

ANGLESEA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc

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Members can look forward to another interesting year of Society activities with an excellent range of speakers lined up, and ideas for excursions being investigated. But before we look too far into the future let's reflect for a moment on the events of the last couple of months of '95. Our annual dinner in early November again attracted excellent patronage and the venue was appreciated by everyone. Lynne Russell, our guest speaker, gave us an insight into the very busy life she leads as Editor of THIS MONTH IN GEELONG, mother of two young children, a lover of chooks and other fine feathered friends, and with husband David, an avid gardener. Those who took the opportunity to visit "Russelldown" early January when it featured as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme will have been amazed I'm sure to see the extensive layout and note that the 'borders' are being constantly pushed out even further! - and what a magical vista of the Otways the Russells have from their 'small piece of tranquillity' (Lynne's words). If you weren't one of the 1700 folk who took advantage of the opening, make sure you don't miss out next time.

THE DECEMBER CHRISTMAS MEETING was well attended (despite numbers of apologies). President Val, in the spirit of the 'season' gave each one present a 'taste' of cake.

Kate Millicer was our guest speaker and Jean Wendt gives her interpretation of Kate's story: "Opening The Box" - a title to whet out appetites. Kate told us a true story of an inheritance which arrived in a box - displayed to us in all its finery. Beautifully inlaid, polished and lined with blue satin - no-one was quite sure of its original use, ladies deciding it was a sewing box. The thrill was to be told about and shown the unusual item in the BOX - a Will and Testament of one of Kate's ancestors, leaving estates, money, jewellery etc. to various relatives amounting to 53 million pounds in 1930 - BUT - the will had never been signed, tragically spectacles had been left at home and Kate's relative had died on the way home. All estate went to the government where it still remains and now there are so many descendants (thousands) it is hardly worth while trying to claim. The will was written in the 18th century. Kate told her story in such a thrilling manner we all waited for the next piece of information with bated breath. A wonderfully enthralling story" Betty Lloyd thanked Kate on behalf of members, presenting her with a small gift.

Alice Bruce, recently returned from a trip to her beloved England, shared a few anecdotes, one of which was about the Chesterfield Parish Church and its spire! This little poem explains the interest attached thereto:

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"Which every way you turn your eye

It always seems to be awry, Pray can you tell the
reason why!

The only reason known of weight, is that the thing was
never straight"!

Perhaps that other famous Pisa Tower had the same architect.

DISPLAYS

Some of our pictures were on display at Aireys Hall at the
end of December. We are grateful to Keith and Val for
transporting boards etc. and to the Lawless' for roster duty.
One of a number of working bees has already been held to
tackle the mammoth task of labelling all our 'board photos' -
so many visitors are interested in knowing 'who', 'when' or
'where' when viewing those on display - it is not possible for
volunteers to remember or even know all the relevant
information so to actually have details in 'print' will be of
great advantage.

EXCURSION

The last excursion for '95 was local in nature and private
transport used. "A great day" was the unanimous verdict.
First stop off was at Deakin University where we were met by
Rod Charles. After enjoying a cuppa in the student cafe we
walked to the "houses on the hill", mostly late 19th century
with the majority having been re-located from West Geelong -
other interesting structures were the old Inverleigh lock-up,
Winchelsea railway yards goods shed, Freshwater Creek school
with residence attached, and an unusual oneroom school
building (of German design) from Natimuk. Before a picnic
lunch at Balyang we visited the 'threatened' aquaduct at
Breakwater, a most interesting edifice not unlike the famous
Firth of Forth bridge. Lastly we met with the curators of the
Cement Works Museum at Fyansford which houses an eclectic
range of memorabilia and the actual building, a former
Presbyterian orphanage, sadly in need of some expensive
restoration work and funds doubtful!

ACQUISITIONS

At the time of writing we are still awaiting the arrival of
the library shelves which have been ordered- however,
delivery has been taken of a computer table.

Opera glasses, ^C1800 are a recent addition - thankyou to Len
Newnam.

Due to some artistic work by two of our members, Edith Lawn
and

Jean Wendt, funds received a boost. They were both awarded
prizes in their particular sections in a table setting
competition staged at the Uniting Church. Jean's exhibit also
collected 'most popular entry' prize - they were both worthy
winners.

Members have assisted throughout January providing 'staff'
for the Info. caravan on Tuesdays and Sunday afternoons at the
Museum - we are most grateful to these volunteers and would
ask that other members come forward.

Just recently our procedure worked in reverse - Val Taylor
offered to help out on a Sunday, apologising that she wasn't a
member Well, you've guessed it - before the day was out she
had joined and had also helped recruit a couple of new members
and participate in the "selling" of two large photo orders -
congrats. and welcome Val. Now we'd also like to welcome

those new members, Michael and Margaret Tull - we look forward to having them join us for some of our meetings.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to print part of the editorial featured in the most recent copy of the INVESTIGATOR It applies equally to our Society "History, of course, involves itself essentially with the past and very little of the future. But as a Society, I feel we should be paying some attention to the future. At present we are going along very nicely -we have a healthy membership, finances are in a sound condition and meetings are generally well attended. What is there to worry about. The problem lies with the age of the membership and of the committee. No doubt history is a subject which holds more attraction as we grow older and yearn nostalgically for a return to the days of our youth, but surely the younger members of our community should have a healthy curiosity about their origins and their predecessors. Somehow, we seem to be failing to attract younger members to our ranks' It goes on to say that a good number of the present committee members had become involved with the running of the Geelong Society when they were in their thirties and forties: they are now in their sixties and seventies - like our committee which can claim octogenarians as well! "Where are the thirty and forty year olds who could replace them when time forces their retirement. Sad to say, they are very thin on the ground".Can you think of a prospective member who would like to join our ranks, especially in the 30y.o., 40y.o., or even 50y.o. groups.

