



The Old School Report

merimbulahistoricalociety.org.au

Merimbula –Imlay
Historical Society

February 2025

Faster than a speeding bullet...Look up! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman! Strange visitor from another planet.. Who can change the course of mighty rivers, bend steel with his bare hands, and who - disguised as Donald Trump, mild-mannered President for a great country of the world - fights a never ending battle for truth, justice and the American way - to Make America Great Again!

[Part anonymous quote from Superman US radio show from 1940 and part sarcasm from me!]

From the Editor -

February already! My hope for a Trump-free year didn't eventuate so no predictions from me about the rest of 2025!

One prediction I feel reasonably safe in making however is Merimbula will cease to have a museum following the resignation of Liz & Don unless we can pull together an efficient working committee. This means everyone getting out into the community to ask people to help in various ways. I have some ideas, but the most important position and the most difficult to fill, would be Curator or Collections Manager. This is a professional position and requires the right person. Let us all put some thought into this before Liz and Don leave.

We were all sad to hear of the sudden death of a beloved member on 17 January. Ursula Hunt was a strong supporter of the historical society although her first commitment was to the Genealogy Society where she had been President and committee member for many years. Ursula was an immaculate record keeper and was extremely knowledgeable about family history. She was a strong Catholic and took up many tasks associated with the Church such as washing the altar linen each week. At the age of 90 Ursula continued to take a walking group every Sunday afternoon. She was working as a volunteer at St Vinny's when she suffered a massive stroke and was taken to Bega Hospital. Ursula is survived by nine children, fifteen grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Another member and a dear friend of mine, Geraldine McCann, was diagnosed with a serious illness over the Christmas break and is currently in Melbourne with her family waiting to be admitted to the Alfred Hospital for treatment. I miss her and wish her all the best. Thanks to the Moorheads, Neil Burnham and Helen Swinbourne for the great articles - don't know what I'd do without you!

Olwen Morris

Books -

I have just finished reading a beautiful, thought-provoking book by Elif Shafak, *The Island of Missing Trees*. It is a story of love, displacement and grief set against the backdrop of war in Cyprus. It is 1974 when two teenagers, from opposite sides of a divided island, meet at a tavern called The Happy Fig in the city they both call home. The tavern is the only place that Kostas, Greek and Christian, and Defne, Turkish and Muslim, can meet in secret to carry on their forbidden romance.

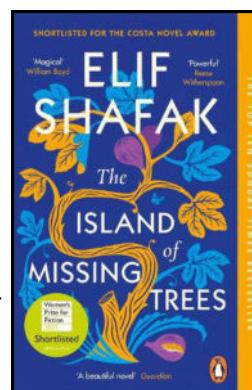
Inside the centre of the tavern is a fig tree which grows through a cavity in the roof. It becomes a third main character in the plot, witnessing events from its own perspective, showing resilience in the face of war, when the capital and the tavern is reduced to rubble and when the teenagers vanish and break apart.

Decades later in north London, sixteen-year old Ada Kazantzakis seeks to untangle years of secrets, separation and silence. The only connection she has to the land of her ancestors is a *Ficus carica* growing in the garden of their London home. The tree is a symbol of survival and redemption illustrating the ways to adapt and move into the future with stability and determination.

The novel also documents the history of Cyprus, combining large social issues with more common yet heart-wrenching ones. Shafak insists her readers witness the real-life devastation of colonialism including separatism and displacement.

It is rich tale of belonging and identity, love and trauma, memory and amnesia, nature and finally, renewal.

Olwen Morris



Diary -

- 24 February - First General Meeting of 2025 at RSL 2.00pm
- 17 March - MOSM committee meeting
- 10 May - SEHG meeting Genealogy Society
- 26 May - General Meeting RSL 2.00pm

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 -

- Liz & Don have officially announced their resignation from MOSM due to deteriorating health. They have done a remarkable job at the museum bringing many improvements and they will be missed. I would like to thank them and wish them all the best for the future.
- NB! Bring your \$5 to the meeting on 24th Feb to enter the lottery and maybe win the \$50 voucher for Swannie's clothing. Thank you Swannie's for your generous gesture.
- NBB! Please note there will be NO general meetings at RSL in March or April. But watch out for possible emails for something unexpected!!

Events Committee Report -

The Book Stall and market day at the Old School museum on 9 January was a great success even though we were not inundated by members of the public. Stall holders all showed up, including Sue from Broadwater Oysters, Christine with her coffee van and the Scouts provided a sausage sizzle. The Sapphire Community Band was excellent and played almost continuously.

Adrian reported we made \$137 in book sales, at least \$20 in donations and \$15 in shop sales. Nancy reckoned we cleared approximately 112 or 115 books. Not a bad day's work for no outlay! And the stall holders were happy and said they would return in the future. *[Below a selection of photos from Book Stall day]*



Band members playing



Sue from Broadwater Oysters & Chris taking a break



Band having well-deserved time out

The next members' meeting and the first of this year will be on **Monday 24 February 2pm at RSL**. Nancy and Andrew will chair the meeting and guest speakers are well-known local personalities, Elaine Waddell and Fay Deveril who will speak about the early years of Spectrum Theatre Group. Fay and Elaine were founding members of Spectrum and have produced many performances over the years.

