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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 4th Wednesday at 7.30pm, except in January,
and during *winter* on the 4th Saturday at 1.30pm.

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

Working Bees at the History Centre are on the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays 10.00-12.00am

Forthcoming Events-

Saturday January 31 & Sunday February 1 –Heritage Festival at Colac Showgrounds,

Joint display with Family History Group.

Wednesday February 4, 7.30pm

- Joint Meeting with Family History Group.

Saturday February 14, 10am to 12.30pm

-Geelong & District Historical Association Meeting, 10-12.30 am,
Hosted by Bellarine Historical Society Drysdale.

****Wednesday February 25, 6pm**

- **BBQ and General Meeting** at home of Barry & Jen McDonald's
residence, Elliminyt.

Bring along any 35mm slides of local or historic interest.

Wednesday March 25, 7.30pm

- **Speaker: Selwyn McAdam** 'Reminiscences of a Colac Butcher'.

Wednesday April 22, 7.30pm

- **General Meeting.**

President's Notes

This newsletter brings several insightful articles into our local history and the effort our contributors and editors devote into researching and writing articles for others to enjoy is greatly appreciated.

The New Year has also brought about a re-organization of some of the furnishings in the History Centre, another step in providing a *more integrated, attractive and user-friendly area*. Thanks go to all members who continue to devote time and energy to the workings of our Society, even when the doors are closed to the public over the Christmas break. It is hoped that we will soon be able to procure some new, sturdy and functional bookcases to further enhance our collections.



An exciting email arrived just prior to Christmas from Ellen Blunden, the great granddaughter of John Blunden, father of Florence, who married Andrew Murray. She has generously offered the Society a small occasional table 70cm high which had originally been part of the furniture of 'Barongarook House' built by Hugh Murray. This authenticated link with Colac's first settler had been passed down through several generations of her family. I am currently arranging for the table to be freighted to Colac from Sydney.

Finally, I have a request. Does any member know where in the History Centre we can locate the missing file containing an index of articles published in our Society Newsletter over the years?

Robert Missen

The Historical Society has a number of paintings to sell by NANCY MCGARVIE who was Secretary from 1977 to 1991. Please contact President Robert or Secretary Jen to see them if you are interested in purchasing one or more.

Meetings Report- Christmas Break-up December 10th- Members who missed this, missed out on an exceptional meal at little cost. It included a variety of cold meats and mouth-watering salads of all kinds brought along by members followed by Liz's delicious plum pudding and custard. John as MC brought us a Christmas quiz, stories and led us in Carol singing accompanied by Dawn on a keyboard. Our window into COPACC featured Santa and some toys from the Olden Days.

What has been in the News?

Colac Herald.

July 30th 2014- Botanic vision on exhibition. (History in the making?) A median strip through the centre of Colac's Bromfield Street would feature medium-sized trees to create a botanic feel in the area. Landscaping is a key feature of *proposed revitalisation plans for Colac's city centre* and a section of Gellibrand Street will be a shared zone. Plans for other streets include median planting, botanic themed sculpture, seating, a new pedestrian bridge over Barongarook Creek, decorative paving at key crossing points, possible public artworks, additional carparks or loss of carparks, undergrounding of existing power lines and much more.

October 17th 2014- Fonterra gifts parcel of land. Fonterra Australia will offer one hectare of land on Corangamite Lake Road for public space which might become a park. Mayor Lyn Russell said the land donation was a fitting dedication to the community which had supported the factory.

October 29th 2014- Childhood memory helps solve mystery. Thanks to the childhood memory of *Alan Carew*, a lifelong resident of Eurack, a decades-long mystery surrounding a missing tree at Eurack's Avenue of Honour has been solved. A tree is to be planted by the Colac Otway Shire for *Private Ted Taylor* who served during WW1 including battles at Gallipoli. The original tree was removed by the shire to create a turnaround for cars.

November 10th 2014- Colac district soldier receives avenue tree. Private Taylor's family, including daughters Alice McKellar and Marjory Fox, joined Colac Otway Shire Council officials and Returned Services League members for the tree planting at the Eurack Avenue of Honour. This avenue is of significant historical value being the first of its kind in Victoria.

November 26th 2014-Cemetery's monument unveiled. Years of collaboration between 2 Colac district History groups have resulted in the installation of a new monument at Wyelangta Cemetery on Sunday 16th November. Colac historian *Dorrie Lawson*, 91, has been researching names of people buried at Wyelangta Cemetery since 1975, working with *Otways Districts Historical Society and the Colac Family History Group* to preserve the site's history and the people buried in it. A monument with the names of 53 people known to be buried there has been erected and new gates and a sign have been erected also. *Otway Districts Historical Group* president *Anthony Zappelli* helped champion the project.

