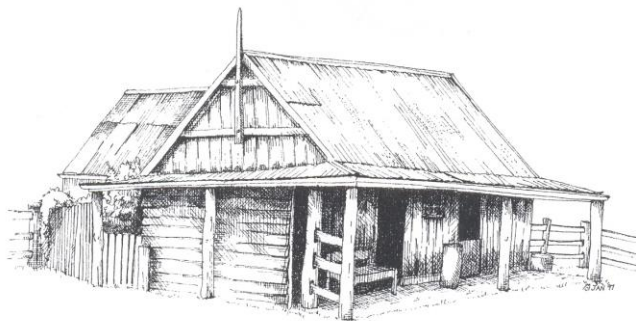


FRIENDS AND RELATIONS OF GULF STATION DECEMBER 2016



Diary Dates (except if Total Fire Ban for Central District)

Sunday 3 December, End of year celebration 2.30pm

Please bring
a plate to
share, tea
and coffee
provided.

Let's plan for an exciting 2017
for Gulf Station.



FROGS Meetings, alternate First Sundays 2.30pm

5 February
2 April (end of Daylight
Saving)

FROGS Social Sundays, alternate First Sundays 2.30pm

5 March
7 May

Bunnings BBQ, Easter Monday 17 April (see page 2)

268-288 Maroondah Highway

Date to be decided between 18 April and 21 May

Our part in National Trust's
Heritage Festival 2017

David Clark talks, Thursdays 22 & 29 June 10.00-11.30am (see page 2)

Thursday Work

Newcomers welcome, all skill
levels, gardening, general
maintenance etc. Join the
friendly team.

Newsletter arrangements

- Emailed to those with email.
- Volunteers' copies available for collection from Gulf Station.

From the President

Dear Friends

I'll share with you extracts from my words on 6 November, our
Hamer day.

When the late Rodney Davidson (who sadly died last April)
persuaded his friend Rupert Hamer to purchase Gulf Station on
behalf of the Victorian government and vest it to the National
Trust to restore and maintain, Gulf Station was very much in
need to loving care. If Sir Rupert had not acted as he did, Gulf
Station would have been demolished and an estate redeveloped.
As Sir Rupert said, when he spoke at the opening of the
homestead in 1996, "Rodney Davidson persuaded me that that
was a significant piece of our Australian history and as I was also
Treasurer at the time, I thought - why not?"

The conservation team, under the leadership of architect Helen
Watters, performed miracles and the Station was open to the
public in 1984. Staff members at that time were Helen, Dickie
Blackman, Carolyn Philip, Kevin and Margo Heeley and Debbie
Winston-Goddard. Conservators were Peter Struthers and Bill
Snook, with many very capable volunteers.

There was also a "committee of management" and the Friends
and Relations of Gulf Station was formed. The FROGS are still a
very active group - volunteering with maintenance, guiding tours,
and keeping the garden a "joy to behold." A more dedicated
group of people you couldn't find anywhere and I'm extremely
proud to belong to such a fine group of people.

We are most fortunate to have the support and help of the
descendant families and I thank them for helping us celebrate
today. The day the newly restored homestead was to be "opened"
water (for a reason I don't remember) was cut off: no water for
the kettle, no water for the loos - and a very distinguished guest
list. Panic! Robin Bell, bless her, brought large containers of
water from Kongwak and saved the day.

I have spent the last 40 years of my life nagging people to be
proud of, and actively involved in helping to conserve our
heritage for future generations to enjoy. To me, mansions are
fabulous places, venues to display craftsmanship and art
treasures, but places such as Gulf Station are living histories of
how ordinary people lived, they commemorate our pioneer past:
how our brave early pioneer families built their homes, brought
up their children, made a living and created a community. These
are the real treasurers.

I need to thank Brooke Wandin, Wurundjeri elder, for weaving us
a basket in the traditional way her Wurundjeri ancestors did for
Mary Ann Bell all those years ago. It will be part of Gulf
Station's history [see page 2].

cont p2

cont from p1

In the house is an exhibition of the wallpapers from Gulf Station, wonderfully conserved and mounted by Briony Pemberton and Tara Elder [see page 8]

Sadly, we have recently said goodbye to two dear friends - our manager Scott Strachan and Captain Ralph McDonnell, a long-time FROG.

