



Published February 2023, Volume 53 - Issue No 1.

Established 6th February 1950 - Incorporation No. - A00245414U

Annual Membership fee: \$20.00 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 advised.

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

We Thank Contributors for This Issue: Ellise Angel and Alan Doyle.

Forthcoming Events -

Wednesday 22nd February – 6.00pm BBQ & Meeting. Venue ‘Balnagowan’ 17 Balnagowan Ave. Colac.
Bring your own BBQ requirements & chair - shelter & shade available.

Wednesday 22nd March – Colac History Centre. 7.30pm Speaker– Helen Paatsch
Topic ‘Joseph Paatsch, a German Catholic immigrant arrives in Colac in 1855’

Wednesday 26th April – Colac History Centre. 7.30pm.

Wednesday 24th May – AGM-Colac History Centre. 7.30pm.

A Note from the President-

2023 commences with a BBQ tea at the grand old historic home *Balnagowan* built by Alexander Ross in 1891. We are very fortunate to have the owners of these homes allow us to visit and gain greater appreciation of their architecture and history of ownership.

On this theme, in 2005 the Society published a booklet entitled ‘The Historic Homes of Colac and District’. The publication has proved a best seller and our stocks are now exhausted. We are anxious to revise the text and photographs where necessary. Although some of the homes included are no longer standing, they were included because they were icons of the early settlement of the district.

We sometimes hear of existing homes that people believe should be included for the same reasons and we would welcome input from members.

As this is the third newsletter since the Annual meeting last May, the executive recently reviewed the membership list. We are very pleased with the excellent support the Society receives from interested people both local and distant. However, we found quite a few unfinancial members among our loyal members who regularly attend meetings and volunteer on a regular basis. If you are unsure whether you are up to date with your membership please check with our treasurer John.

What has been news in the Colac Herald?

November 2- Housing estate talks for cemetery reserve. The State Government recently removed special usage zoning on about 1.7 hectares of land next to the Colac Memorial cemetery on Pound Road as it is not now required for cemetery use.

November 9 - Fifty-year celebration for icon. The Colac Cricket Club is expecting a huge turnout at the Colac Bowling Club to help celebrate Rob “Scruffy” Osborne’s incredible 50-year milestone. Rob was a Swan Marsh export moving to Colac aged 19 and played 26 years of Division One cricket including 5 premierships and making countless Country Week and Hudson Shield appearances. After retirement Rob remained involved in coaching.

November 23- Successful year of glass recycling. Colac Otway Shire has collected over 500 tonnes of glass since introducing glass only kerbside collection one year ago.

November 28- Polwarth MP Richard Riordan retains his seat in a tight race. He now faces the challenge of “managing 2 sets of expectations”, as Torquay becomes Polwarth’s new population centre.

November 28- Colac’s Joe McCracken has secured a seat in the Western Victoria region, which is Colac and district’s upper house electorate.

November 30- A century in Colac for dairy producer Bulla. Bulla Dairy Foods hosted a country fair attended by hundreds of Bulla’s past and present team members, farmers, suppliers, and their families.

December 2- Owner of historic ‘Balnagowan’ thwarted by planning delays. Leigh Rich said the planned subdivision of 39 retirement units had been a nightmare, being plagued by a litany of requests from council planners. Meanwhile, restoration work on the mansion is ongoing.

Windfarm at Cressy. Golden Plains Wind Farm north-east of Cressy will be Victoria’s largest approved windfarm with 122 wind turbines, construction is set to begin early in 2023.

December 7- A full Lake Colac sees the return of watercraft. Yachters, jet skiers, fishers and water skiers are all taking advantage of a full Lake Colac.

December 16- Colac Visitor Centre opening hours victory. It will open 7 days a week this summer, in a win for a community campaign and petition to extend hours to pre-pandemic levels.

December 21- Associated Kiln Dry establishing a new national Head Office in Colac. The office is situated in former Centrelink offices at corner of Hesse and Bromfield Streets. The timber company employs 1200 workers across 12 separate locations in 3 Australian states.

Beechy’s Gain. New plans for a major subdivision at Elliminyt have also revealed a new off-road route for the Old Beechy Rail Trail.

New inquiry for pathway next to lake. Colac Otway Shire Council has commenced a feasibility study into a path linking Colac and Cororooke, along Lake Colac’s Western shore.