The Otway Light, November 14th 2014- A list of the names of people interred at *Wyelangta cemetery* on the Otway Ridge includes 26 babies aged from stillborn to age 1, between the years of 1907 and 1938. Family names of Otway pioneers include Altman, Bachelor, Baird, Close, Crump, Davey, Deppeler, Devitt, Duncan, Eslick, Foote, Francis, Gard, Green, Haigh, Harrington, Harris, Henley, Hill, Hobson, Holien, Humphrey, Kearney, Knox, Kohring, Lawson, Levelin, Mackenzie, Moodie, Munro, Murchison, Nolan, Pappin, Prewitt, Pugh, Richardson, Ritchie, Scott, Speight, Sprague, Stafford, Suckling, Tyrell and Young

Colac Herald

December 8th 2014-Windmills shipped to Malaysia. A Malaysian tourist has bought 2 Colac-made windmills after spotting them in a paddock while holidaying in the region. Colac's *Bryan Windmills* shipped them to Malaysia to be used to provide water from a spring to a village.

January 7th 2015- Colac Botanic gardens 150th Anniversary. An Australia day celebration will kick off a year of activities to mark the Colac Botanic Gardens' 150th anniversary. The *Friends of the Botanic Gardens* have been working with Colac Otway Shire Council officials to organise events to mark the milestone, including the launch of a book by *Helen Paatsch*, detailing the history of the Colac attraction.

**Modern Passenger Buses to Serve
Colac Residents from To-day.**

A further step in Colac's transport facilities will be made today, when the passenger bus now serving town residents and school children will be replaced by two of the most modern buses available.

The buses will be operated by Messers, W. Caldwell and Stan Gainger on a much improved time-table.



The buses, delivery of which was taken last week, are of the "step-in" type, and each has seating accommodation for 31 passengers.

The bodies were built on Bedford chassis by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation at Fishermans Bend on aircraft production lines. They are constructed of duralium, a metal much lighter and stronger than steel.

Visibility of all passengers is assured by the 42 armor-plate glass windows, which can be operated as desired by each passenger.

Both front and rear doors can only be operated by the driver, thus ensuring a maximum of safety and allowing passengers quick entry and exit. It is impossible to open the doors while the buses are moving, as they are vacuum- controlled by the motor.

This is the first and only type of bus in Victoria fitted with this modern amenity.

Gainger Bros., of Beeac, now have four of these buses (pictured above). The other two will be used on their district service.

The improved time-table for the town service is advertised in today's issue, and will come into operation at 8.30 this morning.

It is intended to run special services on Monday, Wednesday and Friday night to cater for "picture" crowds. The Saturday night bus for picture patrons will continue to run to Colac West and Elliminyt as usual.

Messers, Gainger and Caldwell are to be commended on giving this excellent service to the public.

LAKE CORANGAMITE EARLY BOATING

(By Norman Houghton)

Continuing on from last issues' **"Lake Colac Early Boating"** - part two of Norman Houghton's writings on the subject **"Water Borne Trade"** continues this issue, with photos added by Craig Pink.

Part three of Norman's writings on **"Water Borne Trade,"** concludes next issue with **"Cream Boating"** - which covers the early Water Borne Trade on the Gellibrand river.

There was a limited range of commercial boating on Lake Corangamite, dating from the gold rush period. The pioneer venture came about when two experienced sailors with the picturesque names of Brighton Bill and Jack the Gooser built from local timbers a substantial vessel. The boat had a single mast carrying two sails, according to a 1921 reminiscence. Its purpose was to cart fence posts from the forests south of the lake across the lake to Foxhow to the pastoral properties on the treeless plains thereabouts. The distance by water was 30 km's or the equivalent of travelling, say, from Colac almost to Cressy so the boat represented a suitable form of transport in what was then a road-less environment.

The boat could carry 400 posts at a total weight of 40 tons. The landing at the north end of the lake was at the mouth of Mack's Creek. Folk memory says that the boat also did a trade in passengers making for Camperdown from Geelong in the days when there was no east-west road through the Stony Rises from Colac to Camperdown. The sources mention no specific date of operation but it would probably have been the late 1850s to early 1860s. Jack the Gooser later worked as a farm labourer at Warrion and ended his days at John Morrison's property.