Nancy and Andrew will hold a general discussion of future meetings and the \$5 lottery is back with a fab prize of \$50 voucher from Swannies. Please support Nancy & Andrew by attending the meeting and bring friends!

Nancy Richards

Curator's Report November & December/January -

CURATOR'S REPORT - NOVEMBER 2024

A busy month, firstly with locating and putting together a display for the 50th anniversary of the first display at the OSM and then organising a lunch with our SEHGI counterparts to launch and celebrate the event.

I did enjoy going through the collection of donations from 1974. There were some I don't remember seeing before and others which were a real delight. A number of items from 1974 are currently on display in our themed exhibitions. I was pleased that a large number of what I found were catalogued albeit without photographs, so that was a very good result! The panel regarding the restoration of Covington's house was also completed and with the wonderful lighting installation by Peter Clancy, it looks great. I attended a concert at 'Covington's Green' last Saturday and in spite of the wind, the venue is really great.

I'm sure a number of you have already seen the improvement in the Annex. All furniture from the Scout garage storage has been arranged and it is looking much tidier and roomier! A very large box of laminated sheets has been sorted and assessed. A number came from RSL displays and other from Museum displays. Angela has them digitised so did not want them and suggested the Genies for relevant ones which I put together and delivered. They were delighted. I have kept the ones with Merimbula relevance and also Military and I have purchased hanging files and they will be filed in the 3 drawer filing cabinet in the Annex. This will save so much research for future exhibitions.

I'm looking forward to the meetings this week with the new Museums Advisor and hopefully we can benefit from her advice. For those of you who didn't see the notice in the BVSC news, the Council is calling for Expressions of Interest for the understorey of the Tura Library. So, no luck for us there.

CURATOR'S REPORT - December/January

The beginning of a new year, let's hope 2025 is a good one for all. Don and I catalogued Oyster Plates over December and we are very happy with our progress. We will now continue with the main holiday period behind us.

I really enjoyed catching up with members and friends at Nancy's Open day last Thursday. Well done Nancy and helpers. Last Friday I spent some time at the Museum whilst Don had his biopsy next door. I photographed the Shipping Exhibition for my ABC talk this Tuesday. With the doors open, I also had a number of visitors! The first two people were Hanns Eber, with his nephew from the US. The nephew was an engineer and gave me information about the Penta motor amongst a lot of other interesting things as well. As luck would have it, Hanns has an interview program on 2SEA, community radio. We were discussing volunteers and he asked me if I would like to talk about it on the radio. I gratefully accepted, so will now send him some info for questions. The second lot of visitors were a family from Melbourne. The eldest son is about to start Year 12 and was passionate (and knowledgeable) about history. So, it was an enjoyable few hours.

Elizabeth Bretherton

SEHGI

The last SEHGI meeting of the year was held at Merimbula Old School Museum on 9 November. It was well represented by 24 members from most of the organisations and all enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by Liz Bretherton - and Olwen made welshcakes.

Business arising reported the recruitment of a new Museums Co-ordinator, Joan Kelly, continuing forum for museums on council premises, ABC radio session now called 'History lesson' and ATO self review report prepared by Jack Dickenson & Adrian Pitt.

Kaye Jauncey from **Bega Pioneers** advised the confrontational motions reported in last newsletter were not supported at the extraordinary meeting and there was positive community response resulting in increase of membership from 70 to approx 130!

Bega Valley Genealogy has renovated the Couthouse with a new paint job.

Bermagui will hold their AGM on 10 November. 4 new members joined following a recruitment campaign.

Bombala & District Historicla Society have unfettered use of the Courthouse, hearings now having ceased.

Bev Holland reported that, as with all the museums, volunteers are desperately needed at **Cobargo** museum. The RSL Memorial Hall rebuild is almost finished.

According to Rob Whiter's report, **Eden KWM** is getting better and better! Maintenance on the Mast is complete and Old Tom has 2 "minor whale" skeletons keeping him company. His previous gallery will become a reception area for tourists with an area for children's activities. (We're not jealous though!!)

Merimbula Old School Museum has ongoing needs for financial and volunteering support just to keep opening. Extra space is also badly needed. The couth boat *Alma Grey* is being prepared for restoration and display. Liz and Colette have created a new display of items from Mrs Mac's Emporium and a display featuring Covington's history on the *Beagle* with Charles Darwin has been developed. Local schools showed much interest in the Merroir Oyster Display and 5 schools participated in the Bird Olympics at Potoroo Palace, showing off their skills in imitating Australian bird calls. MOSM displayed the Dawson Shield from the collection. Curator, Liz Bretherton, presented a display reflecting the opening of the museum's first display 50 years ago.

Judie Winter reported little change to activities in **Snowy River Historical Society** but advised of the presentation of a display at the Dalgety Horse Auction & Agricultural Display recently. The Society is hoping to work together with Snowy Alpine Heritage Association to advance both societies.

The next SEHGI meeting will be 8 Feb at Delegate Showground.



