

# *The Learmonth and District Historical Society, Inc.*

Founded in 1983.  
Incorporated 15/10/1986  
Incorporation No. A11215  
ABN No. 22 155 588 072.



The Old Shire Offices, 326 High Street, Learmonth, Victoria.

## *The Society's Happenings*

**SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2018**

# The Dolls, Teddies and Toys Display

From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, the Learmonth and District Historical Society had the pleasure of displaying the extensive doll and figurine collections of Joy Higham and Lois Spenceley. The dolls and teddies display was a fascinating exhibition that displayed dolls, teddies and toys from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fun was had by all who attended and reminisced about their own dolls and had fond memories of when they were young. As usual the wonderful scones and slices went down a treat!

Most of the dolls were loaned to us by Joy Higham of Clunes, who has been collecting dolls since childhood, the first doll at the age of 6, was a Pedigree doll from England. As children of the 1950's, Joy and her sister Lois, both got gifted pedigree dolls as Christmas presents. Joy call her doll, Diana. Whilst Joy was raising her young family she started collecting dolls to give to her children. Then however once her family had grew, so too had Joy's collection.

Joy's assortment of dolls, prompted Joy to start making them, she gained her accreditation as a porcelain doll maker in the 1990's. She now makes miniature dolls and figurines. She also makes miniature scenes depicting times gone by, such as shop fronts, house interiors (pictured below) and a Sherlock Holmes display which features his main door, then on the reverse is his lounge room.



Joy appreciates wares from the past, and this includes her collection of dolls – Shirley Temple, Heritage Porcelain dolls, Kewpie dolls, miniature porcelain figures (with hand beaded dresses), famous dolls and famous figurines including Princess Diana in her wedding gown, Jacqueline Kennedy in her wedding dress and Grace Kelly (late Princess Grace of Monaco) in her wedding gown.

She has even created a look alike of her mother at around the age of 3 years, wearing a hand knitted dress that was made by her great grandmother Scott (nee Shillington), Joy sat and reproduced the dress in the photo, to specially go on the doll, for the purpose of our display. Lois also had a collection of Cabbage Patch dolls and accessories and is now avidly collecting Charlie Bears.



The society would like to extend a thank you very much to Joy Higham for the loan of her collection. This is the first time she had displayed such a large collection of her dolls. A very proud time for Joy.

# Trip Down Memory Lane Display

This October the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> the Learmonth and District Historical Society put on a magnificent display of old wares from the past. Although the weather during the week put some people off, the attendance was great, a few bus trips from Ballarat came out to see the displays and stayed for a refreshing tea and scone, served with the generous help of the members in the kitchen.

Using the old Learmonth State Schools collection, Lois and David Spenceley arranged a school display that included the original school books, desks, blackboard, Honor Board and Honor Roll book.

The event displays included Ben Wright's sensational corner store display that even include the 'Invicta' Jam tins from the movie "The Dressmaker". The corner store and school exhibitions were quite nostalgic as many of our guests enjoyed reminiscing about their childhoods.

The society also displayed some of the items of importance that we store, Dr. Barnaby and Dr. Courtney had a collection that was put on show that showcased the supplies and tools that medical practitioners used during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection of Dr. John Gowan Barnaby, was donated by Matthew Barnaby, John's grandson. It is in the same condition when Dr. Barnaby closed his practice, which was situated on Bankin Street.

It was a combined effort of Desley Beechey, Lois Spenceley, Claudette Crick and Cameron Wright that created a dining and kitchen display, pieces of furniture that were kindly loaned to the society for the purpose of the 'Trip down memory lane' display, included a singer treadle sewing machine, Victorian dining table and antique radio lent to us by Cameron Wright, Desley Beechey lent a sideboard and Claudette Crick loaned us kitchen utensils.

