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

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

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

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

### Dates for your Diary

Invitation to attend a discussion on **Saturday February 1st** - 10.30am – 12 noon at Colac History Centre-‘Connecting and sharing between local history groups’. All history groups encompassing an area between Winchelsea, Apollo Bay, Lismore/Derrinallum and Terang have been invited to attend.

**February 1<sup>st</sup> & 2nd Colac P & A Society Heritage Festival**– Colac Showgrounds with a **Colac Historical Society Display Stand**.

Feb 8th Geelong District Historical Societies meeting – venue to be announced

February 17th Joint meeting with Colac & District Family History Group 7.30pm.

\*\*\* **Wednesday February 26<sup>th</sup>** First gathering for Historical Society is to a **BBQ** at the home of *Jen and Barry McDonald, 15 Belvedere Drive, Elliminyt*, from 6.00pm. Please bring own choice of meat and a salad, sweets or nibbles to share.

March 15th Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies at Horsham.

**Wednesday March 26<sup>th</sup>** 7.30pm at the History Centre. **Speaker** – Ray Thomas, Colac Apex Club, – including window display.

\*\*\* **Saturday March 29<sup>th</sup>** - **Excursion to Historic property** north of Colac.

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

**Wednesday May 28<sup>th</sup> our AGM.**

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

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Members were saddened to read in December of the passing of sisters **Valeria and Bronwen Basset** of Colac. Both ladies were in their 90s. The Bassett family had a long association with the Historical Society - their parents were founding members and have been generous with donations and help. In fact the material for the recent Sitlington window display came from the Bassett family. Historian Dawn Peel also said the sisters had given her and Andrew McIntosh access to their father’s WW1 letters which became the basis of the Fromelles booklet which this Society published and has sold for a profit.

### NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Plans for 2014 were discussed at a Committee Meeting on January 14. We hope this will lead to a varied and informative meeting program, which can be published in our next newsletter. We aim to have two excursions on the Saturday following our meetings in March and October. Suggestions for meeting topics and excursion venues are most welcome. We need to ensure that our activities continue to stimulate interest and provide encouragement for others to join.

A working bee arranged at short notice was held on January 15, when an overhaul and rearrangement of the History Centre showcases was undertaken. The two new showcases were stocked, one with a collection of Cliff Young memorabilia, the other with some of the fine china pieces from our collection. The end result is a less cluttered and more inviting display area. The two ex-Shire computers have also been installed in the centre. The commitment of all members of the Society, whether it be at regular working bees, cataloguing, research activities or duty roster is one of its great strengths.

The sale of books published and distributed by the Society continues to be very successful and provide a good source of income. With this in mind I hope this year we can work towards a publication where all members can contribute. The idea is to publish a book of Colac businesses and locations and the changes which have occurred since the town began. Craig Pink is currently indexing the *Bela Bard-brucker* photo collection (former Colac Herald photographer) with selected photos being progressively placed on computer file and photo cards. These photos taken 1960-1990 often show businesses quite different to today.

At our April meeting we will delve into this issue and I hope individual members might like to take up the challenge to research the changes that have occurred on individual sites. We will then produce a book that presents a written and photographic record of their evolution.

On the weekend of February 1 and 2 our Society will have a display and book stall in the Homecrafts Pavilion at the Colac P & A Society 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Heritage Festival. I hope members will visit and perhaps spend a little time being the face of the Colac & District Historical Society inviting people to join, or maybe sell some books.

Robert Missen.

### What has been in the News?

#### **Colac Herald.**

**October 23rd 2013. Book digs up dairy memories.** Historian and author *Laura Donati* wrote the book "*Cororooke: A Dairy Factory, 1901-2013*" with contributions from the Colac and District Historical Society, Fonterra employees and suppliers. Fonterra commissioned the book to recognise the factory's legacy before the machines were turned off and the factory closed down. The book brings to life the link between the people, the community and the site, that has been an important part of the area for over a century.

