

PORT FAIRY POST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT FAIRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Letter from the President

Greetings to Port Fairy Historical Society members!

As you are aware the official advice in Victoria is that restrictions will slowly be eased; however, it will still be some time before all restrictions are lifted and it is likely that our general meetings will be among the last activities to be permitted. Therefore Richard, our newsletter editor, has kindly offered to issue extra newsletters with consideration for permanently increasing the frequency of our newsletters over time.

So, although we are not quite ready to resume all normal activities it is heartening to see that Port Fairy and Surrounds appear to have been able to contain the spread of the COVID-19 at this stage. Perhaps we have learnt something from our history here in Port Fairy as residents of Port Fairy in 2020 are far more compliant to imposed restrictions now, than during the 1919 Pandemic, when there was a sense that the epidemic was, “a distant problem and that there was little to worry about”...Richard’s article on the 1919 Pandemic in this newsletter provides more details.

I know you will enjoy this well researched and crafted edition of our newsletter filled with fascinating insights into our history and interesting news of what is happening now. I particularly enjoyed reading about “The Fairy returns to Port Fairy” and the associated exciting prospects this holds. Richard promises, “tracking progress in future editions, including details of how you might assist Mike’s remarkable vision become a reality”.

This edition also brings a stark reminder of the how vulnerable we are in the face of misfortunate and extreme weather events as we revisit the plight of some of the fishermen lost in Port Fairy in treacherous conditions at sea or unfortunate accidents that often left families destitute.

While some form of social isolation and lockdown remains a reality for us, at present, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Committee of Management and Volunteers who continue to share their skills and services on behalf of our society. At this uncertain time I feel that it is more important than ever to recognise and acknowledge our volunteers

as “National Volunteer Week” commences this week with the very appropriate theme, “Changing Communities. Changing Lives”.

Members have been active, where possible, keeping our society running through continuing with plans for exhibitions later in the year, working on organising collections, researching and creating databases, developing new projects, updating databases and records, creating indexes, sharing mail and information, maintaining accounts, publishing our newsletters, attending online conferences, gardening and maintenance of our building and grounds, recording pictorial “History in the Making” [Richard’s article below describes more on this] and the list goes on! Our researchers have been particularly busy with managing and responding to research enquires, where feasible, as many people are using this time of isolation to update their family records. I was also excited to hear about a collaborative project on the stone walls of Port Fairy that is taking place between the PFHS and the PF National Trust entitled, “Walls of Belfast”. I am sure we will hear more on this in the future.

So a very big thank you to all of our volunteers for their ongoing generous contribution, dedication and commitment to our society in these challenging times. Hopefully, we will all be able to gather again soon, where we can further acknowledge our team of volunteers.

Best Wishes to all,
Andrea Coney

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History in the Making

Anzac Day 2020

This year's Anzac Day commemorations in Port Fairy, as in the rest of Australia, were quite different from normal, because of the COVID-19 restrictions. It was a relatively cold morning and at 6am there was little sign of the breaking dawn. And yet it was heartening to see how



many residents had left the warmth of their beds to stand at their gateways with lighted candles, to bear witness to the pledge that 'We shall remember them'.

Little was said, and little needed saying, but there were chains of light down every street, despite a few obvious gaps. Moreover, in one part of the town at least, a talented bugler made an excellent job of playing the Last Post and this sounded particularly poignant as the notes echoed down the quiet streets.

Ironically, we suspect that it was an experience that many will remember when more conventional Anzac Day commemorations are forgotten. Despite this, few would not hope that in 2021 we shall be able to return to the traditional dawn service and marches.

COVID-19 Lockdown

While the social isolation regulations have been in force, Port Fairy has been a very different place. Carol Heard and Heather Templeton have taken a few pictures to illustrate this, in the course of going about their lawful business outside their homes. They felt it was important - as indeed it is - that a record should exist of what the town looked like during these weeks of uncharacteristic quiet. No doubt, in the fullness of time, there will be a COVID-19 exhibition at the Museum but, in the meantime, we are including a couple of examples on this page.

Carol has told us that some of the photographs were used in Facebook posts on the PFHS page and most of the comments from former residents were to the effect that Port Fairy was a much better place before all the tourism occurred: the photos reminded them of that earlier time.

This comment thread has spilled on to other Port Fairy Facebook sites. Carol adds that it was not her intention to cause any controversy!

While some may feel that the town is a better place without tourists, the truth is, of course, that it would be a shadow of its current self without them. In the 1950s, Port Fairy was regarded as a run-down backwater. Surely no one really wants to go back to that time.

The Fairy Returns to Port Fairy

Mike Seward and his wife, Julie, are relative newcomers to Port Fairy but Mike, a naval architect, has already had an inspired idea. This is to build a full-sized replica of *The Fairy* - Captain Wishart's original vessel and the source of the town's name - as a community asset.

Mike's plan is to engineer the design in such a way as to avoid an entirely traditional approach; this would minimise future maintenance costs and produce a strength of construction that Nineteenth Century methods cannot guarantee, both major considerations for a ship that is likely to be around for far longer than the original. This said, the finished vessel would look 'traditional' from the outside.

Mike used the proposed engineered timber design approach for the 22-metre brigantine *Windeward Bound*,



built in Hobart from 100% recycled timbers in the 1990's and still based there. She had her 25th anniversary in late 2018.

Mike sees the prospect of sail training, day sailing experiences or even trips to Portland and Warrnambool. Longer trips to Melbourne, King Island and Adelaide, or even across Bass Strait, would all be perfectly possible. He also believes that *The Fairy* might complement the existing whaleboat and could add dimensions to day tours (rowing in company in the bay, towing *The Fairy* up/down river etc).

All of this will, of course, come at some expense and whether the requisite funding will be available in the post-COVID-19 world is yet to be seen. We shall be tracking progress in future editions, and including details of how you might assist Mike's remarkable vision become a reality. 🌊

The Lighthouse Keepers 2

Alfred Goff

Alfred Goff was the Lighthouse Keeper at Griffith Island between 1867 and March 1873. He had been born in around 1828 and, in 1854, married Elizabeth Jane née Walker. They had one son, Alfred Richard Goff, who was born in 1855. Like many lighthouse keepers, the family based themselves in Williamstown.

In 1861 Alfred was the second assistant keeper at Middle Island, Warrnambool when he replaced John Alexander as Assistant Keeper at the Beach lighthouse on the latter's removal. In 1863 Goff is recorded as having helped Stephen Waller, 'the well-known fisherman', to catch a nine-foot leopard seal at Warrnambool.

Goff obviously impressed his superiors sufficiently to be given the position of Lighthouse Keeper at Belfast in 1867. On 1 January 1871, Captain Abraham Robert Pleace was appointed Harbour Master and Pilot, in succession to Captain Mills. Captain Pleace's brigantine, *Challenger*, had, in controversial circumstances, become a total wreck in Port Phillip Bay in 1870, and this might have been a metaphor for his relationship with Alfred Goff.

