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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: colachistoricalsociety.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.

Please note that articles printed in this Society Newsletter are subject to Copyright

Forthcoming Events.

Sat August 26th - 1.30pm

Wed September 27th - 7.30pm

Sat October 21st

Sun October 22nd - 10.00am

Wed October 25th - 7.30pm

Sat November 10th - 10.00am

Wed November 22nd - 7.30pm

Historical Films from our Collection

'John Muston – Search for a Western District Squatter'

Speaker: Rob Wuchatsch

Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies Warrnambool

Bus Tour 'Historical Sights of Colac & Environs' as part of

Colac Family History Weekend

Charles Stewart & Co '100 years in Real Estate and Livestock in Colac'

Speaker: Neil Stewart

Geelong & District Historical Association Apollo Bay

'Vintage Clocks & Watches' Speaker: John Knight

A Note from the President

A willing band of members filled all offices and committees for the 2017-18 year. We are pleased to welcome Noel Ryan as Vice President and Helen Paatsch as Librarian.

We were also honoured by the presence of Professor Don Garden OAM at the Annual Meeting where he presented Life Member Diana Cowan with a Royal Historical Society Order of Merit in recognition of a lifetime of service to the Society. The photos below show Professor Garden with Life Members Diana Cowan, Ida McIntosh, Dawn Peel and Elizabeth Chambers.

Thanks to the contributors of the informative articles in this enlarged issue of the Newsletter. The article by Peter Chapman in this edition was presented to us at our June meeting and was very well received by the large number of members and visitors present. All financial members are highly valued and I believe those who may be unable to attend meetings should feel well catered for with the quality of articles published in the quarterly newsletter.



President's Report 2016-17

It is with pleasure that I bring the 67th Annual Report of the CDHS. 15 years have elapsed since the lease with the Colac Otway Shire for these premises was enacted. It was with some relief and satisfaction in January 2017 that a new lease for a further 5 years with 2 options to extend was eventually signed with similar conditions as before. This enables us to plan our future with confidence.

However, with the completion in the past year of 2 major sporting developments in the city it is time that local government and the Colac community overall gave serious consideration to the development of the total civic precinct between Rae Street and the railway line. A growing city of Colac's stature deserves a properly resourced purpose built Art Gallery and History Centre to complement our cinema and performing arts complex. 18 years have elapsed since the purpose built history centre (which our most senior members here tonight worked so hard to achieve) was demolished to make way for the COPACC complex. As a result of which historic artefacts remain hidden from the public gaze in non-climate controlled storerooms and a shipping container.

The creation this year of our own dedicated website **colachistoricalsociety.org.au** has been a highlight and is resulting in an increased number of enquiries, book sales and offers of information and memorabilia. Our grateful thanks to Richard Francis who updates the content as required.

Our thanks go to the Colac Otway Shire for a grant of \$1010 which enables us to complete the digitization of our maps and sale posters as well as turning 2 deteriorating 16mm films, including the 1957 Kanyana Festival into DVDs. Sincere thanks also to the South West Community Foundation, whose grant of \$1000 assisted us to reprint our publication 'History of Colac 1830s to 1930s' by Isaac Hebb.

Book sales of our own publications and those of members continue to be a good source of revenue and a small reprint of 'Dreeite-A Soldier Settlement' by Dawn Peel was one of several carried out.

A steady flow of researchers seeking access to the Colac Herald motivated us to take up the offer of a ScanPro 2000 microfilm reader, computer and software at less than half of new replacement cost. We hope this purchase will reduce the times the ageing Colac Heralds will need to be accessed.

We have participated in the Colac Heritage Festival, hosted school visits from Sacred Heart and St Mary's Primary Schools, and a visit from the Donald Historical Society.

Information and photographs have been provided to the Memorial Square Master Plan and to Vic Roads concerning the Barongarook Creek Bridge; also to the New Councillors Orientation Pack and the Tourist Information Centre.

We have maintained affiliation and involvement with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, the Geelong & District Historical Societies and the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies.

Several members attended a workshop conducted by Collections Victoria and this is an aspect of documentation of our collection that warrants further action. Steps have also begun to decide how we can catalogue and preserve the J G Johnstone collection of historic documents.

Monthly meetings have had a diverse range of speakers both from visitors and within the membership. A highlight was the visit by architectural historian Alan Willingham in November which was widely advertised and attracted an audience of over 50 people. Several new members were gained from that evening. Sharon Gibson invited us to hold our February meeting in the reception room at Coragulac House following a BBQ tea.

