MORWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

published monthly, except December

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7·30pm in St.Andrews Presbyterian Church Hall

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WELCOME TO THE JUNE NEWSLETTER

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society held in April the following office-bearers were elected: President:Lou Bond, Vice-President:Eric Lubcke, Secretary:Elsie McMaster, Treasurer: Dot Taylor, Committee: Audrey Conrow, Jess Cafiso, Bob Meredith, Perce Mooney.

Members are reminded that annual subscriptions are now due: $7.00 a single, $10.00 a couple or family.

This month we are pleased to include in the Newsletter the text of two recordings made by the late Mr.Les Hare about ten years ago. Also reprinted is an item from theCyclopedia of Victoria, taken from Morwell Historical Society News Vol13, 1974.

Another item of topical interest, in view of the recent Gippsland floods, comes from the Morwell "Advertiser" of June 1909.

NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, JUNE 19.....

The room is warm, the seats are soft and the company is congenial!

Hope to see you there!

Extracts from the Cyclopedia of Victoria, Volume 111, published in 1905.

Morwell in 1905.

The township of Morwell, which lies ninety-nine miles south-eastward from Melbourne, on the railway line to Sale and Bairnsdale, and eight miles to the westward of Traralgon, is the centre of a large agricultural and dairying district, in the midst of extensive deposits of brown coal. The township, a few years ago, attained some prominence on account of the Great Morwell Brown Coal Mine, situated near the bank of the Latrobe River, six miles to the north-west.

The best point of vantage from which to obtain a bird's eye view of Morwell and its environs is from the summit of the belfry tower of the handsome Church of the Sacred Heart, situated in the Commercial Road, near the railway station. From this elevation, Morwell presents itself as a long, straggling township, with streets running east and west, parallel to each other and to the railway line.

It is surrounded on all sides, save to the eastward, by ranges densely clothed with timber, principally messmate, stringy bark, and by small patches of blue gum. To the south-west are the Strzelecki Ranges, seeming quite close, but in reality some thirty miles away from the township, covered with a mantle of sombre green.

Away to the north-west, and considerably nearer the township, are the Haunted Hills, which derive their name from a curious legend of the early days, when this particular locality was part of a cattle track used by the drovers at that time to convey large mobs of sheep and cattle from Bairnsdale and the districts further east, to Melbourne.

A drover who was the first to adopt that route, so the legend runs, on approaching a certain spot in the hills, was descending a steep incline, when the mob of cattle he was driving suddenly stampeded, and fled,terror-stricken, into the dense scrub, immediately disappeared from view, as if by magic, and were never seen again. The dismayed and awe-impressed drover strenuously maintained that an unearthly noise, emanating from the bowels of the earth, had bewitched his cattle, nor could he be persuaded to follow that route again.

From that time forward, other drovers, pursuing the same track, always averred that, at this very spot, their cattle always stampeded or became unmanageable, and that here, many of their stock were always lost, those in charge of them declaring that when this locality in the hills was reached, there could be distinctly heard the tramp of another mob of cattle descending the other side of the hill, but it invariably happened that,when any of the stockmen rode to the opposite slope for the purpose of ascertaining whether any such travelling stock could be seen, not a trace of them could be anywhere visible, and so they concluded that the wierd sounds arose from the ghostly tramp of the spectral cattle,which had so mysteriously disappeared years ago, when the track was first opened up.

The mysterious noise has, however, long since been accounted for by the phenomenon of an echo,arising from the peculiar formation of the hills in this locality, and one can readily understand the awful and impressive influence which such a phenomenon would exercise upon the minds of those probably superatitious stockmen in the wild solitude of the hills, and wholly unacquainted with its natural cause.

This echo is not confined, however, to these particular hills, but is peculiar to the township itself, for should a band be playing in the Commercial Road, it will sound as if the music came from some considerable distance up the street, and upon the other side of the railway line.

Away to the north of Morwell, in the distance can be seen the Dividing Range and Mount Baw Baw, the most prominent feature of the landscape, with its summit partially covered with snow, while, as far as the eye can reach,between the township and the purple contour of the hills, lies a stretch of gently undulating country, thickly timbered, so that as the spectator looks down upon the little township, from his position on the top of the church tower, Morwell appears to occupy a small clearing in the centre of an immense forest.

On the north side of the railway line, almost in the centre of the township, can be seen the tall poppet-heads of what was at one time,the shaft of the Maryvale Company's brown coal mine.

About a mile further on, westwards,on the same side of the line, are the Morwell Brick Works, and facing these, on the opposite side of the railway, the eye is arrested by the curious bottle-shaped kilns of the Morwell Brick, Tile, and Pottery Company.

