

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

September 2024

YOUR HISTORY, OUR RESPONSIBILITY

In this issue:

- Message from The CEO
- Mrs Kenny's Honour Board
- 200 Victoria St
- Memories of Former Residents
- Save the Date - Reunion
- Planning for Cafs 160th
- In Memoriam
- From the Archives
- Keeping in Touch with Cafs



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

We have lots of updates to share with you in this edition of the History and Heritage newsletter. The History and Memory Centre has had some interesting display changes including the wonderful addition of the reverse of Mrs Kenny's Honour Board (story following).

We were pleased to see the City of Ballarat Interpretation Plans for 200 Victoria Street finally announced. It's been a long road to reach this point and we look forward to seeing some progress for the project.

Planning for the 2025 Reunion is well underway and we welcome everyone to join us next February at Russell Square for a relaxing afternoon among friends.

Until next time.

Wendy

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Ballarat Orphanage - Mrs Kenny's Honour Board

We at Cafs had long heard of the legend of the girls who claimed the title of honourable, by etching their names in the back of Mrs Kenny's Honour Board.

Last year, as we installed the new exhibition in the Cafs History & Memory Centre, we took the opportunity to have the Honour Board removed from its place in the Board Room, to view the magnificence of these girls' artworks on the back. Special mentions to Peggy, Peg, Maxine, Joyce (x3), Minnie, Aileen, BB, Muriel, Miss McArthur, MM, and Shirley, whose inscriptions we have identified on the honour board.

We thank you for self-claiming the title of 'honourable' and making us smile. We have now had your artworks documented by a specialist photographer, with a full-scale print installed near the original artefact. We are fascinated by the ways in which children at the Orphanage and the Children's Home found ways to express themselves. Do you have any other memories of claiming space like this as children?



HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Reflecting and acknowledging the past at 200 Victoria St

The City of Ballarat has announced the heritage interpretation plans for the site of the former Ballarat District Orphan Asylum, Ballarat Orphanage, and Ballarat Children's Home - all based on Victoria Street in Ballarat East.

The site has been developed by private developers and is now home to housing, a childcare centre, and a supermarket. The former Toddler's Block, two walls of the school house building and the brick wall on Stawell St are the only built structures that remain on site. The interpretive elements will be a really important way of communicating the stories of over 4,000 children who lived together on that site. For those interested in learning more, see the City of Ballarat's news release here: [Reflecting and acknowledging the past at Victoria Street | City of Ballarat](#)



BUILDING BLOCKS

Children's building blocks featuring historical Henderson Nursery Rhyme paintings, which were once on display at the Ballarat Children's Home.



CURVED PILLAR

Inspired by shapes that once decorated historic buildings at the site, curved pillars will feature stories and historic images. Roses are also used in acknowledgement of the rose garden that the children were expected to tend, but were not allowed to enjoy.



CURVED SEATING WALL

Curved seating walls will showcase stories from former residents in their own words.



MARBLES

Marbles were once a popular game played by the children, and will be used to display stories and historic images.

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Memories of Former Residents

John Fielder

John Fielder was a former resident of the Ballarat Orphanage from 1945 where he was, at the age of two, taken from his mother along with his older sister and placed in care until 1960.

John went on to live a very productive and exciting life, travelling many countries, meeting dignitaries such as the Governor General and participating in the Tivoli theatre. John and his wife Catherine, who now live in Sydney, have 2 children, Jonathon and Amelia, 6 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren!

John recounted his family life with fond memories of his foster siblings, Gwenda, Yvonne, Brian and Andrew. Recently, as a result of the advancement of DNA technology and through Ancestry.com, John was able to find out who his birth father was and, in the process, discovered he has an older half-brother (from his father's side) which he was able to visit and meet for the first time over in Perth.

John was also saddened to hear of the recent passing of Joe Sloper and wishes to extend his condolences to Val and Teddy. All of whom were great friends during his childhood.

Recounted life memories by John Fielder as noted on 20 May 2024, for the purpose of publishing in the Cafs Former Residents' Newsletter.

Eric Jackson

Hi, I saw that you recently featured one of the stories from my father Eric Jackson, who grew up at the Ballarat orpho from the age of 4 in 1935.

He has always regarded his orphanage experience as a very good one and many that he grew up with there became his family, although they are all gone now.

Eric drove over today and suggested that I forward a couple of images to you. I don't know if you would use them or not.

Motivated by a recent advertising campaign he saw for the Spirit of Tasmania ship, he recalled transporting his car to Tassie when he was much younger.

To take his Austin 7 to Tasmania in 1953, he had to park it on a net and they used a crane to place it in the hold of a ship. He took these images himself.

I understand that during his teens in Ballarat that he was one of the few of his 'extended family' to possess a camera and took many pics from his early Ballarat days

Regards, Ian Jackson

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Memories of Former Residents

Eric Jackson continued



“The Way it Was”

The orfo had a lot of paddocks scattered around. One such I recall at harvest time had a crop to cut. We used a reaper & binder, fuelled by a horse. The crop was cut & bound into scheaves which were stacked into stooks to dry.

In time these were loaded in to a wagon and bought back to the farm.

Using a pitch fork they were tossed into the loft above the cow bales. There was a chaff cutter up here; the worst job in the book. The air was filled with chaff & dust as the chaff was cut and bagged, to be fed to the cows at milking time.

In other paddocks the grass hay cut and pressed into bales. These were stacked and put in the hay shed to feed the hundreds of mice that lived there.