On 22 March 1873, *The Hamilton Spectator* reported that,

'It is a pity that birds in one nest cannot agree! I find this is the case with our Harbour Master and his men. One of the men, it appears, has found it necessary to quarrel with Captain Pleace, and that gentleman has retaliated by leaving his "private marks" on the "figure head" of his subordinate. I understand the matter has been reported to the Melbourne authorities, who, no doubt - and very rightly so - will cause an investigation to be held. The lighthouse-keeper, Goff, has been suspended by the Harbour Master, for not having his lamp lit at sunset one evening last week. This is, I understand, Goff's second offence, and, no doubt, if the complaint is substantiated, it will be his last, as such a grave dereliction of duty on the part of an officer holding such a responsible position, cannot pass unnoticed by the Government. I need scarcely add that Captain Pleace promptly reported the matter to the proper officer.'

Seven days later *The Hamilton Spectator* added the following:

'The report from the Harbour department in reference to the late irregularities in the Belfast harbour department it is said, has come to hand, but I think only privately. The report says that Captain Pleace is fined a month's pay (£20) and Goff, the lighthouse keeper is to be removed to the Gellibrand lightship with a reduction of 1s. per day. John Hanby - who has been in the service for nearly twenty years in Belfast - is to be removed to the lightship in the Western Channel, Hobson's Bay, with a similar reduction in pay, and Walpole is

dismissed the service. This is all the information I can at present give you in reference to this matter, and it is only hearsay, but, "I tell it as 'twas told to me".'

The information proved correct in every detail and Alfred Goff lost both valuable income and a position where his wife and son might accompany him. They would have had to move back to Williamstown and it is not altogether surprising that, in October 1874, Alfred Goff declared himself bankrupt.

But which of the three men had quarrelled with Captain Pleace and received a punch or two in return remains a mystery. Hitting a subordinate was a serious offence and Pleace was lucky to escape so lightly. Was it Goff or the ever-loyal John Hanby? 'Walpole' was Horace Orford Walpole and relatively new to the service. If Goff really had twice forgotten to light the lamp, he would, we must assume, have been dismissed, although he may have been offered a reprieve if he was the victim of Pleace's anger and had been struck by him.

'that gentleman has retaliated by leaving his "private marks" on the "figure head" of his subordinate'

Despite all of this, Alfred Goff stayed with the service and in October 1880 was promoted from Senior Seaman, Gellibrand's Point to Light Keeper, South Channel - the South Channel Pile Light. In July 1882 he was made Junior Assistant at Cape Schanck but died on 23 November 1885 at Williamstown, at the age of 57.

John Hanby also stayed with the service and, in February 1883, was appointed Lighthouse Keeper at Point Lonsdale. Even the unfortunate Horace Walpole was later accepted back into the employment of the Customs Department. When he retired in 1901 he was an Inspector for the Board of Public Health.

At the end of 1875, Captain Pleace was appointed Harbour Master at Geelong. In 1876 he was declared bankrupt, but in the following year a grateful government appointed him Assistant Inspector of Fisheries in addition to his Harbour Master duties. In 1887 Pleace was found to have committed an error of judgement in connection with the grounding of the ship *Penwern*. In 1890 it was recommended that Pleace, who was now over 60, should retire after an accident at Geelong in the previous year in which he had acted as Pilot and allowed the vessel of which he had taken charge to collide with a beacon. It had emerged in the enquiry that he was not licensed as a Pilot under the Marine Board Act. Captain Pleace retired from his position but went back to sea as the First Mate of the barque *Chitoor*. In 1891 he was drowned off Lorne in an accident. ❀❀❀

Port Fairy's Population

What was the population of Port Fairy in the past? As Professor C.E.M. Joad might have said, 'it all depends what you mean by Port Fairy'. 'The Belfast township', 'Belfast proper', 'Belfast east', and the 'suburbs', were all descriptors used for local population totals in the 19th Century.

In January 1845, the *Sydney Morning Herald* quoted the *Portland Gazette* as saying that 'the entire population of the town, it appears by a census recently taken, is 525, composed of all religious denominations and all ranks of society'.

Then, on 20 May 1846, the *Geelong Advertiser and Squatters' Advocate* declared that the 'population of the town of Belfast, is, by the recent census, 601'. Three days later the *Cornwall Chronicle* was able to add that this figure consisted of 359 males and 242 females, and that 108 of the males and 107 of the females were married.

However, in December 1846, the *Maitland Mercury* printed a piece which suggested that the Census had shown Belfast's population to be just 269, and, in March 1851, the *Belfast Gazette* quoted the latter figure as accurate for exactly five years earlier. For in 1851 the total had grown to 964, and there was some obvious satisfaction that Belfast's population had almost quadrupled while, during the same period, Portland's had just doubled.

The Census taken in April 1854 showed the population of Belfast as 1339, comprising 658 males and 681 females, while that taken in 1857 found that there were 1776 individuals living in 'Belfast (proper)' with a further 137 in 'Belfast (east)'. Another 277 were said to live in the 'Suburbs' but ignoring this last group, it appears that the population had grown to 1913 which, if accurate, indicates a more than sevenfold increase in just eleven years.

The 1861 Census showed a total for Belfast of 2338, although this figure included those living in the 'suburbs'. One of the other things indicated by this census is that, while males outnumbered females in Victoria by a ratio of 3 to 2, in Belfast 52% of the population was female.

The 1871 Census gives a total of 2484 for Belfast, although this again seems to include the inhabitants of the suburbs. In 1881, apparently now reverting to the population of 'Belfast proper', the figure quoted was 1757. Included in this figure were 15 Chinese men, 2 Chinese women and three Aboriginal men.

The 1891 Census revealed that there were 1861 souls in Port Fairy, but no Chinese inhabitants, and 404 dwellings. Ten years later, the population of Port Fairy was 1990. There were now 440 dwellings, although 34 of these were unoccupied.

In 1914 the population was said to have increased by just ten people in thirteen years, to 2000, while there were now 429 dwellings.

The 1933 Census showed Port Fairy to have a population of 1859 – 953 males and 906 females, while the 1940 figure was 1996. In the latter year there were said to be almost 500 dwellings, virtually all of them occupied.

In September 1941, for the purpose of setting targets for the War Loans, Port Fairy was assumed to have a population of 1850, but by June 1942 it was becoming apparent that there were increasing numbers of empty shops and houses in Port Fairy, the result of many men and women joining the forces or seeking better paid employment in the cities, and of shops no longer being able to obtain merchandise.

On 7 December 1942, *The Gazette* suggested that 'a photograph of Sackville Street could be a place from which Goldsmith got the theme for his "Deserted Village"', and by early 1945, the War Loan administrators had placed Port Fairy in the category of towns with less than 1000 inhabitants.

With the end of the war there was obviously a move back to the town because in 1947 the population was said to be 2007, composed of 993 males and 1014 females.

In 1953 a headline in *The Gazette* declared that 'Population Has Not Increased Since The Year 1857'. The article that followed said that the population in 1857 had been 2190 (that is, including those living in the so-called 'Suburbs') and that the town's population in 1953 was 2150.

By 1954 the population was 2265, made up of 1107 males and 1158 females, while the 1961 figure was 2426, comprising 1180 males and 1246 females. Five years later, in 1966, the population was 2577, made up of 1245 males and 1332 females.

It is worth adding that, regarding the latter figures, the Town Clerk in 1967 reported that he had only just become aware that 15% of Port Fairy's population was over the age of 60, as compared with the Australia-wide figure of 10%. He must have been badly-informed, however: in 1947 the Census had revealed that 15.1% of the population of Port Fairy was over 60 and the figure had remained at about that level ever since. The comparative figures for the Shires of Belfast and Minhamite had, during this period, stayed at around the national figure of 10%.