A Selection of Photos from the Remembering 1974 display and the SEHGI meeting on 9 November at Merimbula Old School Museum.

Left: Pam Pitt looking closely at one of the displays in the School Room.

Right: Curator Liz Bretherton with a display of her delicious cooked items.

Below: SEHGI members listening with rapt attention and some items that were on display at the museum in 1974.



War time shipwreck on the South Coast -

When the War Came to Moruya.

In the early hours of the morning of August the third 1942, the citizens of Moruya were awakened by the sound of gunfire and flashes on the horizon. The cause was an attack by the Japanese submarine I-175 on the fishing trawler *SS Dureenbee*.

The *Dureenbee* was a steel trawler built in 1919 of some 220 tons and steam powered. She was owned by Cam & Sons of Sydney, commanded by Captain William Reid, an experienced Skipper and crewed by eleven men. The attached photograph is a sister ship.

The *Dureenbee* was trawling, travelling at 3 knots with dimmed lights, as it was known that Japanese submarines were in the area, the *SS William Dawes* having been torpedoed a couple of weeks before. The *I-175* was on the surface charging her batteries when the *Dureenbee* approached. The first she knew she was in trouble was when she was hit by a shell from the submarine.

The ship's wireless officer, L W Wilson, immediately sent out a distress signal. Before he could signal again, machine gunfire raked the wireless station taking off his hand and destroying the station.

The attack took place seventeen nautical miles offshore in heavy seas. Captain Reid tried to communicate with the submarine that his was an unarmed fishing vessel, with no result. A seaman whose name was Scobie endeavoured to launch the lifeboat and inflatable raft but was riddled with bullets. Captain Reid sent up flares.

The submarine circled the *Dureenbee* for three-quarters of an hour, firing several shells and machine gunning it. The bridge was totally destroyed and her engine disabled. Several of the other crew were injured. It appeared that the Japanese were using her for target practice as no attempt was made to actually sink her.

It is interesting the contrast between this attack and what had happened to the survivors of the *SS William Dawes*. They were allowed to man their lifeboats and be towed ashore by the Merimbula fishing boats despite the *I-11* surfacing nearby.

After the attack the *I-175* disappeared, leaving the *Dureenbee* helpless and adrift.

Meanwhile a smaller trawler, vis the *Mirrabooka*, put out from Moruya to help at about 2.30am. At about 6.30am a RAAF aircraft located the drifting trawler and directed the *Mirrabooka* to her.

The rescue of the remaining crew was hazardous due to the rough seas and the *Dureenbee's* life boat and raft had been destroyed. One difficulty was saving the body of Scobie as he was twenty-two stone. Another injured seaman, Archibald Mc Pherson, died before they could return to shore. The Captain's brother Alexander Reid later died in hospital.

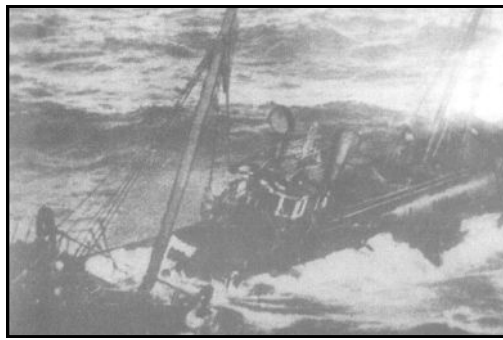
The battered hull of the *Dureenbee* drifted until she foundered on rocks north of Bateman's Bay. The crew of the *Mirrabooka*, the McDiamid brothers and Ces Williams received the Royal Humane & Shipwreck Society award for their courage. The three deceased members of the *Dureenbee* are buried in the Moruya Cemetery.

The *I-175* won distinction for sinking the USS Aircraft Carrier *Liscome Bay* in November 1943 with the loss of six hundred and forty-four lives. It was finally sunk by an American Destroyer on Fifth of February 1944.

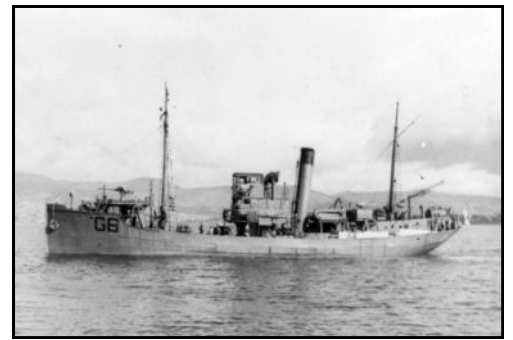
Garry & Colette Moorhead



Graves of men lost on SS Dureenbee



Wreck of Dureenbee



Sister ship of Dureenbee, SS Goonambee

The *Cactoblastis* moth -

The things one discovers while researching! I was looking for something that happened in Australia 100 years ago and the most interesting thing I could find was that the *Cactoblastis* moth was introduced in Queensland to control prickly pear cactus!

Apparently prickly pears (*Opuntia stricta*) were imported into Australia in the First Fleet as hosts of cochineal insects which were used in the dye industry. It quickly became a widespread invasive species, rendering 40,000 square kilometers of farming land unproductive.

