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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 on 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 advised

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

Annual Membership now due - \$25 per person

Forthcoming Events –

Saturday August 26th - Meeting 1.30pm – Colac History Centre

‘Getting to know our Collection’

Wednesday September 27th – Meeting 7.30pm – Colac History Centre

Speaker – Doug Kirkman - ‘A Plasterboard Business in Colac’

Saturday October 21st – 10am Camperdown Heritage Centre

Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies – Zone Meeting followed by Lunch and Heritage Walk

Wednesday October 25th – Meeting 7.30pm – Colac History Centre

Speakers – John & Liz McKenzie – Former Colac Businesses ‘McKenzie Motors’ and ‘Ball & Croft’

Wednesday November 22nd - Meeting 7.30pm – Colac History Centre

Speaker – Graeme Robb – ‘Pea Pickers & Pea Harvesters’ – The Green Pea Industry in Colac District

A Note from the President –

One of the most important roles of a Historical Society is to preserve written material and objects of local historical significance. For this to occur we rely on the donation of items by the community.

This month we were delighted to receive from the Carmody family a remarkable box of newspaper cuttings, meeting minutes and letters recording the events of the Victorian Onion Marketing Board.

Their grandfather Mr T.J. Carmody was the Chairman of that board during the turbulent years of the late 1950s. Also included was a personally signed letter of condolence to Mrs Carmody from the Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies upon the death of Mr Carmody in 1961.

The volcanic soils of Alvie, Cororooke and Warrion were the centre of the onion growing industry in Victoria at that time. Although it was compulsory to sell all onions through the Board, a glut in supply meant that a black market existed. This created open warfare between some disgruntled growers and the Onion Board. A series of newspaper articles in the Melbourne ‘Truth’ and the Melbourne ‘Herald’ make fascinating reading.

These documents, carefully preserved in a box by the Carmody Family will now safely reside in a manuscript box in the compactus in our climate controlled archive room.

I ask all our readers to encourage others who have documents of local significance tucked away in a draw or cupboard to bring them to the History Centre where they can be preserved in a climate controlled environment.

Further reading about the onion industry can be found in the book 'Onion People' written by the late Shirley Burns. This book is still on sale at the history centre. Her introduction tells us 'that an advance from the Onion Marketing Board paid for her honeymoon in 1954.'

The book 'Onion People' is for sale at \$15.00 plus postage from the Colac & District Historical Society Inc.

Member Dawn Peel investigated a recent donation:

Recently the Historical Society received a bundle of letters written during 1941 by a young man, Reg Russell, who lived at a property called Mundarra, firstly at Colac West, and mostly later at Gellibrand River. He was writing to a mate, Gordon Croft, who lived in Adelaide. They provide a fascinating insight into his life.

The importance of the radio (or rather the 'wireless' as it was commonly known) is apparent, as he comments on programs he has recently enjoyed. The coming films to be shown at the Regent Theatre in Colac were considered as to whether seeing them would be worth the trip into Colac. His bicycle was his major form of transport and he reported trips to town and elsewhere on his 'grid'.

In a time before emails were available to keep people in touch with their friends, letter-writing was important. Our collection is the richer from the donation of these letters. They will be catalogued, and then stored in our manuscript collection.

What has been news in the Colac Herald ?

April 19- Royal surprise for centenarian. Colac's *Antonina Kubisz* from Poland has witnessed major world history in her 100 years and can now add being among the first to receive a birthday letter from *King Charles III instead of the Queen*.

April 21- Easy transition to lower limits. *Electronic 40 kmh speed signs* will appear in Colac's Murray Street in the coming weeks following the Federal Government allocation of \$1.9 million to reduce speed from 50 kmh to 40kmh.

June 21- Colac welcomes new Uniting Church minister *Susan Malthouse-Law*. Her husband Daniel and son Elijah have come with Rev Susan from working in Tasmania to lead the church at Colac, Beeac, Cressy, and Warrion.

June 23- Colac VIEW thanks long-serving trio. View stands for Voice, Interest, Education of Women and the club has been one of Australia's leading volunteer organisations which provides women with an opportunity to meet regularly, establish friendship and help disadvantaged children. *Jennie Scott, Mary Carew, and Dr Dawn Peel* have received badges for their outstanding 20 years of service to the Colac Evening VIEW Club.

