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PORT FAIRY POST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT FAIRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Letter from the President

Dear Members,

The Christmas season is upon us bringing in the end of 2020, a year like no other, and yet we still have much to be thankful for.

In these closing days of 2020, we reflect, with great satisfaction, on all that has been achieved as we continued to offer our services to individuals and organisations within our community and beyond. Many thanks must go to the team of very dedicated committee members who work tirelessly and consistently, often several days a week at the Museum, for the society, the museum and our community. Without this commitment our society would not thrive in the way it does.

We are extremely appreciative of the new members and new volunteers who have joined us during the year and we look forward to your attendance at general meetings in 2021 once we are able to gather again to listen to guest speakers and enjoy the company of others.

We are also very thankful for all our member volunteers who have continued to work on behalf of the society during 2020. I am often amazed at the amount of work that is undertaken to keep our society and museum active, including cataloguing and processing our collections, designing and creating exhibitions, publishing our newsletters, managing the archives, collecting and processing photographs, record keeping of events, organising and selling our publications, managing our library, answering research queries and correspondence, maintaining buildings and grounds and, of course, opening the doors of our Museum for visitors. What an undertaking by many of our members who generously volunteer their time!

And a thank you to those who have signed up for the 2021 duty roster. The Museum will open on the 2nd of January with the cleverly named, "Three men in a boat" exhibition which commences the commemorative celebrations of the *Tacoma*. There will also be a number of smaller exhibitions for our members and visitors to enjoy. We have established a COVIDSafe Museum and will ask our volunteers to take the time to read through our COVIDSafe Plan and follow signage which will

guide us when we are on duty or attending the museum. We are still keen for more volunteers to sign up for the duty roster so please feel free to contact me if you have a few spare hours in the month.

A special thank you to Richard, our Newsletter Editor and Teresa, who generously shares her journalist skills, for keeping us connected in 2020 through the newsletter with entertaining and informative news and stories of today and yesteryear. This special edition of the Port Fairy Post acknowledges our wonderful community, both individuals and organisations with heartwarming tales. We are also invited on a quest to solve a mystery, which may seem rather hopeless, but after reading Richard's update of Carol Heard's successful and very determined investigations, may not seem too outlandish after all!

And of course the big news which you may have encountered through the local and state media outlets... Museums Victoria has honoured Lynda Tieman with the inaugural Martin Hallett Award for Individual Contributions to Community Heritage. Richard provides further details of this honour in this newsletter.

Finally on behalf of the Society, I wish you a safe and joyous festive season and hope you enjoy this special Christmas edition of the Port Fairy Post.

Best Wishes
Andrea Coney

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HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Tuesday, 8 December was a Red Letter Day for the Historical Society, for two reasons.

First, we were able to hold our first social event for many months – lunch at Charlie's on East Beach. Second, we received the news that our Collections Manager, Lynda Tieman, had won the inaugural Martin Hallett Award for Individual Contribution to Community Heritage.

This award recognises and celebrates those who have played a significant role in the preservation of history in their communities. It is awarded by Australian Museums and Galleries Association Victoria (AMaGA Victoria), formerly Museums Australia (Victoria), which supports the development of quality museums, collections care, knowledge, and specialised skills for museum work.



Lynda Tieman - Collections Manager

The Award is named in commemoration of Martin Hallett (1945 - 2019), who was a former deputy chief executive of Museums Victoria, curator emeritus, and lifelong champion of public museum collections, community engagement and empowerment. Martin played an integral role in the formation of Victorian Collections during his time at Creative Victoria.

The Judges commented that, 'We were impressed by Lynda's enthusiasm and dedication, her generosity of spirit, and her longstanding commitment to the Victorian Collections community.' They noted that Lynda 'brought together devoted, on-the-ground work with significant community engagement and sharing of knowledge', and commended 'her ability to harness the potential of storytelling and digital formats as a mechanism to share collections'.

We congratulate Lynda and believe that this award is fitting recognition for all her hard work and dedication to the Historical Society over many years.

The lunch at Charlie's was attended by around 30 members who heard our President, Andrea Coney, announce the award to Lynda Tieman somewhat in advance of the 6.30pm media embargo! She also took the opportunity of thanking all the Society's many

volunteers and confirmed that the Museum will re-open on Saturday, 2 January 2021. In that context, Andrea particularly wanted members to be aware that we need



Andrea Coney - President

more volunteers to make themselves available to staff the Museum during opening hours. To meet the COVID-19 pandemic the Society has developed a range of safe working practices to be applied when we are open to the public, including the maximum number of visitors and staff who can be in each room of the Museum, and on the premises as a whole, at any one time.



Ian & Ganga Powell, Graeme & Judith Kershaw and Brendan O'Toole

In the meantime, the lunch was enjoyed by everyone and was a memorable way to farewell a forgettable year. 🌸

The Lighthouse Keepers 7

William Stevens

William Stevens spent the whole of his period as Assistant Lighthouse Keeper at Port Fairy, from the end of 1861 until September 1866, as the understudy to Thomas Pearson. And since he and Pearson did not enjoy a positive relationship, William Stevens' reputation suffers when seen through the entries in Pearson's diary.

There was no particular reason why the two men should get on. Stevens had served in the British Navy for eleven years and had then become a member of the Victoria Police force. He was an upholder of the law. His superior at the lighthouse had walked out of his apprenticeship as a wheelwright, an illegal act; changed his name, without observing the legal formalities; and had then been part of a mutiny on board the *Derry Castle*, coming to Belfast immediately after serving 12 weeks' imprisonment at Portland.

Stevens' background was also interesting, but in a more conventional way. While in the Navy he had fought in the Crimea and was said to have been wounded. After his death it was recorded that he 'often used to relate his stirring experiences during that time'. Of William's subsequent service in the Victoria Police, there were suggestions that he was one of the officers involved in the attack on the miners at Ballarat during the Eureka rebellion. However, no proof of this can be found and it may have been a tale intended to discredit Stevens.

Just after his arrival in Belfast, on 30 January 1862, William Stevens married Susan Davis. The entries Thomas Pearson made in his diary tend to imply that Susan Stevens was 'no better than she ought to be'. The following all date from the first year of the Stevens' marriage, in 1862:

'7 February - J. Staines, Coxswain of the Harbor Master's boat, was discharged.

