

# Daylesford & District Historical Society NEWSLETTER

November 2019



## THE HISTORY OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES

### Anne Dobbs & Judy Files

Ken James was the guest speaker at the 55th Annual General Meeting.

Ken James is co-author with Pam Baragwanath of 'These Walls Speak Volumes', a history of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria.

Ken is an enthusiastic historian and retired teacher, who has produced or is researching many books, some of which relate to our area.

The idea of self-improvement and self-education embodied in the Mechanics' Institute's ethos was seen as leading to a more equal society. The movement had its beginnings in Scotland, but European settlement in Australia was quickly followed by establishment of

these organisations. There was no central body, and each committee formed to establish and operate a library was entirely independent.

The first established in Melbourne was in 1839, which quickly became the Athenaeum Library. This was remarkable as Melbourne had only been settled by Europeans in 1835, and proclaimed a colony in 1836. Like many other institutes, a hall was added as a means to raise funds to provide for the library. This library, in Collins St, has operated continuously ever since.

By 1890 every small town had started a library, often in rented premises until they were able to purchase or build a permanent home.



## COMING UP

### GENERAL MEETING

**12.30 pm**

**Sunday 8 December**

**End-of-Year Party**  
**Honouring the work of**  
**all our hard-working**  
**volunteers**

Continued on Page 2

## THE HISTORY OF MECHANICS' INSTITUTES continued

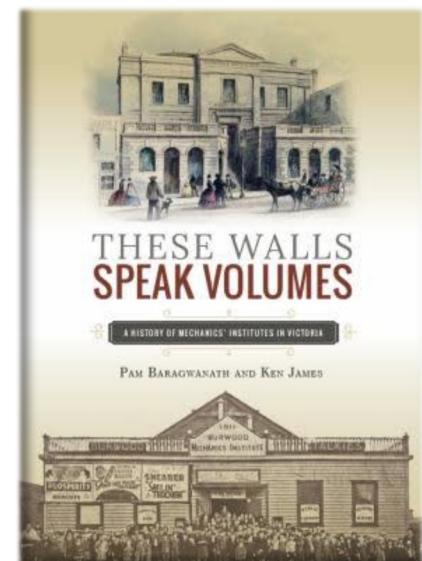
The state Health Department had to approve the buildings for public use, sometimes leading to delays in occupation. Government grants were available for buildings and book stock

Apart from books for borrowing, and a mobile service, newspapers and periodicals were stocked from elsewhere in Victoria and Australia, as well as overseas. It was a subscription service which was also available free for those unable to find the subscription fee. These libraries were well used by their local schools, either for reference material or as a place to hold classes. They were staffed by paid librarians, and were open long hours, usually from 10am to 10pm. Although initially thought of for working men, women soon began to use their services, and to become active

as committee members and librarians. Ken's grandmother was one of these librarians for over 20 years, but when she died, that particular Mechanics Institute closed. By the 1930s this movement was in decline, and services tapering off as local Councils began to view provision of these services as part of their responsibility.

Of course many of these buildings no longer exist, but Ken referred to some local Mechanics' Institutes whose buildings are still used as community halls: Bullarto, Leonards Hill, Lyonville and Yandoit.

Mystery still surrounds many, and as there was no central record-keeping, information has to be gleaned from other sources like Government records of grants, local newspapers and land records. Daylesford, Glen-



lyon and Porcupine Ridge are in this category, and researchers are keen to see any records which may exist locally about these (sometime short-lived) libraries. Some may never have owned their own buildings, so records are sparse.

We are left with an enduring legacy of the remaining buildings, and a record of a world-wide movement which was an agent for social change and personal advancement for all.

## CLEANING ROSTER



Our volunteer co-ordinator, Jan Smith, has initiated a very important cleaning roster for the Museum. The old saying of many hands make light work could never be more true. Our Curator can get on with more pressing

tasks. If you can spare an hour have a look at the roster on the whiteboard in the Research room. You can form a team of two and perhaps adopt a room that you can look after. Talk to Jan to discuss how you can help.

The work involves vacuuming and cleaning

### Monthly

Lelean Room  
Indigenous Room  
Meeting Room  
Pots and Pans Room

### Weekly

Hallway  
Kitchen  
Toilets  
Research Room

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Barry Files



### Accreditation

It has been confirmed that the MAP visit to the Museum will be Tuesday 26 November. It is likely to be several months before we hear the results from the inspection.