The moth *Cactoblastis cactorum* from Argentina, whose larvae eat prickly pear, was introduced in 1925 and almost wiped out the prickly pear. This case is often cited as an example of successful biological pest control.

A monument to *Cactoblastis cactorum* was erected in Dalby, Queensland, commemorating the eradication of the prickly pear in the region. Who'd have thought it?!



THOMAS RAINE (1793 – 1860)

Thomas Raine (1793-1860), mariner and merchant, was born on 21 June 1793, the youngest son of Richard Raine, barrister, and his wife Mary, née Beatty. He was educated at Westminster School and joined the merchant marine; when he sailed for Australia in 1814 as a junior officer in the convict transport *Surry*, an epidemic of typhus left him the only surviving officer. As acting master he sailed the ship to China for a homeward cargo and on the way examined part of the Great Barrier Reef, Raine Passage and Raine Island being named after him.



Portrait of Captain Thomas Raine (Image from the *Journal of The Royal Australian Historical Society Vol. 26, p 279.*) and the Convict ship *Surry* in Sydney Harbour.



Confirmed as captain, Raine made five more voyages to Australia in the *Surry* between 1816 and 1823, four with convicts; his humane treatment of them earned him the commendation of Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Between voyages he engaged in a variety of mercantile enterprises, speculating in shipping elephant-seal oil from Macquarie Island to London and wheat from Chile to New South Wales. In 1819, with Macquarie's encouragement, he proposed to establish a packet service between England and Australia, but this proved abortive. On a

return voyage from Valparaiso in 1821 he took off Henderson Island three survivors of the whaling ship *Essex*, which had been sunk by a whale in mid-ocean. Later he made a second expedition to Macquarie Island and at the request of Edward Wollstonecraft drew up a detailed report on its resources.

In 1822, after he had taken Governor Macquarie back to England, Raine founded, in partnership with a ship's surgeon, David Ramsay, the Sydney firm of Raine & Ramsay, general merchants, ship owners and agents. Although he continued to act as captain of the *Surry* until 1827, she did not carry convicts again after 1823 and Raine became increasingly involved in the colony's affairs.

He was a director of the Sydney and Van Diemen's Land Packet Co., and a prominent supporter of Sydney's benevolent and sporting institutions. He extended his business interests to include the timber trade, pork and coconut oil from Otaheite, sugar, spices and rum from Mauritius and the East, and flax and ships' spars from the establishment he formed at Hokianga, in the north-west of New Zealand, in 1828, the year after he had sent a trial shipment of Australian cedar to England. In that same year, Raine sent a party of 25 to Twofold Bay aboard the small colonial vessel *Darling*, to establish Australia's first shore based whaling station.

Just two months later, Captain Bennett left Twofold Bay aboard the brig *Ann*, with a cargo of whale oil and bone, followed by the *Darling* in August with another sixteen tons of black whale oil, with a further eighty tons awaiting shipment along with twenty tons of whale fins.

To finance these and other enterprises Raine & Ramsay were largely dependent on bills drawn on the Bank of New South Wales, on inadequate security according to a board of inquiry in May 1826, when they were the bank's largest debtors. This criticism was followed by Raine's resignation from the board of directors, to which he had been elected in December 1824. During the next eighteen months the intensifying general depression and the bank's restriction of credit increased the firm's difficulties, and in October 1828 the partnership with Ramsay was dissolved. In December Raine, who had been elected a director of the bank again in January, was one of those chosen by lot to retire and he did not seek re-election; early in the New Year he was bankrupt. However, in March an arrangement with his creditors was soon followed by his resumption of business at the New Zealand establishment, where in due course he built three trading vessels which helped to restore his fortunes.

In 1831 his wife had settled near Bathurst, where seven years before Raine had been granted land. There in 1832 he built Rainham (sold to the Boyd family in 1854), and engaged in wheat and dairy farming, built the first flour-mill in the district, and established Boree station farther out, whence (Sir) Thomas Mitchell and Richard Cunningham set out in 1835 on their expedition to the Darling River; during these years he gradually disposed of his mercantile concerns and was able to make further payments to his creditors.

RAINHAM, BATHURST
***UPDATE: SOLD AT AUCTION FOR \$500,000**

Rainham, just outside of Bathurst, has just been listed for sale for the first time in 157 years.

The 2-storey Colonial Georgian home was built for Captain Thomas Raine in 1832, making it 180 years old. Captain Raine's son went on to co-found the Raine & Horne real estate agency, and coincidentally the same agency has the property on listing.

It was believed that Captain Raine had brought back cuttings of willow from Napoleon's tomb on Saint Helena, and grew several trees from cuttings on the estate.

Captain Raine sold the property in 1855 to James Boyd for 4,000 pounds. The property remained in the Boyd (now Richardson) family for the past five generations. Boyd's had operated it as an inn for several years during the gold rush.



Rainham in 2012, sold at Auction by Raine and Horne for \$500,000.