'10 February - Mrs. Stevens went to a party given by Mrs. Staines.

'11 February - Mrs. Stevens came back from the party 11pm.

'5 April - The Assistant's Wife did not come back last night, as the Dr. said that the air was too strong for her.

'1 August - Mrs. Stevens went over with a man named Dunn and a chimney sweep to a party given by Mrs. Dunn.

'24 September - Mrs. Stevens has gone over to spend the night at a party.

'9 November - Sunday. The Assistant and his wife went over to go to Warrnambool; the Wife stopped over all night.'

During their time in Belfast, William and Susan had at least two children, Emily Catherine in 1864 and George Frederick William Stevens in 1866. The latter became a lighthouse keeper himself and, in a 1902 article in *The*

Argus, the almost hereditary nature of lighthouse keeping was highlighted:

'One learns what indeed might have been expected from the peculiar isolation of the lighthouse-keeper's calling, that the men often grow up from childhood in the service. While youngsters they are cut off from association with other lads, quickly learn the routine of lighthouse work and are ready to follow it when a start in life has to be made. Thus, Mr. Stevens was born at one of the lighthouse stations, his father having been a lighthouse-keeper for over 33 years ...'.

And while Pearson obviously niggled and blamed Stevens over several years, he also had the temerity to ask him for a loan of £30. Borrowing money from a subordinate has long been frowned upon and is normally seen, at the very least, as a breach of workplace ethics. Supervisors who continually borrow money from their subordinates still haunt many Australian workplaces. But William Stevens was no fool and had the loan, and the rate of interest to be paid, properly documented.

Thomas's son, William Pearson, wrote an account of his own life and suggested that his father's decision to leave the lighthouse service was triggered by his continuing bad relations with Stevens. However, the latter left Port Fairy in September 1866 to become Assistant Lighthouse Keeper at Warrnambool, while Pearson probably worked for a month or two after this.

After his time at Port Fairy, besides Warrnambool, William Stevens was based at Wilson's Promontory, Cape Schanck (1874), Gabo Island, Geelong and Cape Otway (1886). In about 1888 he came to live in Colac East. He died in February 1895 at the age of 67 after a short bout of 'inflammation of the bowels brought about by a chill'. Ever careful with his money, William left Susan the sum of £1650.

Susan Stevens died in August 1911 aged 74. *The Colac Herald* said,

'The deceased lady was very highly esteemed by a very large circle of friends, as she had a very charitable, hospitable, and kindly nature, and her demise will be sincerely regretted. The family consists two sons and two daughters, for whom much sympathy is felt.'

A third daughter had predeceased her mother.

William's son, George, had a stellar career in the lighthouse service but was involved in an embarrassing incident in 1910 while at Wilson's Promontory. His wife and two sons got into difficulty while bathing near Lonsdale Pier. George Stevens jumped into the water to rescue them but, in so doing, struck his head on the sandy bottom, with the result that all four members of the family had to be rescued by two army sappers who, fortunately, were close by!

Thomas Pearson would have enjoyed *that* story! ♣♣

THE DUTCH BOYS

We received a delightful letter from Historical Society member Marjorie Morkham. She had been reading *Port Fairy's Wars* which has quite a number of references to members of her Goldie family. She wrote,



'One sentence leaped from the page when you described Mrs Goldie of *Ellangowan*, Port Fairy North, hosting two young men from the Royal Netherlands Navy in October 1943. Mrs Goldie is my grandmother. I found myself saying out loud, "The Dutch Boys". For years my mother used to tell us how they came to stay with their family and showed us the photos of them. As children we did not ask enough questions ...'.

Most of us can say 'amen' to that, but who were the Dutch Boys and what became of them?



The Goldies' Home, Ellangowan

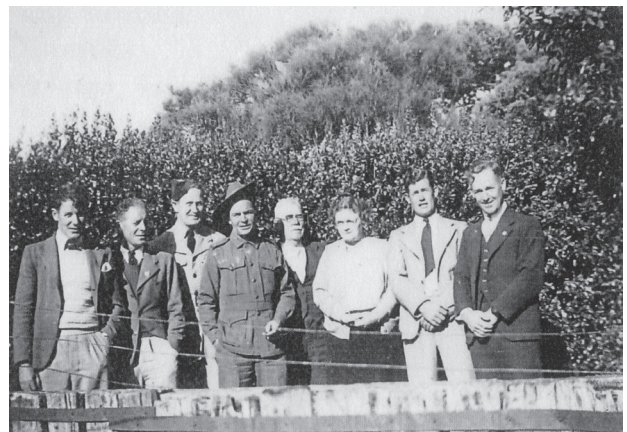
First, we know that these two members of the Royal Netherlands Navy came to stay with Mrs Goldie for a fortnight in the spring of 1943. They were Johnny Bennewitz, a radio operator from Magelang in central Java, and Able Seaman Adrianus Wilhelmes Von Ooyen from Surabaya in East Java. They were said to have joined

the Navy about four years previously and to have spent the last two years in Australia or in Australian waters. The reason was obviously the advance of the Japanese into the former Dutch East Indies and the desire to keep the fight up to the Japanese and the Dutch fleet out of enemy hands.

We can only assume that these two men came to the Goldie family as part of a scheme to give Dutch servicemen a 'spell' in rural Australia.

To the left is a photograph of the 'boys' leaning against the Goldie family's 1935 Ford V8 Grand tourer, although we do not know which is Johnny and which Adrianus.

The Gazette went to some pains to say how well each of them spoke English and to record that they had had some thrilling adventures since they had left the Dutch East Indies. Unfortunately, it did not relate the nature of the latter to its readers!



The Goldie Men and their parents in 1941 - Ron, Lloyd, Lex, Max, William, Jean, Noel, Bert (Absent - Geoffrey, Ron's twin)

There is writing visible on the hat of one of the sailors but this gives us no clue about his ship. The words that can be seen are 'Koninklijke Marine' which means Royal Netherlands Navy.

