



## Historical Society

EST 1941

### February 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2024.

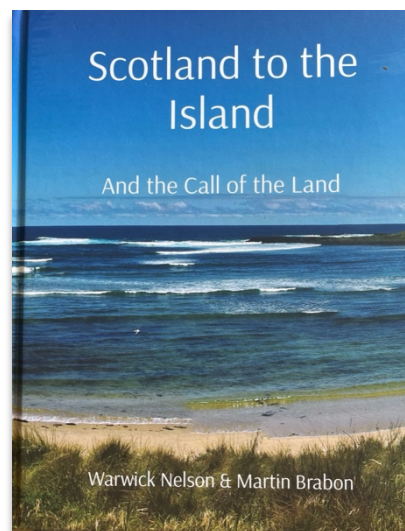


To kick off the first newsletter of the year we have included a media report and photos taken during the Join the Fun Day event at Rhyll Park, which saw some 1,500 locals enjoying the sun, the music, the food, the entertainment and the park on January 26. We acknowledge the Australia Day Council for their support in making the event possible.

During the holiday period, we gratefully accepted the donation of a number of very interesting donations, including the Produce Register which is an inventory book used by Tom Beaton who managed, and then purchased, the Cowes Supermarket (located where ALDI is now). This Produce Register gives an example of the measurements and the costs (all in pounds, shillings and pence) of various goods – a wonderful insight into our life on the island over sixty years ago.

We also received a donation of a wonderful book written by Warwick Nelson, titled 'Scotland to the Island' on the Miller family who were early settlers who selected land in the vicinity of Kitty Miller Bay.

Anticipation is growing as we prepare to transition our administrative operations from the Genealogical Society's rooms to the new research room at the Cultural Centre (Bernnineit). We've finalized lease agreements and partnership agreements with the Bass Coast Shire Council, and now await the formal handover, including the keys, to facilitate the move. Alongside our administration, a significant portion of our artifacts will also be housed in the compactus installed in our research room. Any remaining items that cannot be accommodated in the compactus will be stored in a facility in Cowes. We look forward to sharing more details at our next General Meeting, scheduled for **Thursday, March 21st, at the Phillip Island RSL**. The meeting will commence with lunch in the Bistro at 12 noon.





## Historical Society

EST 1941

During the summer break, the Society's committee has diligently worked on implementing our plan to boost revenue, with a focus on achieving self-sufficiency. This will enable us to create engaging temporary exhibits. This year, we commemorate the 150th anniversary of Cowes Primary School No. 1282 and the 101st anniversary of the Warley Bush Nursing Hospital in December. The Society will honour these milestones with exhibitions throughout the year, including a presence at the Cowes Primary School Fete on March 9th. We look forward to reconnecting with as many members as possible at the Cowes Primary School Fete – see attached flyer.

As a component of our income generation initiative, we're exploring the prospect of organizing a film night. We're collaborating with the Bass Coast Shire Council to identify an appropriate film. Stay tuned for further details.

Next Saturday (24<sup>th</sup> February) we're delighted to welcome the Frankston U3A to our Museum and research room. They'll be treated to a concise history of Phillip Island's milestones. This marks our inaugural venture into such presentations in our new premises, and we're eager to organize more throughout the upcoming year.

Attached to this Newsletter is also a flyer for an Open Day at the historic Harewood Home which is located near Tooradin Airfield. The following is a summary of the significance of the building according to Heritage Victoria:

*Harewood at Tooradin was built in 1865-8 on a sandy rise on the eastern shore of Western Port Bay for pastoralist William Lyall to plans drawn up by the Melbourne architect of Italian origin, Alessandro Martelli. It replaced an earlier cottage on Lyall's run. Lyall was born in Scotland, migrated to Port Phillip by way of Van Diemen's Land in 1847, and took up several pastoral runs throughout the colony. He was also a partner in a leading Melbourne firm of stock agents. He had made plans in 1858 to build a house here to use as a hunting lodge on his 30,000 hectare run, but there is no evidence that Harewood was used as anything other than a family home. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Harewood was the centre of social life in the Western Port district, and notable guests, including Lord Hopetoun, Governor of Victoria and later the first Australian Governor-General, and his wife, were entertained there. Lyall was a prominent member of the Acclimatisation Society and introduced here Australia's first hares (which gave the name to the property), as well as partridges, deer, pheasants, shaggy highland cattle and various plant species.*

*His interests were wide ranging: he also imported pedigree English cattle, sheep and horses for breeding; he attempted oyster culture in Western Port in 1873; he imported a brick-making machine in 1876 to supply the district with bricks; and he lost money in unsuccessful attempts to drain the Koo Wee Rup swamps, including giving the Lang Lang River its first outlet to Western Port Bay. Lyall and his family were closely connected with the final years of the local Bunarong tribe, and Jimmy and Eliza, the last full-blood members of the tribe, lived in the room at the end of the stables during their later years. Lyall's descendants lived in the house until the 1960s.*

