank you all for help over the time and I wish you all well with your chosen area of our work.

Our latest venture has been moving my family and local history from my garage to the Historical Society. Robin Parker has brought four trailer loads of files across to the rooms to be sorted. Files have been sorted for various groups which include Clunes, Talbot, Dunolly and Maryborough Genealogical Group; now to work on Carisbrook files which will take some time to sort. One file found is the works of Garryowen on early Melbourne in excess of 1,000 pages. Great reading which Robin has scanned.

Sorry I can't be with you all today.

Regards  
**Judith Healey**



### Charlton Golden Grains Museum (NC)

Our Museum has had another productive six months.

We now have 14 active volunteers plus several home typists. It can get quite crowded on cataloguing day! Each volunteer works in an area of interest with some cataloguing, some photographing our collection while others are adding items to Victorian Collections or conducting family history research. Our volunteer, David, has been recording podcasts including oral histories with community members. Other podcasts are chats with our volunteers and a regular monthly podcast talks about a specific historical object, event or person. These are put on YouTube and Facebook.



Next week Emma Russell from History at Work will be undertaking a Significance Assessment of our collection. This is being funded by our local Bendigo Community Bank. It will be great to find out if we have anything of national significance or at least receive advice on what the most significant items are in our collection and make sure we are looking after them properly.

We are looking forward to the retro fashion parade we are holding on June 21<sup>st</sup> at the Rex Theatre. Some of the clothes which come from the '60s, '70s and '80s are from our collection and others borrowed from the community.

Our volunteers recently went on an excursion to Wedderburn to visit their Historical Records Museum and the Old Coach House Gallery. Both are well worth a visit. Last November we travelled to the museum at Rupanyup. We find it beneficial and enjoyable to visit other museums as a group to see how they operate and display their collections.

Our medical display in the back room of the Wesley Chapel is coming along. Most objects have been placed in cabinets and we now need to tweak the displays and create labels and interpretive panels.

We have regular Museum updates appear in the monthly community newsletter and we submit information from 100 years ago to the local newspaper. Content for the quarterly *Cultural Magazine* is always well received, and we recently did a story on Charlton's Brownies and Girl Guides (which included several reminiscences) plus a story on the Arundell Family who were early settlers and for many years had a shoe store. They have a street and bridge named after them.

Carolyn Olive



Charlton Golden Grains Museum volunteers visiting Wedderburn's Historical Records Museum.

## Camperdown and District Historical Society (S)



Our Society is ticking along nicely with a membership of around 200.

Research and indexing continue to keep our volunteers busy and, while we have recently lost a couple of volun-

teers, we are pleased to have welcomed a new volunteer with experience in photography who is currently assisting with our negatives collection.

At the Zone Meeting held in Cobden on 14 September 2025 we reported our objection to a planning permit application for a large advertising sign near our Heritage Centre which we believed would be detrimental to the historic character of the precinct. We are pleased to report that, following a strong and well-supported case (including submissions from others), the proponents withdrew their application.

On 14 October our volunteers participated in a day trip to Melbourne. Travelling economically by train and foot, the group enjoyed a day of sightseeing with a strong heritage focus, visiting the Museum, Melbourne University's Indigenous Art display and making the most of the final hour taking in other sights before boarding the train home.

On 19 October two Committee members attended a Port Fairy Historical Society event.

On 29 October Committee members Maureen and Angela led an Indigenous excursion for Years 7 and 8 students from Camperdown College.

On 4 November our volunteers gathered for a Melbourne Cup lunch at our Heritage Centre.

On 22 November members attended the book launch of *Dalvui, a Western District Eulogy* (historic homestead) at Noorat. The book, authored by six contributors including Maggie Black, explores the history of the Black family. It includes contributions from Dr Anne Vale on Dalvui's William Guilfoyle designed garden, Timothy Hubbard on the architectural design and construction of the homestead and John Maidment on the inclusion of a three-manual pipe organ. Support provided by members of the Terang, Warrnambool and Camperdown Historical Societies is acknowledged in the publication.

On 2 December members enjoyed a Christmas Picnic at Wurrong Homestead, a historic Camperdown property purchased by one of our members in the mid 1970s.

In December to encourage the study of history, our Society once again presented end-of-year awards of \$100 to students at Camperdown Mercy Regional College and Camperdown Secondary College.

On 21 March 2026 the Society supported and hosted the book launch of *Crisp and Sir Chester* by Andrew Lemon which tells the story of Australia's greatest steeplechaser. Bred by Sir Chester Manifold at his historic Talindert stud Camperdown, Crisp raced successfully in Australia, America and England. Our Society strongly encouraged and supported both the writing of this book and the successful launch event which was well attended by 90 people.

We have also been working with Corangamite Shire on a project to install QR codes at selected historic sites. To complement the existing heritage signs, the QR codes will include voiceovers recorded by radio announcers with some incorporating sound effects. Six sites are included in the project which is expected to be launched soon.

In partnership with the Corangamite Shire, we are exploring the possibility of hosting an 'Open House Camperdown' (day or weekend) event for later in the year.

