



The Old School Report

merimulahistoricalociety.org.au

Merimbula –Imlay
Historical Society

November 2024

The good thing about procrastination is that you always have something planned for tomorrow!

(An anonymous quote that could have been written by me!!)

From the Editor -

Firstly thanks to all who have contributed such interesting articles to the newsletter - it makes my job easier and more enjoyable! This issue includes another mysterious shipwreck story from the Moorheads, a report on Guye Richards's talk on sharks from Shirley, an article from the *National Library of Australia News* magazine from Liz, which I have expanded slightly (I have a copy of the original article if anyone is interested), and a new section titled Who am I? detailing the life/lives of members of the Society.

It appears that many local historical societies are struggling to find volunteers with waning interest from younger generations. A possible solution offered by the Federation of Australian Historical Societies is to focus on engaging with local schools and councils. Good luck with that! I have included a SEHGI report from the last meeting and the discussion around the Bega Pioneers Museum problem regarding lack of volunteers.

I have mentioned Val Currie and Brenda Christie in the Society News section but I had to omit Ian Battersby due to lack of space. Ian has often assisted in MOSM events with recording and photographing, but is also an awesome person who never hesitates to help with technical or other issues. Ian has endured several medical issues in the past three years and is currently in Bega Hospital suffering from a severe infection. He has been in and out several times but this time has been an inpatient for over a week, expecting to be discharged next Thursday with the possibility of further treatment in Canberra. Hope you get better soon, Ian - the world needs you!!

As this will be my last newsletter for 2024 - and where did that year go? - I wish you the best for the Christmas season and lots of hope for a more peaceful (and Trump-free) 2025. Keep well all of you!

Olwen Morris

Books -

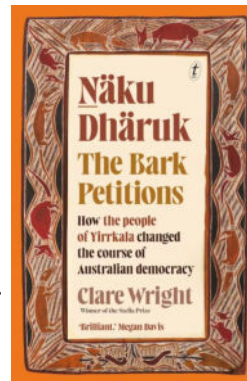
As it's the anniversary of the disastrous referendum of the Voice I thought I'd include a new book about the Yirrkala Bark Petitions of 1963. The Yolngu people believe they have lived in the area now known as Arnhem Land for millennia. In 1931 the Arnhem Land Reserve, comprising an area of 31,200 square miles, was established by the Australian Parliament. Its purpose was to provide the Yolngu with "adequate land to meet their hunting and other requirements in order to preserve the aboriginal races".

In 1953 large deposits of bauxite were found in Arnhem Land near Yirrkala and as most of the world's aluminium is extracted from bauxite the Arnhem Land deposits were extremely valuable. So the government amended the legislation controlling access to Aboriginal reserves to allow entry for miners and prospectors! From 1953 mining prospectors began appearing around Yirrkala and in 1963 Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced the Federal Government had approved plans for the mining and processing of bauxite in north east Arnhem land near Yirrkala. A total of 140 square miles was removed from the Arnhem Land Reserve for bauxite mining leases. Until this point, the Yolngu were unaware of the development plans or that the government had made it legal for the land to be removed from the reserve for mining.

In a formal attempt to have their lands recognised the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land presented two petitions written, one on bark & one on paper, to the Australian Parliament. It was the first time documents incorporating First Nations ways of representing their relationships to land were recognised by Parliament. A parliamentary committee reported that a halt to mining was not recommended. However it recommended that sacred sites were to be protected, compensation for loss of livelihood be paid and that a dedicated committee monitor the mining project.

Naku Dharuk, The Bark Petitions is the story of a founding document in Australian democracy and the trailblazers who made it. It is also a picture of the ancient and enduring culture of Australia's first peoples. Professor Claire Wright OAM is an award winning historian and author who is currently working at La Trobe University as Professor of History and Professor of Public Engagement.