The principal street in Morwell is the Commercial Road, the houses in which are built on one side of the thoroughfare only, and front the railway station, alongside of which, facing the houses, are planted a number of tall pine trees, which extend for a considerable distance along the street.

The houses are very irregular, and with two exceptions, the street contains no buildings worthy of special notice, these being the Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart, and the Post Office.

The former is a fine specimen of early English Gothic architecture, built of red brick, with a handsome belfry tower, which rises to a height of 75 feet. It was planned by the well-known Melbourne firm of architects, Messrs. Reed, Smart, and Tappin, who have designed so many ecclesiastical buildings in Victoria. The contractor for the building was Mr. J. Hall, builder, of Morwell, and it was erected at a cost of £2,566, of which sum £1,000 was the munificent donation of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, a resident of the place.

This really handsome church is the most striking architectural feature in the township, and is so finely proportioned as to give a feeling of spaciousness to the whole structure, making the building appear much larger tnan it really is. The main aisle is 60 feet by 30 feet, and its height from the floor to the apex of the roof, which is constructed of Californian red pine,divided into panels, is 32 feet. The chancel, which has an octagonal apsis, contains a fine, ornamental ceiling of fibrous plaster. In the sanctuary adjoining are two stained glass windows, containing two lights each, executed by Mr. Montgomery of Melbourne, the one representing the Virgin Mary, and the other, St. Joseph and the Immaculate Conception. The ventilation of the church is effected by means of a central octagonal fleche.

The Post Office, situated in Commercial Road, is a large, handsome, and commodious structure of brick, with buff-coloured facings, and immediately arrests the attention of visitors crossing from the railway station to the main street. It divides with the Church of the Sacred Heart the architectural honours of the township.

A great deal of interest in Morwell was excited seventeen years ago (1888) by the discovery of brown coal in the vicinity, when the late Mr.Henry Godridge, who had been prospecting in the neighbourhood for years, struck a deposit of brown coal on the north bank of the Latrobe River, six miles north-west from the township. A number of residents recognized the probable importance of the discovery, and eventually a Melbourne syndicate was formed, and the seam was opened up. A shaft was sunk, some 36 feet by 12 feet, and coal found a few feet from the surface.

About this time, Mr. W. Tulloch, an old resident in Morwell, found,at a distance of ten chains from the shaft sunk by Godridge and party, coal in the hillside, eight chains away from the bank of the river. This proved to be an almost solid mass of brown coal, and as from its natural position it could be worked with less difficulty and expense by quarrying into the hill, instead of sinking, the original claim of Godridge and party was abandoned in favour of Mr. Tulloch's. It was found, on examination, that the hill was covered with a surface stripping of earth 25 feet thick at its deepest part, when a solid seam of coal was disclosed in a "face" 60 feet in thickness from the base to the summit of the hill.

After this discovery the Great Morwell Brown Coal Company was formed for the working of the mine, and arrangements made with the Government to lay down a loop line from the Gippsland main line to the mine, a distance of three and a half miles. The company was to construct the line at its own expense, the Government agreeing to refund £5,000 on condition that the company would erect a briquette plant.

When the line was completed, a large quantity of brown coal in its raw state was despatched to Melbourne, and other markets elsewhere, and for a time the coal met with a ready sale.

The Great Morwell Company then entered into a contract with the Otis Elevator Company for the erection of a briquette plant. It had been previously proposed by Mr. Tulloch that a small plant be imported from Germany, and to engage an expert there, to be sent out in charge of it, but in this proposal he was overruled, and the late Mr. Perry, of the Otis Elevator Company, went to Germany, and returned with plans for the construction of a briquetting machine. In due time the plant was constructed, and when tested was found to be entirely unsuitable.

Before the machinery was paid for, a fire occurred, in which the buildings were destroyed, with the whole of the plant. Fresh machinery was erected, and guaranteed to be efficient, but this also proved to be a failure, and the shareholders became disheartened.

The great majority of the shares were held by the first syndicate, 11. and the holders of them refused further calls. Consequently, the whole of the property,including the lease, fell into the hands of the National Bank as liquidators, who sold both lease and machinery to Holmes Bros. Mr. Tulloch then applied for the forfeiture of the lease in August,1899, in consequence of the non-compliance with the labour covenants. In this he was unsuccessful, but a year later he made another application, which succeeded. At this time Holmes Bros. had sold the lease to the Gippsland Goldfields Syndicate, who entered an action against Tulloch and Co. for trespass, claiming £500 damages.. The case lasted several months, and was finally decided in favour of the defendants. The Goldfields Syndicate entered an appeal which fell through, leaving Tulloch and Co. once more in possession of the mine.

