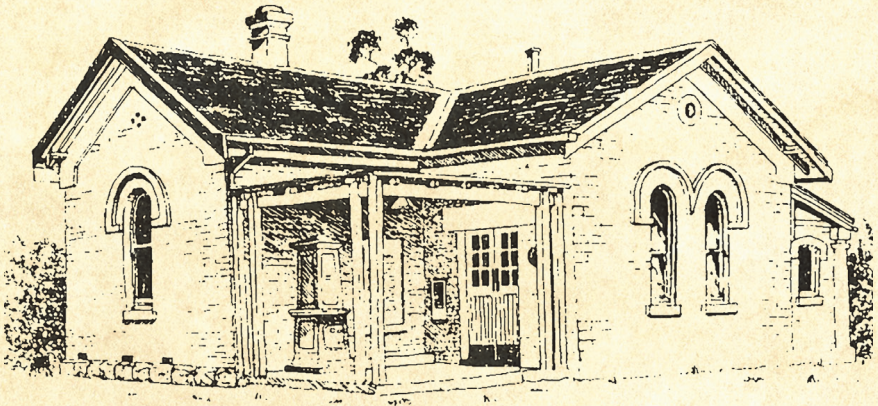


# MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



Corner Main Street and Esplanade, Mornington 3931

## NEWSLETTER

December 2021

Newsletter No. 293



# President's Report

We hope everyone is well and now that we have come out of lockdown, we will be able to get together and see you all again soon. It has been sad that we had to cancel so many of the planned activities but our guest speakers are all looking forward to meeting up with us next year. Fingers crossed we won't have to cancel again.

We have decided that we will open the Museum on 2nd January, 2022. We will need to follow the regulations set by the Government and the Mornington Peninsula Shire. That will mean that we will need three people on duty on Sundays and Wednesdays in the school holidays and our volunteer pool has diminished over the last two years and we will need to build again. The committee has been concerned that we will need to check that everyone that comes into the Museum is fully vaccinated, so we are waiting until after the Christmas/NY rush.

On a more positive note, we are going to work towards a celebration opening in April/May when the Council is planning to celebrate Heritage Week and we will be taking part in this with all the Mornington Peninsula Historical Societies. We hope that we can show our new lighting and information panels and signs by then. We will be open everyday for a week and plan to run a Cemetery Walk, a Main Street Walk with a bit of fun and have a stall outside on the lawn. Lets hope for an Indian Summer. We will need volunteers to help to have the Museum open, so please offer your services for this to someone on the committee.

We have received a grant from the State Government on behalf of the Friends of Fossil Beach for some interpretive work on the site. Congratulations to Ian Stevenson for organising this.

I hope you will enjoy the two stories following by Edna and Libby. If you think you might be able to offer something similar, please contact me. 0403 077 053

*Diane White*

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Janice Murphy

Welcome to our group and we hope you have a rewarding experience.

# Beleura Private Hospital

**B**eleura Private Hospital currently has 157 beds with a diverse range of specialties and is part of The Ramsay Health Care Group.

Long time Mornington residents may be able to remember the cyprus hedge on Nepean Highway with standard roses lining the driveway to the front entrance of the original Beleura Hospital which opened in 1969.

It was built and opened by Irene Richardson who was an auburn-haired, slightly eccentric Irish nurse. She had the foresight to buy the plot of land on the corner of Nepean Highway and Tanti Avenue and then to purchase extra land as it became available.

The original hospital was 25 beds consisting of 15 single rooms and 5 two bed wards. The 25 patients shared 1 bath, 2 showers and 4 toilets, and had commode chairs beside each bed. No such thing as en suites then!! 52 years ago it was considered to be the height of luxury and often accommodated “ladies”, “sirs” and well known public figures.

Irene Richardson was the Hospital matron and her husband George was the chef. Patients meal trays were elegant with linen napkins and George catered for the patients whims with oysters and culinary delights. Nursing staff did chores such as setting breakfast trays and making porridge on night duty and made light meals such as poached eggs and bread and butter for frail patients who needed feeding.

Irene knew exactly what she wanted to provide in the way of patient care and chose her nursing staff well. Beleura was a happy place that the patients loved, staff loved and doctors were pleased to admit their patients to.

The patients were often frail and elderly and health funds such as HBA allowed their members to stay in for weeks at a time so that Beleura was a second home. It may not have been an acute hospital in those days but we did nurse very sick patients with cancer, strokes, pneumonia, chronic illnesses and unusually for those times a psychiatrist admitted his patients.



