



**Established 1963**

# PORT FAIRY POST

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PORT FAIRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**VOL. 10 NO.2 MARCH / APRIL 2021**

### Letter from the President

Dear Members,

As we settle into 2021 we are planning a number of new projects and ventures. Lynda Tieman and I have registered to complete a Cultural Capability Training Course for regional museums as a key component of the implementation of First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries. We look forward to the opportunity, over the next six months, to advance our cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity to focus on specific skills and behaviours. We will be provided with the opportunity to further enrich our current understanding and awareness of the First Peoples' knowledge and heritage, and the multitude of behaviours that frame their unique culture.

Further training sessions with Victorian Collections are also being undertaken by a number of our committee members. These workshops and training session focus on the process of cataloguing in the Victorian Collections system and cover basic principles of collection management, object handling and digitisation. Victorian Collections is a web-based, collection management and publishing system. It is a database of records and provides access to the cataloguing tool that we are using to record our items. We are very fortunate to have access to this resource as a way of creating a central portal to our rich cultural heritage and diverse history. You may be interested in exploring the database at [ <https://victoriancollections.net.au> ]

Judith Kershaw, Lynda Tieman and Carol Heard will represent our Society at the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies in Stawell on April 10 and we look forward to a report from our attending members on this Annual General Meeting.

Debra Walker and Peter Grenfell have commenced working on a project to produce greeting cards. What has resulted are delightful cards depicting birds of Port Fairy from Peter's extensive collection of photographs. You may like to drop by and view these on sale at the Museum while also enjoying our new exhibition on the life of Annie Baxter. We have also decided on the sale of a small selection of photographs from our collection as the demand for this service has increased significantly partly due to the very engaging display at The Mill, Port Fairy that was instigated by Anne McLean.

Jan Willey, Carol Heard and Heather Templeton have commenced recording the oral histories of some of our long standing community members. The recording of these oral histories provide primary source materials that will preserve the voices, memories and unique perspectives of the people in our community.

Jo Mackenzie, from the Port Fairy Visitors' Information

Centre, (and also a new Society member) has invited us to join the VIC's Ambassadors' Program. Thanks to Glen Foster for representing us in the program which offers another opportunity to promote our Museum and Archives centre. You can view Glen's presentation on our website at

<https://portfairyhistoricalsocietyinc.org.au/visit>

Please note the change of postal address to 30 Gipps Street as the committee has decided that we will cancel our Post Office Box at this stage.

A warm welcome to our newest members Joanne Mackenzie, Clare Murphy, Brian and Elizabeth Kenna, Jude and Bill O'Brien and Sandra Jans and Colin Cleary. We are very pleased to have you join us, a community of members that are committed to preserving and sharing the history and heritage of Port Fairy and the District.

And finally a reminder that PFHS members are invited to two special events next month focusing on Port Fairy's historic lifeboat and reconstructed whaleboat. Ross Knudsen, will be our guest speaker at the museum at 8pm on Tuesday, April 13 to talk about the construction of *The Shearwater* whaleboat. (Ross' talk will follow the general meeting at 7.30pm.)

Members can also view the whaleboat on Friday, April 16 at 1.30pm at the Port Fairy Showgrounds, where it is stored, then visit the historic Port Fairy lifeboat, Lifeboat Shed and slipway in Griffiths Street.

Enjoy this edition of the Port Fairy Post, with contributions from our talented members. It is a delight to read the articles, enjoy the unique "voice" of our writers and wonder at our diverse and often surprising history. Once again a most appreciative thank you to Richard Patterson and Teresa Murphy for their diverse and always interesting contributions and a special thank you to Marten Syme for a most welcome additional piece on the Brig *Sarah*, her Captain Lewis Grant and the rich and entertaining life to be had in Port Fairy and the District.

Kind regards  
Andrea Coney

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## History in the Making

### AGM and Committee Meeting

The Historical Society's Annual General Meeting was held on 9 February. We had intended to include a photograph but, because masks were compulsory for indoor meetings at that stage, the effect was of a gathering of bank robbers, so we decided against it!

The minutes of the meeting were circulated some time ago, although, the names of the Society's new Committee members can also be found on page 14 of this newsletter. Members should also be aware that the Society showed a trading loss of \$2000 in 2020 which, given the lockdown and the historically low interest rates, is about as good a result as might have been expected.

A Committee Meeting was held on 23 February and the following decisions were made:

- A printer / photocopier / scanner is to be leased on a three-year contract at \$120 per month. This charge includes 300 black-and-white and 150 colour copies each month (with a small charge for additional copies), the delivery of toner, and replacement of the machine if it breaks down. It was agreed the convenience was worth the extra cost to the Society.
- A monitor and stand are to be purchased to replace the existing projector and screen setup.
- Teresa Murphy has agreed to be Publicity Officer for the Society.
- Two Wi-Fi-capable laptops will be bought for the museum.
- The Society's post office box is to be cancelled with mail in future to be delivered to a lockable letterbox at 30 Gipps Street, which Graeme Kershaw has already skilfully installed.
- The freezer for preserving vulnerable artefacts, ordered last year, is now up and running. Freezing is the most effective way of killing insects such as silverfish that infest books, papers and other material.
- The Photographic Committee is to meet and make recommendations on the sale of images held by the Society to the public and to businesses. It was recognised that there is an obvious interest in buying historic photographs, but that the Society should decide very carefully what images to sell, how to produce them and the sale price. It is likely that, initially, around 10 images will be selected.

### Annie Baxter

By the time this edition of the *Port Fairy Post* has been issued, a new exhibition celebrating the life and times of Annie Baxter will have opened. This involved a swift turnaround, following the *Tacoma* exhibition, and thanks go to Lynda Tieman and her team. An article on Annie by Judith Kershaw will feature in our next issue.

### Marking Time



Recently, member Jeanette Robertson called in a clockmaker from a distant town to repair her clock. Aware that the Museum's clock had not worked for several years, she asked if we would be interested in her man taking a look at it and, in no time at all, the clock was returned to rude health and has kept excellent time since.

The name on the face declares it to be by Kilpatrick & Co. of London, who also had a branch in Melbourne. The company supplied clocks to various institutions in the state - Victorian Collections has a photograph of a Kilpatrick clock that used to hang in the Mayday Hills Mental Hospital at Beechworth. Our clock is an eight-day timepiece and so requires weekly winding. The face of the clock has been repainted and the pendulum has been remade. As to its age, around 1880 seems a likely date although others may have a more accurate idea.

### Joan Lear

We recently heard of the death of a former member of the Historical Society Joan Lear. Past-President of the Society, Judith Kershaw, writes:

Joan Lear was an enthusiastic long-time member of the Port Fairy Historical Society.