Mr. Tulloch then approached the Government to repair the loop line, but they declined to do this, and then the Company met the demand of the Railway Department for £250 for repairs to the line.

The Government next required a further bank guarantee of £175 per annum from the company for all time. This demand Tulloch and Co. would not accede to, and in 1902 Mr. Tulloch withdrew, and the undertaking went into liquidation.

Mr. Tulloch still holds the lease, and many of the residents of Morwell continue to be very sanguine that,ultimately, the immense areas of brown coal in the neighbourhood will be operated upon, and will revive the prosperity of the township.

A scheme has been recently suggested whereby this almost inexhaustible supply of fuel could be profitably used as a means of generating electricity in sufficient quantity to perform the whole of the domestic work of Melbourne as regards lighting, cooking and heating,etc.,with economy and cleanliness. This, it is contended, could be accomplished without difficulty by the construction of large "generators" in the neighbourhood of the mines producing alternating currents of high pressure, which could be conveyed to Melbourne by means of wires three or four inches in diameter, and there received into a "transformer", and changed into low pressure currents available for immediate use.

Near the Great Morwell mine, on the other side of the loop line, two years afterwards, the Great Gippsland Company started operations on land held under lease by Dr. L. L. Smith, which extends over 2,000 acres, but little work has been done, owing to the humidity of the soil.

The Maryvale mine, on private land leased in the township,sank, by means of a diamond drill supplied by the Government, 1,009 feet, proving over 800 feet of brown coal. At 25 feet the drill went through splendid fire-clay, which Morwell possesses in abundance. This company abandoned operations thirteen years ago (1892).

Doubtless it was owing to the machinery having failed in the manufacture of briquettes, coupled with the fact that, shortly after the opening of the Morwell mine, the black coal measures of Korumburra were opened up, and the fuel rapidly placed on the market, that the interest originally excited in the area by the brown coal discoveries rapidly faded out of the public mind, and this branch of industry passed into almost complete oblivion. Thus, Morwell narrowly missed becoming one of the most thriving commercial centres in Gippsland.

That the failure to produce good briquettes did not proceed from any defect in the quality of the coal itself, but was due to the unsuitableness of the machinery imported, is proved by the fact that a sample of coal sent to Germany was manufactured into briquettes which gave every satisfaction, being very hard, and only capable of fracture by a forcible blow, whereas those manufactured locally wanted cohesion and were friable to the touch.

Still, notwithstanding the combination of adverse circumstances by which Morwell has missed its mark as an important mining centre for the present, it is a thriving place. A large trade is done in dairy cattle raising and in general agriculture in the surrounding districts.

There are several first-class hotels in the township, and churches representing all the religious denominations.

THE FLOODS

BIGGEST FOR 13 YEARS

OVER £700 OF DAMAGE DONE IN THE MORWELL SHIRE

[FROM THE MORWELL ADVERTISER 18/06 1909]

Unusually heavy rains fell over Jeeralang, Jumbuk, Budgeree and Gunyah on Wednesday and Thursday, last week, which had the effect of bringing big floods down the Billy's Creek, Middle Creek, Traralgon Creek, and the Morwell River on Friday night and Saturday morning, such as had not been previously seen by the oldest residents; and the damage caused throughout the district is considerable. Enormous logs that had lain bedded in the creeks and rivers flats for many years were lifted and carried miles down the stream.

At the Boolarra bridge a pile of timber, estimated at 1000 tons, was to be seen during Saturday and Sunday on the upper side of the bridge. This enormous weight had the effect of throwing the bridge about a foot out of line, but the pressure was relieved somewhat by the flood overflowing round Mr John Walsh's flat on one side and Mr Penaluna's on the other, and about 16 feet of the approach on the Boolarra end of the Bridge was carried away. Cr Penaluna telegraphed to Morwell for assistance in affecting repairs, and a gang of men was sent out on Sunday to temporarily bridge the gap, after which they set to work to clear the waterway of the timber. This was done by floating the timber away with the stream. Considerable difficulty was met in this respect, by the manner in which the mass was locked together, and some very narrow escapes from drowning occurred by workmen slipping off logs into the water. One man - Mr Fancke - had his foot crushed, and was sent to Morwell for medical treatment.

At Middle Creek, the most serious damage was done. No less than four of the bridges were carried away. Two of these were much out of repair, and the Morwell Council decided some time ago to abandon them in lieu of a side-cutting. The side-cutting had been completed, but the late rains had caused such land-slips on it, that the roadway is completely blocked. This road served the Messrs Brazel Bros, Smith, and A. and W. Coleman.

Mr James Sawyers will be very much inconvenienced by the loss of the bridge giving him access to his place , whilst he had also his pigsties and a quantity of fencing carried away.

