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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.

(History Centre closed from December 15th at 4.00 pm, reopening January 18th at 2.00 pm)

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

Forthcoming Events.

Wed November 22nd - 7.30pm

Tues December 5th - 6.30pm

Wed January 24th

Sat & Sun February 3rd & 4th

Sat February 10th - 10.00am

Wed February 28th - 7.30pm

'Vintage Clocks & Watches' Speaker: John Knight

Christmas Dinner in conjunction with Family History Group at Baronga Motel
 6.30pm. Bookings are essential by November 30th

Proposed Bus Trip for BBQ tea to Lake Purrumbete property

Further details later

Colac Heritage Festival - Historical Society Display

Geelong & District Historical Association – Mt Duneed

General Meeting

A Note from the President

Looking back on our monthly meetings over the past year, our society has been very fortunate to have had a diverse range of excellent speakers on a wide range of topics.

At the same time I must thank our loyal band of volunteers who have staffed and maintained the History Centre, produced window displays, contributed to the newsletter and handled a myriad of queries and requests which form part of the day to day operation of the Historical Society.

I congratulate the Family History Group on their highly successful weekend seminar in October. We were pleased on the Sunday to be able to support the event by organising a bus tour of local historical interest which attracted 40 passengers. This included a group from the Colac Visitor Information Centre. Special thanks to Noel Ryan and the tour leaders.

With this in mind I would take the liberty to quote from an address delivered by Professor Graeme Davidson at the Victorian Community History Awards: "Family History and local historians are inextricably connected. Only when we place the family story in its local or community setting do we truly understand it. Only when we walk in the paths of our ancestors, do we begin to feel that we belong. So, sorry Ancestry.com, it's not just your fingers but also your feet; not just your software but your boots and rainwear that you need when you do family history."

Close co-operation between ourselves and the Family History Group, as joint tenants of the History Centre, ensures that our visitors and researchers get the full story.

I encourage those members who are able, to attend our joint Christmas meal (see above) on December 5th.

In January a visit to the Lake Purrumbete property for a BBQ is proposed & we will inform members of details at a later date.

Best wishes to everyone for a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Meetings Report – We have had the pleasure of hearing two speakers in September and October sharing the fascinating stories behind their recently published books. They were *Robert Wuchatsch* and *Neil Stewart*. See below for reports in the Colac Herald of these two **.

What Has Been In The News?

The Colac Herald 2017 -

August 14th - **Love inspires historical book.** Pirron Yallock's *Robert Wuchatsch* has researched and completed a book - *John Muston; Draper, Squatter, Speculator in Colonial Australia*, the great, great, great grandfather of his late wife Margaret. John Muston originally settled on the Barwon River with other squatters before they all moved westward; the Pollacks, the Manifolds and the Roadknight family. Robert lives on a property owned by the Roadknight's and he hopes to write a book on the history of the stony Rises.

August 16th - **Back in Time for Trinity College celebrations.** Past and present Trinity College students uncovered history when they dug up a time capsule buried for 25 years which contained letters, diary entries, photographs and drawings from different classes. It was buried at the college's 25th Anniversary in 1992.

- **New era for Curtain Company "Dollar Curtains"** which opened in 1985 on the corner of Gellibrand and Rae Streets by *Elaine and Daryl Langdon*. Later moved to Bromfield Street in 1986 as "Dollar Curtains and Blinds". Now sold to Nigel and Christy Rothery after 32 years.

August 18th - **CWA bids farewell to Colac Hall.** *Polwarth Country Women's Association* conference was held for the last time in their Rae Street CWA Hall. It has been sold to new owners as member numbers have decreased and to save on the high maintenance costs and rates. The Polwarth Group includes eight Colac District branches that will have to find other venues, possibly in private homes, but with their Annual Exhibition at St John's Hall.

September 4th - **Roundabout opens ready for new supermarket.** A new roundabout has popped up on the corner of Queen and Bromfield streets installed by the developers of the nearby *Colac Plaza Shopping Centre*. *Coles* have prepared 276 car-parking places at the Plaza.