I first met Joan in 1994 at the Monday afternoon work group, where she taught me to catalogue new items for the museum collection.

Joan, and her husband Jack, first came to Port Fairy when he was appointed to the Port Fairy Railway Station, and their children grew up here.

After a later appointment to the Camperdown Station, Jack and Joan returned to Port Fairy to retire.

They were very active members of the community; both of them at the Bowls Club, and Joan at the Historical Society. At one of the New Year's Eve Parades in the 1990s, Joan was the Queen of Moyneyana; later, she resided at Moyneyana House in Port Fairy.

Our condolences go to Joan's family in their sad loss.

# The Lighthouse Keepers 9

## William Ewers

William Ewers was the Assistant Lighthouse Keeper on Griffith Island between 1884 and 1891. In 1879, he married Ellen Whiteside who had been born in County Cork in 1838. William, who came from Stepney in London, had been born in 1841.

It is known that, in October 1880, William was appointed seaman on the West Channel Lightship which, in the following year, was to be replaced by the West Channel Pile Light. Before the end of 1880, however, William was working on the screw-steamer *Pharos*. The *Pharos* was a composite vessel with an iron frame encased in timber. She had replaced the *Leila*, her purpose being to convey equipment and stores to the various coastal lighthouses, and to provide a means of visiting and checking the buoys laid down in Port Phillip.

On Christmas Eve 1880, William moved from S.S. *Pharos* to his first land-based appointment as Assistant Lighthouse-keeper at Wilson's Promontory. He remained in that position until he was appointed to Belfast, on 1 February 1884, in place of Wemyss Thomson who had gone to Shortlands Bluff. In the following year, *The Gazette* noted William Ewers' kindness to John Andersen as the latter sickened and died as Belfast's Lighthouse Keeper.

Little more is known about William's seven years in Belfast, although he gained national press coverage for an incident in August 1891. As a prelude to this, there had been newspaper reports of a gigantic sea serpent seen off the coast of New Zealand, first by a Gisborne surveyor and others, who described it as raising itself 30 or 40 feet out of the sea, and then, in very much the same location, by the crew of the S.S. *Rotomahana*.

At this time 'sea serpent fever' was prevalent. For example, in June 1891, a whale was seen off Port Fairy, although one witness declared it to be 100 yards long and another averred that it was as high out of the water as the *Casino* 'but considerably longer'.

Then, on 11 August, *The Gazette* reported that,

'A few mornings ago as Mr. W. Ewers, the assistant-keeper at the Port Fairy Lighthouse, was undertaking his customary duties, he noticed that a peculiar sea monster was stranded upon the rocks at the end of the island. He at once proceeded to the spot, and found that what had attracted his attention was apparently a fish, having the form of a snake, some 18ft. in length and about 4ft. in circumference at the thickest part. The reptile, or whatever it might have been, was of a silvery colour, and had a peculiar fiddle-shaped head, upon which were fins forming a sort of crest, the eyes being as large as tea-cups. Mr. Ewers made an attempt to haul the thing over the rocks, but was unable, owing to its weight, to get it out of reach of the waves single-handed. It seemed to be dead, however, and he left it with a view to obtaining assistance. The tide was at flood, and before he could return to the spot the water had covered the locality, and the "sea serpent"

had sufficient vitality left to take advantage of the altered circumstances of the case, and to make itself scarce. Mr Ewers informs us that one of the "feelers" of the fish was broken off by him in his endeavours to land it, and remains in his possession as a verification of his encounter with what he believes to have been a young "sea serpent"'.

*The Gazette* subsequently reported that, 'the assistant lighthouse keeper at Port Fairy has at a bound achieved notoriety by means of his encounter with the baby sea serpent'. The newspaper also noted that *The Argus* had printed a 'leaderette' about the incident, suggesting that the sea serpent had previously inhabited the waters off the American coast but was now visiting Australia, being 'a considerate monster'. It noted that a serpent estimated to be some 200 feet in length had been reported by the crew of the S.S. *Rotomahana* and,

'while the serpent was disporting himself at sea, the lighthouse keeper at our own Port Fairy discovered a juvenile serpent, some eighteen feet long lying exhausted on the rocks. ... As the baby was too big for Mr. Ewers to drag fairly on shore, he went in hot haste for assistance, but true to the traditions of its race, the serpent had slipped into the water, and had vanished'.

Shortly after this, William Ewers left Port Fairy and one wonders if the authorities considered that such publicity reflected badly on the sober and conservative lighthouse service.

At this point William vanishes from view although, towards the end of his life, he lived in Williamstown, like so many retired lighthouse keepers. Ellen Ewers died on 10 September 1900 and William made a new will in December, describing himself as a 'retired civil servant'. Just before his death in 1913, William moved to Glenferrie.

In his will, he left around £550 but no real estate; he paid rent until his dying breath and for a day or so after. He left his money to three women - Mary Ann Symonds, Emily Elizabeth Dann and Louisa Aughterson. But by the time of William's death, Mary Ann had predeceased him. Emily Elizabeth Dann had been left half his money and Mary Ann and Louisa one quarter each. Consequently, Mary Ann's portion was shared equally by Emily and Louisa giving them £292 and £175 respectively.

One's first impulse is to assume that these were his married daughters, but there is no evidence that William and Ellen ever had any children. Emily Dann lived in Kennington Road, Lambeth, while Mary Ann and Louisa lived in Dunedin, New Zealand, all three being William's married sisters and all having been born in Whitechapel in the 1840s.

In an act of generosity, William had left the larger part of his estate to the sister who had stayed in England and whose need, presumably, was the greatest. ❀❀❀



## The Sarah's Voyages and Grant

by Marten Syme

In the April-May 2020 edition of *Port Fairy Post* (Vol.9, No.2), the Editor reported on the log of the brig *Sarah*, kept by H R Stevens, Chief Officer, for voyages between June 1848 and October 1849. He viewed the log, lent by Joan Powling, prior to her deposit of the book at the State Library of Victoria. I was very interested in the detail within, but due to the arrival of COVID restrictions and the closure of the Library, it has not been accessioned as yet.

Angela and I purchased the first house of Captain Lewis Grant (whose ship, *Sarah* was the subject of the log) in 1976, and, because the title was still registered under General Law, the second oldest memorial in the collection was the sale of 3 roods and 8 perches (now occupied by nos. 16 and 18 Wishart St) from James Atkinson Esq. to Captain Lewis Grant on 8 October 1855. The memorials provided a sequence of all subsequent financial dealings in the land, so I had a “flying start” to the history of the house. By luck and perseverance, I eventually located, (by March 1979) a trove of manuscript material relating to Lewis Grant and *Sarah*. My research assembled his nautical service and voyages in Australia between 1839 and 1856, when he sold *Sarah* to settle at Belfast (Port Fairy).