**Irene with staff. Her house which was called the chocolate box in the background and the wonderful old oak tree that was planted by Mr. Minzenmay in the 1920s.**

Nursing, kitchen and cleaning staff all enjoyed wonderful morning teas and lunches together and were often joined by doctors. The local Mornington ambulance officer Ernie Gauhl was known to give a burst of his siren to get to morning tea if he could (and his wife Norma often made the best ginger fluff sponges for the nurses).

Many staff from those early days went on to work at Beleura for 40 years and there are still a couple of stalwarts there today.

Close friendships were formed that are still treasured today and it is joyful to know that children of those friendships are now great friends; even if they laugh about the old Beleura network, they fondly realise the sisterhood that sustained us throughout the years.

I started working at Beleura in 1977 when my youngest child was 2 and I thought some night duty around the corner from home would suit my family schedule. My early impressions were shock horror as to that date I had worked in public hospitals with much paperwork, rules and starchy had little documentation and was so laid back but I soon realised that despite this patient care was number one. It was also the first hospital I had worked where we wore pants and tops with no veils or caps. Bliss!

Local GP's admitted their patients and would come in to visit them each day. Beleura usually enjoyed high occupancy of the 25 beds and while Irene was supportive of her female staff she was also a very good business woman. I remember her coming into the hospital while I was on night duty and if there were empty beds she might say "cancel the milk darling" or "top to bottom the sheets". She didn't literally mean this but made you aware it was a business and waste was not acceptable.

Irene went on to build 2 operating theatres and 27 surgical beds in the early 1980's. This was an immediate success and the start of the multi disciplinary hospital it is today.

I like to think that the high standard of care and community spirit that was started in 1969 is still a part of Beleura today.

*Libby Gillingham*



**Irene Richardson and staff on a Melbourne Cup day. Staff would wear jockey outfits. The ward was decorated and the patients enjoyed a festive day too.**

## Dates To Remember

Because it is so hard to plan very far in advance when we don't know if we can have our meetings, please if you can, have a look at our website and our Facebook page to check what is happening.

**Friday 3rd December @ 12 noon - \$5pp**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** followed by **MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

Carpark on left, then walk across the creek to the BBQ area. Our flag will be there. Please bring your own lunch, drinks and utensils. These are COVID regulations. The entry fee puts you in a draw for the lucky 'door' prize. We will also be selling tickets for our shawl raffle.

#### **NOTICE OF MEETING - 57th Report**

Annual General Meeting of the Mornington & District Historical Society Inc.  
A 0053926W to be held Friday 3rd December 2021 @ 12.00 noon at the Briars.

#### **BUSINESS OF MEETING**

1. To confirm the Minutes of the 56th Annual General Meeting
2. To receive the report of the activities of the Society for the Year ended 30th June 2021
3. To receive and consider the Financial Statement for the Financial Year ended June 30, 2018
4. To elect members nominated for election to the Committee.
5. To appoint Auditors.
6. To transact any special business of which notice has been given in accordance with the rules of the Society.

If you need a Proxy or a Nomination form for the committee please contact Dawn 5977 0027

**Tuesday 8th February @ 10.30am - \$5pp**

**Coffee Morning Mornington RSL rooms**

Claire Sandell, the Shire's archivist will speak about the items she has found deposited at the Shire.

# A Reminiscence

**M**y Father joined the Royal Horse Artillery between World War 1 and 2 and was a postillion on the horses that pulled the gun carriages. He was very good at handling horses and so when he left the Army he joined the Royal Household as a Groomsman, driving carriages and as an Outrider for the many public occasions and ceremonies that the Royals' attended. He and my Mother lived in Windsor, the Royal Mews, across the road from Windsor Castle. At some stage they, my parents and my three brothers, moved up to London and lived in the Royal Mews, next to Buckingham Palace, but during the second world war the Palace was bombed and they were evacuated back to Windsor and that's where I was born. Windsor and the Castle was at that time a scary place to live, as Lord Haw-Haw broadcast on the radio that "the Flowers are blooming in Windsor Castle ..... but not for long"! and a great many bombs did drop in Windsor Great Park and the Grounds of the Castle.