July 3- HAY! It's Back. The iconic cordial brand returning to Colac, 38 years after it shut down. *Jeff Hay* is bringing back *Colac Aerated Water Co.* producing cordials based on the original family recipe used from 1918, brought from Scotland in the 1800s. they produced premium cordials but also syrups, soft drinks ice block mixture, jelly crystals, ginger beer and tonic water.

July5- Mates turn passion for cars into business. A love of cars and all things automotive has led *Ben Riches and Kade Richens* to open *Colac Auto Care*. They have opened their business in the former Williams Auto Care site in Rae Street.

July 7- Floodgates to open in weeks. For the first time in almost 30 years, *Corangamite Catchment Management Authority* will release water from Lake Colac due to the rising water level in the lake. This will link Lake Colac with the ocean via the Barwon River in order to stop flooding and erosion around the lake. The Lough Calvert Drainage Scheme was established in 1953 to divert water from Lake Colac along a 30 kilometre-long channel to Birregurra Creek and into the Barwon River.

July 10- School takes shape. Construction of a new home for *Colac Specialist School* has resurrected the unused Colac High School back to its glory days as heritage construction remains on track alongside new build. When complete the name will change to *Lake Colac School* on Murray Street.

July 10- Storm topples trees in busy day for SES. A 122-year-old iconic, pink flowering gum has fallen victim to wind storms at the *Colac Botanic Gardens*. A plaque under the tree says- J .Oliphant planted the pink-flowered marri in 1901 to celebrate *Federation*.

July 10 -The classification of the tree in 1995 was *Corymbia calophylla*. James Oliphant was the curator of the Gardens from 1904 to 1911 as mentioned in Helen Paatsch's 2015 book called *For the Pleasure of the People*.

July 12- Trees to be protected in Bruce Street subdivision. Developers will need to retain trees as part of a 54-lot subdivision of former council- owned land.

July 26- We're here to stay. The *Salvation Army* continues its 135 years of service in Colac by unveiling its new welfare centre in Dennis Street in the site of the former Australian, Electoral Commission offices. The new building includes showers, a laundry, a food pantry for people in need plus a drop-in centre, play group, and worship centre.

July 26- "Conservative" release from lake. Six megalitres are released a day from Lake Colac to trickle down through the Lough Calvert Drainage Scheme.

July 26- Colac trucking company Wettenhalls celebrates Centennial celebration of transport excellence. Generations of staff members and truckies gathered in Colac for a special gala to celebrate this centenary. The company was formed by Amezdroz and Menzies in the 1920s but has expanded nationwide with more than 170 vehicles rebranded Wettenhalls in 2004.

July 31- Wartime onion factory demolition proposed. This concerns an historic but dilapidated former onion-drying factory on *Rossmoyne Road in Colac West*. It was built by the Federal Govt in 1942 but later it became a saw mill, has been vacant for many years and appears to be falling down. Of special concern is the safety of the 23-metre-high, circular, brick kiln-like chimney.

August 4- Praise for winter festival. The inaugural *Otways Winter Festival* has raised large amounts of money for Colac's health services plus more into the local economy through the many stalls. Four thousand people attended the festival which was held in the former Mitre 10 building where The Colac City Band entertained them.

August 7- Cressy railway's fascinating story. Local author and historian *Norman Houghton* has produced a new book about an historic railway line that linked the north-eastern parts of the Colac Otway Shire. It is titled "*The Plains Line*", which was 160 km in length from Geelong to Ararat.

Early Pioneer Charles Sheppard - Much Travelled Gravestone

by Robert Missen

One Sunday afternoon in 2017 a visitor called at the History Centre to donate a broken headstone which had been abandoned in her garden, by the sea, near Wilson's Promontory.

The only words visible were – Lake Colac, Wife, 6, 1854.

Fortunately the donor of this exceedingly heavy slab of solid grey rock, Vanessa Farrell, had carefully tracked down the life story of the wife, Eliza Evans, when some other words were still visible. Her story is to be found in the Colac & District Family History Group publication '*Colac – Stories of our Pioneers*' – published later that year.

The burial was originally at the Old Melbourne Cemetery, situated between, Franklin & Peel Streets, and the present site of the Victoria Market. As the market expanded, graves were exhumed and transferred to the Melbourne General Cemetery & Fawkner cemeteries. How the broken grave stone found its way to the Gippsland coast will remain a mystery.

