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Annual Membership fee: \$20.00 per person- **Renewals Due In May.**

Historical Society Meetings held monthly- 4th Wednesday at 7.30pm,

except in January, also during winter on the 4th **Saturday at 1.30pm.**

News/Updates/Information - Website: colachistoricalsociety.org.au

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Open Hours for the public at COPACC History Centre - 2.00pm to 4.00pm - Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

Working Bees at the History Centre - dates & times advised.

Please note that articles printed in this Society Newsletter are subject to Copyright.

Forthcoming Events –

February 26th – 6.30pm – BBQ Tea & Meeting - *The Elms* – Gellibrand Street, Colac

March 9th – 1.30pm – Re-scheduled Bus Tour of *Beeac Area Bluestone Cottages*- Bookings Essential

March 25th – 7.30pm – General Meeting – Items from our Collection

March 28-29 – Weekend AGM of Western Victoria Association Historical Societies –hosted by Ararat HS

April 22nd- 7.30pm – General Meeting with Guest Speaker – *Lynton Evans*

-Former Murray St. Trader - Dairy & Machinery Business

A Note from the President –

Although usually a quiet time, the Christmas/New Year break has been a time of much activity in the Archive room at the History Centre.

We have finally been able to install a climate control unit which regulates temperature and humidity with the assistance of a Community Support Grant from the Colac Otway Shire. We thank the Shire for this grant which recognises the importance of our collection of manuscripts and newspapers. They are an invaluable component of our cultural heritage.

Willing co-operation from Shire staff has enabled this unit to be installed with a minimum of disruption.

At the same time the gift of a large compactus from the recently closed Colanda administration block has enabled the manuscript boxes to be housed neatly.

Many hours of heavy lifting by our members has enabled all the shelving to be reorganised; with more space available to house the growing collection of Colac Heralds.



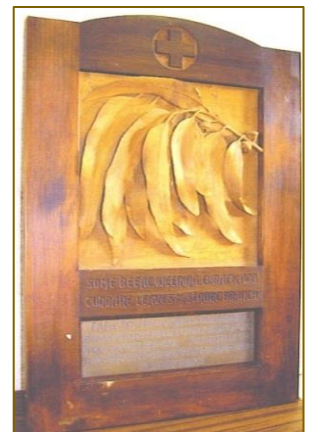
Pictured at right: Compactus & new Climate Control Unit.

Another highlight has been the high demand for our latest publication *The Victoria Hall* by Dawn Peel. The initial print run sold out and we have printed another 100 copies.

Pre-purchase by John Blane has provided the funding for the reprint and we appreciate his support in promoting the sale of Colac and District historical publications.

The Colac Otway Shire presented a Community Service Award on Australia Day to the Beeac Red Cross which has closed after more than 100 years of service. Sandra Sheedy accepted the award on behalf of the group.

The Colac History Centre houses the John Blogg carving which was presented to the Beeac Red Cross following World War 1, which is pictured at right.





December 4th 2019 – Marked the end of an era for the Frank Lawrence Old Time Dance Band.
 Members left to right: *Arthur Pearce, Frank Lawrence, Stephen Gill, Les Oliver, Bill Simmonds and Judy Comley.*
 Their final show after almost 40 years was held at the Elliminyt Hall.

Photo supplied by Davida McDonald

Guest Speaker –

November – Garry Richardson – History of *Warrion House*, O'Shea's Road, Alvie.

Hugh Murray 1837 and his brother Andrew came to Colac from Tasmania.

The Murrays had several runs including Elliminyt, Gnora Reet and Irrewillipe

They bought Richus' property called Tea Tree which ran north from Corunnun. Cost - four bullocks.

The partnership between the two brothers was broken up and Tea Tree divided into Warrion run (Hugh) and Wool Wool (Andrew).

1854 Tommy Brookhouse was murdered on the Tea Tree Estate. Pat Geary was working on the property and was a prime suspect for the murder. Hugh Murray had been on Red Rock with a telescope trying to find out how his sheep were going missing but had seen nothing untoward. Many years later a skull was found which led to the arrest and hanging of Pat Geary.

It is believed that Warrion house was built about 1860 of vesicular basalt, a lava rock. The roof was originally covered with split shingles which have been covered with corrugated iron.

Thomas, Hugh's eldest son, took 5000 sheep on the Camden Harbour Expedition, which was intended to start settlement in the North Kimberley area. It was a disaster. Thomas returned overland to the South, with Fred Hooley; areas of W.A. were named after them. He worked for some time at Deniliquin. There he met Miriam Parker and was married. They arrived back in Colac in 1869 and had to buy Warrion from his late father's estate. They had one daughter.

Thomas now owned 5000 acres. A journalist called Bruni published a story about the area – he talked up the land – according to him in 1887 there were 18 000 sheep, 100 horses and over 100 cattle on the Warrion land.

