



INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

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Our November Event Christmas Lunch

At our annual Christmas lunch at the Marion Sports Club, we were joined for lunch by our friends at the Village Museum, making a total of 22 people who were able to come to the event. It was nice to be able to have our annual event once again, as the year before it was cancelled due to lockdown.

Before lunch, Heather addressed the assembled company on the subject of the impending closure (short of a miracle!) of the society, as none of the current committee members are able to continue after this year's AGM, and to date there has been no-one available to fill their roles. Heather also spoke of the use of the society's funds in placing a plaque and surround on Henry Nixon's grave and digitizing many of the council rate books as a resource for historians, family or otherwise.

After Heather's talk we proceeded with our lunch, which as usual was excellent. Maybe the knowledge that it would probably be our last one encouraged many to stay on a while after they had eaten, and maybe it was just the usual good company plus other friends!

We still have three meetings this year, as well as the celebration of the finally marked Nixon grave at West Terrace Cemetery. It is great that one of our last acts as a society will be to honour this prominent Marion pioneer.

Hoping that you all had a Merry Christmas! Happy New Year to all our members, whatever the year shall bring.

Thank you to Mandy for arranging the program and thank you to our committee for their work through the year.

Marion's early rate assessments

Early Marion council rate assessments will soon be able to be viewed in the Marion Heritage Research Centre, thanks to a donation from the Marion Historical Society.

The Marion Historical Society and volunteers at the council's Marion Heritage Research Centre are often asked to help people find out where their ancestors lived, or when a house was first built on a property. Often, the best source of information for answering these questions is the early council rate assessments, which show the names of both the owner and occupier of each allotment in the council area and what buildings are on each allotment.

However, these records are not stored in the Council buildings and have not been digitised. They are handwritten in large, heavy books, which can only be viewed by visiting State Records at Gepps Cross. We rarely make the trek out there so our answers to some enquiries lack that information, other than advising the enquirers how and where to find it.

Given the likelihood that the Marion Historical Society will be closing this year, the Committee has been discussing suitable ways of spending our funds and decided a few months ago that digitisation of as many as possible of Marion's early rate assessments would be our top priority. The images will be donated to the Marion Heritage Research Centre and State Records.

Heather Latz is co-ordinating the project, which should be complete by the end of February. After first establishing that no amount of money would enable State Records to do the scanning themselves, she contacted a firm which already has experience at scanning these sorts of records – Total Secure Scan – and began liaising between them, the City of Marion (which owns the records) and State Records (which is the custodian of the records).

The earliest rate assessments were recorded in 1854 and Heather hopes that the funds we have allocated will allow scanning of records from then up to 1925–26, at least.

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From the Newspaper - 100 years ago

Bunyip (Gawler, SA : 1863 - 1954), Friday 7 April 1922, page 3.

THE FIRST MURRAY LOCK.

The formal opening and handing over of the first Murray river lock, the William R. Randell, took place at Blanchetown on Wednesday. The foundation stone of the lock was made in 1915. This is the first of a series of locks that are to harness the waters of the Murray, and give facilities for irrigation along the banks and navigation of the stream. The original estimate of the cost of the lock (£104,000) has been considerably exceeded, due to the difficulty in obtaining plant and material, and the expenditure to date has reached £220,000. The new lock is built close to the right bank of the river near Blanchetown, and has an available length of 275 feet clear between the gates, and a total over all length of 378 feet. The inside width is 56 feet. The lift or vertical distance between the water below and above the weir varies with the amount of flow in the river, reaching a maximum of 10.7 feet, when the lower pool is at zero level with the upper pool full. The completion of the work marks the first of the co-operative schemes of River Murray development, as instituted by the three States interested New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. Work is now in progress at lock No. 3, about five miles from Over land Corner, and lock No. 9, near the mouth of Frenchman's Creek, forming the inlet to Lake Victoria, where a system of storage has been provided for to give a regular and sufficient flow of water over the border for irrigation and navigation. The Blanchetown lock is expected to throw the water back 70 miles, or within ten miles of Waikerie. The basin of the River Murray covers the enormous area of 414,253 square miles, or over 250,000,000 acres of land. From the nature of the soil and the general contour of the country, it presents an ideal opportunity for intense culture by means of irrigation on a large scale. It is estimated that of the total of square miles in the catchment area, 43,542,000 acres in New South Wales, 4,000,000 acres in Victoria, and 2,700,000 acres in South Australia are irrigable if water can only be provided

The lock was named for the Murray's pioneer captain William R. Randell who first navigated a portion of the river in 1853.

The river projects were undertaken for both irrigation and navigation for passenger and cargo vessels. With the advent of rail and motor transport the main use now is for tourism and recreation.

It is interesting to note that the level of the water on the lower side of the Blanchetown lock is maintained by the barrages at the Murray Mouth, 171 miles, 275km downstream from the Blanchetown Lock and

that at no place in this distance does the bed of the Murray rise above sea level at the mouth. In fact in some places there are holes from 50 to 70 feet deep. (South Coast Story, J.C. Tolley, published 1968)

News from the Marion Heritage Research Centre

*A very happy 2022 to all our heritage friends!
In spite of the pandemic, the year promises to
be another one full of rich historical
discovery and experiences.*

*We are extremely grateful to the Marion
Historical Society for their generous donation
of the scanning of the Marion Rates books.
This means that, very soon, we will be able to
research these records right here, on site,
at the MHRC. This is a huge boon for
researchers and for us as a history
service provider.*

*To recognise ANZAC Day, we are hosting
guest speaker Dr Janet Scarfe at 10.30 am
on Wednesday 27th April presenting her talk*

***'Remarkable service, in war and peace:
Vieve Dwyer AANS'***

*about Mary Genevieve Dwyer who grew up on
the Oaklands Estate, and went on to become a
decorated WW1 Nursing Sister,*

*For more information and bookings please
contact the MHRC on 7420 6455 or
heritage@marion.sa.gov.au*

*Watch out for info about our events in the
Marion Libraries' 'What's On!' booklet.*

Marion Heritage Research Centre
245 Sturt Rd, Sturt
Ph: 7420 6455

Email: heritage@marion.sa.gov.au

Marion Historical Society Next meeting:

March 16th
at 7.30pm at Club Marion
Hills View Room 2/West

**MHRC co-ordinator and volunteers
Marion Heritage Research Centre showcase**

All visitors are Welcome

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