Which brings me to our most important resource – our membership. Our membership is not large but it is pleasing to open 3 afternoons a week and have practically all rostered volunteers only having to serve on one day a month. As well there is a willing band of members who produce 4 newsletters a year, prepare window displays, sort, file, catalogue and answer research inquiries. Some of you spend countless hours and without you the preservation and dissemination of our history would not happen. Thank you all. There is always more that could be done and I wonder can we put together a list of projects big and small that could be used to give new members an immediate feeling of belonging.

Unfortunately there is always some sadness. Liz Chambers relinquished her role as treasurer after many years due to ill-health. Margaret Facey and Diana Cowan always worked the roster together, every 2nd Sunday. Margaret is suffering from ill-health and Diana is shortly to leave Colac. We mourned the passing of our immediate past Secretary Jen McDonald.

In conclusion special thanks to Secretary/Treasurer John. Thank you. *Robert Missen*

What Has Been In The News?

The Colac Herald-

May 15th 2017- Red Rock memories preserved. *Colac and District Family History Group* enthusiasts have unveiled the results of a 3-year project to orally record 40 or more people's memories of the Red Rock region.

May 19th - Exhibition features inspiring women. At COPACC, an exhibition called "Her Place: Remarkable Women", featuring stories of 10 amazing women from across Victoria. Colac's *Diane Wright* - founder of Anam Cara House Colac and Anam Cara House Geelong features as a pioneer of residential hospices. Diane tirelessly fundraised to open these 2 hospices to provide a "home-like" environment for respite and care.

May 26th - Book traces railway's history. Colac historian *Norm Houghton's* latest book details the history of the Ballarat to Skipton railway which was established to connect Ballarat to nearby settlements during the Gold Rush. Mr Houghton has done a lot of books on railway history, which are mostly Colac and district related.

May 29th - Honour for dedicated history enthusiast. Colac and District Historical Society's *Diana Cowan* has earned a merit award for 5 decades of service. She was presented with her award by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's president Professor Don Garden. Diana was the inaugural editor of the local society's newsletter, a busy fundraiser in the Historical Society Auxiliary group and until recently was the Society's Librarian.

June 19th -Machinery dealer earns honour. Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce executive director G. Gwilym presented Colac farm machinery dealership *Rhys Evans* with a certificate honouring the company's 50 years of VACC membership. The business is in its third generation after Rhys Evans founded it, then Lynton Evans took over and later the business was sold to new partners including his daughter Sue Kerr.

June 26th - New centre will help Aboriginal residents. The development of a *Gathering Place* by the Wathaurong Aboriginal Action Group in Colac along with service providers aims to improve the health and engagement of the region's Indigenous community. A building at 4 Miller St has been donated to begin this project.

June 30th - Historical Society wants new space. Colac & District Historical Society President *Robert Missen* believes Colac needs a purpose-built visual arts centre with gallery hanging space and a museum. The CDHS had built a purpose-built space for themselves but it was demolished in 1990 to make way for COPACC. "The society has items of historical interest that cannot be displayed due to lack of space. Our history is part of our heritage and it needs to be preserved", Mr Missen said.

July 3rd - Colac's AKD Softwoods set to be the world's most modern sawmill. The \$30 million expansion of the Colac business in Forest Street began in 2014 and is part of AKD's ongoing quest to be internationally competitive. Old equipment installed in 1997 is being replaced with modern equipment.

July 14th - Vintage trucks sold to private collector. Jack Ramakar of Colac expressed his disappointment that the late *Merv Brunt's truck collection* was not now on public display. He believes that the vintage truck museum was an asset and a draw card for people to visit Colac and now the future of the museum is uncertain. "Colac needs something going to showcase vintage machinery and objects which celebrated the region's history", he said.

July 14th - Turbine foundations in place. The *Mount Gellibrand wind farm* has reached another milestone as workers poured 330 cubic metres of concrete foundation for the first wind turbine; an Acciona project. There will be 44 power generating turbines on 87 metre high towers, 20 kilometres north-east of Colac.

July 21st - End of era for Colac retailers. *Colac's Alex and Rosie Genua* closed the doors to their furniture business after 30 years. The building was the former Patterson's furniture shop in Murray Street.

July 26th - Colac train service reaches 140th anniversary. The first passenger train from Melbourne arrived in Colac on *July 27th 1877* opening up the region for food production and travel. Prior to the train coming there was just a Cobb and Co coach for transport. Fresh produce could be railed out to markets at Geelong and Melbourne and further afield. Using manual labour, horse teams and bullock teams carted materials to install the 81 kilometre railway line, the job was completed in two and a half years. A crowd of 600 people welcomed the first train to Colac with the Governor of Victoria G F Bowen and government ministers on board.