In 1881 he started selling animals. In 1889 there was a subdivisional sale. In 1890 he took out a mortgage of 64 000 pounds. In 1890 there were two clearing stock sales. In 1892 he tried to sell almost the entire farm and then leased 56 paddocks. He sold the last lot with the mortgage to cousins in 1901.

They sold off small lots after that. During this time the house was probably vandalised.

In 1915 the remaining 272 acres were sold to the Stepnell and Barry families.

Alan Stepnell and his wife were the first people married in Alvie church and the second family to live in Warrion.

In 1959 Alan Stepnell died and Alan Stepnell junior inherited the property.

Rosemary Richardson bought the house, on 6 acres, in 1996 and sold it in 2019.



Warrion House – Photo 2019

What has been in the Colac Herald news?

November 13- 2019-Scouts proud of flood recovery. Colac third *Fourth Scouts group* has unveiled its upgraded hall next to the Barongarook Creek after flooding in 2016 damaged the renovated facility. New additions include roofing, an accessibility ramp, a disabled toilet, flooring and heating and cooling appliances.

November 15- Discovery prompts future dig. A test dig by husband-and-wife palaeontologists, *Tom Rich and Patricia Vickers-Rich*, on Cape Otway revealed a remarkable bounty of prehistoric remnants just below the surface at Eric the Red West site. "Never in the last 40 years in south-eastern Australia had so many fossil dinosaur bones been found in such a small volume of rock." Tom said.

November 18- Pieras proud of steel career. *Barry and Lyn Piera* have retired after 44 years in the scrap metal and steel business in Colac. Piera Metals started as a car-and-trailer operation which grew, and they bought their Darcy Street site 34 years ago when it was vacant land. They have only ever sold Australian steel products.

November 18- Ballarat Clarendon Campus at Yuulong? The college has bought a 40-hectare property at Yuulong on the *Old Iluka Access*, near Cape Otway to run a Year Nine, 8-week program to provide the situational, environmental and cultural contexts for their students.

November 25- New map reveals massacre history. Two Colac district Aboriginal massacre locations appear on an interactive online map which aims to change the way Australians view their colonial history and that of the violence *First Nations people* have historically experienced. Map shows Aire River Estuary and Blanket Bay massacre sites at Cape Otway in 1846. The map is a joint project of the University of Newcastle and The Guardian.

November 29- Elliminyt property, 166 Main Street, for sale dates back to the 1930s and was originally a bakery with the original brick oven still existing and front veranda over the footpath.

December 4- Frank and friends' finale. The end of an era for the Frank Lawrence Old Time Dance Band which included *Frank Lawrence, Billy Simmonds and Judy Comley*. Their final show after almost 40 years was held at the Elliminyt Hall

December 6- Milestone for Freemasons. Colac's Masonic Lodge has celebrated its 100th anniversary. The Hesse Street group raise money for local charities.

December 16- Heritage report for Lake Colac anchor. An archaeologist and heritage advisor was hired by Colac Otway Shire Council to assess an anchor discovered in Lake Colac's dry bed in 2016. It is likely that it belonged to a massive steamboat, the *SS Dorothy*, as a mooring point. The boat hosted pleasure cruises on the lake from 1912 to 1914.

December 16-Bulla's Grand Plans to expand its Murray Street site. *Bulla Family Dairy* has visions for a retail store in the former McMahons Upholsterers Colac site.

December 27-Victoria Hall history captured. Colac and District Historical Society life member *Dawn Peel* has compiled the 90-year history of Colac's former Victoria Hall built in Murray Street in 1889 and opened in 1890. For 90 years the hall hosted dances, meetings and social events. Colac had grown to a town with 3,000 people in 50 years and needed a large meeting space. A group of businessmen built the hall to meet that need.

January 15, 2020- Service Station gets green light. A proposed new service station and 4 food outlets plan on the former Rhys Evans site in Colac's Murray Street has received the tick of approval from Colac Otway Shire Council's planning department.

January 22, 2020- A team approach to street upgrade. *Frank De Lorenzo* has worked in retail in Colac's Murray Street for more than 30 years and wants Colac Otway Shire Council to work with Murray Street traders to produce a retail-friendly framework around cultural heritage. There are currently 234 individually significant sites and 12 heritage precincts in the heritage overlay making it difficult and expensive to update older shops.

January 27-Dedicated doctor earns honour. After almost half a century of treating countless Colac and district patients, retired Colac doctor *Michael Connor* has earned national recognition for his service to the region- the Medal of the Order of Australia, at *Beeac on Australia Day*. He started his career as a GP at Beeac in 1970 before moving to Colac to serve the next 47 years at Otway Medical Clinic and was a visiting GP at Colac's Colanda Centre. He retired in 2018.

January 29- Event draws a crowd. Colac and district people gathered at *Red Rock* for Pang-ngooteekeya weeng malangeepa ngyee, a powerful Aboriginal community-led event on January 26 which included a Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony, traditional dancing and artwork.