*Auckland 1852 – the Queen St wharf. The line of buildings (Shortland St) ascending to St Paul's Church includes the house of Mary Jane's parents. (W D & H O Wills cigarette card)*

Lewis was born at North Shields, on the Tyne River where his father was a gunner in the Royal Artillery, in 1813. His nautical experience included a variety of vessels in the North Sea and Atlantic between 1834 and 1838, and he was probably at sea in earlier years. His first record in Australian waters is as master of *Socrates* sailing from Sydney to Launceston in August 1840 and he was carrying wool from Geelong to London and for a Lloyd's resurvey in April 1841. He was 26 years old and his nine crew averaged 23 years, all born in England. *Socrates* was then owned by John Griffiths, and Grant was later master of other vessels owned by Griffiths, being *William* and *Giraffe*, then, jointly with John Thom, *City of Sydney* and lastly his own vessel, *Sarah*.

The descendant of Grant whom I contacted in 1979 had an extraordinary collection of material relating to Grant, but I will concentrate on *Sarah*. Grant commissioned Sydney boat builder John William Russell, of Pymont, to build a vessel of about 150 tons for £11.10.0 per ton (space capacity) or £1,700 in March 1848. Russell was paid £1,742 for his work, and Grant added £10 per month for his own time. There was a further £646.9.9 for rigging, equipment, transport and sundry fittings, a total of £2,418.9.9. He was then a bachelor, and confided to his colleague and co-share-holder with him in *City of Sydney*, Captain John Thom, that he had “formed a strong resolution to total abstinence”. A week later, he advised “I will not have any feasting or bother at the launching as I do not intend to lay myself open to temptation any more”. He noted that the *Sarah* “came off the stocks this morning (4/4/1848) in first rate stile (sic), we had few or no spectators as it has been raining since yesterday afternoon. She is a beautiful vessel. The draft of water when launched is 4'6” forward and 7'1” aft”.

His initial voyages were detailed in the log (between Sydney and Launceston), then to the Cape of Good Hope. In May 1849 he agreed a charter with John Taylor for six successive voyages to carry coal from Newcastle to Auckland and to return to Sydney with not less than 50 tons of copper regulus (partially smelted copper ore), mined from Kawau Island, in the Hauraki Gulf. The mine was below sea level, and subject to flooding, so the quantity available for loading was often short, giving Grant demurrage fees and free time in Auckland, which he put to good use (although he may have cast off his earlier resolution). He was a visitor to a hotel, kept by Edward George, in central Auckland, where he met George's young daughter Mary Jane. On his third visit to Auckland they married at the Church of St Paul, Waitemata on 17 April 1850, when she was only 16 (family legend has her 15!) and Lewis then 36. It is also understood that they eloped as *Sarah* departed a week later, with "Mrs Grant" as a passenger.

Mrs Grant continued as a passenger with her husband on *Sarah* on the next three voyages to Kawau Island until August 1851, when she is noted as arriving in Sydney with a child. Grant's wife and child were registered as passengers on several subsequent voyages by *Sarah* before, presumably, the demands of raising a toddler on board a ship required her residence ashore. Grant also must have had concerns about his marital obligations, as he voyaged to Port Fairy from Sydney in September 1852, and, it appears, made arrangements to settle there. Possibly the opportunity to operate a lightering business, then conducted by William Rutledge, proved attractive, given his experience in shipping coal (then imported into Belfast from Newcastle as a domestic fuel), and as the Rutledge business had little need to manage lightering if someone competent could take it on.

Mrs Grant and her daughter landed at Port Fairy the following voyage (December 1852). Grant purchased the leases for the lots now occupied by nos. 16 & 18 Wishart St and engaged John Coates, one of the leaseholders, to erect a pre-fabricated house which had been brought from Sydney (and now no.16). In July 1853, Grant passed the sailing responsibility for *Sarah*'s voyages to employed skippers, and fathered a growing family in Belfast from January 1854 until 1866.



Coppermine Bay,  
1900. Winkelmann,  
Auckland Institute and  
Museum.

*The remains of the Kawau copper mine and pumphouse, 1900 (Auckland Institute & Museum)*

*Sarah* was a frequent arrival at Port Fairy and Portland, carrying coal, rising from an initial arrival in 1851 to between ten and twelve arrivals each year in 1853 to 1855. She departed Port Fairy for the last time on 17/1/1856, sailing to Sydney. Grant's day book noted "Wrote to Sydney Willis Merry & Co" (his agents), and on 14/3 that year "Wrote Willis Merry & Co accepting terms Sale of the *Sarah*". He did not record the value received for his vessel. During that time, Grant established his business selling coal in the town, billing residents £241.15.0 for the 5 months to May in 1856, which represented 63 tons sold, before his interest turned to general merchandise and lighterage.

Grant's lightering and warehousing business flourished in his lifetime, seeing off several competitors, and economically surviving until his death in 1885. What is of interest in Grant's experience was the transfer of economic activity originally sourced from Launceston (whaling, general trade and John Griffiths' influence) to Sydney, due to James Atkinson's land purchase and encouragement of settlers and William Rutledge establishing his commercial activities at Belfast.



## The Great Showman

Stephen Patrick 'Skippy' Wilson was well-known in Port Fairy for many years, being involved in a number of business enterprises. However, he was probably best known to the public as a showman.

In 1922, Wilson took out a five-year lease on the Drill Hall in Bank Street, calling it the 'Fairy' Palace and employing H. Jenkinson as his manager. The opening night 'Palais-de-danse' took place on 29 October 1922, although 'boisterous' weather restricted the number of patrons. The next attraction was to be mid-week (roller) skating and these two entertainments, along with some community singing sessions, constituted the main fare for the next eight months.

Then Wilson decided to try his hand at putting on picture shows. This was hardly a first for Port Fairy: before the Great War, Wests Pictures, Star Pictures and Melba Pictures had all shown films in the Lecture Hall, although Star Pictures was wound up in November 1912. Having no seating, Wilson went to Melbourne to look for suitable theatre chairs, but found the prices beyond his budget. He consequently decided to manufacture his own Wilson Theatre Chairs, and soon began installing them at the Fairy Palace.



The first film night there was on 13 June 1923 when he showed *Chivalrous Charley*, a comedy drama, and *The Man of the Forest*, based on a Zane Grey novel. Dancing to a jazz band completed the night's entertainment. Prices were 2/- for reserved seats, 1/6 for chairs and 11½d for forms.