The 2001 Census showed, surprisingly, that the population had decreased slightly since 1966 to 2523, a reduction of 54. By 2006 the population was 2599, 54.1% of whom were female. In 2011 the population had increased to 2835, an increase of 236 in five years, with an unchanged percentage of females.

The 2016 Census showed Port Fairy to have a population of 3029, an increase of 194 over the 2011 figure, with 53.1% of the population being female and 38.2% being over 60. Time will tell if the latter percentage continues to increase into the future. ☸☸

An Embarrassing Admission

In March 1889 a youth named William Edwin Barratt was arrested in Port Fairy on a charge of breaking in to the store of Russell and Powell and stealing a number of articles. This insignificant piece of news was seen in the *Spectator* by one J. T. Sharples. He found it of considerable interest because he had just sent £5 to a man named Barratt in Port Fairy and naturally wanted to know if he and the burglar were one and the same.

Sharples had earlier seen an advertisement in a Melbourne newspaper for clerks and managers for a large company operating across the colony. Because, it was alleged, a clerk had previously absconded with a fortnight's staff wages, a cash sum was demanded from prospective employees as a guarantee of good behaviour. Fearing the worst, Sharples travelled to Port Fairy and was quickly advised by the police that the chances of his ever seeing his £5 again, or of being appointed to the position advertised, were negligible. He would also have been told that the burglar was the son of the man who had organised the fraud, William Milner Barratt, the recent manager of the Port Fairy Gas Works.

Sharples returned to Melbourne and issued a warrant for the arrest of Barratt for obtaining money under false pretences. The police in Port Fairy received this information shortly after Barratt senior had been sent to prison for twenty-four hours for contempt of court, having been unable to restrain himself from making verbal interjections during his son's trial. William Edwin Barratt, incidentally, had been sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.



William Milner Barratt in 1895

When William Barratt senior was questioned about his activities, he admitted that he had collected £100 from his gullible dupes, including £25 from one man who had recently arrived in the colony. It emerged that he had, in fact, asked Sharples for £50, with a deposit of £25, and that Sharples had sent Barratt a cheque drawn by his father for £5, presumably as a token of good faith.

Nor was this the end of Barratt's activities because it

was found that, while still at the Gas Works, he had advertised for the supply of gas pipes that were not, in fact, required, and had asked tenderers to put up the sum of £5 as a deposit. At least one Melbourne iron founder had co-operated with this request which, at that time, was fairly common practice, although Barratt's use of the deposit for his own purposes was not!

Barratt was tried at Footscray and the court heard that he had opened an account at the Colonial Bank in Port Fairy, but that Sharples' cheque had been cashed at a bank in Richmond. Port Fairy's Town Clerk testified that Barratt had indeed been employed by the Council as Gas Manager, which should have been an embarrassing admission. Barratt was found guilty and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.



William Milner Barratt in 1904

Barratt then passes out of sight for some years but surfaces in Geelong in 1899. During the subsequent five years he served no fewer than ten sentences for false pretences, for periods ranging from one to eighteen months. However, in 1904, by when Barratt was 53 and describing himself as a gas engineer, he was brought to court for collecting £72 4s. 6d from local residents to float a gold mine at Matlock. One of the 'investors' stated in court that he knew Barratt as a preacher and consequently 'had the utmost confidence in his integrity'. Of course it emerged that the mine was largely a figment of Barratt's imagination and he was sent to gaol for two years.

Research shows that Barratt was a gas fitter who came to Australia from London in 1888 on board the *Orizaba*. His wife's name was Louisa Ann Swain, née Abbey, the couple had been married in Leeds in 1869 when Louisa was 20, and they had at least five children. Additionally, Barratt sometimes went by the name of William Swain. It is believed that Barratt died in 1906. But what strikes us still is how such a man ever came to be put in charge of the Port Fairy Gas Works?

In our next issue we shall feature information about the operation of the Port Fairy Gas Works in the early-Twentieth Century.

Photographs: Courtesy of the Public Record Office Victoria

The Martyred Youth

On 8 April 1926, the publication *Labor Call* printed a seven verse poem by J. K. McDougall entitled *Port Fairy*. This is not, by any measure, great poetry. The first verse says,

‘O the hummocks of Port Fairy - Port Fairy by the sea
And the rollers from the ocean are always calling me;
The fields of purple barley - the boat that seaward
steams,
In visions of a shining past, rise ever in my dreams.’

The fifth verse, however, caught our eye and reads as follows,

‘Not far from green Port Fairy sleeps the martyred
youth McLean,
‘Tween the sunset and Port Fairy is Ryan’s homestead
seen;
Where sunned in sheltered hollows, the brooding
sheoaks croon
The spirit-moving melodies of wave and wind and
dune.’

Footnotes explained that the references were to the boyhood home of T. J. Ryan, the former Premier of Queensland, and to McLean who was ‘buried at Illowa by the Australian Workers’ Union’. But who was ‘the martyred youth’ and what is his story?

William John McLean is regarded as the first Australian to die for his trade union beliefs. In 1894 he left his home to go shearing in N.S.W. On 26 August, at Grasmere wool shed on Natalie station near Wilcannia, McLean was one of a group of around 100 unionists who arrived after dark outside a hut occupied by non-union labour from New Zealand. The police who were stationed nearby came upon the scene and were told by the unionists that they were armed and that they intended to take the non-unionists away.

Senior-Sergeant McDonagh replied that the police would not allow the men to be interfered with, but he was felled by a blow to the head with a stick. At this the unionists rushed the hut and knocked the door down with a battering ram. The police fired some shots, but so too did the non-unionists. William McLean and John Murphy were both shot and the unionists retreated. The police followed them and arrested six of their number as well as the wounded men, who were carried on a buggy to Wilcannia.

About three miles from the town, a group of around 500 unionists attempted to stop the police and to release the eight unionists who had been arrested. However, the police drew their pistols and the unionists allowed the group to proceed.

A doctor examined McLean and Murphy and found that

the former had been shot in the chest. A bullet was extracted an inch below the left shoulder blade and an inch from his spine. He was declared to be ‘in a very critical condition’.

On 18 October 1894, McLean, by then recovered to some extent, was put on trial at Broken Hill with the seven other men. They were charged with riot, assault with riot, and unlawful assemblage.

Senior-Sergeant McDonagh described the evening’s events and swore that the police had not fired at the unionists, merely in the air to frighten them. Indeed, one of the non-unionists, Arthur Baker, testified to the fact that he had fired the shots that wounded McLean and Murphy ‘because he considered his life was in danger’.

Mr. Justice Stephen found the men guilty of riot. He made a number of comments about non-unionists being justified in arming themselves to deter such attacks and, while not encouraging the use of firearms, felt the non-unionists had a right to defend themselves. He added that, ‘He sympathised with union men and thought unionism a good thing, but when they broke the laws of their country

his sympathy was no longer with them’.

It is said that Arthur Baker was later rewarded with a gold medal and that the pastoralists raised money for him.

McLean, meanwhile, was sentenced to three years hard labour but it became obvious that his health was deteriorating. He was released, some say, because the authorities did not want him to die in a prison hospital. His death occurred on 22 March 1896 when he was still only 26.

