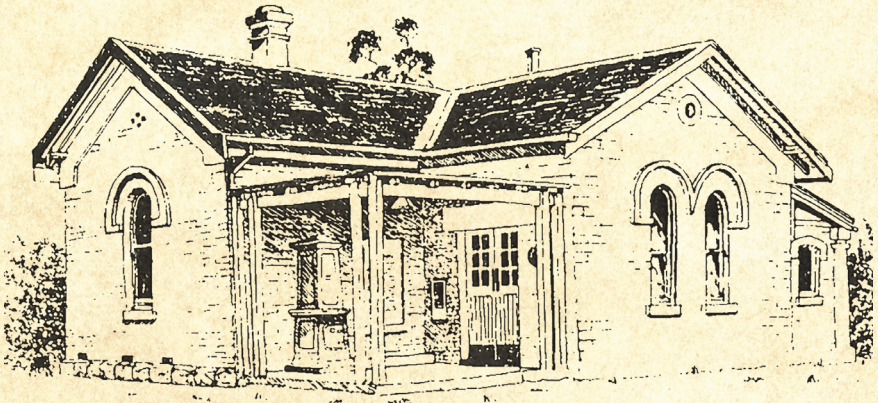


MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



Corner Main Street and Esplanade, Mornington 3931

NEWSLETTER

May 2022

Newsletter No. 295



President's Report

With all of the restrictions now gone, let's hope we can all keep well and away from COVID and the flu. .

As this is the May newsletter, your membership reminder is included. It has been noted that all voluntary organisations have lost members and volunteers once they came back after the disruptive two years. We need your membership and volunteer support if we are to keep going as strongly as we have done in the past. If you know someone or have a friend who is interested in history or would benefit from belonging to a FRIENDLY, GREAT organisation, put our invitation forward to them.

Can I encourage you to offer your volunteer support if you are at all able to. Primarily it would be for 3 hours on a Sunday afternoon every month to six weeks. You would be on with a committee member after your initial introduction. You only need to be able to invite people into the Museum. You don't need to know all about the history of the area at the start, but you might have something to add, you never know. I can promise you get nice comments and it can be fun. Come and join us. We operate safely within COVID protocols.

I hope you have enjoyed Edna Lowe's piece on growing up at Buckingham Palace. The next story is from Joan Simpson on living in London during the blitz. If anyone else has a story we could put into the newsletter, I would welcome it. You can email it to me at: redhillsouth@icloud.com.

Diane White

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Susan Blackburn

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

An Accompanying Person *by J.V. Simpson*

Early Learning Experiences

World War 11 began on 3rd September 1939. I was a pupil at Stanburn School in Abercorn Road, Stanmore. This was my first school and I was in infants' class.

One and a half miles up the hill from school stood Bentley Priory, a stately mansion designed by Sir John Soane and built in 1775. At one time it was the home of the Dowager Queen Adelaide, but it was to become the Operations HQ for RAF Fighter Command and accordingly a prime target for the Luftwaffe.

The wailing of air raid sirens punctuated most days in class and when this happened our teacher Miss Rawsthorn would say "Quickly and quietly children, leave your things and follow me." There would be a scramble - we all knew what to do because the routine had been rehearsed many times.

With the siren moaning away, we would rush through the classroom door along the corridor and out into the playground. As we crossed the playing field to the underground shelter, I would look up at the sky filled with silver barrage balloons and think of Dumbo the Elephant from the Walt Disney film which had been showing at the nearby Essoldo Cinema in Belmont Circle.

Descending into the dimly lit and cold bunker, we would sit in rows on wooden slatted seats and the teachers would organise a sing-song. We all sang as loud as we, although I knew hardly any of the words. "She'll be coming round the mountains when she comes", "Ten green bottles, hanging on the wall" and "Early one morning just as the sun was rising" we bellowed. The teachers would pass around Horlicks tablets and I would suck mine slowly and try to make it last as long as possible.

When the last continuous whine of the 'All Clear' siren was heard, we were allowed to return to our classrooms and carry on with our lessons. Some of the older children would talk about looking for pieces of shrapnel after school had finished.

At home when the sirens sounded at night, Mother would come into our bedrooms and say "Quickly go downstairs and get under the shelter." This was a massive iron structure called a "Morrison Shelter" which had been erected in the dining room. Many nights were spent huddled together there, wrapped in scratchy grey utility blankets, listening to the noise of droning aircraft engines and of explosions.



Morrison Air Raid Shelter
Image: Imperial War Museums

...Continued on Page 6

MORNINGTON & DISTRICT

Dates for You

Website: <http://morningtondistricthistory.org.au>

Foll

Visitors warn

Tuesday 14th June 10.30am - \$5pp

COFFEE MORNING @ Mornington RSL rooms

TREASURES. A very popular morning. Bring something of yours so you can share its History with us.

Tuesday 12th July 10.30am \$5pp

COFFEE MORNING @ Mornington RSL rooms

Ruth Quinn. Ruth worked as a makeup Artist at the BBC for many years and she has Some stories to tell.

Tuesday 9th August 10.30am - \$5pp

COFFEE MORNING @ RSL rooms

Julia Young. Julia has been curating the Collection at Melbourne University of Dr. Cunningham Dax who changed the way Mental Health Institutions were run.