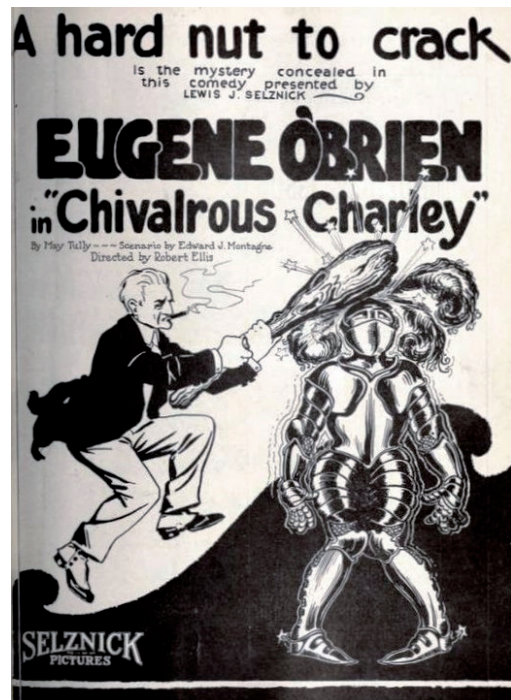
On 21 June 1923, *The Gazette* reported,

'You cannot over-crowd "Fairy" Palace - there is room for more. More comfortable chairs are being added each week, and the proprietor intends manufacturing them until there is seating accommodation for 600'.

Wilson's films were a great success and, on 29 August 1923, H. Jenkinson wrote to the local manager of United Artists, advising him that *The Three Musketeers* was 'without a doubt ... the greatest and best production ever screened in this town'.

Subsequently, representatives from Mount Gambier's Town Hall saw Wilson's chairs and ordered around 700 for their hall. Thereafter Wilson's chair business took

off and, in 1925, it was announced that 'a special open-air chair is being manufactured that will give as much comfort as an indoor chair' but remain unaffected by the weather.



*Chivalrous Charley* - first film shown at the Fairy Palace. Selznick Pictures Corporation / Select Pictures Corporation - Exhibitors Herald (Oct. - Dec. 1921)

One might have thought that Port Fairy in the 1920s would have barely been able to support one cinema, but in fact there were, for a time, three operators here. Robert Scott, proprietor of Scott's Pictures, had, since the start of the War, been showing films in Port Fairy and in Nhill, where, in 1922, he had bought the Theatre Royal. In 1923 Scott leased the picture hall in Koroit and, in the following year, sold his interests in Nhill in order to concentrate on this locality. Also in 1923, he was elected Councillor of the Borough of Port Fairy and became Mayor in 1926. In April 1926 he sold his business to Premier Pictures.

Premier Pictures was run by Albert George 'Albie' Kearney and Leslie Owens<sup>1</sup> at the Lecture Hall, which was able to provide seating for around 350 patrons. In February 1928, *Everyones* magazine described their operation as follows:

'Knowing the value of attractive lighting, these smart young showmen have designed something that is certainly effective. On the top of the theatre there is a flashing sign with the name of the show, while the entrance and corners of the building are covered with various colored globes which seem to say, "You are very welcome: come in". The happy result of this small expenditure is that the many visitors who

<sup>1</sup> A Leslie Owens was employed as an engineer at Glaxo and in June 1922 lost his arm in a workplace accident. Was this the same man?

invade the town at this time of year are attracted like moths.'

Meanwhile, 'Skippy' Wilson was not resting on his laurels and, on 17 July 1929, *Everyones* magazine reported that, 'A steamer arrived at 10 o'clock last Tuesday morning with an iron girder, weighing four tons. This was taken ashore, carted to the theatre and inserted in the walls before the show that night. It will buttress the new gallery which will seat 3000 people.'

The article went on to say that Wilson was spending £1000 on the building, although one has to suspect that 300 additional patrons might be nearer the mark than 3000!

On 24 September 1929, the revamped cinema was complete and Wilson held a gala night to which the Mayor and Council, and other local worthies were invited. The walls were said to be 'decorated in artistic Oriental style' with concealed lighting that dramatically enhanced the designs. The new gallery was fitted out with Wilson's own seating and an orchestra of eight was employed to accompany the still silent films.

But cinema performances were not the sole offerings at the Fairy Palace. In February 1928 it was noted that Wilson was running regular dances for holidaymakers and others, at which the Warrnambool Jazz Band was a key attraction. And in January 1927 he had devoted the whole of the second half of his show to a Chinese conjuror and illusionist named Wong Toy Sun (who, in reality, was an Australian named Claud Guest!).



Wong Toy Sun

Courtesy of State Library of Victoria

Nor was the outside of the Fairy Palace to be outdone by the light installation on the Lecture Hall. On 23 October 1929 *Everyones* referred to the fact that, 'When dusk falls on picture nights at Port Fairy, the first thing that catches the eye in Bank Street is a glitter of brilliant lights on an impressive building. It is Steve Wilson's new Fairy Palace all aglow and full of business'.

Less than two months later, Hoyts Road Show talkies were due to play the Lecture Hall, having been secured by Premier Pictures. On the night before this, Wilson was running the final of a Popular Girl quest before a crowd of 400 patrons. Nevertheless, he introduced Hoyts' agent

and advised his audience to attend the opposition show because 'they had the goods', an act that won him praise for his sportsmanlike attitude.

A form of sound synchronisation had been demonstrated in Port Fairy in June 1929, although this involved playing a gramophone record at the same time as the actors on screen spoke and sang, something which could go horribly wrong if the needle was not put down at exactly the right moment.

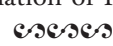
In September 1930 there were said to be twelve 'shows' between Winchelsea and Port Fairy, with only two showing talkies. For everyone else, crowds began to dwindle: silent films were old hat. Premier Pictures installed sound equipment in time for their Boxing Day 1930 showings, but Wilson's business must have languished. Finally, in June 1931 it was announced that Wilson was installing Raycophone sound equipment and the Fairy Palace began showing talkies on 20 August of that year.

Even with sound, Premier Pictures was offering only one show a week in the winter, on a Saturday, reverting to two shows during the warmer months. But the business was on the rocks and failed at the beginning of 1932. 'Skippy' Wilson took out a lease on the Lecture Hall and now controlled showings at both venues. Despite this, by November 1932 business was far from good, blamed, among other things, on the wet weather in the winter and the failure of the onion crop. The effects of the Great Depression were, perhaps, too obvious to mention!

By October 1934, Wilson was reporting 'a very lean time' in an industry where business was rarely said to be anything worse than 'fair'. In June 1935 he reported mid-week business as being 'very bad' due, it was said, to the cold and miserable weather.

