

Traralgon & District Historical Society

Incorporated

BULLETIN

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JUNE 2008



**An important part of our heritage
The historic Traralgon Post Office and Court House
Erected 1886. Is it again under threat ?**

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The following items will be included in the September 2008 Bulletin:

- The Grubb Family History

Obituaries:

- Mrs. Perl Reeves. Traralgon.***
- Mr. John W. Davidson. Traralgon.***
- Mr. Alan Wilson. Ringwood, Vic.***

Historic photographs used in "The Bulletin" are from the resources and archives of the Traralgon and District Historical Society Inc. You can peruse these resources on line by visiting our website:

www.traralgonhistory.asn.au

**The Traralgon and District Historical Society 2008 calendar
is available for purchase -**

be sure to get your copy soon as the number is limited.

Only \$7.00 each

***Phone Secretary Thelma on 0429 901 948 to purchase your calendars. There will
be an added fee for postage and handling for our calendars.***

COMING EVENTS :

June 10th 2008 – Mrs. Lyn Grasby -

“World Travels and Tours from the 1950’s to Today”

Lyn is an experienced traveller, having sailed in the most luxurious liners for over 50 years, and recently as a passenger on the final cruise of the QE2. The QE2 is still the fastest ocean going liner in the world.

July 8th. - Mr John Cameron.

“A History of the Cameron Family.”

August 12th 2008 – Mr. Rick Hanning

“Aberfeldy to Arlington”

Mr. Hanning is Vice Chairman of the Gippsland Armed Forces Museum, Sale. He has extensively researched aeroplane crashes which have occurred in the district. He will be speaking specifically on this occasion about the discovery of a WW2 American plane crash in the Aberfeldy area.

September 9th 2008 - Annual Dinner

(See Page 5 for details)

Guest Speaker , Mr. Ted Addison.

“Then and Now from the 70’s”

Mr. Addison is the licensed Estate Agent and Auctioneer and Officer in effective control of Addison Real Estate, the only Latrobe Valley Estate Agent who is a Registered Owners Corporation Manager, and a member of the REIV’s Owners Corporation Chapter.

Ted Addison has been a resident of Traralgon since 1977 and for 6 years prior, worked in Traralgon one day per week.

He is a Past President of :

*Traralgon Jaycees
Gippsland Jaycees
Central Gippsland Hospital
Latrobe Regional Hospital
Grey Street Primary School
Traralgon Community Health Centre
and Gippsland Branch of the REIV*

He was also a Director (9 years) of the Traralgon Football Club, and for the past 14 years has facilitated the course for Real Estate Representatives at our local TAFE College.

October 14th. - Mr. Rob Youl.

“Recollections of a Traralgon Boyhood.”

November 11th. - Members of the Brady Family.

”A History of the Brady Family.

December 9th. - Mr. Robert Czigledy.

“Resettling in a new Country. “

Traralgon and District Historical Society -

During 2008 Sunday openings from 2pm - 4pm, schedule as follows:

March 30th	April 27th	May 25th
June 29th	July 27th	August 31st
September 28th	October 26th	November 30th

Working Bees -

Working bees will be held on the second and fourth Monday afternoons in each month, excluding public holidays.

February 11th, 25th	April 14th, 28th	May 12th, 26th
June 23rd	July 14th, 28th	August 11th, 25th
September 8th, 22nd	October 13th, 27th	November 10th, 24th

Come when you can, between 1pm and 4pm - Everyone welcome !!!

Traralgon and District Historical Society

Cordially invite you to join them at their
46th Annual Dinner

Held at : **The Grand Junction Hotel Function Rooms**
Corner Princes Highway and Franklin Street
TRARALGON

On Tuesday September 9th 2008 commencing at 6.00 pm.

Menu

50/50

Soup:- *Pumpkin or Spring Vegetables*

Main :- *Chick Mignon on Cous Cous with Vegetables*

OR

Roast Sirloin of Beef and Yorkshire Pudding with Vegetables

Dessert:- *"Pavlova Thelma" (Sweet and Fruity)*

OR

Sticky Date Pudding with Butterscotch Sauce

Tea and Coffee:- *Self Service*

Alcoholic Drinks at own cost

Guest Speaker:- Mr. Ted Addison - Addison Real Estate Agent.

Topic:- Real Estate Then and Now from the 70's

Cost: \$35.00 per person with a deposit of \$10.

R.S.V.P. Wednesday 3rd September 2008, to The Secretary, Thelma Mayze,
P.O. Box 697, Traralgon, Vic. 3844. Phone: 517 43696 Mobile: 0429 901 948

From the Chair

Half the year has gone, and as one gets further into seniors years the time seems to go quicker. Events in our fair City have created much interest especially the intended moving of the Post Office from the historic Franklin Street site to the business Post Office in Church Street. Franklin Street Post Office has been a postal service since 1886.

As one walks or drives around Traralgon, the change in the past 12 months or so have been huge, with new business coming to our fair city which goes well for the future of Traralgon.

There has been quite a number of various items that have been passed on to the Society, for which we are grateful. Over the last few months Moe and Morwell Societies assisted in retaining memorabilia from the Latrobe City. Traralgon seems to have the most to sort out, so shortly much of this will be on display.

We have been fortunate to receive some funding from the Keith Chenhall Foundation, for funding some interpretive signage around the City. Guest speakers have entertained our members with interesting topics, on Theatres, Convicts, Weary Dunlop, Women at War. Thelma has manned the stall at the monthly market with good sales of publications and having people sign up as new members, and some have given their time to assist with jobs around the club.

The trip Thelma organized to Phillip Island was well supported and all enjoyed a great day.

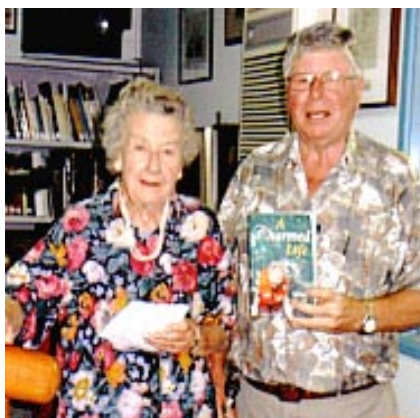
Till the next Bulletin - Take care.

Jim

Book Presentation by Mrs. Youl to the Traralgon and District Historical Society 11th March 2008.

Last year, at the March 13th 2007 meeting, Grace spoke to the Society. Her topic – “A Memoir of Traralgon and District”. She mentioned the fact that she was compiling a more extensive account, which would be published in book form. We congratulate Grace on the completion of this project. Her book “A Charmed Life” was launched on 16th February 2008 at St James Anglican Church. This well attended function was the occasion to celebrate Grace’s 90th birthday.