Emissions cut for authority. The Corangamite Catchment Management Authority is on track to reach net zero carbon emissions for its operations by 2024.

December 23- Elliminyt’s Gwen Huggins turns 100 and still leading an active life. Gwen was prominent in a host of sporting and community activities. She was Shire of Colac Citizen of the Year in 1993 and received the Polwarth Community Volunteer Award in 2017.

2023 -

January 6- Developers Planning 54 lot housing estate. The Bruce Street development is adjacent to the former Colac rubbish tip and Lake Colac.

January 11- Colac Area Health to receive \$834,000 from Department of Health. This grant is for the development of a 5 bed short stay unit.

Von’s vibrant at 101. Community volunteer and Colac Shire Citizen of the Year in 1991, Von Hillier celebrated her 101st birthday. She and the late Pauline Goonan visited hospitals and nursing homes to entertain patients and residents, with Pauline on the piano and Von on drums.

January 13- Video conferencing upgrades at Colac library. Colac Otway Shire Council, Geelong Regional Libraries and Colac Secondary College worked together to upgrade all 5 of the library’s meeting Rooms and equip them with video conferencing technology for groups of between 8 to 25.

January 20- Fresh Start. New Colac school campus in Hearn Street, part of St Joseph’s, will help vulnerable youths from 12 to 25 who have been disengaged from mainstream school.

Colac has a new councillor. Tosh-Jake Finnegan takes the place of Joe McCracken who resigned and was elected to State Parliament in November. The election follows a recount of preferences at the last Local Government elections.

January 27- Order of Australia for Neil Stewart. Chairman of the Board of Charles Stewart & Co for over 60 years, Mr Stewart contributed to the community through the Colac District Water Board, Colac Otway Shire commissioner and was instrumental in the establishment of Anam Cara House.

‘Airdrie’, the historic former home of J.G. Johnstone listed for sale at \$2 million plus.

February 1- House makes way for school oval extension. Colac Primary School students have a bigger and safer area for play following the demolition of a neighbouring house at 51 Murray Street East.

February 8- Historic events facing the chop. Colac axemen urge the State Government to keep the sport alive. Vic Forests are no longer able to provide logs due to a lack of harvesting access.

Colac Cricket Legend Retires. Aaron Finch retires from international cricket after 12 years, 5 tests, 146 One Day Internationals, 103 T20’s and captained Australia to two World Cup wins.

February 15- New-look playground for Beac’s Town Park. Work has commenced on a modern play space to replace the existing 25 year old play equipment.

The Sandy Creek Wine Shanty, along the road to Colac.

Princes Highway, Mount Gellibrand - GPS reference: 38°17'26.5"S 143°50'04.1"E (approx.)

By Alan Doyle - June 2022

The new duplication of the Princes Highway - celebrated with travelling times to Geelong just under one hour from Colac, in the comfort of our cars. But, little thought on its progression over time.

The road used to be just a track, followed basically in the footsteps of pioneer Hugh Murray's trek with his herd of sheep back in 1837. Over time, more people would follow his path over many years and consequently, the track became a road from the Geelong direction. In these early days, people would either walk, ride a horse, or cart goods. This was Colac's lifeblood road from the east.

".....John Gibson, for many years walked to Geelong every six months to buy his supplies of leather. On these trips he commonly arrived within five miles of Geelong in a day. After selecting his leather, he would engage a local carrier to take the goods to Colac, and after camping the night, set off home. On one trip he became weak in the legs and diverted to stay at a hut on Armytage's run where kinfolk from Ayrshire were staying. He passed an uncomfortable night as 'they had their seed stored inside and there was scarcely any sleeping room left'. Then on towards the Barwon, where he crossed the river on a fallen tree, noticing a platypus as he did so 'but in a twinkle it was down again'. On this occasion his feet were so sore he finished the last few miles to Colac on his bare feet". (Book – Year of Hope 1857 in the Colac District, page 94 – Dawn Peel).

Over time, stagecoach services became more frequent, transporting people and the Royal Mail. The train line came many years later, due to the need for short stops along the roadway, offering shelter and services.