Education returns to Glenormiston. The Colac region's future farmers will be able to gain agriculture qualifications at Glenormiston, north-west of Camperdown, this year, with the State Government confirming a deal with South West TAFE. It had closed in 2014 because of funding cuts. It will offer Certificate three in Agriculture and Equine related qualifications under Racing Victoria.

September 6th - **Book rises from the ashes.** *Peter Jacobs*, an artist, whose Separation Creek property survived the 2015 Christmas Day bushfires, has published a book of illustrations, photographs and verse. It expresses the emotions he and other residents experienced when 116 homes were destroyed at Wye River and Separation Creek.

September 20th - **New palms for plaza.** Colac Plaza will feature palm trees, despite the new arrivals appearing smaller and a different variety to the plants which had previously grown on the site. They were planted 80 years ago by the late *Harry Jellie* when the site was owned by the Atlantic Union Oil Company.

- **Colac Truck Museum needs help to open.** Colac Otway Shire Councillor *Jason Schram* called on volunteer organisations to help keep this Value-adding collection of vintage trucks in Colac, in a museum. Three trucks are more than 100 years old. Multiple groups could manage the museum, he suggested rotating opening days and keeping profits to benefit local charities.

September 25th - **Club marks 50 years of helping war widows.** Members and friends of *Colac Laurel Club* gathered to celebrate the club's 50 years of helping and supporting the region's war widows. They provide support and friendship for women whose partners died at or after return from war. The first secretary of the Colac Club was *Mrs EH Child* and her daughter *Marj Osborne* cut the cake. Current President is *Pat Robb*.

- **Centenary celebration.** *Charles Stewart Real Estate* hosted its Centenary Gala Dinner for 200 at Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre. *Charles Stewart and Company* started in Colac in 1917 after separating from J.G. Johnstone and Co after 21 years of business together. The fundamentals of ethical, honest and hard-working leaders and employees have been handed down by generations of Stewart family members. **Neil Stewart**, the grandson of the company founder and the present Board Chairman has written a book on his company which is now under the Directorship of his son *Michael Stewart*.

September 27th - **Colac welcomes new Coles.** The new supermarket is part of the new multi-million dollar *Colac Plaza shopping centre*, situated on the corner of Bromfield and Queen Streets. Store manager is Vignesh Raj. The old Murray Street store has been sold.

October 18th - **Fifty year celebrations for Colac kindergarten.** *Wydinia Kindergarten and Early Learning Centre* welcomed back former staff and unveiled future projects to celebrate its 50th Birthday.

- **Eventide buildings demolished.** Colac's former *Eventide Aged Care* home site in Church Street is being demolished. Former residents moved to the new *Mercy Aged Care* facility in Queen Street in 2005. Also in 2005 international workers with ALC- Australian Lamb Company, were accommodated there, mostly Chinese. A Barwon Heads based company is preparing the site for a new housing development.