### Scan Pro

The Society was successful in receiving a \$10,000 grant from Daylesford District

Community Development Limited (DDCDL), for the purchase of a ScanPro microfilm reader, that will allow us to buy the microfilm of many missing newspapers, read them and digitally store the information.

We are extremely grateful to be the beneficiaries of such a substantial grant.



Thanks to the members who met the DDCDL board to put our case for funding.

### AGM

Welcome to new Committee member, Alex Home, who was elected at the Annual General Meeting. Thanks to Liz Togni for her contribution over the past three years. The meeting dates for this coming year are on Page 11.



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## THE SHOW MUST GO ON



Don and Mary Harvey were our special guests at the November General meeting to talk about the Daylesford show.

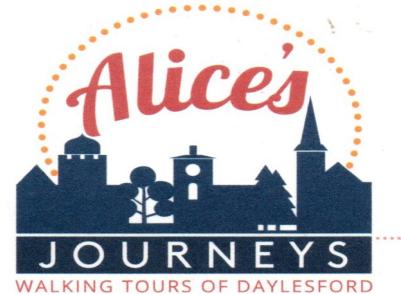
Don is the current President of the Daylesford & District Agricultural Society Inc. and Mary is the Schedule Secretary.

Daylesford is coming up for its 147th annual show and like most country towns is striving to keep the tradition alive in a changing world.

The Daylesford Agricultural Society was formed in 1863 .

The Museum had a display of newspaper articles tracing the origins of the DAS , some photographs of the show in 1917 when the showground was on the corner of Knox St and the Midland Hwy and a number of cups and sashes that are in the Museum collection. Don also brought some impressive memorabilia from the Agricultural Society.

His talk gave us a better understanding of the many and varied tasks and problems involved in organising this important local event.



The times that the guided walking tours of Daylesford take place have been revised.

**Friday . . . 2.00p.m.**  
**Saturday . . . 10.00a.m.**  
**& 2.00p.m.**

Ring 0455 519 111 for more information about prices and bookings. This two hour tour is highly recommended.

## CURATOR'S REPORT

by Gary Lawrence



### Conservation Work

Many willing workers are continuing to do valuable conservation work on items in our collection, including inter-leaving of newspapers and registers, after inspection and cleaning.

The building has been undergoing a thorough clean in order to avoid any mould

### Local Artist

Val Farrell visited the Museum recently to show the results of her work of a painting of the Daylesford Railway Station. Val studied numerous photographs in the Museum collection in order to depict the station circa 1907. The picture will hang at the Railway Station.



### Happy Holidays Exhibition

We are holding an exhibition over the holiday period, covering the months of December and January. Entitled "Happy Holidays", the display will feature all aspects of holidaying in the Spa country, including the great guest house era.

Our thanks to HockingStuart who have kindly donated two 1200 x 900 corflute signs (see facsimile right) that we can erect in suitable locations to promote our event.

### Building Repairs

We have been advised that some much needed repair work to the Museum roof will be carried out before the end of the year.

**Happy Holidays**  
Daylesford & Hepburn Springs  
New Exhibition  
December - January



Daylesford & District Historical Society  
Sat & Sun 1.30 - 4.30  
100 Vincent St, Daylesford

### Villers-Bretonneux

#### Visitors

Along with Bronwyn Barlow and Lilli Bowyer (the Daylesford College student who travelled to France in April 2018, to lay a wreath on Anzac Day on behalf of Hepburn Shire), we met with a visiting group from Villers-Bretonneux at Hepburn Springs. Although aware of the John Grant connection with their Museum and ours, their tight schedule did not allow them to visit our Museum. However, they were very appreciative of being accompanied on a walk to Argyle Spring.



Val Farrell, pictured left, showing the finished work to Society Vice-President, Jan Smith

## FREE TO GOOD HOME

by Judy Files

Any large collection like ours contains some stray items with no obvious connection to our area. We've been recipients over the years from other historical societies who found themselves holding items (usually photos) relating to our district.

moved to Williamstown after living here. So I found contact details for Williamstown Historical Society and emailed them an image. Some good work by their volunteer, Jenny, produced a quite recent real estate advert from 2015 for this building, not in Williamstown but

good quality scanned image for our records.