Olwen Morris



Diary -

- 28 October general meeting RSL. John McKay from McKay's Oysters to speak.
- 9 November - SEHGI meeting OSM 50 yr anniversary.
- 29 November - Christmas Lunch Aqua Café, Pam-bula Beach
- 9 January - Market Day & Book Stall at MOSM
- 24 February - 1st General Meeting of 2025 at RSL

Committee members -

President - Don Bretherton

V-P - Nancy Richards

Secretary - Andrew McManus

Treasurer - Adrian Pitt

Curator - Liz Bretherton

Committee members - Peter Clancy

Archivist - Colette Moorhead

Events - Nancy Richards

Public Officer - Adrian Pitt

Non-committee position:

Newsletter ed. - Olwen Morris

Books - Geraldine McCann

Society News -

- 50th Anniversary of 1st display at Old School Museum 9 Nov SEHGI meeting.
- Vale Coral Herring who passed away on Wednesday 9 October at Eden Uniting Aged Care. Coral was a past member of the Historical Society.
- Best wishes to Val Currie who had a bad fall & broke her collar bone & pelvis & is now recuperating at home.
- Also Brenda Christie has been recovering from a severe bout of pneumonia. Hope you are now better, Brenda.

Events Committee Report -

Looking forward to seeing you all at our last meeting for 2024 on **28 October** at the club. John McKay will be back to talk about the local Oyster industry in October. As announced at the September meeting we are reducing the number of meetings at the club in 2025 to 4! The meetings will take place as usual on the last Monday of the months of **February, May, August** and **November**. We will have a meeting on the last Monday in **March [31]** with Andrew McManus in the chair to be held at the museum with afternoon tea and a **Show and Tell About Your Favourite Object**. I also hope to have a cosy lunch somewhere in June or July with a speaker. 50 years! MOSM celebrates 50 years of public exhibitions and to mark the occasion we are hosting lunch at the November 9th South East History Group meeting to be held at our museum. All members are asked to attend and maybe a few could help with the catering. Please let Liz and Nancy know if you can contribute a slice or a salad - Olwen is making Welshcakes!

We hope everyone comes to the SEHGI lunch on **November 9** and the Xmas lunch at Aqua Cafe & Bar **Friday November 29**. A traditional Christmas lunch with a roast and Plum Pudding with brandy sauce costing \$35. Please RSVP ASAP for both events for numbers. Additionally we are working on an idea for a Book Stall and market day on **Thursday January 9** at the museum. The Merimbula Information Centre will be joining us, hopefully the Scouts will be able to cook their sausage sizzle and Broadwater Oysters will bring delicious oysters. It's going to be during our usual open hours for Thursdays. I'm working on live music and a coffee van. Elaine Waddell will be the guest speaker at the first meeting at the RSL next year and will be as usual the last **Monday [24th] February** at 2pm in William Dawes Room.

Nancy Richards

Curator's Report October -

The year seems to be drawing to a close very rapidly with still so much to be done at MOSM.

On October 1st we hosted the Home School Group. There were three adults and six children. With such a small group Don and I were able to take them through. It was a very successful visit and I was amazed at how fascinated they were with the Classroom and kept returning to it every opportunity.

This week we had a very active and dedicated group for a working bee to move all the remaining OSM belongings from the Scout garage. After a bit of rearranging and the removal of the old cupboard with sliding shelves, we managed to rehouse the two plan filing cabinets, the two door records cabinet and the three door filing cabinet in the Annex. The Pambula & District Hospital Auxiliary records and the Save Our Hospital records have also now been added to our storage cupboard. The Singer sewing machine is causing some problems though unfortunately. Thanks to all who worked so hard. Don and I worked again yesterday going through a lot of loose items and categorising for cataloguing etc.

At the end of next week I will be starting to assemble the '1974 Exhibition'. As we are short of volunteers for the final Sunday of October, I intend to keep the Museum closed (with a notice of course) and that will allow me a little more time to organise the display.