February 5- College unveils new facilities. After 14 years in the making, the St Joseph's Resource centre has opened with former Trinity principal Tim O'Farrell returning to unveil the state-of-the-art building which includes a resource centre, an expansion on the Frank and Helen Paatsch Library; Helen being the former teacher, librarian and historian at the college. The new building in the St Joseph's wing would also include areas for IT, careers, media, study rooms and a robotics table. The building, staff and students were blessed by Father Michael O'Toole.

February 7- Bulla hosting celebrations for ice cream. Colac's own Bulla launched its newest ice cream range in the very street it is named after- Murray Street, inspired by the rich history of Bulla in the region. Three families in Colac have been perfecting the Bulla ice cream craft for over 6 generations using locally sourced fresh milk, cream and free range egg yolk.

THE ROBERTSONS

By Craig Pink

The three part series about William Robertson and his family concludes this issue, with a look further into the life of George and James Robertson - the youngest two sons of William Robertson.

GEORGE P. ROBERTSON

William Robertson's third son, George Pringle Robertson (better known as G. P. Robertson) - was born 22nd August 1842 at Hobart Town. Along with the other brothers, George received the best education the era could offer, including time at Rugby in England. George had the mansion *Coragulac House* built on part of his portion of land to the south-east of the nearby Coragulac hills c.1870 -71, close to Alvie. It had been part of his father's land divided up between his four sons. The mansion, named after the local Coragulac lakes area, saw the first of numerous alterations and additions added just a year or so after its initial build.

In 1874 George captained the *Victorian Cricket Eleven* against the *All England Team*. Although quite ill by this time, it was his father William who encouraged, and also convinced George to participate in this particular prized cricket game to represent the colony. George had previously excelled at cricket while in England, as well as gaining a Bachelor of Arts, and also a Blue for cricket. Among others, George had played for Oxford against Cambridge, and also with *The Gentlemen of England*.

Closely associated with the progression of Colac and district, George also served on the Colac Shire Council from August 1872 until resigning in December 1880. He was also Shire President in 1874 and again in 1875.

JAMES ROBERTSON

William Robertson's fourth son, James Robertson - was born 7th July 1848 at Hobart Town, and also had education at Rugby, in England. Upon returning to Australia, James went on to have his own mansion built on a portion of his land previously divided up by his father, close to the lower rises of the Warrion Hills, to which he named his Gothic style mansion *Glen Alvie* after his father's origins at Alvey, Scotland.



ABOVE - *Coragulac House*, the mansion built for G. P. Robertson - as originally built (c. 1870-71). The garden is obviously more established compared to Glen Alvie - at right, which was built just a year or so later. The original feature of the raised roof over billiard room can be seen in this image.

ABOVE - Glen Alvie, the mansion built for James Robertson in the early 1870's at an initial cost of several thousand pounds. Note the lack of established garden compared to *Coragulac House* - at left, which is only a year or so older.

Both images from part of the Society's original collection of 21 local scenes taken (c. August 1875) by J. Norton, Geelong, at the request of the Colac Shire Council.

THE BULLOCK SWAMP SPRINGS

In keeping up with the latest technology of the era, a large steam powered pumping unit was installed to pump water from the fresh water springs known as *Bullock Swamp*, situated several miles north-east of the Glen Alvie mansion. Depending on the season, the Bullock Swamp area consisted of, on average, around 20 to 30 acres of drinkable water from the fresh running springs.

William Parker who came from Tasmania around 1875, was an early employee of the Robertsons on the Glen Alvie estate and was employed as their chief engineer. William oversaw much of the original construction of the water supply on the estate, including the pumping system, tanks, piping, troughs and the like. The north-west corner of the Bullock Swamp springs was opened up by a cutting being driven well into it, the sides and bottom being lined with stone to facilitate the flow of water. Due to the labour demand and type of skill needed, William Parker spent a good deal of his time operating and also maintaining the boiler, steam engine and pumping installation at the Bullock Swamp springs. In times of peak water demand the boiler of the steam engine consumed wood by the ton, and worked up to 24 hours a day. This was very labour-consuming in regard to the supply of suitable wood sourced and

AT RIGHT – Obviously a fairly new Glen Alvie Mansion at this point, with little to no garden.

The main upper storey at right was not rebuilt after the disastrous fire in January 1915. The upper storey and main tower stonework were lowered to match a new single storey roofline, although an upper level does still remain in the lowered main tower, and without its original tapered roof top - the two window levels in main tower remain today as can be seen in this image, with the smaller tower remaining as originally built. A circular vehicle track can also be seen in the foreground.

Image from Society files



brought by bullock or horse teams. The steam boiler, which was around 8 feet high, was the size of an average room, and consumed logs up to 6 feet in length, which were fed in on a trolley along a small track. A large stone reservoir with the capacity of some 35,000 gallons was built approximately one mile to the west, and around 160 feet above the height of the Bullock Swamp pumping station. This reservoir was situated to the south of the Glen Alvie cattle sheds, which was part way up the Warrion Hills. The Warrion Hills were better known as *The Big Warrion(s)* in the earlier times of the district. Several other smaller reservoirs also went on to be constructed around the estate, as well as dams being dug, which also held water for reserve purposes.

