



## Historical Society

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### August 2024 Newsletter

What an eventful month it has been since our last newsletter! We are thrilled to welcome 15 new members to the Phillip Island & District Historical Society. A warm welcome to our new friends—



Ian Bell-Towers & Lee Jones, Ann Ferrari, Elizabeth Francis, Jan Hudson, Hayley & Chris Justice, Lynore Mercer, Mary & John O'Brien, Helen Russo, Sue Trist, Lyn Duguid and Patty Marshall & Noel Stewart. We hope to get a chance to meet you at one of future

meetings very soon.

Membership is the lifeblood of our Society, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have introduced others to our community. At just \$30 per year, we aim to offer value and a meaningful connection to our shared history. As of this writing, our membership has reached a remarkable 113 individuals, including family members. We're optimistic about doubling this figure over the next three years.

Our recent activities have been full of progress. Thanks to the generous funding from Bendigo Bank, we've purchased new storage units for our research room, and the organization of our file is moving forward at a steady pace.



Peter Fogarty presenting to the PIDHS at the July meeting at the Phillip Island RSL. (see summary below)

In July, we held our quarterly general meeting and were privileged to hear from citizen scientist Peter Fogarty. His presentation was both fascinating and insightful, and I've included a summary of his engaging presentation for those who couldn't attend.

The Society also had the pleasure of presenting to the Probus Club of Phillip Island, where we received a warm and enthusiastic response. I'm delighted to report that many of

our new members have joined us from this very event.

Looking ahead, I'd like to remind everyone that next month on 26 September is our Annual General Meeting (AGM). It will be held at the Phillip Island RSL in Thompson Avenue, with lunch in the Bistro commencing at 12 noon and the meeting anticipated to follow at 1pm in the ANZAC Room. This year's AGM is particularly important, as we'll be tabling a Special Resolution proposing changes to certain aspects of our Society's Constitution. This resolution requires a



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vote from the members present, making your attendance more crucial than ever. Detailed information regarding the Special Resolution has been emailed to all members.

### Hidden Melbourne



Following the AGM, we're thrilled to welcome historian, photographer, and founder of the captivating website Hidden Melbourne, Barney Meyer (left) [[www.hiddenmelbourne.com.au](http://www.hiddenmelbourne.com.au)]. Barney is renowned for his remarkable ability to bring Melbourne's past to life, offering a unique 'armchair time travel' experience. Through his lens, you'll journey through not only the city's rich history, but many other locations as well, comparing yesterday's landscapes with today's scenes. This is a rare

opportunity to delve into Melbourne's (and beyond) hidden stories and discover how the various landscapes have evolved over time. Don't miss this chance to be inspired and captivated by Barney's extraordinary work!

We warmly encourage as many members as possible to volunteer for either the Management Committee or a Standing Committee. Both roles offer rewarding experiences with only a modest time commitment, providing an excellent opportunity to help shape the Society's future without it being overwhelming. With our new constitution, meetings can be held virtually or even via email, making participation more convenient and achievable than ever! Please consider stepping forward—we truly value fresh perspectives and new ideas!

In this edition, we are pleased to feature a nostalgic piece from Gaye MacLeod, who shares her fond memories of her first visit to Cowes and her stay at Glencoe Guesthouse in 1951. We extend our sincere thanks to Gaye for her wonderful contribution.

As you read Gaye's recollections, I wonder how many of our members will be transported back to their own early holidays in Cowes. Perhaps her story will stir up fond memories of sun-soaked days at the beach, leisurely strolls along the Esplanade, or the warm hospitality of the island's guesthouses. Cowes has been a cherished destination for generations, and we would love to hear your stories too. Your memories are a vital part of our shared history, and we warmly invite you to contribute them for inclusion in future newsletters.

Enjoy!

Pamela Rothfield



Do you have any ideas for a new home for our beautiful historic Council table, dating back to 1929? Unfortunately, the Society can no longer store it. (For more details, see the article in the Advertiser on the last page of this newsletter.)