Marjorie Morkham provided all the photographs on this page and it is fair to say that Johnny and Adrianus would have had an interesting time at *Ellangowan*. The photograph of the Goldie men and their parents suggests an open and forthright family and we may very well return to them one day. Marjorie's mother, Betty Goldie, is obviously absent from the photograph.

Interested to know what subsequently happened to these two servicemen, we discovered that Johnny Bennewitz married an Australian, Barbara Cadd, in Perth, on 9 October 1944. On 18 August 1945, twin sons were born at Hawthorn Hospital in Perth – Jan and Robert. Unfortunately, according to the Perth newspapers, Robert died after 14½ hours, although the Western Australian official records state that it was Jan who died. Two years later there is a record of Barbara Cadd travelling from the Eastern States back to Western Australia, alone with a child. After this the trail goes cold. Adrianus seems to have left Australia without a trace. ❀❀❀

Closing the Circle

In our last edition, we told the story of how Carol Heard had spent three years identifying a series of wedding photographs that she eventually established had been taken at the marriage of Mavis Thomas and Joseph Brooks in 1947.

Shortly after that edition of the *Port Fairy Post* had appeared, she received news that 'a friend of a friend' had identified Mr and Mrs Brooks as her former neighbours in Bostock Street, Warrnambool. In fact, she was told, the Brooks' had a son named Gary, who has a concreting business, and could undoubtedly tell Carol more about the family.

Carol rang Gary and related the story of the photographs. He was able to tell her that the family no longer had their own copies because they had been stolen some time ago. However, he was sure that the flower girl in the photographs was Sarah 'Sadie' Thomas, the youngest sister of his mother, Mavis Brooks. Sadly, though, Sarah had died many years ago.

When Carol asked further questions, Gary responded by saying 'Why don't you ask Mum?'. Carol suddenly realised that Mavis Thomas, the bride in the photographs, was still alive!

Mavis is now 94 years old, but still bright and alert, and living in a retirement home in Warrnambool. Gary undertook to try and arrange for Carol to see her but recognised that this might be a problem in these COVID-19 times. He would see what he could do.

Carol, on the other hand, could not wait. She made copies of the photographs and had them framed. She bought a box of chocolates and set off for the retirement home. The staff were very accommodating when they learnt the nature of her mission and she was soon being introduced to Mavis.

Naturally Mavis was delighted to be reunited with her wedding photographs which she had given up all hope of ever seeing again. She was also happy for Carol to take her photograph (*above right*) and both she and Gary agreed that it might be reproduced here.

The story behind the wedding is typical of the austerity years after the War. Mavis had not wanted an elaborate wedding but her mother was keen that she should have all the trimmings, having seen her two older daughters married with a minimum of fuss. But money was tight and a friend, Mrs Low, lent Mavis her own dress to wear. The veil came from another friend, Mrs Cavanagh. The dresses worn by Mary Arnel, the bridesmaid, and Sarah Thomas, the flower girl, were hand-sewn by Mavis' mother, Mary Thomas. Mary also looked after all the catering.

Mavis had met her fiancé, Joseph Brooks, prior to him serving in the army during WW2. But, given that he was 22 in 1947, how had he been able to sign up? The truth is that he overstated his age, told the recruiters



Mavis Brooks

that he had been born in 1924, rather than 1925, and soon found himself as a Lance Bombardier in the 2nd Australian Tank Attack Regiment. He would have landed at Balikpapan on 1 July 1945, part of the campaign to liberate Japanese-held British and Dutch Borneo. He was discharged in March 1946.

After the War Joseph worked at Youngers department store in Liebig Street, Warrnambool. Mavis looked after their two children and worked at Eckhardt's Hotel in Warrnambool (we have yet to establish where this was). Meanwhile, in Koroit, Mary Thomas was missing her daughter Mavis and so Joseph drove her to her former home every week. Like many women at that time, Mavis never learnt to drive.

Joseph worked at Youngers until it closed in the 1970s and then assisted his son with his concreting business. He died at the age of 81.

Meanwhile, Mavis shared with Carol her secret of a long life: walking everywhere rather than being reliant on transport. This had kept her fit and also ensured that she got to meet her neighbours and anyone else that she happened to bump into.

As you might imagine, the staff at Mavis' retirement home were amazed that Carol, a complete stranger, should walk in off the street and give Mavis the wedding photographs that she had considered to be lost forever. In Carol's words, 'They wanted to ring *The Standard* but I wouldn't let them!'

Thank you, Carol, for not only allowing us to tell this extraordinary story first, but also for bringing a little unexpected sunshine into Mavis' life. ❀❀❀

History Written in Stone

By Teresa Murphy

What do Crown Casino, Melbourne tram stops, Southern Cross Station, Port Fairy's street redevelopment, the Eden Garden Building in Beirut, Lebanon and the Australia Museum in Sydney have in common?

They're all made from, or feature, Port Fairy bluestone.

Renowned for its durability, purity and aesthetic appeal (especially as it ages), Port Fairy bluestone is used all over the world, from museums and award-winning homes and gardens to major infrastructure projects, buildings and memorials.

The stone is quarried between here and Yambuk and processed in Port Fairy by Bamstone, a family business that began 45 years ago (in November 1975).

Started with a staff of just six by Don and Yvonne Bartlett, today Cheryl and Michael Steel (their daughter and son-in-law, who bought the business in 2001) employ 40 at the Hamilton-Port Fairy Road site and seven across two quarry sites.

Indeed, Bamstone is the world's largest manufacturer of Australian bluestone.

The bluestone, known as basalt in Victoria (and New Zealand), is sourced from the Mount Rouse lava flow, estimated to be 300,000 years old.



Recreated footprints of First Australians from 20,000 years ago in the bluestone entrance to the Australia Museum in Sydney. Photo courtesy of James Morgan Photographic Consultancy for Australian Museum

The basalt reefs that fringe our coastline from Griffiths Island, the South-West Passage, Pea Soup, South Beach and further west to Yambuk are the endpoint of that

particular eruption of the two-million-year-old Mount Rouse volcano at Peshurst, 60 kilometres away. (Tower Hill volcano is much younger, at 30,000 years.)

It shows just how tough Port Fairy bluestone is, withstanding eons of pounding surf and wind of the brutal Southern Ocean.

