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Established 6th February 1950 - Incorporation No. A00245414U

Annual Membership fee: \$25.00 per person - **Renewals Due In May**

Historical Society Meetings held monthly 4th Wednesday at 7.30pm,

except in January, also during *winter* on the 4th **Saturday at 1.30pm**

News/Updates/Information - Website: colachistoricalsociety.org.au

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

Working Bees at the History Centre - dates & times to be advised.

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

Annual Membership now due - \$25 per person

Forthcoming Events –

- Saturday June 24th - Colac History Centre. Meeting 1.30pm
Working Bee – Continuation of Map Preparation for Digitization
- Saturday July 22th - 1.30pm at Camperdown Heritage Centre, 241 Manifold Street, Camperdown
Speaker Norman Houghton –
'140th Anniversary of the Opening of Colac-Camperdown Railway'
Car Pool -12.45 Depart Colac History Centre
- Saturday August 26th - Meeting 1.30pm

President's Annual Report 2022-2023

The past year has been one of progress, but seemingly in slow motion as we have emerged from the Covid lockdowns. Many of our members are involved in multiple organisations requiring volunteers.

Our opening hours 3 days a week rarely requires members to be available more than once a month and we welcome some new names to the roster, while the depth of local knowledge by our senior members is a great benefit to visitors to the History Centre.

Activities have included a visit to the Camperdown Heritage Centre in June and a visit to the clubrooms and museum of the Colac Rifle Club in November.

Meeting programs included contribution by both members and visiting guests.

AGM	Norman Houghton	Centennial Businesses of Colac
	Michael Menzies	South West Railways
	Dr Heather Threadgold	Gulidjan Stones & Stories
	Dr Leon Bren	Researching Lake Corangamite
	Helen Paatsch	Joseph Paatsch – A German Catholic Immigrant to Colac in 1855

Our February meeting took the form of a BBQ at 'Balnagowan' where our hosts Leigh and Jan Rich spoke of the history of the imposing home and their work in its ongoing restoration.

The quarterly newsletter has continued to produce excellent in depth articles of historic interest and special thanks go to Craig Pink who has put a tremendous amount of time and effort into its production with great support from Ellise Angel, Alan Doyle & Dawn Missen.

There has been excellent contribution from members in hosting primary school visits. I believe that this is an important role for the Society at a time when the study of our history seems to be increasingly squeezed out of school curriculums.

We continue to receive donated items and artefacts of local interest which can't always be properly displayed or stored.

The installation of a shipping container in a secure and accessible location has been an ongoing saga. It was delayed for a year by shortage of containers and the time lag in gaining the necessary Shire permits. It is now finally in position, ready for fitting out and transfer of historic artefacts including those held in Civic Hardware building. Thank you Noel.

A public curated display would be a better option but safe storage seems to be preferable to having items lost for all time. We must continue to press for a purpose built Museum/Arts Centre for Colac.

Book sales are a regular source of income and we are indebted to members who have written local histories which are sold through the History Centre. 'Historic Homes of Colac' is out of print. It is currently being revised for a reprint, together with 'Street Names of Colac'. These projects are time consuming and thanks go to Dawn Missen and Helen Paatsch who are devoting time to these updates.

We have supported efforts to re-open the Information Centre and revitalise the Sculpture Park.

Window displays continue to be a feature. Liz Spence and Deb Chant with assistance from other members have utilized the resources of both the co-tenants to showcase our collections as well as significant milestones and events.

Special thanks go to the small team who have worked diligently sorting, re-cataloguing and boxing our bulging collection of clothing. Consideration needs to be given to the best method of dealing with surplus items.

We are very fortunate to have the support of Richard Francis to keep our website current. However, a danger warning which appeared when people tried to access the website late last year has been the cause of much frustration. Considerable time, energy and cost has been expended in finding a solution.

Personally, I was disappointed that the Family History Group has voted against any formal amalgamation of the two groups. However, work has commenced towards a single digital library catalogue and bringing all the family files together. Our members have access to the Family History Group folders and indexes and I believe this spirit of co-operation enhances the quality of research the members of both groups can offer. The continuation of the physical card system of cataloguing material which we use enables all our members to participate, whatever their skills and ensures good back-up of records.