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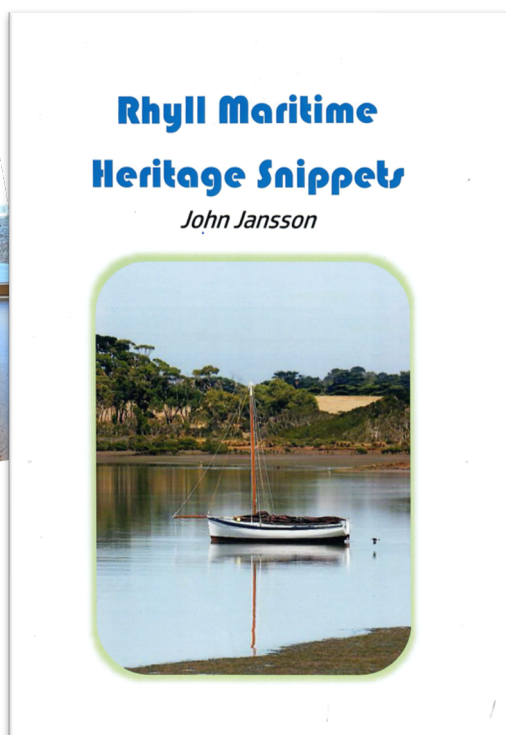
### Life Membership with the National Trust

This month, we had the pleasure of seeing local historian, Past President and Life Member of the Phillip Island & District Historical Society, John Jansson honoured with a Life Membership by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The presentation was made by Kate Drummond and Ross Lloyd, both representing the National Trust, in front of a select gathering of Trust members and friends at Berninnet.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of a special commemorative book to all attendees. The book, *Rhyll Maritime Heritage Snippets*, a beautifully compiled collection of John's stunning photography accompanied by narratives, was thoughtfully designed and produced by Christine Grayden. It was met with great appreciation and added a meaningful touch to the celebration.



Above: John Jansson with John Eddy and Ross Lloyd



Above: Kate Drummond and Ross Lloyd presenting John with his certificate



### We're On the Line: New Mobile Number Now Active!

We're excited to share that the Historical Society now has a dedicated mobile phone. You can reach us at 0466 049 755.

This number will primarily serve for voicemail, and we'll be regularly monitoring it.

**Don't forget to share our Facebook page:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/pidhs>



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### Notes on the Presentation by Peter Fogarty Citizen scientist and Photographer PIDHS General Meeting at Phillip Island RSL 18 July 2024

Peter Fogarty's career spans 41 years in the police force, from which he retired 12 months ago as a Detective Senior Sergeant. He has had a long-standing interest in photography and began serious photographic work over ten years ago. His objective as a photographer is to capture moments in time, which complements his role as a citizen scientist. His background in the police force, with extensive knowledge of forensics, has been invaluable in his scientific pursuits.

Peter explained the role of a citizen scientist by sharing a recent discovery: Swan Lake is currently bone dry while Fisher's Wetland is full of water. This unusual event is unprecedented in his experience, and he plans to address this anomaly with Phillip Island Nature Parks in an endeavour to uncover the cause.

Regarding his whale photography, Peter recounted his first foray into citizen science, which was back in December 2012, when he captured a photograph of an Orca, initially mistaken for a dolphin by his companions. Excited about the photo, he uploaded it to Facebook and soon received 15 messages from scientists seeking more information about the animal in the photograph. Peter noted that he now rarely uploads photographs to social media for various reasons.

He explained that whale flukes (the tail) are unique, much like human fingerprints, with distinctive scars, barnacle marks, and ridges that help identify individual whales. Peter shared an example of a whale he photographed last month in Western Port, which was last seen in Hervey Bay in August 2019 and has now reappeared in this area. He also revealed some of the secrets behind his stunning whale photography, such as understanding the animals' behaviour patterns to anticipate their next move for the perfect shot.

We also learned about the dedication of Wildlife Coastal Cruises to responsible whale watching. Each of their cruises includes a marine biologist or a marine biology student on board.

On behalf of the Historical Society, I want to thank Peter for his enlightening and fascinating talk, and sharing his magnificent photography, which truly captivated the audience.

Pamela Rothfield

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Do you have any memorabilia from the **Cowes Primary School** or the **San Remo Primary School** – such as workbooks, photographs, uniforms etc. suitable for a temporary exhibition of these two wonderful institutions, to celebrate their sesquicentennial in October? If so, please contact us at:



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

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### Reminiscences of my holidays in Cowes

By Gaye McLeod

In 1951, we didn't have a car, so my father had to drag a large suitcase packed with everything needed for our two-week holiday at Cowes. We walked to Bentleigh Railway Station with excitement and then boarded a train to Frankston.

I could hardly wait to board the steam train, with its hissing steam and occasional puffs of smoke. The rhythmic 'puff, puff, puff' added to the anticipation of the journey. In those days, every child was thrilled by the thought of a steam train ride. As we rattled along the rails toward our destination, Stony Point on Western Port, the train's warning horn sounded regularly. The journey, which took about 45 minutes, was a thrilling experience for me as a young child.

