



# Prahran Mechanics' Institute

## Victorian and Local History Library

**Newsletter No. 41 October 2005**

140 High Street, Prahran (PO Box 1080, Windsor VIC 3181)

Open Mon-Fri 9.30-4.30 Sat 9.30-1pm

Tel/fax (03) 9510 3393 [library@pmi.net.au](mailto:library@pmi.net.au)

<http://www.pmi.net.au>

### NEWS AND EVENTS

## *90th Anniversary* - 140 HIGH STREET 11.30am, Saturday 8 October

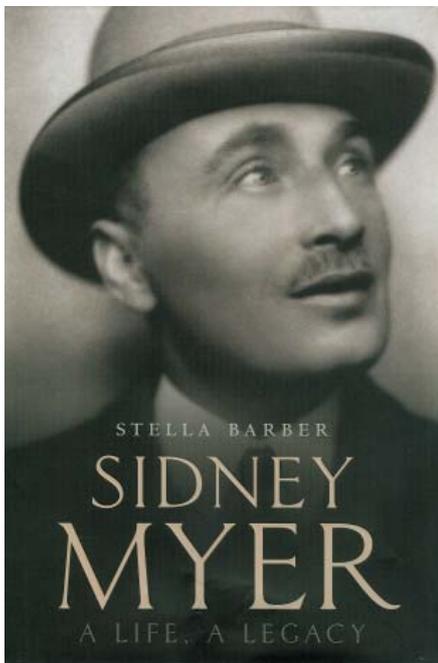
Come along to PMI for the 90th anniversary of the opening ceremony of our building at 140 High Street! Joining us to celebrate this occasion will be:

Ms Chris Gallagher, Chair, Heritage Council of Victoria

Cr Sarah Davies, Mayor, City of Stonnington

and Mrs Pam Baragwanath, Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria

*See page 4-5 for further details ...*



# SIDNEY MYER:

## A LIFE, A LEGACY

an illustrated lecture by Stella Barber

Discover the man behind the retail empire, through this tribute to the life and achievements of Sidney Myer. The author will take us through her illustrated depiction of the life and achievements of Sidney Myer in Russia, Australia and America, drawing on records and sources not previously published.

Stella Barber worked for Coles Myer Ltd for more than a decade as the company historian and archivist. She is a freelance historian with masters degrees in history and archives.

Free entry but seating is limited and bookings are essential.

2.30PM, SATURDAY 15 OCTOBER - BOOKINGS 9510 3393

### *Inside...*

*Travelling exhibition - Recent additions to the collection*

*Historic Picture Show report - Farewell to Pam Baragwanath*

*Special Article - 90th Anniversary of High Street Building & MIV Plaques series*

## Library News

Thank you to Lyn Ross, who worked casually to fill in for Tim McKenna and Christine Worthington's time off recently.

On 1 October Christine will speak at the Brunswick Community History Group's AGM about Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria, and the role of the Prahran Mechanics' Institute.

On 21 October Christine will attend a library marketing seminar to be run as a part of the Statewide Training Program for public librarians, an initiative of Viclink and the State Library of Victoria.

Visitors to the library may have recently noticed a lack of window displays. Though colourful and topical book displays in our substantial windows have had undoubted advantages for the library, they have been discontinued for now due to the detrimental effect of the full sun on books placed in them. The Committee has been examining various options for sun protection for the windows and we will inform of progress in future newsletters.

Budding genealogists amongst our members will be interested to know of a day of free information sessions, *A Family History Feast* to be held at the Village Roadshow Theatre, State Library of Victoria on Saturday 22 October. For further information contact Christine on 9510 3393.

PMI has recently purchased the Genealogical Society of Victoria's index of St. Kilda Cemetery transcriptions, and it is now available for use within the library.

Congratulations to Julie Meadows, who was recognised this year in the Queens Birthday Honours with a Medal of the Order of Australia. Julie received her OAM for service to the community through the Write Your Story program of the Makor Jewish Community Library. PMI members may recall that Julie conducted a writers workshop at our library on a weekly basis throughout 2005, which also incorporated a very well attended morning of public readings during Book Month.

## Travelling Exhibition at PMI A Magnificent Spectacle: the Theatre Posters of J.C. Williamson



Theatre icon J. C. Williamson was a dominating force in Australia and New Zealand from the 1880s until the mid-twentieth century, staging elaborate productions including the latest hits from London and New York. This exhibition highlights the range of productions the agency presented and the roles played by local and imported actors.

