

# Now & Then



Issue 1 February 2015

Affiliated with Royal Historical Society of Victoria Inc

## Meeting Dates

### 2014

- February 28
- April 11
- May 2
- June 6
- July 4
- August 1
- September 5
- October 3
- November 7
- December 5

All meetings are held on the 1st Saturday of the month (except as shown above) and at 1 pm at the Old Lilydale Court House 61 Castella St., Lilydale.

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Issue 1 February 2015

## Val receives RHSV Award of Merit

Members, friends and four generations of Val's family came together on September 6, to see the President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria Associate Professor Don Garden, present Val with the RHSV Award of Merit in recognition of her service to local heritage.

Don spoke of Val's untiring work for the society and her many years spent researching and recording the history of the townships of Coldstream, Gruyere, Yering and Killara.

Val joins other award recipients - Sandy Ross, Jack Lundy-Clarke, Leigh Blackburn and Netta and Neville Lord.

**A copy of society's nomination is published on page 4.**

## ANZAC Grant Approved

The Minister recently advised the society it had been successful in its grant application for funding of its ANZAC project.

The funding of the society's project means the names of all the service men and women from the society's collecting area who served in World War I

*Continued pg 2*



*Top: President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria Associate Professor Don Garden, society vice-president John and Brown Val Sheehan.*

*Above: The four generations of Val's family after the award ceremony.*

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## Talks, tours and walks

Anyone looking for a speaker or a different place to go should contact Lorraine Smith as the society has several members willing to give talks about their area of special interest.

These include Melba, aspects of Lilydale township and its history, Lilydale Cemetery, the Lilydale Express newspaper and Lilydale's military history.

Contact Lorraine Smith on 9735 1104.

## Speakers program

Lorraine Smith is presently compiling a list of people to approach as guest speakers at the society meetings or special evenings next year. If you have heard someone - not necessarily related to heritage - who you found interesting and entertaining, please call Lorraine on 9735 1104.

## Keep up to date

If you want to find out more information about the society, our local history, its people and places or about Dame Nellie Melba go to:

[www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au) or

[www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au](http://www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au)

## On the airwaves

Listen to us on Radio Station 98.1 Radio Eastern FM. The society is on the airwaves on the second Tuesday in the month from 9.30am to 10am. The other societies on other Tuesdays are Ringwood, Knox and Croydon.

**For the latest news on the society, its projects and activities go to: [www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au) and click on What's New.**

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## ANZAC Grant approved

*Continued from page 1*

will now be added to our website along with their service details and their own family story.

"Our collecting areas are Yering, Coldstream, Gruyere, Killara, Lilydale, Chirside Park, Montrose and Kilsyth," project manager Sue Thompson said.

"By putting the information on line we hope that descendants of these men and women give us more information, photographs etc on these local heroes.

"Also, copies of all our research will be kept in archival folders and be accessible to all members of the public for their own research and, perhaps, they will be able to add information about the service personnel.

"Based on the Shire of Lillydale Honour Board in the Atheneum Theatre, there will be about 400 names to be researched.

"Anyone who would like to help with the project can contact me directly on 0408 507 890," Sue said.

## Guest Speakers 2015

The society will continue to have guest speakers every second month during 2015.

On Saturday, February 7, our guest speaker will be Luigi Fotia from the Yarra Valley Italian Group. He will talk about his group and its wonderful publication *Dreams From a Suitcase* which tells the stories of many Italian families who settled in our district.

Our April meeting will be held on the second Saturday - April 11 - due to Easter. Our speaker will be Gary Taylor who will talk about the scrap book of his great uncle Ronald (Buck) Taylor who went down with the RANS *The Yarra* in 1942.

On Saturday, July 4 our guest speaker will be Gary Arnott, president of the Croydon Historical Society who will talk about his family history book.

Our meetings start at 1pm and the guest speaker will be introduced at 2pm.

Visitors are welcome but the cost for non members is a gold coin donation.

If you know someone the society could invite to be a speaker, please call Lorraine Smith on 9735 1104.



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## Stories behind the headstones

After many hours of research, recording and checking, the society will be launching its Stories Behind the Headstones project on Saturday February 28 at 2pm.

The society is delighted the Shire of Yarra Ranges' new Mayor Cr Maria McCarthy is available to officially launch the project on our website.