**October 28th Cameras keep Colac under surveillance.** Terry Mulder, the member for Polwarth has launched Colac's 9 closed circuit television cameras, a project worth \$300,000 to monitor the main street, the park, oval and skate park, from the police station.

**November 1st Undertaker solves memorial mystery.** Colac RSL had been searching for details of a man named on a plaque stuck to the Red Rock eastern lookout memorial- WW2 veteran Private Gordon Robert Smith. A local funeral home helped to find his relative. The ex soldier was living in the area when he died, though he had enlisted at Seymour in 1942. The Red Rock memorial was unveiled in 1920 and honours 10 servicemen who died in WW1 and others who served then.

**November 6<sup>th</sup> Public advocate wants 2015 Colanda closure.** The office of the Public Advocate wants all remaining Victorian disability institutions, including Colanda closed by 2015 and people moved into smaller houses in the community. There are 90 people resident at present and a no-admissions policy is in place.

**November 8<sup>th</sup> Farm heritage comes to light in latest book.** The closure of Colac district's Fonterra dairy factory has prompted historian *Norman Houghton* to research his latest book called "*A Land of Milk and Onions.*" The book focuses on the rise and fall of mixed dairy farming in Colac district where there were once 45 dairy factories and very poor roads. Every locality had a creamery and now there is none. Onion growing was a major industry along with dairying, until the 1960s when a disease ended the onion boom. Farmers also kept pigs and poultry and grew potatoes, vegetables, fruit and fodder until financial pressures forced them to change or sell their farms.

**November 11<sup>th</sup> Theatrical group marks 70 years.** The Colac Players marked their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary by putting memorabilia and photos on display in COPACC's foyer and in *Colac's History Centre window*. Hundreds of Colac and district people have appeared in more than 170 shows performed by the group since 1943. The first show, "No Social Standards", held in Colac's Victoria Hall, provided entertainment for the community and the troops stationed in Colac. It was a great hit.

**November 20<sup>th</sup> Plan to salvage submerged plane.** An Ocean Grove commercial salvage diver plans to recover a WW2 *Wirraway* from Lake Corangamite where it crashed in 1950. He proposes to raise the aircraft intact and transport it to a 300,000-litre freshwater tank erected nearby where it can be cleaned and monitored. The project has been approved by the RAF, Parks Vic, Heritage Vic and the Environment Protection Authority. The *Wirraway* was on a training run from Pt Cook when it crashed into the lake. *Wirraway* pilots trained at a base in Cressy during WW2.

**November 27<sup>th</sup> Historic house tour.** *Coragulac House* is an 140 year old 26-room, bluestone mansion at Alvie. It was built by George, son of Colac pioneer William Robertson, in 1873. Private viewings and an open day were planned by the new owners Gary and Sharon Gibson

**December 9<sup>th</sup> District Heritage projects delayed.** Colac Otway Shire councillors have approved the council's new heritage strategy concerning Colac district's, iconic, *dry, stone walls* whereby a planning permit would be required to demolish, remove or alter a dry, stone, wall built before 1940. But moves to establish a fund for historical restoration work are at a standstill.

**December 27<sup>th</sup> City will lose service club.** Volunteers are winding up *Colac's Apex Club* after 78 years of community service. The club was formed in 1936 for young men aged 18 to 40 to gain new skills, make new friends and help people in need. The trees in Murray St between Sinclair St and Cants Rd were planted by Apex. Life member *Ed Cole* recalled giving Christmas gifts to all children in hospital and melting down fat from the butchers to put into tins to be sent to Britain after the war. Club members collected and chopped firewood for old people and cleaned up gardens. They built infra-structure that Colac lacked such as playgrounds, seats, a kindergarten, a bridge over the Barongarook Ck, a kindergarten and the Tourist Information Centre. Apex members also took over the running of Kana when there was not a committee. Apex was a club that developed young men, producing successful businessmen, councillors, Shire Council Presidents and Mayors of the city.

