



Published May 2020, Volume 50 - Issue No 2

Established 6th February 1950 - Incorporation No. A00245414U

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**

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Open Hours for the public at COPACC History Centre - to be advised

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

Forthcoming Events –

Due to coronavirus Covid-19 the History Centre remains closed to the public and AGM deferred. As soon as circumstances change all members will be notified by email.

A Note from the President –

May I extend the best wishes of the executive to all our members in these unprecedented times. We trust that you are coping well with the changes Covid-19 has made to our daily lives.

This issue of the newsletter contains some fascinating articles and photos for your enjoyment from our dedicated regular contributors.

Our February meeting was held following a BBQ at 'The Elms', thanks to the generosity and hospitality of the present owners David and Miffy Shelton.

Two articles in this newsletter explore the history of this magnificent home built in 1876, by Dr Foster, who was one of the many doctors who have contributed to the growth of Colac and district as a thriving community. David and Miffy are to be congratulated on the work they are completing to progressively restore their home to its former glory. Two photos of 'The Elms' from our Society Collection are included below.

We were indeed fortunate to hold our bus excursion to visit 19th century bluestone homes in the Beeac district just one week before the strict restriction on gatherings and travel was introduced. 'Rosebank', 'Grassy Vale', 'Dornwyn' and 'Braeburn' were all built by original selectors, Messrs Coulston, Lang and Pink as a result of the Selection Acts post 1860. We appreciate and thank the current owners of these properties for allowing us to visit.

On May 9th I participated in a zoom meeting of the Geelong and District Historical Societies Association where member groups informed others of their recent activities during the current conditions.

Hopefully, we can return to the History Centre and hold our AGM at one of the Saturday afternoon winter meetings.



What has been in the Colac Herald news?

February 12- Former Birregurra Uniting Church sells for \$870,000. With a ridiculous initial bid of \$180,000, the bidding really commenced when it reached \$500,000, the vendors very happy with the end result on Saturday for the 6069-square metre property which included the 112 year old church.

Murray Street Heritage rules face overhaul. Colac Otway Shire continues to cut red tape, with council looking at how to make it easier for traders to change and improve their storefronts. Development and community services general manager *Ian Seuren* said the council was aware of challenges that local businesses had faced with obtaining permits in the parts of Colac with heritage controls.

February 19- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation has extended its area of responsibility for cultural heritage issues to include Colac and district.

February 24- Ss John's Anglican Church appoints new priest *Father Ryan Austin-Eames*.

\$320,000 Upgrade of Colac's Velodrome at Elliminyt Recreation Reserve is under way.

March 2- 7000 Grey-headed Flying Foxes are now living in the Colac Botanic Gardens.

March 4- Clinic stalwart says goodbye. *Doctor Ross Griffiths* says goodbye to a career spanning more than four decades, as he retires from Corangamite Clinic, having treated hundreds of patients from across the district. He obtained degrees in obstetrics, anaesthetics and paediatrics while in England. Wanting to be a country GP he came to Colac when there were only 3 doctors at the clinic and was on call every second or third night.

March 4- History celebrated at family reunion. More than 50 descendants of some of Colac's earliest European settlers have travelled across the country to discover more about their origins. The extended family of Colac pioneers *Benjamin and Rebecca Harlock* shared stories and photographs at Beeac, visited relevant graves at local cemeteries and attended COPACC's Family History Centre. They discovered a convict in the family who stole 6 geese in England and was deported.

March 9- Retiree's lifetime honour. *Peter Cain* helped thousands of patients during his 32 year career with ambulance services including 12 years at Camperdown and 20 at Colac. He received life membership to the Retired Ambulance Association of Victoria.

March 13- Call to fix *century-old obelisk*. Alvie community members are working to restore names nearly erased by time and weather on their iconic war memorial at *Red Rock*. It was built by the residents of Alvie and Dreeite to commemorate all people from the district who served and died in the First World War. On March 24, 1920, the stone was unveiled by General William Birdwood, respected commander of the ANZACs during the Gallipoli campaign.

March 23- New space will honour Aboriginal burial site. Colac's Lions Park is making way for a *Traditional Owner designed memorial area*, with the final stages of Colac's Barongarook Bridge makeover. Aboriginal Ancestral remains were unearthed there during bridge reconstruction. A new picnic area is to be built in the Sculpture Park. There has been input from Eastern Maar who consider the bridge area as a place of cultural significance as a Gulidjan burial place.

Schools closed indefinitely and all non-essential services shut down to combat the spread of coronavirus Covid-19.

March 27- Colac Area Health establishes a dedicated testing site for Covid 19.

April 3- The number of Covid 19 cases in Victoria passes 1000, but no recorded cases in Colac Otway Shire.

Colac Cricket Club president *Rob Osborne's* 50 year contribution to Colac district cricket has earned him recognition as a nominee for the Weekly Times Heart Volunteer award.

April 15- *Doctor Michael Connor* who died on April 4 has been remembered as a family man, a lover of adventure and a beloved family doctor. Born in England and became a GP at Beeac in 1970 and a roving anaesthetist, before moving to Colac where he spent 47 years as a GP at Otway Medical Centre. Dr Connor received a Medal of the Order of Australia this year for his service to medicine and the community.

April 27- More names for Colac memorial. Colac RSL will update the list of names on *Memorial Square's First World War Shrine* adding 69 names of people who served in the war but missed out on the original honour rolls.