James Conn, a Birregurra farmer, saw a niche opportunity to capitalise on the passing patronage along the road, between Colac and Winchelsea. He applied for a Colonial Wine Licence and set up the premises strategically at locally known Sandy Creek - positioned 14.5 miles (23 km) from Colac and 9.5 miles (15.4 km) from Winchelsea.

In 1868 he was granted his licence, and commenced building on the site (allotment 36B1 & 36B4, Birregurra Parish map) located along the north side of the Princes Highway and eastern corner of Prices Lane.

COLONIAL WINE LICENCE – James Conn, of Sandy Creek, on the main road at Birregurra, applied for a Colonial Wine Licence, for the premises lately used by him under a beer licence. The requirements of the Act having been complied with, and the report of police favourable. His application was granted. (Geelong Advertiser, 3 October 1871, page 3).

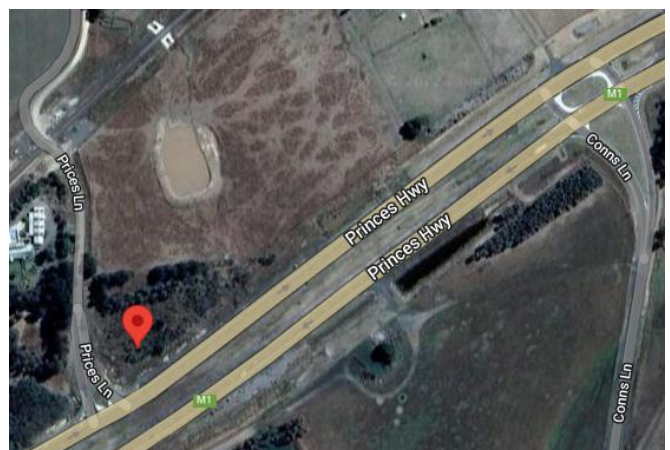


James Conn
courtesy David Conn

Business grew, and the original building was required to be enlarged. By late 1875, a larger dwelling, consisting of seven rooms for public accommodation with separate personal living quarters was built. The business thrived for about nine years, until the railway came through, connecting with Colac in 1877. The railway took away so much business that the venture finally folded shortly after. James abandoned the business and concentrated on his farming interests. Sadly, the train line would also cut directly through his farming land.

Today covered with a small amount of shrubbery and pasture, it is hard to visualise a building ever being there. The only feature of James Conn's time being at this location is Conn's Lane on the south side of the Princes Highway, a half kilometre to the east from the site.

Acknowledgement and thanks to family descendant, David Conn for his time in supplying various known family records for this article. Reference books "Drink Up Gents" – A History in Colac and District 1841 to 2011 – Norman Houghton ISBN 978-0-9593013-8-0 and Hotel and Pubs & Inns of Geelong Country Districts – Pam Jennings, ISBN 978-0-9803480-9-5.



James Conn's allotment & approx. Wine Shanty location

Google maps 2022

EARLY HISTORY OF WARRION

This was prepared and written by Mrs Jean Heppell for a broadcast over Radio 3CS Colac C. 1950s

Reference: Mr Henry Lewis Chant - 1870-1959 born and died at Colac

By H. L. Chant

To most of this information on the early history of Warrion, we are indebted to Mr H. L. Chant, the oldest resident in the Warrion district, and whose father was one of the earlier settlers in the area.

When the Colac district was thrown open for settlement, Robertson Bros purchased thousands of acres from practically the Princes Highway on the south, to Wool Wool on the west, from Beeac on the north of Ondit on the east. The Government retained a portion where the Warrion Township now stands. It was known at that time as Cummel. This piece was practically surrounded by Robertson's vast estate.

When later it was surveyed and cut up into 3-acre blocks, the selectors renamed this piece Ti-tree probably called so on account of the ti-tree bush which grew thickly on the flats along the water course. The greater part of the Ti-tree selection was at various times of the year almost covered by shallow water coming out of the rock across the Government selection and then passing through Robertson Bros estate in a drain, which Mr Chant's father constructed in the early 1860's to the fresh water lake two miles to the east.

The first farm stables in the 70's were erected on Robertson's estate near Glen Alvie. Loads of ti-tree from the flats here were cut and carted by wagon teams and laid across the beams of the stables and then thatched with the tall reeds which grew on the swamp.