Wendy Pierre-Humbert has started cataloguing work with Don and has grasped the 'intricacies' of e-Hive very quickly. For those of you who do not know Wendy, she and her partner own the Secondhand Bookshop in the arcade in Merimbula. Many thanks to Wendy for volunteering to help.

I am very much looking forward to the SEHGI meeting on November 9th to share our Museum with others in the group and hopefully have a relaxed and enjoyable meal as well.

Elizabeth Bretherton



Nancy organising the Scouts and their sausage sizzle!



Garry keeping an eye on the morning tea!



Geraldine standing guard over the book stall!

SEHGI News -

It appears all museums in region are suffering from 'volunteeritis' a disease that affects members of the public and discourages them from volunteering in not-for-profit organisations. Almost all the representatives at the last SEHGI meeting in August reported that lack of volunteers was a dominant problem. Kaye Jauncy from Bega Pioneers Museum reported she was standing in as interim President as there were insufficient nominations to form a committee; current expenses were not covered by income and grants were being sought to fund repairs to the building. The future was looking bleak and more about that later.

An AGM was held at the same meeting and Bev Holland from Cobargo Historical Society replaced Jenny Drenkhahn as Secretary. Shirley Bazley moved a motion of thanks to Jenny for her many years' service as Secretary of SEHGI to unanimous agreement. Later Adrian Pitt volunteered as position of Treasurer.

Now to the news of Bega Pioneers Museum. As we know on 28 September the museum held a Special General Meeting to consider motions put forward by a member of that museum. The resolutions included changing from a museum to a historical society, selling the building & finding another site to house the historical society and rationalising the objects and disposing of surplus items. Shirley Bazley was one of many members who attended the meeting and reported that all 6 resolutions were voted against! Kate Jauncey said members would be emailed about the next steps to be addressed by the committee at its next meeting.

Movements are afoot however as there have been specific offers of practical and financial help, discussion with Bega Valley Shire Council and plans for grant applications, State heritage listing of the building and crowd funding. So Bega Pioneers Museum lives to fight another day!

Shirley also sent a link to the online journal About Regional which has an article about 4 local museums in trouble:

<https://aboutregional.com.au/four-bega-valley-historical-societies-and-museums-in-jeopardy/459157/?>

Editor

Also one from Liz from the ABC titled **"Bega Pioneers' Museum one of many struggling to get volunteers, let alone visitors, as interests change"**:

Nita Quinn remembers the whole community coming together in the 1970s to create a local history museum on the NSW far south coast. Residents in the Bega Valley volunteered their time to build sheds, lay carpet, paint rooms, and staff the growing museum.

"We were able to put one volunteer here in the morning and we could switch over to another in the afternoon. We had so many," the 95-year-old said.

Nearly half-a-century later, the rooms of the Bega Pioneers' Museum are mostly quiet.

Visitor numbers are down, volunteer numbers are down, and the museum is losing \$6,000 a year.

Under such difficult circumstances, it has sparked talk of its closure and a sale of the building that houses a collection of around 30,000 objects.

The Societies being lost to History

Federation of Australian Historical Societies president Christine Yeats said the Bega Historical Society was not alone in its challenges.

"Historical societies in Port Stephens, Griffith, and Canterbury are among those which have closed in recent years. Every closure is a cause for concern," Ms Yeats said. "It's an ageing group who are managing the societies...and there's challenges trying to attract younger people."

Ms Yeats has encouraged historical societies to reach out to schools about education opportunities and teaching lessons, to advocate for a local history section in their community library, and improve marketing on social media.

"Once upon a time you could open up and say, 'Here we are, the local historical society'. But it involves more than that," she said. "It means that we all have to rethink."

Whose history is it?

Academic historian Ian Willis said there was a need to rethink how museums operated and how their audiences had changed since they gained popularity in the 1960s and early 1970s.

"That generation were really interested in preserving white Australian history," Dr Willis said. "They will value a certain type of Australian history that doesn't appeal to different generations or those who have turned up in Australia in more recent decades."