(Photo - Jim accepts the book from Grace)



Churchill Island and Phillip Island Coach Trip - by *Thelma Mayze*



On Saturday March 1st, 2008, 39 passengers, made up of members, friends, and visitors, enjoyed a lovely day to Churchill Island's working heritage farm. The Mayor of Melbourne had a holiday house dated 1872 on Churchill Island.

Animals on the farm are Clydesdale horses, Highland cattle, sheep, ducks, chickens, pigs, goats and peacocks. The first Settlers on Churchill Island was the family of Samuel Kirkby Pickersgill and Winifred June Nealis, married on 21st September 1852 at St. Francis Church, Melbourne.

Samuel Kirkby Pickersgill - 1826-1902.

Samuel came to Australia as a result of the stories told by Lt. Richard Pickersgill, the navigator and charterer for Lt. James Cook on his voyages to Australia. In 1841 he jumped ship and changed his name. He married Winifred Jane Nealis as Robert Gipson. Until he returned to England in 1855, he carted goods from Sandridge to Melbourne. On his return to England he was indentured to Alex McCallum on French Island. From there, he would have seen Churchill Island, where he took up residence in c.1857 in Lt Grant's blockhouse built in 1801. In c.1866 he was dispossessed of the Island, because John Rogers selected Churchill Island for 210 pounds.

Winifred Jane Nealis - c.1832-1891

Winifred was an Irish Famine Orphan, who came out on the "Lady Kenaway" in December 1848 from Mayo, via the Sligo Orphanage. On her arrival, she was employed as a nursemaid by Major Firebrace at Melford.



After Samuel lost the farm on Churchill Island, in the late 1880's she, from money earned from Mrs. McHaffie, bought in her own name a block of land and built a house on it in 1888. She ran a boarding house for the workers on the Coal Railway Line. In 1891 Samuel mortgaged her house to satisfy his gambling needs, and in utter disappointment, she went to bed and just died. She was a kind, generous and forgiving woman who loved the flora and fauna. Some of the magnificent trees and orchard on Churchill Island could have been planted by her. After our guided tour of the homestead and out buildings on Churchill Island, we enjoyed lunch in the Cafe and Restaurant which have spectacular bay views.



After lunch, we travelled to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island. This was very educational, with over 5,000 photos, exhibits, dioramas and models from all Services on display. This is well worth a visit.

From here we travelled to the Nobbies Marine Centre for afternoon tea and enjoyed the amazing Seal viewing of the Seals at Seal Rock, and a stroll on the boardwalk to the stunning Blowhole, taking in the view of the rugged coastline.

On our way home we thought we would visit the Phillip Island Vineyard and Winery, but because I had not booked beforehand we were refused entry, which was disappointing. However, everyone had a pleasant day exploring Churchill Island and Phillip Island.

Stay tuned, for our next trip !



Photo of "Weary Dunlop" in the Museum



View of the rugged coastline near "the blowhole"

Monthly Meeting – 12th February 2008

Speaker – Mr. John Hewson

Subject: The History of Gippsland Post Offices.

Mr. John Hewson is originally from Leeds, England, and is now a resident of Newborough. John has thoroughly researched postal history for 20 years, and brings with him part of his impressive stamp collection, for the interest of members and guests.

John's detailed summary of his presentation to the Society is too large to fully include in The Bulletin. The introduction in full is included, together with summaries of the various detailed subjects. John's full report is available from the TDHS.

Introduction

\What do the following have in common with Traralgon ?

Burstoff's Telephone Office	Dumbalk Butter Factory
Eaglepoint Village Settlement	Hinnonmunjie Bridge
Jim and Jack Creek	Koo Wee Rup South Stata School
Lakes Entrance Camping Park	McDonald's Track
Moe Swamp East	Murrungowar Lower
Narracan Railway Township	Nyeriminalang
Sale West Commonwealth Immigration Centre	
Sardine Camp Creek	Ten Mile Creek State School
Thunder and Lightning Creek	Warragul Military Camp
Yarrock Village Settlement	Yallourn Railway Camp

Apart from some fairly amazing names, each of these was a Gippsland Post Office.

All are now shut, and, I must confess, I would have difficulty knowing exactly where most of them were. Many local communities draft historic summaries of their town's development, but either omit, or not know, details of the postal services provided in their town. It is the role of Postal History to record and preserve what we know.

Victoria was proclaimed a separate colony in 1851. Until that date, its 43 Post Offices were under the control of the postal authorities of New South Wales. Between then and the early days of Federation, 1901, when the colonies posts and telegraphs were passed to the control of the Commonwealth of Australia, a staggering 2000 post offices had been opened in Victoria, becoming an essential part of each community.

The huge boost in the state's development resulted from the discovery of gold, which resulted in a massive influx of hopefuls, and the resulting growth in producers, traders and service suppliers. As communities developed, it was necessary to establish a postal service so settlers and businesses could maintain personal and business contacts.

This document looks at the history of the various post offices that have been established in Gippsland – that region in Victoria's south east which is rich in natural resources. In 1851, Gippsland had only two post offices, Alberton and Flooding Creek (renamed Sale). Over the next 150 years, something like 900 offices were opened in Gippsland. I will focus on these offices, charting their growth and examining the services they provided.

In remote settlements the development of postal services was closely linked to the establishment of community facilities – such as a store or hotel, a Mechanics Institute Hall, a school, a creamery or butter factory or a railway station. These premises were a natural focal point of community involvement and gathering, and provided the opportunity to establish an organized postal service. A commercial business would act as a postal agency, or a public minded settler would contract to use the hall, school etc., as post office. In some cases the post office incorporated the name of the facility into the name of the post office. Examples, and many are listed, include Winter's Store, Jeeralang State School, and Flynn Railway Station.

In order to better understand the development of postal services, I will explain the different types of services the offices provided, leading to the progression from Receiving Office to Post Office, and the distinction between a Post Office, a Telegraph Office, a Money Order Office etc.

A post office name is shown on the canceller used to postmark the stamp. Over the years, the cancellers wear out and are replaced. This article describes the basic types of cancellations as they have evolved over the 150 years of use. Other cancellers have been introduced for services, such as money orders, telegraphs etc., and I shall examine these services and the cancellers they spawned.

The study of these sorts of details relating to post offices and postal services is called Postal History. One fact that becomes apparent, is the dual operation of Post Offices (PO) and Telegraph Offices (TO) in some towns. Hence we can have two town cancellers with the same name, eg. Glengarry, distinguishable only by the letters T.O. on the canceller. A more appropriate title for this presentation may well be "The Post and Telegraph Offices of Gippsland". Early offices often displayed a sign reading "Post and Telegraph Office".

Finally, I provide a chronicle of Gippsland Post Offices, documenting the various types of cancellers used. This comprehensive list is presented in regional order centred around 20 or so of the region's larger towns. This approach is appropriate as many regional postal services were delivered from these towns. To those interested in Postal History, such details as the status of an office are as interesting as the study of the various cancellers used at that office, looking at the main types of cancellations used, remembering that it is the canceller that give us such information as identification of the town of usage, the date of handling, and even the status or type of office.