There is a suggestion in the sources that the boat was used until about the 1890s for local work. The boat was eventually abandoned on the shore of the lake, at the north-west side of Carson's island, with the stern-planks lying on the ground and the bow section on a slip. The Carson's noted that the planks were properly formed, being round on the bottom and flat on the top as if shaped by an adze. The mast was eventually recycled by the Carson's and used as a wireless aerial at the farm house. The final remains of the boat were washed away during the floods of the early 1950s.

The second commercial boat business occurred in 1876 when Pirron Yallock interests put together a syndicate and brought a small steamer, called the *Lusitania*, from Geelong to ply the lake on pleasure trips. This seems overly ambitious for the proposed tourist market at that time and maybe explains why the boat was used to ferry timber across the lake from south to north in the same way as the earlier Brighton Bill boat. It is not known for how long the *Lusitania* plied the lake.

The next pleasure boat was placed on the lake in 1906 by H. Vaughan of Pirron Yallock. No further details are known to the writer but the Vaughan boat was the last commercial effort for a long while.

Commercial boating returned to the lake in the flood years of the 1960s. In 1960 three farms were cut off on the isthmus at Wool Wool and used a row boat to take in their empty milk cans from the CDC truck on the closest passable road. Next year Norm Coates' farm at Corangamite was cut into segments, isolating an onion crop so Coates made a punt and boated out the bagged onions one ton at a time.



ABOVE – Two photos from April 1961 showing Norm Coates' onions being winched over 400 yards to reach dry land again, after Lake Corangamite rose over 4½ feet, turning 90 of his 160 acres into submerged land beneath the lake.

Left photo shows from left – Norm Coates and Jim Parker. Right photo shows from left - Colac Herald reporter, Mrs. Coates, Norm Coates and Jim Parker.

(Photos from – Historical Society files - Bela Bard Brucker collection)

Swimming in Lake Colac.

Dawn Peel

The first record of swimming in the lake can be found in the *Colac Observer* of 2 February 1867, when it was reported, under a heading Colac Aquatic Sport, that a series of swimming matches had taken place at the boat house, Lake Colac on the previous Saturday. The report continued:

There was a fair attendance of spectators despite the attraction of a cricket match the same day. The first match was for men, distance of 200 yards. There were three competitors, Geo Thomas, John James and Cornelius O'Brien. It was a good match. James overtook the others and won. The next match, for 100 yards, also had three entrants, Sisl, Archer and Robertson. Archer came first. There were no entries for the boys under 12 match.

Diving. *John James, Geo Thomas, Duncan Robertson and D. Archer were the competitors. James made the greatest distance under water, about 20 yards.*

This being the first occasion that sports of this kind have taken place on the lake, their inauguration maybe said to have been marked with considerable success.

These Colac competitions were part of a wider developing interest in competitive swimming developing about this time. The Victoria Swimming Club was formed in 1861 and Geelong swimming matches held in 1867. This interest led to the development of baths where men, and women too in separate areas, could swim and be shielded from the public view. Prior to this there had been many vocal objections from members of the public to the sight of nude or partially nude bodies (male bodies of course at that time), particularly as young men took to the water. The term 'swimming pool' was not commonly used in the nineteenth century. 'Baths' was the most often used term for any of the activities which involved the immersion of the body in water, and many baths combined both individual personal baths with a swimming area. 'Ballarat Baths', for example, were built in 1865. It seems likely the first record found of baths in Lake Colac fitted this mode.

Mrs Mary Mitchelmore obtained a bathing-house licence and by 1872 the baths were established opposite the end of Grant Street. It is not totally clear whether these baths were dual purpose, providing both baths for personal cleanliness and swimming, but from the advertisements it seems likely that they were. As well as advertising a family season ticket for two guineas, a single ticket for one guinea, one dozen baths at three shillings, and school children at one shilling per dozen, there was also advertised a single bath at a separate cost. Mrs Mitchelmore was 'in attendance daily on females from 8.30 am until 4 pm'. During this time she also boiled in a copper the towels which were supplied to patrons'. When the baths opened in October for the 1875-76 season, the initial advertisement carried a testimonial from a number of the well-established gentlemen of the town:

We hereby certify that we have derived great benefit from bathing in Lake Colac at the Colac Baths. We can confidently recommend the Baths for those seeking health and recreation.

It was signed by Thomas Rae, LRCSR, Deputy Medical Officer, R. Tassell M.D., J. G. Jennings, A. Hamilton, G. Hall, A. H. Moore, W. W. Greene, G.T. Turner, H. M. Hearn, H. A. Whyte, C. M. Farrington.

