

# LEARMONTH and DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED QUARTERLY SUMMER 2015

FOUNDED 1983. INCORPORATED 13/10/1986. INCORPORATION No. A 11213. ABN No. 22 133 588 072.



*326 High Street, Learmonth, Victoria, 3352*

*May the peace  
And joy that  
Christmas brings  
Always be with you*



*A Merry Christmas  
To all  
And a happy New Year  
From the society*

## **VISITORS TO THE SOCIETY**

On the 7th November we had a visit from the family of Joy Morrish who was an employee of the former Shire of Ballarat, she died in January 1979. The shire had two paintings that had been dedicated "In Memory" of Joy. Her son and daughter, along with their partners attended the society to see the above painting, one of these has been painted by local artist, James Egan, and the other by William Bolitho. Both paintings are of the local district.



Above, Suzanne Carracher & her brother John Morrish, children of Joy Morrish, both were accompanied by their spouses, Patrick Carracher & Maureen Morrish.

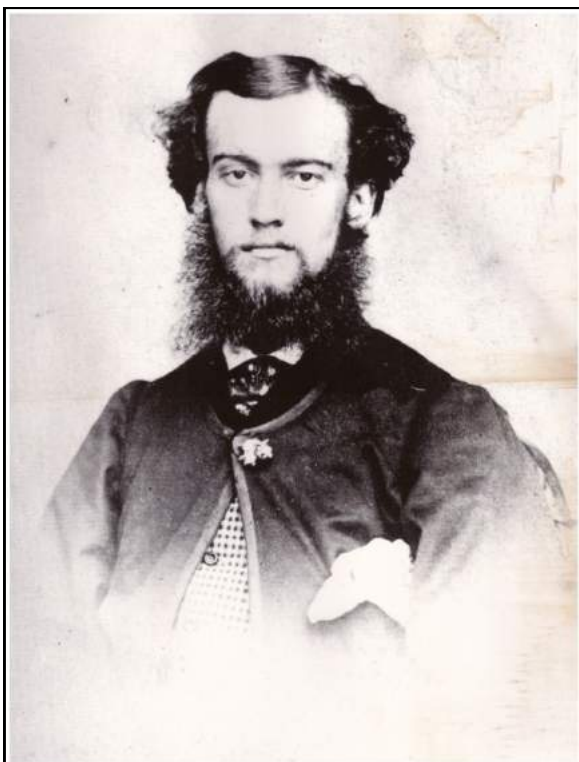


## *Richmond - Dobson*

The 11<sup>th</sup> November we had a visit from some visitors from Queensland, one of these being Bill Richmond, 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin of one of our members, Graham Findlay.



Above - Graham Findlay and Bill Richmond, both being great grandsons of James Richmond (below).



## *James Richmond*

### **FIRST FULL TIME SHIRE SECRETARY SHIRE OF BALLARAT**

24 November 1840 - 29 December 1879

James Richmond, the son of Andrew and Elizabeth, was born at Hamilton, Lankashire in Scotland (about fifteen miles south of Glasgow) on the 24th November 1840.

At the age of 21 years, he migrated to Australia on the sailing vessel "City of Melbourne" arriving on the 23rd July 1862, after 140 days at sea.

He made his way to Ballarat district and secured a position as head teacher of the Weatherboard Hill State School, some three miles out of Learmonth. Records state that he filled the position with much credit and ability.

The first position of Secretary of the Ballarat Shire was filled on a part-time basis, by Senior Constable Mather, who was also Clerk of Courts of Learmonth Petty Sessions. Mather's salary was fixed at £275 per year.

After two years in this position, Mather defaulted to the extent of £703.3.11 in rates and dues collected, and subsequently escaped judgement by taking a ship out of the country.

James Richmond was chosen from eight other applicants for the office of secretary on the 25th April 1866, at a starting salary of £250 per annum.

The office was henceforth to be a full time position. The following year, James married Annie Dobson, the second daughter of Henry and Isabella Dobson of Broomhill, Northumberland, England. They married on the 26th February 1867, when James was 26 and Annie was 19 years, and they produced four sons and two daughters.

James devoted himself to the position of Secretary and worked long and tirelessly for the improvement of the Shire. For example, according to the Shire Minutes of the 14th October 1875, a fall of revenue to the Shire obliged the Secretary - Treasurer to take on extra duties.

- 1/. Collection of statistics for the West Riding.
- 2/. Thistle inspector for the West Riding.
- 3/. Direct surface labour in the absent of the Shire Engineer. (Uniform wages for road surfacers fixed at 6/6d per day about this period).
- 4/. Supervise Shire reserves.
- 5/. Registering of dogs. (He was however, paid an allowance of 1/- for every dog registered).
- 6/. Shire offices to keep open for three days a week.