McLean was buried at Tower Hill Cemetery and his grave (*left*) is marked by a broken granite column, representing a life cut short. This was paid for by his friends who collected £90 and sent

it to McLean’s mother, Emma.

The grave became something of a shrine for trade unionists and in April 1930 around 500 people gathered in the Cemetery. Mr. J. McNeill, MHR for Wannon, told the crowd that ‘He remembered men shearing in the Western District of Victoria for one penny per sheep, with shed hands as low as 5/- per week. A shearer in those days was scarcely the owner of his soul’.

In 1936, on the fortieth anniversary of McLean’s death, there was a second pilgrimage of unionists from all over Australia, but particularly from the Australian Workers’ Union which was holding its jubilee conference in Ballarat. Subsequently there seem to have been no large gatherings although it is clear that McLean’s ‘sacrifice’ is still remembered by the union movement.



Gentleman vs. Players

A letter to the Editor of the *Banner of Belfast* from 'Scout', published on 20 January 1869, asked a very pertinent question:

'Sir, - Can you inform me whether it is usual in most Cricket Clubs to confine the batting and bowling to one or two individuals, as is done in Belfast? And whether fielding is now dispensed with; for on one or two occasions I have noticed when on the Cricket ground, that all the players stay about the wickets which, when I used to play cricket, was the place for the bowler and batter?'

The Editor had appended a note in which he said that he did not think that this was the normal state of things and that 'all those who can bowl should especially practice', perhaps suggesting that the club was not spoiled for choice. He ended by saying that he hoped the B.C.C. would 'not lose sight of the Warrnambool match'.

That match took place in February, with a return game in March, and it is instructive to see how far Scout's criticism was reasonable.

Over the two games, Warrnambool batted four times. Two Belfast bowlers took all the wickets, Ireland taking eleven wickets in the first game and nine in the second, and Whitehead taking six wickets in the first game and nine in the second. The other batsmen dismissed were run out and there is no evidence that anyone else bowled.

The Belfast scorecard for the first game was not reproduced in the newspapers, although the team won; however, in the second match, Ireland opened the batting for Belfast but, in his two innings, made just two runs. Whitehead batted at number 5 and scored just one run in his two innings. Fulford - assumed to be the Anglican Rev. Jonathan Fulford - scored an aggregate 28 runs, the next highest 'score' being Sundries with 19. Even so, this was sufficient for Belfast to again win the match and enough to suggest that Scout's comments were accurate. Incidentally, it appears that, over the two matches, just one boundary was scored, which may well explain the lack of deep fielders.

The 'Ireland' referred to was John de Courcy Ireland. In September 1867, he was appointed Landing Waiter (4th Class) at Port Fairy - a customs official who oversaw the landing of goods. Less than two weeks later he was additionally appointed Keeper of the Port Fairy Powder Magazine. In May of the following year he was appointed Acting Collector of Customs and Acting Collector of Imposts, positions which he subsequently held from time to time. Then, in January 1874 he was appointed Collector of Customs at Wodonga, which is where he died in the following August, aged 29, having suffered for some time from 'pulmonary consumption'.

Upon his death the *Town and Country Journal* revealed that he was 'the son of the eminent Melbourne barrister and took a prominent part in some of the stirring events in Fiji'. In fact John was the nephew of Richard Davis Ireland Q.C., a man who was said 'to have made and spent four fortunes'.

A true son of Richard Ireland, De Courcy Ireland, had been a successful plantation owner in Fiji but had been detained on HMS *Dido*, in February 1873, against his will, when it was claimed that he had fomented a rebellion against the *de facto* Fijian Government. This resulted in a significant court case two years later when De Courcy Ireland sought compensation of £10,000 from a Naval Commodore for his detention on the ship. But the involvement in those events of a Port Fairy Customs official is far from certain.

Saving the Day

On 22 June 1931 the *Casino* experienced a serious difficulty at Portland. The problem and how it was resolved was referred to later in that year at the Belfast & Koroit Steam Navigation Company's Annual Meeting.

While the ship had been attempting to berth, a trailing stern line had become caught in her turning propeller. As a consequence, it became wrapped around it so tightly that the propeller jammed. The consequence of this was that the *Casino* was still moving forwards but the Captain had little, if any, control over her movements.

As a result the vessel caught the corner of the lifeboat shed, hit the davits that held the pilot boat and began to bump her way along the wharf. It seemed inevitable that she would run ashore.

In the nick of time, two Portland fishermen, Alf and Charlie Fredericks, saw what was happening and dexterously used their shark fishing boat, the 42-foot *Rachel Irene*, to slow down the *Casino* and then to nudge her towards her berth. This, at least, is one version of events although an alternative account states that they actually towed the *Casino* to her berth.

The story was taken up by the Company Chairman, E. W. Powling, who reported at the Annual Meeting that,

'The chief officer (David Peter Sinclair) was a very worthy man, and had recently proved his value to the Company in a very commendable way. ... Despite the fact that it was the middle of winter Mr Sinclair had dived into the water several times, continuously cutting away, with a sharp knife, the 3-inch rope which had become entangled in the propeller. It could be well imagined what a laborious and hard undertaking this had been, but Mr Sinclair had succeeded in his task. If this had not been done, it would have meant securing a diver from Melbourne, and a consequent disorganisation of the steamer's schedule.'

Mr. Powling added that, although little publicity had been given to the incident - and certainly the *Portland Guardian* carried no mention of the story - Sinclair had been thanked by the Company.

David Sinclair's captain at this time was John Gilchrist Middleton, who was one of the ten crew members lost when the *Casino* sank at Apollo Bay a year later. David Sinclair was fortunate in taking leave just before the *Casino* tragedy, but drowned in the *Coramba* disaster in 1934.



The Fishermen's Memorial

Most readers will be familiar with the Fishermen's Memorial at Martin's Point, sponsored by the Lions and unveiled on 19 October 1985. Eighteen names are listed and it comes as a shock to understand some of the relationships that existed within that tight group, including three brothers who were drowned on different occasions over more than thirty years. But who were these men and how did they meet their ends?

Thomas (Wrixon) Johnstone – 24 May 1881. During the morning, Thomas Johnstone (otherwise known as Wrixon) had caught a large number of barracouta and had then retired to a public house to celebrate the fact. Being intoxicated, he decided to try his luck a second time but was caught by a squall which capsized his boat. This was witnessed from the shore and two boats went out in an attempt to rescue him. The boat and sails

were recovered but Johnstone's body was not found for some time. Subsequently, it was revealed that Johnstone had attempted to persuade two of his adolescent sons to accompany him, but they had refused, so probably saving their lives.

George Gregory – 16 April 1861. What was described as 'a tornado' sank a boat carrying four men at Port Fairy. Two of the men were drowned - George Best, 32, a saddler who had lived in the town for many years, and a lighterman, initially reported to be named McDonald. Thomas Pearson, who rescued the two survivors in a small boat, recorded that the other drowned man was, in fact, named George Gregory rather than McDonald.

George Jellard and Edward Burley – 11 September 1879. In trying to enter the South West passage, a fishing boat containing Michael Prior, George Jellard and Edward Burley 'was capsized by a roller'. Prior got to shore but Jellard and Burley were drowned and their bodies not recovered until the following morning. A magisterial inquiry was held and the inevitable verdict of accidental drowning was recorded. The funeral procession for the two dead men was said to have been the longest yet seen in Belfast.