April 27- Colac community pays tribute. *It was an Anzac Day unlike any other*. COVID-19 stay-at-home laws meant thousands of people across Colac and district were unable to gather to commemorate our diggers on April 25th. For the first time Colac's Memorial Square was deserted on ANZAC Day dawn however people stood in their driveways, kept a minute's silence and watched a virtual service led by the RSL.

April 29- WHISKEY STILL ON. Minister approves major tourism project; Whipper Snapper Whiskey distillery, restaurant and function centre at Colac's former Mitre 10 building in Murray St.

May 4- Colac has recorded its first positive coronavirus Covid-19 result.

Renovations of the heritage listed former Colac High School quadrangle building would cost \$2.5 million.

DR. FOSTER'S NEW RESIDENCE

From the Colac Herald - 6th October 1876

Amongst the latest addition to the family residences in Colac is the house erected for Dr. Foster, situated near the English Church. This building considerably improves the appearance of the locality where it is erected, and it is also an ornament to the town generally. A short description of the house may not be unwelcome to our readers, and from a cursory inspection of it we are enabled to furnish the following particulars: - The architect of the building is Mr. Alexander Hamilton, and every care has been taken to provide ample ventilation, a very important matter nowadays. The foundations are composed of honey comb-stone and concrete, and the house itself is built of bricks, made in Colac, and very well burnt bricks they are. It is faced with white bricks, procured specially for the purpose from town. The roof is slated, and has a very neat appearance. The building has three fronts - south, west and north. The south is the general and family entrance, while the west is the professional entrance, and the north presents a long view of the extreme length of the building, in which the eye is agreeably relieved by five fine large windows. The first object that strikes any one entering the house by the south entrance is a very neat and light verandah, thirty feet in length, and thirteen feet in height. Entering the building by the south front a wide hall is observed, with a fine Plaster of Paris archway, which has a very good effect. Turning to the left, immediately upon entering, the drawing room is to be seen. This is a fine, large room, twenty-one feet in length and sixteen feet in width. There is a magnificent bay window, from which a fine view westward, and of the Lake Colac to the north, can be seen, and also two other large windows, looking southward, in this room. It is fitted with a very handsome white marble mantel-piece and ornamented iron grate. The centre-piece on the ceiling is a masterpiece of the Plasterer's art, and the cornices are very neatly done. A noticeable feature in this room is the extreme width of the skirting - sixteen and a half inches, and the deep moulding with which it is set off. This is painted a delicate lavender color, and presents a nice light appearance. Next to this is a large bedroom, sixteen feet square, also furnished with a centre-piece and cornices, and an enamelled slate mantel and grate. Immediately opposite to the drawing-room, and to the right upon entering, is the dining-room, which is also a spacious apartment, decorated with a centre-piece, cornices, and skirting-boards similar to those in the drawing-room, with the exception that the latter are painted and grained something after the pattern of dark oak. The mantelpiece in this room is made of enamelled slate, and is a very handsome one indeed. It is like black marble and malachite, and we have seldom seen anything in this line show to better advantage. There are two windows in this

room, which look towards the forest country. Immediately at the back of the dining-room is another large bedroom, decorated and finished in a similar manner to the one opposite, behind the drawing-room. The hearthstones in the four rooms alluded to are composed of Castlemaine slate.

The west entrance is ornamented with an archway, and encaustic tiles are laid down as the door is approached. Entering by the door, which is also nicely grained, after an oak pattern, we find ourselves in a waiting-lobby, in which patients who may come to consult Dr. Foster professionally will remain, should the doctor be engaged. To the left is the consulting room, and the laboratory is adjoining and connected with it, so that the doctor may be able to at once obtain whatever instruments or medicine he requires whilst treating a patient in this room. Immediately behind, are two bedrooms, and at the back of these is the kitchen, which is a spacious room, furnished with one of Parker's patent ovens. On the left side will be found the pantry, scullery, and servant's bed-room, and also an underground cellar, about seven feet in depth, well and strongly-built, though a little damp at present. Owing to some cause, the water continually rises in the cellar, and it has been found necessary to construct a well outside, adjacent to the cellar, into which the latter is drained by means of pipes.

The ceilings all through the house are twelve feet in height, and there is a ventilator in each ceiling. The heated air ascends through these into the roof, from whence it escapes by means of holes specially made in boards placed under the eaves for this purpose. Bell-wires are laid throughout the building, and bells are placed in all the apartments. The windows are a special feature in this comfortable residence. They are all 7 feet 2 inches in height, and 3 feet 4 inches in width, and composed of single sheets of fine stout glass. They give a general air of lightness and pleasantness to the building which is most agreeable. The doors are nicely grained a dark oak, furnished with bronze knockers, and bells are also placed at the side of the entrance doors on the south and west fronts. They are also relieved of their heavy appearance by small windows of ornamented glass, of a neat pattern. Provision is made for carrying the water from the spouting round the roof, by means of pipes, to a large tank in the yard. This tank is fifteen feet in depth, with a diameter of twelve feet, well bricked from top to bottom, and finished off with a large dome at top. A short distance from the house, and to the north of it, are situated the stables, coach-house, and outbuildings. The stables are built after the latest model, and furnished with every convenience. There is also a large tank close to them, which will hold a considerable quantity of water. The whole is surrounded by a neat picket-fence, and, as there is plenty of ground for the purp-

ose, we understand that Dr. Foster intends to have a flower garden and shrubbery laid out and planted round the house. This will considerably add to the appearance of the premises, and make them very pleasant to look upon. Taken altogether, the building is a very substantial family residence, and though the architecture is not of the very florid order, still it must be admitted to the general effect - the *tout ensemble* - is pleasing to the eye, and appears what may be termed "comfortable."

