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CITY OF MOORABBIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Affiliated with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Cheltenham Arts and Crafts Society

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NEWSLETTER

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The Society meets at the State School, Charman Road, Cheltenham on the 3rd. Thursday in each month. Next meeting Thursday May 23rd. (moved forward because of school holidays).

WANTED - information and photographs. You may be able to help.

The Council of Adult Education of Victoria has long been interested in local history and at present Mr. A. Wesson, one of its officers is preparing a register of Mechanids Institutes to be published in 1969. He is asking historical societies and individuals throughout the state to send him information and photographs of Mechanics Institutes in their districts. In some parts of Victoria the institutes are still standing, though not always in use; in others they have been demolished. In the area once covered by the Shire of Moorabbin there were four institutes - Cheltenham, Moorabbin, Sandringham and Mordialloc. We know most about the one in Cheltenham. It stood on the Nepean Highway where the Cheltenham Hall and Library stand today. Its full name was Mechanics Institute and Temperance Hall; possibly the latter was added as a gesture of defiance to the Exchange Hotel across the Highway, built about the same time, in the 1860's. The temperance movement was strong at the time and one of the lodges, the Rechabites who met at the hall believed in total abstinence from alcohol.

For nearly a hundred years, until demolished in 1960, it was an important place in the district. There met for part of its short life of two years in the 1960's one of the first cultural organizations in Moorabbin - the Cheltenham - Beaumaris Young Men's Improvement Society. Its main hall was used for concerts, dances, fetes, sometimes a cantata or a play; in a smaller one lodges and other organizations met. There was also a library and a billiard room. Unfortunately when the building was demolished there was no historical society in Moorabbin to save some of the objects in it. It was particularly regrettable that its large canvas stage curtains on which were painted advertisements of local tradesmen from butcher to undertaker and badges of local lodges disappeared.

Our Society will be glad to have any further information about or photographs of the hall. Please ring 93-6232

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