

CAMPERDOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

July, 2012

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241 Manifold Street
Camperdown 3260

Opening hours

Tuesdays and 1st
Sunday of month,
10am-3pm
Or by appointment

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Hello everyone,

The very first thing I have to do in this newsletter is to make a humble apology. The article in our last newsletter about the Harrison family quarry at Pomborneit contained a number of errors. These have been put right by Historical Society members Margaret Murrhy and Veronica Webber (both nee Harrison) who grew up on the property. A full apology with the corrections is contained in this newsletter.

There are more member profiles, telling you what we're all doing during our time at the Heritage Centre and there's a report on the successful Chocolyn Reunion with photos of descendants of the original soldier settlers.

The Robert Burns Festival is keeping many Camperdown residents very busy and you can now see a full program and book your tickets online at the Website: <http://www.camperdownburnsfestival.com/index.html>. The Heritage Centre will be open on Sat. 25th August, from 9.30am to 4pm and on Sunday, 26th from 9.30am to 1pm, and we are putting together a display of some of "Camperdown's Notable Scottish Settlers" for the occasion.

The item photographed below inspired a search in our own files and in that wonderful online resource, "Trove", for some early history of the Mechanics' Institute. I hope you'll find the results interesting.

We welcome new member, Garry Brian, to the CDHS.

Have a look at: <http://camperdownhistorynewsupdates.blogspot.com.au/> to check latest developments from your society.

Gillian Senior Newsletter Editor

From the Heritage Centre Collection: Mechanics Foundation Trowel



Trowel used to lay the foundation stone of the Lecture Hall of the Mechanics' Institute.

October 29th, 1875

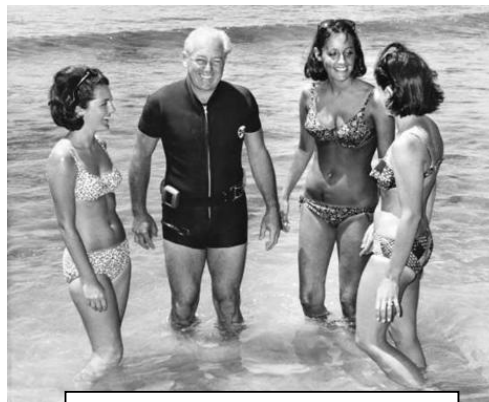
Donated by the estate of the late James H. Monk

April, 2002

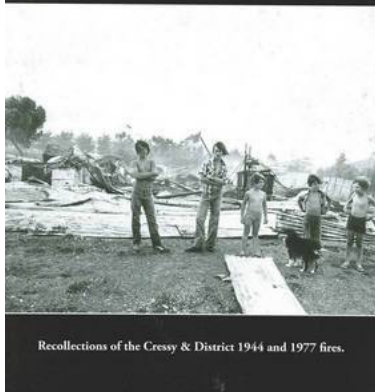
COMING EVENTS: AUGUST - OCTOBER 2012

**Tuesday 7th August
7.30 pm at the McCabe Room
Annual General Meeting
and film night**

Following our AGM, we will view a very interesting documentary about the mysterious disappearance of Australian Prime Minister, Harold Holt, in 1967.



Harold Holt at Cheviot Beach, 1966



**Tuesday 4th September
7.30 pm at the McCabe Room
The Cressy Bushfires**

Our guest speaker, Robyn Alexander, will talk about the disastrous bushfires around Cressy in 1944 and 1977.

Robyn is co-author of the book produced by the Cressy & District History Group; "*We remember: Recollections of the Cressy & District 1944 and 1977 fires*".

The book is based on eye witness accounts of the tragic fires.

**Tuesday 18th September, 7.30 pm
Executive Committee meeting at the Heritage Centre**

**Tuesday 2nd October
7.30 pm at the McCabe Room
Leslie Manor and the
Indian Army Officers**

Allan Willingham makes a welcome return to Camperdown to tell us about the Indian Army Officer settlers at Leslie Manor in the 1920's.