At this point Wilson went back to holding dances and extended the floor so that another 40 or 50 couples might be accommodated. A dance held on 4 July 1935 in aid of the Returned Soldiers' League included a reconstruction of a 'dug-out' on the stage. At this time it was said that at least 600 revellers could be accommodated at dances at the venue. The next many months proved hard going and Easter 1937 was declared a disaster when heavy rain persuaded hundreds of holidaying campers to go home rather than visit the cinema or attend dances. Wilson sold his cinema business to John Henry Reardon in 1938.

Even so, 'Skippy' Wilson's Theatre Chairs continued to be used across venues in the Western District and beyond. It is said that a pair of his chairs regularly appeared on the TV series, *The Flying Doctors*, occupied by two old codgers who observed life's passing pageant.

We tend to believe that buildings such as the Drill Hall and the Lecture Hall have always been stolid and austere. When you see them next, remember a time when they twinkled with lights and a flashing sign implored the population of Port Fairy to see Norma Talmadge in *The Lady!* 



## PRESENT MOMENT TO LAST A LIFETIME

By Teresa Murphy

Now that we can cross the South Australian border again (fingers crossed!), Port Fairy art and history lovers should consider a road trip to Adelaide for a long-awaited new exhibition featuring Casterton-born Clarice Beckett.



*Clarice Beckett from Clarice Beckett: The Artist and Her Circle, by Rosalind Hollinrake*

The Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) now owns the most significant Beckett collection held by a public institution in the world, courtesy of philanthropist Alastair Hunter OAM. He purchased 21 Beckett works from the painter's champion and biographer, Dr Rosalind Hollinrake, and donated them to the gallery, in memory of his mother, Elizabeth. AGSA was the first state gallery to purchase a Beckett work, way back in 1979, and now owns, with this amazing donation, 25 works in total.

These stunning works are the centrepiece of *Clarice Beckett: The Present Moment*, which runs until May 16. Curator Tracey Lock achieved the almost impossible by amassing nearly 130 works during COVID-hit 2020, drawn from public and private collections from around Australia, including Warrnambool Art Gallery.

This new exhibition, the first major retrospective of Beckett works in more than 20 years and certainly the largest ever staged, is particularly powerful and thought-provoking, with a focus on the impact of spirituality, music, nature and literature on Beckett, who could transform the every day into pure poetry.

Tracey worked in tandem with Melbourne-based Dr Hollinrake, who completed her PhD thesis on Beckett in 2017 and is about to release her long-awaited biography on the mysterious artist.

Clarice Beckett, who exhibited each year in Melbourne in the 1920s and early 1930s, was largely ignored in her lifetime, for various reasons: most of her works were small and 'misty', the antithesis of the heroic landscapes that most critics and the public preferred; she was, briefly, a student of the divisive tonalist painter Max Meldrum; and, of course, she was a woman.

She would have remained a footnote in Australian art

history if not for Hollinrake's Beckett obsession, which started 50 years ago when Clarice's sister Hilda took her to an open-sided shed in the Victorian countryside, near Benalla. Stored there, for 30 years, were almost 2000 Clarice paintings, exposed to the elements, rats and possums. Hollinrake wept at the sight. But she managed to save approximately 370 works, exhibitions were staged around the country and Beckett was finally acknowledged as one of Australia's finest painters, with her own unique vision. The total surviving oeuvre of Beckett works number around 600.



*Summer Fields, 1926, Naringal [Station], Western District, Victoria. Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM and the late Tom Hunter in memory of Elizabeth through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide*

Clarice Marjoribanks Beckett was born in 1887 in Casterton, where her father Joseph managed the Colonial Bank (the building is still there). Clarice was a great-granddaughter of John 'Como' Brown, the third owner of the South Yarra mansion, which he transformed to a grander scale.

Her maternal grandfather was Thomas Brown (no relation to 'Como' Brown), who was a wealthy landowner in Victoria, including the Portland Bay district.



*Princes Bridge, c.1923, Melbourne*

After attending primary school in Casterton, Clarice, her mother Elizabeth and sister Hilda lived in Ballarat so the girls could study at Queen's College while their



father remained in Casterton. (The Becketts' first child, Alfred, was born with an intellectual disability and died at Kew asylum in 1899, aged 17. Clarice, who loved poetry, music and art, wrote a secret poem about her brother after his death.)

Between 1904 and 1907, the family lived in South Yarra (at various addresses), then moved to Bendigo, where Joseph managed the Colonial Bank in Pall Mall until 1919. The family lived at 267 View Street (still extant), one of Bendigo's most prestigious addresses.

When Joseph retired, the family of four settled in Beaumaris, an isolated bayside suburb of Melbourne where they had holidayed and that has become synonymous with Clarice's work.



*Clarice Beckett painting in yard of her Beaumaris home from: Clarice Beckett: The Artist and Her Circle, by Rosalind Hollinrake*

She captured the ever-changing moods, landscapes and seascapes of this bush idyll by the sea, becoming a familiar sight along the cliffs and beaches with her homemade painting cart, occasionally selling works to passing admirers. But she sold few works at her annual exhibitions and was regularly savaged by critics for her 'befogged landscapes'.

It is this soft-edged, 'misty' quality of her works that speaks so powerfully to Beckett fans today.

The light of early mornings and evenings, in particular, stirred her soul.

She captured that essence in luminous paintings of silver ocean at moonrise and pink whispers of sunsets and, just as evocatively, wet nights and grey days, soft green trees and brilliant blue or storm-tossed seas.

She painted wet nights in Brighton, taxi ranks and passing trams in the city, cars and telegraph poles, petrol pumps and bridges. She turned the 'banal' into pure

poetry. Occasionally she ventured further, to Anglesea and Lorne, Phillip Island and the Mornington Peninsula, Warburton and Olinda. But she never left Victoria, let alone travel overseas as many fellow painters did.

In 1925-26, she stayed five months at Naringal Station at Wallinduc, west of Ballarat, owned by the brother of her friend, Maud Rowe, who had also studied with Meldrum. Her light-as-air Naringal paintings are a highlight of the Adelaide exhibition. For the first time in her life, Clarice had a studio - on the upper level of a shearing shed with an expansive view of the golden Western District landscape. It was a pivotal moment in Australian landscape painting, noted for its minimalism that conveyed so much. Curator Tracey Lock says of one work, *Summer Fields*: "In a tiny frame she managed to capture that limitless expanse and radiating heat we can all identify with in the Australian landscape."

Of the same work, renowned landscape artist Fred Williams remarked in astonishment: "She got there before me."

The Rowes were great supporters of Clarice and bought more than 30 of her works, most of which were lost when Naringal homestead was largely destroyed by bushfire in 1944.