Recent events have crystallized my belief that when an organisation becomes too dependent on one person or one person becomes too involved in too many aspects of a multi-faceted organisation, such as ours, change is essential, but also for the well-being of the Society.

For this reason above, I am standing down as president after 10 enjoyable years.

I think we should look carefully at the various roles and responsibilities each of our devoted active members perform. Not enough members have a good grip of where things are kept, or the simple day to day jobs that need to be attended to. For this I must accept responsibility.

The number and role of sub-committees we elect at each annual meeting has barely changed since Dawn and I became members 12 years ago.

I intend to remain actively involved in the Society and am willing to support a new president in whatever way I can.

My thanks go to you all for the friendly support you have given me and willingness to respond when asked a favour. I especially thank all the current office-bearers and executive committee.

Robert Missen – May 2023

What has been news in the Colac Herald ?

February 15-Never Forgotten. Remembering Ash Wednesday-40 years on. Three lives were lost, 729 homes, 53 other buildings, almost 3000 livestock and 41,000 hectares of land. The region had very little rain in 1982 and dry Northerly winds developed into gale-force winds with temperatures reaching 43 degrees Celsius.

February 24- Kids desperate for BMX track. Colac Otway Shire Council has been busy removing "homemade" bike jumps on public land which has prompted outrage from the Colac community. Parents and bike riders would like council to build a permanent bike track in Colac.

February 24- Cressy plane bound for Avalon. Cressy Aerodrome's *Paul Lamont* was invited to take his Second World War Tiger Moth called Millie to the Australian International Air Show.

February 27- Flying the flag for equality. Rainbow colours will be raised by the Colac Otway Shire for one day a year to promote gender equality.

February 27- Vital service's official launch. More than 170 teenagers have accessed the support of Colac's new *Headspace* centre proving the demand for mental health services among young people.

February 27- Library shake-up set to be costly for ratepayers. Colac and district libraries face a lengthy and expensive transition to a new state-imposed management system, with ratepayers to foot the bill.

February 27- No police for Cressy or Beeac. These stations remain but Victoria Police has reassured those residents that police officers from other towns are available around the clock to respond.

March 1- Rainbows brighten a rainy afternoon. Colac's first ever pride event was a "historic moment" for Colac in celebrating diversity and the LGBTQIA + community.

March 1- Visitor centre trial extended. Colac Otway Shire Council has extended Colac Visitor Information Centre's full-time hours until "at least after Anzac Day to make the most of upcoming public holidays.

March 3- Soil clean-up causes stink. Chemical smells wafting from construction work in Colac's Wilson Street are the result of work to clean up contaminated soil at the site of a former *Caltex -Ampol fuel depot* which backed onto the railway tracks.

March 6- Riding mentor's special honour. *Brendan Scanlon* has been volunteering for Colac's Riding for the Disabled group for about 20 years. He is the current president and has received a Life Membership.

March 13- Top cop reflects on career. *Senior Sargeant Ken Slingsby* came to Colac in 2003 to manage Colac's 24-hour station with a staff of 60. He was a key player in the design of Colac's new Police Station which opened in 2018.

March 17- Brothers' brass band bond. *Bryan and Barney Cuthbertson* will march in their 60th year of the Kana Festival which coincides with their 50th anniversary of joining the Colac City Band.

March 24- No -fuss philosophy for all-rounder *Les Trigg*, who has achieved his 102nd Birthday. He is a Second World War veteran, a Life Member of the RSL and he has earned the RSL's Meritorious Medal.

March 29- Donation delights refugee group. A new volunteer group in Colac is called *Rural Australians for Refugees*. Their aim is to support refugees to find housing, household goods, employment, English classes, etc.

March 31- Historic ruling over Otways native title. *Eastern Maar* people have received formal recognition of their land rights in South- West Victoria which includes much of the coastline of the Great Ocean Road and part of the Great Otway National Park.

March 31- New era for historic Colac home, built in 1890 by master stone mason *John Pell*, is on the market. Pell was also contracted to build the original Shire Offices and Colac Post Office.