To everyone, thank you sincerely for coming to help celebrate the remarkable work of conservation by the National Trust, the dedication of Gulf Station volunteers and for the insight of Victoria's best-loved Premier, Sir Rupert Hamer.

Lesley Barnes OAM

Our new Australian flag

We still haven't had our flag-raising - recent Thursdays at Gulf Station have been just too busy.

Bunnings BBQ

We have our next Bunnings date - Easter Monday 2017. It seems a long way ahead but please let Stan or Irene know if you might be able to help on the day. Just a couple of hours would be appreciated.

Volunteer news

Some volunteers are coping with health problems just now – your friends wish you a speedy recovery and return to Gulf Station. Others are travelling – come back safe and sound.

A new basket for Gulf Station

Gulf Station's artefacts include two baskets made by local Aboriginal women and given to their friend Mary Ann Bell. **Brooke Wandin Collins**, a Wunundjeri elder, has created a new basket as a gift to Gulf Station to accompany the ancient baskets. Brooke used raffia and New Zealand flax and she hopes "this basket creates curiosity and conversations about our shared history of the Yarra Valley."

Right: Brooke handing the basket to Lesley

Image Irene Kearsey

Archives Room project

Kevin H's holiday and pressure of other tasks meant no progress with checking but we should get back to it now.

Garden report

The garden looks wonderful, a credit to the garden team and their hard work. They also produced plants for sale on the two open days; **Helen Moss** also sent pots for sale on Hamer Day. **Justin Buckley** (Trust Manager of Horticulture) arranged for the elm trees to be treated (but there are beetles in the air).

Working Group for day-to-day matters at Gulf Station

The death of Scott Strachan left Gulf Station without a Manager. In recent months, Gulf Station Volunteers put a proposal to CEO Simon Ambrose, that, for the time being, the volunteers can manage the property without the need to appoint an employee manager. Simon has accepted the idea so the Volunteers are now in the process of negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Trust Management to identify and clarify the boundaries of responsibility. Amongst other points, the MoU comprises details such as the reporting mechanism between the Volunteers and Management; the work priorities and the need to adhere to the Conservation Policy of the NT and the Burra Charter; the management of agistment stock; the importance of adherence to Shire of Yarra Ranges Fire Regulations and CFA guidelines; the organisation of tours; and the need to ensure any expenditure is within the NT budget allocation.

In essence, the vast experience of volunteers who have worked and volunteered at Gulf Station is an invaluable resource for the successful ongoing administration of Gulf Station. Over the next couple of weeks, the Gulf Station Volunteers will have a document that outlines the parameters of responsibility. More news as the situation becomes clearer.



More David Clark

Irene has another opportunity to talk about the 1839 voyage of the *David Clark* and what became of her passengers:

Thursdays 22 and 29 June (10.00-11.30am) U3A Hall rear 14 Ivanhoe Parade, Ivanhoe (phone: 9499 2080) Melway 31 F7 (disability friendly)

Details at:

www.u3abanyule.org.au/files/Newsletter%20December%202016.pdf (or ask Irene)

The big wind of 2016

The working horse stable building suffered a battering during a particularly windy day in October. The 'before' photographs don't show how the roof was lifted at one end, pushing it down at the other.



Above: the back 'before'

Below: Crakka assessing the damage



Above: the front 'before'

Images: Irene Kearsey

The day following discovery of the damage, Crakka assessed the situation, Simon Ambrose and Martin Green saw the photographs and authorised Crakka to obtain Acrow props, which he was able to do immediately. After a ring-around that evening, a team of volunteers assembled the next day. Once Crakka had about 12 props in place and the building was safe to enter, the volunteers' main task was to remove the countless saddles and bridles from the stables, and the tools, benches, etc, from the two workshops at the end of the building, then relocate all those things appropriately around the property. By the end of the day, incremental adjustments to the props had the building more or less square again. As he has time, Crakka is bracing the building and removing props.



Above: the back 'after'



Above: the back with props in place

In time for Hamer Day, all *external* props were gone, but internal props are in place and the building is not yet open to the public.