Dr Willis said despite the declining appeal of local historical museums and the preservation of physical artefacts, he had noticed young people teaching history on online platforms like TikTok.

He recalled a time he watched a student give an account of the French Revolution in 30 seconds.

"[Digital mediums] present an innovative environment where young people tell stories to each other in a fashion that people of my generation don't," he said.

"Local history is about storytelling and young people engage with storytelling. "It's just finding a way of presenting the story in a fashion they relate to."

The Home to Thousands of Artefacts

The Bega Historical Society will decide the future of the museum at the end of this month.

Committee member Peter Ubrihien said he did not know where the thousands of artefacts in the museum's rooms would go if the building was sold or the collection downsized. "If it's dispersed well that's the end of the road for it," he said.

"Too much work's gone in over the years to get the collection together and look after it. "We need the people through the door and a bit of money in the bank. If we can't do that, we're going to be in trouble."

What's Next?

An academic historian says upcoming generations are changing the way that history gets preserved and handed down, and existing venues must adapt.

For Nita Quinn its closure would be a huge loss.

"This is [the town's] history. This is what has been, and [we] show them how we used to do things," she said.

"I know the work that has been put into this and to see it go downhill it is very sad."

ABC South East NSW, by Isla Evans Fri 27 September

Mysterious Far South Coast Shipwreck -

Another mystery shipwreck article gratefully received from the Moorheads describes a wreck on Nelsons Bay. According to an article by Ellouise Bailey in the Canberra Times of 6 April 2022, the remains of a shipwreck were discovered in the sand of Nelsons Bay on the far south coast by some Bega Valley locals. According to the Constable family huge swells had moved the sand around the beach allowing the wreck, which is possibly 160 years old, to be revealed. Andrew Constable said that local legend has it that the wreck would appear after big storms.

South coast residents Ollie and Nancy Hinde, who have been following the shipwreck for more than 50 years, maintain it only surfaces for a few days before it is lost again to the shifting sands. The wreck seems to be positioned between two rocky outcrops which would allow the sand to be washed out in heavy seas, exposing the wreck. The sand would soon return with the surf, covering the wreck again.

Fascinated by their discovery, the Hindes kept clippings from various publications and discovered there were no official records of the wreck. Also in their personal archive was an excerpt from the *Tathra Times*, written by historian Sister Bernice Smith in 1964. She wrote the wreck's timbers suggested it was an American vessel and it had been found full of cedar logs.

The Hindes also have a copy of the *Tanja Centenary* that was researched and written by Robert Russell in 1978.

According to him the wreck was a schooner of about 70 tonnes discovered on the shore between the Bega River and the locality of Nelson. He said the cedar logs were sold during a public auction in 1859 by the administrator of Public Affairs and were turned into furniture including two tables at Jellat.

Sources revealed that the first recorded sighting of the wreck was in 1859 by Captain Fletcher of the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company's *SS Mimosa* [see last edition of the Old School Report!]

Nancy Hinde said there had been much speculation and many anecdotal histories given over the years about the origin of the cedar carried by the mysterious schooner.

"Ollie had been told by some old bush workers about how they came across where there'd been cedar trees cut down on Dr George, and they often wondered how and why they had come to be cut down because they thought they were in virgin country," she said. "One of the stories was that this ship that washed in there, they were poaching cedar, but it's all hearsay and I don't know what evidence there is for that story."

Of course this attracted the curiosity of Garry and Colette who had heard about it on the ABC some time ago. During a visit by one of their sons, Robert, they drove to Nelsons Bay to check it out for themselves. To their delight they were able to see the evidence for themselves. However on further investigation they were unable to find any record of a ship or a wreck in this area. Yet another mystery involving historic ships! Any ideas anyone??

Well when it comes to research I am like a dog with a bone so I decided to do some more digging!

On 16 April 2022 Albert McKnight wrote in *About Regional* that the wreck was first reported bottom up and loaded with cedar logs in 1859 by the captain of *SS Mimosa*. Heritage NSW said that it was made of wood and weighed 70 tonnes. He also quotes Sister Bernice Smith.

