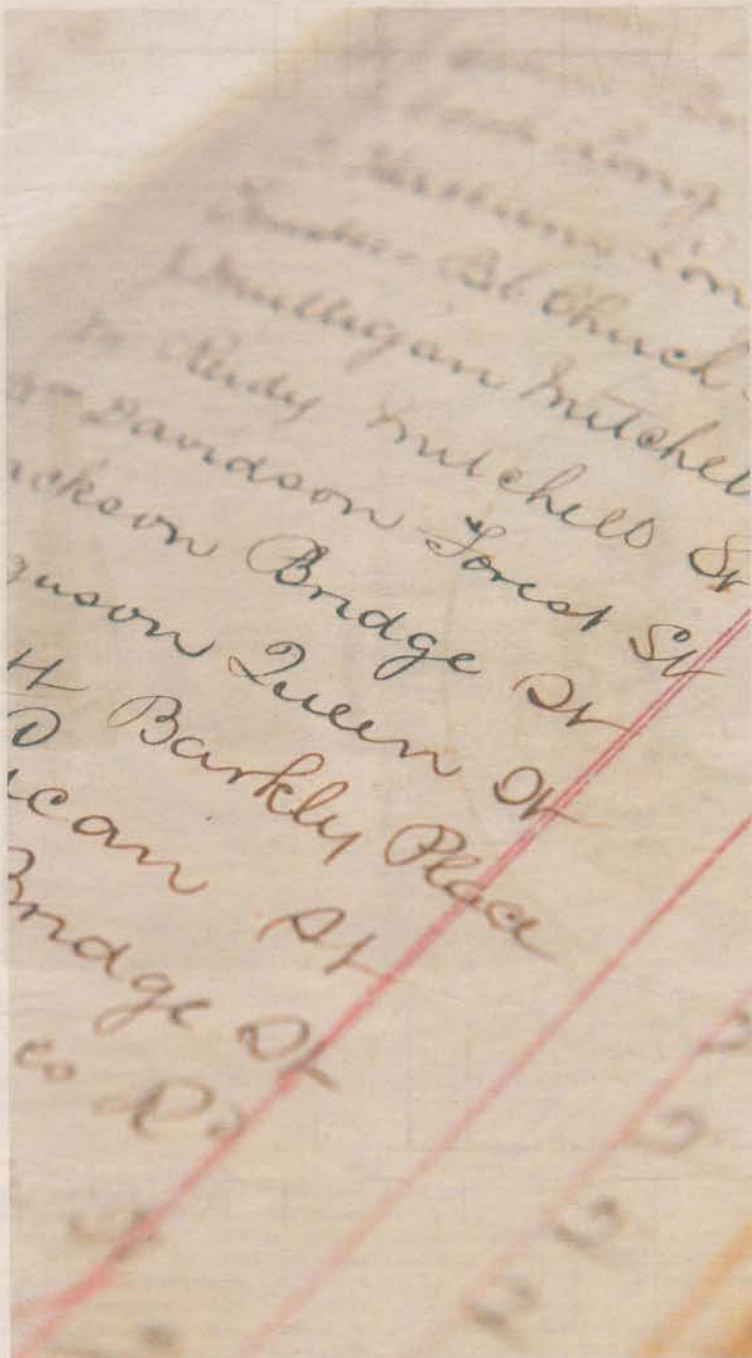


weekender.



ABOVE: Genealogist Phyllis Mills. **Picture:** DARREN HOWE

LEFT: A ledger housed in the Bendigo Regional Archives Centre. **Picture:** DARREN HOWE

BELOW: Genealogist Judi Fisher goes through court records dating back into the depths of Bendigo's past. **Picture:** DARREN HOWE



INTEREST IN LOCAL HISTORY IS GROWING

As researchers carefully thread a path through the past, the local history movement is growing.

Last week the Bendigo Historical Society held its first gala dinner and raised \$3000 for equipment to help catalogue their collection of documents, photos and other items held at BRAC's Nolan Street premises.

There are hopes that Bendigo might one day have its own museum focused on history, the group's president Jim Evans said. "Council is interested in this, we are told. We are also very keen to create more storage space at the archives and we know that is being discussed at council as well," he said.

BRAC's Dr Michele Matthews said when she first started studying history in the 1980s next to no attention was given to the discipline's local variants. Today many historians consider the local history field vitally important.

Mr Evans said a lot of people expressed an interest in the city's past - and not just locals. "People come up from Melbourne and one reason is that they are interested in

history and know something of Bendigo's rich past," he said.

He said local schools had embraced local history and this would help a new generation get hooked on uncovering their families' stories.

The rise of the internet and ancestry sites had made family history accessible but BRAC's Vivien Newton said expertise in cataloging and searching through history were just as important as ever.

"Going forward, a lot of our history is still in print form. People now want things digitised so they can type in a name anywhere in the world and it all miraculously pops up," she said.

"The generations coming through expect it to be at their fingertips and history isn't, yet."

There were other reasons expertise was needed too, including that people could make mistakes as they explored their family's history, sometimes compounded by errors made by others compiling online family trees.

"One of the challenges for all of us is when people are absolutely convinced they're

connected to one group and we are trying to tell them 'I'm sorry but you've got the wrong great-grandad,'" Mr Cotton said.

SO, WHAT DO WE KNOW FOR SURE ABOUT MRS PANKHURST?

So far, the genealogical society has discovered Mrs Pankhurst was born in Dead Horse Gully, Eaglehawk, Mr Cotton said.

Researchers has confirmed the names of her parents, the church she was married in in 1919 and that she had two children.

They know that eight years later her husband died in London.

They also know she ran a private school and then a private hospital in Wattle Street, Bendigo before moving to Melbourne in 1919.

Yet, to date the genealogical society has not discovered why Mrs Pankhurst was listed as the next of kin to a man who died half a world away.

"We suspect that during the First World War she belonged to a group like the Red Cross, supplying parcels to troops or knitting socks. There's a whole host of maybes," Mr Cotton said.

For the time being the search continues...