Great teamwork by **Crakka** and volunteers **Pam**, her husband **John** (on his first day of retirement), **Alex**, **Kevin H**, **Mike**, **Neil** and **Stan**! And Crakka sends his thanks to all who pitched in and worked so hard on that day.

Captain Ralph John McDonell OAM (1928-2016)

Those with a long involvement at Gulf Station who remember Ralph McDonell will be saddened to hear of his death after some years of physical incapacity although that never dulled his mind and sense of humour. This is the National Trust's tribute to Ralph [www.nationaltrust.org.au/vale-ralph-mcdonell/]:

VALE Ralph McDonell OAM

Ralph McDonell was a ships master, maritime heritage enthusiast, carpenter, wood carver, historian, author, devoted father and a true 'man of the sea'. He made an enormous contribution to the National Trust.

After growing up in boarding schools in Britain, Ralph McDonell went to sea at the age of 17 working for the Cunard White Star line. He worked his way up through each officer rating to eventually become a ship's captain. He served as Master on the Abel Tasman and Princess of Tasmania and enjoyed a life at sea over 40 years.

He was a gifted and exceptional captain having gained his pilot's license for twenty ports in Australian waters where he might berth his ship.

After his maritime career Ralph began his volunteer career many miles inland at Gulf Station Farm at Yarra Glen. He took on the difficult and strenuous task of installing post and rail fences around the property crafting local hardwoods which stand there today. He maintained a long association with Gulf Station whilst becoming involved in maritime heritage.

Ralph made a huge contribution to the preservation of the Alma Doepel and the Polly Woodside. He was always very generous in his time and talents but also encouraged others to volunteer as well. After considerable research, Ralph chronicled the history of the Alma Doepel in the book "History of an Australian Schooner". He also wrote about the post war Australian merchant maritime industry in *Build a Fleet, lose a Fleet*.

At the Melbourne Maritime Museum, Ralph made his mark as the President of the Polly Woodside Volunteers Association. He made a tremendous contribution to the Melbourne maritime museum and the ship over 26 years using his skills, knowledge, enthusiasm and interest in people. His wood carvings take pride of place in the Master's Saloon and the Deckhouse still today.

In 2001 Ralph was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) "for service to the preservation of Australia's maritime history particularly through the restoration of historic vessels and as an author."

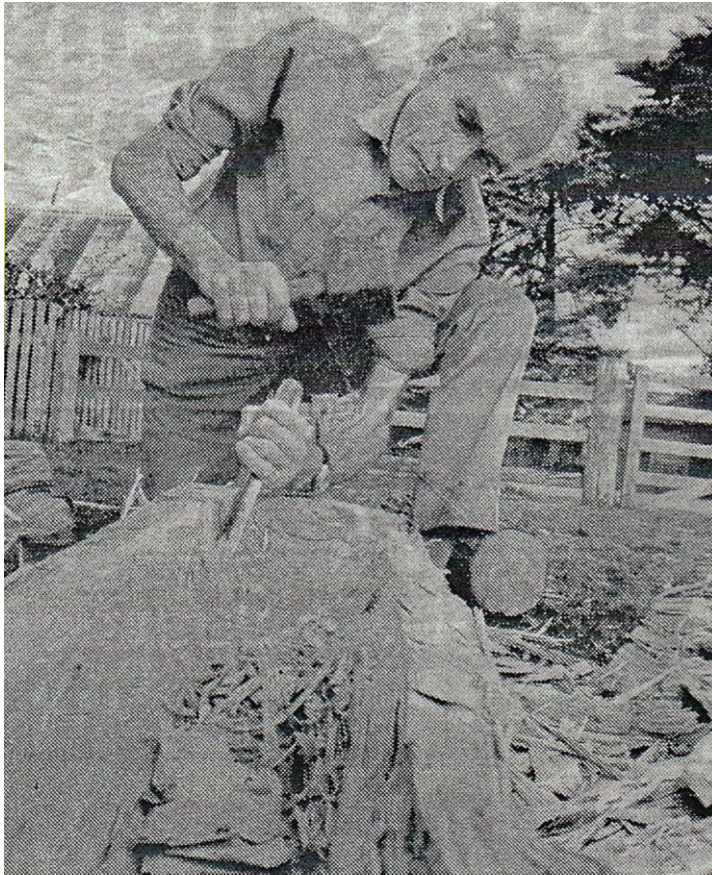
The National Trust acknowledges Ralph McDonell's enormous contribution to heritage over a lifetime and wish to extend his family condolences on their sad loss.