WANTED, AXEMEN.
The undersigned is prepared to treat with Applicants for **CUTTING WOOD** in Messrs. Robertson Brother's Bush Paddock. About 200 Tons 4 Feet, and 100 Tons 2 Feet. Applicants apply to Mr. **CHARLES PRIGG**, or to *Herald* Office, Colac.

FIREWOOD.
TENDERS will be received until 1st APRIL for the SUPPLY of 250 TONS of FIREWOOD to Messrs. Robertson Bros. Particulars at my office. **A. HAMILTON,** Colac, 18th March.

Tenders.
TENDERS WANTED for Supplying 500 Tons of FIREWOOD, in 6 feet lengths, to be delivered at the ENGINE SHED, GLEN ALVIE. Further particulars at the Office of this Paper.

Colac Herald advertising - **ABOVE LEFT** - 19th May 1882, the Robertsons' tenders for firewood were termed by how many hundred tons were required. **ABOVE CENTRE** - 12th March 1884 - tender for 250 tons of firewood. **ABOVE RIGHT** - 29th September 1885 – tender for 500 tons of firewood. Various adverts appear also for tenders for fencing on the estate. By 1885 there was over 200 miles of fencing on the Coragulac and Glen Alvie estates, and over 20 miles of piping for water reticulation. At this time, the Bullock Swamp engine shed was capable of pumping up to 100,000 gallons of water per day for times of peak demand, especially during the summer months when the demand for water was obviously much greater.

CATTLE BOOM OVER

By the mid 1880's the cattle boom had really slowed down, the Robertson Bros scaling down their large scale cattle stud, also dissolving the Robertson Bros partnership (they had also previously invested quite heavily in sheep stations in Queensland which failed around this time also). As well as selling most of the stock, the Robertsons also sold some of their land. The land was well suited for a growing population wanting to milk dairy cows, grow crops such as grains, onions, peas, potatoes, and also other smaller scale farming ventures. Most of the remaining land which wasn't sold was leased out at lucrative rates and terms. After the April 1887 dispersal sale the Robertsons still carried on the breeding of pure Shorthorn stud cattle and horses, but on a much smaller scale than previously.

John James, who had been a long term employee of the Robertsons and also for a time their stock manager, purchased his own pick of the stock at the Robertsons' 1887 (final) sale. With John leasing land from the Glen Alvie estate, this not only kept the original Robertson blood line going locally, but also on a portion of the same land.

AT RIGHT – Advertising from Colac Herald - 25th March 1887, this being for the April 1887 (supposedly final) sale, but there were numerous other sales, some at The Hill, some at the Glen Alvie Saleyards - some also with outside entries to boost numbers. As the fine print says – nearly the whole of the Robertson Bros estate was either sold or leased out by this time.

FINAL SALE
OF
Messrs. Robertson Bros.'
STOCK
At
COLAC.

RICHARD GIBSON and CO. have received instructions from Messrs. Robertson Bros., of Colac, to **SELL** by **PUBLIC AUCTION**, at the **GLEN ALVIE SALE YARDS**, Near the Warrion Hills, At two p.m. on **THURSDAY, the 7th APRIL NEXT,**

- 60 Pure Shorthorn Cows, from 3 to 6 years old, with 15 calves at foot, got by pedigreed sires
- 30 Do do, aged
- 70 Do do Heifers, 18 months to 3 years old
- 6 Pure Shorthorn **PEDIGREED** **STUD BULLS**, from 2 to 3 years old.
- 90 Station-bred Shorthorn Steers, 15 months to 2 years old
- 20 Pure Shorthorn Bulls, station-bred, from 12 to 18 months old
- 350 Selected Pure Lincoln Ewes, 6-tooth, in lamb
- 400 Comeback Lambs.

Owing to Messrs. Robertson Bros. having sold and leased nearly the whole of their Estate, they have to sell without reserve the above valuable stock, and devote their attention purely to breeding pure Shorthorn stud cattle and horses.

This Sale offers an unusual opportunity to purchasers to acquire some of the best stock in Australia.

John James was born in England in 1850, and when 23 years old, came out to Australia in charge of four Shorthorn bulls for Mr Richard Moreton of the Mt Derrimut stud. These were the first cattle to come under quarantine regulations, under which John James remained in employment at the Mt. Derrimut stud until purchased by the Robertson Bros in 1876.

In 1876 John James went to take charge of the famous Shorthorn herd of the Messrs Robertson Bros, taking with him Oxford Cherry Duke and the whole of Mr Moreton's Mt Derrimut stud herd. John remained in employment with the Robertsons for some ten years, and when the final clearing sale of the stud stock took place he bought the basis of a herd which he subsequently made famous throughout Australia. For some years he leased part of the Glen Alvie estate, to which he named the house on his leased land *Riccarton* after the place he hailed from in the old country.

