

**CAMPERDOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.**

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 Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/camperdownhistory>

**Volume 25 - No. 3**

**NEWSLETTER**

**July/August, 2015**

**President**

Maree Belyea

**Vice President**

Bob Lambell

**Secretary**

Heather McDowell  
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**Treasurer**

Frank Rose

**Committee**

Gillian Senior  
 Ray Watson  
 Jan Whamond  
 Rob Wuchatsch

Hello everyone,

In April's Newsletter it was the Anzac Centenary that was taking up all our time: researching the district's servicemen, seeking out WWI memorabilia and setting up our display for April.

We had only just started to recover from that busy activity when, suddenly, it was time for the Robert Burns Festival again. Because we had spent so much time and energy on WWI and also because we felt it was a valuable exhibition, we decided not to dismantle it but to simply move it back a little to make room for Mr. Burns. Extra display boards were borrowed from the community and the two displays were put in place.

Following that activity, we had a request for a school visit on 6<sup>th</sup> August, so down came Robert Burns and up went "History of Camperdown's Settlement" plus lots of other historical information for Years 3 & 4 from Camperdown College. It's a busy life at the Heritage Centre!

In this Newsletter, we are publishing the second part of Jan Whamond's assignment on the CDHS as well as some very interesting historical records of Lake Bullen Merri and its use for swimming and aquatic carnivals. There are a few questions in this article which members may be able to help us with.

We welcome new members Andrea Falk, Kate Gane and Geoff Langsworth and look forward to meeting you soon.

*Gillian Senior* Newsletter Editor

**Camperdown Heritage Centre**

241 Manifold Street  
 Camperdown 3260  
 PO Box 243  
 Camperdown.

**Opening hours**

Tuesdays and 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday  
 of month, (Market Day)  
 10am-3pm  
 Or by appointment

**From the Heritage Centre Collection: THE MAYORAL ROBES**



**One of our newest acquisitions is this beautiful display case containing the Mayoral Robes from the Town of Camperdown. The Shire has asked us to be the custodians of these special robes and they arrived only a week or two ago. Some more information about them is in this newsletter.**

**In this issue:**

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## COMING EVENTS: SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2015

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September, 10.30 am: Executive meeting at the Heritage Centre

**Visit to:**

**Stony Rises Rabbit Factory and Dry Stone Causeways**

**Sunday, 11th October**

By the 1870s the Stony Rises were overrun by rabbits. Many rabbits were trapped and sent to Colac and Camperdown to be canned and exported to Britain. In 1885, a factory was opened in the old woolshed at Stonyford, in an attempt to eradicate them.

Join us for a tour of the old rabbit factory led by Rob Wuchatsch and also see two amazing dry stone causeways constructed to provide access to orchards which were established to provide fruit for canning.

Afternoon tea at the historic Stony Rises Homestead. (Tea and coffee provided)

**Departing 1.00 pm from the Heritage Centre**  
*(Share cars)*

**Please bring a plate to share**

**Bookings:**

**Bob Lambell Ph: 0424 220 809**



Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November, 10.30 am: Executive meeting at the Heritage Centre

# NEWS FROM THE HERITAGE CENTRE

## **Burns Festival – our membership well represented.**

The lecture series that our Society's representative on the Festival Committee, Bob Lambell, helped arrange were very successful. Society member and distinguished historian, Allan Willingham presented a talk with the intriguing title: "Will the Oldest Statue of Robert Burns in the World Please Stand Up?" It proved to be a fascinating and detailed story involving the Taylor family and their commissioning of our Burns statue. Allan's comprehensive research will culminate in publication of a book which he aims to have published by next year's festival.



**Allan Willingham**

Another member, Gordon Ashley, gave a wonderfully comprehensive talk on the "Burns Statues of the World" and on Sunday, member Marie Thornton chaired a discussion and Q&A session with Allan, Gordon and two other Burns world experts: Fiona Ross and Danny Spooner.

In addition, of course, the Heritage Centre/Museum was open during the festival. Numbers of visitors was very pleasing, with 42 on the Saturday and 44 on the Sunday. It was decided we would not open on the Friday next year as our numbers then were a total of 3 visitors two of whom were members!

## **Digital copies of Camperdown Chronicle**

We were very happy with an offer from Editor, Stewart Esh to provide the Society with digital copies of our local paper. Currently we store hard copies (paper) as well as receiving them on microfiche but the world of technology moves on and apart from the space taken up by endless paper copies, the pdf format will enable us to search on computer for any subject in any paper. This will be invaluable for research purposes.