Basalt is a blue-grey, fine-grained igneous rock, Earth's most abundant bedrock, mainly beneath the oceans (it's also on the Moon and Mars). Many outstanding public buildings, churches and homesteads were built of Victorian basalt and Port Fairy boasts many such gems.

Bamstone bluestone has won or been involved in many awards over the past 45 years.

One fascinating project is the entrance to the Australia Museum, featuring 20,000-year-old First Australian footprints recreated in Bamstone bluestone. They are replicas of footprints left by two adults and a child on the shores of Lake Mungo in New South Wales.

For Cheryl and Michael Steel, who live in Port Fairy (and have a bluestone driveway), selecting their all-time favourite project is difficult.

'This is certainly a hard one', Cheryl says. 'For us, the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat is a favourite. It means so much to so many people and we feel so honoured to have been involved with this.'



The evocative Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial, in Ballarat's beautiful botanic gardens, was dedicated in February 2004. Created by sculptor Peter Blizzard, it features more than 36,000 names etched on a 130-metre-long granite wall and natural bluestone obelisks listing the wars and countries where POWs were held.

Photo courtesy of the Trustees of the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial; see powmemorialballarat.com.au

'Artistically there are many projects we love, such as Lyon Housemuseum in Kew which we clad in stone and made thousands of small cylinders for the exterior.

'The sculpture outside the State Library of Victoria, Architectural Fragment by Petrus Spronk, is Port Fairy Bamstone bluestone. We constructed the whole piece, both the stone and the steel frame, on site in Port Fairy. It was craned onto transport in Port Fairy and lifted off straight onto its current site in Swanston Street, Melbourne.

‘Of course, being involved in such a wonderful community project and seeing Port Fairy paved in its own local stone was absolutely terrific! It was also wonderful to pave Warrnambool’s streets as it is the home to many of our employees.

‘Charity and memorial projects are also a favourite as, although most are donated, they have wonderful meaning and purpose to be shared by so many.

‘The memorial plane at The Crags was, again, one of those special projects to be involved in. We were approached to make this plane and at the time didn’t fully appreciate the story of what had happened to those young men and the devastating impact on their families.



The Crags bluestone memorial to four aviators who crashed near Lady Julia Percy Island (Deen Maar) in February 1944. It was unveiled in February 2015. Photo: Teresa Murphy

‘Until the completion of the Memorial Plane there had been no funeral, marker, memorial or even a letter acknowledging the death of the four young men. Their families came from far and wide to the opening and I will never forget the comments of a sister of one of the young men. She was only a teenager when her brother was killed and her brother’s death had devastated her family. She said she had waited her whole life for something to mark the life of her brother and finally she had it.

‘It’s also a proud moment to arrive by train at Southern Cross Station and walk across our local stone at the station and out onto the many CBD streets paved in Bamstone bluestone.’



Architectural Fragment by Petrus Spronk, outside the State Library of Victoria. Photo: City of Melbourne

The Steels are also proud of their staff, from creative stonemasons, office staff and maintenance team to quarry workers.

‘We have many long-serving employees, however, we value all our employees and couldn’t function without them,’ Cheryl says.



The Lyon Housemuseum Galleries, Kew

‘Many of our factory staff have developed wonderful skills over the years and we certainly couldn’t operate without their loyalty and dedication. It is amazing what specialist pieces they produce, ranging from a piece of furniture to a difficult shaped and angled piece required for a civil project. As well as the many kilometres of street paving and kerbing. The maintenance team do an excellent job in maintaining all the machinery and providing quick turnarounds when problems arise.

‘Our office staff also do an amazing job co-ordinating all of our varied projects and helping us to make the whole business tick! Of course, nothing would be possible without the great quarry team. It all starts there; they carefully extract each boulder and are skilled at grading the raw material and selecting stone for specific projects. None of us can function without each other.’



Thar They Blew

Mount Rouse is located in the Newer Volcanics Province (NVP), the third-largest volcanic plain in the world, with the youngest volcanoes in Australia. Mount Rouse is Victoria’s largest and most complex volcano.

The NVP covers 19,000 sq km, stretching 410 kilometres Melbourne to Mount Gambier. There are 704 eruption points from 416 dormant volcanic centres, with an age range from 4.5 million years to just 5000 years ago at Mount Gambier.

Local Aboriginal people witnessed some of these eruptions, naming them ‘Willum-a-weenth’ (place of fire). Dormant rather than extinct sounds a little scary and yes, the NVP is still volcanically active. But don’t panic - the next eruption isn’t expected for another 5000 years, give or take.

The Volcanoes Discovery Centre in Penshurst is worth a visit - as is a climb up the 100-metre Mount Rouse (‘Collorerr’ to the local Kolor clan).

Two Spiders and a Madame Bishop!

At this season of the year, the thoughts of many people turn to drink. But what drinks would have been available in the Nineteenth Century? Certainly not a Moscow Mule, a Penicillin or a Corpse Reviver!

It would be easy to suppose that the choice was limited to beer, wine and spirits, but this is not the full story.

Certainly beer was always popular and discerning beer drinkers preferred the export product brewed in England, particularly at Burton-on-Trent. Locally manufactured beer was, initially at least, largely disliked. In more than one instance, it was discovered that unscrupulous operators had decanted local beers into bottles bearing forged Byass and other labels and passed them off as imported. Such activities were not even illegal in the 1850s and, if the contents were not up to scratch, this could be easily explained. For example, in August 1860 the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that, 'Byass's brand has gone a good deal out of favour in consequence of late importations having been very bad. Allsopp's is now the most in demand.'

The favourite spirit of the age was undoubtedly brandy and the Martell, Salignac and Hennessy brands were to the fore. A 'shot' of spirits was known as a 'nobbler' but no one seems to have an explanation for the derivation of this name. It was suggested that it came from the astronomical term 'Nebula', on the grounds 'that as the "Nebula" throws a filmy haze over a star, so does the nobbler when often repeated, cloud the vision of those who indulge in its pleasures', but this was mere whimsy. As might be expected, nobblers were sometimes consumed in prodigious quantities at a single session. There are references to men drinking a dozen at one sitting, while Frank Fowler, the British journalist, refers to some Australian men being able to 'do' as many as forty nobblers a day. Fowler also tells us that a nobbler was sometimes referred to as a 'breakdown', while to buy drinks for others was to 'stand', 'shout' or 'sacrifice'. The verb derived from 'nobbler' was to 'nobblerize'.