One particular issue for which he fought was the creation of a parkland and picnic area on the shores of Lake Learmonth, envisaging that in years to come the area would provide an attractive recreation



**Continued** - area which could be reached by a comfortable horse and buggy drive from the bustling city of Ballarat. The parkland, which remains by the foreshore behind the township of Learmonth, immediately recognisable by the dark foliage of pine trees, is named "Richmond Park". The council first moved that the park be so named in July 1873, seven years since the appointment of James Richmond as Secretary.

The Secretary was very keen to have Lake Burrumbeet and Learmonth stocked with fish and there is repeated evidence of his lobbying for this in Shire minutes. Indeed, having been successful, it is recorded in 1876 that the Shire voted a sum of £15 be awarded as a bonus to James Richmond in consideration of the extra services rendered by him regarding trout fishing.

James was also the first treasurer of the Learmonth Presbyterian Church and formed, and conducted the first church choir.

A severe attack of rheumatic fever cut short a rich and happy life - James Richmond passed away on the 29th December 1879, at the age of 39 years leaving Annie to raise their six children.

Today, there are still descendants of both the Richmond and Dobson families living in the surrounding districts.



**"THE BALLARAT COURIER"** December 1879

"Our Learmonth correspondent writes;

It is my painful duty to record the demise of Mr. James Richmond, the much respected secretary of the Shire of Ballarat. Only a week ago I notified the fact of his having been laid up with a severe attack of rheumatic fever. I little thought however at the time that I should be so soon called upon to chronicle his death. The malady, which soon manifested very unfavourable symptoms, first prostrated the deceased last Saturday week last, and finally settled in the region of the heart, to which he succumbed at half past eleven on Monday night. Drs. Hooper of Learmonth, and Tremearne of Creswick, were in attendance on the deceased, but all that medical skill could do was of no avail.

The deceased, in his public and private capacity, was widely known, and universally respected, his general urbanity and usefulness being equally admired and appreciated. In him the public have lost a hearty and willing worker in every good cause, he haven taken an active part in promoting and furthering every worthy and philanthropic undertaking - and these have been numerous - which from time to time have taken place in the district.

The Shire has also lost a faithful and valuable servant, the very books of which are written and posted up to date with as much precision as if he were awaiting a public audit.

It is also needless to say that his widow wife has lost a most affectionate husband, and his children a kind and indulgent father; for all of whom the utmost sympathy is now being felt.

Mr. Richmond arrived in the colony about 1861 or 1862, and was appointed head teacher of the Weatherboard Hill school, about three miles from here - a position he filled with much credit and ability, and secured for the school a position it never attained either before or since. He was appointed to the office of secretary to the Shire of Ballarat in 1866, the duties of which he ably and faithfully discharged, I must say, up to the day of his death.

"With the prospect, apparently, of years of social and domestic happiness before him, he has been suddenly cut off at the comparatively early age of thirty-nine years, and leaves a widow and six children to mourn their loss, together with a large circle of intimate friends and acquaintances, whose sympathy for the bereaved widow and children is of the deepest kind.

His remains will be interred in the Learmonth cemetery on Wednesday afternoon at two o'clock.



**William Kofoed Richmond  
1877—1943**

(Use of photographs, courtesy of Graham Findlay)



Top - William Kofoed Richmond  
Below - Elizabeth (Lizzie) Hamilton Sides and her sister, Annie Isabella Findaly. The above, were all children of James Richmond & Annie Dobson.



The plaque outside the Old Shire Offices.

## HERITAGE WALK

### Upgrade to signage

The City of Ballarat have replaced all the 37 markers on our “Heritage Walk,” with new larger and colourful signs, including a QR code which allows people with a smart phone to view further details via the society’s website. [www.learnmonthdhs.com.au](http://www.learnmonthdhs.com.au)



The Gas Street Lamp out the front of the Old Shire Offices



The Boer War Memorial



## Guest Speaker – Dot Wickham speaker at our September 2015 meeting.

### Tales of the Tapestry

Dot spoke about a Tapestry that her Great Great-Grandmother, Alice Webb Russell had embroidered when she was only 13 years of age. It was sown from very fine silk thread, extremely delicate work from someone so young. This Tapestry had long been a prized possession of the family but it also held a great mystery, what was the building depicted and what was the significance of the two columns of initials?



Dot and her mum at the gatehouse from the north east leading to the church graveyard and Preceptory at Torphichen, Scotland.

