

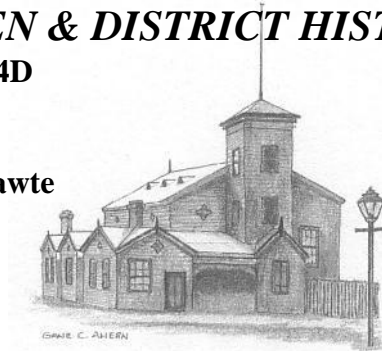
YARRA GLEN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EDITOR

It is good to start off a new year with a contribution to the Newsletter from one of our members. Barry Watts spent his childhood and youth in Yarra Glen and his interest in the history of the area is being put to good use by recording the results of his research. A by-product is the article in this issue about the life of Loronza McKenzie, the founder of McKenzies Tourist Services. A book was published for the Company in 1999 and gives a detailed account but it was distributed privately and not made available for sale. The Historical Society is fortunate to have a copy in its collection: Elana Steinberg, *In the Driver's Seat: the Story of MecKenzies Tourist Services Pty Ltd*, 1999.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on 19 October 2008 and the following were elected:

Office bearers for the year 2008/2009

President	Brenda Cawte.
Vice President.	Jill Sheffield
Secretary/ Treasurer	Eric Tetlow
Committee	Yvonne Monk Kristin Otto Leigh Ahern.

The Annual Report is printed on page 2.

Helen

Advance Notice

PETTY FAMILY REUNION

A reunion of descendents of John Hicks Petty (1828-1910) and Maria Byrne (1844-1922) is planned to be held in March 2010. John originally bought land in Yarra Glen in 1856 and the family ran the Post Office from 1861 to 1950. John and Maria had 13 children.

Contact Terry Waters for more information on terry_waters@westnet.com.au

St ALOYSIUS CHURCH

The parishioners of the Roman Catholic Church in Yarra Glen are very proud of their renovated church. If you haven't seen it, it is worth a drive up Sayle Street. Volunteers spent many hours over the last couple of years, preparing the surfaces, replacing windows, spoutings, etc and doing a lot of the painting. In addition Ted Bowling erected a new fence and lych gate, working bees established a garden and a water tank was installed. Contractors recently put the finishing touches by completing the difficult painting jobs including the high roof. Unfortunately the difficulty of obtaining a priest means that Sunday services have not been held for several months. We hope this is remedied soon.

Before (about 1994)



After (January 2009)



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT 2008

I am happy to present my report for the past year.

The biggest meeting ever was held at the Living & Learning Centre last October when Bill Murcett spoke to us on the Williamson family history. Many families came as guests, so it was wall to wall people. Bill gave an excellent presentation which everyone enjoyed.

After our submission to the Shire of Yarra Ranges we were able to open our new home in February this year. Since then our membership has grown to 44. Attendances at monthly meetings average 14 members with an occasional visitor.

Also in February we visited the Newell's property in Steels Creek Road where there was a display of old steam engines being restored and in use.

Speakers this year have been : David Rapley on the Rifle Clubs of the Yarra Valley, John Waghorn – The Victorian Postal Service and David Allan – The Klondike Gold Rush.

At other meetings during the year members spoke and showed many items of interest.

Since we moved in to our own room we have been given many pictures, photographs and items of interest for safekeeping. Now we need your help in identifying some of the people in the photographs. Our photo collection is being catalogued at present.

[\(Do write on your photos in pencil the names, places and dates for future reference\)](#)

Helen Mann and Barry Smith have compiled a Newsletter on the Yarra Glen Football Club and we are hopeful we can produce a book on the history of the Club this coming year.

Our sincere thanks to Helen for our excellent Newsletter this year when she has spent so much time travelling to and fro to Queensland.

Mary Mann is now 90 and is our most recent Life Member.

Leigh Ahern has reproduced all our books as CDs which are being sold to interested enquirers.

Thank you Eric for all the research you do and for being Treasurer and Secretary for our Society – we are all indebted and grateful.

The Internet has been the source of most of our enquiries.

We are now open most weeks on Wednesdays 1.30 p.m to 4.00 p.m. when members and visitors have called in to discuss research.

I would like to thank Jill Sheffield – my able vice President who has taken four meetings this year when I was unavailable. It has been good to have your help, support and encouragement.

In the near future our Historical Society's name will be added to the notice board at the front of the Memorial Hall.

We have been asked by the Association of Eastern Historical Societies to host a conference Saturday 2nd May 2009. We asked the Shire for a tentative booking of the supper room for that day and have been told it is available.

May we continue to enjoy our times together next year while learning and sharing our history.

Brenda Cawte.

LIBRARY DONATION

Charles Joseph La Trobe: landscapes and sketches, introduced by Dianne Reilly. Published by the State Library of Victoria, Tarcoola Press and the National Trust of Victoria, 1999. 341pp. (pictured below)

Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian notes 1839-1854, edited and indexed by Ev Beissbarth. Published by Tarcoola Press in association with the State Library of Victoria and Boz Publishing, 2006. Limited edition of 200. 379pp.