Drawn from the collection of the State Library of New South Wales and sponsored in Victoria by the Department for Victorian Communities.

**On now until 23 September!**

## MI Libraries Group

The Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Libraries Group will meet at the Melbourne Athenaeum on 21 October.

The Group will also take a tour of the city public library on that day.

These meetings enable the geographically spread mechanics' institute libraries to meet, report on their activities and share ideas.

## Your Questions

**Q. Can I use the internet in the library?**

**A.** Yes, the public access computer in the reading room of the library is available for internet access but

- a) this service is strictly for members only
- b) internet access at PMI is for *historical and family history research purposes*

For general internet use, such as for email, the internet may be accessed free at your local public library. If you need assistance with your internet research, the library staff will be more than happy to help you. Members of the library are also entitled to free tea and coffee while they read/surf.

### **Goodbye to Pam**

Pam Baragwanath, Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria committee member and author of *If the Walls Could Speak: a Social History of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria*, has retired from the Prahran Mechanics' Institute committee due to ill health.

Pam's resignation letter reads as follows:

*To the Chairman and Committee Members, Prahran Mechanics' Institute,*

*It is with much regret that I tender my resignation as a Committee member. The time spent on the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Committee has made me aware of just what a unique Institution it is and I feel proud to have been associated with it.*

*The staff, Cathy, Christine and Tim deserve special commendation. They are conscientious and dedicated to their jobs. This involves a range of activities related to the traditional usage of a mechanics' institute, the expertise to administer an important heritage building and library collection and their supreme loyalty to the Institute and the subscriber base has obviously been paramount. Their many talents have been of immense benefit to the historic Institution.*

*I feel that the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Committee have superbly supported the staff while meticulously maintaining the Institute in all its varied functions. That the Prahran mechanics' Institute Committee has voluntarily given much time an expertise to this wonderful Institution since 1854 is indeed something which of the members can be justly proud.*

*I will follow with great interest the exciting years to follow.*

*Yours truly Pam Baragwanath.*

The PMI staff and committee wish Pam the best for the future, especially health-wise, and thank her for her four years of service to the committee. Pam's understanding of the plight of mechanics' institutes and the importance heritage and of forming links with the other institute libraries has made a significant and lasting impact.



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### **HISTORIC PICTURE SHOW A HUGE HIT!**

Members of the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Cinema and Theatre Historical Society and their guests turned out in unprecedented numbers on September 15 for our inaugural Historic Picture Show. The Show was held at a lecture theatre at Swinburne University next door, and this was very fortunate, as the Institute's library could never have seated the 80+ people who attended.

There were many highlights, but attendees were very interested to learn that one of the oldest films in the programme *After Dark or the Policeman and his Lantern* (1901) had been publicly screened very few times since the 1920s. The plight of the main character in *Birthday Congratulations or His Birthday* and his action-packed dream sequence was a terrific and entertaining example of very early cinema. The two films showing Melbourne, *Marvellous Melbourne* (1910) and Efftee's *Melbourne Today* (1931) were fascinating.

On behalf of the committee, staff and members of the Prahran Mechanics' Institute, thanks so much to Peter Wolfenden for providing this experience. Thanks to the National Film & Sound Archive for the loan of *Living Hawthorn*, a memorable view from a carriage ride down some of the main roads of Hawthorn. Our thanks also to Swinburne University Prahran for the use of lecture theatre PK501 for the evening.

This was a thoroughly memorable and entertaining evening which attracted tremendous support from the members of both groups.

## **MIV Plaques Series**

The idea of putting a plaque on Mechanics' Institute Halls was advanced by Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Committee member Alan Tonkin in 1999.

Objectives of the plaques series included increased awareness and understanding of mechanics' institutes in the community of Victoria, and to raise the profile of the remaining mechanics' institute buildings, as so many of them have already disappeared, and in modern times many are still in danger of disappearing.

Even a casual flick through Pam Baragwanath's *If the Walls Could Speak* reveals the uniqueness of each of the many institutes in Victoria. Because they all sprang up independently of one another, their varying localities, community needs, community resources, and committee styles meant that institutes differed markedly in size, architectural style and design, services offered, activities held and community uses. Each had their own colourful history and their own important role in the fabric of their own local communities. Remarkably though, for many of the institute buildings which no longer exist today there are very few surviving reminders - often not even a photograph.