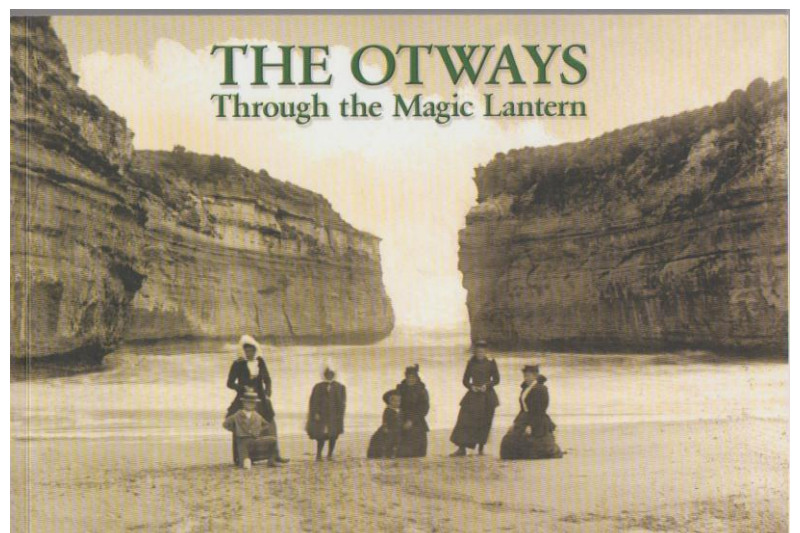
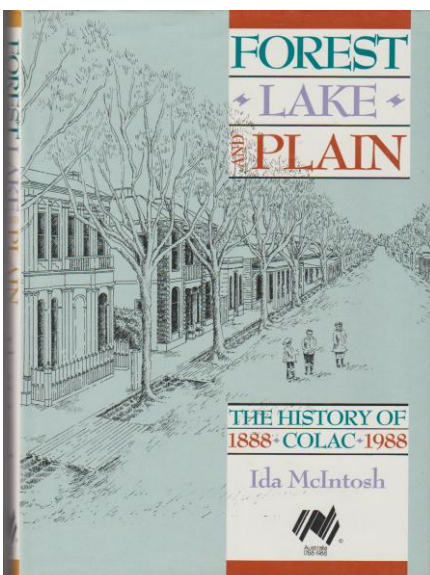
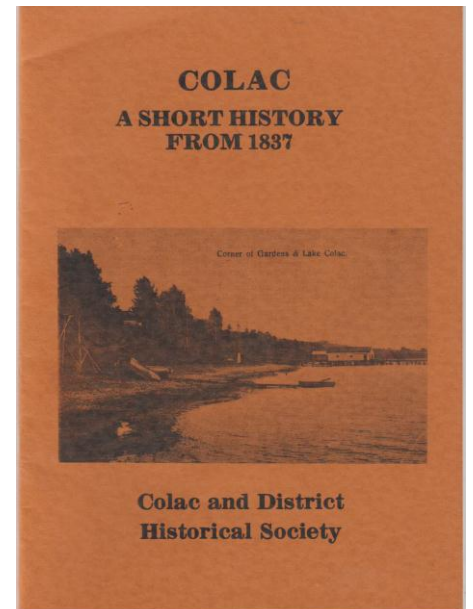
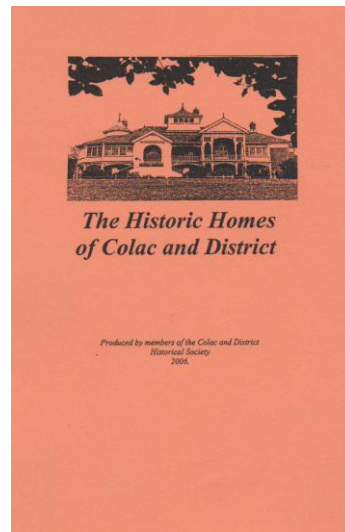
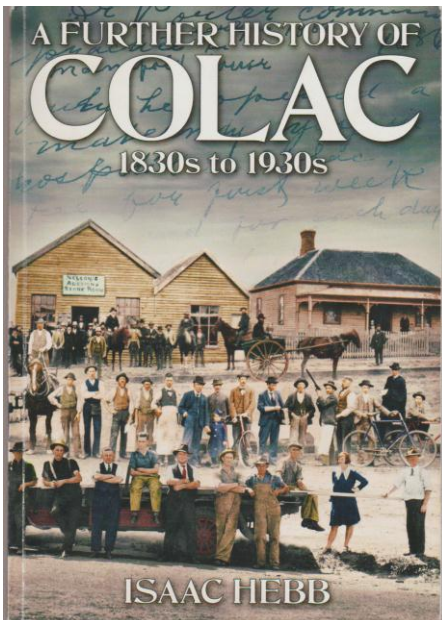
October 20th - An amazing piece of Colac's history. *Derrinook*, on the corner of Gellibrand and Manifold streets, started as a private hospital in the 1890s and is one of Colac's most iconic properties. *Derrinook* is a grand example of late Victorian, early-Federation architecture design with ornate timber detailing on the verandas, a steeply gabled roof and ceramic chimney pots. Inside it has high ceilings, lath and plaster-finished walls, wooden mantles and elaborate fireplaces. It was one of the first properties in Colac to have electricity. It became self-contained flats for returned Second World War servicemen in the 1940s, but at present has nine units and an owner's apartment and is for sale.