Born and bred in Camperdown, Allan is a widely known and respected Architect (now retired) and historian.



Indian Army Officers, 1915

MEMBER PROFILES

Merle Newling:

Merle has taken on the mammoth task of going through each one of our suspension files in the Archive Room, which currently number around 900. She has finished replacing the handwritten labels with clear computer-printed ones and is now sifting through each file, noting the contents and listing significant information. This will eventually be transferred to a searchable computer record. She is also researching the history of one of our early Scottish settlers for the Burns Festival.



Chris Farmer:

Chris has been working with Merle on the Archive Room files. She also assists with typing up articles, either for the newsletter or for our research records, and takes on any jobs in the Centre that turn up on the day.

Chris is also a member of the team researching the history of businesses in Manifold St. which is described in more detail below. Currently, she is writing up the history of one of our early Scottish settlers for the upcoming Robert Burns Scottish Festival in August.



John Woods:

John is our hard working Treasurer, and you can see that we have provided him with the very latest in accounting equipment – solid and long lasting!

Apart from looking after our money, he is one of a team working on the “Manifold Street Businesses Project”. Beginning with the blocks between Bath/Gibson Streets and Leura St., they are building up a data base of owners and types of business occupying the sites from the present time to as far back as possible. Rate books have been a good place to start but the information can be sketchy so this is followed by discussions with current occupiers and older residents, searches through advertising sections of newspapers, and any other resources that turn up.



WE NEED YOU!

Any information you might have about the above project will be most welcome. We need anything you might have in your memories or in your possession, such as photographs, dates, kinds of businesses, even anecdotes about a business – all will be most valuable. You can contact us by phone, email or post – the addresses are on the front of this newsletter.

AN APOLOGY:

We are grateful to CDHS members Margaret Murrhy and Veronica Webber for their corrections to last Newsletter’s article on the quarry at Pomborneit which supplied scoria to the railway line.

Margaret and Veronica were both Harrison daughters and had grown up on the property. As children, they had been told stories of the quarry and the rail lines and have walked, with their own children, through the old deep pit where the men had worked with their picks and shovels. Their father, Robert George Harrison, was grandson of George Harrison who owned that particular quarry and old rail line. Claude Harrison was the grandson of George Harrison and it was his father, William, who marked the distance on the family calendar. Zeldia Clementson was actually the daughter of Muriel Anson (nee Harrison) who had grown up on the property.

This photograph and two others have been given to the Society along with more detailed information about the owners and uses of the quarries. These have been gratefully accepted and will be included in our records.



Chocolyn Soldier Settlement Reunion

It takes time, enthusiasm and total dedication to achieve all that Alan Fleming did in organising the recent Chocolyn Soldiers Settlement reunion on Sunday, 6th May, 2012.

The focal point of the day was the ceremonial unveiling of a Memorial Plaque at the site of the Chocolyn School and, at the same time, there was an extremely comprehensive display of photographs and information set up at the Camperdown RSL Hall. A booklet containing a concise history of the development from the first white settlement by the Manifold Brothers was available to all and Alan had also produced 35 different booklets, one for each of the original 35 families, which contained old family photographs, the Soldier Settler's army history, a copy of the Application for Land (prior to being interviewed by the Closer Settlement Board), a copy of the purchase document containing all the conditions of sale, interest rates, repayments, etc. as well as copies of any Camperdown Chronicle articles which referred to developments on the family blocks, such as purchase of a generator, building of a dairy or other building, or other items of interest during those early years.



On the day of the unveiling, there were 16 sons and daughters of original settlers present as well as many more distant relatives. Three lots of descendants had travelled from Queensland, two grandsons from Sydney and many others came from all over Victoria.

