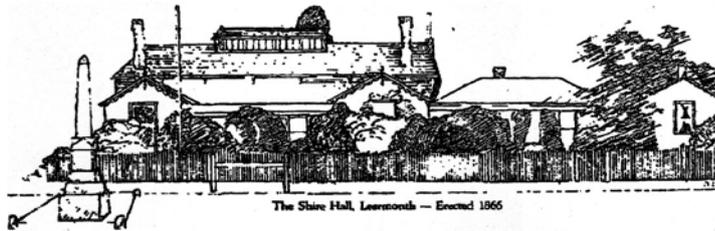


LEARMONTH AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

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MEETING DATES

Tuesday, February 20th, 2007.

Tuesday, March 20th, 2007.

Tuesday, April 17th, 2007.

As usual, meetings will commence at 8 p.m. in the old Shire Building.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

BUS TRIP, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 2007 - We are not telling you where! One of our members was telling us of a "Mystery" bus trip she went on with a group recently and how enjoyable it was, so it has been decided to organise one on similar lines. We can reveal that we will visit more than one location, that you may have an opportunity to do a little shopping at locations we visit, and that none of the locations will be a long distance from Ballarat. The first intended port of call is a place firmly entrenched in the Ballarat district's early history. All being well, a well known historian will meet us there and tell us all about its history.

At this stage, planning is in the very early stages, but we feel this will be a trip not to miss.

To book a seat, phone Ilma on 5343-2366, Claudette 5343-2302 or Terry on 5331-7642. Cost per person is expected to be not more than \$20. Bring your lunch, including thermos, but we hope morning tea will be supplied at the first stop. Also, bring an esky as you will have the opportunity to buy top quality perishable food at one stop for less than retail prices.

Bus will leave Leamonth at 9 a.m. and return at 4 p.m. approximately.

ANOTHER LOSS

We were saddened to lose long time member, "Bobby" Crockford, recently. "Bobby" was a member from the society's early days and attended meetings regularly until several years ago. We will remember forever her beautifully kept garden, which was a visual delight no matter what time of the year. The society extends its sympathy to her family.

THE CHHA EXPO

The society won the Encouragement award at this year's Expo for its sporting theme display. Well done Bill, Claudette, Marie and all others involved!

NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

We certainly picked a good night for our final meeting of the year, being the day of the fire of Waubra and the unpleasant windy weather which continued into the night. As a consequence, what is traditionally our best attended general meeting was one which had almost the smallest attendance of the year. A welcome sight was the appearance of Kerry and Ann Hammond, fresh from the successful auctioning of their Addington School and school house on the previous Saturday, after 20 years as owners and caring custodians. They assure us they still intend to take an active interest in the society in the future, which is most welcome news.

The main items at the meeting were:

1. Leaking roof at the junction of the Roads Board building and Shire Building. We received a donation from Council, via Cr. Wayne Rigg's budget, towards further restoration work on the building and it was felt repairing the roof to make the building totally weatherproof was top priority.
2. The Bus Trip. Details are shown on the front page.

GROWING OLDER

As we enter another calendar year, we will all, no doubt, consider our capabilities in comparison to 12 months previously. The adage that you are as

young as you feel is certainly very true. You might like, also, to consider the following words of wisdom on the subject:

Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it, you've got to start young.

Theodore Roosevelt, US President.

Forty is the old age of youth. Fifty is the youth of old age.

Victor Hugo, French author.

None are as old as those who have outlived enthusiasm.

Henry David Thoreau, philosopher.

Old age comes on suddenly, and not gradually, as is thought.

Emily Dickinson, poet.

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

Mark Twain, US writer.

One thing one should never abandon is learning. Learn more about gardening, crafts, computer, whatever. Never let the brain get idle. An idle mind is the devil's workshop and the devil's name is Alzheimer's.

A classic example of thinking young was the case in Adelaide in the late 1960s, when adult education courses began at schools in the evenings. One school had a 95 years old man enrol for its course in learning Greek. When asked why he wanted to learn Greek at his age, he replied, "It's now or never!"

More recently, in America, one of the best selling books in the past 5 years was the biography of a 100 years old Afro-American, who decided to learn to read and write at the age of 97. You are as young as you feel!

EARLY DAYS IN ASCOT

Ascot in Victoria may not be nearly as well known as its namesake in England where Her Majesty makes her annual pilgrimage to the racecourse where the major British horse races are held. However, it has played a major role in this district since it was first settled, especially as a food source.