For those who did not wish to drink beer or straight shots of spirits, alternatives were available. Non-alcoholic drinks were obviously obtainable and, in addition to soda water, included a 'Band of Hope', which was made from lemon syrup, and a 'Maiden', made from peppermint or cloves. The origin of these names seems fairly self-explanatory.

Alcoholic drinks included a 'Tom and Jerry', a 'Spider', a 'Coffee Royal' and an 'Egg Nog'. A Tom and Jerry, (which derived its name from the two main characters in Pierce Egan's *Life in London*, Jerry Hawthorn and Corinthian Tom), was a drink of hot rum and eggs, often spiced and sweetened. A Spider was merely brandy and lemonade, while a Coffee Royal was black coffee with cognac, lemon peel and sugar.

Egg Nog was originally an English drink derived from the posset of the Middle Ages. It combined the white and yolk of eggs with warm spirits, wine, cider or beer.


Some drinks derived their names from the popular idols of the day, opera singers and entertainers. For example, a 'Catherine Hayes' was a drink of claret, sugar, and orange and was named in honour of a famous Irish soprano. Similarly, 'Madame Bishop' was a drink comprising port, sugar, and nutmeg and was named after Anna Bishop, an English opera singer and wife of Henry Bishop, the composer of 'Home! Sweet Home!'. A 'Lola Montez' was a mixture of Old Tom¹ [very good, strong gin], ginger, lemon, and hot water, named after an Irish entertainer whose most famous performance was the Spider Dance, by all accounts a harmless enough little number which shocked and titillated audiences across Australia in the 1850s.

Other drinks bore names that are less easily explained. A 'Stonefence' was gingerbeer and brandy, the name probably referring to its colour. But why a 'Sensation' should turn out to be a fairly unsensational half-glass of sherry, or a 'Constitutional' a glass of gin and bitters, is unknown. Unlike today, a 'Cocktail' did not embrace a wide range of drinks but was very specifically brandy, bitters, and sugar, while a 'Julep' was a drink of brandy, sugar, and peppermint, and a 'Smash' was ice, brandy, and water.

Incidentally, it is often forgotten that the world's first commercial machine for making ice was manufactured in Australia in 1855 and weighed five tons. It was invented by James Harrison of Geelong and, when demonstrated in London in 1858, was able to make between 5000 and 6000 pounds of ice per day. Some of Harrison's descendants still live in this area.

Surprisingly, ice was also imported from Wenham Lake in Massachusetts, USA. The local inhabitants broke up the thick sheets in the winter, and then transported them around the world by ship, to India, Hong Kong and Australia. However, in 1868, the *Launceston Examiner* was able to declare that 'It is not generally known that the greater portion of so-called "Wenham Lake Ice" is obtained from Norway'.

Despite all competing attractions, beer was the most popular drink, although there was an appalling tendency to mull or spice it, serve it warm, mix it with eggs or otherwise adulterate it.

However, one thing that publicans would have been incapable of doing was to serve their beer too cold, so rendering a flavourful drink tasteless, insipid, bland and overly fizzy, an art that their descendants have fully mastered in the intervening years! 

¹ Possibly deriving from Thomas Chamberlain, a gin manufacturer of some repute.

Brandy, Old Tom, and Deosculation

Local newspapers in the 19th Century were a rich source of bad verse. On 18 June 1857, the *Melbourne Punch* decided to have some fun at the expense of *The Banner of Belfast* which had printed a poem by someone calling themselves B.D. *Punch*, under the headline *Poetry from Fairy Land*, advised its readers that,

'Port Fairy is famous for large potatoes and small poets. There is a heavy stock of both continually on hand, and when the mails don't happen to arrive, or the editorial scissors want sharpening, the large potatoes and the small poets find their way into print, in one or other of the local newspapers'.

In other words, both *The Banner* and *The Gazette* were accused, on slow news days, of using stories about outsized potatoes or verses sent in by aspiring Byrons to fill the empty spaces. On this occasion, the poem was called *The Boys of Port Fairy* and ran as follows:

'Oh, the boys of Port Fairy are rollicking blades,
And whenever they meet with their flash servant maids,
They'll kiss them and coax them, and nobblerize free,
Of all towns in Victoria, Port Fairy's for me.

'In the town of Port Fairy there runs a clear stream,
In the town of Port Fairy there lives a dressy dame,
Her hair wreathed with roses, her bonnet the same:
But she's just like the rest, and not much for to blame.

'But when she's at home she's as black as a coal,
In the heel of each stocking she has worn a large hole,
Her slippers hang loose, and her hair—but I'm sure
She'll faint off if she hears I glanced in by the door.'

Punch's comment was:

'What an interesting insight this gives us into the social life of the Port Fairies. The "boys"- used, we presume in the Hibernian sense of the word, to signify men - are "rollicking blades", and they improve the shining hours, by kissing, coaxing, and bestowing "nobblers" upon what the poet calls "flash servant maids".'

The paper went on to suggest that, when one of these men called upon a Port Fairy household, before paying his respects to the lady of the house, he would kiss the servant who opened the door, take her to the nearest tavern and treat her to "nobblers". But who, it wondered, were 'the rest', mentioned in the second verse. 'Does that comprehensive expression refer to the "rollicking blades" or to the "flash" female domestics who are addicted to brandy, old tom, and deosculation?'

There was much more of the same, the writer ultimately declaring, 'Why doesn't the poet add another letter to his initials, and attach to his productions the expressive signature—B.A.D.?'.



An Eye-Watering Problem

The scene was set in an article in *The Gazette* on 4 January 1934. Under the headline, 'The Onion Industry', W. Kiely wrote,

'The year 1933 will be remembered by onion growers as the most disastrous in the history of the industry, and it would appear as if we are approaching "the parting of the ways" insofar as this one-time very valuable industry is concerned.'