The plaque depicted the map of the Soldier Settlement blocks with the names of the original settlers. Three elements were represented in the unveiling: a soldier's palliasse covering the plaque, a farmer's three-pronged pitchfork to lift it off and a large pot of Rosemary, for remembrance, at the base. (A palliasse was a hessian bag carried by soldiers in WW1 which could be filled with hay and used as a mattress.)



Corangamite Shire Councillor, Geoff Smith, unveils the plaque.

The day was a successful culmination of many months of dedicated work and, to quote the front of the Memorial Book: "A time to meet with friends to reflect, discuss and admire the efforts of the returned soldiers and their families."

The CDHS has added the booklet containing valuable historical information to its records on the Chocolyn Settlement.

CAMPERDOWN MECHANICS' HALL – 1876-1927

A Little Random Historical Information

Some speeches, various entertainments and some moving pictures.

The Mechanics Institute in Camperdown was established in 1865 and as early as 1871 the committee of management began considering building a lecture hall at the rear of the original building as the Temperance Hall was considered too crowded and uncomfortable for entertainment.

Foundation Stone for a new hall:

Funds were raised and plans made over a period of four years and the foundation stone for the hall was laid by Mr T. Picken, President of the Mechanics Institute committee on 29th October 1875.

The following are excerpts from the Camperdown Chronicle, 1st November, 1875:

At about half-past three o'clock in the afternoon, the ceremonies commenced, the assemblage numbering about two hundred besides the school children, who came out in full force, under the charge of Mr. and Mrs. Hilliard and the under teachers. On the platform were the General Committee of Management, and the office bearers of the institute. The building was gaily decorated with flags, conspicuous among which were the Union Jack, the St. George, and the Harp of Erin.

There were, of course, many speeches by the dignitaries before Mr Picken took the stage. He said he was *"...glad to see so many taking an interest in the proceedings of this day. When the building was erected it would be both ornamental and useful. The committee of the institute had had many difficulties to encounter, but he was happy to say that they had all been overcome. He then thanked the children for their attendance and intimated to them that it was the intention of the institute to give prizes of books at the next examination. He then proceeded to the laying of the stone, and, having gone through the usual ceremony, declared it laid.*

The bottle laid with the stone contained a copy of each of the local newspapers, the Camperdown "Chronicle" and the Hampden "Guardian", and coins to the value of about 6/-. Three cheers having been given, the National Anthem was sung by the children, and Mr. Picken thanked the Cobden Brass Band for their services which had been kindly given on the occasion under the direction of Mr. Armstrong Wright. The contributions towards the building fund amounted to £32.11/- including the president's contribution of £10 10/-. Three cheers concluded the ceremony of the day.

Hall completed:

In 1876, the hall was completed and ready for use. The famed entertainers, Buckley & La Feuillade were booked and advertised, and a grand Opening Ball was planned.

A few days later, the Camperdown Chronicle gave a glowing report on both the hall and the entertainment:

"The first performance in the new Mechanics' Hall, Camperdown, was given on the evening of Wednesday last, by Buckley and La Feuillade's Anglo-American Company, in their drawing-room entertainment. As it was the first occasion on which an opportunity had been afforded for properly testing its acoustic qualifications, considerable interest was manifested by amateurs and others as to how far the expectations formed would be realised. The hall was well filled and presented a very handsome appearance, and when the seating and scenic arrangements are completed, it will be difficult to find out of Melbourne a room that for sound and general appointments will surpass it. The ladies and gentlemen of Mr. La Feuillade's troupe speak in the highest praise of the new hall, as possessing every requisite of a concert room.

The first portion of Wednesday's entertainment consisted of the usual chair business, with Buckley and Medina as "corner" men¹. Departing from the usual burnt cork regulations, bones and tambourine only "blacked up", and another innovation in this entertainment was that the position in the half

circle usually allotted to "Mr Johnson" was occupied by a lady (Miss May Vivian). The songs, most of them

New Hall,
MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.

