

NEWSLETTER no. 25

THE GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA - MID GIPPSLAND GROUP

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CHANGE OF VENUE

For five years our group has been meeting at the Regional Education Centre, Moe on the fourth Thursday of each month. Over the last twelve to eighteen months our library facility at the Regional Office has become inadequate to our needs. Added to this is the inconvenience of having to transport our library material up to the first floor before meetings and return it to its cupboard after the meeting. This is an unenviable task for our librarian and her few willing assistants.

The group has now decided that the time is right for a move. From Thursday 24th April our meetings will be held at the Gippsland Institute of Advanced Education at Churchill and we will continue to meet on the fourth Thursday of each month. As well as having adequate storage room for our library holdings, we will have access to other facilities at the Institute, such as photocopiers, microfiche readers and their library - all facilities we would never be able to provide for ourselves.

It is hoped that this move will prove to be of long term benefit to our group and its growth, and will encourage our members to make full use of this new found facility. Our first meeting will be one at which our members will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with our new venue. Mr. David Tuck will attend that meeting to "show us the ropes".

David will be in attendance in his office in the Centre for Gippsland Studies each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, therefore our members will have use of our library at these times as well as on meeting nights.

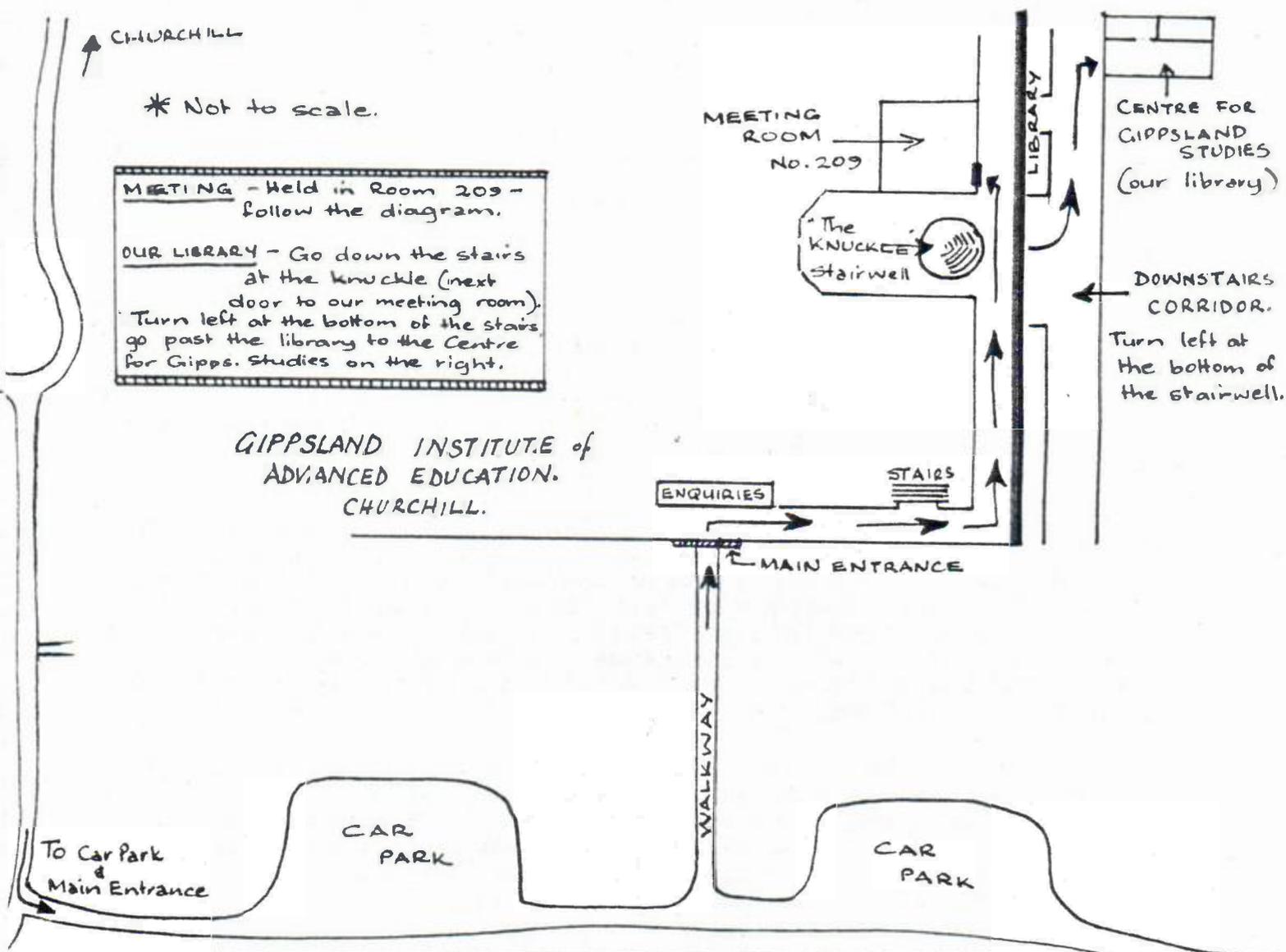
Be sure to be at the April meeting so that you can get to know our new home.