The bridge at Bryson's lies a chain or so down the stream below its old site, and for a distance of three to four chain, the creek is completely filled with timber to a depth of about 15 feet, and 1 1/2 chain wide. The old ford, used before the bridge was erected. is covered with debris, and the Messrs Gilbert Bros., and others on the same side have to go by way of Whitelaw's Track to reach Yinnar.

Billy's Creek overflowed and flooded all the adjacent flats. Messrs Frasor's and Harkness' and Hall's cultivated land was also under water

The culvert on Keogh's road, Yinnar opposite Me Ern Francis, was carried away bodily and deposited about 4 chain down Quigley's paddock. The corduroy on the Mardan Road, near Yinnar, has also been damaged.

Tha amount of damaged to roads and bridges caused by the floods, so far as is known, is established at from £700 and £1000, while the destruction of fences and cultivation is considerable. Very little loss of cattle is reported.

The banks of Billy's and Middle Creeks have been cleared of all undergrowth and ferns, and in many places the course has been altered.

One farmer on the latter creek states he was doing a bit of ploughing and harrowing on Thursday afternoon, near the creek, and on finishing for the day he left the plough ahd harrows there. On Friday morning, when he went out to complete his work, on looking about him, wondering whether, during the night, he had been carried away and dropped in other part. But no, there were the same old hills on both sides. But where were his plogh and harrows, and the flat he had tilled the day before? Some of the flat was there, the creek had taken possession ofthe rest. After carefully taking his bearings to locate the site of his implements, he commenced to dig, and there, under about a foot of silt, discovered his plough and harrows.

The embankment forming the roadway over the river flat was threatened. Mr Brinsmead, noticing a gap being washed through the bank, at once set to work to check the flow, whilst his son came into town for assistance, which arrived just in time to avert serious consequences. There is a wide stretch of flat country adjoining the river near Mr Brinsmead's and the flood coming with terrible swiftness, surrounded a good many of his milking cows, as well as some sheep. To get the stock out meant taking them up the stream for about a quarter of a mile. However, after a deal of labor, all the cows were safely placed on higher land, the only loss being five lambs.

Mr C. Davey, whose land adjoins Brinsmead's had several horses caught in the waters, but they were rescued without any loss.- Mr W. Godridge, at Morwell Bridge, has missed two valuable horses, and as they were in a paddock adjoining the river, it is supposed they have drowned. - Mr Vary, another land-owner on the river, suffered about the most loss. Quite a number of his cattle, horses and sheep were surrounded by the flood. At first sight, the matter of rescuing them looked hopeless, but after a good deal of hard work, all were saved excepting about thirty sheep.- The flood overflowed the road near Mr Rowell's place. Most of the low lying country is still under water, and, no doubt, will be so for a few days yet. The Latrobe River over-flowed its banks in places. Howlett's flats, as well as others were all under water, but no serious damage has yet occurred

LES HARE'S MORWELL

The late Arthur Leslie Hare O.B.E. was one of Morwell's best known and most respected citizens. He came to Morwell with his family as a young man and, in 1902, secured a position with George Billingsley who was a carter and contractor and owned a livery stable in the town.This work led to his later setting up his own carrying business, taxi service and garage. He was a long-serving member of Morwell Shire Council,(he was President eight times), and was vitally interested in anything which would promote the development of Morwell and its surrounding areas.

About ten years ago, he recorded some of his memories of Morwell as it was when he first knew it and we are indebted to his grandson, Mr.Les Campbell, who recorded the tapes, for allowing us to publish the text in the Newsletter. So, here for your enjoyment are Les Hare's memories of Morwell:-

" Morwell in 1902-03 was a very small town. There was only a population of about 5oo. There were no big industries. The only industries we had were a butter factory, down along Bridles Creek, below the Ridge, owned by Wood and Co.,(it used to manufacture four or five tons of butter a week), and we had a brick and pottery works owned by a local syndicate. It used to produce wire-cut bricks and sent bricks from here all over Gippsland. There was also a chap from Scotland, Jack the Potter, and he used to make pots and saucers for flowers, vases, all that sort of thing, out of clay.

There was a clayhole where the Elderly Citizens'Flats are today. At the brickworks, they sank a shaft and they got brown coal at about 15 or 20 feet and they used to mine that and mix it with clay and make clay and coal bricks. When those bricks were burnt they were quite a nice blue colour. The coal in the bricks used to help burn the clay and they were only about half the weight of ordinary bricks but they were quite good for outside work.

There were two kilns - one held 30,000 bricks, the other 40,000. Fred Williams and I used to cart them to the railway station. We used to cart 2000 bricks a day each on a draught-horse drawn dray and put them on railway trucks and they were sent all over Gippsland. We'd do that for a week or ten days until we emptied the kiln.