October 30th - College marks 50th anniversary. *Trinity College Colac* has celebrated its 50-year Jubilee with a weekend full of festivities at the rapidly developing college. Their new *Jubilee Performing Arts Centre* hosted its first formality, with performances by old collegians and current students, and the launch of former librarian **Helen Paatch's** book - *Looking Back - 50 years of Trinity College*. St Mary's parish priest *Michael O'Toole* blessed the new buildings and the synthetic oval which were officially opened by *Gerard McKenzie and Des Ryan*.

November 15th - Men retrace grandfather's steps. Swan Marsh's *Chris, Josh and Tim Smith* were among the enthusiasts and descendants of Australian Mounted Division soldiers who joined the re-enactment of the charge at Beersheba as part of the battle's 100-year anniversary. Chris' grandfather *Clarence Walter Smith* was among 800 members of the Fourth Light Horsemen Brigade fighting at Beersheba on October 21st, 1917

Books for Sale at Colac & District Historical Society:

These would make ideal Christmas Gifts.



MEMORIES OF *NERAH*, DREEITE, 1920 – 1923

Contributed by Dawn Peel

In 2001 I was compiling a history of the Dreeite area and appealed in the Weekly Times for information. One response came from 84-year old Miss Beatrice Crawford of Ivanhoe, and the information she offered follows:

My father, Alexander Steward Crawford, purchased *Nerah* at Dreeite on 11 December 1920 for the sum of 6567 pounds at 40 pounds per acre. He purchased it from Donald Alexander McDonald of Beeac, who, I imagine must have bought it from Neil Calvert when the property was sub-divided into soldier settlement blocks after World War 1.

We only lived there for about 3 years (when we went bankrupt). The house had about 14 rooms, including the ballroom and maids' quarters. It had its own gas plant for lighting and a septic sewerage system. There was also a bell service throughout the house and when a bell button was pushed in a room a shutter fell down on a board in the vestibule to indicate which room required service.

We had two maids, one named Margaret Foley who was sent by an agency in Melbourne, but Mum thought she was too old to cope with us kids (there were 7 of us then) so she kept her and they sent another young girl who was named Hilda Granrott. The maids had their own quarters with a toilet and bathroom. I don't know what happened to them, if they remained in the district or otherwise.

When we moved to *Nerah* our greatest thrill was 'pulling the chain'. It was a great septic system with a main tank a long way down one of the paddocks. We also had a gas plant which was controlled from a tall structure like a windmill with a huge weight which had to be wound up to its apex and as it came down must have pressurised the gas through the pipes into and through the house. The ballroom had many little brackets of about 5 lights around the walls.

The soldier settlers used to have an annual ball at our place. When there was a ball or dance imminent the workmen from the farm scraped candle wax over the floor and we kids sat on hessian bags and they pulled us round and backwards and forwards on the floor to give it a nice shiny floor for dancing. My mother played the piano and my father the violin, although I don't know if they played at balls. On one occasion during a ball a group of larrikins got into the gas plant shed and let the weight down with the result that all the lights went out.

We had a tennis court and the tennis club had various activities at our place. The nuns from the Catholic church[at Coragulac] also had a Sunday School at our place on Sunday afternoons about once a month.

I thought we went to the Dreeite South State School ... but it could have been North. The teacher was a Mr Stevens and he boarded at our place. We went to school on horseback.

I think we sold the property to someone named Thornton from Kolora or Noorat, but I really can't remember ... At some time after we left, and probably after Thornton's left, the house was cut in two and the front portion moved into Colac and made into a residence there.

Miss Crawford's letter and the documents relating to the purchase of Nerah are in our collection in Manuscript Box 47. No doubt the Colac Herald would yield to the keen researcher more detail about the property. Crawford advertised it to let in late 1923. I have been told that part of Nerah was used for a weatherboard dwelling still in Lyons Street, Colac.