Sincere thanks to the Regional Education Office in Moe for their assistance to us and their co-operation over the past five years.

HOW TO GET TO THE G.I.A.E. - see map on page 2 of this newsletter.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Guest speaker at our February Meeting was Mr. Clem Little of Traralgon. Mr. Little had the novel idea of recording his family history on film and the end result was extremely interesting. The film was narrated and included photos, newspaper clippings and showed the modern method of harvesting hay on one of the original Little properties near Traralgon. Our thanks to Mr. Little for providing an entertaining evening.



NEW MEETING VENUE: G.I.A.E : AS OF THURSDAY APRIL 24th. 1986

VICTORIAN BIRTHS, DEATHS & MARRIAGES INDEX PRE 1896

- see article written by Dom Meadley in the latest edition of 'The Genealogist' Vol 5 No. 1 March 1986 pages 3-5 which is in our library.

THOMAS FERRIS.....FOUND AT LAST !

by Yolanda Reynolds

My purpose in studying the early rate books of North Fitzroy was to ascertain the earliest year in which my great great grandfather, John Ferris, had settled in the area. Little effort was required to locate the entries which recorded that he was a resident of Rae Street, from 1860, until his death in 1902. From the very first reference I was puzzled by the mention of Thomas Ferris, an adjoining landowner who was listed consistently, until his abrupt disappearance from the rate books in 1870.

According to family knowledge, John Ferris had been the only member of his family to emigrate from Wiltshire, England to Australia but it now seemed evident that his elder brother Thomas, who was born in 1822, had also left their homeland. As such, it seemed strange that

older members of the present family had no recollection of him or any of his descendants, particularly as so many of the descendants of John Ferris had spent their entire lives in North Fitzroy.

As I studied year after year of the rate books, the progression of the area emerged and transformed from a rural district to a flourishing town. Each year saw the introduction of more streets and less grazing properties, as subdivisions occurred the population increased and business and trade facilities were established. Many of the main thoroughfares of today appeared as the town expanded into the land which had been used by grazing stock and dairy herds.

Both John and Thomas Ferris were listed consecutively as quarryman and dairyman over those early years. At the time, much of North Fitzroy was covered in shallow bluestone quarries, hence the original name of the "Quarries". Stone masons such as John Ferris quarried the bluestone and used it to build their homes, edge roads and pave laneways. However, his major income was from his dairy herd which grazed on land leased from the Crown, and from a milk round which his wife operated in conjunction with his dairy. Later a general store, monumental mason business and the ownership of the building which housed the first post office for North Fitzroy, firmly established them in the business sector of the town.

Some research in Sydney proved that Thomas Ferris, the older brother of John Ferris, had arrived there in 1855, six years after the arrival of John Ferris. Perhaps, similarly, he had driven sheep south, before he settled at North Fitzroy. His disappearance in 1870 suggested that he may have died at the age of 47 years, or that he may have left the area. Victorian directories mentioned several entries for Thomas Ferris in various rural districts, but to prove a connection to any of them seemed an awesome task.

The index room at the Title's Office recorded many land transactions for Thomas Ferris but one reference recorded that a parcel of land in Jika Jika which included North Fitzroy area, had been cancelled in 1896.

The index to inquests recorded an inquest, in 1896, for Thomas Ferris and, although this index did not confirm an area, the fact that the dates coincided suggested a connection between the two events.

On Wed 4th December I arrived at the Public Record Office in Laverton with the intention of inspecting the original papers of the inquest held in relation to the death, in 1896, of Thomas Ferris. Immediately I located and read the document, I knew that not only had the fate of Thomas Ferris been determined, but also a family secret, hidden for many years, had been revealed.

Older family members could recall when, as young children, they had overheard conversations and sensed overtones of secrecy about a relation who was associated with Yarra Bend Asylum.

Thomas Ferris died at 8 o'clock on the morning of 19th September 1896. He had been an inmate of Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum for 27 years. In 1869, at the age of 47 years, he was diagnosed as suffering from dementia and was admitted to the institution. At the time of his death, he was 74 years old and in very poor health. The inquest divulged many aspects of his dementia, repulsive to many but intriguing to the genealogist.