*Harewood at Tooradin is a large picturesque, stuccoed brick house. The front part consists of two separate single storey hipped roofed sections with a separately roofed hall between. The hall originally had a hipped roof and a small porch; by 1890 it had a gable with decorative bargeboards and a larger gabled porch also with bargeboards. The hall is a feature of the*



## Historical Society

EST 1941

*design and was originally covered with glass, which was partly replaced by timber in the 1880s; the hall was originally decorated with large pot plants. The rear of the house consists of a two storeyed L-shaped section, with a small porch over the back door and a two storey timber verandah on the side facing the bay. The roof is of corrugated iron. Several pieces of the original furniture, much of it made to order for Lyall in England, remain in the house. Most of the original outbuildings have been demolished, but the weatherboard stables have survived. The stable building is likely to incorporate the original hut on the site, built by Edwin Cockayne in about 1850.*

Given that the above summary includes a reference to Eliza, one of the last of the local Bunurong people, I have included a 'Bit of History on Peter and Eliza' - the same Eliza who is mentioned in the above summary, who also worked on the Island for John McHaffie in the 1850s.



We welcome two new members with open arms. **Warwick Nelson** a descendant of the Miller family above has produced a beautiful book on the family which he has donated to the Historical Society – available for members to enjoy.

We also welcome **Leeston McNab**, who is the daughter of William Theodore Hopkins, (1914 – 2011) who purchased the sheep farm 'Ventnor Park' on

Phillip Island in 1967. William came to Phillip Island after encouragement from his brother Dr. Don Hopkins, a well-known and loved local. Leeston returned to the Island in September last year after an absence of 35 years and we are glad to have her back! Enjoy.

Pamela Rothfield



## MEETING NOTICE!

March is the month of our first General Meeting of the Society for 2024, which will take place at the Phillip Island RSL on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March at 12 noon. Lunch can be ordered individually at the Bistro servery and the meeting will follow in the ANZAC Room. Whilst RSVP is not essential – it would be good to have an idea of numbers who can attend. Please

RSVP to Judy Gittus on: [jgittus43@gmail.com](mailto:jgittus43@gmail.com) or call Judy on 0417 390 885.





## Historical Society

EST 1941



Rhyll locals John Jansson (from the historical society of Phillip Island), Keith Norman, Lillian Heflingers and Leonie Norman at the Australia Day event in Rhyll Park.



Brian Morris, Rob Robertson, Graeme Turner, Tony and Lee Hochkins, Bill Young, Syd Hadley and Gary Simmons were kept busy at the popular free sausage sizzle provided by Rotary.

# Community flocked to share the fun

The Australia Day event at Rhyll Park was a resounding success, with around 1500 people attending across the day.

Organised by the Phillip Island and District Historical Society and supported by the Rotary Club of Phillip Island and San Remo, the event transformed Rhyll Park into a vibrant hub of excitement and camaraderie, offering a delightful family day packed with live music, activities for the kids, and a free sausage sizzle alongside other deli-

cious treats.

Organisers said the theme "Reflect, Respect and Celebrate" set the tone for the day encapsulating the essence of the Historical Society's mission, "emphasizing the pride in reflecting on the rich history, respecting the legacy of predecessors, and celebrating the beauty of our island home".

The support of the Australian Government, through the National Australia Day Council, was acknowledged as a valuable contribution for the day.

The free sausage sizzle, a

quintessential part of Australian celebrations, drew a crowd ably assisted by the fabulous music provided by local bands Island Jazz and Slip Shot.

The Historical Society's commitment to preserving and sharing the diverse history of the community is evident in the Society's museum exhibits currently on display in Berninnet, the Cowes Cultural Centre, which added a dimension of historical enrichment to the Australia Day experience.



Karen Brunetti with David, Bree and Gracie Pascolo - visiting their mum, a Cowes local.



Silverleaves locals Roslyn and Adrian Mitchell with Chris and Rod Andrews and Sue Simmons visiting from Canberra.



Visiting from Bayswater North and taking advantage of the beautiful face painting on offer, Lily and Elena.



Visitors from Melbourne Rosie Monteleone and Michael Cefai with Rhyll local Dave Canny and Kensani from Ventnor.



Bev Park, Harinda Parkinson, Lynne and Martin Saunders and Ken Whitbread came along to the Australia Day celebrations at Rhyll Park.



Rhyll locals Bianca Rainer and daughter Isla with Michael Ashcroft and children Harvey and Eloise. On stilts is Bonnie Stoll from Nova Star Productions. More photos at pisra.com.au

## George Bird receives OAM

George Bird of Inverloch received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for service to the Wonthaggi community.