With the backing of the medical profession and widespread concerns about hygiene, sanitation and cleanliness, swimming had continued to grow in popularity during the second half of the 19th century. With this list of gentlemen the Colac endorsement was consistent with these sentiments in the wider Australian community. As well as the two medical men and a pharmacist, the signatories included two bank managers, the clerk of courts, two ministers of religion, and three well respected businessmen. Endorsement indeed!

William Van Sommer, a visitor staying in Colac January 1880, recorded walking through the gardens to the lake one hot Monday early in January, where, before breakfast, he 'had a bathe'. The next day he had intended to repeat this but found it was ladies day. There are few early references to women bathing in the lake, and certainly all the early competitions were exclusively male events.



These were the men's baths, pictured with a diving board at the end, and with towels drying along the rails. Women's baths were later built several hundred yards to the east. These structures had disappeared by 1900.

*Colac and District Historical Society,
Photo card 360.*

By 1881 a Colac swimming club had been formed and some competitions held, and by February 1882 club members were planning a meeting for the coming month. Mr Mitchelmore was to be paid for the use of baths, and labour and boat. Alexander Hamilton had been around collecting donations for prizes. These competitions proved to be a success and the organisers had big ideas for the future, as the local paper revealed:

The second annual swimming matches in Connexion with the Colac Swimming club were held today and proved highly successful. There was a very good attendance of spectators, and each event was watched with interest. In consequence of the encouragement received, it is intended to hold a grand match next year, the programme to contain sufficiently large prizes to attract competitors from all parts of the colony.

Thursday 9 March 1882,

Like swimming competitions in other colonial places in this period, there were many novelty events. All races were for males. In addition to a handicap race of 150 yards, the Colac handicap of 300 yards there was a youths' race, Siamese race, a clothes race in full dress with boots on, a diving race in which the one who went the furthest without surfacing was the winner, a somersault race in which entrants were to perform six somersaults during the race, and a cigar race (50 yards if rough and 75 yards if the water smooth) in which the contestants had to carry a lighted cigar. Swimming continued to be a novelty feature of the regatta in coming years.

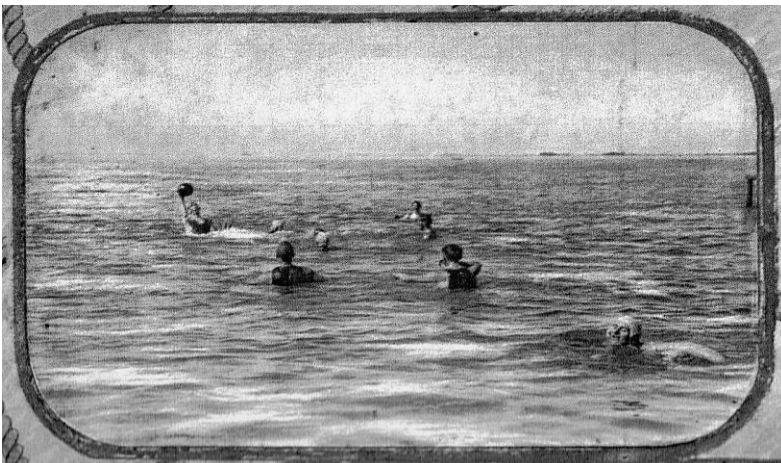
The Mitchelmores gave up the baths in the mid-1880s, and in 1887 Mr Grigg applied for the licence to run them. Apparently he, too, found it impossible to run a profitable business there. Later the shire council erected dressing sheds on the foreshore for men and women.

The council was probably partly prompted in this move by letters to the press such as one in 1912 where the writer was busy, as earlier ones had been, in guarding the sensibilities of the ladies of the town. The writer objected to the way bathing was permitted near the jetty. He continued: *'The young men certainly wear neck to knee bathing costumes, but of such thin make that they may as well be naked, and when the ladies see these men and boys occupying the jetty they will not go on it. There is a bathing shed on the west side for men, but they do not often use it.'* (Colac Reformer 31/01/12)

Things had not improved five years later when another correspondent complained that *Conditions in which bathing is carried on at the lake is nothing short of scandalous. For some reason the Shire Council has closed the dressing sheds on the foreshore set aside for males, and bathers have had recourse to dressing on the sand in full view of anyone parading on the pier.* (Colac Reformer 13/01/17.)

These swimmers also caused a problem, it was claimed, for boaters using the jetty as well as for fishermen. These problems were nothing new. In 1898 it had been noted that the council was to confine swimming to certain limits. The townspeople, it was said, were 'scandalised by the promiscuous bathing' and urged the council to take some action.