The problem was depressed prices for the crop; parliamentarians were accused of doing nothing for growers and, Kiely believed, unless an export industry were built, onion growing was doomed to extinction with disastrous results for the region. Some time before, as many as 10,000 tons of onions had been exported to the USA in one season, but now even New Zealand had placed an embargo on onions as a response to their potatoes being banned from the Australian market. The Ballarat potato growers were said to be delighted with this, but they were dismissed as merely selfish.

A few days after the *Gazette* article appeared, the state's onion growers met and agreed to form the Victorian Onion Growers Association with its own Marketing Board, a pooling arrangement and ownership of the onions being vested in the Board.

Onion growing was far from easy. In January 1926 we read that, 'The withering of the tops of onions in the Killarney district, it is believed, was due to the presence of the Country Roads Board tar sprayer in the vicinity'!

There was also the enemy within. In September 1934, it came to light that 319 bags of onions, valued at £114, had been stolen from the Killarney / Port Fairy district by James Joseph Gleeson, a Killarney farmer. He was arrested by none other than Port Fairy's future Chief Commissioner, Rupert Henry Arnold, just then a mere plain-clothes police constable. Gleeson denied that it had been theft, saying all the farmers concerned owed him money, but in December he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

This was unfortunate because the benefits of the pool arrangement were just becoming apparent, hundreds of tons of onions having been sold in Melbourne at £7 2s. 6d per ton. By January 1935, a price of £8 5s. was being obtained. In 1938 it was said that practically all the growers in Colac, Warrnambool and Koroit had joined the Onion Marketing Board. However the Housewives Association condemned the Board, saying it had been a failure, the only winners being their highly-paid executives.

A year later, the Melbourne market was said to be flooded with cheap onions from Egypt, Japan and New Zealand while domestic onions could not be sold at the £18 per ton price set by an overly-ambitious Onion Marketing Board, almost three times the price just five years earlier! By mid-July a price of £25 per ton was being sought 'for choice sorts', but, in 1942, onions came under Federal control and a more reasonable price of £11 10s. 3d was set.

WEIRD BEARDS

By Teresa Murphy

While researching images of Port Fairy pioneers and early citizens, one thought does spring to mind: did the wives enjoy actually snogging their pogonophile husbands?

Pogonophiles are beard lovers; pogonophobes the exact opposite. Being in the latter camp, I'd be fascinated to know how these women tolerated such bristly connubials.

There were certainly some standouts at the height of the facial salad obsession in the mid to late 1800s in many parts of the Western world - and Port Fairy men followed the global trend.



William Earle

Author and Belfast Mayor William Earle, for example, had a nascent Cousin Itt dangling from his face, while Cr. John Cox Ritchie's wide-ranging moustache had its own postcode

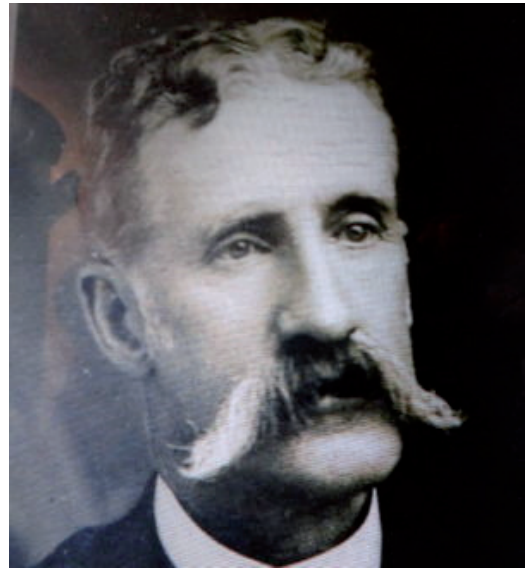


John Cox Ritchie

Shire engineer and owner of Talara, Dilmond John Howes, also opted for a long, dapper moustache, angled downwards, like bird wings.

Auctioneer and politician Francis Edis Beaver had the largest beard outside the Old Testament, according to

local historian Jack Powling, though he had plenty of competition in Port Fairy.



Dilmond John Howes

Many adopted the Ned Kelly/bushranger look - bushy beard, sideburns and moustaches, all connected - while some went "Abe Lincoln" (no moustache) or the "Newgate fringe", a beard under the chin and jaw (bizarrely named for its appearance, like a hangman's noose around the neck).

So how did this fetish for flourishing follicles come about?

Charles Dickens is partly responsible, according to a great-great-great-granddaughter of the famed writer. Lucinda Hawksley, author of *Moustaches, Whiskers and Beards*, writes that the 'Great Victorian Beard Craze' began during the Crimean War (1854-56) and came to denote heroism and heightened masculinity.



Charles Macknight - Belfast Pastoralist

In the US, the "so-called safety razor" was often dangerous to use, and a germ carrier if not cleaned properly, so American men began to follow the British

and European trend for facial hirsutism.

During the American Civil War (1861-65), “sideburns” was coined, a tribute to General Ambrose Burnside, “whose bushy moustache had been allowed to connect with his whiskers and formed an impressively thick and unbroken line of hair right across his face”.

Prodigious side whiskers known as “dundrearies” or “Piccadilly weepers” were very long, bushy sideburns. The “Abe Lincoln” was a curtain of hair connecting sideburns and beard (no moustache) and “mutton chops” were sideburns, thin at the top and bulged at the bottom, like the cut of meat.

Charles Dickens was an early fan of the moustache. In 1844 he wrote: “The moustaches are glorious, glorious. I have cut them short, and trimmed them a little at the ends to improve their shape. They are charming, charming. Without them, life would be a blank.”

When he visited the US in 1867-68, he was a global superstar and everything about him was emulated, Lucinda writes, including his “doorknocker beard”.



Charles Dickens

In Australia, squatters, gold diggers, explorers and bushrangers avoided the razor for practical reasons, “as well as for ideals of ruggedness, independence and masculinity”.

Towards the 1890s, full whiskers and beards were on their way out, considered the domain of the conservative, older generation, Lucinda writes. By 1904, US inventor King Camp Gillette (who preferred moustache only) had patented his safe, disposable razor, which “coincided with increased scientific understanding of the existence and spread of bacteria”.

