

Foster & District Historical Society Inc.



PROM COUNTRY NEWS

FEBRUARY 2018

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President: Meg Rogers
Vice-President: Mike Heal
Secretary: Kerry Corcoran
Treasurer: Noela Cripps

Curator: Jennifer Jones
Archives: Noela Cripps
Research: Nola Taylor
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Welcoming Party for the Great Victorian Bike Ride

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President's Report

Another busy quarter for the Museum with plenty happening.

We've had interesting speakers. Liz Rushen & Kathy Gibson spoke on Anastasia Thornley, concentrating on Anastasia's Irish roots. Mike McCarthy gave us a wonderful insight into the early Timber Industry on the Prom and Muddy Creek in the 1850's. Then in late November we participated in the hosting of the Great Victorian Bike Ride through Foster. The day was a huge success for the town and the Museum made a nice profit.

We finished the year with our Christmas Break-up which was very well attended and I wish to thank all those members who helped to make the evening an enjoyable evening.

We have applied for numerous grants and were notified that we were successful with the grant from the Federal Government to paint the Agnes School and to install glass doors on the cabinets in Crawford Hall. The Shire are intending to paint Crawford Hall and this will greatly improve the appearance of these 2 buildings. The Calendars are selling well and are a continuing source of revenue for us.

The New Year is shaping up to be busy with the Garage Sale on Australia Day and manning a stall at the Foster Show on February 24th. The removal of the wonderful Sports Exhibition and the installation of the new exhibition "The Franklin River – Mountain to Sea" following the river and all the events occurring along it from Gunyah to Port Franklin. March 10th is the opening day when we will also launch Neil Everitt's book on the Hydro Scheme on the Franklin Falls at Kewita.

Finally I would like to thank all the volunteers who have manned the front desk – sometimes without a single visitor, during the holiday season.

History Matters

Meg Rogers.

COMING EVENTS

Tuesday 6 March - Monthly meeting with Guest Speaker Mike McCarthy. His topic is the sawmills and tramway at Toora

.Saturday, 10 March - Official Opening of New Exhibition and Book Launch

Tuesday 3 April – Monthly meeting with Guest Speaker, Lyn Skillern. Her topic is the Larkforce, WW2.

Tuesday 1 May - members' meeting.

A Request - to assist with the project to acknowledge ANZACS who were buried in cemeteries in Australia. The Society seeks the help of residents to identify any relative who may have been an ANZAC or may have served in the Boer War and who is buried in a local cemetery, but is not on the existing list, which the Society holds. The Society, in conjunction with the Foster RSL sub-branch and with the permission of the relevant cemetery trusts, wishes to recognize those returning ANZACS lying in the graves in local cemeteries. For the whole of April 2018 Australian flags will be placed on each of these graves. For further information , Contact : Nola Taylor for Foster on 5682 2279: Rae Knee for Toora on 0428862253, or Marilyn Smith for Welshpool on 0408 517 043. If you can assist, the Society needs the information by 28 February 2018.

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Visit to Toora Cemetery, Tuesday, 3 October 2017

Nineteen Foster and District Historical Society members attended the walk as well as Rachel Day from ABC Sale. Rae Knee, Jan Best and Neil Cook, members of the Toora Cemetery Trust provided us with a history of the cemetery and biographical sketches of a number of people who were buried there.

It appears that the cemetery was used from 1884, but early records were destroyed by fire. The site was officially selected in 1887 and by 1894, John Scannell, Arthur Jacobs, Thomas Scales, James Fraser and Gabriel Silcox were appointed as Trustees of the Toora Public Cemetery. The cemetery records are accessible on Google, on Ozgen.online.

The graves that were selected for the tour included Nurse Harriett Everitt (nee Evans), mother/grandmother/ mother-in-law of the 14 Everitts who are buried at Toora; Jabez Richards (1879-1955), who lived at Kewita, fought in the Boer War and later worked as a stock and station agent. He married Annie Osborne in 1929 and lived in Toora; Charlie Berger, an athletics coach who migrated from Switzerland and coached young runners in the district; the Lonsdale children who perished in the fires of 1906 at Mt Best.

Charles Frisco, described as a pauper in the cemetery's receipt books, has yet to have his grave identified.

The excursion ended at Historical Society's secretary Kerry Corcoran's property at Toora with a delicious barbecue prepared by Kerry and husband Terry.

Q and A session on the *book Anastasia: From Callan to Stockyard Creek*, by Elizabeth Rushen and Kathlyn Gibson, Anchor Books 2017.

The Foster and District Historical Society hosted this session on Tuesday, 7 November, Melbourne Cup Day.

The evening was well attended, demonstrating a keen interest in the book about Anastasia's life.

Kathy began by sharing some reflections inspired by the keynote address by Graeme Davison at the recently-held Victorian Community History Awards.

Professor Davison reflected on several themes: that of interrogating the concept of 'belonging'; different meanings of 'community' and its place in local history, and the significance of family history contributing to local history. Kathy shared some of his reflections and suggested these were pertinent to the writing of Anastasia's story.

Liz then showed a selection of video clips from the book launch at Callan, Co Kilkenny, Ireland in the grounds of the historic Callan Workhouse which is now a developing arts precinct. Rosie Lynch, the curator of the Callan Workhouse, welcomed the large group who had assembled to hear Anastasia's story. The weather was superb as Richard Andrews, the Australian Ambassador to Ireland observed *warm Australian weather*. Some lovely comments were made. Joe Kennedy launched the book and humorously quipped *he always looks for the mistakes and this time he could find none*. Joe is the local *seanaiche* (Irish storyteller) perhaps like our Cobber or Meg Rogers to name just a couple ! Joe Kennedy has also written a number of books on Callan's heritage and has been a long time secretary of the Callan Heritage Society. It was nice to hear the Ambassador's comment that the book was written with a lot of *love and respect* for Anastasia. Local representatives, including Martin Brett, Mayor of Kilkenny, Rita O'Neill of Callan Heritage Society congratulated the authors and were delighted in reading Anastasia's story to learn of the successes she achieved. They were also heartened to welcome back Anastasia Burke's story as part of their own Callan heritage.

Callan Workhouse in the 19th century, throughout Anastasia's life in Ireland, by contrast was a site of widespread poverty and suffering. Liz outlined its history. It was built in 1841 to house about 600 paupers. The great famine of 1847 to 1851 that devastated the population resulted in the workhouse accommodating up to 2000 persons most of whom died there. The Cherry Field graveyard in the same vicinity was the place where the deceased bodies were transported on carts to be interred. Anastasia would have witnessed the widespread suffering which claimed the lives of two of her sisters in the year before her emigration in 1855. It was highly likely that Anastasia's father as a stonemason may have worked on the construction of the workhouse.

A lively discussion followed the video presentation. Questions and comments included clarification that Thornley's Exchange Hotel was always on its current site, occupied by the ¼ acre miners right. Later legislation allowed its expansion to the owner on proof of prior residence. Other questions related to the nature of Thornleys' health and the inquest. A comment was made that the community perspective of an immigrant population could be highlighted in Foster's 150 anniversary. There was interest in the description of the extent of the workhouse land and buildings and the area of the Callan Poor Law Union.

The nature of collaboration between the authors was of interest and an outline was given of the stages of research and writing, acknowledging that this biography was highly contextually based. The authors stated that they greatly appreciated Foster and District Historical Society's resources, both records and members, without which Anastasia's this story may not have been written and published.

Kathy Gibson



The Australian Ambassador and Liz Rushen at the Callan launch

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