They have since made contact to let me know that they have found a newspaper reference which identifies the occasion as the presentation of Dental Units and X-ray equipment to the Army and Navy, purchased from funds raised by the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (RAOB), as reported in the Age on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1944.



Recently some detective work led to us sending a photo to a very appreciative historical society.

This picture had intrigued us, and it seemed to be a Melbourne suburban scene with no known relevance to us. It was with a few lodge photos from a former member, and some vague information that the man in some of the photos may have

in Neill St, Carlton. So I found contact details for the Carlton Family History Group and emailed them the image. They identified it definitely as that building, and indicated they would love to add this original mounted photo to their collection. It was clearly taken sometime during WW2, but they didn't know the occasion. So the photo was duly sent to them, and we kept a

As the picture below shows, this fine building survives, today although it is now apartments. It was auctioned in 2015.



## DAYLESFORD WAR MEMORIAL

by Les Pitt



On 19th July 1929 Daylesford Borough Council agreed to take over the fundraising for a war memorial from the RSL. For a number of years the RSL had been trying to raise the £600 required, but felt unable to complete the job, so handed it over to the Councillors.

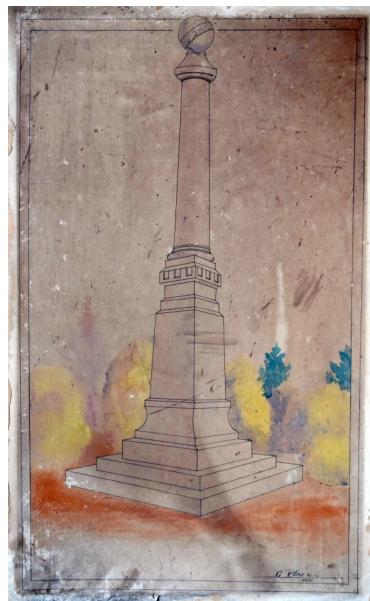
One councillor suggested that a lookout tower be built on Wombat Hill, another thought that entrance gates could be built at the new lake which was in the process of filling, and another suggested gates to Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens. It was also mentioned that Hepburn people wanted their own memorial.

Councillor J.C Pollock was the first to suggest a simple obelisk in Burke Square. The options were discussed many times before it was agreed on, the suggestion by Councillor Pollock turning out to be the popular winner.

During 1929 tenders were called for the design and stonework to be used for the then WW1 Soldiers Memorial obelisk. In due course this was won by the Daylesford stonemason George Place, whose yard in Raglan Street (just below Mercato) still

shows relics of the stonemason's craft.

In 1930 the RSL announced that the foundation stone would be laid on Anzac Day. A request was made to the 'Ministers Fraternal' to 'carry out the religious exercises'. The MF was a gathering of the Church of England, Presbyterians, Methodists and the Salvation Army. In June the RSL received confirmation from Brigadier Harold 'Pompey' Elliott that he would be at the unveiling on August the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Brigadier Elliott was the commander of the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade, a very popular leader, who was affected by witnessing many of his men being slaughtered at some of the battles in France, particularly at Fromelles.



In July two letters were received by the Advocate, one asking whether 3rd August was a suitable date due to the chance of bad weather, and the other asking whether the organising committee was organised enough to get things right by 3rd Aug. In due course the ceremony was postponed to a more auspicious day - the 11<sup>th</sup> November. The Council announced on 15th July that the date had been changed to 11th Nov, and during this meeting Councillor Crockett remarked, very presciently, that the Roman Catholics would not attend if the program as set out was adopted. He suggested that the program be submitted to the Reverend Dr Collins for ratification.

Next month the RSL announced that they would prefer just a civic ceremony, and that the Protestants and Roman Catholics could hold their own ceremonies separately. It would seem the RSL could sense conflict on the horizon. The Ministers Fraternal wrote in the same issue of the paper that Father Collins had already a chance to have his say regarding the program and that he had failed to reply.