In a bizarre coincidence, the very same day that Naringal was lost - January 14, 1944 - 60 homes in the Beaumaris area were burnt or damaged by bushfire, among them the Becketts' former home in Dalgetty Road. (The Country Fire Authority was established a year after that horrendous summer.)



*Evening light, Beaumaris, c.1925, Beaumaris, Melbourne*

Tragically, Clarice died at just 48, a year after her mother, whom she grew closer to in their final years. Clarice painted in all weathers, a habit that would lead to her premature death from double pneumonia in July 1935. She was buried in the nearby Cheltenham Memorial Park, where her mother had been laid to rest and her father was to follow in 1936. Her sister Hilda Mangan died in 1980. The Beckett line has continued through Hilda's children.

## A Regular Out-and-Outer

There was a time when that little beige and green publication, the *History of Postal Services in Victoria* (1984), was, it seemed, to be found on desks and bookshelves in most homes in the State.

One of the stories it tells is of a bushranger named William Green who, in June 1850, held up and robbed the mailman taking letters and packets from Melbourne to Belfast. Some time later, the book says, Green was arrested and put on board a schooner to take him for trial in Geelong. But when the vessel was anchored off Warrnambool, Green escaped in a small rowing boat and, making it to shore, melted into the bush. Then, in August, he held up and robbed the same mailman in almost exactly the same spot.

We are told that Green was arrested once more and, making no secret of his guilt, complained that the mail had contained more love letters than valuables. He was subsequently sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment.

On the same page that this picturesque tale appears, is a quite separate article about another bushranger named Codrington Revingstone who, it is said, twice held up the Belfast mailman, was arrested after the first crime, but then escaped from the ship taking him from Warrnambool to Melbourne. In this case he was never recaptured but subsequently held up the Portland to Melbourne mail.

It is little wonder that some historians believe that the similarities between these two stories are such that it is obvious that William Green and Codrington Revingstone were one and the same person. The writer Bernard Wallace is in no doubt that the two men are identical and cites J. W. Powling's *Port Fairy: the First Fifty Years* in which the author says that Green also went under the aliases 'Carrington Gessington, Condington Revingstone and Codrington Leviston'. What is remarkable is that the compilers of the *History of Postal Services in Victoria* did not tumble to the fact that these were two different versions of the same story. So what did occur and was Age writer Tony Wright correct in 2019 when he claimed that Codrington 'is the only place in Australia named after a bushranger'?

Powling believed that Revingstone's real name was Henry Green while Wright states that he was born Henry Rouse, in Leicestershire, in 1818 and that he trained as a cooper. This is probably correct although his prison record suggests that his name was Henry Garratt, that he was also known as Henry Rowse, that he was born in Nottinghamshire in 1819 and was a 'carpenter and cooper'. He was transported in 1843 for the theft, with others, of cloth valued at £50 and spent time on the notorious Norfolk Island and, subsequently, in Van Diemen's Land. By 1850, Wright says, he was working as a cooper in Geelong.

In July 1850 *The Belfast Gazette* reported the committal of Codrington Revingstone on a charge of robbing the

mails 'near Spring Creek' - assumed to be the place of that name about 18 kilometres from Penshurst. It recorded that,

'On the night previous to his committal the robber made an attempt to escape, but as every precaution had been used to frustrate such a design, which from the daring character of the man was anticipated, he was unsuccessful. He had, however, succeeded in breaking his handcuffs and in wrenching a staple with which he was fastened by a chain to a slab but was detected before he had time to proceed farther. He is now well secured and a watch kept constantly over him. He says he intended to have robbed the previous mail coming to Belfast but was getting pegs to peg out a kangaroo skin when it passed. He will not say what he did with the mail bags and letters which have not yet been recovered and it is supposed that his reason is that he would be thereby telling who were his accomplices.'

Powling records that, at Belfast, Revingstone was brought up before William Rutledge who remanded him for trial in Geelong. Revingstone is said to have told the magistrate, 'You'll hear of me again shortly, Mr Rutledge', to which Rutledge responded, 'No fear of that, you scoundrel'. Rutledge is then said to have personally escorted Revingstone down to the wharf. Powling says that the vessel on which he was to sail to Geelong was the *Wave*, although contemporary accounts state that he was put on board the *Cecilia*.

On 26 July the ship was lying off Warrnambool when Constable Hogan, who was 'guarding' Revingstone, heard a sound on deck and, rushing from his cabin, saw his prisoner drifting towards the shore. He attempted to shoot Revingstone but, in the words of the *Gazette*, 'several of his caps would not go off, and it was only after the boat reached the beach, that one did, when the man was at too great a distance'.

Then, on 8 August, Revingstone held up the same mailman, coming from Belfast, just a few miles from the first ambush. The mailman believed that there was little point in resisting because 'Revingstone was well mounted and armed to the teeth, and beside, had proved himself a regular out-and-outer'. He therefore surrendered his packhorse and bags and was asked by Revingstone to give up his coat as well. At this point a whipcrack suggested that a horseman was only a short distance away, and Revingstone made off, leaving the coat and without tying the mailman to a tree as he had intended.

The mailman contacted the two constables who had been tracking Revingstone since the *Cecilia* incident but they proved totally incompetent and, indeed, had only one horse between them. Attempts to hire a second were unsuccessful, because of fears among the horse-owning section of the community that the poor animal would



not be returned in the same condition. And a lone pursuit was thought unwise because Revingstone was believed to be operating with a gang.

A reward of £30 was put on Revingstone's head but, towards the end of 1850, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Belfast Gazette* - an item of correspondence that was believed to be entirely genuine - and which the editor quickly reproduced in his newspaper, minus certain unprintable descriptors. It said,

'I see by the newspapers a reward of £30 offered by that \*\*\*\*\* in Melbourne for my apprehension. Now I, William Green, *alias* Codrington, hereby offer £100 to any man or old woman who will deliver in to my hands Charles Joseph La Trobe, and by my word if I get hold of him I will work the shine out of his \*\*\*\*\* carcass; does he think any man will be so mean as to inform for his paltry £30.

'I am ready for another turn of the Portland bags, but the beggarly rascals put nothing in them but love-letters; I could tell you some secrets - but honour among thieves.'

Revingstone continued to rob those travelling on the Portland road to the extent that, in Tony Wright's words, 'the coastal bush from which the bushranger made his raids became known among fearful travellers as "Codrington's Forest". It stuck.'

But these predations were small beer compared to the larceny on an altogether different scale that was to come. Revingstone believed that there was money to be made from the Ballarat goldfields but had no intention of using a pick or shovel. Going under the name Henry Beresford Garrett, Revingstone took up residence in Ballarat with a woman described as an actress. He drew attention to himself by always having plenty of money but never doing any work, and was known to his acquaintances as 'Long Harry'.