What was the Historical Society to do with this stone? It was not suitable for display in the History Centre and had been a tripping hazard for visitors. Rightly or wrongly I decided to take it to our farm at Beeac, turned it upside down and used it as a stepping stone at a water trough for livestock.

In March this year we received an inquiry about the grave stone from Roger Darby in Ballarat. He was the 3 x great grandson of Charles Fisher Sheppard the husband of Eliza Evans. His research had led him to Vanessa Farrell who pointed him in our direction. He would like to see the stone.

In the meantime I had sold our Beeac farm and was now living in Colac. I fully expected the stone to be damaged or covered with fresh filling. I returned to the farm and to my relief found the stone exactly as I had left it. The new owners were not at home so I retrieved the stone and brought it back to Colac.

In June Roger Darby paid me a visit and took the stone back to Ballarat. It is now back with the family.

Why Lake Colac? Who was Charles Fisher Sheppard?

At the time of his death he was either manager or overseer of Morris's Ondit run and Robertson's Coragulac Station for Benjamin Boyd. At that time Boyd was the "largest squatter in the colony occupying 381,000 acres for which he paid 80 pounds a year." *Hebb's History of Colac & District*.

There are a number of references to Sheppard in the Colac Court of Petty Sessions usually listing him as plaintiff in cases of employees absconding or failing in their duties. There are also cases against Sheppard where there was a dispute over payment of wages, with balanced findings. There was also a case against Sheppard where he was fined one guinea with six shillings costs for assault.

His earlier life was even more colourful.

In December 1834 he was managing sheep stations on the Monaro near Cooma when his camp was raided by bushranger 'Jack the Rammer' and accomplices. He shot dead one of the accomplices, but he was shot and beaten himself and left for dead. It was not until late the next day that he was conveyed to the Goulburn Hospital still soaked in blood with flyblown wounds. He remained there for 36 days.

On the 7th May, 1835, the full story was revealed when the bushrangers were brought to trial. Sheppard produced 10 slugs which had been taken from his body. He was held in high regard for his actions and a group of local businessmen set up a fund to reward him.

In 1840 Sheppard was granted 1120 acres of land near Maitland NSW, and in 1841 granted three convict labourers. For reasons unknown he walked away from this and took up a job with Benjamin Boyd who also held properties in the Monaro. In 1842 Boyd acquired 'Ledcourt' a sheep run of 200, 000 acres in the Grampians. Sheppard became overseer of that property until 1848 and it seems likely that is when he moved further south to manage Boyd's properties in the Colac district.

In 1849 Boyd left Australia for California, never to return. Charles Sheppard's death certificate shows that he died of dysentery in Melbourne in October 1854. His occupation was shown as a sheep farmer from Lake Colac. Whether he was still a manager for William Robertson who purchased Boyd's holdings, or had purchased land himself requires further research.

A look back at what was happening

at Colac High School & Colac Technical School 30 years ago, in 1993.

by Jane Davis

COLAC TECHNICAL SCHOOL

At the Tech School, Mr Reg Craig retired and a new Principal Mr. R. Isaac was appointed, and Mrs Olive McCoombe (Canteen Manager for 17 years), Heather Le Griffon, Rod Morgan and Mark Murray also left the school.

The Tech school Debating Teams soundly defeated Mathews Flinders High school and Barwon House scooped the pool in the House Swimming sports.

Footy Fever Day was again held on the last day of Term III, with Gavin Brown, Danny Frawley and Gary Lyon kicking off the fun, and agreed to umpire the match between the Senior Girls and Senior Boys. (Although the boys tried hard, they were over run & out powered by the girls!)

In 1993 the inter school swimming carnival was held for the first time at the Indoor 25 meter Swimming pool. Everyone hailed it as a success, with the added bonus for event winners as new records were set in every event. Top performers for Tech were Denis & Sarah Roscoe, Ben Read & Brad Russell.

August saw the Junior, Intermediate & Senior Netball teams compete in the Victorian Netball Schools Championships at Royal Park in Melbourne. Top performers were Amy Newcombe, Diane Russell and Kirsty Olney.

1993 Colac Tech had the largest enrolment of students in the state in the Agricultural & Horticultural Studies course. The introduction of a new dog-proof paddock, purchase of more sheep, and a stud Maine-Anjou heifer, construction of new sheep yards and a shearing shed, all attracted great interest for the students.