Considerable credit is attached to the various individuals who have taken part in the erection and ornamentation of the building. To the architect, Mr. A. Hamilton, of course a just meed of praise is due,

for the careful manner in which he has seen to the carrying out of his plans, and to the tradesmen employed also must be rewarded praise for the faithful manner in which they carried out his ideas. The following are the names of the tradesmen who obtained the various contracts and worked them out, with the amount of the same.

Carpentering, plumbing, and bell hanging, Mr. Robert Spark, £500 ; foundations and bricklaying, Francis Bell and Son, £400 ; plastering, &c., Riley Brothers £180 ; painting and graining, Forbes Brothers, £72 ; slating, M'Ewan and Co., £150 ; stables, &c., C. Drew £130.

The whole amounts to a total of about £1432.

How Colac coped with an earlier influenza epidemic

By Dawn Peel

The influenza epidemic of 1919 placed great demands on the Colac community. The doctors, in consultation with the Shire President, decided that the showgrounds (at that time in Queen Street adjacent to the railway line) would be the best available place for an isolation hospital. There was accommodation for 20 men and 20 women in the luncheon rooms, and if needed for another 40 patients in the large showroom. The publican's booth would serve as a kitchen, being far enough away from the wards to protect the workers. Volunteer nursing staff members were recruited to serve under Sister Benallack, who had recently returned from serving in France during the war.

AT RIGHT – Colac-born Mary Ann Benallack nursed in France from 1914 to 1918. Despite having suffered spells of bronchitis, gastritis and a facial wound causing headaches during her service, she had been back in Colac only briefly before volunteering to take charge of the emergency hospital at the showgrounds. (Image from Society files)



By the end of May there would often be up to 18 patients with influenza at the showgrounds, and volunteer carers were supplemented by two nurses from the hospital who were sent in relays. The *Colac Herald*, on 4 June 1919, told of how disturbing the patients found the noise from the trains passing so closely by.

It was further reported that nurses, when taking meals from the publican's booth to the wards, had to carry a tray, a lantern and an umbrella, with some conditions 'too bad to tell, especially the place past which food had to be carried...'

In the wards on frosty nights, drops of water fell from the bare corrugated iron roof onto beds making them wet. The bedding had to be changed and sanitary conditions there were said to be 'far from satisfactory'.

The spread of the influenza into the Otways was a double blow to that district, coming on the heels of devastating bushfires in February. Mill workers, often living in primitive conditions, were soon affected and many mills closed. In May there were twenty cases reported at Wyelangta alone and the school was forced to shut down. The teacher then began to assist the bush nurse, and they were kept very busy. The newspaper reported one heart-rending story of a couple who had planned to take up a settler's block in the area: *The nearest doctor is in Colac. A particularly sad case occurred recently. A settler on his way to take up a block fell ill. He had to be taken to the Colac hospital, and died: his wife fell ill shortly afterwards and had to be carried three miles by ten men, on a stretcher to a railway station and sent to Colac. She was taken into the hospital as her husband was being carried out dead.*

From July, patients were nursed in a tent at the hospital. The epidemic subsided after a final wave of cases in October 1919.

“A William John Lasseter watercolour painting of Lake Colac and surrounds - 1894”

By Alan Doyle – March 2020



Title: ‘Lake Colac 1894’ - William John Lasseter

Medium: Watercolour on cream paper - **Size:** 318mm (H) x 563mm (W)

SLV Accession No. H97.265

Author image, October 2019



A visit to the State Library of Victoria (SLV) to view a watercolour picture of ‘Lake Colac – 1894’ was to reveal a pleasant surprise. The picture represents, a late, lazy, hazy afternoon by the southern shore of Lake Colac. The view is taken looking west from a point close to the mouth of the Barongarook Creek, with many activities at play. The watercolour was painted by the artist William John Lasseter.

The watercolour was purchased by the SLV in 1997 and originally framed by the Simpson’s Book Arcade in Ballarat. The frame has since been discarded by the SLV, but the framers label was retained (SLV Accession No. H98.139). The painting has been professionally re-matted and is awaiting re-framing so it can be rehung for all to enjoy. The title of the piece is ‘Lake Colac 1894’, which is painted in black in the left hand bottom corner, with the painter’s name ‘W. J. Lasseter’ painted in red in the bottom right hand corner.

The picture captures so many aspects of lake life happening at one time in 1894. The Colac Botanical gardens appear to the left with people enjoying the surrounds. A tall gentleman and two elegant ladies enjoy a stroll, with children playing under the trees with their dog. The boat sheds are seen standing, as a sentinel to the two boats and yacht

sailing on the lake. A diving platform is located between the sheds and boats. Further around the shore line, grazing cattle can be seen close to the water’s edge. The yacht is being prepared for an afternoon sail, with the skipper hauling sail. The vessel is still tethered to its mooring, while numerous water fowl fly about.



Present day view looking from approx. vantage point.

Author image, December 2019

Notably Colac houses caught in a moment of time.



'Lake Colac 1894' – Notable house locations centred in painting.