INDIAN HAWKERS

- *July meeting report by Ellise Angel*

July 26th 2017 - Colac & District Historical Society members and guests were treated to an informative session on a little known subject - **Indian Hawkers of Colac and the South Western District** spanning the late 1800s to early 1900s. Much research over many years has resulted in the printing of 6 books for the Australian Indian Historical Society Inc. Apparently there are even more books in the pipeline. Our session was presented by AIHS researchers *Len Kenna* and *Crystal Jordan*. We heard about **Mr Gundah Singh**, a wiry-stocky Indian who for about 40 years was one of Camperdown's best known and highly esteemed figures, who first hawked his pack before purchasing a horse and covered wagon. When he came to the South Western District Gundah could speak little English and he camped in Mr J W Gellie's paddock at "Lake View", Camperdown. He persevered at hawking and it was a surprise to learn that he later owned property on Purumbete Estate. He sent 200 pounds to India hoping to bring his son, Katarah Singh out to Australia; however his son had died in 1928 unbeknown to Gundah and was therefore unable to join his

father. Gundah died at the Colac Base Hospital in 1935 aged 62 and was buried at the Camperdown Cemetery. Gundah died without an heir, leaving an estate worth 8,186 pounds. This large amount of money accumulated by Gundah amazed even those who knew him well, according to a report in the Camperdown Chronicle Vic, Thurs. 16th April 1936. It also recounted an incident when Gundah bought the 2 subdivided blocks of the Manifold estate by pulling out of his trouser pocket a roll of notes equalling 6,000 pounds! Mr James Wilson Gellie died at his residence "Lake View" in 1935 aged 92 years, believed to be the oldest native of Camperdown when interviewed by the Camperdown Chronicle April 7th 1932.

Another Indian hawker had a brief connection with Colac- **Mr Otim Singh**. He landed in Melbourne in 1890 and received his English education there over 3 months before heading inland first to Ballarat and then to Colac. One of his own countrymen instructed him in the trade of a hawker. This trade led him to Kangaroo Island where no other commercial travellers ventured. There he trudged around the island with his bundles on his back. He soon acquired a horse and van. He became so successful that he was able to establish himself a store in Kingscote built of tin at first then later of stone. Otim married a resident of King Island and proceeded to greatly enlarge his premises in 1907 which he named- "The People's Store". He died in 1927 aged 64 and was described as "a good citizen" in the Chronicle Adelaide S.A. 17th Dec 1927.



AT LEFT – Well-known local Indian Hawker *Purtapa Singh* stands beside his wagon outside the old Court House in Queen St. Colac.

Sign-work on wagon side reads -

ALL SALES CASH
DRAPERY & FANCY GOODS
JEWELLERY & C.
PURTAPA SINGH
Indian Hawker
~COLAC~
1 TON

Image from Historical Society files – ENV 10022

Before long, hawkers such as the above and scores more, were required to obtain an annual license at the Colac police court. This was necessary to regulate the flow of hawkers around the country as women in isolated farm houses had been intimidated by unscrupulous types. After licensing, hawkers were a welcome sight across the country areas bringing much needed household items, clothing and materials to delight farmer's wives and children. The only dates that such licences could be granted were the second Tuesday's in March, June, September and December, with notice being given the previous Tuesday. Some licences were granted to hawkers with horse and cart but many, many more were granted to those on foot. A **Mr Meer Singh** appears in this list in Colac on Dec 14th 1900 when 78 licences were granted giving 92 pounds to Public Revenue. A collection was also taken up on that day on behalf of the Colac Hospital and a list recorded the gifts to the hospital from the Indian Hawkers ranging from a donation of apples to 21 shillings. Meer Singh however donated nothing. At some stage Meer, like many hawkers of the time, obtained a typical 4 wheeled cart pulled by 2 horses to hawk his wide range of goods around Colac and district. On the side of his wagon in large letters could be read-"DRAPERY, FANCY GOODS, JEWELLERY". But then he did get a mention in the Colac Reformer December 12th 1914 where Meer Singh's license application was made too late and thus the Bench could not grant him a license! Later on Meer Singh is described as "a well-known character in Colac" in The Age Melb. December 13th 1928 where we are told he was sentenced at the police court to a month's imprisonment for having insufficient lawful means of support. This would have been during the Depression when things were pretty tough for anyone without work and there were hundreds of destitute men walking our country roads. Gundah, Otim and Meer are just three of the many Indian Hawkers who contributed to our history before the days of supermarkets, good roads, easy transport and mail orders. Many did very well for themselves in a land far from home while others struggled for whatever reason. At the Colac & District Historical Society meeting some folk recalled stories told to them by their parents about Indian Hawkers and how they camped on their property and cooked their own meals, sometimes sharing it with the family. Some even remembered as children seeing these polite, turbaned men, their horses and all the amazing goods revealed to them as if by magic that had been so expertly stacked and packed inside those iconic vans.

