

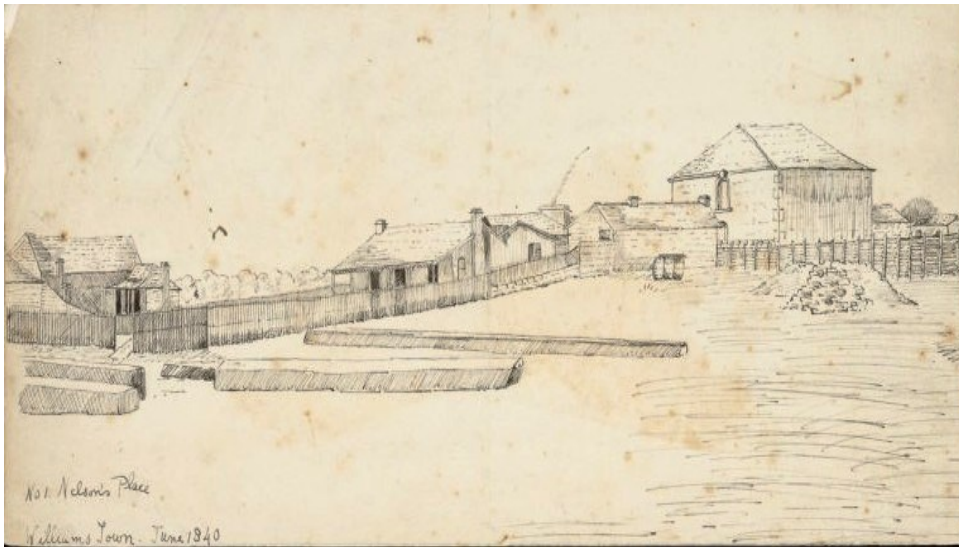


Jun - Jul 2025
Volume 48, No 3

PIONEER ECHO

WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR PAST

Newsletter No: 239



‘No. 1 Nelson’s Place, Williams Town. June 1840’.

“A very early view of Williams Town, Port Phillip ... It shows most of the settlement’s first primitive buildings, which fronted Nelson Place. The old building shown in the foreground was a boarding house ... behind it is shown the local depot of the Carlton and United Brewery ... the larger building at the rear was built by the Langhorne brothers for the purposes of a wool store. The later pencilled note on the back of the drawing refers to William H. Elsum, author of The history of Williamstown : from its first settlement to a city 1834-1934 where the drawing is and captioned ‘An early sketch in Nelson Parade.’ Elsum does not give any provenance information, although the note on the reverse would imply that the drawing was lent to him for inclusion in his publication.”

The Langhorne brothers’ building was demolished in 1850. See page 5 to discover whose body was strung up in the rafters.

Also read about Sergeant William Henry Johnson, enemy of murderers and arsonists on pages 3 & 4

Port Phillip Pioneers Group



Left: Source: <https://douglasstewart.com.au/product/port-phillip-no-1-nelsons-place-williams-town-june-1840/>

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PORT PHILLIP PIONEERS GROUP INC.

Inc. No. A0022862G / ABN: 79 213 729 409

A Member Society of the G.S.V. Inc.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Our next meeting is at 2pm on Saturday 12 July 2025 where the speaker's topic is *Land Management from Deep time to 1851*. Our speaker Richard Broome AM is President of the Royal Historical Society and Emeritus Professor of History at La Trobe University. Professor Broome's impressive CV is on our website. His focus is on the marked difference between the land management by the traditional owners and that of our pioneers between 1835 and 1851.

1851 is now a long time ago and development of our city is ongoing. During a recent drive from Melbourne's north down through Bulleen where the new northern road is heading, made me reflect again on how far Melbourne has come since 1835. Leaving aside getting easily lost in the twists and turns, I was staggered by the size of the monstrous machinery undertaking the works and the dust hanging over the landscape.

As a contrast, from *Petticoats In The Orchard* by Irvine Green (Doncaster-Templestowe Historical Society 1987), this profile of Isabella Duncan appears:

'They lived on the rich river flats at Bulleen. The grassland was dotted with a few magnificent, spreading red gum trees and chains of lagoons broke up the ground. The largest was called Lake Bulleen, a large area of water surrounded by thick reeds that were almost impenetrable. The lagoons teemed with fish, and water birds filled the air with their wild cries.'