Over the years, the Robertsons travelled extensively overseas to England, Scotland and also Europe. While some were for leisure, other trips were more for health reasons. In December 1883 James Robertson and his sister-in-law Annie Robertson left Colac by train on a journey to Europe, to which they sailed on the RMS Rome. Mrs Robertson went on to join her husband George in Switzerland, who, acting under orders from his medical advisers, had been compelled to sail to that country on account of his failing health. James Robertson expected to return to Colac within the next six months - he arrived back in early August 1884 on the sailing ship RMS Ballarat.

Accidents were also numerous, and not uncommon in those earlier days. In late March 1884, James Robertson's second son Clive and his sister were out riding together when the pony threw him. Amongst other injuries, Clive dislocated his shoulder when he fell from the horse, and was under the care of Dr. Foster for some time after.

Late October 1888 saw James Robertson's return from an overseas trip visiting Europe – stating upon his return to the Colac area - *the tour has greatly benefited his health.*

It was an unexpected cable that told of the death of James Robertson in England on 25th July 1890. Already suffering ill health and receiving the best of treatment overseas, the cause of death was stated as typhoid fever. James had left Colac in February 1890 on a brief visit to Europe where he intended to return to Victoria in September and re-join his wife and family who were at that time in Sydney, where they were residing at that time upon medical advice due to the delicate health of their daughter. James had married Miss Margaret Stodart of Corunnun, third daughter of Dr. Stodart. The estate of James Robertson filed for probate by the executors in November 1890, with James Robertson's will dated October 1888. They had two sons and four daughters, with James Robertson leaving an estate of some £112,580, which consisted of £92,630 as real estate and £19,950 as personal estate. About three years previously James had also insured his life for £10,000. His will also stated his widow was to receive £2,000 per annum and the use of the house, and the remainder to his children on their attaining the age of 21. He provided that each son would receive double the share of each daughter, who received at most £10,000.

After suffering for some years past from consumption (TB), Miss Ruby Margaret Robertson, eldest daughter of James and Margaret Robertson, died on 29th October 1892, aged 21 years. Several years previously, in company with her parents and other members of the family, she visited Berlin amongst other Continental cities where she was placed under the treatment of the eminent Dr Koch, however her case was pronounced as hopeless. Treatment was advised which was carefully carried out - part of the treatment advised being a change of air and scene, so a family tour of several European countries, as well as England and Scotland was taken. This not having the desired effect, a return was made to Victoria, as a sea voyage was also considered beneficial to patients suffering from said complaint. A tour through NSW and also Tasmania was then undertaken. Every modern remedy had been tried, but the disease had taken a strong hold. They returned to Glen Alvie where she resided until her death under the care of Dr Foster who was unremitting in his care, but the case deteriorated past the point of medical skill. Ruby was buried in the Robertson family vault at the Colac cemetery.



AT LEFT – Glen Alvie Mansion at its best. The man-made lake was the home of black and white swans as well as other birds, and at times - also fish. One such stocking of this man-made lake was a deposit of 70 English trout in January 1883 from the Geelong Breeding Ponds.
Image from Society files

GEO. URQUHART,
(For ten years head Gardener to James Robertson, Esq., Glen Alvie).
Desires to announce to the public that, having been compelled through continued ill-health to relinquish his position as head gardener at Glen Alvie, he has OPENED BUSINESS in the Premises next
Mr. Green's Auction Rooms,
Murray Street West,
As a
NURSEYMAN, SEEDSMAN, FLORIST,
GREENGROCER, &c.
Fruit and Vegetables of all descriptions on hand during the season.
GRASS SEEDS, LUCERNE SEED, &c.

AT LEFT – The vast gardens surrounding the Glen Alvie mansion utilised their own gardener – this advert from Colac Herald 26th April 1887. This would place Geo. Urquhart at Glen Alvie in 1877.

AT RIGHT – Still using huge amounts of firewood into the early 1890's -this advert from the Colac Herald 21st August 1894.

FIREWOOD.
TENDERS received up to 31st INST. for 200 Tons of Gum and 100 Tons Messmate, delivered at Glen Alvie and Coragulac, and 50 Tons Gum and 300 Tons Messmate delivered Bullock Swamp Springs. Glen Alvie and Coragulac 6ft lengths, Springs 6ft, latter not to exceed 6 inches in diameter, thoroughly sound and dry. Delivery completed by 31st JANUARY by Horse Teams only.
GEORGE P. ROBERTSON,
Coragulac,
Colac.

As John James explained in December 1891, he was leasing some 1,200 acres of the Glen Alvie estate. The water supply, which was part of a system maintained at quite considerable expense by the Robertsons, was for the benefit of their tenants.