GORDON COLBROOK CHAPMAN

19.03.1908 – 18.05.2002

DEALER, STEEL MERCHANT & FABRICATOR



Fig: 1

Gordon Chapman (Fig:1) was born in Gordon, Victoria. He was the son of Edward William Chapman, blacksmith & wheelwright (1866 – 1928) and Lavinia Forreste Wood (1872 – 1913); and the grandson of Abraham Chapman, blacksmith & wheelwright (1827 – 1908) and Catherine Wilsden, shoemaker (1826 – 1871) who emigrated to Perth, Australia on the ship "Palestine" from Plymouth in November 1852.

Gordon left school at age 13 and by this time had become an accomplished seventh generation blacksmith and wheelwright under the tutelage of his father. A legacy of his work is the wrought iron fence (Fig:2) around the family ancestral grave at the Gordon cemetery.



Fig: 2

In 1922 he left home and worked his way around Australia for the next 16 years before coming to Colac in 1938 at 30 years of age. His first job was on the construction of the pipeline designed to bring water from the Otway's to the filtration plant at Elliminyt to serve Colac. He then took a job with Hector, Victor and Eric Chapman's plumbing business in Manning-Sutton Street, which eventually became Murray Street between 1938 – 1940.

Around this time while boarding with a Mrs Walsh at 269 Manners- Sutton St. he met Kathleen May McMahon (1916 – 2009) who was the daughter of Michael McMahon (1881 – 1956) and Elizabeth Bouchier (1882 – 1966) and the granddaughter of Irish immigrants Michael McMahon (1847 – 1924) and Elizabeth Boland (1844 – 1913).

Between 1940 and 1941 Gordon was self employed at his first registered business premises at what is now 369 - 371 Murray St. The sign above his premises read "G Chapman, Dealer, Colac" (Fig:3). He was a 2nd hand dealer in motor wrecking, house demolition (timber merchant); as well as doing welding and repairing tractors and agricultural machinery for farmers.



Fig: 3

In 1942 Gordon was called up for military service and so he and Kathleen (Fig:4) decided to marry prior to his departure. They married in Colac on 26th December 1942 and took up residence at 25 Mark St.



Fig:4



Fig: 5

The local farmers petitioned the authorities to try to avert his loss to the district on the basis of him being "essential to primary industry". The petition was not successful and so on 9th December 1943 he registered at the RAAF recruitment centre in Melbourne (Fig:5) and was posted to Tocumwal RAAF base in NSW where in June 1944 he underwent flight mechanics training.

In November 1944 there was a major incident at the base when live ammunition exploded and Gordon was seriously injured. He was discharged from the RAAF in April 1945 on medical grounds and returned home where his wife "Kathy" supported him in his rehabilitation as well as raising the 2 children they had at that time.

In June 1945 he moved his business premises to 68 Dennis St, a site he purchased from Dalgety's which was originally their old saleyards. Within 5 years as well as motor wrecking and welding he had also added "Steel Merchant and Fabricator" to his activities.

It was not long before he found his business had expanded to the point where he needed even larger premises, particularly to be able to build the steel infrastructure of the large building projects he was commissioned to undertake; and so in 1955 he applied for a building permit to extend the premises in Dennis St. He built all the steel structure for the building himself and also made much of the engineering equipment for use in the new building.

To accommodate their eventual family of 7 children Gordon and "Kathy" moved to 16 Fyans St. in 1956. The house was a large Federation style home (Fig:6) architecturally designed by Donald Dunoon for his son to reflect his social status as a prominent local identity and was built in 1920. The house and stables combination remain as a rare example of what was common prior to the impact of the automobile.



Fig: 6



Fig: 7

By 1961 the work had increased significantly and so Gordon's son Michael joined the business. The operation became "Gordon Chapman and Son" (Fig:7) and together they progressed the business over the next 25 years. Two other sons Kevin and Paul also spent time working in the business.

At their peak operation, they employed around 14 staff. Over the years these employees were of many nationalities. Australian, English, German, Italian and many others. They were also known to take on additional staff, not because of work requirements, but because those unemployed people needed the money to feed their families.

Major works, that they undertook relating to rural industry included extensions to the Nestle factory in Warrnambool (Fig:8), the Colac saleyards on Ballarat Road (Fig:9) and the Kraft Cheese Factory at Simpson. They built all the machinery sheds for The Rural Finance Group in Heytesbury along with a multitude of dairy milking sheds and yards, haysheds, woolsheds, farm machinery sheds, sheep yards, cattle yards and calf shelters all over the Western District. Hay loaders and elevators (Fig:10) were also another common component of their business.