[continued over page]

Thomas Raine continued -

While the combination of ship's captain and merchant adventurer was not uncommon in early Sydney, Raine stood out among his colleagues for his imagination in visualizing the commercial possibilities of new localities, products and trade routes and his technical ability to exploit them. His failure in business was caused through the lack not of enterprise or competence but of the necessary capital to carry his ventures over the difficult period of the late 1820s.

Once bankrupt, Raine wisely realized his assets and invested what was left in country properties which he developed with success, becoming a well-known and respected figure in the Bathurst district. His accounts of Pitcairn and Macquarie Islands and journal of the *Surry* show him to have been an exceptionally accurate observer and recorder; that he was also a man of liberal and humanitarian principles is evinced by his behaviour towards his convict passengers, who on being disembarked



Raine had two children by Jane Wright at Parramatta in 1822 and 1825; at St James's, Sydney, on 6 April 1826 he married Fanny Eleanor, daughter of General Worsley; they had three sons and seven daughters. After the death of his wife and two of his children he returned in indifferent health to Sydney, where he died on 6 June 1860 aged 66. He was an active Presbyterian and one of the founders of the Scots Church in Sydney in 1824.

*Born 21 June 1793 Hexham, Northumberland Unitary Authority, Northumberland, England
Died 18 June 1860 (aged 66)*

Buried Camperdown Cemetery, Newtown, City of Sydney, New south Wales, Australia

Sinking of the Ship Essex.

On November 20, 1820, in the South Pacific whaling grounds, the American whaling ship *Essex*, out of Nantucket, Massachusetts, under the command of Captain George Pollard Junior, was rammed by a sperm whale. The incident inspired Herman Melville's famous novel *Moby Dick*. The ship sank, leaving 20 or 21 survivors in three leaky whaleboats. The survivors were more than 1,900 kilometres (1,200 miles) from the nearest islands (the Marquesas) to the west, without adequate food or freshwater. Fearful that the islands were inhabited by cannibals they decided to head east to South America, a 3,000 mile journey. Of the crew members who left Nantucket only eight would survive to tell their story of endurance.

On the 20th of December the boats landed on Henderson Island, one of the Pitcairn Islands, a group of four volcanic islands in the southern Pacific Ocean that form the sole British Overseas Territory in the Pacific Ocean. Had they landed on Pitcairn Island they would have been greeted by the descendants of the Bounty mutineers. They found the island's only fresh water source but soon exhausted most of the readily available food.

On 26 December they concluded they would starve if they remained much longer. As most of the crew prepared to set sail for South America in the whaleboats, three men – William Wright, Seth Weeks, and Thomas Chapple, the only white members of the crew who were not natives of Nantucket, opted to stay behind on Henderson.

In time the boats were separated and the men suffered severe dehydration, starvation, and exposure on the open ocean. The survivors eventually resorted to eating the bodies of the crewmen who had died. When that proved insufficient, members of the crew drew lots to determine whom they would sacrifice so that the others could live. Seven crew members were cannibalized before the last of the survivors were rescued, more than three months after the sinking of the *Essex*. First mate Owen Chase and cabin boy Thomas Nickerson later wrote accounts of the ordeal.

On February 18, off the coast of Chile, 89 days after *Essex* sank, the British vessel "Indian" spotted and rescued three of the crew Chase, Lawrence, and Nickerson in one whale boat. Pollard's boat, now containing only Pollard and Ramsdell, was rescued on February 23 when almost within sight of Santa Maria Island on the South American coast by the Nantucket whaleship *Dauphin*, 93 days after *Essex* sank. Pollard and Ramsdell by that time were so completely dissociative that they did not even notice *Dauphin* alongside them, and became terrified when they saw their rescuers.

Almost a year after *Essex* sank, Lloyds List reported that Captain Raine of the ship *Surry* had rescued the three men from Henderson Island and taken them to Port Jackson, Australia. Wright and Weeks left Sydney on the 29th of Jan 1822 onboard the ship *Claudine*, captained by Thomas Raine, bound for Valparaiso. Seth Weeks, born 4 March 1803 in Plymouth, became a Captain, Master Mariner and died 12 Sept 1887 in Barnstable County. Thomas Chapple died of plague fever in Timor while working as a missionary and William Wright was lost in a hurricane in the West Indies.

Captain Pollard returned to sea in early 1822 to captain the whale ship *Two Brothers*. She was wrecked on the French Frigate Shoals during a storm off the coast of Hawaii on his first voyage, after which he joined a merchant vessel, which was wrecked off the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii Islands) shortly thereafter. By now Pollard was considered a "Jonah" (unlucky), and no ship owner would trust him to sail on a ship again, so he was forced to retire. He subsequently became Nantucket's night watchman. Every November 20, he would reportedly lock himself in his room and fast in memory of the men of *Essex*. He died in Nantucket on January 7, 1870, aged 78.

References:

H. E. Maude, 'Raine, Thomas (1793–1860)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/raine-thomas-2570/text3511>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 26 August 2021. This article was published in hardcopy in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 2, (Melbourne University Press), 1967.

The Whaling Era – Eden

Eden Killer Whale Museum Website.

Thomas Raine (abt.1793-1860) | WikiTree FREE Family Tree.