The first settlers in the Ascot area were William Coghill and wife and their son David, in 1838. Having come from New South Wales, William showed considerable foresight in bringing with him a plough, harrow and parts of a hand steel flour mill. Thus he was able to reap his first harvest as early as 1839. His pastoral run, called Glendaruel, was 36,000 acres in size and ran 14,000 sheep, officially, in 1846. The Coghills erected a homestead on this run and fenced off about 640 acres, or a square mile. They purchased the fenced off area for £1 per acre and leased the remainder of the 36,000 acres. The 640 acres became known as Coghill's Pre-Emptive Right. This meant that they had the control of everything on, and below, the ground, including ownership of minerals and water, and the right to dam creeks that ran through the property.

Gradually, more people came to settle around Ascot, after the granting of 80 acre freehold blocks from the Crown Allotment Subdivisions of the original squatting runs of the 1850s. One newcomer, William Howitt, likened the land around Ascot to the South Downs

of his native Sussex. In 1851, there were 51 farmers in the Ascot area, according to the Post Office Directory, as well as some freehold owners, and the remainder tenants.

It was the discovery of gold at Clunes in 1851, and later at Creswick, that caused a significant increase in the population of Ascot. As the goldfields population swelled, the miners needed food supplies and the Ascot farmers became an important source of supply. As well as running sheep, they grew potatoes, hay, cereal crops and even dairying turnips. They also turned their hands successfully to growing nuts, berries, soft fruits and grapes. One could only imagine how much such produce would be appreciated by miners. To the farmers, their "gold" was a combination of the rich soil and the good rainfall which enabled them to grow these crops.

By 1865, Ascot was a busy community and had 284 rateable residences and farms. It had a flour mill, Fry's, which was established in 1856. The mill operated until 1890 when it closed because of district farmers preferring to grow hay instead of grain. A large forge and blacksmith's shop, McGrath's, was also established at Ascot and employed upwards of 18 people in its heyday. What may have been the last wagon made in Victoria was completed at McGrath's in 1934. The blacksmith's shop still stands, adjoining the residence of Frank and Imelda McGrath.

The first school at Ascot was a denominational school for the Presbyterian Free Church, in August, 1859. Starting with 26 pupils, its numbers increased to 96 by 1866. Subjects taught included Astronomy, Algebra, Trigonometry and Moral Philosophy. In 1863, Principal Mr. Bowman advertised that the school would be able to take in boarders. The school was situated on the rise, about 150 yards east of SS 2507, and was offered to the Government on condition that the Board of Education pay the £200 building debt. The Board declined the offer and built its own school, No. 16, which opened on 1/1/1873 and closed on 16/2/1883 after the Board purchased another site in 1881 and erected SS 2507 there, where it functioned for over 100 years.

The Ascot Hotel was a brick construction and the first owner was a Mr. Ogilvie, who was related to Mr. Angus Ogilvie, husband of Princess Alexandra. The hotel also served for a time as the Post Office. There was also a hotel called the Wheatsheaf.

The Welsh swagman, Joseph Jenkins, often worked in the Ascot area as a farmhand and Peter Lalor, of Eureka Stockade fame, was one of those who had an 80 acre holding in the area, after the Stockade.

The Free Presbyterian Church had its official opening on 3/7/1859, with a Gaelic service at 11 a.m. and an English one at 8 p.m.

On 26/4/2001, residents held a meeting and appointed a committee to secure the regular services of a professional doctor. From this meeting, an arrangement was quickly made for a doctor to visit at least once a week, more if necessary, consulting room to be in the Ascot Hotel, and parents were urged to have children checked often because of the prevalence of deadly diseases such as diphtheria and scarlet fever. Families could have children checked for a cost of 1/- per family. Like all districts, Ascot lost many young ones to these diseases.

These days, Ascot is still a peaceful farming area, still serving the district and beyond well.

(Thanks to Claudette Crick for information for this article.)

AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE MAGAZINE

You will receive a flyer with this newsletter from the publishers of the above magazine. This is an outstanding read from cover to cover, with superb articles by some of the best qualified historians in Australia. The idea of a gift subscription for \$28 is very appealing and will, no doubt, be more pleasing to the recipient than handkerchiefs or socks. Well worth considering!

LAST WORD: Compliments of the season to all members and their loved ones from the president and committee of the society. Hope you

can make the bus trip on February
24th.