"Timbers in her suggested she was an American vessel. She was wonderfully well built and all wedges were of timber. No papers were found in her or any name to give any indication of her ownership," she said.

Nancy Hinde had a theory about the cedar logs. A local timber cutting family told her husband they had gone into the bush near Mumbulla Mountain, which was supposedly virgin forest, and came across stumps of cedar trees. So had the logs been poached from the mountain? And if so how were they transported to the ship?

Local historian, Angela George, was also interviewed by the *Canberra Times* and said there were many shipwrecks along the coast, some of which have never been located. The only shipwreck she found on the Maritime Heritage database was the charred remains of a 50 ft schooner identified in 1891 and found embedded on the coast between Bega River and Nelsons Lagoon.

Angela advised that shipwrecks are protected by the NSW Heritage Act and should never be tampered with.

"All shipwrecks in State waters that are more than 75 years of age, or even those that are younger that have local or State significance cannot be disturbed without prior approval by the Heritage Council of NSW," she said. Wood is preserved when it is buried under sand and kept wet but when you remove the vessel the timbers dry out, shrink and open up. If kept in water and under wet sand the wood is protected from destructive elements.

Acknowledgements to the Moorheads, Canberra Times and About Regional.



The remains of a mysterious shipwreck on Nelsons Beach were discovered by some eager Bega Valley locals. Picture courtesy of the Constable family, taken on Sunday April 3, 2022. [From Canberra Times 6 April 2022]



The mysterious shipwreck at Nelsons Beach re-emerged from the sand in the 1970s. Photo: Nancy Hinde. [From About Regional 16 April 2022]

Sharks! -



Port Jackson shark egg cases



Various species of egg cases



Various shark species' teeth



Jaw of a grey nurse shark held at MOSM

Snippets from a talk on SHARKS given by Guye Richards to the M-HIS members on 30 th September 2024. Guye started his talk with a brief explanation of the display of the shark jaws, teeth, egg cases and skin he had brought, that could be handled later with great care by the audience.

There are over 500 species of sharks worldwide, ranging from the smallest, that are the size of a handspan, to the enormous whale sharks that can grow up to 60 feet (18 metres) in length. Though shark attacks always attract media attention, the number of incidents pale in comparison to road accidents and in many cases are initiated by stupid human behaviour. Usually sharks will swim away from humans but obviously attacks do happen when the animal is looking for food and is attracted by the shape of a surfer or silhouette of a board or by blood in the water from a spearfishing haul. Often the shark will take an exploratory bite of its prey, possibly a seal, to assess if it is worth pursuing to the death but that is of little comfort to a human, who may sustain life threatening injuries. The most sensitive part of the shark is its nose so the best defence, if attacked, is to hit it there but the safest human behaviour is to avoid swimming at dawn or dusk, near shoals of fish where there is a feeding frenzy and when spear fishing, not holding catch close to the body or on a trailing rope.

Identification of the species of sharks responsible for attacks has not always been accurate. Adverse publicity has been given to the grey nurse shark when it was really a wobbegong or carpet shark. The former sounds so much more dangerous than the latter! However the wobbegong is the fastest moving shark. An adult male can swim sideways 6 feet from its position on the sand, attack and return to the original site in 1/6 th of a second - half the human reaction time.

Unlike other fish species, sharks do not have a swim bladder so cannot rest for long as they have to keep moving to circulate oxygen bearing water through their gills. Oil in their liver helps buoyancy and the upper tail lobe gives thrust.

All sharks reproduce by internal fertilisation. Some species give birth to live young, while others produce eggs that may "hatch" within the female or the case is exuded and the hatchling develops in the ocean. Cases sometimes wash up on beaches and their distinctive shapes indicate which species frequent the area. Life is hazardous right from the start, as in some species the stronger sibling eats its twin in utero and the live young in the ocean risk being eaten by the parent sharks at birth.