**January 15<sup>th</sup> 2014 Vintage truck owner considering options.** *Merv Brunt* has a collection of about 40 vintage trucks on display at an east Colac warehouse and he has been trying to find a better site to boost Colac tourism. Proposals to

move the museum to the former Colac High School site and the old Civic Home Hardware building last year hit State Government and Colac Otway Shire Council hurdles.

**January 24<sup>th</sup> Museum push grows beyond truck display.** A push to set up a *Colac vintage truck museum* has grown to include displays of classic cars, motorcycles and railway history. Supporters believe the former High School site could be turned into a very large heritage museum for the whole area. It could also include displays about logging, the Beechy railway line and general Colac district history. A petition to support this idea is circulating. The State Govt owns the school site but has refused to donate it to the council for community uses, despite evidence that Colac residents bought the site a century ago and gave it to the Govt to build a school on it.

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**NB.** Amongst the books we have for sale are the 2 new ones mentioned above- "**Cororooke: A Dairy Factory**" by Laura Donati and Norman Houghton's, "**A Land of Milk and Onions: the rise and fall of mixed dairy farming in the Colac Shire**". Much of the research has come from our Dairying files and vertical files. According to *Dr Dawn Peel* we had a big display on dairying a few years ago and that is when Historical members *John and Heather Knight* sorted all the material and placed it into an indexed file, making this information available to later authors or interested persons. This is just one example of the wealth of historical information that has been saved and cared for by the *Colac Historical Society*. As you can imagine it is an ongoing task, being done by a small number of volunteers, and new members would be most welcome.

**Here are some more animal items passed on to us by Norman Houghton from his research of old Colac Heralds.**

1948. The *Balintore School* has a pet cat named Tabby. It was a wild one that went there during the holidays to have kittens. The children gave it food and milk and eventually it emerged with its kittens. The school was plagued by rabbits until now but Tabby keeps them down. She has been caught in rabbit traps a few times. The school garden is flourishing now that the rabbits are kept under control.

1954. Recently happened in a *town near Colac*. One of the local businessmen has a dog that usually accompanies him. One day he was called away from the business so he telephoned his wife and said he would leave the dog in the office until he got back. Wife was later concerned about the dog locked up so rang a friend living near the office to let out the dog so that he could come home. One hour later dog was not home so the wife rang the friend again who said that she had let out the dog an hour ago but the dog ran straight across the road to the hotel and took up a position outside the main door and refused to leave. So the dog is still at the hotel.

1955. A violent wind storm at *Chapple Vale* on *A. Bone's* place snaps pine trees two feet foot in diameter, wrecks a shed and sends the roofing iron half a mile. There were two inches of rain in 20 minutes. The storm also picked up two horses in the paddock and carried them half a mile. Bone found them out of the paddock [with undamaged fences] in a very dazed state.

1955. *Frank Christensen* of *Carlisle River* recalls that in the early days of settlement his father had a number of pigs he wished to take to Colac to sell. Father and son drove the pigs as far as *Tomahawk Creek* and found it in flood so they had to catch the pigs and ferry them across. Frank was then a boy and remembers catching the pigs in the scrub. But some pigs escaped and ran away so they continued to Colac with the rest. When they returned home that night they found the missing pigs had found their way home and were asleep in the hut, the door of which they had forced open.

1956. Quadruplet kids born to a nanny goat owned by *Adrian Goldsworthy* of Forest St. The quads are all females.

1956. Seen in *Bromfield Street* last market day a man with a pram with a calf in it and the cow following and frequently peering into the pram. Cow and calf bought at the sale but the calf too young to make its own way so farmer put it in a pram.

1956. Last breeding season some sparrows made a nest inside the ram on top of the Golden Fleece petrol pump at *Dillon's service station* in *Murray Street*. This year a starling family moved in to share. At first there were a few squabbles but matters eventually settled. the two families now live in amity, as the adults emerge daily to replenish the larder. When the hatching period ends Mr Dillon expects there to be some congestion inside the ram.