Fig: 8

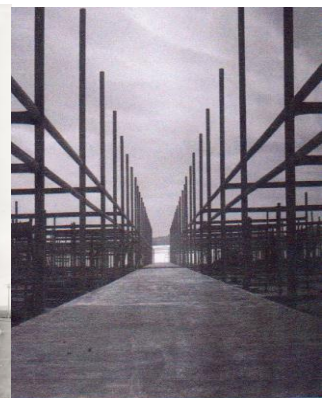


Fig: 9



Fig: 10



Fig: 11

They were often called upon to do repairs and make modifications to agricultural machinery - e.g. Sunkist pea harvesting machinery (Fig:11), potato harvesters and onion sorting machines to meet local conditions and Gordon always enjoyed the challenge of developing new inventions to meet a specific purpose.

Outside of the rural industry the business constructed many buildings all over the Western District. Locally they undertook the steel structure for the Colanda Disability Centre (Fig:12); Trinity College; Sacred Heart School; the Colac Drive-in screen (20 metres high x 27 metres wide) (Fig:13) and the Cressy Church.

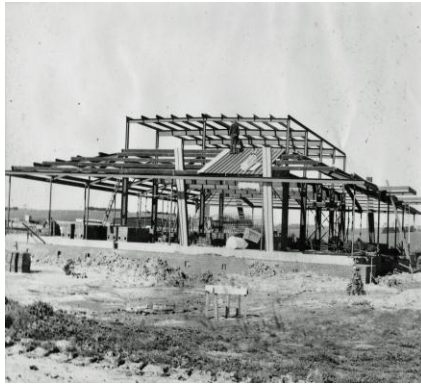


Fig:12

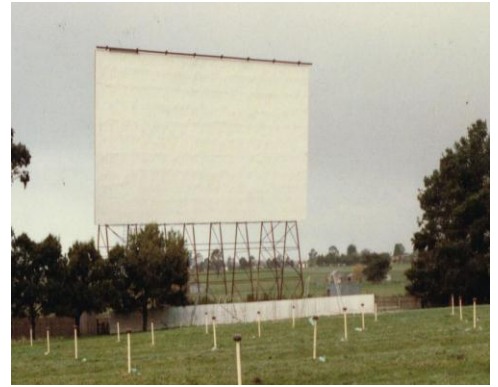


Fig:13

Figures 14 and 15 relate to the erection of the steel work for the Colac Library in Gellibrand St. in 1968. Note: the 2 columns on the right hand side of Fig: 15 have the words "Chapman Colac" painted on them.



Fig:14



Fig: 15

Outside of the local shire they did the steel work for buildings in Casterton, Warrnambool, Ballarat, Geelong (Belmont High School Sports Stadium), Hamilton, Mortlake and the Terang Church.

By 1985 the business also began designing and manufacturing display turntables for use in the automotive and retail industry, under the brand name "TURNMATIC". The company went on to produce display turntables for use locally, as well as in Perth, Adelaide and Sydney and also exported to Yugoslavia.

In 1989 at the age of 81 Gordon decided to retire. The Dennis St. premises was sold and the business was downsized and moved to the Industrial estate in Colac where it continued until 1995 when Michael retired.



Fig: 16

The turntable business went on to become "AUSTRALIAN TURNABLES", a family owned business under Gordon's son Paul and based in Kangaroo Flat near Bendigo. Today it specialises in design engineering, manufacturing and installation of turntable systems for a wide range of industry groups. The company employs 21 staff and exports to 17 countries. Some specific projects have included the Milad Tower revolving restaurant, Tehran; mining truck turntables for Rio Tinto, WA; the Rolls Royce automotive showroom display turntable, Abu Dhabi (Fig: 16) and the Adelaide Convention Centre rotating auditorium. The company has also received milestone achievement awards from 2009 – 2017.

As well as his contribution to business in Colac, Gordon also took a particular interest in community affairs. He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce to promote industry in the town.; the Colac City Band; a committee member of the under 16 Colac Magpies Football Club and what he considered his most important involvement – the Lord Mayor's Children's Camp, an organisation set up to provide the opportunity of a holiday for underprivileged children, held at Portsea.

From humble beginnings in Colac in the early 1940s as a 2nd hand dealer, to an important engineering company meeting the needs of the farming and business sections of the Western District, to a major specialist engineering company exporting to 17 countries Gordon Chapman and his family have left a significant legacy.