The years between 1909 and 1914 appear to have been the heyday for organised swimming in the lake, as the water levels rose, following a dry period from the late 1890s. The Colac Amateur Swimming Club was formed, and with the widespread interest in swimming in Victoria, the Colac club participated in Victorian Amateur Swimming Association competitions. For a few years, groups of metropolitan swimmers came to Colac by train to participate in the competitions held in association with the annual regatta. While there were serious swimming contests, novelty events remained part of this and similar competitions. An egg and spoon race was one example.



Men swimming at a Lake Colac regatta in the early 20th century.

Image by Fred Meyer, 1910, Colac and District Historical Society Document Box 97.

In March 1914 a group of 50 boys who had been coached by local teacher Mr Dobson took part in swimming competitions after they had been taught to swim fifty yards, dive, float and 'restore the apparently drowned'. However there was no reported outcome of a visit to Colac of Miss Cox of the Education Department who held a meeting to promote the value of girls being taught to swim. The Education Department had introduced swimming into the curriculum from 1898 but no records of its early implementation in Colac have been found.

Information about female swimming in the lake at any time is also hard to find. Being able to swim was looked at with approval, as a comment on Mrs Pearson who, in 1883, was able to rescue herself after tripping from the jetty into the lake

demonstrated. Although in Victoria the idea of the benefits to women of (non-competitive) swimming were seen in a positive light, it was most likely to be women of the middle and upper classes were able to indulge in the activity. As it was long considered improper for women to swim outside baths there was the cost of paying to use the facilities to be considered.

Another deterrent to women actively swimming or even learning to swim was the heavy costumes it was considered necessary for them to wear. Although Geelong had an active Ladies Swimming Club from 1900 no such group has been found to have existed in Colac. However, over the same period men were obviously catered for. In 1904 Tulloh's Colac store listed 'bathing costumes' in a list of men's wear available. In 1910 another store had 'Gents Lake Bathing Costumes', and Bilsons listed neck to knee bathing costumes, amongst their 'Gentlemen's Hot Weather Necessities'.

After 1914 the fortunes of swimming fluctuated. It fell off during the Great War and the falling level of the lake contributing to the decline in interest. The lake level began to rise again from the mid-1920s, and with it came a renewed interest in swimming there. In 1927 the Rowing Club responded to this with holding a learn to swim week, with the expressed hope that 'every boy and girl can learn to swim'.

The advent of sewerage in 1928, with the treated material being discharged into the lake, became a significant deterrent to many swimmers, and this, combined with the promotion of the health benefits of swimming, led to the start of a campaign for a municipal pool in the town. There continued to be intermittent reports of young men defying the current view of the water quality and swimming in the lake. Extremely low water levels in the 1940s put a stop to this for some time. In 1944 a pool was developed in Wallace Street. This was to prove popular.



The Wallace Street pool in the mid-1940s. The railway line is in the background.

Colac and District Historical Society, Photo card 180.

The 1950s brought a new focus on the lake as a venue for swimming. Meredith Park, on the eastern shore had been popular, particularly with Beeac residents, in the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1954 the Colac Shire Council built new dressing sheds there for bathers. In Colac in 1955 'Learn to Swim' classes were held in the lake and by now girls were truly in the picture. Mrs Hendriks is still remembered as the instructor by several local women who were part of these classes 60 years ago. The prospect for the use of the lake must have been positive, as a Life Saving Club was formed there in February 1955 (and effected the rescue of a boy in trouble off the jetty the week after its formation). The Apex Club supported the Learn to Swim campaigns, and in 1957, 90 participants received their certificate, followed by 200 young swimmers in 1958.

But February 1958 also brought bad news for lake users. Children learning to swim in the lake were contracting eye infections and skin rashes. The health Inspector tested the water and found it 'contaminated with faecal matter of human and animal origin'. A deterrent indeed! The most affected area was said to be on the popular swimming area on the foreshore opposite the Botanic Gardens. The Learn to Swim campaign of November-December that year was cancelled. Casual bathers deserted Lake Colac on hot summer nights to go to a beach at Corunnun on Lake Corangamite. People familiar with the lake - oarsmen, yachtsmen, and nearby residents - are said to have continued to casually bathe in Lake Colac when conditions seemed favourable.