THE JANUARY 1st REGATTA was held under extremely difficult conditions this year with the river unpredictable. However that didn't diminish long-time Society member Joan Murch's enthusiasm when she presented the prizes to the event winners. Let's hope that the '97 Regatta will be held on a brimful Anglesea River.

FEBRUARY 3RD - 8P.M. AT THE MUSEUM
Peter McPhee will talk about 'Castles, Vineyards and the History of the South of France' - sounds irresistible doesn't it! Make sure you don't miss this first meeting for the year- there will be slides to illustrate Peter's talk.

MARCH 2nd - 8P.M. AT THE MUSEUM
SQD.LDR. John Hollway will recount his part in the recovery of RAAF aircraft which had crashed in New Guinea. SQD. LDR. Hollway was to have been guest speaker in September last.

APRIL 13Th or 14TH Please note change of date because of Easter and availability of speaker. Watch Echo for details.

Sadly we have lost two members since our last Newsletter. Edna Stevens, donor of many items including the longcase clock and Norman Must who also kindly donated a number of items following the death of his twin sister in Ballarat. We shall miss them both.

Please don't forget subs. are due \$7:50 p.p. a red x will denote that yours is outstanding and the treasurer will be delighted to hear from you!!

NEW BOOKS IN PIPELINE... Keith reports that 2 small editions - one on oil the other coal will be published soon.

Lindsay's continued research now brings us the story of the Tonge family, following information from Robert Tonge in QLD.

TONGE STREET is named after a Melbourne family who at first travelled to our coastal resort in 1915. For many years they spent all school holidays at Anglesea, leaving Melbourne on the 'SS Courier' at 9.00 am, arriving at Geelong about midday. Their large party, with school friends (every member of the family took at least one) would lunch at the ABC Café in Moorabool Street, and then load on to a special 8 horse coach for the twenty mile trip to Anglesea. When they reached the Jan Juc hill, it was a case of 'everybody out' and walk, to lighten the burden on the horses. They would usually arrive during late afternoon at 'Debonair', their holiday house by the beach.

The Rev. Arthur J. Tonge was a very popular Church of England Minister, and at that time Headmaster of Trinity Grammar, Kew. He purchased a half acre site from his friend Harvey Sichlau and selected local builder Walter Harrison to construct their seaside dwelling, which was placed to look across the river mouth towards Port Philip heads. Arthur had a keen sense of humour, and named his new abode 'Debonair' to be in frivolous harmony with Harvey Sichlau's 'Bon Air' immediately next door - these names still remain today.

Peggy Bunton (Paton) remembers in her book 'The Hut' that in the early days the Rev. A.W. Tonge took a Church of England service in the Presbyterian Church in the morning, and then they all came to the Presbyterian service in the evening. Arthur Tonge's sermons were always fresh, original and stimulating. One of his remarks lingers in memory - 'People are always saying boys will be boys and girls will be girls, *but they forget that kids will be goats!*' The Tonges were somewhat more liberal about Sunday observance, and the Reverend Gentleman was said to have often come to the morning services (when down here on holidays) with his swimmers under his cassock, ready to dive into the nearby river, or go fishing or rowing, as soon as proceedings were over.

Winston (Tom) Tonge mentions in his 'Recollection of Anglesea' that early 'Debonair' was built to take a large crowd, with four bedrooms, including two large rooms fitted with bunks - one for boys and one for girls. Most of their meals were taken on the large enclosed front verandah. This was an excellent holiday house, maybe primitive by today's standards, with large wood stove, kerosene lamps, chip heater in the bathroom, and outside laundry and toilets.

Mrs. Tonge must have been an efficient housekeeper to cater for their large crowd of guests. There was no refrigeration, meat was delivered only twice a week from Aireys Inlet, bread and groceries were dispatched from Geelong on a Cobb & Co. coach, and the only daily delivery was milk from Evan's farm in Camp Road (now Alcoa).

The Tonge sisters (Janet and Lynette) purchased Lots 10 and 13 corner Tonge and Parker streets at Harvey Sichlau's 'Bon Air' No.1. Sale. These were leased for some time to the Bradleys (on the corner of the Esplanade and Parker Street), who used them as a paddock to rest their horses after the trip from Geelong. In 1930 these two blocks became part of the site for the first Anglesea Tennis Club. Only recently the remains of the old courts were cleared to become two excellent house sites.

When the 1919 bushfire swept into town, it threatened both the Tonge and Sichlau houses. Everybody in Anglesea seemed to be on the beach, plus horses, cows, buggies and phaetons. Harvey Sichlau and friends started burning a break in the sand hills to the south west of Debonair. The Tonge girls also wanted to help with this protective operation, but for safety sake Harvey stated he would definitely not have on site a girl wearing a skirt. As jeans were not in style at those times, they all turned up in blouses and bloomers - which in those days would have been quite startling! Despite the somewhat unusual spectacle - *both houses were saved from the fire.*

Eventually the family travelled to Anglesea in their own car - a Dodge tourer. Even though the road from Geelong had been improved since the coach days, it still took about an hour to drive the 20 miles. By this time the Cobb & Co coaches had been replaced by Drayton's Torquay to Anglesea bus service and Fletcher's Studebaker cars.

In 1930 the Tonges sold their seaside retreat to Annie Beckingham, who established a Guest House on the property. An enlarged and modernised 'Debonair' Guest house and Motel now occupy *Tonge's holiday site.*

Lindsay Braden - A researcher for the Anglesea & District Historical Society Inc.