About 100 million sharks are killed annually to satisfy the demand of 125 countries for products made from their liver oil, cartilage, skin, teeth and flesh. About 600 thousand tonnes are used to make perfumes and creams, health products, handbags and watch bands, jewellery, and food. Old seafarers also used shark skin as a sandpaper substitute.

Shirley Bazley

Whale Ho! South Sea Tales -

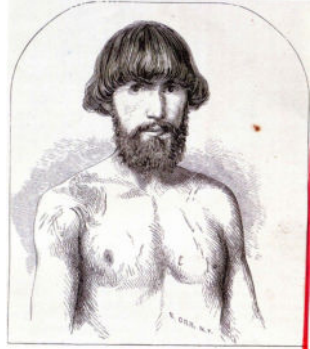
Liz sent in this interesting article from the June 1998 edition of the *National Library of Australia News* written by Honore Forster. It is not the complete article but Liz and I have picked out the more exciting bits, some of which are very relevant to our collection!

The article begins with a quote from *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville:

"That great America on the other side of the sphere, Australia, was given to the enlightened world by the whalem.."

When Melville wrote those words in the mid-nineteenth century, the great age of Pacific whaling was already coming to an end. Although the epic novel of the great white whale gave a romantic dimension to the whalemens' mundane activities, there were many other factual stories about whaling which cast light on an industry so important to the early economic development of Australia.

There was always a contemporary readership for the whalemens' tales and overall they give a fascinating picture of what it was like to sail on a long Pacific whaling journey, with all its discomfort, boredom, bad food, illness and danger. Likewise the chance of excitement and adventure and the possibility of financial reward.



William Jackman

Much of the article consists of lists of log books and journals that are kept in the National Library and which relate to Australian whaling. Doctors were carried on board British and French whaleships as a matter of course, though not on American ones, and several books have been published recording their experiences. Ordinary crew members also recorded their personal narratives, some with dubious veracity, but the stories are vividly told. One such tale was written by a Devon man, William Jackman, who crewed aboard several whaleships in Australian waters. He claims one such ship was blown ashore and wrecked in the Great Australian Bight in 1837. This led to Jackman being forced to live with Aboriginal people for a year and a half.

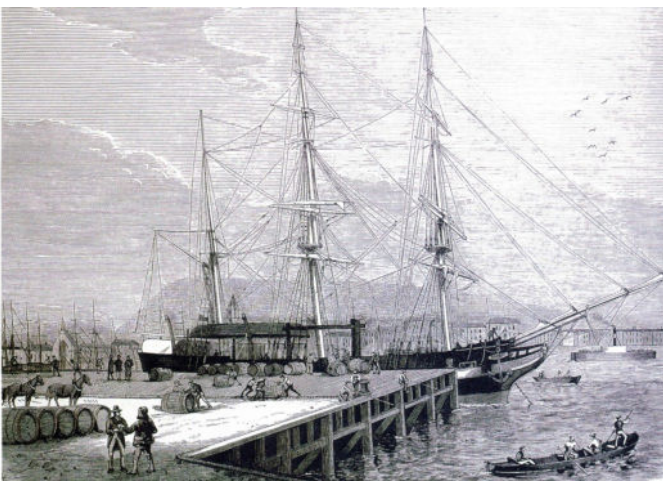
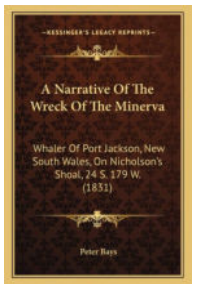
Australian-owned whaleships feature in several books describing wreckings in the Library's collection. 'Sailing-master', Peter Bays, describes the wreck of the *Minerva*, whaler of Port Jackson, on Nicholson's Shoal in 1829. *A Narrative of the Wreck of the Minerva* is a historical account of the disastrous shipwreck of the whaling vessel, *Minerva*, on Nicholson's Shoal, south of Tonga, in the South