Isabella would surely not recognise the Bulleen flats today.

Land management is this meeting's topic and I wondered whether we had done any better than our pioneers; is what we now see occurring explained as progress?

Come along or join us on ZOOM to hear an interesting historical topic which still has importance today.

Paul Cronin

President

Editor's Note: At the AGM all Executive Officers, Committee Members and Volunteers renominated and were accepted, together with a new Committee Member John Guest. Donations were also made to the NLA (\$100 towards scanning and digitising their collection) and the RHSV Annual Appeal. (\$200).

NEW MEMBERS

PPPG No	MEMBER NAME	DESCENDED FROM	DETAILS	DATE	SHIP OR OTHER MEANS
1580	Coral JONES	John WILSON	Arr. P.P.D.	18 Feb 1844	<i>Royal Consort</i>
		Martha WILSON nee BURGESS	"	"	"
		Thomas SLATER	"	Nov 1841	<i>Francis</i>
		Shara SLATER nee SHANNON	"	"	"

VALE



Margaret Mary WOOD (nee RODGERSON) Member No. 1418
d. 18 April 2025



A TRUE REPORT OF THE SERVICES RENDERED BY
SERGEANT WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON (c 1815-1891)

Nothing is known of William Henry **JOHNSON** prior to 1839 when his journal states *"In May 1839, I was appointed Corporal by Sir George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales, and took charge of six border police, and marched overland to Melbourne. Arrived on the 13th of June in the same year ... On arrival I reported to Captain William **LONSDALE** ... I drilled the men and attended as orderly to Captain **LONSDALE** at Batman's Hill until the arrival of Sir Charles Joseph **LATROBE** and the chief Commissioner of Crownlands. Then I was transferred to the Governor and acted as his mounted orderly at Batman's Hill, my chief duty was to patrol the County for the protection of the squatters and their shepherds."*

His journal does not mention where he was born or how he arrived in Australia but an article written for *ARMY* by Cpl Chris Black of Army Public Relations (Trove: *Australian Army (National: 1959 -1980)* Thu 26 May 1966 Page 2) says *"WO1 Bill Johnson, RSM, HQ Eastern Command has a biography written more than 100 years ago by his great-grandfather Sgt William Henry **JOHNSON**. Sgt **JOHNSON** was transferred in the British Army to Australia in early 1839 when the colony was beginning to flourish."*

JOHNSON'S journal tells of his experiences from 1839 to 1873 including arresting aboriginal men for robbery in the Western Port District in 1839, cutting the first track into Gippsland from Western Port Bay in 1840, bringing the murderer of 2 shepherds in **DUTTON** and **DARLOW'S** station on the Campaspe River in 1841 to trial and in the same year, exploring the Mallee Wimmera area and presenting his findings to the Chief Commissioner and the Governor. The journal tells how *"the blacks had robbed Mr. **CLARKE'S** Lower Plains station of all the rations and had driven away 3000 of the sheep."* They tracked down the offenders and Johnson was speared in the leg during the melee. He saved the Chief Commissioner's life and they recognised *"my valuable service by raising my pay 2p per day. In September 1843 news came to Melbourne that a man named **SIMPSON** had been murdered near Buninyong by a man named **WAIN** who had burned the body in a hollow log."* Again Sgt **JOHNSON** tracked down his man. **WAIN** was brought to Melbourne, committed, tried and found guilty of wilful murder and subsequently paid the penalty of his crime by being hanged. In 1843, **JOHNSON** arrested an escapee from Adelaide gaol who had been charged with arson.

*"**JOHNSON** excelled in tracking and the traps he devised to snare the defaulters could be envied by today's police force"* wrote Corporal Black. *"Perhaps his most bizarre case was in January 1844 when a young squatter named **BEVERIDGE** had been speared to death by aboriginals at his homestead near the junction of the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers ... The only witness was **BEVERIDGE'S** shepherd, a man named **RILEY**, who had hidden terrified under a sofa while the aborigines killed his master and ransacked the homestead. Taking **RILEY** and two troopers, Sgt **JOHNSON** set out to track down the aboriginal tribe and arrest three warriors who had committed the murder. Johnson's method of capturing the murderers involved a cunning plan and once the prisoners were secured they travelled to Melbourne ... where they lodged the prisoners in the Western lockup. Next day they were committed for trial, and in a week two of them were tried and found guilty and subsequently hanged. The third was not executed but kept in goal until the others were hanged. He saw them hanged and was then set at liberty to go back and tell the tribes what he had seen."* For this capture **JOHNSON** said *"I was greatly praised by the country and the press."*