NOTE: Artistic licence has been applied to position houses within painting.

Centred in the picture is Robertson's Hill looking due west, are four notable houses of Colac's elite.

1. *'Balnagowan'* on Ross' Point. Its red bricks can be seen reflecting in the shimmering waters of the lake. The house being a mere three years old, is kept company by two trees. A weekend retreat for Melbourne resident Alexander Frazer Ross.
2. The Robertson property, *'The Hill'* or *'Kerangemorrah'*. Well placed in the centre of the hill with its large gardens and commanding views of Lake Colac and surrounds. His Excellency the Governor and the Countess of Hopetown visited and stayed at *'The Hill'* and were welcome guests of the widow of Mrs. W. Robertson on the 10th January 1894.
3. Located on the northern side of the hill, is *'Cororooke House'* with its large established gardens. In 1894 the house changed hands from Mrs. J. H Connor to the incoming resident of Mr. Everard Browne.
4. By the shore is the white house of *'Thornbank'*, with a tree line running to the shore of the lake. Owned by grazier Charles Armstrong, his cattle are depicted grazing along the lake shore.

What happened during 1894, by Lake Colac at this location?

Events at this location can be found through various news articles by the Colac Herald, such as the Botanic Gardens having the Colac & Camperdown Brass Bands playing in March and the introduction of six English blackbirds (both sexes) brought from Ballarat Botanical Gardens in August.

There were the concerns regarding fish populations in the lake at the time, and in February two fishermen from Geelong conducted an audit, by netting fish in four locations.

"The first spot tried was opposite the Botanic Gardens. The result being 300lbs of perch, the biggest 3 ½lbs. The second trawl off the cricket ground resulted in a splendid haul – about 500lbs-including a few dozen carp. Off Ross's Point some 300lbs were obtained, and near the Lady Franklyn Farm about 100lbs. Of course the fish were all deposited in the lake again." (Colac Herald, 13 February 1894, page 2).

On the 5th October, a large storm lashed Colac and there was severe flooding of the town and district. Torrential rain flowed into the creeks and lake, causing flooding along the lake shores. The total rainfall was registered by Botanic Gardens curator, Mr. McDonald. He recorded 320 points (80mm) in just 2 ½ hours.

"...THE LAKE. As might naturally be expected the lake began to rise rapidly owing to the immense volume of water deposited therein by the various streams. It was never so high before, not even during the heavy flood of 1875. The jetty and the floors of the several boatsheds are covered by two or three feet of water, and if rough weather should eventuate before the lake subsides somewhat the buildings may not be able to stand the strain. On Saturday all land surrounding the mouth of Barongarook Creek and along by Mr. A. Hamilton's and Mr. D. Thomas's was flooded." (Colac Herald, 9th October 1894, page 3).

Who was artist, William (Johnny) John Lasseter?

Such was the relaxing scene that William John Lasseter painted of Lake Colac, it is possible this was the peaceful life he was searching for. He was locally known, as *Johnny* Lasseter and to be a person with a short temper and was fond of the drink. A short man who enjoyed reading, when he wasn't indulging in the drinking of alcohol.

Johnny, was born in Steyning, West Sussex, England in 1848. He arrived in Melbourne from London, aboard the 'Yorkshire' 19th June 1863, as a seventeen year old. Passenger records show that he was not listed and it is possible he was part of the crew. His marriage records show his occupation, as seaman. He may have left the ship on arrival to Melbourne to possibly join the Victorian gold rush.

He would later take up the trade of a coach painter. A trade that would have required coaches being painted to a high standard with finishing's of high-lights and decals. Over his life he held many jobs to make ends meet, such as shearer, labourer, rabbit trapper and a horse and buggy driver. He drove a horse and buggy for Ward's Livery Stable between Steiglitz and Morrison. Later taking up a job of a Rabbit Inspector for the Colac Shire.

Johnny married his first wife Agnus Cruickshank in 1876 and they raised four children. William Arthur (b. 1876), Lilian Jeanette (b. 1878), Lewis Hubert (b. 1880), and Claude Henry (b. 1883). They brought their children up around the Meredith and district area, taking up land in the district and built the family home, which was located along the Woodbourne Creek at Bamganie. The area was just south of Meredith and later becoming known, as Lasseter's Gully. The family would suffer many tragic circumstances in life.

Agnus died of apparent sunstroke in 1888, leaving Johnny to raise his family while still finding work. He brought his sister, Lily Charlotte Lasseter out from England to look after the children, but this didn't quite work out. She was strict and didn't adjust too well to the Australian country life style at all. She took a lot of her frustrations out on young Lewis, who she disliked.

Both Lillian and Lewis ran away from home and were finally caught up with, just on the outskirts of Geelong. A compromise was taken, with Lillian taking up a domestic job for a family at Ocean Grove. Lewis was taken in and cared for by the Sydenham family in Colac. Older brother William Arthur looked after himself and took up a job with T. Peters & Co. in Colac. Young Claude, would have still been in the care of his aunt.

Johnny moved to Colac and leased a property from Colac architect, Alexander Hamilton and took up a permanent position with the Colac Shire Council, as a Vermin (rabbit) Inspector. A job he held for a little over three years. His main task was to enforce the law of ridding rabbit numbers from private properties. He held the position from 1890 till mid-1893, until it was made redundant by the government. Johnny was well respected in this position and

operated without fear or favour. A petition was taken up by the Colac public and submitted to council to keep him as the Vermin inspector. Council tried to retain him, but were unsuccessful.