Camperdown's iconic Finlay Avenue of elm trees will mark its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in July and we are currently considering appropriate ways we can recognise this milestone.

### Coming Up: Robert Burns Festival - History Talks Saturday 27 June 2026

10:30am – 11:30am

Dr. Chris Gouramanis: *Past Climate and Environmental Change from Iconic Crater Lakes in Western Victoria*

11:30am – 12:30pm

Dr Iain Buckland: *Scottish Country Dance - created by the Scottish aristocracy, but now adopted by dance and fitness enthusiasts world-wide.*

12:30pm – 1:30pm

LUNCH BREAK

1:30 pm – 2:30pm

Dr Vicki Couzens: *Saving a language: the revitalization of the Keerray Woorroong language of South West Victoria.*

2:30pm – 3:30pm Dr Bob Bowker: *Dr Daniel Curdie and the Exploration of Family History*

3:30pm CLOSE

Please note that the Camperdown Heritage Centre is currently closed for approximately one month while refurbishment works are undertaken on the floor.

**Lyle Tune, President**

## Minyip and District Historical Society (WM)



Another year has passed, albeit very quickly. Our monthly meetings have been well attended with a number of interesting guest speakers. These, along with visits to the Dimboola Historical Society, the Murtoa Sump

Oilers Museum and a walk through the nature reserve on the former town common - led by Rae Talbot - have meant a continually active year for the society.

I think the shift of meetings to the Memorial Hall has been an extremely positive move. The hall provides a much larger space and makes use of a much under-utilised venue. It also enables the *Guardian* Office to become a workspace not requiring re-organisation for each meeting.

The willingness of the Minyip Lions Club to allow the society to redirect its donation of \$5,000 from the building extension to storage is appreciated and we need to progress this as soon as possible.

Work continues on the scanning of files and photographs to be placed on the computer. In the last two weeks the actual folders into which this material is to be placed have been created. Thanks to Gillian H for her assistance with this.

Three *Guardians* have been published in the last year and continue to receive positive feedback from recipients. We may need to look at the cost of subscription to these when taking into consideration the increase in postage.

We remain able to have the *Guardian* Office open only on Friday mornings and during special events due to a lack of available personnel. This is a problem most historical groups face. I believe that if we continue to advertise our presence and willingness to assist groups and individuals at any time we are fulfilling our obligations in this area.

Our major project currently continues to be the Selectors and Settlers Memorial which is undertaken in conjunction with Minyip Lions Club. It is hoped that the first of the Parish maps will be available in a couple of months which will give us some idea of cost as well defining the general design.

Special thanks to Chris our Secretary and Susan our Treasurer for their work and Shirley for keeping our cemetery records up to date.

I also commend Yvonne for her work as she diligently records every document in every file in every cabinet by hand. The record she is creating will be invaluable when these files are on computer as it can be used as the basis for searches.

In closing, sincere thanks to all of you who, with a shared interest in the history of the area and its people, make our meetings such enjoyable and informative events.

**Wayne Jackson, President**

## Donald History Society (NC)



Since our October zone meeting guests have included: Ann Walsh on 100 years of the Litchfield Hall; Warren Nelson, an aboriginal man, who told of his journey through life as one of the stolen generation; and Brian Brasier, retired school principal, on his memories over a lifetime.

As part of History Month the Courthouse Museum was open every Friday during October from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Georgie Ah Ling, Donald's market gardener, collection being a feature. Visitors were also directed to a mural of Georgie on the wall of IGA's carpark. This is the work of Melbourne street artist Heesco who recently completed two more murals around the town. The Courthouse Museum can be viewed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Fridays by booking a tour at our Archives building at 58 Woods Street.

Our annual luncheon was held at the Jeffcott Hotel in November. Guest speaker Barb Kelly spoke on her connection to the Donald district, in particular the story of her great aunt's journey, arrival and settlement in the area.

Volunteers at the archives have been kept busy with a varied number of requests which we were able to help with. Some of the requests have included information on: - Donald's Boer War Memorial names; Salvation Army 1917-1920 in Donald; a local cricket rule; Chinese Market gardeners in Donald; Louisa Liddle's hospital in Houston Street; results of a hockey match in the Donald Birchip Times in 1982 and numerous family names.

We have recently purchased a new printer/scanner/copier and have been busy putting together a number of our publications that needed replenishing.

The issue of maintaining our buildings is concerning with falling plaster at the Court House Museum and white ant damage at the old archives in particular.

Due to difficulties filling the position of grants officer it has been decided to ask for help from the wider community. Hopefully we can find someone soon.

**Ann Dunstan, President**



## Nullawil Historical Society (NC)



Throughout 2025 Nullawil Historical Society has been notably active with members and volunteers contributing substantial effort to various projects and events. Our Heritage Centre has been prepared for multiple on-site occasions, thus ensuring visitors have a memorable experience. Working Bees resulted in renovations and improvements to both the facilities and the grounds, reflecting our commitment to ongoing enhancement.