**George Place's monumental mason's yard in Raglan St.**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> August a letter was received from Father Collins objecting to the service being run by the Protestant Minister, and in the same issue the MF wrote saying that if the service was a civic one they would be unable to attend. The next salvo was fired on the 8<sup>th</sup> August when the MF wrote objecting to Collins letter and saying that the Roman Catholics had surveyed the program and re-arranged it to their own liking. They added that 'the Memorial would have no more significance than a pagan obelisk erected in a heathen country if the religious part of the ceremony was omitted'. Naturally Father Collins had to reply, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> August he wrote to the paper lambasting the Protestant Ministers and suggesting the 'pagan monument' should perhaps have a crucifix placed on top of it.

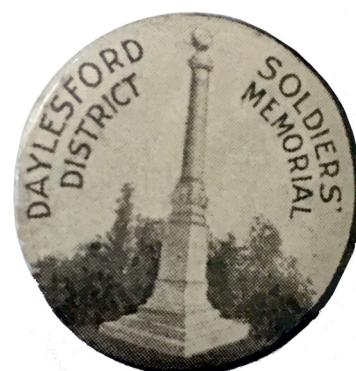
On 15<sup>th</sup> August the Protestant Ministers replied to what they called Father Collins 'sarcastic' letter, saying they were happy the Committee had adopted the form of service that was usual throughout England and Australia.

On 28th October it was announced that invitations had been sent out and a Public Holiday gazetted. They asked that returned soldiers who still had uniforms to form a guard of honour, although it was reported later in the Advocate that not many had retained their uniforms and that the Defence Dept would not lend any. The Hepburn Springs Memorial committee asked that the guard of honour be made available at their ceremony later the same day. The Advocate announced on the 7<sup>th</sup> November that the ceremony would be of 'a

religious nature' and after the ceremony the official party would travel to Hepburn to open their Memorial in a civic ceremony.

Brigadier Elliott arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup> November and duly gave his speech and the ministers said their prayers and thus prevented a 'pagan obelisk' being installed in Burke Square. On the same day it was reported that archbishop Mannix was visiting Daylesford and was being feted at a party hosted by Father Collins. The RC minister gave a speech during which he complained that the RCs had been excluded from the ceremony.

The Advocate on the 14<sup>th</sup> November gave a report of Pompey Elliott's visit during which he had met the wife of Dr Trewella and said that she had nursed him three times during the war, once in Egypt and twice in France. Mrs Trewella was

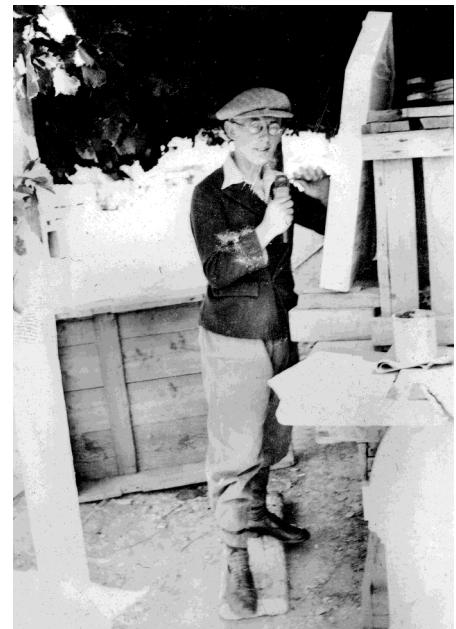


the matron of the Daylesford hospital after the war.

On the same day the Advocate reported on Elliott's speech at the Hepburn memorial. Chaplain Captain Yeo had also spoken at the service and remarked that 'war is degrading, brutalising and devastating and should be avoided at all costs'. Elliott then gave his speech, disagreeing strongly with Yeo and stating his view that lessons could be also learned, namely devotion to duty at all costs, and

the willingness to save our fellow man. He mentioned two instances of bravery, one at Gallipoli and one in France. Elliott was one of many mentally damaged by the war, and he committed suicide less than four months later.

Pictured right: A monumental mason at work



## THE HOSPITAL LAUNDRY INCIDENT 1920

### by Don Harvey

I have spent several months trying to find the basis of a story that must have been very widely discussed in Daylesford ninety nine years ago in 1920.

Another member of the historical society "Tuesday workers" had mentioned to me that, "There had been a big stink {sic} about the laundry at the hospital during the depression and they ended up sacking the matron", it wasn't meant as anything more than telling me something he thought that I might be interested in and was merely one of a number of interesting issues that we were discussing as having

divided the townsfolk over the years.