The Trust's web site (above) also includes a video of Ralph talking about his life at sea, his warm character so apparent. Ralph's OAM was "For service to the preservation of Australia's maritime history, particularly through the restoration of historic vessels and as an author." Another of his publications was *Australian salvors of World War II: the history of the Marine Salvage Board, 1942-1946*.

At Gulf Station, apart from our memories of Ralph, we have his legacy of stretches of post-and-rail fence - a skill that he passed on to other volunteers. There are also the lovely doorstops that he carved for the homestead and other items around the property (the article opposite records his creation of the trough that's still in the pig pen next to the whelping kennels).



Above, cover of the Order of Service



RALPH McDonell fosters the pioneering spirit at sea and on the land.
Picture: PAT O'DONNELL

Irene will miss Ralph's jokes that he contributed to past newsletters, and all his Gulf Station friends will miss his warmth and wisdom.



Keen to show past charm

By LIZ TUNNECLIFFE

MT WAVERLEY retired sea captain Ralph McDonell is devoting his spare time to rekindling the pioneering history of the Yarra Valley.

He regular steps into the National Trust's Gulf Station at Yarra Glen and becomes Ralph the pioneer, and it's hard work.

Ralph has spent countless hours at Gulf Station, sweating over massive logs of timber, slowly transforming them into fence panels and slabs for the outbuildings.

He refuses to use anything but the tools used to establish the farm 100 years ago. While the result is rougher and slower than what would be achieved by power tools, he believes it is far more beautiful.

It has taken him countless hours over six years as a Gulf Station volunteer to replace 92 fence panels.

A keen woodworker, he enjoys the sense of history and place he feels at Gulf Station, splitting the massive mountain ash logs using only an axe, adze (a sharp-edged mattock), wooden maul, wedges, a gouge and mallet.

"It amazes me what people achieved," he said last week after spending all day converting a large log into a pig's trough.

"I'm trying to show people how it was done in the past, when there were no power tools."

He enjoys showing school groups what can be achieved with such crude and yet highly-efficient hand tools, urging them to feel the smooth grain, appreciate the beauty of timber's qualities over today's steel and plastic.

Mr McDonell's interest in working wood with old tools began about 13 years ago when he was compiling a history of the Alma Doepel sailing training ship.

One of the early workers on the restoration of the great sailing ship, he was full of admiration for the craftsmanship which went into it.

He found records of how one woodsman cut the 30-metre (100-ft) long keel in the bush with a broad axe. It was one piece of timber of 30cm by 15cm.

He wanted to find out how someone could achieve such a task and found men in Tasmania using broad axes to cut timber for bridges. They taught him how to use the tools.

Mr McDonell is one of many people who will demonstrate early skills at a "Pioneering Skills Day" at Gulf Station this Sunday from 11am to 4pm.

There will be draught horses competing for the Golden Plough, barrel making, shingle splitting, blacksmithing, bread-making, horse-powered chaff cutters, working dogs and folk music.

Ralph's funeral was attended by Simon Ambrose and Martin Green, and several FROGS and volunteers.

In their eulogies, Ralph's children recalled him spending afternoons cycling to each of their homes, enjoying afternoon tea at each stop: Ralph surely personified the saying 'you can't fatten a thoroughbred' as illustrated by this photograph.

Left: Ralph working on a post-and-rail fence at Gulf Station (date unknown but possibly 1990s)

Image: John Oswin

Hamer day at Gulf Station

On 6 November, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the purchase of Gulf Station, on behalf of the people of Victoria, by Rupert Hamer and of its vesting with the National Trust for ongoing management.

Volunteers put in extra days on site preparation; others on the day contributed homemade goodies for the afternoon tea and helped set it all up; the borrowed PA system was installed and tested; and displays were organised. Some visitors came from afar and both Bell and Smedley families were represented.

Trust CEO Simon Ambrose was MC, making everyone welcome (this was Simon's fourth visit to Gulf Station since he took up the role 10 weeks back).