JOHNSON'S diary also states ... *"in Melbourne Sir John **FRANKLIN** and Governor **LATROBE** complimented me as a bushman, and said I was the best in the colony, and I don't think a man can be found in either of the colonies who has done so much for the settlement of a country or who has so repeatedly risked his life in trying to make this a home for hundreds of thousands of people. I was twice wounded during my experiences of service under Government. I claim to be the first white man who ever discovered coal on the surface at Cape Patterson and brought specimens into Melbourne and gave them to Governor **LATROBE** at Batman's Hill in the year 1839."*

William was mentioned in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* Wed 6 Jan 1847 Page 2 *"Sergeant William **JOHNSON** of the Mounted Police has received a free pardon for the activity displayed by him in*

SGT. WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON (c 1815-1891)

*the capture of the murderers of Mr. **BEVERIDGE**. (Trove newspapers online)*

*“At the end of 1846 the Border Police was disbanded and the native police force reduced in number, there being only a few retained as trackers. My chief officer, Mr. F. A. **POWLETT**, retired from the service, and went home to England; I resigned and left the Government service.” (Johnson’s Journal)*

William Henry **JOHNSON** married Elizabeth Ann **WILSON** (also known as Eliza) on 11 August 1848 at St Francis church Melbourne. (BDM Vic certificate 572/1848).

*“In 1853 I joined the first volunteer artillery corps established here under the captaincy of Mr. Rodan **Green**. I drilled some of the first cadets at Essendon. In the service I remained until 1862, when I entered the public works department as overseer in the construction of bridges on the Yarra track, under Mr. Clement Wilks, chief engineer. I continued in the Public Works department until 1866, when, in consequence of the deadlock during the regime of the Mc Culloch administration, I retired. In 1869 I entered the service of O’ Grady, Layett and Noonan, as overseer on the North Eastern railway. And in 1871 I re-entered the Public Works Department under Mr. George Burnley, chief inspector of the department at Williamstown, and I remained at this until 1873, when I was appointed one of the first foresters, and took charge of the Victoria State Forest on the 1st of October 1873 having held this appointment until the present.” (Johnson’s Journal)*

*The Argus 21 April page 11 1883 “William **JOHNSON**, forester at Buangor, to be a Crown lands bailiff.”*

*1890 Select Committee into who discovered gold first in Bendigo – The Government was offering £1000 for discovery of gold at Bendigo. One of those who made a claim was William Henry **JOHNSON** who was living at Longwarry at the time. He says “... he was with the Lands Department and served stock assessments to the squatters every year. I had been Government orderly to Governor **LA TROBE**. I came from Sydney in 1838. I brought my gold to Melbourne and showed my wife and her mother and we made up a party [Johnson, Wilson and Robert Kennedy] to go to Bendigo.”- September 1851. William Henry **JOHNSON**’s claim was unsuccessful as the Committee found “that due to the length of time from the discovery of gold at Bendigo it would be very difficult now to ascertain who the actual discoverer was.”*

William Henry **JOHNSON**’s death was announced in *The Leader* 17 January 1891 page 3

***JOHNSON** - On the 11th January, at Joyce’s Creek railway station, William Henry Johnson, late Crown lands bailiff, of Buangor, father of J. W. Johnson, station master Joyce’s Creek railway station, aged 76 years.*

William was buried at the Newstead cemetery on 12 January 1891 (*findagrave.com*). Eliza **JOHNSON** died at Ringwood in 1886 aged 56. She was born in Norfolk, England, her parents were James Wilson and Annie Walton. (BDM Vic 10752/1886)

William and Eliza had the following issue;

1. William Henry **JOHNSON** bc.1860 d 1861 at Essendon aged 7 months (BDM Vic 635/1861)

2. James Wilson **JOHNSON** b. 1861 Melbourne (BDM Vic 11884/1861), died in 1923 (BDM Vic 4155/1923) Ballarat East Victoria aged 63. I have not been able to find a marriage between James Wilson **JOHNSON** and Mary Carroll, but they had the following issue; 1889 William Henry **JOHNSON** /1892 Mary Elizabeth **JOHNSON** / 1893 Raymond James **JOHNSON**/ 1896 Maurice Wilson **JOHNSON** / 1898 John Thomas **JOHNSON** / 1899 Alice Ellen **JOHNSON** / 1904 Michael Leonard **JOHNSON** / 1907 Eugenie Mary **JOHNSON** / 1912 Agnes Jean **JOHNSON**. Mary died in 1933 and is buried with James at the New Ballarat Cemetery.