The first half of Dot's talk focused on a trip she took with her mother in the early 1990's to discover the origins of the Tapestry and her family's Scottish roots. The Russell family, and thus

the Tapestry, hailed from Torphichen, a small village not far from Edinburgh that dates back over a thousand years. Dot spoke of the historic buildings they visited whilst building up a picture of their ancestors and the places depicted in the Tapestry and how they identified the castle depicted. Whilst seeking information on the Russell family they also found that another branch of the family, the Hamilton's, came from the same area. Finally they answered the mystery of the initials.

The later part of the talk focused on Alice's life after arriving in Australia and the family's connection to Ballarat, particularly Sebastopol.

Alice is buried in the Ballarat New Cemetery.



Alice Russell - Hamilton -Webb

1821 - 1923

She was buried with her first husband Robert Hamilton.

In the Ballarat New Cemetery

## Dennis Spielvogel speaker at our November 2015 meeting.

### —My Grandfather: Nathan Speilvogel.

Dennis's topic was his Grandfather, Nathan and was accompanied by a collection of family photos. Born in Ballarat in 1874, the son of Newman Frederick Spielvogel and Hannah (nee Cohen) who were members of the Jewish Community, Nathan attended Dana Street State School. He trained as a pupil-teacher and then teacher's assistant and later went to teach in the Wimmera near Dimboola at Brim Springs and Warkool. He taught for two days at one school, spent the third day travelling between the two schools on horseback and the next two days at the other school. One very hot day he had a visitor, not knowing who he was offered to leave the children at work and visit the local pub for a cold drink. His visitor turned out to be the local inspector.

Nathan had his first story published in 1894, this was the beginning of a long career as an author, with stories published in The Dimboola Banner, the Bulletin and other newspapers. He also published books of short stories. In 1897 he was posted to Little Snowy State School where he decided to dispense with the use of the cane, here he really began to enjoy his teaching and became involved in the community, establishing what later became the Young Farmers movement. In 1904, with 120 pounds in his pocket, he embarked on his Wanderjahr, a trip across Europe. Upon his return he again took up a teaching post in Dimboola. Here he serialised his journey, this was later published as, "Gumsucker on the Tramp", which sold 20,000 copies.

In 1911, Nathan married Jessie Harris, daughter of Henry Harris, a publisher. They had three sons, Newman Laurence, Phillip Frederick and Lassalle Harris (father of Dennis).

In 1924, Nathan returned to Dana Street School as Head Teacher, a post he held until 1939.

Nathan was President of the Ballarat Historical Society from 1933 until his death. He wrote "The History of Ballarat for Ballarat's Centenary". The years 1936-1938 saw him presenting weekly history programs on 3BA, these were later combined as The Spielvogel Papers (still available at the Gold Museum).

Nathan died in 1956 and is buried in the Ballarat Old Cemetery.



Photo is of Ruth Nelson and Dennis Spielvogel chatting after the meeting.



# Dowling Forest Cemetery

## Walk of Revelation

The Dowling Forest Cemetery is situated at 23 Dowling Road, Miners Rest. Partially fronting the Sunraysia Highway it is largely as it has been for over 150 years. As is customary for most cemeteries it is divided into 4 sections, Presbyterian, Church of England, Catholic and Wesleyan. In more recent times a lawn and ashes section has been added.



The Dowling Forest Cemetery was gazetted in 1860, over 332 known burials have taken place at this cemetery, some before this date. The information on the headstones tell a lot of the story of the history of Miners Rest and district.

In November local historian Bill Loader led a group, including members of the Lions Club, around the cemetery. This proved to be most informative and enlightening with Bill's amazing local knowledge, his stories on their lives, family connections and involvement in the community.



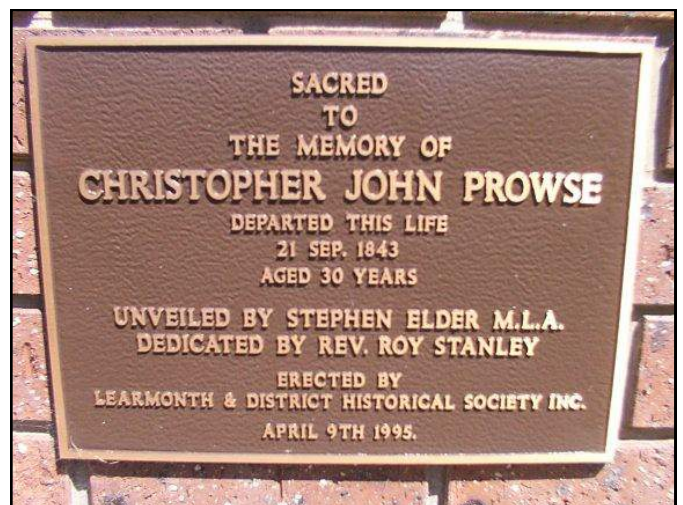
Bill Loader on his Walk Tour at the cemetery.



