

Hello members,

March 2018

Many long term residents of south west Victoria feel comforted by the fact that we reside in a part of the world which is not subject to extremes. The recent devastating fires which swept through parts of the district on Saturday 17 March were a shock to us all and a reminder to take nothing for granted and the wisdom of being prepared for the unexpected. These fires are being widely referred to in the media as 'the St Patrick's Day fires' and this label will likely be used in future years to distinguish them from other fire events. Those with an eye for the past will have noted that this is not the first disaster to occur in the district on this date. March 17, 1946 was when the worst recorded floods in the area swept down the Merri & Moyne rivers, taking six bridges and seven lives. Weather patterns which typically occur during autumn in our region were major factors in both these extreme events.

Please do not blame St Patrick, who really has little to do with it, except that according to legend the disaster of untimely death befell him on that date also. He really is a beloved saint, and his day is commemorated in more countries of the world than any other festival, as well as on the International Space Station. He was not Irish; he was born in Roman Britain and kidnapped by Irish raiders during his youth and is venerated not only by Roman Catholics, but also in the Lutheran, Anglican and Eastern Orthodox churches also. Some historians think that the 'snakes' he is credited with having driven out of Ireland were actually the pagan druids who gave him a hard time because of his proselytism of Christianity. Fossil records show that snakes have not existed in Ireland since the last ice age.



As reported in the last newsletter, W&DHS mounted a display of items in the foyer of the Lighthouse Theatre Studio relating to Dame Nellie Melba's visit to Warrnambool during her 1927 'Farewell Tour'. Our display, in conjunction with the Warrnambool Theatre Group's season of the Jack Hibberd play *A Toast To Melba*, featured the beaded French evening purse which Melba presented to Miss O'Donnell, the housemaid who looked after the diva during her stay as a guest of Miss Florence Lake at *Lyndoch*. The program from the concert held at the Warrnambool Town Hall was also included in the display, along with a beaded opera jacket of the era and a framed Melba autograph on loan from the costume collection of Dorothy Nicols, Lismore.

Other happenings this month have included visits to HeritageWorks by a class of year 7 students from Emmanuel College and a carers group from MPower; a guided street walk conducted for visiting Rotarians; visits to & addresses on various topics to University of the Third Age and members of the Association for Independent Retirees Inc. Our volunteers have fielded many enquiries from visitors to HeritageWorks, including members of local families who are well known to us such as Serong and Rutledge. Our business and occupations files have yielded up some vital information for various people seeking information about their relatives who were hotel licensees, bootmakers and car dealers and engineers.

## National Trust Heritage Festival 2018 April 18- May 20



Attached to this bulletin is an invitation to join us at History House on Tuesday 24 April for our festival event for 2018. We invite all members to an afternoon celebration to mark the renaming of History House in honour of the late Les O'Callaghan, who as a member of W&DHS from the early 1970s until his death in 2014, served as president for over 30 years and took on many other committee roles. A plaque will be unveiled on the day in recognition of the years of service Les gave to our society. This day also provides a chance to view our new exhibition which explores the lives of women in our local community 1840-1910.

The Silent Lives exhibition can be viewed throughout the festival and should be of special interest to teachers, and we encourage all our school members to come along to the launch for a preview the exhibition. Teachers are urged to discuss with us the ways in which we can assist with ideas for the teaching of the humanities curriculum, particularly how a class visit to HeritageWorks, the Silent Lives exhibition at History House and the use of artefacts here such as the Pioneer Board can assist in developing historical concepts, knowledge and skills. We remind our member schools that one of the benefits of your membership is that school visits are free of charge.

### Mystery Object of the Month

We have yet to solve the mystery of the missing cat from last month, and now another conundrum. The object pictured, was sent to us by a Melbourne man who tells us that a relative found it on a cliff top to the east of Warrnambool (Hopkins Point Road vicinity) approximately 25 years ago. It appears to be the remnants of a piece of ceramic tile which has become fused to rock through concretion. This might indicate it had been in the sea for a considerable time. The object measures 100mm x 70mm and weighs 310g.



### In April & May this year Warrnambool celebrates 100 years as a city.

The official city seal dates from much earlier when John Macdonald, the town's first school master, designed the crest and devised the motto when the first municipal council was formed in 1856. Though the 'By These We Flourish' crest has mostly been replaced by the stylized logo of the Norfolk Island Pine powered ship as a symbol of the city on advertising and signage, it is still in use on official documents today.



### Coming up soon - for your calendar

18 April - 20 May	National Trust Heritage Festival	
24 April	Silent Lives exhibition launch	Les O'Callaghan House
21-22 April	WVAHS Annual General Meeting	Port Fairy
19 May	Family History Group seminar	Hammond Centre.

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Committee: Marita Murphy (Vice President). Barbara McLeod (Treasurer) Mandy King, Joanne Laity, Glenys Phillpot, Pat Varley and Eric van der Wal.

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