(written/contributed by Peter Chapman)

THE BOX FACTORY

By Craig Pink

The Colac branch of the Box Factory was established in 1946 when there was an acute labor shortage in Melbourne. Decentralising industry was an idea which kept part of the workforce in country areas, instead of them having to shift to the larger cities for work. The Colac Box Factory operated firstly out of premises in Murray St (portion of which in 1956 was occupied by the Postal Engineering Branch and the Electoral Officer). After about two years of operation in the Murray Street premises, the all new factory premises was built in Dennis St, situated to the east side of the Fire Station, which the company then operated out of. The new factory was very comfortable and convenient, the work conditions being ideal. Mr. G. W. Prime, from the Melbourne factory of Messers. G. & N. Raymond came to Colac as manager of the Colac Box Factory, a post he filled for the life of the Box Factory operation in Colac.



I have often wondered how many people of Colac know what is going on in the town in the way of Industry. Many of the residents have grown with the town while some of its industries have done likewise. Every day we pass along the street and hear sounds which absently associate with some industrial operation but probably never stop to think, or wonder, what is being done there.

Perhaps the people working there would not welcome us if we walked into have a look, but generally, I feel sure, they would not object. It would be a very good thing if we did take a greater interest in things which are going on around us and it would be an excellent thing for the town. Perhaps we would also be prouder of it than we are and not feel so depressed when some patronising city dweller, who thinks civilisation ends at the boundaries of Melbourne, refers to all country towns as "the bush."

These things came to my mind as I considered the factory of Messers. G. and N. Raymond situated in Dennis Street near the Fire Station. Factories are not particularly attractive places to look at from the outside, but they have improved tremendously in many respects in recent years. Raymonds is no exception and in front is a very attractive little lawn with suitable shrubs while the place always looks clean and fresh. Inside, the effect is the same and the impression is one of general neatness.

Seeing the factory, you do not wonder that the group of young ladies who are to be seen entering Murray Street from Gellibrand Street at the SEC corner somewhere about five o'clock each evening do not give the impression that they are weary and worn out after a hard day's work. On the contrary, they seem very much the reverse. Yet they have been doing a very good job but under pleasant conditions. (Colac Herald – 21st September 1951)



AT LEFT – Pushbikes belonging to the many women who worked at the Box Factory partially block, and clutter the lane between the Box Factory and the Fire Station in this early to mid-1950s view.

Note the early front with two doors on the Fire Station which was built in 1923, the front was later modernised, and still stands today with a wide single door instead of the original double style doors and brick central pillar.

Image from Historical Society files - Photocard 387

With a number of machines in operation at the Colac Box Factory, many of them being very ingenious, they were mostly operated by women. The largest of the boxes made at the Colac factory were shirt boxes measuring 15x8x5 inches. The smallest boxes measured 3x1x1 inches which were specially made for the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories. Other in-between sizes were also manufactured on the premises upon demand of the time the factory was in operation.

The Box Factory was kept busy and expanded into 1950 and beyond. At this time the demand was continuous. September 1951 saw 78 employees working on the premises, mostly women. In fact at the time it is well documented that the Box Factory had already become an important feature of Colac's economic life, with a weekly pay sheet of up to £600. Much was also said of the value of such a factory, and was certainly helping in the development of the town.

However, in mid April 1952 came the first of announcements of staff reductions, the normal staff of 68 immediately reduced by 14. The reduction was regarded as *temporary* and would be governed by *future developments*. The manager of the Colac Box factory - Mr G. W. Prime stated that the demand for some of its lines such as boxes for jewellery cases had naturally fallen with the recent restriction of imports of jewellery. He hoped that the reduction in staff would be for a short period until other lines could be picked up, and that the staff were especially trained for the work, and that it was a much regretted decision.

In mid-May 1956 the decision was made to close the Colac Box Factory, an advert appeared in the Colac Herald (see below) to the effect of it closing. The announcement to close the factory on 30th May 1956 came as a shock to not only remaining staff, but local townspeople who had also come to regard the factory as a permanent fixture in the town. A list of reasons given for the closure included – new types of fully automated equipment, enabling increased production in Melbourne with much less manual hands on labor needed, the cost of maintaining and operating a decentralised unit had also remarkably increased, although government of the time supposedly supported the decentralisation of industry.

Public Notices

G. N. RAYMOND LIMITED

Forward policy of the Company dictates that the Colac unit of its plant be closed as from the 30th May.

New types of automatic equipment enabling increased production within the scope of the Melbourne plant, together with the increased cost of maintaining and operating a decentralised unit, has compelled the Board to reluctantly arrive at this decision.

We take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to both our staff and the Town of Colac for the loyal support we have received since the initial establishment of the unit in 1946.