The next leg of our journey to Phillip Island was a 40-minute ferry ride to Cowes, which was known as 'The Gateway to Cowes.' I was thrilled, having never been on a boat before, even though it was just a ferry and not a grand sailing ship. I remember hanging out of the window, feeling the sea air rush past and the salt clinging to my face.



Gaye with her parents at Glencoe in 1951

Once we arrived on land, my poor father had to drag the suitcase to our accommodation. Glencoe Guest House, located on Chapel Street, required us to walk the entire length of the shopping area, which felt like an uphill trek. My father certainly had his work cut out for him!

Built in 1890, Glencoe was one of the earliest guest houses on the island. Originally owned by Alex and Annabel McLardy, it was sold in 1949 to the Monk family from England. My family and I stayed there as happy guests during their ownership. Over the years, Glencoe underwent many changes in ownership and structure. By 1971, the charming weatherboard house with its bullnose verandas and delicate lacework was sold to a supermarket chain and demolished to make way for a car park, which it remains today. It's a shame that such a beloved building, full of memories and secrets, is no longer standing. I, along with many other families, cherish our memories of Glencoe and will never forget our stays there.

Upon arriving at Glencoe, we found that our accommodation was the front room, which I suspect may have been one of the original guest house's main bedrooms. It featured a double bed, a single bed for me, a wardrobe, and a charming old open fireplace. The trusty suitcase was tucked under one of the beds. The guest house had numerous rooms opening from a long hallway, but the shower and toilet facilities were located outside—one building for men and another for women. These facilities must have been added later. On one occasion, the guest house relied on tank water, and there wasn't enough for showers, so guests had to wait for fresh water to be delivered the following day.

Meals were served three times a day in a large dining area at the centre of the house. I developed a lasting love for jelly and whipped cream, a treat I still enjoy today. I was also fascinated by the skylight, which was a novel feature for me.

Since we wouldn't be home for Christmas, I remember how my mother had 'phoned' Father Christmas to request an early visit at Bentleigh, and I was amazed by her 'connections'! On My parents arranged for my grandmother and aunt to travel from Hawthorn to Cowes for Christmas Day. I was very close to my Granny, so I stayed by her



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side all day. The management at Glencoe provided my grandmother and aunt with lunch, which they greatly appreciated.

We soon got to know some of the other guests, including Ivy and Ed and their two children, Gail and Peter. Although Gail was two years older than me, we quickly became close friends, as did our parents. Most afternoons, we would walk the short distance to Cowes beach, where swimming was a must. I remember one day when Peter Monk, the guest house owner's son, tried to teach me to swim, though he didn't succeed—I still can't swim! In the late afternoons, guests would rush back to Glencoe to use the limited shower facilities, often resulting in long queues. Afterward, we enjoyed our evening meal and, on one occasion, went to see the penguins return from their day at sea.

Ivy and Ed were kind enough to drive us to various places of interest. One memorable trip was a rough ferry ride to Seal Rocks, where we tried to view the seals up close. The journey was so choppy that I felt seasick and was terrified by a possible collision with the rocks. (Years later, we visited Seal Rocks again and used telescopes for a much safer and clearer view of the seals.)

On the main road a few kilometres out of Cowes, we visited a koala colony munching on gum leaves. It was a must-see for anyone with children. On one of these trips, I had the chance to pick up a koala and give it a cuddle, but it bit me on the arm. Clearly, it wasn't too fond of being held by a child! I quickly let it go, and it scampered up a nearby tree, sensing it was in danger.

Another daytime adventure was a visit to the Strawberry Farm, where everyone enjoyed those delicious berries and cream. Unfortunately, I was allergic to strawberries, so I had to settle for fruit salad and cream. I was also allergic to what we called 'Raspberry Vinegar Cordial.' Despite this, I begged my mother for a drink while we were at the fish and chip shop in Cowes. She gave in, but I barely made it outside before I threw up the entire drink. I'm sure the fish and chip shop owners were relieved! Fortunately, I could enjoy a 'Mint Julip,' which didn't upset my stomach. (Thankfully, I can now eat strawberries and raspberries.)



Pat, Gaye, Granny, Aunty Lou & Mum c. 1953

We had three successive holidays at Glencoe, meeting up with Gail's family each time. By then, my dad had bought a second-hand car, so he no longer had to drag that suitcase around. We stayed in the same room again, and everything else remained unchanged, making our holidays wonderfully relaxing.

In December 1953, when I was 12 and Gail was a teenager, we eagerly looked forward to New Year's Eve, when there would be a fancy dress parade along Cowes' main street. Gail, Peter, Pat (a young girl about Gail's age who worked part-time as a cleaner and waiter at the guest house), and I were excited to dress up for the parade. Pat had joined Gail and me for the preparations. I didn't know much about Pat,

but I remember one day she was crying and leaned on my mum for support. Mum took her under her wing and looked after her. Looking back, I realize Pat might have been missing her family and was working instead of playing. My mum was very kind to her.