## **The Mayoral Robes**

As noted on the front page of this Newsletter, the Mayoral Robes from the Town of Camperdown have arrived in our Museum. Although the Town of Camperdown was formed in 1952, the Mayoral Robes were not purchased until 1959. Quoting from Kaye C Dowdy's book: *The Making of our Town, Camperdown*, "On Wednesday, September 15, 1959 the town was officially proclaimed by the Minister for Local Government, Mr. Murray Porter. Before the official ceremony the first Camperdown Town Mayor, Cr. F. A. Robertson was installed. He was dressed in scarlet robes of office which had been made in London and invested, as was the Lady Mayoress, with chains of office. Cr. Frank H. Fisher made the gift of both chains, specially manufactured, in honour the visit of Princess Alexandra the following weekend and in honour of his parents, Henry and Elizabeth Fisher, pioneer settlers.



**Cr. Robertson farewells Princess Alexandra at Camperdown Station, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1959.**

## **Report of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

There was a good turn up of members on Tuesday evening 4<sup>th</sup> August – especially as the night was cold and wintry (as usual!) for our successful and enjoyable Agm. Office bearers were elected as per the list below and this was to be followed by the showing of an ABC documentary DVD on the life of Sir John Monash. Sadly our DVD player decided to misbehave and after a few false starts and the trial of a different DVD, it was decided to abandon the effort. Looks like we have to invest in a new one.

Fortunately there were cups of tea or coffee ready as well as a very nice supper available, so members were able to use the time to tour the museum and have a look at the artefacts on display ready for a school visit the following day. These consisted of many old items that would be unfamiliar to the Grade 3 & 4 students from Camperdown College, such as a soap-saver, a flat iron, a candlestick holder, a candle making mould as well as aboriginal artefacts and samples of volcanic rocks. Members were also able to help with identifying many local people from old photographs that were waiting to be catalogued.

Your committee for the coming year, 2015-2016 is:

- President - Maree Belyea
- VP - Bob Lambell
- Secretary - Heather McDowell
- Treasurer - Frank Rose
- Committee: Jan Whamond (Heritage Co-ordinator)
- Gillian Senior
- Ray Watson
- Rob Wuchatsch



## A new Heritage Centre Co-ordinator

In our last Newsletter we introduced one of our volunteers, Jan Whamond, who is studying for her Post Graduate Degree in Local, Family and Applied History. So enthusiastic has Jan become about what she's learning, that she has offered to take over the job of HC Co-ordinator – much to the relief of the previous co-ordinator, who was feeling rather overwhelmed by the job!



*Past Co-ordinator*



*Current Co-ordinator*

In April we published the first part of her assignment: "History and Museums" which covered the history of our Society since its establishment in 1960 and looked at the developments that have taken place over the past ten or so years. We now bring you the second part of Jan's assignment which looks at the building, the volunteers, membership numbers and where we may be heading in the future.

## Camperdown & District Historical Society Inc.

### Part 2 – Where to now?

The Society has developed a good relationship with the local paper, The Camperdown Chronicle, which regularly features photos from the Heritage Centre collection and often seeks information as background for their articles. The Chronicle also regularly features articles about activities at the Heritage Centre. This serves to give the Heritage Centre a high profile in the town. A number of books and booklets produced by the Historical Society are for sale at the Heritage Centre, the Tourist Information Centre and the Newsagency and photographs from the Heritage Centre collection hang in one of the town's hotels.

The layout of the main hall has been rearranged to allow better access to displays and de-clutter its overall appearance. The displays are well set out and maintained, but few of the items have labels, which detracts from the overall visitor experience.

A major challenge has been to mount appropriate exhibitions to attract visitors to the Centre. Generally, people are not interested in generalised and static displays and the Heritage Centre doesn't have any interactive displays. The strategy being implemented at present is to hold three or four exhibitions a year, relating to a single area of interest. This has proved to be quite successful, with visitor numbers rising from 389 in 2009 to 720 in the past 12 months. As well as rising visitor numbers, in the past year, forty requests were received for paid research to be carried out.

The volunteers are a very hardworking and enthusiastic group who have done an impressive job over the past eight years in re-organising the Heritage Centre. The leadership of past president Bob Lambell has been crucial to the success of this undertaking. His organisational and people skills were pivotal in the overall process of change. To create a "team" atmosphere and to distinguish the volunteers from visitors, a distinctive shirt and jacket has been provided for volunteers to wear at the Heritage Centre.