In our museum the excellent bound copies of "The Advocate" dating back to 1859 are the obvious place to find the bones of an issue and as I quite enjoy reading the old papers I went looking for the "hospital laundry issue" in the bound Advocates. Unfortunately, I judged the depression to have dated from October 1929 and so flipped through over four years of papers before deciding to methodically work backwards until I found it.

Rather than "The Depression", the issue which I as-

sume was the basis of the bit of folklore about the matron being sacked actually took place in 1920, and unfortunately so far I only have the pages of our old bound Advocates to go on. Although the case is very interesting, from the first few words that appear in the newspaper in June 1920 it is obvious that much of this debate had been well and truly aired about the town and well fuelled by hearsay and rumour before becoming the dry historical fact available for conjecture ninety nine years later.

As there were no portable voice recording devices

available in 1920 and I assume nobody alive today who could be interviewed about the incident or incidents we must rely on the newspaper report of the June 1920 monthly meeting of the Board of the Daylesford and District Hospital and Benevolent Asylum as published in the Daylesford Advocate of Tuesday 13/07/1920.

Under the general heading four sub headings indicate the tenor of the article. They could be described as, "teasers", I think as they embellish the body of the article by claiming, "Declaration of Former Patient", "Sheets not changed for five weeks", "Committee to Investigate", and the most ominous, "PATIENT'S ALLEGATION". Under this bold heading came the report of Dr. Embleton stating that he had an important matter to bring before the committee but he would like them to decide whether it should be discussed in camera, or whether the matter should be made public in the press"

After brief debate it was decided that the matter should be made public in the interests of thorough debate and in a real desire to, "see the matter through", Dr. Embleton said he had heard from several sources outside the institution that statements had been made that the sheets on a patient's bed had not been changed for five

weeks. He had seen the patient in question (Miss M. Rowe) and she made a Statutory Declaration before Mr. W.D. Mitchell J.P. (which he produced). In the declaration Miss Rowe stated that she was admitted to Daylesford Hospital on 9th March 1920 and discharged on 13th May 1920. During her residence in hospital the sheets on her bed were not changed for one continuous period of five weeks; that period being the first five weeks that she was in the institution".

The Hospital Board Annual General Meeting was held under the shadow of that sub committee at the Town Hall Lodge Room on 29/07/1920 and the president, Mr. F. Brewer in accepting re-election said he had been, "cut to the heart" by criticism of the hospital in the street, particularly by people who when asked "deny it". He said that, the committee had a complaint before them now, and [they] would go into it with an unbiased mind and no one would be shielded if



3920

A letter was also handed in by Dr. Embleton from Nurse Horsfall which read as follows. "I can state that Miss Rowe's sheets were changed at least once a week by me".

The stage was set for considerable public debate but in a surprisingly modern twist it was decided to refer the matter to a sub committee"

there was anything wrong". President Brewer also went on to point out that, "anyone who makes a complaint and won't back it up with a written statement is either telling a deliberate lie or trying to damage the hospital". I think these are fairly strong words for a president's acceptance speech. This report on Mr. Brewer's re-election con-

## THE HOSPITAL LAUNDRY INCIDENT 1920

### continued

cludes with, "He thanked the Committee of Management for their loyal support during the year".

Two further speakers in responding congratulated Mr. Brewer on his re-election and also alluded to, "the Incident". Dr. Rundle thought that Mr. Brewer was, "a little over sensitive in taking notice of every carping critic outside", and Dr. Embleton who had first brought the matter to the attention of the committee said, "with one exception he hadn't heard a complaint from patients. If people had anything to complain about they should make the complaint in such a manner that the complaint could be rectified".

The issue surfaces again surprisingly soon in the Advocate of 17/08/2020 under an all capitals header "RESULT OF HOSPITAL INQUIRY" with another all caps Sub Heading "RULES RE CHANGING OF LINEN NOT CARRIED OUT" when the sub committee's report was presented to the board and reported as such, "Having heard the evidence on both sides (Miss Rowe, the matron and nurses) we find that the rule of the hos-

pital is that all bed linen be changed at least once a week and oftener if required, and find from the evidence, that Miss Rowe's sheets were changed only twice during the five weeks referred to; and that there was no shortage of sheets, excepting on one or two occasions during a heavy inrush of patients. This sub committee then recommended that a further sub committee be formed to inquire and report on the nursing and household departments of the hospital and that an inventory be compiled of all linen, that that inventory be compiled every two months and that the matron and the laundress co sign all linen in and out of the hospital and laundry respectively". The report does not appear to have recommended that the matrons employment be terminated. Dr. Embleton spoke at length on what he regarded as some shortcomings in the manner in which the Inquiry was conducted..