And so, one document proved to be the final solution in a family secret shrouded in mystery for so many years. Had it not been for some speculative research the facts would have remained hidden in our state archives and perhaps never been revealed.

OBITS AND PIECES

Epitaphs, inscriptions and embellishments on churchyard memorials record the frailty of human life, and its continuity. They are mirrors of the contemporary social scene. They can enlighten us on the social history as well as the professions, trades and occupations of the people of the district. What delight to discover an ancestral tomb such as the few examples which follow:

"Here lies the Body of Mary Haselton, a young maiden of this town, born of Roman Catholic parents, and virtuously brought up, who, being in the act of prayer repeating her vespers, was instantaneously killed by a flash of lightning, August 16th, 1785. Aged 9 years."
- from the graveyard at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, Eng

"Here lies the body of Thomas Fanton who was Born at Warwick A.D. 1683 he was hired by Ld Chief Baron Smith with whom he liv'd 14 years; He was then recommend'd (by Ld Ch Baron) to Sr Edwd Smith Bart in whose services he continued till ye time of Sr Edwd's death wch was 14 years. He was then servant to Edwd Smith Esq of this place wth wn he liv'd 35 years who in remembrances of his many years Honest and Faithful services order'd this stone to be Erected to his Memory. He died very justly Lamented by all who knew him."
- from graveyard at Edmonthorpe, Leicestershire. Pity there's no death date !!

"Here lies poor but honest Bryan Tunstall; he was a most expert angler, until Death, envious of his Merit, threw out his line, hook'd him and landed him here the 21st day of April 1790."
- from the graveyard of Ripon Cathedral, Yorkshire.

"Martha Blewitt ye wife of nine husbands successively buried 8 of ym, but last of all, ye woman dyed allsoe, was buryed May 7, 1681."
- from graveyard at Birdbrook, Essex.

- State Library Biography Index- for sale on microfilm. The Ballarat newsletter No. 37 Oct 1985.
- Mornington Cemetery Transcriptions have been completed. Earliest buried Oct 1858.
- Ideas for collating and filing information - Mallee Roots Newsletter Dec 1985.
- Cobram & District Group Newsletter No. 1 - Information on how to obtain Irish Ordnance Survey maps from the Latrobe Library.
- 'The Past Finders' - Cairns Branch G.S.Q. Dec 1985:
 - * Helpful Hints when confronted with a genealogical problem;
 - * Surrey marriage indexes - list of parishes & periods covered;
 - * Australians at War - Summary of conditions, Awards & Medals
 - * Members' research

SOVEREIGN HILL MUSEUM

Has volumes of banking records of 'The Colonial Bank of Australasia' which can be viewed by appointment only. Ph: 053 311944.

JEPARIT MUSEUM AND DISTRICT

Covers all aspects of life in the areas of Jeparit, Mallee and Wimmera. Records include:

- Banking records
- Telephone Company Ledgers - all phone calls and accounts;
- Records of Doctors, Dentists and Chemists;
- Council, School, Social Club records;
- Hundreds of photographs;
- Family Bibles - with charts;
- Diaries;
- Information on Machinery, Buildings, Homesteads;
- Bric-a-Brac.

The museum has recently been given more donations than it can house and as a result many of the records are not completely sorted or catalogued. The Museum is open to the public but it is advised to check times before setting off.

On a round trip from Jeparit, around Lake Hindmarsh to Rainbow and back one can see many of the old Bank Houses, shearing sheds, fencing as it was 100 years ago.

The cemetery in Jeparit, Rainbow and other small towns are very old but extremely well kept. There are a lot of graves on private properties and one example of this is on Settlement Road about 5 miles from Rainbow -

Pioneers Grave,
Mrs. Jardine & Child,
died 1847.

The grave was maintained over the years and in 1962 a headstone was erected by the students of Rainbow State School. The story of her death as told by Mr. J. Helyar, the owner of the property either side of the grave is as follows:

"Mr. Joseph Jardine worked as foreman on 'The Outlet'. His wife gave birth to a child and both were very sick. Joseph loaded his wife and child onto a dray to take them to the doctor at Jeparit about 30 miles away. But his wheel broke on what is now Settlers Road between 'Tarella' and No.47 (Land allotment) and he left his wife and child to walk about 5 miles for help. When he returned both mother and child were dead. He buried them where they died, placing a wooden fence around the grave site so the position would not be lost."

The 'Pine Plains Homestead' has four such graves.

- Information supplied by our member, Nelly Helyar.

NEW LIBRARY ADDITIONS

- Books on Gippsland History
- Gippsland - A Bibliography of Literature 1980-1984 by S. Gillespie
- Members' Interests Directory - Mornington Peninsula Group
- Cobram & District Newsletter, No. 1
- Yarram Members' Interests Directory.

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