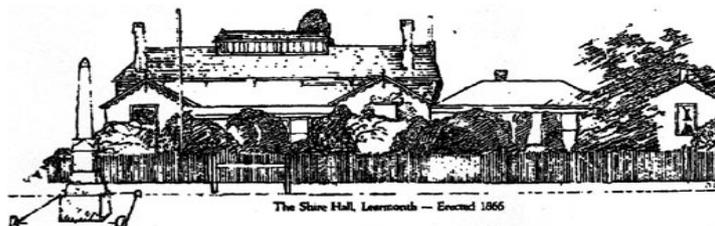




LEARMONTH & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

NOVEMBER 2008

FOUNDED 1983.

INCORPORATED 13/10/1986. INCORPORATION No. A 11213.

ABN No. 22 133 588 072.



18th November is our last meeting for the year, and our guest speaker will be Graham Findlay.

Ladies, please bring a plate.

There will be no meetings in December or January.

MEETINGS FOR 2009

FEBRUARY: 17th

MARCH: 17th

APRIL: 21st

MAY: 19th

JUNE: 16th

JULY: AGM to be advised

AUGUST: 18th

SEPTEMBER: 15th

OCTOBER: 20th

NOVEMBER: 17th Christmas meeting, and please bring a plate.

All meetings will commence at 8pm, and will be held at the Historical Society, (former Shire Hall) Learmonth.

There are no meetings held in December or January.

GET WELL SOON

On the sick list is Terry Foran, the Societies members wish you a speedy recovery.

NEWSLETTERS

As of next year, the newsletter will be sent out in February, May, August and November, and as this is the last newsletter for 2008, the society would like to wish all its members a very

MERRY CHRISTMAS

and a

HAPPY NEW YEAR

LEARMONTH TOWN WALK

This project is nearing completion. Most land holders have given permission for the sign posts displaying their location in the town, the art work for these posts are ready for the sign writer and we hope for these to be in the ground in the new year,. The flyers are ready to be sent to the printers. We will be organizing a working bee to install the posts, David Spenceley is looking for information on the 37 sites to add into the flyer and the societies new web-

site <http://lhs.ballarat.vic.au>

Our new email address is learmonthdhs@gmail.com



Ivy May Nelson



17 Mar 1915 - 10 Sep 2008

May was born at Leongatha on the 17th March 1915, the eldest daughter of Ethel May (nee Hobley) and George Smith, who were share farmers on a dairy farm, at Stoney Creek in South Gippsland. In 1921 the family moved to Drouin South and eventually into the town where her father worked at the local Butter Factory. She attended Drouin State School until the age of fourteen years, where she completed her merit certificate. May dreamed of becoming a School Teacher, but her father sent her off to do seasonal work, packing apples at Toomuc Valley (Pakenham area) at the orchard of Kitchen Bros (of velvet soap fame).

Following this, she worked at a Drouin Newsagency & General Store where she got her chance to try her hand at "Window Display". It was during this time that she trained as a Sunday School Teacher and soon had her own class. At age sixteen years of age she became a junior member of the Independent Order of Rechabites and was soon the assistant secretary. In 1934 whilst working in Melbourne, she was encouraged by the vicar of St Augustines to train as a Youth Leader, which resulted in her going to Tasmania to do Extension Youth Work. Whilst in Hobart she was given the opportunity to do a specialized two week promotion job at "Charles David" Department Store. This ended up being a full time position. (she had "fallen in love" with Tassie). During the War and on behalf of "Charles Davis", May did a lot of fund raising, organizing functions for the War Effort. And formed a dance band with some friends, in which she played the mandolin. In 1941 she was transferred back to Melbourne and worked at Myers, in Bourke Street. During this time she met Allan and in Jan 1942, they were married at St Albans Church, West Coburg.

They lived in West Brunswick, then Coburg, where their first three children, Ruth, Heather and Ronald were born. Here she became involved with the local "Girls Friendly Society". 1949, saw a move to Bacchus Marsh, Allan having acquired a position at the Co-Op and there their fourth child, David was born. Then in 1953, the family moved to Ballarat, (Allan's home town, having grown up there).