In December 1959, the Colac outdoor swimming pool opened in Gravesend Street – fulfilling a vision of 'baths for Colac' first mentioned in 1910. Thirty-two years later this was superseded by the heated indoor pool at the Colac Bluewater Fitness Centre. But any residents looking to swim in the lake in 2014 or early 2015, while this pool is closed for renovations, would have a hard job. Once again, the water level is low, and it would be a trek over the reeds and mud to even begin to wet one's feet.

Acknowledgements;: This article was written with input from Diana Cowan, Norman Houghton, and Craig Pink, and with information from the files of the Colac and District Historical Society. Also consulted was the Colac newspaper collection held by the Colac and District Historical Society. For a detailed story of the history and development of pools in Colac, see an article 'Sink or Swim' by Norman Houghton in an earlier newsletter.

THE WEST COAST RAILWAY STORY : September 1993 – August 2004 (By Craig Pink)

A story in the November 2013 newsletter acknowledged 20 years since the 19th September 1993 commencement of the first West Coast Railway revenue passenger train service, from Warrnambool to Melbourne. A similar story is repeated here to now commemorate 10 years since the final West Coast Railway revenue passenger train service, which occurred on 31st August 2004.

The Kennett Government was well advanced by early 1993 with its intentions to privatise, and also close some of Victoria's longer distance country railway passenger lines. The railway line from Geelong to Warrnambool was amongst those earmarked for closure under the Kennett Government policies, with the intention of being replaced by privatised road coach (*bus*) services. The Victorian Railway Company Pty. Ltd. was a newly formed privately owned company trading as "West Coast Railway", which was announced in early 1993 as the successful tender for passenger services from Melbourne to Warrnambool. Most, (*including the notable "VINELANDER" from Melbourne to Mildura*) were replaced by road coach services, but West Coast Railway's successful negotiations saw the railway passenger service from Geelong to Warrnambool retained.

The first revenue West Coast Railway passenger service left the Warrnambool railway station at 17.00 (5pm) on 19th September 1993, being appropriately hauled by V-Line locomotive N466 "CITY OF WARRNAMBOOL" and travelled the previous usual route, which ended at Spencer St. Melbourne. A mixture of V-Line "A", "N" and "X" class locomotives were used until West Coast Railway had its own locomotive fleet refurbished. West Coast Railway purchased previously ageing 1950s locomotives from V-Line, along with passenger carriages also dating from the late 1930s, to 1950s era. Locomotives B61, B64, B65, B75, B76, and B80, along with S300, S302, S311 and S312 were initially purchased from V-Line, and transported to West Coast Railway's Ballarat Workshops. Refurbishment took considerable time, with some of the locomotives purchased more for their scrap value/or not in going condition, and only useful as a source of parts. February 1995 saw x V-Line locomotives S300 and B61 (*see photo below*) venture out on an initial trial run to Warrnambool + return, which saw B61 condemned due to excessive noise in its No. 2 end driver's cabin. It was decided not to use the No. 2 end driver's cabin on B61 as the noisy engine blowers were much closer to that cabin's rear wall. It was also decided to install a false wall in the engine room behind B61's No. 1 end driver's cabin, along with suitable insulation, which made travelling much quieter for driving crews. The S class locomotive fleet of West Coast Railway were eventually fitted with the same false wall/insulation as it was so successful in cutting down the intrusive engine noise into the cabin area. B61 re-entered service with only one of its two driver's cabins used, and was rotated like the single ended S class locomotives upon reaching Warrnambool/Spencer St. Locomotives S302, S311, followed later after major refurbishment and returned to regular service, also B76 in March 1997. This now saw locomotives - S300, S302, S311, B61 and B76 all supposedly available for service on the Warrnambool passenger service, operated by West Coast Railway in their striking fleet colours of Blue/White/Yellow. Breakdowns were not only common, but also embarrassing; partly due to the age of the vintage locomotive fleet. Newspapers of the era highlight headlines of breakdowns/mishaps over the eleven years of West Coast Railway passenger service; overheating, over running platforms, even running out of fuel amongst the common mishaps.



ABOVE AT LEFT- Vintage 1950s Diesel electric locomotives S300 and B61 on a preliminary WCR test run, shown here at Colac on 14th February 1995 on the return trip from Warrnambool, on route to Spencer St. Melbourne. This was the first time in over a century that a privately owned locomotive had hauled a passenger train in Victoria, and some 3 weeks before official records say WCR locomotives were first tested on the Warrnambool line. B61 (the trailing locomotive) was condemned due to excessive noise in its No. 2 end drivers cabin as a result of this inaugural WCR owned locomotive test run. Various V-Line carriages were still hired at this point, as complete train sets of WCR carriages were also still under refurbishment after purchase from various sources.