A copy of the hand-written journal of Sgt. William Henry **JOHNSON** was donated to the PPPG library by his Great Grandson Paul **SMITH** PPG Member No. 1362. Susanne **WHEELAHAN** Member No. 1555 has kindly transcribed the journal, and the full version can be found on the PPPG website.

Contributed by Dianne Wheeler PPPG Member No. 1505

WILLIAMSTOWN WOOL STORES / STOCKADE

This large square building made of thick solid bluestone was originally built by William and George **LANGHORNE**. The *Port Phillip Herald* 12 May 1840 announced the **LANGHORNE** Bros. begged “to inform the mercantile interests of Melbourne, and the settlers of Australia Felix that their extensive wool stores at Williamstown are now completed for the reception of wool.” However, by November 1841 the brothers were filing for bankruptcy.

Thirteen years later, on September 8, 1853, the building was acquired by the Government, the *Gazette* of September 7 proclaiming, ‘The Lieutenant Governor proclaims and declares the certain pieces or parcels of land lying and being in Williamstown, having a frontage to Nelson Place of 132 feet, with a depth of 313 feet, with all erections thereon, to be a marine stockade or prison house of correction and penal establishment.’

By the 1850’s, the wool store/prison had become notorious for its association with the murder of John Giles Price (1808-1857), who was appointed Inspector General of penal establishments in Victoria in January 1854. He was renowned for his tyrannical rule at Norfolk Island from 1846 to January 1853 and this rule extended to Williamstown. Seated at his table in the old wool store, he would ladle out punishments to the tune of 30 lashes for such trivial offences as falling asleep in church. This hatred of him culminated in his brutal death, attacked by convicts from the Hobson's Bay prison hulks in March 1857. Price's battered body was conveyed to the stockade and slung to the roof beam to avoid the attention of rats and pending the arrival of the coroner for the inquest. Fifteen convicts were committed for trial and seven were hanged for the murder.

Inside this archaic building, stood massive square stone pillars to which convicts used to be chained. Cells were constructed on both storeys and the solid stone stairs showed signs of constant wear. Iron bars to the windows were made by a local Williamstown blacksmith. In 1941 the original rafters and flooring were still in position, but the roof, which was originally thatch, was now iron.

This ancient building at Nelson Place, Williamstown, once a wool store, convict stockade & brewery was demolished in 1950.

Interestingly, physical objects held by the State Library of Victoria include leather boot parts and a piece of wood from the penal stockade at Williamstown, a black and white postcard of the building itself (above right) and a photocopy of a letter of sympathy to Mrs. Price following her husband's murder.

Sources:

slv.vic.au

The Sun News Pictorial 5 April 1941 p24

Williamstown Advertiser (Vic. : 1875 - 1954) Fri 27 Feb 1953 Page 1

Australin Dictionary of Biography online



Photograph of Williamstown wool store built by the Langhorne brothers in 1840

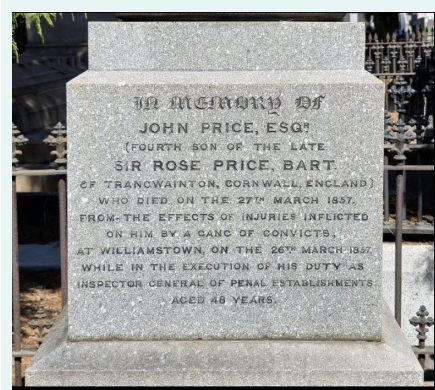
photo source: slv.vic.gov.au
Inscribed on verso: 16-5-1941



This granite column commemorates John Price (1808-1857)

The dedication on the reverse reads:

THIS MONUMENT
WAS ERECTED BY THE OFFICERS &
WARDERS OF PENAL ESTABLISH-
MENTS IN VICTORIA AS A TRIBUTE
TO THE MEMORY OF ONE WHO NEVER
SWERVED FROM THE PATH OF PUBLIC
DUTY OR FAILED TO RESOUND TO
THE CALL OF FRIENDSHIP .