AT LEFT - Pre - 1900 image of the Warrion State School - No. 1308. The Warrion State School amalgamated and became part of the new Alvie Consolidated School of the early 1950's situated at Alvie. (Image from Society files - School photos collection)

These reeds and some of the ti-tree bush are still growing on the Warrion Reserve today. In those days several types of shrubs and trees grew abundantly around this district, mostly on the barriers. Light Woods, Honeysuckle, Box and Black Wattle.

At one time 100 ton of Black Wattle was cut from the surrounding paddocks and carted to Glen Alvie for the homestead there. Water fowl abounded on the reedy waters and 80 pair was only a fair bag in those days. Rabbits and wombats were very numerous and the barriers were riddled with their burrows.

After the land of Cummel was cut up into blocks there were as many homes in the township as there are today. Any one requiring a block just put his name on a stake and stuck it in the ground on his chosen site and then made application in Colac to the Government to buy it. As sometimes there were quite a few applicants for the one block, a meeting was called, usually at a hotel, and the most deserving applicant was granted the block.

When first surveyed into blocks, the centre of the Reserve, about 5 acres, was retained as a community sports ground. It proved not to be a very good one however, being too low lying and damp. The strong running stream through the centre was a watering place for travelling stock passing through to Ballarat and Geelong markets and as a result the ground was usually in a bad state of repair. So later the committee of the Sports ground obtained permission to sell the reserve and to purchase the present arena.

This ground today is in splendid order – well-lit with electricity for night training and is a credit to the foresight of the old committee. At the same time a block was reserved in the centre of the township for a site for a Public Hall – where our hall stands today.

AT RIGHT - Warrion Post Office, Main Street Warrion C. 1930's. The mail delivery truck is Burke's, who delivered mail and other usual necessities throughout the area for many years.
(Image from Society files - Local Post Office collection)



Around the 1860's some of the settlers leased about 20 acres around the reserve for about £1 per year for the purpose of planting orchards and vineyards. These were kept in production for many years and a wine shop was erected and distilled its own wine.

The homes in the township in those days were mostly occupied by stonewallers, rabbiters, station workers, shearers and salt gatherers. The salt was gathered on the Beeac and Horseshoe lakes.

A two-roomed school was started adjoining the wine shop which also housed the Post Office and store. Children had to go into the wine shop counter to collect their mail which was carried out from Freshwater on horseback. The same mailman carried the mail onto Beeac and Cressy.

Parents complained to the Postal Department about their children having to go into the wine shop for their mail and after much agitation a room was built onto the end of the verandah and used as a Post Office. This proved little better, so the Post Office was shifted to a site immediately opposite the present Post Office and used in conjunction with a combined store and butcher's shop.

By this time the township boasted a Blacksmith's shop, Wine Saloon, Baker's shop, Butcher's shop, two stores, Post Office and school. There were also two churches and a branch of the London Chartered Bank. In 1880, a new State School was erected and the residents of Ti-tree decided to change the township's name to Warrion – named after the large hills covered with sheoak and wattle and named Warrion Hills.

A few years later Robertson's estate was subdivided and sold for smaller holdings. The land around became more closely settled, creameries and butter and cheese factories were built. The main portion of Glen Alvie was sold and leased in 1886. The settlers around Warrion increased and other districts were named.

In 1953 the wine shop was licensed to a Hotel and a very modern brick structure was built and named the Ti-tree Hotel.

The land of Warrion adapts itself to intense cultivation and all lines of the dairy industry. Quantities of onions, peas, beetroot, asparagus and potatoes are grown here and gallons of milk and cream are sent to the dairy factories. We have a pea factory where large supplies of green peas are handled by the Pict Company.

Warrion is one of the most progressive centres in the Colac district, being well served with an automatic telephone exchange, electricity and bitumen roads.

AT RIGHT - The Ti-Tree Hotel at Warrion. The far end (southern end) dates from C. 1926 - the bar end at left was added in the early 1950's.
(Image from Society files – Bela bard Brucker collection)



COLAC'S TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

A brief history by Craig Pink

Colac's Tourist Information Centre actually dates back to 1962, when volunteers started having tourist maps and similar items for locals, and the travelling public at the Colac Fashion Centre in Murray St. The Fashion Centre re-opened after refurbishment in November 1962 to cater for the much-needed local tourist trade, and also travellers going through the district. The Colac Tourist Bureau, which was run in close operation with World Travel Services Pty Ltd would fulfil a long-felt want in the district. A big neon sign measuring 10' x 12' and clearly visible from both directions would grace the outside of the store, so that all passers-by may know where to obtain information about Colac, or trips to other places etc. The establishment of the tourist bureau provided a service sadly lacking in the past for visitors to Colac.