**Exhibitions for WW1 and Robt. Burns- April to July'15**



*The old supper room. Still work to be done here!*

The Corangamite Shire owns the building and it has proved difficult to get building maintenance carried out. A supper room was added to the back of the hall about 115 years ago. This was of timber construction and has deteriorated to the extent that it now leaks when it rains. This room is the storage area for many of the larger exhibits owned by the Society. One such exhibit, an oat threshing machine, is considered of State importance due to its links with Victoria's early pastoral and agricultural industries, the mechanisation of work on large farms and the development of Melbourne's early manufacturing industry. This machine, and all

the items stored there, now gets damp every time it rains. There is also a safety issue with a slippery brick path to the outside toilets, which the Council has yet to remedy. There has been a plan to build inside toilets for several years, but finances are very tight and the project is not considered a priority by the Council. The Heritage Centre has no disabled access and there are no plans to remedy this.

Membership numbers have been maintained at about 115 for the past few years (up from 65 in 2009), however, many of the members are elderly, or don't live in the district. Active membership would number about 20 of whom 13 are regular volunteers at the Heritage Centre. In an effort to cater for elderly members, monthly business meetings have been discontinued in favour of bi-monthly committee meetings to transact routine business and special events are staged on the alternate months. Many of these are scheduled in the afternoon to appeal to elderly members. There has been a mixed reception to this strategy and only time will tell if this format will continue.

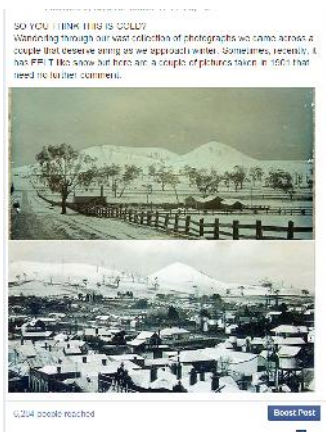


**Jude Murfitt & Verna Regan share their experiences at Gallipoli & the Western Front**

The age of the volunteers, mid 60's to early 80's, is indicative of the situation of many volunteer organisations today. With a large number of women and most men under the age of 60 still in the workforce, volunteering is largely done by retirees. This should not present a problem as long as new people continue to be attracted to volunteering, but in the past two years there has been a net gain of only one volunteer at the Camperdown Heritage Centre, which is only sufficient to maintain the current activities.

This situation may be the catalyst for changing the way the centre operates. One option would be to have research and indexing done off-site, rather than a volunteer spending the whole day at the Heritage Centre.

I believe that the Camperdown & District Historical Society Inc. has shown that it is possible for a small local museum to address the challenges facing them. This has been achieved by the willingness of the members to seek outside help, to change the focus of the museum's operations and to put in countless hours of voluntary work documenting and cataloguing the collection. They have been successful in reaching out to their community through the local newspaper, their web and Facebook pages and putting on relevant exhibitions. Underpinning these changes has been strong leadership and the dedication of the Historical Society committee and volunteers. Their flexibility in dealing with past issues will be needed in the future if they are to continue to fulfil the potential of the Heritage Centre in providing research and educational services to their community with, possibly, fewer volunteers. The problems of poor building maintenance and lack of disabled access remain unresolved.



Facebook Page for 22 May'15.  
6,284 people reached.

**NOTE:** Link to our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/camperdownhistory?ref=hl>

**NOTE:** *The slippery brick path outside the toilets has been blasted clean of moss, etc. by the Shire. They also have plans for further development of the building. Of course, as always, it rests on the availability of finance.*

## ----- LAKES BULLEN MERRI AND GNOTUK

The amount of history available surrounding these two lakes is enormous and a whole book could be written about them. However, it may be of interest to readers to look briefly at a few aspects of their development and use over the years.

The following excerpt is from a book written by James Bonwick about his travels through western Victoria as inspector schools. His observations of the natural environment are always very valuable.

### THE CRATER LAKES IN 1857.

...I looked down upon the beautiful Basin Banks. The northern fresh lake, Gnotuk, is four miles (6.4 km) in circumference; the southern, Bullen-merri, is seven miles (11.3 km) round and above three hundred feet (91.4 m) deep. Both basins have high banks of tufa\* and basalt, one part nearly two hundred feet (61 m) to the top. There are no fish in the waters, though vast flocks of wild fowl, especially Black Swans swarm about the place. The northern lake has its surface fifty feet (15 m) above that of the other, although only a small tongue of land of no great elevation separates them.