There were other means of controlling rabbit numbers coming onto the market, such as poisons. Johnny was shown to be proactive in the determination of eliminating the rabbit pest, by at one time instigating the aid of a new poisoning machine invented by Mr. Andrew Jackson. This was done shortly before he was made redundant.

The rabbit Inspector positions were all being removed from the state of Victoria and replaced by other government personnel, such as policemen.

The general public were generally against this change, as the new changes would see less experienced personnel identifying rabbit pest problems through the district. The governments reasoning was that rabbit numbers were coming down and a dedicated inspector was no longer required.

Government Notice.

V.  R.

SECOND SCHEDULE—"THE VERMIN
DESTRUCTION ACT 1890,"

NOTICE TO DESTROY VERMIN

To Owner of Allotments B and C, of
Block 63, Parish of Irrewillipe.

Take Notice that I, William John Lasseter, of Colac, being an Inspector duly appointed under "The Vermin Destruction Act 1890," and authorized for this purpose, do hereby, in pursuance of the provisions of such Act, require you to forthwith destroy all rabbits or other vermin within the meaning of such Act upon the land owned or occupied by you in Colac Shire, Corangamite Riding, containing about 200 acres, and upon the adjacent half-width of all roads bounding or adjoining the same or any part thereof, and I also require you henceforth to keep such land and half-width of roads clear and free of all rabbits and other vermin as aforesaid.

Dated at Colac this 14th day of September 1891.

W. J. LASSETER,
Inspector.

W. J. Lasseter – Vermin Inspector
Colac Herald, 15th September 1891,
page 3

COLAC POLICE COURT.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23-

(Before Mr. Herou, P.M., and
Messrs Bullivant, Coulston, Inglis
and Trangmar, J'sP.)

FAILING TO DESTROY RABBITS.

W. J. Lasseter v. G. H. Hills—For breach of the Rabbit Suppression Act. Mr. Hancock appeared for the prosecutor.

After hearing the evidence, the Bench considered that effective measures were not being taken to destroy the pest and a fine of £2, with £2 10s costs, was inflicted.

Same v. H. M. Hearn, F. Clifford and S. H. Johnson—Similar charge. A fine of £2, with £2 10s costs in each case was returned.

W. J. Lasseter – Vermin Inspector
Colac Herald, 27th January 1891,
page 4

Mr Andrew Jackson will give an exhibition of his patent "automatic poisoning machine" on Mr Bullivant's Yeo estate at 1 p.m. to-day Mr Lasseter, rabbit inspector for this district, has made the necessary arrangements. The trial should prove interesting to persons whose land is infested with rabbits. Mr Jackson has had successful trials of the machine at Belfast, Mortlake and other places.

Automatic poisoning machine trial.
Colac Herald, 14th February 1893, page 2

Johnny would lose all three boys to various misfortunes through his life time.

Claude Henry died of consumption (Tuberculosis). In March 1895 Johnny, had requested the help of the Colac Shire council for their influence in getting his son accepted into the Austin Hospital for Incurables. Colac doctors Brown and Wynne wrote a supporting letter that Claude required better care and supervision. During this period Johnny was unable to leave home to look for work. Claude was committed to the Kew asylum on the 22nd June 1895. Upon his death the Asylum warden Robert Reid, notes that the last visitor for Claude was back in December 1895. He was 16 years of age, when he died on the 15th September 1899.

William Arthur enlisted for duty in the Boer War and was killed in Action (aged 24), at Buffel's Hoek, in South Africa, 23rd October 1900. His unit was the New South Wales Imperial Bushman and he held the rank of Lance Sergeant.

Lewis Hubert lost his life in Central Australia, chasing a dream of finding his supposed lost gold reef in 1931. He died at the age of 51 years. (refer to CDHS newsletter May 2019, Vol. 49-Issue No. 2).

Now that the Rabbit inspector job was gone, Johnny returned back to his property in Meredith and continued work as a labourer in the district, as well as getting rid of rabbits, by becoming a rabbit trapper.

Johnny, aged 49, remarried local Meredith widow, Mary Molloy (nee Watts) aged 44 on 27th May 1897. She had four adult daughters from her previous marriage.

His temper and hot head saw him in trouble with the law, with two documented altercations back in Meredith. On Wednesday 14th November 1900, he took offence to a remark that a young man named McPherson made to him. Johnny, who was suffering from the effects of drink, brooded over the comment made. He returned to have a fight with him, to which McPherson just laughed. Lasseter left and returned with a firearm ready to "drill a hole" in him, as he was claimed to say. Johnny roamed the main street looking for him, but became tired and took up a position and fell asleep. The local policeman was called and saw the opportunity to overpower him and took him into custody. On another occasion in July 1908 in Meredith, he had an argument about a watch with James Bell. Johnny picked up and swung an axe, which inflicted a nasty wound to Bell. Again he was taken into custody.

After twelve years of marriage his 2nd wife Mary died on 1st October 1909 at Meredith. This only left him with his daughter Lillian who married Joseph McGrath and was now residing in South Australia. Johnny, in his ageing years would live with his step-daughter, Rose Grant's family in Meredith. By about 1932, Johnny had moved to South Australia and was being cared for by his daughter, Lillian. Johnny was 96 years of age when he died on the 24th October 1944 at Belair, South Australia.