Last year, the society was successful in gaining a grant from the shire for the project which has recorded all those people with headstones buried in Lilydale Cemetery from 1861 to 1931.

The stories include an image of the headstone, burial register details and information about the people and their families. Other related images will be progressively added to the site during the next 12 months.

After the launch everyone is welcome to join the members for afternoon tea.

This project also has had other benefits to the society. The 12 or so members involved in the research have learnt a lot about the contents of our vast archive and developed new skills such as searching the National Library's Trove site for information. All of these skills will be used in our upcoming ANZAC project.

The society is also working with the Greater Metropolitan Cemetery Trust which controls the cemetery on this and another project.

***Go to page 5 for just one of our 400 headstones' stories.***



*Above: Our Christmas tables laden with our first course of roast turkey and salads.*

*Right: Robert Bethell, Sandy Ross, Liz Harvey, Dot Hill, Jeanette Dodson and Yvonne Bethell chat before their Christmas lunch*



The society has established a real Christmas tradition at its final meeting of the year. After the business is dealt with, the hall is cleared, and everyone adjourns to sit out the front under the marquees to enjoy great companionship and Christmas fare. Our 2014 party created a record with 47 people attending. There was plenty of food, great salads and delicious desserts all thanks to the generous members who volunteered to spend a little time cooking and preparing for the day.

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## Mrs Valma (Val) Jean Sheehan nee Skate

Val Sheehan has been an active member of the Lilydale & District Historical Society Inc since 1990. She was made a life member in 2008 for her outstanding contribution to researching and recording of local history for the old Shire of Lilydale. She has served on and continues to serve on the committee of the historical society and is an active volunteer at the Old Lilydale Court House. For many years she was also an active volunteer at the Museum of Lilydale when it was home to the Lilydale & District Historical Society.

Val who is now in her 80s moved to Coldstream with her parents in 1943 and continues to reside there today and has brought up a family of five children, who still live in the district. In 1946 her first job was at the local Coldstream Store and Post Office where she started to build her lifelong connections with the local families of the district. One of the most significant families of the district being the Vestey's of Coombe Cottage, the descendants of Dame Nellie Melba. She was nominated by Pamela Lady Vestey, the granddaughter of Melba for a Certificate of Recognition by the Shire of Yarra Ranges in 2005 for her contribution to the Coldstream area. She was instrumental with her brother Les Skate in erecting the Coldstream and Yering War Memorial which was unveiled in 1995.

Val's has spent many years researching and recording the history of the townships of Coldstream, Gruyere, Yering and Killara which were part of the old Shire of Lilydale which is now the Shire of Yarra Ranges. Her publications are a valuable source of information on the townships and the people which the historical society refers to constantly.

Another project Val has been working on is the copying of all obituaries, births and marriages from the local newspaper the *Lilydale Express* since its inception in 1886 to the 1960s. This is proving to a valuable resource for the society's current Lilydale Headstones project.

### Publications

Val has written four books and is currently researching and writing her fifth book in her series 'As It Happened' a history of the Coldstream, Gruyere, Yering and Killara area.

Her books are:

They came to Rushworth - Genealogy of the Skate/  
Clayton/Muller families

As It Happened Vol 1 - Settlement to 1900

As It Happened Vol 2 - 1900 to 1920

As It Happened Vol 3 - 1920 to 1940

She has collaborated with other members of the Society on many publications including:

\* Unmarked Grave at the Lilydale Cemetery Vol 1

\* Reminiscences of Life - Memories of Lilydale

residents, which she is featured in.

\* Gun Alley – the Story of the Backstreets of Lilydale.



*After several year's absence, committee member Ruby Kwijas is again gracing the airwaves at 98.1 Radio Eastern along with several other members - Lorraine Smith, John Brown, Sue Thompson and Philip Burton.*

*In the background is host Peter McArthur.*

## New display

Our new display boards were put up on January 28. This display features the work of Samuel and George Dornom who built many of Lilydale's major buildings including the Lilydale Hotel and Athenaeum hall.

In our continuing series of murders in the district Lynn Wales has spent many hours researching the murder of Richard Knight near his hut in Ingram Road in 1913. His murderer was never caught and for 12 months his little dog kept vigil in his hut.

