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Treasurer Liz Chambers: 03 52314572 Annual Membership fee: \$20.00 per person – due

in May

Historical Society Meetings are held monthly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday at 7.30pm, except in

January,

and during *winter* on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday at 1.30pm.

Open Hours for the public at COPACC History Centre: Thursday, Friday and Sunday 2.00pm to 4.00pm

### Dates for your Diary

**Wednesday April 23<sup>rd</sup>** 7.30pm at the History Centre. **Members Project** on “*Colac Then and Now*”, a timeline of selected Colac businesses, sites, public buildings etc. . Members invited to share the workload for this new book idea.

**Wednesday May 28<sup>th</sup>** our AGM 7.30pm. Please come and show your support for the Society.

**Saturday June 28<sup>nd</sup>** at 1.30pm . Speaker- N. Houghton

**\*\* News letters-** Some members have provided adequate stamped envelopes thankyou, but it would save money and time if the newsletter could be emailed to as many as possible. I have email addresses for Jane, Carolyn, Norman, Gwenyth, Peter, Barry, Dawn, Craig, Lynne & Robert. Any others can email to me, Ellise, at [elimalee@southernphone.com.au](mailto:elimalee@southernphone.com.au)

*Working Bees at the History Centre are on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays 10.00-12.00am.*

### **President's Report**

In the last month Dawn and I have attended two significant events.

On March 15<sup>th</sup> we attended the annual meeting of the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies at Horsham, an umbrella group which is made up of 3 separate regions. Colac belongs to the Southern region and the morning session was a regional meeting where all branches presented a report of their activities. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear of diverse projects, share experiences and gain ideas in order to stimulate interest and preserve local history. Listening to the trials and tribulations of other clubs, I believe our dedicated Colac members are to be congratulated on the amount of areas of endeavour in which we are involved. However by listening to others one realizes how much more could be done with more active members and resources.

With these thoughts in mind *Jen, Craig, Dawn M and I* attended a seminar at RHSV headquarters in Melbourne on March 29 titled ‘*How to Build and Maintain your Membership*’ plus ‘*Opportunities in Information Technology for Historical Societies*’.

Some of the points made by different speakers included

- What is your *Wow factor*?
- We must promote ourselves to councils and the wider community
- We must not be frightened to charge for our services or we will not survive

- Are we sharing the story?
- Family Historians and Local History Groups must work together - the lines are blurred
- Importance of making visitors welcome – Make sure someone talks to new faces.  
Before the next event make sure someone is responsible to invite that person to the next event
- Survey members as to how your club is meeting their needs
- Communicate by email or Facebook to keep people informed
- Have plenty of portfolios and sub-committees to spread the load but define roles
- Forge a partnership with your local library

It is good for us to pause and reflect every now and then on what our club is doing. Is it enjoyable? Is it worthwhile? What should we do differently?

*Robert Missen*

### **Meeting Reports Colac & District Historical Society**

#### February 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Colac P & A Society Heritage Festival.

Although the heat was extraordinary, the various displays at the Colac Showgrounds were excellent, including our own Historical Society Display of books for sale, information and historical items from our great collection. Many people stopped in to chat and to admire the historical display.

#### February 26<sup>th</sup> Welcome Meeting and BBQ

This was a very pleasant evening at the home of Jen and Barry McDonald at 15 Belvedere Drive, Elliminyt. It began warm enough to sit, eat and chat outdoors while admiring the lovely garden and view, and then we moved indoors for the business side of the night and a hot drink. The year ahead holds many challenges for such a small band of dedicated volunteers.

#### March 26<sup>th</sup> Colac Apex Club with guest speakers Ray Thomas and Stuart Osborne

Apex is a service organization which began in Geelong during the 1930s by three Geelong businessmen: John Buchan, Langham Proud and Evan Laird to assist in the personal development of young men aged 18-35 years as struggled during the Depression.

The Colac club was constituted at a dinner meeting held at the *Trocadero Café* in 1935. Initial president was Les Atyeo and secretary Claude Burnett, who both became leading Colac citizens. The first fundraiser was a bonfire and Guy Fawkes Night at Cororooke House.

The first service project was the donation of blood. Apex in Colac worked closely with Council and many Apexians moved on to serve their community as City or Shire councillors.

#### Projects fostered and created by Apexians included:

- Selwyn Park Playground – Corner of Church & Chapel Streets 1974
- Albert Newcombe Park – Elliminyt
- Support for Civilian Widows
- 80-100 tonne firewood cut and delivered annually to people in need
- Food Caravan
- Apex Kindergarten – 1977
- Large input into Tourist Information Centre
- Summit Club for Youth
- ‘Stumpy’ the Train at district carnivals and events.