These bricks were pretty hard on the fingers and we used to cut the top off an old boot and slit the top of the leather on both sides and stick our forefinger in one slit and our little finger in the other. That acted as a sort of pad to save your fingers. We used to pick up five or six bricks at a time, tip them up on our arms and carry them off the dray in to the railway trucks. The same thing happened when we loaded them on the dray at the brickworks.

Mr.Corbett was very strict about the bricks. When we came back from the station he'd come out and inspect our drays to see if there were any corners off the bricks in the bottom of the dray, but we woke up to that - we used to tip the dray in the station yard before we went back for another load! But we never knocked the bricks about.

Another brick yard over the other side where the Men's Club is now was owned by Bill and George Corbett. They were in opposition to their father at the brick and pottery works. Morwell bricks in those days were in great demand. When Yallourn started up, they put in a brickworks out there and opened up a clayhole but the clay wasn't too good - the bricks used to melt away a bit on the outside - so they used to cart Morwell clay out and mix it with Yallourn clay to make the bricks.They put in high class machinery out there which did away with a lot of labour. They could sell bricks much cheaper than the locals could do and that's why the Morwell kilns closed down, I think.

The business part of the town was between Hazelwood Rd. and Tarwin St.-there were no bitumen roads in those days, just a sand road with asphalt footpaths along Hazelwood Rd. and Tarwin St. The Main Street (Commercial Rd.) from the Mirboo railway crossing to the top of the hill near the Catholic church was just a sea of mud for much of the year. There was a bit of a passage down the centre with some gravel and sand for the traffic to go through but in winter we used to have to come up with the horse and dray and scrape a path through the mud about 3 - 4 feet wide and three inches deep across the top of Tarwin St. and put a bit of sand down for pedestrians to get across to the railway

station or the post office. There was a turnstile to the railway station about opposite where Woolworths is now, and we used to have to clean a path and put sand down so passengers could get to the station with dry feet. That had to be done every winter.

Tarwin St. was just washed out gutters and clay. Gutters in those days were red gum slabs and red gum kerbing from Hazelwood Rd.to Tarwin St. and along Tarwin St.

The businesses in the town in those days? Well, we had a plumber, Samuel Bryden. He used to make all the tanks - the water supply was all handled in tanks and plumbers were kept pretty busy making tanks and horse troughs and ten-gallon milk and cream cans.

We had two bakers shops in the town. There was McDonald and Hohn. McDonald ran a grocery shop and Hohn did the baking in the back. In those days the bakers used to deliver the bread around the town. Each baker had a boy on a baker's cart and they'd do the town in the morning and in the afternoon they'd go out around the country towns and deliver the bread. The same thing happened with the butchers.We had three butchers in the town at the time - Harry Butters, my wife's father, Tom Klein and Jack Manning, and these butchers used to run a cart around the town in the morning then to Driffield and Hazelwood North and Morwell North in the afternoon and supply all the farms with meat.

We had three grocers shops - John Hall on the corner, McDonald and Hohn down near where the monument was, and the corner store was run by Jimmy Morris - it was later taken over by Jenkins.

The Mechanics Institute was where Maples is - it was there for many years with a library attached. The only amusement we had was was magic lantern slides and quite a number of social evenings and dances at the Mechanics Institute. It got burnt down in later years. A new Town Hall was built on the corner of Hazelwood Rd. and Commercial Rd. On that site was a boarding house owned by Samuels.

There were three hotels in the town - The Cricketers Hotel was owned by Charlie Smyth (on the corner of Hazelwood Rd and Commercial Rd.). The middle hotel - Mrs.Fitzpatrick had that and later sold it to Dick Barry's mother and Dick Barry sold it later on to a syndicate. The Club Hotel was owned by Mrs.Reidy and that changed hands several times during the years. The hotels in those days all had a billiard room. Beer was about 4pence to 6pence a glass. John Hall used to bottle his own beer. He had a beer and wine and spirit licence. He used to get beer up in about 30 - 60 gallon kegs . He had a bottling licence and he used to bottle his own and sell it for 6 shillings a dozen.He also used to bottle his own wine.

