

PRAHNAN MECHANICS' INSTITUTE VICTORIAN HISTORY LIBRARY

NEWSLETTER NO 68 - NOVEMBER 2010



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About the PMI:
140 High Street, Prahran
(PO Box 1080
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library@pmi.net.au
www.pmi.net.au

Open:
Mon-Fri 9.30am-
4.30pm
Sat 9.30am-1.00pm

Membership:
\$12 individual
\$10 student/pensioner
\$30 institutional

Patron:
Keith Dunstan OAM

Feedback/suggestions
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PMI RECEIVES VICTORIA 175 GRANT

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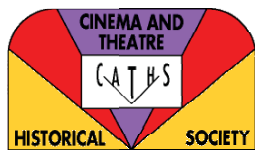
COMING UP IN HISTORY WEEK 24-30 OCT:

Mon 25 Oct - PMI Short History Prize Announcement



Announcement of winning entry
(\$1000 up for grabs!)
Check the PMI website at 11am.

Wed 27 Oct - 7.00pm - Historic Picture Show: Historic Melbourne



To coincide with the Melbourne's 175th birthday,
this year's show features early footage of
Melbourne and will be presented by the President
and Secretary of the Cinema & Theatre Historical
Society (CATHS).

Free entry - refreshments provided - bookings essential.
A joint presentation of the PMI and CATHS.

Sat 30 Oct - 1.00pm - Lecture: Bruce Turner on A Short History of the Victoria Barracks



Bruce Turner is a former Secretary Librarian
of the PMI and former Secretary of the Prahran
Historical & Arts Society (PHAS). He served
with the Royal New Zealand Navy including
active service in Korea, and has been conducting
tours of the Barracks for over a decade.

Free entry - refreshments provided - bookings essential.
A joint presentation of the PMI and PHAS.

Throughout the week: 25-30 October - Display: 'Arena of Wonder': From Wires to Wireless



An extraordinary collection of wireless equipment
and memorabilia to mark the 100th anniversary of
the Wireless Institute of Australia. Items are from
the personal collection of PMI committee member
Peter Wolfenden (also of the WIA).

Free entry, view at your leisure during the PMI's opening hours
(M-F: 9.30-4.30 and Sat: 9.30-1.00).

For more details on the events happening during History Week, visit

www.historyweek.org.au

History Week is generously supported by the Vera Moore Foundation
and is coordinated by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

much more about the project via this newsletter in the coming months.

Thanks and congratulations to Ursula who put a lot of effort into the application and no doubt applied much of what she learned at the recent grant seeker workshop run by the City of Stonnington.

News from the committee

The sale of our 140 High Street property was finally completed on 4th August 2010. The \$5.9 million that Swinburne University paid for the property was put in trust while changes to the Prahran Mechanics' Institute Act 1899 to allow the sale of the property were making their way through Parliament. The amending bill received Royal Assent on the 8th June 2010. When we finally received the money after the sale went through, the amount had grown to approx \$6.1 million due to interest. The money has been placed in a six month term deposit at the Bendigo Bank while the committee formulates plans for the future of the PMI. We have signed a lease with Swinburne University to continue to occupy the 140 High Street building at a peppercorn rent of \$1 per annum until 9th December 2014.

Library Hours

The PMI will be closed on Cup Day, Tuesday 2 November.

We wish all PMI members a very happy and safe Christmas break, and advise that the PMI will **close at 4.30pm on Tuesday 21 December and reopen at 9.30am on Wednesday 5 January 2011.**

The return book chute will be closed throughout the Christmas period, so be sure you have organised your holiday reading and book renewals prior to Christmas closing.

The PMI committee and staff are sincerely grateful for the support and patronage of PMI members in 2010 in the form of prompt subscriptions renewals, generous donations, committed volunteer assistance and general interest in the welfare and progress of the library.

Best wishes for a happy 2011 to all. You can give the gift of reading this Christmas by popping a PMI voucher inside your Christmas card for hard-to-buy-for friends and family members.

NATIONAL FAMILY HISTORY WEEK SEMINAR: 8 AUGUST



Above: Dr George Legge (GSV Writers Circle) and Alison Boundy, who conducted this year's National Family History Week seminar talks.

RIP Verene Lawrence

We were very sad to hear of the death of Mrs Verene Lawrence on 5 September. Mrs Lawrence had been a member and regular visitor to the library since 2002.