### Dedication Day – April 2025

In April we held Dedication Day at the Heritage Centre, focusing on two main goals. The first was to honour the Eddy Abraham Collection, which features harvesting machinery and stationary engines donated by Eddy and Gwen Abraham. Gwen and their daughter attended this significant event. The second purpose was to recognise Tony Bartram, a current member, for his initiative in relocating a substantial stable and memorabilia from his property, The Grange, to the Heritage Centre. The stable now serves as a home for key artefacts in our museum's collection.

### Centenary Celebration of Auchmore Home – August 2025

After extensive preparation, August saw a successful celebration marking 100 years of Auchmore Home, the central feature of our Heritage Centre. Over 100 guests travelled from near and far to participate in activities including a singalong in Winston Church, viewing collections and displays and sharing a lunch. The event also paid tribute to Auchmore Home's history, recognising Henry and Rita Bennett as its original residents. Descendants of the Bennett family were present for the occasion.

### Armistice Day Commemoration – November 2025

In November we hosted a modest gathering to observe Armistice Day and dedicate newly-framed flags associated with the World Wars. These flags were professionally preserved thanks to a grant, ensuring their ongoing protection and display.

### Visitor Engagements

During the year we welcomed several Trade Travel Groups and local family reunions, further strengthening community ties and fostering interest in regional history.

### Community Partnership – Christmas Event

December saw a collaborative effort with the local Progress Association to host a festive Christmas evening at the Heritage Centre, enhancing community spirit and engagement.

### Grant Application success

The society applied for a solar grant through the Stronger Communities program and Anne Webster's Office. This application was successful. The heritage centre now runs solely on solar panels connected to a battery with a generator back up. This has been an excellent addition to the heritage centre as we now run a fridge and freezer continuously for the benefit of both our members and visitors.

The society also received a grant from the Bendigo Bank. This has allowed us to employ someone to set up our website. The website is a work in progress. It connects Facebook, allows people to contact us via the site and some QR codes have been added. For some of us this is all very new and we are learning as we go.

### Recognition – Community Event of the Year

In January we were privileged to be chosen for Buloke Shire's Community Event of the Year recognising the centenary celebration of Auchmore Home at the Heritage Centre.

### Collection Enrichments

Recently we received several significant items from the estate of Lois Bartram, one of our founding members. These additions will enable us to share Lois' unique story with visitors.

### Ongoing Donations and Collaboration

Our collection continues to grow through donations from the local community, providing new opportunities to enrich our displays. We are currently working with Lake Boga Flying Boat Museum and Kerang Museum to coordinate a Triangular Weekend of museum visits across the Mallee region. This has led us to make a listing on the ATDW (Australian Data Tourism warehouse). Our understanding is that this will give us wider recognition.

### Interactive Domestic Chores Displays

The Museum currently features exhibits on historical domestic tasks including the Townrow Dairy Display, Spry Collection and Wash House. Visitors are invited to participate in interactive demonstrations utilising restored equipment such as a hand-operated separator, butter churn, grain grinder, washing machine and honey extractor.

### Commitment to Heritage Centre Administration

Nullawil Historical Society remains steadfast in maintaining the administration of the Heritage Centre including cataloguing collections, documenting stories and preserving photographs to safeguard local history for future generations.

**Wendy Spry, President**  
**Kaylene James, Secretary**

## Mortlake and District Historical Society (S)



In September 2000 the MDHS was reformed after a gap of some years. A celebration was held in December 2025 to commemorate this 25th anniversary. The day itself was wet and cold and hence the attendance was less than what we had hoped for. That said,

the MDHS committee was able to decorate a shop front window in the main street of Mortlake to promote our organisation. The display included photos, historic items and stories of the Mortlake district. A Mortlake Quiz focused on local history items was placed in the local Lions Newsletter to promote our birthday which generated much interest.

At our November 2025 meeting the MDHS decided to make enquiries to Victorian Collections, our goal being to use their database to manage our collections of historical items. In the following month the MDHS has done an amount of work with Victorian Collections. In February five members completed an Introductory training module with Victorian Collections and had the opportunity to play on the training system. Our members all found the training excellent. That said, we were all a bit overwhelmed by the amount of data for each item that was required.

As a follow up to our Victorian Collections training day, in March five MDHS members visited the Warrnambool Historical Society which has been using this system for more than ten years. It was a good day as the Warrnambool members provided many insights into the prework done for all items donated to the Society. Finally, the documentation Warrnambool uses to manage the collection and entry of data for each item placed on the Victorian Collections database was discussed. At this time, the MDHS is now in a position to commence developing

its own processes to manage our collection and to move an amount of it onto the Victorian Collections database in the coming months.

The MDHS committee has restarted our work on the digitisation of the *Mortlake Dispatch*. Our archivist raised her concerns on the condition of the original copies that the MDHS holds and the difficulties of efficiently using the microfilm that we hold at Mortlake. Our first goal is to have all copies of the newspaper up to 1900 digitised and this will be a significant challenge as it is expensive to do.

In March of this year we successfully applied for a grant from the Gwen and Edna Jones Foundation which will enable the MDHS to digitise up to 1887. The ground-work previously completed allowed us to quickly pull together a realistic plan and budget that enabled us to obtain the grant. Unexpectedly, the recent work on becoming involved with Victorian Collections was to our advantage when working with Trove and the National Library, Canberra. The timings for the completion of the digitisation are not yet finalised.