Val Sheehan has brought together all her research on businesses in Coldstream to compile two panels of the buildings, their history and the people who operated them. Our new Melba display features Melba's love of technology and her death and funeral. In Adelaide 50,000 people were at Adelaide Oval for a memorial service.

Two other panels are devoted to our Stories Behind the Headstones and feature 11 different stories chosen from more than 400.

## Research

Due to the increasing demand for research, all inquiries must be in writing and go to Sue Thompson via [info@lilydalehistorical.com.au](mailto:info@lilydalehistorical.com.au). A quote for the cost of the research will be provided and no research will be done until the quotation is paid. Our charges are \$20 per hour. Contact Sue Thompson 9761 9192.

**For the latest news on the society, its projects and activities go to: [www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au) and click on What's New.**

## New Society Patron

After officially opening the Lilydale & District Historical Society Museum in the former shire offices in Castella Street in 1976, Pamela, Lady Vestey accepted the honour of becoming our Patron and helped us promote and develop the interest in her grandmother, Dame Nellie Melba. Unstintingly Pamela loaned precious objects from *Coombe Cottage* to our society which in turn pledged to always have a Melba exhibition in the museum. Even after we moved out of the museum, Pamela remained our society's Patron, a position she held until her death on September 2, 2011.

Determined to keep the close links with Melba, the society approached Pamela's family and were delighted when the Hon Saffron Foster, Pamela's

eldest granddaughter and Melba's eldest great, great granddaughter agreed to become our second Patron.

Members look forward to welcoming her to the Old Lilydale Court House when she is next visiting *Coombe Cottage*.

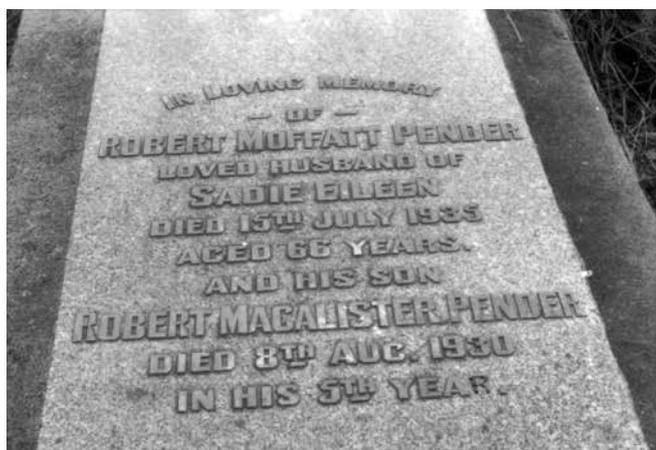
## Red Dots

**If your edition of Now & Then has a red dot on the back cover it means your membership subscription is now overdue. Please contact either Philip or Lorraine if you have any queries**

## Pender, Robert Macalister and Robert Moffatt

Inscription:

In loving memory / of / Robert Moffatt Pender / loved husband of / Sadie Eileen / died 15th July 1935 / aged 66 years. / And his son / Robert Macalister Pender / died 8th Aug. 1930 / in his 5th year.



Burial Register Details:

Prev No.	Current No.	Date	Name	Age	Section	Lot	Notes
-	2329	10-08-1930	Pender, Robert McAlister	40	CE1	241	
-	2658	15-07-1935	Pender, Robert Moffat	65	CE1	241	

Notes: Burial Register lists Robert McAlister's age as 40 not 5.

Links:

Image: 10023 (1-23)

## Robert Mcalister Pender

### A Shocking fatality young boy electrocuted

When the electric current cut off peremptorily at about 5.50 last Friday evening, most people accepted the happening philosophically, as such occurrences are by no means rare in Lilydale. Stark tragedy, however was lurking in the beyond, and a few moments later it became known that Robert Macalister Pender, a boy of 4 years and 10 months, the youngest son of Mr and Mrs R.M. Pender, of Silvan, had been electrocuted.

The boy had been playing in the yard of the Crown Hotel, a few doors from his mother's shop, with Patricia Morris, the six year-old daughter of Mr and Mrs E.F. Morris.