On 6 August 1854, Revingstone and three other men, named Quin, Marryat and Bolton (variously Quinn, Marriott and Boulton), robbed the Bank of Victoria in Ballarat, making off with £14,300 and in excess of 250 ounces of gold. Before doing so, the men placed a notice on the door of the bank, stating that it would be closed for an hour, so ensuring that they remained undisturbed. Revingstone and his 'wife' lay low for some months then, in December, boarded the *Dawstone*, a ship bound for England, which deposited them at Deal, Kent in March 1855. The couple then took a train to London and took up residence at 15 King Street, Soho. Revingstone had converted some of his cash into gold dust while in Australia and quickly sold 499 ounces (that is, over 31 lbs!) to a bullion dealer for £1975.

Unfortunately for Revingstone, two Melbourne detectives had followed his trail and took little time in tracing him to King Street, where they also rented a room from which they could observe his movements. They enlisted the help of the local police, being especially keen that their

quarry should have no chance of attacking them if he was cornered. Revingstone was followed by two constables who suddenly pinioned his arms while the detectives handcuffed him. When searched, Revingstone was found to be carrying two loaded pistols and a dagger.

He was placed in a cell and, given his past form, a police officer stayed with him all night to prevent his escape. When brought up in court, he was charged with stealing property to the value of £20,000, an enormous sum at that time. At this hearing it was revealed that Quin had been captured in Australia and had turned Queen's evidence, detailing Revingstone's part in the robbery. It was not long before the Home Office drew up the papers necessary to ensure Revingstone's return to Australia.

Revingstone sailed on the *Exodus* from Liverpool to Sydney, in the charge of a Captain Hampton, and accompanied by fifty British policemen who were due to serve in New South Wales. He then sailed from Sydney to Melbourne on the *Waratah* and was quickly sentenced to ten years' hard labour on the roads.

He served six years and was then released from Pentridge in August 1861 on a ticket-of-leave. He was helped to leave Victoria and to travel to the Otago goldfields in New Zealand. But Revingstone was far too used to his mode of life and soon became New Zealand's first bushranger. He set some kind of record by holding up and robbing 23 people in one day, close to the site of the present-day town of Lawrence. Eventually the law caught up with him and he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. After Revingstone had served six years, he was sent back to Melbourne, where he was immediately arrested under the Influx of Criminals Act.

Revingstone now grew resentful that he was not being permitted to permanently settle anywhere and apparently threatened to commit a murder so that he might be hanged and thus relieve the community of his offending, and himself of the inevitability of spending more years in a prison cell. The Victorian authorities were unmoved, however, and determined to send Revingstone back to New Zealand as an 'undesirable immigrant'. He was given seven days either to clear out or to go to prison for a further two years. Ultimately, the Government paid his passage to Dunedin where he was given accommodation by a non-conformist clergyman. For a couple of years he led a blameless life as a cooper but then acquired some skeleton keys with which he broke into several business premises. Revingstone was caught and given a life sentence, based on his long criminal record. He died in Wellington Gaol of bronchitis in 1885.

So is Codrington the only place in Australia named after a bushranger? The answer must be 'no' given Power's Lookout, Brady's Lookout in Tasmania and Mount Tennent in the ACT. However, it is the only *township* named after a bushranger and, in this case, a fairly remarkable one, not least because, as Tony Wright has calculated, he spent a total of 50 Christmases behind bars!

## How Others See Us

In September 1945 a Secretary of the Department of Information in Canberra, wrote a script describing Port Fairy and its many attractions. This was sent to some ninety radio stations and was regarded by *The Gazette* as 'splendid publicity' for the town. The newspaper reproduced parts of what had been distributed:

'One of the most fascinating and least-known places in Australia lies on the West coast of Victoria - the fishing village of Port Fairy.

'It has a charm of its own, rarely seen in this modern land, reminding one of a quaint Irish town, and back in the '80s it was originally called Belfast. Port Fairy has two good surfing beaches and a few miles off the main headland lies an island called Mutton Bird or Julia Percy Island. At sundown, it is literally covered with thousands of these black and white birds.

'Many of the residents of Port Fairy make their livelihood by fishing, and to walk down to the wharves at night and see the trawlers coming in with their cargoes of cold, gleaming fish, which is cleaned and packed on the wharves, is an interesting sight for the visitor.

'Port Fairy's climate in the winter is cold and raw, but with an invigorating chill which incites one to walk for miles and see the queer beauty of the place. There are no modern stores in the little township, just little, intimate-type shops which supply most necessities, but very few luxuries.

'Everyone in Port Fairy knows everyone else, and the place has that friendly social life that is not to be found in a large country town.

'The nearest and largest town is Warrnambool, which is an 18-mile 'bus ride. Port Fairy residents go to Warrnambool twice, and sometimes three times, weekly to shop, do business and see shows.'

If *The Gazette* thought this was positive publicity, many did not agree, especially when it was understood that the author was Dukie Kentwell who had been a Warrnambool resident in his youth and was a cousin of Port Fairy's Flying Officer Norman Athol Bruce.

In the next issue of *The Gazette*, a frequent visitor to Port Fairy, writing under the snappy *nom de plume* of 'Correct Information, Please', declared himself to be amazed and said that the Department should be renamed 'Misinformation'. He considered that the piece was really a 'boost' for Warrnambool under the guise of publicity for Port Fairy. He went on:

'It is generally cold throughout Southern Australia during the winter months, but I could name many places - not excepting Canberra - where the climate is much more severe and frosts more prevalent.

"Just a few intimate little shops". I know one shop with a floor space exceeding 4,000 feet, and there are several other shops which just could not possibly be described as "little", while I have no hesitation in

claiming that at least one shop is as "up-to-date" as any similar shop in the State.

"Port Fairy residents go to Warrnambool two or three times a week to shop, do business and see shows". While it is unfortunately realised that some residents do purchase goods in Warrnambool which could be purchased in their own town, and also transact professional business which could be attended to with at least equal efficiency in Port Fairy, the statement that Port Fairy residents visit Warrnambool weekly for the purposes indicated is just not correct.'

A second correspondent, Peter Paul Conlan, was equally upset. He considered that, in Kentwell's opinion,

'we live in a quaint little village and "one of the least known places in Australia", devoid of any facilities apart from a few little shops which supply only the merest necessities ... 'buses convey the meagre handful of villagers to Warrnambool twice and thrice weekly to shop, do business and seek amusement. His remarks about Julia Percy Island, the fishing village and our climate are just as inaccurate as his other statements. The "boost" to Port Fairy is, in my opinion, a splendid advertisement for Warrnambool by a former resident of that city and is the most derogatory description of Port Fairy that I have ever read.