Contributed by Dianne Wheeler PPPG Member No. 1505

Changes to our Website and Email Addresses

We have picked up a member suggestion that we do something about simplifying our very cumbersome website address. It can now be found at pppg.org.au rather than the typo-friendly *portphillippi-owners.org.au*. If you have bookmarked the old address you will automatically be redirected to the new one. We hope this makes it easier to find for members and others.

At the same time PPPG email addresses such as info@pppg.org.au have also changed to the new address.

If you have any problem with accessing the site or email let the Secretary, Stuart Hamilton, know. You can text him on 0414 300 505 if all else fails.

Contributed by Stuart Hamilton PPPG Member No. 1454

FEEDBACK FORUM

An email from **Fay JOHNSON (nee Martin) PPPG Member No. 1101** re Rosalie Triolo's talk at the AGM 10 May 2025 (published with permission)

"Many thanks for the most valuable contents from the presenter's lecture. I have been concerned for many years about things people declare with no references, especially when it comes to indigenous matters. You hear in your lifetime various stories of one's family, but you also wonder if stories have been 'enhanced' and not quite true. I do however feel that if one was prepared to impart what your family did or did not do to the journalist, if it was not true, others would, at the time, give their version very quickly.

My **WITHERS** family arrived in Melbourne in 1840 and their first child, Sarah (my great great grandmother) was born not long after. The family took a license out to run sheep in the Euroa district and their run was named *Bailey Hill*. This was short-lived due to aggressive attacks by aborigines. I have no additional details. They then moved to the *Ullina* run in 1846 at Chiltern and although they had problems with the Ovens district Aboriginal tribe they seemed to have an understanding with the Murray River tribe, who visited and received food and some sort of welcome which helped keep life peaceful. Jason & Hannah **WITHERS** ... had 10 children between 1841 and 1859. The aim of my letter is to encourage family historians to search for the 'truth' and to record the references. A distant cousin, Robert Ashley has written a book on the Withers family called *The Withers Whose Forebears in Ancient Britain Walked*, published in 2007.

Thanks to the wonderful Trove newspapers online, I recently had two breakthroughs with my own re-search. The first a reminiscence from a relative in the *Nth Eastern Ensign* (Benalla, newspaper, 6 July 1923, p.3) talking about the Murray River Aboriginal tribe visiting my ancestor Jason **WITHERS** at his *Ullina* Squatting Run at Chiltern, NE Victoria (1840's period). Jason would set up a large boiler outside, fill it with all the scraps from the homestead and set to boil. The article continued ... "*Jostling and jabbering, the blacks would gather round the cauldron, snatch bones from the boiling mass, gnaw the meat off them and toss the bones over their shoulder to the Lubras who were squatting on the ground behind them. At Gooramadda, little trouble was experienced ...*"

My second find was that I finally discovered where the name *Whyrebremen* came from. (The name of my great great grandparent's property at Brown's Plains, Gooramadda, Victoria, on the Murray River near Howlong, NSW.) A relative told me that the sign hung on the gate. In old maps of the area, it is written as *Browns or Wybremmin Plains* and *Wyrenbemmin or Browns Plains*. Finally I found a reference from Gooramadda squatter James Lindsay Brown, who stated "*Gooramadda is the black's name for the site of the homestead and was obtained at some distant period from the fact of a very old blackfellow falling down the bank of the river and dying from the effects thereof. My vineyard was planted in 1859 ... Crossing the eastern end of Gooramadda Plain (Black's name - Wyren Bimen, now the site of J.F. Martin's house and vineyard.)*" *Albury Banner* 1 May 1885, p.8. A second article in *The Leader*, 2 May 1885, p.11, stated that *Wymer Bimen* is the Aboriginal name of the '*elevated sloping plain at the north eastern foot of Mt Ochertyre*'. *It would seem that it was a name given to describe the general area. James Martin's land, purchased in 1859 (when J.L. Brown lost the bulk of his squatting run) extended from the Murray Valley Highway to the base of Mt. Ochertyre, close to the Murray River.*' This article shows that some squatters did try to live harmoniously with the Aborigines and acknowledged the local aboriginal tribes by giving their homes an aboriginal name.