Gippsland's first Post Office was established in 1843, at Alberton (then NSW) serving Port Albert. Since the 1840's this office acted as the place for collection or receipt of mail for the Gippsland region. Travellers were often asked to carry mail to this office where they could be posted for ongoing transmission by boat.

The first overland mails were carried by the regular Native Police patrols, sent by Superintendent LaTrobe from Dandenong in 1846. "Two troopers started for Gipps Land taking the treasury & post office mail with them".

In July 1848, a fortnightly mail service was set up, which passed through Traralgon on its way to the Woolpack Inn (later Flooding Creek, now Sale) and thence to Alberton - a total of 165 miles. By 1865, the mails came weekly.

Overland Mails.

Patrick Mulcare was awarded the Melbourne to Alberton Mail Coach contract in 1854, but he could not have run a coach all of the way. By 1855 all of the mails went overland, much to the consternation of Port Albert, Alberton, and Tarraville residents who had to wait four days longer to receive their mail via Flooding Creek.

By 1850, there was still no road to Gippsland, the mails and goods being carried by packhorse over bush tracks that were rendered impassable in winter. In 1858 the mails came twice weekly.

Telegraph.

In 1864, a telegraph line linked Sale and Port Albert. Angus McMillan became the first person to send and receive a telegram. Later this was extended to Rosedale. Opening dates of Gippsland Telegraph offices were:

Port Albert	1 December 1864
Rosedale	1867
Sale	22 September 1864
Taradale	November 1861
Wood's Point	1865

Mail Coaches.

Mail coach routes were established along the major routes, eg. Rosedale to Yarram, Traralgon to Yarram. Mail services began to reach into newly settled areas with small mail depots set up where mail could be left from the coaches coming through, Loose bags of mail were left for someone to collect and distribute. In winter, coaches were often stopped, and mails continued the journey on horseback.

Settlements not on the mail routes had to rely on horseback carriers with a once or twice weekly delivery. For example, such deliveries ran from Yarram to North Devon and Bulga, and from Carrajung to Blackwarry. The 1864 tender for mail carriage requests a service to and from Berwick and Sale, via Pakenham, Moe, Traralgon and Rosedale, three times a week (Berwick had deliveries six days a week.)

In 1866 services were called for a six days a week service via Oakleigh, Springvale, Dandenong, Berwick, Pakenham, Shady Creek, Moe, Morwell, Traralgon and Rosedale. Post Office hours were from 9am to 8pm. In 1875, a mail service was instigated between Traralgon and Walhalla via Toongabbie.

Post Office Openings 1843 to 1905.

From Alberton in 1843, it was another 5 years before the next office opened at Flooding Creek (Sale). Then came post offices at Omeo (1851), Tarraville (1854), and Port Albert (1856). 1858 saw a steady stream of openings at about two a year, as east and central Gippsland were settled – Lucknow (Bairnsdale), Stratford, Yallock, Corinella, Traralgon, Yarram Yarram, Moe, and the Goldfields in 1862. Morwell opened in 1870.

Mail Centres – 1975

Prior to 1975, each state had one Mail Exchange in each capital city. Melbourne's was at the corner of Bourke and Spencer Streets. In 1975, Australia Post began decentralizing the mail network by setting up country and metropolitan Mail Centres. Five country and seven metropolitan centres were opened. The Morwell Mail Centre opened in 1977, and has since been renamed the Gippsland Mail Centre

Shared Post Offices – Combined with businesses or community facilities.

Victoria's first post offices were either in private residences, or combined with other businesses, such as hotels or general stores, or community facilities, since small communities would not have had sufficient business to run a separate post office.

The settlement of Traralgon South has been well recorded, and presents us with a very clear chronology of the provision of facilities in a remote community – which is typical of many Gippsland towns. The first school was set up in a rented room in 1879. A new school was built in 1880. A creamery was also established about that time. A church was built in 1889, and a year later the Mechanic's Institute was opened. A post office was opened in 1889. Other towns may have had a railway station.

Such premises were a natural focal point of community involvement and provided the opportunities for a community to establish a post office. A shop keeper could contract to act as an agent for the Post Office. In other cases, a local citizen would act as Postmaster/Mistress operating out of a room in the Mechanic's Institute, or their own home. Post offices were also set up in schools and railway stations.

Railways

In 1878 the railway line to Melbourne was complete, and through rain travel was possible. It was typical at that time to open a post office in the station building when no other suitable building was available, or not contracted. Flynn and Flynn's Creek are two examples. Typically the station master/mistress was also entrusted to manage the mails, sorting the letters and parcels that arrived by train, as well providing for the sale of stamps and the receipt of letters posted locally.

Mail was sorted at the station before and after the train's arrival by officially appointed locals.

Railway post offices were an important part of the postal system in the late 1800's. In 1880 there were more than 60 in the state and the numbers grew as the railway network expanded. Ultimately, over 60 Railway Station Post Offices were opened in Gippsland alone.

The following is a list of Traralgon District Railway stations which are known to have had post offices with their own canceller:

Cowwarr R.S. T.O.	Flynn R.S.
Flynn's Creek R.S.	Flynn's Creek R.S. T.O.
Glengarry R.S.	La Trobe R.S.
Morwell R.S. (1 & 2)	Traralgon R.S.

In many cases the Post Offices moved from the railway station into the town centre. In many cases a new canceller without the "R.S." was supplied, but occasionally the "R.S." continued in use for many years, possibly until the need for a new or replacement canceller arose. So the inclusion of "R.S." does not necessarily mean that that Post Office was operating at the station at that time. Ry.Stn. was also an abbreviation used.

Travelling Post Offices (TPO)

A Travelling Post Office was attached to a train running between towns of substantial population or through a well populated district. The idea was to relieve the pressure on local sorting staff by having the mails processed on the train as it travelled.

Although the main task was sorting, the TPO did accept and forward mail handed in at stations, and carried mail in bags which had already been sorted . Its main work came from mail bags collected along the way. Mail that was sorted on the train had a distinctive TPO cancel applied to the back of the article, as a transit mark to show the mail had passed through a particular train on that date. If the article had not been cancelled the TPO handstamp was used as a stamp canceller. Hence we can find stamps cancelled with TPO markings.

The sorting carriage or compartment was owned by the Railways but staffed by the Post Office. The last Victorian TPO was withdrawn in 1932.

J.R. W. Purves studied these TPO's and produced an excellent work – "Victoria: The Travelling Post Offices and their Markings 1865-1912 (JRP2). From this we can see that Gippsland had two TPO services – one operating on the Melbourne to Sale (and possibly Bairnsdale) line, and one on the Melbourne to Port Albert /Yarram line.