In their play the children had climbed onto the roof of the washhouse, but, being noticed by the cook, were told to get down. This they did, but a few moments later they

had got up on the roof again, and the boy had contrived to come into contact with an uninsulated portion of the live wire attached to the roof of the building. The alarm was quickly given, and medical aid and the police were summoned. Meanwhile Mr F. Benyan, who had been working on the premises, procured a pair of rubber gloves from the fire station, and Mr Morris detached the unfortunate boy from the wire.

Dr McMahon arrived on the scene in quick time, and immediately the boy was freed he began an endeavour to restore life by resuscitation methods. A little later he was joined by Dr Short, and the two, with Mrs Short, made a valiant effort to bring life into the young boy's body again. For about two hours they worked incessantly, but to no avail. [*Lilydale Express* 15-08-1930 pg1] We have no information about his father Robert Moffatt Pender.

## Where Do I Come From?

Each year, the society receives dozens of inquiries from all over the world from people wanting to know about their ancestors who were born, lived, worked or died in the Lilydale district.

While we are an historical society, history is made by people and with this in mind, the society has formed a partnership with the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies in Blackburn.

While we have the local knowledge they have the knowledge about family trees and researching family resources.

Our first joint venture will be Where Do I Come From? A Family History Weekend to be held on Saturday and Sunday, August 15 and 16 from 10am to 2pm.

The AIGS will be providing four speakers on the weekend talking on topics such as starting your family tree, Scottish and English ancestors, dating photos etc. There will also be various tables with experts able to help residents with any queries.

We will publish more details later but please put the date into your diary.

## Cataloguing

In the last few months the society has been busy with various projects.

Several members have been indexing several key publications which were not previously indexed. The 1931 *Back to Lilydale Re-union* has now been completed and Rouget's *Shire of Lilydale Past and Present* - the first history of Lilydale produced in 1924 is now being indexed.

Member Judy Macdonald has been busy setting up and indexing our library and has indexed Anthony McAleer's Lilydale Express scrapbook on World War I which will be used extensively during our ANZAC project. Her next project is indexing the RSL Minute Books until the mid 1920s. Many years ago the RSL let us copy the books and they provide valuable insight into returned serve personnel after the war.

Under the guidance of committee member Joy Gothe work is also well underway into the indexing our



Society members Sandy Ross and Philip Burton with the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum staff at the shire's archive.

archives. This is a mammoth job but is slowly being done. In time, these indexes will be put into spreadsheets and imported into DBtextworks along with our other indexes and accessible via the society's computers. Anyone wanting information on any family, place or event will be able to quickly get a list of information to help with their research.

## Inmagic

Late last year the society decided to purchase cataloguing software to help keep track of our growing paper-based collection, images and archive. Five members underwent a day-long training program during January and committee member Joy Gothe will be heading up the team to input our data.



Jeannette Nabatov from Washington D.C., at the Court House.

## Visitor's passion for Melba

We received an email from an opera lover and long-time admirer of Dame Nellie Melba who was coming to attend events at *Coombe Cottage*, Melba's Yarra Valley Estate. So on Friday November 14, 2014, after numerous emails back and forth, we met Jeannette Nabatov from Washington D.C. USA who with two of our members was escorted to Dame Nellie Melba's grave at the Lilydale Cemetery.

Jeanette had read a book *Red Plush and Black Velvet* by Joseph Wechsberg at the age of 13 which started her passion for opera and Dame Nellie. Jeannette spent time with us at the Old Lilydale Court House discussing Melba, her passions and interests. We are excited at the prospects of our new friendship and look forward to Jeanette returning to our shores in the near future. Already, Jeannette is working for us to try and establish the Charlie Chaplin film in which Melba appeared. Also other research projects seeking information about Melba in USA are being discussed with Jeannette. She wants to be known as Our Go-To Gal in USA. Latest information is that Jeannette has tracked down the film through a contact from the Charlie Chaplin Archive in Italy.

## Historic Bale of Wool

Just before Christmas Val Sheehan showed me a copy of a postcard of Melba which I hadn't seen before. It showed Melba standing in a wool store surrounded by bales of wool.

There was no information on the back of the postcard save a note from the sender to Melba at *Coombe Cottage*. However, the only clue was the handwritten words: "Geelong Woolsheds 25<sup>th</sup> February 1915" printed beneath the photograph.