In 2026 the MDHS will continue to conduct excursions for our members and the local community. At this time, a tour of Woorndoo, north of Mortlake, will be held in mid-May. Lesley McLeod, one of our committee members, is busy developing a tour and completing arrangements for the day. Preliminary discussions have been held for a tour for the second half of 2026, likely to be to Kolora.

The MDHS and other local history groups in our region suffered a great loss in late 2025 with the passing of Florence Charles. Florence made significant contributions to local history around Mortlake and Terang with books, short stories and research for many people. Her loss will be deeply felt as she was a repository of much knowledge and a single call to her would yield names, contacts, insights and long lost facts.

**Robert McLaren, President**



In March five members of the Mortlake and District Historical Society visited the Warrnambool and District Historical Society to learn more about how W&DHS has been utilising Victorian Collections for the past 15 years.

A wonderful instance of collaboration and sharing of knowledge!

Photo: Craige Proctor

## Nhill and District Historical Society (WM)



NDHS Committee plans for the Society rooms over the next couple of years:

- Reorganise and refurbish the Archive Room to maximise the storage space for our valuable books, photos, maps, documents and memorabilia.
- Sort through our collection, to ensure the focus of the collection is Nhill and District.
- Research items within the collection and create a story for each item for when they go on display.
- Update display cabinets and areas.
- Periodically change displays that haven't been changed for more than 15 years.

To help with the refurbishment of the archive room we have the assistance of Anthony Bone and Ian Cramer who are also both retired builder/carpenters.

The Committee is looking for new members and volunteers willing to help with writing grants, computer skills, compiling and writing cards for our displays and an interest in history and photography and also to join our committee at the next AGM.

### Events and Activities

John Deckert's talk in February at the Nhill Senior Citizens Rooms was successful. John started the afternoon stating that if anyone got bored they were welcome to leave at any time this would not upset him at all. There were twenty-five people in attendance, and not one of them moved, they hung onto every word for the whole hour and a half that John talked for. It was amazing to hear all the different adventures and things he had done throughout his life like his early interest in photography, his farming experience, which led to 4x4 driving and adventure tours, which led to helping map the Simpson Desert, researching and adding information to maps in Australia, volunteering with Nhill Aviation, the Historical Society and the Silo project. At the end of the afternoon John donated a book titled "Great Trek Across Australia; Milner Droving Pioneers by Russell Pugh which he had collaborated on. We raised approximately \$170 from this event.

The latest display in the Museum has an Australian Defence Force theme in recognition of Red Poppy Day,

honouring the soldiers, aviators and nurses who served our country. This display will remain in place to also commemorate Anzac Day.

### 2026

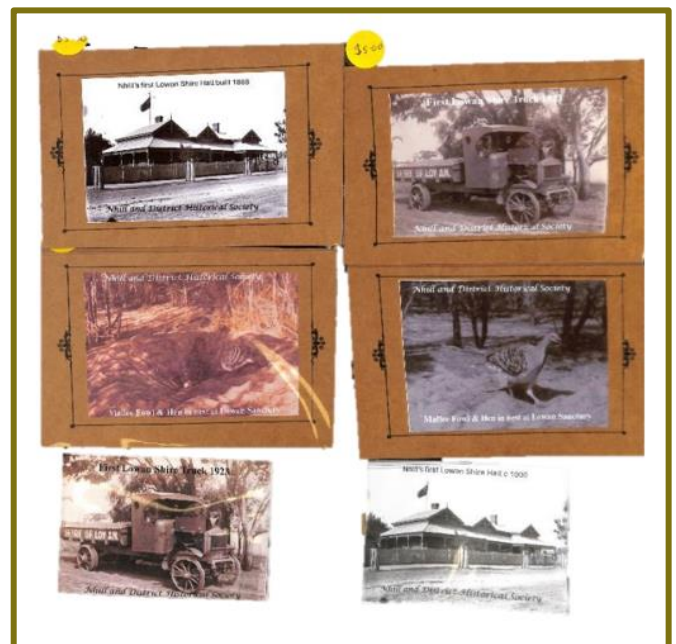
Our May "Writing your family History" course has had to be postponed due to the fuel crisis/pricing as we didn't want Imelda Cribbin, our course instructor, to be out of pocket. The course will be rescheduled for either later in 2026 or possibly the same time in 2027.

On Sunday 21st June we have guest speaker Bill Allen who is a qualified Mine Geologist and Heritage Officer based in Bendigo to speak on the history of the Gold route.

### Fund raising

To raise funds for the Society we have created magnets and postcards of old photos of Nhill.

**Don Keam, President**  
**Colleen Forbes, Secretary**



The Wimmera Mallee Zone Meeting at our AGM in St Arnaud.



### East Loddon Historical Society (NC)

Thank you to St Arnaud members for hosting the weekend and the hardworking team at WVHAS.

**Remembrance Day 2025**, for fifteen years, since November 2011 and in conjunction with a small group of Mitiamo-East Loddon RSL members, we have held a commemoration service at one of the local memorials within the former Shire of East Loddon.