April 5- New name starts a new chapter for Colac school. Colac Specialist School will become *Lake Colac School* on the site of the former Colac High School on Murray Street in 2024.

April 17- Tributes for former mayor- *Peter Mercer*, began as a Colac Shire and then a Colac Otway Shire councillor. He was shire president several times between 1969 and 1993 and in the new shire between 1996 and 2008 when he became mayor between 2000 and 2003. Peter received an Order of Australia medal in 2014. He died in April 2023.

April 24- Letters preserve diggers' tales. Jason Schram bought a box of war memorabilia from the Bassett family estate and is elated with the hundreds of photographs and letters of Colac's original ANZAC soldiers-*Richard Bassett and Alec Sitlington*, from their training days to their journey to Fromelles during WW1, where Alec was killed in action.

April 28- Mr Sutherland retires. Long-time Colac surgeon *Chris Sutherland* retires after 40 years serving the Colac community. Colac was his first job where the GPs did everything including surgery, anaesthetics, and obstetrics.

May 1- Reflections on an Otways legend- *Cliff Young*. It is 40 years since Cliff amazed everyone by winning the Sydney to Melbourne Ultramarathon in May 1983. Cliff lived on a spud farm at Beech Forest.

May 24- Colac choir bursting with new members. Lockdowns in 2019 almost ended the *Colac Chorale* which has been around for 3 decades. A concert at St John's church was dedicated to Lila Ross, a faithful long-time member of the Chorale. *Pam Radcliffe* is the pianist, and her daughter *Johanna Latham* is the conductor.

May 26- January 26 ceremony to stay, according to a decision of *Colac Otway Shire* and they will continue to hold a citizenship ceremony then.

May 26- Climate crisis call for Colac council who have acknowledged a climate change crisis for the first time, after 3 years of resisting calls to declare a climate "emergency." Councillor *Graham Costin* moved the motion.

May 29- Awards for cheese producer of *Jiwan Dairy Company*. The owners of an award-winning Colac dairy company, began last year with a staff of 14, and are overwhelmed with the support from Colac community members.



The fires of 'Central Bazaar' (Central Arcade), Murray Street – 1924 & 1926.

90 to 94 Murray Street - GPS reference: 38°20'22.9"S 143°35'16.9"E (approx.)

65 Bromfield Street - GPS reference: 38°20'26.8"S 143°35'17.1"E (approx.)

By Alan Doyle – January 2023

The well-known *Central Arcade* in Murray Street has been there for a long time, but the façade we see today from Murray Street was built after a great fire that destroyed the original building on 9th June 1926. There was a total of twelve businesses lost and neighbouring buildings were at risk of being engulfed in the blaze.

The building that overlooks Memorial Square (Market Square) stretches between Murray Street through to Bromfield Street, began its life around 1879 as livery stables. In 1900 the property was bought by Dr. J. G. Wynne, who enlarged and renovated the livery stables. They were leased to W. R. Edgar and began trading under the name of *Central Livery Stables & Horse Bazaar*. W. R. Edgar ceased trading from this address and left in 1917.



W. R. Edgar Livery Stables & Horse Bazaar – c1910
Prosperous and Progressive Colac, 1910 – CDHS collection

G. S. Connor then leased the building and converted it into a market. A partnership was formed with E. M. Bourke, becoming *Connor & Bourke mart*. They traded from the Bromfield Street entrance, administering the auctions of pigs, cattle, sheep, fowls, and other farm animals. Money was poured into a new paved stabling yards and pens, with long races for ease of access.

The whole site became known, as *Central Bazaar* which included a total of ten shops (stalls) and auction mart. The smaller shops were leased to small traders, who would rely on word of mouth and good service.

The first fire broke out at the arcade on 29th October 1924 causing damage to some stall holders.

BIG FIRE AT COLAC – Geelong Resident Suffers – CAR AND STOCK DESTROYED

Last evening a fire broke out in Connor and Bourke's Bazaar Murray Street, Colac. It occasioned extensive damage. One of the principle suffers was Mr. D. Brownhall of Geelong. He had a stall in the bazaar for the sale of clothing. This was destroyed together with his motor car. Miss G. W. Dunn's fruit shop was badly damaged and stock worth about £15 destroyed. The premises occupied by Mr. A. Kent, butcher, also suffered. So too did those of Mr. Highfield, draper. The flames entered the C. B. C. Café next door, but prevented from spreading. It is understood that the Bazaar buildings were insured for £1000 in the Liverpool London and Globe Company. They were recently purchased by Lionel Flight, Melbourne, and there was some talk of erecting a picture theatre on the land. (Geelong Advertiser, 30st October 1924, page 7).