In 1992 the pieces of a badly broken and weathered headstone were discovered in a paddock at Dowling Forest. At the time the Christian name was readable but unfortunately not the surname. It also appeared the date of death was 1845. After considerable research it was decided the headstone was that of Christopher John Prowse who had arrived from England in March 1842 Prowse was employed by Mr W J T Clarke (known locally as Big Clarke or Money Clarke) as an assistant manager on his 'Dowling

Forest' pastoral run near Learmonth. 18 months after his arrival (21 September 1843) Prowse died as a result of an accidental fall from his horse.

The Learmonth & District Historical Society had the headstone restored and a monument constructed in the Dowling Forest Cemetery which was unveiled in 1995. This is just inside the north gate and one of the stories spoken about by Bill.



Dowling Forest is a busy cemetery and is one of a very few still managed by a Trust.

This Trust is made up of 8 Volunteers from the local community who give their time to manage the cemetery for the community.



## LEARMONTH SOLDIERS WELFARE. HONOR BOARD



**Batty**, Rueben Abraham \*  
**Baird**, David Alexander \*  
**Baird**, Jean McLennan. AWAS  
**Casey**, Kevin Michael. (Cpl) \*  
**Casey**, Francis James \*  
**Casey**, Maurice Joseph \*  
**Casey**, John Vincent \*  
**Casey**, William Francis \*  
**Crosthwaite**, Robert Rowe \*  
**Crosthwaite**, Albert James  
**Crosthwaite**, John Richard  
**Collings**, Francis Edward  
**Dean**, Mark Alfred. Sgt \*  
**Dean**, Ronald \*  
**Dean**, Gordon Verdon \*  
**Dean**, Joseph Walter \*  
**Dean**, J. D. (Could be James Bailey) \*  
**Findlay**, George Hossack  
**Goad**, Allan Raymond \*  
**Goad**, Courtney Edmund \*  
**Goad**, Sydney Randall \*  
**Goad**, D.  
**Hender**, Thomas Eddy Pollard  
**Hender**, Sydney Charles Wilkinson  
**Heenan**, R. F.  
**James**, J. C.  
**Lusk**, Rev. K. K.  
**Long**, Joycelyn Alice AWAS  
**McIntyre**, William Eric  
**McIntyre**, Robert  
**Medwell**, L. J.

**Medwell**, Jean Margaret. WAAF  
**O'Neil**, Daniel Raymond  
**O'Neil**, Ernest  
**Page**, Alexander Edmund  
**Paterson**, John James  
**Paterson**, Patrick John  
**Paterson**, Camp  
**Bell**, James  
**Paterson**, John Charles  
**Peters**, W. J.  
**Peters**, A.  
**Ryan**, J. J.  
**Ryan**, John Gerald  
**Ryan**, F. V. (Could be Father. Vincent Edmund Michael)  
**Stowe**, John Stanley  
**Sellwood**, Alan Charles. D.F.C.  
**Sellwood**, Richard Morgan  
**Sellwood**, Joseph Lloyd George \*  
**Smith**, A. C.  
**Thomas**, H. R.  
**Thomas**, N. R.  
**Wilson**, G. H.  
**Wilson**, W. T.  
**Walker**, R. C.  
**Morgan**, Albert John \*

AWAS - Australian Women's Army Service.

D.F.C. - Distinguished Flying Cross

\* Now deceased

# OOOP's

*I forgot to send out reminder*

*notices regarding membership fees which became due in July.*

*If you would like to continue to receive our new formatted newsletter and have not renewed your membership, could you please do so.*

*We appreciate your membership as it goes a long way in helping the society to maintain not only our own belongings but also the society building and grounds.*

## **VOLUNTEER WANTED**

To help with the archiving and cataloguing at the local historical society, must have some knowledge of computers. One afternoon a week. Contact Lois Spenceley, H.53845334 M.0428928318 or Email: davidandlois@ncable.net.au

# Learmonth and District Historical Society



## Open Days

4th Sunday of each month,

or

by appointment with the Secretary.

**Normal monthly meetings**

**3rd Tuesday of each month  
(except December and January)**

**from 7.30 pm**

**at the**

**Old Ballarat Shire Offices,  
326 High Street, Learmonth**

16th February

15th March

19th April

17th May

21st June

July. AGM to be advised

16th August

20th September

18th October

15th November

Could members please bring a plate of food for after our meetings.

For more information

please contact:

Lois Spenceley

Phone

H. 03 53845334 & M. 0428928318

Email [davidandlois@ncable.net.au](mailto:davidandlois@ncable.net.au)

**PLEASE NOTE THE NEW  
PHONE NUMBERS FOR THE  
SECRETARY**