A shire office exhibition was graciously and patiently pieced together by Ruth Nelson and David Spenceley, memorabilia was used that was left in the building when the shire relocated to Wendouree. The display also included some old bushel and grain weights and the shire flag. A Militaria room was produced with the help of Carissah Cain-Sultana and Lois Spenceley. Carissah lent to the society her collection of Australian Army uniforms and webbing as well as medals and other memorabilia.



The society also took the opportunity to display William Mervyn Leach and Edwin James Moyle's military collections that included postcards and medals.

A big shout out to all those who donated items to the farming section of our display, they looked fantastic. Thanks to Claudette and Geoff Crick who loaned their washboard, butter churn and other household items that related to the farm life. The red plough and the front belonged to Eric Loader who also displayed rabbit traps and horseshoes. The potato hoe belongs to the historical society, it was donated to us by Tom Ford, who gave it to us before a clearing sale at 'The Mains'. (Where his sister, a former councillor of the Ballarat Shire, Mary Ford lived).

Most of the items on exhibition at the "Trip down memory lane" display, were previously donated to the society for a number of years.

The society would like to extend a big thank you to all those members who helped out with the setup and attended on the days they were rostered on, the event ran smoothly thanks to the generosity of the members.



Thank  
You

## Members' Memories

*By Cameron Wright*

During the March meeting, members may recall that Cameron Wright got up to talk about his experiences as a pupil at the Learmonth State School. Cameron was a pupil from 1976-1982 and was taught by Gloria Morgan. Cameron said that where the toilet block is now, was actually the old shelter shed and that the toilets were up the back where the carport is.

Cameron advised us that he went to school with the Casey's, Nolan's, Verlay's, Ryan's, Harrison's, Baird's, Hunter's and many more. His good friend was Tim Ryan.



School sports were taken quite seriously and school camps were run efficiently. Mr Rasmussen once came to school with a film projector where he showed the pupils slides. In the early 1980's, when electronic games came in, it was a huge craze at school.

For lunch he discussed that they had to cross the road over to the shop, they had to walk across the road between the 2 white posts. Cameron remembered the punishments they received was getting smacked over the hands with a wooden ruler. The pupils had many odd jobs to do like collecting the milk, photocopying and ringing the bell. They held Easter bonnet parades and concerts over at the Mechanics Hall.

Cameron remembered his days as a pupil at Learmonth, with a lot of fondness.

## By Bill Dunn

During the November meeting, we had the pleasure of listening to Bill Dunn's talk about his recollections and memories of attending the Brewster State School. Bill spoke about the Closer Settlement Act, a Victorian Government initiative to ensure that the large allotments of land often part of larger pastoral estates, were subdivided and sold off to stem the flow of unemployment of those who suffered during the 1890's depression, by giving them access to agricultural pursuits in the rural towns and cities. A petition in 1905 was submitted to the Premier of Victoria that Rear Admiral Bridges' property Trawalla Estate be selected under the Closer Settlement Act.

The land selected was owned by Rear Admiral Walter Bogue Bridges, who began subdividing his property under the Closer Settlement Act in 1909, it was only at the pastoralist's death in 1918, that the Victorian Government purchased the estate. By 1921 the property's 8000 acres was compulsorily acquired and sold in lots at a public auction. Bill's grandfather was allotted a 350 acre block to farm. Bill had researched that there were 93 farms of an average of 272 acres that sold for £6 an acre.

A petition was sent around by Bill's Father and Brother Roy amongst the local soldier settlers and their young families for the establishment of a School in the district.

According to the Vision and Realisation book written by the Education Department of Victoria on the histories of Schools, the Brewster State School was officially opened on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1924, by the Returned Sailors & Soldiers Imperial League of Australia.

The need for a school in Brewster was first mentioned by the RSSILA on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1922. The District Inspector Mr. W. J. Stephenson recommended that the site of the School be on a 2 acre piece of land granted by Mr. Thomas Lakey, on the corner of Trawalla East Road, and Kayley's Lane.