Train Dash to Safety in 1919 Fire

(Likely to be a bit of a tall story - author unknown)

I wonder who remembers that column of smoke that curled up over the ridge on John Gardner's property at Ditchley in February 1919. Fanned by a strong northerly it spread rapidly towards Beech Forest, becoming one of the worst fires to ravage the Otway's. The train had just left for Colac and the immediate problem was to return it to the safety of the Beech Forest railway yard. There was no hope that the little 'NA Class loco could push the train back up the hill, so another engine was sent to help haul the train back.

The Beech Forest crew took their engine down and hooked onto the van of the stranded train and, with the two engines, - one pulling and one pushing the train, returned to the safety of the railway yards. A number of children were taken to the Ditchley Park Hotel, wrapped in wet towelling and stayed there until the danger had passed.

Because two engines were on the same sector at the one time, the Beech Forest crew were severely dealt with by the Railways Commissioners. The fact that their deed had saved the lives of passengers and crew and in fact the whole train meant nothing to them. As usual, Red Tape was more important than life.

In those years, Beech Forest was a thriving little rail centre where trains from Colac and Crowes met and transferred passengers and goods. Beech Forest railway personnel at that time included Walter Bassett (Stationmaster), Jimmy Allen (Operating Porter), Bill Nation (Guard), Bob 'Dasher' Dalton (Driver), Bob Thompson (fireman), and Alf Featherstone (Cleaner). Quite a number of Beech Forest School Teacher - 'Bluey' Smith's pupils had a ride in the guards van around to School No. 3235.

There was a twice-weekly train service to Colac to coincide with Sale days on Mondays and Thursdays. The train left Beech Forest at 7am and returned at about 7pm, weather and other circumstances permitting. The only time the train was permitted to exceed 15 miles per hour was when it reached a spot near Elliminyt where 20 mph was allowed.

In these days, it is a little strange to realise that the timetable allowed 3 hours 20 minutes for the 29 mile trip to Colac. The 20 minutes was spent at the refreshment room in Gellibrand consuming the inevitable sausages and mash, which had previously been ordered by telephone from Beech Forest.



AT LEFT – Locomotive 6A - a typical NA locomotive at the Colac Railway Station c.1920s. The NA's did years of reliable service even in a totally worn out state of repair, which were only kept going by the ingenious knowhow and knowledge of the local drivers and crews. *Image from Historical Society files - Photocard 167*

In the Twenties, when the timber mills were in full swing, and a little later on when the road construction workers, under the guidance of 'Bricky' Bennett

arrived, the hotel was a busy place with patrons three and four deep, especially on Saturdays. Constables Gunn and Henry Bradbury, who were Officers In Charge at Beech Forest at different times, were kept on their toes.

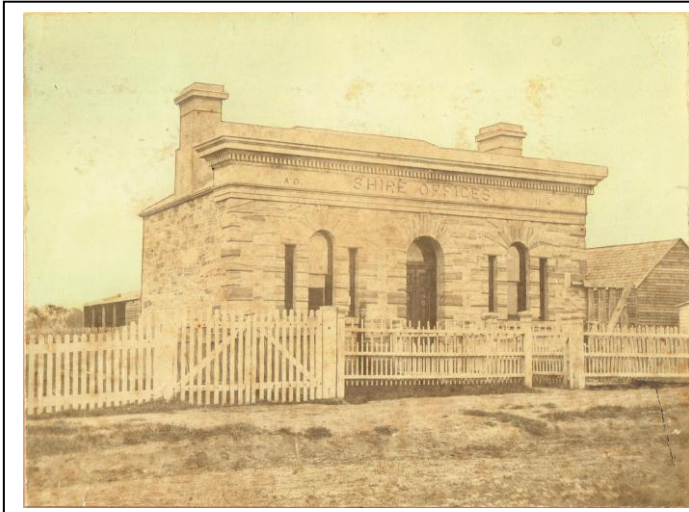
A Look at the Rates

By Norman Houghton

A social and economic snapshot of Colac in the 1860s can be gleaned through the newly formed Colac Shire in its first set of rate books from 1866. As well, Bailliere's Gazetteer (Road and Town Guide) of the same year has a broad summary of the town to supplement the detail data.