Trust Chairman Kristin Stegley outlined Gulf Station's history and (most importantly) launched, for Gulf Station, the Trust's Foundation (this permits donors to the Foundation to specify that interest on their donation be applied to Gulf Station). Donations to the Foundation are retained and only the income is spent. More information will be sent to FROGS soon but Irene can send you a form now if you wish.

Lesley Barnes spoke on behalf of FROGS (see the President's letter on page 1 for her address).

Sandra Sharman spoke on behalf of Bell descendants, noting in particular how close Gulf Station came to destruction before it was purchased by the Smedley family, who then cared for the place as dearly as had the Bells.

All speakers were warm in acknowledging the role of volunteers.

Two plaques were then unveiled. One commemorated the anniversary. The other dedicated a tree to the memory of Scott Strachan; we were honoured to be joined by members of his family. A new version of the National Trust plaque has also been fitted by the entrance to the house

Then everyone was free to enjoy the magnificent afternoon tea and explore Gulf Station including inspecting the two books of wallpapers that had been carefully conserved (more on page 8).



Above: the audience in the barnyard

Left: Kristin Stegley **Right:** Simon Ambrose

Images: Alan Gosling

Outdoor news

Ian recreated the post-and-rail fence between homestead and dam, leaving a gap for a gate. However, before making a new gate, an old unused one was found on the property and it just fitted the gap! **Harvey** has been replacing another stretch of fence in the barnyard.

Crakka treated the carpark and quince path with Roundup (the path was ready for mowing, there was so much grass).

In **Kevin B**'s absence, the grass was getting badly out of control but now **Alan** is back – only on light duties – the ride-on mower is again in action.

However, hurry back **Kevin B**.



Ian with new fence and perfectly fitting old gate

Image: Irene Kearsey

Many more make and repair jobs are underway but the team don't brag about what's underway.

Animal news

All the Clydesdales have had their teeth filed; they look beautiful after Hannah's careful grooming of them preparing for our two big days. While on site, Hanna found a shed snake skin by the toilets - a warning that snakes are about. A pair of willie wagtails built their nest on a branch overhanging the dam, it seems with two chicks, and William Wagtail was clearly not happy when **Mike** got too close when chopping bulrushes (his continuing campaign). The frog chorus around the dam indicates the quality of the water after the spring rain.

Tour news

Co-ordinator Pam reports:

Our Guides have been kept very busy of late and this will continue for the next few weeks. On Thursday 6th October we were visited by 83 students from Rangeview Primary School together with their teachers. A most enjoyable day was had by all. Many thanks to **Irene** and **Mike** for helping with this large group.

A group from Burwood Uniting Church visited on Thursday 13th October. Thursday 20th October was a very busy day with Sandown Probus Group visiting in the morning and Rye Ladies Probus Group in the afternoon.

The Open Day on Thursday 27th October enabled our visitors to see our volunteers at work and of course it is always a joy to share the Gulf Station story.

Upcoming visits include Ivanhoe Girls Grammar, retired staff members of Melbourne Grammar, Little Yarra Steiner School and King Lake Primary School.

Many thanks to our dedicated Guides **Ros**, **Neil**, **Barry** and **Arthur**.

