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 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,
 also during *winter* on the **4th Saturday at 1.30pm.**

Website address: colachhistoricalsociety.org.au

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 held on 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of month - 10.00 am-12.00 midday.

Forthcoming Events -

Wednesday February 22nd

6.00pm BBQ & Meeting at Coragulac House. Guided Tour to follow.

Wednesday March 22nd

7.30pm Meeting: Speaker-Angela Jeffery Indigenous Resource Facilitator, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

Wednesday April 26th

7.30pm Meeting: Archival DVD/Film from our Collection.

Saturday April 29th

Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies AGM – Stawell.

Saturday May 13th

10.00am Geelong & District Historical Association Quarterly Meeting– Host - Meredith History Group.

Wednesday May 24th

7.30pm AGM.

Vale: Jen McDonald -

With sadness we acknowledge the death of our valued member and friend on 9th February 2017.

Jen was elected society secretary in May 2013 and carried out her role with diligence and enthusiasm until forced to resign through ill health late in 2014. We extend our sympathy to Barry and her family.

A Note from the President -

Envy is one of the seven deadly sins, but one cannot help but be envious of the new architect designed 5 storey library and history centre in Geelong. Members of Geelong and District Historical societies were taken on a guided tour at their quarterly gathering on Saturday February 11th.

A complete floor of the \$45.5 million dollar building is a dedicated History Centre with 3.5 full-time staff, wonderful furnishings, interactive digital displays, library and research facilities. The centre caters for all facets of local and family history. The storage area has 4.6 kilometres of compactus shelving with full climate control.

Furthermore, one doesn't have to be a resident of Geelong and environs to become a library member to avail themselves of the facilities in the Heritage Centre at no cost.

Hopefully, one day the vision for Colac's Civic Precinct incorporating Railway Crescent, and the Civic Hardware building will include a purpose built, properly staffed History Centre and Art Gallery. Only when this occurs will there be sufficient wall and storage space to properly display and conserve our heritage of historical material and artwork. COPACC has proved a wonderful focus for cinema and Performing Arts. However, the loss of our purpose built History Centre in 1990 and lack of an Art Gallery leaves Colac with a serious deficiency in its cultural well-being.

Recent issues of this newsletter have featured well researched articles from Society member Craig Pink about our district windmill manufacturers. Craig is to be congratulated on having some of his work published in 'The Windmill Journal', a quarterly publication documenting the history of Australian and New Zealand windmills. This journal is published by the Morawa District Historical Society in Western Australia.

Thank you to those members who manned our display at the recent two day Colac Heritage Festival. Our display of old and recent photographs of Murray Street premises plus sale posters created much interest. Book sales for the Society was also a highlight, selling a good amount over the two days. (See page five with photos and further report on the annual weekend).

Our new website colachistoricalsociety.org.au has proven to be a valuable asset to the society. Already we have been contacted by two other historical societies with recently donated material relevant to Colac and district. Research inquiries and book sales have also been made by people unable to physically visit the History Centre.

Meetings Report -

November 23rd - Alan Willingham, guest speaker, who grew up at Camperdown, attended Melbourne University and wrote his Masters of Architecture thesis between 1970 and 1983 focusing on the work of *Davidson and Henderson*, architects who had trained in Edinburgh, Scotland before coming to Australia. They created an exotic, picturesquely detailed style that was totally different to what most architects of the time were producing. Alan described these as French medieval Romanesque! He told us that he visited the daughter of George Henderson in Edinburgh in 1972 and copied the many letters written to her by her father containing wonderful descriptions of his work in Australia. Because the originals were later destroyed, Alan is proud to be the custodian of those copies and feels it is his duty to share his extensive knowledge of Davidson and Henderson. (See the Colac Herald article below for a list of their notable works).

What Has Been In The News ?

Colac Herald-

November 11th 2016 - High school site eyed for Specialist School. The former *Colac High School* site in Murray Street, Colac West could be an option for Colac's Specialist School which requires a new, larger site to improve health, safety and learning conditions for the 48 students enrolled, with more expected in 2017. The department was approached by the school's council. When this option is fully investigated the property will be sold.

November 18th - Talk unveils history of bluestone structures. Architectural historian **Allan Willingham** to reveal the Scottish and French connections of the Western District's iconic bluestone buildings as guest speaker of the *Colac and District Historical Society* on November 23rd. He will discuss the works of Alexander Davidson and George Henderson who designed bluestone public buildings and homes in the region between 1865 and 1877. These included *Yarima* at Cressy, *Eurack House*, Mount Hesse, *Coragulac House*, *Glen Alvie*, *Bleak House* at Warncoort, the Presbyterian Church at Rokewood, *Christ Church* at Birregurra. He also designed *Barwon Park* at Winchelsea.

