

# BUNINYONG AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reg. No. A0030085Y

Web Site <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~buninhis>

PO Box 98, Buninyong, Vic. 3357.

## Newsletter

### August 2023



**Buninyong Supermarket, 1982. From our collection. Look how much has changed in this part of central Buninyong over the last 40 years! The new supermarket, further up the hill, was opened in 2012.**

At our August meeting, we enjoyed a very interesting address from **Dr Yvonne Horsfield** of Ballarat, who has recently completed her PhD at Federation University on the subject of a biography of her ancestor, the Rev Tong Way, a Presbyterian minister to the Chinese community in Ballarat and district. Yvonne has produced a book from her thesis, entitled *Chinese Roots*, which adds an important dimension to the story of the local Chinese community extending back to the goldrushes.

Welcome to new member, **Geoff McArthur** from Mount Helen, who has just published an important contribution to Ballarat's history, *Under the Red Umbrella*, the story of Mrs Muller, a female entrepreneur who developed an umbrella-making business and retail sales outlets at a time when a woman's place was ostensibly in the home.

### **150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Buninyong Primary School.**

On 1 September 2023, the Buninyong Primary School celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the new Buninyong State School in 1873. This brand-new school was built for 500 pupils, following the Education Act of 1872, which brought free, secular and compulsory education to Victoria. It grew out of the original Presbyterian Boarding School established by Rev Thomas Hastie in 1847, and the Holy Trinity School, established in 1857. Our member Fiona Shaw has worked closely with the School to share photos from our collection, and the School has established a Facebook page where many photos from the last sixty years have been shared and commented upon. The School is holding an Open Day on Friday 1 September, inviting old scholars to visit the school and share memories.

### **AMaGA Workshop**

As we gear up to digitise our collection, and prepare to catalogue our collection for addition to the Victoria Collection's Database maintained by the State Government on behalf of museums throughout Victoria, we had the great benefit of a visit from Caroline Wall, a staff member of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (Victoria), who conducted a three day workshop at our headquarters from 22-24 August, attended by eight members of our Society, who learned about preparing different sorts of objects and documents for photography and developing digital collections. Caroline will return for another three days on 11-13 September, where we will learn about care of collections and disaster management, as well as digitising more items in our collection. We are most grateful to Angela Aldred for spearheading this initiative, supported by Fiona Shaw and Simon Dennis.

We mark the passing of another local identity, **Ken Turner of Navigators**, who established a flourishing business as an electrician and sound engineer in Ballarat, as well as a very rare talent in servicing pipe organs. He was strongly associated with the Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields Festival for over 20 years, and was responsible for maintaining pipe organs in churches all over Western Victoria. His life was celebrated with a service at St. Paul's Church in Ballarat East.

**Vale Tony Corcoran (1935-2023)**  
**Postmaster, Community motivator, gregarious Irishman.**

Tony was born near Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland, at a time when Ireland was suffering severe depression. He had three sisters and four brothers. As a young man, he got a job with a local trainer, riding trackwork. This love of horses and the turf would remain all his life.

He met Pauline, an Australian girl from Ballarat, in England. They married and moved to Victoria, and their first child Emma was born 1972. The family grew to encompass four daughters and one son.

In 1979 Tony and Pauline Corcoran purchased the old Post Office in Learmonth St Buninyong, with Tony as Postmaster in the little, crowded office where locals gathered to collect their mail, but also to find out what was happening in the township from the friendly Postmaster.

Tony became involved in the Gold King Festival and served five terms as President between 1984 and 1996. In 1985 he organised a Ball in the Town Hall to celebrate Victoria's sesquicentenary. With his love of horses and a punt, he was the genius behind the Buninyong Calcuttas, held at the Golf Club on Melbourne Cup Eve, to raise money for the Festival. It was his custom to visit the Crown Hotel on Friday nights, a place he referred to as 'The Font of Knowledge'.

His faith was always a wellspring of his philosophy and commitment to social action. He was a key member of St Peter and Paul's Catholic community, and an active member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

He was also an entrepreneur, with a keen business head, especially when it came to dealing in property. As Buninyong's population expanded in the 1990s, he saw the opportunity for new business premises, and commissioned four shops in Warrenheip St. He sold the new buildings, then purchased one back and convinced Australia Post to

lease this as the new enlarged Post Office. So in October 2000 the old Post Office closed, and Tony and Pauline moved to the new Post Office in Warrenheip St.. In 2000 the Lions Club published a calendar with characteristic photos of local personalities, including Tony and Pauline. The caption summed up Tony very astutely:



The Post Office is the place to find out what is happening in Buninyong, thanks to the gregarious nature of our Irish born Postmaster and his musical wife. Since their arrival in 1979, many community projects have emanated from this time-honoured little building, increasing in a crescendo around Festival time. (Lions Club *Buninyong 2000* calendar, from BDHS Photo Collection.)

In 2002 Tony retired as Postmaster, after 20 years in that important role. He bought a small property at Navigators, in the shadow of Mt Buninyong, where he enjoyed looking after a small herd of cattle, and continued his love of racehorses, with regular visits to the Ballarat Turf Club meetings at Dowling Forest. Nearing the age of 80, he sold his farm, and returned to Buninyong to live in a flat built behind his daughter Emma's place. He enjoyed the company of his daughters and grandchildren, and was proud to see his daughter Brigid flourish with her innovative business, Saltbush Kitchen, which featured Indigenous food and art.

Tony died at St John of God hospital in Ballarat. His passing came as a shock to his many Buninyong friends, and a largely attended Requiem Mass was celebrated at St Peter and Paul's on Tuesday 24 July 2023, conducted by his friend Father Eugene Mckinnon. He was buried the Buninyong cemetery, and an Irish-style wake was held in the Buninyong Town Hall, with his children and grandchildren.

## **Chinese History in Buninyong**

As work progresses on the new Chinese memorial section at the Buninyong Cemetery, we were delighted recently to receive a beautiful addition to our collection in the guise of a Chinese silk shawl, which was given to Richard Odgers in 1911 when he purchased his market garden property *Lefroy* in Webbs Hill Road from two Chinese gentlemen who wished to return to China. The gift came from Carolyn Whitmore, a descendant of the Odgers family, who has recently purchased *Clifton* Villa in Eyre St.

## **Mount Buninyong in another VCAT Challenge**

Our Society will again be defending the natural heritage of Mount Buninyong, when we join in opposing an application to place six containers on the slope of Mount Buninyong as accommodation for tourists. The application is from David Penman, whose proposal to build six 'barrels' on Mount Buninyong was defeated in 2021. The City of Ballarat is opposing the application, as is the Buninyong and District Community Association. The matter is listed for hearing at VCAT in Melbourne over three days at the end of November.

**Remember we are open on the third Saturday of every month**, from 9.30am to 1.0pm, when members will be on hand to help visitors.

**Next Meeting will be on Thursday 19 October, which will be our Annual General Meeting.** Chris Hindhaugh will not be re-nominating for treasurer, so we are on the lookout for a member to take on this role. Thanks, Chris, for your efforts over a number of years in that role.