Schools

Schools were often the focal point of an isolated community, and sometimes became the Post Office. The parents rarely visited town, and children brought the mail to be sent , and fetched home any incoming mail. The teachers received payment for their services as Postmasters, which may have included an allowance for rental of the premises. In later years the teacher's wife may have acted as Postmistress, and even operated the telephone exchange.

Gippsland schools which are known to have had a Post Office with their own canceller:

Budgerie State School	Bulga State School
Denison State School	Devon North State School
Jeeralang State School	Kooraman State School
Koo-Wee-Rup South State School	Modella State School
Ten Mile Creek State School	Woodleigh State School

Creameries

The creamery was a focal point for a community, and was often one of the first buildings opened in a newlyformed town. It is common to find a town's resources listed as store, school, mechanic's hall, post office, and creamery, and not much more. The Dumbalk Butter Factory is the only known Gippsland creamery/butter factory to have its own canceller.

The installation of separators on farms led to the closure of creameries.

Telegraph or Telephone Office

The telegraph was a separate business from the Post Office a century ago, and many telegraph offices were opened. These may have shared facilities with the Post Office or operated in a different building. They were generally given a canceller which included the abbreviation "T.O". The period 1910 to 1916 saw a preponderance of Telegraph Offices being opened at Railway Stations, but most of these were closed within a few years, or were amalgamated with the Post Office.

The only known Gippsland Telephone postmark is: Burstoff's Telephone Office.

Post Office closings 1960's and 1970's

The 1960's saw the introduction of automatic telephone exchanges, and this served the death warrant on many of Gippsland's smaller post offices which had doubled as manual exchanges. These included Jack River, Carrajung South, and Hunterson. In the 1970's, many local stores/mixed businesses found that they were unable to compete with those in the larger settlements, and many of them closed. This often meant that the associated post office closed too. These included Won Wron, Devon North, Alberton West and Tarraville.

The Future

For the postal historian, mail centres have had a significant impact. On the one hand they introduce a whole new range of cancellations which have been introduced at the centre. On the other hand, the cancellations of many smaller towns are now rarely seen, since all of the mail collected in mail boxes is now gathered and sent to the mail centre to be processed, where it receives a mail centre cancel. A look at your own incoming mail will confirm this.

Weary Dunlop - The Man from Sheepwash Creek

He packed his kit, and he went to war,
With the eighth division to Singapore,
And a parting tear slid down the cheek -
For the fine young man from Sheepwash Creek.

With their guns ablaze and bayonets drawn,
The battle raged in the early dawn,
And the medics they went to seek -
Was a tried and true from Sheepwash Creek.

Far from the land of the blossom gum
The enemy marched them one by one,
To a camp, where no one dared to speak -
'cept the spirited man from Sheepwash Creek.

And their hell was called the Burma Trail.
(With skeletal frames, they built the rail)
While their blessed saviour, so to speak,
Was the medial man from Sheepwash Creek.

The medical man - with the weary eyes.
He watched 'em bleed, and he watched 'em die.
He battled on with the sick and weak,
Did the weary man from Sheepwash Creek.

But it's now I hear the bugle sound
A last hurrah, for the Heaven bound
And a million tears roll down the cheeks -
Good - bye, Good shepherd, from Sheepwash Creek.

- **Heather Prentice**

Monthly Meeting - March 11th. 2008

Guest Speaker: Mrs. Valda Street (nee Fitch)

Subject: Secretarial Life in Australia and Overseas.

Valda is originally from Tyers, now residing in Warburton and running a bed and breakfast business.

She was educated at Traralgon High School, and her business/secretarial career commenced with Traralgon solicitors, becoming secretary to both Mr. C.H. Ford Snr., and Mr. C.H. Ford Jnr. Extra experience included being night receptionist at Central Gippsland Hospital.

Valda then ventured overseas where agency work brought her into contact with many interesting personalities, notably Father Mario Borrelli. His splendid work caring for the urchins of Naples was featured in the book "Children of the Sun" written by Australian author Morris West.

Returning to Australia, Valda became secretary to Mr. Somerville, Managing Director of C.S.R., one of Australia's largest companies. She eventually became secretary to Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop C.M.G., O.B.E.D., army surgeon. Sir Edward was also a renowned champion sportsman, but especially revered for his compassion and care of prisoners of war on the Burma-Siam railway.

Valda spoke of her experiences with her varied secretarial work for "men of quality" as she phrases it, and particularly of Sir Edward ("Weary" Dunlop, whom she describes not only as a famous Australian, but as a country boy who had the time for all others.

Valda recalls "I started working for him when he was 70, so I never really considered it as a permanent job, because people of 70 are retiring". Sir Edward was a hugely compassionate man, his whole life was coming into the rooms and looking after his patients. He was also a very hospitable man, his house was open to everyone.

He really was very much a country man I think, and that's how I saw him, as I was one of the people who was really close to him, as I worked as secretary for Sir Edward from 1978 until he died in 1993,

Sir Edward was an army surgeon to fellow Prisoners of War on the Burma-Siam Railway in World War 2. Prisoners of War never spoke about their experiences, and I think that when he published his war diary which he had been sitting on for 40 years, it opened the door for other Prisoners of War to talk about their experiences.

I did say to him once "If you had your days over again, what would you do?". He looked at me fair and square in the eye and said "I wouldn't change a thing". I said "Surely you wouldn't want to be a Prisoner of War", and he said "I was the right person in the right place at the right time".

He always had time for others, and it was the secret to his success. When his book was published, lots of kids chose to do him as a subject for their various projects. They would phone up and say "Would it be possible to speak to Sir Edward?" and I would always put them through to him because he loved talking to the kids. Although he wasn't a high flying sophisticate, he could certainly cope with those occasions, but he was most comfortable sitting with the Prisoners of War round a big table having a cup of tea. Sir Edward "grazed" rather than ate a meal, so I always kept food for him in the office.

I can still see him, he's come racing out, he'd have to go to a meeting down in Collins Street somewhere, and he'd always be running late and he'd always take the tram or walk. He'd grab a handful of sandwiches, and they'd go straight into his pocket, then he'd be down the stairs and I'd look out the window and here is this great man, who has ten statues and a postage stamp, running that little park in front of our building, wolfing down his sandwiches, and I thought – you can take the boy out of the country but you can never take the country out of the boy.

Sir Edward had a similar nature to the other men with whom I worked throughout my career – I just think they were all men of quality. They were not necessarily men of great breeding. They were nearly all of them men who had started from the bottom and worked their way up. They were men who set a good example. They were involved in civic things, they were involved in charitable things, and they gave as much as they could.

After starting my working career in Traralgon, in the early 1960's I traveled overseas to England and Italy, where I worked through a secretarial agency for seven years. The world was a different place then, you didn't have to get a visa to get jobs, and Australian secretaries were sought after.