November 21st - Book features district churches. Historian and writer *Norman Houghton* has researched Colac and district's 135 churches for his latest book "*God's House*", charting their construction and use since white settlement 178 years ago, however only 25 are still in use as churches. Every town had 4 churches; Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist. All churches were involved in education until 1874 when state education came in and were the focal point for each community providing spiritual, social, recreational, educational and sporting opportunities in tennis, cricket, croquet, basketball, netball or football, as well as support for the sick and poor. Churches were probably the biggest buildings in any town, standing out in the landscape. ("*God's House*" is on sale at the History Centre for \$45).

November 25th - Removed date palms close to man's heart. Former Colac mayor and businessman, 80 year old, *John Jellie* remembers eating dates from the palm trees which were planted by his father and until last week stood on the future Colac supermarket site in Colac at the far east end of Bromfield Street. His father Harry had been the fuel depot manager at this site owned then by The Atlantic Union Oil Company. The iconic palms were relocated to a new home on the Bellarine Peninsula as not being native, there was no requirement to keep them in Colac. (Much to the dismay of many locals).

December 7th - Discoverer wants spot for anchor. Colac's *Jason Schram* and his children discovered a large historic anchor in Lake Colac when the lake was empty in March 2016. Fellow Colac Otway Shire Councillor *Chris Smith* gathered a team to help remove the anchor from the mud. It is believed to be from the *SS Dorothy* that provided pleasure cruises on the lake between 1912 and 1914 before sinking. Their aim is to donate the anchor to the public and have it on public display.

Collector maps Colac's history. *Jason Schram* has amassed a private collection of Colac-branded memorabilia which includes bottles, crockery, books and maps. His interest was sparked by reading Isaac Hebb's book - "*The History of Colac and District*". He has a demijohn from Watson's Mutual Store, bottles from G. Wilmot ginger beer, Colac Aerated Water Company, Hay's, and also Buchanan's of Colac. He also has an oven door from Bryan Brother's foundry in Colac and a 1915 map of Colac.

The Memorial Square – A brief history

During 2016 the consultant preparing a brief on the future of the Memorial Square asked the historical society for a short history of the area. This was our contribution which was written by Dawn Peel.

When Alexander Skene surveyed the site of the town of Colac in 1850, he did not sub-divide the area now known as the Memorial Square into smaller building blocks but designated it as 'reserved for market'. The Colac Shire Council, created in 1864, then oversaw the area and its maintenance and use were the basis of frequent 'vexatious discussions'. In 1873, when town lands not already subdivided were being surveyed, it was decided to formally reserve the area as a park and so keep it as open space. The ownership and management of the area were then vested jointly in the shire council and the Lands Department. Later in the 1870s, under pressure from the Lands Department, the shire was forced to make some improvements to the 'malodorous swamp' so a fence was erected and some minor drainage works were done.

The area was used for vehicle parking. A travelling circus performed there. Band recitals were held. Gradually other uses developed. In 1887 the Fire Brigade erected premises on the southern edge of the square. The 1890s saw a Bowling Club and its pavilion established on the north-western corner. There was a temporary band pavilion and in 1901 a library was built on the south-eastern edge of the square as a peace memorial to the Boer War.

Over these years, while others had their eyes on the vacant land in the middle of the growing town, the council (and public opinion) led to the rejection of proposals for a nursing home, new shire offices, a school and the long-term lease of the southern frontage for shops. The community preference for open space in the square has a long history.

After World War 1 the arrangement with the government was re-negotiated and control vested in the shire council. This paved the way for the erection of the iconic war memorial, based on a bluestone mound, centrally located in the square, and opened in 1924. Henceforth the area was known as the Memorial Square, and memorials to subsequent conflicts were added to the forecourt of the original building.

Another addition to the commemorative function of the area was a lone pine from Gallipoli planted there in 1966. In 1985 a fountain was erected to enhance the approach to the monument. The square became the focus for many events, one notable one being the declaration of Colac as a town in 1948. Multiple other uses have included a Six-Day Race, an event which attracted international publicity over the years between 1983 and 2006.