COLAC HIGH SCHOOL

Principal Alan Sewell retired and Rick Schwanker was appointed head of the school, with Gerard McKenzie Deputy Principal. The school said farewell to Mrs. Gwen Smith, Ms Baiba Lowther, Mrs. Liz Smith, Ms Karen Finch, Mr Mathew Taylor, Mr Damien Boyle, Mdm Jolie, Ian Barlow & Ian Gullan. Ms Judy Carter took up a teaching position in Zambia.

The years 7,8 & 9 students attended the schools' own camp at Barramunga, with Camp Aide Mr. Geoff Speirs keeping the students entertained. (They all agreed that his fishing stories got bigger each year they heard them!)

The House Athletics & Swimming Sports were won by Murray House.

Narelle Robb, Stuart Clifford, Vicky Umland and Tania Siegert excelled in athletics, winning their way through to the State Athletic finals at Olympic Park.

1993 was also the year the Library was electronically catalogued, making resources easier to find and access.

The year 10 Art students (under the watchful eye of Ms Garrett) took on the task of brightening up the rubbish bins to make rubbish collection & recycling more appealing.

In April this year the Home Eco rooms of the school resembled a Lygon St. pizzeria as six Year 11 students made 110 pizzas to feed the starving High School hordes at lunchtime. This was part of the VCE Business Management course and was hailed a resounding success. The boys each made a profit of approx. \$15 each – a lot of money then!

In June, 44 students from years 7-12 entered an Australia-wide Science competition organized by the Educational Testing Centre of the Uni. of NSW. A total of 283,000 students entered, with 12 students from Colac High gaining Certificates of Distinction.

THE WALKER EXCHANGE TRIP

In September, 1993 a group of 20 students (10 from Colac High School & 10 from Colac Technical School) travelled to Colac's sister city Walker in Michigan, USA. The City of Colac's Sister City Committee was instrumental in liaising, planning and student selection for this trip. Two staff members from each school accompanied the students.

The students stayed with host families and attended Kenowa High School in Walker for 5 days, where they experienced no uniforms, no chewing gum, no graffiti, a very large & extensive cafeteria and a ride on a yellow school bus.

Visits to Hollywood, Disneyland, dinner at the Hard Rock Café in Chicago and Alcatraz in San Francisco were also highlights.

All agreed it was an excellent experience, with lots of life-long friends being made, and culturally a big success for both Colac & Walker.

Information sent and sought from the Omeo Historical Society

by Lois Crisp – Secretary, May 2023

MILLER, John.

In his Witham Family History, written mainly from talks with his Grandmother, Sarah Witham, Robert Charles “Bob” Witham relates that while his grandparents were living at Hurdle Flat (near Stanley which is not far from Beechworth), a couple named Miller came and made camp under a large tree close to the Withams. Mrs. Miller had a young baby and about a month later, one windy day, the tree fell on the Miller tent and Mrs. Miller was killed. Bob’s grandmother took the baby and fed it along with her current infant. *“Mr. Miller asked grandma if she would continue to look after the baby, and he would give her a gold sovereign each four weeks. She told me that she received only one sovereign as Miller moved away to the Gibbo gold fields and she did not hear from him again”.*

John Miller was reared with the Witham family and was known as Miller Witham.

Records show that John Miller was born in 1860 and registered at Stanley, his father, John Smith Miller, and mother Christian Stewart. Christian Stewart’s death was registered as 1861, no death place shown on the Vic. bdm index.

No death registration has been identified for John Smith Miller, but “Bob” Witham believed he died at the Gibbo and was buried there.

On a tape recording of “Bob”, made by his son “Dick” Witham possibly in the late 1970s, “Bob” says: *“As an adult John Miller was living above Connleys. Then around 1917 or 18, he was notified the he had inherited a life interest in a farm at Beeac, 14 miles from Colac. So he sold up his river place there (Livingstone Creek), and down at Day’s Creek, he had that place there, used to be Lee’s Hotel.*

He died at Beeac, when we were stationed at Port Campbell. The property was sold up and went to the Colac Hospital”.

He had paid rates in the Omeo riding of the Omeo Shire from 1886 to 1913 - and beyond.

John Miller’s death was registered 1931 at Colac. His occupation was given as Labourer.

Trove Newspapers –on-line, The Argus 23rd June 1932 page 11.