A 16 horsepower steam engine run by a large boiler made by Wright & Edwards was employed at that time to work a treble-action force-feed pump by Robinson Bros, capable of lifting up to 6,000 gallons per hour, and a smaller double force-feed pump with the capacity of 3,000 gallons per hour. The water was lifted about 6 feet, and afterwards forced a height of around 160 feet into the large stone reservoir through a four inch pipe. From this large stone reservoir, the water was distributed by gravitation over the estate of some 9,000 acres through 2½, 2 and 1 inch piping. Over 20 miles of iron piping had been utilised at this point, mainly to supply Glen Alvie mansion, its paddocks, and the Glen Alvie cattle sheds. A direct pipe ran to the south-west, which could also supply directly to the Coragulac House mansion and its surroundings. John James also stated at this time (1891) that by that time in the USA a windmill would replace the work of the steam engine and, in turn, with considerably less labour required.

John James even carried on the tradition of the Robertsons' extensive overseas travel by visiting the Old Country numerous times (1896 and 1901 are known), and while there he also purchased the finest of breeding bulls with equally fine names such as Duke of York and Clinker. Breeding draught stallions also brought out by John included King of Hearts and Patron. While at Riccarton, John James purchased a portion of the Balintore Estate when it was sold by Thomas Chirnside, and when the lease expired at Riccarton he erected a house at Balintore, where he went on to live, naming the property *Derrimut* after the old original Mt Derrimut stud. At Derrimut, John James also carried on with some of the former Robertson blood lines of mainly cattle and horses on a fairly large scale.

The quality of stock had already earned John an excellent reputation, placing him amongst the finest of breeders in Australia and New Zealand. John James died at his Ondit property Derrimut on 22nd July 1916 aged 66 years. He had three daughters and three sons. *NOTE – John James is also mentioned (along with his photo) in Alan Doyle's article on Butchers of Colac in the November 2019 Society Newsletter.*

AT RIGHT - Colac Herald 22nd August 1893 advert placed by George P. Robertson - offering an undisclosed reward for any information about anyone tampering with the locked gates on the Glen Alvie and Coragulac Estates.

George Pringle Robertson died 23rd June 1895 at the Grand Hotel Melbourne, his will dated 22nd June 1895. In previous years he had made several visits to the Old Country to recuperate, and had sought the best of medical skill. When in Colac Dr Brown was his medical adviser. In filing for Probate, the executors listed assets as £63,408 and personal property as £2,474. George had recommended that any real estate not be sold until the youngest son reached 21 years of age, and that then the estate be divided between his three children in such proportions as that the share of each son shall be double that of each daughter. His wife Annie Robertson was to have the use of Coragulac House and 100 acres of adjoining land until the property was sold, with £250 for immediate use, and an annuity of £1,000.

N O T I C E.
A REWARD will be given for information that will lead to the Conviction of any Persons Damaging the Locked Gates on the Glen Alvie and Coragulac Estates.
GEORGE P. ROBERTSON.
Coragulac,
Aug. 21st, 1893.

THE BIGGEST WINDMILL IN THE COLONY

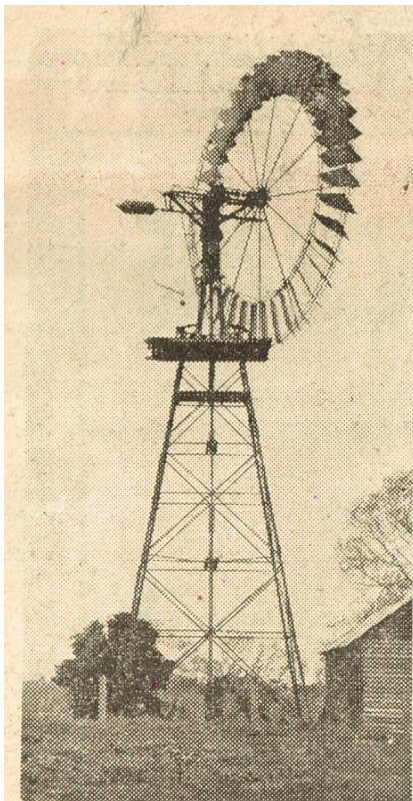
John James' prediction of a windmill doing the job of the steam engine to pump water went on to become very true in mid-1895, when the largest windmill in the colony was erected at the Bullock Swamp springs, close by the already existing steam engine. Made by Mr J. Abraham of Ballarat East, this huge one-off windmill had a wheel diameter of 36 feet, a total height of around 82 feet, and a weight of some 13 tons. With a driving capacity equal to over 10 horsepower, the Abraham windmill's pumping capacity was up to 100 gallons per minute lifting 300 feet high, or 300 gallons per minute lifting 100 feet high. The usual quantity in an ordinary wind was about two thirds of the above.

AT RIGHT – The enormous Abraham windmill in its better days at Bullock Swamp. After the installation of the windmill in mid-1895, the steam engine was still used in times of peak demand, and of course in times of little to no wind – especially in autumn. The original cost of this Abraham windmill installation was £450. It was well capable of pumping 8,000 gallons per hour - the pumping capacity obviously dropped as it pumped to higher elevations.