Tuesday 13th September 10.30am

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Val with some of the participants on the Cemetery Walk.

our Diary 2022

Follow us on Facebook Museum Phone (03) 5976 3203

Family welcomed

THE DEADLIEST MAKE-UP

Make-up history is full of dangerous materials, including lead, mercury and arsenic, but the deadliest was potentially radium.

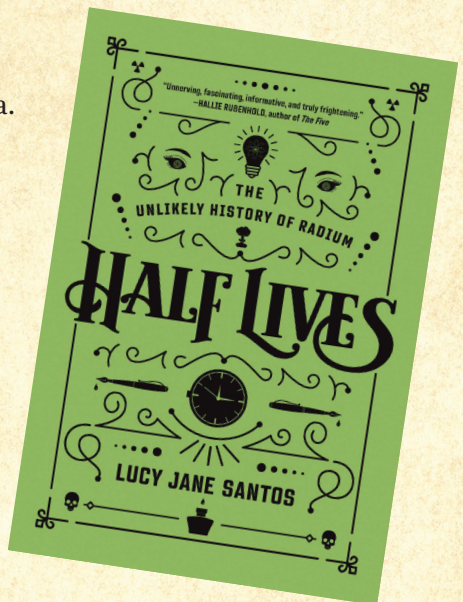
The discovery of radium in 1898 prompted a craze with scientists, medical practitioners and entrepreneurs exploiting its exciting properties.

The cosmetic products launched were *Tho Radia*, *Rador*, *Artes*, *Radium Vita* and *KemOLite* radioactive beauty plasma.

Because of the high cost of the element, only minuscule amounts were used limiting the harm.

But a wealthy playboy Ebdon Byers took numerous Doses of radium-laced Radithor 'medicine' until his jaw disintegrated and he suffered a gruesome death.

*Extract from Lucy Jane Santos
Half Lives, the Unlikely History of Radium
(Icon Books 2020)*



...Continued from Page 3

By far the most frightening experience of all was to come later in the War. The unmanned V1 rockets, nicknamed 'Doodlebugs' were developed in 1944. They had a distinctive drone as they journeyed across the sky towards their targets. When their engines cut out, we would all hold our breath in the ominous silence, praying that it would not be our home that was to be destroyed.



'Doodlebug' V1 Rocket
Image: Wikipedia

There was also a shelter built at the bottom of the garden, dug deep into the earth; this was called the 'Anderson'. None of us liked going into it because it was so damp and unpleasant. In October 1940 during a night time raid, mother gave birth two twin boys at home under the dining room table.

In the following months, I kept hearing the word 'evacuation' and I wasn't quite sure what that meant, but in the New Year, clothes and belonging were packed and one morning we joined crowds of other people at Harrow and Wealdstone railway station to wait for the train. We all carried our gas masks in brown canvas cases slung over our shoulders and everyone had a label showing their name and address tied to their coat. Operation 'Pied Piper' had begun.

Children were crying as they waved goodbye to those left standing on the platform, but we were lucky because Mother came too. She refused to be parted from her baby twin boys, my sister and me; her own family life had been wrecked by the First World War.

The train journey was long and tedious for everyone. I remember a snack, something like a hard square dog biscuit being passed around in case we were hungry.

When we finally reached our destination everyone climbed down from the train onto the platform and coaches were waiting to take us to a village hall where we had sandwiches and tea. Local families stood around the edges of the hall and selected or were allocated children.

It was now quite dark, the hall was almost empty and I realised that we and a few children all wearing spectacles, were the only evacuees left.

Telephone calls were being made and late that night our family was taken to a small cottage in the grounds of an estate which was the home of a Mrs. Heywood. She immediately instructed her maid to make hot milk for us all.

“The Laundry Cottage” stood in the grounds of Little One Hall in Staffordshire, a beautiful Tudor mansion, occupying the site of a medieval monastery. At one time, the Hall had been owned by the Cavendish family. Mrs. Cavendish (formerly Julia Legal from Chicago) and her husband were aboard the *Titanic*, when it sank in 1912. Mr. Cavendish perished but Julia and her maid Nellie Barber were rescued in lifeboat 6.

The next few weeks and months were exciting. I loved the freedom and the space of the countryside; it was a release from the restricted life of a suburban street. The cottage was next to farmland and some mornings we would tramp across the fields hunting for mushrooms. There was so much to explore. In the cottage garden there was a gnarled walnut tree and it was fun to climb and collect the nuts. No others have every tasted so sweet and creamy.

Children were expected to be part of the ‘War Effort’ and we helped lift potatoes from the fields and put them in sacks. Rosehips were gathered from the hedgerows to make syrup. The scent of Bay tree immediately transports me back seventy years to the barns and haylofts on the farm.

One evening local people were invited to see a film about Marie Curie which was to be shown in an aircraft hangar a mile or so away at RAF Wheaton Aston and I recall us trudging across farmland in the dark carrying lanterns. This was the first grown-up film I had ever seen and I remember it still.

...This story will be continued in the next Newsletter



Operation Pied Piper - Waiting for the train Image: Evening Standard

VALE - Ron Simpson

The sad news of the death of Ron Simpson came when we learned that Joan had been hospitalised with COVID. We extend our condolences to Joan and her family. Ron accompanied Joan on our excursions and was always a jovial companion. Many will remember him through his association with U3A.

We wish Joan a speedy recovery too. Let's hope that the publication of her story will assist with this.

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