Annual Carols by Candlelight are held there. A 'Ferret Cup' featuring ferrets racing along pvc pipes also gained publicity outside the Colac area. The square had often been the site for the culmination of Colac's Kana and Kanyana festivals, while an annual car show currently attracts widespread interest. A monthly Sunday market is held.

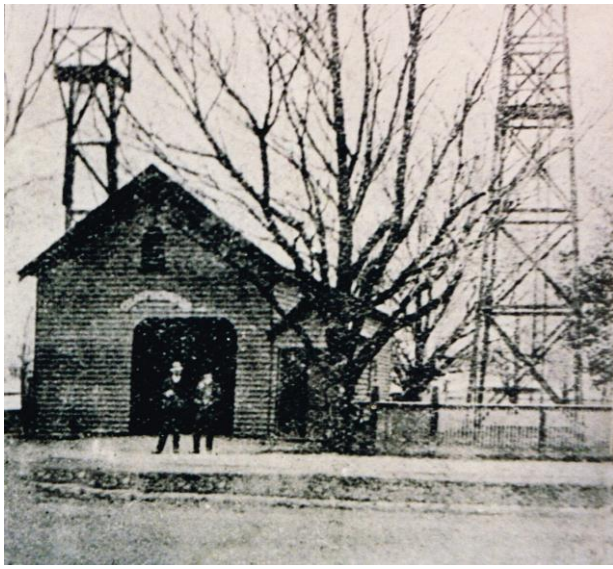
At the same time, the memorial focus is not lost as the ceremonies on 25th April and 11th November, held there each year, testify.

The public preference for an uncluttered square was demonstrated by the gradual removal of structures. The library went in 1970. Toilets in that area were re-located to the Gellibrand Street frontage, but later shifted so that their presence did not impinge on the square.

At around the same time the Bowling Club was shifted from the area. In the 1990s a report was prepared on the square prior to major improvements being made. The original fountain, which often mal-functioned, was replaced. A rotunda was erected in the south-western area, while at the same time extensive paving was carried out. A playground in the north-western corner is popular.

The square is well used both by local citizens, and by the many tourists whose buses disgorge them on the northern perimeter. Barbecues are provided along the Dennis Street frontage. The area, with its striking monument, is a central focus for the town.

(See photos on next page which show some earlier views of the Memorial Square).

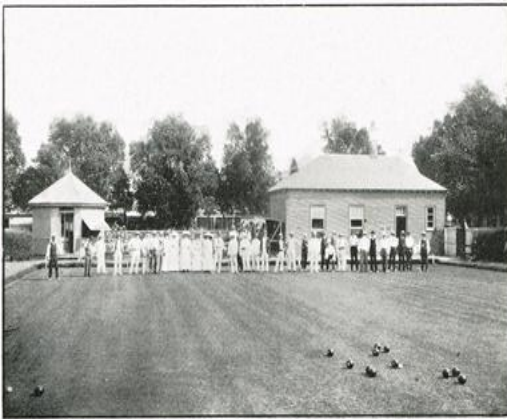


ABOVE – Murray Street Fire Station as it appeared in 1910. (The Fire Station was erected on the southern edge of the square in 1888).



THE LIBRARY, COLAC.
A Handsome and splendidly arranged and managed one, also decidedly comfortable.

ABOVE - Colac Free Library in 1910. Built in 1901 as a peace memorial to the Boer War, the library was on the south-east corner of the Memorial Square.



COLAC BOWLING CLUB. Meyer, Photo.
A group of the Members on their well arranged and beautifully kept green

ABOVE - The Bowling Club on the Memorial Square as it featured in a 1910 publication about Colac. The Murray Street shops across the road can be seen at rear of photo.



ABOVE - The War Memorial situated on the Memorial Square in its original form, as it was opened in 1924.



AT LEFT - Snow has always been a rare occurrence in Colac, this Memorial Square snow scene dates from 1951.

(All images from Historical Society files)

COLAC P & A SOCIETY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Held at the Colac Showgrounds on Saturday 4th February and Sunday 5th February 2017.

By Craig Pink



AT LEFT – The mooring anchor which was originally bought to Colac to get the S.S. Dorothy out of shallow, muddy waters in early 1912. This anchor was then lifted up, and relocated as a mooring weight some distance offshore out in deeper water from what is today's Rowing Club building. There it lay for over 100 years until found and removed in March 2016. NOTE – The removal of this large anchor was attempted when the S.S. Dorothy was removed in 1961, broken cables was the only outcome, and the mooring anchor was left there.