2025 saw the township of Mitiamo feature the ceremony again. Extensive research to tell the stories of just over 150 names was planned to be developed into a booklet. Unfortunately, time and technical issues over-ruled the deadline and set forward a path for a 2026 release.

Each Remembrance Day one local serviceman who is recorded on the Memorial is randomly selected for us to share their journey through the war years and beyond. In 2025 Lieutenant George Leigh Pentreath MC, a state school teacher, was the subject of the opening address. We were privileged to have Steve Pentreath from Swan Hill share with approximately forty attendees the story of his great uncle, generally referred to as Lt Leigh Pentreath, who was born and raised near Mitiamo. After leaving school Leigh studied to become a school teacher. Prior to, and after returning from WWI, he taught in many schools in Melbourne, regional towns and small country areas from Gippsland to Mildura. When he enlisted he was married and teaching at Eurack near Cressy in Victoria. In May, 1916 he and the school children planted trees to honour the district's men and women who had enlisted. The Avenue of Honour is recognised as the oldest in Victoria. In November 1917 Lt Pentreath was awarded the Military Cross.

Following Steve we were fortunate to have guest speaker Mr David McDonald, president and research officer of the 2/3 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association address the gathering. David's interest in the gun was peaked on a previous trip through Mitiamo when he subsequently made an enquiry to ELHS about it. Following discussions with him he accepted an invitation to address our 2025 service. David travelled from the Canberra district and delivered an extensive history of the Bofors Light Anti Air Craft gun displayed at Mitiamo Memorial Corner.

An unexpected addition to David McDonald's history presentation was revealed when one of our regular attendees, local Prairie farmer Brian Phillips, younger brother of Helen Stevens, quietly informed us prior to the ceremony that he, as a young lad in the early 1970s, travelling in the old farm Austin truck, accompanied his father Jack and Les Haw of Mitiamo to the Bandiana Army Base in North East Victoria. The mission was to collect their \$26.00 investment of the significant piece of

WWII memorabilia for placement at Mitiamo Memorial Corner. With this new piece of knowledge, we persuaded a reluctant Brian to give a brief talk on how the gun came to rest at Mitiamo.

Brian imparted his colourful memories of the trip which involved visiting many gentlemen's watering holes during the long journey.

**Dingee Bush Nursing Centenary History 1923-2023.** This history book has been a very long arduous journey of research and verification of in-depth information to acknowledge each of its thirty-nurse managers, relief bush nurses and countless voluntary committees of management who retained the nursing services for over one hundred years. Light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter for printing.

**Family research enquiries** continue to open a world of investigation for us. It is fascinating how, with each small enquiry of a name, we manage to unlock new information about a local family who we then build into the local files. Several of us get so caught up in discovering each piece of historic information that charging for our time to include the many 'rabbit holes' we fall into, pales into insignificance when our curiosity takes precedence. We usually ask for \$20 as who would pay \$400.00 for twenty hours of our research?

**Mitiamo Progress Association received funding to place interpretive panels and plaques** around Mitiamo to recognise the once thriving railway township. ELHS has been working with them to identify all commercial establishments. From the over fifty businesses there is hardly a trace of physical evidence existing.

**Mitiamo Memorial Hall**, built in 1885, has been in need of roof and guttering repairs for several decades. The problem became more evident during rainfall from the 2022 floods with internal damage occurring to a brick wall. This is a major structural expense, far beyond the pockets of a small historical society. Treasurer Mary Davidson has been gathering small donations towards the renovation and working with the Loddon Shire and Mitiamo Progress Association to secure grant funding to replace the guttering and eaves. Our fingers are crossed for a positive response from Tiny Towns Grant funding, hoping to bring longevity to the 140-year-old hall.

After more than a decade of enjoying a gifted photo-copier from ViaTek, we had to bite the bullet and invest in a new colour laser printer/scanner. A kind benefactor was most generous towards our requirement. It has been a new learning curve of instructions to challenge our grey matter.

**Robyn Brown, Secretary**

## Dimboola and District Historical Society (WM)



The Courthouse Museum had an extended Christmas break and even now we have only three rooms open although research has re-commenced. In every report I mention we are undoing this or undergoing that and shuffling about; you all must think we are in perpetual disarray and you wouldn't be far wrong. That's basically how we seem to operate; we thrive on drama.

We acquired three largish cabinets for the courtroom which required a re-think on where they were going to go. It was definitely a headrush; but before you think or just don't miss a good opportunity, I think perhaps a bit of both, considering we are struggling for space. We believed the display cabinet location was reasonably sorted when, out of the blue, we learned the old movie projectors from the Star Theatre were going to be sold to help fund the new development of the former picture theatre. (The theatre is to be a live production theatre so the projectors were no longer required.)

DDHS has talked for years about these very projectors and the possible scenario that one day these projectors could leave Dimboola and what would we be able to do about it? We have secretly coveted them for a long time. They are a very important part of our town and district's social history.