The memorabilia I have from the time that I worked for Sir Edward includes paintings, caricatures, and my old desk. These are on display – they belong to the people of Victoria because the man I worked for who was my boss, had ceased to be just my boss, but he'd suddenly become this great hero, who was becoming bigger and bigger. And I kept thinking – I'm the country girl from Tyers and I worked for someone who's now honoured with a postage stamp, and who has many statues in many places.”



Chairman Jim Hood makes presentation to Mrs Valda Street following her address.

Monthly Meeting - May 13th. 2008

Guest Speaker: Miss Claire Wood

Subject: Convicts on the Run

Claire Wood grew up in Northern Victoria on a dairy farm at Bamawn Extension, which is about 12 miles from Echuca. Claire completed her Librarianship degree in Sydney before coming to Gippsland in the early 1980's.

She has been working in various capacities in public libraries around the Latrobe Valley for the last 25 years. Currently Claire is Systems Coordinator for Latrobe City Library, which basically means looking after the Library computer system. She also wears the hat of Traralgon Branch Librarian.

Claire has a keen interest in local and family history, and was very excited recently to be able to trace her Wood ancestors back to a Yorkshire marriage in 1750.

For this meeting, Claire's talk is about escaped convicts in colonial Australia.

In the early convict Australia, the colonies of NSW and Van Diemens Land were strange new lands at the edge of the known world. The formidable barriers of distance, impenetrable bush, and miles of oceans made escape a daunting prospect – yet hundreds of convicts made the attempt.

The absence of gaols made escape relatively easy. However, to survive, and reach safe haven was far more difficult. In the early days of the colony, most runaways or bolters headed “north” or into the interior. Some perished in the unforgiving bush, or at the hands of hostile aboriginal people.

The majority struggled back exhausted and bewildered to punishment and harsh and brutal chains, chaingangs, treadmills, floggings – transport to Port Arthur, Sarah Island etc one historian reckons that depending on where the convict was located, one in ten male convicts received the lash, in other areas, one in four.

The escapes covered in my talk are ones that piqued the public imagination of the time, often because the escapes were daring and the journeys dangerous. In one case the behaviour of the escapee was repugnant to decent people and in another, the trial hits the headlines for a few reasons, one surprisingly because of the lawyer's campaigning against capital punishment.

Mary Bryant made English newspaper headlines as “the Girl from Botany Bay” and her escape was one of the earliest from the new colony of New South Wales.

Mary Bryant was a convict who arrived in Sydney Cove with the First Fleet in 1788. She married a convict called William Bryant, who was an experienced fisherman and sailor.

At Port Jackson, William soon acquired the use of a hut and started a garden. He was given charge of the fishing boats, but in February 1789 was convicted of selling privately some of his catch, and sentenced to receive 100 lashes. He was deprived of the fishing control, although, being a skilful fisherman, he was kept in the boats.

William and Mary Bryant made plans to escape in the Governor's personal cutter and persuaded a Dutch captain to give him some sailing equipment and stole out of Sydney Harbour in the six oar rowboat on the 28th March 1791.

Aboard were eight convicts and two children. They headed north and it is thought that they stopped at Glenrock Lagoon near Newcastle. They had to stop frequently to look for water and food.

They managed to survive being blown out to sea twice and they navigated in the cutter through the dangerous reefs of the Great Barrier Reef and the Torres Strait. In a storm off the Queensland coast James Martin said that in the morning they saw no land, and that the waves were as high as mountains. They thought that every moment would be their last with the waves crashing over the sides, and two hands bailing continuously. It had rained all night and they were very distressed with everything very wet and they could not light any fire. They had nothing to eat except a little raw rice.

After ten weeks at sea they reached Timor. The Bryants and their crew claimed to be shipwreck survivors. They were later discovered to be British convicts, apparently after William became drunk and confessed in the process of bragging. The convicts were handed over to the British, but on the way back to England, Mary's husband, and two children died.

Back in England, Mary expected to be hanged or returned to Australia. However, she was instead imprisoned for an additional year in Newgate Prison, during which time a public outcry ensued, coupled with an onslaught of publicity by the famous writer and lawyer James Boswell. As a result, she was pardoned in May 1793, as were the four surviving men of her crew later. Boswell gave her an annual pension of 10 pounds, but nothing more is known of her life after her release.

John Graham arrived in Sydney in 1825 convicted on a seven year sentence for stealing 6 ½ pounds of hemp.

Assigned to a mill owner Parramatta and became friendly with the local aboriginal people who taught him food-gathering and survival skills. In 1826, he received a second conviction for theft and was shipped to the penal colony of Moreton Bay.

A year after arriving in Moreton Bay, Graham absconded into the bush, hoping to hail a ship on the coast that would take him to China. After subsisting on fish and fern roots for several months, he was "recognized" by an aboriginal woman as the ghost of her dead husband. He stayed with the tribe for six years, adapting completely to their ways, before suddenly returning to Moreton Bay and giving himself up.

Three years after Graham returned to Moreton Bay, news reached the settlement that the brig Stirling Castle had been wrecked off the coast to the north, and some of the survivors, including the Captain's wife, Eliza Fraser, were being held captive by aboriginal people. Graham volunteered to join a rescue party, hoping that success might earn him a pardon. They sailed to the Noosa River Estuary, where Graham went on alone and unarmed. Over the next three days he brought in three members of the ship's crew. Two days later he delivered Mrs. Fraser to safety. He was rewarded with a ticket-of-leave and 10 pound note, in 1837.

Martin Cash was born in 1808 at Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland. At the age of 19 he was convicted of housebreaking (in his version it was for the more romantic crime of shooting his mistress's lover) and transported to New South Wales for seven years.

Originally assigned to a farmer in the Hunter River district, he earned a ticket-of-leave and found work as stockman. When he was caught cattleduffing in 1837, he moved to Tasmania.

Two years later he was convicted of larceny and again sentenced to seven years. In the next three years he escaped several times and was sent to the penal settlement at Port Arthur.

On Boxing Day 1842 he and two companions, Lawrence Kavenagh and George Jones, absconded from a stone quarry gang into the bush. For three days they hid in thick scrub before making their way across country to Eaglehawk Bay. At times they were forced to crawl long distances through the undergrowth to avoid military patrols. Piling their clothes on their heads, the convicts swam across the bay without alerting the guard dogs, or indeed the sharks which were believed to infest these waters.

Cash and his companions took up bushranging. Descending from their stronghold on Mount Dromedary northwest of Hobart, they robbed inns and homesteads of wealthy settlers with seeming impunity. Popularly known as Cash & Co, they eschewed unnecessary violence, and earned a reputation as "gentlemen bushrangers".