Then, almost two years after the first fire, a more serious and devastating fire was to change the arcade's appearance from Murray Street through to Bromfield Street.

The big fire began at around 1 o'clock on the morning of 9th June 1926, illuminating the night sky, as like daylight. The fire destroyed the width of three shop fronts and swept through from Murray Street to Bromfield Street. The courageous efforts of the Colac Fire Brigade saved the Murray Street of shops by containing the fire to the effected premises. There was good water pressure to support the five hoses dousing the flames, as well as being supported by an excellent bucket brigade by firemen and the public.

The Fire Brigade's skills were tried and tested and were successful in containing the fire to the site. Saving the adjoining businesses from being impacted. The timber yard and building of Peters' Colac Pty. Ltd on the eastern side was contained with great difficulty, but no loss. W. Dunoon's saddlery shop on the western side, sustained only minimal damage.

The loss of these small shops (stalls) in the blaze were reported in the newspapers and gave us a brief glimpse of who and what was trading in this close-knit group of traders. Traders that never seemed to advertise in the Colac newspapers. It appears that all affected businesses lost quite substantial losses of property and stock, which their insurances couldn't quite cover.

From the fire, twelve businesses were affected with substantial losses incurred to most:

- Mr. Thomas Inglis, who owned the mart site, sustained a loss of £3000, for which their insurance policy only covered £1000.
- Conner & Bourke mart sustained a loss of £500, for which their insurance policy only covered £200.
- Mr Ernest Cecil Fryfield, men's and boy's outfitter sustained a loss of £1800, for their insurance policy only covered £1400 for stock and £100 for fittings.
- Mr. Len Kemp, butcher, was not insured and lost stock valued at £200.
- Mr. G. F. Butcher, agent for Singer sewing machines, Pianola and gramophones.
Personal loss £75, Pianola and gramophones owned by Branch & Co., Melbourne, loss £300, and Singer Sewing Machine Company, loss £250. None these items were covered by insurance.
- The Thistle Café, owned by the estate of the late Harry Clarke, sustained damage of £800 and insured for £600. The occupier of the café, Mr. Andrew Smith estimated his damage as £600, and was not insured.
- Mr. Reginald Vawdon, dryer and tailor, sustained a loss of £300 and only insured for £200.
- Mr. John Pocock, draper, lost stock valued at £800 and only insured for £150.
- The Shepparton Orchard Products fruit depot lost £150 of stock.
- The Colac Hospital jumble stall lost stock and fittings valued at £40 and was not insured.
- Mr. V. M. Pearson, jeweller was damaged by water.
- W. Dunoon, saddlery, was only lightly damaged.

Like a phoenix, a new shopping complex would rise from the ashes, within a year. The new building having been rebuilt by Colac contractors, Messrs Searle & Wallace.

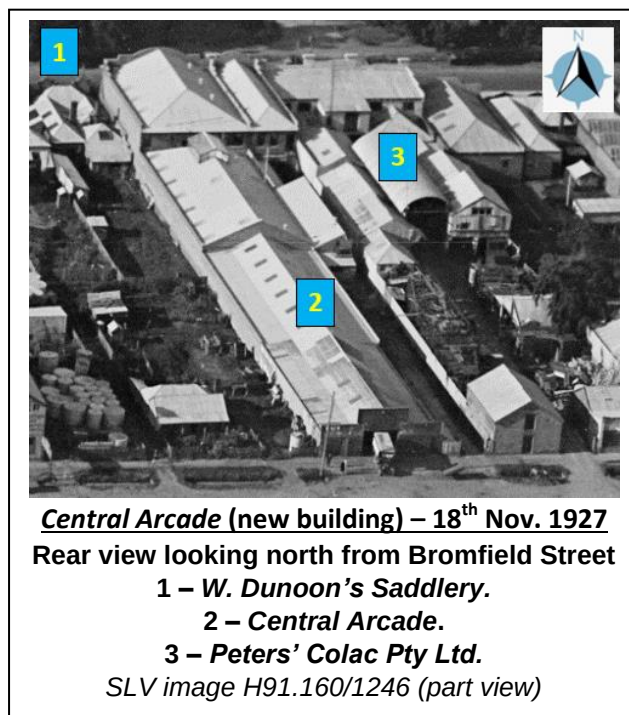
The Central-arcade, built for Mr. Thomas Ingles, is the most striking architectural alterations in Murray-street of recent years. It consists of a two-story front with an arcade containing eleven lock-up shops and an extensive produce mart at the rear, with a frontage to Bromfield Street. (The Age, 21st June 1927, page 12).