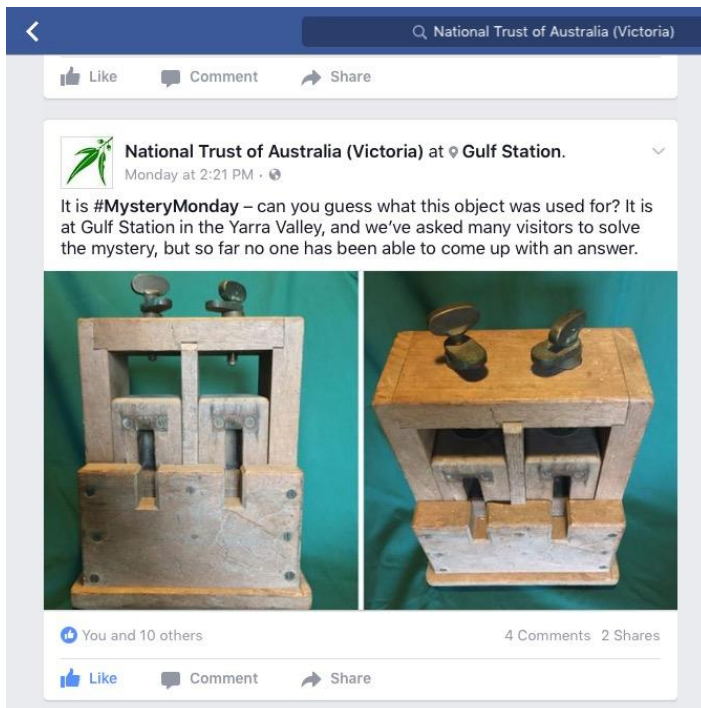
Yarra Ranges Seniors Festival

Our Thursday Open Day attracted only 27 visitors but they mostly came early and all stayed several hours (some stayed the whole day). All said how much they loved the atmosphere of Gulf Station.

One visitor was an old friend of **Ralph McDonell** (she lent Irene the article on page 5 to photocopy). She said years ago Ralph had made her a nativity group: Joseph "looked rather grumpy" and Mary, "a real country girl."

Hannah had moved the Clydesdales to the driveway paddock for maximum interaction; **Crakka** also made sure his Clydesdales could show their working skills and meet the visitors. **Pam** and **Ros** provided tours and **Lesley** manned the tea urn. The other volunteers just got on with their usual jobs and chatted to the visitors. The Thursday opening was a successful experiment all round.

One visitor suggested we should use facebook to advertise our Open Days. The Trust uses facebook so we'll have to see how we can tap into that.



Our Mystery Object

This has featured on the Trust website and a few responses came in but none make sense when you know the screws aren't long enough to meet the top of each wooden block: they only make contact when the object is the other way up.

Our mouse trap features on the Trust's Collections web page:



More Gulf Station wallpaper conserved

During the long years of being lived in, the homestead walls were papered many times. As much wallpaper as possible was removed during the 2010 restoration work and a small selection put on display in the dining room.

In 2015, conservators from the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (part of the University of Melbourne) started treatment and research on ten more samples of wallpaper. The Copland Foundation funded this project. For an illustrated description of the project and techniques, go to: <http://commercial.unimelb.edu.au/gccmc-conservation-services/our-portfolio/paper-photography-parchments-books/gulf-station-wallpaper-project>

One outcome is a pair of handsome large handcrafted books displaying the samples and these are currently on show at Gulf Station.



Above: Visitors study dining room wallpaper display

Image: <http://nicolastairmand.com.au/?p=17>



Upper right: One of the newly conserved wallpapers

Right: A page in, and cover of, one of the volumes

These images:
CCMC web site



More from Betty Kelso on the Little family

Lesley received the following from Betty to add to our understanding of the Little side of Gulf Station (that is, Mary Ann Bell's family):

I have a photograph of my Mother's Uncle Francis Anderson Little for you [Langholm, right].

The home was in Richmond and he lived there with his Aunt Isabella Anderson as her husband had died. The Andersons previously owned a lot of land past Sunshine called "Truganina," they were very rich. Isabella left the home to Francis and he in turn left it to the Gulf Station girls. I remember my mother saying that there used to be two trains going to Melbourne in those days: morning and afternoon. The Andersons had a good vegetable garden, also currant bushes so a box of black currants would be sent to Gulf Station and picked up from Yarra Glen station.

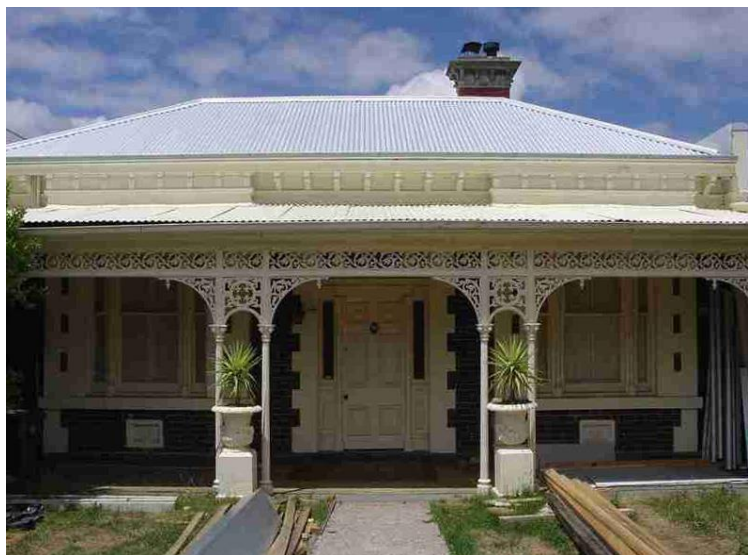
I have a smaller photograph too of Francis outside the house, he is sitting on a seat with a little dog at his feet. He had a beard.