In 1843, while visiting Hobart, Cash mortally wounded a police constable and was captured. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang. An hour before the planned execution, Cash was reprieved. Instead of hanging he was sentenced to transportation for life. The former bushranger was shipped to Norfolk Island, where he became a model prisoner and received a ticket-of-leave.

Cash returned to Tasmania and was granted a conditional pardon in 1856. After visiting New Zealand, he bought a property at Glenorchy, five miles north west of Hobart. He farmed until his death in 1877.

William Swallow - The government ship *Cyprus* was sheltering in Recherche bay on the remote south east coast of Tasmania on 14th August 1829. Among the cargo of prisoners was William Swallow – his real name William Walker - a former sailor who had been sentenced to hard labour for a second escape attempt.

While three officers were away fishing, a group of convicts gained control of the *Cyprus*. Under the command of Swallow, the ship sailed to New Zealand and Tahiti and then back to Tonga – where seven convicts left the ship – and on to Japan, before being scuttled of the Chinese coast. Five convicts, including Swallow, took the *Cyprus*'s longboat to Canton, where they secured passages to London. Unfortunately on arrival, they were arrested and tried for piracy.

At Recherche bay, those unwilling to join the mutiny (44 people including women and children) had been abandoned on the shore. They were saved by two convicts, John Pobjoy and Tom Morgan, who constructed a coracle out of wattle branches and canvas.

“Morgan ingeniously constructed the coracle using a knife, a razor, and canvas across pliable wattle sticks. It was waterproofed with beeswax and soap from personal kits. Remarkably, it proved seaworthy and Morgan and Pobjoy used rough-hewn paddles.”

After two days in the open seas, they were picked up by a passing ship, and arranged the rescue of the other castaways.

The mutineers were found guilty and sentenced to death, except for Swallow who managed to talk himself out of similar fate. He was acquitted and sent back to Van Diemen's Land for the third time. He died of TB in 1834.

James Porter was born in London about 1800. In 1815 he joined the brig *Sophia* bound for Rio de Janeiro and spent much of the next six years in South American waters.

Shortly after his return to England in 1821, he was convicted of stealing a quantity of silk and beaver, and sentenced to transportation for life. He arrived in Hobart the following year. By 1824 he had made two attempts to escape. Unable to keep out of trouble, he served several stints on a chain gang. In 1829 he escaped again. Eluding pursuit, he made his way through the bush to the coast and swam across the narrow channel to Bruny Island. However, before he could stow away on a whaling ship, he was recognized as an escaped convict, and returned to Hobart. For this latest offence he was sent to the penal settlement at Macquarie Harbour. He was there two years before he bolted into the bush again, only to be hunted down by the military.

In 1834 he made his boldest escape attempt yet. With nine other convicts he hijacked the government brig “*Frederick*”. The “*Frederick*” had been built at the Macquarie Harbour shipyard, and was about to sail on her maiden voyage to Hobart. While the captain was waiting for the wind to change, two of the military guard took the whaleboat to go fishing. The two soldiers remaining on deck were easily overpowered by Porter and his mates.

The captain, crew, and the rest of the guard surrendered and were abandoned on the shore. They survived a gruelling 80 mile march to the Van Diemen's Land Company base at Cape Grim, on the north coast.

Meanwhile, the convicts sailed the brig across the Pacific before scuttling her off the coast of Chile, and making their way in the whaleboat to Valdivia. There they assumed new identities as shipwrecked sailors. By 1835 six of them had moved on. A year later, the remaining four, including Porter, were arrested and handed over to the Royal Navy. They were eventually returned to Tasmania, where they were convicted of piracy.

The judge had doubts about the correctness of the verdict, and they did not hand. Instead, they were sent to Norfolk Island. After four years of good behaviour, Porter was transferred to the mainland. In May 1847 he absconded from Newcastle, supposedly on the brig “*Sir John Byng*”. He was never heard of again.

Alexander Pearce, a small pockmarked Irishman, was one of only a handful of convicts to escape twice from the penal settlement at Macquarie Harbour. Born in County Monaghan in about 1790, Pearce was transported to Hobart in 1820 for stealing six pairs of shoes.

In June 1822 he was charged with forging a money order and absconding. His guilt was easily proved and he was sent to Macquarie Harbour for the remainder of his sentence.

In September, Pearce and seven other convicts seized a small boat at Kelly's Basin, where they had been sent to cut timber. After raiding the stores at Coal Head further down the harbour, they holed the boat and set out on foot through some of the most mountainous and inhospitable country in Australia. They hoped to reach Hobart, where they planned to steal a schooner and sail to England. However, their provisions were totally inadequate for such an enterprise and Pearce was the only survivor of a nightmare journey, during which, one after another, his companions were murdered and eaten by the remainder. The first victim was Thomas Bodenham, who accepted his fate, according to Pearce, with remarkable calmness. After he was killed by an axe blow to head, his body was butchered, roasted and "devoured greedily".

Sustained by their meal, the convicts set out again. A direct route was impossible. They stumbled over rotting logs, which often collapsed under their weight; they tripped over coiling vines and fought their way through dense nets of fern. Eventually, only Pearce and Robert Greenhill were left. Both men fought the urge to sleep, eyeing each other uneasily. When Greenhill finally dozed off, Pearce seized the axe and "gave him a severe blow on the head which deprived him of life". Taking part of Greenhill's arm and thigh, Pearce struggled on for several days until reaching the banks of the Derwent River, where he joined a gang of bushrangers.

When he was finally captured on the outskirts of Hobart the authorities refused to believe his horrific tale of cannibalism. There were no bodies to support his claim, and they were sure that he was protecting his companions who ere believed to be still at large.

Pearce was shipped back to Macquarie Harbour. A year later he escaped again, this time with only one other convict. He was apprehended after a week, camped alone on a remote beach. In his pocket was a chunk of human flesh.

This time he was believed, promptly tried, and hanged.



Lorri O'Connor and Claire Wood (Speaker) at the May Meeting

Monthly Meeting – April 3rd. 2008

Guest Speaker: Mr. Gerry Kennedy

Subject: : The American Influence on Australian and Gippsland Cinemas.

Gerry is president of the Cinema and Theatre Historical Society, and his topic – Gippsland Cinemas, American Designs, and their influences.

Living in Traralgon since 1949, Gerry attended St. Michael's Primary School, St. Paul's College, and continued his education at boarding school and university where he obtained a Bachelor of Commerce degree and Diploma of Education.

His interesting working life included time as a secondary school teacher, twenty years in the family business "Kennedy's Hardware Store", then twenty years managing public transport systems in Gippsland. This involved overseeing V. Line train services, school bus routes, and public bus services.

In his address to the Traralgon and District Historical Society, Gerry speaks about his enthusiasm and interest in cinema architecture.

