



FOSTER & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC



PROM COUNTRY HISTORY NEWS

DECEMBER 2015



At the Royal History Society of Victoria's annual Community History Awards in October 2015, Dr Liz Rushen and Museum Curator Jennifer Jones receive Certificates of Commendation for the Society's publication "Prom Country – a History" and for the current exhibition "South Gippsland at war – 1914 to 1918" from Justine Heazlewood, Director and Keeper of Public Records, Public Records Office of Victoria

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Speaking at the well-attended 42nd Annual General Meeting of the Foster & District Historical Society, President Meg Rogers reflected on the launch of the Society's book *Prom Country – A History* and on the success of the opening of the latest exhibition *South Gippsland at War – 1914-1918* by the Chairman of the Victorian ANZAC Centenary Committee, The Hon Ted Baillieu. She also noted the number of new interpretative panels the Society had erected to commemorate the first Field Day in Foster and the arrival of the first settlers at the Landing

Following the AGM, the Society's IT officer, Howard Plowright spoke about the upcoming installation of solar panels to assist the Society in reducing its significant electricity costs.

Unfortunately the grants were far less than the committee had requested and, whilst the Society thanks the Shire and Community Bank for their generosity, this has left the Society's part of the funding much larger than anticipated. The President asked all members to consider supporting the Society by donations for this important major project which will be of excellent long term benefit to the Society. The Society will be paying for important renovations to the roof of the Museum in readiness for the panels.

Cheryl Glowery outlined the plans for the next major exhibition following on from the current World War 1 exhibition. Titled "Road to The Prom", this new exhibition will focus on changes in Yanakie in the 1950s and 1960s, including the soldier settlements, the Yanakie run and the development of tourism on the Prom. The exhibition will feature photographs and interviews with residents.

Museum curator, Jennifer Jones spoke about early pioneer John Baragwanath and showed a number of family artefacts from the Museum's vault. Jennifer thanked guest Mrs Frances McPherson, who donated many of these artefacts to the Museum.

The new Executive Committee is:

President: Meg Rogers  
Vice President: Mike Heal  
Secretary: Clare Carmichael  
Treasurer: Nola Taylor

Ordinary members: Kerry Corcoran, Marilyn Smith and Rob Pritchard

Other members of the Committee:

Curator: Jennifer Jones  
Archives & Research: Noela Cripps  
Maintenance: Reg Williams

### Annual membership subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2015 – 2016 were due & payable **1 JULY 2015** and should have been paid prior to the A.G.M. 4 August 2015. If you have not yet paid your dues, we respectfully request prompt payment of

- \$20 individual membership
- \$35 family membership (two or more people)



## SOLAR PANELS

### MUSEUM POWER CONSUMPTION

The 4.5kw solar panel system has now been installed at the Foster Museum to reduce the on-going expenses incurred in running the Museum. Power is being generated and is estimated to reduce the Museum's power bills by at least 50%.

The Museum's major running cost is the energy required to

- maintain the vault at controlled low humidity and temperature to preserve community records (a requirement of Accredited Museums)
- keep the building at a stable temperature to preserve artefacts on display
- ensure volunteers who offer their time and expertise are comfortable

Before the solar panels were installed sections of the roof were strengthened and replaced. We were fortunate in receiving assistance from local plumber Butch Prain.

The Society received grants towards the cost of the solar panels and installation from the Community Bank Toora and the Shire of South Gippsland, plus generous donations from the Rotary Club of Foster and Toora Lions Club. In addition some members made generous donations to assist us towards the costs. The Committee appreciates and thanks those members for their support.

There is still a small shortfall in the funds to pay for this important addition to the Museum and any further donations from members would be welcome. Please contact the president, Meg Rogers.

Thank you to Howard Plowright in particular, for all the hard work in getting the quotes, sorting through requirements and grants. A big thank you also to member Carol Johnston who supported the grant writing and to Reg and working bee volunteers for sourcing tradesmen and getting the roof sorted.

It takes a lot of effort to keep the Museum in good repair, organised and operating smoothly. There is a great deal that goes on unseen but requires the dedication of all our volunteers. The only funds the Historical Society receives are door entry, publication sales, grants and donations.