My recollections are from our return to London in 1947. The Royal Mews was a thriving place, always full of the sound of horses exercising and stables being cleared out, carriages being cleaned and polished and the many visitors who came on Museum day. The famous Windsor Grey horses, which were used on very special state occasions, were housed in large vaulted-ceilinged stables. Also the many other horses, some used to courier the famous red boxes of state from the Prime Minister's Office to Buckingham Palace, as well as for collecting dignitaries from Embassies.

The many beautiful coaches were also housed there, as well as the Gold Coach, used for the Coronation. The routine was for the horses to be exercised in early morning ... at 5.30am when the streets of London were comparatively quiet. Horses were groomed and carriages cleaned, brass and copper shined and uniforms for the ceremonies repaired and buffed up. Some of these clothes were embroidered with real gold thread and gold buttons and were very old and heavy.

For a child, it was a great place to grow up. The Mews itself was a very large square with four Plane Trees in the middle - a great place to play rounders. The Stables and Carriage houses were all around the outside of the square and the accommodation for the workers above them. We had a three bedroom flat, that looked out onto the back of the Palace and gardens on one side and the Mews the other.

We played hide and seek, explored every nook and cranny and generally got into as much trouble as we could. Sliding down the hay bales and being chased by horses, that we had spooked - boy did I get into trouble for that one!

When Queen Victoria was on the throne the Mews was self sufficient. Containing a School, Hospital, Canteen and recreational rooms and accommodation for single men and families. When I grew up, that had for the most part gone and we went down the road to the local School. We did have our own Doctor though and he was known as the "Queens Apothecary" from the time of the split between the Surgeons and General Practitioners (apothecaries) He was very grand and titled!

A major event was the 1953 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. A lot of preparation went into that event. The Gold Coach was reupholstered and re-sprung. Although it was sprung on leather straps and so I am not sure if it made it anymore comfortable! The horses were harnessed up and as there were six, much practice was done going around the yard. As it was a super special event, we the Mews kids, were allowed to sit in the coach and were driven around the mews and very grand it was. I remember the velvet and copper hot water bottle! My Father put up bunting and we had a very great time celebrating in the evening. Everyone glad that all had gone to plan.

*Edna Lowe*

*The remainder of this article will appear in the next newsletter*



The above picture is of the Gold Coach, which had paintings on its sides by the Italian painter Cipriani. The springing can be seen stretching from the back to front - leather straps! Also the house, on the left in the corner above - the one with the air raid warning box above it, was our house/flat for many years

## VALE

Winifred (Winty) CALDER has passed away. Winty and Stuart were long time supporters of the Society and the Mornington Peninsula Branch of the National Trust. Winty's family were long time residents of Mt. Martha first as holidaymakers and then became permanent. Winty trained as a scientist and wrote several books on the geology and flora of the Mornington Peninsula which are used as a resource today. She was also interested in the history of the area and her book Mt Martha - Lands and People is a very valuable resource. Her contribution to the Mornington Peninsula will be sadly missed. We extend our condolences to her family.

## FOR SALE - *Please contact the Museum:*

### **FIFTEEN YOUNG MEN**

*by Paul Kennedy* - Published by Penguin Random House \$35

### **THE WOLFDENE STORY -**

**The Families and Functions of a Mornington Historic House**

*by Joy Cullen \$15*

### **THE NAMES ON THE MORNINGTON HONOUR ROLL**

**Who were they?** *By Val Wilson \$20*

**A JOURNEY ALONG BALCOMBE CREEK** *by Winty Calder \$45*

### **READY AND WILLING, WE**

**STRIVE TO SAVE - The story of the Mornington Fire Brigade 1917-2017**  
*by Colin Fisher \$20*

**OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT - from the pages of *The Peninsula Post*.**

This award winning book including DVD disc on World War 1 is now reduced to \$30

### **WORLD WAR 1 POEMS**

Selected from *The Peninsula Post* \$15

**REV GEORGE COX - A MAN OF MANY PARTS** *by Joy Cullen*  
\$15.00 per copy plus postage.

*We offer our respect to the First Peoples. The members of the Boon Warrung/Bunurong, past, present and future, the custodians of this land and waters.*

*Thanks to the Mornington Peninsula Shire for their support.*

Mornington & District Historical Society Inc. A00041916W

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Museum: Corner Main Street and Esplanade

Open 1.30 - 4.30 Sundays or by appointment

Donations to the Historical Society of \$2 or more are tax deductible