Image originally from the late Don Bayne – who lived at Bullock Swamp.

In the weeks following its installation, this huge Abraham windmill created a sensation never before seen. In mid-October 1895, newspapers such as The Australasian (Victoria) and the Launceston Examiner in Tasmania reported on the huge new windmill on the Glen Alvie Estate. Newspapers such as the Goulburn Evening Post (Victoria) even had readers write in saying why didn't their own town supply already have a windmill of this kind - as it would supply their water pumping for many months of the year, while also saving much on the expense of coal.

William Parker went on to lease land from the Robertsons, where he also milked 50 to 60 cows while raising a family of ten. William retired to Yeo around 1902 when part of the Robertsons' estate was broken up, his son Colin continued to operate the pumping installation at the Bullock Swamp springs for some years after.



AT LEFT – From a feature of Colac and surrounds from Melbourne Sun News Pictorial - 18th September 1924. It states - *Warrion Windmill - at one time pumped water to supply Robertson's estate of 15 square miles.*

This Abraham windmill was self-regulating, having variable pitch sails pivoting in the wheel. Having no tail, this style of windmill was of the vaneless type always facing the wind on the leeward side of the mast. Turning the mill on or off involved climbing the tower to move the position of a heavy regulating weight. It is doubtful by the lean on the wheel that it still operated at this time - the wheel broke apart in a bad storm, supposedly in the mid-1920's. A few bits and pieces of the workings still survive today - such as four "T" section (6x6x6 *Inch*) steel girders that remain in a paddock close by. These girders were mounted vertically to support the column casting above the tower and each measure 13 *feet* in length. The size of this Abraham windmill was never surpassed in Australia. Several smaller Abraham windmills were used in the Colac district, one being on the Melrose estate near Warrion.

The executors for James Robertson announced a sale to further subdivide the Glen Alvie Estate in December 1901 - announcing that the sale was to be held in the spring of 1902. On 17th October 1902, 3182 acres of the Glen Alvie Estate were offered at auction, offering farms from 40 to 315 acres, bringing in some £70,000. Buyers and prices were published in the Colac Herald some weeks later which showed good prices paid for both the smaller and larger lots of land.



AT LEFT - In mid-1931 the remaining Abraham windmill tower at the Bullock Swamp springs was purchased by Mr Leslie Fisher of Warrion. He partly disassembled the tower and relocated it to its present site, where he reassembled the original Abraham tower as a very very tall tank stand (along with its original cast feet at ground level). After re-assembling the tower, a Crossley car was used to raise the tower, and later the tank, into their new upright positions. This still stands today, and can be seen to the west of the Warrion football/cricket ground. The main frame is of 4 inch angle iron, the legs of the tower stand as their original dimensions at some 22 *feet* apart at ground level. The level the tank sits on is close to where the original platform was - as seen in the original two photos. *Image - C. Pink*

A further sub-division of the Glen Alvie estate in October 1910 included the Glen Alvie mansion and 550 acres of surrounding land. Mr J. P. (John Patrick) Morrissy of Stoney Point Alvie, bought 340 acres, along with the Glen Alvie mansion for £54 per acre - a total purchase price by John of £18,360.

AT RIGHT – Colac Herald 22nd February 1911 – advert for the clearing sale at the Glen Alvie mansion following its sale for the first time out of the Robertson family in October 1910.

COLAC.
FRIDAY, 24th FEBRUARY.

At the Mansion, Glen Alvie, at 11 o'clock sharp.

CLEARING SALE OF VEHICLES, HARNESS, HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, PALMS & POT PLANTS, and a large Quantity of Sundries.

J. G. JOHNSTONE & CO. under instructions from the Owners, will **SELL by PUBLIC AUCTION** as above,

Double seated Waggonette, Buggy, and other vehicles, a lot of harness, in good order, Wardrobes, Chests of Drawers, Washstands, Toilet Tables, Double and Single Bedsteads, and a large assortment of Useful Furniture; also Billiard Table, by Alcock, with marker, cues, balls, etc.

Owing to the large number of lots, the sale will start at 11 o'clock sharp.

Without Reserve. Terms Cash.

LOST OR FOUND.

£1 REWARD.

LOST—One Leather MOTOR COAT, between Cororooke Township and Glen Alvie.

MRS JAS. ROBERTSON, "Riccarton," Alvie.

AT LEFT – Colac Herald advert from 10th March 1911. It was James Robertson's son James and his wife who were at Riccarton at this time. £1 reward at that time is an extremely generous reimbursement.

James Robertson's son James E. Robertson, Esq, offered the remainder of *Riccarton* for public auction on 17th April 1914, including the home block with the Riccarton homestead and 137 acres of land. The remainder, in 25 lots - 20 of which ranged from 12 to 32 acres. As it was considered some of the best onion land in the district, Mr Robertson decided to cut the blocks small to give every small buyer an opportunity of securing a bit of freehold.