And therein lies the rub. Just imagine what nasties were harboured within those facial forests! No wonder I’m a pogonophobe. ❧❧❧

An Island Tale

On 15 August 1890, a rumour, which *The Gazette* referred to as 'sensational', suggested that a foreigner had 'taken possession of the Julia Percy Island'. The individual concerned was said to have camped with some fishermen at the Craggs, then gone to Port Fairy seeking someone prepared to sail him to the island.

The first attempted journey was unsuccessful but, on the second occasion, fishermen named Dunn and Whateley managed to land him along with an 'ample stock of provisions consisting of tea, sugar, flour etc.'. The man was also said to be 'armed to the teeth' and to have a very large sum of money in his possession.

Having two bob each-way, *The Gazette* said that the man, later identified as William Archibald Ansters, was either 'a fugitive from justice', with 'two detectives on his trail' or was, even then, slaughtering seals 'and doubtless we shall soon hear of his sending a valuable consignment of the skins to market, to his own profit and pecuniary advantage'. At any rate, a large fire on the island was observed from the mainland, evidence of the fact that it was mid-winter and bitterly cold.

Soon it was said that Ansters was wanted in connection with the 'Swan Hill Murder' - the shooting in his bunk of a fisherman named Donald McDonald. In the light of this and the fact that there was 'valuable Government property' on the island, two policemen, together with Dunn and Whateley, made their way there in the *Lady Hopetoun*. (The 'Government property' on the island was, presumably the dry clothing, blankets and bottle of rum stored in a 'depot' for the relief of shipwrecked sailors - but hardly 'valuable'.)

On arriving at the island after 'a tedious journey, the sea being rough', Sergeant Boyle and Constable Shoebridge persuaded Ansters to bring his flat-bottomed boat down to the rocks, waving a large fish at him by way of inducement. As soon as Ansters got close, they seized the boat - in truth a leaky punt made from old packing cases - and then landed on the island with him, climbing a 150-foot cliff by means of a handy rope. At the top they found a fishermen's hut and, inside it, a coat with a revolver in the pocket and almost 100 rounds of ammunition. Ansters was then asked to accompany the policemen to Port Fairy.

As the men drew away from the island in the small boat, it is said that Ansters tried to upset it, rocking it from side to side and stamping on the flimsy boards.

A special hearing of the Police Court took place on 25 August. Ansters proved to be just 23 and missing all the teeth at the front of his upper jaw. Why was he on the island? He fancied a change! Given that there was no evidence to connect him with the murder, he was quickly discharged.

By the following January, there had still been no arrest of Donald McDonald's murderer. ❧❧

The Amana Mystery

On 6 June 1955, *The Port Fairy Gazette* reported that a woman's gold wrist watch, set with jewels and apparently of some value, had been found in the wreckage of the ANA Douglas DC-4 Skymaster aircraft, the *Amana*, that had crashed at York, Western Australia, in June 1950, with the loss of all 29 passengers and crew. At that time, this was the worst airline accident to have occurred in Australia.

Through jeweller's marks and numbers it had been ascertained that the watch had been sent from Melbourne in April 1950 to 'Miss M. McLean of Port Fairy, Victoria'. No one by that name was on the passenger list although the dead passengers included four women. A full five years after the tragedy, the police were trying to establish whether anyone remembered Miss McLean and how her watch came to be among the wreckage of the fatal flight.

As far as is known, this mystery has never been solved. It will not have escaped your notice that the Historical Society's Secretary is Anne McLean, but enquiries within her family have not revealed any connection. Moreover, it is known that there were other McLeans in Port Fairy during and after World War Two. For instance, in February 1943, *The Gazette* recorded the engagement of Christinia [*sic*] Olive McLean, youngest daughter of Mrs. D. McLean of The Reedy, Port Fairy, to Alfred Fox.

Although it seems hopelessly optimistic to imagine that the mystery might be solved at this distance, we are setting out below the names of, and what is known about, the passengers and crew. If you have any idea why one of these 29 individuals might have been carrying a watch that was once sent to Miss M. McLean of Port Fairy, please let us know.

PASSENGERS

Mr. Victor C. Anquetil, of Wills Street, Glen Iris, Melbourne, assistant manager of the Charles Moore Read Co., Prahran. Survived by his wife.

Miss Doris Margaret McHenry, 30, of Evans Street, Port Melbourne, an employee of the Shell Oil Co. She was on her first plane trip, returning from a holiday in Perth.

The Rt. Rev. C. Murray, Bishop of the Riverina, of Bishop's Lodge, Hay, N.S.W.

The Rev. Norman Blow, Dean of Newcastle, of The Deanery, Newcastle.

Miss McDougal, of Outram Street, West Perth.

Mr. George Colin Campbell Carmichael, of Oakleigh, Victoria had been Secretary of the Shire of Mulgrave for the previous 26 years.

Mr. Douglas N. Engler, of Westbury Crescent, Bicton. He was secretary of the Pioneer Bus Co., Perth.

Master J. Engler, 13, of Westbury Crescent, Bicton.

Mr. Pedro Capelette, a 57-year old Spanish seaman, of the Adelaide Steamship Co. He was returning to Newcastle because he had become ill while his ship was at Fremantle.

Mr. Tan Jee Hoe, Singaporean student, who had recently arrived in Perth to study in Melbourne.

Mr. T. R. Graham, of Broome Street, Cottesloe, 41, single, employee of the Bank of Australasia. He had been promoted to the inspector's branch in Melbourne.

Mr. Stan Baker, 53, of Ferdinand Grove, Balmain, and c/o Ampol Petroleum Co., Sydney. (In 1931 he had been booked to fly on the fatal flight of the *Southern Cloud*, but

had travelled by train instead.)

Mr. E. Vincent Finnigan, of Balgowlah Road, Balgowlah NSW, and c/o Siemens (Aust) Pty Ltd York Street, Sydney. He was regarded as a world authority on electric traction and had been completing a job for the West Australian Railways.

Mrs. J. W. Morrison, of Bundaring Parade, Swanbourne, W.A.

Mrs. G. Haese and infant, Sandra, of Bagots Road, Subiaco, Perth.