Other known watercolour paintings –

The only two other known paintings by William are:

- Painting titled '*Lake Bolac*', sold Joel's auctions in 1997 for \$500.
- Painting of the family home at Woodbourne Creek, held by his grand-daughter, Mrs. B. Correll in Adelaide.



Lewis Hubert Lasseter (1894), presumed to be by the shore of Lake Colac. Image from Society collection – Photo card 130.



**William (Johnny) John Lasseter headstone - Mitcham Cemetery
South Australia**

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/201513964/william-john-lasseter>

It is a pity that the watercolour painting, '*Lake Colac – 1894*' is not easily accessible for all to enjoy and is locked away in storage at the State Library of Victoria. It's a magnificent picture that has caught a moment of Colac life in 1894 and should be shared.

Acknowledgement and thanks to Craig Pink, Dawn Peel & Robert Missen for their time and assistance, advice and researching the CDHS records for this article. Johnny Lasseter's life sourced from 'The Truth About Lasseter – Why his elusive gold reef never existed', Chris Clark – 2019, ISBN 9780648554035 (PDF) (Full bibliography can be supplied upon request)

Doctors and their contribution to Colac

By Norman Houghton

In the history of Colac the town doctors have been some of the greatest community builders and providers of significant architecture that has enhanced the amenity of the town.

Dr David Stodart was Colac's first doctor but he scarcely practiced, being more of a pastoralist than a medico. He erected a modest homestead to the west of Ross Point before taking up the Corunnun run.

The first town doctor as such, Henry Nankivell, commenced practice in the unlicensed Colac East Hotel premises in 1850 and remained here until the hotel gained a licence in 1854. He then moved to a site on Little Barongarook Creek (later in Wallace Street) where the original two room Police Barracks was situated. Nankivell expanded what was then a new building and converted it to his residence and surgery. He practiced out of there until his death. Dr T Rae took over 1859 and in 1875 built a hospital ward alongside. The house was called Mooringarara.

Rae based his practice here for many years. On his death widow Agnes remained in residence until her passing in 1914. The whole block was then subdivided into town housing lots but leaving the main house block with five acres. The house was then described as of 10 rooms, stable, coach house (near new), harness and mens' room. There was an extensive and well kept garden with fruit and ornamental trees. The new owner turned the place into rental flats and it remained thus until the early 1950s when sold again, being purchased by the Cartiere family, who ran the site as a market garden, while residing in the main house. In 1989 the McIntosh family took over the site and began a restoration project to the building and grounds. So Mooringarara remains intact at the time of writing, forming a continuous link with Colac's earliest days.



AT LEFT – Mooringarara – The original Police Barracks for Colac was this building, later called Mooringarara, and much expanded by Dr. Rae. It was one of Colac's leading medical establishments for much of the latter half of the 19th century. The building was solid enough to survive the years and several different purposes right through to the 21st century

This original drawing forms part of a series by Kate Potter from the 1980s - which are held by the Society.

Dr Thomas Foster gave Colac the stately mansion known as The Elms in Gellibrand Street. The house was built in 1876 to a design by Alexander Hamilton. The house had ten main rooms, consisting of drawing room, dining room, library, sitting room, six bedrooms, kitchen, two maids rooms, two pantries, two store rooms, cellar and billiard room, with spacious verandahs on three sides plus tennis court and stables. The doctor practised at home and built an out-office as a consulting room.

Dr William Brown acquired the house in 1896 and lived there until leaving town in retirement in 1921. Local hardware merchant Max Castles then bought the house in 1923 and son Geoff moved in when he got married in 1949. Portions of the house (it being so big) was later divided into two flats with two kitchens and two bathrooms. Geoff bought the house from his late mother's estate in 1969. The verandah was removed when it fell into disrepair and was not reinstated. The Castles quit the house in 1975. It had a nondescript existence until 1998 when Carmen Zahra bought it and turned it to a B&B. The place was restored to some degree in its new role. In recent times the property was turned over again to the ownership of David and Miffy Shelton and a full restoration begun. The building lives on, reflecting its original grandeur.

Dr Joseph Wynne arrived in town in 1888 and proved to be a great mover and shaker. He was a popular figure in the community and gave his time and money to many local interests. He was an active contributor to the Colac Turf Club, Fire Brigade, Dog & Poultry Society, Free Library, the Pastoral and Agricultural Society and the Colac Polo Club.

In business he was a founding director and shareholder in the Colac Dairying Co, established the short lived Colac Daily News, built the Federal House Coffee Palace in Murray Street and dabbled in various land deals. His lasting legacy to Colac is Lislea House, built for his residence and consulting rooms in 1892 at the corner of Corangamite and Bromfield Streets. Folk memory attributes to him a remarkable medical mercy dash from Colac to Apollo Bay to attend an emergency in 1892. Wynne took four and a half hours to do the distance, a near miracle on the then 'road' which was a rutted ribbon of dirt and mud. Wynne's pair must have been the best because the Colac Herald wrote of

the incident 'Blood will tell and skilful driving does not go for nothing'. On Wynne's death in 1915 his son Dr Thomas Wynne took over the practice and worked out of Lislea House until 1934. The next major use of Lislea came about in 1942 when it became Colac's main funeral parlour subsequently run by the two George James, father and son, and then through Rex Wagenknecht and Quinns. New owners in 2012 in the Koorns turned the place into two self-contained rental suites. In more recent times the place is under the control of Colac Area Health as an accommodation facility for visiting and trainee health workers. So Lislea House has gone the full circle from health to health.