*2005 is the 90th Anniversary of the building at 140 High Street, Prahran.  
To mark the occasion each newsletter this year features a  
short article about various aspects of the building and the  
people and events surrounding it. In this issue we look forward to our  
Anniversary Day on 8 October and look at the MIV plaques series.*

MIV Committee member Paul Permezel brought the plaques project to reality in 2003 and since then plaques have been installed at the following institute halls:

1. Maldon Athenaeum
2. Ballan Mechanics' Institute
3. Tallarook Mechanics' Institute
4. Taradale Mechanics' Institute
5. Lilydale Athenaeum
6. Berwick Mechanics' Institute and Free Library
7. Minyip Mechanics' Institute
8. Frankston Mechanics' Institute
9. Mt. Eccles Mechanics' Institute
10. Arthurs Creek Mechanics' Institute and Free Library

We chose the 90th anniversary of the opening ceremony of the building to have our plaque installed, which will be number 11 in the series. Digby Mechanics' Institute will be number 12.

The wording on the plaque will be as follows:

*Prahran Mechanics' Institute (est. 1854)*

*Formed Prahran Technical School on this site in 1915.*

*The Mechanics' Institute movement began in British urban industrial centres in the early 1800s. A "mechanic" was a person applying skills and technology. During the 19th century most towns in Victoria established a Mechanics' Institute or Athenaeum with a library and a meeting hall. Common objects were the "spread of useful knowledge" and provision for "rational recreation" in the community.*

*This plaque, No. 11 in the MIV series, was unveiled on 8 October 2005 to mark the 90th anniversary of the opening ceremony of this building.*

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## RECENT ACQUISITIONS (Aug-Sep)

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In keeping with the MIV objectives for the plaques series, we feel that this will be an excellent opportunity to celebrate our building, and the fact that the building was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in December last year. Ms Chris Gallagher, Chair of the Heritage Council (pictured, right) has kindly agreed to unveil the plaque for us on 8 October.

### About the Heritage Council

The Heritage Council of Victoria provides the highest level of legal protection for heritage places and objects identified as being of significance to the State of Victoria.

As an independent statutory authority, the Heritage Council of Victoria is the State's main decision-making body on heritage issues. Its ten members are appointed by the Governor-in-Council upon the recommendation of the Minister for Planning. It operates in accordance with the Victorian Heritage Act. The major functions of the Heritage Council of Victoria are to:

- Act as the primary source of advice to the Minister of Planning and Local Government on heritage issues
- Determine which heritage places and objects are added to the Victorian Heritage Register
- Hear appeals on permit applications determined by Heritage Victoria
- Approve or reject recommendations for loans and grants from the Heritage Fund for registered heritage places
- Promote public understanding of Victoria's cultural heritage and to conduct community education and information programs.



### Anniversary Day - A Celebration of Heritage!

Our Anniversary Day proceedings will be hosted by Alf Lazer, President of Prahran Mechanics' Institute. Pam Baragwanath will give an outline of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria heritage plaques series.

Readers of this newsletter will know that Prahran Councillors played a significant role in the setting up of the Prahran Technical School, and in the opening ceremony on 8 October 1915. That is why we are very pleased that Cr Sarah Davies, Mayor of the City of Stonnington will join us to speak to members and guests about heritage in Stonnington.

Ms Gallagher will then speak to members about the work of the Heritage Council, and we will adjourn briefly outside for the unveiling.

The silver trowel used to lay the foundation stone of the building will be on show, and there will be a small display relating to the 1915 opening ceremony. This event will run for approximately one hour. Refreshments will be provided, entry is free, but as always please book ahead (9510 3393 or christine@pmi.net.au).

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## RECENT ACQUISITIONS (Aug-Sep)

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### General Collection

Prince of fire / Daniel Silva  
The other Boleyn girl / Philippa Gregory  
Watson's dictionary of weasel words, contemporary cliches,  
cant and management jargon / Don Watson  
Cross bones / Kathy Reichs  
The twelfth card / Jeffery Deaver  
The broken shore / Peter Temple  
Murder by manuscript / Steve J. Spears  
Arthur and George / Julian Barnes  
The tyrannicide brief / Geoffrey Robertson

As always, thank you to all our members and others who have contributed to the library collection through their donations of books and financial donations to the library. Books donated to the library which do not fit with our collection policy are sold within the library to raise funds for the historical collection. Check out our 'Books for Sale' shelf on the right of the loans desk. Also available for sale are a number of publications by Prahran Historical & Arts Society, including all eight volumes of the Discovering Prahran series.