Bailliere describes Colac as a postal and road board town on the main road to Warrnambool and having a population of about one thousand. The pastoral and agricultural role of Colac is mentioned and emphasis is placed on the several carrier's offices *for the conveyance of goods to and from Geelong and Camperdown*. The road conditions are outlined, mostly bad, and the various industries and support services are described. A flour mill, tannery and sawmill comprise the factories and the services consist of two coach booking offices, one bank, post office, Council chamber and a public library with 100 subscribers. There are seven hotels, the Great Western (Willis) out on the road at Irrewarra, Colac (McLaughlin), Farmers Arms (Silk), Royal (Anthony), Odd Fellow's (Etheridge), Victoria (Gleeson) and Telegraph (Bradley).

Total livestock resources for the district totalled 2,177 horses, 1,847 cows, 68,229 sheep and 1,106 pigs. There were more horses than cows, thus confirming Colac's place as a cartage and transport hub and service town on one of the Colony's main roads.



AT LEFT - The original Colac Shire Council office as built in 1864. Prior to this the Shire operated out of the first Court House. The Shire office was poorly designed and built, was abandoned as unsafe in 1876 when the foundations sagged and the fabric cracked and it was subsequently pulled down. Council then moved to alternative premises until finally getting around to erecting a new Shire Office on the same site in 1892.

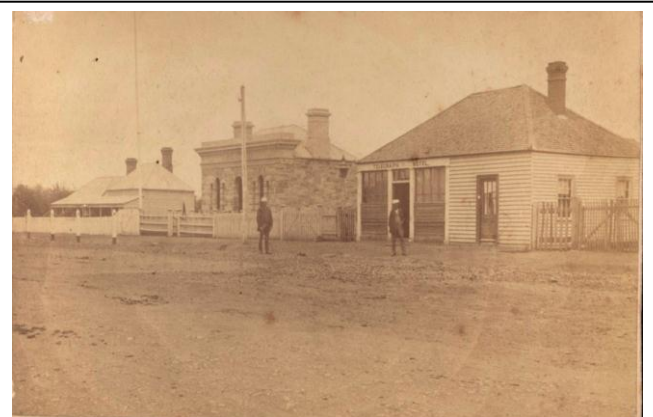
Image from Historical Society files - Photocard 64

The first Rate Books do not specify occupation and it is not until the 1870 book that these are mentioned, thereby restricting this analysis for

the mid 1860s. However the range of occupations and services by 1870, and there is no need to doubt a similar developing mix for 1866, shows that there were sufficient to satisfy just about all local and district needs for business, travel, nourishment, health, worship, clothing, education, social and cultural.



ABOVE – From left - Pre 1870 Post Office and Shire Office corner, foundation of the Civic Precinct in the early 1870s. This end of town was where the banks, the better hotels and businesses were situated so was the centre of action. The wall of today's No.1 Murray Street is at right of image.
Image from Historical Society files - Photocard 351



ABOVE – Shire Office situated between the Post Office and the Telegraph Hotel about 1870. The hotel was later demolished and a new Commercial Hotel built in 1876.
Image from State Library – (SLVH2004-55-2)

The occupations shown for 1870 include publicans, two bakers, two nurses (Jane Dixon and Jane Doak), surgeon (Thomas Rae), solicitor (John Lane), two coach operators, two saddlers, eight boot-makers, two tailors, dress maker (Isabella Pink), school mistress (Margaret Kelly), teacher (Mark Pitts), two auctioneers, two clerks, three wheelwrights, six blacksmiths, six carpenters, three stonemasons, five carters, three drovers, four butchers, three bakers, six storekeepers, and one each of fruiterer, tinsmith, librarian, accountant, draper, photographer, printer, brewer, tanner, watchmaker, sign painter, coach painter, drover, herdsman, chaff cutter, constable, pound keeper, miller, coach driver, bone dealer, gardener, sexton, rate collector, bank manager and brickmaker. One had to go out to Elliminyt to Seth Richardson to get a broom made by his good self. The largest single occupation category was that of a labourer and around 50 men were designated thus.