*Stuart Osborne* joined Apex at age 21. Through Apex he developed confidence in public speaking and proper meeting procedure. Newcomers to Colac were invited to join the club and Apex opened doors to a circle of people who helped both each other and community members.

*Ray Thomas* came to Colac in 1983, joined Apex in 1985 and was quickly involved with the community.

Apex peaked at 700 clubs and 17,000 members throughout Australasia. Colac was club No. 19.

Despite raising the age limit and admitting women, membership has declined and the Colac club has now closed. The demands of modern life and the inability to go out and do things because of O.H.& S. and Insurance issues, plus red tape have all contributed to its demise. Colac Lions has absorbed ex Apex members and recognised their service record, ensuring the continued use of the Apex shed and local icons like 'Stumpy' the train.

NB The History Centre window has been well set up to display the interesting history of Apex in Colac.

One of our members who is a prolific writer, donates to our library a copy of each book as it is published. The following books written and published (with one exception) by Norman Houghton have been donated to the Historical Society:-

#### **BOOKS BY NORMAN HOUGHTON**

Barongarook: A Rural Portrait, Barongarook School Centenary. (1979)

Beech Forest: Capital of the Ridge. (2007)

Beech Forest: Century of the Ridge. (1983)

The Beechy: The Life and Times of the Colac – Beech Forest- Crowes Narrow Gauge Railway, 1901-1962. (1992)

By the Barwon: A History of Forrest and Barramunga. (2005) Also a new edition (2013)

A Century of Country Clay: Selkirk, The First Hundred Years. (1983)

Closed 50 Years Ago: The Colac to Crowes Narrow Gauge Railway, Commemorative Booklet, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012 (2012)

Cross Country: A History of the Ballarat - Skipton and Newtown - Colac Railway, 1883-1985. (1986)

"Drink up, Gents": A History of Colac and District Hotels, 1841 to 2011. (2011)

End of the Line: A History of the Beech Forest to Crowes Extension Railway, 1911-1962. (2011)

Excuse Me, Sisters, Please: A Schoolyard Memoir, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's, Colac, 1953-1965. (2010)

Forrest, The First 85 years. (1976)

Games at the "Ditch": Centenary History of Beech Forrest Ditchley Park Sports Ground, 2011 (2011)

A Gentle Place: The Geelong Club - A Jubilee History, 1859-2009. (2012)

A Grand Parade: 150 years of the Colac and District Pastoral and Agricultural Society, Commemorative Jubilee History of the Years 1859-2009. (2011)

The Onion Line: A History of the Colac to Alvie Railway, 1923-1954. (2012)

The Ridge: A Brief Historical Guide to the West Otways Ridge. (2005)

Sawdust and Steam: A History of the Railways and Tramways of the Eastern Otway Ranges. (1975)

Also a new edition, 1850-2010 (2010)

West Otway's Narrow Gauge. Published by the Light Railways Research Association. (1973)

(Dates of publications in brackets)

*This list was kindly contributed by CDHS Librarian Diana*

*Cowan.*

While sorting items donated to the Colac & District Historical Society over past decades we discovered a very large, pale pink, handmade quilt. It featured 750 white stitched names and various insignias in numerous squares joined with handmade, white, crocheted lace. The story we subsequently unearthed that it was made by the *St John's Ladies Guild in 1895* to be raffled in aid of the Colac Hospital. Apparently it made over 37 pounds for the hospital, which was a good amount in those days. The quilt was later donated to the Historical Society by the *Sydenham family* who we presume won it in the raffle. There are so many interesting items in our collection, many hidden away due to lack of space for their display..... if only they could talk we would learn so much more about the people and the way they lived their lives here in our town and district.

### **What has been in the News?**

#### **Colac Herald.**

**January 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 Former school remembered.** Former *Larpent Primary School* pupils, (M. Middleton, B. Lyness, B. Hickey), were arranging a school reunion to help rekindle old friendships to be held on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Years ago old rolls were used to contact ex pupils whereas now a days Facebook is used to get in touch with old school mates. The school closed in 1996 with 15 pupils in its final year.

**January 31<sup>st</sup> \$7M Bulla expansion lifts Colac economy.** *Colac's Bulla Dairy Foods* will invest \$7 million in a new milk separation plant at the company's Forest St site, to be complete by August.

**Homemade fire truck on display at festival.** Pirron Yallock beef farmer D. Pope has converted a T-model Ford into a fire truck which was on display at *Colac Pastoral and Agricultural Society's annual Heritage Festival* at Colac's showgrounds on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> & 2nd. Mr Pope has also made a miniature Chevrolet army Blitz and a military Land Rover at a scale of one-twelfth the original size.