'It is time that we residents of Port Fairy indicated that we are rather tired of, and no longer amused by, the reference to Port Fairy as a "quaint little village", and I have for the information of Mr. Kentwell, forwarded him an extract from the Municipal Directory'.

In the following edition, someone in Melbourne, calling himself 'Not a Quaint-'Un', suggested that Conlan was ungrateful and should be glad that Kentwell had bothered to focus on so 'meagre' a village 'when he so far has passed his "beloved home town" by'. He felt that Kentwell had done 'a fine job' in promoting Port Fairy and asked,

'Does he, Mr Conlan, think that, to put a holiday resort on the map, it is necessary to broadcast the number of schools, lodges and library books etc. in a town, and the amusements therein? Few people are amusement mad.'

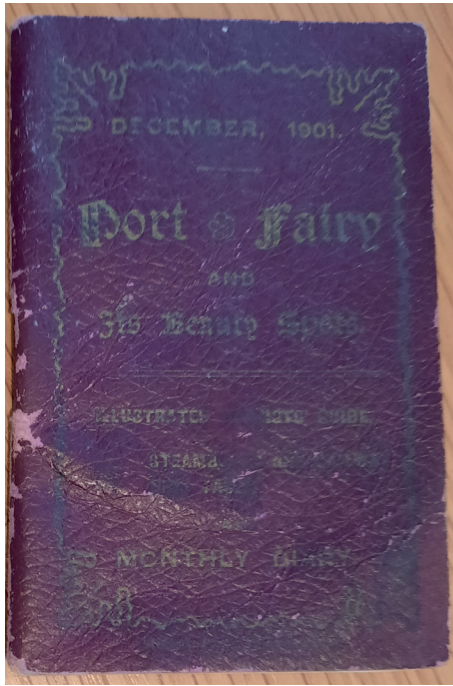
Conlan rose to the bait and referred to these comments as 'facetious' and maintained that Kentwell had grossly misstated the facts. He suggested that 'Not a Quaint-'Un' should refer to the dictionary definition of a village, arm himself with Kentwell's script and come to Port Fairy to establish the facts for himself.

Conlan was the solicitor to the Borough of Port Fairy, the Shire of Belfast and the Port Fairy Waterworks Trust, as well as being President of the Hospital Committee. Kentwell's piece was condescending humbug but hardly worth Conlan's thin-skinned reaction!





## How We See Ourselves



This little publication from December 1901 was recently lent to us by Jan Willey. Its title is 'Port Fairy and its Beauty Spots' and it was issued by Messrs. Hassett and Willis with the object of advertising the town. It contains photographs of some of those beauty spots, although *The Gazette* considered that 'a much more elaborate description of work should be produced'.

The main article is entitled 'Port Fairy, the 20th Century Hygeia' which promotes the town's claim to be a 'hygienic resort'. To lend credence to this assertion, the views of some of those who had spent their holidays in the town are quoted. Not any old holidaymakers, of course, but some of the state's leading figures.

The first is the Bishop of Melbourne, the Right Reverend Field Flowers Goe, who is quoted as saying that his 'holiday spent each year at Port Fairy is the pleasantest of the year. The sea-bathing facilities are splendid; the hard, sandy beaches unequalled in the colony; and the accommodation excellent'.

Evening up the balance for the Roman Catholic interest is Dean J. L. Hegarty, one of the State's pioneer priests, who said that, 'My stay in Port Fairy was very pleasant. Cool, quiet and clean is the town; and the residents sociable - characteristics not always observable at seaside resorts'.

Also quoted is the Honourable Thomas Bent, MLA who in three years' time was to become the Premier of Victoria. He declared that at Port Fairy his 'sleep is sweeter than for 20 years past, and the delightful freshness makes life worth living'. Meanwhile, Nathan Thornley, a local member of the Legislative Council, considered that 'a holiday at the Port "braces one up for the whole year"'. There are also notes on several of the town's hotels from which we learn that, at the Star of the West, the 'cuisine is controlled by a chef from the culinary department of the Mikado, consequently the delicacies of the table

are choice, tempting and appetising'. We have been unable to trace either an hotel or restaurant named the Mikado, although there was at one time an ocean liner by that name. As far as Tennyson's Hotel is concerned, it was considered sufficient to say that Mr Tennyson was a former Mayor of the town, a present Councillor, 'as well as being a most excellent raconteur'. Not everyone wants their contemplative drink to be accompanied by humorous anecdotes from the other side of the bar so, passing on to the White Hart Hotel, we find that the proprietor, Mr Roder, 'has a private bathing box on the beach for his patrons'. Meanwhile at the Union Hotel Dominic Keating, the proprietor, was said to make each visitor 'perfectly at home', although by the time this booklet was published, Keating had given way as licensee to J. Spring of Koroit, even though he still owned the freehold. Of the town's other hotels, there is no mention. Places of interest include the Island (for a picnic), the Lighthouse, ('a pleasant outing by boat'), the Beaches, the Crag, Yambuk Lake, Tower Hill and Lake, Hanging Rock and Marr's Hill<sup>1</sup>, ('a pleasant drive of six miles for picnic parties'), the Gardens, the Hot Salt-Water Baths and the Preserving Works ('an interesting industry that may be inspected by those who wish to examine the methods employed').

A separate advertisement for the 'Hot and Cold Sea Water Baths' tells us that they are open from 6am until 9pm every day except Sundays, when the hours are 6.30 to 10.30am. Meanwhile, the Golf Links had been 'declared by no less an authority than Mr Sylvester Browne to be the "best summer links in the colony"'. Sylvester John 'Vessie' Browne was the brother of Thomas Alexander Browne - 'Ralph Boldrewood' - and was, among other things, a keen amateur golfer.

Details of a coach service between Port Fairy and Macarthur are provided. Horse-drawn, of course, and a journey of four-and-a-half hours when travelling from Port Fairy, leaving town at 4pm and arriving, via Orford and Broadwater, in Macarthur at 8.30pm. This makes sense of those perennial calls to build a railway line on this route.

Not that the journey would necessarily have been that much faster by rail. The timetable for the Terang, Warrnambool and Port Fairy line has the day's first train leaving Melbourne at 6.30am and arriving in Port Fairy at 3.15pm - that is, 8 hours and 45 minutes' confinement, as like as not, in a non-corridor compartment. This was, of course, if the train ran to time and there is an account, from 1907, of an horrific journey by train from the City that took a full eleven hours to reach Port Fairy, finally arriving at 3am.

Altogether this is a fascinating read and our thanks go to Jan Willey for allowing us to examine it. ❧❧

<sup>1</sup> Does anyone know this location?

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