George Williams – 27 November 1895. George Williams and Frederick Presnell had been fishing for salmon in a centre-board boat, *Mayflower*, and were returning to the river just after sunset. The *Argus* reported that, 'While crossing the patch of shallow water east of the black buoy a blind roller suddenly struck the boat, and

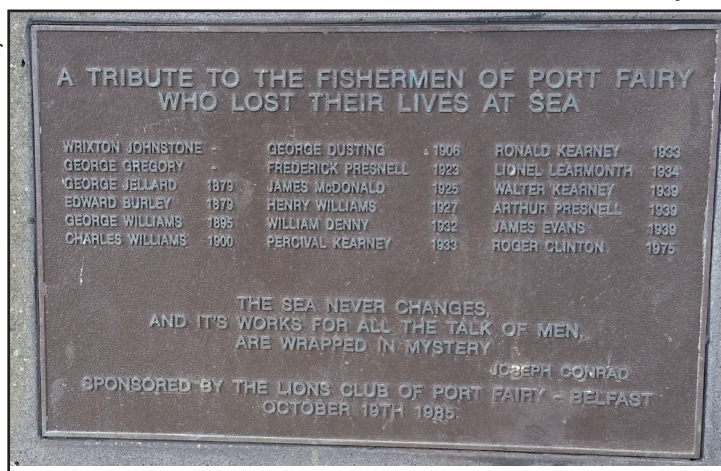
completely swamped her, the craft immediately sinking stern foremost'. As the boat went down, Presnell caught hold of the mast and was in the water for an hour before being saved by the Lighthouse Keeper, Henry Bucher. But George Williams, a strong swimmer, disappeared beneath the waves. He was said to have been married just four months previously, was a good cricketer and the best footballer in the district.

Charles Williams – 16 July 1900. Charlie Williams, 25, and his married brother, James, set out in their fishing-boat, the *Ethel May*, between 8am and 9am. Having emerged from the Moyne River, they were crossing The Patches when a wave overturned their boat. Samuel Thomas was following them in his boat and was able to throw a line to James and to haul him to safety. But Charlie Williams could not swim and was swallowed up by

the sea. Later on, the boat was thrown up on the beach but no sign of Charles could be found. Charles and James were brothers of George Williams who had perished in the same place almost five years previously.

George Dusting – 2 December 1905. George Henry Dusting, a Port Fairy fisherman, was drowned when a storm overtook his boat, *Melba*, a 26-foot centre-board vessel, as he was returning from Portland to the town. The Portland lifeboat was sent to search for him, a trip that afterwards ended in some controversy. The Government paid out £60, of which £40 went to the owners of the steamer *Australian*, which towed the lifeboat out to sea. Over £17 was paid to the lifeboat crew and it was considered surprising that they had accepted the money, given that 'it was at their own pressing request that permission was given to use the lifeboat'. Of the 13-member lifeboat crew, four had the surname Dusting. The dead man left a widow and two children, but his wife died of heart failure in February 1908, at the age of 29, leaving their two young children orphans.

Frederick Presnell – 23 September 1918. An experienced fisherman, Frederick Percy Presnell, who had been rescued by Henry Bucher in 1895, was drowned off Port Fairy while fishing from a dinghy, close in to shore. His motor yacht was some distance away in the charge of Leslie Bull, an inexperienced young man. When Presnell signalled for Bull to bring the yacht closer, Bull accidentally drove it on to a reef. Presnell then went to save both Bull and the yacht but quickly got in to difficulties himself. Bull



managed to struggle to the shore through surf and kelp, and then raised the alarm. Unfortunately, no sign of Presnell could be found despite an extensive search being made until darkness fell. Frederick Presnell, who was fifty-six years old, left a wife, Margaret, and four children.

James McDonald – 5 May 1925. James McDonald and his two brothers, Donald and John, left the wharf in their motor-boat at 4am to recover their crayfish pots off Julia Percy Island. The morning was very foggy and, when about four miles out, the boat hit rocks and quickly sank. The three men had just enough time to throw off their clothes and swim to the shore, which was no great distance away. Unfortunately James did not make it, becoming entangled in seaweed, and was not seen again. Donald and John later said that they had become disoriented because of the fog and did not hear the sound of the breakers above the noise of the boat's engine.

Henry Williams – 18 November 1927. Henry Williams had been returning to his home at Port Fairy East with his wife when he remembered that he had something to attend to on board his boat. Subsequently, his body was taken out of the river and it was assumed that he had fallen in to the water and become trapped beneath the boat. Henry was the brother of George and Charles Williams who had drowned decades earlier.

William Denny – 22 August 1954 (not 1932 as stated on the memorial). William 'Ginger' Denny, a professional fisherman of Campbell Street, was drowned off the coast of Port Fairy. It was his habit, on Sundays, to take out a small dinghy to fish or tend to his lobster pots to the west of Boarding School Bay. On Sunday evening his dinghy was found, containing his shoes and socks. His body was not found until the following Wednesday. Exactly how his death occurred is not known because, even though he was 75 years old, he was a strong swimmer and had over 60 years' experience of local conditions. He left his wife, Violet, two sons, Wilfred and Xavier, and four daughters, Violet, Nellie, Dorothy and Isabella.

Percival Kearney and **Ronald Kearney** – 16 October 1933. Three Port Fairy men died when the motor boat from which they were fishing capsized. The men had earlier left the River Moyne intending to catch trumpeter off Boarding School Bay. The alarm was raised by a boy named Oakes who saw the incident from the window of the State School. Searchers found parts of the boat but no trace of the men who were W. E. Willson, licensee of the Commercial Hotel; Percy Kearney, a fisherman; and, Roy Kearney, his son and agent for the Port Fairy fishermen. Percy Kearney was a widower, but Willson left a widow and four daughters and Ronald Kearney a widow and two children.

Lionel Learmonth – 21 April 1934. In 1932 Lionel Pearson Learmonth had bought the 25-ton ketch *Saguenay* in order to catch crayfish. In April 1934 he sailed from Port Fairy to Melbourne where he paid off his crew of four and hired replacements. The ketch then sailed for New Year

Island in the Bass Strait. Unfortunately, a storm blew up, the ship was wrecked and four members of the crew were drowned, including Learmonth. He was 44, weighed 20 stone and did not hold a master's certificate. He left a widow and two young children. His brother, Captain Basil Learmonth, would normally have accompanied him on the *Saguenay* but decided, on this occasion, to attend the Anzac Day ceremonies in Melbourne.

Walter Kearney – 2 April 1939. Port Fairy fisherman Walter Tasman Kearney was drowned in the sea off Dennington, his body being subsequently found on the beach at Warrnambool. He had left home at 7.30am, telling his wife, Margaret, that he was going fishing and would then set his lobster pots. John Thomas Pettingill, another Port Fairy fisherman, had seen Walter Kearney at around 10am on 2 April when the latter told him that he had enough fish and was off to set his pots. Pettingill's best guess was that Kearney had motored around a fouled pot in order to loosen it but that his legs had then become entangled in the rope attached to the pot and that he had eventually been pulled in to the sea. Victor Ronald Artis, who had gone to lift the pots on 5 April, had found one of them fouled and agreed with Pettingill that the likeliest explanation was that Kearney had been pulled in to the sea. On 7 April Walter's wife was asked to identify a guernsey found on the dead man, although his brother, Albert George Kearney, identified the body. Walter Kearney left a widow and three children with no adequate means of support.