AT RIGHT - Dr. Wynne's house in its prime circa 1900. The house possessed five bedrooms, formal lounge, dining and sitting rooms, kitchen, outbuildings and medical consulting room. Note the wooden towered windmill in background close by, a very common sight in town before a reticulated water supply was provided. Image from Society files - Photo card 048



The father and sons Doctors Brown, William and Arthur, served Colac from the 1890s to the 1950s and made a lasting contribution. William arrived in Colac in 1890 and ran his practice from a small private hospital he established on the north-east corner of Gellibrand Street and Manifold Streets. The house was expanded with surgery additions in 1898. Brown was Medical Officer at the Colac Hospital from 1891 to 1921.

Brown should be acknowledged as the one who single handed took on the Colac Shire Council to clean up the filthy streets and gutters that were a feature of Colac around 1900. Colac was full of horses and cattle who walked the streets pulling conveyances or going to the saleyards, its citizens were cavalier about disposing of household watery waste and shopkeepers dumped their waste of paper, straw and horse manure onto Murray Street outside their premises. In wet weather watery filth streamed across the roadways, gathering in stagnant pools etc and in dry windy weather foul dust, grit and particles emanated from the heaps. It was all a severe health hazard. Brown badgered Council until it undertook a program to form stone gutters, many of which remain in the older parts of town. In 1903 Brown erected Derrinook private hospital in Gellibrand St, diagonally opposite his current surgery and hospital to cater for an expansion in medical needs as Colac's population grew. Derrinook comprised 24 rooms for wards, operating theatre and service areas. Derrinook was then, and currently remains, the grandest wooden building in Colac. Brown was active in the Lawn Tennis Club. He left Colac in 1921 on retirement and his son Arthur took over his practice.

Arthur Brown was involved in several community bodies, in particular the second version of the Colac & District Progress Association as its founding President in 1922 and committee man and president of the Lawn Tennis Club. Arthur's most enduring monument in Colac was the notion of a Community Hospital where all medical and surgical services were centralised under the one roof. Out of this came the new Colac Hospital, opened in 1934, with a full range of wards to accommodate 100 patients, operating theatres, doctor's consulting rooms and nursing quarters. It was a revolutionary idea.

The doctor owned private hospitals in Colac were closed at this time and converted for residential purposes. Derrinook became six private rental flats of three and four rooms. During the post World War Two housing shortage the number of flats was increased to nine. The property remained in the Brown family until 1958 when it was sold and it remains in residential use at the time of writing.

Dr. Richard Gibbs gave Colac Glen Ora House at No 1 Bromfield St, opposite the hospital. Gibbs took up practice in Colac around 1900 and lived in a small wooden cottage on the site until 1907 when he moved the house to Connor St and converted it to a private hospital called Ulverstone. On the vacated site he had built a large, two storey brick residence. He conducted his practice and Ulverstone private hospital in Connor Street. Gibbs was killed on military duty while based at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 1919 (he fell out of a tram in motion) and Dr Francis Nance took over the house for a couple of years. Other doctors to live at Glen Ora after Nance were Archibald Murray and Thomas Uglow. From 1937 the residence became a guest house and in 1942 the Post Master General's Department leased the building to house its engineering and technical staffs. In 1980 the building then became offices for a legal practice. When Dr Uglow left Glen Ora he did so to move into a two storey brick residence in Hesse Street built in the ocean liner style of the day (with rounded features). The house was one of several similar styled residences erected

at this time by leading town personalities, thus reflecting the prevailing dynamism and wealth in the community. The house remains intact and substantially original.

Dr Francis Nance and wife Winifred were community minded persons. Nance arrived in Colac in 1916 and was Hospital Medical Officer from 1918 to 1957. He was involved in various groups, including the Colac Progress Association. Winifred was active in various movements and causes. Her energy and drive was largely responsible for the construction of Colac's first free kindergarten in 1951, which is named after her. Winifred was also involved with the Eventide Hostel, Ladies Benevolent Association, Blind Auxiliary, Baby Health Centre, Hospital Auxiliary, Hospital Linen Guild and cultural groups such as the Colac Art Studio. In 1956 she was awarded an MBE for her services to Colac and district.

Dr Keith Doig came to Colac in 1920 and practiced in association with Dr Brown, owning a share of Derrinook private hospital. He was instrumental with Dr Brown in setting up the Colac Community Hospital from 1934 and was Medical Officer there from 1919 to 1949. Mrs Doig was active in community affairs, especially in the establishment of the Baby Health Centre in 1925 and she steered this organisation for 11 years as President until purpose built premises were achieved in 1936 at the current Queen Street site.

The most outstanding monument to Colac's early 20th century doctors was the Colac Community Hospital building but it failed the test of time and eventually succumbed to new trends in medical practice. It was demolished in 2004. However most other doctor inspired architecture remains intact and the doctor tradition of maintaining and enhancing Colac's built residential environment has continued as a part of community life through to contemporary times. This was confirmed in 2008 when a Colac record price was paid for the Pollock Street house *Bryntirion* upon Dr Tudor Jones moving out.