A serious committee meeting was hastily convened and, thankfully, it was unanimous that a generous offer would be made pronto. Fortunately, it was accepted and we now have two Circa 1935 Racophone movie projectors plus another projector which was used for the glass negative advertisements and an array of associated bits and pieces. These projectors are big and heavy. However, our President Bruce Donnelly was able to dismantle them methodically, by himself, label all parts and lower all the gear from the projection room on the second floor, down to the ground floor, without help. He prefers to work alone with his "secret skills". He did a splendid job. They have now been reassembled and placed for now but we will not be fully open for a bit as we will be working on some ideas for our exhibits.

By some quite bizarre coincidence, we had already begun in-house research on the history of film in Dimboola from the early 1900s. And then magically we had the projectors. What are the chances? Not only that, but we also now believe these were the very ones used in the early 1930s by touring showman/projectionist George Gange of Rainbow who did the circuit of small towns in the Wimmera including Jeparit, Rainbow, Beulah and Dimboola. George Gange went on and acquired the Dimboola Star Theatre from Perce McDonald in 1932, eight years after it was built in 1924 for McDonald by local builders, Martindale & Sons. We feel confident that

George Gange installed the Racophone movie projectors as he used this brand on the circuit and there was an equipment dispersal sale when Perce McDonald sold the theatre.

The theatre has had an interesting life playing host to countless events which both entertained and changed the course of Dimboola and district's history and just about everything in between. Who could forget the film "Dimboola"?

Last year DDHS decided that, due to the continuing deterioration of Dimboola's steam engine J539 - one of our major tourist attractions - and the obvious lack of interest by its responsible entity, DDHS would take on and fund a painting refurbishment and do the work ourselves. This has been a massive task by two of our members, John Bohem and Raymond King, who undertook a task which has been very labour intensive. Expert advice was sought prior to commencement on how to tackle internal and external rust and what preps would be required. A large amount of the initial prep work involved heavy duty equipment to rub back rusted areas and paint then apply chemical type rust inhibitors and galv primers. Undercoats and top coats followed. The project has taken around 17 months so far, having to factor in such things as the weather, moisture problems, time taken for each prep to cure and dry, school holidays, accessing paint and accessories, crowd control and so forth.

By Easter up to 80% of the engine had been completed. It has taken 16 litres of Primer, 10 litres of Galv Special base coat, 4 litres of Base thinners, 10 litres of Methylated spirit thinners, 28 litres of Mineral Turpentine for thinning and washing down and 44 litres of top coat. Not to mention angle grinding disks, sanding equipment, heavy duty spray outfits, generators, etc. etc.

Once the engine is painted, that will complete stage one; stage two will be signage for the story of the engine. The engine was purchased with community funds back in 1975, whereby you were given the opportunity to purchase a part of the engine in principle and given a card with your name, and the part of the engine you owned. In the archive we have a couple of cards, with the purchase of a wheel and a part of a brake.

We have already begun working with Horsham Design and Print for the story boards. We are hoping that stage three will be a roof over the engine to keep it in good order for a long time to come.

Locals and visitors alike will be able to read of the monumental effort of the community and the different local organisations who saw an opportunity and were not daunted by the task. Quite a feat, moving a 112-ton engine from the main line down an embankment onto curved jump rails onto Government Road to the point of curve and then down along McDonald Street along sections of line that were then lifted and placed in front of J539 on its way before reaching its new home the former Apex Park, now fondly known as the train park. Around 100 people took part in the relocation working bees.

A large number of people who took part in 1975 are no longer with us. At the time the *Dimboola Banner* wrote "May it be a fitting memorial to the wonderful spirit of co-operation and assistance that you gave. Look after our Loco; it is for you to enjoy."

It must be said that these current and future projects would not be possible without the generous bequest to the society by a former foundation member in Marvan Haby. Marvan was passionate about Dimboola and its history. He was one of the very earliest members of the historical society and would you also believe he was manager of the Star Theatre

for over 30 years? His primary wish was for the continuation of care for Dimboola's heritage. We owe him a great deal of gratitude.

Marvan's grandparents, accompanied by their two young children, came from the Yorke Peninsula in 1887 in a horse-drawn German-type wagon with hessian over hoops. It was said that the eldest boy came by train with his father's older parents as he was the "heir" and shouldn't be subject to the deprivations of overland travel.

**Evelyn King, Secretary**

### Glen Thompson History Group (S)



Since our last AGM at the National Wool Museum in Geelong, the Glen Thompson Group has been fairly quiet. Our members have just quietly plodded away in the background doing some research, more for our own records than for clients.

In May a group of us spent an afternoon at the Dunkeld Museum. A lovely 14 year-old young lady gave us a tour. She was very informative and it was lovely to see someone so young interested in history to this extent. She is assisting the museum to introduce QR codes, something we may look into

further down the track. Due to the overlapping situation of inter-marriages between small towns, a few of our members came away from the afternoon with information about their Glen Thompson family members. It was a great afternoon of information sharing and socialising.

October saw us run an event for Seniors Week. Entitled "Memories", we invited people to share their memories of events and living in and around Glen Thompson. We combined this with the Anglican Church so people could have a look at the murals with one of the church elders explaining them. Morning and afternoon teas were also offered. We had attendees from South Australia, Hamilton and, of course, Glen Thompson.