Essex (whaleship) - Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org

Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex education.nationalgeographic.org

Historic Rainham on the market | Old estates for sale oldestatesforsale.wordpress.com

Historic "Rainham" changes hands after 150 years - Raine & Horne www.raineandhorne.com.au

Chase, Owen. Narrative of the most extraordinary and distressing shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex ----.

PUBLISHED BY W. B. GILLEY, 92 BROADWAY. J. Seymour, Printer. 1821. Southern District of New York ss.

Article provided by Neal Burnham

Who is this? -



Can you guess who this cutie is? The answer is in her story on the next page.

Continuing my regular feature on members of the Society. 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 British arrive

- The eleven ships of the First Fleet, carrying more than 1400 people, left Portsmouth in England on 13 May 1787. They arrived in Botany Bay around 18-20 December 1787; however Captain Arthur Phillip found the site unsuitable and moved to Port Jackson (now better known as Sydney Harbour) to found the new colony.
- When the First Fleet sailed into Port Jackson, Surgeon White wrote: *Port Jackson I believe to be without exception, the finest and most extensive harbour in the universe....*
- On board, some of the more affluent "gentleman convicts" (usually convicted for fraud or forgery) may have carried a few books, a writing case or a piece of jewellery. Most left England with just the shirts on their backs.
- The supply ships of the First Fleet carried goods to help establish the colony, such as 14,000 shovels, 40 wheelbarrows, 8000 fish hooks and 5448 panes of glass.
- A female convict named Mary Bolter gave birth to the colony's first baby, Joshua, on one of the transport ships as the First Fleet entered Botany Bay. Babies of convicts were free-born and were labelled as BC on the government 'muster' (census), which stood for Born in the Colony.
- The colony did not have an auspicious start - on 6 February, during a huge storm, lightning struck a tree in the centre of the camp, which fell and killed five sheep and a pig.
- At first convicts and officers slept in tents until more permanent dwellings could be built. Some of the earliest building projects were a hospital, wharves, stores, a church, soldiers' barracks and homes for the officers. The only convicts with experience were one brickmaker, five bricklayers, three plasterers, three carpenters and a stonemason. Some of the first flimsy huts were constructed of wattle-and-daub, which did not withstand the heavy summer storms. Some convict boys slept in a hollow tree for months while huts were being built!
- While male convicts were ordered to construct buildings, female convicts were set to work crushing oyster shells to make lime for cement. It was impossible to keep the male and female convicts separated so Governor Phillip began to recommend marriage in the hope it would keep some of the felons and prostitutes from debauchery.
- On Sunday 10 February 1788 Reverend Richard Johnson conducted the marriages of five couples and baptised three children.
- No ploughs were brought out with the First Fleet and there were no draught horses, making sowing fields difficult. To make matters worse, only three men had farming experience - Governor Phillip, James Ruse and Henry Dodd.
- Governor Phillip wrote to Britain saying: *"I hope few convicts will be sent for one year at least, except carpenters, masons and bricklayers, or farmers who can support themselves and assist in supporting others....If fifty farmers were sent out with their families they would do more in one year in rendering this colony independent of the mother country...than a thousand convicts"*.
- Within nine months food was so scarce that the *Sirius* (one of 2 large vessels left in the colony) had to be sent to South Africa for supplies. The ship returned with flour, salt pork, medicines and seeds of wheat and barley, but by the end of the second year rations were again very low. By 1 November 1789 the colony was facing starvation.
- Rations were so low that Governor Phillip asked his dinner guests to bring their own bread while some convicts actually starved to death during what became known as 'the starving time'.
- Sick convicts or colonists were tended to in a rudimentary hospital run by surgeon John White. The surgeon, appalled by the conditions, wrote to England for medical supplies, including blankets and sheets, writing: *"the want of them makes...observance and attention to cleanliness...utterly impossible"*. He also noted that *"constantly living on salt provisions without any possibility of a change, makes them more necessary than perhaps in any other quarter of the globe"*.
- Before the arrival of the second fleet food was so scarce that for the theft of two cabbages Private Richard Knight, a marine, was sentenced to 200 lashes. Another man, William Parr, who had stolen a pumpkin, received 500 lashes for his dishonesty. Joseph Elliot was sentenced to 300 lashes and loss of his flour ration for stealing potatoes, but had to have his rations reinstated or he would have starved to death.

[Taken from *Amazing Facts about Australia's Early Settlers*, Karin Cox & Steve Parish, 2009]

And the answer is... -



Nancy Richards in cheeky pose in the delightful 'Gigi'!

Nancy Dianne Pirazzini Richards to give her full name, is one of the most hard-working members of the Society who is now in charge of the duty roster. Never one to run away from a chore, Nancy will take up a duster and broom at a working-B and race around at speed disposing of cobwebs and detritus to make sure the museum looks its best for visitors! However who knew that acting was one of her passions? This is her story.

I was born in San Diego, California in 1948 and grew up in the beachside village of La Jolla.

My father taught Spanish and Italian and my mother had her own theatre company for over 40 years. I literally grew up in the back of the costume wardrobe! I have had a strong passion for the performing arts all my life, as well as the love of learning languages.