Mr. R. Kenneth Douglas, of Kalamunda, WA, was on his way to a Board meeting in Adelaide of the Chrysler-Dodge distributors. He was the managing director of the Winterbottom Motor Company.

Mr. Ian Herbertson Simpson, 23, of Wickopin. Partner with his father in a farm. Was travelling to Adelaide to see his fiancée who was holidaying there, and to bring her home.

Mrs. Ilona Borszeki and infant, Northam Migration Camp.

Mr. Stanislaw Pawlowski, Northam Migration Camp.

Mr. Joseph Boklak, Northam Migration Camp.

Mr. Lazio Orszag, Northam Migration Camp.

Mr. Edgar Forwood, 67, Managing-Director of Forwood Down and Company Ltd., a South Australian engineering company. He was the oldest person on board the flight, and probably the most experienced air traveller. He survived for 6 days after the crash.

CREW

Captain Robert James Chapple, 39, of Beach Street Frankston, married. Former member of the RAAF.

First Officer Raymond Harris Willis, 24, of Beaver Street, Essendon. A former member of the RAAF he had been married for just four months.

Second First Officer Victor Maurice Trevitt, 29, Centre Road and View Street, Clayton, married, with two children.

Hostess Margaret Alison Elizabeth Britton, 23, stationed in Adelaide She had been an air hostess for 4½ months.

Hostess Jean Winsome Graham, 22, of Port Pirie, SA. Had been with ANA for just over two years. Mother's maiden name was March.



The above photos of some of the passengers and crew appeared in *The Age*. Can you help? ☞

Unconsidered Trifles

On 4 and 5 January 1901, Annie May Abbott, who was known as the 'Little Georgia Magnet', appeared at Port Fairy's Lecture Hall. Annie May's real name was Dixie Haygood and by this date she was around 40 years old. Her act consisted of feats of strength and motion resistance. For instance, she was able to lift two chairs with six heavy men on them, but defy the combined strength of the same men to lift her from the ground. She had performed before the crowned heads of Europe and had even lifted the future Edward VII merely by placing a hand on either side of his head. She seemed to have been endowed with 'super powers' although in our more cynical age her abilities are seen as mere conjuring and trickery.



On 5 February 1945, *The Gazette* reported the first use of penicillin at Port Fairy Hospital. The patient was Mary Howes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Howes of Port Fairy. Mary was admitted to the hospital suffering from osteomyelitis, the belief being that she would have to undergo an operation to relieve the serious infection. However, penicillin injections were tried and, within six weeks, she had made a full recovery. If the operation had been undertaken, Mary would have been a semi-invalid for at least a year.



The Dunstan Times, a New Zealand newspaper, recorded the following on 23 March 1888: 'The rabbits round Belfast (Victoria) are particularly voracious. After eating every settler in the district out of house and home, and farming implements, and scoffing everything on the land, saving the mortgages, the rapacious rodents have attacked the late lamenteds in the local burying-ground. At a recent meeting of the Belfast Council it was proposed "that all bodies be removed from the cemetery, as the rabbits are disinterring them". The look-out for the industrial pastoralist is becoming grave down Belfast way. All his life he is vainly soothing hen ague or chicken cholera on to the destroying rodent, and when at last he gives up and dies in sheer weariness, the avenging rabbit comes to the mausoleum where he has been dumped among his fathers and hauls him out on the damp grass'.



On 10 December 1901, Licence renewals were granted for nine of the ten hotels still operating in Port Fairy. In the case of the tenth, the White Hart Hotel, Inspector Graves objected to the renewal of Henry Roder's licence 'on the grounds of systematic trading on Sundays and during prohibited hours'. It was alleged that Roder employed a young man, Stanley Ford, as a 'spotter' who, by means of a 'peculiar whistle', warned the publican of the police's approach. Mr. Powling, who was acting on Roder's behalf, stated that Ford was employed as 'boots, groom and billiard-marker' at the hotel and that the comings and goings that the police had observed were explainable by the fact that the hotel had 12 to 15

boarders and doubtless it was they and their friends that the constables had seen. The Licensing Magistrates were unconvinced by the police evidence and Roder's licence was renewed.



According to *The Gazette*, only about 30 people came to the Lecture Hall, on 27 October 1924, to see the screening of the State Electricity Commission's films promoting the use of electricity. The showing of the films, which lasted just 40 minutes in all, was delayed until 8.30pm in the hope that more residents would turn up, but to no avail. The newspaper believed that there were no more than a dozen members of the public present who were 'anxious to see the electric current brought to Port Fairy' and took this as 'proof that the residents (or the majority here) are quite satisfied with the present backward and obsolete condition of things'.



On 8 January 1907, it was reported that the Port Fairy Borough Council had considered the establishment of an unemployment bureau in the town. It was eventually decided not to proceed but 'That the Town Clerk send to the authorities in Melbourne the name of any local person seeking employment'.



The Moyne river broke its banks from Rosebrook to Port Fairy on 12 August 1966, following heavy rain. It formed 'a huge lake, in some places well over half a mile wide'. The *Gazette* later reported that Port Fairy bay had been 'turned a light brown by the water'.



On 15 June 1953, *The Gazette* drew attention to the fact that Members of Parliament had been feted over four days in Canberra during Coronation week, occupying most of the city's first class hotel accommodation. In addition, they had received a daily allowance of fifty shillings and their wives had been flown to and from the capital at taxpayers' expense. 'In sharp contrast to this', the newspaper recorded, 'are the arrangements for the Coronation at Port Fairy. Public subscriptions will pay for the school children's treat on Coronation Day, and the civic dinner at night will be paid for by councillors out of their own pockets! Politicians and Departmental heads could well follow this example'.



It was only in October 1993 that the Minister for Small Business granted an application by the Borough of Port Fairy for shops in the town to be able to trade, between the hours of 10am and 5pm, on eight specific Sundays in 1993 and 1994.



On the evening of 14 February 1929, radio listeners heard, via 2FC (Sydney), six songs sung by Miss Molly Hayres of Port Fairy. Miss Hayres was introduced as 3LO's soprano and it was said that her 'voice came over the air clearly and with good effect'. ❀❀❀

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CHRISTMAS

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