Our sympathies also to Les Percy whose mother passed away on 15 August. Mrs Elsie Percy had been a member of the PMI since 1996.

Second hand history books for sale

Those members who are on the email mailout know that we have been offering second hand history books for sale to members only. Those who are not on the email mailout can access the books for sale list at

www.pmi.net.au/for_sale.htm

or check the list at the front desk of the library when you come in or simply browse the second hand history book shelf and then check the prices at the front desk. The list is updated monthly.

National Family History Week

Thanks very much to Alison Boundy (of the PMI committee and the GSV Library) and Dr George Legge (of the Genealogical Society of Victoria Writers' Group) who gave presentations at this year's National Family History Week Seminar. All in attendance found the most interesting themes and detailed talks very interesting and informative.

Facebook & Twitter

The techheads of the PMI membership may be interested to know that the PMI now has an official Facebook page linked to Twitter.

To subscribe to either of these you can use the links on the PMI homepage and then click 'like' and 'follow'. We intend using these to help spread the word about the PMI library and to give members and others a heads up on events, occasional book sales and other activities and news.



facebook

Name:
Prahran Mechanics'
Institute

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VOLUNTEERS' NEWS

2010 Volunteer Stats

To the end of September 2010 PMI volunteers have completed 628 hours of work in the library (various tasks including book care, archive scanning and catalogue work), five book indexes (with several in progress) and delivery of 350 PMI pamphlets in the local area.

We are so grateful for the effort of all volunteers, who have made such a dramatic and positive impact on the library and collection this year. Some long term and important projects, previously relegated to the 'back burner', are now well on the way to realisation thanks to these committed and generous people.

Volunteer Indexers will soon attend a workshop run by the RHSV entitled 'Indexing for Historical Societies'. Some of our volunteers attended the same workshop last year and found it very helpful to their work.

International Volunteer Day

All PMI volunteers who contributed in 2010 will soon receive their invitation to our annual International Volunteer Day Luncheon which will be held at the library in early December. On this day volunteers will receive certificates denoting their specific contributions this year.



**International
Volunteer Day**

During History Week, and to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the Wireless Institute of Australia, the PMI Library will host a most interesting display of wireless equipment and memorabilia from the personal collection of PMI Committee member Peter Wolfenden. In this instalment of 'Writing History' Peter tells us about writing a history of the WIA published in the Association's centenary year ...

AN ARENA OF WONDER: FROM WIRES TO WIRELESS

The Wireless Institute of Australia is the world's first and oldest National Radio Society, which grew out of a group of 50 'wireless' enthusiasts who met in Sydney in 1910. At the time there were no government stations and only 10 wireless stations had been licensed.

About the WIA

All 50 at the meeting had one main aim and that was to increase their knowledge of the new science of wireless. Two individuals stood out at that initial meeting.

George Taylor, who called the meeting, was actively involved in the newly formed Aerial League of Australia and considered that wireless was to become an important part of aviation. Taylor was also associated with the army and was later involved with establishing the first wireless communication for the army.

The other outstanding person was Walter Hannam, a frustrated young man who had tried for 18 months to obtain approval from the government to conduct wireless experiments. Hannam was very capable and had earlier demonstrated his home made wireless equipment. He became the first secretary of the Institute of Wireless Telegraphy in Sydney and was later snapped up by the Mawson Antarctic Expedition in 1911/12.

A similar group formed in Melbourne during 1911, initially adopting the name Amateur Wireless Society of Victoria. Groups also established in other capital cities during the ensuing years but all closed down during World War I, complying with government directives to dismantle their stations. Many members enlisted, taking their skills with them into the armed services.

Following the war, groups re-established



and during 1923-4 broadcasting became a reality generating massive interest on the part of the public. This culminated in local clubs being established in most major suburbs, their members intent on learning how to receive speech and music transmissions.

This was also the time that licensed experimental transmitting stations discovered that by using higher frequencies (than those used by broadcast and shipping), extreme distances could be spanned. They demonstrated that with modest equipment and aerials installed in the backyard, it was possible to communicate directly with England or America! Experimental amateur radio boomed and the world rapidly became 'smaller'!

In May 1924 a federation of the individual state organisations was formed with the aim to provide one coordinated voice for dealing with government authorities. The National Wireless Institute of Australia came into existence.

Today the Wireless Institute of Australia still represents the Australian Amateur Radio Operator, not only at the local level, but internationally through the International Amateur Radio Union.