The Museum has a band of 6 to 10 dedicated volunteers working many days a week to -

- \*catalogue, conserve, preserve and prepare artefacts and photographs for display or safe storage
- \*create, maintain exhibitions and displays including sourcing new information
- \*photograph artefacts to add to the catalogue
- \*maintain and keep over 100yr old buildings, both internally and externally, in good order
- \*undertake research quests
- \*undertake a myriad of other activities that occur each week

These same volunteers, together with another 12 to 15 people keep the museum open to the public at weekends and daily during school holidays. 28 people during the short holidays and 84 people during the summer holidays are required - a few work many shifts to ensure this happens.

**We would really appreciate more members offering their assistance on the desk, behind the scenes and on working bees. Thanking you in anticipation**

## ANASTASIA THORNLEY

### SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION

Most people in Foster have heard of Anastasia Thornley. She has the biggest and grandest memorial in the local cemetery. Anastasia Lane, behind Foster's exchange hotel is named after her, for she ran the pub for 30 years from the late 19th century to the early years of the 20th century. She was a publican, gold mine manager and community benefactor.

At the Society's October meeting, Society member Kathy Gibson gave a fascinating account of what she, with the help of Dr Liz Rushen, has managed to find out about Anastasia.

Anastasia was born in October 1827 in Callan in Kilkenny, Ireland. She was one of eight children and her mother died when she was only about six. Her father was a farmer and stonemason and lived until he was 100. In 1855 Anastasia left Ireland in search of a better life in Australia. She sailed to Adelaide, one of around 120 Irish girls, assisted immigrants and quickly came to Victoria. The details are sketchy, but she ended up at the gold diggings at Stockyard Creek – later Foster.

In January 1873 she married Manchester-born William Thornley. Then, as she was to do rather often, Anastasia hid her true age (45) declaring she was many years younger. Only a few months later in May 1873, William, the licensee of the Exchange Hotel was dead and Anastasia was a widow. There was some suspicion of poisoning, but the cause of death was recorded as "disease of the brain". Anastasia retained the hotel for the next 30 years. When the hotel was destroyed by fire in the 1880s, she arranged for it to be redesigned and rebuilt in the style of American Romanesque Revival, complete with a turret, making it the grandest hotel in Gippsland.

Not content with being a publican, Anastasia had her fingers in lots of pies, including the local gold mining industry. She was involved in fundraising for the building of Foster's Catholic Church and the town saleyards and took a keen interest in politics. She owned more than 300 acres of land at Meeniyan and had town blocks at Toora. She was reportedly happy to accept gold nuggets in lieu of cash over the counter at her pub.

Anastasia is featured in historian Clare Wright's "Beyond the Ladies Lounge, Australia's female publicans" where it is written she turned the Exchange Hotel's bedrooms into hospital wards when bushfires ravaged the Foster area.

She died at the hotel in January 1907 in her eightieth year. Her funeral procession was massive, the longest seen in Foster for many years, including twenty vehicles, fifty horsemen and 100 on foot. Her niece Ellen Smyth ordered a highly ornate memorial for her at Foster cemetery. At her funeral she was eulogised as being "heart and soul in sympathy with district and people."

Kathy Gibson's research continues. She is planning to turn her work into a booklet and is keen to hear from anyone who can help with details about when and why Anastasia came to Stockyard Creek, her day to day life as a publican and any other information about this prominent citizen of Foster.

If you can help, please speak with the President Meg Rogers or Curator Jennifer Jones. Thank you



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY SHINES IN THE VICTORIAN COMMUNITY HISTORY AWARDS

Foster & District Historical Society featured in the Royal Historical Society of Victoria's annual Victorian Community History Awards. At a presentation at the Melbourne Arts Centre on Monday 19 October 2015, Society member, Dr Liz Rushen and Museum Curator, Jennifer Jones received Certificates of Commendation for the Society's publication "Prom Country – a History" (under the Collaborative Community Award) and for the current exhibition "South Gippsland at war – 1914 to 1918" (under the Historical Interpretation Award). The Society was the only organisation to receive more than one commendation.

The Society has received a number of awards or short-listings over the years, including a short-listing of the exhibition "No more than five miles" in the Museums & Galleries National Awards 2012.