American influences on Australian Cinemas

Background history

Prior to the invention of modern projection techniques films were personally viewed in many ways. Edison invented the Kinetoscope which involved peering into the tip of a box light apparatus. The viewer turned a crank handle to move the film and later coin in the slot machines drove the film. Edison is also credited with projecting a small picture onto a wall. The light source limited the size of the picture.

1895 The Lumiere brothers projected the first films onto a wall, in a Parisian cafe (26/12/1895). For the first time a larger group of people could view a film. This revolutionary change was quickly taken around the world.

1897 The first screening in Australia took place in 1897 in the Prince of Wales Opera house in Melbourne. This venue later became the Tivoli Theatre. The early films were short and usually shown as part of vaudeville theatre programs. Given the often less than salubrious nature of vaudeville theatre, film screenings were mainly shunned by the genteel section of society; films were considered vulgar. Nevertheless the popularity of films grew very rapidly, giving rise to a new industry, that of the travelling picture showmen. I seem to recall reading that such a show came to Traralgon Mechanics Hall around 1898.

Soon entrepreneurs were constructing specialty venues to screen films. These venues were often converted shops, with basic facilities that generally lacked ambience and comfort. Such venues in the USA were nicknamed Nickelodeons as they charged 5 cents for admission. Similar venues were built in Australian capital cities. Up until the late 1920's films were silent. Gramophone records, pianos and small orchestras were used to enhance the atmosphere of screenings.

1907 The popularity of films, along with intense competition for the patrons encouraged entrepreneurs and movie managers to provide improved facilities combined with heightened levels of showmanship and entertainment.

From around 1907 specialty built film theatres began to appear in the New York area. These venues became larger and more elaborate to attract and accommodate growing audiences. The age of the picture palace was soon to arrive.

1910 - 20 Film theatres began to take on the grandeur of legitimate live theatres and a new rising star burst onto the scene in the form of Samuel L. Rothaphel, nicknamed Roxy. Roxy opened The Family theatre in a room at the back of a tavern in Philadelphia. He later moved onto New York where he became the manager of New York's Regent Theatre in 1913 and the Strand in 1914. His revolutionary ideas of showmanship and management were greatly appreciated by his employers. In 1916 The Rialto theatre was opened which had been built to his ideas of "the totality of escapist pleasure." His philosophy was to build theatres of "mock palatial architecture with its incumbent retinue of servants all of which was remote from the patron's daily lives" This combined with longer feature films, the best projection techniques, lighting effects, the imaginative selection of music, singers, and the use of large orchestras completed his winning formula.

Roxy was the catalyst for his employers leading to bigger and better theatres. During the 1920's there was a boom in the construction of picture palaces around the world. Most were built to house both films and live theatre. Specialty architectural firms were widely used so the latest trends spread rapidly, including Australia.

Various architectural styles evolved. The Revivalist (or old world) style used in many 19th century live theatres was copied and further enhanced. The design features of opulent European palaces were copied. Huge auditoriums included the use of lavish entrance lobbies and lounges, marble, grand suitcases, chandeliers, fountains, gold leaf, along with lavish draperies and furnishings. Theatres seating over 3000 seats were common and Roxy's own theatre the New York Roxy was around 5000 seats.

Other theatres at the time followed Chinese, Egyptian, Indian and Mayan design. Also in the 1920 the atmospheric style evolved; these theatres featured ceilings of blue skies twinkling stars with the walls depicting various outdoor scenes of Venice, Florentine gardens, Eastern or South American themes.

From 1925, following the Paris Exhibition, the styles of Art Deco and Moderne (streamlined) were taken up by theatre architects. Often theatre designs and decor were a mish mash of styles and themes which often drew negative comments from pure architects. This mattered little for it was the audiences which were to be fascinated and transformed into a dream world.

The Great Depression generally saw the end of the huge picture palace construction boom. Modern, smaller, more efficient theatres became the norm. Radio City Music Hall, built in 1932 was the exception to the rule with 6000 seats.

American Influences on Australian. and Gippsland theatres.

As in America, film exhibition in Australia quickly became the preserve of major companies. Two major firms had a sizeable influence; country Hoyts and Union Theatres (now Greater Union). These two companies controlled many of the theatres in city, suburban and country areas.

Foreign architects from Europe and America worked in Australia, the most famous being Walter Burley Griffin. In 1924 he built Melbourne's first Picture Palace, the Capitol. The remnants of this theatre still draw international interest as it was truly an architectural work of art. With its geometrical shapes and 5000 lightbubs it was intended to look like Aladdin's cave.

The managements of both Hoyts and Greater Union travelled to America to see how theatres were being constructed and brought back ideas that were adapted to local needs. The flamboyance was moderated in what were generally smaller auditoriums. In Melbourne Hoyts Regent chain of theatres copied the revivalist grand European influences and Union Theatres constructed the State Theatre as an atmospheric. It contained an auditorium of a Florentine garden with Moorish exterior.

The Palais Theatre, in St Kilda is also largely of the revivalist style. The three largest theatres built in Australia were all in Melbourne and all built in the late 1920's. Later the 1930's and 40's American designs were imported. Hoyts, Greater Union and other individual managements built several Moderne and Stadium style (single level) theatres.

Theatres of the revivalist, moderns and stadium styles were quickly built around country areas as well. In the case of Gippsland the Prince Regent in Sale was a modified revivalist theatre (1927), The former Morwell Town Hall/Theatre (1935), and the Yallourn Theatre (1939) were of a modernist style. Stadium theatres were the Valley Theatre (1951) in Traralgon, and the Maya Theatre (1957) in Morwell.

What has become of them all? Most of the old picture palaces have long been demolished but some have survived, often lying dormant for decades under preservation and heritage orders. Several theatres have been converted into live theatres, others were converted into multi screen venues and others have become churches. In Sydney the State and Capitol theatres remain whilst Melbourne has the Regent and Palais (St Kilda). In Gippsland the Regent Yarram (1930) is all that remains.



"Valley" Theatre, Traralgon circa 1973. Later renamed "Latrobe" cinema.

A Special Item from the Editor:

**The Traralgon Post Office and Courthouse Complex –
An historic heritage icon to be preserved at all costs.**

For those ex Traralgonites now resident elsewhere, indeed throughout the world, it was with a sense of shock that on National Television, and indeed on Australia Network broadcasting to the world, in the last week of May 2008, the two leaders of the National Opposition, Dr. Brendan Nelson, and Mr. Malcolm Turnbull, loomed very large on the screen, holding up a very large maroon and gold banner emblazoned “SAVE OUR POST OFFICE”, and there dominating the background was our magnificent heritage treasure, the Post Office and Court House.

The following week, when the writer was actually in Traralgon, local press releases revealed that indeed, the Government authorities are seriously considering “decommissioning” the historic Post Office, as an operating entity.