It really is just a lesson on not to give up with your search for the truth, with references to prove your point."

Address at the AGM on 10 May 2025 by

DR ROSALIE TRIOLO

Dr Rosalie Triolo OAM FRHSV gave a talk on local and international historical sources and resources you might not have used in local/family history.

She has generously provided us with the following lists that can be found on our website at for Members only at:

pppg.org.au > Member Resources > Methods and Sources or through the link at the Members News > A New Set of Sources for Australian History Research

- Highly Recommended Victorian, Australian and International 'History Providers' to Support and Inspire Accurate, Creative and Engaging Research, Writing or Other Forms of Presenting Australia's History
- Image-Based Australian History Primary and Secondary Historical Sources: A Selection to Inspire Creative Teaching, Learning, Research, Writing or Non-Traditional Forms of Presentation
- Highly Recommended SOUND-BASED Historical Sources to Support and Inspire Accurate, Creative and Engaging Research, Writing or Other Modes of Presenting Australia's History
- Word-Based Australian History Primary and Secondary Historical Sources:
A Selection to Inspire Creative Teaching, Learning, Research, Writing or Non-Traditional Forms of Presentation



LIBRARY NEWS

- ♦ Don't forget to check out our library for a selection of borrowable books available to our Members and Associate Members including;

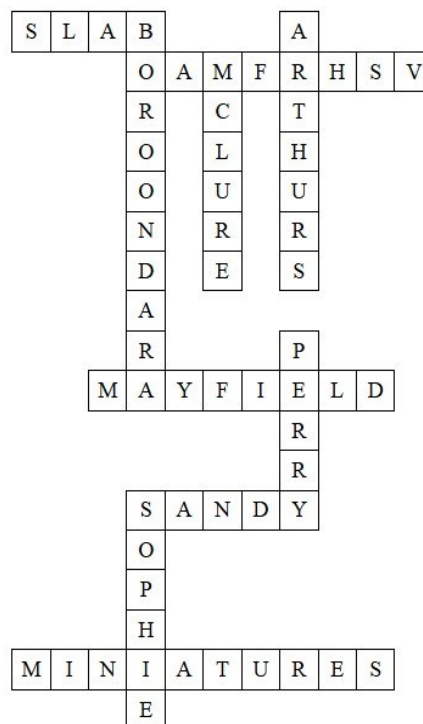
Garryowen Unmasked: The Life Of Edmund Finn.

- ♦ Volunteers are now in the process of sorting our library books with the intention of placing them in a glass cabinet at the rear of the hall making them more easily seen and accessible .

PPPG PUZZLE# 6 Answers

(from the PPPG Puzzler Di Wheeler)

PPPG Puzzle #6



- BOROONDARA
- OAMFRHSV
- MINIATURES
- SLAB
- MAYFIELD
- PERRY
- MCLURE
- ARTHURS
- SANDY
- SOPHIE

FROM THE EDITOR

- ♦ *The Pioneer Echo* is always keen to accept contributions from our members. Consider sharing your stories so others can enjoy your passion by submitting an article to the Editor Di Wheeler at:

pppgdiw@gmail.com

- ♦ The Victorian BDM Registry are offering uncertified historical certificates (a scanned image of a certificate which is not valid for official purposes) for \$22.50 each. If you buy an uncertified image, you can download it immediately.

<https://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/>

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Saturday: 12 July 2025

Speaker: Richard Broome AM

Topic: Land Management from Deep Time to 1851

Saturday: 13 September 2025

Speaker: Laura Jocie

Topic: The Letters of Capt. Richard Hanmer and Sarah Bunbury

Saturday: 8 November 2025

Speaker: Margaret Anderson

Topic: Melbourne: Foundations of a City

MEETING VENUE

Hall Entry: \$2.00

Doors Open: 1.30 pm. Sign in. Time to browse notice board, borrow library books, and chat.

Meeting Starts: 2.00 pm.

Guest Speaker: 2.30 pm.

Afternoon Tea: 3.30 pm.

Venue: Wesley Hall, St. Andrew's Unit-ing Church, cnr Burke and Malvern Roads, Gardiner.

Melways Reference: Map 59 H7.

Or Online via Zoom digital platform

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