Pacific Ocean. Written by Bays, the book details the events leading up to the wreck, the struggles of the crew to survive in the aftermath, and their eventual rescue. The *Minerva*, was on a voyage to the South Pacific in 1829 when it encountered a violent storm that caused it to run aground on the treacherous Nicholson's Shoal (now known as Minerva Reef). After the wreck the crew, led by Captain William Smith, took to the boats and battled the elements, hunger, and thirst for several days before finally arriving at Tonga. Bays' account is based on the firsthand experiences of the survivors and provides a vivid and harrowing description of the dangers of whaling and seafaring in the early 19th century.

Whaleships had their share of mutinies too - and a remarkable one with an Australian association is described in a little known book, *Three Times Around the World, or Life and Adventures of Alonzo D Sampson* (1867). Among other lesser adventures, Sampson tells of his involvement in the violent mutiny on the *Junior* of New Bedford, near Tasmania in December 1857. After murdering the captain and the third mate, the five mutineers forced the remaining officers to navigate the ship as far as Cape Howe, where they took off with several other members of the crew in two whaleboats and landed on Australian soil near the present day town of Merimbula. All but two, who were never found, were eventually rounded up by the police and returned to the United States to stand trial. Sampson himself was freed to write down his story some years later. The story was given full coverage in the early months of 1858 by the Sydney Morning Herald.

In *Moby Dick*, Melville took to task any readers who believed that whaling lacked dignity, or that whalemens were 'poor devils' with no good blood in their veins. He was a magnificent chronicler, romancer and public relations man for whaling and the whalemans. But, as this full article shows, the whalemens themselves also helped to tell their own story, giving readers a tantalising look at life aboard those now-vanished ships.

Liz Bretherton & Olwen Morris (Taken from *Whale Ho! South Sea Tales* by Honore Forster in *National Library of Australia News*)



A Hobart Town Whaler, the Emily Downer
Reproduced from the Australian Sketcher 27 September 1879
From the Pictorial Collection



The Death Flurry 1865
Oswald W. Brierly (1817 - 94)
Watercolour; 72.3 x 134.2 cm
Rex Nan Kivell Collection; from the Pictorial Collection

Who are they? -



**Can you guess who this lovely young couple are?
The answer is in their story on the next page.**

I hope to do a section like this in each issue of the Old School Report, as long as people send me the information!

Our personal stories make us who we are, which in turn create the narrative of a community that leads to the history of a nation. Ripples on a pond! To share your story with the members please email me with a young photo and a recent one, on olwenmorris@gmail.com and let's make history!

Amazing Facts -

The First Australians

- The First Australians probably arrived some time between 50,000 and 65,000 years ago during the last Ice Age when ice sheets may have joined Indonesia to South-East Asia. Genetic analysis of Aboriginal hair samples confirms that they were here 50,000 years ago and some archaeological sites in northern Australia are believed to be 50,000 years old.
- Each Aboriginal nation occupied its own territory of 500 - 100,000 square kilometres. This area provided the people with resources for their survival, such as food; animal skins; material to make shelter, clothing, tools and musical instruments; minerals (such as ochre for body painting and rock art); and medicines (mostly made out of native plants).
- Although Aboriginal people moved around within their territory for hunting or clearing country with fire to encourage grazing land for food source such as kangaroo, they would also stay in one place for months at a time. Their dwellings were built of a variety of materials depending on where they lived. Some huts were made of bark and branches, some of logs and some of stone such as the Gunditjmarra people of south west Victoria. The Gunditjmarra also had one of the most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems known as the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape. The ancestors farmed kooyang (eels) for food and trade for millennia.
- Around 10,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age, rising sea levels isolated Tasmania and limited contact between Tasmanian Aborigines (the Palawa kani) and those of the mainland.
- Historians estimate that 300,000 - 750,000 Aborigines lived in Australia at the time of European settlement, but the exact figure will never be known. They probably lived in 500 - 900 separate tribes or nations, each of which had between 50 - 2,000 members.
- More than 250 Indigenous languages were spoken across Australia, along with 800 dialect varieties. Each language was distinct with its own grammar and vocabulary. (Today only about 145 of those original languages are still spoken and 110 are critically endangered).
- First Nations peoples have a spiritual connection to the land, sea and stars. Landforms and stars are believed to be the physical representations of ancestral heroes and spirits. Each Aboriginal nation has its own 'Dreaming' tales, which explain features of the group's territory, beliefs and ancestry. The stories describe the creation of the world and the way people in that Aboriginal nation should behave and relate according to tribal law. Special events and ceremonies, such as corroborees, honour the ancient ancestors and the places where their spirits reside.