We have received quite a few donations to our collections over the past year. Some items are extras to a collection we have already received from that same donor while others have been from new donors, usually a child passing on things their now deceased parent has left behind and a few others are from people trying to downsize but loath to simply throw something away. Some of the donations have been of brand-new books which assist with adding to our knowledge of our surrounding area or confirm information we already have.

One of the new donations has ties back to an item I brought to the attention of both WVAHS and even some of our Shire representatives.....Time Capsules.



This Australia Day saw a community time capsule raised in our Lions Park. Sadly we had only about six of the original attendees present. The wife of the former President of our Community Association and former Shire Councillor (pre-amalgamation) was invited to not only assist with raising this capsule but she raised our flag and one of her daughters gave a presentation on their family as a sixth generation member of the Mitchell family. We advertised the fact that we were to raise the time capsule and

anticipated, based on the last few years of attendance, for around 30 people. We were thrilled when we ended up with almost 100 people in attendance, especially with the heat that day. While the History Group wasn't the actual group running this event, I was at first wondering if I would mention it in this report but we were given the time capsule container itself and the majority of its contents for our collection. It had been laid in 2001 and so was 25 years old and contained a varied group of items: newspapers (both local and state), letters written to family members 25 years in advance, coins, photos and write ups of some of the groups and associations which were about at that time, and more.

As with many of these donations, we are yet to properly catalogue, photograph and home these new items but we look forward to putting them out on display.

We have put in for a few grants but were sadly unsuccessful in 2025. Hopefully this will change for us in 2026. Our AGM will be held later this month.

**Tracey Potatau-Wright, Secretary**



### Warrnambool and District Historical Society (S)



There have been some developments in our long running accommodation saga, though nothing of substance yet. We continue to hold discussions with City Council officers.

Apologies to those of you who have visited over the past twelve months. You will know that parking in the area is dire due to the construction of railway stabling yards for the V-locity trains. The works lately seem to involve digging up the TAFE carpark every two or three weeks. VLine claims the work will finish in six weeks. However, the reconstruction of the TAFE building to become a new technical school across the road has begun so the disruption is set to continue.

Stage 3 of our digitisation of *Standards* campaign is proceeding....slowly, but we are expecting that the 1890s *Standards* will be on Trove soon. The master tapes were sent to Canberra in the middle of last year; however it was our biggest batch yet so that might be what is slowing the process down. We are listed on the "Coming Soon to Trove" page but not soon enough for us!

We are participating in the National Trust Heritage Festival again this year. The theme is Change, so we are preparing a rolling photo exhibition 'Through Time's Lens' which will be showing in the reading room of the Library and Learning Centre for two days on Friday 1 and Saturday 2 May.

Things have been busy on the publications front. We have two more booklets in the *Hotels* series in the final stages of editing. *Faithful Unto Death*, James 'Bim' Affleck's book documenting the 178 men and women whose names appear on the Christ Church Honor Board, was launched at the church in November. Bim has now begun research for his eighth book in the *Soldier Settlement* series on the Mortlake area. This was precipitated by a recent visit by five Mortlake HS members to our research centre.

**Janet Macdonald, President**

### Ararat and District Historical Society (Langi Morgala Museum) (WM)



Our last year at the Museum has gone along successfully. This is mainly due to the commitment and efforts shown by the volunteers who help out every week. None of it could happen without

them. We were sad to lose our volunteer Jane who died after a long illness and who had been with us for many years.

Seniors Month in October saw a "Remember When" fashion parade at the Museum, with tickets sold out. This was largely the work of Marion McAdie and her group of willing volunteers. Fashions were modelled by Marion's family members and friends and Museum volunteers. It was a great way to promote the Museum and also raise some funds to keep the Museum going.

We received a grant from Ararat Rural City Council for a Schools project – called "Linking our Future and Our Past". Over the past year more than 200 students and staff came through the Museum, with five schools participating. The children really enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the history of Ararat and even found items on display related to grandparents and great-grandparents.

We also received local grants for a set of power tools for maintenance purposes and a computer upgrade.

Over the year we made an effort to do more print advertising and keep our Facebook page updated.

We'd love to see more locals taking the time to come into the Museum but are finding this a difficult task. The Fashion Parade and Schools project went some way to improving that but it continues as a work in progress.

We have connected with Neil Gibbs, the owner of the historic bluestone *Berrambool* homestead (pictured below), built in 1864 by John Moffatt. The homestead is located west of Lake Bolac between Wickliffe and Chatsworth over-looking the Hopkins River. We have sold or loaned surplus items to Neil and will be visiting the homestead in May to see how the restoration is progressing.



We have set up a new Marching Girls display, a popular activity in Ararat and Stawell during the 1960s.

We are looking forward to the next twelve months of activity at the Museum.

**Kerrin Gellie, President**

### Nhill Silo Heritage Project (WM)

It is five years since the Nhill Silo Heritage Project (NSHP) was created to protect, preserve and restore the buildings formerly known as Noske's Flour Mill. With the enthusiastic assistance of a dedicated group of volunteers, a slow - but steady - breath of life is being injected back into this iconic structure.