*Prom Country: A History* is available for purchase at the Museum \$34.95

## VISITORS TO THE MUSEUM

Over the winter months we have been visited by a number of members of families represented in the Museum, including relatives of Harold Lasseter and more recently, Ted Bennison the great grandson of Richard Bennison, an early pioneer of the district. We were able to provide photographs and family details

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### Prom Country – A History - on radio

Starting on Saturday 26 September and each Saturday for the next three months, radio station 3mfm's Local Focus programme will be featuring readings of the memories of locals who grew up in the area from Foster & District Historical Society's "Prom Country-a History". The readings have been recorded by Jan Bull of Foster's Little Book Shop and other volunteers at the station. They can be heard between 1pm and 2pm by tuning into 88.1, 89.1 and 89.5 or by listening to the program streamed live on [www.3mfm.com.au](http://www.3mfm.com.au).

### "Road to The Prom."

Work has begun on the next exhibition to be curated by Cheryl Glowery and Jennifer Jones. The exhibition "Road to the Prom" will look at the developments in the Yanakie Isthmus and beyond in the period immediately after the Second World War, through the 1950s and 1960s. The exhibition will examine the development of the Soldier settlements in Yanakie, the Yanakie run and the development of the tourist facilities at the Prom. We are fortunate that there are still residents who can give us oral histories of the time and arrangements have been made to interview them as a group. In addition to the Museum's own photographs and archives, we are receiving assistance from Jim Whelan, a long - time Parks Vic Ranger based at Tidal River.

The exhibition is planned to commence in March 2016.

**The ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER** will be held at the Crawford Hall commencing **6.30pm on Tuesday 1 December 2015**.

The last page of the newsletter is an invitation to detach and place on your fridge as a reminder – **PLEASE ALSO DETACH** and return the **RSVP SLIP by 20 November 2015** to the President for catering purposes.

## Museum open hours

The Museum is open daily during school holidays and on Saturdays and Sundays during term time.

Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day & Good Friday

The hours are 11.00AM – 3.00PM

*All other times by appointment: (03) 5682 1201 / (03) 5682 2297*

## Admission fees

This is a volunteer run and maintained museum. FDHS relies upon the small admission fee to run and maintain the museum on behalf of the Foster & District's Community .

Adult	\$ 5.00
Concession ( <i>senior, pension, special &amp; student over 15yrs</i> )	\$ 4.00
Children (5 – 15)	\$ 0.50c
Family	\$ 10.00
Children (under 5)	free
Members	free

## Foster & District Historical Society Inc

### Membership

Becoming a member of Foster & District Historical Society Inc. helps us to preserve and present the districts' history. Receive free museum entry, newsletters and invitations to events and new exhibition openings.

Single	\$20.00
Family	\$35.00

Foster & District Historical Society Inc. meets at 7.30pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month from February to October. The A.G.M. is held in August. The meetings are held in the Crawford Hall (entry rear of museum complex from the car park). We have many interesting speakers. Visitors and new members are very welcome.

### Officers of the Society:

President	Meg Rogers
Vice-President	Mike Heal
Secretary	Clare Carmichael
Treasurer	Nola Taylor
Ordinary members:	Kerry Corcoran Rob Pritchard Marilyn Smith
Curator	Jennifer Jones
Archivist/Research	Noela Cripps
Maintenance	Reg Williams

**Contact details:** Website [www.promcountryhistory.org.au](http://www.promcountryhistory.org.au)  
Enquiries [enquiries@promcountryhistory.org.au](mailto:enquiries@promcountryhistory.org.au)

### Newsletter

The newsletter is produced quarterly, in September, December, March and June. Contributions by members would be very welcome.

*The Foster & District Historical Society Inc. is a member of the South Gippsland Historical Network, a member of the Gippsland Association of Affiliated Historical Societies, an affiliated member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Foster & District Museum has been appointed by the Public Record Office of Victoria as a Place of Deposit for non-permanent public records and is an accredited museum through Museums Australia (Vic).*

Foster & District Historical Society Inc

# Christmas Dinner

Tuesday

1 December 2015

Crawford Hall, Museum

6.30pm

Cost: \$25.00 per person

BYO: cutlery, plates, bowls, glasses and drinks

Please also bring: *something old, together with its story to share with the group.*

We look forward to seeing you all

RSVP: by Friday 20 November 2015 to ensure we can cater for numbers and diets.

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**RVSP – please detach and return with \$25.00 per person to:  
President FDHS PO BOX 231 FOSTER 3960 or  
drop into the museum in an envelope marked for the ‘attention of the President’**

Name/s.....

(Please cross out the incorrect statements) is / are attending / unable to attend

FDHS Christmas Dinner on 1 December 2015 in the Crawford Hall at 6.30pm

I/W e have included \$25.00 per person for the meal

please tick the box

Dietary requirements: .....