Central Arcade would also be locally identified by the names of *Inglis' Arcade* and the *Ingles Buildings*. Roy Raggatt opened his upmarket café, *The Trocadero* on 13th June 1927. The shop being located on the east side of the Murray Street entrance, which would become a Colac institution. He was also joined with butcher, E. Muir & Co. and was known as *The Central Cash Butchery*, Charles N. Flower's song shop, Colac District Hospital Jumble shop and. P. C. Hancox who took over the auctioneering from the departing auctioneers Connor & Bourke.

However, countless other traders have since come and gone through this arcade over the last 96 years since its rebuilding, with many now lost to time.

A current survey of shops trading from the *Central Arcade* site at time of writing (1st July 2022):

- Shop 1 - *Future Bakery* (front shop on LH side of arcade).
- Shop 2 – Vacant.
- Shop 3 – Being re-modelled, while Vacant.
- Shops 4 & 5 – Dog day care (part of *Petstock* business).
- Shops 6, 7 & 8 - *Cow Lick Bookshop*.
(ceased trading 6th January 2023)
- Shop 9 – *Paul Benjamin Photography*.
- Shops 10 & 11 – *Tattoo Sin & Body*.

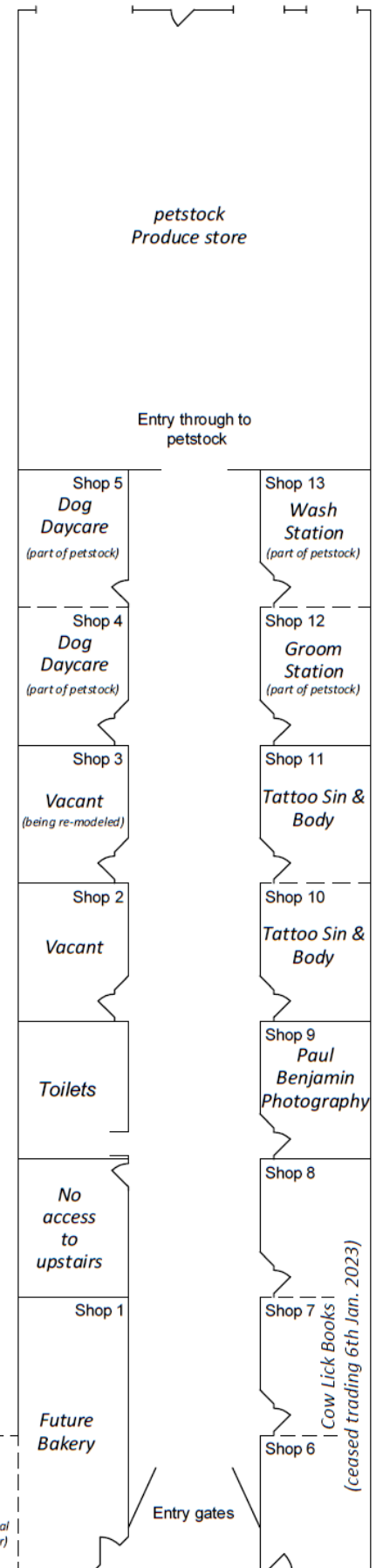


- Shops 12 & 13 – *Groom & Wash Station* (part of *Petstock* business)
- *Petstock* (rear shop building from Bromfield St.)