Donated to the Yarra Glen & District Historical Society by Bruce Nixon of Tarcoola Press, Yarra Glen, these splendid publications are a handsome addition to the modest library of the Society.



L. R. McKENZIE

by Barry Watts

Few people have the lasting impact on the district in which they were raised as Loronza Reilly McKenzie, whose surname today bedecks fifty luxury buses seen frequently around the Yarra Valley. He was better known locally by a variety of nicknames - 'Laurie', 'Porky' and 'Mac'.

He was born at Dixons Creek in the final years of the nineteenth century¹ and, following the death of his mother, moved into Yarra Glen with his family when he was twelve-years-old. Soon he began working for local identity Charles Hicks Bath who ran the livery stables and provided mail delivery for the outlying districts of Christmas Hills, Steels Creek, Kinglake, Castella, Toolangi, and Dixons Creek. This was to become 'Mac' McKenzie's run, while Mr Bath took care of train passengers going to and departing the Yarra Glen railway station in his two-horse covered buggy.

'Mac' began part-time blacksmithing between mail runs with the local 'smithy' in King Street. This led to an unfortunate accident in which he had a nail lodged in his right eye, causing permanent loss of sight in that eye. Some time before this misfortune, 'Mac' had married his boss's second daughter, Mary May Bath, in May 1922. During his convalescence, the couple traveled to Sydney by train where 'Mac' decided that motor vehicles were the future mass means of transport. He purchased a Hudson car in Sydney which the couple then drove home to Yarra Glen.

It became the foundation vehicle for what, over the next 80 years, became a fleet of modern buses carrying tourists and school children around the Yarra Valley and beyond.

In 1927, two years after their only child Nancy was born, 'Mac' McKenzie bought a local hire-car service operating between Marysville and Healesville which he extended to Melbourne. 'Mac' put his brother Ken in charge of the Marysville ticketing operation, moved his own young family to Melbourne, and began driving the 140-mile round trip daily himself.

It was estimated at that time that Healesville alone had about 80 guesthouses and these provided a steady stream of customers for his service. Soon McKenzie's added a further four cars and recruited and trained new drivers, eventually building his fleet to eight vehicles. In 1932 'Mac' developed his version of a 'stretched limousine', a Packard with an extended chassis to provide more seating, and luggage carried on the roof – he had turned a five-passenger car into an eleven-seater.

Seeking an opportunity to become involved in the burgeoning regional timber industry, 'Mac' purchased the Healesville Ford dealership and added to it several leading petrol franchises – now he was able to supply both trucks and petrol as well as servicing the vehicles, and ran seven timber-trucks of his own.

Next, he needed larger premises in Melbourne to house and service his growing fleet. He bought Kew Motors in Barkers Road in 1936, and installed his sister Freda² there to reconcile bookings and agent commissions. Not long after this a family home was purchased in nearby Stevenson Street, Kew. The outbreak of WWII saw several drivers leave to join the armed services while the boss, because of his blindness in one eye, was unable to enlist. The army commandeered his new business premises during this period.

In 1941, 'Mac' put his wife Mary and daughter Nancy, then sixteen, in charge of the business while he joined the Red Cross's Field Force. He was posted to Darwin where he was to distinguish himself twice during Japanese air raids. In the first instance he drove a Red Cross truck through enemy aircraft-fire onto a burning wharf and dived into a bay ablaze with oil to rescue several wounded men one at a time. On the other occasion his heroism saw him protecting a mother and her children by flinging himself across them in a dugout as Japanese aircraft strafed the ground around them. For these actions, L R McKenzie was awarded the George Cross medal³. He resigned from the Red Cross for health reasons (a busted shoulder) in 1944 and returned south to run his businesses.

After the War, three significant changes took place at 'McKenzies'. First, 'Mac' disposed of his timber trucks to his brother-in-law Jack Bath⁴. Next, he bought the house and shopfront on Maroondah Highway, Healesville, which served the family and the business for well over fifty years. Then in 1946 daughter Nancy, who had helped her mother operate the company in 'Mac's absence, married Toolangi timber-worker Nelson Smith.

In 1948 'Mac' and Mary purchased land in Anzac Avenue, Yarra Glen with views across the township to Mount St Leonard, and later they built their county home there.

His bus runs were expanded to cover Buxton, Eildon and Alexandra. Then 'Mac' turned his mind to organizing tours, charter work, and school bus contracts; each of which in turn produced amazing growth to the 'McKenzie's' enterprise. In 1955 his friend and fellow tour-bus operator, Reg Ansett who owned Pioneer Tours, sold Southern Coachlines (a Healesville-based busline) to 'Mac'. Southern had operated in competition to 'McKenzies' on the Melbourne-Healesville-and-beyond routes for many years, as well as having some local school contracts.