1956. The State Electricity Commission manager comments about birds' nests on electricity poles around Colac. He mentioned one at *Eurack*, probably for a hawk that was made with a base of several types of wire including baling wire, No 8 fencing wire and wire netting. The wire was carefully threaded and bent and shaped. The base of the nest was lined for the eggs with wool, cow hair, bark, a few sticks and a lamb's rib-bone.

1956. A white hen belonging to *G. Osborne of Elliminyt* laid a perfectly round egg 1.75 inches in diameter and resembles a golf ball.

1957. Some passers-by saw a wallaby come down to *Shelley Beach* near at *Apollo Bay* through the scrub and go for a swim in the water. The wallaby was there for some time and when it came out it was caught by the spectators. The animal appeared to be tame and unfazed by humans and eventually hopped away.

1958. Thousands of black swans from drought areas in north Victoria are descending in the district and wrecking pastures and crops. A farmer said from 5.30 am each day they come in wave after wave and the paddocks are black with them and they are shooting them as fast as they can.

1959. A farmer was taking a truck load of stock from *Birregurra* towards Geelong and with him in the cabin were his son and the farm dog. At *Winchelsea* at 7.45 pm the truck hit a cow wandering on the road and crashed onto its side. No one was hurt but when the farmer and son scrambled out of the cabin and when the dust settled the dog was nowhere to be seen. The dog turned up at the *Birregurra* farm at 10.30pm, so the animal had covered 19 miles in 2 hours and 45 minutes.

1960. A cat in *Thomas Street* gave birth to four kittens in a hen's laying box. When the hen returned she adopted the kittens as her own and put them under her. She tried to teach them to eat wheat by demonstrating scratching etc. The cat tries to get with her kittens and when she sits on the kittens the hen sits on the cat. When the cat leaves the hen takes over.

1960. A four years old mongrel cattle dog from *Don Dunstan's* farm at *Tomahawk Creek* got lost at *Finley, NSW*, on a shooting trip. The dog had never been off the farm but 18 days later the dog turned up at the farm, so had covered the 300 miles in that time.

1960. *J. Ryan's* farm of 182 acres at *Pirron Yallock* on *Lake Corangamite* has 122 acres flooded. The cows have to swim across water up to 10 ft deep to be milked and they are led by *Queenie*, the dominant cow.

1960. A pig kidnaps puppies at *Eurack*. Farm dog *Lassie* had nine pups the same time as a sow had piglets. The piglets died so the sow grabbed all the pups and nursed them. Whenever the dog retrieved her pups the sow took them back. Eventually the dog took the pups up into a haystack but the sow wrecked the stack and got the pups back. Farmer *Jim Lemon* says the pups are doing well.

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

	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
<b>February</b>	6th D. Missen 13th I. Barlow 20th G. Splatt 27 <sup>th</sup> J. Knight	7th C. Pink 14th G. Bray 21st E. Chambers 28 <sup>th</sup> B. & J. McDonald	2nd A. McIntosh 9th D. Cowan & M. Facey 16th N. Houghton 23rd M. Facey & D. Cowan
<b>March</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> D. Missen 13 <sup>th</sup> I. Barlow 20 <sup>th</sup> G. Splatt 27 <sup>th</sup> J. Knight	7 <sup>th</sup> C. Pink 14 <sup>th</sup> G. Bray 21st E. Chambers 28 <sup>th</sup> B & J McDonald	2nd A. McIntosh 9 <sup>th</sup> D. Cowan & M. Facey 16 <sup>th</sup> N. Houghton 23 <sup>rd</sup> M. Facey & D. Cowan 30 <sup>th</sup> Committee
<b>April</b>	3rd D. Missen 10 <sup>th</sup> I. Barlow 17th G. Splatt 24th J. Knight	4th C. Pink 11 <sup>th</sup> G. Bray 18 <sup>th</sup> <b>Easter Holiday-</b> ( E. Chambers ) 25th B. & J. McDonald	6 <sup>th</sup> A. McIntosh 13 <sup>th</sup> D. Cowan & M. Facey 20 <sup>th</sup> N. Houghton 27 <sup>th</sup> M. Facey & D. Cowan