ABOVE AT RIGHT- Steam powered locomotive R711 returned to Colac each Saturday when low fire danger permitted its use, some days R711 ventured alone, while other days came assisted by a Diesel electric B or S class locomotive. Throttle + other relevant controls were adapted from a "disused" B/S class locomotive, which allowed control of the trailing Diesel electric locomotive from the cabin of R711 (first time this had been used). Used sump oil fired R711's boiler, earlier times saw the Colac Fire Brigade fill the locomotives water tender each time it passed thru Colac, until an overhead water filler from the water main was devised which worked well. The two smoke stacks on R711 were a distinct feature of the extra power obtained by WCR on this steam powered locomotive. The extra power came with ongoing maintenance issues which were expensive, but crowds gathered for the spectacular arrival/departure each time it came thru Colac.

Breakdowns aside, West Coast Railway did prove the Kennett government wrong, patronage increased, taking the yearly number of passenger journeys from 270,000, to a peak of 325,000 in 1998. West Coast Railway also brought back to life locomotives B65 as well as B80. B65 was painted in a plain Blue with "WEST COAST RAILWAY" which was aimed at lease to other freight companies in the ongoing privatisation of railways in Victoria and also interstate. B80 appeared in an extremely unlikable paint job of Grey/Yellow/Red with "THE MURRAY LANDER", this was for an ill-fated tourist venture in S.A. that never saw service. B80 spent its next life mainly on lease to other freight companies alongside much later out-shopped B65. B65 and B80 did not see service for West Coast Railway on the Warrnambool passenger line service. B61 was also initially intended for the same freight hire and was actually owned by the directors of West Coast Railway, but locomotive shortage rarely allowed B61 to leave the Warrnambool line. West Coast Railway directors/staff also had substantial interests in revitalising steam powered locomotives. Undoubtedly their best achievement was the restoration of an old Victorian Railways (continued on next page) ↘

(continued from previous page) R class steam powered locomotive (R711), which was built in Scotland in 1951. From 21st November 1998, R711 saw regular Saturday service (*fire danger permitting*) from Spencer St. to Warrnambool and return in the evening.

When R711 returned to regular Saturday roster, it was said to be the fastest regular passenger steam train to be operating in the World. Locomotive B61 (*built in 1952*) was also noted to be the oldest Diesel electric locomotive (*and the noisiest*) doing regular passenger runs in the World also. Special trains such as R711 to the Warrnambool races etc. proved popular, along with steam locomotive R711's other excursions. Sister R class R766 also had substantial restoration work by West Coast Railway. West Coast Railway also had other steam powered locomotive interests, J536 was also removed from Colac's railway station and taken to their Ballarat Workshops, but ongoing delays due to its poor condition (*including boiler/firebox*) halted any forward progress on the project. Passenger journeys on the Warrnambool line fell to 304,000 in 2003 (*partly blamed on a lack of tourist interest*).



ABOVE AT LEFT- B61 at Warrnambool, 11th January 2004. The drivers cabin at left of photo was the only cabin used in WCR days; the cabin at right was not refurbished by WCR with false wall, insulation etc. as the other (left) end. Connex joined WCR in June 2001 by taking a half share in the Warrnambool passenger franchise, this included locomotives S300, S302, S311 and B76. B61 was always owned by WCR company directors, and technically wasn't for use on the Warrnambool line, but did see occasional hire to "FREIGHT AUSTRALIA". After WCR service, B61 had a major refurbishment, including major repairs of the stress cracks in its underframe, and is still in regular use today on freight work, where it is utilised more as a secondary power unit.

ABOVE AT RIGHT- The late Charles Ilett reminisces about his old train driving days of the late 1950s era, where he drove steam, as well as B, S and T Class locomotives. Charles is seen here at WCR Ballarat Workshops explaining the driver's controls of S302, in the later times before WCR's demise. Charles was called back to the family dairy farm "OLIVE BANK" near Beeac when his father became ill, and ended up taking on the farm, which ended his train driving career. Note - the air conditioning unit which can be seen hanging from centre of roof, this was a modern addition, and of WCR fitment. Most of the other controls and interior were very little changed to when S302 was delivered brand new in 1957. S302 held the honours for the quickest acquired 2 million miles travelled, which it logged in August 1969. May 1971 saw S302 with 2,225,000 miles travelled, beaten only by locomotives B60, B61, B62 and B63.