Estate of Mr. John Miller

The National Trustees Company, as executor of the will of Mr. John Miller, of Colac, has paid the following legacies:-

Omeo hospital £1,000; Methodist Church Omeo, £25; Presbyterian Church, Omeo, £25; Church of England, Omeo, £25; Roman Catholic Church, Omeo, £25; committee, State School Omeo, £10;

Committee State School Warrion, £10; Church of England, Warrion, £25; Methodist Church, Warrion, £25; Presbyterian Church, Warrion, £25; Trustees of The Public Hall, Warrion £25.

The Age 1-12-1931, reported the John Miller Estate leaving his real estate to the Colac Hospital (possibly £4743, article is almost illegible), his personal estate as advertised in The Argus, and the residue to be divided between Children’s Hospital, Alfred Hospital, Eye and Ear Hospital Queen Victoria Hospital and Protestant Boy’s Orphanage Geelong.

Please Note:

Enquiries made by the Colac & District Historical Society Inc. with district Miller families have to date not yielded any knowledge of this former philanthropic and ecumenical John Miller.

Any further knowledge or information would be gratefully received by the Society.

Plan Digitization Working Bee - 24 June 2023

After our June monthly meeting, our diligent members began cutting and lightly ironing creases from the plans from the damaged council folio book. Snipping scissors carefully cut away the old tape. Then with great care an iron was lightly applied to the plans to straighten creases. The plans were then carefully piled into a stack to be sorted later for digitization later. Many pages had been extricated from the folio, before a well earned cup of tea and a bight were enjoyed. Later in the week the task was completed by Robert, Ray & Adrianna.



Careful removal from the Council folio.



The growing pile of plans
L-R – Alan, Liz, Ray and Adrianna.



The growing pile of plans.
Next step, sorting.

JULY JOINT MEETING WITH CAMPERDOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

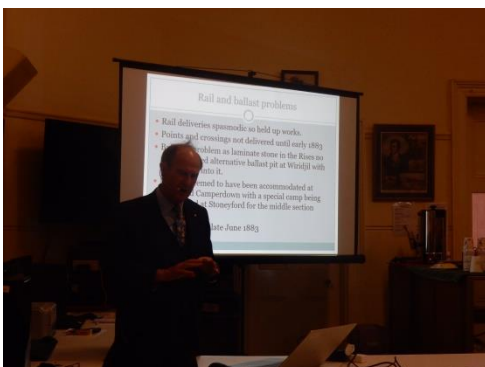


In July the Colac Historical Society joined with Camperdown for address by Norman Houghton to celebrate the 140th Anniversary of the Opening of the Colac-Camperdown Railway in 1883.

Photos:

Camperdown President Rob Wachatsch welcoming speaker Norman Houghton.

Historical Society members in attendance.



FIND-A-WORD

Colac and District



ALVIE	BARONGAROOK
BEEAC	BUNGADOR
CARPENDIT	COLAC
CORAGULAC	COROROOKE
DREEITE	ELLIMINYT
EURACK	IRREWARRA
IRREWILLIPE	KAWARREN
LARPENT	NALANGIL
ONDIT	PIRRON YALLOCK
POMBORNEIT	STONYFORD
SWAN MARSH	WARNCOORT
WARRION	WEERING
WOOL WOOL	YEO

Submitted by Alan Doyle – June 2023

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2023 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
SEPTEMBER 2023	7 th D. Missen 14 th L. Spence 21 st G. Splatt/ A. Robb 28 th J. Knight	1 st R. Richardson 8 th G. Bray 15 th E. Angel 22 nd R. Perrin 29 th R. Missen	3 rd R. Osborne/N. Ryan 10 th G. Knox/R. Perrin 17 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 24 th H. Paatsch
OCTOBER 2023	5 th D. Missen 12 th L. Spence 19 th G. Splatt/ A. Robb 26 th J. Knight	6 th R. Richardson 13 th G. Bray 20 th E. Angel 27 th R. Perrin	1 st R. Osborne/N. Ryan 8 th G. Knox/R. Perrin 15 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 22 nd H. Paatsch 29 th R. Missen
NOVEMBER 2023	2 nd D. Missen 9 th L. Spence 16 th G. Splatt/ A. Robb 23 rd J. Knight 30 th R. Missen	3 rd R. Richardson 10 th G. Bray 17 th E. Angel 24 th R. Perrin	5 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 12 th G. Knox/R. Perrin 19 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 26 th H. Paatsch