Buckley and La Feuillade's
ANGLO-AMERICAN COMPANY.

FOR TWO NIGHTS ONLY,
WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY,
AUGUST 23 AND 24.

Messrs. Buckley and La Feuillade respectfully announce to the inhabitants of Camperdown that they have the honor of giving the first entertainment in the above hall, and will present an entertainment worthy of the admiration of all who may favour them with their patronage, and in every way suitable to a grand opening night.

NOTE OUR TABLET OF GENIUS.

Miss May Vivian	Miss Kate Herbert
Tom Buckley	N. La. Feuillade
Frank Medina	Mr. John Drayton.

A splendid programme will be presented each evening.
Doors open at half-past 7; commence at 8.
Front seats, 3s.; back do, 2s.; children, half-price.

BUSINESS MANAGER..... MR. S. LOVELL.
MANAGER IN ADVANCE ... WM. EVANS.

new, were very pretty and well given, that of “Silver Threads among the Gold”, by Miss Vivian, and “She whispers of Home”, by Mr. John Drayton, being particularly worthy of mention. In the choruses the want of a tenor was noticeable. Miss Kate Herbert presided at the piano and played the accompaniments with exactness. Mr. La Feuillade’s violin playing is too well known to require more to be said of it than that it was as usual, the feature of the evening. This gentleman has a great faculty for the instrument, and produces a breadth and clearness of tone delightful to listen to. The second part comprised dances and vocal and instrumental solos, that by Mr. Drayton, “Nil Desperandum”, displaying this gentleman’s voice to advantage. An absurd but laughable trifle, the “Baby Elephant”, sent the people to their homes, well pleased with their first experience of the Camperdown Mechanics; Hall. Last evening the company gave another concert in the same hall and tonight, appear at Colac.”

¹ For those who are as puzzled as your editor was by the references to “corner” men, “bones and tambourine” etc., a search on the internet (what a wonderful thing!) revealed that it was a traditional Minstrel Show played by white men dressed as Negroes – unacceptable in today’s world but a common form of entertainment back in those days.

Here is a quote: *In part one the performers were arranged in a semicircle, with the interlocutor in the centre and the end men—Mr. Tambo, who played the tambourine, and Mr. Bones, who rattled the bones (a pair of clappers, named after the original material from which they were made)—at the ends. The interlocutor, in whiteface, usually wore formal attire; the others, in blackface, wore gaudy swallow-tailed coats and striped trousers. The program opened with a chorus, often as a grand entrance, and at the conclusion of the song the interlocutor gave the command, “Gentlemen, be seated.” Then followed a series of jokes between the interlocutor and end men, interspersed with ballads, comic songs, and instrumental numbers, chiefly on the banjo and violin.*



“A SUBSCRIPTION BALL”

After the success of the hall as an entertainment venue, next to come was the Opening Ball. Sadly, a report in the Hampden Guardian tells us that the ball had to be postponed due to an outbreak of Scarlet Fever. Once the epidemic had passed, we have a brief report that unfortunately the opening ball was “not well attended”. However, despite that, it was certain that the new hall would continue to be a great asset to the community of Camperdown.

Other entertainments followed and by July, 1881, according to the Camperdown Chronicle, a number of local ladies and gentlemen had volunteered to present....

“...a miscellaneous entertainment in order to assist in liquidating the debt of the Mechanics’ Institute. No sooner had the idea assumed a definite shape, than a programme was drawn up and the most proficient musicians and vocalists of the district, together with a number of the ex-members of the defunct dramatic club, went right willingly to work on making the affair a thorough success. And there is no gainsaying the fact that a thorough success it was in every respect. At 8pm the hall was full and half an hour later it was almost crowded.”

There were many items of songs sung by Mr. Ferres, Mr. Ogilby, Mrs Armfield, Miss Hood and many others and then, it seems, the dramatic club members came into their own.

