

National Trust - Mount Alexander Branch

More Branch News & Activities

DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS PARTY

FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER FROM 6.00PM

The President, David Cunningham, invites members, partners and friends to come to his home at 39 Bull Street, Castlemaine from 6.00pm for a very informal little end-of-year celebration.

No formal activities—just an opportunity to meet other members and enjoy a little social Christmas cheer and—again this year—to be entertained by “The Odds ‘n Sods”, a most unusual band of unusual people playing unusual instruments. You’ll love it!

Bring your own food and drink and a salad to share. BBQs will be available. And do bring your friends...all are welcome.

MAKE A NOTE IN YOUR DIARY NOW!



The Odds & Sods at last year's party

Please RSVP to 5472 4478 or email dccunningham@netspace.net.au by December 6.

VCAT has the Last Word — The Decision on 255 Barker Street

As most members will know, we appealed to VCAT against a Mount Alexander Shire Council decision to grant a permit for the demolition of the Victorian house at 255 Barker Street, Castlemaine. The proposed demolition is part of a plan to enlarge the IGA supermarket on the corner of Barker and Templeton Streets. Two months after the hearing VCAT has at last decided in favour of the developer and the confirmed the Council's decision to allow the demolition.

It is Council policy that in Heritage Overlay areas 'the remaining evidence of buildings and works of the Victorian and Edwardian era are preserved'. All parties agreed that the house in question is Victorian and that it is in a Heritage Overlay area (the Central Conservation Area, HO667). An entire house seemed to us a good deal more than 'evidence' of a Victorian building, so on the face of it we had a very good case. Particularly as we put up an alternative plan by which the supermarket could be enlarged to the same extent without demolishing the old house.

The VCAT Member who heard the case originally said that he hoped to give a decision on the day of the hearing, but, as it took him fully two months to come to a decision, he obviously had some difficulty with it. He was required to decide 'whether the demolition of the dwelling . . . would have an adverse impact on the significance of the heritage place'. His problem was that HO667 is an old one and, unlike more recent Heritage Overlays, does not include a 'statement of significance' which might have guided him in coming to his

decision. His decision, reached without any such guidance, was that the proposal, taken as a whole, would not have an adverse impact on the heritage site.

The Member also noted that he was required to consider the proposal in the light of other planning priorities, including Council's plan to 'provide an economic anchor at the northern end of the [town] centre that would be able to compete more effectively with the new retail development at the southern end', i.e. the planned retail development on the Hunt and Lobb site on Forest Street. Unfortunately, though he acknowledged its existence, the Member does not appear to have assessed our alternative proposal, which, we think, would equally well have provided such an 'economic anchor'.

It is a matter of concern that, in spite of the protection offered by a Heritage Overlay, the demolition of a Victorian building is to be allowed to enable a trader to expand his premises in a particular way. Most of the Victorian and Edwardian buildings in Castlemaine are not covered by any Heritage Overlay at all, so, if an Overlay provides such feeble protection, what is to save the majority of our buildings which do not enjoy even that level of protection?

But we must not allow ourselves to be discouraged by failure in this particular case. Council must be persuaded as a matter of urgency to revise and extend the Heritage Overlays and provide them with clear 'statements of significance' on which future planning and VCAT decisions can be based.

David Cunningham, President

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT WITH SEVERAL MAJOR PROJECTS NEXT YEAR!

Several interesting and important projects are on the drawing board but we need the support of more members to make them happen. You'll hear about these projects and have the opportunity to offer your help at the AGM, so if you would like to become involved without a long term commitment, come to the AGM on October 20.


National Trust of Australia (Victoria) - Mount Alexander Branch

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NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2009

SEPTEMBER 13 — Forty-five Trust members and friends visited Woorookoobanya, a pastoral property at Majorca, some 15km from Carisbrook. The old homestead was fascinating, having been built in 1884, much of it still largely in original condition. The 66 square building containing thirteen rooms was constructed of bluestone finished with the precision for which builders of that era were renowned. Visitors were impressed by the inherent splendour of the property and fascinating glimpses into the lifestyle of 130 years ago.

Perfect weather allowed us to stroll around the extensive property and enjoy the views. Then a splendid afternoon tea was served in the spacious 'ballroom' a room of grand dimensions—how many gracious functions with distinguished visitors must have taken place here over the years!

This was a truly memorable, educational and enjoyable visit and our grateful thanks go to our hostess, Barbara Willis. Barbara has lived at Woorookoobanya all her life, being the great granddaughter of James Buick, who owned the property in the early 1900s.



Guests arriving at Woorookoobanya were immediately impressed. A stone tower above the entrance was removed many years ago as it was judged to be unsafe. Afternoon tea was served in the grand 'ballroom' (left).



OCTOBER

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 20 October at 8.00pm

All members are cordially invited to come along to the Branch's Annual General Meeting to be held in the Faulder Watson Hall, 206-208 Barker Street Castlemaine, commencing at 8.00pm.

Take this opportunity to hear the President's report of the activities of the Branch during the year recently concluded. If you've ever wondered what your Branch Committee does, here is your chance to find out. You may well be surprised and impressed!

After one or two other items of business you will hear the interesting talk described at right. Following the meeting you will be our guest at a light supper and convivial glass (or cup of tea as you wish).

AGMs can often be boring evenings with a lot of dull detail, but not ours. Come and see!

**FAULDER WATSON HALL
TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER AT 8.00PM
FRIENDS AND VISITORS WELCOME**

"WHEN GIANTS ROAMED THE LAND"

A true story from local history, told by George Milford

George will tell us about the decade 1860 to 1870 when people like Robert 'Redgum' Barbour, Joseph Blight, Edward O'Keefe, and Messrs Leslie & Ross were engaged in massive undertakings in the district.

Each of these was a big employer. The men they employed caused brawls, court cases, inquests and even parliamentary enquiries. They left their mark in bridges, the railway, quarries, the irrigation system. We can verify their activities by oral tradition, news reports, inquests, government sources and even by archaeology.

Each of these men was an entrepreneur with a big-picture vision. They took enormous steps and gigantic risks. This talk will bring them to life. We will even hear their own words, in some cases evasive, in others defiant, as they grappled with the pioneering tasks that shaped our district.

PLEASE SEE OVER FOR MORE BRANCH ACTIVITIES