Using that date gradually the story began to unfold of a generous pastoralist determined to make a difference in World War I who donated a bale of wool which directly assisted Belgium soldiers wounded while fighting for their homeland.

None of the research could have been achieved without the resources of Trove, the internet and the Mortlake Historical Society.

While Melba's role was only small – only £100 raised, it was her involvement that raised the community's and media's interest in the generous donation of one Western District woman.

### Wool growers support the war effort

With the outbreak of World War I, Australians from all walks of life were determined to help the war effort. In Brisbane and Sydney pastoralists donated bales of wool to be auctioned with the regular wool sales and the proceeds given to the Belgian Relief Fund. One bale in Brisbane yielded £127 on December 4, 1914.

Perhaps inspired by this, Miss Annie Gordon of "Ballangeich" Ellerslie near Mortlake in the Western District of Victoria donated a bale of the property's wool to be auctioned at the Geelong Wool Exchange on December 17, 1914.

Miss Gordon had already lost a brother in the war and another – George Herbert Iver Gordon - was away



*The Ballangeich and Ellerslie Red cross, Warrnambool Show, November 1917.*

*L to R: Miss Annie Gordon, Miss Mary Ormsby (Mrs A.C. Patison), Miss Isabel Cook, Mrs John Cook, Miss Emily Stratton, Miss Ellen Stratton, Mrs Daniel Stratton. (Mortlake Historical Society)*



*Melba in front of Mrs Petersen's wool bales at the Geelong wool stores.*

fighting. Her brother was Captain Robert Eddington Gordon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment who was killed in action at the Battle of Aisne, France on September 15, 1914. He was 37 and unmarried.

### Geelong Wool Exchange auction

Such was the respect for the family and the donation that at the Geelong Wool Exchange auction on December 17, 1914 spirited bidding saw the Ballangeich wool bale up for auction 22 times and finally raised a record price of £693.

The new owners from America put it under the hammer again at Geelong in early 1915 and raised a further £300 which combined with the final sale meant the Belgian Relief Fund had now received £1023 from bale.

### Nellie Melba's Geelong Concert

Meanwhile, Nellie Melba had been doing her bit for the Red Cross and Belgian Relief Fund. She had given a concert in Adelaide, another in Ballarat and was scheduled to appear at Geelong's His Majesty's Theatre on February 24, 1915. At her concert, Melba auctioned the bales several times and raised a further £100 plus meaning the bale had now raised £1168.

### Wool bale in London

The bale was sold to H. Dawson and Co in London who generously undertook to have the wool made into khaki for the benefit of the Belgian Relief Fund.

The blue cloth was about 140 yards long and 54 inches wide. After seeing samples, his Majesty the King of the Belgians directed the cloth be made up into suits for the wounded soldiers.

### The postcard

The mystery of the post card was also solved as during her visit to Geelong Melba went into one of Geelong's wool stores and was photographed for the Geelong newspaper *News of the Week*. The photo was published in its edition of March 4, 1915. However, 1000 postcards were produced using the picture block and the sales benefitted the Belgian Relief Fund.

For more information or to download the booklet, go to: [www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au)

If undeliverable return to:  
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**Now & Then by email**

With the rising costs of paper and postage, the society is inviting members who are happy to receive their newsletter by email to contact Sue Thompson at [suethompson50@ozemail.com.au](mailto:suethompson50@ozemail.com.au) and I will email a copy to you. Back copies are also available electronically.

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For the latest news, listing of events and our publications, go to our website at

[www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au)

Also look out for our re-vamped website which is now being designed by one of our sponsors Paradigm 4.

**Your Membership**

Members are the life blood of any organisation and that includes your society.

As a member you receive many benefits:

- Free access to our extensive archive of families, places and events in our community;
- Free access to our digital archives such as the Lillydale Express and rate books;
- Four issues each year of our newsletter

Now & Then by either mail or email

- Invitations to all our special events, talks and tours;
- Discounts on all our publications; and
- Opportunity to learn more about our local history.

Renew your membership or invite a friend to join our society today by filling out the form below.

**Membership Subscription 2014-2015 now due**

**Membership Subscriptions 2014-2015 were due on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.** (If you are not sure if you are financial, please ring Lorraine on 9735 1104 to check.)

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