Early 2004 saw the closure of the Geelong to Melbourne railway line for five weeks in January and February for the fast rail 160kmph project. This saw patronage drop considerably, West Coast Railway also had the added expense of hiring road coaches to run from Geelong to Melbourne, while part of their locomotive fleet sat idle. A short time later in May 2004, the Department Of Infrastructure issued an alert on stress cracks in the underframes of the ageing B and S class locomotives. Once again West Coast Railway locomotives sat idle, replacing two of its three daily return services with road coaches. With a repair bill in excess of one million dollars, West Coast Railway directors decided "out" – was the best option, the last West Coast Railway service operated on 31st August 2004, with V-Line resuming occupancy the next day. Road coaches were initially used as V-Line was also short of locomotives, but locomotive S302 was soon back in service, as had been undergoing a major overhaul over the previous months, including the repair of the stress fractures problem in the main underframe. Most of the locomotive fleet was sold to private freight companies, and most returned to service. Locomotive S302 did see V-Line passenger service on the Warrnambool line in September 2004 with the "West Coast Railway" livery removed, with the faded colours of Blue/White/Yellow remaining intact. S302 was repainted in Maroon/Dark Blue V-Line colours in mid December 2004, and was ready for use just prior to Christmas. Its new fate was short lived as it was soon rendered not suitable, because of the more modern chosen V-Line passenger carriages that required a locomotive run generator set, which only the much newer "N" class locomotives had. At a weight of 123 tons, the 25 strong "N" class were introduced in 1985, all but two of the 2,500hp locomotives were named after a Victorian City, "N456" is named "CITY OF COLAC". The N class locomotives are still used on the Warrnambool line today, due to maintenance rosters/rotation, locomotives such as N456 can often be observed hauling the carriages on Warrnambool line.



AT LEFT- B61 being rotated on the old turntable at Warrnambool on 18th December 1996. The two windscreen wipers which can be seen is the only cabin which was used in WCR days. The B class's original objective was that the driver's cabin each end allowed the driver to swap ends for the return trip, and rotating on a turntable was unnecessary. The S class locomotives only had one driver's cabin and were originally intended more for tandem unit use such as interstate freight/passenger services from the late 1950's. Today's "N" class Diesel electric locomotives use a full width driver's cabin each end, and do not require rotating for the return trip. B61 travelled over 716,000 miles while under WCR ownership, and celebrated its 60th birthday in August 2012 with over 4.6 million miles travelled in its life so far.

(All photos by Craig Pink)

CONUNDRUM ANSWER - Last issue – “MYER”.

As the Colac Herald reported on 26th May 1967, “**MYER’S ARE HERE**”,----- “*Bilsons have been bought out by Australia’s largest department store group – Myer Ltd.*”

The Colac Myer’s store closed on 6th January 1973 for renovations, and re-opened on Friday, 13th April 1973 as “**TARGET**”, which it still trades as today.

AT FAR LEFT - Workers erecting the “MYER” sign on the Murray Street frontage in May 1967. Compare the letters to the 2 workers, the individual “MYER” letters were 6 feet high.

AT LEFT – January 1973 view of the former Myer store in Colac’s Central Business area of Murray Street, which re-opened as “**TARGET**” in mid April 1973.

(Both photos- Bela Bard Brucker collection).



CRAIG’S CONUNDRUM -

WHERE IS THIS JANUARY 1962

“BEACH SCENE” ?

CLUES – Yes it had sand, but is not anywhere at the Ocean, not anything to do with Lake Colac (obviously including Meredith Park etc.). It is only 10 minutes drive from Colac, where could it possibly be ???, and if you’re really really stuck, I can well remember it being “*a bit salty*” on the eyes !!!.

ANSWER NEXT ISSUE -

COLAC and DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2015 2.00 to 4.00 pm

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
January	22nd G. Splatt 29th J. Knight	23 rd E. Chambers 30 th B & J McDonald	25 th M. Facey & D. Cowan
February	5 th D. Missen 12 th I. Barlow 19 th G. Splatt 26 th J. Knight	6th C. Pink 13th G. Bray 20 th E. Chambers 27th B. & J. McDonald	1 st A. Mc Intosh 8 th D. Cowan & M. Facey 15 th Committee ? 22 nd M. Facey & D. Cowan
March	5 th D. Missen 12 th I. Barlow 19 th G. Splatt 26 th J. Knight	6th C. Pink 13th G. Bray 20 th E. Chambers 27th B. & J. McDonald	1 st A. Mc Intosh 8 th D. Cowan & M. Facey 15 th Committee ? 22 nd M. Facey & D. Cowan 29th Committee?