They moved into the New Housing Commission Estate at Wendouree West, and apart from a small shop in Howitt Street, opposite the Wendouree State School, there were no facilities and minimal transport. As shopping needed to be done in Ballarat, one had to catch a bus or "push the pram" through to the trams in Wendouree Parade. It was whilst living in Wendouree West, her local community involvements began in earnest.



As there were no services or facilities for young families, a local MP contacted Council and a public meeting was called. May was determined not to get involved in anything as she wanted to just raise her family but, she was nominated to go on the committee. So starts a long association with the Ballarat Shire Council. May, along with supporters, battled until she got the Health Centre and Kindergarten (still standing on the corner of, Norman and Daffodil Streets) and a Youth Club whilst still raising her young family. Before long Councillors had co-opted her to represent the Shire Council, Kindergartens, Business and Professional Women etc. Eventually the family moved into their own home in Prefect Street, Wendouree, where she remained until her death.

In 1974, she was prompted to stand for council and became the first elected woman councillor in 121 years history. It was at this time her daughter, Heather was diagnosed with leukaemia. She died in 1975, leaving May and Allan to raise their grandchildren, Shaun and Deborah. The children would often accompany “Gran” on her council assignments, as she had made a promise to her daughter not to give up the council, and so she battled on. 1983 saw May, elected as the first female Shire President (another milestone in history) and was installed on the 10th November 1983, just nine days after the sudden death of her husband, Allan on the 1st November 1983. May bravely continued with always a willing ear for her constituents needs and concerns. May was one of the prime movers to involve the Shire in Road Safety, Bicycle Tracks and the Traffic School. Also she helped to establish the Wendouree Library, Big Bin Collection (of which she was very proud), Family Day Care and the Wendouree Elderly Citizens Club. During this time (approximately ten years) she was the local contact for ABC news and would often get called out at “all hours” to check a story. In her retirement, she taught herself to use a computer and completed three Family Histories and had them published spending many years and hours gathering the information. In 1995, at the age of eighty years, May had her first trip overseas, to visit relatives and friends in Winnipeg, Canada and two years later, at eighty two years, took off “up the centre and down the west coast” for two months with some cousins and a caravan.

Then around 2003, May began loosing her eye sight with Macular Degeneration, but she still managed to put together another book for the Learmonth and District Historical Society (of which she was a long time member), a collection of short stories and memories by the locals, “Stories from the days before yesterday” As her vision worsened she continued her thirst for knowledge by way of audio books provided by Vision Australia. She also became a founding member of the Ballarat West Probus Club and enjoyed many outings with them.

In 2008, after suffering years of increasing hip pain due to arthritis, she finally had her surgery, only to be struck down by medical complications. As a the result, never got the chance to try out her new hip and after four months in hospital and being cared for by her daughter for a short time, she passed away in the early hours of 10th September 2008. May was always a very independent woman and did not “suffer fools gladly” or want to “put other out”. She always liked to be in control of her own destiny and was forever willing to take up a challenge.

This article was written by her daughter, Ruth Nelson.

The members of the Learmonth & District Historical Society would like to express their deepest sympathy to the Nelson, Findlay and Ryan families on the loss of their loved ones.





L-R Claudette Crick,, Bill & Marie Loader

EXPO 2008, this was as enjoyable as it has been in previous years, with many stall holders coming from far and wide. The Learmonth & District Historical Society once again wining an “Honourable Mention” with the display that Claudette Crick had put together, the theme being “That’s Entertainment. The visual and performing arts from 1850-1950’s.” The society won a \$50 voucher for archival products, which Claudette will put to good use with storing the societies photo collection. Thanks go to the members who help out on the stall, Gwen and Fred Wren coming all the way from Portarlington. It was lovely to see them again since moving away from the district. One of our members, Bill Dunn, was lucky enough to win one of the raffle prizes, a Family Pass to Sovereign Hill.



L_R Bill Dunn, David Spenceley & Margaret Sawyer



L-R Claudette Crick & Margaret Sawyer (PROV)

If undeliverable please return to
Learmonth and District Historical Society
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Learmonth Vic 3352