Acknowledgement and thanks to Craig Pink for his time in researching the CDHS records (Full bibliography can be supplied upon request).

NOTE: No access to the upper floors of the *Central Arcade* building.

Bromfield Street



Murray Street

NOTE: Not to scale



Central Arcade (rear), Bromfield Street, Colac



Entry through to petstock



**Shops 12 & 13
– Groom and Wash Station**



Shops 4 & 5 – Dog Daycare



**Shops 10 & 11
– Tattoo Sin & Body**



Shop 9– Paul Benjamin Photography



Shop 1 - Future Bakery



**Shops 6 & 7 – Cow Lick Books
(ceased trading 6th Jan. 2023)**



Central Arcade, Murray Street, Colac

Author images – 1st July 2022

FIND-A-WORD

Historic Colac Botanical Gardens

G C Z A T E R R A C E S C M F J E J Y M
E U U D N L I L Y P O N D O I S E P R O
R F X R U G D Z L S S Q V G U N C F O N
O O R B A F L A M M M G M O L E N E T K
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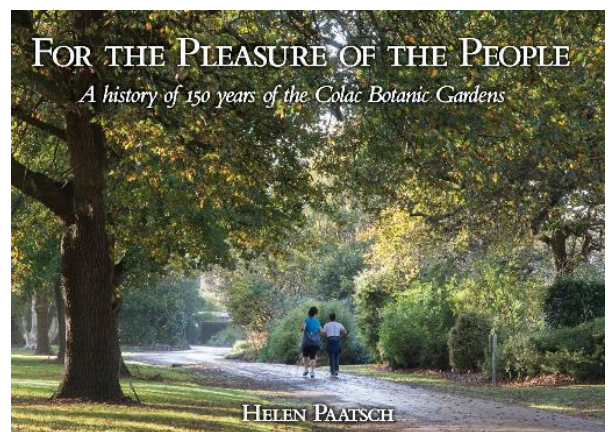
ANGLING CLUB
BILSON GATES
BULLDOZER
BUNCE
CAMPBELL
CANNONS
CONSERVATORY
CURATORS COTTAGE
DRIVEWAY
EVENTS
FIRE BRIGADE TRACK
FLAG POLE
FORESHORE
FOUNTAIN
FUN
GATHERINGS
GUILFOYLE
HERITAGE TREES
JETTY AND BOAT HOUSE
KANGAROO AND EMU
LILYPOND
MONKEY CAGE
PAVILION
PLAYGROUND
RARE PLANTS
RECLINING PALM
RELAXATION
ROSE ABOUR
ROSE GARDEN
ROTUNDA
ROWING CLUB
TERRACES
TOILET BLOCK

Source:

'For The Pleasure Of The People – A history of 150 years of the Colac Botanic Gardens'
– Helen Paatsch, 2015, Dewey Number: 580.73945

Alan Doyle – 2023

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HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF COLAC AND DISTRICT



DERRINOOK – Gellibrand Street, Colac

*Built in 1900 as a Private Hospital for one of Colac's colonial doctors.
The Derrinook Hospital became one of the first places in Colac to be lit by the new Electric Light
some fifteen years before electricity officially came to Colac.*

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2023 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
June 2023	1 st L. Spence 8 th D. Missen 15 th G. Splatt 22 nd J. Knight 29 th D. Peel	2 nd - 9 th G. Bray 16 th E. Angel 23 rd R. Perrin 30 th R. Missen	4 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 11 th G. Knox 18 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 25 th H. Paatsch
July 2023	6 th D. Missen 13 th L. Spence 20 th G. Splatt 27 th J. Knight	7 th R. Richardson 14 th G. Bray 21 st E. Angel 28 th R. Perrin	2 nd R. Osborne/N. Ryan 9 th G. Knox 16 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 23 rd H. Paatsch 30 th R. Missen
August 2023	3 rd D. Missen 10 th L. Spence 17 th G. Splatt 24 th J. Knight 31 st R. Missen	4 th R. Richardson 11 th G. Bray 18 th E. Angel 25 th R. Perrin	6 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 13 th G. Knox 20 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 27 th H. Paatsch