There was no electricity. The lighting in shops and hotels was done with carbide gas. Each of the big places had a sort of a gasometer. They used to put in blocks of carbide and let water drop onto it. That manufactured gas and it was distributed through the building through a small pipe with a burner on the end of it. Other shops would have kerosene or candles and the street lights were kerosene. A chap named Cooper used to come in from Morwell Bridge and light the street lights. There was a lamp on the corner of Commercial and Hazelwood Roads on a pole about ten feet high, another down on George St. on the corner of Hazelwood Rd., another on Jenkins corner near the Mechanics Institute, another near the state school in Commercial Rd. and another at the railway crossing near the Post Office. Well this chap used to come in from Morwell Bridge with his horse and jinker and a gallon or two of kerosene in a container. He'd clean the lamp glasses, put in about apint of kerosene and light it about four o'clock in the afternoon and that would burn until about eleven o'clock. No-one had to turn the lamps out - they just burned out. Later on the Shire put in a kind of gas lamp called "Lux"light. It burnt on a mantle and used petrol. You heated it up with methylated spirits, pumped it up and pulled it up on a big high pole about fifty feet high. We had three or four of these in the town before electricity came in. Quite a number of homes had gas lights, too.

When I came here first there were eleven hotels in the shire of Morwell - three in Morwell, three in Boolarra, one at Gunyah (Rogers), one at Budgeree (Scanlon's), one on the Mountain Hut Rd. on the way to Darlimurla (which is Delburn today), one at Morwell Bridge, one at Yinnar and Quigleys had a wine licence at Yinnar. Later a number of these closed but they were necessary in the early days for accommodation for travellers.

In those days it used to take us a full day to drive with a buggy and pair to Mirboo North. We had two trains each way to Mirboo North but that timetable didn't suit a lot of (commercial) travellers.

The Carlton Brewery traveller in those days was Belfanti. He'd never go on a train but he'd always go by horse and buggy and I used to drive him out.We'd get to Yinnar and there'd be three or four of the old-timers sitting around on a stool outside and, as soon as he'd arrive there he'd call them all in to the hotel and shout for them. He was a great chap, Belfanti - never drank,although he travelled for Carlton United Brewery.

He'd take a cigar, and he'd come out with nearly a pocketful of cigars. The same thing happened at Boolarra. He'd go round the hotels and there'd always be a few hanging round, not working, and he'd take them all into the bar and shout for them. At Mirboo North the same thing happened. There were three hotels in Mirboo North in those days - two in the main street and one over at the back of the railway station. I think one hotel-keeper used to tell all his good clients when the traveller was coming and they'd all be there sitting like crows on a seat, waiting for us to arrive.

Belfanti travelled this area for many years. He won Tatts, one year. He never smoked, he never drank strong drink and he used to take the cigars home and give them to charity workers in Melbourne. He was a marvellous chap - very popular.

The shops along main street - there was a boarding house on the corner where the Town Hall is today. The Cricketers Hotel was on the other corner and next door was the Colonial Bank which was later taken over by the National. Next to that, Jack Rintoull had a shop - he used to do shoeing and make harrows and manufacture stuff for buggies. In the horse and buggy days there was quite a lot of work to be done on wagons and drays and buggies.There was tyre-cutting - wooden wheels used to shrink in the summer time and the metal tyres would get loose and you'd have to bring them in to the blacksmith and have an inch or so cut out of the tyre, and put it on red hot and cool it off with water on a stand. Jack Rintoull used to do quite a lot of that and there was a lot of work with plough shares. Jack Rintoull was a champion blacksmith.

We had George Dayble and Son on the other side (of the railway line) where the Post Office is now. He had a blacksmiths and wheelwrights shop there. He used to manufacture lorries and buggies and drays and all that sort of thing. He used to get parts of buggies up from Keep and Wood in Melbourne and assemble and paint and finish them off up here.

Jack Lowe used to do the wheelwrighting for Rintoull in Commercial Rd.

Following on from there we had a saddlers shop run by a chap named Rogers.Saddlers were kept pretty busy in those days because hand-sewn traces and saddles and collars and making up sets of harness was a big job.

Mostly the farmers used spring drays to cart their stuff into the town.Where Morwell East is today, Joe Buckley used to grow oats. The main crops grown around here were oats and barley. There was very little wheat grown.Ronald used to grow a lot of hay out on the Yinnar road, and Porters down on the flats. Quite a lot of chaff was sent from here to Melbourne in the old days. We used to put six tons on a truck and cart it in - we'd get about five bob a ton for carting it in, loading it on a (railway) truck, covering it with tarpaulins and roping it down.

Ben _____ used to grow hundreds of tons of potatoes out on the McMillans Flats. He used to truck them away from Hazelwood siding. He must have had thousands of tons of potatoes off the Hazelwood Flats. He leased it for a time before World War 1. Later, it was taken over by the Closer Settlement Board and divided into Soldier Settlement blocks.