We all know how cold Ballarat can be, thinking back to after tea the only warm place was to sit on the steps outside the boiler house, steam pipes ran under. When the doors to the bedrooms were opened it was good to get into bed, Two blankets was a bit light on.

On a cold and frosty night you could hear the trains just across. A double header steam would be pulling up the “bank”. You could lie in bed and hear the wheels slipping on the iced rails. The fireman would hall a lever to drop sand to the rails for the wheels to grip.

Back in the East Wing when it was “lights out” and all the authority gone there was a scatter to get the floor mat that ran down the middle of the polished floor. This mat would be snaked over all the beds on one side, taken turn about, for extra warmth. The mat being replaced when the siren went in the morning.

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

Memories of Former Residents

Eric Jackson continued

At the appointed time a queue would form outside the casualty room. Missus Ludbrook who was a trained nurse would open up, she would treat all manner of ailments, real and imagined. For cuts and scratches she would apply a coating of red mercurochrome, "now banned", she was a lovely lady. It was not above a few of us to go out to the garden and "bandicoot" a few spuds to bake in the incinerator.

When the war was on trenches were dug in the yard. Logs were lain close together and the soil mounded over. We were drilled in case of an air raid. Keep your backs from the wall. Thankfully they were not used for the purpose intended.

There was the time that a load of pears was dumped in the pig paddock. With the war there was no labour to pick and pack them. We had to fight a losing battle with the pigs to get some good ones.

One of the jobs after tea was delivering milk. My mate Bosy Neate, with whom I am still in close contact, after 80 years, drew the short straw. We had a four gallon churn of milk; bloody heavy! Our route was down Victoria st. Our customers hung their billies on the picket fences; some got a quart others three pints. One lady used to leave a cake in the letter box for us. She always got good value.

The milk was not pasteurised or homogenised or any other "ised"; straight from the cows. If left in the billy overnight there would be a quarter inch of thick cream on tap.

The last stop was the convent, the empty can taken back and steamed clean.

The Jersey herd was built up over many years. One job was to look after the Stud Book.

This book showed which cow was put to which bull. The resultant heifer was put to another bull to keep the integrity of the herd. The lad that did this went on to be a cattle judge at the Melbourne show.

We had a boxing ring, regular size. Our instructor was Gus Henderson, who had a blacksmith shop in Main Rd. Twice a week Gus would come and train us. The two in the ring were always evenly matched and learned the basics. In time we had a fair level of competence.

There was a time that half a dozen of us kids were sent to the Technical School to study.

The older kids came down to "initiate" the new kids. They soon learnt in no uncertain manner that you don't mess with the orphanage kids. Nice one Gus!

No story would be complete without a mention of the band. Anywhere in the area the sound of the band practicing came through the air. The band travelled far and wide, and was well received everywhere. It was a good much needed fundraiser led by a very stern bandmaster.

At one time it entered the radio show "Australia got talent" and won.

I am getting writer's cramp so I will finish up.

Eric Jackson

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save The Date - 2025 Reunion

Planning is well underway for our 2025 Former Residents Reunion.

We look forward to welcoming everyone for another terrific catch up including lunch.

If anyone has any ideas about how to make this a special day, please get in touch with us.

- **Friday, February 21, 2025**
- **Russell Square, Humffray St Nth, Ballarat**
- **11:30am - 1:30pm**

We will send out for RSVP's closer to the date so please make sure you keep us updated with any address changes so we can get your invitation to you.

Planning for Cafs 160th Anniversary - 2026

160
YEARS

In 2026 Cafs is looking forward to acknowledging the 160 years since the first families were brought into the Ballarat Orphan Asylum. The first 9 children arrived on voluntary placements from the Challen, Bisgrove, King, Watson and Phillips families in 1866. Cafs has meeting rooms dedicated to each of these families at our HQ in Lydiard Street.

Between the arrival of these first families in 1866 and the closure of the Ballarat Children's Home in 1983, Cafs' predecessors managed over 4,000 children in institutional care. At Cafs, we are keen to hear from past residents who might be interested in helping to plan events, or activities to commemorate the forthcoming 160th anniversary. If you would like to be involved or share your ideas, please get in touch.

IN MEMORIAM

We would like to take a moment to recognise our Former Residents who have passed away since our last newsletter.

- Phyllis Cremona (nee Excel) has passed away after a long illness. Phyllis has been on our former residents advisory group and her voice, memories and advocacy was vital in shaping the way we presented history in the exhibition at Cafs. Our thoughts are with her family and all those who loved her.
- Dorothy Sharp nee Edwards. Resident, late 1940's. Always remembered.

HISTORY & HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH CAFS

Future newsletters

A friendly reminder that we have now moved to a preferred method of email communications, and future newsletters will be sent by this method. If you have not already provided us with an email address and wish to continue receiving newsletters, please drop us a line so that we can update our mailing list accordingly. If you no longer wish to receive History & Heritage newsletters please unsubscribe by sending an email to records@cafs.org.au

Accessing your records

If you wish to access your records, please send an email with information including the years that you were in Care, date of birth, names of parents and any siblings. Please also include photo ID such as an image of your license.

Calling for contributions

Have you got a story or memory you'd like to share in the next newsletter? You may like to share a poem that you've written, some artwork you've created, share a photo or your experiences from your time in Care. It's really up to you! If you'd like to contribute, please get in touch.

Cafs Heritage and History Records Service

Ph: 03 5337 3333

Email: records@cafs.org.au

Hours of operation:

Monday 9am – 5pm

Friday 9am – 5pm