I came to Australia in 1971 with my then husband, Dennis Richards, and my three and a half year old son, Colin. Dennis was an English High School teacher and I had a Diploma in Drama. We were incredibly lucky to be sent to Bega by the NSW Department of Education, and we spent our first year living in Tathra. I met the late Claire Lupton that year and joined her drama group. Later, in 1976, I joined Spectrum Theatre Group where I was able to use my drama training to my heart's content! Although I have lived in many places all over Australia, I have always called the Far South Coast home, living in the same house at Pambula Beach for 43 years with my partner, Rob Zelley.

We have had a successful electrical contracting business together for over 40 years and still counting!

I joined the Merimbula Old School Museum in 2014 after attending a U3A One Off Visit hosted by Olwen Morris and Garry Moorhead. **Nancy Richards**



Nancy and son, Colin, as brother and sister in 'The Creature Creeps'.



Front of Settler's Cottage



Rear of Settler's Cottage



Grinding Wheel



Servery for meat



Old cart and grinding stone



Water cart

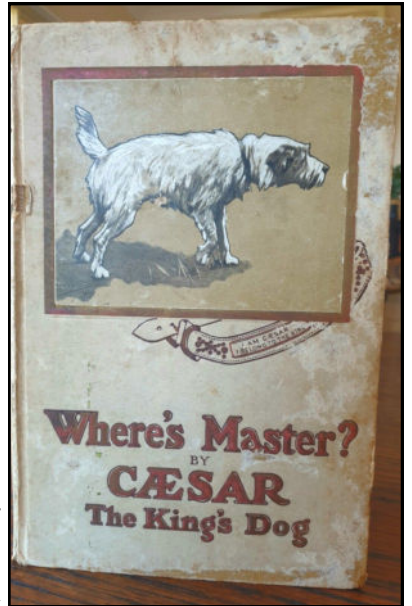
A selection of great photos, courtesy Don Bretherton, of the SEHGI meeting in Delegate on Saturday 8 February. The host organisation was Bombala and District Historical Society but owing to renovations to the Delegate School of Arts the venue was changed to the Showground. A look at the Settler's Cottage and the Bundian Museum was on the agenda so if someone who went to the meeting would please give me details I'll put a report in the next newsletter. From what I've heard it was an enjoyable day and am sorry I missed it. **OM**

The Banned Book -

The mere idea of a banned book surely revives a long list of publications that failed contemporary standards of obscenity, blasphemy and sedition, mysterious volumes wrapped in brown paper and furtively exchanged in back rooms. How, then, would we clean-living folk respond to a member of this historical society displaying a banned volume on her bookshelf? Admittedly, this seemingly innocent little volume – composed as if by a small dog - hardly rates on the scale of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or *The Dubliners*. In fact, it offended only one person but more of this, later..

What was that? Written by a dog? This was indeed a special dog. He was a wire-haired Fox Terrier, modelled by Fabergé and reproduced as a stuffed toy by the Steiff company. His portrait was painted by the famous Reuben Ward Binks, and his owner ruled the largest empire the world has ever known. His collar bore a gold plate inscribed *I am Caesar. I am the King's dog*.

Bred by the Duchess of Newcastle in 1902, Caesar was given to King Edward VII by Lord Dudley. He straightaway became his master's constant companion – and the terror of Buckingham Palace, where a footman was exclusively assigned for cleaning-up duties. Shadowed by his footman, Caesar accompanied his doting master everywhere – aboard the Royal yacht, on train and motor car journeys and on holidays in Europe, where in Marienbad he disgraced himself by chasing his host's very rare white peacocks. On another occasion he killed pet rabbits belonging to Lord Redesdale's daughters.



These were happy days for Caesar. Indeed, for 11 years his doting master was a popular king, with a notable talent for calming political arguments. Life was good, and yet by May 1910, with the death of the King, Britain's Great Edwardian Age was falling under the shadow of Europe's gathering storm clouds.

King Edward VII's death launched a wave of grief throughout Britain and her empire. In Buckingham Palace, little Caesar mourned his beloved master as deeply as any little dog could possibly grieve. He refused to eat and at one stage seemingly disappeared forever, until discovered by Queen Alexandra under the late King's bed. Concerned for the little dog's life, Queen Alexandra (who wasn't too keen on Caesar, initially), adopted him as her own, encouraging him to eat and restoring him to health with loving care.

Despite competition from the United States, and Germany, in 1910 Britain still remained the most powerful nation on earth. Now, with British reputation at stake, its leaders resolved to stage a truly magnificent farewell for its late King. Thus on 20 May that year, with vast crowds silently lining the route, spring sunshine greeted a host of dignitaries including Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Theodore Roosevelt as well as nine reigning kings, all making their way

through central London on foot, on horseback and in carriages. Representing seventy nations and dynastic powers that had ruled for centuries, this was the greatest, and the very last gathering of royalty, power and rank ever convened in the same place and on the same day. Notably, walking ahead of this extraordinary gathering was a small, sad dog. Led by a Highlander in full regalia, behind his master's coffin, it was little Caesar who drew sympathetic gasps from the tearful crowds. They marvelled at the procession's magnificence, but their hearts went out to Caesar. Meanwhile, Kaiser Wilhelm II was enraged. How dare the British give precedence to a dog, over the Kaiser! A *dog!* How dare they!