Primary produce was the main item of wealth in those days. There were quite a number of creameries around the Shire. There was one up at the corner of Latrobe Rd. and Melbourne Rd., there was one on a little creek near Tramway Rd., another on the Yinnar Rd. near McNabbs, another one up Boolarra way.These creameries were run by Wood and Co. who owned the butter factory. Farmers used to take their milk to these creameries to be separated by steam-powered separators. They'd get their skim milk back to take home for their pigs and cows. Later, farmers put in their own separators and brought in their own cream in ten-gallon cans to the butter factories and that finished the creameries. Some of the farmers had steam turbine separators but the hand turned ones seemed to be the most popular. You used to have to turn a handle until the bell stopped ringing. Then you knew you had enough speed up. You turned the milk on and the cream came out of the top spout and the milk out of the bottom spout. Now today most farmers supply whole milk.

In those days the cost of living was very cheap. You could buy a loaf of bread for 4 pence. Meat was 2½pence a pound for corned beef, 3 pence for roast.You could go to Rowell, who had a tailors shop here, and get a very good suit for 4 guineas with a spare pair of trousers chucked in. If you paid cash he'd throw in a silk tie, worth about seven and six in those days. He used to make suits out of No.3 serge and you could wear it til it was like a looking glass - you couldn't ever wear them out.

Boots and shoes were very cheap. We used to buy Hugh Thompson working boots from Arthur Green's shop around in Tarwin St. - a shop built of galvanized iron. It used to be called the Iron House. He sold also dress materials, towels, calicos, all that sort of thing. He was a very popular businessman. He could sell HughThompson boots for twelve and six. You couldn't wear them out. They had hobnails in them and a little horseshoe on the heel.

You could buy a pair of Blucher boots for half a crown a pair. Button-up boots were all the go with the ladies in those days. You had to carry button hooks around to undo them and hook them up. Living was very cheap.

Milk was cheap. You could go to a hotel in Melbourne and if you bought a pot of beer you could get curried sausages or steak and kidney pie dished up to you for nothing.

There was no water laid on to the town. Every household had a galvanized iron tank or, if not a galvanized tank, a square tank. These tanks held 200 gallons - they came out from overseas with crockery in them and then were used for water tanks here. Many of the shops and hotels had underground water tanks, about fifty feet deep.

In the dry summers we'd run out of water. George Billingsley had two 2000 gallon tanks on two drays. Fred Williams and I used to have to go down to the Morwell River and bale water out of the river in a 1½ gallon bucket. We'd stand on the second rail of the bridge with a foot on the wheel of the dray and we'd pull up bucketful after bucketful to tip into this 2000 gallon tank. then we'd bring it into the town and run it into the tank at the pub or store. We used to get four shillings a tank load and we'd have to do three trips a day - that's twelve shillings a day, six bob for the horse and dray and six bob wages - six bob a day for nine hours work! Eventually we got a six inch main laid from Billy's creek. That was a boon to the town.

In the old days the Brown Coal Mine was just a heap of rubble. The face of the coal was all slack coal - if you left the face in the sun it would crumble up into little granules like sugar. The old brown coal was lying there for years. In the early days it was used by the briquette factory, which was burnt out.

Before the First World war, a chap named Hoffman came here. He used to hire a horse and buggy every day and drive out to this brown coal mine and he dug out the face and put a tunnel in and timbered it up. He tunnelled out some of the solid coal and filled it into 200 gallon tanks. He'd get a (rail) truck load of them up from Melbourne and we'd cart them out on the lorries . He'd seal them up and push them out on a trolley to the corner, where I could get in with three horses and a lorry. I'd bring him out some empty tanks and pick up these full ones.I'd load up three on a lorry and away I'd come into Morwell with them. We'd lift them off with a crane and load them into railway trucks and send them off down to Port Melbourne. That coal was sent to Germany and tested over there and results came back that there were over 30 by-products in this Morwell brown coal.

The slack lumps of coal were put into 5 gallon drums and sealed up in the mine and we'd bring them in and send them to Germany, too. All that used to happen twice a week. I'll tell you, they took a bit of scuffling around, 15 hundredweight of coal in 200 gallon tanks! The First World War broke out and Mr.Hoffman disappeared overnight and that was the end of it.

We had a Brown Coal Committee that was very keen. Every politician who came to town, we'd run them out and show them this brown coal mine. We tried to get coal mining organised here but we were kicking against the wind for years. I remember once, when Drysdale Brown was minister for mines in State Government, we took him out there and he said "It's of no commercial value", and he wouldn't have anything to do with it. Later, we got the Premier, Sir Alexander Peacock, up with his Cabinet and we put on a turkey and plum pudding dinner for them out there. At the time they promised us they'd have a look at the position but, when it went to Cabinet, they all voted against brown coal for electricity - they voted for water power instead. They reckoned water wouldn't go on strike!

