



Coladjins

Colac & District Family History Group Inc

e-newsletter Issue 2 2022 - part 2

Part 1 of this newsletter, published on the 8th November, covered the family history group's activities from February to July and Part 2 covers from August to November

August

GUEST SPEAKER AT AUGUST MEETING - RON RITCHIE



Ron Ritchie, pictured here with wife Maree, was just 15 years old when he moved to Australia as part of a scheme to bring out young British boys to work on farms.

Ron first worked on a huge remote sheep and cattle station. The work was tough and life at the station was lonely for a young 15 year old so far from family and friends. But Ron remembers the owners of the station with fondness and values the experience.

After a while Ron was able to move to Melbourne where a relative lived. He soon found a job as an apprentice butcher and before long was indoctrinated into the game of Aussie Rules. And, as all new arrivals to Victoria are required to do, he chose a team and became a lifelong fan of the Fitzroy football club.

When Ron was about to turn twenty years old, his birth date was drawn from the barrel, and - in his words - “won the conscription lottery”. *(Many of the audience remembered the days when a male friend or member of the family was approaching their twentieth birthday and the anticipation/trepidation of the life-changing “National Service Ballot”. They expressed surprise that the ballot also captured young British men living in Australia at the time)*

Ron was born in Belgium, where his father was serving with the British Army following the Second World War. When the family returned to England, they lived in Liverpool, the most heavily bombed area of the country, outside London.

A description of the city at the time: *“many docks and their neighbourhoods were reduced to rubble. A number of ships were sunk in the docks and river. Much of the city centre was devastated, including the main shopping and business areas”.*

Liverpool would later become famous for the Mersey Beat, producing such bands as the Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers, The Searchers and soloist, Cilla Black and Ron experienced some of their music live and in locations that are now legendary.

In Melbourne Ron met Maree, a country girl who had moved to the city to work. The couple married and later settled in Maree’s home town of Colac.

There was much more to Ron’s talk, which was peppered with amusing anecdotes and serious musings of his life experiences.

Ron’s wife Maree, is an active volunteer with the family history group, mainly working on the photo collection. Maree is also known as the “queen sponge maker” who generously bakes delicious sponges for our afternoon teas.

The “Conscription Lottery”



Between 1965 and 1972, these ballot balls (marbles) were used to select birth dates for men to be conscripted into the Australian army for a period of two years

You can read about it on the National Archives website:
www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/war/vietnam-war/national-service-ballot-balls-conscription-lottery

AUGUST IS NATIONAL FAMILY HISTORY MONTH

We asked members to share stories about a precious item that originally belonged to their ancestors or family members. Meryl has written about a rustic wooden trunk that held the belongings of a family member on her voyage to Australia.

Voyage to the New World

Lynette shared the story of a pair of French child's clogs brought home by a great uncle who had served in France in the First World War

Mary McKenzie's French Clogs

September

BALLARAT EXCURSION

Thirteen members braved a cold day in September to visit Ballarat for an excursion to The Eureka Centre – which houses both the Ballarat Genealogical Society and the Public Records Office Victoria, in the same venue as the Eureka Stockade museum. Later in the afternoon we visited the Ballarat Mechanics Institute in Sturt St. We travelled via car pool from Colac and other members joined us from Warrnambool, Lismore, Geelong and Laverton for the day.

We learnt from two members of the society about their record keeping system and how the large library in this space is conducted. It is actually two libraries combined – the BGS library and the Australiana Room library. The books are separately catalogued and are not for loan, but available for research on site.

After lunch we formed two groups and had an informative session with the staff of PROV where we learned about different research procedures on the PROV website.

Later in the afternoon we visited the Mechanics Institute for a guided tour of this beautiful historic building which has been tastefully restored over the years. We sat in the heritage reading room to hear the history, and then proceeded to the Minerva Theatre and the Humphrey Room, both of which are hired out for public events. The day proved to be a great success, and it was most enjoyable to meet up with members from far away - from our President, Diana McGarvie



Top left: Front Lyn Heppner, Avon Bucholtz and Diana McGarvie - Robyn Currie and Judith Oke in the background.

Top right: Norma Bakker (middle) and Mandy Bridges looking through some of the books in the combined library

Bottom left: Judith Oke and Robyn Currie

Bottom right: the group listening to a presentation in the Archives Centre

October

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF A FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

Andrew McIntosh couldn't resist the old photograph that he saw at a garage sale one Saturday morning. He purchased the family portrait for \$5 and brought it into the History Centre the following Monday morning with the hope that we could identify the family and perhaps find it a new home.