Visitors could obtain any information about the district, could be advised as to accommodation, day tours and points of local interest and which the Colac Tourist Development Association (formed in 1962) was confident would draw far more tourists to the district, also extending their stay to the advantage of commerce in the city.

With increased tourists and demand, Colac's Apex club set up a large tandem caravan in the Memorial Square around 1983, which was totally run by volunteers.

**TOURIST BUREAU
OPENS TODAY AT
FASHION CENTRE**



AT LEFT - Colac's Tourist Information Centre Caravan in the Memorial Square, as it stood in the mid-1980's.

AT RIGHT - S.A. Premier Don Dunstan visited in July 1983 and was very impressed. (Image Left - Society files - Photocard 289) (Right - Bela Bard Brucker collection, July 1983 Colac Herald negatives)



The new purpose-built Colac APEX Tourist Information Centre at its present site on the Murray/Queen St corner opened 23rd March 1987 - this was mostly built by voluntary supply of materials and voluntary local labor.

Everything was sourced locally in the region, local architect Geoff dela Rue provided the architecture - so the building is actually of Geoff's design. No outside consultants to waste money on, all volunteers donating their resources and time - and also the running of it.

The large central wooden beam support column in centre, a tourist attraction in itself, was installed in June 1986 as the Tourist Information Centre was being built.

AT LEFT - The central Blackwood support column in place, mid-June 1986. Wet conditions were the main hassle of getting the crane in a secure position before lifting. This is looking to south east - Leahy BP at left, and Worts Mobil fuel depots can be seen at far east end of Bromfield St where Coles Supermarket is today. (Image from Society files - Bela Bard Brucker Colac Herald negative collection).

The beam is 9.3 metres long, 40cm square and is Blackwood, weighing some 2.5 tonnes. The beam was logged from a Blackwood tree on Hall's Ridge, south of Beech Forest, and harvested by Calco Timber from within one of that year's logging areas, and donated by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

AT RIGHT - Apex club volunteers work with builders to quickly secure the base to the Blackwood column, when lifted to position by crane at the very bottom of the new Tourist Information Centre building in Mid-July 1986.

BELOW x 2 - Volunteers working away the same day as the Blackwood beam was installed.

(Images x 3 from Society files - Bela Bard Brucker Colac Herald negative collection).



Crane driver Graham Williamson was sure presented with a challenge lifting the Blackwood central support beam by one end and swinging it into place, while also clearing the other tall foundation posts, along with the floor beams which had already been set up in place.

With recent rain, the most hassle was getting a sure footing for the heavy duty ACCO crane, but "a few well-placed beams under the crane soon solved the problem". As well as being the main central support for the building, the Blackwood central column would also be a focal point of interest - a central feature of the Tourist Information Centre.

The cartage and dressing of the Blackwood log was donated by the Colac-Based timber industry, along with the other treated Pine poles which were also donated by the Colac-based timber industry.

Co-chairman of Colac Apex Rob Bartlett said at the time that the work arrangement was that builders did as much as they could during the week, and Apex volunteers, with help from professional tradesmen moved in at weekends. He also said plenty of manpower was needed during the construction phase, and that so many, including the timber industry had been extremely generous in their support of the whole project. The Apex project was unique as Apex was saving the City Council money by helping with builders and labor, and cost \$170,000 to build.

While obviously attending to countless numbers of tourists over the years since opening in March 1987, it has also been put to very good use over the years. Organisations such as the Colac Community Church had their meetings there each week for quite some years, along with numerous other local voluntary groups.

The Colac Tourist Information Centre was run by volunteers for many many years, until government agencies took over. With so much money thrown at tourism it got to the point where it eventually became solely run by Local Government entities.



The Covid pandemic obviously closed the Tourist information Centre for extended times, its future still in much doubt. It is hoped it can remain open being run again by volunteers and still fill the need it was originally intended for.