Arthur Presnell and **James Evans** – 23 April 1939. Following the drowning of Walter Kearney on 2 April, a party of around fourteen men from Port Fairy set out to refloat and tow back to the Moyne Kearney's motor boat which was beached near Illowa. A separate group of about thirty men went by road to assist with the recovery. A large vessel, the *Bluenose*, took an 18-foot net boat that was to be used by a landing party to secure lines to the stranded vessel. Unfortunately, the conditions proved more treacherous than expected and the landing party misinterpreted signals from the men on the beach not to proceed. The result was that James Evans, 41, of Port Fairy was drowned, and Arthur Presnell, 60, of Port Fairy went missing, believed to have been washed out to sea. Arthur was the brother of Frederick Presnell who drowned in 1918. Ronald Artis, 22, was heroically rescued by S. Tyson, one of the land party. Artis was hospitalized 'suffering from immersion and shock'. Over 400 people attended James Evans' funeral: he left a widow and two young children. Subsequently an Appeal Fund was established to support the dependents of Kearney, Evans and Presnell.

Roger Clinton – 16 July 1975. Roger Clinton, who was 29, drowned when his fishing boat capsized off the town. His companion, John Phillips, of Research, was also drowned. A land and sea search failed to find any trace of either man. ❀❀❀

The 1919 Pandemic

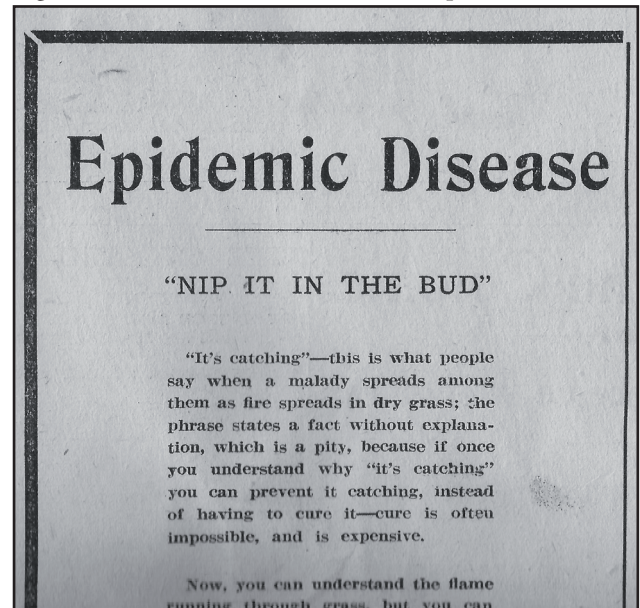
In our last issue, Andrea Coney asked, 'I wonder how the "Spanish flu" impacted Port Fairy at the end of World War One?'. Then, Joan Powling came across a copy of *The Herald* for 30 January 1919, a date close to the start of the influenza pandemic of that year, at least in Australia.

The first known Australian infection had been in Melbourne in that same month and had possibly been brought in to the country by a returning serviceman. Within a few weeks, Melbourne had become a place to avoid whenever possible, and excursion trains to Port Fairy and other resorts were cancelled. Train services between Victoria and South Australia were suspended.

Fears that this particularly dangerous form of influenza was on its way to Australia had been held for some months. On 21 November 1918, *The Gazette* reported that the death toll in the USA was already 82,000 - more than the casualties sustained by that country's army in France.

The Herald reported that Dr. R. McMeekin of the Melbourne Hospital had given his opinion that the disease was the same as that which had occurred in New Zealand and England, and was known as 'Spanish influenza'. This was because some authorities were insisting that it was

church services could go ahead as long as everyone wore a face mask. As a result, it was suggested that hymn singing might have to be eliminated for a short period!



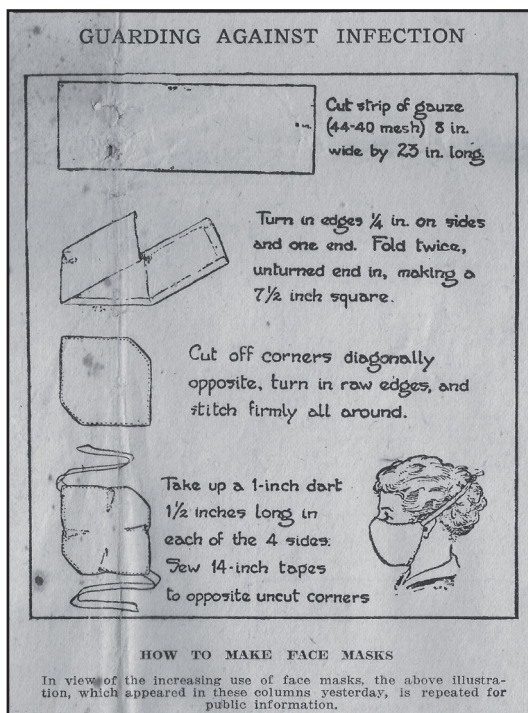
For those wishing to make their own masks, the set of instructions (*left*) was displayed on the front page of the newspaper. It is interesting that, in Melbourne, many people were said to have expressed a willingness to wear a mask 'but have refrained from doing so owing to the fear of being laughed at'. It was recorded that the clerks at the Commonwealth Bank had worn them, as had some Town Hall staff whose duties put them in direct contact with the public.

In January 1919, the view was that state schools might be used as hospitals and that libraries and art galleries should close. Factories and 'dining rooms' were to close only if necessary. It was stated that 'Generally the idea was not to interfere with essentials until it was imperative'.

It should be noted that these were merely the initial reactions to the epidemic, which was still in its infancy. One point of interest is that *The Herald* carried a large and portentous advertisement, part of which is shown above, headed 'Epidemic Disease' and, to all appearances, possibly an official pronouncement. It is only when you read down to the third paragraph that you realise that it is, in fact, an advertisement for Lifebuoy Soap!

Meanwhile, in Port Fairy, there was a sense that the epidemic was a distant problem and that there was little to worry about. References to anything approximating to 'social distancing' are few and far between, although on 9 December 1918, *The Gazette* reported the receipt of a circular from the City Health Officer suggesting people should not kiss anyone with a sore throat and should exercise care with regard to 'spitting, sneezing and coughing'.

On 28 April 1919, *The Gazette* quoted a letter from a resident of Melbourne: 'The influenza is very bad here at present, and people seem to be dying all over the place. It



a milder form of influenza that had arrived in Australia in the previous September. Dr. McMeekin also said that, 'In other countries the epidemics have started quietly. In some cases they lasted two or three weeks and died down, only to recur with intense severity'. He added that, 'The high death rate among young people was a feature of the epidemic in Europe and America'.

Individuals going into quarantine did so for seven days. It had been decided that 'Public meetings of persons exceeding 20, including lodge meetings held indoors, would be prohibited'. Sunday schools had been closed but

is to be hoped that no cases appear in Port Fairy'. In reality, Charles Lowe had already spent two days of a ten-day stay in the hospital suffering from the virus, to be joined on 1 May by George Irons.

On the latter date, *The Gazette* reported that an appeal had been made for a thousand women to help staff the hospitals in Melbourne and suggested that 'some of those tender-hearted ladies who used to send white feathers to men who had not gone to the war should now give some proof of their own pluck'.