R. N. RAYMOND, Director.

ABOVE – Public Notices section of Colac Herald 21st May 1956, dealing a blunt blow to the end of the Box Factory in Dennis St. Colac. *Note the mention of initial establishment in Colac in 1946 mentioned.*

AT RIGHT - Public Notices section of Colac Herald 7th July 1956, advertising the Colac Box Factory building for sale. In 1956 the building would have only been 8 years old. As well as the modern features, also mentioned is the *abundance of excellent female labor available.*

Both adverts from Historical Society files- Colac Herald collection.

Public Notices

FOR PRIVATE SALE
COLAC **Vac. Poss.**

Already a centre for secondary industries because of its abundance of excellent female labor.

**THIS EXCELLENT MODERN
BRICK FACTORY**



AREA OF 8800 SQ. FT.
Well Lit and Well Equipped Factory.
Grinnell Sprinkler System,
Slow Combustion and Electric Space Heaters,
Staff Diningroom, Kitchen, Rest Room,
Locker Rooms and Tiled Wash Rooms,
Adequate Administrative Offices & Storerooms.

AGENTS IN CONJUNCTION :
J. G. JOHNSTONE & CO. PTY. LTD.
144 MURRAY STREET, COLAC. Colac 1 and 42.
K. GARDNER, LANG & CO. PTY. LTD.
80 SWANSTON STREET, C.I. MF.2821.

At the time of closure there were 31 women and 4 men employed at the Colac Box Factory, with a weekly pay sheet of up to £350. The top wage when the factory opened in 1946 was £3. 5. - per week, and the employees earned a total of up to a combined sum of £70 per week. In 1956 they were able to earn about £14 per week each.

Most of the staff were offered positions in the Melbourne Box Factory premises of Messers. G. and N. Raymond, but most of the mostly women workforce were well set up to live in Colac, and really unable to leave.

The Mayor Cr. D. C. Stalker also made comment, saying that the council would make every effort to induce some other industry to purchase or lease the building. He thought strong action should be taken by people living in the country to induce politicians to take a more sincere interest in decentralisation, which was of great national importance. In the first week of June 1956, 24 people were still working at the Colac Box Factory to finalise orders/shipments, about five of the 35 strong previous workforce had obtained other employment.

In later May 1957, a *Modern Times Exhibition* was held in the former Box Factory premises. This attracted considerable attention from people of the town and surrounding district. It was estimated that about 8,000 people witnessed the street procession and exhibition. The main attraction prior to the opening of the exhibition was the procession, its highlight being the monster dragon which was 100 feet in length, with 1,250 scales, and weighed nearly two tons. It was stated to have been imported from Hong Kong at a cost of £1,000, and brought by the Victorian Young Chinese League. Floats and displays included - Henry Jacobs, E. Whillans photographer, The Colac Fashion Centre, Foy-Bilson's, H. L. Stephens Pty. Ltd., Peters and Co., Millard Motors Volkswagen, A.K. McKenzie Ford Dealers, Colac Timber Supply, Gray's Central Store, Quinton's Farm Machinery, The Home Centre float showcased new TV sets, bulk farm milk cooling vats were also displayed by Dairy Kold. As there was nowhere else big enough, Social/Civic/Sporting functions were also held at various times in the former Box Factory over the next two years. In mid-1959 the premises was brought by the Youth Club for the sum of £15,000. The Youth Club proceeded to rent out the office space in front, the Boys Club also used space, along with the Youth Club which was especially aimed at activities for youths to stop them getting into trouble with police.

Early February 1961 saw Colac Technical School students take up residence in the former Box Factory, (the *Colac Technical School* had been established for one year and had over 250 enrolments) they stayed there until late October 1961, when they famously marched on Friday 27th October to their new school in Hearn St.



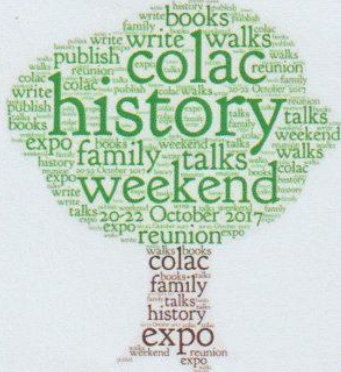
AT LEFT – Colac Technical School students at front of the former Box Factory in Dennis St, ready to leave on a week's 1,400 mile tour on Friday 25th September 1961. Mr. D. Stalker, centre, was one of two masters who accompanied them on the trip.
(Image from Historical Society files – Bela Bard Brucker collection).