His contribution included multiple roles with Wonthaggi Lions Club (where he has been a Charter Member since 1961) and serving as Lions District Governor.

He was a founding member of the Lance Creek Tennis Club and Wonthaggi Orchid Society, a board member of the Wonthaggi Anglican Church and a donor for the pony club.

A Freemasons member since 1957, he was also Bass Coast's co-citizen of the year in 2009, and an honorary member of Rotary in 2011-2012.





Historical Society

EST 1941





Historical Society

EST 1941

**3300 South Gippsland Highway - KOO WEE RUP  
(Next to Tooradin Airfield)**



# HAREWOOD HERITAGE DAY



**SUNDAY 7th APRIL 2024 10am - 3pm**

**ENTRY: \$15 Adult, \$10 Concession**

**\$40 Family (2 adults/2 concessions)**

- Tours of Harewood House & Environmental Walks of Grounds
- Local Historical Displays
- Traditional Trades & Craft demonstration
- Historic Cars and Vintage Machinery
- Period Costumes
- Food Stalls
- Live Entertainment
- Plus Much More...

**Proceeds to Koo Wee Rup Regional Health Service**

Information: Bev Edwards

PH: 0400 584 235 Email: harewoodcharityday@gmail.com

Proudly

Sponsored By

**MOONEY & CO** Real Estate Cranbourne





## Historical Society

EST 1941

### A Bit of History on Peter and Eliza; the last of the Local Bunurong Mob

Peter was born on Bunurong country in c. 1834, the year prior to John Batman's exploration of the area which we now know as the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Thereafter colonisation occurred apace and within five years the land on the Yarra once occupied by the Bunurong/Boonwurrung people was unrecognisable having been transformed into the town of Melbourne (image left).



Collins St in 1839. Watercolour by W. Knight

By the 1850s due to European colonialization, most Bunurong/Boonwurrung people in the Western Port area had died or been displaced, and those remaining withdrew to the Mordialloc Aboriginal Reserve which was established in 1852 encompassing 337 hectares (832 acres) alongside the Mordialloc Creek and Port Phillip Bay. *Mordy yallock* (yallock meaning 'creek' in

Boonwurrung language) was a favourite traditional camping ground for the first nation's people, offering food sources such as wild fowl in the low-lying areas of Carrum Swamp, and fish which came to spawn in the creek.

According to Heritage Frankston (Frankston Library), in 1852 Peter and Eliza had built a mia mia (a temporary shelter made of bark, branches, leaves and grass) on the site adjoining the present site of the Frankston Mechanics Hall.



It seems that Peter and Eliza (pictured left) moved from Frankston to Phillip Island, where they found employment with John McHaffie who had the leasehold on the entire island. The duration of their tenure with McHaffie is unclear, but according to McHaffie's daughter Anna (married name Hardy), born in 1867, Peter and Eliza lived on the island during her father's time and worked for him for many years. Anna recalled learning from her parents that Peter's responsibilities included shooting crows that threatened newborn lambs. Based on Anna's recollections, it is understood that Peter and Eliza were on Phillip Island in the 1850s, as they were both in Melbourne by the early



## Historical Society

EST 1941

1860s. Notably, their association with McHaffie was significant enough for them to adopt the McHaffie surname as their own.

Photographic evidence depicts Peter (below) in a Victorian-era home wearing distinctly European attire, complete with a hat and leather shoes. This suggests that McHaffie may have also trained him for indoor responsibilities.

Following their departure from McHaffie's employ, both Peter and Eliza faced a challenging path. Instances of alcohol abuse led them to court in Melbourne, though they were consistently discharged the following day.

In 1872 Mr J. Randell, responsible for the people in the Mordialloc Reserve, reported to the Board of Protection of Aborigines that he had only four aboriginals under his charge receiving aid. These included Peter and Eliza McGaffey (sic.) and King Jimmy and Nancy Dunbar. In his report Mr Randell mentions that Peter hunts but had a dependence on alcohol. He states, "Their greatest happiness is perfect liberty to roam free and unconstrained. There are some good traits in their character, for instance, they are perfectly harmless, and thoroughly trustworthy and honest."



Peter died in the Alfred Hospital on **27 September 1874** aged about 40 from pulmonary tuberculosis. On his death certificate his last name is shown as McHaffie.

Eliza (b. c. 1822) died on **28 February 1877** at the age of 55 and is buried in the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery.

Jimmy Dunbar, the last remaining member of the Western Port mob, died in the Alfred Hospital only six days after Eliza on 5th March 1877.

oo000oo

---

Newsletter written and edited by Pamela Rothfield

Copyright © 2024 PIDHS. All rights reserved.

Website: [www.phillipislandhistory.org.au](http://www.phillipislandhistory.org.au)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pidhs>

Email: [hello@phillipislandhistory.org.au](mailto:hello@phillipislandhistory.org.au)