A DISASTROUS FIRE

Glen Alvie mansion was almost destroyed by a disastrous fire on Monday, 25th January 1915. The fire was caused by sparks from a chimney igniting the straw which nesting birds had accumulated under the roof. It started just after mid-morning, quickly catching and spreading through the upper rafters of the structure which supported the slate roof. From the top of the building the flames spread to the rear and extended forward, defying the efforts of a number of neighbours, who strenuously endeavoured with buckets and similar operation to confine the fire to one area. Though the supply of water was good, it could not be directed onto the fire in sufficient quantity and force. When the alarm reached the Colac Fire Station at 11.15am, ex-Captain Parks and a party of firemen motored to Glen Alvie, a distance of 12 miles, along with the fire engine, manned by seven firemen. By 12.30pm the engine was playing water into the building, but the fire was not extinguished until 5pm, the damage being so severe that only two rooms and the tower of the building remained. The building, then owned by J. P. Morrissy and family, was insured for £5,000, the furniture not being insured. A man named Brown, who was assisting with the bucketing work, and occupied a position on top of the building, jumped from a window on to a veranda and went right through with considerable force on his back. He received a serious injury to his spine, and had to be taken to the Colac Hospital. Mr J. P. Morrissy was away from home at the time of the fire, his wife had a narrow escape, being rescued with difficulty from the top storey by one of the men employed on the homestead. Some of the furniture was removed in time, but the heavier items had to stay as they could not be lifted at the time.

AT RIGHT - Colac Reformer 27th April 1915 advert for tenders on rebuilding Glen Alvie mansion from D. C. Dunoon, Architect, Colac. The original upper storey of the mansion was not rebuilt, it survives today with a lower roof line and lowered main tower.

D. C. Dunoon,
ARCHITECT, COLAC,

INVITES tenders until 12 noon on Monday, 17th May, for Re-instatement of Residence at Glen Alvie, for John P. Morrissy, Esq.

Plans and specifications may be seen at my office, Colac, until Saturday, 8th May.

Coragulac House and the surrounding estate also got numerous subdivisions; the Chirnside family ended up with the Coragulac House mansion and surrounding land. When Mr Andrew Chirnside succeeded the Robertsons at Coragulac House, a home lighting system was installed, later SEC power was connected. Later owners of Coragulac House and surrounding land were likely - Baker, Ralton and Robinson. Around 1949, long after the coaches stopped rumbling up to its magnificent chandeliered reception hall, Coragulac House, consisting of 26 rooms and surrounding land, was bought by the Mathews Bros. Originally bought as a partnership with two families of the two brothers, the property remained in Mathews' ownership for over 62 years, until bought in 2012 by the present Gibson owners, who nowadays also hire the place out for accommodation and events - the Society had their summer barbecue outing and meeting at Coragulac House in February 2017. Glen Alvie mansion was sold after the death of J. P. Morrissy, then bought by the Turner family, to whom it belongs today. At Riccarton today, the homestead survives, but with a reduced number of rooms. The large main stone water reservoir still stands - its capacity has also been enlarged at some point by adding more rows of stonework to its height. The large wooden cattle sheds which were better known as the famous Glen Alvie saleyards also survive intact today at Riccarton. Thanks to assistance from Norman Houghton, Dawn Peel and Hugh Sloane.



CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER - Looking to the east from the top of the hill to the west of William Robertson's Corangamoorah mansion –
A painting by Chevalier (c. 1867) with Lake Colac in the background.

Image from Society collection



AT LEFT – Can you pick what is loaded for removal on the trailer of Ken Black's truck? And yes, it is of timber construction, and just been lifted by their aged, but ever so reliable and dependable old Blitz crane.

If you need a clue, perhaps the date of late 1961 may help – further help— it's by the Lake Colac foreshore and just east of the present day Rowing Club area.

**ANSWER NEXT
ISSUE**

COLAC AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROSTER 2020 2.00 PM – 4.00 PM – Thankyou

Month	Thursday	Friday	Sunday
March	5 th D. Missen 12 th R. Osborne 19 th G. Splatt 20 th J. Knight 27 th R. Missen	6 th C. Pink 13 th G. Bray 20 th E. Chambers 27 th M. Saddlier	1 st A. McIntosh 8 th G. Knox 15 th B. McDonald 22 nd I. Barlow 29 th G. Knox
April	2 nd D. Missen 9 th R. Osborne 16 th G. Splatt 23 rd J. Knight 30 th R. Missen	3 rd C. Pink 10 th Closed - Easter 17 th E. Chambers 24 th M. Saddlier	5 th A. McIntosh 12 th Closed - Easter 19 th B. McDonald 26 th I. Barlow
May	7 th D. Missen 14 th R. Osborne 21 st G. Splatt 28 th J. Knight	1 st C. Pink 8 th G. Bray 15 th E. Chambers 22 nd M. Saddlier 29 th G. Bray	3 rd A. McIntosh 10 th G. Knox 17 th B. McDonald 24 th I. Barlow 31 st G. Knox