

MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



Corner Main Street and Esplanade, Mornington 3931

NEWSLETTER

May 2024

Newsletter No. 303



President's Report

Apologies for this newsletter being late but we have had illnesses and accidents on the committee. Hopefully this is passing now and we can get back to some sort of business.

We will be saying farewell to Libby our Vice President at the end of June when she will move down to Gippsland to be near her family. She will be sadly missed and has been a long, long time resident of Mornington. Libby's many years looking after patients at Beleura Hospital will mean she will be leaving many friends in the community too. We will miss her friendship, ideas and enthusiasm. Libby promises to come back for special occasions to catch up with us all.

We are very happy to welcome Edna Lowe back to the committee. Edna has great ideas and is a great organiser. Why not come and join her?

Please give some thought to nominating for the committee at our September meeting. It is a great privilege to be able to contribute to ensuring the history of the area is preserved.

A good way to test whether you might be interested in this or just to slake your curiosity would be to come to our August coffee morning at the Museum when we can show you the work that we do.

This year is the society's 60th anniversary. It would have been very exciting back then when they had all the stories to tell, still in front of them. Leslie Morehead would write up stories and put them into the newsletter to educate people about the history of the area.

I hope you will indulge us with another story on the Bay Steamers. This is in our archives and it looks like it was to be for a brochure. This was in the days before computers and everything had to be laid out by hand. Our former member Dorcas McLean has been credited with doing the artwork for this. This is one example of valuable work we hold in the archive. If you join us in August you will be able to see some of these sorts of things.

We recently had a fantastic bus trip to the former Red Hill Railway and Flinders Cargo shed where we found out about the Telegraph cable which connected Tasmania to the mainland and on to London, in the late 1860s for Morse code communication. We thank Neville from Flinders District Historical Society for welcoming us. You will see some of the pictures of this trip further in the newsletter.

We hope you will have been able to participate in the local history networks' heritage event at the Peninsula community theatre. I hope you are able to learn things perhaps have one of your treasures valued and to meet our historians from other historical societies. We thank the Shire particularly Julia and Georgia for organising this day.

Diane White



Standing under the Red Hill Railway sign.



Arriving at the Flinders Cargo Shed.



The old Flinders Pier - now closed to the public.



Examples of the Bass Strait cable which connected Tasmania to the world.

MORNINGTON & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

Dates for Your Diary 2024

Website: www.morningtondistricthistory.org.au

Follow us on Facebook Museum Phone (03) 5976 3203

Visitors warmly welcomed. Why not bring along a friend and introduce them to the Historical Society? The more the merrier.

Tuesday June 11th 10.30am - \$10

COFFEE MORNING

St. Mark's Community Room, Waterloo Place

TREASURES - Bring along something of historical importance to you and share its story with us. This very popular morning always brings surprises.

Tuesday July 9th 10.30am - \$10

COFFEE MORNING

St. Mark's Community Room, Waterloo Place

COFFEE MORNING - TANTI CREEK

Martin Lenard Will share what he has learned about his research into this important waterway.

Tuesday August 13th - 10.30am - \$10

A PEEK INTO THE ARCHIVES

Old Post Office Museum

Join us for a cuppa while we take you through some of the things we do.

Tuesday September 10th -

10.30am - \$10

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

St. Mark's Community Room, Waterloo Place

Your committee reports on the activities for the year and a new committee is elected.

Please come and join us on the committee - ask someone to nominate you.



DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

We are wondering whether you have given any thought to receiving the Newsletter in digital form via email? The one advantage is that it will be in glorious colour. If you would like to partake of this, could you please email Dawn to let her know dawnfisher@live.com.au

VALE

It was sad news that we heard of the passing of Shirley Holmes earlier in the year. She reached the ripe old age of 96. She and Keith were regulars at our coffee mornings and our Christmas luncheon.

What happened to all the paddle steamers?

Wouldn't they be a popular tourist attraction today?



Following on from our talk last month where Will Spokes used the Hygeia for the purposes of his novel, we thought you might be interested in what was done to tell the story of the paddle steamers in the early days of the historical Society. We have this document in our archives.

It says that one of our very early members, Dorcas McLean was the person who did the artwork.

Reg. VMOR A3261 FASCINATING HISTORICAL FACTS

Mornington Peninsula Paddle Steamers of Port Phillip Bay

It reads: *Back in the 1800s at Mornington, a small seaside town on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria Australia the main event of the day was the arrival of one of the paddle steamers at the Mornington wharf. The local hotels and guest houses sent wagonettes and Porters to the pier to escort guests to their establishments. When the paddle steamers departed to continue the journey to Sorrento, a procession of porters, trolleys and passengers headed towards the main street.*

Paddle steamers were a luxury form of transport on Port Phillip Bay in the 1800s. They were used to transport tourists from Melbourne to Mornington, Dromana and Sorrento on the Mornington Peninsula and Queenscliff on the Bellarine Peninsula.