“The afterpiece, in which nearly all the local talent took part, was a dramatised version of Dickens’ celebrated breach of promise case, Bardell versus Pickwick. It is well known that even if the words of the great novelist were merely recited by an indifferent elocutionist they would not fail to excite the risible faculties of any person who had the faintest perception of humour, therefore it follows, as a natural consequence that the man or woman who can see the serio-comic piece acted and refrain from laughing until the tears roll down his or her cheeks must be a stolid person indeed. To confine ourselves more strictly to a report of the proceedings; we may premise by regretting that owing to the comparatively early hour at which we are obliged to go to press in order to catch the mails, we are unable to write as much as we should wish about the performance, or as much as it honestly deserves. The piece was well put upon the stage, and the actors, without exception, acquitted themselves creditably.”



The hall continued to be used regularly by many different professional entertainers and the style of reporting in those days is almost as impressive as the performers:

Camperdown Chronicle – 6th November, 1877

THE PREMIER ILLUSIONISTS.

The company consists of Mr. A. Silvester (son of the Faker of Volu), Mlle. Naomi, (Mrs. A. Silvester), Professor J. Curthew, Mlle. Latta (Mrs. Curthew), and Mr. J. T. Boilean, Pianist.

Mr. Alfred Silvester commenced the performance last evening by his feats of legerdemain and sleight-of-hand. His first trick was the well-known hat trick, which, however often repeated, never fails to bewilder an audience, and the more so when the trick is enlarged upon as it was done by this prestidigitateur. A time honored bell topper was not available amongst the audience on this occasion, and a "high crown" had to be resorted to, out of which yards upon yards of ribbon lining of all colors, wigs, no less than 15 ladies' reticules, and numerous other articles were produced in rapid succession from this "magic well," including a large bouquet of flowers, all of which feats evoked loud applause. Mr. Silvester's next feat was one in which a tumbler of water, after being covered over, suddenly vanished from his hand into the audience, where it was afterwards recovered from the back of a juvenile amongst the assemblage. Some amusement was caused by the dancing sailor, which is a small marionette cut out of cardboard and by the aid of the electricity is made to go through a sailor's hornpipe on a table. Several other feats brought us to the latest London sensation – the Flying Bird Cage trick – in the performance of which Mr. Silvester capped all his previous performances, much to the further mystification of the audience. Mr. Silvester appears on the stage with a small wire cage, in which is a live canary. After this has been submitted to the inspection of the audience, Mr. Silvester returns to the stage, and whilst prominently holding the cage in both his hands, at a simple one; two; three; it suddenly vanishes into thin air, canary and all. The difficulty of this trick can well be imagined when it is known that it can only be performed by two persons in the world besides Mr. Silvester, and then it is only done with smaller cages.

Skating as a popular pastime.

On Wednesday, 2nd May, 1888, the Camperdown Chronicle reports:



Tomorrow afternoon at 2.30 the Skating Rink will again be open for ladies and children, and in the evening at 7.30 for ladies and gentlemen. Attention is directed to an alteration in the advertisement announcing that members must produce their tickets at the door. A further, supply of skates has been ordered, but owing to the demand all over the colony, there has been some difficulty in obtaining them. It is expected, however, that they will be here to-day or tomorrow.

Skating and 'Fancy Dress' were a popular pastime in that era.

We now jump some years into the early part of the twentieth century and perhaps the start of a Camperdown tradition of cycling.

Camperdown Chronicle, Tues. 12th October, 1909

ADVERTISEMENT

DUNLOP ROAD RACE PICTURE.