Here's where the banned book comes onto the story. Within weeks a sentimental novella, *Where's Master?* was published in London. Written as if by Caesar himself to share his sadness and confusion, *Where's Master?* straightaway sold thousands of copies and ran into nine reprints. While Queen Alexandra was displeased that permission had not been sought, such was the Kaiser's wrath that given the burgeoning political difficulties between Britain and Germany, the British government became extremely nervous. *Where's Master?* was quickly withdrawn, unsold copies destroyed and the book ordered not to be reprinted. Countless fearful owners surrendered their copies for destruction. Effectively, *Where's Master?* became a banned book, and the copy held at Tura Beach is one of very few copies to have survived.

And little Caesar? He lived a quiet life with Queen Alexandra until his death in April 1914. He is buried in the pet cemetery at Marlborough House, and is acknowledged on King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra's tomb in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, eternally curled up at his master's feet. Forever, Caesar is indeed *The King's Dog*. **Helen Swinbourne** [Photos credited to Sandringham Estate]



Bermagui turns out to thank and farewell Bob and Judi Hearn

It is difficult to imagine what Bermagui would be like today if not for more than 25 years of generous and inspiring volunteer work by Bob and Judi Hearn.



*Judi Hearn was presented with a book of photographs taken by William Henry Corkhill between 1880 and 1910.
Photo: Lori Hammerton.*

People came from as far as Canberra and Pambula on Sunday (9 February) to say farewell and thank them for all they had done for the community before the couple started a new chapter in their lives near Echuca.

Among the crowd were business folk, historians, a geologist, filmmaker, museum advisor, multidisciplinary digital artist, and former and current Bega Valley Shire councillors, reflecting the extraordinary range of people who Bob and Judi worked with over the years to complete significant social and economic projects for Bermagui.

After transitioning from their cattle farm in Echuca over a few years, Judi and Bob settled permanently in Bermagui around 1995.

Judi, a historian, author and poet, wasted no time documenting Bermagui's history.

A history of Bermagui she co-wrote with Ron Gaha was published in 1994, followed by her own work, *Bermagui by the Sea*, which was published in 1996. She also wrote the history of big game fishing in Bermagui, the history of Montreal Goldfield, and the biography of local racehorse trainer Leone Creamer.

Wendy Douch, former secretary of the Bermagui Historical Society, said the society first met in June 1993 at the Horseshoe Bay Hotel, now the Bermagui Beach Hotel.

"Judi was the founding member and the only one still involved," Ms Douch said. "She has been coming along for 30-plus years."

In the mid-1990s Judi was quick to join forces with local businessman John Neilson, and Bermagui Chamber of Commerce members Frank Haynes and

Chris Franks, to restore the almost forgotten Montreal Goldfield, north of Bermagui, to its former glory.

The Chamber of Commerce was looking for a new tourist attraction for Bermagui other than big game fishing and beaches.

Judi researched the goldfield's history and wrote application after application for the grant funding needed to clear the overgrown goldfield and make it safe for public access.

For four years, Bob, a skilled carpenter, along with Bruce Blackburn, Ian Barkland and Mr Neilson, spent most days at the site, clearing it and building pathways, fences, and covers for the deep mine shafts.

"We were keen and stupid," Bob said. "We tried to unload the covers with a tractor, but it was too dangerous because the wheel would go down a hole and we didn't know where the holes were."

Hundreds of shafts were eventually identified in the five-acre section that was fenced off.

For 25 years, Bob oversaw and was involved with work at the goldfield, including building the goldfield's Heritage Centre, completed in 2014. It houses all the memorabilia that Mr Neilson had accumulated over the years.

They called themselves the Old Codgers Construction Company. Council staff checking their work every day or two could not fault the men's work.

Bob's skills extended to making souvenirs for the Heritage Centre and Bermagui Visitor Information Centre. He and Judi were Montreal Goldfield tour guides for years.

Montreal Goldfield was one of three finalists in the [NSW Community Achievement Awards in 2009](#).

The farewell was poignant for Mr Franks, president of the Montreal Goldfield Management Committee.

"Today is to get a clear understanding of what we have gained in Judi and Bob, so we have a clear understanding of what we are losing," Mr Franks said. "My teacher is about to walk out on me."

After the formal speeches, several people put their hands up to speak about how much Bob and Judi had done for the community.

Judi and Bob lent their skills, knowledge, and experience to other community projects.

Bermagui Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism secretary Janette Neilson said that when the chamber started work on an emergency plan for the town, "they were two of the first people involved".

Bega Valley Shire councillor Helen O'Neil said it was almost hard not to volunteer in Bermagui. "That is because of people like the Hearn family who know how to do it really well."



*Bob Hearn was a tour guide at Montreal Goldfield for years and often showed children how to pan for gold.
Photo: Supplied.*

[Marion Williams, About Regional, 13 February 2025]