



Coladajins

Colac & District Family History Group Inc

e-newsletter Issue 2 2021

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Who'd have thought in March 2020 we would still be in the grip of this pandemic mid October 2021? Unfortunately we are, but I feel certain we have managed it in the best way possible. I'd like to congratulate all the volunteers for staying committed and focused during this uncertain time, there has been a huge amount of work carried out. We have met up in small numbers at the centre when able (and been pleased to see each other), and stayed home when we needed to. I miss the normal busyness, but let's hope those days will return soon. Best wishes to you all and thank you. Diana McGarvie, President.

2021

The last newsletter, which was in May, began with reflections of life during Covid19 in 2020. In early 2021 we were celebrating the normality of having spent Christmas with family, meeting with friends for lunch, going to the pictures, watching sport in a crowd, being able to celebrate birthdays and special occasions together and, for our volunteers, getting back to working together at the History Centre.

We were busy making plans for the future; prioritising work to be done, booking guest speakers for meetings and mapping out our technology upgrade. There was even a discussion about a family history seminar later this year, after a break of several years.

Those plans have all been thrown into disarray yet our volunteers now slip seamlessly from working at the History Centre to continuing their work from home. New equipment made available through grants from South West Foundation and the Bendigo Bank have made connection to the family history group network more reliable and increased the capacity for volunteers to work remotely.

We thank the South West Community Foundation and the Bendigo Bank for their support and their ongoing contributions to the community.



Colac Connected
Communities

Community grants program



40th Anniversary



The Colac & District Family History Group Inc was established in 1981 and this year we celebrate 40 years of service to the Colac Community.

The planned celebrations were unable to proceed yet the sub-committee, with the help of Deb Chant, were able to film several of our early members talking about the history of the group and sharing their recollections of that time. You can view the video by clicking on the button below,

[Click Here for the interviews with our early members](#)

There is also a video about the group today. Click on the link below to learn who we are, what we do, what is in our collection and the activities of the group.



[Click Here to watch the Colac & District Family History Group Video](#)

House and Property Names



While researching for the Almost Forgotten, pre 1900 burials project, which spans from approximately 1850 to 1899, we came across many houses and properties identified by a name only, not necessarily the location. The names seem to have been chosen from a place that was important to the original owners, or reflect the aspect or features of the location and were often retained by successive owners of the property.

For example Thomas Dyson, a shopkeeper in the late 1800s, named his homes in Beeac and later Colac, *Manono*, which is in the Navigator Islands and where his missionary parents were working when he was born.

Mary Widlake immigrated to Australia in 1888 at the age of 38. It is possible that she came to Colac after caring for her own parents to help look after her aging, childless relatives, William and Mary Priscott. Charles Roscoe was on the same ship and the couple were later married. Their house, situated in Colac East, was named *Braunton*, the same name as Mary's home town in Devon.

The Ludlow family of Barongarook lived at a property called *Gezireh*, also the name of a royal palace in Egypt. At first glance it could be assumed that it was a reference to their home being their palace, but further examination revealed that the *Gezireh* Palace, which had been converted to a hotel, was used as No.2 Australian General Hospital in WW1 to cope with casualties from the Battle of Gallipoli. The death notice that appeared some years later in the Colac Herald seemed to support that theory.

On the other hand, names like *Ivy Bank*, *Lake View*, *Lightwood Flat*, *Hilltop* seem to indicate the location or geographical features of the property. And the origin of some names might only be known to the original owners. Whatever the origins, property names can be another valuable tool in the kit to help overcome some of those brick walls, or to put "meat on the bones" of our family history research.

Capturing and recording the names of local houses and properties began as a side issue to the Almost Forgotten project until our Librarian, Robyn, offered to administer it. Since that time the database has more than quadrupled, with Robyn actively seeking the information instead of just recording what is stumbled on. And this is where you can help.

Do you, or anyone in your family, live in a home that has a name, or had a name when you bought it? Do you know where it originated from – or who would have named it? You can contact Robyn to have your house name added to the register... or to find out if it is already listed. We also welcome your photographs or stories about houses and properties. E: research@colacfamhistory.org.au

An Object Biography by Meryl Ritchie



Meryl is a volunteer who, as well as helping with research for the Almost Forgotten project, is also undertaking Family History studies at the University of Tasmania. A recent assignment was to research and write an "Object Biography" and her delightful essay is about this family heirloom spoon. We thank Meryl for allowing her work to be shared. Click on the link below to read the full story.

[Click Here to read Meryl's story about her Favourite Silver Spoon](#)

History of Italians in Colac

Whilst most of the new settlers to the Colac district from the mid 1800s had an Anglo Celtic background, they weren't the only group to choose to settle here.



Photograph: Some members of the local Testa, Zaia and Loricco families.

The Almost Forgotten project has identified people of many different nationalities, arriving

from all points of the globe. It has been one of the aspirations of the group to investigate and record these histories and Lynette Genua has volunteered to start the process with the Italian families in Colac and the surrounding district.

Some of our records are proving to be very valuable to this project, including school pupil registers, the detailed cemetery database, obituaries and the large collection of funeral booklets. Lynette has prepared an extensive database of names of Italian families who lived in the district and is now endeavouring to make contact and conduct interviews, although the recent spread of the Coronavirus has limited those opportunities.

If you know anyone who might be able to contribute information, stories and photographs to this project, please contact us.

Federal Coffee Palace Update

In the last newsletter Lyn Heppner contributed a story about the Colac Federal Coffee Palace. Since that was published, some photographs have emerged of the building and the dining area inside, which prompted these recollections.



“I remember the dining room clearly and how my aunts insisted, however busy they may have been, on having flowers and leaves on the tables. My grandmother had a mangle in the wash house. The tablecloths, sheets etc. used to be boiled separately in a huge copper, then when dry, she would fold them and roll them through the mangle. We all loved winding the mangle”.



More than 950 people have been researched for the “Almost Forgotten” project and many of their stories have been published in our newsletters and on the dedicated facebook page: www.facebook.com/almostforgotten1900. This latest story is about publicans George

and Anne Ball and was written by Mary Day from research done by Raye Loughnan. Click on the link below to read George and Mary's story.

[Click here to read Mary's story about George and Anne Ball - Pre-1900 burials in the Colac Cemetery](#)

If you have an ancestor who died at Colac or the nearby district between 1850 and 1899, and is believed to be buried in the Colac Cemetery, and you would like a copy of the death certificate... we are offering to co-purchase. We would each pay \$10 and each get a copy of the certificate. Thank you to all of the members and friends who have donated certificates to assist with this project - they are an invaluable resource.. So far we have discovered that there are more than 500 extra people buried in the Colac Cemetery in that time-frame and we have also learned that more than 80 people said to be buried there are actually buried elsewhere. For more information, contact media@colacfamilyhistory.org.au



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