Good to see the young so interested in the display.



More books!



Past MOSM member Kerry Hynes admiring the oyster display.

And the answer is... -



Pam and George Pitt

This is the story of Pam & George - long time members of MIHS, who this year celebrated their 68th Wedding Anniversary.

They were both born in London in 1936. In February 1953, both age 16, they met at a square-dance, a pastime they continued right through to 2017 (except for a few years bringing up their family). The highlight of those first few months was to be part of a demonstration team, taking part in an International Folk Festival in the Royal Albert Hall, London.

At the age of 18 George was called up for his 2 years National Service duty in the Royal Air Force, and dancing ceased at that time. Pam and George were married in 1956, six months before the end of George's stint of National Service, and they spent their first year of marriage in Shrewsbury, Their first child, a son, was born at the end of that first year.

After his stint of National Service, they moved back to London with their baby for a few months. George then applied and was accepted for the West Sussex Police Force and the next 16 years were spent near the coast, George working and Pam having more babies, making five in all, 3 sons and 2 daughters. Nothing was further from their minds than square-dancing at that time.

In July 1974 George noticed an advert in a newspaper calling for Prison Officers in Australia, and applied and was accepted for the position. He and Pam, together with their five children, emigrated to Australia in September that year. After three months in a Government hostel in Maribyrnong, Melbourne, they bought their first Australian home and moved to Melton, west of Melbourne. After a few years they took up square dancing again joining a local club. George very quickly realised

that the Prison Service was not for him and secured a position as an Ambulance Officer. He remained in this employment for around 8 years before starting his own driving school. Soon after their arrival in Australia Pam became a public servant with a branch of the Department of Defence Support in Maribyrnong where she spent 15 happy years, starting in the typing pool and finishing up secretary to the Chief Superintendent. Gradually the children left school, began working, eventually marrying or going off to university, and by 1989 all had left home. After holidaying in Eden, they fell in love with the far south and bought the managing rights of a small block of units in Merimbula.

As there wasn't a square dance club within a 2 hour drive of Merimbula, they started their own soon after moving to the area. "Sapphire Squares", with George being the caller, quickly becoming part of the social life in Merimbula.. They ran this dance club for 27 years, making many friends, many of which remain today.

After managing for 3 years they sold those managing rights and bought a small freehold complex which they ran until 1999 when it was time to retire and take things a little easier. By that time they had become members of the local jazz club, The Down South Jazz Club. They are still very much active in this, George having been President for 20 years now and Pam the Publicity Officer for many years also. Their second son, Adrian, and his wife moved to Merimbula a few years ago and Adrian is the Treasurer for the Jazz Club, and has recently also taken on the position of Treasurer to MIHS.

Upon retirement they both looked around for voluntary work, and spent a few years with the Visitor Information Centre working together one morning a week. After those years they decided to give that away and soon became volunteers with the Merimbula Imlay Historical Society and do museum duties at the Old School Museum a couple of times each month. This they have been doing for many years now, and will continue doing so for as long as their health remains good.

Their family has now risen to 11 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren. They consider themselves extremely fortunate.

Pam Pitt



Pam and George's wedding day!

Merry Christmas

and a

Happy New Year!