*In the early 1880s during the summer season the Port Phillip steamship and Hotel company owned the **Golden Crown** and **Lonsdale** paddle steamers. They ran daily excursions from Melbourne to Mornington, Dromana, Sorrento and Queenscliff.*

...Continued on the next page.



Golden Crown was built in Auckland in 1870 using a timber frame. She was 200 feet long and weighed 330 gross tons. She was sold to the Australians for service in 1874. She was broken up in 1884 in Melbourne.

Lonsdale was built in Scotland in 1882. She was 228 feet long built of iron and weighed 228 tons. During the storm in 1889 she broken mornings and was stranded on Port Melbourne Beach. She was refloated two years later but the costs were prohibitive so she was dismantled.



Next George Coppin, theatre entrepreneur and owner of the Continental Hotel, Swimming Baths and Tramway that carried visitors from the Bayside beach to the wild open Beach at Sorrento, started the Bay Excursion Steamer Company Ltd. and commissioned the construction of the first Port Phillip Bay steamer in 1886.

By the turn-of-the-century, there were three Port Phillip Bay paddle steamers in operation, the **Ozone**, the **Hygeia** and the **Weeroona**.



The **Ozone** was built in Glasgow she was 260 feet long built of steel and weighed 572 tons. Her two paddle wheels each measurement almost 22 feet in diameter and she could travel up to 20 knots. At the time she was considered the finest paddle steamer to be built. **Ozone** had three decks, a luxurious dining room, bars and a ladies hair salon. She had dark green hull, white

upper sections and two orange funnels. She could carry up to 1600 passengers. So up-to-date was the **Ozone** her lighting was by electricity which had been invented by Thomas Edison only seven years earlier. Her maiden voyage on Port Phillip Bay was in December 1886. First stop Mornington then Sorrento and on to Queenscliff where she collided with the pier! Due two declining patronage,

the **Ozone** was withdrawn from service in 1918. She was stripped of all fittings and the hulk sunk at Indented Head near Queenscliff and is now acting as a breakwater and reef. You can still see some remains.



The next steamer to go into service was the **Hygeia** which was designed to compete with the **Ozone**. **Hygeia** was 300 feet long built of steel and weighed 986 tons. She was capable of 22 knots under full steam and was considered the most luxuriously appointed paddle steamer ever built for Australian service. Licensed to carry over 1600 passengers **Hygeia** operated for 40 years servicing Port Phillip Bay. She had a promenade deck, licensed saloons, luxuriously appointed dining rooms and a barbershop. **Hygeia** was taken out of service in 1930. She was laid to rest after being stripped of all her fittings, at Barwon Heads just outside the western head of Port Phillip Bay in 1932.

Weeroona was the last of the Port Phillip Bay paddle seems to be built. She was built in Glasgow in 1910 for Huddart Parker and Company who also owned **Ozone**. She took 70 days to complete her maiden voyage from Glasgow to Melbourne via the Suez Canal, Jakarta, Thursday Island, Brisbane and Sydney.



Larger than the other two paddle steamers **Weeroona** was 310 feet long, constructed of steel, weighed 1412 tons and licensed to carry 1900 passengers. Again she was extremely luxurious spacious decks, lounges and dining rooms. **Weeroona** serviced the resorts of Port Phillip Bay until 1942 when she was purchased by the U.S. Navy who intended to refit her as a convalescent and accommodation ship. She left Melbourne in 1943 under her own steam to Sydney and was then towed to the Philippines via Brisbane and New Guinea.

The Australian government purchased her from the U.S. Navy in 1945 and sold her for scrap in 1951 when she was stripped and sunk off Berry Bay in New South Wales.

FOR SALE - Please contact the Museum:

FIFTEEN YOUNG MEN

by Paul Kennedy - Published by
Penguin Random House \$25

THE WOLFDENE STORY -

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

by Joy Cullen \$10

**A JOURNEY ALONG BALCOMBE
CREEK** *by Winty Calder \$30*

**READY AND WILLING,
WE STRIVE TO SAVE -**

**The story of the Mornington Fire
Brigade 1917-2017**

by Colin Fisher \$5

**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 \$25

**THE NAMES ON THE MORNINGTON
HONOUR ROLL**

Who were they? *By Val Wilson \$15*

*Special Offer - Both Boys at the Front
and Honour Roll \$30 together*

WORLD WAR 1 POEMS

*Selected from *The Peninsula Post* \$10*

**REV GEORGE COX - A MAN OF
MANY PARTS** *by Joy Cullen*

\$10 per copy plus postage.



DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

We are wondering whether you might like to receive the Newsletter in digital form via email? The one advantage is that it will be in glorious colour. If you would like to partake of this, could you please email Dawn to let her know dawnfisher@live.com.au

*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.*

Thank you to Chris Crewther MP for printing this newsletter.

Thanks to the Mornington Peninsula Shire for their support.

Mornington & District Historical Society Inc. A00041916W

ABN 7515 1057 105 - PO Box 71 Mornington 3931

Museum: Corner Main Street and Esplanade

Open 12.30 - 3.00pm Sundays or by appointment

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

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Account Number: 162 405 427

Please say what the payment is for.