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## ***RECENT ACQUISITIONS (Aug-Sep) (cont.)***

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### Historical Collection

Victoria Government Gazette 1888 CD-ROM / Archive CD Books Australia

The open road in Victoria: being the ways of many walkers / Robert Henderson Croll [donated by Diane Nicholas]

Aspendale Aspendale Primary 1925-2005 [donated by Aspendale Primary School]

Auburn This temple of grace: the centenary history of Auburn Uniting Church / Geoffrey E.H. Vertigan [donated by Diane Nicholas]

Ballarat The Eureka Stockade 1854-1954 / R.D. Walshe [donated by Jim Badger]

Bannockburn Shire of Bannockburn: a step into the past historical tour including art and craft

Beechworth Gold and granite grandeur: living history of Beechworth, Stanley and Eldorado / David Williams [pictorial]

Bendigo Tablets of memory: the Bendigo Cohns and their descendants 1853-1989 / Alan A. Cohn, Jack M. Cohn and Lawrence J. Cohn [donated by Mary-Louise Phillips]

Journeying together: celebrating St. Andrew's Bendigo 1854-2004 [donated by Nancy Bomford for the Church]

Historic White Hills Cemetery Bendigo: photographs of headstones CD-ROM

Box Hill City of Box Hill golden jubilee souvenir guide 1927-1977: a supplement to the Whitehorse Standard The Ruskin all-about Box Hill

Brighton A short historical sketch of East Brighton and District read at the Garden Vale State School on March, 1925 / H.A. Cheeseman

Casterton Casterton historical street walk from flour mill to Glenelg Inn

Casterton Cenotaph WW1

Casterton Cenotaph WW2

Extracts taken from the minutes of Casterton and District Historical Society Inc. from 1966-1996

Corndale State School Honour Board

Castlemaine Castlemaine Primary School no.119 150 years 1855-2005 / compiled by Gail Woodward [donated by Norma Lupton]

Collingwood Collingwood Football Club the machine: the inside story of football's greatest team / Glenn McFarlane and Michael Roberts

Dandeenongs Little churches of the hills: a brief history of churches in the Dandenongs / Betty Hotchin

Euroa A brief history of the early days of Euroa / C.L. De Boos for back to Euroa 1934 centenary celebrations

Gippsland Mid-Gippsland cemeteries Victoria: Yallourn Cemetery transcriptions 1930-2000

Harrietville Harrietville Cemetery CD-ROM / Dianne Carroll

Hawthorn Hawthorn history walks [set of 14 booklets, vertical file]

Katamatite Katamatite East Primary School 3663 1910-1985 / Ada J. Rudd

Mansfield The Mansfield Valley: 150 years of history [donated by Diane Nicholas]

Melbourne Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, Australia [donated by Catherine Wherry]

Walking Melbourne / Wendy Jacobs [donated by Catherine Wherry]

A diverting history of Melbourne's murky River Yarra / Kristin Otto

Still glides the stream: the natural history of the Yarra from Heidelberg to Yarra Bend / Geoff Lacey

Moe A short history of Moe and Newborough / Graham Goulding

Origin of street names Moe and Newborough / A.P. Ringin

Mooroolbark Fields of faith sown in red earth: 50 golden years for St Francis in the Fields Anglican Church

Mooroolbark 1954-2004 / edited by Clive P. French [donated by Fran Henderson, Church Warden, St. Francis in the Fields Anglican Church]

Mt Eccles Gathering at The Mount: a history to celebrate the centenary of the Mt Eccles Hall 2005 / Pat Spinks

Mt. Hunter The rise and fall of the Mt Hunter Tin Mine: a glimpse at the history of Northern Wilsons Promontory / Ian C. McKellar [donated by Diane Nicholas]

Numurkah Numurkah / William Henry Bossence

Omeo Omeo Pioneer Cemetery CD-ROM / Dianne Carroll

Port Campbell The story of the Port Campbell district / Rosamund Duruz [booklet]

Rosanna Remembering...the future: a series of facts and reflections concerning the first 50 years of Rosanna Baptist Church 1948-1998 / G.S. Winnett

Skye 100 years in Skye 1850-1950 / Dot Morrison

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## *RECENT ACQUISITIONS (Aug-Sep) (cont.)*

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St. Arnaud The history of the Edna Walling C.W.A. Pioneer Park, St. Arnaud / Ella Ebery