AT LEFT - At over 35 years old, Today's Colac Tourist Information Centre still draws tourists coming inland, especially for shopping in Colac of what coastal areas don't have.
(Image - C. Pink)

GLOVERS PIES AT WARRION

By Dawn Missen

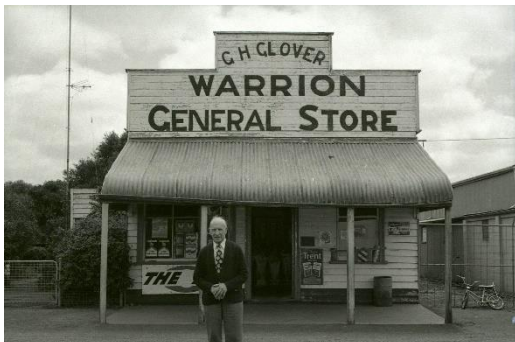
George and Rose Glover manufactured pies daily at their Warrion Bakery and General Store. There was a large wood fired oven at the rear of their shop. The meat was bought from McAdam's butcher and arrived in a large dish. George made the short crust bottom and side of the pies and Rose made the flaky pastry for the top.

Each school day they delivered their home-made pies in their Holden Panel Van complete with warmer oven in the rear, firstly to Alvie Consolidated School and then onto St. Brendan's School at Coragulac. There was a choice of meat, meat and vegetable, apple or apricot pies. On Friday's, fish pies were added to the menu, but only a few of these were available to the Catholic students at Alvie School.

As Friday was then a meat-free day for Catholic families, most of the fish pies were required for St. Brendan's School. Students requiring pies for lunch lined up in the school driveway behind Mr Glover's Panel Van. The pies were oval shaped, always hot and delicious.

Locals who lived along the route to Alvie School and St Brendan's School would stand outside their properties with a plate to buy pies from George.

In 1958 when the school pie delivery ceased, Glover's were making 300 pies each day and charging one shilling (ten cents) for each pie. Former students recall the price being nine pence earlier.



AT LEFT/RIGHT - George Glover at his beloved Warrion General Store, November 1979. George still sold the usual general store goods at this time, as well as newspapers etc.

(Both images from Society files - Bela Bard Brucker Colac Herald negative collection).



AT LEFT - The baker's oven at the rear of the shop/bakery as it remained in modern day times of 2019 by previous owners.
(Image - C. Pink)



BELOW - Colac's Bryan Bros & Borch advertising C. early 1980's for their direct acting 6ft windmill, which sold by the hundreds around the local district and well beyond. This model is still made today by the current owners of the business.



DIRECT ACTING WINDMILL

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CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER- Johns furniture in Bromfield St, which was built after the saleyards on the site was relocated to Irrewarra in late 1970's. Today the site is occupied by A to Z Traders.

The centre parking is also still intact today and a unique feature of this section of Bromfield St.

(Image - Society files Bela Bard Brucker collection Colac Herald negatives - October 1983)



AT LEFT – Can you recognise this local landmark - the date is December 1969. If you need a clue – it is in Colac, and still very much “lived in”

ANSWER NEXT ISSUE

COLAC AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2023 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM – Thankyou

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
March	2 nd D. Missen 9 th L. Spence 16 th G. Splatt 23 rd J. Knight 30 th R. Missen	3 rd C. Pink 10 th G. Bray 17 th E. Angel 24 th M. Saddlier 31 st C. Pink	5 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 12 th G. Knox/R. Perrin 19 th N. Ryan/R. Osborne 26 th H. Paatsch
April	6 th D. Missen 13 th L. Spence 20 th G. Splatt 27 th J. Knight	7 th Closed Easter 14 th G. Bray 21 st E. Angel 28 th M. Saddlier	2 nd N. Ryan/R. Osborne 9 th Closed Easter 16 th G. Knox/R. Perrin 23 rd N. Ryan/R. Osborne 30 th H. Paatsch
May	4 th C. Pink 11 th L. Spence 18 th G. Splatt 25 th J. Knight	5 th D. Peel 12 th G. Bray 19 th E. Angel 26 th M. Saddlier	7 th R. Osborne/N. Ryan 14 th G. Knox/R. Perrin 21 st N. Ryan/R. Osborne 28 th H. Paatsch