(Photo by C. Pink)

AT RIGHT – Early 1900s Ransomes Sims & Jefferies steam traction engine, which was shown as a working display. These were also the early heavy transport, but were extremely heavy for the roads of the era, and therefore bogged very easily. A steam traction engine of similar size to this is what delivered the steamship "WANDA" to Colac in 1901.

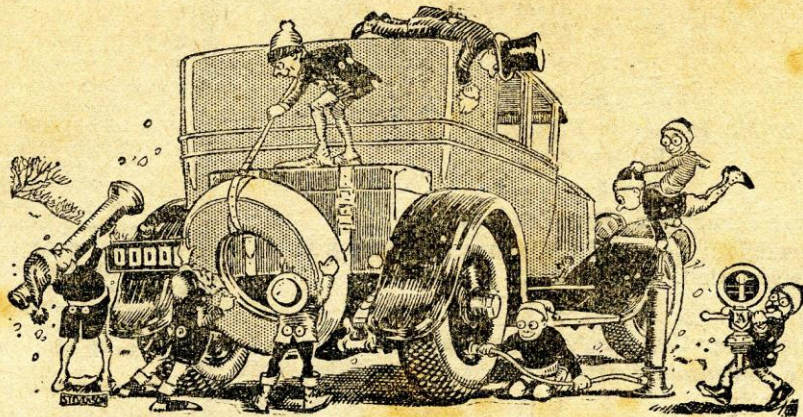
(Photo by C. Pink)



AT LEFT – Society member Barry McDonald displayed these model steam engines built from meccano. The compactness of the original boiler/steam engines these were modelled from was an attempt to best utilise limited floor space in factories of the later 1800s era.

(Photo by C. Pink)

If it's for an Automobile
—————We have it.



Is your engine over-oiling? If so inquire for the **PERFECT CIRCLE OIL RING**
 We guarantee these rings to overcome all oiling troubles- Ask for our quotation to fit these to your engine—one ring necessary per piston.
 You will soon save the cost by lessening your oil bill.

THE CARE OF AUTOMOBILE BRAKES.

Results of a recent investigation in a large city show that 80 per cent. of all automobile accidents are due to **DEFECTIVE BRAKES**.

The sure way is to have your lining and brake mechanism examined periodically at a reliable garage or service station.

WE ARE IN THE POSITION to make inspection or carry out any repairs to your brakes.

The Asbestos lining and the correct countersunk aluminium rivets supplied for you to do re-lining yourself if desired.

Sizes in stock to suit Buick, Dodge, Chevrolet, Overland, Rugby, Studebaker, Pontiac, Reo Truck, International Truck, Graham, etc., 1/8, 5/32, 3/16, 1/4 thickness, and from 1in. wide to 4in. wide.

Electrical and battery repairs. Delco, Remy, North East, Autolite, Splitsdorf, &c. Parts for ignition and Motor and Generator—actually in stock.

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Immediate delivery from stock of almost any spring for all American and Continental Cars—Buick, Chevrolet, Ford, Dodge, Chrysler, Bean, Morris Cowley, Rugby, Singer, International Truck, Reo, Graham; or the main leaves only.

Engineers' supplies, bolts and nuts, S.H.F. and B.S.F. Whitworth standard, tools, drills, valves, lifters, grinding paste, feeler gauges, etc.

LONGEST ESTABLISHED MOTOR BUSINESS IN THE COLAC DISTRICT.

PARKER BROS.,

FOR QUICK SERVICE

MURRAY STREET, COLAC, and LIEBIG ST., WARRNAMBOOL.

ABOVE - Advert from the Colac Herald - 29th June 1927. Note the Parker Bros Warrnambool premises address also at this point. **AND** - in 1927 Parkers' stated that their business was the longest established Motor Business in the Colac district.

(Image from Society files, Colac Herald collection).

Vanished Wetlands

By Norman Houghton

In its natural state prior to European intervention the Colac region was a myriad of wetlands due to normal rainfall and run off from the Otway Ranges. The first white settlers coming from Geelong noted the wet places and teeming birdlife (pigeon, duck, turkey and bustard). Survey plans from the 1860s for the district lands opened for settlement show that all the creeks, gullies and dips were wet places with boggy margins, reeds, tussocks etc. The wet bogs and marshes usually dried in summer. The larger creeks had wide flood plains to absorb winter flows.

However, such wetlands could not stand in the path of progress and from the 1850s to the 1940s the swamps, bogs, marshes and floodplains were drained and native vegetation removed to make way for agriculture. These wetlands were regarded as waste lands that had to be tamed and made productive.