As luck would have it, there was just enough information on the back of the photograph, along with the style of clothing and the hairstyles that enabled our researchers to quickly identify Thomas and Martha Holden and their family, a prominent family in Geelong in the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The photograph was most likely taken on the couple's Golden Wedding anniversary in 1915 and Thomas had died the following year.

The Colac Herald published an article about the photograph which took up almost a full page, and thanks to some extra work from members and other interested parties, we are very close to tracking down current descendants. Although the mystery of why it was in Colac has not yet been solved.

NEW HOME FOR FAMILY HISTORY SCROLL

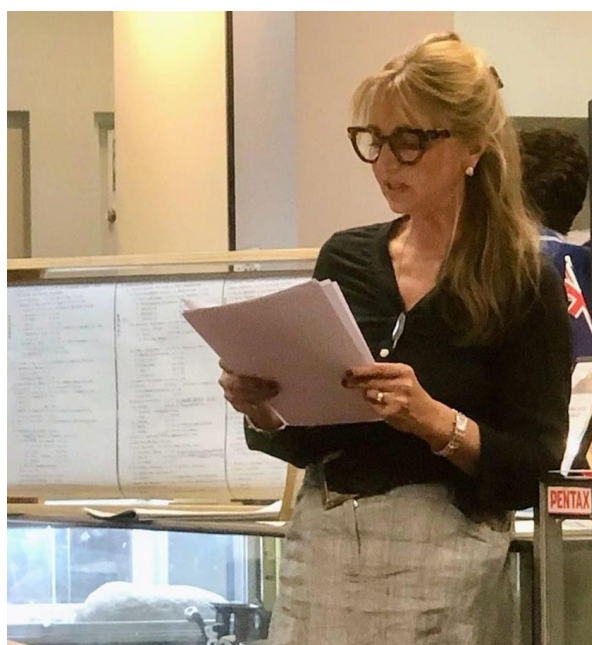
Harry Salmon, an avid family historian, recorded the details of the Salmon family on a scroll that opened to several metres. Following his recent death, the family history group became custodians of the scroll and sought advice on how best to display it.

Harry Dobber, our regular maintenance volunteer and member of the Colac Woodcrafter's Guild, completely rebuilt the frame and spindles and inserted a glass cover to ensure the family tree could be put on display without incurring any damage or deterioration. We are really grateful to Harry for his continued support. Pictured - Harry Dobber with the finished display case.



November

NOVEMBER GUEST SPEAKER - FIONA EAST



Fiona East, the guest speaker at the November quarterly meeting, spoke about Barunah Plains located on the Hamilton Highway and the Russell family who owned the property for more than a century.

Along with fond personal memories of time spent at Barunah Plains, Fiona has a treasure trove of material, including letters, photographs, legal documents and other material to support her research.

The family history group has transcribed more than 30 of the 19th century letters, which were mainly between two brothers, James who lived at Barunah and his younger brother Andrew. Although Andrew had owned properties in Australia, most of the letters were written after he had returned to Scotland.

An almost capacity crowd turned up for Fiona's presentation with guests travelling from Melbourne, Warrnambool, Camperdown, Cressy, Bannockburn and Anglesea.

Fiona intends to write a book about the history of the property and the Russell family and judging by the interest so far, it will be very well received.

We look forward to continuing to support Fiona with her endeavor.

Fun Facts from our Librarian

Words – deciphering them from old documents

Whilst reading family history documents or stories have you ever come across words which make no sense to you or you wonder what they mean? For instance – a lavender (not the flower), a huer, a cozier, a cashmarie, or a snobcat? Well, the words just mentioned refer to jobs or occupations and are described in one of our library books called Dictionary of Old Trades and Occupations. Members are very welcome to come and refer to the library books anytime we are open. Many of the books can also be borrowed for a short time. Oh and by the way, a lavender was a washerwoman, a huer a cliff-top signalman for seine fishing or lookout, a cozier was a cobbler, a cashmarie was a fish pedlar and a snobcat was a shoemaker.

Reading Old Handwriting

Our volunteer researchers have been going through a cache of letters from the Russell family from late 19th century. Sometimes it takes two or three people to look at the same word or phrase to try to work out what it is. This book has tips and examples of lettering used, showing different styles, abbreviations and techniques employed by those writing in days gone by.

Visits from Interstate Member and Guest

This month we welcome an interstate member, Gavin Brown from NSW who is spending time in Colac researching his Wilson and Rye family connections.
Later this week, Melissa Leslie, will be in Colac researching her Gamble family and our research officer is in the process of contacting other descendants to meet with her.

MEMBERSHIP Thank you to all members who have renewed your memberships and welcome to all of our new members. Your support is greatly appreciated and provides essential funding to keep the group viable and financially secure. Membership remains just \$20 per year.