Reports said that the Post Office operations would be centred on the small premises on the corner of Hotham and Church Streets, which would seem to be a strange decision as these premises already are apparently quite inadequate – which was attested to by the comments from many local residents who complained bitterly about long queues in that premises.

Whatever the full truth and ramifications of this proposed “decommissioning” it would be the second time in post war history, that the government has floated this idea. We quote in the following pages, from “The Journal” of Circa 1962, very similar proposals which thankfully at that time did not eventuate.

Let us hope that the same happens again – that nothing eventuates, and we are spared the indignity of seeing the main historic architectural icon still standing in our town, being desecrated by conversion to discotheque (heaven forbid) or a “high class restaurant”.

If the decommissioning **MUST** take place, maybe the authorities concerned could consider in their magnanimity, handing the premises to the Traralgon and District Historical Society !!!!!!!

In writing the foregoing, your editor, as have many other residents of Traralgon, witnessed the unfortunate destruction of first our original Shire Offices, several other intermediate buildings that should have been preserved for posterity, , and most tragically, the destruction of the Town Hall, and Mechanics Hall complex.

It would be the worst civic vandalism of all, if the same fate awaits the Post Office. Soon we will have no historic buildings to pass on to our generations.

.....**The Editor**

“A HISTORY OF TRARALGON POST OFFICE. “

(From the “Traralgon Journal” circa 1969)

A Post Office was first opened at Traralgon on January 1., 1861, under the management of Mr. D. Campbell. It was a non-official office, and probably operated in conjunction with a small general store.

An annual allowance was paid to the Postmaster which was based on a percentage of postal business transacted. This amounted to £10 (\$20) during 1861.

The mails at that time were conveyed by Patrick Mulcare, who had contracted to convey mail between Melbourne and Sale.

Mail traveled by coach to Dandenong and from there was carried by packhorse, traveling by way of Berwick, Warragul, Traralgon, and Rosedale, once a week in each direction.

By 1863 the packhorse service had been increased to operate three days a week. By 1865, the roads had improved sufficiently to allow use of a mail coach over the entire journey. The coach service operated six days a week as far as Berwick, and three days a week from Berwick to Sale.

Mr. Campbell was succeeded by Mr. C. Denis about 1865. The annual allowance had increased to £by that time. In 1871, Kate Campbell, wife or daughter of Mr. Campbell, the first postmaster, was appointed postmistress. She remained in charge of the office until 1890.

A telegraph office was established in August 1878. A telegraph operator and two messengers were added to the staff at that time. Money order facilities were provided during 1868, and a Post Office Savings Bank opened on July 12th 1875. On October 22nd 1889 a post office was opened at Traralgon South . The Postmaster appears to have been Charles Mitchell.

The fertility of the soil in the Traralgon district induced a large number of people to settle in the area, and by 1886 there was a pressing need for a larger post office. Work began on a new, official building, in late 1886, and was completed in 1887. During 1887, an additional telegraph office was opened at the railway station.

Kate Campbell was succeeded by another postmistress whose name is not available. A gap appears in the records until 1903 when Isobel Clinton was in charge. It is possible that this lady could have taken over from Kate Campbell, as records show that Isobel Clinton was postmistress at Smeaton in 1889. (The Journal article then lists in detail the succession of postmasters and postmistresses, concluding the list with W.I. Simkin, 1967.)

Telephone facilities seem to have been first provided about 1907 or 1908. Dr.H.A. Hagenauer was the only subscriber, No. 1. The service was known as a trunk local line, and all calls, whether local or distant were charged at trunk call rates. Dr. Hagenauer apparently had his main surgery at York Street, Sale, and he had the fourth telephone installed in that city. By 1912 there were 36 subscribers, and the trunk rates for local calls no longer applied. No. 2 subscriber was Dr.T.A. McLean Snr. No. 3 was H.O. Challman, chemist, No 4 T.B. Little & Co., auctioneers, No. 5 Mac Christensen, draper, and No. 6 was G.H. Marsh, butcher.

The oldest surviving mail return (records of mail handled) for the Traralgon Post Office is for the year 1884. During that year, a total of 129,640 postal articles were handled at the post office, in addition to 2373 telegrams. The post revenue amounted to £545.

Fairly extensive additions and alteration were made to the building in 1965, but to retain the character of the original building as much as possible, a number of old building components were recovered and re-used in the new section.

This history was prepared by Derek N. Baker – Post Office historian. In a footnote added by the present postmaster, the most recent figures are given.

Articles handled for 12 months ended June 1969, 4,910,000, telegrams 27,989, telephone subscribers, 2307.

From the “Traralgon Journal” – September 1962

“SOME REGRETS IF POST OFFICE IS TO BE REPLACED”

The announcement in Traralgon recently by the Postmaster- General, Mr. Davidson, that the Traralgon Post Office may be replaced next year, has been received with mixed feelings by Traralgon citizens.

Some will be glad to see more modern facilities, but others will be sorry to see Traralgon’s most prominent and eye-catching architectural landmark go.

It was built in 1886 – one year before the Mechanics’ Institute – and with the Court House is probably the oldest public building in Traralgon, except the Elderly Citizens’ Club.

The builder was a Mr. N.W. Frogley – and its present excellent condition is a tribute to the workmanship displayed by the men employed.

After a series of transfers, the people of Traralgon in 1883 decided it was time they had a proper Post Office. Up until then, the post office had been conducted at the Campbell’s home in Kay Street, later known as “The Retreat”. The room abutting the street was the post office, and the boarded up window through which the letters and parcels were handed out, and the old letter box slot, covered with a sheet of iron, could be seen until “The Retreat” was demolished a few years ago.

Deputation to P.M.G.

By 1886, Mrs Starke, the widowed mother of the boy who later became Mr. Justice Starke, had taken over as postmistress from Miss Kate Campbell in “The Retreat”.

But the growing centre of Traralgon needed something more elaborate for its post office, and in March 1883, the Shire President, Cr. Bodycomb, Cr. Peterkin, and Mr. James Campbell, the Shire Secretary and engineer, formed a deputation which was introduced by Mr. F.C. Mason, M.L.A., to the Postmaster General, Mr. Berry, and asked him to agree to the erection of a post office and telegraph office in connection with the proposal to also build a Court House.

Mr. Berry is recognized as giving a most favourable reply. On March 3, 1884, a further deputation from the Shire Council, consisting of the President, Cr. Kelleher, Cr. Peterkin, and Mr. James Campbell, the Shire Engineer, again waited on Mr. Berry with the same request.

COST £1,200 - £1,500

Mr. Berry again acknowledged the claims of the district, and promised from £1,200 to £1,500 for the building. This sum was placed on the estimates in November 1884.

It was the wish of the local residents that a tower should be placed on the new post office, and £50 for this purpose was donated from the funds of the Central Riding, and the townspeople donating the rest. The new post office, erected in 1886, and associated buildings, was one of the edifices of

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