This year the WIA has been celebrating 100 Years of Organised Amateur Radio in Australia. Dick Smith, (also a radio amateur) was approached to become our Patron. He was deeply involved with a major national celebration held in Canberra during May at which many overseas dignitaries attended. There have also been many smaller local celebratory functions held by clubs right around Australia. A special station call sign, VK100WIA, was issued by the government for use by authorised club stations during part of this year. This has generated much interest both locally and internationally resulting in some 17,000 radio contacts made to date. Any amateur communicating with VK100WIA receives a commemorative card. See www.wia.org.au for more information.

(Contributed by Peter Wolfenden)

Peter Wolfenden first became interested in wireless telecommunication at the tender age of nine, when he and some friends looked to getting a crystal set for their cubby house. Peter's father proceeded to show him how to make one, and Peter says 'I was hooked, or perhaps more correctly 'switched on!' The ability to hear (and later, transmit) messages, through the aether was magical to me!

His enthusiasm was resparked years later

when he studied electrical engineering, and he later sat for the examinations to obtain the Amateur Operators Limited Certificate of Proficiency in 1962. 'I commenced experimenting with Very High and Ultra High frequencies which was the part of the radio spectrum which interested me most at that time.'

The main activity of amateur radio operators is communication in many forms, 'from short range to long distance voice, Morse code, highly technical weak signal communication systems (some of which rely on 'bouncing' signals off aircraft vapour trails or even the moon!) Other amateurs communicate using television in all of its formats.

'To become involved in many of these activities requires a deal of self education - one of the great strengths of amateur radio. Broadcasting as such is not the province of the amateur, however many amateurs provide their skills to help establish and operate community radio stations. When I obtained my licence, it was necessary for every amateur to sign a 'Declaration of Secrecy' which prevented disclosure of any 'overheard' official radio transmissions.

'Involvement with the Wireless Institute of Australia began at the Divisional (State) level in Victoria. In the early 1970s, I was asked to join the Federal Executive (National) as a committee member and in 1976 became Vice President. In 1980, I was elected Federal President of which I remained for three years following which family and business involvements demanded more of my time. As National President, I never considered myself to be a high profile person, rather a 'nuts and bolts' type.'

Peter Wolfenden's history of the WIA, *An Arena of Wonder* was published this year in five installments January-June in the WIA journal *Amateur Radio*, and earned him a WIA Higinbotham Award. A copy of this history can be found in the library.

This history came about from another project Peter was working on - a CD featuring the voices and stories of early amateur experimenters. This project required a linking narration for the individual segments to put them in context.

The WIA holds a great deal of paper documents, but they were largely unsorted and uncatalogued and finding appropriate material was initially quite difficult. Luckily, one interesting document discovered early was a hand written list of early newspaper articles relating to the WIA and amateur experimenters, presumably put together by an earlier historian. He was able to obtain these articles from the microfilmed *Argus* newspapers held at the PMI.

A spread-sheet time-line of newspaper reports and events applicable to amateur radio and the WIA became the back-bone for the research. Further work done at the Adelaide library and Flinders University library provided

(Continued p.6)

other important links. Now the National Library's *Australian Newspapers* database has become available and research can now be done easily, on-line, at home. A copy of the WIA time line can be found at www.wia.org.au/newsevents/centenary/timeline/

'Much of my work was to confirm information already published and in some cases to refute so-called facts! Some very interesting and forgotten aspects of our history also came to light. While I referred to earlier histories published in the WIA journal, *Amateur Radio* magazine and a number of historical books, I generally used these as background information and approached the history via contemporary newspaper reports and specialist magazines. I believe that the early journalists tended to report what they were told or witnessed rather than journalise as is the trend today. If a story could be confirmed from two or three independent sources, it was probably correct and was used in the history.

'So the history grew initially from the research for the CD, but once the WIA board realised that I had done a great deal of research work, it was assumed that the written history would be easy to draft! Twelve months later, the history of the WIA from before that first meeting of like minded people in 1910 to the establishment of the Federal WIA in 1924, was in a form ready for our magazine editor by November 2009. In all, two years were spent on both the CD and the historical article a task which was only possible because I had recently retired!'

Display - 'Arena of Wonder': From Wires to Wireless

The display includes various components used for radio broadcasting and amateur radio stations.

'There are examples of very old receiving and transmitting electron valves together with more modern solid state or transistor equivalents. Other items include Morse code sending keys and a small range of microphones. Early radio receivers are featured including a crystal set using a 'cat's whisker'.

'Most of the items in the display have been personally collected over many years. Some came to me from the deceased estates of early experimenters.

'It is a privilege to share aspects of my collection with visitors to the PMI.'

Additionally, Peter has a list showing early amateurs and radio clubs which shows that there were many wireless experimenters in the Stonnington area.

This display will be on show at the PMI throughout History Week.

Copies of the CD *Sounds of Amateur Radio (V 1 & 2)* mentioned in this article will be available from the PMI for the special price of \$20 during History Week.



NON-FICTION

NOTE: All information reproduced from book jacket blurbs.

WORLD

A history of Britain: the fate of empire 1776-2000 / Simon Schama

'While Britain was losing an empire, it was finding itself ...'

The compelling opening words to *The Fate of the Empire*, set the tone and agenda for the final stage of Simon Schama's epic voyage around Britain, her people and her past. Spanning two centuries, crossing the breadth of the empire and covering a vast expanse of topics – from the birth of feminism to the fate of freedom – he explores the forces that shaped British culture and character from 1776 to 2000.

The story opens on the eve of a bloody revolution, but not a British one. The French Revolution never quite crossed the Channel, though its spirit of fiery defiance and Romantic idealism did, sparking off a round of radical revolts and reforms that gathered momentum over the coming century – from the Irish Rebellion to the Chartist Petition. The great question of the Victorian century was how the world's first industrial society could come through its growing pains without falling apart in social and political conflict. Would the machine age destroy or strengthen the institutions that held Britain together, from the family to the farm? And if the British Empire helped to make Britain stable and rich, did it live up to its promise to help the ruled as well as the rulers? On the way to answering these questions, *The Fate of Empire* makes stops at both celebrations, like the Great Exhibition, and catastrophes, like the Irish potato famine and the Indian Mutiny. Amidst the military and economic shocks and traumas of the 20th century, and through the voices of Churchill, Orwell and H.G. Wells, it asks the question that is still with us – is the immense weight of our history a blessing or a curse, a gift or a millstone around the neck of our future?

It is a vast compelling epic, made more so by the lively storytelling and big bold characters at the heart of the action. But alongside flamboyant heroes, like Nelson and Churchill, Schama recalls unsung heroines and virtually unknown enemies. Alongside the grand ideas, he exposes the grand illusions that cost untold lives. Schama looks head on at the facts and asks, 'What went wrong with the Liberal dream?' The answers emerge in *The Fate of Empire*, which reveals the living ideals of Britain's long history, 'a history that tied together social justice with bloody-minded liberty'.

Atlantic: a vast ocean of a million stories/ Simon Winchester

In this narrative *tour de force*, Simon Winchester dramatises the life story of the Atlantic Ocean, from its birth in the farther recesses of geological time to its eventual extinction millions of years in the future.

Travelling around its edges and across its huge expanse, Winchester reports from the places that encapsulate the Atlantic's most fascinating stories – the age of exploration and the colonisation of the Americas; the rise and fall of the slave trade, and the flourishing of transatlantic commerce; extraordinary tales of seaborne emigration; and the great naval battles that have left an indelible imprint on Atlantic history.

The result is an utterly enthralling mixture of history, science and reportage from a master of narrative non-fiction, and an exhilarating account of a magnificent body of water.

The crucible of Christianity: the forging of a world faith / Jonathan Hill

The first 400 years after the death of Christ saw huge developments and changes in the emerging faith. Christianity spread from Jerusalem to much of the known world; it became the official religion of the Roman Empire; its key texts were written and its core ideas and beliefs were shaped and formalized. Much of this happened under huge pressure, from both within and without.

Jonathan Hill charts the fascinating history of this crucial period in the development of Christianity. He shows how and why certain ideas triumphed over others; introduces the key figures, both within the faith and among its opponents, and their intellectual struggles; covers the main battles, often bitterly fought, both of ideas and of weapons; describes the lives of ordinary Christians and their worship and how each influenced the other.

Occasionally murky, often thrilling and always compelling, the story Hill tells recounts the ways in which a new religion – centred on a single man, arbitrarily executed in the Roman Middle East – first struggled, and then spread, to become the dominant belief system of the world.

AUSTRALIA

Shotgun and standover: the story of the Painters and Dockers / James Morton and Russell Robinson

Few names in Australian criminal history are as evocative as the Painters and Dockers. They were

a trade union gone bad. From their outset, early in the twentieth century, they attracted more than their fair share of nefarious waterfront characters, and by the 1960s, 70s and 80s leading elements of the union had become a heavy criminal fraternity of some of the most violent and dangerous men in Australia. Standover, robbery, smuggling, gambling, prostitution and drugs were the daily trade of the Painters and Dockers, and turf wars and old scores were often settled with the lethal blast of a sawn-off shotgun.

From its connections with gangster Squizzy Taylor in the 1920s, through to its direct links with Melbourne's contemporary gangland wars, this legendary crime group's story touches almost every part of our violent and bloody underworld history. Members and associates of the Painters and Dockers are a roll call of some of Australia's most violent offenders: Brian and Les Kane, Ray 'Chuck' Bennett, Billy Longley and the Moran family, among many others. In this fascinating and compelling account, the group's brutal story is laid bare. *Shotgun and standover* is a definitive work of true crime about one of Australia's most notorious criminal collectives.

The job: fighting crime from the frontline / Charlie Bezzina with Ben Collins

Charlie Bezzina was one of Victoria's top homicide detectives. In his 17 years in the homicide squad, he investigated more than 300 suspicious deaths, including 150 murders – among them the crimes of serial killer Paul Denyer, the killing of Melbourne gangland figure Alphonse Gangitano, the baffling disappearance of former gameshow model Jacquie Ramchen, and the death of former test cricketer David Hookes.

This is the never-before-told story of Bezzina's rise from a sheltered childhood in a Maltese family in Melbourne's western suburbs; to a widely respected senior detective who served Victoria Police with distinction and unquestioned integrity for 37 years, culminating in his highly controversial departure from the Force.

Brimming with exclusive insights that only a seasoned detective can provide, *The Job* is an explosive and intriguing account of what it takes to be a criminal investigator at the highest level.

Snouts in the trough: a true story of the underworld and the brotherhood behind the badge / Andrew Fraser

When a suspected armed robber was shot dead by the cops in an Australian suburban street it set off a deadly reaction that was to have far reaching effects. Andrew Fraser tells the story of the whistleblower cop who saw it all. Four more people were killed within a year, two of them police, two of them by police – everyone was innocent.

That first killing was the beginning of the end. It led to a life on the dark side, of lies and corruption that knew no bounds. This story lifts the lid on some of the darker sides of doing business copper-style. Those caught up in the web included gangsters and police alike.

As compelling and fast-paced as any thriller, this is the true story of police officers who thought they were above the law, who believed that the brotherhood would protect them. It is the story of some very public murders and how millions of dollars in drugs were released onto Australia's streets. It reveals corruption on a scale beyond belief.

Documents that shaped Australia: records of a nation's heritage / John Thompson

100 documents from 1516 to the present day.

Documents that shaped Australia is a richly varied anthology of 100 written and spoken snapshots of the Australian nation across space and time. John Thompson's diverse selection – illustrated with facsimile documents, portraits and maps and featuring detailed contextual introductions – spans over 400 years of recorded Australian history, drawing on letters and diary entries, poems and songs, as well as official commissions, petitions, speeches and Acts of Parliament. This collection of touchstones from the nation's documentary heritage reveals Australia's moments of triumph and its hopes for a richer and better future, as well as its moments of darkness and its times of shame.

Beginning with the first reported sighting of the Southern Cross constellation in 1516 and concluding with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's national apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, *Documents that shaped Australia* also features:

- Governor Arthur Phillip's 1787 memorandum on the treatment of convicts during the forthcoming settlement of the new colony.
- An edited extract from Ned Kelly's 1879 Jerilderie Letter.
- A series of telegrams sent between the Australian Board of Control for International Cricket and the Marylebone Cricket Club in 1933 over the controversial Bodyline Tests.
- The 1963 bark petition of the Yolngu people seeking government recognition of their rights to their traditional lands.
- John Howard's 2001 election policy speech in which he declared 'we will decide who comes to this country'.

Reg Grundy / by Reg Grundy

Reg Grundy is one of Australia's most successful media entrepreneurs – the man behind such shows as *Wheel of Fortune*, *Sale of the Century*, *Perfect Match*, *Prisoner*, *Sons and Daughters*, *Young Doctors* and a host of others, including the great international hit *Neighbours*.

He had a talent for creating winners, but he did not always have the Midas touch – his career was one of dizzying heights and terrifying lows. In this book, the notoriously private person tells his life story for the first time – the true story behind the man behind the shows. Written in his own words, it is full of colourful and charming anecdotes from over 30 years in Australian and international television, starting with the very early days of broadcasting. It is a story of ingenuity, risk-taking, courage, salesmanship – and amazing determination.

With contributions from a host of media insiders and fascinating photographs from Australian broadcasting history.

Vanda & Young: inside Australia's hit factory / John Tait

Harry Vanda and George Young have provided the soundtrack to much of the last 50 years. As members of The Easybeats they penned the classics 'Friday on my mind' and 'Good times', they wrote international hits for Stevie Wright, and John Paul Young, including 'Love is in the air', and were producers and mentors for AC/DC, Rose Tattoo and The Angels.

Vanda & Young is the revelatory story of this incredible song writing, producing and star-making team.

MILITARY

The men who came out of the ground: a gripping account of Australia's first commando campaign: Timor 1942 / Paul Cleary

It was early 1942, Australia was in dire straits. The seemingly all-conquering Japanese military forces had rolled over South-East Asia. Singapore had fallen. Most of the 23,000 soldiers Australia had sent to its north to fight had been captured. Only a few hundred men remained in Timor. These soldiers, the 2/2 Australian Independent Company – Sparrow Force – were all that stood between Japanese forces and Papua New Guinea.

A Special Forces unit set up to fight a different kind of war, many were bushmen and crack shots, and all were trained to fight behind enemy lines. Mobilising the support of the locals, the 2/2 Company avoided pitched battles, instead picking just the right time to strike. They adapted their bush skills to become the masters of this new kind of warfare.

Always greatly outnumbered but relentless in their harassing campaign of skirmishes and ambushes, Sparrow Force tied down thousands of Japanese in a fierce guerrilla war – not just matching them but beating them.

The men of the 2/2 company and their campaign in Timor became a defining moment in Australia's military history.

Bad characters: sex, crime, mutiny, murder and the Australian Imperial Force / Peter Stanley

Australians have celebrated the Anzacs for nearly a century – but what do we really know of what war did to them? Charles Bean, historian of the citizen soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force, wrote that its history spanned 'the good and the bad' – but so far Australians have only looked at the good.

Leading war historian Peter Stanley reveals the citizen soldiers the army regarded as its 'bad characters'. These were men who went absent and deserted, caught or concealed VD, got drunk and fought their comrades, who stole, malingered, behaved insolently toward officers or committed more serious offences, including rape and murder.

This frank history – the first book on the AIF's indiscipline – shows that it became one of the war's most effective fighting forces *in spite of* its record for military misbehaviour. Stanley exposes, with a wealth of examples drawn from court-martial files and soldiers' letters, how the war turned some men into criminals, but also how bad characters made the AIF the superb force it was.

Crumps and camouflaflets: Australian tunnelling companies on the Western Front / Damien Finlayson

Below the shattered ground that separated the British and German infantry on the Western Front in the First World War, an unseen and largely unknown war was raging, fought by miners, 'tunnellers' as they were known. They knew that, at any moment, their lives could be extinguished without warning by hundreds of tonnes of collapsed earth and debris.

These men were engaged in a desperate duel with their German opponents to destroy their opposing front lines by blowing mines, carefully placed in dark, treacherous tunnels under no man's

BOOKS ETCETERA

land. At the same time, the tunnellers worked to defend their own front lines from the German miners, intent on the same deadly task. It was a war within a war in its most literal sense. The secret war culminated in the simultaneous blowing of nineteen huge mines, with a combined payload of almost 450,000 tonnes of high explosives, beneath the Messines Ridge.

Over 4,500 Australians served on the Western Front in three Australian tunnelling companies and their unique support unit, the Alphabet Company. Almost 330 men did not return. The remains of most lie in carefully tended military cemeteries spread along the entire length of what was the British sector of the front, from the Belgian coast at Nieuport Bains in the north, to Bellicourt in the south. Some lie on German soil where they died in captivity. Others are lost in the dark, silent embrace of the earth and whose resting place is known unto God.

Australian tunnelling companies took part in the battles of Fromelles, Arras, Messines, Passchendaele, Cambrai, the defence of Amiens, Lys, and the famous last 100 days. This is the first complete history of Australia's role in the tunnelling war of 1914-1919, of the men and units in which they served, and of life in the tomb-like tunnels of the war underground.

The coast watchers: behind enemy lines, the men who saved the Pacific / Patrick Lindsay

After Pearl Harbor, Japan swept unchecked through the Pacific. But a tiny band of brave men and women stayed behind the enemy lines. Aided by loyal islanders, they watched and they warned. They were the Coast Watchers.

They saved countless lives - including that of future US President John F. Kennedy - and they changed the course of the Pacific war. They knew capture meant certain execution (indeed, more than 30 were caught and executed) but, while the Japanese hunted them, they hid in the jungle, moving their cumbersome teleradios with them (equipment that took more than a dozen men to transport).

From their jungle hideouts, they warned of Japanese air strikes, reported on the movements of their ships and troops, and saved scores of downed airmen. It was the Coast Watchers' reports that ultimately gave the Allies a vital edge in the Pacific, allowing them to take decisive toll on the enemy.

The famed American Admiral William 'Bull' Halsey summed up the Coast Watchers' contribution to the war: 'Guadalcanal saved the Pacific, and the Coast Watchers saved Guadalcanal'.

On Radji Beach: the story of the Australian nurses after the fall of Singapore / Ian W. Shaw

Singapore was in its death throes on 12 February 1942, just days away from its fall to the Japanese. As the city burned, hundreds of desperate people scrambled to the docks to flee. Amongst them were 65 Australian Army nurses, who boarded a coastal freighter, the *Vyner Brooke*.

But theirs was a doomed voyage. In the waters off Banka Island near Sumatra, Japanese bombers attacked and sank the vessel. Those who survived drifted for up to three days before making landfall on one of the many beaches on Banka.

A group of shipwrecked survivors, including 22 nurses, washed up on Radji Beach and voted to surrender to the Japanese rather than slowly starve to death. But the Japanese patrol that found them did not accept their surrender. Instead, it divided the survivors into three groups and the executions began. In the last group were the Australian nurses who died in a hail of bullets as they walked, abreast, into the sea.

Miraculously, there was one survivor, Vivian Bullwinkel, who in spite of a bullet wound endured 13 days in the jungle before surrendering to another Japanese patrol.

Vivian was united with the other surviving *Vyner Brooke* nurses in a makeshift camp on the island, and these courageous women went on to experience the internment camps, starvation and disease over the next three-and-a-half years. Twenty four made it home.

Meticulously researched from the diaries and papers of some of the nurses who survived, this is a moving account of the fate of every nurse who boarded the *Vyner Brooke* that day: their service in Singapore and on the Malay Peninsula, their ill-fated evacuation, and their courage, compassion, ingenuity and fortitude in the unthinkable events that followed.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE PMI LIBRARY:

The monthly 'Recent Additions' list is automatically sent to all those who receive this newsletter my email. If you receive the newsletter by post and would like to have the Recent Additions posted to you please let us know by phone 9510 3393 or by email library@pmi.net.au and we will add you to the mailing list.



HISTORIC HAPPENINGS

For contact details for these events please contact the PMI Library on 9510 3393 or library@pmi.net.au

Box Hill Historical Society - 21 Oct - General meeting: Historian Lesley Alves will talk about her recent publication *Suburban heartland: a history of the City of Whitehorse*.

18 Nov - General meeting: Pamela Hore will talk about her grandfather, Boer War veteran Cpl Eugene Daylesford Patterson.

Brighton Cemeterians - 7pm, 31 Oct - Halloween walk. Don't forget to bring a torch. Kids dress up as ghosts, fairies, pirates or whatever you would like to be. Fun for the whole family. This walk is family orientated and is designed to promote the history that exists at the Brighton General Cemetery. Duration of walk is approx. 60 minutes. Cost is \$25 per family [2 adults and 2 children]. Additional persons \$5 each. Persons without children \$10 each.

Brunswick Community History Group - 1.30pm, 6 Nov - meeting followed by guest speaker Marion Turnbull to talk about 'The Burchett family in Brunswick'.

Camberwell Historical Society - 18 Nov - 'Beyond the façade: Flinders Street Station, more than just a railway station' by Jenny Davies

Coburg Historical Society - The Bluestone Cottage is open 2 pm to 4.30 pm every first Sunday of the month. 82 Bell Street, Coburg.

Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society - Oct – Sundays Costume display at Schramm's Cottage 'A week in the life of a pioneer family'. Each room in Schramm's Cottage will be a day of the week, and this theme will enable us to show an array of clothing, ranging from kitchen aprons to wedding dresses and evening wear. Open for viewing on our usual Sunday opening days throughout October, and on other days by special arrangement.

East Melbourne Historical Society - 20 Oct - AGM talk by Dr Anna Blainey Warner: How in the 1890s members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union alerted the public to the sexual assault and prostitution of young girls, and of the controversy that followed.

Fitzroy Historical Society - 17 Oct - Fitzroy born Mary MacKillop is to become Australia's first saint. The Melbourne based celebration of the canonisation will take place near to Mary MacKillop's birthplace in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. Blessing of the site of the new Mary of the Cross chapel at Central Hall (part of the Australian Catholic University) at 1.15 pm and a street procession departing from Mary's birthplace to the Royal Exhibition Building at 2.15 pm. Further information: www.cam.org.au/mackillop

Hawthorn Historical Society - 17 Oct - Eastern Hill Fire Station visit 2 pm cost \$6.

28 Nov - AGM speaker Jill Barnard author of 'Boroondara's yesterdays'.

Heidelberg Historical Society - Sundays - 'Invitation to the ball' exhibition featuring women's formal wear dating from 1850-1950. Winner of the Victorian Community History Award for Best Exhibit / Display. 2-5 pm every Sunday at the Old Heidelberg Court House Museum cnr Jika St and Park Lane, Heidelberg. Entry \$5 adults, \$2 children under 16, members free. Group bookings for weekdays by arrangement only.

Kew Historical Society - 10 Nov - 'Studley Park modern houses: a post-war legacy' by Kerry Fairbank and Michelle Scollo.

21 Nov - Sunday. Big quarterly book sale 1-4 pm. Phyllis Hore Room (rear of Kew Library), Civic Drive, Kew. Lots of bargains.

Knox Historical Society - 3-17 Oct Seniors Week and Seniors Festival. 'Ambleside' Museum will be open each day 1-4 pm.

Malvern Historical Society - 3 Nov - Visit to Presentation Convent, Windsor. Wednesday 2pm.

Nepean Historical Society - 15 Nov - Visit the South Channel Fort. Learn more about the history of the South Channel Fort on the Nepean Historical Society's excursion on Monday 15th Nov. A boat will leave the Sorrento Pier at 9.30 am going to the South Channel Fort and passing other sites of interest. On arrival we will go ashore for a guided tour of the Fort. The boat will return to Sorrento Pier at 12.30 pm. The cost of \$39 includes morning tea. Bookings required.

Oakleigh Historical Society - 1 Oct to 31 Dec - Exhibition: World War 1 commemorative project: men of the Oakleigh District who died in World War One. Monash Federation Centre, 3 Atherton Road, Oakleigh. Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-5 pm.

Queenscliff Historical Museum - 28 Oct - 'Gum San Chinese Heritage Centre Ararat' presented by Richard de Fegeley who helped to establish the centre.

Prahran Historical & Arts Society - A GM was held on 25 Aug and new committee was elected with plenty of ideas and enthusiasm flowing from it. Preparations for 2011 are underway. The new committee would like to thank the previous committee for their great service to the Society. If you would like to join, subscriptions start from \$5 for pensioners and \$13 for individuals. Contact President/Secretary Gabriel Hermes on 95297442 or write to PO Box 8649 Armadale Vic 3143.

Ringwood & District Historical Society - 26 Oct - Melbourne's tramways by John Wayman, Tramways Museum.

23 Nov - History of social poverty with John Murphy of Melbourne University.

Royal Historical Society of Victoria - 20 Oct - Podcasting workshop

26 & 30 Oct - Play: Jessie Stobo Watson Webb \$15 members, \$20 non-members

29 Oct - Workshop: Indexing for historical societies

St Kilda - Friends of St Kilda Cemetery - 10.30am, 31 Oct. Kid's Halloween tour. Tour leader: Tina Phillips

2pm, 31 Oct - All Souls Tour, Tour leader: Glen Turnbull.

Waverley Historical Society - 24 Oct - David Kemp will speak on the eye-catching Syndal Baptist Church and complex at the corner of High Street Road and Blackburn Road.

Yarra Glen & District Historical Society - 14 Nov - Kinglake history and stories by Deidre Hawkins.

HISTORY WEEK 24-30 OCT:

Picture Show: *Historic Melbourne*
Lecture: *A History of Victoria Barracks*
Display: *Arena of Wonder: from Wires to Wireless*
All the details p. 1

WRITING HISTORY:

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