At the Mechanics' Hall to morrow night an opportunity of seeing the living picture of the great Dunlop road race of 1909 will be given Camperdown residents. This picture, which is 1800 feet long, and takes 40-minutes to show, is the finest and most costly film ever produced in Australia, and is the work of that celebrated cinematograph firm, Pathe Freres. Incidents in the race are:- Competitors at Shelly Beach, Warrnambool, Coming up the Cutting, on the Hopkins River, at Beeching's Hotel, Cycles being Sealed, Starting of Competitors, The Race Through Camperdown, Terang, Stony Rises, Colac, Geelong, Werribee, etc., various Feeding Stations, Through Mud and Slush, Over Hill and Dale 165 mile at 23 miles an hour, The Struggle for Supremacy, The Close and Exciting Finish, The Winner and Placed Men, Sir Alfred Spicer Decorating I. R Munro, the World's Champion Road Rider, with the Blue Riband, The Champion Rides Through the Crowd,

etc., etc. The pictures will have a special local interest, as they will show the riders passing through Camperdown and the feeding station on the hill. A specially selected programme of the best pictures will also be shown. The latest popular music will be rendered during the evening by the company's pianist. . This entertainment is under the management of "Empire Pictures", Warrnambool, who have secured the rights to show the road race picture in the Western district.

Two days later, the Chronicle reported the success of the film.

DUNLOP ROAD RACE - BIOSCOPIC VIEWS.

A large assemblage filled the Mechanics' Hall, Camperdown, last night to view a number of bioscopic scenes, shown by the Empire Co., and depicting incidents in the recent road cycle race. Considerable interest was manifested in the pictures showing the riders passing along Manifold street, and a number of residents could be distinguished among the spectators taken by the cinematograph camera and shown upon the screen. Other pictures novel and interesting were shown. With film not shown here hitherto, the company will again visit Camperdown within four weeks.

At some time in the 1960s, Mrs. Harriet Lafferty gave a talk to the Camperdown and District Historical Society about her memories of the Mechanics' Hall, and this was reported in the Camperdown Chronicle. Some excerpts follow:



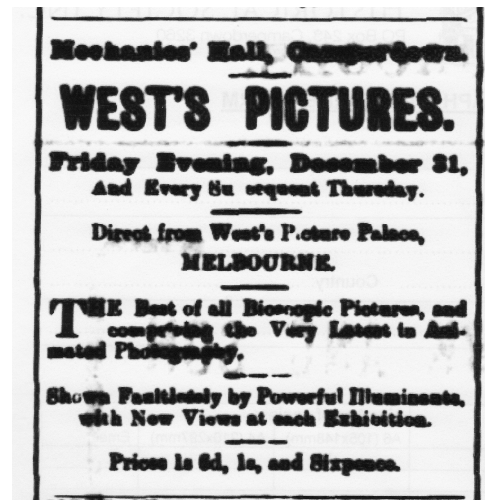
Mechanics' Institute, 1912 with SKATING advertised above the door.

About that time, 1910, the hall was used as a roller skating rink. Before the turn of the century too. I am told, there was skating there. I remember a fancy dress skating carnival winding up the season once, and where the onlookers were all perched up on the gallery-like seating accommodation provided on the stage, the seating collapsed. There were some people hurt that time but not very badly.

Lastly, remember the early picture shows?

West's, with the projector set up in the aisle, smelling strongly of kerosene. It sometimes went on the blink, but most times would come good, and we'd get a good showing, with the pianist, Bill Carroll, rattling up the old piano. When he wasn't available, Miss Gaut, now Mrs. J. Regan, played and kept up the music, sad and gay, for hours. Other pianists for the pictures were Miss M. Hay (now Mrs. R. Pilkington) and Mr. W. Haugh.

Then came the talkies. How good it all has been. Being so used now, to the perfection of the 'Silver Screen' with speech and technicolour, do we ever think of what we were happy to watch, well, perhaps about 1905? The snowy, jumpy, flickering fadings in and fadings out, presented to the kiddies on Empire Days as a special treat as I remember – very good, we all thought.



Programs were presented at least once a week and often two or three times weekly. There was plenty of variety – enough to appeal to a wide range of viewers. Here's an example of the sort of 'Picture Shows' they were watching.

