



Historical Society

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March 2024 Newsletter

Welcome to our March Newsletter.

Since our last newsletter, we're delighted to share updates on our recent successful events! We have hosted two engaging gatherings, with the first being a dynamic presentation on the concise history of Phillip Island. Despite the challenge of condensing one and a half centuries into an hour, our team delivered an insightful session that captivated our audience. This special event, organized for the U3A of Frankston, marked the inaugural use of our Research Room upstairs at Berninnet—a milestone we're excited to celebrate! The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, and we'll soon be showcasing these endorsements on our website. Stay tuned as we gear up to extend our offerings to a wider audience, aiming to provide enriching presentations to organizations far and wide!



"We had a great day on Phillip Island today and the icing on the cake was your wonderful, incredible presentation.

It was very informative and entertaining at the same time, everyone in our group loved it, even commenting how much better it was than other presentations and guided tours we have had previously.

Thank you so very much for all your hard work and making it so interesting.

Thank you again and best wishes."

Barbara von Blomberg
and U3A Frankston Excursion Group



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Our second event in recent weeks featured an exhibition showcasing the rich history of Cowes State School No. 1282. Following a request from the school executive, we curated a comprehensive display spanning from the school's inception in 1874 in the old school grounds in Thompson Avenue up until the new school opened in Settlement Road. This exhibit was proudly showcased at the School Fete last weekend. Once more, we've been delighted by the positive feedback received, including endorsements from the school itself. Look out for these endorsements soon to be featured on our website!

The move into our Research Room. The Council lease agreements have undergone slight amendments and have been duly signed once again. Now, we eagerly anticipate the receipt of the key for permanent access to this room. With all necessary arrangements in progress, we're poised to begin relocating our files into the Research Room. Following closely behind will be many of the artifacts currently housed in our storage facility at the Concourse. We're fortunate to count on the support of a generous benefactor who will cover the offsite storage costs for artifacts that don't fit into the research room. This support greatly relieves the pressure on the Society as we prepare to procure office equipment and other essentials for the new space.

A friendly reminder: Our first **General Meeting for 2024** is scheduled for Thursday, March 21st, at the RSL. We'll convene at 12 noon in the Bistro for lunch, followed by an engaging session in the ANZAC Room.



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Our esteemed guest speaker for our first General Meeting is **Lyn Skillern OAM** (left), who



will enlighten us with insights from her book, *'Forgotten for Too Long'* – which delves into the story of the Leongatha members who lost their lives in WWII Lark Force, a garrison stationed at Rabaul in PNG. Lyn's extensive research reveals the resilience of the four Leongatha members who survived out of the 18 involved. Lyn's expertise extends to her previous work, *'From Inkwell to Internet – A Century of State Secondary Education in Leongatha'*, published in 2012 for the

Leongatha High School Centenary. With a deep understanding of Phillip Island's early schooling era and the evolution of Victoria's education system, Lyn promises an enlightening and enriching discussion.

Continuing the education theme, I have included a snapshot of the Cowes State School history later in this Newsletter, which we had produced on a postcard for the School.

Happy Easter to All,

Enjoy.

Pamela Rothfield



MEETING NOTICE!

First General Meeting of the Society for 2024,

at the Phillip Island RSL on Thursday 21st 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 or call Judy on 0417 390 885.



Membership of the Historical Society is not only vital for preserving our heritage but also plays a crucial role in securing funding through grants. A substantial membership base strengthens the Society's credibility and demonstrates widespread community support, increasing the likelihood of successful grant

applications. These grants are essential for funding research projects, preservation efforts, educational programs, and the maintenance of historical sites and resources. By becoming a member, individuals not only gain access to the



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Society's resources and events but also contribute directly to its financial stability and ability to obtain grants, ensuring the continued preservation and promotion of our shared history for generations to come. Do you have friends or family who 'should' be members?

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South Eastern Historical Association General Meeting meeting will be held at Wonthaggi Historical Society *at the Railway Station Museum* on the 19th May. Sam Gatto as guest speaker.

Appeal for Continued Funding



The Royal Historical Society of Victoria is urging support for the continuation of funding for the Victorian Community History Awards and PROV's Local History Grants program, both crucial for the well-being of historical societies in Victoria. Despite previous successful lobbying efforts, funding for these programs remains uncertain beyond the current year. The society is calling on members and supporters to write to the Minister for Government Services and local MPs to advocate for funding renewal.

Historical societies play a significant role in community identity and resilience, yet they receive minimal government support. Advocates are encouraged to highlight personal experiences and the societal importance of these programs in their communications with government officials.

Information:

Victorian Minister for Government Services: The Hon. Gabrielle Williams,
gabrielle.williams@parliament.vic.gov.au

Local Representative for Bass, Jordan Crugnale,
Jordan.Crugnale@parliament.vic.gov.au



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Cowes School No. 1282 - A Brief History



The original Cowes State School. 1874

Cowes Primary School, number 1282, officially commenced its journey as a state school on February 10, 1874, operating within the premises of St. Philips Church in Thompson Avenue at a rental of £10 for six months. A two acres site for a dedicated school building and grounds situated opposite St. Philips Church was reserved in 1873. Construction on the school building crafted from timber was completed in October 1874. It was capable of accommodating 72 students. Attached to the school stood a three-roomed building designated for the teacher's accommodation.

John Brown Brook assumed the role of the first teacher, serving for a decade until 1884. During the inaugural year, Cowes school no. 1282 witnessed an average attendance of 49 pupils. The following year, 1875, saw enrolments rise to 57, comprising 24 boys and 33 girls, with the average attendance dipping to 39, just under 70%.

In 1918, as part of a remodelling effort, a further room was added to the school building, alongside the construction of a new residence for the teacher, which was now separate from the main school building.



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Students at Cowes State School c. 1911

In 1952, the school administration procured a new site spanning 14.5 acres (approximately 6 hectares) on the current Settlement Road site. Although there were discussions about merging all Phillip Island schools into one state school at this time, concerns arose among outlying communities regarding the considerable distances some children would have had to travel each day. Consequently, the discussions were brought to a halt.

Two years later, in 1954, two classrooms and an office were constructed on the newly acquired school site in Settlement Road, marking the relocation of senior grades 5 and 6 to the new premises starting from August 1954.

It wasn't until 1975, a span of 21 years, that the junior grades vacated the old school site, joining their senior counterparts at the Settlement Road site.

Cowes Primary School has thrived over the years. Presently, it comprises three main buildings along with several relocatable buildings, a gymnasium, swimming pool, and specialized areas. The school boasts expansive playgrounds and a native bush sanctuary. Additionally, it houses an Early Childhood Centre on-site, providing long-day care and Kindergarten Programs.

Cowes Primary School number 1282 remains to this day at the heart of our community.

Phillip Island & District Historical Society 2024



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Historical Display - Cowes Fete - 9 March 2024



Newsletter written and edited by Pamela Rothfield

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