An example of this is the refurbishment work that has taken place in the main hall (Fry Hall) where a large section of flooring has been removed and the rotted stumps, bearers and floorboards have been renewed.

During the Nhill Heritage weekend, held last October and organised by the NSHP, a display entitled Postcards of Nhill was hosted in the main building. The successful exhibition was created by Fiona Lane and Daryl Meek and explored Nhill's past through the words and images of those who were there.

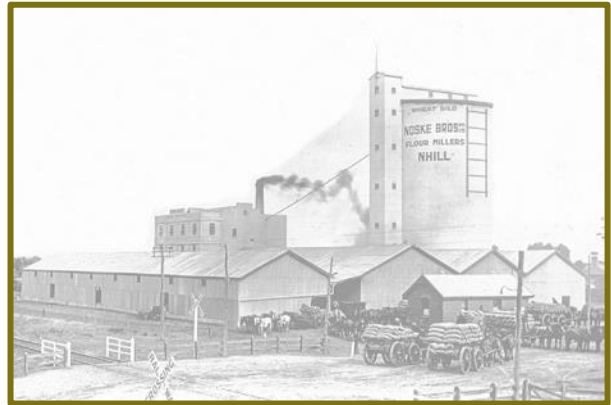
Our PROV grant for resources suitable for the storage and preservation of archival material is coming to conclusion. The grant was used primarily to acquire suitable storage for the hundreds of plans and blueprints from the many Noske Mills along with donated objects relating to the Mill.

Ahrens' gift of the original four-storey flour mill and long storage shed has occurred. We are currently waiting for confirmation of title transfer before work begins in these areas.

The erection of the post and rail fence across the front of the site will soon commence. The necessary timber has been acquired and cut to shape. An appeal will soon commence encouraging supporters to purchase sections of the fencing.

In the meantime – work goes on!

**Daryl Meek, Vice President**



Below: the Silo floor



***And finally.....***



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# Historic hosting gig brings in heaps for meeting

A HISTORIC meeting has helped St Arnaud in a number of ways, bringing new faces and money to the area.

The Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies hold its annual general meeting last weekend and was hosted by the St Arnaud and District Historical Society.

Beverly Reid of the St Arnaud Historical Society said while hosting such an event can be logistically challenging for the host society, doing so is an excellent way for a group to showcase not only its collection but also its local region.

"The feedback from all attending was that the event was extremely well organised by our Society and attendees enjoyed exploring our local heritage sites and learning about our district's history," she said.

"With so many staying over for two nights it was also of economic benefit to St Arnaud."

The WVAHS, formed in 1963, is a network of 53 historical societies throughout Western Victoria with member groups spanning the area from Ouyen and Swan Hill to Port Fairy, Colac, Maryborough and up to Echuca.

It is, both in terms of geography and membership, the largest network of historical societies in Victoria.

The network is divided into three Zones and each April a different Zone hosts the AGM. The

Wimmera Mallee Zone comprises 19 societies including, in the Horsham region, Arapiles, Dimboola, Nhill, Minyip, Warracknabeal, Jeparit, Rainbow, Horsham and Hopetoun societies.

At the meeting Craige Proctor, member of the Jeparit Historical Society and Wimmera Mallee Pioneer Museum at Jeparit, was re-nominated as President with Helen Curkpatrick of Haven continuing in the role of Secretary/Treasurer, a position she has held since 2010.

The WVAHS Executive Committee comprises people from Horsham, Stawell, Landsborough, Nhill, Jeparit, Charlton, Glen Thompson and Mortlake.

"Despite the challenges of distance and the current uncertainty around fuel, around 65 people travelled to St Arnaud for the



The executive team of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies



Meeting attendees at the AGM in the St Arnaud Town Hall

meeting," St Arnaud and District Historical Society President Len Reid said.

"The WVAHS remains an active and supportive network for history struggling to carry out their work in the community."

"While a number can't attend, this is not due to lack of interest or commitment but often because the members are running their own activities or opening their societies and museums. Historical Societies are dynamic and highly active organisations."

It was a full program months in the making with the WVAHS leadership liaising with the St

Arnaud Historical Society to ensure all attendees benefited from the event.

"These events take a great deal of organisation and communication but they are always well attended and supported," Mr Proctor said.

"For more than sixty years they have enabled member groups to share knowledge and insights and they continue to do so."

Also attending was Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM, President of the Federation of Historical Societies. Dr Triolo often attends WVAHS events as she is highly



Society members at the Pebble Church at Carapooee

committed to working with and supporting groups throughout 'the west'. After a day of meetings including the AGM, many attended the dinner, at which St Arnaud local historian and publisher Scott Smith, spoke.

Most attendees stayed over to take part in a coach tour on the Sunday morning which showcased some of St Arnaud's heritage sites including the unique Pebble Church at Carapooee and the Kooreh Hall.

The group looks forward to planning ahead for the year.

The report of our AGM published in the *North Central News Herald* (St Arnaud), 22 April 2026, kindly provided by Beverly Reid of the St Arnaud and District Historical Society. (There is an error in the caption for the main photo which is not of the WVAHS Executive but of those who attended the excursion to the Kooreh Memorial Hall.)