*"Western Victoria" by James Bonwick. 1857.*

\*tu·fa (tōō'fə)

A rock formed of sediments deposited during the evaporation of lake water, spring water, or groundwater. Tufa is usually composed of calcium carbonate.



On display at Heritage Centre.

***(The Heritage Centre has on display at present a large 'ball' of calcium carbonate from Lake Bullen Merri which is well worth a look.)***

### LAKE LEVELS

Professor Patrick De Deckker, from the Research School of Earth Sciences, ANU has made many studies of Lakes Gnotuk and Bullen Merri. He estimates that the levels of the lakes have fluctuated for 30,000 years and the current level of the lake is back to what it was around 2,000 years ago. His estimates are based on the carbon-dating of exposed stumps of trees that are now exposed around the lake which puts the age of the trees as growing there around 2,000 years ago.



Aerial photo of the lakes - 2002

The following articles are taken from various editions of the Camperdown Chronicle. These are just small part of the material available describing the many activities that have taken place at the lake.

**20<sup>th</sup> February, 1930**

### **LAKE BULLEN MERRI – BATHING AND SWIMMING FACILITIES**

For years Lake Bullen Merri was practically unknown as a bathing resort. Then within the brief space of a few months its possibilities in this direction have been realised. A number of individuals with considerable vision banded themselves together and through their industry and enthusiasm 1930 will stand out in the history of Camperdown as the year in which swimming and sun bathing received a phenomenal fillip. Already two beaches have been cleared and swimming facilities provided, and the public is at last enjoying a boon which has been long denied them. During last week-end, taking into account the Anglers' picnic, about two thousand people visited the cool and limpid waters of the lake and enjoyed the benefit of what had been already done. During the season under review, scores of bathers have learned to swim, and people who hitherto had a dread of entering the water of the lake, now do so with complete confidence. Parents can also allow their children to disport themselves in the shallows without any misgivings, because of the provisions that have been made for safe bathing and swimming. While being grateful for all that has been done, the public must not forget that although a certain amount of work can be accomplished by voluntary labour, material for the construction of fences, diving boards and so forth require money, and everyone should therefore support the praiseworthy efforts that are being made to still further improve the facilities.

On Saturday the Camperdown Swimming Club will hold aquatic sports at the park side of the lake. A most attractive programme has been arranged and a special feature of the events will be the demonstration of life-saving to be given by members of a Melbourne club. It is to be hoped that the success of the carnival will exceed all expectations, and that the money to erect an additional dressing shed will be readily forthcoming. Both sides of the lake have their partisans but anything to improve the bathing facilities of the lake generally should be encouraged and supported by all.



*Lava Tube cave which was used for boat storage is now many metres from the shore.*

#### **Lava tube cave:**

The lava tube cave which was used for boat storage back in the 1930s is now accessible just a few metres down from the road leading to the Camperdown Golf Course.



*Owners' name plate at top of the cave entrance.*

**7<sup>th</sup> December, 1933**

### **CORRESPONDENCE: LAKE BULLEN MERRI LEVELS.**

Dear Sir,

Kindly allow me a little space in your very widely read paper to give a few facts regarding Lake Bullen Merri and its levels. The following measurements were taken on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1933. The stone marked 1887 that was discovered by the drover is today 132 yards out of water and the original water level would be about 154 yards – the water's edge at this height being clearly indicated by the fact of the grass dying off in comparison to that further up the hill. The stone certainly is of great interest and shows great foresight on the part of the late Mr. Jas. Dawson. What interests me more is the spot where my brothers and I used to swim. In 1908 we rolled a very large stone into the lake and used it to dive from. Today, this stone is exactly 44 yards from the water's edge. Also in 1912 a boundary fence was erected and I happened to be present when the last post was put in and the fencer – Mr. Jacka – had to bank the hole on the lake side to stop the water flowing in until he got the post set. Today this post is 35 yards from the water's edge. Certainly the water may have receded more in some years than others, but between 1887 and the present day and calculated on a yearly basis, the water has receded at the rate of 8 feet per year. No doubt those of us alive when the lake is really dry should be, in our wheel-chairs, sent overboard to the bottom, and the downward journey would, I am sure, take sufficiently long to allow us to calculate the amount of water it once held.