St. Kilda Transcripts of memorial inscriptions in the St. Kilda Cemetery and an index of names CD-ROM / transcribed by Genealogical Society of Victoria

Steels Creek Steels Creek: a social history 1946-1995 / Vera Adams

Swan Hill Swan Hill Folk Museum guide / design and artwork by Robert Ingpen [donated by Catherine Wherry]

Tullaroop Former Shire of Tullaroop heritage study stage two: assessment of places of cultural significance CD-ROM / Robyn Ballinger and Wendy Jacobs

Walhalla Walhalla / Lauris Collins [booklet]

Wangaratta Snow on St. Bernard: the Wangaratta Ski Club jubilee book 1930-1980 / edited by Bill Callander and Graham Welsh

Wodonga A tale of twin cities: part 1 - the founding years / Desmond Martin [donated by Jim Badger]

### Biography & Autobiography

John Youl: man and timber man: in sincere appreciation of 50 years of devoted service to the Australian timber industry [booklet]

Savage cows and cabbage leaves: an Italian life / Marie Alafaci [donated by Mary-Louise Phillips]

Father and daughter [autobiography] / Muriel Mathers [donated by Muriel Mathers]

Ned Kelly's last days: setting the record straight on the death of an outlaw / Alex C. Castles

Mary Proctor: convict, pioneer and settler / Jeff Atkinson

### Australian Art & Literature

Treasures of the museum Victoria, Australia / edited by Bryony Cosgrove

Picturesque pursuits: colonial women artists and the amateur tradition / Caroline Jordan

Remembering Barak / edited by Wendy Owen [donated by Diane Nicholas]

Everyman's rules for scientific living / Carrie Tiffany

Heavenly pleasures / Kerry Greenwood [donated by Janina Maciulis]

Man upon his mountain: murders at the Wonnangatta Station / Niall Brennan

### Maritime & Transport

On Austral shores: a modern traveller's guide to the European exploration of the coasts of Victoria and New South Wales / Trevor Lipscombe

The Rattlesnake [exploration] / Jordan Goodman

A journey by train to Walhalla: Australia Day holiday, 31 January, 1938 / from an original manuscript by William G.A. Lewis, edited by John E. Thompson

Travels by Trainor: a railwayman's memories 1921-1931 / edited by John E. Thompson

Trains, troops and tourists: the South Geelong-Drysdale-Queenscliff Railway / Paul and Kathleen Kenny

Ballarat trams: a pictorial history in four postcards [vertical file] [donated by Catherine Wherry]

### Natural History

Wildflowers of Victoria / Jean Galbraith [donated by Catherine Wherry]

The native flowers of Victoria / Edward Edgar Pescott [donated by Catherine Wherry]

Tower Hill Wildlife Reserve [booklet] [donated by Catherine Wherry]

The Alps at the crossroads : the quest for an alpine national park in Victoria / Dick Johnson [donated by Catherine Wherry]

Saltwater River history trails / Hugh Anderson [donated by Diane Nicholas]

### Miscellaneous

Rebellion at Coranderrk / Diane Barwick

Double time: women in Victoria - 150 years / edited by Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly [donated by Mary-Louise Phillips]

Whitewash: on Keith Windschuttle's fabrication of aboriginal history / edited by Robert Manne

The history of B'nai B'rith in Australia and New Zealand 1944-2004 / Garry Fabian [donated by Garry Fabian]

Gilbert - Sparrow Alliances / R.C. Gilbert [family history, donated by Mr Ronald C. Gilbert]

The worn stockwhip: tracking down the past / Beverley Gilbert [donated by Beverley Gilbert]

A city lost and found: Whelan the Wrecker's Melbourne / Robyn Annear

Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society: 87 early issues [donated by Michael O'Brien, Bradstreet's Books]



### ***Book Covering***

Would you like to protect your books from wear and tear by having them professionally covered? Would you like to have a book covered which you intend to give to someone as a gift? This service is strictly for members only.

***Paperbacks - \$1.50 ; hardbacks with dust covers - \$2.50***

Maximum of five books at a time please.

If undeliverable please return to:

**Prahran Mechanics' Institute and Circulating Library**

Victorian and Local History

PO Box 1080, Windsor VIC 3181



***90th ANNIVERSARY OF 140 HIGH STREET***  
***LECTURE: Sidney Myer: A Life, A Legacy by Stella Barber***  
***Book your seats now! Details inside...***