ABOVE - The former Box Factory as it stands today, situated at 28 Dennis St. The premise was recently sold, its next stage in life about to begin?
Note the single door frontage of the Fire Station compared to the later 1960s view on rear page.
(Image by - C. Pink)

After the Colac Technical school students vacated the former Box Factory in late October 1961, the premises lay vacant, and was next bought by the SEC (State Electricity Commission) and used by its Engineering Services Division to service South West Victoria, which lasted until the SEC was privatised in the mid-1990s. The building was then purchased by two local businessmen, and was leased to Target Australia as a storage warehouse. The building was next sold in early 2016, where it remains as a leased warehouse.

(An architect drawing survives of the Box Factory building situated at 28 Dennis St, dated 23/6/1947)
(Thanks also to references from Norman Houghton)



Mark these dates in your diary

WEEKEND OF FAMILY HISTORY, COLAC

Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd October 2017



Colac & District
Family History Group Inc.

FRIDAY 20TH BOUTIQUE WRITERS' FESTIVAL

Colac Community Library Queen Street Colac

- Mini Expo featuring specific organisations to assist and offer advice in every aspect of researching, writing and publishing your family history. 12pm to 6pm Incorporating presentation of the winners of Meriba "Our Pioneer Stories" writing competition at 5pm
- Workshop: Writing a Non-Boring Family History with Hazel Edwards - tickets \$10 each 1pm to 4pm - Purchase Workshop tickets for \$10 each online at <https://www.trybooking.com/297289>

SATURDAY 21ST FAMILY HISTORY EXPO IN CONJUNCTION WITH VAFHO

10am to 4pm at COPACC – Cnr Rae & Gellibrand Streets, Colac. Opposite the Railway Station.

More than thirty stall-holders, 4 great speakers, a cultural historian dating photographs and clothing, giveaways, prizes, photographic exhibition and much, much more.

Tickets \$20 per person, all inclusive and available now at the Colac Cinema office or on-line at: <http://www.copacc.com.au/Events/Family-History-Expo>

Family reunions – meet up with others researching the same surnames at the specially allocated meeting points. Contact research@colacfamilyhistory.org.au for more information and to register the surnames you are researching.

SUNDAY 22ND CEMETERY WALKS, HISTORY TOURS, FAMILY REUNIONS

10:00am ENTHRALLING EXPIRIES – meet the guide at the front gate - cnr Hearn & Gravesend Streets - to hear the stories and for a tour of the resting places of some of our interesting pioneers. Tickets \$10 per person <https://www.trybooking.com/RIUG>

1:00pm MY DONATED HEADSTONE – meet the guide at the front gate - cnr Hearn & Gravesend Streets - for a walking tour around the graves of people whose headstones were erected by public subscription. Learn who these people were and why the community felt the need to honour them. Tickets \$10 per person <https://www.trybooking.com/RIUL>

HISTORY TOUR – COLAC & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Meet at entry to COPACC at 9:45 for 10am. The bus will take you on a two hour tour of the historical sights of the district with commentary. Tickets \$10 per person – available at the History Centre

FAMILY REUNIONS: Meet up with your newly found relatives through the Family History Group Surname Register or organise a reunion of your family members who will all be in Colac for this important event. Let us know what you will be doing. Contact research@colacfamilyhistory.org.au

History Centre COPACC
Cnr Rae & Gellibrand Streets
Colac VIC 3250



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CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER –

AT LEFT - Situated next to the well-known former Fire Station in Dennis St, the building is still known as ***The Box Factory*** - see article on the building's life and times in this issue.

This later 1960s view shows signage of State Electricity Commission on old Box Factory frontage. Note also the two door frontage of Fire Station still at that time compared to today's view.



AT LEFT – These school children are walking south on Gellibrand St, past the Union Club Hotel on Friday 27th October 1961, **WHY ?**

-If you need a clue – they are carrying their school bags.

ANSWER—NEXT ISSUE

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

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
September	7 th R. Osborne 14 th I. Barlow 21 st G. Splatt 28 th J. Knight	1 st C. Pink 8 th G. Bray 15 th E. Chambers 22 nd M. Saddlier 29 th R. Osborne	3 rd A. McIntosh 10 th G. Knox 17 th B. McDonald 24 th G. Knox
October	5 th D. Missen 12 th I. Barlow 19 th G. Splatt 26 th J. Knight	6 th C. Pink 13 th G. Bray 20 th E. Chambers 27 th M. Saddlier	1 st A. McIntosh 8 th G. Knox 15 th B. McDonald 22 nd R. Osborne 29 th L. Spence
November	2 nd D. Missen 9 th I. Barlow 16 th G. Splatt 23 rd J. Knight 30 th R. Missen	3 rd C. Pink 10 th G. Bray 17 th E. Chambers 24 th M. Saddlier	5 th A. McIntosh 12 th G. Knox 19 th B. McDonald 26 th R. Osborne