Our two mums got together to create fancy dress costumes from whatever materials they could find. Gail dressed as 'Miss Cowes,' Pat went as a 'Cigarette Girl,' Peter was a water-bearing 'Chinese Boy,' and I ended up as a 'Boxer'—quite a unique choice! The parade was a lot of fun, despite the walk, and it was wonderful to see everyone dressed up and enjoying themselves. We rang in 1954 with great excitement.

A few days later, the guests at Glencoe organized a picnic outing. In keeping with the times, a furniture moving van was hired for the day, and we all headed to Wonthaggi for a community lunch.



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During the summer of 1953/54, Cowes was graced by a visit from two prominent stage actors, Lynne Lyons and Richard Currie, who were performing in 'Paint Your Wagon' in Melbourne. Hundreds of people gathered on the beach to catch a glimpse of this glamorous couple, who graciously mingled with the crowd.



Miss Cowes Beauty Contest 1953

The Sun News Pictorial Bathing Beauty contest was a popular event at the time, and Cowes was no exception. Many turned up at the beach to enjoy the festivities and cheer on the contestants.

Looking back from late 2023 as we prepare to welcome in 2024, I'm filled with gratitude for those joyful days spent with my wonderful parents and new family friends at Glencoe Guest House in Cowes on Phillip Island. Gail and I remain close friends and were each other's bridesmaids, while our husbands, Alb and Ian, were best men for each other. Our parents stayed friends and visited one another frequently. Sadly, we had just one more stay at Glencoe Guest House in 1954/55, after which we all went our separate ways. I wonder if there's still a New Year's Eve parade in Cowes?

**AGM**  
Thursday 26 September 2024 at Phillip Island RSL  
Lunch in the Bistro at 12 noon, with the AGM to follow at 1pm

Special Guest: Barney Meyer,  
photographer, historian and founder  
Hidden Melbourne website.

### AGM

RSVPs appreciated: to Judy Gittus on: [j.gittus43@gmail.com](mailto:j.gittus43@gmail.com) or call Judy directly on 0417 390 885.



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# Historical Society faces space crunch

## BERNINNEIT

The Phillip Island and District Historical Society is facing a significant challenge following its move to the new Cultural Centre.

Following the demolition of its premises in Thompson Avenue three years ago to make way for Berninneit, it has been a challenge for the Society to accommodate the treasure trove of island history formerly on display there.

The new museum and research room now occupies 45 per cent less space than in its former premises.

The Society's president Doug Waugh confirmed the Historical Society has been forced to now store a large portion of its collection in an offsite secure storage facility, as they have no space at Berninneit.

"Whilst we have had to seek offsite storage for the large items in the collection, we are grateful that council has contributed to our storage challenge with the installation of a compactus – a very efficient filing unit able to house the smaller and precious or vulnerable items," Mr Waugh said

One important item that has not found a home and cannot be used in the new centre is the original Phillip Island Shire council table and chairs, including the grand mayoral chair. These date back to the late 1920s, when Phillip Island gained municipal independence from the mainland.

For the past four years these invaluable pieces of our history have been stored in a private warehouse, at the expense of a generous Society member.

Unfortunately, the storage arrangement can no longer continue and the Historical Society is at a loss for a solution.

With no room to house these significant artefacts within their current space, the Society is reaching out to the community for help.

"We are calling on the community for ideas on where these historic items could be safely stored and displayed, Mr Waugh



The Historical Society space at Berninneit. The group said it has now been forced to now store a large portion of its collection in an offsite secure storage facility.

said.

"These pieces are not just furniture.

"They represent an important part of Phillip Island's history and heritage.

"Possible solutions could include finding another temporary storage facility, securing a display space within a local business or public building, or even a community funded project to create a dedicated space for these artefacts."

The Historical Society welcomes all suggestions, and is hopeful the community will come together to preserve these vital links to our past, so they are not lost for future generations.

Those who have ideas or wish to contribute in any way, please contact the Phillip Island Historical Society at [hello@phillipislandhistory.org.au](mailto:hello@phillipislandhistory.org.au).

"Together we can ensure that these historic treasures remain an accessible and celebrated part of our local heritage.

"Let's rally together and find a home for our history."

The Society is holding a membership drive, and each new membership counts.

If you would like to join, go to [phillipislandhistory.org.au/membership/](http://phillipislandhistory.org.au/membership/)

Newsletter written and edited by Pamela Rothfield

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