**February 7<sup>th</sup> Family linked to hall for 4 generations.** *Carpenters' Hall* committee president, D. Robertson is her family's fourth generation to help oversee the hall, 30 kilometres west of Colac. Her grandfather Thomas Anson donated land for the hall which is now celebrating its centenary having opened on *July 24 1913*. It was home to 1940s Crystal Talkies movie screenings.

**February 21<sup>st</sup> Appeal to protect historic pine tree.** Elliminyt's C. Buchanan said the Lone Pine, a descendent of the original Gallipoli one, had outgrown its tree guard at Colac's Memorial Square. The original Lone Pine at the site of the *Battle of Lone Pine in 1915* was destroyed in battle but Australian soldiers collected its pine cones and took them home to Australia.

**February 21st Water fountain evokes history.** *Ss Johns' Anglican Church Gymnastic Club* presented a water fountain to the town of Colac in 1923. The Harcourt granite fountain in Memorial Square cost 90 pounds and was officially handed to the shire on Jan 21 1924 after the club had disbanded.

**February 14<sup>th</sup> Neighbour says school has become fire hazard.** A concerned neighbour has reported that the old high school is neglected and falling apart. Colac Otway Shire also has concerns about the state of the State Government-owned building.

**February 24<sup>th</sup> MP says no proof site was donated.** Polwarth MP Terry Mulder is supporting the State Government's plan to sell Colac's former high school site in Murray St. He also said Colac Otway Shire Council needed to show a "genuine need" for the buildings. The council hoped to receive at least 2 thirds of the site. The Education Department however was yet to find conclusive evidence that the community bought the land in 1911 before donating it to the government to build the school. A proposal to turn the site into a *history museum featuring Colac's vintage trucks and vehicles* has gained community support.

**March 10th A blast from the past.** A cannon in the Colac Botanic Gardens is a relic from Victoria's early naval history. It came from *HMVS Nelson in 1908*. The nelson was launched in Britain in

1814 for the Royal Navy and having never seen service it was given to the Victorian Navy as a training ship in 1864.

**March 17th Project raises money to help historic graves.** Colac historian *Dorrie Lawson*, 91, has been researching *Wyelangta cemetery* since 1975 and is working with *Otways Districts Historical Society and the Colac Family History Group* to restore the site for visiting families. The cemetery closed in 1939 when the water authority bought everybody out and all the books were lost or destroyed. All the 62 grave mounds have been lost except for 5 that had headstones. Now 53 of them have been named. It is hoped that the group will put up a monument naming those who are buried there.

**March 24<sup>th</sup> Saleyards' new roof welcomed.** Colac Stock Agents Association president Terry Dove said the *\$1.5-million Colac Livestock Selling Centre roof* construction was "a wonderful thing for the Western district." The roof which Ballarat based MKM Construction built covers 7,300 square metres, includes solar panels and collects rain for use at the centre.

**April 2<sup>nd</sup> Fighting to stop disposal of school.** Colac Otway Shire Council says it has found concrete evidence in the old Shire of Colac records to support a claim on the former Colac High School site. The documents from 1909 and 1910 show the Shire of Colac paid \$1,300 for the land plus \$200 for improvements. It was then to be an Agricultural High School. "We will continue to fight for this land to be returned to its rightful owners- the ratepayers of Colac Otway Shire", Mr Small Said.

**COLAC and DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2.00 to 4.00 pm**

	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
<b>May</b>	1st D. Missen 8th I. Barlow 15th G. Splatt 22nd J. Knight 29 <sup>th</sup> Committee?	2nd C. Pink 9th G. Bray 16th E. Chambers 23rd B. & J. McDonald 30th Committee?	4 <sup>th</sup> A. McIntosh 11th D. Cowan & M. Facey 18th N. Houghton 25th M. Facey & D. Cowan
<b>June</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> D. Missen 12 <sup>th</sup> I. Barlow 19 <sup>th</sup> G. Splatt 26th J. Knight	6 <sup>th</sup> C. Pink 13 <sup>th</sup> G. Bray 20th E. Chambers 27 <sup>th</sup> B & J McDonald	1st A. McIntosh 8 <sup>th</sup> D. Cowan & M. Facey 15th N. Houghton 22nd M. Facey & D. Cowan 29th Committee?
<b>July</b>	3rd D. Missen 6 <sup>th</sup> A. McIntosh 10 <sup>th</sup> I. Barlow 13 <sup>th</sup> D. Cowan & M. Facey 17th G. Splatt 20 <sup>th</sup> N. Houghton 24th J. Knight 31 <sup>st</sup> Committee?	4th C. Pink 11 <sup>th</sup> G. Bray 18 <sup>th</sup> E. Chambers 25th B. & J. McDonald	27 <sup>th</sup> M.