Camperdown Chronicle, 14th February, 1911
ADVERTISEMENT

WEST'S PICTURES ADVANCE TO-NIGHT'S PROGRAMME WILL DEMONSTRATE THE ADVANCE MADE IN CINEMATOGRAPHY.

People who can recall their impressions on seeing a cinematograph picture for the first time will have an opportunity of seeing those, impressions humorised at West's Picture show tonight in the Mechanics' Hall, where the highly diverting film, "First Visit to a picture show", will be screened. Series entitled "Chew Chew

Land” will include a host of magical incidents said to out-wizard most modern magicians. Wonderful coastal scenery will be shown in the views depicting the gathering of sea-birds’ eggs. As usual, Pathe’s Gazette will be replete with most recent happenings of great moment. Scenes in Colombo will include some unusual glimpses of native life. Films sure to appeal to the ladies are those animatedly illustrating basket weaving and lace and embroidery making. Other series making up a very attractive programme will include “The Millionaire and the Ranch Girl”, “The man who Learned”, “Manxland” (2nd series), “How she won him”, “A Summer Idyll”, “Longlegs loves Fencing”, “Daddy’s Little Did’ums”, and the droll “Foolshead”.

In 1927, fire broke out and caused considerable damage to the building. Although not totally disastrous, it eventually forced the rebuilding of the Mechanics’ Hall.

Camperdown Chronicle, 15th March, 1927.

SERIOUS FIRE AVERTED.

CAMPERDOWN MECHANICS' IN DANGER . GOOD SAVE BY BRIGADE.

A serious fire was narrowly averted on Saturday afternoon shortly before 4 o’clock when the Camperdown Fire Brigade was called to the Mechanics' Hall where the fire was located. The fire had gained a good hold by the time the brigade arrived, and it was evident that it had been burning for some little time before the bell was rung. Flames were leaping through the windows of the lumber room adjoining the main hall, and from the far side were licking the east wall of the hall and had reached the eaves of the building. From first appearances it seemed as though the hall was doomed, but the smart work of the Brigade soon changed the aspect. With a splendid pressure of water from the avenue main the Brigade played the water on to the main wall and the lumber room where the fire was burning fiercely, and in a very short time this portion was out of danger. The inside of the hall was filled with stifling smoke and from the ventilators on the outside of the hall volumes of smoke issued forth. It was apparent that the fire had travelled from the eaves on the east side into the woodwork between the plaster ceiling and the roof, and operations were next focused upon this portion. Willing firemen and volunteers scaled ladders placed against the walls and gaining a foothold on the hot roof managed to force off several sheets of the roofing iron, and the hose was passed up. The excellent force of water, well directed on the dangerous parts soon extinguished this part of the fire, and a close inspection was made of the hall both outside and in side, and all the wall and woodwork in the region of the fire was saturated. Undoubtedly a disastrous blaze was saved by the quick intervention of the brigade, who were assisted in the work by a number of volunteers, drawn from the sporting grounds.

The chronicle report continues, praising many local residents for their contribution to the control of the fire.

Eventually, as a result of the damage cause by the fire, a new building was proposed and thus, the Theatre Royale came into existence. A future newsletter will cover some of the history and anecdotes of this new era of the Mechanics’ Institute in Camperdown.

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Community Notice:

A reunion to celebrate 160 years since the arrival of the ‘Zes Gesusters’ aka ‘Six Sisters’ emigrant ship will be held on SUNDAY, 13 JANUARY, 2013 AT GEELONG, VICTORIA.

For more information, please contact reunion organizer, Rob Newland at robnewland@yahoo.com.au

A FINAL THOUGHT FOR YOU ALL: (found while wandering through the internet):

“HISTORIANS ARE PAST CARING”

....AND SO WE ARE!



Camperdown & District Historical Society Inc.

PO Box 243 Camperdown 3260 camperdowndhs@gmail.com
www.camperdownhistory.org.au

**POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA**