

# ROSES AND THORNS



INC. A00228417

ISSUE 94 - MARCH 2015

ABN 3435719671

## NEWS FROM OUR GROUP

Welcome back everyone – Christmas, New Year has come and gone. Presents given and received, (some returned or given elsewhere) decorations packed away and now Easter is upon us. It is hard to think of Easter whilst this warm weather endures, but no doubt it will cool down and the eggs the Easter Bunny leaves around the house and garden will not melt.

Our end of year was celebrated at the Benalla Bowls Club and those who came enjoyed the company. The Christmas Hats were an interesting lot, however the clear winner was Joy Cole in a most magnificent creation, and well done to everyone who made the effort.

Regrettably the Introduction Night planned for February was cancelled due to lack of numbers. At committee level we always discuss what events should be planned and thought the Introduction Night would be well received. Can you write and tell us what you would like organised either in the rooms or an outing or even your thoughts whether we should continue with this type of activity?

Bill has settled just out of town and is down to the last few boxes, thoroughly sick of the sight of them and well on to organizing paperwork for the Molyullah Sports. Dot is well recovered from her carpal tunnel operation and Joan and Les have moved into town. Not only is there limited parking space in Church Street, but when Joan and Doreen are in there is competition for prime pram parking, and then when it is home time figuring out whose is whose. Unfortunately Joy had an altercation with a suitcase and received 17 stitches and Carole is busy with her first Grand daughter Harriet Anne and I welcomed my first Grandson Hamish. Our sympathy is extended to Judi Ryan whose brother recently passed away.

In the coming months many of our regular attendees are planning trips interstate and overseas – the two Wendy's, Pam, Tom, Rosemary, Judi, Neil and myself will be away between now and October. This effectually leaves Doreen, Carole, Bill, Chick and myself to staff the room when available. I am heading to Queensland in a couple of weeks and later in the year will be leaving Benalla returning to Melbourne and so am resigning as President.

Therefore we **DESPERATELY NEED ASSISTANCE**. The topic of opening hours was discussed at our last meeting and the situation may mean that we will only be able to open one day per week, and cancel the once a month Saturday opening. So once again I have to ask the question – can you help? I understand many members have other commitments but want to emphasise that those who are regularly coming in all have other tasks and all are on other committees but can find time to devote to the Group.

# NEWSLETTER OF THE BENALLA FAMILY RESEARCH GROUP INC.

ISSN 1449 - 2920

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## Around the traps

Finally there is light at the end of the tunnel with the new batch of computers.

The conflict with networks has been fixed by simply pulling a plug – an oldie but a goodie. Installation of the Digger Disks on the Research Computers is near completion and both have wireless access to the A3 printer, along with the President's computer which has been relocated to the front desk. Tom, Bill and I were getting very squashed at times. Problems with filters on the group's email accounts have been rectified thanks to Karl.

The laptop has internet and wireless access to the A3 printer and will soon have the consolidated index uploaded.

The Cemetery Indexes for Moorngag and Winton compiled by the two Wendy's are now set to have their own website, which is still in the building stage and should be fully operational in three weeks.

[www.http://benalladistrictcemeteries.org](http://www.benalladistrictcemeteries.org)

We say goodbye to Jean from the Gliding Club who has been living here over the summer

months, and who is returning to England for another summer.

Jean has been methodically going through all the Family Histories donated to the group checking to see all the BDM's have been copied for our spare folders. Thank you Jean and hope to see you next year.

Thank you to Pat Manser who recently brought in more folders found in the back shed. These see through ones with a fold-over tab to secure it are light and easy to handle and sit well in the compactors, and are very suitable for BDM certificates.

Chick, Joy and Wendy M. went through old photographs in boxes and albums that had shots of various places in Victoria and elsewhere and bundled them off with letters to the relative Family History Group. We have received some very appreciative replies as most were originals taken on personal holidays. It is rewarding to establish a bond between Groups similar to ours and hope one day treasures of this nature will be sent to us.

Calendars are still available – see Bill if you want one.

If you have time to help out with any of the roles whilst the Office Bearers are away on holidays, you will not be thrown in at the deep end.

**We will give guidance and assistance.** You must realise that finances still have to be attended to, the Library has to be updated, Research has to be done for people who walk in and those who contact us via the internet. Letters and communications have to be attended to.

We need a quorum to have meetings to keep the Group going.

It would be terrible to consider that within a year the room may be unattended and only open by appointment.

Call in or ring any of the Office Bearers to discuss how you can assist.

Thank you.

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**NEW MEMBERS**

**welcome to:**

**Dawn Williams**

**Helen Munro**

**Wendy Delaney**

**Jo Wise**

**re-joining:**

**Meredith Tolliday**

The **knocker-up** (usually an elderly man or woman) performed his duties as a human alarm clock until the 1920s. Using a truncheon or a stick to knock on doors or windows, his job was to wake people up in the morning so that they would get up on time.

[http://blog.myheritage.com/2014/09/labor-day-10-jobs-that-are-obsolete/?utm\\_source=email\\_newsletter&utm\\_campaign=september2014&lang=EN](http://blog.myheritage.com/2014/09/labor-day-10-jobs-that-are-obsolete/?utm_source=email_newsletter&utm_campaign=september2014&lang=EN)

**Our Group has donated \$2000.00 towards digitization of the Benalla Standard on Trove. Although it is a free site many Genealogical and Heritage Groups around Australia and Government Agencies contribute towards digitization.**

**RELIGION THEME CEMETERY WALK continued from previous editions of Roses and Thorns.**

**REV. ALEXANDER MCCONNAN 1856 - 1930**

Alexander McConnan was born in London in 1856 and studied for his ministry at Glasgow University where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree.

He first came to Australia in 1880 then Benalla in 1884. He retired from his ministerial works in 1926 which had spanned 42 years in Benalla and during that time he oversaw many changes to the church and its organisations. His wife passed away not long after the birth of their last child Edgar in 1895 and he together with his three older brothers had careers in Banking and left Benalla. His only daughter Elsie married a parishioner Mr. George Say and remained in Benalla.

Reverend McConnan not only was responsible for the members of his church but he was a single father charged with the raising of five children. His deeds show that he was a remarkable man.

In the early days of Benalla Presbyterians attended Church of England services and after the gold rush declined and town growth increased it was decided to build a permanent Presbyterian Church in Benalla, which is where our family history group is situated. Its erection was overseen by Rev. Robert McCully and was opened in 1866 shortly before he left Benalla.

*"The church remains a very prominent building. It looks down Mair Street to the main street - Bridge Street. It is the most complete mid Victorian church building in the town. It is a good example of neo Gothic architecture and has a fine Italianate front."*

Subsequent ministers built a manse and vestry, however Reverend McConnan named the church St. Andrew's in 1887 and eighteen years later oversaw the building of the new bigger church. He had not taken on an easy task as there was a significant drought during that period and funds were short. After selling church land at the corner of Nunn and Benalla Streets only half the money had been raised. But he was determined and the foundation stone was laid in May 1905 and four months later on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1905 the dedication service was held. A social tea meeting and social was held at the Town Hall to celebrate the opening of the new church and Rev. McConnan was presented with a new clerical gown.

It was quoted that the most outstanding features of the church were its octagonal turret surmounted by a spire, the raked floor that enabled everyone to see the preacher, and the triple coloured glass window.

Reverend McConnan in addition to his clerical duties oversaw the installation of a pipe organ in 1914 which was dedicated to his honour. He had electric lights installed in 1923 and a WW1 honour roll was unveiled in April 1919. One of three Memorial Tablets within the church is for Mr. Victor Say who died in 1919 had been a much esteemed member of the Board of Management and an Elder and who Reverend McConnan called his "right hand man".

Reverend McConnan was a tireless worker establishing the Parish Paper in 1909 which would provide an important link between the minister and his congregation. The Kirk Session was formed in 1885 to assist him with administration tasks. He continued Sunday School work to such an extent that when 122 children were attending in the Old Hall and through the generosity of Mrs. Isabel Say (widow of Victor Say) the Kindergarten Hall was built in 1926.

Other Church Institutions included a Guild for young people in 1909, A Foreign Mission Band in 1910, Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union in 1914, Young Peoples league of Worship in 1915, Young Peoples Mission Band in 1917, the Presbyterian Girls' Association in 1924 and sport was not forgotten with the establishment of tennis and cricket teams both of which were ceased during the first world war.

Reverend McConnan was always concerned with those who were unable to attend services in Benalla and established outstations in the surrounding districts of Baddaginnie, Goomalibee, Kilfeera, North Winton, Warrenabyne and Winton.

In 1931 his family donated a beautiful three paneled stained glass window. Flower stands which are still used were made by the Boys Club under the supervision of Mr. A Hair. The timber came from a Cedar of Lebanon tree Reverend McConnan had planted many years before but which was cut down when the Kindergarten Hall was built.

When Reverend McConnan retired from the church in 1926 he left it in a thriving position and in years to come his tireless work in Benalla and the surrounding districts was not forgotten. He had laid the foundation of a career of earnest work and good citizenship which made his name honoured and revered by the whole community. Besides his church work he took an active interest in local affairs and was a prominent member of the Agricultural Society; he supported the Mechanics Institute and the Benalla High School where McConnan House was named in his honour. He was also a foundation member of the Benalla Golf Club. Reverend Alexander Candlish McConnan passed away on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1930.

## WEB SITES WORTH A LOOK

<http://www.maps.thehunthouse.com/index.htm>

A web site devoted to London. Bruce Hunt © 2008-2015 Incredible passion and devotion to the past as Bruce has recorded the name change of every street in London from 1857/1929/1966. If you are researching this area there will be something on these pages to help.

<https://www.nla.gov.au/family-history/genealogy-selected-websites>

The National Library of Aust. directory of Genealogical Websites. One of the most comprehensive lists and well a look, you might find something new and with all the information constantly being uploaded it is worthwhile to revisit many of the older established sites.

<http://www.insidehistory.com.au/2014/10/new-free-tasmanian-name-index-available/>

Tasmanian information page.

<http://www.access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component/daPublicBaseContainer?component=daViewConsignment&entityId=9583&consignment=P0003>

Old Melbourne Cemetery Burials. Not all burials listed but those that are have quite extensive detail, such as birth place, cause of death, etc.

<https://sites.google.com/site/wheatonsurname/beginners-guide-to-genetic-genealogy>

Explained in simple terms this is a good place to start and understand DNA in Genealogy

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## **VALE - RONDA DOROTHY WHITTEN**

Sadly we record the passing of our friend and colleague Ronda Whitten. Rhonda joined the Group in 1988 and it was evident to her peers what an asset she was to the membership, proving to be one of the most diligent and thorough researchers.

Ronda who farmed at Swanpool with her husband Barry was very community orientated and worked tirelessly for so many worthy causes as noted in the eulogy at her funeral.

May she rest in peace.



## A SOLDIER REMEMBERED

*How often do we bemoan the fact documents, photographs, books, artifacts and even furniture have no provenance. Photos are a particular misery – the mostly stern portraits of people who dressed in their ‘Sunday’ best to be photographed – with no evidence of their identity. Records of this kind are located in every repository in the world. From large and ornate private and public museums, state, federal and local libraries, schools, churches and record collections, even down to the humble local family history centre. We all have them.*

This was the opening paragraph in December’s issue of a story about Ernest “Nip” Simmonds, and a testament to the perseverance and professionalism of our researchers. Well Wendy Maxwell is back in the headlines with another success. The story begins.....

Chick Walker received a call from Joyce asking if she would help clean out her shed. Among the bits and pieces was a large original photograph of a young World War 1 soldier. A few days later Joyce rang to say she had found some post cards which might be connected to the soldier.

Wendy Maxwell, was handed the documents, and proceeded to sort and identify them. Once again with side kick Carole Gray on the case they put together the folder for these donated pictures and documents.

Of course on the way their curiosity was aroused and before we knew it they were researching Benalla Family Research Group Inc.

and detailing who was who and where the connections were for these families. The reoccurring names were Jespersen, Kronberg and Kenny.

I think I might have mentioned last time they “quietly went about their business”, well I have to retract that statement because in the room we are all aware of their detective work!! Really it is quite overawing to listen to their conversations working around a name or a date, never trying to put a round peg in a square hole but painstakingly looking at the results and resources from every angle to make sure they not only find the relevant piece of information but also that it is correct and not assumed.

So Wendy and Carole duly recorded the information in family tree format, identified as many photographs as possible, printed, numbered and indexed the pages and typed an information page on the provenance of the documents.

During Wendy and Carole’s time on this project I once again identified their passion and also recognized how they became ‘part’ of the families. They spoke of these long gone people as though they were alive today and related to them. When their research was recorded and the folder ready for cataloging and shelving they turned to the unnamed original photograph of the young soldier.

He was one of two soldiers they had documented as belonging to these families and could be either:

Karl Hansen JENSEN  
Jep Francis KENNY  
Harry Hansen KRONBERG

The photograph cardboard frame had the impression Vine’s Studio Wangaratta and searching the internet we found a group in Wangaratta had 13,000 plates of this photographer. Although no photographs were on the web site there were descriptions of each and we subsequently contacted the group in the hope they could identify the soldier. From the

description Wendy and Carole thought it was Jep Francis Kenny. Unfortunately we did not get a response so I contacted Ray McKenzie President of the Wangaratta Family History Group Inc. Ray went through their records and also consulting the Vine photographic register contacted us to say he believed he had proof of the name of the soldier. He came to our room the following week not only to show Wendy and Carole what he had found but to share in a relaxing lunch and talk ‘shop’ with his cousin Bill Willett our Secretary.

There was a bit of push and shove to be first to read Ray’s information so eager were our researchers: in the end it was smiles all round and then Wendy and Ray chatted peacefully for half an hour or so before lunch.

Amongst the many postcards is one from Harry Kronberg who wrote home to tell the family when he learnt of his cousin’s death. (page 6)

Here was another young Australian whose life so sadly ended on the battle field.

Although this story ends on a sad note I have to once again acknowledge our “Genealogical Detectives”. I use the term in a broad sense as not only did Wendy and Carole complete some first class research but Chick brought the project to our room. Wonder what she has in store for us next?

Next time you come in, read his story and see the handsome face of a young Aussie who gave his life....

**Jep Francis Kenny**  
**30.8.1871 – 17.8.1916**  
**Anzac Cemetery,**  
**Sailly-sur-la-Lys, France.**

**Lest We Forget**

*This research was once again achieved through local papers, using the resources of Digger®, Trove, National Library of Australia and the Australian War Memorial, Ancestry and general Internet resources.*



England undated postcard.

*"Well now I am coming to the sad part of my story about poor Jep. I do not know if Carrie has heard anything but when I got here I went and made enquiries about the 57th Battalion. I was lucky as I found 2 who were just on the point of leaving for the front. I asked if they were of A coy and they said yes so I asked if they knew Jep. One of them said he had known him since he was about so high pointing to his waist so I commenced to wonder and asked him where he was from. He said from Lochards creek and that he knew the Kennys when they were at Woodsides milking he said that he was alongside of him when he was killed and that he died instantly being hit on the head with a piece of shell. I was sorry they could not stay longer and get more particulars of it but he had to make off with his company. I am writing this to Carrie and I know it will upset you all but it is best to know the truth. The mans name was Bob Miller and said that his brother Charlie was well know (sic) to Kennys. Well I will not write anymore just now. This is for you both so mum must not be jealous but I know you will want the cards. Love to you all. Harry. The old address."*

### **FILLING IN THE GAPS**

One of the recent additions to the Group's Library is 'Violet Town 1917 ANZAC Avenue of Remembrance' written by two of our members, Sheila Burnell and Jenni Kennedy: a book which is the result of a passion for history, Violet Town, soldiers at war, restoration and telling a story.

When I was speaking to Sheila about the book she was quick to acknowledge the input of Jenni Kennedy who did the design, word processing and contributed to the stories. I wanted to know what inspired Sheila to write this particular book and she replied quite simply: 'because of the gaps in the flame trees.'

Her research began with newspaper reports of 81 flame trees planted in 1917 and 66 Dutch Elms in 1918 to commemorate those Violet Town men and women who had enlisted in the Great War. Over the years the elements had reduced these memorial trees to only three and Sheila decided they needed to be replaced. This decision led her to record and research those young country Australians who had answered the call to fight for man and country. A simple thought at first but one that has taken a great deal of energy and time to achieve.

During the 18 months of toil and research, setbacks with both Jenni and Sheila's health put the project in jeopardy, but with determination, the R.S.L. and help from family and friends they were able to complete the task. "I loved doing it and I became more passionate as time went on. I don't believe in war but I love social history," she said quite emphatically. But then followed with the quip, "It's no fun getting old."

I am continually inspired by those people who have the courage and determination to publish their stories as it is by no means an easy task. Sheila has that determination. Wanting to achieve and be proficient she completed a Writing and Editing course and has already published a book of poems and a child's story book. Whilst planting the trees and writing the book she found her enthusiasm for history and writing increased as well as her determination to keep on listening and learning.

Privates and Officers: Nurses and Light Horsemen.

Brothers and cousins enlisted - not all returned.

The stories are brief - read them, they will stir you.

Thanks to Sheila, Jenni and their team 'the gaps have been filled.'

They did not forget.

If undelivered please return to  
P.O. Box 268, Benalla. 3671

**HAPPY EASTER - HOPE THE BUNNY HOPS YOUR WAY**

*The Group, Committee and Editor does not hold itself responsible for statements or opinions expressed by authors of papers published in this newsletter. The accuracy of offers, services or goods appearing here cannot be vouched for by the Group. The Editor reserves the right to condense and edit articles to meet the approved size limits of our newsletter.*

**THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BENALLA FAMILY RESEARCH GROUP INC. WILL BE HELD ON TUESDAY 26TH MAY 2015 IN THE OLD ST. ANDREW'S HALL, 9 CHURCH STREET, BENALLA AT 7.30 PM.**

**AFTER THE READING OF REPORTS ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE. YOU ARE NEEDED BY THE GROUP TO ENSURE WE CONTINUE OUR IMPORTANT WORK IN THE TOWN OF BENALLA.**

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