In 1923, it was decided that a dilapidated school from Malakoff, be relocated and re-erected on this new site. The Education Department stated that after a windy night, the school blew off its blocks, however the feeling of the community was that someone may have 'helped' it fall off. A new timber school building was erected.

The first Head Teacher was Margaret J. Ross, transferred from Purdeet, near Elmhurst who on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1924, first enrolled 10 pupil from grades 1-5.

*The Ballarat Star* published an article written on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 1924 about the opening of the Brewster State School:

### NEW SCHOOL OPENED.

The official opening of the Brewster State School, No. 4166, took place in the presence of about 60 people. The school is called after the same parish of the same name, and is situated on the Trawalla Soldier Settlement. There is no doubt but that it will prove of great benefit to the settlers' children. An interim committee comprising Messrs Anderson, Dunn, Kay, Grant, McErvale, and Foster, with a number of soldiers wives, carried out the arrangements for the day. Cr D. R. Hannah, chairman of the Beaufort school committee, addressed the parents, intending pupils, and visitors, from the porch, and handed the key to Mrs Kay, who then opened the door and declared the school open.

Because of the fluctuating attendance, the school decided on a 6 foot extension on the south side.

Bill can remember his time at school fondly and his teacher being Miss Fishwick who (like many other state school teachers) went home for lunch to the teacher's residence built on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1938, opposite the school.

Bill told us his memories of riding his new bike to school.

## *By Mary Wright & Janet Goldsmith*

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2017, after our doll exhibit, the society invited Mary Wright and Janet Goldsmith to talk about their memories of living at 'The Laurels'. The history of 'The Laurels' began as a family home for the family of William and Miriam Vaughan.

William was a pastoralist who had arrived in Victoria in 1851, aboard the ship 'Deborah', he travelled with his Brother Charles, and together they made their way to Larpent, near Colac, to live with a relative. The boys believed they could make it on the goldfields and relocated up to Ballarat, where by chance they met Mr. Thomas Bath. Thomas told them of pastoral opportunities in Learmonth, the two Vaughan brothers entered into a partnership with Thomas Bath, and in 1857 William had purchased a property of 159 acres in Learmonth.

In 1862, William met and married Miriam Ann Sanderson, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Robert Sanderson of Mount Bolton. By the time they were to be married, William had commissioned the homestead to be built, they named it 'The Laurels' after the cherry laurels that bordered the driveway. William and Miriam raised their family on the property, and at the time of William's death in 1919, the property was worth a staggering £12,398. Their son William travelled from his own estate near Forbes, New South Wales, to become the owner of 'The Laurels'. Upon Williams' death the property was handed down to his only daughter Elizabeth May, who on Wednesday the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1940 at the Wycliffe Church, Learmonth, married Noel St John Wettenhall, (Mary and Janet's parents).

Mary and Janet recalled fondly roaming the estate as children, they both attended the Addington State School and could remember leaving the horses in the paddock near the school. For Mary and Janet, church was always on Sundays and the children also attended the local Sunday school. They both vividly could recall when the vicar would often stop in for lunch.



The girls spoke freely about their life which they described as safe and enjoyable at 'The Laurels', which included climbing the big Cyprus trees to get a view of Lake Learmonth. Life was simple then, Mary and Janet both mentioned Kitty Maibacher, their live in housekeeper, who was a part of the family.

Whenever help was needed for times like harvest, Jack McNulty and the justice folk would often pitch in to help Mary and Janet's family. The children were tasked with feeding their pet lambs and calves. Mary and Janet recall that their father, an excellent horseman, took horses to shows, and was good at Sheep dog trials, whilst their mother enjoyed exhibiting dogs.

The property also featured a mill, stables and numerous outbuildings. Janet could not remember the mill as it was before her time. We thank Mary and Janet for allowing us to hear what it was like at 'The Laurels'. The estate has so much history and it seems it was a peaceful place to live.