Nancy and Nelson had senior roles in the running of the business. 'Mac' was heavily involved in vehicle design, and rode 'shot-gun' on all decisions, but still managed to find time to serve as Shire councillor for nineteen years – including three terms as President. He believed in giving something back to the community that has provided him with a great deal. 'Mac' was still a driving force in the

¹ Loronza Reilly McKenzie was born 31 December 1897.

² Alfreda McKenzie, born 9 October 1907 at Dixons Creek, attended Yarra Glen Primary School.

³ The George Cross is the civilian equivalent of the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery. Loronza McKenzie was also the recipient of the Order of St John for conspicuous Red Cross service.

⁴ Charles John (Jack) Bath was born 26 December 1904, attended the Yarra Glen primary school.

Healesville Amateur Racing Club that he had helped to create, and bred horses of his own. Although the McKenzies kept their house in Kew, they moved into their home at Yarra Glen permanently.

Sixteen years after the building of her 'dream home' in the town of her birth, Mary McKenzie passed away in 1966. She had been the central person 'behind the scenes' during the growth of an amazing local icon – 'McKenzie's'. She was the one who cooked for their first drivers, tallied the fare monies, sorted the petrol coupons, and attended to all the banking and bookings.

In 1970, the lad who was born at Dixons Creek seventy-three years earlier, bowed before Queen Elizabeth II at Government House, Melbourne, as he was made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) for services to transport and tourism.

'Mac' held the reins firmly for another ten years before he moved to his Yarra Glen property in semi-retirement. While he said he had handed over to Nancy and Nelson, he was often on the 'phone asking questions, checking details, and regularly visited his major depots to chat with old staff. He found it difficult to let go.

Loranza Reilly McKenzie, 'Mac', passed away on 13 May 1987.

Nancy and Nelson Smith instituted a program to upgrade their road fleet with Mercedes Benz luxury coaches. At the turn of the new millennium they had fifty vehicles, all bearing the familiar 'McKenzie's' logo, serving the public. It had always been a family company and the Smith's children and grandchildren were also inducted into the company workforce.

In September, 2006, McKenzie's Tourist Services was purchased by the Dineen Group from Warragul for an undisclosed amount. "The proud name of McKenzie's will continue," new owner Bill Dineen said.⁵

Sources:

In the Driver's Seat, the Story of McKenzie's Tourist Services by Elana Steinberg. 1999.

Yarra Glen & District Historical Society genealogical resources

Warragul Times newspaper

⁵ The Dineen Group is a major regional bus operator with five bus lines - Warragul, Berwick, Diamond Creek (Panorama), Westernport, and Heyfield. Owner Bill Dineen started with one bus in Warragul in 1972 and now has 300 buses. "McKenzie's sits well with our other businesses," he told the *Warragul Mail*, 06-09-2006, when announcing his new acquisition, "The company will continue to operate as McKenzie's Tourist Services."

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Dorothy Agnes Fothergill

25/11/1915-5/12/2008



Dorothy Fothergill (née Walker) passed away on Friday 5th December 2008 at Healesville aged 93 years.

Few can claim to be more native to the area than Dorothy. She was born in the heart of Yarra Glen, in the former bank building on the corner of Bell and Herbert Streets, on 25 November 1915. Her great grandfather, Joseph Scott, arrived in Australia from Cumberland aboard the 'Six Sisters' with his wife Jane and five of their ten children in 1853. He selected 80 acres at Steels Creek which later was expanded to include hundreds of acres. Dorothy is also descended from the Hill family of Lilydale through her maternal grandmother Mary Jane Scott (née Hill).

Dorothy attended the Yarra Glen Primary School and then for a few years worked in Melbourne and Sydney as a housemaid, cook or housekeeper. About 1940 she returned home to assist the family with the management of a milk bar in Bell Street, Yarra Glen. It was here that she met Arnold Fothergill when he came to Yarra Glen as part of a haymaking team from Nagambie. They married in 1941 and made their home in the Glen, raising three children. Dorothy has ten grandchildren and many great grandchildren.

Dorothy always had a great interest in the history of the town and its people and was a great source of information about all the 'hatchings, matchings and despatches', the history of buildings and community activities. She was a foundation member of the Yarra Glen & District Historical Society in 1973 and became a Life Member in 2005. While her children were at school Dorothy's interest lay in associated activities, including five years as Secretary of the Yarra Glen Primary School Mothers Club. In most of the many organizations she belonged to Dorothy became an office bearer and in some cases was a founding member. She will be well remembered for the role she played in establishing and organizing the activities of the Senior Citizens and the Combined Churches Opportunity Shop. She was a lifetime member of the Yarra Glen Presbyterian/Uniting Church and for many years an Elder. In 1999 she was one of seven Yarra Glen residents to be honored as Citizen of the Year by the Commonwealth Government.