On 5 May *The Gazette* told its readers that, in the Hawkesdale division of Minhamite Shire, 132 people had been inoculated once and 116 people twice. The vaccine was supplied free by the Government although Dr. Sweetman charged 10s. 'for each double operation'.

Any rules about social gatherings seem to have been entirely discarded. Just before the peak of the epidemic locally, *The Gazette* was able to report that, on 7 May 1919, 'A sumptuous wedding breakfast was partaken of by a large number of guests in the Yambuk Hall, and the event was further celebrated by a party at night'. At the same time, a Naval Dance to be held in the Drill Hall on 14 May was widely advertised, with drags organised to bring people in from Koroit and Dennington.

On 13 May the Hospital Committee met and it was noted that there were 27 in-patients, including Nurse D. M. Storey (influenza) and trainee nurse Rita Hayres (scarlet fever). The Medical Officer, Dr. Keith Hartridge was unable to attend, being laid up in bed with the virus.

In the following fortnight there were a further twenty-four admissions for influenza, of whom three died. The first of these was Bridget McMahon of Rosebrook, a 38-year-old married woman with two children. Three days later, Nurse Nellie Smith died. She was 24 and had been nursing relatives named Martin at Yambuk. Her father was Ray Smith, a Port Fairy watch repairer.

Nurse Smith's death was quickly followed by that of Mary Ann Lane who died at home in James Street. She had been expecting to see her son, Private Dan Lane, in the following month when he was due to return from Europe. Mrs. Lane appeared to have only a cold but was found dead in her bed one morning.

On 26 May, *The Gazette* reported that,

'A slight deviation from the usual routine of patrons of picture shows in the Lecture hall was given on Saturday night last, when smoking was greatly indulged in by the majority of the gentlemen present.

This was considered to be a preventative for influenza.

It is expected that the ladies will be at it next.'

Two days later, Mary Fox, a 27-year-old married woman of Albert Street was the third victim to die in the Hospital. Her husband was a dealer named William Fox and the couple had four young children.

On 2 June *The Gazette* recorded that there were 'scores of families in the borough and district confined to their homes with colds' - almost certainly influenza cases. A Koroit man who had visited Killarney on the previous day

had found so many families down with influenza that he had quickly fled home in some alarm. A Crossley resident commented that it was 'pitiful' that sufferers in that district were having to leave their beds to milk the cows and then crawl back between the sheets.

For some the penny now dropped and a hospital ball at Orford was cancelled. In Macarthur there was discussion about closing public halls and that old prohibition on assemblies of more than 20 persons was suddenly remembered.

Belfast Shire Council was reported on 9 June to have retained the services of a Nurse Humbert at four guineas a week, plus expenses, to visit the sick in the Kirkstall and Moyne riding. A motor car had been placed at her disposal and there were misgivings about the fact that a Mr. Thacker had to be paid two pounds a day for providing the car and acting as driver. Indeed, Councillors Moloney and Lane 'thought the worst of the trouble was now over, and the patients were rapidly recovering'. It was decided to retain Nurse Humbert for one additional week, but to make anyone requiring her services pay the cost of transport from Port Fairy!

In mid-June Dr. Hartridge reported to the Port Fairy Borough Council that the outbreak had started in the first week of May and slackened off at the start of June. He claimed that it had ended as quickly as it had begun although sporadic cases were still occurring. Moreover, 'the great feature of the epidemic was its mildness', only one death having occurred in the Borough [*sic*]. He said that those who 'immediately laid down to the disease did not suffer from its dangerous complications'. He estimated that at least 100 or more cases had occurred (the true figure must have been far larger). The available hospital beds had been increased to 28 and four additional nursing staff had been procured from Melbourne. Only the most severe cases had been sent to the Hospital. In some instances whole families had been stricken and the Red Cross had distributed food where necessary. He recognised that the isolation of patients and contacts was the only sure way to contain the disease and expected another wave of the virus, more virulent than the first.

The total cost of the epidemic to the Borough Council was calculated to be £130 15s. 2d although it was hoped to recoup much of this from patients who had received treatment and who had the means to pay.

Two more deaths in hospital quickly occurred. On 16 June, William Shuttle, who was just 28, died and, on 22 June, six-year-old Donald McLean Bruce of Gipps Street passed away after one day in hospital.

It is also worth recalling that at least three men from Port Fairy died from complications arising from influenza, contracted while serving in Europe. Thus we can say that at least nine local people died.

It is estimated that, eventually, 40% of Australia's population fell ill and around 15,000 people died. However, this was just 0.3% of the 50 million deaths that occurred around the world in this horrifying pandemic. ❧❧❧

Unconsidered Trifles

On 3 July 1900, the *Gazette* reported that the bonus offered by Belfast Shire Council to residents killing rats had been claimed in only one instance. A resident of Killarney had presented the Council with a collection of 193 corpses.



On 7 July 1941, H. E. Digby wrote to the *Gazette* about the delicate subject of 'sanitary conveniences', or rather the lack of them at the wharf. Although he had been pestering the Council about the matter for two years, in the last four or five months the situation had been exacerbated by the closure of the Shipping Company's conveniences. Nature had been allowed to take its course and now 'the filth at places is disgusting'. Digby had made various suggestions, such as moving the disused men's conveniences from East Beach down to the wharf, but the Council had said the building would not comply with the Health Act. He also made this telling point: 'If anything to do with improvements for visitors or sporting bodies is asked for, it is always granted to them, yet a large body of ratepayers who keep the town going by paying their rates - if not, they are sued at the court - get no consideration'.



On 17 November 1934, a musical pageant of Port Fairy's history, entitled 'Milestones', was staged before an audience of over 200 at the Lecture Hall. The production required more than thirty performers and was written by J. W. Powling. The first scene was based on Captain Wishart's supposed arrival at Port Fairy in 1810, after which scenes depicted 'the purchase of Port Fairy settlement by James Atkinson, a scene in the local Merrijig, the arrival of Governor Barkly at Port Fairy, the syndicate land sale in 1885, the opening of the railway to Port Fairy in 1887, the Boer and Great Wars'. 'Milestones', which was produced by Dr. H. V. Francis, included a number of song and dance numbers.



On 7 December 1903, a special train transporting Fitzgerald Brothers' Circus from Warrnambool to Port Fairy was brought to a standstill between Illowa and Koroit by a plague of caterpillars. The caterpillars were said to be so dense in some places that the rails could not be seen. The wheels of the engine could not grip and so the locomotive had to proceed to Koroit with just half the carriages, returning later for the remainder.



A proposal to establish a snake farm and miniature zoo at 15 Bank Street was considered by Port Fairy Borough Council on 29 March 1967. Only one kind of snake was proposed to be kept, the Queensland carpet snake, while the zoo exhibits would include large rabbits and similar animals. The proposal came from Colin Dicks, proprietor of the Book Exchange at that address. He claimed that the carpet snake was 'quite harmless' and

'as affectionate as a kitten'. The Councillors seemed at a loss but eventually advised Mr. Dicks that he would need 'Departmental approval' if setting up a zoo. Having consulted the bureaucrats in Melbourne, Mr. Dicks later modified his proposal to a snake farm only.