At Colac East the hotel is shown as an Inn and dwelling and its owner John McLaughlin also owns some cottages and has a garden. The turn on the highway here was known as Dalton's Corner for many years and this was after John Dalton who had a blacksmith shop on the bend. He was variously described as a blacksmith or wheelwright. Richard Darby was a dealer and he had a warehouse for hay and corn. Other trades represented were a painter, cooper, currier, bootmaker and carpenter and these individuals owned or rented dwellings here. One teacher appears as a resident in 1870

There was sufficient wealth in the community to enable home and business ownership and of the dwellings listed for Colac slightly around half were owner/occupied and the rest tenanted. The stand-alone dwellings for 1866, 1868 and 1870 were 48, 66 and 60 respectively and the tenanted properties were 32, 57 and 64 (allowing for some inconsistencies in rate book terminology). The business people lived on site and their rate entries usually show as shop and dwelling.

There was not much else going on in the rest of the shire apart from at Beeac, which was a newly surveyed township. There were around 30 houses and 10 business/commercial premises in the town and a developing occupational mix which, in 1870, comprised the classifications of bootmaker, school mistress, surgeon, storekeeper (3), butcher, carpenter, blacksmith, saddler, tailor, horse breaker, hawker, gardener, labourer (11), dairyman, publican (3) and salt maker.

Cressy was barely a blip on the map with no stand alone dwellings and just a publican, storekeeper, carpenter and blacksmith shown.

Irrewarra possessed an Inn (The Great Western) near where the future railway crossing on the Ballarat Road was to be and that was it. This building dated from 1854.

Pirron Yallock had a store and an Inn and one carpenter, the latter being Thomas Sharrow who went on to bigger and better things in Colac as a carpenter, timber yard owner, sawmill and funeral director. Its near neighbour Irrewillipe was the centre of some recent settlement and it possessed a store and a sawmill. John Rand operated a wayside Inn at Nalangil on the main road.

To the south of Colac there was virtually nothing even though Barongarook parish had been surveyed in 1866 and made ready for selection. John Powell is the only occupational entry and it is given as a splitter.



AT LEFT - View of Beeac main street from the south end looking north in late 1870s. The settlement was well established by then with a line of dwellings and business premises fronting the road. St. Michael's Catholic Church stands in the foreground.

Image from Historical Society files – Early Colac Shire Framed Series.



CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER –

AT LEFT - As mentioned in the story on the Box Factory, this image shows the Colac Technical School students walking from the Box Factory to their new school in Hearn Street on 27th October 1961.



AT LEFT - Can you identify the location of this school, and also what the children are doing ?. The date is August 1964, perhaps a clue may be that hill to the east in the background ?

ANSWER—NEXT ISSUE

COLAC AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY DUTY ROSTER 2017/18 - 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM - Thankyou

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
December	7 th D. Missen 14 th I. Barlow 21 st <i>closed</i> 26 th <i>closed</i>	8 th C. Pink 15 th G. Bray 22 nd <i>closed</i> 27 th <i>closed</i>	3 rd A. McIntosh 10 th G. Knox 17 th <i>closed</i> 24 th <i>closed</i>
January	4 th <i>closed</i> 11 th <i>closed</i> 18 th G. Splatt 25 th J. Knight	5 th <i>closed</i> 12 th <i>closed</i> 19 th E. Chambers 26 th <i>closed</i>	7 th <i>closed</i> 14 th <i>closed</i> 21 st B. McDonald 28 th G. Knox
February	1 st D. Missen 8 th I. Barlow 15 th G. Splatt 22 nd J. Knight	2 nd C. Pink 9 th G. Bray 16 th E. Chambers 23 rd M. Saddlier	4 th A. McIntosh 11 th G. Knox 18 th B. McDonald 25 th L. Spence