AT RIGHT – Derrinook Private Hospital was erected by Drs Brown and Doig on a site formerly occupied by the Bible Christian Church. The building turned out to be Colac's largest wooden dwelling house, some 2035 square metres, and was used as a hospital to 1934. After that it was turned in to residential flats, a use that remains to the present day.

Image from Society files – Folio collection



In the settlements around Colac there has been some fine doctor inspired architecture. At Beeac Dr M. Cave had a substantial house renowned for its library and rose garden setting. Unfortunately the house accidentally burnt to the ground in 1927. The doctor also erected a private hospital in 1924 and this later formed the basis for the Beeac Public Hospital from 1950.



AT LEFT – The Colac Community Hospital, which opened in 1934 as the brainchild of Dr Arthur Brown. He had in mind a plan to centralise all medical and surgical services on community lines. This involved closing all private hospitals owned by medical staff (including his own) so that treatment could be had under the one roof. The new hospital complex could accommodate 100 patients and 30 nurses. The hospital served Colac for 70 years until being pulled down in 2004.

Image from Society files - Post card series collection.

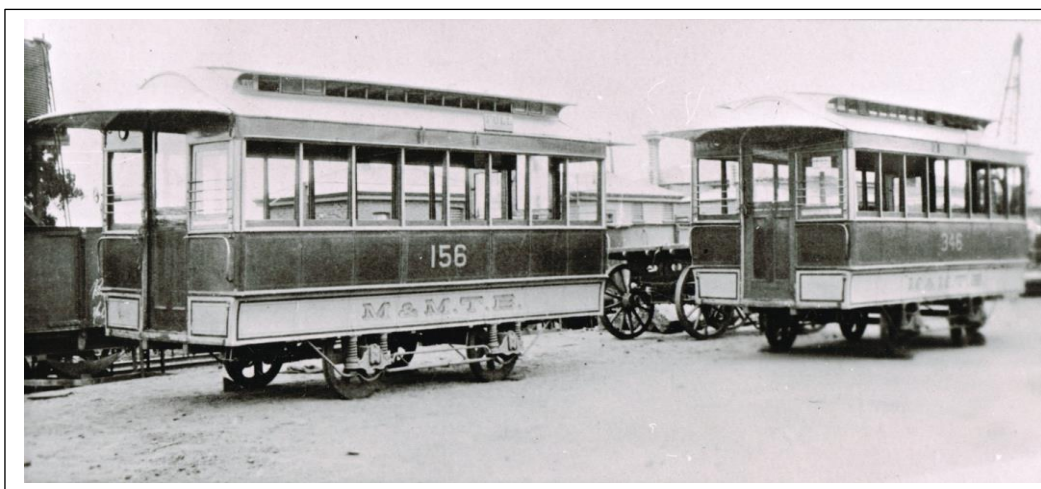
At Beech Forest Dr Benjamin Backhouse in 1905 erected one of the largest residential structures in town as his residence, surgery and private hospital. The building later became the Post Office and served this function through to the 1990s. The building remains intact as a residence at the time of writing.



CRAIG'S CONUNDRUM

LAST ISSUE ANSWER-

The Dorothy's hull – or what remained of it after Gelignite was used to blow its side away so the boiler could be dragged out - after that, what remained of the hull was then dragged in to shore. Here it's shown being transported away from the lake foreshore at the Rowing Club in late 1961. Its remains had been removed in a final clean-up of the lake bottom in an idea to enhance the use of Lake Colac. (This image was taken late 1961)



AT LEFT – DID COLAC EVER HAVE TRAMS ?

These two ex-Melbourne Cable Trams (No.s 156 and 346) have just been delivered by rail to the Colac Railway Station in early 1926, **Why - and what were they used for ?**

A CLUE – their role was a moving one, they did not remain stationary when put into service at Colac.

ANSWER

NEXT ISSUE

K	F	C	C	F	B	G	D	Q	E	R	K	E	E	T
A	C	I	A	E	A	R	N	K	X	O	S	P	L	R
W	Y	O	E	R	E	R	O	I	O	D	X	I	L	O
A	O	A	L	E	P	O	R	R	R	Q	X	L	I	O
R	C	O	I	L	R	E	A	A	J	E	I	L	M	C
R	E	T	L	O	A	G	N	S	W	G	E	I	I	N
E	E	U	R	W	N	Y	W	D	N	E	F	W	N	R
N	I	O	R	O	O	A	N	A	E	G	R	E	Y	A
C	C	V	R	A	N	O	L	O	T	I	A	R	T	W
O	V	A	L	M	C	A	L	A	R	Q	T	R	I	A
L	B	C	A	A	N	K	V	D	R	R	V	I	D	R
A	D	R	O	F	Y	N	O	T	S	P	I	O	N	R
C	S	C	O	R	A	G	U	L	A	C	E	P	O	I
H	R	O	D	A	G	N	U	B	O	Y	M	N	J	O
P	O	M	B	O	R	N	E	I	T	Z	O	G	T	N

FIND-A-WORD

Colac and District

by Alan Doyle

ALVIE	BARONGAROOK
BEEAC	BUNGADOR
CARPENDIT	COLAC
CORAGULAC	COROROOKE
DREEITE	ELLIMINYT
EURACK	IRREWARRA
IRREWILLIPE	KAWARREN
LARPENT	NALANGIL
ONDIT	PIRRON YALLOCK
POMBORNEIT	STONYFORD
SWAN MARSH	WARNCOORT
WARRION	WEERING
WOOL WOOL	YEO