Langholm sold for over a million dollars. I know it had a cellar underneath it and a long back yard as Dave and I were in Richmond, and saw the "Sold" sign on it and were invited to come in to it by the buyer when I told him my connection.



Francis Anderson Little, *Langholm* (built 1885) ?early 1890s

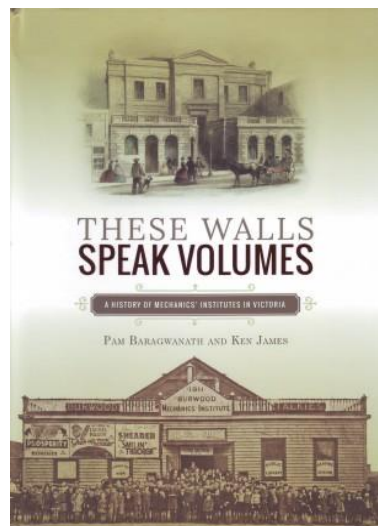
Courtesy Bessie Kelso



29 Waltham Street, Richmond, current appearance, remarkably similar outside but for the loss of one chimney

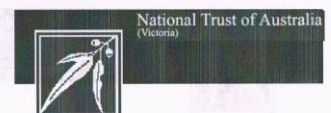
History publication

Winner of the 2016 Victorian Community History Awards is about Victoria's Mechanics' Institutes: meeting places for adult education, the arts and entertainment. The book gives an insight into one of Victoria's earliest community organisations.



Gulf Station Recipes

This 2003 publication is available once again. Price \$10 plus p&p – ask Irene to send you a copy. One for the sweet-tooth and just in time for Christmas giving!



Clip Clop Clydesdales

Gulf Station has recently been enjoying the company of **Matt Jeffery's** Clydesdales as well as our own three. Crakka recently took part in a ten-day drive with the Victorian Working Draught Horse Association around the Narioka district (due north of Melbourne, just south of the Murray). Crakka reports:

Trigger and Diesel were the lucky two to be chosen for this expedition and their harrowing works in the paddocks paid off as they behaved themselves tremendously and did me proud. Horses enjoy routine and they certainly enjoyed their days out averaging between 15 and 25 kilometres a day in the 1890 Drovers wagon that was one of the first horse drawn vehicles that I ever restored – timber species in the wagon range from straight-grain hickory, big old growth Kaouri pines, spotted gum for spokes and grey ironbark from Mt Tamborine, Queensland for the wheel hubs that took a two-year drying period, periodically being shaved down on a wood lathe. The janka [hardness] and minimal moisture content make this one of the few species on our continent suitable for wheel hubs.

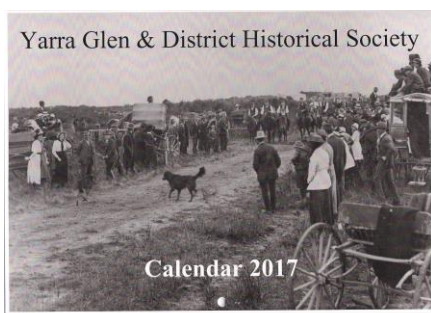


Trigger and Diesel's return coincided with our Seniors Open Day so visitors saw Crakka removing the horses' shoes.

On Hamer Day, the horses demonstrated their working horse skills as well as interacting with visitors.

Images: Matt Jeffery

Yarra Glen & District Historical Society 2017 calendar



Once again, the Yarra Glen & District Historical Society has produced an interesting and practical calendar featuring 12 wonderful historic photographs of Yarra Glen and district's sporting activities.

Available at Yarra Valley Gifts and at Yarra Glen Newsagent \$12.50 or ask Irene to post you a copy (p&p extra).