Yours etc. L. R. Hamilton. Camperdown, 7/12/33

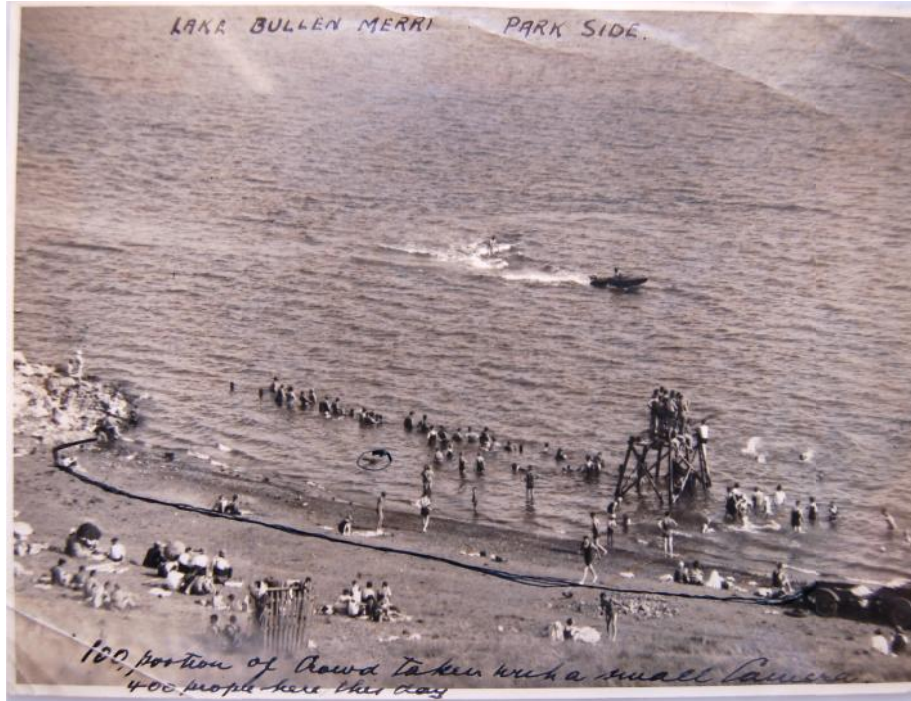


4/3/1939

### A GENEROUS DONATION.

Though few perhaps were aware of it, the children who enjoyed themselves so immensely at the South Beach carnival at Lake Bullen Merri last Saturday, had Mr S. A. Errey to thank for the popular innovation—the ocean wave. Mr Errey, who is the president of the Lake Sports' Association, and has always taken a keen interest in its welfare, has generously donated the ocean wave to the association, and it has already become one of the popular attractions at the beach.

*(NOTE: Does anyone remember the "ocean wave"? And what did it look like?)*



*This picture has been posted to our Facebook page and has brought a few different reactions. Some say it's North Beach and some that it's South Beach We have no record of the date or of who took the picture. Any other information from our Newsletter readers? We are also looking for any more early photographs.*

## 11/2/41 SUCCESSFUL SWIMMING CARNIVAL AT LAKE BULLEN MERRI Bright Display in Summer Sunshine LARGE CROWD WITNESSES KEEN EVENTS

The Lake Bullen Merri Sports Association staged another very successful carnival at the South Beach on Saturday afternoon. There was a large attendance, children being strongly represented, and the lengthy and diversified programme was discharged with commendable precision. The gross takings were approximately £90, and a satisfactory profit will result.

The afternoon opened with the weather cloudy and uncertain, but conditions improved as the afternoon advanced and were ideal later in the day.

**EXCELLENT ORGANISATION** The organisation behind the carnival was high-class and the greatest credit is due to the officials on whose shoulders this responsibility fell. These officials were: President, Mr. S. A. Errey; vice-presidents, Messrs. J. Rose, E. F. Halford, A. J. Hartley; honorary secretary, Mr. H. P. Holm, assistant secretary. Miss Astrid Holm.

**QUEEN OF THE LAKE** The "Queen of the Lake," a male bathing beauty burlesque was won by D. Ralton.

**AQUAPLANING DISPLAY** At intervals during the afternoon Mr. Reg Pitts gave entertaining exhibitions of aquaplaning and water skiing behind Mr. H. Cummins' speed-boat "The Bluebird."

**A REQUEST:** If any member knows of more photographs of Lake Bullen Merri as a swimming destination during the early years, the Society would love to see them and take copies for our records.