The underlying assumption seems to have been the notion of compelling nature to maintain a zero or permanently stable level of lake and swamp water to accommodate economic activity around these waters. The fact that nature had long term cycles of wet and dry was not considered. It was noted by a commentator in the 1880s that the seasons in the 1840s around Colac had been dry, drought years and since then the climate had shifted to a wet cycle, thus underpinning Colac's cropping and herds. Drought proof was a term occasionally used for Colac.

Lake Colac on its south east margins was shown on early plans as having a bog plain and records indicate this part of the lake bank was clothed in a dense melaleuca. The axe soon removed this nuisance to progress. The lake also had reed beds and lots of birdlife therein.

The main inflow to the lake, Barongarook Creek, had flood flats along portions and while these were not touched, the clearing of vegetation for agriculture along its length and headwaters resulted in the creek silting. This was noted in 1888 with the comment that the original melaleuca along the banks had preserved the soil.

Around Lake Colac the sloping lands, particularly on its western end, were drained by the Robertsons. A similar drainage effort was put into the Robertson lands on the east side of Corangamite Lake and drains cut towards this lake.

Major drainage schemes in the 1880s tackled the Gerangamete marshes, in reality a flood plain for the Barwon River, and the same flood plain at Birregurra. Similarly for the bogs situated at Murroon. The Gerangamete marshes were noted for their eels, fish and birdlife and were a favoured spot for shooters and fishers from Birregurra engaging in weekend sport. After a few years' efforts the flats at Birregurra, Gerangamete and Murroon were clear of water and farmers could use them for cultivation and grazing.

A bigger effort was required to the west of Colac at Pirron Yallock, Swan Marsh and Carpendeit. The swamps and wetlands here from the southern shores of Corangamite Lake for several kms to the south were massive and each breeding season attracted thousands upon thousands of black swans, hence the name Swan Marsh. The soils on the margins and into the swamps when dried were described as peat with blue black clay covered with tussocks, reeds and niggerheads. The drainage works here were on a large scale.

The biggest swamp was the Tirrengower Morass and it exercised fifty years of efforts by farmers, the Shire, Drainage Trusts and the State Government from 1877 almost to the present day with hand tools, mechanical excavators and other earthmoving machinery. These drainage works created wide canals and various waterways to send winter rainfall straight into the Corangamite Lake instead of it pausing at Tirrengower and Swan Marsh and deciding of its own accord when to flow further.

The drainage mentality persisted well into the twentieth century, with the last of them being at Glen Aire in the 1940s and the Lough Calvert drainage scheme of the 1950s.

The removal of swamps and associated vegetation profoundly altered the local ecology, groundwater and run-off rates, not to mention its effect on birdlife. This was not obvious at first but by the 1950s the problems became evident with persistent flooding of Lakes Corangamite and Colac. The sponges had gone.



CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER - (Above left) - South end view of former saleyards in central Colac – this image taken from atop City Council offices in mid 1970s, (Rae Street frontage) before the saleyards were demolished to make way for a supermarket.

ABOVE AT RIGHT – Can you identify where this early 1900s Murray Street scene was taken, if you need a clue – it was (and still is) a good place for a drink.

ANSWER – NEXT ISSUE.

COLAC AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2017 - 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM - Thankyou

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
March	2 nd D. Missen 9 th I. Barlow 16 th G. Splatt 23 rd J. Knight 30 th R. Osborne	3 rd C. Pink 10 th G. Bray 17 th E. Chambers 24 th M. Saddlier 31 st L. Spence	5 th A. McIntosh 12 th D. Cowan & M. Facey 19 th B. Mc Donald 26 th M. Facey & D. Cowan
April	6 th R. Osborne 13 th I. Barlow 20 th G. Splatt 27 th J. Knight	7 th C. Pink 14 th Closed-Easter 21 st E. Chambers 28 th M. Saddlier	2 nd A. McIntosh 9 th D. Cowan & M. Facey. 16 th Closed-Easter 23 rd M. Facey & D. Cowan. 30 th L. Spence
May	4 th D. Missen 11 th I. Barlow 18 th G. Splatt 25 th J. Knight	5 th C. Pink 12 th G. Bray 19 th E. Chambers 26 th M. Saddlier	7 th A. McIntosh 14 th D. Cowan & M. Facey 21 st B. McDonald. 28 th M. Facey & D. Cowan