Later on fuel was very scarce in Melbourne and the Mines Department came and opened up the brown coal and used to send truckloads away. We'd pull it up by horses to Hernes Oak and send it away to Melbourne - raw brown coal.When the railway line from the mine was burnt out, it wasn't fit to put a locomotive on and we had to pull the coal out by horses. A 15 ton truck took a bit of struggling up to Hernes Oak around the curves with the wheels grinding! We sent hundreds of tons of coal away in the early days before the S.E.C. was constituted. I was working for myself at that time and I pulled the first truck of coal out of the old coal mine. I had a contract but my team of horses wasn't quite up to it - I'd struggle to get up the hills. A 10 ton truck was all I could pull out so I handed over the job to Mr.Billingsley. He had a team of draught horses and he pulled hundreds of trucks up to Hernes Oak.

The road to Traralgon in the early days was only a bush track. It carried on up Commercial Rd. to the top of the Ridge where the main road to Yinnar turned off. It was only scrub and ti-tree. There were about four tracks through the scrub and you had to pick the best one out to get to Traralgon.

The road to Brown Coal Mine and Moe was down Station St. (Princes Highway today), down to Toners Lane, along Old Melbourne Rd., down the old sandhill at Godridge's, over the old bridge and turn to the right along the Morwell River; the road to Moe was straight on down the old coach road.When you got to the Haunted Hills it was pretty well straight up. From Pettigrew's Garage up it was about a 1 in 5 grade and it was just as steep going down the other side.All the carters and teamsters coming up that road used to fall a tree to hang on behind their wagon to help the brakes coming down the steep hill. At the bottom of the hill they'd just unhook it and roll it off on the side of the road. There'd be a heap of logs on each side of the road at the foot of the hills on both the Moe Morwell sides, about four or five feet high.

There were quite a number of bullock wagons doing the heavy carting in those days. Jack Dwyer had a champion bullock team - fifteen bullocks. Bill Cook was another one who had a bullock team and Fred Firmin was another. They used to cart sleepers and timber and all that sort of thing from the bush. You could go with a bullock team where you couldn't go with horses.

Drovers used to say that theHaunted Hills were hollow. They could never get animals to settle down and camp there.Sheep drovers had to travel four miles a day - they weren't allowed to loiter on the roads.

The only fast-moving traffic was the railways. Wherever the railway crossed the road there were railway gates with a gatehouse. The ganger's wife used to open and shut the gates when the train was coming through.Down on the Tramway Road below the Ridge there was a gatehouse.

There was an open crossing connecting Church St. and Commercial Rd. - a big wide crossing. It used to be a bit of a nuisance, especially when motor cars came in. Trains used to be shunting and they'd always have that crossing blocked - you'd have to go down to Jane St. to get across the line. There was another crossing down near Toners Lane. Later on the railways replaced the gated with cattle pits at the crossings and shifted the gatehouses.

Morwell railway station and waiting room in the old days was just an office and a residence behind it for the Station Master and his family. They later turned the residence into an office. There was a goods shed and a cool shed because a lot of perishable goods were sent to Melbourne, such as meat and butter.

They shifted two of the gatehouses into Morwell and built a Station Master's residence right opposite where the National Bank is today.

Morwell had four race meetings a year. There was a New Year's Day meeting at Yinnar, Boolarra had one and Morwell had two - the A.N.A.Day race meeting and the St.Patrick's Day meeting. People came for miles to these races. There were pony races and trots (ridden - no sulkies). These trots created a lot of interest. They were handicapped up to 70 yards start for a mile or two-mile trot. Pony races were handicapped, too. Little ones would have a couple of hundred yards start but it was good sport to see them racing.

There were Indian hawkers here who used to walk around the countryside with a big basket on their backs and a bundle on their heads. In the basket they'd have beads and things - safety pins and hairpins etc. In the bundle they'd have aprons and handkerchiefs, stockings and materials - all sorts of things for the farmers. They'd walk through the hills and there were certain places where they'd camp, where the farmers used to let them stay. They always carried their own food - they'd never eat any food that was handled by the local people. In the old days, Joe Buckley built them a shed up on his farm, where the reservoir is today, and there used to be a dozen Indians make this their headquarters. They'd stay there for a week and get their supplies to take out during the weeks ahead.

On the weekends, a number of Indians would come to town and buy chooks and take them up there and kill them themselves., according to their religion. It was funny to go up there and see them sitting around smoking a pipe. They'd have a big pipe in the middle of the room and they'd all sit round it. It was on a swivel and they'd all have a suck at it and puff out the smoke, and this smoke was drawn through water.

The Indians were very clean and tidy and they pioneered a lot of the back blocks here, helping out settlers with little knick-knacks delivered onto the farms up in the hills. A lot of the farmers looked forward to the Indians coming around."