In an adjacent column there is an interesting notice, it states, Matron Miss Munro, "tendered her resignation after eleven years of service", trainee nurse

I.Mc.Monnies resigned her position owing to her heavy work load, trainee nurse L.B. Lester resigned her position due to ill health, Junior nurse I. Dunbar resigned her position due to poor health, nurse L.Courtney gave one month's notice on account of going to Western Australia, this little report of staff movements at the hospital concludes, "One temporary trained nurse is still under employment to carry on the nursing of the institution".

I wonder if a historian ninety nine years later could be justified in saying, "No that story about the matron being sacked isn't true, I have read the paper that reported on that issue and she actually resigned". Or is the lesson simply to be careful about what you read in the newspaper, sometimes you have to "read between the lines a bit". I enjoyed the case, I hope you did too.

**Daylesford and District Historical Society Inc.**

**Meeting Dates for 2019 - 2020**

|          |                |      |           |         |
|----------|----------------|------|-----------|---------|
| Thursday | 10th October   | 2019 | Committee | 7.30pm  |
| Sunday   | 3rd November   | 2019 | General   | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday | 14th November  | 2019 | Committee | 7.00pm  |
| Sunday   | 8th December   | 2019 | General   | 12.30pm |
| Thursday | 12th December  | 2019 | Committee | 7.00pm  |
| Thursday | 13th February  | 2020 | Committee | 7.00pm  |
| Sunday   | 1st March      | 2020 | General   | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday | 12th March     | 2020 | Committee | 7.00pm  |
| Thursday | 9th April      | 2020 | Committee | 7.00pm  |
| Sunday   | 3rd May        | 2020 | General   | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday | 14th May       | 2020 | Committee | 5.00pm  |
| Thursday | 11th June      | 2020 | Committee | 5.00pm  |
| Sunday   | 5th July       | 2020 | General   | 2.00pm  |
| Thursday | 9th July       | 2020 | Committee | 5.00pm  |
| Thursday | 13th August    | 2020 | Committee | 5.00pm  |
| Sunday   | 13th September | 2020 | AGM       | 1.30pm  |

May, June, July and August COM meetings will start at 5.00pm

Please note: meeting times have been varied to provide opportunities for all our members to attend at least some of the scheduled meetings.

General Meetings commence at 2pm.

AGM commences 1.30pm **SUNDAY**

Daylesford & District Historical Society Incorporated  
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DAYLESFORD VIC 3460  
Reg. No. A13586  
ABN: 94 876 895 453  
Telephone: (03) 5348 1453  
E-mail: [history@daylesford.net](mailto:history@daylesford.net)  
also on facebook

**Museum Opening Hours:**  
Weekends 1.30 pm-4.30pm.  
1.30-4.30 Tue. Wed. School  
Holidays & Public Holidays

**D & DHS OFFICE BEARERS:**

|                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>President</b>            | <b>Barry Files</b>    |
| <b>Vice-President (Snr)</b> | <b>Jan Smith</b>      |
| <b>Vice-President (Jnr)</b> | <b>Les Pitt</b>       |
| <b>Secretary</b>            | <b>Ian Marshall</b>   |
| <b>Asst. Secretary</b>      | <b>Anne Tamblyn</b>   |
| <b>Treasurer</b>            | <b>Judy Files</b>     |
| <b>Asst. Treasurer</b>      | <b>Joyce Orr</b>      |
| <b>Curator</b>              | <b>Gary Lawrence</b>  |
| <b>Committee Members</b>    | <b>Leanne Howard</b>  |
|                             | <b>Bronwyn Barlow</b> |
|                             | <b>Alex Home</b>      |
| <b>Newsletter Editor</b>    | <b>Barry Files</b>    |

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**NEWSLETTER**

**Daylesford & District Historical Society Incorporated**  
**If unclaimed return to 100 Vincent Street Daylesford 3460**