Later that year, on 11 December 1967, 13 World War One veterans were guests of the Port Fairy R.S.L. This was the third occasion on which the branch had organised such a function. The thirteen men were Jim Cruickshank, Ernie Arnold, Charlie Fuller, Lou Richardson, Cecil Watts, Jack Ray, Howard Dunn, Jack McNamara, Les Graham, Bill Robertson, Steve Pampllett, Joe Costello and George Fitzgerald. During the evening, a visitor to Port Fairy brought his portable TV to the R.S.L. and the company sat down to watch the Lionel Rose v. Rocky Gattellari boxing match.



On 2 May 1851, the Bishop of Melbourne, Charles Perry, and his wife, Frances 'Fanny' Perry, arrived in Belfast, staying at 'Mr. Rutledge's'. At just that time it was being reported that the Bishop had recently delivered a sermon against hot cross buns. *Freeman's Journal*, a Sydney newspaper, commented that, 'We wonder whether it was against the *buns*, or the *cross*, that his Lordship inveighed. We strongly suspect that the *Popery* of the buns was too strong for his Lordship's Anglican digestion'.



On the night of 21 May 1874, a man from Port Fairy named George Ryan reported to the Melbourne police that he had been robbed of between £170 and £180. Detectives immediately set about discovering who had stolen the cash but then, on the following day, Ryan advised the police that he had found the money in the lining of his coat.



The Port Fairy Citizens' Band appeared on BTV-6 as part of the opening of the new translator station at Tower Hill on 18 June 1966. The Band had to travel to Ballarat for the programme which was due to feature a number of other local artists.



Exactly thirty-three years earlier, on 18 June 1933, several hundred people attended a meeting called by the Mayor, Councillor Robert Stephen, to protest the decision of the Charities Board to close the Port Fairy Hospital at the end of June. The inspector of charities, Mr. C. L. McVilly, advised the meeting that the cost of maintaining each bed in the hospital in the previous year had been £200 - twice what an efficient hospital, such as Warrnambool, was able to achieve. Considerable scepticism was expressed that a new building alone could achieve such a reduction. Mr. McVilly was nevertheless adamant that the present building should either be demolished or remodelled. ☺

Christ Church, Tower Hill

A visitor to the Museum in March of this year spoke of an ancestor who had been christened at the Tower Hill Anglican Church. But where was this building?

An article about Tower Hill that appeared in *The Gazette* on 16 June 1966, credited to the Fisheries and Wildlife Department, tells us that Christ Church was situated on the rim of Tower Hill, 'overlooking the bank of the south side immediately adjacent to the bend in the Prince's Highway as it leaves the rim to run down to Port Fairy'. The article adds that it was used as a church until 1871 and that it was 'a prefabricated iron structure costing £830'. Because of its relative prominence, it had been used by some as a landmark to fix the possible location of the Mahogany Ship!

The article added that the site of the church had completely disappeared during excavations for scoria.



The Rev. Louis Alexander Baker was minister of the church (seen above in *Joseph H. Soden's photograph*) for some fifteen years, between 1855 and 1870, and the iron structure was eventually made less stark by a covering of ivy. However, it was intolerably hot in summer and obviously built in the wrong location, given the centres of population that subsequently grew up.

Rev. Baker had originally been a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and had practised in England and India, coming to Australia at the time of the gold rushes. He subsequently decided that his future lay as a minister of the church.

In 1865, Rev. Baker's wife, Mary, died and in the following year he married Hannah Davies, daughter of a clergyman from Devon. Baker was subsequently responsible for initiating the building of St. Paul's Anglican church at Koroit, the preferred location for a new place of worship. The church's foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Melbourne on 8 March 1870, and in the church is a three-light memorial window by Ferguson & Urie, dedicated to Mary Baker's memory. Rev. Baker soon left to take up a position at Ballan.

The need for a parsonage at Koroit led to the strange decision to relocate the former iron church to that town; 'strange' because what had been an uncomfortable place in which to worship for a few hours each week, became, in summer, a veritable oven for the minister and his family.

Thus, in 1879, it was agreed to add additional rooms to the iron building in the hope of making it larger, more comfortable and attractive. These were said to cost some £300. Consequently, the iron parsonage was still in use during the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

Rev. L. A. Baker, who laboured so long in that comfortless church, died of typhoid in Geelong in 1889 at the age of 76. His burial place is embellished with a large stone cross taken from the original church of St. Paul in Melbourne, which was dismantled in 1885 to make way for St. Paul's Cathedral. The cross is an unusual and over-sized architectural feature to place on a grave. ✠✠

Culinary Hints

'Banana Twists

"Nancy" (Port Fairy) - This recipe is probably the one you want. Two bananas, 2oz. cornflour, 2oz. castor sugar, 3 oz. butter, 7oz. flour, one teaspoon baking powder, yolk of one egg, a little vanilla essence, milk to mix. Sift flour, rising and cornflour. Cream butter and sugar, add egg yolk, and beat well, then the mashed bananas, sifted flour, vanilla essence, and sufficient milk to make a stiff paste. Roll out thinly on a floured board, cut into strips 7 inches long, twist each strip and cross the two ends. Bake on a slightly greased tin in a moderate oven until biscuit colour (about 15 minutes).'

The Argus, 16 March 1938

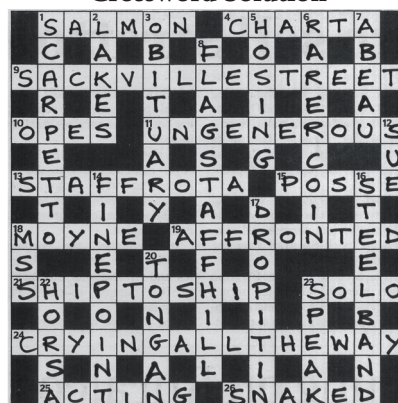
'Buffet Casserole

Six small potatoes, 6 small carrots, 1 cup peas, 1 small cauliflower, 8 oz. cheese, ¾ cup milk, parsley. Cook all vegetables, then place in a casserole. Melt cheese with milk, pour over vegetables and brown in hot oven.' — Mrs A. L. McLauchlan, Post Office, Port Fairy, Vic. *Weekly Times*, 17 January 1951

'This Buffet Dinner for Twelve won £100 for Mrs. V. Walliker, of Port Fairy, Victoria. The menu includes mint julep, cocktail stick savories, spaghetti with meat balls, and delicious chicken and mushroom casserole; also mimosa eggs, potato salad, strawberry meringue, chocolate velvet.'

Womens' Weekly, 17 September 1949

Crossword Solution



Port Fairy Historical Society

President: Andrea Coney

0457 777330

Vice President: Peter Grenfell

5568 3004

Secretary: Anne McLean (on leave)

5568 1828

Treasurer / Interim Secretary:

Graeme Kershaw

5568 2791

Family Research: Lyn Brown

5568 1266

Collections Manager: Lynda Tieman

5568 1432

Committee Members:

Margaret Collins 5568 2339

Carol Heard 0418 567437

Heather Templeton 5568 1515

Jan Willey 5568 1496

Virginia Mack 0423 634 918

Debra Walker 5568 2781

Museum and Archives:

30 Gipps Street, Port Fairy, 3284

Website: www.historicalsociety.port-fairy.com

Phone: (03) 5568 2263

Email: pfhsmuseumandarchives@gmail.com

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